

## **Migrating Banjaras and Settling Tandas: An Un-noticed Contribution**

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**Abstract:** *This research is an effort to understand the contribution of the migration to the north-western, western and northern India. Throughout the medieval history migration has efficaciously made creative contributed. None of the migration in its beginning was a smooth experience and was given to harshness and arduous jeopardizes. Usually the migrations from central Asia in India have been proven as awaiting fortunes. The medieval century migrations were accommodated in the courts and have made notable contributions to the literary culture and art. Similarly the nomadic community of Banjara was also making certain obvious additions to the India and its landscape. The organization of Banjara community was given to nomadic lifestyle but in the same role they were performing the twin tasks primarily as a transporter or supplier along with it some trade-cum-credit activities and pastoralism. The flexible intake of members made this community a heterogeneous social organization which picked and dropped cultures, rituals and religious affiliations over the years grabbing the opportunities for scrolling over the trade. The Banjaras moved in groups with laden oxen, who were beast of burden and an acquainted acclimatizer with minimum requirement of water and fodder. The moving caravans were called as Tanda. Interestingly, in the north India there is large number of villages and few towns with name of Tanda; and all these are located near some river or a water source. Surprisingly, majority of these were established during medieval India especially during Mughals. So the Banjaras were a community engaging with trade and transport and the routes they were travelling were getting patched with the Tandas. The geographical area drawn up for this research will be limited to present Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Jammu & Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Bengal and the city of Aurangabad located in Maharashtra. Before settling down the souls of a troop, the location for a Tanda has to be well calculated; by keeping tap on the location and its connectivity with the trading zones, nearby supply centers and the availability of water. It is not much for surprise that majority of the present railway tracks; presented to India by the British and the present roadways are all crossing through or besides, the ways adopted by the Banjaras for effective and speedy transportation through the forest areas during the medieval centuries. The reports of the labour supply for laying down the railway tracks speak aloud about the massive employment of the banjaras as rail labourers but are mute on a silent theft of the banjara's knowledge bank of the traditional routes. The much of the routes traveled by the Banjaras were passing through difficult terrains and unwelcoming forests. This study will look into the migration of Banjaras in different directions and the settlement of Tandas; which made the art, crafts, agro-dairy products, agricultural production and culture to travel in the history.*

**Keywords:** *Tanda, Aurangabad, Trade, Banjara, medieval cities.*

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The history of India especially the north, north-western and western landscapes is a narrative of the mass migrations given to either conduciveness or bitter and violent experiences. The migrations throughout the medieval India were uninvited events pushing to the extremes and many times it was also a blessing in disguise. In long run the very same forced and later the unacceptable migrations proved to be the booms. The majority of migrations were followed by establishment of new settlements and had loud capabilities for developing the cross-cultures. The medieval Indian migrations were mainly given to arduous routes and unwelcoming events. Throughout the world usually the migration was undertaken due to two factors. Primarily, due to environmental conditions and secondly, due to non-accommodative and un-cohesive political and social situations and happenings. But landmass of India shows a different reaction for the migration to be undertaken due to environmental factors. For example, the Thar which has been understood as the most harsh and difficult desert on the earth with the temperature rising upto 52°C and the water sources are also denied. Despite these cruel unalterable realities it is the most densely populated desert in the world,

which is very much juxtapose to its geographical and ecological conditions. The cultural vibrancy is also most distinct, efficiently wide and attractive.

The internal migrations in Thar have also contributed immensely to the ecology, culture, art, economy and society of India. A few communities were able to contribute more. The Banjaras were the most essential community during the medieval India because without them the much celebrated trade vibrancy of the medieval times would have been a distinct dream. It was due to the efficient supply system and effective transportation undertaken by Banjaras that huge quantum of non-perishable goods were transported over the immensely extensive landscape of India. The Banjaras transported over a stretch that extended from Qandahar to Bengal and from Srinagar to Seringapatam. The Banjaras were distanced and drew closer to the state, its officials and merchants due to the push and pull factors which were in sets of harsh penalties, disruptions and economic gains followed by recognition respectively. Definitely, the movements of the Banjaras were not in isolation. The trading and transporting activities were demanding much of interaction with the local populace and haggling with the merchants. Further, the nature of *Tanda* (troops) organization did not allowed to carry ready to consume food items and apparently it ensured exchanges with the native habitant settlements. All these activities were regular and miscellaneous in nature but definitely not useless. The regular exercises carried out by the Banjaras lead to the emergence of a cross-cultural language (*Binjari*), cultural absorptions and adaptations, pick and drop of rituals. Gradually, all this was leading to a cultural expression of “multiculturalism” which formed the ‘identity’ of the Banjara community. Religiously, also this community was heterogeneous, not abiding to the strict norms of any one religion. They were taking up hassles-workable rituals and ceremonies on basis of choice and circumstances available around the profession. The odium of being a Banjara demanded a curious element. Tapan Raychaudhuri notes ‘qafilas included heterogeneous elements, e.g. camellers, carters, Baluchis and Jats’.<sup>1</sup> The women also had significant role and contribution in the *Tanda* (troop and its halting station); mainly as watch-keepers, food-collectors and organizers.

