

THE LAST QUEEN OF THE MYSTERIOUS SIDDHIS(ABYSSINIAN) OF SACHIN STATE IN INDIA

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PRELUDE

Sunni Muslims of the Siddi dynasty of Danda-Rajpuri and Janjira State who were of Abyssinian (Habesha) origin ruled the Sachin State of Gujrath. This state was a princely state belonging to the Surat Agency, former Khandesh Agency, of the Bombay Presidency during the era of the British Raj. Its capital was in Sachin, the southernmost town of present-day Surat district of Gujarat State. *For more details of the Siddhis read my comprehensive paper on The Siddhis of India-The Chronicle of an African Diaspora. To understand this dynasty we must take a quick glimpse at the mother land-Ethiopia.*

The Ethiopian Empire formerly known by the exonym **Abyssinia** (derived from the Arabic *al-Habash*), or just simply known as Ethiopia was a monarchy that spanned a geographical area in the current states of Ethiopia and Eritrea. It began with the establishment of the Solomonic dynasty by Yekuno Amlak from approximately 1270 and lasted until 1974, when Emperor Haile Selassie was overthrown in a coup d'état by the communist Derg. It was throughout much of its existence surrounded by hostile forces in the African Horn however it managed to preserve and develop its ancient form of Christianity based kingdom. It is perhaps this reason that Abyssinians sailed to amongst other places- India particularly the Gujrath Coast which is closest to Ethiopia.

Founded in 1270 by the Solomonic Dynasty nobleman Yekuno Amlak, who claimed to descend from the last Aksumite king and ultimately the Biblical Menelik I and the Queen of Sheba, it replaced the Agaw kingdom of the Zagwe. While initially a rather small and politically unstable

entity, the Empire managed to expand significantly under the crusades of Amda Seyon I (1314–1344) and Yeshaq I (1414–1429), temporarily becoming the dominant force of the African Horn. Yeshaq's reign was however challenged by Sultan Jamal ad-Din II which led to Yeshaq's death. Under the rule of Zara Yaqob (1434–1468), the Hadiya Sultanate was invaded by Ethiopia and the captured Hadiya princess Eleni converted to Christianity leading to her marriage to Zara Yacob.^[13] Muslims in the region as well as Adal Sultanate rejected the marriage alliance and began launching several invasion attempts into Ethiopia finally succeeding under Imam Mahfuz. Mahfuz's ambush and defeat by Emperor Lebna Dengel brought about the early 16th century Jihad of the Adalite Imam Ahmed Gran, who was only defeated in 1543 with the help of the Portuguese. Greatly weakened, much of the Empire's southern territory and vassals were lost due to the Oromo migrations. In the north, in what is now Eritrea, Ethiopia managed to repulse Ottoman invasion attempts, although losing its access to the Red Sea to them.

Reacting to these challenges, Ethiopia started to expand westwards, conquering the Lake Tana area and much of Beta Israel territory in Begemder. In the 1630s Emperor Fasilides founded the new capital of Gondar, marking the start for a new golden age known as "Gondarine period". It saw a relative peace, the successful integration of the Oromo and a flourishing of culture. With the deaths of Emperor Iyasu II (1755) and especially Iyoas I (1769) the realm eventually entered a period of decentralization, known as "Era of the Princes". The Shewa region de facto seceded and constituted a kingdom of its own, while within the Empire, regional warlords contested for power, with the emperor being barely more than a mere puppet.

Founded on 6 June 1791 over 85% of the subjects were Hindu, but the state was ruled by Sunni Muslims of the Siddi dynasty of Danda-Rajpuri and Janjira State. Janjira State was located on the Konkan coast in the present-day Raigad district of Maharashtra. The state included the towns of Murud and Shrivardhan, as well as the fortified island of Murud-Janjira, just off the coastal village of Murud, which was the capital and the residence of the rulers. The state had an area of 839 km², not counting Jafrabad, and a population of 110,389 inhabitants in 1931. Jafrabad, or Jafarabad state was a dependency of the Nawab of Janjira State located 320 km to the NNW.

Establishment of the Siddhi State of Sachin State was a princely state belonging to the Surat Agency, former Khandesh Agency, of the Bombay Presidency during the era of the British Raj. Its capital was in Sachin, the southernmost town of present-day Surat district of Gujarat State.

