CHAPTER III

THE CONTEXT: PRE-COLONIAL AND COLONIAL BACKGROUND

OF LAND, POWER AND PEOPLE OF BASTI DISTRICT

Rural elites are an integral part and reflection of rural society. An attempt at detailing the essential features of the structure of rural elites without, however, detailing the relevant aspects of rural society would be an incomplete exercise. We propose to present in this context a tentative historical construction of land, power and of rural people's stable relationship with one another. We have many reasons for such an undertaking. But the chief reason is to highlight the historical nature of the agrarian social life in

1. First, in the absence of a radical or revolutionary breakdown of customary social and cultural practices there is a good deal of persistence of traditions in North Indian countryside. Use of historical material to highlight contemporary social data, therefore, assumes a significance for sociologists. Similarly, historians of contemporary agrarian unrest, on account of their disdain towards field work tradition of social sciences and reluctance to make use of some of the elementary concepts of sociology generally fail to offer an adequate explanation of their historical data. M.H. Siddiqui, for example, does not explain as why upper and lower caste tenants had to pay differential rents to talukdars in Oudh. Tenurial distances in terms of tenant and talukdar statuses did not abolish caste and kinship ties among such upper castes as Rajputs and Brahmins. Caste and kinship affinities of tenants with talukdars, therefore, used to fetch special rent concessions to the former from the latter. M.H. Siddiqui, Agrarian Unrest in North India, contd...
a way as to enhance and magnify the relative validity of
data that impinge upon the contemporary dynamics of rural
ever.

We divide the history of Basti district in two phases,
namely, the pre-colonial phase and the colonial phase.
The latter phase begins with the cession of Gorakhpur
district, of which Basti was then a part, to the East
India Company in 1801. Delineation of the pre-colonial
phase of history pertaining to the patterns of agrarian
relationships, castes and lineages, and their relative
positions in terms of the patterns of land control and
the exercise of power, would provide a dependable base for
the analysis of the colonial phase of this set of relations-
ships. We shall describe and discuss the historical data
in relation to these two phases of the district under study
subsequently.

PRE-COLONIAL PHASE

The famous ethno-geographic maps of Sir Henry Elliot\(^2\)
painted the picture of the extensive spread of Rajput (Kshatriya)

contd...
principalities over Northern India and recorded the variations in their sway over land from the period of Akbar (1596) down to the 19th century. It is reported that, at the time of British arrival in the area now, known as the state of Uttar Pradesh, two-thirds of land was owned by less than "three hundred gentlemen" who were "old feudal chiefs, mostly Rajputs". Pemble reports that during the pre-Mutiny period, 6 per cent of Rajput population "controlled over half the land of the Province" (United Provinces). In Basti, 3.22 per cent of Rajputs population controlled over the total 7,628 villages of Basti by different lineages.

The pre-colonial phase begin with the process of eastward ethnic movements of some of Rajput lineages. These Rajput lineages, in course of their colonization of taraí Himalayas initiated a process which led to usurpation of the indigenous population. This process of colonization gave rise to the formation of ethno-geographic domains of Rajput lineage power. We shall examine how such domains of lineage rule gave birth to distinct territorial base of power organization. These territorial units had as


their loci the **parganas** which were further sub-divided into **tappas**. Territorial expansion of a lineage was subject to inter-lineage wars where sheer might of sword decided the expanse of the **pargana**.

We are presenting below an outline of the ethnic movements of **raiputs**. Since they have been the main colonisers of these tracts of land, it would be worthwhile to describe their lineage structure and their relationship with other sections of local population. Relying essentially on British ethnographers and compilers of local history, we propose a dependable though admittedly nebulous portrayal of the said objectives.

**Ethnic Movements and Rajput Colonization.**

Studying Indian agrarian social structure have paid little due attention to the socio-political consequences of the relations between the processes of migrations, concentration and dispersal of some lineages with the evolution and organization of a specific system of land control.

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Historical accounts of Muslim invasions in the western parts of India and of the consequent displacement of the resident Rajputs are recorded by British ethnographers, settlement officers, pedigree compilers of ruling lineages, and by the compilers of District Gazetteers. Ethnographers, such as Crooke, and Settlement Officers such as Benett and Hooper give extensive details of such lineages as Janwars, Kalhansas, Chauhans, Bisens (or Bias), Gautams, Sarnets and Surai Vanshis. Pedigree compiler, such as, Morgan, not only give a sketch of the arrival of most of the Rajput lineages of the erstwhile United Provinces of Agra and Oudh but also identify the historical periods when and, the geographic origin of these lineages, moved in and colonised the land and people of this region. Chronicles and family

7. William Crooke, op. cit., p.86.
9. T.N. Morgan who compiled the pedigrees and titles of the chief ruling families of Uttar Pradesh gives detailed information about the migration and settlement of Rajput families including other castes and communities. See his, Manuals of Title Holders: United Province of Agra and Oudh, Allahabad: Superintendent, Printing and Stationary, 1901.
histories of influential Rajputs narrate the Rajput exodus from States like Punjab, Gujarat and Jammu and Kashmir. And District Gazetteers contain information on these aspects of influential lineages and families of the district. Alfred C. Lyall utilised data of ethnic movements of Rajputs to explain the broad outline of Indian history. He reports that almost all the cities of Northern India - Lahore, Delhi, Kanauj and Ayodhya were held by Rajput Rajas at the time of first Musalman invasions and that these invasions and the attendant plunder, loot and destructions forced the emigration of Rajputs. During the seven centuries from 10th century AD to 17th century AD, Layall writes:

Muslim invasions pierced their country (Rajput domains) from end to end by rapid rushing invasions, plundering and ravishing, breaking the idols, and razing the beautifully sculptured temples, Buddhist and Brahman. In course of these Musalman forays and rushes, domains and principalities were thrown in the whirlwind: some went to deserts of Rajasthan, some crossed the Vindhyas, others retreated to jungles and criss-crossed the directions according to the outlets open at the time of attacks.13


Rajput lineages and priestly Brahmins of Cis-Himalayan tract of districts like Baharaich, Gonda, Basti and Gorakhpur depict in the store of their folk history, the story of this migration and of their colonization of the new regions. The entire drama of their exodus from well-founded kingdoms and principalities in western regions of India are remembered. Lineage elders are the repositories of this past. The tale of their migration is linked to the tales of Sultan Mahmud Ghazni (997-1030) and the last of Mughals and Nawabs of Oudh. The names of Bakhtiyar Khilji, Balban, Aurangzeb, down to Saadt Ali, Nawab Wazir of Oudh, are associated with acts of Sadism, rapine and torture, with demolition of temples and breaking of idols; with the sale of Hindus to slavery and their forceful conversion. Crooke and Lyall record the migration tales of the lineage elders and state that:

... in the same manner as the tribes of Israel there are traces all over India of tribes lost and extinct, some of them cut off within the historic times by the pitiless sweep of some Pathan invader's Scimitar. But then again, in the confusion and anarchy of dilapidation of these huge Asiatic empires some daring chief of such a lose predatory tribe as we now see (in 1880's) gathered... (and) issued out with its kinder band and gets a name and a territory; so that in the incessant flux and

15. Lyall, op.cit., p.190.
change of Asiatic institutions the whole history of the ascent from the cave of Adullam to the chiefship of a clan, to the rulership over tribes, and sometimes to empire over a great territory, is constantly repeating itself. 16

Historians, on the other hand, with a single exception, have so far paid little attention to agrarian power dynamics of this process. But a scrutiny of literature identified above reveals several points of interest for the present study. These are:

a) The Rajput migration and dispersal in northern parts of India were politico-cultural responses to usurpations and destruction of their kingdom and principalities of religious persecution, demolition of temples and idols and a large scale genocide carried out by the invaders.

b) Despite this displacement, which led to widespread dispersal and migration of Rajput lineages, the Rajputs seem to have regrouped and consolidated their power to such an extent as to be able to carry out usurpations of indigenous populations of forest clad regions inhabited by

16. Lyall, idem., p.169.
17. Only exception is John Pemble, op. cit., pp. 126-128.
such ethnic groups as Dom-Katars, Bhor, Arakh and Tharus in North-cis-Himalayan tracts. They colonised these natives and transformed them into the subjects of the new lineage domains and principalities. These uprooted native subjects either lived in bondage with the Rajput coloniser or migrated northward to the jungles of Nepal Tarai.

c) In the region recently called Uttar Pradesh, the directions of Rajput movements have been towards the north-east along the Cis-Himalayan tract, towards north upto the boundaries of India or even further deep in Nepal, and towards the east upto the present district of Ghazipur. This area had distinct geographical features which offered strategic refuge to the fugitive Rajputs chiefs and their kins where they could safely expand their hold.

d) Lastly, the Rajput migration was not confined to a family or lineage. History is silent about this aspect but field information based upon interviews disclose that in course of the past displacement and movements, entire communities living around the Rajput chiefs moved along

22. According to Crooke Mohemadan Emperors used to hunt rhinoceros in Saharanpur Tarai during the last quarters contd....
with them and settled at places where their masters colonised the natives. These lineages transported their *Raiput*-ethos or the culture of the ruling caste intact and implanted it vigorously in their new settlements. Since ethnic movements of this type were accompanied by the transportation of complete structural and cultural values, their politico-cultural continuity remained almost uninterrupted. Primordial loyalties among the various groups of rural population towards their *Raiput* maliks, tend to remain more or less intact. The common traumatic past suffered by them together welded them into one group. Further details of the arrival of these ruling lineages of *Raiputs* in Basti will be given a subsequent section.

This migration began in the middle of the 13th century AD and continued till the end of the 15th century AD. The general eastward migration of *Raiput* lineages are being illustrated with the specific cases of *Samet* and *Kalhans* movement and colonization. See Buchanan Hamilton who surveyed Gorakhpur district in 1818 reports of destruction caused by wild elephants in the district. Raja of Balrampur captured a herd of elephants in Gonda districts. Hamilton reports of tigers attack on the villagers of Gorakhpur in course of which 400 people were killed. Its wild population declined after the Mutiny of 1857. See Crooke, ibid., p.48. About wild life, Gorakhpur Gazetteer, p.27. About Hamilton Buchanan's visit to Gorakhpur district, see, Asiya Siddiqui, op.cit., p.40 and Basti Gazetteer, p.69.

The traditional functionary castes such as washemers and barbers in Basti invariably report that their fore-fathers came to this area with the forefathers of their local *Maliks* - the *ex-rajas* and *thakurs*.

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MOVEMENT AND COLONIZATION OF SARNET LINEAGE IN GORAKHPUR AND BASTI DISTRICTS

MAP 3A

GORAKHPUR DISTRICT

BASTI DISTRICT

Srinagar (PUNJAB)

Gorakhpur (U.P)

IN INDIA

BANSI

MAGHAR

RUDRAPUR (SATASI ESTATE)

UNALA ESTATE
The first to arrive at this region seemed to have been the Sarnets of Bansi Raj (Map No. 104) who colonised the eastern part of Basti and the western part of Gorakhpur districts. The Solanki lineage of Kathela in Basti arrived around the same period as Sarnets. The Kalhans of Basti-raj and that of Rasulpur Gans in Basti district are the branches of the great house of Raja Achal Singh who ruled over Khursna in the district of Gonda. Older branches of this family arrived in Basti (Map No. 103) and colonised the northern tract, parallel to Solankis. To the south of Kalhansas lay the principalities of Surajvansis and Gautama of Mahuli-raj and Nagar-raj respectively - who had, as tradition goes, thrown away not only the Dom-Katars but also

25. According to Gorakhpur Gazetteer, one Chandra Sen descendant of Rapi Narain is said to have come to Gorakhpur region from Srinagar in the neighbourhood of Lahore, now in Pakistan and settled at the bank of Kwanar river near Duhriapir. He ejected the Doms and Katars and other semi-tribals from the land and colonised the area. His descendants established Satasi and Upana Ra in Gorakhpur district and Bansi Raj in Basti district. See, Gorakhpur Gazetteer, op. cit., pp.114-115; and Basti Gazetteer, ibid., pp.88-91; and Morgan's Manuals of Titles, op. cit., p.142.

26. About details of Kalhansas, see, H.R. Nevill (ed.) District Gazetteer of Gonda. Allahabad: Superintendent, Printing and Stationary, 1903, pp.89 and 139. Since the Kalhansas first came to Bara Banki district and established their seat at Bado Sarai on the western bank of Chagara river, Bara Banki Gazetteer adds, "Mysterious tribes of Kalhansas are derived from Achal Singh who accompanied Dario Khan when Ibrahim Shah was ruling over Jaunpur and Oudh was a battle ground between eastern dynasty (of Sharquis of Jaunpur) and Lodhis of Delhi". It further adds, "Achal Singh is a great name in the history of middle ages of Oudh".

contd....
MOVEMENT AND COLONIZATION OF KALHANSAS LINEAGE IN BARABANKI, GONDA AND BASTI DISTRICTS
the Kavastha principality of Amroha as well. Bisens of Marvatia village in Basti tehsil have had a long history which is traced out in the Majbula Ray of Bisens in Deoria district. The Gazetteer reads, ".....by the time Mughal dynasty was established (16th century AD) in India almost whole of Basti had been held by Rajput clans...."

The arrival of these Rajputs, and their attendant functionary castes not only led to the colonisation of the region, people and land, but defacto, resurrected a semblance of

contd.... It is also reported that this Achal Singh was of English extract and was locally known as Achal Singh Angrez. See, H.R. Nevill (ed.), District Gazetteer of Bara Banki, Allahabad: Superintendent, Printing and Stationary, 1903, pp.155-168. According to Morgan, Achal Singh was the last Raja of Khurasan, which was founded by Sahaj Singh, a native of Baligana in Gujarat in 1375. Achal Singh survived in years 1544 when he was overthrown in an inundation of river Sarju (Ghagara). His brothers and descendant established the estates of Paraspur, Babhanipair, Kamair (Deoli), Dhanavan, Shahpur, Ate, Paska, Chingaria in the district of Gonda and Chawkhar and Basti estate in the district Basti. See Morgan, ibid., pp.207-208; Gonda Gazetteer, Appendix XXXIV and Basti Gazetteer, op.cit., p.145.