Etymologically the word *Tanda* is derived from an Arabic word *dammad*,<sup>2</sup> which signifies the bandage means a strip of woven material used for binding. As noun *Tanda* stands for time, instance, duty, turn, task, work, group, session, series and shift. All these different words clearly indicate to one and same meaning of *Tanda* that it is a group or troop, which performs any task as a ‘joint exercise’ or the entire group gets together to carry out a activity. Interestingly, throughout the world, *Tanda* as a word carries and conveys the same sense of a troop and a space to live. The usage of the word spreads from Serbia (South-East Europe’s Balkan Peninsula) to the eastern most extent of India (Bengal) while hitting many countries of Africa in between.<sup>3</sup> Coming back to the geographical area drawn for this research, extending from Jammu & Kashmir to Maharashtra and stretching from present state of Gujarat to Bengal, the recognized and much in everyday use *Tandas*, are only 50 in number.<sup>4</sup> The popular *Tandas* are *Tanda* of Bengal, *Tanda* in Ambedkar Nagar (Uttar Pradesh) and *Tanda* in district Rampur (Uttar Pradesh). Besides these many other *Tandas* also exist. So, through these it can be said that *Tanda* stands for a settlement. But how it could be that, so many settlements are named in a same way and linear style? This wide distribution of the term makes it omnipresent. The common thread that runs through these locations to form the cause of naming so many places as *Tanda* in India was the contribution of nomadic Banjaras; who were constantly moving through the length and breadth of country for transporting the consignments of goods. Tapan Raychaudhuri has explained *tanda* as a large camp of Banjaras who organize transport of foodstuff.<sup>5</sup> Limiting the definition of Banjara transportation only to foodstuffs is not acceptable because the Banjaras traded in many other items such as multani, saltpeter etc. Exhausting the list of items transported by Banjaras as food stuffs

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<sup>1</sup> Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib, *The Cambridge Economic History of India c.1200-1750*, vol. 1, Orient Black Swan, Delhi, reprint 2010, p. 354.

<sup>2</sup> <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/tanda>

<sup>3</sup> *Tanda* (Bor) in Serbia, *Tanda* (a town in Ivory Coast), *Tanda* (a town in Egypt), *Tanda* (a rural village or commune in Niger), *Tanda* (a rural locality in the Sakha Republic of Russia), *Tanda* (a town in Bengal).

<sup>4</sup> *Tanda* (Hazaribagh, Jharkhand), *Tanda* (Bilaspur, Chattisgarh), *Tanda* (Raipur, Chattisgarh), *Tanda* (Doha, Gujarat), *Tanda* (Reasi, Jammu & Kashmir) etc.

<sup>5</sup> Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib, *The Cambridge Economic History of India c. 1200-1750*, vol.1, Orient BlackSwan in association with Cambridge University Press, Delhi (reprint 2010), p. 331.

minimizes the specialized and fine tuned role performed by the ‘transporters of par excellence’. Many folklores also hint to the word *Tanda*. Wherein, the request is made to Banjari (wife of Banjara) that ‘please don’t sleep otherwise the *Tanda* will be lost’.<sup>6</sup> Hence, the *Tanda* means a troop whose members have voluntarily organized through mutual understanding to carry forward a joint activity of transportation and it also incorporates the camp area of the Banjara caravan.

The mobility of *Tanad* was not always swift due to the difficulties encountered en-route. The challenging terrains were full of physical limitations, surprises and serious threats. So, while carrying out the tedious task of transportation the Banjaras were also engaging in some cultural activities and public works such as building wells, *chhatris*<sup>7</sup> and *hauz*. The sole purpose of these constructions was to make arrangement of water for the large number of moving cattle (ox), which was the beast of burden. The animal number in the *Tanda* ranged between 12,000 and 20,000.<sup>8</sup> Both Peter Mundy<sup>9</sup> and Tavernier<sup>10</sup> provide a huge number of cattle. The cattle engaged for transportation was emasculated ox. The physiology of animal and capacity to effectively acclimatize made the ox an obvious choice. The physical features of ox such as hump, moderate height and hoof along with the swift movements were added features of attraction for employing as the load-carrier. The observation made by Peter Mundy clearly highlights the social and economic importance of the Banjaras: ‘*They are sometimes hired merchants, but most commonly they are the merchants themselves, buying of grain where it is cheap to be had, and carrying it to the place where it is dearer and from thence again related themselves with anything that will yield benefit in other places, as salt, sugar, butter etc.*’<sup>11</sup> The Banjaras were not only grain carriers. They were also suppliers of armies as described in Emperor Jahangir’s memoirs: ‘*In this country Banjaras are a fixed class of people, who possess a thousand oxen or more or less, varying in number. They bring grain from the village to towns and also accompany armies with an army (like the one being prepared for Qandahar) these may atleast be a hundered thousand oxen or more.*’<sup>12</sup> Therefore, it can be said that the Banjaras were actively exchanging with state and the inhabitants on regular basis.

