

adhered to their own world views. The Awadh rulers were reasonably successful in resolving this difficulty by resilience and by making compromises.¹ But compromise was of no avail against increasingly assertive Shiism of Lucknow and the East India Company's aggressive claims over the province. It would thus appear that the history of Lucknow and Awadh was not confined to the boundaries of the city and the province; it moved much beyond, to incorporate into it the history of the Mughals and of the British and their encounters with the peoples and the realities of the subcontinent.

Early History and Tradition

Awadh first acquired its social and political distinction in approximately the eighth century BC as Kosala, one of the sixteen *mahajanapadas* of the later Vedic period. Over time, this region continued its cultural identity as Kosala and Madhyadesha, even as it merged into one or other of the states of northern India such as the Gupta (c. AD 320–510), the realm of Harshvardhana (606–47), the Pratihara (816–1090), and the kingdom of the Gahadavalas of Kanauj (c. 1104–94).

The details of the founding of Lucknow are uncertain. The earliest definite references to the city come from the medieval period, but local traditions trace its origins back to the hero of the *Ramayana*: Rama built Lucknow for his brother, Lakshman, naming it Lakshmanpur after him (Sharar, 1975: 36). Thus the inhabitants of this city made the same etiological appeal for legitimization as many of the leading Rajput clans of Awadh, who claimed biological descent—and therefore political authority—from Raja Rama.

Lucknow city developed as a centre of a distinct political and cultural region. Together with the city of Ayodhya in the east, Lucknow anchored the historically persistent cultural region defined by the Awadh dialect. Rural Awadh remained dominated by largely Hindu Rajput landholders. For example, Baiswara, a region historically controlled by Bais Rajput landholders, lay to the south of Lucknow. While many Rajput landholding families traced their genealogies back to Raja Rama, others asserted that their rights over their estates came from another deity, or from conquest over indigenous peoples living in jungle land. Brahmins and other Hindu castes, and many Muslim clans like Saiyids, Shaikhs and Afghans also held considerable land in Awadh. (Alam, 1986: 94–5; Fisher, 1987: 41–9) With the coming of Islam to India, especially after the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate (1206–1526), a number of established landholding families as well as significant numbers of the

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The Awadh regime (1722–1857) encountered phases of brilliant triumphs as well as days of doom and dismal failure. The founders of the dynasty built and cemented the base of their power by bringing the turbulent countryside under control, through a series of armed confrontations and tactful alliances. Later, their successors, who saw themselves as the 'Emperors of the Age', asserted the cultural superiority of their capital. During these years they manoeuvred to maintain and consolidate their power with reference to the Mughals and, in varying degrees, against the ambitions of the local elite, and then against the heavy demands of the British. In the realm of culture, their achievements were often unmatched. They generously patronised almost all forms of art and culture—architecture, dance, music, painting, poetry—as also religious scholarship. Their greatest achievement was the promotion and reinforcement of a political norm which co-ordinated, in large measure, the conflicting claims of the diverse groups and communities within the province.

The political glory of this regime was, however, short-lived, to fade off much before its evident decline. I present here a brief account of the vicissitudes of the first phase of the history of this regime (c. 1722–64). At centrestage were the Awadh rulers, initially mere governors of the Mughals in the province, struggling for additional powers and autonomy in the face of the power of Delhi. Even as they virtually rejected the authority of Delhi, they acceded to the symbolic 'paramount' position of the Mughal emperor. There were other actors also. Most of the local magnates were willing—they had also been moulded in the days of the Great Mughals—to act on the norms of the new court culture, but many

peasantry converted to the religion of north India's new rulers. Further, many Muslim individuals and clans entered India from Afghanistan, Central Asia, Iran, or Arabia, and settled in Awadh.

As the Delhi Sultanate asserted its power across north India, Lucknow served it as one of its several administrative seats in the Gangetic plain. The city stood as the established centre of its local region after the coming of the Mughals as well (1526). The Mughals incorporated the city into their sophisticated administrative structure, and made it the headquarters of one of Awadh province's five sub-provincial administrative units (*sarkars*). The Mughals also stationed in Lucknow one of the eight military and police commandants (*faujdar*s) of the province of Awadh. Additionally, they established a mint for copper and silver coinage in the city. Often, the governor (*subadar*) of the province made it his main centre of operations in the region. All this reinforced Lucknow's prominence.

