Regional Patrias in the Eighteenth Century: Politics of Legitimacy and Governability in Awadh (1727- 1857)

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For

Mummy, Papa, Anurag, and Wasif

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Abstract

The eighteenth-century regional kingdoms of South Asia functioned as the locus of parochial culture and the ruling dynasties sought to legitimize these patrimonies by appealing to distinct religious traditions and syncretic cultural rituals. The institutional brittleness and the volatile political scenario coupled with the decline of one empire and the rise of another did not enable these dynasties to stabilize their rule. The patrimonies were honey-combed with influential power brokers ranging from women of the royal household and British Residents to revenue farmers and *talukdars*. Besides, the increasing penetration of rapacious English East India Company in the local political economy added to the chaos and altered the methods of surplus extraction in the countryside.

British interference in Awadh's internal administration escalated with troops' garrisoning in the name of protection, as did Residents' appointment at the court, who, under the guise of being a mediator between the Company and the Nawab, vitiated the administrative setup. Residents, or plenipotentiaries of the English East India Company, encouraged the formation of dual centers of governance and deliberately undermined the authority of the ruling monarch. They gradually indulged in illegal private trade and appointed proteges at the court to extract monetary benefit.

What flourished in such circumstances was the growth of urban culture in the context of the encounter between English East India Company, distinctive Indo- Islamic cultural tradition of the court, and various exotic European influences in the Orient. Thus, the eighteenth-century polities could be termed as ‘frontier polities’ situated temporally between the Mughal empire and the British empire and culturally between expanding European colonial culture and distinctive syncretic ‘Islamicate’ culture.

The thesis thus departs from extant literature in three ways: first, it sees these dynastic patrimonies not simply as successor states of the Mughal empire but distinct political entities, second these patrimonies did not mark a continuity of the Mughal tradition of governance and third English East Company destabilized the local political-economic settings rather than continuing with it.

Résumé

Les royaumes régionaux du XVIIIe siècle d'Asie du Sud fonctionnaient comme le lieu de la culture paroissiale et les dynasties au pouvoir cherchaient à légitimer ces patrimoines en faisant appel à des traditions religieuses distinctives et à des rituels culturels syncrétiques. Pourtant, la fragilité institutionnelle ainsi que le scénario politique volatile, jumelée au déclin d'un empire et l'expansion d'un autre, n'ont pas permis à ces dynasties de stabiliser leur domination. Ces patrimoines étaient corrompus par des courtiers influents, allant des femmes de la maison royal, des résidents britanniques, aux fermiers et aux *talukdars*. Par ailleurs, la pénétration croissante de la conquérante compagnie anglaise des Indes Orientales dans l'économie politique locale a accru le chaos et les méthodes d'extraction de surplus dans les campagnes.

Les interférences britanniques dans l'administration interne d'Awadh se sont intensifiées avec la mise en garnison de troupes au nom de la protection, tout comme la nomination des résidents à la cour, qui, sous prétexte d'être médiateurs entre la Compagnie et le nabab, ont altéré le système administratif. Les résidents, ou plénipotentiaires de la Compagnie Anglaise des Indes Orientales, ont encouragé la formation de doubles centres de gouvernance et miné délibérément l'autorité du monarque au pouvoir. Ils se sont progressivement livrés au commerce privé illégal et ont affecté des protégés au tribunal pour en tirer un avantage monétaire.

Pourtant, ce qui a fleurit dans de telles circonstances était la croissance de la culture urbaine dans le contexte de la rencontre entre la Compagnie Anglaise des Indes Orientales, la tradition culturelle Indo-Islamique, distinctive de la cour, ainsi que diverses influences européennes exotiques en Orient. Ainsi, ces politiques du XVIIIe siècle pourraient être qualifiés comme politiques frontalières situées temporairement entre l'Empire Moghol et l'empire britannique, et

culturellement entre l'extension de la culture coloniale Européenne et la culture islamique syncrétique distinctive.

La thèse s'écarte ainsi de la littérature existante de trois manières : premièrement, elle montre ces dynasties patrimoniales non seulement comme les états successeurs de l'Empire Moghol mais aussi comme des entités politiques distinctes. Deuxièmement, ces patrimoines n'ont pas marqué de continuité avec les traditions de la gouvernance de l'Empire Moghol. Troisièmement, la Compagnie Anglaise de l'Est a déstabilisé les contextes politiques et économiques locaux plutôt que de continuer avec ceux déjà établis.

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Introduction

The Eighteenth Century in Indian History

The eighteenth century in Indian history is the period marked by the disintegration of the Mughal empire and the coming of the British to the political landscape of India. The decline of the Mughals had set in after the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 C. E.[1] By the middle of the century, the empire that once encompassed half of the Indian subcontinent had shrunk to its capital at Delhi and the nearby areas.[2] The eighteenth century witnessed India's political reconfiguration with the rise of the regional systems commonly known as 'successor states' and the gradual emergence of British colonial capitalism.[3] While a group of historians considered agrarian and economic crises in localities responsible for the Mughal decline, others regard regional assertiveness and exploitation by the ruling elites as a significant factor for what they view as a period of political turmoil.[4] Some of the key highlights in historiographical writings of the eighteenth century include- the dissolution of the Mughal empire, transitions to the successor states, the increasing

[1] All dates mentioned in this thesis are in common era until otherwise mentioned. For Details on Mughal Empire- John F. Richards, *The Mughal Empire,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). Douglas E Streusand, *The Formation of the Mughal Empire,* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989). Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, (ed.) *The Mughal State, 1526-1750,* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998). Aurangzeb (r.1658-1707) well known by his regnal title 'Alamgir' was the sixth Mughal ruler to rule over the Indian subcontinent.

[2] Muzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and Punjab, 1707-1748,* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986). Alam and Subrahmanyam, (ed.) *The Mughal State*. Meena Bhargava, (ed.) *The Decline of the Mughal Empire,* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[3] P.J Marshall, (ed.), *Themes in Indian History: The Eighteenth Century in Indian History,* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003). The phrase 'successor state' has been frequently used by P.J Marshall in this work. 'For details on historiography of Eighteenth Century refer Seema Alavi, *The Eighteenth Century in India,* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002). Irfan Habib, "The Eighteenth Century in Indian Economic History", *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, Vol.56, (1995), 358-378.

[4] For more details on the decline of the Mughal empire refer, Meena Bhargava (ed.) *The Decline of the Mughal empire,* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014). Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and Punjab,* Karen Leonard, "The Great Firm theory in the Decline of the Mughal Empire", *Comparative Studies in Society and History,* Vol.21, no.C2, (April,1979), 151-167.

orientation towards trade and capitalism, the European intrusion, and the emergence of the new colonial order. [5]

Historical scholarships on the eighteenth century usually encompasses the concurrent events of Mughal decline and British intrusion in the polity, society, and economy, indicating an increased affinity in older historiography with the grand narratives. Early scholarship marginally explores themes on cultural, religious, and social transformations in the regions. The very term 'successor states', undermines the distinctiveness of the regions and sees it as a mere continuation of the Mughal empire. Historians have not employed any category to define this transition because of existing regional differences. Yet, this period showcases unique cultural, political organizations and identities. Investigating the legitimizing principles of newly emerging statelets explains the development of distinctive cultural undercurrents in the polities even though they remained nominally under the Mughal rule.

Frontier regions of Awadh and Hyderabad became crucial zones to study the growth and amalgamation of Indo-Muslim civilization. Furthermore, smaller towns (*qasbahs*) witnessed the 'Indianization of Muslim dominance'[6] and the blending of elite personnel and popular styles. This blending was responsible for the presence of vast written material between empires. When the larger imperial systems collapsed, the scholars and chroniclers chose to write about the regional histories. Besides, the study of Shiʿa Nawabs is significant because it is a living tradition that provides insights into the culture and politics of present-day Uttar Pradesh. The town of

[5] P.J Marshall, (ed.), *Themes in Indian History*, 1-15.

[6] The phrase 'Indianization of Muslim dominance' has been used in works of scholars like Madhu Trivedi, *Making of Awadh culture;* Richard Barnett, *North India between Empires: Awadh, the Mughals and the British 1729-1801*, (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1987). A detailed study Shiʿism an Indian religion has been done by Karen Ruffle in "Making Shiʿism an Indian Religion: A Perspective from Qutb Shahi Deccan", *Reorient,* Vol.5, Issue. 2, (Spring, 2020). M. Raisur Rahman, *Locale, Everyday Islam and Modernity: Qasbah town and Muslim life in Colonial India,* (Oxford Scholarships Online, August 2015). I argue in my thesis that Shiʿism in Awadh was 'Indianized' and was not merely an Iranian import. It adapted to local traditions under the Nawabs of Awadh and hence was an essential tool for legitimization.

Faizabad/Ayodhya that once symbolized syncretism and co-existence under the Begums of Awadh, became the political battleground of Hindu nationalist sentiments.

Several successor states rose to prominence after the Mughal empire's decline- such as Bengal, Hyderabad, Maratha Confederacy, Mysore, and Rajput principalities; Awadh attained the limelight based on its economic, political, and cultural strong point. The durability and strengths of the Nawabi system was immanent in the distribution of power and resources among various segments in its frontier. The political organization of the state was not fixed, thereby forming a dynamic governing setup. Thus, the development of newer power centers and shifting resource advantages enabled Awadh to endure external threats and aggressions. However, the increasing English penetration from the late eighteenth century, along with stationing of troops in Nawab's administrative domain, ultimately resulted in British annexation in the nineteenth century. The present research focuses on studying the transition of Awadh from Mughal imperial rule to a sovereign state and then to a subsidiary alliance under the British.

The erstwhile Mughal governors created semi-autonomous regional principalities of Deccan, Awadh, and Bengal adopted and adapted with the administrative and revenue systems of the Mughal empire. For instance, the region of Awadh and Punjab collected revenues on Mughal principles and allocated *jagirs* (land grants). Bernard S. Cohn argued that the Mughal rule's effectiveness lay in the solid administrative control asserted by the imperial center to suppress regional and local powers.[7] Yet, this control got usurped by governors/ *subedars* of the old imperial systems after crushing the 'refractory' local chiefs and establishing domination over the region to create a new state under their rule.

[7] B. S Cohn, "Political Systems in Eighteenth-Century India: The Banaras Region", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 82, No.3, (1962), 312-19. Reprinted in P.J Marshall (ed.), *Themes in Indian History: The Eighteenth Century in Indian History*.

Review of Existing Scholarships

According to P.J Marshall, the 'new political order' that emerged in the eighteenth century in some ways reflected the strengths and weaknesses of the late Mughal empire.[8] Bernard S. Cohn and A.M Shah highlighted the interaction between the imperial, regional, and local systems in Banaras and Gujarat.[9] While scholars like Philip Calkins[10] focused on the growth and consolidation in pre-British Bengal, others like Stewart Gordon[11] provide exciting insights into the smaller political systems of Central India that were gradually incorporated into the larger Maratha Confederacy. Additionally, Karen Leonard elucidated the political systems of Hyderabad and the constitution of its ruling class that sustained its regional autonomy; though Mughal authority continued to be a source of symbolic legitimacy.[12]

The chroniclers at the Mughal court bemoaned the end of a glorious and powerful era.[13] Others with differing views saw the beginning of a new socio-economic relation with emerging colonial capitalism that would eventually begin the 'perpetual economic drain from India' and push India into a state of chaos and anarchy.[14] The imperialists viewed the eighteenth century as a

[8] P.J Marshall, (ed.), *Themes in Indian History*, 7-10

[9] Cohn, "Political Systems in Eighteenth-Century India: The Banaras Region", 312-19. A.M Shah, "Political System in Eighteenth- Century Gujarat," Enquiry n.s. 1, no.1 (1964), 83-95.

[10] Philip B. Calkins, "The Formation of Regionally Oriented Rural Group in Bengal: 1700-1740", *Journal of Asian Studies* 29, no. 3 (August 1970), 799-806.

[11] Stewart N. Gordon, "Scarf and Sword: Thugs, Marauders, and State Formation in Eighteenth-Century Malwa", *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol.6, Issue 4, 1969, (403-429); *Marathas, Marauders and State-Formation in Eighteenth-Century India*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press,1994); *The New Cambridge History of India, II- The Marathas 1600-1818*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[12] Karen Leonard, "The Hyderabad Political System and its Participant", *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol.30, no.3, (May,1971), 569-582. 'Leonard opines that Nizam's recognition of Mughal suzerainty became nominal overtime. He conducted wars, made treaties, and conferred titles and *mansab* appointments himself. The Nizam's appointees were knows as "*Asafia*" *mansabdars* distinguished from the *Padshahi mansabdars* appointed by the Mughals. The office of the *Padshahi diwan* who approved all revenue collection diminished over the years and their power declined. 570.

[13] The Mughal historians have attributed diverse answers to the possible reasons of the decline beginning from political reasons like the deteriorating character of the monarchs and nobles, weakening control over the *mansabdars* and their *jagirs* to the indigenous banking firms. P.J Marshall (ed.), *Themes in Indian History*, 1-15.

[14] R.C. Dutt, *The Economic History of British India*, (London: Kegan Paul, Trench Trübner and Co., 1906), 51.

period of decline and anarchy awaiting British rule's order and modernization. In their writings, the Mughal empire symbolized order, and as such, its decline became the defining lens to analyze the eighteenth century. Not even Marx could escape this contemporary teleological analysis in his narrative on 'Asiatic mode of production.'[15] Some scholars of Mughal India like Irfan Habib,[16] M. Athar Ali,[17] and Satish Chandra[18] view the eighteenth century as a period of disruption, while other revisionist scholars like Frank Perlin[19] and Burton Stein[20] analyze it as a period of continuity. However, seeing the emergence of regional polities as a period of turmoil or mere continuity is reductionist because either case fails to recognize the distinctive cultural undercurrents and efflorescence in these centers.

A plethora of secondary literature exists on the political and economic developments of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Scholars like Richard B. Barnett[21] analyze the growth of regions in the purview of shifting of net resource advantages with the onset of imperial

[15] 'Marx and Engels had agreed that the absence of private property was the key to the oriental world. In this formulation Marx was influenced by James and J S Mill and more particularly by Richard Jones who maintained that sovereign was the sole proprietor of land and enjoyed exclusive right to it. Consequently, there was no loci of power independent of the ruler who appropriated the surplus from direct producers in the form of rent/tax. This system of ownership, production relation, and surplus appropriation was called 'Asiatic mode of production'. M.J.K Thavaraj, 'The Concept of Asiatic Mode of Production: Its relevance to Indian History', *Social Scientist*, Vol.12, No.7, (July,1984), 26-34.

[16] Irfan Habib, "The Eighteenth Century in Indian Economic History", in *Themes in Indian History*, P.J Marshall (ed.) (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 90-100; *The Agrarian Systems of Mughal India, 1562-1707* (Bombay: Asia publishing House, 1963). "The Social Distribution of landed property in pre-British India," in R.S Sharma, ed., *Indian Society: Historical Problem in memory of D.D Kosambi*, 2nd ed. (Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1977), 264-316.

[17] M. Athar Ali, "Recent Theories of Eighteenth Century India" in P.J Marshall (ed.), *Themes in Indian History*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 62-90; 'The Passing of Empire: The Mughal Case', MAS 9, no.3, 1975 (385-396); *The Mughal Nobility Under Aurangzeb*, (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1966), Ch.7. 'Athar Ali in his writing hints at a peculiar intellectual paralysis that the period of eighteenth century witnessed.'

[18] Satish Chandra, *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court, 1707-1740*, (Aligarh: Aligarh Muslim University, 1957). 'Chandra in his writings blames the nobility for the breakdown of Mughal administrative apparatus in the eighteenth century'.

[19] Frank Perlin, "The Problem of Eighteenth Century", in P.J Marshall (ed.), *Themes in Indian History*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 53-62.

[20] Burton Stein, "Eighteenth-Century India: Another View", in P.J Marshall (ed.), *Themes in Indian History*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 62-90.

[21] Barnett, *North India between Empires*, 1-30.

decentralization. He conveniently labels this shift as 'economic dislocation'[22] and describes the evolution of Awadh as a mature, expanding, autonomous, and wealthy state due to shifting power alliances and accommodation of diverse ethnic elements. Furthermore, he discussed the confrontation between the Nawabs and the British with the coming of the subsidiary political system in 1765 and emphasized the impact of English Residents' direct take-over of the Nawabi administration.[23]

In conclusion, his work offered a political analysis and macro-historical understanding of the region, its evolution, and adaptation to changing circumstances in the eighteenth century. Barnett viewed Awadh as one of the most enduring polities of the eighteenth century. In the latter half of his work, he argued that the encounters between the Company and the Nawabs assured a period of semi-autonomy but eventually led to the annexation of half of its territory in 1801. However, Barnett's work failed to touch upon the interlacing of culture and polity in the region.

Another notable work by John Pemble on the later Nawabs and transformations in Awadh outlined the development of region under the British Residents' and assumption of influential roles by them that altered the administrative setup.[24] He investigated the political backdrop leading to annexation and Awadh becoming the mutiny zone against the British in 1857. His work also highlighted the problems in land tenure and revenue collection systems and asserted that the methods of farming out revenue to contractors led to the emergence of an influential class of *talluqdars* (holders of the large estate under a single proprietary who dealt with the government collectors). Pemble argued that *talluqdars* remained too strong to be dispossessed even after the

[22] Ibid., 1-16.
[23] Ibid., 127-165.
[24] John Pemble, *The Raj, the Indian Mutiny and the Kingdom of Oudh*, 1801-1859, (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1977), 3-10.

annexation of Awadh in 1857. The work gave vivid descriptions of the city of Lucknow and its emergence as a significant commercial and cultural center.

Another important name in the economic history of Awadh is Saiyid Zaheer Husain Jafri's *Studies in the Anatomy of Transformation of Awadh: From Mughal to the Colonial Rule.* His work traces the region's agrarian history from the Mughal rule until the British came to power. It dealt with administration of *jagirs, Madad-i Ma'ash* (religious endowments), and the study of Sufi institutions, marking a shift from the previous historiography that stressed studying regional centers. He studied the transition in agrarian relations from Mughal rule to the Nawabi administration and discussed the emergence of the *talluqdari* system. Similar other historiographical narratives include works of scholars like A.L Srivastava[25], Surendra Mohan[26], and Violette Graff.[27]

A common thread connecting the historiographical accounts is an increased fondness with the political and economic narratives. The secondary literature explores dynastic histories and ignores the development of religious identity and composite cultures that defined Awadh, as compared to other regional political systems of the eighteenth century. In my exposition, I study the cultural developments in connection with the political and economic changes. I argue that the portrayal of religious identity, construction of architectural spaces, patronage to scholars, and establishing connections with indigenous traditions were the vital tools for legitimizing the Shiʿa monarch's position in Awadh.

[25] Ashirbadi Lal Srivastava, *Shuja ud-Daulah,* (Delhi: Shiva Lal Agrawal and Co., 1971) and *The First two Nawabs of Awadh,* (Agra: Shiva Lal Agrawal and Co., 1954). This is one of the oldest historiographies on Awadh that focuses on dynastic history through use of primary sources in Persian, Urdu and English.
[26] Surendra Mohan, *Awadh under the Nawabs: Politics, Culture and Communal Relations, 1722-1856,* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1997).
[27] Violette Graff, *Lucknow: Memories of a City,* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997).

In the last few decades, a new body of secondary literature has marked a shift towards studying the cultural and religious undercurrents in the regions. Works of scholars like JRI Cole elucidates the connective systems of Awadhi Shiʿism with its Iranian counterpart and stress that the migration of scholars from Iraq and Iran played an essential role in the consolidation, growth, and popularity of Shiʿism in North India.[28] Cole's work provides insight into what he calls 'Popular Shiʿism in Awadh' and touches upon communal relations, clerical ideology, and the Farangi Mahall's ulema. He (*Imami Shiʿism*, 1984) mentions a kind of patron-client relation developed between the high Shiʿa notables and the clergy or *ulema*. However, Cole emphasizes Shiʿism in Awadh being an Iranian import and thereby fails to notice interaction and accommodation to Indian customs and eventual indigenization of religion.

Scholars like Madhu Trivedi have highlighted the growth of *Ganga-Jamuni Tahzeeb* by analyzing the cultural and religious life in Awadh along with various facets of art and architecture patronized by the Nawabs.[29] She has focused on the city of Lucknow and explored its intellectual and cultural life, built spaces, music, and literature.[30] Her work explicated the growth of Lucknow as the cultural node of North India.[31] Rosie Llewellyn-Jones has also made a significant contribution to the 'Europeans' in Lucknow and provides an insight into freelancers' role in Awadhi administrative setup, trade, commerce, and military. She opined that the British interference and alliance with Awadh was a 'Fatal Friendship,' which ruined the administrative and economic systems of Awadh.[32].

[28] JRI Cole, *Imami Shiʿism from Iran to North India, 1722-1856: State, Society and Clerical Ideology in Awadh* (Dissertation, UCLA, 1984) and *Roots of North Indian Sh'ism in Iraq and Iran: Religion and State in Awadh, 1722-1859*, (Berkeley: UC Press, 1989).
[29]Madhu Trivedi, *The Making of Awadh Culture*, (New Delhi: Primus Books, 2010), 3.
[30] Ibid., 1-11.
[31] Ibid., 5.
[32] Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, *A Very Ingenious Man: Claude Martin in Early Colonial India*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992). *Engaging scoundrels: True Tales of Old Lucknow*. (Oxford University Press, 2000). 'Claude

The regional Patrias (term used by C.A Bayly,1998) became the reservoir of emerging traditions and the most viable arena of change in the pre-colonial period.[33] Within these premodern 'statelets,' one witnesses the emergence of territoriality or varying territorial patriotism levels. Studies have linked the development of a modern state in India to a similar sense of territoriality and sporadically present popular patriotism prevalent before the British. C.A Bayly argued that 'Old patriotisms' are precursors of Indian nationalism because they created a conceptual realm, cluster of institutions, and popular sentiments responsible for rooting later nationalistic sentiments.[34]

Historians of the eighteenth century have argued that these regional polities were carved out by warriors from overlapping bundles of patrimonial rights. Within these polities the religious difference between the ruler and the ruled diminished sentimental bonds. Sir John Seeley argued that no patriotic sentiment existed in India before the arrival of colonists because the Islamic rule broke the 'ties of nationality' and the right to appeal to patriotism. Nonetheless, in my opinion, these works failed to recognize that Islam in India, be it under the Mughals or the regional principalities of Awadh, Bengal, and Hyderabad, accommodated different forms of religio-cultural traditions to gain legitimacy, thereby strengthening the structures of patriotism.

Dirf Kolff in *Naukar, Rajputs, and Sepoy*: *The Ethnohistory of the Military Labour Market of Hindustan* argued that a sense of homogeneity prevailed among the regional elites who perceived each other as a social unit challenging the authority of the Mughal Emperor. So, eighteenth-century India witnessed a growing sense of local patriotism that flourished under the

Martin has usually been neglected as a peripheral figure in the court of *Nawab* of Awadh. He is often referred to as a 'mercenary' or an 'adventurer'. It was after the battle of Buxar of 1764 that Calude Martin came to Lucknow.

