

a history of
MUGHAL NAVY
and
NAVAL WARFARES

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INTRODUCTION

Many able works have been done on Indian Shipping of the middle ages, but none so far has been done to make a comprehensive survey of the Mughal 'Nawara' as a distinct branch of the Mughal armament, and I think the need for such a survey has been persisting since long. Of course, paucity of Source-materials is there as the Mughal Commanders and strategists have left us no useful works on the art and science of naval war. All the relevant information we need cannot be found in the Persian histories and chronicles composed during the Mughal period. However, the meagre information supplied by the Persian historians and chroniclers can be profitably supplemented by contemporary accounts left by European travellers and recorders. In my humble way, I have endeavoured to piece together these widely scattered scraps of information in the present volume.

So long, there was a common impression among the European scholars and following them, the Indian scholars that the Indian rulers and more precisely the Mughals had no navy as a fighting unit or naval organisation of any kind. It is true that the Indian rulers of the Medieval age failed to compete with the naval power of the European nations, but at the same time, it cannot be denied that the Medieval Indian rulers and particularly, the Mughals were not alive to the necessity of a naval force to protect the sea coasts as well as to develop trade and commerce. As a matter of fact, our maritime history is never a matter of chance or of casual growth. It has a great heritage and the Mughals made their best efforts to carry on that heritage.

Under the Mughals, the shipping industry developed a great deal in different parts of the country. Interesting descriptions of ships built in Bengal and other places during this period are available in contemporary literature. In the chronicles of the Mughals, some interesting descriptions of ships built in Bengal, Kashmir, Lahore and Surat are available and there are numerous representation of various types of boats and ships in the Mughal

paintings that testify to the high standard of technological perfection.

An attempt has been made in the present work to get an idea of the Mughal navy and the naval organisation as a branch of Mughal armament from the time of its origin to its collapse after Aurangzeb's death. Emperor Akbar might be called the real founder of the Mughal navy and it was he who created a naval establishment. This navy and the naval establishment could not grow in stature and strength under the next two Mughal emperors. It was Aurangzeb who re-built the Nawara and made it a fitting challenge to the European maritime powers to some extent.

The Mughals were never shy in fighting naval battles and this is evident in Eastern and Western waters in the time of Jahangir and Aurangzeb. These naval warfares have been detailed on the basis of available sources. Some may, however, object to the term 'naval warfare' in that age in India as Colomb observes, "...Naval warfare is of comparative modern origin. Sea-fights there were, no doubt, in every ancient times, but sea-fights do not of themselves constitute naval warfare...". (Colomb—Naval warfare—p. 1). It is true that naval warfare for the permanent occupation of the Sea is a modern conception. But the medievalists never conceived of naval warfare for the permanent occupation of the Sea. As in Europe, so in India, they fought battles in open seas and rivers with their ships of sail and oar when there was no steamship. And these encounters have been termed as naval warfares by the European scholars. Indian scholars of repute like Sir J. N. Sarkar, Dr. S. N. Sen, Dr. N. K. Sinha and Prof. Mohibbul Hasan have referred to Mughal navy, Maratha navy, Haidar's navy and Tipu's navy respectively. Hence the battles they fought in open seas and rivers with their navies can be termed as naval warfares.

In the days of sail and oar, there was not much distinction between a warship and a merchant-man. As Michael Lewis observes in reference to English man of war, "Throughout the Middle ages in England, it is roughly true to say that Merchant ships and war-ships were identical or at most, war-ships were but slightly and often temporarily, modified merchant ships. They

all belonged to that family of craft which a logical Frenchman has called 'Le Vaisseau Rond'—The Round ship ; a short tub-like affair, heavy and strong and propelled exclusively by the wind" (M. Lewis—The Ships and Seaman of Britain). The same is true of the Mughal ships of war as well as those of the Marathas. The Mughal flotilla included ships or boats of various sizes and burden for various purposes. Whenever the Mughal advanced with their fleet whether in the Eastern or Western waters, their fleet included many types of boats, besides some boats well-furnished with conventional weapons like guns and cannon.

I crave the indulgence of readers and scholars to form their judgment about the present work and if by inadvertence I have missed anything vital, I would feel grateful to those who might kindly draw my attention to it.

I am grateful to Prof. S. H. Askari who has been kind enough to write the foreward.

My thanks are due to the various sources from which the photographs and sketches appearing in this book are taken. The photographs of ships appearing in Chapters IV & VII are taken from Malgonkar's Kanhoji Angrey, S. C. Mitra's Jasore-Khulnar Itihas, Vol. II and Panikkar's 'India and the Indian Ocean'. The sketches appearing in Chapter VII are taken from Malgankar's above noted book. The descriptions of 'ghurab' and 'patil' boats as given by the authors of Padishanama and Alamgirnama are almost identical with the types of boats we find in S. C. Mitra's book noted above.

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FOREWORD

One of the weaknesses of the Mughals was the absence of a proper navy in the modern sense of the term which made them dependent on foreigners for their commercial pursuits and safety of pilgrims. European merchants, adventurers and freebooters infested the Indian ocean and coastal regions in the 16th and 17th centuries, but the Mughals were not strong enough to check their depredations and were unable to devise effective protective measure against piracy, foreign or Indian. Sivaji realized the need and built a strong navy with which he waged wars against the Europeans and once he captured and occupied the islands of Henry Kenry of Bombay after a bitter naval struggle with the combined forces of the Sidis and the English and showed that the Indians could hold their own against the foreigners if they brought their will and energy to bear on the task. But the Mughals with all the vast resources at their disposal could not display such effective reaction against European piracy in the Indian ocean, especially the Western side of it. The letters and instructions of Aurangzeb, embodied in *Ahkam-i-Alamgiri* and *Kalimat-i-Taiyyabat*, form an interesting reading. Many of them relate to the affairs of the English factors at Surat and piratical activities of the European nations at the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th centuries and they give us an idea of the attitude and views of the Emperor and also reveal the helplessness of the Mughals on the sea.

Abul Fazl has described in *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. I, the organization of a naval department of Admiralty under an officer called Mir Bahri which had certain functions to perform such as the supply of ships and boats for transportation of elephants, employment in sieges, and conveyance of merchandise, and supply of experienced officers and efficient mariners. The Mughal seamen were familiar with the depths of channels and rise and fall of tides, winds etc. There were cargo boats, pleasure-boats and also flotillas of armed cruisers and boats. Twelve classes of officers and men from Nakhuda or the commander who directed

the course of the ships to gunners and ordinary seamen have been enumerated in the *Ain*. The Admiralty watched the rivers, looked to the regulations, for fords, ferries and wharves and imposed and realized river tolls and dues. Abul Fazl says that Bengal, Kashmir, and Thatta in Sind were chief centres of ship building and pivot of commerce though vessels and ships were numerous in every part of Akbar's Empire. Large ships were built along the ocean coast in the East and South, suitable for voyages. Such a naval department continued, perhaps, down to the time of Aurangzeb as Khafi Khan, the historian, has referred to one, Raja Mohan, who was a "writer of occurrences" in the department of Mir Bahri, and he has among other things, described the plunder, with its sequel, of Ganj-i-Sawai, the largest of the Mughal ships, in the port of Surat, having 800 guns and 400 muskets on board.

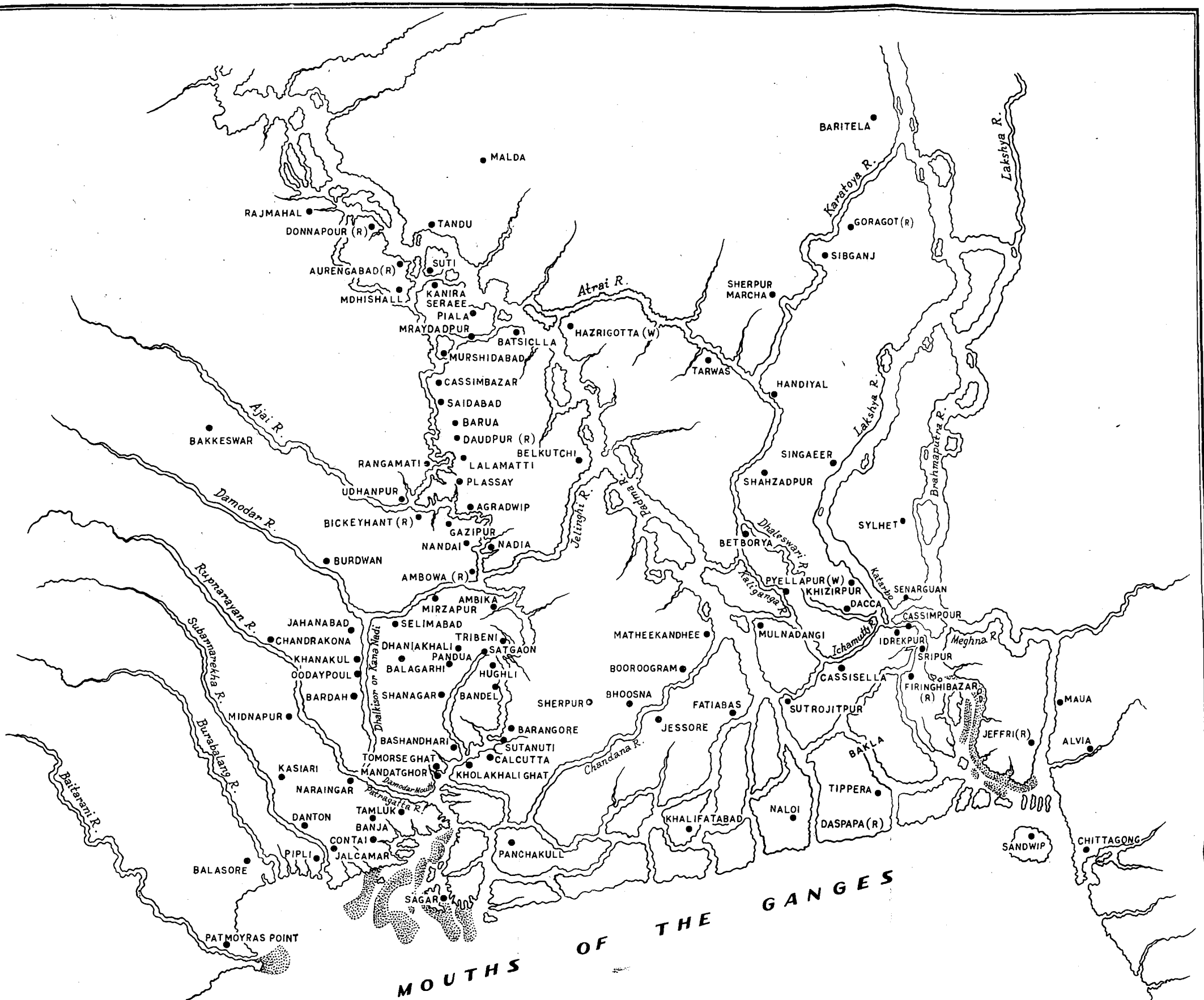
The Mughal period witnessed considerable activities in ship-building and shipping trade in the Empire, due to both Government and private efforts. "The Mughal subjects have a good many fine large ships that trade all over India", says Alexander Hamilton. De Laet refers to "the ship which made the annual voyage from Surat to Mochha on the Red Sea", and adds that "they are of huge size, but are carelessly built, and though they carry many guns, cannot defend themselves properly. Each of them sometimes carries as many as 1,700". We get many references to Abdul Ghafur, a Bohra merchant of Surat, who, according to Hamilton, "drove a trade equal to N.E.I.Co. which represented transactions worth 30 or 40 lakhs of rupees. He fitted out in a year 20 sails of ships between 300 and 800 tons". "He had built up a great fortune by successful ventures in shipping and was a conspicuous figure in the history of Western India in the closing decades of the 17th century", say Arnold Wright. There big ships laden with cargo and owned by him were captured by the pirates, one in August in 1691, another Fatch Mahammadi soon after, and a third named Faiz Risan in January 1705. In between some other ships were also plundered. Aurangzeb's own big pilgrim ship, Ganj-i-Sawai, was plundered by pirates in 1695. All this was due to the "absence of a strong over-ruling naval power", says Arnold Wright. What Sivaji achieved within

a short time and with much less resources, the Mughals failed to accomplish, though thanks to their ever-widening conquest they no longer remained a land-locked inland power in the time of Aurangzeb.

The present work by Dr. A. C. Roy is a much-needed comprehensive survey of Mughal art and science of naval warfare and naval organisation and establishment as a branch of Mughal armament upto the end of the reign of Aurangzeb. The learned author has made a commendable attempt to piece together and present in a systematic form all relevant information on the subject, gleaned from contemporary and near-contemporary published Persian chronicles and supplemented by very valuable contemporary accounts left by European and other travellers and visitors. So far as it is known to me, no one has taken up this important subject and dealt with it in such rich details and, therefore, Dr. A. C. Roy's book is a valuable contribution to historical literature.

Patna
20. 9. 72.

Syed Hasan Askari



MOUTHS OF THE GANGES

VAN DEN BROUCKE'S MAP OF BENGAL (1660)

TRADITIONS OF NAVY AND NAVAL
WARFARES IN EARLY MEDIEVAL INDIA

The traditions of Indian navy and shipping of the ancient days continued in the medieval age as well. The traditions continued through the ages till the shipping industry was destroyed by British navigation laws. "The general attitude of the authorities, suggest to me," says Moreland, "that apart from the Portuguese trade to Europe, the great bulk of the commerce in the Indian Seas was carried in ships built in India and that most of these and certainly all the large ones, were constructed on the west coast not at any one centre but at various ports or inlets within easy reach of the forests. It is practically certain that India also built all the small boats required for the coasting trade from Bengal as far as Sind and the aggregate volume of shipping was therefore very great when measured by contemporary standards."¹

Moreland, however, is more concerned to show that ship-building in India declined since the Muslim period. The great historian does scant justice to this great if not the greatest industry of medieval India by asserting that the ordinary vessels that were constructed in the medieval days, were of small capacity and that the larger ones were few in number. But Nicolo Conti, writing in the 15th century, has recorded the existence of Indian ships of 1000 tons burden and they were much larger in size than any with which he was familiar in the Mediterranean. The early English visitors to western India have described Indian vessels of even greater size second only to the huge carracks built by the Portuguese. But Moreland thinks that these Indian vessels were used only for the Muslim pilgrims for Mecca and Jeddah and that there were at that time not more than half a dozen of them in

¹ Moreland, *India at the death of Akbar*, p. 170.

existence. But Moreland, unfortunately, cites no authority for such a slighting observation. As a matter of fact, during this period, the Sultans of Guzarat, the most advanced maritime province of India, second in ship-building to Malabar were in the habit of maintaining large fleets both for commerce and warfare. They used to style themselves 'Lords of Sea'. The vessels called 'baghalahs' were one of the oldest designs that traversed the Guzarat coast. The Sultans of Guzarat mostly used these boats. The over-all dimensions were 74 feet by 25 feet—those of a rather broad sized vessel. "They were of approximately 150 tons and their holds were as deep as 11½ feet. The stern was almost perpendicular to the sea level. . . . The construction was entirely of wood except for the joinings which were of nail and the deck was covered with matting. . . . these vessels withstood rough seas."²

Referring to the Indian merchants, Nicolo Conti observed as mentioned by Moreland himself thus "They (Indian merchants) were very rich so much so that some will carry on their business in forty of their ships, each of which is valued at 15,000 gold pieces."³ A Ship costing 15,000 gold pieces of those days would certainly exceed a million sterling in purchasing power to-day. Hence we can imagine the size of the ships built at such a cost. And given only a single such merchant in ports like Surat, Broach, Goa, Calicut and half a dozen on the Eastern Coast to Satgaon, we get a fleet of some four hundred ships of the largest tonnage. Nicolo Conti had stated that Indian-built ships were larger in size than the ones built by the Italians. They were of approximately 60,000 cubic feet in capacity. They were so large that they required as many as five sails supported by five masts, to propel them. The bottom of the ships was made up of three layers of planks to enable the ships to resist the cyclonic weather and rough water during the monsoons. Abdur Razak, an Arab traveller of the 15th century says, "The king of Vijaynagar has 300 sea-ports, everyone of which is equal to that of Calicut."⁴ Hence, there is nothing to show that Indian shipping had declined

² Bayley, *Guzarat*, p. 386 ; K. Sridharan, *A Maritime History of India*, p. 127.

³ Nicolo Conti, *India in the 15th Century*.

⁴ Vide, Elliot and Dawson, Vol. IV, p. 103.

since the days of the Sultans of Guzarat, the Bahmani Sultans of the Deccan and the Hindu kings of Vijaynagar, to which such un-prejudiced foreign testimony like that of Nicolo Conti and Abdur Razak relates.

On the western coast, the Zamorins of Calicut maintained a great naval force till the first quarter of the 16th century, which along with the naval forces of Guzarat controlled the trade with the Red Sea ports and with the Persian Gulf. Ibn Batutah has spoken highly of the commercial importance of Calicut in his days. He writes "It was one of the chief harbours of the country of Malabar where people from China, Sumatra, Ceylon, the Maldive islands, Yemen and Fars come and here gather merchants from all quarters of the globe. And the harbour of Calicut is one of the largest in the world." Calicut was not only a great emporium in those days, it was also a centre of great naval power. Mahuan, the Chinese Muhammadan who visited Calicut in 1403 A.D., describes it as a great centre of naval power. The chief naval base of the Zamorins was Ponnani. The Marakkars were the hereditary admirals of the Zamorins. Muhammad Kunjali Marakkar, the chief Admiral of Calicut, a Moplah by birth, was an experienced and valiant navigator. Kunjali I mobilised a band of brave and sturdy seamen and constructed a formidable naval base at Ponnani.

Vasco da Gama has left a graphic description of the fleet of Calicut. He writes "The ships had not got more than one large mast and two ropes on the sides and one at the prow like a stay, and two halliards which come down to the stern and help to sustain the mast; and the rudder is very large and of their planks and on the outside of those ships they have ropes on either side, with which they haul on the rudder in order to steer the ship; and the ship is undecked, short and with a few ribs, the planking is joined and sewn together with coir thread and very strongly, for it endured all the strain of sailing and the planks are fastened in the same manner to the ribs, sewn with the same coir and they remain as secure as if they were nailed. There are other ships which have the planks nailed with thin nails with broad heads...and they have planks as high as up to where they put cargo and from that point upwards they have

cloths very thick. . . . these are pitched with a bitumen which they call quil, which is like pitch, which they boil with cocoanut-oil and fish oil, and above these cloths some cane mats of the length of the ship, woven and very strong, and they are a defence against the sea and no water gets through them. Inside, instead of decks, they have chambers and compartments made for the merchandise. . . . Their yards have two-thirds of their length abaft and one-third before the mast and the sail is longer abaft than forward by one-third ; they have only a single sheet (escota) and the tack of the sail at the bow is made fast to the end of a spirit almost as large as that they steer very close to the wind and set the sails very flat. . . . They have no tops not have they more than the one large sail. . . . Their planks are also sewn with coir and rattans outside and are very strong inside and resist the weight of the water. . . . The ships which are thus sewn with coir have keels and those fastened with nails have not, but are flat-bottomed. Their anchors are of hard-wood and they fasten stones to the shanks so that they are heavy and go to the bottom. . . . The crew are lodged above and no one has quarters below where the merchandise is stowed. . . .”⁵

The captains and sailors of the Calicut fleet were mostly Muslims. Ibrahim, a merchant from Bahrein held the office of ‘Shah-Bandar’. Another Muslim ship-wright Misque “possessed great riches and many ships for trading purposes in India, China, Yemen and Fars.”⁶ It is to be noted that when Vasco da Gama failed to get a foothold in Calicut, he allied himself with the king of Cochin, a vassal of the Zamorin. This alliance brought the wrath of the Zamorin upon the Cochin king and he sent a naval squadron against the Portuguese in the year 1502. Da Gama gives a vivid description of the first naval war with the fleet of the Zamorin thus, “. . . One morning, they (Portuguese) sighted the fleet of Calicut ; which was coming along the coast with a light land breeze ; there were so many sails that our people did not see the end of them, as they came one after the other in a long line, for so the capatin Cojambar had ordered it

⁵ *Three Voyages of Vasco da Gama*, trans. by J. Stanley, Hakluyt Society, pp. 240-42.

⁶ Ibn Batutah, *I.B.H.*, p. 189.

that they might make more show ; he came in the Van with the large ships which might be as many as twenty, with many 'fustas' and large 'Sambuks', which altogether might be seventy sail which came in the first squadron, with which Vincent Sodre who was running close in shore, fell in, and the rest came behind. When Vincent Sodre saw the fleet, he ordered the caravels to edge in close inshore, one astern of the other in a line and to run under all the sail they could carry, firing as many guns as they could, and he with the ships remained behind....The ships (Portuguese) carried six guns below on the deck and two smaller ones on the poop and eight falconnets above and several swivel-guns and before the mast two smaller pieces which fired forwardsThe Moors (of the Calicut Fleet) seeing our fleet so small whilst they had so many, gave great shouts with sound of instruments and hung out flags and standards which our men did not attend to, so as to have less hamper....Ahead of the Moorish flagship came many 'paraos', which are like 'fustas' and they remained to seaward, so that their ships might shelter them from the guns of the (Portuguese) caravels....when they (Portuguese ships) reached as far as forward as the Moorish ships....discharged their guns, all firing at the flagship....with their discharge our men made such good work that they brought down the mast of the flagship which fell over and stove in the ship and killed many Moors and another shot hit it full and passed through near the poop which it shattered much and killed and wounded many people ; of the other large ships, three were stove in low down, so that they foundered and went to the bottom....they so much embarrassed one another that they all remained stuck close to each other and our ships fired into them for a considerable time....The Moors, although they were in such straits, fired much artillery which they carried....The wind drove them out to sea, so that the ships lengthened their distance from them, always doing them much damage with the artillery, because our shot was much more powerful than theirs. As at this time, the ships of burden had come up, Vincent Sodre loosed his sails and ran on after the caravels which were now reaching the other squadron of the Moors, the captain of which was the Moor Coja Kasim which consisted of more than a

hundred sail, but the greater part of them were 'Sambuks' . . . the Moor held on his course with all his large ships straight for our ships to board them . . . As the wind freshened and was better for our ships, they made straight for the Moorish flagship which came foremost and in the centre of the others . . . As the flagship carried much artillery, one shot entered the ship of Vasco Tinoco and killed him . . . but a shot from the Portuguese ship took the flagship obliquely and threw it into disorder, killing many men, because all the Moors showed themselves above, but our men remained below and none should except the gunners and the men who assisted them . . . The Moors also fired much artillery . . . but they were small guns and when they passed near our ships they covered them with arrows, but they did not hurt the men who lay hid . . . In this confusion, the other first ships of the Moors came up and the Portuguese ships of burden came up with them and when they were within range the captain major ordered them to fire . . . As they fired many heavy guns they caused much terror to the Moors that they edged away in shore as much as they could. But with the confusion they drifted away a good deal to sea-wards and the wind fell calm so that all remained becalmed . . . Pero Rafael advanced so much that he reached the ship of Coja Kasim and fired so many shots into his rigging that he brought down his yard, for he broke the halliards and as the sail held no wind it fell in board and killed and wounded many people. The Captain-major, seeing that the business was certain, sent the boats with falconnets and swivel-guns and in each boat twenty armed men . . . to go to the ships which were becalmed and shoot at them above and kill the crews. This they did, so that the Moors threw themselves into the sea and went swimming round the ships. The 'paraos' seeing the boats ventured against them and came to attack and board them, but our men entered with lance thrusts and drove them into the sea. Then the gunners entered and with their hammers knocked out the planks at the bottom, so that water came in and they went to the bottom. This they did to six or seven vessels."⁷ The Calicut fleet thus suffered a disaster.

⁷ *Three Voyages of Vasco da Gama*, pp. 367-74.

In spite of superiority in number of boats, the Calicut fleet suffered a disaster. The reasons are not far to seek. The Muslim gunner of the Calicut fleet were no match for the Portuguese gunners. The Calicut guns were smaller in size and less-firing capacity than the Portuguese guns which were heavy and capable of firing to a long distance. The Calicut gunners and sailors were thoroughly exposed to the Portuguese guns while the Portuguese sailors and mariners excepting the gunners were well under cover below the surface of the deck. The Portuguese caravels had a definite advantage in fire-power. Each caravel's armament consisted of 4 heavy cannon, 6 falconets of which 2 were stern guns, ten guns on the quarter-deck on swivel mountings and a twin gun mounted on the poop. The wind was unfavourable to the Calicut fleet. The Moor Captains of the Calicut fleet did not fight with zeal as required of them. They had been carrying in the ships their wives, children and personal treasurers with the object of proceeding to Mecca in case of their defeat in the hands of the Portuguese.⁸ Such half heartedness on the part of the Muslim Captains certainly could not be expected to win a war. However, it is to be admitted that the Zamorins continued India's great naval tradition and hence it disproves the assertion of Moreland that the Indians lost their shipping since the Muhammadan rule. Although the Zamorin suffered a disastrous naval defeat in the year 1502, he favoured friendship with the Portuguese. "For the Zamorin", says Ayyar, "was deeply interested in navy and artillery and wanted to raise them to the level of those of the most advanced countries in the world. He would have gladly taken the Portuguese Captains and Sailors into his service."⁹ But the Portuguese alliance with the Raja of Cochin embittered the relations between the Zamorin and the Portuguese. So the Zamorin fitted out naval expedition to Cochin in 1503. . . . "The fleet (of Calicut) consisted of 160 'paraos' each carrying 2 guns and other engines devised by Antonio and Maria (Italians) : Twenty 'paraos', tied together by chains were sent in advance of the main fleet to swoop the

⁸ Ibid., p. 372.

⁹ Ayyar, *The Zamorins of Calicut*, p. 166.

enemy. The sides of the ships were protected against cannon balls by sacks filled with cotton.”¹⁰ The Zamorin took some protective measures for his ship and harbour. With a view to preventing the Portuguese ships from entering the harbour, paraos, a kind of small paddle boats, anchored apart, were tied to one another by iron cables to form a cordon, which proved a hazard for safe navigation. Fire balls were set on floating hulks. A number of incendiary towers were constructed on the deck of the hulks, set alight and sent down stream where the Portuguese ships were anchored in the hope of destroying them by fire.

The Zamorin's naval strategy was to cross the backwater at Kumbalam. The defence of the city of Idappalli in the kingdom of Cochin and the fort was entrusted to a picked force of 35 European and 4500 Nayars led by the Cochin Raja. The largest of the 5 war-vessels which Affonso Albuquerque had left behind him at Cochin was amply provided with ammunition and it cruised off the town to prevent any attempt by sea. With the other 4 ships and 11 Europeans assisted by 5,000 Nayars, Pacheco, a Portuguese admiral, guarded the Kumbalam ford. He connected three of his vessels by chains and stationed them in the middle of the stream to block the passage of the Calicut fleet. On 17th March (1504) the Zamorin arrived at Kumbalam. Next day the Calicut fleet advanced and it entered the backwater. “A fierce engagement ensued and after a stout resistance by the Portuguese for some hours, a shot from a heavy gun broke the chain that connected the ‘paraos’ and caused four of them to retreat, others were forced to retire, whereupon the attack from that quarter began to flag.”¹¹ Referring to the Calicut fleet, Castaneda writes, “The boats of the enemy (Zamorin) were very numerous and without order ; they hindered each other and our fire did prodigious execution among them ; several of their ‘paraos’ being torn to pieces and great numbers being killed or wounded without any hurt on our side.”¹² The channel was

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

¹¹ Danvers, *The Portuguese in India*, Vol. I, pp. 106-107.

¹² Castaneda, *The history of the conquest of India*, p. 480.

too narrow to allow the free and easy movement to the Calicut fleet. The Calicut fleet withdrew from the channel after having lost 79 ships and 290 men.

The Zamorin's defeat for the second time was due to the superiority of the Portuguese on the sea. However, the Zamorin did not give up hope. He issued fresh order for the construction of better and larger ships and impressed into his service Portuguese deserters causing them to teach the secrets of their art of navigation and naval warfare to the Indian craftsmen and soldiers. At the same time he sent an appeal to the Sultans of Egypt, Persia and Guzarat to send to his assistance an well-equipped fleet. Within a short time he re-fitted his fleet and it was seen coming down on Cannanore "like a forest of masts". It consisted of two hundred large vessels collected from various places. Among the soldiers on board were a number of Turks in glittering red robes. As against this formidable fleet of the Zamorin, the Portuguese under Lorenzo had only eleven ships. Meanwhile an Egyptian fleet appeared in 1508 and joined the Calicut fleet. The Egyptian fleet consisted of 12 war-vessels under the command of Mir Husain. It was "well-equipped with large crews and a good armament."¹³ Lorenzo advanced with his fleet to intercept the Egyptian fleet. The two fleets met off Chaul. But Lorenzo's ships were caught in the stakes driven by the fishermen into the muddy bottom of the sea. As a result Lorenzo could not escape and he perished with his boats.

But the Portuguese fleet was soon refitted and the Viceroy Almeida himself took command of the fleet. Almeida sailed for Diu where Mir Husain had established his base. The opposing fleets met on 3rd February 1509. Mir Husain had been reinforced by 300 foists from Calicut. The naval battle was long and stubbornly contested. "Favoured by a stern wind the Portuguese ships bore rapidly down on the Egyptians until they were near enough for the Malabar long bowmen stationed amidst and in the fighting tops to open fire. . . . As the hostile vessels came to grips, each manoeuvred for an opportunity to ram her

¹³ Barbosa, *A Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar*, p. 61.

adversary ; and where these tactics failed, grappling irons were flung and boarding parties, armed with half-pikes and axes, leaped down from the bows and charged, . . . when it became evident that Mir Husain's plan had miscarried, the foists ventured forth from the channel in the desperate hope of effecting a diversion. They were manned by warrior Nairs . . . but courage availed nothing against artillery and their fragile craft were sunk in batches."¹⁴

In January 1510, the Portuguese viceroy Albuquerque fitted out a fleet against Calicut. The invading Portuguese fleet, consisting of 20 ships besides numerous 'paraos' carrying 2,000 Europeans set sail from Cochin and anchored off Calicut on 3rd January 1510. But the naval strategy of the Portuguese was entirely miscarried, and they suffered a total disaster. Observing on the failure of the Portuguese ; Ayyar writes "If Land-power without the co-operation of a sea-power was equally futile, the combatants must change their tactics if any decisive results were to be achieved. And it was exactly what the Zamorin did. He was inferior to his enemies in organisation and artillery. But he had one advantage over them, his ships were lighter and faster, he controlled the entire coast line from Pantalayini to Chetwai and his seamen knew every creek and bay. Though the Portuguese might command the open sea, they were powerless against the country craft when once it had gained the shelter of some river-mouth. He therefore avoided pitched battles and began a sort of guerilla warfare on the sea . . . He (Albuquerque) realised that with the limited resources at his command and the new tactics employed by the Zamorin it was impossible to reduce his power by open war or a blockade."¹⁵

Repeated frustrations of the Portuguese convinced their viceroy Albuquerque as he suggested to the king of Portugal thus "If your (the king of Portugal) wish is to destroy it (the Calicut naval power) by stern war, it will require a fleet always in occupation on her and the fleet of India is not so large that it can be divided into two squadrons . . . They (Indians) launch

¹⁴ Vide, Ayyar, *op-cit.*, p. 184 ; Barbosa, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

¹⁵ Ayyar, *op. cit.*, pp. 189-90.

their ships into the sea and load them ; and your caravels and small vessels do not dare to send out their boats, while they have a hundred 'paraos' laden with merchandise around one ship and freight her in two hours and with the right wind the ship goes the round of the sea and your vessels remain at anchor. . . . They have always done navigation and will continue unless you have those posts (Pennani, Pandarini and Chalea) occupied with some very good ships and some rowing vessels to be close upon the shore."¹⁶ Understandably, it was only when the Portuguese began conquering the islands in the Indian Ocean that they came to acquire a dominant position on the western coast of India. And it was a superior fleet brought from Europe that made the conquests easy.

Like the Muslim and Hindu rulers of the western coast of India, the Muslim rulers of Bengal had also developed shipping and built up their naval power during the early medieval period. Hijli, Satgaon, Gaur, Bakla, Sondwip and Chittagong continued to be the principal centres of trade and commerce. Ibn Batutah has referred to Sonargaon as a great port for over-sea trade. Water was, as is to-day, a convenient medium for commerce and trade as well as for transport of armies in Bengal. The river system and the sea-coast, doubtless, facilitated the growth of Bengal's commerce and maritime activities. The role of the rivers and rivulets in the economic geography of Bengal cannot be overestimated. Doubtless, in all ages the city which controlled the mouth of the Ganges was commercially the most important in Eastern India. For instance, Tamralipta, down almost to the end of the Hindu period, later Satgaon till the close of the 16th century, then Hughli and finally Calcutta grew into importance on account of their situation at the mouth of the Ganges. Like merchant-shipping, the navy of Bengal had a glorious past and the people of Eastern India particularly the Bengalis and the Ahoms played a very prominent part in naval activities.

Races do not become martial by birth. They become brave or otherwise according to the condition under which they live and the training that they receive. Dexterity in naval (colonising

¹⁶ Vide, *ibid.*, pp. 190-91.

or maritime) activity is acquired by those who generally live near to the sea and navigable rivers and no wonder, that the Bengalis, particularly those of South and Eastern Bengal, acquired the fame of being a maritime people from the earliest times. And the tradition continued even in the medieval days. Nearness to the sea and a spirit of adventure made the people of Bengal a sea-going people and widely known both within and outside India even during the medieval days.

The maintenance of a naval force was essential for a country like Bengal whose peculiar physical configuration, numerous rivers, rivulets and creeks rendered in those days the task of conquest and consolidation difficult. In the north eastern part of Bengal, a land of hills, morasses and 'nallahs', cavalry was practically useless and as a matter of fact it did not exist in Assam as a unit of war. Like the Ahoms, the mainstay of the Maghs and Feringhis was their war-fleet without which it was impossible to traverse the numerous rivers and streams of South-eastern Bengal. Moreover, prolonged rains and almost annual floods in rivers made any campaign or transportation of merchandise absolutely impossible without a strong fleet. The methods of warfare as applied in the plains of Northern India could not be profitably applied in lower Bengal, the home of rivers. In those days Bengal did not breed good horses for which she had to depend on upper India and lower Bengal was not suitable for cavalry movement. Although cavalry and elephants were often employed in warfare in Bengal, the navy played a very conspicuous part, as Mirza Nathan might well write, "In these days it is impossible to dispatch cavalry and the infantry by land and there is no other means except requisitioning the fleet."¹⁷ Hence more attention was given by the Sultans of Bengal and the Mughals later on while advancing towards the eastern, south-eastern and north-eastern Bengal as well as by the Ahoms and the Magh-Feringhis advancing to the opposite directions, to the organisation and up-keeping of powerful fleets and infantry and less to cavalry.

Medieval poets of Bengal like Ketakadas, Bansidas and

¹⁷ *Baharistan*, Vol. I, p. 148.

Kavikankan Mukudaram have referred to Bengal's maritime activities in their poems and verses. Mukundaram has referred in glowing terms to Satgaon and Gaur as Bengal's premier ports and ship-building yards. The early Bengali 'Charyapadas' and the 'Manasahmangalas' refer to boats including sea-going vessels and mention their component parts viz. helms and oars, instruments for bailing out water, ropes both for towing and fixing it to a wooden post on the land, sails, mast and wheels. In the inscriptions of the Sena rulers of Bengal we come across the words like 'Naobut' or fleet of boats. The inhabitants of Gaur called 'Kaivartas' were renowned for their dexterity in naval warfare and land was assigned to them for their maintenance.¹⁸ Sultan Ghiyasuddin Iwaz Khalji turned these 'Kaivartas' into carpenters for building boats on the basis of daily wages and they were deprived of their land. In the time of the Mughals, the 'Kaivartas' of Jessore-Khulna were employed in the Mughal 'nawara'. Mirza Nathan in his Baharistan has also referred to the 'Kaivartas' as good sailors. The boatman and sailors were recruited on a temporary basis in times of war.¹⁹ The war vessels of the Hindu princes and landlords of Bengal were called 'naobut', the admiral was called 'tarik', and the bridge of boats was called 'naokamelak'. The naval war-cry resembled a sound indicating laughter. The dock was called 'nabataksheni', also sometimes called 'naodandak'.

The Sultans of Bengal were not unaware of the importance of navy. Sultan Ghiyasuddin Iwaz Khalji (1213-1227 A.D.) felt that cavalry could guarantee six months' hold over any distant part of the river-insected Bengal. But for the rest of the year a powerful fleet was essential not only for administrative purposes but also for maintaining hold over the riverine tracts of eastern and south-eastern Bengal. With this object in view he transferred his capital from Devkot to Gaur which commanded an easy and rapid communication by water with the distant parts of Bengal as well as he built up a powerful fleet which he turned into an indispensable branch of his armament.²⁰ Hence Iwaz

¹⁸ *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. XXX, p. 290.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *History of Bengal*, (Dacca University), Vol. II, p. 24.

Khalji might be called the father of Muslim navy in Bengal. This fleet helped him in preventing Sultan Iltutmish of Delhi from crossing over to Bengal in 1225 A.D.²¹ The building up of a flotilla speaks of his ability as a military strategist.²²

The next Sultan of Bengal, Mughisuddin Tughral (1268-81 A.D.) built a strong flotilla. When he revolted in Bengal against Sultan Balban of Delhi, the latter led a naval expedition against Tughral (1280 A.D.). Balban's two earlier expeditions against Tughral having failed, the Sultan of Delhi came to realise that Tughral could not be subdued without a strong naval force. The Sultan marched against Tughral in person. He entered Oudh which was made the rendezvous of his army and the fleet. "The Sultan ordered the construction of a fleet of boats on the Jamuna and the Ganges and it swelled into an immense size by fresh requisitions during its voyage down the Ganges ; this flotilla now stood ready to co-operate with the land forces. . . .and in these (boats) he passed his army over the Sarju. The rains now came on and although he had plenty of boats, the passage through the low-lying country was difficult."²³ However, the Sultan pushed forward and his fleet of boats was to keep in touch with the land forces. When the Sultan crossed the Sarju undisputed, Tughral who also moved up to the bank of Sarju with his fleet of war-boats, sailed away. Balban marched from Lakhnauti in pursuit of the rebel and arrived at Sonargaon. The Rai of Sonargaon made an agreement with Balban that he "would be answerable for Tughral if he would take up his position on water or land or fly by way of water or conceal himself in the water." Though there was no naval engagement between Tughral and Balban, it is clear that both sides used fleets of war-boats and Balban's easy march upon Bengal was facilitated by his fleet. His agreement with the Rai of Sonargaon indicates that there was every possibility of Tughral's escaping by the water-routes with his fleet.

Between 1353 and 1360, two expeditions were directed

²¹ Ibid.

²² Vide, Proceedings of Indian History Congress, 1944.

