

EMB-101: Emergence of Bangladesh

Class - 3

From Origins of Bengal Sultanates to the Battle of Polashi (1204-1757) : Society, Religion and Politics



Inspiring Excellence

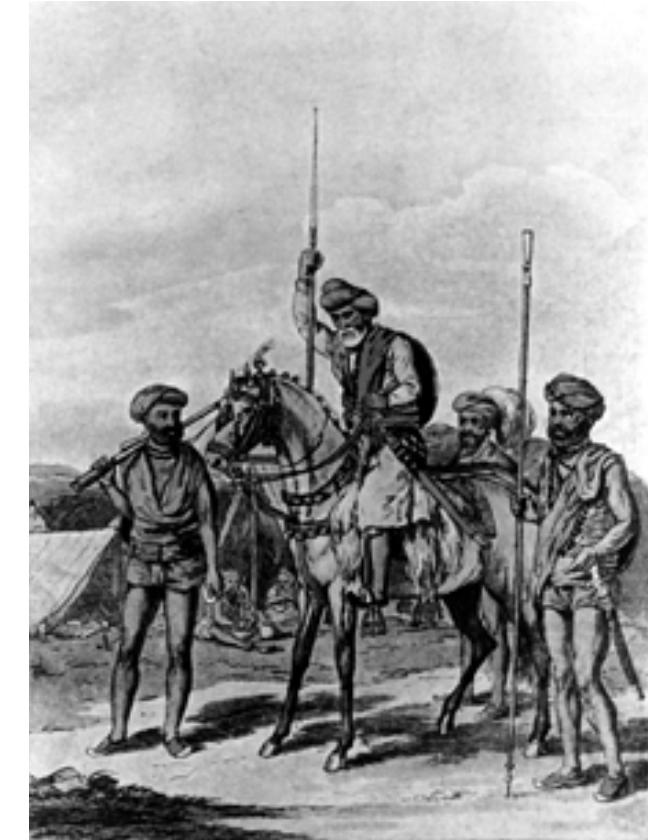
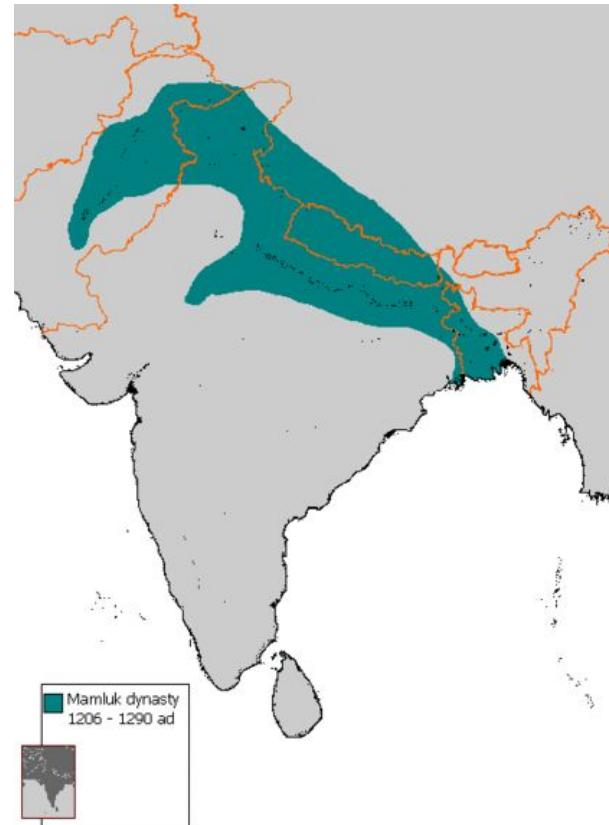
Overview of the Class

- Root, route and rule of Islam in Bengal
- Bengal under Delhi Sultanate
- Bengal under Mughal rule
- Understanding North-Indian Hegemony
- Quasi-independent Bengal
- Nawabi rule
- British in Bengal and The battle of Plassey

Backdrop of Muslim Rule in Medieval Bengal

Social change:

- Bengal x Islam
- Liberation theology x Muslim leadership
- Claims of social cohesion, tolerance, harmony, liberalism
- Trade imperialism and economic expansion
- Muslim population of immigrant Muslims and converted Muslims
- Sufis as agents of Islamization



Muslim Trade & Rule in Bengal

- **8th century arrival of Islam in India.**
Silver coin of Harun-ar-Rashid, an Abbasid Caliph, found at Paharpur, issued in 788

Islamization in India/Bengal:

- **Khilji conquered Bihar in 1203 and Gour in 1204**
- **Bengal for Muslim immigrants**
- **Social liberation from the Hindu caste system**