The Province and the Problems of Governance

As the eighteenth century opened, Awadh posed a problem for the Mughal emperors. On one hand, Awadh stood as a prosperous and strategic region for the empire. Over the preceding century of relative peace and political stability in north India, it had registered unmistakable economic growth. Intraregional as well as interregional trade throughout the empire in local goods, artifacts, minerals, and food grains sustained a network of towns and monetised markets of varying sizes. Economic developments in Awadh resulted not only in a rise in Mughal revenue collections but also in the emergence and affluence of a number of towns (*qasbas*), with a chain of routes to link them to long distance trade. Lucknow itself produced calico, other cotton cloth, embroidery, and archery bows, and was a sugar collection point (Habib, 1982). The agricultural prosperity of the region was to the obvious advantage of the local landholders (*zamindars*) who enjoyed a dominance in rural production.

The Mughals also valued Awadh for strategic reasons. It lay in close proximity to Delhi, and at the gateway to the eastern imperial provinces. The main route eastward, to the north of the Ganges River, went through Lucknow city where it split: one branch leading on to Ayodhya-Faizabad, the other to Varanasi. In the wake of various regional assertions (such as the Maratha and Bundela uprisings), these trade and administrative-military routes through Lucknow acquired special importance for the Mughals.² Moreover, a large number of the smaller office-holders (*mansabdars*) in the Mughal administration, petty commanders of the imperial troopers, and associates of Mughal courtiers came from the

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towns of Awadh. Mughal imperial control over the province was therefore vital to the future of the empire and Lucknow—even after the foundation of Faizabad by the Awadh ruler in the early eighteenth century—was in turn the key to the control over the region.

At the same time, Awadh remained notoriously difficult to govern. Local officials faced stiff resistance from landholders and peasants in the exercise of imperial control. Typically, a landholder in Awadh based his local control and military power on links of kinship and service with kinsmen in the villages on his estate (Fox, 1981). Rural pressure often took the form of a landholder mobilising his kinsfolk and armed retinue in a rural uprising, even in a few cases to the extent of besieging an imperial fortress. Resistance to imperial authority rested on local level linkages between the landholders and their tenants.

In the area around Lucknow city in particular, a clan putatively descended from a courtier of the Mughal Emperor Akbar, named Shaikh Abd-al Rahman, came to predominate as landholders; they together with many other Shaikhs and Sayids of the province, were collectively known as Shaikhzadas (descendants of the Shaikh). Several Afghan clans had also settled in the areas south and east of Lucknow city. Even when the Mughal empire was at its height many of these landholders—especially Rajputs and Shaikhzadas—asserted some degree of local autonomy in Awadh.

These landholders had earlier allied with the Mughals and accepted a subordinate position either in the face of invincible Mughal armies or to avail of imperial support to protect and promote their own individual interests against those of others within the region. Since the Mughal centre declined during the final years of Aurangzeb's reign (1659–1707) and under his largely powerless successors, these rural notables now found themselves strong enough to rise up in arms.³ The annual revenue collection process usually consisted of a recurrent conflict between the landholder and the collection agent of a provincial administration. The quantity of revenue extracted, the degree of local control exercised by each, and the point of intersection between the authority of the landholder and that of the district administration, remained constantly subject to abrasive negotiation. Often these issues were decided annually on the basis of armed struggle. The larger landholders, (in Awadh called *taluqdars*, landholders who paid revenue for themselves and other zamindars), could from their villagers muster military support comparable in size to that of the administrator charged with revenue collection. A concentrated effort by the provincial administration could dislodge

even the largest landholder. Nevertheless, the short campaign season due to the climate, the need to collect revenues just after the harvest, and the almost uniform opposition of the landholders (protected by their sturdy mud forts in the midst of impenetrable bamboo groves, and supported by the neighbouring villagers), all meant that only a few 'examples' could be made each year by the administration.

