PART I

THE NEW FORCES AT WORK
CHAPTER I

MUGHAL RULE IN BENGAL

I. Land-marks in Bengal's political history, 1575-1627.

On March 3, 1575 Munim Khan decisively defeated Daud Karrani at the battle of Tukaroi and thereby laid the first foundation of Mughal rule in Bengal. On October 29, 1627 Emperor Nur-ud-din Jahangir passed away. Between these two dates,—if one is allowed to fix specific dates for a historical process,—Mughal rule in Bengal was consolidated. During these years the province witnessed many wars, campaigns, rebellions and a succession of conquering generals and viceroyys. Such political events were perhaps not of any direct significance in the daily life of the common people. But the wars, the rebellions, the succession of viceroyys brought about a slow change in the character of the administration and in the state of peace and security. The land-marks in the political history of Bengal between 1575 and 1627 thus assume, with a slight variation in emphasis, a considerable significance in the story of the life of the people.

The defeat of Daud Karrani on the battlefield of Tukaroi registered a claim to sovereignty. It did little more. Secure in his possession of Orissa, Daud continued to give trouble. Shielded by mighty rivers, Isa Khan and the bhuiyas enjoyed the fullest freedom and challenged actively the authority of the Mughals. On the battlefield of Rajmahal in July, 1576 the Mughals conquered Bengal a second time. Daud was executed and a great obstacle to consolidation of power thus removed. But Mughal rule in Bengal was yet far from secure. The
conquest on the contrary unleashed new forces of anarchy. For Bengal, the years 1579 to 1583 were particularly gloomy. The Afghan chiefs were everywhere up in arms. With the rising of the Mughal captains and their usurpation of power during 1580-'82, all semblance of centralized authority vanished. The futile campaigns of general Shahbaz Khan against Isa Khan and the other zamindars of Bhati (1584-'85) mark the first serious attempt at assertion of authority. The patched up peace of 1586-'87 similarly marks the failure of this attempt. Thus twelve years after the initial Mughal conquest of Bengal, the province was still for all practical purposes a conglomeration of petty states ruled over by Afghan chiefs and Hindu princelings, some of whom formed an anti-Mughal confederacy under the leadership of Isa Khan.

In November, 1586 Akbar introduced uniform subah administration throughout his empire. A viceroy, a diwan and a bakhshi were sent accordingly to Bengal as well. But for years to come, the change was little more than theoretical. Wazir Khan, the first viceroy appointed under the new dispensation, died too early (August, 1587) to achieve anything. Said Khan, who enjoyed a longer lease of power (1587-'94) could make no more headway against the hostile forces all around.

The consolidation of Mughal power in Bengal and the pacification of the province really began in 1594. In that year Raja Man Singh Kachhwa was appointed viceroy and five thousand of Prince Salim's troops were granted jagirs in Bengal. In 1595, the Raja laid the foundations of a new capital at Rajmahal. Starting out from the capital in a campaign against Bhati, he dislodged the rebel chiefs from the lands west of Brahmaputra and in 1596, turned the frontier Kingdom of Kuch into a vassal state. The authority thus imposed on the greater part of Bengal and the peace which probably ensued in consequence were once more seriously shaken by the widespread revolt of 1600 when Man Singh was away from the province. He returned to his work of pacification in 1601. By 1603-'04, the turbulent chiefs of Bhati were effectively crushed for the time being and there ensued a period of comparative peace.

The five years of Islam Khan's viceroyalty (May, 1608—August, 1613) saw the virtual completion of Man Singh's work. In 1608, the zamindars of Birbhum, Pachet and Hijli were
forced to accept vassalage, but allowed to retain their jagirs. The viceroy next turned his attention to East Bengal and the bhuiyas and zamindars submitted one after another. Satrajit of Bhushana submitted in 1609, entered imperial service and was confirmed in the possession of his lands. By 1611 Musa Khan, the son of Isa Khan, chief of the Bengal zamindars and his associates also laid down their arms. They were nominally confirmed in their jagirs, but forced to attend the viceregal court in person and put under surveillance. By 1612, Jessore and Bakla were also brought under the direct rule of the viceroy. In course of the same year Khwaja Usman was killed in battle and with the submission of Bayizid, the last resistance of the Afghans in Sylhet came to an end. Another significant development of the year was the transfer of capital to Dacca. Practically the whole territory within the geographical limits of Bengal was now under the firm sway of the Mughals. For the people at large, this fact implied at least freedom from perpetual warfare and consequent sufferings. Islam Khan now felt strong enough to venture further afield into Kachar and Kamrup.

Fresh troubles broke out during the next viceroyalty (1613-1617). The zamindars of Birbhum, Pachet, Hijli and Chandrakona, lukewarm in their loyalty, were however easily brought back to obedience. The Arakanese invasion of Bhulua (1614-'15), though unsuccessful, indicated a far more serious threat to peace and security which was to assume serious proportions in the years to come. During 1615-'16, the Mughals suffered two serious set-backs. An attempt to conquer Chittagong ended in an expensive failure while from Assam there came back the miserable remnants of a routed army.

With the appointment of Ibrahim Khan in 1617, opened a new era of short-lived peace which lasted with little interruption till 1623. The masses enjoyed once more the blessings of peace, security and even economic prosperity. The zamindars benefited by the viceroy’s conciliatory policy and had their properties restored to them. But few as the disturbing factors were, their cumulative effect was hardly insignificant. In 1617, an expedition had to be sent against Bir Bhan of Chandrakona who “had been causing great annoyance to travellers passing by his territories”. The revolt of Ibrahim Kreri in the frontier
territory of Kamrup was another source of trouble. The Ahom attacks on the same territory further strained the resources of the Mughal Government in Bengal. After the conquest of Tipperah in 1618, Bengal enjoyed peace for a couple of years until in 1620, the Arakan king sailed up to the very vicinity of Dacca and wrought havoc on the river-side villages. A second attempt to secure Chittagong (1621) failed like the first and thus gave fresh encouragement to Magh raids, while the Firingi raids in South-East Bengal continued as before. In 1621, a revolt of the Hijli zamindar assumed formidable proportions and could be crushed only with difficulty. Even the following two years of comparative peace were regularly interrupted by 'periodic and isolated revolts' in Kamrup.

Then in 1624 came the revolt of Shahjahan and his temporary occupation of Bengal. He found a ready ally in the dissatisfied elements and the habitual enemies of Mughal imperialism, e.g., the Maghs and the Portuguese. Bengal became the scene of a civil war in which Ibrahimm Khan perished. The entire administration became topsy-turvy. The restoration of Jahangir's rule in 1625 and the governorship of Mahabat Khan brought in little improvement, for the latter's preoccupation with intrigues at the capital even enabled the Maghs to ravage successfully the metropolitan city of Dacca. A few months before his death, Jahangir appointed Fidai Khan (March, 1627) viceroy of Bengal. His one significant act was the stipulation 'to remit yearly from Bengal, in the shape of presents, a sum of five lakhs for the Emperor and an equal amount for the Queen-consort Nurjehan'. Evidently, peace was returning to Bengal, and with it, economic stability.

II. The pattern of Mughal rule in Bengal

The pattern of Mughal rule in Bengal throughout the period was of a complex character. Its dominant note was an attempt at centralisation. Its significance in the life of the people is to be measured with reference to the extent to which this attempt succeeded or failed.

The administrative structure of Bengal during the period under review had three distinct facets. First, there was the manifold control exercised by the central authority on the government of this province. Secondly, parts of the territory
were directly administered by the provincial and local officers more or less after the same pattern as was to be found in the other subahs of the empire. Thirdly, over a fairly extensive territory semi-independent lordlings exercised their sway under the political hegemony of the Mughals.

III. Central control over provincial administration.

For Bengal, imperial control over the provincial administration was to some extent a reality from the very time of the conquest. From Munim Khan to Man Singh, all the generals who contributed to this piecemeal conquest were acting under the emperor's direct orders and, in case of incompetence, were liable to be recalled. But before the establishment of Mughal authority on a sound footing, particularly before the introduction of the uniform subah administration towards the very end of 1586, this central control was subject to obvious limitations. The hazards of the situation called for local initiative. An emperor as wise as Akbar naturally avoided putting any impediments in its way. Instead, he remained satisfied with the appointment as viceroy of one in whom he had absolute faith, —Man Singh. Gradually with the consolidation of power, the emperor's hold on the provincial administration also slowly tightened. It found material expression through a number of offices created for the purpose of check and balance and through a system of regular administrative measures meant to control the local authorities and to keep the emperor informed of the goings on in the province. Rules laid down for the succession of subahdars in Bengal prove the strength of the central control: if the subahdar of Bengal died, the highest imperial officer at Monghyr was to take charge; if there was no such officer, then the governor of Bihar was to take over. Further evidences of this growing strength are to be found in the dismissal of Qasim Khan and the similar orders received by his predecessor. The obligation to send peshkash regularly to the imperial court defined Bengal's relationship with the centre in even clearer terms. At the early stage, when the income of the provincial exchequer was necessarily uncertain, the peshkash was naturally paid both in cash and kind. In Islam Khan's days eunuchs 'were procured specially for imperial peshkash'. In the next regime, 'the revenues of the Crown-lands as shown
in the register of cash-realisation (tumar)’ had to be sent to the capital. Qasim Khan, despite obvious reluctance, was forced to send with an imperial courier two lakhs in cash besides a bond (tamassuk) for the balance due, promising to send it through agents. In 1627, ten lakhs of rupees were sent as peshkash and Fidai Khan, the subahdar, stipulated to send five lakhs as annual tribute. Besides the usual peshkash, the booty sent by the campaigning generals to the subahdars would at times go directly to the imperial court. During Islam Khan’s viceroyalty, an expert was sent from Agra to fetch the courtiers and musicians from the provincial court.

The subah administration, as organised by Akbar in 1586-87, was based largely on a system of check and balance. The diwan’s extensive powers over the provincial exchequer and the bakhshi’s control over all matters of military finance, detracted much from the subahdar’s autocratic authority in the province. The waqai-navis or news-reporter, on the other hand, acted as a direct link with the centre and hence as a check on all viceregal excesses. He was instructed “to send to the imperial Court reports of events and doings of the provincial governors” . . . . and “had instructions not to show them to the subahdars.” In 1587, all these officers were appointed directly by the emperor in Bengal as well as in other subahs of the empire. But it was only at a later date, in the reign of Jahangir, that they really made their power felt. The replacement of Islam Khan by Shajant Khan as viceroy was ordered apparently on the basis of reports received from Yaghma Isfahani, the waqai-navis. In the days of Qasim Khan, the power of the subahdar was almost overshadowed by that of the diwan. His ‘corruption evil ways and arrogance’ called for some sort of check and the emperor decided to procure it by appointing Mukhlis Khan ‘to the combined office of the diwan, bakhshi and waqai-navis of Bengal,’ so that the ‘whimsical Khan’ might be overpowered ‘in questions and replies’. It was clearly stated that if the new diwan found Qasim Khan to be ‘unfit for subahdarship,’ the latter would be dismissed. The diwan was also empowered to delegate authority and he presently appointed his own son as bakhshi. Hence Mukhlis Khan really acted as the emperor’s personal representative and there followed a prolonged conflict between him and the subahdar. The jealous vigilance of the imperial
mansabdars acting in various offices in the province also acted as a constant check on the activities of the viceroy. In matters of official preference the imperial mansabdars were rivals of the subahdar’s officers and when Islam Khan seemed inclined to show undue favour to his own men, the mansabdars sent a joint appeal to the emperor seeking redress of their grievances. Islam Khan received a sharp reproof in consequence.

At times the emperor would interfere in the viceroy’s activities even more directly. In matters of great consequence, in particular, the subahdar was obliged to consult the emperor. And if the former showed a spirit unduly independent, detailed regulations or sharply-worded farmans came from the court to bring him back to the path of loyalty. The most notable instance in point is the imperial ordinance issued by Jahangir in the sixth year of his reign during Islam Khan’s viceroyalty in Bengal. In it, particular attention was drawn to the imperial style assumed by Islam Khan and its immediate discontinuation ordered; the great imperial officers were not to be compelled to follow the officers of the subahdars; and the subahdar was to ensure that the officers worked honestly and faithfully, “strictly in accordance with imperial regulations”. From time to time, the emperor sent his personal couriers to bestow rewards and administer reproofs. Khilats, horses and other valuables came regularly from the emperor in token of his approval of the officers’ good deeds. Often again the courier brought farmans bearing sharp words of admonition, which the subahdar and the officers concerned were obliged to accept in all humility,—taking them with both the hands, ‘one after the other’, and placing them on the head. Thus was Shaykh ibn Yamin sent to Islam Khan and Ibrahim Kalal to the next viceroy. Ibrahim Kalal was sent not to warn the subahdar alone, but to sternly admonish the bakhshi, the diwan and the waqai-navis as well. Punishments would often follow in the wake of such warnings and even the highest was not beyond the pale of the imperial wrath in this respect. Reduction of mansabs seems to have been the most usual form of punishment. Islam Khan’s mansab was reduced for his not accompanying the campaign against Usman while a similar punishment befell Mukhlis Khan because of his failure to check Qasim Khan’s excesses. Disobedience of officers, too powerful to be dealt with success-
fully by the viceroy, might be reported to the emperor and 
punished with such measures as forfeiture of honorific titles. 
The fear of imperial investigation acted as a constant and 
salutary check on official delinquency. After Qasim Khan’s 
conflict with the diwan, Sadat Khan was sent from Agra to 
investigate the matter and the governor ordered to redress the 
diwan’s grievances on pain of punishments. Following the 
suppression of Ibrahim Krori’s revolt, the officers and soldiers 
hastily restored all properties seized by them for fear of 
inquiries. Even the Khan Fath-i-Jang, who enjoyed His 
Majesty’s fullest confidence, restored to his jagir an officer in 
Kuch,—formerly dismissed on sufficient grounds,—lest the 
disaster in that region should later be attributed to this 
dismissal. And even when there was no specific investigation 
in view, an imperial messenger might visit the distant thanas, 
distributing presents and inspecting the defence and thus main-
tain a direct link between Agra and the most outlying regions 
of the new subah. The officers’ promotion depended ultimately 
on the emperor, though the reports sent by the subahdar had 
much to do with it. Hence the strict instructions requiring the 
viceroy to send correct reports, the officers’ eagerness to inform 
His Majesty of their exploits through independent means and 
the enormous peshkash sent by individual officers to the 
 imperial court. ‘The total value of the peshkash, rare gifts and 
elephants’ sent by Nathan, the author of Baharistan, to the 
imperial court in anticipation of a promotion, amounted to 
forty-two thousand rupees. Thus there existed a direct relation 
between the emperor and the officers of this outlying subah 
which checked to a considerable extent all centrifugal tendencies 
within the administrative frame-work. The Mughal law of 
escheat, whereby the residue of the officer’s property at his 
death was forfeited to His Majesty’s treasury, was a further 
bond between the Emperor and his officers, though a harsh and 
cruel one. But surely it acted as a strong link in the chain of 
centralisation. For an officer like Nathan’s father might die 
at one far corner of the province; still, an exact account of his 
property would have to be rendered and the residue carried to 
Agra to the very last farthing. Perhaps, above everything else, 
a subtle, intangible bond acted as the strongest link between 
the emperor and his men: it was the bond of loyalty forged
by a semi-religious,—almost super-human,—awe and reverence inspired by the name of the emperor. It is not our business here to inquire into the origins of this attitude. Nor is it true to say that the cases of disloyalty and defiance were even infrequent. But a study of the works of such Bengal officers as Talish and Nathan points inevitably to the conclusion that to the majority of the officers in this far away province, the emperor was the highest master, the pir and the gibla and his sublime court, the ultimate resort in matters spiritual as well as temporal.

The emperor’s relation with his subjects was necessarily much feeblener. But the custom of sending the rebel chiefs reduced to vassalage to the imperial court in the days before Ibrahim Khan’s viceroyalty, the grant of mansabs to the local chiefs, the occasional judicial appeals to the imperial court—all these gradually established a relationship, though never very direct, between the emperor and the people of Bengal. The emperor’s name attained a significant familiarity in the common parlance of the day and seemingly became synonymous with royalty at all times. For the erudite poet of Chaitanyakaritamrita refers casually to Hussain Shah, not as sultan, but as padshah.

The days of Bengal’s autonomy were definitely over. For the sake of convenience and efficiency, the reins of central control were no doubt loosened a great deal. But in case the subahdar or any lower officer proved restive, the emperor’s arm was always long enough to reach the farthest corner of the newly conquered province, often over the heads of the sabahdars. Such interference, however, was exceptional, not regular.

