

# The Advent of British Colonial Rule and Annexation of Bengal



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# Advent of the European colonial powers in Bengal



**“The East is a Career”**

-Benjamin Disraeli



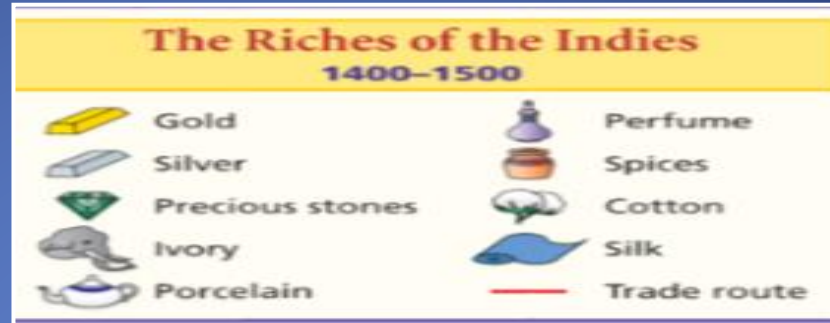
# Reasons behind Colonization

- The three G's :

Gold

God

Glory



# Advent of the European colonial powers in Indian-subcontinent

- The arrival of the Europeans to the Indian sub-continent was an event of great significance in the history of our country as it ultimately led to revolutionary changes in the future.
- It is a matter of common knowledge that Asian commodities were in great demand in European markets throughout the Middle Ages. These things used to reach Europe either by land or by sea. However ,difficulties began to arise on account of the rise to power of the Ottoman Turks and Italian merchants. As the land route was partially closed ,there arose the necessity of finding a new route to India. **The voyages of the Portuguese navigators led the way in this matter.**

(Source: Kamruddin Ahmad, *A Socio Political History of Bengal and the Birth of Bangladesh* & V.D Mahajan, *Modern Indian History*)

# Advent of the European colonial powers in Indian-subcontinent

- **Arrival of the Portuguese(*Firingis*)** : In 1498,explorer Vasco Da Gama crossed the Cape of Good Hope and after a voyage of a month reached Calicut port(present location: Kerala of South India). His expedition created a new horizon in history during Age of Discovery. By the 1520s, they were settling in Bengal, notably in Chittagong and the island of Sandwip .
- **Arrival of the Dutch(*Olandaj*):** Dutch East India Company established forts in Surat and Bengal during early 17<sup>th</sup> century.

# Advent of the European colonial powers in Indian-subcontinent

- **Arrival of the French colonists:** By mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, French East India company managed to establish important trade outposts and factories in Surat, Pondicherry, Musulipatam and Chandernagar.
- **Arrival of the British colonists(1612-1947):** Compared to the other European colonial powers, British rulers managed to rule Indian sub-continent for a very long time. \*\*\*

