

AWADH: ITS ART AND ITS PEOPLE

c.1720-1850

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CERTIFICATE

Certified that this dissertation entitled, "AWADH: ITS ART AND ITS PEOPLE c.1720-1850" submitted by Kanupriya Harish, Centre for Historical Studies, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy (M.Phil)** of this University is her own work and has not been previously submitted for any degree of this or any other university.

I recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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INTRODUCTION

Situated in the heart of Gangetic plain, the territory of Awadh was drained by six, almost parallel rivers i.e. Yamuna, Ganga, Sai, Gomti, Deoha and Rapti. The Ganga and Deoha were navigable all round the year, in contrast to Sai, Tons and Gomti, which were navigable only in the rainy season. The soil of the southern portion of Awadh was generally light, there being a preponderance of siliceous and calcareous earth. Between the Gomti and Ganga, the light arable soil was interspersed with patches of *usar* or sandy soil. Most of the territory of Awadh possessed alluvial soil that was well drained and suited for agriculture.¹

According to Abul Fazl in the *Ain-i-Akbari*, c.1600, "its length from the Sarkar of Gorakhpur to Kanauj is 135 *kos*. Its breadth from the northern mountains to Sidhpur on the frontier of the Subah of Allahabad is 115 *kos*. To the east is Bihar; to the north the mountains; to the south Manikpur, and to the west Kanauj."² Under Burhan-ul-Mulk and Safdar Jang, the territories of Awadh extended from Khairabad in the west to Ghazipur in the east and from Bahraich in north to Manikpur in the south.³

¹ Donald Butter, *Outlines of the Topography and Statistics of the Southern Districts of Oudh, and of the Cantonment of Sultanpur-Oudh*, Calcutta, 1839, pp.1-28 and also see, Spate, O.M.K. and Learmonth, A.T.A., *India and Pakistan: Land, People and Economy*, London, 1967, pp.41-43.

² Abul Fazl Allami, *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol.II, translated by Col. H.S. Jarrett, New Delhi, 1978, p.181.

³ Muzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India, Awadh and the Punjab, 1707-48*, New Delhi, 1986, pp.256-257.

After the battle of Buxar, Shuja-ud-daula lost Kara and Allahabad to the British East India Company forces. However, they were 'purchased' back by the Nawab for Rs.50 lakh. Before coming to power in 1798 Saadat Ali Khan entered into an agreement with the British East India Company to increase the payments due to the Company from Rs.56 lakh to Rs.76 lakh. In 1801 another agreement abolished these payments and in their place he was required to cede Kora, Kara, Etawah, Kanpur, Farrukhabad, Kheragarh, Gorakhpur, Batul, Allahabad, Rohilkhand, Nawabganj, Khali and Mahal, to the Company.⁴

The Suba of Awadh held an important place in the Mughal Empire, both from the point of view of revenue as well as acting as a link with the east, especially Bengal. However as the Mughal control loosened and the hold of Delhi over the provinces became lax, a few regional states emerged. The two provinces of Awadh and Hyderabad worked their way towards autonomy from the Mughals, from the middle of the eighteenth century.

Saadat Khan Burhan-ul-Mulk, the founder of the Nawabi dynasty of Awadh, belonged to a Shia family in Persia and came to India after their fortunes had declined in Persia. Although slow to rise in the ranks of the Mughal nobility, he rose to the level of a *Faujdar* of the district of Agra in 1719. As the *Faujdar* of Agra, he was vested with the task of collecting revenue from this region. The task was extremely challenging especially as the local zamindars and landlords were extremely turbulent and rebellions. Saadat Khan fulfilled his assigned task with

⁴ M.H. Fisher, *Clash of Cultures: Awadh, the British and the Mughals*, Delhi, 1987.

efficiency and soon gained a name for himself, that helped him get the governorship of the Suba of Awadh. Awadh at that time was known for its semi-independent feudal barons, each having his own army and civil establishment.⁵ Saadat Khan had to literally fight his way into the city of Lucknow.⁶ Saadat Khan dealt with the rebellious zamindars firmly. He appointed his nephew, Safdar Jang as his deputy; Safdar Jang later married his uncle's daughter. Saadat Khan gradually consolidated his position in Awadh, and held on in Awadh despite several attempts to dislodge him. The break with Delhi came in 1728 when he was ordered to leave Awadh and take charge of Agra; an order which he disobeyed. After the death of Saadat Khan, his nephew and son-in-law, Safdar Jang naturally assumed charge as the governor of Awadh. The post of the governor became hereditary and later Shuja-ud-daula, son of Safdar Jang became the Nawab after the death of his father. Awadh had become virtually independent by the time Shuja-ud-daula sat on the throne, as even the revenues that were collected from Awadh were not remitted to Delhi. The Nawabs of Awadh derived a large part of their wealth as land revenue from the fertile lands of their kingdom. The cities and towns in Awadh often grew at the expense of Mughal urban centers, as the artisans migrated to Awadh towns in search of patronage and the emerging markets. The capital of Awadh was shifted from Faizabad to Lucknow in the year 1775, and thereafter a distinct *Lakhnavi* culture developed in Lucknow; it was represented in

⁵ A.L. Srivastava, *First Two Nawabs of Oudh*, Lucknow, 1933, p.32.

⁶ It was during the reign of Akbar that Lucknow was chosen to be the capital of the Suba of Awadh.

its language, etiquettes, customs, music, dance and even food. The power and wealth of Awadh attracted British attention. The British were involved in trading activities in Awadh and when they tried to intervene Shuja-ul-daula resisted. Later they fought Shuja-ul-daula at Buxar in 1764. The British were victorious at Buxar, and Shuja-ul-daula was humiliated by them, but not dethroned. The Allahabad treaty that followed gave the company the right to freely trade in Awadh, took away Kora and Allahabad⁷ from Awadh, and stationed the Company troops in Awadh at the Nawab's expenses .

The position of the British further strengthened after Saadat Ali Khan assumed throne in 1798 and ceded half the territory of Awadh to the British in 1801. However Saadat Ali Khan proved to be an able administrator and tried to set right the former maladministration. The revenue administration in Saadat Ali Khan's reign was not only efficient but also beneficial to the peasantry.⁸ In addition to prosperity in the markets and rise in trade, Saadat Ali Khan's reign was also marked by the presence of eminent and distinguished persons.

Ghazi-ud-din Haider showed no signs of his father's intelligence and appreciation of the value of money, nor did he show any interest in the army.⁹ He was the first ruler of Awadh who was conferred the title of a king by the Company, in return of a huge loan. Nasir-ud-din Haider ascended the throne in

⁷ Kora and Allahabad were purchased by the Nawab from the Company in 1773 for Rs.50 lakh.

⁸ W.H. Sleeman, *Journey through the Kingdom of Oude in 1849-1850*, Vol. II, Lucknow, 1989, pp.112-113.

⁹ Abdul Halim Sharar, *Lucknow: The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture*, New Delhi, 2000, p.53.

1827 and was followed by Muhammad Ali Shah, Amjad Ali Shah and finally Wajid Ali Shah. The first part of Wajid Ali Shah's reign was characterized by the dashing young king's paying more than usual attention to the dispensation of justice and army reform.¹⁰ However, he soon started paying attention to poetry, and other interests in life. He also build the famous Kaiser Bagh, where one had to wear saffron clothes to make an entry. The famous mutiny occurred during the reign of Wajid Ali Shah and he spent the rest of his days in Matiya Burj in Calcutta.

The revenue administration in Awadh underwent a large number of changes from the days of Saadat Khan Burhan-ul-Mulk's reign to those of Wajid Ali Shah. Land revenue administration in Awadh in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has been discussed in the first chapter, as land revenue was an important sources of income for the Nawab. The huge income from the fertile lands of Awadh was the main reason for the extremely lavish personal expenses of the Nawabs; in 1796-97 they amounted to Rs.74,41,732-8-0.¹¹ The patronage extended by the Awadh Nawabs to artisans was an important factor in the emergence of several industrial handicrafts. The nobility was the simple largest consumer of goods such as gold and silver brocades, kalabatun, zardozi, enamelled ware, ivory ware, brocaded shoes etc. The general state of the economy also made sure that the demand for goods consumed by the middle classes, such as dyed cotton fabrics,

¹⁰ Ibid., p.62.

¹¹ P Surendu Basu, *Oudh and the East India Company 1785-1901*, Lucknow, 1943, p.107.

chikan work, bidri work etc. the various handicrafts produced in the Nawabi Awadh have been discussed in the second chapter. The landed elite in Awadh generally belonged to the Rajput caste; the family history of Baises of Baiswara has been discussed by Elliott. However, in the nineteenth century, several 'non-hereditary' taluqdars came to own land in Awadh; they were generally money lenders and merchants. The agricultural castes, the artisanal castes, the merchant and trader castes have been discussed in the third chapter. Except the Pathans, Shaikhs and Mughals, most of the Muslims in Awadh were Hindu converts. Many of them had their forefathers who belonged to the lower castes. Many of their practices including the caste system were similar to that of the Hindus. The different 'castes' among the Muslims have also been discussed in the last chapter.

Even though the Nawabas of Awadh were controlled by the East India Company, Lucknow did not see any major invasion or destruction. After the revolt of 1857, the British dealt strictly with the residents of Lucknow, indulging in mass hangings etc. However, the culture of Awadh especially the Lakhnavi culture survived. The patrons of Awadh handicrafts might have been removed, and the artisans shifted to more common and affordable goods, but the handicrafts underwent modifications so as to become affordable to the common man.

CHAPTER I

LAND AS A SOURCE OF INCOME

“The king was seated on his throne of pure gold, dressed in a very costly habit of Persian velvet, embroidered with gold; on his neck valuable ‘haarhs’ (neckless) of diamonds, pearls, rubies, and emeralds, were suspended in many rows, reaching from the neck nearly to the waist....

The king’s crown is elegantly formed, richly studded with diamonds, and ornamented with handsome plumes of the birds of paradise...

To the right of the throne were gilt chairs with velvet seats placed for the accommodation of the Resident and his lady”.¹

This statement about the lavishness and riches of the Awadh Nawab’s² also presents a paradox; the wealth was there but it was increasingly coming under the shadow of the British East India Company, which was gradually tightening its hold over the Nawabi rule in Awadh. The British influence was to be seen in every aspect of administration, more so in the case of revenue collection from which the Company derived its pound of flesh, after Buxar was lost by Shuja-ud-daula in 1764. For the greater part of its life the Nawabi rule in Awadh was influenced directly or indirectly by the British.

The main concern of the British in Awadh was its wealth, which came from several sources i.e. land revenue; taxes on markets or *ganjiyat*; custom duties; road

¹ Mrs. Meer Hasan Ali, *Observation on the Mussalmauns of India*, vol.II, Delhi 1973, pp.268-270.

² Nawab Muhammad Ali Shah. (1837-42).

duties or *sayer*; pilgrim tax;³ and miscellaneous sources such as *nazars* etc. However, land revenue remained the most important source of income of Awadh state, and it was the revenue from the rich lands⁴ of Awadh which decided the course of its court politics, palace intrigues and finally annexation of nearly half its territory in 1801.

A number of influential local families held sway in Awadh, before this region came under the control of the Nawabs. Such a family ruled over a number of villages, extracting a share of the peasant's produce, besides levying transit dues, ferry fees, tax on forest produce, tolls on artisans and traders etc. These groups constituted the local political and administrative elites and were also the agencies through which the countryside was integrated into the larger outer world.⁵

In the Mughal sources the local potentates have been referred by the generic term of zamindars or the holders of the rights over the produce of the land. The zamindars had an origin independent of the Mughal system. However, the

³ Pilgrim tax came from Hindus who entered Awadh to reach Ayodhya, Haridwar, Kashi etc. However, the amount of revenue actually realized from the pilgrim tax was never specified by the Nawab's administration.

⁴ Ain-i-Akbari describes the Subah of Awadh in detail. "Agriculture is in a flourishing state, especially rice of the kinds called Sukhdas, Madhkar, and Jhanwan, which for whiteness, delicacy, fragrance and wholesomeness are scarcely to be matched". Abul Fazl Allami, Ain-i-Akbari, Vol.II, Translated by Col. H.S. Jarrett, Delhi, 1978, p.181

In the Nawabi period also, several travellers noticed the fertility of the Awadh region. G. Foster in his 'A Journey from Bengal to England through the Northern part of India', London, 1798, describes "The Oude territories, generally flat and fertile, are watered by the Ganges, Jumna, Gograh, Goomty and Gunduck, exclusive of many rivulets", Lucknow, January 16, 1783, p.85.

⁵ Muzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India, Awadh and the Punjab*. New Delhi, 1986, p.92.

zamindars who were integrated into the empire evidently grew in strength and influence in the wake of the political and economic unification under the Mughals. Both the Mughal state as well as the zamindar benefitted by this relationship.⁶

The local potentates however, always remained a source of trouble for the Delhi/Agra rulers, and whenever the situation seemed ripe, they resisted. Saadat Khan Burhan-ul-Mulk and later Safdar Jang, tried to reform the Mughal system, but had to face a lot of resistance not only from the landed magnates but also from the local revenue officials. Although amils in the Mughal administrative setup were revenue officials, they had gradually become ijaradars or revenue contractors by paying the jagirdar money that was due and keeping the rest (i.e. the extra amount that was collected from the peasants using coercion) to themselves. The amil occupied an important place in the maintenance and administration of the jagir. In some cases the amils were local magnates and managed to stick to their office in the same mahal, notwithstanding the changes and transfers of the jagirdars. The amil in a number of cases thus practically became a revenue contractor who assured the jagirdar his due amount and kept a part of the revenue himself. This transition had been going on since the early years of seventeenth century, when it was a common practice with the jagirdars to displace an amil by another who offered bigger qabz. This led to the concentration of the office of the

⁶ Ibid., pp.92-93.

amil in the hands of the local magnates by turn of the eighteenth century. Thus the revenue contractor emerged in the early eighteenth century.⁷

It was therefore natural for the amils and jagirdars to resist any attempt to change the status quo Burhan-ul-Mulk recognized that any attempt to regulate the revenue system in Awadh would imply the separation of amils from jagirdars. Burhan-ul-Mulk personally supervised the revenue administration of the province with great care.⁸ He brought the amils under his own control, thereby ensuring payment of revenue to the jagirdars. Amils and amins were henceforth appointed by the Governor himself, and they were accountable to the latter. Local officials such as the chauthary, the qanungos, and the muqaddams, were now to approach the amils (directly answerable to the Governor) for matters related to land revenue. Thus the administrative rights that the jagirdars had over their jagir, namely collection of land revenue, and other authorized cesses, was taken over by the Governor.⁹ This arrangement was welcome to most of the mansabdars, as they were hardly in a position to manage their jagir against the dangers of recalcitrant zamindars. However now they were relieved from the onerous task of keeping a check on the corrupt amils. The jagirdars no longer had to send their own officials

⁷ Muzaffar Alam, pp.205-206.