Bokhtiar Khilji issued coins by using both Sanskrit and Arabic

Root and Route of Islam in Bengal

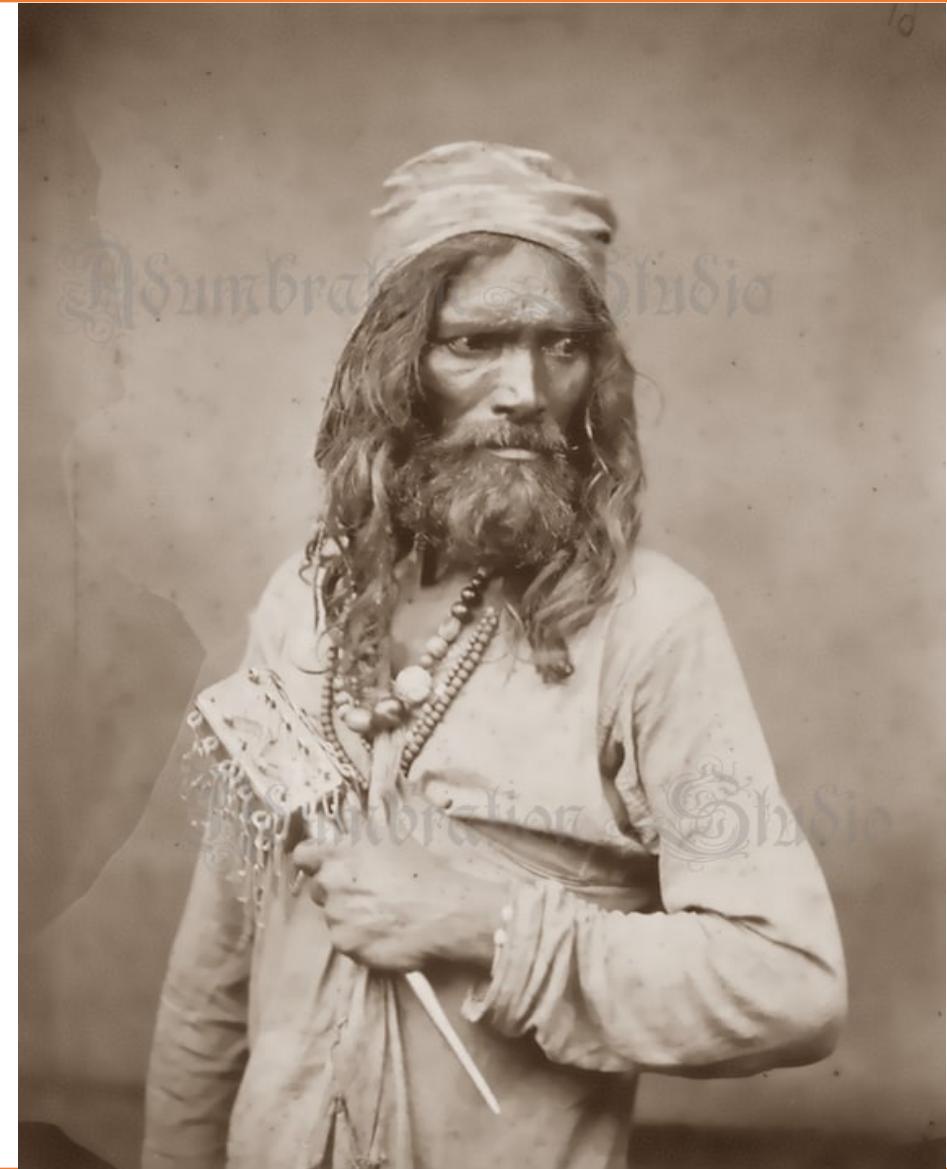
“Many early Bengali saints, whose shrines are located in a large arc extending from the Twenty-four Parganas and Khulna Districts in the south, through Noakhali, Comilla and Sylhet Districts in the east, are associated with the clearing of the jungle and the teaching of wet-rice agriculture, along with, of course, the preaching of Islam. It appears, then, that in this earliest phase of the Islamization of Bengal Muslim pioneers took part in the settlement of this land, and that some of them actually organized the indigenous peoples for purposes of clearing the land for rice cultivation. Overtime, these same indigenous peoples seem in turn to have sanctified those pioneers by whose hands they had become integrated in to an expanding agrarian economy.”

- Richard M. Eaton, cited in the Islamic Heritage of Bengal (Edited by George Michell), Page-26

Sufism in Bengal

Sufism in Bengal:

- Agents of Islamization in Bengal
- Religious missionaries that preach Islamic egalitarian principals
- Advocate of spiritualism to ordinary people
- Sufism is a significant dimension of religious and cultural expression in Islam
- Sufis, Saints and Ulemas played the most important rule in the mass conversion process
- Promotion of syncretic attitude



Root and Route of Islam in Bengal

Increase of the Muslim population in the period 1872—1941.

Census	Total popula-tion in India	Total Muslims in India	Total popula-tion of Bengal Proper	Muslim popula-tion in Bengal Proper	Hindu popula-tion in Bengal Proper.	Remarks.
1872	255 million		36,769,735	16,370,967	18,102,348 16.8 million actual.	Many Animists were enumerated with Hindus. The actual Hindu population was 16.8 million.
1881		49.95 million 19.97 p.c. of total.	35,607,628	17,863,411	17,254,120	Fall of total population because of separation of Sylhet and its inclusion to Assam. Its population was 10 lakhs in 1881 and 11 lakhs in 1891.
1891	287,223,431		38,277,338	19,582,481	18,068,655	
1901				21,907,980	20,150,541	In 10 years Muslim increase was 10 % and Hindu increase 4.8 %
1911				24,237,228	20,945,379	In 10 years Muslim increase 10.4 and Hindu 3.9 %
1921						
1931						
1941	388.9 million	94.45 million 24.28 % of total popula-tion.	70 million approximately	37 million approximately.	31 million approximately.	Because of political pas-sions both Hindus and Muslims inflated their numbers