Sachin state was founded on 6 June 1791. Though over 85% of the subjects were Hindu, the state was ruled by Sunni Muslims of the Siddi dynasty of Danda-Rajpuri and Janjira State. The Siddi dynasty is of Abyssinian (Habesha) origin. Sachin State was under the protection of the Maratha Peshwa until it became a British protectorate. It had its own cavalry, currency, and stamped paper, as well as a state band that included Africans.

Rulers

Nawab Sidi Ibrahim Muhammad Yakut Khan III of Sachin State was married to Fatims Begum an Indian actress. Sachin State was under the protection of the Maratha Peshwa until it became a British protectorate. It had its own cavalry, currency, and stamped paper, as well as a state band that included Africans. The rulers of Sachin State bore the title 'Nawab' and were granted the right of a 9 gun salute by the British authorities.

Fatima Begum (1892–1983), one of the early superstars in Indian cinema and India's first female film director, was allegedly married to Nawab Sidi Ibrahim Muhammad Yakut Khan III of Sachin State. But Sachin royal family sources cast a veil over this claiming no record of a marriage or contract having taken place between the Nawab and Fatima Bai or of the Nawab having officially recognised their children, Sultana, Zubeida and Shehzadi, as his own. Sultana, the daughter of Fatima Begum, became a leading figure in early Indian movies. Zubeida, leading actress of India's first talkie film *Alam Ara* (1931), was her younger sister.

Nawab Sidi Ibrahim Muhammad Yakut Khan III, Sachin State's last ruler, signed the accession to join the Indian Union on 8 March 1948. The state then became part of Surat district in Bombay Province.

After the Partition Zubaida stayed in India, while her sister Sultana moved to Pakistan where she married and had a daughter, Jamila Razzaq, who became a prominent Pakistani actress in the decade between the mid 1950s and the mid 1960s.

Siddhi Nawabs of Sachin State

- 6 Jun 1791 – 9 July 1802 Abdul Karim Mohammad Yakut Khan I (b. 17.. – d. 1802)
- 9 July 1802 – 25 March 1853 Ibrahim Mohammad Yakut Khan I (d. 1853)
- 25 Mar 1853 – 1 December 1868 Abdul Karim Mohammad Yakut Khan II (b. 1802 – d. 1868)
- 1 December 1868 – 4 March 1873 Ibrahim Mohammad Yakut Khan II (b. 1833 – d. 1873)
- 4 March 1873 – 7 January 1887 Abdul Kadir Khan (b. 1865 – d. 1896)
- 4 March 1873 – Jul 1886 -Regent
- 7 February 1887 – 19 November 1930 Ibrahim Mohammad Yakut Khan III (b. 1886 – d. 1930)
- 7 February 1887 – 4 May 1907 -Regent
- 19 Nov 1930 – 15 August 1947 Haydar Mohammad Yakut Khan (b. 1909 – d. 1970)

The last great Queen of the Siddhis of Janjira- Sachin State.

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Zubaida who was not only an Indian actress, director, and screenwriter. She is often considered the first female film director of Indian cinema. Within four years, she went on to write, produce and direct many films. She launched her own production house, Fatma Films, which later became Victoria-Fatma Films, and directed her first film, *Bulbul-e-Paristan*, in 1926. She lived from 1892-1983 and was mother to three children.



Fatma Begum was born into an Urdu-speaking Muslim family in India. Fatma Begum was supposedly married to Nawab Sidi Ibrahim Muhammad Yakut Khan III of Sachin State. However, there is no record of a marriage or contract having taken place between the Nawab and Fatma Bai or of the Nawab having recognised any of her children as his own, a prerequisite for legal paternity in Muslim family law. She was the mother of silent superstars Zubeida, Sultana, and Shehzadi. She was also the grandmother of Humayun Dhanrajgir and Durreshahwar Dhanrajgir, son and daughter of Zubeida and Maharaja Narsingir Dhanrajgir of Hyderabad and Jamila Razzaq daughter of Sultana and Seth Razaaq, a prominent businessman of Karachi. She also happened to be the great-grandmother of model turned actor Rhea Pillai who is the daughter of her grand daughter Durreshahwar Dhanrajgir.