⁸ There are several sunnuds of Saadat Khan in existence, to prove this point. According to Elliott, one family possesses 6 of this sunnuds in which he grants and again resumes slight remissions, gives orders about tolls at ferries, and so on. The seal is "Saadut Khan Burhan-ul-Mulk, Nazim of the Soobah of Oudh, servant of Mahommed Shah". From C.A. Elliot, *The Chronicles of Oonao, A District in Oudh*, Allahabad, 1862.

⁹ Muzaffar Alam, p.207.

to their jagir. For any trouble the jagirdars now wrote directly to the Governor who directed action through the amil (now under the direct control of Governor).¹⁰

The small jagirdars welcomed the changes instituted by Burhan-ul-Mulk. In most cases they were unable to collect revenue from their jagirs, involving their own agents, and had as a result farmed out their territories to the local ijaradars.

The big jagirdars, however strongly condemned Burhan-ul-Mulk's levy of peshkash and discount from the jagir. Burhan-ul-Mulk however, paid no heed to such protests. On the contrary he tried to reduce to the minimum, the number of jagirs of the mansabdars, especially the powerful ones, who were posted outside the province of Awadh. For in the case of any difficulty in the management of their jagirs and break or delay in payment the mansabdars would inevitably interfere. In one such case, the *vakil* of Raja Jai Singh at the court, had certain grievances about the raja's jagir in Ibrahimabad in *sarkar* Lucknow. Initially he sought the permission of the Governor to send, and then without the latter's prior notice actually sent, his representative to supervise the settlement. Burhan-ul-Mulk, who had directly written to Jai Singh about it violently resented the nomination of the representative.¹¹

Burhan-ul-Mulk also exercised great control over the jagirs of those jagirdars whom he apprehended would develop local ties through their long-term jagirs and prove to be a potential threat to his ambition; several jagirdars were

¹⁰ Ibid., p.207.

¹¹ Ibid., p.208.

transferred.¹² Burhan-ul-Mulk only managed to regulate the big jagirdars but not abolish jagirs, which could only be done by this successor Safdar Jang. Safdar Jang allowed only his relations and close confidants to have big jagirs in Awadh. The policy of wooing powerful zamindars and with their support strengthening and broadening the social base for the Governor was extended by Burhan-ul-Mulk and later on by Safdar Jang, to small zamindars as well.¹³ Zamindars were checked from becoming too powerful, and were never allowed to gain additional privileges of a local potentate.

It was in the reigns of Burhan-ul-Mulk and Safdar Jang that we see the beginnings of the *ijaradari* that became common under the subsequent Nawabs. In order to appease the old powerful zamindars, Burhan-ul-Mulk extended certain sops to them in the form of an arrangement termed as *ta'ahhud*, according to which the zamindar had to pay a fixed amount for the contracted territory. Sometimes a provincial official also contracted a *ta'ahhud*. This contract system involved not only revenue collection, but also entailed some administrative and military responsibilities.¹⁴

Under the Mughal administration, *madad-i-ma'ash* grants were made to religious men. According to Abul Fazl, there were four classes of persons for whom the grants were specially meant i.e., men of learning, religious devotees,

¹² Ibid., p.208.

¹³ Ibid., p.214.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp.217-18.

destitute persons without the capacity for obtaining livelihood, and person of noble lineage, who would not, “out of ignorance”, take to any employment.¹⁵ As a rule fifty percent of their grant was over cultivated land and another fifty percent over cultivable waste. Madad-i-ma’ash grantees were generally exempted from paying any land revenue over the latter part of the grant.¹⁶ They did not however, enjoy any right over the former category of land, that was a part of the grant other than those previously claimed by the administration. He could not demand a larger amount of land revenue than was authorized.¹⁷ The madad-i-ma’ash grant also did not in any way affect the zamindari or milkiyat rights of others established over the land. Till about the closing years of the seventeenth century, the madad-i-ma’ash land was never transferred to the grantee in full proprietary possession, but was only held by him during the pleasure of the emperor.¹⁸ The possessions could not be transferred nor sold by the grantee. Similarly, it could not pass on to his heirs except in accordance with imperial orders. However, in 1690 Aurangzeb issued a farman that made madad-i-ma’ash grants hereditary.

According to certain accounts, in Awadh the persons who held large madad-i-ma’ash grants, freely acquired zamindaris and even acted as revenue farmers.¹⁹ S. Nurul Hasan points that the madad-i-ma’ash grants acquired the

¹⁵ Abul Fazl Allami, *Ain-i-Akbari, Vol.I*, Translated by H. Blochmann, New Delhi, 1977, p.278.

¹⁶ S. Nurul Hasan, *Thoughts on Agrarian Relations in Mughal India*, New Delhi, 2000, p.18.

¹⁷ Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India, 1556-1707*, New Delhi, 2000, p.314.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.348.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.355.

character of zamindari as is evident from the sale deeds of madad-i-ma'ash lands in the eighteenth century.²⁰ Burhan-ul-Mulk seems to have been very strict to the madad-i-ma'ash grantees, and tried to subject these grants to assessment, though light.²¹ In this endeavour Burhan-ul-Mulk was supported by the zamindars, who had resented the privileges enjoyed by the madad-i-ma'ash grantees. The latter also accepted it because assessment of their lands gradually lent the madad-i-ma'ash holders the strength of a zamindari holding.²²

In the Mughal period, except under simple crop sharing, the collection of revenue and its assessment were entirely distinct operations. In crop-sharing the state's share of the grain was directly seized from the field or the threshing floor at the time of division, so that assessment was totally dispensed with. In other systems, assessment could take place between the time of sowing and harvesting, but collection, whether the medium of payment was cash or kind, usually took place at the time of harvest.²³

According to Abul Fazl, the amalguzar should begin the collection for rabi from Holi and that of kharif from Dasehra.²⁴ In the kharif season, revenue was

²⁰ S. Nurul Hasan, p.19.

²¹ Muzaffar Alam, pp.220-21.

²² Ibid., p.224.

²³ Irfan Habib, p.281.

²⁴ *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol.II, p.48.

collected in three stages, i.e. first on sanwan, second on bajri, and third sugarcane. For the rabi season, revenue was collected at one time only.²⁵

Revenue assessment and collection under the Nawab Wazirs till 1765 continued more or less under the framework that had existed in the seventeenth century. However, after the battle of Buxar, Shuja-ud-daula was forced to drastically reduce his troops, as per the terms of the treaty signed with the British East India Company. In spite of financial constraints, Shuja-ud-daula managed to maintain the traditional revenue structure. By the time of Asaf-ud-daula, ijaradari was a well entrenched practice. According to Barnett, in Asaf's regime, only a small part of the land was allocated as jagris. Out of the total gross assessment 84.3% was under ijara and the rest 15.7% in jagirs.²⁶

Under this system, the amount of land revenue was assessed separately for kharif and rabi crops. The revenue for the autumn crops was divided into five monthly installments or qists, while for the spring crops, the payment was to be made in four qists.²⁷ The qists for autumn crops were to be paid at the new moons between 11 September and 11 February, while those of spring crops were to be paid till 12 June. Inability to pay the qists invited use of force.²⁸

²⁵ Irfan Habib, pp.291-82.

²⁶ Barnett, *North India between Empires; Awadh, the Mughals and the British 1720-1801*. University of California Press, Berkeley, 1980, p.173.

²⁷ Elliott, *The Chronicles of Oonao*, pp.137-39.

²⁸ Donald Butter, *Outlines of the Topography and Statistics of the southern Districts of Oudh and the Contanment of Sultanpur – Oudh*, Calcutta, 1839, pp.100-101.

The Subah of Awadh under the Mughals was divided into five Sarkars viz. Awadh, Bahraich, Gorakhpur, Khairabad and Lucknow. In early eighteenth century Awadh, there were eight faujdaris. Five of these correspond to the above mentioned five sarkars, and the rest three were small faujdaris, namely Baiswara, Bilgram and Sultanpur Bilehri. By 1722, all the faujdaris had come under the jurisdiction of Burhan-ul-Mulk. The faujdar was now appointed independently by the Governor. The faujdar was a deputy of the subadar and was also called as the nazim or naib.

The territory of Awadh under the Nawabs (before 1801) was divided into permanent nizamats, each of which was under the charge of a Nazim, who was responsible for the collection of revenue, and maintenance of peace in his district. He held the command of an army of about 3000 troops, whose salary and maintenance was drawn from the treasury in Lucknow. To each Nazim were attached several news-writers or Akhbar Nawis, whose duty was to keep a record of the daily events and forward these records to the durbar in Lucknow every week.²⁹

Each nizamats was divided into 3-4 chaklas, each under a chakladar. He worked under the nazim and collected the revenue of his chakla, and dispensed

²⁹ According to W.H. Lawrence, as the Akhbar Nawis were drawing their salaries from the Amils, it was almost next to impossible for the minister in Lucknow to ever get any correct information, or any information which the Amil did not want to be known in Lucknow; Kingdom of Oudh, Calcutta Review, Vol.III, 1845, p.387.

rough and ready justice.³⁰ He maintained troops to help him realize the revenue. There were several qanungoes and patwaris under a chakladar, and their function was to keep information about land holdings in their villages, net area sown and the estimated yield.

Elliot³¹ describes in detail the scene at the chakladar's tent where the chakladar was present along with his treasurer and his chief military officers, the tehsildars, the qanungo and the chauthary, a few large landowners of the pargana, the akhbar nawis, and all the zamindars and patwaris of the pargana. The patwari gave an account of the area under cultivation in his village, and the crops sown. This information was 'confirmed' by the qanungo.³² The tehsildar would report that the village last year paid, say, Rs.1000/-, but then there was less land under cultivation, and the revenue could now be raised, say, to Rs.1200/-. The "owner of the village"³³ protested, saying that even by paying Rs.1000/- he was a ruined man, and this year he would be able to pay not more than Rs.900/-. The dispute would thus go on till the "owner of the village" agreed to pay Rs.1200/-. In order to pay this amount, the "owner of the village" would have to borrow from the moneylender and in 3-4 years would lose the village to the moneylender. In case

³⁰ G.D. Bhatnagar, *Awadh Under Wajid Ali Shah*, Varanasi, 1968, p.169.

³¹ Elliot, *The Chronicles of Ooano*, pp.137-39.

³² Elliot describes how corruption was embedded into the whole system of revenue assessment, and how officials were bribed to oust the original zamindar of the village by raising the revenue demand to a level which the original zamindar could never afford to pay, and thereafter getting the revenue demand lowered.

³³ Elliot, uses the term 'owner of the village' for zamindars.

the “owner of the village” did not agree to the enhanced amount, the chakladar would give the village to the moneylender, who in this case is willing to pay Rs.1200/-. This enhanced rent would in a year or two come down to Rs.800/- after money changed hands.³⁴

Under the changed rules of revenue assessment the zamindar had the liberty to deal with the peasantry as he deemed fit. Butter’s statement reflects this arbitrariness of the revenue officials leading to hardships for the actual producers, “during that sovereign’s (Saadat Ali, 1798-1814) life, the rent of good land varied from one to one and a half rupee per bigha, and now (1836) the assessment is 2, 3 or 4 rupees per bigha, and can seldom be fully levied without the ruin, both to raiyat and the zamindar”.³⁵ According to Heber³⁶ on the other hand, rent per bigha of the land was around 4 rupees per bigha or even more.³⁷

Over and above that, around 1780, there were four big revenue collectors who collected bulk of the Nawab’s land revenue. According to Barnett,³⁸ Almas Ali Khan collected 23.2% of the total jama, Ain-ud-din Khan 17.9%, Bhawani Singh 13.9% and Mahmud Husain Khan 7.8%. Meean Almas Ali Khan deserves

³⁴ Elliot, p.137-139.

³⁵ Butter, p.54.

³⁶ He toured the upper provinces of India in 1824-25.

³⁷ Heber, Reginald, *Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India, from Calcutta to Bombay, 1824-25*, London, 1838, pp.414-415.

³⁸ Barnett, *North India between Empires*, p.186.

special mention, as he has been discussed by Elliot, Sleeman and other authors of the nineteenth century.

Almas Ali was the son of a Jat cultivator near Hoshiarpur in Punjab, and was a eunuch by birth. He was bought by Nawab Ishak Khan of Sholapur, and when Shuja-ud-daula married that nobleman's daughter,³⁹ he formed part of her dowry. Being a man of great talent and learning, Bahu Begum soon made him the manager of her estates in Gonda and Faizabad. Her son Asaf-ud-daula affectionately called him 'Mamu' (maternal uncle) and as soon as Asaf-ud-daula came to throne in 1775, gave him the management of a territory which produced a revenue of nearly a million sterling⁴⁰ Asaf-ud-daula did this by displacing Achul Singh from Baiswara district. Almas Ali was in control of the region south of Awadh and lower doab. Here he built a town and named it Meeangunj. Almas Ali and his agents collected revenue through the tehsildars (also called amils), as per the rent rolls, and after defraying all the expenses, sent the balance with their accounts to Lucknow. Several travellers who visited Awadh in late eighteenth century, shower praises on Almas Ali for the excellent management of his territory. In 1799, a company Chaplain Rev. William Tennant, toured the Doab and reported that Almas Ali's territory was the best cultivated and most populous of the Nawab's dominions.⁴¹ Sleeman has also observed that Almas Ali kept the

³⁹ Later she came to be known as Bahu Begum.

⁴⁰ Elliot, p.124.

⁴¹ Barnett, p.172.

life and property of people secure and encouraged and protected the cultivators, so that his time was considered a golden age by the population of the Doab.⁴²

In 1801, Saadat Ali ceded half his territory to the company, and in turn got a free hand in the remaining half. He proceeded to rearrange the districts and introduce a new revenue system. The parganas of Sandila, Sandee Palee and Shahabad were taken away from Khairabad and made into a separate chakla,⁴³ called as the Shah-i-rah or the highroad chakla. Later on, it was divided again into two separate jurisdictions, one chakladar residing at Sandila and the other one at Sandee.⁴⁴ Lucknow Sarkar was completely broken up. Baiswara was made into a nizamat, having three chaklas i.e. Haidergarh, Rai Bareilly and Poorwa. The Meeangunj chakla was later broken up into two parts, with one chakladar residing at Meeangunj and the other at Russolabad.⁴⁵

Saadat Ali also reorganized the army after the fashion of the company's Native Regiments, with the same degrees of rank for the officers, though with different titles. The army – infantry, cavalry and artillery – was posted in each chakla. A vakeel or a counsel remained at Lucknow to defend any suit or refute any charge which might be brought against the Regiment. The troops in a chakla

⁴² Sleeman, *A Journey through the Kingdom of Oude in 1849-1850*, Vol.I, Lucknow, 1989, p.321.

⁴³ The word Chakla had been applied in Akbar's time to tracts corresponding to Sircars. In Awadh, the 4 large districts during Saadat Ali's reign, i.e. Baraich, Khairabad, Sultanpur and Baiswara, were called as Nizamats. The word Chakla was given to the smaller ones i.e. Derriabad, Sandee, Sundeela, Meeangunj, Rasolabad etc.

