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Awadh and the English East India Company

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As the Mughal Empire fragmented and the British Empire laid its own foundations, Awadh emerged as an essential component in the most important political formulations of the day. Although the various provinces of the Mughal Empire seemed to break away during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, it was not until the revolution of 1857–58 that the Mughal edifice finally collapsed. The English East India Company sought to hasten this Mughal decline and fastened on Awadh as one of its prime reserves for military, political, and fiscal resources. Simultaneously, however, each of the elements in the society of Awadh had its own plans and visions of the future. Thus, the history of Awadh up to 1858 reflects the interaction among British and Mughal imperial ambitions and the agendas of the rulers, townsmen, rural landholders, peasants, and other people of Awadh.

Not until the mid-eighteenth century did Awadh clash with the English. From its foundation in 1600 until the 1750s, the English East India Company confined itself largely to coastal commercial concerns, far removed from Awadh in the central Gangetic plain. The 'factories' at Madras (obtained by the Company in 1640), Bombay (first rented by the Company in 1668), and Calcutta (founded 1690) were at first mere warehouses where the Company's 'factors' (merchants) collected goods they had purchased, prior to export in the Company's ships for sale in London. As a joint-stock corporation, the English East India Company had as one of its goals the payment of satisfactory dividends to its shareholders. This meant steady pressure to keep costs down and returns up. Indeed, the Company continued to pay dividends to its shareholders at a fixed and generous rate till 1858. Until the mid-eighteenth century,

commercial rivalries with the French East Indian Company (founded 1664) played a much larger role in the English Company's policies than did political interests within the Indian heartland where Awadh lay.

The Company's earliest political confrontations with Awadh and the other Indian states grew out of its expanding commercial interests and its rivalry with its French competitors. Political strife in Europe had echoes in India, bringing on wars between the English and the French Companies in south India—the Carnatic Wars (1746–48, 1751–54, 1756–63). In their struggles, the English and French Companies allied themselves with rival powers within the many already conflicting Indian states. The English Company thus learned that its burgeoning military wing could not only stand up to the armies of the Indian states, it could allow the Company to tap the economic resources and accumulated treasures of those states. Taking this lesson with him to Bengal, Robert Clive reversed the Company's flagging fortunes there by a combination of political manoeuvre and military force against the Nawab. The result—the Company's victory over the Bengal armies at Plassey in 1757—left the Company in possession of a vast territory, three times the size of England itself. This conquest brought the English into direct collision with the aggressive political ambitions of the current ruler of Awadh, Shuja-ud-Daula (1754–75).

As each of the provincial rulers of the Mughal Empire broke away from imperial control, each nevertheless sought to use the power of the Emperor's name to further his own ambitions. The Emperors themselves made futile efforts to harness the war-lords. A series of regional rulers elevated puppet Emperors in order to legitimise their own aggrandizements. Based strategically near the Mughal capital, the Awadh nawabs proved among the most persistent of these provincial manipulators of the Mughal imperial name.

Awadh and the Company first directly challenged each other when Shuja-ud-Daula marched his armies against the English, under the Mughal banner, in 1764. The Company crushed these armies at the battlefield of Buxar.[1] But given the vast extent of the Awadh territories, the Company shrank from attempting to assert its own direct administration—lacking the funds or manpower to garrison, the expertise or power to administer, and the inclination or authority from Parliament or its Court of Directors to annex them. Consequently, the Company sought an Indian ruler to entrust with these lands. It decided to restore Shuja-ud-Daula to authority, but as its subordinate ally, and an effective buffer against hostile forces to the south and west (Marathas or Afghan

murders). Shuja-ud-Daula had proven administrative ability and access to the resources of Awadh, both of which the Company desired to exploit.

In the Treaty of 1765, the Company selected for annexation only part of the Nawab's holdings, and the rest were restored to him on payment of Rs 50,00,000—the alleged charges for the expenses of its recent campaigns. To ensure his loyalty to the Company, it bound the Nawab by this treaty to mutual defence and trade for the Company free of duty—a continuing source of dispute (Khan, 1902: 2:579, 584; Aitchison, 1909: 2:67–9). The ease with which the Nawab paid this vast sum whetted the Company's expectations of future extractions.