[33] C.A Bayly, *Origins of Nationality in South Asia: Patriotism and Ethical Government in the Making of Modern India,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the age of British Expansion, 1770-1870,* (Oxford Scholarships Online: September 2012).

[34] Ibid., 2-4.

fringes of the imperial systems and the carriers of these patriotic sentiment were the frontier polities. It is evident in the Rajputs of Rajasthan, Marathas, Jats, and the Nawabs of Awadh and Bengal, who eventually evolved their own identity in the wake of the Mughal decline. In this context, C. A Bayly (1998) argued that pre-colonial India was characterized by sense of identity and doctrines going beyond the broader social divisions of village clusters, clans, and community.

Contribution and Scheme of Chapters

My thesis departs from the existing literature by analyzing politics of legitimacy, courtly culture, and power consolidation in Awadh under the Nawabs. It offers an alternative view of the region itself and asserts that these dynastic patrimonies were not simply successor states of the Mughal Empire but distinctive frontier polities that developed their systems of administration, thereby marking a shift from Mughal traditions of governance. I argue that the Nawabs used Shiʿism as a legitimizing tool to assert their authority in a politically volatile scenario, and the religious systems adapted to local traditions and therefore became 'Indianized'.

The first chapter of my thesis examines the court politics and consolidation of Awadh, dominated by semi-independent feudal barons of varying strengths and competence. It focuses on political developments through which the region attained a semi-autonomous status from the Mughals and later from the British. In the second chapter, I aim to analyze the Nawabi state as a stronghold of Shiʿa culture in North India. I argue that migration of scholars from Iran and patronage extended by the state to art, architecture, and religious scholars not only played an essential role in the consolidation of Imami Shiʿism but worked as a vital tool for legitimization in the cosmopolitan centers of Lucknow and Faizabad. The third chapter investigates the political influence commanded by the Begums, who were the vital powerbrokers of the region and

patronized religious scholars and institutions. Lastly, my study on Awadh's polity and administration also entails exploring the Resident's growing power, who created a dual system of governance and corrupted the administrative setup.

Review of the Sources and Methodology

The sources for discerning politico cultural trends in Awadh are diverse from contemporaneous material in Urdu and Persians to documents left in English by British officials and Europeans present in the court of Nawab or were traveling in the region. Due to the nature of my research question, I incorporated variegated sources to create a larger narrative on politics of legitimacy in Awadh. W.H Sleeman's *Journey through the kingdom of Oudh* is a detailed analysis of the prevailing conditions in the pre-annexation Awadh in the early nineteenth century. Sleeman's diary/report is significant because he traveled through the countryside providing details to the then governor-general Lord Dalhousie about the political and administrative conditions. It unfolds the enormities of the *talluqdars* in the countryside and the slackening Nawabi administration.

Other travel accounts include the work of a British woman named Fanny Parkes: *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque during four and twenty years in the East with Revelations of Life in the Zenana*. Fanny Parkes traveled in India (between 1822 to 1845) and wrote about her visits to the royal *zenanas* of Awadh. Additionally, textual sources include works of foreign travelers like Bishop Reginald Heber, William Hodges, J.G.A Baird, and C.A. Elliott. Abdul Harim Sharar's *Guzishta Lucknow: Mashriqi Tamaddun kā Ākhiri Namuna* deals with aspects of *Awadhi* culture and its socio-religious pursuits. It is significant for understanding the socio-cultural and political developments in Lucknow and Faizabad.

I have used *Tarikh-i Farah Baksha* by Muhammad Faiz Baksha, that recounts the life of Begums and their agents in Faizabad. It was written by Munshi Faiz Baksha and later translated into English by William Hoey as 'Memoirs of Delhi and Faizabad' (Allahabad, 1888,1889). His work provides a detailed description of the people who migrated from Faizabad to Delhi in the late eighteenth century and were in the service of the Nawab of Awadh Shuja ud-Daulah and Asaf ud-Daulah. He asserted that he wrote the book after being inquired about the history of Faizabad from a British collector of Gorakhpur. However, the claims made in this work need to be corroborated with other Persian sources because the author perhaps tries to gloss over the political details to impart a smooth picture of the strained relations of the Nawabs and the Begums.

Muhammad Taqi Ahamd's *Tarikh-i Badshah Begum* is based on the life story of chief wife of Ghazi ud-Din Haider, the ruler of Awadh (1814-27). It is a crucial primary source for ascertaining the role of Begums in political and religious spheres. This text begins with the reign of Ghazi ud-Din Haider (1814) and ends with the death of his son Naseer ud-Din Haider and the ascension of Muhammad Ali Shah to the throne in 1837. This text can be read as a biography on the life of the Begums of Faizabad. By far, very few biographies on the life of a royal ladies have been attempted in Persian in the case of South Asia.

The development of Awadh as an independent Shiʿite kingdom under the Nawabs was evident in its art, architecture, courtly culture, religious gathering, and cultural landscape, showing signs of assimilation. My thesis will bring forth the politico-religious connections to understand the growth of syncretic culture in Awadh. A discussion on the history of *Awadhi/* Nawabi politics and communal relations is imperative as it encompasses the prevailing traditions of the time and the legends of Ayodhya (Faizabad). In recent years, a lot has been done to blanket the religious trends under the Nawabs to give the region a saffronized history.

Chapter – 1

The Nawabs and the Power Consolidation in the Eighteenth Century Awadh (1722-1801)

Awadh - Geographical Setting

Awadh, since the time of Mughal emperor Akbar (1556-1605), had a fixed geographical boundary with the Himalayas in the North, Bengal in the East, Manikpur *sarkar* (*sarkar* is a smaller administrative domain than the *suba*), and Allahabad *suba* in the South and Kannauj *sarkar* in the West.[35] The administration in the Gangetic plains of North India witnessed significant changes with the Mughal decline in the eighteenth century.[36] The then semi-independent Mughal province of Awadh expanded in the second half of the eighteenth century to incorporate in its administrative domain the provinces of Allahabad, Delhi, and areas lying between the Ganga and the Yamuna doab.[37] The Gangetic axis became the British empire's significant commercial and territorial base during this period. It linked the British centers in Bengal to the Mughal capital and further to regions of Central Asia.[38]

[35] *Ain-i-Akbari* translated by H.S Jarret and Sir Jadunath Sarkar, Volume II, 1949,181. Srivastava, *The First two Nawab of Awadh,* 3. Jafri, *Studies in the Anatomy of a Transformation: Awadh from Mughal to Colonial Rule,* 24. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, 1-3. 'The province of Awadh first emerged under the Delhi Sultans in the thirteenth century and it survives as a political system well under the Mughal rule.'

[36] The Mughal empire faced agrarian and political crisis in the seventeenth and the eighteenth century due to various factors like Jats and Maratha insurgency, the growing resistance from the rural magnates like *zamīndars*, *Jāgirdārs*, and the *madad-i ma'āsh* (religious endowments). The crisis in the agrarian countryside led to increasing control of the *sūbadārs* over the dominion which eventually ended in an assumption of independent stance. (For Details see- Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India,* 11, 12, 16, 118, 243.

[37] Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, 1-3.

[38] Ibid., 1-3.

The province of Awadh was divided into five uneven districts or *sarkars*- Haveli Awadh (Faizabad), Gorakhpur, Bahraich, Lucknow, and Khairabad.[39] The region was administered by a *nazim* or governor, also known as *subedar*.[40] A *subedar's* fundamental responsibility being tax collection, maintaining law and order, upkeeping road networks and communications, and providing military aid to the imperial center.[41] The Mughal emperor assigned duties to the *subedar* and controlled his military and administrative actions. Additionally, a *diwan* (chief revenue officer) was also appointed in each province.[42] Which explains the control over the internal administration and revenue collection by the Mughal emperor. A shift from this established system of governance during the first half of the eighteenth century indicated steps towards gaining an autonomous position.

Amongst the successor states that emerged after the decline of the Mughal empire, Awadh had extensive geographical boundaries and was exceptional in resource generation.[43] The present chapter analyzes Awadh attaining autonomy under the newly autonomous *subedar* while retaining its intimate connection with the Mughal court. Besides, it investigates the political goals of the early Nawabs that helped legitimize their position in the initial decades of the eighteenth century. Answering these questions expounds the burgeoning of regional states and affirm that although an anarchical frenzy existed in imperial centers, the regions showcased distinct socio-economic and cultural patterns.

[39] Srivastava, *The First two Nawabs of Awadh*, .31. Barnett, *North India between Empires*, 20. Jadunath Sarkar, *The India of Aurangzeb: Topography, Statistics and Roads Compared with the India of Akbar* (Calcutta: Bose Brothers,1901), 30-35, 137-138.
[40] Barnett, *North India between Empires*, 20-21.
[41] Noman Ahmad Siddiqui, *Land Revenue Administration under the Mughals 1700-1750* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House,1970), 74-77
[42] Parmatma Saran, *The Provincial Government of the Mughals*, 2nd ed. (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1973), Chap.5; Noman Ahmad Siddiqui, *Land Revenue Administration under the Mughals 1700-1750*, 74-77.
[43] *Ain-i-Akbari* translated by H.S Jarret and Sir Jadunath Sarkar, Volume II, 1949. p 181. Walter Kelly Firminger, *Historical Introduction to the Bengal Portion of the Fifth Report*, (Calcutta: R. Cambray, 1917), Vol. I, 89-90. Trivedi, *Making of Awadh Culture*, 1-2.

Socio-political Background

Awadh had immensely prospered under the Mughal rule by registering economic growth, political stability, inter and intraregional trade in local goods, artifacts, minerals and sustaining a well-monetized market system.[44] The economic prosperity increased the revenue resources of the Mughal empire, enabled the emergence of *qasbas* (small towns), and promoted the affluence of local landowners (*Zamindars*) within the province. The agrarian prosperity necessitated commercialization and linked the *qasbas* to longer trade routes.[45] Awadh was located close to the Mughal capital and was a gateway to the eastern provinces. Besides, the region acquired added importance in the wake of local assertions as the trade, administration, and military routes passed through the city of Lucknow.

The Mughals valued Awadh for its revenue resources and locational advantages. Yet, the region remained challenging to govern during the eighteenth century. Mughal rule was a system of governance where power was enforced though a militaristic approach. [46] Thus, one can easily overestimate its control, especially in the outlying areas. But the empire was like a patch-work quilt raised over virtually autonomous local groups. The system depended on the capability of the state to appropriate roughly one-fourth of the total agricultural produce. [47] The merchants and the landholders having influence in the *qasbahs* (small towns), and *bazaars* (markets) recognized the supremacy of the emperor. Due to the weakening imperial control and military might the local revenues officials appointed by the imperial center faced stiff resistance from the landholders and

[44] Graff, *Lucknow: Memories of a City* 18.
[45] Ibid., 19.
[46] Streusand, *Islamic Gunpowder Empires: Ottomans, Safavids and Mughals,* 1-15.
[47] Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars,* 31.

peasants.[48] Local level kinship connections between the landholders and tenants added resistance to imperial authority.[49] The local landowners in early centuries accepted the subordinate position in front of the Mughal army but rose in arms against the imperial authority after the death of Aurangzeb. However, the scale of resistance remained localized and did not transcend the caste and class divisions to subsume larger regional groups.[50] These revolts corroded the agrarian base of the Mughal empire in the provinces indicating a shifting loyalty towards powerful governors and nobles at the regional level.

The increasing regional prosperity in the decades before the eighteenth century led to conflicts among local groups who tried to increase their benefits against the other. The temporary land revenue assignment holders- *madad-i ma'ash* (revenue-grantees) and *jagir* (land grants) holders aspired to convert their grants into permanent estates.[51] These grants were made transferable by the Mughal ruler, and the *jagir* (land grants) holders received them in regions outside their administrative dominion to ensure their dependence on the imperial center for salaries.[52] But due to lack of productive lands and increased income demands, the *jagir* holders resisted transfers and started building a permanent base in what was a temporary assignment of land revenues. As a result, after allying with local administrators they disregarded the authority of provincial governors who eventually coerced them to submission.

[48] Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India, Awadh and the Punjab,* 11-16.
[49] Ibid., 19.
[50] Ibid., 11-16; Graff, *Lucknow: Memories of a City* 19.
[51] For Details see- Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India, Awadh and the Punjab, 1707-1748*, 11, 12, 16, 118, 243; Graff, *Lucknow: Memories of a City*, 20; and Jafri, *Studies in the Anatomy of a Transformation: Awadh from Mughal to Colonial Rule*, 1-15.
[52] For details on Mughal *Jagirdars* and Agrarian systems see- Richards, *The Mughal Empire;* Streusand, *The Formation of the Mughal Empire*; Alam and Subrahmanyam, (ed.) *The Mughal State, 1526-1750*; and Farhat Hasan, *State and Locality in Mughal India: Power relations in Western India, c.1572-1730,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Likewise, the institution of contractual tenures or *ijaradari* became prevalent in provinces, including Awadh.[53] The collection of land revenue was assigned to an independent party who carried duties like a revenue collector and often kept the surplus amount as his profit. Even the moneylenders and merchants contracted offices and landholdings on behalf of the officials as financial speculation.[54] It worked as a business venture where their employees worked as revenue officials. Any extra collection apart from the stipulated revenue went to the private pockets. The governors of the province, including Sa'ādat Khān, held control over the region on a similar basis. The Nawabs of Awadh had farmed out 85% of the entire agrarian revenue base.[55] These revenue farmers were the elites supporting the growth of 'independent Awadh.'[56] The overall effect was attenuating Mughal imperial control and increasing autonomy of individual officeholders explaining the backdrop to the emergence of autonomous dynastic patrimonies in the eighteenth century; roots of which are evident through the shifting of resource advantages in private hands.

The provincial governor/*subedar* of Awadh carved out the independent principality from the declining Mughal Empire; were not monarchs in the real sense. The successors of Sa'ādat Khān claimed the title of 'Nawab' from the emperor of Delhi, giving them a viceregal status. Later, in 1748, when the Nawab became '*vizier'* (minister) of the emperor, he was known as the '*Nawab vizier*,'. This remained a prevalent title until the end of the eighteenth century. In 1764, the British defeated the Nawab Shuja ud-Daulah in the Battle of Buxar and imposed a subsidiary alliance, forcing the ruler to pay a large annual subsidy and appointing a British Resident at their court. Despite the British interference, the Nawabs managed to control the region until the end of the

[53] Graff, *Lucknow: Memories of a City*, 21. For Details on *Ijaradari* system refer, Rajat Dutta, "Commercialization, Tribute, and Transition from late Mughal to Early Colonial India", *The Medieval history Journal*, April 2003.
[54] Graff, *Lucknow: Memories of a City*, 21.
[55] I.G Khan, "Aspects of Military Organization in Nawabi Awadh, 1750-1800", *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, vol.50, Golden Jubilee Session, 1989, 320-327.
[56] Ibid., 326.

eighteenth century. However, after the death of Asaf ud-Daulah, the rulers of Awadh in 1801 were forced to cede large areas of their territory to the Company to fulfill tributary obligations. In 1819, Awadh finally gained independence from the Mughals during the reign of Ghāzi-ud Din Haider (Refer figure, 5 and 6) but by then the power of the Nawab had diminished.[57]

Initial Consolidation and Shift towards an Autonomous State (1720-1754)

The royal genealogy of Awadh begins with Sa'ādat Khān, a Nishapuri noble who was appointed the governor of Awadh in 1722 by Mughal emperor Muhammad Shāh (1719-1748).[58] Sa'ādat Khān was relegated to the governorship of Awadh because he failed to crush the Jat rebellion in Agra.[59] As such, he had to leave for Awadh without a formal investiture ceremony, and his robes of office were sent by messenger.[60] He subdued rebellious *rajas* and chiefs in Awadh and managed to increase the revenue payments by more than half.[61] Impressed by his early successes in the province, the Mughal emperor Muhammad Shāh (1719-1748) granted him the title Burhan ul-Mulk. Later he made his way to Delhi, but after a quarrel with one of Muhammad Shāh's favorites, he was banished to Awadh for a second time.[62]

After repeated condemnation from the Mughal emperor, Sa'ādat Khān ensured to secure his future in Awadh by sending strong contingents to subdue the refractory chiefs, particularly

[57] Barnett, *North India between Empires*, 35; Trivedi, *Making of Awadh Culture*, 3; Jafri, *Studies in the Anatomy of a Transformation,*1-15*;* In the figure 5 and 6 one can notice change in the dressing style of the Nawab from their predecessors.
[58] Sa'ādat Khān Burhān al-Mulk (1680-1739) was the founder of the Nawabi regime in Awadh and belonged to an elite Sayyid family of Nishapur (Khurasan). Mohan, *Awadh under the* Nawabs*;* Srivastava, *The First two Nawab of Awadh,* 88; Muzaffar Alam, "The Awadh Regime, the Mughals and the Countryside", 24-25.
[59] Barnett, *North India between Empires*, 20-25; Srivastava, *The First two Nawab of Awadh,* 3; Alam, "The Awadh Regime, the Mughals and the Countryside", 22. 'Sa'ādat Khān held several minor positions under the Mughal rule. He was appointed the camp superintendent under faujdar of Kara Manekpur in Allahabad and later became deputy governor of Gujarat.
[60] Barnett, *North India between Empires*, 20-25; Srivastava, *The First two Nawab of Awadh.* 31-35
[61] Barnett, *North India between Empires*, 26.
[62] Ibid., 26.

Tiloi, Bias, Gonda, and Balrampur.[63] The Awadh that Sa'ādat Khān found was dominated by semi-independent landholders of varying strength and political significance. These feudal barons or landholders lived in mud and brick fortress constructed in a village's interior and maintained their finances, army, and civil administration.[64] Awadh in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was marked by the presence of extensive forests providing an ideal setting for the refractory chiefs to construct their fortress.[65] Some of the landholders had acquired virtual independence during Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb's reign, as mentioned earlier. They created power centers by forming their independent army and legal rights in their respective quarters.[66] These powerful interest groups were significant for revenue resources of the state and had a long history of opposition to the Mughal empire. Sa'ādat Khān used his politico-military acumen to strengthen his control over the local landholders and administration and bound them into a loosely organized group that supported his regime.[67] Assertion of the control over the territory happened due to domination over

[63] Srivastava, *The First two Nawab of Awadh,* 31. See more in Jones, *A Fatal Friendship: The Nawabs, the British and the City of Lucknow* in *The Lucknow Omnibus*; Jafri, *Studies in the Anatomy of a Transformation: Awadh from Mughal to Colonial Rule,* 30-34; Barnett, *North India between Empires*; Pemble, *The Raj, the Indian Mutiny and the Kingdom of Oudh 1801-1859*; Bhatt, *The Life and Times of Nawab of Lucknow*. Mohan, *Awadh under the Nawabs, Politics Culture and Communal Relations*.

[64] Srivastava, *The First two Nawab of Awadh,* 31.

[65] Ibid.; 30-31. Francis Buchanan, District Reports, (1807-11) edited and abridged by Montgomery Martin, *The History, Antiquities, Topography, and Statistics of Eastern India,* 3 volumes, London, (1838), Indian reprint, 1976, The Survey of Gorakhpur in Martin's abridgement, Vol. II, 512; Jafri, *Studies in the Anatomy of a Transformation,* 33. 'Francis Buchanan surveyed the district in 1807-11 and estimated that 1450 sq. miles of the total area of Awadh was covered with forest'.

[66] Some these feudal barons included notable chiefs like Mohan Singh, Raja of Tiloi in present-day Rae Bareli district, Rajas of Bansi and Rasulpur and Binayakpur in Basti, Chet Rai Bais of Baisawara, Raja Dutta Singh of Gonda, Raja Narain Singh of Balrampur. Besides, these major landlords' numerous smaller chieftains acquired significant power and autonomy during the weakened Mughal rule. More details in Srivastava, *The First two Nawab of Awadh,* 31.

[67] The revolt of zamindars and their power assertion in the region was seen as a crisis in the making for the Mughal North India in the eighteenth century. The leaders of the local communities known as *zamindars* in the sources were hereditary local potentates. Their position, strength and resources were independent of the state. But they were sharply divided among themselves on caste, clan and territorial lines and were perpetually at war with each other. Each group feared the other and had to be constantly alert against the actual or threatened encroachment of the other. The social conditions of the period rarely allowed the various local communities to stand together; they could always be subjugated by a power that was able to stand above kin, clan, regional and religious connections. The rulers of the Mughal Empire played earlier this role, and later the power was vested in the *Nawab*s of Awadh. Alam, *The Crisis of the Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and Punjab*; Srivastava, *The First two Nawab of Awadh,* 31-40.

the countryside. Similar lines were followed by the Nawabs of Bengal, who based their rule on the support of the *zamindars* and appointed local Hindus in high administrative posts.[68]

By the Mughal emperor's approval, the Nawab further acquired hold over the neighboring territories of Banaras, Jaunpur, Ghazipur, and Chunargarh.[69] The *sheikhzadas* (sons of nobles) asserted local autonomy and control over the city of Lucknow during the time of Sa'ādat Khān.[70] The astuteness of Sa'ādat Khān and the guidance of the Afghan chief helped him gain control of the city, and the *sheikhzadas* were forced to vacate their palace in Lucknow, the *panchmahala* (literally translates to the five-storeyed building).[71] The eastern frontier of Awadh expanded up to the boundaries of modern-day Uttar Pradesh (India) under Sa'ādat Khān. However, after a decade of territorial consolidation, the fateful battle with Nadir Shah and ransacking of Delhi in 1738 ruined the Nawabs' plan.[72] Further, Nadir Shah sent troops to Awadh to extort money from the Nawab, humiliating Sa'ādat Khān, who supposedly committed suicide on 20th March 1739.[73]

Arguably the end of Sa'ādat Khān's governorship was unanticipated, but he is credited to have laid a strong foundation in Awadh by subduing the rural landlords and extending his power deep into the rural administration. Muzaffar Alam notes that he founded the Awadh dynasty within the Mughal empire.[74] The region transitioned from being a Mughal *suba* to a regional political

[68] Philip B. Calkins, "The Formation of Regionally Oriented Rural Group in Bengal: 1700-1740", 799-806.
[69] Barnett, *North India between Empires*, 20-25. Srivastava, *The First two Nawabs of Awadh*, 1-10. Maulavi Najm ul Ghani Khan, *Tarikh-i Awadh* (Lucknow: Nawal Kishore Press, 1919), 51-53. 'He also defeated the *Raja* of Allahabad and acquired his *Sarkar'.*
[70] Alam, "The Awadh Regime, the Mughals and the Countryside", 19. "The descendants of the Mughal courtier Sheikh-Abd-al Rahman became prominent landholders of Awadh and they along with other Sheikh and Saiyids were collectively referred as *Sheikhzadas."*
[71] Srivastava, *The First two Nawabs of Awadh*, 3.
[72] Barnett, *North India between Empires*, 34-37. Srivastava, *The First two Nawabs of Awadh*, 45-5-, Bhatt, *The Life and Times of Nawab of Lucknow*, 18-19
[73] Bhatt, *The Life and Times of Nawab of Lucknow*, 18-19. Barnett, *North India between Empires*, 30-33. However, the aforementioned assertion lacks veracity as contemporary writers have attributed varying causes to his death ranging from bodily ailments to consumption of poison.
[74] Alam, 'The Awadh Regime, the Mughals and the Countryside', 22.

system. Yet, Awadh under Sa'ādat Khān's governorship was not an independent region and remained a part of the Mughal imperial system.

