SOCIAL HISTORY
OF
THE MUSLIMS IN BENGAL
(DOWN TO A. D. 1538)

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East Pakistan.
1959.
To the memory of my parents,
Late Sayyid Waizuddin
&
Late Sayyida Rashida Khatun
PREFACE

No one can deny the need of a comprehensive social history of the Muslims in this sub-continent. The present work is a pioneer attempt in partial fulfilment of this need covering a limited period in Bengal’s history. Prepared and submitted as a thesis, it earned me the degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Dacca. We have gathered together all the relevant materials which help in tracing the origin and gradual building up of the Muslim Society in Bengal from the earliest time down to A.D. 1538, the terminal date being chosen as it marks a stage in the social development before the true Pathan (Afghan) and Mughal elements were introduced into Bengal. In this period Islām, which came as a foreign religion, was integrated into the socio-religious system of the people, and while it won over the general mass to its own ideals, many of the local customs, beliefs and practices stole into its fold and became recognised as the part and parcel of the local Muslim Society. Islām became a national religion in Bengal mainly under the patronising spirit of the Independent Sultāns.

The thesis first discusses the sources from which the materials are drawn and then outlines a politico-social background in order to understand the parts played by various forces in the society. The next chapter is the longest, divided into three sections, each assessing the contributions made by the Sultāns, the Scholars and the Šūfis towards the growth of the Muslim Society. In the next three chapters the society is viewed as an integrated whole and analytical study is made to understand its composition, the popular elements and the daily life of the people. Finally the concluding chapter sums up the main points.

The whole treatment is historical and no attempt is made to solve any sociological problem. The social questions, as they arise in their historical perspective, have been considered. In short the thesis deals with the Muslim Society of Bengal as it passes through centuries on the basis of the available materials, and hence the title Social History of the Muslims in Bengal.

I take this opportunity to thank my teachers and colleagues in the Department of History, University of Dacca, who encouraged me all the time in carrying on research in such an interesting field. Words
fail me to express my gratitude to Dr. A. H. Dani but for whose active help and guidance, I would not have been a success. He has also been kind enough to write a foreword to this book. Prof. A. Halim, Head of the Department, took keen interest in the progress of my work, and inspite of his manifold preoccupations, found time to go through the thesis before submission and make valuable suggestions. My colleague and former student Mr. Md. Sirajuddin helped me in the preparation of index. I am also indebted to Mr. Faiz Ahmad Choudhury of Persian department and Mr. Ahmad Sharif of Bengali department, Dacca University, for the help received from them. My friend Mr. M. A. Khan, Research Officer, Bureau of National Reconstruction, Govt. of E. Pakistan, helped me in many ways especially in proof reading. Dr. E. Haq, Dr. M. Ishaq and Dr. M. S. Hasan helped me by lending rare books from their personal libraries. My thanks are also due to the President and members of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan, Dacca, who kindly undertook to publish this book.

University of Dacca.  

Abdul Karim  

The 10th November, 1959.
FOREWORD

From the mere tale of wars and conquests and those events that centre round a few personalities, it is pleasing to go over to the peoples' history and view in broad perspective the interaction of different civilisations, the mingling of the peoples of diverse races and qualities, and the social adjustments that accrue from the complexities of human life. In this unfolding of man's history the passions of war cool down to the necessities of human existence. Man appears as an individual—a part of the social group that is being created out of the chaos resulting from wars and conquests. It is precisely this aspect of the history of Bengal that has been attempted in the following pages by Dr. Abdul Karim. Away from the political bickerings he is concerned here with the problem of the fundamental change that the mediaeval society of Bengal was undergoing as a result of the impact of Islām. How was it possible for the flooded plains of Bengal to absorb the desert-born Islām, and what were the circumstances that led this far-flung area to become a Muslim-majority pocket? What forces were acting and reacting in the formation of the Muslim society in Bengal? Finally the attempt is made to analyse this social overgrowth on the planes of orthodox Islām and local beliefs and practices. The history traced here on the basis of the Persian chronicles, inscriptions, coins, foreign travellers' accounts, Persian and Bengali literature and the local traditions, mirrors the individual and the groups of individuals as taking part in the social phenomena that constitute the foundation of East Pakistan. An understanding of these forces is essential both for those who are engaged in the study of similar societies and for those who are busy in building up the new order. The book brings forth sufficient materials and draws certain conclusions, which even if not palatable to all, deserve careful reading and thinking over.

University of Dacca.  
The 10th November, 1959.  

Ahmad Hasan Dani  
Reader in History,  
University of Dacca.
NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

The following system has been used:—

(i) For Arabic and Persian letters:—

\[
\begin{array}{lcl}
\text{أ} &=& \text{a} \\
\text{ب} &=& \text{b} \\
\text{پ} &=& \text{p} \\
\text{ت} &=& \text{t} \\
\text{ث} &=& \text{th} \\
\text{ج} &=& \text{j} \\
\text{چ} &=& \text{ch} \\
\text{ح} &=& \text{h} \\
\text{خ} &=& \text{kh} \\
\text{د} &=& \text{d} \\
\text{ذ} &=& \text{dh} \\
\text{ر} &=& \text{r} \\
\text{ز} &=& \text{z} \\
\text{ژ} &=& \text{zh} \\
\text{س} &=& \text{s} \\
\text{ش} &=& \text{sh} \\
\text{ص} &=& \text{s} \\
\text{ف} &=& \text{f} \\
\text{ق} &=& \text{q} \\
\text{k} &=& \text{k} \\
\text{گ} &=& \text{g} \\
\text{l} &=& \text{l} \\
\text{م} &=& \text{m} \\
\text{n} &=& \text{n} \\
\text{ر} &=& \text{m} \\
\text{ز} &=& \text{n} \\
\text{i} &=& \text{h} \\
\text{ي} &=& \text{y}
\end{array}
\]

Short vowels—a, i, u
Long vowels—ā, ī, ū
Diphthong—aw, ay

(ii) For Bengali letters:—

\[
\begin{array}{lcl}
\text{অ} &=& \text{a} \\
\text{এ} &=& \text{ā} \\
\text{ই} &=& \text{i} \\
\text{ঈ} &=& \text{î} \\
\text{উ} &=& \text{u} \\
\text{ঊ} &=& \text{ù} \\
\text{ো} &=& \text{ri} \\
\text{ষ} &=& \text{e}
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{lcl}
\text{এ} &=& \text{a} \\
\text{ও} &=& \text{o} \\
\text{আ} &=& \text{au} \\
\text{ক} &=& \text{k} \\
\text{খ} &=& \text{kh} \\
\text{গ} &=& \text{g} \\
\text{ঘ} &=& \text{gh} \\
\text{ঞ} &=& \text{ù}
\end{array}
\]
| त  | ch       | ण  | b       |
| थ  | chh      | ड  | bh      |
| ज  | j        | म  | m       |
| ध  | jh       | य  | y       |
| ण  | ṅ        | न  | r       |
| तें  | ṭ       | ल  | l       |
| ठें  | ṭh      | न  | v       |
| डें  | ḍ       | झ  | s       |
| ढें  | ḍh      | घ  | sh      |
| पें  | ṃ       | ङ  | s       |
| त  | t        | ह  | h       |
| थ  | th       | ड  | r       |
| ध  | d        | य  | y       |
| ण  | dh       | र  | m       |
| न  | n        | ढ  | h       |
| प  | p        | न  | n       |

The transliteration system has not been followed in bold letters.
ABBREVIATIONS

‘Afīl’ = Tārīkh-i-Fīrūzshāhī by Shams-i-Sirāj ‘Afīf, Bibliotheca Indica, A. D. 1890.


Baranī = Tārīkh-i-Fīrūzshāhī by Dīyā‘ al-Dīn Baranī, Bibliotheca Indica, A. D. 1862.


Khazīnāt al-‘Aṣfīyā’ = Khazīnāt al-‘Aṣfīyā’ by Ghulām Sarwar, Newal Kishore Press, Lucknow.


Minhāj = Tabaqāt-i-Nāṣirī by Abū ‘Umar


Muslim Inscriptions of Bengal = Bibliography of the Muslim Inscriptions of Bengal by Dr. A. H. Dani in Appendix to the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan, Vol. II, A. D. 1957.

Riyāḍ = Riyāḍ al-Salāṭīn by Ghulām Ḥusayn Salim, Bibliotheca Indica, A. D. 1898.

Tārīkh-i-Fīrishtah = Tārīkh-i-Fīrishtah or Gulshan-i-Ibrāhīmī by Muḥammad Qāsim Fīrishtah, Newal Kishore edition, Lucknow.

Yaḥyā bin ʿAḥmad = Tārīkh-i-Mubārakshāhī by Yaḥyā bin ʿAḥmad bin ʿAbd Allāh al-Sarhindī, Bibliotheca Indica, A.D. 1931.
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CHAPTER I

SOURCES

No attempt has so far been made to reconstruct the social history of the Muslims in this sub-Continent. The attention has centred round the political history chiefly because the Persian Chronicles, which are the main sources of Muslim history, confine themselves to a narration of political events. On Bengal also number of works have been produced dealing only with the political history, though no contemporary chronicle of the pre-Mughal period has so far been discovered in this part of the country. This aspect of the history of Bengal is based on brief references found in the chronicles of Northern India and on the data collected from a study of inscriptions, coins and other archaeological evidence. There is, however, sufficient materials in these chronicles as well as in the contemporary literature—both Persian and Bengali—available, with the help of which social history can be reconstructed.

These materials fall into following groups:

(a) Persian and Arabic Works written outside Bengal.
(b) Inscriptions and Coins.
(c) Writings of Muslim Scholars in Bengal.
(d) Writings of non-Muslim Scholars in Bengal.
(e) Hagiological literature.
(f) Accounts of foreign travellers.

Social History

(a) Persian and Arabic Works written outside Bengal

(i) Chronicles

The earliest chronicle referring to Bengal is the �iaca-i-
Naṣiri of Abū 'Umar Minhāj al-Dīn 'Uthmān bin Sirāj al-Dīn al-
Juzjānī1. Though it is a general history of Islam, the author devotes a section2 on Bengal dealing with the Khalji Maliks of Lakhnawī. He also refers to Bengal while dealing with the Sultanāns of Dehī and their officers connected with affairs of Bengal3. The author visited Bengal during the governorship of Malik 'Izz al-Dīn Tughral Tughān Khān4. He received patronage from the said Malik, joined the war against the king of Orissa and acted as a mediator between his patron and Malik Tamar Khān Qirān, Governor of Oudh, when they were quarrelling for the possession of Lakhnawī. From his description of Bengal it is clear that the author took pains to collect information about the Khalji Maliks from their surviving associates5 and about other governors from the information available at the Dehī court or by his personal observation. But unfortunately the book gives only a chronicle of political events. References to social affairs are limited to general remarks about the construction of mosques and madrasahs, (Schools or Colleges) the arrival of Muslim divines and the construction of Khānqahs (mystic convents) in the metropolitan city or the striking of coins and the reading of Khuṭbah (lecture delivered in Friday prayer in the name of the Sultanān). Nevertheless, it is of importance, as it is the only Chronicle which supplies information about the foundation of Muslim rule in Bengal.

Other contemporary Chronicles that refer to Bengal are, (a) Tārīkh-i-Firūz Shāhī of Diya‘al-Dīn Barani7, (b) Tārīkh-i-Firūz Shāhī of Shams-i-Sirāj 'Aṣīf,8 (c) Tārīkh-i-Mubārak Shāhī of Yaḥyā

1. Published in the Bibliotheca Indica Series, A.D. 1864.
2. See, Taḥqat No. 20.
3. See for example, Taḥqat Nos. 21 & 22.
4. Minhāj, pp. 243-44.
5. Ibid, pp. 245-46.
6. e.g., the information received from Mu‘tamid al-Dawlah (Minhāj, p. 153).
7. Published in the Bibliotheca Indica Series, A.D. 1862.
8. Ibid, A.D. 1890.
bin Aḥmad bin ‘Abd Allāh al-Sahrindi, and (d) Futūḥ-al-Salāṭīn of ‘Īṣāmī. The first three were written in Dehli and the last in the Bahmani Capital under the patronage of Sulṭān ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Ḥasan. None of these authors came to Bengal. Moreover they refer to Bengal only in connection with the invasion of that country by the Dehli Sulṭāns. But the chief importance of these chronicles lies in the fact that while describing the battles between the Sulṭāns of Dehli and their antagonists in Bengal, they occasionally refer to the geographical factors affecting the politics of the country, the circumstances leading to the independence of Bengal Sulṭāns, the composition of their army and other connected subjects. From these chronicles, a student of Social history can sift materials for his own purpose.

The later chronicles are, (a) Ṭabaqāt-i-Akbari of Niẓām al-Dīn Aḥmad Bakhshī, (b) Muntakhab al-Tawārīkh of ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Badāyūnī, and (c) Tārīkh-i-Hind of Abū’l-Qāsim Firīshṭāh. The first two works were written in Dehli during the reign of the great Mughal emperor Akbar, while the third i.e., number (c) was written in the Deccan. Badayuni’s Muntakhab is a general history of the Muslim world. He refers to Bengal in connection with his discussion on the pre-Mughal Sulṭāns of Dehli. No chapter is devoted in his book to the history of the Independent Sulṭāns of Bengal as is done by Niẓām al-Dīn Bakhshī and Firīshṭāh. Hence the two latter Chronicles are valuable, though their information is short and meagre. Another important Chronicle which has a chapter on Bengal is Žafar al-Walīh bi Muṣṭafar wa Ālīh (An Arabic History of Gujrat) of ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad bin ‘Umar al-Makkī alīs Ḥājī Dabīr. Ḥājī Dabīr

2. Edited by Agha Mahdi Husain, Agra, A. D. 1938.
4. See, Baranī, p. 82.
5. Published in the Bibliotheca Indica Series, A. D. 1927-35. There are three volumes, of which Vol.III has a chapter on Bengal.
was alive in 1020/A. D. 1611, and the latest event recorded in his book is the accession of Emperor Akbar in 963/A. D. 1556\(^1\). Though not a contemporary writer, he has utilised some earlier Chronicles like that of Dīyā‘al-Dīn Barānī and one of Ḥusām Khān, now lost to us\(^3\). He records the construction of a madrasah in the holy city of Makkah by Sulṭān Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Shāh of Bengal and his receipt of investiture from the Khalifah of Egypt. The writer quotes al-Sakhāwī's *Al-Daw al-Lāmi‘ li-ahl al-Qarn al-Tāsi‘*, which is discussed below.

(ii) Other Works

The *Ā’yn-i-Akbarī* of Abū‘l Faḍl\(^8\), written under the great Muḥāl emperor Akbar, forms a separate sub-class. This is a book approximating to modern gazetteers. The second volume of the *Ā’yn* devotes one chapter on Bengal and another chapter on the Sūfīs in which some of the Bengal Sūfis have been included. The list of Bengal Sulṭāns as available in the *Ā’yn* is faulty, but the account of socio-economic condition is important as it gives an opportunity to examine them in the light of other corroborative evidences. The chapter giving statistical details of the revenue of Bengal, though of later period, is important in as much as it supplies for the first time names of important places and revenue divisions, some of which can no doubt be traced to our period.

The *Qirā‘an al-Sa‘dayn*\(^4\) of Amīr Khursaw occupies a unique place in the Persian literature of this sub-continent. It is more than a poetical description of the meeting between the opposing Sulṭāns, the father and the son, Sulṭān Nāṣir al-Dīn Maḥmūd Buγhrā Khān of Bengal and Sulṭān Mu‘izz al-Dīn Kayqobād of Dehlī on the bank of the river Sarayu. The poet undertook to write the book in obedience to royal command but nevertheless it clearly brings to our view the licentious life of Sulṭān Kayqobād and his flattering court retinue, dancers and musicians who followed even in the wake of battle.

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3. Published in the Bibliotheca Indica Series, A.D. 1877.
Another important Work is *Al-Ḍaw al-Lāmiʿ li-ahl al-Qarn al-tāsiʿ*, a biographical dictionary of famous men among the Muslims of the 9th century A.H., written by a contemporary scholar ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sakhāwī. The author refers to the construction of madrasahs in and sending of presents to the holy cities of Makkah and Madīnah by Sulṭān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aʿẓam Ṣḥāh and Sulṭān Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Ṣḥāh. He also relates the religious activities of Sulṭān Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Ṣḥāh, the converted son of Rājā Gaṇeṣa and his receipt of investiture from the Khālīfah of Egypt. As the author spent much of his time and died in Madīnah, there is no room to challenge the authenticity of his evidence. Ghulām ʿAlī Ṭāṣād Bilgrāmī in his *Khazānān-i-Āmirah* (a history of the Persian literature) quoting from Quṭb al-Dīn Ḥanāfī’s *Tārīkh-i-Makkah*, relates Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aʿẓam Ṣḥāh’s benevolent activities in Makkah and Madīnah and thus gives further stress on the authenticity of al-Sakhāwī’s view. This evidence has also been cited in a 19th century manuscript, *Iḥāṣah-i-Ḥāṣirah li-Khazānān-i-Āmirah of Ḥāmid Allāh Khān*.

(b) Inscriptions

Contemporary inscriptions and coins have been discovered in large number. Their chief importance lies in the fact that they

1. Published in Cairo, A. H. 1303, in several Volumes. Al-Sakhāwī was born in Cairo in 830/A.D. 1426, and died in the city of Madīnah in 902/A.D. 1496. (See, Introduction to the first volume of *Al-Ḍaw al-Lāmiʿ li-ahl al-Qarn al-tāsiʿ*).


4. Inscriptions have been published in various historical Journals. Recently Dr. A. H. Dani has compiled a bibliography of inscriptions. (See, *Muslim inscriptions of Bengal*).

help in building up the chronology of the Sultāns. The find-spots of inscriptions and mint-names on coins enable us to trace the gradual expansion of the Muslim power and settlement of the Muslim population in different parts of the country. The reference to the erection of mosques and madrasahs, the names of ṣūfīs, ʿĀlims and the learned officers and kings found on inscriptions show how different sections of people contributed to the growth of the Muslim society. Similarly the titles of Bengal Sultāns on their coins and inscriptions indicate their attitude towards the Khalīfah of Islām, their love of power and show, their learning and particular inclinations and sometimes dynastic relations.

(c) Writings of Muslim Scholars in Bengal

(i) Chronicles

So far no contemporary chronicle of our period written in Bengal has been discovered. Only two works are known which cover the political history of this period —Riyāḍ al-Salāṭīn of Ghulām Ḥusayn Salīm, which was written at the instance of George Udney in the year A.D. 1788, gives a connected summary account, based on published materials of the Muḥāfīḍ period and the local traditions that the author could gather in Maldah. The other work which remains unpublished but for few extracts translated by H. Beveridge is the Khurshīd-i-Jahān Numā of Sayyid Ilāhī Bakhsh. It does not add any new information.

(ii) Persian and Arabic Works

Important works of this category are, a translation of a Sanskrit Yogic work named Amṛtkuṇḍ by one Qāḍī Rukn al-Dīn al-Samarqandī in the reign of Sultān ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ʿAlī Mardān Khaljī, a book


1. Published in the Bibliotheca Indica Series, A. D. 1898.
2. H. Beveridge has made a long summary translation in J. A. S. B 1895.
3. The original translations are nowhere available at the present time, but a second Persian recension made several years after
on *Fiqh* named *Nām-i-Ḥaqq*, a Persian lexicon named *Sharfnāmah* by Ibrāhīm Qawwām Fārūqī⁴ and a transcription of *Jāmī’ al-Bukhārī* by Muḥammad bin Yazdān Bakhsh, famous as *Khwājgī* Shirwānī⁵. Except the translation of *Amritkund* dealing with *yogic* philosophy all other works were meant for educating Muslim population in Islāmic sciences and literature.

(iii) **Bengali Works**

The earliest Bengali Work by a Muslim author is *Yusuf Jolekhā* (correctly *Yusuf Julaykha*)⁶ by Shāh Muḥammad Ṣāghīr written in by an anonymous writer is now available in different libraries of Europe and Islāmic countries. (For details see, *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, Karachi, Vol.1, Part 1, January, 1953, p. 53, note I). Recently Qazi Ahmad Mian Akhtar of Junagadh has published the preface of this second recension and the titles of chapters and parts of the book in the *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, Karachi, Vol. 1, Part 1, January, 1953. Ethe’ in his *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the Library of the India Office* (See Vol. I, Oxford, A. D. 1903, No. 2002), refers to a manuscript named *Bahr al-ḥayāt*. According to him, the book, *Amritkund* was translated by one Kanāma, a Brahmin of Kamrup, who accepted Islām when Sulṭān ‘Alā al-Dīn Khaljī invaded Bengal. The manuscripts in question are probably different transcription of the same work, because only the titles of works and the name of the Brahmin differ. Ethe’ probably confused between ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Khaljī and ‘Ali Mardān Khaljī, because at the present state of our knowledge we know that Sulṭān ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Khaljī never invaded nor conquered Bengal.

1. There are two editions of the book, one from Bombay, A. D. 1885, and the other from Kānpūr in 1332/A.D. 1907.
2. A manuscript copy is now preserved in the ‘Āliyah Madrasah Library, Dacca, (Ms. No. P.MSS 13/8).
4. There are three manuscript copies of the book in the Dacca University Library, (Old Catalogue Nos. 225-227 and New Catalogue Nos. 12-14), and one manuscript copy in the possession of Dr. Ėnāmul Haq, Director, Bengali Academy, Dacca.
the reign of Sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aʿẓam Shāh (A.D. 1392-1410). It gives in verse the love tale of Ḥaḍrat Yūsuf and Zulaykhā on the basis of the Kitāb and the Qurʾān.

Dr. Enamul Haq suggests that three other Muslim poets wrote books in Bengali during the period under review. They were Zayn al-Dīn, Muzammil and Afdal ʿAli. But a close examination shows that they belong to later period. Zayn al-Dīn, in his book Rasūl Vijaya refers to one Yūsuf Kān who is identified by Dr. Enamul Haq with Sultan Shams al-Dīn Yūsuf Shāh (A.D. 1474-81). But except the similarity in name there is no other proof to be adduced. Moreover the name has been written as Yūsuf Kān. Had he been a king, he would have been called Shāh and not Kān. Ibrāhīm Qawwām Fārūqī in his Sharfnāmah records that one Amīr Zayn al-Dīn Harwī was the poet-laureate of Sultan Rukan al-Dīn Bārbak Shāh, the father of Yūsuf Shāh, but it is difficult to identify him with the author of Rasūl Vijaya. Muzammil’s works Sātnāmā (Seʿtnāmah) and Nīṭisāstravartā have been discovered. The books deal with some popular beliefs of the Muslims in Bengal such as the auspicious days and hours to make visits, journeys, construction of houses, wearing new clothes etc. Dr. Enamul Haq attributes him to the 15th century A.D. on ground that the poet in one place refers to one Shāh Badar al-Dīn Pir, whom the learned scholar identifies with Pir Badar al-Dīn Badar-i-ʿĀlam of Bihar. The identification is obviously wrong because, except the similarity of name, there is no other proof for such an identification. Muzammil does not give any date of composition. His books deal with those popular beliefs which cannot be traced out from any other contemporary source. So to fix a date simply on the similarity of name is risky and unhistorical. A book named Naṣīḥatnāmah of poet Afdal ʿAli

2. Ibid, pp. 60-70.
3. Ibid, pp. 61 ff. (Dacca University MS. No. 594).
5. The manuscripts (Nos. 119 & 237) are preserved in the Dacca University Library.
has been discovered. Dr. Enamul Haq places it in early 16th century on the following grounds. First, the poet refers to one Shâh Rustam who, according to local people of Chittagong, lived there three to four hundred years back. Secondly, in one Bengali padâ (couplet) ascribed to one Afḍal ‘Alî, the poet refers to Sayyid Firûz Shâh, identified with Sulṭân ‘Alâ’al-Dîn Firûz Shâh (A. D. 1532-33). None of these arguments is weighty. As for the first, the local tradition can hardly be accepted unless corroborated by other evidences; as for the second, there is no proof to identify Afḍal ‘Alî, the Padakâra (the writer of couplet) with Afḍal ‘Alî, the author of Naṣīḥatāmah. Sayyid Sulṭân’s Ofhâte Rasul (Wafat-i-Rasûl) dated towards the later half of the 16th century A. D. and Dawlat Wazîr Bahrâm Khân’s Lâlî Majnu dated between A.D. 1545-1553 contain in them traditional account of their religious and literary materials. Muḥammad Khân’s Maktul Hosân (correctly Maqtût Ḥusayn), a 17th century Bengali Work records the settlement of an Arab named Mâhisawâr in Chittagong and his contact with the local people.

(d) Writings of non-Muslim Scholars in Bengal

The contemporary Bengali books written by non-Muslims are many, but only two of them namely Padma Purâṇa of Vijaya Gupta and Manasâ Vijaya of Vipradâsa make some reference to the Muslim society. Though other books like Mâlâdhara Vasu’s Śrî Krishna

1. Ibid, pp. 72-75.
2. Ibid.
3. Edited by Ali Ahmad, Noakhali, B. S. 1356.
4. Edited by Ahmad Shariq and published by Bengali Academy, Dacca, A. D. 1957.
6. There are a few editions of the book, the one edited by B. K. Bhattacharjee and published by Bâñî Niketan, Barisal, has been followed.
SOCIAL HISTORY

Vijaya, Chandra's Śrī Krishṇa Kīrtana, Kavindra's Mahābhārata, Śrī Kara Nandī's Mahābhārata (Ātwamedha Parva) and Dvija Śrī Dhara's Vidyā Sundara, do not refer to the Muslim society, the very fact that many of the authors were patronised by the Bengal Sultāns, or their officers, show the sympathetic attitude of the Muslims towards the non-Muslim authors and their works.

Of the later Bengali literature, the biographies of Śrī Chaitanya Deva, such as Chaitanya Bhāgavata of Brindāvana Dāsa, Chaitanya Charitāmṛita of Krishṇa Dāsa Kavirāja need special mention. In depicting the superhuman power of Chaitanya and some of his followers they also refer to the Muslim population. Though shrouded with religious frenzy, they offer corroborative evidences. Mukunda Rāma's Chaṇḍi Maṅgala dated towards the end of the 16th century A. D. depicts the religious and social life of the Muslims in a new settlement named Birnagar. The settlement itself seems to be imaginary, but he must have painted the Muslim society as he found it.

(e) Hagiological literature

The Muslim hagiological literature has so far remained untapped except for writing a few articles by Prof. H. Askari. They may be divided into three parts- (i) the Biographies of the Śūfis, (ii) the malfuzat or discourses of the Śūfis and (iii) the maktūbāt or letters written by the Śūfis. We shall see later that Bengal was the seat of a

1. Edited by Khagendra Nath Mitra and published by Calcutta University, A. D. 1944.
3. Edited by Gaurī Nāth Sāstrī and published from Dhubri, Assam.
7. There are a few editions of this book.
8. There are a few editions of this book.
9. Published by the Baṅgabāṣī Kāryālāya, Calcutta. The book has also been published in two volumes by Calcutta University, A. D. 1924 and 1926.
large number of Şūfīs, but very few of their malfūzāt or maktūbāt have come to light.

(i) The biographies of the Sufis

A good number of biographical works dealing with the life sketch of Muslim saints of Indo-Pak sub-continent have been discovered. But unfortunately most of them do not refer to their activities in Bengal.

The contemporary biography Manāqib al-Asfīyā’ of Shāh Shu’ayb deals with only Makhdūm al-Mulk Shaykh Šarf al-Din Yaḥyā Maneri. In this connection the book makes casual reference to Šarf al-Din Abū Tawwāmah, the teacher of Makhdūm al-Mulk who passed his later life in Sunārgāwn and Mawlānā Taqī al-Din, the teacher of Shaykh Yaḥyā (father of Makhdūm al-Mulk) who lived at Mahi Santosh. Siyar al-Awliyā’ of Muhammad Mubārak ‘Alawī Kirmānī alīs Amīr Khūrd devotes a section to Shaykh Akhī Sirāj al-Dīn ‘Uṭmānī2a. Two other biographies that deal with a few Bengal Saints are of later date. They are Akhbar al-Akhīyār of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ḥaq Dehlawi3 (written in the reigns of Akbar and Jahāngīr)4 and Mirāt al-crastār of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Chishtī5 written in the reign of Shāh Jahān.6 Both the works deal more with the activities of the Şūfīs outside Bengal, than their activities in Bengal proper. Mirāt-i-Madārī,7 also of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Chishtī, deals only with the life of Bādi’ al-Dīn Shāh Madār outside Bengal. Khazīnāt al-Asfīyā’ of Ghulām Sarwar8 also a later work is practically a reproduction of Akhbar al-Akhīyār.

1. See, Chapter III, Section (c).
2. Extract printed at the end of the Maktubāt-i-Ṣadī.
2(a) Ghulām Aḥmad Khān has published an Urdū translation of this book from Muslim Press, Dehlī.
5. Manuscript Nos. 16 A.R./143 of the Dacca University Library and Ma 12/19-20 of ʿĀliyah Madrasah Library, Dacca.
7. Manuscript No. 217 of the Dacca University Library.
8. Published by Newal Kishore Press, Lucknow.
Another biographical work is Gülzär-i-Abrār of the Shāṭārī scholar Ghawthī, written in A.D. 1613. It also contains lives of many Şūfis of Bengal.

Beside these, three other biographies dealing with three different Şūfis were written in Bengal. The first is Sekh Šubhodya, (Šaykh Šubhodaya) dealing with the life of Shaykh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizī in Bengal. This is a Sanskrit work attributed to Halâyudha Miśra, a courtier of king Lakshmana Sena. But the book is said to be spurious and is generally dated to 16th century A.D.3 The second is Risâlat al-Shuhdā, of Pir Muḥammad Shāṭārī, dated 17th century A.D. It deals with the life of Shāh Ismā'īl Ghāzī in Bengal. The third is Suhayl-i-Yaman of Nâṣir al-Dīn Ḥaydar, dated A.D. 1859. The book deals with the biography of Shāh Jalāl of Sylhet. Though of very late origin the author had the advantage of consulting two earlier manuscripts, Risâlah of Muḥī' al-Dīn Khâdim and Rawḍat al-Salâtîn, now lost to us.

(ii) The Malfuzat

The malfūzāt of Bengal Şūfis have not come to light. But we have been able to lay our hands upon the following books containing the malfūzāt of some eminent Chishtiyah saints of northern India.

(a) Fawâ'id al Fawā'id of Ḥasan 'Alā Sajzī (collection of sayings of Šaykh Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā)'6.

(b) Khayr al-Majālis of Qalandar (collection of sayings of Šaykh Nâṣir al-Dīn Maḥmūd, Chirāgh-i-Delhi)'7.

2. Edited by Sukumar Sen, Calcutta, 1927.
6. Muslim Aḥmad Nizāmī has published an Urdu translation with the title Irshād-i-Mahbūb from Khwājah Press, Dehlī.
(c) *Afḍal al-Fawā'id* and *Rāḥat al-Muḥibbin* of Amīr Khusraw (collection of sayings of Shaykh Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā).  
(d) *Fawā'id al-Sālikīn* (collection of sayings of Shaykh Quṭb al-Dīn Bakhṭyār Kākī).

These books throw some light on the life sketch of Makhdūm Shaykh Jalāl Tabrizī before his arrival in Bengal. The *malfūzāt* of Shaykh Ḥusām al-Dīn Manikpurī, compiled under the title of *Rafiq al-‘Arefīn* by one of his disciples Farīd binn Sālār have also been discovered. Recently Prof. Hasan Askari has published the relevant extracts which throw important light on Bengal. As the Shaykh was a disciple of Shaykh Nūr Quṭb ‘Ālam of Pandwāh and as he himself visited Bengal, the materials derived from his *malfūzāt* may claim authenticity and genuineness.

(iii) The Maktubat

The following eight letters of Shaykh Nūr Quṭb ‘Ālam have come to light.

No. 1 was written to one Shaykh Qāḍī Asad.  
No. 2 was written to one Shaykh Mu‘izz al-Dīn.  
No. 3 was written to one Shaykh Rūkhn al-Dīn.  
No. 4 was written to one Raf‘at Khān.  
No. 5 was written to one Qāḍī Zāhid.  
No. 6 was written to one anonymous person.  
No. 7 was written to one Qāḍī.  
No. 8 was written to some dear one.

All these letters, except the last one deal with *Taṣawwuf* and hardly refer to the Socio-Political condition of the country. The last one hints at the interregnum of Rājā Gaṇeṣa in Bengal’s politics.

1. Sayyid Rūkhn al-Dīn Niẓāmī has published Urdu translation from Kutubkhānah-i-Maḥbūbī, Dehli.
2. Ghulām Aḥmad Khān has published an Urdu translation in *Khwājgān-i-Chisht*, from Muslim Press, Dehli, A. H. 1348.
But letters of two other Ṣūfīs who visited Bengal throw very important light on the subject. They are Mīr Sayyid Ashraf Jahāngīr Simnānī and Mawlānā Muẓaffar Shams Balkhī. The following letters of Mīr Sayyid Ashraf Jahāngīr Simnānī so far discovered throw light on Bengal's history:

(a) One letter to Sūltān Ibrāhīm Sharqī of Jawnpūr.
(b) One letter to Shaykh Nūr Quṭb ‘Alam.
(c) One letter to Shaykh Ḥusayn Dhukkarposh.

These letters are very important as they throw light on the political condition of the country during the time of the interregnum of Rājā Gaṇeṣa and the resultant invasion of Bengal by Sūltān Ibrāhīm Sharqī of Jawnpūr. They also refer to the condition of the Muslim divines during the time.

Mawlānā Muẓaffar Shams Balkhī wrote a number of letters to Sūltān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh son of Sikandar Shāh. They deal with various subjects like qualifications of a king, the attitude of a Muslim ruler towards the non-Muslims, requesting the Sūltān to arrange for shipping space in Chittagong Port for the followers of the Mawlānā who were out on pilgrimage to the holy cities. As such these letters throw important light on the Socio-political condition of the country.

Beside the hagiological literature, a large number of traditions are current in different parts of the country about various Ṣūfīs. Though traditions hardly offer good materials for the reconstruction of the history, they sometimes corroborate other evidences. Names of a few Ṣūfīs have come down to us only through tradition.

**Accounts of foreign travellers**

The first traveller who came to Bengal during the period under review is the Moorish traveller Ibn Baṭṭūtah. He did not stay here

3. For traditions see, *District Gazetteers of Bengal*.
4. See, Chapter III, Section (c).
5. The Account of Ibn Baṭṭūtah has been edited with French translation by Defre'mery and Sanguinetti in four Volumes, Paris, A. D. 1853-59.
for a long time. His intention of visiting Bengal, as he himself says was to meet Shaykh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizī in the hilly region of Kamrūp. His account of the early Muslim rulers of Bengal is faulty and as we shall see later he even gives a wrong name of the Śūfi, he met. But nevertheless he supplies valuable information regarding the Socio-economic condition of Bengal, as he gives a list of commodities he found in the markets and their price. He also records the attitude of the ruling Sūltān towards the Muslim faqīrs.

The following Chinese records on Bengal throw light on political, social and economic condition of the period under review.

(a) *Ying Tai Sheng lan* compiled by Ma-Huan between 1425 and 1432 A. D. It is a general account of Bengal without any reference to the king or court.

(b) *Sing Ch’a Sheng lan*, compiled by Fei-Sin in A. D. 1436. This is also a general account of Bengal with some information on the king and the court but the name of the king does not occur.

(c) *Si Yang Ch’ao Kung tien lu* compiled by Huang Singts’eng in A. D. 1520. Beside the general account of Bengal it contains the name of the king and a reference to the various embassies sent by him to the Chinese Court till A. D. 1438.

(d) *Shu Yu Chou Tseu lu* compiled in A. D. 1574 by Yen Ts’ong Kien.

(e) *Ming-She*, the official compilation was completed in A. D. 1739 but the materials were old.


Of the European writers, Nicolo di Conti (Venetian), Varthema

2. See for example, *Indian Historical Quarterly*, 1942, pp. 65-70.
3. See, Chapter. III, Section (c).
4. Only one Chinese Account that of Ma-huan was first translated by G. Phillips in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1895, pp. 523-35, and then all the Chinese Accounts were re-edited and translated by P. C. Bagchi and published in *Visva-Bharati Annals*, Vol. I, 1945, pp. 96-134.
(Italian)⁴, and Barbosa (Portuguese)⁵, have left valuable account on the Socio-economic condition of Bengal but unfortunately they are general accounts and it is hardly possible to find out anything exclusively on the Muslim society.

So far scholars working on the early Muslim history of Bengal dwelt on only the political events and as such they based their findings only on chronicles, inscriptions and coins. The sources such as writings of contemporary Muslim scholars, contemporary and later Bengali literature and the hagiological literature practically remained unexplored. With the help of these materials it is now possible to attempt a social history of the Muslims in Bengal from the conquest of Lakhnawti by Muḥammad Bakhtyār Khaljī down to A. D. 1538.


2. *The Book of Duarte Barbosa*,

Chapter II

Political Background

1. Socio-political Forces at Work
   (A) Early Muslim Contact with Bengal

   Traditional accounts take back Muslim contact with Bengal to the early centuries of the Hijrah. But so far no authentic record has been found to establish their early settlement here. In course of their eastern trade, the Arabs appear to have visited the Bengal coast, but how far they penetrated inland is not definitely known. Evidences of the preponderance of the Arabic words in the Chittagonian dialect and facial resemblance of the Chittagonian people with the Arabs have been produced to claim early Arab colonisation, but these influences could as well be the result of slightly later contact when Muslims had become predominant in Bengal and carried on trade with the Arab world through the Chittagong port. The existence of

1. For traditions see, J.A.S.B. 1889, vol. LVIII, pp. 12 ff; J.A.S.B. 1875, part I, No. 2, pp. 183-86; J.A.S.B. 1904, part I, No. 3, pp. 262-71; Bengal District Gazetters: Pabna, Bogra, Dacca, Mymensingh. They have also been discussed in Chapter III, Section (C).

2. The earlier theory that a small Arab kingdom was established in Chittagong, [see, Enamul Haq and Abdul Karim: Arakan Rajsabhaya Bangal Sahitya (Bengali Literature in the Arakanese Court), Calcutta, A. D. 1935, p. 3] has recently been refuted. (See, A. H. Dani: “Early Muslim Contact With Bengal” in The Proceedings of the Pakistan History Conference, Karachi Session, 1951).

the commercial contact with the Abbasides is indicated by the discovery of a few coins of the Khalifah. It is possible that these businessmen created by their honesty a favourable atmosphere for the reception of Islam in this idolatrous country, as is traditionally known about the ship-wrecked Muslims who found shelter in Arakan. Stories about a number of Māhīsawār and other Muslim saints coming by sea route, are widespread in the country, but it is difficult to examine their veracity or fix them to any definite chronology. One thing is certain that their influence could have hardly affected the society as no reference is found in the contemporary local literature or inscriptions.

(B) Early Muslim Governors

Islam, which completely changed the socio-religious pattern of Bengal, came in the wake of Turkish conquest towards the beginning of the 13th century A.D. This conquest of Eastern India does not appear to have been the result of any pre-mediated plan. It was more a dare-devil attempt on the part of Muhammad Bakhtyar Khalji to seek fortune in the eastern lands, but the easy success that met Bakhtyar's arms in Bihar as well as in Bengal was possibly due to the

1. Three Abbaside coins, one from Paharpur and two from Mainamati have been found in excavations. (See, K. N. Dikshit: Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India, No.55, Delhi, A.D. 1938, p. 87; F. A. Khan: Recent Archaeological Discoveries in East Pakistan: Mainamati. Pakistan Publications, Karachi, p. 11).
3. See, note 1 at page 17.
4. The only exception is an inscription of Ratnapāla which refers to Tājīk, identified with the Arabs. See, J. A. S. B. 1898, vol. LXVII, p. 116; Proceedings of the Pakistan History Conference, 1951, p. 200. In a 15th century manuscript Persian dictionary, the word Tājīk has been explained as non-Arabs and Turks. (See, Ibrāhim Qawwām Fārūqī: Sharafnāmah, ‘Āliyā Madrasah MS. No. P. MSS/13.8, folio No. 128).
5. Minhāj, P. 151. For date see, Indian Historical Quarterly, June, 1958, pp. 133 ff.
6. Minhāj, pp. 147 ff.
great consternation spread about the Muslim conquerors. This has again to be viewed in the general background of that role of conquest and annexation that began with the victory of Muḥammad bin Sām at the battle of Tarain in A. D. 1192. Bakhtyār is a link in this chain, as his visit to Ḍirb al-Dīn Aibak after his possession of Āudandbihāra and his presentation of gifts after his conquest of Nadiyā clearly prove. The defeat or flight of the Hindu Rājās was alone to be achieved, as the masses are hardly known to have given an opposition to the conquerors on political or military grounds. The Hindu rulers appear to have formed a class by themselves, being surrounded by Brahmanical aristocracy and having no contact with the masses. The former must defend themselves or be replaced by others who could muster a superior force. It is on this hypothesis that we can understand the imposition of a new hierarchy of rulers and landholders on the existing Hindu socio-religious structure and the way how these were accepted so willingly by the local people.

(C) The Khalji Oligarchy

Minhāj informs us about the entourage of Bakhtyār Khaljī and we learn how men belonging to his tribe flocked around him in the hope of making fortune for themselves. True to the interest of his people Bakhtyār, after occupying a part of the Sena territory, distributed the acquisition among the Khaljī nobles, three of whom, Muḥammad Shīrān, ‘Ali Mardān and Ḥusām al-Dīn ‘Īwād were the most prominent, the latter two being explicitly called Muqta’s. They were not only in charge of the administration and land-revenue collection, but as is known from the example of Muḥammad Shīrān, were also military commanders not only for the purpose of defending areas under them but also to wage wars against the neighbouring Hindu

2. Muhammad Aziz Ahmad: Early Turkish Empire of Delhi, Lahore, A. D. 1949, pp. 77-79.
5. Minhāj (P. 150) refers to the flight of the Hindus towards Bang and Sanknat meaning Eastern Bengal.
7. Ibid, pp. 156, 158.
Rājās. The history of these Khalji Amīrs, after the death of Bakhtyār when each of them tried to establish his own authority at Lakhnawtī or Deokot, shows how jealously they clung to their conquered territory. It is not unlikely that they regarded this land as their own heritage against the Dehlī Sultanate where the Khaljīs had hardly any place. Only mutual rivalry forced them to turn to Dehlī for help as it was in the case of ‘Alī Mardān Khaljī; otherwise right down to the end of ‘Iwaḍ’s reign the Khaljīs were supreme in the Lakhnawtī Sultanate. Probably to break this Khaljī monopoly and to establish the Dehlī (Ilbarī) Turks’ hegemony over them Iltutmish personally came to Bengal and later sent his favourite son Nāṣir al-Dīn Maḥmūd, who crushed their power and established his authority. Subsequent death or probably murder of Maḥmūd, shows the strength that the Khaljīs still possessed in Bengal, and though Ikhtyār al-Dīn Balkā Khaljī acknowledged Iltutmish’s suzerainty on his coins, Iltutmish himself was bent on uprooting the Khaljīs for ever. Hence he overthrew them root and branch and started the practice of nominating governors from Dehlī, the first of whom was Malik ‘Alā’al-Dīn Jāni.8

In this period beside the problem of their own adjustment to the new surroundings and their strained relation with the Dehlī emperors, the Khaljīs were constantly at war with the neighbouring Hindu Rājās. Their existence was guaranteed only by their recurring raiding expeditions into Hindu dominions, their wealth increased by the imposition of taxes on the Hindu rulers and their prosperity assured by gradual expansion of their territory in the teeth of the Hindu opposition. They are referred to as Gajjanetvaras or Turushkas in Sanskrit inscriptions and literature, which do not betray any cowardice on the part of the Hindu rulers; on the other hand they boast of winning victories over the Muslims. The Turkish cavalry was no doubt the deciding factor in the war and the conquest in the early

1. Minhāj, p. 158.
6. Epigraphia Indica, Vol. XIII, P. 153,
stages followed those directions where the horses could easily move. The river-girt southern Bengal was left immune from the Muslim raids for a long time.

This was the formative period of the Muslim Society in Bengal. On the foundations laid in these few years depended the future edifice of Islam in Bengal. Fortunately the Khalji nobility came forward to provide facilities for the dissemination of Islamic learning by founding madrasahs, for the propagation of Islamic religion by helping the dargahs, and for the observance of Islamic rituals and ceremonies by building mosques. Traditional stories about the advent of Muslim saints in this period are many, the most famous among them relates to Shaykh Jalâl al-Din Tabrizi, who is said to have come at the time of Lakshmana Sena and established his reputation in Bengal. All these influences were acting on the then existing society. Its new attitude depended on what shape these new forces were assuming. It is well worth examining the future trend of these foreign influences.

(D) Lakhnawti under Dehli Authority

The break up of the Khalji monopoly by Iltutmish opened the way for fresh migration of population—especially of the uprooted Turks from Central Asia—into Bengal. This was further facilitated by the appointment of new governors from Dehli, who on their part took up their posts at Lakhnawti with all their adherents, loyal troopers and followers in order to assert their authority over a heterogeneous population. The Dehli emperor’s name was pronounced from the pulpit, and occasionally his coins were issued from Lakhnawti mint. From time to time presents of elephants and treasure passed from Bengal to Dehli, and the emperors conferred upon the governors titles, privileges of drum-beating, umbrella and flags. The wealth and special status of Lakhnawti became proverbial in Dehli and every ambitious servant of the state aspired to the high post of the governor of Lakhnawti. It was this position which earned for them the

2. Šekh Šubhodaya, (Shaykh Šubhodaya) edited by Sukumar Sen, Calcutta, A. D. 1927. For details on this saint see, Chapter III, Section (C).
5. Ibid, pp. 181 & 243-44.
title of *Malik al-Sharg*\(^1\) in actual name, fame and wealth. The
government of Lakhnawti became a replica of that at Dehil\(^8\), and
this place along with Badayun, Kara and Oudh formed strong centres
of administration of the eastern extension of the Dehil Sultanate.
But soon after the death of Ilutmish political squabbles and party
factions weakened the central authority, which gave opportunity to
the provincial governors to rise and assert their powers over others
on the basis of their own strength. Lakhnawti was the worst sufferer
in this respect as all of them had a covetous eye on it and fought their
way to take possession of it\(^8\). The whole period is a sickening tale of
such rivalries and fights between the ambitious governors. This
state of affairs was put to an end by the strong hand of Sultan Ghiyath
al-Din Balban who appointed his own governor.