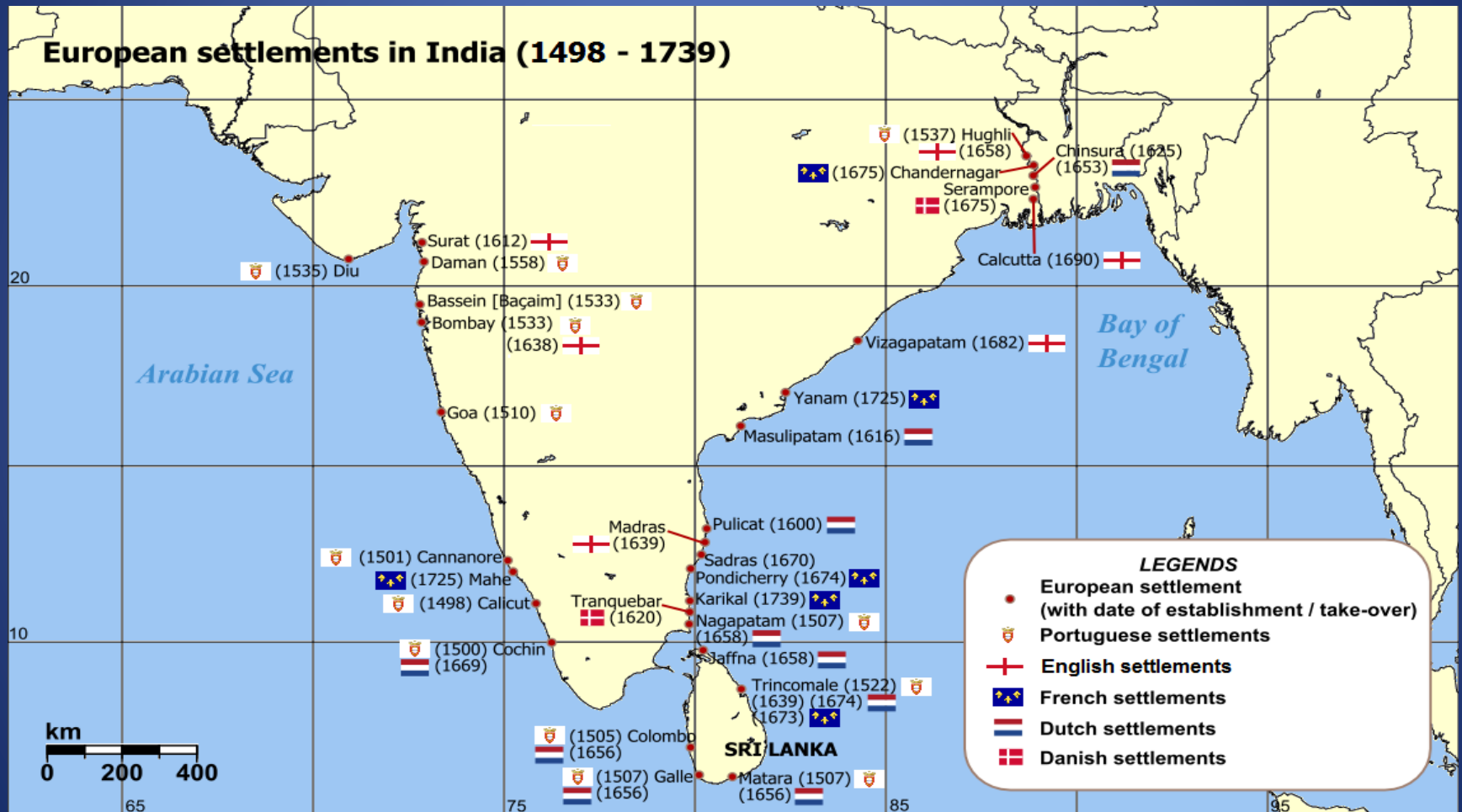


# Vasco da Gama lands at Calicut, May 1498 CE.





# European settlements in India



# Phases of British rule in Indian-subcontinent

## **First Phase (1608-1757):**

Commercial ventures of British East India Company in the region

## **Second Phase (1757-1857):**

Company Rule in Indian sub-continent

**Third Phase (1858-1947):** British Raj/Beginning of Crown Rule

# Reasons for British involvement in Bengal

- ❑ Trade for commodities like cotton, tea, salt, spices, saltpetre, indigo dye and opium.
- ❑ Bengal's luxury cotton , *Muslin*, and silk textiles had high reputation throughout Europe and Asia.
- ❑ The region was used as a profitable marketplace, source of raw materials and cheap labour.
- ❑ Forward base for China: the trading posts in the region were utilized as forward bases for trade into China(for e.g. to trade tea and opium).



Opium



Muslin dress



# Rise of British East India Company

- The British first arrived in the subcontinent as traders in the shape of the British East India Company (BEIC).
- On December 31 ,1600,the company was officially granted charter through royal decree of Queen Elizabeth I. In 1608,ships belonging to the EIC arrived in India, docking at Surat for the first time.
- In 1615,King James I sent Sir Thomas Roe to the court of Mughal Emperor Jahangir to gain right for the British to establish a factory in Surat. Between 1615-1651,numerous factories and trade outposts were established in Surat, Madras, Balasore and so on.

# Rise of British East India Company

- Charters allowed the company to bring more ammunitions from Britain for the security of their factories. They could establish forts ,enact laws and the company had full power to declare war .
- By 1690s,the company's influence had grown so that it had three main bases: **Bengal, Madras and Bombay. BEIC also laid the foundation of Calcutta city.**
- **They constructed one of their principal edifices, Fort William in Calcutta.**





