INTRODUCTION

1) Sources

ii) Origin and Development of Sufism in Islam

iii) The Advent of Islam and Early History of Sufism in India

iv) The Advent of Islam in Bengal
1) SOURCES

No attempt has so far been made to reconstruct the history of Sufism in Bengal. The histories of Bengal, like those of many other parts of the subcontinent, mainly deal with courts and political developments only because the Persian chronicles, which are the chief sources of Muslim history, confine themselves to a narration of political events. On Bengal also number of works have been produced dealing 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 Development of Sufism in 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 Development of Sufism in Bengal can be reconstructed.

These materials fall into following groups:

(a) Persian Works.
(b) Inscriptions and Coins.
(c) Hagiological literature.
(d) Bengali Works.

(a) Persian Works

1. Tabagat-i-Nasiri of Abu Umar Minhaj al-Din Uthman bin Siraj al-Din al Juzjani\(^1\) is the earliest chronicle referring to Bengal. The work is a general history of Islam but the author devotes a section\(^2\) on Bengal while dealing with the Sultans of Delhi and their officers connected with affairs of Bengal.\(^3\) The author visited Bengal during the governorship of Malik 'Izzal-Din Tughral Tughan Khan.\(^4\) He received patronage from the Said Malik, joined the War against the king of Orissa and acted as mediator between his patron and Malik Tamar Khan Qiran, Governor of Oudh, when they were quarrelling for the possession of Lakhnawti.\(^5\) The book gives only a chronicle

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2. See, Tabaqat No.20.
3. See for example, Tabaqat Nos.21 & 22.
5. Ibid, pp. 245 - 46.
of political events. References to the arrival of Muslim divines and the construction of Khanqahs in Bengal are limited. Nevertheless it is of importance, as it is the only Chronicle which supplies information about the foundation of Muslim rule in Bengal.

2. **Ayn-i-Akbari** of Abu'l Fadl written under the great Mughal emperor Akbar. The third volume of Ain-i-Akbari devotes one chapter on Sufism in which some of the Bengal Sufis have been included.

3. **Riyad al-Salatin**\(^1\) of Ghulam Husa'yn Salim, which was written at the instance of George Udney in the year A.D.1788, gives a connected summary account of political history of Bengal, based on published materials of the Mughal period and the local traditions that the author could gather in Maldah (Bengal). From this chronicle, we can shift materials for our own purpose.

4. **Khurshid-i Jahan Numa**\(^2\) of Sayyid Ilahi Baksh, covers the political history of Bengal. It does not add any new information.

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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.

(b) **Inscriptions and Coins**

Contemporary inscriptions and coins have been discovered in large number. Their chief importance lies in the fact that they help in building up the chronology of the Sufis and Sultans. The reference to the erection of mosques and madrasahs, the names of Sufis, 'Alims and the learned officers and Kings found on inscriptions indicate Sultans attitude towards the Sufi Saints of Islam, and also show, their learning and particular inclinations and sometimes dynamistic relations.

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1. The original translations are nowhere available at the present time, but a second Persian recension made several years after by an anonymous writer is now available in different libraries of Europe and Islamic countries. (For details see, *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society, Karachi, Vol. I, Part I, January 1953, p. 53, note 1*). Recently Qazi Ahmad Miyan Akhtar of Junagadh has published the preface of this second recension and the titles of chapters of the book in the *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society, Karachi, Vol. I, Part I, January 1953*. Eth 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-hayat*. According to him, the book, Amritkund was translated by one Kanama, a Brahmin of Kamrup, who accepted Islam when Sultan 'Ala al-Din Khalji 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. Eth probably confused between 'Ala al-Din Khalji and 'Ali Mardan Khalji, because at the present state of our knowledge we know that Sultan Ala al-Din Khalji never invaded nor conquered Bengal.
(c) Hagiological Literature

The Muslim hagiological literature may be divided into three parts -(i) the Biographies of the Sufis, (ii) the malfuzat or discourses of the Sufis and (iii) Maktubat or letters written by the Sufis. Bengal was the seat of a large number of Sufis, but very few of their malfuzat or maktubat have come to light.