²³ Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi*, Vide, Elliot Dawson, Vol. III, pp. 115-16.

against Sultan Ilyas Shah (1342-1357 A.D.) and his son Sikander Shah of Bengal by Sultan Firuz Tughluq of Delhi. The Sultan of Delhi invaded Bengal with one thousand war-vessels called 'kistiha-i-band-kusha' (barrier-breaking boats). The boats carried his vast army composed of one lakh of soldiers.²⁴ Ilyas Shah also advanced with his fleet and infantry and threw an embankment at the confluence of the Ganges and Kaushiki. But the gradual advance of the imperial army compelled Ilyas Shah to sail down as far back as to the Kosi where he stood ready with his fleet and infantry. Afif writes that the Bengali fleet came forward to oppose the imperial army at every convenient point, such as the confluence of the Gogoa and the Ganges, the Gandak and the Ganges but it had to give way at each of the points. Having failed to march across the river Kosi in the face of the army and the fleet of Ilyas Shah, the imperial army proceeded northwardly direction along the western bank of the river and crossed the river to the great surprise of the Bengal army. Ilyas Shah took shelter in the fort of Ekdala a very important strategic post enclosed by the arms of the Ganges.

In the time of Sultan Husain Shah (1493-1519) and Nasrā Shah (1519-1533), Bengal's naval strength increased much and numerous war-boats were built at Gaur as recorded by the Venetian traveller Frederick. It was in the reign of Husain Shah that medieval Bengal had the first encounter with the Ahom State in the upper Brahmaputra valley: According to Ahom Buranji, a vast army of infantry and cavalry along with numerous war-boats were fitted up for the expedition. The Muslim army had a smooth sailing at the outset. It proceeded up the Brahmaputra as far as the eastern limits of the modern Darhang district and reached the bank of the Burai river. A decisive naval battle with the Ahoms took place at Timeni. The Muslims though achieved success initially, suffered at the end miserably.²⁵ Another Muslim invasion was launched against the Ahoms sometimes in the year 1533 A.D. A hot naval encounter took place near

²⁴ Afif, *Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi*, Vide, Elliot-Dawson, Vol. III, p. 305.

²⁵ Bhattacharyya, *Mughal North-East Frontier Policy*, p. 87.

the mouth of the Burai river and the Muslim navy was worsted. Another serious naval reverse was suffered by the Muslims at Duimunisila when the Muslim admiral with 2500 men was killed and twenty of his war-boats were captured by the Ahoms.²⁶ However the arrival of fresh reinforcement and a fleet of war-boats raised the drooping spirit of the Muslim invaders. In May 1533 the Muslim navy advanced beyond Tejpur and halted at the mouth of the Dikrai river. The Ahoms entrenched themselves opposite to it with a strong fleet. A serious encounter took place on the bank of the Dikrai in which the Muslim fleet suffered a disaster. A large number of Muslim sailors and archers perished in the water. The Muslim boats carrying food and provision for the soldiers were captured and the boats carrying stones and matchlocks were sunk. Only a few boats of the Muslims succeeded in escaping.²⁷ The reasons for the disaster of the Muslim navy against the Ahoms are not far to seek. The Muslims were quite unfamiliar with the river-routes of Assam. Secondly, the Muslim boats were larger in size and heavier in weight than the Ahom war-ships which gave the latter much more mobility than the Muslim war-boats. However, the naval encounter of 1533 was the last attempt on the part of the Muslim rulers of Bengal to conquer Assam till the advent of the Mughals.

Prior to Akbar's reign, we hear little of any naval department of the Mughals, so to say, although we have references to two naval exploits of Babar, the one in 1528 A.D. when Babar fought a naval battle on the Ganges near Kanauj with the Rajputs. The other was fought on the river Gogra with the Afghans of the Eastern provinces in which the latter collected 150 boats and offered Babar a naval encounter.

Babar had a large number of boats, about 420 at his disposal while sailing along the river Indus. But it does not appear that they were all war-boats. While sailing, Babar dropped the anchor and for a while remained stationery in the midst of the river. At the time of marching across Sind, (20th March 1525) he

²⁶ Ibid., p. 91.

²⁷ Ibid.

collected six flat-bottomed boats with four sails each and divided them into three groups the right, the left and the centre. He put "men-on foot over these boats."²⁸ Babar appointed a few officers like paymaster and 'dewan' and six or seven being put in command to take charge of the boats."

Babar continued his voyage and on 27th February 1526, he passed Kanauj and encamped on the western bank of the Ganges. His soldiers went out and seized a number of enemy's boats which they brought in. Within a few days the Mughals collected about 30 or 40 boats of different sizes.²⁹

While crossing the Jamuna on his way to the Eastern provinces, (March 1529), Babar had 420 boats. Babar writes, "A favourable wind having sprung up and flowing down the river, they hoisted the sail of a Bengali boat and made her tow the large vessel which went very quick. . . . I embarked and sailed a little way up the river and then returning again crossed over to the north side of the Ganges and brought the boats close to the bank."³⁰ After conquering Bihar, Babar embarked in boat and made all the boats ranged in regular order. He then directed the boats to set sail and to move forward close to each other. Although he could not collect all the ships as some places in the river were shallow and in some places the current was strong, the boats moved in perfect order.

Some of the boats of Babar bore special names.³¹ The old large vessel, 'Babari'; which was constructed before his war with Rana Sangha, he called 'Asaish' (the Repose). The same year before he joined the army, his craftsman Asaish Khan had built a special vessel and presented it to him as a peshkash. Babar directed a platform to be raised on the boat and bestowed on it the name of 'Asaish' (the Elegant). He similarly caused a large platform to be raised on the boat presented to him by Sultan Jalaluddin as a peshkash and called it 'Gunjaish' (the

²⁸ Mrs. Beveridge, *Memoirs of Babar*, p. 451.

²⁹ Leyden, *Memoirs of Babar*, p. 379.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 409-410.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 411.

capacious). Another small bark used as a vessel of communication and which was sent on every business and occasion was named 'Fermaish' (the Envoy). Some of his boats, placed in the vanguard at the time of war, were furnished with artillery and it is often mentioned in the Memoirs that his artillerymen were well trained in naval encounter.

The Mughals continued their march towards Bengal and reached the confluence of the Ganges and the Sarju "where they (the Afghan rebels) had collected 150 vessels."³² Babar resolved to force a passage across the Sarju or Gogra. He busied himself in collecting boatmen and some boatmen were hired but the sailors had been struck with such a panic upon a report that the Bengalis were coming that Babar had to call his nobles to a council and disclosed his plan thus, "to divide my army into six bodies, to make the chief force of it cross in boats at the Haldi passage (the ghat of Haldi seems to have been a passage over the Gogra) and advance upon the enemy so as to draw them out of their entrenchments and keep them occupied till Usta Ali Khan could cross the river, . . . that myself would pass the Ganges with Usta Ali Khan and remain on the alert and in readiness for action ; that as soon as the great division of the army had effected their passage and got near the enemy, I should commence an attack on my side and cross over with my division."³³ (Babar's division was to cross the river under the cover of Alikuli's fire.)

On 2nd May 1529, the Mughal army began to cross the Ganges. A few boats laden with soldiers were detached in advance to spot out the enemy fleet. On 4th May 1529, the Mughal army marched from the place where they had crossed the river and advanced towards the field of action which was near the confluence of the two rivers. Usta Ali Khan's artillerymen struck two vessels of the enemy with shot and sank them. Shots from the Mughal artillery destroyed the masts of other three ships of the enemy completely and those ships fell astray. After a hot engagement on the river, the enemy boats began to retreat with speed. On 5th May, Babar went aboard the

³² Ibid., p. 411.

³³ Ibid., p. 414.

Gunjaish and dispatched a thousand troopers under the command of Bardi-Mughal with orders to ascend the river for four or six miles and to cross the river. While they were on their march not far from Askari's camp, they fell in with 20 or 30 Bengali³⁴ vessels which had meanwhile crossed the river with the intention of making an assault on the Mughal boats. However, the Mughal soldiers advanced swiftly and threw the enemy into confusion and seized seven or eight of their vessels.³⁵ The same day the Bengalis landed from a number of vessels near Muhammad Zaman Mirza's quarter (on the Ganges below its junction with the Gogra) and made an attack on him. The Mirza in a fast-moving rowing boat made a counter-charge, drowned the men of the three vessels by stoning those vessels and one enemy vessel was seized. The rest of the enemy boats sailed off swiftly. Babar himself boarded a Bengali vessel and proceeded to the place where batteries had been raised. Alikuli Khan fired upon the Feringhis³⁶ (Portuguese) several times. Some Mughal vessels advanced up the river Sarju and the enemy vessels were sighted at a distance. Meanwhile news reached Babar that the ships that had been collected higher up the river had advanced as directed and that the Bengali ships had occupied a narrow pass in the river and engaged them.

Babar rushed to the spot with his vessels on 6th May 1529 and on his arrival, the enemy fleet began to sail down with great precipitation. Babar ordered Taimur Sultan and Bugha Sultan who were protecting the vessels to waste no time in crossing the river. Taimur Sultan embarked with his troopers in a large ship and effected a passage and another boat got across after him. The Mughal vessels began to cross in uninterrupted succession. "On observing what was going on, the Bengali ships which lay opposite to the batteries down the river (Gogra) began to flee."³⁷

³⁴ The word 'Bengali' as occurs in the Memoirs refers to the Afghan rebels of Bengal which was being ruled by Nasrat Shah.

³⁵ Leyden, *op. cit.*, p. 415.

³⁶ The Portuguese of Chittagong were employed by Sultan Nasrat Shah in his fleet.

³⁷ Leyden, *op. cit.*, p. 417.

Babar advanced as far as Buxar and on his way he received the submission of the Afghan chiefs.

From Oudh to Buxar, Babar followed the water-routes and brought his army in a large number of ships of various sizes. On the other hand, his enemy, the Afghans of the Eastern provinces, also advanced against the Mughals with their fleet and a few naval engagements took place though not on a grand scale. Very little is known of the naval establishment of Babar. He had no mariners nor sailors in his service on a permanent basis and had to recruit them in course of voyages. Babar himself admitted that in course of his war with the Afghans (in Bihar) his craftsman Mir Muhammad was engaged in collecting boatmen and other requisites for constructing bridges and taking boats forcibly from the local people.³⁸ Babar's naval war-instruments included arrows, stones, matchlocks and artillery.

The next Mughal Emperor Humayun was no less interested in boats and he had to his credit some curious contrivances. He employed in his service a number of carpenters called 'Najjars' imported from abroad and got constructed four special type of boats and set them afloat on the Jamuna. Each of these boats had an arch, of which two storeys were very high. When these boats were put together in such a way that the four arches remained opposite to one another, an octagonal fountain was formed within them which presented a picturesque view. The boats were provided with bazars and shops and often the Emperor sailed in them from Firuzabad Delhi to Agra with his courtiers.³⁹ There was such a bazaar afloat on the Jamuna that "one could have whatever he liked". Humayun seems to have been quite aware of the necessity of a flotilla for war-purposes. In his naval war with Sher Shah at Chausa, on the east-bank of the Karamnasa river (1539 A.D.) Humayun engaged a large number of boats which were filled with men armed with match-locks and spears and stones. He also filled his boats with provisions for the soldiers and with labourers for construction of bridges.⁴⁰ Both

³⁸ Mrs. Beveridge, *op. cit.*, p. 599.

³⁹ Jaffar, *The Mughal Empire*, p. 42.

⁴⁰ Erskin, *History of Humayun*, p. 173.

Babar and Humayun should be regarded as pioneers of the Mughal navy which received proper attention from the succeeding emperors of Delhi.

Hence, it is clear that naval traditions of India continued through the early medieval period although the details about the naval establishments are lacking.

MUGHAL NAVAL ORGANISATION
UNDER AKBAR

We have already seen that Babar and Humayun used boats in their wars against the Afghans in the Eastern provinces, although none of them could develop a naval organisation or a naval force as such. Of course it is to be admitted that none of them felt the necessity of building up a naval fleet as a special branch of armament. It was due to strategic necessity that Babar impressed into his service a large number of boats which constituted a fitting reply to the numerous war-boats of the Afghan rebels of the Eastern provinces. Balban and Firuz Tughluq did the same thing while marching upon the Eastern provinces. But while Balban and Firuz Tughluq utilised the fleet as an auxiliary to the land army, Babar carried his entire army in his boats. Again there is no mention of fire-arms carried by the fleet of Balban and Firuz-Tughluq. But the fleet of Babar and Humayun was furnished with guns along with other war instruments. Babar and Humayun, however, laid the foundation of the Mughal navy which took a definite shape in the time of Akbar.

Emperor Akbar's conquest of Gujarat in 1573 A.D. pushed his western frontier to the sea and brought him into contact with the Portuguese. Gujarat at that time was a rich emporium of commerce between India, Turkey, Syria, Persia and the countries of Europe and therefore very wealthy. Moreover, Gujarat lay on the way to Mecca and Akbar therefore was anxious to bring it under his control. It was at Gujarat that the emperor saw the strength of the Portuguese naval squadron. Like Gujarat, other ports on the western coast like Cambay, Surat and Sarnal were noted for trade and commerce. The conquest of Gujarat opened the emperor's eyes to the vast prospect of revenue from

trade and commerce. Moreover, he was interested in providing a safe conduct for the Mecca pilgrims. But Akbar was quite aware of the fact that shipping on the western coast was dependent on the goodwill of the Portuguese.¹ Although the emperor courted friendship with the Portuguese (who in their turn were afraid of the irresistible landforce of the emperor), he made serious efforts in building a naval force on the western coast.

Similarly with the extension of the Mughal frontiers to the Eastern provinces by the second half of the 16th century and the consequent hostilities with the local rulers who were strong in naval power, it became incumbent upon the Mughal Government to create a powerful fleet and organise a naval force. Moreover, a naval establishment on a permanent basis in that region was necessitated, from the side of the Mughals, by the depredations of the Magh and Feringhi sea-rovers as well as of the Ahoms who used to come often by the numerous water-routes and hence constituted a serious menace to Mughal rule in the Eastern provinces and particularly in Bengal. Like the Sultans of Bengal in the preceding epoch, the Mughals also experienced great difficulty in extending their imperial sway over the whole of Bengal due to physical factors. "The cavalry, hitherto the mainstay of the Mughal army, proved practically useless in traversing the numerous rivers and streams of South-eastern Bengal. . . . Above all, the Mughals (in their initial stage of conquest in Bengal) were weak in war-boats, the only effective instrument of war in Bengal and weaker still in trained soldiers and they had to depend on the war-boats of their allies and vassal zamindars."² Moreover, prolonged rains and floods in the rivers made it absolutely impossible for any military campaign without a strong fleet.

Besides, a department of admiralty was considered very useful by Akbar for the benefit of the country in general as it furnished means of obtaining things of value, provided for agriculture and the emperor's household. Hence the Mughal Government under Akbar gave a great impetus to Indian shipp-

¹ V. A. Smith, *Akbar the Great Mogul*, p. 81.

² *History of Bengal*, (Dacca University), Vol. II, pp. 245-46.

ing and as a matter of fact an imperial naval establishment was founded. The department came to be known as 'Nawara'. Akbar looked upon "promoting the efficiency of this department as an act of divine worship."³

For the first time, Akbar framed a set of elaborate regulations for the organisation of the department of Admiralty or the office of the 'Meer Bahar' ('Amir-ul-Bahar') as it came to be called.

Akbar's admiralty had, broadly speaking, four functions to perform.⁴

The first duty was to fit out strong boats for the purpose of navigation, transportation of elephants and conveyance of merchandise. Some boats were to be built in such a manner as to be of use in sieges and for the conquest of strong forts. The officers were to "look upon the ships as if they were houses and dromedaries and use them as excellent means of conquest."⁵

The second duty of the admiralty was "to appoint experienced seamen acquainted with the tides, the depths of the ocean, the time when the several winds blow and their advantages and disadvantages. They must be familiar with shallows and banks. Besides, a seaman must be hale and strong, a good swimmer, kind hearted, hard-working, capable of bearing fatigue, patient; in fact, he must possess all good qualities."⁶ Men of such character could only be found after much trouble. The seamen for the Mughal navy came from Malabar and Bengal.

The third duty was to appoint experienced, impressive and fearless men with loud voices to look after the rivers, to settle the ferries and to provide the travellers with boats. Abul Fazl writes, "As he possesses experience, he settles every difficulty which arises regarding ferries, and takes care that such places are not overcrowded, or too narrow or very un-even or full of mud. He regulates the number of passengers which a ferry may carry; he must not allow travellers to be delayed and sees that poor people are passed over gratis. He ought not to

³ Blochmann, *Ain-i-Akbari*, p. 289.

⁴ Blochmann, *Ain-i-Akbari*, pp. 289-92.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

allow people to swim across or wares to be deposited anywhere else but at fording places. He should also prevent people from crossing at night unless in cases of necessity.”⁷

The fourth duty was in regard to the imposition, realisation and remission of custom duties. “He (Emperor) wished that boatmen should get their wages.”

The vessels were built of various sizes and the number of sailors in a vessel varied according to the size. In large ships there were officers and men of the following titles and description.

(1) The ‘Nakhuda’ or the captain of the vessel, Abul Fazl calls him the owner of the vessel. He directed the course of the ship.

(2) The ‘Muallim’ or the mate. Abul Fazl calls him the captain. He must be acquainted with the depths and shallow places of the ocean and must know astronomy. It was he who guided the ship to its destination and prevented her falling into danger.

(3) The ‘Tandil’ or the chief of the ‘Khalasis’ or Sailors. Possibly his duty was to recruit Khalasis and to look after their discipline and well-being.

(4) The ‘Nakhuda-Khashab’ whose duty it was to supply the passengers with fire-wood and straw and to assist in loading and un-loading the cargo.

(5) The ‘Sarhang’ whose duty was to supervise the docking and landing of the ship and he often acted for the ‘Muallim’.

(6) The ‘Bhandari’ was in charge of stores.

(7) The ‘Keranee’ or the ship’s clerk who kept the accounts of the ship and served out water to the passengers.

(8) The ‘Sukhangeer’ or helmsman. He steered the ship according to the orders of the ‘Muallim’. Some ships carried several helmsmen but never more than twenty.

(9) The ‘Panjaree’ whose duty it was to look out from the top of the mast and to give notice when he saw land or a ship or a coming storm. In the English navy during the days of Elizabeth we find the same thing. A barrel was fixed at the mast-head of a man-of-war as a shelter for the lookout-man.

⁷ Ibid.

It was called 'crow's nest'. Little boys with sharp eyes were put on the mast-head to give warning when they happened to come across any ship, land or storm.

(10) The 'Gumtee'. He belonged to the class of Khalasis. He threw out the water which had leaked through the ship.

(11) The 'Top-andaz' or gunners were required in naval fights and their number depended on the size of the ship.

(12) The 'Karwa' or common sailors. Their duty was to set and furl the sails. Some of them also performed the duty of divers and stopped leaks or set free the anchor when it stuck fast.

In their earnestness to have a strong fleet, the Central Government took all possible care to keep the harbours in excellent condition, to appoint hard-working and experienced seamen and to look after their well-being. Emperor Akbar set down the rules regulating the wages of the seamen which of course varied from region to region and depended on the course of the voyage or 'Kush' as the seamen called it. For instance, in the harbour of Satgaon (Hughli) a 'Nakhuda' used to get rupees four hundred per month as his salary; besides he was allowed four 'malikhs' or cabins which he filled with merchandise for his own profit. The Muallim used to draw rupees two-hundred and two 'malikhs'; the Tandil rupees one hundred and twenty; the Keranee rupees fifty and one 'malikh'; the Nakhuda Khashab rupees thirty; the Sarhand rupees twentyfive; the Sukhangeer, the Panjari and Bhandari, each rupees fifteen; each Kharwa or common sailor rupees forty and his daily food in addition; the Top-andaz or gunner rupees twelve.⁸

In Cambay, a Nakhuda used to get rupees eight hundred and the other men in the same proportion. In Lahari, a Nakhuda used to get rupees three hundred and the rest in proportion. The boatmen on rivers got wages varying from rupees one hundred to five-hundred per month.⁹

The Mughal Government had to incur heavy expenses for building vessels and maintaining the naval establishment. The

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

Mughal flotilla at the time it was established by Akbar, consisted of 3000 vessels of various sizes. Besides a large number of boats were furnished by the vassal allies and landlords. The flotilla was principally stationed at Gujarat and Surat on the western coast and at Dacca in the east as their headquarters. Under the jurisdiction of the admiralty of Dacca was placed the whole coast from Mundelghat, near the confluence of the Damodor and the Rupnarayan rivers to the coast of Balasore to the west and the whole of the Brahmaputra and the Meghna coasts to the east.

Understandably, the naval defensive measures involved a huge expense. "In fact", writes Grant, "the ordinary established rental of the whole country was then almost absorbed actually or fraudulently in jagirs in protecting the sea coasts from the ravages of the Arakanese aided by the Portuguese".¹⁰ The flotilla was maintained not only for defence but also for the purpose of offence. A large number of boats had to be built, a huge number of personnel to be impressed into service and naturally huge expenses had to be incurred.

Raja Man Singh as Mughal governor of Bengal, considerably increased the revenue of Bengal by conquering the maritime region of Bhati (Lower Bengal) near the mouth of the Ganges and by levying a tribute from Raja Lakshminarayan of Kuch Behar. This did not, however, augment the public income as the gains achieved were absorbed in maintaining a huge flotilla. It was during Man Singh's viceroyalty that we find a remarkable outburst of naval activity in eastern Bengal in which the Mughals and the local independent landlords played an equal part.

Regarding the details relating to the financial aspect of the naval establishment, we have to refer to the abstract of the 'Ausil Toomar Jumma' (original-established revenue) of Bengal as settled about the year 1582 by Raja Todar Mal. The whole expenses of maintaining the 768 armed cruisers and other boats of the imperial 'nawara' stationed at Dacca including the wages of 923 Portuguese sailors "was estimated monthly at Rs. 29,282 which with constructing new vessels and repairing the old amount-

¹⁰ Grant, *Analysis etc.*, p. 131.

ed annually to Rs. 8,43,452 levied altogether from 112 entire or broken parganahs chiefly in the 'chakla' of Jahangirnagar (Dacca) and composed a great part of the richest and most productive lands of the great province. . . ."¹¹ On this account, a large amount was also raised from Sylhet. The jagirs that were assigned in the Dacca district for the support of the imperial flotilla were computed to comprise 1/8th of its whole extent.

Besides the vessels built and maintained by the Mughals in Bengal, the landlords of the province also supplied their boats to the imperial 'nawar' whenever called upon to do so and in return they were assigned lands under the head, 'Omleh Nawara'.

For the support of the 'nawara', another source of revenue was derived from a tax called 'Meer Baree' levied on the building of boats varying from eight annas to one rupee and four annas according to the size of the vessels. This tax was realised from all boats arriving at or leaving the naval headquarters "whose crews were not residents of the district".¹² It is to be noted that the tax 'Meer-Baree' thus collected was entirely spent on the naval establishment. As regards the river-tolls, Abul Fazl writes, "for every boat, 1 R. per kos at the rate of 1000 'mans', provided the boat and the men belong to one and the same owner. But if the boat belong to another man and everything in the boat to the man who has hired it, the tax is 1 R. for every $2\frac{1}{3}$ kos. At ferry places, an elephant has to pay 10d. for crossing; a laden cart 4d; do empty 2d; a laden camel 1d; empty camels, horses, cattle with their thing $\frac{1}{2}$ d; do empty $\frac{1}{4}$ d. Other beasts of burden pay $\frac{1}{10}$ d. which includes the toll due by the river. . . . The rule is that one-half or one-third of the tolls thus collected go to the state (the other half goes to the boatmen)".¹³ Throughout the reign of Akbar, the 'nawara-jagirs' and river-tolls (Meer-Baree) constituted the principal sources of income for maintaining the naval establishment. During the reign of the succeeding emperors, other sources like customs collected from the Europeans were also utilised for the same purpose.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 203.

¹² R. K. Mukherjee, *Indian Shipping*, p. 211.

¹³ Blochmann, *Ain-i-Akbari*, p. 292.

Although boats and ships were collected from many places, it was nowhere other than in Bengal, Kashmir, Massulipatam and Sind that sea-going war-vessels of superior quality were built. After the conquest of Gujarat, Akbar appointed one Mir-Saman to supervise the construction of boats of various sizes. Mir Saman was entrusted with the task of recruiting expert shipwrights. Along the coast of the ocean, in the West, South and East, large ships were built suitable for long voyages. Each of them carried some times 1,700 men on board. These ships sailed for purposes of trade and pilgrimage to Mecca and Jeddah in the month of January returning in September or October. Also long voyages were made to Arakan, Pegu and Tenasarim. But possibly voyages to Mecca for pilgrimage were forbidden by Akbar's famous decree of 1579.

From countries abroad, Akbar imported many carpenters and artificers and got constructed war-vessels and pleasure-boats at Lahore and Allahabad.¹⁴ But these boats seldom came to Bengal. When Akbar came to Bihar to suppress Daud Karrani in 1574, he brought along with him numerous boats built at Lahore and Allahabad. Mostly the boats that were built in Bengal were used in Bengal. A large variety of vessels were built and stationed at Dacca. The Emperor "had the sterns of the boats made in shapes of wonderful animals and thus combined terror with amusement." Like his father, Akbar had a special fancy for floating markets and floating gardens. During his voyage to Bengal (1574) two large vessels were appropriated for the residence of the Emperor himself and they were followed by a great fleet carrying the high officials with necessary equipments and baggage of every kind. Even "gardens such as clever craftsmen could not make on land" were built on some of the boats.¹⁵ Kasim Khan was the Emperor's chief craftsman,¹⁶ skilled in constructing bridges of boats for the passage of the imperial army. Besides the vessels of the Mughal 'nawara' and the Emperor's personal boats, two state-barges for the use of the

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 279.

¹⁵ *Akbarname*, Vol. III, p. 120.

¹⁶ *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, trans. by Lokhandwala, p. 99.

subahdars were always stationed at Dacca. The subahdars or viceroys were under obligation, as Akbar had imposed, to send two magnificent vessels annually to the Emperor at Agra.

The Emperor's personal boat bore a special dignity and respect and it was commanded that the provincial governors should show a befitting respect and perform an obeisance to it whenever they happened to meet it. For instance, Murshid-Kuli Khan's (of Bengal) sense of respect for the Emperor's barge was so deep that "he would not sit down in a royal boat and when in the rainy season, the Emperor's boat came from Jahangirnagar for an exhibition, he went out (from Murshidabad) to meet it and turning his face towards the seat the Emperor used to occupy, made his obeisance, presented his 'nazars' and kissed the deck of the state-boat".¹⁷

Did Akbar employ European sailors in his navy? We have reason to believe that he did. Europeans had earned the reputation of being good gunners and expert sailors since the days of Vasco da Gama and Indian merchants were very eager to employ European mariners in their sea-going vessels. It was at Guzarat that Akbar came into contact with the Portuguese and he was impressed by their superior seamanship. "There must have been Europeans serving in the capacity of common soldiersand some fugitive sailors from ships lying at Surat or Cambay. . . ." ¹⁸ The Emperor impressed the Portuguese "either from Goa or from the Colonies of that nation settled about the mouth of the Ganges and Brahmaputra"¹⁹, in the naval department as craftsmen and artillerymen and thus set the precedent of appointing Europeans which was followed by his successors. The sailors were recruited from the seafaring tribes.

Akbar's Government took some steps for regulating the entry of ships into ports after the Portuguese on the western coast had tried to plunder the port of Thatta (Sind). The *Tarikh-i-Tahiri* records the port-regulation thus, "whenever a ship enters the

¹⁷ Gladwin, *Narrative of transactions etc.*, p. 113.

¹⁸ Irvine, *The army of the Indian Moghuls*, p. 172

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

creek it intimates its approach by firing a gun which is responded to by the guard-house (chowkie) by that signal, to inform the people at the port of the arrival of a strange vessel. These again instantly send word of its arrival to the merchants of Thatta and then embarking on boats repair to the place where the guard is posted. Ere they reach it, those on the look-out have already enquired into the nature of the ship. Every vessel and trader must undergo this question. All concerned in the business, now go in their boats (ghrabs) to the mouth of the creek (communicating with the port). Between the ocean and the port, there is one inhabited spot called Sui Miani. Here a guard belonging to the Mir Bandar or port-master, with a loaded piece of ordnance is always stationed. If the ship (incoming) belongs to the port it is allowed to move up and anchor under Lahori Bandar ; if it belongs to some other port, it can go no further ; its cargo is transpired into boats and forwarded to the city.”²⁰

It should be noted that the rules and regulations as framed by Akbar’s Government were not rigid. The working of the Mughal naval department as well as the rules relating to the officers and sailors engaged in the ‘nawara’ and their wages underwent alterations during the reigns of the succeeding Emperors.

²⁰ *Tarikhi-i-Tahiri*, Vide, Elliot and Dawson, Vol. I, p. 277.

MUGHAL NAVAL DEPARTMENT
AFTER AKBAR

Of the Emperors following Akbar, Aurangzeb took a keen interest in maintaining and strengthening the imperial 'nawara' both in western and eastern India. Jahangir and Shah Jahan do not appear to have taken such active interest in developing the naval department as was expected of them in the face of growing naval strength of the European maritime nations in Indian waters. Again of the imperial viceroy posted at the imperial provinces, only Islam Khan, Mir Jumla and Shaista Khan as viceroys in Bengal, are found to have been alive to the necessity of organising and strengthening the naval force in Bengal and it is under them that the Mughal 'nawara' is seen at its best.

Of course, the maintenance of the flotilla was the work more of the provincial governors than the Emperors, because ultimately they were charged with the responsibility of preserving peace and security in the provinces, fighting out the enemies and extending the imperial frontiers. So far as the Mughal navy in eastern and western waters is concerned, neither Jahangir nor Shah Jahan exerted themselves in making it a real fighting force and protecting the coasts. On the contrary, the naval organisation, particularly in Bengal, showed signs of declining to a considerable extent after Islam Shah's viceroyalty (1608-13) till Aurangzeb and his capable viceroy did their best to revive it and made it fit both for defensive and offensive purposes.

Like his father, and great grand-father, Emperor Jahangir had a special fancy for pleasure trips in boats, although we are not told whether like his great grand-father, he used to take along with him any drinking party. "Everyday, I sat in a boat", Jahangir writes, "and went to hunt waterfowl and wander over the river."¹ With a view to gaining the Emperor's favour, some

European 'ghrabs' (ghurabs) well decorated, were showed to him but "it does not seem likely", observes Roger "that Jahangir interested himself in foreign ships."²

In the time of Emperor Shah Jahan, there was no navy worth the name. Manrique attributes the want of an efficient navy to the timidity of the Mughals.³ However, in Shah Jahan's time, the flotilla of boats for transport purposes called 'nawara' was there and this 'nawara' was used as a fighting arm, once against the Portuguese of Hugli and again against the Ahoms in Assam.

Emperor Aurangzeb was a man of different calibre whose over-powering ambition "would not allow any earthly power to defy the Emperor's authority". Hence he took a keen interest in developing and strengthening the naval force. Certain incidents drew his attention to the problem of protecting the sea coasts both in western and eastern India.

While in Kashmir, Aurangzeb received a report that one of the imperial ships that was carrying pilgrims to Mecca had been captured by a European pirate. And unfortunately some of the pilgrims were ladies belonging to the imperial 'harem' who had been manhandled by their European captors. In the east, the Arakan flotilla had attacked the Mughal flotilla in the waters of Dacca, destroying 160 of the boats and this happened just after the Mughal disaster in Assam followed by the return and death of Mir Jumla.⁴ Aurangzeb was much exasperated at these unhappy incidents and hence resolved to re-build the flotilla for the purpose of suppressing piracy in Indian waters and hence asked his Bengal viceroy to take "fitting steps in this regard." Besides, Aurangzeb was much interested in augmenting his revenue derived from customs. The sea-ports yielded him a large revenue. Among them were those of Sind, Broach, Surat, Cambay and Hughli. Surat alone brought him in about thirty lakhs of rupees annually. Also he earned huge customs from the whole coast of Coromandal, from Masulipatam and from the coast of Orissa.⁵

² Ibid., F. N. p. 255.

³ Manrique in Bengal, *Vide Bengal—Past & Present*, Vol. XII, p. 218.

⁴ Foster, *English Factories in India*, 1661-64, p. 397.

⁵ Manucci, *Storia do Mogor*, Vol. II, tr. Irvine, p. 417.

Hence the Emperor was anxious to build up a sufficient naval strength to protect his coastal trade and commerce.

THE DEPARTMENT AT WORK

Emperor Akbar laid the foundation of the Mughal naval department, as we have already seen. Further developments were made in the organisation although the details are lacking. However, the Mughal naval organisation, as we find in Eastern India, was developed considerably.

Like other departments of the Mughal government, the Naval department was placed in charge of a high ranking imperial officer of integrity and having knowledge of naval warfare, called Mir Bahar. Along with Islam Khan and Mutaqid Khan, appointed viceroy and 'diwan' of Bengal respectively, Ihtimam Khan was appointed Mir Bahar of the imperial 'nawara' by Emperor Jahangir.⁶ All the personal boats of the Mughal officers in Bengal were under overall control of the Mir Bahar. The personal boats of the officers furnished with cannon bore special marks for their use in times of war. Although the Mir Bahar was the chief officer of the 'nawara', he was subject to the command of the viceroy and as a matter of fact, no naval warfare could be undertaken without the latter's permission. Sometimes the land army was placed at the command of the Mir Bahar.⁷ The latter was to recruit boatmen and crew and provide other equipments necessary for naval campaigns. A large number of menials were always kept in service on a permanent basis. The persons employed in the navy were paid by the chief admiral for which the latter was assigned jagirs in several parganas. The chief admiral was to supply money and other provisions to the land-troopers when demanded by the general of the army. During the Assam campaign in 1663, we find the Mir Bahar Ibn Husain despatching "six boats, two laden with gold and four with silver" to Mir Jumla, the supreme commander of the Mughal army.⁸

⁶ Tuzuk, p. 144 ; *Baharistan*, Vol. I, p. 4.

⁷ *Baharistan*, Vol. I, p. 6.

⁸ Glanius's Accounts, Vide *Bengal—Past & Present*, Vol. XXIX, p. 20.

The post of the Mir Bahar, carried high respect. When Ihtimam Khan, the Mir Bahar of the Mughal 'nawara' arrived at Akbar-nagar from Delhi, the Bengal viceroy Islam Khan and the diwan Mutaqud Khan came to the bank of the Ganges to welcome the Mir Bahar in a befitting manner.⁹ The Mir Bahar used to receive a robe of honour, a sword, a special gun with the rank of 1000 'zat' (personal) and kettle-drums.¹⁰

It was the duty of the 'diwan' to settle the wages of the boatmen, sailors and other personnel employed in the department. Sometimes he was to accompany the troops and supply ration to the workmen engaged temporarily in the construction of bridges, mud-forts and barricades. Accountants were appointed to look into the financial matter of the naval department and to keep the accounts properly as it was subject to audit. The exact number of the accountants is not known. Along with these officers are mentioned captains, stewards (Mir Samana), 'sardars' and 'darogahs'. A group of boats was put in charge of a captain; the steward had the responsibility of inspecting the boats and keeping them in good order. The 'sardars' were to recruit sailors and other labourers in the times of campaigns. In the Baharistan we find the 'sardars' sometimes in charge of posts. Those in charge of posts were appointed on a permanent basis, while some of them were employed temporarily to assist the 'nawara' in the war-fronts. The 'darogahs' were superintendents of the boats. Their duty was never fixed.¹¹

Besides the imperial fleet in charge of the chief admiral, the viceroy, other imperial officers and the vassal zamindars had their personal boats to be used in times of naval war. Although the personnel of these boats were the personal employees of the officers and zamindars concerned, in times of naval engagements, they were subject to the control of the Mir Bahar of the imperial 'nawara' and normally the viceroy was not expected to engage them without Mir Bahar's approval, but exceptions were always there. The boats were arranged into groups, each placed in

⁹ *Baharistan*, Vol. I, p. 11.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹¹ *Baharistan*, Vol. I, pp. 29, 34, 35.

charge of superintendents or captains and Mir Samana under the direct control of the chief admiral. The boats of the zamindars' fleet were likewise grouped according to their respective strength and placed in charge of the imperial superintendents. The latter were probably deputed to prevent the desertion of the zamindars' boats. The desertion of the zamindars' boats in times of naval engagements was a normal phenomenon. Besides the superintendents, commanders were also appointed over the zamindars' boats. Of course, in most cases, they were appointed from amongst the zamindars themselves who and none else had control over their sailors and crews.¹²

For supplying provisions to the naval troopers and others engaged in war, the boats of the 'beparis' (traders) full of ration always accompanied the fleet. These boats followed the fleet but they were always kept at a safe distance from the actual war-field as they were the objects of the enemy to be plundered.¹³

The imperial flotilla was often inspected and reviewed by the Emperors and the viceroys. For instance, on the eve of departing for Bengal, on 4th July 1607 the newly appointed Mir Bahar Ihtimam Khan arranged the fleet under his command for a review by the Emperor. The Mir Bahar held a grand review of his 295 war-boats of which seventy were designed for carrying loads, properly equipped with heavy cannon and other necessary requisites. It is reported by Mirza Nathan that the artillerymen from the fleet had produced such a sound and the numerous 'mountain like boats' had created such a horror that "the crocodiles of the river (Jamuna) fled from the banks and shallows and ran to deep waters."¹⁴ During the progress of the imperial flotilla towards the Bhati (lower Bengal), the viceroy Islam Khan often inspected and reviewed it, rewarding the naval officers for their excellent jobs and reprimanding others for negligence.

While the imperial army under the viceroy Islam Khan and the imperial fleet under Ihtimam Khan had been proceeding towards Dacca against Musa Khan (1610 A.D.), Ihtimam Khan

¹² Ibid., pp. 21, 29.