- N.B.—(1) In 70 years (1872—1941) Indian Population increased by 52 per cent.
 (2) In 60 years (1881—1941) Indian Muslim population nearly doubled (from 49.95 million to 94.45 million).
 (3) In 70 years (1872—1941) Bengali Muslims more than doubled (16 million to 37 million); 131.2 p.c. increase.
 (4) In 1872 Bengali Muslim population was half a million Hindus; in 1891 they surpassed Hindus by a million and half.
 (5) In 70 years (1872—1941) Hindu increase was highest in Ea(17 million to 31 million) 14 million i.e. 82.3 p.c. increase.
 (6) The increase of Muslim population was highest in Eastern Bengal.

The Origin and Growth of the Muslims

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It took nearly a millennium to form majority of Muslim in Bengal or todays Bangladesh. This increase became clearly visible in the census of 1872-1941.

Bengali language and literature

The evolution of Bengali from Sanskrit and Arab-Persian languages

Ma-Huan, a Chinese traveler visited Bengal in 1433 commented “although Persian was spoken by some in the Muslim court, the language in universal use is Bengali”.

- Richard M. Eaton, cited in the Islamic Heritage of Bengal (Edited by George Michell), Page-29

Development of Bengali language and literature

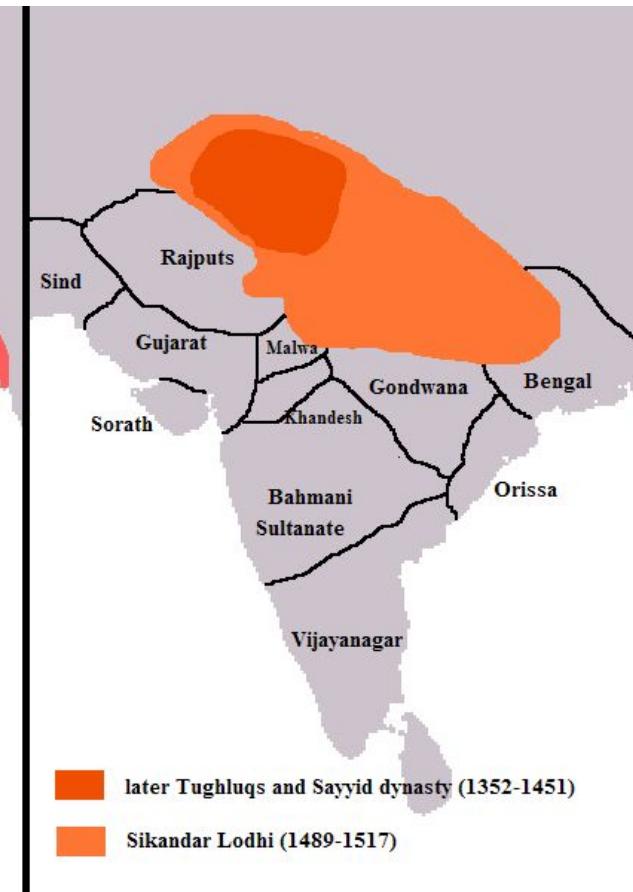
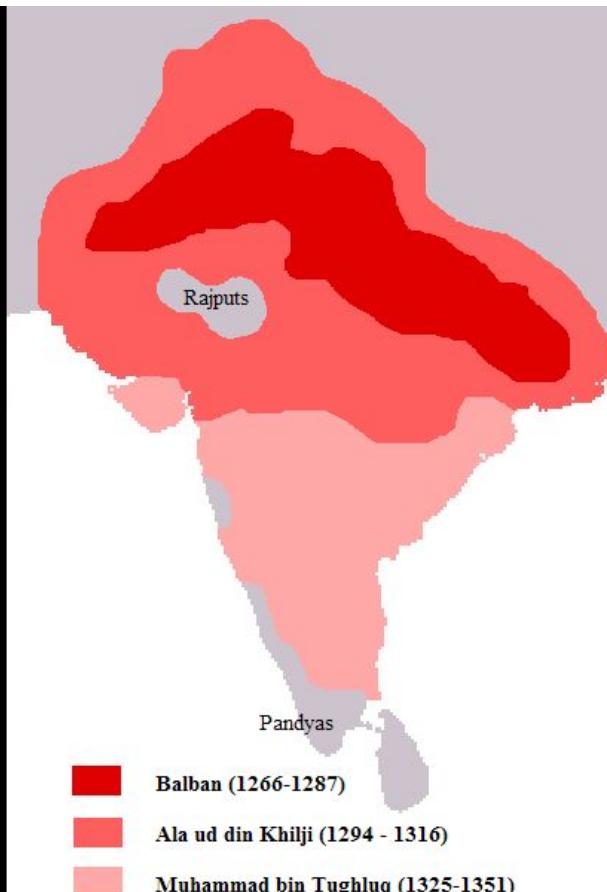
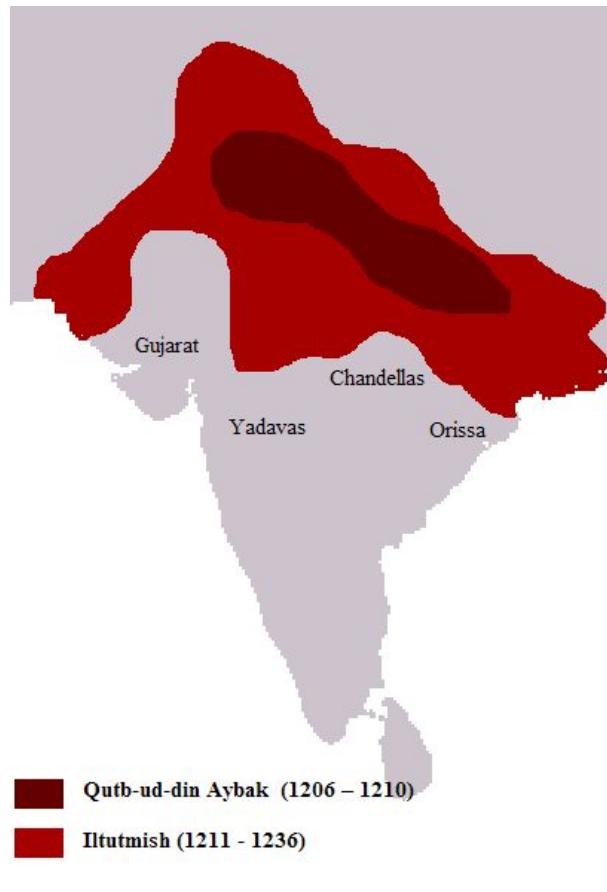


