

**OPPOSITION AND DISSENT IN THE AGRARIAN SECTOR IN THE UPPER
GANGETIC BASIN, 17TH AND EARLY 18TH CENTURY**

*Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of the degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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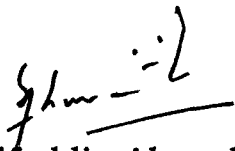
2002




22nd July 2002


DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the Dissertation entitled **Opposition and Dissent in The Agrarian Sector in The Upper Gangetic Basin, 17th and Early 18th century** submitted by me, **Saifuddin Ahmad, centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi**, for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** is my original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full for any other degree or diploma in any other university.


Saifuddin Ahmad

This may be placed before the examiner for the evaluation for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**.


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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Kirti Kumar Trivedi for helping me clear the ambiguities in my arguments. He has been extremely helpful and encouraging right from the beginning. My thanks are also due to Dr. Madhu Trivedi, who was kind enough to go through some of my chapters.

My grateful thanks to the members of the staff of Research Library, Department of History, Aligarh Muslim University, Maulana Azad Library, Aligarh; Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi; D.S.A. Library, JNU.

A special thanks is due to Indian Council of Historical Research for providing me Contingency Grant.

I am thankful to numerous friends who helped me in various ways.

Saifuddin Ahmad

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>A'in</i>	<i>A'in-i Akbari</i> by Abul Fazl
<i>'Aja'ib</i>	<i>'Aja'ib-ul-Afaq</i>
<i>Akhbarat</i>	<i>Akhbarat-i Darbar-I Mu'alla</i>
Allahabad	Persian records preserved at the Uttar Pradesh State Archives, Allahabad
<i>A.S.B.</i>	Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta
Br.M.	British Museum (now British Library), London
FS	Farrukh Siyar
<i>IESHR</i>	<i>The Indian Economic and Social History Review</i>
<i>IHR</i>	<i>India Historical Review</i>
I.O.	India Office Library (now Commonwealth Relations Library, London)
K.K.	Muhammad Hashim, Khafi Khan, Muntakhab-ul-Lubab
M.A.L.	Maulana Azad Library, Aligarh
<i>M.U.</i>	<i>Ma'asir-ul-Umara</i> By Shahnawaz Khan
<i>PIHC</i>	<i>Proceedings of the Indian History Congress</i>
<i>Tabsira</i>	<i>Tabsirat-un-Nazirin</i> by Saiyid Muhammad Bilgrami

INTRODUCTION

In keeping with the significance that has often been attached to socio-economic factors in historical processes, a considerable amount of recent scholarship has been directed towards examining the economic base of medieval Indian state and society. It is, in turn, the predominantly agrarian aspects of the medieval Indian economy that have been subjected to the closest scrutiny by scholars.¹

On account of this effort, an appreciably improved perception of the medieval rural society has emerged.² More specifically, image of the agrarian society during the Mughal period has apparently become sharper than ever before. This is reflected in the many related works on Indian history.³ The magnificent structure of the Mughal state and the continued dominance of its ruling elite rested upon the state's ability to appropriate a major part of the surplus generated by the agrarian society. The agrarian structure of the Mughal state that was able to extract a significant amount of the surplus produced was extremely complex. The surplus was

¹ W.H. Moreland, *Agrarian system of Moslem India* (first published in 1929); Irfan Habib, *Agrarian system of Mughal India, 1556-1707*, rep., 1999; N.A. Siddiqi, *Land Revenue Administration Under the Mughals, 1700-1750*, (Bombay, 1970); Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: the jagirdari crisis and the village* (New Delhi, 1982); S. Nurul Hasan, *Some Thoughts on Agrarian Relations*, (New Delhi, rep., 1983).

² In this regard Irfan Habib's, *Agrarian System*, seems to mark a sort of turning point. Also see Harbans Mukhia, 'Peasant Production and Medieval Indian Society', in Harbans Mukhia and T.J. Byres, eds., *Feudalism and Non European Societies*, (London, 1985), p. 239.

³ M. Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility Under Aurangzeb*, (Bombay, rep., 1998), See also Indu Banga, *Agrarian System of Sikhs* (New Delhi, 1978).

systematically appropriated by the dominant *zamindars* and the Mughal state apparatus. It was subsequently distributed amongst sections of the dominant classes (which comprised of *jagirdars*, *madad-i ma'ash* holders and so on).

Contributing to the emergence of this system and important to its functioning was the structure of the village-community, its internal dynamics and its response to forces and factors around it. One of the earlier explanations of the classical village-community as a whole under Mughal rule has been made by Irfan Habib,⁴ while some other researchers have engaged in examining its details and variations.⁵

Besides the nature of the agrarian structure in medieval India, attention has been focussed on the position and the role of the *zamindars* and their mutual interactions within the purview of the state.

The *zamindar* class played a vital role in the political, economic, and cultural life of medieval India. The *zamindars* with their tremendous military resources constituted a formidable class and

⁴ Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System*, chapter, IV; Irfan Habib, 'Potentialities of capitalistic Development in the Economy of Mughal India', *Enquiry*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (1971), pp. 6-22.

⁵ There are a number of works too numerous to mention, B.R. Grover, 'Nature of Land-rights in Mughal India', *IESHR*, Vol. I, No. 1 (1963); B.R. Grover, 'Nature of Dehat-i-Ta'aluqa: Evolution of the Ta'aluqadari System during the Mughal Age', *IESHR*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1965); S. Nurul Hasan, 'The position of zamindars in Mughal India', *IESHR*, Vol. I, No. 4. (1964); Satish Chandra, 'Some Aspects of the Village Society in North India during the 18th century (Position of Khud kashta and pahi kashta)', *IHR*, Vol. I, No. 1, (1974) etc.

could sway social and political fortunes. Moreland, was probably the first to draw attention to the importance of the *chieftains* in Mughal empire.⁶ P.Saran, in his *The Provincial Government Under the Mughals* has highlighted the position and the role of some of the *chieftains* in the Mughal empire by listing the principalities of a few of them.⁷

Irfan Habib in his *The Agrarian System of Mughal India*, scrutinises the enlarged scope of the agrarian structure and identifies the various classes that contributed to its sustenance. Habib, in his chapter on the *zamindars* has briefly discussed the position of autonomous *zamindars* (*chiefs*) in the Mughal empire. However, his major concern was the inquiry into the genesis and composition of *zamindars* in general and their rights and privileges in particular. He has obviously not been able to go beyond suggesting similarities and dissimilarities between 'autonomous chiefs' and the ordinary *zamindars*.⁸

S.Nurul Hasan, in his *Thoughts of Agrarian Relations in Mughal India*, discusses the position and status of *zamindars* and their role in the Agrarian structure of Medieval India.⁹ In another article, he examines the role of chiefs in the Mughal empire. He touches upon the difficult role the *chiefs* may have played in the economic

⁶ Moreland, op.cit..

⁷ P.Saran, *The Provincial Government Under the Mughal*, (1556-1707), Bombay, rep., 1973.

⁸ See Irfan Habib, op.cit., chapter V.

⁹ S.Nurul Hasan, *Thoughts on Agrarian Relations in Mughal India*, New Delhi, 1973.

and cultural life of the century before and after their submission to the Mughals.¹⁰ His observations are however, based on a general survey of the Mughal empire covering a period of approximately 150 years. A closer analysis of region wise and period wise data still remains to be undertaken.

Major discussions on the Mughal economy revolve around the agrarian sector as we have already discussed above. In one of the reviews it has been suggested that around 90 percent of the state revenue, collected through highly systematised arrangements, was from agrarian productions.¹¹ Over and above the local potentates, revenue officials were also brought into systemised shares in the surplus-generation.¹² To agree that the local potentates had readily accepted the control over their fiefdoms and shares would be too simplistic. Yet, for a considerable period of time there was an apparent peace and smoothness in the collection of revenue by the agents of the Mughal state. However, by the middle of seventeenth century, the resistance from the countryside had become too obvious. This has legitimately received serious attention of the scholars.¹³ In these studies, the focus has continued to be on the reign of Aurangzeb and areawise they are limited to the regions of Mathura-Kol and Narnaul only. Further,

¹⁰ S.Nurul Hasan, 'The Position of Zamindars in Mughal India', *IESHR*, Vol. I, No. 4 (1964).

¹¹ Shireen Moosvi, *The Economy of the Mughal empire, c.1595, A Statistical Study*, Delhi, 1987, p. 95.

¹² *A'in*, I, p. 285; S. Moosvi, op.cit. pp. 174-75.

¹³ The discussion by Irfan Habib in *Agrarian System*, is considered most erudite.

these resistances have been shown as arising from amongst the peasants in which the *zamindars* have been in a way, forced to participate. It has been held for long that the exploitation of peasantry on account of the transferable nature of jagirs was the motivating factor that caused the subsequent decline of the Mughal empire.¹⁴

The present study, also has as, it focuses on the opposition and dissent in the agrarian sector in the Upper Gangetic basin. However, it differs from earlier studies in that it emphasises the discontent on the part of the local potentates as being the crucial determining factor. The gradual loss of Mughal authority could also be traced to the lack of adaptability in Mughal institutions, where senior positions were not available to the local potentates from outside the erstwhile ruling families. This study examines the response of local potentates to the Mughal system of accommodation in the official hierarchy, through the assignment of *mansabs* and the *jagirs*.

It is argued that the institution of *mansab* and the *jagir* were inherently flawed. There seem to be two reasons for this. The first, is that the land tenure system resulted in the undermining and compromising of the position of *zamindars*. Secondly, it

¹⁴ Barnier, *Travels in Mughal Empire*, A.D. 1556-68, tr. A. Constable, 1972, pp. 226-227; see also Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System*, chapter VII.

failed to fulfill the aspirations of the *zamindars* and this added greatly to the discontent among this section of society. It is also argued that discontent and opposition among this section of society was a phenomenon that was ubiquitous throughout Mughal rule. The study of the sources reveals that there was discontent simmering throughout Mughal rule. However, this was not the determining factor that would lead to the flaring up or manifestation of the discontent. It was rather the might of the state authority which acted as the determining force and it was only when the state authority weakened that this rural discontent became manifest in an overt form.

The first chapter, deals with the description of the soil, topography, climatic conditions of the region i.e. the Upper Gangetic basin which, is a part of the Great plains lying between the Yamuna in the west and 100 m. contour in the east covering about 51 percent of the area of present Uttar Pradesh. The region, so defined, incorporates within its bounds three areas of some historical individuality: The Ganga-Yamuna Doab; the greater part of the *suba* of Awadh; and the modern Rohilkhand region of the 18th century. The soil is alluvial and suited for all types of food crops, and there was extensive cultivation. Significantly, the region was one of the highly irrigated agricultural regions of India and played a dominant role in boosting the agricultural prosperity

of the region. This chapter also takes into account the extent of the cultivated area.

The second chapter, discusses the agrarian structure and the social composition of the population inhabiting the region, specifically the composition of the *zamindars*. The two most crucial components of the population were the caste component and what can broadly be described as the class component. Among the rural peasantry two most important categories were the *khud-kasht* and *pahi-kasht*.

The all important category in terms of revenue extraction was that of the *zamindar*. In a consideration of the caste composition of the area under study one finds a correlation between the upper castes and their occupation of the upper rungs of the agrarian hierarchy. The Rajputs held a position of pre-eminence in our region of study except in Rohilkhand, where Rajputs conceded domination to the Afghans.

The third chapter, looks at the response of the local potentates to the Mughal system of accomodation in the official hierarchy through the assignment of *mansabs* and the *jagirs*. From the manner in which the *zamindars* responded to this system, it is argued that there were systemic flaws within the Mughal administrative machinery. The Mughal system of land tenure not only compromised their position but also failed to satisfy their

aspirations. The chapter will attempt to analyse the relative ease with which the local *potentates* accepted Mughal domination over their area. It is argued that opposition among this section was a phenomenon ubiquitous throughout the Mughal period and no period was free from this latent simmering discontent, not even when Mughal rule was at the height of its glory.

Chapter - 1

TOPOGRAPHY OF THE REGION AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

Political boundaries are, to a great extent, determined by the physical features of a region. The locations of mountains and rivers, the distribution of river-water, the seasons and the climate of an area all assume great importance when one takes up the history of a particular region/ area. They determine the social and economic conditions of the people and also affect considerably the political developments.

The vast region which constitutes the upper Ganga plain is a part of the Great plains lying approximately between the Yamuna in the west and 100 m contour in the east ($73^{\circ}3'E - 82^{\circ}21'E$ and $25^{\circ}15' N - 30^{\circ}17'N$) covering about 1,49,029 Km² (about 51% of the area of present Uttar Pradesh). The region is delimited in the North by 300m contour, which separates it from Garh-Kum Himalya west of Sarda while the international boundary of Nepal marks the limit towards the east. In the South, the Yamuna demarcates its border with the Bundelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh. In the west, however, a 250-year-old state boundary which, by and large, coincides with the subterranean extension of the peninsular block and which also separates the Indus and the

Ganga drainage systems is regarded as its limit. The 100m contour adjusted with the administrative boundaries on tehsil level has been finally accepted to as the eastern limit of the upper Ganga Plain.¹

The region, so defined, incorporates within its bounds (550 Km E-W and 380 Km N-S) three areas of historic individuality:²

(i) The Doab, a long fillet between Yamuna and Ganga, with Delhi and Agra as its poles. The Yamuna and the Ganga, commanded the northern approaches to the Malwa passage into the Deccan; this was the core area of the Delhi Sultanate, its military rear and major granary. Its importance continued into the Mughal Empire.

(ii) The greater part of the *Suba* of Awadh. During the Mughal period it constituted a separate *suba* of the empire from 1580-1724. It passed through varying fortunes in its chequered history. Situated partly in the north, it was dominated by the marital clans of Rajputs who formed the core of its *zamindari* setup,³ holding more than 75 percent of the total *jama* recorded in the *A'in*.

¹ R.L. Singh (ed.), *India – A Regional Geography*, Varansi, 1989, p. 124.

² O.H.K. Spate and A. T. A. Learmonth, *India and Pakistan: A General and Regional Geography* (1967), p.546.

³ Mohammad Taiyab, *Suba of Awadh under the Mughals (1582-1724)*, unpublished Ph. D. Thesis. Deptt. of History, A.M.U., 1980, p.2.

(iii) Between these two lay Rohilkhand, so named after the Rohilla Pathans, who emerged as the dominant political power in this region, during the 18th century.

Culturally, the region represents an amalgam of the ancient and the medieval. However, politically, due to its proximity with the national and regional capitals, the region has enjoyed relatively greater stability with occasional interruptions during the intermittent transitions induced during the change-over of the dynasties. It was during such periods of flux that the local aspirations, like that of the *subedars* of Awadh gained strength.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

The upper Ganga plain has, from very ancient times, held a unique position in the march of Indian history even before the Kuru-Panchala days. It covers the ancient Panchala country in the Ganga-Yamuna Doab, and also the plains of Rohilkhand and Awadh of recent times. It can infact be called a strategic nerve centre to the immediate west of which, lies the Delhi-Agra filterzone. The Delhi gateway is strategically situated between the Himalyas in the north and the Aravallis and the Thar in the south. Agra which is towards the south, held the approaches to the great Malwa passage-way serving as the forward base for the powers in the filter and falcrum zone. It has been the fate of this region to retain control over this axis so as to keep itself free or else face

subjugation and defeat, if, the Delhi gateway were to be forced open or the axis run-over. Many invasion thrusts have been made into the Ganga valley through this axis. As such, the axis area has been a cockpit of warring forces. It is believed that it was on these plains that the Great War of Mahabharata between the Kurus and the Pandavas was fought. Also, the battle of Thaneshwar between Prithviraj and Mohammad Ghori was fought in this zone. Later, the fate of India was thrice decided in the battles of Panipat here in the plains of Kurukshetra plain in 1526, putting the Mughals in power; in 1556, re-establishing their supremacy; and in 1761, when the Marathas were humbled. The area has been a part of Madhyadesa or the Middle Country (the pivot of the Aryavarta) as mentioned in the epics-the Mahabharata, and the Ramayana, and the puranas. It was also a part of the 'Hindustan' of the Muslim historians. In fact, it was 'the heart of India, typically Indian and securely Indian'⁴ from time immemorial. Every power with an ambition to rule India gravitated to grab it, for only those who could securely hold the Madhyadesa could aspire to rule India. Hence, all invasions had their thrust on these parts.⁵ This area was also a prized possession on account of its richness in terms of resources. The Doab, which was a part of this region, had alluvial plains suitable for the cultivation of all food crops. Historically,

⁴ Ali, S.M.: *The Geography of the Puranas*, Delhi, PPH, 1966, p.134 c.f R.L.Singh, India: *A regional geography*.

⁵ K.M.Panikkar, *Geographical factors in Indian History*, Bombay, 1959, p.99.

the region constituted the hinterland, the military rear and the major granary of the Delhi Sultanate. Its importance continued into the Mughal Empire even when the capital was shifted to Agra.⁶ Thus, it can be said that the strategic position of this region and its historico-political value have been, in terms, intriguing, challenging and rewarding for to the rulers of India. The importance that the rulers gave to the agriculture and the general economy of this region meant that the towns were not only centres of grain trade but also of handicrafts and other products. However, these local aspirants to power, were never quite. With the fall of the Mughals, the Jats in the Doab, and the Rohillas in Rohilkhand and the Marathas in the south set out to wrest control over this area. Infact in A.D. 1720, Awadh broke away from the Mughals and the city of Lucknow emerged as a grand capital city in the highly productive Awadh plain.⁷

Drainage:

The lie of the land is simple; a great plain built up of detritus from the Himalyas.⁸ The region in general is a part of the well-integrated drainage system of the Ganga; although the two important tributaries, the Ghaghra and Gomati join the master

⁶ For more details see K.K.Trivedi, "Historical Geography of Ganga-Yamuna Doab 13th –17th century", *Proceedings of Indian History of congress*, 1981, Aligarh (Cyclostyled).

⁷ See Muzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh & Punjab, 1707-48*, OUP, reprint 2001, Chapter VII.

⁸ O.H.K. Spate and A.T.A. Learmonth, op.cit, p. 546.

streams in the Middle Ganga plain. The Ganga and its major tributaries, the Yamuna, the Ramaganga and the Ghaghara are the only Himalyan rivers which carry sufficient water all the year round, though with high seasonal fluctuations. Wide flood plains and high banks are the common features in the course of the Ganga and the Yamuna along with their repository of silt and clay deposits. The other two have rather ill-defined channels, subject to frequent changes which is probably a consequence of the nature of deposits and the space available to carry coarser material.⁹

Regionally, most of the Awadh and Saryupar plain is drained by the Ghaghara and the Gomati while the Ramaganga collects most of the drainage of the Rohilkhand plain. The Doab has fewer streams worth a mention, joining the Ganga and the Yamuna.¹⁰

SOILS:

This region has an almost uniform topography and lithology. The soil is by and large, homogeneous. Alluvial soil in two variations, *Usar* and *Bhur*, depending on the drainage conditions, the mechanical and chemical constituents and the climatic characteristics, are observed in different parts. Two other soil types the *khadar* and *bhangar* (with different local names,

⁹ R.L. Singh, op.cit, p.133.

¹⁰ R.L.Singh, op.cit, p.133.

denoting the minute variations in properties) are also quite widespread.