IV. The administrative set up: deviations from general practice.

The structure of Mughal administration within Bengal was roughly similar to that in other provinces. But if one aims at accuracy, it is safer not to overstate this fact of uniformity with regard to Bengal, particularly for the period under review. For in studying Bengal’s administrative set-up during 1575-1627, the background of the wars of conquest and political strifes has to be borne in mind. Amidst these widespread conflicts which continued with short breaks to the very end of
the period, it was hardly possible to achieve administrative systematisation to the same extent as in the more peaceful provinces. Hence, for the present purpose, the subah administration as described in the Ain-i-Akbari has to be considered as an ideal from which the deviations were many and frequent.

The subahdar, here as elsewhere, was the executive head of the province. The diwan as the head of the financial organisation enjoyed co-ordinate authority. Then there were the bakhshi, or the military pay-master-general and the waqai navis, or news-reporter, whose function, as already explained, was much more important than his modest designation suggests. The division of the province into sarkars and of the sarkars into parganas was current in Bengal as well. The faujdar in charge of the sarkar and the shiqdar in charge of the pargana were also familiar features of the Mughal administration in Bengal. The faujdar, as described in the Ain, was however not necessarily in charge of a sarkar, but of 'several parganas'. The appointment of Nathan's brother as the faujdar of several parganas points towards a similar practice.

Here one must stop to note an important deviation from the usual practice. The demarcation of sarkars and parganas presupposes an advanced stage in the consolidation of political authority. But to the very end of Islam Khan's viceroyalty (1608-13) territories had to be wrested from the clutches of hostile forces. Tippera was conquered even later, in 1618. The Magh and Firingi raids continued throughout the period, and in fact, much longer. Hence in considerable parts of the province the conditions were often those of war and the representatives of the imperial power were obliged to function as an army of occupation. Such soil was hardly congenial to the sarkar administration, devised for more peaceful climes. So while with the progress of peace and security, the faujdars and the shiqdars took charge of sarkars and parganas in many parts, for the rest a sort of stop-gap arrangement had to be introduced. Following the conquest of a particular territory, one or more thanas would be set up, each with a thanadar or faujdar and a garrison under him. Pacification of the locality, suppression of refractory tendencies, preservation of law and order and, as things settled down, introduction of regular peaceful administration,—such were the duties of the thanadar
and his garrison. In more than one unit of administration this stop-gap character seems to have persisted even long after the initial conquest. The epithet, 'sardar', is used with reference to the officers in charge of the administration of such places as Sylhet and Jessore even as late as the days of Ibrahim Khan's administration. The exact nature of the functions of the sardar is not quite clear. But the stray references in the Baharistan to this particular office would suggest that the sardar was in sole charge of the administration of such territories as might be put under his care, the duty of maintaining peace and security being particularly underlined. The chief accusation against Suhrab Khan, the sardar of Jessore, for example, was that he had failed to protect the territory from Firingi raids, and when he was restored to office following a threat of dismissal, "a letter of covenant was taken from him making him responsible for the protection of Jessore". On the basis of such meagre facts, one may venture a suggestion that the vague designation of sardar was applied to an office which was in the nature of a half-way house between the thanadar (also indiscriminately referred to as faujdar) in charge of a newly occupied territory and the faujdar, who was the executive and military head of a regularly administered sarkar or some similar unit of administration. Besides the offices of the faujdar and the sardar, Nathan also refers to the post of wardens of such strategic places as Rajmahal and Burdwan. The administration of the sarkar, as also of the units under the sardars, was in certain ways a miniature replica of the subah administration. A diwan, a bakhshi and a waqai-navis were appointed apparently in every such unit of administration and discharged functions similar to those of their superior name-sakes. But on more than one occasion the three offices were vested in one and the same person. In some cases at least, these appointments were made by the diwan and one may assume that the officers thus appointed were responsible to him.

Besides these officers in charge of financial and general administration, some others deserve special mention. One was the qazi, the law-officer and judge, who not merely judged cases, but also registered sales. Another was the kotwal, the police-chief. A third was the sadr, the officer in charge of ecclesiastical grants, who, interestingly enough, is never
mentioned in the *Baharistan*, but features prominently in the list of oppressive officers in a later work,—the continuation of the *Fathyya-i-Ibriyah*. From the information at our disposal, it is difficult to say definitely whether a *qazi* and a *kotwal* were posted in every town. But it seems fairly certain that every important town and outpost had a *kotwali chabutara*. Then, there were the *kroris*, revenue-collectors in charge of particular areas and their subordinate staff of official and semi-official functionaries. Lastly, there were the imperial *mansabdars*, *ahadis* and *subahdars’* officers without any specific office, but called upon to discharge various functions as the need might arise from time to time. Their chief duties, however, seem to have consisted in participation in campaigns and in the establishment of peaceful administration. A numerous host of clerical and menial staff, characteristic of the Mughal administration everywhere, were attached to the different departments of government. They, along with hired labourers, attended to the smooth working of the many wheels of the administrative machinery.

**V. Viceregal control and the position of local officers.**

In the preceding paragraphs, an attempt has been made to define the structure of Mughal rule in Bengal in the directly administered areas. Here it would be well to take note of some aspects of the actual working of the system. At the top was the *subahdar* who enjoyed a practical monopoly of initiative with regard to the formulation of administrative policy within the limits set by the imperial regulations. In him was also vested the ultimate authority as regards the actual execution of this policy. In other words, so long as he was not violating the laws of the empire, every officer in the province was obliged to accept his control. As Abul-Fazl put it somewhat vaguely. “He is the vicegerent of His Majesty. The troops and people of the province are under his orders and their welfare depends upon his just administration”. Only in the very important domain of finance the *diwan* had a similar monopoly of power, and thereby enjoyed with the *subahdar* a co-ordinate authority. Thus in theory,—and to some extent in practice,—power in the Mughal *subah* of Bengal was centralised in the hands of the *subahdar* and his associates.
But then, it was so only to some extent. When a new territory was conquered, it was the commanding officer of the conquering troops rather than the viceroy, who proved to be the master of the situation. In most cases, *thanas* with garrisons were set up to attend to the primary duty of maintenance of law and order. In others, the viceroy might entrust the administration of a region to some trustworthy officer who would deal with the local situation in his own way. Thus, ‘after the submission of Pratapaditya... the administration of the territory of Jessore was assigned to Ghiyas Khan’. At about the same time, Saiyid Hakim and others were left in charge of Bakla. But often again, the officer who conquered or pacified a territory appointed his own men to take charge of the locality. On the submission of the *zamindars* of *pargana*, Jahanabad, Mirza Nathan sent his elder brother as the *faujdar* of that region and concluded the necessary arrangements with the *zamindars* on his own initiative. On the surrender of Bayizid Karrani and his brothers, Shaykh Kamal left a number of imperial officers in Sylhet under the command of Mubariz Khan, and the administration of the country was entrusted to one of his own trusted officers. Mirza Yusuf Barlas, after he had ‘brought most of the *parganas* of Dakhinkul under his general control’, himself ‘began to collect revenue’. Whatever the formal administrative regulations might have been, it appears that the officers in charge of particular territories first sought to establish order. That primary task accomplished, they next turned their attention to collection of revenue, either through their own men, or through a *krori*, appointed either by the provincial government or by themselves. In one instance at least the *faujdar* was himself the *krori*. During our period there is little evidence of any further activity on the part of the government in the *pargana* or the *sarkar*, excepting of course such functions as were discharged by the *qazi* and the *kotwal*.

Among the directly administered areas we have also to take note of the officers’ *jagirs*. Here, the particular officers were apparently the sole authorities and the administration of such territories seems to have been carried on exclusively by the officers’ men.

Normally, it may be said, there was little interference with the activities of the local officers. The evidence of silence on
this point is sufficiently convincing. More positive testimony is also available. Ibrahim Khan took steps against the inefficient sardar of Jessore only when the Firingi raids assumed dangerous proportions due to the officer’s negligence. And the people of Khuntaghat rebelled repeatedly against their oppressive officers, as the provincial government did little to check their oppression. In the jagirs, the officers’ authority was absolute to an even greater degree. Except for transfers,—which, however, were often frequent.—we do not read of any interference on part of the provincial government in the administration of such territories. The transfers also were due either to reasons of administrative convenience or to wire-pullings and other personal factors. In any case, these had little reference to the internal administration of the jagirs, where a transfer only meant a new master and his new staff of subordinates. The mild or oppressive character of the jagir administration depended, we may assume, entirely on the temperament of the particular officer holding a jagir.

It is not true to say, however, that the administration in the sarkars and parganas was carried on by the officers posted there quite independently of the subahdar. Cases of interference were indeed neither frequent nor normal. Perhaps this was so because from the point of view of the government,—which is to be distinguished from the point of view of the people,—the officers generally kept themselves within the prescribed limits. In case such limits were overstepped, retribution was not slow to come. Leaving one’s post without the governor’s orders was, for instance, considered a reprehensible offence and might be punished by confiscation of jagirs and even by imprisonment. Withholding of government revenue called for sterner measures, and one officer, Ibrahim Krori, guilty of such delinquency, eventually rebelled to save himself from severe punishment. Even the semi-independent ‘Musundulim’ of Hijli, Manrique informs us, readily agreed to give full satisfaction to the viceroy, when the latter demanded his share of the dues from Portuguese ships. Occasionally, complaints from the ryots might also lead to punishment, but a timely word put in by an influential friend at the court would save the oppressor. Possibilities of dismissal and the practice of transfer constituted another check on the activities of the officer. An officer might
be transferred either from his office or from his jagir to another one. Among the other methods of central control may be mentioned the occasional inspection of the officers’ muster roll by agents of the provincial pay-master-general (bakhshi-i-kul). Besides, the viceroy had regular and constant contact with the subah’s expanding frontiers as also with the forces operating in the rebellious parts of the country. “It was the practice of Islam Khan to send reinforcements one after another to the help of the imperialists, from the day the army was sent till the conquest was achieved.”

The same subahdar received the news of the attack on Dhubri through his kotwal, “who came there a few days before the war and returned after it”. It was also the usual practice of the subahdars to regularly secure correct information regarding the valour and services of the officers at the front and send reports to the imperial court. Promotions and honours were granted on the basis of such reports.

VI. Territories under the local chiefs.

A very considerable part of the territory of Bengal continued, for all practical purposes, to be governed by the native rulers,—both Hindus and Afghans. More than three decades of almost continuous warfare brought their political independence to an end. But their administrative autonomy was little affected. Many of these zamindars, some of the bara bhuiyas in particular, were no doubt upstarts who had grabbed territories during the period of transition from Afghan to Mughal rule. But this statement perhaps does not apply to a large number of the zamindar families of the early Mughal days. For many of them were hereditary lords of the land,—descendants of various princelings who had carved out petty kingdoms for themselves during one or other of the troubled periods in pre-Mughal Bengal. Some of them could surely trace back the early beginnings of their power even to the Hindu period. The Malla Rajas of Vana Vishnupura have a history going back to the seventh century A.D. The Rajas of Shushang, as also some other Varendra Brahmin families of Mymensingh, similarly established their power in that outlying part of Bengal towards the close of the Hindu period. Many more, to be sure, can trace back their history to the 15th and the 14th centuries, as a study of the
district histories, often based on more or less dependable local traditions, family records and caste annals, shows quite clearly. Of the bhuiyas too at least one, viz., the bhuiya of Chandradwipa was no mere upstart of the period of transition.

Till 1594, as we have seen, many of these princelings enjoyed not only administrative autonomy but, for all practical purposes, political independence as well. Thereafter, Man Singh subjugated the greater part of Bengal, defeated the bhuiyas in battle and annexed the territory of one of them,—Kedar Rai of Sripur. The rest were brought under the Mughal yoke by Islam Khan. Towards the bhuiyas, Islam Khan followed a more or less uniform policy. Parts of their territories,—the whole in case of Jessore,—were directly annexed and the rest was nominally restored to them as their jagir. Their flotillas were seized, and in some cases no part of their lands were directly annexed in view of this seizure. They were made to accept vassalage of the empire and also drafted into imperial service as mansabdars. Further, they were placed under surveillance and forced to attend personally at the subahdar's court. Some of them were also sent to the imperial court, apparently for a short period. Thus the semi-independent princelings were all reduced to the position of jagirdars or subordinate zamindars. Some also became officers of the Mughal empire.

How were the territories of the zamindars governed during their period of surveillance? This is a question which can be answered only vaguely in the present state of our knowledge. We are to remember, in the first place, that the restoration of territories in the form of jagir was not always nominal. Nor were all the zamindars drafted into imperial service or placed under surveillance. This seems to have been particularly true of the zamindars of West Bengal. The zamindars of Birbhum, Pachet, Hijli and Chandrakona, for instance, retained their independence to a sufficient degree to be able to rebel during Qasim Khan's viceroyalty, while the unruly activities of Bir Bhan of Chandrakona necessitated an expedition as late as 1617. The petty zamindars of Barda and Jhakra in Midnapore who submitted to Nathan during Islam Khan's rule also retained their territories as jagirs and were allowed to return, only a minor being "kept in . . . service." The Rasikamangala of Gopijanavallabha Dasa
describes the semi-independent status of one Balabhadrada Dasa of Hijli in the early part of the 17th century. In East Bengal, too, those who became willing partisans of the imperialists, e.g., Raja Raghunatha of Shushang, were allowed to continue as before on their acceptance of vassalage. The temporary forfeiture of personal liberty was then, apparently, a measure directed against the turbulent bhuiyas and such other zamindars of Bhati who offered a stiff resistance and were likely to cause further trouble. The rest, so long as they observed the terms of the vassalage, were probably left undisturbed in the government of their estates.

As to the administration of the territories of the bhuiyas, information supplied casually by Nathan is of some significance. "Islam Khan", he tells us, "assigned as much of the territories of Rama Chandra to him as was necessary for the maintenance of his fleet; the rest was given to the krois and jagirdars". Elsewhere we are informed that Sayid Hakim and his brothers were put in charge of Bakla. From these two statements one fact clearly emerges: a part of Rama Chandra's territory was to be directly administered by Mughal officers — krois and jagirdars, — under the supervision of some higher officials; the other part was evidently not to be so administered. Now let us consider the case of Sylhet, after the submission of Bayizid Karrani and his fellow Afghan chiefs. Here, the procedure was much simpler. The Afghans were feted and feasted all night and laid under the burden of being true to the salt. But no pretence of restoration of their territories was made. They, on the contrary, were to be sent to the imperial court and the administration of Sylhet was entrusted to one of Shaykh Kamal's officers and a number of imperial officers under Mubariz Khan were left there with the object of preserving law and order. Jessore, after the fall of Pratapaditya, was similarly administered. To Musa Khan and the bhuiyas generally, a third type of treatment was meted out. While they were drafted into imperial service and put under surveillance, "the estate of each of them was given to them as jagir for their maintenance". On the basis of a comparison of these three types of treatment, a conclusion as to the manner in which the jagir of the zamindars under surveillance was administered seems authorised: In so far as the political, and even personal liberty of these zamindars was curtailed, the
restoration of territories was indeed nominal; but since Nathan clearly mentions the appointment of officers and revenue-collectors to territories directly annexed and remains silent as regards the internal administration of the territories restored, we are left to assume that they continued to be governed as before and administered by the zamindars' men as representatives of their absentee masters.

With the introduction of Ibrahim Khan's policy of reconciliation and his release of political prisoners the anomaly mentioned above came to an end. A more or less uniform relationship was now established between the Mughal government and the zamindars who now became full-fledged vassals of the empire. The restoration of territories now was no longer nominal but real. Meanwhile, another peculiar development is said to have taken place. In place of the bhuiyas who had either fallen in their struggle with the Mughals or whose estates had been divided among others, numerous taluks and petty zamindaries had come into being. Now all these various landlords apparently came to enjoy the same privileges as the older houses. The agreement between the Mughal administration and the landlords was a simple one. The documents in the possession of many old zamindar families,—supposing of course that these are genuine,—clarify the nature of this relationship. Though these documents mostly belong to a period slightly later than the one under review, there is nothing to indicate that they reflect any changed circumstances. A farman from Shahjahan, for instance, called upon the mansabdars, jagirdars, chaudhuris and qamungos to acknowledge the Raja of Narayangarh as the zamindar of the locality and let him enjoy his customary rights without interference. The zamindar, in return, was required to be punctilious in his remittances of revenue and to look after the welfare of the people. Letters from Prince Shuja during his subahdarship to the Raja of Shushang refer to similar rights of the Raja and also to his obligation to regularly send agar wood and ivory as peshkash. Khilats and horses were sent regularly in token of the emperor's kindness to his vassals. Services rendered by the zamindars to the imperial cause either as mansabdars or as vassals constituted yet another link. The bhuiyas, as mansabdars, helped in conquest and pacification. The bhuiyas of Chandradwip and the Thakurtas of Banaripara fought the Maghs and
Firingis on behalf of the Mughals and received hissajat and nowara lands in return. Though the imperial farmans mention multifarious duties, it seems fairly certain that only non-payment of revenue, rebellion or the subahdar’s ill-will might lead to loss of a zamindary or, in fact, to interference in any other form. For nowhere do we read of any direct intervention in the internal administration of such estates. It was only when a zamindar like Chandrabhan became odious to the people of the neighbourhood and a menace to law and order, that steps were taken to assert governmental authority. Succession was practically hereditary, though the form of fresh investiture at successions was there.