The bulk of the landholders thus escaped direct coercion, and could negotiate their payments from a position of strength. As a whole, the landholders maintained an adversarial relationship with the district administration, even as they recognised the *de jure* sovereignty of the Mughal emperor and the authority of his appointed governor. Nevertheless, the goals of these landholders were limited, narrow, and locally oriented. They relied upon support from their peasants and smaller landholders of their own caste. The scale of their mobilisation against imperial power could not transcend divisions of caste and community and failed to incorporate the interests of other regional groups. In many cases their interest remained limited to their kinfolk in their villages; townspeople and traders, like the revenue collecting agents of the administration, could become their victims.

Nevertheless, these revolts corroded the basis of Mughal imperial authority, sometimes through linkages with imperial court politics. In the emerging political situation, service and loyalty to the imperial authority ceased to count, for it was not the Emperor but the provincial governor and powerful nobles at the imperial court who began to dictate state action. Thus, the imperial assistance available to provincial nobles and local officials for coping with local problems depended more on their individual influence with powerful nobles at the centre, and less on their loyalty to the Emperor. In addition, increasing regional prosperity generated conflict amongst the local groups, as each tried to maximise its gains at the expense of the others.

In particular, two classes of people receiving temporary land revenue assignments from the Emperor sought to entrench themselves in this rich region. *Madad-i ma'ash*-holders (revenue-grantees) made a bid to turn their grants into permanent estates, without forfeiting their existing privileges and perquisites.⁴ *Jagir*-holders also aspired to permanency within the Mughal empire, an office-holder received a transferable assignment of land revenue (a *jagir*) from a specified area. This assigned land normatively lay in a region outside the administrative authority of that office-holder, and within the authority of a different official. By rotating these assignments frequently, the Emperors tried to prevent the

entrenchment of any official in his *jagir* and keep each office-holder dependent for his income on the Emperor. From the late seventeenth century, however, the quantity of revenue-producing lands available in the Mughal empire fell below the income demands of the imperial establishment; further, the officially rated income from many lands far exceeded its actual revenues. In consequence, officials in possession of productive assignments resisted transfer to less productive ones, seeking to build their own permanent base out of what was supposed to be a very temporary assignment of land revenues. Additionally, by conspiring with the local administrators, *jagir*-holders sought to exclude the governor's influence. Some *jagir*-holders even managed to obtain administrative authority over the areas containing their own *jagirs*, thus controlling the coercive power to extract whatever revenues they could. This drive by some Mughal officials to establish themselves permanently in their *jagirs* could prove particularly contentious for any ambitious governor who was trying to establish his own control over his province.

Another feature characteristic of the later Mughal empire, and tending toward the decentralization of power was the institution of contract tenure (*ijaradari*). By the early eighteenth century, this institution extended through much of the Mughal empire, including Awadh. An independent party would be 'contracted' to carry out the duties of an office, typically to collect land revenue. The contractor assumed the responsibilities and authorities to extract the revenue, and often kept any excess over the agreed upon amount. Such contract relationships were varied and extensive. Indeed, a number of merchants and money-lenders contracted offices and landholdings on behalf of the officials as financial speculations. They ran them as business ventures with their own employees carrying out the functions of the official. In effect, many governors of the eighteenth century, including Sa'adat Khan, the founder of the Awadh dynasty, held their provinces on this basis. The overall effect was the diminution of central control and the increasing autonomy of individual office-holders.

Thus, prior to 1722 Awadh stood as a particularly important yet troublesome province for the Mughal empire. Lucknow, as the site of one level of Mughal imperial administration, remained an interface between the imperial administration and the surrounding countryside. As an economic centre as well, the city drew upon its hinterland for various kinds of agricultural produce, while at the same time linking Awadh to the larger world of interregional trade. Following the arrival of Sa'adat Khan as governor in 1722, the province would begin a new phase of its

history, one of a growing regional identity over and against that of both the Mughal empire and the rest of north India as well.