The *khadar* soil which is relatively rich in plant nutrients, occupy the narrow frequent siltation tracts in the flood plains of the rivers. These are deficient in organic materials specially phosphorus and are sandy to loamy in texture.

The *bhangar* soil is more extensive in the areas that are spread out and occupies the interfluvial zones. In the proximity of the Ganga, the *bhangar* soil is loamy to sandy loam in texture while near the Yamuna the silt content decreases possibly due to excessive drainage giving it a sandy to sandy loamy texture.

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Among the variants worth noting is the *Bhur*, a generic term for patches of sandy soil, in places sufficiently extensive to form low but undulating sandy uplands. The *Bhur* proper is a belt on the east bank of Ganga in Moradabad and Bijnaur district.¹¹

¹¹ Spate and Learmonth, op. cit, p. 549.

The *Usar* soil is in sizeable tracts in the Ganga- Ghaghara Doab area that spans Sultanpur, Pratapgarh, through Rae Brailley, Lucknow, Hardoi, Shahjanpur etc. It is contiguous with the tracts of the middle Ganga plain. In the Ganga-Yamuna Doab, the areas north of Bulandshahar and south of Eatah consists of silty and clayey *bhangar* tracts while the sand ridges are alternated by depressions in Bulandshar, Aligarh, etc. Such a stratification renders this portion of the Doab topographically more diversified than those of its counterparts in the north and south. The nature of deposits is probably is because of the crescentic bends in the two master rivers-the Ganga and the Yamuna.¹²

The rich topographical resource base of the region was its diversity to the rich alluvial soils and the abundance of water resources from its long perennial rivers.¹³ The region is one of the densely cultivated areas of India, with more than half of the land under cultivation. Food crops usually predominate, wheat being the primary crop, followed by rice, barley, jowar, bajra, gram and maize. Among the cash crops sugarcane, cotton, tobacco, indigo and oil seeds are cultivated.¹⁴

The region so defined, incorporated within its bonds the divisions of Meerut (excluding Dehradun district), Agra, Rohilkhand,

¹² R.L.Singh, op. cit, pp. 131-32.

¹³ Ibid., p. 137.

¹⁴ O.H.K.Spate and A.T.A. Learmonth, op.cit, pp. 550-51.

Lucknow, Allahabad (excluding the tehsils of Handia, Phulpur, Meja and Karchhana) and Faizabad (excluding the tehsil of Utraula, Balrampur, Faizabad, Tanda, Akbarpur, Sultanpur, Kadipur and Patti) and the southern part of the Haldawani tehsil of Nainital.¹⁵

The region was broadly divided into the Mughal *subas* of Awadh, Allahabad, Agra and parts of the Delhi *suba*. It would be appropriate here to deal with the topographic details of these *subas* separately.

AWADH

The Mughal province of Awadh extended over the territory entirely consisting of alluvial plains, lying between 79.6° and 84° longitude East and 26° and 28.4° latitude North. The Limits of the *suba* were described by Abul Fazl, in his 'Account of Twelve Provinces.' It was bound on the east by the province of Bihar and to the north lay the Northern mountains; *Sarkar* Manikpur of *suba* Allahabad was situated to the south of the province, while on the western side was *sarkar* Kannauj of *suba* Agra.¹⁶

To some extent, the boundaries of the *suba* took into account the physical features of the upper Gangetic plains. Apart from the

¹⁵ R.L.Singh. op.cit., p.125.

¹⁶ See *Ain-i Akbari*, I, P. 433, also S.Z.H.Jafri, 'Agrarian Conditions of Awadh under the Mughals and Nawab wazirs : 1595-1856, unpublished ph. D. Thesis, Aligarh, pp. 1-2.

Himalyan barriers to the north, the Ganges separated it from the Mughal province of Agra, and the Sarju river fixed the boundary line between *Sarkar* Gorakhpur of Awadh and Jaunpur of *suba* Allahabad.

The Mughal province of Awadh came into being in 1580 A.D., when Akbar superceded the earlier divisions of the Lodi Sultans to make his own administrative arrangement.¹⁷

The limits of the new territorial divisions were determined by a number of considerations, not all based on physical geography. Charles Elliot, in his account of Onao district expounds that *pargana* boundaries were traced in the most irregular fashion. Infact, the boundaries were determined by the proprietary rights of individual clans which formed the basis for fixing the limits of the mahals.¹⁸

Since time immemorial Awadh has been a land of great fertility and productivity. Its rich alluvial soil, the abundant water resources provided by its big rivers like Ghagra, Gomati, Sai, Gandak and the out flanking Ganges, its forest reserves supplying diverse raw material, and its climatic conditions, made the region one of the coveted possessions of the Mughal Empire.¹⁹ When one looks at the general breakup in relations to the amount of

¹⁷ *Akbarnama*, Bib. Indica, Calcutta, 1873-78, Vol. III, p.412.

¹⁸ Elliot, C.A., *Chronicles of Onao*, p. 149 & notes.

¹⁹ W.Crooke, *The North western provinces of India*, London, 1897, p.,4

production and fertility in Mughal Awadh, the sarkar of Lucknow with its adjoining regions can be seen to be in abundance, while the amount of cultivation to the north of Ghagra was very small. Also between the Ghagra and the Ganga, eastward of the line joining Allahabad and Faizabad, the proportion of production was less than one-fifth.²⁰

Taking advantage of this favourable geographical location, which made it an excellent area for agricultural cultivation, less than 5 percent of people, lived in towns. Agriculture was the vital industry of the people; with it were linked all other local industries. It was on the agricultural development that all the hopes of raising the status of the people depended. According to Elliot, the total area under cultivation was 60 percent.²¹ This meant that 40 percent was still open to plough. But from this uncultivated margin, large deductions had to be made. About 12 percent, for example was, occupied by forts. The remaining portions were left virgin for the grazing of cattle.²² The population was congested and worked largely in spade labour, which had extended cultivation to practically the highest limit.²³ Donald Butler, an English surveyor posted in the southern district of Awadh, noted that the climate of Awadh was such that all annual

²⁰ Moreland, *India at the Death of Akbar*, p. 21.

²¹ C.A. Elliot, *Chronicles of Onao: A District of Awadh*, 1862, pp. 125-28.

²² W. Crooke, *op.cit.*, p. 320.

²³ *Ibid.*

plants withered off in April-June. He observed that the land was swept by hot winds. However, when the rains came, vegetation advanced rapidly and covered almost the whole ground.²⁴

The soil in some areas was red, sandy loam without kankar. In the southern parts the soil was generally light. In some places like in the ancient forests, the soil was rich dark loam. But the richest soil in the south of Awadh were found near Jayes, Rampur and Manikpur etc. In this context the remarks of W.Crooke is noteworthy—"of all the provinces of the Empire, none is of greater interest than this (Awadh). It is the veritable garden of India, with a soil unrivalled in fertility; for the most part protected from the dangers of famine by a magnificent series of irrigation works; occupied by some of the finest and most industrious of native races".²⁵

ALLAHABAD

The *suba* of Allahabad covered large blocks of territory on both side of the Ganga. It stretched deep into Baghelknand and also included the lower portions of the Ganga-Yamuna Doab and the Ganga-Ghaghara Doab. If we go by the exact location of the *suba* of Allahabad, it extended upto the bank of the river Ghagra in the

²⁴ Donald Butter, *Out lines of the Topography and Statistics of Southern District: of Awadh*, Calcutta, 1939, p.72.

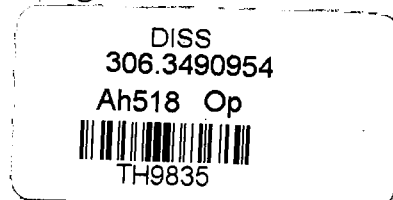
²⁵ W. Crooke, op. cit. P. 320.

north, Chausa in the east, Ghatampur in the west and Kaimur in the south.²⁶

The entire northern portion which lay between the river Ghagra in the north and the river Yamuna in the south was famous for its fertility right from ancient times. In general, the area was a vast plain except for a slight undulation, which might have been caused by the valleys of the rivers flowing through it. Its surface was composed of the deposits of the rivers flowing from the Himalyas. The southern part of the *suba* had alluvial soil, but it also presented a picture of wilderness with of valleys, ravines and craigs, with hills encircling the alluvial basins here and there.²⁷

A number of rivers, rivulets and streams flowed through the *suba*. The mighty Ghagra appears to have served as the northern boundary of the suba. Sai, Ganga, Gomti, Yamuna, Ken and Tons flowed through the suba.

The climate of the *suba* on the whole was healthy, moderate and quite agreeable.²⁸ There were regular, dense forests in the northern parts of the *suba* along the banks of the Ghagra.²⁹



²⁶ *A'in*, II, p. 169, The extent of the subah has been discussed in the chapter dealing with the administration.

²⁷ Sinha, S.N., *Suba of Allahabad under great Mughals*, Gitanjali Pub., 1983ed. pp. 1-2.

²⁸ *Ain*, ii, p. 169.

²⁹ *Akbarnama*, ii, p. 396.

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The areas near Prayag (Allahabad) and Kantit were also covered with thick forests.³⁰ The area of *mahal* Bhadoi and Kantit in the *sarkars* of Allahabad and Chunar was covered with hills, valleys and forests.³¹

AGRA

Agra extended over a vast region lying between 75⁰ and 81⁰ East longitude; it covered approximately an area of 1,19,080 sq. Km. *A'in-i Akbari*, gives the extent of Agra *suba* as being located between Ghatampur in the east and Palwal in the west, Kannauj in the north and Chanderi in the south. *A'in* in its, 'Account of the Twelve subas' also gives a breakup of the *sarkars* of the *suba* into *parganas*.³² The *suba* was constituted in 1580 A.D. by Akbar.

The entire region between the Ganga and Yamuna is a vast level plain. The three distinct natural regions incorporated into *suba* of Agra were the middle doab, the trans-Yamuna plains of eastern Rajasthan, and the Vindhyan escarpment north and south of the river Chambal. They may be identified with Spate's regions XI (Ganga plains), XV-1 ('the Aravalli Range') and XVI-1(a) (the 'Vindhyan rock Zone').³³

³⁰ *Ain*, ii, p. 169.

³¹ *Rewa Gazetteer*, p. 31.

³² *A'in*, p. 441-55.

³³ K.K. Trivedi, *Agra: Economic and Political Profile of a Mughal suba (1580-1707)*, Pune, 1998, p. 17.

The rivers of the middle Doab were the part of a well integrated drainage system. The Ganga and Yamuna rise in the high Himalyas, while their tributaries, like the Hindaun and Kali, rise in the lower hills. The Ganga and Yamuna are perennial rivers, which receives water supply from the monsoon, as also from the snow melted during the summers and from minor rivers like Kali and Arind in the Doab, and the Chambal, Betwa and Sind in the trans-Yamuna areas. These rivers enrich the soil during the floods as they deposit suspended matter.³⁴

By a rough estimate about 50 percent of the geographical area of the *suba* could be marked as forest and hilly land. The largest stretch of heavy vegetation ran along the Vindyas range in the southern parts of the *suba*. Based on contemporary accounts, an approximate forest cover has been shown on sheets 6B and 8B of '*An Atlas of the Mughal Empire*'. This covers the small stretches of forest spread all over the *suba* and indicates that the uncultivable area was about fifty percent of the whole.³⁵

ROHILKHAND

The earlier name of Rohilkhand was Katehr (8th century A.D.) and it continued to be known by this name till about the middle of the

³⁴ See Agra Distt. *Gazetter* pp. 8-12.

³⁵ Trivedi, K.K., *Agra: Economic and Political Profile of a Mughal Suba, 1580-1707*, Pune 1998, p. 19.

eighteenth century, when it came to be known by the name of Rohilkhand. It was a part of the *suba* of Delhi.³⁶

The area around Rohilkhand is divided into different regions or *Mulks*. The highland on the Right Bank of the Ganges is *Mulk Pahara*; and this is replaced by sandy soil on the left bank of the valley called *Mulk Bhar*. The last one which stretches for some distance away from the river is succeeded by the *Mulk Katehr*, while beyond the Ramaganga lies *Mulk Terai*. The distinction between *Mulk Bhar* and *Mulk Katehr* is arbitrary, as it does not reveal any distinction with regard to the geographical contours of the country. None the less, it is clearly marked out. The soils of Rohilkhand (*Katehr*) though far more productive for the purpose of cultivation is harder and more difficult to work on than the soil in *Mulk Bhar*. It therefore seems probable that the word 'katehr' is a corruption of the Hindi word 'katehr' meaning 'hard'.

The present district of Brailley lay almost in the centre of this region. Besides, it seem to have included the modern districts of Shahjahanpur, Badaun and Moradabad. Fisher says, "the whole of Moradabad district as at present seems to have been included in the country called katehr, at least, as late as the Muslim conquest".³⁷

³⁶ See Badaun *Gazetter*, chpt. II.

³⁷ Moradabad *Gazetter*, p. 138.

The river Ganges was the south-western boundary of the region. In the north the land was guarded by the hilly areas of Nainital. The region of Awadh formed the eastern limit of Rohilkhand.

The Region was watered by Ganga, Ramaganga and its tributaries. The land, particularly the northwestern area, was very fertile. The area facilitated the cultivation of both *rabi* and *kharif* crops. In the northern fringe areas, the soil was naturally moist as it could profit from the many spring torrents from the hills. As a consequence, dry weather could not do much harm to crops. On the contrary, even during droughts a better harvest could be produced since sowing and ploughing of the land could be done more easily. Hence, the supply of grains in this area was maximum during times when there was scarcity in other areas and at times when the prices were the highest. There was a trade boom in Rohilkhand when scarcity loomed large in other areas. The important crops that were exported-rice, sugarcane indigo, cotton and tobacco.³⁸

Hindustan as a whole, was essentially an agricultural country. The majority of its population lived in villages and subsisted on agricultural produce. Every period in Indian history has had its forest line and desert frontier besides its political and military

³⁸ IOL & R, OPSR, V/23/136, Selection from Revenue Records NWP, Vol. III, Allahabad 1873, p. 287.

boundaries. The importance of this boundary line between Man's domain and the natural bounty becomes manifold, when we want to study Indian history in its varied aspects. It not only defined the area under cultivation, but also became an index of the growth of population in the various parts of the country.

The majority of its population lived in villages and subsisted on agricultural produce. Every period in Indian History has had, its forests-line and desert frontiers besides its political and military boundaries. The importance of this boundary line between Man's domain and natural boundary becomes many fold, when we want to study Indian History in any of its aspects. It not only defined the area under cultivation, but also became and index of the growth of population of the varying parts of the country.

As has been pointed out earlier, the fact that Hindustan was essentially an agricultural country meant that the Mughal Empire heavily depended on agriculture for its revenue generation. The Mughal institutions like the *Mansab* and the *Jagir* systems, which were vital for the strength, stability and the military expansion of the empire were all dependent on the revenue resources from agriculture, since the *mansabdars* and the *jagirdars* were remunerated out of it. So it was imperative to have near accurate estimates of the revenue from this sector.

Therefore, our study should begin with a survey of the extent of the cultivated area in this period. General statements pertaining to this subject by contemporaries are unfortunately not very helpful, as they present vague or exaggerated accounts which are quite often mutually inconsistent.³⁹ The description of the 'Twelve suba' in the *A'in-i-Akbari* contains the area statistics for the entire north Indian provinces, with the exception of Bengal, Thatta and Kashmir. These statistics were assigned in the year 1595-96, the 40 reiginal year of emperor Akbar. From among these statistics in the *A'in*, those relating to the productivity of the soil, dasturs (assessment rates), *arazi* (measured areas) and *jama' dami* (assessed revenue) can be considered to be of immense help.

Moreland was first to recognise the value of *Ain's* statistics. He made use of the data from *A'in*, and assumed that the measured area statistics represented the gross cropped area (that is, double cropped area counted twice over). He compared this with similar data from 1900 in order to assess the extension of cultivation in the intervening period of three hundred years.⁴⁰ Some scholars, accepting Moreland's assumptions, have taken for granted that the *arazi/zamin-i paimuda* figures represent the gross cultivated (GC) area along with a small proportion of the cultivable waste (CW)

³⁹ Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian system of Mughal India*, New Delhi, rep. 1999, p.1.

⁴⁰ W.H. Moreland, 'The Agricultural statistics of Akbar's Empire', *JUPHS* (1919) vol. II, pt. I, pp. 1-39, c.f K.K. Trivedi, *Agra: Profile of a Mughal Suba*, pp.53-4.

and uncultivable waste (UCW) to the extent of 10 percent of *arazi* area according to one suggestion.⁴¹ After Irfan Habib's extensive analysis in *The Agrarian system of Mughal Empire*, historians have generally accepted the conclusion that the gross area under cultivation in 1595 was a little over half of what it was in the first decade of the twentieth century; a point reaffirmed in Shireen Moosvi's detailed quantitative study in her, *The Economy of the Mughal Empire, c. 1595: A statistical study*. In estimating the extent of cultivation under the Mughals, Moosvi, made three assumptions. One, the *arazi* figures given in the *A'in-i-Akbari* were collected for purpose of revenue assessment; so they include, primarily, the area under cultivation, only a part of the 'cultivable waste and uncultivable waste' was covered by the *arazi* statistics since their measurement was unnecessary for revenue purposes. Moosvi, seems to be influenced by the assumptions of Moreland⁴² and insists that, 'it is obvious that land measurement must have been undertaken by the Mughal administration basically for the purposes of revenue assessment' (p. 39). Two, the cultivated area

⁴¹ Irfan Habib, *The agrarian system*, reprint, 1999, pp.5-6; also see Shireen Moosvi, *The economy of the Mughal Empire*, Delhi, 1987, pp.44,48, for the suggestion that the size of uncultivated waste was in the range of 10 percent only. However, regional inquiries suggest that the area of uncultivable waste was much larger. According to S.P.Gupta, *The Agrarian System of Eastern Rajasthan*, Delhi, 1986, p.41, it constituted about 7-20 percent of the area, Shaukat-Ullah Khan, 'Agricultural Statistics of Mughal India: A Reconsideration', *Studies in History*, 13,1, n.s. (1997), p.131, the uncultivated waste in Gujarat in the post *A'in* period was around 33 percent of the measured area.

⁴² W.H. Moreland, op. cit, p. 3; also see Habib, p.3, that the Mughal administration measured land primarily for assessing revenue up on it.

covered in the *arazi* statistics refer to the gross cropped area, and not the net cropped area i.e. they include a double count of the area under double cropping, the sown area in both seasons being totaled to arrive at the figure for the cultivated area. Three, the relative distribution of 'cultivated' land and 'cultivable waste', which are unspecified in the *arazi* figures, can be derived from twentieth century statistics.

Suggesting that the ratio of 'cultivated' area to 'cultivable waste' remained constant over time, Moosvi argued that it was possible to use the regional figures of the twentieth century as a rough index for 1595. This assumption is problematic. Moosvi suggests that the cultivable area was continuously redefined as the limits of cultivation expanded. When the margins are pushed outward, land earlier considered as uncultivable passes into the category of 'cultivable waste'. Such a fluid notion of land classification is not applicable for the colonial period when grasslands commons and forests were reserved, especially because the category of 'waste' entered in the records was officially defined.