1. The biographies of the Sufis

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

The earliest known biographical dictionary of Sufis written in India is the Siyaru’l-Auliya fi Muhabbat al-Hagg jalla wa ala; simply known as the Siyaru’l-Auliya' which was the work of Sayyid Muhammad bin Mubarak bin Muhammad Alwi Kirmani known as Amir or Mir Khwur.¹ Siyar al-auliya', contains

1. Amir Khwurd, was the grandson of Sayyid Muhammad bin Mahbud Kirmani, a merchant who in the course of his journeyings between Kirman in Iran and Lahore used to meet Shaikh Farid al-Din Gajj-i Shakar, who was known as Baba Farid at Ajod'han and became his disciple. Sayyid Ahmad Kirmani, an uncle of Sayyid Muhammad bin Mahmud, an officer in the Multan mint, married his daughter to Sayyid Muhammad. Although his father-in-law pressed him to remain in Multan and for about eighteen years loyally served his pîq. After Baba Farid’s death, the Shaikh and his sons migrated to Delhi and became great companions of Shaikh Nizamud-Din Auliya. Sayyid Muhammad died in 711/1311-12 and was buried at Delhi. His grandson, m.b. Mubarak, received his initiation into Sufism in Childhood from Shaikh Nizam al-Din. Subsequently he became the disciple Contd....next
lives of Chishti Saints, written in the reign of Firoz Shah Tughlaq (752-90/1351-88), when the author was fifty years old and divided into ten babs or chapters (1) Shaikhs of the order from the Prophet to Nizam al-Din Auliya (2) Khalifahs of Munu'd-Din Sijzi, Qutbal-Din Bakhtyar and Farid u'd-Din (3) descendants of Faridu'd-Din, relatives of Nizam[u'd-Din and Sayyid's of the author's family, (4) Khalifahs of Nizam al-Din (5) some friends who had the honour of being murid and intimates of Nizam[u'd-Din (6) duties of Khalifahs and murids (7) forms of prayer used by Faridu'd-Din and Nizanau'd-Din (8) mystic love and visions of God (9) Sama (music, trances and dancing), (10) Sayings and letters of Nizam[u'd-Din.

In this book Amir Khurd devotes a section to Shaykh Akhi Siraj al-Din 'Uthman.¹

Two other biographies that deal with a few Bengal Saints are of later date. They are Akhbar al-Akhyar-fi Asrarul

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of Nasir al-Din Mahmud Chiragn i-Dinli. Amir Khurd obtained a high degree of scholastic education. His association with such literary giants as Amir Khusraw, Amir Hasan, Fakhru'd-Din Zarradi and Ziya'ud-Din Barani helped to develop his own intellectual and mystical sensitivities.

¹. Ghulam Ahmad Khan has published an Urdu translation of this book from Muslim Press, Dehli.
Abrar¹ of Shaykh 'Abdul-Haqq Muhaddith Dihlawi² and Mirat al-Asrar³ of Abdu'r-Rahman Chishti.⁴ Both the works deal more with the activities of the Sufis outside Bengal, than their activities in Bengal proper. Akhbaru'l-Akhyar fi Asraru'l Abrar which incorporated 225 biographies of Indian saints. The book began with a note on Shaikh 'Abdu'l Qadir Jilani and ended with an account of the author's own ancestry and his own life. Akhbaru'l Akhyar was written before A.D.


2. Abdu'l-Haqq bin Saifu'd-Din al Turk a Dihlawi, A.D. 1551 and died in 1642-3. He had his education in India and Hejaz. Being trained as a scholar of Hadith, he was famous as a muhaddis. Shaikh 'Abdul-Haqq was a masterly critic of Hadith and was therefore well-equipped to investigate the authenticity and historical value of religious traditions. His long life was spent in an unremitting pursuit of knowledge.

3. Mirat al-asrar, biographies of numerous saints from the early days of Islam to Husam al-Din Manikpuri (d. 853/1449). The book was started in 1045/1635 and completed in 1065/1654. (MS. Nos.16 A.R./143 of the Dacca University Library).

