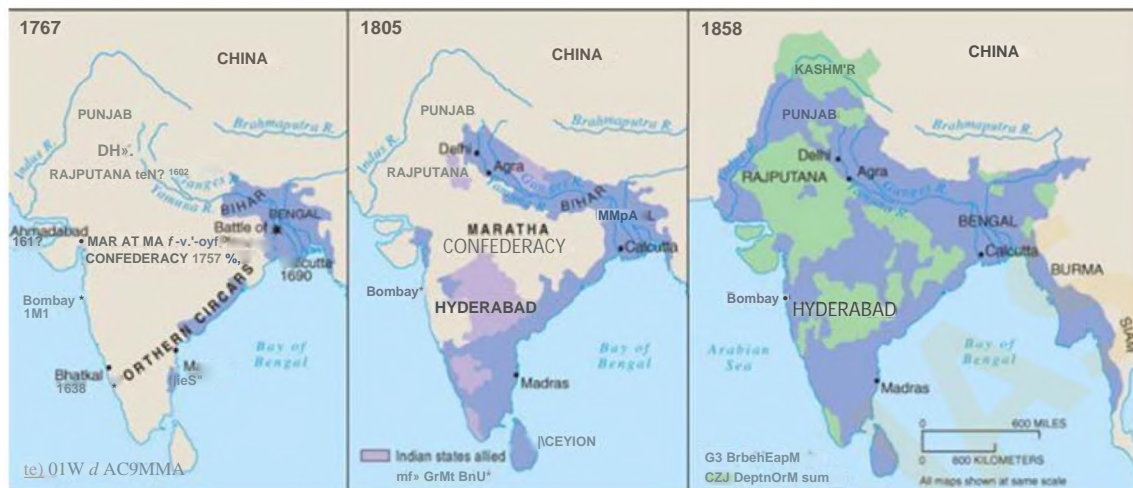


Modern India 2024

Handout 5: Conquest of Bengal (Plassey and Buxar)

Nikhil Sheth



Years	Phase	Governors (General)	Major Wars and Conquests
1757-1813	Mercantile Phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robert Clive (1758-60) Henry Vansittart (1760-64) Robert Clive (1765-67) Warren Hastings (1772-73) Warren Hastings (1773-85) Cornwallis (1786-93) Richard Wellesley (1798-05) Lord Minto (1807-13) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carnatic Wars Bengal - Plassey and Buxar Four Anglo-Mysore Wars Two Rohilla Wars First and Second Anglo-Maratha War
1813-1858	Industrial Phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lord Hastings (1813-23) Lord Amherst (1823-28) William Bentinck (1828-35) Lord Auckland (1836-42) Lord Ellenborough (1842-44) Henry Hardinge (1844-48) Dalhousie (1848-56) Lord Canning (1856-58) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Third Anglo-Maratha War Annexation of Sindh First Anglo-Afghan War Gorkha War Two Burmese Wars Gwalior War Two Anglo-Sikh Wars Annexations, Subjugation of Princely States and Doctrine of Lapse
1858 onwards	Financial Phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lord Canning (1858-62) Lawrence (1864-69) Earl of Mayo (1869-72) Lord Northbrook (1872-76) Lytton (1876-80) Ripon (1880-84) Dufferin (1884-88) Lansdowne (1888-94) Elgin (1894-99) Lord Curzon (1899-1905) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bhutan War Second Anglo-Afghan War Third Burmese War Tibet Expedition

The Conquest of Bengal

Rich resources of Bengal were known since ancient times. **Bernier** (1620-88) wrote "The rich exuberance of the country has given rise to a **proverb** in common use among the Portuguese; English and Dutch that the kingdom of Bengal has a hundred gates open for entrance, but not one for departure."

By the 18th century,

- The Mughal province of Bengal had turned into an independent Nawabi Riyasat under Murshid Quli Khan. He combined both **Diwani** and **Nizami** into one post in **1717** and managed to carve out an independent Nawabi.
- There was fierce competition among various European companies. In the process of mercantile expansion, Bengal had become the hunting ground for Dutch, French and British companies.
- In 1717, **Farrukhsiyar** gave firman to the EIC which conferred on it the right to custom-free trade in Bengal at the payment of Rs. 3000/year. The firman also contained other important concessions-the rent of 38 villages adjacent to Calcutta, the permission to use the royal mint for minting coins out of its imported bullion.
 - John Surman was sent from Calcutta to negotiate with the Mughal emperor.
 - Actually, the firman confirmed the privileges granted to the Company in 1691.
 - Rs3000 = £350. At that time Company's exports from Bengal were worth more than £50,000 a year. **6% tax**
 - This firman is also called as Magna Carta of the company.