Besides the aforesaid cultural, economic, social contributions and public works the Banjaras were also settling the *Tandas*. The settlement of *Tanda* required firstly identification of a safe zone around some water source and with some human habitation in the close proximity. The purpose of locating a zone with above mentioned specific features was to make food, water and fodder available for the members of the *Tanda*. Hence, the zones in which the Banjaras halted for resting, overnight stay, waiting for the trade, collecting cattle etc. were also referred as *Tanda*. The areas for *Tandas* were allotted outside the villages due the various notorious activities of the Banjaras such as kidnapping, witchcraft etc.<sup>13</sup> European travelers were super active to mention about all the social and economic activities of the Banjaras due to the fascination felt by them towards the colorful caravanes and the vagary Banjaras.

<sup>6</sup> folklore: *Binjari yai tu soai mat ja and Banjara ban mai phire, liye lakria haath; Tanda waha lad gaya; koi sanghi nahi saath.* A famous poem by Nazir Akbarabadi *Banjara* also highlights the significance of Banjara trade.

<sup>7</sup> *Chhatris*: Namely these are called *Banjara ki Chhatttri* and *Banjaro ki chhattri* located at village Khandar of district Sawai Madhopur and village Lalsot of Dausa district (near Jaipur) respectively. Singh, Chandramani (ed), *Protected Monuments of Rajasthan*, Jaipur and Agrawala, R.C., ‘Unpublished Railing Pillars from Rajasthan’, *Lalit Kala, No.11*, Bombay, 1962. Cf. [www.asijaipurcircle.nic.in/](http://www.asijaipurcircle.nic.in/); [www.asijaipurcircle.nic.in/Lalsot-Banjaro%20ki%20chhattri.html#pub](http://www.asijaipurcircle.nic.in/Lalsot-Banjaro%20ki%20chhattri.html#pub) and [www.ignca.nic.in/asp/all.asp?projectid=rjsmp2510001&ignca.nic.in/asi\\_reports/rjsmp\\_251.pdf](http://www.ignca.nic.in/asp/all.asp?projectid=rjsmp2510001&ignca.nic.in/asi_reports/rjsmp_251.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib, *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, p. 331.

<sup>9</sup> Peter Mundy, *The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia 1608- 1667, Travels in Asia 1628-34*, Vol.2, edited by Lt. Col Sir Richard Carnac Temple, Hakluyt Society, London, 1914, pp. (96), 95-96.

<sup>10</sup> Jean Baptiste Tavernier, *Travels of India*, T.V. Ball, 2nd edition, revised by W.Crooke, London, Vol. I, p. 33-35.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Mundy, *The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia, 1608-1667, Vol. II, Travels in Asia, 1628-1634* (edited by) Col. Sir Richard Carnac Temple, London, 1914, pp. 95-96.

<sup>12</sup> *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, Alexander Rogers (trans.) and Henry Beveridge (ed.), vol. 2, Low Price Publication, Delhi, 2011 reprint, p. 232-33.

<sup>13</sup> R.V. Russells and R.B. Hira Lal, *Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India, Vol-II*, Macmillan and Co. Ltd., St. Martins Street, London, 1916, p. 178-182.

Many other secondary works also confirm the same. The state sources are completely silent regarding the settlement of *Tandas* and their local activities and locations. The village records of north-western frontier are limited to the notorious behavior of Banjaras and only indicate towards the fines levied on them for destroying the crops and abrupt grazing of the animal in standing crops. The absence of the information regarding the social organization, religious associations etc. in the state, local and vernacular records is little disheartening. Hence, I am depending on the census data and list of villages provided in the census report of Government of India for year 2011.

A close look at certain medieval cities established by the Mughals helps to understand that many *Tanda* were allotted spaces around the cities. Interestingly, none of the *Tanda* was given a halting zone inside the city. The reason could be rowdy behavior of the *Tanda* members and the inability of the administration to surveillance the troops and the routes undertaken by the caravans once they make a move. The allocation of space around the city was to ensure an unbreakable and regular supply of food and other essential commodities in the cities. The names and location of the *Tandas* indicate to two types of *Tanda* settlements. First, the *Tandas* were established around some demographically dense area and second were the *Tandas* that came up around some newly established cities. Other interesting features about the *Tandas* located for this study are as follows:

1. All the *Tandas* are located around some water source like river, pond, *talab*, *jhar*, lake, well or some naturally captivated water body.
2. For much of surprise majority of present national highways and state highways and the railways routes are crossing through the trade routes that were used by the Banjaras while travelling through the forests, earlier or more particularly in the seventeenth and eighteenth century.