4. Shaikh Abdur Rahman Chishti, a descendant of Shaikh Ahmad 'Abdu'l-Haqq of Raudauli, who succeeded to the leadership of the Chishti order in 1032/1622. He died in 1683.
available at the time and contains the biographies of 575 sufis. The Gulzar-i-Abrar was dedicated to the Emperor Jahangir. Gulzar-i-Abrar contains lives of many Sufis of Bengal. The contemporary biography Manaqibat-Asfiya of Shah Shuiayb deals with only Makhdum al-Mulk Shaykh Sharf al-Din Yahya Maneri. In this connection the book makes casual reference to Sharf al-Din Abu-Tawwamah, the teacher of Makhdum al-Mulk who passed his later life in Sunargawn and Mawlana Taqi al-Din, the teacher of Shaykh Yahya (father of Makhdum al-Mulk) who lived at Mahi Santosh.

Beside these, three other biographies dealing with three different Sufis were written in Bengal. The first is Sekh Subhodya (Shaykh Subhodaya) dealing with the life of Shaykh Jalal al-Din Tabrizi in Bengal. This is a Sanskrit work attributed to Halayudha Misra, a courtier of king Lakshmana Sena. But the book is said to be spurious and is generally dated to 16th century A.D. The second is Risalat al Shuhda, of Muhammad Shattari, dated 17th century A.D. It deals with the life of Shah Ismail Ghazi in Bengal. The third is Suhayl-i-Yaman of Nasir al-Din

1. Extract printed at the end of the Makhtubat-i Sadi.
2. Edited by Sukumar Sen, Calcutta, 1927.
Haydar, dated A.D. 1859. The book deals with the biography of Shah Jalal of Sylhet. Though of very late origin the author had the advantage of consulting two earlier manuscripts, Risalah of Muhi‘al-Din Khadim and Rawdat al-Salatin, now lost to us.

The Malfuzat

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

2. Qhulam Ahmad Khan has published an Urdu translation in Khwajgan-i-Chishti, from Muslim Press, Dehli, A.H. 1348.
3. Sayyid Rukn al-Din Nizami has published Urdu translation from Kutubkhanah-i Mahbubi, Dehli.
4. Muslim Ahmad Nizami has published an Urdu translation with the title Irshad-i-Mahbub from Khwajah Press, Dehli.
Khayr al-Majalis of Qalandar (collection of sayings of Shaykh Nasir al-Din Mahmud, Chiragh-i-Dehli), these books throw some light on the life sketch of Makhdom Shaykh Jalal Tabrizi before his arrival in Bengal. Rafiq al-'Arefin (Malfuzat of Shaykh Husam al-Din Manikpuri) compiled by one of his disciples Farid bin Salar have also been discovered. Prof. Hasan Askari has published the relevant extracts which throw important light on Bengal. As the Shaykh was a disciple of Shaykh Nur Qutb-i-Alam of Pandwah, and as he himself visited Bengal, the materials derived from his malfuzat may claim authenticity and genuineness.

The Maktubat

The following eight letters of Shaykh Nur Qutb-i-Alam have come to light.

1. Ahmad Ali has published an Urdu translation with the title Siraj al-Majalis from Jamia Millia Press, Dehli, A.H. 1347.
No. 1 was written to one Shaykh Qādī Asad.
No. 2 was written to one Shaykh Muiz al-Dīn.
No. 3 was written to one Shaykh Rukn al-Dīn.
No. 4 was written to one Rafʿat Khan.
No. 5 was written to one Qādī Zahid.
No. 6 was written to one anonymous person.
No. 7 was written to one Qādī.
No. 8 was written to some dear one.

All these letters, except the last one deal with Tasawwuf. The last one hints at the interregnum of Raja Ganesa in Bengal’s politics. The letters of Mir Ashraf Jahangir Simnani are as follows:¹

1. One letter to Sultan Ibrahim Sharqi of Jawnpur.
2. One letter to Shaykh Nur Qutb-i-Alam.
3. One letter to Shaykh Husayn Dhukkarposh.

