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## Lesser Known Capitals of Bengal Before Calcutta: Geo-Historical Aspects of ‘Tanda’

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### ABSTRACT

Tanda was the capital of Sultan Sulaiman Khan Karrani, ruler of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, who shifted his capital from Gaur to Tanda in 1565. It was the capital of Bengal Sultanate till 1576, till Sulaiman's son Sultan Daud Khan, declared independence from the Mughals which cost him his kingdom and life in 1576. Tanda continued as the capital of Bengal Subah of the Mughals till Raja Man Singh shifted the capital to Rajmahal in 1595, except for a short period when the capital was shifted by Munim Khan to Gaur. Tanda was located at the juncture of Padma and Bhagirathi, about 15 miles from Gaur. As happened with many cities of Bengal located on the banks of rivers, Tanda also suffered the same fate. Tanda does not exist today. It is said that in about 1826, the city was destroyed by floods and disappeared into the river.

### 1.0 Introduction

Bengal has a rich history over hundreds of years and there have been many capitals in this part of the country over this period. Some capitals have coexisted over a period of time being capitals of different dynasties in the eastern and western half of Bengal. Or capitals of the same dynasty like Gaur and Bikrampur were the capitals of the Sena dynasty at the same time. Below please find a list of the capitals of Bengal which existed before Calcutta became the capital.

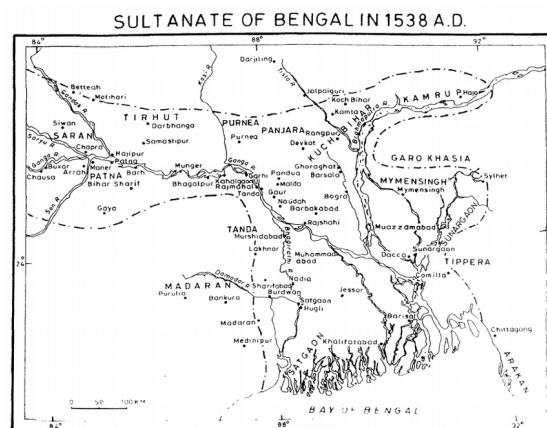
SL. NO.	NAME	REMARKS
1)	Bikrampur	Chandra dynasty
		Varman dynasty
		Sena dynasty

		Deva dynasty
2)	Devkot	Bakhtiyar Khilji
3)	Dhaka	Capital established by Islam Khan Chisti
4)	Dhumghat	Capital of Raja Pratapaditya, Jessore
5)	Ekdala	Alauddin Hussain Shah shifted capital from Gaur to Ekdala
6)	Gange	
7)	Gour/ Lakhnawati/ Lakhnauti/ Gauda	
8)	Iswaripur	Capital of Raja Pratapaditya Roy
9)	Jessore	Capital of Raja Basanta Roy
10)	Karnasuvarna	Maharaja Sasanka's capital
11)	Madhabpasha	Capital of Raja Ramchandra Basu of Chandradweep, son-in-law of Raja Pratapaditya
12)	Mahasthangarh	Capital of Pundravardhana
13)	Mahipal	Mahipala I, son of Vighrahapala II, liberated North and West Bengal from foreign powers and founded the capital in Mahipal.
14)	Munger	Mir Qasim's capital
15)	Murshidabad	Capital established by Murshid Quli Khan. Remained capital till British shifted capital to Calcutta
16)	Pandua/ Purruah/ Hazrat Pandua/ Firozabad/ Adina	Capital of Bengal Sultanate during Shamsuddin Ilyas Shah's reign, 14 <sup>th</sup> century
17)	Patikanagar	
18)	Priyangu	
19)	Rajmahal	Capital of Raja Man Singh. Shifted to Dhaka in 1608 by Islam Khan Capital of Prince Shah Shuja
20)	Ramavati	Rampal – Capital of Gaur kingdom
21)	Saptagram	
22)	Somapura	
23)	Sonargaon	Deva dynasty – 13 <sup>th</sup> century middle, Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah (14 <sup>th</sup> century) and his son Ikhtiyaruddin Ghazi Shah Isa Khan 16 <sup>th</sup> century.
24)	Tamralipta	Capital of ancient kingdom of Suhma/ Sumha
25)	Tanda	Karrani dynasty capital