So within their estates, the zamindars enjoyed autonomy in the truest sense of the term. Grant’s generalisation regarding the power of the zamindars in Bengal towards the close of Muslim rule and, to some extent, throughout the Mughal period, may be accepted as being largely correct in view of other contemporary evidence. The zamindars, “as native guardians of the public peace and private rights,” he tells us, “relieved their ignorant, voluptuous Mussulman rulers from the intricate troublesome detail of internal police, and management of Mofussil Collections”. The uncomplimentary adjectives are hardly applicable to the pioneers of Mughal rule in Bengal, nor is it correct to say that in our period police and revenue administrations of the whole subah were left to the zamindars. But with regard to such matters, they were almost certainly the masters of the situation within their estates. In the literature of the period, even the small zamindars appear as Rajas, omnipotent within their territories, while the representatives of the imperial power seem to be a distant reality hardly intruding into the zamindars’ sphere of influence. Describing the state of administration in Jessore as the British found it on taking over, Westland gives us an account very similar to that of Grant. The zamindars at this stage are described as ‘contractors for the general administration’. “The duties of police were in their hands, and they had to keep up police establishments”. They, or rather their subordinates, also “had a good deal to do with the adjudication of petty disputes, whether of a criminal or of a civil nature”. There are reasons to suppose that in the period under review, the zamindars enjoyed similar powers within their
particular territories, though not in the province as a whole. When Murshid Quli tried to reorganise the finances of Bengal, he merely put the zamindars under a binding obligation to pay their revenues regularly. Even this sole mark of bondage had apparently been ignored in the preceding years, when Mughal authority is supposed to have been most firmly entrenched in Bengal. Is it too much to suppose, then, specially in view of the supporting evidence, that during the first stormy half-century of Mughal rule, the Bengal zamindars who became willing partisans of the conquering power were left free to administer their estates in their own fashion with a monopoly of police and judicial functions? In the days of the devout Aurangzeb, a Muslim appellant from Shushang to the imperial court was referred back,—a letter in the possession of the Shushang Raj family tells us,—to the Hindu Raja of his home district, so that justice might be done on the spot. Surely in the earlier epoch such appeals were rare, and even if any were at all made to the court at Agra or at Dacca, one may well wonder whether they were not similarly referred back to the local princeling for adjudication.

The autonomy exercised by the zamindars in internal affairs was hardly always beneficial to the common man. Local traditions and family histories are full of lurid tales of zamindars' oppression, many of which date back to the early days of Mughal rule. The Chaudhuris of Nawapara, Baidya zamindars who obtained possession of some of Kedar Ray's villages, to mention only one instance, are said to have grown proverbially oppressive and turned 750 families into their slaves (nafars) with no interference from the ruling power, so that the local people were obliged to organise resistance with some leading families at their head. It was only in the days of Sarfaraz Khan that, after long generations of suffering and strife, the provincial government intervened directly, and put an end to this oppression.

The depredations caused by the zamindars often over-stepped the limits of their own frontiers, and the instance of Chandra-bhan is not the only one in point. The perpetual conflicts between the various princelings which marked the pre-Mughal period of Bengal's history were truly at an end. But outbursts of the old lawless spirit were still not very infrequent. The
zamindars of Bagri and Bishnupur in the Midnapore district continued their mutual struggles to the very end of the seventeenth century. In Jahangir's reign, Nathan regretfully informs us, "Raja Satrajit (of Bhushana) the vassal zamindar was in the habit of molesting friendly chiefs." Thus for the numerous Bengal ryots and other classes of people living under the zamindars, the transition from Turko-Afghan to Mughal rule was a political one in the main. The administrative changes following in its wake,—the mighty machinery of Mughal centralisation,—altered their lives but little.

VII. Administration of Revenue in directly administered areas.

No account of Bengal's administrative set-up under the Mughals can be complete without a description of the revenue arrangements. For in those days, when governmental activities were necessarily limited in scope, it was at this point that the administration touched the life of the people most directly.

The starting point in our study of the revenue history of Bengal under the Mughals is the meagre account in Abul Fazl's Ain-i-Akbari. "The demands of each year," it runs, "are paid by instalments in eight months, they (the ryots) themselves bringing mohurs and rupees to the appointed place for the receipt of revenue, as the division of grain between the government and the husbandman is not here customary. The harvests are always abundant, measurement is not insisted upon, and the revenue demands are determined by estimate of the crop. His majesty in his goodness has confirmed this custom". From this brief account we learn, first, of the payment of the annual 'demands' in eight monthly instalments. The Baharistan however refers to two collections a year following the two harvests in autumn and spring. Secondly, we are told of the payments being made in cash, and that directly to the government. The last mentioned fact can, of course, refer only to the directly administered parts of the Khalisa lands. Finally, there follows the most important information that the method of crop-estimation, not measurement, was current in this province. But it may as well be noted here that though measurement was 'not insisted upon', it was not entirely unknown either. The statement that Nathan's men went to 'survey and inspect the
villages’ in Tajpur-Purnea may be a casual slip of the pen,—understandable in a man familiar with the upper Indian custom of survey and measurement,—or even a vague reference to the method of crop-estimation itself, for it is the only statement of its kind occurring in the Baharistan. But Mukundarama’s woeful tale of the oppressive shiqdar who measured 15 cottahs to a bigha cannot perhaps be explained in any such way. So we are left to conclude that, while in most of the areas the system of crop-estimation was current, in some at least, that of survey and measurement was also in vogue.

The Government’s income was derived from two main sources. Of these, land (mal) of course was the more important one. The other was known by the general name of sair duties, ‘arising from a variety of imposts chiefly on personal property’. As to the land arrangement, the total taxable area may be said to have been divided into three broad classes. First, there was the Khalsa sharifa, or the crown-lands directly administered by the revenue department of the provincial government. Secondly, there were the assignments or jagirs granted to officers for their maintenance. These two types, however, seem to have often overlapped each other. Thirdly, there were the lands of the zamindars or semi-independent chiefs, often formally conferred on them as their assignments. In most cases, these lands were but only such as the zamindars themselves possessed at the time of their acceptance of vassalage. Besides these, there were also the rent-free lands granted for various reasons. But such lands, in practice, formed parts of one or other of the three classes mentioned above.

The khalisa lands might be administered for revenue purposes either directly by the officers of the government or leased out to revenue-farmers known as mustajirs. In either case, the revenue realised from these lands was to go to the imperial court. The part of the khalisa land directly managed by the state might again be administered in one of two alternative ways. The collections might be made either through the kroris and faujdars or the lands might be entrusted to individual officers and receipts taken for the same. The receipts apparently implied the officers’ responsibility for collection of the amounts shown in the tumar. Nathan further informs us that “whatever (revenue) falls short in the crown-lands (khalisa) must be
written in the name of some one." It may either imply the joint responsibility of the officers administering crown-lands or, what is more probable, the obligation of particular officers to pay up any deficit in collection. The initial arrangements for revenue collection were made either by the officer who conquered or was charged with the pacification of a locality or by the diwan of the particular area in question. Assessment and preparation of a rent-roll (muskha) were necessarily the primary tasks of the diwan or the officer charged with revenue-management of a locality. An officer, assisted no doubt by a subordinate staff, would be sent to prepare the rent-roll or register of revenues. The ideal register was to be prepared on the basis of "an estimate of the revenues" with the consent of the ryots and to the advantage of the imperial treasury. It was to be signed by the qamungos and the qabuliyats (deeds or agreement) of the chaudhuris were to be enclosed with it. The register thus prepared would be kept in the government record-office in charge of the accountants of the officer concerned, to be enforced on the ryots and the jagirdars. On the rent-roll being prepared, the diwan or the officer in charge divided the territory into 'well-defined circles' (chakla) and entrusted one part of the lands to mustujirs and the other to kroris and faujdars. The division of revenue-paying territories into well-defined circles does not, however, seem to have been universally practised. In any case, 'necessary arrangements for each' of the collectors were made, implying apparently that everyone of them had to enter into agreements individually with the government regarding collections. Of the officers appointed by the government for the purpose, the krori was the chief. Evidently his duties no longer corresponded to the literal implication of his designation (viz., collector in charge of an artificial revenue-circle yielding one crore of dams), but were far more general in character. He appears in our sources simply as the chief revenue-collector of a region. Shaykh Ibrahim was appointed krori for the whole country of Kamrup. Following the establishment of a thana in Rangalikhata, a junior mansabdar received this appointment for the region. But a number of kroris might also be appointed for a particular locality, perhaps one for each chakla, where such divisions were introduced.

Of the subordinate staff of official and semi-official functionaries
who assisted in the collection of revenue, three deserve special mention: First, there was the *karkun* or registrar of the collection of revenues, an employee of the government, apparently associated with the *krori*. Secondly, there were the *ganungos*, a hereditary class of local assessors who assisted the government in the preparation of the rent-roll. Thirdly, there were the *chaudhuris*, or village headmen whose *gabuliyyats* accompanying the *nuskha* suggest that in some cases at least collections were made through them, and not directly by the government officers from the ryots. The revenue arrangement in Bakla, where a part of the territory was entrusted to *kroris* and *chaudhuris*, further indicates that this was really the case. Evidence of direct payment, found in *Ain* as also in the *Baharistan*, however, disproves quite clearly the theory put forward by Moreland that collections were made through farmers and village headmen only. Besides, the *gabuliyyats*, like the *ganungos’* signatures, might also be meant merely to testify to the correctness of the rent-roll and incidentally to the obligation of the villagers to abide by its terms. To these three classes of men associated with revenue-collection, we are to add of course, the ubiquitous *mutasuddis* or accountants. The latter, however, were associated not merely with revenue-collection, but other branches of administration as well. Occasionally, we also hear of soldiers assisting the collectors, specially in the newly conquered territories. As Moreland correctly guessed, the accuracy of the rent-roll and revenue accounts in general could not be accepted merely on the good faith of assessors and officers. The *mutasuddis*, it appears, were entrusted with the task of checking the accounts though occasionally special parties might also be secretly sent to check the authenticity of rent-rolls. This complex machinery, with all its ramifications, was not however everywhere in operation. In an unsettled region, or in a newly-annexed one, the chief officer on the spot would proceed to collect revenue on his own initiative and deal with the situation as he thought best, in complete disregard of all elaborate paraphernalia. The usual machinery, in its entirety or in parts, might be introduced at once in such places. But oftener perhaps the officer and his men would remain content with collecting the dues from the farmers, the *chaudhuris* and the ryots with the solitary aid of the soldiers.
A fact of special interest is that the *diwan* or *krori* in a particular locality might, and actually did, introduce changes in the revenue assessment of the *parganahs* under him apparently without any fresh inquiry. Charging the allowance of the *paiks* or archers to the rent-roll of the ryots, seems to have been a common form of extortion. It has to be added, however, that when such enhancements fomented serious discontent, the root of the trouble would be removed and the detested officer transferred to some other office.

The *mustajirs*, or revenue farmers, also enjoyed considerable independence in the matter of revenue collection. Deeds of acceptance were taken for the *parganahs* given to them. This practice surely implied that they undertook to pay specific sums to the government in accordance with the *tunar*, or some rough estimate, where the *tunar* was not available. Following such agreement, the *mustajirs* would take possession of the *parganahs* 'after making a slight increase in the rent,' and would also think 'of increasing it more for their own benefit and expense'. Since we may well assume that the amounts they agreed to pay to the government corresponded to the sums payable by the ryots on the basis of crop-estimates, such enhancements were only natural. It was even more natural that these fostered discontent. But nowhere do our sources refer to any governmental interference with the activities of the *mustajirs*. The discontent of the ryots of Jahangirabad, due to the tax enhancements for which the *mustajirs* were at least as much responsible as the *diwan*, led to the removal of the latter alone. Thus it would appear, that so long as the revenue-farmers paid the stipulated sum to the government, they were free to make as much money as they could at the cost of the ryot.

We may next consider the land-arrangements in the *jagirs* granted to the officers. Here, too, a distinction has to be made between the officers' personal *jagirs* and those granted for the maintenance of their soldiers or for such specific purposes as the upkeep of the flotilla (*nowara* lands). Nathan's father, for instance, received 22 *mahals* of Bhati and Ghoraghat as his personal *jagir*, and several *parganahs* of Orissa, Midnapore and Burdwan 'in lieu of the salaries of his men'. The latter were parcelled out among the soldiers and their officers and,
apparently, were enjoyed as rent-free service tenures like the paikan lands of a later epoch. Special arrangements were made in the parganahs for the maintenance of the workers and officers of the fleet. The exact nature of these arrangements is not quite clear. It may however be assumed that parts of such lands were parcelled out among the workers and officers while in other parts direct collection of revenue was current.

The management of the personal jagirs was more complicated. Practically all the references to the topic in the earlier part of Baharistan mention arrangements for collection being made personally by the officer. Nathan's father, Ihtimam Khan, for instance, sent his personal assistant, Mohammad Murad, to make the necessary arrangements for his personal jagir. The latter 'appointed revenue collectors in different places', 'despatched two efficient regiments to two important places', and also instructed the latter 'to help the revenue collectors'. In the viceroyalty of Ibrahim Khan, Nathan similarly 'sent his diwan Ray Balabhadra Das in order to regulate the revenue and administrative affairs' of his jagirs. But in the latter part of Baharistan, particularly in the chapters dealing with the period of Shahjahan's usurpation, a different type of arrangement is mentioned. Even in the days of Ibrahim Khan, we find Nathan demanding the revenue of the parganah Khuntaghat, granted to him as his jagir in lieu of his services, from the provincial diwan. During Shahjahan's short-lived usurpation of power, Sher Khan Fath-Jang complained that he was not receiving his allowance from the jagir of Ghoraghat and was allowed to send hundred horsemen to help the revenue-officers in collecting revenue. At about the same time Nathan accepted the jagir of Tajpur-Purnea on condition that he would be allowed "to go there personally to punish the zamindars and to make them obedient". Evidently, all these instances refer to an arrangement whereby the collections in the parganahs assigned as jagirs to officers were made by government collectors and the income as estimated beforehand, made over to the officers concerned. If the officer concerned doubted the accuracy of the assessment, he might ask for a fresh inquiry. Any surplus apparently went to the government exchequer, being charged 'on the rent-roll'. Deficits of course had to be borne by the officers as their personal losses. One wonders
whether this arrangement records a change which gradually came in or whether it was co-existent with the other system under which the officers themselves made arrangements for collection in their personal jagirs. A reference to grant of assignment on revenue of particular parganahs is, however, found as early as the days of Islam Khan, who granted Raja Pratapaditya “the revenue of the districts of Sripur and Bikrampur in lieu of his allowance”. To be sure, the actual revenue-collection of these regions was not entrusted to Pratapaditya. But, then, no such arrangements are mentioned so early with reference to any imperial officer. In the later days an extremely complicated system was in vogue under which two sets of officials,—the shiqdars and amlas of the jagirdars and the government collectors,—operated in the same area, entailing endless sufferings on the people. The beginning of this oppressive system may be noted in some of the instances mentioned above. Another evil, mentioned as being much current in the later days, viz., ‘multiplicity of co-partners’, first appear in the period under review. During Shahjahan’s usurpation an officer was sent to secure some money from the jagir of Ghoraghat already assigned to another officer, Sher Khan Fath-Jang. The fact that the estates were scattered involved enormous cost in collection and thus proved to be extremely uneconomic. The frequent transfer of jagirs from one officer to another also entailed a great deal of suffering on the officers. In cases where the collections were made by the officers’ own men, the transfers no doubt involved a certain amount of dislocation of the machinery of revenue collection, as one set of revenue staff was replaced by another on such occasions. In some cases, however, continuity of administration was maintained, at least parts of the father’s jagirs being conferred on the son. Incidentally, the system of transfer detracted from the officer’s interest in the welfare of the ryots, and collection of the maximum possible amount became inevitably their sole concern.

VIII. Revenue arrangements in the lands under the zamindars.

The zamindars enjoyed a tenure, much more stable than that of the officers’ jagirs. Theoretically, from the viewpoint of
land-revenue, the zamindars came to occupy the same position as the officers. For as vassals of the empire,—and often they were mansabdars as well,—their estates also were termed jagirs like the estates of the officers. Usually, when they accepted vassalage, their territories were given back to them as their jagirs, occasionally with some deductions. The analogy between the two types of tenure in our period practically ends there. Within their domains, the zamindars managed the revenue affairs just as they pleased, without any interference from the government. To the government the zamindars paid a peshkash or tribute, in cash and kind, the amount of which might have been fixed in some cases. In the sarkar Sulaimanabad, the Ain informs us, the receipts from independent taluqdar amounted to 213,067 dams. With this exception,—and whether the Ain really refers here to fixed cash demands is not certain,—host wa bud jama or fixed cash demands are nowhere mentioned with reference to zamindars in our period. Nor, apparently, were the lands belonging to the zamindars assessed. They were, however, expected to be regular in the payment of their tribute.

