Chapter III
Evolution of Rural Settlements
The interplay of historical and socio-economic factors with physico-cultural determinants has produced a social structure of Aligarh District which is quite distinct from that of other region. The intermixing of various ethnic groups and cultural traits from within and outside the country have produced a complex pattern. The beginnings of rural settlements in the region go back to the pre-historic period. This is borne out by the legends and folk lore of the area, the presence of large number of mounds, and, more convincingly, by the archaeological excavations in different parts of the District. The abundance of mounds suggest that the area had a number of settlements in the ancient period. Archaeological excavations have shown that settlements of this region date back to at least 1500 B.C. and that the area has been under the sway of many dynasties. Thus, the present pattern of settlement distribution is the result of a series of ups and downs of earlier settlements. This is why the study of its historical evolution is most relevant to the present work. In order to understand the present formal pattern of the rural settlements of the Aligarh District a study its histogenesis, i.e., the evolution of its settlements assumes considerable significance.

Hence an attempt has been made here to trace the evolution of the rural settlements of the District, taking
into account the place-names, culture archaeological evidences and written records since no single evidence is strong enough to reconstruct the evolution of rural settlements in the study area.

1. Place-Names Analysis

Place-name analysis has enjoyed much importance in the field of settlement histogenesis as it is a valuable source of the study of the evolution of cultural landscapes, especially those of rural settlements. According to Brunhes, place names are the fossils of Human Geography. The study of place names helps to trace the evolution of rural settlements because their suffixes and prefixes are closely related to the physico-cultural background of an area, since there is a complex relationship between names of places and their geographical surroundings. Kemble (1849) discovered the significance of place-names ending in ing and ingham in the evolution of Saxon settlements of southeast England. These suffixes point to the clans which had settled in the places which now bear their names. Alice Mutton (1938) has traced various phases of the settlement of the Black Forest and the Rhine areas, based on the evidences furnished by the place-

name endings and their distribution. Dickinson (1949) has studied the evolution of German settlements with the help of place-name suffixes. He has traced the evolution of various plans of rural settlements and discussed the distribution of settlements types in Germany with the help of the place-names. Maxwell (1965) has successfully traced the origin and evolution of settlements around Sheffield through various phases of its colonization on the evidence. Nitz (1972) has attempted to trace the evolution of Teutonic settlement in southern and western Germany with the help of such evidence. He points out that when belligerent groups of Teutonic folk had permanently settled down, they named their settlements after the groups of inhabitants who again named themselves after the head of the leading family. According to him, village names with the suffix ‚ingen‘ added to a person’s name, belong to the period of Teutonic colonization.

Indian villages have a varied nomenclature and even in the same region there are diversities because of variations in physo-cultural and socio-economic conditions at micro level. Their place names are often influenced by the geographical environment which provide clues to the evolution, growth and decay of earlier human settlements. It has been found that different place names have been assigned to the same place in different historical periods. Such changes of place name are due to the change of people inhabiting them and have also resulted from changes in their socio-economic condition. During the course of field studies related to the present work, it has been found a large percentage of the names of the villages of the Aligarh District have suffixes or prefixes like, Pur, Pura, Nagla, Garh, Garhi, Sarai, Khera, Khurd, Kalan, Maufi, Chak etc. and these affixes usually refer to a ruling chief or a god or goddess and or the topographical features or the vegetation of the area. Thus, it may be inferred that villages are somehow or the other associated with the physico-cultural and socio-economic conditions of a region. So place-name analysis has been used as a tool to trace the evolution of rural settlements of the study area. Different place names of the Aligarh District along with their associations are shown in Fig. 3.1.

Before discussing the association of the place-names of the Aligarh District with physico-cultural factors it would
be better to take up the name of the District itself. Such an analysis will reveal the histogenesis of the area.

Aligarh and its immediate surroundings were known by the name of Kol (Koil). This settlement was known by different names at different times such as Kol, Muhammadgarh, Sabitgarh Ramgarh and Aligarh.

Kol, the earliest name of Aligarh, included not only the city but the entire District, though its geographical limits kept changing from time to time. The origin of the name of Kol (Koil) is obscure. In some ancient texts, Kol has been used in the sense of 'tribe' or 'caste', name of a place or a mountain or the name of a sage or a demon. According to Skanda Purana, Kol was a malecha tribe that wandered in the forests of the Himalayas, while according to Bramhavivarta Purana it was a mixed caste (varnasankar). Padma Purana refers to Kol as an aboriginal caste. References to Kol have also been found in the medieval sources like Tabagat-i-Nasiri and A'in-i Akbari. Kol is referred to in the former in connection with its capture by Qutubuddin Aibek in 1192 A.D. In A'in-i Akbari, Abul Fazal lists Kol among the mahals of

Akbar's empire. The study area is now usually referred to as 'koil' rather than 'kol'.

According to the local tradition, the name Kol (Koil) was given to the place by Balaram, brother of Srikrishna, who slew here the great demon (ausura) Kola, with the assistance of the Ahirs. A significant tradition that is mentioned in the Municipal records of Kol (Koil), is that Raja Buddha Sen, Son of Mitra Sen, of Jalesar, while going to Delhi, once halted near a kol (lake) along with his counsellors and built a fortress there. On account of this lake the place was named 'Kol'. Prior to the excavation of the Aligarh Drain, the north-western part of the Aligarh town was full of water throughout the year, which also gave rise to the growth of a deep morass there. Probably, the presence of a large jhil (lake) in the vicinity of Koil gave the place its present name. According to the census of India 1872, there were about 35,081 Kols (a tribe of weavers) in the region. They are still found in large numbers in the District as professional weavers. It is thought that the settlement of this tribe in

the area before the Turkish conquest gave Koil its name. Many authorities such as Fuhrar, Hodiwala, and Atkinson, state that when Mohammad son of Umar was the governor of Koil during the reign of Ibrahim Lodi, he built a fort at Koil and lent his own name to it, calling it Mohammadgarh, while Sabit Khan who was the governor of this region during the period of Farrukh Siyar and Mohammad Shah, rebuilt the fort and named the town after his own name Sabitgarh. After the occupation of Koil by the Jats in 1775, it was renamed as Ramgarh and finally, when a Shia commander, Najaf Khan, captured Koil, he gave it its present name, i.e., Aligarh. These authorities also state that the name of the town also changed with the name of the forts. Sabit Khan, who was the governor of Koil, showed a keen interest in building activities. He built a fort about three miles north of the centre of the town of Koil; which is now known as the Aligarh fort. The name of the place is generally spelt as Aligarh, but the British authorities sometimes, spelt it 'Allygurh'. During the Maratha occupation of the fort, its name remained unchanged. After the British annexation, when the entire territory of the United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh) was reconstituted and

for the first time in 1804, Aligarh was constituted as a district. Koil became the name of one of the tehsils of the Aligarh District, with its headquarters at the old site of Koil which continues to have the same place-name.

1.1 Place-names Associated with Culture and Cult

A major portion of the Aligarh District has Vraja culture. The word vraja or barai, in vedic literature, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, has been used for 'cowshed' and 'pastoral land'. Mathura, the heart-land of the braj culture, was noted for its pasture lands, forests and horned cattle, especially cows. Being the birth place of Lord Krishna, Mathura District attained a special status among the holy places of India. As Krisha belonged to a family of cow-herds (yadavas), he passed his early life and youth in grazing herds in the meadows and forests of Mathura and Brindaban with his cowherd and milkmaid companions. Due to its association with Sri Krishna, its physico-cultural and socio-economic attributes attained religious sanctity. He became the base not only of a cult of worship but also a distinct culture in which he himself, his beloved Radha, brother Balaram, parents and friends became central figures. Aligarh District having close links with Mathura, has

therefore many place-names associated with braj culture. A comparison of the place-names associated with forest and trees of the area with those of Mathura district, shows that the place name in both the districts have the same affiliation. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aligarh</th>
<th>Mathura</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Koil</td>
<td>Koela Alipur</td>
<td>Swampy ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kajroth</td>
<td>Kajroth</td>
<td>From Kadali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pisava</td>
<td>Pisava</td>
<td>From Pasavya (Sanskrit) fit for cattle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhakpurah</td>
<td>Dhakpurah</td>
<td>From dhak tree (buteafrondosa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chhonkra</td>
<td>Chhinkra</td>
<td>From chhonkar tree, (prosopis spicigera)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khandia</td>
<td>Khandia</td>
<td>From khandi forest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If one ignores the administrative boundary between the two districts, Aligarh may be placed in the same geographical belt of that of Mathura. Thus the literal definition of vraj (braj) is as much applicable to Aligarh as it is to Mathura. It is well known that among all the epithets of Srikrishna, those associated with the cow stand very prominent. Cow protection and its worship has become an integral part of the


2. Ibid., p.350.
braj Culture. The place names Gobla, Gobra, Gomat, Gokulpur, Gopalpur, Gopi, Govindpur, Govind Nagar and Govardhanpur, clearly indicate that these places have strong cultural associations with the Braj culture. Obviously these places have been named after the epithet of Srikrishna, with religious overtones. Maintenance of gaushals (cowsheds) is not as popular in the Aligarh District as in Mathura. But according to information gathered from different location in Aligarh, Gomat, Barhad, Harduaganj, Dadon, Hathras, Sasni and Aligarh city it has been found that prior to the establishment of dairies, gaushalas existed at these places and the entire village population was responsible for their maintenance. In the place names associated with Hindu mythology, the influence of Krishna and his close associates appears to be the dominant one. Place names of Kanhoi, Daupur, Hardua and Balrampur indicate that from the earliest times the region was under the influence of braj culture.