These letters are very important as they throw light on to the condition of the Muslim divines during the time of the interregnum of Raja Ganesa and the resultant invasion of Bengal by Sultan Ibrahim Sharqi of Jawnpur.

Beside the hagiological literature, a large number of traditions are current in different parts of the country about various Sufis. Though traditions hardly offer good materials for the reconstruction of the history, they sometimes corroborate other evidences.

Accounts of a foreign traveller

It was Ibn-Battutah, who visited Bengal during the 14th century. His intention of visiting Bengal, as he himself says was to meet Shaykh Jalalu'd-Din Tabrizi in the hilly region of Kamrup. 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 Sufi, he met. He also records the attitude of the ruling Sultan towards the Muslim faqirs.

(d) Bengali Works

Satnama (satnamah) and Nitisastravarta of Muzammil deal with some popular beliefs of the Muslims in Bengal such as

1. For traditions see, District Gazetteers of Bengal.
3. See for example, Indian Historical Quarterly, 1942, pp. 65-70.
Faraidi doctrines.

_Nazim al-Din: Puthi_, pp. 1-120, in Bengali dealing with Faraidi doctrines. The title page and the preface of the work and a few pages at the end of the book, are missing. The first 31 and odd pages of Nazim al-Din's work gives us an idea of the Faraidi attitude towards the important problems of _ijtihad_ (i.e. the principle of fresh investigation into the points of law and rules of morality) and _taqlid_ (i.e. initiation of the authoritative prescriptions of the schools of law).

_Muslim Ratnahar_, the authorship attributed to Wazir Ali, being a sketch of life and career of the Faraidi leaders from the earliest time down to B.S. 1335. It consists of 55 pages and was carelessly written.

_Haji Shariat Allah_, by Munshi 'Abd al Halim, a manuscript biography of Haji Shariat Allah, in Bengali, 22 folios. The author died in the year 1928 or 1929, at the age of 70.

_Hayate Uwaysi_, by Maulana Jainul Abedin Akhtari, a short biography of Sayyid Shah Sufi Fateh Ali Uwaysi (d. 1886) written in Bengali.


Data Baba Pir Mahbub Shah by M. Abdur Rahman, a short biography of Data Baba Pir Mahbub Shah. The author is an advocate, sahitya-Bharati, Katwa, Burdwan and a resident of Nimra, P.O. Kirnahar, Birbhum. Some other important books of the same author are as follows:
Hazrat Kirmani, Shaheed Bir Titu Mir, Sufi Mahila Tin Rabia and Paigambar Pria.


Bangladeshir Pir Auliya Gan by Maulana Muhammad Ubaidul Haq, Principal, Fani Alia Madrasa, Bangladesh. Published by Rashid and Brothers, Hamidia Library, Fani, Noakhali. The book is written in Bengali language which contains life and activities of one hundred ninety one Sufi Saints of Bengal.

Tazkirah Auliya i Bangal by Maulana Ubaidul Haq, the book is written in Urdu, which contains lives and activities of Bengal Saints.

Aiynai Uwaysi by Prof. Mohammad Motiur Rahman, which contains lives and activities of Naqshbandi Sufi Saints of India during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The work also deal with the activities of the Sufis of Bengal. The book is dedicated to Muhtaram Janab Alhaj Hazrat Azuddin Khan, Reader, Deptt. of Islamic Studies, A.M.U., Aligarh.
In these studies, the Development of Sufism in Bengal did not receive as much attention as it deserves in its socio-religious aspects. 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 Development of Sufism in Bengal.
ORIGIN OF SUFISM

The Muslim scholars favoured its derivation from "Ahl-us Suffa" (the ascetics who lived in the Prophet's mosque). Some of the Sufis themselves associate it with the Arabic Safa (Purity); some derived it from "Saff" meaning line or rank, as Sufis occupied the first rank. Some assert that Sufis is so called because he wears a woolen or rough garment was a symbol of simplicity of life and renunciation of luxury. The Holy Prophet of Islam (Peace be on him) and many early Muslims preferred a plain and simple dress to a guady one even on festive occasions. The word "Aswaf" (Pl of Suf) has been used in the Quran also (XVI: 86) "Sufi" is a name which is given, and has formerly been given, to the perfect saints and spiritual adepts. One of the Shaykh says: Man Saffahu'l-hubb fa huwa Saf-in wa man Saffahu'l habib fa huwa sufiyyun. He that is purified by love is pure and he that is observed in the Beloved and has abandoned all else is a 'Sufi!

