Chapter II
Later Mughals and the Rohilla:

(i) A Study in 18th century Mughal India
(ii) A study in Rohilla ethnicity
CHAPTER – II

LATER MUGHALS AND THE ROHILLAS

PART-I

Understanding 18th Century Mughal India

The eighteenth century in India was characterized by two critical transitions which altered the structure of power and initiated important social and economic changes. The first was the transition in the first half of the century from the Mughal Empire to the regional political orders. The second was the transition in the polity, society and economy. In the 18th century English East India Company steered its way to position of political dominance. The decline of the Mughal authority gave rise to the emergence of a number of independent kingdoms. In this chapter we focus on the emergence of these independent kingdoms in different parts of the country. The aggressive British policies affected the economic situation. The agricultural and non agricultural production was altered. The commercial activities also underwent changes. These will also be discussed in this very chapter. The social and cultural scenario of 18th century will also be analysed.

Political and Economic Decline---From 1707 to 1805, from the death of Aurangzeb to the final subjugation of the bulk of India by the English East India Company forms the long period during which the Mughal Empire disintegrated and new states struggled to occupy the space it had vacated. Within this indigenous India, It is important to know the nature of the Political process its implications for the economy of India until India became Company’s empire. For the purposes of the present thesis, it is mainly the economic implications that needs our serious attention however political aspect is equally important. All theories of the eighteenth century must necessarily start with the problem of the economic of Mughal Empire before its decline. The conventional concept of empire in Indian history generally has come under challenge With Romilla Thapar revisiting the Mauryas and with Gerard Fussman’s Empire. Both tend to emphasize the unevenness in depth of central

control, the empire presumably drawing smaller and smaller revenues, and so affecting the economy less and away from the centre towards its frontiers. It applies this formula of core versus periphery ---- as it moved away from the centre towards its frontiers.30 Behind the surprising degree of systematised centralisation and even spread of Mughal administration was, perhaps, not only the momentum given by Akbar's strong measures, but also the existence of a universal land-tax, which, allowing for different shares of local hereditary right-holders (styled zamindars in the Mughal terminology of the 17th century corresponded to the surplus produced by the peasant. Detailed documentation from Rajasthan and Maharashtra adds specific details to the picture, without affecting however the generality of the magnitude and nature of Mughal land-tax.31 What the Empire did was to greatly systematise revenue assessment and collection, as also the shares it would allow to the various kinds of local claimants, whom it insisted on viewing as a single class of zamindars. In recent writings, there has been a tendency to overlook the major burden of the land-tax, and emphasize instead the adjustments with and concessions to the zamindars.32 But if we bear in mind the fact that, with all the concessions given,33 the land-tax was still the main external charge on the peasant, it would be hard to disagree with Moreland's dictum that "next to the weather, the administration was the dominant fact in the economic life of the country".34 Once this dominant fact is acknowledged, one can consider arguments as to whether the Mughal Empire obstructed or promoted economic growth, notably in the form of extension of cultivation. In the 1660's Francois Bernier observed a process of economic decay in India, which he attributed to the royal ownership of land, as reflected in the unrestrained authority of the Timariots (his term for jagirdars) and their unpredictably short terms set by the King.35 The increasing pressure of revenue led, on the one hand, to a flight of the peasants from land, having a negative effect upon

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32 See, especially, Andre Wink, op. cit., for such a view, within the framework of what he rather quaintly designates fina.
33 On whose size generally, see Irfan Habib, Agrarian System, pp. 130-54; S. Moosvi: Economy of the Mughal Empire, pp. 176-89; Satya Prakash Gupta op.cit. pp. 134-40.
expansion of peasant settlements, and, on the other, to 'peasant uprisings, and simultaneously a breakdown in the collaboration between the jagirdars and zamindars, thereby turning the agrarian difficulties into a crisis of the Empire. Unluckily, neither demographic data nor other statistics (e.g. of area under cultivation) come to us in a manner which would justify a definite conclusion as the progress of the agricultural sector over the entire course of the seventeenth century.