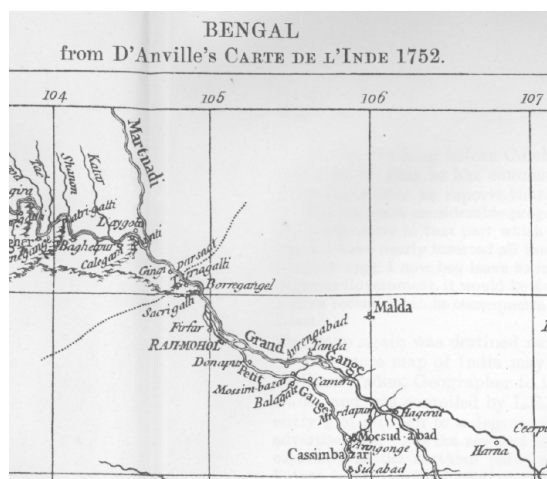
## 2.0 Tanda: Geographical location

Tanda had the advantage of having the narrow passes of Teliagarhi and Sikrigali as a natural first line of defence which led to it being chosen as a capital of Bengal. The city was also known as Tandah, Tanrah or Tarrah and was also referred to as Khawaspur Tanda, from the original name of the district in which it was situated, so as to differentiate the city from the Tanda in Oudh.

Tanda was located at the juncture where the Ganges separated into two branches in those days – the Bhagirathi, the lower portion of which is called the Hooghly, flowing beside Kolkata and the Padma. Major Rennel states that it was situated on the road from Rajmahal to Gaur. It was about 15 miles from Gaur and 12 miles from Teliagarhi pass. Dr. Buchanan Hamilton places Tanda in thana Kaliachak, to the south west of the ruins of Gaur, following the survey of Gaur by Henry Creighton, who carried out a research on the remains of Gour and Pandua. As happened with many cities, the change in course of the Ganges spelt doom for Tanda. It is said that in about 1826, the city was destroyed by floods and disappeared into the river. Once the capital – it exists no more.



SOURCE: URBANISATION UNDER THE SULTANS OF BENGAL, 1203 TO 1538 BY MD KHURSHID ALAM



SOURCE: HISTORICAL RECORDS OF THE SURVEY OF INDIA, 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY, MAPS, VOL I

Numismatic evidence presents that Tanda was a mint town in 1544 during the time of Sher Shah.

### 3.0 Capital of Karrani dynasty (1565-1576)

Tanda was the capital of the Bengal Sultanate from 1565 to 1576, after the capital was shifted from Gaur by Sultan Sulaiman Khan Karrani and thereafter till 1595 for the Mughals, except for a short period when the capital was shifted by Munim Khan to Gaur. The Bengal Sultanate was a Sunni Muslim monarchy with Abyssinian, Afghan, Turkish and Bengali Muslims. The Bengali Hindu community continued to play an important role in administration, armed forces, and arts. Persian was the official language while Bengali was the most widely spoken language.

The Karrani dynasty started with Taj Khan Karrani in 1564. He ruled for only a year. Sulaiman Karrani (1565 – 1572), Taj Khan's younger brother, who had been the governor of Bihar during Sher Shah's rule, established his independence in Bengal when the power of the Sur dynasty declined. Sulaiman accepted the suzerainty of the Mughal Emperor Akbar. He had the *khutba* read in Akbar's name and never sat on the throne nor struck coins in his name nor assumed any royal title. By these actions, Sulaiman Karrani ensured that the Mughal army never addressed themselves towards his kingdom, though for all practical purposes, he was an independent king. For the success of his reign, credit is given to his Wazir, Amir Lodi Khan, who possessed a keen political insight, wise moderation and tactfulness. During Sulaiman's reign, the kingdom extended from Kuch Bihar in the north to Puri in the south, Son River in Bihar in the west to Brahmaputra River in Assam in the east. Ibrahim Shah Suri, the fifth ruler of the Sur dynasty, after losing out to Adil Shah, had sought asylum in the court of Raja Telinga Mukundadeva of Kalinga in 1560. The Mughal Emperor Akbar sent an envoy to Raja Mukundadeva requesting him to surrender Ibrahim Suri. A similar request was made by Sulaiman Karrani also.