This was a period of turmoil in which fresh blood added to the
complications of the then Muslim society in Bengal. New arrivals
created new problems and they had to be provided for. Hence we
hear of recurrent wars against the neighbouring kings.\(^4\) But there
was fundamental weakness of the Muslim power in Bengal due to
mutual rivalry. On the other hand the Gang a rulers of Orissa had
not only increased their power but also integrated greater portion of
south-west Bengal into their territory mainly owing to the weakness of
the Senas, who on their part, were being squeezed between the Muslims
in the west and the rise of the Devas in the east.\(^5\) For the first time
the Muslims suffered reverse in south-west Bengal at the hands of
Narasimhaveva I, the Gang a ruler, who is known to have advanced
as far as the Ganges.\(^6\). The Muslim territory shrunk, though
temporarily, but on the other hand touched Bang along the left bank

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163-64.


3. The most important example is the rivalry between Tughral
Tughan Khan and Tamar Khan Qiran. (Minhaj, pp.
245-46).


7. For success of Mughal al-Din Yuzbak see, Minhaj, pp.
262-63.
of the Padmā. Four great Muslim seats emerged in this period—Lakhnawti, Deokot, Mahisantosh and Lakhnawr—this last was temporarily lost to the Gaṅgā rulers1. The individual Muslims especially the saints had further penetrated into the villages and even in the Hindu territories, as is known from the numerous graves scattered in the country2. Several generations of Muslims had by now passed in Bengal. This long stay had created a peculiar tendency among them, the effect of which was seen in the great revolt.

(E) The Great Revolt

Dīyā’al-Dīn Barānī gives an explanation of the revolt. “The wise and the men of experience called Lakhnawti, Balghākpur, because from a long time past after Sulṭān Mu‘izz al-Dīn Muḥammad (bin) Sām captured Dehlī, any Wāli that the Sulṭān of Dehlī appointed for Lakhnawti—Lakhnawti being far away from Dehlī, being very extensive and wide and there having been tiresome difficulties (of communication) between Dehlī and Lakhnawti—disobeyed and revolted (against the king of Dehlī). If the Wāli did not revolt, others revolted against him and killed him and the country was captured. For many years the revolt has become their second nature and habit. And every Wāli appointed there was turned away against the king by the tresspassers and balghākīāns (rebels)”3. However,

1. Minhāj, p. 245.
3. Barānī, p. 82.
the hold of Dehlī on Lakhnawtī mainly depended on the strength and unity that the reigning Sultān could muster. The local governors had by then established sufficient security in order to maintain the independence of their possession against any possible Hindu attack. Consequently, the weakness of the successors of Iltutmīsh inspired a few local governors to assert their own authority. But the greatest of the revolts occurred in the time of the strong-willed Sultān, Ghiyāţ al-Dīn Balban. Mughīth al-Dīn Tughral, a former slave of the Sultān and lately in great favour, rose in rebellion, and Balban met the challenge with full determination. He was the second Dehlī Sultān to come to Bengal, to establish a system and to lay out a future programme of conquest.

(F) The House of Balban

Balban left behind his younger son, Bughrā Khān, in charge of the affairs of Bengal with able advisers who had the explicit instruction to carry forward the limits of the Muslim territory. Soon after Balban’s death Lakhnawtī severed its connection from Dehlī. Throughout the period that the Khaljīs were ruling at Dehlī, the Ilbarī Turks of the House of Balban or their supporters like Shams al-Dīn Firūz Shāh maintained their independent status in Bengal and Bihar. The Sultānate of Lakhnawtī for the first time stood rival to the Dehlī empire and it was in this period that the neighbouring regions of Satgāwn, Sunārgāwn, Mymensingh and Sylhet were conquered.

1. Important examples are those of Mughīth al-Dīn Yūzbak (Minhâj, p. 263. For his independent coinage, see, H.N. Wright: Catalogue of the Coins in the Indian Museum, Calcutta, Vol. II, Oxford, A. D. 1907, p. 147) and Mughīth al-Dīn Tughral (Barani, P. 83). Others like Tughral Tughān Khān and Tamar Khān Qirān asserted their own power, though they did not openly revolt. (Minhâj pp. 242 ff., 247 ff.).

2. Barani, pp. 92 ff.


5. Ibid, pp. 75 ff.
and integrated into the Muslim Sulṭānate. The Gangeto-Brahmaputra delta, except the marshy tract of southern Bengal was united under one sceptre, and even the mighty forces of 'Alā’ al-Dīn Khaļījī could not crush its freedom. Rightly speaking, the independence of Bengal began with the reign of Buğhra Khān. Only a short interlude set in with the quarrel among the sons of Shams al-Dīn Firūz Shāh, as a result of which the Tughluq intervention once again established the Dehlī authority and demarcated three clear-cut administrative divisions, Lakhnawi region, Satgāwn region, and Sunārgāwn region. The administrative divisions could hardly work for a decade, when political chaos and disintegration towards the later half of the reign of Muḥammad bin Tughluq led local aspirants to try their luck and establish the rule of their own dynasty. Out of these chaotic wars was born the Independent Sulṭānate of Bengal under the authority of Sulṭān Shams al-Dīn Ilyās Shāh.

In this period Muslim power in Bengal for the first time had full faith on its own strength. The Sulṭānate could hope to protect itself not only against Hindu insurrection but also against external aggression, and at the same time carry further Balban’s programme of conquest and expansion. Bengal became the refuge of Ilbarī Turks and their supporters. Probably this addition in men and power aided in the extension of the Muslim territory. Along with this political growth must be viewed the development in the socio-religious side of the Muslims. We hear of numerous scholars, poets, darwishes and theologians arriving in Bengal and opening up new centres of education and religious instructions. The new cities that rose to prominence were Bihār sharīf, Satgāwn, Pandwah (Firūzābād), Sunārgāwn, and Sylhet. They became the abode of Muslim saints, centres of Islāmic learning, administrative headquarters and commercial centres. It is this organisation of the cities that wielded Muslim authority in this vast region, and with the spread of Muslim population in the train of the saints, teachers and theologians that this authority sustained against the opposition of the Hindu populace. In this period was also laid the foundation of those institutions, social, religious and educational, that in due course led to the development of local Muslim culture. The foundation was laid by men who came from

3. See, Chapter III, Sections (B) and (C).
far afield, like Abū Tawwāmah at Sunārgāwīn, Shāh Jalāl at Sylhet while the madrasah of Ẓafar Khān at Satgāwīn, the tradition of Shaykh Badar at Chittagong and the dargāhs of Shaykh Jalāl Tabrizī and Nūr Ḥūbat ‘Ālamat Pandwāh laid this foundation on strong basis. Culturally the Muslim society in Bengal continued to keep contact or link with the Muslims outside, especially with the Muslim occupation of Chittagong the Arab migration received further impetus. Overseas trade appears to have increased and as a result Bengal silver coinage became a regular feature. However this was a mere prelude to the real prosperity, peace and security that was to come during the period of Independent Sulṭāns.

(G) The Independent Sultans

The Independent Sulṭānate in Bengal actually began in A.D. 1338, when after the death of Bahāram Khān (Muḥammad bin Tughluq’s governor at Sunārgāwīn), his silāḥdār Fakhrā took the insignia of royalty at Sunārgāwīn with the title of Sulṭān Fakhr al-Dīn Mubārak Shāh⁴. Two other governors of Muḥammad bin Tughluq, Qadar Khān of Lakhnawī and ‘Īzz al-Dīn Yaḥyā of Satgāwīn came out to suppress Fakhrā but were themselves killed and in their place rose to power ‘Alī Mubārak, the ‘Āriḍ-i-Mamālik of Qadar Khān⁵ and Ḥāji Ilyās, a newly arrived adventurer from Dehli and a foster brother of ‘Alī Mubārak⁶. For the next few years Bengal witnessed two rival Sulṭānate with headquarters at Fīrūzābād and Sunārgāwīn respectively. The former was held one after the other by two rival Sulṭāns ‘Alī Mubārak, entitled Sulṭān ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Alī Shāh and Ḥāji Ilyās, entitled Sulṭān Shams al-Dīn Ilyās Shāh⁶. The latter was held by the House of Fakhr al-Dīn Mubārak Shāh⁷. But although

1. See, Chapter III, Sections (A), (B) and (C).
5. Riyāḍ, p. 95.
there was mutual war among the Bengal Sultāns, the sovereignty did not pass to the Sultāns of Dehli. Soon the situation took a new turn when in 754/A.D. 1353 Shams al-Dīn Ilyās Shāh conquered Sunārgāwn and united the whole of the Muslim kingdom of Bengal under him⁴. Sultān Firūz Shāh Tughluq of Dehli twice attempted to reconquer Bengal⁵ but none of the attempts bore any fruit. The result was that from A. D. 1338, when Fakhrā assumed independence in Sunārgāwn till A. D. 1538, when Sher Shāh captured it⁶, Bengal was completely independent under its own rulers. This long duration of two hundred years is called the period of the Independent Sultāns in Bengal.

The period saw the rise and fall of four dynasties and a few Ḥabshi usurpers. They are given below.

(1) **The House of Fakhr al-Dīn Mubarak Shah at Sunargāwn**


Both the rulers of this House ruled in East Bengal with their headquarters at Sunārgāwn. All their coins have been issued from that mint-town. According to Ibn Baṭṭūtah⁶, Sultān Fakhr al-Dīn Mubarak Shāh had only one son, who was killed by Shaydā during his lifetime. But Ghāzi Shāh, in his coins calls himself Sultān bin Sultān (king, son of king) which suggests that he was the son of Sultān Fakhr al-Dīn Mubarak Shāh⁶, though strangely enough he does not mention the name of his father.

(II) **House of Ilyās Shah**


1. *Ibid*, p. 27.
3. Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aʿẓam Shāh (son of No. 2)\(^1\) 795-813/A.D.  
1392-1410.

4. Sayf al-Dīn Ḥamzah Shāh\(^2\) (son of No. 3) 813-814/A.D.  
1410-11.

5. Shihāb al-Dīn Bāyazīd Shāh\(^3\) (adopted son of No. 4) 815-817/A.D.  
1412-1414.

6. ‘Alāʾ al-Dīn Fīrūz Shāh\(^4\) (son of No. 5) 817/1414.

Shams al-Dīn Ilyās Shāh, the founder of this dynasty, was a new comer, but in course of time he was able to build for himself a kingdom in Bengal. This was possible for him by siding with the interests of the local people, the Hindu zamīndārs and the Muslim nobility.\(^5\) These people stood firmly with him when Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq invaded Bengal, and it was mainly due to their support that Ilyās Shāh could retain his independence. He well deserved the titles of “Shāh-i-Bangālāh” and “Shāh-i-Bangāliyān” given by ‘Afīf.\(^6\) He was the first independent Muslim Sultān to rule over the united kingdom of Bengal and it was from this time onward that the term “Bangālāh” connoted the whole Sultānate.\(^7\) Its boundary gradually extended and the marshy lands of southern Bengal were incorporated into it.\(^8\) Muslim arms penetrated even far into the northern regions and Brahmaputra valley.\(^9\) But the very support of the local people implied a concession to the local interests, which resulted in the patronage of

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2. Ibid, pp. 90 ff.
6. Ibid.
local culture, art and literature and also in the formation of a party of local zamīndārs as opposed to the party of foreign elements that had so long been strong in the capital. It is from this time onward that we hear the names of Hindu zamīndārs being mentioned among the Sultān’s courtiers and supporters, the Muslims taking pride in calling themselves Bengali, and studying Bengali language and literature; the Hindu officers, ministers and army commanders serving side by side with the Muslims, the Hindu poets and writers praising the Sultāns and receiving rewards and titles. The Muslim architecture took a new form and became acclimatised to this soil and climate. The Hindus for the first time became reconciled to the Muslim Sultānate and began sharing in the government and political life of the country. The Muslims looked upon this country as their homeland and began re-creating a social order in which their ancestral Islāmic heritage would find due place in the local traditional culture. The religion and spirit of Islām spread widely in the country, and the popular tongue Bengali, found its literary medium side by side with the Persian.

But the conflict between the foreigners and the local interests sustained throughout this period. The Muslim immigrants continued to pour into this country and establish cultural link with other Muslim countries while pilgrimages to the holy places and the study of Persian and Arabic kept ablaze the idea of Dār al-Islām in the minds of the Muslims. On the other hand local interests demanded a new outlook of life. The climax reached in A. D. 1415 when the Ilyās Shāhī rulers were temporarily set aside, and the House of Rājā Ganēsā occupied the Muslim throne after changing their religion from Hind- uism to Islām.

1. For example, the family of Shaykh ‘Alā’ al-Haqq was known as Bangālī. (Akhbār al-Akhyār, P. 143).
2. For Muslim poet writing in Bengali, see, Chapter III, Section (B).
6. For details see, Chapter III, Section (A).
(III) The House of Raja Ganesa

1. Rājā Gaṇeṣa.  

The local forces gained victory under the banner of Islām. The local cultural elements burst forth to find expression in the country’s life. The king became the Khalīfah for the people. Sanskrit and Bengali literature expanded and improved. The Hindus jumped up the ladder of influence and political power. Naturally to the foreign Muslims this sudden change was a defeat of Islām and usurpation of the Muslim power by the Hindus. This attitude is aptly borne out in the invitation to Sulṭān Ibrāhīm Sharqī of Jawnpūr by

1. The former theory that Rājā Gaṇeṣa actually crowned himself king (See, N. K. Bhattasali: Coins and Chronology of the Early Independent Sultans of Bengal, Cambridge, 1922, pp. 117 ff.) has been challenged by A.H.Dani. (See J.A.S.B. Vol. XVIII, new series, No. 2, 1952, pp. 121-170.)
2. It was formerly held that his last date was 835 A.H. J.A.S.B. Vol. XVIII, No. 2, 1952, pp. 143-54, 158-166. But recently the correct reading of his inscription shows that his last date was A.H. 836. (Ziauddin Desai in Islamic Culture, July, 1958.)
3. Ibid.
5. For the patronage of Rājā Gaṇeṣa to a Bengali poet Kṛiti-vāsa and of Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad to a Sanskrit poet Bṛihaspati Rāyamukuta, see, Sukumar Sen: Bāṅgālā Sāhityer Itihāsa, Calcutta, 1940, pp. 87-88.
6. Riyāḍ, p. iii.
Haḍrat Nur Quṭb ʿĀlam, who led the opposite party. In spite of these political bickerings the dynasty ruled for two generations and left behind indelible impress on the future trend of cultural development.

(IV) The restored Ilyas Shahi dynasty

2. Rukn al-Dīn Bārbak Shāh 2 (son of No. 1) 864-879/A.D.
   1459-1474.
3. Shams al-Dīn Yūsuf Shāh 3 (son of No. 2) 879-886/A.D.
   1474-1481.
4. Sikandar 4 (son of No. 3)
5. Jalāl al-Dīn Fatḥ Shāh 5 (son of No. 1) 886-892/A.D.
   1481-1486.

The actual circumstances that led to the restoration of the old dynasty are not properly known, but it seems that squabbles among the party of the foreign elements favoured the reinstallment of the older line. In these rulers once again the older tradition of unity and harmony became identified. Though local literature continued to grow and local art and architecture flourished under them, the rulers equally patronised Persian literature, even appointed Persian poets at the court, and took keen interest in the spread of Muslim education and maintaining the Muslim dargāhs. But the most important change brought about in this period was the introduction of Abyssinian element in the local populace. Recruited mainly as slaves to support the royalty, the Abyssinians greatly increased their power and with a fortunate chance ultimately broke that very line of the royal dynasty which had so long brought them up.

4. Riyāḍ p. 119. (His reign lasted not more than three days.)
6. See, Chapter III, Sections (A) & (B).
7. Chapter III, Section (A).
8. Ibid.
(V) The Abyssinian usurpers

1. Bārbak Shāh¹
2. Sayf al-Dīn Firūz Shāh²
3. Nāṣir al-Dīn Maḥmūd II³
4. Shams al-Dīn Muẓaffar Shāh⁴

"From slavery to royalty" is an old proverb, and the Abyssinians like the Mamlūks of an earlier age, rose to the throne of Bengal. From being the support of the royalty, they became kings themselves. Perhaps their introduction in Bengal was the result of an earlier lesson learnt by the Ilyās Shāhīs from their placing over-confidence in the support of the local people. But the lesson was less learnt than lost. The Abyssinians stole a march over others in the confidence of the kings till they usurped the power themselves. They became the sole power and faced the opposition of the country. Their hated rule was overthrown in A. D. 1493.

(VI) The Husayn Shahi Rulers

1. 'Alā’ al-Dīn Ḥusayn Shāh⁵
2. Nāṣir al-Dīn Nuṣrat Shāh⁶ (son of No. 1).
3. ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Firūz Shāh⁷ (son of No. 2).
4. Ghīyāth al-Dīn Maḥmūd Shāh⁸ (son of No. 1).

2. Ibid, P. 300.
3. Ibid, pp. 300-301. (His parentage is a subject of controversy. For details see, History of Bengal, Vol. II, pp. 139-40.
7. Riyāḍ, p. 139; History of Bengal, Vol. II, p. 159. All his published coins are dated 939 and hence the numismatists have so far believed that he reigned for only one year i.e. in A. H. 939. But recently I have examined two of his unpublished coins in the Dacca Museum. Both the coins are dated 938.
‘Alā’ al-Dīn Ḥusayn Shāh, a minister⁴ of the last Abyssinian ruler, became the new Sultān. With him were restored peace and tranquillity in the kingdom, good administration and political harmony, expansion and commercial prosperity. The Ḥusayn Shāhīs were enlightened and tolerant rulers. It is during their rule that the local Bengali literature⁵ found its clear expression and the various religious communities developed in perfect peace and harmony⁶. The spirit of sufism had permeated through the masses and in spite of Chaitanya movement, the mystic religion had overwhelmed various groups of people in Bengal⁷. The kings had endeared themselves to the people, and they on their part had adjusted themselves to share equitably in the prosperity of the country. The prosperity had been doubled by the opening of the European trade with the arrival of the Portuguese⁸. The country’s industries and commerce grew and foreign silver poured into the land. The Ḥusayn Shāhī’s was an age of peace at home, expansion over neighbouring territories and prosperity in overseas trade.

This period was brought to a close in A. D. 1538 with the defeat of the last representative of the dynasty Ghayyāth al-Dīn Maḥmūd⁹, at the hands of Sher Khān, the future Sher Shāh, who was soon to integrate Bengai into his North Indian Empire.

2. Gradual expansion of the Muslim territory in Bengal

The foundation of the Muslim kingdom in Bengal was laid by Muḥammad Bakhtyār in or about A. D. 1204⁷ with his headquarters at Lakhnawtī. This was nothing more than a small principality in the north-western part of Bengal while the vast territory towards the north, east, south and south-west lay outside his dominion. Another run of two hundred and fifty years was to pass before the Muslims

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4. Chapter III, Section (C).
could finish the task begun by Bakhtyär. In the beginning Muslim arms penetrated only towards the south and north of Lakhnawtī, where the cavalry could be profitably utilised. Soon they realised that the cavalry was of little use in the vast riverine tract of eastern and southern parts of Bengal. The first ruler to realise this secret was Ghiyāth al-Dīn 'Iwād Khaljī, who for the first time organised a flotilla of war-boats. Strengthened with this new system, the Muslim power advanced beyond the traditional line and encroached upon the neighbouring territories of the east and the south. It is during the later Ilyās Shāhī period that the whole of Bengal was integrated into the Muslim Sulṭānate.

Muḥammad Bakhtyār’s principality was limited to a small tract of land round about Lakhnawtī, with Deokot in the north, the rivers Tista and Karatoya in the east and south-east, the main stream of the Ganges in the south, while in the west, he had his possession in Bihar. Before he marched to Tibet, he sent an army under Muḥammad Shīrān Khaljī towards Lakhnawr and Jānagar. Nothing definite is known about the success or failure of this expedition. According to Minhāj, as soon as the news of the murder of Muḥammad Bakhtyār reached him, he returned and came back to Deokot. So in all probability Lakhnawr remained outside the pale of the Muslim kingdom. This last locality does not come to the picture again before the time of Sulṭān Ghiyāth al-Dīn ‘Iwād Khaljī.

Meanwhile the situation in Deokot did not go well for Muḥammad Shīrān Khaljī. Though he was able to imprison ‘Alī Mardān and was accepted as the head of the principality, the latter somehow escaped from prison, fled away to Dehlī and beseeched Sulṭān Qutb al-Dīn Aibak to interfere in Bengal’s politics. The Dehlī Sulṭān took advantage of the situation and ordered Qāmāz Rūmī, his governor of Oudh to go to Bengal and settle affairs in Lakhnawtī. Muḥammad Shīrān was not the person to surrender before Qāmāz Rūmī.

1. Minhāj, p. 163.
4. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
He gave battle but was defeated\(^4\). The defeat led him to flee away towards Moseda and Santos, identified with Mahisantosh in Dinajpur district\(^9\).

Ghiyāth al-Dīn 'Iwad Khaljī was the first to make an attempt to extend the frontier towards the south and the east. Minhāj says, "In short, Ghiyāth al-Dīn Khaljī was a virtuous, just and good-mannered Sulṭān. The neighbouring states of Lakhnawtī such as Jājnagar, Bang (Eastern Bengal) Kamrup and Tīrhut all sent tributes to him. And he conquered Lakhnawr and many elephants, much wealth and treasures came to his hand and he posted his own Amirs there."\(^8\) This categorical statement of Minhāj leaves no doubt that 'Iwad conquered and annexed Lakhnawr. As for the rest of Minhāj's statement, i. e. the kingdom of Jājnagar, Bang, Kamrup and Tīrhut sent presents to 'Iwad, it was probably the result of the raids and not of annexation. A study of the pre-Mughal history of Bengal shows that the Bengal Sulṭāns never annexed the kingdoms of Jājnagar, Kamrup and Tīrhut, though portions of those territories were occupied from time to time. In the case of Bang, as we shall see hereafter\(^4\), it was annexed to the Muslim sulṭānate only about one hundred years later.

The possession of Lakhnawr was lost by the Muslims, during the governorship of Malik 'Izz al-Dīn Tughral Tughān Khān. He

1. Minhāj, P. 158.
3. Minhāj, p. 163.

achieved some initial success in his battle against Orissa, but subsequently, he was out-generalled by his adversary. The Orissan general followed up his victory upto Lakhnawr, killed a large number of Muslims including the Muqta', Fakhr al-Mulk Karim al-Din Laghiri and even laid siege to Lakhnawt. Malik Ikhtyär al-Din Yuzbak, who assumed independence with the title of Sulтан Mughith al-Din Yuzbak, retrieved to some extent the loss of the Muslim kingdom. He soon entered into war against Orissa and extended his southern frontier as far as Umaran, identified with Mandaran in the Hughli district. But as misfortune would have it, this masterful prince, who brought glory to the Muslim kingdom, lost his life in course of his Kamrup expedition. What became of his possession upto Mandaran after his death is not definitely known.

The appointment of Bughrä Khän as the governor of Lakhnawt by his father is an epoch-making event in the history of the expansion of the Muslim kingdom of Bengal. The contemporary historian Barani writes, “And he (Ghiyath al-Din Balban) called him (Bughrä Khän) before his presence in private and made him swear that he (Bughrä Khän) should not have convivial assembly, nor drink, nor engage himself in pastime, before conquering the Iqlim of Bangalah and taking it into his direct control.” Here the clear indication is that the Sulタン ordered his son to extend the frontier. As a matter of fact it is from this time that an all-round expansion began. We do not know, what part did Bughrä Khän himself play in the expansion. His son Rukn al-Din Kaykä’ús Shāh was the first to issue coin from the Kharaj of Bang. It is during his time again that the conquest of

1. Minhaj, p. 245.
2. Ibid, p. 263.

ويبش خود درمجلس خلوت طليبه سوگند داد که بش ازان اقليم بنگا له را پاست آرد ودر نیب خود مستقيم کند درهچ روز مجلس نسازد وشراب نخورد وبلهو مشغول نشود.

Satgāwn or Triveni area began under his general Zafar Khān. But the most important achievement in this connection was that of Sultan Shams al-Dīn Firūz Shāh. During his time, Satgāwn was finally captured, Sunārgāwn, Bang and Ghīyāthropūr appeared as mint-towns, thus indicating that Eastern Bengal including the area round about the present town of Mymensingh was annexed to the Muslim kingdom. The Sylhet inscription shows that the eastern frontier of his kingdom extended up to Sylhet. Chittagong was conquered by Fakhr al-Dīn Mubārak Shāh. The fruits of their annexations fell to the lot of Sultan Shams al-Dīn Ilyās Shāh, who for the first time united Lakhnawtī, Satgāwn and Sunārgāwn under him. The southern outskirt of the province that was still left out was annexed by Sultan Jālāl al-Dīn Muḥammad and Nāsir al-Dīn Maḥmūd I. Chātgāwn (Chittagong) and Fathābād appeared as mint-towns for the first time under Jālāl al-Dīn Muḥammad, thus suggesting that he had firm control over Chittagong and Fathābād (modern Faridpur region?). The inscriptions of Khān Jahan’s tomb and the erection of mosque by him indicate that the Sundarban area was occupied by the Muslims under Sultan Nāsir al-Dīn Maḥmūd I. The annexation of Bakerganj is learnt from an inscription dated 870/A.D. 1465 at Mirzaganj in Patuakhali sub-division. As for the northern outskirts of the country, Shāh Ismā'īl Ghāzī, a warrior-saint of the time of

3. *J. A. S. B.* 1922, pp. 413-14. See also *History of Bengal*, Vol. II, p. 79. The inscription now preserved in the Dacca Museum records that Sylhet was first brought under Muslim control in the reign of Shams al-Dīn Firūz Shāh by his general Sikandar Khān Ghāzī.
7. Ibid.
Rukn al-Dîn Bârbak Shâh was buried at Kantaduar in Rangpur, thus indicating that by the time Bârbak Shâh was on the throne, the northern frontier of the Muslim kingdom extended at least up to Rangpur.

The above discussion shows that the small Muslim principality of Lakhnawî of Muhammed Bakhtyâr turned to be the Muslim kingdom of Bengal by the last half of the 14th century A.D. Within a further one hundred years, this kingdom was able to exert its power over even the nook and corner of Bengal having no rival to challenge its supremacy. The scene of warfare of the succeeding Sulţâns e.g. Sulţân ‘Alâ’ al-Dîn Husayn Shâh shifted from the inland towards the frontiers against Orissa, Kamrup, Tippera and Arakan.


2. For his warfare, see, History of Bengal, Vol. II, pp. 143 ff.
CHAPTER III

THE GROWTH OF THE MUSLIM SOCIETY

Section (A)

The Part Played By The Sultans

The Sultān had a significant part to play in a society which had strong faith in monarchy. But the distinguishing feature of the monarchy in Bengal throughout this period was that in spite of the attempt made to the contrary it remained in the hands of the Muslims. All the political moves on the part of Rājā Ganeṣa to found a Hindu monarchy broke down when his own son accepted Islām and carried further the work of the earlier Muslim rulers. The attachment to the Muslim monarchy was so strong that there was no compunction to accept a newly-arrived Muslim if he could muster strong the unifying forces and establish peace in the country, as we know in the case of Shams al-Dīn Ilyās Shāh and 'Alā' al-Dīn Husayn Shāh. The main aim of these monarchs was not only to keep strong the Muslim ascendancy in Bengal but also to build up such institutions or initiate such works as would help in the growth of the Muslim culture. To illustrate the first we can cite the example of the Shaykhs and Ulamā who strongly reacted against Rājā Ganeṣa's move to disturb this established rule. But it is chiefly in the second branch that the real constructive works of the Sultāns are known. These may be grouped as follows:

2. 'Abd al-Rahmān Chishti: Mirāt al-Asrār, 'Alīyah Madrasah MS. Folio No. 184; Riyāḍ, pp. 110 ff.
(a) Erection of mosques, (b) Construction of madrasahs, (c) Promotion of Islamic spirit, (d) Patronising Muslim scholars and Sufis, (e) Cultivation of learning by some of the Sultāns and their officers, (f) Benevolent activities of the Sultāns.

(a) **Erection of Mosques**

The mosques formed an important feature of the Muslim Society in Bengal. The construction of mosques began with the conquest of Muḥammad Bakhtyār Khaljī. Minhāj records that after making Lakhnawī the seat of government, Muḥammad Bakhtyār built mosques, madrasahs and the Khānqahs. He praises Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn ʿIwād Khaljī for building a number of Jamīʿ(congregational) and other mosques. As for the construction of mosques in the later period, especially from the time of Sultān Rukn al-Dīn Kāykaʿūs to the last of the Independent Sultāns, stronger and undoubted evidences are available. A large number of inscriptions recording the erection or repairing of mosques have been discovered from different parts of the country. They were built mostly at the initiative of the Sultāns or their officers. The inscriptions generally begin either with a verse from the holy Qurʾān or tradition of the Prophet or both, indicating the rewards that await one in the next world for founding such religious institutions. The Sultāns or their officers

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1. Minhāj, p. 151.
3. For inscriptions, see, *Muslim Inscriptions of Bengal*. A considerable number of these mosques exist even today. Notable among them are (a) Adina mosque of Pandwah, (b) Sonā masjid of Gaur, (c) Shāṭ Gunbad mosque of Bagerhat, (d) Bābā Adam Shahīd’s mosque at Rampala, Dacca. *(See, Memoirs; R. E. M. Wheeler: Five Thousand Years of Pakistan, London, A.D. 1950, pp. 111 ff.*
4. Some of them are as follows :— *(See Memoirs, pp. 80-81.)*

قَالَ ٱللَّهُ تَعَالََِّ اِنَّا يَعْمَرُ مَسْجِدَ ٱللَّهِ مِنْ آَمَنِ بِۡ اِلِّهٖ وَلِيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَإِقَامَ الْصَّلَاةِ وَآَتَى الْزَّكَوْةَ وَلَمْ يَضْضِبَ ٱللهُ أَلَّا يَعْلِسُ إِلَّا أُولَٰئِكَ ۰ يَكُونُ نَاسِمُ ٱلْمُهْتَدِينَ — قَالَ ٱلْبَنِى صَلِّى ٱللهُ عَلَیْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مِنْ بِنِى مَسْجِدَ ٱللَّهِ بِنَى ۚ ۖ ۚ ۗ ۚ
thus erected mosques not only for mere pomp and show but also in full realisation of their performance of a religious duty. The location of these mosques reveals that the rulers adopted a systematic policy of building up a new society in Bengal; wherever Muslim power penetrated, mosques were built in order to give facilities to Muslim conquerors or the converted Muslims to perform their religious duty. The examples of Khān-i-Jahān’s mosque at Bagerhat, the Magidbārī mosque near Mirzaganj in Bakerganj district, Ẓafar Khān’s mosque at Triveni may be cited. In some cases mosques were built by the side of the tombs of Sūfis, thus making these dargāhs doubly attractive for the Muslims of the surrounding area. The Adina mosque of Pandwah offers some interesting points to be noted. It is the second biggest mosque in this sub-continent with a dimension of 507½ feet north to south and 285 ¼ feet east to west. This huge structure was built by Sulṭān Sikandar Shāh between 766/ A.D. 1364 to 776/A.D. 1374. Several considerations might have prompted him to undertake its construction. First, non-Muslims were to be impressed by the might of the Muslim power. Most of its building materials were taken from the Hindu temples. It probably played the same part as did the Quwwat al-Islām mosque in Delhi. Secondly, as ʿAbidʿAli Khān suggests, Sikandar Shāh’s idea was to see that all Muslim population of Pandwah could gather in one place for their Friday prayers. If this is true, the Adina mosque played a significant

1. The location of mosques may be determined from the find-spots of inscriptions. Inscriptions have been discovered from all parts of Bengal and they reveal that mosques were built simultaneously with the expansion of the Muslim power. For find-spots see, Muslim Inscriptions of Bengal, pp. 117 ff. Of the extant inscriptions of the period, seventy four record the building of mosques and twenty six record the building of Jāmiʿ (congregational) mosques.

2. For example the mosque near the dargāh of Mawlānā ʿAṭā (J. A. S. B. 1872, pp. 104-5).


4. Ibid; R. E. M. Wheeler suggests that it was built in the year A.D. 1369 or 1374. (Five Thousand Years of Pakistan, London, 1950, p, 112.)


6. Ibid.
part in the then Muslim society, in as much as it offered a meeting ground for all the Muslims living at the metropolis. Thirdly, as Sulṭān Sikandar Shāh was the second of the first important dynasty of the Independent Sulṭāns of Bengal, the idea of exhibiting parallel strength to the Sulṭānate of Dehli might have lurked in his mind. The architecture of Bengal Sulṭāns with predominantly local influences and the issue of coins by some later Sulṭāns beginning from Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Shāh with Khalifat Allāh title substantiate this view. So long the mosque architecture of Bengal has been studied by historians and archaeologists from the points of view of dates, style and building materials, but to the students of social history it is of greater significance as it formed the nerve-centre of the Muslim society and the basic root of Muslim culture.

(b) Construction of Madrasahs

The next important contribution of the Bengal Sulṭāns and their officers, was the construction of madrasahs or schools and colleges for imparting religious instructions. Beside the evidence of Minhāj regarding the construction of madrasah by Muḥammad Bakhtyār, the inscriptions supply three concrete examples of madrasahs erected during the period under review.

In the year 698/A. D. 1298 one madrasah was built at Triveni in the reign of Sulṭān Rukn al-Dīn Kāykāūs. One Qāḍī al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, who for strength of his argument was styled, “Qāḍī, the tiger” spent large sum of money on education. The inscription is fragmentary but the few lines that have been deciphered are full of significance. It starts with a tradition of the Prophet calling the people, “You should acquire knowledge, for its acquisition is verily submission, its search is devotion, its discussion is glorifica-


3: Minhāj, p. 151.

tion." Education is compared to "a shield that can avert such evils as cannot be avoided with the help of a shield-bearer." The Qādi also spent a large sum in granting subsistence to "men of learning for the inculcation of the Muslim law", and "to manifest the Divine Faith among the haughty."

A second madrasah was built in the same locality in 713/A.D. 1313 in the reign of Šhams al-Dīn Firūz Shāh by one Żafar Khān. The madrasah was known as Dār al-Khayrāt (the house of benevolence). A third madrasah was built at the order of Sultān ʿAlāʾal-Dīn Ḥusayn Shāh in the year 907/A.D. 1502. The inscription recording the erection of this madrasah is attached to the enclosure wall of Firuzpur mosque, north-west of the English Bazar police station in Maldah district. It starts with a tradition of the Prophet, "Search after knowledge, even if it be in China." The madrasah was built "for the teaching of the sciences of religion and for instruction in the principles which lead to certainty, in the hope of obtaining from Allah the great reward and begging from Him that He will ever remain pleased (with him)."

Aside these three madrasahs evidenced by inscriptions, traces of other madrasahs are also available. N. N. Law says that Sultān


3. Ibid.


8. Ibid.

أطلبو العلم ولو بالصين

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ToList ever al-Dīn ʿAlāʾal-Dīn Ḥusayn Shāh in the year 907/A.D. 1502. The inscription recording the erection of this madrasah is attached to the enclosure wall of Firuzpur mosque, north-west of the English Bazar police station in Maldah district. It starts with a tradition of the Prophet, "Search after knowledge, even if it be in China." The madrasah was built "for the teaching of the sciences of religion and for instruction in the principles which lead to certainty, in the hope of obtaining from Allah the great reward and begging from Him that He will ever remain pleased (with him)."

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قال عليه السلام ( تعلموا العلم فإن تعمله طاعة وطنبه

عبادة ومذاكيره تسبح 


يقتى به الشر مالا يقتى بالتارس

3. Ibid.

لتدريس علم الشرع & لا ظهاردين الله بين الغدارس


اطلبوا العلم ولو بالصين

8. Ibid.

أطلبو العلم ولو بالصين

أطلبو العلم ولو بالصين
Ghiyâth al-Dîn ‘Iwâd Khalji "built a superb mosque, a college and a caravansarai at Lucknauti soon after his election to the masnad of Bengal." This statement is based on the evidence of Minhâj who records the bestowal of stipends to the ‘Âlims by the Sultân and his other construction activities. In Gaur near the village of Umarpur, between Mahdipur and Firuzpur, there is a plot of land which the local people call Darasbârî (reading-room or madrasah). The name itself suggests that there was a madrasah in the site. There stands a large mosque in the same site known as the Darasbârî Masjid. An inscription found under the heap of rubbish at this place records that a mosque was built by Shams al-Dîn Yusuf Shâh in the year 884/Á.D. 1479. The inscription is long in size, measuring 11 feet 3 inches in length and 2 feet one inch in height, and heavy in weight and thus it is suggested that it could not probably move from its original site. It is therefore assumed that the inscription originally belonged to the Darasbârî mosque and that the Darasbârî or the madrasah was either attached to this mosque or it was a separate building.

‘Âbid ‘Alî Khân records that at the northern end of the Chhota Sâgar Dighâ, there lie remains of a large building consisting of a number of grey and black polished stone pillars. The local people call it "the Bhîtâ of Chând Sawdâgar." But another tradition records that it is the site of the Belbârî madrasah.

Generally these madrasahs were built by the side of the mosques or mosques were invariably built in the madrasahs. In far off places

5. Ibid. The inscription is preserved in the Indian Museum, Calcutta, numbering 3239.
6. Memoirs, p. 77, plate III.
8. It is situated beyond the Tantipara mosque at about the same distance from the Nawabganj road to the east, as the Gunmant mosque is to the west. It is called so to distinguish it from the Sâgardighî in the north-west of Gaur. See, Memoirs, p. 86.
10. The system is prevalent even today. Nowadays the mosques
where only mosques were built they served both the purposes of masjid and maktab. In the Mughal period in Bengal generally the maktabs were held in the rooms provided at the ground floor, while the main mosque was in the first floor as is found in Khān Muḥammad Mirdhā’s mosque at Dacca. The two sets of buildings helped the growth of Muslim society and Muslim culture in Bengal and the ruling power played a significant part towards this end. In Bengal madrasahs, both private and state owned, are continuing even to this day. The syllabus taught therein shows that there has been little change except the introduction of some modern subjects, thus indicating that these are the remnants of the old system introduced by the Sultāns.

(c) Promotion of Islamic Spirit

The Sultāns of Bengal were very particular in the promotion of Islamic spirit. They followed the general Islamic practice of (i) recognising the Khalifah as the Anūr al-mu’minīn, (ii) sometimes seeking recognition from the Khalifah, (iii) constructing charitable buildings and educational institutions at the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah, (iv) sending lavish presents to the holy cities and (v) helping other Muslims to perform the ḥajj.

(i) Since the beginning of the Muslim coinage in Bengal, the name of the Khalifah is found on them. Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Ḥāwāl Khaljī was the first to start this practice.\(^1\) On the basis of the name of Khalīfah Al-Nāṣir al-Dīn Allāh inscribed in the coins of Ḥāwāl, the earlier numismatists propounded the theory that Ḥāwāl actually received investiture from the Khalifah of Baghdad. The theory held the ground till it was challenged by Dr. A. H. Dani.\(^2\) The practice of Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Ḥāwāl was followed even when the Baghdad Khalifat came to an end and the name of the last Abbaside Khalifah is found on the coins of the Bengal rulers\(^3\) who came to the throne even after

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also serve the purpose of madrasahs for imparting instructions on religious principles.

A.D. 1258. Still later the name of the khalifah was dropped but the phrase Nāṣir-i-Amīr al-Muʿminīn continued to be used signifying the ruler's strong faith in the institution of Khalīfat.

(ii) We have got one definite instance from Bengal in which a ruler attempted to seek recognition from the Khalifah. Leaving aside the doubtful question of 'Iwād Khalji, we have the explicit reference that Sultān Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Shāh, son of Rājā Gaṇēṣa, sought for and actually received investiture from the ruler of Egypt. This is evidenced by no less an authority than Al-Sakhāwī himself. Following Al-Sakhāwī, Ḥājī Dabīr in his Zafar al-Wālih (Arabic History of Gujrat) writes as follows, "He (Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Shāh) sent presents to al-Ashraf Barstāy, the ruler of Egypt, and he sought for investiture from the Khalifah, and the robe of honour was sent to him (Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad) through a responsible man. Then he (Jalāl al-Dīn) put on the robe of honour and sent presents to the Khalifah. His presents were sent to Egypt and Damascus through one 'Ālā al-Bukhārī'. Al-Ashraf Barstāy, the ruler of Egypt, to whom Sultān Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Shāh sent presents and from whom he received the robe of honour was Al-Ashraf Sayf al-Dīn Barsbāy, the 9th ruler of the Burjī line of the Mamlūk rulers of Egypt, who ruled from A.D. 1422 to A.D. 1438. This piece of information is of great importance to us, because it is not

1. Ibid.
5. The dates also suggest that Ashraf Barsbāy was a contemporary of Sultān Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Shāh, who ruled from 818/A.D. 1415 to 836/A.D. 1432, (J.A.S.B. Vol. XVIII, No. 2, 1952, pp. 121ff. See also note 2 at page 30 above.
available in any other source and so long it was lost in obscurity. Even the coins of the Sultān do not bear the name of the Khalīfah. Towards the beginning of his reign till 834/A.D. 1430, he issued coins declaring himself al-Nāṣir Amīr al-Muʿminīn (helper of the Commander of the Faithful) or Ghawth al-Islām waʾl-Muḥsinīn (helper of Islām and the Muslims). ¹ But from 834/A.D. 1430, he issued coins declaring himself Khalīfah² (الله خليفة, Khalīfah of God).

It is difficult to explain at the present stage of our knowledge, why he did not inscribe the name of the Khalīfah in his coins even though he is said to have received the recognition. It is also not known what led him in 834/A.D. 1430 to declare himself Khalīfah.³ We also do not know what was the date of his receipt of recognition, because in this point, Al-Sakhāwī is silent, while Ḥājī Dabīr is thoroughly unreliable; according to the latter, Sultān Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Shāh died in 812/A.D. 1409, which goes against the accepted date or the evidence of coins.⁴

(iii) & (iv) It is interesting to note that at least two Bengal Sultāns built and maintained madrasahs (schools or colleges) in the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah. They were Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aʿzam Shāh and Sultān Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Shāh. Al-Sakhāwī records the following in connection with Aʿzam Shāh.⁵ Aʿzam Shāh son of Iskandar Shāh son of Shams al-Dīn, Ghiyāth al-Dīn

2. Ibid.
3. For a discussion on the subject see “Khalīfah Allāh title in the coins of Bengal Sultāns” in Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society, Vol. VIII.
N. K. Bhattacharji: Op cit, pp. 123 ff. See also note 2 at page 30 above.

اعظم شاه بن إسكندرشاه بن شمس الدين غيات الدين ابن المظفر
السجستاني الأصل صاحب منجله من بلا دالهند – كان حنفيا\nذاححاً من العلم والعُير محبباً في الفقهاء والصالحين – شجاعاً كريماً
جواداً - اتبنى بمكة عند باب أم هاني مدرسة - صرف عليها وعلى
Abū’ l-Muẓaffar, al-Sijistānī by origin, (was) the ruler of Bengal in the country of India. He was a Ḥanafī (belonging to the School of Abū Ḥanīfah), favoured with learning and wealth, loved in the circle of theologians and pious men, brave, generous and bountiful. He built (established) a madrasah at Makkah at the gate of Umme Hānî (باب ام هاني) and spent for it and for its endowments twelve thousand Egyptian mithqāl (مثقال), established lectures in it, for the people belonging to four madhābs¹ and the lectures came to an end² there in Jamāḍī II, in the year 14 (probably meaning 814/A. D. 1411). Similarly, he founded a madrasah in the city of the Prophet (Madinah) at a place called the ‘Old Fort’, near the ‘Gate of Peace’. This is in addition to his sending rich presents for the people of Haramayn (Makkah and Madinah) several times”.

Ghulām ‘Ali ʿAzād Bilgrāmī³ gives further details on the point and writes as follows. “Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn, ruler of Bengal

1. The four madhābs are, Ḥanafī, Shāfeʿī, Māleki and Ḥanbali, named after their founders.
2. There is a lacunae in the text; is probably a mistake for التمساح

Sultān ʿAmir of Bengal is not included among the twelve thousand. He was a descendant of the Aybak dynasty and his name was Sultan Ghiyath al-Din. He built a madrasah at Makkah at the gate of Umme Hani and spent money on its endowments. He also founded a madrasah in Madinah at a place called the ‘Old Fort’, near the ‘Gate of Peace’. In addition to this, he sent rich presents to the people of Haramayn (Makkah and Madinah) several times.”

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sent to Makkah and Madinah a huge sum through his personal servant Yaqūt ‘Anānī, to be distributed among the inhabitants of both the holy places and also to establish a madrasah and to open a saraī in the holy city of Makkah after his name. He purchased land for making waqf and spent on works of public utility such as education etc. He wrote a letter to Mawlānā Ḥasan bin ‘Ajīn, the Sharīf of Makkah and sent him valuable presents. The Sharīf accepted (the presents) and ordered the works to be done according to the wish of the Sulṭān. The Sharīf took one-third (of the wealth sent) according to his family custom and the rest were distributed among the learned and destitutes of the holy cities. So much wealth was sent that everyone of the two holy places got his own share there of. Yaqūt purchased two houses near the place known as Bāb-i-Ummehānī for building the madrasah and the saraī. The two houses were demolished and the madrasah and the saraī were built (on the same site). Two aṣīl and four raḥba.