Scholars have contested the first two assumptions. Land measurement, was not simply for revenue assessment: it was also to define the area of jurisdiction.⁴³ Shaukat ullah khan, argues that

⁴³ For details see K.K. Trivedi: 'Estimating forests, wastes and fields, c. 1600', *Studies in History, Vol. XIV, No. 2, 1998, July-Dec.*

the land survey was conducted not merely to assess revenues but also for ascertaining the details of land use pattern and for maintaining land records of the entire area under the surveyed unit. So, the cultivated land was recorded along with cultivable waste, small grooves and forests, river beds and habitation sites. Therefore the recorded uncultivated area in the *arazi*, was significant. Trivedi, notes that the *arazi* figures did not record the double-cropped area. He based his argument on the evidences from the Navsari document, and also from the account of Badauni in *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, the text of which he has re-translated: (Lowe fails to adequately highlight the content of Badauni's statement).

'The parganas with large and small jurisdictions covering one end of the land to other (from settlements to the mountains) and encompassing rivers, deserts/uninhabited lands, forests, reservoirs, wellswere (all) measured'.⁴⁴

This has been corroborated with the evidence from land records documents from Rajasthan Archives.⁴⁵ He opines that *zamin-i-paimuda* does not necessarily refer to cultivated or cultivable area.

⁴⁴ Badauni, *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh* eds. Kabir-al-Din Ahmad Ali and W.N. Less, Bib. Ind. Calcutta, Vol. II, p. 189. C.f. Trivedi, *Agra: Profile of a Mughal Suba*, pp.58.

⁴⁵ Dilbagh Singh, *The state, Landlords and peasants: Rajasthan in the 18th century*, Delhi, 1990. pp.55,70-81.

This could be the measured area of an administrative/fiscal division or a settlement. He claims that supportive evidence is available from the documents relating to revenue free grants.⁴⁶

The detailed recalculations that have been done show that the extent of area covered by the forests was at least 47 percent of the area of a *suba*. The size of cultivable waste-including grooves and small forests varied between 20-55 percent of the measured area given in the *A'in*, and no more than 28 percent of a *suba* was actually under cultivation.⁴⁷

It should be noted that if, the *arazi* figure do not cover the double-cropped area, then they are not comparable with the twentieth century data from *Agricultural statistics* which include the double-cropped area. Such a comparison inflates the extent of agrarian expansion over this period. If this is so, then the notion of cross temporal estimates have to be revised.

The Duke university project suggests that a little less than 32 percent of the area was under active cultivation; a little more than 32 percent bore some kind of forest cover; 21 percent was under grassland and non-forest wetland; 11 percent was barren and the rest was unused for either cultivation or forestry in 1880s. By the 1980s, the area under cultivation expanded to 44 percent and the

⁴⁶ K.K.Trivedi, op. cit., p.59.

⁴⁷ See K.K. Trivedi's article, op. cit, *Studies in History*, Vol. XIV, no.2, 1998.

forest area shrank to 20 percent. If in the 1880s only 32 percent of land in India was under cultivation, it seems unlikely that it would have been more than 27 percent in the sixteenth century.

The arable land of the region we are concerned with, was sufficiently rich in food as well as commercial crops. The major portion of the region had alluvial soil. There are as usual, many local variations in the nature of the soil ranging from pure sand to heavy clay. The river provided an excellent system of drainage in the region during the medieval period. This contributed in good measure to the growth of agriculture and made the land considerably rich for cultivation.

An important feature of Indian agriculture has been the large number of crops raised by the peasants. In this they (peasants) came second only to their counterparts in China.⁴⁸

The *A'in-i-Akbari* lists a maximum of fifty crops in a Mughal *suba*. In the *suba* of Agra itself a total of forty-eight crops were harvested in the two seasons. Similarly, the lists of assessed crops are extensive in the case of other *Zabti subas*: seventeen in *rabi* and twenty-six in *kharif* in the Delhi *suba*, forty-one crops in the Allahabad *suba*, twenty-one *rabi* crops and twenty-nine *kharif*

⁴⁸ Irfan Habib, 'Technology and Barriers to social change', *IHR* (1978-9) Vol. V, P. 153.

crops in the Awadh *suba* and so on.⁴⁹ The peasants of Mughal India had the knowledge and skill to deal effectively with a large variety of crops, whose cultivation was made possible by the tropical climate.

In the production of food-grains, Mughal India exhibited the same broad division into rice and wheat-and millet zones that we find today, with 40-50 inch annual isohyets constituting the dividing line. Rice constituted the chief cereal crop of the region, since the low lying areas of Awadh with its inundation was suited for its cultivation. It was cultivated throughout the terai region and along side the course of the major rivers traversing the regions of the Awadh, Allahabad and the corresponding regions. The different varieties of high grade rice namely Sukhdas, Madhkar, Jhanwan were praised for this whiteness, delicacy, fragrance and wholesomeness.⁵⁰ In Awadh, the crop was grown three months earlier than in other parts of Hindustan.⁵¹

Similarly, wheat was cultivated throughout Agra, Allahabad,⁵² Awadh and Rohilkhand. Jowar and Bajra were not cultivated in Allahabad.⁵³ The cultivation of wheat suited only the higher

⁴⁹ See dastur tables in *A'in*, I, 348-85. Cf. I. Habib in *Cambridge Economic History of India*, ed., T. Raychandhari and Irfan Habib, I; p. 217.

⁵⁰ Sujan Rai Bhandari, *Khulasat-ut-Tawarikh*, Delhi, 1918, p. 10.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 45.

⁵² For Crop wheat in Allahabad, see *Rewa Gazetteer*, p. 29.

⁵³ *A'in*, I, p. 423.

grounds and drier areas. The highlands between the rivers were considered specially suited for the crop. All crops with the exception of few were grown in almost all the *dastur-circles* of the *subas* under consideration. While sugarcane, indigo and wheat required constant ploughing, extensive irrigation and expensive inputs, crops like jowar, bajra, kodon etc. could be grown on less fertile soil and needed little assistance and irrigation.

The 'cash crops' of modern classification are practically identical with the Mughal records which termed it as *jins-i-kamil* or *jins-i-ala* (high grade crops) chiefly grown for the market and *jins-i-adana*, defined as crops fetching low prices. In the former category was included sugarcane, cotton and betel leaf etc. and in the later came the various kinds of millets.

Cotton, sugarcane and indigo were the major crops belonging to the cash crop category. They were cultivated throughout northern India. Sugarcane was the most important cash crop. The revenue rates for high quality and common sugarcane are provided by *A'in* in all *dastur circles* of Awadh and Allahahad. *A'in* lists this crop in all the *dastur circles* of Agra, where its cultivation was widespread. If the remarks of European travelers are to be relied, good quality sugar was manufactured for a market outside the subcontinent. Bayana and Kalpi were famous for the production of

such fine quality sugar.⁵⁴ In the Allahabad *suba*, Benaras, Jaunpur, Kalinjar, Kara and Allahabad were famous for the cultivation of sugarcane. In Awadh the prominent centers were Bahraich, Sultanpur etc.

Cotton was apparently an important crop in the Agra region.⁵⁵ It was also cultivated in all the *dastur circles* of Allahabad, Rohilkhand and Awadh. We know from the records of the factories (1618-21), p.192-3 and Peter Mudy, p. 134, that its cultivation extended upto Patna. In Baiswara region, particularly in its western part, it was very extensively grown. It was also the market for cleared cotton.⁵⁶

Indigo which was used for the manufacture of dye was cultivated in Agra, Allahabad Rohilkhand and Awadh region. The best indigo was grown in the Bayana tract near Agra⁵⁷ while indigo of a lower quality was cultivated in the Doab, around Khurja and Kol.⁵⁸ The indigo produced and manufactured in the province of Awadh was of inferior quality and the *A'in* mentions the revenue rates in only six dasturs. In the Allahabad *suba* it was cultivated in

⁵⁴ *Ain*, p. 442 steel and crowther, *Purchas III*, p.268, *The English Factory Records* : (1696-50) p.300, (165-54), p. 52.

⁵⁵ *Factories*, (1655-60), p. 118.

⁵⁶ Donald Butter, *Outlines of the Topography and Statistics of the southern District Of Oudh*, Calcutta, 1839, pp. 61-62.

⁵⁷ *A'in*, I, p. 442, Palsaret 13-14, Mundy, p. 222, 234.

⁵⁸ Palsaret, p.15.

Bhadoi, Benaras, Jaunpur and Manikpur, when compared to the indigo of Agra, this too was of inferior quality.

IRRIGATION:

The upper Ganga plain continues to be one of the highly irrigated agricultural regions of India. Infact, irrigation has played a dominant role in boosting agricultural prosperity.⁵⁹ An important aspect of Indian agriculture is the recourse to artificial irrigation to supplement the natural bounty of the monsoon and the rivers flowing through the region. Traditionally, the principle means employed for this purpose has been the construction of wells, tanks and canals. In the upper Gangetic plains, wells were the chief source of irrigation. Around Agra and further east, the *charas* or leather buckets were used to draw water with the help of yoked oxen.⁶⁰ Wells and tanks were also common in Agra,⁶¹ Awadh and Allahabad. There was an absence of the *Persian wheel* (rahat) in Awadh as well Agra, and there was absolutely no canal irrigation in Awadh, Agra and other parts of the region.

The suba of Awadh had earned a considerable reputation as an important region of the Empire with throbbing industrial and commercial activities. Its fertile land and, well watered plains made it the agricultural heartland. Its long standing traditions of

⁵⁹ R.L.Singh, op. cit, p. 162-63.

⁶⁰ Irfan Habib, op.cit, p.28.

⁶¹ Spate and Learmonth, op. cit , p. 627.

exquisite workmanship for fine fabrics, handicrafts, glazed pottery and indigo production were renowned. The copious factory records throw abundant light on the nature and extent of the trade of the *suba* with other regions of the empire, as well as foreign countries. Lucknow was a famous trading center specially dealing in cotton fabrics.⁶² Khairabad was known for its white cotton cloth,⁶³ and Awadh was the chief center of the cotton textile industry.⁶⁴

In the *suba* of Allahabad, Benaras had a number in industries, the best known being silk, cotton and embroidered products.⁶⁵ Allahabad by itself was a big trading and commercial center. It was centre for the manufacture of fine paper (Shahzadpur, near Alkhabad and Zafarabad).⁶⁶

In the Rohilkhand region, cotton or textile industry flourished booth in the rural as well as urban areas. Barailley and Najibabad enjoyed famed reputations for the manufacture of cotton fabrics. Shahjahanpur was also famous for its superior variety of cotton goods.⁶⁷ *Chahar Gulshan* records that the famous Delhi-Barailley-Benaras-Patna route passed through these towns.⁶⁸

⁶² De Lact, *The Empire of the great Mogol*, tr. J.S. Hoyland, Bombay, 1928, p. 64.

⁶³ Peter Mundy II, p. 140.

⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 156.

⁶⁵ *A'in*, II, pp. 169-70, Sarkar, J.N, *India of Aurangzeb*, p. XLVII.

⁶⁶ Jaunpur *Gazette*, p, 58.

⁶⁷ H.,K.Naqvi, *Urbanization and urban centres*, pp. 139, 143.

⁶⁸ M.P. Singh, *Town, Market, Mint and Port in Empire, 1556-Mughal 1707*, Delhi, 1985, p. 6.

It was in the *Agra suba* that the major trade routes between the east and west and also northern or southern region of the subcontinent terminated. It was also a busy port city with lot of trading activities. It was the centre for the manufacture of dyes (indigo industry), saltpeter and cotton textiles besides the existence of the sugar industries.

The overall economic condition of the region during the period under review was fairly good. As is evident, being situated mostly in the Gangetic valley resulted in a richness in agriculture. In addition to agriculture, there were flourishing industries, which attracted businessmen and traders from almost every part of the country. This added to the prosperity of the region. The prominent rivers served as important waterways for transport, in addition to the various trade routes. All these contributed to the rapid development of trade and commerce in the region.

Chapter - 2

AGRARIAN STRUCTURE AND THE COMPOSITION OF ZAMINDARS

Babur's historian, Zainuddin Khawf, remarks that in Hindustan, "most of the subsistence of the people is on agriculture"¹ and as such the village was the lowest settlement from where the people carried out their vocation and thus contributed to the resources of the state. A study of the structure and working of the village society is vital for an understanding of the evolution of Indian society during this period. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, considerable attention has been devoted by administrators and scholars to understand the structure and functioning of the Indian village society. The question of proprietary rights in agrarian land and the nature of various types of land tenures in Mughal India has caused extremely vexed problems for the Indian administrators, jurists and economic historians ever since the bloom of specialised scholarship in the latter half of the twentieth century.²

¹ *Tarikh-i-Baburi*, MS. Rampur, p. 155.

² See S.Nurul Hasan, "The position of the Zamindars in the Mughal Empire", *IESHR*, Vol.-I, No.4, 1964, pp. 107-19; Satish Chandra, *The structure of village society in North India in Medieval India: Society, The Jagirdari crisis and the village*, Delhi, 1982, pp. 29-44; *Medieval India: A Miscellany*, Vol.-I. (Bombay 1968) pp. 233-9; Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System of Mughal India*, (Bombay, 1963); B.R. Grover, 'Nature of Land Rights in India', *IESHR*, Vol.-I, No. 1, 1963, pp. 1-23; N.A. Siddiqui, *Land Revenue Administration under the Mughals, (1700-1750)* Bombay, 1971; Satish Chandra, *Parties and Politics at The Mughal court, 1707-1740*, Aligarh, 1959, also see K.K.Trivedi, *Agra: Economic and Political profile of a Mughal Suba, 1580-1707*, Pune, 1998.

The observations made by the European visitors to India in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, that all of the land was in the hands of the state³ and that the king was the owner of the soil in India was based on their gross ignorance of the workings of the *jagir* system. Though, both in theory and practice, the state was the proprietor of all the jungles and unreclaimed lands for agrarian purposes, it did not possess any proprietary rights in the absolute sense over the vast cultivable lands already in the hereditary possession of the various classes of *riaya*. Baden Powell, in his paper "Is the state the owner of all land in India?" says that the transfer of jungle land or *banjar* land to the *riaya* or a certain category of *zamindars* was always accompanied by a defacto possession of the proprietorship so long as the land remained under cultivation.⁴ Rather claiming, the state claimed only a share in the produce of the land. When Abul Fazl attempts to justify the levying of taxes on "peasants and the merchants" he does not argue that the tax on the land flows from the sovereign's right of ownership; on the contrary, he appeals to a social contract, by

³ Francois Bernier, *Travels in the Mughal Empire, 1656-1668*, Oxford University Press, 1934, pp. 211-12, 220-226, also "Euology of Father Jerome Xavier, S.J. A missionary in Mogor", tr. By Rev.H.Hosten, S.J, *Journal and proceedings of the Asiatic society of Bengal*, New series, vol.-XXIII, p. 121.

⁴ *A'in-i-Akbari*, Vol.-II, tr. S.H. Jarrett, Ed. By J.N.Sarkar, Calcutta (1949), P. 54, See for details Baden-Powell, "Is the State the owner of all Land in India?" *A.Q.R.*, July-October, 1894, pp. 4-8.

which the sovereign claims his "remuneration" through taxation in return for providing protection and justice to his subjects. (*A'in*, I, p. 290-91). This concept clearly dismantles the European observations regarding the state ownership of the land. The *A'in-i-Akbari*, in its chapter on '*Rowai Rozi*' (the means of subsistence), categorically recognises the proprietary title to land that the various classes of the cultivators had. According to the *A'in*, "It is evident that in all cultivated areas, the possessors of property are numerous, and they hold their land by ancestral descent; but through malevolence and despite, their title become obscured by the dust of uncertainty and the hand of firmness is no longer stretched above them. If the cultivator holds in awe the power of the Adorner of the Universe and the Elixir of the living, and the merchant turns back from evil designing and reflect in his heart on the favour of the lord of the world, the development of divine grace, his possessions would assuredly be approved of wisdom. Thus, the virtue of property lies in the pledge of intention, and a just ruler, like a salt bed, makes clear the unclear, and the evil good. But without honest coadjutors, abundant accessories of state and a full treasury, even he could effect nothing and the condition of subservience and obedience would lack the bloom of Discipline".⁵ In the same chapter we find an explicit mention that the land revenue was infact a tax on the property of the subjects. It

⁵ *A'in*, Jarrett tr., pp. 50-56.

states, "In every kingdom, Government taxes the property of the subjects over and above the land revenue and this they called *Tamghah* ..." ⁶ Aurangzeb's *farman* to Mohammad Hashim clearly mentions the proprietary title of the ryots with full rights of mortgage and sale. ⁷ Contemporary documents too support this contention ⁸ of the right of the cultivator. There is definitive evidence from the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries that persons who brought new areas under cultivation were recognised as *malik* or the proprietors of the land. ⁹ The saleable nature of land right is also reaffirmed by the Shamshabad document No.-4 (1611) from the middle Doab. It traces the right of the *zamindar* of a particular village, and states that this has been purchased from certain *maliks*, who in turn, had purchased the village "from ancient *maliks*, who were *Kachhis* and *chamars*"; who, judging by their castes, would only have been cultivators or labourers. ¹⁰ When the *A'in* talks about the king's obligation to protect the peasants "who held cultivated lands for generations", the assumption of

⁶ Ibid, pp. 63.

⁷ *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, I, pp. 268-270 cf. B.R. Grover, 'Nature of Land Rights in Mughal India', *IESHR*, Vol.-I. No. 1, 1963 P. 3.

⁸ Allahabad Document (A.D.) no. 1180 dated 21-1-1643 cf. B.R. Grover, op.cit, p.3. Irfan Habib, 'Aspects of Agrarian Relations and Economy in a Region of Uttar Pradesh document the 16th century', *IESHR*, 1967, Vol.- 4, No. 3, pp. 205-32.

⁹ See, Dilbagh Singh and Statish Chandra, "Stratification and Structure in Rural Society in Eastern Rajasthan", *PIHC*, December, 1972.

¹⁰ Shamshabad Document No. 4, The *Kacchis* were traditionally low caste cultivators of market or garden crops, and the *chamars* were the lowliest cultivators and labourers. Even if in this particular case, the original purchasers were fictitious, the claim would not have been put forward had such a transaction been regarded by the contemporaries as impossible. (cf. Irfan Habib, *IESHR*, IV (3), pp. 215-16, 230-32).

hereditary claims to the land among peasants seems to be tacitly admitted.¹¹

Late medieval documents, particularly the Rajsthani, Marathi, as also the early British documents, enables us to form a fairly clear idea of the rights and obligations of the various classes of cultivators and their role in agricultural production. *A'in* gives different names to the cultivators of the soil, viz., *Kashawarz*, *Dehkan*, *ryots*¹² whereas other revenue literature from the Mughal period refer to them as *raiya* and *muzariah*¹³.

Irrespective of the use of different phraseologies and technical terms, the cultivators were, on the basis of the nature of land rights, divided into two categories, *pahi-kasht*.

These categories of cultivators were found in all regions in particular. They were to be found all over North India, the titular nomenclature being different in different regions. As such in Maharashtra these two categories were known as *mirasi* and *upari*, while in Rajasthan it was *gaveti* and *paltis* respectively.

A *Khud kashta* cultivator was a peasant-proprietor having his landholdings and residential house situated in the same village.

¹¹ *A'in*, I, p. 290.

¹² See B.R. Grover, op. cit., p. 4.