The second feature shall not occur as surprise. Due to the fact, that when the Banjaras were eliminated from the economic panorama of colonial India, the majority of Banjaras were employed as wage labourers for drawing up the veins (iron tracks) of the new introduction railway.<sup>14</sup> The competition offered to the Banjaras by the railways was unmatchable because of the enhanced speed of mobility ensured by the rail wagons powered through the invention of century that is steam engine. W.H. Moreland's comment on the transport activity of Banjaras was 'an entire season's traffic would be equivalent to an amount which a railway could carry over an equal distance in less than a week'.<sup>15</sup> This comment clearly and significantly highlights the efficiency of the railways and the success by which it can replace the traditional transporters. This also depicts the redundancy attributed to the Banjaras with the introduction of the railways, who later took up the truck transportation to associate with their traditional profession and its history, nostalgically. For the colonial authorities it was pivotal to eliminate these efficient transporters, so that the control over troops can be ensured and subsequently the supplies and the quantum of trade can be regulated and in long run the balance of payment can be diverted towards the company. The inability to surveillance this community due to lack of identification and the absence of any particular areas of settlement has made the colonial officials suspicious. Further, the routes taken up by the Banjaras were mainly through inaccessible forest areas and only a seasoned Banjara can lead through it. The routes through forests were connecting the various cities and were leading into other forests after each city and vice-a-versa. At times after some un-orderly behavior the Banjaras use to hide in the forests and were not in reach of the imperial penal machinery. The much suspicion of Britons for the two most essential communities of medieval times namely Banjaras and Eunuchs; made then to label both the communities as 'Criminal' by creation of The Criminal Tribes Act, 1871.

The community of Banjaras has contributed significantly to the history. Besides being the efficient suppliers they also acted as peddler traders. The peddling trade made them small creditors who had no education in accountancy. The contributions of Banjaras have been acknowledged seminally but only in terms of the trade and transportation activities.<sup>16</sup> So far their cultural and social contribution has not

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<sup>14</sup> Rana P. Behal and Marcel van der Linden (ed.), *Coolies, Capital and Colonialism, Studies in Indian Labour History*, 2007, pp. 90-112.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib, *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, p. 339.

<sup>16</sup> Habib, Irfan, 'Merchant Communities in Pre-Colonial India', Tracy, James D. (ed.) *The Rise of Merchant Empire 1350-1750*, Cambridge University Press, 1990.

seen the crack of dawn. This work is an initiative to understand the effort made by the Banjaras for making the new city projects of medieval centuries a hit. In order to draw a research area I have concentrated and limited my research to some of the famous medieval cities and could locate massive number of *Tandas* that popped up around them during medieval times. Namely the cities are Aurangabad (in present Maharashtra), Faizabad (present Uttar Pradesh), Kangra (presently in Himachal Pradesh), Malda (Bengal) and Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh). This research is basically a deconstructing exercise. The limitation of data and the non-availability of archival material further tightens' the narration. Sadly, the Banjaras themselves never maintained records of their activities because their dependence was much on the oral skills and traditions.

The cities chosen for this study are mainly the medieval cities. The city of Aurangabad is located in present state of Maharashtra was established by the infamous Mughal ruler Aurangzeb. The city was his dream project. He even wished that after his death his corpse shall be buried in Khuldabad on *paitaani* (foot side) of the famous sufi mystic Shirazi. The grave of Aurangzeb is not made out of concrete. It is a mud structure as per his wish. The present district of Aurangabad has all the medieval architecture and have eight *talukas*. The eight *talukas* of Aurangabad district are Aurangabad, Khuldabad, Kannad, Gangapur, Paithan, Sillod, Vaijapur and Soegaon. Looking at the physical layout of these *talukas*, it can be said that Aurangabad city was enclosed by these eight *talukas* on three sides. On eastern frontier Jalna District covers the border. Gradually, scrolling through the list of villages in each *taluka* of Aurangabad and *talukas* of Jalna district a surprising number of *Tandas* have been located. The *Tandas* in District Jalna are Bhanu Naik Tanda, Patra Tanda and Shivani Tanda (Jalna Taluka); Ghonsi Tanda (Ghansawangi); Garteki Tanda, Gulkhand Tanda, Waghoda Tanda and Watur Tanda (Mantha Taluka). Interestingly, while fixing the *Tandas* on the map a wonderful pattern has emerged which indicates that all these *Tandas* were in close distance from the fifty two gates of the Aurangabad city. In few *talukas* the number of *Tandas* is really high, but a close distance from the other trading routes suffices as a reason. Numerically there are, fifteen *Tandas* in Aurangabad,<sup>17</sup> nineteen in Kannad *taluka*,<sup>18</sup> in Paithan *taluka* there are twelve *Tandas*,<sup>19</sup> five in Soegaon,<sup>20</sup> one in Khuldabad<sup>21</sup> and two each at Sillod<sup>22</sup> and Gangapur.<sup>23</sup> In total around Aurangabad there are 64 *Tanda* out of which eight are in various *talukas* of Jalna district.<sup>24</sup> None in *taluka* Vijapur which forms the western part of the Aurangabad. So, it can be asserted that around the medieval city of Aurangabad and on the route that connects the southern peninsula with northern landmass of India, many *Tandas* find the existence even in the modern times.

The second question that tickles is why so many *Tandas* when the Banjaras were a nomadic community. A close perusal of the village names helps to highlight that nomenclature of *Tandas* were depending on two factors. Primarily on basis of the nearest village and, secondly some are named after the name of the *Tanda Naik/Nayak*. The Naik was the leader of the caravan or troop. Some *Naiks* were popular and had many troops on constant move. Perhaps, therefore a permanent allotment on basis of the name of *Naik* was made.