Let us now turn to the word "Wali" as the two words (Sufi and Wali) are very often used synonymously. "Wali" means "near," and Wila't signifies nearness or as generally meant, "nearness to Allah" "Wila'it" has two grades: one is meant for all the believers, as the Qur'an says, "God is near (or friend to) those who believe(and) brings them out from.
darkness to light" (11:257); and the other is reserved for those who annihilate themselves in God. The real "Wali", therefore is he who lives in Him, and dies in Him.

The scholars on Sufism have given many subtle definitions of sufism all of which cannot be discussed but some of them mentioned here.

Dhu'l-Nun Misri, says: "The Sufi is he whose language, when speaks in the reality of his state i.e. he says nothing which he is not, when he is silent his conduct explains his state and his state proclaims that he has cut all worldly ties; i.e. all that he says is based on a sound principle and all that he does is pure detachment from the world (tajrid); when he speaks his speech is entirely the truth and when he is silent his actions are wholly 'poverty (faqr). Rubia Basri, says, "The best thing that leads man on to God is that he must not care for any thing of this world or of the next other than God." "Everything bears fruit, and the fruit of knowledge is absorption in God." Junayd Baghdadi says, "Sufism means through dependence of God for life, death and everything else." Maruf al Karkhi says, "Three signs distinguish the saints: (a) their thought is God; (b) their dwelling is with God, and (c) their business is in God." Bayazid based his theory of Pantheism on the verses of the Qura'n, such as, "To Him belongs command and to Him you will return!" (XXVIII:88) "Everything will get back to Allah"
We are for Allah and unto Him we return! (11:55).

Abu'l Hasan Muri says, "Sufism is the renunciation of all selfish pleasures." Ali al Hujwiri explains it, "This renunciation is of two kinds: formal and essential. For example, if one renounces a pleasure and finds pleasure in the renunciation, this is formal renunciation; but if the pleasure renounces him, the pleasure is annihilated and this case falls under the head of true contemplation (wushafadat), therefore renunciation of pleasure is the act of Man, but annihilation of pleasure is the act of God. The act of Man is formal and metaphorical, while the act of God is real!"

Sufism is essentially an Islamic origin. The Qur'an asserts in many places that from the Deity everything has originated and to the Deity everything will ultimately return. He only is eternal, all the rest transient, e.g. "Everything is perishable except his essence. To Him belongs command and to Him you will return! And the poverty of Muhammad (PBUH), whom Allah sent the key of all the treasures that are upon the face of the earth saying Lay no trouble on thyself, but procure every luxury by means of these treasures, and he answered: 'O, Lord, I desire them not! Keep me one day full fed and one day hungry! These are very excellent principles of Sufi conduct. The four caliphs of Islam were extremely
devoted to Allah and His Prophet did the same thing.

Thus the doctrine of Sufism and the derivation of the word "Sufi" whether it is derived from "Ahl-us-Suffa" or from "Safa" (Purity) or from "Saf" (rank) or from "Suf" (wool); in all cases it leads one to conclude that it has its origin and basic root in Islam and a sufi is one who leads a purely religious life and devotes his time for the attainment of Allah's pleasure.