In the first quarter of the eighteenth century, the major administrative constraints tended to collapse, as may be seen so graphically from a rarely quoted passage from Khafi Khan (1731). The sale of tax-farms (ijara) became a more and more general practice. C.A. Bayly has given us a new perception of this institution "as one which consolidated the intermediate classes of society — townsmen, traders, service gentry — who commanded the skills of the market and the pen". Muzaffar Alam has been won over so far to this approach that he sees the increasing use of this oppressive device as an index of "growth." One example tells the story. Sayyid brothers sold away in farm the khalisas territories (treasury lands) for lakhs of rupees for their own benefit and that posts were given exclusively to the Barha Sayyids (their own clan) and the Bania (Baqqals) (Ratan Chand's caste). There could hardly have been any localization of power through such imposition of one's clan followers over the entire Empire. It is not surprisig that when Nizamu'l Mulk suggested a set of reforms to the Emperor in 1724, the first one was "the abolition of ijara of the mahals of the khalisas, which has become the source of the ruin and devastation of the country.

The linkages can also be drawn for urbanisation and the decline of the empire. If there is a question-mark over the ability of the Mughal Empire to allow agricultural expansion, one can, perhaps, be more positive about its contribution to

36 Agrarian system of Mughal India, pp.317-51.
urban growth and the expansion of trade. The tendency towards cash nexus and, therefore, towards induced trade: the large transfer of rural surplus to the towns and its conversion into craft-commodities and services to meet the demands of an essentially town-based ruling class and its dependents; the provision of some degree of security and controlled taxation along the routes; and a metallic currency of uniform standard and purity uttered from mints all over the Empire - all these were factors that should have created the basis for commercial expansion.

There could have been a real increase, in merchant-capital through its absorption of some of the resources of the Mughal ruling class by an. indigenously developed system of deposit-banking, credit, brokerage and insurance. The larger availability of capital so obtained was possibly connected with the remarkable fall in interest rates about the middle of the seventeenth century, though bullion imports into India uncovered by exports of goods might also have helped.

If some of these factors, closely related as they were to the Mughal Empire as an all-India polity, were to weaken or even whither away with the decline of the Empire, it would be hard to argue that commerce and towns would still not have suffered. Gujarat was a province of the Empire that not only had important textile and other industries catering to the inland markets but through the Gulf of Cambay also maintained a large overseas trade. As Ashin Das Gupta has pointed out, the commercial decline of Surat mirrors fairly accurately the decline of the Empire. The story is partly told in Dutch information on arrivals of Indian ships annually at Surat: 87 in 1693; an average of 32 from 1716 to 1720, largely maintained til 1733; but the number ultimately falling to only 19in 1741. DasGupta firmly attributes the decline to the conditions in the hinterland of the port consequent upon the increasing weakness of the Empire. There was no rival in the Gulf of Cambay to gain at the expense of Surat; and Bombay had a different hinterland and could hardly supplant

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41 For detailed argument on these lines see Irfan Habib, 'Potentialities of Capitalistic Development in the Economy of Mughal India'. Journal of Economic History, 29.1 (March 1969); the same with revisions pub. in Enquiry, Delhi, NS. III (i) (O.S. No.1 15). Winter 1971 (it may. perhaps, be clarified that, despite the title, the potentialities for true capitalistic development within Mughal India are denied): Tapan Raychaudhuri, The State and the Economy: the Mughal Empire* in T. Raychaudhuri and I. Habib (ed.): Cambridge Economic History of India (CEHI). Cambridge. 1982. pp.172-93.


Surat as a base of Indian shipping. An earlier decline seems to have affected Indian shipping in Bengal.44

Quantitative information by which the fortunes of inland trade could be traced is much harder to come by. The only way in which security costs can be measured is by way of comparing insurance. Since movements of interest rates may reflect changes in availability of capital, it is relevant to ask if the decline in the interest rates which is so marked in the mid-seventeenth century continued into the eighteenth. Insufficient as our present evidence for economy under the indigenous eighteenth century regimes is, it is enough to make us entertain doubts about their having witnessed any significant measure of economic growth. There is no strong reason to believe that their performance in terms of population increase, extension of cultivation or expansion of trade was superior to that of the Empire in the seventeenth century. A very modest compound rate of population growth of 0.14 per cent has been suggested for the period 1000-1800, given the most plausible estimates of the total population for 1600 and 1800.45 The economic effects of Tribute were not, however, confined to areas which came under the Company's government or its system of indemnities and subsidies. There was, first, the deflationary tendency stemming from net loss of silver, which affected prices and capital supply everywhere. Unfortunately, price-information for the latter half of the eighteenth century has not been properly collected. Jevon's, prices for wheat at Delhi, nonetheless, show a long-term decline (when considered on the basis of annual average by decades), beginning with the 1790's and continuing into the next century. Bayly himself notices that "a great 'want of specie' " was felt in the Delhi region and the Punjab after 1770 and that towns and trade in the area decayed between 1770 and 1800.46 The diversion of Bengal's exports in silk and textiles entirely to Europe, practically closed the traditional trade with Gujarat, whose famous textile industry depended upon Bengal silk. Under these circumstances, one