In present Uttar Pradesh as per the government of India census report there are twenty three *Tandas*.<sup>25</sup> All the *Tandas* are located on the banks of some or the other rivers. Here, the city of Faizabad is taken up to make a point about the much serving *Tandas*. The city was found on initiative of Mughal emperor Faruk Siar, who asked Raja Syed Mohd. Hayat, to settle a civilization on the banks of river Ghagra. The present Ambedkar Nagar (district of Uttar Pradesh) that houses the famous *Tanda* was

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<sup>17</sup> <https://villageinfo.in/maharashtra/aurangabad/aurangabad.html>

<sup>18</sup> <https://villageinfo.in/maharashtra/aurangabad/kannad.html>

<sup>19</sup> <https://villageinfo.in/maharashtra/aurangabad/paithan.html>

<sup>20</sup> <https://villageinfo.in/maharashtra/aurangabad/soegaon.html>

<sup>21</sup> <https://villageinfo.in/maharashtra/aurangabad/khuldabad.html>

<sup>22</sup> <https://villageinfo.in/maharashtra/aurangabad/sillod.html>. Tanda Ganwadi and Tanda Sirsala.

<sup>23</sup> <https://villageinfo.in/maharashtra/aurangabad/gangapur.html>

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.census2011.co.in/data/subdistrict/4127-jalna-jalna-maharashtra.html>

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.census2011.co.in>. Tanda in Muzaffarnagar, Bijnor, Moradabad, Rampur, Jyotiba phule nagar, Meerut, Baghpat, Bulandshahr, Firozabad, Bareilly, Bareilly, Pilibhit, Rae bareli, 2 Tandas in Jhansi, Jhansi, Fatehpur, Pratapgarh, Kaushambi, Bara banki, Sultanpur, Sant kabir nagar, Ghazipur, Nainital (presently in Uttarakhand).

carved out of Sulatanpur and Faizabad. The distance of Tanda from Varanasi, Lucknow and Gorakhpur is 155 Km, 200 Km and 80 Km respectively. Another famous kingdom was estate of Rampur. It was established by Faizullah Khan in 1775 A.D. The number of *Tandas* around Rampur is seven namely, Tanda Nagar, Abbas Nagar Tanda, Mohabbat Nagar Tanda, Nawab Nagar Tanda, Rajpur Tanda, Sayeed Nagar Tanda and Tanda. Similar to the location of *Tandas* around Aurangabad, the *Tandas* of Rampur are serving to the respective towns attached with the name of Tanda, all of these came up in the late eighteenth century with the expansion of the Rampur estate. The water source for all these upcoming *Tandas* were river Ramganga and Kosi.

Two *Tandas* served the newly formed city of Pilibhit which was established in c. 1801. The *Tandas* were Madho Tanda and Tanda Surat. The Tanda Surat is famous for cloth as the Banjaras supplied cloth to this town from Surat (Gujarat). The water serving source for Pilibhit is Gomti River and Gomat Taal. In Muradabad District, Tanda Sambhal and Bhagatpur Tanda were important centers for supplying the essential commodities. Thus, in total around Rampur estate there are eleven *Tandas*. Besides these many *Tandas* are also spread over many other areas of present Uttar Pradesh.<sup>26</sup> The National Highways and State Highways are at a very close distance from location of these *Tandas*.

In the early 18th century, Bhopal was a small village in the Gond kingdom. The modern Bhopal city was established by Dost Mohammad Khan (1672–1728 A.D.), a Pashtun soldier in the Mughal army.<sup>27</sup> After the death of the emperor Aurangzeb, Khan started providing mercenary services to local chieftains in the politically unstable Malwa region. In c. 1709, he took Berasia estate on lease and later annexed several territories in the adjoining regions and established the Bhopal State.<sup>28</sup> Khan received the territory of Bhopal from the Gond queen Kamlapati in lieu of payment for mercenary services and usurped her kingdom after her death.<sup>29</sup> In the 1720s, he built the Fatehgarh fort in the village, which developed into the city of Bhopal over the next few decades. A visible thick presence of *Tandas* is visible in Madhya Pradesh.<sup>30</sup> The major water source for these *Tandas* was Mahi River. Many major roads and the National Highway number 12, 34, 35 and 86 cross through these *Tandas* and some are passing from a very close distance.

The hilly terrain of Himachal Pradesh also had the effect of the Banjara movements. Looking at the surroundings of the famous Kangra district, it can be said that the introduction of the imperial forces to win over the invincible Kangra fort has introduced the *Tandas* around it. Historically, Kangra was known as *Nagarkot*.<sup>31</sup> Also this claim is negated by historians who have cited various sources to say that the fort was impregnable and remained unconquered until its conquest by the winning imperial army of Emperor Jahangir in A.D.1622.<sup>32</sup> At present around the Kangra fort, in different *tehsils* there are six *Tandas*.<sup>33</sup>

In district Hoshiyarur of Punjab a popular Banjara settlement is Urmar *Tanda*. Historically, the city is associated with Guru Hargovind, the sixth master of Sikhism. The time period was from 1595 to 1644 A.D., which fixes the city well into the medieval Indian history. The National highway number 1A passes through it. And the source of water is river Beas. There are also many other *Tandas* in Punjab.