A number of verses in Mukundurama’s Chandimangala describing the settlement of Gujrat, the kingdom of the legendary hero Kalaketu, throw some light on the actual relationship between the tenant and the zamindars. From these it would appear that the actual tiller of the soil would have to pay the rent, not on the basis of the area of land he cultivated, but roughly according to the number of ploughs used for tilling it. These might have been, however, the case only in some instances. Precise demarcation of the plots of land seems to have been in vogue. The system of giving patta formally acknowledging the ryots’ tenancy right, was also current, probably supplemented by the usual procedure of taking gabuliyais or deeds of agreement from the ryot in return. Often, to induce the prospective tenant, and perhaps also as an ordinary practice, loans would be advanced to the ryots, particularly in the form of such implements of agriculture as cattle and seeds. In these cases, the zamindar appeared in the role of money-lender or mahajan. One passage, it would seem, refers to the custom of granting sub-tenures. The Kayasthas who are described as having come to Kalaketu’s kingdom,—‘all educated men’ and apparently not the actual tillers of the soil,—asked for
agricultural loans and promised in return to settle with hundred thousand families of tenants. The passage can almost surely be taken to mean that certain classes of people settled their own tenants on lands taken from the zamindars, and that they constituted a rent-receiving interest.

Besides the main land-tax already mentioned, the zamindars levied numerous extra imposts. The practice of paying bhett or tribute, consisting usually in foodstuffs and such other things, must have been a very common one. The dealers in different articles would regularly present their wares to the zamindar. It may be assumed also, that the people of various professions given rent-free lands would have to pay back in terms of service. At the time of the first settlement, a lump sum, called salami had to be paid. Special dues were also payable at the time of ceremonics and festivals, under the general name of parvani. And besides, constant additions were apparently made to the burden of the poor tenant, particularly in the form of imposts in cash or kind on sales of such articles as betel-nut, salt and even rice or paddy. Besides the zamindars' men would habitually take without payment their 'tola', i.e., share of the tenants' merchandise, from the local market. Even worse would be the lot of the ryot, when the zamindar appeared in the role of the ruthless money-lender. As already noted, advances were often made by the zamindars to promote cultivation. Often, again, it seems, the ryot would have to pay back with interest, and his crop might be seized as soon as the corn in the field was ready for harvest, lest the debtor-tenant should escape without paying. Even such natural calamities as flood, etc., with their disastrous effects on the standing crop, would not always secure remission of taxes, and dire punishments might befall the ryot in cases of failure to pay. But it may also be assumed that the 'te-sani inam' or triennial remission mentioned so wistfully by Mukundarama, or at least remission for a more limited period, was occasionally granted by the zamindar in his own interest. For when oppression exceeded a certain limit, there was always the danger of the ryots running away to some other locality. The zamindars' self-interest, combined with a certain amount of lassitude inherent in zamindari administration, surely protected the ryot to some extent and relieved him from the rigours of punctual payment. Even in the estate of a landlord less noble
than Kalaketu, the payment of the tenants' dues in instalments in course of three years, was not perhaps impossible.

IX. Rent-free lands.

We may now take note of the rent-free lands in passing. As previously mentioned, such lands might be found within all the three categories: the crownlands, the officers' jagirs and the zamindars' estates. At a later date the government grants were known as badshahi and the zamindars' grants as 'hukumi'. This distinction in nomenclature might have existed even in our period. In all these cases again, the lands might be granted either as religious endowments or as service-tenures. The Muslim religious endowments in the crownlands known as madad-i-maash and aimā were placed under the supervision of the provincial sadr. The stipends of the soldiers were granted in the form of land-allocations and these to be sure, were rent-free. The Fathiyya (continuation), however, mentions the grant of assignments on the revenue of particular jagirs, and not actual grants of land. Certain facts indicate that the government granted rent-free lands to the zamindars as well, in view of some particularly meritorious services. Correspondence dating back to the late 18th century, preserved in the Barisal district collectorate, mentions two types of rent-free tenures in the possession of some zamindars, called nowara and hissajat lands. The former is described as having been granted by the Mughal emperors for contribution of boats and men during the struggles with the Maghs and Firingis. The hissajat lands were granted as reward for the zamindars' personal participation in such campaigns. Since the struggle raged furiously in S. E. Bengal during the period under review, it may be supposed that some of these grants at least were made then.

Besides, there were the various rent-free tenures granted by the zamindars to some people for their religious merit (e.g. Brahmans and Vaishnavas) as also to certain occupational groups, who performed essential services. Among the occupational groups enjoying inam lands are mentioned fishermen, oil-manufacturers, mat-makers, Bagdis, tailors, carpenters, ferrymen, minstrels, milkmen, cobblers, weavers, agradanis and a number of others. But it does not seem very likely that
all the members of these various groups were everywhere exempt from all types of payments.

X. Sair duties.

As to the sair duties, Grant in his Political Survey mentions seven types of imposts as being current in Bengal under Mughal rule. These are 'mahsool' or 'customs in exports and imports'; 'rahdarry', an inland toll collected at road-side stations or chowkis 'on account of merchandise, grain and all the necessaries of life, carried to market'; 'panderry', i.e., tax on shops of workmen and retail merchants in towns, and temporary stalls at pilgrim fairs; 'mholoreffa', on artificers and manufacturers; 'Ferroay Foujdarry', i.e., 'produce of fines, confiscations' and, lastly, 'chout, or fourth of the sums litigated in the civil courts', besides, jiziya, which was in abeyance throughout the empire in the days of Akbar and Jahangir. Grant's statements are corroborated directly or indirectly by our contemporary sources. Income from sair duties in one form or other is mentioned repeatedly in the statistics of the sarkars of the Bengal subah, as given in the Ain. Describing the condition of Bengal before Shaista Khan introduced his very necessary reforms, Shihabuddin Talish stated with regret: "From the first occupation of India and its ports by the Muhammadans to the end of Shah Jahan's reign, it was a rule and practice to exact hasil (custom) from every trader, from the rose-vendor down to the clay-vendor, from the weaver of fine linen to that of coarse cloth". In fact all 'artificers, tradesmen and new-comers (Khush-nashin, i.e., well-to-do) were subject to it. Secondly, there were the house-taxes collected from newcomers and hucksters. Thirdly, the zakat, 1/40 of the income, was charged on travellers, merchants and stable-keepers. The parganah of Kora in sarkar Ghoraghat yielded 18,000 dams as zakat dues. Fourthly, the rah-dari became a great nuisance, at least towards the later part of Mughal rule. To quote once more the somewhat exaggerated words of Talish, "On the roads and ferries matters came to such a pass that no rider was allowed to go unless he paid a dinar, and no pedestrian unless he paid a diram. On the river highways, if the wind brought it to the ears of the toll-collectors (rah-dars) that the stream was carrying away a broken boat without paying hasil, they would
chain the river. . . . They considered it an act of unparalleled leniency if no higher zakat was taken from rotten clothes actually worn than from mended rags, and a deed of extreme graciousness if cooked food was charged with a lower duty than uncooked grains”. The shop dues and market dues are also mentioned in the Ain along with various types of sair duties levied on a variety of objects ranging from elephants and salt-pits to undried ginger. “Dues on produce and piscary of rivers, tanks, etc.” mentioned in the Ain, also comes under this head. The impost on betel-nuts at Bakla yielded a considerable sum. At Dacca, Manrique found Rs. 4,000.00 being collected daily as dues from betel. Talish describes a despicable practice as having been long in existence in several parganahs: “When any man, ryot or newcomer, died without leaving any son, all his property including his wife and daughter was taken possession of by the department of the crownlands, or the jagirdar or zamindar who had such power and this custom was called unkura (-hooking)”. The judicial system also gave much scope for extortion. The clerks of the kotwali chabutara, “in paying to the claimant his due,” used to seize for the state one-fourth of it under the name of “fee for exertion.” What is more curious and almost incredible, the plaintiff and the defendant were both ‘kept in prison until the decision of their case’, ‘and their liberators (itlaq-goian) took daily fees from the prisoners and paid them into the state’. It is not certain, however, whether the two last mentioned practices can be traced back to our period. All these various imposts were in vogue in the officers’ jagirs as well as in the crownlands. From the jagir of Shaista Khan alone 15 lakhs of rupees used to be collected as hasil. When to this formidable list we add those extra imposts mentioned in Chandimangala, Talish’s statement that at last “tradesmen and merchants gave up their business, householders took to exile,” hardly appears to be an exaggeration.

XI. The blessings of Mughal rule.

The extortionate character of some aspects of the revenue administration need not blind us to the very real benefits conferred by Mughal rule on the people of this province. After long years of bitter useless strife, Bengal by 1613 found peace in a comparative, if not in an absolute sense. This was the first
and the most important gift of Mughal rule to Bengal. The province was now included into the general pattern of Pax Mughalia which already covered the greater part of India. Though the authority of the emperor in all its implications was not imposed on this province, central control was now firmly established. Within the framework of imperial government, the people were brought into a closer touch with North Indian life than they had been ever before. Within the country, the authority of a single political power was now acknowledged from one end to the other. For the common mass of men, it meant the end of the constant squabbles of the petty chiefs and the suffering they brought in their train. Politically, again, the country was firmly unified. The mighty arm of the Mughal emperor was extended to protect this outlying province from the recurrent invasions of the Maghs and the Portuguese. Thanas were set up at strategic points to minister to this particular need.

Mughal rule also brought to Bengal the blessings of a regularised administration. With its graded hierarchy and organisation into departments, the provincial administration of the Mughals brought the highest and the lowest in the land into close contact with the government. The kotwali chabutaras, set up even in the remote districts of the country, furthered the cause of peace and security. If an official proved oppressive, the people now had at least the right of appeal to the provincial authorities. The possibility of redress of grievances was also not entirely precluded.

In the wake of peace and regular administration, there came economic prosperity. By the end of Ibrahim Khan’s viceroyalty, there was considerable improvement in the condition of agriculture, trade and industry. In the courts at Dacca and Agra, were found a new market for the costly fabrics of the Bengal looms. The textile industry was thus directly encouraged. The new peace naturally attracted to this rich province, traders whom the ceaseless strifes of the previous epoch had hitherto discouraged. As the political centre of gravity shifted to the marshy and riverine tracts of the south-east, the arteries of trade were revitalised up to their farthest point. Dacca developed as a great emporium of commerce, and by 1628, was in a state flourishing enough to draw homage from the pen of the much-
travelled Manrique. Evidently, a new era was dawning in the history of Bengal.

**XII. Drawbacks of Mughal rule in Bengal.**

One must not however exaggerate the blessings of Mughal rule. For Bengal under the Mughals,—during the first half century in particular,—was surely no blissful Utopia where peace and prosperity alone reigned supreme. The history of this province between 1575 and 1594 is a sickening tale of recurrent rebellions and fruitless warfares. Ralph Fitch, who visited Bengal in 1587, referred to the troubled state of the land, infested with rebels. Even in 1597, the author of *Ain-i-Akbari* mentioned Isa Khan as the ruler of East Bengal, where the coinage and the *Khusba* were the only vestiges of imperial rule. Even as late as 1616, letters exchanged between Roe and Surat factors refer to the unsuitability of Bengal as a field for English commercial enterprise, partly because of the political insecurity. Even after Mughal authority was established more or less firmly, rebellions continued to occur from time to time almost to the end of our period. A close study of *Baharistan* reveals in gruesome details the full implication of all these wars and rebellions in the life of the common man. Plunder and rape appear as the invariable concomitants of these campaigns, and even a comparatively sensible man like Mirza Nathan boasts of his ruthless exploits. Udayaditya’s failure to satisfy this officer’s lust for gold drew upon the head of the Jessore people a terrible vengeance. He threatened to show “what is meant by looting” and true to his words, wrought such a havoc that he became “an object of great terror to the people of the country”. Yet to be sure, Nathan was more humane than his brother Murad, who during the Jessore campaign brought as captives 4,000 women, old and young, stripped of all their clothes. The imperial armies, while operating in a rebel country, almost invariably took ryots captive and laid waste the cultivated lands with the object of weakening the enemy’s war-effort. The weak and the innocent,—the ryots, the *bepris*, the poor pedestrian on his way to the market,—suffered heavily at the hands of both the parties and died in numbers. In a land where food as also all commodities in general were proverbially cheap, scarcity always followed in the wake of war and prices
shot up sky high. The results are too obvious to require explanation. The expansion of the Mughal frontier brought forth new problems and involved the provincial administration in a prolonged warfare with the neighbouring kingdoms. The unhappy repercussions of these wars on the life of the people,—specially on those living in the frontier regions,—were no doubt considerable.

The Magh and Firingi raids on the coastal districts,—and often further inland,—darkened still more the picture which was even otherwise none too bright. Despite the thanas set up by the Mughal authorities, the Magh raids desolated the entire tract from Chatgaon to Jagdia. Even such important places as Dacca, Bhulua, Sripur, Sondip, Jessore and Bhushana were not spared. The Mughal navy was too inefficient and Mughal rule too weak to prevent these depredations. The Maghs found a proper ally in the Firingi or Portuguese pirates and the two together wrought havoc on the hapless people of lower Bengal. The Firingis were strong enough to attack and kill at his own residence Daud Khan, the brother of Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala. Fear of their raids induced Pratapaditya to submit to the Mughals. In the viceroyalty of Ibrahim Khan, the daily raids of the Firingis in Jessore assumed serious proportions and 1,500 men and women were taken away as captives in a very short time. There was ‘neither any inhabited place, nor any traffic of merchants’ on the route of Jessore, and few men except the Maghs and Firingis were familiar with the streams and nulas in this tract. The island of Sondip and parts of Bakla were in the possession of a Portuguese buccaneer for long. The Firingis shared their booty with the Maghs and carried on a brisk slave-trade with captives taken from Bengal. The Mughal officers at Tamluk would allow them to sell their captives at the harbour to prevent worse depredations. The Maghs preferred to employ their captives and settled many of them near Chittagong. Truly could the Firingis assert, “Our salary was the imperial domain. We considered the whole of Bengal as our jagir”.

Even the piratical raids aside, the Mughal administration in Bengal was no picture of perfection. Imperial control over the province was hedged round by limitations. No messenger or letter could come from or go to Agra without the viceroy’s knowledge, if he so wished. An imperial courier might be put
to chains practically with immunity. Rebellion was also not precluded, though it was never so serious as to be uncontrollable. What affected the people of the province more directly were the elements of inefficiency in the provincial administration and official oppression. It was not always easy for the governor to assert his authority over the officers posted in outlying regions and the forms of defiance were many and curious. A petty mansabdar might rise in revolt, a krori refuse to yield up the revenue and a high imperial officer with all his followers might turn mendicant just to spite the governor. The jealousy between the imperial and provincial officers, the vexatious ever-recurring question of precedence as between fellow-officers, suspicions regarding the governor’s bona fides,—all rendered the working of the administrative machinery a slow and irksome process. Within their jagirs or the territories in their charge, the officers acted as so many lordlings with little fear of interference. They might oppress the ryots, raise their dues and seize their beautiful boys and girls and for all that, merely stood the risk of being removed only if the consequent discontent assumed very serious proportions. The Eastern Bengal Ballads record the very common tradition regarding the seizure of ryots’ wives and daughters by high officers and mention the professional sindhukis employed to secure such unsavoury booty. The life story of Mukundarama similarly illustrates the financial extortions of officers. To the oppression of the officers was added that of the clerks and it fell particularly heavily on the soldiery.

Even the peace and security characteristic of Mughal rule which might be considered some compensation for all this suffering, had obvious limitations. For as Pelsaert writing in the days of Jahangir put it, the emperor was the ‘King of the plains or open roads only’ and there were ‘nearly as many rebels as subjects’. In many places one could ‘travel only with a strong body of men, or on payment of heavy tolls’. If this was true of Upper India, it must have been more so of this outlying province.

The revenue administration also was none too well conducted. One prominent drawback it suffered from was its lack of uniformity. Within his jagir the officer was free to rack-rent the tenant without any let or hindrance. The system of escheat and frequent transfers of jagir must have made the officer parti-
cularly indifferent to the lot of the ryot. *Mustajirs*, too, were free to enhance the assessment to their own benefit, and the system, as analysed above, made it practically inevitable that they should do so. Then there was the formidable list of *abwabs*, levied independently by the government, the officers and the *zamindars* in their respective domains, with its stultifying effects on trade and industry.