1. Aṣīl is derived from Aṣl (root) and technically it means the original site of a house. Raḥba means the courtyard of a house.
of land were purchased and endowed to the madrasah. He appointed four teachers of four madhhabs and sixty students were gathered, the expenditure was to be borne out of the proceeds of the endowment. He bought another house in front of the madrasah at five hundred gold mithqāl and endowed it for the benefit of the sarāī. Mawlānā Ḥasan charged twelve thousand gold mithqāl for the two houses over the site of which the madrasah and the sarāī were built and the two asīl and four raḥba of land. In addition to this he took a large amount, which no one can tell. Sulṭān Ghīyāḥ al-Dīn also sent money for the excavation of a rivulet at ‘Arafah through the said Yāqūt and Mawlānā Ḥasan accepted it and said, “we shall do the needful”—the amount was thirty thousand gold mithqāl”.

The writer quotes from the Tārīkh-i-Makkah of one Qādī Qutb al-Dīn Ḥanafī¹ and gives the actual Persian rendering of that Arabic work. Moreover the writer says that he visited the places and saw the madrasah, sarāī, and the rivulet of Sulṭān Ghīyāḥ al-Dīn Aẓam Shāh. The two scholars, al-Sakhāwī and Bilgrāmī give the same account, the latter giving more details than the former. As recorded earlier,² this same account is available in a 19th century manuscript, Ḥāṭah-i-Ḥāṣirah li-Khazānah -i-Āmirah of Ḥamīd Allāh Khān who however copied Bilgrāmī verbatim³.

The second Sulṭān who maintained a madrasah in Makkah was Sulṭān Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Shāh. His madrasah is said to have been awe-inspiring (āʿāda), probably in size⁴. These two instances show that the Bengal Sulṭāns kept close contact with the holy cities.

These evidences at once raise the prestige of the Bengal Sulṭāns to a high point. They illumine the character of both Aẓam Shāh and Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Shāh. The former built two madrasahs in the cities of Makkah and Madīnah, which were open to people

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¹ See, Lane : Lexicon. What is meant here is that Yāqūt ‘Anānī purchased original sites of two houses and courtyards of four others.

² Supra, p. 5.

³ Manuscript in the library of Islamic Intermediate College, Chittagong.

belonging to four schools of thought. He built a sarāi at Makkah
and caused the excavation of a rivulet at 'Arafah. In addition,
he also sent presents to the people of the two cities so that
everyone got his due share. Sulṭān Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Shāh’s
madrasah in Makkah is described as awe-inspiring. The evidences
set forth above, indicate only the general attitude of the two
Sulṭāns towards Islām and Islāmic cultural centres; they do not
reveal anything about their promotion of Islāmic spirit in Bengal.
But if they are read together with those discussed in the succeeding
pages, they reveal a hitherto unknown feature of the Muslim
Sulṭānate in Bengal. As will be discussed presently, almost all
Bengal Sulṭāns patronised learning, 'Ālims, and the Şūfīs. They also
built prayer houses, schools and colleges. So, by keeping contact
with the holy cities through construction activities and sending of
presents Sulṭān Ghiyāth al-Dīn A’ẓam Shāh and Sulṭān Jalāl al-Dīn
Muḥammad Shāh excelled all others of their rank. These were meant
to generate an Islāmic spirit in the mind of their co-religionists
in Bengal. Even today, Muslims of Bengal look towards Makkah
and Madīnah for inspiration and guidance in religious matters.

(v) The Sulṭāns also gave facilities to the pilgrims to visit the
holy cities during the time of Ḥajj. Recently, Prof. Hasan Askari
has published a few letters, written by Mawlānā Muẓafīr Shams
Balkhi to Sulṭān Ghiyāth al-Dīn A’ẓam Shāh. In a letter the
Mawlānā writes, “Now the (pilgrim) season is approaching. A
farman may kindly be issued to the officials (Kārkuns) of Chatgāon,
directing them to accommodate in the first ship the band of Darwesh
pilgrims for Mecca who have assembled around me, the poor
man”. In another letter he writes. “This insignificant mendicant,
Muẓafīr Shams, offers his peace and blessings. The auspicious
‘farman’ has been received.”

pp. 1-19.
2. Mawlānā Muẓafīr Shams Balkhi was a disciple of Shaykh
Sharf al-Dīn Yaḥyā Manerī (See, Ibid, p. 2; ‘Abd-al-Raḥmān
Chishtī : Mirāt al-Ashrār, ‘Āliyah Madrasah Ms. Folio No.
199).
modated in the first ship, shows that more than one ship used to sail from Chittagong, the major sea-port of Bengal, towards Arabia carrying a large number of pilgrims from this country. The contemporary inscriptions also refer to Ḥājis i.e. those who visited the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah. Ḥājī Bābā Šāliḥ who built a mosque at Sunārgāwn in the reign of Sultān ‘Alā’al-Dīn Ḥusayn Shāh claimed himself to be a “servant of the Prophet, who made pilgrimage to Makkah and Madinah and who visited the two foot-prints of the Prophet.”

(d) Patronising Alims and the Sufis

The ‘Alims and the Šūfis received patronage from the Sultāns and their officers. Muḥammad Bakhtyār Khalji was the first to build Khāngahs for the Šūfis. In the reign of Sultān ‘Alā’al-Dīn ‘Alī Mardān Khalji, a Muslim scholar and Šūfī, Qāḍī Rukn al-Dīn al-Samarqandi, was probably under his employ in the capacity of a Judicial officer. Of Sultān Ghīyāth al-Dīn ‘Iwād Khalji’s encouragement to the ‘Alims and the Šūfis, Minhāj writes as follows. “And in that country (Lakhnawī) many marks of his goodness remained . . . . . . . He gave pensions to good men among the ‘Alims (learned), the mashā’īkh (doctors learned in religion and law), and the Sayyids (descendants of the prophet) and other people received much wealth from his bounty and munificence.” In his time, one Muslim divine, Jalāl al-Dīn son of Jamāl al-Dīn Ghazwānī of Firūz-Koh visited Lakhnawī. He was called upon to deliver a theological lecture in the audience-hall of the Sultān. The Sultān and the nobles presented such a huge sum to him that at the time of return he amassed a sum of eighteen thousand tankahs. Minhāj-i-Sirāj came to Bengal and himself

1. For inscription see, J.A.S.B. 1873, p. 283.
received patronage from Malik 'Izz al-Din Ṭughral Ṭughān Khān, the governor of Lakhnawi.1 Sultān Shams al-Din Iltutmish ordered the construction of a sacred building at Gangarampur near old Maldah. The building was renovated in the reign of Sultān Nāṣir al-Din Maḥmūd of Dehli (son of Shams al-Din Iltutmish) by Jalāl al-Din Mas′ūd Jānī, the governor of Lakhnawi.2 As the place was probably a seat of a Chilliākhānah of Maḥdūm Shāykh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizī, this sacred building was probably attached to that saint.3 Sultān Mughīth al-Dīn Ṭughral, (the rebel governor of Sultān Ghīyāth al-Dīn Balban) was very much liberal towards Qalandars, whom he presented three mauls of gold.4 Bughrā Khān (son of Sultān Ghīyāth al-Dīn Balban, who assumed independence after his father's death)5 was the patron of two great poets, Shams al-Dīn Dabīr and Qādī Aṭīr.6 Both of them and the great poet Amir Khusraw visited Bengal in the train of the expeditionary forces of Sultān Ghīyāth al-Dīn Balban.7 Sultān Shams al-Dīn Ilyās Shāh built a mosque in honour of Shāykh ‘Alā’ al-Ḥaqq.8 He took a great risk by attending the funeral of Shāykh Raḥjah Biyābānī at a time when he was besieged at the Ikdālah fort by Sultān Firūz Shāh Tughluq of Dehli.9 Sultān ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Alī Shāh built a shrine in honour of Maḥdūm Shāykh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizī.10 On the patronage of Sultān Fakhr al-Dīn Mubārak Shāh, Ibn Bāṭṭūṭah writes as follows. "There was an order of Sultān Fakhr al-Dīn not to take money from the faqīrs, while they travelled by

8. For inscription see, Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica, 1938-40, pp. 7-9, Plate IV (a).
10. Ibid, p. 94.
the river, to provide them with provision if anybody was in need of the same, and to pay them half a dinār, whenever they reach a town or city." Sultan Fakhr al-Din Mubarak Shāh was so fond of faqirs that he made one of them named Shyādā, the ruler of Sudkāwān. But the faqir proved faithless, killed the Sultan’s son and received punishment from him. Sultan Sikandar Shāh ordered the erection of a domed building at the shrine of Mawlānā ʿAṭā, a great Sūfī, lying buried at Deokot. In his reign a mosque was built by one Khān-i-Aʿzam Ulugh Mukhliṣ Khān in the vicinity of the dargāh of Hāḍrat Muḥammad Kabīr Shāh, generally called Shāh Anwar Quṭī of Aleppo. In the year 863/1459, a tomb was erected in honour of a great Sūfī, probably Hāḍrat Nur Quṭb ʿĀlam by one Khān-i-Aʿzam Latīf Khān. Poet Shāh Muḥammad Ṣaghīr, who wrote Yūsuf Jolekhā (correctly Yūsuf Zulaykhā) in Bengali, received patronage probably from Sultan Ghīyāth al-Dīn Aʿzam Shāh. The Sultan was very much respectful towards the contemporary Sūfīs. He once sent a trayful of dishes to the celebrated Sūfī, Hāḍrat Nur Quṭb ʿĀlam.

1. Ibn Baṭṭūṭah, Vol. IV, p. 293.


5. For inscription see, J.A.S.B. 1870, p. 292.

6. For inscription see, J.A.S.B. 1873, p. 271. Memoirs pp. 115-116. (See also Chapter III, Section (c).


He also presented rich garments to Shaykh Mużaffar Şams Balkhî who came to Bengal on his way to the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah for performing ḥajj. He also made arrangement of ships for the voyage of the Shaykh and his disciples, from Bengal to Arabia. The court of Sultân Rukn al-Dîn Bârbak Şâh was graced by the presence of a number of scholars, Ibrâhîm Qâwwâm Fâruqî, the writer of Farhang-i-Ibrâhîmî (better known as Sharţnâmâh), Amîr Zayn al-Dîn Harâwî, the poet-laureate, Amîr Shahâb al-Dîn Hâkim Kirmânî, the physician who also wrote a persian lexicon, Manşûr Shîrâjî, Malik Yûsuf bin Hâmid, Sayyid Jalâl, Sayyid Muḥammad Rukn, and Sayyid Hûsâyîn, all of whom were poets. Khân Jâhân, who is considered to be the first to bring Bagerhat under the Muslims is credited to be, “the lover of the descendants of the leader of the Prophets and sincere towards the pious scholars.” Sultân Jalâl al-Dîn Fath Şâh repaired a stone-building in the precincts of the dargâh of Mawlânâ Aṭâ Waḥîd al-Dîn. Muḥammad Buda’î ūrf Sayyid Mir Alawî wrote a book, Hidâyat al-Râmî (a book on archery) and dedicated to Sultân ‘Alâ’al-Dîn Hûsâyîn Şâh. The same Sultân patronised one Muḥaddith (traditionist), Muḥammad bin Yazdân Bakhsh who transcribed the Şâhî al-Buḫšârî in three volumes in 911//A.D. 1503 in the capital city of Ikdâlah. He granted land for the maintenance of alms-house attached to the dargâh of Ḥadrat Nûr Quṭb ‘Alam. In his reign a number of sacred constructions were made, attached to the dargâhs of the Şûfîs. A mosque was built by one Majlis Rāḥat in the shrine of the descendants of Sultân Adam of Balkh. In the year

4. For inscriptions see, J.A.S.B. 1867, p. 135.
5. For inscription see, Varendra Research Society Monograph, No.6, 1935, pp. 3-4.
900/A.D. 1494-95, a gate was built in the shrine attributed to Šāh Ismā‘īl Ghāzī at Mandaran,¹ and a vault was erected in the *dargāh* of Šāh Nafah, near the old wall of Munghyr (Bihar) by Dānḫāl Šāh-zādah (son of Sultan ‘Alā’al-Dīn Husayn Šāh.)² He (Sultan ‘Alā’al-Dīn Husayn Šāh) also built a *siqāyah* (shed for supplying drinking water) in the precincts of the tomb of Shaykh Ākhwī Sirāj al-Dīn,³ and built a mosque in the shrine of Šāh Gadā.⁴ In his reign, one of his officers Khāliṣ Khān erected a sacred building in the *dargāh* of Šāh Jalāl of Sylhet.⁵ During this period, the tomb of Ḥāji Bābā Šāliḥ was built at Sunārgāwn.⁶ The Sultan also caused the excavation of a tank in the village of Mangalkot, Burdwan district near the tomb of Mawlānā Ḥamīd Dānishmand⁷ and one of his officers Rukn Khān built a mosque and a minaret in front of the gate of the *dargāh* of Mawlānā ‘Aṭā in Deokot.⁸ Sultan Nāṣir al-Dīn Nuṣrat Šāh built a gateway to the tomb of Shaykh Ākhwī Sirāj al-Dīn⁹ and a mosque in the Chillākhanānah of Makhdūm Shaykh Jalāl Tabrizi at Deotala.¹⁰

The patronage of the Sultan and their officers towards the ‘Ālims and the Šūfīs just discussed above show that they fall under the following categories:—

(a) granting of stipend or making presents of money or dress or edibles.
(b) exemption of the Šūfīs from the payment of conveyance charges.
(c) encouragement to the poets and scholars for writing books.
(d) building of *siqāyah* or excavation of tanks near the shrine of Šūfīs.

(e) granting of lands for the maintenance of shrines.
(f) building of tombs or other sacred buildings like mosques attached to the shrine of the Šūfīs.
(g) giving facilities to the Šūfīs or 'Alims or others for visiting holy places.

As for categories a, b, c, e, and g, these are positive proofs that the Sultāns and their officers tried their utmost to encourage the 'Alims and the Šūfīs with an ultimate view of encouraging the growth of Muslim culture and Muslim society. Categories d and f are only indirect evidences. Naturally, the dargāhs of Šūfīs became places of pilgrimage, and they were visited by the people. The siqāyahs were built and the tanks were excavated to meet the needs of such visiting people and those who settled round these places. Similarly the construction of sacred buildings like mosques were to give them an opportunity to perform their religious duties. The very fact that tombs were erected, is a sufficient testimony to the attitude of the rulers towards the Šūfīs. The discussion on the patronage of the rulers towards the 'Alims and the Šūfīs further proves that from the time of Muḥammad Bakhtyār Khaljī upto the end of the period, it was a continuous process; almost all the Sultāns paid due attention towards the well-being of the 'Alims and the Šūfīs.

(e) Cultivation of Learning by Sultans and their Officers

Some of the Sultāns and their officers were famous for their learning, their proficiency in the Holy Qur‘ān, the Ḥadīth (tradition of the Prophet) and the Shari‘ah (the Islāmic law). In the reign of Sultān Rukn al-Din Kāykā’ūs, one Ikhṭyār al-Din Firūz Aitgīn, the governor of Bihar claims himself to be an 'Alim. In an inscription, Sikandar Shāh claims himself to be “the lord of the age and the time, the causer of justice and benevolence........learned and great monarch.”3 Sultān Ghīyāth al-Din A‘zam Shāh was fellow student

1. See, Chapter III, Section (C).
of Ḥaḍrat Nūr Qūṭb ‘Ālam, the celebrated saint of Pandwah, both receiving education from one Shaykh Ḥamīd al-Dīn Kunjnasīn of Nagawr. The Sultān composed verses in Persian. The anecdote recording his presence before the court on an warrant from Qāḍī Sirāj al-Dīn and his submission to his orders shows that he was fully aware of and had respect for the shari‘ah. In an inscription found at Zafar Kān’s mosque at Triveni, Rukn al-Dīn Bārbak Shāh is called “the just, the liberal, the learned and the perfect.” Of Sultan Shams al-Dīn Yusuf Shāh, Firīshthah writes, “he was a learned, virtuous, and tactful king, who ordered for doing good and prohibited from doing evil. In his time nobody dared drinking openly and disobeying his orders. At interval he called the leading ‘Ālims to his court and used to say, ‘you should not side with anybody in discharging religious matters, otherwise there will be no good terms between you and me and I shall punish you.’ As he was a learned man himself, most of the cases in which the Qāḍīs failed, he used to dispose of himself.” Sultan Jalāl al-Dīn Fatḥ Shāh is praised in one inscription as “reave-

1. Riyāḍ, p. 108. He cannot be identified with the famous Qāḍī Ḥamīd al-Dīn of Nagawr who predeceased Shaykh Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyā.
4. For inscription see, J.A.S.B. 1870, p. 290.
ler of the secrets of the Qur'an, learned in all branches of learning both concerning religion and body (i.e. theological and medical education)." One Taqi al-Din son of 'Ayn al-Din, who built a mosque at Sunargawn in the reign of Sultan Nasir al-Din Nasrat Shah claims himself to be "the chief of the lawyers and teachers of Hadith." Another Ulugh Majlis Nur, who built a mosque in the reign of Jalal al-Din Fatih Shah was a "lord of the sword and pen." Khan Jahan of Bagerhat was closely associated with "the true 'Alims." 

(f) Benevolent Activities of the Sultans

The benevolent activities of the Sultans were aimed at ameliorating the distress of the people. Sultan Ghayath al-Din 'Iwad Khalji was the first to attend to such works of public utility. He caused the construction of a series of dykes to protect the city of Lakhnawt and the suburbs from the inundation of the flood waters. He also connected the two frontier cities of his time, Deokot on the north and Lakhnawr on the south with the head-quarters by causing the construction of a high road which was ten days' journey. "Apart from the strategic and commercial importance of this royal high-way, it proved also a real blessing to the inhabitants of a considerable part of the Sultan's kingdom as a great cross-country bund that saved their home and harvests from flood—a yearly calamity even now to our people." At a later time, Sultan Rukn al-Din Barbak Shah of the later Ilyas Shahi dynasty made a similar attempt to control the flood in the vicinity of Lakhnawt and in this work he was assisted by the famous warrior-saint Shah Isma'il Ghazi. Sultan 'Ala'al-Din Husayn Shah's name is associated with construction

5. Minhaj, p. 162.
of well and excavation of tanks.\(^1\) His granting of lands for the maintenance of alms-houses in the *dargāh* of Shaykh Nūr Qūtb ʿĀlam has already been mentioned.\(^2\) The *Riyāḍ\(^3\)* further mentions that he maintained alms-houses in each *sarkar* of his dominion and bestowed vast treasures to the poor and destitutes. Many of these works were meant to give succour to the people and these certainly popularised the Muslim administration in Bengal and indirectly popularised the religion that the Sultāns professed.

A Bengali Muslim poet Dawlat Wazīr Bahrām Khān\(^4\) gives the following description of the benevolent activities of one Ḥamīd Khān, one of the poet’s ancestors and an officer of Sultān ‘Alā’al-Din Ḥusayn Shāh.

“In old days, there was a world-famous king named Ḥusayn Shāh. His beautiful jewelled throne adorned the city of Gaur. His chief wazīr was Ḥamīd Khān, whose qualifications are beyond description. He built houses of food (inns or beggar-houses) and mosques and he caused the excavation of tanks in different places.”\(^5\)

The poet claims that Ḥamīd Khān, his ancestor, was the chief wazīr of Sultān Ḥusayn Shāh. This information is not available in any other source.

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The discussion makes it adequately clear that the Bengal Sultāns were supporting a cause which ultimately proved to be the foundation of a new society and a new culture in Bengal. The construction of mosques, madrasahs, the close contact with the cultural centres outside the country including the holy cities of Makkah and Madīnah, and the encouragement to the ʿĀlims, all these helped to a great extent, the foundation of Muslim culture. Due credit should be given to Muḥammad Bakhtyār Khalji, the first conqueror, who led the way to initiating cultural pursuits. His warlike disposition did not fail him to realise the danger of the presence of a handful of Muslims in the midst of a hostile multitudes. The construction of prayer houses, madrasahs and khānqahs was therefore to base his political structure on a solid foundation. Happily for the Muslims in Bengal, his policy was followed with equal or more assiduity by his successors. Two of them Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aʿzam Shāh and Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Shāh excelled all others by erecting madrasahs in the holy cities and sending presents to the Muslim population there. Their fame transcended the frontier of their own kingdom and resounded in outside cultural centres. The obvious conclusion, therefore, is that, but for the liberal patronage of the Sultāns, the expansion of Muslim culture in Bengal would have been checked at least temporarily if not for ever. For, the individual efforts could not have built so many mosques or madrasah or could not have kept contact with the outside cultural centres in such extensive scale or even could not have encouraged the ʿĀlims in their respective duties. The Kāykāʾūs inscription of Triveni records that Qādī al-Nāṣir spent money "to manifest the Divine Faith among the haughty."

This probably suggests the propagation of Islām among non-Muslims. Mawlānā Muẓaffar Shams Bakhī’s letters to Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aʿzam Shāh, discussed earlier, suggest that the Sultāns provided shipping facilities for pilgrims to Makkah. The fact that more than one ship sailed for Makkah manifests that the number of pilgrims was not small. Unless there was state-patronage, the pilgrims would have faced enormous difficulties. It is therefore evident that the part played by the Sultāns in the growth of Islāmic culture in Bengal was great and significant.

2. See, Supra, pp. 51-52.
SECTION (B)

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE MUSLIM SCHOLARS

The very concept of the Islāmic world was such as to facilitate movement of scholars, traders and men of piety from one country to another. As the modern ideas of nationalism had not bound down people to the country of their origin, the Muslims had no compunction to migrate from one country to another and adopt a new homeland where they could find better means of livelihood. This migration of scholars and saintly men helped in both disseminating Muslim learning and religion and raising the general level to a high standard. This was possible by keeping Arabic as the language of the religion and Persian, as far as southern Asia was concerned, the language of culture. In the higher circles these languages were understood by the people of this sub-Continent. It is much later that their ideas, thoughts and traditions were translated in local languages for the benefit of the common mass. In Bengal we have evidence to show how Muslim scholars came from outside, some of them settled here and founded madrasahs, wrote books and held discussion with the non-Muslims and won them over to the religion of Islām. We have also materials produced in Bengali language.

Unfortunately very few of the original writings have come down to us. So far we have been able to trace out (1) one translation of a Yogic work from Sanskrit into Persian and Arabic, (2) a book on Taṣawwuf, (3) a book on Fiqh, (4) a book of romance of religious nature in Bengali, (5) a Persian lexicon, (6) a book on Ḥadīth. (7) and a book on archery. A few letters (maktūbāt) of Sūfīs have also been discovered; they will be dealt with in a separate chapter in connection with the Sūfīs. Names of a few other poets have come down to us, but not their writings; either because they have been destroyed or they have till now escaped the notice of scholars.

(i) Qādī Rukn al-Dīn al-Samarqandi

The first Muslim scholar in Bengal, whose writing has come down to us, is Qādī Rukn al-Dīn al-Samarqandi. He translated a Sanskrit work named Amṛitkuṇḍ on Yogic system, first into Persian
and then into Arabic. The circumstances that led to the translation are as follows:

"There was in Hind an authentic book well-known among the philosophers and learned men named, Amritkund i.e. "the cistern of Nectar." When the Muslims conquered cities of Hind and the banner of Islam was flown there, the news reached Kamrup, the extreme territory of Hind where lived its learned men and philosophers; and one of them came out to hold discussions with the learned divines of Islam. His name was Bhojar Brahmin, the Yogi, meaning in Arabic an ascetic. He reached Lakhnauti in Bengal during the regime of Sultan 'Ali Mardan, entered the mosque on Friday and enquired about the Muslim divines. The people pointed out to him the abode of the Qadi Ruknuddin of Samarqand. The Yogi asked him, "who is your Prophet?" "Muhammad, the apostle of God, (peace be on Him)" was the reply. The Yogi then asked, "is he the same


فان في الهند كتب معتبر معرف عند حكمائها وعلماً لها
وهويسمى أبحر كند يعني جوسر ماء الحياة فلما أفتحوا المسلمين
بلاد الهند وظهر فيها علم الإسلام - بلغ الخبر إلى كابر (كامر)
وهي إقلي بلاد الهند وفيها علمها وها وحكماً وها - فخرج واحد
منهم لطلب المناطرة مع علماء الإسلام، واسمه بهو جر برهمين
جوكي، معناه بالعربي ببر神州 عالم - حتى وصل إلى لنكوت في
وقت السلطان على مرد في تيكرا (بنكلا) فدخل الجامع يوم الجمعه
فسائل عن العلماء فاشا روا إلى معمل القاضي ركن الدين محمد
المرقطى - فقال ماماكم! قال وكلو محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم
رسول الله - فقال الذي قال في الروح "هومن أمر ربي"، فقال
صدقتم هذا الذي وجدها في مصحف إبراهيم وهم إبراهيم وموسى
عليهما السلام - فاسل علماء الإسلام - حتى اجازوناه
العلماء الفتيو وعرض هو هذا الكتاب على القاضي المذ كور عليه
Prophet who said about the Soul ‘it is by the order of my Lord.’” “Yes, you are right”, the Qādī affirmed. The Yogi then declared “we have found this Prophet in the scripture of ‘Brahmān’ or two Abrahāms (i.e. Abrahām and Moses). Thereafter, the Yogi embraced Islam and learnt Islamic sciences to such an extent that the Muslim divines permitted him to pronounce legal decisions. The Yogi then presented this book to the Qādī (God's mercy on him) who admired it and practised the science of Yoga so much so that he reached the Yogi's stage. Then he translated the book into Persian and from Persian into Arabic.”

The Yogi work *Amritkund* translated by the Qādī, contained ten chapters and fifty *slokas* (verses). The titles of chapters themselves point out the subject matter of the book.¹

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¹ An Arabic version of the book is available in *Journal Asiatique, Tome CCXIII*, pp. 292-344, under the title *Hawd al-Ḥayāt* (حَرْض الْحَيَةِ).


Arabic table of contents:

الباب الأول - في معرفة كيفية العالم الكبير

الباب الثاني - في معرفة الصور التي في العالم الصغير
As clear from the contents of the book, the subject matter is Yoga philosophy, with its practical application to human beings. Ways and means have been suggested and certain ascetic exercises have been described, which help the ascetics to achieve spiritual ascendency. Nothing is known about Bhojar Brahmin, the Yogi, or the Sanskrit text, Amritkanda, from other sources. Bhojar Brahmin, the Yogi, came to Lakhnawti to hold discussion with the Muslim divines. But ultimately he embraced Islam and himself mastered Islamic religious sciences. Several other examples of similar disputations between the local Sadhus and the saint Shaykh Jalal al-Din Tabrizi are found in the Sanskrit work Sekh Subhodaya, (Shaykh Subhodaya) in which these Sadhus were won over by the Muslim saint.

These instances give us an idea that the Muslim scholars began to influence the local culture soon after the establishment of

الباب الثالث - في معرفة كيفية القلب وحقيقة ومعناه

الباب الرابع - في معرفة الرياحة وكيفيتها

الباب الخامس - في معرفة النفس وكيفيتها

الباب السادس - في كيفية محاصلة ماء الحياة

الباب السابع - في معرفة كيفية الوهم

الباب الثامن - في معرفة علامات الموت

الباب التاسع - في معرفة تسخيرالر وحانيات

الباب العشرين - في كيفية تتمة الحكايحة

Persian table of contents:

باب أول - درمجرفت عالم صغير وما هيت آن

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باب سويم - درمجرفت كيفية دل وحقيقة واردات وتخيلات ومغييبات

باب جهار - درمجرفت رياضت وكيفيت آن

باب هنجم - درمجرفت ايجاد انسان وا نوع دم

باب ششم - درمجرفت چگونگی جسد وما هیت آن ومعافیت منی

باب هفتم - درمجرفت وهم
Muslim kingdom. They won over the non-Muslim Sādhus and Yógis and made them embrace Islām. But the most important point about the Muslim scholars that may be noted is that they did not hesitate to learn local language and study books of other religions. Qāḍī Rukn al-Dīn Samarqandī not only translated the Ṭhogic work but also practised the Ṭhogic science and “reached the Ṭhogi’s stage”.

Qāḍī Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Samarqandī is identified with Qāḍī Rukn al-Dīn Abū Ḥamīd Muḥammad bin Muḥammad al-ʿĀmidī of Samarqand, who was a famous Ḥanafī (belonging to the school of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah) jurist and a Șūfi. He was a distinguished Muslim theologian and was the author of Kitāb al-Iṣḥād. He was also the founder of the science of al-khilaṣtawal-jadal (dialectics). He died at Bukhārā on the 9th Jamādī II, A. H. 615/A.D. 1218. Sultān ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Alī Mardān Khaljī ruled in Lakhnawī from A.D. 1210 to 1213. The Qāḍī was present in Bengal during his time and was probably under his employ. But he went back to his native place where he died.3

(ii) Mawlana Taqī al-Dīn ‘Arabi

According to Manāqīb al-ʿĀṣfīyā’ of Shāh Shuʿayb, Shaykh Yaḥyā, father of Makhdūm al-Mulk Shaykh Shārīf al-Dīn Yaḥyā Maneri received his education at Mahisun under Mawlānā Taqī al-Dīn. Mahisun is probably Mahisantoshi, now in Rajshahi district. Whether the Mawlānā maintained a madrasah is not known, but it

5. History of Bengal Vol. II, p. 37. Before A.D. 1947 this was included in Dinajpur district.
proves that he devoted his attention towards imparting religious instructions and he attracted students from as far a place as Maner in Bihar.

(iii) Shaykh Sharf al-Din Abu Tawwamah

Shaykh Sharf al-Din Abū Tawwāmah, the teacher and father-in-law of the celebrated saint of Bihar, Shaykh Sharf al-Din Yaḥyā Manerī, came to Dehli in or about A. D. 1260. He was a Ḥanafī jurist and a traditionist of great reputation and was well-versed in Chemistry, natural sciences and magic. Soon he gathered a large number of adherents and devotees in Dehli. The Sulṭān of Dehli became nervous at his growing popularity and with a view to getting rid of him urged him to go to Sunārgāwn.¹

The date of Shaykh Sharf al-Din Abū Tawwāmah’s arrival in Sunārgāwn has been a matter of controversy. Dr. Muhammad Ishaq, on the authority of Nuzhat al-Khawātır² of Sayyid ʿAbd al-Ḥayy is of opinion that he came to Sunārgāwn during the reign of Sulṭān Iltutmish of Dehli³. Dr. Saghir Hasan al-Masumī⁴ is of opinion that the Shaykh came to Sunārgāwn in 668/A.D. 1270 or 669/A.D. 1271, i.e. in the reign of Sulṭān Ghiyāth al-Din Balban. He cites in his favour the Manāqib al-Asfīyāʾ of Shāh Shuʿayb⁵, an almost contemporary authority, and says that Makhdūm al-

1. (a) ʿAbd al-Rahmān Chishtī: Mirāt al-Asrār, ʿĀliyah Madrasah Ms. Folio No. 199.
   (c) Muhammad Ishaq: India’s Contribution to the Study of the Ḥadīth Literature, Dacca University, A. D. 1955, pp. 53-54.
Mulk Shaykh Sharf al-Dīn Yahyā Maneri, who was born in 661/A.D. 1263, accompanied his teacher Ābu Tawwāmah to Sunārgāwn at the age of 7 or 8 years.

Dr. Ishaq's opinion may be rejected on the ground that his source book Nuzhat al Khawāṣir, written only a few years back is not corroborated by Manāqib al-Asfiyāʾ, an almost contemporary authority. As for Dr. Saghir Hasan's view, an examination of his source-book, Manāqib al-Asfiyāʾ, shows that the date may be pushed forward at least by a decade. We quote below the relevant passage from the same book1.

"When he (Makhduμ al-Mulk) reached the age of maturity, he engaged himself in religious learning and attained proficiency in it. At that time the fame of the wisdom, holiness and learning of Mawlaμā Asbrāf al-Dīn Tawwāmah had spread in the western regions of India, nay in Arabia, Iran and other countries.

was accomplished in all sciences; even in Chemistry, Natural science and magic he had experience and perfection. As for the religious sciences, the learned people used to consult him and the commons, the aristocrats, the Amīrs and the Maliks, were devoted to him. In magic, he displayed wonders to the public. Seeing the devotion of the people towards him, the King of Dehlī got nervous, lest he snatched the kingdom from him. He therefore, tactfully induced the Mawlānā to journey to Sunārgāwn. At that time the kingdom of Bangālah was under the possession of the ruler of Dehlī. The Mawlānā also wittily understood the king’s motive, but since the obedience to the man of affairs (meaning the kings) is necessary, he undertook the journey to Sunārgāwn. During his sojourn, when he halted at Maner, Shaykh Sharf al-Dīn Manerī paid a visit to him. The Shaykh being impressed by the learning and wisdom of Mawlānā Ashraf al-Dīn Tawwāmah thought that the religious sciences could be studied only with such a vastly learned man. The Mawlānā too admired the talent and manners of the Shaykh and thought it wise to help him in learning religious sciences. Shaykh Sharf al-Dīn Manerī therefore, with the permission of his parents accompanied the Mawlānā to Sunārgāwn and endeavoured his best to master the religious sciences”.

Two points, derived from the above passage may help us in determining the date of the Shaykh’s arrival in Sunārgāwn. (1) The age of Makhdūm al-Mulk Shaykh Sharf al-Dīn Yaḥyā who accompanied the Shaykh (Abū Tawwāmah) and (2) the categorical statement that Bangālah was at that time under the possession of the Sultān of Dehlī.

Dr. Saghīr Hasan al-Masumi says that Makhdūm al-Mulk Shaykh Sharf al-Dīn Yaḥyā Manerī accompanied his teacher to Sunārgāwn at the age of seven or eight years, but his authority does not bear him out. The Manāqīb al-ʾAsfiyā’ says that when Abū Tawwāmah, on his way to Sunārgāwn stopped at Maner,
the Shaykh of Maner visited him, who already attained the age of maturity and engaged himself in the study of religious science, and attained proficiency in it. He also became impressed by the learning and wisdom of Mawlānā Abū Tawwāmah and thought that the religious science could be studied only with such a vastly learned man. The very statement that he attained maturity, rules out the view of Dr. Saghir Hasan al-Masumi that he was a boy of only seven or eight years. Secondly, the statement that he engaged himself and attained proficiency in studies and that the Mawlānā (Abū Tawwāmah) also admired the talent and manner of the Shaykh, suggests that the Shaykh was not a boy of only seven or eight years, when he accompanied his teacher to Sunārgāwn. Rather, he must have been at least fifteen to twenty years old, so that his talent and manner could impress his teacher, or he could judge the worth of his own teacher. Considering from this standpoint, it may be assumed that they came to Sunārgāwn between the years (A.D. 1263\(1+15\)) A.D. 1278 and (A.D. 1263+20) A.D. 1283.

The second point that Bangālah was at that time under the Sultān of Dehlī also suggests that the date may be pushed forward even after A.D. 1283. During the time when Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Balban invaded Lakhnawtī to chastise Mughūth al-Dīn Tughral, Sunārgāwn was under the possession of one Danuj Rāi, with whom Balban entered into an agreement\(^2\). Before leaving Bengal, Balban advised his son Bughra Khān, the new Governor of Lakhnawtī, to conquer\(^3\) Bangālah i.e. Eastern Bengal\(^4\) which included Sunārgāwn. It is therefore evident that Sunārgāwn was not occupied by the Muslims at least upto A.D. 1282, when Balban came to Bengal\(^5\). The first

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2. Baranī, p. 87.
3. Baranī, p. 92. See also Supra, p. 36.

Dr. Saghir Hasan al-Masumi (*Islamic Culture*, Vol. XXVII, No. I, January, 1953, pp. 8 ff.) says that Sunārgāwn together with Bang was first occupied by Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Iwaḍ Khālji. He cites Minhāj (p. 163) in his favour
Muslim coin from the Kharāj (land-tax) of Bang (Eastern Bengal which included Sunārgāwn) was issued by Sultān Rukn al-Dīn Kāykāʾūsī in the year 690/A.D. 1291 and the first Muslim coin from the mint-town of Sunārgāwn was issued by Sultān Shams al-Dīn Fīrūz Shāhī in the year 705/ A.D. 1305. It is, therefore, clear that Sunārgāwn was first conquered by the Muslims between the years A.D. 1282 when Balban came to Bengal and A.D. 1291 when Kāykāʾūsī issued his coins from the (Kharāj) land-tax of Bang. Shaykh Sharf al-Dīn Abū Tawwāmah must have come to Sunārgāwn sometime during this period. Sultān Rukn al-Dīn Kāykāʾūsī, who reigned in Bengal from 690/A.D. 1291 to 700/A.D. 1300, was for all practical purposes independent as his coins with full regal titles show. After his (Bughrā Khān's) father's death in A.D. 1287, Bughrā Khān also assumed who says that the kingdoms of Jāñagar, Bang, Kāmrud and Tirhut sent presents to him ('Iwaḍ). Any serious student of history will agree that this was just a general remark implying probably the result of raids, because neither of these kingdoms was actually conquered or annexed by 'Iwaḍ Khalji (History of Bengal, Vol. II, pp. 20 ff). Moreover the learned scholar fails to note another statement of Minhāj, (pp. 163-64) saying that when Shāhīd Nāṣir al-Dīn Maḥmūd (eldest son of Iltutmish) invaded Lakhnawtī, 'Iwaḍ was out in an expeditionary force towards Bang and Kāmrud, but as soon as he received the news of the happenings in his capital, he hurried back and fell a prey in the hands of Nāṣir al-Dīn Maḥmūd and was killed. This statement implies that 'Iwaḍ could not capture Bang and Kāmrud. Again the learned scholar quotes James Wise (J.A.S.B. 1874, p. 83) to say that Tughral was punished by Balban in Sunārgāwn, a statement that goes against no less an authority than Baranī, (p. 91) according to whom the punishment was meted out in the bāzār of the city of Lakhnawtī.

independence.¹ So, if there is any truth in the statement of Shāh
Shuʿayb that Bangālah was at that time under the Sultān of Dehlī,
the logical assumption is that Shaykh Sharaf al-Dīn Abū Tawwāmah
came to Sunārgāwn in between A. D. 1282 and A. D. 1287.²

At Sunārgāwn, Shaykh Sharaf al-Dīn Abū Tawwāmah devoted
himself to cultural pursuits. He maintained a madrasah for his
students and a Khāngah for his disciples. Here he was surrounded by
a large number of students and disciples, the chief of whom was
Makhdūm al-Mulk Shaykh Sharf al-Dīn Yaḥyā Manerī. The Makhdūm al-Mulk studied under his teacher Tafsīr, Ḥadīth, Juris-
prudence and other branches of Islamic learning³. An idea of the
number of his students and disciples or the size of his madrasah and
Khāngah may be obtained from the following anecdote concerning
the life of Makhdūm al-Mulk Shaykh Sharf al-Dīn Yaḥyā Manerī⁴.
The kantuīr (dinner-table) of Sharf al-Dīn Abū Tawwāmah was open
to all students, guests and visitors. As the number of those attending
the kantuīr was great, it took a longer time to finish one's meal and
Makhdūm al-Mulk thought that it was a mere waste of time for him-
self. So he discontinued to attend it even at the risk of losing his
usual meal. When Abū Tawwāmah came to know the reason of his
absence from the dinner-table, he arranged to have his meals served
separately.

Shaykh Sharaf al-Dīn Abū Tawwāmah wrote a book named
Maqāmat, a book on Taqwawwuf. The book gained popularity among
the learned in the whole of India. In a manuscript collection of
Tarassul-i-ʿAyn al-Mulkī, there are two letters, one written to Sayyid
Nāṣīr al-Dīn, the Muqtaʿ of Lahore asking for a copy of the Maqā-
mat of Abū Tawwāmah and the other acknowledging its receipt.⁵

². The dates fit in with another statement of Shāh Shuʿayb
that Makhdūm al-Mulk took leave from his parents before
accompanying his teacher. Now, as his father died in 690/
A. D. 1291 (Calcutta Review, Vol. 71, p. 198), Makhdūm al-
Mulk must have left for Sunārgāwn before A. D. 1291.
⁴. Shāh Shuʿayb : Manāqib al-Asfīyāʾ, vide at the end of
I, 1953, p. 12.
⁵. Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, Manuscript No. F II.
CONTRIBUTION OF MUSLIM SCHOLARS

It is very much regrettable that the book is lost to us. Whether the book was written in Bengal or outside is not known.

Dr. Saghir Hasan al-Masumi suggests\(^1\) that the authorship of *Nām-i-Ḥaqq* a book on *Fiqh*, should also be ascribed to him. But a close examination of the book shows that the book was not actually written by him but by one of his disciples on the basis of his teachings. The author’s introduction will bear testimony to it. The relevant portion is reproduced below\(^3\) :

(1) “I admit of my inability and shortcomings. I am not unwise and unaware and ignorant (of my worth).

(2) “Our predecessors have put forward the excuse, ‘he who writes, becomes the target (of critics)’ (thus implying that he also puts forward the same excuse).

(3) “But to try so far as one can is better than to remain silent and inactive.

(4) “I tried up to my ability; I put forward (have written) the *fiqh* in the garb of verse.

(5) “Do not find fault with me; rather cover it with the robe of honour (i.e. improve upon it) if you can.

2. There are two editions of the book, one from Bombay, A.D. 1885, and the other from Kānpūr, A. H. 1332.
“Though the Arabian horse runs swiftly, yet the lean and thin ass legs on i. e. somehow goes towards the goal.

“There are one hundred and eighty verses and ten chapters, which are befitting the people of today (i.e. commensurating the short time that they can devote towards religious studies.)

“It is short and pleasant, hence it has become unique.

“This is a reminiscence of Sharf for you; whose name is spread all over the world.

“His ancestry and birth-place is Bukhārā; he got education and other achievements in Khurāsān.”

Verses No. 9 and 10 quoted above record that the book was a reminiscence from one Sharf whose name was spread throughout the world and who was born in Bukhārā and received his education in Khurāsān. So Sharf of verses may be identified with Mawlānā Sharf al-Dīn Abū Tawwāmah. But they also suggest that he was not the author himself, rather from his reminiscence, some one else, probably his disciple wrote the book. In the first place, if he (Sharf) was the author himself, he would not have introduced himself in the third person while in the preceding verses, for example from verses 1-7, quoted above, he always used the first person. Secondly, he would not have claimed to be renowned throughout the world, while in the preceding verses, he expressed himself with humility.

Nothing is available in the book to ascertain the name of the author or the place where it was written. But the date of completion of the book suggests that the book was written in Bengal. “693 years have elapsed since the death of the Prophet upto this year. In the first half of Jamādī I, this versification was completed”.1 By the date, ‘693 years after the death of Prophet’, the author must have referred to the Hijrī year. We have already noted that Mawlānā Sharf al-Dīn Abū Tawwāmah came to Bengal in between A.D. 1283-12872. The book was probably written in 693/A.D. 1293 in Bengal.

The book is a small one, having one hundred eighty verses and ten chapters. These ten chapters are in addition to three introductory

2. See, Supra, p. 72.
chapters dealing with Ḥamd (praise of God), Na'at (Praise of the Prophet and the four Khalifahs) and the author's introduction. The ten chapters dealing with the subject-matter of the book, are divided as follows.

Chapter I deals with Waḍū' (ablution). It is divided into four sections:

Section I — Farḍ (obligatory part) of Waḍū'.
" II — Sunnat of Waḍū'.
" III — Mustaḥab (optional portion) of Waḍū'.
" IV — Makrūh (that which is hateful and unbecoming) of Waḍū'.

Chapter II deals with those matters that nullify Waḍū'.

Chapter III deals with Ghusal (bath). It is divided into three sections:

Section I — Farḍ of Ghusal.
" II — Sunnat of Ghusal.
" III — deals with the quantity of water that is required in Waḍū' and Ghusal.

Chapter IV deals with those matters that make Ghusal obligatory.

Chapter V deals with Tayammum (purification by sand).

Chapter VI deals with Namāz (Prayers). It is divided into four sections:

Section I — Farḍ of Namāz.
" II — Wājib (near obligatory) of Namāz.
" III — deals with additional prostration necessitated by committing mistakes in course of prayer.
" IV — Sunnat of Namāz.

Chapter VII deals with obligatory (Farḍ) prayers of the day and night.

Chapter VIII deals with obligatory Sunnat (Sunnat-i-Mu’akkadah) prayers of the day and night.

Chapter IX deals with the fasting in the month of Ramaḍān.

Chapter X deals with the penalty to be paid for breaking the fast in the month of Ramaḍān.
Last of all there is the Khātimah or the concluding part in which the date of completion of the book has been given.

(iv) Shah Muhammad Saghir

Shāh Muḥammad Ṣaghir composed Yūsuf Jolekhā (Yūsuf Zulaykhā) in Bengali in the reign of Sulṭān Ghīyāth al-Dīn Aʿẓam Shāh¹. The love story of Ḥaḍrat Yūsuf and Zulaykhā, the subject-matter of the book is available in the Holy Qurʾān² and a few works of Persian poets³. As will be seen presently, in the words of the poet himself, he based his book on the kitāb meaning Arabic or Persian works and the Qurʾān.

The details about the life of the poet is not available. Dr. Enamul Haq⁴ thinks that he belonged to a darwīsh family because he (the poet) takes the title of Shāh. He was probably in the service of the Sulṭān⁵.