27. Before the arrival of Surajvanshis and Gautams of Mahuli and Nagar Raja respectively, there was one Rai Jagat Singh - a Kavastha. He was said to have been Governor of Oudh in early days and had his headquarters in the district of Sultanpur. According to one tradition Jagat Singh overthrew a Dom King who was demanding a daughter of a Brahman for marriage and in reward obtained Amorah. It was at that time that Kalhonsas first came in the region. Jagat Singh, according to the other tradition, used to rule during Akbar's time. See Basti Gazetteer, pp.146-147. Surajvanshis and Gautams entered into Basti from Raiabed district and expelled the Kavasthas from Amroha pargana. Gautams estate at Nagar was established by one Jagdeo who came from Fatehpur and slowly established his estate. Surajvanshis as well as Gautams, both have tradition of fight with Dom Katars after whose displacement they established their Rajas. See, Basti Gazetteer, op.cit., pp.92-96.


29. Basti Gazetteer, ibid, p.147.
the chiefdom they had lost at the hands of Musalmans. They cut the forests, built fortresses and overlorded the indigenous population. By imbibing the ancient religious traditions of Basti, with Ayodhaya - the birth place of Lord Rama in South and Kapilvastu - the birth place of Lord Budha in North both by caste Rajput reinforced their secular power with the added strength of religious dogma associated with their blood connections with Hindu Divines.

The Brahman population arrived only with Rajputs as their priests and ecclesiastic guides. Exceptions are only found in cases of Pandev and Tiwari (a sub-caste of Brahman) of Jagdishpur and Balbheriya respectively of Harriya tehsil and Pandev of Gadawar of Domariaganj tehsil whose forefathers according to the interviewees and local traditions continued to have remained in Basti since the time immemorial.

Brahman families like those of Uska, Chetia, Bhatangwa, Narharia, Basti, and their splinter groups came attached to different Rajput chiefs in Basti as priestly groups. Their families held vast Birta (grant) land under their Maliks in return for their religious and advisory services to the chief and other members of his lineage. Other Hindu groups, like Ahir, Kumis, Kanvars, Paris, Nais, Bhaat, Dhubis etc. also settled here after the Rajputs usurped the land possessed by the original semi-tribal population.
Kshtriva Lineage and Paragana System

Historians suggest an ethnographical reciprocity between a lineage and a territorial unit of paragana.

Geographers have tried to identify an expanding network of gaon, tapa, and paragana overlapping upon lineage units. It was left to Fox, an anthropologist, to examine the socio-political aspects of such overlap in the context of Kshtriva lineage of East Uttar Pradesh. Fox's aim was to investigate behavioural and ideological interaction between the local community and national society. In the course of making such an investigation he highlighted the overlapping of clan and paragana on each other. His later interest, however, depends from ours. Primarily because he mobilises his material to construct an evolutionary model of kin, clan and Raja a model which has been close to the hearts of

30. Such as Eric Stokes, op. cit., pp.82 and 135; Pembble, op. cit., p.131.


32. Richard G. Fox, Kin, Clan, Raja and Rule, Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1971, p.VII.

33. Fox, ibid., pp.17, 20, 27.

34. Fox, ibid., pp.62-75.
British ethnologist like Lyall. The Rajput developmental cycle could have been of real potential for us had India remained a pre-industrial colony of West. Cycles operate when space is insular, but this is not so in India at present. After Independence India’s political system has closed the avenues of data in support of his evolutionary model.

Unlike Fox whose primary objective was to buttress evolutionary model is twofold: Firstly, to reconstruct archetypal categories of agrarian class structure on the one hand and the nature of power, on the other. Secondly, the land - people-power relation thus constructed is to be also examined in terms of its ability to react to the colonial innovations of bureaucratic rules and regulations. The questions which bothered the British at the initial stages of their Land Settlements, were to quote Stokes, “What was the basic peasant tenure? In whose hands lied the primary domain of soil?” call for an examination of both the historical as well as field data.

Writing in 1882, Layall states that ".... a Rajput State, where its genuine form has been least modified

36. Stokes, op.cit., p.3.
denotes the territory over which a particular clan or a division of clan claims a domain for its chief and possession for itself by right of conquest and settlement". He further states, "In a Raiput State ....we still find all the territory partitioned out among the Raiputs in whose hands is the whole political and military organizations". Layall adds that the process goes on when "A sept or an offshoot of a sept of a particular clan, sets out an expedition and takes as much land as it can hold and builds the fort....." About Raiput expeditions in search of regions to colonise, W.C. Benett observes, "The militia levies of his (Raiput) clansmen and their dependents for the persecution of his private dispute "gather at the "summons of the chieftain of his tribe". He further indicates that, "when Raja went to war he was followed by an enthusiastic army attached to himself and to each other by the closest ties of common origin and common interest." 37

Colonization of Basti region by Raiputs was a process in which chunk by chunk land and its native population was occupied, subdued and subdued. The lineage chiefs followed by their kinsmen and accompanying satellites of functionary

37. Lyall, op.cit., p.197.

38. W.C. Benett,1870, op.cit., paras 74 and 75.
castes formed their domains and principalities. The Brahman priest supported by Rajput chiefs proselytised into the fold of Hinduism the vanquished tribals, who, in terms of religious faith and commitments, were almost a drifting mass of people connected loosely to their animistic gods and dieties. These new Hindus were dumped into the lower and exterior strata of Hindu hierarchy. Doms, Bhangas and Arakhs are some of the new Hindu castes who continue to be a part of Hindu population today in Basti. It was as a result of such a process that lineage and territory overlap emerged all along the Eastern Uttar Pradesh region.

Crooke writes that:

The traces of this early form of colonization may be observed to the present time (last decades of 19th century) in the local sub-divisions of pargana and tappas, which corresponded to the baronial or hundred sub-divisions of some of our English and Irish countries. These probably represent the areas originally occupied by the invading Sept.

Writing about the tappas of Gorakhpur division to which Basti district belonged, he further writes, "The tappas... as in Gorakhpur, corresponds to natural divisions formed by rivers or other natural features. This was a characteristic of the Rajput settlement, where the various colonising bodies are separated from each other by rivers, the chief ethnical frontiers of early times."

Right from the 13th to the 16th centuries, the Raiput lineage such as Sarnets, Kalbansas, Gautamas, Surajbansis, Bisens carried out their colonization and principality formation activities in waves. In Basti, these principalities corresponded to nagana territory (See Map ____). In 1865, some naganas of the eastern side of the present Basti fell under the administration of Gorakhpur district. These naganas are Maghar and Binaavakpur. With the introduction of tehsil system during the British raj, the Gazetteer of Basti makes a significant comment on the reason for its own account. It states "Though they (naganas) have ceased to be of much importance... their existence is of interest from historical point of view, as they coincide with the limits of the old independent principalities...."  

The size of eight original naganas (in acres) which existed as the principalities of Raiputs before the arrival of the British in 1801 are presented below. Table on the following page will give the details.

40. Basti Gazetteer, p.112.
MAP 4

PARGANA PRINCIPALITIES OF RAJPUT LINEAGE AT THE TIME OF BRITISH ARRIVAL (1801 A.D.)

PARGANA BOUNDARY

BANSI WEST

BANSI EAST

BINAIKPUR

RASULPUR GAUS

AMORAHA

NAGAR

MAHULI

SARNET PARGANA TERRITORY

KALHANSA PARGANA TERRITORY

SURAJA BAUSI PARGANA TERRITORY

GAUTAM PARGANA TERRITORY
### Table - 2

**Pre-British Parganas by size of land and lineage principalities of Basti district.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Name of Pargana</th>
<th>Approximate size of area in acres</th>
<th>Original colonizing clans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Basulpur Ghaus</td>
<td>211,884</td>
<td>Kalhansas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Bansi</td>
<td>524,138</td>
<td>Sarnets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Binayakpur</td>
<td>31,006</td>
<td>- do -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Amorha</td>
<td>178,110</td>
<td>Surajbansis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Nagar</td>
<td>133,771</td>
<td>Gautamas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Maghar</td>
<td>233,332</td>
<td>Sarnets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Basti</td>
<td>180,094</td>
<td>Kalhans and Bisens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Mahuli</td>
<td>233,736</td>
<td>Surajbansis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 1,789,171 (2,795.5 sq. miles)

**Source:** Based on Basti Gazetteer, Appendix Table No. V

While the boundaries of parganas coincided with the territorial domain of Rainut lineages, (Map No. ______), the control of and rule over the domain of parganas, however, on account of inter-lineage warfare occasionally underwent the change of shrinkage, expansion and in cases of total obliteration. Deceit and treachery have played a vital role in the disappearance of a vanquished lineage and expansion of the "victors' pargana." Early settlement Reports of
Basti and the information contained in the District Gazetteer of Basti reveal that during the last decades of 17th century, principalities of Solankis of Kathela and Chauhans of Butwal were forced into insignificance and their domains incorporated into the principality of Samets of Bansi. The pargana of Binayakpur held by Chauhans was lost to Samets. In fact, the machiavellian samets, according to tradition killed in deciet, Raja Kesri Singh of the senior branch of Kalhanas lineage and grabbed a greater part of his pargana domain of Rasulpur Gaus. Alfred Lyall observes that, "in early and wild times a tribe or a clan regularly throws off another tribe or a clan after its own kind, as swarms come out of wild bee nest...." stands validated by Basti data on Rajput inter-lineage warfares.

Nevertheless these Rajputs used to dissolve their lineage feuds when threatened by external forces of Central powers of Muslim Emperor or Nawabs. They united temporarily as a ruling caste to protect their common interest at the face of any common threat. They frequently resorted to banditry, and guerilla warfare in the face of a strong enemy

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41. Such as Hooper, op.cit.
42. Basti Gazetteer, op.cit. p.152.
43. Lyall, op.cit., p.177.
and to open rebellion and war against the garrison of enemy when the enemy was weak. These strategies were carried out in the name of Rajput caste. The attendant Brahmans mobilised the peasant in favour of the Rajas - to protect temples and Hindu idols against the Musalman rulers. Sleeman reports that the Raja of Tulsipur was given support by neighbouring as well as by the distant Rajas of the Rajput caste to meet external threats from the Lucknow Nawabs. He further observes that in Oudh in 1814, Rajputs refused collectively to pay any type of tribute to Nawabs and instead persisted in waging a war against his forces. The defiance to Central power as described below, characterised the Rajput ethos and had made them de-facto lord of the land.

**Rajput Defiance**

The expansion, perpetuation and fall of lineage domains caused by inter-lineage conflict present one set of data. The other relate to the relation of lineage chiefs with the sovereign of the State. Historical data of Basti reveals that the capacity of a lineage to retain and expand its rai and to consolidate its territorial domain was

subject to the availability of support from the collateral chiefs of the same lineage in certain cases neighbouring clans on the basis of blood brotherhood used to support them. Lineages like Kalhanas, Sarnets, Bisens, Gautams and Suraiyansis survived inter-lineage conflicts on account of their capacity to mobilize such a collateral power in response to their calls for rescue. These lineages had collaterals spread over in the districts of Gorakhpur, Gonda, Azamgarh and Faizabad; Kalhanas Raj of Pair and Parasraopur in Gonda district responded, as the oral traditions go, to the call of Kalhana chief of Rasulpur Ghaus in Basti. Sarnets of Bansí sought the help of their brothers at Satasi and Bansí in Gorakhpur district. But the Chauhans and Solankis, on the other hand, had no backing support; they had no nearby collateral to fall back upon at the attack of Sarnets and hence they fell prey to the Sarnets attack.

In each Pargana, the raj of the lineage on account of topographical factors remained almost independent. In the face of stronger Musalman armies, as was the case in 1567, when Todar Mal tried to subjugate the local chieftains, the Rajputs retreated into dense taraí forest and to more obscure mud forts. The Sarnets did so in abandoning the Maghar fort then held by them. In 1610, the Sarnets of Satasi and Bansí joined together and attacked on the Mughal
garrisons of Gorakhpur and those at Maghar during the period of Jahangir and regained the forts they had lost earlier. Local chiefs had remained generally independent of Emperor till the rise of Aurangzeb who appointed one Quazi Khalil-ur-Rehman to settle the score with the local chiefs. Subsequently, Sarnata again retreated to jungles and fort of Bansi till the death of the Quazi. According to tradition, Quazi was killed by local Rajputs who resented his presence in the locality. Writing on this phase of Basti history, the Gazetteer observed:

The real ruler of the country were the Rajas tho at this time (17th century AD) rose to the height of their power. It was they alone who made grants of land and remission of revenue, and each chieftain was practically independent within his own territory. They maintained large forces of armed men, and by their means made wars on their neighbour at their will.45

Even after the rise of Nawabs, who right from Saadata Khan (1720-39) down to Shuja-ud-Daula (1756-75) had their capital at a stones-throw distance from southern boundary of Basti in Faizabad, found Rajputs only as a burden to be kept at a distance. At the most the Nawab could effect a nodding allegiance of these chiefs without converting their status of independence to that of a subordinate subject: This was so because, "the Rajas trusting in their sure defence of dense forests, and unfordable rivers, 45. See, Basti Gazetteer, pp.151-152.
were able to defy the central power with some sense of impunity". The Rajputs always built, abandoned and, shifted their mud forts from place to place within their tracts. Forts of Maghar and Bansi of Sameta, Nagar of Gautama and Amorha and Mahuli of Surajvanshis and of Latera and Awania of Kalhansa, etc. have been built and abandoned at various times. When the British annexed Oudh they counted as many as 623 such Rajput mud forts. Writing about the resistance offered by these forts to the Central power the Governor General in 1824 wrote, "As far as the disorders are suppressed in one quarter, they spring in the ether. Forts which are this year dismantled are restored again the next." Each fort in Basti is a sacred hump of land site, built of broken reddish bricks, rising above a skyline slowly being brought under the plough, leaving alone the deep wide well around which lineage folk tales of Rajputs are linked with supernatural awe and reverence. Each Rajput, even today, while passing along these ancestral forts, are often seen taking off his shoes to reach to the well close to which is the seat of lineage deity.