Queen  
Elizabeth I  
of House  
Tudor in  
England



Flag Of BEIC



Coat of Arms of BEIC



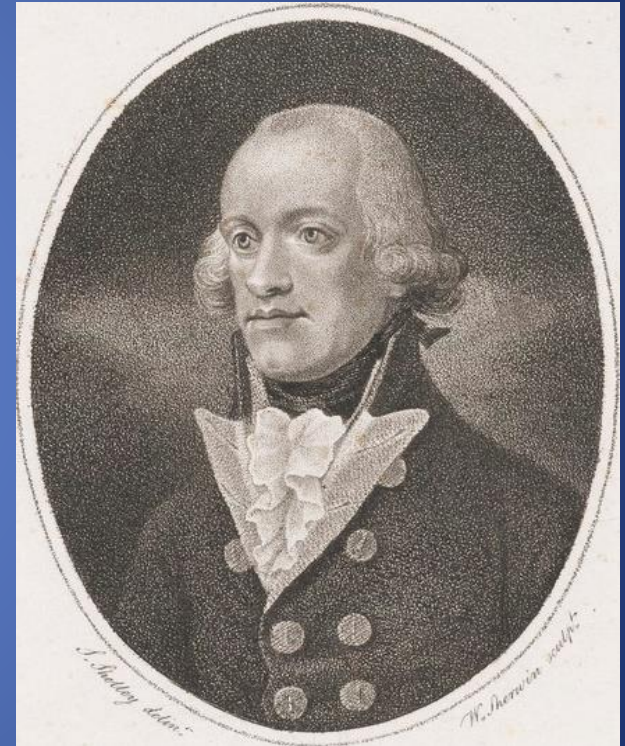
# Notable pioneers of the British East India Company



Sir Thomas  
Smythe



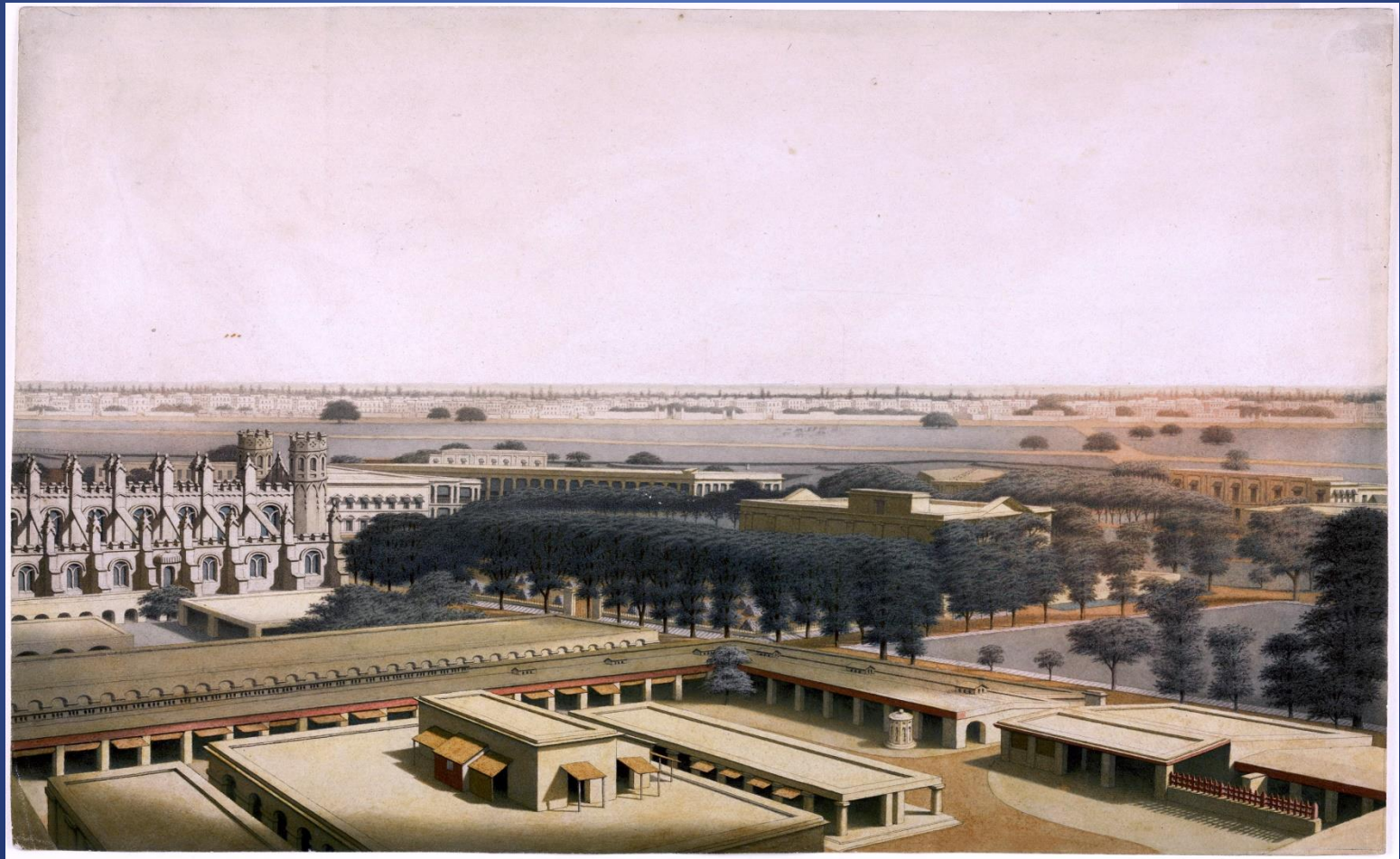
Sir James  
Lancaster



Sir John  
Watts



# Fort William, c. 1828



# Fort William, Hastings, Calcutta ( Kolkata)





# Events leading up to the British annexation of Bengal

- **French-British rivalry:**
- **Downfall of the Mughal Empire**
- **Conflict between the Nawab of Bengal and the British East India Company**

