

Mystics, Masters and the Rural Society of Awadh*

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Abstract : *The Kingdom of Awadh broadly corresponded with the 15th Century Sharqi Kingdom of Jaunpur. The region emerged as a center of high elite culture. Hence, Mughal emperor Shah Jahan used to refer this region as Shiraz (purab Shiraz-I Mamlakat-imaaast). It had large concentration of the aimma grantees that looked after the maintenance of numerous institutions disseminating knowledge and propagating suficide as and humanistic values in the society. The induction of the class of the grantees in mist of the rural society often created some tensions, which sometimes led to even violent clashes. In such situations an intervention on the part of the state had always settled the dispute. Thus, the intricate balance between the state, the grantees and the rural society was sought to be maintained. Such disputes can never be described as a 'local battle between the Hindus and Muslims' and as 'a savage attack by the totality of the rural society against the small town headquarters of the Muslim gentry', as has been described by C.A. Bayly. Whenever state has initiated any negative action against the revenue grantees, it has really affected their profile as has been seen in case of the first three Nawabs of Awadh and their policies vis-à-vis the maafî holders. The suyurghal statistics provided by Ain-i-Akbari suggest very clearly that the grantees were allotted aimma land in every pargana, irrespective of the caste of the Zamindar dominating the area. It was the 'authority' of the state which made even the zortalab regions and their chieftains to accept new 'hierarchy' of the revenue grantees in their midst.*

Key Words: *Aimmadars/Ma'afidars, Suyughal statistics, Rural Potentates, Cooperation/conflict, State/Governance.*

The interactions between the state and the society have been a continuous process in the history of the human civilization. The state exercises its authority through various institutions of governance and control, by invoking the processes/procedures of law and customs. The state created and sanctified the hereditary classes of the people having a share in the usufruct of the land. Such actions were always considered as the legitimate way of creating hierarchy among the landed elites. One notices instances when such action of the state was resented by the class which was already controlling the surplus in a particular locality. There are instances when such opposition has turned violent and the new elite were driven away / not allowed to take possession of the allotments. In such cases a little use of force /coercion or a simple change in the area of the allotment settled the issue. It is pertinent to point out that 'the force' always moved away to the local headquarters after the new settlement has been enforced. Later on, it was 'writ of the state' which guaranteed the peace in the region rather than continuous presence of the force. However, it needs to be emphasized that coercion was exercised rarely and often as the very last option.

The society and its various segments often saw the state and its mechanisms of governance as the only or the most important legitimizing factor for the creation, continuation and existence of their traditional rights, privileges and prerogatives. This interdependence between the state and society manifested itself in almost every sphere of societal activity in the pre-colonial society.

The class of the grantees variously known as *aimmadars* or holders of *suyurghal* or *madad e maash* rights represented a very minor segment of the pre-colonial society. Their actual share in the revenue resources of the Mughal Empire was quite negligible (ranged between: 1.5% to 4.5% of the total *ja'ma* of the empire). But in spite of their occupying a marginal space economically, in the resources of the empire, they represented one of the most articulate (and influential) sections of the society. They were involved in the dissemination of knowledge and often defined the norms of high culture in the society. Their literary contributions were not confined only to Arabic and Persian, but extended to the new dialects and literary genres

like the use of *Awadhi* and the *Premakhyan* literary traditions. It was these intellectual elite that led the state to formulate policies in order to promote their interests and to curb them. Though it will be rather out of place to mention here, it is worthwhile to recall that the colonial policies towards the *ma'afidars* were also aimed at controlling this class of the people and hence could explain their participation in a large number during the great uprising of 1857.

The class of the grantees depended solely on the action of the state for the creation of their fiscal rights; they also needed the cooperation of the local officials and superior right holders of the various regions to carry out the state's alienation of its rights in their favour.

Some of these grantees were the holders of the ecclesiastical offices like the offices of *Qazi*, *Muhtasib*, *Waqia* and *Nirkhnawis*, the functioning of which required their continuous interface between the Society and the State. As a part of their duty, they had to report/record every pleasant/unpleasant happening in the region, even the attitude of the recalcitrance/rebellion displayed by the local hereditary landed elite. Such a situation often resulted in creating tensions and conflict between these grantees and the class of the *zamindars*, which sometimes led to violent clashes. Hence, we come across numerous *mahzars* (petitions addressed to the high officials/emperor to redress of the grievances by the aggrieved party) in our archives and libraries, throwing light on such matters of conflict. A change in the area of the grant / or any display of force by the local *faujdar* settled the issue in favour of the grantees. It was the authority of the state which provided legitimacy to such solutions.

On the other hand, there were grantees with mystic predilection that seldom faced the ire of the local landed magnates. They survived in the areas which were known for their recalcitrant *zamindars*. In case of this group of the grantees, we come across the evidence that the local potentates/chieftains, belonging to various Rajput castes, have already made these grants for the maintenance and upkeep of the various mystic establishments/families. Even for such grants, the imperial *farmans* were sought by the grantees, who were already in possession of their grants, so that the grant

remains in perpetuity.

The archival records and the family papers of the various grantees' establishment have been acquired by the U.P. State Archives, Lucknow and the National Archives of India, Delhi. Some of the data from these repositories has been used here for the first time, along with the judicial and revenue records of the colonial times and the family histories of some of the grantees from the kingdom of Awadh.

The cultural legacy of the region

The Mughal *suba* of Awadh, which broadly corresponded with the 15th century Sharqikindom, was important enough during the early days of Delhi Sultans as well. It along-with the adjacent sultanate headquarter at Kara (Manikpur) was one of the two important military stations on the road to Bengal. Apart from this strategic importance, it was one of the three places to have been the seat of *Sheikh-ul Islam*, the two others being Delhi and Multan. Within this region a dialect of *Hindavi* known as *Awadhi* was in vogue, in which Kabir, the great monotheist, composed his verses and a number of poets belonging to the Chishti- Nizami order of Sufis had developed a literary *genre* of *Premakhyan* in tune with the Persian *masnavi* tradition. It could be asserted that the region had a distinct 'cultural personality' of its own.