Before the British established their bureaucratic colonialism among the Ceded Districts, the native Colonialism

46. Ibid., p.153.

47. Number of mud forts and Governor General's statement is cited by Pembale, op. cit., p.58 and 131.
of Rajputs had already evolved a history of abandonment of mud forts, retreat to forests and of frequent resort to guerrilla attack at times when Musalman (local derogative term for them is Turkats) Emperor's or Nawab's armies were too strong; of their advance, rebellion and open warfare to recapture forts and territory when the latter were weak. Even today Rajput socialization includes assimilations of folk tales which remind them of their valor, chivalry and of their independence.

To describe the relations of these Rajputs (Maliks) with the priestly and peasant section of population and, the nature of their right in land, we need not begin with an evaluation as to whether lineage Raj was a system of Kin based tribal society or if it approximated to those of medieval feudalism of Europe. Fox has already examined some of the older notions of Lyall and Tod as well as the current notions of Thorner, Coulborn and Wills, etc. We should instead focus our attention upon the land relationship as it existed before the British arrival. In doing so we have to take into account the structure of Rajput lineage and their relation to priests and peasants. These nexus* reveal the general land and power relations of pre-colonial Basti district.

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48. See, Fox, op.cit., p.133-133.
Structure of Rajput Lineage

Historical information as well as field observation of Basti Rajput lineages do not support Fox's model of evolutionary process of birth of a lineage, rise of a Raja and intervention of state. Instead, it was generally a static retention of root lineage and horizontal expansion of subsidiary lineages, which in the process led to the establishment of many princely states (Raj) of the same enterprising lineages. Usually, youngsters of the agnatic line of the root lineage used to break away and establish new Rajas. In this fashion, the established three Rajas - one at (Babhanipair) in Gonda and two Rajas such as those of Rasulpur Gaus and Basti in Basti district. Samets, similarly first established their Raja at Satasi and Unaula in Gorakhpur district and after consolidating their hold over there, one of them came to Basti and established the Raj, first at Maghar and then at Bansi. Similar pattern can be noted in the case of Gautam and Surajbansi also.

Once a lineage had established its Raj over an area, it was generally left to the senior brother to retain and rule over the root Raj. The younger brothers with the help of the militia which had initially established the root Raj lineage

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49. Fox, ibid, p.62.
was used to push ahead in quest of new Rajput, a fresh territory, which once occupied was given to the younger agnate of the lineage. Such a process does not conform to the evolutionary model: Rajput colonization was more of a loot of land by foot soldiers and free booters led by Rajput chiefs rather than a systematic unfolding of evolutionary patterns. Each colony, thus established used to protect the other of the same lineage on the principle of blood ties.

The territory occupied in such a manner was equally divided into parts among the lineage members. Tracts of cleared land and jungle, village and ponds were thus divided and demarcated for each kin. Like the division of land, attached families of such functionary castes as Brahman priest, barbers, washermen, and many other such castes were equally divided for use among the colonising lineage kins. Each such lineage unit, during Akbar's period when Todar Mal brought these Rajput chiefs to a nodding allegiance to the Emperor, was called Mahal. The term Mahal referred to "Crown" or "Palace". The intra-lineage structure of the Basti Rajput was a federal cluster of such unstratified Mahals or

50. Todar Mal, during Akbar's reign intervened in these parts of East Uttar Pradesh and established the Sircar of Calcutta. According to Aven, it had 24 Mahals (revenue paying units). Mahals of Kotela (Kathela) Fusool poor and Choosy (Rasulpur Gaus) and Beneykpoor (Benayakpur) were parts of this Sircar which used to furnish 1010 cavalry and 22000 infantry. See, Aven Akber, by Abul Gazal Allami, Tran, by Francis Gladwin, Calcutta: The Indian Publications Society 1783, pp.487-488. About the nodding allegiance of the local Rajputs to Akbar, see, Basti Gazetteer, pp.148-149.
sub-principalities located at various strategic points of the territory of the Raj. The Raj, usually the eldest member of the occupying lineage used to retain the seat of lineage deity, the head priest and other symbols of senior status. Kins scattered over the pargana or principalities used to consult the Raj and the senior members of the lineage. Once such Rajas, such as those of Kalhansas in Gonda and Basti district, established their lineage, the local population would subsequently rally around the nearest Raj, since he was the closest chief of the lineage.

Mahals in Basti such as of Sohna, Shahpur Chaukhera of Kalhansas, Rudhauli, Bakhira, Mehdawal of Sarnets, Banpur, Hariharpur and Mahuli of Surajbansis, etc. corresponded to the tappa division. Therefore, when the lineage Raj corresponded to pargana, the Mahal coincided generally to tappas. Primogeniture was absent, and the rise and fall of Mahals, by and large, used to be dependent upon the drive, initiative and strength of its owner to convert jungle into cultivable land, to impart justice and protection, to seek loyalties of his subjects.

Inter-lineage relations depended more upon the policies of lineage raj rather than on the rule of hypergamy. Sarnets who had killed Raja Kesri Singh of Kalhansas were treated by the latter as an outcastes. Kalhansas did not accept water
or food from the Sametas. These initial taboos, however, wore-off after hundreds of years of contact with all the Mahals of Sametas. Once these lineage were reconciled over their booty of territory, they began to evolve means for its retention. And here the Rajput caste status was the unifying element which cemented them together against the common enemy. This unity was further strengthened by the rule of marriage. Suraibansis and Gautamas accepted daughters of Kalhansas. Kalhansas did the same with the Bisema. Thus, bonds of blood and affinity by marriage blended them in such a way that Rajputs as a stratum and lineage as segments, divided further into sub-segments of Mahal at tower level was the traditional socio-political apparatus of lineage Raj in Basti.

While at the pargana level, the lineage Raj was insular and distinct from similar Raja of other lineages, the same lineages at the level of region were expansive in nature. Various Rais of the same lineage located at various tracts of tarai were sources of power for each other. Simultaneous to the lineage expansions were the affinal expansion of relations. Marriage connections strengthened commitments for support and these could be when needed, transformed into a power alliance as well. These networks were used to sustain the raj in the face of external threats and to perpetuate its rule over people. There, thus developed a specific mode of agrarian relationship.
Rajput lineage had total and absolute ownership and control over land. Forest, tank, river, the  
land, farms and villages falling within the domain of a particular lineage were under the direct and exclusive control of the Rajput chief. He was, however, bound by certain codes of conduct, relating to justice, property and physical safety of priests and peasants which restrained him from becoming despotic.

**Rajput-Malik and Brahman**

A few generations of agnatic and collateral kins, spread over Mahals of parganas with a common descent from a legendary father (Gotra) and united by brotherhood ties of blood, used to have (and continue to have) a common deity - a Kali, a Durga or a Bhawani. This deity was always attended upon by Brahman priests. The role of the priest in the lineage Raj was twofold: Firstly, their function was to create and ensure a loyal subject for the Raja. This they did by Hinduisising the indigenous tribal population into the Brahmanic pantheon. Crooke, Beden-Powell and Lyall describe these proselytising functions of the Brahman in Rajput raj.

Hinduization of tribals and semi-tribal population led to an emergence of a settled and stable population of Sudra and exterior castes among the Hindus. These people supplied manpower to Rajas in the latter's bid to cut down the jungle
for cultivable land and extended help in building their mud forts. Thus the process of colonization by the Rajputs went hand in hand with the Hinduization of the indigenous population. The appearance of servitude in Uttar Pradesh can, by and large, be attributed to this process.

The second function of the Brahman was to remind the Rajput of their traditional codes. The codes, according to field reports, included such values as to impart justice, protect religion, priests and the peasants even if the Rajput had to risk his own head. The Rajput was the great builder of Hindu temples, Dharmasalas, protector of pilgrims on way to Ayodhaya, Allahabad and Banaras. The relationship between the ruling Rajput and the Brahman priest was thus symbiotic: each thriving upon the gains of the other and each suffered from the loss of the other.

All the notable Brahman families of Basti, such as those of Narharia, Chetia, Bhatangwa, Uska, etc., are those that moved in these tracts with their respective Rajas. In return for their religious and advisory duties, they received vast areas of land from the Raja as Birt (grant). These Birts originate from heterogeneous occasions when a Raja in recognition of priestly duties granted land to Brahman priests. There have been Jeewan Birt (grant for livelihood), Sankalp (passing on the land in the name of the dead), Dan
(religious donation) and birta for maintaining esoteric educational institutions locally referred to as pathshalas, and dhammanshalas (resort for pilgrims to stay).

However, despite their religious and cultural importance of the Brahman in the Raj, their power and authority was subject to his Raja. It is as the descendants of Lord Rama and Lord Krishna that the Rajputs assert superiority over Brahmins. Local Rajputs assert, "We worship the Brahman feet, but we do not do so with his neck" - implying thereby that Rajput could inflict punitive measures including capital punishment upon the Brahmins. These birtadars (grantees) Brahmins of Rajputs rose to a great height in the middle of the 19th century during the British Raj. They, however, in those parts of Uttar Pradesh generally fell short of Kshatriya Rajas in status and local power.

Rajput and Peasantry

Historically, the Rajput whose hands wielded the swords and the Brahman who sung the hymns of not only Hindu Divines but also those of the valour and chivalry of the Rajput chiefs, did not and still do not touch the handle of plough. Religio-cultural taboos forbid the upper castes from any involvement in the direct operation of agricultural activities, i.e., cultivation of land, sowing and irrigation of crop, etc. Direct involvement of Rajputs and Brahmans
in the productive process carried negative cultural valuation in the traditional normative order of Hindu society.

These upper castes, therefore, had to entrust the functions like felling forests, clearing land, its cultivation and raising rice crop, on the middle and lower sections of population in the Brahmanic order of caste society. The exterior castes like Chamars, Doms, Bhangis and Mochis did the menial work of skinning of carion, tanning of hide, producing shoes and leather boxes and containers for the higher castes. The next strata in the hierarchy of functionary castes, like Kahar, Bari, Tamoli, Dhobie, Nais, etc. performed other types of services for the Rajput Rajas, the chiefs and to the Brahman priests.

By and large, cultivation, during the pre-British period, according to the tradition in Basti and as elders of the community describe the past, was carried out by such clean Hindu castes as Kumis, Abirs, Gadarias, etc. These castes used to combine land cultivation with animal husbandary. Artisan castes like Lohars (iron-smiths), Sonar (Gold-smiths) Barahi (carpenter), Thavai (mason) etc. rendered services to ruling caste by furnishing them with such implements as swords, arms, utensils, ornaments and agricultural implements. They also built forts and Bakharis (houses) and temples for the ruling castes. These lower castes performed agricultural
operations and in return got a share in the produce from the upper castes.

The entire social structure of a Rajput estate functioned on the basis of relative contributions made by each caste to the maintenance of the Raj, Rajput-Malika, the priests and peasants had definite positions in the traditional social structure and each carried a pre-ordained definition of his status which justified his social rank in the hierarchical arrangement of the population during the Rajput Raj.

Pre-colonial Structure of Land and Power

Holt-Machenzie, Secretary, Board of Commissioners, North-Western Provinces (1818-20) writes, "The Village Zamindars (Kshtriya Rajas chiefs) were the immemorial occupant of the soil; .... They gave, sold and mortgaged their land at their will". Writing about their tenacious hold over the land, he further states, "Nothing but violence appears to have disturbed the tenure of the village zamindars; neither the furthest exile, nor the longest absence, dissolved the tie that bound them to the field of their ancestors, nor destroyed their right to resume possession when they returned." 52

In order to identify the section of population which had basic domain over soil during the pre-colonial period and from which primary peasant tenures subsequently evolved during the British Raj, we have to shake off the correct notions of land tenure and the concepts of land holdings, "rights" and "ownership". These concepts which have had their moorings in the modern setting are such that instead of illuminating the evolution of land and power relations of colonial period, they would inject semantic confusions.

We have to assume with a fair degree of confidence that districts like Gonda, Basti and Gorakhpur being at the southern edge of Nepal tarai permitted, the growth of independent and semi-independent lineage rajas and principalities. Encroachment upon their independence was by and large short-lived and temporary.

Under the situation as it existed then, right over land generally arose from the might of conquest. As conquerors of area/instrumental to its colonization, as Rajput lineage domains corresponding to natural divisions of parganas, the Mahals (short lived revenue unit during Akbar's time in Basti) at tappa level bestowed paramount right to Rajputs in the land they colonised. The concept of "tenure" which refers to some mechanisms of payment of dues to superior powers, therefore, in those days had no consistent history. As such, actually
the Rajputs had right not only over cultivated land, forests, ferries, fairs, waste land, village sites but also over the subject population that lived in their colony. All that fell within the domain under the right and control of the conquerers. The peasant was the serf and the slave of the upper castes. Observations of past practices by settlement officers confirmed the fact of continuation of peasantry as serfs and slaves of Basti Rajas and Zamindars. Hooper, a Settlement Officer, writes that the "status of the professional ploughman almost amounted to slavery." Hooper refers to the practice of Savaki. The term Savaki is a vernacular version of Sanskrit term Sarvaka meaning pupil of or votaries to lords. The peasant was a Sarvaka who bounded his family to the landlords, the rajas and zamindars in exchange of land or loan of money. According to Hooper, three kinds of Savakas were found in Basti. They were:

1. Tihara Savaka - Tihara Savaka was a "ploughman" (by "ploughman" Hooper perhaps means peasant or cultivator) who had no cattle of his own but used to plough for two days each week the land of the lord and in exchange used to latter's cattle to plough his own land given to him. The landlord exploited the peasant both ways. He got his land ploughed

53. Hooper, op.cit., paras 36, 40, 50 and 75.
54. Hooper, ibid, para 50.
free of cost and also took share in the harvest of the Savaka.