The Nawab had recognised the value and advantages of European arms and military science and, like other Indian rulers of the day, now recruited European military advisers to reconstitute his army. Indeed, so successful was his policy that the Company grew concerned and, in a 1768 treaty, stipulated the maximum size of his army and prescribed that less than a third could be on the 'European model' (Aitchison, 1909: 2:70). Thereafter the Company enforced an even further reduction in the Nawab's martial capacity. In 1773, it displaced parts of his army by establishing a 'subsidiary force', troops under Company control paid for by Awadh. This gave the Company the ultimate deciding power in its later confrontations with the ruler.

The East India Company and the Nawab did not, however, have only a one-sided relationship. Shuja-ud-Daula employed his new arrangement with the Company to advance his own expansive interests in north India. Most notably, he used these subsidiary brigades in support of his own army during the Rohilla War (1774).[2] Indeed, some Company officers' complained that their troops bore the brunt of the fighting while the Awadh party gained all the spoils and subsequent advantages.[3]

To manage its relations with the ruler, the Company appointed a political agent, or Resident, at the Awadh court. Until 1772, the Company had transmitted the occasional message through an officer in its army stationed nearby. But now the Resident would supervise the Company's interests there (and in the other centres of political importance to the west as well). This Resident not only gradually moved to monopolise communications between the Nawab and the Company, he eventually intervened in virtually all aspects of the foreign and internal affairs of the state, thus establishing a system of indirect rule that would eventually extend across all of the 'princely states' of India (Fisher, 1991).

Following the death of Shuja-ud-Daula, a new set of political relations between Awadh, the Mughal court, and the Company commenced. On one hand, Awadh moved toward a regional political identity, linked to the Mughal Empire primarily in symbolic terms. On the other, despite the exertions of the Nawab to preserve autonomy, the Company's Resident gradually established indirect control over Awadh. As the new capital of Awadh, Lucknow saw many moments of drama.

Awadh under Indirect Rule

Shuja-ud-Daula's successor, Asaf-ud-Daula (1775–97), sought to inaugurate a glorious new era for Awadh, centered on his magnificent court. Under the previous two rulers, Faizabad had largely displaced Lucknow and Ayodhya as the political centre of Awadh. Faizabad was, however, the unplanned product of the haphazard but dynamic growth of the court under Safdarjang (1739–54) and Shuja-ud-Daula. Asaf-ud-Daula's mother and grandmother, with whom he could not get along, dominated its court life. Its location (near Ayodhya) on the eastern border of the territories remaining to the Nawab, lacked the centrality he now sought. Further, much of the support for his brother and rival, Saadat Ali Khan, came from the Faizabad administrative, military, and court establishments. Consequently, Asaf-ud-Daula shifted his court to Lucknow, which he began to rebuild as a capital worthy of his new reign. Lucknow had been a prosperous regional city, known as a cultural and commercial centre, but its political importance had faded.

Following 1775, Lucknow emerged as the first city in India of its day, rivalling (and many would argue far surpassing) both Delhi of the Mughals and Calcutta of the Company for the richness of its high court culture, its striking architecture, the excellence of its crafts-people and artisans, and the fame of its artistic, musical, poetic, and scholarly luminaries. Asaf-ud-Daula's arrival brought to Lucknow not only his personal retinue, but the headquarters of the administration and the army. The Resident, and various European adventurers too, shifted their homes and patronage to Lucknow. Thus new sections of the city developed around the court, the government, and the palace complexes of these notables.[4] Populating the new quarters around these centres were an array of poets, musicians, courtesans, artisans, and other purveyors of the increasingly lavish culture that became legendary as *Lakhnavi* (Sharar, 1975).

By the end of the eighteenth century, the ruling family of Awadh had shifted its self-perception and public image significantly. Unlike the

founders of the line, these rulers of Awadh apparently no longer considered themselves members of the Mughal service elite. While they continued to regard the Mughal Emperor as sovereign until 1819, they had so established themselves locally as to consider their position as rulers to be hereditary. Status based on achievement was transformed by them into status based on birth. As a contemporary Muslim official in Awadh noted about Asaf-ud-Daula:

> The Wazir Asaf-ud-Daula expects that people will yield him allegiance on account of the names and claims of his ancestors, will submit to these tyrannies with perfect complacence, will wink at his evil practices, which are harder than death to endure, and will not open their lips to complain. If anyone is foolish enough to reproach the Wazir for these actions and shuns him, he and his place-seekers charge him with sedition, disloyalty, and enmity to Mussulmans (Taalib, 1885: 75).