The people settling in the small towns and important centers of northern India were mainly from Central Asia and Iran. They brought the major elements of 'Islamic culture' with them and established a number of *maktab* and *madrasa* to cater to the needs of emerging Muslim population. Shaikh Rizqullah Mushtaqi, while writing about the reign of Sultan Sikandar Lodi, very specifically says that:

in each town and region (of the Indian sub-continent) where the forces of Islam have gained an upper hand and has become popular, *masajid*, *jam'atkhana* and *khanqah* were established and the capable people were appointed in the *maktabs* and the *madrasa* as the *mu'allim* and *muddarris*. In these institutions, the *umra'* and their sons and the soldiers acquired knowledge and busied themselves in the

prayer and meditations. Those who could afford discharged their duties in the way of God (by managing these institutions of learning). The institution so established trained the inmates for the emerging needs of the administration and the bureaucracy, the *Qazis* (judicial officers), the expert accountants, scribes and other state functionaries were the products of these institutions.¹

A number of *sufi* centers representing various *silsilas* were also established in the region of Awadh. Places like Dalmau, Kara-Manikpur, Sandila, Bilgram, Zafarabad, Sahali, Salon, Nasirabad, Khairabad, Laharpur and Jais emerged as the major centers of Islamic intellectual life and *sufi* tradition. An early incident suggests that teaching in the *maktab* was supposed to be a very noble and virtuous act as seen in one of the *majlis* of Shaikh Nasiruddin Mahmud (d. 1354). A *danishmand* from Sahali (in Awadh) had come to visit the Shaikh. The Shaikh recalled:

The people at Sahali are pious and most of them have matrimonial alliances here and the women of that place are more pious than men' the Shaikh inquired the *danishmand* about his profession. On being told that he teaches the children, the Shaikh said: 'This is a virtuous act, engagement with the sinless entities and engagement with the *Quran*. In addition since you remained in the mosque, you are with ablution on for the entire day, it is a nice work and a good engagement'.²

The students trained at these centers of learning were directly absorbed in the administration and given postings at the small towns and even remote places. They were assigned land grants, either in lieu of some services, or for the maintenance of certain institution. The famous incident recorded in *Siyar-ul Auliya* about the outburst of one of the class fellows of the famous *Chishtisufi* Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya (d. 1325). Seeing the Shaikh in tattered clothes, he reportedly exclaimed:

Maulana Nizamuddin! What misfortune has befallen you?
Had you adopted the teaching work at Delhi you would

have become a leading scholar of the time with affluent circumstances'. To this taunt, his *pir* Shaikh Baba Farid(d.1265) advised him to reply with the following couplet,

nahamrahitumara, rah-e ksheshgiradbaroo;

tarasa'datbadamaranagunsaari

[You are not my companion, you follow a different path, get along;
May prosperity be your share, while misfortune is my share in life]³

The region had acquired a considerable reputation as the center of Islamic intellectual tradition as the places above named were the major centers providing the service gentry and the intellectual elite to the various provincial kingdoms and even to the Mughal Empire.

Ghulam Ali Azad Bilgrami (d. 1761), while paying glowing tribute to the cultural life of the region, has said that 'this eastern region since the olden days (*qadim-ul ayyam*) has been the cradle of knowledge and centre for the scholars (*ma'adan-e ilmwa'ulema*)'. According to him the Mughal *suba* of Awadh and Allahabad enjoyed special status as compared to other provinces of the empire in the sphere of intellectual activities. There were innumerable intellectual centers and numerous scholars, that these two *suba* had 'a major settlement of Muslim intellectual elite (*shurufawanajaba*) at every 5 to 10 *kroh*'. They had been well-provided by the earlier *salatin* with cash and *madad e maash* grants. This had facilitated the establishment of mosques, *madrasas* and *khanqahs* all over the province, where the teachers of all disciplines were busy in the dissemination of knowledge. The students trained at these institutions went to other parts of the country and established and strengthened this intellectual tradition further. It is important to note that Azad Bilgrami specifically says that the well- provided section of the society took extra care of the requirements of these scholars and considered serving them an act of great benefit (*sa'adat-e uzma*) for themselves.

Awadh had become so prominent during the time of Mughal Emperor Shahjahan that he proudly referred to this region as *Shiraz-i Hind* (*purab shiraz-imamlakat-imaast*). However, the situation in this region had

undergone a drastic change, especially with the establishment of the rule of the Awadh Nawabs. The old educational establishments did not enjoy the same degree of patronage available to them during the earlier times. In fact, Azad Bilgrami criticizes the early two Nawabs, Sa'adat Khan (d.1739) and Safdarjung (d.1754), for resuming the cash and land grants (*wazaif o-suyurghalat*) 'of the old and new families'. As a result of this, he says, 'the Muslim learning suffered very heavily in both Allahabad and Awadh provinces'; especially in the small towns and *qasbas* he has named above.⁴ This situation forced the people to abandon their scholarly pursuits and took to the army profession, a curious statement which links the two professions throughout this period. Consequently, the institutions of long standing with strong scholarly tradition ceased to exist; and Azad Bilgrami laments that the intellectual tradition established in Awadh region over the period of centuries came to a sad end.

Bilgrami goes on to add that when Safdar Jung succeeded to the seat of Nawabirule and got the additional charge of the *subadari* of Allahabad, the grantees of this *suba* too became victims of the policy of resumption. This grim situation continues till the time of the writing of Bilgrami's book. After Safdar Jung was appointed as the *wazir* of the Mughal Empire by Emperor Ahmad Shah (1748), the situation of the grantees further became bad to worse. By way of an optimistic note, Azad adds that in spite of all the havoc inflicted on the grantees, the tradition of rational sciences (*m'aqulat*) continued to be patronized here in such a way that was not seen anywhere else in India. Some of the greatest scholars of the time continued teaching these subjects in some of these seminaries.