44 Ashin Das Gupta in CEHI. I. p.432. Om Prakash : The Dutch East India Company and the Economy of Bengal. 1630-1720, pp.223-24. however, sees "no clearly discernible trend" in Bengal shipping at least until 1720.
45 Irfan Habib in Tapan Raychaudhuri and I. Habib (ed) : Cambridge Economic History of India. 1. Cambridge. 1982. p.157; S. Moosvi. Economy of the Mughal Empire, c.1595. pp.405-6, calculates a coin* pound rate of 0.21% for the longer period. 1601-1871,
46 Rulers Townsmen and Bazaars, pp.65-6. He does not rather surprisingly relate this 'money famine' to the stoppage of flow of bullion into India, to which he himself refers on p.28
cannot be sure that what now took place was a mere "redeployment of merchant
capital within India, not its (partial) destruction".

The indigenous regimes that arose as the Mughal Empire weakened, retreated and splintered can be very broadly divided into two groups. The first group consisted of states that were created by Mughal officials turning into local rulers; such were the Nazimates of the Deccan, Bengal and Awadh. These also included states created or enlarged by a simple acquisition of territory in jagir and revenue-farm as in the cases of Jaipur and the Bangash principality. The second set of states were creations of opponents of the Mughal power, principality, the Marathas, Jats, Rohillas and the Sikhs. The first group of states maintained a direct continuity with imperial administration, including its personnel. But practically all of them (the Deccan, perhaps, more slowly than the others) gave up the system of jagir transfers, since this pillar of all-India centralization was no longer essential for their own existence. One can imagine, therefore, that these states could allow both a long-term policy towards land-revenue realization and greater accommodation with the local, zamindar elements. Of the Deccan under the Nizams during the eighteenth century, there is yet to be a tolerable economic study, despite the large amount of available documentary material. For the Bengal Nazimate, James Grant's interpretation of Mughal revenue statistics, prepared in 1786, seems yet to dominate the field. Grant's major conclusion was that under the Nazimate "the whole country remained prodigiously under-rated", though this led to the imposition of the awwab or irregular exactions. The new system taking "the room of the equitable mode of Mogul administration" tended to favour "the new class of officers denominated zemindars". Essentially, his argument was that the land revenue did not increase in correspondence with the rise in prices caused by the silver influx. The Nazims' dependence on the Jagat seths and other mercantile interests in revenue-collection could be seen as part of a rapprochement with non-bureaucratic classes to secure a moderate level of revenue-collection. The level was still high enough to sustain a considerable degree of urbanization with the capital Murshidabad judged by Clive to be as populous as London in 1764. Muzaffar Alam offers us a picture of expanding

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47 cf. S.P. Gupta: Agrarian System of Eastern Rajasthan. pp.5-17. for the creation of the Jaipur state under Sawai Jai Singh (d.1744).
cultivation in Awadh and adjacent regions, on the basis of eighteenth-century revenue statistics compared with those of the A'in-i Akbari (c. 1595); but un-adjusted to prices they really carry little or no message. In the second set of states the pride of place is occupied by the Peshwa's government, with its large areas of control and enormously rich archives. Its ruling elements originated not from within the ranks of the Mughal nobility and bureaucracy, but out of the class the Mughals called zamindars or hereditary rural potentates. These origins partly explain the state-structure the Marathas built; an internal taxation system within the swarajya, supplemented by a zone of extraction of tribute out of revenue collection (chauth and sardesh-mukhi), a tribute whose origins lay in the zamindars' shares in tax-revenue. Simultaneously, there was a strong proneness to institute, hereditary 'fiefs' (saranjams) and officers, in contrast to the transferable jagirs and posts of the Empire. Not only was mulk-giri (lit. country-seizure, but meaning plunder) a long and self-defeating mechanism for continuous tribute-extraction, but the system of hereditary right led to difficulties in internal taxation and maintenance of soldiery. The Peshwas' regime was thus constantly immersed in financial crises even in moments of military triumph. The impact of the Maratha regime was doubtless uneven. Within Maharashtra, the Peshwas promoted the transformation of uparis (non-hereditary or temporary peasants) into cultivators for fiscal advantage, and it is possible to argue that conditions in the Maratha homeland were fairly stable with a steady pace of increase in cultivation until the last years of the regime (1803-18), when, with British hegemony, the old system broke down under the burden of financial bankruptcy and tax-farms. Outside Maharashtra, the view of Maratha expansion as a sheer process of devastation was called into question by Stewart N. Gordon on the basis of a set of documents relating to the Maratha conquest and early