⁴⁴ Elliot, pp.131.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.132.

were at the disposal of the chakladar, who distributed them in different parganas in proportion of their requirements. In the pargana the troops were to follow the orders of the tehsildar, who was in charge of the pargana. However, the chakladar also kept a large contingent of troops at the chakla headquarters and used them as his escort whenever he moved about in his chakla.

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The system of revenue administration under Saadat Ali (1798-1814) was highly centralized, and worked well as the revenue officials were kept under control by the Lucknow Government. According to Baden Powell, "In the palmy days of the kingdom, it may have been the case that the public welfare was best secured when the state officers dealt directly with the headmen of the villages, and the collections were paid into local treasuries, the system being worked by a graded series of officers, beginning with small local charges, and ending with the government of a large tract of country, the whole under the thorough control of the state".⁴⁶

Sleeman also gives an account of how the common masses of Awadh remembered Saadat Ali's reign even after 30-35 years had passed. "... 40 or 50 years ago, Sir when I used to move about the country, on circuit with Saadut Alee Khan – the then sovereign – as I now move with you, there are many Rajput landholders in Oude, stronger than any that defy the government now; but they dared not then hold their heads so high as they do now. The local officers,

⁴⁶ B.H. Baden Powell, *The Land Systems of British India*, Vol. II, New Delhi, 1974, p.214.



employed by him, were men of ability, experience and character, totally unlike those now employed. Each had a wing of one of the Hon'ble Company's regiments, and some good guns with him, and was ready and able to enforce his master's orders, and the payment of his just demands; but since his death, the local officers have been falling off in character and strength, while the Rajput landholders have risen in pride and power".⁴⁷

Also, "when Saadut Alee made over half of his dominions to the British Government in 1801, he was bound to reduce his military force, and rely altogether upon the support of your government (the British government). He did so, but the forces he retained though small, was good; and while that support was afforded, things went on well – he was a wise man, and made the most of the means he had."⁴⁸

Being a highly centralized system, the revenue assessment and collection system came crashing down after the death of Saadat Ali. The leases that were earlier executed to run for 3 to 5 years, were "granted for not more than a year after 1814; also the rent was fixed at a rate generally 50% above that of former times as to leave the peasants little beyond bare subsistence".⁴⁹ As corruption grew and revenues started falling, the state started shifting towards ijaradari, in order to assure a fixed return. The government officials most often made the revenue

⁴⁷ Sleeman, *Journey through the Kingdom of Oude in 1849-1850*, Vol.II, Lucknow, 1989, pp.112-113.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p.104.

⁴⁹ Butter, p.49.

settlements with the local chieftains and the community brotherhoods. The local magnates remitted a fixed sum to the treasury, while they recovered from the peasants whatever amount they could recover. In most of the cases the peasants were subject to great hardships as the ijaradar collected much more than he paid to the chakladar. Butter however gives an account of the Tiloin estate in chakla Salon, that was under the control of Chattari Rajput family, who did not assess the peasants heavily. Butter describes Tiloin as “one pleasing oasis amidst this widespread social waste”.⁵⁰ The use of force was as important in ijaradari as it was in direct revenue collection by the Nawab’s officials. The regular forces that were maintained for revenue collection were called as *mutaiyanah*. In case these forces were found insufficient, additional troops were recruited to assist the revenue collectors and revenue farmers during the harvesting season. These additional recruits were called as *sehbandi*.⁵¹ Under the ijara or contract system,⁵² the *mutaiyanah* and the *sehbandi* troops were maintained and paid for by the ijaradar themselves. Even the hereditary officers serving in the ijara villages were paid their salaries by the ijaradar.⁵³ In case the crops failed due to natural calamities there was a provision to provide some relief to the ijaradar, in the form of, not insisting for the full amount for which the contract had been made. However, this provision was there only in theory, and during most of the times he had to remit

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.109.

⁵¹ Barnett, p.167.

⁵² This was the chief method of revenue collection after Saadat Ali.

⁵³ The system of contract farming or ijaradari became so popular that the land grantees also started making farming arrangements with the mustajirs in the villages of their grants.

the whole amount. According to Elliott, "A mere collector of revenue had no need to be overbearing, and if cruel he was so out of mere wantonness of cruelty. If the harvest failed or sickness broke out, he had but to stake the impossibility of collection, and the amount was remitted. But a contractor could not do this. No such excuse could be valid from him; he was bound by the strict letter of the bond, to pay up the uttermost farthing. If any one was ground down to take a contract on high terms, or had taken it on speculation (as often happened), without accurate knowledge of the gross rental, he was absolutely forced, in self preservation, to extort more than was due from the tax payers".⁵⁴

The system of *ijaradari* favoured the growth of *taluqdars*, as it was easier for the *chakladars* to deal with large land-owners; it simplified business and made the receipt of revenue safer. However, as the *taluqdars* became powerful, there was also a risk of their going into rebellion. The *chakladar* tried to pacify these powerful *taluqdars* by throwing a sop of an extra village or two at judicious moments. According to Elliott, "in 1814, no estate in Faizabad district paid a revenue of Rs.10,000; in 1856, one estate paid Rs.2 lacs, two paid Rs.70,000 and one Rs.50,000, several Rs.30,000 and so on".⁵⁵

The *taluqdars* who emerged in Awadh after the death of Saadat Ali, belonged either to the old landed elite or belonged to the money lender and

⁵⁴ Elliott, pp.133-134.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.134-136.

merchant class.⁵⁶ Donald Butter⁵⁷ gives an account of the Kanhpuriya Rajputs who held sway over the area of Tiloin estate since Mughal times. They held the estate during the times of Saadat Khan Burhan-ul Mulk and Safdar Jang, though the state got divided among the various decedents. The senior-most descendant, Shakar Singh was granted the title of a Raja, and he paid an amount of Rs.7.5 lakh to the chakladar every year as land revenue. The Raja also had jurisdiction over civil and criminal matters, as well as boundary disputes between zamindars.

Other hereditary taluqdars were the Shaikhzadas of Fatehpur and Lucknow, who continued their hold in the region since the days of the Ain-i-Akbari.⁵⁸ Sleeman also gives an account of the taluqdars of Mehmoodabad who were initially zamindars and had expanded their territory by absorbing estates and villages of their weaker neighbours.⁵⁹

Non-hereditary taluqdars were the ones who had recently become landlords. They included merchants, money lenders and also ijaradars, nazims, chakladars and other officials. Money lenders and traders stood sureties for zamindars and taluqdars for the payment of land revenue. In case the latter accumulated a large debt, the money lenders and traders obtained the taluqas of their debtors. As discussed earlier, Elliott describes how in a chakladar's tent the

⁵⁶ Collectively called as Non-hereditary Taluqdars.

⁵⁷ Donald Butter, *An outline of the Topography and State of the southern districts of Oudh and the Cantonment of Sultanpur*, Calcutta, 1839, pp.109-114.

⁵⁸ *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol.II, p.190.

⁵⁹ *Sleeman*, Vol.II, pp.223-224.

money lender would agree to get the village at the enhanced amount (Rs.1200 according to Elliott) or the original owner would be so much indebted to him that in 3-4 years he would have sold the village to the money lender.⁶⁰

Elliott⁶¹ describes the case of Chundan Lal⁶² who made a great fortune in the nizamat of Baiswara, through his original business of money lending. In 1810, Chundan Lal possessed only three villages in Baiswara district,⁶³ but by 1850 he was a big taluqdar of the area, with influential friends in Lucknow as well as Kanpur. According to Sleeman, Chundan Lal was the most respected person among the money lender class.⁶⁴

Similarly several revenue officials also became big taluqdars. Sleeman gives an account of Bakhtawar Singh and his brother Darshan Singh, of the Sultanpur-Faizabad Nizamat. Bakhtawar Singh was employed as an orderly at Saadat Ali's court, but soon by his influence he got his brother the ijara of Bhadarse and five adjacent villages. The fortunes of the family rose after that and in 1827 they held the ijara for Sultanpur and other districts altogether yielding 59 lakh rupees a year.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Elliott, pp.137-139.

⁶¹ *ibid.*, pp.137-139.

⁶² Chundan Lal was a moneylender and his detailed story is given in Elliot's book.

For a similar change in western Uttar Pradesh, on a larger scale see, K.K. Trivedi, "Changes in Caste-Composition of the Zamindar Class in Western Uttar Pradesh", 1595 Circa 1900, pp.57-60.

⁶³ Elliot, p.139.

⁶⁴ Sleeman, Vol.I, p.269.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol.I, pp.151-152.

The taluqdari rights that the taluqdars enjoyed in their taluqas were different for hereditary and non-hereditary taluqdars. The old hereditary taluqdars, who also happened to be the local potentates of their respective parganas, retained much of their ancient privileges, i.e, they administered justice, decided upon disputes etc., besides collecting revenue. Also, in the course of this revenue management, he looked after the efficient cultivation of his lands.

Once a village was placed in a taluqa, it depended on the circumstances how much right passed to the taluqdar, and how much remained to the villagers. According to Col. Erskine, "it is well known that the rights of the interior proprietors (i.e. the villages comprising the taluqa) will be found in different degrees of vitality. In some the taluqdar has succeeded in obliterating every vestige of independent right and making the former proprietors forget it too. In others... he has reduced them to the condition of mere cultivators. In some cases, though he had originally brought the village under his sway by force or trickery, the taluqdar has permitted the representatives of the old proprietary body to arrange for the cultivation, received a share of the profits, and enjoy 'manorial rights'. In some, again, he has left them in the fullest exercise of their proprietary rights, paying only through him (but at a higher rate to cover his risk and trouble) what they would otherwise have paid direct to the state. These (latter) are what are

called “deposit” villages, the owners of which voluntarily placed themselves under the taluqdar to escape the tyranny of the ‘Nazims’.”⁶⁶

The so called ‘manorial rights’ did not generally lay with the non-hereditary taluqdars, who had acquired the taluqas either by purchase or as a grant. Such taluqdars were concerned mainly with the collection of land revenue in their taluqa.

In addition to taluqdars, sometimes soldiers were paid their salary by the assignment of revenue in certain ilaqas. This system of revenue collection was called as qabz, and had to be adopted against turbulent peasantry. Soldiers who were granted such ilaqas, prepared an account of the money realized and also a statement of the expenses they had incurred in realizing it. Then, they forwarded the balance of money and the vouchers to the government.⁶⁷

Sometimes, to avoid any future trouble, a zamindar of his own free will placed his estate under a military officer or an influential person for collection of rent and payment of state revenues. This system was known as *Jamog*. The zamindar was paid an allowance from the revenues realized in recognition of his proprietary rights. This allowance was called as *nankar*.⁶⁸

Under the influence of his English advisors, Muhammad Ali Shah (1837-42) restored the direct system of revenue collection. The parganas were parcelled

⁶⁶ Col. Erskine, *Oudh Digest of Circulars* in Bader Powell, p.219.

⁶⁷ G.D. Bhatnagar, *Awadh Under Wajid Ali Shah*, Varanasi, 1968, p.174.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.174-75.

out into chaklas, and the revenue of each chakla was managed and collected by officers called nazim or chakladar. However, in a very short time, it was found that these officials were no different than the taluqdars.⁶⁹ A common complaint against the taluqdars was that they exacted large sums of money from the peasants, that was much higher than the revenue they actually paid to the government. According to Sleeman, an uncontrolled official collecting the revenue at the point of the sword and under fire of his guns, was not a whit better than the systems of leases of taluqas.⁷⁰ The revenue collectors exacted much in the form of cesses and presents over what they paid into the treasury – as anyone else. The use of force was generally resorted to. When Sleeman passed through the district of Sandila, he observed that the amil was in possession of twelve guns. Although the services of the troops and artillery was always needed for the collection of revenue, they were never kept in a working condition. Revenue collection with such disorganized and non-professional force was always harsh, and some soldiers were “ready to fight for the sake of plunder alone”.⁷¹ Sleeman also charges the revenues collectors with promoting violence in the region. In one incident, Khwaja Muhammad – the amil of Muhammadi district – wanted to increase the revenue demand of a village, which the leasee refused to pay. However, another Rajput taluqdar of the area (Rehreea region) agreed to pay the enhanced amount and got the lease. This led to

⁶⁹ Baden Powell, pp.213-14.

⁷⁰ Sleeman, Vol.II, pp.206-7.

⁷¹ Ibid., Vol.II, pp.2-3.

a lot of plunder and devastation in the area, as the Rajput taluqdar attacked the village, killing the previous zamindar's brother and two sons.⁷²

This system also gave rise to banditry. The main body of bandits comprised peasants who had suffered because of the unscrupulous revenue demands of the chakladars, and still worse, the soldiers whose pay had not been paid. Heber while moving from Kanpur to Lucknow observed a state of siege at the very gates of Lucknow. "A large sum of money, said to be 30,000 rupees, on its way to the treasury at Lucknow, had attracted a number of the neighbouring peasantry, who were assembled outside the walls with their weapons, waiting for the departure of the treasure, while sentries were posted by the escort on all the old towers, and the gates were fast closed".⁷³ As a result of this pathetic law and order condition, economic activity was severely curtailed. Whenever the amils or chakladars failed to collect the stipulated amount of land revenue, they tried to extract it from merchants and money lenders. It was for this reason that many money lenders of Rae Bareli district having substantial capital worth upto Rs.4 lakh left the kingdom of Awadh and migrated to the neighbouring British territories i.e. Kanpur, Gorakhpur, Farukhabad and Banaras.⁷⁴

However, the peasantry, that could not migrate elsewhere had to suffer all kinds of excesses at the hands of the revenue officials and the soldiers. According

⁷² Ibid, Vol.II, pp.84-85.

⁷³ Heber, pp.371-72.

⁷⁴ Butter, pp.85-86.

to Sleeman, while he was passing through the districts of Sandeelah Bangar and had encamped in the village named Sakin, few villagers reported to him that his soldiers had plundered their stock of straw. On enquiry Sleeman was told that this was an established practice in this region, that all villages near the road are plundered of straw and all those within ten miles of the place where the soldiers encamp for a week or fortnight, are plundered in the same way.⁷⁵

The East India company was a major player in the politics of Awadh and it is quite expected that they pulled the strings in revenue matters also. One of the greatest source of interference by the Resident was because of the presence of several soldiers from Awadh in the company's army. Whenever any sepoy was a party to a land dispute, the Resident would be more than happy to intervene on his behalf. Sleeman describes an incident involving a retired Subedar major – Shaikh Mahmood Ali. He had acquired the possession of a village from his powerful neighbour's estate, with the help of the Resident. However, he soon found that he was unable to get the cultivators to till his newly acquired land. The zamindar who was evicted had a large force and threatened to kill anyone who cultivated the land for the Subedar Major. Sleeman admits that when it comes to the company's sepoys, most of the time the Resident does not ascertain facts before intervening on the behalf of the Sepoys. 'Such cases', according to Sleeman, 'are very numerous'.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Sleeman, Vol.II, pp.10-14.

⁷⁶ Ibid., Vol.I, pp.283-285.

