

## **The Company becomes a regional power in India**

In 1757, as regional rivals fought for power, the East India Company used its army and effectively took control of Bengal.

The Company became responsible for 20 million inhabitants.

*“[It] had risen from very slender beginnings, to a state of the highest importance; their concerns, simple at first, are grown extremely complex, and are immensely extended.*

*They are no longer mere traders, and confined in their privileges; they are sovereigns over fertile and populous territories.”*

-- anonymous writer, Monthly Review  
(1772)

## **The famine of 1769-73 in Bengal**

An estimated 10 million died in the famine, a natural disaster made worse by the actions of the East India Company.

As more land came under the Company's control it increased taxes, forcing many local people to stop growing food to support themselves, and instead grow 'cash crops', which could be sold to raise cash for taxes.

This was often opium, which the East India Company traded for Chinese tea.