49 Crisis of Empire In Mughal North India, pp.252-3: Richard R. Barnett: North India between Empires: Awadh, the Mughals and the British, 1720-1801. Berkeley. 1980. does not similarly give any hard evidence of economic prosperity.
administration of Malwa, 1728-60. In Gujarat, Muhammad Ali Khan gave a fairly favourable account of the Maratha administration, claiming that by 1754 it had led to a certain amount of economic recovery. The insurance rates on money and goods sent from Malwa to different parts of the Maratha dominions, in 1795 were about the same or only slightly higher than in 1820. Clearly, these testify to the maintenance of certain levels of law and order throughout Maratha-con-trolled territory. And yet one cannot altogether exclude from consideration the disorderlies which was built into the Maratha system involving not only constant plundering forays, but also the supplanting of local zamindars at the pettiest levels by outsiders, so as to make it seem to an observer in 1762-63, that the Brahmans of Konkaji wished to become "proprietors (not simply rulers) of the whole world". The significant position occupied by bankers and moneylenders in the Maratha states, notably the Brahmans of Poona, perhaps represented more the malfunctioning of the fiscal system than any positive state support to trade and commerce. The extent of net urban growth seems also to have been limited: even Poona, the capital, is not credited with a population of over 100,000 at the end of the century. The Jat power near Agra and Mathura arose out of rebellion of peasants under zamindar leadership, attaining the apex of power under Suraj Mal (d.1763), who, though a "Sage among his people, spoke the Braj dialect and wore "the dress of a zamindar." A similar result seems to have been a replacement of Rajput by Jat zamindars. A similar result was brought about, but in favour of the Rohilla, a set of immigrant soldiers, traders, and rural settlers. In the Doab but especially in the trans-Ganga tract of Katehr, now Rohilkand, they built up a network of clan chieftaincies, without attaining a possible degree of centralisation or even systematic

54 The Slow Conquest: Administrative Integration of Malwa into the Maratha Empire. M A S. 11 (1977), pp. 1-40
55 Mir'at-i Ahmadi. ed. Syed Nawab Ali, Part II, Baroda. 1927. p.462. the author himself was the Mughal diwan of the suba.
56 See the table in Malcolm. Memoir of Central India. II. pp.366-68
57 Azad Bilgrami: Khizana-t 'Amira, Kanpur. 1871. p.47
58 The nature of this relationship has been explored provocatively by Karen Leonard. 'The Great Firm" Theory of the Decline of the Mughal Empire. Comparative Studies in Society and History (CSSH), 21 (1 979), followed by a controversy on the theme with J.F. Richards in CSSH. 23 (1981), See also Divekar. op.cit, who rightly emphasizes (esp. pp.44 1 -3) the parasitic and economically restricted nature of the usury to which the financial needs of the Maratha regime gave rise.
59 Divekar. op.cit, p.442.
61 cf. Irfan Habib. Agrarian System of Mughal India, pp.339-42. The detailed political history of the Jat kingdom has been painstakingly reconstructed by Girish Chandra Dwivedi: The Jats: their Role in the Mughal Empire. Bangalore, 1989.
administration. They seem, however, to have reclaimed land and promoted agriculture. Punjab remained for much of the latter part of the 18th century, a battleground between the Afghans and the Sikhs. Initially, in Banda Bahadur's uprising, 1710-15, the rural character of the Sikh revolt was very marked. Contemporary historians speak of his following as comprising "sweepers, tanners, the caste of Banjaras (migrant pastoralists and transporters) and other lowly and wretched people." Khafi Khan, who too speaks of the mass of "lowly Hindu" joining Banda's banners, says that he had counsellors also from the "respectable Hindus" like the Khatri (a mercantile and bureaucratic caste) and the "warlike Jats" (a peasant and zamindar caste). The peasant and low caste soldiery and even leadership, combined with a very deep-rooted religious millenarism, delayed the transformation of the Sikh polity into a conventional state. But zamindari aspirations became important with time, and social egalitarianism could not prevent the rise of leaders like "Nawab" Kapur Singh. Ultimately, in the nineteenth century, under Ranjit Singh, came the full-blown Raj, that was seemingly a continuance of Mughal administration with strong Rajput symbolisms and even rites. The two sets of polities we have been considering do not include a state which had a short life in the latter half of the eighteenth century, but had remarkable features of its own. This was the Mysore of Haidar Ali and Tipu (1761-99). These rulers, transforming a traditional raj, constructed an administration closely built on Mughal lines. The pressure on zamindars inherent in the administrative tradition, was intensified to the point of Haider Ali's taking away the ten-percent allowance paid to them and managing the revenue-collection directly. The jagirs too were largely (not totally) abolished under Tipu. But Mysore was also the first state to shift almost entirely to European methods of warfare, depending on firearms and infantry, with cavalry and