One of the significant premises of autonomous rule is the construction of capital city but in this case the Nawab preferred to stay in a temporary residence. In this regard, Muhammad Faiz Baksha in *Tarikh-i Farah Baksha* had pointed out that-

> "When Nawab Burhan-ul Mulk was given the governorship of Awadh he pitched his tent and court on the banks of river Ghagra, four miles to the west of Haveli Khass. After a few days, he constructed a Bangla, a wooden hut with a thatched roof, to pass the rainy season. Round it, he raised a mud wall on all four sides with a bastion on each corner like a fort. He made the enclosure so long and wide to provide plenty of room for infantry, cavalry, artillery, and other establishments. Thus, this place of residence was called Bangla. During the reign of second Nawab Safdar Jung, it came to know as Faizabad." [75]

The Nawab in the early decades lived in a semi-permanent capital, yet the administrative reforms or changes were marked as the first steps towards the creation of an independent state because he dominated the lesser structures on the periphery and annexed territories that were previously not a part of the Mughal *suba* of Awadh.

Following the death of Sa'ādat Khān in 1739, Safdar Jung reclaimed the position in Awadh after paying rupees 2,00,00,00 as *peshkash* (a tribute) to Nadir Shah.[76] Like his predecessor, he continued the expansionist policy in the Gangetic plains taking leverage of the political weakness. He was offered the office of *Mir Atish* (Commander of Artillery) along with the *subedari* of Kashmir.[77] Safdar Jung organized a palace wedding for his son and turned it into an imperial event thereby asserting his independence.[78] Besides, during the reign of Mughal emperor Ahmad Shah

[75] William Hoey, *Memoirs of Delhi and Faizabad*, translation of *'Tarikh-i Farah Baksh'* of Muhammad Faiz Baksh, Volume I. (Allahabad: Government Press, 1889), 3-4. The capital of Awadh shifted from Faizabad to Lucknow during the reign of Sa'ādat Khān's grandson Asaf ud-Daulah.
[76] Bhatt, *The Life and Times of Nawab of Lucknow*, 33.
[77] *Tarikh-i Awadh*, 112-113. Barnett, *North India between Empires*, 35.
[78] Ibid., 35.

(r.1748-1754) he was accorded the title of '*wazir*,' or minister showing a significant political advancement.[79] He consciously exchanged the *subedari* of Ajmer for Allahabad to expand into the contiguous territory. Following Sa'ādat Khān's technique, he ensured that his heir was granted the title of Shuja ud-Daulah and control over imperial artillery.[80] The emergence of a new political tradition is noticeable with conscious effort being made under the first two Nawabs to strengthen their hold over the *suba* of Awadh.

However, due to political misjudgments, Safdar Jung lost to Ahmad Khan Bangash in late 1750, and consequently, large towns of Awadh were plundered.[81] He also conducted a series of excesses owing to which he was forced to relinquish his position as '*wazir'* and restrict his areas of influence to Awadh.[82] In Barnett's words, Safdar Jung failed as a *wazir,* yet one cannot deny that the Nawab had a formidable army at the command and strong rebellious chieftains who recognized his regime and secured its frontiers from external threats. Both the early governors of Awadh did not take orders from any Mughal *wazirs* or dignitaries and behaved considerably independent in their internal administration.[83] They pretended to be the governors of the province and gave a facade of obeying the imperial orders, whereas they assumed an autonomous stand.

The shift towards gaining independence is visible through the changes in the administrative setup under the first two Nawabs. In the internal administration, the *naib* or deputy-governor became the head of civil and military administration of the province. Below the deputy governor was the *diwan*, who oversaw revenue and civil justice. In addition, *suba* had a *Bakshi* (Paymaster),

[79] Ibid., 36.
[80] Ibid., 38.
[81] For more details on the political campaigns of the first Nawab refer- Srivastava, *The First two Nawabs of Awadh.* Bhatt, *The Life and Times of Nawab of Lucknow*. Barnett, *North India between Empires*, 30-40.
[82] Ibid., 38 'The one episode that strained relations of Safdar Jung with the Mughal court was the assassination of eunuch Javid Khan who commanded influence over both Ahmad Shah and Queen Mother Udham Bai'. Ahmad shah retreated to the harem and Udham Bai favored the enemies of Safdar Jung which led to civil war. *Tarikh-iAhmad Shahi,* 206.
[83]Srivastava, *The First two Nawabs of Awadh,* 245-250.

a *Qazi* (Muslim Judge), a *Sadr* (head of religious endowments), and a *Buyutat* (who kept records of the deceased person's property).[84] In the countryside, two or three *Parganas* were grouped under an *amil*, usually assisted by a *tahsildar* (tax collector). The position of *faujdar* (military-superintendent) and *Karori* that existed under the Mughal empire was abolished. [85]

Arguably increasing control over the revenue resources and agrarian countryside was evident under the early Nawabs. Such a control depended on the presence of a strong military stationed at Faizabad. In case of any delay in payments, the troops coerced the rural manganates to pay the desired revenue on time. Conclusively indicating a strong hold over revenue resources by military-magisterial power (*faujdari*). One can argue that the political order established under the Nawabs created patterns of consumption, protection, and revenue extraction, which acted as a bridge between the townsmen and the rural society solved issues of legitimate rule.

Although the rulers of Awadh did not declare their independence from the Mughal empire until 1819, steps taken towards gaining an autonomous state were witnessed from the early eighteenth century under the first two Nawabs. Richard Barnett opines that a comparison of the Mughal administrative practices and the Nawabi administration in the provinces helps determine the degree of autonomy exercised by the successor states. He also enlists criteria indicating if a state acted independently of the Mughal authority.[86] Measures like appointing revenue officials, collecting revenue for use within the region, independent diplomatic and military activity were already visible under the reign of the first two Nawabs. However, creating a capital city and an environment of eclecticism became evident under Shuja ud-Daulah and Asaf ud-Daulah.

[84] Ibid., 249-250, Jafri, *Studies in the Anatomy of a Transformation*, 40-44.
[85] Jafri, *Studies in the Anatomy of a Transformation*, 40-44.
[86] Barnett, *North India between Empires*, 20-25.

Shuja ud-Daulah's Reign: A Shift from Autonomy to Subservient Political System

The reign of Shuja ud-Daulah lasted from 1754 till his death in 1775, with a period of disruption in 1764 with the battle of Buxar.[87] Awadh reached its maximum territorial extent under Shuja and the province included much of Allahabad, Rohilkhand, mid-Gangetic Doab, including Etawah. [88] This period has been called the period of 'greatest autonomy' by Richard Barnett.[89] It witnessed a complex interplay of increasing efforts at legitimization, further decay of the Mughal empire and augmenting British intrusion. The battle of Buxar changed Awadh's governance in the coming century and opened gateways for formal British penetration in Awadh's internal administration. It remains a significant military action of eighteenth-century India whereby an alliance of several regional rulers confronted the Bengal army of British, altering relationships of the concerned parties.

The hereditary nature of Awadh's regime, coupled with its economic and military resources made it a strong regional power in North India. Still, the affirmation by the Mughal emperor was a crucial factor in determining the *subedari* of Awadh. The *wizarat* entrusted to the Nawab of Awadh was taken away during the time of Safdar Jang, and he barely managed to keep the *subedari* to himself. The first action taken by the new Nawab was to approach the Mughal emperor Alamgir II (1754-1759) to obtain an imperial appointment to the province of Awadh.[90] Later, Shuja appointed all existing officials to their position, including his cousin Muhammad Quli Khan, deputy governor of Allahabad, and Ismail Khan Kabuli, who held the position of *naib* (deputy-

[87] Ibid.,10-19. 'Shuja ud-Daulah succeeded to the governorship of Oudh (Awadh) and Allahabad after the Death of Safdar Jung. He was appointed to the position by the Mughal emperor Alamgir II.
[88] 'Mirza Jalal-ud Din Haidar better known with the title of Shuja ud-Daulah was born in Shahjahanabad in the imperial city of Delhi.' Srivastava, *Shuja ud-Daulah*, 7-8, 312-315; Jafri, *Studies in the Anatomy of a Transformation: Awadh from Mughal to Colonial Rule*, 35-36
[89] Barnett, *North India between Empires*, 43-50.
[90] Barnett, *North India between Empires*, 43.

governor).[91] However, in the early years of his reign, he was involved in a scandal when he got the eighteenth-year-old Khatri girl abducted by the Naga soldiers.[92] This led to massive protests and the Mughal soldiers in Shuja's army resolved to appoint his cousin Muhammad Quli Khan as the Nawab in place of Shuja. Later, the shrewdness of *Nawab*s' mother Sadr-i-Jahan thwarted the situation from escalating by asserting Shuja's rightfulness as an heir.[93] This was an instance of the diplomatic role played by Begums. Moreover, the episode indicates that rulers' survival in the eighteenth century depended greatly on the subjects' support, mainly because they belonged to ethically heterogeneous groups. It is noticeable that the powers of the rulers of the frontier polities were not absolute, and legitimacy emanated from the subjects. Unlike the Mughal empire where divine kingship was the norm, and the ruler was bestowed with divine light (*farr-i Ijadi.*)

The eighteenth-century frontier polities were constantly engaged in internecine warfare. As a result, there were constantly making and breaking alliances. Such diplomatic and military activities were frequent in Shuja's reign.[94] In the early years of territorial consolidation, the Nawab diplomatically sought peace with the Ruhela chief. In 1758, he dealt with the *raja* of Balwant Singh of Banaras, who had occupied the forts of Vijagarh, Angoori, and Lateefpura and had challenged the Nawab since 1753.[95] Shuja vanquished the *Raja* of Banaras and increased his

[91] Ibid.,'The *naib* literally deputy was initially controlled by the Mughal emperor and subservient to the provincial diwan until the 1720s. He was now only second in command to the *Nawab'.*
[92] Srivastava, *Shuja ud-Daulah*, 17-19. Barnett, *North India between Empires*, 43-47. K.S Santha, *Begums of Awadh,* 34-39.
[93] Hoey, *Memoirs of Delhi and Faizabad*, 8-9; Srivastava, *Shuja ud-Daulah,* 17-19. Barnett, *North India between Empires*, 43-47; Santha, *Begums of Awadh,* 34-39. 'Sadr-i Jahan Begum summoned Ram Narayan (Khatri diwan of Awadh) to her private apartments for a harsh lecture on the inadvisability of what he and Ismail khan were doing. She asserted that Shuja was the rightful heir and the only son of Safdar Jung.'
[94] Ibid., 20-35. "Shuja ud-Daulah took control over the Allahabad in 1759 after crushing his rival. Furthermore, Shuja was involved in the war between the Maratha and the Ahmad Shah Abdali's forces in the third battle of Panipat in 1761.
[95] Barnett, *North India between Empires*, 55-66. Srivastava, *Shuja ud-Daulah*, 50-55.

revenue payment towards the state.[96] Furthermore, the territory of Allahabad came under the firm control of Shuja ud-Daulah in 1759 when he seized the fort and made the family of Muhammad Quli Khan hostage.[97] From the above political maneuvers and expansionist attitude, one can opine that the Nawab in the first decade of his reign, vigorously enlarged the territory of Awadh by crushing his immediate neighbors either by waging wars or through diplomacy. The expansion was deliberately carried in the contiguous territory in order to increase the revenue of the state. He occupied a powerful position in the region at the end of 1760 when Awadh reached its maximum territorial extent.

A tough challenge appeared in 1761 with the third battle of Panipat.[98] Even though the war between the Abdali's forces and the Maratha army involved the Nawab, he looked forward to gaining from the skirmish and affirming his political ruling. Shuja adopted a non-partisan approach during the battle yet made sure to assert his position as an autonomous ruler when Abdali's officer promised him the *Wizarat.*[99] When offered the office of *wazir* by Ahmad Shah Abdali, Shuja replied- Who is the emperor? Whose *wazir* am I to be?[100] It is evident that he did not recognize the authority of the Mughal emperor. Besides, the Nawab even requested to play his drum and bugle corps in Abdali's camp.[101] It is discernible that Nawab, in many respects, considered himself an autonomous ruler looking for opportunities to assert his sovereignty primarily in front of

[96] Barnett, *North India between Empires*, 47-48; Najm ul-Ghani Khan, *Tarikh-i Awadh*, II, 151; Mohan, *Awadh under the Nawabs*, 64. 'Balwant Singh agreed to pay Rupees. 5,00,000 in immediate tribute and accepted a vastly enhance rent of Rupees, 12,00,000 in exchange for being confirmed in possession of expanded territories.'
[97] Barnett, *North India between Empires*, 55-66; Srivastava, *Shuja ud-Daulah*, 312-315, 'The ambitious proposal of Muhammad Quli Khan (deputy governor of Allahabad) to march against the English in eastern India and establish a new sultanate led him to lose control over Allahabad'.
[98] The third battle of Panipat was fought between the Marathas and the invading Afghan army (Ahmad Shah Durrani or Abdali). The Durrani army was supported by four others allies, the Rohillas under the command of Najib-ud Daulah, Afghans of the Doab region and the Nawab of Awadh.
[99] For details see Srivastava, *Shuja ud-Daulah*, 312-350. Barnett, *North India between Empires*, 55-56.
[100] Barnett, *North India between Empires*, 54
[101] Ibid., 55.

outsiders and other regional powers of the subcontinent. In a later episode, the Nawab also reminded the Shah of his primary allegiance to the Mughal emperor only to avoid the threat to his state and not pay the monetary demands made by the Shah. In Barnett's words, he used the Mughal shield to protect his resources.

Scholars argue that Shuja's non-partisan approach in the battle of Panipat was also because of the heterogeneous composition of the army, which notably included Hindus who were prominent in administrative and military posts in Awadh.[102] In 1757, Raja Beni Bahadur, a skilled brahman, had become the chief minister or *naib* of Awadh.[103] Furthermore, the Nawab also had a Marathi-speaking Deshastha Brahman, Gosain monks, Naga *sanyasis*, and Shaivite warriors in his army whose services were indispensable to the Nawab.[104] The presence of *kafirs* (non-muslims) and naked *naga* warriors amidst the armies composed of Muslims might have alienated the Nawab from the ideology of holy war (*jihad*) but created a backdrop for asserting his independence all the more.[105] The diverse composition of his army was an important ligament that tied the state to society thereby extending the rule over the local subjects.

After the battle of Buxar (1764) the British established their military supremacy over Awadh and became temporary custodians of Shuja's territories. The British did not wish to assume complete territorial control and reached a subsidiary political system with the Nawab. The Nawab was to retain Awadh, and Allahabad and Kara's region were ceded to Shah Alam II (r.1760-1788;1788-1806) for his income.[106] The Mughal emperor chose to stay in the fort of Allahabad. A war indemnity of Rs.50,00,000 was to be paid to the company in installments, and Shuja and the

[102] Ibid.
[103] Najm ul-Ghani Khan, *Tarikh-i Awadh*, II, 151; Harnam Singh, trans. Elliot and Dawson, History, VIII, 348-349.
[104] Barnett, *North India between Empires*, 57.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid. See, Srivastava, *Shuja-ud Daulah*.

company would defend each other's territory.[107] In addendum, a British Resident was appointed at the court of Nawab as an observer. The succeeding decades established that Resident functioned more than an observer. Despite the administrative disruptions caused by the subsidiary alliance Awadh reached its political and cultural apogee under Shuja ud-Daulah and his successors.

After the battle, Faizabad was made the seat of government and the army and nobility was reorganized. The Mughal contingents were disbanded, and brahmans, Rajputs, and *sheikhazadas* were appointed in his army.[108] It won't be incorrect to argue that a conscious anti-Mughal policy was apparent after the defeat at Buxar. The early Nawabs had also divested the revenue rights of the old Mughal nobility in order to attain a quick control over the resources, but such instances became pronounced from the time of Shuja ud-Daulah. Another essential feature of Shuja's army was the appointment of eunuchs or *Khwaja-Saras* as officers.[109] The Nawabs' army stationed in Faizabad included thirty thousand regular soldiers in red uniform and forty thousand irregulars in black.[110] The commander in chief was Sayyid Ahmad, popularly known as *Bansi wala*.[111] Muhammad Faiz Baksha in *Tarikh-i Farah Baksha* also mentions in detail the chief officers of Nawabs cavalry and their ranks.[112]

The shifting of capital opened gateways for scholars, traders, artists, and freelancers from Delhi and Lucknow. The evolving cultural mosaic of Faizabad coincided with the decline of the

[107] Ibid., 57-60.
[108] 'The highest cavalry leaders were Nawab Murtaza Khan Bareech and two brahmans named Himmat Bahadur and Umrao Gir. These three commanders together had more troops under them than all the other lesser commanders.' Sharar, *Lucknow: The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture,* 32.
[109] 'Khwaja-sara Basant Ali was in command of two divisions which included a force of fourteen thousand regular soldiers.' Sharar, *Lucknow: The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture,* 32.
[110] Ibid., 31-33.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Hoey, *Memoirs of Delhi and Faizabad,* p-8-9. "The chief officers of *Nawab's* cavalry were *Nawab* Murtaza Khan Barij and the two Goshains, Himmat Bahadur and Amraogir (Umrao giri) who each had under him more men all put together, and sheikh Ahsan kamboi, Gurji beg khan, Gopal Rao Marhata and Saiyad Jamaluddin Khan Nawab son-in-law of Mir Jumla who held an appointment under the *Nawab*. Besides Tahawwar Khan a native of kakori and Muhammad Muazzuddin Khan a *Sheikhzada* of Lucknow. None of them had less than 1000 or 500 horsemen with them."

Mughal capital of Delhi and the Safavid empire, furthering the migration of scholars from different regions.[113] The *madrasas* (schools) of Faizabad acquired fame and thence many students and scholars from Bengal, Gujarat, Malwa, Hyderabad, Lahore, Kabul, Kashmir, and Multan were attracted to the city.[114] One can argue that the reign of Shuja ud-Daulah was remarkable in establishing a composite culture in the hinterland of Awadh. Muhammad Faiz Baksh notes that when Shuja shifted the capital to Faizabad, he built the city anew on a grander scale and rebuilt the old citadel constructed by Sa'ādat Ali Khan Burhan-ul Mulk and razed the houses of Mughals. Civil and military officers were given plots of land to construct houses.

With regards to the city, Muhammad Faiz Baksha further notes –:

> "I was bewildered when I entered the city gates of Faizabad because there was dancing and shows everywhere in the city. From sunrise to sunset, the noise of drums and kettledrums of the regiment never ceased, and the sound of gongs which told the hours and the watches defeaned the ears."[115] He further describes the grandeur of the city and mentions – "Well dressed picked young men, sons of nobles of Delhi and Physicians of the Greek school, singers and dancers of both sexes and every land were in the enjoyment of large salaries. The pockets of all high and low were crammed as full as they could be gold and silver, and no one dreamed of poverty and distress." [116]

Construction of built spaces are both ways to seek legitimacy and assert power in the region. In this case it was done to display strength and magnificence. For instance, the tomb of Safdar Jung which is till date an imposing architecture in Delhi was built by his son Shuja ud-Daulah, remains the largest monument erected in Mughal style in the eighteenth century. This asserts that power that these *Nawabs-vizier* commanded at the Mughal court. In the city of Faizabad itself there were three gardens. The first was the Angoori Bagh, constructed within the

[113] Ibid., 35. Hoey, *Memoirs of Delhi and Faizabad,* 10-12.
[114] Mohan, *Awadh under the Nawabs,* 64-6. Hoey, *Memoirs of Delhi and Faizabad,* 67.
[115] Hoey, *Memoirs of Delhi and Faizabad,*10-12.
[116] Ibid., 10-15.

fort and occupying one-fourth of the enclosed area.[117] The second was the Moti Bagh located in the heart of the Chauk bazaar, and the largest among them was the Lal Bagh.[118] These gardens were furnished with magnificent lawns, and flowers appeared in profusion. Sharar mentions that these gardens were renowned throughout the provinces, and thus even the Mughal emperor Shah Alam on his return from Allahabad, came and spent some time in Faizabad.[119] The discussion on built spaces constructed by the Nawab is outside the purview of this chapter.[120] Yet, I would like to emphasize that the construction of both religious and secular architecture had purposes beyond their basic physical utility. They were tangible evidence of the growing power of the dynastic patrimony and indicates attempt towards outlining their territorial control.

After the defeat at Chandernagore, the French also sought refuge with the Nawab of Awadh. The Nawab assigned the French engineer Antonie Louis Polier civil works and the task of improving the city's defense.[121] In 1775 about 200 Frenchmen and Europeans were in the service of the Nawab.[122] They gave troops military instructions, cannons, muskets, and weapons of war produced under their supervision.[123] J.J Gentil was the most prominent and an adviser to Shuja ud-Daulah and remained attached to the court of Awadh till the death of Nawab.

Shuja ud-Daulah's reign witnessed changes in two phases- the first phase was before the battle of Buxar and centered on territorial expansion, and the second phase experienced massive construction projects, protracted autonomy and British intervention in the Awadhi administration after 1764. The consolidation of the army coupled with the conscious shifting and construction of

[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Sharar, *Lucknow: The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture*, 32.
[120] For Details on architectural spaces of Awadh refer, John Marie Lafont, *Chitra: Cities and Monuments of Eighteenth Century India from French Archives*, (New Delhi: OUP, 2001).
[121] Antonie Louis Henry Polier, *Shah Alam II and his Court*, ed. Praful C. Gupta, (Calcutta: S.C. Sarkar, 1947), 5
[122] Trivedi, *Making of Awadh Culture*, 2. Sharar, *Lucknow: The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture*, p.33 For Details See Llewellyn-Jones, *Engaging Scoundrels: True Tales of Old Lucknow*.
[123] Sharar, *Lucknow: The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture*, 33.

the capital city at Faizabad indicates creation of a heterogenous culture and display of imperial might. Despite the defeat at Buxar, the Nawab managed to gain control over his province through diplomatic and political prowess. The building of imperial spaces like gardens citadels, palatial monuments, mosques, gateways indicates that the monarch was attempting to display strength and legitimize his position. In some instances, the scholars contemporaneous to Shuja ud-Daulah also compared the city of Faizabad to the Mughal capital Shahjahanabad. In conclusion, the assertion of autonomy and legitimacy through constructing architectural spaces and patronizing scholars and artists became pronounced from the time of Shuja ud-Daulah, and it won't be incorrect to argue that it reached its apogee under his successor Asaf ud-Daulah.