¹³ *Ibid.*

The word *khud-kasht* is self-explanatory. The term is also applied in the north-western provinces, to the land which the proprietor, or the revenue payer to the government cultivates by himself.¹⁴ So, we can say that *khud-kasht* meant self cultivated land where the family members provided their labour and it also included the land cultivated with the help of hired labourers. [This would in a way mean a piece of land over which a person enjoyed proprietary rights, and so it was also known as an individual *zamindari* land.¹⁵ The *khud-kasht* cultivator held his holding through hereditary possession and had the rights to transfer, mortgage and sell it.¹⁶ The cultivation of all arable lands was the settled policy of the state. If any adverse circumstances affected the cultivation of the land or it was, for various justifiable reasons, remained uncultivated, then it was not assessed and was exempted from revenue payment.] The A'in in its instructions to the *amal-guzars* states, "Let him (amal-guzar) learn the character of every husbandman, and be the immediate protector of that class of our subjects. Let him endeavour to bring the waste lands into cultivation, and be careful that the arable lands are not neglected..... If a husbandman cultivates a less quantity of land

¹⁴ Wilson's *Glossary*, 267, Satish Chandra, *Medieval India*, p. 32, K.K.Trivedi, *Agra, Economic and Political profile of a Mughal Suba*, p. 93.

¹⁵ S. Nurul Hassan, 'The position of the zamindars in The Mughal Empire, *IESHR*, Vol.-I, April-June, 1964, pp. 27-29, Also K.K.Trivedi, op.cit. p. 93.

¹⁶ Rajasthan Archives, Jaipur (R.A.J.), category No. 4, dated 4th Safar, 8th r.y. (Aurangzeb), 1668, records the sale of 7 bighas of land in village Pilmipatala, pargana Shahjahanabad (suba Shahjahanabad) for Rs. 70 and duly signed by the parties, attested by witnesses in the court of Qazi, cf., B.R.Grover, op. cit.

than he engaged for, but produces a good excuse, let it be accepted."¹⁷

In the early 19th century, Eliphinstone in his report on the territories conquered from the *Peshwa*, collected full information on the tenures of land from the collectors and commented that [the *ryots* paid a fixed land tax to the government. He states that they were never dispossessed while they paid their tax, and even if dispossessed, they have, for a long period (at least thirty years), the right of reclaiming their estate by paying the to the Government.¹⁸]

[Thus, a *khud-kasht* was a peasant who owned the land he cultivated, possessed oxen and other means cultivation, had resided for a long time in the village or rather in the *zamindari* in which he had his own habitation, could sell, transfer or bequeath his land, and was not ejected as long as he paid the land revenue. The *khud-kasht* or *mirasdar* paid the land revenue at a concessional rate or the revenue which had been fixed by the custom. Theoretically, it can not be increased but practically it depended on the power of the *mirasdar*, the nature of the government and the availability of the land etc.] We have evidence

¹⁷ *A'in*, Jarrett tr. P. 46, is contradictory in this context.

¹⁸ C.f. B.R. Grover, op.cit., pp. 4-5.

from Maharashtra, where the Marathas had loaded the *mirasdar* with extra imposts, raising the land revenue to about half.¹⁹

[No qualification whatsoever, based on caste or communal lines or on the size of the land holding were applicable for *khud-kasht*. The *A'in*, mentions traditional cultivating casts like the Jats, Gujar, Ahir, Kurmi, Meena etc. along with the Brahmans, Rajputs and Saiyyeds, and they were all entered as *zamindars*, at various *pargana* levels. Some were enjoying the status of intermediaries, or village headmen, with the titles of *patel* or *choudhari*, while others were merely peasant proprietors.²⁰]

According to some Rajasthani documents, the local officials were instructed not to permit the practice of cultivation of the land by hired labourers except on special occasions such as the harvest seasons.²¹ As the *khud-kasht* paid land revenue at a concessional rate, such a practice could lead to a loss of revenue for the state. According to Khawaja Yasin, if a *khud-kasht* gave his oxen, etc., and got his land cultivated by a peasant (*riaya*), the latter would get only one-seventh of the produce. But in view of the availability of cultivable waste land in the country at that time, such peasants may not have been very numerous. Also, it was very

¹⁹ Eliphinstone, official writings, p. 278. Cf. Satish Chandra, *Medieval India*.

²⁰ See Document produced in S.P. Gupta, *The Agrarian System of Eastern Rajasthan*, pp. 236-43, 257-68 and Dilbagh Singh, *The state and Landlords*, pp. 42-44; K.K.Trivedi, *Agra*, p. 93.

²¹ Satish Chandra, *Medieval India*, pp. 34-35 & f.n. 15.

difficult to keep them on the land, as they would have been the members of lower castes who were normally not allowed to own or cultivate land.²² Yet, it appears that though there was plenty of cultivable waste land available, if the state officials were vigilant, the conditions were not propitious for a *Khud-kasht* to obtain more produce by cultivating his land with the help of hired labour.

[The *khud-kasht* had at least two obligations. It was considered a duty to the state to cultivate as much land as they could. Secondly, they were collectively responsible for the payment of the land revenue. If a *mirasdar* defaulted, his dues were to fall on other *mirasdars*. His land was to be leased to them, but as soon as the original *malik* of the land came back, even if it was after a long period, he was given back his land provided he paid all the arrears to the state.²³]

[There were also the small-scale dependent producers who sold a part of their labour and or rented in draught animals and a significant amount of other agricultural equipment. These peripatetic cultivators were known as *pahis*.²⁴]

²² Irfan Habib, *Agrarian system of Mughal India. 1556-1707*, Bombay, 1963, pp. 120-22, also Tapan Ray choudhary, "The Agrarian system of Mughal India", *Enquiry*, Spring, 1965, pp. 97-99

²³ Aurangzeb's farman to Mughammad Hashim, text in *JASB*, New Series Vol. II(1906), pp. 238-49; tr. By J.N.Sarkar, *Mughal Administration*, (Calcutta, 1935) p. 199.

²⁴ Dilbagh Singh, "Caste and Structure of Village Society in Eastern Rajasthan during the Eighteenth Century", *IHR*, Vol.-II, No. 2, January, 1976, pp. 299-311.

A'in in its chapter on 'Instructions to *amal-guzar* directs, "He should strive to bring waste lands into cultivation and take heed that what is in cultivation, fall not waste..... Should there be no waste land in a village and a husbandman be capable of adding to his cultivation, he should allow him land in some other village".²⁵

[A cultivator could have dual capacity, a *khud-kasht* in his own village and a *pahi-kasht* in another one. But the *pahi-kasht* enjoyed the same rights as that of the *khud-kasht*.²⁶]

The fifth Report supports the above arrangement when it defined [the *pahi-kasht* as those who 'cultivate lands belonging to a village where they do not reside; they are considered tenants-at-will and as having only a temporary, accidental interest in the soil they cultivate']²⁷ According to Khwaja Yasin's *Glossary*, *pahi* means one who is 'the peasant (raiyat) in one *mauza* and is subordinate to one *zamindari* and carries on cultivation in the *zamindari* of another *zamindar*even if a peasant resided in one village, but cultivated land in another village belonging to the same *zamindari*, he would not be considered a *pahi*'.²⁸ In Maharashtra such type of peasants were called *owandkari*.²⁹ [There were two

²⁵ *A'in*, tr. Jarrett, p.46.

²⁶ B.R.Grover, op.cit. p. 5.

²⁷ W.K.Firminger, ed. Fifth Report from the select committee of the House of commons on the Affairs of East India Company, Vol. II, July 1812, p. 57. See also, Baden Powell, The land system of British India, 1892, p. 599, Satish Chandra, *Medieval India*, p. 36.

²⁸ Satish Chandra, *Medieval India*, pp. 36-37, K.K.Trivedi, *Agra*, p. 94.

²⁹ K.K.Trivedi, op.cit, p. 94.

main categories of *pahis*. One category was of those who tilled the *khud-kasht* land belonging to *patils* and the *inam* lands of the *zamindars* or of the *madad-i-ma'ash* holders.)

[In some regions the size of the holdings of the intermediary *zamindars* were so large that it could not be profitably exploited with the manpower of their families. In some of the regions, social as well as caste taboos rendered the owners of land incapable of ploughing with their own hand. Such land owners engaged the less privileged to work on their fields. As such there was a sufficient number of landless persons in medieval India who could be easily employed as a *pahi-kasht* to cultivate the land of such *zamindars*.³⁰ The *pahi-kasht* could retain the land as long as he wished on the condition of regular payment of land revenue, or he could be given a piece of land for their maintenance by the *zamindars*, in return for their labour. The *pahis* of this category did not possess the means of cultivation such as ploughs, bullocks, seeds; these were arranged or rented out to them by the village *muqaddams*, *zamindars*, *mahajans* etc.,³¹ who were the superior sections in the village society.]

[The other category of *pahi-kashts* who seem to be most important and numerous were the ones who had their own means of

³⁰ Ibid, pp. 93-94.

³¹ Satish chandra, *Medieval India*, pp. 37-38.

cultivation i.e. ploughs and bullocks. They were engaged to repopulate villages which were deserted owing to man-made or natural calamities. The *pahis* along with *muqaddams* or *patils* played a crucial role in the extension of cultivation. They were also important in the growth, expansion and ever normal functioning of the village society.³² We have noticed that the holdings of the *khud-kashts* were not necessarily of an optimum size, which would be sufficient to meet their requirements. Such persons were obliged to work on the fields of others, and could have belonged to any section of the social hierarchy. Thus, in a *pargana* of eastern Rajashtan, over 28 percent of such labourers belonged to the lower castes.³³ It has also been observed that a large number of *pahi-kashts* cultivated, the lands of other with their own means of cultivation, suggesting that *pahis* did not necessarily belong either to the category of landless labourers or to the menial castes.

[The spread of the *pahi-kashts*, who possessed the means of cultivation, could not have simply been on account of the oppression of a large segment of the peasantry by the local magnates, especially so, when the medieval period, had a favourably land-man ratio. There was a surplus of cultivable land,

³² Ibid., pp. 38-39.

³³ Ibid.; See also K.K.Trivedi, *Agra*, p. 94.

and in case of intolerable harassment the peasants could either flee the land and hide in forests, or they could migrate to other favourable areas with their belongings.³⁴ At the lowest rung of the rural society were the *kamins*, who were lower caste and the poor landless peasants.]

The central administration was very much concerned about the extension of cultivation and it invariably asked the local officials to take effective measures for the extension of agriculture in their areas of jurisdiction. In all *jagir* assignments, the extension of cultivation to more and more land was asked for by the Mughal administration. The central administration also lured the cultivators with concessional rates of assessment so as to bring more virgin land under cultivation/plough. In the case of *madad-i ma'ash* grantees, the state government, allotted them fifty percent of their grants in the virgin land (*zamin-i uftadah qabil-i ziraa't*)³⁵. Perhaps the idea was to bring more and more land under cultivation. The *karoris* and the *jagirdars* were not allowed to disturb or oppress such assignees.³⁶ Towards the end of the seventeenth century, Aurangzeb started making such type of grants *hereditary*. This implied that the virgin land grants which were allotted, was converted into *proprietary* land: the *khud-kasht*

³⁴ K.K.Trivedi, *Agra*, p. 94.

³⁵ Shaikh Abdur Rashid, 'Suyurghal Lands under the Mughlas' in H.R. Gupta (eds.) *Essays presented to Sir J.N.Sarkar*, Punjab University, 1958, pp. 313-22.

³⁶ *Ibid.*; P. Saran, *The Provincial government of the Mughals*, p. 81.

or *zamindari* of the grantees. As has been discussed earlier, the grantees who were not able to cultivate the land with their own family labour, took the services of the *pahi-kasht*.

When a virgin land was brought under cultivation it was known as *Sir*. Wilson in his *Glossary* defines *sir* as:

“(a) name applied to the lands in a village which are cultivated by the hereditary proprietors or village *zamindars* themselves as their special share, either by their own labourers and at their own cost, or by *tenants at-will*, not being let in lease or farm; these lands were sometimes allowed to be held at a favorable assessment, or were unassessed so as to provide *Nankar*, or subsistence for the proprietor; the term is also sometimes applied to lands cultivated on account of the state, or to those in which the revenue is paid by the cultivators without any intermediate agent”.³⁷

It seems that despite a favorable land-man ration in the medieval period and the official instructions for the extension of cultivation and thereby an increase in the land revenue, the peasants could only hope to get a concession in the assessment of land revenue

³⁷ Wilson's *Glossary*, p. 485; Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System*, p. 146a.

for a limited period. The cultivators who were having their own means of cultivation, preferred to working on the lands of *Khud-kashts* which were already under cultivation, and offered better rewards for less labour than the virgin land. This seems to be a more plausible reason as to why the cultivators preferred to work on *khud-kashts* land than on the virgin land.³⁸

The *A'in-i Akbari* provides us with the names of the dominant *zamindar* castes of the time, in the various *parganas* of the Mughal empire. These castes did not enjoy sole proprietary rights over the entire land of these *parganas*; though they enjoyed the large proprietary rights. In the middle Doab comparing the modern districts of Agra, Mathura, Aligarh till Kanpur, the Rajputs belonging to various clans held the *zamindari* which was about 69 percent. If we add the *zamindaris* of the Brahmans and the Saiyids the percentage will increase to about 75 percent.³⁹ Similarly, the figures for Rajasthan are 42.96 and 49.95 percent respectively. Thus, the upper class landholders must have engaged a large number of cultivators on their fields.

The possibility cannot also be ruled out that a substantial part of the village population had no fields of their own, and the landless

³⁸ K.K.Trivedi, op.cit, p. 95.

³⁹ K.K.Trivedi, 'Changes in caste composition of zamindar class in western Utter Pradesh, 1595 circa 1900', *IHR*, II, No. 1, July 1975, pp. 47-67.

people, like the *pahi-kashts*, could belong to any caste or community.

The Mughals liberally gave grants of land to people in order to provide them with means of subsistence. The beneficiaries of these lands soon emerged as a distinct category of land holders.⁴⁰ This class of grantees, according to Abul Fazl, was made up of four categories of persons, namely, seekers after true knowledge; devout persons who had abandoned the world; destitutes who did not possess the capacity to earning their livelihood; and persons of noble lineage who would not, 'out of ignorance', take up any employment.⁴¹ The nature of *suyurghal* is described in the chapter entitled '*A'in-i suyurghal of A'in-i Akbari*.'⁴² It tells us that the grants of the emperor made in cash were known as *wazifa*, while those given in land were designated as *milk* or *madad-i ma'ash*. It may be inferred from this that the land and cash grants taken together were commonly referred to by the term *Suyurghal*.⁴³

⁴⁰ S.Nurul Hasan, *Thoughts on Agrarian Relations*, p. 21; also see Iqtidar Alam Khan, 'Nobility under Akbar', *JRAS*, 1968, p. 33, for a reference from *Muntakhab-ut Tawarikh*, Vol. II, p. 22: 'if the bounty of all former kings of Hind were thrown into scale and the liberality of this age (Akbar) into the other, yet this would preponderate'.

⁴¹ *A'in*, p. 1989; K.K.Trivedi, op.cit., p. 96.

⁴² *A'in*, pp. 198-9.

⁴³ Cf Shaikh Abdur Rashid, 'suyurghat land s under the Mughals in H.R. Gupta (eds.), *Essays presented to sir, J.N.Sarkar, Punjab University, 1958*, pp. 312-22, where he discusses about the difference between *madad-i ma'ash* and *suryurghal*, "the term used commonly during the time of Akbar and his successors, both in official and non-official documents, was *madad-i ma'ash* and it very rarely that *suyurghal* was used. The original term *madad-i ma'as h* was retained for official purposes. First, as it was well known in India and secondly, in order to distinguish it from *Suyurghal* in Muslim lands outside India during the 16th century. The term *Suyurghal* denoted a military grant for which in India the term *Jagir* and *Iqtah* were commonly used. It also referred to maintenance grants for certain categories of Muslims corresponding to the *madad-i ma'ash* grants which entitles no obligation to maintain a

From the *Suyurghal* figures given in the *A'in*, it appears that about 3.99 percent of the estimated revenue in Agra, 5.25 percent in Allahabad, 4.22 percent in Awadh and 4.81 percent in Delhi *suba* were doled out in the name of charity.⁴⁴

The amount of revenue alienated through *Suyurghal* was quite considerable and it varied from place to place. The four *subas*, Agra, Delhi, Awadh and Allahabad, together made up for more than 50 percent of the total *Suyurghal*. In the *suba* of Agra, in *pargana* santhavari of *sarkar* Tijara there was as much as 66.60 percent of *jama*; the highest for any *pargana* in the *suba*. It is under the *pargana* haveli Agra that the highest amount, 88,24,454 *dams* was entered. This came to 19.63 percent of *Jama* for the *pargana*. Some other *parganas* with noticeably high figures were Hindaun, Bayana, Khanua, Fatehpur, Dholpur, Chandawar and Mahaban, Sikandra-Rao, Kol, Khurja in *sarkar* Kol. etc.⁴⁵ In Awadh and Allahabad, the maximum amounts reached were not so high; it was 23.13 percent (*pargana*-Ibrahimabad, *sarkar* Awadh) and 21.30 percent (*pargana* Mohoba *sarkar*, kalinjar) respectively. But there were more instances of appreciable alienation of *jama* in

contingent or render any active service in return for this favour. Such grants were naturally made to poets, Shaikhs, Sufis, Muizzin, Mutawallis, orphans, widows, Sayyids and musicians. See also Moreland, *Agrarian system of Moslem India*, pp. 98-10, P. Saran, *Provincial government of the Mughals*, pp. 48, 49, 90; Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System*, p. 313; K.K.Trivedi, *Agra*, p. 96.

⁴⁴ For *Suyurghal* percentage as *Jama* based on *sarkar* figures see, Shireen Moosvi, *The Economy of the Mughal Empire*, p. 159; for a different and higher estimate, see K.K.Trivedi, *Agra*, pp. 95-97

⁴⁵ K.K.Trivedi, op. cit. pp. 96-97, Moosvi, op. cit, p. 159.

suyurghal in Awadh (9 out of 128 mahals), and in Allahabad (13 out of 120 mahals), with the proportion of revenue claimed by the grantees exceeding 10 percent.⁴⁶ On the other hand, the area with low *suyurghal* figures were in the Rohilkhand tract, to the south-east of Brailley and extending westward between Badaun and Sambhal up to the Ganga.

The above figures only indicate the amount of *Suyurghal* from the estimated revenue. However, it did not include the other half of the grant, which were in the form of cultivable waste. It is probable that the cultivable wastelands were made cultivable by the efforts of the grantees, who employed the *pahi-khasts* or labourers to cultivate, and thus generate revenue. If this was the case, then the total value of the grant would become twice the estimated revenue mentioned in the *sources* (records.). Thus, the entire revenue from this portion of land was pocketed by the grantees and their position become much better than the other grantees.