2. Dhamahadar – Savaka of this category, according to Hooper, was the servant of two masters. He used to work half day for each of the masters. He received nominal wages and was attached to the lord only for half the year.

3. Chhatian – He worked for the master throughout the year deploying all his family manpower towards the cultivation of master’s land and in return received a small plot of rent-free land.

Beneath the seemingly despotic control and power of colonising Rajputs over land and dependent people, local respondents report that there always existed customs defining the interests and rights of peasants in land they cultivated, pastures, they grazed their cattle on and the village sites whereon their huts were built. These customs were binding for both, the Rajput as well as for the peasants. Despite the fact that the grip of custom was less strong for the Rajputs and more strong for the peasants, there did exist some of authority in the form of customs, traditions and conventions which were relatively independent of Rajputs and peasants. From such customs it appears that there emerged the subsidiary (inferior) rights of peasant in land.
cleared the forest had customary right to cultivate at the approval of the coloniser.

The relative subsidiary rights and interests were of two types in Basti: one referred to *birt* (grant) right secured by generally non-lineage Rajput mercenary from the conqueror in return of military services. This type of *birt* was called *Jeewan-birt* (subsistence grants). Most of the non-dynastic Rajputs in Basti such as Katarias, received this type of grant from ruling *Raja* and chiefs. In Gonda district, Benett reports that Kalhansa Raja of Khurasa gave large area of land as *Jeewan-birt* to Bisen Chatri (Rajput) who gave supported the former with cadets. The second, *Morchabandi-birt* and *Khubaha-birt* referred to grant accorded towards effecting siege and getting slain respectively for the cause of the patron *Raja*. Both were part of the generic *Jeewan-birt*. This was a feudal tenure which disappeared after the British arrival.

*Birt* given to Brahmans were of two types: one which was granted by way of *Dan* and *Sankalpa* (grants out of religious donation or piety) and the other for the upkeep of temples. These *birt* were free of taxation called *Malikana*. *Malikana*-free grants were usually made to Brahmans *Jeewan-birt* given to Rajput cadets or in exceptional cases such as

birt given to Kumri cultivator of Dhekahari village by Sarnat Raja of Bansai in return for a glass of water were, tied up with Malikana.

Once a birtedar had taken possession of the grants, his right over the territory, according to the traditional rule defining the right of birt, passed from the conqueror to his birtedar. Obliteration of birt was a violation of the traditional norm. Thus the concept of tenure emerges, for the first time, in Basti and adjoining district around the institutions and practices of birt. It carried the modern concepts of "right" and "ownership" of the grantee over the granted, though in a vague manner. The concept of "property" as a system of right to sale, purchase, mortgage and gift seems to have first arose around the land which was exempted from Malikana to the grantor. As it was the practice to make such grants generally to Rajputs mercenaries and Brahman priests. This second order of right over land probably nucleated around only the upper castes.

Right over and ownership of land which used to be confined to warrior and priestly section of populations, slowly starts being transferred down to peasant level on the basis

56. On the system of Birts, see, Basti Gazetteer, pp.86-87 and Gorakhpur Gazetteer, op.cit, pp.127-128.
of the nature of a system of interests. These interests of the peasant were conjoined with the logic of Rajput colonialism. Rajputs needed manpower to build their mud-forts, Lohars to turn out swords from their furnace, Barahis to help in roofing the fort with wood, Nairs, Baris, Kabars, Dhobis and number of other such functionary castes had their relevance in the interest of the lineage raj. Such a colony could emerge only when these functionaries believed in the chief's and Raj's power to give them security, protection and justice, in addition, to provide subsistence of shelter and food.

The real cultivators were the Kumis and Ahirs. They tilled large areas of cleared land on different basis of tenure. The Ahirs and Kumis, however, did not exclude the functionary castes from the tilling of the land. Most of the functionary caste generally supplemented the share thus received from the collective pool of the produce of Ahirs and Kumis, by partial agriculture. Each caste had share interest in the produce of land given to the peasant castes. Hooper, the Settlement Officer of Basti, captures some of the lingering practices of sharing the produce in 1891. He writes:
In the village called Dhebarua, (the village in Basti district) the following persons take the share of grain (share is locally called 'Jeora') amount to four nanseri (each nanseri is of the measure of four pound weight) for each plough of cultivated land in the village: the barber, washerman, carpenter, blacksmith, and cowherd. These also receive a further allowance (called Khalyani) when the busines of the threshing floor is over. Another series of smaller shares are allowed to Pandit or astrologer (priests) who determines the propitious season for sowing, to Kahar...Soka (exorcist). Besides these regular allowances certain other deductions are made from the grain heap before it is divided between the tenant and the landlord. Other deductions are for the ploughman's wife for luck measuring give anjories (double handful) and also for charity to famuir.57

Common share in the produce of the farm is also reported by W.C. Benett, the Settlement Officer of the neighbouring district of Gonda. He writes, "The basis of the whole society is the grain heap in which each constituent rank had its definite interest. There is as yet no trace of private property, whether individual or communal, the right which bears the nearest resemblance to it being essentially the state-right of the Raja." 58

The interest of the peasant in land was defined by the institutional norms. Share in the produce slowly gave way to different types of Malikana (lord's taxes) tenure over the land of cultivators received from the Rajputs.

57. Hooper, op.cit., para 64 and 65.
The increase in population and decrease in the availability of cultivable land gave rise to stronger pull of Rajas and chiefs over the peasants. These pulls took the form of lords taxes or Malikana which we shall discuss in detail in the context of British phase.

In Basti, the concept of right and ownership of peasants over the land they tilled was absent during the pre-colonial period. The peasantry had an interest-based relationship with land. His interest was defended and secured by a set of cultural norms and practical considerations. These norms and considerations were binding to both the colonizer as well as to the cultivators. The raja and ruled had to conform to the encompassing institutions of Hindu code of conduct. Consequently, despotic growth of power could not develop in these parts of India.

In so far as the raja was concerned, any injustice, tyranny and humiliation of his subjects perpetuated by any of his lineage kinsmen of Mahals was brought to his notice. His seniority in the lineage held the deviant kin in control. On the other hand, if the raja was younger, the elder of the Mahal used to exercise check on the raja.

The structure of power was essentially coercive in the beginning, but slowly transformed itself into a normative one. Coercion and colonization gave way to conventions and
to the routine rules of the Rajput raj. In such a structure, right over land gave basis for rule over peasants who had only interests in land rather than right over or ownership of the same. Existence of jungles and waste land areas, coupled with the fact of a thin population and, scarcity of manpower replaced coercion with institutions and practices based upon trust and loyalties. For, under the system of right over land, there was an ice-berg of normative rules transcended the ranks and files of castes which was of necessity in exercising control on the total population.

The growth of population which increased the demands of peasants over land coincided with the fissions within the families of rajas and chiefs. This subsequently resulted in the fragmentation of land. Mahals consequently, started getting broken into pattis, (literally meaning stripes - here it refers to sub-Mahals). The pattis in turn got divided into thoks, (literally meaning divided heap - here it refers to sub-pattis). The latter gave birth to what, since colonial phase, is referred to as Khatedar (holder of legal share in the land). The breaking up of Mahals, a process which was initiated by the Musalmans rules sets the stage for the arrival of British colonialism in Uttar Pradesh.

60. ibid., pp.31 and 233.
61. See, Moreland, op.cit., p.274.
COLONIAL PHASE 1801-1947

The arrival of British colonialism and its expansion in Uttar Pradesh began with Warren Hastings's (1775-97) fraudulent acquisition of the Old Province of Banaras in 1775. The later history of its growth was a history of annexation, cedation, and conquest. In 1801, Sadat Ali Khan (1790-1814), the Nawab Wazir of Oudh, ceded almost fifteen districts of jabal and the Doab tract to the East India Company. The Company, after getting a firm foot hold in these ceded districts, launched sustained attack, and between 1803 to 1840, step by step grabbed the districts of Bundelkhand Division. These were called the conquered districts. The ceded and conquered districts formed the erstwhile state of North-West Provinces of the East India Company. The final expansionist stroke of the Company was seen when it deceitfully took over the remaining districts of Oudh in 1857. The Great Rebellion of 1857, after the annexation of Oudh replaced the Company raj by the raj of the British Crown in 1858. The United Provinces of Agra and Oudh emerged in 1902 as consequence of the unification of North-West Provinces with the Province of Oudh.

The initial response of local chiefs and priestly section of Hindu population to the British colonialism must have been shaped by their experiences with the Muslim Emperors and Nawabs. The past historical context of constant insecurity, of displacement, of threat to culture, religion and power. It was in a situation accentuated by the addition of frequent inter-clan feuds and warfare, that these shifting sand dunes of Kshatriya rule and chieftainship came in contact with the British. Constant threats from the Nawabs treasure trove Chakledar, Nattus (revenue officers) and Kazi (judicial officer) who often threatened the local chiefs had prepared a condition in which acceptance of security, peace and relief assured by the British from Musalman pressures was handy alternative.

Under circumstances as it prevailed then, the response of the lineage raj to the raj of the British colonialism, as distinguished from their past experiences of encounters with Musalman invaders and rulers, was a different nature altogether. Not that there was any anarchy within the lineage raj, for the peasantry by and large remained loyal and

obedient to the chiefs, but chiefs themselves lived under constant insecurity. What had been at stake was not so much the considerations of exercise of rule and independent power over their raj, as the question of protecting culture and religion of the migrant settlers. Pemple cites the instance of scorn of a Rajput of Khajuri raj in Rae Bareili district towards the Musalman Nazim of the Nawab of Oudh. The Rajput it is reported preferred to cut off his own thumb with a pair of scissors than to permit the sepoy of Musalman Nazim to inflict mutilation as punishment for his defiance.

The historically accumulated negative perception of previous Musalman powers whose subjugation could be generally thrown aside defined in some way the response of local chiefs towards the British. Sociological interpretation of historical data such as of the Sarnets who lost their fort of Maghar to Musalman and retired northward to Bansi but later recaptured it mentioned earlier were the one who gave protection to British fugitives during the Mutiny of 1857.

Any field worker who comes in contact with these ex-Rajas and chiefs often hears affectionate remembrances.

63. Pemple, ibid., p.124.
64. See, Basti Gazetteer, p.151.
of their fathers and grandfathers friendship with such
British Commissioners as BIRD SAHIb (Mr. R.M. Bird who
was the first Commissioner of Gorakhpur), SMITH SAHIb
(Mr. Vincent A. Smith, the famous historian who was
Commissioner of Gorakhpur in 1882-1900) and Mr. Charles
Hobart, Commissioner, Gorakhpur (in 1920). Some of the
elder local chiefs still remember the company of such
British officers as Mr. Cotton (1914), Mr. Muir (1919),
J.F. STEVENSON (1920), J.F. Sale (1924), Mr. Raddy/and
65 others in reference to huntings and horses. This is in
sharp contrast to their memories of Musalmán officers.

The differential response of the rather unruly local
chiefs towards the British, as compared to their district
and conflict with the Muslim powers was, however, in part,
the product of compulsions. Their initial rejection of the
British and, in fact, their attempt to throw them off
totally, as was reflected in the involvement of several
of RAJAS and RAIPUT chiefs in the Rebellion of 1857 against
the Company RAJ (East India Company), was traumatic for the
British. But the application of modern bureaucratic adminis-
tration and the use of technology ultimately led to the

65. The names of the British officers are drawn from letters
they had written to local chiefs. We, therefore, could
not get the tenure of their offices in Gorakhpur
Division and in Basti districts except the years when
occupying offices they wrote these letters.
capitulation of the people including their chiefs to the British. An examination of the expansion of British administration and of their agrarian policies is presented below.

Expanding British Administration

The new raj of the British colonialism was a different system. Its system, unlike the Nazims and Chakladas of Nawabs were officials who moved on palkees, horses and elephants armed with guns. Its archeologists like Cunningham, ethnologists like William Crooke (who compiled the first Gazetteer of Gorakhpur district in 1881) and who was Honorary member of Ethnological Survey, North-West-Provinces during 1890's and numerous Census, Surveyers and Settlement Officers - from Hamilton Buchanan, J. Hooper down to H.R. Nevill, surveyed, measured and mapped each corner of the land. They cast their rigorous administrative net

66. Sir A. Cunningham's name is associated with Bhula Daha a lake 18 mile north-west of the town of Basti which is regarded as having sacred connection with the activities of Lord Budha, see Basti Gazetteer, p.141. About William Crooke who compiled the first Gazetteer of Gorakhpur in 1881, see Gorakhpur Gazetteer, Preface and about his career, see his Religion and Folklore in Northern India, Allahabad: Superintendent, Government Press, 1894, under the name of the author is a record of his qualification and offices held. Francis Hamilton Buchanan surveyed the population of Gorakhpur-Basti region in 1813. His report is contained in, "An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal and of the Territories Annexed to this domain by the house of Gorkha", Edinburgh: 1819, Basti Gazetteer refers to this data on population, see, Basti Gazetteer, p.69. We have often cited the settlement report by Hooper and Gazetteer (ed.), by H.R.Nevill earlier in this Chapter.
over the entire cis-Himalayan districts including Gorakhpur and Basti. Their mobile camps covered the remotest part of the Basti jungles. Territorial clusters of parganas and tappas were merged into bigger revenue units of tehsils. These tehsils were directly connected with district collectorate, and collectorates with the commissionary.