The poet explains why he composed the book in Bengali. It is reproduced below⁶:

“In the fourth place, I shall relate something about the puthi (book). I have made up my mind (to write the book) giving up the fear of sin. The people are plunged in tales and

2. Qurʾān, XIII.
5. Ibid, p. 58.

“চতুর্দশঃ কবিয়ে কিছু পোখার কথা।
পাপ ভয় এতে লা পুজ করি মন।
নানা কারণ চতু ৰোপে মনে নর্গণ।
যার এই প্রভায় সত্তোয় করে মন।
fictions; everybody satisfies himself with what is dear to him. No one writes about the religious tales for fear of being blamed by others. I have thought over and come to the conclusion that the fear is unnecessary (literally false); language does not matter if the words are true. I have heard great men say, 'in the store of jewels, words are a real worth.' Taking the jewel-like words I shall write the religious tale of love. Yusuf and Zulaykhā became lovers; it is written in the Kitāb that they loved each other in a religious mood. (Even) when love did not find place in the heart of Yusuf, Zulaykhā steeped into the sea of tragedy. I have seen much in the Kitāb and the Qurʾān; the story of Yusuf and Zulaykhā is full of nectar."

Though the poet claims that he wrote his book on the basis of the Qurʾān and the Kitāb, it is not free from the local touch. It also depicts the Bengali setting. The following examples may be cited:

(a) Šahā Muḥammad Šaghîr refers to the marriage of Ibn Amīn, younger brother of Yusuf, with Bidhu Prabhā, princess of Madhupur. Bidhu Prabhā is the name of a Hindu girl and Madhupur is also the name of a place in Bengal.

न लेखे किताबः कथा मनें भय राते।
दोषीव सकलः ताँकः इह न जुराय।
गुणिना देखिनुः आचि इह भय बिछा।
न हय भागायः किछूः हयः कथा साचा।
शुनियाचि महाजनः कहिते कथन।
रतन भाऊः रतनः रतन से धन।
बचन रतनः रतनः रतनः पुरिया।
प्रेमसः धर्माणीः कहिङः तारानः।
ताबकः ताबिनीः हैन इचुङः जनिखा।
धर्माभासः करे प्रेम किताबवें लेखा।
न हैते प्रेमसः भावः इचुङः अधरः।
जनिखा सकिनः ताहः विरहः गायः।
किताबः कौराणः मने देखिनुः बिशेषः।
इचुङः जनिखा कथा असिनः अशेषः।"

1. E. Haq: Muslim Bāṅgālā Sahitya, Pakistan Publications, Dacca, 1955, p. 60,
The story of Yusuf Jolekhā (Yūsuf Zulaykha) is found in the Holy Qur'ān, and the place of their activities is Egypt. The reference to these two Bengali names suggests that the book being written in Bengal received a Bengali character.

(b) The merchant who bought Yūsuf, is called a Manirū. But this is a Bengali word derived from *mani* (jewel).

(c) In describing the marriage of Zulaykha with ‘Azīz Miṣr, the poet freely refers to the ornaments and clothes used by the Bengali ladies even today. King ‘Azīz Miṣr came to receive his bride on a chaudol, a kind of transport used by the Muslims in Bengal during marriages. King Tāimus (Zulaykha’s father) and his queen were chewing the pān (betel-leaf) a favourite thing in Bengal.

(v) Ibrahim Qawwam Faruqi

Ibrāhīm Qawwām Fārūqī wrote a Persian lexicon named *Farhang-i-Ibrāhīmi*, but it is better known as *Sharfnameh*, because it was dedicated to the memory of Shaykh Sharf al-Dīn Yaḥyā Maneri. The book was written in the reign of Sulṭān Rukn al-Dīn Bārbak Shāh, of whom the author writes as follows:—"May Abū’l-Muẓaffar Bārbak Shāh be Shāh-i-Ālam (king of the world) and he is. May the kingdom of Jamshid be under him and it is." Again he writes, "O’ (the man) ’, who has given many horses to one who asks for. Those who go on foot were given thousands of horses. The great Abū’l-Muẓaffar, the world of favour that he is, whose smallest general gift is a horse." The eulogistic verses show that the author was in some way or other grateful to the Sulṭān or was probably under his employ.

1. Ibid.
2. Shāh Muḥammad Ṣaghīr: Yūsuf Zulaykha, Dr. E. Haq’s MS. Lines 121-124, 213-244, 1101.
The chief importance of the book lies in the fact that he has supplied the names of a few scholars and poets of the time. They are as follows:

1. Amîr Zayn al-Dîn Harwî. He is called the poet-laureate (ملك الشعراء).
2. Amîr Shahâb al-Dîn Ğâkim Kirmâni. He is called the ‘pride of physician’ (النخاع المكرم).
He was also a poet and was the author of a Persian lexicon named Farhang-i-Amîr Shahâb al-Dîn Ğâkim Kirmâni.

3. Manşûr Shîrâzî. He was a Persian poet.
4. Malik Yûsuf bin Ḥamîd was a poet.
5. Sayyid Jalâl was a poet.
6. Sayyid Muḥammad Rukn was a poet.
7. Sayyid Ḥasan was a poet.
8. Shaykh Wâhedî. He was probably a teacher of the author. He passed this world when the author wrote his book. The author also refers to a book of the Shaykh named Ḥabl Matin the subject-matter of which is not known.

It is unfortunate that none of their writings have come down to us. We also do not know the subject matter on which they wrote except that of the lexicon of Amîr Shahâb al-Dîn Kirmâni. Ibrâhîm Qawwâm Fârûqî quoted a few lines, but they do not throw any new light on the authors.

(vi) Muḥammad bin Yazdân Bakhsh

Muḥammad bin Yazdân Bakhsh famous as Khwâjgî Shirwâni was a Muḥaddith (Scholar on the tradition of the Prophet)

ایا بدا ده بهسا تلی فروان اسپ
پیاد گان رابغیشده صد هزاران اسپ
پوالالمحظور والا جهان لطف که هست
کمینه بهخشش عامت بگه احسان اسپ

1. Ibid. pp. 61 ff. (See also, Sharñâmah, ‘Alîyah Madrasah MS. Folio Nos. 23, 43, 49, 60, 185, 231 and 241).
2. Ibid.
and transcribed in Ikdālah, the capital of Sultān ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Ḥusayn Shāh three volumes of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī.¹

(vii) Muhammad Buda’i ‘urf Sayyid Mir ‘Alawi

His book Ḥidāyat al-Rāmī² was dedicated to Sultān ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Ḥusayn Shāh. Ḥidāyat al-Rāmī is a book on archery containing twenty seven chapters (bāb). Some drawings representing the archers in Indian costume drawing the bow in various attitudes are appended to the book. The date of composition of the book is not known. The transcribed copies preserved in the British Museum cannot be dated before the 17th century.

Contribution—a resume

The writings of the Muslim scholars may be grouped into following heads (1) Islāmic sciences like Fiqh and Ḥadīth, (2) the Persian lexicons and Persian poetry, (3) the religious tales and (4) the archery.³

(1) The Islamic Sciences

The writings on the Islāmic Sciences are represented by Nām-i-Ḥaqq and transcription of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī. For a country like Bengal, where Islām just obtained its political hold, books of such nature were of supreme importance. They were meant to teach the people on fundamental principles of Islām. Nām-i-Ḥaqq deals with essential principles like Wad’ū’ (ablution), Namāz (prayers), Fasts in the month of Ramaḍān and Ghusal (obligatory bath), all those subjects that guide the Muslims in their day to day life. This shows that it was intended

3. We do not know where the Maqāmat (see, Supra, p. 72) of Shaykh Sharaf al-Dīn Abū Tawwāmah was written, neither do we know what was the subject matter of Ḥabl Ma’in of Shaykh Wāḥeḍi (see, Supra, p. 79). We have not included Šūfī writings because (a) they have not come down to us except for a few letters and (b) the activities of the Šūfīs form a separate chapter. See, Chapter III, Section (c).
for ordinary persons i.e. those who did not receive advanced studies on theological subjects. The author of Nām-i-Ḥaqq himself says that the book was befitting the people of his time who could devote short time to the study of religious books.

(2) The Persian Lexicon and Persian Poetry

We shall see later¹ that the official language during the period under review was Persian. Moreover many of the religious books available at that time were written in that language. Nām-i-Ḥaqq is an important example to be cited. So the importance of the Persian lexicons cannot be underestimated. The fact that one of the poets received the title of Malik al-Shuʿarā (poet-laureate) suggests that the Persian poetry received patronage from the Sultāns.

(3) The Religious Tales

The importance of the religious tales in Bengali has been explained by Shāh Muḥammad Ǧaḡīr (the author of Yūsuf Jūlayḵhā) himself.² He says that people were plunged in tales and fictions. The gravity of the situation will be clear if we remember that a large number of local people were converted to Islām;³ they did not know the Arabic or Persian languages in which the religious books were then available. A Bengali Muslim poet makes the point further clear, when he says, “Bengalees are born in Bengal out of their misfortune. They do not understand Arabic language, nor do they understand their own religion. They all remain (satisfied) with mythological tales.”⁴ In another place he says, “Kāvīndra composed the Mahābhārata at the order of Lashkar Parāgal Khān. Both Hindus and Muslims read that book in their respective houses and none remem-

1. Chapter VI.
2. See, Supra, pp. 76-77.
3. See, Chapter III, Section (C).

कर्ष्टलोऽ बंकेत्वा बालविन मूर्ध्दम।
ना रुखेष् बवालिन सवे रूरवि वचन॥
राधौना दिनेिे कोल एक ना बुखिल।
परम्बाव सकल सवा नया सव रैल॥

11—
bers the name of Khodā and Rasūl (God and His Prophet). Under the circumstance, it was but natural that the Muslim scholars should have taken up their pen to write Muslim religious tales just to divert the people from the non-Muslim ones. More importance may be attached to the fact that it was written in the language of the people and in so doing Shāh Muḥammad Ṣaghīr did a great service to the cause of Muslim culture in Bengal.

(4) The Archery

Hidāyat al-Rāmī, a book on archery suggests that the Muslim scholars also devoted their attention to the writing of books on military sciences. The Muslims were ruling a country where geography and climate were unfamiliar to them. So the book on archery helped them in understanding the war-tactics that they had to follow. This further suggests that the Muslims paid due attention to both religious and secular studies.

Syllabus Taught in the Madrasahs

It has been pointed out earlier that a number of madrasahs were built by the Bengal Sulțāns. Mawlānā Šaraf al-Dīn Abū Tawwāmah maintained an academy at Sunārgawn, while a few Šūfīs also maintained some madrasahs or imparted religious instructions in their Khā-nqaḥs. Nothing definite is known regarding the syllabus taught in these madrasahs. The following references are available in the inscriptions:

(a) Qāḍī al-Nāṣir Muḥammad granted subsistence to “men of learning for the inculcation of the Muslim Law and to manifest Divine Faith among the haughty”.


3. Supra, p. 72.

4. Chapter III, Section (c).

(b) Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Husayn Shâh built a madrasah "for the teaching of the sciences of religion and for instruction in the principles which lead to certainty."

Both these inscriptions emphasize the teaching of Muslim Law and the Islamic religious sciences. The Islamic religious sciences include the Qur'ân (the Holy Book), the Tafsîr (the commentary of the Qur'ân), the Ḥadîth and the Fiqh. The writing of Nam-i-Ḥaqq, a book on Fiqh and the transcription of Jâmi‘ al-Bukhârî, just discussed earlier, further strengthens the view that these subjects were taught in the madrasahs. Books on these subjects were then available, as also long after, only in Arabic and Persian languages. So it may be concluded that Persian and Arabic languages were also included in the syllabus taught in the madrasahs. The fact that a Persian lexicon was written by İbrâhîm Qawwâm Fârüqî strengthens this view.

2. Supra, pp. 80-81.
3. Nam-i-Ḥaqq was in Persian, the transcription of Jâmi‘ al-Bukhârî was in Arabic.
SECTION (C)

THE SUFIS AND THEIR INFLUENCE

(a) Sufism

"Of all great religions of Western Asia, Islam has generally been regarded as the most worldly and least ascetic". Yet from the second century of its existence, it let loose that popular force which later on came to be known as Şūfīm. "Şūfīm speaks of advancement in the spiritual life as a ‘journey’ and the seeker after God as a Sālik or ‘traveller’. Its teaching is intended to guide the traveller to the attainment of perfect ‘knowledge’ (maʿrifat) of God, the only Reality diffused through all things. Subsequently, the wandering soul is led onwards by slow ‘stages’ (maqāmāt) and through the experience of certain states (aḥwāl), along a ‘Path’ (aʾt-ṭarīqat), to the desired goal of union with God, called fanāʾ fiʾl-ḥaqīqat, absorption (lit. extinction) in Reality." This fanā is the state which precedes that of baqa (perpetuity) which is an eternal existence. According to Shushtery, "by Fana, the Sufi means self-negation or negation of earthly tendency, and Baqa, retention of spiritual existence or extraction of evil qualities or retention of virtue or permanency of mind from sensible objects to spiritual reality, the extinction of material desires and the loss of selfish consciousness".

Şūfīm developed into a number of Orders or Sects of which four exerted great influence in India. They are, (1) the Chishtiyyah, (2) the Suhrawardiyah, (3) the Qāderiyah and (4) the Naqshbandiyah. All other orders that developed later were sub-divisions of these

four\(^1\). The order of many of the Şûfîs that came to Bengal, during the period under review, cannot be determined, though it may be assumed that quite a large number of them belonged to the Chishtiyah or the Suhrawardiyah schools.

(b) **Sufism in Bengal**

The Şûfîsm in Bengal was not an indigenous growth; it was imported from the west, from Central Asia through Northern India. A large number of Şûfîs came to Bengal; according to tradition, some of them came even before the Muslim conquest\(^2\). An idea of the influence of Şûfîs in Bengal may be had from a letter written by Mir Sayyid Ashraf Jahângîr Simnâni to Sultân Ibrâhîm Sharqî of Jawnpûr\(^3\). He writes, “God be praised! what a good land is that of Bengal where numerous saints and ascetics came from many directions and made it their habitation and home. For example at Devgaon seventy leading disciples of the Shaikh of Shaikh Hazrat Shaikh Shahabuddin Suharwardi are taking their eternal rest. Several saints of the Suharwardi order are lying buried in Mahisun and this is the case with the saints of Jalilia order in Deotala. In Narkoti some of the best companions of the Shaikh of Shaikh Ahmad Dəmisəqi are found. Hazrat Shaikh Sharfuddin Tawwama, one of the twelve of the Qadarkhani order whose chief pupil was Hazrat Shaikh Sharfuddin Maneri is lying buried at Sonargaon. And then there was Hazrat Bad Alam and Badr Alam Zahidi. In short, in the country of Bengal what to speak of the cities there is no town and no village where holy saints did not come and settle down. Many of the saints of the Suharwardia order are dead and gone under earth but those still alive are also in fairly large number”\(^4\).

It is, therefore, clear that Bengal became a stronghold of the Şûfîs during the early Muslim period. The present section has been divided into two parts. Part I deals with the biographical sketch of the Şûfîs and Part II with the influence of Şûfîs in the growth of Muslim culture.

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2. See *Infra*, pp. 86 ff.
3. This saint was a disciple of Şaykh ‘Alâ’ al-Ḥaqq of Pandwah. (*Akhbâr al-Akhyâr*, p. 166).
Part I— The Biographical Sketch

The following biographical sketch is derived from hagiological literature. The accounts are full of mysterious tales, which on reasonable grounds seem to be preposterous. But no attempt is made to omit those materials. These details have been given to gauge the depth of credulity of the local people and the general influence that the saints exerted on them. Wherever possible, epigraphical and other evidences have been produced to check the mistakes in chronology. No attempt is made to give an exhaustive list of the saints. A select study is made below in order to show how these saints interlinked Bengal with the rest of the Muslim world, and at the same time how they spread out in every part of Bengal.

(a) Sufis, who are believed to have come before Muslim Conquest

Some Şüfîs are believed to have come to Bengal before the Muslim conquest. They are immortalised in the hearts of men through tradition, handed down from generation to generation. It is difficult to determine how and when they came or how far they contributed to the spread of Islâm in Bengal, but the places where they are believed to be lying buried, are venerated by the people even to-day.

(i) Baba Adam Shahîd of Rampal

Bâbâ Ādam Shahîd is generally considered to be the earliest in this category.¹ He is now lying buried at Rampal, about half a mile away from Ballâl-bârî, (believed to be the capital of one king Ballâl Sena) in Munshiganj sub-division, Dacca district. Tradition relates that while he was living in Makkah as a faqîr, a certain Muslim of Kanai-Cheng, a village not far from Rampal fled away from the oppression of king Ballâl Sena for his offence of sacrificing a cow on the occasion of the birth of his son, appeâred before him (the saint) and related the story of his being persecuted by a Hindu king. Hearing that there was a country in which there was no religious toleration the saint was moved and came to Bengal with six to seven thousand of his followers. He encamped near Rampal and began sacrificing cows. This led to his conflict with king Ballâl Sena. The saint was ultimately killed by the king, but by a curious stroke of fate the king

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¹. For the tradition of Bâbâ Ādam Shahîd, see, J.A.S.B. 1889, Vol. LVII, pp. 12 ff.
and his family lost their lives by throwing themselves into *agni kūnda* or a pit of fire. The tomb of the saint is found even to-day in front of a mosque, built in the time of Sulṭān Jalāl al-Dīn Fath Shāh in the year 888/A.D. 1483.¹

It has been pointed out earlier² that Muslims had contact with Bengal through the Arab traders long before the Turkish conquest. But whether this contact could lead to the settlement of the Muslims in the interior in a place like Rampal is doubtful. The Fath Shāh inscription attached to the mosque does not refer to the saint; it is doubtful whether Malik Kāfūr, the builder of the mosque, knew about the saint or the tradition. But the story (except its earlier portion i.e. king Ballāl oppressed a Muslim for sacrificing a cow, who fled away to Makkah and appeared before Bābā Ādam) has been related by Ananda Bhaṭṭa in his *Ballāl Charita*.³ Ballāl’s enemy has been named Bāyadumba, obviously a corruption of Bābā Ādam, and the enemies have been called *Mlechchas* (a word frequently used by Hindu writers in this period to denote the Muslims) consisting of five thousand strong. The fate of the king and his family has been described as it is found in the tradition. In spite of Ananda Bhaṭṭa’s corroboration, the historiocity of the event cannot be determined, because even Ananda Bhaṭṭa’s date has been a matter of controversy and many scholars challenge its authenticity.⁴ N. N. Vasu records that there was one Ballāl Sena, a *Zamīndār* of note who rose to some prominence in Vikrampur towards the close of the 14th century A. D. He belongs to *vaidya* caste and he was different from Ballāl Sena of the Sena dynasty and it was at his instance that Ananda Bhaṭṭa wrote his book.⁵ The date of this second Ballāl Sena saw the complete dismemberment of the Hindu power in East Bengal. If this identification of N. N. Vasu proves correct, Bābā Ādam’s date may be put to the end of the 14th century A. D.

1. For inscription of this mosque, See, *J.A.S.B.* A.D. 1889, p. 23, Plate, V. See also *J.A.S.B.* 1873, p. 285.
3. *Ballāl Charita* by Ananda Bhaṭṭa, translated by H. P. Śāstrī, Chapters XXVI & XXVII.
(ii) **Shah Sultan Rumi**

The *dargāh* of the saint exists at Madanpur in the Netrakona sub-division of the district of Mymensingh. In 1829 the Government tried to confiscate the property attached to the *dargāh*, but the *Khādim* produced a Persian document of 1671 A.D. and saved the property. The document claimed that *Shāh Sūlṭān Rūmī* came to Madanpur in 445/A.D. 1053. It is said that a certain Koch King accepted Islām at his hands and donated the village to the saint. If this is true, the story must relate to a much later date as the Kochas became supreme in this region long after the overthrow of the Senas in 13th century A.D.

(iii) **Shah Sultan Mahisawar**

He is lying buried at Mahasthan in Bogra district. It is said that he was the son of a certain king of Balkh. He occupied the throne after the death of his father, but left home being disgusted of luxurious life. He became a disciple of *Shaykh Tawsīq* of Damascus, who ordered him to preach Islām in Bengal. He arrived at Hariram Nagar via Sandvip and killed a *Kālī* worshipper, king Balarāma, while the king's minister accepted Islām. Then he went to Mahasthan where he fought against king Paraśurāma and his sister Śilā Devī. The king was killed, while his sister drowned herself in the river Karatoya. The account of his war with king Paraśurāma, with minor variations, has come down through tradition, recorded by various authors. He is called Māhīsawār or fish-rider. It is said that he came on a boat shaped like a fish or with the figure-head of a fish. It is difficult to identify

him, but people of the locality regard him as one of the great saints. In the year 1096/A. D. 1685 Emperor Aurangzeb issued a sanad to Sayyid Muḥammad Ṭāhir, Sayyid ʿAbd al-Raḥmān and Sayyid Muḥammad Riḍā confirming their right on the Lākhirāj land attached to the dargāh of the saint. The deed bears the seal of Kokultash Muẓaffār Jang and is in the form of an order to the officials, Muṭāqaddis, Chawdhuris, and Qanungos of Pargana Silbari in Sarkār Bazuha and directs them to respect the Lākhirāj of the saint Muḥammad Māḥisawār. This sanad refers to earlier sanads and farmāns granted by earlier Sultāns. The dargāh was an old one, but how old nobody can say, because the earlier sanads referred to by this one, have not come down to us.

(iv) Makhdum Shah Dawlah Shahid

He is lying buried in Shahzadpur in the district of Pabna. Tradition connects him with Muḥāz-bin-Jabal, a companion of the Prophet. According to tradition he came from Yaman, with the permission of his father Muḥāz-bin-Jabal and accompanied by a large number of followers, some of whom were his near relatives. On way he met Jalāl al-Dīn Bukhārī who gave him two pigeons. Their ship

1. H. Beveridge (J. A. S. B. 1878, Part I, No. I, p. 91) writes as follows:—“The only genuine inference which we can make, I think, from Muhammad Shah’s history is, that he was the hero of a popular rising. He was not a fighting man apparently, and is never called a Ghazi, like the famous Ismail of Rangpur. Parasuram was probably a bigoted tyrant, and was killed by those of his subjects who had turned Muhammadans. This view is supported by the local tradition that Parasuram could not bear the sight of a Muselman. It seems also certain that Muhammad Shah was helped by Parasuram’s own subjects; for the tradition is, that one Harpal, the Raja’s sweeper, used to convey information to Muhammad.”

2. The text and the translation of the sanad will be found in J. A. S. B. 1878, Part I, No. 1, pp. 92-93.


continued eastward sail till at last it struck near Shahzadpur. The king, who was the master of Bihar, gave resistance to the settlement of these foreigners; the saint, including some of his followers lost their lives in the battle that followed.

The date of the saint is not so old as that of Mu'āz bin Jabal who died in A.H. 17 or 181, though he might have connection with the family of that companion of the Prophet. The date of Jalāl al-Dīn Bu'khārī is fixed from A.D. 1192-1291. If there is any truth in the statement that he met Jalāl al-Dīn Bu'khārī, it may be supposed that Maṭhūm Shāh Dawlah Shahīd came to Shahzadpur in the 13th century A.D. i.e. after the conquest of Lakhnawtī by Muḥammad Baḥṭyār Khālīji. The Shahzadpur mosque attached to the dargāh, is endowed with 722 (Seven hundred twenty two) bighās of rent-free lands, held direct from Government by trustees or mutawallīs.

(v) Makhdum Shah Mahmud Ghaznawi

Dr. Enamul Haq relates a tradition according to which the dargāh of this saint exists in Mangalkot in Burdwan district. He is commonly known as Rāhā Pīr. He fought with king Vikram-Keśarī of Mangalkot and preached Islām.

Beside these, the dargāh of Sulṭān Bāyazīd of Bīstām and the fountain attached to the name of Shaykh Farīd, occupy important position in Chittagong. How these names came to be prevalent in Chittagong is not known, because none of these saints seem to have ever come to Bengal. Dr. Enamul Haq identifies the former with Shāh Sulṭān Māhīsawār of Mahasthan (No. iii above), and the latter with Shaykh Farīd al-Dīn Ganj-i-Shākar (died A.D. 1269). He also suggests that Shaykh Farīd in his wandering, might have once come to Chittagong and Faridpur., which again, according to the

same author was after the name of Shaykh Farid. In the contemporary hagiological literature, there is no reference to Shaykh Farid's visit to Bengal. In the Muslim coins, inscriptions and Bengali literature, Faridpur was for a long time known as Fatḥābād, a name given to it by the Muslims after its conquest by Jalāl al-Dīn Muhammad Shāh. Even if Faridpur or Shaykh Farid's fountain in Chittagong were named after Shaykh Farid, the visit of the saint was not necessary, his disciples might have given the name as well.

(b) **Sufis of the Early Muslim Period**

Names of Sūfis of this category are available from comparatively reliable sources like inscriptions and biographical works. Even then, our sources are meagre and knowledge scanty. But as far as can be gathered, they exerted great influence in the spread of Islam; some of them even interfered in the politics of the country. The Sultāns looked upon them with esteem and respect; they visited the shrines, built Khānqahs, tombs and mosques in their honour. Some of them even granted lands for the maintenance of their shrines.

(i) **Makhdum Shaykh Jalal al-Din Tabrizi**

Among the saints of this category, Makhdūm Shaykh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizī seems to be the first to come to Bengal. `Abd al-Rahmān Chishtī, in his Mirāt al-Asrār calls him Abū'l Qāsim Makhdūm Shaykh Jalāl Tabrizī. He was born in Tabriz in Persia and was the disciple first of Shaykh Abū Sa'īd Tabrizi and then after

3. Details about him will be obtained from :- (a) Ā‘yn-i-Akbarī, Vol. II, p. 406; (b) Aḥbār al-Aṣḥāb, p. 44; (c) Khazīnāt al-Asfīyāʾ, Vol. I, pp. 278 ff. (d) Khūrsād-i-Jāhān Numā of Ilāhī Baksh in *J.A.S.B.* 1895. There were three Sūfis in Bengal with the name of Jalāl. For other two see later.
his death, of Shaykh Shahāb al-Dīn Suhrawardy. Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq Dehlawi has given an example of his extreme devotion to his teacher Shahāb al-Dīn Suhrawardy. Shahāb al-Dīn Suhrawardy often used to make pilgrimage to the holy city of Makkah and Shaykh Jalāl Tabrizī used to follow him. As Shaykh Shahāb al-Dīn was ill, he could not take cold food. Shaykh Jalāl Tabrizī used to put a stove on his head, so that he could provide his teacher with hot food whenever he wanted.8 When Shaykh Jalāl Tabrizī reached Dehlī, he was received by Sultān Shams al-Dīn Iltutmish (A.D. 1210-1236) and the Shaykh al-Islām Niẓām al-Dīn Suḥrā.3 The Sultān ordered that arrangement be made for his stay near the palace. At this the Shaykh al-Islām grew jealous, and brought a few charges against him, the most serious one is that of incontinence with a disreputable woman.4 But he was in good terms with Khwājah Qutb al-Dīn Bakhtyār Kākī and Shaykh Bahā ‘al-Dīn Zakariyā.5 Ultimately the falsehood of the charge was proved.6 But Shaykh Jalāl Tabrizī proceeded towards Bengal.7

The spiritual exploit of the saint in Bengal has been the subject of Sekh Subhodaya, (correctly Shaykh Subhodaya)8 a later work


5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Edited by Sukumar Sen, Calcutta, A.D. 1927. Regarding
attributed to Halāyudha Miśra, a courtier of King Lakshmana Sena (died sometime after A.D. 1205),¹ the last king of the Sena dynasty. According to scholars the book is spurious, "prepared to establish a right to the Bāis Hazāri estates during the preparation of Todar Mal’s rent-roll in Akbar’s time".² According to this book, the saint came to Bengal before Muḥammad Bakhtyār’s conquest, and foretold the impending Turkish attack on Lakshmana Sena’s Kingdom.³ It relates that he was born at Etawah (in modern U.P. in India), his father’s name was Kāfūr and he received education with the help of one merchant named Ramadān Khān and left home at the complicity of that merchant. He came to Bengal in black robe, with a turban on head, a bowl and an ‘aṣā (stick) in hand. On reaching Bengal he built a Khānqah, where he used to feed thousands of poor, destitutes and travellers⁴. A number of miracles are ascribed to him. According to Shaykh Ṣubhodaya, one night while the Shaykh was living in a forest, three tigers came, saluted him and went away⁵. According to Akhbār al-Akhīyār, he converted at a look, a Hindu milkman of Badāyūn⁶. Seeing his miraculous activities, the king (Lakshmana Sena) built a dargāh and a mosque and made liberal grant of land for their maintenance⁷.

The stories in Shaykh Ṣubhodaya are fictitious. This strengthens the view that the book is spurious. In the first place, Shaykh Jalāl Tabrizi was not born in Etawah, rather he was born in Tabriz in Persia.⁸ Secondly, he could not have come to Bengal before Muḥammad Baḥtīyār’s conquest. According to Fawāḍ al-Fawād, Fawād al-Sālikīn and all later works on the biography of the Şūfīs, the authenticity of the book see, Memoirs, pp. 105-106.

4. Ibid, p. 91.
5. Ibid, p. 11.
8. Beside the hagiological literature referring him as al-Tabrizi an inscription categorically calls him جلال ألدین شهاب تبریز مراد (See Memoirs, p. 102).
he came to Dehli, when Sulṭān Shams al-Dīn Ilūtūmish was on the throne. So he could not have come to Dehli before A.D. 1210 when Sulṭān Ilūtūmish ascended the throne, not to speak of coming to Bengal before that date. (Lakshmana Sena died in A.D. 1206).

In Pandwah, there is a set of buildings which go by the name of Barī dargāh or Shrine of Shāh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizī. These buildings are, (a) one Ḫāmi‘masjid, (b) two Chillākhānāhs, (c) one Tanūr Khānāh (kitchen), (d) one bāb-dār khānāh (store house) (f) Ḥājī Ibrāhīm’s tomb and (g) Salāmī darwāzah (entrance gate). The original shrine was built by Sulṭān ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Ali Shāh (A.H. 742-43/1341-42) at the order of the saint in dream. The original mosque was also probably built by him, which was repaired by Shāh Nī‘mat Allāh in 1075/A.D. 1664. The Bhāndār Khānāh was erected by one Chānd Khān in 1084/A.D. 1673. The inscription attached to the Lakshmana Sena Dālān shows that the astānah of Shāh Jalāl Tabrizī was repaired by one Muḥammad ‘Alī of Burji in 1134/A.D. 1722. The inscription in Tanūr Khānāh shows that it was built by one Sa‘ad Allāh in 1093/A.D. 1682. The endowment to the shrine of the saint is known as Bās Hazārī (containing twenty tow thousand bighas of land).

There is another chillākhānāh at a place called Deotala, which was given the name of Tabrizābād after the name of the saint. Four inscriptions, referring to Tabrizābād have so far been discovered. They are detailed below:

(a) Inscription of Sulṭān Rukn al-Dīn Bārbak Shāh, dated 868/A.D. 1464. It records the erection of a

3. Riyāḍ, pp. 94-95.
4. Memoirs, p. 100. See also J.A.S.B. 1895, p. 201.
5. For inscription see, Memoirs, p. 102.
8. Ibid, p. 106.
Jāmī’s mosque at Tabrizābād by one Ulugh Murābit Khān;

(b) a second inscription of the same Sulṭān. The date is broken. It records the erection of a mosque “in the blessed town of Tabrizābād, generally known as Deotala”;

(c) one inscription of Sulṭān Nāṣir al-Dīn Nuṣrat Shāh dated 934/A.D. 1527. It records the erection of a mosque by one Shīr Khān, “in the town of Shaykh Jalāl Muḥammad Tabrizi”;

(d) an inscription of Sulaymān Karrānī, dated 978/A.D. 1571. It records the erection of a mosque “in the blessed town of Tabrizābād, known as Deotala”.

The above discussion brings out the following important points. The saint was born at Tabriz and his name was Shīykh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizī. His original name might have been Abūl Qāsim, as found in Mirāt al-Asrār. From the names of his contemporary saints, Qūṭb al-Dīn Bakhtyār Kākī, Bahā’al-Dīn Zakariyā, Shīykh al-Islām Nizām al-Dīn Ǧurgā under Sulṭān Shams al-Dīn Iltutmīsh, it may be concluded that the saint lived towards the later part of the 12th and the earlier part of the 13th centuries A.D. The evidence of Shīykh Ǧabhdodāya that he came to Bengal in the reign of Lakshmana Sena cannot be accepted, because he came to Dehlī, not to speak of Bengal, sometimes after A.D. 1210 when Sulṭān Shams al-Dīn Iltutmīsh ascended the throne.

The saint exerted a great influence in Bengal, attracting a large number of people around him. Two places in Bengal that received prominence by his presence are Pandwah and Deotala, the latter received the name of Tabrizābād after his name. The construction of Tanūr Khān, Bhāndār Khān referred to earlier,

1. J.A.S.B 1874.


denotes that the **Khāngah** of the saint made arrangements for feeding the people that came to visit the **dargāh**.

The date and place of death of the saint is a matter of controversy. According to **Aḵbār al-Aḵyār** he is lying buried in Bengal, but according to Abu’l Fadl, he died in Deo Mahal, identified with Maldive islands. According to **Khazinat al-Asfīya’** he died in 642/A.D 1244, while according to **Tadhkirat-i-Awliyā’-i-Hind**, an Urdu biography of the saints, he died in 622/A.D. 1225.


Enamul Haq: **Baṅge Sūfī Prabhāva**, Calcutta, A.D. 1935, p. 96. H. Beveridge (Sec, **J.A.S.B** 1895, pp. 230 ff.) does not accept either of these dates. He is of the opinion that Shaykẖ Jalāl Tabrizī lived up to the middle of the 14th century A.D. and Sulṭān ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Ali Shāh had an interview with the saint; that this saint and the one named Shaykẖ Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizi by Ibn Baṭṭūta with whom he (Ibn Baṭṭūta) met were one and the same person and further that he was contemporary of Shaykẖ Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā (died A.D. 1325). In forwarding this view, Beveridge has been misled by two statements—one of Ibn Baṭṭūta and the other of the **Khadims** of the saint’s **dargāh** at Pandwah. According to the former, he met Shaykẖ Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizi in Kamrup (see, Ibn Baṭṭūta, Vol. IV, p. 215) and according to the latter the saint lived in Pandwah till 728/A.D. 1337 (Sec, **J.A.S.B.** 1895, p. 203). Beveridge was so much influenced by these two statements that he suggests that the words **by ṭā’l** of the **Riyād** (p. 94, in which the receipt of the order of the Shaykẖ by Sulṭān ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Ali Shāh to erect the shrine has been discussed) mean face to face interview with the saint and not in dream.
(ii) Makhdum al-Mulk Shaykh Sharf al-Din Yahya Maneri

The celebrated saint of Bihar Makhdum al-Mulk Shaykh Beveridge begins with a note, “Ibn Batuta’s book is unfortunately confused, and wanting in precision”, but his whole argument is based on the testimony of Ibn Baṭṭūṭah, while the corroboration has been found in the Pandwah tradition. At the present stage of our knowledge, we can say with certainty that Shaykh Jalāl Tabrizi of Pandwah and Shaykh Jalāl with whom Ibn Baṭṭūṭah met in Kamrup and whom he wrongly calls Tabrizi were two different persons. The inscriptions cited above clearly mention that Shaykh Jalāl of Pandwah was Tabrizi, while the inscriptions discovered from Sylhet (See, J.A.S.B 1873, p. 293) mention that Shaykh Jalāl of Sylhet was Kunyāyī. Some of these inscriptions were issued within an interval of a few years (Cf. J.A.S.B., 1873, p. 293 and Memoirs, p. 191 for inscriptions of ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Ḥusayn Shāh and Nuṣrat Shāḥ). If they were not two different persons, the inscriptions issued within an interval of only twenty two years would not have used two different epithets to their names. Secondly, we know that Shaykh Jalāl Tabrizi was a disciple of Shaykh Abū Saʿīd Tabrizi and Shaykh Shahāb al-Dīn Suhrawardy and that he came to Dehlī during the reign of Sulṭān Iltutmīsh when Shaykh Niẓām al-Dīn Sughra was the Shaykh al--Islām. How could he then live upto A.D. 1346 when Ibn Baṭṭūṭah visited Bengal? Even if the testimony of Ibn Baṭṭūṭah that he lived for one hundred and fifty years is accepted, the identification is impossible. Because if he died in A.D. 1347 after a life of 150 years, his birth falls in A.D. 1197 which means that he was a mere boy when he came to Dehlī, though the sources at our disposal assert that he already served two of his teachers, and was a friend of two other great Sūfīs, Quṭb al-Dīn Bakhtyār Kākī and Bahā’ al-Dīn Zakariyā. Therefore Ibn Baṭṭūṭah’s reference to Shaykh Jalāl Tabrizi in Kamrup is a mistake for Shaykh Jalāl Kunyāyī,
Sharf al-Dīn son of Shaykh Yaḥyā came to Sunārgāwnī with his teacher Mawlānā Sharf al-Dīn Abū Tawwāmah at the prime of his youth and stayed there up to the age of thirty. Here he passed as he committed in many other cases in connection with Bengal. (Cf. Indian Historical Quarterly, 1942, pp. 65-70).

Thirdly, there is no justification in discarding the evidences of Abūʾl Faḍl and Firīshṭah, simply on the ground that they are not corroborated by the Pandwah tradition and the doubtful testimony of Ibn Baṭṭūṭah. Beveridge himself admits that Abūʾl Faḍl and Firīshṭah make him a contemporary of Qūṭb al-Dīn Bakhtyār Kākī and Bahāʾ al-Dīn Zakariyā and thus put his date to early 7th century of the Hijrah, but expresses doubt on the ground that Abūʾl Faḍl “puts him in his list not only after Bahauddin, but after his son and grandson and also after Nizamuddin Awliyā, who died in 725 A.H.”. If Beveridge had examined Ā’yn-i-Akbarī carefully, he would have found that Qāḍī Ḥamīd al-Dīn Nagawri, who died in 644/A.D. 1246 (according to Akhbār al-Akhyār A.H. 605, see p. 38) has been enlisted by Abūʾl Faḍl after those of Bahāʾ al-Dīn’s son and grandson and of Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyā. There is no reason to think that Abūʾl Faḍl wrote in chronological order. Except Ibn Baṭṭūṭah, there is no other authority which refers to the presence of Shaykh Jalāl Tabrizī in Kamrup. The acceptance of Pandwah tradition in preference to Abūʾl Faḍl and the change of meaning of the text (as in the case of ʿe of the Riyāḍ, pointed out earlier) to fit in with later evidences are simple questions of ingenuity.


2. For Mawlānā Sharf al-Dīn Abū Tawwāmah and the circumstances that led him to come to Bengal, See, Supra, Pp. 67-72.
his whole academic career and “evinced great interest in his studies and became proficient in all the branches of Muslim learning viz. the commentary on the Qur’ān, Tradition, Jurisprudence, Theology, Logic, Philosophy, Mathematics etc. and his works are full of eloquent suggestions on these points”1. Sharf al-Dīn also turned his attention towards Sūfīsm. He spent much of his time in meditation and spiritual exercises².

Shaykh Sharf al-Dīn married the daughter of his teacher³ and had three sons by his wife. After completing his studies, he returned to his native place. Bengal thus lost the services of a great saint who in his later life earned great fame in the world of the Sūfīs. But the ground for his greatness was prepared in Bengal.

The following anecdote points out the Shaykh’s thirst for knowledge. While in Sunārgāwvn, he was so much absorbed in studies that he paid no heed to the letters he received from home. He put the letters in a bag and forgot all about them. After completing his educational career he opened the letters in which he found one containing the news of his father’s death⁴.

(iii) Shaykh (Shah) Jalal of Sylhet

This saint must be distinguished from Shaykh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizī discussed before. But unfortunately in the local traditions, even in the account of Ibn Baṭṭūṭah and in his biography, Suhaylī-Tāman, written in the last century, no proper distinction has been made between the two. On the evidence of inscriptions, we are justified in talking of Shaykh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizī on the one hand and Shaykh al-Mashā’īkh Makhdūm Shaykh Jalāl Mujarrad bin Muḥammad on the other⁵. This last saint is said to be Kunyāyī i.e. hailing from Kunyā in modern Turkey in another inscription⁶. Fortunately this epigraphical evidence is corroborated by the account of the saint given in Gulzār-i-Abrār of A.D. 1613, which is based on an earlier account of Shaykh ‘Ali Sher’s Sharḥ-i-Nuzhat al-Arwāḥ⁷. “He

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2. Ibid.
5. Memoirs, p. 102; J.A.S.B. 1922, p. 413, Plate IX.
8. Ivanow: Descriptive Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in
was a Turkistan born Bengali. He was a Khalifah of Sultan Sayyid Ahmed Yesvi. It is said that one day he represented to his bright-souled pir that his ambition was that just as with the guidance of the master he had achieved a certain amount of success in the Higher (spiritual) Jihad, similarly with the help of his objectfulfilling courage he should achieve the desire of his heart in the Lesser (material) Jihad, and wherever there may be a Dar-ul-Harb, in attempting its conquest he may attain the high rank of a ghazi or a shahid. The revered pir accepted his request and sent 700 of his senior fortunate disciples (may they be honoured!) along with him. Wherever they had a fight with the enemies, they unfurled the banner of victory. Even more remarkable was the fact that in these far-flung campaigns they had no means of subsistence, except the booty, but they lived in splendour. Whenever any valley or cattle were acquired, they were entrusted to one of the accompanying saints and he was charged with the responsibility of propagation and teaching of Islam. In short, he (Shai-kh Jalaluddin) reached Sirhat (Sylhet), one of the areas of the province of Bengal, along with 313 persons. Raja Gaur Govind who was the master of one lakh foot soldiers and many thousand horsemen, was the ruler of that place. He was very powerful as compared with this small group, which in comparison with his huge army was not even like salt in bread. When, however, the battle was joined, the manifestation of the verse (With the grace of God the few attained victory over the many) became visible and the idoler later took to flight, taking with him only his life to Hell. All the region fell into the hands of the conquerors of the spiritual and the material worlds. Shaikh Mujarrad, making a portion for everybody, made it their allowance and permitted them to get married. In that distribution the town fell to the share of Shaikh Nurul Hudâ Abul Karamat Sai'di Husainî. He became a householder, begot children and Shaikh 'Ali Sher, who was one of his descendants, has narrated this account in the introduction of his commentary on Nuzhatul Arwah1. Mr. Ikram4 points out that "Shaikh Jalal was not a native of Yemen and did not belong to Suhrawardi order. His

SUFIS AND THEIR INFLUENCE

Spiritual guide, Sayyid Aḥmed Yesvi was an important saint of the order of the Khwājās of Turkistan (which later developed into the Naqshbandī order) and finds prominent mention in Rashkat of Mulla Ḥusain Waʿiz Kashifi. He was a contemporary of ḤaḍratʿAzīzan Khwājā ‘Ali Ramtini, who died in 715 A.H. (1315-6 A.D.). Kashifi’s account of Khwājā ‘Ali Ramtini shows that he lived in a period of great confusion and disorder—presumably owing to the Mongol invasion—and Shaikh Jalāl’s urge for Jihād may very well have been a reaction against those conditions and Mongol aggression in Muslim lands”.

It is difficult to decide which of the Shaykhs Ibn Baṭṭūṭah met. As we have seen, the earlier one i.e. Shaykh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizī died in the year A.D. 1225; so he could not meet him. On the other hand this saint from Sylhet is Kunyāyi and not Tabrizi. It seems therefore that there is some confusion in the account given by Ibn Baṭṭūṭah. He also attributes in his book several miracles to the saint that he met. The dargāh of the Shaykh in Sylhet is daily visited by a large number of people even to-day. People of East Bengal remember him in the popular ballads.

(iv) Shaykh Akhī Sirāj al-Dīn Uthmān

He was one of the famous Khalīfahs of Shaykh Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā of Dehli. Akhī Sirāj, in his boyhood came to Shaykh Nizām al-Dīn, who handed him over to Fakhr al-Dīn Zarrādī to teach. The teacher gave him the title of ‘Uthmān. He read Kāfiyah, Mushṣal, Qudūrī and Majma’ al Baḥrayn under Mawlānā Rukn al-Dīn. Shaykh Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā used to call him ā’ina’i-Hindūstān (Mirror of Hindūstān), and asked him to preach Islām in Bengal. After the death of his teacher he came to Bengal and began preach-

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1. See, Supra, p. 96.
5. Akhbār al-Akh’yār, p. 87; Amīr Khūrā: op cit, p. 288
6. Ibid, p. 87; Amīr Khūrā: op cit, p. 288
7. Ibid; Amīr Khūrā: op cit, p. 288
8. Ibid,
ing in Gaur and Pandwah. He had a number of disciples in Gaur and Pandwah, chief among whom was Shaykh ‘Alā’ al-Ḥaqq.

It is said that he buried the robes, that he received from his teacher, at a place in Gaur, and ordered his disciples to bury him near the grave of his robes⁴. The Shaykh died in Gaur, in A.H. 758/A.D. 1357⁵. His tomb is lying at the north-west corner of the Sāgar dīghī in Gaur⁶. The following inscriptions recording the erection of a gateway to his tomb have so far been discovered :-

(a) Inscription of Sultan ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Ḥusayn Shāh dated 916/A.D. 1510⁷.
(b) Inscription of Sultan Nāṣir al-Dīn Nuṣrat Shāh dated 931/A.D. 1524-25⁸.

Shaykh Aḵhī Sirāj al-Dīn originally came from Badāyūn⁹, but he had long connections with Bengal, because, his mother used to live here. Before he was finally ordered to start for Bengal for preaching Islām, he came here to see his mother⁹.

