CHAPTER - I

THE GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING

(i) The Natural Environment

The Mughal province of Awadh extended over the territory entirely consisting of alluvial plains, lying between 79.6° and 84° longitude E. and 26° and 28.4° latitude N. The limits of the su®ba are described by Abul Fazl in his 'Account of Twelve Provinces'. It was bounded on the east by the province of Bihar and to the north lay the Northern mountains; sark²r Manikpur of su®ba Allahabad was situated on the south of the province, while on the western side was sark²r of Kannuj of su®ba Agra. The distance from sark²r Gorakhpur to Kannuj was computed at 135 kos; while only 115 kos were said to separate the northern mountains and the southern boundary of the su®ba.

To some extent, the boundaries of the su®ba took into account the physical features of the Upper Gangetic plains. Besides the Himalayan barrier to the north, the river Ganges separated it from the Mughal province of Agra and the river Sarju fixed the boundary line between sark²r Gorakhpur of Awadh and sark²r Jaunpur of su®ba Allahabad.

A number of rivers and their tributaries flowed through the province. Abul Fazl lists four principal rivers traversing the plains of the province. These were the Sarju, Ghaghra, Sai and Godi [Gomti]. But this list is a very short one. Butter lists the Ganges, Deoha [Ghaghra] Gomti, Sai, Tons and Lon rivers as the main water channels of the southern districts of Awadh alone. The distinguishing features of each of these rivers are well described by him. The Ganges and Deoha had a low bed with an average width of four miles, and alterations occurred in the channels almost annually so much so that within a span of four or five years the rivers considerably shifted their courses. Compared to these rivers, the smaller rivers had almost fixed narrow channels and little change occurred in their courses. Few of these rivers had depth enough to avoid overflow even during the rainy season. The banks of these rivers were made up of high kankar ridges making them navigable, but it was noticed that as a result of the diminishing of these ridges during the summer, the depth of the rivers was adversely affected. Butter thought it a duty of the government of nawāb-wazīra to clear out debris of such fallen ridges to keep the streams navigable.

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1. Ibid.
In importance the river Gumti, though much smaller, was next only to Ganges and Deoha. Its right bank was made up of solid kankar giving the appearance of a mountainous range, while the left bank was low and sandy to the maximum extent of 3 miles it was an arid waste. Beyond this zone the soil was quite fertile. The water was unfit for drinking because it was heavily loaded with yellowish clay. Fish abounded in all seasons. At some places, the Sai was as broad as the Gumti, but had only half of its depth. The Sai could accommodate boats of 300 mounds during rainy season, but because of its zig-zag course, it was avoided by navigators in favour of the Ganges and Gumti.

The Tons had its source in the Deoha, being essentially an arm of that river. It was shallow, and little navigation could be carried through it. The small river Lon flowed in the northwestern portion of Awadh rising near Shahabad. It joined river Sai near Rae Bareli. During the summer it was of no consequence.

An important feature of the natural geography of Awadh in the 16th-18th centuries was the presence of large forest belts. It is possible to map the main forest tracts by drawing upon diverse sources. We find that the Terai forest spread between the city of Gorakhpur and the Himalyan range, as shown

1. Among the Indian works, only Haft Iqlim seems to refer to "forest in Awadh." Cf. Irfan Habib, An Atlas of the Mughal Empire, OUP Delhi, 1982, sheet no. BA (notes).
in James Rennell’s Bengal Atlas (1780). Ghulam Hazrat, in his memoir of the Gorakhpur district (1810) tells us that the city of Gorakhpur was surrounded by forests. He says that the tappa of parganas: Anola, Bansi, Silhat, Basti, Maghar and Gorakhpur were desolate owing to the scarcity of peasants, the density of jangals and the inroads of the wild elephants. Owing to the depredations of these elephants, the peasants abstained from cultivation of the sugarcane. Francis Buchanan who surveyed the district in 1807 estimated that out of the total area in the district of 7,438 sq. miles, about 1450 sq. miles were covered with forest. Besides these forests, a number of patches studed with bush and long grass were to be found here and there.