The lineage raj of pargana domain and principalities of tappas and Mahals of the pre-colonial phase were subsumed by the ever-expanding onion-tower of district administration. From the Lambardars (carrier of revenue numbers assigned to chiefs in 1804) and Choykidars at the village level up to the district collectors, via the tehsildars at tehsil level, there arose a modern bureaucracy in which each unit was accountable under the impersonal laws of the British raj. Basti was undergoing a process of modernization and those who were till then, such as some of the local chiefs, unaccountable to any authority started submitting themselves to the British rule. And, from then to the 20th century, when the British bureaucracy pieced together scattered pockets of lineage domains and principalities into an unified system of territorial organization based on the concept of jurisdiction of districts and states, the British initiated a series of systematic attempts towards the containment of traditional power of the local chiefs.
We shall, therefore, attempt to discern the major consequences of the encounter between the traditionalism of the kin-based lineage raj with the well-equipped modern bureaucratic British raj. The ensuing consequences of this encounter reveal far reaching impact upon land, power and people relations at the local level. In process of such an inquiry we shall try to highlight the inner contradictions that dominated the British policies towards the native Rajput chiefs, the Brahman priests and towards the lay peasantry.

Contradictions in and dualism towards the various sections of population persisted in the policies of the British throughout their stay in Basti.

But the fact remains that the British system of administration, the institution of salaried police, judiciary, hospitals, schools and post-offices, in addition to the application of periodic but regular Census and Land Settlement revenue operations, were major innovations. Plot by plot survey of land, forest, ponds and farm land put a stop to the insularity of the rajas and chiefs domain. It

drastically reduced what used to pass by the name revenue-free land and villages and concessions which were enjoyed by the local chiefs. Their tracts of land were being reduced to plots of land. And each plot started carrying ownership right over it by a name. These great transformations deeply shook the structure of land power and people’s relations in the countryside.

_Social Structure and the Structure of Power and Land Control during the British Raj (1801-1947)_

The changes from the local Rajput lineage raj to the expanding bureaucratic system of British raj was not totally disjunctive and abrupt. It did not mark termination of, or changes in, the basic principles of social structure, including the structure of the then existing power, and in the traditional system of land control. There was no ethnic movements and displacements; indeed there was hardly any exodus of people from Rajput principalities. The British arrival was too subtle and too en captivating to cause any initial unrest - at least during the first half of the 19th century. Initial British attempts and policies were generally towards articulation, expansion and stabilization of their raj rather than towards the radical upsetting of

68. See, Basti Gazetteer, p.117.
the traditional social structure of land and power relations of people.

The traditional social structure of Basti, in general expressed the structure of power which in turn reflected the system of land control. The essence of social structure resided in the principle of hierarchy. Entire population of more than sixty castes, each one differentiated from the other by the normative rules of inherited inequalities, composed of segments and strata of society. Muslim population followed the cue of caste: from Hindu: and had their own ranking of groups on the basis of relative superiority and inferiority.

Power structure and control over land and its resources had in the past grown out of the lore of Rajput colonization. Principles of hierarchy, however, emanated from Brahmanic traditions. In Basti and the adjoining districts of CIS Himalayan tarai, the power of Rajput swords, apparently coincided with the scriptures of the Brahmans. These two together resulted in the emergence of a distinctive type of social structure. The normative basis of social hierarchy in that social structure corresponded to population divisions in political and economic categories of ruling castes, cultivating peasant castes and to the numerous landless exterior castes. The traditional reality of the power
of swords blended with the mythical power of Brahmanic scripture with such an effect that each segment and strata, despite internal objective contradictions, were bound up with each other into a complete fabric of the social structure. The powers and privileges of a few coexisted with the perennial poverty and wretchedness of many. The Basti social structure, as it grew during pre-British period and culminated the period of the new rai, was a structure of contrasts.

The objective structural contradictions and contrasts were so systematised in its culture - the actual way of life of people that the rajas and chiefs of high Bukharies (brick buildings) and Havelis (large buildings) and the peasants in surrounding thatched huts dwarfed by the sprawling and massiveness of the former's dwelling lived without conflicts. Such an orderliness accorded root to the rootless, integration to the drifters, and sense of belonging to those who had nothing to belong to - except the loyalty towards the lords. We offer below a description of these segments and groupings of people of Basti to illuminate the land-power relationship during the colonial period.

Rajas, Zamindars and the System of Land Control

During the first four decades of British administration in Basti, covering a period from 1801 to 1848, supreme right over land was vested wholly in Rajput rajas and Zamindars.
The evolution of land tenure as a legal concept comes into being during this period. Nowhere was Lord Irwin's observation on the basic and primary Rajput hold over land at local level more true than in the forest clad border districts of Basti. Settlement officers, give extensive details of undeniable ancestral right over the land in soil which emerged from the tradition of Rajput colonization discussed in preceding chapter. Commenting on the unquestioned power of Rajas and Zamindars at the time when it (in 1801) was ceded to East India Company, Gazetteer of Gorakhpur also applicable to Basti (which was then its constituent) remarks, "When the district was first made over to East India Company the cultivators of the soil were the mere serfs of Rajas and their immediate dependents (estate functionaries like Ziedar, Karindas and Sinahes). They (the Serf cultivators) had no rights and no privileges and their one duty was to obey the behests of the Zamindar from whose order there was no appeal and no redress.

Despite the introduction of propeasant tenancy rights in land such as the creation of occupancy and expropriatory

70. Such as Hooper, *op.cit.*, paras 10-12.
tenure acts of 1859 and 1873, the Gazetteers of Gorakhpur and Basti report the dismal impact of these laws on the unabated control of the rajas and zamindars over land and people of these districts. According to the Gorakhpur Gazetteer, "As late as 1869, was reported that tenant right was non-existent and the universal opinion prevailed that tenancy lasted only so long as the landlord pleased. The reason lay, naturally enough, in the ignorance of the peasantry and their inability to shake themselves from the tradition of centuries. The British administration had a history of such radical and pro-peasant officers at the top of its bureaucratic apparatus and, that too during its most plastic and formulative years as Sir James Thomson, Lieutenant Governor, North-West Provinces (1843-53), Mr. Robert Martin Bird, Chief Revenue Officer, North-West Provinces (1833-41) and Captain R.W. Bird, Assistant to Resident at Lucknow, Major General Sleeman (1849-54). The administration, it is clear, was initially during the pre-Mutiny phase anti-rajah and anti-zamindar. The famous "Proposal" of Captain Bird, "to the introduction of a British system of Government in certain provinces of Oude (Oudh) ", submitted to the then (in 1848) Lieutenant Governor

72. Ibid., p.135.

for "advice", though apparently meant only for the districts of Oudh (which was to be annexed in 1856) highlight the general anti-rajah and anti-zamindar mood of the British.

In the light of the general land relations prevailing during the 19th century Basti, we have to examine a few issues pertaining to the actual status of rajahs and zamindars in relation to the British rule on the one hand and to the peasantry in general on the other. This we shall do before we describe the actual mode of land control in the district.

Rajahs - Unlike the institution of Rajaship in the adjoining district of Gonda, extensively studied by Benett, where zamindars used to have a vassal status below the rajahs, and where the latter's rule of inheritance was based upon the system of primogeniture, the structure of Basti Rajaship was more segmental rather than hierarchical. In Gonda, local judicial and coercive power (maintenance of arms and soldiers), including the power to control land, was vested in Rajahs alone who could deprive an erring zamindar of the land granted to him.


75. See, Benett, 1891, op.cit., paras 51-56.

76. See, Neale, op.cit., p.44.
In Basti, on the other hand, the *raja* represented the senior family of the lineage. There was no usage of primogeniture and all the sons, at the demise of the *raja-father*, had equal shares in the *raja*. By custom, the elder brother inherited the status of the *raja*. The rest of the junior families of the same clan occupied far-flung villages with a customary right over land as was the case with the *raja's* right over the soil. The right over land of *raja* and his kinsmen, who were similar to *zamindars*, was on the same footing. Qualitative differences between *raja* and *zamindar* in Basti was, by and large cultural in nature. In the *raja's* fort, lineage deity was installed. It was this *raja* who presided over the lineage rituals pertaining to rites of birth, death and marriage. Being the symbol of the founding father of the lineage *raja*, the *raja* expected obedience from the younger families of his lineage. He was the unifier of the families into the solidarity of a lineage. He invoked practices, usages and customs of the past to exercise restraints and control over his *zamindar* kins.

While these *Rajput-rajás* consistently defied the central power of Musalman ruler, they did not hesitate to accept *Sanads* or certificates from the British as a recognition of their *Rajaabi*. When the Britishers came, they recognised
and accepted these **rajas**. Thus British did not actually create **rajas**. They merely recognised and accepted their existence. And this recognition was in keeping with their expansionist colonial policies, i.e., in order to have a stable and firm hold over the ceded districts, it was in the logic of a machiavellian calculation to have satisfactory relations with the local chiefs and noteables who alone had roots in the soil and who alone ruled over the peasantry in the past. The fact that Thamasonian school could not make any appreciable dent into the fortified power of local **rajas**, at least till the British caged India under the crown of England, is explicable in terms of the historical necessity of **rajas** for the promotion of the British **raj**. When the **rajas** exhausted their need, they underwent systematic erosion of their power.

In order to highlight the extent of the hold of **Rajput rajas** over land, economic resources, and by virtue of these holds, their power over peasantry.

We are presenting in Table 10 a consolidated picture of lineage **rajas**, their nature of traditional right in land and their relations with the British by the end of the 19th century.
Table - 10

Rajas of Basti District by their Lineages, Traditional Rights in Land, Property Position and by their Nature of Relation with the British at the end of 19th Century

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Lineage</th>
<th>Nature of Status</th>
<th>Nature of traditional</th>
<th>Nature of their status</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raj of Basti</td>
<td>Right by conquest</td>
<td>Recognized as loyal</td>
<td>In 1900 AD owned 104983</td>
<td>After the meeting part</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Bansi Raja</td>
<td>of Samets (14th century) AD</td>
<td>rajas</td>
<td>acres of land, 86</td>
<td>of confiscated property of Amorha and Nagar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>revenue free villages.</td>
<td>Raja for loyalty to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Revenue paid to the British</td>
<td>the British</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>amounted Rs.121685/-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Raja Basti Raj of (15th century) Kal- hansas AD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Lineage</th>
<th>Nature of Status</th>
<th>Nature of traditional</th>
<th>Property</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raj of Basti</td>
<td>do - (in 1900 AD)</td>
<td>- do -</td>
<td>223 villages</td>
<td>Raj gained part of confiscated property of Amorha and Nagar Raj after the Mutiny for loyalty to the British</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Mahuli Raj of Surajban- (15th century AD)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Lineage</th>
<th>Nature of Status</th>
<th>Nature of traditional</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raj of Mahuli</td>
<td>do -</td>
<td>Recognised as Raja</td>
<td>In 1900 AD owned 85 villages paying a revenue of Rs. 23411/- to the British</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Amorha Raj of Suraj- (early 16th century AD)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Lineage</th>
<th>Nature of Status</th>
<th>Nature of traditional</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raj of Amorha</td>
<td>do -</td>
<td>Recognised as raja</td>
<td>Berekognised Information not available for Rebellion against the British Raj</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

77. Information contained in the above table are based on Basti Gazetteer, pp. 82-88; and Morgan, op.cit., pp.135-148, 207.
Position of these Rajas in the beginning of the 20th century, A.D. are described below:

a) Raja Ratan Sen Singh, Raja of Bansi of Samar clan, by the end of 19th century was the biggest landlord of Basti, occupying 1,04,883 acres of land with 86 revenue free-villages and paid a revenue of Rs.1,21,685. Revenue free villages were granted as a reward for the active aid given by Raja Mahipat Singh and his brother Lal Mahendra Singh to the British during the Mutiny. This property had been confiscated from the rebel Raja of Nagar. Lal Mahendra Singh, who succeeded his brother in 1863, was conferred with the title of Star of India by the British at a Durbar held at Agra. Raja Ram Singh, the son of late Raja Mahendra Singh and father of Lal Ratan Sen Singh, was involved in a murder case in 1886 and his title of 'Raja' was withdrawn. His armory had consisted of 227 swords, 13 bayonets,

78. Basti Gazetteer, p.91.
17 Bhujalis (Nepalese Kukharles or curved swords), two Pesh Kabz, seven knives, ten Kataras, 40 Pistols, 161 Guns and three Guntis, totalling to 479 units of arms. One of the privileges of Basti Raja had been to keep licence free fire arms and his armory was exempted from Arms Act. These arms were restored to Lal Ram Singh. His withdrawn title was restored to his heir Lal Ratan Sen Singh, C.I.E. in 1906, who was the caretaker of his estate during the retirement of his father. After his death - his widow was conferred with the honour of Grant of Badge of a Champion of the most Eminent Order of the Indian Empire in 1918. The late Raja was a most influential figure of the then United Provinces of Agra and Oudh. His contributions to the promotion of education in Basti have been singular. At present, the descendents of the late Raja, Raja Pashupat Pratap Singh, after the abolition of Zamindari, continue to devote their attention towards the education of people. One higher secondary school and an undergraduate college are run solely by the finance and resources of this family. The descendents of this family are being sought by political

80. See, Government Order No.687, dated 28th February, 1900, from R.G. Hardy, Chief Secretary, North-West Provinces to the Commissioner, Gorakhpur Division advising the restoration of confiscated arms to Lal Ram Singh. See also, Letter No.372/XXII-3 of 7th March, 1900 to the Collector Magistrate, Basti, advising him to restore the confiscated arms to Raja Ram Singh of Bansai, Pol. Deptt. File No.XIII, Serial No.1 (1895-1900), E.R.O., Basti.

parties of Independent India to speak to the peasants in their favour. But this they usually decline. They, however, continue to have a great hold over peasantry as well as over other local Rajput lineages and Brahman population. Lal Sahib, the son of Raja Pashupat Pratap Singh, holds a high managerial position in Delhi.