Towards the end of the Nawabi rule the hold of rulers had certainly weakened and the state was not able to discharge its various functions satisfactorily. At the law and order front the situation had deteriorated to such an extent that most of the people moved around fully armed; even the treasure of the state could not be transported safely. In the countryside the revenue officials and the army used extremely harsh methods to extract revenue from the peasantry. According to Butter, "During the reign of Saadut Ali Khan, a single canon shot could not be fired by a Chakladar without being followed by immediate enquiry from Lucknow, as to its causes – now a Chakladar may continue firing for a month without question".⁷⁷ Money lenders also shifted their base to the neighbouring British territory, so that non-agricultural economic activity also took a plunge.

The reign of Wajid Ali Shah was brought to an end by the British and after the revolt of 1857, the British Crown took possession of the reigns of India. In the United Province of Agra and Awadh, it was decided that the revenue settlement be made with the taluqdars, provided they became at once the adherents to the British rule. It was decided not to interfere with his actual village collections. In respecting the rights of 'old possession', no injury was intended to be done to the zamindars, who were to be protected from extortion. In case the 'manorial rights' lay with the zamindar, they were to be retained with the natural possessor of these rights. This arrangement was expected to lead to the speedy pacification of the province. As all proprietary rights were forfeited by the confiscation order of

⁷⁷ Butter, p.102.

March 1858, and no person had any valid claim to any portion of the property he formerly possessed, Government had a legal title, apart from political reasons, to make its settlement with any person who would become a staunch supporter of the British rule, and materially aid the British authorities in re-establishing order in the province.⁷⁸

The summary settlement of 1858, was made for a period of three years, and was supposed to remain in force till a detailed settlement could be carried out. While conferring the rights on holders, claims of all parties were duly weighed, their conduct during the revolt, and their relations as regards the taluqdars, were fully considered; the decision in each case received the confirmation of Chief Commissioner, and was to be considered final and lasting. The taluqdars were ordered to submit their arms and destroy their forts.⁷⁹

The British therefore ended up recognizing two classes proprietors in one estate i.e. taluqdars and zamindars, the latter being intermediate between taluqdars and the peasantry.

The demands of the company from the Awadh regime was a great burden on the latter. The method of revenue collection in Awadh was to a great extent dictated by the huge demands of the Company. The result of such demands was devastating on the peasants, and also led to general deterioration of law and order in the kingdom.

⁷⁸ Rajkumar Sarvadhikari, *The Taluqdari Settlement in Oudh*, Calcutta, 1882, pp.16-17.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.24-25.

CHAPTER II

THE ART AND CRAFTS

Utilitarian use notwithstanding, industrial handicrafts such as textiles, embroidery, metal works etc. are designed and produced for their aesthetic sense and are used as a symbol of social prestige. The quality of a work of art is determined by the caliber of its creator, by his/her intelligence, personal and social sensitivity, energy, dedication and technical competence. Although any work of art is personal and unique to the artist, the role of a patron is also quite important. Just like an artist, a patron also has special and individual tastes and the work of art reflects them.

The establishment of the kingdom of Awadh provided a great impetus to arts and crafts. Dyers of cotton and wool came over from Delhi and Agra and settled in Lucknow under the auspices of the Nawabs. Calico-printers were invited from Farukhabad and dyers of silk from Benaras under promises of liberal rewards. Besides, royal tastes also gave a boost to handicrafts.¹

Not only by their patronage, but also by regulating trade, the Awadh rulers supported the handicraft industry. The penetration of cheap industrial goods from

¹ During the reign of Wajid Ali Shah, on certain occasions admittance to the fancy fair at Kaiser Bagh was not allowed except to persons dressed in saffron-yellow garments. This rule was often so strictly enforced that the name of Kaiser Bagh (the King's garden) became corrupted to Kesar Bagh (the saffron garden). From Saiyad Muhammad. Hadi's *A Monograph on Dyes and Dyeing*, in North-Western provinces and Oudh, Allahabad, 1896, p.3.

Europe was prevented to a large extent by the Nawabs. Although there was a provision of free trade in the treaty of Allahabad, Shujauddaulah strongly and consistently resisted it, and in 1773 the East India Company was blocked from entering the markets of Awadh. European technology in industrial arts did not find many buyers in Awadh. In 1795-96, about Rs.50 lakh worth of goods were exported from Awadh to Bengal; 60% of Awadh exports were constituted by cotton piece goods.²

Besides trade, the consumption by the Nawabs and the elite groups boosted handicraft production in Awadh. In 1796-97, Nawabs' private expenses amounted to a huge total of Rs.74,41,732-8-0.³ The income of the kingdom of Awadh came from several sources, the most important being land revenue. A chakla (unit into which Awadh was divided), yielded a revenue ranging from Rs.60,000 to Rs.24 lacs.⁴ In the nineteenth century, most of the districts of Awadh were under Amanee system, that essentially yielded a fixed revenue to Lucknow. The following is the list of yearly revenue yielded by the different chaklas:⁵

² Rudrangshu Mukherjee, *Trade and Empire in Awadh 1765-1804*, Calcutta, 1977, pp.15-18.

³ Purendu Basu, *Oudh and the East India Company 1785-1801*, Lucknow, 1943, p.107.

⁴ Papers relating to the affairs of Oude (1834), p.36.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.37.

Chakla or District	Average Jumma (Jama) (in Rs.)
1. Sutanpore	2215000
2. Manekpore	109000
3. Puchumrat	452000
4. Selair	611000
5. Sundeslah	1465000
6. Bainswarah	1505000
7. Kheerabad	2100000
8. Mahomdes	512000
9. Buddooserace	61000
10. Baraich	1478000
11. Dewa Sitturkan	490000
12. Durreabad	411187
13. Bangermous	512000
14. Gosaeengunge	278000
15. Ramnuggur	137000
16. Nowabgunge	95000
Total	12431187

The Bazaars and gunges yielded a revenue of Rs.2,14,000 as tax, *saer* and custom duties brought in Rs.200,000, newspapers 1,10,000 and other miscellaneous sources Rs.1,71,000.⁶

This tremendous amount of wealth was the reason for the richness and lavishness of the Nawabi court. The famous 'lakhnavi' culture was to a great extent supported by this wealth.

⁶ Ibid., p.37.

This chapter aims at presenting an account of the various handicrafts produced in the different parts of Awadh. Cotton fabrics constituted, perhaps, the most important product of Awadh. Production centers were widespread and provided employment to a large number of families. According to GCM Birdwood,⁷ in the Nawabganj tehsil of Barabanki district, there were 1910 weavers (in 1877), who weaved 10 denominations of cotton fabrics, namely garhas, gazis, dhotis, mamudis, and kasas of country twist, and tapatis, charkanas, adotars, susis, and bilras of Lancashire twists. In the Kheri district, cotton weaving was pursued by 3155 and cotton printing by 990 artisans. Despite the downfall of the Nawabi rule and the opening up of Awadh markets to foreign competition, “cotton printing”, according to Birdwood, “still continued in Lucknow”; “Lucknow Chintzes were far superior in colour, the Kukrail and Baita rivers being famous for the purity of the tints their waters give to the deep-toned dyes of India”.

The only kind of cotton that was grown in Nawabi Awadh was the short-stapled variety known as ‘Bengals’.⁸ Besides local production, cotton was also imported into Awadh. Different types of fabrics were produced from the cotton. These fabrics differed with respect to the fineness of the yarn, colour and their arrangement. The various patterns on the fabric were produced by the use of different coloured yarns or by both these means, and still more, by specially

⁷ GCM Birdwood, *Industrial Arts of India*, London, 1971, pp.247-48.

⁸ C.A. Silberrad, *Monograph on Cotton Fabrics produced in North-Western Provinces and Oudh*, Allahabad, 1898, p.3.

interweaving yarn on a set system as the weaving of the fabric proceeded.⁹ In addition, needle work was also used to produce different patterns.¹⁰

Garha and *gazi* fell under the category of plain woven and uncoloured materials. Generally *garha* was finer than the *gazi*. According to the quality, the number of threads varied from about 20 to 40 per inch. As such fabrics were never bleached, they were always pale fawn in colour. Such fabrics were generally used by the poorer classes for clothing, sheets and as wrapping material.¹¹

Dhotar was a similar but coarser material, but was more loosely woven than *gara*. It was used for clothing. *Mahmudi*, *Sakkan*, *tallua* and *tukri* were all very similar to *garha*, but were of a slightly better quality.

Chandaha was very similar to *garha*, but was twice as thick. *Darab* was also similar but had two bordering red stripes that were half an inch wide; in *domarga* the strips were one inch broad.

Girant, *addhi* and *tanzeb* were plain woven-muslins of varying degrees of fineness; *girant* being the coarsest,¹² *tanzeb* the finest. *Addhi* was produced in Lucknow, where it formed the ground material for the *chikan* and *kamdani* work.

A special type of fabric called as *iktara* was made only in Lucknow. After weaving the fabric was bleached, heavily starched and well beaten with mallets.

⁹ This method is used to make jamdani.

¹⁰ C.A. Silberrad, *Monograph on Cotton Fabrics*, p.27.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.27.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.28.

Dobra was a loosely woven coarse material, having a coarse check pattern and mostly used for floor covering. Other types had striped pattern, or both stripes as well as checks.

Another famous handicraft work was Jamdani. It was a hand-woven figured muslin, that was made in Tanda and one or two other villages in Faizabad district. Jamdani work is said to have started during the reign of Nawab Saadat Ali Khan.¹³ In Jamdani, the body of the fabric was a fine muslin, quite similar to *tanzeb*, the pattern was interwoven while on the loom, and was made up by a series of weft threads; between each pair of weft threads a pair of threads of the figure to be woven was put in, the heddles being raised, or depressed after one had been inserted. These were inserted between the requisite number of warp threads by a very small spool of fine yarn. Jamdani art according to Silberrad was dying out in Awadh, and Maharaja of Ayodhya was said to be the sole purchaser in Awadh.

Chikankari, for which Lucknow is so justly famous was introduced and matured in the reign of the Nawabs. Dacca where chikan was produced originally, was left far behind in the quality of work by the artisans of Lucknow. Chikankari is an embroidery with a delicate white thread, and is generally done on white muslin, called *addhi*. In chikankari there are six stitches, which can be found in practically every garment prepared in the traditional style. The chief varieties of patterns used are¹⁴:

¹³ Ibid., p.32.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.33.

'*Murri*' – In this pattern, the thread is sewn on so as to produce an oblong raised lump, somewhat the shape of a minute carrot.

'*Jali*' – It is a network of holes, is made by tightly drawing together the threads of the muslin.

'*Ba chia*' – In this the thread sewn on forms a grain-like appearance similar to *Murri*, but very much smaller and circular or square.

'*Tuppa*' – It is a set of straight parallel stitches used in filling in large pieces in the pattern.

'*Zanjiri*' – It is a set of chain like stitches when long lines are required.

'*Pechni*' – They are long continued lines, but not chain like.¹⁵

When chikankari is done in gold and silver threads, it is called as *kamdani*. In this a hollow silver-gilt wire is used. A very fine needle and thread is passed through the hollow of the wire and the wire is stitched on to the muslin which is kept stretched horizontally on a framework.

Closely associated with the fabrics production is the dyeing industry. According to Saiyed Muhammad Hadi, "the dyeing of cotton is carried on almost all over the United Province and comprises the colouring of unspun cotton fibre or yarn and of the woven fabric". Cotton wool was dyed only occasionally and almost invariably with a red dye and when so dyed it was used chiefly for

¹⁵ George Watt, *Indian Art at Delhi 1903, Being the official catalogue of Delhi exhibition 1902-1903*, Calcutta, 1903, pp.399-401.

spreading in quilts. Dyeing of cotton cloth was the most important branch of the dyeing industry, and was done by two classes of Muslim artists,¹⁶ i.e.

- Rangrez, who dyed fabrics in almost all plain colours.
- Nilgars, who dyed only with indigo.

The process of dyeing involved washing or *dhulai*, followed by bleaching or *merai*. Then dyeing or *rangai* was done.

The dyes in most cases were obtained from vegetable sources. The dye of safflower, for example, was obtained from the flowers of safflower. The flowers were finely powdered and sifted. The powder was sprinkled with water or oil, and after having been kept in this state for some time, was rubbed with the hands, and the yellow colouring matter was eliminated by straining. After the yellow colour had been completely washed away, an alkali was mixed with the powdered flowers. The alkali that was used was generally the ash of *bajra*. The alkali was well mixed with the flower powder, and rubbed with hands. The paste was again placed on the strainer, and when water was poured over it, it dropped through, in the form of deep-red solution. The cloth was dyed by dipping in this red solution, the depth of the shade produced depended on the number of times it was dipped and dried.¹⁷

¹⁶ Saiyid Muhammad Hadi, p.4

¹⁷ L. Liotard, Memorandum on Dyes of Indian Growth and Production, Calcutta, 1881, p.67.

Similarly, there were different methods for obtaining blue dye, yellow dye and so on, from various plant sources. In dyeing with indigo, the cloth was always dipped in the fermentation vat and moved about in the liquid until it had absorbed the required amount of colouring matter. In other cases the dye bath was prepared with a decoction and infusion or a solution of the dye stuff was employed.¹⁸ The fabric to be dyed was dipped, soaked, steeped and occasionally even boiled in the dye liquid. Sometimes it was necessary to dye the cloth successively in different dye liquids which were kept in separate baths, and in the majority of such cases it was the practice to dry the piece after dyeing in each bath. Dyeing was followed by the process of fixing the dye on the fabric, and also to brighten or intensify the colour, specially in the case of safflower and turmeric. This process was called as *khatai dena* i.e. dipping the dyed fabric in an acid bath, the acids commonly used being infusions of mango rind and tamarind fruit. Starching with wheat flour, clubbing and finally polishing or Ghutai followed fixing of dye.¹⁹

Natural dyes were in vogue till 1860s when European magenta dye appeared in the Indian market and proved to be a formidable rival to safflower. Later on, the introduction of a large number of other European dyes caused a revolution in the dyeing industry of Awadh and U.P.²⁰ During the times of the Nawabs, natural dyes completely dominated the dyeing industry. For blue and its

¹⁸ Ibid., p.4.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp.4-5.

²⁰ Ibid., p.5.

shades, indigo was used. Two different kinds of Indigo vats were used in Awadh – one was called the '*khari*' or alkaline vat, and the other '*mitha*' or sweet vat, where sugar was used. The sweet vat was commonly in use among the dyers of Lucknow.²¹

For red and its shades, safflower was the main dye stuff. Yellow and its shades were obtained from turmeric, flowers of Harsinghar (*Nystanthus arbortristis*), flowers of Tesu (*Butea frandosa*) and flowers of Tun (*Cedrela Toona*).²² A series of shades of grey and drab are commonly produced through the agency of chabulic myrobalan and green vitriol. The chief shades produced were:

- Gul-i-sarrai or sarkandai (silver grey)
- Dudhia Khaki (light slate)
- Khaki or jastai (grey)
- Kathia Khaki (slate drab)
- Dudhia Kanjai (Pearl grey)
- Fakhali (Dove grey or stone drab)
- Kanjai (smoke or ash drab)

Different centers of dyeing were known for producing different shades. e.g. Lucknow was known for producing Gul-i-sarrai, Dudhia Khaki and jastai shades which were distinctly deeper than in other regions in Awadh.²³

²¹ Ibid., p.7.