¹³ Ibid., p. 48.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 6.

was ordered to hold a review of the fleet on the river Ichhamati. Referring to this review, Mirza Nathan writes that as ordered by his father Ihtimam Khan, he arranged the review of the fleet in the following way, "He (Mirza Nathan) beautifully arranged the 'Katari', 'maniki' and 'bathila' boats by putting big cannon on them and made such a floating bridge as has never been done by any leader during any time. Behind it, he placed the 'kusas' of war and other boats of this type for review. After preparing the floating bridge, the big boats which contained large cannon and 'zabarzangs' (field pieces) were arrayed like battlements. On the gangway of each of these boats, he arrayed (a line of) wagons called 'thatari' and on them he arrayed a series of towers and on each of these towers a red flag was hoisted. . . . Every boat was covered with a gold embroidered canopy. It was arranged in such a way that if it was desired to discharge the artillery, these wagons which stood like the wall of a fort on the boats extending from one side of the river to the other, could all at once be made to lie flat on the boats and when the dreadful cannon were discharged by the time their smoke disappeared, these wagons could be raised to their former position. A large number of soldiers dressed in steel uniform was posted on the aforesaid boats. Six fully equipped war-kusas were placed in front of the above mentioned (floating) bridge as 'qarawal' (vanguard). Tying those 'kusas' with the bridge by means of strong ropes, six expert men were made to board the stern of these 'kusas' with the instruction that when it was necessary to keep the bridge in straight order, they would row each of the six 'kusas' in a straight line so that the bridge might proceed in that direction. When it was necessary to turn it from the right to the left, they should stop rowing the three on the right and ply very swiftly the other three on the left so that it might turn to the right and they would row all the six equally. When it was necessary to turn the bridge from the left to the right, they should similarly stop rowing the 'kusas' of the left and put all their strength on the 'kusas' of the right. When the firing of the cannon would begin, they should take the three 'kusas' on the left to the left bank of the river and the other three to the right; and at the end of the firing, all these six must be employed in carrying the bridge. In the rear he (Mirza

Nathan) arrayed all the small and large boats of the fleet. . . . At the time of the arrival of the imperial officers (to attend at the review) Mirza Nathan ordered the ropes of the wagons to be pulled so as to make them fall flat on the gangway of the boats and he fired the cannon all at once with a wick of a lamp. The dreadful sound of the artillery resounded from land and water. . . . No sooner did the smoke of the artillery clear up than the wagons were pulled up and were made to stand again like the wall of a fort. . . . when the bridge (floating) approached the boat of Islam Khan. . . . Mirza Nathan disjoined the connecting links of the bridge and placed each one of these boats of the bridge separately before Islam Khan and the imperial officers."¹⁵ The dexterity of Mirza Nathan in building a floating bridge and his placement of the fleet in a battle array, the excellent equipment of the boats and the skill displayed in handling them excited the admiration of the viceroy and other imperial officers. Normally the viceroy, who was also the chief commander of the imperial army, used to send 'couriers' to the admirals beforehand asking them to keep the flotilla in a battle array for his inspection and he used to come on the spot on horse. After reviewing the arrangement from the bank, sometimes he used to inspect the number of sailors and crew as well as the war equipments for his personal satisfaction.

It was the duty of the admirals of the fleet, whether imperial, officers' or zamindars' to collect carpenters, blacksmiths and other menials for the repair of the boats in case of damage. Sufficient quantity of gun-powder, bundles of straw, bamboo-pikes, pieces of stones and other materials were always kept ready in the boats for the purpose of constructing bridges, mud-forts and barricades.¹⁶

Elephants were used in fighting. Elephants were carried on boats and for this purpose two or more boats were tied together with a platform over them which was called 'mands'. To carry them 'biras' or a kind of raft made of wood and plaintain trees tied together called 'bir' were also used. Then there are references to 'gondolas' to carry men and horses.¹⁷ Mirza Nathan

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 48-51.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 32.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 422.

says that in the time of the Assam campaign (during Qasim Khan's viceroyalty 1614-17) several 'gondolas' were procured from the fishermen to carry the general and others.¹⁸ The elephants were covered with iron-jackets to protect them from the fire of the enemy. A huge number of blacksmiths were always kept employed at Dacca to make the iron-jackets for the elephants and it was the duty of the chief admiral to inspect the 'karkhanas' from time to time.

Kettle-drums, big and small were always taken in times of naval expeditions and were used in times of marching as well as in rallying the fugitives hiding in the forests and jungles adjoining the battle-field. Unlike the Portuguese sea-rovers who threw wounded or half-dead soldiers into the water, the Mughals took proper care of them. They were supplied with cooked-food, raw corn, 'bhang' and clothes. "Whoever", writes Mirza Nathan, "was addicted to intoxicating drugs was given intoxicants." Opium mixed with soup was poured down the throats of the wounded soldiers and sailors alike. "First give us some intoxicants so that we may take something" was the common reply of them when asked if they would take any food.¹⁹

In the time of naval war, temporary bridges were often constructed for transporting infantry serving as an auxiliary to the naval army as well as cavalry, elephants and other heavy loads. Any river, if unfordable, was crossed by a temporary bridge of boats such as are still to be found in the present days. The Mir Bahar himself was to supervise the construction work and to supply flat-bottomed boats for the purpose.²⁰ It seems that purely native system of making a bridge of boats suffered from one glaring defect. The native made no use of grapnels. Instead of these, they followed the tedious mode of driving stakes into the riverbed. The result was that the bridge became less secure and what might have been ready in one day took 8 or 10 days to complete.²¹

It is interesting to know how this huge Mughal naval es-

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 358, 362.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 400-401.

²⁰ Vide, Elliot & Dowson, Vol. VI, p. 363.

²¹ R. E. Roberts, *Asiatic Miscell*, Vol. I, p. 419.

establishment in Bengal was financed. Akbar's government worked out some procedures in this regard in a general way. So far as the imperial 'nawara' in Bengal is concerned, we find two modes of paying the persons employed in the naval department viz. assignments of lands and cash payments. The naval officers like the officers of the land-army were granted 'jagirs'. Here a distinction was made between the officers' personal jagir and those assigned for the maintenance of their soldiers or for such specific purposes as the up-keep of the flotilla. Mirza Nathan says, "Islam Khan (the viceroy) was assigned as much of the territories of Ramchandra (Raja of Bakla) to him as was necessary for the maintenance of his fleet, the rest was given to the 'kroris' and jagirdar." It should be noted that the chief admiral, being in charge of the imperial navy was assigned land. Besides, as he was to maintain his personal boats to be pressed into the imperial service, further assignments were made. For instance, Ihtimam Khan, the Mir Bahar, received 22 'mahals' in Bhati and Ghoraghat as his personal jagir and several parganas of Jahanabad, Tamluk and other places in Orissa, Burdwan and Midnapur "in lieu of the salaries of his men."²² Mirza Nathan, as an officer having his personal boats at his disposal, likewise received grants of land in several parganas. Mirza Nathan gives an interesting account about the rates of boats that the officers used to receive. Ihtimam Khan, the Mir Bahar was entitled to draw Rs. 1,200 for the each boat at his disposal. But later Islam Khan, the viceroy, reduced the rate to Rs. 400 for each boat.²³

As a result, Ihtimam Khan had to suffer a great loss. He required one hundred and twenty thousand rupees for his three hundred boats but he was given only eighty thousand rupees. However in order to meet the remaining forty thousand rupees, he obtained the assignment of ten 'mahals' or parganas.²⁴

As regards the vassal zamindars like the Raja of Chandradwipa and the Thakurtas of Banaripara who helped the Mughals in conquest and pacification, were assigned two kinds of rent free

²² *Baharistan*, Vol. I, pp. 12-13.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

lands called 'nawara' and 'hissajat'. The 'nawara' lands were granted in order to enable the zamindars to contribute boats and sailors during the campaigns against the Maghs and the Feringhis. The 'hissajat' lands were assigned to them as reward for their personal participation in those campaigns. Dr. Wise has referred to three sanads relating to 'nawara' lands.²⁵ He writes "The Jangalbari family (of Isa Khan of Sonargaon) have only preserved three sanads of any importance. The one is dated 1059 A. H. (1649) and is sent by Shah Shuja (Governor of Bengal) to the mansabdars and other officials and directs them to leave the land owned by Masum and to give over to him the 'Nawara-Karkhana' or dockyards which had previously been worked by the government. The other (Sanad) bears the name of Shahzadah Muhammad Azim (Governor of Bengal), better known as Azimusshan dated 44th Julus of Alamgir (1700). In it Haibat Muhammad, son of Hayat Muhammad, is ordered to have in readiness 37 'Kosa' boats with 32 boatmen in each; to pay rupees 10,261-7, the revenue of pargana Buldakhah etc. and to remit the rental of the 'paibaqi' or reserved lands, then held by Luthfullah, and Inayatullah." It is clear therefore, that the vassal zamindars were assigned nawara-lands to maintain a fixed number of boats and sailors to be pressed into imperial service when called for. Dr. Wise has also referred to some nawara-lands in some districts. He writes "The modern tradition in Tippera is that the old name of the district was Jahaznagar or the 'city of ships'. This is evidently founded on the circumstance that at a much later period, the revenue for the support of the Nawara or imperial fleet was derived from lands in the district."²⁶ Dr. Wise writes further that the Haibatnagar family still possess a sanad issued by Shah Shuja in 1649 and another by Shaista Khan in 1667. Both were addressed to Masum Khan "but they contain nothing excepting order about war-boats."²⁷

But all the zamindars were not assigned 'nawara'-lands and they had to supply boats and sailors to the imperial flotilla when

²⁵ Vide, *J. A. S. B.*, 1874, Part I, p. 214.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, F. N. p. 83.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 1872, Part I, p. 57; 1874, Part I, p. 210.

occasion arose and the expenses had to be borne by themselves. For instance, Musa Khan, when defeated by the Mughals (1611), was left but little of his territories, the greater portion being absorbed by the victors, although often he had to contribute quite a good number of boats to the imperial flotilla for which he received neither 'nawara' lands nor cash payments. Raja Satrajit of Bhusna, a vassal of the Mughals, similarly had to supply boats and naval armaments at his own cost, of course, according to the terms of his vassalage.

So far as the boatmen, crew and other menials are concerned we come across some arrangements for their payments. Here again, a distinction was made between those employed on a permanent basis directly under the Mir Bahar and those recruited on temporary basis according to necessity. Sometimes lands under the head 'nawara jagir' were assigned to them for their maintenance. Generally a plot of land was divided into 'taluks' and each such division was assigned to each boatman. As Taylor writes, "The following were the principal assignments (in the district of Dacca) (1) 'Omleh Nawara' for the support of the armed vessels to guard the coast against the incursions of the Maghs. . . (besides the imperial fleet as established by Akbar) a number of boats and men were furnished by the zamindars in return for the lands. . . (2) The 'Nawara jagir' was the principal assignment in the district and included the best lands of the Nizammat and was subdivided into a number of 'taluks' which were granted to the boatmen and artificers of the fleet instead of wages.²⁸ In the *Ain-i-Akbari*, the rates of wages in cash of the workers employed are given, which of course, were not strictly followed.²⁹ The rates varied from region to region. Generally, the diwan was to settle the wages of the sailors, crew and artificers of the fleet. As we have already noted, in times of war 'sardars' were appointed to recruit the menials for the fleet. For their wages the Mughal government entered into contracts with the 'sardars' acting as agents who were paid in lump-sum to be distributed amongst the workers and in certain cases these

²⁸ Taylor, *Topography of Dacca*, pp. 193-94.

²⁹ Irvine, *The Army of the Indian Moghuls*, p. 174.

poor people were defrauded by these agents. As a result the sailors and other menials often deserted the fleet. Referring to such incidents, Mirza Nathan writes "All the sailors of the fleet fled away on account of their distressed condition, because neither the Diwan Mutaqid Khan had settled their dues, nor had Islam Khan made him to do so. In the morning at the time of march, it was found that in the whole fleet of three hundred war and cargo boats, there were only seven hundred men."³⁰

CONTRIBUTIONS OF MIR JUMLA AND SHAISTA KHAN TO MUGHAL NAVY

The Mughal navy is seen at its best during the reign of Emperor Aurangzeb both on the eastern and western coasts. The imperial viceroys in Bengal, Mir Jumla and Shaista Khan introduced certain new elements in the naval organisation to make it a 'real force' in the eastern waters and as a matter of fact, the Mughal navy came to acquire such a standard of strength and efficiency that it caused nervousness even among the Europeans, as the Madras Council might write to the Court of Directors at London thus "Your (company's) warships must consider that these people (Mughals) are grown more powerful than formerly and will not be so subject to us as they have been They accounted us formerly very powerful there (in Bengal), but they (the Mughals) look not upon us now-a-days after that rate and begin to slight our passes."³¹ So long the Europeans with their superior naval power used to defy Mughal authority in Indian waters. But during Aurangzeb's reign the Mughal navy grew to be a serious challenge to the European maritime nations. What Mir Jumla and Shaista Khan did in Bengal, the Sidis of Janjira as Mughal admirals did the same in the western waters. The Mughal navy under the Sidis threw a great challenge to the European navies.

The Mughal naval strength showed signs of declining since the closing years of Jahangir's reign till Aurangzeb came to the throne when attempts were made afresh by his viceroys Mir

³⁰ *Baharistan*, Vol. I, pp. 29-30.

³¹ Foster, *English Factories in India*, 1661-64, p. 401.

Jumla and Shaista Khan to revive it. During the reign of Emperor Shah Jahan the established rental of Bengal was almost entirely absorbed in jagirs assigned to protect the coasts from the depredations of the Arakanese and the Feringhi pirates. Matter instead of improving grew worse and worse due to the gradual dilapidation of the Mughal flotilla on the one hand and the growing power of the Magh and Feringhi fleets on the other. When Prince Shuja was appointed viceroy of Bengal in 1639, great confusion was caused by his negligence and the extortion and violence of the nawara mutasaddis (clerks) ruined the 'nawara' parganas assigned for maintaining the 'nawara'. Many naval officers and sailors holding nawara jagirs and stipends were overpowered by poverty and starvation.³² "The navy (nawara) so necessary for the defence of the Bengal delta at last fell into decay and despair through official parsimony or peculation".³³ The parganas assigned for the maintenance of the 'nawara' and yielding 14 lakhs of rupees annually had become desolate on account of the extortion and violence of the rent collectors. Moreover 'scorched-earth' policy of Shuja while fighting with the imperialists left only a few and rotten boats in Bengal constituting the 'nawara'.³⁴ The loss of the revenue from the nawara-parganas made it impossible to maintain a large number of boats. The most pressing problem before Mir Jumla was to protect the coastal regions from the ravages of the Maghs (Arakanese) and Feringhi sea-rovers. To fight them without a strong fleet was well-nigh impossible. Hence Mir Jumla and Shaista Khan had to undertake the task of defending the coastal regions, building up new war-boats, financing their maintenance and extending the Mughal frontiers to the north-east and south-east.

Mir Jumla "an expert, clever and hardworking officer" was sent to Bengal (1660-63) with definite instructions from Aurangzeb to regulate, supervise and 'bring to order' the Mughal nawara. Mir Jumla's first concern was to build new vessels and repair the old ones. And to do this he engaged a number of

³² J.A.S.B., Vol. III, 1907, p. 405.

³³ *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, Vol. XI, pp. 296-97.

³⁴ J. N. Sarkar, *Life of Mir Jumla*, p. 160.

European shipwrights and European captains. Of course, the employment of Europeans in the Mughal navy was not a new thing. Akbar had given the start long before. Due to their superior skill as carpenters, gunners and fighters, Mir Jumla took them into imperial service on a grand scale. Glanius, a Dutch sailor says “. . . we went on board one of the vessels belonging to the Nawab (Mir Jumla) where we found four Englishmen, few Portuguese and two men of our company.”³⁵ The viceroy was always on the look-out for European sailors and carpenters. For instance, upon the arrival of Glanius and his party, the viceroy at once sent for him, offered him three hundred rupees as wages and assigned him a number of ‘ghurabs’, one of which carried 14 guns and 60 men. Each ‘ghurab’ was attended by 4 ‘Kosas’. A good many of the officers were Portuguese and “the General (Mir Jumla),” writes Glanius, “had so good an opinion of the Christians that if a Moor could speak but a little of that language, he commonly preferred him to some considerable office.”³⁶

Mir Jumla required two of the Dutch carpenters’ assistance to build for him a stately vessel from a model he showed them. These carpenters were in the company of Glanius whom he promised their liberty if they could furnish him with the required vessel. They accepted the offer, came to Dacca and finished their undertaking within the stipulated time.³⁷ Mir Jumla utilised the services of the European shipwrights for his boats and paid them handsomely. But in certain cases we find him employing them forcibly without paying their wages. He pressed the Dutch, Portuguese and English to lend him vessels to reconquer Hijli. He also put pressure on the Dutch to despatch a vessel to Arakan in pursuit of the fugitive Mughal Prince Shah Shuja. It is admitted by the English factors that the Dutch assistance made the enterprise a grand success and Hijli was reconquered. Moreover a ‘gallivat’ which the Dutch had built at Hughli and manned by 6 or 7 English runaways under the command of Captain John Durson was sent to Dacca for the use of the Mughal viceroy

³⁵ Glanius, *Vide Bengal—Past & Present*, 1925, Vol. XXIX, p. 13.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

³⁷ Foster, *English Factories in India*, 1661-64, p. 70.

towards the end of May 1661. But Mir Jumla had little gratitude for the services rendered by the Dutch.

It will not be true to suppose that Mir Jumla employed Englishmen indiscriminately in the 'nawara' department. For instance, at Dacca there was residing a certain William Pitt with five English sailors. He quartered himself at the ship's timber 'wharf' superintending the building of a 'gallivat' though he was not entertained by the viceroy for this purpose. William Pitt had no admittance to the viceroy nor he had any influence of any sort.³⁸ According to the English factors at Dacca, William Pitt demanded exorbitant wages for constructing a single vessel. On the other hand, Thomas Pratt, another Englishman "high in favour with Mir Jumla" was employed by the viceroy in building boats and making ammunition for river-fighting.³⁹ In an undated letter but probably of October or November, 1663, Pratt is found demanding 180 rupees for his salary and servants' wages and apparently it was agreed upon to pay him that amount.⁴⁰ But Manucci writes that Pratt demanded 500 rupees and he was offered that sum. He was master of the riverside and employed in building boats and making ammunition for river fighting.⁴¹ After the death of Mir Jumla, Thomas Pratt had certain difficulties in realising his wages from the Mughal government. So he left Dacca with four Englishmen and reached Rajmahal in a sloop furnished with four guns, "his object being to offer to the new Nawab (Shaista Khan) his services in building ships and making cannon."⁴² A Madras letter of 12th January 1665 mentions that William Blake, the Bengal factor, "is forced to continue Mr. Pratt at Dacca at a great charge."

Besides improving the quality of the war-boats with the assistance of the Europeans and making them thereby more efficient for naval wars, Mir Jumla took an equal interest in protecting the sea-coasts by raising a number of naval forts about the confluence of the Lakhiya and the Ichhamati rivers and

³⁸ Ibid., p. 71.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 294.

⁴⁰ Ibid., *Manucci*, Vol. II, p. 87.

⁴¹ *Manucci*, Vol. II, p. 102.

⁴² Foster, *English Factories in India*, 1661-64, p. 393.

constructing several good military roads and bridges in and around Dacca. The Khizrpur fort bears the name of Mir Jumla. From Khizrpur towards the West can be traced an old road with several ruined bridges on the banks of the Buriganga.⁴³

Mir Jumla made a new financial arrangement for defraying the cost of maintaining the flotilla which amounted to 14 lakhs of rupees annually. For defraying partly the costs of maintaining the flotilla, customs were realised more vigorously from the Europeans. Sometimes anchorage charges were levied on the European ships and on this issue a dispute arose with the English upon their refusal to pay Rs. 3,000 as the anchorage charges in addition to annual customs. The exasperated English agent at Hughli seized a country vessel belonging to Mir Jumla at Balasore. Mir Jumla, thereupon, ordered the faujdar at Balasore to levy a duty of 40% on all English exports besides anchorage duties on their ships. However the dispute was brought to a settlement. The grant under the head "Omleh Ahshan" was appropriated for the maintenance of the naval troops and artillery to defend the forts on the coasts.⁴⁴ The Jahanshahi pargana in Mymensingh district supplied 20 'Kosa' boats to the imperial 'nawara' and "the two shares into which it is now divided and which paid for the equipment of $10\frac{1}{3}$ and $9\frac{1}{3}$ Kosas respectively are still known as the 'daghkosa' and 'nankosa' zamindars."⁴⁵

A large area in Jessore was distributed among the 'Kaibartas' who were expert sailors, for their employment in the imperial fleet. These people manned Raja Pratapaditya's navy but were reduced to great straits after the fall of the Raja. Mir Jumla made fresh grants to these people and thus got a great supply of them as sailors. Mir Jumla also revived Pratapaditya's dockyard called 'Jahajghata' for rebuilding the imperial 'nawara'.

Doubtless, the 'nawara' under Mir Jumla was in a progressive state and as many as 323 war-boats he employed in his Assam campaign (1662-63). Besides, several other boats laden with provisions and war-ammunition were always kept ready at the

⁴³ J.A.S.B., 1874, Part I, p. 211.

⁴⁴ Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

⁴⁵ Glanius, *vide, op. cit.*, p. 13.

headquarters to be engaged in times of emergency.⁴⁶ Glanius says that "Mir Jumla had 500 (boats) for his share".⁴⁷

In spite of his best endeavours, Mir Jumla could not bring any lasting improvement in the naval organisation. With a view to reorganising the nawara, he abolished the old system but before he could start a new one and make it permanent, he had to set out on his fateful Assam campaign.

The disastrous Assam campaign of Mir Jumla affected the Mughal nawara very adversely. Many expert naval officers and crew perished in the course of the campaign and the flotilla utterly ruined. On the resignation of its admiral Ibn Husain, Mahamad Beg was appointed its superintendent and he was asked by Aurangzeb to send a report after ascertaining the quality, the number and the true state of the Bengal nawara. The destruction of the Mughal navy endangered the security of the Subah and aggravated the menace of the Magh and Feringhi pirates. Early in 1664 the Arakan fleet appeared before Dacca, made an attack upon the Mughal flotilla in the Dacca river and destroyed 160 of the Mughal war-boats.⁴⁸ The cruising Mughal admiral (sardar-i-sairab) Munawar Khan who was stationed there with the relics of the 'nawara' took to flight in confusion and the few boats that still belonged to the nawara were thus lost and its name alone remained in Bengal.⁴⁹

Hence upon his arrival in Bengal as the next viceroy, Shaista Khan had to face an unhappy situation. But he was equal to the occasion and employed his whole time and energy to revive the imperial nawara, and to his credit, it should be admitted that his energy and perseverance overcame every obstacle.

Shaista Khan's first concern was to have a suitable shipyard for constructing new boats and repairing the old ones. Dacca served the purpose, and accordingly it was turned into a great and busy shipyard. In the great dockyards that lined the channel passing through the city of Dacca in the quarter known as Tanti Bazar, began busy activities for building boats on

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Foster,—*English Factories in India*, 1661-64, p. 397.

⁴⁹ *J.A.S.B.*, 1907, pp. 205-6.

a large scale.⁵⁰ As timber and shipwrights were required for repairing and fitting out the ships, bailiffs were sent with parwanas to fetch timber and carpenters from every 'mauza' of the province and to bring them to Dacca.⁵¹ The viceroy ordered as many boats as possible to be built at the ports of Hughli, Balasore, Murang, Chilmory, Jessore and Karibari and desired them, when finished, to be sent to Dacca. From his vigorous exertions and busy activities, it seems that he put the entire province on war-footing and it must be admitted that he left no stone unturned to make the flotilla a real force to fight the enemies, particularly the Maghs and the Feringhis whose "war-vessel were more numerous than the waves of the sea." Talish writes "Not for a moment did he (Shaista Khan) forget to mature plans for assembling the crew, providing their rations and needments and collecting the materials for ship-building and shipwrights" and in a short time about 300 war vessels were built ready in wartrim and employed against the Feringhi pirates of Chittagong.⁵² At Lalbagh, Shaista Khan built a large red-brick fort to command over the river which once washed its south face.⁵³

Expert officers were chosen for the fleet. Hakim Muhammad Husain, a mansabdar, "an old, able, learned, trustworthy and virtuous servant of the Nawab" was appointed head of the ship-building department. Qazi Samu was made the superintendent of the dockyard. Kishore Das, "an imperial officer and a well-informed and experienced clerk" was entrusted with the duty of supervising the 'nawara' parganas and the stipend of the jagirs assigned to the naval officers and others. The viceroy was careful enough to appoint only expert officers having had previous experiences. Balchand was made the superintendent of the customs at Hughli with Parameswar Das as his assistant. Ibn Husain, who resigned from the admiralty after Mir Jumla's Assam expedition, was again appointed chief admiral.

Like Mir Jumla, Shaista Khan also engaged the English, Dutch and Portuguese in the Mughal navy and we find him often

⁵⁰ *History of Bengal*, (Dacca Univ.), Vol. II, p. 397.

⁵¹ *J.A.S.B.*, Vol. III, 1907, p. 406.

⁵² Vide Sarkar, *Studies in Mughal India*, p. 134.

⁵³ Wilson, *Early Annals*, Vol. I, p. 81.

demanding of them their vessels. "You make vast amounts every year", Shaista Khan told the Dutch Captain, "by your trade in the imperial dominions for which you have to pay no duty or tith. For this reason, the path of the profit of Muslim and Hindu 'beparis', and merchants in the imperial dominions especially in Bengal, has been closed. In gratitude for such favour and bounty, you should call for your ships from your country and co-operate with the imperial forces in the expedition against Arakan for extirpating the Maghs which I have in view." .⁵⁴ The Dutch Captain asked his permission to write to their Governor-General (of the Dutch Indies) as it was a "serious proposal". Although Shaista Khan appreciated the Captain's suggestion, he instead of depending on the assurance of the Captain, despatched an envoy to Batavia with suitable presents, soliciting the Dutch Governor-General's favour in this regard.⁵⁵ Talish says that their help was at last found unnecessary.

Shaista Khan put forth the same demand to the English. A letter from Madras to Hughli dated 8th October 1664 contains the following passage upon the subject. The letter runs, "you say, there is an absolute necessity to furnish the Nawab with a 'sloop' and men and it will be a great furtherance to our masters' business. . . You must endeavour to get men and a 'sloop' to assist him (the viceroy) . . . but he must allow the charges of the sloop and men".⁵⁶ By threats and allurements, the viceroy also succeeded in effecting a desertion of a large number of Portuguese sailors and soldiers from the side of the Arakan king. Lands were assigned for their settlement near Dacca and two thousand rupees were distributed amongst them from the viceroy's private purse. Also a monthly stipend of Rs. 500 was settled on the Portuguese captain from the imperial treasury.⁵⁷

According to Bowrey, Shaista Khan imposed a sort of 'shipmoney' on the merchants to build up the naval power of the Subah both for defensive and offensive purposes. A boat pro-

⁵⁴ *J.A.S.B.*, Vol. III, 1907, p. 406.

⁵⁵ Foster, *English Factories in India*, 1661-64, p. 403.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 399.

⁵⁷ Sarkar, *Studies etc.*, p. 130.

ceeding to Murshidabad was charged at the rate of 8 annas per oar ; to Calcutta 10 annas ; and to Burdwan one rupee and eight annas ; while boats coming from these places were taxed at the rate of 1, 2 and 4 rupees per boat respectively. These rates were likewise exacted by the 'zamindars from every boat that passed their territories.'⁵⁸

Bowray writes further that the viceroy sent his 'paiks' to the merchants at Hughli, Jessore, Pipli and Balasore for a ship or two in each respective place of 400, 500 or 600 tons to be sent to Dacca and also 10, 20 or 30 'jalia' boats to attend them, and "the Moor's governor having strict order to see them finished with all speed and gunned and well manned and sent up the Ganges as high as Dacca."⁵⁹

Of Shaista Khan's marine, Bowrey says that it consisted of about "twenty sail of ships of considerable burden that annually trade to sea from Dacca, Balasore and Pipli, some to Ceylon, some to Tenassarim".

To the credit of Shaista Khan, it should be admitted that he not only revived the imperial flotilla and built it afresh but also inspired the demoralised Bengali sailors and mariners into a fighting mood and at last succeeded in crushing the naval power of the Maghs and Feringhi's in the year 1666 A.D.

⁵⁸ Bowrey, *Countries Round Bay of Bengal*.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

MUGHAL SHIP-BUILDING CENTRES
AND TYPES OF BOATS

The boats for the Mughal 'nawara' were built at various places throughout the empire. The ship-building centres of the previous epochs continued to flourish in the time of the Mughals although some of them in course of time gave place to new ones. Foreign travellers who visited India in the age of the Mughals speak in high terms of the wealth of the country flowing from her brisk sea-borne trade and greatness of some of her ports. Here we are not concerned with all the great or small maritime ports of India. We are only concerned with those ports or places which were used as ship-building yards. The Mughal ship-building yards were more in Eastern India than in Western India. The main reason for this less number of ship-building centres in western India is not far to seek. On the western coast, the imperial Mughals had to depend much on European vessels for India's coastal traffic as well as for protecting the coastal regions from the depredations of the European and native sea-rovers. Moreover, with a view to earning more revenue in the form of customs from the sea-trade, the Mughals did not like to challenge the naval power of the European nations trading in India so seriously. Of course, at the same time it would be wrong to assume that the imperial Mughals were totally indifferent to build up a powerful navy on the western coast. The chief ship-building centres of the Mughals on the western coast were Masulipatam, Gujarat, Surat, Thatta (Sind) and Cambay, besides Kashmir and Lahore.

De Laet writes, "Ships of considerable size are built at Masulipatam of excellent timber but not as hardy or as well suited for fighting as are European ships".¹ No substantial

¹ De Laet, *The Empire of Great Mogul*, p. 77.

revenue was collected in the form of customs at this port, but "the best it affordeth is, it aboundeth well in timber and conveniences for the building and repairing ships".² Near Masulipatam, there was another ship-building centre of note. It was Modapallam (Madhavyapalam). "Here is the best and well grown timber in sufficient plenty ; the best iron upon the coast is for the most part vended here and at reasonable rates, with the workmen also ; any sort of ironwork is here ingeniously performed by the natives, as speeks (spikes), bolts, anchors etc."³ Many English merchants and others used to build ships yearly at this shipyard. There were many expert masterbuilders who, though employed by the Mughal government, depended on the English for their subsistence and "indeed learnt their art and trade from some of the English by diligently observing the ingenuitie of some that built ships and sloops here for the English East India Company and their agents . . ."⁴ Gujarat was a noted ship-building centre of the Mughals. The Sultans of Gujarat styled themselves 'Lords of sea.' When Emperor Humayun conquered Gujarat in 1535, he on securing the splendid jewelled-belt of Bahadur Shah of Gujarat, remarked, "These are the equipments of the Lords of the Sea."⁵ At Gujarat boats of various sizes and burthen were constructed under the supervision of the Mir Bahar. In the Sarkar of Thatta (Sind), according to the *Ain-i-Akbari*, there were always 40,000 boats ready for hire, large and small. Surat was by far the greatest of the Mughal ship-building centres on the western and southern coasts. Wheeler writes, "The Mughal shipping lay pretty close together in the Surat river, some of the vessels were more than a thousand tons burden. Altogether there were more than a hundred good ships besides smaller vessels. All these vessels were built for the Mughals by English ship-wrights, who were driven by poverty undertook the work".⁶ One of the Mughal ships built at Surat and measured by an English Captain Saris at the Red Sea about the year 1611 was 153 ft. in length and 42 ft. in

² Vide, *Hakluyt Society Series II*, Vol. XII, p. 99.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Bayley, *Gujarat*, p. 386.

⁶ Wheeler, *History of India*, Part IV, p. 499.

breadth, 30 ft. in height and 1200 tons burden.⁷ Referring to Surat as a great ship-building station of the Mughals, Downing writes "The city (Surat) is situated by the side of a pleasant river which falls into the Indian Sea over a Bar. This river is navigable for ships of large burthen where they have the benefit of building and repairing ships with the same convenience as we have in England. The Moors build very compleat ships which the Princes of Arabia frequently purchase".⁸ By the middle of the 17th century, the English Company at Surat had successfully adopted the practice of getting the small vessels required for its needs constructed there. This may be regarded as the beginning of the Company's Mercantile Marine. The English also secured permission of the Mughal government to build their own ships at the Mughal ship-building yards at Navasari and Gandevi.⁹ But as the permission to use those Mughal shipbuilding yards had to be obtained with great difficulty, the English after 1635, began to utilise the larger shipbuilding yards at Bassein, Daman and Diu which were Portuguese jurisdiction.¹⁰ In 1640 the English had quite a small fleet of country-built ships and frigates furnished with small guns.¹¹ This caused anxiety to the Mughal Government and hence the Mughal Government tried to prevent the native ship-builders from accepting the company's jobs. In the time of Aurangzeb, Lahore developed as a great shipbuilding centre and most of the heavy fighting boats were built there.

In Eastern India and particularly in Orissa and Bengal, the Mughals had a number of ship-building yards. Pipli in Orissa was a great sea-port "whereto much shipping did belong and many ships and other vessels were built".¹² The Mughal Governor of Orissa granted permission to the English East India Company in

⁷ K. T. Shah, *Trade, Tariff and Transport*, p. 32.

⁸ Foster, *Downing's History of the Indian wars*, pp. 173-74.

⁹ Gandevi—28 miles south-east of Surat. "Gandevi... is a very faire haven and great store of shipping built there, whereof some are of four or five hundredth tun. It standeth in a good soile..." Vide, *The Travels of the Abbe Carree in India and the Near East*, Vol. I, p. 126.

¹⁰ M. S. Commissariat, *A history of Gujarat*, Vol. II, p. 309.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Burton, *A voyage to Bengalla*, p. 265.

May 1637 "to build shipping, small or great or any other vessels which they shall think best and fittest for their occasions and uses. . ."¹³ It is to be noted here that Emperor Shah Jahan, when involved in troubles with the Portuguese in Bengal, asked the English to build ships in Pipli and to supply him some ships against the Portuguese.

Satgaon, on the bank of the river Saraswati remained for some time a great centre of ship building industry. The great medieval Bengali Poet Mukundaram in his *Chandikavya* writes that—Satgaon was a great harbour for building and repairing vessels and these facilities attracted the attention of the merchants of other countries. The boats built at Satgaon were called 'pencosa' with which the people "go from place to place and buy rice and many other things. Their boats have 24 or 26 oars to row them and they be of great burthen". This historic maritime port and a ship-building yard was, however, destined to decline as the river Hughli diverted its current through the main channel and caused the silting up of the Saraswati which became unsuitable for navigation.

Gaur continued to flourish as a great ship-building centre under the Muslim kings of Bengal. Sultan Ghiyasuddin Iwaz Khalji transferred his capital from Devkot to Gaur with the main object of building up a flotilla of war-boats. Gaur commanded an easy and rapid communication by water with every part of Bengal and also with the important towns of Bihar. It was at Gaur that a great dockyard was built by Iwaz Khalji. Under Sultan Alauddin Husain Shah (1493-1519) of Bengal, a powerful fleet was maintained at Gaur. He imported a large number of carpenters from South-eastern Bengal while the 'Kaivarta' inhabitants of Gaur were employed as boatmen. One of the *Mss* (Bengali) gives a glowing description of the port of Gaur and the innumerable ships and boats built there testifying thereby to the vastness of its maritime trade and as a "great mart for boats."

De Laet has described Hughli as a great ship-building centre

¹³ Ibid.

under expert carpenters.¹⁴ From the 16th century Hughli took the pride of the ancient maritime port of Tamralipta. Ralf Fitch writes that merchants from Negapattam, Sumatra and Malacca used to come to Hughli for trade and commerce and they were very much impressed by the dexterity of the local shipwrights. He further writes that ships of various sizes and burdens were constructed at Hughli.

During the time of the Mughals, Chittagong grew into importance as a centre of ship-building industry. Frederick, a Venetian traveller saw many war-vessels built at Chittagong. The Sultans of Constantinople liked very much the vessels built at Chittagong than those built at Alexandria. Under the Maghs and the Feringhis thousands of boats of various sizes were built at Chittagong and with these boats they used to ravage the coastal region of Bengal. It was Shaista Khan, the Mughal Viceroy of Bengal, who gave much impetus to the ship-building industry at Chittagong. A class of people called 'Balams' living on the shore of the Karnafuli river in Chittagong were renowned ship-builders. Even now the descendants of those 'Balams' build small vessels called 'ballami-boats' after their name. After the conquest of Chittagong by the Mughals in 1666, Shaista Khan employed quite a large number of Feringhis as shipwrights on high emoluments.¹⁵ However the ship-building industry of Chittagong completely decayed by 1875. Because, the local ship-builders could no longer compete with the power-driven ships imported from Europe. The ship-builders like Ranga, Basir, Gumani, Malum and Kerami owned sometimes more than 100 vessels each. These builders often fought with the Magh (Arakanese) pirates with their big ships called 'sloops'. Those who achieved victory over the pirates were called 'bahardars'. Some of these bahardars of Chittagong were alive till the beginning of the 19th century.

Sondwip, an island at the mouth of the Ganges in the district of Noakhali, was another centre of ship-building industry and various types of boats were built there long before the Mughals

¹⁴ De Laet, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

¹⁵ *J.A.S.B.*, Vol. III, 1907, p. 425.

conquered Bengal. It was conquered by Shaista Khan and was turned into a ship-building yard wherefrom the Mughal fleet after repairing and refitting, sailed towards Chittagong in the year 1666.¹⁶ Timber from the Sundarban forests was mainly used in building boats at Sondwip.

Chirairbari, a place near the city of Gaur on the bank of the river Mahananda, was another ship-building centre of the Mughals making provisions for many artificers. Here new boats were constructed and the old ones were repaired. The 'Laghata' is still bearing the memory of Bengal's old naval art.

Dacca had been the headquarters of the Mughal 'nawara' since the days of Emperor Jahangir and under Shaista Khan it grew into a great centre of ship-building industry.

The other Mughal ship-building centres in Bengal were Chilmari, Jessore, Bakla anl Howrah.¹⁷ Bishop Hair wrote as early as 1823 that "Howrah was the abode of ship-builders."

"The build of boats all along the coast of India varies according to the localities for which they are destined and each is particularly adapted to the nature of the coast on which it is used."¹⁸ The construction of war-boats likewise depends on the natural factors of the locality such as the position and course of the rivers, rivulets, harbours, artificial or natural, the condition of the coast and the availability of materials. And that is why, even although a particular model is followed while building a boat in any part of the country, the same differs in another part because the materials, the technique of utilising such materials, the river-coasts and the like differ from place to place.

In the contemporary literature we come across a variety of boats having different names and sizes built in different parts of the country. The boats built and used by the Mughals in Eastern and Western India were almost of the same types and sizes as used by the Bengali landlords, the Ahoms, the Maghs and the Marathas, although some peculiarities were always there and that was due to the fact that the boats were built at different

¹⁶ Ibid.

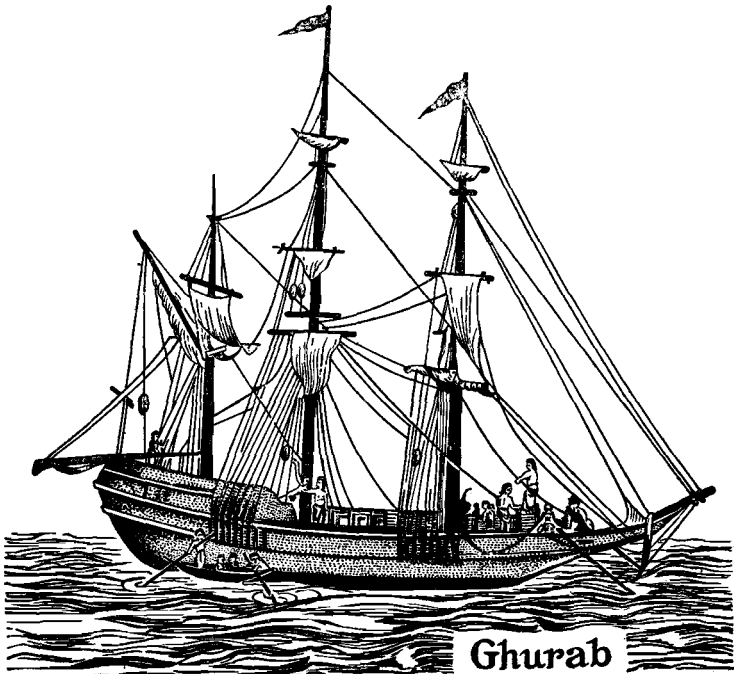
¹⁷ *Howrah District Gazetteer*, p. 404.