Development of Sufism:

When after the period of the four orthodox caliphs there started political turmoil and civil wars among the Muslims and they were divided into various political and religious groups, a group of pious Muslims separated themselves from this political controversy and devoted their times to prayers and religious duties and remained in isolation. They had completely renounced the world and depended on Allah for everything. These spiritual Muslims were, to all intents and purposes, obviously sufis, whether they were then called by that name or not. In this context Imam Hasan al Basri (d.110 A.H./728 A.D.) is generally regarded as the first Sufi. He had sound knowledge on Islamic theology which he had acquired from the members of the Holy Prophet's own clan. He was the
teacher of Wasiil-bin-Ata, founder of the Rationalistic school of Islam. Abu Hashim (d. 162 A.D./777-78 A.D.) was an Arab of Kufa, who settled in Syria. Jami considers him the first devotee who was given the title of Sufi. Ishaq Ibrahim bin Adam who renounced the throne of Balkh for the attainment of spiritual perfection was a mystic of great repute. He died in 161 A.D. (777 A.D.). Rabia is regarded as one of the greatest Muslims spiritualists the world has ever produced. She died in 160 A.H. (776 A.D.) Maruf Yarkhi (d. 200 A.H./815 A.D.) a sufí saint who retired from the world, and lost himself in communication with the creator was followed by Thawban bin Ibrahim. Dhul Nun Misri (d. 245 A.H./859-60 A.D.), was regarded as a pillar of Islamic mysticism by the Muslims. He was a philosopher and an eminent scholar. Another contemporary Sufi of Dhul Nun Misri was Bayazid (or Abu-Yazid) of Bistam. He introduced the doctrine of self-effacement and self annihilation. In the beginning of Islamic history the holy Prophet was the formation of all religious knowledge. But in the course of time various religious sections i.e. Fiqh, Hadith, Tafsir, developed and took an independent shape. In the same way the Sufi way of life which took an independent shape after the Holy Prophet in course of time as an independent science.

Thus all the three stages of Sufism i.e. ascetic, theosophical and pantheistic evolved from purely Islamic elements.
Junayd of Baghdad (d. 297 A.H./909 A.D.) emphasized that the external path (Shariat) and internal path (Haqiqat) of Islam are essentially two sides of the same picture and that they, far from being antagonistic, corroborate each other. It was Junayd who systematized the mystical doctrines and put them in black and white. It was, however, Imam al-Ghazzali who popularized mysticism among various sections of the Muslims community by reconciling it with the eternal laws of religion (Shariat).

The decline of sufism began when the two halves (external and internal) of Islam were separated. This decay was complete when saints began to constitute themselves into a separate body, with its branches spread all over the world. This body in course of time split into a large number of schools, each having its own monastery and code of laws. The four principal schools of sufism, named after their leaders, from which many sub-schools have emerged, are: (1) Qadiriyyah (after Abdul Qadir Jilani, d. 552 A.H., 1166 A.D.) (2) Suhrawardiyyah (after Shihab-u-Din Suhrawardi d. 632 A.H.); (3) Chishtiyyah (after Abu Ishaq Shami and Khwaja Mu'in ud-Din Chishti, d. 663 A.H.; 1265 A.D.), and (4) Naqshbandiyyah (after Baha-u-d Din Naqshband d. 791 A.H.).

The advent of Islam in India; Early history of Sufism in India

The Muslims arrived in India in three distinct movements; first as traders and missionaries to India's
southern coasts; then in the expanding wave of the Umayyad conquests which carried them to the Rhone, the Syr Darya and the Indus; and finally like the Greeks, the Sakas and the Hans, is more organised conquest cum-immigration movement of the central Asian Turks and Afghans.¹

Muslim Arabs arrived on India's coast in the wake of their pagan ancestors² who had carried on a tradition of maritime trade across the Arabian sea since nearly the dawn of history.

These Arab traders who settled down in India's coasts between the seventh and ninth century were treated with tolerance by Hindu rulers, and the legend of conversion of Cheraman Perumal raja shows that they were allowed to propagate Islam³; they intermarried with indigenous women; some of them joined service under Hindu

1. Ahmad, Aziz, Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment, p.77
Several Muslim communities like the Labbes, the Mapillas (Moplahs) and the Nawait thrived in the south and their descendants still survive.

**Early History of Sufism in India**

Muslim saints reached India in the very early parts of history. They followed the Muslim conquerors and merchants and started their missionary work of propagating Islam among the Indian masses. In the beginning these saints had their individual identities and were not organised into various sufistic orders. They were responsible for converting a large number of Indians to Islam.