The mountain Hindu shrines of Badri Nath, Kedar Nath and Trigun Narain of the erstwhile Estate of Tehri-Garhwal have received grants and donations towards their maintenance from the family of Bansi.

b) Raja Pateshwar Pratap Narain Singh, Raja of Basti of Kalhansa lineage, comes from the younger branch of the family of Raja Achal Singh of Khurhansa pargana of Gonda district. Achal Singh died in 1544 and his son became the Raja of Rasulpur Ghaus, whose descendants are Kalhansas of Chaukhara estate after killing their lineage raja, Raja Kesri Singh, in 1687 by Sanset Raja Ram Singh of Bansi. Kesri Singh's Raj in addition to the pargana of Rasulpur Gaus also included the pargana of Babhnipair in Gonda District. Kesri Singh's infant son Chhatra Pal Singh

82. Based on Bahukhat (Pilgrims record) of Shri Onkar Nath, Randa of Badri Nath Temple, and Brahamanand and Thakur Prasad Shukla respectively of Trigun Narain, Kedar Nath Temples.

inherited the Raj of Babhnipair, while Anup Singh stayed back to Rasulpur Ghaus.

The Kalhans house of the Basti Raja comes from the younger brother of Raja Achal Singh to Pirthi Deo Singh. At the time of Saadat Khan, Nawab Wazir of Oudh (1720-39), Jai Singh was the Raja of Basti and was succeeded by his grandson, Pirthipal Singh, whose son, Jograj Singh, held the Basti Raj when the district was ceded to East India Company in 1801. He was followed by Raja Sheo Baksh and then by Raja Indra Daman Singh, whose widow, the Rani, managed the property during the Mutiny and was rewarded the large confiscated property of the Amora Suraibansi widow, Rani Jgatraj Kunwar whose husband Raja Jang Bahadur Singh had died in 1855. Thus the confiscated Raj of one Rani, thus passed into the hand of another Rani.

The infant son of the widow of Indra Saman Singh was Mahesh Sitla Baksh Singh and he became Raja of Basti. He died in 1890. He had inherited 233 villages as ancestral property with an addition of 114 villages as a reward for his mother's loyalty to the British during the Mutiny. Raja Sitla Baksh Singh dissipated the property. His elder son, Raja Patoshwari

84. Basti Gazetteer, pp.92-93.
Pratap Narain Singh became Raja in 1906. The Raja was Honorary Magistrate of the second class of Basti Tehsil. The Raja was exempted from Arms Act and maintained his own armory without licences for the same. It is reported that mother of Raja Mahesh Sitla Baksh Singh was of a religious bend and had a strong repulsion for Musalmans. The rebel Nazim Mohammed Hasan of Gorakhpur could not set foot in her Raj. And when Mohammad Hasan tried, he had to flee in the face of chasing Rajput Tilangas (sepoys) of the Rani. Her family still retains a large brass gun captured from the Ghadaris (rebels).

Rajas of this family had close connections with religious centres like Allahabad, Banaras, Ayodhya, etc. where they used to have their family temples. They were also associated with the remote sacred shrines of Badri Nath, Kedar Nath and Trigun.

c) During the first decade of the 20th century, Raja Narendra Pal of Mahson (Mahuli) was the head of the Suraibansis clan. His step brother, Lal Mangal Prasad Pal resided at village Badwal. The Raja's family possessed 85 villages paying a revenue of Rs. 28,411/- to the British Government in 1906. His lineage settled in Basti district during the 15th century.

86. Basti Gazetteer, p.91
85. Ibid., pp 93-94
from their original raj in Kumaun, where their kin ruled over Garhwal - Kumaun valleys of Himalaya. A splinter group of this lineage is to be found at Pura in Faizabad district and in the estate of Harha, in Barabanki district, where they had a domain also.

According to the tradition reported by the present members of this clan, two brothers, named Alakh Deo and Tilak Deo, defeated the tribal chief Kaulbil Bhars, who was demanding the hand of a Brahman's daughter. As Rajputs were prone to do, these two Surajbansis took revenge on Kaulbils by waging a war on his domain and by defeating that tribal chief on the battleground. The victorious brothers and their descendants subsequently divided between themselves the conquered domain which they later expanded. The head of the clan borne the title of Raja.

Raja Man Pal was 7th in descent from Alkh Deo. Parasram Pal, the eldest son of Raja Man Pal, obtained Mahuli Raj, while the second son, Jagat Bali Pal founded the Jaswanl estate and the youngest third son, Sansar Pal, founded the estate of Siktar. The estates of Hariharpur, Siktar, Banpur and Persain grew with the increasing population of the family. They established these estates from shares obtained from the lineage Raj and partly from fresh conquests. Surajbansi estates of Pura in Faizabad and Harha in Faizabad and Bara
Banki district used to support Basti district Suraibansis in the process of the latter's territorial conquest and expansion. We shall introduce these ruling families of Suraibansis along with other Zamindars of the districts in the section that will follow the present one.

At the time of the cession of the district in 1801, Mahuli Rai was held by Raja Bakhtawar Pal who was succeeded in line by Raja(s) such as Shamsher Bahadur Pal and Mardan Pal. Raja Mardan Bahadur Pal, the grand-son of Bakhtawar Pal, was followed by Raja Bhawani Ghulam Pal. This Raja died in 1892, leaving two sons by his first wife of whom, the elder, Raja Narendra Bahadur Pal was the Raja of the lineage in 1906.

The Raja's descendants are at present successful farmers and still carry traditional influence over the peasant. Local political leaders usually try to seek the blessing of this family before they file their candidature for membership either to the State Legislative Assembly or to the Parliament. The family finances and manages several educational institutions.

The family of the Raja, the ex-Raja Kashinath Bahadur Pal, son of late Raja Narendra Bahadur Pal, carried a team of local Hindus under his leadership to shrines of Trigun Narain (11,000 ft. Altitude) Kedar Nath (approximately 12,000 ft. Altitude) and Badri Nath (10,000 ft. Altitude) in 1955. About fifteen years later, on 4th June, 1970, Lal Ashtosh Bahadur Pal,
the son of ex-Raja paid a similar visit to these shrines and the writings of his wife Kunwar Shaleshwar, on Panda records, reflected a personality of high dignity, personal charm and culture. The ex-Royal couple was followed by their kins, followers and servants.

Raja Jang Bahadur Singh, Surajbansi Raja of Almorha, who died in 1855 and whose widow, Rani Jagatraj Kunwar carried sword and fūt battle against the British during the Mutiny, held a large tract of territory they had conquered in the 17th century from the Kayastha Zamindar, Rai Jagat Singh. Jagat Singh was a warlike scribe of Kayastha caste and one tradition is that he was Governor of Oudh and had his headquarters in the present district of Sultanpur. Kayasthas after being dispossessed of their estate by the Surajbansis almost disappeared from the power scene of the district. I have visited the Amorha Kot (the ruins of Kayastha fort) during 1978 and, it then covered large area of buldge rizing above the plans surface of surrounding wheat fields. Broken earthen utensils, glasspieces, decaying bricks around an unusually wide circumferenced old well were all that I could note of that shrub clad ground, once the seat of Kayastha family.


88. Basti Gazetteer, p.146.
The seat of Rani Jagatraj at Amorha was the main battle field of the rebellion of 1857. The battle between the forces of Rani, Mahdi Hasan, the rebel Nazim of Gorakhpur and other rebel Rajas at the one side and on the other, the British force led by Mr. Peepe, the Deputy Magistrate of Basti. The British force was supported with 12th irregular Horse squad led by Col. Rowcraft and Mr. Sothely and Major J.F. Five hundred sepoys of the Rani were killed. But the British forces suffered in thousands. She again attacked the British forces on 25th April and Rowcraft suffered heavy loss and was forced to retire northward to Captainganj, a small town on the road which connects Faizabad and Basti towns. He attacked the Rani only after the Nepalese force led by one Jang Bahadur came to help him. On the Peepal trees which still stand by both sides of this road, it was reported that Col. Rowcraft hanged hundreds of alleged rebels. The branches of these Peepal trees were gallows.

The Rani's property was confiscated and bestowed upon the loyal Rajas like those of Bansi and Basti and few Kshtriya and Brahan zamindars. She died childless and her

89. Ibid., pp.160-162 and field reports.
90. Basti Gazetteer, p.96.
royal pedigree line after 1857 became extinct. However, she is a legend in Amorha region of the district and like Rani of Jhansi she is praised for her bravery. Folk songs still extol her and glorify her resistance to the British.

Her raj is traced to Raja Kanh Deo Singh who first set out to attack the Kayastha and his goal was fulfilled by his son, Kans Narayan Singh who obtained the raj of Amorha. Stigmatised by the British, even the great pedigree compiler Morgan does not mention the pedigree of this family.

e) The last raja of Nagar Raj who got eclipsed after the confiscation of this raj after the 1857 rebellion, was Udal Pratap Singh of Gautam lineage. His kinsmen continued to be influential zamindars in Harriya tehsil throughout the British period. The family of Nagar Raj was founded by Jagdeo Singhji, who, it is reported, had migrated to this place from Argal, now in Fatehpur district of Uttar Pradesh. Initially, he got the 12 villages of Nagar as dowry from Bisens of the locality. Nagar was then under the tribal rule of Domkatar chief, known as Rahila, by whose name, the partana of Nagar was known then as Rahilapara. He was vanquished by the Gautams. In the overthrow of Domkatara, Gautams received Tilanga (sepoys or soldiers) support from their kins

91. Morgans, op.cit.
of Fatehpur and affinals of local Bisens. Lineage story is incorporated in the Gazetteer of Basti.

They built a fort in Nagar, the ruins of which, like the ruins of Amorha, still bulge up to stand out conspicuously to remind the existence of this disappeared raj. The grandson of Jagdeo Singhji was first founding Rajas of this Raj. The third Rajas in line, Raja Bhagwant Singhji Rao, was slain by an Afghan Governor of Mughals on account of his resistance in accepting the sovereignty of Musalman Rule. Raja Bhagwant Singh refused and had to face a large Musalman army which captured him and, as the story goes, produced him before the Governor who asked him to make a choice between the two alternatives: to embrace Islam or to get beheaded. He opted for the latter.

The son of the late Rajas Raja Chand Singhji Rao, expelled the Musalman usurper through guerrila warfare and after killing the local agents of Governor in revenge, recaptured the lost Rajas. Five generations later came Raja Ganpati Singh Ji Rao, who was succeeded by his elder son, Harban Singh Ji Rao. Five generations after Raja Harban Singhji Rao came Raja Amar Singh. Raja Ambar Singhji Rao died issueless around the end of 18th century. When the

92. Basti Gazetteer, p.95.
93. Based on field report and Basti Gazetteer, p.95.
district ceded (1801) Raja Ram Prakash Singh Ji Rao, a collateral of the late Raja, held Nagar Raj which then consisted of 114 villages in addition to 62 villages given on birth and, from which he received Malikana (10 per cent revenue of the early produce).

Udai Pratap Singh was the son of the late Raja. He rebelled and lost his entire property of 114 villages to the British who confiscated his Raj. Col. Bowcraft, as reported by his kinsmen, arrested the Raja and had declared capital punishment. The Raja managed to escape hanging by committing suicide.

The descendents of this lineage live at Pokhaml village near the Nagar town. At present Rani of Pokhaml is still being referred to as Rajmata (Royal mother) by the local population.

The Zamindars

Structure of Zamindari System

The term "Zamindar" is a linguistic expression. Persian in origin, it became part of local vernacular during Muslim rule in India to designate holders of land. Irfan Habib does not find any definition of Zamindar or that of Zamindari right over

95. Ibid., p.96.
land during the Mughal period. Nurul Hasan, another historian of Muslim period of Indian history, discusses "intermediary zamindars" and "primary zamindars", and writes on "Zamindars under the Mughals". For sociologists, the etiology of a term is not so relevant as the total impact it makes in defining and shaping the interpersonal relations of the people of a specific group.

The term 'Zamindars' at a grass-root level of the agrarian situation existing during the period of the British colonialism as well as during the pre-abolition period of zamindari system in Uttar Pradesh, referred to a minority population of high caste Hindus who held exclusive right over land as Malika-ala (superior tenure holder) as opposed to the majority population of tillers which either had no right over land at all, or their rights were of Malika-adna (inferior tenure holders) status. The latter, Malika-adna rights emanated from the superior right Malika-ala. The existence of superior and inferior systems of land tenure in Uttar Pradesh during the British period was a throw-back, pre-colonial lineage Rai. These systems of land tenure generally corresponded to the systems of rights and privileges, power and


prestige, including relative notions of purity and pollution of various social groups in the agrarian society. 

Zamindars, therefore, referred to land holders of high caste; the asami (subject group) the rest of the castes.

System of Mahal, by and large, remained ineffective in so far as the Basti chiefs were concerned because they were always rebellions towards the Nawabs of Oudh. It was revived nominally by the British in the second decade of the 19th century. The British had accepted these Rajas and chiefs as superior proprietor of land. In addition to Mahals and, generally imposed over it, the British super-imposed the system of Lambardari. Mahals used to refer to revenue paying unit which, generally in turn, designated a family. Family members, in order to evade payments of Naim of Nawab, would pass on the responsibilities of such payments from member to member till the Nazim had either to resort to arms or to move to another Mahal for seeking revenue.