While Lucknow blossomed as a cultural centre, it did so in an increasingly isolated political environment. The East India Company incrementally cut Awadh off from political events outside of that province. All political communications into and out of Awadh had to pass through the Resident's hands. Such political isolation proved a central element in the establishment of indirect rule here and elsewhere.

In the internal affairs as well, the Company asserted its ultimate political and military control through its Resident. It guaranteed the protection of the ruler from external and internal enemies, and stationed troops in Awadh and in the surrounding territories. Further, to free the Company's regular troops for service elsewhere, the Company organized the 'Oudh Auxiliary Force', at the ruler's expense.

The military might of the Nawab decayed. Excluded from deployment outside of the province, his forces further rapidly lost effectiveness for use even within Awadh. Writing in 1823, a ruler explained that his dynasty had come to regard the degradation of the army as a test of its loyalty to the Company: 'From the time of my late Father, . . . relying as he did on the Honorable Company's Government for support against all domestic and foreign enemies, he considered that the maintenance of any troops of his own was not only unnecessary, but would have had the appearance of a separation of interests between the two (Awadh and the Company).' He continued that he surpassed even his father in the neglect of the army in order to prove his fidelity to the Company (Bengal Political Consultations 3 October 1823, No. 12).

After Asaf-ud-Daula's death, the Company's role as arbiter of the political future of Awadh manifested itself overtly. As frequently proved

the case, a succession in an Indian state was a time of internal weakness, to be exploited by the British. The Resident at first acceded to the accession of Asaf-ud-Daula's designated heir, Wazir Ali (1797–98), but the new ruler's policies conflicted with the Company's.[5] Thereupon the Company's long-time client, Saadat Ali Khan—the late ruler's brother who had lived for twenty-two years in exile as a pensioner under the protection of the Company—was installed, after signing a treaty with the Company transferring to it vast territories from his father's domain. The Company later reduced the territorial cessions but extracted a large sum of money instead.

The Company used the Resident to extract the range of resources it desired from Awadh. The Company expected the Resident to secure British control over commerce, including minerals (especially saltpetre for gunpowder), hand manufactures (such as cloth and luxury goods), and grain and other agricultural products (especially cotton and indigo for Britain's cloth industry).[6] In particular, Governors-General frequently stressed to Residents the Company's need to extract cash from the ruler. The nawabs supplied vast amounts of wealth in the forms of subsidies for the Company's troops, loans at low interest, or simply donations (officially to the Company, or unofficially to individuals working for the Company, or even to influential European adventurers). Overall, between 1764 and 1856, the Company extracted (in cash) at least Rs 60,00,000 in assorted 'penalties' (imposed on various rulers, for example, to cover the Company's 'expenses' in installing them during succession disputes), some Rs 52,00,000 in loans (from rulers to the Company at below market interest rates), and between Rs 80,000,000 and 100,000,000 in 'subsidies' (for troops).

In addition, the Company regarded Awadh as a prime recruiting ground for its army and administration. Since there was no ethnic or religious unity and no great identity between the ruler and the vast bulk of the people of Awadh, the nawab apparently did not particularly interest himself in the Company's recruitment policies. Numbers of Awadh's service elites (mainly from the scribal 'castes' with traditions of administration under the Awadh and Mughal dynasties) took employment with the Company. Members of various rural Brahmin, Rajput, and Muslim families, often with small landholdings of their own, found service in the Company's armies. Such service brought not only salaries (of a regularity and scale not locally available) but also various privileges under the Company's auspices, including judicial protection against the Awadh administration for themselves and their families. Soldiers and officers from

Awadh formed the core of the Company's Bengal armies until 1857. (During the 1857 fighting, soldiers native to Awadh formed the greatest threat to the Company (see Mukherjee, 1984).

Despite Saadat Ali Khan's history as a pensioner living under Company protection, as Nawab (1798–1814) he tried to develop policies providing some degree of autonomy to his government. He sought to transform land revenue grants that had been allocated to the Lucknow nobility by his predecessors into cash pensions, thus increasing his fiscal control over them. Land revenue grants were controlled by their holders; cash pensions depended on his whim. This the Resident opposed in several test cases, thus building a constituency among the urban elite for himself, at the cost of their loyalty to their ruler.