A large number of local Hindu gods and godlings also influenced the cultural set-up of the Braj region. Place-names, such as, Kanaua, Karasvara, Kalua, Darkaula are good examples of this. Some gods, goddesses and divines were worshipped out of fear and were supposed to be associated with the evil spirit. They were Masani, Nagarsen, Kaila Debi, Bhumiya, Burhe Baba, and Zahar Pir or Goga Pir.\(^1\) The place

names of Koras, Jakhera, Jakhota, Darkoula, Darkauli, Kailora, and Kalua of the area are said to have derived their names from the local gods or goddesses. At some of these places they are still held in great esteem.

Besides the Krishna cult, there are other cults in the region which have influenced the rural life of the people of the District. The Chinataharan temple of Hathras, Achleswar and Khereswar temples of Aligarh city, Mahadeva temples of Beswan and Sikandra Rao are some of the important shrines of Lord Siva in the District. Siva lingums (phalluses) have been discovered from a large number of mounds of the area. Some of them have been installed in the temples and some are still lying over the mounds. These lingums are being worshiped as Kherapatis (Lords of the Mounds), and are considered protectors of the villages. There are five village in the District names of which are directly associated with Lord Siva - Sankra, Shivala, Bhadesi, Shankerpur and Mahamai. It appears that here Siva worship was one quite popular. A large number of Mahadeva temples have been found in the area but they have gradually lost their popular appeal. Lord Ram is also popular in the study area. There are many villages in the District which have been named after him, Laksmana and Sita. Rampur, Ram Nagar, Ramgarh, Laksmanpur and Sitahari are some of the examples.

There is nothing peculiar regarding the Muslim culture of the District. The pattern is more or less the same as in
other parts of north India. Being the headquarters of the Muslim governors and officials, the old town of Koil became a central place of the Muslim immigrants from the beginning of the thirteenth century A.D. Atrauli, Sikandra Rao, Jalali, Pilkhana, Nanau, Gangiri and Tappal are other examples of early Muslim settlements. At these places medieval mosques, tombs, shrines and madarsahs (schools) are found. The distinction between Muslim and non-Muslim culture is very clear at these places. Elements of Muslim culture may be discerned in some villages of Atrauli, Koil, Khair and Sikandra Rao tehsils. The Muslim masses of these places may be distinguished on the basis of their social customs. Rural Muslims have been greatly influenced by the Braj culture. In many villages, social customs, dress, food habits and dialect of the Muslims and non Muslims are generally the same. Some of the local gods and goddesses are also worshiped by the illiterate rural Muslims, who have been newly converted from low castes. Due to the impact of urbanization and westernization, certain cultural changes such as dress and social customs are being seen in the rural areas of the District. On the whole, the area is dominated by Braj culture, which has overshadowed every other culture.

1.2 Place-names Associated with Forests

From the study of the place-names of the Aligarh District, it appears that the area was once largely covered
with forests, thickets and groves. In 1833 Hutchinson observed that the District was covered to a great extent with heavy dhak (butea-frondosa) jungles. In addition, the khadar of the Ganga and the Yamuna were also full of jhau (tamarisk). In the Yamuna khadar a narrow belt of jhau was followed by broad stretches of vast covered with thatching grass. The tract provided valuable pasturage for the cattle. The increase in village sites and the growing value of agricultural land led to a marked decrease in the area under groves. During the periods of third (1822-1904) and fourth (1937-1940) regular settlement such decrease was very remarkable. Akbar and Jahangir visited Koil, (the old name of Aligarh District) on hunting expeditions. Jahangir says in his memoirs that in the forest of Koil, he killed wolves. From the traditional account of the District contained in the Misl-i Bandobast (files of revenue records) of the District, it appears that a fairly large number of villages

were under forest cover prior to being inhabited. The presence of words having association with different kinds of vegetation (in actual or corrupt forms) such as khandi, ghana, juraiya, arangia, jhau or jhan and shikar in a large number of village names, suggests that these places were once covered with forests or thickets. In addition to these, there are villages which are named after trees found in the forests e.g. arni, jamun, dhak, mahua, imli shisham, bakaven, and so on. At some of these places, not a single tree with which the name of a particular village is associated can be found today.

It is obvious that the region was covered with fairly dense vegetation which was subsequently cleared by the inhabitants during the course of settlement. Hence there are many village names indicating the burnings or clearings of forests, such as Barauli, Jaroth, Jarothi, Bankati, Barotha etc. denoting a settlement founded after the cutting down or burning of a forest. Other names like Amni, Janera, Hasayen, Jraiya and Kadali signify forest settlement. Many villages in the District are associated with the pipal tree (ficus religiosa) and pakar (ficus infectoria) such as Pipali Nagla, Kadirpur, Pipal garhi, Piploi, Pipali, the pipal gaon, Piploth and Pakhondna etc. These two trees are considered sacred by the Hindus. Similarly various villages have been named after trees like imli (tamarind), for example, Imloth, Imlani and Ratanpur Imlia etc., Mahua e.g., Maho, Mahua
etc. and Khajur (arabika) e.g., Khajura uath. In the same way, village names such as Neem Khera, Amosi, Jamuni, Kansera, Barotha etc. indicate their close association with different trees.

1.3 Place names Associated with Topography and Siting

A large number of village names in the Aligarh District are associated with topographical feature like rivers, mounds, depressions and the characteristics of the soil. Place names analysis shows that there are three villages in the District designated after the bhur soil, viz., Bhuria in tehsil Sikandra Rao and Bhuria Majra Kasar and Bhuria Majra Rampur in tehsil Atrauli. Rehsupur in tehsil Koil which is named after reh soil, given has also been given to 29 villages in the District having inferior quality of soils. The suffix and prefix like khera, used in village names denotes earthen mound Villages like Khera Kishan, Gaon Khera, Balukhera, Bhawan Khera, Khera Firozpur and Khera Parsauli can be cited as examples of this. Dariyapur, Gangabas and Gangiri indicate that the villages bearing these names are closely associated with rivers.

1.4 Place names Associated with Animals

Bagh or tiger is the only wild animal with which some of the village place names are associated. Baghna, Bagh Sasni, Baghau, and Baghraya villages are good examples of this. These locations must have been covered with forests.
having wild animals in the past. Some of the earlier human settlements which came into existence as a result of the cleaning of the forest land might have been occasionally visited by tigers.

1.5 Place-names Associated with Castes and Communities

There are many villages in the Aligarh District which have been named after castes and communities inhabiting them. Such villages are mainly hamlets that are attached to the main villages. Nagla Chamar, Chamar Patti, Nagla Jato etc., are named after communities of the scheduled castes. Likewise various hamlets are also designated after other low castes communities such as Nagla Fakira, Nagla Kunji, Nagla Jughar and Nagla Madho etc. Many villages in the District have been named after different castes of Muslims, like Shekhpur, Shekhpur Kutub (after the Sheikhs), and Nagla Mian (after the Saiyids). During the medieval period the District was ruled by many prominent Muslims chiefs who founded many villages. The place-name analysis of the villages clearly indicates that they have been named after some of the rulers of India, like Akbarpur, Akrabad (after Akbar), Jahangirabad, Jahangirpur, Jahangirpur Kondra, Jahangira (after Jahangir), Sikandarpur Ghherat, Sikandarpur Kota (after Sikandar Lodi), and Firozpur after Firoz-Tughlak.