Another category of the forests consisted of the jungle situated either on the low land [kachar] or on the higher grounds. These were carefully preserved from clearing by the zamindARS of the area. These offered him a safe place of "asylum from the tyranny and the rapacity of the chakledar."

1. Mufti Ghulam Hazrat, KwaIr'-i-zila’ - Gorakhpur, (1810 A.D.), MS Aligarh Subhan Ullah Collection-954/12, ff. 12a-b.


3. Ibid., 513

4. Butter op. cit., p.5
The face of the country was level plain, but river Gumti had cut the soil at some places creating ravines to the depth of 50 ft. These ravines were made use of by the zamindārs who planted trees to create jungles and so made hideouts for themselves. In the midst of these forests every land-holder of consequence used to build mud-forts (warnis) "surrounded by a ditch and dense fence of living bamboos, through which common shot cannot penetrate." The chakładārs were always helpless against such fortifications of the zamindārs, as the janqals were too green to be set fire to and "being within the range of match locks from the parapet, they cannot be cut down by the besieging force." Sleeman laments that such defences could easily be broken down but "Dude force had seldom either the means or the skill for such purpose". Sleeman has listed twenty four belts of forests in the kingdom of Oudh (1850) which were being used by the zamindārs to challenge the authority of the government officials. They were spread in all parts of the kingdom, and it was computed that about 886½ sq. miles of area were covered by such forests. Sleeman offers us the figures for the estimated area under forest in the districts of Awadh.

1. W.H. Sleeman, A Journey through the Kingdom of Oudh during 1849-50, 2 volumes, London, 1858, volume II, pp
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
kingdom in square miles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chakla /District</th>
<th>Forested area [in sq. miles]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sultanpur</td>
<td>279 sq. miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Uldemau</td>
<td>102 sq. miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Daruabad</td>
<td>76 sq. miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Dewa-Jahangirabad</td>
<td>64 sq. miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Ganguar</td>
<td>72 sq. miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Salon</td>
<td>72 sq. miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Bainswara</td>
<td>30 sq. miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Hydergarh</td>
<td>7½ sq. miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Khyrabad Muhammadi</td>
<td>150 sq. miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Baree and Muchreyta</td>
<td>30 sq. miles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL : 888½ sq. miles

The mud forts or the Garhis situated in these belts were said to number about 633.

1. Ibid.
2. Foreign Consultation Number 136/52 dated 31 August 1856, National Archives of India, New Delhi, Cf. A.A. Azmi, "Ta'alluqadars in the kingdom of Awadh, 1814-56". Paper presented at the session of Indian History Congress (Allahabad Session, 1965), but only its summary was published in the Proceedings (page 323). For details, see the cyclostyled paper, p.16.
In order to increase revenue, and, perhaps, remove the zamindāras' hide-outs the clearing of the forests for the purpose of cultivation was encouraged by the government. A number of incentives were given to the peasants for carrying the work of reclamation. Forest-land was lightly assessed by the revenue officials of the Nawab Vazira "free for the first year of occupancy, charged at only two anna per bigha, the second year, four anna the third year, six anna, the fourth year and fifth year, ten anna; beyond which, as an encouragement to the settlers the rent is never raised." In these lands the irrigation facilities were available abundantly as the water-table was found just at the depth of 10 feet, and wells and tanks could be dug quite easily. Butter describes the destruction of a chiul jangal which was twenty miles in length and eight miles broad, situated between Niwurdipur and Manikpur.

However, due to the unremitting destruction of the forest, adverse affects were produced on the general climate. Butter thought that the annual average rainfall declined and the water-table went down, thus creating difficulties for irrigation. This situation could have certainly been controlled by a "systematic artificial planting to counteract the parching effects produced by the removal of these natural protectors of the soil."