The death anniversary of the saint is celebrated annually on ‘Īd al-Fiṭr day. The heraldic symbol (Jhāndā) and the Pānǰā (reproduction of the hand) of Shaykh Nūr Quṭb ‘Ālam are sent to his dargāh from Pandwah as a mark of respect to the saint on this occasion⁹.

(v) Makhdum Jahaniyan Jahangasht

A little to the south of the tomb of Shaykh Aḵhī Sirāj al-Dīn there is a mosque called Jhan Jahniyā Massjid by the local people. ‘Ābid ‘Ali Khān takes the name to be a corruption of Jahāniyān and is of the opinion that the mosque was named after Makhdum Jahāniyān Jahangasht¹⁰. An inscription attached to the gateway records the erection of the mosque by Sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn Mahmūd Shāh (A.D. 1533-38)¹¹. Tradition connects two other relics to the sacred

1. Ibid, pp. 87 & 143.
5. Memoirs, p. 90
10. Ibid, p. 92.
memory of this saint—Jhāndā (heraldic device mounted on a staff) and the Qadam Rasūl (the stone representation of the foot-print of the Prophet.) The first is preserved in the shrine of Shaykh Jalāl Tabrizī at Pandwah and the second is preserved in the famous Qadam Rasūl building at Gaur.

His original name was Mīr Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn. He was given the title of Jahāniyān Jahāngāshī and the word Bukhārī from the name of his birth-place was appended after his name. He was the grandson of Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Surkhpūsh and son of Sayyid Aḥmad Kabīr. It is said that he travelled round the world several times and on one such occasion he came to Pandwah. He is said to have joined the funeral ceremony of Sayyid ‘Alā’ al-Haqq and actually led the prayer. But the available materials do not substantiate this view. According to Akhbār al-Akhīr, Shaykh ‘Alā’ al-Haqq died in A.H. 800, while the last date of Makhdūm Jahāniyān Jahāngāshī is put to A.H. 785, thus indicating that Makhdūm Jahāniyān pre-deceased ‘Alā’ al-Haqq. Many Muslims, including some royal officials became his disciples. He died in A.D. 1383 and is now lying buried at Uchh.

(vi) Shaykh Raja Biyabani

According to the Riyād, Sultan Shams al-Dīn Ilyās Shāh (A.D. 1342-57), the founder of the Ilyās Shāhī dynasty in Bengal attended the funeral of this saint in cognito, at a time when he was besieged in the Ikdālah fort by Sultan FIRūZ Shāh Tughluq of Dehli.

1. Memoirs, p. 64.
(vii) Shaykh 'Ala al-Haqq

Shaykh 'Alā' al-Ḥaqq was the son of Shaykh As‘ad of Lahore. He claimed to be a Qurayshī Hāshimī and traced his descent from Khalid bin al-Walid. He was the spiritual disciple of Shaykh Akhī Sirāj al-Dīn 'Uthmānī. 'Alā' al-Ḥaqq was very much proud of his high ancestry. Shaykh Akhī, when he received order from his teacher Nizām al-Dīn Awwliyā, to go to Bengal, represented that he was no match for 'Alā' al-Ḥaqq. Nizām al-Dīn Awwliyā replied that 'Alā' would in time become his (Shaykh Akhī's) pupil. 'Alā' al-Ḥaqq is said to have taken the title of Ganji-i-Nabat (store of refined sugar) for which Nizām al-Dīn Awwliyā cursed him, "May God strike him dumb". 'Alā' al-Ḥaqq could free himself from the curse only after he became the humble pupil of Akhī. Shaykh Akhī Sirāj al-Dīn used to travel on horse-back; 'Alā' al-Ḥaqq followed him with a hot pot on his head, which made him bald. In order to humiliate 'Alā' al-Ḥaqq before his relatives who were occupying high government posts, Shaykh Akhī used to take him in this condition to the houses of his relatives.

One of the miracles attributed to Shaykh 'Alā' al-Ḥaqq is that he punished two faqīrs, who visited him and vexed him with un-becoming words. One was killed by an ox, another got an attack of orchitis, according to words uttered by the saint. It is said that he spent a large sum of money in feeding the pupils, beggars and wanderers. The Sultān grew jealous because the state treasury also could not have borne such a huge expenditure. He ordered the saint to leave the capital and to go to Sunārgāwn. In Sunārgāwn, the saint spent twice the amount. Nobody knew wherefrom this huge sum came,

5. Akhār al-Akhyār, p. 143.
6. Ibid.
his possession included only two gardens, which also later on he gave to a beggar\(^1\). He is lying buried at Chhoti dargāh in Pandwah, by the side of his more illustrious son Nūr Ḍūtāb ‘Ālam. According to Akhbār al-Akhīyār, he died in A.H. 800/A.D. 1398,\(^3\) while according to a book in the possession of the Khādīms of the shrine, he died in 786/A.D. 1384\(^5\).

Sayyid ‘Alā’ al-Ḥaqq left a large number of his disciples, of whom the most illustrious are, (a) his own son Shaykh Nūr Ḍūtāb ‘Ālam and (b) Mīr Sayyid Aṣḥāf Jahāngīr Simnānī.

(viii) Shaykh Nur Qutb ‘Alam

He was the son and spiritual successor\(^4\) of Shaykh ‘Alā’ al-Ḥaqq.\(^6\) According to the Rīyāḍ, he was a fellow student of Sultān Ghīyāth al-Dīn A’ẓam Shāh and received education from Qāṭī Ḥāmid al-Dīn Nagawrī\(^6\).

Shaykh Nūr Ḍūtāb ‘Ālam assumed spiritual leadership at a time when Bengal was passing through a serious political disturbance. One Hindu noble, Kāns (Gaṇesā) usurped the power and perpetrated oppression on the Muslims including the Muslim Shaykhs and divines. The situation came to such a point that the Shaykh was compelled to write a letter to Sultān Ibrāhīm Shārqī of Jawnpūr imploring his assistance\(^7\). The Sultān (Ibrāhīm Shārqī) was also encouraged to invade Bengal and to punish Gaṇesā, by Mīr Sayyid Aṣḥāf Jahāngīr Simnānī a disciple of Sayyid ‘Alā’ al-Ḥaqq, who was then in Jawnpūr\(^8\). Sultān Ibrāhīm marched with a huge army and

encamped at Sarāi Firūzpūr. Rājā Kāns (or Gāneśa) became frightened, humbled himself before Shaykh Nūr Qutb ‘Ālam, begged him to pardon his offences and to remove Sultān Ibrāhīm’s domination over the country. The saint demanded that the Rājā should turn a Muslim. The Rājā agreed but his wife forbade him. The Rājā then brought his twelve years old son Jadū and requested the saint to convert him. The saint converted the boy who was made the king with the title of Jalāl al-Dīn. The saint then requested Sultān Ibrāhīm to leave Bengal. An angry dispute followed in course of which the saint cursed both the Sultān and his Qādī. Sultān Ibrāhīm went back to Jawnpūr, but it is said that both the Sultān and the Qādī died the same year. This description, however exaggerated it may be, shows that Shaykh Nūr Qutb ‘Ālam was busy not only with the spiritual exercises but that he also interfered in the politics of the country, especially when the interest of Islām and the Muslims was in jeopardy.

It has been pointed out earlier that the Shaykh received his spiritual training from his father. It is said that, in order to practise the virtue of humility, he used to do all sorts of lowly works, such as the washing of clothes of beggars and wanderers, carrying fuel and water, keeping water constantly hot for ablution, sweeping the cell of his father and cleaning the privies attached to the house. He also refused the invitation of his worldly brother A’zam Khān who was a Ważīr, to accept an office in the court.

He is lying buried at Chhotī dargāh in Pandwah. The sources differ widely on the date of the saint’s death. An inscription of the time of Nāṣīr al-Dīn Māhmūd I (A.D. 1437-1459) records the death of a saint on Monday, 28th Dhi’l-Hijja 863/A.D. 1459. Ā’yn-i-

1. Riyāḍ, pp. 112-114. The evidence of coins shows that Sultān Ibrāhīm Sharqī did not die the same year but continued to rule till 844/A.D. 1440 (See, H.N. Wright: Catalogue of Coins in the Indian Museum, Calcutta, Vol II, Oxford, A.D. 1907, p. 211.) that is long after the alleged incident.


4. Memoirs, p. 115, Plate VI.

This last date is generally accepted today. The chronogram for this date is نور بنورش (light went into light). But the wordings of the inscription of Nasiir al-Din Mahmud Shah I, referred to above, lead us to believe that the saint referred to in the inscription was no other than Shaykh Nur Qutb 'Alam. The inscription is as follows: “Our revered Master, the teacher of Imam, the proof of the congregation, the sun of the Faith, the testimony of Islam and of the Muslims who bestowed advantage upon the poor and the indigent, the guide of saints and of such as wish to be guided, passed away from this transient world to the everlasting mansion on the 28th Dhil-Hijja, a Monday of the year 863 (1459 A.D.) during the reign of the Sultan of Sultans, the Protector of the countries of the Faithful, Nasiir al-Duniya wa'l-Din Abu'l-Muqaffar Mahmud Shah the Sultan”5. 'Abid 'Ali Khan conjectures that this was applied to Shaykh Zahid, the grandsons and successor of Shaykh Nur Qutb 'Alam. But they are applicable more to the high reputation of

5. Memoirs, p. 115, Plate VI.

وانقل معد ومنا علامة استاذائمة برنان الأمة شمس
اللهجة الاسلام والمسلمين لاعف العصاء والمساكن
مرشد الواصلين ومسترشدين من دارالفناء إلى دارلباء
الثامن اعشي منذ الحجة في يوم الاثنين وكان ذلك
في السنة الثالث والستين وثنا نما ته في عهد السلطان
السلاطين خايمي بلالاهل اسلام المسلمين ناصر الدين
والدين ابولظفر محمود شاه سلطان ـ

Shaykh Nūr Quṭb ‘Ālam rather than to the comparatively less renowned Shaykh Zāhid. Moreover ‘Ābid ‘Alī Khān himself says that the death of Shaykh Zāhid took place on the 17th Rabī‘ al-‘Awwal, 860/A.D. 1455. The chronogram of his death is حب دنياه في نداءه. (“He had no love for the world”). The epithets applied to the saint in this inscription are comparable to those applied to Shaykh Nūr Quṭb ‘Ālam in an inscription of A.D. 1493. It says, “In this Sufi building the tomb of the Pole of Poles was built, who was slain by the love of the All-giver, the Shaykh of Shaykhs, Ḥadrat Shaykh Nūr al-Ḥaqqa wa’l-Shar’a wa’l-Dīn Sayyid Quṭb ‘Ālam – may Allāh purify his beloved heart and may Allāh illuminate his grave”. The Mirāt al-Asrār says that both Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad (died 836/A.D. 1432) and his son and successor Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad Shāh (836/1432 to 839/A.D. 1435) became disciples of Shaykh Nūr Quṭb ‘Ālam though the author puts his death in 818/A.D. 1415. What has been discussed above leads us to conclude that probably his death occurred not in A.D. 1415 but long after, though at the present state of our knowledge the date cannot be satisfactorily established.

It has been pointed out earlier that ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Ḥusayn Shāh granted a number of villages for maintaining the alms-house attached to the dargāh of Shaykh Nūr Quṭb ‘Ālam. The Sulṭān used to come every year from Ikdālah to Pandwah to visit the shrine of the saint. Shāh Shujāʿ (son of Mughal Emperor Shāh Shāh)


بنى في البيت الصوفيّة الراضية لقطب الاقطاب نجل محبة وهاب
شيخ المشائخ حضرت شيخ نورالحق والشرع والدين سيد قطب
عالم قدس الله سره العزيز ونور الله قبره...

The inscription was issued in the reign of Sulṭān Shams al-Dīn Muẓaffar Shāh.

Jahān) made a fresh grant to Shaykh Kabir in the year 1058/A.D. 1648.

Shaykh Nūr Quṭb Ālam had two sons, Shaykh Rafaq al-Dīn and Shaykh Anwar. Both of them received their spiritual education from their father. The former was celebrated for his humility and used to say that he was of less account than a market-dog. The latter died a martyr in Sunārgāwn in the hands of Rājā Gaṇesa. Another spiritual disciple of the Shaykh was Shaykh Ḥusām al-Dīn Manikpūrī.

(ix) Mir Sayyid Ashraf Jahangir Simnani

It has been pointed out earlier that he was a disciple of Shaykh ‘Ālā’ al-Ḥaqq. He came to Bihar, just when the renowned saint Shaykh Sharf al-Dīn Yahyā Maneri had died in 782/A.D. 1380. He passed on to Bengal and stayed there for six years under the celebrated Bengal saint Shaykh ‘Ālā’ al-Ḥaqq. Then he went back to Jawnpūr where he finally settled and laid the foundation of the famous Khānqah of Kachaucha Sharif.

His love for the land of his spiritual teacher is known from his letter to Sulṭān Ibrāhīm Sharqi of Jawnpūr. This letter was written in reply to one written to him by the Sulṭān seeking his opinion on his intended invasion of Bengal at the instance of Shaykh Nūr Quṭb Ālam. Among other things, he writes as follows: “If the sons and descendants of these holy personages (earlier he gave a list of such holy personages), and particularly the son and family members of Hazrat Quṭub Alam, are rescued from the clutches of the black infidels with your aid and assistance and the courage and bravery of your troops it would be an excellent thing.....I, the afflicted Darwash of the Alai order congratulate you on the firm resolve that you have made and I offer my prayer for the deliverance of Bengal from the hands of the infidels. I have already recited

4. Ibid.
7. Quoted elsewhere in this Chapter. See, Supra, p. 85.
the Fatiha prayer to God to render justice. As your object and
that of your nobles is to free the land of Bengal and to champion
the cause of Islam, if God wills you will achieve your aims in the best
manner possible. As the firm resolve and the sound judg-
ment of the King are directed towards helping the cause and satisfying
the heart’s desire of the son of Hazrat Makhdum you should not ne-
glect showing favour to that dear holy personage and you should
never refrain from meeting him and fighting for his cause”.

(x) Shaykh Badar al-Islam
He was a contemporary of Shaykh Nur Qutb ‘ Alam. The
Riyāḍ relates the following story about him. One day he sat before
Kāns (Rājā Gaṅesa) without saluting him. When he was asked
the reason for this conduct, he gave an evasive reply. Another day,
the Rājā sat in a low room having a narrow entrance door and sum-
moned the Shaykh before him. The Shaykh could realise the pur-
pose. He first put his foot inside the room and then entered into it,
without having had to bow his head. The Rājā got furious and
had the Shaykh instantaneously put to death. Mir Sayyid Ashraf
Jahāngir Simnānī in his letter to Sulṭān Ibrāhīm Sharqi of Jawnpūr
refers to two Shaykhs, Haḍrat Bad ‘ Alam and Badr ‘ Alam Zāhidī.
The latter has been identified by Hasan Askari with Shaykh Badar
al-Dīn Zāhidī, son of Khwājah Fakhr al-Dīn Zāhidī, who was a
contemporary of Shaykh Shafi al-Dīn Yahyā Maneri. The
mausoleum of Shaykh Badar al-Dīn Zāhidī is at Bihar. Probably
the former may be identified with Shaykh Badar al-Islām.

(xii) Shaykh Husayn Dhukkarposh
From the Bayāz of Mullā Taqīyyā, we know that Shaykh
Husayn Dhukkarposh was a Khalīfah of Sayyid ‘Alā’ al-Ḥaqq. While
Rājā Gaṅesa was perpetrating oppression on the Muslims he also
shared the same. His son was slain by Rājā Gaṅesa. Mir Sayyid
Ashraf Jahāngir Simnānī gave him consolation in one of his letters.

1. Quoted by Syed Hasan Askari in Bengal: Past and Present,
   1948, p. 36.
5. Quoted by Syed Hasan Askari in Bengal: Past and
It reads as follows: “Those who traverse the path of God have many calamities to suffer from. They have to undergo many trials and tribulations .......... It is hoped through the spiritual grace of the souls of Suhrwardia and Ruhania saints of the past that in near future that kingdom of Islam will be freed from the hands of the luckless non-believers. The royal army is being sent from this side to render assistance and the result will soon become apparent. My Makhdum Zada (the son of my spiritual guide), “the blossoms of the garden of Alai and Khalidia house” may rest assured of the help of this Darwesh”.

Shyakh Husayn Dhukkarposh (dust-ridden) maintained his Khängah at Purnea. He was the son of Makhdum Sháh Husayn and Bibi Kamál, the female saint of Kako in the Gaya district. She was the daughter of Ḥadrat Sulaymán Langar-Zamín and of Bibi Hadda, who was one of the four daughters of the famous Jethuli saint, Makhdum Shaháb al-Dín Pir Jagjot.

(xii) Shaykh Anwar

It has been pointed out earlier that Shaykh Anwar, son of Shaykh Nūr Quṭb ‘Ālam was a martyr at the hands of Rájā Gānēśa. He was famous for his generosity and used to have sheep fattened and killed for the faqirs, though he did not touch the meat himself. About his death, the Riyāḍ states as follows: When the cruelties of Kâns (Ganēśa) passed all bounds, Shaykh Anwar complained to his father against the tyrant and said, ‘It is a matter of regret that in spite of such a holy saint of the time as yourself, Musalmân should be oppressed and ground down by the hand of this infidel’. Shaykh Nūr Quṭb ‘Ālam was at that time absorbed in prayer and meditation. On hearing the utterance of his son he got enraged and replied in a fit of anger, ‘This tyranny shall cease only, when thy blood shall be shed on the earth’. Shaykh Anwar knew well that whatever came out from the lips of his holy father, was sure to pass. It so happened that Rájá Gānēśa banished both Shaykh Anwar and Shaykh Zâhid (grandson of Shaykh Nūr Quṭb ‘Ālam) to Sunārgâwn. There inhuman cruelties were perpetrated on them, so that they might

2. Ibid., p. 37, note 32.
3. Ibid.
divulge the whereabouts of the hidden treasures of their fore-fathers. Shaykh Anwar was actually murdered. It is said that on the very day and the very moment when Shaykh Anwar was murdered at Sunārgāwn, and his sacred blood was shed on the earth, Rājā Kāns passed away from this world¹.

(xiii) Shaykh Zahid

Shaykh Zāhid was the son of Shaykh Rafaq al-Dīn and grandson of Shaykh Nūr Qūṭb ‘Ālam. He was also banished by Rājā Gaṅeṣa to Sunārgāwn along with Shaykh Anwar. About him Shaykh Nūr Qūṭb ‘Ālam said, “The drum of the virtues of Zāhid shall resound till resurrection-day”². He was also oppressed by the officials of Rājā Gaṅeṣa to divulge the whereabouts of the treasures of his forefathers. When they attempted to take the life of Zāhid, the latter stated that in a certain village a large culdron was hidden. The culdron was found out but it contained only one gold-coin. On enquiry Shaykh Zāhid said, “Apparently some one has stolen it”. But it is said that this was the outcome of miracle³. After the death of Kāns (Gaṅeṣa), when Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad (the converted son of Gaṅeṣa) assumed sovereignty he “called back the saint Shaykh Zāhid from Sunārgāwn and paid him every respect and honour, and rendering him services, was very often in attendance upon him”⁴.

Shaykh Zāhid died in 860/A.D. 1455. He is lying buried at Pandwah in the precincts of the Chhotā dargāh⁵.

(xiv) Shaykh Husam al-Dīn Manikpuri

He was a disciple and Khalīfah of Shaykh Nūr Qūṭb ‘Ālam⁶. He was a great Šūfī of his time. His malfūzāt have been compiled by his followers and given the name of Raṣīq al-‘Ārefīn⁷. It is said that after he received his spiritual education from his teacher, he

1. Ibid. It is not possible to examine the veracity of this statement because no other source throws light on the date of their death.
2. Riyāḍ, pp. 115-16.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
observed fast for seven years. He died in 882/A.D. 1477 at Manikpur in U.P. India.

(xv) Badi al-Din Shah Madar

His original name was Badi' al-Din, and Shah Madar was his title. He was the son of Abu Ishaq Shami of Syria, who was a direct descendant of Haqrat Harun (brother of Haqrat Musa). According to Akhbar al-Akhyar, he did not take meal for twelve years and dressed himself with one piece of cloth. He used to cover his face with a veil, because he was so beautiful that people had to prostrate before him at his look. He was born in A.H. 715/A.D. 1315 in Syria and died in A.H. 840/A.D. 1436, on 18th Jamadi I at Makanpur in the district of Kannpur in the reign of Sultan Ibrahim Sharqi.

Badi' al-Din Shah Madar visited various places in India. He visited Gujrat, Ajmir, Kanauj, Kulpai, Jawnpur, Lucknow and Kannur. There is no direct evidence of his visit to Bengal, but some scholars believe so on the basis of a reference to the invocation of "Dam Madar" in "Niranjaner Rushma" of Sunya Purana. The chapter is said to be a 15th century interpolation.

The influence of the Madariyah saints in Bengal is visible even to-day. Dr. Enamul Haq thinks that Madaripur Sub-division

3. A biography of the saint has been written by Shaykh 'Abd al-Rahman Chishti in A.H. 1064. The title of the book is Mirat-i-Madar. There is a manuscript in the Dacca University Library, MS. No. 217.
4. 'Abd al-Rahman Chishti: Mirat-i-Madar, Dacca University manuscript, Folio, 3.
9. Ibid, Preface by Dr. M. Shahidullah.
in Faridpur district and Madarbari and Madarsha in Chittagong district were named after Shāh Madār. There are a few customs in East Bengal which also bear testimony to Madāriyah influence. These are (a) lifting of bamboo of Madār, an annual festival in memory of Shāh Madār and (b) the name Madārī that is given to fish or tortoise in the ponds attached to a dargāh. On the strength of these evidences, it is assumed that the Madāriyah saints exerted influence on the Muslim masses, though it is difficult to say whether Shāh Madār himself ever visited Bengal.

(xvi) **Pir Badar al-Din Badar-i-Alam**

He is lying buried in the Chhoti dargāh of Bihar. He is said to have travelled from place to place. The name of Badar Pir is associated with dargāhs of various places. In Chittagong there is a dargāh which go by different names – ‘Badar ‘Ālam’, ‘Badar Muqām’ ‘Badar Pir’, ‘Badar Awliyā’, ‘Badar Shāh’ and ‘Pir Badar’. Traditionally the name of Badar Pir is associated with the spread of Islām in Chittagong.

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2. Ibid., p. 113.

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Translation:-“The sight of the city of Fatḥābād (Fateyābād) fulfils the desire of one (who desires to look at it); it is better known as Chāṭigrāma. In beauty it is like Amarāvati and it is inhabited by many virtuous and honest men. It is near the sea
In Kalna, Burdwan district, there are two tombs, one of Majlis Şāhib and the other of Badar Şāhib. It is said that they were two brothers, who came to Bengal to preach Islām. Their tombs are still venerated by the people, both Hindus and Muslims. Between the tow tombs, which are apart by about a mile, people are considered to be safe from any accident. People offer them clay horses, fruits, sweets and flowers.

In Hemtabad, Dinajpur district, there is a dargāh of one Pir Badar al-Dīn. According to tradition he came to preach Islām, while a certain Hindu king named Maheṣa was ruling there. Being oppressed by the Hindu king, the Pir begged for help to Sulṭān ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Ḥusayn Shāh. The Sulṭān helped him; the result was the defeat of the Hindu king and the spread of Islām in the region. People locate the Ḥusayn Shāhī Taḵht (throne of Ḥusayn Shāh) and the palace of Maheṣa in the ruins not far from Hemtabad.

It seems very likely that Pir Badar of the few places mentioned above were one and the same person, identifiable with Pir Badar al-Dīn Badar-i-ʿĀlam. Probably he visited all these places where later on dargāhs were erected and legends have grown up.

Pir Badar al-Dīn Badar-i-ʿĀlam has become a legendary figure in the imagination of the people. The sailors of East Bengal take the name of Badar Pir even to-day when they apprehend any danger. Pir Badar al-Dīn is said to have arrived at Chittagong floating upon a stone slab. The local tradition is that Chittagong was at that time the abode of fairies and hobgoblins and no one could live there. Pir Badar al-Dīn begged a space for his lamp. This was granted but when he lit it, its magic power was so great that the spirits were frightened away. In the local dialect the lamp is called

(literally saline water), on the bank of the river Karnaphuli. The city is heavenly. It is surrounded by hills and hillocks. Herein (lies) Shāh Badar ʿĀlam”.

4. Ibid.
Chāti and people believe that the name Chātigrāma took its origin from the lamp of Badar Pîr. There is a hillock in Chittagong town called Chāti pāhār (hillock of lamp) where Pîr Badar lit his lamp. Candles are offered there by people, Hindus and Muslims and they are kept burning at night

(xvii) Shah Safi al-Dîn

In Chhota Pandwah (Hugli district) is situated the tomb of Shâh Šafi’ al-Dîn. Tradition current at Pandwah has it that Shâh Šafi’ al-Dîn, son of Barkhurdâr, a noble of the Court of Dehli and brother-in-law of King Firûz Shâh came to preach Islâm in Bengal. But the local king, Pândav Râjâ was very powerful and antagonistic towards the Islâmic faith. Quarrel broke out between the saint and the king over the sacrifice of a cow on the occasion of the circumcision of a boy. The boy was killed by the king. The saint appealed to his uncle Firûz Shâh who sent a large army for the religious war. The saint also received the boon from the famous saint Bû ‘Ali Qalandar of Panipat-Karnal. In the war that followed, the Hindu king was defeated. It is said that two other men of repute joined this war; one was Zafar Khân Ghâzi, whose shrine is at Triveni, and the other was Bahrâm Saqqâ.

The tradition refers to the following persons – King Firûz Shâh, Pândav Râjâ, Bû ‘Ali Qalandar, Zafar Khân Ghâzi and Bahrâm Saqqâ. King Firûz Shâh may be identified with the Bengal Sulţân of that name i.e. Shâms al-Dîn Firûz Shâh (A.D. 1301-1322). Sayf al-Dîn Firûz Shâh (A.D. 1486-1489), ‘Alâ’ al-Dîn Firûz Shâh (A.D. 1414) or ‘Alâ’ al-Dîn Firûz Shâh (A.D. 1532-33) can not claim identification because long before them Triveni area was brough under the Muslims. Pândav Râjâ is obscure in history. He might have


J.A.S.B. 1870, p. 287.

been a petty Zamīndār. Zafar Khān Ghāzī is known from other sources as a conqueror of Triveni area under Sultān Rukn al-Dīn Kāykā’ūs and Shams al-Dīn Firūz Shāh. Bahram Saqqā’s shrine is at Burdwan and according to Burdwan District Gazetteer, he was contemporary of Mughal emperor Akbar. On this evidence, Bahram Saqqā can not be a contemporary of Bū ‘Ali Qalandar, Shams al-Dīn Firūz Shāh and Zafar Khān Ghāzī. So there is some confusion in the tradition.

As the tradition refers to Bū‘Ali Qalandar who died in 724/ A.D. 1324, Blochmann identifies Firuz Shāh of the tradition with Sultān Jalāl al-Dīn Firuz Khalji of Dehlī. But this identification can no longer be accepted. Bengal became independent after the death of Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Balban. Although independent coinage of Nāṣir al-Dīn Maḥmūd Bughrā Khān has not come to light, there is no doubt that his son and successor Rukn al-Dīn Kāykā’ūs was completely independent with full insignia of royalty. During this time the question of sending troops to Bengal by Jalāl al-Dīn Firuz Khalji does not arise. Secondly, there is undoubted evidence to show that Satgäwn-Triveni area was brought under the Muslims by one Zafar Khān Ghāzī during the period from A.D. 1298 to A.D. 1313 under Sultān Rukn al-Dīn Kāykā’ūs and Shams al-Dīn Firuz Shāh.

The tradition also refers to one Zafar Khān Ghāzī. The two evidences therefore made Shāh Ṣafī’ al-Dīn contemporaneous with Zafar Khān Ghāzī and it may be assumed that in the campaign that was undertaken by Zafar Khān Ghāzī, Shāh Ṣafī’ al-Dīn also took part. And if there is any truth in the statement that Shāh Ṣafī’ al-Dīn was related to Sultān Firuz Shāh, he was related to Sultān Shams al-Dīn Firuz Shah of Bengal and not Sultān Jalāl al-Dīn Firuz of Dehlī.

(xviii) Shah Anwar Quli Halwi

At Mulla Simla, Phurphura, in the district of Hugli, there is an old mosque and a tomb of a certain saint. According to tradition, Shāh Anwar Qulī Ḥalwī whose original name was Muḥammad Kabīr is lying buried there. The word Ḥalwī indicates that he came from Aleppo. Tradition relates that a Bāḏī king ruled in the area who was defeated by the saint and his companion Kāram al-Dīn, but later on they were also killed by the enemy. The most important offering to this saint is the looking-glass, because it is said that looking-glass was very dear to the saint. Blochmann suggests that this was probably due to the fact that his birth-place was formerly famous in the East for its glass-wares. An inscription attached to the entrance of the dargāh records the erection of a mosque by Ulugh Majlis Khān in 777/A.D. 1375 in the reign of Sultan Sikandar Shāh. The inscription was probably taken from a nearby mosque which is without any inscription.

(xix) Shah Ismail Ghazi

Pir Muḥammad Shaṭṭārī, a 17th century biographer of Shāh Ismāʿīl Ghāzi writes as follows about the saint:

Shāh Ismāʿīl Ghāzi, a descendant of the Prophet, was born in the holy city of Makkah. He was a devout follower of religion and spent his time in preaching and teaching. After a long and tedious journey, he arrived at Lakhnawtī, the capital of Sultan Rukn al-Dīn Bārbak Shāh. Sultan Rukn al-Dīn Bārbak Shāh was then busy to find out ways and means for controlling the flood in the vicinity of Gaur. He engaged all engineers and craftsmen for the purpose, but failed. At last following the advice of Shāh Ismāʿīl Ghāzi, he came out successful. This brought the saint to the notice of the Sultan. The saint was then appointed to conduct warfare in different frontiers of his Kingdom. He defeated Gajapati, the Rājā of Orissa and wrested from him Mandaran. Rājā Kāmeṣvara of Kamrup was

1. An account of this saint may be obtained from:—(a) Bengal District Gazetters: Hugli, pp. 302-3; (b) J. A. S. B. 1870, pp. 291-92.
4. An account of this saint is obtained from Risālat-al-Shuhdā. See, J. A. S. B. 1874, pp. 215 ff.
defeated by him and was forced to pay tribute to the Bengal Sultan. Moreover the king of Kamrup polluted his caste by chewing the pān (betel leaf) from the mouth of Ismā‘il Ghāzī.

This warrior-saint, who did so much for the Muslim Sultanate, was beheaded by the order of the Sultan in 878/A.D. 1474. One Rājā Bhāndsi Rāi, a Hindu commander of Ghoraghat sent a false information to the Sultan that Ismā‘il Ghāzī had entered into an offensive and defensive alliance with the Rājā of Kamrup and intended to set up an independent kingdom. The Sultan got alarmed and at once ordered for beheading the Saint.

Tradition has it that the head of the Saint was buried at Kantaduar in Rangpur district and the body at Mandaran. Both the places have since been sacred to the Muslims. In the district of Rangpur, there exist at present as many as four dargāhs.

(xx) Mulla Ata

Mullā or Mawlānā ‘Aṭā is lying buried in Gangarampur in the district of Dinajpur. His name has come down to us only through inscriptions. His dargāh is a place of pilgrimage even to-day. Four inscriptions have so far been discovered from the shrine of this saint.

(a) An inscription of the time of Sikandar Shāh, dated 765/A.D. 1363. In this inscription he is described as "the pole of the saints, the unequalled among enquirers, the lamp of truth, law and faith, Mawlānā ‘Aṭā".

(b) An inscription of the time of Jalāl al-Dīn Fath Shāh dated 887/A.D. 1482. In this inscription he is called "Makhdūm Mawlānā ‘Aṭā Waḥīd al-Dīn".

(c) An inscription of the time of Sultan Shams al-Dīn Muẓaffar Shāh dated 896/A.D. 1491. Here he is called

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2. Ibid.
“the well-known Makhdūm, the pole of the holy men, Mawlānā ‘Aṭā Waḥid al-Dīn.”

(d) An inscription attached to a mosque in front of Mawlānā ‘Aṭā’s shrine is of the time of Sultān ‘Alā’al-Dīn Ḥusayn Shāh. It is dated 918/A.D. 1512. In this inscription he is called “Shaykh of Shaykhs, Shaykh ‘Aṭā”.

From these inscriptions, it is clear that Mawlānā ‘Aṭā died in the reign of Sultān Sikandar Shāh at the latest. But his dargāh was an object of veneration throughout this whole period. He may be grouped with the earlier Sufis and was probably a contemporary of Shaykh Akhī Sirāj al-Dīn (died in 758/1357).

(xxii) Shah Jalal Dakini

Shāh Jalāl Dakinī was the disciple of Shaykh Piyārah. He was one of the greatest of holy personages of his time. He came to Bengal, sat on the throne like kings and exerted great influence upon the people. The Sultān of Gaur became suspicious of his power and beheaded him.

The royal army beheaded the Shaykh and his followers. According to Akhbār al-Akhyār, while his followers were being killed, he exclaimed, “Ya Qahhār” (O Destroyer, meaning God), but while he was himself killed, “Yā Raḥmān” (O Merciful) and after his execution his head called out “Yā Allāh” (O God). The date of his execution is 881/A.D. 1476.

According to Late Ḥakīm Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān, he is lying buried with his followers within the precincts of the present Government House at Dacca. The area was formerly known as Moti Jheel. The Mausoleum of the saint is an one-domed structure.

Ibrāhīm Qawwām Fārūqī in his Shahrnāmah has devoted a few verses in praise of one Jalāl al-Dīn wa’l-Dunyā. Dr. N. B.

Baloch identifies this Jalāl al-Dīn with Shāh Jalāl Dakīnī. The verses are as follows:

"Bravo! The paradise is a pinnacle of the palace of your high rank; its door may correctly be called "Jannat al-Māwā". The authority of your antagonist is fleeing before you just as a wild deer. Your high position has touched the heaven just as Wāmaq caught hold of the skirt of 'Adhrā. The heavenly angels as well as I, say every moment on the throne of God that thou art the great Jalāl al-Dīn wa'l-Dunyā."

(xxii) Mawlana Shah Dawlah

The saint is lying buried at Bagha in the Sadar Subdivision of the Rajshahi district. His original name was Mawlānā Shāh Mu‘āẓẓam Dānishmand but he is known by his more familiar name Shāh Dawlah. Tradition records that he was a descendant of Hārūn al-Rashīd, the Abbaside Khalīfah of Baghdad. He ran away from Baghdad, reached Bagha in the reign of Sultan Nāṣir al-Dīn Nūṣrat Shāh (A.D. 1519-32), and married the daughter of a certain influential noble ‘Alā Bakhr Sh Bar‘hurdār Lāshkārī of Makhdūmār not far from Bagha. Since then the Mawlānā settled at Bagha and his descendants are living there even to this day. An inscription discovered from the place records that one mosque was built by Sultan Nāṣir al-Dīn Nūṣrat Shāh in 930/A. D. 1523-24.

2. Ibid.
5. Ibid, p. 113.
The following popular story about the saint is available. "An emperor of Gaur on his way to Dacca encamped near Bagha. As fire was wanted men were sent out to find a house. Coming to a jungle from which smoke was ascending, they found a fakir who, though fires were burning and tigers were roaring round him, went on quietly with his prayers to God. The men seized up some fire and rushed back with it to the camp where they told the Emperor what they had seen. The Emperor, filled with curiosity, went forth and visited the fakir and found him as has been reported. Then the Emperor waited on the fakir whose name was Shah Mahamed Doolla (Shāh Muḥammad Daula) and besought him saying, “O man of God, shall thy servant advance to Dacca or wait here”. Then the Fakir answered and said, “Wait thou here one day”. So the Emperor waited. And it came to pass the very same day there came messengers to him from Dacca saying, “Behold, the fighting is over, and the victory is thine”. The Emperor was so pleased that he offered rent-free lands to the saint. As the saint did not accept the lands, the Emperor made a grant of 22 villages to the saint’s son, Ḥaḍrat Ḥamīd Dānishmand. According to another account ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, son of Maulānā Ḥamīd Dānishmand received a grant of forty two villages with an annual rent of rupees eight thousand from Prince Khurram Shāh Jahān, later on Mughal emperor, when the latter rebelled against his father and temporarily held the dictatorship of Bengal. ‘Abd al-Laṭīf (4), who travelled in North Bengal in A.D. 1609 in the reign of Emperor Jahāngīr met one Hawadha Mian at Bagha, an old saint aged about one hundred years. The old man maintained a college, built of grass-thatched roofs and mud-plastered walls where many of his descendants and other students engaged themselves in study. The entire country-side around the village was granted to Hawadha Mian for his subsistence (madad-i-maʿāṣh). Hawadha Mian of ‘Abd al-Laṭīf’s account may be identified either with Maulānā Ḥamīd Dānishmand or with his son ‘Abd al-Wahhāb. In any case, there is no doubt that Bagha continued to be a Muslim cultural centre since the arrival of Maulānā Shāh Dawlah till at least A.D. 1622 when Shāh Jahān came to Bengal in course of his rebellion against his father.

3.  Ibid, pp. 112 ff.
Besides, there are a few more saints whose names at least may be noted. Among these the most famous are Šāh Langarī at Mu‘azzam-pur (Dacca District), Šāh Ni‘mat Allāhī at Purana Paltan (Dacca district), Šāh Gada9 at Mughaltuli (Maldah), Šāh Lankāpatī4 at Old Maldah and Šāh Kākū,5 a disciple of Shaykh Nūr Quṭb ‘Ālam.


Dr. Enamul Haq (see, Baṅge Sūfī Prabhāva, Calcutta, 1935, p. 143) thinks that Šāh ‘Alī Baghdādī now lying buried at Mirpur, a few miles away from the city of Dacca was living in the 15th century and died sometimes before A. D. 1480. His argument is that the mosque over his grave was built in A. D. 1480. But as the saint is lying buried within the mosque it is reasonable to suggest that the mosque is earlier than the death of the saint. The date of the saint cannot be satisfactorily established. See also A.H. Dani: Dacca, Dacca, A.D. 1956, p. 195.
Part II—The Influence Of The Sufis

The biographical sketch of the Šūfīs reveal that their activities were not confined only within the four walls of their Khāngahs, rather they exerted a great influence in the people’s minds and in the society. Even if one is hesitant to accept the statement of Mīr Sayyid Ashraf Jahāngīr Simnānī that “there is no town and no village where holy saints did not come and settle down”,¹ the names of Šūfīs and their account that have come down to us, either through tradition or literary and epigraphic sources establish the fact that their number was not too small to be by-passed. They came, established Khāngahs, gathered disciples around them, imparted instructions, while some of them settled and died in this country. Thus they added another factor in the Muslim society with those of the ruling class and the ‘Ālims (scholars). If only the location of their dargāhs is taken into consideration we find that they did not concentrate only in the metropolitan cities, but scattered throughout the country, extending from Chittagong and Sylhet in the east², to Mangalkot (Burdwan district) in the west and from Bagerhat and Chhota-Pandwah in the south to Kantaduar (Rangpur) in the north. Their dargāhs and tombs are visited and venerated by hundreds of people even to-day. They influenced deeply the minds of the people in their lifetime. Šūfīsm, thus became a powerful factor in the then society and its contribution may demand a careful and proper assessment from the scholars.

The influence of the Šūfīs on the growth of the Muslim Society in Bengal may be grouped under the following heads:—

(i) the expansion of the Muslim power,
(ii) influence over the ruling class,
(iii) imparting of religious instructions,
(iv) and their influence over the society and missionary activities.

1. Quoted in Bengal: Past and Present, 1948, p. 36.
2. The Šūfīs visited further east as the tomb of Ghiyāth al-Dīn in Hajo Taḥṣīl in the Kamrup district, Assam, suggests. (See, Assam District Gazetteers: Kamrup, Allahabad, 1905, Chapter III, p. 101.)
The Expansion Of The Muslim Power

The expansion of the Muslim power in different parts of Bengal and how and when they were subjugated have been discussed in a previous chapter. But traditions and later writings record that some of the Şūfis fought against the local non-Muslim kings either on their own account or in collaboration with the Muslim rulers. Generally these accounts are full of superhuman colouring, thus raising suspicion on their validity. As for example, traditions of different places supply identical stories with minor variations. They refer to the existence of a Muslim family in the midst of a large number of Hindus; the trouble generally arose over the sacrifice of a cow on the occasion of the birth of a son or his circumcision. A kite was invariably there to carry bit of flesh and throw it in the vicinity of a Brahmin family and then the war broke out. The superhuman colouring and the identical stories show that there have been exaggerations of what actually happened. The clash between the incoming Muslims, be he a Şūfī or a layman and the local people who lived in this country from generation to generation can not be altogether ruled out. It is not unreasonable to suppose that the Şūfis required time to pacify or influence the local people by their peaceable pursuits, simplicity of life and devotion to God. The collaboration of some of the Şūfis with the Sultāns in the expansion of the Muslim power cannot also be ruled out altogether, because they thought that fighting for the cause of Islām was a Jihād (religious war), provided by the Islāmic law. It is from this standpoint that we should judge the collaboration of Shaykh Jalāl with the general of Sultān Shams al-Dīn Firūz Shāh in the conquest of Sylhet or of Shāh Ismāʿīl Ghāzi with Sultān Rukn al-Dīn Bārbak Shāh in his wars against Kāmrup or Orissa. These are the examples in which the saints themselves took to fighting for the cause of Islām. On the other hand there are a good many examples from Bengal which supply information of a reverse type; that is we have got real soldiers and conquerors treated as saints probably after their death, and their tombs

1. See, Chapter II, pp. 33-38.
2. The examples of Bābā Ādam Shahīd, (Supra, pp. 86-87.) Shāh Sultān Māhīsawār, (Supra, p. 88-89), Makhūm Shāh Dawlah Shahīd (Supra, pp. 89-90) may be cited.
3. See for example the account of Shāh Jalāl of Sylhet (Supra, pp. 99 ff.), Shāh Ismāʿīl Ghāzi (Supra, pp. 118 ff) and Shāh Ṣafī’al-Dīn (Supra, pp. 116 ff.)
attaining the rank of shrines or dargāhs. Two important examples of this nature are the dargāh of Khān Jahān of Bagerhat1 in Khulna district who was an official and a conqueror of this region in the time of Nāṣir al-Dīn Māḥmūd Shāh (A.D. 1442-1459), and the other is Zafar Khān Ghāzi2 who conquered Triveni area in the time of Rukn al-Dīn Kāyka’ūs (A.D. 1291-1301), but today he is the renowned saint in that area.

(ii) Influence Over The Ruling Class

The above point will be more clear, if we remember that the Sūfīs also interfered in the internal politics of the country and sometimes tried to influence the Sultāns in moulding their state-policies. We have pointed out elsewhere3 that the Sultāns were respectful towards the Sūfīs, helped them in their missionary activities, built mosques, madrasahs and Khānaqahs in their honour and even granted lands for their maintenance. But it is difficult to explain, why, in spite of generally respectful attitude of the Sultāns to the Sūfīs, Sikandar Shāh turned Shāykh ‘Alā’al-Ḥaqq out of Pandwah and banished him to Sunārgāwn. The reason put forward by the author of Akhbār al-Āḥyār4 is far from satisfactory, because he says that by a super-human power, the Shāykh spent so much money in feeding the beggars, pupils and wanderers that even the state-treasury could not have borne such a huge expenditure. The Sultān grew jealous and ordered the Shāykh to leave the capital. On the other hand we know that the same Shāykh ‘Alā’ al-Ḥaqq was looked upon with regard and esteem by his (Sikandar’s) father Ilyās Shāh who built a mosque in his (the Shāykh’s) honour5. Even Sikandar Shāh’s attitude to the Sūfīs was all along one of respect and veneration; he built a mosque in honour of Mawlānā ‘Aṭā6; he was in correspondence7 with the celebrated saint of Bihar Shāykh Shārīf al-Dīn Yaḥyā Manerī. In view of these facts

3. See Chapter III, Section (A), pp. 52-57
5. For inscription see, Epigraphia Indo-Mostemica, 1939-40 pp. 7-9, Plate (a). Muslim Inscriptions of Bengal, p. 10.
we are apt to conclude that there must have been very strong reasons that led him to take such a step. The subsequent history of Bengal leading to the Hindu interregnum after supplanting the Ilyās Shāhi dynasty, suggests that there must have been a wide difference between the Sultāns and the Sūfis on the matters of state-policy, particularly on the question of the appointment of non-Muslims in the key-positions. That the situation took such a turn is proved from a few letters of Ḥāḍrat Mawlānā Muẓaffar Shams Balkhī, addressed to Sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aʿẓam Shāh of Bengal. The relevant extract is given below:\footnote{1}

\textquoteleft\textquoteleft The Exalted God has said, \textquoteleft\textquoteleft Ye who believe take not into your intimacy those outside the ranks. The long and short of the matter is that in commentaries and lexicons they have said that the faithful should not make the unbelievers and strangers their confidants and ministers. If they say that they do not make them their favourites and friends but for the sake of expediency, the reply is that God says that it is not expediency but the cause of trouble and sedition. He says \textquoteright\textquoteleft Lā Yālunakum Khabālan\textquoteright (they will not fail to corrupt you) i. e. Lā Yaqseruna Ḥsād-i-Amrekhun\textquoteright (they will not hesitate or spare themselves in creating troubles for you). Therefore, it is incumbent on us that we should listen to the divine command and cast aside our weak judgement. God says \textquoteright\textquoteleft Wadduna Mā Anittum\textquoteright (may only desire your ruin) i. e. when you make them intimate with yourself they will love to involve you in evil deeds. An infidel may be entrusted with some work, but he should not be made Ḥwāli, (Chief Supervisor or Governor) so that he may have control over and impose his authority on the Muslims. God says \textquoteright\textquoteleft let not the believers take for friends or helpers unbelievers and neglect God; if any do that, in nothing will there be help from God except by way of precaution, that ye may guard yourselves from them. There are severe warnings in the Qur'ān the 'Hadis' and historical works against those who have given authority to the unbelievers over the believers. God grants oppulence and provisions from unexpected sources, and He gives deliverance from them.\textquoteright\textquoteright There is an authoritative promise of provisions, victory and prosperity. The vanquished unbelievers with heads hanging downward exercise their power and authority and administer the lands

\footnote{1} \textquoteleft The correspondence of two 14th century Sufi Saints of Bihar with the contemporary sovereigns of Delhi and Bengal\textquoteright in \textit{Journal of the Bihar Research Society}, Vol. XLII, part II. 1956, pp. 10-11.
which belong to them. But they have also been appointed (executive) officers over the Muslims, in the lands of Islam, and they impose their orders on them. Such things should not happen”.