Raja Telinga Mukundadeva welcomed the envoy from Akbar, swore allegiance to Emperor Akbar and promised to hand over Ibrahim in case Sulaiman Karrani betrayed his allegiance to Akbar. To prevent Sulaiman Karrani from marching into Kalinga, Mukundadeva advanced as far as Saptagram in Hooghly in South Bengal and raised a military post there.

Earlier, Sulaiman had been badly beaten by Raja Mukundadeva and Raja Rudranarayan of Bhurishreshthapur and was waiting patiently for revenge. Akbar was preoccupied with siege of Chittor (1567-68) and could not help Mukunda Deva. Sulaiman grabbed this opportunity.

He sent his elder son Bayazid and general Kalapahar to chastise Mukundadeva. Raja Mukundadeva lost the battle and his life in the battle. The general of the Kalinga army Ramchandra Bhanja seized the vacant throne but was soon eliminated by Sulaiman. Ibrahim Suri was also captured and killed. Kalinga passed into Muslim possession (1568).

After establishing himself master of Kalinga, Sulaiman sent a section of his army, under Kalapahar, a Hindu, trapped into falling in love with Sulaiman's daughter and converted to Islam, to ransack the temple of Jagannath at Puri (1567-1568).

There are various accounts of the desecration and destruction of the Temple of Lord Jagannath given by Neamet Ullah, the official chronicle of the temple of Jagannath Temple *Madala Panji*, Abul Fazl, etc. It is said that the town of Puri was surrounded on four sides with temples and a deep trench. Sulaiman mounted his Afghans on 300 elephants. The Afghan army, unopposed, advanced with ease. The people of Puri were so lulled into security by centuries of freedom from foreign attack on their holy city that they disbelieved the first report of the approach of Muslims. But subsequent reports caused panic. Divya Simha, the Superintendent of Jagannath Temple removed the wooden image of Lord Jagannath and hid it at Chhapalai Hathipada, an island in the Chilka Lake.



TEMPLE OF LORD JAGANNATH AT PURI

In a manuscript, found near Khurda, it has been mentioned that the head man of a village named Koklo of Khurda, a traitor, Danpahanta Singh met Kalapahar and divulged the location of image of Lord Jagannath. Kalapahar brought back the image on the back of an elephant, took it to the sea shore near Kujang and burnt the image. The sacred Kalpavata tree was dug out and burnt. The temple of Jagannath was destroyed. The Brahmin ladies, adorned in their jewellery, hid behind the different temples of Jagannath without thinking of escaping. The Muslims rushed into the temple and took the women prisoners. An image of Krishna, with limbs of gold, adorned with ornaments and jewels and with eyes of Badakshani ruby was broken and thrown into a filthy place. There were seven other idols, all of gold

and each weighing five Akbari maunds, approximately 186.6 kilograms, which were carried away by the raiders. Neamet Ullah observes that the Muslims who had carried out the sacking, all died within a year, reduced to misery and distress.

Thereafter, Sulaiman addressed his attention to the Hindu Kingdom of Kuch Bihar in north Bengal, which was being ruled by Raja Naranarayan. His younger brother, Sukladhwaja got adventurous and marched into the dominions of Sulaiman in 1568. Repercussion in the shape of Kalapahar followed. Sukladhwaja lost the war badly and was imprisoned. Kalapahar demolished the temples at Kamakhya, Hajo and other places and returned to Bengal, having no intention of taking permanent possession of the country. A few years later, feeling the necessity of having good friends in the northern frontier to counter the hostility of the Mughals, Sukladhwaja was released.