The somewhat independent domestic policies of Saadat Ali Khan, and the Company's renewed territorial ambitions, led to further cessions from Awadh. Governor-General Wellesley (1798–1805) put particular pressure on Awadh, urging the Resident to demand from the ruler both territory (particularly the fertile and strategically located Ganges-Jumna doab) and also administrative 'reform'. Although the ruler carefully fulfilled his obligation to pay the subsidy to the Company, he struggled to repulse the Company's intervention in his internal administration. Residents had over time attempted to determine the appointment of various officials in the Avadh administrtion, set administrative policy, and generally interfered in the state apparatus. As an ultimatum, Saadat Ali Khan vowed to resign rather than submit to further intervention. The delighted Company immediately drew up a treaty by which he would cede all of Awadh in exchange for a generous personal pension to the ruler, should he step aside. The Nawab repudiated this offer, seeing it as a sell out for his personal profit, and the Company feared to annex his state by force. Consequently, in 1801 the Governor-General settled for a cession of virtually all the Nawab's territories outside of Awadh, with annual revenues at that time of over Rs 13,000,000, as permanent payment of the subsidy for its forces charged to the state. Despite Saadat Ali Khan's fervent objections, he was eventually compelled to accede, and entrust his Shi'ite co-religionists and their religious buildings to the special protection of the Governor-General (Aitchison, 1909: 2:130–42). In exchange, he received temporary relief from intervention by the Resident in the administration of his remaining territories. Later Awadh rulers would take the same position: unable to oppose the Resident's intervention, they nevertheless refused to relinquish their cultural values, even if it meant personal material loss.

In addition to extracting commerce, wealth, manpower, and territory, the Company also tried to manipulate Awadh for ideological and political purposes. In the eyes of many Europeans, disorder and misgovernment here were potentially dangerous (lest they spread to Company territories), but they also allegedly confirmed the relative superiority of British administration. The Company thus held up the Awadh administration as a negative example of the alternative to British rule. Conversely, for Indian notables and disgruntled people under direct British administration, Awadh provided a partial escape from British rule. Rather than revolt, many emigrated into Awadh.

The East India Company selected Ghazi-ud-din Haydar (1814–27) as the next Nawab from among Saadat Ali Khan's potential heirs. In exchange for his elevation, Ghazi-ud-din Haydar made numerous financial and political concessions to the Company over the course of his reign. At the same time, Lucknow continued to express its own identity through the developing culture of its court and city. Most notably, in 1819 Ghazi-ud-din Haydar had himself crowned, in an elaborate and ritually complex ceremony, as 'Emperor of the Age' (Fisher, 1987: 120–59). The events of this coronation reflected how understandings about his status varied between the court, the British, and the people of the province of Awadh. For the Awadh court, the coronation expressed the unique and leading place of the dynasty in the Shi'ite political universe. For the British, this ritual simply demonstrated the demotion of the Mughal Emperor to the mere King of Delhi, through the secession of one of his principal subordinates. To many of the people of Awadh, the ceremony consisted of yet another remote and costly (to them) court escapade. Thus, the court culture that developed in Lucknow became increasingly ingrown and isolated from political events outside of Awadh and from connections with the people of the province.

Given the frequent and galling restrictions which the Company's Resident placed on the Awadh rulers, each successive ruler sought a different means of self-expression. Nasir-ud-din Haydar (1827–37) worked—against the efforts of the Company—to locate himself prominently within the political world of both his own traditions and those of Britain. Since he could not act politically outside of Awadh due to the Company's strictures, he apparently felt he had to make these assertions symbolically. On his accession, he rejected the Resident's demands for a new 'Deed of Engagement' which would bind him 'to act agreeably to the advice of the Honourable Company in the affairs of Government.' Instead he succesfully negotiated a continuation of the current treaties in