²² Thomas Wardle, *Report on the Dyes and Tans of India*, Calcutta, 1887, pp.3-22.

²³ Saiyid Muhammad Hadi, pp.14-15.

In addition to simple colours, compound colours were also produced using two or more dyes. Blue and red dyes were combined in various proportions to produce different shades of purple, violet, lilac, heliotrope and lavender. Lucknow was known for producing these different shades, which had local names e.g. Kokia or kauriyala for lavender, kasni for heliotrope, Abbasi for magenta and so on.²⁴

Compound colours of yellow and red were produced by dipping the fabric successively in the solution of a yellow dye, shahab (obtained from safflower) and acidulated water. Yellow dye used was generally *tun*, turmeric or *harsinghar*.

Compound colours of yellow and blue were produced by the mixture of *Butea frandosa*, turmeric and indigo. Shades of fast green were obtained using indigo, myrobalan and acetate of iron. The chief shades of fast green were *sabz* (green), *sabz kahi* (mystle green), *zamurradi* (peacock green), *tarbuzi* (bottle green), *telia mashi* (olive green) etc.²⁵

Compound greys were produced using myrobalan, catechu and lime. Fakhtai (dove grey), Pistai (grey) and Shikari (olive grey) were the various shades produced in Awadh.

Black colour was produced using *kath* or iron liquor. Browns were produced using catechu. Catechu brown was called as *kathai* in Lucknow, and was produced using myrobalan, ferrous sulphate, red ochre, catechu and lime. Other

²⁴ Ibid., pp.15-16.

²⁵ Ibid., pp.19-21.

shades of brown were shutri (light catechu brown), sabz kishmishi (nut brown) and surkh kishmishi (snuff brown).²⁶

The name *Amaua* applies to a series of shades, representing the various colours assumed by the mango fruit during the various stages of its development. *Sunahra Amaua* shade was produced using turmeric, pomegranate rind, alum, red ochre or safflower. *Zard Amaua* of Lucknow was produced using turmeric, red ochre, trin (*cedrela toona*) flowers, shahal and alum. Lucknow was also famous for kishmishi Amaua, Sunehra Amaua, and Amaua Gobrai.²⁷

Other colours that were produced in Lucknow were *Aqil Khani* or drab, *Unnabi* or bronze, *Telia Kakrezi* or dark maroon, *chunautia* or chocolate and *Makoiya* or dark plum.

Another industry closely related to dyeing was that of calico printing, also known as *kapre ki chhapai*. According to Hadi, “a large number of Kanauj artisans shifted to Farukhabad during the rule of the Nawabs, and made considerable improvements in the industry under their patronage. From Farukhabad the art was imported to and gradually established in Lucknow under encouragement from the Nawabs of Awadh, and there it acquired the perfection for which Lucknow enjoys the present reputation”.²⁸ The materials used for calico printing were either

²⁶ Ibid., pp.23-24.

²⁷ Ibid., pp.25-26.

²⁸ Ibid., p.44.

English cloth,²⁹ garha (coarse cloth) or country cloth.³⁰ Calicos were printed in two different styles i.e. the superior *tel chol* style, in which bleaching was done with an emulsion which was made from a fixed vegetable oil and an alkali. In the inferior *katha* style, the cloth was not bleached at all.³¹ Both types of work were done in Lucknow and Farukhabad. The first method was used for the superior English cloth especially Nainsukh. *Katha* style was used for coarse cloth or country cloth. According to Birdwood, "Cotton printing, however, still continues to be a successful calling in the city of Lucknow, although Manchester Chintzes sell for a shilling the yard, while those printed on the spot cost 20 pence the yard. Formerly the weavers of Tanda in the Fyzabad district used to produce the most delicate muslins, but now they are seldom made".³²

Besides these two main styles of printing, *khema ki chhapai* was also done in Lucknow. The cloth used were *Desi garha* and *dhoti*, or *dosuti*.

Wool dyeing was confined to shawls and was done by people known as *doshala farosh*.³³ The dyeing of woollen yarn, as distinguished from woollen cloth was done on a comparatively large scale. The yarn so dyed was used for carpet making. After initial treatment, wool was dyed using *Kasis* (Ferrous sulphate) for

²⁹ Called as malmal, nainsukh, lattha and markin.

³⁰ Called as gazi, or adhotar.

³¹ Saiyid Muhammad Hadi, p.45.

³² G.C.M. Birdwood, *Industrial Arts of India*, p.248.

³³ According to Hadi they had originally come from Punjab and Kashmir.

black colour,³⁴ sulphate of indigo for blue,³⁵ *Ritha* (*Acacia concinna*) and sulphate of indigo for *Asmani* (pale blue). *Sausani* (purple) colour was produced using lac, muriatic acid and sulphate of indigo;³⁶ *Badami* (orange) using *lodh* (*symplocos racemosa*) and *khar* (alkali);³⁷ green using *tesu* (flowers of *Butea frandosa*), *lodh* and *sajji* (crude carbonate of soda); yellow green using indigo, turmeric and muriatic acid; *sabzi pakki* (olive green) using *harsinghar* flowers, *babul* pods and sulphate of iron.³⁸ *Surkh* (red) was produced using lac and muriatic acid; *Malla garha* (strawberry) using lac, sulphuric acid and *lodh* (*symplocos racemosa*).³⁹ *Khatmali* (dark brown) was produced using lac, sulphuric acid, *lodh* and dry mango rind; *shutri* (nut brown) using myrobalan, flowers of *Butea frandosa* and catechu. *Pistai* (lemon yellow) was produced using flowers of *butea frandosa* (*tesu*), *babul* pods and *kasis* (sulphate of iron); *Gandhaki* (sulphur yellow) using flowers of *Butea frandosa*, and *Pamba* (yellow) using turmeric and sulphuric acid.⁴⁰

Though not on a scale as in Banaras, silk dyeing was done on a smaller scale in Lucknow. The dyers engaged in dyeing of silk with lac belonged to low

³⁴ L. Liotard, Memorandum on Dyes of Indian Growth and Production, p.117.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.114.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.120.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.126.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.124.

³⁹ Hadi, pp.37-41.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.37-41.

caste Hindus known as *lahera*. Dyeing was mainly done using lac, *kamila* fruit powder, *asbarg* (*Delphinium ajacis*) and indigo.⁴¹

Silk fabrics were not produced to a large extent in Awadh; their production centered only in Banaras and to some extent in Agra. However, there were several collateral industries connected with silk fabrics. Ribbon-and-fringe-makers were called as *Patwas*, and they also strung beads and jewellery, made small ladies purses (*batwas*), along with *rakhis* and *anantas*. While *Patwas* were Hindus, *Ilaqebands* were Muslims. The latter were mostly based in and around Lucknow. *Ilaqebands* were concerned mainly with the manufacture of expensive miscellaneous articles of silk i.e. *Palang-dori* (strings for bed covers), *Izarbands* (*paijama* string girdles), *Naras* (similar strings for *Lhengas*), *Jhalars* (Fringers), *phuls* (pompoms), *phundnas* (tassels) for fezzes and other articles of dress or upholstery.⁴² *Patwas* and *Ilaqebands* generally used *kachar* which was obtained from waste rags of silk collected together in large cities by a special class of dealers called as *parachiyas*. Another source of silk was *Kattan*; ordinarily when a silk weaver prepared a particular pattern of silk fabric on his loom he left about 12-13 inches of waste threads unwoven; this silk was called as *Kattan*.⁴³

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp.41-44.

⁴² Yusuf Ali, *A Monograph on Silk Fabrics produced in North-Western Provinces and Oudh*, Govt. Press, Allahabad, 1900, p.66.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.66.

A great quantity of silk was also consumed in the ornamentation of *huqqa* snakes (*naichas*), and the class of people employed in this industry was called as *Naichabands*.

Ropes entwined with silk were used for *sawan swings*, for nose strings of bullocks, and for tents made of *zarbaft* (cloth of gold). Embroidering with silk on caps of velvet or silk was another industry connected with silk.⁴⁴

Shawl weaving was chiefly in the hands of the Kashmiris who had settled in Lucknow in the area called as Kashmiri Muhalla, during the times of the Nawabs. Besides shawls, woollen carpets, *Namdass* (made of unspun wool and used as bed and floor rugs, prayer mats, horse cloths, saddles etc.) *Kammals* (blankets) etc. were also manufactured, though on a smaller scale.⁴⁵ Birdwood has also mentioned the existence of pashmina shawl weaving in Lucknow.⁴⁶

As precious metals were not found in Awadh, they were imported from other regions. Apart from imports, gold and silver was also obtained by melting down old ornaments, coins, lace etc. Silver melted down from old ornaments, lace etc., and refined was commonly known as *takya* or *tapiya ki chandi*. Its price varied with quality. Lucknow *takya* was renowned for its purity.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Ibid., p.67.

⁴⁵ A.W. Pim, *Monograph on Woollen Fabrics in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh*, Allahabad, 1898, pp.11-13.

⁴⁶ G.C.M. Birdwood, *Industrial Arts of India*, p.281.

⁴⁷ A.P. Charles, *A Monograph on gold and Silver Ware Produced in the United Province*, Allahabad, 1905, p.3.

The common ornaments were the same in the villages as they were in the cities, the only difference was that, in the villages the *Sunar* not only made the ornaments, but also engraved them, set them with stones, and finished them himself, whereas in towns and cities there were special workmen for separate processes. A few common ornaments are as follows:

- *Karanphul* (ear flowers)
- *Jhumka* – It is a pendant to the *Karanphul*
- *Arsi* – It is a thumb ring of large size, that carries a small mirror for the use of the wearer.
- *Hamel* – it is a necklace, generally of coins, with a pan-leaf pendant.
- *Jhanjhan* – It is an anklet made hollow and containing some shot that makes noise as the wearer moves.⁴⁸

The manufacture of spangles, tinsel, gold and silver lace, gold and silver thread for embroidery, and gold and silver brocades, needed the production of gold and silver wire. The process of production of wire started with the *Kandler* or *raini* or *guli*, which was a bar of silver, one cubit long, and something like a pencil sharpened at both ends. There was a sort of mint in the chowk at Lucknow which was maintained by the *gotawalas*, who were a community of dealers in gold and

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.11-13.

silver lace. This mint was called as the *Kandla Kachahri*.⁴⁹ The *kandlakash* drew out a wire from the *kandla* using a special apparatus.

The so-called 'gold wire' was not made of solid gold. It was a silver wire with a coating of gold. According to William Hoey the gold was added by "placing it at the plate, and it adheres to the *kandla* as it is drawn through".⁵⁰ Other method was to wrap the silver *kandla* in a covering of gold leaf (*sona patra*). This covering was fastened on with twine and the *kandla* was then placed in the fire. It was taken out when red-hot and when the twine had disappeared, while the gold leaf had become welded on to the silver wire.⁵¹

The wire, when the *kandlakash* had done with it, was still moderately thick. The *tarkash* reduced it in some cases almost to the fineness of silk. It is stated that a *kandlakash* turned out 10-12 yards to the tola, and the *tarkash* 900 yards.

The *tarkash* delivered the wire round, but flattened wire like very thin or narrow ribbon was often required and this was prepared by the *tar-dabkaya*.⁵² The flattened wire was called as *Kamdani ka tar*.

⁴⁹ William Hoey, *A Monograph on Trade and Manufactures in North Western Province*. Lucknow, 1880, pp.1-13.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ A.P. Charles, *A Monograph on Gold and Silver Ware Produced in the United Provinces*, pp.14-15.

⁵² Ibid., pp.15-16.

Salma was also a kind of wire which was used in embroidery. It was a simple wire curled into spiral form. *Salma* could be *Kora* or round, *Dabka hua salma* or flat, or *Chaupahal* i.e. four sided.

Gijai was a twisted wire but thicker than the above mentioned ones.

Tar ka gokhru was made up of two flat wires twisted one over the other and bent at intervals.

Tarang was a broad, flat wire ribbon done up in coils. The small stars or spangles used for embroidery were called *sitara*. *Katori* was a tiny cup of metal used for embroidery.⁵³

Kalabatun was prepared by twisting the silver or gold wire around the silk thread. The former was called as *Rupa Kalabatun* and the latter *Sona kalabatun*.

An inferior gold thread was made by giving a very light coating of gold and helping out the effect by the use of *haldi* (turmeric) which intensified the pale yellow tinge. This cheap product was called the *rasi kalabatun*.⁵⁴

If the *kalabatun* (either silver or gold) was so closely twisted that the thread was entirely covered by the precious metal, the product was heavier and more costly than when the thread was just visible through the spirals of the wire. This superior *kalabatun* was called as *battan-ka-kalabatun*.

⁵³ Ibid., p.17.

⁵⁴ Yusuf Ali, p.68.

In some cases, the gold or silver wire was not drawn out quite so fine as that used for *kalabatun*; it was flattened and sold as *badla* (flat wire). *Badla* therefore had no thread inside it. It was used in weaving fabrics called as *Tashbadla*.

Trimmings of silk garments consisted generally of *gota-kanari*, *lais* and *zardozi*.

Gota is a narrow fabric in which *badla* formed the warp and silk thread the weft. Depending on the width, *gota* was given different names i.e. *Dhanuk*, *Gota*, *Lachka*, and *Pattha*.

Lais is a narrow fabric in which silk formed the weft, but the warp contained both *badla* and *kalabatun* and sometimes also silk.⁵⁵

Zardozi, also known as *Kar-chob* was worked by stretching a silk fabric tightly on a frame (*adda*). It used *salma*, *sitara* or *katori*, (described earlier). The thread with which these were sown was of silk.⁵⁶

Lucknow was also famous for its gorgeous gold embroidered velvet or *makhmals*, that were used for canopies, umbrellas of dignity, elephants cloths, horse cloths, and caparisons.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp.68-69.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p.69.

⁵⁷ G.C.M. Birdwood, *Industrial Arts of India*, p.282.

