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## A Tribute To The Silent Death Of The Bhawal Raja’s Heritage In Bengal

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### Abstract

It was not very much far behind that the Bhawal Raja’s has the royal power to rule the 2nd largest Zamindary in eastern Bengal, which includes the capital city of modern Bangladesh, Dhaka from mid-17th to the early 19th century.

They built many temples, palaces, schools, guest houses & other structures to facilitate their realm. But the absence of authority, poor maintenance, wrong restoration & rapid unplanned urbanization & industrialization has silently erased the existence of the most dominated zamindar dynasty of Bengal.

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### 1. Introduction

Bhawal Raja’s was the famous Zamindars of Bhawal (Bengali: ভাওয়াল) known as the leading Hindu landlords having the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest Zamindary of Eastern Bengal until the abolition of the Zamindary system in 1951. (Islam, S., 2015) Their capital was settled in Joydevpur, currently fall into Gazipur District, 30 Km North from Dhaka, (Islam, S., 2015 & *Bhawal Estate*, 2015) carrying the evidences of their legacy all most everywhere around the region. Though their capital was at Gazipur but they occupied the maximum land of present Dhaka city.

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Rapid unplanned urban & industrial development has already destroyed the essence of Bhawals existence. Moreover, in recent time, some of their establishment has destroyed & some are on the process of extinction and some are the victim of wrong restoration. The absence of authority & poor maintenance is another reason which increases the urge to take initiatives to save this recent past.

The aim of this paper is to explore the real history & legacy of Bhawal Raja's through documenting their heritage. It will also try to find the reasons behind the extinction of their heritage's & make some proposal which may help to create an example of conservation of the architectural heritage in the late 21st century as a part of cultural identity.

## 2. Background

### 2.1 The origin of the word "Bhawal"

The meaning of the word 'Bhawal' creates much debate in its history. The debate starts with the Mahabharata & ends with the Gazi's of Bhawal. Roy, J. M. (1912) wrote that the soil condition & other ethereal circumstances depict Bhawal as a very ancient place. He continued, during the war of kurukshetra the ruler of Vaba Pal or Vadro Pal state fought for Duryodhana. Some think present Bhawal was the capital of these Vaba Pal or Vadro Pal state. He also inscribe that, the initial part of the dictionary Written by Sre Ram Komol Sen describes that; some says Bhawal comes from the name Vogalay which was the capital of Vagadatta mention in Mahabharat\*.

During 10<sup>th</sup> century Ptolemy describe ancient Bhawal as 'AtmikBhol' in Greek language which is a transformation of Sanskrit Bhu-al word. Later on these 'Bhu-al' transform into 'Bhawal'. To deposit water, the Bhumi (lands) of this area were enclosed through several elevated land called 'Ailes'. Some thinks that the word Bhawal may come from 'Bhu-al' or 'Bhu Jukto Ailes' which means 'land with several elevated land'. (Islam & Rashid, A., 2012)

But, no proper evidence has been found about these beliefs, rather history shows strong evidence that Sufi Karfarma's (the founder of GAZI dynasty) inheritor Bhawal Gazi (some claims Fazal Gazi was bhawal Gazi) rename the area Bhawal after his own name in between the late 12<sup>th</sup> to the beginning of 13<sup>th</sup> century(during the rule of Sher Shaha). (*History of Gazipur District*, 2015 & Yowashi, M., H., 1992)After Gazi's, the Hindu Zamindars of Bhawal pargana (territory) became renowned as Bhawal raja.

### 2.2 The rise of Bhawal Raja & historical chronology

The vast land of Bhawal pargana (territory) was ruled by Gazi's of bhawal before the rise of Bhawal Raja's. The ancestor of Gazi dynasty was karfarma shah who was mainly a Sufi. He reached the ancient Bhawal's eastern region Kaliganj by boat to spread Islam during the Sena Emperor & settles his establishment at Choira. The ruler of Delhi, sultan Tughlaq became grateful by karfarma shah. Allen, B.C (1912) wrote, karfarma shah went to Delhi & there received from the emperor the grant of Pargana Bhawal.

After the death of 'karfarma shah' his ideal successor Bhawal Gazi imposed his kingship in all the petty territories one after another & renamed the area after his name. The first renowned chief of Bhawal was Fazl Gazi, a close associate of Isa Khan, one of the leading Baro Bhuiyans\*\* of Bengal. Bahadur Gazi, one of his descendants, received

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\* The Mahabharata or Mahābhārata is one of the two major Sanskrit epics of ancient India. The Mahabharata is an epic narrative of the Kurukshetra War and the fates of the Kaurava and the Pandava princes.

\*\* The **Baro-Bhuiyans** (spelled variously as *Baro-Bhuniyas* etc.) were warrior chiefs and landlords (zamindars) in medieval Bengal and Assam who maintained a loosely independent confederacy.

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