Asaf ud-Daulah and Problems of Being an English Protectorate

Weber has given three "justifications" or "legitimations" through which a ruling power can secure obedience. He sociologically defines 'legitimacy' as belief in the rightfulness of a given power and states three ways in which legitimacy can be secured- the charisma of the person, the "gift of grace in leadership, and that of legality".[124] But the legitimacy of Asaf ud-Daulah was based on the political resources and bond of loyalties built by his predecessors. As I have stated elsewhere, there was meager quotient of charisma about the Nawab.

Scholars argue that Nawab was somewhat obese and can be seen in Zoffany's painting "Colonel Mordaunt's Cockfight" (Figure.8) and the portraits of him by Ozias Humphry (Figure.4); as such, it was not his charisma that defined his reign. Richard Barnett mentions that he had a

[124] See his 1918 lecture "Politics as a vocation", in H.A Gerth and C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: OUP, 1958), 77-128

particularly sheltered youth life, and he ignored all training in skills that befitted an heir apparent.[125]

In the *memoirs of Faizabad,* the author describes the physical features of Asaf ud-Daulah-

> "Asaf ud-Daulah's feature bore a general resemblance to his father's. The upper part of his body was rather long, and the lower part of his body was rather short. From his childhood, he was rather obese; his fat ears, neck, and double chin were one fleshy mass". The author further goes on to say- "From his boyhood, Asaf was addicted to frivolities and his natural inclination was for low, ill-born and base-minded associates." [126]

However, the hereditary nature of the Nawabs' regime together with its legality and the resources at command, helped survive the initial regnal turmoil. Abu Talib in *Tafzihu'l Ghafilin* mentions that since Asaf ud-Daulah was near his grandmother in Faizabad, who disproved most of his conduct, he shifted to Lucknow.[127] On similar lines, Abdul Halim Sharar also opined that when Asaf ud-Daulah assumed the rulership of Awadh, he quarreled with his grandmother and went to Lucknow. Other narratives indicate Asaf disliked the constant interference of his mother, Bahu Begum. As such shifting the capital to Lucknow was an escape mechanism and not a planned transfer. Consequently, the splendor of the court in Faizabad started to decline, and Lucknow gained the limelight as a capital.[128] Asaf also did not enjoy a good reputation as a ruler, with the then British Resident John Bristow.

Sadr un-Nisa Begum:

> "When Sadr un-Nisa Begum, Shuja ud-Daulah's mother, and Jinab Aliya mutaliya his wife were together after the death of Asaf ud-Daulah's father; Nawab Aliya advised Jenab Aliya saying: your son Asaf ud-Daulah is twenty-six years old, but up to this time he has devoted himself to amusements

[125] Barnett, *North India Between Empires*, 99.
[126] Hoey, *Memoirs of Delhi and Faizabad*, 16.
[127] Hoey, Willaim. *History of Asafu'd Daulah Nawab Wazir of Oudh*, translation of *Tafzihu'l Ghafilin* by Mirzā Abu Talib Khān, (Pustak Kendra: 1971), 8.
[128] Sharar, Abdul Halim. *Lucknow: The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture, edited by E.S. Harcourt and Fakhir Hussain*, translated from *Guzishta Lucknow: Mashriqi Tamaddun ka Akhiri Namuna,* (London: 1965), 45.

> unbecoming and inconsistent with his position, he has neither manners, presence, nor knowledge of business and he absolutely incapable of supervising or comprehending administration: it is not unlikely that all the wealth your husband has acquired will in a short time be dissipated. It is advisable to nominally place him in the chair of state and appoint Mirza Saa'dat Ali, who is acute and intelligent as his minister."[129]

To which Bahu Begum replied:

> "I have but one son in my whole life; bad or good he is my sole treasure. In your eyes, all sons of Shuja ud-Daulah are equal".[130]

Asaf ud-Daulah ascended the throne in 1775, and alongside the British concluded a new treaty with the Nawab which added an extra burden to the finances of Awadh and reduced the control of the ruler over his administration.[131]Asaf ud-Daulah was aware of the need to gain public affirmation and conscious of the political scenario that demanded allegiance to the ruling. As such, he procured temporary peace by negotiating with the state servants and courtiers of Shuja ud-Daulah, who had initially boycotted his coronation.[132] He entrusted his brothers and sons to important posts in the departments like treasury, superintendent, and household and dismissed all Shuja ud-Daulah's servants who had taken care of the *subah* with skill and distinction.[133] Asaf appointed his chief steward Murtaza Khan who eventually became the overseer of the *Nawab*'s household and chief of state workshop.[134]

Murtaza Khan (title, Mukhtar-ud Daulah) played a huge role in worsening the Begums and the Nawab relations. Hoey mentions that Murtaza Khan sought permission from the intoxicated Nawab to procure money from Begums after his arrival, and the Nawab in an inebriated state

[129] Hoey, *Memoirs of Delhi and Faizabad,* 22-24.
[130] Ibid., 129.
[131] Barnett, *North India Between Empires*, p.99. Hoey, Willaim. *History of Asafu'd Daulah Nawab Wazir of Oudh,* translation of *Tafzihu'l Ghafilin* by Mirzā Abu Talib Khān, (Pustak Kendra: 1971), 8.
[132] Ibid., 22-24.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Read Hoey, *Memoirs of Delhi and Faizabad,* 22-24 for details on Murtaza Khan.

allowed for the same.[135] Taking advantage of the situation and reluctance of the Begum to pay the money from the treasury of Shuja ud-Daulah, the British plenipotentiary agreed on becoming the mediator between the two. He convinced the Begum to pay a sum of rupees sixty lakh, after which no money would be demanded from the Nawab's side, which estranged the relations between the two thereafter.[136]

From interfering with the Begum's treasury to negotiating treaties with the Company, Mukhtar-ud Daulah was allowed to decide on matters of state and administration, which bothered the old nobility and caused disruptions in the administration of Awadh.[137] Collectively, this led to accumulating revenue deficits and defection of old nobles, landing Awadh in a state of financial deadlock. The money given to the Nawab by the Begum was insufficient to solve the problem. The increasing army crisis and political strife's with the neighboring regions provided Resident the opportunity to place Company officers in charge of the Awadhi army. This marks the beginning of the Company's interference in Awadh's administration. By the end of 1777, there emerged three influential players in the region of Awadh- the Nawab, the Begums, and the Company. The Nawab had secured legitimacy from the people, the Begums commanded financial resources, and Company had superior military organization. The secured public allegiance and the military sanctions that Shuja-ud Daulah has secured began to crumble from 1777 onwards.

Nawabi regime in Awadh faced numerous repercussions of the British alliance on its administration and resources, from lack of suitable administrative personal, increasing powers of revenue farmers and the autonomy of the begums to increasing interference in politics. The last chapter of my thesis discusses the arbitrariness and the coercion of the Resident in the Nawab

[135] Ibid., 25-26. Murtaza Khan took with him the Eunuch Brigadier Basant Ali Khan and some companions of the regular; John Bristow, the Resident at Lucknow and Nawab Salar Jung also accompanied him to Faizabad.
[136] Ibid., 26-27.
[137] Barnett, *North India between Empires*, 104-106.

administration. The English reaped financial advantages from their connection with the court at Awadh, their financial claims in the name of military protection increased over the Nawab. Furthermore, the French artillery was replaced with the British army because the French presence in Awadh was seen as a threat.

Asaf ud-Daula's agreement with the military protection did not bring any advantage to the Nawab's administration. Moreover, the problem of collecting the revenue increased because there were no strict lines drawn on enforcing the responsibility to collect. As a solution to the problem, the cash payment of subsidy was replaced by assignments of revenue or *tankhwahs* from a specific territory.[138] When the revenue farmers began to evade payments, Asaf ud-Daulah sought the company's assistance in collecting taxes from areas not assigned to them.[139] As a fallout, more British troops were stationed to defend the territory/borders of Awadh. Also, the British involvement in revenue collection increased the status of the Resident to that of a Mughal *mansabdar,* who used coercion to collect revenue.[140] Collectively, these steps diluted the role of Nawab in his administration. The Company gained access to entire records and revenue accounts and was able to acquire any confidential information on the material record of Awadh. With access to new revenue records, the English mercilessly farmed the revenues at excessive rates. The protest by the Nawab against the English excesses represented a critical turning point in the alliance between the Company and the Nawab.

The region of Awadh enjoyed a brief of semi-autonomy in the reign of Asaf ud-Daulah after governor-general Warren Hastings negotiated reforms in the subsidy payment.[141] These negotiations were carried to restore the faith of the Nawab in the alliance with the British. These

[138] Ibid., 160-165, Saiyid Zaheer Husain Jafri, *Studies in the Anatomy of a Transformation, 60-65*
[139] Barnett, *North India between Empires* ,118-121.
[140] Ibid., 160-165, Saiyid Zaheer Husain Jafri, *Studies in the Anatomy of a Transformation, 60-65.*
[141] Barnett, *North India between Empires,* 224-226.

measures benefitted the Awadhi regime, and the powers of the Resident were considerably reduced. However, a change in the attitude of the British after the death of Asaf -ud-Daulah in 1797, paved the way for the eventual annexation of Awadh.

The first two Nawabs of Awadh lived in simple houses, were concerned with territorial expansion and strengthening their position while the later Nawabs were more interested in commissioning building activities. For instance, Nawab Saadat Ali Khan, who assumed the throne in 1798, is credited for constructing several buildings in Lucknow. [142] Still, significant changes were noticed in building construction that assumed European style.[143] The process of Europeanization of architecture had become evident from the time of Asaf ud-Daulah.[144] Under the early Nawabs, the focus was laid on constructing religious spaces like mosques and *Imāmbārās,* which changed from the nineteenth century when one witnesses an element of hybridization.[145]

The later Nawabs became 'Kings' and attained full autonomy from the Mughals, yet the kind of influence they commanded had declined, even though the rulers were monarchs in an absolute sense. They took decisions at the behest of the British. Awadh continued to grow in terms of architecture and culture, but the power of the monarch reduced considerably, and duality in governance was visible. Although after 1801, elements of traditional rule were preserved in Awadh, everything that remained was subjected to the higher British authority. This kind of

[142] Sharar, Abdul Halim. *Lucknow: The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture, edited by E.S. Harcourt and Fakhir Hussain*, translated from Guzishta Lucknow: Mashriqi Tamaddun ka Akhiri Namuna, (London, 1965). 50-52 'Sadat Ali Khan first bought a house *Farhat Baksha*, Pleasure-giving from Claude Martin for fifty thousand rupees. Then in the neighborhood he constructed the Tehri Kothi for the Resident to live in. After this he built the Lal Barahdari for his court. In addition to this he built a new kothi on the side of the river called Dil Aram, 'Heart's Repose'. Furthermore, on ahigh hill he constructed another building called the Dil Kusha. The Nawab constructed several other buildings like Munavar Baksha, Khurshid Manzil, Hayat Baksha.
[143] Ibid., 52
[144] Trivedi, *Making of Awadh Culture,* (chapter 2)
[145]Ibid., 170-180

indirect rule or a ‘dyarchy’ entailed that the East India Company, through its Residents, intervened in all internal matters like the army, Judicial system, or revenue collection.

Chapter- 2

Growth and Popularity of Imāmi Shiʿism under the Nawabs. (1722-1801)

Shiʿa's in South Asia- Background

The Shiʿa Muslims had a considerable presence in the Mughal court, where they occupied an important position as provincial governors. While several Shiʿa scholars, artists, and painters had already made their way to the Mughal court during the time of Humayun (founder of the Mughal empire; r. 1530-1540, 1555-1556) their religious practices were a low-key affair for the most part of the Mughal Rule.[146] Many scholars and artists from Iran were impressed by the intellectual pursuits of Humayun during his stay at Kabul and decided to settle at the Mughal court.[147]

During the reign of Emperor Akbar, the inability of the Sunni scholars to contribute to debates in Ibāadat Khāna led Akbar to invite Shiʿas to the discussion.[148] The Shiʿa scholar Mulla Muhammad Yazd was invited to participate in the discussions at the Ibāadat Khāna.[149] About Mulla Muhammad Yazd, Badayuni mentions-

> "Attaching himself to the emperor Mulla Yazdi commenced openly to revile the sahaba (The prophet's companion) told queer stories about them and tried hard to make him a Shiʿa."

[146]Humayun was overthrown by the Afghan ruler Sher-Shah Suri and he seeked help from Shiʿa ruler Shah Tahmasp. It was during his stay at the Safavid court that his steward Jawhar Aftabchi mentions that Humayun had shown his devotion towards the Imam in front of the Safavid Shah. Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, *A Socio-Intellectual History of Isnā Ashāri Shiʿis in India*, 194-195.
[147]Ibid., 194-195. Some popular names include Khwaja Abdus Samad and the famous Iranian Painter Mir Sayyid Ali.
[148] Ibid., 214
[149] Ibid., 215.

However, details about the presence of Iranians at Akbar's court (r.1556-1605), as mentioned by Badayuni, are exaggerated, but it does provide an essential insight into the presence of the same.

The development of composite culture and increase in Shiʿa ritualistic traditions was witnessed in Delhi from the time of Mughal emperor Muhammad Shāh (r.1719-1748).[150] One of the reasons may have been the influence of the Shiʿa Begums of the emperor. This strengthening of Shiʿism in Delhi paved the way for developing art forms like *marsiya-khwani* and *marsiago*.[151] Details on the development of Shiʿite Culture in Delhi are provided by Dargah Quli Khan in *Muraqqa'-i Delhi,* who visited Delhi during the time of Muhammad Shah. *Muharram,* which was initially not celebrated, became a great spectacle under the later Mughal rulers. Conclusively, it can be argued that Shiʿa community did enjoy a great deal of autonomy under the Mughal rulers and as Trivedi has highlighted in her work that they were also allowed to carry out mourning ceremonies.

In the Deccan (Bahmani Kingdom), one of the first scholars to introduce Shiʿism was Fazlu'llah Inju.[152] He was originally from Shiraz and was a disciple of Sa'du'd-Din-at Taftazani (1389), the famous scholar at Timur's court.[153] He moved to Deccan during the reign of Sultan Muhammad II (r.1378-1397) and invited several scholars from Iran to join the court. The increasing threats from the immediate neighbors encouraged the Bahmani rulers to accept immigrants such as Turkish, Iranians, and Arab soldiers. These new people were known as the *gharibs* or *āfaqis*.[154] They practiced *taqiyya* and prepared the ground for the growth of Shiʿism in Deccan. Later, the Bahmani ruler Ahmad Shah is supposed to have even converted to Shiʿism.

[150] Zahiruddin Malik, *The Reign of Muhammad Shah, 1719-1748,* (New Delhi: Asia Publishing House, 1977), 342-405.
[151] Madhu Trivedi, 'Appropriating an Iranian Literary Tradition: Marsiya in the Indian context', in *Journal of Indian Musicological Society*, volume 36-37, Mumbai, 2006.
[152] Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, *A Socio-Intellectual History of Isnā Ashāri Shiʿis in India,* 247.
[153] Ibid., 247.
[154] Ibid., 248.

This is further attested by the fact that the first three inscriptions on his tomb mentioned the prophet and the twelve Imams and did not mention the first three caliphs, which is unusual for a Sunni tomb.[155] Furthermore, Shiʿism remained on the rise under the Bijapur, Ahmadnagar, and Golkonda Sultanate, mainly due to the immigration of scholars from Iran.[156]

In the second half of the sixteenth century, the twelve Imami Shiʿite acquired the status of state religion in Safavid Iran. This paved the way for Shiʿism's growth and efflorescence, whereby scholars from Syria, Lebanon, Iran, and Bahrain came together and consequently stimulated a revival in learning Shi's jurisprudence logic and mathematics which facilitated the presence of the Shiʿa community in North India. Many Iranian scholars had traveled to India in the sixteenth, and the seventeenth century. Some of the popular names include those of Mir Fath Allah Shirazi[157], Ibn-i Khakun, who was the nephew of Bahā' al-Din Amilī, and Mir Muhammad Mu'min Astarabādī,[158] who had the rare opportunity to return to his homeland Iran as a rich person.[159] It is against this background that this chapter will construct the growth of Imāmi Shiʿism in Awadh its function as an important tool for seeking legitimacy and promoting syncretic trends.

The Formation of Shiʿa Religious life, Migration of Scholars and Connective Systems

[155] Ibid., 255.
[156] Ibid., 272.
[157] Ibid., 272. "The arrival of Shah Fath Allah Shirazi is regarded as the turning point in the history of growth of Shiʿism in India. His own student Mir Jumla of Bijapur aroused Sultan Adil Shah's interest in his own teacher. In turn the Sultan paid enormous amount of money and arranged for his visit to Bijapur. The Shah later also made his way to the Mughal court in 1583.
[158] Ibid., 303-305. Mir Muhammad mu'min Astarabādi hailed from the family of eminent Sayyids of Astarābād in Gilan province. He was educated by his maternal uncle Amir Fakhru'd-Din Samāki in the traditional and rational sciences. Mir Mu'min also entered the court of Shah Tahmasp and was appointed the tutor of his son Prince Haydar Mirza. He later went to mecca and from there moved to Deccan. Due to his erudition, piety and integrity he became famous in Golkonda.
[159] Francis Robisnson, "Ottomans-Safavids-Mughals: Shared Knowledge and Connective Systems", *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 8:2, 1997, 159.

The socio-cultural apogee and efflorescence that Awadh achieved under the Shiʿite Nawabs (1722-1857) lasted for only a century, yet it became a zone of cultural refinement and eclecticism by bringing together heterogeneous religious groups under the high Indo-Persian culture. The rulers of Awadh extended discerning patronage to art, craft, and Persian and Urdu literature.[160] They are also credited for laying the foundation of Shiʿa heritage in North India. Under their patronage, Awadh exhibited a distinct Shiʿite cultural identity, and thus religion became a legitimization tool. There are various contesting propositions regarding the Shiʿa Nawabs of Awadh (1722-1857); while some scholars perceive the growth of Shiʿism in a primarily Sunni and Hindu majority area as a 'clash of cultures' others portray it as an 'elusive chiaroscuro' which eventually adopts a hazy form as India gained its independence in 1947.[161]

In the case of Awadh, both religion and state cannot be studied in isolation. The growth of Shiʿism provided a distinct cultural personality to the region of Awadh, visible not only in Lucknow and Faizabad's cosmopolitan centers but also in the *qasbahs*.[162] Awadh under both Nawabs Shuja ud-Daulah and Asaf ud-Daulah saw rigorous building projects which disseminated the religious orientation of the state. Besides, under the patronage of Shuja ud-Daulah, Shiʿa scholars from various parts of India also migrated to Faizabad.[163] Asaf ud-Daulah was also well known for bestowing money on dervishes, Saiyids and Shiʿa visitors from Middle East.[164] Unlike the Mughal empire, where the monarch's persona was a powerful instrument for gaining

[160] Trivedi, *The making of Awadh Culture*, 24-37.
[161] Graff ed. *Lucknow: Memoirs of a City*, 2.
[162] Rahman, *Locale, Everyday Islam, and Modernity: Qasbah town and Muslim life in Colonial India*, 30-35.
[163] Trivedi, *Making of Awadh Culture*, 42-43, Hoey, *Memoirs of Faizabad*, 10-15.
[164] Khayru'd-Din Muhammad Ilahabadi. "'*Ibrat-namah*," Vol. 2, Persian MS 2210, 146, National Archives of India, New Delhi. J.R.I Cole, *Roots of North Indian Sh'ism,* 60.

legitimacy, Awadh rulers used their Persianate origin and Shiʿa Islamic identity as a contrivance to showcase their distinctiveness.

The history of Indian regions and the research into their social morphology gets covered up with the history of castes, communities and political developments, which undoubtedly forms a significant corpus of literature to look at. Yet, such approaches sheathe the broader social and cultural transformations. One of the problems I encountered while studying the secondary literature on regional towns and cities is the perception. The account of company officials and foreign travelers visiting the region of Awadh forms a significant corpus for analyzing the politics of governability, cultural and social efflorescence. However, these accounts are plagued by the orientalist stereotyping of regional states as the zones of decadence and moral debauchery providing a warped image of socio-cultural and religious processes at play. Such perceptions undoubtedly provide validity to colonial masters gaining moral high ground as rescuers of declining regional states but imparts a reductionist and insufficient view of the region itself. The region of Awadh saw the fruition and indigenization of popular culture associated with Shiʿism, thereby becoming an independent global entréport that acquired added symbolic meaning and popular legitimation under an independent chief/subedar.

The collapse of the Safavid empire was concomitant with the emergence of Shiʿa regional kingdoms which facilitated the migration of several scholars from Iran to *qasbas* of North India and the Deccan. A shared world of scholarship between India and Iran had already existed under the Mughal and the Safavids, and the break-up of both empires furthered the movement of scholars between the two regions in search of better fortune. The need to find a suitable patron and safety from oppression of the existing monarch motivated these scholars' journeys. They played a very significant role in the development of North Indian Shiʿism. The travelers along these routes

included scholars, Iranians, and Iraqis migrating to India and the movement of scholars from Awadh to Iraq.[165]

The influence of travelling scholar is visible in the Madrasa curriculum of the Mughal, Ottoman and Safavid Empires. The travels of scholars and the shared world of scholarship remained visible in the Shiʿa dynastic patrimonies as well. But the consumption of knowledge did not remain confined to Shiʿa circle rather it was cherished by the scholars of Firangi Mahall [166]and Khairabad.

Scholars who migrated from Iran to northern areas of Indian subcontinent in the eighteenth century associated themselves with the Isfahan school of thought and were influenced by the works of Mulla Sadra of the sixteenth century.[167] A network of scholarly connections from Karbala to *qasbas* and new courts of North India like Azimabad, Murshidabad, and Lucknow.[168] JRI Cole had shown in his work how some of the important *majilisi* families of Isfahan had their base in the *qasbahs* of Awadh.[169] Some of the popular names in the region include Shaikh Ali Hazin of

[165] Trivedi, *Making of Awadh Culture,* 42-43. One of the notable Shiʿite scholars of Awadh who moved to the shrine city of Iraq included Saiyid Dildār Alī Nasīrābādī

[166] When the Nawabs of Awadh claimed the land, they recalled land grants (*ma'daad i mash*) given to Sunni educational institutions that were hereditary in nature. Yet, some schools survived and prominent among them was the Farangi Mahall, literally translates to 'European mansion'. It was initially owned by Dutch merchant. When a Sunni religious scholar Mulla Qutbu'd-Din Sihalawi was murdered then as a compensation his orphans were given the Farang Mahall by the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. See, Francis Robinson, *The 'Ulama of Farangi Mahall and Islamic Culture in South Asia,* (London, Permanent Black). J.R.I Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shiʿism*, 43

[167]'Sadr al-Din Muhammad b. Ibrahim b. Yahya Qawami Shirazi (ca. 1571–1636) was the most significant Islamic philosopher after Avicenna, better known as Mulla Sadra. He used a wide-ranging approach to understand Islamic thought and argued for understanding reality through a mix of logical reasoning, spiritual inspiration, and a deep meditation upon the key scriptural sources of the Twelver Shiʿa tradition in Islam. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mulla-sadra/, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/molla-sadra-sirazi. S.H Nasr, 'Sadr al-Din Shirazi (Mulla Sadra)'in M.M Sharif, ed., *A History of Muslim Philosophy,* Vol. II (Wiesbaden, 1966), 958.