force (Bengal Political Consultations, 16 November 1827, No. 15). Nevertheless, the new ruler's proposed revisions of his, his wives', and his wazir's (chief minister's) titles in light of his self-perceived imperial status met with rejection by the Company, except for their use domestically within Awadh. Diplomatic letters from Indian rulers outside of Awadh, congratulating him on his accession were turned back by the Company. Nasir-ud-din Haydar also elaborated a series of specifically Shia rituals. Beyond more conventional religious ceremonies, he devised novel observations such as designating twelve virgins to act as the mothers of the Shia Imams, and even allegedly dressing up himself as the Imams' mothers and enacting their pregnancies and labours (Sharar, 1975: 57; Bengal Political Consultations 18 September 1829, No. 43; Foreign Political Consultations 12 September 1836, No. 73). Nasir-ud-din Haydar also sought confirmation of his status in British terms, particularly through an exchange of presents and diplomacy with Queen Victoria. The Company did allow him to receive the gifts and correspondence sent by the British monarch to his late father, which arrived posthumously. Further, the Company at first allowed his dispatch of a return mission. In London, however, it blocked the delivery of his presents and corespondence and confiscated them, thereby severing these diplomatic dealings with the empress (Short Statement, 1857; Bengal Political Consultations 31 October 1828, Nos. 15, 16 and 27 February 1828, No. 16). Nevertheless, Nasir-ud-din Haydar persisted in his efforts to gain British respect, through lavish patronage of Europeans in his retinue, wearing formal English dress, building a European-style observatory, enrolling in the British Society of Architects, studying English, and adopting a curious Persian script designed to look like English letters (Bengal Political Consultations 16 August 1833, No. 32, 2 September 1831, No. 73, and 7 January 1833, No. 2; Muhammad, 1939: 40–8; Foreign Political Consultations 27 February 1837, No. 31; India Political Consultations 7 November 1836, No. 56). Ultimately, however, the Company's intervention frustrated his ability to control even administration of his own territories (see Siddiqi, 1973).

The Resident, when reduced to a direct confrontation with the ruler, could rely on the force of the Company's troops. On Nasir-ud-din Haydar's death in 1837, the Resident decided to reject his designated heir, Faridun Bakht. In a dramatic confrontation, the Resident had his troops attack the throne room where Faridun Bakht was ascending his late father's throne against the Company's wishes (Prashad, n.d.: 363, 367–9; Foreign Secret Consultations 7 August 1837, No. 10). In his place, the Company then installed Nasir-ud-din Haydar's aging uncle, Muhammad Ali Shah (1837–42) (see Ahmad, 1971).

As the price of his unexpected accession, Muhammad Ali Shah agreed to sign whatever treaty the Company might propose. Eventually, the Company presented him with the controversial Treaty of 1837, giving the Company the right to take over the administration of Awadh (should it deem necessary) and establishing a payment of Rs 16,00,000 annually for the subsidiary forces. Since the 1801 cession of territory had already satisfied this subsidy 'in perpetuity', the Court of Directors subsequently annulled the 1837 treaty. The Governor-General, rather than admit that he had been overruled, 'inadvertently neglected' to inform the Awadh ruler (and even some of the Company's later Residents) that the Treaty had been annulled, only that the additional subsidy would not be collected (Aitchison, 1909: 1:16).

During the course of his reign, Muhammad Ali Shah made efforts to reform the Awadh administration and further glorify Lucknow through an ambitious series of building projects. Control by the Resident over the most effective military forces in Awadh, however, made enforcement of the ruler's orders problematic. These troops could be used by his administration against defaulting landholders only with the Residents' approval. This cumbersome command structure led to severe limitations on their use by the Awadh administration in collecting land revenues, the main source of income for the state. Conversely, however, these troops provided the Resident with a base for his forays into the administration. Further, the soldiers themselves—mostly born in Awadh—used the Resident to provide them and their families with immunity against the Awadh administration. Thus, only through cooperation with the Resident could the Awadh ruler implement his policies or gain the funds to pay for them.

Amjad Ali Shah (1842–47) in many ways continued the practices of his father, Muhammad Ali Shah, and their predecessors. He strove to develop the identity of his court, resisting many of the assertions of the Company, while at the same time recognizing the need to find a means of working with the Resident in order to carry out the functions of the administration. In Amjad Ali Shah's case, his court culture proved more pietistic than earlier rulers. He reduced the elaborate ceremonies and rituals of the court, channeling resources rather toward Shi'ite religious luminaries and scholars.