¹⁸ Bevan, *Thirty years in India*, Vol. I, 14.

places and by different hands. For instance, the boats built at Chittagong differed in some respects from those generally found in other parts. We give here a short description of the vessels built at Chittagong.

Balam—It was a large vessel having 16 oars on each side. The 'balams' of bigger sizes carried a load of 300 tons but they were not allowed to sail into the open sea with more than 50 tons weight of merchandise.

Godha—It was generally of great length and was used in naval fighting. Shaista Khan took special care in building this



Mughal war-ship—1

type of boats in large number for protecting the Chittagong rivers from the depredations of the Magh pirates. Its planks were not

tied with iron nails. The Different parts of the boat were tied with 'gallak' a kind of cane and the cavity formed in between the two canes was fastened with ropes and cotton to prevent any leakage. In the off-season, the different parts of the boat were kept disjoined.

'Sloop'—It resembled the 'balam'.

'Sarenga'—These boats were not used for sea-voyage.

Sampen—They were built after the fashion of Chinese vessels.

Kond—It was of huge size and brought to shape by skipping a block of wood of great dimension. It was mainly used for transporting merchandise.

Of the Mughal vessels, the following as found in the literature, were used normally in Bengal both for the purposes of war and commerce, viz. 'Kosa', 'bepari', 'balia', 'pal', 'ghurab', 'machua', 'pusta', 'jalia' and 'massula'. The 'Kosa' was a big war-vessel with sometimes 60 oars and furnished with artillery. It looked like a sauce-vessel. The author of the *Padishanama* says that the term 'Kosa' was applied to such ships as were used to row war-ships. Though the statement of the author of the *Padishanama* is generally true, in some cases the 'Kosas' furnished with guns were used in actual naval encounters. The 'ghurab' was a strongly built vessel and in Urdu 'ghurab' means 'crow'. It had normally two and sometimes three high masts. In proportion to length, it had an unusual breadth. It was a war ship furnished with guns in front while the two flanks with a few of them. The term 'ghurab' is regarded by the author of the *Padishanama* as a Bengali term.¹⁹ The 'balia' was a swift-moving vessel with a roof. The 'pal' meant the 'pulwar' boat generally built at Dacca. It contained one mast of a great height and carried huge load. The 'massaula' boat was generally used on Madras coast.²⁰ The 'pusta' was a fast-moving boat with two masts. The Mughals used this boat mainly against the Magh and Feringhi pirates. The 'jalia' or 'gallivat' was used by the Mughals on the Southern and Eastern coasts. Manucci has repeatedly referred to the Mughal 'gallivats' on the western coast. The English helped the

¹⁹ Vide, Elliot and Dowson, Vol. VII.

²⁰ Wheeler, *Early Records*, p. 54.

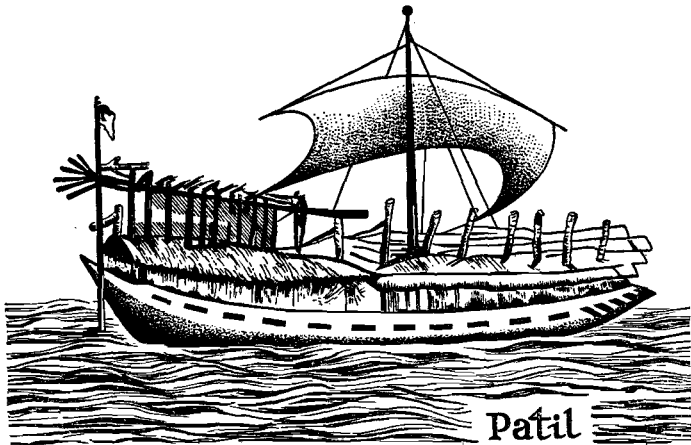
Mughals in constructing powerful gallivats at Surat and as a matter of fact, "the facilities for ship construction and undertaking refits were expanded,"²¹ at Surat after the English established their factory there in 1612. This type of boat was also used in the Mughal warfares in Bengal. It was impelled with oars alone and sometimes fitted with 40 or 50 oars on the two flanks and furnished with 5 or 6 small pieces of cannon. It was another form of ancient 'galley'. In the Mughal fleet, *jalia* numbered more. A 'ghurab' never went in action unless it was accompanied by one or more 'gallivats'. Referring to the 'gallivats', Orme writes, "There are large row-boats built like the 'grab', but of smaller dimensions, the largest rarely exceeding 70 tons; they have two masts of which the mizen is very slight; the main mast bears only one sail which is triangular and very large, the peak of it when hoisted being much higher than the mast itself. In general, the gallivats are covered with a spar deck, made for lightness of bamboos split and these only carry petter-aroës fixed on swivels in the gunnel of the vessel, but those of the largest size have a fixed deck on which they mount six or eight pieces of cannon, from two to four pounders; they have forty to fifty stout oars and may be rowed four miles an hour".²² In the Mughal 'nawara' we find a type of boats called 'frigates' which were "fit to row on sail made with prows instead of beaks, but they were useful in creeks and rivers than in open sea."²³ There were few 'manchuca' boats in the Mughal navy operating on the western coast. Gamelli Carreri, who travelled in a Portuguese 'mauchua' in 1695 describes the 'manchucas' as follows, "These 'manchucas' had such a main sail as the Lantis of Trapan in the kingdom of Sicily, 12 oars and four small guns." The fast-moving 'sip' boat was used for carrying messages from one station to another. The 'jung' boat was used for transporting elephants, horses and other heavy goods. The Mughal navy contained a good many of these boats and these boats were mainly used in eastern waters. The 'patil' was imported into Bengal

²¹ K. Sridharan, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

²² Orme, *Military Transactions in Indostan*, Vol. I, pp. 401-2.

²³ Wheeler, *History of India*, Part—II, p. 500.

from north-western India and it was used for carrying ration for the soldiers and sailors. In Bengal, Bowrey noticed "great flat-



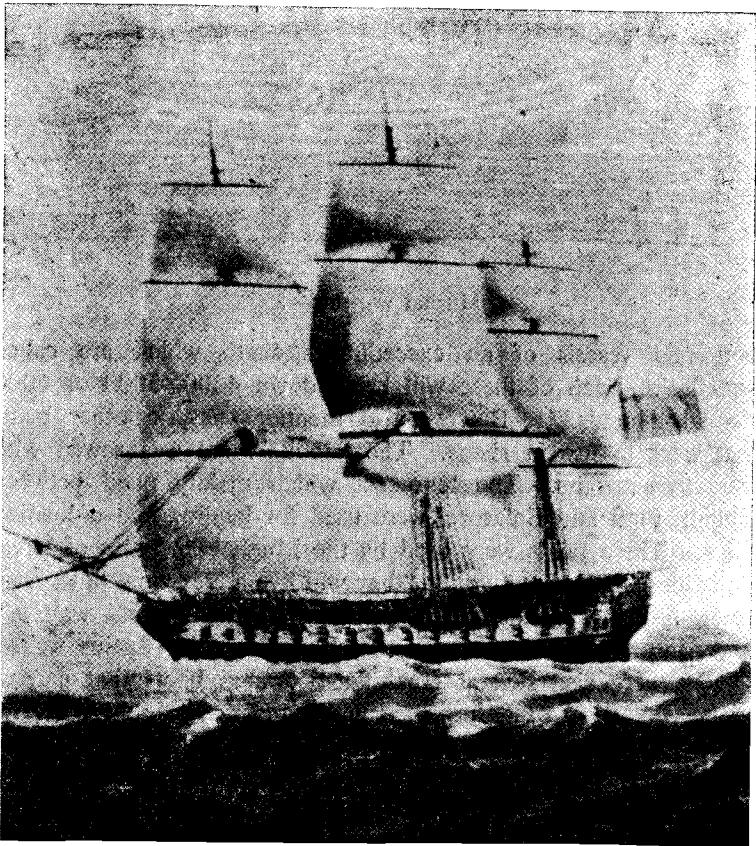
Mughal war-ship—2

bottomed vessels of an exceeding strength which are called 'patellas'. Each of these will bring down 4000, 5000 or 6000 Bengal maunds."²⁴ Bowrey also mentions several other boats that were in use in rivers. The 'oolooka' boat was rowed with four to six oars. The 'pargoos' which mainly plied between Hughli, Pipli and Balasore, were used for loading and unloading ships. These boats were used by the Mughals in times of naval expeditions. Bowrey writes, "they will live a long time in the sea, being brought to anchor by the stern as their usual way is". Referring to the Mughal war-vessels in Bengal, Glanius writes, "There were also several great flat-bottomed boats that carried no mast, yet were full furnished with guns. . . There were several other vessels laden only with provision and war-like ammunition".²⁵ The 'bepari' (trader) boat had a roof, a few oars and a big mast at the centre. These boats were used by the Mughals in times of naval warfares in Bengal. Mirza Nathan has referred

²⁴ Bowrey, *Countries Round Bay of Bengal*, p. 277.

²⁵ Glanius, *Accounts etc.*, Vide, *Bengal—Past & Present*, Vol. XXIV, 1925, p. 13.

to these boats more than once as engaged in times of naval warfares. The Mughal navy included a number of large and beautifully decorated 'budgraws' called 'mahalgiri' which were mainly used by the royal princes and princesses. A few such 'budgraws' were always detached along with the war-fleet for the use of the admirals and nobles. Emperor Akbar imported a large number of shipbuilders and constructed these boats at Lahore and Allahabad.²⁶



Mughal war-ship—3

²⁶ Blochmann, *Ain-i-Akbari*, p. 290.

Although there were variety of boats meant for various purposes, in the time of war, no discrimination was made regarding their employment and most of the boats noted above were more or less used in naval encounters. In the days of Elizabeth or even for the matter of that of Nelson, there was not much difference between the fighting ships and the merchantmen. As a matter of fact, the East Indiamen of the 18th and 19th century, built with almost equal attention to speed, armaments and carrying capacity could and did do service equally well as a merchantman or a man-of war. But to-day not only is the fighting ship entirely distinct from the commercial vessel but in both of the principal types of ships there are again very important sub-divisions. The modern navy must have its capital ships and cruisers, its destroyers and gun-boats just to do the work for which it was designed. So far as India is concerned, in the Mughal age, all types of boats available were impressed into naval service and some of the boats were furnished properly with guns and other kinds of fire-arms. Artillerymen along with infantry and cavalrymen were posted on the boats. Of course, the 'grabs', 'gallivats', 'kosas' and frigates were specially built for naval fighting.

The European travellers and the European factors in India spoke highly of the strength and durability of the India-made war-vessels as well as of the dexterity of the Indian ship-builders. Referring to the boats built in India in the 15th century, Nicolo Conti observes, "They build some ships larger than ours with five sails and as many masts. The lower part is constructed with triple planks in order to withstand the force of the tempest to which they are so much exposed. But some ships are so built in compartments that should one part be shattered, the other portions remain intact and may accomplish voyage." We know that the English and the Dutch had some of their ships constructed in India during the period under review and this could not have been so unless those ships were cheaper in cost and durable. A letter of 1668 addressed by the English President and the Council to the Company in London in reply to some anticipated objections with regard to the starting of ship-building in Bombay, state, "...these carpenters (of India) are grown so expert and

matsters of their art that there are many Indian vessels that in shape exceed those that come either out of England and Holland”.

Neither there was any dearth of materials in India in those days for building boats. Bengal was abundant with these materials. There was no want of wood in the Sundarbans and in the forests of Chittagong. Of the teaks, ‘sundari’ oak is by far the best for the purpose. This kind of wood is thick, red-coloured, hard and capable of sustaining heavy loads. It keeps well in water and saline water cannot harm it in any way. It is more lasting in water than even teak-wood and in those days ‘sundari’ wood was found abundantly in lower Bengal. Raja Pratapaditya of Jessore-Khulna had the least difficulty in procuring this type of wood for the purpose of building his war-vessels. The principal vessels like ‘ghurabs’ were made of teak after the fashion of other countries. But all the shipwrights not necessarily did know the use of the ‘sundari’ wood. In Europe in those days, ship was made of oak, but teak is of much better stuff than oak, because the oak-made ship required repair or replacement every twelve years whereas teak-made ship lasted for more than fifty years.²⁷

In Eastern India, the materials for building vessels of the Mughal navy were mainly brought from Sylhet which was noted in those days for the natural growth of ship-timbers “which could be built into vessels of different sizes.”²⁸ Sondwip was also abundant with ship-building materials and they were so cheap that the Sultans of Constantinople got them built there than at Alexandria.²⁹ Referring to the ship-building materials available in Eastern India in those days, Antony Lambert observed in 1802 thus, “They consist of teak timber and planks imported from Pegu, ‘sisoo’-timber from Bihar and Oudh and the inexhaustible forests that skirt the hills which form the northern boundaries of Bengal and Bihar. The ribs, knees and breast-hooks or ‘the frame of ship’ are composed generally of ‘sisoo’ timber, the beams and the inside planks of ‘saul’ and the bottoms,

²⁷ S. C. Mitra, *Jessore-Khulnar-Itihas*, Vol. II, p. 219.

²⁸ *Fifth Report of the Select Committee*, pp. 444-45.

²⁹ Taylor, *Topography of Dacca*, p. 212.

sides, decks, keels, sternposts etc. of teak. The excellence of teak for the purpose of ship-building and its durability are well-known to require any description. Of 'sisoo' and 'saul' timber, the former is admirably adapted to ship-building from its size, form and firm texture and as it produces crooked timber and knees of every shape and dimension for vessels of full forms and of every magnitude, even for a ship of war of first rate and that of the latter furnishes excellent beams, knees and inside planks."³⁰

Cocoanut cords were mostly used for sewing the planks of the ships together. These cords were mainly imported into India from the Maldivé islands. The Indian ships of war whether of the Marathas or of the Mughals, were mostly sewn with them, "for the Indian ocean" as Ibn Batutah writes "is full of reefs and if a ship is nailed with iron-nails, it breaks upon striking the rocks ; whereas if it is sewn together with cords, it is given a certain resilience and does not fall to pieces."

The sails for the Mughal vessels on the western coast were made from cotton cloths manufactured mainly at Surat, Gujarat and Lahore. The production was specially supervised by the Mughal officers. Coloured cloths (mainly white and pink) were usually used for the sails. In the time of Emperor Jahangir some English experts in dyeing were employed for the purpose on high emoluments.³¹ For the Mughal nawara in Bengal, Dacca was the principal centre of manufacturing such cloths and Shaista Khan took special interest in manufacturing special kinds of cloths for the purpose.

So far we have attempted on the basis of very scanty source-materials to give an idea about the origin, development and organisation of the Mughal navy and the naval department and the principal Mughal ship-building centres and the various types of boats used by the Mughal 'nawara'. During the age of the great Mughals, two other powers played a very important role in the naval history of India—one was foreign, the Portuguese and the other Indian, the Marathas. With these two naval powers, the great Mughals had to come into contact. Hence it

³⁰ Vide, R. K. Mukherjee, *Indian Shipping*, p. 249.

³¹ Foster, *English Factories in India, 1622-23*.

would not be out of place to draw a picture of the navies of those two powers.

CONTEMPORARY PORTUGUESE FLEET IN INDIA

In the days of the Mughals, the Portuguese maintained a very powerful navy in India. This navy had a humble beginning in Indian waters. Vasco da Gama's first exploratory voyage in the year 1497 might be called the beginning of the Portuguese naval power in India. He came to India on a Portuguese vessel called San Gabriel, which was a vessel of less than 120 tons. The San Gabriel and her two consorts were indeed small vessels but they carried heavy guns and other armaments. The flag-ship of the Gabriel carried 20 guns. The two consorts were equally well-armed and besides the crew, others who accompanied Gama were expert sailors.³² The next Portuguese fleet that voyaged for India under Gabriel was a large one consisting originally of 33 ships carrying 1500 men although only six vessels reached India. Vasco da Gama led the third expedition in a fleet "consisted of 15 ships of which six including San Feronymo, the flag ship, were larger than any that had so far sailed the Indian seas. The other five were lateen rigged caravels fitted with heavy artillery and the expedition carried 800 trained soldiers."³³

For the protection of the western coast of India from Goa to Cambay and to prevent the raids of the Malabar pirates, the Portuguese equipped two Armadas³⁴ at Goa, one of which was called Armadadel Nort and the other Armada del Sud. Each was composed of 50 or 60 war-galliot's excluding the 'cheties' or merchant-men and including one or two grand 'galleys' like those of Spain. These galleys were rowed by prisoners of war. The 'galliot's' (a small galley with but one mast. In Europe it had ordinarily 3 men to each oar. Possibly convicts and prisoners of war were employed exclusively for the galleys due to incessant labours involved) had 15 to 20 benches on each side with one

³² Panikkar, *India and the Indian Ocean*, p. 38.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

³⁴ *The voyage of Pyrard*, Vol. II, p. 117

man to each oar. They were not, however, convicts but the local recruits at Goa. As a matter of fact, the Portuguese had no hesitation in employing Indians in their fleet and giving them necessary training in sea warfare. These local recruits were called 'lascary' by the Portuguese and their captain 'moncadon'. The word 'mancadon' was derived from 'mulcaddam' or head man. According to Linschoten, the 'mulcaddam' was a contractor who used to engage local recruits in the Portuguese fleet and for which he used to receive his wages in a lump.³⁵ In times of naval engagement a number of trading boats, like the 'bepari' boats in the Mughal navy, called Navies de 'chetie' always accompanied the Navies de Armada. The war-vessels were equipped at the expense of the Portuguese government but the cheties were at the expense of their owners although they were under the over-all charge of the chief admiral of the Armada called Captaine Major just as the vessels of the vassal rulers and those of the Mughal officers were under the control of the chief imperial admiral of the imperial navy in times of naval war. In the great galleys, there might be 2 or 3 hundred men-at-arms and in other galleys which were called frigates and smaller in sizes, there might be one hundred men-at-arms. There were other smaller galleys called 'Navires' which used to accommodate 40 or 50 men-at-arms. There were still some smaller ships called 'monchones' which used to carry 15 or 20 men-at-arms. As for the round ships (i.e. sailing ships proper such as carraks and caravels), their number of men-at-arms was according to their size.³⁶

A general and a captain were appointed in each fleet whether ordinary or extra-ordinary by the Portuguese Viceroy and his Council. The Viceroy and his council also fixed the number of vessels of each fleet as well as the emoluments of the general and the captain. The generals and the captains bore the duty of engaging and paying the expenses of the crew, the mariners and providing for their advances in money. As for provisions, the soldiers and mariners were well-fed at the expense of the Portuguese

³⁵ Linschoten, *The voyage*, Vol. III, p. 267.

³⁶ *The voyage of Pyrard*, Vol. III, pp. 117-18.

government on board ship and according to the produce of the places visited by them. When they were at sea, they took the ordinary ships victuals i.e., rice with butter, sugar, lentils and mango. Frequently too, they had biscuits and their drink was water only.³⁷ Their main armaments were artillery, swords and spears. There is no reference to pieces of stones used by the Portuguese naval fighters as we find in the Mughal fleet. Again like the Mughals, the Portuguese did not use bows and arrows in times of naval encounters.

CONTEMPORARY MARATHA FLEET

Shivaji was the father of the Maratha navy which played a glorious role in the later years under the Maratha admiral Kanhoji Angrey. Krishnaji Anant Sabhasad writes that Shivaji's fleet was divided into two squadrons of two hundred each of varying types and dimensions. Malhar Ram Rao Chitnis writes that Shivaji's fleet had four to five hundred ships of different types.³⁸ However, most of the historians agree that Shivaji had built up a fleet of at least 200 fighting ships of various sizes. The Marathas seem to have had a bewildering variety of sea-rafts ranging from flimsy dug-out tonics to stately three-masted 'ghurabs'. One writer gives a list of as many as fifty-one different kinds of vessels. Of them only five were exclusively used as fighting ships, viz., the 'ghurab', the 'gallivats', the 'manchuas', the 'shibar' and the 'pal'. The 'manchua' was a fishing boat suitable only for coastal use and carried no more than fifteen men.³⁹ The 'pals', the 'shibars' and the 'ghurabs' were sea-going vessels equipped with two or three masts and carrying sails. The 'ghurabs' were the biggest naval ships of the Marathas with ordinarily three masts. They ranged from 150 or 300 tons. Some 'ghurabs' were of 400 tons. The Maratha 'ghurabs' were mostly like the English and the Portuguese frigates. "The 'ghurabs' were squat, broad-beamed vessels riding high in the

³⁷ Ibid., p. 126.

³⁸ Vide, Sen, *Military system of the Marathas*, p. 156.

³⁹ M. Malgonkar, *Kanhoji Angrey*, p. 61.

water, their prows, long and thin like blades of swords, almost touching the water, and they were subject to violent pitching and rolling in the open seas."⁴⁰ The 'ghurabs' were normally furnished with two twelve-pounder guns. Besides, there were also 12 to 16 other guns from 6 to 8 on each. Each 'ghurab' carried from 100 to 150 fighting men in addition to the crew. "But like the cruisers and battleships of the navies between the two world wars, the ghurabs seldom went into action by themselves. They were almost invariably accompanied by a screen of gallivats which were faster and more manoeuvrable than the ghurabs".⁴¹ The Maratha 'gallivats' constituted the real backbone of the navy. They were fast-row boats with sails. They had two masts. They were built more for speed and easier handling than for strength. Some of the large gallivats used to have wooden decking and were fitted with 6 to 8 two-pounder or four-pounder guns. The gallivats carried forty to fifty oars. Besides the guns, other weapons used in sea-fights included bows and arrows, swords, spears and stones. Each ship was stocked with piles of stones to be hurled against the enemy-ships.

Such was the size and shape of the Maratha navy as developed by Shivaji and it grew in stature and strength later under Kanhoji Angrey.

Most of the boats of varying sizes and tonnage of the Maratha fleet were common to the Mughal fleet. But the Mughal fleet included many more varieties of boats. The Mughal 'ghurabs' and 'gallivats' seem to have been more heavier in weight than the Maratha counterparts. The 'Kosa' boat was more numerous in the Mughal navy which was absent in the Maratha navy. The Maratha navy does not appear to have possessed anything like the 'sip' boat of the Mughal navy. The Marathas again do not appear to have employed European shipwrights at least in the days of Shivaji like the Mughals, although both the Marathas and the Mughals were eager to secure the services of European captains and European sailors for their sea-going vessels.⁴²

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 62.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 62.

⁴² Sen, *The Military system of the Marathas*, p. 161.

From the organisational point of view, the Mughal navy as built up in Bengal was more better organised than the Maratha navy under Shivaji. The 'nawara' as developed under the great Mughals, took the form of a distinct department of the state with a distinct class of officers to look after the development of the admiralty. The Mughal naval strategy as we find in Bengal was better planned and executed than the Maratha naval strategy on the western coast under Shivaji, although the Mughal navy was not powerful on the western coast as well. Shivaji's fleet was numerically superior to the fleet of the European nations in Indian waters, but in artillery and in the art of navigation it was surely inferior.

NAVAL STRATEGY
OF THE MUGHALS IN BENGAL

Nature endowed Bengal with all the resources requisite for a great naval power. Bengal had a long tradition of colonial and maritime activities. The peculiar physical configuration of Bengal, its numerous rivers, streams, creeks, and its nearness to the sea, made Bengal since ancient days an essentially maritime country. As in the case of trade and commerce, so also in the case of warfare in Bengal, particularly in lower Bengal, navy played a conspicuous part in the ancient as well as in the middle ages. Most of the foreigners who visited Bengal during the 16th and 17th centuries have spoken of the maritime importance of Bengal's rivers and rivulets. Although strictly speaking, the term naval warfare in its modern sense cannot be applied to the wars fought in Bengal between the Mughals and the Bhuiyas and between the Mughals and the Magh-Feringhi pirates, it cannot be denied that in most of these wars navy and naval strategy played a conspicuous part. In those days, the only effective instrument of war in Bengal was navy in which the Mughals were weak in their early stage of conquests in Bengal. In their subsequent wars with the Bhuiyas and the pirates who possessed strong naval forces and war-boats, the importance of a navy and naval strategy was felt by the Mughals. Hence the Mughals had to undertake the task of organising a naval department, constructing war-boats, raising naval forts and docks and planning naval expeditions.

In naval encounters the Mughal had to depend for success on the massiveness and strength of their war-boats, the boats supplied by the vassal zamindars, the skill of the artillery accommodated in the boats and the maintenance of communications between the land army and the navy. The entire naval strategy of the Mughals in Bengal was developed on the mobility of their war-

boats, naval guard houses at strategic places, the process of sounding the depths of the rivers, the 'nawara' grants in the coastal region and defensive measures.

At the beginning of Jahangir's reign, most of the strategic naval forts in Bengal were in the possession of the Bhuiyas and the Magh-Feringhi pirates. Without going into details of the naval strategy of the Bhuiyas, it would suffice to say that the naval forts of the Bhuiyas were strongly built and raised on the confluence of important river routes. These naval stations were raised not exactly at the mouth of every confluence but a few miles off the confluence and link was maintained by means of cannals, so that as soon as the news of the enemys' arrival reached, the war-boats were pushed down to the main confluence in series through the canals. Besides naval stations, the Bhuiyas possessed excellent harbour close to their respective capitals for building and repairing their boats and imparting naval training to their soldiers. In this connection, the harbours of Dhumghat (of Raja Pratapaditya), Sripur (of Raja Kedar Rai), Sonargaon (of Musa Khan) and Chittagong (of the king of Arakan) may be mentioned.

In lower Bengal the Mughals set up their first military post at Dacca in the time of Akbar. But at the beginning of their campaigns, the Mughals attached little importance to Dacca from the point of view of naval strategy. It was only when Islam Khan (the Mughal Governor of Bengal) launched his 'Bhati' campaign against Musa Khan in 1608 that the naval strategic importance of Dacca was felt and since that time Dacca was made the Mughal capital of Bengal. Rajmahal, the old capital was abandoned, because a change in the course of the river Ganges on which this city stood had set in making the city thereby inaccessible to war-boats and unsuitable for naval defence. For the suppression of Musa Khan, and the 'Twelve-Bhuiyas' first and Khwaja Usman next, Dacca was most favourably situated. Moreover, for the suppression of the Magh and Feringhi pirates, a convenient base was required from which a close watch on the usual routes followed by the pirates could be kept. For this purpose Dacca was most suitably situated. The river on which Dacca stands is invariably called the Dulai by Mirza Nathan (the author of Baharistan) and never Buriganga, its present name.

It is to be noted that access to Dacca from the Meghna side was through two channels, one going to Demra and the other to Khizrpur. There were two small forts called forts of Beg Murad Khan at the point where the Demra channel bifurcated from the Dulai. Near Dacca about a mile down the river Lakhiya on its eastern bank stood the fort of Sonakanda. "The fort at Sonakanda gives one a good idea of what these forts were like. It is a rectangular enclosure provided with a bastion on the river frontage."¹ Mirza Nathan speaks of an old fort in this region originally built by the Maghs, subsequently repaired by Musa Khan and used by him as a naval base.² From the point of view of naval warfare and coastal defence against the pirates, Dacca provided a most convenient base.

For protection against the depredations of the pirates as well as for conquests in south-eastern Bengal, Bhulua in the Noakhali district provided another suitable naval base. It was of great strategic importance as commanding the route to and from Arakan particularly Chittagong. Hence Bhulua was one of the earliest tracts to feel the weight of the Mughal arms and to be annexed to the Bengal Subah. Two forts were subsequently raised by the Mughals, one at Bhulua and the other at Jogdia in course of their operations against the pirates.³ The river Feni rising in the hills of Tiperah and passing by Jogdia falls into the Ocean. In those days numerous 'nullahs' intervened between Feni and Chittagong. From Dacca to Chittagong six creeks had to be crossed in boats. Hence for campaigns as well as for defence, Bhulua and Jogdia formed the most suitable bases.

Permanent and temporary naval ports, docks, guard-houses on the strategic places played prominently in the Mughal naval strategy in Bengal. At the time of their war with Musa Khan, the Mughals not only fortified Dacca, but also raised other fortifications in and around Dacca and built a shipyard on a permanent basis. As protective means against the attacks of the Magh-Feringhi pirates, two forts were built on either side of the

¹ Bhattasali, 'Early Mughal rule in Dacca', Vide, *Islamic Culture*, 1942.

² *Baharistan*, Vol. I, p. 86.

³ *History of Bengal*, (Dacca University), Vol. II, p. 238.

point where the river Dulai bifurcated—one branch joining the Lakhiya and Demra and the other at Khizrpur and also artificial canals were constructed for maintaining the heavy war-boats. “In the great dockyards that lined the channel passing through the city of Dacca in the quarter known as the Tanti-Bazar, boats were built in large numbers.”⁴ Frequent mention of docks is made in the annals of this period but these must be understood as referring to ship-building and careening shipways or to natural creeks improved by digging but not retaining water at low-tide. The modern meaning of a dock as a water-basin dates from 1811 when St. Katherine’s dock near the Tower of London was built—the first such docks in the world. The only brick-built dock serving as waterbasin during this period was the dock of Raja Pratapaditya near Dhumghat called ‘Jahajghata’. The Minakhali river which now-a-days connects the Meghna and the Brahmaputra was probably the course that the former took at some early date on its way to join the Lakhiya opposite Narayangunj. “This supposition is supported by the fact that the Mughal viceroy Islam Khan built naval forts to prevent the Maghs from passing up the rivers, the site of one was Hajigunj (popularly known as Khizrpur Killah), of a second Triveni, the confluence of three streams (Meghna, Brahmaputra and Lakhiya) and of a third Munshigunj.”⁵

Close to Dacca, two other naval stations of consequence were built by the Mughals for the purpose of providing additional defence for Dacca as well as for serving as advance bases of operations against the Mughal enemies. These two naval stations were Khizrpur and Qadam Rasul. The fort of Khizrpur stood near the confluence of the river Dulai and the Lakhiya commanding the only water-route to Dacca from this side. Wise says “Here was the chief naval fort of the Muhammadam Government and from it all their great naval expeditions were sent out.”⁶

The naval fort of Qadam Rasul, opposite Narayangunj, was surrounded on three sides by water. Batteries were raised in the fort and war-vessels furnished with guns were always kept

⁴ Ibid., p. 379.

⁵ Wise, Notes on Sonargaon, Vide, *J. A. S. B.*, 1874, Part I, pp. 95-96.

⁶ Wise, Notes on the Baro Bhuiyas of Bengal, Vide, *J. A. S. B.*, 1874, Part I, pp. 211-12.

ready below the fort both for offensive and defensive purposes. So Dacca, Khizrpur and Qadam Rasul were the chief permanent naval stations of the Mughals and which constituted the backbone of the Mughal naval strategy.

Temporary naval forts were often raised in course of Mughal campaigns in the eastern Bengal water. "In Bengal", writes Mirza Nathan, "there were no ancient forts except those at Gaur, Akbarnagar, Ghoraghat, Dacca and some other places; but in times of need the boatmen quickly construct such fort, even the expert masters are unable to build one like it within months and years."⁷ But it should be noted that these forts were raised temporarily and only in times of war. Land soldiers filled these forts while the war-boats defended them. In the second round of war with Musa Khan, Mirza Nathan raised temporary fortresses about which he writes, "Mirza Nathan reached Khizrpur and Shaikh Kamal Kumarsar and they began to construct fortresses. . . The fort which Mirza Nathan began to construct on the bank of the river (Lakhiya) became complete towards the end of the day. After placing the artillery in different positions, he posted his subordinate officers in the following order—Md. Khan Pani was posted at the 'mohana' of Khizrpur which is the confluence of the rivers Daulai and Lakhiya with 500 horsemen and a bridge was constructed at the mouth of the river with 'katari' and 'maniki' boats of the artillery. On its left, Shahbaz Khan and a troop of 50 men were kept in charge of an entrenchment. . . Shaikh Kamal constructed his fort at Kumarsar. . . On the second day he raised another wall in the middle and then constructed a third battlement on the bank."⁸ At the time of Chittagong expedition, Sondwip was turned into a temporary naval base of the Mughals. Situated off the coast of Chittagong and only six hours' sail from Chittagong, Sondwip was captured by a runaway captain of the Mughal navy. Its strategic advantages could not be overlooked either by the Mughal rulers of Bengal or the Magh kings of Arakan. The Maghs and the Feringhis used Sondwip as their advance naval base in course of their plundering

⁷ *Baharistan*, Vol. I, p. 57.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

raids into the coastal regions of southern and eastern Bengal. The Mughals first conquered Sondwip, raised temporary fortifications, built a dockyard there for keeping a division of the imperial fleet ready for emergency while the main naval force proceeded towards Chittagong.

In the time of campaigns guard-houses were set up supported by a number of boats at the mouths of the important rivers in order to supply the advancing army with boats when called upon to do so as well as to keep watch over the movements of the enemy fleet. Also the guard-houses helped the main army in the event of retreating.⁹ These guard-houses at the same time maintained the link between the advancing land army and the fleet. In the course of Islam Khan's 'Bhati'-campaign, a number of such guard-houses were set up,¹⁰ on the banks of the rivers Ichhamati, Jamuna and Dhaleswari. The boats stationed in these guard-houses were normally the swift moving 'kosas' and 'khelnas'.

The system of sounding the depths of the rivers to be traversed by the invading fleet played a very important part in the Mughal naval strategy. In the course of their naval expeditions, a number of small boats called 'khelna-boats' by Mirza Nathan were despatched in advance to sound the depths of the rivers so that the progress of the fleet might not be hampered. This system might be called the origin of the pilot system of the latter days. Whenever the water was found to be shallow and hence impassable for the boats, canals were dug with the help of labourers accompanying the fleet and the fleet was diverted to the canals.

In the campaigns in lower Bengal, the co-operation between the land army and the navy constitutes another important feature of the Mughal naval strategy. No attack was delivered generally on the enemys' posts unless there was a perfect understanding between the land army and the fleet. The Mughal encounters with Musa Khan, Raja Pratapaditya and the Maghs bear testimony to this point. As the main strength of the Bhuiyas and the Maghs depended on their war-boats and naval stations, it was the

⁹ Ibid., p. 56.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 393.

constant care of the Mughals to follow the water-routes and sieze the naval posts of the enemy one after another till the capital of the enemy was reached. Islam Khan's attacks on Musa Khan and Pratapaditya and Shaista Khan's attacks on Chittagong well illustrate this point. As a matter of fact, wherever in the eastern and south-eastern tracts of Bengal, the Mughals launched attacks by land without naval support, they courted failures and sometimes disasters. Qasim Khan's (1614-17) and Ibrahim Khan's (1617-23) Chittagong expeditions by land routes may be mentioned in their connection.

The Mughal rulers of Bengal paid serious attention to the protection of the coastal region against the depredations of the Magh-Feringhi pirates. There were two routes taken by the Magha in their raids on East Bengal. "When they started from Chittagong to ravage Bengal they skirted the imperial frontier post of Bhulua on their right and the island of Sondwip on the left and reached the village Sangramgarh at the southern apex of the delta to Dacca and the then junction of the Brahmaputra and the Ganges. From this place, they sailed up the Ganges if they wished to plunder Jessore, Hughli and Bhusna or up the Brahmaputra if Vikrampur, Sonargaon and Dacca were their objectives."¹¹ The two grants 'Nawara Jagir' and 'Omleh-Ahsham' "were appropriated for the maintenance of troops and artillery for the defence of the forts on the sea coasts."¹² Ibrahim Khan (the Mughal viceroy—1617-21) strengthened the fortifications of the frontier thanas and stationed a division of fleet for the safety of the parganas of Phuldhubi (in the Faridpur district). He took special care to strengthen the hands of the faujdars at Jessore and Dakhin-Shahbazpur, an island near the mouth of the Meghna by stationing a fleet of 60 and 600 war-boats respectively at their disposal. Although the Governor raised the number of imperial warboats to 4000/5000 and strengthened the naval posts in the river Meghna, he could not well protect the frontiers against the ravages of the pirates. "Matters came to such a pass that the Governor of Dacca confined his

¹¹ Sarkar, *Studies in Mughal India*, p. 127.

¹² Taylor, *Topography of Dacca*, pp. 193-94.

energies to the defence of that city alone and the prevention of the coming of the pirates' fleet to Dacca and stretched some iron-chains across the nullah of Dacca and set up some bridges of bamboos on the stream of the city."¹³ To guard against the incursions of the Maghs, Mir Jamla raised several naval posts about the confluence of the Lakhiya and the Ichhamati and constructed a number of good military roads and bridges in the neighbourhood of Dacca. In the time of Shah Jahan a naval fort was built by the admiral of Bengal Nawara at the junction of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra. The mingled stream, after passing by Bhulua and Sondwip, falls into the sea. The fort was called Sangramgarh after the name of the admiral. Regarding the importance of this naval fort, Talish writes, "If a fort was built here and stored with weapons, munitions and materials of defence, and a large force and well-equipped flotilla kept here, the oppression of the pirates and the raids of the Maghs into Bengal could most probably be prevented."¹⁴ In the time of Aurangzeb, the Bengal viceroy Shaista Khan turned Sangramgarh into a strong naval base. He garrisoned a powerful land army in the fort and ordered Abul Husain, the Mughal admiral to post himself there were 300 war-boats with the object of "patrolling the rivers and watching over the movements of the pirates." Another naval base was opened at Dhapa (6 miles south-east of Dacca) where another admiral was posted with 100 ships "with orders to reinforce Abul Husain whenever he heard of the coming of the pirates".¹⁵ At the same time a high way was built to connect Dacca with Sangramgarh. Although the conquest of Chittagong in 1666 broke the nest of the pirates, their depredations continued on smaller scales till 1772.

In western Bengal, the Mughals raised a number of naval stations. Across the river Hughli the western channel ran by the island of Hijli where the Mughals raised a fort. A deep channel running eastwards was called 'Rogue's River', being the haunt of the Portuguese pirates from Arakan. Wheeler writes

¹³ Fathiya, Vide *J. A. S. B.*, Vol. III, 1907, p. 423.

¹⁴ Fathiya, Vide *J. A. S. B.*, Vol. III, 1907, p. 424.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 407.

“The first safe anchoring place in the river is off the mouth of river about twelve leagues above the Saugor commonly known as the Rogue’s River which had that appellation from some banditti Portuguese and that river having communication with all the channels from Chittagong, to the westward from this river they used to sail out and commit depredations on those who traded in the river Hughli.”¹⁶ In order to check the depredations of the pirates, the Mughals built a naval fort. The confluence of the Hughli, Damodar and Rupnarayan was at Hughli point above Diamond Harbour. Two mud forts on either side of the river were raised for checking piratical incursions. One of these forts stood where the house of the Superintendent of the Botanical Gardens now stands. The other was at Matiabruz lower down the river and beyond the protection of these forts none dared dwell. In the time of Emperor Shah Jahan, Ibrahim Khan, the Mughal viceroy of Bengal took special care in maintaining a powerful fleet at these two forts for keeping watch on the movements of the Feringhi pirates.

It is to be noted that in spite of defects, the naval strategy and the naval force of the Mughals superior to that of their enemies ultimately accounted for their success in Bengal.

