ABSTRACT

The thesis is concerned with the agrarian history of Awadh during the period c. 1595 to 1856, covering the Mughal and nawab periods. Awadh, a part of the Gangetic plain, forms a fairly homogeneous geographical block, though its political boundaries as a Mughal subah and a kingdom (especially before 1801) varied considerably (Chapter I).

The detailed information in the Ain-i Akberi has been used to determine the level of cultivation and (on its basis) the size of population c. 1600. It has been concluded that cultivation then was about 59% of what it was in 1835-6, and that the population of the subah was 9 millions. The same limits contained 12.6 millions in 1856, showing a low growth of 0.28% p.a. (Chapter II).

The methods of cultivation and crops have been studied in Chapter III. Particular use has been made of the Ain as well as British reports of nawab Awadh.

The land-revenue arrangements under the Mughals and Nawab Wazir have been treated separately, owing to obvious differences, though the origin of the latter lay in the former. The failure of the Nawab Wazir to evolve a satisfactory revenue machinery under the constant financial and political pressure from the British has been studied in particular detail (Chapters IV and V).
An important feature of the agrarian situation in Awadh was the presence of zamindars right from Mughal period to the Annexation. Chapter VI is devoted to a description of the rights of the zamindars under the Mughals, and the changes in caste-composition of the class until the 19th century. The growth of armed power of the zamindars, and its role in Nawab Awadh are also studied.

The jagir system was an essential element of Mughal agrarian administration. Its nature and functions are examined in detail on the basis of local documents (Chapter VII). The breakdown of the jagir system led to the evolution of the ta'allugdari system, which is often considered a special institution of Awadh (Chapter VIII).

The revenue grantees formed a relatively minor segment of agrarian society, but their conditions are illumined by exceptionally extensive documentation. Moreover, their rights tended to become hereditary from the closing days of the Mughal Empire. Chapter IX presents evidence relating to this class.

The Awadh Kingdom during its later days displayed considerable agrarian instability. It is argued in Chapter X that this was due not so much to its own intrinsic faults (which were, of course, not insignificant) as to the interference of British authorities which nullified the king's power almost totally. As a result, the cycle of disorder and suppression became endemic, until it was presented as a justification for the Annexation.