The *zamindars*, within their territories, were free to rule as they liked: free to rule, and free to oppress. The various forms of their oppression,—financial or otherwise,—have been noted above. It has been mentioned also that their mutual struggles were reduced in extent, but not entirely put to an end. Talish’s verse,—‘dark sigh of sufferers, in the heart of dark night’,—not merely describes the sufferings of the oppressed *aimadars*, but pretty well sums up the whole situation.

**XIII. Some aspects of Mughal rule in Bengal.**

Certain claims are generally made in favour of Mughal rule in Bengal. Thus the Mughal conquest is said to have brought to an end the political isolation of this province. In so far as the restoration of Mughal power at Delhi in the person of Akbar and the subsequent continuation of Afghan rule in East India created a temporary barrier between the two regions, the assertion may be accepted as being correct. But in the days of Sher Shah and the Surs, Bengal formed a part of the Indian empire just as any other province. Even after the restoration of Mughal rule in India, Bengal was one of the seats of the Afghan power which continued to dominate Eastern India and not an entirely isolated unit. Again, in the previous epochs, Bengal had relation with other parts of Eastern India as between independent powers. In the realm of culture, she had influenced the literacy forms and religious thought of upper India in the pre-Mughal days.

We may be led to suppose that the unification of Bengal with the rest of India under the aegis of the Mughal emperor was all for the good. No doubt, the end of the internal strife augured well for the province. But the fact remains that throughout our period, Mughal rule in Bengal preserved its character of a foreign conquest. The viceroys and officers came and went without taking any real interest in the life of the province. A
considerable part of the resources of the land was drained away to Upper India in the form of presents or cash tributes. To the emperors, Bengal was merely a remote newly-conquered province which still remained to be pacified completely. Upper India for them had become very much their motherland. Bengal was never destined to become so. She remained throughout a 'hell full of bread', a place of exile for incompetent officers and, in the declining days of the grand empire, a milch cow to suckle the famished army and administration of the whole sub-continent.

One cannot accept without qualification either, the view that Mughal rule brought to an end the cultural poverty and political isolation of East Bengal. The rule of the bhuiyas, no doubt, had given that part of Bengal the character of a confederation of autonomous states and perhaps it was all for the good that this independence of doubtful value was brought to an end. But in the hey-day of the Sultanate period the two parts of Bengal were politically united. Nor was Eastern Bengal during the pre-Mughal days a mere cultural back-water where animism and the like alone flourished. Ever since the transfer of the Sena seat of power to Vikrampur, cultural traditions of orthodox Hinduism and the new social organisation based on Kulinism had found a fruitful soil in the riverine lands of the east and south-east. In this region the Sakta-Tantric cult which dominated mediaeval Bengali life had an unbroken tradition of centuries and particularly from the fifteenth century onwards produced a crop of holy men and scholars, of whom Sarvananda, Brahmananda and Purnananda are only the more famous ones. Their writings still exert considerable influence on Tantric thought and practice in both parts of Bengal. The ovation which Chaitanya received during his academic tour of Eastern Bengal affords further evidence of a living cultural tradition.

Mughal rule is also believed to have had a fostering influence on the European trade and the growth of neo-Vaishnavism. The former suggestion may be accepted in its entirety and one may even go a little further on this point. The growth of European trade was not merely related to the peace and centralisation which followed in the wake of Mughal rule; the Mughal Government took active steps to encourage it from the very beginning.
In 1576, the initial Mughal conquest of Bengal was achieved. Perhaps in the same year the Portuguese founded Hugli under the authority of Akbar’s farman. Since then throughout our period the Mughals adopted an actively favourable attitude to European trade.

The relation between Mughal rule and the growth of Bengal Vaishnavism is less obvious. If in a more troubled period, the Master and his followers could carry their message to the remotest parts of India, it is as likely that the return journey of the faith from Vrindavana in its transformed shape would also have been possible without the aid of Pax Mughalia. But Pax Mughalia no doubt sheltered the path along which the disciples of the gosvaminis came to Bengal with the works of their masters in a sealed chest. But for Pax Mughalia, perhaps, more than one Bir Bhan would have plundered the poor anchorites and the masters’ works got lost beyond redemption. Perhaps, again, in such a contingency, the Navadwipa school of Bengal Vaishnavism would have got a chance and a little more of the revolutionary potentials of the Chaitanya movement come to fruition. Surely then, Mughal rule contributed indirectly to the organisation of Bengal Vaishnavas into a sect. The path to Vrindavana lay open,—and the path to Puri. Along these two paths the new sect grew apace. Whether it was all for the good is another question.

Finally, Mughal rule is supposed to have fostered an over-all renaissance in Bengal’s life. This question will be discussed fully later on in this work. Here it may merely be pointed out that the vernacular literature of the period, deprived of the sustenance of royal patronage, lacked the vigour and spontaneity of the earlier epochs. Krishnadasa Kaviraja, Kasirama Dasa and Mukundarama, the only outstanding products of the age, are men of the old rather than the new epoch, judged by the generation they belong to. But for their works, the sickening fertility of the literature of the period has little striking to offer. Far away in Arakan under royal patronage local poets were experimenting on a new literary form in Bengali. But Mughal rule had little to do with that. The heavy classical scholarship which often acts as a drag on the poetic inspiration of this age might have been partly the product of the greater economic security which certain classes now came to enjoy. But its merit,
too, like that of most other features of this period, is rather questionable.

Looking for the positive benefits conferred by Mughal rule on Bengal during the period under review, we may seize finally upon two points: first, centralised administration and its consequence,—peace; secondly, the beginnings of European trade and the new wealth which it brought in its train. As to the first, if we may put it somewhat paradoxically, the qualitative change was profound, but the quantitative one far less so. In other words, the character of the government was fundamentally changed, but the result of this change, assessed in terms of human happiness and suffering, was far less striking than it might have been. As to the second, it has to be noted that this development was only partly due to the policy of the government and, to a far greater degree, the result of forces operating from beyond the seas. Besides, the encouragement to foreign traders for love of immediate gain in the shape of higher income from tariff undermined an alternative possibility, viz., the growth of a native over-seas trade under government patronage.

APPENDIX A

*Views of Grant and Moreland on revenue administration in Bengal under the Mughals.*

Due to the paucity of the available data, the discussion on Bengal's revenue history of the Mughal period, particularly its earlier part, have so long been more or less perfunctory. However, two notable attempts have been made so far in this direction. In the 18th century, Grant produced his two exhaustive, but often undependable, works: *Political Survey of the Northern Circars* (written in 1784) and *A Historical and Comparative Analysis of the Finances in Bengal*. In the present century, W.H. Moreland published "*The Agrarian System of Muslim India*" (Delhi, 1968), of which work one section is devoted to the revenue history of Bengal. The papers on which Grant's studies were based were 'chiefly contained in about twenty volumes of Persian *ferds*, or account of revenue, prior to the era of the *dewanny* ... entirely produced through the influence of a light and private purse,' in Hyderabad. As the
sources of Grant's information are no longer traceable, it is
difficult to pass any accurate judgment on his work. It is,
however, surprising that a study of the contemporary sources
now available go to prove that Grant's analysis is very often
correct in matters of detail, though his general thesis is funda-
mentally wrong. This anomaly may be explained with reference
to the fact that Grant "described Murshid Quli's methods with
substantial accuracy", but erroneously supposed that Murshid
Quli's system was the same as Todar Mal's and that there had
been no change in the intervening period. Hence, as in fact
many of the details of Murshid Quli's revenue administration
were similar to those of the period under review, Grant's state-
ments on such matters are now found to be true. The 'mahl'
(mal), i.e., territorial income, in the days of Murshid Quli, as
also throughout the entire period of Mughal rule in Bengal,
according to Grant, was 'generally considered under the
denomination and common idea of a land-tax imposed on
certain classes of native and hereditary proprietors called
zamindars'. Further, "about the year 1582, the revenue-
demand on the peasants was fixed in detail by Todar Mal at
figures representing one-fourth of the average produce....
collections were made according to it by zamindars, who were
annual contracting farmers, with stated allowances by way of
commission, and small estates, their entire legitimate receipts
never exceeding ten per cent of the demand". Grant, however,
mentioned as items of lesser importance the lands immediately
dependent on khalsa sharifa (royal exchequer),—"including the
capital town, with its dependent circar.... and the principal
parganah or district of all other circars, under the subordinate
rule of nabobs, soujders or aumils", parcellled out into revenue
divisions under kroris with a 5% commission,—and the jagirs
assigned to officers for maintenance of troops and personal
dignities, 'by a feudal temporary tenure'. It is significant,
however, that though Grant describes the land-tax imposed on
the zamindars as the main territorial income of the government,
'the Reserved area..... on Grant's figures, considerably
exceeded the area given in assignment'.

Moreland, in his chapter on the revenue history of Bengal,
pointed out the basic errors of Grant's thesis and suggested
some necessary amendments. For our present purpose, we
need take note of a few points raised by him. In the first place, he pointed out that the statistics given in the Ain, for Bengal in particular, represent 'valuation, not Demand,' to which, however, the demand might have approximated in the later days. Secondly, the state-demand in Bengal, as the testimony of the Ain clearly proves, were fixed by estimate, not assessment'. We may further add that for our period the idea that the territorial income was conceived mainly as an impost on zamindars is basically incorrect. Moreland provisionally suggested that, "when Bengal was annexed by Akbar, there were some chiefs, and some old-established Farmers,... both classes paying fixed sums by way of Demand; and that, apart from the areas so held, the officials or assignees dealt with the villages either through Farmers or through the headmen". Gradually, "the officials came... to occupy the position of Farmers, paying the amount of the Valuation, and making what they could. As time went on, the distinction between Chiefs, Farmers and Officials disappeared, because there was in fact no difference in the incidence of the various positions, and all alike came to be known as zamindars."

Before putting forward the objections to Moreland's hypothesis, it is only fair to take note of the fact that he offered it, 'not as fact established by evidence, but as tentative inference, to be confirmed or modified in the light of further knowledge'. Such further knowledge is now available in the copious references to revenue administration contained in the Baharistan and the Fathiyya, which were not utilised by Moreland.

Moreland's suggestion that the chiefs, like the farmers, paid 'fixed sums by way of demand', cannot be accepted in view of the fact that our sources throughout the period speak of 'peshkash', not 'hasbud jama', with reference to the chiefs. In making it, Moreland fell into the same error as Grant, of equating the system prevalent in a much later epoch with that in an earlier one. Secondly, it is not correct to hold that the officers or assignees in all cases dealt with the ryots through farmers or headmen. The lands assigned to farmers or Mustajirs, were clearly distinguished from such parts of the khalisa or crown-lands where officers collected revenue through their own men or those appointed by provincial authorities. The jagirdars, too, we are told, made arrangements for collec-
tion through their own men. As to the transformation of the officers into farmers, the beginning of the process may be noted in our period; but still many decades were to pass before all who paid revenue to the government came to be known by the general name of zamindar. And, finally, in our period at least, there were major differences in the incidence of the various positions as the above reference to the position of the chiefs alone will prove.

NOTES ON AUTHORITIES

N.B. In these Notes, reference is made by means of key-words or names of authors, which are printed in italics. The full titles etc. of these works are given in the Bibliography.

SECTION I. The resume of the political history of Bengal, 1575-1627, is based mainly on the History of Bengal, chapters X-XVI. For the original sources of information, see Bibliography of the same work. In writing this section, I have consulted chiefly the Akbarnama and the Baharistan.

SECTION II. The best authority for the different facets of the administration in Bengal in this period is the Baharistan which contains numerous incidental, and hence very dependable, references to the subject. The account given in the present work has been reconstructed by piecing together this scattered information and by adding to it some materials available elsewhere. The following references are to the Baharistan, except where otherwise indicated. The English translation of Baharistan has been referred to as tr.

For rules for the succession of viceroy and their dismissal, see 141a-141b, 197a-197b; tr., I, 211, 257. For peshkash and booty see 106b, 156b-157a, 160b-161a, 264b, 271a-271b; tr., I, 224, 299, 310 and II., 608-9, 628-29; also History of Bengal, 218, 314. For waqai-navis see 101a; tr., I, 209. For diwan's power, see 183a, 187a; tr., I, 377, 388. For the mansabdars' attitude see 105b; tr., I, 220-21. For imperial intervention, see 2b, 29b, 103a, 140a-140b, 160a-160b; tr., I, 4, 5, 73-74, 213-14, 254, 308-10; also Tuzuk, I, 205. For inspections, punishment of officers, and consequent fear see 103a, 146a, 151b, 197b, 219b, 261a; tr., I, 99, 214-15, 271-72, 287, 420; II, 476, 606. For the system of escheat, see 97b, 156b-157a; tr., I, 207, 299. For reference to Husain Shah as padshah, see Chaitanya-charitanvita, madhyala, 19.

SECTION IV. For the safdar, see 56a; tr., I, 139; also Ain, II, 41-42. For sardar, see 272b, 273a, 274a; tr., II, 633, 635, 637-38. Regarding wardens of strategic places, the Baharistan uses no specific appellation, but refers somewhat vaguely to Khidmat dar band-i-gahri'arf rajmahal wa Akbar-nagar. For the vesting of several offices in one person, see 146b, 152a, 187a, 273a; tr., I, 272, 289, 388; II, 635. For the registration of sales by the qazi, see 64a; tr., I, 163. For the subahdar's theoretical position, see Ain, II, 37.
V. For the power of officers administering newly conquered territories, see 56a, 57b, 76a, 98a, 146b, 174b, 180a-180b, 273a; tr., I, 139, 199, 217-8, 273, 274, 353, 368-69; II, 635. For viceregal control, see 105a, 146a-147b, 156a, 269a; tr., I, 220, 271-72, 274-76, 296-97; II, 622; also Manrique, I, 23-24.

SECTION VI. For the antiquity of some of the zamindar families see Medinipur Itihasa, 498-99, 504-33; Maymansimher Varendra Brahma Jamidar; and History of Backergunge. For the zamindars' status, see Baharistan 56a; tr., I, 139; Medinipur Itihasa, 156-57. For the administration of their territories, see Baharistan, 53a, 75b-76a, 98a; tr., I, 132, 197-98, 207-8. For the rise of new petty zamindars, see Medinipur Itihasa, 113, 127-28; Vikrampur Itihasa, 509. For the zamindars' relations with the imperial power, see Medinipur Itihasa, 188; Annual Report, Regional Records Survey Committee, Bengal and Assam, 1947-48 (Secretary's Report); also Maymansimher Varendra Brahma Jamidar, II; Gaurer Itihasa, II; article on Some Old Documents in Barisal, Indian Historical Quarterly, December, 1948. For instances of governmental interference, see Medinipur Itihasa, 183-84; Jessore District Gazetteer, 35. For the zamindars' powers and functions within their estates, see Grant's Survey, 30; Westland's Jessore, 51-52; also Mukundarama's account of Bankura Ray in Chandimangala, 7. The original Persian letters in the possession of the Shushang Raj family mentioned in the text are reported to be in the Mymensingh Court of Wards office at present and no longer accessible to the public. The present author consulted some certified Bengali translations of these letters which were submitted as exhibits in a law-suit and the authenticity of which were admitted by the government. These are now in the possession of Maharaja Bhupendranarayan Sinha of Shushang. For the instances of zamindars' oppression and their lawless activities see Vikrampur Itihasa, 128-29; Medinipur Itihasa, 501-2; the accounts of brigandage organised by Bir Hamir and Chand Ray in Premavilasa; Baharistan, 284a; tr., II, 665.

VII. For general account of Revenue administration in Bengal, see Ain, II, 134. For half-yearly collections, see 325b; tr., II, 779-80. For survey and measurement, see 311b-312a; tr., II, 742; Chandimangala, 7. For administration of Khalsa lands, see 146b, 152a, 156b-157a; 160b-161a, 325b; tr., I, 272-3, 289, 299, 310; II, 779. For the details of methods of collection, see 57b, 61b, 146b, 152a, 192a, 270a, 284b, 311b; tr., I, 144, 156-7, 272, 289, 403; II, 625, 667, 742. For Kroris, see 146b, 152a, 171a, 174b; tr., I, 272-3, 289, 342, 353. For the subordinate revenue staff see 53a, 61b, 174b; tr., I, 132, 157, 353. For soldiers' participation in revenue collection see 4b; tr., I, 12-13. For checking of accounts and inspection parties see 311b, 325a; tr., II, 741-2, 778-9. For stop-gap arrangements in newly conquered areas, see 146b, 174b, 270a; tr., I, 273, 353; II, 625. For transfer of oppressive officers, see 152a, 180b-181a, tr., I, 288-9, 369-70. For arrangements in the officers' jagirs, see 4b, 9b, 15b, 284b, 286b, 324b, 325b; tr., I, 12-13, 29, 43; II, 667, 673, 776-7, 779-80; Fathiyya (continuation), 117a-117b; J. A. S. B., 1906, 260.
VIII. For cash receipts from zamindars, see *Ain*, II, 154. For land and revenue arrangements in territories under the chiefs, see *Chandimangala*, 100-107.