The letter clearly indicates that the Bengal Sultāns allowed the non-Muslims to participate in the administration and even appointed them in the key-positions of the state. In fact this policy was first adopted by Sultān Shams al-Dīn Ilyās Shāh.1 Diyā’al-Dīn Barānī, a contemporary historian writes as follows about Ilyās Shāh, which according to him justified the Lakhnawī invasion of Firūz Shāh: “That Ilyās, the ruler of Lakhnawī, who has taken possession of that country by force, at this time gathered together the pāiks (foot-soldiers) and dhāmuch (bowmen) from the river-girt Bangālah and invaded Tīrlut without any reason”.2 In another place the same author writes in describing the battle between Ilyās Shāh and Firūz Shāh, “The well-known pāiks of Bangālah who, for years, gave themselves the name of Abū Bangāl (the father of Bengal) and claimed to be (heroic) men, took promise before Ilyās, the Bhāng-eater, to sacrifice their lives (for him) and standing in front of his (array of) horses, together with the Rāis of the river-girt Bangālah, (they) bravely threw about their arms and legs. In the time of battle, when faced with the brave soldiers and archers of the army of the victorious, (they ) put their finger (in fear) into their mouths, lost their sense, threw away swords and arrows from their hands, rubbed their foreheads on the ground and fell to the swords of the enemies”.3 The above passages therefore, reveal that Ilyās Shāh recruited the local people in his army as foot soldiers

1. For the attitude of the Muslim Sultāns towards their non-Muslim subjects see, “Early Muslim Rulers in Bengal and their non-Muslim Subjects” in Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan, Vol. IV, 1959.
and bowmen. Yaḥyā Sarhindī gives the name of one Bengali supporter of Ilyās Shāh; his name was “Sahdeo” or “Sahdeva”¹ The condition of his time demanded such a policy from Ilyās Shāh, as he was opposed initially by two rivals in Bengal itself, while towards the middle of his reign Sulṭān Firūz Tughluq of Dehlī made a desperate bid to snatch away his sovereignty. The position was not better under Sikandar Shāh. Just on his accession to the throne, he faced the second invasion of Sulṭān Firūz Shāh Tughluq. In the face of such unfavourable circumstances, it was but natural that they turned towards the local people for help and appointed them in the important offices of the state. This very policy, which the rulers found as an expediency, was bitterly opposed by the Šūfis, as has been shown from the letters of Ḥaḍrat Muẓaffar Shams Bahlī. Now if Ghiyāth al-Dīn Aʿzam Shāh could be warned by a Šūfī of Bihar, was it not possible for Shaykh ‘Alāʾ al-Ḥaqq to do the same in the time of Sikandar Shāh? It is unfortunate that the correspondence between Sikandar Shāh and Shaykh Sharf al-Dīn Yaḥyā Manerī has been lost to us. It would have probably thrown further light on the subject, and in fact Muẓaffar Shams Bahlī alludes to this when he says, “You are enjoying the fruits of these blessings”² i.e. blessings of Shaykh Sharf al-Dīn Manerī through his letters to Sikandar Shāh, Aʿzam Shāh’s father. The above facts lead us to believe that the estrangement between Sikandar Shāh and Shaykh ‘Alāʾ al-Ḥaqq was not due to any personal jealousy, as Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq Dehlawī would have us believe,³ rather it was

1. Yaḥyā bin Aḥmad, p. 125, note 5.
due to their wide difference on matters of state-policy. Sikandar Shāh, put in an adverse situation as he was, due to a hostile attitude from the Sultān of Dehli, could not but rely upon the non-Muslim local people, thus giving a popular shape to the Muslim Sultānate in Bengal. The political condition and state-craft demanded such an outlook from the Sultān, while the Muslim divines reading the canonical law between the lines could not approve this attitude of the Sultān.

It is difficult to say who were right, the Sultāns or the divines, but the subsequent happenings leading to the Hindu interregnum of Rājā Gaṅesa show that the policy of the Sultāns received a setback at least temporarily which required Shaykh Nur Qutb 'Ālam, the greatest Muslim divine of Bengal of the day, to take active part in politics.

All the authorities agree¹ that the Muslim Sultānate of Bengal passed through a critical period towards the beginning of the 15th century. Taking advantage of the liberal policy of the Ilyās Shāhi Sultāns, Gaṅesa (Kāns) gained ascendancy² and perpetrated oppression on the Muslims including the divines. This oppression led Shaykh Nur Qutb 'Ālam to invite Sultān Ibrāhīm Sharqi of Jawnpūr to invade Bengal and to save the Muslim Kingdom there. He also wrote a letter to Mir Sayyid Ashraf Jahāngīr Simnānī requesting him to utilise his good offices to urge upon Sultān Ibrāhīm Sharqī to come to the aid of the Muslims of Bengal. When Sultān Ibrāhīm reached Bengal and encamped in Firūzābād, Gaṅesa was terrified and submitted before the saint. As regards the conversion of Jalāl al-Din, the Riyāḍ and Mirāt al-Asrār differ; according to the former³ Gaṅesa took his twelve year old son Jadū to the Shaykh, got him converted to Islam and renounced his sovereignty in favour of his son, but according to the latter Jadū, finding it difficult to rule over the Muslims


2. Recently Dr. A. H. Dani has tried to prove that Gaṅesa or Kāns did not crown himself king. (See, J. A. S. B. Vol. XVIII, No. 2, 1952, pp. 121-170).

3. Riyāḍ, p. 113.
embraced Islam, “because of his lust for Kingdom”\(^1\). Whatever might have been the case, there is no denying the fact that the conversion of Jalāl al-Dīn and the restoration of the Muslim Sultānate in his person was due to Shaykh Nūr Quṭb Ālām. The Muslim Kingdom of Bengal was deeply indebted to this Muslim divine, but for whose timely action, the sovereignty of Bengal might have passed out of the hands of the Muslims for many years to come.

Two other saints who seem to have taken part in politics were Shāh Ismā'īl Ghāzī and Shāh Jalāl Dakīnī. Shāh Ismā'īl Ghāzī was executed at the order of Sultān Rukn al-Dīn Bārbak Shāh. According to Risālat al-Shuḥdā the reason of his execution was as follows:—

One Rājā Bhāndsi Rāi, a Hindu commander of Ghoraghat sent a false information to the Sultān that Ismā'īl Ghāzī had entered into an offensive and defensive alliance with the Rājā of Kamrup and intended to set up an independent kingdom. The Sultān got alarmed and at once ordered for beheading the saint\(^2\). It seems unreasonable that the Sultān took action on a false charge against a person who did so much for the cause of the Sultān and his Kingdom. He assisted the Sultān in building a dam for controlling the flood in the vicinity of Gaur\(^3\). He was the man who defeated Rājā Gajapati, the King of Orissa and Kāmeśvara, the King of Kamrup\(^4\), and made them to pay tribute to the Bengal Sultān. Moreover Sultān Bārbak Shāh was a great patron of scholars and literature; his court was adorned by a number of Persian poets\(^5\); he encouraged Mālādhar Vasu, the writer of Śrī Kṛishṇa Vijaya who was given the title of Gunarāj Khān;\(^6\) he himself was an Ālim. It seems unreasonable, therefore, that the Sultān took action on a false charge but probably on stronger reasons. Rukn al-Dīn Bārbak Shāh was the first to recruit Ḥabshi slaves and appointed them in the key position of the state; he recruited about eight thousand of them\(^7\). This policy later on

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3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
proved disastrous to the Bengal Sultānate as we find a Ḥabibi
interregnum in Bengal about half a century after the interregnum
of Rājā Gaṇeṣā. Was there any difference between the Sultān
and the warrior-saint on this policy or was it a fact that the warrior-
saint actually proved faithless and intended to set up an independent
kingdom? These questions cannot be answered with certainty, but
there is no doubt that there was some sort of a disagreement between
the two.

Of Shāh Jalāl Dakini tradition has it that, he sat on the throne
as kings and exerted great influence upon the people. The Sultān
of Gaur became suspicious of his power and beheaded him. Though
no clear idea may be obtained from such general remarks, it probably
implies that the saint exerted some influence not liked by the Sultān.
It is difficult to identify the Sultān of Gaur who beheaded the saint,
but if the identification of the saint with Jalāl al-Dīn of Sharfnāmah
is correct as has been done by Dr. N. B. Baloch, we may identify the
Sultān with Rūkn al-Dīn Bārbak Shāh.

The above discussion leads one to conclude that the Šūfi are not
remain merely spectators of the political events in Bengal, rather they
in their own way, tried to influence them, when they thought that the
Sultān’s action was going against the spirit and interest of Islām.

(iii) Imparting of Religious Instructions

From the beginning the Šūfi paid their attention towards edu-
cating the people. Beside general reference to the establishment of
Khānqahs and educating the people, we have some concrete examples
to show that they taught the people and sometimes maintained aca-
demies for the purpose. The first important example is that of BhojTar
Brahmin, the Ṭagī, who mastered himself in Islāmic Sciences
under the guidance of Qāḍī Rūkn al-Dīn al-Samarqandī. The examples
of maintaining academy or imparting instructions by Mawlānā Taqī
al-Dīn and Mawlānā Sharf al-Dīn Abū Tawwāmah have been cited
already. The next Šūfi who is given credit to maintain a madrasah
was Ḥaḍrat Nūr Quṭb ‘Ālam. In praise of Sultān ‘Ala’al-Dīn Ḥusayn

Supra, p. 120.
January, 1953, p. 47.
4. See Supra, pp. 67 ff.
Shäh, Stewart writes as follows: “Amongst the numerous instances of his piety, he settled a grant of lands for the support of the tomb, college and hospital of the celebrated saint Kuttub al-Alum, which are continued to this day; and every year made a pilgrimage on foot, from Akdala to Pundwah, to visit the holy shrine of that saint.” All later histories confirm that Husayn Shäh granted lands for the maintenance of the alms-house in the dargah of the saint, but none of them refers to the maintenance of the college. We do not know wherefrom Stewart got this information, but if it proves to be true, it will leave no doubt that the saint Qutb Ālam maintained a college, which continued after his death and received a land-grant from Sultan ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Husayn Shäh. N. N. Law suggests that the college was founded by Sultan ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Husayn Shäh himself as a memorial to the saint, but Stewart, his authority does not bear him out. The passage quoted above suggests unequivocally that Husayn Shäh granted lands for the support of the college that was already in existence.

The importance of the teaching of the Bengal Sufis is borne out by the fact that a number of Muslim divines received training under them. Thus Shaykh Yaḥyā, father of Makhdūm al-Mulk Shaykh Sharf al-Dīn Yaḥyā Maneri studied under his teacher Mawlānā Taqī al-Dīn in Mahisun (Mahi-Santosh) now in Rajshahi district, Makhdūm al-Mulk himself studied under Mawlānā Sharf al-Dīn Abū Tawwāmah in Sunārgāwn, Mīr Sayyid Ashraf Jahāngīr Simnānī and Shaykh Husayn Dhukkarpūsh studied under Shaykh ‘Alā’ al-Ḥaqq in Pandwah, Shaykh Ḥusām al-Dīn Manikpūri, Shaykh Kākū under Shaykh Nūr Qutb Ālam in Pandwah. Sufism received so much prominence that new mystic orders were introduced in Bengal. Mīr Sayyid Ashraf

Jahāngīr Simnānī, in his letters refers to the following orders:

1. *Suhrawardia*, the great mystic order after the name of Shaykh Shahāb al-Dīn Suhrawardy, (2) Jalāliyah (*Jalāliyah?*) of Deotala, after Makhḍūm Shaykh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizī, in whose honour Deotala was given the name of Tabrizābād, (3) Qadarkhānī, to which Shaykh Shīrīf al-Dīn Abū Tawwāmah belonged, (4) ‘Alā’, after the name of ‘Alā’ al-Ḥaqq, (5) Khālidiah, meaning the order of Shaykh ‘Alā’ al-Ḥaqq who traced his origin to Khālid bin Al-Walid, (6) Nūrī after the name of Shaykh Nūr Qutb ‘Ālam, (7) Husaynī, after the name of Shaykh Ḥusayn Dhūkkarpūsh and (8) Rūḥānīyah, the identification of which is difficult. Among these orders the Suhrawardia was obviously of outside origin, but all others were named after Bengal saints. It appears, therefore, that each Ṣūfī gathered a number of disciples round him who claimed themselves to have belonged to the order of their respective teachers.

(iv) Their Influence Over The Society and Missionary Activities

A minute study of the biographical sketch of the Ṣūfīs reveals two important facts. First, people thought that they were endowed with superhuman powers like giving relief to the poor, sick and destitutes, being present in several places at a time, giving life to the dead, killing anybody at will and telling the future. Secondly, their Khāṅqāhs were open to all poor, destitutes, mendicants and wanderers, who received food and shelter therein. Beside traditions, a number of contemporary inscriptions substantiate this view. The dargāhs of the Ṣūfīs were considered to be, “rest-giving building on earth” (بعلام اين بناي راهى انرى), “where people attain their wishes”, (ازرب خلايق راسى تعصيم تنا)⁵. The way in which the inscriptions refer to some of the Ṣūfīs is noteworthy. Shaykh ‘Alā’al-Ḥaqq has been referred to as, “the benevolent and revered saint, whose actions of virtue are attractive and sublime inspired by Allāh, may He illuminate his heart with the light of divine perception and faith, he is the guide to the religion of the Glorious”⁴. Shaykh Nūr Qutb ‘Ālam has

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been referred to as (a) "Ha'drat Shaykh al-Islām, crown of nation, full moon among the saints, who have been united with Allah, (b) "Ha'drat Sultān al-'Arefīn (Sultān of Saints) Qutb al-Aqṭāb (pole of poles)" (c) "Our revered master, the teacher of Imāms, the proof of the congregation, the sun of the faith, the testimony of Islām and the Muslims, who bestowed advantages upon the poor and the indigent, the guide of saints and of such as wish to be guided". (d) "the sun of the sky of religion and the moon of the mine of truth, a guide to the way of spirituality". According to another inscription, "Jalāl al-Dīn Shāh (Tabrizī) was the accepted of Allāh, Angelic in disposition and king of religion and of the world."

Now were these epithets attributed to the Šūfīs for nothing? As will be seen presently the answer should be in the negative. The people really believed that they were endowed with super-human powers, they were inspired by Allāh, their hearts were illumined by the divine perception and they were the mine of truth. And all these were in spite of the fact that they led the life of simplicity and austerity. They did not hesitate to perform humble works even to work as sweeper at the bidding of their teacher. Makhdūm Shaykh Jalāl Tabrizī used to follow his teacher with a heated stove on his head and a cooking pot thereon, so that he could provide his master with hot

1. Memoirs, pp. 109, 115, 123.
   (a) حضرت شيخ الإسلام تاج الامة برلاو اصلين مقبول
       بارگه رب العالمين
   (b) حضرت سلطان العارفين قطب الاقطاب
       مجد ومنا العلامة استاذالائمة برهان الامة حجة
   (c) الإسلام والمسلمين نافع الفقراء والمسلمين هما
       الواسمين والمسترشدين
   (d) شمس سماء الشرعية قمران الحقيقة هادئ راه ارادة

2. Ibid, p. 104.
   جلال الدين شه آن مقبول بارى - فرشته خوي شاه
       دين ودنيا
food on demand⁴. While he came to Bengal, he had only a bowl and an ‘aṣā (stick) in hand⁵. Shāh Jalāl of Sylhet observed fast for forty years which he used to break only after ten consecutive days. As for his possession, he had only a cow⁶. Shaykh ‘Alā’ al-Ḥaqq used to accompany his teacher Shaykh Akhī Sirāj al-Dīn ‘Uthmān with a hot stove on his head, the cooking pot thereon, so that he became bald⁷. Shaykh Nur Qutb Alam used to perform all sorts of menial works including the carrying of wood and cleaning of lavatory⁸.

Such were the Šūfīs who made Bengal the cradle-home of their life. They were renowned for their simplicity of life, strength of character, devotion to faith and peaceful pursuits; their Khāṅqāhs were rest-giving refuge, their alms-houses were open to all, poor, destitutes, wanderers and mendicants; they were regarded as having been endowed with super-human powers. Naturally, the people were attracted and enchanted towards them and it is in this way that they won over the mass of the Bengali people to Islām. Examples are not rare that substantiate the statement. We know from Ṣekh Šubhodaya (Shaykh Šubhodaya) that many people attached themselves to Shaykh Jalāl Tabrizī. The Shaykh restored to life a dying man whose wife was named Mādhavi. Both husband and wife became his slaves⁹. It is also said that four servants of a certain minister of King Lakshmīna Sena were jealous of the growing popularity of the Shaykh. They one day conspired together to test the super-human power of the Shaykh. They feigned to be blind, went to the Shaykh and asked him to cure them. The Shaykh listened to them carefully and asked them to see him some other day. While coming out, the servants found to their horror that they became actually blind. They immediately surrendered to the Shaykh and implored for pardon. The Shaykh became pleased and cured them. Since then, they with their wives became servants of the saint.⁰ The saint influenced the people so much

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1. Akhbār al-Akhīyār, p. 44.; Supra, p. 92.
2. Ṣekh Šubhodaya, (Shaykh Šubhodaya) edited by Sukumar Sen, Calcutta, 1927, p. 7; Supra, p. 93.
6. Ṣekh Šubhodaya, (Shaykh Šubhodaya) edited by Sukumar Sen, Calcutta, 1927, Chapter III.
7. Ibid, chapter IV.
that, "all the people think only of the Shaykh. They consider him as king........... The king (Lakshmana Sena) also does not remember anybody else except the Shaykh." Shāh Jalāl also influenced the people of the hilly region of Sylhet. According to Ibn Baṭṭūṭah, both Hindus and Muslims of the area used to bring gifts for the Shaykh and his followers lived mainly on those gifts. The conversion to Islām actually began during the time of Muḥammad Baḵhtyār Khaljī, who converted a certain Mech chief and gave him the name of ʿAlī. He was the person who led Baḵhtyār in his expedition to Tibet. Beside the general references evidenced by traditions, we have some undoubted evidences to show that the Šūfīs converted people to Islām. In the reign of Sulṭān ʿAlī Mardān Khaljī, Qāḍī Rukn al-Dīn al-Samarqandi converted one Bhojar Brahmin, the ʿOghi. Shaykh Nūr Quṭb ʿĀlam converted Jadū (Sulṭān Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Shāh). The people of the hilly region of Sylhet accepted Islām in the hands of Shāh Jalāl.

One great factor that must have helped in bringing the Muslim saints to the notice of the general mass is the fact that most of their dargāhs in Bengal are found on the top of the older sacred buildings. Shāh Sulṭān Māhīsawār’s dargāh at Mahasthan in Bogra district stands on the top of a Śāiva temple; at the famous Buddhist monastery at Paharpur in Rajshahi district stands Satyaśīr Bhiṭā and on actual excavation Muslim relics were found there; the dargāh of Bayazid Bisṭāmi at Chittagong is occupying the top of a mound; and even the Khāṇqah of Shaykh Jalāl at Sylhet is placed prominently on an

1. Ibid, Chapter IV, p. 24.
ancient mound. If we bear in our mind the attachment of the local people (Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims all alike) to the sacred places of old, it is not difficult to realise how these dargāhs continued to attract the general mass even when they had replaced the earlier object of reverence.

This archaeological evidence is of great importance. It at once reminds us of the stories given in Sekh Śubhodaya (Shaykh Šubhodaya) where we learn about the disputations held between the Muslim saints and the local Śādhus. It is not difficult to realise that after the defeat of the Śādhus and their conversion to Islām, their habitat was occupied by the saints and turned into dargāhs. Such an hypothesis alone explains the presence of so many dargāhs on top of mounds and at the same time rationalises the stories given in literature. These Śādhus, who were mostly Tantric Gurus had mysterious influence over the credulous masses. They were more than mere religious teachers. They had become an institution by themselves, round whom flocked the villagers in search of salvation, relief from miseries and solace in the distracted world. Their abode had become a tīrtha (place of pilgrimage). The people had blind faith on them. Naturally when these Śādhus were converted by the Muslim saints who occupied the old places, the devotion of the masses to these places did not diminish. On the other hand the miracles and the piety of the new saints worked more in their imagination leading ultimately to mass conversion of the local populace. They became Muslims in name retaining all their local beliefs and customs. They learnt the rudiments of Islām by attaching themselves to the new saints, but did not discard their own language and their particular ways of life. As a result local elements have mixed up with Islām in Bengal.1 In this Islām the dargāhs quite naturally have played, and are playing today the most important part. It would not be an exaggeration to say that they are the nerve-centres of the Bengali Muslim Society. They have all the three, religious, educational and sociological significance. Some of the saints have been so popular that their names are incorporated in the local boat songs.2

In conclusion, it must be stated that the Muslim saints and the dargāhs have deeply affected the growth of the Muslim society in Bengal. An important factor in Bengal’s history is the preponderance of

1. See, Infra, Chapter V.
2. Dacca Review, August, 1913, p. 142,
Muslim population. Whereas in Northern India, the place under Imperial domination for centuries, Islâm was confined into urban centres, in the deltaic Bengal, it captured the rural society. One reason for this position may be found in the missionary activities of the saints and the numerous dargāhs scattered all over the country.
CHAPTER IV

COMPOSITION OF THE MUSLIM SOCIETY

The building up of the Muslim Society in Bengal is a long process of gradual growth, as has been discussed in the last chapter. The composition of the society quite naturally also differed from century to century. Two factors were mainly responsible in swelling the ranks of the Muslims in Bengal: (i) the immigration of the foreign Muslim populace and (ii) merging of the local populace in the Muslim Society after their conversion.

The foreigners migrated into Bengal on several occasions—some came in the wake of conquest, some joined later in the services, some followed the appointment of new Governors from Dehli, some trekked in as peaceful settlers in search of livelihood, some ventured as traders and businessmen, and some were fired with missionary zeal. Almost all of them came along with that horde of migration that

1. Minhāj (p. 147) refers how the Khaljis flocked together round Muhammad Baḵhtiār after his initial successes in Bihar. Minhāj (p. 152) also refers to ten thousand soldiers with whom Baḵhtiār marched against Tibet.

2. The most important example is that of ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Ḥusayn Shāh (later on Sulṭān) who first accepted office under the Sulṭān. (Tārīḵ-i-Fīrishtāh, Vol. II, pp. 301-2). For appointment of Ḥabshi slaves see, Ibid, p. 298.


4. The examples of Amīr Zayn al-Dīn Harwī, the poet-laureate of Sulṭān Rukn al-Dīn Bārbak Shāh (See, Supra, p. 79) and Mawlānā Shārf al-Dīn Abū Tawwāmah, (Supra, pp. 67 ff.) may be cited.

5. For a businessman under ‘Alī Mardān Khaljī see, Minhāj, pp. 159-60.

6. For Şūfīs, see, Chapter III, Section (C).
was set afoot by the devastating flood of Mongol eruption from their homeland north of China. Many uprooted families from Central Asia sought refuge in this sub-continent; many of the crowned heads thrown out of their masnads took the garb of royal saints, and moved on to a new missionary life; many craftsmen, architects, poets and painters flew away from the raging scourge and found shelter in the plains of this sub-continent. In the biographical sketches of the saints and scholars we have traced before how they moved out of their homeland and settled in Bengal.

These immigrants introduced new elements in the Muslim Society. They came under the banner of Islâm, but they brought with them their particular ways of life, and as far as practicable tried to keep a homogeneity of their group. The earliest such people were the Khalji conquerors. Minhâj says how men belonging to Khalj tribe flocked around Bakhtyâr, hearing about his dare-devil conquests. It is they who formed the first Muslim nobility in Bengal, and it is round their oligarchy that the Muslim society began to take shape in Bengal. Later, with their subjugation new Turks poured into this country till towards the end of the 13th century A.D. Bengal became refuge of the Ilbari Turks driven out from Dehli. Lakhnawti and Dehlì, for more than a quarter of a century, stood face to face in a reversed position; the Khaljis along with the local converts occupying supreme place in Dehli, and the Ilbari Turks with their supporters holding their own in Bengal. The Tughluqs, who were Qaraunah Turks, broke this rivalry and isolation and once again opened the way for fresh migration. Their supporters from far off places like Panjab, Multan and Sijistan found an easy opening to Bengal. One such immigrant was Ḥāji Ilyās from Sijistān, who founded the Independent Sulṭānate and who was the first to unite the whole of Bengal under him in A.D. 1353.

2. For such saints, see Chapter III, Section (C), pp.88,112,123.
4. Under the House of Balban and their supporter Shams al-Din Firuz Shâh and his children.
In the years to come we hear of the importation of the Abyssinian slaves\(^1\) by Rukan al-Dīn Bārbak Shāh. Still later came the Afghāns\(^8\) (popularly known as Pathans) when they lost power in Dehli to the Mughals, and the latter in chasing the Pathans spread out in the East, but their real supremacy in Bengal belongs to a period subsequent to that discussed here.

On the other hand the local converts hailed from different ranks in the society. The large majority came from the general mass, who being attracted by the miracles and piety of the Muslim saints, accepted Islām. There are traditions which speak of the rivalry\(^6\) between Buddhists and the Hindus, and the former welcoming the Muslims


\(^6\) Ibid, pp. 301-2.

\(^1\) An important example is found in Chapter “Niranjaner Rushma” of Śūnya Purāṇa, edited by C. C. Bandopadhyay, Calcutta, B. S. 1336.
and joining hands with them. Many of the humbler people chose to identify themselves with the Muslims in order to be free from social

Translation: "There are sixteen hundred families of the Brahmans in Jaipur. They go to different places demanding *dakshinā*; where they do not get any, they pronounce their curse and thus burn the world. At Maldah they levy a regular tax. They go demanding *dakshinā*, where they do not get any, they pronounce their curse and thus burn the world. At Maldah they levy a regular tax upon all without distinction. There is no end of their knavery. They have grown very strong; ten to twenty come together and destroy the worshippers of *Dharma*. They pronounce the *Vedas*, fire
injustice and to gain good position in the society. It is these elements that created the popular aspect of Islam. But there were higher section of the people who were gradually succumbing to the influence of Islam, either political or religious. Among these may be mentioned

issues forth incessantly, everyone trembles before them. Being aggrieved at heart, people say, O’ Dharma, protect us. Who is there other than yourself who can rescue us? Thus do the Brahmins destroy the creation. This is burning injustice. Dharma, from his seat in the Vaikuntha knew all this in his mind. He produced illusion and produced darkness. He assumed the form of Yavana (i.e. Muslim), wore a black cap on the head with bow and arrow in hand. The best is achieved without fear, with the utterance of one name of Khodâ (God) who is formless and without any attribute and who is incarnate in Behist (Paradise). They utter the name of Madâr (Shâh Madâr?). All the gods with one accord wore the trousers with great delight. Brahma became Muḥammad; Vishnu became Paighambar (prophet); Śiva became Adam; and Gaṇeśa became Ghâzî, Kârtika became Qâdî and munîs became faqîr. Throwing away his proper vestment Nârada became a Shaykh, Indra became a Malânâ (Maulânâ). The sun, the moon and other gods became foot soldiers and all began to play martial music. Chaṇḍikâ transformed herself into Eve and Padmâvatî became Bibî Nûr. All the gods with one accord entered Jâipur, broke the temple and images, seized (property) and called out ‘catch hold of him’ or them”.

1. R. C. Mitra: The Decline of Buddhism in India, Viśva-Bhāratī, A. D. 1954, pp. 78-79, 81. According to Duarte Barbosa (Barbosa, p. 148) “the heathens daily become Moors to gain royal favour.”

2. For popular aspect of Islam See, Infra, chapter V.

3. Chaitanya Bhāgavata, Adi, 14th.

Translation:—“Among the Hindus there are some, who though they are Brahmins, become yavanas according to their own will.”
the names of Bhojar Brahmin⁴, Sulṭān Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad⁵ and ‘Pirali Brahmanas’⁶ (converted to Islām) in Khulna district. It is the presence of such people in Islām, which reacted to foreign elements and were mainly responsible in giving a local colour to the Muslim society of Bengal⁶.

There were also children of mixed marriages. Several examples of Muslim migrants taking Hindu wives are found in the literature⁵.

1. See, *Supra*, p. 64.
2. Riyāḍ, p. 113.
5. (a) Vijaya Gupta: *Padma Purāṇa*, edited by B. K. Bhattacherjee, Bāṇī Niketan, Barisal, p. 56.

Translation: “She was a Hindu girl. It was her misfortune that the Qādī forced her away and married her.”

(b) Abdul Karim: *Bāṅgālā Prāchīn Punthīr Bīvarana*, Part I, Bāṅgiya Sāhitya Parishad Patrikā, additional number, B. S. 1310, p. 159.

Translation: “While Māhī Asawār (correctly Māhī-sawār) was travelling through that country (Chittagong), he saw the daughter of Achārya. She excelled Vidyādhara (Singer in the court of gods) in beauty, her smile and talk outpoured nectar and her eyes were like lotus. When Māhīsawār saw her, he proposed to the Brahmin to marry her. When Achārya did not agree, he rode on
The children of such persons attained rank in the society depending upon their father’s station in life. The example of Muḥammad Khān, a 17th century Bengali poet may be cited, whose ancestor, a certain Māhīsawār came to Bengal, married a Brahmin girl, and left behind a line of children who were governors in Chittagong in the later Ilyās Shāḥī and Ḥusayn Shāḥī periods. Tradition makes Ḥusayn Shāḥ a tiger and appeared before the Brahmin. All the Brahmins fled away out of fear, Achārya paused and gave his daughter in marriage."

(c) For one Shāh Kamāl’s marrying a Hindu lady see, J. A. S. B. 1874, p. 285.


2. Muḥammad Khān gives the following geneology:—

Māhīsawār

Ḥātim

Ṣiddīq

Rāstī Khān (identified with Rāstī Khān, Governor of Chittagong under Rukn al-Dīn Bārbak Shāḥ).

Minā Khān (identified with Parāgal Khān, Governor of Chittagong under ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Ḥusayn Shāḥ).

Gābhur Khān (identified with Chhute Khān, Governor of Chittagong under ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Ḥusayn Shāḥ and Nuṣrat Shāḥ).

Ḥamzah Khān

Nuṣrat Khān

Jalāl Khān

Ibrāhīm Khān.

Mubāriz Khān.

Muḥammad Khān.

(See also Proceedings of the Pakistan History conference, Karachi Session, 1951, pp. 201—202.)
in his early life a servant of a Brahmin named Subuddhi Rai. He rose by dint of merit to be the Sultān of Bengal. The Ḥabshi slaves rose to masnad simply with the help of sword. Niẓām al-Dīn Aḥmad Bakhshī remarks, “They say that during some years, there was such a custom in Bangālah that whoever slew a ruler and sat on the throne, everyone became submissive and obedient to him.” Low origin does not seem to have offered any barrier in gaining position in the society. There also does not appear to have been any stigma attached to the children of mixed marriages nor did they form any distinct class of their own.

Local tradition also attaches some significance to the migration of Arab traders in Chittagong and the growth of a Muslim population mixed with Arab blood in that region. There is no doubt that the Arabs carried on trade with the Chittagong coast, but as we have shown earlier, no definite record is available to substantiate the hypothesis of such an Arab fusion. It must however be maintained that Chittagong, being an important port-town, Arabs, Persians and many other foreign merchants came there for commerce and trade. Barbosa gives a similar account of the city of Bengalah and records the presence of “Arabs, Persians, Abexis and Indians.”

7. Barbosa, pp. 135, 139.
How were these people divided into social organisation, is still more difficult to say. The Holy Qur’ān says, “O mankind, Lo! we have created you men and women, and have made you nations and tribes that you may know one another. Lo! the noblest of you in the sight of Allāh is the most pious of you. Lo! Allāh is Knower, Aware.”

Thus the distinction among the Muslims is in respect of their piety and their affiliation to the nations or tribes and not in the sense of class distinction as it technically means to-day or what the caste distinction means in Hinduism. But this is a general religious principle.

In practical life it is possible to distinguish some groups of people having mutual relations based on common interest. The earliest reference to such groups is found in the Inshā-i-Mahru, which contains a proclamation by Sultan Firuz Shāh Tughluq issued in the name of the people of the territory of Lakhnawī on the eve of his first invasion of Bengal (A.D. 1353). Here the people are grouped as follows:

(i) The Sādāt, Ulamā, Moshā’ik and others of similar nature;
(ii) The Khāns, Malik, Umarā, Sadrs, Akāber and Ma‘ārif;
(iii) The ‘train and suit’ of No. (ii);
(iv) Zamindārs, Muqaddams, Mafruzmān (Mafruzīān?) Madkān (Malkan? and such like;
(v) Hermits, Sains and gabrs (probably gurus).

Here we meet with a good cross-section of the upper class of the society in Bengal, who counted for being mentioned in the royal proclamation. It is not difficult to determine their exact meaning with the help of other details given in the document. In connection with Nos. (i), (ii) and (iii) the order speaks of “their fiefs, villages, lands stipends, wages and salaries”. Obviously these were the sources of income to the persons concerned. Among these we can easily distinguish (a) Sayyids (b) Ālims, i.e. scholars, (c) Shaykhs i.e. saints, (d) Officers, bearing titles like Khān etc. and (e) the servants of lower cadre attached to (d). It is important to note that the Sayyids, Scholars and Saints are grouped together and they are given precedence over the officials indicating that they held pre-eminent position in the society. With respect to class (iv), the order speaks of the “revenue”, “produce”, and “illegal taxes and dues” obviously implying that these have got to do with agricultural produce as distinct from the official class and the scholarly and saintly groups. To the last class are assi-

gned "hermits, sains and gabrs (?)" who also enjoyed income from "fiefs, villages, lands, wages and stipends etc." Their privileges are almost the same as those of class (i), (ii) and (iii). But the very fact that they are mentioned separately shows that there was some fundamental difference between the two broad groups. If the terms used are indicative of their true affiliation, it can be deduced that the persons of earlier group are Muslims and those of the latter are non-Muslims as Sain can be derived from the sanskrit word Sādhu and gabr is probably a mistake for guru.

It is necessary here to say something about the persons implied under different terms.

(i) The Sayyids

The Sayyids, being the descendants of the Prophet, were looked upon with veneration and respect by the general population. Khān Jahān of Bagerhat, who was the first to bring Khulna-Jessore area under the Muslim domination, claims himself to be a "lover of the descendants of the Prophet".1 In the reign of Sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn Iwād Khaljī, they received stipend from the State.2 Firuz Shāh Tughluq promised increment of stipends to the Sayyids.3 They had no hesitation to have matrimonial connections with those who did not claim such a noble ancestry or to receive training from those who were spiritually or in any other way superior to them. For example, Sayyid Husayn Makkī (later on Sultan Alā‘ al-Dīn Husayn Shāh) married, according to tradition, the daughter of a Qāḍī of Rāḍha,4 while his son Nuṣrat Shāh married the daughter of Sultan Ibrāhīm Lodī.5 It has been said earlier that Māhīsawār, the ancestor of poet Muḥammad Khān married a Brahmin girl.6 Shaykh ‘Alā‘ al-Ḥaqq, who claimed to be a Sayyid, received his spiritual teachings from Shaykh Akhī Sirāj al-Dīn ‘Uṭmān al-Badāyūnī, who did not claim such a high birth.7

The proclamation of Firuz Shāh Tughluq shows that the Sayyids formed an important element in the society of Pandwah.8 Similarly

4. Riyāḍ, p. 132.
7. See, Chapter III, Section (c), pp. 104-05.
Vipradās' a description of the Muslim population of Satgāwn refers to the Sayyids as an important group. A Sayyid dynasty, consisting of four rulers, ruled over Bengal for long forty five years (A.D. 1493-1538). Lastly, a large number of Šūfīs claimed to be Sayyids and traced their origin to the family of the Prophet. The fact that Sayyid Sulṭān, a mid-16th century poet wrote in the local language shows that the Sayyids not only settled in this country, but some of them mastered the local language. The Sayyids thus came to Bengal in different times, settled here and engaged in various professions. All the same the Muslims in general paid due respect to them in whatever walk of life they might be. They did not form a professional class, nor can this class be regarded as Brahmins are in the Hindu society, though in both the factor of birth is common. Unlike the Brahmins the Sayyids have no legal claim to superiority, though in practice they are respected because of their connection with the family of the Prophet.

(ii) The Alims

Etymologically, the word ‘Alim means one who knows, but technically it means a person who is well-versed in Islāmic sciences. Whoever could master the science of religion was called an ‘Alim. It is said that Bhojar Brahmin, the Yogi learnt the Islāmic science to such an extent that the Muslim divines permitted him to pronounce legal decisions. The ‘Alims could also attain the status of a Šūfī. Mawlānā Sharīf al-Dīn Abū Tawwāmah was a Šūfī, as his book Maqāmat suggests.

Generally the ‘Alims accepted the profession of teaching. Sayyid Sulṭān, a Bengali poet records the following duty of an ‘Alim. “Living in the country, if any ‘Alim does not teach (the religious principles),

3. See Chapter III, Section (c), Biographical Sketch of the Šūfīs.
6. See, Chapter III, Section (B), pp. 67 ff.
he will surely be put to the hell. If the people commit sin, God will catch hold of ‘Alims and will punish them.” The ‘Alims thus considered it their obligatory duty to teach the people. This is further substantiated by the fact that the ‘Alims maintained academies, imparted instructions and sometimes wrote books on religious sciences. We have seen earlier that Qâdir Rukn al-Dîn al Samarqandî converted and taught Bhojar Brahmin, the Yogi; Mawlânâ Taqî al-Dîn, whose student was Shaykh Yahyâ of Maner, imparted instructions; Mawlânâ Sharîf al-Dîn Abû Tawwâmah maintained a madrasah where he taught all branches of religious sciences. Nâm-i-Ḥaqq, a book on jurisprudence, was also written here by an ‘Alim. Moreover, the erection of madrasahs by the royal patrons, as referred to earlier, necessitated the appointment of ‘Alims to impart education on “the sciences of religion and instruction in the principles which lead to certainty.”

Secondly, as they were learned in the religious sciences, they were also appointed as Qâdis i.e. the office in which an incumbent was required to be well-versed in Islamic Law. We have on the authority of Finishta, discussed earlier, that Sultân Shams al-Dîn Yûsuf Shâh used to call the ‘Alims at intervals to admonish them not to side with anybody in discharging religious matters.

(iii) The Shaykhs

The word ‘Shaykh’ means old, but technically it means doctors in Muslim law and theology. In this sense they are ‘Alims, but the

2. See, Chapter III, Section (B), p. 64.
3. Supra, p. 66.
5. Ibid, pp. 73 ff.

لتدريس علوم الدين وتعليم أحكام اليقين

Shaykh are those 'Alims, who themselves attain and train others in attaining spiritual development. This definition explains why the Insha-i-Mahrû draws a distinction between the 'Alims and the Shaykhs. The word 'Shaykh' has been appended to the names of almost all the Sufis of Bengal about whom we have discussed. This is probably due to the fact that the Sufis actually devoted themselves to the teaching of Islamic sciences along with their mystic performances. We have, therefore, identified the Shaykhs with the Sufis.

The Shaykhs played a prominent part in the Bengali society. We have seen earlier that a good number of them made different parts of this country the scene of their activities by establishing Chilla-khanahs or Khângahs. Each of them had a large following under them. Moreover, as has been pointed out earlier, they helped the expansion of Muslim royal power, imparted instructions, influenced the ruling class and lastly converted the local people to Islam. They maintained poor houses, giving relief to the poor and the destitutes. In this period, especially in Bengal, the word Shaykh, as said before, was applied only to the Muslim saints. But today the connotation is changed. According to E. Haq and Abdul Karim, in some parts of West Bengal it signifies the lower class Muslims, generally converted ones, and in East Bengal especially in Chittagong it is used for the aristocratic non-Sayyids.

(iv) The Official Class

The bureaucracy in the kingdom formed the official class in the society. They bore the title of Khan, Malik, Amir, Sadr, Kabir and Ma'arif. In the inscriptions of the period, Khan is the simplest title conferred on the officers. Their further elaboration is as follows:

2. Chapter III, Section (C).
3. Ibid.
4. Chapter III, Section (C), Part II.
6. Ibid.
Khān Mu‘azzam, Khān al-A‘zam, Khān-i-Khānān, Khān al-Mu‘azzam al-Mukarram, Khān Khān al-Sharq wa ’l-Šin. Malik is another title borne by the officials. It has also different grades as follows:—Malik al-Mu‘azzam, Malik al-Mu‘azzam wa ’l-Mukarram, Malik al-Mulk, Malik al-Mulk al-Sharq, Malik al-Umārā wa ’l-Wuzarā. But sometimes this was also assumed by the princes. Bārbak Shāh (later on Sultān Rukn al-Dīn Bārbak Shāh) is called in the inscription, Malik al-‘ādil al-bādhil al-Kāmil al-fādil (the Malik, the just, the liberal, the learned and the perfect). We have only one instance of the use of Amīr before the name of a Sultān and that is in the case of Sultān Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Shāh. Šadr probably was the chief of the department of justice. Kabīr and Ma‘ārif probably implied the aristocratic class of the kingdom.

This evidence about the Muslim society, derived from the Persian source, needs to be checked from the local information. Fortunately we have a similar reference in Manasā Vijaya of Viprādāsa dated A.D. 1495, who mentions about the Muslim population of Satgāwn. He speaks of the following people:


2. For inscription see, J. A. S. B. 1870, p. 290.


6. Ibid. p. 114.

निबंध यथा यत् 
ताह । वा बलि [ब] कृत्—
मोहन पाठान मोकाद्दिस।

नेत्रम दोल। काजिः 
केतठा कोराण राजिः,
दूई ओज करें जलिल।

Translation:—"The Muslim population of (Saptagrāma) is innumerable; they belong to Mughals, Pathans and Mokādīms (Makhdūms). The Sayyids, Mullās and Qādīs are busy with the Qur‘ān and the Kitābs (religious books)."
(i) Mongol, Pathan.
(ii) Mokâdîm (i.e. Mâkhdûm).
(iii) Sayyid.
(iv) Mullâ.
(v) Qâdî.

All these people he calls by the general name of "Yavana" and speaks how they pray in the mosque and read Qur'ân and Kitâb (probably religious books.) Herein we get a picture of the Muslim society as it appeared to a Hindu living far away from the capital. Here there is no reference to the official class, except the Qâdî, who came in contact with the common people in smaller towns more than the higher officials. The name of Mullâ is very significant. The part played by him has been discussed in another place. The Sayyids have already been discussed before. The Mâkhdûm is another word by which the Muslim saints are remembered in the inscriptions. They have been dealt with before. Mongols and Pathans are racial terms, used probably to refer to the foreign Muslim populace of the place.

The use of these two racial terms in A. D. 1495 by Vipradâsa is difficult to explain. In the sanskrit inscriptions we get only Turushka or Tâjika, besides the general nomenclature Yavana. It is true, Mongols were not unknown to the Muslim historians of this sub-continent, as we have several references to them in connection with invasion from the north-west, and they are also known to have settled in Dehli. But no other evidence is available to show that the peaceful Mongol settlers pushed as far east as Satgâwn, especially in such a large number as to have been mentioned by Vipradâsa.

2. See Supra, p. 149.
3. For inscriptions see, J. A. S. B. 1872, p. 107; J. A. S. B. 1873, pp. 271, 290, 294; Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica, 1929-30, pp. 11-12; Muslim Inscriptions of Bengal, pp. 103-107.
4. Chapter III, Section (C), See also Supra, p. 151.
8. J. A. S. B. 1892, p. 325;
Even the use of the word "Pathan" throws some doubt on the authenticity of the evidence. 'Pathan' is no doubt, the general term used in the sub-continent for Afghāns, but the use of this word became more current after the overthrow of the Afghāns from Dehli by Mughal invasion in A.D. 1526 (and later the destruction of the Sūri empire) and their consequent spreading out in Eastern India. In Bengal the descendants and supporters of Dāūd Khān Karrānī (died in A.D. 1576) are referred to as Afghāns or Pathans as opposed to the Mughals, who displaced their authority and established their rule here. Most probably from this time onward in Bengal the generic term Pathan was used for pre or non-Mughal Muslim population as opposed to the Mughals. In common parlance in India we get only four terms Shaykh, Sayyid, Mughal and Pathan. The first refers to the saints, the second to the descendants of the Prophet and the last two are the same kind of generic terms as used by Vipradāsa. Though no definite date can be fixed to the origin of this general proverb, it seems that it is of Mughal or post-Mughal creation. Therefore, it appears that the use of the terms 'Mongol' and 'Pathan' by Vipradāsa may not be taken seriously.