The Delhi Sultanate

- Medieval empire
- 5 ruling dynasties over 320 years
- Rapid Muslim conquests deep into South India
- Political transformation
- North-Indian hegemony was not a religious factor, rather was a part of expansion of imperialism (happened in Morya rule, Gupta rule, Pala rule, Sena rule, even during Muslim period)
- **Ghiyas-Ud-Din Iwaz Khilji (1212-1227), a Governor of Delhi Sultan Iltutmish (a ruler of Mamluk dynasty)**

Bengal under Delhi Sultans

- North Indian Hegemony continued
- Bengal was a province of Delhi up to 1338
- Bengal used to be known as the city of rebellion due to its frequent revolt against Delhi Sultans



The First Independent Muslim ruler of Bengal

- Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah was the first Independent Muslim sultan (1338-1350)
- Sonargaon was his capital
- Constructed a royal road from Chandpur to Chottogram
- Patron of art, literature, culture, and Sufism



Coins of Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah



Moroccan Traveller Ibn Batuta
Came to Bengal in 1345 – 46.

Visited Hazrat Shah Jalal

Independent Sultanate in Bengal

Ilyas Shahi dynasty (1342-1487 except some short interregnums)

- Established by Shamsuddin Ilyas Shah (1342-1357)
- Initially ruled Lakhnauti, later conquered Satgaon and Sonargaon
- He united Bengal and titled himself as Shah –E –Bangala or Sultan-E-Bangala
- Pandua, a city of Maldah district, was the capital
- He promoted the participation of local people in the administration
- Another prominent ruler was Giasuddin Azam Shah (1393-1409)
- GAS was the patron of art and Bengali language and literature. For instance, Shah Sagir wrote Yusuf Julekha in response to the request of Sultan. Ramayana got translated into Bengali by Krittibas
- Ilyas Shahi rulers were the patron of Muslim art and culture

Independent Sultanate in Bengal

Ilyas Shahi architecture



Adina Mosque, the largest mosque in Indian-sub Continent at that time was built by Sikandar Shah

Shat Gombuj Mosque was built by Khan Jahan Ali, a governor of Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah

Independent Sultanate in Bengal

Husain Shahi dynasty (1494-1538)

- Established by Alauddin Husain Shah
- Golden Age of Bengal
- Conquered Assam, Kamrup, Teppera, Jajnagar and Chittagong
- Gaur/Lakhnauti, a city of Maldah district, was the capital
- He and his successors promoted the participation of local Hindu people in the administration. His Private Secretary Rupa Goswami and several ministers were from Hindu religion, specially the followers of Vaishnavism.
- Religious tolerance and pluralism
- Monoshamongal was written by Vijoy Gupta
- Maha Bharat was translated into Bengali
- They patronized the development of Vaishnavism
- Appointed Vaishnavis and liberal Hindus in their court



Coins of Alauddin Husain Shah

Mughal rule in Bengal

- Disintegration of Bengal Sultanate, and North-Indian hegemony
- Rise of Sher Sha Sur and Karrani dynasty
- Babur started Mughal Rule in Delhi in 1526
- Akbar conquered Bengal in 1576, and consolidated Mughal rule in Bengal
- Mughal supremacy was challenged by regional Bengali chieftains or Baro-Bhuiyaans