As the nawabs of Bengal experienced heavy loss to the exchequer due to this, there was always pressure from the provincial administration to compel the English Company to pay more for its trade in the **province**.

- During the era of Murshid Quli Khan, this firman became the fountainhead of commercial abuses pursued by the English merchants. What worried him more was the duty-free private trade carried on by the servants of the Company and their rights to issue dastaks (certificates).
- EIC trade + **private trade** together deprived the Bengal treasury of its due revenue. It was in unscrupulous manner of **swindling and defrauding**. The nawab thus tried to force the English merchants to pay the same custom duty as was paid by other merchants.
- Alivardi Khan came to the throne in 1740 and tried to be relatively more **assertive** over trade privileges. He acted against British and other European companies and also recovered arrears. He occasionally intercepted the goods cargo of foreign merchants and forced them to pay huge sums. Alivardi also didn't allow English and French to fight in Bengal during the First Carnatic war. He opposed their **fortification** in **Calcutta** and **Chandarnagar** and didn't allow them to consolidate their military position in Bengal.
- However, on the whole, both Murshid Quli and Alivardi avoided open conflict with the English and allowed the company to carry out **duty-free** export trade from Bengal, provided the goods genuinely belonged to the company and not to a private trader. Bengal nawabs so far didn't disturb the economic privileges of the Company in the hope that the English trade would bring economic prosperity in Bengal.



Siraj-ud-Daulah (1756-57) succeeded Alivardi Khan as Nawab of Bengal in 1756.

- Succession Issue
 - o His succession was opposed by his aunt Ghasiti Begum, his cousin **Shaukat Jang** (Governor of Purnea) and a section of nobility in the court. But Siraj was quick to smell the plot and detained **Ghaseti** Begum at Moti Jheel palace in Murshidabad. He suspected that the English company was involved in the plot.
 - o Besides this, there was internal dissension within the Nawab's court. Jagat Seth, Umichand, Raj Ballabh, Rai Durlabh, Mir **Jafar** and others who were also opposed to Siraj.
- Straining Siraj-Company relations
 - o There was a serious threat to Nawab's position from the growing commercial activity of the English Company. On his accession, English company didn't provide customary nazrana, as all other **foreign** merchants did. A suspicion grew in Siraj's mind that the English were hostile to him and were supporting his rivals.
 - o Siraj decided to take hard-line towards the English. Siraj was determined to stop the illegal trade and would not hesitate to use force, if necessary. However, the Company was teeming with confidence after its recent victory over the French in Carnatic and was in no **mood** to tolerate **assertive** nawab of Bengal.
 - o The English were determined to continue the misuse of **dastaks**.
 - o Company officials suspected that Siraj would cut down the privilege of the Company in alliance with the French in Bengal. Without any permission from the Nawab, English tried to expand the fortification around Calcutta, on the pretext of imminent French attack. Siraj saw it as violation of sovereignty.
 - o Company gave shelter to Krishna Das (son of Raj Ballabh) who was one of the chief supporters of the plot, fled with immense wealth against Siraj's will.
 - o Siraj realized that Company was running a *state within state* and it was a direct challenge to his sovereignty. Siraj thus determined to teach the English a good lesson.



Siraj-ud-Daula rides off to war.

Series of events:

<p>Siraj-ud-daula's attack on the English fort at Calcutta precipitated an open conflict.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Si raj seized Kasimbazaar factory and invaded Calcutta. He captured Fort Williams. British had only 500 men there. British ran away to Fulta island under leadership of Drake. Siraj changed the name of Calcutta to Alinagar. • Meanwhile Holwell (junior member Calcutta council) surrendered - Black Hole tragedy. Nawab captured 146 Europeans who were confined to a tiny room for the night. It was alleged that it was too small to accommodate so many people, and thus many of them perished out of suffocation. 
<p>Recapture of Calcutta</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrival of a strong English force (900 Europe, 1500 Indian) under the command of Officer Robert Clive and Vice Admiral Charles Watson to Calcutta from Madras strengthened the British position in Bengal. He captured Calcutta. • Meanwhile Abdali had captured Delhi. Siraj got unnerved and started to conciliate the British. Thus, Treaty of Alinagar (1757) - all company privileges were restored. • Clive also captured and destroyed French Chandarnagar.
<p>Hatching of Conspiracy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This was a sham peace concluded with the Nawab. Meanwhile, Clive was involved in secret negotiations for removing Siraj. Clive became aware of the secret plan to dethrone Siraj (Omi Chand, Mir Jafar, Jagat Seth, Rai Durlabh, Yar Latif Khan) and supported the plot. • Mir Jafar was offered Nawabship in return for the help. Mir Jafar promised to neutralize a section of Nawab's army during Clive's attack on Murshidabad.
<p>Plassey (23 June 1757)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clive marched against Nawab on trivial pretext. Clive now wanted respectable casus belli. He sent letter to Siraj accusing of breaking Alinagar treaty, hobnobbing with French and then without waiting for his reply, he left Calcutta with army and reach Plassey (12 miles south of Murshidabad) • It was a minor skirmish. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 800 Europeans + 2500 Indians versus 50,000 Indians.  <p>Due to Mir Jafar and Rai Durlabh's treachery, the army didn't fight. Only a small group of soldiers led by Mir Madan and Mohanlal fought valiantly. Siraj left the battleground on the request of his loyal associated but was captured later and put to death by Mir Jafar's son Miran.</p>