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<sup>26</sup> Tanda in Muzaffarnagar, Bijnor, Moradabad, Rampur, Jyotiba phule nagar, Meerut, Baghpat, Bulandshahr, Firozabad, Bareilly, Bareilly, Pilibhit, Rae bareli, 2 Tandas in Jhansi, Fatehpur, Pratapgarh, Kaushambi, Bara banki, Sultanpur, Sant kabir nagar, Ghazipur and Dhaura Tanda in Bareilly district.

<sup>27</sup> John Falconer, James Waterhouse, *The Waterhouse albums: central Indian provinces*, 2009, Mapin. ISBN 978-81-89995-30-0

<sup>28</sup> Shaharyar Khan, *Begums of Bhopal, A Dynasty of Women Rulers in Raj India* (illustrated ed.). I.B.Tauris, 2000, ISBN 978-1-86064-528-0.

<sup>29</sup> Kamla Mittal, *History of Bhopal State*. Munshiram Manoharlal, 1990, p. 2. OCLC 551527788

<sup>30</sup> Tanda in Berasia Tehsil (Bhopal), Tanda in Bina tehsil (Sagar), Tanda in Bagh tehsil (Indore), Banki Tanda, Barada Tanda, Tanda in Kukshi tehsil, Tanda in Bagh tehsil and Tanda Kheda in Sardar pur tehsil of Dhar District.

<sup>31</sup> *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, v. 14, p. 397.

<sup>32</sup> *Official historical account of Kangra*

<sup>33</sup> Tanda, Kangra (tehsil) in Kangra Dist., Tanda Hamirpur, Tanda in Indora of Kangra Tehsil, Tanda Parla and Tanda Holta in Palampur tehsil of kangra dist., Tanda in Panchrukhi tehsil of Kangra Dist and Tanda in Balh tehsil of Mandi Dist.

Tanda was an ancient town in Malda and became capital of Bengal after the decadence of Gaur.<sup>34</sup> According to Stewart, before the final depopulation of Gaur; Sulaiman Shah Kararani, the Afghan kings of Bengal, moved the seat of government to Tanda in 1564 A.D.<sup>35</sup> Though it was never a populous city, Tanda was a favourite residence for the Mughal governors appointed in Bengal until the middle of the seventeenth century. During the heydays of Akbar, *Tanda* (Bengal) was capital of Bengal.<sup>36</sup> It was also a prestigious and crucial land assignment bestowed upon the *jagirdars* and *mansabdars*. Fazal notes 'Khan-Khana in concert with Raja Todar Mal took up the quarters of Tanda which is capital of that country, and engaged in arranging matters, political and financial'.<sup>37</sup> The importance of Tanda (Bengal) for empire was so much that even a mint was established here and in A.D. 1577, and Todar Mal was given charge of it.<sup>38</sup> During c. 1660, when Shah Shuja was hard pressed by Mir Jumla (Aurangzeb's general), he retreated from Rajmahal to Tanda for escape and a decisive battle was fought in the vicinity of the town in which the former was finally routed.<sup>39</sup> Subsequently, Tanda was deserted by the Mughal governors in favour of Rajmahal and Dacca.

The constant struggle of Aurangzeb in the Deccan area paved way for thick presence of the *Tandas* in a few zones of Maharashtra. The reason for the presence of Banjaras was simple as they were commissariat suppliers for the fighting armies in the battle fields. The thick presence of *Tandas* in Maharashtra is also visible around the district Nanded (Maharashtra).<sup>40</sup> In district Nanded there are thirty five *Tandas*. The potable water is available from river Sur. Names of some *Tandas* indicate to a few places (geographical zones) from where members of that particular *Tanda* have arrived and some do highlight the name of Banjara leaders who is popularly known as *Naik*.<sup>41</sup> The Naik was introduced as 'each Banjara camp (tanda), its king, bedecked with a pearl necklace'.<sup>42</sup> For example Mathura and Nandgeon (Uttar Pradesh), Rajgad and Raipur (Rajasthan) are names of towns. And the *Tandas* with these names indicate to the areas from where the members of that particular troop have come. The *Tandas* names in which *Naik* is fixed are indicative of the famous *Tanda* leaders after whom his *Tanda* was known. Such as Chapla Naik Tanda, Bhanu Naik Tanda, Dongri Naik Tanda, Devla Tanda, Ruad Naik Tanda, Lalu Naik Tanda, Maharban Naik Tanda, Deep Naik etc.