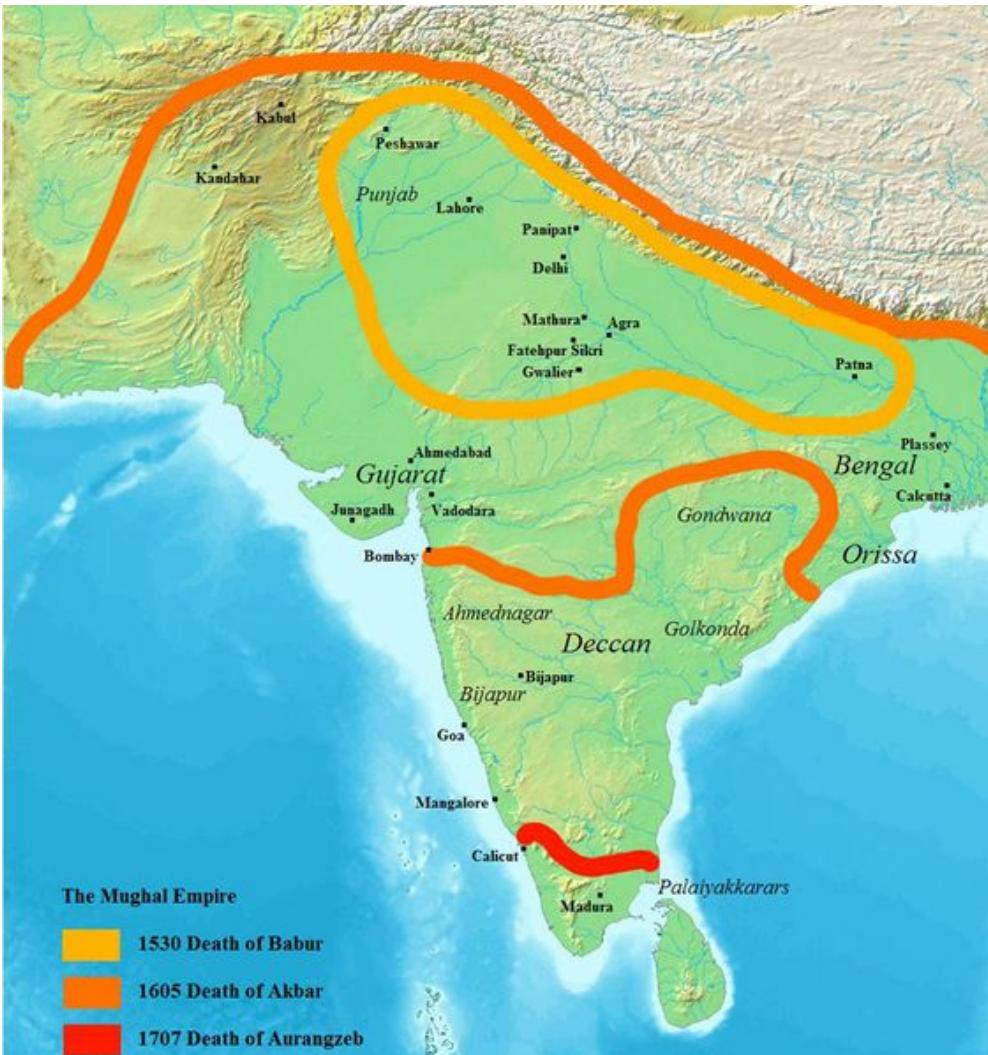
Palace of Isa Kha
at Sonargaon, Narayanganj