The British, on the other hand, evolved a precise system. In order to fix the responsibility for revenue, they assigned numbers to individual zamindars and held him responsible for the payment of revenue rather than a family. The English term Numbur was vernacularized in into 'lumber' and this came to be known as Lambardari system. Asiya Siddique who has dealt in detail with these systems as they
existed or as they came into being during the first three decades of British rule in ceded districts, not only defines these terms but also illustrates them with historical data.

Since the Lambardar was responsible for the payment of revenue (Malguzar) to the British, therefore, he has also been called Malguzar (revenue payer). The terms Mahal, Lambardar and Malguzar, therefore, designated to only one category of privileged people, i.e., the Zamindar, who in turn, was characterized by his superior proprietary right over the land.

The discussion and analysis of superior land proprietary rights have suffered from terminological confusion. Much of these confusions arose from the settlement reports of British officers, such as Thomason's Report on the Settlement of Chukla Azimgarh (Azimgarh) of 1837, or from the writings of authorities, such as Baden-Powell. These confusions are, as we can see, offshoots of too much of their emphasis on the then current modes of superior tenure rather than on its evolutionary patterns or, on the substantive principles, which determined superior proprietorship as a distinct category from its inferior counterpart held by the

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100. Baden-Powell, op.cit., p.20.
Thomason, who was the settlement officer of Azamgarh district of Gorakhpur Division headed by Mr. R.M. Bird as its Commissioner in 1837, as reported by Asiya Siddiqui maintained a distinction between singled and shared proprietorship of land. To the first he assigns "Zamindari" tenure, the latter he divided into "Putteadaree" and "Bhyachara". A similar distinction was maintained by Mr. E. Currie, the Deputy Collector of Gorakhpur in his report on Sattasi Raj of Gorakhpur district in 1831.

Looking at these forms of tenure from a viewpoint of system of rights attached to them, we find no difference among them at the level of substantive content of power and privileges which accompanied these rights. In fact, they invariably referred to superior tenure which remained constant irrespective of the fact whether it was being exercised by one (as is the case with the notion of Zamindari tenure) or by a corporate body composed of several co-shares (as is the case with Pattidari and Bhai-chara). Besides, these have hardly been a stable category to provide a firm basis for differentiation of superior proprietorship into different sub-systems of tenures such as Zamindari, Pattidari and Bhai-chara. For, at a

101. Siddiqui, op.cit., p.16.
102. Illustrated by Asiya Siddiqui, op.cit., p.18.
given period of time, a given superior tenure over the property of an individual family was called *zamindari*, which, as it happened, on account of division of the same property among the brothers, hitherto living into one family unit, transformed the *zamindari* tenure into *pattidari* one without transforming the basic nature of right which accrued upon the *Zamindari* tenure. Similarly, the so-called *pattidari* or *bhaichara* tenure, after the death of brothers, in case they had no male issue relapsed back to *zamindari* tenure to one who was alive, again without altering the nature of primary superior right over land. Following diagram will clarify the issue with the help of two specific cases:

Diagram - I

The Circular Pattern in the Evolution of Superior Tenure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>State I</th>
<th>State II</th>
<th>State III</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nature of Tenure</td>
<td>Nature of Tenure</td>
<td>Nature of Tenure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Case A</td>
<td>Single proprietor of superior tenure</td>
<td><em>Zamindari</em> Division or property</td>
<td>Bhaichara among brothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>undivided family of brothers</td>
<td>Pattidari superior</td>
<td>Death of Zamindari all the again brothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>without male issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>except one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Case B</td>
<td>Multiple proprietors, divided family</td>
<td><em>Pattidari</em> or <em>Bhaichara</em></td>
<td><em>Zamindari</em> central</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>without living</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>male under</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>inheritors undivided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>family</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Watter C. Neale, using a different process arrives at conclusion similar to the present one. **Zamindari** tenure used to refer a specific system of superior right over land. **Pattidari** and **Bhaichara** on the other hand referred to shares in the exercise of those right. The British officers **灾区** suffered from semantic and terminological confusions; generations of scholars uncritically accepted those confusions as "facts". We shall, therefore, use the term **zamindari proprietorship** to refer superior tenure in Basti.

In Basti, at the end of the 19th century the system of **zamindari** tenure extended to cover all 7,638 villages. The varieties of the superior tenures as practiced by the British officers for the purpose of revenue collection were as stated below.

All the villages of Basti district were divided into five categories of proprietary tenures. Maximum number of 5,254 and 1,451 villages were held under **Pattidari** and **Zamindari** tenures. There were 786 villages under single proprietorship. **Bhaichara** and revenue-free villages accounted for ten and 137 respectively.

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The relevant detail on Basti notables such as the zamindars is presented below. They are divided into two sub-groups: the first consisted only of Rajput zamindars who, being the kin of the lineage rajas had superior rights over land. Whenever, we find an exception of other castes, as traditional zamindars, we shall make mention of them. The other sub-group consisted of Birayas (land grantees) whose inferior tenure was raised up to the supervisor zamindari tenure by the British, by the Regulation IX of 1833 which came into effect in Basti in 1842. We shall refer to them as the new zamindars.

**Traditional Zamindars**

Traditional Zamindars were not the product of the British revenue policy or land settlement measures. They have generally been the kin of ruling Rajput Rajas who, at the time of cession of the districts, were recognized by the British as superior proprietors of land. Before 1842, it was the 3.12 per cent of Rajput population that made up this group of traditional/zamindars. The rest of Basti population was known as asami, praja or rivaya (subjects) of the zamindars. The zamindars were referred to as Malik (master), Sarkar (code

105. Ibid., p.117.

106. Basti Gazetteer, p.78. It may be pointed out Brahman families of Jagdishpur, Kalyanpur and Gadawar, as exceptions were included among the Malikas as they held Talukdari right from the Nawabs of Lucknow
of conduct incarnate), Mai-basp (parents) or Deo-Bhagwan (God incarnate). The caste hierarchy overlapping upon the hierarchy of land tenures and agrarian relation was sharply conical.

The following data (Table 11) expresses the sharpness of this conical agrarian social structure of Basti.

### Table 11

The Zamindar and Asami population reflecting the enormity of gaps between superior and inferior tenure holders in Basti before 1842.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Tenure Types</th>
<th>Percentage of Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Zamindar (Malik)</td>
<td>3.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Tenants (Asami)</td>
<td>96.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the close of 19th century A.D., these traditional Rajput zamindars included the Samet families such as the Thakurs of Rudauli who owned as much as 159 villages in Maghar parganas and paid a revenue of ₹19,102/- to the British government. Similarly, the Thakurs of Mehdawal of the same lineage owned 64 villages and paid a revenue of ₹12,368. Thakurs of Bakhira, the lineage members of Samets, rebelled against the British and their property was confiscated.

The descendants of Kalhansas Raja Kesri Singh possessed large area of land in pargana Rasulpur Ghaus. Thakur Naubat Singh of Chaukhara village and Shohrat Singh who owned 20 villages paying a revenue of ₹6.21/- and 49 villages paying a revenue of ₹17.287/- respectively, were very influential Kalhansas of the district. Other families of this lineage were spread all over the villages of trans-Rapti river area. These villages are Sohna, Shahpur, Awania, etc. This lineage has produced leading scholars and professional politicians. The first scholar from this district to earn the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Botany from Cambridge University London was Dr. S.B. Singh of Kalhansa family of Sohna. He was awarded the degree in the early forties of this century.

There are at present four scholars from the lineage of Kalhansas who hold the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy from various universities at present. Out of the four, two are distinguished professors, one each in the discipline of social and natural sciences. One member of this clan held Ministerial position in Central Government of India (in 1979).

Among the lineage of Gautamas the Thakurs of Pipra and Ganeshpur each holding 60 and 54 villages respectively were influential zamindars of the district. Thakur Ram Baksh Singh
of Pipra paid a revenue of Rs.6,000/- to the Government at the end of the last century. The Ganeshpur family property was passed on to the Pindaries by the British after the Mutiny.

The Surajbansis of Mahuli family had large estates in the south southern part of the district. The Surajbansi thakurs of Hariharpur and Banpur have had great names during the British period. Thakur Kanhaiya Baksh Pal Bahadur of Banpur used to hold 70 villages and paid a revenue of Rs.8,827/- per annum to the British. Thakurs of Hariharpur had owned 40 villages, paying a revenue of Rs.11,573/- per annum.

Among the Amorha branch of the Surajbansis, the family of Jitipur was most prominent. Jitipur Thakurs used to pay a revenue of Rs.7,161/- to the Government. The dispossessed Raja of Amorha whose property was confiscated used to be the head of this branch of Surajbansis. Jitipur Thakurs represented symbolically the sacrifice made by their lineage for independence in 1857.

The New Zamindars

The new Zamindars refer to ex-Birtvas (Grantees).

The Regulation IX of 1833 of the then North-West Provinces

108. Information on revenue payment of these families are based on Basti Gazetteer. pp.96-97.
implemented in Gorakhpur Division in 1842, delinked the Rajas and traditional zamindars tenurial super-ordination upon their birthholders (grantees). Before the introduction of this Regulation, all the Birtvas used to have inferior proprietary right over the land granted to them by the traditional Rajput zamindars. The grantees had to pay 1% per cent Malikana of the land produce to the granter. The holders of Jewan-birt, which by custom of the community was not evictable, all other grants of land were subject to eviction by the grantors. The grantors used to be the Malikas of the grantees.

The British by this said Regulation, granted to these inferior property holders, a superior right of Zamindari. These new Zamindars were brought under the direct revenue control of the district. Birtvas were thus made to pay their revenue not to local Malikas but directly to the British Raj. The nexus of super-ordination between the 3.12 per cent of Rajput birta giver giver and its receivers was dissolved. This dissolution diluted the supremacy of Rajputs over the Brahman Birtvas and at the same time created more zamindars. British objectives, in retrospect, was political. They wanted to establish the accountability of a bigger population than 3.12 per cent of Rajputs alone. Accountability was, as field interviews highlight, synonyms of loyalty to the British.
Thus, almost the entire 11.3 per cent Brahman population who were predominantly priests of Rajputs temples, were all of a sudden recruited into the upper stratum of land and power control. A rather too sharp cone of the apex of Basti social structure flattened to accommodate this almost four times more population of new Zamindars into the sanctuary of traditional Rajput Zamindars. Brahman Praja became a Malik. The process is summed up in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.</th>
<th>Type of Tenure</th>
<th>Before 1842</th>
<th>After 1842</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage of Population</td>
<td>Zamindar</td>
<td>Percentage of Population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Zamindari (Maliks)</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>Zamindar (Maliks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Tenants (Asami)</td>
<td>96.88</td>
<td>Tenants (Asami)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the new Zamindars who were dependents of Rajputs the Tiwari Brahman family of Chitia is well known. They, being the priests of the Raja of Bansi, furnished the said Raj with Dewans (estate managers). They had as many as 52.

109. Basti Gazetteer, p.146. Exceptions are of Kurmis of Dhekarbi and Kayastha family of Changera who received large tract of land as Birt from Raja of Bansi. Rest of the Birtyas have been of the Brahman caste.
villages and paid revenue of Rs.10,087/- per annum. Chawdhury Ram Datt and Chawdhury Ram Hrakh have been influential in Basti who rose to the status of Zamindar from lower caste sections (kurni caste) of Basti.

Brahman families, with the exception of those of Pandit Deokali Prasad of Gadawar in Domariaganj tehsil were influential. Brahman like Pandit Harmanain of Jagdishpur and Pandit Jagrup Datt of Kalayanpur, each paying a revenue of Rs.8,595/- and Rs.2,012/- per annum respectively, received large areas of land as reward from the British for their loyalty during the Mutiny.

Another Brahman family of rehman in Basti has been that of Sriwas Pande of Narhariya of Basti tehsil. This family was in service of Kalhansa Raja of Basti and acquired bulk of property both by Birt as well as by the business of money lending. They owned 92 villages and paid a revenue of Rs.10,902/- per annum to the Government.

Traditional Rajput Maliks and the new Brahman Zamindars both belonging to the group of superior proprietors of land in Basti, held land which was disproportionate to their population. The enormous gap between upper caste zamindar and the rest of Hindu and Musalman tenants (asamis) shows the extent of the economic power of the former on the latter.

Table - 13
Land disparity by zamindar and tenant section of population at the close of the 19th century

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Caste group</th>
<th>No. of castes</th>
<th>Percentage of population to the total population</th>
<th>Percentage of land owned of the district</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Upper caste group</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Other castes and Musalmans</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>85.6</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>65</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the light of the general structural background pertaining to the position of power and privileges of rajas and zamindars during the 19th century in Basti, let us describe and analyse the actual modes of control exercised by them over land and its produce. We have stated earlier that control over land generally led to control over people in Basti. Hence a description of land control is also a description of power and domination of one section of people by the other.

