Title : The Spread of Islâm in Bengal in the pre-Mughul period (1204-1538 A.D.) - Context and Trends.

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The origin of the Bengali Muslims became a much debated question after it was found out that they formed the majority of the population of Bengal, especially in the rural areas. This thesis does not tackle the whole problem (origin of the Bengali Muslims); it is primarily concerned with one aspect of it, viewed over a limited period of history which seems peculiarly significant. It starts with the question: how did Islâm spread into Bengal during the pre-Mughul period (1204-1538 A.D.)? The attention is focused on Islâm as a religious belief, in an attempt to review and assess different factors which may account for its spread in Bengal. Chapter I ("Pre-Islamic Bengal") surveys the past history of Bengal and its condition at the time of the Muslim conquest, in order to suggest a link between some trends of that history and the developments of the Muslim period. Chapter II ("Socio-political factors") summarizes the political history of the Muslim period under review, pointing out features which form the context of the religious developments; it examines the part played by the immigration of Muslims from other areas, and discusses the situation of the non-Muslim subjects in relation with the phenomenon of conversion to Islâm. Chapter III ("Religious factors") tries to describe and assess the prominent role played by the Ṣûfî saints in the spread of Islâm in Bengal. Their activities are related to the general background of Ṣûfism in India, to the features of Islâm in Bengal as well as to pre-Islamic history; this suggests a re-assessment of the modern idea of "conversion" as applied to the phenomenon recorded in Bengal during that period.

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The Spread of Islam in Bengal in the PreMughul Period

THE SPREAD OF ISLĀM IN BENGAL

IN THE PRE-MUGHUL PERIOD (1204-1538 A.D.)

Context and Trends

by

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

A problem

To the British administrators of Bengal, the Census of 1872 came as a surprise and a puzzle: the results revealed a larger Muslim population than had ever been thought to exist. When the English magistrates first came in contact with the people of Bengal in 1765, they estimated that the Muslim population was about 1% (1); surveys of Dacca city (1830) and District (1838, 1860) showed a slight majority of Muslims; but up to 1872, the commonly accepted estimate remained that the Muslims represented one third of the total population of Bengal.

The discrepancy between the different estimates mentioned above can be understood as a part of the miscalculations of the British administrators concerning the whole population of Bengal: as noted by Hunter (2), the 1872 Census was the first for the whole of Bengal, and prior to that, the estimates were based on partial and largely unreliable enumerations.

The Census of 1872 showed that in Bengal proper, there were nearly 18 million Muslims, out of a total population of 36.5 millions (3). This astonishing figure formed but a part of the unexpected statistical distribution of Muslims in the whole of India, and it was to be confirmed by

the subsequent Censes (decennial, from 1881): it was not in the great Mughul capitals that the Muslims were most numerous, but in the distant provinces; moreover, in Bengal itself, in centers like Dacca, Patna, Gaur, the Muslims were less than half of the population, whereas in Bakarganj and Tipperah (more remote areas), they formed up to two thirds of the population; and, wherever the Muslims formed the bulk of the population, they belonged to the agricultural class of the people (4).

Since no massive immigration to Bengal had been recorded for centuries, the British administrators explained that situation by saying that the aboriginal inhabitants of the delta had been converted to Islâm, due to various factors: Islâm had been for more than five centuries the creed of the governing power; its missionaries were men of zealous character who spoke to the popular heart; its message of unity of God and equality of men was most appealing to the poor, and gave them a free entrance in a new social order. It is hard to say who first formulated that explanation, but it became commonly accepted by the administrators and writers; it is repeated, sometimes almost word for word, by Risley, Hunter, Wise, Arnold, Titus, and Cotton, usually without adding any new evidence to support that view (5).

As more material became available, closer attention was given to the problem, and more recently, that explanation was directly challenged by a Pakistani scholar, Dr. M. Abdur Rahim: "H. Beverley and H.H. Risley cut the 'Gordian Knot' of the unexpected Muslim majority with the thoughtless observation that the Bengali Muslims were mostly converts from the low caste peoples of Bengal. ... This theory of Risley, which was conveniently accepted by the English and Hindu writers, has prevailed ever since. An honest attempt has been made to solve this question by a study of all contemporary records. It has yielded significant results, which have exploded the view of Risley and have exposed his mischievous notice of humiliating the Bengali Muslims. It has thus given the Muslim people of Bengal their rightful place in the social life of the country." (6)

Dr. Rahim's assertion is perhaps to be understood within the context characterized by Abdul Majed Khan: "Since Beverley's low caste theory originating simultaneously with the first information of the existence of a Muslim mass of people therein and Bengal's upper class Muslim society being really alien both in race and culture, there has been a persistent attempt among the rising middle class to repudiate the Bengali origin. There have been protests both vocal and silent against Beverley's theory. Khan Bahadur Dewan Fazle Rabbi of Murshidabad wrote a whole book (Haqiqat-i-Musalman-i-Bangala, the English translation of which was published as Origin of the Musalmans in Bengal, 1895) to establish that all Bengali Muslims are not low caste Hindu converts but many among them are immigrants at different periods of history from outside. The rising class of educated Bengali Musulmans began increasingly to claim foreign origin and therefore aristocracy." (7)

The same author proposes another approach to the problem when he says: "The whole thesis about the Bengali Muslims centred round two alternatives: either they were low caste Hindus converted to Islam or they were immigrants, Mughal, Syeds, Pathans or at least Shaikhs. The third and possibly the more correct assessment, namely, that they were essentially neither but a distinct cultural entity could never occur to any one." (8)

Scope of this thesis

This thesis in no way pretends to arbitrate or close the debate, for at least one reason: it does not tackle the whole problem; it is primarily concerned with one aspect of it, viewed over a limited period of history. The question here is not directly: what is the origin of the Bengali Muslims, but: how did Islâm spread into Bengal during the pre-Mughul times (1204-1538 A.D.)? Whereas the works mentioned are concerned with the growth of Muslim society in Bengal, the attention is here focused on Islâm as a religious belief, in an attempt to review and assess different factors which may account for its spread in Bengal:

I. Pre-Islamic Bengal (Chapter I)
II. The spread of Islâm: socio-political factors (Chapter II)
III. The spread of Islâm: religious factors (Chapter III).

The assumption here is not that religion is a mere outgrowth or by-product of a given technological, economic, social and political conjuncture. It is that the spread of a religious faith does not depend only on the intrinsecal value or attractiveness of its tenets; but that it is also linked with

- the character and background of the milieu in which it is brought (Chapter I),
- the socio-political conditions prevailing at the time of its import and spread (Chapter II),
- the attitude of those who propagate it (Chapter III).

Due to the character of the sources, no clear-cut solution is expected. The basic purpose of this thesis is to suggest a distinction between definite facts, reasonable probabilities, and wishful hypotheses. Such an attempt, if successful at all, may throw some light on a field where action-reaction generalizations have often been disproportionate to the narrow factual basis provided by historical data.

Sources and approach

At this point, it may be useful to remember some of P. Hardy's observations (9) on the modern study of medieval Muslim India: they command a profitable handling of the sources, and are relevant to the problems likely to occur when dealing with Bengal.

Until recent times, most of the works on medieval India showed concentration on one class of material (medieval chronicles) and one form of

history (political-narrative); they also represent a divorce of that part of Indian history from the study of Islâm as a religion and a system of thought in its wider extra-Indian setting; many of the British writers seem indifferent to the work and technique of continental scholars of Islâm, as well as to new trends in British history-writing. That concentration and that indifference were often the result not of ignorance, but of a deliberate choice dictated by a commitment to politics and administration: "Sir Wolseley Haig, Sir William Hunter, ... had all had official experience to influence their later academic activities." (10)

On the other hand, the Indian writers, Hindus and Muslims, in the 1920s and 1930s had at least this in common with the British, and perhaps all historians, that they could hardly escape the influence of their time and environment: "there was a sharper awareness of different communal identities and an urge to call up the past to the support of present ambitions and policies." (11) Some works also reflect a more or less conscious attempt to promote communal harmony between Hindus and Muslims, or, within Pakistan, to promote unity and better understanding between the two wings. Some recent works offer much more than a political narrative: they stem from sources much broader than the chronicles, and they show a definite concern for the social, cultural and religious aspects of Indo-Muslim history.

In the case of Bengal, the basic difficulty remains the scantiness of primary sources, especially for the period under review; what Dr. A. Karim says about social history applies, to a great extent, to religious history: "The need of a social history of the Muslims in Bengal has always been felt by historians. But at the same time we cannot forget the difficulties we have to encounter. The most important handicap is the paucity of source-materials. It is well-known that the Persian Chronicles are the primary sources of information for Muslim history in the Indo-Pak subcontinent. Muslims ruled in Bengal for more than five hundred years. But unlike Delhi's, Bengal's contribution to the growth of historical literature is negligible. The first four hundred years are completely barren. ...

It may thus be observed that students working on the Muslim society in Bengal are seriously handicapped. The situation is rather precarious with those dealing with the earlier period (i.e. pre-Mughal)." (12)

In the books of Jadunath Sarkar, M. Abdur Rahim, and Abdul Karim, the available sources are surveyed (13), carefully translated, commented and used with great profit. Those books represent a significant progress in the historical knowledge of medieval Bengal. For lack, or meagre use, of primary sources, the British writers had to take statistics and anthropological observations as a starting point; then, they tried to bridge with hypotheses the gap between their time and pre-Islamic Bengal, on which they had more knowledge.

The major part of that gap corresponds to the pre-Mughul period, and after what has been said about that period (12), one cannot pretend to bridge it only with the facts presented in the primary sources. The approach intended in this thesis is therefore to test the inferential value of those isolated facts by viewing them in a broader context, i.e. by focusing on them a convergence of

- what is known of pre-Islamic Bengal (e.g. socio-political conditions, religious situation);
- some patterns suggested by the history of Islamic civilization in other parts of the Muslim world (e.g. Mongol invasions, development of Ṣūfism, Ghâzî movements, devshirme, Mamlūk recruitment and its influence);
- some trends shown in the contemporary history of Muslim India (e.g. position of non-Muslim subjects, Ṣūfî orders and their activities, popular religion);
- the observations of the British period (e.g. number of the Muslim population and its distribution).

NOTES (Introduction)

1. James Wise, "The Mohammedans of Eastern Bengal", Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, vol. LXIII, Part III, no.1, 1894; the pagination is the one of a cyclostyled copy in my possession.

2. Cf. William Wilson Hunter, The Imperial Gazetteer of India (London, Trübner, 1881), vol. II, pp. 19-20: "The Census, taken during the cold weather of 1871-72, was the first that had ever been attempted throughout Bengal. Previous to it, only partial enumerations of particular areas had from time to time been made, and these were either estimates based upon the number of houses in the District incorrectly computed, or conclusions drawn from experience and general observation, and entitled to little reliance. The population shown by the Census far exceeded the total of any such previous estimates. With few exceptions, every District in the Province is more thickly populated than even the most liberal official calculation had allowed for. In the first instance, about 1765, the polulation had been assumed at 10 millions; Sir William Jones in 1787 thought it amounted to 24 millions; Mr. Colebrook in 1802 estimated it at 30 millions. Dr. Buchanan-Hamilton had, however, about this period made an estimate of the population of several Districts, which he put very much higher than other authorities. In the years just before the Census, the population had been generally accepted at about 40 millions for the Lieutenant-Governorship of Bengal, which then included Assam. The Census of 1872 suddenly disclosed a population of 66,856,839 (including Assam)."

3. The exact figures of the Census are given by Hunter, The Imperial..., pp. 13-14, by areas and districts.

4. Cf. Hunter, The Imperial..., p. 21.

5. H.H. Risley, The Tribes and Castes of Bengal, 2 vols. (Calcutta, 1891)
W.W. Hunter, "The Religions of India", The Times, Feb. 1888
_____, The Imperial..., p. 21
_____, The Annals of Rural Bengal (London, Smith, 1868), 475 p.
James Wise, op. cit., p. 4
T.W. Arnold, The Preaching of Islam; a History of the Propagation of the Muslim Faith, second edition, revised and enlarged (London, Constable, 1913), p. 279 (First edition was: 1896).
Murray T. Titus, Islam in India and Pakistan; a religious History of Islam in India and Pakistan (Calcutta, Y.M.C.A., 1959), pp. 44-45 (First edition: 1930).
J.S. Cotton, "Bengal", EI, I, p. 695.

6. Muhammad Abdur Rahim, Social and Cultural History of Bengal (Karachi, Pakistan Historical Society, 1963), vol. I, pp. 56 & xii.

7. Abdul Majed Khan, "Research about Muslim Aristocracy in East Pakistan - An Introduction", in Social Research in East Pakistan, 2nd revised edition, edited by Pierre Bessaignet (Dacca, Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1964), p. 25.

8. Ibid., p. 27.

9. P. Hardy, Historians of Medieval India; studies in Indo-Muslim historical writing (London, Luzac, 1960), pp. 1-19.

10. Ibid., p. 9.

11. Ibid., p. 10; cf also Aziz Ahmad, Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment (Oxford, Clarendon, 1964), p. 264:

"European Oriental studies inspired and led to the establishment of Hindu and Muslim traditions of the study of their own pasts. In this process they developed separately their own mechanisms of revivalism and apologetics. In their emotional response to the history of Muslim India, the two processes of revivalism clashed."

12. M. Abdul Karim, "Research into the Social Heritage of the Muslims in Bengal - A Historical Study upto A.D. 1538", in Bessaignet, Social Research..., pp. 7, 11.

Cf. also Jadunath Sarkar, ed., History of Bengal, vol. II (Dacca, Univ. of Dacca, 1948), p. 501: "No continuous history of the province of Bengal was written in the Persian language before 1788, that is more than one generation after the passing away of Muslim rule, and this book named the 'Riâz-us-Salâtin' is meagre in facts, mostly incorrect in detail and dates, and vitiated by loose traditions, as its author had no knowledge of many of the standard Persian authorities who had treated of Bengal as a part of their general histories of India. Again, we miss during the Muslim period (1200-1757) the wealth and variety of inscriptions which illuminate the life of the province during the preceding Hindu period. The extant Arabic and Persian inscriptions found in Bengal merely record the names of the builders of mosques and tombs and their dates. During the many centuries when Bengal was a part of the empire of Delhi, the only mention of the province in the historical chronicles of Delhi occurs when something abnormal happened there, as in fact Bengal affairs had no 'news value' to the royalty and courtiers of Delhi."

13. Sarkar, op. cit., pp. 501-508;
Muhammad Abdur Rahim, op. cit., pp. xvii-xxx, 424-36;
M. Abdul Karim, Social History of the Muslims in Bengal - Down to A.D. 1538 (Dacca, Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1959), pp. 1-16, 212-25.

Chapter I

PRE-ISLAMIC BENGAL

The past history of Bengal and its condition at the time of the Muslim conquest are an important factor accounting for the spectacular spread of Islâm in that remote area. This can be hardly questioned. But questions arise as to which trends of that history can be more definitely linked with the developments of the Muslim period. With those questions in mind, I shall first summarize and discuss the view offered by Sir William Hunter (section A), and then check this first approximation with the recent contributions of contemporary scholars (section B).

A. An "anthropo-racial" outline

In his Imperial Gazetteer of India, published in 1881, Hunter makes some general considerations about the population of Bengal: its ethnical and religious elements are very heterogeneous; among the Hindus "a large section of the people belongs to the august Aryan race, from which we ourselves descend. Its classical language, Sanskrit is as near to our own as that of the Welsh or Scottish Highlanders." (1) This echoes the more elaborate considerations that he had made thirteen years earlier (1868) in The Annals of Rural Bengal. At that time, he was not at all concerned with explaining the presence of a large Muslim population; his preoccupation was to make the British authorities and public aware of the fact that the

situation in India, and especially in Bengal, is a very complex one, in which the British have to come to terms not with an homogeneous and still population (the India of Michelet), but with different types of people in a not so "sweet" social context: "the echoes of ancient life India little resemble a Sicilian Idyl or the strains of Pan's pipe, but strike the ear rather as the cries of oppressed and wandering nations, of people in constant motion and pain." (2) For Hunter, the cause of that "pain" is a racial confrontation, pre-existent to the Muslims' coming to Bengal: "The mass of the people consisted of two races which in intellect, language, and in everything that makes a nation great or ignoble, have been selected to represent the highest and the lowest types of mankind. The aboriginal tribes of Bengal, pushed back from the rich valley by the Aryans, made a final stand for existence among the highlands of Beerbhoom; and the same mountains which were fixed in pre-historic times as landmarks between the races, accurately demarcate their territories at this day. The composite people evolved from two stocks, belonging to very unequal degrees of civilisation, when brought closely and permanently into contact, presents one of the most interesting questions with which history has to deal. How the Aryan and the Aboriginal solved this problem, the terms on which they have to a certain extent united, and the ethnical compromises to which they have had to submit, form the subject of this chapter." (3) The ethnical analysis which follows, taken with restrictions to be made further on, brings out information on the religious and social situation of pre-Islamic Bengal.

According to Dani (4), the word "Bang" designated originally "non-Aryan people", and came to be applied to their homeland in Southern and Eastern parts of Bengal. There is evidence that the religion of those people was Buddhism. Hunter (5) says that Buddhism found its most lasting conquests outside the Middle Land (Northern India); in Bengal, it obtained a fair hearing from a people who had not developed a high form of religion for themselves. When the Aryan settlers came to Bengal, either they must have quickly forgotten the distinctive doctrines of Aryan faith as professed in the Middle Land, or they must have started southwards before these doctrines were evolved; they make their first appearance in history as Buddhists, not

as Hindus, and the kings of Bengal, with Gaur as their capital (785-1040 A.D.) were Buddhists at least until 900 A.D. The Hindu creed, as laid down in Manu and the Brahmanas, is thus a comparatively modern import from the North; moreover, its mingling with the religion of the aboriginals accounts for the difference between the orthodox doctrines of the Brahmans and the popular forms of Hinduism found in Bengal: "in this difference of races lies the explanation of the esoteric and the exoteric religions of the Hindus; the former representing the faith which the Aryan settlers transmitted to their children of pure descent, the latter the patchwork of superstitions which the mixed population derived from the black-skinned, human-sacrificing, flesh-eating forest tribes." (6)

A similar phenomenon is also observed in the social field: Manu's artificial classification of the people in four castes did not pass to Bengal in its integrity (7). The Aryan settlers in Bengal claimed the same title as the aristocracy of their fatherland (North India); but no sharp distinctions among the general mass of the people seem to have been formed on the same basis as the caste system of the Middle Land. So, the social distinctions, more cruel in Lower Bengal, perhaps, than in any other part of India, do not proceed from Manu's rigid fourfold classification, but from another cause: racial opposition between the Aryan invaders and the vanquished aboriginals. The invasion of the Aryans soon reduced the natives to the alternative of serfdom, or flight into the jungle; when the Aryans settled, their relations with the local people became embittered, because of the ethnical superiority of the Aryans: in every point in which two races can be compared, the aborigines, called in early Sanskrit literature Dasyans, were painfully inferior. Their speech was of a broken and imperfect type, compared to Sanskrit: the Aryan warrior used to pray for victory over the "men of the inarticulate utterance" and "of uncouth talk". Color was perhaps the most discriminating factor: Vedic singers again and again speak with deep contempt of the "vile Dasyan colour". The aboriginals ate flesh, which meant that they did not respect the life of animals; the Vedic singers speak of their repulsive habits of eating and concentrate the national abhorrence into one stinging epithet: "the Raw-Eaters". To the Aryans, the natives seemed to possess no

conception of God at all; the Vedic epithets, full of detestation depict them as: "Rejectors of Indra", "not sacrificing", "without gods", and "without rites". Moreover, they had not the slightest conception of eternity, whereas the Vedic texts show a firm faith in immortality.