The *madad-i ma'ash* holders constituted a considerably strong social force in our region of concern. There were a number of instances of appreciable alienation of *jama* in *Suyurghal* as we have already discussed. A number of *madad-i ma'ash* holdings of

⁴⁶ Moosvi, op. cit. pp. 159-60

land extended over more than two to three hundred bighas.⁴⁷ Such large *madad-i ma'ash* holdings were not uncommon in Mughal Empire.⁴⁸ Initially these land grants were not hereditary; but from the time of Akbar grants of tracts were conferred to the son of the deceased. The Mughals endeavors to reform the *suyurghal* administration in the seventeenth century, were never properly carried out. It is reported that Shahjahan once ordered an investigation into the affairs of *madad-i ma'ashholders*. But it was never carried out and was subsequently replaced by a new one in 1644, which benefited the grantees.⁴⁹ In 1690, Aurangzeb, by a royal order, made the *madad-i ma'ash* completely hereditary.⁵⁰ Records of the seventeenth century show that those who held large *madad-i ma'ash* grants acquired enough wealth and power and freely acquired *zamindaris*.⁵¹

Thus, these *madad-i ma'ash* holders held the proprietary rights over the land they held as grants and they also had a considerable

⁴⁷ See Allahabad Documents No. 196 and 1300, Saiyid Muhammad Arif and Bibi Saliha of *pargana* sadarpur in *sarkar* Khairabad. Saiyid Muhammad held over 645 *bighas* as *madad-i ma'ash* in *pargana* Husampur. Bibi Saliha had 200 *bigha* as her *madad-i ma'ash* in *paragana* Sadarpur.

⁴⁸ Shaikh Abd-ur-Rashid, 'Suyurghal Lands under the Mughals,' H.R.Gupta (eds.) Essays presented to Sir J.N. Sarkar, pp. 313-22.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ cf. Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System*, pp. 351.

⁵¹ Allahabad Documents, No. 439; See also Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System*, p. 355; M. Alam, *Crisis of Empire*, p. 111; N.A.Siddiqi, *Mughal Land Revenue Administration*, p. 133.

area under command as grants (discussed above). They emerged as a powerful section in the eighteenth century.⁵²

The *zamindar* class played a vital role in the political, economic and cultural life in medieval India. At the time of the establishment of the Mughal Empire, the *zamindars* had acquired a distinct identity which demarcated them from the mass of peasantry on the one hand and the Mughal *jagirdar* on the other. The *zamindars*, in due course of time, acquired considerable political clout, after having successfully retained their hold against the efforts of the Sultans of Delhi to dislodge them. The Rajput *rajas* continued their dominance over large tracts of land in the countryside, even in the centrally administered areas of Punjab, Bihar, Doab etc. They were called *rais*, *rana*, *rawat* etc. In modern writings, the term '*chief*' has generally been used to refer to them.⁵³ They had their own armed forces, and they generally lived in the countryside in their fortresses. Contemporary sources portray them as hostile towards imperial authority, but it hardly seems possible that a permanently hostile relationship could have existed between them. An administrative nexus was inevitable as it was not possible for the 'new rulers' to

⁵² S.Nurul Hasan, *Thoughts on Agrarian relations in Mughal India*, pp. 20-21; M. Alam, op.cit., pp. 110-22.

⁵³ S. Nurul Hasan, 'The position of the Zamindars in the Mughal Empire', *IESHR*, vol.-I, No. 4, April-June 1964, pp. 108-09; Irfan Habib, op.cit., pp. 169-70; Also see, A.R.Khan, *Chieftain during the reign of Akbar*, where he has stressed the importance of Chieftains.

collect revenue from the conquered areas by themselves. Also these *chiefs* were the local potentates, who were in commanding positions in the countryside. So, they were left to rule these areas, as long as they paid the tribute and remained loyal.

We have the evidence of a growing political relationship between the '*Delhi Sultans*' and local *chiefs*; under Sultan Balban, Firoz Tughluq and especially under Alauddin Khalji. Despite such increased political linkages with the Sultanate, the position of the *chiefs* was quite uncertain. Whenever there was a chance, the Delhi Sultans tried to reduce their power. However, they could not dismantle the existing hierarchy of the *chiefs* vis. *rais/rana*, *rawat*, *muqaddams* *khuts* *chowdharis*, etc. at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels respectively. It was only the military superiority of the sultan of Delhi that kept the chiefs under some check. However, time and again the sultan had to proceed himself, or send his area commanders against the local magnates to realise the tribute.⁵⁴

We find increasing references to the *zamindar* at the beginning of 14th century. The term, which does not exist outside India, was increasingly used to designate the *hereditary intermediaries*. Amir Khusrau, was amongst the first to use it. In course of time, the term came to be applied to the *khuts*, the *muqaddams* and the

⁵⁴ See K.K.Trivedi, op.cit., f.no. 28.

chaudharis, and even to those former *chiefs* who were forced to pay a fixed tribute, based on the land revenue assessment. Under the Mughals, the term '*zamindar*' began to be used for all hereditary owners of land or for those who were having a hereditary share in the land revenue. The *chiefs* were also included in this category.

The term *zamindar* is hard to define. It is a Persian word compound, which literally means the controller or holder of *zamin* or land. The word, which originated in India, was practically unknown in Persia.⁵⁵ It is an established fact that the *zamindari rights* existed in the Mughal Empire, and the area that we are concerned with i.e. the upper Gangetic basin was no exception to this. The members of the upper caste who were dominant in large areas throughout the empire, controlled the cultivable and uncultivable waste as their *zamindaris* while the *primary zamindars* had claims to only small tracts of land.⁵⁶

The *zamindari* was wholly an item of private property. This is apparent not only from the fact that it was saleable and inheritable but also in that it could be mortgaged. In this regard, the statement made by Qazi Muhammad A'ta early in the eighteenth century that *zamindars* presumed a claim to proprietary right (*tamalluk*)

⁵⁵ See Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System*, for the meaning and origin of the term *zamindar*. He has discussed it in detail in chapter 5. Also see S. Nurul Hasan, 'Zamindars in the Mughal empire, *IESHR*, vol. I, No. 4 1964.

⁵⁶ See Trivedi, Agra, p. 99, S. Nurul Hasan, *op.cit.*

and hence bought and sold their land (*arazi*) is very much helpful.⁵⁷ However, the imperial recognition of this right can be traced to much earlier times. In 1563-4, Akbar in a *farman* acknowledged the right of the *maliks* of newly cultivated land in Awadh to sell the land⁵⁸. A case regarding the dispute over the possession of a village in *pargana* Bilgram (Awadh), in 1570, was decided by the imperial officials on the basis of the evidence of purchase by the rightful party.⁵⁹ We get a fairly good idea about the nature of *zamindari* rights from the 'Shamshabad-Bilgram Documents. A document of 1611 from *pargana* Shamshabad refers to the mortgage of a village to a bania (*baqqal*) who was the resident of another village. The muslim *malik* or *zamindar* of the village later redeemed it.⁶⁰ Though, the *baqqal* or *mahajans* (money-lenders) advanced large sums of money to *zamindars* with an eye on their *zamindaris* as repayment, they rarely appear as *zamindars* in our area of concern i.e. the upper Gangetic basin (Suba of Agra, Allahabad and parts of Awadh, Rohilkhand) except in a few *parganas* of Agra suba. Thus, it is probable that such mortgages to money lenders were not very common. This was contrary to the conditions in the later periods.

⁵⁷ *Risala-i Akham al Arzi*, ff. 1b-2a, 49a, Yasin's *Glossary*, Add. 6603, f. 65a, cf. Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System*, p. 194.

⁵⁸ Bilgram Documents. 7, Summary in *IESHR*, IV(3), p. 225.

⁵⁹ Bilgram Documents no. 9, summary in *IESHR*, IV(3), 226-8, see also *Shara'if-i 'Usmani*, ff. 64b-65b, where claim to the *milk* and *khoti* of the part of the village was recognised by the *Qazi* of Bilgram on the basis of inspection of sale deeds (*IESHR*, IV (3), 223-4).

⁶⁰ Shamshabad Document No. 4, *IESHR*, IV(3), p. 230-31.

The *zamindari right* was fully alienable and the superior proprietary rights of land had an intimate connection with the domination of a particular clan over an area. The possession of "armed retainers appears as the necessary pre-requisite for the establishment, as well as the retention, of *zamindari rights*."⁶¹

The use of armed power by the various clans to keep their possessions intact and to acquire new areas had been a continuous process in the medieval period. The association of caste with the more or less well-defined tracts of the country was so conspicuous in Awadh that C.A. Elliot concluded that *pargana* boundaries were fixed on the basis of the "possession of an individual clan".⁶²

The study of the caste composition of *zamindar clans* must obviously begin with the rich information contained in the *A'in-i Akbari*, Abul Fazl gives the details of the castes of the *zamindars* of each of the *parganas* of the *subas*, along with the number of their *armed retainers* (horse and foot), along with the *naqadi* (Jama) figures assessed from it. In a large number of *parganas*, a single caste or clan has been recorded as *zamindar*. But this does not imply that those *parganas* were controlled in their entirety by

⁶¹ Irfan Habib, op.cit., p. 202; *A'in*, I, p. 175.

⁶² C.A. Elliot, *Chronicles of Onao*, Allahabad, 1862, p. 149. Here he argues that since the boundaries of the mahals were not fixed in accordance with the physical or geographical features of the country, the only reason, "for their irregular tracing seems to be the proprietary rights".

that particular *caste* or *clan*. It is generally believed that in the *Ain-i Akbari*, Abul Fazl has simply recorded the names of the dominant castes as *zamindars* against that *pargana*.⁶³ Very often, more than one caste is recorded for some *parganas* but they never go beyond four. Abul Fazl some times uses the word *mutafarriqa* (miscellaneous) or he simply leaves the space blank. This seems to be because of a lack of information. From the information contained in the *A'in* regarding the different revenue paying castes in 1595, it would appear that the whole region that corresponds to present day western Uttar Pradesh was dominated by different Rajput clans.⁶⁴ Similar was the case in the *suba* of Awadh and Allahabad.⁶⁵ According to Laljee the author of *Mirat-ul Auzza*, an 18th century source, "within the total population of Hindus, the Rajputs were in a majority, and the *zamindars* and *talluqadars* were mostly from this caste. The *muslim zamindars* and *talluqardars* were comparatively less numerous. Consequently, most of the uprisings and rebellions appear to be fomented and precipitated by the Rajputs. The *zamindars* from the *clans*, other than the Rajputs, were much less in number".⁶⁶

⁶³ See K.K.Trivedi, "changes in the caste-composition of the zamindar class in western Uttar Pradesh, 1595 circa-1900", *IHR*, 1975-76 & f.n. (1).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 47-67.

⁶⁵ B.S.Cohn, "Structural changes in Rural Society" in R.E. Frykinber (eds.) *Land control and Social Structure in Indian History*, pp. 343-421; S.Z. H.Jafri, 'The Land controlling classes in Awadh- A study of changes in their composition, 1600-1900', *PIHC*, 1981 (cyclostyled).

⁶⁶ Laljee, *Mirat-ul Auzza*, MS. Aligarh, MAL, f. 72b, he comments about Awadh; K.K.Trivedi, *op.cit.*, p. 48.

In the district of Agra, the Rajputs, Chauhans and Gaurs were the dominant *zamindars*, followed by *Shikhzadas* and *Chistis* in Fatehpur Sikri, by Jats and Lodhas in haveli Agra and by the Gahlots in *pargana* Jalesar.⁶⁷

In 1595, the Rajputs were paying the maximum revenue in Mathura district followed by the Brahmans and the *saiyids*. But they were gradually replaced by the Jats in the later periods. In the *parganas* falling within the limits of the adjoining district of Aligarh, the Rajput clans claimed an overwhelming share of the *zamindari*.

In the Etah district to the east of Aligarh, Rajputs Chauhans, Rathors, etc. occupied a predominant position in almost all the *parganas* except in Bilgram and Saron, where the *zamindaris* belong to Afghans and Sayids.

In the Mainpuri district, the Rajputs-Bhaduriyas and Dhakras led by the Chauhans accounted for over 90 percent of the land revenue. The Brahmans, the only other *zamindari* caste accounted only for 7.38 percent of the total revenue.

Further in the east, the modern district of Etawah was held by the different Rajput clans. *A'in* does not show any other caste except

⁶⁷ See *Ain-i Akbari*, II, tr. S.H.Jarrett, (ed.) J.N.Sarkar, Calcutta (1949), pp. 193-206, for the caste composition of zamindars in suba Agra; Also see K.K.Trivedi, 'changes in the caste composition of zamindar class', *IHR*, II, No. 1, July 1975.

the Brahmans in the Etawah and Deokali *parganas* of the district of Etawah. In the tahsil Etawah, the Rajputs held 66 percent of the *zamindari rights*; the remaining being held by the Brahmans.

The district of Farrukhabad was dominated by the Rajputs-Rathors, Chauhans, Bais and Panwars. The Brahmans ranked second in *pargana* Sikandarpur Udu. Similarly, the *Shaikhzadas* and Afghans came second to the Rajputs in *pargana* Kantit. In the Kaimganj tehsil, the land was held by the Rajputs. However, in the later periods the Muslims emerged as the principal *zamindar*. In the corresponding *parganas* of Kampil, Shamshabad, Bhojpur, Sikandarpur Udu, Bilgram, Kannauj, etc. of tehsil kaimganj, the Rajputs, Chauhans and Panwars were the *zamindars*.

In Kanpur district, leaving the areas which came under the *suba* of Allahabad, the *zamindari rights* chiefly belonged to the Rajputs-Chauhans, Bais, Chandelas, Gehlots and Kachhawahas only. One third of the *zamindari* belonged to Shikhzadas, Malikzadas and Brahmans.

In the upper Doab region in Bulandshahar district, the Rajputs were the principal *zamindars* with 53.7 percent of the total revenue assessed. Among them the Bargujar and chauhan clans were the largest revenue-paying castes accounting for 29.33 percent and 132.47 percent of the total revenue respectively. The Gujars were placed third with 11.57 percent of the share.

In Meerut district, several castes were recorded as *zamindars* of single *parganas*. There were unshared Jat *zamindari* in four out of fifteen *parganas*, but they paid only 18.82 percent of the total revenue collected. The Tagas (the tyagi Brahmans) are recorded as the top revenue paying castes in four *parganas* and as sharers in two others. The other castes mentioned as *zamindar* include Brahmans (general), Gehlots, Chauhans, Rajputs (miscellaneous), Shikhzadas and Raghars, with the Jats consolidating and expanding in later years.

The Rohilkhand region, comprised of the modern districts of Uttar Pradesh viz. Brailley, Moradabad, Badaun. In Moradabad the Tagas were the sole *zamindars* followed by Saiyid in the *parganas* of Sahanspur, Mughalpur, Azampur, etc. and also in the *pargana* of Sirsi and Amroha respectively.

In Barailley, Rajputs, Chauhans, Gaurs and Kayasthas have been recorded as *zamindars*. In the *parganas* of the districts of Shahjahanpur, the *A'in*, records as the *zamindar* caste the Rajputs Bachhals and Dewaks with the Rajputs holding 63.22 percent of the total revenue assessed.

A new phase in Mughal-Afghan relations starts with the accession of Jahangir in 1605 A.D. Under the patronage extended by the emperor Jahangir and his successors, many Afghans came to India and started settling, in both north and south India, especially in

Katehr and in its adjoining areas.⁶⁸ It is very significant that the *A'in* (1595-96) does not record a single Afghan *zamindari* settlement in the area of katehr comprising of Badaun and Sambhal (Delhi Suba).⁶⁹ In fact, Katehr was controlled by Katehriya Rajputs who were the *zamindars*. The principal centres of the Rajput settlement were Shahabad, Rampur, Kabar (Brailley) and Aonla. The Rajputs took advantage of the geographical features of the country and created problems for the government quite frequently.⁷⁰ It was to keep the Katehriya Rajputs under control that the Afghan settlement in the area was greatly encouraged by the Mughals. As a result, a number of Afghans settlements came into existence, Shajhahanpur being the notable one. Dilerkhan, the younger brother of Bahadur khan defeated the Kateheriyas and other Rajput clans in a pitched battle.⁷¹ In recognition of his services a perpetual grant of 14 villages was assigned to him. Subsequently, Shahjanpur became a strong Afghan settlement where 9000 Afghans settled.⁷² In spite of the Afghan settlement in Katehr, the Rajputs continued their defiance.

⁶⁸ *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, ed. Sir Syed Ahmad, Ghazipur and Aligarh, 1863-64, p. 147.

⁶⁹ Najmul Gani, *Akhbar-us-Sanadid*, I, p. 79, says modern district of U.P. viz. Brailley Moradabad and Badaun formed Kateher, cf. Iqbal Husain, "Patterns of Afghan Settlements in India in 17th century", *PIHC*, 1978.

⁷⁰ Atkinson, H.W. P. *Gazettiers*, IX, pt. ii, p. 144.

⁷¹ See Iqbal Hussain, "Pattern of Afghan Settlement in India in the 17th century", *PIHC*, 1978, pp. 330-331.

⁷² For Afghan Settlements in Agra, Allahabad, Awadh and Delhi suba, See *A'in*, ii, pp. 76-144.

What was remarkable about the 27 Rajput clans recorded in the *A'in* as *zamindars* in different areas of the Ganga-Yamuna Doab, was that they were found in particular blocks: the Badgujars in the north of *sarkar* Kol; the Bhaduriyas along the Yamuna, in the *pargana* of Hatkanth and Etawah; the Chauhans along the Yamuna and the western parts of *sarkar* Agra, and to the west and east in the *parganas* of *sarkar* Kol, etc. Among these Rajput clans, the Chauhans had a 21 percent share in the *zamindari*. This was 12 percent of the total assessed revenue of the *suba* of Agra.

Superior land rights have been linked in Awadh, as elsewhere, with the domination of a particular *clan*, or *caste*, over an area. The association of a *caste* with more or less well-defined tracts of the country was very much conspicuous in Awadh too. Abul Fazl gives us a detailed census of the dominant castes in each *pargana* of Awadh along with the *naqdi* (*Jama*) figures assessed upon it.

The *A'in* figures show that more than 75 percent of the total *jama* of the *parganas* recorded in Awadh was from the land holdings of the various Rajput clans.⁷³

The Bais had 18.50 percent share in the total revenue assessed on the Rajput clans, while the Bachhils had 5.22 percent, the Gehlots 5.11 percent, the Bachgotis 4.73 percent, the Bisins 4.13 percent,

⁷³ *A'in*, 11 (Jarrett), pp. 184-90; see also S.Z.H.Jafri, 'The land controlling classes in Awadh, 1600-1900', *PIHC* (43rd session, Kurukshetra, 1982).

others 3.42 percent and the, undifferentiated category, 25.64 percent. The Brahmans and Muslims respectively accounted for only 6.42 percent and 10.86 percent of the total *jama* of the *suba*.

Abul Fazl records the Bais Rajputs as *zamindars* in 27 *parganas* of the *suba* of Awadh. The *zamindaris* of the Bais were in contiguous blocks. The tract acquired the name Baiswara in the 17th century. Its first occurrence as a place reference appears to be during the period of Shahjahan, when the recalcitrance of the Bais *zamindars* led to the creation of a special *faujdari* jurisdiction for Baiswara.⁷⁴

The Bais *zamindars* were dominant in 22 *parganas* of the *suba*. They not only retained their possession recorded in the *A'in* but they also extended their possessions in the later period.