Patterns of Land Control During the Raj

Right over land by conquest, our preceding survey of data reveals, was an exclusive right: originating from the

111. Ibid, p.88.
coercive power of conquerors. Traditions and practices routinized that right during subsequent periods. At the grass-root level, the following types of control over land and water resources ensued from the exclusive rights of the Rajput rajas and zamindars.

a) No tenant or cultivator had the right to cultivate land or make use of water resources, including fishing in the ponds without the granting of the same to them from the zamindar maliks. Since cultivators’ right over land was based upon the wishes of their maliks, the former suffered constant threats of eviction from land.

b) The rajas and zamindar maliks had total and absolute control over all the zamijar land (waste land), Usar land (alkaline land), Characah (pasture land), Abadi (village land) and Pahars (village paths and cart-dust-roads). This also included maliks right over ponds, ferries and forests. These provided the Rajas and Zamindars with Savar (cess) supporting income. For, whenever other sections of population had to make use of them, they had to pay for the same to the Maliks.

c) The general tenurial patterns which grew after the arrival of the British and on which the systems of land control operated in Basti were of the following types:

1. Khudkasht or Seer land
2. Birta land
3. Patta land
4. Land on Lagan or Malguzari
5. Pahi land
Khudkasht or Seer land used to refer to the area of land under the actual or theoretical Jot (cultivation) of the rajas and zamindars hal (plough). Before the arrival of the British and, in the absence of any organized administrative intervention of the Emperors and Nawabs during the pre-British period, relevance of this tenure was redundant. The British in pursuit of revenue and administrative precision, classified the people and land relationship into legal categories of various types. It is important to note that Rajput did not touch the hal (plough) as it was a caste taboo. Seer land was thus a theoretical category of tenure, as it was actually cultivated by the peasant castes. Such a peasant cultivation took two sub-patterns in Bani. Rajas and zamindars declared the area of land as their seer and Khudkasht land on the Khaara (village land record register) of Patwaris (land record keeper and compilers) and gave the same land to cultivators on lagans (revenue) or in return of other services such as, on charwabi (tending cattles), sirwari (watchman of farms) and goraiti (head ploughman). From the crop of seer land, a share was given as mandi (1/24th share of a Bigha standing crop) to such functionary castes as Dhobi (washerman), Nat (barber), Lohar (iron-smith), Barhi (carpenter) and Barais (the caste that supplies Dona (leaf cup) and Patri (leaf plates) to the Malikas, etc. Often this land was given to these castes and it continue to remain a seer land, though it was tilled and harvested by other than the Malikas.
Land recorded as Khudkasht or Seer in the name of the Malik but given to peasant castes either on Malguzar or Lagan (rent) payment or also on the basis of Adh-batai (half-share in harvest). In the either case, the tiller of the land was neither the raja nor the zamindar malik. The raja and zamindars only exacted rent or share in the produce from the real cultivators.

Rajas and Zamindars, in this way, retained large area of land under the seer tenure. By retaining the tenure of seer, they retained the legal right over it which they effectively used to oppress the peasants. The latter had no tenure of their own except through the permission of their Malik.

A part of the seer land, which was cultivated by the Maliks was based upon the practice of Bhatai system. According to this system, a cluster of Chamar families (now referred to as Harijans) occupying Abadi land of a Malik in Chamartolas (locality in a village where Chamar and untouchable have had their homesite) used to pool all their men, women and children's labour force for the cultivation of the Maliks seer land. The Maliks used to give them ploughs, bullocks, seeds, etc. At each harvest, the Bhatai received 1/5th of the yield from the crop. This one/fifth share was further divided among the Chamar on the basis of number of labourers from each Chamar family. When such Chamar families had finished their share earlier than the next crop, their
Maliks used extend Sawai or Deuhra (a system of grain loans carrying an interest by 25 per cent or 50 per cent). This loan, with the interest, was exacted from the Bhatta (share) of the coming crop yield. Usually the cumulative effect of this practice invariably landed the Chamar and his family into being held in Bandhaks (in bondage) of the maliks.

Birta tenure approximated to the practice of giving land as fief. Rajas or Zamindars used to make grants of land to, generally, either Brahmans for their educational, managerial and priestly services, or to their own caste members in return for their mercenary services. There are a very rare cases of such a grant being made to a peasant caste of a Kurni and a Kavastha family by the Raja of Bansi in the entire district. We have described the types of birtas earlier. The raja or zamindar used to receive 10 per cent of the yield from the Birta land holders as malikans. A large number of Brahman population of Basti were Brtitvas of Rajput rajas and zamindars before the Fifth Land Settlement of 1842.

Like the grant of Brit, Patta (lease) tenure was granted by the maliks for a certain specified period to Pattedars (holders of lease) after a deed which recorded the lump-sum amount given to the malik or, in exchange of cash, cattles or commodities. Such a Patta was usually given to caste and kin members alone. Pahi system in Basti used to refer periodical camping of cultivator's family in villages
other than where they resided with a purpose to cultivate, sow and harvest the crop on temporary basis. Usually, where peasant castes used to be few in number and the land to be cultivated abundant, the malik of such a village would influence cultivators of other villages to bring the land under cultivation. The Pahic cultivators used to migrate with their cattles and families during agricultural operation seasons for a month or so at a stretch to such an under populated villages for cultivation.

Till 1842, all the above types of tenures were parts of basic superior proprietary right of the maliks. With a low population, land was relatively surplus. Hence, despite the seemingly despotic power of rajas and zamindars, there used to be built-in economic constraints on them against the temptations of practising despotism upon the cultivators. For an oppressive landlord was, as is reported by our respondents, during the first four decades of British arrival in Basti, a curse on his family and a shame to his lineage. Though potentially despotic, they had little scope to actually indulge in despotism.

Land on Lagan or on Malguzari was generally given to caste Hindus and Muselman peasants on the payment of fixed annual rent which varied from Rs. 4/- to Rs. 6/- . The rent varied from locality to locality and some time even from lineage to lineage of Rajput rajas and zamindars. Variations in the quantum of rent paid by the cultivators to their
maliks depended upon such factors as quality of land; whether it is Ek-fasla or Do-fasla (single crop or double crop land respectively), Gorihar (upland closest to village and hence natural soil fertility by night soils and cattle dung), Dar (land farthest from the village and manure demanding) or Dabar (low wet land yielding only single crop of late paddy). Rent also used to vary by the availability of irrigational resources, such as pond or well which determined the utility of upland Dar for double cropping.

Uncultivated land - like Usar, Banjar, Charagah, Dahar and Abadi land - were given to subject sections of Basti population for such purposes as grazing and herding of cattle and for Khalihan (threshing floor), in return of traditionally fixed quantity of milk, Sharwahi (grazing the cattle of malik free of charge), Begar (unpaid labour), Khairkhwahi (unqualified loyalty and well wishing), etc. Abadi land was given for house sites, and occupancy of a few yards of land of this Abadi land of the Malik immediately branded the occupant as the Praja, Riva or Asma (subjects) of the former. Similarly, water resources, such as ponds and wells were made available to Praja on the basis of either putting Begar of supplying one/third of vegetables grown at the bank of the pond or Singara (water-nut) grown on its water of the daily yield. River ferries, controlled by the Maliks used to bring grain or cash to them from the subjects who either used canoes, wooden
bridges or even just waded across through the water. One Anjuri (two handful) of paddy or a paisa used to be the ferry charge. All these resources made a substantial Saver (income) of Maliks and went to add to their powers over the Praja of Basti.

This power of Malik over Praja manifested itself through various forms of ritualised exactions, known as Malikana. There used to be a difference between Lagan or Malguzari and Malikana payments. The former was based upon economic rationality of exchanges, while the latter carried a high overtone of culturo-religious ritualization.

The Malikana payment system took various forms. It was treated as an expression of tribute from the Praja to the Malik. It could be Bhahu, which refers to a payment in cash or kind to a Malik whenever a daughter in the Malik's family got married; Hathiahi and Ghorahi, which refer to a practice of making payment to Malik when he purchased an elephant or a horse and Pujahi, which involved making a contribution to any religious function including a pilgrimage in which the Malik engaged himself. These payments must have been a token of gift in the beginning but later on degenerated into a mechanism of exploitation and oppression of peasants by the Maliks in the countryside.

Malguzari and Malikana payments belong to two different categories of payments. Malguzari was essentially an economic
nexus universally prevalent in agrarian economics, wherein payment to lord by the subject had a secular rationality as subject used the lord's land. Malikana, on the other hand, seems to have emerged from and got rooted in the sociological matrix of exchange of good wishes between the Malik and the cultivators. Non-payment of Malguzari was an undisputed and manifest breach or default of an economic contract in which lord and peasant bound themselves; one giving his land to the other and the other, in return, paid the former a rent in exchange. Any violation of this contract amounted an independently sufficient ground for taking the land back from the peasant.

But the same cannot be said about the practice of Malikana. Malikana was not a part of stated contract. It was more of a latent system of expectations of Maliks from their Praja that the latter would, through symbolic tribute of good wishes, by way of cash and kind payments, cement their loyalties. Such an expression of good will through the token payments at ceremonial occasions in the Malik's family, used to mark the corporate character of Malik and Praja relationship. Its non-payment did not amount to a breach of default of contract, as was the case with the Malguzari payments. However, Malikana which seems to have come in practice initially as the practice of "gift" giving among the tribal communities, consequently took the form of an instrument of oppression and
exploitation. For, like the default against Malguzari payment, the non-payment of Malikana also became an implied reason for the Praja for eviction from the land he tilled, orchard he maintained and, the house he occupied and lived in. It became a lever in the hands of Malik to squeeze the Praja dry of his earnings and subject him to sufferings, the escape from which was only migration. Of the two instruments, (the Malguzari and the Malikana), the latter was the worst, as there was no stated limits to its exactions. Those who were traders like Banias, Halvais, and Sonara, etc. were also made to pay Malikana by way of Gharahi (for living in Malikas' Abadi land) and Tehabazaar (for putting weekly shops on Malik's land) in Basti district.

Thus, in the total economic sphere, Malik retained all the right over land and extended the same to other sections of population only on the basis of some kind of payment. This led to a polarisation of power structure. The entire population was reduced to an appendage of the raias and nargana chiefs. This, rather sharply conical power structure of Basti district, in which the distributive system of economic resource corresponded closely to the hierarchy of castes started succumbing to the impact of agrarian modernization initiated by the British after 1842. In fact, it was a widely shared view among the Basti influentials, that degeneration of Malikana in the district was on account of systematic erosion of their economic resources by the British in favour of the peasants.
The increasing revenue demanded by the British could be met only after the land was released from the relatively unproductive grips of traditional Maliks who did not till it and given to the cultivators who actually worked for the agricultural production. The consequence was the introduction of various land settlements measures in favour of the peasants. This was done at the cost of the loss of Malik's power. Maliks tried to compensate their loss by intensifying their hitherto-then symbolic Malikana exaction, by a more oppressive and exploitative exactions.

The British, on the other hand, being aware of the rebellious history of local Maliks and of the subsequent uprisings of 1957, tried to compensate the declining ramport of Maliks' power by ego-fulfilling bluffs - the institutions of District Durbars, which became a venue for the awards of titles, gifts and sanads; by introducing institutions to keep them as a buffer power between the Empire and the peasantry. We propose to examine the nature of these institutions in detail in the next Chapter as they reveal the nature of elites of the colonial phase. Before we move to the next chapter, a comparative description of some of the basic distinguishing features of land power and people relations

in the historical settings of pre-colonial and colonial phases of Basti district be ideal-typically summarised below;

1. The pre-colonial phase of the relationship between land, power and people was characterised predominantly by the Rajput ethnic movements. Under the mounting Muslim invasions, some of the Rajput lineages abandoned their domains in the western parts of India and migrated eastward in search of territorial colonies. Beginning from the 13th century to the 17th century, A.D., various Rajput lineages led by their respective raja or chief came in waves and after defeating and displacing the native indigenous population of this tarai tract, they established their colonies in the form of lineage domains.

2. These rajas and chiefs remained at war with the State power of Muslim kings and Nawabs. They fought with the Nazims and Chubbudars of Nawabs and kept their political freedom and independence protected. In the defence of the political independence of lineage domains, the Rajputs used to unite and fight with their common enemy. But among themselves, they were divided house. While some Rajput lineages appeared to built mud-fort and expanded their territorial gains; the other suffered a shrinkage and often totally disappeared from these parts of tarai tract. In this phase of history, Rajputs fought tooth and nail, both among themselves and with an external enemy.
3. The basic and the primary right (control) over land, during the pre-colonial phase, generally emerged from the customs of the Rajput conquests. It was the might of the sword which defined the extent of control over the colonised tract. All other groups and segments of population, instead of having any 'right' or 'control over land', had only 'shares' in the agricultural produce. Process of production used to have a corporate character and the corporate body of people shared the yields of the process of production. Control over the means of production, however, always remained in the hands of Rajput colonisers. The Rajputs could deny others of their share in the produce, but on the other hand, others could not deny the monopoly of the former over the tract of the land in whose produce they claimed their share. The right of the Rajputs, thus, could be differentiated from the 'shares' of the remaining subject population.

4. The arrival of British colonialism initiated an era of relative peace and security for the ruling Rajputs and for their subject population. But the wider ramification of the encounter of experiences between the ruling Rajputs and the British was complex, deep and widespread. The impact of the British on the traditional structure of land, power and people's relations can be summed around following submissions:
a) The British were an innovative force. They came with the modern rational apparatus of bureaucratic administrative system, with the tools and techniques of survey and measurement of land.

b) Aided with modern techniques, an efficient bureaucratic system of control and administration, the British started changing their colony of its own cultural image. The British started superimposing their own concepts, notions and symbols on Indian practices. The alien notions of "property", "ownership", "rent", "revenue", "tax", etc., were transplanted to displace the traditional concept of "shares" in the produce. The system of private property in these parts of Uttar Pradesh originate the phase of British rule. Privatization or individualization of resources was a great transformation.

c) Defiant and rebellious as the Rajputs had been towards the Muslim power, they did, especially, some of them, start being apprehensive towards the British on account of systematic increase in the payment of revenue and of the loss of revenue free village. The British had already taken the autonomy and independence of lineage-raj of the Rajputs. But the systematic encroachment on their economic resources did compell some of the Rajputs to attempt rejection of the British. In this way, the Rajputs had rejected the Muslim power in past. The Great Rebellion of 1857, in part, was the outburst of the angry rejection of the British. But unlike in the past,
the Rajputs, this time could not put a united front against the British, in the fashion they used to do against the Muslim enemies. Some Rajputs preferred the British rule over the rule of the possible Muslim kings and Nawabs.