Calcutta, Plassey, Murshidabad, Munger, Buxar



Battle of Plassey looks very heroic in this painting, which was commissioned by Clive of India. *Was it so?*



Robert Clive meeting with Mir Jafar after the Battle of Plassey



Palashi Monument

Madras had been the headquarters of the Company's activities in 17th century. After the victory at the Battle of Plassey, the EIC moved its headquarters from Madras to Calcutta and Clive became Governor of Bengal in 1765.

Significance of Plassey:

military significance : english victory in battle of plassi is confirm even before the battle is fought is not the superiority of military power but the conspiracy of nawab official that help english side.

political : significance is nothing much because nawab of bangal still the sovereign authority but in the long turn plassey mount begin of the concert of india. history of bangal in 1757-65 is gradual transfer of power from nawab to british

economical significance : immense because company found new kind of political significance to establish political monopoly in the bangal. bangal emerged as a puppet state after the plassey because company exploited the resources every possible way. bangal was forced to pay bangal a contribution of india. the resource gain by company after the plassey are used in anglo french war of carnatic.





Siraj-ud-Daula's palanquin, taken from the battlefield of Plassey.



Clive's loot and acquisitions are on display in the Clive Museum at Powis Castle.

It looks very English, but it contains more Mughal loot that anywhere in India, Pakistan, Afghanistan or Bangladesh.



A simple flat-roofed tomb of Siraj-ud-daula's named Khasbagh at Murshidabad.



The territorial ambitions of the mercantile East India Company were viewed with distrust and doubt in England. After the Battle of Plassey, Robert Clive wrote to William Pitt, one of the Principal Secretaries of State to the English monarch, on 7 January 1759 from Calcutta: *But so large a sovereignty may possibly be an object too extensive for a mercantile Company... I flatter myself... that there will be little or no difficulty in obtaining the absolute possession of these rich kingdoms:... Now I leave you to judge, whether an income yearly of two million sterling with the possession of three provinces... be an object deserving the public attention...*

Mir Jafar and British (1757-60)

In accordance with the secret deal struck before Plassey, Mir Jafar was made the Nawab, but he was supposed to function merely as a puppet. Mir Jafar was made to pay a heavy price to his English friends for their favour.

- Presents and compensation.
- Zamindar of 24 Paragana
- Mint at Calcutta
- Monopoly of saltpetre in Bihar
- Freedom of trade throughout the region
- Nawab to treat all enemies of the companies as his enemies.

Clive estimated later that the English extracted more than 3 crore rupees from him. Servants of the company asked for more presents almost as a matter of right. But the treasury of Murshidabad did not have enough resources to satisfy the demands of Clive and his fellow countrymen. Its fabled treasure was not as rich as imagined. Thus, Mir Jafar's treasury soon got exhausted in meeting the demands of the Company servants.

EIC's incessant demands for money and territory, and constant interference in internal administration, made it impossible for Mir Jafar to run the government. He soon realized his mistake.

Finally, he tried to change one master for another and started secret talks with Dutch, but the Dutch were soon defeated in the naval battle of Chinsura/Bedara in 1759.

Mir Jafar now lost the confidence of the English. The rebellion of Mir Jafar's army for their due salary provided pretext for the British to force Mir Jafar to step down. In 1760, Mir Jafar was replaced with Mir Kasim (Mir Jafar's son-in-law) by a new Governor Henry Vansittart.

Kasim paid large amounts of money (gifts upto 30 lakhs rupees) and gave zamindari of three districts: Burdwan, Midnapore and Chittagong to the English Company. Henry Vansittart and his family received 2 lakh pounds. The greed and nepotism shown by Vansittart was bottomless.