¹⁶ Wheeler, *Early Records*, pp. 186-87.

MUGHAL NAVAL WARFARES
IN EASTERN WATERS

The Mughals primarily a land-power, had to face a new situation while advancing in Eastern India right from the time of Emperor Akbar. With the gradual expansion of Mughal frontiers in Eastern India, the Mughal Emperors and the Mughal Government became involved in a series of stiff naval encounters with the land-lords of Bengal, popularly known as Bhuiyas and the princes of the North-Eastern frontier kingdoms. These landlords and the princes were materially resourceful and particularly in war-boats. They had numerous war-boats well furnished with guns and other implements of war, trained sailors and mariners as well as naval fortresses. Situated as they were and surrounded by rivers and rivulets, they had to depend for their existence more on naval force than on land force. Moreover most of them had their ports for trade and commerce which constituted one of the principal items of their revenue. It is the prospect of trade and commerce that attracted the European maritime powers like the Portuguese, the English and the Dutch to these ports of Eastern India during the period under review and many of them joined the naval forces of the landlords of Bengal and the frontier kingdom "to improve their own fortune." The induction of these European fortune-seekers, understandably, improved the naval power of these princes. Generally these European adventurers served two purposes, viz. building and repairing the ships and leading them to war and secondly making guns and preparing powder. Besides these princes, there were the searovers like the Maghs (Arakanese) and the Portuguese with their headquarters at Chittagong, Siam and Dianga along the coast of Arakan. Their main profession was piracy and they with their numerous war-fleets constituted a great threat to Mughal peace in Bengal for centuries. Hence the Mughals had to face a grave

challenge from the naval power of these people. To the credit of the great Mughals it is to be admitted that they built up a great naval power (as has been told already) and fought a series of naval wars in Eastern waters. The naval strategy of the Mughals in Bengal has already been examined. Hence it would be right to say that the Mughals never engaged themselves in naval encounter unless they had perfect support from their land army and this constituted the main feature of their naval strategy. From the time of Jahangir to the end of Aurangzeb's reign, the Mughals fought the following naval battles.

(1) NAVAL BATTLES WITH MUSA KHAN—1610-1611 A.D.

Mirza Nathan's Baharistan gives us the details of the naval wars that were fought by the Mughals in Eastern India during the reign of Jahangir. It greatly supplements the meagre account of the activities of the Mughal Governor of Bengal Islam Khan and of his successors previously available in the 'Tuzuk' and the 'Iqbalnamah'. Among other things, it throws much valuable light on the naval strategy and the progress of the imperial navy in the days of Islam Khan.

Musa Khan, son of Isa Khan, of Sonargaon was a premier Bhuiya of Eastern Bengal. In the wars with Musa Khan, the Mughals had to depend much on their war-boats and naval strategy. It was Islam Khan who made the real beginning of naval campaigns in the riverine tracts of Bengal where fleet was the only effective instrument of war. Although the naval strategy of the Mughals took a definite shape in latter days, to the credit of Islam Khan, it should be admitted that he realised in the right moment the importance of war-boats in fighting the Bhuiyas of lower Bengal. The series of naval campaigns as organised by Islam Khan against Musa Khan will bear the truth of this fact.

Musa Khan, was the ruler of Sonargaon and his kingdom comprised about half of the present Dacca district, half of modern Tippara and almost the whole of Mymensingh except Susang. The strength of Musa Khan lay in his war-boats and naval forts like Khizrpur, Qadam Rasul, Sonargaon and Jatrapur. Khizrpur stood near the confluence of the Dulai and Lakhiya rivers com-

manding the only water-route to Dacca from this side. Opposite Narayangunj stood Qadam Rasul. About three miles east of Khizrpur stood Sonargaon. Jatrapur stood at the confluence of the channel where the Ganges, the Dhaleswari and the Ichhamati met. Jatrapur is about 25 miles west of Dacca. In Brouck's map (1660) and in Tavernier's Travels, Jatrapur is located near the confluence of the three great channels. It commanded a naval strategic position of great importance. The Jatrapur route along the Ichhamati was the usual water-route from Rajmahal to Dacca. So it will be evident that as the forts which constituted the real backbone of Musa Khan's defence and which were set up at strategic positions on the main water-routes, without a navy and naval force, it was not possible for the Mughals to fight Musa Khan.

As has been told earlier that along with the appointment of Islam Khan as Governor of Bengal, Ihtimam Khan was appointed the chief admiral of the Mughal navy. Ihtimam Khan was particularly commanded by Emperor Jahangir to proceed to Bengal "With the magnificence of the navy in order to uproot the malcontents of that province."¹ Ihtimam left for Bengal collecting the imperial boats of various sorts in charge of the imperial officers on the way. A large number of heavy boats were collected at Allahabad.² At the time of departure from Delhi, the Mughal fleet was composed of 295 war-boats of which 70 were designed for carrying loads, properly equipped with heavy cannon and other requisites for the expedition.³

In October 1609, Islam Khan with a strong land army got himself ready at Ghoraghat, on the right bank of the river Karatoya, for the Eastern Bengal Campaign. According to the plan of the campaign, the land army was to be followed by the fleet and a naval force all along their long march against Musa Khan. Ihtimam Khan was ordered to proceed with the fleet to his jagir, at Kalabari and to keep it ready for the 'Bhati' campaign. Farid Khan was appointed the chief of Islam Khan's

¹ *Baharistan*, p. 6.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

own fleet and he was sent to Ihtimam Khan in the company of Islam Khan's inspector of boats named Muhammad Khan. Meanwhile Ihtimam Khan with the fleet came to his Jagir and pitched his camp there. At night most of the sailors of the fleet deserted it. In the fleet of 300 war and cargo boats, only 700 sailors were left as a result of the desertion. To prevent further desertion, Mirza Nathan "tied the boats together in groups of 4 and 5 and posting 2 or 3 men in each, he began to despatch them one after another, so that by mid-day all the imperial boats were thus skilfully despatched."⁴ Ihtimam Khan reached Ghoraghat with the fleet and joined Islam Khan. At Ghoraghat, Mirza Nathan busied himself in arranging and repairing the boats and collected 900 carpenters, blacksmiths and other labourers for the purpose. He ordered the subordinate officers to distribute allowances to all the sailors, mariners and other naval officers high and low.⁵ The artillerymen of the fleet were given fresh instructions regarding cannonading upon the enemy fleet.⁶

Signals of various colours were supplied to the 'panjarees' or holders of the masts of the ships and they were given special instructions as regards signalling.

It should be noted that only three important rivers viz. the Atrai, on the west, the Karatoya in the centre and the Ichhamati on the east, were mainly concerned in the progress of the Mughal navy and the army towards the 'Bhati'. Islam Khan was at Ghoraghat and the imperial fleet under Ihtimam Khan was somewhere near Bandaikhara on the bank of the Atrai. Ihtimam Khan was expected to sail up to Syalgarh (south of Ghoraghat on the Karatoya) with the imperial fleet "avoiding the Bhuiya-infested south". Upon the departure of Islam Khan from Ghoraghat, Ihtimam Khan left for Syalgarh with the fleet. The progress of the fleet was hampered near Syalgarh due to the shallowness of the Bhudai canal. It was neither possible to proceed further nor to sail back. Mirza Nathan, who had been accompanying the fleet, got down and made a survey of the place

⁴ Ibid., p. 30.

⁵ Ibid., p. 32.

⁶ Ibid.

in order to find out some water-way so that he might connect it with the canal so as to facilitate the progress of the fleet. He discovered two 'jalahs' or large sheet of water and a deep marsh. He then divided the area of these places among the ten thousand boatmen of the fleet previously sent to connect those water with the Bhudai canal. He instructed them to excavate the two 'jalahs' as deep as the height of a man and the marsh deep enough to conceal a man, because the Bhudai canal was below the level of the ground and the water of these three was above it. Mirza Nathan engaged three thousand boatmen in the following manner ; five hundred of these men were to guard the boats and the rest to make a strong embankment across the mouth of the canal to stop the flow of water out of the canal towards the river Karatoya and thus make it flow towards the imperial fleet under Ihtimam Khan so that it might pass on with ease. The work was done very successfully. Ihtimam Khan with the fleet reached Syalgarh by swift marches. It was decided to leave the dams of the Bhudai canal as they were and to transport the boats over the embankment by pulling them over it in proper order, so that the fleet of the mansabdars and the boats of the 'beparis' (traders) which were following them by Bhudai canal might not turn back and come with safety behind the imperial fleet. Mirza Nathan showed great engineering skill in excavating the canal and facilitating thereby the progress of the entire imperial fleet. Shortly, Ihtimam Khan arrived at Shahzadpur and the land army under Islam Khan.⁷

By land the main army under Islam Khan marched to Balia seven miles to the south-west of Shahzadpur in the district of Pabna and crossed the river by constructing a bridge with the boats of the traders, while Ihtimam Khan, proceeding with the fleet and artillery by water took fifteen days to reach Balia. Islam Khan being enraged at this delay of the arrival of the imperial fleet, ordered the superintendents of his own fleet to come to him with his personal boats and it was done "without the permission of Ihtimam Khan." This gave Ihtimam Khan much affront and he felt himself insulted and ordered Mirza Nathan to lead the imperial fleet to the destination before Islam Khan's own fleet

⁷ Ibid., pp. 46-47.

could arrive.⁸ Accordingly Mirza Nathan started with 150 boats, leaving his father Ihtimam Khan in the rear to escort the remaining boats of the fleet. He then came to place which was dug out by the sailors under his supervision. The place was soon converted into a big canal and a link with the aforesaid river was then established and within a few hours all the boats, passing through the canal, entered the river Karatoya two days before the arrival of Islam Khan's personal fleet. An intimation was sent to Islam Khan about the arrival of the imperial fleet under Ihtimam Khan at the appointed place.⁹

Islam Khan, Ihtimam Khan and other imperial officers met at a council to decide upon the plan of attack upon Musa Khan. It was decided that both the land army and the fleet should proceed to the Trimohana or the confluence of three streams of the Khal Jogini to erect forts and to halt there. From there Islam Khan would proceed to the 'mohana' of Katasgarh (the name of the mouth of the channel which led to Jatrapur). After the army and the navy had arrived near the said confluence of the Ganges (Padma), the Ichhamati and the Dhaleswari, three temporary naval stations were raised and at each station a group of boats was anchored. The Governor asked Ihtimam Khan to supply from the imperial fleet one thousand musketeers, 50 cannon, 100 maunds of gun-powder, 100 maunds of lead and other materials to Shaikh Kamal and Mirak Bahadur in order to enable them to proceed to Dacca and to prepare themselves for attacking Musa's capital from that side. The army under Islam Khan arrived at Katasgarh followed by the imperial fleet. Ihtimam Khan's proposal for a naval attack upon Jatrapur did not meet with Islam Khan's approval. It was decided that from the 'mohana' of Katasgarh up to the 'mohana' of Jatrapur, block-houses should be constructed on the road, the land forces be kept ready in battle array and behind them the fleet be posted by the side of the river for facilitating the conquest of Jatrapur. From Katasgarh, the army followed by the fleet proceeded towards

⁸ Ibid., p. 51.

⁹ Ibid., p. 52.

Jatrapur—an impregnable strong hold of Musa Khan on the bank of the Ichhamati (25 miles west of Dacca).¹⁰

Meanwhile Musa Khan got himself prepared and upon the news of the arrival of the imperial army at the mouth of Katasgarh, he hastened with 700 war-boats consisting of 'kosas', 'jalias', 'dhuras', 'bajras' and 'khelnas'. He was later joined by Madhu Ray and Mirza Mumin, his two close associates. They came by the river Ichhamati with their fleet and arrived at Dakchara a strategic point on the bank of the Padma (3 miles north-west of Jatrapur) where a big naval fort was raised facing the imperialists. The plan of Musa was to attack the imperialists before they could fall on Jatrapur. Accordingly, he despatched 300 war-boats furnished with 50 pieces of cannon to Jatrapur and divided the war-boats into three lines. The front-line was composed of heavy war-boats so that they might stand the cannonading from the Mughal fleet. The second line was composed of kosas filled with war-materials to be supplied to the front-line.

Having completed his defensive measures at Jatrapur and Dakehara, Musa Khan and his allies took the offensive at Katasgarh by cannonading from their fleet. The first two divisions of Musa's war-boats slowly advanced towards the Mughal post at Katasgarh. The Mughals also replied with their cannon mounted on their boats killing many of Musa's men and drowning several of his kosas. Alighting from their boats, Madhu Ray and Binod Ray, Musa's associates, offered a hand-to-hand fight with the imperial boatmen. The latter placing their shields before their faces, continued their advance. A severe fighting between the boatmen of the two sides ensued in the river. The imperial archers began to shower arrows from the fleet on the enemy. Due to such attack, the second line of Musa's fleet became detached from the front line. Musa suffered heavy losses and his fleet fell back upon Jatrapur. The Mughals now attacked Jatrapur. Islam Khan asked Shaikh Kamal and Mirak Bahadur at Dacca to send a number of heavy war-boats at the mouth of Kudalia (either near Narayangunj or on the northern bank of the Dhaleswari).¹¹

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54.

¹¹ *History of Bengal*, (Dacca University), Vol. II, p. 255.

Upon the arrival of the war-boats from Dacca, Islam Khan ordered Ihtimam Khan to cross the river Ichhamati with the fleet. Musa rushed to the place with his fleet and discharged cannon shots upon the imperial fleet. Some imperial boats caught fire and some lost their masts. The burning boats were immediately drowned by the imperialists so that other boats might not catch fire. Musa's swift moving kosas attacked the advancing imperial fleet from the rear. Mirza Nathan writes that cannon shots from both sides covered the river Ichhamati with dark smoke. In spite of his best efforts, Musa failed to prevent the imperial fleet from crossing over the river and falling upon Jatrapur. Musa evacuated the fort which was promptly occupied by the Mughals (June 1610).

The naval strategy of the Mughals in capturing the fort of Jatrapur is to be noted. The fort was bounded on one side by the river Ichhamati and the other three sides by a marsh and hence impregnable. Raja Raghunath of Susang, a loyal Mughal vassal, opined that, "There is a canal between the trenches of Iftikhar Khan and Mutaqid Khan (on the bank of the Ichhamati) which has dried up and a large heap of sand has blocked its mouth; if it is dug and the imperial navy is made to enter the river Ichhamati through this canal, then this fort (Dakchara) as well as the fort of Jatrapur may be occupied without a battle."¹² The plan was approved of and Mirza Nathan who had previous experience in digging such canals, was asked to put this plan into execution. Of the 12,000 sailors of the Mughal fleet, Mirza Nathan left 2000 in the boats with Ihtimam Khan and employed the rest in the work of excavation. He personally supervised the work and cheered up the sailors "by distributing among them copper coins, rice, 'bhang' and opium".¹³ The mouth of the canal was thus cleared which facilitated the passage of the Mughal fleet.

After the fall of Jatrapur, the Mughals proceeded to occupy another naval fort of Musa Khan at Dakchara. The canal, as has been told, connected the Ichhamati with the Padma on the

¹² *Baharistan*, Vol. I, p. 61.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

bank of which stood the fort of Dakchara. The imperial war-boats entered the canal in series. Musa's naval strategy broke down as he never expected such a sudden assault upon the fort of Dakchara. He never expected that his enemy would excavate a canal joining thereby the river Ichhamati with the Padma. However, Musa Khan with his war-boats tried to prevent the passage of the imperial boats through the canal. As a result a severe naval-fight ensued between the fleet of the two sides. At the outset, Musa's artillerymen from the 'ghurabs' wrought havoc on the imperial fleet by ceaseless cannonading. Mirza Nathan, leaving the van with swift-moving 'kosas' made a dash upon Musa's war-boats of the front line. The Mughal soldiers jumped upon the enemy-boats with swords and spears. Some of them climbed up the masts to cut the ropes of the sails so as to make the boats immobile. As a result, a hand-to-hand fight between the soldiers of the two sides on board the vessels ensued. The artillerymen of the second row of the imperial boats at last succeeded in pushing the enemy-boats down by heavy cannonading. Musa does not appear to have possessed a sufficient number of cannon as Mirza Nathan does not refer to discharge of heavy cannon-shots from Musa's fleet in this naval encounter. Musa lost a large number of his boats and his personal boat 'Sundara' was struck and shattered to pieces by cannon-shots from the imperial fleet.¹⁴ Musa's fleet was compelled to fall back at a safe distance. The hostilities were suspended for some time. It was decided meanwhile to conduct the imperial fleet during the night and then the boats of Islam Khan and those of all the imperial officers in order of their ranks were kept ready in the canal for assistance. And this was accomplished accordingly.¹⁵

Mirza Nathan was entrusted with the command of the fleet to capture the fort of Dakchara. The land army under Islam Khan followed the fleet. There was perfect co-operation between the land-army and the fleet. Musa strongly defended his fort by displaying his strength from the top of the ramparts and the towers. His boats were mobilised on the other side of the river Padma and

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 64.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 65.

'ghurabs' and 'jalias' stood ready with heavy cannon. But the imperial fleet instead of making a frontal attack, did it from the rear. The imperial land troopers with a large number of elephants crossed the river in boats and thus there was a combined attack upon the fort of Dakchara. Musa could not withstand the assault and he escaped. The fort of Dakchara fell into the hands of the imperialists, (15th July, 1610).

The conquest of Jatrapur and Dakchara ended the first stage of the campaign. Islam Khan's next step was to proceed to Dacca for attacking the centre of Musa Khan's power and his capital Sonargaon. Islam Khan continued his march with the entire land army by way of Kutharueya, Balia (24 miles west of Dacca) and Kalakupa (on the Ichhamati), and reached Patharghata¹⁶ (on the bank of the Dhaleswari, about six miles south of Dacca). The Governor despatched a large naval force comprising the imperial boats, his own boats and those of other officers under the command of Mirza Nathan to Kalakupa. Mirza Nathan arranged the flotilla in the following order : Mirza Fathjung, Mirza Murad well trained youths in naval warfare, were posted in the van ; Islam Qali and Baz Bahadur were attached to them. One hundred and fifty boats were employed of which fifty boats were kept in charge of Baz Bahadur in the van. Qaza Khan and Mirza Nuruddin led the right wing of the fleet with 30 and 20 boats respectively. Iftikar Khan and Abdul Wahid led the left wing with 20 and 30 boats respectively. Mirak Bahadur and Mubariz Khan were posted in the rear with 30 boats in charge of each. Mirza Nathan himself remained in the centre with 200 imperial boats to lead the assault.¹⁷ At day-break the fleet crossed to Kalakupa. The enemy failing to oppose the imperial fleet took to their boats and fled away. The imperialists thus achieved another substantial victory over Musa Khan at Kalakupa.

Now the Mughals resumed their march towards Dacca. The fleet and the artillery were sent by the river Ichhamati under the command of the chief admiral Ihtimam Khan. A group of imperial officers were sent by the right side of the fleet towards

¹⁶ *History of Bengal*, (Dacca University), Vol. II, p. 255.

¹⁷ *Baharistan*, Vol. I, pp. 70-71.

Sripur and Vikrampur and the land force of Ihtimam Khan was sent by the left side of the fleet towards Kudalia. Ihtimam was asked to proceed to the 'mohana' of Patharghata with great vigilance by posting himself in the centre of the fleet and the artillery. Mirza Nathan was to lead the advance-reserve of the fleet. Islam Quli was put in the van and the rear, the right and the left wings were formed by the boats of the nobles. Ihtimam Khan was asked to report to Islam Khan on his arrival at Patharghata and to stay there with his fleet until further order.

The fleet moved on for the 'mohana' of Patharghata in a battle array. A few of the imperial boats were sent in advance as vanguard and they were met by the war-boats of Musa Khan near Patharghata. At the sight of the imperial fleet, Musa's boats took to flight and the imperial fleet anchored at Patharghata with ease. As desired by Islam Khan, who had already arrived at Dacca, the imperial fleet proceeded to Dacca.

The news of the arrival of the land and naval forces of the imperialists at Dacca roused Musa Khan again to action. He utilised the river Lakhiya (which was at that time a large river, more than a mile in breadth with strong currents) as his base for defence. He set up 'chowkies' (guard-houses) at Vikrampur and Sripur and himself took post at the central strategic point at the mouth of the Bandar canal which joined the Lakhiya opposite Narayangunj. He posted his brothers Abdullah Khan at Qadam Rasul (on the eastern bank of the river Lakhiya), Daud Khan at Katrabhu (north of Qadam Rasul), Mahmud Khan at Demra Khal (four miles above Narayangunj) and Bahadur (an ally of Musa) at Chaura (on the south bank of Ichhamati).¹⁸

On the side of the imperialists, Islam Khan confined himself to the right bank of the Lakhiya. Khizrpur was made the base of the imperial war-boats and artillery, the war-boats being stationed at a safe place in the narrow waters of the Dulai. Meanwhile, being aware of the movements of the imperialists, Musa Khan sent his war-boats and they arrived at a time when Mirza Nathan had been crossing over the river Lakhiya. Ihtimam Khan sent 20 war-boats to the aid of Mirza Nathan. The troopers under

¹⁸ *History of Bengal*, (Dacca University), Vol. II, p. 257.

Mirza Nathan began to fire and breaking to pieces every kosa of the enemy. The boats sent by Ihtimam Khan attacked the enemy-fleet from the flank and kept the enemy-fleet at bay. The troopers on the Kosas of Musa Khan were pushed to the land with their boatmen and the boats were seized. Mirza Nathan crossed the river Lakhiya, fell upon Daud Khan at Katrabhu and occupied that post. Emboldened by Mirza Nathan's success, Ihtimam Khan came out with the entire fleet from the river Dulai into the Lakhiya and started heavy cannonading from the fleet upon Abdullah Khan's post at Qadam Rasul. Mirza Nathan moved to Qadam Rasul. "This easy success (at Qadam Rasul) intoxicated the imperial fleet which began to pursue the enemy boats in a disorderly manner without waiting for the order and guidance of Ihtimam Khan".¹⁹ Musa's war-boats at once turned round and made a counter attack reducing the imperial fleet to serious straits. Mirza Nathan at once came to the assistance of the imperial fleet and made a naval attack upon Musa's two fortified posts at the mouth of the Bandar Canal. This successful diversion saved the imperial fleet from a great danger. Musa Khan was taken by surprise and fled. Mirza Nathan leaving his boats behind, forded the canal and seized Ala-ul-Khan's post.

Repeated reverses un-nerved Musa Khan. The fall of Jatrapur, Dakchara, Kalakupa, and Qadam Rasul completely broke Musa's all defensive measures and he lost most of his war-boats. With the fall of Sonargaon in April 1611, the war with Musa practically ended and he at last surrendered to the imperialists.

It is to be noted in connection with the two major naval encounters between the imperialists and Musa Khan that the naval strategy of the imperialists was far superior to that of Musa Khan. The Mughal land and naval forces all-along maintained a close co-operation. The imperial land army never fought a battle without the support of the fleet and so was the case with the fleet. While on the other hand, Musa Khan solely depended on his fleet without a powerful land army. The author of the Baharistan repeatedly refers to Musa's war-boats but seldom his cavalry or infantry.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 258.

So with the annihilation of Musa's fleet, his resistance collapsed. Moreover, the imperial flotilla was organised very efficiently with all sorts of workers, officer, provisions and war materials. While on the other hand, Musa's fleet lacked proper organisation including war-materials although he was superior to the Mughals in respect of number of war-boats. Musa Khan had to depend to a great extent on the war-boats of his allies who, not always, proved loyal to his cause.

(2) THE NAVAL BATTLE OF SALKA WITH PRATAPADITYA—1612 A.D.

Raja Pratapaditya of Jessore-Khulna stands out very prominent in the naval history of Bengal during the period under review. He was one of the prominent 'bhuiyas' of Bengal during the Mughal rule. The Baharistan and the travel diary of Abdul Latif and the contemporary European travellers—all testify to his personal ability, political pre-eminence, material resources and martial strength particularly in war-boats. Like Musa Khan, Raja Pratapaditya also rightly understood the effectiveness of a naval power in the riverine tracts of Bengal as a means of best self-defence against the Magh and Feringhi pirates of Sondwip and Chittagong as well as against the aggressions of the Mughals from within. As a matter of fact, it was the onward march of the Mughals on Pratapaditya's kingdom from the north-west in the beginning of the 17th century, the incursions of the Magh and Feringhi pirates from the south-east and his natural thirst for conquest that prompted Pratapaditya to build up a naval power on a grand scale. It does not appear that the Raja utilised his naval power for commercial purposes. It would not be out of place to say a few words about Pratapaditya's navy and naval organisation.

Pratapaditya's Navy and naval organisation : Pratapaditya had the advantage of building boats and organising naval strategy. He put much emphasis on naval strategy, the various types of war-boats furnished with guns, the dockyards and naval fortresses. There was no dearth of wood for constructing boats in the Sunderbans. Of the oaks, 'Sundari Oak' is

by far the best for the purpose. It is more lasting in water than teak wood. In those days 'sudari oak' wood was found abundantly in lower Bengal. Pratapaditya had the least difficulty in procuring this kind of wood for the purpose of building his war-vessels. But all the shipwrights not necessarily did know the use of 'sundari' wood. It required special knowledge in building boats of this kind of wood.²⁰

A few types of boats were the characteristics of Jessore, such as 'dingi', 'pansi', 'bachari' and 'balam'. When the use of iron was not known, the Bengalis used to collect pieces of rattan (or cane) and tied them together and which they used as boat for carrying rice to many countries. This kind of boat was called 'balam' only found in Old Jessore or South Khulna. The name 'dinga' was used for big boat or ship sometimes with two high masts and smaller boats of all kinds were called 'dingi'. The 'dingi' was much in use in Jessore at that time. The boat bigger than a 'dingi' and having a roof was called 'pansi' in which a few persons could move freely. Those 'pansis' of bigger sizes that used to come from Faridpur were called 'Saidpuri Pansi'. The boat bigger and stronger than a 'pansi' and capable of more loading without any roof was called 'bachari' and still bigger such boat was called 'bachari-ship'. A scheduled class people having the title of 'bachar' are still living in old Jessore. But Pratapaditya's war-vessels,²¹ included 'ghurab', 'Kosa', 'gallivat' and 'balam'. These were real war-boats having all the requirements for fighting in waters, while the rest were heavy load-carriers. Abdul Latif has referred to "gigantic ghurab's with high masts and a row of cannon fixed."

Pratapaditya owned as many as 1000 war-vessels of the best type, besides a good many of other types of boats serving as auxiliary to the war-fleet in times of war. We know from Abdul Latif's travel-diary that in 1608 Pratap's fleet included 700 boats and when the Mughal general Ghiyas Khan was despatched against him, his son Udayaditya faced the Mughals with 500 war-vessels. Besides, Pratap had a few war-boats at each naval

²⁰ S. C. Mitra, *Jessore-Khulnar Itihas*, Vol. II, p. 219.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 217.

station to meet any emergency. It is difficult to ascertain how many more boats he had for collecting provisions and transporting his soldiers from one station to another. Besides the boats noted above, Pratap possessed quite a fair number of swift-moving 'sips' for maintaining communications between the different naval stations and 'jung' boats for transporting elephants, horses and other heavy loads.

Pratapaditya's naval department was well organised. His chief admiral was Augustus Pedro, a Portuguese under whom a few other Portuguese admirals were employed, although their names are not known. Mention is made of another Portuguese captain named Ruda who was taken prisoner and later employed in Pratap's service. In course of time Ruda rose to the position of chief admiral of Pratap's fleet. He trained Pratap's soldiers as mariners and naval fighters. It was the duty of the chief admiral to look after the comforts of the mariners and soldiers, to "keep the power dry" and to make proper review of the fleet from time to time. Each subordinate admiral was posted at each naval station subject to inspection by the Raja. All the havens and dockyards were under the supervision of Augustus Pedro. Frederick Dudley, another Portuguese, was the chief of the ship-building department and under him Khwaja Abbas supervised the construction work at the dockyards. A number of officers were especially appointed in times of war for recruiting sailors and collecting provisions. Of course, these officers were not expected to take part in any naval engagement. Only the 'regulars' were so employed. The sailors and soldiers employed on temporary basis were allowed a share of the booty besides a fixed lump sum. Irrespective of class, colour and creed, Pratap employed in his navy the people living around the Bay of Bengal such as the 'bagdi', 'kaivarta', 'pod', 'bediya' and others.²² Pratap furnished his fleet with big and small cannon. The ruins of a great arsenal at Dhumghat bear evidence to this point.²³ His fleet was sometimes supported by cavalry imported from Northern India. But the Mughals far excelled him in cavalry and artillery.

²² Ibid., pp. 237.

²³ Ibid.

There was an elaborate arrangement for keeping watch on the movements of the enemy in the channels and rivulets and a regular link was always maintained with the naval posts from the docks by means of swift moving 'sips' each in charge of an admiral or 'mir-bahar'. Besides the Portuguese, Muslims were also employed as sailors and captains. Of the latter, Shaikh Kamal and Shaikh Jamal played a conspicuous part in the naval war with the Mughals.²⁴

Pratapaditya seems to have taken a keen interest in building ships and in their up-keeping. The main dockyard (planted five miles north of Dhumghat (the capital) was the nerve-centre of Pratap's naval department. The pioneer of this dockyard was a Bengali artist, although his name is not known. After him, Frederick Dudley was made the chief of the staff whose early career is unknown. The dockyard was called Jahajghata where Dudley and his staff had their quarters. The ruin of the dockyard still exists. It is on the eastern bank of the Jamuna. Jahajghata is also called by some Kotaghata which was for some-time the headquarters of the Mughal officers. Possibly, after the fall of Pratapaditya Dhumghat became inhabitable and so the Mughal faujdar appointed at Jessore took up his quarters at the buildings of Jahajghata.²⁵ There was a naval fort surrounded by a ditch close to the Jahajghata dockyard, filled with mariners and gunners. To the north of the Jahajghata and on the south bank of Jamuna lay the Dudley dock, so called after the name of the admiral Dudley. At the north-eastern mouth of a channel flowing down to Jamuna from the east, a sub-channel was excavated and its water was made to fall into an artificial lake. Through this sub-channel, big war-boats could move down to this lake for the purpose of refitting and repairing and it was so done by completely stopping the flow of the water and then drying up its closed water.²⁶ A number of such artificial lakes were excavated not only for the purpose of repairing but also for building vessels. Each lake or ditch had a wooden door to admit water

²⁴ Ibid., p. 229 ; *Baharistan*, Vol. I, p. 127.

²⁵ S. C. Mitra, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 221.

²⁶ Ibid.

when necessary for setting afloat a newly-built vessel. A number of such docks were planted not only at Dudley and Jahajghata but also at other places like Araibaki, and Sagaur islands.

Pratapaditya was a great strategist. On the two sides of his kingdom, north and south-eastern, the Raja raised a number of fortresses meant for land and naval fightings. To the north, his main enemy were the Mughals and to the south, the Maghs and the Feringhis. The most important and greatest of all his naval stations was at Dhumghat. Kamalpur fort was meant for the eastern enemy or the enemy advancing by way of the Bhairab and the Kabotaksh rivers. At the confluence of the Arna-Sibsa and the main Sibsa rivers, the Raja built another naval station called Sibsa fort with a view to meet the enemy coming from the eastern side. At the outset of his war with the Mughals, Pratap built the fort of Jugaddal on the right bank of the Ganges. Salka or Salikha was another naval fort and the first and the most important naval battle was fought between Pratap and the Mughals at Salka on the Jessore frontier. There is a difference of opinion as to the location of this naval fort. According to some, it was near modern Salkhia to the north of Howrah. Ram Basu says that it was in the Salkhia thana that the naval battle was fought between Pratap's fleet and the Mughal fleet. But Salka does not seem to be Salkhia of Howrah. According to the Baharistan, the fort of Salka was situated somewhere near the confluence of the Jamuna and the Ichhamati. It was a place of great strategic importance. Because a naval force stationed at the mouth of this confluence could have intercepted very easily the advance of an enemy upon Jessore from the north trailing along the Bhairab-Jamuna or the Bhairab-Ichhamati rivers.²⁷

To come to Jessore, the Bhairab was the principal water-route of the Mughals. Sailing along the western bank of the Bhairab, if the enemy entered the Jamuna, no obstruction was immediately offered to them; on the contrary, they were allowed to proceed further un-opposed. The same strategy was followed if they preferred to advance along the Bhairab and the Ichhamati till they reached the confluence of the Jamuna and the Ichhamati

²⁷ Ibid., p. 200.

when they were opposed by a strong naval force stationed at Salka. Again if the enemy, instead of entering the Jamuna, preferred to sail further south, they were opposed at Jugaddal first and then at Raigarh on the right bank of the Ganges. On the bank of the Ganges, Pratapaditya had another naval station at Matla (to the north of modern Canning) in charge of an admiral named Haidar Mankali, off the river Bidyadhari. The main course of the Ganges flowing further southwards falls into the sea and this confluence is called Sagaurdwip. Here Pratap had a fort and numerous war-boats. This naval fort was meant to oppose the searovers like the Maghs and the Feringhis. Pratap planted a chain of naval stations on his southern frontier. From Dhumghat to Matla, at every confluence of rivers, he raised a naval fort filled with war-boats and other war equipments. The forts were not necessarily raised just at the junction of the rivers but a few miles off them, but the link was maintained by means of canals so that as soon as the news of the enemy's arrival reached, the war-boats were pushed down to the main confluence in series. The naval fort of Araibaki (in the Sundarbans) was in charge of Pedro. It was also called "Feringhi fort". Slight eastwards, there was a curved canal. In the event of gale, the war-boats were kept in the canal for safety. The entire river-route from Dhumghat to Matla was kept under the care of the Portuguese admiral and well guarded by the Feringhi sailors. At the mouth of Bhagirathi, there was another naval station. It is said that Ruda, Pratap's Portuguese admiral, routed the Mughal fleet here in a naval engagement.²⁸ After his war with the Mughals had started, Pratapaditya raised a naval station at Mautla, six miles from his capital Dhumghat. Below the station, he hurriedly constructed a harbour for building and repairing the ships and keeping military stores as well. A Portuguese admiral was put in charge of this harbour and for whom there was a spacious quarter there.²⁹

The Naval Encounter : So far we have discussed the navy and the naval organisation of Raja Pratapaditya. Now let us

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 203-204.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 211.

describe the first and the most important naval encounter between the Jessore-fleet and the Mughal fleet at Salka.

After the successful conclusion of the war with Musa Khan of Sonargaon, the Mughal viceroy Islam Khan turned his attention towards Raja Pratapaditya and decided to subdue him. Here it should be remembered that upon Islam Khan's arrival in Bengal, Raja Pratapaditya tendered his personal submission and agreed to send 400 of his war-boats to join the imperial fleet and to proceed personally with 100 war-boats to attack Musa Khan's territories in Sripur and Vikrampur. But the Raja broke his pledge, tacitly supported Musa Khan and thus proved guilty of disloyalty as a vassal. Hence in order to punish Raja Pratapaditya and to conquer his territories, Islam Khan despatched a large army and a navy composed of 300 war-boats furnished with heavy fire-arms. The imperial fleet (300) and the fleet of Musa Khan and those of other vassal landlords were put in charge of Mirza Nathan.

In most of their engagements in the riverine tracts of Bengal the Mughals maintained co-operation between their land forces and the fleet. No attack was generally made on the enemy's posts unless there was perfect understanding between the land forces and the fleet and this practice constituted the most important feature of the Mughal naval strategy. In the case of the Jessore campaign, the same strategy was followed.

Ghiyas Khan was the commander of the landforce and Mirza Nathan that of the naval force. The chief admiral Ihtimam Khan with 200 war-boats remained anchored in the Padma. Ghiyas Khan crossed the Padma near Alaipur and then advanced along the banks of the Jellinghy and its tributary, the Bhairab, till he arrived at Pakhwan³⁰ (on the Bhairab, 20 miles north of Krishnagar city) awaiting the arrival of the imperial fleet under Mirza Nathan. Meanwhile, Mirza Nathan, moving with the fleet along the Ganges, the Jellinghy and the Bhairab, joined the land army at Pakhwan (Bhagwan). By the middle of December 1611, the imperial fleet supported by the land army marched southwards

³⁰ *History of Bengal*, (Dacca University), Vol. II, p. 265.

along the Ichhamati and the Bhairab and reached a place called Salka near the confluence of the Jamuna and the Ichhamati.

As soon as Pratapaditya was informed that the Mughals had crossed the Padma and a division of the imperial fleet had anchored in the Padma, he undertook preparations for his defence. As the imperial fleet had been advancing along the confluence of the Jamuna and the Ichhamati, the Raja raised a temporary naval fort near the confluence. He divided his entire army into two divisions. With one division he took his position at the fort of Dhumghat while the other division composed of five hundred war-boats of various sizes and burden including 'ghurabs' each with 30 sails and one thousand horsemen was despatched under the command of his son Udayaditya and the Jessore admiral Khwaja Kamal. The Jessore fleet was well equipped with artillery under the supervision of Feringhi and Afghan musketeers. Another Jessore fleet was kept ready at the dock of Jahajghata.³¹

Pratapaditya not only took defensive measures against the impending naval attacks of the Mughals, he also took precautionary measures against the possible incursions of the Magh and the Feringhi pirates at the same time. A strong fleet was stationed at a place between the river Bhagirathi and the Kagarghata canal.³²

Udayaditya, after his arrival at Salka with the main Jessore fleet, raised a lofty fort at the confluence and "the trenches around it were arranged in such a way that one side of the fort became protected by the river, the other two sides by an extensive 'jalah' or marsh and on the fourth side a deep ditch was excavated to such an extent that water came out of its bottom. Its breadth was more than that of a rivulet and the water of the river was connected to it by a breach in its bank and it was joined with the aforesaid 'jalah'. Having water on all the four sides of the fort he (Udayaditya) took his stand with full strength without any fear. He arranged his fleet in the river and the landforce in the fort".³³

³¹ S. C. Mitra, *op. cit.* Vol. II, p. 384.