In turn, the presence of the Dasyans exercised definite influence on the Aryans in matters of language, religion, social conditions and political destiny; two races, the one consisting of masters, the other of slaves, cannot become one socially and politically: the Sanskrit element kept disdainfully aloof from the aboriginal, denying it every civil, political, and religious right. Even the jus commercii was granted only under the severest restrictions and upon the most unfavorable terms; the "twice-born" settlers had the more profitable branches of industry and could at any time rival the low castes in their occupations if convenience urged them to do so; there was one law of inheritance for the Aryan, another for the non-Aryan; intermarriage and even cohabitation between the ruling and the ruled were regarded as sacrilege and incest. Hunter concludes: "I have dwelt at length on the unequal degree of enlightenment possessed by the Aryan and aboriginal races, because I believe that it affords the true explanation of those cruel social distinctions which divide the existing population of India. The Dasyan appears in Sanskrit history first as an enemy, then as an evil spirit, then as a lower animal, and finally as the slave of the nobler race." (8)

The approach of Hunter is typical of the one that Sorokin calls the "anthropo-racial" school of sociology, whose theories "give an exclusive importance to the factor of race, heredity and selection in determining human behavior, the social processes, organization, and the historical destiny of a social system." (9) Hunter's numerous references to F.M. Müller definitely link him to the series of philologists, historians, and social thinkers who started the theory of Aryanism. To-day, the comparison of races, religions and languages in terms of "superior" and "inferior" is shocking; and Aryanism is regarded as a "racial myth" (10). But the findings of that school cannot be rejected altogether (11), and in our case,

Hunter's considerations cannot be discarded altogether. Taken alone, they surely fail to account for the whole situation prevailing in Bengal in his time; but, at the very least, they help to understand the reaction of some local scholars under the impact of what could be taken as a personal insult; for a long time, their attention was almost monopolized by the "anthropo-racial" aspect of the question; to an outsider, that orientation seems somewhat tangential to the problem as a whole; but a semi-conscious quest for nobility on the part of the Bengalis (12) was but a normal answer to Hunter's provocative assertions.

For the purpose of this thesis, and for the time being, the following points extracted from Hunter's argument should be kept in mind: a) on the eve of the Muslim conquest, there was no consolidated religious organization to oppose Islâm; Hinduism had fought Buddhism, mingled with it, weakening the position of both of them; b) between the rulers and the mass of the people, whatever may have been their respective races and actual "superiorities", there were basic differences; they created a gap nourished by the superiority complex of the ruling class, translated into social discriminations, and resulted in the absence of political as well as national unity.

That outline must now be substantiated, supplemented and, presumably, corrected with a more analytical and factual view gleaned from some recent works of local historians and sociologists. Of course, those scholars themselves point out that their works represent the pioneering stage of modern scholarly research about Bengal's history. Compared to other areas of India, the history of Bengal, whether Muslim or pre-Muslim, has received relatively little attention from modern scholars. R.C. Majumdar and J. Sarkar, the editors of the History of Bengal (2 volumes), clearly express the limitations and the incomplete character of that work (13). For A. Karim (14), a contributor of Social Research in East Pakistan (first published in 1960), research on the Muslim history of Bengal is still in its infancy, and even volume II of the History of Bengal is a "mere chronicle of events and does not give adequate importance to the socio-cultural aspects". As for the collective publication Social Research in East Pakistan, its editor emphacizes its

pioneering character, saying that it is "meant to be less a contribution to knowledge than a step toward such contributions in time to come" (15). So, while using materials provided by those works, one must consider them as opening the way to further research which may eventually undermine the present approach to the problem.

B. Historical Analysis

Political history

The political history of pre-Islamic Bengal can be summarized under four broad headings: 1. Early history (326 B.C. - 320 A.D.); 2. The Guptas; the kingdoms of Gauḍa and Vaṅga (320 - 650 A.D.); 3. The Pâles (c. 750 - 1155 A.D.); 4. The Senas (c. 1050 - 1300 A.D.) (16).

1. The first exact date known in Indian history is 326 B.C., the year of Alexander's invasion; by reckoning back from that point and making use of traditions of primarily religious character, a little information can be gleaned concerning a few kingdoms of northern India in the seventh century B.C.; but no definite affirmation of any kind can be made about specific events in either the peninsula or Bengal before 300 B.C. (17). As far as information on the preceding period goes, South Bihar, an immediate neighbor of Bengal, was the seat of the Magadha tribe; the Magadha kingdom originated in the seventh century B.C., under a chieftain from Benares; it was intimately associated with the development of Jainism and Buddhism. In the fourth century B.C., that kingdom rose to pre-eminence, in spite of the Persian occupation of the Indus valley (from c. 515 B.C.).

As for Bengal proper, the available evidence suggests that the ancient peoples who had settled in Bengal were different in race and culture from the Aryans who compiled the Vedic literature; it seems that there were

settled governments in Bengal long before the fourth century B.C.; the country was normally divided into a number of states, some of which occasionally grew very powerful. A gradual process of Aryan infiltration is recorded with the advent (322 B.C.) of the Maurya dynasty in Magadha. Thus we find Bengal within the empire of Aśoka Maurya for a few years (c. 260 B.C.) (18), and under the imperial Guptas for about a century (from c. 320 A.D.) (19). But even the Guptas did not seem to have a very firm grip on Bengal; the political condition of Bengal at the beginning of the fourth century A.D. was probably not very different from that depicted in the epics: a number sturdy states, sheltered by the great barriers of rivers, jungles and swamps, and capable of forming closer political associations to fight a common external aggressor; some of them could be submitted to an external power for some time, but not all, and not for a long time.

2. The Gupta dynasty (20) of India (320-647 A.D.) emerged as a result of the matrimonial alliance between a powerful Lichchhavi princess of Vaiśâli (North East India) and Chandragupta, the Râjâ of Magadha (South Bihar). Under their son Samudragupta (c. 330-380 A.D.), the Gupta empire became the greatest in India since the days of Aśoka (c. 260 B.C.); Western Bengal was a part of that empire, whereas the kingdoms of Samataṭa and Davâka (Southern and Eastern Bengal) along with KâmarÛpa (Assam) paid tribute to the Gupta emperor. The golden age of the Gupta era (c. 320-480 A.D.) represented a period of considerable developments in matters of government, literature, art, and science. But, towards the end of the fifth century A.D., the Gupta rule began to be shattered by the invading hordes of nomads from Central Asia, which the Indians called the Huns. The barbarian invasions of the fifth and sixth centuries were a turning point in the history of Northern India: the political system of the Gupta period was completely broken up and new kingdoms were formed.

The gradual decline of the Guptas opened the way to the rise of two independent kingdoms in Bengal at the beginning of the sixth century A.D. Vaṅga (or Samataṭa) was the first independent kingdom to rise on the ruins of the Gupta empire; it originally comprised East, South and South-West Bengal.

The kingdom of Gauḍa rose in North and North-West Bengal; it probably acknowledged Gupta suzerainty up to the end of the sixth century A.D.; but under Śaśâṅka (c. 600-650), it formed an independent kingdom; Śaśâṅka was the first Bengal king known to have extended suzerainty over territories far beyond Bengal; a devotee of Śiva, he is said to have oppressed the Buddhists. At the death of Śaśâṅka, his vast dominions, perhaps including Vaṅga, splintered into separate independent kingdoms. For one century (650-750) the history of Bengal is extremely obscure. Contemporary records describe the political condition of Bengal in the middle of the eighth century as mâtsyanyâya, which denotes the absence of a central ruling authority, resulting in a chaotic state, where every local chief assumes royal authority. That state of political disintegration was probably caused by foreign invasions and changes of dynasties in Gauḍa and Vaṅga.

3. The Pâlas and the Senas were the greatest dynasties of Bengal. The Pâlas, who were fervent Buddhists, ruled for four centuries (c. 750-1155), with an alternation of consolidation and decline in their power. With Bengal and Bihar as its nucleus, the Pâla empire was founded by Gopâla (c. 750), who succeeded to establish peace in the province by bringing the turbulent elements under control; whether Gopâla himself adopted Buddhism or was born in a Buddhist family is not known definitely; but his successors were all ardent followers of Buddhism, and for nearly four hundred years their court proved to be the last stronghold of that declining faith in India. The Pâla empire was expanded by Dharmapâla (770-810), who was a great patron of Buddhism, without being hostile to the Brahmanical religion. The empire reached the height of its glory under Devapâla (810-850): his suzerainty was acknowledged over the whole of North India, from Assam to the borders of Kashmir, and an ambassador from the Malay peninsula, among others, was sent to him as to the guardian of international Buddhism.

This glory, however, did not survive the death of Devapâla: the rule of his successors (c. 850-988) was marked by a steady process of decline and disintegration; their power in North India became insignificant, and by the middle of the tenth century, Bengal itself was divided in three

well-defined kingdoms: the Chandra kingdom comprising East and South Bengal, the Kâmboja-Pâla kingdom in North and West Bengal, and the Pâla kingdom proper, comprising Anga and Magadha. Threatened with disruption from within and invasion from abroad, Mahîpâla (c. 988-1038) nonetheless re-established Pâla authority over a great part of Bengal, and probably up to Benares; this was partly due to the invasions of Maḥmûd of Ghazni, which diverted from Bengal the energies of the neighboring powers. This brief restoration was followed by a new break-up of the kingdom (c. 1038-1070) under foreign invasions; towards the end of this period, a new power, the Varmans, supporters of orthodox Brahmanism, occupied Bengal. The disintegration was temporarily stopped by Ramapâla, who secured by lavish gifts the alliance of the independent-minded petty chiefs; but after his death (c. 1120), the kingdom collapsed, once more due to internal disruption and invasions from outside, and the Pâlas passed out of history (c. 1155).

4. Coming from South India with the wave of the Châlukya invasions (c. 1050), the Senas established their power in Bengal, and consolidated it during the reign of Vijayasena (1095 or 1125 - 1158), a strong monarch who held a sturdy authority over the petty chiefs of Bengal. The reign of his son Vallâsena (1158-1179) was marked with a revival of orthodox Hindu rites. Lakshmenasena (1179-1205) was quite successful in his military expeditions outside Bengal, and under him, Bengal played an important part in North Indian politics; but, towards the end of his reign, his authority was shattered by the rise of splinter-kingdoms, and by the invasion of Bihar and Bengal by the Muslims (1203-4). Half a century elapsed before the Muslim rulers of Lakhnawati could subdue South and Eastern Bengal; but by the end of the thirteenth century, the Sena dynasty had disappeared from the history of Bengal.

Though it was relatively short (1050-1300) and ended abruptly, the Sena rule is an important landmark in the history of Bengal: a succession of three able and vigorous rulers consolidated the whole province into a united kingdom; their firm support brought the orthodox Hindu faith to a position of supremacy which it already enjoyed in the rest of India;

their reign also marked the peak in the development of Sanskrit literature in Bengal. The last Sena kings have been made, by some historians, scapegoats for the rapid collapse of Hindu rule before the Muslim forces. For R.C. Majumdar (21), though it is hard to assess the causes of that collapse, it seems that Buddhism, in its last phase, was a disintegrating force in religion and society, and that the "genius of the people of Bengal" was allergic to the sense of discipline and organization in the face of a common danger. Of course, these observations must be understood within more general considerations concerning the pre-Islamic period as a whole.

This historical sketch shows definite trends and patterns in the political history of pre-Islamic Bengal. The fragmentation of power is striking: a powerful central authority could not endure for long; at the first occasion, feudatory chiefs rebelled and established petty kingdoms of their own. On the other hand, Bengal, considered as a whole, maintained a certain political aloofness, not to say independence, from the great empires of India; invaders established dynasties in Bengal, but their subjugation to or of other parts of India was either non-existent or short-lived; they were lucky if they could only cope with the local forces of disruption.

The geography of Bengal partly explains that political fragmentation within and aloofness from the outside. Bengal has geographical peculiarities that distinguish it from the rest of the sub-continent. It has natural boundaries which made it quite inaccessible: the North is bounded by the Himalayas, the East by hill ranges, the South by the sea (alluvial shallow shores), the West by jungles, rivers and hills. Within those boundaries, Bengal is a vast alluvial plain watered by a remarkable network of rivers forming the delta of the Ganges, the Brahmaputra, the Meghna and the Mahananda; the monsoon floods the lower lands for nearly six months in a year, making land communications nearly impossible, while frequent storms make navigation hazardous. Numerous examples could be brought to show how geography had a decisive influence on the life of Bengal (22); it undoubtedly favored political fragmentation as well as political independence.

Races, culture, and society

The question of the race and culture of the pre-Islamic Bengalis is a very complex one (23), far more complex than the Aryan-Dasyan duality propounded by Hunter. It is true that the primitive people of Bengal were different in race and culture from the Vedic Aryans. This conclusion is borne out by the evidence of language and anthropology (24). But considering them as one group under the terms "Dasyan" or even "Dravidian" is an over-simplification: as pointed out by Dani (25), the non-Aryans neither were a homogeneous people, nor did they belong to one race. It is no longer necessary to refer to them as Dravidians. If the Dravidian elements had been stronger in Bengal, as is generally supposed, the general character of the Bengali culture should not have been so different from that of South India. This term "Dravidian" has been a handy hold-all: whatever in Indian culture cannot be explained through Aryan origin is conveniently attributed to "the Dravidians". But, the Dravidians were not the sole makers of pre-Aryan India. As a matter of fact, anthropologists now tend to discard the term Dravidian in its loose sense, and distinguish various racial elements in it.

Thus, one must distinguish at least two elements in the non-Aryan population of Bengal. The first consists of the primitive tribes like the Kols, Sabaras, Pulindas, Hâdi, Dom, Chandâla and others designated as the Mlechchas; they represent the first inhabitants of Bengal, and, notwithstanding their cultural differences (26), they have been given the general ethnic name of Nishâdas (literaly "non-white"). These Nishâdas, with a neolithic culture, formed the substratum of the population of Bengal, as of most other parts of India; but they were later submerged by new waves of other non-Aryan people with a high culture and civilization, so that ultimately they touched only the outer fringe of society, while the latter formed its very basis and foundation (27).

This second non-Aryan element (28), which succeeded the Nishâdas, comprised at least four great tribes: Pundras, Vaṅgas, Radhas, Suhmas. Although the nature and degree of their civilization cannot be definitely

assessed, it seems that they stamped their own name and character upon the land and culture of Bengal; their arrogance in challenging epic heroes of the Aryans suggests that they were men of no ordinary calibre. The overabundance of the non-Aryan elements in the Hindu population most likely accounts for the great difference in the socio-religious life of the Bengalis from that of the rest of India; the two most significant aspects of that difference are the Dayabhaga system of inheritance as opposed to the Mitakshara, and the stress on the worship of the female Sakti (power) resulting in the development of Tântric cult and other related forms of worship. So, the picture traced by Hunter has to be retouched, and its clear-cut contour softened: as noted by Majumdar (29), "there has been a rude shock to our complacent belief, held without question for a long time, that the Brahmans and other high castes of Bengal were descended from the Aryan invaders who imposed their culture and political rule upon primitive barbarian tribes."

Due to this assertive as well as heterogeneous character of the pre-Aryan people of Bengal, the "aryanization" of Bengal was a long two-way process. The gradual stages of that process are not definitely known; but one of its earliest steps seems to have been an attempt to bring the indigenous people into the framework of Aryan society. As rightly observed by Hunter and corroborated by Majumdar and Dani (30), Manu's fourfold classification of the people did not pass to Bengal in its integrity: by the time Bengal underwent Aryan influence, numerous castes and sub-castes had been evolved, and more were added with the mingling of the local population. There are evidences (31) to show that some classes of the people of Bengal were raised to the rank of Brâhmanas, and that there was inter-marriage between the immigrant Brâhmanas and the native people. This points to the fact that the caste-divisions in the early Aryanized society of Bengal were yet in a stage of flux, and further that the adoption of Aryan manners and customs by the indigenous tribes of Bengal was a long and tedious process. It must have required many years, perhaps centuries, before the Aryan immigrants from the Midland and the people of Bengal could reach a certain degree of "fusion" within a rigid framework of Aryan society.

Applied in that context, the term "fusion" becomes relative and must be qualified. On the one hand, it reflects a merging of Aryan and non-Aryan components into a distinct new whole: according to Majumdar (32), there were many common elements in the culture and civilization of Gauḍa and Vaṅga in the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries which differentiated them from the rest of India, and imparted a distinct individuality to the Bengalis. Reference may be made, for example, to the evolution of a proto-Bengali dialect and alphabet, the special preference for the goddesses representing female energy culminating in the worship of Durgâ as a national festival, the growth of Tântrism, the absence of any head-dress, the use of fish and meat as articles of food, and peculiar laws of inheritance which differed in essential respects from those in force in other parts of India. In the long run, these characteristics marked the Bengalis as a distinct entity among the Indian peoples.

On the other hand, without going as far as Hunter did, one may say that the Bengali society was not integrated; restrictions about inter-marriage and inter-dining were slowly evolved. More generally, still in the opinion of Majumdar (33), the facts known so far do not encourage the belief that there was enough social solidarity or cultural homogeneity to foster a feeling of national unity in ancient Bengal. Socially and culturally, India, whether ancient or medieval, was divided horizontally rather than vertically, i.e. in terms of social stratification rather than geographical units: a Brahman of Bengal felt and consciously maintained greater affinity with a Brahman of Upper India than with a member of a lower caste in his own province. Besides, social solidarity was rendered difficult, if not impossible, by the evolution of the elaborate structure of caste, which made a permanent cleavage between the Brahmans and the remaining elements of people, almost all of which were degraded to the level of Sûdras. Even the latter were divided into numerous isolated and rigid groups by the creation of innumerable castes and sub-castes.