Isa Kha, one of the
Baro-Bhuiyaas

Mughal rule in Bengal

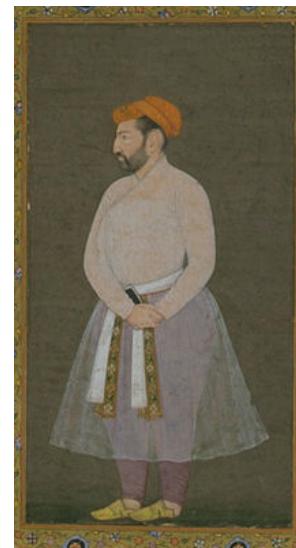
The trajectory of Mughal rule in Bengal



Bengal under Mughal Subedar or Governors



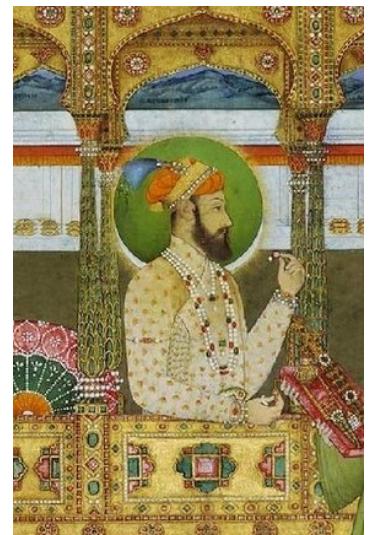
Prince Shah Shuja



Mir Jumla

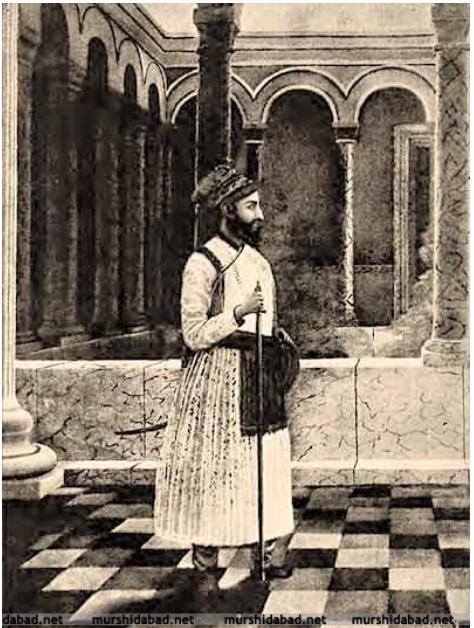


Shaista Khan



Prince Azimuddin

Backdrop of Bengal coming under Nawabs



Murshid Quli Khan

Alivardi Khan

Sirajuddaula

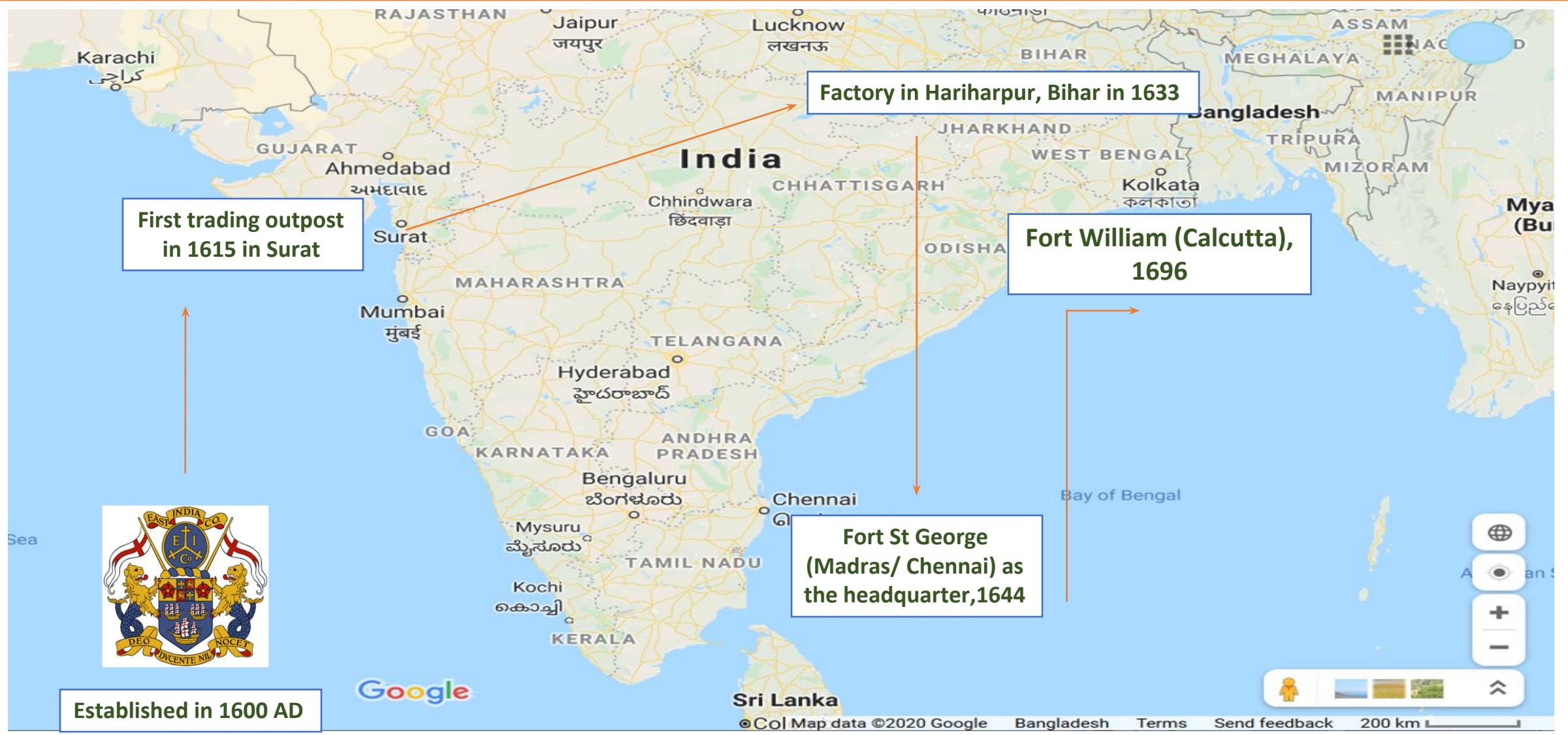
Lalbagh Fort, a Mughal architecture

- **Emperor Akbar was one of the greatest rulers in Asia**
- **Patron of arts, culture and education**
- **Pluralism in the society and administration, and religious tolerance**
- **Mughal India was wealthier than contemporary European states**
- **Bengal turned into one of the wealthiest province of Mughal Empire**
- **Decay of Mughal central authority after the death of Aurangajeb in 1707**
- **Bengal turned int a quasi-independent entity during Murshid Quli Khan**