1.6 Place-names Associated with Ages and Sizes of Settlements

A large number of villages using suffixes and prefixes like, Khurd, Kalan Buzurg and pur, pura, nagla, garh, garhi
nagar etc., indicate the sizes and ages of villages. Village names ending in kalan or khas and khurd or pura designate generally the earlier and late settlements respectively and 'big' and 'small' as the these Persian words imply. Mamota Kalan, Shahpur Kalan, Sataloni Kalan, Kherala Kalan, Luheta Khurd, Shahpur Khurd, Khera Khurd, Bizona Khurd, Badha Khurd, Alipura, Hirpura, Sotipura, and Birpura may be cited as examples of such names. The suffix, buzurg used in a village name, denotes a larger village size. Kheria Buzurg, Husainpur Buzurg, Tikari Buzurg are the good examples of this. Similarly, village names having terms like garh, and garhi, suggest former seats of the local chiefs where the people used to assemble for safety and security. Villages, Madhogarh Hasangarh, Kishangarh, Manzoorgarh and Sikargarh are examples of such villages.

1.7 Place-names Associated with Grants

There are many village names related to land grants which a chief or zamindar gave as charity or reward to his officials and servants. Suffix and prefix like Maufi (without charge) and chak (a piece of land) used in village names indicate the settlements of medieval period, founded by Muslim rulers. These rulers used to grant free lands to their

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servants and officials for service rendered by them. Later, these areas got settled and were named according to the nature of the grants. Villages Doriyia Maufi, Salimpur Maufi, Chakathal and Chak Kheria may be cited as examples of such villages.

2. Evolution of Territorial Units Through Land Occupancy

The occupation of land has been a universal process for the formation of territories among corporate political groups throughout human history. The dominant corporate group always occupied the key points of a territory and allowed other, non-corporate groups of men and women, to settle on a land given to them in order to carry out their socio-economic activities within its organisational framework. Thus territory formation was the first step in the process of settling at lower level. Due to this, there has been a strong link between settlement pattern and economic activity. Territory formation in the initial stages was not usurpation of a region but the occupation of a virtually virgin or thinly populated land by a group of study people on a small scale. Such an area had enough scope for expansion of the settlement and development of socio-economic and political institutions with a view to ensuring peaceful existence and defence. During the course of

land occupancy and actual settling process, emotional and historical ties developed among the inhabitants, which tended to bind them to live together in a territory. Such a territorial occupation required autonomy for the occupants to function as a viable unit. Many cultural institutions such as shrines, markets, fairs, and places associated with gods and godlings came up in the course of the settling process and these made the inhabitants feel that some places were vital for, the well being of the group and must be defended. The occupied land, the shrine, the family burial ground and sotes of local festivals also generated a sense of belonging to the territory among the settlers which was shared by the non corporate group with those of the corporate political group. As such, the territory become a complex symbol of possessiveness, means of sustenance and well-being and security and culture evolved over a period of time.

At the time of the original occupancy there was no fixed territorial system. However, later these territories developed as clan based republics headed by their chiefs. During the medieval period there was three-level political structure in almost all parts of India. At the top was Delhi or central government, in the middle was the regional or provincial administration and at the base was the hegemony of

the locally dominant corporate group. An occupied territory generally termed rai or laga, was the primary clan area and came to be known as the pargana. The pargana was segmented into sub-clan or secondary clan areas known as tappas, which were subdivided into smaller territorial units were known as gaon (grams). As a result of this three tier division, there evolved a hierarchy of settlements, the original chief settlements at the pargana and tappa levels developed as quasi-urban settlements because of their respective territorial and sub-territorial commands of leadership and resources, whereas the gaon evolved as the basic rural unit of settlement with local resource utilization and political power. Under the prevailing linear political system, these three units i.e., gaon, tappa, and pargana were territorially structured on the functional principles of kinship and descent from the ancestor or founder of the dominant clan. These settlements were, thus, arranged on the basis of hierarchy, both areally and functionally from the very beginning and continued to remain so until forces of modernization broke them up.

During the British period, a five-tier territorial system was introduced, i.e., paragana, tappa or turf, taluka,

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patti and goon in descending order. The Britishers brought about enormous changes in the civil and administrative set up. The paragnas were maintained as subdivisions of a tehsil and were used as revenue units, and they continue to function as such. Earlier, tappa was used as a fiscal division, but later, the British recognized the tappa as a sub-clan territory. Not only were talugdari and zamindari and other territorial rights of land corresponding to them given weight, but they also formed the basis of surveys and records of holding rights.¹

Four years after India achieved independence the Zamindari Abolition Act was passed by the U.P. Legislature in May 1951, and by January, 1956, all the zamindari estates were abolished. The Aligarh District was divided into seventeen administrative cum planning divisions, called development blocks, and these have been sub-divided into Adalat Panchayats which 8 to 12 Villages per Adalat Panchayat, on an average. These units are often independent of the clan boundaries and other social ties.

The foregoing discussion reveals that different people and societies had introduced their own methods of spatial organizations and agricultural systems, which, during the course of time, intermixed and metamorphosed and thus the present territorial system was evolved which has a distinct structural pattern.
The objective of the present study is to discuss the various zamindar clan of the Aligarh District from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, who functioned as corporate territorial groups and served as dominant local power in different parts of the region. Information regarding the territorial evolution of the District in the ancient period is not available. So the study is primarily based on medieval sources, and particularly on the information contained in Ain-i-Akbari and Misl-i-Bandobast (miscellaneous papers of revenue settlement) of 1866, preserved in the Revenue Records Room of the Aligarh Collectorate and at paragana or mahal and village levels. Information regarding earlier times is based on local tradition. Information gathered from these sources has been supplemented with the data collected during field survey.

During Akbar's reign (1556-1605) a new unit of administration was introduced, i.e., sarkar. Koil was a sarkar of the suba of Agra. It contained 21 mahals viz., Atrauli, Akbarabad (present Akrabad), Ahar, Pahasu, Bilram, Pachlana, Tappal, Thana, Farida, Dibai, Jalali, Chandaus, Khurja, Sikandra Rao, Saron, Sidhpur, Shikarpur, Koil Gangiri, Mahra, Malikpur and Nuh. (Fig.3.2). The sarkar was divided into four dastur (revenue) circless, i.e., Thana Farida, Mahra, Haweli Koil and Akbarabad. The mahals of Pahasu, Dibai, Malikpur, Shikarpur, Nuh, Khurja, Thana Farida, Ahar,
KOIL MEDIEVAL TERRITORIAL DIVISION'S DURING AKBAR'S TIME (1556 - 1605 AD.)

FIG. 3:2

INDEX

- Suba Boundary
- Sarkar Boundary
- Dastur Circle
- Sarkar Headquarters

KALMANSURI

- Farida
- Ahar
- Malakpur
- Shikarpur
- Kurja
- Pahasu
- Dibai
- Shaikpur
- Tappal
- Chandaus
- Chherat
- Atrauli
- Harouganj
- Jalali
- Gangiri
- Bilram
- Sohawar
- Sidhpur
- Morohro
- Suror
- Karali
- Alipur

- Suhar
- Koila (Aligarh)
- Deotana
- Koh
- Jait
- Mothura Maholi
- Koela
- Farah
- Agra
- Firozabad
- Sikohabad
- Fatuhbad
- Rapri

20 0 20 40 60 KILOMETRES
Chandaus and Tappal wave included in the dastur circle of Thana Farida; the mahals of Sorom, Pachlana, Marahna, Bilram and Sidhpur were in the dastur circle of Marahra, the mahals of Koil, Jalali, Sikandra Rao and Gangeri were in the dastur circle of Haweli Koil, and the mahals of Akbarabad and Atrauli were in the dastur circle of Akbarabad. The sarkar of Koil covered an area much larger than that of the present District of Aligarh. It contained 1.52 times more area than the present District.¹ Thirteen of the twenty one mahals of sarkar Koil and the mahals of Agra sarkar, lay wholly or partly within the present limits of Aligarh District. Most parts of the paraganas of Hathras and Mursan were included in the mahals of Jalesar and Mahaban of Agra Sarkar. Small portions of the mahals of Dibai, Pahasu, Bilram, Marahra, Nuh and Mohaban, which are now in the district of Bulandshahar, Etah and Mathura, were included in the present District of Aligarh. A study of zamindar clans between the sixteenth and the eighteenth century reveals incursions on the territories of these mahals, their pattern of settlements, areas of jurisdiction and successive changes therein in the region during the period.