She began her career on the Urdu stage. She later shifted to films and debuted in Ardeshir Irani's silent film, *Veer Abhimanyu* (1922). It was common practice for men to play women in plays and movies, so she became a huge woman superstar. Fatma Begum was fair skinned and wore dark make-up that suited the sepia/black & white images on the screen. Most of the roles required wigs for the heroes as well as the heroines.

In 1926, she established Fatma Films which later became known as Victoria-Fatma Films in 1928. She became a pioneer for fantasy cinema where she used trick photography to have early special effects. She was an actress at Kohinoor Studios and Imperial Studios, while writing, directing, producing, and acting in her own films at Fatma Films.

Begum became the first female director of Indian cinema with her 1926 film, *Bulbul-e-Paristan*. While no known prints of the film currently exist, the high budget production has been described as a fantasy film featuring many special effects. If true, the film places Begum among early pioneers of fantasy cinema such as George Melies. While continuing to produce and appear in her own work, Fatma worked for Kohinoor Studios and Imperial Studios until her last film in 1938, *Duniya Kya Hai?*

She directed many other films, her last being the *Goddess of Luck* in 1929.

Indo Nordic Author's Collective

FILMOGRAPHY			
Year	Film	Role	Notes
1922	Veer Abhimanyu	Actress	Debuted in Ardeshir Irani's silent film
1926	Bulbul-e-Paristan	Director	First female director of Indian cinema; Used own production house 'Fatma Films'
1929	Goddess of Luck	Director	
1938	Duniya Kya Hai?	Actress	

Legacy: She died in 1983 at the age of 91. Her legacy was carried on by her daughter Zubeida, whom besides being a silent film star, acted in India's first ever talkie, *Alam Ara*.

The Surat Agency was one of the agencies of British India in the Bombay Presidency. It was formed in the 19th century as the Khandesh Agency, after the region of Khandesh, becoming the Surat Agency in 1880. Around 1900 the Dangs were incorporated and in 1933 it was abolished and became part of the Baroda and Gujarat States Agency. Finally in 1944, towards the end of the British Raj, the Baroda and Gujarat States Agency was merged with the Western India States Agency to form the larger Baroda, Western India and Gujarat States Agency.

The headquarters of the Surat Agency were at Surat, where the Political Agent who reported to the Political Department office in Bombay, used to reside.

The agency included three 9-gun salute princely states and the Dangs

Salute States-The Dangs

The **Dangs** were a group of small states in what is now the Dang district of Gujarat State. Today Dang is a district in the state of Gujarat in India. The administrative headquarters of the district are located in Ahwa. Dang has an area of 1,764 km² and a population of 228,291 (as of 2011).^[1] As of 2011, it is the least populous district of Gujarat (out of 33). As per the Planning Commission, Dang is one of the most economically distressed district out of 640 districts in India. 98% of the population belongs to one of the scheduled tribes. The five Kings of Dangs are the only hereditary royals in India whose titles are currently recognized by the government owing to an agreement made during the British Raj in 1842.

State	Population ('000);	Revenue (1881, Rs.)	Ruler's title. Notes

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Dang Pimpri	3,6	3106	388 km ²
Dang Wadhwan	0,253	147	ca. 12 km ² . Not to be confused with Wadhwan State whose capital was Wadhwan.
Dang Ketak Kadupada	0,218	155	
Dang Amala	5,3	2885; 1891: 5300	Raja. 307 km ²
Dang Chinchli	1,67; 1891: ca. 1,4	601	ca. 70 km ²
Dang Pimpladevi	0,134	120	ca. 10 km ²
Dang Palasbishar (= Palasvahir)	0,223	230	ca. 5 km ²
Dang Auchar	ca. 500	201	< 21 km ²
Dang Derbhauti	4,891; 1891: ca. 5	3649	Raja. 196 km ²
Dang Gadhavi (= Gadhi)	6,309	5125	Raja.
Dang Shivbara	0,346	422	ca. 12 km ²
Dang Kirli (= Kirali)	0,167	512	31 km ²

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Dang Wasurna	6,177	2275	
Dang Dhude (= Bilbari)	1,45; 1891: 1418	85	< 5 km ²
Dang Surgana	14	11469	
Machhali	1.1;	4745	35

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