# Nawabs of Bengal

- Nawabs were the hereditary rulers of Bengal whose only connection with the Mughal Emperor was to follow his Firman and to pay a tribute to him regularly. The Nawabs were responsible for their Subah(province).
- Mughal empire began to decline after the death of Aurangzeb. Taking advantage of the situation, the Nawabs of Bengal strengthened their position and began to rule independently.
- **Murshid Quli Khan(1706-1725) was the first independent Nawab of Bengal.**
- **Mirza Muhammad Siraj-ud-Doula(1756-1757) was the last independent Nawab of Bengal. The end of his reign marked the beginning of British East India Company rule over Bengal and later almost over entire South Asia.**

# Belligerents of the Battle of Palashi



**Nawab Siraj ud Doulah**



**Lord Robert Clive**



# Conflict between the Nawab and the British

- There were many factors that brought Nawab Sirajuddaula into direct conflict with the British.
- The British were misusing certain trade privileges in Bengal, which were given to them earlier. This infuriated Sirajuddaula, and he demanded stricter trade practices from the British, which made relationships deteriorate.

# Conflict between the Nawab and the British

- Siraj's accession was a threat to the Company also because he made it absolutely clear that, unlike the previous Nawabs, he would not put up with the abuse of dastaks (permit for trade) by the British and their **illegal private trade of opium**.
- **Grandfather of Sirajuddaula, Nawab Alivardi Khan, had not permitted the British to fortify their settlements in Bengal. However, in anticipation of the breaking out of the Seven Years' War, the British and the French began to fortify their settlements in Bengal without the Nawab's permission. Later the French complied and followed the Nawab's orders, but the British continued building forts in Bengal obeying Governor Drake of BEIC.**

# Conflict between the Nawab and the British

- Moreover, the BEIC sheltered Krisna Das, who fled from Dhaka to Kolkata with a big amount of money from the treasury & denied to hand over him despite order placed by the Nawab for trial.
- As a result, power conflict immediately erupted between the young Nawab & the BEIC on economic and political interests.
- Leaders of the BEIC conspired with one of the commanders of the Army, Mir Jafar Ali Khan & offered Yar Latif Khan to take power with the British help ousting Nawab Siraj-ud Daula. The powerful banking family, Jagat Seths also aided the British.



# Conflict between the Nawab and the British

- In an early attempt, conspirators led by Raydurlov & Jagat Sheth had supported Shaukat Jang, the cousin of Siraj-ud Daula to capture power defying Nawab Alivardi Khan.
- Becoming Nawab, Siraj had attacked Purnia & killed Shawkat Jang in May 1756 & arrested his aunt Gosheti Begum as reprisal.

# Conflict between the Nawab and the British

- To punish the BEIC leaders, Nawab Siraj-ud Daula captured Kashimbazar British military base in a four days campaign in June 1756.
- In another sudden attack at Fort William in June 1756, Nawab was accused of capturing many British soldiers and putting them in a 14X18 feet dungeon. Colonist historians claim that many of them died at night due to asphyxiation and called the incident “Black Hole” tragedy. Although some of the description of the event was exaggerated by the British authority to defame the Nawab.
- Later, Madras Board of Governors sent Colonel Robert Clive & Admiral Watson to recapture Kolkata & they managed to succeed.
- Soon after this, a battle plan was formulated by Robert Clive

# Conflict between the Nawab and the British

- Clive's battle plan got approval by the BEIC officials in Madras & after a few days he advanced to Murshidabad with an army of about 3,200 soldiers.
- **In line with a secret deal between Clive & Mir Jafar, the Battle of Palashi started on 23 June, 1757.**



# Battle of Palashi (1757)

- The Battle of Palashi is considered as one of the most significant battles in the history of the subcontinent. The outcome of the war paved the path for British regime in entire Indian subcontinent.
- The battle took place on June 23 ,1757 near Palashi (at present: a village in Nadia district of West Bengal).