Moplahs of the south coast were converted to Islam by the disciples of Malik b. Dinar (d. 744), Dudwalas and pinjaras of Gujrat by al Hallaj (d.921), Labbes of Trichinopoly by Nithar Shah (d. 1039), Memons of Cutch by Yusuf al din Sindi, the Daudpotas of Sind and Baluchistan by the Qutbite missionaries of Sind, the Bohras of Gujrat by Imam Nusaiy in missionaries like Nur Satgar. The tomb of Imam Nasiruddin at Jullundur bears the year of his death as

2. Al-Masudi (Sprenger), i, 152 ff.
945 A.D. Similarly a tomb of another sufi named Al-Khadar reported to be existing in Dacca. Al-Khadar died in 951 A.D.

In 975 A.D. Abu Ishaq of Gazrun appointed Safi-ad-din Gazruni (962-1007), a young boy of seventeen years as his Khalifah and asked him to go to India for the spread of his own creed. He came to Ismaili Kingdom of Multan and settled at Uch. He remained there till his death in 1007 A.D. Another Sufi was Shaikh Ismail who belonged to a noble Saiyid family of Bukhara. He reached India about the year 1005 A.D., and settled at Lahore under Hindu rule. Shah Sultan Rumi reached India during the second half of the eleventh century, and settled in Bengal with his religious preceptor Saiyid Shah Surkh Khul Antiah in the year 445 A.H./1053 A.D. (one old Persian document, executed in the year 1082 A.H./1671 A.D., has revealed the name of Shah Sultan Rumi. It is also known from the same document that the koch king of the locality of Madanpur in Netrakona sub-division of Mymensing district (now in Bangladesh) tried to poison the saint). This saint with his wonderful miraculous power, befuddled the aim of the Raja, who afterwards was obliged to accept Islam and dedicate the whole village to the revered memory of the saint and his future spiritual successors. Another important early saint was Ali al-Hujwiri commonly known as Data Ganj Bakhsh Lahori,

1. Ijazul Haq Qudai, Tazkara-i-Panjab (TSP) P. 39.
the celebrated author of Kashiful Mahjub, who, after visiting many Muslim countries reached India in the latter part of his life and settled at Lahore where he died in 465 A.H./1072 A.D. All al Hujwiri is reported to have converted Rai Raju a Hindu general of the Ghaznavids to Islam. Yusuf Gardezi worked in Multan and died there in 1152 A.D. Some other early sufis in India were, Mir Husain Zanjari, Ahmad Tokhta Lahori (d.1205 A.D.) Yaqub Sadar Diwan Lahori (d.1208 A.D.) and Azizuddin Makki Lahori (d.1215 A.D.) Tokhta Lahori reached Lahore from Trimiz via Kech and Makran, Saiyid Ahmad Ilias Lakhi Data or Sakhi Sarwar of Multan, born of an Arab and from Khokhar mother preached his system at Sadhra and Dhokan in the West Panjab. He died in 1181 A.D. at Shahrut near Multan. Baba Adam Shahid reached India and settled in Bengal during the reign of Raja Balla Sena, with whom he fought for the cause of Islam and courted martyrdom in 1119 A.D. was buried in a village Abdullahpur in Bikrampur, Dacca.

These early sufis had lived with the common people and propagated the laws of Islam and tried to invite them to embrace Islam. It is largely due to their missionary zeal that Islam in the early centuries in India had flourished.

1. Qaduri, Ijazul Haq, Tazkara-i-Panjab (TSP), p.705
2. Ibid, p. 49 Sabahuddin Abdul Rehman, Bazmi Sufi(BS)P.41.
3. Qaduri, TSP, p.332
4. Ibid, p.707
5. The struggle for Empire, p.167
The Advent of Islam in Bengal

Some scholars are of the opinion, that a small Arab kingdom was established in Chittagong during 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 intend 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 as 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 the commercial contact with the Abbasides is indicated by the discovery of a few coins of the Khalifah. One thing is certain that these


2. The earlier theory that a small Arab Kingdom was established in Chittagong, has recently been refuted by A.H. Dani, cf. "Early Muslim Contact with Bengal" in the Proceedings of the Pakistan History Conference, Karachi Session, 1951.