The cultural world of the Awadh court and that of the province it ruled shared little in background, composition, or interest. As part of the

process of the development of a distinctly Lakhnavi culture, a hereditary and protected nobility developed at the Awadh capital. As the Awadh rulers made a series of massive and forced loans to the East India Company, the over Rs 25,00,000 in annual interest from these loans was largely assigned in perpetuity to specific relatives and dependents of the Awadh dynasty (Uttar Pradesh, 1964). Despite the taint of usury—forbidden in the Quran and a matter of concern to both the Awadh rulers making the loans and the recipients assigned interest from them—these permanent stipends bestowed security on their recipients. Most of these were individuals who would earlier, under the Mughal pattern, have been assigned *jagirs* and would have been required to actively serve the ruler in exchange for their income. Rarely deigning to serve in the Awadh administration, however, these Lucknow 'guaranteed pensioners' formed a leisured and protected rentier class. The East India Company guaranteed its protection over this hereditary nobility in Lucknow, even against the authority of the ruler. The dependence of such a class on the Company provided its Resident with considerable influence in Lucknow.

Scattered across Awadh lay well-established towns (*qasbas*). These market and cultural centres supported an Islamicised service and commercial elite of their own. Many of the leading scholars of Islam came from, or taught in, *madrasas* located in such towns. A number of the families with traditions of education and service to the Mughals and later the Awadh rulers, had roots in these towns. As such, they formed an essential element of the culture of Awadh not based in Lucknow.

The elite of Lucknow largely avoided the rural areas of Awadh. Except for hunting parties, the courtiers and high officials of Awadh ventured out of the capital only at peril to their lives.[7] A Resident in Lucknow observed:

> The most remarkable feature about the state of Oude is the entire absence of all sympathy, and I may almost say all communication between the Court and the aristocracy of the capital, and the landed aristocracy of the provinces, or districts. They know hardly any more of each other than if they occupied separate planets . . . The aristocracy of the capital . . . would, none of them, be safe a single night beyond the capital or cantonments. They would be plundered and destroyed by the landholders (Foreign Political Consultations 21 April 1849, No. 100).

Thus the elite of the court and the people and elite of the countryside shared little.

Conversely, virtually none of the established landholding families made their way into the administration or capital. Only in a few unusual

cases did landholders side consistently with the administration. Landholders who ventured into Lucknow were held hostage for the payment of their revenue, beaten, imprisoned, and even killed when discovered in the capital. The rare landholder who did enter Lucknow tried to insure his safety through guarantees from powerful individuals at court. As a rule, the ruling house, courtiers, administrators, landholders, and peasants each intermarried among themselves, each group within its own class and religious community.

The lack of sympathy or shared cultural identity between the courtiers and the landholders of Awadh generally precluded regular social contact and marriage between them. The rulers, and apparently virtually all of their courtiers, shunned any marriage connections with the inhabitants of the province they ruled. Only in a few unusual cases, where the landholder made extraordinary efforts to adopt the culture of the capital, did social contact develop. In one of these rare instances, a landholding family which had already converted to Shi'ism sought to participate in the culture of the court. The result was prolonged and destructive warfare between the members of the two cultural worlds. For instance, the Raja of Nanpara frequented Lucknow sufficiently to take as his second wife one of the favoured courtesans of the city, a woman who had allegedly been a former intimate of the Nawab himself. When the Raja died soon thereafter, this younger, Shia, wife gathered the support of her old companions in the city to try to take over the estate of Nanpara. The late Raja's senior wife, a Sunni, held the backing of the administration of the estate and most of the neighbouring landholders who united to exclude the forces of the junior widow. In the period of conflict which ensued, the estate was devastated. Only after a compromise, which pensioned off both widows and placed the estate under an infant relative of the late Raja, was peace restored (Ghoshal, 1918; India Political and Foreign Consultations 28 December 1855, No. 307).

The Awadh rulers clearly regarded the Shi'ites of their court—and of the rest of the world—as their primary constituency. While Shi'ites dominated in the administration and nobility of the capital, they made up an insignificant percentage of the population of the countryside. Excluding Shi'ites in the earlier capital of Faizabad and in Lucknow, they made up less than 0.2 per cent of the population of Awadh.[8] To the detriment of the other communities, rulers demonstrated their preference for Shias in their distribution of honour and the resources of the province. They assigned over 90 per cent of the interest paid on their loans to the Company to their relatives and dependents—almost all of

whom were Shia. Most of the remainder of the annual interest went to specifically Shia institutions, like *Imambaras* (where the symbols of Shia martyrdom are housed). These sums were in addition to nearly Rs 20,00,000 which went annually in direct pensions from the ruler to his relatives. Further, large gifts were made to the institutions at the site of martyrdom in Karbala in Iraq (Uttar Pradesh 1964; India Political and Foreign Consultations 19 December 1853, No. 115; Bengal Political Consultations 16 November 1827, No. 12). Thus a significant part of the revenue was committed to those who shared their sectarian identity.