However, collaboration to the indictment of Azad Bilgrami has come from the writings of two English officers, *Travels of the Lt. Col. Allen Macpherson and John Macpherson (between AD 1764-1787)*, completed while undertaking marches from Dinapur to Oudh (between December 1772 and October 1773). While on a military expedition, the author and his company had halted near the township of Bilgram on 30th May 1773. His observations about the township are worth quoting:

'This town (Bilgram) has been a very large one, and there

are still the remains of an immense number of Brick Buildings. The place was famous for Persian and Arabic Academies and there are still some few. They were formerly supported by *Jaggeers*, or pensions from the king, but Suja ul Dowla has deprived them of everything of the kind, and the masters now live upon what they receive for educating children'.⁵

It is precisely during this period that the famous seminary of Sunni orthodoxy, the house of Firangi Mahal had emerged as a major center of religious learning. The family of Firangi Mahal has shifted from the nearby *pargana* of Sihali after a violent incident when the head of the family namely, Mullah Qutbuddin was assassinated by the neighboring *zamindars* of *pargana* Fatehpur and Deva, on 27th March 1692. His house was plundered and the excellent library was also destroyed. The uprooted family of Mullah Sayed and his other brothers was allotted the European's house (*haveli-e firang*) in Lucknow. Mullah Nizamuddin Mohammad (d. 1748), the third son of Mullah Qutbuddin took the family tradition to new heights and made it into a great center of learning. The credit of devising new syllabi for the *madrassa* graduates goes to him, it came to be known as *dars-e nizami*, laying emphasis on *m'aqulat* and reduced the burden on the pupil by prescribing only two essential texts on grammar, philosophy, *fiqh*, *kalam* and exegetical sciences, while he made only one text of *hadith* essential with little emphasis on literature.

The family was the recipient of the *madad e maash* grant since the time they were settled at Sihali, where their predecessors Shaikh Hafiz along with Qazi Fatehullah were bestowed a land grant of 26 hundred *bighas* by Akbar in one of his earliest known *farmans* of 1st December 1559. While the family received the same imperial favors when they had shifted to Lucknow, Emperor Aurangzeb had granted a fresh grant of 112 *bighas* to Shaikh Nizamuddin and others on 22nd September 1696. The members of the other branches of the main family freely accepted bureaucratic posting and served the empire with distinctions mainly as judicial officers namely *asqazis* and *muftis*. It was only during the 18th

century that we notice some wavering in the fortunes of the family forcing Mullah Abdul Ali (d. 1819), also known as *Behrul ulum* to shift his *madrasa* first to Shahjahanpur, then to Rampur then to Buhar (district Burduan in West Bengal) and finally to Arcot, Tamil Nadu. However, it is worthwhile to note that in spite of Mullah Abd'ulAli's exit from Lucknow, *Firangi Mahal* continued to be the main seat of the family tradition.⁶

Azad Bilgrami, who had the occasion to visit Mullah Nizamuddin on 19th *Zilhij*, A.H. 1148, remembers him as one of the most learned and pious person and says that the scholars (*ul'ema*) throughout Hindustan are mostly his pupils, initially he was initiated in the *naqshbandi* order by Shaikh Ghulam Naqshband of Lucknow, but later on became the disciple of the Qadiri Shaikh Abdul Razzaqof Bansa (d. 1724), an order with which the family continued to maintained the spiritual linkage.⁷

Caste, Grantees and Adjustments

Another important feature of the Awadh region was its caste structure which dominated the agrarian society and controlled the agrarian surplus. There were tensions between the dominant *zamindari* castes and the revenue grantees relating to trivial issues, often leading to extreme unpleasantness. We come across a number of petitions (*mahzar*) by the grantees to the provincial authorities or for the redressal of their grievances of the alleged high handedness of the rural landed elites. It appears that an intervention by the authorities was enough and the things became smooth thereafter. The clashes in the agrarian society between the dominant rural elite of the area and the newly inducted class of the grantees were mainly to control the flow of the surplus and the prime land in the village. In no way these clashes could be termed as 'local battles between the Hindus and the Muslims' or 'the communal land wars'....and in no way 'the form of these land wars was often a savage attacks by the totality of the rural society against the small town headquarters of the Muslim gentry'. Similarly, these clashes cannot be described as 'straight forward pieces of communal savagery'.⁸

One should remember that such 'clashes' were mainly confined to

certain areas/regions, which have acquired considerable notoriety for the recalcitrant attitude of their *zamindar*.⁹ While, some 'empirical' data has been provided and it has been finally argued (though it is difficult to make out what argument is being made) that in the late 17th and early 18th century Awadh, the 'community consciousness often prevailed to blur the other identities' at the same time adding that 'society was not always divided strictly on community lines even in times of conflict'. It has also been argued that 'there was no homogenous Hindu community, the followers of Islam entertained diverse notions of piety and spirituality'. On the basis of hagiographic records and the 'miraculous tales', glowing tribute is paid to a 'Qadiri Sufi in Bansa in Awadh [to have] experience[ed] divinity in a Hindu ensemble with Hindu Bairagis', and finally it is concluded that all this, in no way, 'underrate the fact that *wahdat ul wujud* ...remained generally the most acceptable *sufi* doctrine in Awadh in our period.'¹⁰

Undoubtedly this region was the abode of the various Rajput clans who dominated the agrarian economy of the region and they, due to their very strong caste ties, had full sway over the surplus generating segment of the agrarian society. The new Muslim intellectual elite, the service gentry and the *sufis* were given land grants in this area only; often there were problems between the grantees and superior right holders over possessing the prime land or the preferred plot in the village. Some of these problems were solved by simple change in the area of the grant by the local administration itself but on occasions, the tension assumed ugly dimensions leading to open hostility and even armed conflict.