Thus, it appears that the different ethnical and cultural elements had interacted enough to make Bengal distinguishable from the outside, but had not yet merged enough to obliterate the internal divisions and cleavages among its composite population.

Religions

The religious evolution of pre-Islamic Bengal more or less followed the general patterns observed in the socio-cultural field: Aryan import, co-existence and gradual penetration, mingling with and adaptation to local elements. Very little is known about the religious faiths and beliefs of ancient Bengal; but their influence is undoubtedly felt in the forms of the religions adopted later (34).

The inscriptions demonstrate the influx of the Vedic culture in Bengal from the fifth century A.D., though it had most probably started much earlier; even during the Pâla period (Buddhist dynasty c. 750-1155 A.D.), the Brahmanical religion gathered further strength; in the 11th and 12th centuries, it made great headway in Bengal under the patronage of the Varman and Sena kings (35). But the Brahmanical religion did not remain monolithic in India at large: early Gupta inscriptions mention gods who, although Vedic in name, have no real connection with the Vedic ritual. They belong to the mythology of the epics and the Purânas. This mythology had begun to captivate the minds of the people already in the Kushân period (roughly, 105-275 A.D.), and with the establishment of new cults, the mythology went on developing throughout the Gupta period (320-647 A.D.). Bengal was not isolated from this wave of popular religion and the inscriptions of the Guptas, Pâlas, Senas and other dynasties discovered in Bengal bear ample testimony to it (36).

In the context of that wave of popular religion, Vaishṇavism spread in Bengal, from the fifth century A.D., and took six special forms; the Krishna legend became an essential element of Vaishṇavism in Bengal, and the Râdhâ-Krishna cult, attested in the 12th century, was a feature special to Bengal. Under the Guptas (c. 320 A.D.), Śaivism became a fully developed religion, combined with various cults of Rudra and Śiva. Sculptural expressions of numerous other sects are found (from the sixth century A.D.).

North and a portion of lower Bengal had contributed to the establishment of the Jaina religion already before the second century B.C., and by the seventh century A.D., the Nirgranthas formed a dominant religious sect in the greater part of Bengal. "The Nirgranthas, however, seem to have almost disappeared from Bengal in the subsequent period, and the numerous inscriptions of the Pâlas and the Senas contain no reference to them. It is only the immigrants from Western India who re-established the old religion in its new form, henceforth called Jainism, in different parts of North Bengal in the Muḥammadan period. The naked Nirgrantha ascetics had in the meantime probably merged in such religious communities as that of the Avadhûtas which had been well established in Bengal towards the end of the Pâla period." (37)

Having obtained a footing in North Bengal in Aśoka's time (c. 260 B.C.), Buddhism was firmly established, even in the remote south-eastern corner of Bengal, by the beginning of the sixth century A.D. (38). It attained the peak of its influence under the patronage of the Pâlas (750-1155 A.D.). During the four centuries of their rule, Bengal and Bihar remained the last stronghold of Buddhism which gradually lost hold of India; during this period and especially during the reign of Devapâla (c. 810-850), Bengal became the center of international Buddhism: the monastery of Nâlandâ was in those days the seat of international Buddhist culture, and, with the Pâla emperors as its guardians, it exercised dominant influence from Tibet in the North to the islands of the Malay Archipelago in the South. Under the Senas (Hindu dynasty c. 1050-1300), Buddhism did not enjoy any state patronage; its institutions soon disappeared, and those which lingered do not seem to have long survived the invasion of Muḥammad Bakhtyâr Khaljî (c. 1204).

In view of later historical developments, namely, the activities of the Ṣûfîs, it is interesting to note two features of Buddhism in Bengal: a definite esoteric and syncretic trend, and the existence of mendicant monks. Buddhism under the Pâlas was somewhat different from what the seventh century had known; it was Buddhism in the most developed Mahâyâna form: it had developed high forms of mysticism known as Vajrayâna and Tantrayâna, and its leaders were the Siddhas (c. 900-1100). On account of this great emphasis

on the esoteric aspects of the religion, although these had their root in Yogâchâra and Mâdhyamika (closer to original Buddhism), Buddhism was soon transformed under their influence. As time passed, less and less importance was attached to the ceremonial aspect which still retained a faint stamp of Buddhism. The ceremonial being once completely eliminated, it was not long before what remained of original Buddhism was absorbed in the Brahmanical Tântric system of Bengal, which by a parallel process had attained a similar form. This assimilation had surely begun before the end of the Pâla period and was completed before the 14th century (39).

This esoteric-syncretic trend was significantly embodied in monastic movements. As mentioned previously, the leaders of the mystical movement in Buddhism were at that time the Siddhas; through their teachings, they also inspired monastic groups such as the Avadhûtas. These Avadhûtas embodied a monastic trend which existed previously, but could not take a permanent form: the twelve Dhûtângas (rules of life), although mentioned in old Buddhist texts, were never practised by the orthodox Buddhists; the most important of these consisted of living on begging, dwelling under trees in forests far away from human habitations, wearing torn clothes, etc. A Jaina text has a chapter enjoining on the mendicants to live on begging, not to mind torn clothes, not to do injury to one's self or to anybody else, etc. These are exactly the rules which Devadatta had tried to introduce in the code of monastic discipline; on account of strong opposition, he had been excommunicated. The Ajîvikas, we know, insisted on such privations. The Avadhûtas seem to have revived that old tradition of the followers of the Dhûta discipline; this supposition is amply confirmed by the Goraksha-siddhânta-samgraha, which was partly a code for their use. This text shows that exoteric standards of religion are of no importance to the Avadhûta; neither the Sâstras (sacred scriptures) nor the places of pilgrimage can lead him to emancipation; he is without any attachment to any object and behaves like a mad man (40).

As to the respective positions and relations of those religions in the society at large, it is hard to form a clear-cut picture. The exist-

ence of different religious sects side by side does not seem to have raised any significant sectarian jealousy or exclusiveness. Majumdar (41) gives instances of kings devotees of one religion, endowing temples or monasteries of another religion, of inter-faith marriages, and of kings openly declaring their devotion to more than one religious faith.

But deciding whether pre-Islamic Bengal was predominantly a "Hindu land" or a "Buddhist land" seems quite risky. Majumdar generally speaks of the "Hindu period", and more precisely asserts: "The patronage of the Pâlas no doubt gave an impetus to Buddhism and saved that religion from the fate which overtook it in the rest of India, but does not seem to have materially affected the dominant position of the Brahmanical religion. For it is worthy of note that by far the large majority of images and inscriptions which may be assigned to the period between 750 and 1200 A.D. are Brahmanical, and not Buddhist." (42)

Images and inscriptions are suggestive, but they may not be conclusive. One may not be ready to follow [illegible]raly A.M. Khan (43) when he says: "The Pâlas were Buddhists and Bengal remained a land of the Buddhists until at least the 14th century"; but, even allowing room for the author's reaction to a Hindu version of Bengal's history, one must still lend serious attention to his arguments supporting the view that "the hold of Hinduism was never very strong in Bengal." For him, the absence of the traditional pattern of Hindu rural organization east of the Bhagirathi and of Varandri establish unmistakably the fact that Bengal proper was never within the Hindu land, except for some time as a part of the Hindusthani empire, British, Muslim and pre-Muslim. It is true that political and administrative reasons and later search for livelihood did in different ages bring about migration and settlement of the Rarhi, Varendri and also Vaidiks (Upper India) into East Bengal; but those people came as residents in Bengal rather than as part of the great mass of the Bengali people. A Rarhi or a Varendri had a greater reason to maintain his social exclusiveness than even a Syed or a Pathan among the Musalmans. The utmost these immigrants did was to convert some natives into low caste

Hindus, the Bangaja Kayasthas being highest among the Hindus in Bangadesh. Unless enforced through the instrument of superior political and economic power, the Bengalis left to themselves would not welcome the status of low castes.

Then, A.M. Khan argues, not without ground, that the Hindu political power, necessary to enforce Hinduism, was never very well established in Bengal. So, for him, it is only in later times that Hinduism made headway into the masses of Bengal: "Hinduism was so weak in Bengal that until the 13th/14th centuries Hindu social classes in Bengal had not been properly codified and the relative position of the Hindu aristocrats had to be continually revised until the 15th century (Majumdar, op. cit., 581). Only when Chaitanya presented Hinduism in an acceptable form that a large section among the Bengalis went over to Hinduism. Large conversions to Hinduism had to wait until the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries."

So, the general picture that we get is that pre-Islamic Bengal was not characterized by the pre-dominance of one religion, but rather by the co-existence and the mingling of various religious traditions embodied in different institutions. While both Vaishnavism and Śaivism derived their strength and inspiration from the magnificent temples and the great community of Brâhmanas, distinguished for their religious zeal, learning, and scholarship, the main strongholds of the Buddhists were the numerous vihâras or monasteries. Hiuen Tsang (7th c. A.D.) (44) records that there were seventy Buddhist vihâras, accommodating eight thousand monks, and no less than 300 Deva temples in Bengal proper. So far as we can judge from archeological evidence and the accounts of Tibetan writers, the number of vihâras, monks, and temples increased in subsequent times. We can easily visualize ancient Bengal studded with temples and monasteries, the name and fame of some of which had spread far beyond the frontiers of India.

There is nothing to show that the mass of the people necessarily had to make a clear choice between well defined religious tenets, and much

of what has been said suggests that official registration under one exclusive religious banner (as in modern censes) was practically irrelevant to the life of the masses at that time. This observation perhaps finds a confirmation in the esoteric and "heteredox" trends mentioned above (pp. 24-25), and which are probably connected with the birth of a proto-Bengali language and literature: for A.M. Khan (45), the pattern of Bengali culture found expression through the Bengali language of the people, which rose mostly outside the circle of the high class people and expressed a general tendency of protest against current orthodox religious systems. It is also hinted that, due to this aloofness of the masses, state patronage was not all-determinant in the spread of a religion: the basic religiosity of the people at large could be influenced by religious imports, but mainly on the basis of their congeniality and adaptability to pre-existent local trends.

As one can see, the situation of pre-Islamic Bengal was probably not so "dramatic" as Hunter thought it to be. But it displayed features that paved the way to the establishment of Muslim political power, and to the spread of Islâm among the masses: aloofness from the rest of India, political fragmentation, social cleavages, local cultural identity, esoteric and "heterodox" tendencies in religion, mystical and monastic trends, all these contributed to the spread of Islâm in a manner which will be discussed in the next chapters.

NOTES (Chapter I)

1. Hunter, The Imperial..., p. 14.
2. Hunter, The Annals..., p. 89.
3. Ibid., pp. 88-89.
4. A.H. Dani, "Bangala", EI^2, I, p. 1015.
5. The rest of this paragraph summarizes Hunter's view in The Annals..., pp. 98-100; 133-34.
6. Hunter, The Annals..., p. 134.
7. For this paragraph and the following, cf. Hunter, The Annals..., pp. 104-113.
8. Ibid., p. 125.
9. Pittirim A. Sorokin, Contemporary Sociological Theories; through the first quarter of the twentieth century (New York, Harper & Row, 1964) p. 219; cf. also pp. 220-222.
10. cf. Juan Comas, "Les mythes raciaux", in Le racisme devant la science^2 (Paris, UNESCO, 1965), p. 41; cf. also pp. 51-57, and Sorokin, op. cit., pp. 266-79, for a criticism of that school of sociology.
11. cf. Sorokin, op. cit., pp. 279-308, about the "valid principles of the school".
12. cf. A.M. Khan, "Research...", p. 22 and passim: "History, historical notions and popular ignorance perpetuated through wrong notions remaining unchallenged have all contributed to our conception of nobility with consequent misdirection in the course of the development of the society."
13. cf. Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, ed., History of Bengal, vol. I (Dacca, Univ. of Dacca, 1943), pp. xiii-xiv;

    J. Sarkar, ed. History of Bengal, vol. II (Dacca, Univ. of Dacca, 1948), pp. vii, 501.

14. Abdul Karim, "Research into the Social Heritage of the Muslims in Bengal", in Bessaignet, ed., Social Research..., p. 7.

15. Pierre Bessaignet, in Social Research..., p. viii.

16. The following historical sketch substantially relies on R.C. Majumdar, ed., History of Bengal, ...

17. Vincent A. Smith, The Oxford History of India, Third Edition, edited by Percival Spear (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1964), pp. 71-72.

18. Ibid., pp. 127-28.

19. Ibid., p. 165.

20. On the Guptas, cf. Smith, op. cit., pp. 164-66; 177-78.

21. Majumdar, op. cit., p. 229.

22. cf. M.A. Rahim, Social and ..., pp. 7-34 for an interesting treatment of this aspect.

23. cf. A.H. Dani, "Race and Culture Complex in Bengal", in Bessaignet, ed., Social Research..., pp. 113-36: this well documented article sifts many notions previously unquestioned, and brings forth cogent conclusions.

24. cf. Majumdar, op. cit., p. 557.

25. A.H. Dani, "Race...", pp. 117-18.

26. cf. ibid., pp. 126-27: "This critical examination clearly shows that we cannot think of one particular race -- Pre-Dravidian, 'Nisada', Munda or Kolarian -- inhabiting Bengal or spreading over the greater part of India. The evidences, however, point out that there were several cultural groups all in a primitive farming stage."

27. cf. Majumdar, op. cit., p. 557.

28. cf. A.H. Dani, "Race...", pp. 119; 117; cf. also Majumdar, op. cit., p. 563.

29. Majumdar, op. cit., p. 562.

30. Ibid., p. 565; A.H. Dani, "Race...", pp. 115-16.

31. cf. Majumdar, op. cit., pp. 563-64.

32. Ibid., p. 622.

33. Ibid., p. 620.

34. Ibid., p. 395; cf. above p. 22 (n. 32).

35. Ibid., pp. 396-97; this paragraph is based on pp. 395-409 of the same work.

36. Ibid., p. 398.

37. Ibid., p. 411.

38. cf. ibid., pp. 411-25 for this section on Buddhism.

39. Ibid., pp. 421-22.

40. Ibid., pp. 423-24.

41. Ibid., pp. 426-27.

42. Ibid., p. 425.

43. A.M. Khan, op. cit., pp. 27-31.

44. Majumdar, op. cit., p. 427 for this paragraph.

45. cf. A.M. Khan, op. cit., p. 30.

Chapter II

THE SPREAD OF ISLĀM : SOCIO-POLITICAL FACTORS

The history of Islamic civilization generally shows that religious developments are neither co-extensive to nor restricted by political frontiers: on the one hand, Muslims ruled over India for more than six centuries (Dehlî Sulṭânate: 1206-1554, and Mughul Empire: 1525-1857), but Islâm became the religion of the majority of the people almost only in remote districts of distant provinces (1); on the other hand, during the last six centuries, Islâm spread in the Malay Archipelago, where the state rulers were consistently non-Muslims who, at least in the beginning, did not patronize and in many cases were antagonistic to Muslim missionary activities (2).

In the case of Bengal during the pre-Mughul period (1204-1538), the spread of Islâm was concomitant with the establishment and duration of the Muslim political power; this was by no means a coincidence of two parallel processes: there was a mutual relationship between the socio-political and the religious destinies of Islâm in Bengal. This chapter therefore presents a brief survey of the political history of Bengal (1204-1538), and then discusses to what extent such socio-political factors as immigration and the status of non-Muslim subjects contributed to the spread of the Muslim creed.

Political history

A first glance at the history of that period (3) shows that traditions of local independence, deeply rooted in the soil during the pre-Islamic period, were inherited by the Muslim masters as petty Hindu principalities disappeared one after another; the same geographical factors fostered the same centrifugal tendencies as in the previous period. From 1204 to 1339, there were 25 governors more or less independent from Dehlî: when the Dehlî sulṭâns grew weak, the Bengal governors waxed independent. That eventually led to the existence of an independent sulṭânate (1339-1538) which developed a separate political career under successive dynasties; during that period, Bengal became so strong and prosperous that even the great Mughul conqueror Bâbur (1526-1530) did not dare invade it. These general considerations will now be illustrated with more details.

In 1203 (4), Muḥammad Bakhtyâr Khaljî, a general of Muʿizz al-Dîn Muḥammad Ghûrî, conquered Bihar; in 1204, he advanced into Bengal and surprised King Lakshamenasena in his camp at Nadiyâ; the king fled, Bakhtyâr took the city and soon moved to North Bengal, to the Sena city of Lakhnawtî (or Gaur) which became the capital of the new Muslim province. Having acknowledged the suzerainty of Quṭb al-Dîn Aybak (first sulṭân of Dehlî), Bakhtyâr assigned iqṭâʿs to at least two of his amîrs, in accordance with the general practice of the ʿAbbâsids, the Ghaznavids and the Ghûrids (5). At the death of Bakhtyâr, civil war broke out among the Khaljî feudatories; this ultimately brought to power ʿAlî Mardân (1210-1213), supported by a new wave of adventurous Turks that he had recruited in Lahore; he openly assumed the title of Sulṭân, and his successor, Ghiyâth al-Dîn ʿIwaz (1213-1227) sought investiture from the ʿAbbâsid Caliph al-Nâṣir.

The Khaljî monopoly was broken up by Iltutmish (sulṭân of Dehlî: 1210-1235), and during the next sixty years (1227-1287), no less than fifteen chiefs are found in authority at Lakhnawtî, and ten of them were Mamlûks of the imperial court of Dehlî. Under their rule, Lakhnawtî became a

replica of the imperial court of Dehlî in grandeur and magnificence, and the administrative system was a close copy of the imperial system under the House of Iltutmish: a hierarchy of decentralized minor sovereignties of a feudal character. The history of this period is a record of internal dissensions, usurpations and murders which the Court of Dehlî, after Iltutmish (1210-1235), could not check (6). The confusion was such that Mughîth al-Dîn YÛzbak (1252-1257) rebelled three times against Dehlî, and ruled over the provinces of Lakhnawtî, Bihar and Oudh. The most serious revolt occurred in the time of the strong-willed Sulṭân of Dehlî, Ghiyâth al-Dîn Balban (1265-1287); Mughîth al-Dîn Tughral (1268-1281), a former slave of the Sulṭân and lately in great favor, rose in rebellion; he was popular with all classes of his people, Muslims and Hindus alike, and Balban was at war not with an individual rebel, but with a whole province; Balban himself had to come to Bengal, and it took him three years (1278-1281) to subdue Tughral.