The nawabs also favoured Shi'ites with key executive posts. As an example, they considered the most prominent position in the administration, that of vizier, appropriate only for Shi'ites. Of the eleven appointments to this office made during the nineteenth century, ten were to Shi'ites. The sole Sunni minister, an official favoured by the East India Company, lasted only a few months.[9]

This nearly unbroken string of Shia appointees in this highest of offices was the result of explicit policy. When the Company suggested a candidate it considered qualified for the post, the Awadh ruler rejected him out of hand because '. . . he is a Sooni, I have not long to live, the Sheeas would desert the town, there would be a blot upon my memory' (India Political Consultations 3 August 1840, No. 71). In cases where no experienced Shi'ite was available, one was appointed wazir anyway, sometimes with a trained Sunni deputed to carry out the practical work of the office; in this way, Shia prestige was preserved and the administration's functions could continue (Khaldun 1958: 1: Chapter 3).

The political pressures on the incumbent of the office of wazir made stable tenure in that office very difficult. The demands of the East India Company on the state fell squarely on the shoulders of the wazir. The ruler on his part insisted that the chief minister remain solely dependent on his favour. In consequence, there was rapid turnover in the office of wazir. Any minister who displeased the Company, or who pleased it too much for the ruler's taste, was sacked. In at least one case, the gestures of support by the Company for an incumbent minister apparently led directly to his dismissal by a jealous ruler (Diskalar, 1937: 22).

Significantly, the only chief minister who remained in office throughout the entire reign of an Awadh ruler was bound to him by ties of marriage. After a number of unsuccessful negotiations with various of his cousins, the prince who would become the last ruler of Awadh, Wajid Ali Shah (1847–56), married the daughter of Ali Naqi Khan, a courtier and

distant relation. On his accession, Wajid Ali Shah appointed his father-in-law chief minister, regardless of the man's almost total lack of administrative experience (see Bhatnagar, 1968 and Bose, n.d.). In spite of the particularly severe strains placed on this minister by the political circumstances of the day, he remained wazir through the annexation of Awadh by the Company in 1856, and even after the deposition and then the exile of the ruler.

Over the years from 1764 to 1856, the Company had on several occasions proposed the annexation of Awadh, and finally in 1856 the Directors authorised the Governor-General to annex the state on the ambiguous grounds of 'misgovernment'. In British eyes, Wajid Ali Shah had became notorious for his devotion to poetry, religion, and/or sensual pleasure rather than the affairs of state.[10] Little evidence, however, supports the British contention that conditions in Awadh had particularly changed for the worse at that moment. In fact, the Governor-General admitted that he was unable to 'find a pretext' for the ultimatum, since Wajid Ali Shah 'will take any amount of kicking without being rebellious' (Baird, 1911; 344). Indeed, at the time of annexation, the ruler had just weathered a communal crisis as Hindu and Muslim partisans fought over disputed religious ground at Hanuman Garhi in Ayodhya. Wajid Ali Shah, by sending in his troops to crush a band of Muslims marching on the site, enforced order, despite thinly veiled British desires that he fail and thus justify Company intervention to 'save' Awadh from its ruler.

Governor-General Dalhousie (1848–56) had the Resident convey to the ruler the Company's unwillingness to tolerate any further 'maladministration'. Although the legal right of the Company to so intervene was debatable, Dalhousie overrode such juridical considerations and justified his act on the theoretical grounds that the Company had to protect 'the People' of Awadh from abuse by their ruler. Rather than direct annexation, the Governor-General first proposed the Company administer Awadh in the name of the ruler. The ruler would keep his main palace and titles, and would receive an annual pension of up to Rs 18,00,000 if he would sign the authorisation for this act. To put further pressure on the ruler, the Resident was to offer the Queen Mother an additional Rs 1,00,000 annually if she would induce her son to sign.