Bengal under Nawabs

- Central Mughal rule contentiously suffered from internal clash and weakness
- European traders took the chance of weakness
- European traders built forts, maintained mercenary army/Sipahi, often took part in the palace conspiracy
- European trade created an affluent and wealthy business class, who also often took part in palace conspiracy
- Battle of Polashy in 1757

British East India Company in India



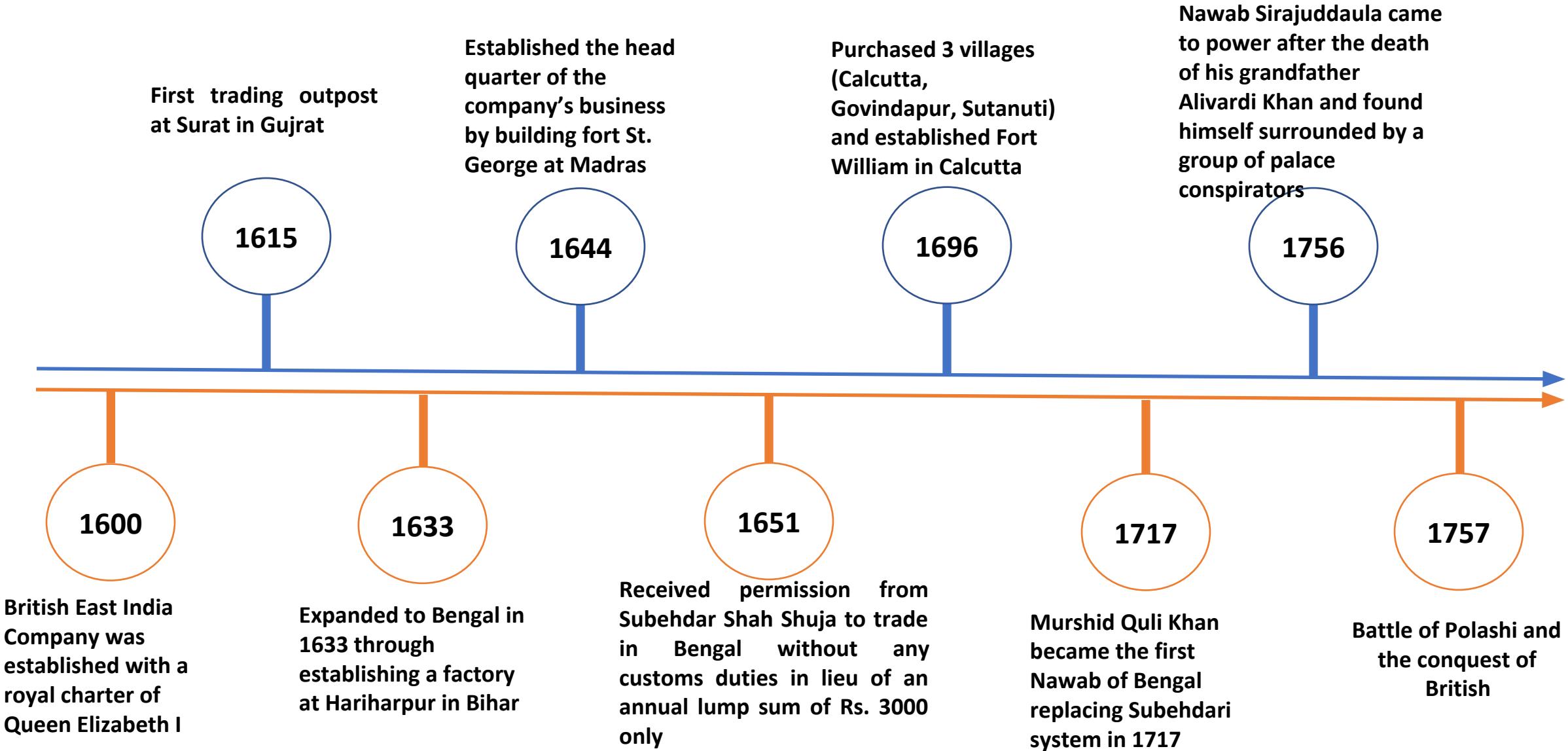
Fort William in Calcutta



Fort William in the Kingdom of BENGALE.
Belonging to the East India Company of England.