Kamkhwabs or *kimkhwabs* are brocades, also known as *zar-baft* (gold-woven) and *mushajjar* (having patterns). If the *kamkhwab* had a ground work of gold threads and a creeper or other pattern of silver thread, it was called *tashi*. A *kamkhwab* that was woven with 3-7 layers of warp threads was called as *tipara*, *chaupara*, to *satpara* i.e. with three, four or seven layers respectively.⁵⁸

Amru is a fabric woven like *kamkhwab* but without *kalabatun*. It is a cheaper fabric as compared to *kamkhwabs*.⁵⁹

Sangi is a fabric with a wavy line (*khanjari*) running along its width produced by the necessary manipulation of the weft thread. *Sangi* derived its name from the fact that two warp threads were treated as one, while weaving this fabric. Each wavy line of *Sangi* stands out like a long stitch on the fabric, while in *Gulbadan* the apparent line was really made up of points. *Gulbadan*'s texture was closer and finer, and therefore more expensive. The characteristic form of *sangi* was green or yellow warp with red weft.⁶⁰

The word *Mashru* means "permitted", and stemmed from the tradition that prohibited that Muslim men from wearing fabrics of pure silk, except at times of war or in the form of narrow borders of dress. To offset this prohibition, *Mashru*

⁵⁸ Ibid., p.86.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p.88.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p.89.

was developed. *Mashru* was a mixed fabric, and had minute *Khanjari* patterns in them.⁶¹

Lucknow was a major center for brass and copper work especially of ornamental ware. The various wares manufactured in Lucknow were:

Badhna – was beaten out of copper and was shaped much like a teapot, having a spout and lid. Lucknow was famous for the manufacture of ornamental *bandhnas*.

Katora – It was similar to a cup but without a handle.

Degchi and *Patili* – They were used for cooking, and generally made of copper.

Sarposti was the cover for *degchi*.

Lagan – It was also made of copper and was shaped like a tray. *Rikabi* was a plate and made of copper.

Abkhura/ Gilas or the glass was generally made of tinned copper.

Seni was a large and generally ornamental tray usually made of copper.

Chilamchi and *Aftaba* (small wash hand basin) were made of brass.

Silafchi, *Pikdan*, *Ugaldan* were used as spittoons and generally made of brass.

Husndan, *Khasdan* and *Pandan* were meant for storing *Pan* and made either of copper or brass.

Fatilsoz or the candle stick was made of brass.

Chiraghdan and *Chaughara* or lampstand was made of brass.

Pichkari and *Ittardan* were vessels to hold rose water generally made of copper.

Gulabpash, *Damkla* were rose water sprinklers of copper or silver.

⁶¹ Ibid., p.90-91.

Kali and *Farshi* were the Huqqa stands made of alloy or silver plated.⁶²

The other articles of metal that were produced in Lucknow during the reign of the Nawabs are as follows:

Bidri work is the name given to vessels of mixed metal (zinc and copper) plated or damascened with patterns of silver. *Bidri* work was introduced into Lucknow by Nawab Asaf-ud-Daula, who brought workmen from Deccan and Murshidabad.⁶³

Bidri articles are generally *surahis*, *huqqahs*, betel boxes, etc. The patterns produced on them were 'fish', 'flower', 'creeper', 'grape leaf' etc.⁶⁴

Zarbuland was very much like *bidri* work, but the birds, flowers etc. or the patterns, were overlaid on the black metal and not let into it.

Kundan is the finest kind of gold, that is beaten into strips, something like gold leaf, after being first reduced to the form of wire, and it was used by the *jariya* or *murassakar* (setter of precious stones) for fixing jewels in their places.

Enamelling is the art of colouring and ornamenting the surface of a metal by fusing over it various mineral substances. The range of colours attainable on gold is much greater than on silver, and still more so than on copper and brass. This peculiarity is to a certain extent overcome by silvering or gilding the surface intended to be enameled. The cloisonné type of enamelling was done in Japan and

⁶² G.R. Dampier, *A Monograph on the Brass and Copper Wares of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh*, Govt. Press, Allahabad, 1894, pp.4-7.

⁶³ A.P. Charles, *A Monograph on Gold and Silver ware Produced in United Province*, p.18.

⁶⁴ George Watt, *Indian Art at Delhi*, p.49.

China. In Lucknow mainly champleve type of enamelling was done. In this the metal was engraved or chased, repoussed or blocked out in such a way as to provide depressions within which the colours could be embedded.⁶⁵ Lucknow was famous under the Nawabs for its minakari. Ornaments were very commonly enamelled on the back, the front being decorated with precious stones and kundan while the surface of the metal was covered with bright coloured enamel.⁶⁶ Enamelling was done mainly on *hukka* bowls, daggers, pan boxes, bangles, glasses, etc.

Lucknow under the Nawabs was also famous for its Ivory work. The various articles of Ivory that were produced by the artisans were combs, toys, requisites for *kalamdans*, articles for applying *surma*, chessmen, paper knives, paper weights, handles for sticks, small boxes etc.⁶⁷ The best work in Ivory was done on tusks having the greatest diameter and that were white in colour.

Ornamental pottery was much in demand during the times of the Nawabs of Lucknow. Four major types of ornamental pottery were produced in Lucknow i.e.

- Plates, cups and saucers ornamented with simple designs in bright unglazed colours, the background being usually blue, plum coloured or salmon coloured and the patterns white.

⁶⁵ Sir George Watt, *Indian Art at Delhi*, p.21.

⁶⁶ A.P. Charles, pp.20-21.

⁶⁷ L.M. Stubbs, *A Monograph on Ivory Carving in North Western Province and Oudh*, Govt. Press, Allahabad, 1900, p.5.

- Trays, plates and vases painted with varnished colours, the background of red ochre, gamboge, aniline purple or cochineal and the designs in white lead, solder or native ink. The centre was generally filled by a drawing of a mosque or fountain surrounded by palms, while the edges were covered with twined leaves and flowers, the whole being protected by a thin coating of varnish which almost gave the appearance of glazed pottery.
- Models of fruits and vegetables – The whole fruit was modelled by a potter by hand, and after being baked received 4-5 coatings of chalky earth, and was then coloured.
- Lucknow figures were made entirely of clay. Moulds were used only for the trunks of the figures.

Besides these ornamental wares, glazed tiles, flower pots and vases of most artistic kind were also manufactured in Lucknow.⁶⁸ Even at the close of nineteenth century, Lucknow exported brilliantly coloured surahis, plates, cups and saucers to the annual value of at least Rs.2000 to all districts of Awadh and to Kanpur, Agra and Bareilly. “The celebrated painted and terracotta Lucknow figures are almost all sent to Tellery and Co. at Delhi, or to a depot at Cawnpore, whence they are exported to Europe”.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ H.R.C. Dobbs, *A Monograph on the Pottery and Glass Industries of the North-Western Province and Oudh*, Allahabad, 1895, pp.16-17.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.22.

Though glass articles were much in demand in Awadh, glass industry was not very important in Awadh, owing to absence of raw materials needed for glass making. Most of the articles of glass were produced from recycled glass. A furnace was used to melt glass and then articles were produced by blowing.⁷⁰

The Nawabs of Awadh were greater patrons of wood-carving in the pre-Lucknow days, before the court was shifted from Faizabad.

The royal palaces in Lucknow did not show much interest in wood carving on the part of Awadh Nawabs. The finely carved screens in Chhatar Manzil are of Punjab workmanship. Sitapur and Bahraich were centers of wood carving mainly on *sal* wood, but the art was certainly not flourishing.⁷¹ Cloth printing industry indirectly supported the wood carving craft by its demand for dies, which were made of *shisham*, mango and ebony, and needed delicate and skillfull workmanship.⁷²

Butter has mentioned the production of salt, soda, saltpetre, gunpowder, arms, cotton, cloth, dye-stuffs, blankets, sugar, paper and glass in Awadh. Salt was manufactured, either by simple evaporation of the water drawn from saline wells,

⁷⁰ Ibid., pp.41-43.

⁷¹ J.L. Maffey, *A Monograph on wood Carving in the United Province of Agra and Oudh*, Allahabad, 1903, pp.22-24.

⁷² Ibid., pp.55-56.

by lixiviation of saliferous earth, or by lixiviation of earth containing both salt, and saltpetre, and subsequent separation of the two ingredients.⁷³

Soda was obtained by scraping off the white efflorescence from the surface of soil, and by subsequent lixiviation, decantation, and evaporation.⁷⁴

Best quality gunpowder was made at Lucknow. The charcoal was obtained from a common jungle shrub called as *rus* (*Justicia adhatoda*). Match locks and swords were also manufactured in the larger towns of Awadh. Best steel bows were made at Marsan, near Lucknow, and were possessed by wealthy people only. Arrows were also made in Lucknow.⁷⁵

Sugar was made chiefly in the eastern part of Awadh. *Gurh* was first made from sugarcane juice and by subsequent processes, the colour and acidity of *gurh* was removed.

Coarse paper was also manufactured at Lucknow and Bahraich from jute fibres. Ink came from Lucknow in the form small cakes.⁷⁶

During the rule of the Nawabs in Lucknow, a new type of shoe called as *khurdnau* with a short toe-cap was designed which became a favourite of the people. These shoes could be made very light weight, but for the masses and villagers they were heavy. The *Khurdnau* shoes were made of brocade velvet for

⁷³ Donald Butter, *Outlines of the Topography and Statistics of the Southern Districts of Oudh and the Cantonment of Sultanpur – Oudh*, Calcutta, 1839, pp.72-73.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.74.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.79-80.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.81.

the dry season, and for rainy season they were made of shagreen. In Lucknow the shoe makers made efforts to beautify the shoes; they were adorned with patterns in gold and silver thread and decorated with brocaded tassels. In addition, the *ghatela* shoe, on the lines of the Persian-style *kafsh* was also common in Lucknow, and was worn by the rich gentry. Another group of artisans who were connected with shoe-making were those who made *aughi*, embroidery in gold, silver and sometimes coloured threads. The *aughi* work of Lucknow was known for its delicacy and beauty.⁷⁷

Lucknow was also an important center for the manufacture of rose water. *Itr* of various kinds were made from roses, *khaskhas*, *bela*, *chameli*, *henna* etc.⁷⁸

To conclude, several artisans thrived in Nawabi Awadh, with Lucknow as the chief center of manufacture and consumption. Several art forms developed and matured in Awadh under patronage from the Nawabs. Though a few handicrafts were produced in pre-Nawabi period, but under the patronage of the Nawabs these products became more refined. With the decline of the Nawabi rule, the handicraft industry of Awadh received a death blow and most of the art forms disappeared. Only a few art forms that could be afforded by the common man or were in demand by the officialdom, survived, more notably, *chikan* and *zardozi* work.

⁷⁷ Abdul Halim Sharar, *Lucknow: The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture*, New Delhi, 2000, pp.178-180.

⁷⁸ A.C. Chatterjee, *Notes on the Industries of the United Provinces*, Allahabad, 1908, p.173.

CHAPTER III

THE PEOPLE

Except for a few cities like Lucknow where the Muslim population was sizable, most of subjects of the Nawabs of Awadh were Hindus. The landed elite, especially the hereditary zamindars, peasants and artisans, all came from specific castes. The caste based occupations were specific not only to the Hindu population but were common among the Muslims as well. A large number of Muslims were Hindu converts and a large number of customs followed by them were derived from the Hindus. Caste system was one such practice and a fairly high level of fossilization had occurred among the Muslims with regard to their caste and profession.

By drawing a parallel between caste and occupation we do not intend to support one particular theory of caste at the expense of others. There might be several reasons for the emergence and perpetuation of caste, but in this chapter the most visible aspect of caste system has been discussed i.e. caste and occupation being fixed by birth. Of course, it does not mean that social mobility did not exist among the Awadh society. The existence of more than one caste in the same occupation, presence of certain upper castes in profession that were not considered very pure, etc. give a fair indication of this social mobility. However, these aberrations were not so common, and caste was more or less coterminous with occupation.

According to Nesfield, common occupation is the foundation of caste; it is the center round which caste has grown. "Each caste or group or castes represents one or other of those progressive stages of culture which have marked the industrial development of mankind, not only in India, but in every other country in the world. The rank of any caste as high or low, depends on whether the industry represented by the caste belongs to an advanced or backward stage of culture; and thus the natural history of human industries affords the chief clue to the gradations as well as to the formation of Indian castes".¹ Nesfield has thus shown the different occupations emerging from the tribe to constitute themselves into sectional units, and these units rising in the social scale according to the trades by which they live.² Thus, the caste-system springs from the regular evaluation of social life, starting at its lowest level and following in its slow progression.

Ain mentions the different zamindars castes found in the five sarkars of Suba Awadh. Sarkar Awadh had Brahman, Bais, Chauhan, Raikwan, Bachgoti, Sombansi and Ansari castes who held control over land. The landed elite in sarkar Gorakhpur were Afghans, Rajput Surajbansi, Bisens, Bansi and Sombansis. Sarkar Bahraich had Rajput, Kahnah, Raikwar, bisen, Janwar and Tanwar. Rajput, Brahman, Bachhal, Ahnin, Rajput Gaur, Sombansi, Janwar and Chauhan were the dominant zamindar castes in sarkar Khairabad. Sarkar Lucknow had Ansari, Sayyid, Shaikhzada, Bais, Chandel, Chauhan, Jat, Kumbhi, Kunbi, Brahman,

¹ Nesfield, *Brief View of the Caste System of North-Western Provinces and Oudh*, Allahabad, 1885, p.88.

² *Ibid.*, pp.177-182.

Chandel, Kayath, and Bachhal as the landed elite.³ In all the sarkars of Awadh Suba, the Rajputs were most numerous zamindars. As discussed earlier, the taluqdars in Awadh were either 'pure' or 'impure'⁴; the former being the descendants of the ancestral proprietors, and the latter court favourites, traders and money lenders. The 'pure' taluqdars were in most cases Rajputs and descendants of hereditary chiefs of important clans. According to Millet, "There is evidence all over the district, that, as successors of the Bhars, the hindus associated themselves firmly into families. This association may have been necessary to resist the attack of aboriginal enemies; it may have been required to withstand the increasing supremacy of the Muslims; it may have been useful towards a successful colonization of a wild country. But in all parts of the district, as, for example, among the Raghbansis of Aldeman, the Bais of Birhar, the Bais of Mangalsai, and the Chauhans of Jagdispur, we see the ancient proprietors not only aggregated into exclusive families, but acknowledging the guidance of a distinct head. As the families increased and grew confident of power, they divided of into branches, and the recognition of the original leadership varied according to circumstances."⁵

According to Elliott, the true taluqdar belonged to the most primitive form of society, where the clan was represented by their head, and all proprietorship was vested in him. Elliot has discussed in detail the origins and nature of the

³ Abul Fazl Allami, *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol.II, translated by Col. H.S. Jarrett, New Delhi, 1978, p.184-190.

⁴ Baden-Powell, *The Land-systems of British India, Vol.II*, New Delhi, 1974 and Patrick Carnegy, *Notes on Races, tribes and Castes Inhabiting the Province of Avadh*, Lucknow, 1868, p.69.