# Events during the Battle of Palashi (1757)

- Mir Madan, Mohanlal, Khwaja Abdul Hadi Khan, Naba Singh Hazari and a few others put up a brave resistance during the battle against troops of BEIC. On the other hand, Mir Jafar, Yar Latif and Ray Durlabh Ram avoided any serious involvement.
- The British had not expected even this much resistance and it was reported that at one point Clive had thought of retreating from the battleground.
- However, around three in the afternoon, things took a turn for the better for the British when Mir Madan was struck by a cannon ball and killed.
- Siraj then sought the help of Mir-Jafar, who advised the Nawab to suspend action for the day in order to renew his efforts the next day. This message was also relayed to Clive who, upon finding the Nawab's men in retreat, launched a fresh assault on them.
- **This ultimately led to a general rout. The battle was over by five in the afternoon with Clive marching towards Sirajuddaula's capital city, Murshidabad.**

# Events during the Battle of Palashi (1757)

- Thus, the unfortunate Nawab with his huge army was completely defeated by the British. Until the end, he tried his utmost to retaliate against the British with the help of the French and his loyal subjects.
- **Nawab Siraj-ud Daula was captured by Miron, the son of Mir Jafar Ali Khan, and killed by assassin Mohammodi Beg. With his death, the rule of the last independent Nawab of Bengal came to an end.**
- Syed Mir Jafar Ali Khan Bahadur was then made the Nawab of Bengal by the Company rulers.



Robert Clive became the British Governor of Bengal after he had instated Mir Jafar as the Nawab of Bengal



# Significance of the Battle of Palashi

*“On a fine June day in 1757 thousands of men were fighting in a mango-orchard close to the border of present-day Bangladesh. This battle became famous as a turning-point in the history of South Asia. It took place in the small village of Polashi (‘Plassey’, pala-si), and the encounter established the British East India Company as the new territorial overlord over Bengal. Within a century this trading conglomerate would capture practically all of South Asia. Historians have often described the Battle of Polashi as the beginning of British colonial rule in South Asia, a rule that would last till 1947.”*

*(Source: William van Schendel, A History of Bangladesh, Cambridge University Press, 1st Edition, 2009)*

# Mausoleum of Nawab Siraj-ud-Daulah at Khushbagh





# Obelisks of Mir Madan, Nabe Singh Hajari & Bahadur Khan near Palashi battlefield



# Palashi Monument in the battlefield





# Statue of Nawab Siraj-ud-Doulah at the site of Palashi battlefield in Nadia





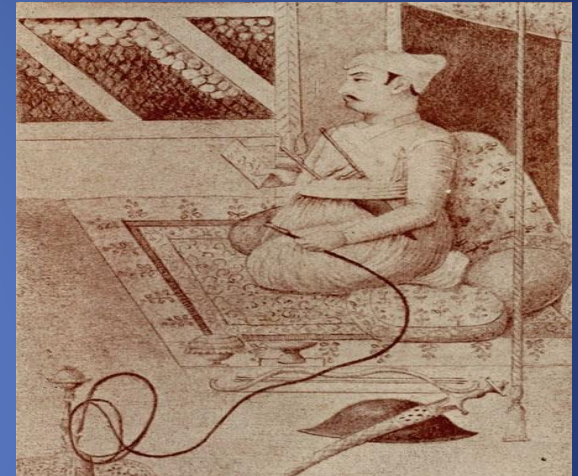
# Battle of Biderra(1759)

- Also known as Battle of Hooghly or Battle of Chinsurah, occurred in the year 1759
- The war took place between troops of British East India Company and Dutch East India Company (supported by Nawab Mir Jafar). British soldiers won the battle under the leadership of Colonel Francis Forde.
- In the wake of their victory, the British dethroned Mir Jafar and replaced him with his son-in-law Mir Kasim Ali Khan.
- Along with the Battle of Palashi, the battle helped establish British supremacy in Bengal. The battle did not affect Dutch neutrality and they remained one of the few European states not involved in the war. The decisive victory helped the company interests in securing their opium trade in Asia as well.



# Battle of Buxar(1764)

- **The Battle of Buxar was fought on 22 October 1764.**
- Battle commenced between the forces under the command of the British East India Company led by General Hector Munroe and the combined armies of Mir Qasim, Raja Balwant Singh of Kashi ,Nawab Shuja ud Daulah of Awadh and Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II.
- The battle was fought at Buxar , a small town located near Bihar.
- It was a decisive victory for the British East India Company. The war was brought to an end by the Treaty of Allahabad in 1765.
- **After the battle, Mir Qasim was overthrown and Mir Jafar was again made the Nawab of Bengal.**



THANK YOU!