At the same time one should not ignore that numerous land grants conferred by the imperial *farmans* invariably has a citation that the area of the grant was already settled by the local chieftains and the grantees were already in possession of the land. The imperial *farmans* were obtained to safeguard the interest of the grantees in future¹¹ and one should not overlook the fact the even if a grant of some villages was made by ejecting the earlier owners from those villages, no attempt was ever made by those owners to take back the possession of those villages forcibly after the weakening of the provincial or central authority. The grantees enjoyed the

uninterrupted possession of such villages till the UP Zamindari Abolition and Land Reform Act of 1952 was implemented.¹²

Agrarian Society of Awadh

The Mughal *suba* of Awadh came into existence when Emperor Akbar reorganized his empire in A.D. 1580, superseding the earlier administrative arrangement of the Lodi rulers. The superior right holders in the region were mainly Rajputs of various clans. These clans have dominated the agrarian society in the subsequent centuries. It was the official policy of administration to appoint officials in their midst and also to settle the revenue grantees to perform number of duties like that of a *qazi*, *muhtasib*, *nirkhnawis* and *mir 'adl* etc. The relationship between these two seemingly antagonistic classes assumed alarming dimensions as some of these officials had close proximity with the imperial establishment. Some of them were expected to perform many unpopular duties in the region and hence, they became easy targets of the recalcitrant *zamindars*, who often thought of expelling the revenue grantees from the area of their control.

The association of the *zamindari* rights with the domination of a particular caste in a *pargana* had been the most peculiar feature of the agrarian life in Awadh. Any attempt to disturb the same had often resulted in an open clash between the local officials and the members of the displaced castes. In case the local authority was strong enough to resist or preempt any such move, the brunt of the burden was felt by the ultimate beneficiaries in such an arrangement, obviously the revenue-grantees. Since the genesis of these conflicts lay in the distribution and control of the social surplus, the conflict often cut across the religious lines.

A glance at Table I of the Appendix (prepared with the help of *A'in*)¹³ will show that more than 75% of the total *jama'* of the *parganas* (in the suba of Awadh) recorded in the *A'in* was from lands under the various Rajput clans, the Bais, 18.50%; Bachhils 5.22%; Ghelots 5.11%; Bachgotis 4.73%; Bisins 4.13%; others 3.42%; undifferentiated, 25.64%. The Brahmans and the Muslims trailed for behind accounting for only 6.42% and 10.86% shares respectively, in the total *jama'* of the *suba*. The

remainder was controlled by other minor clans some of these are unidentifiable.

Apart from the general picture of the Rajput domination in the various *sarkars* of Awadh, we should be undertaking the specific study of the Bais Rajputs who were the most dominant clan in the major parts of the southern Awadh along with Kanpuriya Rajputs. This becomes necessary in view of the fact that most of the empirical data and the Archival records, we are dealing with, mainly relates to this region.

The Bais Rajputs are recorded as *zamindars* of 27 *parganas* in Awadh by Abul Fazl. In the *sarkar* of Awadh, they are co-sharers in 3 *parganas* holding 6% of the total *naqdi* of the *sarkar* and one *pargana* each in *sarkar* Bahraich, Khairabad and Gorakhpur, while in *sarkar* Lucknow they possessed 15 *parganas* singly and 6 *parganas* as co-sharers. In all they controlled 18.22% of the total *naqdi* of the *suba*. These *mahals* formed a contiguous block. The tract acquired the name of Baiswara in the 17th century; the first occurrence of the name appears to be in Shahjahan's time, when the recalcitrance of the Bais *zamindars* caused the creation of a special *faujdari* jurisdiction of Baiswara,¹⁴ 'consisting of many *mahals* that are the native places of the seditious *zamindars* of the caste of Bais'.¹⁵ They supported the rebellion of Bahadur the Bachgoti chief in Aurangzeb's first R.Y.¹⁶ and apparently lent aid to the Chauhans of *pargana* Shahpur in or about 1700 AD. The disturbances were suppressed with some difficulty and Ra'dAndaz Khan, the *faujdar* of Bainswara reported his successes with much satisfaction.¹⁷ C.A. Elliott provides us with detailed information on the settlements of the Bais Rajputs in the Baiswara region from their traditional settlement till about 1860.¹⁸ We are told that there were 22 *parganas* in all, under the dominance of this clan:

<i>District</i> (according to Present distribution)	<i>Pargana</i>	
1. Rae Bareili	1) Dundiakhera	8) Mukrid
	2) Unchagaon	9) Dalmau
	3) Kombhi	10) Bihar
	4) Bar	11) Pattan

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|------------|--------------|-----------------|
| | 5) Kehengur | 12) Punhan |
| | 6) Ghatampur | 13) Rae Bareili |
| | 7) Serhapur | 14) Hurha |
| 2. Onnao | 1) Satampur | 5) Gorinda |
| | 2) Purwa | 6) Pursundan |
| | 3) Maurawan | 7) Serwan |
| | 4) Asoha | |
| 3. Lucknow | 1) Bijnor | |

‘The Baiswara *nizamat* included very little more than the *parganas* in the above list’.¹⁹

The Bais *zamindars* seem to have extended their possessions in *parganas* Dalmau and Bijnor, since Abul Fazl has recorded the former under ‘Turkmans’, and the latter under the Chauhan Rajputs.²⁰

Revenue Grantees in the Agrarian Society

The holders of *suyurghal* and *madad-i ma’ash* formed a minor segment of the agrarian society of Awadh during the Mughal period, but their conditions are illuminated by an extensive documentation. There appear to have been substantial conditions with these grants, in the beginning; later on these were dropped altogether and the grantees themselves were elevated to the status of the ‘Army of the Prayer’. Still we find that the successive Mughal rulers insisted on confirmatory orders after the death of the original grantees. In matters of inheritance to grantees, the rules of *shariat* were not applicable as *madad-i ma’ash* was now described in the official chancellery as an article on loan (*‘ariyat*), hence separate regulations were devised to regulate the succession and inheritance in the property of the grantees.²¹

A perusal of the *Suyurghal* statistics in the *Ain-i Akbari*’s account shows that in absolute terms the number of persons holding *madad-i ma’ash* rights in *parganas* with Rajput and other non-Muslim *zamindars* was larger than those holding these rights in the *pargana* having Muslim *zamindars*. An analysis of the data leads us to some interesting conclusions. In the five *parganas* of the various *sarkars* of *suba* Awadh where the *zamindars*

happened to be Muslim, the percentage of total *naqdi* (cash) alienated by way of *suyurghal* ranges from 0.49% (*pargana* Utraula', *sarkar* Gorakhpur) to 12.6% (*pargana* Unam, *sarkar* Lucknow), while *pargana* Ibrahimabad, *sarkar* Lucknow by way of an exception records a high percentage i.e. 23.3% of the total *naqdi*.