2. Ibid., p. 7.
3. Ibid., p. 48.
But reclamation continued unabated. The agricultural statistics of 1885-6 show no forest area in those districts where, as we have Sleeman estimates, forest areas of 888½ sq. miles. It may be assumed, then, that by 1885-6 such extensive tracts of forest comprising about half a million acres had come under cultivation.

Wild animals found their way in these deep and long stretches of green-belts. The carārī forest of sarkār Gorakhpur was famous for containing numerous elephants, a menace to cultivation. Tigers too were found in great number between the city of Gorakhpur and the mountains, and before the cession of this territory to English their number was still larger. After 1801 due to forest clearing operations, a good many of them were hunted down by English civilians as well as the military officers. These animals lived so largely on cattle that in the year 1799, the year of great famines, most of 'herbivorous animals' perished so the tigers were famished. The tigers in a large hoard fell upon the town of Bhewapor, and within no time killed about 400 of its inhabitants. The town remained deserted for a long period.

1. Agricultural Statistics of British India, 1885-6, Calcutta.
2. Ghulam Hazrat, Kwaif-i-Gorakhpur, f. 9a.
Wolves and Jackals, too, were very common in these forests, posing a constant threat to the peasants as well as the domestic animals. The wolf was quite a menace in the southern districts of Awadh when Butter compiled his survey. He says that they carried away a number of children from the small bazaar attached to the Cantonment of Sultanpur. Superstition among the native population precluded their being killed; and their dens were observable along the sides of the 'ravines' throughout the country.

Whether any change in climate occurred in the course of the two hundred and fifty years is a matter on which the information available is rather slight. In 1838 Butter was convinced of a "great change in the climate" by which he perhaps meant a decline in rainfall. Butter has appended tables showing the diminishing pattern of the rabi as well as the khairif crops. At the time of his writing the report (1836 A.D.) even the 'produce in a good year' was much less than what it was 'before the great change in the climate'.

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid. p. 56.
3. Ibid. p. 18. . .
4. Ibid.
### Table

#### (I) Kharif crops, sown in the Rainy Season

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the crop</th>
<th>Seeds of seeds per bigha</th>
<th>Mans of produce in a good year</th>
<th>Mans of produce in a bad year</th>
<th>Former produce in mans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Koo 2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10 to 12</td>
<td>4 or 5</td>
<td>16 or 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makra</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8 to 9</td>
<td>2 or 3</td>
<td>10 or 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanwa</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2 or 3</td>
<td>10 or 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asahan kharif</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8 or 9</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### (II) Rabi crops, sown in the cold season

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the crop</th>
<th>Seeds of seeds per bigha</th>
<th>Mans of produce in a good year</th>
<th>Mans of produce in a bad year</th>
<th>Former produce in mans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chana</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14 or 15</td>
<td>5 to 8</td>
<td>18 to 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genhun</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>14 or 15</td>
<td>7 or 8</td>
<td>20 to 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jau</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20 to 22</td>
<td>10 to 13</td>
<td>20 to 25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The average annual rainfall in Awadh according to him followed a very irregular pattern. At the same time it was 'steadily decreasing on an average of 5 or 6' year'. Butter attributed such a change to the destruction of the 'sylan vesture' by the

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 57-58. The tables contain information about a number of other crops, but entries are provided against the last column only for the crops listed in our table.
peasants in order to bring more land under the cultivation. It was predicted that the country was under the slow but definite process of becoming 'barren ravines' as there were no forests left 'to ward off' the 'fierce rays of the sun' and 'dew deposition' thus creating 'springs of running water'. The green belts of the region had detained water in meshes, but such land was now 'ploughed into barren ravines'. As a result the province lost "its springs and perennial streamlets... ...... the distance of water from the earth increased - and its rain-falls, and the volume of its rivers diminished."