There were many zamindar clans which held lands in the region. Some of the important of these clans were Chauhans, Badgujars, Porouchs, Gahlots, Bangars, Pundirs, Jangharas, ¹ From the boundary as shown in Irfan Habib's Atlas of the Mughal Empire, (1987) p. 125.
Jats, Brahmans, Afghans, Bhals, Kiras, Jadons and Kayesthas. The territorial jurisdiction of these zamindar clans have been clearly marked out in Fig. 3.3 and 3.4). These figures have been prepared on the basis of the data contained in the Misl-i Bandobaest and the actual position recorded in 1833, in which year the first regular settlement was completed Fig. 2 shows the position of the zamindar clans upto the sixteenth century, which is based on traditions recorded in the Misl-i Bandobaest. It may be noted that the Misl-i-Bandobaest information has been supplemented with data collected during the field survey of the region. By and large, the present local traditions confirm earlier ones contained in Misl-i-Bandobaest. The zamindar clans have been a dominant factor in encouraging the evolution and growth of rural settlements in the region. So the study of the territorial jurisdiction of different zamindar clans is essential in order to trace the evolution of the villages in the study area. The account of some of the important clans along with their areas of settlement is given below.

1. Chauhans Figs. 3.3 and 3.4 show the position of the Chauhans in the region in different periods. Fig. 3.3, based on tradition contained in Misl-i-Bandobaest, indicates that the Chauhans dominated in the paragna of Khair, Chandaus and Morthal and were also found in the paragna of Tappal and Atrauli as well as in the western part of Sikandra Rao. By
1833, they had lost half of their holdings in the pargana of Tappal while they retained their major holdings in Chandaus. In Khair, they conceded at least half of their lands to the Jadons and the Brahmans. In Morthal they retained their traditional area. In Atrauli their area seems to have doubled, and in Sikandra Rao too it had expanded. The presence of Chauhans in the paragnas of Koil and Atrauli in the sixteenth century is nominal. This may be explained by the absence of information in the *Misl-i-Bandobast*. According to it the places were under the Chauhan zamindars even in sixteenth century.\(^1\) The villages of Qasimpur, Jawan, Tejpur, Mohanpurah, Raipur and Loharah of paragana Morthal are said to have been captured by the Chauhans during the Sultanate Period, after clearing away the Muslims.\(^2\) According to a tradition these areas have been held by the Chauhans since the 12th Century A.D., and that Manik Rai Chauhan migrated from Rajputana and captured Sikandra which was then dominated by the Chandelas.\(^3\) Bilram Singh, son of Manik Rai Chauhan, founded Bilram (in Etah District) and his descendants established many other settlements in the region. Jarauli, Kachaura, Katai, Porah, Dahgawan, Agsauli (Aksauli),

\(^2\) Information from Brij Mohan Sharma of Satha.
\(^3\) A few sculptures, assignable to 11th and 12th centuries A.D., have been discovered recently from the mound at Sikandra Rao proper. They have been preserved in the Archaeological Laboratory of the A.M.U., Aligarh
Bargawan, Mandi, Jansol and Sindhauli are cited as examples of some of the rural settlement of Chauhan zamindar clans.\(^1\)

The south-western part of Sikandra Rao was formerly included in the mahal of Marahra and its north-eastern corner was included in that of Bilram. Bilram and Marahra belonged to the Aligarh District till 1824 and 1838 respectively.\(^2\)

I Badgujars

Fig. 3.3 that Badgujar zamindar clans held the entire paragana of Barauli and a few portions of the northern part of pargana Atrauli in the sixteenth century. According to the *Misl-i Bandobast*, villages Gaonri, Tamkoli, Pratappur, Potha and Malikpurah of Pargana Barauli were granted to Rao Pratap Singh, the ancestor of the Badgujars of this pargana, by Raja Prithvi Raj Singh of Delhi, as a reward in twelfth century A.D. Rao Pratap Singh made Barauli his capital. A large number of villages of this pargana are said to have been founded by the Badgujar zaminars.\(^3\)

II Poruch:

According to information called from *Misl-i Bandobast*, the Poruch zamindars held 40 villages in the central part of Hathras pargana and 14 in the eastern part of

1. Information from Niranjan Singh Chauhan Journalist, Sikandra Rao.
Mursan during the sixteenth century. Villages Dariyapur, Madanpur, Tatapur, Aliya, Mitai, Gajrauli, Hathras, Mandu, Lakhnu, Pabloi, Khonda Hazari and Garhi Quandhari are some examples of such settlements. Due to incursion of the Jats into their territorial jurisdiction, their position declined in the region (Fig. 3.4).

III Gahlots The Gahlot zamindars had settled in the southernmost part of the paragna of Hathras and south-eastern corner of Mursan. According to information contained in Misl-i Bandobast, Hansraj came here in 1225 A.D. from Loni Chittorgarh and founded the village of Chursen. His descendant, Alu Singh, was converted to Islam during the reign of Shahjahan in 1631 A.D. and was named by emperor Alah Khan. He founded the Village of Alahpur. The Misl-i Bandobast also mentions the names of other places from where the Gahlots migrated to this region. According to it, Ahiran migrated from Jewar and founded the village Ahavi in 1566 while Thakur Mirza founded Mirzapur village.

IV Jats The Jats are mainly concentrated in Hathras and Mursan (Fig. 3.3). They trace their descent to Makhan, who at the end of the sixteenth or the beginning of the seventeenth century, led a tribe of Thenwa Jats from Rajputana into the
neighbourhood of Mursan. Nand Ram, the successor of Makhan, established himself in the region of Mursan. Villages Udaibhan, Bhakroi, Kakravali, Gubrai, Gopalpur, Kuravali and Dengra were founded by the Jats during the fifteenth century. Shahzadpur, Lustan, Sathia, and Rampur are the earliest settlement of the Jats in paragna Hathras. About Daulatabad, the Misl-i Bandobast furnishes the information that it was founded by Daulat, a Jat cultivator. According to Smith, the Jats of Tappal first settled in Khandia, from where they dispersed until they occupied the whole of Tappal and parts of the adjacent parganas. Twenty villages in the Tappal paragna are said to have been founded by the Jats: The settlements of Thakural Jats are found in the Hasangarh paragna and in Pisawah.

V Brahmins The Brahmin zamindars are scattered throughout the Aligarh District. But there are three prominent belts of their zamindari in it (Fig. 3.3). One is located in the south-eastern corner of paragna Khair, than other in the western part of Tappal and the third in the southern part of the paragna of Mursan.

In Tappal, villages Devaka, Morargarh, Hetalpur and Adampur were founded by Brahmin zamindars. In paragna Khair,  

2. Smith, W.H., op. cit., p. 27.
there are 15 villages which were held by the Brahmin zamindars roundabout 1600 A.D. Villages Arni, Nagla Assu, Balipur, Andla, Kasison, Nandpur Pala, Nayela, Bihari pur and Bhojpur were founded by the Brahmin Zamindars. In paragna Hathras, one Keshav Brahmin acquired a forest from the Poruch chief of Dariyapur, and after clearing it, founded a village there after his own name, i.e. Nagla Keshon. Village Naga Jodha was founded by one Jodha Ram, a Brahmin cultivator. In paragna Mursan Brahmins founded many villages in the sixteenth century. Villages Khutipurah, Rathbangarhi, Senpur, Darshana and Mohanpur may be cited as examples of such settlements. During the succeeding centuries, the position of Brahmin zamindars was further strengthened (Fig.3.4). Under Maratha rule, Pandit Ganga Dhar held the talluga of Iglas as freehold.\(^1\) In 1833, Brahmins held nine villages in paragna Tappal, 23 and a half in Khair, 21 in Mursan and 45 in Hathras. Enjoying the privilege of being the priestly caste, the Brahmins acquired a number of villages as muafi (freehold) lands. Later, they extended their zamindari possessions even more and, as bankers and money lenders, and thereby acquired a large number of other villages.

**VI Afghans** Before the battle of Khanwa in 1527, when Babur's position was precarious. Koil had been captured by

\(^{1}\) Hutchinson, J.R., op. cit. p. 218.
Iliyas Khan Sherwani. The Sherwani Pathans of the Aligarh District claim their descent from the Afghan tribe of Sarwan (corrupted to Shwerwani). Villages Nausha, Barla, Pahripur, Hasanpur, Chharra and Gangiri were originally held by the Sherwani zamindars. Abbas Khan, in his detailed history of the Sherwani tribe and their settlements from the earliest time to the twentieth century, furnishes valuable information regarding the Sherwanis of this region. Dadon, Dataoli, Budhagaon, Bilone Kanobi, Hasanpur, Bhamori, Barla, Mangupur, Alifpur and Parora are some of the earliest settlement of the Shwerwanis in the region during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Afghans of Sikandra Rao trace their earliest settlements in the region to the reign of Sultan Sikandar Lodi, It is said that Sikandarpur was named after the Sultan. Villages, Arifpur, Asoi, Barishhpur, Fatehpur, Khizrpur Qasba, Phulrai Mughal Garhi, Sakhipur, Aba Talippur and Sanjarpur were held by the Afghan zamindars in the sixteenth century. Dad Khan, the ancestor of the present leading Sherwani families, settled permanently in Gangiri.