The Bachgoti Rajputs are recorded as the exclusive *zamindars* in six *parganas* and jointly of one in *sarkar* Awadh. They accounted for 18.85 percent of the total '*jama*'. Their *parganas* were contiguous, barring one. The Bachgoti *zamindars* caused considerable disturbances in 1690 A.D., the area of rebellion being the suburb of the Baiswara division. This rebellion led to the devastation of a considerable area, and imperial forces were

⁷⁴ Abdul Hamid Lahori, *Badshahnama*, Bib., India, Calcutta, Vol.-I, pp. 243,278; See Zahiruddin Malik, Problems of Faujdari jurisdictions in Baiswara", *PIHC*, 1973, Chandigarh; S.Z.H.Jafri, paper presented in the *IHC*, 1981, Bodh-Gaya, (42nd session), titled 'Bais Zamindars of Awadh' (cyclostyled copy, Deptt. of History A.M.U).

sent under the command of Bahadur Khan to chastise the rebels. Subsequently, peace was restored.⁷⁵

The Chauhan Rajputs held one *pargana* each in the *sarkars* of Khairabad, Awadh and Lucknow. In two *parganas* they are recorded as co-sharers, controlling 4.33 percent of the total *jama* of the *suba*. The Chauhan *zamindars*, in due course of time, grew strong enough, to create problems and harassment for the imperial authority during the closing years of Aurangzeb's reign.

Apart from these major *zamindar clans*, there were many other *castes* recorded in the *A'in* with small shares in the total revenue of the *suba*. These include the Chandels (1.5%), Amins (1.97%), Ahirs (1.77%) Kumbi (.49%), Jats (.08%) and Kuhwas (.23%).

The Brahmans were recorded as co-sharers in two *parganas* of *sarkar* Awadh, controlling 3.80 percent of the total *jama*. In *sarkar* Khairabad, they are recorded in four *parganas* controlling as much as 17.73% of the total *jama*. In Lucknow, they held 4.73% of the *jama*. The Brahmans, on the whole, were controlling 6.42% share of the total *jama* of Awadh. They successfully retained their possessions and also expanded their *zamindari*, in subsequent periods.

⁷⁵ Lahori, op.cit, I(i), pp. 243&278; Mohd. Kazim, *Alamgirnama*, Vol. I, p. 450.

The Muslim *zamindars* accounted for roughly 10.86 percent of the total revenue of the *suba* of Awadh in 1595.

Zamindar castes in Awadh in 1595

Zamindar castes	AWADH		KHAIRABAD	
	Revenue	Percentage	Revenue	Percentage
(A) Rajputs				
Bais	36,35,070	8.87	4,57,332	1.04
Gaur	-	-	3693,053	8.29
Bachgoti	7721766	18.85	-	-
Sombansi	1360753	3.32	3055339	6.96
Gehlots	1415701	3.45	-	-
Bachhils	1415701	3.45	3977894	9.07
Chauhans	4141078	10.11	2091983	4.77
Rajwars	7924908	19.34	-	-
Undifferentiated	9698537	23.68	10309841	23.51
Total of Rajputs	3,73,13,514	91.07	2,60,83,622	59.28

B.other Castes	AWADH		KHAIRABAD	
	Revenue	Percentage	Revenue	Percentage
Brahmans	1557763	3.80	7633331	17.4
Syeds	-	-	-	-
Afghans	-	-	-	-
Ansaris	1571712	3.83	-	-
Kumbis	1004183	2.45	-	-
Amins	-	-	3967684	9.04
Ahirs	-	-	35,66,055	8.13
Misc.	308788	0.75	1221733	2.78
Other	-	-	457332	1.04
Total of others	4442446	9.93	1,68,46,135	38.39

Source: Ain-i Akbari, The figures are the result of a comparison of the texts of the following MSS. Br. Mueseum Add. 5645; Add 6552 cf. S.Z.H.Jafri, The land controlling class in Awadh PIHC, 1982 (cyclostyled)

Abul Fazl in the *A'in-i Akbari* also gives detailed statistical information in the Account of the 'Twelve suba about the military resources, viz; the strength of the cavalry and infantry maintained by the *zamindars* of the various *parganas*. There is no information in the contemporary sources as to how the administration of that

time got details regarding the military resources of the *zamindars*. However, the detailed census of the armed resources of *zamindar* must be respected "The troops of the *zamindars* (of the Empire)", declares the *A'in* "exceeded forty-four lakhs".⁷⁶ This grand total and the *pargana-wise* breakup, shows that almost every *zamindar* of some consequence was in possession of armed retainers. The *zamindars* built "small forts" described as *grahi* or *qilacha* in the villages of their *zamindari* to station these retainers to protect their possessions from other *zamindars*. It was common to see a *zamindar* expand his territory by encroaching upon other's territory.

There is some information about the caste differentiation of the *zamindars* of the *suba* of Allahabad. Abul Fazl has in fact given a *pargana-wise* list of various *castes* of the *zamindars* of the *suba* Allahabad in *A'in-i Akbari*.⁷⁷ They were Brahmans, Rajputs, Kayasthas, Rahmatullahi, Gaharwar, Birasi (Bhar), Raghuvanshi, Saiyid, Bachgoti, Ansari, Siddiqi, Kurmi, Gautami, Shaikhazadas, Turkman, Bisen, Faruqi, Baghela, Parihar, Gond, Afghans (Lodi) and Dikshit. There are references that in due course of time some of these *zamindars* migrated to other areas. A close study of the *A'in* and the relevant *District Gazetteers*,⁷⁸ show that in some of

⁷⁶ *A'in*, I, p. 175; P. Saran, *Provincial Government*, p. 262.

⁷⁷ *A'in*, II, pp. 172-78.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p. 176, Pratapgarh *District Gazetteer*, p. 148

the *parganas*, there was a continuity in the *zamindaris* of some *caste* or *clan* even upto the early years of the twentieth century. For instance, Bisens in *pargana* Manikpur and its suburbs, Rajputs and Bais in *pargana* Kharelah⁷⁹, Rajputs in *pargana* Haveli kara,⁸⁰ Brahmans in *pargana* Rari⁸¹, Brahmans in *pargana* Hatgaon⁸² Rajputs in *pargana* Hanswah⁸³ and the Baghelas who continued to be hereditary *zamindars* in Baghelkhand.

The Brahmans, Rajputs, Saiyids, Bais, Kaysthas, Bisen and Bhaghela *zamindars* continued in their respective *parganas* for four centuries.⁸⁴ Thus, these castes emerged as quite influential in their respective areas.

A comparative study of *A'in-i Akbari* and relevant *District Gazettters* shows that out of the twenty-eight *castes* who were *zamindars*, only seven were found to continue in their respective *parganas*. This would mean that only 25 percent of *zamindars* of the same *caste* continued in their respective *parganas* from Akbar's reign to the early twentieth century. The social heterogeneity of the *zamindar* class must have further increased the sale and purchase of *zamindari*. A *caste* or *clan*, when it

⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 176, Hamipur D.G, p. 187.

⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 179, Allahabad D.G, p. 269.

⁸¹ Ibid, p. 179, Fatehpur D.G, p. 278.

⁸² Ibid, p. 179, op.cit., p. 229.

⁸³ Ibid, p. 179, op.cit., p. 227.

⁸⁴ See W. Crooks, *Caste and Tribe of N. W. Province and Oudh*, Vol.-II, pp. 143-62 for Brahmans Vol.-IV, pp. 217-23, for Rajputs, pp. 301-5 for Saiyyids, Vol.-III, pp. 184-212 for Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System* p. 168.

gained power, expelled the established *zamindars* of the area, till another caste or clan adopted the same method. The victorious caste crystallized into *zamindari rights*.⁸⁵

Any *zamindar* of consequence always tried to keep his hold over his fortresses, and seize those of his weaker neighbours. These "small *forts*" or *qilachās* were a common feature in the *zamindari* areas of the empire. They could be found in Awadh as well as the heart of the empire, the central Doab.⁸⁶

Thus, the forts can be seen as the visible symbols of the armed might of the *zamindars*. They served as the strongholds, garrison-houses and bases of the *zamindars*. However, it seems that the real power lay in the large number of retainers, based on caste, and clan ties, since the *zamindari* rights itself originated on *caste/clan* lines. It is however, quite unlikely that all the troopers recorded in the *A'in* belonged to the same *caste* or *clan* to which the *zamindars* himself belonged. We have an instance from the Baiswara region of Awadh, where a seditious Bais *zamindar* employed an Afghan. He not only placed the fort under his charge but also named the fort Salingarh, after his Afghan employee.⁸⁷ So, it need not be a surprise that some of the *zamindars* enlisted mercenaries belonging to other castes and communities.

⁸⁵ Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System*, p. 207.

⁸⁶ See Irfan Habib, *Ibid.*, p. 203-03, for more evidence.

⁸⁷ Bhupat Rai, *Insha-i Roshan Kalam*, f. 6b; Irfan Habib, *op.cit.*, pp. 204-05.

The *zamindars* paid their retainers through various means. They usually gave some of their own lands to their fellow caste/clansmen in lieu of their pledge of servitude; the case of the Rajputs in the territories of the autonomous chiefs reinforces this tradition.⁸⁸

There are a number of the *mahzar* seeking redress against the wrongs suffered by the petitioners and imperial officials containing a recital to the same effect also provides important clues to the strength and the use of armed power by the local *zamindar*. It seems that established *hereditary zamindars* usually resented the induction of any new element such as land grantees into their territory. We find that during the reign of Shajahan and also of Aurangzeb, *madad-i ma'ash holders/grantees* were often harassed by the local *zamindars*. They (*the zamindars*) enforced a non-payment of land revenue to the grantees or ensured a refusal of payment of revenues by the *ri 'aya (peasants)*.⁸⁹

One such example is the petition by the family of a *Qazi* in Baiswara which especially mentioned the tussle between their

⁸⁸ "The Rajputs practice was that in the mahals of their *watan-jagir* they grant villages to Rajputs, and latter offer their lives whenever the time of battle comes", Inder Singh Rathor's submission to the court in *Documents of Aurangzeb's reign*, p. 121, c.f. Bernier, pp. 39, 208.

⁸⁹ See, S.Z.H.Jafri, "Armed Zamindars: The powerplay in Awadh (1595-1858), *PIHC*, 52 session (1991-92)

ancestors and the Bais *zamindars* of the area which had been going on for the last 80 years.⁹⁰

It is evident from this discussion that in the Mughal age, the state never claimed absolute and exclusive ownership of agrarian land and that they definitely recognised the existence of the *zamindari* right which was wholly an item of private property and was fully alienable, salable and mortgagable.

The association of *zamindari* rights with the domination of a particular *clan* or *caste* in *parganas* had been the most peculiar feature of agrarian life during the Mughal period. Any attempt to disturb this caste hegemony often resulted in an open clash between the imperial officials and the members of the caste in question. Moreover, the *zamindars*, whom the imperial government sought to reduce to the status of servants, always nursed ambitions of autonomy and for them it was only a matter of finding an opportune time for realizing this goal.

⁹⁰ Ibid. p. 295.

Chapter - 3

THE ERA OF DISSENT AND OPPOSITION

Major discussions on the Mughal economy revolve around the agrarian sector. In one of the reviews it has been suggested that around 90 percent of the State revenue was collected through highly systematized arrangements, from agrarian production.¹ Also, the local potentates and revenue officials were brought in as systematised sharers in the surplus revenue.² To agree that the local potentates had readily accepted the control over their area of influence and share, would be too simplistic. Yet, for a considerable period of time one observes an apparent peace with no overt opposition to the collection of revenue by the agents of the Mughal State. However, by the middle of the 17th century the resistance from the countryside had become visible, and this has legitimately received serious attention of the scholars.³ However, in these studies, the focus has continued to be on the reign of Aurangzeb, with the analysis being limited to the regions of Mathura-Kol and Narnaul only. Also these resistances have been

¹ Shireen Moosvi, *The Economy of The Mughal Empire, c-1595, A Statistical Study*, Delhi, 1987, p. 95

² *A'in*, I, p. 285; S.Moosvi, op.cit.,pp. 174-75

³ The discussion by Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India*, is considered most erudite.

shown as coming from the peasants in which the *zamindars* were in a way, forced to participate.

This chapter seeks to look at the responses of the local *potentates/zamindars* to the Mughal system of accommodation in the official hierarchy through, the assignment of *mansabs* and the *jagir* system. From the manner in which the *zamindars/local potentates* responded to this system, it is argued that the systems of *mansabs* and *jagirs* were inherently flawed. There seem to be two reasons for this. The first, is that the Mughal land tenure system when viewed as a successor to the one already in existence during the Delhi Sultanate undermined, and compromised, the position of the *zamindars*. Secondly, the system failed to fulfill the aspirations of the *zamindars* and consequently it added to the discontent among this section of society. It will be argued in this chapter, that this discontent and opposition was a phenomenon that was ubiquitous throughout the Mughal rule; no period of Mughal rule can be said to be free of such a latent simmering discontent, not even the ones that are considered to be the most glorious in of Mughal rule. However, this chapter also argues that in spite of the ubiquity and continued persistence of this discontent, it was not the determining factor that would lead to flaring up or manifestation of this discontent. The determining factor, rather was the power/might of the state authority and it was

only when the state authority weakened or subsided that this rural discontent was manifested in an overt form.

By the time the Mughals had established their power in India, the land and its wealth was already under the control of large and small family and kingship groups which we have already discussed in the preceding chapter. These groups were comprised of the local political and administrative elites and they acted as agencies through which the countryside was integrated into the outer world. They enjoyed claims over the surplus produced by the peasants in accordance with a structure of graduated proprietary rights over the land. The groups had their power structure based on their territories.⁴ The *zamindars*, as the Mughal sources denoted them, were a highly variegated dominant rural class and they also included the '*rajas*', who were the autonomous controllers of their territory. It must be kept in mind, that the origin of the power vested with the *zamindars* were independent of the Mughal system.⁵

The *zamindar* class played a vital role in the political, economic and cultural life in medieval India. By the time the Mughal empire was established, the *zamindars* had gradually acquired a distinct

⁴ Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System*, pp.177-80; also see Irfan Habib, eds., *Cambridge Economic History of India*, I, pp. 53-60.

⁵ See Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System*, Chapter V.

identity which demarcated them from the peasantry on the one hand, and the Mughal *jagirdars* on the other. They became leaders within their respective caste and established their sway over a large part of the country through coercion, exercised through the might of the retainers whom they maintained. For this reason, it was perilous to ignore them (*zamindars*). As allies they were a tremendous source of strength for any ruler but as opponents they were a source of immense political threat.

During the Mughal periods their importance increased, while their position in society became more complex. The surplus of agricultural production, appropriated from the peasants, was shared between the Emperor, his nobles and the *zamindars*. The power exercised by the *zamindars* in the countryside-over agricultural production, handicrafts and trade was tremendous. In spite of the persistent struggle between the imperial authority and the *zamindars* to secure a greater share of the produce, the latter became the partner of the former in the process of economic exploitation. Politically, there was a clash of interest between the Mughal government and the *zamindars*. Yet, simultaneously, the *zamindars*, as a class, became the mainstay of the empire.⁶

⁶ cf. S. Nurul Hasan, 'The Position of Zamindars in the Mughal empire', *IESHR*, Vol. I, No. 4, April-June 1964, pp. 107-119

Akbar was the first ruler who realised the importance of forging powerful links between the empire and the chieftains by consciously absorbing many of them in to the official hierarchy and administrative machinery. They were allowed to become an important part of the Mughal ruling class, and as individuals they were given the opportunity to the highest level in the bureaucracy. This policy was continued by Akbar's successors, and during the reign of emperor Aurangzeb eighty persons from the ruling house of the *chieftains* held *mansabs* of 1000 and above (representing almost 15 percent of the total number of *mansabdars* of 1000 and above).⁷

The *chieftains* who were assigned of a comparatively high *mansabs* were also allowed to retain control over their ancestral land designated as *watan-jagir*. Irrespective of its revenue potential, this revenue was considered equal to their salary claim against the *mansab*. Further allurements or concessions came at the time of a raise in the *mansab*. In the context of such a raise these *chieftains* turned *mansabdar*, was given another *land/jagir* outside their ancestral domain. This was governed by the general rule of the *jagir* system. This policy resolved to an appreciable degree the basic contradiction between the *chieftains* and the imperial power

⁷ See M. Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb*, Asia Publishing House, 1998, pp. 175-271.

and made it more faithful for them to seek promotion of their interests through association with imperial service, rather than to cast-off the imperial yoke. The imperial service not only brought monetary advantages but also acted as a source of power to the *chieftains* enabling them to strengthen their position.⁸

However, this privilege was not available to those *zamindars*, who did not have the honorific title of '*raja*'. High *mansabs* were generally assigned to big *zamindars* or *chieftains*.

One needs to probe a little further into the exact manner in which the *zamindar* class as a whole was absorbed within the Mughal hierarchy. Such an analysis reveals that there were varying parameters with only the *chieftains* being allowed to rise to any position of significant authority or influence. In effect, this meant that a sizeable proportion of the *zamindar* class was prevented from rising very high in the Mughal hierarchy. The obstruction to the upward mobility of such a sizeable section inevitably meant frustrated ambitions and discontent.

To gain an understanding of the Mughal court's inability and failure to accommodate the aspirations of the *local potentates* at the intermediate level, one needs to focus upon the manner in which the Mughals handed out *mansabs* to the various local

⁸ cf. S. Nurul Hasan, op.cit., pp.107-199.

potentates. A careful analysis of the distribution of *mansabs* reveals that, the system was unable to completely satisfy the aspirations of these potentates. A *mansab* of 5000 was in those days considered to be extremely prestigious. However, we find that the Mughal court allowed the commissioning of only sixteen such *mansabs*.⁹

Here, it is evident that the Mughal rule was negligent in taking rural aspirations seriously and they were reluctant to include or allow certain local potentates into the echelons of the Mughal elite. This Mughal propensity to set a certain glass-ceiling for the ambitions of the local notables was bound to create a certain degree of frustration that inevitability led to a sense of resentment and hence discontent with the Mughal rule. There are a large number of references to *zamindars* or *rajās* who held high *mansabs* and received extensive *jagirs*. They were given important commands, participated in military campaigns and held administrative posts, like these of *governors* and *faujdars*. It is, however, interesting to note that the Rajput *zamindars* of the middle Doab especially the Chauhans who paid the highest percentage of the total *jama* (about 18.78 percent) for the *suba* Agra are missing from the list of *mansabdars*, except for Anup

⁹ *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, p. 306.

Singh dealer of Anupshahar. Similarly, the Bais Rajputs of Awadh who paid the highest percentage of *jama* (18.50 percent) were missing from the *mansabdars* list.

It seems that the percentage of *jama* paid was not the criterion upon which *mansabs* were awarded. This is clear from the fact that we find the Bhaduriyas of Etawah and Hatkant, who paid a mere 1.23 percent of the total *jama* of *suba* Agra, and yet making it to the list of *mansabdars*.

It seems that the Mughals generally recognised the hereditary claims of the *rajas* and tried to enroll them in the state service. However, they did not bestow the honorific title of '*raja*' to castes having no hereditary claim, even if they may have considerable resources.¹⁰

From the point of view of the *mansabs* and their participation in governance, the Bundela Rajputs appear to have occupied a premier position. The Bundelas had their *zamindaris* in the *subas* of Agra and Malwa.¹¹ Raja Madhukar was the *chief* of the Orcha

¹⁰ See M.Athar Ali, op.cit. pp.112-135, 175-271. Here we find the descendants or raja Madhukar Shah being recognised as the holders of the title of '*raja*' and are addressed accordingly in the chronicals of the 17th century. But in the case of Champat and his son Chhatrasal, who had no ancestral claim to this title of '*raja*', could not receive that recognition, inspite of the fact that they wielded great power and were a source of harassment to the Mughals. Also, the case of Jats will serve our case, who wielded great power in trans-Yamuna region in the second half of the 17th century, but could not even get into the imperial service. cf. K.K.Trivedi, *Agra*, p.124.