In the other six *parganas* where Muslims are the co-sharers of *zamindari* rights with the Rajputs, the *jama*' alienated by way of *suyurghal* ranges from 1.78% (*pargana* Manwi, *sarkar* Lucknow) to 18.49% (*pargana* Sidhaur, *sarkar* Lucknow). While in another 72 *pargana* with no Muslim *zamindari* these grants constituted between 0.03% (*pargana*, Darijyapara, *sarkar* Gorakhpur) and 18.74% (*pargana* Sihali, *sarkar* Lucknow) of the total *naqdi*. The remaining 47 *pargana* recorded no *suyurghal* grants at all. This included *pargana* Anona, *sarkar* Awadh, where the *zamindars* were Chauhan Rajputs, newly converted to Islam. In Awadh, at least, the grantees appear to have been indifferent to the community of the *zamindars* while seeking grants or making their settlement.²²

In any case, the total amount of the *jama* alienated through such grants in 1598 was only 5.72% of the total *naqdi* in *suba* Awadh. But the fact that the *madad-i ma'ash* grants as a rule were made out of the cultivable waste with the implicit purpose of making it cultivable; the standard formula used invariably in such orders was *zamin-iuftadalaiq-I zairaatkharijazjama*'; at the most 1/3 of the total and at the later stage 1/2 of the total grant was out of the cultivated land (*mazru*').²³ It is to be remembered that the *suyurghal* figures of the *Ain-i Akbari* represent only the loss of revenue to the state through such alienations, and not the actual income from *madad-i ma'ash* lands. It might have included the amount distributed through cash allowances, but this is not clear. Holders of the *madad-i ma'ash* rights *per se* posed no threat to the dominant elite of the area; neither could they ever claim any fiscal perquisites belonging to the *zamindar*.²⁴

The revenue grantees without any position in the official hierarchy posed no threat to the dominant elite of the area; neither could they ever

claim any fiscal perquisite belonging to the *zamindars*. The resistance to the induction of the grantees from outside by the local elements generally centered around the questions like not relinquishing the cultivated land in any *zortalab* areas, refusal by the peasants/*zamindars* to pay the land revenue. A quick redressal of these matters even by the local officials could greatly help the grantees. Often a change in the area of the grant was made in the same village or the *pargana* under the usual administrative procedure. So the acquisition/possession/retention of the prime land in the village and a guaranteed uninterrupted flow of the revenues to the grantees were the major factors of tension and conflict within the agrarian society, but they were kept within the manageable administrative limits and such questions would have seldom caused any major law and order problems. The manner in which the local chieftains bestowed favours upon the *Sufis* and the institutions having mystics predilections can be culled from the *wajib al arz* documents prepared during the course of the First Regular Settlements(*bando-bastawwal*) of the province of Awadh after the events of AD 1857. These papers recorded the past history of the village; the detailed information regarding the previous ownership, the history of families and clans of the various regions was arranged and incorporated in these reports.

A few *wajib al arz* of the villages included in the *ma'afi* of the Salon family of the grantees are available. A perusal of these records gives us some idea of the favours bestowed on them by these chiefs.

- a) Village Dhankesara, *pargana* Parshadepur, and village Barwaliya, *pargana* Salon, were in the estate of Raja Balbhadra Singh, the Kanphria chief of Tiloin. He had donated the revenues of these villages in favour of Shah Pir 'Ata, so that he may be able to meet the expenses incurred in feeding of mendicants, destitute and the visitors to his *khanqah*. Since till F1174/AD1763 the grantees held the possession of the villages on the strength of the *sanad* of the Raja; thereafter in F 1175/ AD 1764 the imperial *farman* of Shah Alam II included these villages also in the grant of the grantees.

The Raja of *talluqa* Bhadri, *pargana* Behar has allotted two tracts of

forest land to Shah Muhammad Panah. The grantee got the forest cleared and settled the area with the peasant castes especially the *kurmis*. One tract was named Panah Nagar and another Hayat Nagar (after his deceased brother Shah Muhammad Hayat).

The existence of numerous villages and *chaks* having the nomenclatures similar to the names of the family members of the mystic establishment in *pargana* Salon, district Rae Bareli (UP) and *pargana* Kunda, district Pratapgarh, suggest that many tracts of forest land have had a similar history and that these areas were also cleared by the grantees/their agents to settle the population and extend the area under cultivation and hence to raise their income.²⁵

Col. W.H. Sleeman, while undertaking his tour of the Nawabi province during 1849-1850 has visited the mystic establishment at Salon. He has recorded that the institution

gets from the king of Oude twelve villages, rent-free, inperpetuity; and they are said to yield him twenty-five thousand rupees a year, with which he provides for his family and for needy travelers and pilgrims. The eleemosynary endowment was granted, about sixty years ago by the then sovereign Asafoodowlah. The lands had belonged to a family of Kunpureea Rajpoots, who were ousted for contumacy or rebellion.²⁶

It is interesting to note that the Kanhpuria clan of the Rajputs continued to be the dominant clan of the land holders in the *pargana* Salon till the modern times. But apparently going by the notion of the legitimacy of the state's actions, they never attempted to reoccupy these 12 villages from which they were said to be ousted from. Their numerical strength was always quite substantial to take on this mystic establishment at any point of time. But one has not come across the slightest tension on this account between the Sufis and the large and powerful Kanhpuria clan in the 18th and 19th century. Perhaps this is an instance which shows the triangular relationship between the state, mystics and the rural society during the reign of the early Nawabs of Awadh.²⁷

Conflicts/Clash in the Agrarian Society

We find that most of the state functionaries, particularly the ecclesiastical officers were holders of revenue-grants in lieu of their pay claims. These grants were generally concentrated in particular villages. Often the induction of these outsiders as co-sharers of the social surplus in the agrarian society was resented by the *zamindar*. But their 'reservations' mostly related to trivial matters, which could be solved by the local officials.