His three sons, Daud Khan, Khan Zaman Khan and Ghulan Mohammad Khan acquired a large area of land, in the region and, by 1833, the Sherwanis were holding nearly the entire paragna of Gangiri and partly that of Atrauli.

There are other minor zamindar castes which claim antiquity. Some of them are Rajputs, such as Jadons, Gujars, Rathors, Pals and Dors in paragna Tappal; Tomars in Koil and Iglas; Gauras in Hathras and Madawar and Chhonkars in Atrauli and Gangiri. The Ahirs, Lodhas, Dhusars, Baniyas, Dhobis, Gadariyas, Kalars, Rewarises and Aherias are said to have founded some of the earliest villages of the District. The Sheikhs, particularly of Nanau and Pilakhna, settled in the region during the time of Babur after ousting the Dhonkar Rajputs. They trace their descent to Shaikh Ghuran, who is said to be founded some villages in the area.

On the basis of the above discussion about the position of different zamindar clans from the sixteenth century to 1833, it may be concluded that the Chauhans, who were once dominating in tehsil Khair, were reduced to the second position and that Jats extended their zamindari considerably to gain the first position in the Aligarh District, and that the Jadons, who were not on the scene in the sixteenth century, appeared as a dominant clan, later while the possessions of other zamindars clans like the Poruchs, the Gohlots, the Bangars and the Kirar were reduced greatly in
tehsil Hathras, their villages being acquired by the Jats and the Jadons.

3. Rural Settlements in sequent occupancy

On account of the non-availability of concerned literature, the history of the human occupancy of the study area is shrouded in obscurity. An analysis of the cultural traditions made previously, indicates that the region which forms part of the Ganga-Yamuna doab, has been one of the most ancient settled place in the country. Such traditions, are based on the villagers' own perception of the past and hence their historical authenticity is questionable. Some literature and historical accounts on the settlements in the Doab in general are available. However, there is hardly any mention of early settlements in the Aligarh District. Excavations made in the nineteenth and the twentieth century have shed some light on the ancient history of the region. Hence for the present study, the literary historical account of the Ganga-Yamuna doab as a whole and the archaeological evidences found in the Aligarh District have been taken into consideration. The evolution of rural settlement in sequent occupancy has been studied under the following heads:

1. Ancient period
2. Medieval Period
3. Modern Period
3.1 Ancient Period (upto 1193 A.D.)

No historical account of the Aligarh District before the twelfth century AD. is available. Excavations in late nineteenth century conducted by Cunningham and Fuhrer\(^1\), as well as recent excavations by the archaeological section of the Department of History, Aligarh Muslim University\(^2\), Aligarh, have shed some light on the ancient cultural history of the region.

Excavations at various sites of the region have shown that settlement of this region had begun around 1500 BC. The earliest remains i.e., pieces of ochre coloured pottery (OCP 1800–1300 B.C.) have been found at Jalali. Then, Black and Red wares, (BRW – 1300–1200 BC), have been recovered from five places, viz., Sankra, Morthal, Hathras Qila, Sasni, and Harduaganj. Though the sites are not numerous, broken pieces of the Black and Red ware have been regularly found in deposits. The region is also rich in the deposits of painted grey ware and its associated wares. A large number of fragments and even complete pots of the classical and crudely painted grey ware (P.G.W. 1300–700 BC) have been recovered from different sites of the District, such as Hathras Qila,

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Sasni, Komri and Tuskan in tehsil Hathras; Harduaganj, Madrak and Morthal in tehsil Koil; Bharatpur Bajera and Tapppal in tehsil Khair; Dhansari and Sankara in tehsil Atrauli and Vijayagarh in tehsil Sikandra Rao.\(^1\) The painted grey ware deposits of some sites of the District bear the similarity to the classical painted grey ware deposits of Atranji Khera\(^2\), (Etah) adjoining Aligarh District. Figure 3.5 indicates historic settlements sites of different period. On the basis of the association of the painted Grey ware with the Mahabharata\(^3\) and the various carbon 14 datings\(^4\), it is inferred that this culture was prevalent in this region in the period from 1000 to 600 B.C. The Classical Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW, 700-200 B.C.) have been recovered from three places in the District, Sasni and Komri in tehsil Hathras and Dhansari in tehsil Atrauli. Its associated wares and antiquities have also been noticed in abundance in the


\[\text{3. Lal, B.B., 'Exavations At Hastinapur and other Exploration; Ancient India, No. 10 and 11, (1954-55), p. 146-151.}\]

\[\text{4. Gaur, R.C.; Date of Painted Grey ware, paper read at the Seminar on painted Grey ware, August (1968), A.M.U., Aligarh.}\]
area. These finds reveal that the region has been extensively inhabited since 600 B.C.

Though it is not possible to trace the successive evolution of settlements in the early historical periods, it is almost certain that the region was occupied by pre-Aryan people during prehistoric times. The presence of Shiva temples in the District clearly indicates that the study area was once occupied by non-Aryans because Shiva was a purely non-Aryan god. Though, archaeological evidences of the earliest settlement of the Aryan people in the area are not available, it may be surmised that their society was mainly rural, based on an agricultural economy. They must have cleared the vegetation along the tributaries of the Ganga and the Yamuna rivers to settle in this region. They must have made their colonies and named these after the name of the chief of their tribes, or clans. By the end of the seventh century B.C., the Aryanisation of the area had been completed and a four tier political organisation had been evolved i.e., tribal kingdom (rastra), containing tribes (jana), tribal units (vish) and villages (grana).1 The smallest unit of a settlement was the griha (house) followed by kula (habitation of joint family) which was headed by the eldest male number of the family called kulapa. Villages were the basic units

of administration\(^1\) and were generally of three types: the majority of them were those which had grown out of inter-mixing of the Aryan and non-Aryan settlers whose main occupation was agriculture. The habitat (\textit{vatsu}), around the village deity was surrounded by \textit{gram-kshetra}, (cultivated fields) beyond which lay \textit{vraja} (forests and pasture lands). The second type was the \textit{paccanta grama} (border village) inhabited by aboriginals or degraded tribes. The third type consisted of villages mostly occupied by artisans and craftsman.\(^2\) The houses of the period were made of wood and bamboo and they did not differ much from those found today.\(^3\)

The settlements of the Arayan may be classified on the basis of their function into six different types, which are as follows:

(i) \textit{Goschala} (cattle ranch)

(ii) \textit{Palli} (a small barbarian settlement)

(iii) \textit{Durga} (forc)

(iv) \textit{Kharrata} or \textit{Pattan} (town)

(v) \textit{Nagar} (city)

\textbf{References:}


The head of the protector of an Aryan village was known as *gramini*. There was a joint family system in these villages, and its organization was based on decimal system. Aryan settlements were divided into eight different types, on the basis of their layout and plan, which are as follows:

(i) **Dandaka** (resembling a staff)
(ii) **Sarvatobhadra** (happy in all respect)
(iii) **Nandyavarta** (abode of happiness)
(iv) **Padmaka** (like lotus flower)
(v) **Prastava** (conch-shaped)
(vi) **Karmuka** (bow-shaped)
(vii) **Chatarmukha** (having four faces or walls)

Fig. 5 shows the plan and layout of Aryan villages. Each village was surrounded by a wall and a ditch for defence purposes. There were generally a gate in the middle of each of the four sides, dividing the village into four quarters. The centre of the village was generally occupied by a temple, tank or public hall. The four quarters were further subdivided by straight streets. Each quarter was inhabited by people of a particular caste or profession, the best quarters

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being generally reserved for Brahmans and people of other high castes.¹

During archaeological excavations, Cunningham recovered some fragments of Buddhist sculptures from Lakhno, Gohan Khera, Sankra and Balai Qila in Koil.

A large ruined brick stupa, conical in shape, and a small building, have been found in Balai Qila, which indicate that this site once had a Buddhist settlement.