The accompanying map drawn to show the isohytes clearly projects that the annual average rainfall of the province ranges from 54.7 inches to 25 inches. It tends to be heavier as we move towards north-west, and lighter as we go westward. Butter in 1836 estimated the average annual rainfall in Southern Awadh at between "70 to 30 inches within a period of four months in duration; but is, on an average of five or six years, steadily decreasing."

The soil of the province was composed of different varieties. On occasions, it contained siliceous and calcareous earth, the latter in the form of kankar which occurred in the

limited horizontal layers at a depth of six to eight feet. The kankar ridges were generally found along the right banks of rivers. At many places kankar constituted the surface of the soil as well. The sites of the 'pr im eval forests of Oudh' and the regions between Ganges and Deoha had the rich and dark soil. In the southern districts of Awadh, the soil of 

pargana Salon, Jayis, Rampur and Manikpur was judged as the best and very productive in different varieties of the grain.

1. Ibid., pp. 25-6.
2. Ibid., p.27.
(ii) Administrative Divisions

The Mughal province of Awadh came into being in the year 1580, when Akbar superseded the earlier divisions of the Lodi Sultans to make his own administrative arrangements. This set up entailed the formation of provinces (ṣūbas) with subdivisions, continuing under the older name of sarkārs. Each sarkār contained a number of parganas. All the sarkārs now included in the suba Awadh are listed by Bābur in his list of Lodi sarkārs, but with Lucknow as Lakhnau-and-Balkar, and Gorakhpur as Saruar.

The limits of the new territorial divisions were determined by a number of considerations, not all based on physical geography. C.A. Elliot, in his account of Oonao district, found that the pargana boundaries were traced in most irregular fashion, being determined by the proprietary rights of individual clans/formed the basis for fixing the limits of the mahāls.

The total number of the parganas included in the suba, as stated in A'in, is 138, but those actually listed come to 133 pargana only. Subsequent to the period when A'in was written,

many changes occurred in the internal administrative units of
the sarkārs, many new parganas were constituted so as to raise
the number of the total mahāls in each sarkār. Sometime during
the 17th century, pargana Kānt in sarkar Būdaun of suba Delhi
being transferred to sarkar Khairābād. But except for this
minor adjustment between the limits of suba Delhi and Awadh,
the territorial limits of the Muqbal province of Awadh seem to
have remained intact.

Within the suba the sarkārs were subject to change,
though the changes were perhaps not many. One change was merely
of nomenclature. Sarkār Gorakhpūr was renamed Mu‘azzamābād
Gorakhpur after Prince Mu‘azzam. The tappa of pargana Pali was
made a full-fledged pargana by the name Shahābād.

The number of parganas in each of the five sarkārs went
on changing. A list showing such changes is worth giving:-

1. See Add. 6586, f. 95a.

2. tappa Shahābād included in pargana Pali was assigned to
Dīlār Khan Afghān in his al-tamgāhā jāgīr by Emperor
Aurangzīb in 1662 (the text of the farman has been repro-
duced by Muzaffār Ḥusain Ḥan, Nama-i Muzaffarī, 2 vols,
Muṭṭabāb Pṛess Kanpur, 1917 (vol.1, pp. 174-9), but in 1686,
we find in a kanād, Shahābād has been styled a separate
pargana. Ibid. 1, p. 266. See also Add. 6586, f. 95a.

3. Add. 6586, f. 94a.
Awadh remained a relatively trouble-free province of the Empire throughout the 17th century. But things began to change during the second quarter of the 18th century, when Burhanul Mulk Sa'ādat Khan was appointed the governor of the suba in 1722 A.D. With the general deterioration and slackening of central control, Burhanul Mulk (d. 1739) and later on his two immediate successors 'Abul Maṃsūr Safdar Jang (1739-56) and Shuja'uddaulah (1756-75) were able to assert their independence from imperial control. However, this was a slow process. In 1739, Sa'ādat Khan joined the imperial forces to face 'Nādir Shah. Safdarjang and Shuja'ud-
Daulah formally held the office of wizārat, and a number of other important posts under the Mughal emperors. The designation of Nawāb-wazīr was applied to them and their successors, at least till 1814, when Ghaziuddin Hyder designated himself King.