An attempt is made here to examine some fresh evidence of the tension and conflict between the revenue-grantee and the *zamindar* as well as the elements of co-operation between the two classes. Since the genesis of these conflicts lay in the distribution of social surplus, the conflict often cut across religious lines.

But things assumed alarming dimensions when these revenue grantees happened to be the holders of ecclesiastical offices as well. Since such officers had a close proximity to the officials at the centre and they had to perform many unpopular duties in the region, they could become easy targets of recalcitrant *zamindars*. These *zamindars* often thought of expelling such people from the area of their control.

A statement of the facts presented by the *qazi* family in the *faujdari* jurisdiction of Baiswara in the year AD 1662 sets the context of conflict unambiguously. It describes the situation there as follows:

The region of Baiswara happens to be abode of infidelity, and all the twenty-one *pargana* are the home of refuge of the Bais people. Out of these, six *parganas* (Asoha, Harha, Dalmau, Moranwan, Sainpur and Ranbirpur) have *qazis*, whereas fifteen *parganas* have neither *qazis* nor mosques, nor do arrangements exist either for the *azan* (call for prayer) or for the congregational prayers. The fact that our ancestors exercised jurisdictions as *qazi* over all the twenty one *parganas* earlier, that there had been ongoing clashes between our ancestors and the Bais Rajputs, this way eighty years had passed, consequently *qazis* lost their jurisdiction ('*amal*') from 15 *parganas*. None has cared so

far, to eradicate the sources of infidelity; therefore the petitioner, Qazi Maudad, deemed it necessary to report the matter to the Emperor Aurangzeb.²⁸

A petition from the family of the *qazi* from *pargana* Parsadepur in the year AH 1061/ AD 1652 complains of the raid in their *madad-i ma'ash* villages by *kanhpuria* Rajputs of *pargana* Salon:

They raided the *madad-ima'ash* villages of the petitioners with a large number of their clansmen and carried away 940 oxen and buffaloes from the villages of Saleempur and Nizampur. This act was committed without there being any justification and with such impunity that, 'they wounded even those two persons who had informed the Emperor of their misdeeds. The infidels are perpetuating such acts of oppression against the Muslims'.²⁹

Not only the holders of the ecclesiastical offices were subjected to the *zamindars* wrath, but also the peasants residing in the villages of their *madad-i ma'ash* were terrorized by the tumultuous *zamindars* when they were out to settle scores with these officers. Cattle, the prized possession of the peasantry, often attracted them, and villages were raided to lift livestock.

The example of such clashes could be multiplied, but it should not be assumed that the grantees holding ecclesiastical offices could be dislodged in this way from any region. They got protection from the Emperor in case of such clashes. There are instances, too numerous to be cited, when imperial *farmans* were issued to award exemplary punishment to the guilty in case of any loss sustained by the grantees.

The above survey suggests that this region emerged as an important centre of the high elite culture wherethe small townships and the *qasbas* displayed and promoted the elements of high culture and mystic values from the Islamic East. The class of the grantees, on which we have focused on in this paper, had to face certain ups and downs during the 18th century, especially under the Nawabi regime. But inspite of some of these negative measures, the intellectual life of Awadh, especially in the field of *maqulat*

did not suffer much. We notice the various clashes between the Zamindars and the grantees, but they were at a manageable level and certainly such clashes do not merit the hilarious conclusions, terming the conflicts as 'communal land wars' or 'battle between Hindus and Muslims'. The state was the major force in creating new fiscal rights and often linking these rights with certain hereditary ecclesiastical offices, granting legitimization for these rights and perquisites in perpetuity, something for which the grantees as well as the local magnates were always looking for. Ultimately it was the 'authority' of the state which made even the *zortalab* regions and their chieftains to accept new 'hierarchy' in their midst, something which continued even during the period when the institutions of governance were supposedly became weak.

APPENDIX A

TABLE I

Zamindar castes in Awadh in c. 1595

Zamindar Castes	AWADH		KHAIRABAD	
	Revenue	Percentage	Revenue	Percentage
(a) Rajputs:				
Bais	36,35,070	8.87	4,57,332	1.04
Gaur	-	-	36,93,053	8.29
Bachgoti	77,21,766	18.85	-	-
Surajbansi	-	-	-	-
Bisin	-	-	20,82,593	4.74
Sombansi	13,60,753	3.32	30,55,339	6.96
Gehlots	14,15,701	3.45	-	-
Janwars	-	-	4,15,587	0.9
Bachhils	14,15,701	3.45	39,77,894	9.07
Raikwars	-	-	-	-
Chandel	-	-	-	-
Chauhans	41,41,078	10.11	20,91,983	4.77
Rajwars	79,24,908	19.34	-	-
Tomars	-	-	-	-

Undifferentiated	96,98,537	23.68	1,03,09,841	23.51
Total Rajputs	3,73,13,514	91.07	2,60,83,622	59.28

(b) Other castes:

Brahmans	15,57,763	3.80	76,33,331	17.4
Sayyids	-	-	-	-
Afghans	-	-	-	-
Ansari	15,71,712	3.83	-	-
Kumbis	10,04,183	2.45	-	-
Amins	-	-	39,67,684	9.04
Ahirs	-	-	35,66,055	8.13
Miscellaneous	3,08,788	0.75	12,21,733	2.78
Others	-	-	4,57,332	1.04
Total others	44,42,446	10.83	1,68,46,135	38.39