Balban left behind his younger son Nâṣir al-Dîn Bughra Khân (1282-1291) in charge of the affairs of Bengal (7). Soon after Balban's death (1287), Lakhnawtî severed its connection with Dehlî. Throughout the period of Khaljî rule at Dehlî (1290-1320), the Ilbarî Turks of the House of Balban or their supporters maintained their independent status in Bengal and Bihar. This was a period of expansion and consolidation: "The Sulṭânate of Lakhnawtî for the first time stood rival to the Dehlî empire and it was in this period that the neighboring regions of Satgâwn, Sunârgâwn, Mymensingh and Sylhet were conquered and integrated into the Muslim Sulṭânate. The Ganges-Brahmaputra delta, except the marshy tract of southern Bengal was united under one sceptre, and even the mighty forces of ʿAlâʾ al-Dîn Khaljî could not crush its freedom." (8) As a result of the quarrel among the sons of Shams al-Dîn Fîrûz Shâh, Sulṭân Tughluq Shâh of Dehlî re-established his authority over Bengal (1324); he demarcated three administrative divisions: Lakhnawtî (North), Satgâwn (South-West), and Sunârgâwn (East). Due to political chaos and disintegration towards the middle of Muḥammad bin Tughluq's reign (1324-1351), these divisions could not work for more than a decade: local aspirants tried their luck to establish the rule of their own dynasty.

Out of these chaotic wars emerged the independent Sulṭânate of Bengal under Sulṭân Shams al-Dîn Ilyâs Shâh (1339-1357); siding with the interests of the local people, the Hindu zamîndârs and the Muslim nobility, he successfully contended with ʿAlâʾ al-Dîn Shâh (1339-1345) in West Bengal, with Fakhr al-Dîn Mubârak Shâh (1338-1349) and his son Ikhtiyâr al-Dîn Ghâzî Shâh (1349-1352) in East Bengal, and finally with Fîrûz Shâh Tughluq of Dehlî (1351-1388), who invaded Bengal but could not crush its independence. Shams al-Dîn was the first independent Muslim Sulṭân to rule over the united kingdom of Bengal; whereas the term Bang or Banqâlah previously referred only to Eastern and Southern Bengal, from this time onward it connoted the whole Sulṭânate (9). Five Sulṭâns of the Ilyâs Shâhî dynasty succeeded Shams al-Dîn on the throne of Bengal between 1357 and 1414. During this time, adaptation to local interests by the rulers resulted in the patronage of local culture but also in the formation of a party of local zamîndârs as opposed to the party of foreign elements which were strong in the capital; the Hindus began sharing even the key-positions in the government and political life of the country; this reflected a climate of conciliation and integration, but it also made possible the interregnum of a local dynasty, the House of Râjâ Gaṇeśa (or Râjâ Kâns) which ruled for twenty years (1415-1435).

Râjâ Gaṇeśa, a powerful Hindu zamîndâr, was an Amîr and most probably the wazîr under Shams al-Dîn bin Ḥamza (10); at the death of the latter (1409), he placed on the throne one of the harem children, and seeing the opposition of a Muslim faction to the child, he finally took over himself. This usurpation raised still more opposition, and on the invitation of Shaykh Nûr Quṭb ʿĀlam, Sulṭân Ibrâhîm Sharqî of Jawnpûr invaded Bengal. This forced Râjâ Gaṇeśa to abdicate in favor of his son Jadû; Jadû converted to Islâm and, with the consent of the nobles, he ascended the throne under the name of Jalâl al-Dîn Muḥammad (1415-1432).

How the Ilyâs Shâhî dynasty was restored is not known precisely; but one thing is sure: during the rule of the five Sulṭâns of that restored dynasty (1437-1486), a large number of Abyssinian slaves were recruited and employed in the army and in the palace. From the position of supporters of

the crown, they gradually moved to the position of king-makers by monopolizing the high posts at the Court.

In a sequence quite typical of Mamlûk ascendency in Muslim history, the Abyssinians finally established a dynasty of their own also known as "Habshî Kings" (1486-1493): with the support of the Paiks (Hindu foot-soldiers and guards of the palace), the eunuch Shahzada murdered the Sulṭân and ascended the throne as Bârbak Shâh (1486); but another Abyssinian, the able and loyal general Andil, soon dislodged him, once more with the help of the Paiks, and offered the throne to the infant son of the Sulṭân; but the late Sulṭân's wife declined, and Andil himself reigned as Sayf al-Dîn Fîrûz Shâh (1486-1490); he was the only able ruler of the dynasty, but died at the hands of the Paiks, who appear to have become the new king-makers.

Raised to the throne by palace revolutions involving the Paiks, the last two Abyssinian kings were also dislodged in the same way within three years (1490-1493). This brought to the throne a minister of the last Abyssinian ruler: he became Sulṭân ʿAlâʾ al-Dîn Ḥusayn Shâh, in 1493. The following period (1493-1538), the last of Bengal's independent Sulṭânate, was one of peace and prosperity, under the rule of four Ḥusayn Shâhî Sulṭâns; it witnessed an unprecedented artistic and literary development, as well as a pervading religious fermentation (cf. chapter III). Of all Muslim sovereigns of Bengal, ʿAlâʾ al-Dîn Ḥusayn (1493-1519) is probably the one who captured most the imagination of the people; having banished the Abyssinians and disbanded the Paiks, he recalled the old Muslim and Hindu nobles to high offices and identified himself with Bengal's aspirations. This policy was carried on by his son Nâṣir al-Dîn Nuṣrat Shâh (1519-1531). But the last ruler of the line, another of his sons, Ghîyâth al-Dîn Maḥmûd (1532-1538) was incompetent; threatened by the invasion of the Afghân Sher Khân (the future Sher Shâh), he made a late alliance with the Mughul Emperor Humâyûn (1530-1556), who came and occupied Lakhnawtî (1538), after Sher Khân had plundered its treasures (11). From his stronghold in South Bihar, Sher Khân gradually closed the trap on Humâyûn; after defeating him twice at

Chausa and Kanauj (1540), Sher Shâh put him to flight, thus becoming the master of North India. Having come to an end in 1538, the independent Sulṭânate of Bengal was integrated into the North Indian Empire.

Despite a certain narrative continuity in its presentation, this short survey of Bengal's history for that period reveals definite trends of political instability: what is seen to-day as a historical unit under the heading "Pre-Mughul Muslim period" was actually a succession of heterogeneous dynastic or individual rulers who were Muslims. Their power rested upon a balance of forces between various factors interacting in an intricate network which forms the background of the major political events mentioned above. Thus, political instability resulted from a combination of three main factors: the feudal system, regional and clannish feelings, the Mamlûk tradition.

The system of government which the conqueror Bakhtyâr Khaljî (1204-1206) established in Bengal was a sort of clannish feudalism (12). The practice of granting fiefs to warrior chieftains in return for military services was prevalent in the Muslim world and represented a system of land-ownership and taxation, combined with local government (13). Being himself a muqṭaᶜ (fief-holder) of the Sulṭân of Dehlî, Bakhtyâr Khaljî divided the conquered land in iqṭaᶜs granted to the army officers; he created some big governorships which he entrusted to three powerful Lords. Due to its shortcomings, the feudal system was reformed by Ghiyâth al-Dîn Balban (1265-1287) and by ᶜAlâ'al-Dîn Khaljî (1295-1315), but it was basically maintained. Even during the independent Sulṭânate of Bengal (1338-1538), it was retained and developed (14). By placing considerable military and financial power at the hands of the local fief-holders, the feudal system made the governor or the Sulṭân of Bengal dependent on chieftains who, at the first occasion, took advantage of the ruler's weakness to assert their autonomy.

The effects of the feudal system were particularly felt in the succession of the central ruler. At the death of a ruler, a new governor was appointed by Dehlî or a new Sulṭân (and sometimes even the governor) was

designated by the nobles of the Court (15); but the new ruler's actual accession to power depended on the support he could muster from the vassals; the existence of factions among the feudatories often resulted in short-lived rules, as in the case of Râjâ Gaṇeśa (cf. above, p. 35), or in long contentions for central power among rival vassals, as it happened at the death of Bakhtyâr Khaljî (cf. above, p. 33), at the time of Fîrûz Shâh (cf. above, p. 34), and at the birth of the independent Sulṭânate under Ilyâs Shâh (cf. above, p. 35). On the other hand, a strong support from the vassals could lead to an assertion of independence by the governor, followed by an intervention of Dehlî which re-established its authority and replaced the previous vassals with new elements (cf. above, p. 34: Balban's intervention against Mughîth al-Dîn Tughral).

The overall results of these patterns were quite clear to the contemporaries, as echoed in the words of Baranî: "The wise and the men of experience called Lakhnawtî, Balghâkpûr, because from a long time past after Sulṭân Muʿizz al-Dîn Muḥammad (bin) Sâm captured Dehlî, any Wâlî that the Sulṭân of Dehlî appointed for Lakhnawtî -- Lakhnawtî being far away from Dehlî, being very extensive and wide and there having been tiresome difficulties (of communication) between Dehlî and Lakhnawtî -- disobeyed and revolted (against the king of Dehlî). If the Wâlî did not revolt, others revolted against him and killed him and the country was captured. For many years the revolt has become their second nature and habit. And every Wâlî appointed there was turned away against the king by the trespassers and rebels." (16)

Within the general framework of the feudal system, another factor of instability was operative: clannish and regional feelings. Bengal being a sort of frontier outlet, various ethnical elements were attracted or sent to it (cf. below, section "Immigration"). They often came not as individuals but as members of a clan, following the good fortune of a chief. Especially among the Turks, clannish rivalries and clashes were common, fostering political upheavals. A good number of Khaljîs crowded around Muḥammad Bakhtyâr after his conquest; at his death (1206), his Khaljî vassals contended for

his succession; in this process, ʿAlî Mardan came back to Bengal with another group of Turks that he had recruited at Lahore. Towards the end of the same century, the Ilbarî Turks of the House of Balban, ousted from Dehlî by a group of Khaljîs, took refuge in Bengal where, in turn, they uprooted the Bengal Khaljîs; the Turks in general regarded the Khaljîs as non-Turks and looked down upon them as inferior people (17); such clannish feelings often found political expression in rebellions in Bengal, in changes of governors, and even in a change of dynasty, as in the case just mentioned.

Under the independent Sulṭâns of Bengal, a sort of national or regional consciousness had been evolved, in which the former immigrants and the Hindu vassals could identify themselves as a unit distinct from the newcomers such as the Abyssinian MamlÛks and the Ḥusayn Shâhî rulers (Arab dynasty: 1493-1538). The interruption of the Ilyâs Shâhî rule by the interregnum of the House of Râjâ Gaṇeša (1415-1435) clearly reflects the conflict between the "foreigners" (though they were Muslims) and the local elements, both Muslim and Hindu (18).

Another cause of political instability, closely connected with the feudal system and the regional feelings, was the MamlÛk tradition. As mentioned previously (cf. above, pp. 33-34), most of the governors appointed to Bengal between 1227 and 1287 were MamlÛks of the imperial Court of Dehlî; they were men of various nationalities of Central Asia, who had risen to high positions at the Court before being assigned to Bengal. Bengal was thus absorbing the <u>contre-coups</u> of the instability created by the MamlÛk and feudal institutions in Dehlî: if a MamlÛk governor wanted to retain his post in Bengal, he had either to cultivate the favor of the changing rulers in Dehlî, or to assert his autonomy, while keeping in check his own feudatories. Since the military support of Dehlî against the local vassals and the latter's support against Dehlî were both unreliable, the rulers of Bengal soon had to devise another basis of power. A first devise was the recruitment of the Hindu <u>Paiks</u>, initiated by Ghiyâth al-Dîn ʿIwaz (c. 1213), and carried on by Mughîth al-Dîn Tughral (1268-1281) and Ilyâs Shâh (1342-1357). The predictable outcome of this policy was that later, Sulṭân Rukn al-Dîn Bârbak (1459-

1474) recruited a large number of Abyssinian slaves, probably with the hope of counter-balancing the influence of the Paiks. But it was not long before the Abyssinians became a new element of disturbance: having gradually occupied the key-posts at the Court, they finally took over the throne (1487); since they were divided among themselves, a sequence of palace revolutions ensued, in which the Paiks were practically the king-makers.

This historical sketch deliberately left aside the religious developments of that period: they shall be dealt with in chapter III; but since the religious aspect cannot be viewed in isolation from the other aspects of history, the general political context has been evoked in this section, and now, more precise factors, namely immigration of Muslims and position of the non-Muslims, will be discussed, because they seem to have a closer connection with the initial question: how did Islâm come to be the religion of the majority of the people in Bengal?

Immigration

Immigration has been a significant factor in the growth of the Muslim community of Bengal. The general context of the migrations to Bengal was the restless situation prevailing in Central Asia due to repeated invasions. From the 11th century, Turkoman tribes such as the SeljÛqs, the Ghuzz, and the GhÛrids, invaded Muslim territories and their dominion came to spread from Ghazna to Konya. The population of Central Asia had hardly recovered from the impact of the Turkoman penetration when a new wave of invaders swept that territory: in the 13th century, the Mongol invasions brought about a great population stir-up. Different Turkoman groups, dislodged by the Mongols, went in search of a new homeland; some went westwards and established dynasties in Asia Minor, where they contributed to the formation of the Ghâzî states (19). Others came to India, along with numerous Persians who fled their devastated homeland. Having provided an outlet to the victims of the Mongol invasions, Bengal also became a refuge for ousted rulers and grandees in disgrace from neighboring provinces or Sulṭânates.

In this process and during the period under review, different types of immigrants came to Bengal. A good number of them were career soldiers and military adventurers. Such was the case of Bakhtyâr Khaljî who conquered Lakhnawtî; seeing his success, other Khaljîs flocked around him and settled in Bengal with their families. In order to regain ascendancy in Bengal, ʿAlî Mardân recruited a large number of adventurous Turks in Lahore and brought them to Bengal. Another type of Turkish immigrants were the soldiers and officers who accompanied new governors from Dehlî; for instance, after subduing the rebellious governor Tughral, Balban appointed his son Bughra Khân as governor of Bengal and left with him a strong force of Ilbarî Turks who also settled in Bengal. Besides the Turks, who generally migrated by clans, other soldiers were brought to Bengal, such as the Abyssinian MamlÛks and a certain number of Afghâns who had been recruited by the Turkoman rulers and were also found in the army of Sulṭân Muẓaffar Shâh and of Sulṭân Ḥusayn Shâh.

Ousted princes often found refuge in Bengal. For instance, Sulṭân Ḥusayn Sharqî, dislodged from JawnpÛr, received the hospitality of Sulṭân Ḥusayn Shâh, and the latter's son, Nuṣrat Shâh, gave refuge to MaḥmÛd Lodî, brother of Sulṭân Ibrâhîm Lodî of Dehlî; those princes and their followers were granted jâgirs (land revenue) and settled in Bengal.

Another type of immigrants found employment as administrators and Court officers. Such was the case with the Persians, from the beginning of the Muslim rule in Bengal: even at the time of Bakhtyâr Khaljî, a certain Bâbâ Kotwâl of Isfahân was the kotwâl of Nagor. ʿAlâʾ al-Dîn Ḥusayn Shâh, an Arab, first accepted service as a minister of the last Abyssinian Sulṭân before he himself ascended the throne.

Others, also coming as peaceful settlers, were scholars, poets, craftsmen, architects and painters. Among them, some rose to great prominence, like Amîr Zayn al-Dîn Harwî, the poet-laureate of Sulṭân Rukn al-Dîn Bârbak, and the great scholar Sharf al-Dîn AbÛ Tawwâmah; born in BÛkhârâ and educated in Khurasân, Mawlânâ AbÛ Tawwâmah was a reputed Ḥanafî jurist, accomplished in secular as well as Islamic sciences; around 1260, he came to

Dehlî, where the Sulṭân became jealous of his great popularity; he had to leave for Bengal, and there, he made Sonargâwn a brilliant center of Islamic learning.

Due to the great prosperity that it enjoyed, Bengal also attracted businessmen and traders. Even before the Muslim conquest there were most probably settlements of Arab merchants in some coastal areas of Bengal (20). Later, Minhâj mentions that in the time of ʿAlî Mardân, an Isfahânî merchant of Lakhnawtî sollicited the help of the Khaljî ruler; according to Baranî, some traders accompanied Balban in his expedition to Bengal, and the accounts of foreign travellers such as Varthema (c. 1505) and Barbosa (c. 1518) record the presence of Arab and Persian merchants' communities in the ports and cities of Bengal. As will be seen in chapter III, a considerable number of Ṣûfîs, scholars and popular preachers were also attracted bo Bengal, where they met great success.

As far as the ethnical or national origin of the immigrants is concerned (21), the Turks were the earliest group to come to Bengal; they first came as conquerors with Bakhtyâr Khaljî; under the governors (1204-1339), the Turkoman Muslims steadily poured into Bengal (Khaljî Turks around 1220, Ilbarî Turks around 1300, and Qarauna Turks around 1320), following the governors appointed by Dehlî, or as a consequence of a change of dynasty or of a famine in the great capital.

As mentioned previously, even before the Muslim conquest of Bengal there were probably settlements of Arab merchants in some coastal areas of Bengal: Chittagong, Noakhali, Sandîp. But Muḥammad Bakhtyâr's conquest (1204) really opened the gate of Bengal to Muslim immigrants of different nationalities. The Arabs were represented by Ṣûfîs and merchants; their influence favored the emergence of the Arab dynasty of Sayyid ʿAlâ' al-Dîn Ḥusayn Shâh (1493-1538). From the beginning of the Muslim rule, Persian merchants, Ṣûfîs and teachers settled in Bengal; the Mongol invasion drove away many Persians to India and some to Bengal; after the period under

review (1204-1538), the Mughul conquest introduced a great number of Persians; the Nawabs of Murshidabad were Persians and welcomed the refugees from their often disturbed original homeland.

The Abyssinians were brought to Bengal as slaves; like the Mamlûks in other countries, they were promoted to high rank and responsible offices, and finally established a dynasty which ruled a few years; many of them were later expelled by Ḥusayn Shâh. The Afghâns came to Bengal first as soldiers in the Turkoman armies; later, some royal refugees and their following took asylum in Bengal, coming from Dehlî and Orissa; they were granted jâgîrs (revenue of a village) and settled. In the Mughul period, many Mughul officers and soldiers served in Bengal; under Akbar and Jahângîr, many of them were given jâgîrs. Literature provides several examples of Muslim immigrants taking Hindu or Buddhist wives from different classes of the local society (22).