The Founding of the Awadh Dynasty within the Mughal Empire

Sa'adat Khan, an Iranian who was later given the title *Burhan al Mulk*, stepped into a complex administrative and cultural situation, in a region alien to his own cultural background. Like most Mughal provinces, Awadh contained a number of administrative units, each with an official who was supposed to be appointed directly by, and responsible to, the Mughal Emperor. As newly appointed governor in a rapidly shifting imperial context, Sa'adat Khan worked quickly to solidify his control both over the Awadh imperial administration and the local landholders and other powerful figures through a series of strategies typical of successful early eighteenth-century governors.

Sa'adat Khan had left the collapsing Safavid empire and arrived in the footsteps of his father and elder brother, in 1708 at the Mughal court. His Iranian Shia background was appreciated at the Mughal court since Iranian culture and Iranian royalty had been long established as the model for sophisticated manners and imperial ritual in India. Further, the Iranians at the Mughal court were sometimes the largest and the most powerful group among the Mughal nobility (Athar Ali, 1966). Sa'adat Khan rose rapidly in the Mughal service. After just thirteen years in India he received an appointment as governor of Agra, the second most valuable province (in terms of assessed revenue demand), as well as an extremely high rank in the Mughal service.⁵ The next year, however, he failed to suppress a local uprising of landholders in Agra. He was then transferred to the governorship of Awadh. At this time, there were very few of his clansmen and associations in Awadh and Sa'adat Khan shared little with the inhabitants of the province other than participation in the Mughal empire. And so he apparently felt it particularly essential to secure for himself the resources of Awadh as quickly as possible.

Sa'adat Khan's first major task was to control the city of Lucknow, then in possession of the celebrated Shaikhzadas, who claimed to be the descendants of the first Muslim conquerors of the province. They had built fortified palaces in the city and big estates in the outlying country; they controlled several important provincial offices, often defied the governor, and would not let anyone enter the city without acknowledging their supremacy. Sa'adat Khan subdued them with arms but more so by striking tactful alliances with their rivals, e.g., the Shaikhzadas of

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towns like Kakori and Bilgram near by (Srivastava, 1954: 32-3; Alam, 1986: 224-37).

Submission of the rural Hindu chieftains followed the capture of Lucknow. Here, again, Sa'adat Khan's military superiority as well as his new revenue schemes ensured his success. The turbulent zamindars were not just ruthlessly subjugated; they were also wooed and won over with a new land arrangement, which guaranteed them additional privileges and profits. How Sa'adat Khan and his heirs sought and gained wide powers in the ongoing conflict over power and revenues within Awadh, is illustrated from a local tradition. Extolling the valour of the Rajputs of an Awadh district, Morawan, the legend goes that when Sa'adat Khan took charge of Awadh, he found the revenue administration of the *suba* in great disorder. He resolved to tour through the country and enquire into the state of things. When he reached Morawan, he summoned all the *qanungos* of Baiswara and asked them to produce the *dawl* (rent roll) of their respective *parganas*. They said 'what dawl will you have?' and on being asked the meaning of their answer, they explained that there were two dauls which a qanungo could give, the 'coward's' or the 'man's'. In the first against every landowner's name was written only that sum which had been fixed at the last assessment, but in the second, rent was indicated on the basis of what it should have been, taking into account the improvement that had taken place in land. Sa'adat Khan called for the 'man's dawl' and on that basis, doubled the assessment of Baiswara. Then, having summoned the representatives of all the zamindars, he placed before them on one side a heap of *pan* leaves, on the other a heap of bullets and bade them, if their masters accepted the terms, to take up pan; if not, the bullets. One after one they came forward and everyone took up the pan leaves (Elliot, 1862: 73). We can speculate that years of Mughal drive against the Rajputs had broken their strength. They thus rejected the bullets and chose the pan, the obvious symbol of a friendly stance.

The new governors or the Nawabs, thus, not only subdued the rural areas of Awadh, they were able to mobilise local social magnates around their own banner through special arrangements with Muslim urban family groups, local landholding potentates, and petty jagir-holders in the province. Further, these hereditary governors also eventually brought provincial finance and all other offices under their own control.