¹¹ *A'in*, pp. 459-60.

clan. Under Akbar's successors, several members of this house were enrolled into the Mughal service and were recipients of high *mansabs*. It seems that the Mughal rulers in their recruitment and appointment of personnel to high offices, made a clear distinction between a Rajput from a royal family and one who was a mere *zamindar*.

The house of Orchha, from all appearances, had a recent origin. The *chief*, Raja Madhukar, and his clan were not considered as equals by the traditional Rajput houses.¹²

This appears to be one of the major reasons for the Mughal hesitation in accepting them in the hierarchical order (i.e. the *mansab* system). During the reign of Jahangir, we also find a new relationship developing between the court and the Bundelas. Bir Singh Deo came into prominence, through rapid promotions and, attained a high *mansab* of 5,000. In fact this honour was awarded to only four Hindu nobles out of a total of sixteen *mansabdars* of this rank during this reign.¹³

¹² William Crooke, *The Tribes and Castes of the North Western Provinces of India*, Delhi, reprint, 1974, II, pp. 163-65, writing during the later parts of the 19th century, state that in Rajasthan Rajputs still considered them lower in social hierarchy.

¹³ *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, p. 306, other Hindu *mansabdars* having *panjhazari* (5,000) were Mirza Raja Bhan Singh (5,000/3,000), Raja Jagannath (5,000/3,000) and Kunwar Karan, S/o Rana Amar Singh (5,000/3,000); K.K.Trivedi, *Agra*, p. 124

After the death of Bir Singh Deo Bundela, Jujar Singh son of Bir Singh Deo was inducted in the Mughal service with a mansab of 2000/1000¹⁴ which was raised to 5000/5000¹⁵ in later periods.

With the information available to us we are in a position to say that under emperor Jahangir and Shahjahan those outside the family of Madhukar Shah's descendents were not assigned *mansabs*. The only exception was Champat and Chhatrasal who were assigned a low *mansab* of 500/500, towards the end of Shahjahan's reign.¹⁶

The *chiefs* or big *zamindars* who were integrated into the Mughal empire evidently grew in strength and influence in the wake of the political and economic unification under the Mughals. As they aligned with the Mughals, they strengthened their position both by acquiring additional assigned rights over their territories and outside and by suppressing the rights of others by encroaching upon their territory. The relationship of the Bundelas with the Mughals highlights the contradiction inherent in the position occupied by such *chiefs* enrolled in the Mughal apparatus. However, these benefits were never allowed to reach a point, where it could pose a treat or challenge to the imperial hegemony.

¹⁴ Ibid, pp. 355-356.

¹⁵ cf. K.K.Trivedi, op.cit., p. 109.

¹⁶ Waris, *Badshahnama*, Aligarh transcript, f.269b; also see K.K.Trivedi, Agra, p. 109.

The Mughals did not allow the emergence of a single leadership in a vast and strategically located region. Any attempts at such a consolidation was nipped in the bud.

As has already been discussed in the previous chapter (chapter-2), the chauhan Rajputs of the middle Doab paid the major share of the *jama* from the region. One branch of chauhan Rajputs, who were located in the Bhadawar along the course of the Yamuna were inducted into the Mughal nobility. They are recorded as *zamindars* (chauhan-i Bhaduriya) in the *pargana* Etawah along with the Brahmans who were the other holders. However, in the *pargana* Hatkant, they were the sole *zamindars*.¹⁷ They also held the *zamindari* of *pargana* Chandwar, which that *A'in-i Akbari* records in the name of Chauhans.¹⁸ The *pargana* Rapri is also mentioned as being under the possession of the Chauhans. However, this was under one of the sects of Bhaduriyas. Thus, we see that these four *parganas* were grouped into a block with a total strength of 4,400 horsemen and 46,000-foot retainers, with the *parganas* having brick forts.¹⁹ The Bhaduriya *chieftains* were referred to as '*raja*' in contemporary sources. This indicates that the Bhaduriyas had exercised control over the surplus production of the region. In fact the sultans of Delhi made arrangements with

¹⁷ *A'in*, p. 443.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, *Zakhirat*, Aligarh MS., f. 108a.

¹⁹ *A'in*, pp. 443-444.

them regarding the payment of revenue from this region. But when the power of Delhi Sultanate declined after the death of Firoz Shah, the revenue was either not paid by the iqta'dars or it was withheld by the local potentates. To address this block in the flow of revenue, the Sultans had to resort to coercive tactics. We have references to the sultans of Delhi themselves leading military expeditions against these local potentates, almost annually, to collect the tribute during the 15th century. Military expeditions were also led against the Bhaduriyas of Etawah.²⁰ This suggests that the *zamindars* of Etwaha were in an esteemed position when compared to the middle or lower level local *magnates*. It can be deduced that they continued to enjoy this status even during the time that the Mughals consolidated their position. It was this stature and standing of the Bhaduriya Rajputs that might have helped them in developing harmonious and mutually advantageous relations with the Mughals. It is interesting to note that *zakhirat-ul khawanin* mentions the Bhaduriyas as the protectors, who were once *zortalab potentates*.

During the reign of Akbar, the Bhaduriyas submitted to his suzerainty and were subsequently admitted to the Mughal service.

²⁰ K.K.Trivedi, 'Emergence of Agra as a Capital and City', *JESHO*, Vol. 37, p. 153.

In the *A'in* we find the name of one Mukutman Bhaduriya holding a rank of 5,00 with the title of 'raja'.²¹

It seems very strange that *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri* has no mention of the contributions of Bhaduriyas in the defense of the Capital City, or in the military expeditions. Neither does it mention the grants to the *chieftains* or the raise in their grants. The information provided by *Zakhirat-ul Khawanin* is corroborated by *Lahori* and their military exploits. Further, we find the mention of the Bhaduriyas on a number of occasions in connection with various military duties and the award of *mansabs* during the reigns of Shajahan and Aurangzeb.²² This shows that the Bhaduriyas continually remained in the active service of the Mughal state. It however, appears that the Bhaduriyas could not reach the upper echelons of the Mughal nobility. Raja Badan Singh seems to be the only Bhaduriya Raja who was able to cross the rank of 1000 *zat*.²³

The *zamindari* in Awadh were very largely shared by the various clans of Rajputs. In a number of *parganas*, the Muslims including Afghans, the Brahmans and certain other castes are also

²¹ *A'in*, p. 228, *Tabaqat-i Akbari*, also lists him as *mansabdar* of 500 (*Zat*) in 40th R.Y. of Akbar.

²² *Lahori*, II, pp. 512-13, I, ii, p. 97, 136, II, pp. 239, 348, Shahnawaz Khan, *Ma'sir-ul Umara*, (eds.) Abdur Rahim and Ashraf Ali, Bib., Ind., Calcutta (1888-91), II, p. 228.

²³ Muhammad waris, *Badshahnama*, Transcript No. 75 of Raza Library Rampur MS. in A.M.U., f. 53a, f. 122b, 17ob.

mentioned in the *A'in* as dominant *zamindars*.²⁴ From among the different Rajput clans, the Bais were the dominant caste who paid 18.50 percent share in the total revenue assessed. Abul Fazl records the Bais Rajputs as *zamindars* against the 24 mahals in the *suba* of Awadh and 3 *mahals* in the *suba* of Allahabad.²⁵ In many of these they were the sole *zamindar* caste recorded.²⁶ While in 12 mahals of the *suba* of Awadh and in all three mahals of *suba* Allahabad they are recorded as co-sharers. These mahals were in a contiguous block. They had a considerable military strength and had small forts. The Bais Rajputs were a warlike clan. But we do not find in our sources any mention of substantial grants or assignment of *mansabs* to the Bais *zamindars* or *chieftains*. If they were assigned any *mansab* it seems to have been too negligible to have found mention in the contemporary sources. The Gaur Rajputs were another clan of Rajputs mentioned in the *pargana katesar sarkar* khairabad. They had twenty-five fortresses under their possession and had considerable armed retainers.²⁷ Sarbuland Khan and Girdhar Bahadur are reported to have led military

²⁴ *A'in*, II, (Jarrett), pp. 184-90, see also S.Z.H.Jafari, 'The Land Controlling classes in Awadh, 1600-1900', *PIHC*, 43rd session, Kurukshetra, 1982.

²⁵ Abul Fazl, *A'in-i Akbari*, ed. Blochmann, pp. 71-84; Also see chapter-II.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ '*Aja'ib-ul Afaq*, Br. Or. 1776, Rampur MS., transcript in Deptt. of History, AMU, Aligarh; Saiyid Muhammad Bilgrami, *Tabsirat-un-Nazrin*, Aligarh MS., Farsiya Akhbar, 204, cf. M.Alam, *Crisis of Empire*, p. 95.

expeditions against them. They were not able to get noticed as mansabdars in the official hierarchy.

Next, we may take up the case of some other *zamindars* who were lower in status than the *rajas*. The Badgujars were a clan who attained a certain prominence in the 17th century by entering the Mughal official hierarchy. They are entered as the sole *zamindars* against the *parganas* of Pahasu, Khurja and Dibai and also as co-sharers in *pargana* Shikarpur along with two other castes. The Badgujar's share in the *jama* for the middle Doab stood at about 4.43 percent. The strength of the retainers of the *parganas* is recorded as 600 cavalry and 10000 infantry.²⁸ However, no Badgujar before Anirari Singh find mention in the list of *mansabdars* in the *A'in-i Akbari*. He was the first Badgujar to have come into prominence during Jahangir's reign under very unusual circumstances. He gallantly saved the life of Jahangir from a Tiger while he was on a hunting expedition near Bari. He was subsequently awarded the title of 'Singh-dalan' (tiger-killer) and 'raja'.²⁹ Perhaps it was at this time that he was also awarded a *watan-jagir* of 164 villages. It is Anirai Singh who is credited with the founding of modern Anup-Shahar in Bulandshahar

²⁸ cf. K.K.Trivedi, 'Non-Ruling Rajputs Families in The Mughal Nobility in Suba Agra', *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, 39th session (Hyderabad), 1978, p. 339.

²⁹ See K.K.Trivedi, *Agra*, p. 113.

district.³⁰ He served the imperial government in different expeditions and reached the highest mansab of his carrer (3,000/1,500) during Shahjahan's reign.³¹ After Anirai's death, his son *Jairam* was awarded the title of 'raja'. We also see that after *Jairam* his son *Amar Singh* was also enrolled in the Mughal service. But we do not find the name of *Amar Singh* in the list of *mansabdars* in the major chronicles of the period. May be this was a consequence of the fact that he could not attain a high *mansab* during the reign of *Aurangzeb*. We do not have any reference to the descendants of *Anirai Singh* after *Amar Singh* in the imperial service.

The Rajput *zamindars* had a large number of retainers. The strength of the retainers of *Bhaduriyas* stood at 4,000 cavalry and 46,000 infantry as against the *Jama* of their *parganas* which was 16.37% of the *jama* of the middle Doab.³²

The *Bahgujars* had 600 cavalry and 10,000 infantry as against the *jama* on their *parganas*, which was 4.43% of the *jama* of the middle Doab. This suggests that both the *Bhaduriya* and *Badgujar* clans maintained retainers at a much higher percentage than the

³⁰ *Tarikh-i Bulandshar*, pp. 261-62.

³¹ *Lahori*, I ii, pp. 97, 140, 227.

³² *A'in*, I, pp. 443-55.

share of the *jama*. The Bhaduriyas had more armed followers to serve the Mughals in military capacity.

The Jats are recorded as *zamindars* in the *sarkars* of Agra, Kol, Gwalior, Payanwa, Narnaul and Sahar.³³ They were the highest payers of the revenue to the Mughal State (about 8.47 percent of the total for *suba* Agra). They were concentrated in the region that roughly corresponds to the modern districts of Agra, Mathura and Aligarh.

The jats who inhabited the Braj region around Mathura on both banks of the Yamuna have had a long history of defiance of Mughal authority. In the last part of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, stray cases of their defiance and recalcitrance are reported in the contemporary sources. Speaking of the province of Agra, Abul Fazl observes that "owing to the peculiarity of its climate the peasant masses (*'umum-i ri'aya'*) of that territory are notorious throughout the vast country of Hindustan for rebelliousness, bravery and courage".³⁴

Speaking of the tracts across the Yamuna from Agra, the author of *zakhirat-ul khawanin*, writing about 1650, says that the *zamindars* did not pay the revenue without a fight, and that the peasants

³³ *A'in*, pp. 443-54.

³⁴ *Akbarnama*, III, p. 231.

("ri'aya who drive plough") carried firearms.³⁵ The area on both sides of the Yamuna figures constantly as the scene of military operations against rebellious peasantry. Akbar once personally led an attack on a village of this area.³⁶ We also read of a *raja* in a *pargana* close to Agra, who used to engage in robbery and had the help of the ganwars or villagers.³⁷ These activities of the Jats were considered serious and there are detailed references to it in *Tuzuk* and *Badshahnama*. In fact exemplary punishments were meted out to them.³⁸

However, the disturbances continued to increase and by the time Shahjahan became emperor, they were considerably high. Jahangir had personally led an expedition against the peasants of the area in his 18th ruling year and Shahjahan, after assuming power, sent his military commanders Qasim Khan and Jai Singh to chastise them. Murshid Quli Khan was made the *faujdar* of Mathura and Mahaban with a raised mansab of 2,000/2,000.

The Mughal efforts, however, could not bring the Jats in to submission and outbreaks were common in Mathura and Mhaban

³⁵ *Zakhirat-ul Khwanin*, Aligarh MS., f. 108a, in an account of Jahangir's noble Bikramajit Bhaduriya, a zamindar of the area.

³⁶ *Akbarnama*, II, p. 163, The village is in the *pargana* Saketa (*sarkar* Kannauj) and Akbar attacked the village in 7th r.y. see also Manucci, I, pp. 132-34.

³⁷ Abdul Qadir Badauni, *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, Vol. II, pp. 151-52.

³⁸ *Tuzuk*, pp. 375-76; Lahori, I i, pp. 196, 204-05; Manucci, Vol. I, p. 204; also see D.H.A. Kholff, *Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy*, Delhi 1990, pp. 1-31.

in *pargana* Chandwar (east of Agra), in the *parganas* of Kama pahari, Koh Mujahid (sarkar sahar) to the north of Mathura.

Manucci, is the only source, which has dealt with the rebellions of this region in detail. It ascribes the Jats as the prime culprits. We hear of Gokula Jat in the twelfth reign year of Aurangzeb. As the leader of the Jats, his depredations extended to Sadabad (near Jalesar) across the Yamuna.³⁹

The threat had become so serious that Aurangzeb had to lead a campaign against Gokula who was captured in the campaign. With the emergence of Raja Ram as the leader of the rebellious Jats, the peace which was restored for some time after Gokula's capture once again assumed a serious dimension and posed serious challenges to the imperial authority. Aurangzeb dispatched a strong force under Khan Jahan Bahadur Jafar Jung from the Deccan. As a result of this expedition Raja Ram was killed in 1688.⁴⁰ But the rising tide of the power of the Jats under Chauraman and others could not be halted or checked by the efforts of the Mughals.

We see that the leadership of the Jat uprising was in the hands of a comparatively smaller *zamindar* class with humble and modest

³⁹ *Ma'sir-i Alamgiri*, pp. 83, 91-94.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 274.

mud fortresses. The uprising had a popular character in which there was active participation of women, who used primitive arms. It seems that the Jats who were paying considerable amounts of revenue to the Mughals as tax, were trying to enhance their position in the rural hierarchy.

However, when this upward mobility of Jats was checked by the effective system of revenue appropriation, the leaders of their community were not given any noticeable position in the Mughal hierarchy as it had been given to others. They expressed their resentment in an overt form by refusing to acknowledge the imperial authority or by becoming defiant. The Jats were gradually able to bring greater areas under their control and strength themselves.⁴¹

The point is that the Mughal rule neglected to take rural aspirations seriously and was also reluctant to include local potentates into the Mughal hierarchy of elites. The point to note in this regard is that this particular Mughal attitude was to lead to the perpetual existence of a certain degree of resentment, hostility and discontent among the local potentates towards the Mughal rule. Such a discontent was thus a continuous feature of the Mughal rule even when the Mughal rule was at its height of power. It should

⁴¹ See R.P.Rana, A dominant class in upheaval: "The zamindars of a North Indian region in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries", *IESHR*, Vol. XXIV, No.4, October-December, 1987, pp. 395-409.

not be concluded that discontent in the rural areas was confined only to the latter part of the Mughal rule, when the state authority has considerably weakened. What is significant is that the context of a weakened Mughal political rule gave rise to the possibility of the already existing discontent to assume the form of a much larger and credible opposition or threat to the Mughal rule.

It appears that in many cases, the local upheavals or uprisings represented the struggle of the powerful *zamindar* clans to bring under their hegemony the entire territory in their proximity. In this connection it would be useful to compare the dominant *zamindar* castes given in the *Ain* and the leaders of these revolts whom we can identify in terms of caste and clan. It appears that five out of eight cases of revolts were led by those castes which were not accorded any noticeable position in the Mughal hierarchy.

TABLE-1

S.No.	Parganas	Dominant Zamindar Cast in the <i>A'in</i> ⁴²	Leaders of revolts in the early 18 th century
1	Kheri, Sarkar Khairabad	Bisen, Rajputs Janwar	Gaur Rajputs
2	Bijnaur Sarkar Lucknow	Chauhan	Bais
3	Ranbirpur Sarkar Lucknow	Bais, Brahman	Bais
4	Harha Sarkar Lucknow	Bais	Bais
5	Unao Sarkar Lucknow	Saiyid	Bais
6	Deora Sarkar Lucknow	Rajput	Bais
7	Jhalotar Sarkar Lucknow	Chandel	Bais
8	Ibrahimabad Sarkar Awadh	Ansari	Kanhpuria Rajputs

⁴² *A'in*, II, (Jarrett), pp. 184, 188-90.

We have noticed that the *zamindars* of Baiswara, the Gaurs of Sadarpur, the kahnपुरी of *pargana* Ibrahimabad posed major threats to Mughal power. Since the reign of Aurangzeb, the *zamindars* of Baiswara had constantly created problems for the imperial authority. A number of villages and mahals in Baiswara such as Bijnaur, Rajbirpur, Unao, Harha, Jhalotar, etc.

Were disturbed by *zamindar* revolts at the time of Aurangzeb.⁴³ In 1714, the Bais *zamindars* along with a large number of their clansmen collected in the garhi of Mardan Singh in Dhondia Khera. They submitted to the Mughal forces under Chhabele Ram after a battle that continued for three days.⁴⁴ But this submission was only *temporary*. Within a year and a half the Bais *zamindars* were again mobilised by Amar Singh of Jagatpur. This time they showed a much more organised and effective resistance against the Mughals.⁴⁵

In another case from Awadh, repeated military expeditions under the commands of *subadars* are reported to have been launched against the Rajputs of *sarkar* Khairabad.⁴⁶ In March, 1715 a military campaign against the *zamindars* was commanded by no

⁴³ *Insha-i Roshan Kalam*, ff. 6,7,12,36-37.