³² *Baharistan*, Vol. II, p. 135.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

Upon the news of Pratapaditya's preparations, the Mughal commander of the land force, Ghiyas Khan made the following plan of attack in consultation with Mirza Nathan thus, "The fleet will proceed by the middle of the river ; one regiment will march by one side of the river and another by the other side to co-operate with the fleet from above the banks and thus the fort of the enemy (at Salka) will be attacked. If the enemy comes out of the fort to fight, then our object will be attained. Otherwise we also will raise a fort in front of the enemy's and will try to occupy their fort by driving away their fleet with the aid of our artillery".³⁴

Ghiyas Khan then ordered Mirza Nathan to go over to the other side of the fort (i.e. on the side of the fort) and ordered Lakshmi Rajput, the vice-admiral, to put the imperial fleet in battle array. The 'khelna' boats were to move as advance squadron to be followed by the light 'kosas' and the heavy boats properly equipped with fire-arms were to be at the centre guarded by smaller war-boats. Ghiyas Khan advised Lakshmi Rajput thus, "The imperial fleet which is in your charge will remain with you. The rest of the fleet with all the other men will go with me by this side."³⁵ Having arranged the imperial fleet thus, Ghiyas Khan with the rest of the fleet and with a sufficient number of sailors, resumed his march. Mirza Nathan with the soldiers under his command crossed the river at night. In the morning, they resumed their march for the battle along the both sides of the river with the fleet moving between them.³⁶

Against the progress of the imperial fleet well supported by land forces, Udayaditya did neither let loose his boats nor did he come out of his inaccessible fort at Salka to offer battle. So Ghiyas Khan and Mirza Nathan posted ten boats each as advance-guard against the enemy and ordered the boatmen of the rest to raise two forts on the two sides of the river, opposite the fort of Salka. Immediately, the boatmen disembarked from their boats and started constructing the forts.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

Before the boatmen could complete the construction works, Udayaditya suddenly appeared on the scene with his fleet along with Khwaja Kamal in the van. The Khwaja was given the command of the van with all the 'piara', 'kosa', 'balia', 'pal', 'ghurab', (floating battery, gun boat), 'machua' and 'jalia' boats. Udayaditya himself took the position at the centre with other types of boats well protected by heavy guns. The Jessore fleet then slowly proceeded as far as the first bend of the Ichhamati river. Jamal Khan, another Jessore commander was posted at the entrance of the fort of Salka with the order of coming to the assistance of the advancing fleet in case it was over-powered by the imperial fleet.³⁷

Shortly a great tumult arose when cannon were discharged from the Jessore fleet upon the advancing imperial fleet. The soldiers of the twenty imperial boats which were posted as vanguard offered a stubborn resistance from their respective positions. But Khwaja Kamal with the 'ghurabs' and two 'piara' boats surrounded the ten imperial boats and pushed them towards the side of the fort of Ghiyas Khan. Incessant cannonading from the Jessore fleet made it extremely difficult for the imperial fleet to move on. A number of 'jalia' boats from the Jessore fleet made a desparate charge upon the imperial boats in the vanguard from the rear and stones were showered upon the imperial boats from the Jessore 'jalias'. It was really a desperate attempt on the part of the Jessore fleet to push back the imperial fleet. At this juncture, the commanders of the imperial land army came to the assistance of the imperial fleet by discharging arrows upon the advancing Jessore fleet from above the bank. The boatmen of the advancing Jessore fleet could not stand the attack of the Mughal archers and hence they jumped into water. The imperialists seized one 'piara' and one ghurab from the enemy.³⁸ But a few imperial 'kosas' were drowned in the water and some 'ghurabs' lost their high masts.

The Jessore fleet then surrounded the imperial fleet on the side of Mirza Nathan. The latter and his party discharged

³⁷ Ibid., p. 127.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 128.

arrows upon the enemy's fleet and Mirza Nathan continued his advance to a position where he had left the fleet of Khwaja behind. But he faced Udayaditya's fleet in his front and flank. "This daring enterprise of Mirza Nathan broke the unity and discipline of the Jessore fleet and in the melee that followed, Khwaja Kamal was killed. The fall of the admiral (of the Jessore fleet) decided the battle."³⁹ But the Jessore fleet continued discharging arrows and shots like hailstones,⁴⁰ and quite a large number of imperial boats were drowned and some of them were greatly damaged.

However, Udayaditya lost heart at the death of his admiral and he hastily fled to his father. Although all the imperial and zamindars' boats were engaged in plundering the enemy boats, four imperial 'kosas' belonging to Mirza Nathan's special suite and two belonging to the admirals of Musa Khan and Bahadur Ghazi gave a hot chase to Udayaditya. "Udayaditya was about to be captured when from among the flying boats of Udayaditya one 'piara', four 'ghurabs' and one 'machua' which carried some Feringhis, proved loyal to their master and cast anchor, thus obstructing the way of the six imperial boats."⁴¹ In the melee that followed between the pursuing and rescuing boats of the Mughals and Jessore respectively, Udayaditya escaped in his swift-flying kosa. Of Udayaditya's boats, forty two escaped with him. The rest of the fleet and the artillery fell into the hands of the imperialists. The fort of Salka came into the possession of the imperialists.

Thus was closed the first stage of the naval campaign of the Mughals against Pratapaditya. The defeat of the Jessore fleet at Salka inspite of its superiority in number is really surprising. Of course, the causes of the defeat are not far to seek. The imperial fleet was ably supported by the land army, while the most glaring weakness of the Jessore fleet was the lack of support by any land army. The Mughal archers and musketeers posted on the high banks of the Ichhamati river "wrought havoc on the helpless

³⁹ *History of Bengal*, (Dacca University), Vol. II, p. 267.

⁴⁰ *Baharistan*, Vol. I, p. 128.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

sailors of the enemy fleet (Jessore) passing below them.”⁴² Further, the very number of the Jessore fleet and the heavy build of some of their war-boats particularly the ‘ghurabs’ proved to be another cause of their defeat. These heavy boats were cramped for space and could not sail freely and in proper order in the Ichhamati which was not only narrow but full of bends and turns.”⁴³ After resisting the advancing imperial fleet for a short while, the Jessore fleet gave way and fought the imperial fleet in a most desultory way. The Jessore fleet does not appear to have made a vigorous assault upon the imperial fleet in a disciplined way. Finally the sudden death of the Jessore admiral completed the disaster.

3. Naval battles with Prince Shuja—1659-60 A.D. The battle of Khajwa (5th January 1659) between Aurangzeb and Prince Shuja practically marked the end of the war of succession to the throne of Delhi. After his defeat Shuja was left a wanderer moving from post to pillar as he was being hotly pursued by the Mughal general Mir Jumla and Prince Muhammad. Retreating through Allahabad, Chunar and Monghyr, Shuja came back to Rajmahal with his exhausted and worn-out army. On being learnt that the imperial army had encamped on the bank of the Ganges, Shuja did not consider his position safe on its right or western bank and so decided to remove his family to Tanda (15 miles west of Gaur) and to prolong his stay at Rajmahal with his flotilla. But on 4th April 1659, Shuja left Rajmahal, crossed the Ganges at Dogachi⁴⁴ on his way to Tanda, collecting the entire flotilla of Bengal at Bakarpur and throwing up naval stations at several places on the eastern bank of the Ganges.⁴⁵ A division of the imperial army entered Rajmahal unopposed. Thus the entire country on the western bank of the Ganges from Rajmahal to Hughli was lost to Prince Shuja.

With Shuja’s evacuation of the western bank of the Ganges, the war between the Shujaites and the imperialists entered upon a new phase. From Khajwa to Rajmahal, it had all along been

⁴² *History of Bengal*, (Dacca University), Vol. II, p. 267.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ 13 miles to the south of Rajmahal.

⁵⁰ *Tarikh-i-Shah Shuja*, pp. 116a-117a.

a land operation in which the imperialists were far superior to the Shujaites. And as a matter of fact, Prince Shuja never offered any major opposition to the pursuing imperialists upto Rajmahal. But upon the arrival of the imperialists at Rajmahal, the rival forces were now separated by the Ganges and hence the war henceforth between them became essentially a naval war. So far as the naval strategy and the naval forces were concerned, Shuja had certain advantages over the imperialists. As Sarkar says "In the first place, the lord of Bengal, the lord of waterways, had a powerful nawara."⁴⁶ Shuja had either seized or sunk or burnt all the private boats so that they might not fall into the hands of his enemy. On the other hand, Mir Jumla had no flotilla either to fight on the water or to cross the river. His army was mainly a land army. He had not brought boats along with him and could not hope easily to procure any in Bengal because of Shuja's 'scorched earth' policy. "His initial efforts were paralysed by his pitiable lack of naval arm."⁴⁷ Shuja could mount his big guns on the boats and employ this extremely mobile force anywhere he liked from Rajmahal to Suti (28 miles to the south of Rajmahal) along the entire Mughal line. Shuja had also other advantages over the imperialists. The entire eastern bank of the Ganges had been under his control. By raising naval posts at strategic places and keeping at these posts a considerable number of heavy war-boats, Shuja had the advantage of preventing the imperialists from crossing the Ganges. "Although lacking in men, Shuja could well defend himself as he got the command over the Ganges."⁴⁸ Mir Jumla had neither sufficient number of war-boats nor the command over the Ganges. In any case, if he was to win over his enemy, he was to achieve it before the monsoons."⁴⁹ Shuja, during the months of Summer, prevented the enemy from crossing the river and taking the advantage of the enemy's immobility for want of fleet, decided to replenish his shattered power.⁵⁰ Shuja employed Portuguese gunners, sailors

⁴⁶ Sarkar, *Life of Mir Jumla*, p. 160.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ *English Factories in India*, Vol. X, p. 282.

⁵⁰ *Tarikh-i-Shah Shuja*, pp. 116a-117a.

and admirals in his flotilla with promises for the future. He defended various places on the eastern bank by means of the flotilla, artillery and entrenchments opposite the imperial front from Rajmahal to Suti. By mounting his great guns on his boats, Shuja also expected to face Mir Jumla effectively on the western bank of the Ganges.⁵¹

After the seizure of Rajmahal from the Shujaites, a few skirmishes occurred on either banks of the Ganges between the rival forces. But the pressing difficulties of Mir Jumla were to procure boats and sailors without which it was well nigh impossible for him to chase the fugitive prince. He sent 'paiks' in search of boats and succeeded in collecting a few of them.

A NAVAL ENCOUNTER AT DOGACHI (April 1659)

Although Mir Jumla collected a few boats, it seemed fruitless to engage in a war at Rajmahal without a fleet. Hence he moved for Dogachi, where the course of the Ganges was somewhat narrow and from where Mir Jumla expected to cross the Ganges with his land army and to fall upon the Sujaites. At Bakarpur, on the opposite bank of Dogachi, the Sujaité général Sayyid Kuli Khan had entrenched himself with the artillery while Shuja posted himself in the rear and his flotilla stationed in front of them.

In fact, Shuja all along relied exclusively on his flotilla and so in his each move from post to post along the eastern bank, he kept his flotilla in front manned by the Portuguese. But ultimately "too much dependence upon the low-caste portuguese ruined the cause of the Prince."⁵²

In between Dogachi and Bakarpur, there was a high island in the mid-stream whose strategic importance caught the imagination of Mir Jumla. But as he had no sufficient boats, a Shujaité general seized that island at night and raised batteries. However, Mir Jumla ventured to wrest that island with the few boats he had at his disposal. At mid-night, the imperial boats transported to the island some 2000 soldiers. The Shujaites were

⁵¹ *English Factories in India*, Vol. X, p. 282.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 284.

struck with terror at this surprise move of the imperialists. Shuja sent Fidai Khan with a large number of war-boats with 3 to 4 Portuguese posted in each boat. When the Shujaite fleet neared the entrenchment, the imperialists fired upon them with cannon and rockets. Shuja's fleet also returned fire "the smoke of which darkened the space above the water." At the rapid advance of Shuja's fleet, the imperialists launched their attack with matchlocks and rockets. A few war-boats of Shuja caught fire and sank in the mid-stream. But his 'kosas' and 'jalias' protected with steel masks moved on assisted by some European vessels. The Shujaite 'ghurabs' and 'jalias' furnished with heavy artillery were divided into two divisions. One division manned exclusively by the Portuguese served as the van, while the other division under Fidai Khan followed the van. Shuja with the rest of his war-vessels and soldiers remained on the eastern shore. Under a thick veil of smoke discharged from the cannon of both sides, Fidai Khan landed on one side of the island, pushing the imperialists down to the shore. But at last "due to the doubtful performance of the Portuguese captains of the Prince's flotilla,⁵³ the Shujaites were defeated, many of them were either drowned or wounded and many of their boats were sunk. Shuja failed to seize the island.⁵⁴ The Shujaites made another attempt to recapture the island with their fast moving vessels furnished with guns and "the roar of the guns were so great that even the fish became restless in the river."⁵⁵

ANOTHER NAVAL ENCOUNTER AT SUTI

Shuja was so long under the impression that Mir Jumla who did not possess considerable number of vessels, would not dare a naval attack upon the island, but the recent turn of events awoke him to realities. He now made a change of his strategy. In order to divide the attention of the imperialists, Shuja's flotilla cruised up and down in the river, exchanging fire with the imperialists on the western bank while keeping his naval force ready on

⁵³ Manucci, op. cit., Vol. I.

⁵⁴ Sarkar, *Aurangzeb*, Vol. II, p. 582.

⁵⁵ Vide, Sarkar, *Life of Mir Jumla*, p. 163.

the eastern coast opposite Dogachi. It was not possible for Mir Jumla to cross the Ganges with a half-a-dozen of his boats and to launch any attack upon Shuja's fleet. Hence Mir Jumla took measures to defend the western bank between Rajmahal in the north and Suti in the south by posting contingents at various points while he himself encamped at Suti. "Mir Jumla's choice of Suti was marvellous, determined by the deficiency of boats. The river was narrow here and easily fordable."⁵⁶ To prevent boats from crossing over to Shuja, Mir Jumla closed all ferries and passages. So strict was the embargo that even stealthy crossings were impossible.

Mir Jumla next busied himself in collecting boats and despatched his officers and 'sardars' to Hughli, Cassimbazar and other places to fetch boats and boatmen. "He called upon men to supply boats of any kind available, 'kisti' or 'ghurab' threatening to desolate their country. . . . in case of failure. The threat had the desired effect. Within ten to fifteen days, about a hundred boats of various sorts ('kosas', 'khelnas', 'rahwaras' etc.) were placed at the disposal of the Mir."⁵⁷ A Mughal officer Zulfiqar too sent 40 boats. With the boats thus collected, Mir Jumla could now guard his front effectively against surprising swoopings by Shuja's mobile fleet. Having lost the command over the western bank of the Ganges, Shuja now formed a defensive cordon by keeping his heavy war-boats in the mid-stream under Fidai Khan, the 'kosas' under the Portuguese behind the frontline, while he himself remained encamped on the shore. Mir Jumla made a naval attack on the Shujaites on 2nd May 1659. About 73 imperial boats carrying 2,000 soldiers were steered to the opposite bank and as soon as the first 2 or 3 boats reached the destination, the Shujaites under Sayyid Alam fell upon them with violence and wrought havoc on the imperialists. The imperialists gallantly defended themselves but they were out-numbered. Some of the imperial boats hastened to land their men. But the crew of the remaining imperial boats got frightened and rowed back

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

hastily refusing to come to the assistance of their fellow crew.⁵⁸ Six imperial boats laden with war materials were seized by the Shujaites. Sayyid Alam fell upon Ihtimam Khan who was in the mid-stream with a division of imperial 'ghurabs'. After a hard engagement Ihtimam Khan fell along with many of his men. The best of the imperial boats were drowned and a few seized.⁵⁹

Edmond Foster in a letter stated that the miserable failure of the imperialists in the naval battle at Suti was due to the fact that they were "in small boats", whereas the Shujaites were in jalias or large boats. Shuja's flotilla included many fast boats like the 'kosas'.⁶⁰ But the fact that 73 imperial boats carried about 2,000 soldiers and war-materials, it can not be said that all the boats of Mir Jumla were small. "Still it must be admitted that the difference in the relative size of their respective flotilla contributed somewhat to Mir Jumla's failure."⁶¹ According to Alamgirnama, Shuja was in an advantageous position with many of his fast-moving boats while Mir Jumla had only a few big boats (6 boats carrying 1,000 soldiers). Moreover, Shuja's had a good number of Feringhi and Bengali sailors in his flotilla who were expert in naval warfare, but the forces of Mir Jumla did not possess any naval strength.⁶² "The deep had unknown terror for them and even a voyage down a river was a penance to be gone through with set teeth and breathless expectation of its ends, when they would tread on solid land again."⁶³ The recent naval discomfiture at Suti could not, however, discourage Mir Jumla. But the insufficiency of vessels and mariners concerned him much. He set about collecting boats and other equipments and his agents moved about to collect carpenters and as many boats as possible. All big boats coming down the river were seized indiscriminately for the purpose. A number of Dutch gunners and sailors were also recruited.

A frontal naval attack was thought fruitless to dislodge Shuja

⁵⁸ Sarkar, *Aurangzeb*, Vol. II, p. 584

⁵⁹ *Alamgirnama*, pp. 506-9; Sarkar, *Aurangzeb*, Vol. II, p. 586.

⁶⁰ Vide, *English Factories in India*, Vol. X, p. 284.

⁶¹ Sarkar, *Life of Mir Jumla*, p. 168.

⁶² R. Das, *Career of Prince Shah Shuja*, p. 209 (unpublished thesis).

⁶³ Sarkar, *Aurangzeb*, Vol. II, p. 579.

from his entrenchment. So Mir Jumla planned to attack Shuja from the east, north and west. Meanwhile, Mir Jumla called upon Daud Khan, the Governor of Bihar to collect as many boats as possible from the nobles of Bihar and to furnish each boat with artillery. Daud was further instructed to march against Shuja with the smaller vessels and to send the heavy-war-boats in advance to join Mir Jumla. It was decided that the combined landforces of Daud, Rashid and Chiragh would launch an attack upon Shuja on the left bank of the Ganges, while Mir Jumla with the flotilla would cross the Ganges when reinforced with Daud's boats.

In three week's time, ninety boats filled with soldiers arrived. They were instructed by Daud to cross the Ganges atonce. Shuja's general Ihtibar Khan was ready with numerous 'kosas'. Ihtibar Khan appeared with a large flotilla and attacked the enemy with cannon and rockets. There were heavy exchanges of arrows, match-locks and cannon and rockets from both sides and as a result both sides lost a large number of 'kosas'. At night, Daud Khan sent 10 boats with fire-arms and 10 troopers in each boat armed with match-locks to anchor on the other side of the river. Next morning, when Ihtibar Khan's fleet made an assault on the imperialists, Daud Khan discharged rockets from his fleet. A severe naval encounter took place in the mid-stream. Daud Khan's 'kosas' made an attack from the rear and a few boats of Ihtibar Khan caught fire. The high masts of some of the 'ghurabs' of Ihtibar Khan were hit by the rockets from Daud Khan's fleet and the masts crushed to death a large number of Ihtibar Khan's sailors and soldiers. Ihtibar Khan became frightened and left the battle-field while the imperialists crossed the river.⁶⁴ Daud Khan ordered Rashid to raise an entrenchment on the bank of the Ganges (10th June 1659). In the next dawn, Daud appeared with some boats. Soon the Shujaites also appeared with many 'ghurabs' and 'kosas'. The 'kosas' were put in the vanguard and the guns on the kosas went into action. The imperialists also returned fire from the bank. At the approach of the heavy imperial ghurabs furnished with heavy cannon, Shuja's fleet fell back hastily.

⁶⁴ R. Das, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

Shuja first wanted to launch a naval attack on Mir Jumla who was staying at Murshidabad. But he soon changed his mind and planned to recapture Rajmahal. The time was opportune for a naval attack upon Rajmahal as the city was isolated by floods and it was not possible for the imperialists to send any aid to the imperial faujdar of Rajmahal, Zulfiqar Khan. The strategy of Shuja was aimed at cutting off the imperial army's communications and preventing Mir Jumla from getting supplies from the Europeans at Hughli. In fact, Shuja succeeded in isolating Mir Jumla at Murshidabad and hence Mir Jumla could do nothing to oppose Shuja's march upon Rajmahal. Shuja's admiral Shaikh Abbas made naval raids upon Rajmahal and Shuja, leaving a contingent at Tanda, crossed over to the western bank of the Ganges with his large flotilla and joined his admiral. Shuja's artillery fired on the imperialists from the river and the weight of his shells were between one and two maunds, while the imperialists replied by arrows and match-locks. Heavy cannonading from the fleet of Shuja made the position of the imperialists at Rajmahal extremely critical.

On 22nd August 1659, a grand naval attack was made upon Rajmahal and it fell into the hands of the Shujaites. Shuja next despatched his another admiral Khwaja Mishki and the general Fidai Khan to intercept the progress of Daud Khan. Meanwhile Daud Khan, after collecting boats and other equipments, had left Patna on 13th May. His soldiers crossed the Ganges there and sailing down Sarju and Gandak, he reached a place called Qazi-Keria (opposite Bhagalpur). He then detached 90 boats to bring the imperial soldiers from Bhagalpur. But he was forestalled there by the Shujaite admiral Khwaja Mishki who had a large flotilla consisting of 'kosas' and 'ghurabs'.⁶⁵

Shuja's general Fidai Khan met Ihtibar Khan and they decided to encircle Daud with his boats and overwhelm him with rockets and cannon. Both Fidai and Ihtibar collected together all their boats, both 'kosas' and 'ghurabs' and each boat (Kisti) was manned by 10 soldiers besides armed mariners. Very soon Fidai and Ihtibar approached Daud Khan with their flotilla and started

⁶⁵ Sarkar, *Life of Mir Jumla*, p. 118.

discharging cannon, small guns and rockets on the imperialists. The imperial boats under Daud also replied with fire. Shuja's fleet could inflict no great damage on the imperial fleet owing to their distance. Next morning, Fidai and Ihtibar again launched a naval attack with their flotilla and started cannonading. A division of imperial fleet came forward and discharged heavy cannon and rockets. The smoke of firing from both sides darkened the sky and this continued till noon when Fidai and Ihtibar Khan advanced to the midstream but the imperialists remained in the murchals. Suddenly, two imperial generals Rashid Khan and Chiragh Beg made a dash upon the Shujaite fleet. The fast moving imperial 'kosas' almost encircled the Shujaite fleet and stones were showered from the imperial 'kosas'. A large number of cannon on the Shujaite boats were damaged due to heavy stoning and the Shujaite mariners were seized with panic. At the sight of a large number of imperial 'ghurabs' fast approaching, the Shujaite fleet retreated and in course of retreat the Shujaites lost a few boats.⁶⁶ Once more in the same day 710 boats of Shuja re-appeared and fired on the imperial boats. But they retreated with the approach of the night. Next day also, there was another indecisive naval encounter in which from both sides volleys were showered like rains. After a week the water subsided and as a result, the arrival of Shuja's flotilla was hampered and it was forced to retreat.⁶⁷ Daud Khan placed 10 equipped boats each with 10 armed pickets to guard the river at night. Fidai Khan and Ihtibar Khan shortly reached Jahangira with the army and 710 boats.

Shuja ordered Ihtibar Khan to remain at Jahangira with the 'ghurabs' to prevent Daud's march upon Akbarnagar. Daud Khan proceeded towards Monghyr from Qazi Keria in the month of December 1659. Daud Khan with his flotilla reached Jahangira but here he found the passage through the river completely blocked by Ihtibar Khan with 'kosas' and 'ghurabs'. At the sight of Daud's fleet, Ihtibar Khan with his fleet sailed forward and discharged volleys of cannon and rockets. Daud's fleet also replied with

⁶⁶ R. Das, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

cannon and match-locks. With the approach of night, Ihtibar's fleet fell back.

Next day, Ihtibar Khan launched another attack with his fleet. With a view to encircle and capture Daud, Ihtibar divided his flotilla into two divisions and instructed one division to attack from the rear and the other in the front with artillery. In spite of their best efforts, the Shujaites failed to obstruct the passage of Daud's fleet down stream and Daud reached Monghyr. Assisted by the land army, the imperial boats under Daud Khan sailed further down stream. Ihtibar Khan made several attempts with his fleet to obstruct the progress of the imperial fleet. But every time the manoeuvring of the imperial fleet frustrated the attempts of Ihtibar Khan. Rapid progress of the imperial fleet made Shuja's position at Rajmahal and Tanda untenable. Hence he collected his boats and fell back on Dacca. All the way from Monghyr to Dacca, the imperialists had to fight out every inch on land and water. On 9th May 1660, Mir Jumla entered Dacca seizing on the way 400 loaded boats, 2 treasure-laden 'ghurabs' and 30 'kosas' belonging to Shuja. Many of the boats of Shuja's flotilla were either destroyed in the war or sunk by the order of Shuja so that they might not fall into the hands of the imperialists.

It took the imperialists a long time to oust Shuja from Bengal and this was due to strong naval opposition from the side of the Shujaites. For most of the time, the encounters took place on water and again for most of the time the Shujaites maintained naval superiority. It was only when the imperialists gained sufficient support from their land forces that the naval resistance of the Shujaites collapsed.

4. **The naval war with the Ahoms—3rd March 1662 A. D.** Like the Bhuiyas of Bengal and the Maghs and the Feringhis, the Ahoms, on the north-eastern frontier, also constituted a great threat to the security of the Mughals in Bengal. The Ahoms also possessed a great fleet and a naval force sometimes superior to that of the Mughals. The second great division of the Ahom military department was the flotilla. It appears to have been the one indispensable weapon of defence as well as of offence in a country like Assam which is intersected by numerous rivers and rivulets. In a land of hills, morasses and nalahs, cavalry was practically use-

less and so it did not flourish in Assam as a unit of war. There was no dearth of material for building war-boats of various types in Assam. The forests had abundance of hard-wood particularly 'chambal' with which the war-boats were made, while the common people, born and bred up in a riverine plain were naturally adept in the art of plying boats. Their skill and bravery in navigation have been highly spoken of by the author of the *Padishanamah*.

According to the author of the *Padishanamah*, although "the Ahoms do not come up in courage to the Muhammadan soldiers, they are very brave in naval engagements."⁶⁸ They built war-boats like the 'kosas' (rowing boats for towing 'ghurabs' or floating batteries) of Bengal and called them 'bacharis'. There was no difference between the two than this that the prow and the stern of the 'kosa' had two projecting horns, while those of the bachari consisted of only one levelled plank. The poop (sar) and the 'keel' of the 'bacharis' were made of one flattened plank.⁶⁹ The Ahom 'bacharis' were slower than the 'kosas'. The shape and design of the 'bacharis' were peculiar. The head and the base consisted of one levelled plank, while the poop was extremely high and was carved with ugly awe-inspiring faces. Each boat was manned by 60 to 80 sailors. The Ahom war-boats stood for durability and strength. "As they were mounted with big guns, they were necessarily very heavy and unfit for swift manoeuvring and, in this respect, compared unfavourably with the light-bodied and light-armed Mughal 'kosas', which could move with the speed of 'lightening and wind'.⁷⁰

The number of these war-boats that the Ahoms possessed could not be determined exactly. The 'Fathiya' seems to put an incredibly high figure exceeding more than 32,000. Talish writes, "The shipping traffic may be estimated from remarks taken from the reports of the 'Waqiahnavis' of Gauhati. . . . He says that up to the present time (1662) no less than 32,000 boats, 'bacharis' and 'kosas' have arrived here. The number of ships engaged for the army and those belonging to the Assamese which

⁶⁸ *Padishanamah*, Vide, *J. A. S. B.*, 1872.

⁶⁹ *Fathiya*, Vide, *J. A. S. B.*, 1872.

⁷⁰ Bhattacharyya, *A history of Mughal North-Eastern frontier policy*, pp. 37-38.

accompanied the army on its return, must certainly have been larger and it is probable that more than one half belonged to the Assamese.⁷¹ It is reasonable to suggest that the Ahoms engaged about 1000 war-boats against Mir Jumla and so were probably more than three times of Mir Jumla's naval strength.⁷² We know very little of the naval organisation of the Ahoms and the personnel of such a large flotilla. The names of one or two of the Ahom officers are only known. The Naubaicha had an allotment of 1000 men for manning the royal boats, while the Nausalia Phukan was entrusted with one thousand carpenters for building and repairing the boats.

According to Wade, the Ahom mariners were inferior to the Mughals in regard to navigation in the open sea. They possessed no necessary skill in the use of artillery. Even "the bridges over the rivers were sometimes constructed by workmen imported from Bengal as the local people did not possess the necessary skill."⁷³ As regards the armament used by the Ahom naval troopers, the author of the *Padishanamah* writes, "The Ahom naval soldiers mostly use bows, and arrows and matchlocks but do not come up in courage to the Muhammadan soldiers."⁷⁴ There is reference to artillery used by the Ahom naval troopers. As regards naval strategy, the Ahoms were definitely inferior to the Mughals. The Ahom frontier forts were mainly meant for foot soldiers, although surrounding the fort-walls all through, ran deep ditches and contingents of heavy war-boats were stationed to safeguard them. The Ahoms do not appear to have cared to protect the river routes to and from Bengal nor they had any sort of naval posts at strategic places. In naval encounters the Ahoms had to depend on the massiveness of their war-boats rather than on nautical excellence. Further, the immobility of the heavy 'bacharis' made fighting at close quarters pretty risky and enough space was required for their heavy boats to move about freely.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Fathiya, *Vide, op. cit.*

⁷² Bhattacharyya, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

⁷³ *Annual Asiatic Register*, 1805.

⁷⁴ *Vide, J. A. S. B.*, 1872.

⁷⁵ Bhattacharyya, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

The course and duration of the Ahom-Mughal contests were largely determined by the physical features of the Brahmaputra valley. From the physical configuration of Assam, it will be clear that the route of an invading army from Bengal must lie along the Brahmaputra river and the most effective and essential instrument of war would be the fleet. The banks of the Brahmaputra particularly in lower Assam being skirted by hillocks covered with forests, the land army from the side of Bengal, must proceed slowly and continuously along the banks in close co-operation with the fleet. "Control over the Brahmaputra—the great highway of aggression as well as of defence, being the crux of the whole situation, naval battles would be decisive factors and land fighting and siege-operation merely subsidiary issues."⁷⁶ The success of an invasion from outside would ultimately depend upon the destruction of the naval strength of the Ahoms, the completion of the return-journey from Assam before the advent of the rains and the maintenance of the communication with the fleet.

During the viceroyalty of Prince Shuja, the Mughal 'nawara' suffered decay and in his wars with Mir Jumla, it was completely destroyed. Hence Mir Jumla had to build the nawara anew. Within a short time, Mir Jumla re-built the nawara and impressed a number of Europeans into the naval service. Certain Muscovites also were impressed in the 'nawara'. In the Assam campaign of Mir Jumla, the Mughal flotilla consisted of 323 war-boats of the following kinds : 159 'kosas', 48 'jalias', 10 'ghurabs', 7 'parindas', 4 'bajras', 50 'pattelas', 2 'salbs', 1 'pital', 1 'bhar', 2 'balams', 10 'khagiris', 5 'mahalgoris', 24 'palwars' and other small boats.⁷⁷ The Mughal fleet also included a few 'bepari' (traders) boats besides the boats noted above for carrying provisions and munitions while the big barges carried the wives of the persons of quality that followed the army. The most powerful of these boats were the 'ghurabs' and floating batteries in charge of the Dutch each towed by 4 'kosas' and carrying 14 guns and a crew of 50 or 60 men. Besides the Portuguese, the highest

⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 43.

⁷⁷ Vide, *J. A. S. B.*, 1872, p. 73.

naval officers, there were a few English and Dutch mariners too. Mir Jumla had a good opinion of the European sea-fighters, especially the Portuguese and Dutch gunners.⁷⁸

It is difficult to ascertain how many Ahom vessels were employed actually in the naval war at Kaliabar on 3rd March 1662. But their naval defeat did not mean the total destruction of the Ahom fleet. The defeat only crippled the naval power of the Ahoms to some extent. Besides the vessels actually engaged in the naval war above Kaliabar, many vessels were found intact in the Ahom King's dockyards, 'nausals' as they were called, after the war. There were two such dockyards, one at Trimohani (the confluence of the Dikhu and Dihing rivers) and the other at Garhgaon beyond Lakhau, and these dockyards were inspected personally by Mir Jumla. The latter found about 100 'bacharis' under the 'chhapars' or thatches measuring 70, 80 and 120 cubits long. In the dockyard of Garhgaon, the Ahoms burnt about 120 well decorated and well-built sea-going vessels so that they might not be used by the Mughals. These bacharis were huge in size. After the fall of Garhgaon, the Ahom capital, Mir Jumla seized about 1000 sea-going vessels each manned by 60 or 70 sailors. Hence it will be reasonable to suppose that the Ahoms possessed more vessels than the Mughals although it is not certain whether they employed all of them in the naval war against the Mughals.

MARCH OF THE IMPERIAL ARMY AND FLEET

Having completed the necessary preparations and having raised a new flotilla, Mir Jumla embarked on his Kuch-Behar campaign in November 1661. After completing the Kuch-Behar campaign, Mir Jumla with an army consisting of about 12000 cavalry, 30,000 infantry and a flotilla of war-boats of which the Portuguese and the Dutch led the van numbering about 323 boats, left Kuch-Behar on 4th January 1662 and moving by way of Gharaghat on the right bank of the Karatoya river reached the Brahmaputra five days later. The army was ordered to

⁷⁸ Account of Glanius, Vide, *Bengal—Past and Present*, 1925, p. 15. Glanius was a Dutch Captain in the imperial fleet.

march in close co-operation with the fleet. Dilir Khan led the vanguard, Mir Murtaza was put in charge of communication while the fleet was placed in charge of admiral Ibn Husain assisted by two subordinate admirals, Jamal Khan and Manawar Khan. Fort after fort of the Ahoms fell into the hands of the imperialists. Jogigopa at the mouth of the Manas river (opposite Goalpara), Srighat at the mouth of Bar Nadi, Pandu and Kajali at the mouth of the Kallang river—all these strategic posts were evacuated by the Ahoms. All along the land army proceeded in close cooperation of the fleet. It appears to be strange that though the Ahom fleet was in no way inferior in strength and number to the imperial fleet, it did not come forward to intercept the progress of the imperial fleet till the latter reached Kajali.

THE NAVAL BATTLE OFF KALIABAR

After unspeakable hardship and fatigue, the Mughal army arrived at a place called Kaliabar in the Nowgong district. It was off Kaliabar that the great naval battle was fought on 3rd March 1662. On account of the hills skirting the river Brahmaputra at this point onward, the imperial army had to move away from the bank, cut off from their fleet.⁷⁹ This temporary isolation of the invading army and the navy gave the Ahoms the desired opportunity to launch a vigorous attack. The isolation of the imperial fleet and the accidental absence of its admiral Ibn Husain (with some of the ships) from the main fleet emboldened the Ahoms to destroy the imperial fleet.

As a matter of fact, the imperial fleet was without able guidance due to the absence of its chief admiral. The Ahoms also marked another weakness of the imperial fleet. The two divisions of the imperial fleet under Jamal Khan and Manawar Khan became separated at this stage from each other by a distance of a few miles. Hence the absence of the chief admiral, the separation of the land army from the fleet and the separation between the two divisions of the imperial fleet, all these weakened the imperial fleet and encouraged the Ahoms thereby to launch an attack upon the imperial fleet.

⁷⁹ Fathiya, Vide, *J. A. S. B.*, 1872, p. 72.

In the night of 3rd March 1662, when the imperial fleet had just anchored above Kaliabar, an Ahom armada of 700-800 ships under its admiral Bargohain suddenly appeared and made a vigorous assault upon the imperial fleet. Glanius says that the enemy's fleet consisted of 600 ships.⁸⁰ It appeared as if the Ahom navy would crush the imperial fleet by its overwhelming numerical strength. The war-cry of the Ahom naval soldiers each armed with shields, spears, bows and arrows and the heavy cannonading from the Ahom fleet gave rise to a ear-deafening sound. The main Ahom fleet remained in the mid-stream while its two divisions mainly composed of 'ghurabs' and 'jalias', slowly advanced towards the two banks of the river possibly with a view to surround the imperial fleet discharging cannon and stones all the way. The Ahoms also surprised the Dutch ships of the imperial fleet. The Portuguese vessels were saved from the imminent danger of being swallowed up only by the force of the current which carried the Ahom fleet far down the stream. The imperial ships with the river current against them had a difficult time, yet they braved the attack of the Ahom fleet throughout the night.

The imperial crew under Manawar Khan bravely held their own position with 30 vessels in that unequal contest till the arrival of the second division of the imperial fleet under Jamal Khan which enabled Manawar Khan to send immediate succour to the hard-pressed Dutchmen. As soon as the ships under the Dutch cast anchor with the help of Manawar's fleet, Manawar Khan left them assuring them of his return with the whole fleet next morning.⁸¹ Before Manawar had gone far, six Ahom vessels with much speed and discharging cannon continuously appeared before the Dutch ships. The Dutch ships very skilfully managed to escape. But within half an hour eight or nine of the enemy's vessels advanced upon the Dutch ships whereupon the Dutchmen sheltered themselves under the cover of the Portuguese vessels which were better equipped. The pursuing Ahom vessels could not proceed further due to adverse currents and wind although

⁸⁰ Glanius, Vide, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

they created a great havoc.⁸² At day-break, the imperial admiral Ibn Husain joined the fleet of Jamal Khan and Manawar Khan with the main fleet. The 'majestic advance' of the main imperial fleet—slowly and steadily and in perfect order—impressed the Dutch and Portuguese very much. The huge masts of the ships, the flags of various colours and sizes flying at the top of the masts and the cannon of various sizes planted at the rear and front of the vessels filled the Ahom mariners with terror. While, on the other hand, this inspired confidence among the imperial naval troopers. The whole fleet of which the Dutch and the Portuguese led the van were in good order and advanced towards the Ahom fleet "as fast as the little wind which then blew would permit them". Glanius writes, "Notwithstanding the forces of the current and the great advantages the enemy has over us, we got the wind of them and from that time, never ceased firing upon them and at length were seconded by our whole fleet."⁸³ Heavy cannonading from the imperial fleet caused considerable damage to the Ahom fleet. The Ahom 'bacharis' (about 50 in number) made a desperate attempt upon the imperial van led by the Dutch and the Portuguese. The Ahom naval troopers showered stones, and arrows like rains upon the imperial ships in the van. The masts of some of the imperial ships broke down and some sails were torn to pieces. But the European sailors and gunners acquitted themselves creditably and pushed back the advancing Ahom 'bacharis' by sheer cannonading.⁸⁴ According to Manucci, the Portuguese vessels fell upon the Ahom vessels of the front line "with such impetuosity that in a little time the whole of their fleet was destroyed."⁸⁵

So long the imperial fleet had been fighting with the Ahom fleet without any support from the land army under Mir Jumla. However, meanwhile Mir Jumla on hearing of the night-long cannonade, had deputed Muhammad Mumin Beg to proceed with a contingent of the land army to relieve the hard-pressed fleet especially the Dutch and the Portuguese ships. The imperial

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Bhattacharyya, *op. cit.*, p. 329.

⁸⁵ Manucci, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 93.

general could not arrive near the fleet during the night. He did so early next morning. The arrival of the land army to the assistance of the fleet decided the issue. A great confusion arose in the ranks of the Ahom fleet and it took to flight hastily.⁸⁶ The Mughals gave a hot chase and captured over 300 Ahom ships each containing guns. As the smallest Ahom ship carried 70 men, at least 21,000 men were made prisoners of war. Many were killed by the pursuing imperial boats. The Ahom admiral, taken prisoner inspite of his disguise, was released at last. To add to the misfortune 300 Ahom vessels that escaped, unhappily cast anchor about a quarter of a league distance from the place where Mir Jumla was staying with his army. As soon as the retreating Ahom vessels came to sight, Mir Jumla ordered the artillery to open fire and as a result most of the ships were sunk, and the rest passed over to the other side of the bank "where our vessels pursued them with success."⁸⁷

Thus ended the naval battle above Kaliabar and with it the Ahom navy was totally annihilated.⁸⁸ The naval battle of Kaliabar was the most decisive event in the whole Assam campaign of Mir Jumla.