These early settlements were in the form of compact and self-sufficient villages. According to the size of the villages, they were variously gamak (small village), gama (ordinary village), nigama gama (big village), dwara gama (suburban village), and pachhanta gama (urban village). Around the villages there were arable lands (gramakshetra), a common pasture land for the cattle and a jungle to provide timber and fuelwood.² There was a gramika (headman) in every village either nominated by the king or elected by grama vriddhas (village elders), to manage the affairs of the village and the maintain peace and security.³

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From the geographical position of Koil, it appears that it was included in the Saursema mahajanapada. From the extent of the empires of the Maurya, the Sakas, the Kushanas and the Naga rulers and their firm hold over Mathura, it may be inferred that Koil might have successively passed under the sway of these dynasties. There are four objects belonging to Kushan period in Mathura museum which were recovered from different site of the Aligarh District. The most significant of these is the Bodhisattava image recovered from Lakhnau in Hathras tehsil, dated 113 A.D. (Plate 3.1). The attitude of the image is the same as that of a Bodhisattava statue of Sarnath. The front of its pedestal is separated from the feet. On the top of the pedestal, there is a fragmentary inscription of a line which given the name of a Kushan emperor, which could be Maharajasya, Devaputrasya or Huvishkasya. On the basis of the epigraphic evidence it appears that the dates of these four relics range from 106 to 138 A.D. A piece of sculpture belonging to Kushan period has also been recovered from Lakhnau near Hathras tehsil, which dates back to between 145 and 1767 A.D. Another


sculpture of a male figure belonging to the same period has been collected from village Jawar in Iglas tehsil.¹ The fourth sculpture has been recovered from the town ofBeswan. This is one of the ancient villages of the District. It is said that this village was founded by rishi Vishwamitra. A large number of antiquities, including terracotta male and female figurines, plaques, sculptural pieces and a few corroded coins belonging to the Kushan period, have been excavated from different mounds of the village. Some pieces of sculpture and terracotta figurines bearing foreign ethnic features have been recently excavated from the village (Plate 3.2). A few coins, belonging to the Indo-Scythian era, were found by Cunningham in Saigarh Khera² and by Fuhrer from Khera Bajhera.³ A large number of burnt bricks of the Kushan and later periods have been found scattered over many mounds of the Aligarh district, in Lakhnau, Tuskan, Gohankhera, Sankra and Bajhera Khera. These reveal that settlements were widely dispersed during these periods.

Very few archaeological remains of the Gupta period have been found in District. Among these are a female head with a striking style of coiffure found at Mahokhera (Plate 3.3), and the image of Maha Vishnu, recovered from village

PLATE NO. 3.1 Bodhisattva Image (Kushan Period)

PLATE NO. 3.2 Male Head with Foreign Ethnic Feature (Kushan Period)

PLATE NO. 3.3 Female Head with a Striking Style of Coiffer
Bhankri in tehsil Hathras. The latter is preserved in the Mathura Museum. Other antiquities in fragmentary form such as a statuette of Vishnu in his boar incarnation, a female figure probably that of Vaishnavi, a small Vishnu image, and few moulded bricks has been recovered from different sites of the District, belonging from the fifth to the ninth century A.D.\(^1\) It appears that during the Gupta period, a temple of Baghwan Vishnu was built at Bhankri and images were installed therein. The images of Maha Vishnu found in the place has three faces. The central face is human, while the right and the left ones are those of the boar and the lion respectively (Plate 3.4). Another interesting image and some fragments of sculpture have been recovered from Gorai-dhana\(^2\) and Jawar\(^3\) in tehsil Iglas (Plate 3.5). The doab region and Koil were included in the empire of the Guptas. Koil was also part of the empire of Harsha.\(^4\) Later, Gurjar Pratihar rulers exercised their control over Mathura\(^5\), and so Koil must have been included in their dominion.

5. Ibid., p.129.
The region is also rich in the relics of the tenth and the eleventh centuries A.D. The images of post-Gupta period, belonging to these centuries, are still being worshipped in village temples at many places such as Harduaganj, Barhad Sikandra Rao, Hathras, Kailora, Bheyan, Kauriaganj, Katai, Mandi, Bilona and Mendu. The demolition of the Koil minaret in 1862 yielded various mutilated sculptural pieces\(^1\) which had once adorned the Dor Rajput temple at BalaiQila at Koil. Most of the recovered pieces of sculpture and images found there represent the incarnation of Vishnu, e.g., Andhkasur Vadha-murti (image showing the killing of Andhkasur) and Krishna with Radha respectively (Plate 3.6).

Among the ancient sites of the District, Jalai deserves a special mention. Cunningham excavated two mounds from the neighbourhood of Jalali, which yielded bricks characteristic of the Sunga and the Kushan periods. In the course of field survey ten small mounds were found in and around Jalali within a radius of about 1.5 kilometre. Jalali itself is situated on a mound. Many fragments have been collected from these mounds. These have been analysed and dated with the help of carbon-14 dating by the archaeologists in the Department of History, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, and were found belonging to different cultural periods such

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PLATE NO. 3.4 Image of Maha Vishnu (Gupta Period)

PLATE NO. 3.5 Balaram Bearing a Vannala (Gupta Period)

PLATE NO. 3.6 Andhakasur Badha Murti (Post Gupta Period)
as Ochre Coloured Pottery (OCP), Painted Grey Ware (PGW), Grey Ware (GW), Red Ware (RW), Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW) and medieval glazed ware. A large number of pieces of pottery and sculpture of the medieval period have also been recovered from different mounds in the Aligarh District, such as in, Koil, Sikandrarao, Tappal, Charra, Dhansari, Kanka, Shasipur, Rutari, Gaon khera, Hasangarh, Dataoli and Jartoli etc. (Fig.3.5). These wares suggest that during the medieval period rural industry had received impetus. Glazed ware is evenly distributed throughout the region.

The ancient history of Koil does not lend itself to a comprehensive and systematic account. Yet archaeological evidence makes one thing clear that the region has remained in the occupation of different rulers in different period and that they have all left their cultural imprints upon its physical landscape.

It is clear from the forgoing analysis that the region was continuously settled from ancient to medieval period, though it is very difficult to trace the pattern of settlement during the different periods, until extensive excavations are conducted, which is impossible on account of the high density of population in the region.

3.2 Medieval Period (1193-1757)

As stated above nothing definite is known about settlements in the study area till the twelfth century.
By the beginning of the twelfth century, the Tomars belonging to a Rajput clan, had established their kingdom in Delhi, and Dor Rajputs, who were their vassals held sway over the town and fort of Koil. Bargujars, are said to have fought on the side of Pirthvi Raj against the Chandelis of Mahoba and earlier, they are said to have assisted his grandfather in driving Tomars out of Delhi, and which had resulted in the establishment of the Chauhan Dynasty. They were amply rewarded by Prithvi Raj and were allowed to rule over Koil. The end of the twelfth century marks the beginning of Muslim invasions and the tilting of military balance in their favour. Dors and Bargujars were uprooted and the fortress of Koil was taken by Qutubuddin Aibek in 1194, and Hisamuddin Gulbak was appointed its governor. At that time Koil was considered to be the most celebrated fortress in India. Qutubuddin Aibek founded what is known as the Slave Dynasty of Delhi which had Koil in its fold. Balban, one of the rulers of the dynasty, while he was governor, constructed a minar (tower) at Koil, in 1253. Which stood where Balai Qila is situated now. (Plate 3.7). Soon after his accession to the throne in 1265, Sultan Ghiasuddin Balban, directed a


campaign against the rebellious chiefs of the Doab. During the course of this expedition he constructed a fortress at Jalali and assigned it to the Afghans. He also built a mosque at Jalali in 1266-1267.¹

From 1194 till 1526 the region was ruled by Turk or Afghan kings of Delhi through their governors. The hegemony of the Slave Dynasty over the region spanned from 1194 to 1290, that of the Khiljis from 1290 to 1320, of the Tughalaqs from 1320 to 1414 and of the Lodhis from 1451 to 1526. During these regimes, Koil continued to be an important place and figures again and again in contemporary narratives from late twelfth century to early sixteenth century.

After the death of Jalaluddin Khalji in 1295, Alauddin Khalji, placed Koil with other district of the doab, within the Khalisa² (area where the land revenue and other taxes were collected by the assignees for the imperial treasury). Barni, mentions in his memoirs that in all the khalisa districts of the doab, rigorous revenue measures were enforced by the Sultan and half of the produce was taken as land revenue.³ As Koil was included in the khalisa districts

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3. Ibid., p.306.
of the doab, it was also affected by these measures. Throughout the early medieval period Koil appears to have been an important city. The term chitta was after used to refer to Koil, which was a commonly used term for a large or metropolitan city.