⁴⁴ Akhbarat FS, 3rd R.Y., II, p. 143.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 2nd R.Y., II, pp. 201,238; 3rd R.Y., II, p. 98.

⁴⁶ Saiyid Muhammad Bilgrami, *Tabsirat-un-Nazirin*, Aligarh MS., Farsiya Akhbar, 204, f.55a.

less a person than the nephew of the then governor Girdhar Bahadur, who later became the governor of the province in 1718.

In the latter half of the 17th century there were a number of *zamindar* uprisings defying the Mughal authority in the *suba* of Allahabad. They had a bad repercussion on the revenue collection of the *suba*. Writing about rebellions and the defiant *zamindars* of Allahabad *suba*, Manucci records, "we were some days in Allhabad and the Governor was Bahadur khan, who was absent on a campaign against some villages who objected to pay their revenue without at least, one fight just as the villagers near Agrah do".⁴⁷ The struggle between the imperial administration and the *zamindars* breaking out frequently into armed conflicts, was an important feature of the political situation during the period under review.

Even though the rebel *zamindars* ultimately submitted to Mughals, the frequency of these revolts, meant a continuous weakening of the Mughal authority. The Mughals did not attempt to make any new arrangement with the *zamindars* and thus contain their aspirations. The *zamindars* continued to look for opportunities which could provide them sufficient strength to defy the Mughals.

⁴⁷ Manucci, II, p. 83.

These uprisings appear to have been symptomatic of significant demographic changes. For example the Bais Rajputs expanded out from the case of their respective original twelve settlements (*dwazdah dih*) and began to encroach upon the *zamindari* of others.⁴⁸ In the course of time this set in a process of extension of agriculture and the consequent growth of the region.

The agriculture in the regions under study registered a marked development in the course of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century. This can be illustrated from a comparison of the available revenue figures of the late sixteenth century as recorded by Abul Fazl in the *A'in-i Akbari* with those of early or mid-eighteenth century. The rise in *jama* of the region since the time of *A'in* had almost doubled.

JAMA FIGURES OF THE REGION

S.No.	Region	Jama 'in Dams in the A'in, 1595-96	Jama 'in Dams in the early mid 18 th C.	Increased by	Year
1	Awadh	20,17,58,172	37,46,74,559	17,29,16,387 ⁴⁹	1755
2	Rohilkhand (Moradabad-Brailley)	10,17,58,494	35,35,04,068	25,17,48,574 ⁵⁰	1750
3	Allahabad	21,24,27,819	52,78,81,196	31,54,53,377 ⁵¹	1700-11
4	Agra	54,62,50,304	1,36,46,02,117	81,83,51,813 ⁵²	1700-11

⁴⁸ *Insha-i Roshan Kalam*, pp. 6,14, 27.

⁴⁹ For the mid 18th century figures compare IO, 4485, 4487 and 4489.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Compare *Dastur-ul 'Amal-I Alamgiri*, ff. 109a-118b, 120b.

⁵² Ibid.

The spectacular rise in the *jama* figures could possibly be explained in terms of the influx of precious white metals and the consequent rise in prices. The increase in prices, over a span of 150 years since c.600, has been calculated to be about 300 percent.⁵³

The revenue of this period reflected the state of agriculture. According to Muzaffar Alam, "the *hasil* figures whether taken as representing the actual yields or as the revenue collected by state officials, also show that *jama* figures bore a relationship to the actual production and the paying capacity of the assesses."⁵⁴

We may say that *hasil* figures probably showed more clearly the ability of the Mughals to collect from intermediaries. In this context it can be pointed out that most of the revenue papers prepared for north India by indigenous officials for the use of the East India Company, mentions the *jama dami* together with the maximum estimate of collection or *hasil-shud* and also the *jama-i saltamam*, the minimum of what was estimated to be collected in a year since about the middle of the 17th century. This seems to be because of the very fact that the company officials faced problems with the *zamindars* in Bengal. They might have insisted on getting

⁵³ Tapan Ray Chowdhary and Irfan Habib, *Cambridge Economic History of India*, Vol. 1, p. 376.

⁵⁴ Muzaffar Alam, "Aspects of Agrarian Uprisings in North India in the early 18th century" in Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subramaniam (eds.), *The Mughal State*, p. 449-73.

all these figures and also the reason such as war, drought or flood (*afat-iarzi-o-smawi*) if any, for the short fall. We may say on the basis of the difference between the minimum of *sal-i tamam* and of the *hasil shud*, if not explained in terms of reduction due to war famine drought or flood, etc. indicated the range of the revenues appropriated by the *zamindar* in addition to his legal perquisite of *malikana*.

It would be appropriate to take into account the reported answer of *qanung's* to the query of Burhan-u'l Mulk the governor of Awadh about the state of agriculture of Baiswara. The governor was on a tour of Baiswara, notorious for turbulent *zamindars*, and was on a mission to set right the revenue administration of the area. He summoned the *qanungo's* and asked for the *revenue* roll. The *latter* enquired as to which revenue roll the *nawab* wanted, 'the man's' or 'the coward's'. On being asked the meaning of this answer, they explained that there were two figures which a *qanungo* could give. In a 'coward's roll' against every land owner's name was written only the sum which had been fixed for him at the last assessment but in the 'man's roll', every one's rent was indicated on the basis of what it should have been, taking into account the improvement that had taken place in land. The

governor asked for the 'man's roll' and on that basis reportedly doubled the assessment.⁵⁵

In this connection the condition of soil may also be taken into account. Northern Rohilkhand, the central districts of Awadh around Lucknow and Faizabad, the alluvial tracts along the river Ganges and the region of Doab, were known for their fertility. Allahabad *suba* with its alluvial soil and a climate producing a rich harvest throughout the year was among the most fertile and populated parts of the subcontinent (chapter one). In Awadh, cultivation was possible without much capital as the soil was moderately light and fertile, and the water table was sufficiently high.

In the Rohilkhand region the soil was extremely fertile and was suited for both *rabi* and *kharif* crops. In the northern fringe areas the soil was naturally moist as it could profit from the many spring torrents from the hills. As a consequence, even during droughts, even a better harvest could be produced as ploughing sowing the land could be done more easily. The harvest of grain in this area and was at its maximum during times when there was scarcity in other areas the prices elsewhere were very high. These conditions triggered off trade from Rohilkhand, when there was a

⁵⁵ Charles Alfred Elliot, *Chronicles of Onao: a District in Oudh*, Allahabad, 1862, p. 73.

scarcity elsewhere. Also, with the switch over to the cultivation of cash crops like sugarcane, cotton, indigo, tobacco, etc., the region had become prosperous.

In spite of all these developments and prosperity, the Mughal empire was not getting the benefit of these enhancements. Obviously the intermediaries were the beneficiaries and appropriated it for their own needs.

The rural disturbances thus showed the rising strength of the region in relation to the Mughal state. This is amply demonstrated in the establishment of fortresses-*ihdas-i qila/qilacha* and the establishment of armed bands of kinfolks and mercineries (*sipah-o-jami'at*) by *zamindars*. As they became rich and resourceful, they aspired for a greater share in the power and authority over the territories under their *zamindaris*.

It would be incorrect to characterize all the rebel *zamindars* as '*rajas*'⁵⁶. Some of these *zamindars* adopted the title of *raja* much later in the early nineteenth century, when their descendants came to acquire more power and privilege. The case of the *raja* (so called) of Tiloi who rebelled in 1715 and was a source of constant trouble to the imperial administration, is mentioned in the records

⁵⁶ See A.L.Srivastava, *First Two Nawabs of Awadh*, p. 31, 34-41, 49, 90. Where he discusses the revolts of so called *rajas* of Awadh during the time of first two Nawabs. This seems to be incorrect.

as '*malaguzari*'⁵⁷. Again, in the records of this period we find their expression of defiance to the imperial authority given as 'the refusal to pay the *mal-i wajib*. This means that these rebel *zamindars* were in no way tributary *chiefs or rajas*. They were the old and the new intermediary *zamindars*, who were not assigned any noticeable position in the official hierarchy by the Mughals. This partisan treatment created dissatisfaction and discontent. These *zamindars* who were now rich and resourceful endeavored to become independent or semi independent.

It can be seen that in those areas which were closer to the headquarters of the imperial authority, the influence of local ruling class was limited in comparison to the areas farther away. As against these, no rebellion is reported from the potentates with honorific title of *raja*.

The Mughal empire signified the successful working of a range of offices and institutions which were meant to be a mechanism of checks and balance. The Mughal imperial system in operation not only delimited the spheres of activities of various social groups but also ensured a balance of their interests for the maintenance and promotion of political integration. The Mughals, especially Akbar, followed a policy of accommodation and compromise

⁵⁷ *Akhbarat FS*, 5th R.Y., II, p. 172.

trying to accommodate the claims of local potentates from the village headmen to the chieftains by integrating them, in different degrees, into the imperial service in such a way that neither the stature of the local potentates, nor the existing hierarchy was disturbed. Thus, even as the members of the erstwhile ruling families received *mansabs* according to their station, however, the aspirations of those at intermediary level who tried to rise in the rural hierarchy were not encouraged. Infact, the Mughal state put to maximum use its repressive military might against them. It was not surprising in such cases, that the erstwhile rural aristocracy along with their caste and community following, sided with the Mughals against the so-called *mufsids* (disturbers). The most appropriate examples being the case of the Jats of Agra *suba* and the Bais *zamindars* in Baiswara region in Awadh. The system of land tenure suffered from a deep systemic crisis that may have led to the unraveling of the Mughal Empire itself. This feature becomes obvious when we see that the position of local potentates in the land tenure system under the Mughals actually resulted in the undermining of the position of the *zamindars*. The *zamindars*, it must be noted, had a powerful presence during the Delhi Sultanate. It is difficult to understand, how the *zamindars* reconciled themselves to a position of control under the Mughal rule; to a situation in which their power and position were definitely compromised and undermined.

One can only surmise that it was the sheer might and political strength of the Mughal Empire, which forced the *zamindars* to accept a position of relative subordination. Of course the *zamindars*, as a whole could only have accepted such a position of relative subordination with a certain measure of reluctance and dissatisfaction. It has already been argued earlier that discontent among the local potentates was in existence right from the time of Akbar, when the Mughal Empire was at its height of its power and glory. The latent simmering discontent was only to become manifest and assume consequential proportions when the strength of the Mughal rule subsided.

The paradox of a acceptance of the overarching political power of the Mughal rule without the overt manifestation of any discontent in the form of a class uprising or a flare up is further compounded when one looks at the sheer numbers of the retainers under them. The *A'in* mentions something like 44 lakh retainers being under the *zamindars*.⁵⁸ Obviously, the large number could only add to the possibility of an uprising on the part of the discontented *zamindars*. The fact that such an uprising did not take place inspite of such large numbers of retainers, only goes to reinforce the point made earlier about the power of Mughal rule being the determining force that thwarted the possibility of such an uprising. It is obvious that Mughal authority brought to bear a

⁵⁸ *A'in*, I, p. 175; P.Saran, *Provincial Government*, p. 262.

considerable degree of power and authority upon the local potentates. Infact, it seems that the significant powers of the local notables paled into insignificance in the face of Mughal authority.

It need to be further noted that there was not only a certain degree of arrogant neglect towards the aspirations of *local potentates*. But the much vaunted Mughal system of *jagirdari* and *mansabdari* was itself inherently flawed. During the time of Akbar, the *jagirdars* where transferred after regular gaps to ensure that they did not consolidate their position and develop local roots, that could lead to the discomfiture of Mughal rule.

However, under the successors of Akbar, the system of transfer of *jagir* came to be easily violated and there is evidence that from the seventeenth century onwards, the *jagirdars* came to stay in their *jagirs* for quite a long period.⁵⁹

It has been generally accepted that the *jagirdars* were not allowed to stay in a *jagir* for long; that they were generally transferred after three years, primarily because of the statement made by *Bernier* (a french doctor).⁶⁰ We have a number of cases where it has been noticed that the Mughal notables with high mansabs remained in their *jagir* undisturbed for exceptionally long periods. Itibar khan remained for about fifteen years in Gwalior; Saiyed

⁵⁹ See *Misleneous Persian Document*, pp.135-37, *Tuzuk*, p. 344; Lahori, II, p. 431; also see W.Irvine, *Later Mughals*, II, p. 230; K.K.Trivedi, *Agra*, p. 139; M.Alam, *Crisis of Empire*, pp. 129-30.

⁶⁰ Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System*, pp. 367-68, M.Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility*, p. 78.

khan, Jahan for about eighteen years in Gwalior; Abdullah khan for twelve and then seventeenth years in Kalpi, Aslo held a *jagir* in kannauj for fourteen years; similarly Raja Bithal Das held a *jagir* in Dhollpur for about ten years.⁶¹ This was not just true in the case of the high *mansab jagirs*. Even the ordinary *jagirdars* in the northern provinces came to enjoy the same privilege. In 1713, eight parganas in Bundelkhand region of suba Allahabad, were assigned to Mohammad Khan Bangash. In 1720, Mohammad khan Bangash received two new *parganas*, Bhojpur and Shahabad, which are referred to as in addition to his eight parganas in Bundelkhand, which he seems to have retained till the early 1730s. This is corroborated from the mentioning of his name as *jagirdar* of Bundelkhand in the context of his conflicts with the Bundelas.⁶² In yet another case, in the early years of Muhammed Shah's reign, the wazir Qamar-ud-din khan, was given a *jagir* in *sarkar* Moradabad which he retained till 1745. Again, at the beginning of Muhammad Shah's reign, one Murtaza Khan is reported to have received the *sarkars* of Benaras, Jaunpur, Ghazipur and Chunar as part of his *jagir*. In 1738, when Burhan-

⁶¹ 'Miscellaneous Persian', pp. 135-37; *Tuzuk*, p. 344, for Itibar Khan, Lahori, II, p. 431 for, Mirza Hasan Safavi as *jagirdar* and also *faujdar* of Fatehpur and Bayana, pp. 344, 404-05 for Saiyid Khan Jahan as *jagirdar* of Gwalior and governor of Agra; Lahori, I, ii, p. 121, for Nijabat Khan as *jagirdar* and *faujdar* of Kol.

⁶² W. Irvine, *Later Mughals*, II, p. 230; also see M. Alam, *Crisis of Empire*, pp. 129-30.

ul Mulk was appointed the governor of Allahabad these *sarkars* were still a part of his *jagir*.⁶³ It seems he retained it till 1748.

The short stay at a place did not permit a *jagirdar* sufficient time to take initiatives for the development of agriculture and instead made him insensitive to the plight of the producer. However, there is little evidence of *jagirdars* using their long stay in a region to actually engage in activities for the development and betterment of the *jagir*.

There is however, evidence that shows that *jagirdars* usedg their extended stay in a particular *jagir* to develop a nexus with the *zamindars*, and jointly operated to deprive the Mughal court of a substantial part of its legitimate revenue.

Further, the decline that had set in within the Mughal system of land revenue administration, subsequent to Akbar's death can be found in the abandonment of the system of extensive surveys for the estimation of land revenue. This system of estimation was an important feature of the more organised and well administered reign of Akbar. Without a proper survey being carried out, an arbitrary fixation of *jama* was done. It led to disparity between *jama* and *hasil*. This was an acute problem engulfing the whole Mughal empire. Any measure to correct it during Shahjahan's

⁶³ Tuhfa, ff. 3a, 4a and 9b; Kamboh, f.48a. Murtaza Khan's original name was Hifzullah Khan. He was son of Shukrullah Khan known as Murtaza Khan Bahadur Shahi (d.1712), cf. M.Alam, *Crisis of Empire*, p. 129.

reign did not seem to bear any fruit. Subsequently, we notice the work of revenue collection done in consultation with the *chaudharies* and the revenue was settled by a kind of bargain.

Such an arbitrary fixation of *jama* and the state's inability to carry out a survey for the estimation of land revenue is an indication of the growing power of the *potentates* at the expense of the state's authority. Further, the disorder that had come to exist within the state can be gauged from the fact that the state authorities faced much difficulty in collecting the land-revenue from those regions, where and when *zamindars* chose to withhold their cooperation from the revenue officials.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Noman Ahmad Siddiqi, *Land Revenue Administration Under the Mughals (1700-1750)*, Bombay, pp. 131-32.

CONCLUSION

To conclude this study it would be useful to recapitulate the main points in the various chapters and also comment on the broad structure of the study itself. The first chapter serves the nature of a general overview of the region under study. The chapter contains the description of the soil, topography, climatic condition and the important urban concentrations of the region. Subsequent to this broad sketch of the important physical features of the region the second chapter looks at the social composition of the population inhabiting the region. The two most crucial component of the population were the caste component and what can broadly be described as the class component. Taking the second category first, there were various levels or strata into which the population can be divided. Among the rural peasantry, two most important categories was the *khud-kasht* and *Pahi-kasht*. The *Khud-Kasht* as the name suggests cultivated their own land. Even a *zamindar* was a *Khud-kasht* on this basis. The *Pahi-Kasht* on the other hand was a cultivator who cultivated lands belonging to a village where he did not reside. They are considered *tenants-at-will* and having only a temporary interest in the soil they cultivated. But the enjoyed the rights as *khud-kasht*.

The all important category in terms of revenue extraction was ofcourse the *zamindar* at the intermediary level. In a consideration

of the caste composition of the area under study one finds a correlations between the upper castes and their occupation of the upper rungs of the agrarian hierarchy. The Rajputs exercised considerable influence in the agrarian structure in the regions of *Subas* of Agra, Awadh and Allahabad. In the region of Rohilkhand, where the Rajputs conceded the domination to the powerful Afghans in the eighteenth century. The traditional cultivating caste of the Jats occupied an intermediate position on a limited scale around 16th century. This study focuses upon those caste and economic groups who occupied position more towards the apex of the social Pyramid of this region. It needs to be emphasized that the study is not focussed upon those caste and classes at the base of the Pyramid and who could be considered to be the real oppressed as our sources provide extremely limited information.

This particular emphasis or focuss becomes obvious in the third and final chapter of the study, where the inability of Mughal rule to fully accommodate and fulfill the aspirations of these relatively dominant groups is brought out. Therefore, the central or key argument which is to be found in the third and culminating chapter is that the Mughal revenues system was inherently flawed because of its failure to sufficiently facilitate the upward mobility and aspirations of these dominant groups, who acted as intermediaries in the Mughal revenue structure. It is precisely for

this reason that this study focuses upon these intermediary section of the agrarian structure, which was in a position to be accommodated within Mughal hierarchy. Again, it needs to be reiterated that the conditions of the lowest rung of the rural society do not constitute a part of the study.

While the third chapter has located the inherent flaw in the Mughal revenue structure as being located at the level of the intermediary strata, it also argues that latent, simmering discontent that was to prevail at this level of society was not a sufficient cause to seriously destabilize the Mughal authority. Thus, the latent simmering discontent that has been referred to, prevailed throughout the Mughal rule. The crucial point is that the sheer force of Mughal authority was able to neutralize whatever possibility of destabilization that it may have held out. It was only when this discontent at the level of the intermediaries with support from the lowest rung of the rural sector and with the undermining or weakening of Mughal political rule that serious consequences to Mughal authority were to arise.

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