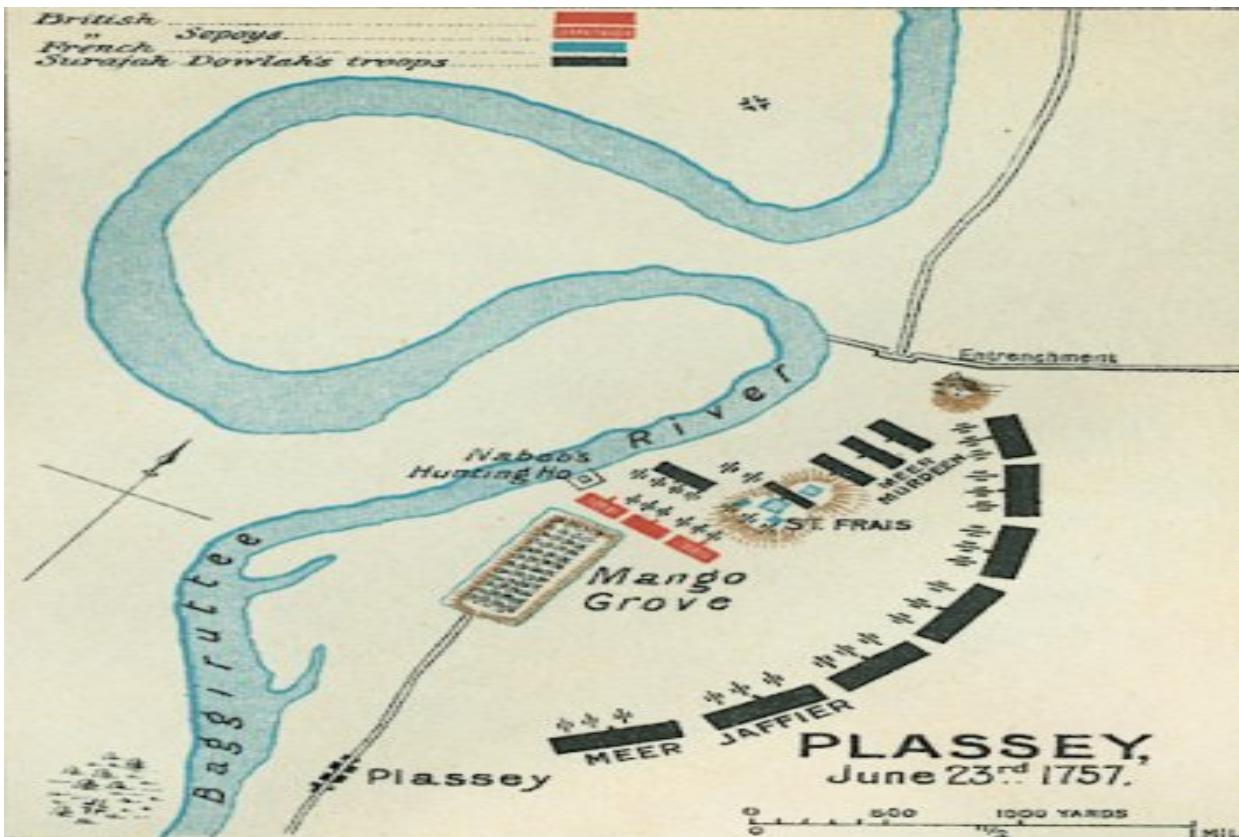
Le Fort Guillaume dans le Royaume de BENGALE.
Appartenant à la Compagnie Anglaise des Indes Orientales.

Timeline: British East India Company Takes over Bengal



The Company and the Conquest of Bengal

Robert Clive conspires with Mir Jafar and others in Bengal against Sirajuddaula, and defeats him in the battle of Polashi



The Masterminds of the Conspiracy



Mir Jafar and his son Miran



Robert Clive



**Robert Clive meeting with Mir Jafar
after Polashi, by Francis Hayman**



**Mir Jafar and his son Miran delivering the treaty
of 1757 to William Watts (chief of the Kasimbazar
factory of the British East India Company)**

Aftermath of the Battle

Nawab Sirajuddaula was defeated and killed

Mir Jafar became the puppet Nawab

Company became the king maker

Battle of Buxar and the defeat of Mir Kasim

Colonial rule started which lasted for 190 years

Company Takes over the Diwani



Immediately after the battle of Buxar, Shah Alam II granted the Diwani right over Bengal to the East India Company in 1765, allowing it to collect revenue

Aspirations for an Empire

After the battle of Buxar, Clive wrote to England:

"We have at last arrived at that critical Conjuncture, which I have long foreseen,' he wrote to the chairman of the EIC. 'I mean that Conjuncture which renders it necessary for us to determine whether we can, or shall, take the whole [Mughal Empire] to ourselves."

Source: Dalrymple, William, *The Anarchy: The East India Company, Corporate Violence, and the Pillage of an Empire* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019), pp. 215.

Suggested Readings

Required Reading:

Salahuddin, A. F. (2004). *Bangladesh National Culture and Heritage*. Dhaka : IUB.

Pages: 95-115

Recommended Readings:

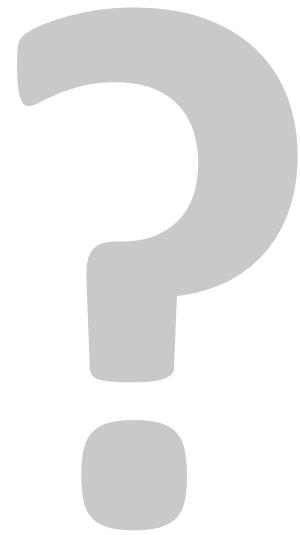
Rahim, M. A. (1963). *Social and Cultural History of Bengal* . Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society.

Sengupta, N. (2011). *Land of Two Rivers*. India: Penguin Books

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Rahim, M. A., Choudhury, A. M., Mahmud, A. B. M. & Islam, S. (2005). *Bangladeshher Etihash (History of Bangladesh)*. Dhaka: Nouruj Kitabistan.

Ahmed, R. (ed.). (2001). *Understanding Bengal Muslims*. Oxford University Press.



British India (1757-1857): Colonialism, Reform and Resistance