[168] Francis Robinson, "Ottomans-Safavids-Mughals: Shared Knowledge and Connective Systems", *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 8:2, (1997), 159.

[169] J. R. I. Cole, 'Imami Shiʿism from Iran to North India, 1722—1856: State, Society and Clerical Ideology in Awadh' (Ph. D dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles,1584), 90-101.

Isfahan, who died in Banaras in (c.1766), Sayyid Muhammad of Yazd, who died in Murshidabad (c.1781), and Ahmad-al Bihbahānī of Kermanshah.[170]

In the first half of the eighteenth century, the Nawabs were more concerned with strengthening their position in the region by extending control over the agrarian countryside, revenue, and construction of the capital. Interestingly, even though the Nawabs originally belonged to Iran, they still had strong connections with the Indian cultural traditions, and they did not firmly adhere to their Safavid roots. The decline of the Mughal empire and the shifting of art and cultural center to Faizabad during the early eighteenth century fostered the migration of scholars from various parts of the country whom the Nawab Shuja ud-Daulah patronized.[171] The influence of scholars like Mullā Padshah was profound in Faizabad, and Bahu Begum patronized him.[172] Faizabad continued to grow as a significant center of Shiʿism in north India under the patronage of begums. During the reign of Asaf ud-Daulah, establishing formal religious institutions and the development of Lucknow as a Shiʿa capital was evident.

The Imāmi Shiʿism that initially developed in Awadh assumed a 'sectarian' stance due to the constant strife between the *akhbaris* and the *usulis* in an atmosphere dominated by the Sunni Muslims. The *akhbaris* renounced rational theology and emphasized scriptural knowledge (Quran and the Hadis) while the *usulis* believed in four sources of knowledge Quran, Hadith, Ijma (unanimous consensus), and *Aql*. The *akhbaris* were dominant in Iraq and Iran in the first half of the eighteenth century, and their population considerably reduced after the decline of the Safavid empire. [173] Many Indian *akhbaris* who traveled to Shiʿa religious centers like Najaf and Karbala also got influenced by *usuli* thought and converted to *usulism*. For the *akhbaris* and the *usulis*, one

[170] Robinson, Ottomans-Safavids-Mughals, 160
[171] Trivedi, *Making of Awadh Culture*, 46.
[172] Ibid., 46.
[173] Trivedi, *Making of Awadh Culture*, 47.

needs to keep in mind that the former forbade the Friday congregational prayer and considered it as the usurpation of absent Twelfth Imam's authority while the latter supported it.[174]

In the case of Awadh, the institutionalization of Shiʿite rituals became a vital tool for legitimization because firstly, it displayed the religious orientation of the Awadh state, and secondly, the Nawab could assert regional independence from the Sunni Mughal Empire. The institutionalization of Friday prayer was an important step in this direction. Cole argues that it was a significant step taken by the clerics and notables of Awadh to establish a religious institution in the region.[175] Even though the North Indian *akhbari* Shiʿas disapproved of this move, the increase in the number of *usulis* facilitated this change. One of the noteworthy Shiʿa scholars of Awadh Saiyid Dildār Alī Nasīrābādī, who had converted to *usulism* was popularly known as Ghufrān Ma'ab, also supported the establishment of Friday prayer. [176]Another Scholar, Mulla Padhshah, who had migrated from Kashmir, promoted the congregational prayer and recommended Saiyid Dildār Alī Nasīrābādī to lead the prayer.[177] The *naib* of Awadh Hasan Razā'Khān organized the first congregational prayer in his palace on 12th May 1785, the birth anniversary of Imām Hussain.[178]

The beginning of Friday prayers was not just a victory of the *usulis*, but it ensured the regional autonomy of Awadh more than before. It aimed to unite the followers and establish a formal ceremony; a practice Sunni Muslims in India were already accustomed to. Even though the *akhbaris* were against the establishment of Friday prayers because they feared backlashes from the Sunnis, the Nawab was in full support of the practice and considered it obligatory. Saiyid Dildār

[174] Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shiʿism in Iraq and Iran: Religion and State in Awadh, 1722-1859,* 41.
[175] Ibid., 42.
[176] Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shiʿism in Iraq and Iran,* 63, 138-39, 163, 189.
[177] Ibid., p.128, Trivedi, *Making of Awadh Culture,* 47.
[178] Trivedi, *Making of Awadh Culture,*47.

Alī was the first *Mujtahid* of Awadh who played an essential role in strengthening Shiʿa intellectual traditions during the reign of Asaf ud-Daulah.[179] He is credited to have written several treatises on the history of Imāms in both Arabic and Persian, and like the Safavid rulers he also opposed the Sufis.[180] His presence in Lucknow helped in formalizing Shiʿism and this attracted many Shiʿa scholars from various parts of India who studied under his guidance and later settled in Lucknow.

Cumulatively, the migration of Scholars from Iran and Iraq in the late eighteenth century played an essential role in strengthening ritualistic practices associated with Shiʿism in Awadh. Although the growth of these practices did eliminate the presence of Sufis, it reduced the pilgrimage to Sufi Shrines and asserted Awadh's positions as a Shiʿa regional power in North India. It is pertinent to mention that Friday prayers were not just limited to the capital cities of Lucknow and Faizabad but eventually became an essential part of the *qasbati* life.

Sayyid Dildar 'Ali constructed a Friday prayer mosque in his hometown of Nasirabad in 1812.[181] In 1807 Sayyid 'Abdu'l- 'Ali built another impressive mosque in Deoghata. Students of Saiyid Dildar also began the practice of Friday prayers in the *Imambaras* of Amroha.[182] Furthermore, Shiʿa laws were more strongly implemented under the Nawab Amjad 'Ali Shāh. The Nawab set up several courts to settle disputes related to buying and selling property, mortgage, debts, title, and inheritance. The ruler also established a royal *madrasa* for Shiʿa scholastic studies near Sa'ādat 'Alī's tomb.[183] Trivedi, in her work, mentions that the later Nawabs of Awadh made liberal religious endowments to Shiʿa religious institutions keeping in mind the welfare of the Shiʿa community at large. Trust was set up for the upkeep and maintenance of the *Imambara* complex.

[179] Trivedi, *Making of Awadh Culture*, 47. Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shiʿism in Iraq and Iran*, 137.
[180] Ibid., 8. 'Musakkin al-qulāb is a text written by Saiyid Dildār alī that gives account of tragedies amd hardships suffered by the prophets and the Imām'.
[181] Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shiʿism in Iraq and Iran*, 137.
[182] Ibid., 129-130.
[183] Trivedi, *Making of Awadh Culture*, 50.

In conclusion, one can say that the late eighteenth century saw a significant development associated with Shiʿa's religious life. There was the establishment of formal religious practices and clergy associated with Shiʿism. The growth of Friday prayers, mosques, and commemoration of *Muharram* indicates the rise of the Shiʿa regional ruling group. Besides, for ensuring proper functioning of these institutions, a bureaucratic system was set in place. Nonetheless. In my opinion the travelling scholars were not the only factors that shaped Shiʿa religion of North India. The interaction of these scholars with the local populace and assimilation of tradition played an important in shaping Shiʿism.

The Development of Shiʿa complexes in Cosmopolitan Centers of Lucknow and Faizabad

As already mentioned, the capital of Awadh was Faizabad, and it later shifted to Lucknow during the reign of Asaf ud-Daulah. Under the first two Nawabs, the city of Faizabad did not attain the glamour of being a permanent abode. During the reign of Shuja ud-Daulah, one witnesses the construction of buildings, gardens, hunting parks, and walled enclosures in Faizabad.[184] The affluence and popularity of Faizabad invited people of all trades, artisans, and scholars from various parts of the country like Malwa, Gujarat, Hyderabad, Shahjahanabad, Lahore, Dhaka, Bengal, Peshawar, Kabul, and Kashmir.[185] Muhammad Faiz Baksha mentions that if the growth and prosperity of Faizabad had continued in a similar fashion, then it would have soon rivaled Delhi in magnificence.[186]

[184] Hoey, *Memoirs of Delhi and Faizabad*, 5-7.
[185] Ibid., 9.
[186] Ibid., 9-10.

Furthermore, the patronage by Bahu Begum and Sadr-i Jahan Begum led to several scholars settling in the city. Sadr-i Jahan Begum also built grand mosque and *imāmbārā* near Moti Bagh in Faizabad.[187] The Nawab Shuja ud-Daulah himself erected mosques in Faizabad. An eighteenth-century traveller William Hodges mentions a three domed mosque not distant from the river Ghagra. Apart from the Begums and the Nawabs, the eunuchs too patronized the construction of mosques. The mosque of Jawahār Ali Khan and Yakub Ali Khan deserve special mention.[188] Even though the capital of Awadh shifted to Lucknow still the grandeur of this city never got eclipsed.

The city of Lucknow had gained the limelight from being a mere *pargana* headquarters to the capital of Awadh from 1775 when the Shiʿa Nawabs shifted the court to the banks of Gomti river. Abdul Halim Sharar has pointed out that with the shifting of capital to Lucknow, the authority of the Nawab began to decline and the magnificence of the city began to increase.[189] Lucknow represented a post-medieval town characterized by its distinct architecture, religious spaces, music, dance, and food. The eighteenth-century saw a decline in the population of the medieval cities of Agra, Lahore, and Delhi, which had prospered under the Mughal rule. Violette Graff has opined that Lucknow under the Nawabs developed into being a baroque capital cogent in the paintings and sketches.[190] It not only represented the growth of Shiʿite culture evident in architecture but was also home to many Europeans, mainly the British and the French, who created a partly European style dilettante.[191]

[187] Trivedi, *Making of Awadh Culture,* 30-40.
[188] Ibid.,188.
[189] Sharar, *Lucknow: The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture,* 45.
[190] Violette Graff ed. *Lucknow: Memoirs of a City,* 2-3.
[191] Michael Fisher, "Awadh and the English East India Company", in Graff ed. *Lucknow: Memoirs of a City,* 25.

W.H Rusell who traveled to Lucknow in the eighteenth century describes it as a vision of palaces, minarets, domes azure and golden and cupolas and colonnades.[192] It had both Nawabi and European buildings, with the architectural spaces built from stucco and gilt.[193] Even though considerable European influence was witnessed in the built spaces from the time of Asaf ud-Daulah, the Nawabi architecture was purely Asian in style. Asaf ud-Daulah constructed *Daulat Khana* as a residence for himself, the *Rumi Darwaza* (Figure-1), and the *Imambara.*[194] The *Imambaras* of Lucknow is a glorious example of the local craftsmanship, engineering, and experimentation in the Indo-Islamic style of architecture. The construction of *Bada Imambara,* which had a physiogamy and character of its own, became a symbol of the institutionalization of Shiʿism. *Imāmbārā* literally means 'the house of mourning in which the *Taziya* or the insignia was placed for facilitating the mourning rituals during the time of *Muharram.'*[195] The construction of *Imāmbārā* was completed in 1790, and amongst all the buildings constructed by Nawab Asaf ud-Daulah, the *Bada Imāmbārā* was the finest and strongly built.[196]

Mirzā Abu Talib Khān in *Tafzihu'l Ghafilin* mentions that:

> "Imāmbārā consisted of two halls balcony and arcades. The length of the hall is 60 yards and the breadth 30 yards. In front of it is an extensive terrace and, on the sides, stand two lofty mosques. Opposite the Imamabada is erected a high gate beside it are two or three extensive jilo-khanas with three doors in the same style. Over the gate of the outmost jilo-khana, known as the Rumi Darwaza, they have erected a circular chamber with painted walls. The breadth of this gate

[192] Russell, volume I, 253, Trivedi, *Making of Awadh Culture*,18.
[193] Graff ed. *Lucknow: Memoirs of a City*, p.2 "One of the prominent French merchant-soldier, Claude Martin was engaged in construction of Constantia, the mansion which later became his mausoleum."
[194] *Imāmbārās* or 'the house of Imam' was built buy the rulers of Awadh primarily for the purpose of Azadari. Some popular *Imāmbārās* include- Husainabād kā Imāmbārā, the Malika Jahān kā Imāmbārā, the Jannat Makān kā *Imāmbārā*. Refer, Trivedi (Ch.6).
[195] A '*taziya'* is a symbolic representation of mausoleum of Imam Hussain. In Awadh the *taziyas* are made of Bamboo and mica flakes.
[196] Hoey, *History of Asafu'd Daulah Nawab Wazir of Oudh*, translation of *Tafzihu'l Ghafilin* by Mirzā Abu Talib Khān, 72.

was the same as the height of all the other three gates, 30 yards, and the height was 40 yards. It dazzled the eyes of those who looked up."[197]

From the above description, one can deduce that the *imāmbārā* was an imposing architecture of Shiʿa religious life in Awadh, which to date is used for commemorating *Muharram*[198] and housing the *taziya* in Lucknow. The Nawab had spent considerable amount of wealth on the decoration of this built space. Hundreds of *taziyas* and candelabra made of gold and silver were kept in the *imamabadas* along with a glass chandelier.[199] The *imāmbārās* had the crest of fish or *Māhī-i marātib*, the emblem of Awadh Nawab on the spandrels of the *mihrab.*[200] Besides commemoration of Muharram, the *Imāmbārās* also served as the mausoleums of the builder.[201] One can then argue that the *imāmbārās* played the combined role of a religious building, tombs, and aspects of a fortress. Scholars argue that the North Indian *imāmbārā* may have been influenced by Iranian *Husayniyyah* or *takiyyah* or by South Indian *Ashura-Khana*.[202] Eventually, the endowments (*waqf*) given to such buildings became an essential medium of passing wealth to future generations. Cole argues that since they could not be sold, any income associated with them could be given to the descendants as a remuneration for the upkeep of the *imāmbārā.* The courtiers of Asaf ud-Daulah were also patrons of built religious spaces, and they put up mansions, mosques,

[197] Ibid., 72

[198] In the South Asian context Muharram had two central rituals: the mourning assembly (*majlis*) held in an Imāmbārā and the procession. The institution of *majlis* as the word itself suggests is a congregational gathering for commemorating the sacrifice of Imām Husan and Husain and their family. In case of Awadh this commemoration later took the form of literary gathering or *mushā'ira*. The procession was an older form of ritual that developed further developed under the Safavid dynasty. Trivedi, *The Making of Awadh Culture*, p.55; Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shiʿism*, 106-107.

[199] Hoey, *History of Asafu'd Daulah Nawab Wazir of Oudh*, translation of *Tafzihu'l Ghafilin* by Mirzā Abu Talib Khān, 74.

[200] Trivedi, The Making of Awadh Culture, 19. Cole, *Imami Shiʿism*, 29.

[201] Ibid., 19

[202] Cole, *Roots of North India Shiʿism in Iraq and Iran: Religion and State in Awadh, 1722-1859,* 95. S. Agha Mihdi Lakhnavi, *Tarikh-I Lakhna'u* (Karachi: Jamciyyat-i Khuddam-i 'Aza, 1976),152-53. '*Ashurakahans* are where *alams* are raised during Muharram for Shiʿa to venerate and from which to seek intercession. They were also used for display of Shi's relics.' For details see., Karen G. Ruffle 'Gazing in the Eyes of the Martyrs: Four Theories of South Asian Shiʿi Visuality, *Journal of Material Culture in Muslim World,* volume 1, Issue 1-2, 268-290.

and *imāmbārās* in every neighborhood. In the first half of the nineteenth century, there were approximately 2000 large *imāmbārās* and 6000 smaller *taziyas-khanas* in Lucknow.[203] Therefore, Lucknow under the Nawabs was developing on similar patterns as the shrine cities of Iraq and Iran. The visit to the tombs of the Imāms was a vital part of Shiʿa's religious life, and some scholars argue that they carry sentimental value.

Besides *Imāmbārās,* Awadh also had a structure representing the Karbala. The first structure that represented the Karbala was Almās ʻAlī Khan kī Karbala and was built in Talkatora during the reign of Sa'adāt ʻAlī Khan.[204] The central structure of this building contained relics from Shiʿa holy places. Similar Karbalas were built on the pattern of Imām Hussain's tomb. The Talkatora Karbala developed into a significant burial ground for the *Ta'ziyas*. Thus, the Nawab of Awadh developed a custom whereby the replicas of Imam Hussain's tomb were buried and became a place of veneration. Such religious burial spaces were present in almost every *qasbah* of Awadh besides the cosmopolitan centers. It is also interesting to note that the clergy promoted such practices because they were important for strengthening Shiʿism in the newly emerged successor states. Other similar religious structure includes Karbala of Nasīr al-Dīn Haider which was constructed in 1837 and it is a mixture of tomb, mosque and *Imāmbārā*.[205]

The development of religious shrines containing relics brought from Iraq and other Shiʿa religious spaces also played an important role in legitimizing the position of the Nawab in addition to the mosques and *imāmbārās*. For Instance, Mirza Faqir Beg, who returned to Lucknow, brought with him a relic from Iraq during the reign of Asaf ud-Daulah and kept the crest at his home in

[203] Cole, *Roots of North India Shiʿism in Iraq and Iran,* 96.
[204] Trivedi, *The Making of Awadh Culture,* 51
[205] Ibid., 192.

Rustamnagar.[206] The shrine began to attract many people who were bringing offerings or *nazr*.[207] When Nawab heard about the shrine's popularity, he constructed a dome for the dervish's house. Eventually, this place became an abode for spiritual healing and blessings. This indicates development of syncretism in the region because such shrines attracted the non-Muslim subjects as well. Later, it was under the reign of Sa'adat Ali Khan that an impressive, gilded dome was constructed.[208] When the Nawab was ill in 1801, he had promised to construct a standard, should he recover, and thence the shrine's popularity increased thereafter. The shrine was a manifestation of the love of the people towards the Imām and the prophet's house. Some believers drew pictures of Imāms and messengers based on their understanding and set them up in household shrines. This is another instance of adapting to Indian cultural tradition.

The construction of religious spaces like *Imāmbārās,* mosques, and *Taziya Khanas,* exhibits complex traditions of reverence to objects like the replicas of Imam's tombs and devotion to images. The study of the religious history of Islam usually excludes sacred objects and their practices as tools for understanding religious processes because of the Qur'anic prohibition against the association of being or things with God (Shirk). However, studying these processes is useful in understanding the indigenization of Shiʿism in North India. The Shiʿa Nawabs of Awadh, like the Qutb Shahi of Deccan, represented themselves parochially using built spaces, sponsoring rituals, and innovating material practices. This validated their position in the region and enabled the diverse constituents of the realm to participate in the martyrdom of Imām Hussain. The visual manifestation of Shiʿa culture was evident in the celebration of Muharram in Lucknow. Some of

[206] Cole, *Roots of North India Shiʿism in Iraq and Iran,*100.
[207] Ghulam 'Ali Naqavi, *'Imad us-sa'adat* (Lucknow Naval Kishore, 1897), 172. Cole, Juan Ricardo, *Roots of North India Shiʿism in Iraq and Iran,* 99.
[208] Cole, *Roots of North India Shiʿism in Iraq and Iran,* 100.

the practices such as *mehndī, jhūlā* processions that were carried out were of Indian origin.[209] In Professor Karen Ruffle's words, the commemoration of martyrdom also acted as a polyvalent religio- cultural mediation with the Hindu majority over which they ruled.[210]

The strengthening of Shiʿa rituals was also evident in *marsiya*[211]culture (epic poems narrating the martyrdom of Imām Husain at Karbala). The *marsiya* was commonly recited in a *musha'ira* gathering and it developed its own distinct language, modes of expression, content and literary form. The observance of *marsiya-khwanī* or *rauz- khwani* (eulogy of the dead) and *manqabat-khwani* (verses in praise of Prophet Muhammad) during Muharram, Ramazan, and *urs* was a widespread practice in Awadh.[212] *Marsiya* as a well-defined literary form, existed in Arabic literature as an elegy in a funeral oration. In Iran, it can be traced to the musical traditions of pre-Islamic Persia. Eventually, it came to narrate the martyrdom of Imām Husain. In the case of India, *Marsiyas* became popular in the eighteenth century and drew more from Indian literary traditions and folk forms.[213] Initially, it was influenced by both *Deccani* and Persian traditions, but later, in the case of Awadh, it acquired the characteristics of an epic and thus began a new era in Urdu poetry. It acquired more of a cultural than religious significance by incorporating spoken idioms and elements of popular speech. It represented the cultural and ritual practices and placed the Imām in an Indian cultural setting. The study of *marsiyas* thus became an essential source to study the Indianization of Islamic traditions.

[209] Trivedi, *The Making of Awadh Culture*, 53.
[210] Ruffle Karen G. "Making Shiʿism an Indian Religion: A Perspective from Qutb Shahi Deccan", *Reorient,* vol.5, Issue.2, (Spring, 2020), 287-304.
[211]As a genre it represented a fusion of various Indian traditions and engulfed traits of both folk and urban theatre popularly known as *qissa-khwāni* which furthered the emergence of a class of *marsiya* writers.
[212] *Tarikh-i Farah Baksh*, 281,282; *Imād-us Sa'adāt*; Trivedi, 53.
[213] Trivedi, *The Making of Awadh Culture*, 53; 'Invoking Sorrow' in *Tradition in Motion: Religion and Society in History*, 131-136.

Non-Muslim's Participation in Shiʿa Religious practices

The cultural fabric of Awadh displayed syncretic trends. This can be credited to the presence of large number of Sufis in North India who drew followers from among both Muslims and Hindus. Somewhat similar trends could be noticed during the Muharram processions.[214] As I have argued elsewhere that the religious identities were accommodated and not merged in South Asian context, but the Muslim cultural life invited participation from all sects and religious communities. Vast majority of Hindus and Sunni Muslims participated in the Muharram processions.

The Hindus associated themselves with reverence to *taziyas* and singing elegies in the name of Imām. This is because veneration to sacred objects was always a part 'Hindu' social and religious life. The Kayastha community particularly adopted to Muslim customs given their association with muslims rulers as secretaries and with revenue departments.[215] Many kayastha built their own *imāmbārās.*[216] This community had Islamised over decades for they had faith in Sufi teachings and Islamic scholars. Some Popular names are Babu Chhail Bihari Lal of Amroha held the office of deputy collector until late 1920s; Babu Dharam Narayan was appointed collector

[214] Participation in Muharram processions was not limited to men. Majlises exclusively for women were held there during Muharram. A Shia couple from muhallah Maidanpura, Mir Muhammad Kazim and his wife, patronized various activities. The wife brought an alam that allegedly 'doubled the grace of azadari' in Maidanpura and became an important part of the processions that Bilgram (*Qasbahs*) Residents built an *imambara-e-zenana* in the house of Mir Turab Ali. For women Participation, see, Rahman, *Locale, Everyday Islam and Modernity: Qasbah Towns and Muslim life in Colonial India*, 150-160.