⁵ *Settlement Report of Fyzabad 1880*, pp.66-67.

landed elite in the Unao district of Awadh. According to him, there were 16 different clans of Rajputs in Unao and they occupied well defined and considerable tracts of land. Among these 16 clans, the Bisens, Guhurwars and Chandels had settled there in prehistoric times. The rest of the clans were colonizers; they colonized the area during the period of Mohammedan conquest and influence.⁶ Elliott has also narrated in detail the history of the great Bais clan that claimed hegemony over all the Awadh Rajputs. It was Abhay Chand who founded this clan and expanded the limits of Baiswara to include 22 parganas in all. Trilokchand was seventh in line from Abhay Chand, and he defeated the Pathans of Malihabad. Trilokchand was the premier Raja of Awadh.⁷ From the ninth generation from Trilokchand, about 1700 A.D. Rao Murdan Singh became famous in the area.⁸

When Saadat Khan tried to increase the revenue assessment of the region held by Baises, he came in conflict with Chetrai. Saadat Khan attacked Chetrai at Pashchimgaon, but the Baises fought bravely. Realizing their power, Saadat Khan agreed to assess their estate at half the sum that had been fixed earlier.⁹ Kanhpuriya Rajputs held sway over the area of Tiloin estate. For many years, including the reign of Safdar Jang their possessions embraced the whole breadth of

⁶ Elliott, *The Chronicles of Oonao, A District in Oudh*, Allahabad, 1862, p.31.

⁷ Ibid. p.68.

⁸ Ibid., p.72.

⁹ Ibid., p.73.

Awadh from Faizabad to Manikpur.¹⁰ By around 1760 they came in conflict with the Nawab. The whole province of Awadh had fallen into disorder and the Nawab due to financial difficulties invited the fugitive raja (son and successor of Bal Bhaddar Sah) to Lucknow and invested him with the government of the estates which were divided among seven of his descendants.¹¹ Later the Kanhpuriya Rajputs were displaced from the town of Salon by Nawab Asaf-ud-daula and the Kanhpuriyas settled in their estates in Salon Khass.¹²

Similarly the Shaikhzada zamindars of Pargana Fatehpur, Sarkar Lucknow were able to maintain their uninterrupted hold since the days of Akbar,¹³ to the nineteenth century. In fact they had much enlarged their landed possessions by this period.¹⁴

Besides the Rajputs, the major zamindars were in the hands of the Brahmins and Kayasthas. The former had accompanied the Rajputs in the capacity of priests, and had received a portion of the conquered territory for their support.¹⁵ In the same way kayasths acquired their lands in repayment of their services.¹⁶ Besides these two castes, other non-hereditary taluqdars were traders and money

¹⁰ Donald Butter, *Outlines of the Topography and Statistics of the Southern Districts of Oudh, and of the Cantonment of Sultanpur-Oudh*, Calcutta, 1839, p.109.

¹¹ Ibid., p.110.

¹² Ibid., pp.138-39.

¹³ Ain-i-Akbari, vol.II, p.190.

¹⁴ Muzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India, Awadh and the Punjab, 1707-48*, New Delhi, 1986, p.7 & 222.

¹⁵ Report of the revised settlement of the Oonao district in Lucknow division of the province of Oudh, p.41.

¹⁶ Ibid.

lenders. Elliott has given a detailed account of one such money lender Chundan Lal. He had made a great fortune in the nizamat of Bainswara. Chundan Lal made a steady progress from 1810 to 1850. In 1810 he possessed only three villages, and by 1823 his estate paid Rs.2½ lac to the Lucknow Government. His uninterrupted progress continued till 1850 when he came in conflict with a naib nazim over hike in revenue. As a result, Chundan Lal was thrown out of his possessions, but his influential friends at the court sought the King's intervention and ultimately his possession were restored to him.¹⁷

The majority of the population in Awadh was involved in agriculture. In the rural areas the Hindus were generally agriculturists and there were a few castes whose sole economic activity was farming. The various agricultural castes in Nawabi Awadh were:

Kumbhi – or Kunbi or Kurmi were the caste of cultivators.

Keori or Murao were generally employed as gardeners and husbandmen. They were the principal growers of poppy, and producers of opium. The various subdivisions of this caste were Kanoujia, Hardiya, Allahabadi, Brijbasi, Kori, Purbiha and Dakhinaha.

Kachhis were also employed as gardeners, but some of them were artisans too. *Malis* were also a caste of gardeners.¹⁸

Gandhri caste was generally involved in the preparation of perfumes from flowers.

¹⁷ C.A. Elliot, *The Chronicles of Oonao*, pp.134-35.

¹⁸ M.A. Sherring, *Hindu Tribes and Castes as Represented in Benaras*, Vol.II, Delhi, 1974, pp.325-27.

Kunjra was a caste of cultivators principally engaged in growth and sale of vegetables.

Barayi caste was exclusively devoted to the sale of *paan*. The various subcastes were Chaurasiya, Jaiswara, Sri Bastak, Berihara, Tamouli, Magaihiya, Nasal Kani, and Phuhihara.

Just like *Barayi* caste, the *Tambalis* were also engaged in the cultivation and sale of *paan*. Among the menial cultivating castes of Awadh were the *Dhanuk*, *Dosadh*, *Kori* and *Pasi*. The *Dhanuks* worked as village watchmen, played the drum at Hindu weddings and the ladies were generally midwives. The *Dusadhs* were usually landless labourers, like *Pasis*. The *Pasis* also indulged in toddy tapping.¹⁹

While discussing the cultivating castes in Nawabi Awadh, one cannot afford to miss out the fact that caste was often a great factor in fixation of rent. There were privileged castes in whose care the rate of rent was by custom lower than the ordinary rate, for example, *Brahmans* and *Thakurs*.²⁰ This was for the reason that, in most cases the *Thakurs* and *Brahmans* were related to *Zamindars*, or they could not plough themselves owing to caste prejudices and thus had a

¹⁹ W. Crooke, *The Native Races of the British Empire, Natives of Northern India*, London, 1907, p.120.

²⁰ S.N. Jafri, *History and Status of Landlords and Tenants in United Provinces*, Allahabad, 1931, pp.348-56.

higher cost of cultivation. The lower caste cultivators such as Kurmis, Kachhis, Kayasths etc. were forced to pay higher rents.²¹

Assuming that not much change occurred in the caste composition of the population of Awadh (Lucknow district in this case). According to a report of 1869²² the approximate of the population of different castes was as under. Hindus constituted 80.7% of the population and Muslim, the remaining 19.3%. The Muslim population in the district was therefore sizable, owing the existence of a large number of Muslims in the Lucknow town. The rural population was mostly Hindu and was generally involved in agriculture. In contrast, not more than 25% Muslims in the whole population derived their livelihood from land.

The caste composition of Hindu population as per the 1869 report was:

Thakur	7.72%
Brahman	8.41%
Kayath	1.82%
Ahir	11.12%
Garariya	2.13%
Dhobi	1.58%
Pasi	10.55%
Lodh	6.17%
Nai	1.95%
Kori	2.19%
Kalwar	1.14%
Kumhar	1.4%
Baniya	2.53%

²¹ Ibid.

²² H.H. Butts, *Report of the Land Revenue Settlement of the Lucknow District, 1873*, pp.47-52.

Tamboli	1.6%
Darzi	1.79%
Bhurji	1.58%
Teli	1.79%
Chamar	11.24%
Kahar	2.80%
Kachhi	4.59%
Barhai	1.68%
Kurmi	6.43%
Thathera	1.90%
Gumel	1.86%

Thus the predominating castes among Hindus were Thakur, Brahman, Ahir, Pasi, Lodh, Chamar, and the two cultivating castes-Kachhis and Kurmis.²³

The cultivator castes among the Hindus were Thakur, Brahman, Kayasth, Ahir, Garariya, Pasi, Lodh, Nai, bakhhal, chamar, Kahar, Kachi, Kurmi, Gumel and Barahi. Among these, Thakurs, Brahmans, Ahirs, Lodhs, Pasis, Chamar, Kurmis and Kachhis formed the chief cultivators.

On the other hand, the main non-agricultural castes were Luniyas, Bhats, Malis, Baris, Gosains, Darzis, Lohars, Khattris, Bhangis, and Mallahs.

The difference between the agriculturist and non-agriculturist castes was not of water-tight compartmentalization. Among the agricultural castes, about 90-

²³ In United Provinces of Agra and Awadh, the percentage population of Thakurs, Ahirs, Pasis and Chamars was 5.9%, 10.4%, 6.1% and 11.5% respectively, as per 1869 report.

95% population was engaged in agriculture, whereas in the case of non-agricultural castes, the percentage was 30-50%.²⁴

Among the Brahmins, the highest sub-caste was Misra, followed by Shukla, Tiwari, Dube, Pathak, Upadhyaya, and Chaube.²⁵ The merchant, traders and money lender castes held important position in Nawabi Awadh. They had become important landed elite besides controlling finance and commerce. Traditionally the Khatri had been involved in trade. They originally came from Punjab. In Awadh, Raja Bhiami Lal of Morawan was a Khatri, as were three other Taluqdars.²⁶ The family of Raja Bhiami Lal had settled in Awadh in early 18th century. Though they were not hereditary taluqdars, they had purchased their zamindaris over a period of time.²⁷

Rauniars were also a class of tradesmen and were more numerous in Gorakhpur.²⁸

Ummars were numerous and influential caste of *Baniyas*, who were found as far as Agra in the West, Lallatpur in the south, Gorakhpur in the north and Banaras and Azamgarh in the east. They held a very respectable position among

²⁴ H.H. Butts, pp.47-52.

²⁵ Donald Butter, pp.146-150.

²⁶ Carnegy, p.60.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ M.A. Sherring, Vol.II, p.284.

the *Vaisya* tribes. They had three divisions i.e. *Til-Ummar*, *Dirh-Ummar* and *Durre*, arranged as per their rank.²⁹

Besides trading castes there were several other professionals who sold goods ;that were needed in day to day life. For example, the sweet sellers, the oil sellers, the perfume sellers etc. They belonged to the castes of Halwais, Teli, Gandhis etc. Halwais were the confectioner caste. They had 7 subdivisions i.e. Kanoujea, Pachipiria, Bauniwala, Gaunu, Madheria, Tihara and Lakhnawa.

Telis were oil sellers, and they occupied a respectable position among the lower castes. Most of them extracted oil from oil-seed and sold it as well. They had several sub castes Biahut Bans were the upper most in hierarchy and they did not allow their widows to remarry. Jaunpuri-telis sold *dal* instead of *tel*. They were said to belong originally to Jaunpur. Similarly, Kanoujias belonged to Kannauj, Lahoris to Lahore and Banarasiyas to Banaras. Turkiya-telis were Muslims.³⁰

Gandhis were perfume sellers. Spirit sellers formed a distinct caste among the Hindus. Spirit was made either from Mahua flowers or from jagary. Although ranking among the vaishyas, they were not regarded as very reputable members of the community. The spirit sellers or *Kalwars* had several sub-castes. Biahuts were in position and reputation far superior than the rest. They neither sold nor drink spirits, and were generally traders and money lenders. Rangkis were Muslims.

²⁹ Ibid., p.299.

³⁰ Ibid., p.302.

Other sub-castes included Jaiswara, Raikalar, Sirdhi, Bhuj-Kalaura, Bhojphuria, Gurer and Tank.³¹

As discussed earlier in the second chapter, there were several classes of artisans in Nawabi Awadh, who were involved in the production of textiles, dyeing, embroidery, metal work, ornamental pottery, glass making etc. the artisans were both Hindus and Muslims, and came from certain specific castes.

Sunar were the goldsmiths, silversmiths and jewellers. In Awadh, they belonged to same social ranking as the Vaisyas. The sunars had differing roots, like Barah mul or 12 roots, Bawan mul or 52 roots or Bais mul or 22 roots. These three types were further sub divided. As gold could easily be resold, jewellery formed a convenient form of saving. Gold jewellery was naturally sold or mortgaged to the sunar, who therefore doubled up as a moneylender.³²

Niariya collected the refuse consisting of small particles of gold and silver, from the workplace of sunars. The Niariyas separated the gold and silver particles from the refuse, and thereby earned their living.

Barhai or the carpenter caste had several sub-castes such as Janeodhari, Khati, Maghaiya, Kokas, Setbanda Rameshwar, Kanoujia and Parganiya. These different sub-castes specialized in making different articles e.g. Khatis manufactured wheels, Kokas made chairs and tables and Setbanda Rameshwar manufactured puppets and dolls. The Barhai or carpenter was a god example of a

³¹ Ibid., pp.302-03.

³² William Crooke, *Natives of Northern India*, p.131.

composite functionary caste; barhais included Brahmans, Rajputs as well as Chamars. The barhais were classified into two categories as per their place of work i.e. the village barhai and the city barhai.³³

The work of a village barhai lasted for about seven months from the time when the first sowing started about the month of June, till spring, when the winter crops ripened. During this time he was employed in making and mending carts, well-gear, farm implements and cotton gins for which he received about 20 pounds of grain from each farmer at both harvests. It was during the rest of the year that he employed his time in making toys and other articles. On the other hand, the city barhais specialized in making furniture, toys etc. He did not work in the Jajmani system, and either worked independently or worked for some merchant in a Karkhana.³⁴

The lohars or blacksmiths had seven sub castes in Awadh i.e. Kanoujia, Mahouliya, Sri Bastak, Mallik, Banarasiya, Chaurasha and Purbiya. Lohars were generally considered to be of non-Aryan descent.

Sandharas sharpened and cleaned swords, knives and other implements of iron and steel. Muslims of the same profession were called Sikligars or Saiqalgars.³⁵

³³ J.L. Maffey, *A Monograph on Wood Carving in the United Province of Agra and Oudh*, Allahabad, 1903, pp.7-8.

³⁴ William Crooke, *Natives of Northern India*, p.134.

³⁵ Sherring, Vol.II, pp.316-18.

Kumhar or the potter caste made all kinds of earthen vessels whether for domestic or general use. This caste had several sub-divisions. The Kanoujia, Hatheliya and Swariya were chiefly employed in the making/laying of tiles and bricks. The Bardhiyas transported clay on bullocks and Godaihiyas on donkeys, kasgars were involved in making dishes and plates. In villages the household utensils that a Kumhar provided ranged from a 'ghara' or pitcher, to the great *Nand* in which chaff was served to the oxen, or the still larger granary in which corn was placed to protect it from weevils and mice. He also made small pots for the Persian wheel.³⁶

The manufacture of earthen articles was mostly confined to the Kumhar caste. However, in certain areas other castes were also engaged in this trade, e.g. in Lucknow in the later half of 19th century, a family of Thakurs kept the manufacture of the famous Lucknow figures almost entirely in their own hands.³⁷ The Thakurs, with whom this industry originated in Lucknow were said to have been originally stone-carvers and were taught this craft by Claude Martin in the 18th century.

Muslim potters were generally called as *Kasgars*. They were divided into 52 sub-castes. In Awadh they were found in considerable numbers in Lucknow and Barabanki. Dabgars were low caste employed in the manufacture of large

³⁶ William Crooke, pp.135-36.

³⁷ H.R.C. Dobbs, *A Monograph on the Pottery and Glass Industries of the North Western Province and Oudh*, Allahabad, 1895, p.18.

earthen vessels for holding *ghee*, and of vessels in which *atta* and glue were deposited.³⁸

Patwas were engaged in the manufacture and sale of ornaments made of zinc, tin and other inferior metals. They also made trinkets of silk and silk cloth, edged with gold. The various sub divisions of the castes were Kharewal, Kahre, Deobansi, Lahera and Jogi Patwa.³⁹

Churihars were the caste manufacturing *churis* and all other articles made of lac.