Concerning the respective numbers of those groups of immigrants, figures are given by M.A. Rahim. Some of those figures are taken from mediaeval chronicles: Minhâj says that Bakhtyâr Khaljî led a cavalry force of 10,000 men in his Tibet expedition, and according to Baranî, a following of 30,000 persons accompanied Sulṭân Ghiyâth al-Dîn Balban in his campaign against Bengal's governor Tughral (23). Other figures are borrowed from the History of Bengal, by Charles Stewart: 8000 Abyssinian Mamlûks are found in the service of Bârbak Shâh, and the Afghân ruler Dâ'ud Karranî had a cavalry force of 40,000 and an infantry force of 14,000 (24); but Stewart himself does not mention specific sources for those figures (25). M.A. Rahim also gives figures without mentioning sources, and estimates based on circumstantial datas (26).

So, it is hard to follow the same author when he comes up with the clear-cut conclusion that "in the growth of this Bengali Muslim people, the foreign element contributed 29.6 per cent and the local converts 70.4 per cent." (27) That conclusion is reached by a process which, at first sight,

seems quite risky: taking as a basis the given or estimated figures that he has mentioned, the author combines them with the rate of growth of the Muslim population between 1872 and 1941, and with the number of centuries spent in Bengal by each group of immigrants upto 1770, date of a great famine; the figure thus obtained is then substracted from the total Muslim population, also reached from the Census via the birth-rate (28). This ingenious device would probably be more convincing if one could ascertain its premises: the regularity of the birth-rate throughout centuries, and the accuracy of the figures found in the medieval chronicles or estimated by the author.

One becomes still more reluctant when the same author later adds another conclusion: "In view of the above facts, it may be concluded that, of the 70 per cent converted Muslims, at least half of them came from the upper strata of the Hindu and the Buddhist communities and the rest was recruited from the lower class. Thus the Bengali Muslim population was formed of about 30 per cent converts from the upper class non-Muslims and 35 per cent converts from the lower strata of the Hindu society. This explodes the theory that the Bengali Muslims were converts mostly from the low caste people of the Hindus. No society of the subcontinent could claim to represent a larger percentage of the immigrant Muslims and converts from the upper class Hindus as well as the Buddhists." (29)

That seems hard to reconcile with the fact that according to the mentioned Census, the great Muslim majorities were found in rural areas, and also with A.H. Dani's observation: "Rightly speaking, the ethnological analysis of the Bengali Muslims yet remains to be done. Apparently it seems that, barring a minor infiltration of the Arab, Turkish and Persian blood in the higher classes, there is hardly any change in the general characteristics of the Muslims as distinguished from the rest of the population." (30)

For an outside observer who can perhaps discard more easily race or class feelings in this case, it is hard to see any "humiliation" (as seen by M.A. Rahim) either for Islâm or for the Bengali Muslims, if it is ever

proved that the majority of the Bengali Muslims descend from the "lower classes" of the former Hindu society. Of course, the latter proof is not more satisfactorily done yet; moreover, my reluctance concerns not the facts and the precious information that the author gathered (there was a certain number of immigrants and of converts from the upper classes) but the proportions attributed to those factors in an over-all picture.

In the present state of research, it is nearly impossible to assign a precise proportion to the immigrant element in the Muslim population of Bengal. One thing, though, seems quite definite: their influence on the local society was due not so much to their number, but rather to the key-positions that they and their descendants occupied in that society. Some of them were scholars and Ṣūfī saints, zealous propagandists of the Islamic faith, as will be seen in chapter III; others were political rulers and high officers; they, also, were in some way propounders of Islâm: as will now be seen, their attitude towards the local population in social, administrative and religious matters had some bearing upon the response of the local population to the creed which they represented.

Position of the non-Muslim subjects

According to Abdul Karim, "two factors were mainly responsible in swelling the ranks of the Muslims in Bengal: (i) the immigration of the foreign Muslim populace and (ii) merging of the local populace in the Muslim Society after their conversion." (31) But conversion is a very complex phenomenon; basically it is the adoption of a new religious faith by an individual or by a group; practically, however, this adoption may be prompted by different factors such as force, socio-political incentives, religious persuasion. In the case of Bengal, the part possibly played by the first two factors will be investigated before examining the third.

It is generally agreed that in Bengal, as in other parts of the Muslim world in general, little was effected by violence in the conversion of local people to Islâm (32). At an early stage of information, Wise could say: "The enthusiastic soldiers, who, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, spread the faith of Islam among the timid races of Bengal, made forcible conversions by the sword, and, penetrating the dense forests of the Eastern frontier, planted the crescent in the villages of Silhet." (33) But he gave no decisive evidence for it, and no author after him held that position. According to Nizami, the Turkish invasions of the GhOrids were not inspired by any religious zeal or proselytizing fervor; their successes were not followed by any retaliatory action inspired by religious zeal or fanaticism; they handled the situation in the light of expediency and did not reject compromises (34); Muḥammad Bakhtyâr Khaljî, an adventurer, seems to have been no exception; he and his successors could hardly afford to provoke the religious feelings of the local people: the trends of political history suggest that nearly all their energies and strength were devoted first to asserting or maintaining their independence from Dehlî, to countering the threat of the neighboring Hindu and Muslim kingdoms, and to controlling the centrifugal tendencies of their vassals.

Among the immigrants, there were merchants interested in different kinds of trade, including slave-trade. On this, Wise observes: "The incursions of Assamese, and Mags, the famines, pestilences, and civil wars impoverished and hardened the people, and drove them in sheer desperation to sell their children as Mussulman slaves. The treatment of these slaves was humane, and their position comparatively a good one, as they were allowed to marry, and their families, supported by the master, added to the number of Islam." (35) The fact that slavery existed in Bengal at that time is corroborated by the accounts of foreign travelers like Ibn Baṭṭûṭa and Barbosa (36); but Wise seems to assume that a slave bought by a Muslim had to adopt Islâm, whereas the Muslim Law itself makes a distinction between Muslim and non-Muslim slaves; in practice, slaves could be adduced to Islâm by the hope of being manumitted, since the voluntary manumission of Muslim slaves by their

Muslim masters was encouraged and quite frequent (37). For Bengal, no mention is made of the number of local people recruited as slaves; there is no evidence, however, that this attained the proportions and the institutionalization of the devshirme in the Ottoman Empire or of the Mamlûk recruitment in Egypt.

Wise also mentions some stories, narrated by Muslims, about forcible conversions and conversions in order to escape judicial or fiscal punishment: for instance, one day a Mulvî, after some years' absence, went to visit one of his disciples who lived in the center of a Hindu village; there, he found out that the Muslim villager had renounced his faith and joined an outcast tribe; on his return to the city, the Mulvî reported this to the Nawab; troops were sent, surrounded the village, and every person in it was compelled to become Muslim. In later times, Murshîd Kulî Khân (Governor of Bengal: 1704-1725) enforced a law that any zamîndâr failing to pay the revenue that was due should, with his wife and children, be compelled to become Muslim (38).

Those stories concern the Mughul period, and one gets the impression that they had struck the memories of the people precisely because they represented something exceptional or contrasting with the pre-Mughul period. The same author says: "During the five centuries and a half of Muhammadan rule in Bengal, we only hear of one wholesale persecution of the subject Hindus, and that was waged by Jalaluddin." (39) Wise does not mention his sources for the "persecution"; "Jalaluddin" must be either Jalâl al-Dîn Muḥammad Shâh (1415-1432), the convert from Hinduism, or Jalâl al-Dîn Fatḥ Shâh (1481-1486); but the other sources used in this paper (including Hindu authors) do not mention anything about that "persecution" which contrasts with the general policy adopted by the rulers of that period, as described in the following paragraphs.

In India (40), jizyah had been imposed on the non-Muslim subjects by the Ghûrids; a policy of taxation on land produce was substituted to it by ʿAlâ' al-Dîn Khaljî (1295-1315); but Fîrûz Tughluq (1351-1388) re-introduced the imposition of jizyah in strict accordance with the Muslim Law;

he was one of the very few Dehlî Sulṭâns who showed zeal for proselytizing: "I encouraged my infidel subjects to embrace the religion of the Prophet, and I proclaimed that everyone who repeated the creed and became a Musulman should be exempt from the jizya. ... Information of this came to the ears of the people at large, and great numbers of Hindus presented themselves, and were admitted to the honour of Islam." (41) Sikandar Lodî (1488-1517) also extended patronage to the converts to Islâm. Those exemptions, along with the hope of patronage and promotion to government posts or court careers could be mighty incentives for conversion to the creed of the rulers. In the case of Bengal, if one wants to assess the actual efficiency of those socio-political incentives, he must first consider the condition of the non-Muslims under Muslim rule.

In Bengali literature, there are traditions to the effect that the Buddhists received the Muslims as liberators from Brahmanical oppression (42); a clear example of this is the Chapter "Niranjaner Rushma" in Sûṇya Purâṇa (an old Bengali manuscript): after stigmatizing the high-handed manners of the Brahmins and their injustice, the author acknowledges the protection of Dharma, who "assumed the form of Yavana (i.e. Muslim), wore a black cap on the head with bow and arrow in hand", in order to rid the Buddhists of the Brahmins' oppression (43). But not a single scrap of evidence is available about the attitude of the Muslim rulers towards the Buddhists, perhaps because the Muslim conquerors did not make much distinction between a Hindu and a Buddhist; so, what will be said applies to non-Muslims in general, and mainly to Hindus.

To the Hindu ruling class (including the Brahmins), the Muslim conquest caused a shock, and their first reaction was to migrate in different directions. As for the mass of the people, there is no evidence of mass-evacuation or of persecution. Considering the social gap between them and the Hindu ruling class (44), as well as the pattern of the Muslim conquest (raids against the main centers), it seems probable that the masses were not much disturbed by what amounted to a change of masters for them. Sporadic

mentions made by Minhâj (45) show that the non-Muslims began to pay their taxes, and that they were recruited in the flotilla of war-boats set up by Ghiyâth al-Dîn ʿIwaz Khaljî (1213-1227): naval warfare was quite foreign to the military tactics of the Turks, and they largely depended on the local people to defend a country where cavalry could be used only six months a year.

For the period of the Independent Sulṭânate (1339-1538), many more facts are gleaned from both Hindu and Muslim sources. During this period, Bengal was unified under a single sovereign and was free to shape its own policy: the general picture is one of liberality towards the non-Muslims, in state service, cultural and religious life, and economic condition.

Whereas in the initial period (1204-1339) the Hindus were mercenary soldiers, during the Ilyâs Shâhî period (1339-1414), they became the main support of the rulers. The famous Hindu Paiks (foot-soldiers) seem to have been professional soldiers who belonged to hereditary warrior-families; they formed the bulk of the army, and were assigned to the guard of the palace. According to Baranî, they used to call themselves Abû Bangâl (father of Bengal), and they "promised before Ilyâs [Shâh] that they would sacrifice their lives for him." (46) They gained so much influence that under the Abyssinian dynasty (1486-1493), they were practically the king-makers (cf. above, p. 36).

The earliest reference to the appointment of non-Muslims to key-positions of the government is made by the saint Ḥaḍrat Muẓaffar Shams Balkhî in the letters he addressed to Sulṭân Ghiyâth al-Dîn Aʿzam Shâh (1392-1410): he asks the Sulṭân not to make unbelievers his confidents and ministers; he says that some of them have already been appointed executive officers, for the sake of expediency, but that this may bring trouble. The saint's admonitions merely echo the advice given by Niẓâm al-Mulk (1072-1092) in his famous manual of statecraft Syâsat-nâmeh: "An officer may well be versed in his duties, he may be a secretary, an accountant or a man of business such

that he has no peer in all the world; but if he is a member of a bad sect, such as Jew, Christian or Zoroastrian, he will despise the Muslims and afflict them with hardships on the pretext of taxes and accounts. ... Now a wazir needs to have sound faith and to belong to a pure sect - either Hanafi of Shafi'i, and he must be efficient, shrewd, a good pen-man, and loyal to his king." (47)

Though they were not heeded by the Sulṭân, the saint's fears proved founded when, a few years later (1414), the Hindu Râjâ Gaṇeša, probably a wazîr, ascended the throne and established his own dynasty. This shows to what extent the Hindus were integrated into the government of the country. In spite of that episode, Sulṭân 'Alâ' al-Dîn Ḥusayn Shâh appointed some Hindus as ministers, and to high offices at the court (e.g., private secretary, master of the mint, private physician).

It is quite revealing that the growth of Bengali literature took place during that period: the earliest available extant books composed by non-Muslim poets go back to the time of the independent Sulṭânate; many of those writers were patronized by the Muslim ruling class. During the pre-Islamic period, due to the ascendancy of the Brahmins, the language of the court and of the writings was Sanskrit. During the Muslim period, the Brahmins lost their pre-eminence at the court; they could no longer keep their religious texts beyond the reach of the common people; they rather felt the need of making them understandable to the masses, to keep them away from the influence of Islâm. Having identified themselves with local aspirations, the Muslim rulers took great interest in Bengali literature; Muslim scholars, saints and poets also joined the movement in order to bring to the masses the message of Islâm (48).

State policy in Bengal required peace and harmony between people of different religions. There are traditions referring to clashes between Muslim saints and Brahmins; but on the whole, the atmosphere seems to have been one of peaceful co-existence in which non-Muslims could freely pursue

their religious activities. Hindu sources describe the florishing state of places of religious learning such as Nadiya, Fullasrî, and Satgâwn: they were full of Hindu professors, Brahmins, saints, sages and monks. It is interesting to note that the reign of Ḥusayn Shâh (1493-1519) corresponds to the rise of Srî Chaytanya Deva, the great Vaishnava reformer (cf. chapter III); far from hindering that rising force in Hinduism, the Sulṭân showed great respect for Chaytanya and enjoined his Qâḍîs to let him operate freely (49).

Since the Muslim immigrants were engaged mostly in state careers as officers, soldiers, nobles and administrators, the economic condition of the non-Muslims was left undisturbed to a great extent; on the one hand, the Muslims did not significantly compete with them in agriculture and industry, and, on the other hand, commercial relations with other parts of the Muslim world opened new markets for the local products. All the sources for the period concur in describing the condition of Bengal as very prosperous.

The most significant fact relating to the situation of the non-Muslims is perhaps the absence of any trace of jizyah (poll-tax) in the sources, both Muslim and Hindu. Whether the Bengali non-Muslims were considered as Dhimmis (protected people) or not is not known. During the corresponding period, the Sulṭâns of Dehlî often imposed jizyah upon the non-Muslims, in accordance with the Islamic Law, and it formed a prominent revenue item. But for Bengal, all the sources, including the Bengali literature of the non-Muslims, are completely silent on that point (50). This does not automatically prove the absence of jizyah; but, related to the general policy of the rulers (realistic approach, expediency, need of local support, adaptation to Bengal's peculiar problems), it establishes the strong probability that the non-Muslims were not subjected to jizyah.

Insofar as this brief survey allows conclusions, it seems that immigration accounted for a minor portion of the Muslim population. But the influence of those immigrants was probably out of proportion to their number, especially in the propagation of Islâm. Some of the conversions may have been

prompted by political motivations; but, on the whole, force and exemption measures for the converts did not have much to do with the spread of Islâm in Bengal. This, however, does not mean that socio-political factors had no bearing on conversions; after the shock of the first encounter, a process of gradual apprivoisement started; in the long run, it generated a certain solidarity between the rulers and their non-Muslim subjects; this was expressed in the successful defense of the common homeland against outsiders (both Hindu and Muslim), in the florishing growth of the Bengali literature, and in the sharing of government responsibilities.

If modern psychology has anything to do here (51), it may suggest that, over a long period of time, that general atmosphere of adjustment, détente and permissiveness was more conducive to conversion than outright proselytizing measures on the part of the rulers. Without minimizing the properly religious dimensions of the question, this consideration helps to understand the religious evolution of Bengal during that period: the activities of the Ṣûfîs and their results must be viewed against the general background of the society of their time.

NOTES (Chapter II)

1. cf. Hunter, The Imperial..., vol. II, p. 21.

2. cf. Arnold, op. cit., p. 363.

3. This section ("Political history") generally relies on the following authors:

   Jadunath Sarkar, ed., History of Bengal, vol. II (Dacca, Univ. of Dacca, 1948);

   Karim, Social History..., pp. 17-38;

   Cotton, "Bengal", EI, pp. 695-96;

   S. Lane-Poole, The Mohammedan Dynasties: Chronological and Genealogical Tables with Historical Introductions (Paris, Geuthner, 1925), pp. 305-8 (dates often have to be corrected with the more recent works mentioned above).

   On the difficulties of reviewing this period of history, cf. Sarkar, op. cit., p. vii, who concludes: "Thus a history of Bengal under Muslim rule is bound to be a production of very uneven parts, being up to modern standards of scholarship and rich in accurate details in certain topics or reigns only, and totally dark or covered with the haze of loose tradition in all others."

4. Various dates have been propounded for both the conquest of Bihar and the conquest of Bengal by Muḥammad Bakhtyâr Khaljî; 1203 and 1204, respectively, have been retained here, on the basis of A.M. Khan's elaborate discussion of the problem:

   cf. A.M. Khan, "Early Medieval History of Bengal - The Khaljis: 1204-1231 A.D. - Chronology and Political History", in Indian Culture 10 (1943-44), pp. 145-57.

5. cf. Abdul Karim, "Aspects of Muslim Administration in Bengal down to A.D. 1538", in JASP 3(1958), pp. 67-68.

6. On the Abyssinian Mamlûks, cf. Sarkar, op. cit., p. 42.

7. For this paragraph, cf. Karim, Social History..., pp. 24-26.

8. Sarkar, op. cit., pp. 24-25.

9. Cf. Rahim, op. cit., pp. 4-5;
Karim, Social History..., p. 28.

10. cf. Karim, "Aspects...", p. 83;
_____, "Early Muslim Rulers in Bengal and their non-Muslim Subjects (down to A.D. 1538)", in JASP 4(1959), pp. 82-83;
Sarkar, op. cit., pp. 124-27.

11. Smith, op. cit., p. 324.

12. Cf. Sarkar, op. cit., pp. 13-14;
Karim, "Aspects...", pp. 67-68.

13. Cf. Reuben Levy, The Social Structure of Islam (Cambridge, University Press, 1962), pp. 401-406;
also C.H. Becker, "Taxation and the Feudal System; a historical study of the origination of the Islamic Feudal System". Chapter translated at the IIS (McGill) from Islam Studien, vom Werden und Wesen der Islamichen Welt (Leipzig, Quelle & Meyer, 1924), pp. 234-247.