During the reign of Muhammad bin Tughlaq, the doab region was convulsed by a peasant rebellion. To quell the revolt, Mohammad Tughlaq summoned forces from Koil. Ibn-i Battuta the Moorish traveller mentions in his account that Koil was also ravaged by the rebellion. He visited Koil and its vicinity in August 1342. He furnishes information about the topography, the condition of the common people and the armed rebellion mentioned above. About Koil he observes: "It is a beautiful city possessing gardens. Most of the trees are mango trees." He also went to Jalali, and found many ridges near and around it, formed by the ravines of the Kali Nadi which flows one mile north east of Jalali. Soil erosion had lead to fantastic ridge formations, as the surface of the ground was broken by deep narrow intersecting channels of the ravines. These ridges appear in the form of hillocks. It is very interesting that a village near Jalali is named Paharipur, (hilly settlement). Apart from the ridges formed

by the ravines of the Kali Nadi, there are many ancient mounds in the vicinity of Jalali on both sides of the Kali Nadi and Sunehra, Paharipur, Azadpur, Shahjahanbad and Sikandrabad, are situated on these mounds. The number and dimensions of these mounds must have been larger at the time of Ibn-i Battuta, who describes them as hillocks. During the course of his journey he observed the countryside quite closely. He usually found ponds in thickly populated villages. It is interesting to note that a large number of place names of the region are associated with ponds, tanks and sheets of water, such as pokhar, kunda, diggi, dabha, daha, nimna, dariva, tal etc.

The Aligarh District was also remained under the sway of the Tughlaq dynasty for some period. After the death of Ferozshah Tughlaq in 1388 A.D, the country in general and the study area in particular, fell into a state of disorder. This period witnessed frequent confrontations between Sultan Mubarak Shah and Sultan Ibrahim Sharqi of Jaunpur. It is said that when the advance of the Sharqi ruler towards Badaon was reported to Sultan Mubarak Shah in 1436, he crossed the Jamuna near Tappal, and, after subjugating Jartauli, marched to Atrauli, where he encamped for some time to watch the

1. Ibid, p.533.
movements of the Shariqi ruler. It was reported to the Sultan that the ruler of Jaunpur had moved southward and had encamped near gasba (township) Burhanabad in the vicinity of Etawah. Mubarak Shah moved from Atrauli and halted at the gasba of Bain Kotah (the present Bain Kalan).

During the early years of the reign of Ibrahim Lodi, Umar Khan was given charge of Koil. He built the fort of Mohammadgarh in 1525, which later came to be known as Aligarh. The Kali Masjid in Mohammad Bani Israilan is one of the examples of the Lodi style of architecture in the study area. During this period the city of Koil was fortified and was provided with four gates. The names of these gates survive to this day, i.e. Delhi Gate, Madar gate, originally Badaon Gate, Turkman Gate and Sasni Gate. On the southern side of the Balai Qila or Uppar Kot, behind the Kotwali, a portion of the fortification wall, made up of square blocks of kankar (pebbles) may still be seen. (Plate 3.8). At one place, a deep tunnel constructed on the principle of a true arch, made of lakhauri bricks, crosses the wall just below its base (Plate 3.9).

At the periphery on the southwest side of Koil, where a moat once existed, a settlements known as Khai-Dora

1. Ibid, pp.207-208.
PLATE NO.3.7 Koil Minarate

PLATE NO.3.8 Fortification Wall of Koil (Medieval Period)

PLATE NO.3.9 Tunnel across the fortification wall.
(khai=moat; dora=lane) was established its name indicating its origin.

The second quarter of sixteenth century marks the establishment of the Mughal empire which continued to rule till the middle of the nineteenth century. Koil retained its importance throughout the Mughal period and almost all Mughal kings visited it. During Babar's period, many stone buildings must have been erected at Koil. However there are no traces of these buildings and Babri Mandi is the only reminder of the period. Babur visited Koil, Atrauli and Sikandra Rao. He got a mosque constructed at Pilakhna, a village in the Aligarh District. It is rectangular in plan and is enclosed by walls about two metre high from the ground level. This mosque is a building of considerable architectural merit.

During Akbar's reign, Koil was the capital of an administrative sarkar which was divided into four 'dasturs' (revenue circles) and twenty one mahals (parganas). Its importance is testified by the fact that it had a 4000 strong cavalry and 79,000 strong infantry and the area under it was in a high state of tillage. Indigo cultivation had reached a

3. Ibid., p.588.
high level of production which had made Koil an important commercial centre, Indigo grown here was exported to Samarkand, Kashghar and Armenia.¹

According to Raja Mohammad, many noted Muslim families of Koil settled in and around Koil, Pilakhna and Naanu during the reigns of Humayun and Akbar.² A few inscriptions survive in the study area from Akbar's time, associated with a number of important personalities. The chief mosque of Sikandra Rao was built by Sabdil Khan in 1585 (Plate 3.10). It is situated in a mound, known as Qila, near the tehsil headquarters. It has considerable architectural merit. It is made of lakhauri bricks and Kankar blocks. It is surmounted by three octagonal hemispherical domes, the central one being larger than the other two. The domes are crowned with inverted lotuses and pinnacles. The shape of the domes, the design of the battlement and the rear minarets shed light on Mughal architecture. Three monuments of Akbar's period are situated in the area known as Bagh-i Gesu Khan³ now a common graveyard in Koil. One of these is the tomb of Mir Gesu Khan made of red sandstone (Plate 3.11). It is an impressive

¹ Early Travels in India (1583-1619), edited by William Foster, Delhi, (1968), p.179.
² Kolvi, Raja Mohammad, Akhbar-ul Jamal, An eighteenth century local history of Koil, Ms. Habibganj Collection, Aligarh, p.211.
³ Ibid., p.207.
PLATE NO. 3.10 Jama Mosque, Sikandara Rao
(Medieval Period)

PLATE NO. 3.11 Tomb of Mir Gazau Khan
(Akbar's Period)
building on a high plinth, with three latticed screens with different geometrical patterns, surmounted by a large low dome.

The District, during the reigns of Akbar's successors, Jahangir and Shahjahan, retained the importance which it enjoyed in during his period. In 1631 an English traveller, Peter Mundy, visited Koil and Sikandrabad and left an interesting account of his the area. On his way back, he passed through the villages of Chherat and Shaikhupur. At the southern outskirts of the city of Aligarh on the G.T. Road, there is a village known as Kukari Khera urf Aurangabad,¹ where there is still a gate of massive dimensions, locally known as the Diamond Gate. Though, now it is without any inscription, it is representative of the typical Mughal architectural style. Probably, the gate was constructed during Aurangzeb's reign. Hence one of the names of the locality is Aurangabad. With the expansion of the city, the village has merged into it and now forms a locality of the city known as Naurangabad.

Towards the beginning of the eighteenth century, after the death of Aurangzeb, Mughal power started dwindling in the region and Jats emerged as a powerful zamindar caste. The rise of the Jats was probably the most important feature of

the social and political history of the region in the early part of the century. The Jats of Aligarh claim their descent from Makhan, who, at the end of the sixteenth or the beginning of the seventeenth century, led a tribe of Thenwa Jats from Rajputana into the neighbourhood of Mursan. They claim that their arrival in the area dates back to about 1646, when their ancestor, Bikram Thakur, drove out the Janghara Rajputs and Kalaras who inhabited the area at the time.\(^1\) This dynasty founded Mursan.\(^2\) Among other castes in the district, the Jats took maximum advantage out of the political unrest and instability that prevailed in the region during the eighteenth century. Largely the extension of Jat zamindari seems to have occurred at the expense of the Rajputs.\(^3\) In fact, Jats were already on the political and social scene during the reign of Aurangzeb's, who had appointed Nund Ram Jat as the Faujdar (army commander) of the District. Nund Ram died in 1665 leaving fourteen sons and the Jats of today are mostly their descendants. In the first half of the eighteenth century, Sabit Khan was appointed Governor of Koil by Muhammad Shah. He took a keen interest in the construction of buildings at Koil. The fort of Sabitgarh

\(^1\) Crooke, W. Tribes and Castes of the N.W.P. and Awadh, Vols, p.35.