Lucknow		Bahraich		Gorakhpur	
Revenue	Percentage	Revenue	Percentage	Revenue	Percentage
2,29,96,760	28.49	13,15,051	5.45	6,76,792	5.67
-	-	-	-	-	-
21,04,023	2.60	-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-	10,67,385	8.94
-	-	15,82,345	6.56	51,61,321	43.27
-	-	-	-	15,60,294	13.08
97,13,997	11.28	-	-	-	-
-	-	12,11,843	5.01	-	-
53,11,950	6.57	-	-	-	-
-	-	47,40,221	19.65	-	-
43,56,254	5.39	-	-	-	-
25,05,047	3.10	-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-	-	-
-	-	9,66,539	4.00	-	-
1,67,72,057	20.77	1,05,64,180	43.79	20,12,533	16.87
6,37,60,088	78.20	2,03,80,179	84.46	1,04,78,325	87.83

(c) Other castes:

38,27,339	4.73	-	-	-	-
45,74,428	5.66	-	-	-	-
8,46,240	1.04	-	-	13,97,367	11.7
52,39,457	6.48	-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-	-	-
-	-	21,40,858	8.87	-	-
-	-	16,19,480	6.71	51,100	0.42
1,44,87,464	17.91	37,60,338	15.58	14,48,467	12.12

Source: *Ain-i Akbari*: The figures are the result of a comparison of the texts of the following MSS, British Museum Add. 5645; Add. 6552.

APPENDIX B

Table 1

Sarkar-wise breakup on the suyurghal Statistics of parganas having Muslim zamindari

I	II	III	
No. of parganas	Total jama' (dams)	Suyurghal (dams)	% of III as to II
4	(a) Sarkar Awadh 45,00,922	3,06,288	6.8%
1	(b) Sarkar Gorakhpur 13,97,367 (c) Sarkar Bahraich (No pargana with Muslim zamindars) (d) Sarkar Khairabad (same as in C)	6,935	0.49%
7	(e) Sarkar Lucknow 1,75,84,829	17,40,280	9.89%
12	2,34,83,118	20,53,503	17.18 %

Table 2
Sarkar-wise breakup of the *suyurghal* statistics of *pargana* without Muslim *zamindari*

I	II	III	
No. of <i>parganas</i>	Total <i>jama'</i> (<i>dams</i>)	<i>Suyurghal</i> (<i>dams</i>)	% of III as to II
16	(a) <i>Sarkar</i> Awadh 3,63,37,212	13,77,877	3.79%
5	(b) <i>Sarkar</i> Gorakhpur 52,56,242	99,280	0.80%
5	(c) <i>Sarkar</i> Bahraich 2,02,42,182	1,06,482	5.24%
	(d) <i>Sarkar</i> Khairabad 39,41,541	16,56,100	4.15%
29	(e) <i>Sarkar</i> Lucknow 5,34,54,089	28,74,330	5%
55	11,92,31,266	61,14,069	18.98%

Notes and References

*From the point of political and historical geography, the name Awadh is used in the sense of the eighteenth century Nawabi Awadh which included the Mughal provinces of Awadh, Allahabad and also parts of Rohilkhand; in no way, it is confined to the nineteenth century kingdom of Awadh, which included only the present day Lucknow and Faizabad Commissionaries, having only twelve districts.

1. *Waq'iat Mushtaqi*, Add.11633,f.18.
2. Hamid Qalandar. *Khair-ul- Majalis*, (ed.) K.A Nizami, Aligarh, 1959, *majalis* no. 32, p. 107.
3. Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, *Life and Time of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya*, Idara-iAdabiat, Delhi, 1991, pp. 42-43.
4. Ghulam Ali Azad Bilgram, *Mathir ul Kiram*, edited by Shaikh Shams ul Haq, *maqtabiya ul ulum e sharqiya*, Lahore, 1971, pp. 213-14; This indictment of the policies of Awadh rulers was always dismissed as the figment of Azad Bilgrami's imagination and the examples of the House of Firangi Mahal and the family of Usmani *qazis* of Bilgram were often cited as the example of the continuation of the land grant policies under the Nawab-Wazirs as well.
5. William Charles Macpherson (ed.), *Soldiering in India*, London, 1928, p. 131. (I am thankful to Ms. Sabina Kazmi, a PhD student of mine, for letting me use this reference).
6. The basic text for the history of *firangi-mahal* seminary (in Urdu) is by

Mohammad Raza Ansari, *Bani-i Dars-i Nizami: Ustad-ul-Hind Mulla Nizam ud Din Mohammad Firangi Mahali*, Lucknow, 1973.

For the details of the family history, the intellectual traditions as well as the documentary history of their land grants during the 16th and 17th centuries see, Iqbal Husain, *Studies in Polity, Economy and Society of the Trans Gangetic Valley: 15th – 19th centuries*, Primus, Delhi, 2013, especially chapter no. 5 (pp. 43-62) and 11 (pp. 103-121).

7. Bilgrami, *op.cit*, p. 212.
8. Bayly, C. A., “ ‘The Pre-history of ‘Communalism’? Religious Conflict in India, 1700-1860””, *Modern Asian Studies*, 19, 2 (1985), pp. 177-203; it is interesting to note that all his references are from the published calendar of the Allahabad document and not from the original or it’s facsimile.
9. For further details see Zahiruddin Malik, ‘Problems of *faujdar* jurisdiction in Baiswara’, *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* (Henceforth *PIHC*), vol. I, 1973, pp. 211-15 (Aligarh volume).
10. See Muzaffar Alam, ‘Assimilations from a Distance: Confrontation and Sufi Accommodation in Awadh Society’ in R.Champakalakshmi & S.Gopal (eds.) *Tradition, Dissent and Ideology: Essays in Honour of Romila Thapar*; Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2001, pp. 164-191; While paying tribute to Saiyid Abdul Razzaq of Bansa (d.1724), the Qadirisufi, he ignores the contrary evidence, which has been discussed by me elsewhere.
11. For example, the large sufi establishment in the southern Awadh, namely *khanqah-e karimiya* at Salon was a recipient of the imperial favours since 19th RY/ H. 1086 (A.D. 1676) of Emperor Aurangzeb till the 6th RY/1764 of Emperor Shah Alam II. All the imperial *farmans* have a citation that the grantees were already in possession of the land granted by the local officials and the chieftains. The imperial *farman* were issued only to safeguard the future interest of the grantees. For the details and translations of all the imperial *farmans* issued to the family see my ‘A Sufi institution of Awadh’, in *Ideology and Society: Essays in honour of Prof. R. S. Sharma*, (ed.) D. N. Jha, Delhi, 1996, pp. 269-89.
12. W. H. Sleeman while undertaking journey through the kingdom of Awadh in February 1849, he refers to this [*Khanqah-i Karimiya*] ‘endowment was