IX. For hissajat and nowara lands, see article on Some Old Documents in Barisal, *Indian Historical Quarterly*, 1948. For various types of rent-free tenures, see the chapters on land revenue in the *Bengal District Gazetteers*; also *Chandimangala*, 101, 105.

X. For the seven types of impost mentioned by Grant see his *Political Survey*, 28-29; also *Ain*, II, 143, 144, 147, 151, 152. For Talish's account of the various imposts, see *Fathiyya* (continuation), 123b-124a, 128a-129a, 131b: *J.A.S.B.*, 1906, 263-4, 266; 1907, 423. For dues from betel, see *Manrique*, I, 45.

XI. For the commercial prosperity of Dacca, see *Manrique*, I, 44-8.

XII. For the troubled state of Bengal, see *Early Travels*, 18; *Roe*, 193n; *Letters Received*, IV, 315. For the reference to Isa Khan as ruler of East Bengal, see *Ain*, II, 130. For sufferings of the people during campaigns, see 1b, 39a, 48b, 50b, 52b, 55a, 57a, 66b, 110b, 184b, etc.: *tr.*, I, 94, 118, 124-5, 130-31, 138, 142, 171, 231, 381 etc. For scarcity caused by war, see 41b, 272b; *tr.*, I, 99; II, 683. For Magh and Firingi depredations, see 36a, 54b, 58b, 273a-273b; *tr.*, I, 85-6, 136-7, 146; II, 635-6; *Fathiyya* (continuation), 107b-108a, 123a-125a, 164b-165a; *J.A.S.B.*, 1907, 419-25. For the limitations of imperial control, see 53a, 106b; *tr.*, I, 132, 224; *Pelsaert*, 58-9. For the limitations of viceregal authority, see 38a-39b, 59b-60a, 308a; *tr.*, I, 92-6, 105; II, 443. For mutual jealousies of officers, see 29a-29b, 48a-48b, 49b-50a, 214a, etc.; *tr.*, I, 71-3, 115-17, 121-22; II, 461, etc. For oppression of ryots, see 146b-147b, 219b, etc.; *tr.*, I, 273-76; II, 476; autobiographical sketch of poet Mukundarama in *Chandimangala*.

Appendix A. For Grant's views on land revenue in Bengal under the Mughals, see his *Analysis*, 29-30, 32-33, 172. For Moreland's views, see his *Agrarian system*, 194-9 and Appendix G. For the elaboration of the arguments put forward in criticism of their views, see the sections on revenue administration in the present work.
CHAPTER II

THE COMING OF THE EUROPEANS

I. Portuguese activities in Bengal: a resumé.

A leading factor in the evolution of Bengal’s society and economy during Mughal rule was the activities of the different European nations. Up to the year 1627 only three of them had appeared on the scene,—the Portuguese, the Dutch and the English,—and only one nation, viz. the Portuguese, played an important part.

As early as 1514, the Portuguese settled in Pipli in Orissa and they visited the emporium of Hijli in the Midnapore district soon afterwards. In 1517 D. Joao de Silveira, the commander of the first regular Portuguese expedition to Chittagong, embarked at that port as the ambassador to Arakan. His efforts to secure permission to erect a factory proved fruitless, but thenceforward a Portuguese ship with merchandise was sent to Bengal every year and Nuno da Cunha, the governor of Goa, persistently sought to secure a foot-hold in and open trade with the country. In 1535 Diego Rebello, the factor of Coromandel pearl fisheries, came to Satgaon in his own armed vessels and was strong enough to forbid two Arab ships to carry on trade. The next year proved a landmark in the history of the Portuguese in Bengal. For in that year Mahmud Shah allowed Martim Affonso de Mello to build factories in Chittagong and Satgaon and also offered them the custom-houses of the two ports. Nuno Farnandes Freire was appointed the chief of the custom house of Chittagong with grants of land and the power to realise rent from the native residents. The custom house at Satgaon went to Joao Correa, but the establishment at this place does not seem to have prospered.

It was the neighbouring port of Hugli, originally an insignificant village, that became the chief centre of Portuguese
activity in the subah of Bengal. The port, Manrique informs us, was founded by some Portuguese traders who came from various parts of India to buy and sell and had large golas or store-houses for that purpose. In the beginning they wintered here for 5 to 6 months and, some years later, prolonged their stay. In the year 1579-80, Pedro Tavares founded the settlement of Hugli, under the authority of a farman from Akbar. The settlement grew rapidly and with it the trade and influence of the Portuguese in Bengal. In 1588 Fitch found the whole town of Hugli in Portuguese hands. Cabral described it as a common emporium of Indian and inter-Asiatic trade. In 1597 the Ain-i-Akbari noted the inclusion of Satgaon as well within the fold of Portuguese authority. The rich citizens bought islands and properties along the river banks.

All the time a crop of Portuguese settlements were growing up in various parts of Bengal. Hijli, Sripur, Dacca, Chandikan, Katrabhu and numerous other places in the Midnapore, Dacca, Jessore, Barisal and Noakhali districts became the scenes of intense commercial activity of the Portuguese. Chittagong, the Porto Grando, became a vast centre of trade and definitely passed into Portuguese hands by 1590. Dianga, a neighbouring place, became another stronghold. Carvalho and Manoel de Mattos brought the strategic island of Sondip under the authority of the Portuguese in 1602. Sometime after 1605 Sebastiao Gonsalves Tibau established his independent authority in that island and added the territories of Dakshin Shahabazpur and Patelbhanga in the sarkar Bakla to his short-lived kingdom.

The high water-mark of Portuguese expansion in Bengal may be said to have been reached now. Towards the end of the 16th century the bulk of Bengal's overseas trade had passed into their hands. At Hugli, they ruled in practical independence subject only to the nominal authority of the Portuguese home government and their representatives at Ceylon. Chittagong enjoyed a similar status. Sondip was the seat of an independent Portuguese power. The adventurous, less inclined to settled ways of life, took to piracy, harassing the coastal districts and often moving even far inland. In the wake of political and commercial power came the Catholic missionaries and they established churches in such widely scattered places as Hijli. Banja, Hugli, Bandel, Sripur, Chandikan, Chittagong etc. Their proselytizing activities
met with practically no resistance from the local authorities.

But then came a period of set-back. By the time when the Portuguese trade was firmly established in Bengal, the general decline in their power all over Asia had already set in. The Dutch had appeared in the Indian seas as a formidable rival and the English were soon to follow. Within Bengal, adverse political circumstances added to their misfortunes. In 1607, the Arakan King massacred their settlement at Dianga. Soon after, the king of Chandikan treacherously killed Carvalho and started a persecution of the Christians. In 1616 Gonslaves' short-lived reign in Sondip was put to an end by the Magh King. In 1632 Hugli, the great centre of Portuguese activity in Bengal, fell before the imperial army of Shahjahan. In other parts of the country,—in Chittagong in particular,—the Portuguese traders and pirates, missionaries and clergymen long continued to be active even after the fall of the Porto Grando during Shayesta Khan's administration. But the fall of Hugli really marked the end of their commercial supremacy in the coast and water-ways of Bengal. Their subsequent activities were of little significance in the larger life of the country.

II. Beginnings of Dutch trade with Bengal.

Another nation which first appeared in Bengal during our period was the Dutch. The early history of Dutch trade in Bengal is still very obscure. As early as 1607, however, a letter written to the English East India Company by Gabriel Towerson, a servant of the Company, refers to the Dutch in connection with Bengal trade. "Between Point de Galle and Colombo", wrote Towerson, "they (a Dutch ship) took a small ship of Bengala, out of which they took 7 packs of cloth". The activity here referred to is obviously piratical, but it indicates clearly enough the growing strength of the Dutch in the Bay. Another letter written by a servant of the Company in 1610 discusses the relations between Bengal and the Indies. It mentions various types of 'excellent fine cloth' manufactured in Bengal as being 'very vendible in all parts of Sumatra, Java, Moluccus...'. Nutmegs, cloves, and maces brought by European merchants from the Indies, on the other hand, sold 'exceeding well' in the port of Satgaon. From the same region, the European merchants also brought for sale in Bengal various
other commodities such as pepper, gold, benjamin, camphor, pitch, saltpetre and 'great quantity of Brimstone'. The Dutch by the 'twenties of the 17th century had already secured a dominant position in the East Indies, and the Portuguese battle for the command of the Indian waters with their newly arrived rivals was already a losing one. So one may presume without any risk of grave error that in this commercial relation between Bengal and the Indies, carried on mainly through European agency, the Dutch played at least an indirect part. In 1615, the Arakan king is said to have forced some Dutch ships in the harbour to help him against the Portuguese. By that time the Dutch had become quite frequent visitors to the coast of the Bay. "...Upon the sea coaste, where there is any hope of benefit," the Surat factors regretfully informed Sir Thomas Roe in reply to his query regarding the prospects of trade in Bengal, "the Dutch and the Portingales have trade". The commercial activities of this nation along the coast of Bengal seem to have gone on uninterrupted. In December 1622 the Masulipatam factors were expecting a Dutch ship, Schidam, 'with purchase from the coast of Bengal'. Again in 1623, the Dutch, oppressed by the ruler of Golconda, attended "deley the cominge of a shippe and two friggatts from the coast of Bengala". By 1625 a further step forward was apparently taken. For near about that year, according to a common tradition, the Dutch established their first factory in Bengal in the town of Chinsura, a few miles off the Portuguese settlement of Hugli. Thus by the end of Jahangir's reign the Dutch had already secured a position of some importance in Bengal's trade and also perhaps a sound footing on her soil.

III. Bengal's first contacts with the English.

But by 1627, and even by 1632, the English could make little headway in their effort to open up trade with Bengal. Their attitude throughout this period was diffident and uncertain, and at the most they only enquired about the prospects of trade with this distant and outlying province of the empire of the Grand Mogor. When in the eighties of the 16th centuries Ralph Fitch, the first English visitor to Bengal, came to this country, he must have considered the place hardly congenial for English trade. He found the country infested by rebels to whom the numerous
rivers and islands of Bengal offered safe shelter. Trade, both inland and overseas, was no doubt flourishing. But the Portuguese with their firm footings at Hugli, Satgaon, Chittagong and a number of other places, were in so complete and confident a control of this trade that they could easily afford to receive and show around a visitor from another European country without any fear or suspicion. Besides, the ‘right way’ from Hindustan to Bengal was full of thieves, so that Fitch had to follow a path which lay through dense wilderness. Finch, writing at about the same time, draws an equally unattractive picture wherein the rebellious Bengal chiefs and ‘the Portugall out-laws . . . living in no form of subjection to God or man’ feature prominently.

In the early years of the next century, however, the English traders and factors in India showed an increasing awareness of the commercial ‘goings on’ in that far off province. The various types of Bengal cloth—‘Tzinde, Patta, Sallalo, Bastan, Kassa’ and the like—occur repeatedly in their letters. They knew too where these articles were in demand as also what commodities from the Indies could be sold in Bengal. Still, more than two decades were to pass before direct trade with Bengal could be opened. But commodities, both raw and manufactured, produced in Bengal soon featured in the list of purchases of the English factories in such distant places as Surat, Ajmere and Masulipatam. Peter Floris writing to Thomas Aldworth in 1614 speaks familiarly of ‘fine Bengal cloth’ as being less profitable than coarse cloth and yarn. Thomas Keridge, writing from Ajmere in the same year, tells us that vermilion selling at Rs. 290 per maund was often brought from Bengal at cheaper rates. In a letter written the following year he mentions again a number of articles,—lead, tin, elephant’s teeth, quick silver etc.,—‘brought usually from Bengala’, which sold best at Gujarat, apparently through agencies, both Indian and English.

The year 1616 is an important land-mark in the history of Bengal’s relation with the English. For in that year was the idea of direct trade with Bengal first definitely mooted. Joseph Salbank, writing from Agra, suggested that some of the Company’s servants should “discover all the parts of this country” including ‘Bengala’ ‘for the vent of our commodities’. The
same year Roe wrote to the Surat factors in even clearer terms that an attempt should be made to open an overland trade with Bengal. But Keridge in his reply argued about Bengal being a ‘whott country’, its inhabitants mostly ‘very poore Gentiles’, and its sea coast controlled by the Dutch and the Portuguese, so that, he felt, ‘the transportation by land thither’, would be ‘more hazardous than the benefit by the sale of a small quantity can answer’. Roe, however, was not convinced. He saw no reason why Bengal so rich in wheat, rice, sugar, fine cloth, musk, civit, amber and the like, should be poor. Further, as he shrewdly observed, “The number of Portugalls residing is a good argument for us to seek it; it is a signe ther is good doing...” His ideas on the future relations with the Portuguese were also very clear: “It is to be understood wee must fire them out and mayntayne our trade at the pikes end.”

The Surat factors continued to be sceptical and in a letter written in July, 1616 they set forth in detail their own point of view. “We deny not”, it ran, “but that Bengalla bring wheat, rice and sugar to Indya, makes fine cloths, etc., which showeth the fertility of the country and the quality of the inhabitants, who, being tillers of the earth and tradesmen, by their sales in India reap the fruit of their labour and sustain life, and some no doubt get wealthy by merchandising. Yet it followeth not that cloth will therefore sell, which in those countries is spent in quantities by princes and gentry only. Of the first there is none, and of the latter very few. We acknowledge transportation by water thither is cheap; yet we think it were better to rot in Agmere... than after expense of time and moneys to return it thither to no other purpose”. Roe still persisted. The project, however, had to be put off that year as small shipping drawing little water necessary for making a ‘trial of Port Pequeno for the sitting of a factory’,—an advance on the first idea of merely opening trade,—was not available.

It is interesting to note that by the end of the year the ambassador himself was won over to the side of the Surat factors. Writing to the Directors of the Company at home on December 1, 1616 he opposed the idea of founding a factory in Bengal. “Whereas you write for new factories, except the silk of Bengala require it”, the letter ran, “I am of opinion your
residences are sufficient”. A letter addressed to Roe from the Surat factors, written a few days later, pointed out anew the unsuitability of Porto Pequeno as a port for the English, specially as the Portuguese had “a city on that part of Ganges and with their boats command the river”. The growing pessimism regarding the prospects of trade with Bengal is reflected clearly in Roe’s letter to the Company in February, 1617. “Bengala hath no ports”, wrote he, “but such as the Portugalls possess, for small shipping. It will vent nothing of yours. The people are unwilling in respect of the warr (as they suppose) like to ensue in their seas; and the Prince hath crossed it, thinking wee desired to remove thither wholly, and that, if wee stay in India, hee takes to bee an affront”. About the same time Lucas Antheunis cautiously advocated preliminary enquiries before Roe took definite steps “to provide for the coasts of Bengala the same privileges” as for the rest of India.

But despite the many discouraging circumstances and the inscrutability of the ways of the Mughal court, there was one particular factor which must have roused new hopes in the hearts of the English in India. At about this time the power of the Portuguese was everywhere on the decline and this fact is noted repeatedly in the letters of the English factors. During the latter part of 1617 Roe made desperate efforts to secure farmans for Bengal and other places, but only met with repeated failures. A growing sense of the importance of the trade with Bengal,—the marked contrast with the previous indifference,—is evident in some letters of this time. “If any innovation or hopes of trade to Bengala shall occure”, wrote William Methwold from Masulipatam to Roe, “it cannot but bee somewhat helpeful to our proceedings.”

The years 1618-'21 saw the first notable effort made by the English to open trade with Bengal. Hughes and Parker, two servants of the company, were sent to Patna on a prospecting mission to investigate into the possibilities of silk-trade with Bengal. At Patna Hughes found large quantities of raw silk brought in cocoon from Bengal, purchased a stock and set a staff to reel it off into suitable skeins. But the wastage and cost of transport to Agra rendered the purchase of raw silk at Patna unprofitable. Besides, the patterns of silk (some of which were also sent by Francis Fettiplace in December, 1618)
procured from Bengal were judged unfavourably. The suggestion of Hughes and Parker to the effect that Murshidabad silk should be purchased, was not heeded. Hughes continued to be of opinion that the purchase of Bengal silk at Patna would prove very profitable and as late as August, 1621 he and Parker were directed to purchase 100 maunds of Bengal silk till at last orders from the home authorities put an end to the project.

According to an agreement between the English and the Emperor Jahangir concluded on November 10, 1623 the English were granted the right of free trade throughout the Mughal empire including Bengal. By the terms of this agreement they were “permitted free trade as well in the ports of Surratt, Cambaya, Goga, Sinda and Bengal, as in all other cities and places within the dominions of Jangere Paudshah, without prohibition of any comoditie to bee brought in or exported out of the Kingdom, neither limitation confininge them either unto places, times or quantities. . . .” A second agreement with the Surat authorities regarding free trade followed in 1624. But then ensued a period of political troubles chiefly centring round Masulipatam which dashed the hopes roused by the agreements of the preceding years. It culminated in the temporary withdrawal of the English in 1628. Only in 1631 and 1632 were the attempts to open trade with Bengal revived in earnest.