This centralised provincial authority was opposed to the system of checks and balances prevalent in the empire to that point. In the earlier Mughal system, the governor had held executive authority, while a

separate chief fiscal officer (*diwan*) oversaw the revenue aspects, both being supported by military and police commandants (*faujdar*s) and a range of other provincial administrators. Significantly, each official appointed to the province had been separately responsible to the imperial centre. As a result of the efforts of Sa'adat Khan (governor until his death in 1739) and his successors, however, the Awadh governors subordinated all the other officials to themselves. Eventually eliminating intervention by the imperial court in the province, Sa'adat Khan and his heir, Safdarjang (1739–56) made Awadh a stable base for their dynasty.

These developments within Awadh (and simultaneously also within many of the other provinces of the empire) were achieved almost wholly within the Mughal institutional framework. Across much of India, powerful governors continued to seek links with one or other faction at the imperial court. The social and political realities of the eighteenth century required at least a semblance of reference to the imperial centre. All sources of growth had not dried up, and no region was in a position to maintain itself in complete isolation from other areas. Despite the unfettered political and military adventurism that accompanied and followed the decline of imperial power, none of the adventurers was strong enough to be able to win the allegiance of the others and then replace the imperial power. All struggled separately to make their fortunes and threatened each other's position and achievements. But only some, like the Awadh governors, could establish their dominance temporarily over the Emperor and their rivals. It was Awadh's dynamic economic growth that supported this regional autonomy, at the cost of the Mughal centre which had earlier managed to harness such economic expansion.

The Awadh governors at various times acquired *rūl* over several other Mughal provinces as well. When they or the other power-brokers of the empire sought institutional validation of their spoils, they needed a centre to legitimise their acquisitions. The imperial court provided the surest such centre, and thus the Awadh governors had ambitions at the Mughal court and conversely, a powerful base in Awadh gave them the power to strive for control over the Emperor and therefore the empire as a whole. In this way, there was a shift within the empire from control over peripheries by the centre (the seventeenth century) to control of the centre by the provinces (the early eighteenth century).

Within the Awadh countryside those who resisted the new regime faced an overwhelming military force, and those who accepted it received reduced revenue assessments. Privileges were extended by Sa'adat Khan

to the landholders in proportion to their strength and the benefits that he expected from their support. Yet, even some of the smaller landholders received appointments. Sa'adat Khan also seems to have encouraged his subordinate officials to purchase landholdings, thus consolidating his strength against the rebellious rural magnates by providing opportunities for the extension of power and influence of non-Rajput elements. This strategy, however, had limited success in the face of the entrenched Rajput clans in many parts of Awadh.

Sa'adat Khan had founded a new capital, Faizabad, near Ayodhya, which was the premier seat of provincial power and politics in the eighteenth century. The new capital, however, affected little the fortunes of Lucknow, which continued to grow in economic and cultural importance with the rise of the new regime. For example, one particularly distinguished family, the *ulama* of Firangi Mahal, had migrated to Lucknow during the late seventeenth century. Over the eighteenth century they established one of the largest and most significant centres of Islamic learning in India, with significant pedagogical influence throughout India and the entire Muslim world (Robinson, 1984).

Towards an Independent Regional State

One of Sa'adat Khan's most fundamental accomplishments in consolidating control over the province in his own hands was extending the range of his power as governor deep into the local administration. One particularly telling feature of the nawabi regime was that he appointed all the *faujdar*s in Awadh without reference to the Mughal centre. Since these police and military commandants represented the administration in a district, Sa'adat Khan was asserting his own power over that district. Eventually, this office became such a component of the governor's administration that the office now was restyled *nazim* or *naiib*, 'deputy' of the governor.

Another consequence of this assertion of the governor's power was the diminishing authority of the local Islamic judges (*qazis*). Often the members of a prominent local family were hereditary judges who had earlier decided disputes over revenue matters, thus counterbalancing the office of *faujdar*. By incorporating the *faujdar* into the administration, the newly assertive provincial centre thus reduced the power of the office of *qazi*.