[215] 'Education in Arabic and Persian was commonplace for this community. It is evident that many were Persian poets, writers, and teachers. Often, they learned Islamic sciences and Qur'an', Rahman, *Locale, Everyday Islam and Modernity: Qasbah Towns and Muslim life in Colonial India*; Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shiʿism*, 116.

[216] Cf K. Leonard, *The Social History of an Indian Caste: The Kayasths of Hyderabad* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ of California Press, 1978), 81-89, 103-4; for Kayasthas in northern India, see W. Crooke, *The Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh* , 4 vols. (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, 1896), 3:184-216; Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shiʿism*, 116.

of Moradabad in 1894 and rose to become chairman of the District Board.[217] Hindus also participated in Muharram ceremonies in the Bada *imāmbārā* and it cut across caste line.

Similar undercurrents of assimilation were evident in the *qasbati* space with different religious communities producing an environment of pluralism and co-existence amidst existing differences. It is noticeable that an *Islamicate* character was evident in many *qasbahs* dominated by Hindus.[218] C.A. Bayly has opined that since both Hindu and Muslim service gentry of Awadh and rest of the North India incorporated a specific Indo-Islamic cultural tradition, a distinct corporate tradition emerged that was formally Persian and Islamic.[219] These practices were visible in *taziadari* (expression of greif) and *Holi* (the festival of colours). Hindus and Muslims happily wished each other and actively engaged in the secular aspects of the occasion, such as marching together in the procession and throwing colours on each other. The *qasbāti* living functioned as a microcosm of the larger Indian society noticeable in Hindu presence in Muharram processions and Muslim landlords contributing financially to Hindu festivals, and various day-to-day customs, such as marriages.[220]

Therefore, it is reductionist to argue that eighteenth century *qasbahs* were culturally exclusive. From an individual's perspective the *qasbahs* were marked by 'Indigenization of Islamic cultural tradition and are spaces where one witnesses 'Indianization of Muslim dominance' in everyday practices. Communal trends, strict social and political roles and its effect on everyday living was a late nineteenth century phenomenon. The *qasbati* space should not be mistaken as a

[217] Rahman, *Locale, Everyday Islam and Modernity,* 175-176.
[218] The term '*Islamicate'* has been used by Marshall G.S Hodgson, "The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a world civilization", vol.3, in *The Gunpowder Empires and Modern Times,* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974).
[219] Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaar*, 352.
[220] Rahman, *Locale, Everyday Islam and Modernity,* 180-182.

utopic setting because tolerance and co-existence was evident, yet the differences and inter and intra community hierarchy existed.

Conclusively, Shiʿism that developed in Awadh is an important legitimization tool that impregnated the Indian traditions. It placed Islam within an Indian context, which proved beneficial in ruling over a population that included Sunnis, Hindus, and Jains. Additionally, an analysis of everyday practices, commemorations, and the establishment of formal institutions indicates co-existence among diverse religious groups. Religion was an important tool for governance, but it also created a shared space marked by various identities that were accommodated yet not merged. Such trends were also visible in the *qasbāti* space apart from the cosmopolitan centers and from an individual perspective it played an influential role in blending communities. [221]

[221] 'The syncretic side of *qasbāti* living, as a microcosm of the larger Indian society, should not be belittled; it can be found in the Hindu presence in Muharram processions, Muslim landlords contributing financially to Hindu festivals, and various day-to-day customs, such as marriages. However, it also did not entail abjuring separate identities exercised in specific rituals, observing ceremonies from a distance, and exclusive neighbourhoods.' See, Raisur Rahman, *Locale, Everyday Islam and Modernity: Qasbah Towns and Muslim life in Colonial India.*

Chapter-3

Domesticity and Power inside the Royal *zenanas*: Patronage and Politics (1727-1801)

Historiography

The figures of Indian women in the eighteenth century have been assigned marginal space in the grand narratives of mighty empires of South Asia. They barely received the due scholarly attention, and research on them remained limited to the unchanging patterns and dubious morals ascribed to them. Studies on the royal *harems* of large empires like the Ottomans, Mughals, and Safavids or the *zenanas* of regional kingdoms of Awadh and Hyderabad endorsed the social evils like *sati* (self-immolation), *jauhar* (mass self-immolation), the practice of *hijab* and concubinage as the defining lens to take up the women's question thereby supplementing the well propagated colonial claim of moral decay and anarchy, evident alike in writings of both male and female travelers' account. Feminist scholars have argued that the figures of women in India remain invisible in writings of the colonial period and get further marginalized in post-colonial studies.

This chapter attempts to uncover the politics of gender, patronage networks, and empire to explore a more politically engaged discourse of the women question in Nawabi Awadh by negotiating contemporary gender and imperial statecrafts. In doing so, one will analyze whether the depiction of colonial masters as a rescuer of Indian women hold ground and to what extent the chaotic administration of the Nawabs was visible in the functioning of the *zenanas*. In addition, I have attempted to analyze the Begums of Awadh as patrons of devout religious scholars and their role in the crystallization of Shiʿism in the regional principality of Awadh.

In Western historiography, women occupied an excreted and obsequious position in the socio-political order of the Islamic civilization. Women in Islamic societies were considered property without individual agency, and rights over them shifted from father to husband figures. Historians have referred in passing about the status of women in Islamic societies by emphasizing the reductionist discourses on polygamy, concubinage, and the practice of *Hijab* prevalent in the *harem* and the *zenanas* (women chambers). As Ruby Lal has pointed, the 'pleasure principle' was used as a standard lens to investigate the women's question.[222] Gavin Hambly concluded in his work that scholars from both Muslim and the European orientalist tradition belittled the women's case in the historical narratives. Women were understood as repositories of male honor, objects of political alliance and sexual pleasure, or utmost producers of male heirs.

Early historiography assumed that the women's activities, behavior, and relationship with the *zenanas* and the outside world were fundamentally unchanging. This erroneous assumption rests on the premise that the seclusion of the women precluded their exercise of power beyond the physical boundaries of the *harem* or the *zenanas*. The *zenanas* were seen as private spaces, and anything beyond the physical and institutional space of *zenanas* was public. Contrary to popular belief, the *zenanas* were not a confined space; instead, they consisted of a diverse community of politically active women of varying ages. In other words, *zenanas* functioned as an institution. This private-public dichotomy was to a great extent responsible for miscalculating the women's question in early modern Islamic empires.[223] In the last couple of decades, significant writings have emerged that provide a broader thematic insight into the socio-political roles of women and move beyond the public-private binaries on historical scholarship on women.

[222] Ruby Lal, *Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), Introduction.
[223] Leslie P. Pierce, *The Imperial Harem, Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire,* (Oxford: Oxford university Press, 1993), 6-7.

The work of feminist scholar like Ruby Lal has pioneered in highlighting the instances of autonomy and political power exercised by the women of the imperial Mughal harem.[224] Leslie Pierce, in her work *The Imperial Harem, Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire (1993),* argues that the western conception of the public-private dichotomy was a profound obstacle to understanding the dynamics and structure of Islamic societies. The concept of private-public that prevailed in the eighteenth-nineteenth century Western thinking could not be juxtaposed on the gender, political and spatial conceptions of sixteenth and seventeenth-century Islamic states.[225] She further argued that the conventional notions of public and private were incongruent with gender in the Ottoman case.[226] The concept of staying away from the public gaze did not imply a lack of power. For instance, the Ottoman Sultan's palace was impenetrable and was hardly accessible to the common people. The space sultan occupied in the palace or public places like mosques was visibly set off by physical or human boundaries.[227]

Narratives on Islamic history said very little about the lives of women in Early modern Islamic empires until scholars like Gavin R.G Hambly,[228] Stephen P Blake,[229] Leslie Pierce, [230] Ruby Lal[231], Michael Fisher[232], and Richard Barnett[233] challenged the stereotypical narratives and wrote about the role of women in public spheres as patrons of built spaces, power brokers and

[224] Ruby Lal, *Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
[225] Leslie P. Pierce, *The Imperial Harem, Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire,* 6-7.
[226] Ibid., 8
[227] Ibid.,10-11, Also, for more details see Gülru Necipoğlu, "Framing the Gaze in Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Palaces," *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993): 303-42.
[228] Gavin R Hambly (ed.) *Women in Medieval Islamic Societies* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1998). 4-5
[229] Stephen P. Blake, "Contributions to the Urban Landscape: Women Builders in Safavid Isfahan and Mughal Shahjahanabad" in Gavin R Hambly (ed.) *Women in Medieval Islamic Societies* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1998).
[230] Leslie P. Pierce, *The Imperial Harem, Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire,* (Oxford: Oxford university Press, 1993).
[231] Ruby Lal, *Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World.*
[232] Michael H. Fisher, "Women and the Feminine in the Court and High Culture of Awadh, 1722-1856" in Gavin R Hambly (ed.) *Women in Medieval Islamic Societies* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1998).
[233] Richard Barnett, "Embattled Begams: Women as Power Brokers in Early Modern India" in Gavin R Hambly (ed.) *Women in Medieval Islamic Societies* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1998)

major players in the political affairs. Barnett's fresh insights into the veiled power of Begums of Awadh and their actions as powerbrokers affirms their control over resources outside the institution of *zenanas*.[234] The earliest historiography by K.S Santha underlines the role of Begums or chief consorts in the political sphere. His work is a teleological narrative describing the traditional role played by women as wives and mothers. On the one hand, it counters the widely held belief of seeing *zenanas* as zones of unbridled promiscuity, yet it is deeply rooted in the clichéd understanding of women's history. He describes the Begums as caring wives with lofty ideals and unflinching devotion towards their husbands.

Studies on women's history of colonial and post-colonial India have seen tremendous growth involving various methodological and theoretical debates. While modern Indian women have enjoyed the limelight in the historical narratives, their precolonial counterparts do not get the same importance due to the lack of source material. There are significant themes in pre-colonial regional history that await exploration, such as women's role in political and economic reformulation, cultural redefinition, creativity, and resistance to the new European presence and religious sphere. There is a need to look at the contextualized and de-romanticized view of women and their roles in the eighteenth-century regional polities. Although the eighteenth century is characterized by the British's dominance on India's political landscape, Indian elites, particularly women, enjoyed a great deal of political, cultural, and psychological autonomy. Thus, making their place crucial in history.

The conception about '*harems*' and '*zenanas*' was mainly based on the travelers' accounts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It came to occupy a different locus as it was premised on 'western' understanding and representation of India. Before the eighteenth century, one rarely

[234] Ibid., 522-524.

encounters a general proposition of inferiority in European travel accounts. Scholars who traveled in North India in the early eighteenth and nineteenth century viewed Islamic religious culture and history as repressive towards women, and they became the base for colonists gaining a moral high ground. A new structure of colonial domination in the political landscape produced newer structures in knowledge, most of which were written from the public affairs mode evident in the writing of travelers like Fanny Parkes[235], William Henry Sleeman.[236]

The western orientalist writings have imagined the *zenanas* as spaces where leisurely women shriveled under the despotic rule of their orientalist masters/ husbands.[237] As far as the *zenanas* of Awadh are concerned, numerous contemporary scholars have written about the life of the royal women under the Nawab's reign. But they confine their writing to analyzing tradition role of women whereas, women in the traditional Islamic societies had opportunities participate in public affairs. Although sometimes that influence was used inconspicuously. But in many cases, strong female personalities dominated the actions of Nawabs, her son, and her brother.[238] Women in early modern Indian regimes wielded true political and social power. In the case of North India, the Begums of Awadh played significant leadership roles.

We have accounts of travelers like William Henry Sleeman,[239] which gives an insight into the prevailing conditions in pre-annexation Awadh. Fanny Parkes is another British woman who traveled during the early nineteenth century and wrote extensively about the women in these *zenanas.*[240] One of the exciting aspects of her work is its difference from the stereotypical depiction

[235] Fanny Parkes, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque during four and twenty years in the East with Revelations of Life in the Zenana*, 2 vols. (London: Pelham Richardson, 1850).
[236] William Henry Sleeman, *A Journey Through the Kingdom of Oude in 1849-1850*, Volume I, (London:1858)
[237] Shampa Roy, 'Inside the royal *zenanas* in Colonial India: Avadhi and the other Begums in the travel accounts of Fanny Parkes', *Studies in Travel Writings*, vol. 16, (2012), 47.
[238] Hambly, *Women in Medieval Islamic Societies*, 10.
[239] William Henry Sleeman, *A Journey Through the Kingdom of Oude in 1849-1850*, volume I, (London:1858)
[240] Fanny Parkes. *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque during four and twenty years in the East with Revelations of Life in the Zenana*, 2 vols. (London: Pelham Richardson, 1850). 77-87.

of *zenana* as being zones of decadence and patriarchal confinement. Instead, Parkes observes that *zenanas* in Awadh were maintained by dynamic and self-confident begums who asserted control in political matters and, therefore, cannot be categorized as helpless lot needing rescue from the colonial sovereign.[241] Accounts of women travelers like Parkes depict a heightened sense of agency with which she was writing, and scholars often praise her straightforward, sympathetic, and independent style, which broke the contemporary stereotypes about life in the *zenanas*. Such an insight seems to be missing in the writing of male travelers.

Even though the domestic picture of the royal *zenana* is provided in the writings of the female writers as compared to the male writers like William Henry Sleeman, who wrote to chronicle the political details to help the British empire frame its organizational strategies in the region; they cannot simply be read as having an inevitably differential, apolitical perspective on its workings. Sleeman was writing from the position of an official representative of the empire, which was unavailable to Fanny Parkes. Still, her non -masculinist work does not reveal a greater sympathetic understanding of the indigenous people. Although these travelers' accounts provide insight into the lifestyle of Begums and Nawabs in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth-century Awadh, the intent to highlight the sense of debauchery, lawlessness, and corrupt practices prevailed in their writings. This backdrop was later used to justify the benevolence of the British empire and more duty towards being a savior of women in these regions.

Parkes traveled to India with her husband in the 1820s when the colonial regime was constituting itself as a reformatory power and analyzed the position of women in very reductive terms.[242] Fanny Parkes analyses the Begums from a very English perspective and sees their participation in politics as unnatural. Her thoughts are deeply rooted in nineteenth-century

[241] Parkes, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim*, 77-87.
[242] Parkes, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim.*

patriarchal traditions. Besides, the East India Company's determination to make its power seem morally sanctioned was visible in its portrayal as a rescuer of Indian women from practices like *Sati* (indirectly administered regions like Bengal) and of Indians in general from the chaotic administration of decadent indigenous rulers (their large *zenanas* being a sign of such decadence). The description of India as completely chaotic and its decadent princely states awaiting enlightened intervention is made quite forcefully by Macaulay in his famous Charter Speech of 1833.

He mentions:

> "In what state did we find India? We found society throughout the vast country in a state to which history scarcely furnishes a parallel. The nearest parallel would probably be Europe in the fifth century. Society was chaos. Its restless and shifting elements formed themselves every moment into some new combination, which the next moment dissolved. In a single generation, a hundred dynasties grew up, flourished, decayed, were extinguished, were forgotten. Every palace was every year the scene of conspiracies, treasons, revolutions, parricides." (Qt In Barbara Harlow and Mia Carter, eds., *Imperialism and Orientalism: A Documentary Sourcebook* (Oxford and New York: Blackwell Publishers, 1999)'.[243]

Social- Context

The state of Awadh had a Shiʿite orientation, with Sunni Muslims comprising ten percent of the population. After the growth of Imāmi Shiʿism, many Sunni Muslim landholders and Hindus also converted to Shiʿism. Thus, religion in the eighteenth century became an important tool for legitimization evident in-built spaces, formalization of religion, and cultural practices. After the

[243] Shampa Roy, 'Inside the royal *zenanas* in Colonial India: Avadhi and the other Begums in the travel accounts of Fanny Parkes', *Studies in Travel Writings*, vol. 16, (2012), 47.

development of the Shiʿite court, it came to recognize three types of marriage- *nikah* (contractual marriage*), mut'ah* (marriage for pleasure*)*, and *Doli* (sending in a palanquin).[244]

In *nikah* marriage, wives are contracted to their husband in payment for a sum of rupees or *mahr*. In Awadh, the first *nikah* wife held immense social prestige. Further, the son born out of a *nikah* marriage would inherit the throne. This kind of marriage also carried a legitimacy that the courtiers and the British recognized. In the second type of marriage, *mut'ah*, the women were contracted to a man for a short time or on a temporary basis. The Shiʿa believe that the Prophet permitted this kind of marriage. The Awadh court imposed no restrictions on the number of *mut'ah* marriages that a man could do. The wives and children had specific rights, but they could not inherit the throne. Sometimes the women and children got themselves included as 'guaranteed pensioners.' This entails receiving interest income from the loans given by the Nawab to the East India Company. This status brought with its protection from the Company and the Resident. The third type of marriage involved low-ranking families sending their daughters to the harems on the palanquin without any formal marriage contract. The power a wife commanded depended on her influence over the husband.

Besides, many women entered *harem* without any legal sanctions of marriage as concubines or by force. Thus, it is evident that the women of *harem* commanded varying powers in the *zenanas* and in the political sphere depending on their official or marital status and the influence they commanded over the husbands. Many times, marriage represented political alliances or goals of the time.

The Begums in Political and Religious Spheres

[244] Michael H. Fisher, "Women and the Feminine in the Court and High Culture of Awadh, 1722-1856", 492-495.

The Begums played an important role in the dynastic history of Awadh for a century and a half; however, as already mentioned, it was only in the last few decades that women studies have gained prominence. Begum Sadr -i Jahan was the daughter of Sa'daat khān and the wife of the next Nawab of Awadh Mirza Muhammad Muquim Abdul Mansur khan, better known as Safdar Jung.[245] This marriage is an important example of a patrilateral cross-cousin wedding. Safdar Jung did not take any other *nikah* wife. Similarly, Safdar Jung married his son and successor Shuja ud-Daulah to the daughter of a distinguished Iranian courtier, and the wife was popularly known as Bahu Begum.[246]

The second Nawab of Awadh faced intense internal strife and revolts from the refractory feudal lords who joined together against Safdar Jung. It was the political acumen of his wife who advised him to strike with firmness.[247] In several military actions undertaken by the Nawab, wise counsel, spirited encouragement, and financial aid by the begum helped him sail through times.[248] But not much is known about her role during the reign of Safdar Jung. Muhammad Faiz Baksha in *Tarikh-i Farah Baksha* mostly talks about her advice and counsel to the Bahu begum and how they developed a distinguished court culture in the capital of Faizabad in the mid-eighteenth century.[249] Scholars have argued that both Bahū Begum and her mother-in-law Sadr -i Jahan begum continued to play important in the politics of North India in the eighteenth century. Due to the prevalence of the purdah system, they functioned through extensive staffs – mostly eunuchs.[250]

[245] Santha. *Begums of Awadh*, Bharati Prakashan, 5.
[246] Ibid., 39-55. Fisher, "Women and the Feminine in the Court and High Culture of Awadh, p.494. Barnett, *North India between empires*, 145-150
[247] Hoey, *Memoirs of Delhi and Faizabad*, 110.
[248] Santha, *Begums of Awadh*, 34-39.
[249] Hoey. *Memoirs of Delhi and Faizabad*, 30-60; Santha, *Begums of Awadh*, 34-39. Fisher, "Women and the Feminine in the Court and High Culture of Awadh, p.494. Barnett, *North India between empires.* Sadr-I Jahan Begum advised Bahu Begum to place Mirza Sa'adat Ali as the minister to Asaf ud-Daulah.
[250] Fisher, "Women and the Feminine in the Court and High Culture of Awadh, 496, William Hoey. *Memoirs of Delhi and Faizabad* II, 50-100. Jessica Hinchy, 'Enslaved childhood in the eighteenth century Awadh', *South Asian History and Culture*, vol.6, no.3, 2015, 380-400. 'The eunuch-slaves or the *khwajasarais* were employed as

Sadr -i Jahan Begum played an important role in shaping the political career of Shuja ud-Daulah.[251] Saving Shuja's political life was the first act of a long and diplomatic role that the Nawab Begum and Bahu Begum played in the history of Awadh.

The city of Faizabad developed as the locus of Shiʿa culture in North India under the patronage of both Sadr-i Jahan begum and Bahu Begum. They patronized the ulama and the devout Shiʿa scholars. Sadr-i Jahan Begum is also credited with having built a magnificent mosque and *Imāmbārā* near Moti bagh.[252] Bahu Begum was also active in political affairs during the reign of both Shuja ud-Daulah and her son Asaf ud-Daulah. After the Battle of Buxar, Shuja ud-Daulah was defeated, and the Begum gave him all the finances, wealth, and jewelry to pay the war indemnity. She used funds under her control to pay off the rupees 200,000,000 penalties with the Company and thus emerged as the company's chief ally.[253] Later, when *naib* Murtaza Khan coerced her to pay the money asked by the Nawab Asaf ud-Daulah, she wrote to the then Resident John Bristow to mediate the matter.[254] It can be concluded that she was a woman of strong character and did not hesitate to contact the Resident. She proved an important player in the struggles between the English East India Company and Awadh because she retained immense treasures. As a chief consort of Shuja ud-Daulah, she commanded a distinct position in the *harem* and had amassed immense wealth. K.S Santha writes that Bahu Begum was wealthy, and her *jagirs*

household servants in eighteenth and nineteenth century Awadh. Besides they were also prominent political figures, government officials, revenue farmers, diplomats and military commanders. Almas Ali Khan is a prominent revenue farmer.' In addition- Muhmmad Faiz Baksha talk about Jawar Ali Khan and Darab Ali khan who were appointed under the Bahu begum in his *Tarikh*.

[251]MSantha, *Begums of Awadh*, 39. She had saved the Nawab from disgrace when he was involved with a Khatri girl. I have discussed about this episode in the first chapter.

[252] Trivedi, *Making of Awadh Culture*, 46.

[253] Fisher, "Women and the Feminine in the Court and High Culture of Awadh, 497, William Hoey. *Memoirs of Delhi and Faizabad*, 19. Barnett, 'Embattled Begums: Women as power brokers in Early Modern India', 522.

[254] 'The influence of Murtaza Khan on Asaf ud-Daulah was disliked by Bahu Begum, and she contacted the officials of East India Company Directly to secure their sympathy'. K.S Santha, *Begums of Awadh*, 68.

and establishment resembled a small kingdom of its own.[255] She had inherited huge wealth in the forms of *jagirs*, houses, gardens, and rights to collecting and levying taxes. Faiz Baksha in *Tarikh-i Farah Baksha* gives details of *jagirs* and *gunj*.