Attempts were made by the nawāb-wazīrs to get more and more area included under their jurisdiction. By 1728, their area of influence was pushed further east by the inclusion of fertile regions of Benaras, Ghazipur, Jaunpur and Chunargarh. The western borders of Awadh kingdom were extended up to Kannuj by the use of armed power against the hereditary Rajput chiefs. In 1735, Saadat Khan in addition to his duties, was invested with the faujdāri jurisdiction of sārkār kāra Jahānābād to crush the activities of the rebel zamindār Bhagwant Singh, who was ultimately killed in a closely contested battle.

Emperor Ahmad Shah conferred upon Safdarjang the office of the wizārat, and assigned him the province of Ajmer in 1748, but the wazīr exchanged his new assignment with sūba Allahabad, which was contiguous to the province of

1. Essentially these area lay in the jagīr of one Murtaza Khan, who had leased them out to nawāb for a payment of Rs.7 lakhs per annum. Al Srivastava, The first Two Nawabs of Oudh, Lucknow 1933, pp. 44-5.

2. Ibid., p.46.

3. Ibid., pp. 49-51.
Awadh; and he now established a hereditary claim over it. The next important addition to the territorial limits of Awadh was made in 1774, when Shuja'uddaulah with the help of East India Company annexed Rohilkhand, much of which formally belonged to suba Delhi. In addition Etawah was also controlled by him.

From the point of view of the extent, maximum limits were attained by the kingdom under Shuja'uddaulah. It comprised the Mughal province of Awadh, and much of the province of Allahabad (barring, of course, the Bundelkhand region), Rohilkhand and mid Gangetic Doab including Etawah. This compact region bordered the Himalyan tarai in the north, the Upper course of River Jandhak in the north-east, the river Son to the south, and the Yamuna in the south-west. In 1764-65, Shuja'ud daulah joined the armies of Shah 'Alam II and Mir Qasim in an unsuccessful attempt to invade Bihar and Bengal. After the defeat at Buxar and then at Jajmau, Shuja'uddaulah was compelled to seek terms. Although he was permitted to continue as a ruler of the Mughal subas of Awadh and Allahabad, certain areas (notably Allahabad) were transferred to Shah Alam II. The appointment of the English Resident in 1773 and the deployment of various contingents of British forces in the Ruheela war, whereby Shuja'uddaulah was able to annex Rohilkhand, made the kingdom of Qudh one of the

1. Ibid., pp. 128, 260.
first subsidiary-alliance states in India well before Lord Wellesley.

After the death of Shuja'uddaulah, the situation underwent important changes. A new treaty was concluded with his successor Asafuddaulah in 1775. Now the amount of subsidy imposed on Awadh was increased, the zamindar of Ghazipur was asked to pay the tribute to Company instead of nawab, and the entire region of Benaras was ceded to the Company. Later, in default of payment of the subsidies, the fort of Allahabad (which had been earlier retransferred from Shah 'Alam to Shuja'uddaulah) was annexed by the English.

Asafuddaulah died in 1797, and this provided an opportunity to the Company to conclude a new treaty with his successors, first with Wazir 'Ali and then with Sa'adat Ali Khan (1798-1814). The treaty concluded in 1801, marks the watershed in the history of relations of the Company with Awadh. Under this treaty the broken crescent formed by Rohilkhand, Farrukhabad, Kara, Kora, Lttawah, Fatehgarh, Kalpi, Gorakhpur and 'Azamgarh, yielding an annual revenue of Rupees 1,35,00,000, was ceded by Awadh to the East India Company.