On Sulaiman Karrani's death on 11th October 1572, his elder son Bayazid ascended the throne. Bayazid soon estranged the proud self-willed Afghan nobles by his insolence, harshness and extortions. His attempt to banish the Afghan veterans from Bengal forced the latter to hatch a conspiracy. Hanso, the nephew and son-in-law of Sulaiman Karrani, killed Bayazid after about five or six months. Unfortunately, Hanso could sit on the throne for only a week when he, in turn, was killed by the machinations of Wazir, Amir Lodi Khan, where after Daoud ascended the throne (1573 to 1576).

When Daoud ascended the throne, his coffers were brimming. He boasted of an army of 40,000 cavalry, 1,40,000 infantry, 3,500 elephants, 20,000 canons and a few hundred warships. Emboldened, Daoud felt that he should become independent of the Mughal rule. Although he was advised not to cast off his allegiance to Emperor Akbar, Daoud's lack of the foresight of his late father cost him his kingdom and life.

Payment of revenue to the Mughal court was stopped and coins were printed in the name of Daoud. He seized the fort at Jamania, on the bank of River Ganges, a frontier post of the Mughal Empire. Emperor Akbar was upset with this audacious action and ordered Munim Khan to chastise the aggressor.



SILVER COIN MINTED BY DAOUD KHAN KARRANI IN TANDA  
SOURCE – A SAHA'S BLOG ON BENGAL SULTAN COINS



Not only did Daoud buy Akbar's ire, he raised a host of enemies at home by wantonly insulting the Afghan veterans and treacherously murdering every kinsman who might have the slightest prospect of the throne. Even Wazir Amir Lodi Khan, to whom Taj Khan Karrani, Sulaiman Karrani and he Daoud himself owed success was not spared. Instigated by some selfish nobles like Qutlu Khan and Gujar Karrani, Daoud brought about a fatal breach with Lodi Khan by murdering his son-in-law and Taj Karrani's son, Yusuf. It was this breach in relation that brought the collapse of the Karrani dynasty and the establishment of the Mughals in Bengal.

While Daoud was busy settling matters, Gujar Khan, another estranged Afghan general, set up a son of Bayazid in Bihar. Apprised of this, Daoud despatched Lodi Khan to chastise Gujar Khan and to bring Bayazid's son dead or alive. The two estranged Afghan generals – Gujar Khan and Amir Lodi Khan met – the meeting could never deliver any good to Daoud, the person responsible for the estrangement.

About this time, Munim Khan had advanced to the border of Jaunpur to take possession of Bihar. Both Gujar Khan and Amir Lodi Khan met Munim Khan, came to terms with him and bought him off with presents and promises of loyalty.

Learning of the turn of events at Bihar, Daoud hastened there to crush Lodi Khan. Lodi Khan escaped to Rohtas and appealed to Munim Khan for protection. The Mughal General could not miss this opportunity. He despatched a Mughal force to assist Lodi Khan. Munim Khan himself moved closer to Lodi Khan so that they could meet and the affairs of Bengal and Bihar could be easily disposed of.

In the meantime, on Munim Khan's request, Akbar had sent Raja Todar Mal at the head of a large army to strengthen the hands of Munim Khan, who was stationed on the outskirts of Bihar. Munim Khan marched into Bihar, up to the confluence of rivers Gogra and Ganges at Trimohani, about 12 miles north of Arrah town. Within a short time Todar Mal arrived with the reinforcements. When the Mughal army was mustered and stood in array, the Afghans, who had built a new fort to confront the Mughals, took to their heels without offering any combat.

But all was not well for the Mughals. When they went forward to establish contact with Lodi Khan, they learnt he had reconciled with Daoud and would now give battle to the Mughals. The battle was fought on the bank of River Son. But Lodi Khan's gallantry caused

Daoud to be disturbed. Qutlu Khan and Gujar Khan did not fail to provide ill advice. Deciding to do away with Lodi Khan, Daoud sent an invitation to him to come and discuss on various aspects. When Lodi Khan arrived, he was arrested and put to death. Discord broke out among the Afghans which destroyed the chances of opposing the Mughals with success.