A further arena in which Sa'adat Khan and his successors tried to assert their control over Awadh was with respect to control over *jagirs*. The governor asserted his own authority over these assigned lands. The

jagir-holders no longer sent their own agents to collect the revenues: the local officials were to approach the governor's appointed administrators for matters relating to the revenue and their own customary perquisites. In other words, the administrative functions that some jagir-holders had established over their jagirs, namely, collection of land revenue and other authorised and unauthorised cesses, was largely taken over by the governor's appointees. Indeed, Sa'adat Khan had the lands of Awadh, including jagirs, reassessed so as to fix the official rate for the land revenue in proportion to the actual full rate of production, rather than the fictive 'book' value. All communication between the jagir-holder and the local officials was thereafter to pass through the governor's office. Even though these efforts were not uniformly successful, Sa'adat Khan gained leverage over some of the powerful nobles in Delhi holding jagirs in Awadh. While some lower level officials, holding only small jagirs and hitherto unable to assert their full rights, appreciated Sa'adat Khan's reforms, some among the larger jagir-holders regarded this as an intrusion into their own control over their holdings. Consequently, some of the latter arranged to transfer their jagirs outside of Awadh, into provinces with more cooperative governors. Such transfers effectively enabled Sa'adat Khan to exclude the influence and interests of rival notables in the Mughal administration from his province. This process of excluding assignments of jagirs in Awadh to all but his supporters was not completed until almost the middle of the eighteenth century, however.

Similarly, for madad-i ma'ash-holders, Sa'adat Khan attempted reforms. He initially tried, through surveys and confiscations, to reduce or eliminate such holdings as were no longer serving their ostensible purpose. The entrenched local position, and influence at the Mughal court, of a number of madad-i ma'ash-holders, however, forced Sa'adat Khan to compromise and in several instances madad-i-ma'ash holdings became permanent landholdings. Thus given more permanency by Sa'adat Khan, many in this influential body of the local elites shifted their influence toward him.⁸

The measure of Sa'adat Khan's entrenchment in office and in Awadh came at the time of his death. Over his tenure as governor, he had transformed Awadh from a mere province (*suba*) to his home province (*suba-i mulki*) and made his governorship much more than a mere administrative assignment conferred by the Emperor. Simultaneously, Sa'adat Khan remained fully involved at the Mughal court. At various times, he played a part as a leading member of several factions in conflicts over

power with other groups. His political manoeuvrings led him occasionally into open defiance of the Emperor, as when he rejected his imperial transfer order from Awadh to Malwa in 1727. At the time of the invasion of Nadir Shah (1739), Sa'adat Khan stood among the most powerful figures in India, first fighting in vain against the invasion and then negotiating what amounted to a humiliating capitulation by the Mughal Emperor to the invader.⁹ On Sa'adat Khan's death soon thereafter, his office became a disputed inheritance between two of his nephews.

As his uncle's deputy governor, Safdarjang had already worked to establish his own control over Awadh. Apparently on payment to Nadir Shah of Rs 2,00,00,000 from the Awadh treasury, this nephew, Safdarjang, emerged as the principal heir, the next governor of Awadh. The general acceptance of the Sa'adat Khan family's right to inherit the governorship of Awadh indicates both the condition of the Mughal empire at the time and the family's hold over the province. Yet the Mughal Emperor's acceptance was vital to Safdarjang and he expended considerable resources bolstering his position within the empire and at the imperial court.

Using Awadh as his base, the new governor continued to further his family's interests at the Mughal centre. Safdarjang emerged after the 1748 invasion of India by the Afghan warlord Ahmad Shah Abdali, as the Vizier (chief minister) of the Empire.¹⁰ The critical place of Awadh in general and Lucknow in particular for Safdarjang's career is evident from his most vulnerable moment. In 1751, an army of Bangash Afghans defeated Safdarjang, invaded Awadh, and—in particular—occupied Lucknow.¹¹ Revealing the strong base of support which Sa'adat Khan and Safdarjang had established in Awadh, is the fact that the Shaikhzadas of Lucknow themselves resisted the Afghan invasion and remained loyal to Safdarjang. After their victory over the Bangash, the Shaikhzadas sent a petition expressing their loyalty and dedication to the Nawab. The Nawab's reply significantly reveals how they had been accommodated in the new provincial administration. Safdarjang had expected such dedication from the Shaikhzadas, for he always considered them much more than 'mere servants and *ra'iyat* [peasantry]' (Hamadani, n.d.: 34–5).