The limits of Awadh from 1801 A.D. onwards down to its annexation (1856) remained more or less fixed. The principality was bounded on the North and North-East by Nepal; on the East
by the British district of Gorakhpur; on the south-east by British district Allahabad; on the south-west by the Doab including the British districts of Fatehpur, Kanpur, and Farukhabad and on the north-west by Shahjahanpur. These new limits extended from latitude 29°6 to 25° 34, and from longitude 79°45 to 83°. The total area was computed at 23,923 square miles.

With the treaty of 1801, Nawab Sa'adat Ali Khan once more felt that he was the ruler of what territories were left under his control. He started with vigour and enthusiasm to streamline the administration and to introduce the new revenue system. The arrangements entailed a reorganisation of the older administrative divisions by dividing Awadh into nizamats and chaklas. Of the five Mughal sarkars, Gorakhpur had been ceded to the Company. Sarkar Bahraich was now too small an unit to continue as a separate division, hence Gonda was added to create the Gonda-Bahraich nizamat. The limits of the old sarkar Awadh, broadly corresponded to the boundaries of this the Sultanpur-Fyzabad nizamat, and sarkar Khairabad was divided into Khairabad nizamat and chakla Shah Rah comprising : parganas

2. Butter, op. cit., pp.97-9; C\A Elliott says that in Oude four large districts, Bahraich, Khairabad, Sultanpur and Bainswe were called nizomat, while the smaller ones like Dereeabad, Sandi, Sandila, Meanganj and Rosulabad were called chakla. Op.cit. p.131(n).
Sandeelah, Sandee, Palee, Shahabad and Bangarmau. Later on the chakla wa of Shah Rah was placed under the jurisdiction of two chakledars, having their headquarters at Sandee and Sandeelah. Sarkar Lucknow was completely broken up; the Bainswara division was made a separate nizamat consisting of a number of chaklas namely Hyderqurh, Rae Bareili, Purwa, Meangunj and Rasoolabad.

The chaklas were put under the over all charge of the chakledars or nazims, while the smaller units were looked after by the faujdār and the diwan, receiving Rs.25/= and Rs.15/= each respectively as their salaries. While the chakledars had no fixed salary, "the difference between the sum, which he has for the year engaged to pay into the public treasury, and the amount, which, with the military power of the state at his command, he can levy from the zamindars constituted his official income".

Butter, writing in 1836, gives the following list of chaklas in Awadh.

2. Butter, op.cit. p.99
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., pp. 97-8.
1. Sultanpur was made up of 6 parganas
2. Aldana had 5 parganas
3. Hartapur had only 3 parganas
4. Rachhirmath also had 3 parganas only
5. Bainswara contained the largest number, i.e., 13 bazar
6. Salun had 4 parganas
7. Ashadgunj too had 4 parganas
8. Jonda-dhahraich was divided into 5 parganas.
9. Kharrapad again contained the largest number, i.e., 13 parganas
10. Sanda had 4 parganas
11. Rasulabad was divided in 5 parganas
12. Lucknow was made up of 2 parganas

However, sometimes during the last years of Awadh regime, the new arrangements, too, were changed, and while retaining a few previous divisions, new units were created for the purpose of revenue administration. The names of the new administrative division have not been provided by our authorities.

No further details about the number of the parganas included in the new unit are available. It cannot be said as to when the administrative unit described by Butter were superseded in favour of the new arrangements.

1. "The fiscal divisions in Awadh are arbitrary. Mr. Lock in 1831 showed 24, Mr. Butter in 1837 twelve; we have before us a list of 25 large and small districts, obtain in during the present year". Cf. 'The kingdom of Oudh', Cairo 'la Revue', 1845 (part III), pp. 386-7.
A sketch map showing the major administrative divisions of Awadh, circa 1850

* Chakla Boundaries are based on P.D. Reeves' map of Awadh, ibid: P.303 (F. Habib)