The reasons for this long delay have been explained with admirable clarity by Sir W. Foster: “The goods sought by the English merchants on the coast were chiefly the calicoes of Golconda and the Hindu countries to the southwards; . . . the products of Bengal were readily obtainable at Masulipatam, and there was no temptation to venture further afield in quest of them, at the risk of being snapped by the Portuguese war-vessels; moreover, the troubles at Masulipatam, culminating in the withdrawal of the English in 1628, had effectually stopped for a time any schemes they may have entertained for the enlargement of their commerce”.

The earliest phase in the history of Bengal’s relation with the English had no immediate bearing on the life of the people. But it marked the beginning of an important development. The diffident gropings of the English for a commercial gateway to
Bengal during the first three decades of the 17th century,—their proposals and arguments, their mission and its failure, the *farrmans* and their withdrawal,—thus assume a considerable significance in the history of the province. If the years 1570 to 1627 were for Bengal primarily a period of seed-time rather than one of fruition, here to be sure was being sown the most fruitful seed of all.

**IV. Growth and pattern of Portuguese trade with Bengal.**

Between 1575 and 1627, the activities of the Portuguese,—and to a lesser extent, of the Dutch,—produced more immediate results. During this epoch the Portuguese trade was perhaps the most notable feature in the development of Bengal’s economy. As early as 1537 the Portuguese had founded trading settlements and secured independent custom-houses in Chittagong and Satgaon. Our knowledge of Portuguese commercial activities in Bengal in the pre-Mughal period is unfortunately meagre. Cesar Federici, the Venetian merchant, who visited these places in 1567 gives us an impression of the nature of the Portuguese trade. In West Bengal, Satgaon was the great entrepôt, “where the Merchants gather themselves together with their trade”. Every year the Portuguese ships sailed up the Ganges, the bigger ones being Iaden at Betor and the smaller ones at Satgaon. A temporary mart,—“a village with Houses and shops made of straw, and with all things necessary to their uses”,—was set up at Betor to cater to the needs of the Portuguese traders and burnt down on their departure. At Satgaon every year “they laid thirtie or five and thirtie ships great and small, with Rice, Cloth of Bombast of diverse sorts, Lacca, great abundance of sugar, Mirabolans dried and preserved, long Pepper, Oyle of Zerzeline, and many other sorts of merchandise”. From Chittagong, the Portuguese purchased in quantities rice, bombast cloth, sugar and corn. The East Indies were the destination of this varied cargo. Cesar Federici in his account of the Portuguese trade in Bengal nowhere mentions either any selling activities or even temporary entrepôts of the Portuguese for trading purposes. One wonders whether this evidence of silence implies that the settlements at Chittagong and Satgaon established near about 1537 had either disappeared or failed to develop as trading centres.
The foundation of Hugli, however, marks the beginning of a fresh development in the Portuguese commercial activities in Bengal. The settlement was started as a merely temporary resort with a number of large store-houses set up by Portuguese traders who came from different parts of India to buy and sell. First, they wintered here for 5 or 6 months, but later "stayed one or two years at a stretch", seeing the advantages of this trade. Manrique gives a detailed account of the wares which the Portuguese at Hugli sold "at high prices". The bulk of these commodities came from the 'south', i.e., the East Indies. From Solor and Timor came red and white sandal-wood; from Malacca and Banda, clove, nutmeg and mace; from Borneo, precious camphor; from China, great quantities of porcelain and various gilt articles, e.g., bedstead, tables, boxes, chests, writing-desks and various curios, as also pearls and jewels set in European style; from south India, 'a large amount of worked silks'. Then there came cowries or shells from Maldives, conch-shells from Tinnevelley coast, pepper from Malabar and cinnamon from Ceylon; the last two had to be smuggled in, their export being prohibited by His Portuguese Majesty because they were royal monopolies. The people who purchased these commodities were the 'Sodagores' or the merchants of the country. These merchants carried the articles brought by the Portuguese from all over Asia to upper India, "to the court of Agra" in particular.

Bengal's export trade during the period was largely in Portuguese hands, though Indian merchants played second fiddle as middlemen. When Emperor Akbar first enquired about the Portuguese in Bengal, his messenger came only to find that they had already sailed away at the end of their hibernating season. But they had left behind more than two lacs of rupees in the hands of a number of native merchants for the purchase of various merchandise which they would collect on their return next year. Cotton goods, gingham of grass, silk, sugar, ghī, rice, indigo, long pepper, salt-petre, wax, lac, rich back-stitched quilts, bed-hangings, pavillions and various curios were among the products which chiefly interested them. Later ships from Portuguese India, Negapatam, Sumatra, Malacca and other places came every year to Hijli to take rice, cotton, sugar, long pepper and butter from there to Portuguese India. Presently
Hugli became a permanent resort with elaborate establishments, as also the chief centre of Bengal’s trade.

A period of rapid expansion followed in course of which the Portuguese extended their activities to all the important trading centres of Bengal, including Dacca, and even captured a part of Bengal’s trade with upper India at least as far as Patna to which place they went with goods manufactured in Bengal or brought to her ports by their ships from other parts of Asia and purchased from there ‘course carpets of Junapoore, amberyes, cassaes and some silke’ and in fact bought up “all they can laye hand of”.

Thus at the height of their power the Portuguese exercised a manifold control on Bengal’s commerce. They now enjoyed a practically unqualified monopoly of Bengal’s sea-borne trade,—both export and import. They maintained this monopoly, first, through their possession of such important trading centres as Hugli, Satgaon and Chittagong and the partial control over lesser ports like Hijli and their numerous establishments strewn through Bengal. The shipping being mostly in their hands, they succeeded easily in directing the sea-borne trade to their trading centres in Bengal, particularly Hugli. The monopoly was maintained also by a second and less innocuous method, viz., the destruction of such audacious foreign vessels as might attempt its infringement in any way. Native boats were indeed not spared. The English factory records refer to the destruction of a fleet of native boats bringing carpets from Bengal for sale at Masulipatam, and also to the uncertainty of the said port’s silk-trade with Bengal in about 1621 as no merchants were coming for some years and the Portuguese had seized the cargo in 1620. In many cases mere orders forbidding trade, backed as they were by the superior armed might of the Portuguese vessels, must have sufficed rendering any actual destruction unnecessary.

But this monopoly had certain limitations, perhaps to some extent self-imposed. In 1602 Pyrard de Laval saw in the Maldives many Bengali merchants purchasing the cowries and coir-products found in abundance there. At least in the early years of the 17th century, Bengali traders carried silk and carpets to the eastern coast of the Deccan. A traveller in 1599 even referred to a Bengali trading settlement at Achin. Besides
the Bengalis, there were the Hindustanis, the Mughals, the Persians and the Armenians who came to fetch goods at Hugli and the merchants who carried Bengal Muslims, mainly from Dacca, to Khurasan, Persia, Turkey and such other places. But the activities of such traders seem to have been confined mainly to the land-route.

There are two factors which may explain the continued infringement of the Portuguese monopoly of Bengal’s sea-trade, despite their naval superiority. In the first place, strong as the Portuguese were at sea, they were not strong enough to entirely wipe out all their rivals, specially in the earlier part of their trading career. Their success in this direction grew in proportion to their strength. Laval noted the busy activities of the Bengali merchants in the Maldives in 1602, but by 1621 the Masulipatam factors were despairing of any further arrival of native fleets with Bengal silk or carpets due to the Portuguese depredations. Secondly, the native trade seems to have been tolerated by them to some extent obviously in their own interest. With some of the native traders at least their relation seems to have been one of the commercial alliance in one form or other. One would not wonder if the system of permits or licences introduced in India’s western waters by the Portuguese and other nations was also in vogue in the east. There are definite evidences to show that some time after Jahangir’s reign the English, the Dutch and the Danes introduced this profitable and pernicious custom in some parts of the Bay. Some years before the Mughal conquest of Bengal, the Portuguese of Goa entered into a treaty with the Raja of Bakla whereby, among other things, the Raja was given four cartazes or passports with which four of his ships could freely navigate the Indian Ocean. In the early years of Shahjahan’s reign, Manrique met in Midnapore a certain merchant, ‘Mobato Khan’, who transacted a large volume of trade with ‘India’. At Pipli in Orissa, again, he found a big new ship belonging to a shigdar being sent to Cochin with varied merchandise under the command of a noble Portuguese, Teotonio Viegas. But altogether the volume of trade carried on by non-Portuguese shipping was hardly considerable. As early as 1597, the sair duties from Bandarban and Mandawi in sarkar Satgaon,—only about two decades after the foundation of Hugli,—were estimated at 120000 dam or
Rs. 30,000, obviously a result of the flourishing Portuguese trade. This was a record with which the other trading communities had nothing to compare. This monopolistic trade was mainly intra-Asiatic. Ships came from the various Portuguese settlements in different parts of Asia as far as Macao in China with local products—mainly spices, minerals, Burmese jewels and Chinese manufactured goods. European manufactures which came regularly to Portuguese India might also have found their way to Bengal in Portuguese vessels, at least for the purpose of presentation to grandees and the men who mattered. On the return voyage the ships carried as their cargo mainly the celebrated Bengal textiles and silks and various food-stuffs and sold them at enormous profit. The Bengal textiles, as Linschoten reports, reached even Portugal. The commodities thus exported were secured mainly through the middlemen and also from the hats or temporary markets set up (as at Betor) by the native merchants to supply the in-coming ships. One may also guess that the Portuguese in their later days went “up and down the river of Ganges to Faires buying their commodities with a great advantage” like the native traders described by Cesar Federici. Just as the Portuguese from other parts of Asia came to Bengal to sell their purchases from elsewhere and to take back Bengal goods for sale all over Asia, the Portuguese of Bengal also went out regularly in their ships to Burma, the Indies and Portuguese India and brought back enormous profits as also the various commodities ‘very vendible’ in Bengal, the sale of which to native merchants and courts added further to their opulence. Ceylon, and apparently also Goa, received regular supplies of food-stuffs from Bengal.

In the internal and overland trade of Bengal, merchants of India and the Asian countries to the west continued to play a prominent part without any serious opposition from the Portuguese. The latter, however, encouraged and made their settlements the seat of various types of manufactures,—dresses, textiles and delicacies for the palate in the main. The trading in salt,—then said to have been rare in Bengal,—was practically their monopoly, yielding enormous profit. Sondwip and Hijli were the chief centres for this trade. The traders from Hindustan, Persia and Central Asia flocked to the Portuguese settlements to buy the imported as well as the local products.
The Portuguese domination of the overland trade extended as far as Patna, as the Englishman Hughes noted regretfully in his letters.

V. Pattern of Dutch trade with Bengal.

By the second decade of the 17th century, the Dutch appeared as formidable rivals of the Portuguese and made serious inroads on the latter's monopoly of Bengal's sea-trade. Their manner of trading was in many ways similar to that of the Portuguese, though there were some important differences. Their trade also was mainly intra-Asian, but not entirely so. In the thirties of the 17th century, there would always be a few Dutch ships in Bengal, trading 'from port to port all the yeare long, sometimes buying rice and other provisions' where they were cheap and transporting these to better markets. Such ships would carry their wares to other parts of Asia and India, and from there would often sail for Holland. Streynsham Master, writing in 1675, stated that the Dutch trade in Bengal and other parts of India was financed partly from Europe. But gold and copper from Japan, tin, brass and ivory from Malay, spices and shells from the southern seas comprised the main stock-in-trade in exchange of which the Dutch secured cotton cloth, silk, sail-cloth, hemp and cordage, rice, opium, sugar, pepper, vegetable dyes, saltpetre etc. for sending home. By the last quarter of the 17th century the European market had thus definitely become one of the chief destinations of the Dutch trade in Bengal and other parts of India. In the earlier part of the century also the beginning of this tendency is clearly noticeable, though in the main the Dutch were then satisfied with carrying their merchandise from port to port along the coast. The Portuguese, in the earlier part of their trading career in Asia, had looked to the European market as the ultimate destination of their eastern trade. But by the time they came to play a prominent role in Bengal's economy, they had found the intra-Asian trade to be profitable enough, and from the view-point of the history of this province their trade with Europe was hardly of much consequence. The Dutch trade, on the contrary, seems never to have lost contact with Europe, though intra-Asian commerce was always one of its most important elements.

Another notable difference consisted in the fact that till the very end of Jahangir's reign, even after the probable establish-
ment of the Chinsura factory, the Dutch trade with Bengal was mainly coastal. The reasons are not far to seek. The Portuguese were already losing their naval supremacy by the beginning of the 17th century. But they were still solidly entrenched in the ports of Hugli and Chittagong and in effective control of Bengal's chief internal trade-routes, the river Ganges and its tributaries. And the people, as Roe noted, were not very favourable to the idea of letting any other European nation come to their soil for trade, lest war should break out. So at least till the fall of Hugli the Dutch had to confine their activities mainly to the coast.

Streýisham Master noted in his days a further peculiarity of Dutch trade in India, particularly in the south: “Their way of trading here is upon credit, so that at present they owe some hundred thousands of pagodas in this country for which they do not pay interest, but the men to whom they owe it are the merchants of whom they buy their goods and in recompense for the interest, they overrate their goods from 30 to 50 per cent and more, the interest of this country being 24 per cent per annum. And when their ships bring gold from the south seas, they coyne . . . . and send part hither but never soe much as to clear their debts.” Here again was a system which offered a contrast to that of the Portuguese. For the latter were in the habit of advancing money to middlemen and later collecting their goods, specially in the early part of their trading career. But we do not know if the Dutch had developed such a system in Bengal as early as our period, though a beginning in this direction even at that time does not seem very improbable.

VI. The results of European commercial activities.

The people who gained most from the European commercial activities in Bengal were of course the Europeans themselves. Bowrey, writing in the days of the decline of the Portuguese power, described the opulence which had survived the political storms. Master, in describing the wide extent and large-scale organisation of Dutch trade, wrote with obvious jealousy. To all this prosperity of the contemporary and a later epoch, Bengal of the early Mughal era had contributed a great deal. But what was a gain for the Europeans was in many ways a loss for Bengal. The control of Bengal's sea-trade now passed
almost entirely out of the hands of the Indian traders to be monopolised, first, by the Portuguese and later to some extent by the Dutch as well.

A compensatory factor was the enormous increase in the volume of trade. The Portuguese and the Dutch with their superior shipping could carry the wares of Bengal to the farthest corners of Asia and even to Europe, and bring back the products of those regions at a speed much higher than the best Asian crafts could have attained. Their control of the East Indies and the South Seas hastened the pace of this growth. One particular aspect of this development was the expansion of the market for Bengal goods. The Portuguese opened and widened the gate to the Asian market in the main, while some at least of Bengal’s products trickled into Portugal through traders who visited Portuguese India or came from there. But even in this period, the wider market of Europe was being slowly opened by the Dutch ships and frigates which touched at Bengal’s coast and sailed on to Holland via other parts of India and Africa. What was more, the nation which was destined to reshape Bengal’s economy, was already looking for a gateway into the province. The notes from the authorities at home, the eager queries of the Batavia council regarding Bengal ‘muga’,—all indicate the growing demand for Bengal products and the appreciation of the advantages of trade with Bengal. Thus by 1627 the window to the west was already opened and the circumstances which would open it yet wider were also taking shape.

Through this open window poured in a steady shower of gold, the volume of which is to be estimated, in the absence of more accurate statistics, in terms of the 30,000 rupees of sair duties payable at sarkar Satgaon alone and the daily custom dues of 4,000 rupees paid at Dacca for one single item,—betel. With gold came the seekers after it. To Hugli flocked the merchants of many nations,—Khurasanis, Mughals, Persians, Armenians, Hindustanis and the like,—to share in her new prosperity and carry thence the products of Bengal and Eastern Asia to upper India and regions further west. The markets of Dacca, the new capital, were also buzzing with the brisk activities of the many foreign and native traders. Their gains from this growing trade was no doubt considerable. Fitch mentioned the immense
wealth of the merchants of Sonargaon and Nathan could raise a loan of hundred thousand rupees at a few days’ notice from the merchant-princes of Dacca. Among the sharers in this new opulence one must count the middlemen to whom the Portuguese advanced money for purchases, the ‘sodagores’, foreign and native, who carried to the court of Agra the rich wares imported from abroad and Manrique’s ‘Cataris’,—Kshetris in more common parlance,—who were the richest people in Dacca, their adopted home. Of the local people, these middlemen and merchants, many of whom came from outside Bengal, benefited most from the European trade.