14. Cf. Karim, "Aspects...", p. 75.

15. Ibid., pp. 68, 81-82.

16. Ziyâ' al-Dîn Baranî, Ta'rîkh-i-Fîrûz Shâhî (Calcutta, Bibliotheca Indica, 1862), p. 82, quoted by Karim, Social History..., p. 23.

17. On the relations between "Turks" and "Khaljîs", cf. A.M. Khan, "Early...", pp. 145-46.

18. Cf. Karim, Social History..., pp. 28-31.

19. Cf. Paul Wittek, The Rise of the Ottoman Empire (London, RASGBI, 1958).

20. Cf. Rahim, op. cit., pp. 37-47, and for the following examples, pp. 47-49.

21. This part generally relies on
Rahim, op. cit., pp. 37-54;
Karim, Social History..., pp. 140-42.

22. Cf. Karim, Social History..., pp. 145-47.

23. Rahim, op. cit., p. 52.

24. Ibid., pp. 51, 53.

25. Charles Stewart, History of Bengal (London, Black, 1813), pp. 100, 152.

26. Cf. Rahim, op. cit., pp. 62-63.

27. Ibid., p. 64.

28. Ibid., pp. 57-64.

29. Ibid., p. 68.

30. Dani, "Race and...", p. 115.

31. Karim, Social History..., p. 140.

32. Cf. Arnold, op. cit., and

Francesco Gabrieli, Muhammad and the Conquests of Islam, translated from the Italian by Virginia Luling and Rosamund Linell (London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1968), especially pp. 116, 226, 231, 239.

33. Wise, op. cit., p.1.

34. Nizami, K.A., Some aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the 13th century (Aligarh, Muslim Univ., 1961), p. 87; in the same line, cf. Aziz Ahmad, op. cit., p. 79.

35. Wise, op. cit., p. 2.

36. Cf. Karim, Social History..., p. 196;
Rahim, op. cit., pp. 299-300.

37. Cf. R. Brunschvig, "ʿAbd", EI^2, I, pp. 24-40.

38. Wise, op. cit., pp. 2-3; Hunter also mentions similar cases, saying that they were few in number, and that "it was not to such measures that Islâm owed its permanent success in Bengal", Imperial..., p. 16.

39. Wise, op. cit., p. 1.

40. Cf. Aziz Ahmad, op. cit., p. 80;
Arnold, op. cit., p. 258.

41. Cf. Aziz Ahmad, op. cit., p. 83.

42. Cf. Abdul Karim, "Early Muslim...", p. 73; the following paragraphs, excepting the last two, make extensive use of this article, which is generally corroborated by the datas of Sarkar, History of Bengal...

43. Cf. Karim, Social History..., pp. 142-44.

44. Cf. Chapter I, p. 22 of this thesis.

45. Cf. Karim, "Early Muslim...", pp. 76-79.

46. Baranî, op. cit., p. 593; cf. Karim, "Early Muslim...", p. 80.

47. Niẓâm al-Mulk, The Book of Government or Rules for Kings, the Syâsat-nâma or Siyâr al-Mulûk. Translated from the Persian by Hubert Darke (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960), pp. 175, 178; cf. also pp. 164-65.

48. Cf. Enamul Haq, "Bengali", EI^2, I, 1167-69.

49. Cf. Karim, "Early Muslim...", pp. 89-90;
Sarkar, History..., pp. 143-44; 150-52.

50. Cf. Karim, "Early Muslim...", pp. 95-96.

51. Cf. Carl R. Rogers, On Becoming a Person (Boston, Mifflin, 1965).

Chapter III

THE SPREAD OF ISLĀM : RELIGIOUS FACTORS

The liberal attitude of the Muslim rulers towards the non-Muslims fostered the consolidation of Muslim political power in Bengal as well as the emergence of a collective self-consciousness among the Bengalis. There is no doubt that the teachings of Islâm represented a new social order which was likely to appeal to the masses of the people: conversion to Islâm could be a liberation from the caste discrimination of the Hindu society.

It may be admitted that "many of the humbler people chose to identify themselves with the Muslims in order to be free from social injustice and to gain good position in the society." (1) To the modern minds for whom religion is a mere epiphenomenon or by-product of a given technological or sociological development, this may seem the ultimate explanation for the spread of the Islamic faith in Bengal. But conceptual vraisemblance must not be taken for factual evidence. The social teachings of Islâm were not translated into facts overnight: the Muslim society of Bengal took form gradually, and in interaction with the local milieu; it departed from the Hindu caste system, but it was not a society without class distinction: contemporary sources distinguish between several social groups, such as Sayyids, ʿĀlims, Shaykhs, Khans, Maliks, etc. (2); and, "as a whole the materials at our disposal give us a picture of the Muslim society divided into two broad classes, the higher class follows the usual pattern of the Muslim society in this subcontinent, but the lower class shows survivals of local practices of influences from the Hindu society." (3)

It is generally agreed that the Ṣūfī saints played a prominent role in the spread of Islâm in Bengal: through their dedicated life and their teachings, they attracted the local masses and converted them to Islâm. But here also, one must beware of operating at a merely conceptual level: a comparison between Hindu and Islamic mystical concepts does not serve the same purpose as an analysis of the Ṣūfîs' activities and institutions in Bengal.

On the basis of presently available sources, A. Karim and M.A. Rahim present an interesting survey (4) of the activities of the Ṣūfîs in Bengal and of the features of Islâm in Bengal. While using the information provided by these authors (second and third sections of this chapter), it may be profitable to view their findings against the general background of Ṣūfism in India (first section of this chapter); this may give a fuller significance to particular facts known about Bengal, and eventually suggest a re-assessment of the modern idea of "conversion" as applied to the phenomenon recorded in Bengal during the 1204-1538 period.

Ṣūfism in India

In the historical development of Islâm, as for other religions, esoteric as well as exoteric trends may be traced. For the exoteric mind, as exemplified by the 'Ulamâ', it was assumed that "the individual Muslim and the organization of his life have to be subject to the system of the sharī'ah, that definiteness in beliefs and practices, and the logical integration of the details of life so that they form a consistent whole, will make the truth of Islâm more evident and ensure success in this world and salvation in the next. Correct practice was deduced from true belief. Both orthodoxy and religious thought regarded personal experience of value if it confirmed dogma; if it did not, then they supposed that, like doubt, it could lead to error, and must be rejected." (5) On the other hand, the

esoteric trend was expressed in Ṣūfism (Islamic mysticism): "the mystical type of mind, because of its peculiar constitution, seeks confirmation of belief through its own individual experience. This experience may lead it towards a more complete and fruitful acceptance of current and established belief, or towards attempts to adjust it to persons and circumstances." (6)

Both the orthodox leaders and the Ṣūfīs had some ground to distrust one another, and this sometimes culminated in outward hostility (7). Due to the spiritual vitality of the Ṣūfī movement, some accomodation with it was forced upon the orthodox leaders; the great theologian-mystic al-Ghazzālī reconciled both: orthodoxy without the revivalist leaven of Ṣūfism was an empty profession, and Ṣūfism without orthodoxy dangerous subjectivism. From that time on, the leaders of both wings co-operated with relative understanding. Ṣūfī missionaries had been instrumental in the conversion of the Turkish tribes, and the Ṣūfī Shaykhs became entrusted with the function of missionary work in the cities and countryside.

Gradually, the Ṣūfī movement gained ground over the orthodox institution; from at least the 11th century, it tended to occupy the central place in the religious life of the great majority of the Muslims; by the 13th century, the function of maintaining the unity of the community had passed from the orthodox leaders to the Ṣūfīs. In contrast to the orthodox institution, the Ṣūfī movement was based on its popular appeal, and its new structure of religious unity was built on popular foundations.

Whereas in the early centuries the Ṣūfī circles emerged as individual and dispersed units, their proliferation was now showing patterns of more organized structures. The personal relationship between the Ṣūfī Shaykh (master) and his disciples evolved into the formation of orders or silsilahs.

In India and in Bengal proper, the main orders represented, from the 13th century, were the Chistī and the Suhrawardī silsilahs. K.A. Nizami gives a description of those two orders in 13th century India (8).

Within a short span of time, their khânqahs studded the whole country; that expansion was linked with the concept of wilayat (spiritual territory), and favored by a spirit of mutual trust and accomodation between the two orders. The Suhrawardîs were most vigorous in Sind and Punjab, but could get no permanent settling in the Gangetic plains; the Chishtîs spread from Ajmer, and eventually established centers up to Bihar, Bengal, Assam, Deccan, gaining an all-India status.

The factors determining the success of a silsilah were mainly its Shaykh's adaptability and the attitude of the order toward the non-Muslims. A good deal depended on the ability of the Shaykh to adapt himself to the mental and emotional climate of a region, to identify himself with the problems of the people, through his nafs-i-qira (intuitive intelligence). The tremendous appeal of the Chishtî saints in non-Muslim environment was largely due to their understanding of the religious attitudes and aspirations of the Indian people; that prompted them to adopt many Hindu customs and ceremonials in the initial stages of their development. The difference between the Chishtîs and the Suhrawardîs in their attitudes towards the non-Muslim also had an influence on their popularity: the Chishtîs held that the control of the emotional life should be prior to the control of the external behavior, whereas the Suhrawardîs insisted on regulating the actions before controlling the emotions; thus, contrarily to the Suhrawardîs, the Chishtîs "did not demand formal conversion to Islâm as a pre-requisite to initiation in mystic discipline. Formal conversion, they said, should not precede but follow a change in emotional life." (9)

Due to the Ghuzz and Mongol devastation of ʿAjam, many disciples of Shihab al-Dîn Suhrawardî migrated to India; among them was Shaykh Jalâl al-Dîn Tabrîzî, who was requested to stay with Iltutmish; having associated with the society of Dehli, he became an object of jealousy and retired to Bengal (10). He "shot like a meteor over the Indian horizon and after short stays in Hansi, Bada'un and Delhi disappeared in Bengal. Earlier authorities do not tell us anything about his activities after his departure from Delhi, but later writers credit him with having established a magnificent khânqah

in Bengal and having converted a very large number of Hindus to Islâm. The devotion of a section of the Hindus to him is clearly evinced in the Sanskrit work, Shekasubhodaya. His personal prestige and influence apart, his khânqah could not develop into a centre for the extension of the Suhrawardî mystic silsalah Bengal." (11)

The Chishtî silsilah was introduced to India before the Turkish conquest by Shaykh Muʿîn al-Dîn Sijzî (d. 1236). The structure of his thought was founded on three principles, which brought him close to the people of India: a) his pantheistic approach drew him near to ancient Hindu religious thought; b) for him, religion was above rituals and formalities, and the service of humanity was its "raison d'être"; c) he opposed parochialism, casteism and religious exclusiveness by making generosity, affection and hospitality the heart of his message. He was followed and succeeded by many disciples; some of them acquired great fame, and attracted disciples from all layers of the society.

Most of the Chishtî saints, unlike the Suhrawardîs, did all they could to keep aloof from the kings and the Courts, as well as from government service (shughl); they also rejected jâgîrs, and pension or favor from a king. They lived on the cultivation of waste land (zamîn-i-Aḥya) or/and on unsollicited gifts (futûḥ). As a consequence, and in contrast with the Suhrawardîs, most of them were living in conditions of appalling poverty in lodging, food and clothing (12). All led a married life, except Nizâm al-Dîn Awliyâ'; a case of intermarriage is mentioned: the one of Shaykh Muʿîn al-Dîn who took the daughter of a Hindu râjâ as one of his two wives.

The Chishtî khânqah was usually a big hall where community life was led; the daily programme comprised prayer, interviews with visitors, fast, vigil, and the performance of some duties in the management of the khânqah; some khânqahs used futûḥ to offer hospitality and entertainment. The residents of the monasteries were usually people who had come there to find peace of mind, which they could not have had previously as scholars, government servants, or businessmen. Casual visitors included all types of people:

scholars, politicians, soldiers, Hindu yogis, qalandars (wandering mendicants), etc.; they came mostly to ask for the Shaykh's intercession in their distress. The disciples were of two types: one was a sort of "tiers-ordre", whereas the other fully consecrated a person to Ṣûfism; after a program of formation, the Ṣûfî mystic received a khilâfat nâmah (certificate of succession) which enabled him to enrol disciples.

In 13th century India, the 'ulamâ' generally had great respect for the Chishtîs; so did the rulers, but they often wanted to attract them to the court. Their interference with the Chishtîs' independence reached a sort of climax under Muḥammad bin Tughluq (1324-1351); inspired by missionary zeal, he wanted the Ṣûfîs to be active in the peaceful propagation of Islâm; the Chishtî Shaykh Naṣîr al-Dîn opposed him. The ultimate result of that confrontation was that Shaykh Naṣîr al-Dîn appointed no successor; with his death, "the great line of all-India Chishtî saints ... was brought to an end. The future Chishtî saints - and there were many of them - could not attain to anything beyond a provincial reputation." (13)

In the ensuing diaspora, Shaykh Sirâj al-Dîn (popularly known as Akhî Sirâj) introduced the Chishtî silsilah to Bengal; he died in Gaur in 1357, leaving an eminent successor 'Alâ' al-Dîn b. As'ad Lâhurî Bengali (d. 1398); he, in turn, left two great disciples, Nûr Quṭb-i-'Âlam (d. 1410), and Ashraf Jâhangîr Simnânî (d. 1405), who popularized the silsilah in Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Nûr Quṭb-i-'Âlam organized public opinion against Râjâ Kans, who had established his power in Bengal (1409); the Shaykh persuaded Sulṭân Ibrâhîm Sharqî of Jawnpur to invade Bengal; he and his descendants also had a share in creating that religious stir which ultimately led to the rise of the Bhakti movement in Bengal and in Bihar (14).

This description of the Ṣûfî orders in 13th century India can be misleading if it is not supplemented by some remarks concerning the Ṣûfîs' attitude towards conversions and towards the Sharî'ah in relation to adaptation to local conditions. Aziz Ahmad notes that "the role of the Ṣûfîs in

India has been over-estimated and over-idealized as eclectic and as a bridge between Hinduism and Islam ... In fact the relationship between Ṣûfism and Hindu mysticism is multi-positional and ranges from polemical hostility through missionary zeal to tolerant co-existence." (15)

Whether "missionary zeal" is necessarily connected to "polemical hostility" remains to be seen. One thing, though, is sure: the adjustments and concessions to popular local practices were gradual and often made with great hesitations by the Ṣûfî leaders; during the 13th and 14th centuries, a section of the Ṣûfî saints shared with the ʿulamâʾ the feeling that, due to the way popular Ṣûfism was evolving, the Sharîʿah was dangerously neglected (16). The protagonists of this tendency tried to reform Ṣûfî beliefs and practices to bring them in line with orthodoxy.

The attitude of the Chishtî Shaykh Nasîr al-Dîn Chirâgh of Dehli (d. 1356) illustrates that tension between two genuine preoccupations, "ortho-praxis" and adaptation: he imposed many limitations on <u>samaʿ</u>, an important practice of the order; he tried to do away with the practice of bowing by touching the head to the ground before the saints, but permitted kissing the ground with the lips; he opposed the veneration of graves as verging on worship, but he approved circumambulation of the saints' mausoleums (17). After him, Ṣûfîs of India, as of other countries, came under the influence of the monistic and pantheistic works of Ibn ʿArabî; the "back to Sharîʿah" slogan could not check the popularity of Ibn ʿArabî and the increasing attempts to explore the common grounds between Hindus and Muslims; "contacts with Yogis and Hindu saints went a long way in popularising pantheistic doctrines", and it soon proved vain "to attempt to uproot all the alleged un-Islamic practices from a country like India which had a preponderance of non-Muslims." (18)

As for the conversion of Hindus to Islâm by the Ṣûfîs, it is a much debated question among the Indo-Pakistanî scholars. M. Habîb says that "converting non-Muslims was no part of the mission of the Chishtî silsilah; the great Shaykh himself [Muʿîn al-Dîn Sijzî or Chishtî: 1141-1236] had made

no converts." (19) This view is supported by Rizvi, who argues that "the early mystic records (Malfuzat and Maktubat), contain no mention of conversion of the people to Islâm by these saints. In the context of this, the Jawahir-i-Faridi, legendary and unreliable in character, and the oral evidence of zamindar families, from whose information the Gazetteers and Settlement Reports were compiled, cannot be given much credence. These zamindars, in order to establish their proprietary rights over larger and larger areas of land, had to prove their superior ancestry by resorting to many cunning devices. They linked their ancestors with real as well as imaginary saints." (20)

On the other hand, Aziz Ahmad holds that the Chishtî founder's ideal included the "zealous propagation of Islâm", and that "most of the Ṣûfî orders as well as individual Ṣûfîs, at one time or other, regarded the conversion of non-Muslims as one of their primary spiritual objectives in India." (21) Nizami notes that "the absence of recorded evidence cannot be interpreted to mean that there were no conversions. Obviously, the increase in Indo-Muslim society was largely due to conversions. But it remains to be investigated how these conversions took place and what agencies worked for them." (22).

The author of this thesis is in no position to arbitrate a debate between such authorities on the subject. It may at least be pointed out that the opposition of their views is not so complete as the above summarization may suggest: on the one hand Aziz Ahmad says that there were highs and lows in the proselytizing activities of the Ṣûfîs (23), and Nizami mentions the opposition of Shaykh Naṣîr al-Dîn to state-patronized conversion assignment (cf. above, p. 48). On the other hand, Rizvi's and Habib's observations concern the early Ṣûfî saints (13th and early 14th century), and perhaps assume that the great leaders had complete control over the activities of their followers scattered over North India; moreover, Rizvi mentions several cases where the great Shaykhs' attitude towards conversions seems to have been quite complex, and dictated more by circumstances than by set principles; for instance, Shaykh Niẓâm al-Dîn Awliyâ' (d. 1325) said, referring to a Hindu who had been brought to him with the hope that the saint's blessings would convert

him to Islâm: "The heart of these people is not changed through one's sermons. However, if some of them are able to join the company of some pious man, they may become Muslims." (24)

This saying suggests that, between clear adherence or clear opposition to a well-defined conversion policy, a whole field was open, on the basis of personal contact and mutual appreciation between the Ṣûfîs and the local people. This aspect may be relevant to the case of Bengal. At any rate, the remarks of Habib, Rizvi, Ahmad and Nizami may be very helpful in sifting the materials provided by Rahim and Karim about the activities of the Ṣûfîs in Bengal: though Bengal was relatively isolated and may offer variations from Ṣûfism in India, the facts known about Bengali Ṣûfîs may acquire fuller significance if they are viewed against a general North Indian context.