The Shaikhzadas and many other of the traditional service elite families of Awadh had thus come to see far more of a future in working for the Awadh Nawabs than for the Mughal Emperors. The tendency among local people to refrain from taking service outside Awadh, can be construed as stages of the development of a definite attitude towards the

new regime in the province. This attitude found much more ruthless expression in their continued support and battle for the re-establishment of the rule of Safdarjang in Awadh even after the Emperor in Delhi had ordered the confiscation of his properties following the Nawab's own defeat at the hands of the Afghans. This implied blatant defiance of the imperial directive by a powerful section of the ruling class of the province. It also showed an active appreciation of the prevalent social and political conditions which had resulted in the new Nawabi regime in Awadh. The broad stability that the Nawabi dynasty had fostered (despite occasional setbacks), and the protection it offered against the Maratha threat, proved highly attractive to many of the elite in Awadh.

The Awadh Political Culture

The early Nawabs' considered effort and policy to satisfy the claims of all the local social groups played a most crucial part in nourishing the social base of the new regime. If, on the one hand, the Muslim Shaikhzadas defended it, even in the face of an order from Delhi to the contrary, the Nawabs found in the Rajputs some of their most trusted allies in times of crisis. Sa'adat Khan and Safdarjang could afford to spend half their time in Delhi to manoeuvre the politics to their favour at court. A large contingent of Rajput zamindars were in Safdarjang's army in the Nawab's struggle against the Jats and the Marathas. In 1765 when Safdarjang's successor Shuja-ud-Daula had been defeated by the English East India Company's troops at Buxar, he fled along the banks of the Ganga to Farrukhabad, and then Achal Singh, the *ra'allaqadar* of Dondia Khera in Baiswara, proved to be a valuable friend and supporter. A large number of the Bais with a quarter's revenue of Baiswara joined the crestfallen Nawab at Farrukhabad (Elliot, 1862: 76).

Further, several Hindus, Kayasthas and Khattris, held in Awadh important offices. Arma Ram, a Khatri, had been associated with Sa'adat Khan since the days of his early career at the Mughal court. He was eventually made the *darwan* of Awadh. His three sons, Har Narain, Ram Narain and Pratap Narain, all held important offices. Har Narain was Sa'adat Khan's *vakil* at the court of Delhi. Among Arma Ram's grandsons, Lachhmi Narain, Shiv Narain and Jagat Narain rose to notable positions. Lachhmi Narain also served as *vakil* of the Awadh court at Delhi. The family of Arma Ram retained an eminent position throughout the eighteenth century. Nawal Rai, a Kayastha, was a close confidant of Safdarjang, and was virtually the ruler of Awadh in the 1740s when the Nawab was busy at Delhi politics. How many of his family members

and associates gained eminence under Safdarjang is not known. He is mentioned, however, by a Kayastha chronicler of the early nineteenth century as 'the promoter and supporter of his community and friends A number of other Hindu officials' names also figure prominently in the Awadh administration. (Bhatnagar, Allahabad MS: 475a; Alam, 1986: 237-41).

By integrating the aspirations of both the dominant Rajput landholders on the one hand, and the Muslims and non-Rajput Hindu urban elites on the other, the Nawabs tried to achieve a political balance. Unlike the Mughals, the Awadh Nawabs had no Abul Fazl to give a theoretical foundation or explanation to their policy. But this did not mean that theirs was a blank pragmatic arrangement. The balance in the new political alliance received inspiration and sustenance from the prevailing religious philosophy. The emphasis in Awadh religious circles was on open and non-combative interaction and, to avoid conflict, on integration and assimilation. The Awadh or Lucknow political culture had a bearing on the religious culture of the region.