The causes of the disaster of the Ahom navy are not far to seek. The Ahoms had overwhelming superiority in numbers. Being up-stream, the current had been in their favour. At one stage it so appeared that the Mughal fleet would be totally crushed by the sheer pressure of the Ahom fleet. But the heavy Ahom 'bacharis' each manned by 60 or 70 men were less mobile than the Mughal 'kosas' which were light and swift-moving boats. The Ahom cannon planted on their boats were smaller in size and had little range-power as it is evident that heavy cannonading from the Ahom fleet even at a close-range failed to damage the Mughal boats to any considerable extent. The failure of the Ahom fleet to seize the hard-pressed Dutch vessels which were temporarily cut off from the main imperial fleet offers a glaring instance of the ineffectiveness of the Ahom fleet. Further, the

⁸⁶ Fathiya, *Vide, op. cit.*, p. 73.

⁸⁷ Glanius, *Vide, op. cit.*, p. 19.

⁸⁸ Bhattacharyya, *op. cit.*, p. 330.

close co-operation between the Mughal and the European admirals and their determined fighting enabled the imperial fleet to hold its own during the crisis. The timely deputation of Muhammad Mumin Beg by Mir Jumla to the hard-pressed imperial fleet turned the scale in favour of the imperialists.⁸⁹ According to Glanius, the Ahom admiral defied the Ahom King's order to lay in ambush and attack the imperial fleet along the strategic point of Gauhati and thus helped the imperial land army to supply provisions and war materials to the fleet. Talish writes that one wounded Ahom soldier told him that "the Mughal fleet could never have withstood one collision with the Ahom fleet" and Mughal advance would have been extremely difficult or rather impossible but for the perfect co-operation between the imperial fleet and their land-army. The total lack of cooperation between the Ahom fleet and their land army led to the ultimate disaster of the Ahom fleet.

5. THE NAVAL BATTLES OF CHITTAGONG—1666 (THE WARS WITH THE MAGH-FERINGHI PIRATES)

In the time of Aurangzeb, the Mughals fought the last noted naval battle with the Magh and Feringhi pirates in the eastern waters.

It is to be noted here that from the second decade of the 17th century, the Magh-Feringhi pirates constituted a serious menace to Mughal peace in Eastern India till the nest of the pirates, Chittagong was conquered by the Mughal viceroy of Bengal, Shaista Khan in the year 1666. Raids and plunders in the coastal region and carrying off the Mughal subjects were the main activities of these pirates. The Portuguese pirates carried on their depredations into the coastal regions of Eastern and Southern Bengal up to the coast of Orissa in close alliance with the local people of Chittagong commonly known as Maghs who were a race of equally competent seamen, equally cruel and living similarly on piracy like the Feringhis.

The main strongholds of the Portuguese pirates were Sondwip (the main island formed at the mouth of the Meghna),

⁸⁹ Sarkar, *Life of Mir Jumla*, p. 240.

Dianga (20 miles south of Chittagong) and Syriam on the coast of Arakan, while the stronghold of the Maghs was Chittagong. In fact, Chittagong, the hilly tract lying midway between Bengal on the north-west and Arakan on the south, was the greatest stronghold of the Eastern pirates. From Jogdia (on the little Feni river) where there was a Mughal outpost to Chittagong, lay a wilderness. On the skirt of the hills was a dense jungle without any vestige of habitation. Ninety-nine 'nullahs' which contain water even in seasons other than monsoons, intervene between Feni and Chittagong. "When Chittagong fell into the Magh hands, they increased the desolation of the region between Chittagong and Jagdia and closed the road so well that even wind could not pass through."⁹⁰ The Mughals built a strong naval fort on the bank of the Karnafuli river and maintained a large fleet to guard it.⁹¹

South-eastern Bengal, woven as it is by a net work of rivers and rivulets offered the seafaring people like the Maghs and the Feringhis the greatest scope for their instinct of adventure. "In a labyrinth of rivers the adventurers could dive and dart, appear and disappear, ravage the country and escape with impunity."⁹²

According to the Baharistan, the Arakan King (Magh-Raja) possessed ten thousand war-boats, besides infantry, elephants, while the Fathiya says "Their cannons are beyond numbering ; their flotilla exceeds the waves of the sea in number."⁹³ Without exaggeration, it is to be admitted that the Maghs in alliance with the Feringhis formed themselves into a great naval power in the 17th century and "kept the Mughals in perpetual terror".

The Maghs practically lived on the sea, played on the sea and hence acquired great skill in the naval art. "They lived in boats with their families and like nomades sailed from place to place like the Feringhis". The Baharistan, the Fathiya and Bernier's 'Traveis', all testify to the spacious country, the political pre-eminence and a large naval force of the Arakan King. Most

⁹⁰ Fathiya, Vide, *J.A.S.B.*, Vol. III, 1907, p. 421.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Campos, *A history of the Portuguese in Bengal*, p. 24.

⁹³ Fathiya, *op. cit.*, p. 420.

of the Magh ships were 'ghurabs' and 'jalias', 'khalus' and 'dhums'. Besides, in the Magh navy we find also big and small 'kartus' fitted with guns. These were light rowing boats, 60 to 80 feet long used in sea-fights. The 'khalus' and 'dhums' were larger than 'ghurabs'. They were so strongly made of timber with a hard core that the balls of zamburaks and small cannon could not pierce them.⁹⁴ The Magh fleet included also other types of boats called 'jahandars' and 'kosas' which were suitable for fighting not on high seas but in channels and lakes. The 'ghurabs', 'dhums' and 'jalias' normally carried heavy loads like soldiers and war-equipments, while the 'kartus' and 'jahandars' carried provisions. "It is a most surprising thing" says Tavernir, "to see with what speed these galleys are propelled by oars. Some of them are so long that they have upto 50 oars on each side, but there are not more than 2 men to each oar. You see some which are much decorated where the gold and azure have not been spared."⁹⁵

Most of the Magh war-boats were well equipped and armed with guns. Besides the trained Magh sailors, the Arakan king impressed into his service the Portuguese and Dutch admirals and gunners who were allowed a share of the booty. Land was assigned to the Feringhi captains for their maintenance.⁹⁶ In addition to the boats furnished with guns, a few boats with magazine called 'floating batteries' always accompanied the flotilla. Sometimes the captives were employed as sailors and menials. The naval strength of the Maghs was considerably augmented by impressing the Feringhis into their service. "The king of Raxhan (Arakan)", says Bernier, "in perpetual terror of the Mughals, kept these people for the defence of his frontier at a port called Chittagong, assigning them lands."⁹⁷ With their help, the Arakan king built vessels and prepared powder and manufactured cannon. To protect Chittagong and to plunder the neighbouring territories contiguous to Chittagong, the Arakan

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Vide, *Eastern Ballads*, Vol. IV, p. 112.

⁹⁶ *Fathiya*, Vide, *J.A.S.B.*, Vol. III, 1907, p. 421; Bernier, *Travels*, p. 175.

⁹⁷ Bernier, *Travels*, pp. 174-75.

king used to send ships to Chittagong "full of soldiers and artillery munitions under a Magh 'Karamkari' (commandant, Superintendent)". But Talish, the author of the *Fathiya*, says that after his alliance with the white pirates, the Magh king "did not send the Arakan fleet for the purpose of plundering."⁹⁸ In times of naval expeditions, the vessels were arranged according to their size and burden and the flotilla was placed in charge of a 'karamkari' without whose signal the fleet could not move and generally a 'Bangala Cane' as Manrique says, served the purpose of signalling, as fire-shot was the mode of signalling of the Feringhis. Each Magh fleet had a captain, pilots called 'Mirada' and over the entire flotilla there was the 'Karamkari' (commander-in-chief).

The Arakan king also possessed a number of pleasure boats "with halls, drawing rooms, galleries and anti-chambers, the whole divided into several compartments for the royal family. And all the apartments are worked with such neatness and beauty that for floating pleasure houses, it must be considered truly magnificent."⁹⁹ In these pleasure boats, the Arakan king usually spent two summer months "giving audiences and despatching business, the concourse being as great as when he holds his court on land."¹⁰⁰ In an engagement with the Feringhis in 1610, the Arakan king lost many ships. Amongst these ships, there was one the loss of which the king felt most. "It was of a vast big-ness and wonderful workmanship with several apartments like a palace, all covered with gold and ivory and yet the curiosity of the work surpassed all the rest."¹⁰¹

The Portuguese pirates, like the Maghs, were equally renowned for their naval dexterity and the possession of large number of vessels of various sizes, well equipped with artillery and other munitions, enabled them to establish their sway for some time over the Bay of Bengal. Their flotilla included 'kartus', 'jalias', 'frigates', small 'barks' and the like. Unlike their compatriots at Goa, who had a regular naval department both for carrying on

⁹⁸ *Fathiya*, Vide, *J.A.S.B.*, Vol. III, 1907, p. 420.

⁹⁹ Manrique, Vide, *Bengal—Past & Present*, Vol. XII, 1916.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Campos, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

trading and bucaneeing activities on the western coast under the command of an established government, the Feringhis had no such regular system in Eastern India excepting the "civilised white settlement at Hughli." At Goa "the ships are equipped at the expense of the king . . . and the soldiers paid from the king's purse."¹⁰² But no such privilege was enjoyed by the Feringhis (mostly 'out-laws') in Eastern waters. Here the individual Feringhi had his own boats manned by his own men and the expenses thereof born by himself. "Nevertheless, they must be subject to the General of the Armada, who is called Captain-Major" in times of naval expeditions.

The vessels of the Feringhis were generally small in size, their prows low, but their poops extremely high and had no keel. For a cabin, a kind of box was placed on poop, large enough to hold one bed. For defence, there were many bundles of lances on board. About the smallness of the size of the Feringhi vessels, Pyrard also confirms that "on board ship, there is so little room that when you lie down, you can hardly stretch yourself at full length."¹⁰³ But they had vessels of bigger sizes also. While sailing, the Feringhis used tents of palm-leaves for the purpose of protecting them from rain and slept on mats and mattresses or carpets of Persia which were folded up and laid aside in the morning.

In their naval operations, the Feringhis used the swift-going crafts called 'galleys' or 'galliot'. These vessels contained 15 to 20 benches on each side with one man to each oar and could accommodate as many as 100 persons. In the smallest ones, there was provision for 40 to 50 'men at arms'. Their 'kartus' could accommodate 15 to 20 men, besides artillery and other munitions. They employed native sailors called 'lascars' besides their own nationals. They always kept native contractors for the 'native-hands' "who received their (native sailors) wages in a lump."¹⁰⁴ The native sailors were allowed to take their wives and children with them on their voyages. Before embarkation,

¹⁰² Pyrard, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 118.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

¹⁰⁴ Linschoten, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 267.

money was advanced to the mariners and soldiers and they were also provided with clothes, arms and other commodities.¹⁰⁵

In the territories of the Arakan king, the Feringhis formed the backbone of the Magh navy and their wives enjoyed the privilege of entering the Magh queen's private apartment. The Arakan king granted them 'bilatas' or revenue-producing lands "on the understanding that they maintained a certain force of their countrymen and also 'jalias' (boats)". The rowers both Feringhis and the natives lived on the captain's lands on condition of serving whenever called upon to do so. It was to the interest of the captains that the latter always endeavoured to keep the mariners and soldiers in good humour by inviting them often to banquets, giving them 'extras' from their own purses."¹⁰⁶ The Feringhis lived happily at Chittagong. Their settlement was called 'Feringhi bandar' on the south bank of the Karnafuli river. The Feringhi pirates, 'Harmads' (from armada) as they were commonly called, are described in the *Eastern Ballads* as short statured men, wearing trousers, red-coats and turbans on their heads. They kept scabbards bound to their waistbelts and guns in their hands. "They use corselets but little while they value highly those collars of buffalo hide and laced jerkins. On land they wear sailors' breeches. . . These are very short and tight and with them they were no shoes, for they say that shoes would deprive them of a firm footing on the vessel whether in the rigging or on the deck."¹⁰⁷ Some of them carried telescopes to survey the merchant ships in the Bay from a distance for the purpose of plunder. "Swift are the small boats of the pirates which pass over the Bay like birds over the sky. The 'harmads' do not at all care for their lives, they are a set of desperate people and in naval fights they show unflinching courage and tact."¹⁰⁸

The Feringhis introduced a new element with their fast sloops and new methods of ship-building so that piratical operations were carried more from the sea and rivers of the delta.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Pyrard, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

¹⁰⁸ *Eastern Ballads*, Vol. IV, Part I, p. 43.

¹⁰⁹ Campos, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

MUGHAL PREPARATIONS AGAINST THE PIRATES

In 1664 Shaista Khan was appointed Mughal viceroy of Bengal with definite instructions from the Emperor to conquer Chittagong and thereby to put an end to the piratical activities of the Maghs and the Feringhis.

At first the prospect appeared hopeless, because the Maghs and their associates the Feringhis were flushed with a long and unbroken course of victories, while the Bengali troops and sailors were utterly terrified and the Mughal flotilla in Eastern India had been woefully depleted by prince Shuja's negligent administration and the disaster of the Assam campaign of Mir Jumla. It was proved in the earlier Chittagong expeditions (1617 and 1621) against the Maghs that without a powerful navy well supported by a land army, the conquest of Chittagong was well nigh impossible. But after Mir Jumla's Assam campaign in 1663, the Mughal 'nawara' completely decayed and "the name only remained in Bengal".

However, Shaista Khan's energy and perseverance overcame every obstacle. He made strenuous efforts to revive the navy and planned out a grand naval strategy for the conquest of Chittagong. In the earlier chapter, Shaista Khan's efforts in building up a new navy have been detailed. Here it would suffice to say that within a short time after his coming to Dacca, Shaista Khan built nearly 300 war-vessels and got them ready in war-trim.

Having revived the navy and the naval force, Shaista Khan next set himself to secure suitable naval bases for the impending invasion. Sangramgarh, an outpost of the Mughals at the confluence of the Brahmaputra and the Ganges, provided a most suitable naval base. The viceroy ordered Muhammad Sharif, the Faujdar of Hughli, to go to Sangramgarh with men, officers and guns and build a naval fort there. Abul Hasan was posted there with 200 ships to patrol over the river and to keep watch over the movements of the pirates. Muhammad Beg with 100 ships was stationed at Dhapa with a view to reinforce Abul Hasan in times of emergency. Ziauddin Yusuf with a few war-boats was stationed at Laricol (13 miles west of Chandpur). Shaista Khan advised Yusuf to put pressure on the Feringhi merchants of

Laricol to "write to the pirates of Chittagong, offering assurances and hopes of imperial favours and rewards and thus make them come and enter the Mughal service."¹¹⁰ Yusuf too, was to send conciliatory letters of his own to them.

Having stationed war-ships at two strategic places, the next step in the campaign was the conquest of the island of Sondwip—only six hours' sail from Chittagong. Sondwip was a halfway house between Chittagong and Sangramgarh and formed an excellent naval base. In November 1665 a naval expedition was sent under Admiral Ibn Husain. The naval squadron was heavily equipped with heavy cannon. Having reached the coast of Sondwip, the Mughal gunners discharged fire from the ships and the Mughal soldiers got down from the ships and started pillaging the island. Dilawar, a run-away captain of the Mughal navy and the present ruler of Sondwip could not withstand the attack of the enemy and hence he fled away. Sondwip was thus conquered. Meanwhile a section of the Feringhis of Chittagong under their leader captain Moore deserted the Maghs. They escaped from Chittagong with their families in 42 'jalas' boats to the Mughal faujdar Farhad Khan at Noakhali.¹¹¹ The *Alamgirnamah* says "...the Feringhis started for service in Bengal with all their goods and ships. On the 19th December 1665, fifty 'jalbas' of the Feringhis, full of guns, muskets and munitions and all the Feringhi families reached Noakhali."¹¹² The Feringhi deserters were immediately impressed into the imperial service and captain Moore was offered a bounty of Rs. 2000.

"In fact, the coming over of the Feringhis was really the key to the conquest of Chittagong." The Feringhi captain urged an immediate attack on Chittagong before the Magh king could get time to bring up reinforcements from Arakan. His suggestion was accepted by Shaista Khan. The plan of the campaign was that the Mughal navy under Ibn Husain should creep along the coast while the land army under Buzrug Ummad Khan (Shaista Khan's eldest son) should march parallel to it, each supporting the other.

¹¹⁰ Fathiya, Vide, *J.A.S.B.*, Vol. III, 1907, p. 407.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 408.

¹¹² *Alamgirnamah*, p. 947.

The Feringhis with about forty vessels of their own should act as auxiliaries. Truly speaking, the Feringhis had to bear the brunt of the fight at the Bay. Noakhali was the starting point of the invading army. Mir Murtaza and other officers of the 'nawara' were ordered to go to Noakhali from Dacca and to join Farhad Khan and Captain Moore and other Feringhi pirates. It was decided that a number of heavy war-boats should remain anchored at Noakhali as reserves under an admiral and the main imperial flotilla while leaving Sondwip for Chittagong, should leave a few swift-moving 'kosas' there for the transportation of the soldiers in case of emergency. As a matter of fact, Noakhali and Sondwip were used as naval bases for feeding the expeditionary naval army.¹¹³ It was further decided to raise a fort on the river Feni at Jogdia. "As the river Feni joins the sea, it was feared that the enemy's ships might pass up the river and harass the imperial army's passage."¹¹⁴ Ibn Husain was ordered to advance with the fleet by the sea and Farhad Khan and Mir Murtaza were ordered to proceed by land in aid of the fleet. "The flotilla was to advance by sea and Buzrug Ummad Khan by its coast, in march and halt, the land and sea forces were never to be separated."¹¹⁵ The imperial fleet under Ibn Husain was composed of 288 ships as described below : 'Ghurabs' 21 ; 'Salb' 3 ; 'Kosa' 157 ; 'jalba' 96 ; 'bachari' 2 ; 'parenda' 6 ; and unidentified 3. On 14th January 1666, the Mughal army crossed the river Feni and entered the Arakanese territory. Ibn Husain advanced with the fleet by the sea in close co-operation with the land army. The fleet entered the Kumiria creek, only two marches short of Chittagong and landed wood-cutters to clear the jungle forward in the direction of Chittagong and behind towards the advancing land army.

FIRST NAVAL BATTLE—23RD JANUARY

On the evening of 22nd January, the scouts ('qarawals') of Ibn Husain brought the news that the Magh flotilla having come

¹¹³ *Chittagong District Gazetteer.*

¹¹⁴ Fathiya, *Vide, op. cit.*, p. 411.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

from Chittagong was staying in the creek of Kathalia, six hours' sail from their place. Ibn Husain got himself ready for the action. At night, he detached a few ships to the mouth of the creek to keep watch over the movements of the Magh fleet. Upon the news that the Magh fleet had started from the Kathalia channel to oppose the advancing imperial fleet, and it might appear immediately, Ibn Husain informed Buzrug Ummad Khan accordingly and he himself set out to attack the light squadron of the Maghs in the open sea near the mouth of the Kathalia channel, "though the wind has freshened and the sea was raging billows threatening to sink the imperial ships."¹¹⁶

Farhad Khan and Mir Murtaza advanced by land to cooperate with the navy following the road cleared by the men of the ships. Shortly the Magh fleet was sighted. Ten 'ghurabs' and fortyfive 'jalbas' of the enemy appeared before the imperial fleet and instantly started discharging guns. Captain Moore and other Feringhis who had been leading the Mughal van, boldly steered their ships up to the Magh fleet. Ibn Husain with the main fleet had been advancing behind the Feringhi ships. The Maghs could not resist the advancing Mughal fleet and so the Maghs of the 'ghurabs' jumped over board and their 'jalbas' took to flight. Ibn Husain, after seizing the Magh 'ghurabs' wanted to pursue the fleeing Magh fleet. "But the Bengal sailors who had never seen the vision of a victory over the Magh fleet, objected saying that the day's victory—the like of which even centenarians had not seen ought to content them."¹¹⁷ Hence Ibn Husain gave up the desire of pursuing the Magh fleet. Advancing a little from the place where the Magh 'ghurabs' had been captured, Ibn Husain decided to anchor there till evening and to return to the creek of Kumiria at night.

But the advancing Mughal fleet was stopped by the main Magh fleet. First two or three Magh ships with flags were sighted afar off. And then the main Magh fleet consisting of large ships called 'khalus' and 'dhums' came out of the Hurla creek. The Maghs had left the Kathalia creek that morning for

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 412.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

attacking the invading Mughal fleet and reached the creek of Hurla close to Kumiria, and "in their pride, left their larger ships called 'khalus' and 'dhums' and some other ships here and sent on only ten 'ghurabs' and 45 'jalbas' as sufficient for capturing the imperial flotilla."¹¹⁸ The two of three ships with flags that were sighted afar off were among these 'khalus' left in the creek. The Magh war-boats were arranged in two rows—the first row was composed of light boats and the second was composed of heavy 'ghurabs' furnished with heavy cannon. The sight of the main Magh fleet extremely frightened the sailors of the imperial fleet. But Ibn Husain cheered up the crew saying, "Now that the fugitive 'jalbas' (of the Magh fleet) have joined their larger fleet, the enemy have surely been seized with terror. It behoves us as brave men not to give the enemy time nor let the opportunity slip out of our grasp, but to attack them. . . ." ¹¹⁹ These words had the desired effects on the Bengali crew and they steered the fleet for Hurla.

The Maghs issued from the creek and stood at the sea in a battle array. The Mughal admiral Ibn Husain, realising the strength of the Magh fleet, felt that to run his small ships against the enemy's bigger ones was to court sure defeat. So he changed the strategy and decided to anchor in front of the enemy fleet and engage in firing till the arrival of his larger ships (salbs) when he would launch an attack upon the Magh fleet. Cannonading from the Mughal fleet continued and without, of course, any effect on the Magh fleet as the distance between the two fleet was quite wide. Ibn Husain sent his men to hurry up the 'salbs'. Throughout the night cannonading from the fleet of the both sides continued.

According to the Alamgirnamah, "After the first naval battle, the enemy fled. Ibn Husain with his light and swift ships gave chase and captured 10 'ghurabs' and three 'halias' (jalias) from them. Soon afterwards, the larger ships ('nawara-e-buzrug') of the enemy came in sight, for a second time, fought a long and severe fight and at sunset fled from the scene of action. Ibn Husain

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

pursued them, but as the enemy's ships entered the Karnafuli and his own larger ships had not come up with him, he thought it inadvisable to advance, but withdrew his fleet to a suitable place and passed the night in keeping watch."¹²⁰ The account of Talish about the first naval encounter with the Maghs almost corroborates the accounts given by the *Alamgirnamah*. It can be said with some amount of certainty that the first Mughal naval encounter with the Maghs was a drawn game and neither side could claim a decisive victory over the other.

SECOND NAVAL BATTLE—24TH JANUARY 1666

After watching the movements of the enemy fleet throughout the night, the imperialists, next morning (24th January), "flying their victorious banner, beating their drums and sounding their bugles and trumpets, advanced towards the enemy firing guns"¹²¹ in this order : first, the 'salbs', then the 'ghurabs' and last the 'jalbas' and 'kosas' side by side. The Maghs got frightened at the determined advance of the Mughal fleet and at once turned the heads of their large vessels away from the invading Mughal fleet, attached their 'jalbas' to them and began to tow back these big ships fighting during their flight. The Mughal fleet continued its advance in perfect order. The Magh fleet retreated down and entered the mouth of the Karnafuli river where they drew up their ships in line between Chittagong and an island in the mid-stream. The Mughal fleet advanced cautiously and entered the mouth of the Karnafuli river and proceeding further halted at a place called 'Feringhi-bandar'.

The southern bank (opposite the imperial line) of the river was defended by the Maghs by raising three bamboo stockades filled with artillery. As soon as the Mughal fleet entered the Karnafuli river and halted at 'Feringhi bandar', the Maghs opened fire from those stockades. The Mughal admiral Ibn Husain at once sent most of the ships to the river and many of the soldiers by the bank and made a violent charge upon the

¹²⁰ *Alamgirnamah*, p. 950.

¹²¹ Fathiya, *Vide, op. cit.*, p. 413.

Maghs. After some attempts, the Magh garrison of the stockades took to flight. Ibn Husain, thereupon, landed a party which burned the stockades, while the imperial fleet sailed up the river and made a violent charge upon the Magh fleet. The Mughal 'ghurabs' approached the Magh fleet and started cannonading, while the Mughal 'kosas' attacked the Magh fleet from the rear. The Magh fleet was about to be surrounded from all sides when the Maghs opened fire upon the imperial fleet from the Chittagong fort. As a result, a great battle ensued both on land and water. The main Mughal fleet dashed upon the Magh fleet. Captain Moore and other Feringhis who had been leading the van came closer to the Magh fleet under cover of fire and jumped upon some of the enemy boats, and put to sword many of the Magh sailors. After some hand-to-hand fight, the Maghs were vanquished and some of their sailors and soldiers jumped over board and the rest remaining in the ships surrendered. Many of the enemy's boats were sunk by Mughal fire while the rest 135 in number were seized. The victors rested in their ships that night a little below the Chittagong town. Next day (25th) the fort was besieged and bombarded by the Mughal fleet. The Magh garrison, rendered helpless by the destruction of their navy, resisted for the whole day and at last surrendered to Ibn Husain on 26th. Next morning, the imperial commander Buzrug Ummad Khan made a triumphal entry into the fort of Chittagong.¹²²

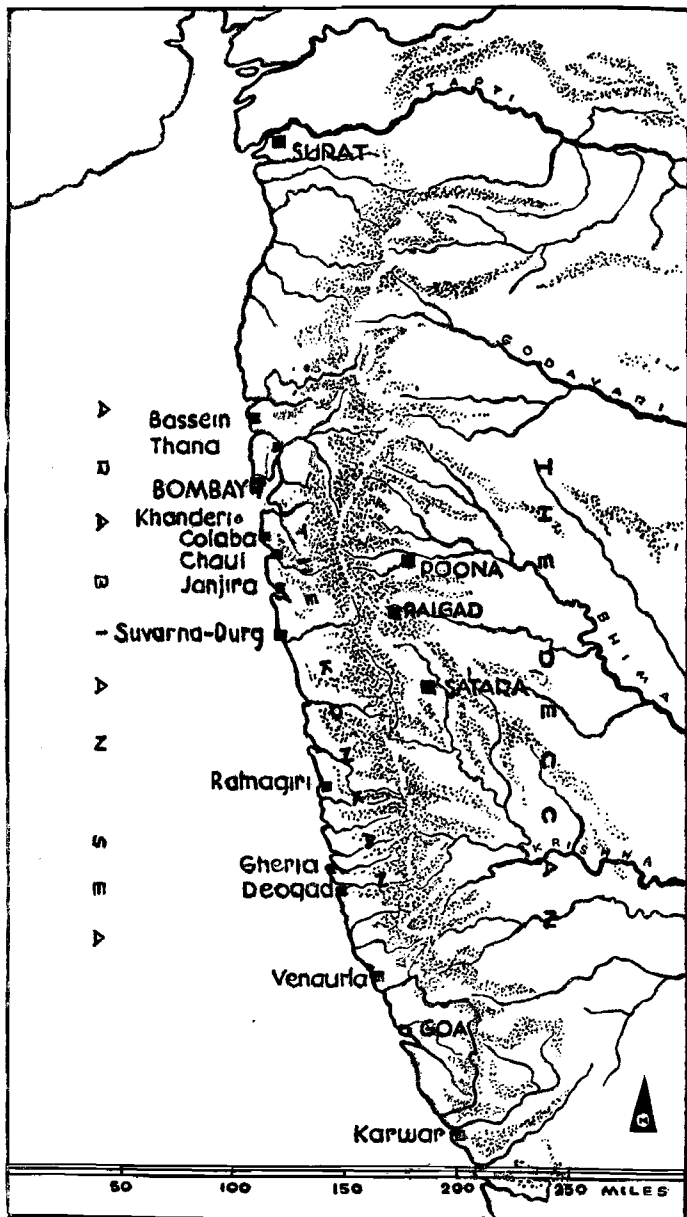
Thus after two great naval encounters, the nest of the pirates broke. It was the superior naval strategy and a naval force ably supported by a land army that ultimately accounted for the success of the Mughals.

¹²² Ibid., pp. 413-14; *Alamgirnamah*, p. 951.

THE MUGHAL NAVY
ON THE WESTERN COAST

During the Mughal period, merchant shipping was, doubtless, encouraged but the navy as a fighting force was woefully neglected on the western coast till the accession of Aurangzeb to the imperial throne of Delhi. From the date of Vasco da Gama's arrival at Calicut in 1498 till the middle of the 18th century while the Zamorins of Calicut, Shivaji and Kanhoji Angrey, the chief admiral of the Marathas, put up a very stubborn fight against the incursions of the European maritime powers in Indian waters in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries respectively, the Mughals utterly failed in this regard. The Mughals, no doubt, built up a great naval power in Eastern India which played a conspicuous part in that sector against the independent landlords of Bengal, the Ahoms and the Magh-Feringhi pirates, but they failed in building up a naval power of any consequence on the western and southern coasts of India. There were a number of ship-building centres and dockyards of the Mughals on the South-eastern and western coasts and they built a large number of vessels of various sizes and strength, they could not develop such a naval force as to face the challenge of the seafaring nations of Europe. Rather, the imperial Mughals till the middle of the 17th century depended much on these European nations for the security of the coastal region as well as for trade and commerce which augmented the royal exchequer.

Ships of considerable sizes were built of excellent timber at Masulipatam. In these ships the Mughals sailed for purpose of trade and pilgrimage to Mecca and Jeddah. The Mughal vessels also made long voyages to Arakan, Pegu and Tenasarim. The Mughal vessels which made annual voyages from Surat to Mecca were of huge size but were carelessly built and though they carried many guns, could not defend themselves properly. Each of these vessels carried sometimes as many as 1700 men on board



who sailed not only for trading purposes but also for visiting the tomb of the prophet at Medina.¹

The Mughal Empire touched the sea for the first time after the conquest of Gujarat by Emperor Akbar. It is true that Akbar realised the importance of sea and accordingly developed the department of 'nawara.' But he failed to realise the extent of the danger that the naval power of the European maritime nations would throw in the future. Of course, it is true at the same time that Akbar started ship-building industry within his empire and a large number of vessels were built at various places on the western and south-eastern coasts of India. Naval batteries were installed and sailors were recruited from the sea-faring tribes of Malabar. But Akbar failed to train up his own men as sailors and naval fighters, as Irvine writes, "There must have been Europeans serving in the capacity of common soldiers and some fugitive sailors from ships lying at Surat and Cambay. . . The emperor impressed the Portuguese either from Goa or from the Colonies of that nation settled about the mouth of the Ganges and Brahmaputra,"² in the naval department as craftsmen and artillery men and thus set the precedent of appointing Europeans which was followed by his successors. The result of such foreign recruitment was that the technical leadership of the navy passed into the Christian hands on the western coast. With the exception of Emperor Aurangzeb no other Mughal emperor succeeded in organising a strong naval force on the western and southern coasts. They all had to depend on the Europeans for the protection of the entire coast-line against the aggressions of the Marathas and depredations of the sea-rovers. Due to the absence of an organised naval force on the western and southern coasts, the Mughals were at the mercy of the Europeans like the Portuguese, the Dutch and the English on the high seas. Akbar at the height of his power could not afford protection to the Mecca pilgrims. Even the imperial ships could not proceed to the holy city unless provided with the Portuguese and other European maritime nations' passes. In Cambay and Surat, in the days of Akbar and Jahangir, the Mughals stationed their

¹ D. Laet, *The Empire of the Great Mogul*, p. 84.

² Irvine, *The army of the Indian Moghuls*, p. 172.

war-vessels, some of them being more than 1000 tons burden. In Surat alone, there were more than 100 well-built ships built by the English ship-wrights. But these ships dared not venture the sea without European passes and pilots.³ Some of the Mughal war-vessels carried 30 or 40 pieces of cannon but "it was more for show than service."⁴ During the reign of Jahangir, the imperial government had, besides war-vessels, about 900 merchantmen, a large number of frigates, but "they were more useful in creeks and rivers than on open seas."⁵

The Portuguese were the first among the European maritime powers to come to India and to establish their mastery over the Indian waters. They utilised fully the naval weakness of the Mughals on the western coast to their own advantage. They concluded a treaty with Emperor Jahangir on 7th June 1615 with a view to keeping the Dutch and the English out of India. Under the terms of this treaty the Mughal Emperor was prevented from having any sort of dealings with the Dutch and the English within the empire and the Portuguese on their part undertook upon themselves the responsibility of conducting the imperial ships to the Portuguese ports as well as protecting the imperial ships against the attacks of the Malabar pirates. The Portuguese reserved to themselves the right of collecting dues at Diu from the vessels navigating the Bay of Cambay.⁶ It is to be noted that the Portuguese concluded a treaty on the same line with Raja Paramananda of Bakla as early as 1559. The treaty of 1615 is a clear evidence of the dependence of the Mughals on the Europeans for their superior naval strength.

The Portuguese used to exact tribute from the Mughals in their own ports for the goods they imported from other ports and compelled even the Mughal princes and nobles to purchase for huge sums safe conduct from the Portuguese commonly called passports. "For these pass-ports, 3000, 4000, 5000 and some times even 8000 'mamudei' are demanded."⁷

³ Vide, Wheeler, *History of India*, Part II, pp. 499-500.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Vide, Danvers, *The Portuguese in India*, Vol. II, pp. 173-74.

⁷ De Laet, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

It is to be noted that free navigation of the sea in those days was denied to all who could not enforce their right. The Portuguese effectively claimed and exercised their sovereignty over the sea for a long time. No merchantman dared to undertake a voyage on the Arabian sea or the Indian ocean without first purchasing the permission of the Portuguese Governor of Goa. Even the Sovereign powers like those of Golkonda and Bijapur had to undergo this humiliation. The Portuguese 'cartazes' or permits were in all cases accompanied by vexatious demands. The permit holders were not allowed to import certain articles specified in the 'cartazes'; nor they were allowed to visit the ports of the Imam of Muscat and those of other enemies of the Portuguese. The Portuguese reserved to themselves the right of searching the vessels carrying the 'cartaz' to ascertain whether those conditions were fully observed.⁸

Thus the Portuguese succeeded in establishing their ascendancy over Indian waters and hence they were never prepared to allow any power whether Indian or foreign to challenge their supremacy. This attitude of the Portuguese led to troubles with other foreign powers like the Dutch and the English as well as the Mughals. As a matter of fact during the reigns of Jahangir and Shah Jahan the Mughal government suffered much from the extortions of the Portuguese.

The growing Portuguese atrocities on the high seas obliged the English to seek the protection of the Mughal government. But the Mughal government was not in a mood to grant such protection in the face of naval superiority of the Portuguese.⁹

Being exasperated at the indifference of the Mughal government, the English, in retaliation, laid an embargo on the Mughal ships that were despatched to Mecca and also on those of many Mughal merchants and thereby obstructing them in their voyages. Jahangir ordered the custom-governor at Surat to adjust the dispute without incensing the English. "At various times, many complaints about them (English) were laid before the king, until

⁸ Sen, *The Military System of the Marathas*, p. 154.

⁹ Letter from Combey to Surat, Nov. 14, 1622, Vide, *English Factories in India, 1622-23*, pp. 148-149.

displeased at hearing so many complaints, he (the Emperor) ordered the English to be seized"¹⁰ (in 1623) and that was accordingly done.

Like Jahangir, Shah Jahan also does not appear to have taken much interest in building up a naval power on the western coast. The Portuguese continued to maintain their obstinacy on the high seas. They used to supply Shah Jahan with the articles of overseas commerce. But at the same time, they used to inflict upon the Emperor various disasters and indignities as the Emperor had no powerful navy on the western coast. In the time of Shah Jahan the relations between the Mughals and the Portuguese grew very strained and frequently they came into clash with each other on the high seas. Whenever the Mughals came across the Portuguese in the rivers, they used to despatch a fire-raft laid on 16 war-vessels of different sizes laden with large quantities of fire-wood, pitch, salt-petre and sulphur, but their attempt to set fire to the enemy's flotilla mostly failed.¹¹ With the decline of the fortune of the Portuguese (after their expulsion from Hughli in 1632), the relations between the Mughals and the English improved considerably and the English were authorised by Shah Jahan to seize on all Portuguese vessels that the English might happen to come across in Indian waters.¹² Moreover, in order to obtain the assistance of the English fleet against the Portuguese, Shah Jahan, who entertained a high opinion of the naval prowess of the English Officers and the crew of the Company's ships, granted a farman to the English President of Surat on April 5, 1629 authorising him to make reprisals on all ships of the Portuguese at Sea and in ports within the Mughal empire and also intimating him that he (the Emperor) would require the assistance of the Company's ships in the next season.¹³ According to the terms of the farman, a squadron of 5 sails of the Company having had arrived at Surat in September 1630, was employed against the Portuguese. The Mughal government supplied the English fleet with additional cannon, ammunition and a few war-vessels.

¹⁰ Manucci, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 177.

¹¹ Saksena, *History of Shah Jahan*, p. 290.

¹² Low, *History of Indian Navy*, Vol. I, p. 47.

¹³ Bruce, *Annals*, Vol. I, p. 294.

The Mughal governor at Surat was instructed to keep a certain number of war-vessels ready at the port to strengthen the Company's squadron in case of emergency. The Portuguese viceroy of Goa, having also received meanwhile a reinforcement of nine war-ships and 2000 soldiers, resolved to anticipate the English Company in their hostile designs, projected the capture of Ormuz. But the project failed.¹⁴

It is true that Emperor Shah Jahan drove out the Portuguese from Hughli, but instead of making the Mughal 'nawara' a powerful force, he continued his dependence on the English naval force for the security of the eastern coast line. The Mughal governor of Orissa being alarmed at the naval superiority of the English, who had recently captured a Portuguese ship near the coast of Orissa, granted the English free-trade upon the following conditions: "That if the English ship or ships should at any time see any ship or ships or junks of any other vessel of the Nawab (Mughal viceroy) or any of his subjects in distress, either by foul weather or in danger of enemies or in any other extremity, that we (English) should help, aid and assist them to our power or if it happened they were in want of cables, anchors, water, victuals or any other necessaries whatsoever . . . that we, the said English should help them as we were able; likewise that we the said English should not make prize of any vessel belonging to any of the dominions of the said Nawab and that we, the said English should not make prize of any ship, vessel or vessels within the ports, rivers, roads or havens of the Nawab . . . but at the sea we might make prize of them if we could."¹⁵

The Mughal governor on his part, agreed thus, "I do give and grant to the English merchants free license to build shipping, small or great or any other vessel they think best and fittest for their occasion and uses . . ." ¹⁶ This license was issued on 3rd May 1633.

Emperor Aurangzeb was a ruler of different calibre whose imperial ambition "would not allow any earthly power to defy

¹⁴ Low, *History of Indian Navy*, Vol. I, p. 48.

¹⁵ Vide, Wilson, *Early Annals*, Vol. I, p. 10.

