INTRODUCTION

THE POLITICAL BACKGROUND

The Muslims under Ikhtiar-u'd-Din-Ibn-Bakhtyar Khalji (killed in 1206 A.D.) the famous general of Sultan Qutb-u'd-Din (d. 1210 A.D.), conquered Bengal around the year 1203-4 A.D. Ikhtiar-u'd-Din had officially acknowledged the suzerainty of the Sultan of Delhi. But Bengal became a headache to the Sultans of Delhi as successive Rulers of Ikhtiar often threw off the Authority of the Sultans of Delhi.

The climate of this Province, her topography, her wealth...
to a large extent frequent confusion and disorder within the Empire and absence of powerful rule at Delhi often encouraged the provincial rulers of Bengal to defy the Imperial Government. The attitude of the Delhi Sultans towards this province was best illustrated in the remarks of Firuz Shah (1321 - 1388) when he said, "many sovereigns of Delhi had come to Bengal and subdued her but none of them thought it prudent to remain there long as it was a land of \$ (swamps) and its rulers passed their lives in Jazairat i.e. island ⁴." In fact, Bengal could not

6. Bengal separated from the rest of Northern India by the Rajmahal hills & jungles. The passes of Teliageri and Shakrigali were only link passages between Northern India and Bengal. This province, especially its eastern part, was full of rivers & swamps.

7. Bengal was more productive than Egypt, remarked Bernier, a traveller of the Seventeenth Century. Even in the Sixteenth Century, Bengal was the richest country in the world for cotton, sugar, grain and flesh of every kind, as considered by Berthema who visited India in the early part of the same century.

8. Old age of Sultan Balban and repeated Mongol invasions in the North-West Frontiers encouraged Tughril Khan to rise in revolt against the Sultan. Absence of any strong ruler at Delhi from the death of Firuz Shah to the Second battle of Panipath (1556), gave almost walkover to the rulers of Bengal to establish Independent Houses. Haji Ilyas set up independent rule even during the reign of Firuz Shah. Ganesh of Bhaturia and Ala-u'd-Din Hussa in Shah also in later age, set up independent rule in Bengal. Balban's two attempts against Tughril Khan, Firuz Shah's two attempts against Haji Ilyas and Sikandar Shah respectively, had failed.

be kept under the perpetual control by Sultans of Delhi. A number of attempts made by them to subdue this province had also failed. As the result Bengal as an independent province was politically isolated from the rest parts of India.

Even when Mughal authority under the Great Emperor Akbar (1556-1605 A.D.) was firmly established, the Surs at that time ruling in Eastern India including Bengal, chose to maintain friendly relation with the Mughals. The Surs were overthrown by Taj Khan Karrani in 1564. His brother Sulaiman (1556-72) revived the glory of Bengal Sultanate.

Sulaiman Karrani was shrewd enough to acknowledge the authority of Mughal Emperor. After the death of Sulaiman, his son Byazid succeeded him but the latter was overthrown by the Afghan chiefs who placed Sulaiman's younger son Da'ud to the throne. Da'ud defied Mughal authority and incurred the Mughal Emperor's wrath not only by proclaiming independence but also by attacking the out post of Zamania on the eastern frontier of the Empire. Emperor

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10. A Pathan tribe of Afghanistan.
11. Tajkhan was one of the principal officers under Sher Shah. He belonged to the Karranis tribe better known as Kartan is a branch of Pathans of Bangash (modern Kurram).
12. Situated at Ghazipur district in U.P.
Akbar himself marched against the presumptuous governor of Bengal and expelled him from Patna and Hajipur in 1574 A.D. Da'ud was again defeated at the battle of Tukaroi in March 1575 and was ultimately defeated and killed at the battle of Rajmahal in July 1576 and Bengal thus came under the Mughal rule.

Yet Mughal authority could not be firmly established in this province. The Pathans with their independent bent of mind, could not reconcile themselves to the establishment of Mughal authority and continued to create troubles to the Mughals. They, in this province, rose in arms under their leader Ōaman during the governorship of Islam Khan (1608 – 1613). But the Pathans were again defeated and Ōaman died in the battle field for his severe wound. Thereafter the Mughal Emperor Jahangir followed a conciliatory policy towards the turbulent Pathans and admitted them in the service of his State. With the establishment of the Mughal rules in this province, the political isolation of Bengal, as referred earlier ended and this province also with other fifteen provinces enjoyed an uniform administration under the strong control of the Central Government.

13. Islam Khan Chishti was related to the famous saint Salim Chishti.
14. Infra, p. 3
Under the mighty Mughal rulers this province enjoyed a long period of some sort of order and peace and continued peace produced large-scale prosperity.

CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH LED TO THE ARRIVAL OF DIWAN JAFAR KHAN IN BENGAL.

Towards the close of the Seventeenth Century, the revolt of Sova Singh (d. 1698), a Zaminder of Midnapur and Rahim Khan (d. 1698), an Afghan chief of Orissa shaked the very foundation of Mughal rule in Bengal and a large area of this province went out of the control of the Mughal Government.

Strength of the rebels was increased by the joining of some local Zamindars around the Sarkar Makhsudabad (later came to be known as Murshidabad). Ibrahim Khan (1689-1697), Governor of Bengal, an experienced officer...

Order was sometimes disturbed for a short period; for instance, when Prince Khurram rose in rebellion against the Emperor. Similarly, Portuguese and Magh pirates occasionally looted lives and properties of people.