Mir Jafar was an elderly Arab whose family migrated from Iraq originally._



Henry Vansittart,
Governor of Bengal (1759-64)

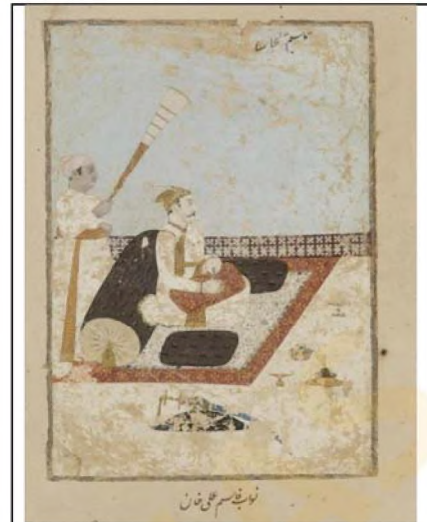
Mir Kasim and British (1760-63)

Mir Kasim had an independent personality of his own. He was an efficient, hard-working, and independent-minded person. He realized that to be independent, a full treasury and a strong army are required.

Now, Company merchants became very aggressive in their behaviour. They were almost looting and plundering the countryside. The Company didn't pay any attention to persistent complaints by Mir Kasim regarding this law-and-order situation. Finally, to restore the order, ensure revenue flow and reorganize the army, Mir Kasim initiated a few steps.

- Shifting the capital from Murshidabad to Munger (Bihar) in order to keep a safe distance from the day-to-day meddling of the Company.
 - Here, he reorganized the bureaucracy by the men of his own choice and purged the pro-EIC elements.
 - Re-modeled the army on western lines to enhance its skill and efficiency.
 - He paid the outstanding dues to soldiers.
 - Several European adventurers like Reinhard (Sumru), Marcat Gentil, Aratoon etc. were admitted to Nawab's army.
 - He set up a factory of arms and ammunition at Munger.
- The issue of misuse of dastaks remained as the bone of contention.
 - In 1757, Clive had secured custom duty exemption from Jafar for company's private trade. However, Indian merchants still had to pay full tax. Mir Kasim retaliated by abolishing internal duties altogether for everyone, thus creating an equal playing field. But English merchants would not have native merchants on equal footing.
- He got investiture from Shah Alam II (Mughal Padshah)
 - This was too much for the English to tolerate.

British now started searching for a suitable replacement of Mir Kasim. But Mir Kasim was not ready to surrender so easily. Therefore, an armed clash between the Nawab and the English became inevitable.



Mir Kasim, son-in-law of Mir Jafar was a second generation Persian immigrant.

Battle of Buxar (Baksar)

In 1763, a regular campaign against Mir Kasim began. Mir Kasim initially defeated the English in battles at [Giria](#), [Udayanala](#) etc. But then Mir Kasim had to flee and took refuge in Awadh. In Awadh, he tried to put up a united resistance against the British with the help of the [Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II](#) and [Nawab Shuja-ud-daula of Awadh](#).

The allied army of the three was routed by Hector [Munroe](#) at Buxar on 22nd October [1764](#). He inflicted a crushing defeat in the fiercely contended battle of Buxar.

Shah Alam submitted to English.

- Shuja fled to [Rohilkhand](#) and Awadh was [overran](#) by British.

Mir Kasim's political career ended here. He became [fugitive](#) and died in extreme poverty as homeless wanderer in Delhi in 1777.

EIC was not entirely confident that it could defeat Shuja in an extensive war. Thus, shortly after the battle, officials of the company made overtures of friendship to the emperor. Negotiations began in right earnest when [Clive](#) returned to India in May 1765 for his second term as the Governor of Bengal.



Hector Munroe

Now, Mir Jafar was brought back as the Nawab. Three districts: [Midnapore](#), [Burdwan](#) and [Chittagong](#) were fully transferred to the English for the maintenance of their army. Also, duty free trade in Bengal (except a duty of 2% on salt) was permitted formally.

Treaty of Allahabad and the beginning of the Dyarchy (1765)

In the summer of 1765 Clive came back as the Governor of Bengal (second term). Clive now engaged himself in completing his [unfinished](#) task, i.e, to make the British the supreme political authority in Bengal.

In August, Clive travelled to Allahabad to pay his respects to the emperor. Then, shuttling between [Allahabad](#) and [Banaras](#) (where Shuja had set up his headquarters).