\(^3\) Smith, W.H., Final Settlement Report, (1872), p. 239.
(Aligarh fort), the tomb of Allah Rakhsh, (1717) reconstruction of the present Jami Masjid of the city (1/24), the founding of Harduaganj market,\(^1\) repairs of the Jami Masjid at Jalali (1724) and old fortress of Koil, extension of shrine of Shah Faiyaz of Atrauli and the construction of a tank which was linked with the Jami Masjid of the Aligarh city through an underground channel, may be cited as examples of this. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Koil was a very important centre of learning and education. It had scholars specialising in different branches of learning and students from other places came to Koil to study under them.\(^2\)

The second half of the eighteenth century was a period of military and political instability. In 1738, Mohammad Khan Bangash, a nawab of Farrukhabad, ruled over some areas of the District; but his successor had to surrender part of his domain, including parts of Koil, to the Marathas.\(^3\) In 1753 Surajual Jat strengthend his position by ousting Bahadur Singh Bargujar from Koil.\(^4\)

In 1760 Ahmad Shah Abdali captured the Ramgarh fort. During his stay in India due to his oppressive rule, the town

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3. Joon, Ram Sarup, op. cit. p. 82
of Koil was much disturbed. Abdali, who had secured the neutrality of Surajmal, defeated Marathas at Panipat in 1761, and, as a reward for his neutrality, he recognized Surajmal's suzerainty over the territory of Koil.¹

Surajmal died in 1763 the Marathas marched to Koil in 1769 and wanted to capture the Ramgarh fort; but, obtaining six lac rupees from the Jats in lieu of this, they returned to Deccan temporarily. The fall of the Mughal empire, coupled with the exit of the Marathas from the region, created conditions of insecurity and uncertainty in it. So a large number of fortresses (garhis) were built by the Jats, commonly of mud for defence purposes. There are about seventy-five place-names in the region, which bear the pre-fix or suffix of -garhi (mud fortress). A large number of them are found in the Jat dominated areas. The remains of these garhis may still be seen at Mau, Mursan, Tuskan, Sanakra, Hathras, Morthal, Chandaus, Pisawa, Baswan, Gorai, Deorai, Chharra, Barla, Khair, Sasni, Kachaura, Bijaigarh and Iglas. (Fig.3.6). These were buildings of considerable strength around each of which a large number of settlements emerged.

3.3 Modern Period:

The zamindars fought desperately against the British to save the region from their hands but failed to do so. As a

1. Ibid.
result, political confusion prevailed in the area which led the rural people congregating in large villages for security. After 1857, following relatively peaceful political conditions, the study area witnessed a new phase of rural settlement.

The fort of Sansi, was the first to be attacked by the British. The Kachaura (Sikandra Rao) mud fort was the next to be taken by the British after a well contested battle. In August 1803, General Lake advanced towards Aligarh, and, after occupying the town of Koil, moved towards Saheb Bagh and made it his head-quarters. On 4th September 1803 the British army attacked the Aligarh fort and captured it. However, the British could not crush the defiant and stubborn people and their local leaders such as those of Pitambarpur, Chandausi, Atrauli, Dibai, Hathras and Mursan.

After the British occupation of the area in 1804 the present district of Aligarh was formed. It was divided into six tehsils, namely Koil, Atrauli, Sikandra Rao, Iglas and Hathras. Agriculture was its mainstay. At the commencement of the British rule there were large tracts of forests, mainly of dhak (butea frondosa), which have now given way to


2. Major William Thorn, 'Memoirs of The War in India, conducted by General Lake (1803-1806), London, (1893), pp. 95
cultivation. In spite of political stability on the one hand and increase in cultivated area on the other, vagaries of weather took their toll throughout the nineteenth Century, leaving deserted villages in their wake. During the second half of the century the population of the District grew at a fast pace—from about seven lac in 1847 to about twelve lac in 1901 and the density increasing from 186 to 241 people per square kilometres. The District had 1799 settlements, including both towns and villages. At present the Aligarh District has 20 towns and 1749 villages, out of which 45 villages are uninhabited.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, industrial activity had been firmly established and had diversified in the District. According to Nevill, the most important industry in Aligarh was that of cotton. Spinning and weaving from locally grown cotton was an old practice. Cotton industry got a fillip after the expansion of export trade. Henderson mentions thirty-four cotton mills run by steam, employing about 3000 workers, and a large number of hand ginning units in the District. The region was also celebrated for its cotton rugs and carpets with 300 looms at work.

Other industries had also started in the District by the beginning of twentieth century. Crude glass, glas

bangles, and bottles were manufactured in various parts of the District. There were European style factories, such as a flour mill and a lime-factory at Hathras, a Saltpetre refinery at Sikandra Rao, and stone quarries at Koil and Hathras. By 1907, brass and iron lock industry had been established and there were twenty-seven lock works in Koil, Hathras, Iglas and other places. Close on the heels of industrial and agricultural development, trade also flourished in the District. Prior to the British occupation, cotton, food-grains, indigo and indigo seeds were exported from the study area. Trade developed rapidly after the construction of canals and metalled roads, the latter contributing much to the growth of Hathras. The impact of railways was much greater and export of food-grains, oilseeds, raw cotton, ghee (cooking fat), indigo, wrought metal, sugar, hides and Indian piece goods was made possible. Development of markets also followed. Hathras evolved as a centre for trading in cotton, sugar and food-grains and became an important market in the District. On a smaller scale, local markets such as those of Hardauganj, Atrauli, Khair, Sinkandra Rao, Sasni, etc. also contributed their mite to the trading activity in the District.

Introduction of railways was an important milestone in the evolution and growth of the rural settlements in the region. The first line to open was that from Tundla to
Aligarh, in March 1863. The Aligarh - Bareilly line was opened in 1872, Aligarh-Mathura metre gauie line in 1875 and Hathras-Kasganj line in 1884.

Aligarh being a central halting place for travellers to and from Delhi, Agra, Mathura etc. Many serais were established on the periphery of the Koil town, along its entrance roads; and when Koil expanded it took these serais into its fold.\(^1\) An altogether new settlement was founded by Claude Russell now called Russellganj. According to Atkinson, there were a large number of Imambaras (places of Shia rituals) and many Hindu temples, including the Achaleshwar Temple in the region.\(^2\) The British developed the city of the Aligarh in the north, between the old Koil town and the Aligarh fort and designated it as the Civil Lines. The railway station, the judges' court, the clock tower, the collectorate, the head post office, the government press, the government school, the jail, the hospitals and a church were built there. The buildings of Aligarh Institute and the scientific society founded by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, were also constructed in the Civil Lines. Subsequently around these nuclei a large number of settlements emerged. The Aligarh District was subdivided into a number of administrative units, district, sub-division (tehsil/pargana) thana and revenue

\(^1\) Atkinson, op. cit., p. 514.
\(^2\) Ibid., p. 516.
village Though the British like their predecessors, did not interfere in the village organization in general, the pattern of settlement, was considerably modified after the establishment of their rule. The people began to move out of the confines of their village, constructing their new dwellings in open spaces near their fields, a fact which subsequently led to the development of hamlets. The Department of Revenue Administration has prepared detailed large scale survey maps of individual villages, showing agricultural plots, inhabited sites, roads, water bodies, forests, etc. which throw some light on the pattern and distribution of rural settlement in the region.

After independence (1947), rural settlements in the study area have witnessed a general tendency of dispersal, because of changed economic conditions. Loss of the hold of traditional as well as other socio-religious beliefs, and customs, the abolition of the zamindar system (1951), the consolidation of land holdings, extension of the means of transport and communication, electricity, irrigation, banking and marketing facilities to the rural areas, improvements in the method of farming with the use of high yielding varieties of seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and new farm machinery have all contributed to this trend in recent years. The phenomenal increase of population and consequent demand for more lands for farming and housing has only led to the widespread shrinkage of forest cover but also to the reclamation of
usar (barren) lands. The new administrative institutions like Development Blocks and Village Panchayats and public buildings belonging to primary schools, rural health centres, panchayat bhawans, (Village council house), community centres etc. have contributed a lot to a change in the rural landscape of the study area. A large number of new settlements have grown up around these centres. The programme of providing house-sites and credit facilities to Harijans and landless labourers, the abolition of bonded labour, the massive drive for linking villages having more than 1500 people with main roads, the extension of health services and drinking water facilities to villages have made the impact on the settlement patterns in the rural areas of the District. Due to these developments, new settlement sites are emerging closer to the fields or along the transport routes. A study of the field surveys of the District has clearly revealed that while the number of revenue villages has remained almost constant for the last four or five decades, a large number of new hamlets have emerged as farmsteads or shops/markets in villages to make room for the fast growing population.