Ref. 3 & 4 are Contd. next page
businessmen created by their honesty a favourable atmosphere for the reception of Islam in Bengal as is traditionally known about the ship-wrecked Muslims who found shelter in Arakan,¹ coming by sea route, are wide spread in the country, but we are not able to examine their veracity or fix them to any definite chronology.

In Eastern Bengal Islam Spread mostly in the villages. H.H. Risley held that the converts were recruited from the aborigines, for their manners and customs, physical appearance and retained caste distinctions are similar² various political, social and religious causes accounted for the progress of Islam in Bengal. The immigrant foreign Muslims who flocked to Bengal for various reasons, political, social and personal, introduced new elements in society. They married Hindu wives.

Foot note from reverse page


4. 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.


2. Titus, Islam in India and Pakistan, 44-45; Herklots, Ja'afar Sharif, Qanuni Islam. Crooke's edn. p.3; H.H. Risely, Tribes and Castes of Bengal; The People of India, ed. by Crooke.
and there were children of mixed marriages. Another factor was the mass conversions of the Hindus mainly among the lower classes, which sometimes took place, as a result of social causes. Bengal was struck by Islam at a period of transition from a debased but popular form of Hinduized Budhism to a various attempt at cultural domination by Brahmanical Hinduism under the Sena Kings. By the tenth century the Bengali mind had already started a campaign against Brahmanism and all that it stood for. The time was thus opportune for Islam to cut the sheet anchor of Hindu ascendancy by converting the sturdy lower classes and fanning the neophytes' fanaticism against the higher classes. Those who embraced Islam came from different ranks in society, mainly the lower classes and occasionally from the higher. The lower classes adopted Islam to escape from social injustice or secure social status. To the poor aborigines of eastern and deltaic Bengal, fishermen, hunters,


pirates and peasants, -the impure or unclean out castes, popularly called the untouchables, spurned and neglected by the caste proud Brahmanical Hindu society, Islam came as a revelation with its message of monotheism and social equality and offered 'full franchise', an escape from the social disabilities and humiliations and opened avenues of progress. So they readily responded to the preachings of Islam.

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.\textsuperscript{1} Ikhtiyaruddin Muhammad ibn Bakhtiyar's surprise sack of Nadia (c. 1203-04) and occupation of Lakhnauti-Gaur, the capital of the Senas of Bengal, ten years after Muhammad Ghuri's establishment of Muslim rule in Northern India (1193) was just a beginning, not the culmination. Nevertheless it inaugurated a new age for Bengal. Dr. J.N. Sarkar has correctly observed, politically it planted the seeds of Muslim rule there. Socially it opened her gates to immigrant foreigners from the entire Muslim World and thereby affected

\textsuperscript{1} Minhaj, p.151, For date see, Indian Historical Quarterly, June, 1954, pp. 133 ff.
her society and culture. 1 Minhaj 2 informs us about the entourage of Bakhtiyar Khalji 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 Bakhtiyar, after occupying a part of the Sena territory, distributed the acquisition among the Khalji nobles, three of whom Muhammad Shiran, 'Ali Mardan and Husam al-Din 'Iwad were the most prominent. The history of these Khalji Amirs, after the death of Bakhtiyar when each of them tried to establish his own authority at Lakhnawi or Dewkot, shows how jealously they clung to their conquered territory. Probably to break this Khalji monopoly and to establish the Delhi Turks hegemony over them Iltutmish personally came to Bengal and later sent his favorite son Nasir al-Din Mahmud, who crushed their power and established, his authority. Subsequent death or probably murder 3 of Mahmud, shows the strength that the Khaljis still possessed in Bengal, and though Ikhtiyar al-Din Balka Khalji acknowledged Iltutmish's suzerainty on his coins, Iltutmish

3. Major Roversy in his translation of Tabagat-i-Nasiri (Bibliotheca Indica), P.775, footnote.
himself was bent on uprooting the Khaljis for ever. Hence he overthrew them root and branch and started the practice of nominating governors from Delhi, the first of whom was Malik 'Ala al Din Jani.

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.