Mughal Emperor [Shah Alam II](#) as the prisoner of the Company after Buxar

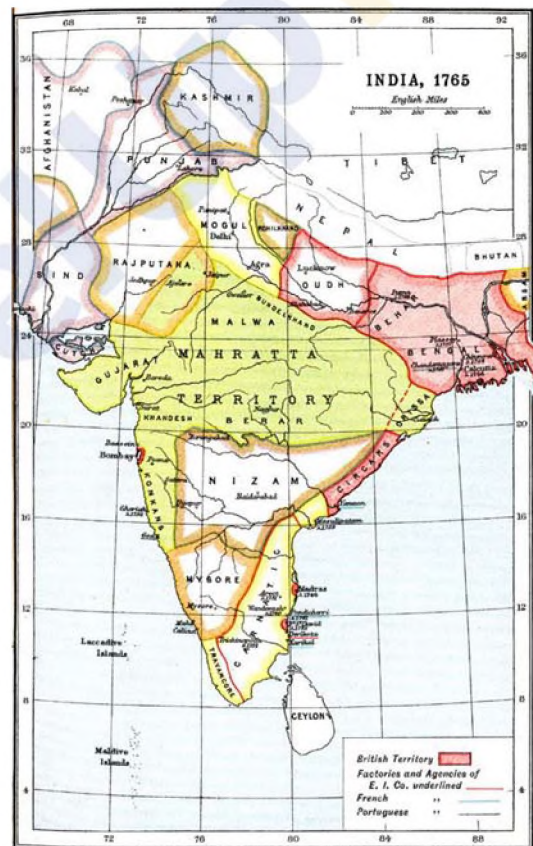


Mughal emperor [Shah Alam](#) hands a scroll to Robert Clive, the governor of Bengal.

Phase 1 of Treaty of Allahabad Robert Clive and Shuja-ud-daula (20 August)	Phase II of Treaty of Allahabad Robert Clive and Shah Alam II (12 August)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shah Alam was to be given Allahabad and the adjoining territories. Chunar to be retained by British. Zamindari of Benaras to be with the family of Balwant Singh under British protection, although formally under Awadh. <p>Nawab to pay 50 lakhs to the Company as war indemnity.</p> <p><u>Nawab to defray the cost of maintenance of the troops for the defence of his frontier.</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The emperor granted by a firman, the <u>Diwani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa to the East India Company</u>. The right of Diwani authorized the Company to collect revenue of the subah of Bengal. Shah Alam was taken under the <u>Company's protection</u>. He was assigned <u>Kara and Allahabad region</u> ceded by Shuja-ud-daula. From now on, Shah Alam was to reside at Allahabad. Company to pay Rs 53 lakh for administrative expenses and Rs 26 Lakhs for personal expenses annually as <u>tribute to the emperor.</u>

Now, while Diwani was with the Company, the Nizamat (responsibility for defence, law and order and the administration of justice) remained in the hands of the Nawabs. Thus, there was a dual government or dyarchy as it was called. Appointment of Muhammad Reza Khan as Naib Subedar marked the virtual end of the British rule in Bengal.

The system of dyarchy actually enabled the Company to establish its supreme control over both Nizamat and Diwani departments, without assuming the direct or formal control of either. The Company thus now enjoyed all the power without any responsibility and the Nawab of Bengal was reduced to a phantom, a man of straw. This arrangement continued till 1772 when Bengal was brought under direct British control.



the battle of buxar gave company complete policial control over the bangal thus it was more decisive than plassey

- 1) it most **decisive** battle ever fought in this battle three of most important indian power defeated simultaneously mughal empor shal alam 2 came under british protection while state of auvadha came under indirect under compony
- 2) the outcome of the battle devised by the **quality** of leader and strengths of the arms, compair to plassey which won by **traiacy** buxer was fearsly constated battle it was superior leadership of hector munuro. british demonstrated the art of order.

the victory of buxer comfirm the virdict of plassey.plassey makes puppets by british but the buxer unchallenged master of bangal

company established the commersial monopoly over the bangal
defeat of siraj udola and the mughal empore confirm the degeneration the army was not confime to navab but the goveral general of bangal.

- 4) the company emerge the real master of resources of bangal with the right of dewani





Additional Information
Internal Reforms by Clive as Governor of Bengal

1. Within the company, Clive enforced his authority by accepting some resignations and enforcing others.
2. Gifts amounting to a value of more than 4,000 rupees were forbidden, and those between that figure and 1,000 rupees were only to be received with official consent.
3. The regulation of private trade was more difficult, for the company paid virtually no salaries. Clive formed a Society of Trade, which operated the salt monopoly, to provide salaries on a graduated scale.
4. Clive dealt with overgrown military allowances with equal vigour, overcoming a white mutiny headed by a brigade commander (1766). He used a legacy from Mir Jafar to start the first pension fund for the Indian army.