Kaseras worked on metals such as brass copper, gold and silver. They manufactured utensil for domestic use and also ornaments that were worn by men and women. Kaseras held position between the Kashatriyas and Vaisyas in caste hierarchy. They were divided into several sub castes i.e. Purbiya, Pachhawan, Gorakhpuri, Tank, Tachara, Bhariya and Golar.⁴⁰ They held a position nearly as respectable as that of the sunar. The Kaseras tended to concentrate in the urban areas especially in places of pilgrimage. As the Muslims preferred to cook and store water in copper utensils, the Kaseras catered to their needs. The Hindus on the other hand preferred brass or bell-metal for household utensils, and the number of utensils sold of this metal were enormous. These utensils were much in demand in villages as they took the place of furniture in the house of a peasant, and they

³⁸ Sherring, Vol.II, p.318.

³⁹ Ibid., pp.319-320.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.321.

could be easily sold or mortgaged in the village, whenever the need arose. Closely connected with this handicraft was the important industry of making brass or bell-metal bangles or anklets which the women of lower castes generally wore.⁴¹

Along with *Kaseras*, the *Thathera* caste was also involved in the manufacture of copper and brass articles. The exact difference between the *Kaseras* and *Thatheras* was not easy to determine. The word *Kasera* is derived from *kansa*, which is the name of an alloy. Word *Thathera* is derived from *tastakara*, or polisher. According to Nesfield, the *Kasera* did the moulding, while polishing and engraving was carried on by the *Thathera*.⁴² *Thathera* worked on iron, tin, zinc, copper and brass and carved the same vessels as produced by *Kaseras*.⁴³

Bhariyas were workers in brass, iron, and other metals. They were specially engaged in the manufacture of moulds for casting vessels.

Katera or *Dhuniya* was the caste involved in carding or combing cotton. Both Hindus and Muslims were involved in this occupation.

⁴¹ William Crooke, p.132.

⁴² G.R. Dampier, *A Monograph on the Brass and Copper Wares of the North-Western Province and Oudh*, Allahabad, 1894, pp.8-10.

⁴³ Sherring, Vol.I, pp.321-22.

Tanti were a caste of weavers involved in making edging of silk and of various kinds of metal. They also manufactured Kimkhab and embroidered dress (Zardozi).⁴⁴

Tantras were involved in the manufacture of silken threads and stuffs.

Rangrez were a caste of dyers.

Chippigars or cloth printers were employed in stamping chintz and other cotton cloth.

The weavers were included in two castes, *Julahas* and *Koris*: the former being Muslims and the latter Hindus. The Julahas were considered more skilful workmen than the koris. From Lucknow came the tradition that Julahas arose in the time of 'King Jamshed of Persia'.⁴⁵ Weaving was restricted only to these two castes though spinning was done by several castes. As a rule, the koris confined themselves to weaving white cloth, whereas the Julahas engaged themselves in weaving coloured cloth. The Julahas were generally towns people, whereas the Koris were found in villages also.⁴⁶

Burhan-ul-Mulk who was founder of the Kingdom of Awadh came from Persia, after he came to know that a Shia was about to occupy the throne at Delhi. Awadh was thus a Shia Kingdom, with a large part of nobility being Shia. Though

⁴⁴ Ibid., p.346.

⁴⁵ C.A. Silberrad, *Monograph on Cotton Fabrics Produced in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh*, Allahabad, 1898, pp.1-2.

⁴⁶ L. Liotard, *Memorandum on Dyes of Indian Growth and Production*, Calcutta, 1881, pp.3-4.

majority of the subjects were Hindus, the Muslims in Awadh occupied an important place in shaping the history and economy of the Awadh.

The Muslims of Awadh could be divided into five classes i.e. Saiyids, Sheikhs, Mughals, Pathans and Hindu converts. The first Muslims in Awadh were those who formed the army of Saiyad Salar Masud, the nephew of Mahmud of Ghazni, in his invasion of the province in 1030 A.D. Several families in Bahraich were supposed to be descendants of the invading force.⁴⁷ For more than 150 years after this, Awadh remained undisturbed by Mohammedan inroads. In 1194, Kanauj and Banaras fell to Ghori. Bakhtiar Khilji also conquered part of Awadh and North Bihar. However, it was not till the middle of 14th century that Muslims in any significant numbers were settled in Awadh.⁴⁸ Shaikh Muin-ud-din, grandson of a lieutenant of Alauddin Khilji, established a colony in Sitapur around 1350 A.D.; this colony was later increased by the assimilation of numerous adventurers. It was in the 15th century that the Muslim settlements became numerous. In Unao were formed the Saiyid colony of Safipur; in Hardoi there were settlements at Bilgram, Sandi, Sandila and Maliawan.⁴⁹ In Lucknow, a family of Pathans had settled in Malihabad, and were sufficiently strong to hold on their own in a great battle with the Bais clan. Several other Pathan families later on joined them at Malihabad.

⁴⁷ Patrick Carnegy, p.63.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p.65.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p.67.

Many more colonies of Muslims were established in Awadh in the 15th and 16th centuries. When the Muslim sovereignty was established, either under the Sharqi rulers of Jaunpur or the Padshah of Delhi, the Mohammadan immigrants carefully protected themselves by grants from the sovereign power. The Mohammadan colonies clustered on the great highway from Shahjahanpur to Bengal, through the districts of Hardoi, Lucknow, Nawabganj (Barabanki) and Faizabad.⁵⁰ However, a large percentage of Muslims who settled in Awadh were converts from Hinduism as is evident by the prevalence of Hindu customs among them; this applied more to Saiyids and Sheikhs, than to Pathans. The Saiyids and Sheikhs of Awadh were descendants of those who had converted outside Awadh. Awadh converts on the other hand were called as *Khanzadas*. They were few in number, and the conversions seem to have been made voluntarily.⁵¹ According to Elliott in his *Chronicles of Unao*, the number of families who had been converted in the district were infinitesimally small, compared to those who were Muslims when they immigrated, for “hardly 20 families of these new Musalmans exist in the district”.⁵² There was a small difference in the customs of Hindu converts to Islam and Hindus.

According to Elliott, “Between Khanzadas and Hindus almost no distinction can be drawn further than that the former say their prayers in a mosque,

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.70.

⁵¹ Ibid., p.72.

⁵² Elliott, p.87.

and cut their coats to open from the right. The Khanzadas refuse to eat beef. They plaster their fire places before cooking and very generally use brazen vessels".⁵³

Kazi Adam is said to have been the progenitor of the sheikhs of Lucknow. From one of this sons sprang the Pirzadas, who held for some time the proprietorship of Bijnaur.⁵⁴ The Shaikhs of Lucknow were the first Muslim inhabitants of Lucknow, followed by the Pathans of Ramnagar.⁵⁵

The Muslim population was mostly concentrated in the towns and cities. This is the main reason why agriculturists among the Muslims were not many. A large number of Muslims were engaged in handicraft production. The nobility in Awadh especially Lucknow were Shia, whereas a large percentage of Muslims from the artisanal class were Sunnis.

To conclude one may say that though the occupational baiss of caste system was not water tight, still a large percentage of people belonging to a particular caste were into similar profession. The caste system though practiced among the Hindus, was recognized by the Muslims too. The main reason for this could be that most of the Muslim in Awadh were convert from Hinduism, and had thus continued with the caste based differentiation; the lower caste Hindu converts were considered inferior by the Shaikhs, Mughal and Pathan who traced their lineage to the times of Prophet Muhammad or some ancient warrior.

⁵³ Ibid., p.86.

⁵⁴ H.H. Butts, Reports of the land revenue settlement of the Lucknow district, pp.105-06.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p.ix (Lucknow city survey).

CONCLUSION

Though labelled as a Shia Kingdom, Nawabi Awadh was predominantly Hindu, with only a sprinkling of Muslim population. The dominant caste in Awadh was the Rajput, who were spread all over Awadh, and were divided into numerous clans. The prominent Rajput families were those of the Baises and Kanhpurias in Unnao and Rai Bareli respectively, the Bisens and Janwars in Gonda, the Raikwars in Bara Banki, the Sombansis in Partapgarh, the Kichers in Kora Jahanabad, and the Bundelas in Bundelkhand.¹ The Brahmans were the next important caste in Nawabi Awadh. Also, some of them were priests, astronomers, astrologers and teachers, while others were soldiers. Ahirs and Kurmis were the chief agricultural castes. Sunars, Lohars, Patwas, Rangrez etc. were the other artisanal castes. The Muslims had settled mainly in the cities and towns and the Afghans and the Shaikhs were the most numerous among them.² The artisanal castes among the Muslims were mainly local Hindu converts and the caste system was still prevalent among them. The division of labour was present not only among the different castes in the Hindus, but also between the Hindus and

¹ A.L. Srivastava, *The First Two Nawabs of Oudh*, Lucknow, 1933, pp.261-63.

² Patrick Carnegy, *Notes on Races, Tribes and Castes Inhabiting the Province of Avadh*, Lucknow, 1868, p.63.

Muslims. For example, the Nilgars were the Hindu dyers who dyed only with indigo, whereas the Muslim Rangrez dyed fabrics in almost all plain colours.³

While considering the change in caste composition of the dominant zamindars in Nawabi Awadh from the days of the Ain-i-Akbari, it is evident that several Rajput zamindars had been replaced by a new class of zamindars belonging to the merchant and money lender profession. Elliott has described one such zamindar, of the name Chundan Lal, who acquired zamindari of a large area of land in the nineteenth century Awadh, through his money lending activities.⁴

As early as the first half of the 17th century, Awadh calicos commanded a ready market in London. In 1640, the British East India Company had established a factory at Lucknow for the supply of calico pieces woven at Daryabad near Bara Banki and Khairabad. The English merchants had styled them as "*Derriabauds*" (cloth of Daryabad), "*Kerriabauds*" (cloth of Khairabad) and "*Echbaryes*" (cloth favoured by Akbar). In western Awadh a cloth known as "*Mercoolis*" was woven on a large scale and was purchased by the Company. The coming of the Awadh Nawabs provided a great impetus to the handicraft industry that were present in Awadh. Under the patronage and market provided by the Nawabs, the existing handicrafts became richer, and several new ones were introduced from other places. For example chikan work was imported from Dacca, Bidri work from

³Saiyid Muhammad Hadi, *A Monograph on Dyes and Dyeing in North-Western Provinces and Oudh*, Allahabad, 1896, p.4.

⁴ Elliott, C.A., *The Chronicles of Oonao, A District in Oudh*, Allahabad, 1862, pp.137-139.

Hyderabad⁵ and so on. Artisans were invited from several places and given various incentives to settle down in Awadh. Lucknow and several other towns in Awadh were famous for cotton and silk textiles, embroidery, brocades, metal work, shoes etc., which had a sizable market both in Awadh and elsewhere. Besides employing a large number of people, the handicrafts of Awadh were an important part of the Nawabi culture. The huge personal expenses of the Nawabs (for example in the year 1796-97, they amounted to Rs.74,41,732-8-0)⁶ were mostly spent in the purchase of different handicrafts or in activities that indirectly benefitted the artisans in Awadh.

A large part of the state's income came in the form of land revenue. The fertile soils of Awadh had always been famous for their agricultural produce. *Ain-i-Akbari* describes the Suba of Awadh in detail, "Agriculture is in a flourishing state, especially rice of the kinds called as Sukhdas, Madhkar, and Jhanwan, which for whiteness, delicacy, fragrance and wholesomeness were scarcely to be matched".⁷ During the eighteenth century, Sarkar Gorakhpur became famous for high grades of rice. Chief cash crops raised in the nineteenth century were oil seeds, sugarcane, cotton, indigo and tobacco. Under the Nawabs, the Kingdom of Awadh was divided into five administrative units called as *nizamats* i.e.

⁵ A.P. Charles, *A Monograph on Gold and Silver Ware Produced in United Provinces*, Allahabad, 1905, p.18.

⁶ Purendu Basu, *Oudh and the East India Company 1785-1801*, Lucknow, 1943, p.107.

⁷ Abul Fazl Allami, *Ain-i-Akbari* Vol.II Translated by Col. H.S. Jarrett, New Delhi, 1978, p.181.

Khairabad, Gonda-Bahraich, Sultanpur, Baiswara, and Salone. Each nizamat comprised of 3-4 chaklas under a chakladar or tehsildar, assisted by qanungoes and patwaris.⁸ Under Asaf-ud-daula, about 84% of the total assessment was under ijarah, and the rest in jagirs.⁹ The jagirs were mostly held by the Nawab's inner circle. A major chunk of the Nawabi revenue was collected by the revenue farmers, who were supposed to pay a fixed sum for a demarcated area for a specified number of years. However, the revenue farmer could realize whatever amount he wished, from the peasants Barnett has classified Almas Ali Khan, Ain-ud-Khan and Raja Bhawani Singh as revenue farmers. Elliott on the other hand regards them as revenue collectors. The amils or revenue collectors were very powerful and they had units of cavalry, infantry and artillery collectively called as Mutaiyanah. In contrast to the ijaradari system, there was another system of revenue collection, called as the *Amanee*. Under this system, the Nawab-Wazir appointed revenue collectors, nazims, chakladars, and tehsildars to collect revenue, which was then remitted to the Nawab's treasury at Lucknow. An offshoot of the Amanee system was the *Qabz*, where the nazim used to assign a portion of land from his estate to the commandant of troops in order to collect revenue and pay salaries to his troops.

It was the ijaradari system that ultimately led to the rise of taluqdari system. The taluqdars developed military strength and fortified their positions. During the

⁸ G.D. Bhatnagar, *Awadh under Wajid Ali Shah*, Varanasi, 1968, p.169.

⁹ Barnett, p.173.

revolt of 1857, the dispossessed taluqdars played a lead role. The British restored land to the loyal taluqdars in the summary settlement done in 1858.¹⁰ After annexation, majority of the land in Awadh was controlled by the taluqdars. Rajputs, Brahmins, Baniyas, Khattris, Syeds, Pathans, Sheikhs and Mughals were the chief castes to which the taluqdars belonged.

The system of land revenue assessment and collection underwent several changes in Awadh, since the days of Burhan-ul-Mulk to Wajid Ali Shah. The company was also to a large extent indirectly responsible for the transition from revenue collectors to revenue contractors.

As the hold of the East India Company strengthened over the Indian subcontinent, the future of the kingdom of Awadh was more or less sealed and it was clear that its days were numbered. The Awadh Nawabs did their best to keep the flag of the Nawabi rule flying. The legacy of the lakhnavi culture left behind by them, still survives. The lavish personal expenditures of the Nawabs might have been labelled by the Britishers as extravagant, but it cannot be denied that the Nawabs directly as well as indirectly gave impetus to the economy and promoted the development of handicrafts in Awadh. This direct correlation was made more evident by the fact that the handicraft industry in Awadh declined almost immediately after Wajid Ali Shah was sent to Matiya Burj.

¹⁰ Rajkumar Sarvadhikari, *The Taluqdari Settlement in Oudh*, Calcutta, 1882, pp.16-17.

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