Bahu Begum continued to remain politically active in the region and supposedly helped the Raja of Benares Chait Singh against English.[256] This might have been the reason why the English sided with Asaf ud-Daulah when he demanded more money from the Bahu Begum. Despite the seizure of wealth by the Nawab, the Begum retained a lot of treasuries. She entrusted seven million rupees to the East India Company, the interests and profits of which were given to her dependents and sent to shrine in Karbala.[257] In the hundred years, the history of Awadh was full of intrigue, treachery, and licentiousness, and in such an atmosphere, it was the strong character of the Begums that left an impressionable mark on the history of the region.

The British also responded to Begum's resistance by resuming their tax-free grants of land and attempted to seize their assets in cash and kind.[258] Asaf ud-Daulah also wishes that the assets of Begums be seized so that he could blame the Company. He organized moves for the direct takeover of Begum's property. Eventually, the two eunuchs of Begum were targeted, and the money they controlled was given to the Nawab. Later with the appointments of the new Resident Middleton, even Asaf was desperate to negotiate with the Begums. In conclusion, one can say that although the British and the Nawab tried hard to usurp begums' wealth, the status that these women enjoyed in Faizabad made their position stronger. After the death of Sadr-i Jahan Begum, her

[255] Santha, *Begums of Awadh*, 73.
[256] Fisher, "Women and the Feminine in the Court and High Culture of Awadh, 497. 'Barnett, 'Embattled Begums: Women as power brokers in Early Modern India',525. 'When the English general Warren Hastings was desperate for resources to fight the French and Mysore and as a consequence, he levied a large tribute on Maharaja of Banaras. The newly ceded territory was close to the begum's main landholding and they decided it fight it themselves.'
[257] Ibid., 498.
[258] Barnett, *North India Between Empires*

property was distributed by her eunuch among her mourners and friends, and nothing was left for the British to tax or take.[259]

Besides the first two begums of Awadh, Badshah Begum, the wife of Ghazi-ud din Haider, also played an important role in expanding the cultural life at the court of Awadh. Many of the religious innovations were initiated under the reign of Ghazi-ud Din Haider. She introduced the celebration of '*chhatti'*[260] of Imām Mehdi, *Achhoti* (too pure to be polluted by human touch) as wives of Imām. The sacred days of birth and marriages of Imām were celebrated with great pomp and show. On the birthday of each Imāms, the Begum decorated and illuminated special rooms at the palace. The commemoration of mourning during *Muharram* was extended from two days to eight days.[261] As already mentioned, religious ceremonies were an important political tool to unite the state and not a mere show of the grandeur and wealth of the empire.

From the brief narrative on life inside the royal *zenanas,* one can conclude begums of Awadh had transcended the prescribed norms of gender and participated in the political sphere and religious activity. They had huge wealth under their command, which they utilized to realize their political aims. They held jagirs in their names and areas assigned to them from which they collected revenue. As they are popularly known, the begums of Faizabad ran a small kingdom in their own space. In case of the state's financial needs, the begums always came to rescue by providing the necessary resources to the Nawab, evident under the time of both Shuja ud-Daulah and Asaf ud-Daulah.

[259] Hoey. *Memoirs of Delhi and Faizabad,* 249-251. Barnett, 'Embattled Begums: Women as power brokers in Early Modern India', 531.
[260] 'In Awadh custom after the sixth day of the birth of child both mother and child take a bath and a big feast is organized'. Cole, 'Shiʿa Noblewomen and Religious Innovation in Awadh', In Violette Graff ed. *Lucknow: Memoirs of a City,* Oxford University Press, 1997.
[261] 'In 1827 when Nasir-ud-Din Haider became shah, Badshah Begum arranged for a proclamation that the mourning rites for Imam Husain would continue for fortieth day (*chihilum*) after his death. Marriage ceremony remained suspended during this extended period of mourning. Ibid., 86.

Furthermore, they patronized scholars in Faizabad and contributed to the growth and development of Imāmi Shiʿism in Awadh. However, the depiction of women in contemporary Persian and Urdu sources does no justice to the political and diplomatic acumen of the Begum. Any study on the politics of legitimacy is incomplete without analyzing the 'veiled powerbrokers' of Awadh.[262]

[262] Barnett, 'Embattled Begums: Women as power brokers in Early Modern India', p.532. The term 'veiled power' has been used by Barnett in his article.

Chapter 4

The Escalating Power of the British Resident and Recasting of Agrarian Countryside (1775-1857)

The Resident, Residency and Illegal Trading Network

The state of Awadh progressed under Sa'adat Khān's successors (Safdar Jung and Shuja ud-Daulah) and had prospered enough to get caught in the eyes of the British.[263] By the mid-eighteenth century, the Company was already heading with its imperialist agenda towards the heart of the Indian subcontinent when the development of Awadh became a commercial, political, and territorial concern for them. One of the plausible reasons was the increasing presence of French mercenaries, who fled from Chandernagore after Clive captured it, having joined the Nawab services, and the other reason being resource appropriation.[264] Also, under French leaders like Madec and J.J Gentil, some of the mercenaries defected from the British army. They were not in favor of the Company gaining hold in the territory of Awadh. Thus, the region came to represent a clash of interest between the English and the French, which invited the fateful battle of Buxar in 1764.[265]

The British imperialist penetration after the victory began by appointing its European-trained sepoys in the areas of its allies (in this case, Awadh) and, therefore, acquired territorial

[263] 'Safdar Jung (belonged to the family of Qara Yusuf, a descendant of Hasan. Hoey, *Memoirs of Delhi and Faizabad,* 8-9; Mohan, *Awadh under the Nawabs: Politics, Culture and Communal Relations* 1722-1856, 1-15; Srivastava, *The first two Nawab of Awadh',* 88.

[264] Muzaffar Alam and Seema Alavi, *A European Experience of the Mughal Orient: The I'Jaz-i Arsalani* (Persian Letters, 1773-1779) of Antoine- Louis-Henri Polier, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 47; Trivedi, *Making of Awadh Culture*, 2; Sharar, *Lucknow: The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture,* 33.

[265] Awadh prospered in real sense after the Battle of Buxar when the court at Faizabad under Shuja ud-Daulah began to showcase its distinct Shiʿite stance in political sphere. This patronage towards redefining the courtly culture under the umbrella of British continued in the reign of *Nawab* Asaf ud-Daulah. Trivedi, *The Making of the Awadh Culture*, 8-10.

possessions and political ascendancy in the region. In this case, the Nawab was responsible for paying the garrisoned troops in exchange for British protection. In the eighteenth century, land grants and revenue assignments were the preferred mode of payment and had been prevalent since the time of the Mughals. This kind of military subsidy required a stable monarchical setup, the absence of which weakened the hold of the Nawabs over their areas. Residents' appointment and garrisoning of troops in the region interfered with the established revenue apparatus and further reduced Nawabs' status as mere paymasters to the British. Although British military assistance guaranteed the Nawab's freedom to rule, yet within thirty years half the Nawab territories got ceded to the British on account of favors of protection.[266]

The city of Lucknow was converted into a military base after the battle, and eventually became a civic and administrative center for the Residents. In other words, it was a *Cavia porcellus* of the eccentric European exploitative talent. In this regard, W.H. Sleeman rightly points out that Awadh became the milch cow for the East India Company. Geographically, it was always a buffer state between Bengal and the North that was then witnessing Afghan and Maratha resistance. The fear of Maratha and Afghan troubles in North India prevented the British from taking complete control over the region after the battle. The Residents and the governor-general's mediation in the state's affairs reduced the status of Nawab to a mere figurehead who could hardly secure his throne by the end of the century.[267] Eventually, the weakening authority coupled with increasing revenue

[266] 'In 1772 the *Nawab* had lost the area of Chunar to East India Company. In 1775 they had made the districts of Banaras and Ghazipur as a part of defense treaty, and in 1798 the fortress of Allahabad previously bought from the company had also been ceded.'Pemble, *The Raj, The Mutiny, and The Kingdom of Oudh 1801-1859*, 10.
[267] Pemble, *The Raj, The Mutiny, and The Kingdom of Oudh 1801-1859*, 10. 'The Governor-General Sir John Shore had decided to remove Wazir Ali from the throne because he was not believed to be a true son of Nawab Asaf ud-Daulah, but the rival claimant Saadat Ali Khan (brother of Asaf) has offered attractive terms as the conditions of elevation.'

farming assignments and mounting debts is credited for raising a new class of revenue contractors, or *talluqdars*, in the countryside.[268]

The battle of Buxar not just showcased the military might of the Company instead became a gateway for the English infiltration into Awadh, eventually making them the sovereign of the region. The wealth and patronage that Lucknow enjoyed under the British attracted many adventurers to try their fortune as traders, shopkeepers, planters, artists, and freelancers, and even to obtain service at the court. The Resident was the biggest exploiter among them, who in his official capacity intervened in the court's affairs and became the real master/ monster by creating an alternate seat of power in the internal economic, and political setup. My thesis also examines the precarious politico-economic circumstances in Awadh with the presence of British Resident, and their interference leading to the mushrooming of *talluqdars* in the agrarian countryside.

Rosie Llewellyn Jones points that Europeans who lived in Lucknow from 1775 until the annexation can be divided into four categories: the battalions stationed in Lucknow as peacekeeping force by the Company; civilian official that included the Residents, their assistants, the Residency surgeon; Europeans employed by Nawab in various capacities and freelancers.[269] These Europeans played a significant role in making Awadh a subordinate principality forming an intriguing case to evaluate. Though one is not trying to harangue the European plenipotentiaries, for they are also credited for Western cultural efflorescence in architecture, painting, and music. But the exploitation they carried using their official posts and unofficial interference cannot be ignored.

[268] Jafri, *Studies in the Anatomy of a Transformation: Awadh from Mughal to Colonial Rule*, 79.
[269] Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, *A Man of Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century India: The letters of Claude Martin, 1766-1800,* (Permanent Black, 2003),18.

One of the significant features of the eighteenth century was the changing characters of the Europeans at the court. The Residents became power mongers of the region, acquired estates, interacted with local subjects, and even had marital relations with local women. They reduced the power of the Nawab in matters of foreign policy and internal mutiny. They enjoyed a privileged position in the city of Lucknow, visible in the residential houses and lavish way of life. While describing the city of Lucknow, Reginald Heber notes that the Resident lived on a "handsome street," which was more extensive than the high street of Oxford.[270] The Residents and his staff lived in conditions that were luxurious compared to other Europeans in Lucknow.[271] Further, he mentions that: 'the street had beautiful houses with gardens, barracks, and a guardhouse at its entrance, the house amidst them belonged to the Resident'.[272] This description is in stark contrast to the living conditions in the rest of the city. The facilities provided to the Resident made them prone to becoming involved in the city's intrigues but made their status equal to that of the monarch.

One such instance that surfaces the growing administrative power of Resident was removing a close confidant and companion of the Nawab, Imam Baksh, who also held the position of commander of the artillery.[273] Nathaniel Middleton (the Resident who succeeded John Bristow), with the support of the governor-general, had him removed from his post on the pretext of carrying a plot against the Company.[274] Amidst changing circumstances, the ministers of Asaf-ud Daulah's court also became agents of the Resident because he could protect them. In another instance, Hasan Reza Khan, a noble was banished on Nawab's orders but was recalled on Middleton's insistence

[270] Reginald Heber, *Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India, From Calcutta to Bombay, 1824-*1825, (Philadelphia 1829), 325-326.
[271] Jones, *A Fatal Friendship: The Nawabs, the British and the City of Lucknow,* 16.
[272] Heber, 25-326.
[273] Barnett, *North India between Empires, Awadh, the Mughals, and the British 1720-1801*,138.
[274] Ibid.,138-141.

and given a robe of honor. These instances indicate the eventual reduction in power and authority of the Nawab in the region. The Resident also appointed proteges and sought benefits from the governor-general at Calcutta to increase their power and position.

The Resident of Awadh was entitled to a modest payment of 200 rupees,[275] but given the advantages, it remained an attractive position for others. The Resident had no defined role, and it kept changing from being a mediator to the Company's agent, trader, the guarantor of stipends, judge, and many more. Apart from employing several clerks, messengers, assistants, and servants, the Resident also constructed quarters for them. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the costs of maintaining the Residency increased immensely. Rosie Llewellyn Jones gives a list of staff employed by the Resident in just eleven years of appointment, highlighting the rising expenses on the Nawabi regime and a strategic attempt at the usurpation of power through economic coercion.

Apart from expanding his parochial empire, the Resident maintained alliances with other influential Europeans to extract monetary gains through trade. British Residents made the area alluring to other European adventures who aimed to carve out niches for monetary benefit by lobbying with them. A prominent person among them was Claude Martin, who solidified his position in Lucknow because of his friendship with the then Resident John Bristow.[276] The illegal trading networks were another significant pocket through which the Residents and his accomplice amassed profits. John Bristow, the first Resident of Lucknow, was a corrupt man. Warren Hastings (appointed the governor-general in 1773) was against placing John Bristow as Resident in Lucknow.[277] However, the councillors of the Company stationed at Calcutta, notably Philip

[275] Llewellyn-Jones, *A Fatal Friendship: The Nawabs, the British, and the City of Lucknow*, 88.
[276] Ibid., 61.
[277] Ibid., 61.

Francis, managed to overhaul the power of the governor-general to make the appointment of Bristow possible.[278] Bristow, Francis, and Martin worked as a clique in various illegal commercial enterprises to build their fortune.[279]

On such instance was securing clothing contracts by John Bristow for upkeep of European troops stationed in Awadh.[280] This meant buying clothes from company sales in Calcutta and selling them at a high-profit margin in Lucknow. The internal trade within the region was therefore taken care of by the Resident. The records of the dealings can be ascertained from letters in the Francis collection. The second lucrative source that Bristow looked for was the saltpeter trade.[281] Saltpeter is an essential component in the manufacturing of gunpowder and was naturally available in Awadh. There existed precedence of benefitting from this trade under Middleton (a previous resident) and Gabriel Harper (special agent) in Lucknow. Bristow's negotiating with the Nawab was unsuccessful because the saltpeter trade also brought profit to the Nawab treasury. Nevertheless, the mounting debts of the Nawab due to his overspending on European goods left him no choice but to assign mounds of saltpeter at Faizabad to Bristow.

However, it would be too early to assume that the interference and ambitions of the Residents were satisfied with saltpeter mounds and trading contracts. Given his despicable character, John Bristow negotiated another alternative of selling weapons to the Nawab's army. After the battle of Buxar, the French mercenaries were dismissed from any position of influence in Awadh. At Resident's insistence, Claude Martin earned the job of superintending the Nawabi arsenal under Asaf-ud Daulah's reign. Eventually, he also erected a market known as 'Captain

[278] Ibid., 62.
[279] Ibid., 63.
'It is important to note in this regard that Awadh was closed to any commercial activity by company officials in 1773'. Still, the majority of Europeans stationed at Awadh indulged in trading activities.
[280]Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, *A Man of Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century India: The Letters of Claude Martin*, 1766-1800, 65.
[281] Ibid., 65.

bazaar' and engaged in selling luxury goods to the Nawab.[282] While John Bristow, in his capacity as Resident, managed to extort 14 lakhs rupees from the Nawab in the name of fake company payments. It is evident that monetarily Awadh was so beneficial that corruption and the extraction of money from the Nawab via unfair means became typical for the Europeans. Also, these events show the trajectory of Residents carving influential niches in the region. Collectively, the Resident who was appointed as a mediator became a powerful agent in the region who controlled the trade, administration, and economy.

Another trader that deserves special mention is Antonie Henry Louis Polier, who came to Lucknow around 1783 with Hastings' interference. The volume of the trade he managed to carry within five years is immense, ascertained from the letters written to the agents, copies of which survive in the form of *Ijaz-i-arsalani*. While going through the letters of Polier, one can easily discern trading relations between Europeans, Mughals, and the Awadh court was scattered along various routes and major cities of North India. The trade included goods of all types, such as spices, horses, elephants, clothes, weapons, gems, tobacco, European articles, and indigo.[283]

For instance, in one of the letters written to Mirza Abdullah Beg, Polier writes, -

> "I came to know from Hurmat Khan that you have brought horses from another dealer instead of Aqa Husain (who is from Afghanistan). Well, today, the Nawab has requisitioned all the horses, so it will be good if you bring some of the horses with you."[284] The letter shows that Polier was actively involved in buying and selling horses for the Nawab, and at times, he even acted as mediator between the buyer (who in this case is the Nawab) and the seller (who is Mirza Abdullah Beg). In another letter, written to Sulaiman Khan, Polier says the forty-four soiled than of broad both are with Manik Ram for sale, and they have not approached anyone for purchase yet."[285]

[282] Ibid., 69.
[283] Alam and Alavi, *A European Experience of the Mughal Orien*, 100.
[284] Alam and Alavi, *A European Experience of the Mughal Orient*, 100.
[285] Ibid., 101.

This reply was given to Sulaiman's query about the selling of broadcloth. The letters also mention the granting of *dastak* and *hundis* to agents and traders. While the former was given to traders to bring clothes from other regions, the latter was used for payments. In yet another instance, the letter was written to Lala Kashmiri Mal (Sahukar); Polier said:

> "Whatever goods the Europeans send to me for sale, I, as a matter of fact, charge 50 percent of the profit as my share. If this fine by me, then send the elephants to me, and I will dispose of them off in the same manner as I handle European goods."[286]

This letter describes the profit earned by Polier, and it also mentions that Polier did not just sell goods from Indian merchants but also European merchants. What makes the case of trading peculiar is that it was illegal for Europeans to conduct business in Awadh. Still, the traders present in Lucknow became merchant magnates in the Nawab space. The letters also talk about storage regions that of Azimabad, Farrukabad, Banaras, and Faizabad further away from the city of Lucknow to escape the eyes of the officials. It is important to note that Europeans also engaged in the slave trade or put forth the demand for a slave and employed many of them in their respective quarters.

Several other traders ran what is called 'Europe shops.' These shopkeepers obtained goods imported to Calcutta, brought them to Kanpur via the riverine route, and then transferred to Lucknow in covered carriages. For the smooth functioning of this 'mail-order,' small companies were even set up in Calcutta. The goods traded include meager items like milk chocolate, mousetraps, guns, cucumber slicers, and European clothes. During the reign of Asaf ud-Daulah, the fetishism for European goods had increased manifolds which allowed freelancers to become traders of European products for monetary gains. Some of them managed to amass profits ranging

[286] Ibid., 174.

between 200-300%[287] by selling European articles or curiosities like mirrors, crockery, furniture, and mechanical devices such as steam engines, telescopes, watches, and wine at the court. Evidence indicates that some of these articles were overpriced, and the Nawab bought them in ignorance.[288]

Apart from traders, mercenaries, and the Resident, the other Europeans who flocked the areas of Awadh included doctors and surgeons employed both by the Company and the Nawabs, though one needs to keep in mind that they were not always directly attached to the court.[289] George Derusett was an English barber who came to Lucknow in 1831 in search of custom and fortune. This coincided with the time when Nawab Nasir-ud-din was on the lookout for a European hairdresser. He heard about Derusett from the Resident and employed him at the court for an overtly high payment of rupees 300 a month. [290] It is also interesting to note that Derusett's camaraderie with Nawab increased to the extent that both used to dance together as partners. There are reports that he received immense gifts and became prosperous and favored.

The administrative and political scenario in Awadh became somewhat unpredictable after the beginning of the Anglo-French war in 1778. The war also marked the beginning of aggressive British interference in the agrarian countryside of Awadh with the aim of increased revenue appropriation. Immediately after the news of rupture between the English and the French reached Awadh, the Resident demanded the survey of private arsenals of Nawab at Faizabad to borrow weapons for war.[291] The reluctance on the part of Nawab saw increased coercion by Resident

[287] Ibid., 67.
[288] Ibid., 60.
[289] Llewellyn-Jones, *A Fatal Friendship: The Nawabs, the British, and the City of Lucknow*, 25.
'Dr. William Stevenson, who in 1828 was requested by *Nawab* Nasir-ud Din Haider to attend the sick poor of Lucknow was junior surgeon to the 14th regiment of the company troops stationed in Mariaon cantonment.'
[290] Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, 'The Barber of Lucknow: George Harris Derusett', *Journal of Asian Affairs*, volume 26, (1996).
[291] Ibid., 80.

Middleton for weapons and extra cash and aggressive interference in the land revenue arrangements of Awadh.

As Richard Barnett also points out, Resident Middleton forced the Nawab into increasing the share of the revenue from one-sixth to more than one-half.[292] The financial claims laid by the English since 1765 had already increased the revenue manifold, and the war situation further pushed Awadh into a state of financial and administrative high-handedness. Cash payments replaced the earlier prevalent revenue assignments called *tankhwahs*.[293] Eventually, the mounting debts and deployment of English troops stationed at Lucknow to collect revenue proved fatal for the revenue system of Awadh and became a reason for the end of the subsidiary alliance between the Company and Awadh. The amount of force and rigor used by the troops not only destroyed the revenue base instead created a vicious circle in the agrarian countryside of Awadh, with the only remedy being the granting of more revenue assignments to balance payments. The matter became worse with the appointment of Resident Charles Purling, who forced the Nawab to produce entire records of Diwani (revenue office). These written records became the base to claim higher revenues.[294] With the intervention of Warren Hastings in 1784s and the treaty of Chunar, the British agreed to re-negotiate the terms of payment, which reduced the pressure on the Awadh regime and a new life as a semi-independent regional power.[295] However, this semi-autonomous status was short-lived and changed after the death of Nawab Asaf ud-Daulah.

The beginning of nineteenth century brought a radical phase in Company intervention, starting with the interference in the appointment of the new Nawab. Saadat Ali was chosen as the

[292] Barnett, *North India between Empires, Awadh, the Mughals, and the British 1720-1801*, 128.
[293] Ibid., 150.
'These revenue assignments made the position of Residents similar to that of a Mughal *mansabdar* who had the task of organizing supplies for commanding troops at the request of troops. The only difference being that he could not collect more than what was prescribed in the *tankhwah* and as a result, the excess remained with the *amils*.'
[294] Ibid., 125.
[295] Ibid., 228.

Nawab of Awadh by the Company in place of Wazir Ali, whom Asaf ud-Daulah recommended. The rumors about Wazir Ali's anti-British sentiments influenced the Company's decision. It also allowed the Company to dictate terms to the puppet Nawab underlining a new trend in Company's policies. Even before he arrived in Lucknow, Saadat Ali was made to sign treaties that promised Britain the cession of Allahabad Fort, the entire doab, the payment of the remaining debts, and the payment of any cost incurred upon securing his throne (Barnett). The new governor-general, Lord Wellesley, brought further changes in the administrative and revenue apparatus of Awadh. Wellesley feared threats from the Afghan rulers of North India and taking it as an excuse, increased the subsidiary forces in Awadh.[296] Secondly, he demanded more financial contributions by the Nawab to use against Tipu Sultan of Mysore.