From another Bengali poet, Mukunda Rāma of a slightly later date (late 16th century) we get a picture of the Muslim society of a lower cadre. He says, "There are some people called golā (correctly goalā or milk-man). They do not perform Rozā (fasting) and Namāz (prayer). Those who accept the occupation of weaving are called jolhā (weavers). Those who drive bullocks are called Mukeri. Some sell cakes and are called Pithāri. Those who sell fish are called Kābhāri; they do not keep beard and always tell a lie. Those Hindus who

became Musalmāns, are called Ghorsāl. Those who beg for alms at night are called Kāl. Those who make the looms are called Sānākār; they earn their livelihood at the mercy of weavers. Some move from town to town with their paintings, while others make bows and are called Tīrakār (bowmen). Some make paper and are called Kāgchā (from Kāghaz), while the Qalandars wander from place to place. Some who paint clothes with dye-stuff are called Rang-rez; they wear red clothes on their head and they possess manliness. Some perform the work of circumcision and are called Hājjām, they move from one town to another without any rest. Some sell beef and are called Kasāi. They will have no place in Yamapura (next world). Those who cut clothes and then sew them are called darzi (tailor)."

The above description gives only professional classes and throws light on the occupational groups of the Muslims. The first is named golā (goālā?)1. Then follow jolā or julāhā, the weaver, mukerī in the

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1. That Muslims also adopted the profession of milkman is supported by James Wise, who made an elaborate study
sense of cowherd, pithāri i.e. baker, kābāri i.e. fish-seller. Strangely enough the converted Muslims are called ghorsāl, a term, the meaning of which is difficult to determine, unless we take it for gol-sāz (maker of firework). Other classes include kāl i.e. beggar, sānākār i.e. loom-maker, painter, Tirakar i.e. bowen, kāghchā i.e. paper-manufacturer, rang-rez i.e. dyers, darzī i.e. tailors, kasāi i.e. seller of beef, and hājjām, who performed circumcision. One more class mentioned is that of the Qalundars i.e. wandering darwishes.

It appears that most of these professional classes were hereditary groups as they have been noticed in later period of history. This is an important evidence suggesting that in the lower cadre the class system was based on profession and probably also on heredity. This may be an influence from the Hindu society, but it is not possible to say definitely how far they accepted other caste rules, like those of marriage, diet etc. of the Hindus.

As a whole the materials at our disposal give us a picture of the Muslim society divided into two broad classes, the higher class and the lower class: the higher class follow the usual pattern of the Muslim society in this sub-continent, but the lower class show survivals of local practices or influences from the Hindu society.

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1. James Wise (Ibid, p. 77) writes, “The maker of fireworks, always a Muhammadan, is often called “Golsaz” but the Persian title of “Atash-baz” is no longer in use.”

CHAPTER V

ISLAM AS PRACTISED BY THE MUSLIMS OF BENGAL

The spread of Islâm in Bengal was a gradual process. As the number of immigrants into Bengal does not appear to be considerably high, it was all the more necessary to win over the support of the local people either by converting them or by pacifying them. This necessity implied some sort of compromise with the local customs and beliefs, as has been said before. But fortunately, the problem was not so difficult for Islâm in Bengal, because, (i) there has always been a preponderance of non-Aryan population in this region and (ii) Buddhism has been a great competitor of Hinduism throughout the pre-Muslim period. The non-Aryan elements had somehow identified themselves with the degraded Buddhism of the pre-Muslim period. When such a keen rivalry was raging in the country, Islâm came as a relieving force, in which many found an easy opening to success and salvation. As it has been said before, there seems to have been mass conversion in Bengal wrought by the Muslim saints. These converts retained their long-inherited customs, beliefs and even love for old Hindu epics. Even in the late 16th century the Bengali poet Sayyid Sulṭān complains of the Muslim masses’ more devotion to this literature than to Qur’an and other Islāmic subjects. Such being the state of affairs, it is not unnatural to expect that many popular

1. See Chapter II, p. 28. For local influences see Infra, pp. 162 ff.
3. History of Bengal, Vol. I, Dacca University, A.D. 1943, Chapter on Buddhism.
7. Sayyid Sulṭān : Ophāte Rasūl, ( Wajāḥ-i-Rasūl ), edited by Ali Ahmad, B. S. 1356, p. 7. For quotation see Supra, pp. 81-82.
elements have crept into the general belief of Islām in Bengal. However, this does not mean that Islām in its orthodox forms was not practised here at all. The following points help in understanding the nature of this aspect of Islām:

1. A large number of mosques were erected that enabled the Muslims to offer their prayers, individual or congregational.
2. A number of madrasahs were established wherein religious instructions were imparted.
3. Muslim scholars wrote books on Ḥadīth and Fiqh. These were to teach the Muslims the fundamentals of Islām.
4. People of Bengal visited the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah.
5. Muslims in Bengal observed fasts as it was in the case of Shāh Jalāl of Sylhet.

Beside these, some important information is also supplied by the Bengali literature.

(i) Chaitanya Bhāgavata

Sulṭān ‘Ala’ al-Dīn Ḥusayn Shāh said to Haridāśa (Yavana Haridāśa of Vaishṇava literature):

“It is a good fortune that you became a Yavana; why do you follow Hindu practices? We do not take our meal after seeing a Hindu; you forsake that (religion), although you belong to Mahāvarṇa (great family). You violate the rules of your own community and religion; how will you escape (punishment) in the next world? Remove whatever sins you have committed out of ignorance by reciting the Kalimah.”

This passage refers to the important tenets of Islām, the Day of Resurrection and the belief in the Oneness of God and belief in the Prophet as the Messenger of God.

1. For details see, Chapter III, Section (A), pp. 40-42.
2. Ibid, pp. 42 ff.
3. Chapter III, Section (B), p. 73.
6. Chaitanya Bhāgavata, Adi, 14th.
(ii) Vijaya Gupta: *Padma Purāṇa*

When the people of Hāṣān Hāti were afraid of snakes, a certain Mullā told as follows¹:

"Why do you salute demon while the Pir exists and why do you bow your head to a demon when there is God?"

The passage indicates that there was belief in the supreme power of God and also a super-human power of the Pir.

(iii) Mukunda Rāma: *Kavikaṭkan Chaṇḍi*²

"Leaving the city of Kalinga, the ryots of all castes settled in the city of Bir (name of a hunter). So many people came to the city of Bir. Accepting the pān (betel-leaf) of Bir (in token of their consent of the agreement), the Musalmāns settled there. The western end of the town

The question of Haridāsa is a controversial point in Bengali literature. According to the Hindu version, he was converted from Islam to Vaishnavism, long before the birth of Chaitanya. But the miracles attributed to him throw doubt on the whole story. This quotation from *Chaitanya Bhāgavata* is also a Hindu version of the story.


was assigned to them. There came the Mughals, the Sayyids and the Qaṭṭās mounting on horse. Bir gave them rent-free lands for house. They built their houses at the extreme western end and named it Hāsān Hāti. They rise early in the morning and spreading a red Pāṭī (mat), they say their prayers five times a day. Counting the Sulaymānī beads, they meditate on Pir and Paighambar (Prophet) and illuminate the seat (dargāh) of the Pir. Ten or twenty sit together to decide cases and always recite the Qur’ān and the Kitāb, while others sitting in the market places distribute the Shīrni (offerings of confectioneries) of the Pir, beat the drum and raise the flag. They are very wise, they care for none, they never give up rozā (fasting) as long as they have life in them. Their appearance is formidable, they keep no hair on their head but allow their beard to grow down to their chest. They always adhere to

আইসে চড়ীয়া তাজি, সৈয়দ মোঘল কাজি,
খয়রাতে বার দেয় বাড়ি।
পুরের পশ্চিম পাটি,
বোলার হাসন হাটা,
এক সমুদ্র গুহা বাড়ি ॥
ফজর সময়ে উঠি,
বিছানা। বোহিন্ড পাটি,
পাঁচ বেরি করয়ে নামাজ ॥
জুবিজুবিজ [সোনেমানি ?] মালা ধরে, জগে পীর পেঁয়েছে,
পীরের মোকাবে দেই সাঙ্গ ॥
দশ বিশ বেরাদের,
বনিয়া বিচার করে,
অনুপন্ত কিতাব কোরান ॥
সাঙ্গে দালা দেই হাটে,
পীরের পীরনী বাঁটে,
সাঙ্গে বাজে দগড় নিশান ॥
বড়ই দানিগবর্ধ,
কাহাকে না করে ছুঁ,
প্রাণ গেলে রোজা নাহি ছাড়ি ॥
ধরেয়ে কায়োজ বেশ,
মাখে নাহি রাখে কেশ,
বুক আচাঁধীরা রাখে বাড়ি ॥
না ছাড়ে আপন পথে,
শেরা টুলি মাখে,
ইমার পরয়ে লচ করি ॥
বার দেখে খলি মায়া,
তা গলে না কেহে কথা,
সুরিয়া চেলার [চেলার ?] মারে বাড়ি ॥

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their own ways, wear ten-sided caps on their head, and they wear *ijār* (trousers) which is tied tight to their waist. If they meet anybody who is bare-headed, they pass him by without uttering a word, but going aside they throw clods of earth at him.”

Here the poet gives the description of a group of religious minded Muslims.

In the orthodox form of Islām, the Muslims practised religious principles, notably the fundamentals like *Imān* or belief in God and His Apostles, *Namāz* or prayer to God, *Rozā* or fasting and *Ḥajj* or pilgrimage to the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah. Of the fifth i. e. *Zakāt* (poor-rate) reference is not available. It is not possible at this stage of our knowledge or with the materials at our disposal, to say whether all the Muslims or a substantial portion of them did adhere to all the fundamental principles of the orthodox Islām. But this much is certain that the conception was there and it was the endeavour of those at the helm of affairs to forge out a culture in accordance with the Islāmic principles. Mukunda Rāma’s description also shows that there were people who held fast to the orthodox Islām.

The popular form of Islām included (i) the Pirism or the concept of the supremacy of the *Pīr*, (ii) Mullāism or the growth of the priestly influence and (iii) the reverence to the foot-prints of the Prophet.

(i) The Pirism

Etymologically the word *Pīr* means old. But it is used generally to denote the teachers from whom people receive the spiritual instruction. As hundreds of people learnt from the *Ṣūfīs* during the period under review, the *Ṣūfīs* came to be known as *Pīr* in the popular phraseology.¹ It has been pointed out earlier² that super-human powers

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¹ “Pīr is a term denoting a spiritual director or guide among the *Ṣūfīs*, or mystics of Islam. The functionary described by the title is known also under the names: *Shaikh*, *murshid*, *ustādh*. Pīr is a Persian word, but is applied to a spiritual guide more commonly in India and Turkey than in its native home; *Shaikh* in our special sense is in general use throughout Islam; *murshid* is also wide-spread, but in Turkish or Arabic-speaking countries rather than in India; *ustādh* is found in Persia.” (*Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. X, p. 40.)

² See, Chapter III, Section (C), Part II.
were ascribed to the Sufis such as giving relief to the poor, destitutes and the patients, being present at several places at a time, giving life to the dead, killing anybody at their wish and telling the future. Naturally, the Khāngahs, Chilla khānahs or tombs of the Pir s became places of pilgrimage where constructions were made giving the name of dargāh. The devotees illuminated the graves and made offerings to the Pir s or their departed soul. Ibn Baṭṭūṭah records that the people of the hilly region of Kamrup used to come and visit Shāh Jalāl and bring for him gifts and presents. It was on these presents that the dargāh subsisted. It may also be remembered that Sultān ‘Alā’al-Din Ḥusayn Shāh granted lands for the maintenance of the shrine of Shaykh Nūr Qutb ‘Ālam.

The reverence to the Pir or the concept of the superhuman power of the Pir was not of Bengali origin, rather it was imported from the west through Northern India by the immigrants. But in Bengal they found a fertile soil and were established on a solid foundation. The existing local population, the Buddhists had the practice of worshipping the chaityas or the stupas and adoring them with flowers and burning incense. The Hindus had an identical idea in their Avatārism.

1. The following examples of dargāhs may be cited:
   (a) Baṭi dargāh at Pandwah (see Memoirs, pp. 97 ff.)
   (b) Chhoṭi dargāh at Pandwah (see Memoirs, pp. 106 ff).
   (c) Shrine of Mawlānā ‘Aṭā (see J. A. S. B. 1872, Part I, p. 107; 1873, Part I, p. 290.)


Later traditions record that articles of daily use were also offered to the memory of the Pir s. For example, people offered looking-glasses to the memory of Shāh Anwar Quli Ḥalwī (see, Chapter III, Section (C), p. 118). In some places clay horses are offered with the belief that lame babies get recovery through the good will of the saint (see, Enamul Haq: Bange Sūfī Prabhāva, Calcutta, 1935, p. 238).


5. Books were written on the Avatārism of Kṛishṇa, see for example, (a) Chaṇḍīdāsa: Śrī Kṛishṇa Kīrtana, edited
Pirs appeared to them either as the Tantric gurus or the teachers of the Sākta order. It is no wonder that the converts found the Pirism in Islam somewhat parallel to their own traditions and superstitions. The following facts lend support to this conclusion. First, a large number of places where the tombs of Muslim Sūfis or their Chilla-khānahs stand to-day were originally Hindu or Buddhist sites. Secondly, sometimes false tombs were erected in those places. They

by Basanta Rañjan Roy and published by Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, Calcutta, B.S. 1323; (b) Mālādhar Vasu: Śri Kṛishṇa Vijaya, edited by Khagendranath Mitra, published by Calcutta University, 1944.

1. For details see Cunningham: Archaeological Survey of India, Vol. XV.; R. D. Banerjee: "Saptagrāma" in J. A. S. B. 1909; See, Supra, p. 138. Dr. K. R. Qanungo (History of Bengal, Vol. II, pp. 69-70) writes on the subject as follows:

"The 'saints' of Islam completed the process of conquest, moral and spiritual, by establishing dargāhs and Khānqahs deliberately on the sites of those ruined places of Hindu and Buddhist worship. This served a double purpose of preventing the revival of these places of heathen sanctity, and later on, of installing themselves as the guardian deities with tale of pious fraud invented by popular imagination. Hindus who had been accustomed for centuries to venerate these places, gradually forgot their past history, and easily transferred their allegiance to the pirs and ghazis. The result of this rapprochement in the domain of faith ultimately created a more tolerant atmosphere which kept the Hindus indifferent to their political destiny. It prepared the ground for the further inroad of Islam into Hindu society, particularly among the lower classes who were gradually won over by an assiduous and persistent propaganda regarding the miracles of these saints and ghazis, which were in many cases taken over in toto from old Hindu and Buddhist legends."
became the places of pilgrimage and satisfied the superstitious nature of hundreds of people.\(^1\)

(a) **The Worship of the Satya-Pir**

A huge literature grew up in Bengal towards the beginning of the 18th century A.D. centering round the **Satya-Pir**.\(^3\) While the Muslim writers call him **Satya-Pir**, the Hindus change the word **Pir** for **Nārāyana** though there is hardly any difference between the **Satya-Pir** of the Muslims and the **Satya-Nārāyana** of the Hindus\(^5\). The worship of the **Satya-Pir** (or **Satya Nārāyana**) by both Hindus

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1. Examples of false tombs are as follows: (a) tomb ascribed to Bāyazīd of Bīstām in Chittagong (see, Enamul Haq: *Bāṅge Sūfī Prabhāva*, Calcutta, 1935, p. 147), (b) tombs in Mandaran ascribed to Shāh Ismā‘īl Ghāzī (see, *J. A. S. B.*, 1917, pp. 131 ff.). Late Mawlawī Ḥamīd Allāh Ḵān of Chittagong in his book *Ahādīth al-Khawānin*, Calcutta, 1871, p. 17, composed and published in the 19th century writes as follows:


and Muslims could be noticed in different parts of Bengal, especially in the western and northern districts even in the 20th century. A wooden plank is used to denote the seat of the Satya-Pir and offerings of edibles like confectioneries, milk, sugar, betel-leaf, betel-nuts are made. The earliest work on Satya-Pir is attributed to Shaykh Fayd Allah, whose Satya-Pir Kavya was composed in between A. D. 1545 and 1575. It is needless to mention that the Satya-Pir idea could not have grown in a day or in a year; it took many years to gain popularity among the people and to be a part and parcel of the social customs. If we allow at least one hundred years for the Satya-Pir idea to obtain force in popular imagination so that it could influence a poet to write on it, and if the date assigned to Shaykh Fayd Allah proves to be true, or even if his date is pushed forward by at least half a century, it may be concluded that the Satya-Pir idea emerged sometimes in the later part of the period under review. D.C. Sen thinks that Sultan ‘Ala’ al-Din Husayn Shah was the originator of the Satya-Pir movement, but there is no evidence to support his view.

The later Bengali literature records two traditions regarding the Satya-Pir (or Satya-Narayana) worship. According to the first, Sri Hari (Hindu god) appears in the guise of a faqir before a poor Brahmin and advises him to make offerings of shirni (confectioneries) to the Satya-Narayana. The Brahmin obeys the order and becomes rich due to the boon of the faqir. The second tradition is as follows: A certain merchant obtains a female child with the blessings of the Satya-Narayana. He gives his daughter in marriage and takes the son-in-law with him on a certain trading voyage. There he was put to troubles before a certain king, because he did not worship Satya-Narayana. But as his wife worshipped him, the merchant got out of troubles and returned home. When they reached near the house, the merchant’s daughter neglected prasada (offerings) of the Satya-Narayana and rushed out of the house to see her husband, and thus enraged Satya-Narayana. The boat capsized. Satya-Narayana

1. Ibid.
was again worshipped. The merchant, his son-in-law, all trading vessels were recovered from the water.

How the Satya-Pir idea originated in Bengal, no one can say for certain. But a close examination of the traditions and the method of worship give the following points:

(i) Satya-Pir or the Satya-Nārāyana claims worship from the devotees in the same manner as the Hindu local goddesses Manasā or Chaṇḍi does, as depicted in the Bengali literature.

(ii) The method of worship shows that Satya-Pir is not represented by any deity but by only a wooden plank.

(iii) Offerings of edibles are made just as they are made to the Hindu gods and the Muslim Pir.

These points indicate that there is both Muslim and Hindu elements in the conception of Satya-Pir or it can be said with some amount of certainty that the Satya-Pir concept originated through a mixture of the Muslim idea of the Pir and the Hindu notion of their deities. Judging from this standpoint, the origin or evolution of the ideal may be traced as follows: It is the result of the Pirism or the Muslim conception of the super-human power of the Pir. When the local people were converted to Islām, they got this conception of Pirism mixed up with their old ideas of the super-natural power of the deities. A further evolution of this process saw the culmination in the personification of the Pirism in Satya-Pir or the Pirism itself began to be conceived of as a super-human power.

(b) The Panch-Pir or The Five Pirs

Closely associated with the Pirism and probably directly derived from it is the worship of Pānch-Pir which played a prominent part in the Bengali Muslim society. In some districts of Bengal like Midnapore and Burdwan, the Pānch-Pir is worshipped even to-day.

"In West Bengal the ‘five saints’ form one of the main objects of adoration, not only of Muhammadans, but also of Hindus of the lower grades. They are often worshipped as family deities, represented by a small mound on a clay plinth erected in the north-west corner of

1. For details, see (a) Vijaya Gupta: Padma Purāṇa, edited by Basanta Kumar Bhattacharjee, Bāṇī Niketan, Barisal; (b) Mukunda Rāma. Kavikāṇkha Chaṇḍi, edited by D. C. Sen, Calcutta University.

one of the rooms of the house. On this is fixed a piece of iron, resembling in its shape the human hand, each finger symbolizing one of the quintette, with a piece of yellow cloth bound where the wrist should be.” In Sunārgāwn, there is a dargāh, known as Pānch-Pīr dargāh. The sailors of East Bengal remember the Pānch-Pīr even to-day along with the name of Pir Badar, with a view to getting relief from dangers.

It is difficult to trace the origin of the worship of the Pānch-Pīr. It is hardly possible to put any date for the Pānch-Pīr dargāh of Sunārgāwn. The tombs are now found in a modern wall-enclosure. By its side there is a mosque, which has also been completely renovated. It is just mentioned that the Pānch-Pīrs are remembered by sailors along with the name of Pir Badar. Who is this Pir Badar? If he is identified with the celebrated Bihar saint Pir Badar al-Din Badar-i-Ālam, the origin of the worship or at least the conception of the Pānch-Pīr may be dated to the 15th century A.D. But there may be objections to such conjecture, because the Pānch-Pīr could have been associated with the name of Pir Badar at a later date as well.

Equally difficult is to answer the question, who were the five Pīrs? The list of five Pīrs differ in different places though the name of one or two local Pīrs are found in the lists. In Bengal it differs from district to district, though in all lists, Ghāzī Miyān finds prominence. It is also difficult to say whether Ghāzī Miyān is a

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1. Ibid.

Translation:—“We are little children, Ghāzī and Gaṅgā are our protectors. We bow our heads to thee, Oh Ganges stream. (Help us) Oh Five Saints. We invoke you in the name of Badar, Badar.”

5. Ibid.
historical figure. It seems, therefore, that the conception of Pānch-Pīr is purely conventional and there were no five Pīrs who constituted the list.

An examination of both Hindu and Muslim religious practices shows that the numeral five is important to both Hindus and Muslims. The Hindus put importance to (a) the five chaste women, viz. Kauśalyā, Draupadi, Kunti, Tārā and Mandudārī; (b) the Pañchawati i.e. the jungles of five vatas where Rāma and Sītā were exiled; (c) the five Pānḍava brothers and (d) the five rivers i.e. the five feeder rivers to the Indus. The Muslims also put importance to the numeral five in some respects, because they have to say their prayers five times a day, to recite five Kalimahs, and according to Islamic principles there are five pillars of Islām i.e. ʿImān (belief), ʿNāmāz (prayer), Rozā (fasting), Ḥajj (pilgrimage to Makkah and Madīnah) and Zakāt (poor-rate). The Buddhists had the conception of five Dhyāni Buddhas. It may thus be suggested that the worship of Pānch-Pīr originated through the extreme reverence to the Pīr by both Hindus and Muslims. Though the approximate date of its origin cannot be fixed with certainty, this much is certain that it took a long time for the system to gain a popular force and to be accepted by both Hindus and Muslims as part of their socio-religious life.

(c) Minor Features Connected With Pirism

Later practices show that a number of imaginary Pīrs receive reverence from the credulous masses. These Pīrs are given different names like Mānik Pīr, Ghoṛā Pīr, Kumbhira Pīr, and Madārī Pīr. Offerings are made to them motivated by various gains and seeking relief from dangers. For example, offerings of milk and fruits are made to Mānik Pīr in north, south and south-west Bengal. Folk songs called Mānik Pīr-e Gān are composed and sung in various districts. In south-west Bengal offerings of clay horses are made to Ghoṛā Pīr with the notion that lame babies get recovery at the boon of the Pīr. Kumbhira or crocodiles are offered edibles and meat. The

3. Ibid.
5. Ibid, p. 239.
following account of the crocodiles of the Khān Jahān’s tank at Bagerhat, will throw light on the point. “...the fact appeared to be that the simple people of the district believe that these crocodiles can bless young ladies to come into an interesting condition, and their blessings are sure to bear fruit. Accordingly many young women repair to this place to bathe in sacred water of the tank, and implore the blessing of the saurian monsters. They offer them fowls and kids; then paint a human figure with red lead on a stone pillar in the neighbourhood, and, embracing it, vow to give away to the crocodiles the first fruit of their blessings. This vow is never broken, the first born is invariably brought to the tank, and when, at the call of the Fakirs, the crocodiles rise to the surface, the child is thrown on the water’s edge with words implying a presentation. But it is taken up immediately after, and borne home amid the rejoicings of the family.” In some dargāhs people bind coloured threads to the branches of nearby trees to have the desired effect. In some places stones or walls attached to dargāhs are washed with lime. Sometimes people offer edibles to fish or tortoise of the tanks attached to the dargāh. The fish or tortoise are called Madāri. In some districts in north Bengal, people arrange a festival known as Madārer Bānstolā (lifting of the bamboo of Madār) in memorium to Madāri Pir. It is difficult to trace the origin of these practices and beliefs. There is no evidence to show that they were prevalent during the period under discussion. But it is probable that they are also the result of popular influence as we have seen in the case of Satya-Pir or Pānch-Pir.

(i) The Growth of Mullaism or Priestly Influence

Vijaya Gupta, a contemporary Bengali poet, supplies the following information about the Mullās:

(a) “A certain Mullā (learned man) named Takāi (correctly Taqī) is well-versed in religious books. If the Qādī arranges a feast, he is called in before anybody else. The Mullā

2. As in the case of the dargāh ascribed to Bāyazid of Bistām in Chittagong.
3. As it is found in Sūnārgāwn.
4. For example, the dargāh of Bāyazid of Bistām in Chittagong.
tells many things (implying that he gives instructions) by unfastening the edge of his cloth and after finishing his *japa* (probably recitation of names of God) he kills the fowl."

(b) "There was a teacher of the Qāḍī named Khālās (correctly Khāliṣ or Ikhāliṣ) who always engaged himself in the study of the Qur’ān and other religious books. .......... He said, if you ask me, I say, why are you afraid of demons, when you have got the religious books. Write (extracts) from the book and hung it down the neck. If then also the demons (implying snakes) bite, I shall be held responsible. The Qāḍī accepted what the Mullā said and all present took amulet from him (the Mullā)."

Mukunda Rāma writing towards the end of the 16th century.


corroborates to some extent what Vijaya Gupta wrote and gives some more information. It is quoted below:

"Many Miyās (persons) settled there with their own taraf (landed property). Some of them contract nīkā, while some contract biyā. The Mullās perform the ceremony of the nīkā and get a reward of four annas and bless the couple by reading the Kalimah. He (mullā) takes a sharp knife, kills the fowl and gets a reward of ten gandās of cowri. For butchering a she-goat, the mullā gets six būris of cowri, as also the head of the animal killed."

In these passages we have got the conception of a Mullā as he was ordinarily held in the villages of Bengal—a practice which is not far different from what we see even to-day in the villages. The Mullā, who was fairly well-versed in religious principles, especially who was master in the day to day practice of Islām, was usually consulted by the ordinary less educated villagers. He, therefore, had a special role to play in the Muslim village society, as it was considered necessary that all the ceremonies and the functions should have an Islāmic

1. Nīkā is derived from Arabic word ́nıkāh (nikāh) and biyā is derived from Sanskrit word bibāha. Here Mukunda Rāma draws a distinction between nīkā and biyā, though in strict sense both the words mean marriage. In popular usage in some districts of Bengal like Dacca, even to-day biyā is used for first marriage and nīkā for second marriage.

2. Ten gandās of cowri are equivalent to 1/3 of a pice. (See, J. N. Das Gupta : Bengal in the 16th Century, Calcutta University, 1914, pp. 89-92.)

3. Six būris of cowri are equivalent to about a pice. (Ibid.)
touch. This was done variously as has been described by Vijaya Gupta and Mukunda Rāma. For this purpose the Mullās charged certain fees, rates in one village have been given before on the evidence of Mukunda Rāma. As similar functions had to be performed in most of the Muslim villages, it was very necessary to have at hand the services of a Mullā. As a result the number of Mullās must have grown sufficiently and also their hold on the then society. The Mullās lived on the petty income that they had out of these religious performances. But it is very difficult to say whether the Mullās did form a class by themselves. Probably they did not as it could not be maintained against the explicit injunctions of Islām. However, Mullās were a force in the society and they kept together the credulous masses by sanctioning popular religious ceremonies. As we learn from an inscription of the time of Nuṣrat Shāh, they formed an important group in the society and they were incharge of the property belonging to a mosque, just as a Mutawalli is to-day.

(iii) The Reverence to the Foot-prints of the Prophet

The Qadam Rasūl building of Gaur stands even to-day and bears testimony to the fact that the foot-print of the Prophet was an object of veneration to the then Muslim of Bengal. Even to-day it is an object of veneration to the Muslims. The structure was built by Sulṭān Nāṣir al-Dīn Nuṣrat Shāh to preserve the stone-representation of the foot-print of the Prophet, said to have been brought from Arabia by Makhdūm Jahāniyān Jānghāgshī. It was formerly preserved at Pandwah in the Chilliākhānah of Makhdūm Shaykh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizi. From that place it was removed by Sulṭān ‘Ala’al-Dīn Ḥusayn Shāh to Lakhnawtī who put it in a beautiful wooden box-table, inlaid with gold and silver. Sulṭān Nuṣrat Shāh placed it in the above mentioned building.

1. For example, uttering the name of God before starting a work, performing a mīlād ceremony before a house is built, uttering the first kalimah before a goat or a fowl or a cow is killed etc.
2. Muslim Inscriptions of Bengal, p. 72.
4. Ibid, p. 64.
5. Ibid, p. 63.
6. Ibid.
7. Two such buildings, built in the later period, are still to be found, one at Nabiganj, opposite Narayanganj
The stone-representation of the foot-print of the Prophet is not permitted by orthodox Islam. Outside Eastern India such examples of stone-representation are not rare. Its reverence must have been imported to the Muslim society of Bengal from outside, though it was strengthened here as a result of the popular force. On the eve of the Muslim conquest and after, the Dharma worshippers of south-west corner of Bengal comprising the modern Burdwan division, (West Bengal, India) used to worship Dharma-pādukā (footwear of Dharma).

The feet of elder people are always held sacred in the Hindu society. We hear in the Sanskrit inscriptions such names as Vishnupāda giri (i.e. the hill bearing the foot-print of Vishnu). Even the early Buddhists reverenced Buddha’s foot-print (Buddhapāda).

in the district of Dacca, and the other preserved in one room attached to a mosque, known as Qadam Mubarak Masjid in the Chittagong town. According to Mirza Nathan, the author of Bahāristān-i-Ghaybi, the foot-print now deposited at Nabiganj was obtained by Maḥmūd Khān Kābuli from some merchants, who brought it from Arabia, on payment of a large sum of money. See, Bahāristān-i-Ghaybi, translated by M.I. Borah, Government of Assam, A.D. 1936, Vol. II, p. 710.


3. The wooden sandal of Rāma Chandra is too well-known to be cited.


In Bengal even today one form of salutation observed by the Muslims is that the youngers touch the feet of the elders. It is therefore not an exaggeration to say that the symbolic representation of the foot-print of the Prophet had deeply affected the Muslim mind in Bengal. It has almost become a religious duty to them to visit the foot-print of the Prophet.

1. An important reference is found in Rasūl Viyāya of Zayn al-Dīn. (E. Haq: Muslim Bāngālā Śāhiya, Pakistan Publications, Dacca, A. D. 1955, p. 61. The date of the poet is controversial. (See Supra, p. 8).

Translation:— "(My) Pīr, Shāh Muḥammad Khān is modest and virtuous; there is no end of his prestige. Anointing the forehead with the dust of his feet (as a tilak), Zayn al-Dīn says, "go and catch hold of his feet; God will grant you success, what sorrow is there to perturb your mind?"

2. In an inscription of the time of Sulṭān ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Ḥusayn Shāh one Ḥājī Bābā Šāleḥ claims himself to be Ḥājjī al-Ḥaramayn wa-Ẓārīr al-Qud Mīnī (pilgrim to two holy cities of Makkah and Madīnah and visitor to two foot-prints of the Prophet. J. A. S. B. 1873, p. 283). In a coin, Sulṭān Jalāl al-Dīn Fāṭḥ Shāh claims himself to be "the Shaykh, who waits on the Qadam Rasūl. (J. A. S. B. 1890, p. 173)."
CHAPTER VI

THE DAILY LIFE OF THE MUSLIMS

Having discussed the gradual development of the Muslim society and its composition in Bengal, we are now in a position to discuss the daily life of the Muslims i.e. the language they spoke, their profession, the dwelling houses, the diet, the dress, the position of women, the social gatherings, the appointment of slaves, their pecuniary condition and their contact with the local people.

(i) The Language

The immigrants must have brought with them their own mother-tongue Arabic, Persian or Turkish as the case might be, while the language of the local Muslims (converts) must have been Bengali. No official document of the time except inscriptions and coins has come to light. The coins were issued in Arabic, while the inscriptions were issued both in Arabic and Persian, majority being in Arabic, only one so far discovered being in Sanskrit. The official titles used in inscriptions such as Sar-i-Lashkar, Shiqdar, Mir-i-Bahr, Kotwal, Sharabdar-i-Ghayr-i-Mahali, Jamdar-i-Ghayr-i-Mahali are all Persian. The official language, therefore, was Persian, while they adopted Arabic in all religious matters. It has been pointed out earlier that the Persian language received patronage from the ruling power. This is evidenced by the fact that Sultan Rukn al-Din Bârbak Shâh appointed one Zayn al-Din Harwî as the poet-laureate. Moreover in his time there flourished in Bengal a number of Persian poets and at least two lexicon writers.

The Chinese account, compiled by Ma Huan between A.D. 1425-1432 says that “the language in universal use is Pang-Kie-li

2. For inscriptions see, Muslim Inscriptions of Bengal.
3. For titles see, Muslim Inscriptions of Bengal, pp. 94-102.
4. Chapter III, Section (B), pp. 52-57; 78-81.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
(Bengali); there are also those who speak in Pa-enl-si (Farsi-Persian)”. The Chinese mission came to visit the royal court and the account shows that it deals more with the description of the court than with the general condition of the country. Similarly it may be assumed that they came in contact more with the ruling class than with the common people. In spite of this when the Chinese account says that the language in universal use was Bengali, it may logically be assumed that not only the local people spoke in Bengali but also some of the immigrants. The following points add strength to the validity of this view. In the first place, the immigrants settled in the country for a long time and had long association with the local people. The first Muslim immigration must have begun with the foundation of the Lakhnawī kingdom by Muhāammad Bakhtyār Khālījī and the Muslim settlement also began from his time. Apart from the ruling dynasties, the most important example of such settlement is of the family of As'ad Lāhorī. Due to the settlement of the family in Bengal, his son Shaykh 'Alā' al-Ḥaqq received the epithet Bangālī with his name. Secondly, they had established social contact with the local people. We have already pointed out that the immigrants sometimes accepted local wives. But they also established some sort of a village-relationship which they considered to be more genuine than the matrimonial one. Thirdly, in conducting the

2. See Supra, pp. 145 ff.
3. Chaitanya Charitāmrta, Adi, 17th.; Krishna Dāsa Kavirāja records the following dialogue between the Qāḍī of Nadiya and Chaitanya Deva:

   "प्रेतु बले आपि तोमार आईलाम अभागित।
   आना देखि लुकाइला ए धर्म केमत॥
   काजिकै कहे तुमि आईस कृष्ण हइ।
   तोना शाक्त क्रैमते रहिनु लुकाइया॥
   एबे तुमि शाक्त हइले आपि मनिलाम।
   भाग्य नौर तोना हेन अधिक पाईलाम॥
   प्राण सब्जु चक्कर्तः हय नोर चचा।
   देह सब्जु हैतेह हय प्राण सब्जु सोचा॥
   नीलावर चक्कर्तः हय तोमार नाना।
   से सब्जु हो तुमि आपि भागिना॥"
administration of the country they came in contact with the people in general and with their colleagues, many of whom were recruited from the children of the soil.¹

While the immigrants learnt the local language, the local Muslims also, at least some of them, must have learnt Arabic and Persian. The very fact that they accepted Islām necessitated them to learn at least something of Arabic, because without Arabic it was difficult to follow some of the fundamentals as in the case of saying prayers. Similarly, if they accepted office and there is no reason why they or some of them should not have accepted office, they must have learnt Persian, the official language.

(ii) The Profession

The Muslims were engaged in various kinds of professions, like state service, trade and commerce, artisanship, agriculture and medical profession.

ভাগিনার ক্রোধ মায়া অবশ্য সহন।
মাতুলের অপরাধ ভাগিনা না লয়॥

"The Lord (Chaitanya) says, 'I am a guest to you; how is it that you kept yourself concealed at my approach?" The Qādī says, 'You came indignant, so I kept myself concealed to make you cool. Now that your anger has subsided I have come to meet you. It is my good fortune that I have got a guest like you. According to the village relationship, Chakravarty (Nilāmbar Chakravarty, maternal-grandfather of Chaitanya) is my uncle, and you know village-relationship is more genuine than bodily (or blood) relationship. Nilāmbar Chakravarty is your maternal-grandfather, so you are my nephew. The maternal uncle tolerates the anger of the nephew, while the nephew does not take into account the faults of the uncle."

¹. For appointment of Hindu officers under Ḫusayn Shāh, See History of Bengal, Vol. II, pp. 151 ff. See also Supra, pp. 128 ff.
(a) Service

As the heads of the state were Muslims, they appointed a large number of Muslims under them. The sources supply the names of the following officers—Iqta’dar, Wazir, Dabir-i-Khāṣ, Sar-i-Lashkar, ‘Ārid-i-Lashkar, Silahdār, Qāḍi, Shiqdār, Mir-i-Bahār, Kotwal,


2. Iqta’dar—‘Alī Mardān Khalji and Ḥusām al-Dīn ‘Iwaḍ Khalji were iqta’dārs under Muḥammad Bakhtyār Khalji (Minhāj pp. 156, 158). Iqta’ is derived from ʿaba (pieces). So iqta’dārs were appointed over a piece of territory into which the state was divided at the initial stage of Muslim administration.

Wazir—The Wazir was the highest officer of the state with both administrative and financial powers. Among the Muslim Wazirs we may mention the names of Aʿzam Khān, brother of Shaykh Nūr Quṭb ʿĀlam (Akhbār al- Akhyār, p. 156), Malik Andīl Ḥabshtī (Tārīkh-i-Firāštah, p. 299), and Ḥusayn Sharīf Makkī, later on Sultan ‘Alā’al-Dīn Ḥusayn Shāh (Ibid, p. 301). Contemporary inscriptions show that Wazirs were sometimes entrusted with the administration of smaller units like ‘Arqah and Shahr and combined in them other posts like Sar-i-Lashkar. (For inscriptions, See Muslim Inscriptions of Bengal).

Dabir-i-Khāṣ—As the name suggests, Dabir-i-khāṣ (Private Secretary) occupied an important position with the rank of a minister. Shams al-Dīn Dabr who accompanied Buḥrā Khān to Lakhnawtī, probably, did not go back and
remained under the employ of Bughrā Khān (Barani, p. 95; Muntakhab, Vol. I, p. 154). Besides Shams al-Dīn Dabīr, the name of no Muslim Dabīr has come down to us, though we know definitely that the office of Dabīr-i-Khāṣ did exist. According to Bengali literature, Rupa was a Dabīr-i-Khāṣ of 'Alā' al-Dīn Ḥusayn Shāh. (See, Chaitanya Bhāgavata, published by M. K. Ghosh, Calcutta, Gaurabda, 440, pp. 82 & 350). The functions of a Dabīr required an incumbent to be well-versed in literature and the art of composition and to be master of style and diction (I. H. Qureshi: The Administration of the Sultanate of Dehli, Lahore, 2nd Edition, 1944, pp. 86-87) and as the official language was Persian (See Supra, pp. 176-78), it may be concluded that the Dabīrs must have been appointed from among the Muslims.

Sar-i-Lashkars were the army officers, having a number of soldiers under them. For reference to Sar-i-Lashkar, in contemporary inscriptions, See, J.A.S.B., 1870 pp. 290, 293-4; J. A. S. B. 1873, pp. 272-73, 285-86.

Sīlāḥdār—Fakhrā, later on Sultān Fakhir al-Dīn Mubārak Shāh was the Sīlāḥdār of Bahrām Khān, the Imperial Governor of Sunārgāwn. (Yaḥyā bin Aḥmad, p. 104). From the analogy with Dehli we know that Sīlāḥdārs were armed soldiers who waited upon the rulers when they gave public audience or rode out. (See I. H. Qureshi: The Administration of the Sultanate of Dehli, Lahore, A. D. 1944, p. 63).
Khān-i-Majlis, Majlis-i-Nūr, Maṣīk al-Muʿāẓẓam and Majlis al-Muʿāẓẓam. The sources do not help us in determining the implication of many of these titles, though there is no doubt that these titles were conferred upon officers according to their rank and grade.

(b) Trade and Commerce

The foreign accounts and the Bengali literature furnish a long list of agricultural, natural and industrial products of the country during the Muslim rule. These products became the source of extensive

Qāḍī - The Qāḍī was charged with the administration of justice. (See Proceedings of the Pakistan History Conference, Dacca Session, 1953, p. 258; Riyāḍ pp. 106 ff.

For references to Shiqdār (persons entrusted with the administration of the Shiq), Mir Bahr (Commander of the fleet), Kōwāl (City Superintendent of Police), Jāmdār-i-Ghayr-i-Maḥālī (cup-bearer outside the palace), Sharābdār-i-Ghayr-i-Maḥālī (cup-bearer outside the palace), Jāndār (body-guards), in contemporary inscriptions, See J.A.S.B. 1872, p. 106, pp. 109-10, J. A. S. B. 1873, pp. 272-73, J. A. S. B. 1870, p. 290. For references to Ḩājīb (Chief officer of the Royal palace) and Darbān (porter), see Riyāḍ, pp. 100, 106, 120-25).

‘Ārid-i-Lashkār - He was the paymaster of the army. ‘Aḥmad Mubārak, later on Sultan ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Aḥmad Shāh was the ‘Ārid-i-Lashkār of Qadr Khān, the Imperial Governor of Lakhnawī. (See Yaḥyā bin Aḥmad, p. 105).

1. For these titles in the contemporary inscriptions, see, J. A. S. B. 1873, pp. 271, 272-77; J. A. S. B. 1874, pp. 296-97; J. A. S. B. 1872, pp. 337-38, 333; J. A. S. B. 1870, p. 90. See also Muslim Inscriptions of Bengal, pp. 94 ff.
internal and foreign trade. The interwoven rivers and rivulets within the country facilitated the transportation of commodities from one side to the other and developed internal trade while the fretted seacoast afforded the country to carry on extensive trade with foreign merchants like the Arabs, the Chinese and the Portuguese.

Contemporary authorities refer to the existence of market-places where shopkeepers dealt in various commodities. Baranī refers to the market-place of Lakhnawī, which was one mile in length, on each side of which the shopkeepers sold their commodities. Ibn Baṭṭūṭah saw commodities being sold cheaper in Bengal’s markets. The Chinese visitor Hon-Hien saw Sunārgāwn “a walled place, with tanks, streets and bazars which carried on business in all kinds of commodities”. He saw the bazar of Pandwah “well-arranged, the shops side by side”. The foreign writers refer to the sea-ports of Chittagong and Satgāwn. According to the Chinese Account, the first port that the merchants were to enter in Bengal from the south and south-east through the Bay of Bengal was Chittagong, situated on the mouth of the sea. It is in this port that the merchants from foreign countries came from outside and anchored their ships. It is there again that they assembled and divided the profit of their merchandise. The first reference to Satgāwn in foreign accounts is to be found in that of Master Caesar Frederick, according to whom,

1. (a) Fruits:- Orange, lemon, mango, banana, jackfruit, sour-pomegranate.

6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Quoted by J. N. Das Gupta in Bengal in the 16th Century, Calcutta University, A. D. 1914, p. 106. Barbosa
"In the port of Satagan every yeare lade thirtie or five and thirtie ships great and small.......The citie of Satagan is a reasonable fair citie for a citie of the Moores, abounding with all things". All these towns mentioned by the foreigners as important centres of commerce and trade were under the possession of the Muslim Sulţāns. Both Lakhnawtī and Pandwah were seats of government, while Sunārgāwn and Satgāwn, sometimes occupied the status of provincial capitals. All these towns including Chittagong were the mint-towns of the Sulţāns. Besides, a study of the coins issued by the Bengal Sulţāns suggests that a large number of mint-towns were established, thus indicating that they were important centres of administration. Besides Lakhnawtī, Pandwah, Satgāwn, Sunārgāwn and Chittagong, these mint-towns include, Mu’aẓẓamābād, Ghiyāthpūr, Fatḥābād, and Khalisfātābād. Apart from their importance in the administration of the country, they also must have been commercial centres.

It is difficult to determine what part did the Muslims play in this extensive internal and external trade. There are occasional references but they are far from satisfactory. Minhāj refers to a Muslim merchant who lost his fortune and prayed for help from Sulţān ‘Alā’al-Dīn ‘Alī Mardān Khalījī. The Chinese Account says, "Every one of them is engaged in business, the value of which may be ten thousand pieces of gold, but when a bargain has been struck,

(Barbosa, p. 135) and Varthema (J. N. Das Gupta: Op cit, p. 117) did not mention Satgāwn but they referred to the city of Bengal. (For identification of the city of Bengal, see, Indian Historical Quarterly, Vol. XIX, A. D. 1943, pp. 316-17.

1. Minhāj, p. 151; Riyāḍ, p. 96.
4. Ibid, pp. 224 ff. Mint-towns identified with Lakhnawtī, have been omitted here. For identification of these mint-towns, see, Ibid.
5. Minhāj, p. 159.
they never express regret".¹ According to Duarte Barbosa, the Muslim merchants used to go upcountry to bring slaves for selling them to exporters.² These references prove beyond doubt that the Muslims did take part but they do not give any clear idea of the actual position they held in the country's trade and commerce. The Chinese Account, if literally accepted, indicates that the Muslims played an important part and carried on an extensive trade, but it should be accepted with caution. In the first place, as the account shows, the Chinese visited only the metropolitain cities from Chittagong to Pandwah via Sunārgāwn; they did not go inland. Secondly, the Chinese Accounts do not categorically refer to Muslim traders, though the statement has been made in course of describing the Muslim population, dealing with the Hindu customs separately. Thirdly, the Chinese Account is not corroborated by any other source. Minhāj refers to only one businessman and Barbosa refers to only slave trade.