¹⁶ Vide, *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

the Emperor's authority". Hence he took a keen interest in strengthening the naval force both in Western and Eastern India. The following two incidents drew the Emperor's attention to the problem of protecting the sea coasts by organising a naval force. In the east, the Arakan fleet had attacked the Mughal fleet in Dacca waters destroying 160 ships of the fleet. Aurangzeb asked his viceroy Shaista Khan to take proper steps to revive the Mughal 'nawara' which was completely destroyed in the Assam campaign of Mir Jumla as stated earlier. To the credit of Shaista Khan, it should be admitted that the Mughal navy in the eastern waters was developed into a great fighting force and the piracy in the eastern waters was suppressed. While in Kashmir, Aurangzeb received a report that one of the imperial ships that was carrying pilgrims to Mecca had been captured and plundered by the European privateers in the Arabian sea. And unfortunately, some of the pilgrims belonged to the imperial harem. "This was the reason", writes Manucci "of his (Aurangzeb's) wishing to create a war-navy, to sweep the seas of the pirates and make himself powerful at sea". With this object in view, the Emperor asked his wazir Jafar Khan to create a strong fleet on the western coast. The wazir told Aurangzeb that His Majesty had no deficiency of money or timber or other necessary materials for constructing a fleet. But he was without the chief thing, that is to say, men to direct it. "The wazir warned the Emperor that he had no sailors, no pilots, no mariners ; that one ship manned with Europeans would rout 20 ships manned by the Moghuls ; that if he employed Europeans, they might slip away with ships and cargos and there could be no one to follow them. But the Emperor was bitten with a mania for building ships on European principles. He resolved that his subjects should be taught and trained on the European system."¹⁷ The Emperor suggested that the conduct of the fleet "might be entrusted to the Franks who lived on his pay." But Jafar Khan replied that "it would not be well to continue to foreigners-fugitives from their own country to a business of such importance ; those men might easily abscond, nor would they think of the Mughal soldiers, who might

¹⁷ Wheeler, *History of India*, Part II, pp. 349-50.

man the ships, of any account, and these, not being properly trained, would allow themselves to be completely controlled by these commanders. To all these Aurangzeb turned deaf ear and then issued an order to have a ship constructed. He wanted to have ocular demonstration of the difficulties raised by Jafar Khan. This order was taken to my (Manucci's) countrymen Ortencio Bronzoni . . . who made a small ship with its sails and rigging, guns and flags. When it was ready, it was launched on a great tank. The king and all the court assembled to behold a kind of machine which could not travel by land. Here the European artillerymen accustomed to navigation, went aboard the vessel and caused it to move in all directions by adjusting the sails and working the helm with great dexterity and cleverness. Then, as if engaging some other man-of-war, they discharged the cannon turning in all directions. On seeing all this, after reflecting on the construction of the boat and the dexterity required in handling it, Aurangzeb concluded that to sail over and fight on the ocean were not things for the people of Hindustan, but only suited to European alertness and boldness. Thus at last he abandoned the project entertained with such obstinacy."¹⁸ The statement of Manucci that Aurangzeb abandoned the project of building a powerful navy as it "only suited to European alertness and boldness" is utterly wrong and misconceived. There are ample evidences, on the contrary, to show that after Akbar, it was Aurangzeb who took a keen interest in developing a powerful navy both on the eastern and western coasts and the Mughal navy was at its best during his time. Panikkar has rightly observed that "In the interval between the breakdown of the Portuguese authority and the establishment of British supremacy, Indian naval interest witnessed a remarkable revival. The Admirals of the Mughals at Cambey and Janjira developed a naval power sufficiently strong to protect the commercial interests of the Empire . . . The Mughal navy at Surat which never counted for much joined the sides of Janjira who from that time (1670) till the rise of British naval power in Bombay, were a major power on the west coast and

¹⁸ Manucci, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 45-47.

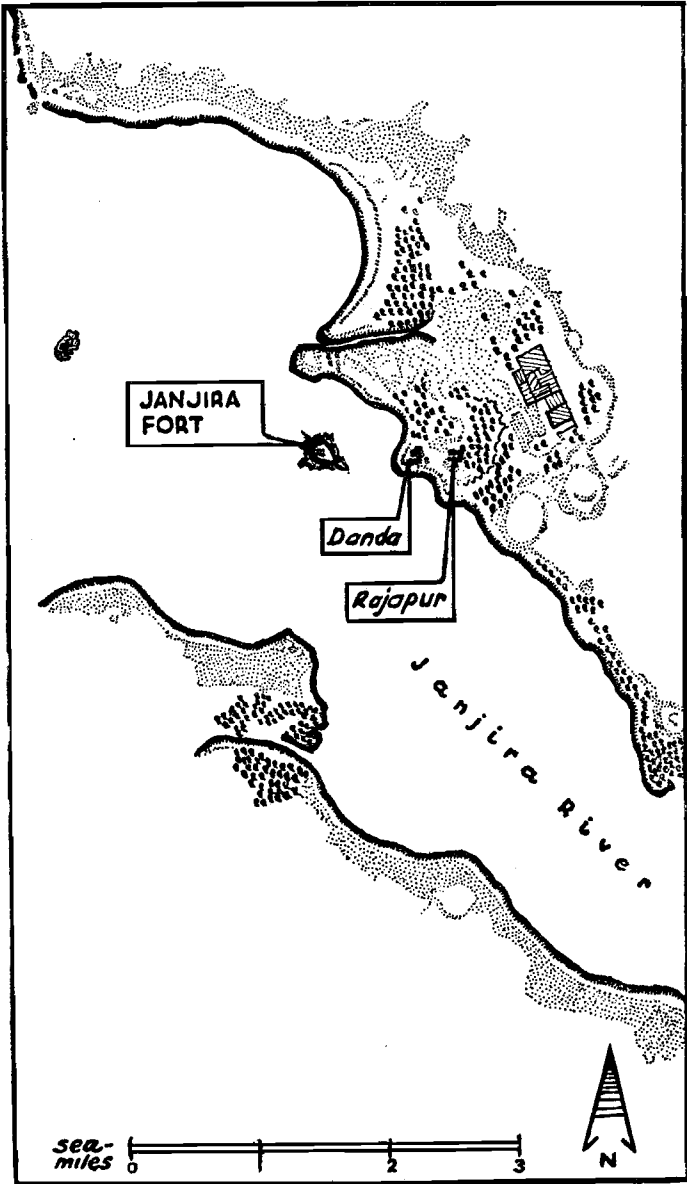
played a notable part in naval history.”¹⁹ As a matter of fact, it was the naval power of the Mughals under Aurangzeb that succeeded in destroying the strongholds of the Magh-Feringhi pirates on the Eastern coast and compelling the English to sue for peace with the Emperor on the western coast in 1680’s.

The great Malik Ambar was the founder of the Sidi naval power based on Janjira. The Sidis of Janjira and the Marathas were in a perpetual state of war with each other and their hostilities passed on from generation to generation. In 1648 with Shivaji’s capture of one of the forts of the Sidi, began a long war between the Marathas and the Sidis. The Sultans of Bijapur were the hereditary overlords of the Sidis. But in their war with the Marathas, the Sidis got no help or aid from the Bijapur Sultans. As a result, the Sidis decided to sever ties with Bijapur. They made overtures to Aurangzeb and agreed to hold their territories as vassals of the Mughals and to transfer the Bijapur fleet at their command to the services of the Mughals in return for the protection against the Marathas. Aurangzeb could not miss the opportunity as the proposal had the bright prospect of weakening Bijapur and fighting the Marathas from a position of strength. Hence Aurangzeb gladly accepted the offer. He sanctioned an annual grant of four lakhs of rupees to be paid to the Sidi for the maintenance of his fleet and sealed the new alliance by conferring the title of ‘Yakoot Khan’ upon Kassem Sidi. Orme writes, “Siddee Jore. . . was appointed the Mughal’s admiral with a large stipend on the revenue of Surat from whence he afterwards continually received succours against Sivaji. These events happened in the year 1660 and 1661 and such was the origin of the power of the Siddes under the Moghul.”²⁰ Low writes “The condition of his (Sidi’s) tenure was the maintenance of a Marine for the protection of the Mughal’s subjects trading to the Gulf of Persia and Arabia, from the Malabar pirates and Portuguese. The crews of his vessels in part were composed of his countrymen and a small African colony was thus formed in the Konkan.”²¹ According to Grant Duff the name of the

¹⁹ Panikkar, *India and the Indian Ocean*, p. 58.

²⁰ Orme, *Historical Fragments*, p. 10.

²¹ Low, *History of the Indian Navy*, Vol. I, p. 62 (F.N.).



Sidi admiral was Fateh Khan while Orme calls him Samboli who gave place in 1676 to Sidi Kassem.²²

With the appointment of the Sidi as Mughal admiral, the Mughal navy entered upon a new career on the western coast. The Mughal navy, henceforth, came to assume a force to be reckoned with by the Marathas as well as the European maritime powers. Shivaji's own failure to reduce Janjira led the Maratha king to consider the question of creating a powerful fleet for himself. The power of the Sidis after they received moral and material support of the Mughal Emperor had grown greatly and they were able to command the sea from Goa to Gujarat. "It was this mastery", writes Panikkar "of the Konkan coast that saved the Mughal power in the South during the life-time of Sivaji and again it was the same naval support that enabled Aurangzeb to undertake his last great campaign."²³ Doubtless, the Sidi's fleet was turned into the imperial fleet of the Mughals under Aurangzeb and it played a conspicuous part on the western coast against the Marathas and the English till the end of the 17th century.

Janjira is an island fortress thirty miles from Bombay. Danda Rajpur was the headquarters of the Sidis. Close to Danda Rajpur, separated by an arm of the sea, stands their impregnable fortress of Janjira. The ships that were constructed at Janjira were at the cost of the Sidi's themselves. But the ships that were constructed for the Sidis fleet at Surat and Gujarat were at the cost of the Mughal government. Under the order of Aurangzeb vessels of various sizes and burden were constructed at Surat and Gujarat and they were placed at the disposal of the Sidis. There was perfect co-operation between Sidi's own fleet and the Mughal fleet and every action of the Sidi admiral was controlled by the Mughal Emperor. "Most of the fleet (of the Sidis) consisted of vessels that had been built at Surat by the orders of Aurangzeb to assist Sidi against Sivaji. . . ."²⁴

The Marathas were hostile to both the Mughals and the Sidis of Janjira. The Marathas under Shivaji and his successors were

²² Ibid.

²³ Panikkar, *India and the Indian Ocean*, p. 58.

²⁴ *English Factories in India, 1670-77*, p. 55.

bent upon destroying the power of the Sidis by conquering Janjira, so as to weaken the Mughals on the western coast. Again the Mughal navy under the able leadership of the Sidis grew to be a serious challenge to the English and other European Powers on the western Coast.²⁵ And it was ultimately the frustration of the English to maintain its supremacy on the high seas in the face of the Mughal navy under the Sidis that led to the undeclared war with the Mughals in 1680's.

As has been told elsewhere that it was the strength of the Mughal naval power ably assisted by the Sidis that led Shivaji to create a fleet for himself. Shivaji with his fleet made an attack on Surat in January 1664. On his approach, the Mughal governor of Surat left the town in great terror and took shelter in the castle, while inhabitants of the town took to flight either in boats or in the neighbourhood.

The English President at Surat Oxinden and the Company's servants shut themselves up in the factory and called in the ships' crew for its defence, while their 'grabs' and 'gallivats' in the river took up defensive position. However this naval expedition of Shivaji ended in nothing. Surat was again menaced by Shivaji's navy in 1665. The English President Oxinden seized the opportunity while the Mughal officers at Surat had been looking for English protection, to send a mission to Broach to solicit from Aurangzeb's uncle, at this time Mughal governor of Gujarat, further confirmation of the Company's privileges. As the Mughal Emperor required the English assistance for the security of the western coast against the Marathas, granted a parwana allowing the English the whole of the customs of Surat for one year. The English President at Bombay, realising the importance of the Marine not only in advancing the Company's commercial interests but in extracting more concessions from the Mughals, paid much attention to its efficiency. In 1668, the English 'Bantam' furnished with eight guns, was employed as convoy to the Surat vessels of the Mughals which annually carried pilgrims to Jeddah.

²⁵ "The Siddis were considered the navigators of India and held themselves to be not inferior to the Europeans", Bruce, *Annals*, Vol. II, p. 51.

For this service, the English Company continued to enjoy trading privileges at Surat.²⁶

In 1669, the Mughal governor of Surat Amanat Khan forced the English, the Dutch and the French to execute a 'muchalka' (bond) whereby they were put under an obligation to protect and convoy the Mughal ships on the high seas and to make good all losses caused by the sea-rovers. The obligation of the Dutch under the agreement to convoy the pilgrim-ships to Mecca was carried out for three years to the great detriment of the Dutch Company which lost three or four ships.

The Dutch tried their best to secure an annulment of the bond of 1669 but to no effect.

The Mughals tried their best to utilise the services of the foreign ships against the sea-rovers. At the same time, the Mughal navy under the Siddis had been growing powerful in the coastal region causing much anxiety to the English at Bombay and the Marathas. Moreover as Hamilton writes. "The Mogul's fleet often winters there (Bombay), which makes provisions scarce and dear". (A. Hamilton—A new account of the East Indies—Vol. I, p. 121).

The port of Bombay, in the possession of the English, was a suitable place where the Mughal fleet and the fleet of the Sidi used to spend the monsoon. The English President of Bombay Aungier gave permission to four ships of the Mughal fleet to pass the monsoon in the Bombay harbour with a view to conciliate the Mughal Emperor as the Company's chief trade by this time was diverted from Surat. But at the same time, the English refused to allow the allied and more powerful fleet of the Sidi of Janjira to remain in the harbour. "Anxiety and sometimes disturbance to the peace of the island (Bombay) were caused by the almost annual visits of Sidi Sambal, the admiral of the Mughal fleet, to the port. These started in December 1672 and continued in 1673 and 1674 when his fleet succeeded in wintering at Mazagaon. . . . Aungier made strenuous efforts to prevent this but was hampered by the difficulty that an absolute refusal was bound to offend the Mughal Emperor and might have inconvenient repercussions at Surat. . . ." ²⁷ The

²⁶ Low, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-58.

²⁷ *English Factories in India 1670-77*, (New series), Vol. I, p. XI.

President, however, forced Sidi Sambal to accept conditions that helped to prevent the customary disturbances that his men committed ashore as well as raids from the harbour on the opposite mainland belonging to Shivaji. The latter and the Sidi as Mughal admiral, were engaged in bitter warfare on the western coast and Aungier had some troubles in persuading Shivaji that the English were not siding with the Sidi by allowing his fleet to stay in the port of Bombay.²⁸

The Mughal fleet under Sidi Sambal continued to play an important role in Bombay and Surat but it caused much embarrassment and anxiety to the English. The harbour was considered suitable for the Mughal navy to launch naval attacks upon Shivaji's territories as well as to pass the winter months. The Sidi demanded the freedom of the harbour for his fleet. Towards the end of December 1672, there arrived in Bombay some 35 vessels under the command of Sidi Sambal. The fleet anchored off Bombay on its way to Danda Rajapur. A proposal that they should be allowed freedom to enter the port had previously been turned down by Aungier. Since then the Sidi's fleet had done great damage down the coast by burning and plundering Shivaji's sea-ports and destroying over 500 of Shivaji's vessels.²⁹ A large number of war-boats were assembled in the river Tapti under the order of Aurangzeb to assist the Sidi in his operation against Shivaji. In August 1672 two Mughal frigates arrived at Surat from Gogo with about 1000 men and huge ammunition. The assembled Mughal vessels in the river Tapti moved towards Surat and joined the main fleet under Sidi Sambal. The Mughal fleet launched an attack upon Jaitapur at the mouth of the Rajapur river and caused much damage to the Maratha fleet.³⁰ Meanwhile Sidi Sambal had begun to give trouble by his persistent desire to winter his fleet at Bombay and in April 1673 the whole Mughal fleet under the Sidi consisting of 2 men-of-war, 5 frigates and some 15 grabs appeared at the mouth of the Bay. The

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 55-56.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 271.

English had no other alternative than to permit the Sidi's fleet to winter at Mazagaon "conditionally on good behaviour". Shivaji took much offence at the Sidi's obtaining permission to winter at Bombay. Aungier tried to remove Shivaji's resentment. "There were cogent reasons for the view that it was better to keep in both sides than to defy the Mughal by refusing his fleet the same shelter at the port as was accorded to Shivaji's vessels and all other strangers."³¹ Shivaji liked the English in Bombay to maintain strict neutrality in his war with the Mughals. But the regular entry of the Mughal fleet to the Bombay port offended Shivaji very much. As a matter of fact, the position of the English was a difficult one. "They dared not break with the Mughal, for they had so many factories in his empire ; they dared not break with Shivaji, for Shivaji could stop their supplies of fuel and provisions."³² Still the English preferred the weaker Sidi as a neighbour to the stronger Maratha and hence they did not hesitate to permit the Mughal fleet to use the Bombay harbour in the war against the Marathas.

However, Shivaji, not being satisfied with Aungier's argument, sent his general Morah Pundit with a large army to Surat, "intending to burn the fleet which had been built by the Mughal's order and was assembled in the river ready to sail with the Siddee as soon as the season would permit."³³ Morah Pundit sailed with the intention of destroying the Mughal vessel. He closely besieged the town of Bombay. But he failed to do any damage to the imperial vessels.³⁴ President Aungier permitted the four principal frigates of the Mughal fleet to be hauled in shore under the care and protection of the garrison, but "suffered none of the crews to stay with them and utterly refused any of the rest or of the Siddee's fleet, either vessels or men to remain in the harbour or island."³⁵ The Sidi, accordingly went away in discontent to get shelter at Janjira. But the Sidi's fleet could not enter Janjira as it was closely besieged by the Marathas. Hence Sidi Sambal

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

³² Sen, *The Military system of the Marathas*, p. 165.

³³ Orme, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

sent a message to the Mughal governor of Surat for immediate succour. Under Aurangzeb's order a fleet of two-men-of-war and several frigates was fitted out at Surat and it left with 2000 recruits as well as provisions and ammunition under the command of Sidi Kassem. After putting some men ashore at Bombay, the Mughal fleet sailed down the coast against Shivaji's fleet. Near Vengurla a naval battle was fought between the Mughal fleet and the Maratha fleet. Sidi Kassam proved his worth as an admiral and he succeeded in pushing back the Maratha fleet inspite of the latter's superiority in number. Sidi Kassem's fleet burnt Vengurla and other towns (1675).³⁶ In this encounter Sidi's fleet was strengthened with two large man-of-war, five frigates and two thousand men while Shivaji's fleet had been increased "to 57 sail of which 15 were 'grabs' and the rest 'gallivats', all crowded with men."³⁷

Sidi Sambal's growing arrogance and his series of attempts to build-up his own sphere of influence on the western coast even to the detriment of the interests of the Mughal government was viewed with alarm by Aurangzeb. Hence in July 1677 Sidi Kassem who was in Janjira was sent down with 150 men from Surat to Bombay to take command of the Mughal fleet from Sidi Sambal under the orders of Emperor Aurangzeb.³⁸ Orme writes "In July all the Siddee's vessels which had continued at Gingerah, came to Bombay in order to spare the provision of their own garrison ; they were commanded by Siddee Cassum who had superseded the influence and command of Siddee Sambal."³⁹

Meanwhile Shivaji's growing ascendancy on the sea alarmed the Mughals, the English and the Portuguese. Siddi Kassem was equally anxious for the preservation of his stronghold of Danda Rajapur "and by this concurrence of apprehensions, obtained the supplies of his equipment for the first time without grudge or regret from the government (English) of Surat. His fleet consisted of 2 large ships, 3 frigates of three masts and 15 stout gallivats."⁴⁰ Siddi Kassem with the Mughal fleet as well as of his

³⁶ *English Factories in India, 1670-77*, p. 122.

³⁷ Orme, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

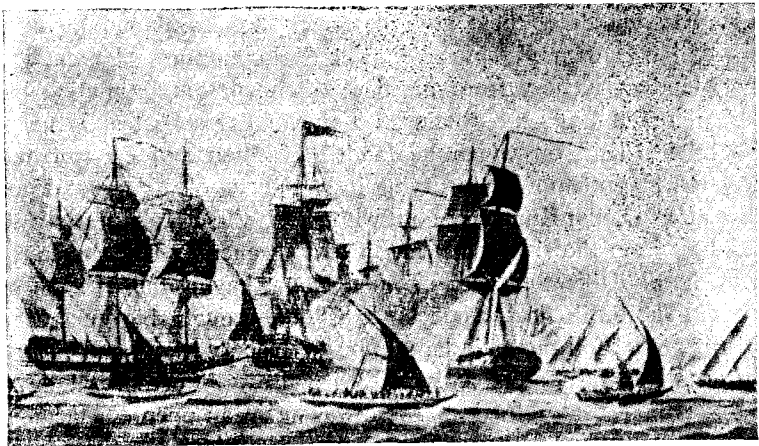
³⁸ *English Factories in India, 1670-77*, p. 174.

³⁹ Orme, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

own arrived at Bombay in November 1677 and after a conference with the English Council there, joined the Company's fleet off Kenery.⁴¹ With a strong determination to prevent the Sidi's depredations and to bring force to bear upon the English, Shivaji sent a naval force under Mai Naik and Daulat Khan to occupy the small island of Kenery. The twin islands of Henery and Kenery commanded the harbour of Bombay. Shivaji aimed at occupying these islands so as to surprise the Janjira fleet easily. Before the English and the Sidi could march upon the island of Kenery, Shivaji's admiral Daulat Khan took possession of it. (1679).

Sidi Kassem with his fleet having rowed round the island of Kenery, proposed to make an assault on it with his own men,



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provided the Company's vessels agreed to cover the landing. But the English Captain Keigwin discovered that the Sidi intended to keep the island for himself, if carried, and as Bombay might receive more detriment from it in the possession of the Sidi than from Shivaji, Keigwin avoided giving any assistance to the Sidi's fleet. However, the Siddi started cannonading the island from

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 104.

his two ships for several days which was returned by the Marathas, but with no effect on either side. During the encounter between the Sidi and the Marathas, no firing passed between the Company's fleet and the island. "This wariness", writes Orme, "confirmed what intelligence the Siddee had gained concerning the negotiation between Bombay and Sevaji and in order to break it, he sent off his gallivats in the night to attack the Corlahs in the harbour, where they burnt four towns. Some boats from the main (fleet) continued to get into the island and Daulat Cawn prepared to come out of Negotan with a numerous convoy laden with provisions and ammunition ; and all his grabs appeared one morning at the mouth of the river ; but on the approach of the two fleets from their stations, went in again ; the smaller vessels were then left to block the outlets ; but the Siddi fearing his own might be surprised, withdrew them and the watch was continued by only two of the Company's ships."⁴² The Sidi continued cannonading the island of Kenery from his fleet when without intimating his design to the English Captains, he anchored his fleet at Henery, the other island on which he landed his men and cannon and declared his intention of fortifying it as a check on Kenery. Four days after, Daulat Khan came out with all his vessels, about sixty in number, from the river of Negaton and a general naval encounter with the Sidi's fleet ensued. Daulat Khan, having failed in pushing out the Sidi's fleet, came back ashore, brought big guns to a raising ground on the main land opposite Henery island and started firing. The Sidi's fleet answered with fire. After several days' cannonading from both sides, there was again an open engagement on 27th January 1680 in which Daulat Khan lost 4 grabs and as many of the small vessels with 500 men killed and wounded.⁴³ "Better artillery and science prevailed in the end over number and Daulat Khan's fleet was put to flight".⁴⁴ The Sidi lost no vessels but only 10 men were killed. Having established his authority in the island of Henery, Sidi Kassem desisted from further attack on Shivaji's position at Kenery and sent a part of his troopers with

⁴² Ibid., p. 105.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 110.

⁴⁴ Sen, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

some of the smaller vessels to harbour at Mazagaon and with the larger vessels, he cruised about Danda Rajapur. For seizing the island of Henery, Sidi Kassem assigned "among other reasons for this measure that the Mughal had been offended at the treaty by the English with Shivaji."⁴⁵ As a matter of fact, the English entered into a treaty with Shivaji early in 1680 concerning the island of Kenery. The Sidi's navy, however, remained unbeaten and his stronghold of Janjira still defied the most strenuous efforts of the Marathas.

The Sidi's fleet continued to play a very important role in the western waters even in the reign of Sambhuji. Unlike his father, Sambhuji employed his whole fleet against the Sidi, but the result was disastrous. As a matter of fact, in the time of Sambhuji, the Mughal navy under the able guidance of Sidi Kassem grew very powerful on the western coast and it plundered the Maratha territories with impunity. Sambhuji tried on many occasions to destroy the naval base of Janjira. Once he secretly planted a saboteur in the Sidi's fort to blow up the Sidi's ammunition magazines. But the plan was miscarried.⁴⁶ The naval engagements between the Mughal navy under the Sidi and the Maratha navy under Sambhuji from time to time offered the land army of the Mughals grand opportunities to ravage the Maratha Kingdom freely.

The Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb being elated much with Sidi Kassem's continued success against Sambhuji, sent orders to hire more ships at Surat which were to reinforce his own fleet and that of the Sidi acting against the fleet of Sambhuji. The Mughal governor of Surat was specifically instructed to supply provisions and ammunition to the Sidi's fleet. An urgent message was sent to the English at Surat to the effect that nothing should be done against the assemblage of the Mughal ships at that port. In July 1682 Sambhuji's gallivats attempted to seize the island of Henery in the possession of the Sidi. But the Maratha ships were successfully beaten back by Sidi's fleet. The Sidi's gallivats at

⁴⁵ Bruce, *Annals*, Vol. II, p. 442.

⁴⁶ Malgonkar, *Kanhoji Angrey*, p. 43.

Bombay, elated with this success, sailed over to the Corlahs and brought away some of the principal inhabitants who purchased their protection by an annual tribute.⁴⁷ Meanwhile Sidi Kassem made an appeal to the Mughal Emperor for more trained mariners and gunners. Under the order of the Emperor, a large number of sailors were seduced from the English ships and they were sent to the Sidi's fleet. Bruce writes "The Mughals were in the habit of enlisting men from the English ships and weakened the crews."⁴⁸ Sambhuji threatened the English at Bombay with immediate invasion if they continued to admit the Sidi's fleet. But the English Presidency at Surat, being afraid of the displeasure of the Mughal Emperor, put no objection to the admittance of the Sidi's fleet at Bombay.⁴⁹

The growing ravaging of the Maratha coast by the Sidi and the admittance of his fleet at Bombay harbour exhausted the patience of Sambhuji.

So in October 1682, Sambhuji fitted out a grand fleet to find and destroy the Sidi's fleet. The Maratha fleet was composed of thirty big vessels and a number of small vessels. The Sidi had barely half the number of ships at his disposal. However, the sea was his natural element. Sidi Kassem himself led his squadron. He came out from Mazagaon with fifteen gallivats "crowded with his best men". "He carefully chose his position and waited for the Maratha fleet to appear like a hunter waiting at a game track. The two fleets came to grips at the mouth of the Thana River. Sambhuji's ships went charging in, carrying every inch of sail, as though in a thundering cavalry charge of the sea. It was a pathetic example of suicide warfare. The battle was short and decisive. The Maratha fleet was soundly defeated. Four of their ships, including the flagship, were captured by the Siddy and many other sunk. Only some half a dozen ships got away. It is interesting to take note of the fact the Maratha fleet was also led by a Siddy Misery, who had deserted to the

⁴⁷ Orme, *Historical Fragments*, pp. 136-37.

⁴⁸ Bruce, *Annals*, Vol. II, p. 358.

⁴⁹ Orme, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

Marathas.”⁵⁰ Orme writes, “At the end of four hours’ fight, the Siddee won the battle and captured four enemy gallivats.”⁵¹

Aurangzeb sent words of encouragement to Sidi Kassem for his brilliant naval success against the Maratha fleet. Meanwhile the fleet which the Emperor had ordered to be prepared at Surat was ready to sail in the beginning of November 1682. Orme writes “The Mughal fleet began to appear on the 28th of November and bringing the acquiescence of the Presidency of Surat, sailed into the harbour (Bombay) without the compliment of notice, and having anchored their vessels, landed 3000 soldiers at Mazagaon, who were all Moors and men of service, whose insolent deportment would have persuaded a stranger that the whole island belonged to them.”⁵² The Mughal fleet joined the Sidi’s fleet and the two fleets then sailed from Bombay in the beginning of February (1683). The Mughals made some descents on Sambhuji’s coasts but effected nothing either of damage or gain adequate to the strength and expense of their equipment. The Sidi’s fleet kept cruising near his station off Janjira. On 20th of April the Mughal fleet was called back to Surat, “The Siddee’s fleet continued after the departure of the Mughals with their usual licentiousness in the harbour and their usual insolence on shore.”⁵³

After conquering Bijapur, Aurangzeb next directed his full attention upon the Maratha forts in the Deccan. He selected two commanders—one for the land army and the other for the navy—for the task. Yettikad Khan was selected for the high land region and the Sidi of Janjira Kassem Khan for the Konkon. The Sidi’s fleet laid seige to Sagargad, Rajkot and Pali one after another and their Maratha commanders surrendered to the Sidi without any encounter. Flushed with such brilliant exploits, Sidi Kassem next advanced with his fleet to conquer the Maratha naval fort of Suvarna-durg in 1688. Suvarna-durg is an island fort, about a hundred miles south of Bombay. The Mughal technique of war was fully applied to the siege of Suvarna-durg. The Sidi’s fleet blockaded the fort from three sides cutting off

⁵⁰ Malgonkar, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-46.

⁵¹ Orme, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 150.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

escape and on the land side, the Sidi unembarked a considerable number of troops. Being thus pressed from all sides, the Maratha commander of Suvarna-durg at last handed over the fort to the Sidi.⁵⁴ It was a brilliant naval operation of the Sidi that led to the fall of Suvarna-durg so easily. The capture of this fort enhanced the reputation of Sidi Kassem as a great admiral.

While the Mughals had been ravaging the Maratha territories in the Deccan, Aurangzeb desired to capture Goa with a view to carrying on the war with the Maratha from the sea more effectively. So the Emperor demanded of the Portuguese a free passage up to Goa. In reply to the Emperor's demand, the Portuguese viceroy of Goa promised to allow a free passage up the river to the Emperor's fleet coming from Surat with supplies for the army under Prince Shah Alam. The Emperor ordered the Prince to undertake the voyage in the direction of Goa in order to "capture the island of Goa by treachery, thus becoming able thereafter to invade easily the territories of Shambhuji."⁵⁵ There was a rumour that Sambhuji also had been planning to seize Goa before it fell into the hands of the Mughals. Aurangzeb ordered his own fleet and that of the Sidi to sail down the coast to launch a naval attack upon Goa if it could not be taken peacefully.⁵⁶ Accordingly, the Sidi's fleet arrived at Surat from Janjira and joined the Mughal fleet under Prince Shah Alam. Thus a grand naval expedition was fitted out and in the beginning of 1684 the operation commenced. The Mughal fleet under the joint command of Shah Alam and the Sidi left Surat and escorting many transports arrived towards the end of January off the bar of Goa.⁵⁷ Prince Shah Alam sent an envoy to the viceroy of Goa as far as the river bank. The viceroy replied that he would certainly carry out which he had promised to the Emperor but the route of the voyage should be by the river of Bardes and not that of Goa. But the Mughal Prince insisted in his demand that the Mughal fleet must have a free passage through the river of Goa as the viceroy had promised to the Emperor. "During the dis-

⁵⁴ Malgonkar, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-53.

⁵⁵ Manucci, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 275.

⁵⁶ Orme, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

cussion", writes Manucci "the king's fleet which was at the harbour mouth (at Goa) continued to advance. . . . The viceroy hurried to the spot where he found that by the carelessness of the commandant of Aguada (a fort on the sea-coast at the north point of the Bay and outside the river of Goa), some 25 galliots had already entered and were close to the Fort of the Kings. When the Viceroy arrived, he ordered at once the discharge of three loaded cannon to intimidate them (Mughals) and cause their retirement. . . . when the Aguada fort became aware that the Fort of the kings declined to allow a passage, it too, fired several times in order to prevent the remainder of the fleet (Mughal) which was following for completing its purpose. Thus Goa was saved this time, for without a doubt, it would have been lost had the fleet (Mughal) entered Goa. The 25 galliots (of the Mughals) which took refuge behind the Fort of the Kings in a river which is called Nelur (about half a mile north-east of Aguada) remained there until the receipt of fresh orders from Shah Alam. . . . Shah Alam persisted that at least the galliots already in the river, behind the Fort of the Kings, should continue their course. He assigned as reasons that other ships being allowed to pass, they (Portuguese) might just as well allow the said galliots to go up."⁵⁸ But the Portuguese retorted that the ships that were allowed to pass were merchantmen as to which there was no prohibition. But in respect of the Mughal men-of-war, the Portuguese insisted on their withdrawal. Accordingly, Shah Alam ordered the gallivats to withdraw.

It appears from the above-noted narration of Manucci that the Mughal fleet had to retire in the face of superior naval strength of the Portuguese in Goa. It is also evident that the Mughals, though sovereign on land, had to seek permission of a foreign maritime power to enter its harbour, of course with the exception of Bombay harbour which the Mughal fleet used to visit of and on caring less for the permission of the English. About the failure of the expedition, it is to be noted that Sidi Kassem delayed the projected naval assault by his clamouring for money from the Mughal government as Orme writes "The Siddee's (fleet) was at

⁵⁸ Manucci, Vol. II, pp. 272-77.

Bombay, waiting for money from Surat without which he would not stir and did not sail until the beginning of Nov.”⁵⁹

In 1680's the Mughals and the English came into clash on high seas on the western coast. As to the causes of the conflict, it is stated in the *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* that “It is nearly eight years from which time the merchant ships of Surat, Arabia and Holi places are destroyed in the sea. There is a great peril to the ships of the Muslims. . . . Kindness, favour and regard towards the Feringhi's have crossed the limits. . . . Severity, harshness and hardness should be used in accomplishment of work. . . . It was stated before that the Feringhis (English) have raised mischief on the sea and that they captured ships. As their nefarious activities were not yet curbed, a royal order was issued to discontinue their trade relations with the Dutch in the empire. A mandane was issued to Abdul Hamid Khan that their (English) mercantile relations with Ahmedabad should be stopped. . . .”⁶⁰ The English took a serious view of the embargo put on their ships entering the Mughal ports as well as harassment to their traders. Hence they took reprisals and seized six Mughal vessels under Dutch colours by Captain Andrews. This event rendered it impossible to conceal actual hostilities from the eyes of the Mughals. And this they did certainly relying on their naval superiority. As Bruce writes “. . . the only restraint on his (Mughal emperor's) exactions was the superior naval power of both (English and Dutch) which the President emphatically describes to be ‘the only hold which they had to defend them.’”⁶¹ Captain Andrews was sent to Surat to seize on all Mughal vessels he might meet with on his passage or attempting to enter the port and to keep watch on the Sidi's fleet, “reported to consist of 200 gallivats.” It was not the intention of the English to destroy the Sidi's fleet “if he kept in port as it might have irritated the Mughal Emperor much”. But if the Sidi's fleet made an attempt to put to sea, it must be presumed to be under the orders of the Emperor with hostile intentions to Bombay. In that case it was

⁵⁹ Orme, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

⁶⁰ *Mirati-i-Ahmadi*, trans. by Lokhandwala, pp. 313, 328.

⁶¹ Bruce, *Annals*, Vol. II, pp. 142-43.

resolved by the English that two English ships Charles the Second and the Caesar were to attack the Sidi's fleet while crossing the Bar of Surat. In the encounter with the Mughal fleet, the English fleet had one hundred sail. It was further resolved that in the event of Captain Andrews conceiving the force of the Sidi to be too great, he was to retire to Bombay where he would be joined by fire-ships which were being equipped to oppose the lesser fleet of grabs fitting at Cambay for the invasion of Bombay.⁶²

The Mughal governor of Surat Muktiyar Khan was taking time either till he should hear of the progress of the English in Bengal or receive instructions from the Mughal Emperor to confirm or break off the negotiation. This duplicity was suspected by Sir John Child. The latter on 9th October 1688 embarked at Bombay and appeared off Surat with a fleet of seven ships and though on this occasion he might have taken or destroyed the whole of the Mughal fleet, he avoided hostilities as the capture of the Mughal fleet might have rendered negotiation at either of the places (Madras and Bengal) impracticable. Muktiyar Khan threw off the mask of friendship which he had so long assumed and seized and imprisoned Haris and Gladman on 26th December 1688. Sir John Child took reprisals. He voyaged down to Bombay with his fleet. On the way he fell in with a Mughal squadron and a convoy of trading vessels. The English fleet approached the Mughal squadron, which was consisted of 2 men-of-war and a few small vessels. It was proceeding to Surat to join the main Mughal fleet. A few shots from the English fleet drove the Mughal squadron further down the sea without of course inflicting any damage. But John Child, however, seized 40 of the Mughal trading vessels with all the sailors and merchandise. "While matters were in this situation", writes Bruce, "the Siddee's fleet consisting of eleven ships and 70 gallivats were at Danda Rajapur, compairing therefore, the recent conduct of Muchtar Khan with the appearance of this fleet near Bombay and the report that his intention was to invade the island, the General intimated to the Siddee that if the fleet should put to sea, he must conclude, it was with hostile intentions

⁶² Ibid., pp. 605-6.

against Bombay and therefore consider him as an enemy.”⁶³ But the Sidi with the entire Mughal fleet at his disposal made a naval attack upon Bombay and compelled the English to take shelter behind the fort walls. Sir John Child failed to come to the relief of the English at Bombay and the Sidi had been getting more and more demanding. The Mughal fleet under the Sidi continued cruising Bombay waters, while maintaining the naval blockade of Bombay. The Sidi, flushed with his success, began to use Mazagaon creek within a mile of the Bombay fort as his monsoon base. The Company’s officials dared not disputing his right to do so.⁶⁴ It is to be noted here that the English in Bengal at the same time were put to tight corner and they were expelled from Calcutta bag and baggage.

However negotiations continued and an English envoy was sent to the Emperor. “From the Mughal’s conduct towards the Portuguese, it was evident that he had determined to reduce the pretensions of the European maritime powers trading to India to a positive dependence on his authority.”⁶⁵ A treaty was concluded and a farman was issued to the English on 4th April 1690. At the time when the farman was delivered, the Sidi’s fleet had invaded Bombay and got possession of Mahim, Mazagaon and Sion and the English governor and his garrison were besieged in the town and castle. However, upon the Emperor’s order, the Sidi’s fleet withdrew and the English got back Mazagaon, Mahim and Sion.⁶⁶ Bruce writes that “. . . the real cause why the Emperor granted peace was that he might continue to avail himself of the protection afforded to his pilgrim-ships by the Bombay Marine.”⁶⁷

With the death of Sidi Kassem in 1707 ended the role of the Mughal navy on the western coast. From this time onwards the Maratha navy under Kanhoji Angrey came to play a glorious role on the western coast. With the advent of Angrey the Maratha navy became formidable. “The Mughal fleet was disappearing from the sea and the Sidi naval power was petering out.”⁶⁸

⁶³ Ibid., pp. 633-34.

⁶⁴ Malgonkar, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

⁶⁵ Bruce, *Annals*, Vol. II, p. 637.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 642.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Sridharan, *A maritime history of India*, p. 71.

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