The revenue demanded by the Company was at its highest of all times, and the incapability to meet the raised demand was seen as incompetence to rule by the governor-general. Without any further explanation from the Nawab, Wellesley demanded the cessation of the entire domain, otherwise at least cessation of sufficient territory to satisfy the Company's enhanced demand. After the negotiation, the Nawab left with a small territory, the revenues of which he could retain, thereby ending the subsidiary alliance in 1801. This shift from the subsidiary alliance to the cessation of vast territories of Awadh also brought changes in the role of Resident, which now became monotonous. After the treaty of 1801 and the cessation of territories, the Resident has left with the internal management of the area apart from holding an advisory post.

Eventually, the issues concerning the guaranteed families of Awadh again increased the power of the Resident. The guaranteed families were pensioners whom the Residents gave stipends on the interest of sums invested in company loans. This scheme was profitable because it provided

[296] Purnendu Basu, *Oudh and the East India Company 1785-1801*, (Lucknow: Maxwell Company), 1943, 164.

the relatives and proteges of monarch protection from the changing political scenarios while at the same time circumventing the Islamic prohibition of usury. This system was first adopted by Bahu Begum, who bought protection from the British by giving monetary concessions in 1775. In 1808, her will declared that the bulk of her fortune would go to the British government, with a specified amount invested in Company loans. The interest on these loans was to be given as stipends to listed beneficiaries and partly for the upkeep of her mausoleum in Faizabad. Collectively, the loans and guarantees of British protection increased the number of recipients over time. In the cases where the beneficiaries died without an heir, the interest was used to pay the principal, and when the heirs were more than one, the stipend was divided. Since the Resident became the middleman between the Company and the beneficiary, his role became significant. He was looked upon for protection but assumed the status of a civil judge in case of a dispute. Consequently, the masses' loyalty towards him increased' and he even started holding his court.[297]

The Guarantee system made the Resident a minor monarch in his own space. Eventually, this led the ruler to embarrassment when his relatives and proteges looked up to the Resident for redressal of grievances in cases relating to internal administration. In one such instance, Bahu Begum approached the Resident because the Nawab had dismissed Tahsin Ali Khan, a eunuch in Khurd mahal at Faizabad. Then, Resident Colonel John Baillie (1808-1815) coerced the Nawab to reinstate the eunuch. The other ladies of Khurd mahal, who were cheated and insulted by Tahsin Al, approached the Nawab, but to their dismay, the Nawab was helpless, and they had to make their way back to Faizabad. Another such instance occurred in 1825 when the Company gave Nawab Ghazi-ud-Din's stipend to Aga Mir, a confidant of the Nawab.

[297] Pemble, *The Raj, The Mutiny, and The Kingdom of Oudh 1801-1859*, 37.

However, with the ascension of his son Nasir-ud-din in 1827, Aga Mir fell of favor and was accused of several charges. Still, the British promised him protection which landed them in a dispute with the Nawab. As has been pointed out by Assistant Resident Lieutenant Paton, "The residence of the British representative became a civil court in which the Nawab himself was the suitor."[298] However, these durbars and the redressal system of grievances of the proteges stopped under Resident Low. Still, that did not reduce the Resident's power because its roots were strengthened in the region.

The Resident now had the task of addressing the complaints of sepoys. The corps, which were in service of princes, submitted petitions of their concerns to the Resident. These complaints were about the rights of *qanungo* and *Chaudhuri*, the *Zamindari* tenurial dispute, the plunder of property, house destruction, demands more than the revenue, and many such matters. Sometimes the sepoys used the Resident's name or the threat of filling a petition as a weapon to force their opponents to do their bidding. When the native government could not solve the problems of the local landlords, they started moving to the Resident for help. The result was that the moral value of the Resident increased in the first half of the nineteenth century. It was not just the locals but also the people of the court and the king himself who started flattering the Resident. The Company was lenient concerning such bonds in the early decades, but with the changing policies and increasing corruption and extortion these Residents indulged in, such bonds were frowned upon. After removing its trading monopoly in 1813, the Company had acquired more bureaucratic character with fixed salaries, regularity, and efficiency, and thus, private fortunes and commissions were majorly disliked.

[298] Ibid., 38.

The Resident and his Residency, the hub of private fortune-making and commissioning, changed with increased bureaucratization. In 1827, Governor-General Lord William Bentinck condemned the exchange of gifts between the native princes and company representatives and ordered the Resident to discontinue the practice. Though gift exchanging and trading got prohibited since the enforcement of the regulation act of 1773, it was not strictly followed. However, with Resident Mordant Ricketts, the scandal became too big to conceal.

Reginald Heber mentions in his diary:

> "Mr. Ricketts' house was the most splendid in Lucknow, and his suwarree exceeds that of the King who is said to be so attached to him as to have given himself entirely into his hands."[299]

Ricketts, during his tenure as a Resident in Lucknow, managed to amass immense wealth illegally. The investigations carried out under Resident Lockett, who succeeded Ricketts, revealed that he had been exchanging a large amount of gold for the bill of exchange on the mercantile house in Calcutta, which caught the eye of Governor-General Bentinck. A Resident could not collect that much gold. However, due to a lack of evidence, Ricketts managed to escape to England before the trial. It became the turning point in the Company's policies regarding the curbing of social intercourse between the Nawab and the Resident. The Company adopted strict measures in the succeeding decades that when Resident Thomas Maddock demanded to represent the Nawab in England in 1831, he was not only forbidden but transferred to Kathmandu.

Recasting of the Agrarian Countryside and Emergence of *Talluqdari* Tenure

[299] Ibid., 326.

The region of Awadh was divided into five *Nizamat*- Khairabad, Gonda Bahraich, Sultanpur, Baiswara, and Salone, headed by a Nazim. Each *Nizamat* was divided into Chaklas placed under a tehsildar. The land revenue system that functioned in Awadh was mainly of two types - the *Jagirs/ tankhwah,* which were given to the privileged members of the regime and were not administered, and the other included the farmed revenues. In the case of the farmed revenue, the duty to collect revenue went to the highest bidder; the system of bidding for an *ijara* (a lease or a contract for paying a fixed amount to the treasury) came to know as the *ijaradari* system.

The system of revenue farming (*ijaradari*) was profitable for the Nawab and the contractor, but it did not disclose the actual revenue capacity of Awadh to the Company. The Company's incapability to realize higher revenue led them to the *tankhwah* system. Nevertheless, the attempt to increase the revenue as prescribed under the *tankhwah/ jagirdari* system messed the punctuality of the payment. Therefore, to ensure a fixed revenue source, the land was farmed out to the highest bidder and any surplus amount that the *amil* realized went to his private collection. This policy had begun under the time of Asaf ud-Daulah but was extensively enforced under Saadat Ali. This practice of subcontracting by taking away the right of revenue collection from the hereditary chieftains (*Zamindar*) became prevalent in the early eighteenth century. Nevertheless, unlike other land revenue systems, this method also had a major fallout that ensured the suffering of the small landholders. These small landholders held areas in a village through brotherhood, and the subcontractors tried breaking those ties. Meanwhile, the British capitalists bought those villages that were reduced to bankruptcy due to failure in paying revenues.[300] As Pemble points out, it was around this time that a newly landed magnate called the *talluqdar* emerged.[301]

[300] Ibid., 50-53.
[301] Ibid., 53.

There has been considerable debate among historians regarding the growth of *talluqdari* tenure in Awadh. Also, there are varied opinions regarding the role and position of a *talluqdar* in the agrarian countryside of Awadh. The word *talluqa* means connection, but it is technically used in the sense of land or area over which any kind of right was claimed. If one notes the picture of the agrarian countryside in 1858, which is immediately after the annexation, then a significant part of the province was under the *talluqdars*. Charles Elliott argues, "The *talluqdar* was a person previously unconnected with the spot and was permitted to realize on his own the share of produce due to the state."[302] Saiyid Zaheer Hussain Jafri opines, "The class of *talluqdars* consisted of people elevated to the position by the ruler, but a good number of them were representative of the hereditary chiefs in possession of large estates in their rights."[303] He also opines that some of them took advantage of the weakening position of the Nawab administration to gain a foothold. Charles Elliott, in *Chronicles of Oonao,* has investigated the issue and noted that the number of big *talluqdari* houses in Oonao, particularly Fyzabad, Tulsipur, Balrampur, and Sultanpur, were descendants of the old hereditary chiefs.[304] There are instances where the revenue officials themselves seized the opportunity to become *talluqdars* by acquiring special proprietary rights.

A detailed description in *Mirat-i Auza* of Lalji describes how the *talluqdars* applied the illegal mechanism to enlarge the land area under him. He argues that most of the villages that formed a part of *talluqa* belonged to those zamindars that could not defend their villages in times of increased revenue demand. Some *Zamindars,* oppressed by the amils (revenue contractor), put their land under the possession of *talluqdars*. The *talluqdar* would, in turn, pay the increased revenue on behalf of the *zamindar* and collect a nominal payment in return called *tamassuk*. These

[302] C.A. Elliott, *Chronicles of Oonao*, 155-156.
[303] Jafri, *Studies in the Anatomy of a Transformation: Awadh from Mughal to Colonial Rule*, 74.
[304] Ibid., 75.

amounts eventually became too high for the zamindar to repay, as a result of which he lost the proprietary rights over his lands. Sleeman points to the case in Gonda Bahraich and says, "As soon as these *tallookdars* got possession of Khalsa villages, they plundered them of all they could find of stock and other property; and, with all possible diligence, reduced to beggary all the holders and cultivators who had any claim to a right of property in the lands, in order to prevent there ever being again in a condition to assert their right."305 Lalji also names a few *talluqdars* who acquired a fortune via this method, including Beni Mahdho Baksh *talluqdar* of Shankarpur, Raghunath Singh of Khajuragaon (in the Baiswara district), Harpal Singh of Sapehi in Sultanpur, and Ram Deo Pandey of Gonda. As such, the *talluqdari* tenure grew in Awadh at a massive scale due to the slackness which crept within the administrative machinery of Awadh after the death of Saadat Ali khan.

The growth of *talluqa* resulted from the failing administrative machinery of Awadh, and the British intervention through its Resident had a significant role to play in this process. The deployment of troops to collect revenue matters after the Battle of Buxar worsened the revenue apparatus. The Nawab was forced to reorganize his troops leading to the drastic reduction in the native army. The native soldiers were known as *Mutaayyana*, and *seh bandi* were insufficient to crush the rebellion of the countryside.[306] As a result, during times of increased revenue demands, the Nawab had no choice but to seek the help of European troops. Extortionate revenue collection was always the case for the state, but it increased beyond the level after British intervention. William Henry Sleeman, who had been writing in 1849, says this system was the source of much evil and was later responsible for prevailing anarchy in the region. According to Sleeman, this

[305] Sleeman, *A Journey through the Kingdom of Oude in 1849-1850*, 53.
[306] Jafri, *Studies in the Anatomy of a Transformation: Awadh from Mughal to Colonial Rule*, 76.

practice of employing troops should be reserved for emergency cases.[307] At this point, it not only devastated the countryside but also rendered the troops unfit for any service. The employment of troops remained the norm of land revenue collection for sixty long years. In several instances, the troops were left to collect by force from the cultivators.

There were several instances when the Resident had noted reports of misuse of the company troops: "In 1808 Resident Bailie informed the Governor-General that he had sanctioned the troops by scrutiny". Similarly, in later decades, several governors had continuously documented the conditions of the deteriorating countryside. For instance, in 1831, Resident Maddock wrote to the Calcutta government about the fallouts of parceling out the territory to vast numbers of farmers whose only aim was to extract as much revenue as possible for their benefit.

If we go by the diary of William Henry Sleeman, he mentions that not all contractors were suppressors; instead, some of them had regard for the welfare of the cultivators. They also made advances to the landholders during drought to be able to irrigate and dig wells. Sleeman also mentions that, after the drought of 1837-38, forage was only procurable in the estates of Oudh revenue farmers. He further notes that the king and his ministers were not bothered about the situation of the subjects until something hampered their gains. It was the consequence of earlier decades of British interference which brought the administrative setup to such a miserable state. One such instance is that of Resident Bailie trying to usurp the power of the Nawab in attempting to force him into adopting new revenue policies. Through the Resident, the British decided to extract immense surplus and later blamed the Nawab for misgovernance by advising them with better policies of revenue administration.

[307] Sleeman**,** *A Journey Through the Kingdom of Oude in 1849-1850*, 150.

The Nawab, who had already lost most of his territory by the treaty of 1801 (end of the subsidiary alliance), was in no mood to accept such suggestions from the Company. Further, the withdrawal of British troops after the treaty weakened his position. The *talluqdars*, on the contrary, grew more potent in the agrarian countryside. Eventually, they started withholding more revenue due to the government and invested the money into building forts and strongholds, casting and purchasing cannons, and maintaining broadband of followers.[308] Evidence that the *talluqdars* resisted the payment of revenue comes from the following letter:

> "The King of Oude, in a letter dated 31 August 1823, tells the Resident, the villages and estates of the large refractory *tallookdars* areas are as flourishing and populous as they can be, and there are many estates among them which yield more than two and three times the amount at which they have been assessed. Furthermore, even if troops should be stationed there, to prevent the cultivation of the land until the balances are liquidated, the *tallookdars* immediately come forward to give battle and, despite everything, cultivate the lands of their estates so that their profits from the land are even greater than those of the government."

One of the significant features of the Awadh's countryside in the nineteenth century was increasing mud forts of *talluqdars* surrounded by bamboo jungle and impenetrably mounted with old guns. The only guarantee of their freedom lay in their mud-forts and military power. Sleeman reported that there were 250 forts and 500 canons.[309] Again, Sleeman underlines that

> "All that they [talluqdar] withheld from the public treasury was laid out in providing the means for resisting the officers of Government; and, in time, it became a point of honor to pay nothing to the sovereign without first fighting with his officers."[310]

Scholars revealed that by the middle of the nineteenth century, the position of these local barons had become so intense that ill-equipped troops could do little to remove them. Sleeman also writes about the camaraderie between the local landholders and the *talluqdars*, which signifies

[308] Ibid., 55.
[309] Sleeman**,** *A Journey Through the Kingdom of Oude in 1849-1850*, 210.
[310] Ibid., 56.

that these landholders used to ally amongst themselves against another landholder at times. Though this brought disturbance in the countryside, it is essential to note that these landholders were also essential in maintaining peace and stability. This was done by the largest and most influential among all landholders, who, apart from maintaining peace, looked forward to settling good cultivators in their areas, for instance, the Nawab of Mahmudabad.

Sleeman notes:

> "The Nawab of Mahmudabad always has money at command to purchase influence at court when required, and he was a strong and well-armed force to with which to aid the governor of the district when he makes it worthwhile to do so in crushing a refractory landholder. These are sources of his power, and he is not at all scrupulous in the use of it - it is not the fashion to be so in Oude."[311]

Conclusively, lesser-known regimes erupted in the countryside, and the feudal lords of those regimes also assumed the title of the Nawab. Sleeman's report is an essential account of the conditions prevailing just before the annexation of Awadh. Though scholars have argued that his diary in no way talks about occupation being the solution to the problems prevailing in Awadh's governance, he gives a detailed account of all the regions from Lucknow to Sultanpur, Gonda Baraich, Partabgarh, Baiswara, Khyrabad, Sundeela, and others. With increasing ruckus in the countryside coupled with the inability of the Nawab to handle the situation led to failing revenue remittances and eventually brought the fall of Nawabi system.

From the above discussion, one can argue that the nature of the European presence in Lucknow changed over time, and they utilized their official capacity to extract fortune and catalyze misgovernance. The Residents shrewdly allied with the nobles at court and other Europeans in the city to carry out illegal trading in Awadh. The ignorant *Nawab*s lost their wealth in the spree to collect European goods, and the ban imposed on trading in Awadh was futile. Instead, what

[311] Ibid., 22.

functioned was a vast trading network within the country which made the Europeans richer and the Nawab poorer. Some Europeans even managed to settle in the region by contracting houses and villas and eventually became patrons of the Awadhi *tehzeeb* (Culture). Therefore Madhu Trivedi, in her work, *The Making of Awadh Culture*, mentions that even after being in the aphasia of transition, Awadh witnessed the growth in cultural activities. Most of what we know as *Awadhi* culture is credited to the encounter between the British and the Nawab and Shiʿism's growth.

Conclusion

The state was not an unchallenged political entity in the eighteenth-century India. The earliest interpretations of Eighteenth century were based on considering it as a period of decline and anarchy. This was hinged on the understanding of Mughal decline in the North which was highlighted by the Aligarh school of historians[312]. But when taken into consideration a larger picture it can be deduced that there were multiple social and political changes at play in the dynastic patrimonies. This period though began with the decentralization of the imperial authority but also gave way to emergence of what C.A Bayly calls 'Successor States' which was done by effective domination of governors of old imperial provinces.

The emergence of these regions was in no way sudden or revolutionary but gradual in nature. These imperial lords withdrew to their domains' building up what are called secure power bases in areas like Hyderabad, Awadh, Banaras and Bengal.[313] These new states had aspects of 'continuity' from the Mughal system and recognized the legitimacy of Emperor but at the same time sought to establish their independent stand amidst fluid political conditions. To establish a strong base and to resolve the problem of legitimate rule structural redeployments were brought about in its agrarian management and political set up. Therefore, C. A Bayly uses the phrase 'Cyclical realignment' for the period rather than calling it a collapse of political culture. These realignments meant withdrawal of resources from some areas and its reinvestment elsewhere.

On a broader level certain homogenous traits could be generally noticed in these Eighteenth-century frontier polities which included emergence of included merchants, revenue

[312] The Aligarh School of Historians include popular names like Irfan Habib, Shireen Moosvi, Iqtidar Alam Khan, Athar Ali and Satish Chandra.
[313] C.A, Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, p.12.

entrepreneurs, rooted service gentry and mobile band of specialists. The decentralization of political power had worked as catalyst in the emergence of these groups. There was change in agrarian dependencies, but these changes varied according to regions while in some area's farms were clan-based organization in others the peasants were depended on landlord and merchants' groups.

Conclusively we observe that there was increasing hold of local elite over the farms which gave rise to a new class of revenue -farmers and bureaucrats who gathered around the court of successor states. With the system of advances being given in the regional state new areas were cleared for cultivation and connection with the management of agriculture was established. Again, in the words of Bayly' Progressive monetization of rent and resort to farming out land by rulers were major aspects of change in new regions, the purpose being detachment from the imperial clutches.

My thesis has highlighted four major aspects about the frontier polity of Awadh. Firstly, it explicates the growth of Awadh as a self-sufficient autonomous state. The rulers of Awadh asserted control over the agrarian countryside, organized their territory and increased interaction with the neighboring states. Furthermore, this thesis highlights clash between the Nawabs and East India Company and changes it brought to the internal administration of the region. The rulers in the first half of eighteenth century strengthened their hold by cruising the rebellious landlords of the countryside. The Nawabs depended on the acquiescence of autonomous body of mercenary soldiers, revenue entrepreneurs, administrative gentry and specialist farmers for upkeep of the administrative machinery and governance. Between the revenue-based state and cultivating groups there existed a range of powerful intermediate groups like *talluqdars* and merchants who were cajoled and manipulated by the European traders. The political order created patterns of surplus

extraction, military protection and commerce under the Nawabs which not only encouraged the growth of rooted service gentry and a homogenous merchant class but brought together the imperial centers and the countryside.

In conclusion one can argue that the eighteenth-century dynastic patrimonies acquired tools for state building from powerful interest groups. Probably, these methods resolved the problems of legitimate rule. In addition, the political situation with increasing European capitalistic enterprise enabled state to become more commercial and bureaucratic at the same time but the Nawabs had an emasculate authority. As mentioned, the rulers started farming out revenue to the highest bidder in the days of the later Mughals. Although, varieties of dynastic regimes existed in the eighteenth century there was a common tendency among them to secure local base of power.

Secondly, Awadh under the Nawabs also developed as a distinct Shi'a cultural polity where legitimacy emanated from the subjects. Conscious efforts were made by the Nawabs to secure a strong base in the region and the law of primogeniture ensured legality to succession. The rulers used their religious identity as important to affirm their identity and gain legitimacy. Due to the presence of Sufis and institutionalizing of Shia ritualistic practices in North India, religion played an important role in establishing syncretic cultural traditions. It became an important ligament that tied the ruler in cosmopolitan centers to the subjects of the *qasbahs*. The growth of Imami Shi'ism was also evident in the construction of built spaces and everyday practices.

In the third part of my work, I have focused on the study of *harems* and *zenanas* were Begums played an important role as powerbrokers and financers in the region. Lastly, I conclude by highlighting the ways in which the interference from the British and the coming of plenipotentiaries disrupted the administrative set up in Awadh finally leading to its annexation.

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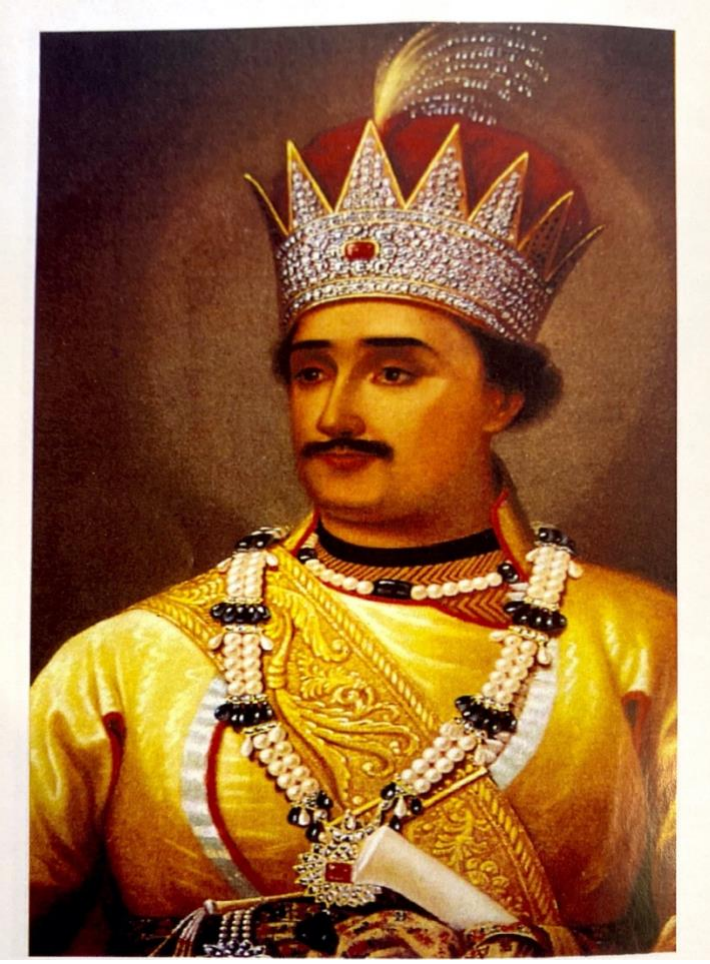

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