PREFACE

The short-lived nawabship of Sirajuddaullah in Bengal constitutes a critical period in Anglo-Indian relations. The English victory over Sirajuddaullah had consequences which were permanent and profound in their nature. The nawab's defeat broke up the Indian government of Bengal and prepared the way for territorial expansion of the East India Company on the Indian sub-continent. It also changed the pattern of Anglo-Indian commercial relations. Prior to 1757 Bengal was the sink into which foreign bullion disappeared; after Plassey it became the mine from which vast amounts of wealth were drained without any return.

The purpose of this monograph is to examine the background, the causes, the nature and the consequences of the conflict between the English company and the nawab of Bengal. Over half a century ago S. C. Hill treated this subject in a long introduction of 212 pages prefixed to the three volume collection *Bengal in 1756-57*. Two writers dealing with the same historical period are bound to relate many of the same events, but I have avoided, as far as possible, any duplication of factual narrative. My approach to the subject has been considerably different from Hill's. He narrates events well, but he has made an inadequate analysis of the commercial relations between the Bengali government and the East India Company, which lay at the basis of the conflict. He has failed to interpret how a commercial corporation came to acquire political power in Bengal. Hill's historical curiosity has been greatly satisfied by relating the causes of the conflict to the avaricious and cruel nature of the nawab. In pursuit of this thesis he has, at times, suppressed evidence to the contrary, and on some other occasions has accepted the opinions of unreliable secondary sources in place of primary witnesses. Hill's view fails to take into account the vast changes in the political and economic climate of India, the changes in the status of the Company itself, which, in the mid-eighteenth century made the English and Bengali interests quite irreconcilable.

In this study I have approached the subject both from the economic and political standpoints. This has necessitated the use of the commercial records of the Company, *viz*: the Journals and Ledgers, and the European Manuscripts preserved in original in the Common-
wealth Relations Office, and the Ledgers of Imports and Exports, likewise preserved in the Public Record Office, both situated in London. While the 612 documents and other narratives reproduced by Hill, most of them extensively, constitute very valuable sources for the study of the period, they are by no means exhaustive. I have used many other documents from the following collections: the Orme Papers, the Home Miscellaneous Series, the Bengal and Madras Correspondence and Consultations (preserved in the Commonwealth Relations Office); the Pocock Papers (preserved in the Huntington Library in San Marino, California); several of the British Museum Additional Manuscripts; and the Rawlinson Manuscripts (in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, England). Hill has made use of only one Persian source, Seir-i-Mutaqbeerin. I have used also the narratives in Riyaz-us-Salatin, Ahwal-i-Mahabat Jung, Muzzaffarnamah, Dastur-ul-Insha, Ibrat-i-Arbab-i-Basr, Tarikh-i-Bangla and Khulasat-ut Twarikh. Two Armenian sources, Life of Emin Joseph Emin and Thomas Khojamall's history of Hindustan have been used to provide Indian evidence of the Black Hole incident.

In this study I have avoided much that has a purely biographical or military interest. Likewise I have not gone into the details of the English conspiracy with Mir Jafar nor with the description of the Battle of Plassey. These events have been dealt at length by Clive's biographers and by Atul Chandra Roy in his study, The Career of Mir Jafar Khan.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND IMPRESSION

An impressive array of evidence was marshalled in this study to show the untrustworthiness of Holwell's account of the Black Hole incident. But imperialist hagiology dies hard. Holwell's account is repeated, without any historical examination of it, by a distinguished London journalist and an amateur historian Mr. Noel Barber, in The Black Hole of Calcutta (London, 1965).

I am grateful to a number of reviewers for drawing my attention to the typographical errors on pages 103, 141, 144.

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