Awadh had been a traditional stronghold of the sufi doctrine of *Wahdat-al-Wujud* (Unity of Being) which had promoted belief in the essential unity of all phenomena, however diverse and irreconcilably conflicting they appear at first instance. Support for the doctrine and its associated generous accommodativeness of the local beliefs and customs continued through the Mughal period. There was a setback when the Mughal state tended to be associated with Sunni orthodoxy in the late seventeenth century, but Awadh never came under the direct influence of the revivalist ideology. The province did witness religious clashes, but even in the midst of intense community conflict, the message of Awadh *sufi* and sufi retained its verve. What is of significance is the fact that early eighteenth-century Awadh saw some serious efforts at rehabilitating this ideology and its social and political implications.

A generous and liberal religious climate thus promoted non-sectarian politics, which in turn helped cement the hold of the nawabs over the province. In the building of the Awadh Muslim regime the non-Muslims of the province had no insignificant part. The third Nawab, Shuja-ud-Daula, quickly consolidated his dominance both in Awadh and at the Mughal court. Indeed, using the resources of Awadh, the new ruler asserted his guardianship over the Mughal Emperor and set about reconstructing the empire. He had inherited from his father, Safdarjang, the office of the vizier as well. He successfully staved off threats to his authority from landholders and rebel peasants in north India, from the

Marathas and Ahmad Shah Abdali. But things began to change in the 1760s, following his defeat at Buxar at the hands of the East India Company. With the English Company's victory on the battlefield, the Nawab was no longer in full control of the province or the Mughal court. Awadh entered a new phase in its history as a subordinate ally of the Company. The foundations of the erstwhile political tradition began to erode. Clashes and confrontations at all levels—between Lucknow and Delhi, between the countryside and the Lucknow court, and above all between Awadh culture and the alien British values—threatened to replace the existing political equipoise.

NOTES

1. For more extensive studies in English of the history of Awadh during this phase see Alam (1986) Barnett (1980) and Srivastava (1954 and 1961).
2. The Marathas, based in what is today Maharashtra, had formed a powerful military force largely opposed to the Mughals, from the time of their leader Shivaji (1627–80) onward. The Bundela Rajputs, based in Bundelkhand (north of the Vindhya mountains and south of the Yamuna, to the south-west of Awadh) also proved a locally-based people resistant to Mughal imperial control.
3. Following Aurangzeb's death, a series of weak Emperors and temporarily strong king-makers followed. No less than fourteen Mughal Emperors sat on the throne during the period of our study.
4. In principle, four categories of people were eligible for such nominally temporary madad-i-ma'ash grants: (1) scholars, (2) those who chose a life of seclusion and self-abnegation, (3) the destitute and poor, (4) unemployed people of noble lineage. In practice, holders of these 'charity' grants constituted a considerable and well-established social force.
5. He held *mansab* ranks of 7,000 *zat* and 7,000 *sawar* (the former a personal, the latter a military rank).
6. The qanungo was a local revenue official recording and supplying information concerning revenue receipts, area statistics, revenue-rates, and rural customs and practices.
7. The dynasty held the governorships of various provinces including: Agra (1721), Kashmir (1744), Ajmer (1748), and—more frequently—Allahabad (first acquired in 1735).
8. As we shall see below, these madad ma'ash holders, many of whom came from the families of the Shaikhzadas, remained loyal to Sa'ad Khan's dynasty even when his successor lost military control over Awadh.
9. Nadir Shah remained in India only for a few months but during that time he subdued the Mughal Emperor, looted vast wealth from the Mughal treasury, and ordered a general massacre in Delhi.

10. Ahmad Shah Abdali, an Afghan of the Durrani clan, had seized the Afghan throne in 1747 and held it until his death in 1773. He invaded India on eight occasions, with varying degrees of success.
11. The Bangash were an Afghan clan, led at that time by Ahmad Khan, who had established dominance in the Farrukhabad region to the west of Awadh. The town of Farrukhabad, named after the Mughal Emperor Farrukh Siyar (1712–19), was founded by his grandfather, Muhammad Khan Bangash in 1713.

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