Daoud had retired to Patna and shut himself up in the fort. The imperial army put the fort under siege. But the Afghans were well equipped with ammunitions and provisions was not a problem as the fort had the River Ganges on one side and all the provisions were being brought in from Hajipur, located across the river. At a loss, Munim Khan begged the Emperor to come in person and assume charge of the campaign.

On 15<sup>th</sup> June 1574, Akbar left Agra by boat for Patna by the Jamuna and Ganges rivers, accompanied by many an illustrious officer – Raja Man Singh, Raja Birbal, Shahbaz Khan and Bhagwan Das, reaching Patna on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1574. Part of the army and the stores accompanied Akbar by the river route while the main army took the land route. Akbar concluded that to bring the Afghans to their knees, it was necessary to stop their supplies. Akbar decided to capture Hajipur first which was taken on 7<sup>th</sup> August 1574.



**AKBAR LEADS HIS ARMY INTO BATTLE AGAINST  
DAUD KHAN KARRANI, THE LAST SULTAN OF**

To prevent further bloodshed, Akbar made a proposal to Daoud that the differences should be settled by single combat. Daoud rejected the proposal. But seeing the huge army all around the fort, the host of cannons and no future succour of replenishment from Hajipur, the Afghans inside the fort were in deep distress as death was a certainty if the siege continued. They administered narcotics to Daud at night and carried him senseless to Bengal.

Patna fell on 9<sup>th</sup> August 1574. The Mughal gained abundant booty. Akbar immediately sent a detachment in pursuit of Daoud but they returned empty handed. Thereafter, Akbar detailed Munim Khan to head for Bengal with a force of 20,000 soldiers, intent on concluding the campaign successfully without giving time to the Afghans to rally. This was on 13<sup>th</sup> August 1574.



The Afghans could not make a stand. One after other, Monghyr, Bhagalpur and Kahalgaon fell to the Mughals. They arrived at Guna, to the west of Teliagarhi pass where Daoud was expected to make a stand against the imperialists. Accordingly, the fort was strengthened and Daoud personally was there with a large force.

The Mughals found it almost impossible to force their march through the pass. The local landlords, who submitted to the Mughals, came to the assistance of Munim Khan. The imperial army marched through a secret path through the territory of the Teli Raja. The Mughals suddenly appeared before Daoud. Confusion resulted and the Afghans took flight.

Munim Khan entered Tanda, the capital of Bengal, on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1574. In consultation with Raja Todar Mal, Munim Khan took up his quarters in Tanda to stabilise political and financial matters. Munim Khan, though advised otherwise, shifted the capital back from Tanda to Gaur in April 1575. But Gaur was an unhealthy place, malaria being rife there. An epidemic broke out. Munim Khan doubled back to Tanda but died on 23rd October 1575.

Tanda remained a mint town for another year.



BATTLE OF TUKARO  
DAOUD KHAN KARRANI RECEIVES A ROBE OF HONOUR FROM MUNIM KHAN

Daoud had escaped to Kalinga. Thereafter he tried twice to regain his kingdom which resulted in the Battle of Tukaroi in March 1575 and Battle of Rajmahal in July 1576. Daoud Karrani, the last independent Afghan ruler of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa was captured and beheaded at Rajmahal on 12th July 1576, and his head was sent to the Agra court. Emperor Akbar announced the creation of Bengal as one of the twelve Subahs, bordering Bihar and Orissa subahs, as well as Burma.

Tanda continued being the capital of Bengal till 1595 when Raja Man Singh shifted the capital from Tanda to Rajmahal on the other side of the Ganges. Fluctuations in the

course of the river were possibly again the reason of the transfer. After the removal of the capital, Tanda steadily died and was ultimately destroyed by the floods in 1826.

#### 4.0 Conclusion

We find Tanda once more being used by a Mughal Prince, Aurangzeb's brother Shah Shuja, in 1659. Shuja, hotly pursued by Aurangzeb's general Mir Jumla, had made Tanda his base, restoring the fortifications of the city. After this date, Tanda is not mentioned in history as the course of events drew the Mughal governors towards Rajmahal and then Dhaka.

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