The common folk were, however, not entirely deprived. Along the river Ganges, in the small but important territory directly under the Portuguese, there developed a flourishing colony. The native, as much as the foreigner, shared in its prosperity. Besides fostering the general demand for Bengal’s products abroad, the Portuguese provided direct encouragement to her cotton, silk and certain minor industries by helping these develop in the territory occupied by them. They also made interesting additions by introducing the manufacture of certain food-stuffs like cheese, pickles, condiments etc.

A development of far greater significance was the importance which now accrued to certain regions comparatively insignificant earlier and the shifting of the centre of economic gravity to these places. Hijli and Chittagong, Sondwip and Sripur gained new importance and Dacca owed her prosperity not a little to the Portuguese. The silting of a river might have been primarily responsible for the decline of Satgaon. But the new port of Hugli, as the Padshahnama noted quite correctly, stole away much of the trade of the older Porto Pequeno and became the chief trading emporium in Bengal. The ships of the Portuguese trailing along the Ganges past Betor and Sutanati chalked out the path which the greater commerce of the Dutch and the English were to follow in future. They also thus marked out the region which was destined to become the centre of Bengal’s economic life and eventually of her political life as well. “It is under their commercial supremacy”, wrote Wilson in assessing the indebtedness of the English to the Portuguese, “that the place which we know by the name of Calcutta first began to have any importance; it is to them that we are chiefly
indebted for our first reliable information about Hugli and its markets."

**VII. Portuguese settlements,—a barrier to Mughal centralisation.**

Trade was the most important, but surely not the only form of activity of the Europeans in the early phase of their relation with Bengal. One of the strongest barriers that beat back the rising tide of Mughal centralisation in Bengal, was the Portuguese settlements which maintained their virtual independence to the very end of Jahangir's reign. Even the mere territorial extent of these settlements was considerable and the extent of their power was greater than that of their territory. They occupied the entire tract from Hugli to Satgaon and individual citizens bought up properties along both sides of the river. They lived in the completest form of independence in this region. The Mughals, satisfied with the revenues of the market and the customs, left the immediate government to the Portuguese, who elected annually a *Capitan Convidor* and four assistants, in accordance with the orders of the Spanish king. Even the Viceroy at Goa had no power over them and the fleet of the viceroy of Bengal himself, while entering the Hugli, would have to submit to certain formalities. With their boats they commanded the river Hugli itself. Power generated arrogance and, we are told, that at the time of Shahjahan's accession they did not even send the customary marks of submission. The prolonged resistance they offered to the imperial army is a further evidence of their strength. Of the other tracts, the very important port of Chittagong, the neighbouring settlement of Dianga and, for a long time, the island of Sondwip with its dependencies were also the seats of different Portuguese communities whose practical independence was often crowned with *de jure* authority acquired through feat of arms. After the conquest of Sondwip, they even planned to hold the east coast of the Bay with Chittagong and Pegu as bases. The numerous minor settlements in different parts of Bengal were also in all probability free from encroachments on part of the local authorities. For the military might of the Europeans and their trade, which was a source of considerable profit to the government, were sure to act as guarantee for their
extra-territorial rights. Fortunately for the Mughals, the scattered settlements of the Portuguese in Bengal obeyed no single authority, nor formed parts of any common organisation. Had such been the case, the establishment of Mughal authority in Bengal might have proved a more difficult task, and the Portuguese India on the western coast might still have a counterpart in the east along the river Hugli and the shores of the Bay.

VIII. Portuguese pirates,— a menace to Mughal peace.

The Portuguese harassed the Mughal authorities in Bengal in more than one way. The activities of the Portuguese pirates and buccaneers, assisted ably by their Magh allies, constituted a perpetual threat to the life and security of the Bengali people throughout our period and even after the fall of Chittagong during Shaista Khan's viceroyalty. Almost in the very beginning of their career in Bengal, the lawless spirit of this Latin people found expression in the destruction of a Persian galleot in the port of Chittagong itself (1526). The author of this crime was Ruy Vas de Pereira, an accredited representative of the government. When individual buccaneers, responsible to nobody, took up this task of ravage and plunder, it naturally assumed serious proportions. Fitch and Finch spoke of the terror unleashed by the Portuguese outlaws in the concluding years of the 16th century. In course of the following decade piracy in the coasts and waterways of Bengal developed as a lucrative and regular profession. Apparently any one who found even the very lax discipline of Bengal's Portuguese settlements rather irksome for his buoyant spirit, had recourse to this attractive mode of living. One Portuguese commander, Barbosa, quarrelled with his fellow officers, went on to settle at Hangarkhali and from there regularly ravaged the coastal districts of Bengal. Persons of better position soon flocked to serve under him.

A modern apologist suggests in an indirect way that the corrupting influence of the Magh King was largely responsible for the worst depredations committed by the Portuguese. But such an apology underestimates rather unduly the evil potentialities of that militant people. The career of Sebastiao Gonsalves Tibau clearly indicates the early beginning of piracy
as a regular profession among the Portuguese in Bengal. He came to India as a soldier, took to trade and after his escape from the massacre of Dianga, settled in the islands at the mouth of the Ganges as a full-fledged pirate, finally ending as the pirate-king of Sondwip. He gave this profession a new impetus though, no doubt, it reached its climax under the aegis of the Magh King. The latter resettled the Portuguese at Dianga after 1615, took them into his service and “with their conjoined efforts brought to a culmination an age of plunder and piracy”. By the end of our period, the Dutch, too, were pillaging ships from Bengal in the Bay. They, however, did not emulate the example of their predecessors on the soil of the province.

To-day one may visualise with precision the effects of these ravages on the life of Bengal. Peace and security, for one thing, were constantly in danger, particularly in the south-eastern districts. “. . . . The Firings of the Harmad, . . . .never ceased even in time of peace to attack and plunder the territory of Jessore . . . .” Daud Khan, the brother of Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, tried to check their depredations and in consequence was killed in his own house by the pirates who escaped with impunity. More than once, they sailed up to the suburbs of Dacca itself and ravaged the neighbouring villages. They abetted the Magh attack on Madaxa, i.e., Murshidabad. In fact, the ‘Portuguese leaders’ went out annually on “‘fibusterling slave-trading expeditions against the Mughals of Bengal.’ The Portuguese in Arakan service continually raided this unhappy province,—usually three to four times a year, not counting the minor raids. In fact they were authorised to ravage Bengal by the provincial Council at Goa which considered these ravages a just act, because the Mughals were held to be the enemies of Christianity.

Perhaps the most obnoxious activity of these pirates.—if one can at all make such an invidious distinction,—was their slave trade, in which the more peaceful settlers also participated. A graphic picture of this gruesome trade has been preserved in the detailed account of Shihabuddin Talish. The extent of the ravage caused by it may be gauged from the fact that between 1621 and 1624, the Portuguese brought to Chittagong alone 42,000 slaves from the various districts of Bengal. The settlers at Hugli regularly bought these slaves from the Maghs and so
did the Portuguese at Tamluk. It is a significant fact that at the time of the fall of Hugli the bulk of its defenders consisted of slaves. Shahjahan accused the Portuguese at Hugli of selling Bengali prisoners to the Maghs for their galleys. The slaves purchased at Chittagong and Dianga were sent to different parts of India by Indian and Portuguese dealers. The beautiful slaves seen by Pyrard de Laval at Goa’s markets, brought “from all countries of India”, included not a few from Bengal. The ship taking Manrique from Pipli to ‘India’ carried 80 slaves.

The effects of these regular raids and slave-trading activities may still be seen in more than one sphere of Bengali life. The forest which skirts the southern shores of Bengal owes its growth, as is well-known, not a little to this particular industry of the Portuguese, though perhaps popular opinion has erred on the side of exaggeration on this point. We have it, however, on the more dependable authority of Manrique, that the once flourishing island of Sagaur was destroyed by the Portuguese and the Maghs. The caste-histories of east and south-east Bengal also tell us of many families who lost their caste through the unholy touch of the Firingi or the Magh. These depredations, as noted elsewhere in this work, also contributed to the decline of the native sea-trade. A favourite method of the Portuguese pirates,—to capture ships and hold them to ransom,—accelerated that process.

**IX. Miscellaneous activities of the Portuguese.**

In the early Mughal period, the Portuguese also played a prominent part in Bengal’s history as mercenaries and officers in the local armies and thus anticipated the activities of the European military adventurers of a later date. Among them were famous figures like Domingo Carvalho and lesser men like Salvador Dantes in the service of the Masnad-i-Ala of Hijli, Fernando Lopes Pereira, appointed Captain of the port of Pipli by order of the Nawab of Dacca, and the Portuguese captain serving the Raja of Sripur, to name only a few. At Sripur, in fact, there was a whole contingent of Portuguese soldiers, though perhaps not very numerous. The Governor of Dacca also had under him a number of Portuguese captains who might not be excommunicated without his permission. The king of Arakan, as noted before, took the entire settlement
of Dianga into his service and gave them lands for their sustenance. A Portuguese captain piloted the ship of a shiqdar of Pipli out on a commercial venture. Taken together, the Portuguese mercenaries must have constituted a fairly numerous community, imparting to the armies and fleets of Bengal a little of their superior skill in military and naval affairs.

More adept in commerce and the art of war the Portuguese who came to Bengal were not entirely ignorant of the nobler arts of peace. True, the activities of the Portuguese missionaries affected but little the life of the Bengali people. But at times at least they brought to the path of God many of their fellow countrymen, who in their more usual moments, lived under "no form of subjection to God or man". According to Nicolas Pimenta, Domingo de Souza and Francisco Fernandes who went to Hugli in 1598, "reformed the courses of many which lived in Piracie, and loose lusts". They also performed a similar salutary task at Chandikan, "where they stayed a moneth to reforme disorders by Lusts and Discord". Fr. Melechoir Fonseca found in Bakla a settlement not visited by any priests for long and sought to reform them by his preachings. Judging from results, such wholesome efforts of the missionaries were hardly very successful. But if by their activities they could in the very least reform the ways of even some of their barbarous compatriots, then surely they deserved the gratitude of the people of Bengal.

The Portuguese also started certain types of development work. They added to the list of Bengal's agri-horticultural products many new items,—pine-apple, cashew-nuts and the like. At Hugli they built an alms-house, the Casa de Misericordia, the first of its kind in Bengal. They also built the first hospitals, in the modern sense of the term. They started the first missionary schools and sent Bengali students to the Jesuit College at Goa. What is more important, Domingo de Souza translated into the 'Bengalan Language', "a tractate of Christian Religion, in which were confuted the Gentile and Mahumetan errors: to which was added a short Catechisme by way of Dialogue". This work, "the children frequenting the schoole learned by heart, and taught the servants in their families". The far-reaching influence of
Portuguese on the Bengali language is a common knowledge to-day. What is less known is the fact that at one time Portuguese became almost the lingua franca of Bengal's coastal regions and was learnt by not a few of the Indians in this province. 'Mobato Khan', a Muslim merchant of Midnapore, spoke to Manrique in Portuguese. The Negroes in the service of the Raja of Sripur conversed in it. "Even as late as 1828 the Governor of Serampore received the daily report of his little garrison of thirty sepoys from the commandant, a native of Oudh, in Portuguese".

In the early days of Mughal rule in Bengal, the Portuguese anticipated in various ways the manifold part which Europeans were later destined to play in the history of the province. In this period they and the Dutch first brought to the doors of Bengal the fruits of the new trade with Asia and Europe. The proud settlements of Hugli and Chittagong, defiant in their independence, pointed to the way along which Chandernagore and Calcutta were to develop later. The Portuguese mercenaries in the pay of the subahdar and the Rajas appear as the true predecessors of the Europeans in the army of the Bengal Nawab. The missionaries and the clever agriculturist anticipated, though but crudely and feebly, the activities of Carey and Hare on the one hand and the development works of the British Indian Government on the other. If in this pleasant picture the pirates and buccaneers seem to strike a jarring note, let us remember the Company's servants in private trade and the gentlemen who shook the Pagoda tree after Plassey and the analogy will be almost perfect.

NOTES ON AUTHORITIES

I. For a detailed history of the Portuguese in Bengal, see Campos; also the chapter on this topic in History of Bengal. A description of the Portuguese settlements in Bengal by an Augustinian monk dated 1699 was found in the Goa archives, it has been published (in translation) in Bengal: Past and Present, 1952. For the history of Hugli, see Manrique, I, 27-9; also Elliot and Dowson, VII, 31ff (Padshahnama).

II. For the beginnings of Dutch trade with Bengal, see Letters Received, 1602-13, 9, 74-6; IV, 315; Roe, 193; Factory Records, 1622-23, 178, 317; Bowrey, 170; Hugli District Gazetteer, 56; Stewart, 138-9; Orme's History of Hindostan, II, 8.

III. For Fitch's account of the state of law and order in Bengal and the position of the Portuguese, see Early Travels, 5-6, 18, 24-6, 28, 34; also
181 for similar description by Finch. For references to raw materials and manufactures from Bengal in English Records, see Letters Received, I, 69-70, 72, 74, 76, 255; II, 59, 181; III, 66. For discussions regarding the opening of direct trade with Bengal, ibid., IV, 66, 250, 315, 327, 342-43; V, 173; Roe, 193, 434; Factory Records, 1618-21, 14, 49-50. For the prospecting mission of Hughes and Parker, see Travels of Peter Mundy, Appendix D, 360-73; also Factory Records, 1618-21, xxiii-xxiv, 46, 52, 193, 197, 205, 260, 317. For Jahangir’s farman of 1623, ibid., 309; for the agreement with Surat authorities, ibid, 27. For the reasons of the delay in the renewed attempt to open trade with Bengal, ibid, 1630-33, Introduction, XXX.

IV. For the Portuguese settlement in Satgaon and Cesar Federici’s account of their trade, see Purchas, X, 113-14, 138. For their independent custom houses, see Campos, 113. For Hugli and its trade, see references in Section I; also Manrique, I, 27-31 and Early Travels, 26. For the expansion of Portuguese trade and the commodities in which they traded, see Manrique, I, 27-36; Mr. Campos’ chapter on the subject: also the relevant factory records mentioned in the notes on Section III; Factory Records, 1618-21, 195, 197 and Early Travels, 182. For the methods by which the Portuguese tried to maintain their monopoly, see Factory Records, 1618-21, 254n, 264; 1630-33, XXX; Campos, 37. For the activities of the Bengali traders, see Purchas, II, 315; IX, 560; Manrique, I, 428, 441. For other Asian traders, see Manrique, I, 56-7, 438; Cabral’s letter in Manrique, II, 392; Bowrey, 192; Bernier, 310. For the system of licences introduced by European traders see Wilson, I, 9 (extract from W. Bruten’s Voyage to Bengal, 1638). For the treaty between the Bakla Raja and the Goa authorities, see Sen, Report on the Historical Records at Goa, 4. For sair duties from sarkar Satgaon, see Ain, II, 154. For the intra-Asiatic trade of the Portuguese, see Pelsaert, 8-9; Pyard, II, 211, 212; Roe, 308; Bowrey, 133-34; Linschoten, I, 96; Purchas, X, 114, 136; Early Travels, 44; Letters Received, IV, 34.

V. For English accounts of the nature of Dutch trade in Bengal, see Hedges’ Diary, III, 179; Master, I, 141, 297. For comparison between the volume of Dutch and Portuguese trade, see McPherson, 45, 47-8. For the local people’s early objection to non-Portuguese European traders, see Factory Records, 1618-21, 14.

VI. For the wealth of the merchants of Dacca and Sonargaon, see Early Travels, 28; Baharistan, 276b; tr., II, 644; Manrique I, 31, 33, 44.

VII. For the power and position of the Portuguese settlement of Hugli see Manrique, II, 316, 393, (Cabral’s letter); Elliot and Dowson, VII, 31-32 (Padshahnama), Roe, 309n. For Portuguese ambitions regarding the east coast of the Bay, see Campos, 71.

VIII. For the destruction of a Persian galleot by the Portuguese at Chittagong, see Campos, 30-31. For Portuguese piratical activities and slave trade, see Early Travels, 25, 182; Manrique, I, 92, 285-86, 304, 442, 445; II, 315, 323, 400, (Cabral’s letter); Baharistan, 36a, 54b; tr., I, 85-6, 136-37; Fathlyya (continuation), 122b, 123a, 123b; J.A.S.B., 1907, 422; Bernier,
239; *Campos*, 78, 81, 105; D. C. Bhattacharya, “*Vangalay Magh d auratmyer vivarana*” in *Prabasi*, 1353, B.S.

IX. For the Portuguese mercenaries in the employ of local chiefs, see *Manrique*, I, 437, 443; II, 311, 393 (Cabral’s letter); *Purchas*, X, 206 (Pimenta’s letter). For the activities of the Portuguese missionaries see, *Dujarric*, IV, 826-34; *Purchas*, X, 205 (Pimenta’s letter). For the spread of the Portuguese language, see *Manrique*, I, 420-21; *Hugli District Gazetteer*, 55-6.