The Ṣûfîs in Bengal

Writers have consistently linked the preponderance of the Muslim population in Bengal with the missionary activities of the Ṣûfîs. But, as it has been seen, Ṣûfîs were also actively present in North India. What, then, accounts for the difference in the outcome of their activities: in India, the Muslims represented a minority, whereas in Bengal, they came to be a majority? At first sight, many factors may be suggested to explain that phenomenon: the Ṣûfîs were relatively more numerous in Bengal; their outlook towards proselytism was different; the local people with whom they came in touch were in a different religious position; the Ṣûfîs did not stay in the urban centers of Bengal, but spread in rural areas; thus scattered and isolated, they enjoyed more freedom in adapting the message of Islâm to the local beliefs and practices.

All these factors may have something to do with the wide spread of Islâm in Bengal; a brief survey of the activities of the Ṣûfîs in Bengal should enable us to see how far those factors were actually operative, without necessarily clarifying whether or why they were less operative in India.

A letter written by Sayyid Ashraf Jahângîr Simnânî (d. 1405) to Sulṭân Ibrâhîm Sharqî of Jawnpur gives an idea of the thriving condition of Ṣûfism in Bengal at that time:

> "God be praised, what a good land is that of Bengal where numerous saints and ascetics came from many directions and made it their habitation and home. For example, at Devgaon seventy leading disciples of the Shaikh of Shaikhs Ḥaḍrat Shaikh Shibâb al-Dîn Suhrawardî are taking their eternal rest. Several saints of the Suhrawardia order are lying buried in Mahisun and this is the case with the saints of the Jalâlia order in Deotale. In Narkoti some of the best companions of Shaikh Aḥmad Damishqî are found. Ḥaḍrat Shaikh Sharf al-Dîn Tawwâmah, one of the twelve of the Qadîrkhânî order, whose chief pupil was Ḥaḍrat Shaikh Sharf al-Dîn Manerî, is lying buried at Sonargaon. And then there was Ḥaḍrat Bad ʿĀlam and Badr ʿĀlam Zâhidî. In short, in the country of Bengal, what to speak of the cities, there is no town and no village where holy saints did not come and settle down. Many of the saints of the Suhrawardia order are dead and gone under earth, but those still alive are also in fairly large number." (25)

Even if one does not take literally the statement that "there is no town and no village where holy saints did not come and settle down", literary and epigraphical sources establish the fact that their number must have been quite impressive; the number and location of their dargâhs (mosque erected by or on the grave of a saint) further indicate that they did not concentrate only in urban areas, but scattered throughout the whole country (26).

The early Ṣūfī saints came to Bengal within the general pattern of migrations caused by the Mongol invasion of Central Asia, as mentioned above (pp. 31 ff.). They usually stopped in Dehlī, and due either to tense relations with the rulers, or to the idea of wilayat (spiritual territory), they pursued their way to Bengal, which seemed to be a more congenial ground for their ideals: such was the case of Shaykh Jalāl al-Dīn Tabrizī (cf. above, pp. 46-47) and of Shaykh Akhī Sirāj al-Dīn (d. 1357), who was assigned Bengal as a wilayat by his master Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyā' of Dehlī. They were usually accompanied by their own disciples, and recruited others in Bengal itself.

Some authors view the activities of the Ṣūfīs in Bengal as moral or spiritual conquest following the physical conquest by the Muslim generals: whereas the latter was effected by military force, the former was effected by peaceful and purely spiritual penetration (27). But the facts were not quite so simple; they seem closer to Aziz Ahmad's general observation on the three phases in the Ṣūfīs' approach to Hinduism: hostility, co-existence, tolerance and understanding.

Local traditions record that some of the Ṣūfīs fought against the local non-Muslim kings, either on their own, or in collaboration with the Muslim rulers. Traditions of different places show almost identical stories, with the same underlying pattern: a Muslim saint or a family lives in the midst of a large number of Hindus; trouble is caused by the sacrifice of a cow or by the practice of circumcision; quarrel arises, and a Muslim army is called into Hindu territory to punish the local king and protect the Muslims' rights. The superhuman coloring of those stories as well as their common pattern suggest that they must be taken with reservations; but they probably reflect, under an epic form, the fact that there were clashes between the incoming Muslim settlers and the local non-Muslim population; assuming the usual reaction of a given milieu to immigrants, it must have taken some time, even for the most peaceful Ṣūfīs, before they were accepted by the local population and could influence it.

As was the case in the Ghâzî states of Asia Minor (28), some of the Ṣûfîs came to Bengal with the idea of fighting for the cause of Islâm; they assisted the local Muslim rulers in expanding their territory at the expense of the neighboring Hindu principalities, as shown by the examples of Shaykh Jalâl of Sylhet and Shâh Ismâ'îl Ghâzî. Shâh Jalâl was born in Kuniya, in Asia Minor, probably in the second half of the 13th century; having achieved some success in the spiritual jihâd under his master Aḥmad Yesvî, his desire was to make a similar headway in the Lesser (material) jihâd. His master agreed to Shâh Jalâl's desire and sent seventy of his disciples with him. In the early 14th century, he reached Bengal, and with the collaboration of a general of Sulṭân Shams al-Dîn Fîrûz Shâh (1301-1322), he conquered the region of Sylhet, where he settled. Around 1345, he was visited by the Moorish traveler Ibn Baṭṭûṭa, who gives an account (29) of the Shaykh's peaceful life in that hilly region: the Shaykh observed the fast for forty years, breaking it only every ten days, by drinking the milk of a cow, his only possession; he was credited with many miracles and with the conversion of the local population to Islâm.

According to tradition, Shâh Ismâ'îl Ghâzî was a descendant of the Prophet, born in Mekka; dedicating his life to the cause of the faith, he came to Bengal with a following. There, he successfully advised Sulṭân Rukn al-Dîn Bârbak (1459-1474) on the control of the floods; the saint was thereupon appointed to conduct warfare on different frontiers of the kingdom; he defeated the Râjâ of Orissa and the Râjâ of Kamrup, thus expanding the Sulṭân's domination; on the false information that the saint, in alliance with the Râjâ of Kamrup, intended to set up an independent kingdom, the Sulṭân had him beheaded (1474).

There were saints who were warriors; but there were also actual soldiers and conquerors who, probably after their death, were treated as saints, their tombs becoming shrines (30): such is the case of Khân Jahân whose dargâh is in Bagerhat, and who was an official and a conqueror of the Khulna region in the time of Nâṣir al-Dîn Maḥmûd (1442-1459); similarly, Zafar Khân Ghâzî conquered the Triveni region under Rukn al-Dîn Kâykâ'ûs (1291-1301), and is to-day the renowned saint of that area.

On the whole, the Ghâzî Ṣûfîs were a minority, and in Bengal, there is no trace of a Ghâzî movement comparable to the emergence of the Ghâzî states in Asia Minor. The great majority of the Ṣûfîs were engaged in more peaceful enterprises: mystical life, scholarly work, teaching and preaching. In addition to the Chishtî and Suhrawardî orders, local Ṣûfî orders soon developped in Bengal under their influence (31). All this may be illustrated by the examples of some prominent Ṣûfîs.

Having come to Bengal from ʿAjam via Dehlî, Shaykh Jalâl al-Dîn Tabrizî (d. 1225 or 1244) attracted a large number of people around him. His presence conferred prominence to two places in Bengal: Pandwah, and Deotola, which was named Tabrizâbâd after him. He is the founder of the Jalâlia order. Shaykh Sharf al-Dîn Abû Tawwâmah was born in Bukhâra and educated in Khurâsân; he was well versed in theology, jurisprudence and traditions. When he appeared in Dehlî (c. 1260), he made such an impression upon the people by his piety and his knowledge that Sulṭân Ghiyâth al-Dîn Balban, feeling uneasy about the saint's popularity, advised him to go to the province of Bengal. The Shaykh went and settled in Sunârgâwn; he established a khanqah for his disciples; a large number of disciples and pupils flocked to him for religious instruction; among them was Shaykh Sharf al-Dîn Yaḥyâ Manerî, the celebrated saint of Bihar, who stayed with him upto the age of thirty.

Shaykh ʿAlâʾ al-Ḥaqq (or ʿAlâʾ al-Dîn) (d. 1398) was the son of Shaykh Asʿad of Lahore; his master Niẓâm al-Dîn Awliyâʾ of Dehlî sent him to Bengal, where he became a disciple of Akhî Sirâj al-Dîn ʿUthmân (d. 1357); miracles are attributed to him, and it is said that he spent a large sum of money on feeding pupils, beggars and wanderers; this excited the jealousy of the Sulṭân, who sent him to Sunârgâwn. The ʿAlâî order was named after him. His son and spiritual successor, Nûr Quṭb ʿĀlam (d. 1415), played a prominent role in the resistance to Râjâ Gaṇeśa (1409), as noted above (p. 29); it is quite significant that after converting to Islâm Gaṇeśa's son and successor Jadû, the Shaykh requested the Sulṭân of Jawnpur to leave Bengal; this suggests that a certain Bengali in-group feeling

had been evolved in the Muslim society of Bengal; in the same line, Nûr Quṭb ʿĀlam made the first attempt at popularizing the Bengali language among Muslim scholars by introducing the "Rikhta style" in Bengali: in it, half a hemistich was composed in pure Persian and the other half in unmixed Bengali (32). Though he was a friend of Sulṭân Ghiyâth al-Dîn Aʿẓam Shâh (d. 1409), he refused a court office offered by his own brother, a wazîr at the court. He left many disciples who spread the Nûrî order, named after him. His dargâh was venerated and endowed by Sulṭân ʿAlâ' al-Dîn Ḥusayn Shâh (1493-1519).

When dealing with the "missionary activities" of the Ṣûfî saints in Bengal, authors direct their investigation to evidence of precise cases of conversions effected by particular saints; this is obviously the first thing to do. But, due to the scantiness of reliable material, this approach offers a very narrow ground for generalization. For instance, Abdul Karim says that "naturally, the people were attracted and enchanted towards them and it is in this way that they won over the mass of the Bengali people to Islâm. Examples are not rare to substantiate the statement." (33) Then, he mentions miracles performed by Shaykh Jalâl al-Dîn Tabrizî, which induced people to become "his servants" as reported in Sekh Subhodaya; but the same author had previously noted about this work that "according to scholars the book is spurious", was written in Akbar's time, and that the "stories in Shaykh Subhodaya are fictitious." (34) A few lines after, he says: "Beside the general references evidenced by traditions, we have some undoubted evidences to show that the Ṣûfîs converted people to Islâm." (35) He mentions the conversions of the Yogi Bhojar Brahmin by Qâḍî Rukn al-Dîn al-Samarqandî, and of Jadû by Nûr Quṭb ʿĀlam. This raises the problem of the inferential value of those particular cases and of the traditions as a basis for generalization. Of course, Karim's conclusions also rely on circumstantial evidence for conversions by Ṣûfîs: he mentions different factors which attracted people towards the Ṣûfîs. Lest high probabilities be confounded with ascertained facts, this process needs some clarification.

The position adopted in this thesis does not deny that there must have been a large number of conversions to Islâm effected by the Ṣûfîs: in the present state of research, this seems to be the most reasonable way to account for the large number of Muslims in Bengal. But it is important to be precise about the practical meaning of the terms "conversion", "the Ṣûfîs", and "Islâm".

In modern context, the term "conversion" suggests adherence to a well defined ensemble of religious tenets and practices, implying the rejection of previous tenets and practices which do not figure in the newly adopted religion. But it seems that in the context of medieval Bengal, "conversion" did not imply the same clear-cut and totalitarian character: Islâm, as propounded by the Ṣûfîs, especially in the rural areas, showed less rigid and more permeable contours than Islâm as represented by the jurists and the ʿulamâ'; moreover, the awareness of basic distinctions and oppositions between Islâm and Hinduism must have been less vivid at that time than it is to-day, after years of clashes between revivalist movements. As for the term "the Ṣûfîs", it is perhaps to be understood in a broad sense; conversions attributed by traditions to a specific saint do not necessarily postulate a recordable proselytizing activity on the part of that saint: due to the religiosity of the people, propaganda around the tomb and the miraculous power of a saint could be as effective as the actual deeds of the saint himself.

The statements made in the above paragraph in no way pretend to supersede explanations offered by previous authors; they only try to push further in relating factors provided by those authors. Moreover, they are less "statements" than estimations or conjectures suggested by a survey of the components of the Sûfîs' influence (following paragraphs), and of the peculiar traits of Islâm as practiced in Bengal at that time (third section).

We have noted earlier that in pre-Islamic Bengal, there were Hindu Yogis, Sâdhus, and Brahmins, as well as Buddhist monks dedicated to an escetic and mystical life, showing striking similarities with the life of the Ṣûfîs. They were held in high esteem and veneration by the people; those Sâdhus (holy men) were mostly Tantric Gurus who had mysterious influence over the credulous masses; they had become an institution by themselves, and the villagers flocked around them in search of salvation and relief from miseries (36). Those men answered a basic need of the masses for what Max Weber calls "charismatic authority": "the term 'charisma' will be applied to a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader." (37) With the decline of Buddhism and the dispersion of Brahmins and Yogis, the Ṣûfîs gradually took over that religious ascendancy upon the local people.

The rapprochement and interaction between Ṣûfîs and Yogis must have contributed to that process, if the case of Qâḍî Rukn al-Dîn al-Samarqandî (d. 1218) and Bhojar Brahmin can be taken as typical (38). Having heard of the Muslim conquest, the Yogi Bhojar Brahmin came from Kamrup to Lakhnawtî, in order to hold discussions with the Muslim divines. The Qâḍî, a Ḥanafî jurist as well as a Ṣûfî, answered his questions, and Bhojar became a Muslim. He mastered Islamic sciences and was permitted to pronounce legal decisions. Then, he presented to the Qâḍî the sanskrit work Amṛitkuṇḍ, a book on Yoga; the Qâḍî translated it into Persian, and then into Arabic and himself practiced Yoga, reaching the stage of Yogi. The translation of Amṛitkuṇḍ is the first writing of a Muslim scholar in Bengal that has come down to us.

For Abdul Karim, "a minute study of the biographical sketch of the Ṣûfîs reveals two important facts. First, people thought that they were endowed with superhuman powers like giving relief to the poor, sick and

destitutes, being present in several places at a time, giving life to the dead, killing anybody at will and telling the future. Secondly, their khân-qahs were open to all poor, destitutes, mendicants and wanderers, who received food and shelter therein." (39)

The first fact is linked to the role of "charisma" in all great religions, and of karâmah in Ṣûfism; M. Mujeeb offers an analysis of karâmah in the Indian context (40). In theory, karâmah was a power through which spiritual achievements could be obtained; in practice, though, it came to mean a supernatural power which enabled the Ṣûfî to do almost anything; it became a criterion by which Ṣûfism and the Ṣûfîs were judged, and the common reason why people believed in them. All accounts of the Ṣûfîs are full of karâmah stories; it is hard to say when they began to be told, but they answered actual needs; when Ṣûfism became institutional and collided with orthodoxy, it had to show a basis of authority to survive; the support of the miraculous made the Ṣûfî superior to the representatives of orthodoxy, and, by inference, to orthodoxy itself. Moreover, when taking Islâm to the masses in a society where the miraculous was a part of the common belief, the Ṣûfîs could not answer religious needs of the people without allowing room for belief in the miraculous.

Karâmah stories grew up without the particular Ṣûfîs concerned being responsible. Whether those miraculous deeds were "true" or "false", by modern standards, is irrelevant: people's belief in them was enough to boost the popularity of the Ṣûfî saints and attract the masses to their tombs. In Bengal, an important factor which must have favored that attraction is the fact that the saints' dargâhs are found on top of older sacred buildings (41): Shâh Sulṭân Mâhîsawâr's dargâh stands on top of a Śaiva temple; the Satyapîr Bhiṭâ rests upon the famous Buddhist monastery of Paharpur; the dargâh of Bâyazîd Biṣṭâmî in Chittagong and the khânqah of Shaykh Jalâl in Sylhet occupy the top of ancient mounds. Due to the attachment of the local people (Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims) to sacred places, the shrines of the saints were centers of attraction. Moreover, the propaganda regarding the miracles of the Muslim saints was enhanced by borrowing stories from old

Hindu and Buddhist legends: for instance, the miracle-working Buddha of the Deva-datta legend was transformed into a venerable Muslim saint, MakhdÛm Sâhib (42).

Concerning the graves of the saints of the pre-Ghurid period (c. 1200) in India, Rizvi observes that many of those graves are fake; they have emerged between the thirteenth and the fifteenth centuries, out of the desire of the local Muslims to have graves of saints for their local worship, just like the Hindus had particular deities in each village; those graves exercised immense influence: "The fulfilment of vows through prayers at these graves seems to have led many Hindus to embrace Islam. Indeed, inanimate objects such as these graves appear to have played a more important role in conversions than the early saints themselves. The mode of showing veneration to these graves is still very peculiar and differs from place to place. At some places it verges on idolatry. Sultan Sikandar Lodi is said to have banned worship at such graves, (Waqiat i-Mushtaqi, p. 15) and Mujaddid Alf i-Sani vehemently opposed these practices. But they are still the objects of great veneration and elicit the devotion of rural Muslims. The beliefs connected with them exercise more influence on them than the Shariat itself. Hindus even to this day offer sweets and flowers on such graves." (43)

Those considerations, however, do not allow us to conclude that the great Ṣûfîs did not make converts during their life. Traditions attributing the mass conversion of the people of a region to a specific saint may raise some doubt; one may even be tempted to interpret them as a posteriori rationalization or explanation for the presence of so many Muslims in a given area: throughout history, in biblical stories as well as in some accounts of World War II, popular mind shows a consistent tendancy to ascribe to individual personalities (heroes or villains) events or phenomena which actually resulted from complex factors through a long process. If it can ever be proved that such was the case of these traditions in Bengal, it would still be significant that the conversions were ascribed to the Ṣûfîs and not to other factors: it suggests that traditions may have merely amplified facts that actually happened in the life of the saints. They were in close contact

with the local people, speaking their language, and sharing their way of life in the countryside; their khânqahs and alms-houses were open to all, poor, wanderers and mendicants. It is reasonable to think that their approach to local problems brought about a rapprochement between Hindus and Muslims; in this context "conversion to Islâm" was probably not what it represents to-day for a Hindu. This hypothesis is strengthened by an examination of the features of Islâm as practiced in Bengal at that time.

Islâm in Bengal

Islâm as practiced in Bengal seems to offer one more illustration of G.E. von Grunebaum's considerations on the "great" and the "little" traditions as a pattern of interaction and adjustment between the Islamic ideal and the local cultural and religious trends (44). Islâm in Bengal, while displaying universal Islamic institutions and practices, also shows signs of contact with local conditions.