The territory lying between Bardwan to Rajmahal went under the control of the rebels. They also captured the fort of Hughly, looted Makhsudabad and its environs. Raja Krishnaram Ray of Bardwan and Niamat Khan, a jagirdar of Makhsudabad were killed in resisting the rebels.

The Zamindars of Fateh Singh were very important among the Zamindars who had joined the rebels.
but then old in age, could not assess the real strength of the rebels and depended upon the local Foujdar to check the trouble-maker.

When news pertaining to the failure of the provincial Government of Bengal to suppress the rebels, reached to the Emperor Aurangzeb (1658-1707), he removed the old Viceroy and appointed 'Azim-u'd-Din, his grandson, Sułhahdar of Bengal. He also sent Zabardast Khan, son of the Nawab, to march against the rebels. Prince 'Azim-u'd-Din arrived at Burdwan in November, 1697 and finally crushed the rebels. After the suppression of the rebels, the new Viceroy gave himself to ease and pleasure. Soon the Emperor Aurangzeb, in order to strengthen the department of revenue administration of this prosperous province which was supplying huge amount of revenue to the Imperial Government, Nawab Jafar Khan, an experienced and reliable officer from the Deccan, sent him to Bengal as Diwan of the

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18. Foujdar Nurullah Khan himself, instead of facing the rebels, fled to Jessore, Wasteland informs us that Nurullah Khan was a foster brother of Aurangzeb as claimed by his great grand son Hidayetullah in 1798. Nurullah used to live on the bank of the river Kapotakshya.

19. 'Azim-u'd-Din also known as 'Azimush-Shan was the son of Prince Muazzam, son of the Emperor Aurangzeb.

20. Hindu by birth and brought up by one Muhammad Hadi, a Shia Muslim. He was first appointed as Diwan of Bengal + Foujdar of Maukhrodobad in 1700 A.D., with the title Kaptalob Khan. He was conferred the title Murshid-ุ-BIGI on 23rd December, 1702 A.D., was given the title Jafar Khan in 1714 A.D.
province. Nawab Ja'far Khan arrived at Burdwan in 1700 A.D., and with the coming of this new Diwan, a new chapter was opened in the administrative history of Bengal.\footnote{Though Ja'far Khan and his successors as Nazims of Bengal ruled over Bihar and Orissa, we have concentrated our discussions only over the geographical territories of Bengal.}

Nawab Ja'far Khan soon became de facto master of the administrative machinery of the province during the last few years of Aurangzeb's reign.

Within a few years, the last Great Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb died (March 1707), and Nawab Ja'far Khan, for a short period, was transferred from Bengal but he was soon brought back to this province\footnote{Ja'far Khan was transferred from Bengal in 1707 A.D., He was reappointed as Diwan of Bengal in Feb. 1710 A.D.}. Nawab Ja'far Khan's second tenure in Bengal synchronised with the gradual decline of Mughal Imperial authority over this province. But we can not agree with P.B. Calkins when he remarks: "The closer we look, the more evidence we can find that political and economic affairs were conducted vigorously and constructively at the local and provincial levels in many parts of India. The case of Bengal can not be
said to have been typical but at least it is one example of a provincial administrative system which appears to have grown stronger, not weaker, after the death of Aurangzeb and where an elite ruling group which was representative of the political realities of the day coalesced and maintained rather high standard of administrative efficiency. 13.

We however see that the decline of the Central Authority in the first half of the 17th Century, had at best helped Nawab Ja'far Khan to increase his authority over the administration of Bengal yet the successors of Ja'far Khan could not retain their grip over the administration of Bengal and with the decline of Central Authority over this province, the holds of the provincial Officers, as will be evident in the subsequent chapters, also declined. Consequently a neo-richer class, consisting of money-lenders, intermediary businessmen, corrupt officials along with foreign traders exploited the prevalent weakness of the provincial administration and reaped the fruits of prosperity of this province. In reality,

this group emboldened with economic power gradually came to wield political power and controlled the tune of the Provincial Administration. Thus, for instance, we see 'Jagat Seth, the King's Sheroff', had supported Nawab 'Alivardi against Nawab Sarfaraz. He also exercised considerable influence upon the Mughal Emperor to legitimize Alivardi's Nawabship. Earlier he was associated with both Nawab Shuja-u'd-Daula and Nawab Sarfaraz's administration as one of the premier counsels, later he joined hands with Clive in his conspiracy against Nawab Siraj-u'd-Daula. The provincial rulers of Bengal also stood for the causes of this group explicitly or implicitly with their administrative policies.


\textsuperscript{25} Supra, p. 266.

\textsuperscript{26} Supra, pp. 180, 185.
Nawab Ja'far Khan's personal religious and moral scruples coloured his functions. He was efficient enough to keep all the groups under some sort of control but his successors were devoid of religious and moral scruples, lacked the required qualities to keep all the groups under their effective control. The administration of the province then suffered from unchecked corruption, forgery, treachery and tyranny. As a consequence, people had to pay the price for all these vices of the prevalent administration. A true picture of our administration, from top to bottom and condition of the subjects had thus been portrayed by a contemporary European writer: "Every head of a village calls his habitation a darbar (court) and plunders of their meals and roots the wretches of his precinct, from him the Zamindar extorts the small pittance of silver with his penurious tyranny has scrapped altogether; the foujdar seizes upon the greatest share of the Zamindar's collection and then secures the Nawab's favour by voluntary contributions which leave him not possessed of half of his repines and exactions; the Nawab fixes his one every portion of wealth which appears in his province.27. This was also true in case of our province."

27. Historical Fragments of Mughal India. R. Orme, pp. 450-51.