The medium of exchange in Bengal's trade were the coins. The introduction or rather the re-introduction of coins both of silver and gold by the Bengal Sultāns is an important factor in the socio-economic history of Bengal. While coinage was not unknown to Bengal rulers of the early period,³ not a single coin of the Pāla and the Sena periods has so far come to light, and the medium of exchange during the period was in all probability the *cowri*.⁴ The re-introduction of the coinage in Bengal by the Muslim Sultāns, therefore, greatly facilitated both internal and external trade of the country, though *cowri* was also current during the period under review.⁵

² Barbosa, p. 147.
⁵ *Viśva-Bhārati Annals*, Vol. I, 1945, pp. 96-134. *Cowries* have also been mentioned in the Bengali literature of the Muslim period. See for example, Chandrī Dāsa: *Śrī Kṛishṇa Kṛitana*, edited by Basanta Rājjan Roy,
(c) The Artisan Class

The only clear cut reference to the industry in which the Muslims engaged themselves is weaving. Vijaya Gupta refers to a weaver family, who were undoubtedly Muslims.\(^1\) The weaving or the textile industry developed to such an extent that the foreign writers are loud in praise of the cotton and silk fabrics produced in Bengal of various size and use.\(^3\) The Ā'yn praised Sunārgāwn for its fine muslin.\(^5\) Ibn Baţţūţah testifies to the extraordinary cheap prices of fine clothes.\(^4\) The Chinese Account has referred to the following varieties of textile goods.\(^6\)

(i) **Pi-po :**--- It was of several colours and of cotton stuff. According to one account, it was over three feet broad and fifty six feet long and according to another, over two feet broad, the length being the same. It was as fine and glossy as painted stuffs.

(ii) **Man-che-ti:**--- It was of ginger yellow colour, four feet broad and over fifty feet long. It was very closely woven and strong.

(iii) **Sha-na-pa-fu:**--It was five feet broad and thirty feet long. It was like Sheng-lo of the Chinese and a cotton gauze.

(iv) **Ki-pai-lei-ta-li:**--It was three feet broad and sixty feet long.

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1. Vijaya Gupta: Padma Purāṇa, edited by Basanta Kumar Bhattacherjee, Bānī Niketan, Barisal, p. 59. That the weaver family was Muslim is clear from the following facts :—The husbandman, who died of snake-bite was buried, arrangement was made for his Kāfan (wrapping the dead body with cloth before burial according to Islāmīc system of funeral), and his mother-in-law was considering to get her daughter married a second time.


It was loosely woven and coarse. It was a cotton gauze.

(v) *Sha-ta-eul* :--- It was a stuff used for turbans. Its measurement was either five inches broad and forty feet long or two and half feet broad and four feet long. It was like *San-so* of the Chinese.

(vi) *Ma-hei-ma-lie* :--- It was a stuff four feet broad and twenty feet long. On the wrong side it was covered with a nap half an inch long. It was like *tu-lo-kin* of the Chinese.

Beside these, the Chinese refer to silk and embroidered silk handkerchiefs and brocaded taffetas. The presents which the Bengal Sultan sent in A.D. 1438 to the Emperor of China included among other things *Sa-ha-la* (*Shawl*), *Cha-fa-hei-ta-li* cloth and *tu-lo-kin*.1

Duarte Barbosa2 praises the Bengal textiles as follows:—"In it are woven many kinds of very fine and coloured clothes for their own attire and other white sorts for sale in various countries. They are very precious, also some which they call *estrawantes*, a certain sort, very thin kind of cloth much esteemed among us for ladies' head-dresses, and by the Moors, Arabs and Persians for turbans. Of these great store is woven so much so that many ships take cargoes thereof for abroad; others they make called *mamonas*, others *duguazas*, others *chautares*, others *sinabafas*, which latter are the best of all, and the Moors held them the best for shirts. All these sorts of cloth are in pieces, each one whereof contains about three and twenty or four and twenty Portuguese Yards. Here they are sold good cheap, they are spun on wheels by men and woven by them."

It is difficult to determine, to what extent did the Muslims contribute to the manufacturing of these textile fabrics, which received so much praise from the Chinese and Portuguese writers. It has just been pointed out that the *jolhā* (weaver) family as described by Vijaya Gupta was Muslim, which indicates that the Muslims also took part in textile industry.

The foreign accounts3 show that the paper and sugar industry also developed in Bengal, though it is not possible to determine, with

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2. Barbosa, pp. 145-146.
the materials at our disposal, how far the Muslims contributed to the
growth of these industries. Mukunda Rāma, writing towards the
end of the 16th century says that there was a section of Muslims who
were known as Kāghchā, because they prepared and sold kāghaz or
paper. Although Mukunda Rāma wrote a few years later than the
period under review, it may be assumed that the condition of the
people did not change suddenly.

The erection of a large number of mosques and the issuing of
a large number of inscriptions suggest that the Muslims produced
masons and stone-workers. The non-Muslim masons or stone
workers might have been appointed for the purpose, but it is futile
to think that during the whole period of about three hundred
years or more they depended solely on the Hindu masons and
stone-workers.

Kṛishṇa Dāsa Kavirāja refers to a Muslim tailor, who prepared
shirts for Śrī Bāsa, a companion of Śrī Chaitanya Deva. We shall
see later that the Muslims used sewn cloth like gown, shirt and sash.
It is, therefore, reasonable to hold that tailoring was an important
profession adopted by the Muslims.

(d) Agriculturists

Firīshṭah says that Nāṣir al-Dīn (later on Sultān Nāṣir al-Dīn
Maḥmūd I), before he was put to the throne, was engaged in agricul-
ture. Though Firīshṭah does not clearly say whether he was actually
the tiller of the soil, the very fact that he belonged to the ruling dynasty
supplanted by the House of Rājā Gaṇesā, suggests that he was no
ordinary cultivator, rather he was of the nature of a land-owner,
working as a middle man between the ruler and the tillers of the soil.
The land-owning class was not altogether absent during the period
under review. We have on the authority of Minhāj that the Rāes
sent kharāj (land-tax) to Sultān ‘Alī Mardān Khaljī when he assumed

2. See Supra, p. 155.
3. Muslim Inscriptions of Bengal.
4. Ibid.
8. Minhāj, p. 159.
independence. According to Shams-i-Sirāj 'Afīf, when Sulṭān Firūz Shāh Tughluq reached Lakhnawtī and Ilyās Shāh took shelter in Ikdālah fort, the Rāes, Rānas and the zamīndārs of the place joined Firūz Shāh and were favourably received. In his proclamation, Firūz Shāh Tughluq promised relief of tax and revenue to the Zamīn-dārs and muqaddams of Bengal.3

We have also got references to actual tilling of the soil carried out in the country. The Chinese Account says, "Their fields are very fertile and yield two crops in the year. There is no need of sowing the seeds (? irrigation)- the crops grow by themselves in the proper season. Both men and women are diligent in ploughing and weaving." 4

"These people (of Bengal) owe all their tranquillity and prosperity to themselves, for its source lie in their devotion to agriculture whereby a land originally covered with jungle has been reclaimed by their unremitting toil in tilling and planting." 4

(e) Medical Profession

Ibrāhīm Qawwām Fārūqī says that one Amīr Shahāb al-Dīn Kirmānī was an Iftākhār al-Hukamā (the pride of the physicians).5

Mukunda Rāma refers to the following occupations adopted by the Muslims—Johlā, Mukeri, Pithāri, Kābāri, Sānākar, Tirakar, Kāghchā Qalandar, Hājjām, Darzi. As for Johlā, Kāghchā and darzi, we have already shown that the Muslims adopted these professions. As for Mukeri, because Bengal was an agricultural country, cattle formed an important element of the country’s economy; the tilling of the soil required the help of the cows or bullocks as it is also the system even to-day. So the existence of cattle drivers or shepherds cannot be denied. As for Kābāri, or seller of fish, fish was abundantly available in Bengal as it is the case at present. Even now the Bengalees, Muslims or non-Muslims take more fish than meat. As weaving was an important industry as has been mentioned before,6 the Sānākar or

1. ‘Afīf, p. 112.
7. See Supra, pp. 185-87.
8. Ibid.
manufacturer of looms found their profession profitable and the same thing applies to tirakar or bow-makers because the fighting with bow and arrow did prevail during the period under review. Similarly the existence of Pithāri or seller of cakes also cannot be ruled out altogether. The profession of Hājjām is important because circumcision is an integral part of the Islāmic practices. Even now it is adopted by a section of the Muslims in Bengal. Mukunda Rāma's testimony that the Hājjām did not find rest is interesting but difficult to explain. Does it mean that the number of Hājjām was less and the number of neo-Muslims was great? The local people who were converted to Islām, in most cases, must have retained their former profession. These professions seemingly minor in importance were adopted by the poorer section. The sources do not help us to say who adopted these professions, only the local people or the immigrants as well.

(iii) Dwelling Houses

The Chinese Account is loud in the praise of the Royal palace, built of bricks, ornamented with flower representation and animal figures, having flat roofs, supported by pillars and having flight of steps. The halls were white-washed inside. The doors were of triple thickness and of nine panels. There were verandas on each side of the audience halls. Poet Kṛittivāsa reached the King's court after crossing nine halls. The peon who was sent by Qāḍī Sirāj al-Dīn to summon Sultān Ghīyāth al-Dīn A'ṣam Shāh to the court, could not have access to the king. He began to recite the Ḥadān (calling to prayer) and thus drew the attention of the Sultān. The Royal palace was surrounded by fortified wall and the palace doors were well-guarded. The ruins of the Royal palace can be seen in the cities of Gaur and Pandwah.

1. Barānī (p. 586) refers to the pāiks (foot-soldiers) and dhanuks (bow-men) gathered by Ilyās Shāh against Sultān Fīruz Shāh Tughluq of Dehli.
3. Quoted by Sukumar Sen in Bāṅgālā Sāhityer Itiḥāsa, Calcutta, 1940, p. 84. The word used by Kṛittivāsa is শহরী which is used to-day to denote outer-house or audience-hall or the visiting room.
5. For ruins, see Memoirs.
An idea of the dwelling houses, other than the royal palace may be obtained from the following sources. The Vaishnava literature refers to the garden in front of the house of the Qāḍī of Nadiya, destroyed by Chaitanya’s followers. According to Duarte Barbosa, “they bathe often in great tanks which they have in their houses,” and according to Abūl Faḍl “their houses are made of bamboos, some of which are so constructed that the cost of a single one will be five thousand rupees or more and they last a long time.” Even to-day the houses of the poorer section of the people are built of wood or bamboos. The difference between the richer and the poorer people was probably in the amount of expenditure; while the rich spent more and used good quality wood or bamboo to make the house stronger and more durable, the poor could not do so. The dwelling houses built of bamboos at the present time are not flat-roofed rather they are sloping from a central ridge so that the rain-water can immediately go down and does not get stuck on the roof. Such domical roofs are known from the existing mosques of the time like the Khān Jahān’s mosque at Bagerhat and Chhota Sonā Masjid at Gaur. The testimony of Barbosa that the Muslims had tanks of their own is significant. At present, in some districts at least, there is hardly a family which does not have its own tank. The tanks were essential to the Muslim families; as we shall see presently, unlike Hindu women, the Muslim women observed pardah (seclusion) and could not have gone out for having their bath in the rivers.

(iv) Diet

Their diet included meat consisting of beef, mutton, fowl and duck prepared with spices. According to the Chinese Account, they

2. Barbosa, p. 147.
4. As in the case of Bābā Adam Shahīd’s mosque at Rampala in the district of Dacca. It was built by one Malik Kāfūr in the reign of Sulṭān Jalāl al-Dīn Fath Shāh. For inscription see, J. A. S. B. 1873, pp. 282-83.
5. As in eastern districts of Bengal.
took both smoked and roasted meat. Though reference to fish and vegetables are not available in the sources at our disposal, there is no reason to think that the Muslims did not take those things. Bengal being primarily an agricultural country with riverine tracts, both fish and vegetables were abundantly available, as in modern times. Moreover the local people who were converted to Islām must have retained the practice of taking fish and vegetables. We have just seen that Mukunda Rāma’s account refers to a group of Muslims known as Kābāri who used to sell fish.

The aristocratic people used to drink wine; it is not definitely known whether the common people were accustomed to it. According to the Chinese Account there were four kinds of wine in Bengal, one was made from cocomanut, the second from rice, third from the aquatic plant called Kajang and the fourth from Tung seeds. The same source records that on certain occasions drinking of wine was prohibited on the ground that “it might lead to trouble” and it was a “breach of decorum” but they used to drink on festive occasions. It is further recorded that after meals sweetened rose water and honey were supplied. Naturally this was a custom prevalent among the aristocrats. The Muslims also took the various fruits available in the country such as banana, jack-fruit, pomegranates and sugar-cane.

(v) Dress

The following account of the dress of the Muslims is available from the sources:

2. The Chinese Account (Viṣva-Bhārati Annals, Vol. I, 1945, pp. 96-134) has given a long list of Bengal’s products. According to the Vaishnava literature (See, Chaitanya Bhāgavata) Chaitanya was fond of sāk (preparation of vegetable leaves).
3. See, Chapter III, Section (C).
6. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
(a) Vijaya Gupta\(^1\) refers to a certain Mullā who kept beard and put on turban on head and ījār (trouser) tied down the waist.

(b) The Chinese Account :—

(i) *Sing cha Sheng lan*, compiled by Fei-Sin in A.D. 1436\(^2\) :—

"The men wear a white cotton turban and a long white cotton shirt. On their feet they wear low sheep-skin shoes with gold thread. The smarter ones think it a correct thing to have designs on them. . . . The women wear a short shirt, wrap around them a piece of cotton, silk or brocade. They do not use cosmetics, for they have naturally a white complexion; in their ears they wear ear-rings of precious stones set in gold. Around their necks they hang pendants and they do up their hair in knot behind. On their wrists and ankles are gold bracelets and on their fingers and toes rings".

(ii) *Si Tang Chao Kung tien lu*, compiled by Huang Sing-ts'eng in A. D. 1520\(^3\) :—

"All men cut off their hairs and wrap their head with a cotton turban of white colour. They wear long gown with a round collar with a coloured sash on the lower part of their body, and put on leather slippers on their feet. The women dress their hairs in knot on their heads. They wear a short shirt and wrap their body with a piece of coloured cloth, silk or brocade. They wear ear-ring of precious stones set in gold. Around their neck they have pendants, on their wrists and ankle gold bracelets and on their fingers and toes rings".

(c) Barbosa's Account\(^4\) :—

"The respectable Moors walk about clad in white cotton smocks, very thin, which come down to their ankles, and beneath these they have girdles of cloth, and over them silk scarves, they carry in their girdles daggers garnished with silver and gold, according to the rank of the person

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4. Barbosa, p. 147.
who carries them; on their fingers many rings set with rich jewels, and cotton turbans on their heads”.

(d) According to Šekh Šubhodaya¹ (Shaykh Šubhodaya), the Shaykh (Jalāl Tabrizī) came to Bengal in black attire, with turban on head and a bowl and ‘aṣā (stick) in hand.

(e) Krishnā Dāsa Kavirāja refers to a certain Turk called a Pir in black attire.²

The passages quoted above show that the dress of the Muslim men included turban on head, long shirt or gown with collar, ijār (trouser) or sash on the lower part of the body. They used shoes or slipper in the leg and rings of jewels or gold in hand. They cut off their hair and kept beard. The dress of the females included a short shirt on the upper part of the body, a piece of cloth like the šārī of the present day to wrap the body. They used various kinds of ornaments like ear-rings of precious stones, they hang pendants round their neck, they used gold bracelets on their wrists and ankles and used rings on fingers and toes. They bound their hairs in knot and did not use cosmetics. The Pir or Muslim faqirs used black attire. But it seems to have been a picture of the Muslim nobles and aristocratic class. For example the ijār or the trouser and the shoes and slippers could not have been used by all the people. In a country like Bengal where practically half of the year is covered by rainy season and the roads or pathways remain inundated and muddy, it is futile to think that all people, especially the labourers, the tillers of the soil could have used this dress. Even to-day hundreds of people living in the villages go without shoes or use a piece of cloth tied up to the waist. Apart from the pecuniary condition of the people one reason why they use this sort of dress is the climatic condition of the country. As regards other dress of both men and women including the ornaments, these might have been used by the people, according to their own means. The rich spent larger amount and used jewelleries and golden ornaments while the poor were satisfied with baser metals or even conch-shell.

(vi) Position of Women

Women observed pardah (seclusion) and did not come out of their houses at day time; in the words of Barbosa “they kept them

carefully shut up."2 But they were treated well by their husbands who gave them great store of gold, silver and apparel of fine silk.3 Polygamy was prevalent. According to Barbosa, 'every one has three or four wives or as many as he can maintain',4 though the general Islāmic law is to have not more than four wives at a time. Sometimes, Muslims accepted Hindu wives. The widow-remarriage was prevalent.5 A specific time was observed by widows, before which they were not remarried.6 Vijaya Gupta7 refers to the vegetarian life led by the widows of Muslim Jolha family. This is probably due to the fact that the poet was ignorant of Muslim custom and in his poetic imagination painted the Muslim widow in imitation of the Hindu practices. Or, if there is any truth in the statement of Vijaya Gupta it may be assumed that the Jolha family were neo-Muslims and as such were not fully acquainted with the Islāmic practice. According to the Chinese Account, their marriages and funerals were both guided by the Islāmic law.8

(vii) Social Gatherings and Entertainments

The Muslims occasionally met in social gatherings, in which visitors were entertained with music and dances.9 Sometimes, the Sultāns sat in assembly with nobles, in which games, music and dances were the common features.10 Actresses and dancing girls were dressed in coloured cloths with decorations of flowers. They used ornaments of various types and of high value.11 Generally visitors were entertained

2. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
10. The indirect reference is available from an order of Sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn Balban to his son Bughrā Khān. He ordered him not to indulge in such assemblies. Barani, p. 92.
with betel-leaf and betel-nuts, but when "they invite guests, they arrange for feastings and amusements".  

1. When the ladies visited their relatives or neighbours at night, they had great festivities, rejoicings and superfluity of wines.  

Riyāḍ al-Salāṭin and Tārikhi-Fīrishtah, record that the nobles in Bengal used to take food in golden plates and for a time it became the custom that whoever could present more golden plates on festive occasions was considered to be higher in status.  

Beside these, there were other entertainments like tiger-play in the market-place and before the houses of the rich.  

Vipradāsa gives a long description as to how the Muslims were addicted to tobacco-smoking in a festive mood, but the passage in question seems to be of later interpolation because tobacco seems to have been introduced long after in the reign of Akbar.

2. Ibid.  
4. The Chinese writer (Viśva-Bhārati Annals, Vol. I, 1945, pp. 118-19), has given the following account of these amusements:—"There are people called Ken-Siao-su-lu-nai who are mounte-banks. Every day at the stroke of five they come around the gates of the houses of high officials and of the wealthy people blowing so-na (Surnā-flageolets) and beating drums and then pass on to another. When comes the break-fast hour they go to each house to be rewarded with wine, food, money or other things. Besides these there are also every other kind of players.  

"(Thus there are people who) go about the market places and to the houses with a tiger held by an iron chain. They undo the chain and the tiger lies down in the courtyard. The naked man then strikes the tiger who becomes enraged and jumps at him and he falls with the tiger. This he does several times after which he thrusts his fist in the tiger's throat without wounding him. After this performance he chains him up again and the people of the house do not fail to feed the tiger with meat and reward the man with money. So the tiger-tamer has a promising business."  

(viii) **Slavery**

The higher class people used to appoint slaves both males and females for house-hold works. The *Riyāḍ* refers to the affection of Sultan Ghiyāth-al-Dīn Aʿẓam Shāh towards three slave-girls, Sarw, Gul and Lālah. Vijaya Gupta refers to a *bandi* (slave-woman) in the house of the Qādī of Hāsan Hāṭi. The Abyssinian slaves appointed by later Ilyās Shāhī Sulṭāns proved to be usurpers of the throne. The slaves were bought and sold in the market-places. Ibn Baṭṭūṭah purchased one beautiful slave-girl named ‘Ashūrā. According to Barbosa, Muslim merchants used to go up country to purchase heathen boys either from their parents or from those who stole them. Boys so purchased were castrated, (in which process many would die) and then they were sold to the merchants. The people engaged them as the guardian of their women, estates or for other house-hold works.

(ix) **Pecuniary Condition**

From economic point of view, the Muslims may be divided into two distinct classes—the rich and the poor. It has been pointed out earlier that the officials received salary, villages and lands. The army received salary and rations. Obviously they were richer and had a better living. It has also been pointed out that the nobles used golden plates and it became a custom to display wealth through the number of such plates they possessed. The merchants formed the next richer class, who sometimes invested ten thousand gold coins. There were

5. Barbosa, p. 147.

A slave sale deed of the time of Sulṭān Nāṣir al-Dīn Maḥmūd Shāh I is available in the Dacca University Library, attached to a Bengali manuscript Sāradā *Tilaka*, No. 4608, dated S. E. 1361/A.D. 1439.

also people, who built their houses at a cost of five thousand tanka. Their dress, diet, practice of keeping slaves, and their dwelling houses indicate that the people were rich and happy. But this is one side of the picture. The picture of the Mullās as drawn by Vijaya Gupta and Mukunda Rāma is very deploaring. The fees received by the Mullās were meagre in amount. They received ten gaṇḍās of cowri (about one third of a pice) for killing fowl, six buṛis of cowri (about a pice) for killing goat and the head of the animal killed, only four annas for performing the marriage rituals. Though the Mullās served as priests in the society and as such deserved the respect and veneration of all, their dress (only ijār or trouser and cap) shows that they did not enjoy a rich living. The Mullā, named Khālās (correctly Ḳhīlāṣ or Ḳhālīṣ) who was the teacher of the Qāḍī of Háṣan Háṭi, is seen moving with a torn ijār (trouser). The reference to his movement from house to house indicates, how difficult it was for him to earn his livelihood. On the other hand, he was the man, who always engaged himself in the study of the Qur'ān and the Kitāb (holy book). The weaver of Háṣan Háṭi who died of snake-bite left only four pans of cowri (about half an anna) for his wife. The above references show that there was a section of Muslims who were poor.

While considering the economic condition of the people, one has to remember that the cost of living was very low.

The following index of price level supplied by Ibn Baṭṭūtah will throw light on the subject. (Taken from the table drawn in History of Bengal, Vol. II, in terms of present standard of weight and value).

(approximately) 8 maunds of rice were sold at Rs. 7/-
" 28 " of paddy " " " " Rs. 7/-
" 14 seers of ghec " " " " Rs. 3/8/-
" 14 " of sesame oil " " " " Rs. 1/12/-
" 14 " of rose water " " " " Rs. 7/-

2. See Supra, pp. 171-172.
Approximately 14 seers of sugar were sold at Rs. 3/8/-
8 fat fowls " " " Rs. 0/14/-
1 fat ram was " " Rs. 1/12/-
1 milch cow " " " Rs. 21/-
15 pigeons were " " Rs. 0/14/-

Judging from the price-level drawn above, it may be assumed that the common people were not hard hit by their low income. Those were the days when one was satisfied having a gift of a jute-piece as in the case of Krittivāsa, who received one such piece from the King of Gaur. 1 Śrīdharā, a disciple of Chaitanya, earned his livelihood by dealing in radish, sheath of bamboo, and the spathe of plantain tree. 8 The needs of the people were not great and they were happy with their lot. Judged from this standpoint, the people were generally happy. According to the Chinese Account, "the seasons of heaven have scattered the wealth of the Earth over this kingdom, the riches and integrity of its people surpass, perhaps those of Ch'in Chiang (Palembang) and equal to those of Chao-wa (Java)." 3

(x) Contact with the Local People

It has been pointed out earlier 4 that some of the social features of the Muslims such as the worship of Satya-Pir and the introduction of the foot-print of the Prophet were due to the mixture of both Muslim and non-Muslim conceptions. There was a close contact between the people of diverse communities. That such contacts were not rare may be gleaned from the following facts.

(a) We have seen earlier 5 that a number of local people were converted to Islām.

(b) Muslim rulers in their fight against the Dehlī Sultāns recruited local soldiers. 4

1. Quoted by Sukumar Sen in Bāṅgālā Sāhityer Itiḥāsa, Calcutta, 1940, p. 86.
4. Supra, pp. 165 ff.
5. Chapter III, Section (C).
(c) Local people were appointed in important positions of the state.¹

Beside these there are references in the Bengali literature to show that the Muslim learned men held discussions with those of the non-Muslims on religious matters. Krishṇa Dāsa Kavirāja refers to two such discussions, one between Chaitanya and the Qāḍī of Nadiya, and the other between Chaitanya and a certain Turk called a Pir.

(A) Discussion Between Chaitanya and the ḍādi

The ḍādi prohibited the Kirtana in Nadiya, probably due to a number of complaints he received from some anti-Vaishnava Hindus.⁸ But Chaitanya ordered for nagara-Kirtana (kirtana in procession) in


2. That the Qāḍī received such complaints is clear from the following verses of Krishṇa Dāsa Kavirāja himself. Chattānta Charitāmṛtata, Adi, 17th.

ḥen kañe pāṇḍitā hinsā pāñc nātā āil
ānā kēhem hinsā dharmā nānām
yē kīrtana prabhaivān katu dūnā nānām

ṛdhana chānā viṣhvarī kere jāgaram

ṭāhā nūnāyāḥ bādā ṣāṇā ṣāṇā ṣāram

pūrvaṃ ṭālā cīl eī nīnāi pātvit.

gaṁ ḍhāte āpiṁa chaśālā vīpārīta

ūciḥ kārī gāyā gātā hārā kṛtānālī.

vēlā kṛtānā shākṣe kore lāgē tāni

nā dānya kē khāṇa nānā tāhā gāyā

lāgē kāndā pāṇḍā uṭhā ṣāḷgāṛa βāyā

naṁparāyākā pāṅkā kālā ṣadā. saṁkārtita

rāṭe ṛnā. nātī yāi kārī ḍāgaram

nīnāiṁ nāṁ chaṇḍha ṣŚvāmaya goṇaṁrī

hinsā dharmā nāṁ kālā pāṇḍitā sāṁkīrṇa

kūṅkhā kīrtana kere nīchā bār bārā.

aiḥ pāṇe nāvīraṃ ḍhāvē uṭaṃḍa

hīnā pāṇe ṣaṃsu nāṁ hāṃṣā nānām
violation of the Qāḍī’s order. According to Kṛṣṇa Dāsa Kavirāja, Chaitanya at the height of his emotionalism reached the Qāḍī’s palace and had the following discussions with him.¹

“The lord says, ‘I have come to put some questions!’ The Qāḍī says, ‘say whatever is in your heart’. The lord says, ‘You take cow-milk, so cow is your mother. Bulls earn food for you, so bulls

Translation: “At that time, some five to seven pāśaṇḍī (irreligious Hindus) came and complained that Nīmāi (Chaitanya) was destroying the Hindu religion and that they did not hear such kīrtana before (as was introduced by him).

Dance, song and beating of drums were befitting to the Chāṇḍī and Manasā worship. Formerly this Nīmāi Pāṇḍit was good, he went astray after his return from Gaya. He sings loudly and claps his hands; the sound of drum and clapping deafen those who hear. Nobody knows what edibles give him strength to become mad, to dance, sing, laugh, cry and to go on rollings. The towns-men are maddened with continuous kīrtanas so that they cannot sleep at night. Now they call him Gaur-Hari in place of Nīmāi; being irreligious, they are destroying the Hindu religion. Even the lowly persons make kīrtana of Kṛṣṇa; at this sin Nadiya will be depopulated. In the Hindu religion, the name Iśvara is a mahāmantra; if everybody hears, the mantra loses its sanctity. You are the Thākur (leader or officer in charge) of the village: call Nīmāi before you and urge upon him to give up (this peculiar way of life).”

are your father. What is this that you kill your father and mother and eat their flesh? How do you do this illogical work?" The Qāḍī says, 'As you have the Vedas and the Purāṇas, I have my religious books, the kitāb (holy book) and the Qur’ān. According to these books, there is distinction between 'Path of Active Life' and 'Path of Passive Life.' According to the latter, the killing of animal is prohibited while according to the former, killing of cow or bull is allowed. There is no sin in killing in the manner as it is prescribed by religion. Your Vedas allow killing of cow, and so great munis (sages) used to kill cow.' The lord says, 'The Vedas prohibit killing of cow, so no Hindu kills any cow. According to the Vedas killing of animal is allowed only if

সেই শাস্ত্রে কহে প্রবৃত্তি নিখুঁতি নাগী তেহ।
নিখৃতি নাগে জীব নার্ত বদের নিষেধ।
প্রবৃত্তি নাগে গোবৃহ করিতে বিধি হয় ন।
শাস্ত্র আজ্ঞায় বহ তৈলে নাহি পাপ তুষু।
তোমার বেদেতে আছে গোব্রহ বাদী।
অতএব গোবৃহ করে বহ বহ মুনি।
প্রবৃত্তি কহে বেদে কহে গোবৃহ নিষেধ।
অতএব হিতু মাত্র না করে গোবৃহ।
জীবাঙ্গতে পানে যদি তবে মারে রাণী।
নেদপুরাণে এই আছে অজানান।
অতএব ধরিভব মারে মুনিগণ।
নেদমে শাহু করে তাহার জীবন।
অর্ধগব হঞ্জ। যুরা হয় আরবার।
তাতে তার বহ নচে হয় উপকার।
কলিঙ্কানে তৈচে শক্তি নাহি ক্যাচে।
অতএব গোব্রহ কেহ না করে এহেন।
তোমার জীবাঙ্গতে নার বহমাত্র গার।
নরক হইতে তোমার নাহি নিস্তার।
গবর তত্তে রোম তত সহস্র বসর।
গোঞ্জী গৌরব মধ্যে পাচে নিস্তার।
তোমার গৌরব শার করা। সেদ আত্ম তৈল।
না জানি শাখের বহ ঐহে আজ দিন।
তুনি তুষ তৈল কাজী নাহি স্কুরে বাপী।
বিখাসিয়া কহে কাজী পরাত্ত মানি।
তুমি যে কহিষ্ঠে প্রতিষ্ঠ দেই গত্তা হয়।
SOCIAL HISTORY

d to life. So the munis (sages) killed old-aged
their life with the help of the Vedic mantras. The
ung ones, so the killing became a boon for them.
Brahmins have no such power, so nowadays they
only kill, you cannot restore to life, so you will
cow-killers will live in hell as many thousand
airs in the body of the cow. Your religious leader
he has given such direction without knowing the
(religious law.)' Hearing this, the Qādī became
utter any word and said, 'I accept defeat, O'
the truth'.

ion between Chaitanya and a Turk

Kavirāja refers to the meeting of Chaitanya
Chaitanya was then coming back from Brindā-
among these men, one clad in black attire,
ory is that once Chaitanya fell senseless in extreme
men came to the spot and suspected his followers
by making him swallow the leaves of dhūturā (a
leaves) and arrested them. On recovering from
ness, Chaitanya testified to the innocence of his
ferred into agrument with the black-clad horseman
was convinced. All the horsemen accepted
their meeting has been described as follows* :—
) propounded monotheism and one common God,
holy book (viz. the Qur‘ān). But the Master refuted

va Charitāmṛita, Madhya, 18th.
arkar : Chaitanya’s Pilgrimages and Teachings (English
ation of Madhya-līla of Chaitanya Charitāmṛita ),
, 1913, pp. 226-27.
engali verses ( Chaitanya Charitāmṛita, Madhya,
re as follows :—

| इ ग्रोङ्च्छ मध्ये एक परम पग्जीर ||
| कन्य जरे सेन्ही लोक कहे पीर ||
| ग आह्तू हैल ताह पर्चुके देखिना ||
| वे शेषे ग्रोङ्च्छ घापे शांत उठाइना ||
| लुल्लवांड सेन्ही करिन घापन ||
| शांत युक्ते प्रभु दिन घापन ||
all his propositions by arguments based on the script was silenced. The Master continued, "Your scripture common God (in the beginning) and refuting the end a particular God, who is full of all power an embodiment of sat chid and ananda, the perfect all-pervading, eternal, the self of everything, life and destruction, the refuge of all universes:

হেই হেই কহে প্রভু সকলি খওিল
উক্তর না আইসে মুখে যা। জ্ঞান হৈয়া প্রভু কহে তোমার শাস্ত্র স্বপনে নির্মে তাহা। ধতি সর্বশেষ স্বাধীন হইয়া যেতে তোমার শাস্ত্র কহে যেতে একই ই সর্বভূতাত্মপূর্ণ তিহো শ্যাম কহেবর।
সচিবিশ্লেষ দেহ পূর্ণ ব্রহ্ম স্বরূপ।
সর্বায়। সর্বজ্ঞ নিত্য সর্বায়ি স্বরূপ।
হই হই প্রথম তাহা হৈতে হয় সুমুখ সুখ অগতের ভিতরে সমাধি সর্বশ্রেষ্ঠ সর্বশ্রেষ্ঠ কারণের কারণ তাহ ভক্তি হয় জীবের সংসার তাহার সেবা বিনা জীবের না যায় তাহার চরণে প্রীতি পূর্ণায় সার।
কোন আপাত হয় যায় এক কঙ্কালে পূর্ণকালে প্রায় তার চরণেছব।
কর্ম জ্ঞান যোগ আপে করিয়া হয় সকল ব্যতীত স্বপনে মুখুয়া সেবন তোমার পালিত সবার নাহি শাস্ত্র পূর্বাচারে বিভিন্ন মধ্যে পর বলবাদ নিষ্ক শাস্ত্র দেখ তুমি বিচার করিবে নিধিবিহ্যায়াে শেষ নির্দেশ করিয়া কহে যেই কহ সেই সত্য শাস্ত্রে নিধিবিহ্যায়াে কহে নইতে না নিধিবিহ্যায়াে গোসাইকে লঙ্ঘন করিয়া সাকার গোসাইকে সেবা কর নাহি গেই তে গোসাইকে তূনি সাকাং ঈশ্বরে কুৰ্পা কার মুজ্ঞি অনুগ্রহ
the most excellent, adorable by all, the first cause of everything. Men are saved by faith in Him, and freed from the bondage of the world only by serving Him. Delight in Him is the supreme human attainment while salvation can give only a particle of that bliss. The highest beautitude comes only from serving His feet. After first insisting on work, knowledge and mental abstraction, these are then set aside and the service of God is laid down as the final duty. Your theologians have no knowledge of their own scriptures; they forget that where there are two injunctions, the latter is stronger. Decide after studying your own holy books, and see what is laid down as the final conclusion."

"The Muslim replied, 'True are your words. What is written in the scriptures cannot be changed by men. The abstract God (Gosain) is discussed by theologians; nobody thinks of adoring the incarnate God. You are such, God's own self. Have mercy on me unworthy sinner!'

The discussions prove that learned men of one community were conversant with the religious books of the other community. For example, the Qāḍī of Nadiya referred to the Vedas and the Purāṇas in his discussions with Chaitanya. Unless there was a close contact between the two people such discussions could not have been possible. Krishṇa Dāsa Kavirāja goes a step further and says that both Qāḍī of Nadiya and the Turk called Pīr were convinced of the arguments of Chaitanya and begged of him to make them his disciples. This is not corroborated by any other source. Such important events, conversion of an important officer like the Qāḍī and another Pīr, would not have been left unnoticed by other Vaishnava writers, if there was any basis in them. Brindāvana Dāsa also refers to the Qāḍī-Chaitanya encounter, but he does not say that the Qāḍī accepted the teachings of Chaitanya. The whole book of Krishṇa Dāsa Kavirāja was written to deify Chaitanya and to paint his character with a superhuman colour. In this particular case also he could not rise above the sectarianism and probably exaggerated the facts.

Materials at our disposal are not sufficient to furnish a comprehensive picture of the socio-economic life of the Muslims in Bengal. Nevertheless, the available ones as sifted above give the impression of a composite culture. The immigrants and converted Muslims mixed together in a social system where both the foreign and

1. Brindāvana Dāsa : Chaitanya Bhāgavata, Madhya, 23rd.
the local elements were accommodated as noticeable in all walks of life. None of the languages, Persian, Arabic or Bengali was neglected. Persian continued as official language and Arabic that of religious matters. The local language, i.e. Bengali not only received royal patronage, but also was learnt by the immigrants, the latter thus adapting themselves in their new habitat. The result is noticeable both in the period under review and in the succeeding period when hundreds of Bengali books were written by the Muslims. Although they came from deserted lands, they had to adapt themselves to the peculiar geography and the climatic condition of Bengal. Thus in dwelling houses, diet and dress, they had to consider the question of suitability and availability. These features were therefore, common to both immigrants and converts, varying however, according to means of subsistence. As for the economic life, the immigrants looked more to the state service, rather than to commerce and agriculture, though the examples of their adoption of these latter professions are not altogether absent. The local converts, no doubt, preferred the state services but they were engaged primarily in their old professions. Be that as it may, as no stigma was attached to the converts, there was no bar on their coming to the same level with the immigrants
CHAPTER VII

THE CONCLUSION

To a student of political history, the history of Bengal from the conquest of Nadiya by Muḥammad Bakhtyār Khaljī† till A.D. 1538 is a mere record of events in the gradual expansion and consolidation of Muslim political power. In fact, during this period of more than three hundred years the Muslim power expanded throughout the nook and corner of Bengal. But to a student of social history, the period unfolds a greater significance, as it witnessed the introduction and gradual development of a fresh element i.e. the Muslim society, in the socio-religious history of the country. Although the political history of Bengal offers several landmarks, the social historian hardly finds any, because the social forces have got a continuous growth and development without caring for or rather encouraged by time and tide. The period covered by the present study passed from the formative stage of the Muslim society to a complete overhaul of the social forces in the country in which the religion of Islām and the Muslims became predominant.

The Muslim society in Bengal developed on three important supports: the Muslim ruling class, the Muslim scholars and the Muslim Ṣūfīs. The most important contribution of the ruling class was that they expanded the political power so that the small principality of Lakhnawtī of Muḥammad Bakhtyār was, within about one century and a half of its existence, turned to be a great Muslim kingdom of Bengal. Without the political power at the top, the Muslim society would hardly have survived the throes of its birth in clash with the hostile multitudes round about them. To the ruling class, especially to the Independent Sultāns, goes the credit of giving Bengal a homogeneous Muslim kingdom, independent of the political forces of Dehli. Shams al-Dīn Ilyās Shāh was the first to unite the whole of Bengal under him, while his successors till A.D. 1538 held the same position.

1. For date of the conquest of Nadiya, see Indian Historical Quarterly, June, 1954, pp. 133 ff.
2. See Supra, pp. 33-38.
without break. The Muslims thus got an opportunity to consolidate their position without any hindrance. Beside the expansion of their power, the ruling class also encouraged the scholars and the Ṣūfīs, built mosques, madrasahs and khāngahs, afforded facilities to the Muslims for visiting the holy cities of Makkah and Madīnah. In short, they helped the growth of a distinct Muslim society in Bengal. The scholars, in their turn, wrote books on Islāmic sciences and literature. They paid special attention to Fiqh, Ḥadīth, Taṣawwuf, Persian poetry and even Bengali language. They also maintained academies and imparted instructions to the people. The contribution of the Ṣūfīs covered a wider range. They were not indifferent to the political happenings, but sometimes, influenced the rulers in moulding the state-policy on Islāmic lines. They even helped the expansion of political power. But the most important contribution of the Ṣūfīs was that they educated the people in religious principles, helped the poor and the destitutes, attracted the local people around them by their religious disposition and converted many to Islām. It is thus clear that they devoted themselves to the cultural pursuits and with the help of the royal power, trained the Muslims in the observance of religious principles. Based on these three supports, the Muslim society developed to such an extent that it occupied a prominent position in the socio-religious life of the people.

When Muhammad Bakhtyār Khaṭṭār laid the foundation of the principality of Lakhnawtī, the Muslim population was composed of merely immigrants, numbering a few thousand. They came either with the invading hordes or as adventurers after the conquest. The society thus established, was subsequently fed in two ways, either by fresh immigration from the west or by local conversion. Thus, we notice that the Muslim society comprise of people from Arabia, Shīrāz, Herāt, Samarqand, Tabriz, Bukhārā, Balkh and Abyssinia. As regards tribal affiliation, there were the Khālijīs, the Turks, the

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1. Chapter III, Section (B)
2. Ibid.
3. Chapter III, Section (C).
4. Ibid.
5. According to Minhāj (p. 152), in the Tibet expedition, Bakhtyār's army consisted of ten thousand soldiers,
6. Chapter IV.
Habshis and probably the Afghans and the Mughals. Similarly the
society included a few groups of people like the 'Alims, the Sayids, the
Sufis and the local converts. These people helped the growth of the
Muslim society in their own way; some formed the bulk of the ruling
class, being appointed in civil, military and revenue departments,
while others educated the people. In their daily life the Muslims used
both Persian and Bengali languages. Bengali was used not only by
the converted local Muslims, but also by the immigrants. The immi-
grants did not try to keep themselves isolated from the social current
of the country. They adopted various professions like trade and
commerce, crafts, industry, and agriculture, beside accepting offices
in the State. They built their dwelling houses with the materials
locally available. Even the court-patronised stone or brick architecture
developed a local style, suited to the climate of the country. Their diet
included meat, fish or vegetables as they were locally available.

The fame of the Muslim kingdom and the Muslim population
of Bengal spread far and wide. Beside trying to obtain political hold
over the neighbouring kingdoms, as evidenced by occasional raids, the
Bengal Sulṭāns exchanged ambassadors with the kingdoms of China,
Dehli and Khurāsān. On occasions, the Bengal Sulṭāns were invited
to help settling disputes over succession in favour of one or the other
prince in Arakan and Tippera.

The Muslim society in Bengal developed the orthodox principles
of Islām and at the same time gave way to the popular forces. As
for the orthodox side, they adhered to the principles of Imān or belief

1. Chapter IV.
2. Chapters III, IV and VI.
3. Chapter VI.

It is said that the Burmese kings appointed Muslim soldiers
including shipmen under them, (Islamic Culture, July,
1936, p. 425) though it is difficult to say whether they
were from Bengal. At a later date the Ahom King
Rudra Singh (A.D. 1696-1714) imported masons and
artificers from Bengal (E. Gait : A History of Assam,
2nd edition, Thacker, Spink & Co. Calcutta and Simla,
1926, p. 181). But it is not possible to determine whether
they were Muslims.
in God and His Prophet, Namaz or prayer, Rozã or fasting and Hajj or pilgrimage to the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah. The society looked for its strength towards the mosque, madrasah and Khãngah. These served as the pillars of the social structure and all eyes were turned towards them for guidance. Besides, the Bengali Muslims, through the favourable attitude of the Sulţãns, kept a close contact with the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah. Both Sulţân Ghiyãth al-Din A'zam Shãh and Jalãl al-Din MuHAMMAD Shãh deserve special mention for establishing madrasah in Makkah and Madinah and making liberal grants for the people thereof. The most important element of the popular force in Islãm was the Pirism. The people considered the dargãh of the Pir as a place of pilgrimage. They made offerings to the Pir or their departed soul, built tombs and illuminated them. The rulers made endowment of land for the maintenance of their shrines and other establishments attached to them. They also introduced the stone-representation of the foot-print of the Prophet (Qadam Rasûl). The Pirism did not originate in Bengal, but the long settlement of the Muslims in this land side by side with the local people, many of whom were converted and taken to the fold of Islam made the conception deeply rooted in the society. The converts found in the Pir a resemblance of the Tãntric gurus and in the tombs and dargãhs that of chaitya or stupa. Moreover, the converts could not readily learn the religious principles, as the religious books were then available in languages foreign to them. No doubt, the religious teachers tried to teach them the fundamental principles of Islãm, but it is futile to think that they succeeded in keeping the converts completely isolated from their age-old customs and traditions. This is why, Sayyid Sulţãn, a mid-16th century Bengali poet, regretfully writes that the Bengali Muslims engaged themselves in reading Hindu mythological tales due to their ignorance of Arabic language.

The Pirism gave way to the further growth of concepts like those of Satya-Pir, Pânch-Pir, Mãnîk-Pir, Ghoťã-Pir and Madãri-Pir. Evidences for them are not available during the period under review,

1. Chapter V.
2. Chapter III, Section (A).
3. Chapter V.
4. Chapter III, Section (C).
though it may be said with certainty that the Pirism formed the basis of their growth. The Hindu society of the day worshipped deities like Manasā and Chaṇḍī for relief from all sorts of dangers.¹ The Satya-Pir etc. probably occupied the same place among the Muslims, as these deities did in the Hindu society.

The Muslims of Bengal did not confine themselves to the orbit of their own society, rather they had contact with the non-Muslims, sometimes they held religious discussions with them.² Credit goes to the liberal Muslim administration³ that although the rulers helped the growth of the Muslim society, they did not persecute anybody simply for difference of faith. Rather they encouraged the non-Muslims, recruited them in the army and even appointed them in the key position of the State.⁴ They also encouraged poets to write in the local language by awarding rewards and titles.⁵ They also attended to the local problems by the construction of dykes and roads and excavation of tanks and digging wells.⁶ These were for the benefit of all and sundry and not of any particular group of people. This explains why the local people stood at the back of the Sulṭāns in their fight for independence against the Sulṭāns of Dehli.

To conclude, therefore, it can be said that the Muslim society in Bengal developed gradually, so that after a lapse of more than three hundred years, it became a part and parcel of Bengal’s body politic. The facts that the Muslims settled in this country, learnt the local language, lived in harmony with the local people, accepted local wives, adopted various professions suited to their genius, and that in their

2. See Chapter VI, pp. 198-204.
dietary system and dwelling houses they depended on materials locally available, bear out that they considered Bengal as their homeland. Side by side they adhered to the Islāmic religious principles and built religious institutions of their own. There is, therefore, good ground to suggest that a Bengali Muslim society already passed its formative stage, took a definite shape, and breathed a new spirit of tolerance, equality and universal love in the country so much so that large masses accepted Islām and even the then Hinduism was deeply affected as traceable in some of the elements of the Chaitanya movement.¹

1. For example, their mass worship, their kirtana, their casteless society etc. For details see, E. Haq: Baγge Sūfī Prabhāva, Calcutta, A. D. 1935, pp. 164 ff.
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