- granted twelve villages rent free in perpetuity...by ousting Kunpuriya Rajputs for...contumacy or rebellion' but this *khanqah* continued to enjoy the *ma'afi grants* of all the villages till 1952. It appears strange that the Kunpuriya Rajputs who dominated the area and were known for their notoriety, have never tried to reoccupy the villages from where they were said to have been ousted. See: P.D.Reeves (ed.), *Sleeman in Awadh: An Abridgement of W.H.Sleeman's Journey through the Kingdom of Oudh in 1849-50*, Cambridge, 1971, pp. 128-29.
13. Abul Fazl 'Allami, *Ain-i Akbari*, Persian Text edited by W.H. Blochmann (Bib. Ind. Series), Vol. I, pp. 71-84.
 14. Abul Hameed Lahori, *Badshah Namah*, Bib. Indica (I), pp. 243, 278. The *sarkar* of Lucknow and district of Bainswara were under one *faujdari*; subsequently Bainswara became a separate *faujdari*. Also see Zahiruddin Malik, 'Problems of *faujdari* jurisdictions in Baiswara', *PIHC*, vol.I, 1973, (Chandigarh Session). For a note on Bais zamindars see my paper in the cyclostyled papers of the members of the Department of History, Aligarh Muslim University, presented at 42nd session of *Indian History Congress*, Bodh-Gaya, 1981.
 15. *Insha-i Roshan Kalam*, MS. Azad Library, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, f. 7a.
 16. Muhammad Kazim, *Alamgir Namah*, Bib. Ind., Calcutta, 1873, Vol. I, p. 450.
 17. *Insha-i Roshan Kalam*, f. 3a.
 18. C.A. Elliott, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-68.
 19. C.A. Elliott, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-68.
 20. Abul Fazl, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-84. However, *Insha-i Roshan Kalam* records the *mahal* of Bijnor under the Bais *zamindars* (f. 7). They have been called as *zamindaran-izor-talab*. While Nevill informs us the *pargana* of Dalmau was possessed by Bais Rajputs. See H.R. Nevill, *District Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh*, (henceforth as *DG*), Vol. 39, pp. 168-69. On the other hand, after the suppression of the Mutiny some Bais proprietors lost their possessions. The most notable loser was Raja Beni Madho Singh of Shankarpur whose large estate was confiscated for his involvement in the Uprising of 1857. The final picture with regard to the land holdings of Bais

clan suggests that by and large all the *mahals* recorded in the *Ain* were kept intact by them, with few new additions were made to the land holdings of this clan by c. 1900. It appears, then, that the possessions of Bais Rajput at least did not, on the balance, suffer any contraction over the three hundred years spanning 1600 and 1900.

21. Different set of rules of succession were formulated by Aurangzeb in relation to the revenue grants, as it was asserted that, 'since *madad-i ma'ash* is an 'ariyat (loan), therefore in such matters, the exalted order is sufficient'. By invoking this principle, the new regulations enforced rules different from the *shari'at* law of succession. The *farman* of Aurangzeb, issued in 35th RY/AD 1690. It was through this order that the *madad-i ma'ash* were made hereditary and different set of rules were framed for deciding the share of an individual in the property of the deceased grantee, accession no. 1880, Regional Records Office, UP State Archives, Allahabad.
22. See Appendix 'B' for the tables. The figures of the tables are based on the two Mss. of *Ain-i Akbari*, Br. Museum Add, 5645 and Add 6552.
23. Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System of Mughal India*, 1963, p. 302 and notes.
24. It was only with the increasing monetization of the proprietary rights during the 17th century that the grantees could purchase such rights and could become *ijaradars*. In *pargana* Hisampur, *sarkar* Bahraich, see the example of Saiyid Muhammad Arif, who was originally a revenue grantee, and made a considerable fortune. (Irfan Habib, *op. cit.*, pp. 150-52).
25. Thus, we have the villages like, Khwajapur, Muhammadabad, Ashrafganj, Atanagar, Ataganj, Usri, Piranagar, Panahnagar, *Chak* Karimnagar, Mohaddi Nagar in the block and *tehsil* Salon, district Rae Breilly; in the block Kara district Allahabad, we have villages named an Afzalpur, Saton, Nizam Mai, Pura Mohammad Saeed and in block and *pargana* Kunda, district Pratapgarh some villages are known as Ashrafganj, PirAtaganj, Karimnagar, Panahnagar and Hyatnagar etc.
26. P.D. Reeves, (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 128.
27. For the history of this sufi institution see my article 'Religious Plurality in the Chishti Tradition: A case study of the Khanqah at Salon in Awadh', in Jamal Malik and Helmut Reifeld (ed.) *Religious Pluralism in South Asia and Europe*,

Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 219-244.

28. *NAI/2618/6*. This representation has as many as six seals of high officials, two of them of the *jagirdar*. It uses the word *ta'alluqa*, which appears to be the earliest reference to this institution in the proper context. Apart from this, topographical details have also been provided. The length of the *faujdari* of Baiswara *nizamat* in the east-west direction between *pargana* Dalmau and Harha was 25 *karohs*, the width in the south-north, lying between river Ganges and the bank of Sai river, was 15 *karohs*. Also the names of all six *parganas* under the jurisdiction of the *qazis* as well as of the 15 *pargana* from where they have been expelled are given.
29. Abdul Qadir Collection 4; U.P. State Archives, Lucknow. This petition has 7 seals, three of them of the *jagirdars* of the area; and 14 signatures (5 of them in Devanagiri script). It is dated 3rd *Jamad* AH1061/A.D. 1652.