The emerging patterns of the *Tandas* are around the trade routes taken up by the Banjaras while transporting the goods. Nine popular *Tandas* of Madhya Pradesh are at Ujjain (two *Tandas*), Dhar (one), Bhopal (one), Sehore (one), Betul (one), Ganu (one), Ashoknagar (one) and one in Jhabua district.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, the Aravalli ranges also have eight popular *Tandas*.<sup>44</sup> Both Jharkhand and Orissa have one *Tanda* each.<sup>45</sup> As discussed above, Uttar Pradesh have 27 *Tandas* around some or the other

<sup>34</sup> The Imperial Gazetteer of India, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1908, [http://www.indpaedia.com/ind/index.php/Tanda\\_Town\\_\(or\\_Tanra\)](http://www.indpaedia.com/ind/index.php/Tanda_Town_(or_Tanra)).

<sup>35</sup> Charles Stewart, *The History of Bengal from the first Mohammeden invasion until the virtual conquest of that country by the English A.D 1757*, London, 1813, p. 95). Cf. <https://archive.org/stream/TheHistoryOfBenga>

<sup>36</sup> Abul Fazal, *Akbarnama*, translated by H.Beveridge, Low Price Publication, Delhi, 2011 reprint, vol. 3, p. 169 & 1023.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 321.

<sup>39</sup> *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1908, [http://www.indpaedia.com/ind/index.php/Tanda\\_Town\\_\(or\\_Tanra\)](http://www.indpaedia.com/ind/index.php/Tanda_Town_(or_Tanra)).

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.census2011.co.in>. Tanda (Gondia Taluka) in Gondia District; Tanda (Mouda Taluka) in Nagpur District; Futtala Tanda, Tandli and Ratna Tanda (Mukhed Taluka), Ambadi, Chapla Naik Tanda, Devla Tanda, Dhawaji Tanda, Jaroda Tanda, Malkajam Tanda, Mathura Tanda, Nandgeon Tanda, Parasram Naik Tanda, Rajgad Tanda, Raipur Tanda, Ruad Naik Tanda, Sowargaon Tanda, Tembi Tanda, Tallari Tanda, Sakul Naik Tanda, Paroti Tanda, Pangari Tanda, Palshi Tanda, Lalu Naik Tanda, Chikhil Tanda, Bhiku Naik Tanda, Bendi Tanda, Deepa Naik Tanda, Dongargaon Tanda, Gondjevil Tanda, Jaldhara Tanda, Jarur Tanda, Mansingh Tanda, Mahada Tanda, Nirala Tanda, and Ritha Tanda (Kinwat Taluka) in Nanded District (Maharashtra).

<sup>41</sup> See footnote no. 40.

<sup>42</sup> Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib, *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, p. 354.

<sup>43</sup> <https://villageinfo.in/madhya-pradesh>.

<sup>44</sup> <http://www.census2011.co.in>, Tanda in Bharatpur, Tanda in Dhaulpur, Tanda in Banswara, Tanda in Chittaurgarh, Tanda in Baran, Tanda in Udaipur, two Tanda in Pratapgarh (Rajasthan).

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.census2011.co.in>, Tanda in Hazaribagh (Jharkhand) and Tanda in Nabarangapur (Orissa).

city, Aurangabad is surrounded by approximately 92 *Tandas*, Kangra is served by six *Tandas* and so on and so forth.

Such a thick presence of the *Tandas* around the cities clearly depicts the role of the Banjaras as the suppliers, without whom the planning of any perfect medieval city would have failed and the inhabitants would have starved to death. Further the willingly maintained segregation exercised by settled villagers and city inhabitant; from the *Tandas* is also pretty clear with the name of village and location of *Tanda* and names of the Banjara troops (*Tandas*), which was allotted space next to a village and the name of village was prefixed to *Tanda* to signify that this *Tanda* belongs to the particular village. The Ghonsi *Tanda* (taluka Ghansawangi in district Jalna) is around the Ghosi Bk and Ghonsi Kheda respectively.<sup>46</sup> Similarly, Gulkhand *Tanda* (taluka Mantha in Jalna district) is near village Gulkhand and Waghoda *Tanda* is named after village Waghoda.<sup>47</sup> In tehsil Aurangabad; Borawadi *Tanda*, Gadiwat *Tanda*, Georai *Tanda*, Ghardon *Tanda*, Girnera *Tanda*, Kachner *Tanda*, Kesapuri *Tanda*, Pardari *Tanda*, Satara *Tanda* and Shivgad *Tanda* are all after the names of villages namely Borawadi, Gadiwat, Georai, Ghardon, Girnera, Kachner, Kesapuri, Pardari, Satara and Shivgad respectively which are next to the *Tanda*'s halting station. Might be it was due to the role of respective *Tanda* for the concerned village where a space for halt has been allotted. The tehsils of Kuldabad,<sup>48</sup> Paithan,<sup>49</sup> Sillod,<sup>50</sup> Seogaon<sup>51</sup> and Kannad<sup>52</sup> (Aurangabad) also reflect identical results.