Despite these inducements, the ruler refused to compromise his honour, as he conceived it, by collaborating in this way with the Company. The Company thus annexed Awadh into its direct rule and as his final act, the ruler paid off his army and ordered all his officials and

officers to cooperate with the Company, 'on no pretense to revolt or mutiny' while he 'proceeds to Calcutta, to bring his case to the notice of the Governor-General and (then to England) to intercede with Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen'. To no avail.[11] The final blow, however, occurred in 1857–58, after the end of the 'Mutiny'. The efforts of the Queen Mother had proved futile. Under the British Raj, Lucknow in particular, and India in general, were to enter yet another phase of their existence.

NOTES

1. For studies of relations between Awadh and the East India Company see Barnett (1980), Basu (1943), Davies (1939), Fisher (1987), and Paton (1944).
2. This war arose from the political manoeuverings of Shuja-ud-Daula and the leader of this Rohilla Afghan ethnicity, Hafiz Rahmat Khan, in the context of the military threat which the Rohilla Afghans posed to the north-western flank of Awadh. The combined Awadh and Company armies proved victorious.
3. For a first-hand account of this war and the other early British conquests by a Muslim subaltern (incidently the first book written and published in English by an Indian) see Fisher (1996).
4. For the architectural history of Lucknow up to 1857, see Llewellyn-Jones, 1985. For the city's post-1857 history, Oldenburg, 1984.
5. While this deposition and reposition went smoothly, Wazir Ali later expressed anti-British resistance: in 1799, he led an unsuccessful revolt, killing the Company's Resident in Benaras but was ultimately captured and imprisoned for life by the Company.
6. For a study of the changing economy of the Gangetic plain see Bayly (1983). There is much debate about the role of British commercial interests in the Company's policy in Awadh see Marshall (1975, 1985) and Mukherjee (1982, 1985).
7. For a colourful and probably fictionalized account of the loot of a party of nobles from Lucknow by local landholders see Knighton (1856: 76–8).
8. According to the earliest census giving such information: White, 1882. The only earlier census did not identify Shi'ites: Williams, 1869.
9. The Ruler refers to this Sunni minister's death as 'timely' and saving the Ruler's good name. India Political Consultations 3 August 1840, No. 71.
10. Some scholars have seen this as an effort to find refuge from the frustrations inherent in their condition of indirect rule (see Goetz, 1938). Nevertheless, all the Nawabs worked to preserve their own sense of their position in the world, as defined by their own cultural values.
11. This annexation generated much discord, both among policy-makers and among scholars assessing it, and among the people of Awadh and north India at the time (for example see: Bird, 1971; Irwin, 1973; Shah, 1856).

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3

Lucknow, City of Dreams

ROSIE LLEWELLYN-JONES

Lucknow was indeed a city of dreams, and it sometimes seems that even today, 140 years after Nawab Wajid Ali Shah left it forever, there are almost as many different ways of interpreting it, as there were dreamers. Curiously, the city's buildings appeared to visitors to have an insubstantial, dream-like quality about them. Some found them theatrical, something of a sham, the painted backdrop for an Indian masque. 'You find, on examination', wrote a disappointed traveller, 'that the white colour of the buildings, which presented in the sunlight the effect of the purest marble, is simply whitewash. The material of the buildings themselves is stuccoed brick, and your taste is shocked by the discovery that the gilded domes, of perfect shape and apparently massive construction . . . are mere shells of wood, in many places rotten' (Beg, 1915: 7).

To Honoria Lawrence, Lucknow in spite of its imperfections and its 'bad taste and inconsistency, altogether comes nearer to anything I have seen to realise my early ideas of the Arabian Nights and Lala Rookh'. (Private Papers 1830–57 MSS Eur. F85 IOL.) Maria, Lady Nugent found one of the palaces 'certainly very pretty and truly eastern—its various courts and colonnades, the variety of birds, the style of the gardens, etc., put me very much in mind of those we see on old China cups and jars'. (Nugent, 1839: I: 323).

Those who were homesick imagined that Hazratganj, the new main street, was like the High Street at Oxford, 'in the colour of its buildings and the general form and Gothic style of the greater part of them'. (Heber, 1828: I: 386). And Lucknow 'will forcibly bring to the recollection of an Englishman those cities of his native land; the same streets, fine houses, and meadows fertilized by the Goomty'. (Anon., *Sketches of India,* 1816: 151).

Indian writers, like Abdul Halim Sharar (English edition, 1975), and