From the very beginning of the conquest (1204), a large number of mosques were erected in Bengal, to enable the Muslims to perform their individual or congregational prayers (45); madrasahs were established for imparting religious teaching. Muslim scholars wrote books on Ḥadîth, Fiqh and Taṣawwuf, such as Maqâmât (on Taṣawwuf) by Sharf al-Dîn Abû Tawwâmah, Nâm-i-Ḥaqq (on Fiqh) by one of his disciples, and the transcription of three volumes of Ṣaḥîḥ al-Bukhârî, by the Muḥaddith Muḥammad bin Yazdân Bakhsh. Trips to Mekka were organized, to perform the ḥajj.

As noted by Abdul Karim (46), since the number of immigrants into Bengal was apparently not very high, a large proportion of the Bengali Muslims were converts from Hinduism and Buddhism; they retained their long inherited customs, beliefs and even love for old Hindu epics. Even in the late 16th century, the Bengali poet Sayyid Sulṭân deplores the Muslim masses' greater devotion to that literature than to Qur'ân and other Islamic subjects. This had an impact at the level of the "little tradition"; what Karim calls "the

popular form of Islâm" (47) included Pîrism (supremacy of the Pîrs), and reverence for the foot-prints of the Prophet. Those features are by no means peculiar to Bengal, but had a particular relevance to Hindu and Buddhist practices.

The term Pîr generally denotes the teacher from whom people receive spiritual instruction; the Ṣûfîs soon came to be designated as Pîrs by the Bengalis, and superhuman powers were ascribed to them. Pîrism was most probably imported by the Muslim immigrants; but in Bengal, it found a fertile soil and was established on firm ground: the Buddhists had the practice of worshipping the chaityas or the stupas, adorning them with flowers and burning incense; in Hindu Avarârism, identical reverence is found. It is not surprising, therefore, that the new converts transferred to the Pîrs and their tombs the reverence they had for their former deities and spiritual leaders; this was also prompted by the fact that many Ṣûfî khânqahs and dargâhs were built on original Hindu or Buddhist sites; sometimes, false tombs were erected in those places, as in the case of Bâyazîd Bisṭâmî's tomb in Chittagong. Those places became shrines where hundreds of people came in pilgrimage.

The worship of the Satya-Pîr and of the Pânch-Pîr (five Pîrs) shows a different trend of Pîrism. Those Pîrs are not connected with specific shrines, but they are worshipped and invoked in the daily life of the people. The Satya-Pîr (called Satya-Nârâyana by the Hindus) is represented by a wooden plank, claims worship from devotees in the same manner as the Hindu goddesses Manasâ or Chandî, and is offered edibles. The Pânch-Pîr worship played a prominent part in the Bengali Muslim society where, in some districts, it is still existing to-day. The sailors of East Bengal, whether Muslims or Hindus, invoke the Pânch-Pîr even to-day, along with Pîr Badar, to be relieved from danger. The emergence of the Pânch-Pîr echoes the importance attached to the number five by Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists. Offerings are also made to numerous other Pîrs, in order to achieve various gains and be protected from danger.

The Qadam Rasûl building of Gaur stands even to-day (48) as a witness to the veneration of the Bengali Muslims for the foot-print of the Prophet. That practice also existed outside India (e.g. Masjid al-Aqdâm in Damascus), and must have been imported. However, it was strengthened by the Hindu and Buddhist context: the feet of elder people were always considered as sacred in Hindu society and in Sanskrit inscriptions names such as Vishṇupâda (foot-print of Vishṇu) are found; for their part, the Buddhists revered Buddha's foot-print (Buddhapâda). It is therefore no surprise that, for the Bengali Muslims, visiting the foot-print of the Prophet almost became a religious duty.

The meeting of Hinduism and Islâm in Bengal also had another kind of outcome: the Bhakti movement as represented by Chaitanya (1485-1533). In a chapter entitled "Popular Syncretism" (49), Aziz Ahmad views the Bhakti movement as a response and a resistance to Islâm. In its first phase (upto the 13th century), it was developed in South India as a cult of love and devotion based on Baghavad Gîta and other sacred Hindu texts. In the second phase (13th to 17th century), the movement came in contact with Islâm in North India; inspired by Islâm's monotheism and stimulated by its challenge (attraction of the masses towards Islâm), it developed a system of self-defence and self-preservation for Hindu spirituality by borrowing Islâm's monotheism and egalitarianism.

A native of Navadvip (Bengal), Chaitanya (50) came in contact with the Ṣûfîs in his early years. He afterwards spent twenty years in the Hindu kingdom of Orissa. Coming back to his homeland, he engaged himself actively in re-absorbing and re-converting Muslims to Krishnaite Bhakti Hinduism. His cult of Krishna, a faith of love, devotion and ecstasy, was also a movement of Hindu reformation: its vehement rejection of the Brahmanical caste system was a direct response to the challenge of Islamic egalitarianism. His conception of Krishna as being one and the emphasis on love as a means of attaining him bear the influence of Islamic monotheism, and of the Ṣûfî approach to God. The practice of sankirtan or namkirtan (chanting of Krishna's name in congregation) expressed that emotional love for Krishna and induced ecstasy, in the same way as the practice of samaʿ did in Ṣûfism.

The Bhakti movement of Chaitanya in Bengal stands as an evidence of Islâm's penetration in that land: on the one hand, the number of converts was significant enough to prompt a movement of re-conversion to Hinduism, and, on the other hand Islamic ideas and practices were influential enough to be borrowed by that very counter-movement. At the same time, the Bhakti movement and the popular features of Islâm in Bengal described above give an idea of the eclectic atmosphere in which Islâm spread in Bengal, and help to qualify the idea of "conversion" applied in that context.

It would be wrong to believe that the adjustment of Islâm to the Bengali context by the Ṣûfîs is an odd case in the spread of Islâm. The situation was pretty much the same in India in general, as noted by Aziz Ahmad and M. Mujeeb (51), and summed up by Rizvi: "At the same time, as the Hindus and the Muslims lived together, a process of cultural synthesis was inevitable. Many of the Indian Muslims were converts from Hinduism. Even the Turks who had settled down in India in the thirteenth century cherished many cultural traditions of their Buddhist ancestors of Afghânistan. In the growth of this composite cultural and religious tradition, the similarity between popular Hindu practices and the Ṣûfic practices, between the various trends of mystic thoughts amongst the Hindus as well as the Muslims could not remain unnoticed. It was therefore natural that in popular festivals both participated with each other. In praying for the removal of a difficulty, a Hindu would readily go to a Muslim grave or a saint and the common Muslim would approach a Hindu saint. The spirit of tolerance, which the monistic trends amongst the Ṣûfîs encouraged, provided an ideological basis for the mixing up of the followers of different faiths. In the poetry, the Hindu idiom was easily accepted by the Muslims as corresponding [to] the Ṣûfic allegory. After all, the position which the orthodox Shariat had prescribed for the non-Muslims was not practicable in India. The liberal trends in Ṣûfism provided a religious justification for the realities of the situation." (52)

India itself was but a part of the Islamic world involved in the process of "regionalization" of Islâm through its propagation by the Ṣûfîs, as summarized by G.C. Anawati: "C'est ainsi que les 'confréries', qui avaient été à l'origine le groupe du maître et des disciples, se répandirent dans les masses. Leur diffusion fut servie par la facilité que montraient les 'missionnaires' musulmans à accepter les nouveaux convertis: ce qu'ils demandaient, c'était la volonté d'adhérer à l'Islâm, la récitation sincère du 'témoignage de foi' (shahâda). Ils fermaient les yeux sur d'anciennes coutumes, pourvu qu'elles ne fussent pas trop visiblement polythéistes. Le résultat d'un tel libéralisme fut de changer sensiblement, pour quelques siècles, la physionomie générale de l'Islâm. Jusque là, grâce à l'autorité reconnue des docteurs, l'unité avait été maintenue. Une fois disparue leur action unificatrice, chaque région musulmane nouvellement convertie, et parfois certaines régions converties depuis longtemps, se 'colorèrent' de tout leur folklore, de la survivance de leurs habitudes ancestrales." (53)

N O T E S (Chapter III)

1. Karim, Social History..., pp. 143-44.

2. Cf. Ibid., pp. 148-57;
   Karim, "Research...", pp. 15-19;
   Rahim, op. cit., pp. 240-73.

3. Karim, Social History..., p. 157; cf. Aziz Ahmad, Islamic Culture..., p. 85: "Economic betterment did not necessarily follow the conversion of Hindus to the new faith. Most of them retained their skilled or non-skilled ancestral professions, and thus brought into Islam some vague features of caste distinction."

4. Cf. Karim, Social History...
   Rahim, op. cit.

5. Mujeeb, M., The Indian Muslims (Montreal, McGill Univ. Press, 1967), p. 113.

6. Ibid.

7. For this paragraph and the next, cf. H.A.R. Gibb, Studies on the Civilization of Islam, edited by S.J. Shaw and W.R. Polk (Boston, Beacon Press, 1962), pp. 27-32.

8. Nizami, Some aspects..., pp. 175-219.

9. K.A. Nizami, "Čishtiyya", EI^2, I, p. 55.

10. K.A. Nizami, "Early Indo-Muslim Mystics and their attitude toward the State", Islamic Culture 25(1950), p. 70.

11. K.A. Nizami, Some aspects..., pp. 220-21; also p. 162: intrigues against him.

12. For more details and examples, cf. Nizami, Some aspects..., pp. 199-202.

13. Aziz Ahmad, "The Sûfî and the Sultân in Pre-Mughul India", Der Islam 38 (Oktober 1962), p. 152.

14. Cf. Nizami, "Čishtiyya" ..., p. 51.

15. Aziz Ahmad, Islamic Culture..., p. 134.

16. For the rest of this paragraph, cf. Sayyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, Muslim Revivalist Movements in Northern India in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, (Agra, Agra Univ., 1965), pp. 1-67, passim.

17. Ibid., pp. 21-22.

18. Ibid., pp. 59, 66.

19. Muhammad Habib, "Shaykh Naṣîruddîn Maḥmûd Chirâgh-i-Dehlî as a great historical personality", Islamic Culture 20(1946), p. 140 .

20. Rizvi, op. cit., p. 18.

21. Aziz Ahmad, "Sûfî and...", p. 142;
_____, Islamic Culture..., p. 84.

22. Nizami, Some Aspects..., pp. 320-1.

23. Aziz Ahmad, Islamic Culture..., p. 134.

24. Rizvi, op. cit., p. 21; cf. also Mujeeb, op. cit., p. 165, who notes the evolution as well as the complexity in the great Ṣûfîs' attitude towards conversions:

> "Finally, if ṣûfism appears to have lost in spiritual intensity, it became more missionary in character. One aspect of its missionary activity was the attempt to propagate higher religious and spiritual standards. ... The other aspect is the appraisal, assimilation or rejection of the spiritual and moral values of Hinduism. Visits of yôgîs are mentioned in accounts of Shaikh Farîduddîn and Shaikh Niẓâmuddîn. The latter, in particular, had a very open mind. He believed, apparently, that the acceptance of Islâm by the Hindûs should be a by-product of the spiritual endeavour and self-discipline of the Muslims, and on one occasion he definitely refused to say anything to induce the brother of a convert to accept Islâm."

25. cf. Rahim, op. cit., p. 77.

26. cf. Karim, Social History..., p. 124.

27. cf. Rahim, op. cit., p. 72;
Sarkar, op. cit., p. 69.

28. cf. I. Mélikoff, "Ghâzî", EI^2, II, pp. 1043-45.

29. cf. Voyages d'Ibn Batouta, texte arabe accompagné d'une traduction par C. Defrémery et B.R. Sanguinetti, Paris, 1922-49, vol. IV, pp. 216-222.

30. cf. Karim, Social History..., pp. 125-6.

31. cf. Rahim, p. 77, who refers to the letter of Ashraf Jahângir Simnâni.

32. cf. Enamul Haq, "Bengali", EI^2, I, p. 118.

33. Karim, Social History..., p. 136.

34. Ibid., p. 93.

35. Ibid., p. 137.

36. cf. Karim, Social History..., p. 138.

37. Max Weber, The Theory of Social and Economic Organization, ed. by Talcott Parsons (New York, Free Press, 1966), pp. 358-59; cf. also _____, The Religion of India; the Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism, tr. & ed. by H. Gerth and Don Martindale (Chicago, Free Press, 1958), pp. 154-157.

38. cf. Karim, Social History..., pp. 62-66.

39. Ibid., p. 134.

40. Mujeeb, op. cit., pp. 118-124, for this paragraph.

41. cf. Karim, Social History..., pp. 137-8;
A.H. Dani, Muslim Architecture in Bengal, Dacca, Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1961;
Sarkar, op. cit., p. 69.

42. cf. Sarkar, op. cit., p. 70.

43. cf. Rizvi, op. cit., p. 19 n.1.

44. cf. G.E. von Grunebaum, "Unity in Diversity", in Unity and Variety in Muslim Civilization, ed. by G.E. von Grunebaum (Chicago, Univ. of Chicago Press, 1955), pp. 27-28.

45. This paragraph summarizes Karim, Social History..., pp. 40-45; 55-57; 63-80. For architectural evidence, cf. Dani, Muslim Architecture...

46. cf. Karim, Social History..., p. 158;

cf. also Dani, "Race and...", p. 114, who speaks of "the mass conversion of a large section of the local populace to Islâm": "They accepted Islâm with all their local prejudices, minor beliefs, forms of devotion, folk tales and folk cultures, and of course retaining Bengali as their mother tongue. That there was a preponderance of such ordinary people in the Muslim converts of Bengal, will be clear if one correctly assesses the census reports."

47. cf. Karim, Social History..., p. 158; the following three paragraphs reflect pp. 162-70, 173-75 of the same work.

48. cf. Dani, Muslim Architecture..., pp. 125-29.

49. cf. Aziz Ahmad, Islamic Culture..., pp. 140-55.

50. On Chaitanya, cf. Aziz Ahmad, Islamic Culture..., pp. 150-51; Rahim, op. cit., pp. 321-27.

51. cf. Aziz Ahmad, Islamic Culture..., p. 85; Mujeeb, op. cit., pp. 166-67.

52. Rizvi, op. cit., p. 29.

53. G.C. Anawati et Louis Gardet, Mystique musulmane (Paris, Vrin, 1961), pp. 67-68.

CONCLUSION

It has been said in the introduction that the basic purpose of this thesis was to suggest a distinction between definite facts, reasonable probabilities, and wishful hypotheses, with a special awareness of action-reaction over-generalizations.

The presence of a Muslim majority in Bengal in the 19th century is evidenced by various Censes. That there was a time (before 1200) when there were practically no Muslims in Bengal has been held as certain by historians until now. This postulates that something happened in between those two points in time. That Muslim political power was established in Bengal during the pre-Mughul period (1204-1538) is not a postulate, but an historical fact evidenced by literary, epigraphic and archaeological datas. As for what happened in the properly religious sphere during the same period, it is designated as "the spread of Islâm in Bengal". This spread of the Islamic faith is postulated by the two facts mentioned above (the quasi-total absence of Muslims in Bengal before the 13th century and their majority position in the 19th); but it could have taken place during the Mughul period (1538-1757). However, the same kinds of evidence (literary, epigraphic, archaeological) show that this phenomenon occurred broadly, if not mostly, during the pre-Mughul period (1204-1538). The problem is to know HOW Islâm spread into Bengal during that period.

In the present state of research, the source-materials at our disposal are rather scanty, and, by themselves, provide a very narrow basis for

generalizations and clear-cut conclusions; the period under review represents a relative gap in the first-hand information about Bengal. Therefore, if one assumes, consciously or unconsciously, that scholarly work must by any means fill that gap with clear-cut and definite conclusions, he finds himself in an ackward position. In this context, certain statements, or the way of presenting them can lead the reader to believe that the point of certainty has been reached when it is actually not the case. That is why, in this thesis, reservations have been made concerning: a) Hunter's over-emphasis of the anthropo-racial factors accounting for the spread of Islâm (chapter I); b) the proportion assigned to Muslim immigration by Rahim (chapter II); c) the modalities of mass-conversions effected by the great Ṣûfî saints, as presented by Karim (chapter III).

From that view-point, this thesis offers a somewhat negative conclusion: on the basis of the presently available source-materials on the spread of Islâm in Bengal, it seems impossible to reach closely reasoned and well documented conclusions.

This, however, does not mean that nothing definite is known about the spread of Islâm in Bengal. The source-materials, though they are relatively meagre, can be interpreted within the broader context of Islamic civilization at large, and more specifically in India. That does not lead to sure statements on what actually happened, but to an interpretative <u>reconstitution</u> of what probably took place. In these pages, an attempt has been made to point out some trends suggested by the available evidences, and to analyse some factors which seem to have marked the spread of Islâm in Bengal.

Insofar as it is possible to assess the relative importance of those factors, it seems that the presence and activities of the Ṣûfîs in Bengal was the decisive factor accounting for the spread of Islâm. The socio-political condition of pre-Islamic Bengal facilitated the Muslim conquest and the subsequent immigration; the decline of Buddhism, the aloofness of the Brahmanical religious institution and its disorganization after the Muslim conquest, all this paved the way to the dissemination of Islâm

by the Ṣûfîs. The liberal attitude of the Muslim rulers towards their non-Muslim subjects, whether congenial or dictated by expediency, echoes the fact that force had very little to do with conversions to Islâm; it also suggests that escape from discrimination was probably not the main motivation for conversions to Islâm. In the long run, that attitude seems to have contributed to a rapprochement between Hindus and Muslims.

That apparent context of religious semi-vacuum and relative détente was likely to favor the activities of the Ṣûfîs. On the basis of presently available materials, conversion of the masses through Ṣûfî influence seems the most reasonable way to account for the Muslim majority in Bengal. That process of "conversion" was a complex phenomenon, involving adherence to basic elements of Islâm, but also adjustment to local beliefs and practices. How many people were involved in that process is not known. But their number seems to have been significant enough to prompt the Bhakti counter-movement paradoxically stamped with Islamic influence.

The role played by the Ṣûfîs in the spread of Islâm in Bengal may be subject to critical assessments of Ṣûfîs and Ṣûfism, such as the one formulated by Fazlur Rahman in his book on Islâm (1). But this also reflects the fact that the case of Bengal, far from being marginal or aberrant, is but one episode in the long story of Islâm's encounter with various cultural and religious traditions: within a basic unity, Islâm developed patterns of adjustment that allowed room for diversity (2).

(1) cf. Fazlur Rahman, Islam (London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1966), pp. 150-66; and, especially, pp. 244-48.

(2) G.E. von Grunebaum, "Unity in Diversity" ...

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