The *Tanda* settlements reflect a visible thick presence in the climatically arid, semi-arid areas and landscapes in which perennial river are not available. The settlement patterns indicate that the Banjaras were active and extensively employed in the areas where the riverine connectivity and communication was not possible. The organization of land transport was largely controlled by the Banjaras.<sup>53</sup> The commodity structure of the Banjara transportation and trade was very wide but mainly in non-perishable items. The major rivers in the North India were much of help during and after monsoon and were providing lifeline for commerce.<sup>54</sup> In medieval India the riverine connectivity and trade was preferred over the other means of transportation due to its effectiveness and high speed.<sup>55</sup> The nature of waterways communication was speedy due to the indigenous knowledge of the boat-keepers and the effective use of winds. Overall, it can be said that the Banjaras were needed more for the areas where absence of flowing rivers was a serious hurdle to carry out the trade and supply activities. To much of surprise, the Banjaras managed the entire trade of the dry and difficult terrains, where the smooth sail of boats was not possible due to absence of the perennial rivers and that too, very efficiently. *An Atlas of the Mughal Empire* is very helpful to locate a few popular *Tandas* that worked as the lifeline in the distant zones of Ganga-Yamuna doab.<sup>56</sup> Here the Banjaras mainly acted to collect the goods on the river banks which were further supplied by river channels to the distant lands. So, it can be said that the *Tandas* were very much maintaining the supply chains for the settled

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<sup>46</sup> <http://www.census2011.co.in>.

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.census2011.co.in>.

<sup>48</sup> <http://www.census2011.co.in>, Tisgaon *Tanda* (Tisgaon).

<sup>49</sup> <http://www.census2011.co.in>, Adool *Tanda* (Adool Bk and Adool Kheda), Devgaon *Tanda* (Devgaon), Pargaon *Tanda* (Pargaon), *Tanda* Bk and *Tanda* Kheda (*Tanda*).

<sup>50</sup> <http://www.census2011.co.in>, Gavhali *Tanda* (Gavhali) and Sirsala *Tanda* (Sirsala).

<sup>51</sup> <http://www.census2011.co.in>, Banoti *Tanda* (Banoti), Ghanegaon *Tanda* (Ghanegaon), Nanda *Tanda* (Nanda), Nandgaon *Tanda* (Nandgaon).

<sup>52</sup> <http://www.census2011.co.in>, Amba *Tanda* (Amba), Balkheda *Tanda* (Belkheda), Bharmba *Tanda* (Bharmba), Chinch Kheda Bu *Tanda* (Chinch Kheda Khurd, Chinch Kheda Bk.), Ghosur *Tanda* (Ghosur), Hiverkheda *Tanda* (Hiverkheda), Jaitkheda *Tanda* (Jaitkheda), Jehur *Tanda* (Jehur), Mundwadi *Tanda* (Mundwadi), Nagad *Tanda* (Nagad), Pangara *Tanda* (Pangara), Umbarkheda *Tanda* (Umbarkheda) and Wadner *Tanda* (Wadner).

<sup>53</sup> Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib, *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, p. 354.

<sup>54</sup> Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib, *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, p. 337.

<sup>55</sup> Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib, *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, p. 353.

<sup>56</sup> Irfan Habib, *An Atlas of the Mughal Empire*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, reprinted with corrections 1986, Map No. 8A (shows three *Tandas* at Delhi and two in Awadh), 11 A & B (two *Tandas* in Bengal – one near Gaur and another at Rampur).



habitations (cities and villages) and were crucial for the trade activities in the role of the 'consignment carriers and transporter' for traders.

Shifting from the landscape of India, an ordinary search on Google helps to identify the usage of word *Tanda* around the globe especially on the western side of India. This clarifies that the usage of term *Tanda* is not limited to Hindustan only. Throughout the world it carries a significant influence, in each place conveying the very same meaning i.e 'a moving troop engaging in the trading and credit activities under guidance of a leader'. In Mexico, *Tanda* signifies a Rotating Credit Association.<sup>57</sup> In Serbia *Tanda* is a village in Bor region and similarly in Russia it is a rural locality in Sakha Republic. At Ivory Coast, *Tanda* is a department. In Egypt, Pakistan and Ivory Coast; *Tanda* stands to signify a town. At last in Niger also, *Tanda* is a rural commune. Thus, it can be said with some firmness that usage of *Tanda* is not limited to the boundaries of Medieval India. Either it migrated in or migrated out of India. To trace its movement is still a matter of extensive research awaiting a scholarly brush to pin its history. What was the route of its migration? It is yet a question to be answered. Overall, in surety the visibility of many *Tandas* across the world clearly speaks in support of the contribution made by the migrations and the settling human populations, who have made a word namely *Tanda* to travel across the globe and, surprisingly conveying the same meaning in every place.

In nutshell, it can be asserted that a huge number of *Tandas* were additions made by the Banjaras who were travelling in troops carrying out trade, credit and transportation activities. The concepts of cities during medieval India (to be located in distant areas and isolated zones with all the supplies of human survival) were just not possible without the Banjaras and their unbreakable and constant chain of supplies. Apparently, the territorial expansion of the Mughal state also owes a lot to the Banjaras and their *Tandas* who were keeping the armies well fed in the battle fields. The peddling trade, organization of caravan and discipline in *Tanda* were the responsibility of a *Naik* under whose leadership the members and the beasts (ox) worked tirelessly and made success out of the concept called *Tanda*.

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