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64 Muntakhabu'l Lubab. II. pp.651-52. 672. Muzaffar Alam, Crisis of Empire in North India. pp. 139-45. tends to overemphasize the zamindar component of Banda's following. He speaks of "Jat zamindars" (p.139), when the only text he cites (Muntakhabu'l Lubab. II. p.651) does not contain the word "zamindar" at all. and actually reads of his followers being "from the caste of Jats and the Khatri of the Panjab and other lowly communities of the Hindus".
local militia as supporting arms.\(^6^8\) Mysore was also the first Indian state to produce modern fire-arms within its borders by importing foreign workmen as instructors.\(^6^9\) The most interesting aspect was the state's direct intervention in production and commerce. Watches began to be made, and sericulture.

**Political Decline and Cultural Decadence**

The eighteenth century saw the decline and dissolution of the Mughal Empire, simultaneously with the rise of the regional states. Geographically the Empire had reached its farthest limits in the Deccan by AD 1707. The imperial principle established almost over the entire subcontinent, was beginning to show signs of crisis in its body politic. These breaches and chasms jolted the entire imperial edifice, which collapsed within forty years after the death of Aurangzeb (AD 1707). The invasion and destruction of Delhi by Nadir Shah Afshar (1736-47), the Persian monarch in (1736-47), left the Emperor Muhammad Shah (1719-48), with his prestige irrevocably diminished. Muhammad Shah died in 1748 and was succeeded by his son Ahmad Shah Bahadur who was, imprisoned and blinded in 1754. He, in turn, was succeeded by Alamgir II, was deposed the following year and was succeeded by Shah Alam (1759-1806). None of these ruler enjoyed any real authority or power. In 1788 Ghulam Khan attacked Delhi and blinded the Emperor. The invasion irretrievably damaged the status of monarchy and ruined the imperial image as the embodiment of law and authority. The imperial governors did not formally deny their allegiance to Delhi, but one after the other they become asserting their autonomy. The Mughal governor(subedars) took advantage of the weakness and dissensions at the court, to seize the revenues in the provinces assigned to them. The result was the creation of a number of successor states, notably in Bengal, Hyderabad and Awadh. In the Gangetic delta(*doab*), Murshid Quli Khan(1703-27), the Diwan of Bengal successfully transformed the city which later took his name as Murshidabad, (the capital of virtually independent Bengal). In the south Mir Qamar al-Din Asaf Jah Nizam-ul-Mulk(1724-48), set himself up in the city of Hyderabad as *de facto* ruler of the Deccan *suba* of the Empire.

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\(^6^9\) *Ibid* p.74-75. quoting Munro (1791); cf. also Mohibbul Hasan, *op.cit*, p.350. The process had begun well before 1761, with Haider All's foundry at Dindigul.
Besides Herman Goetz, who was first to detect some order in this seemingly chaotic period, there have been other serious and comprehensive studies that reassess the century’s events and cast doubts on the bleak perspective of previous historians. While suggesting that the turbulent events of the century reflected not the final dissolution of the Mughal empire, as much as the emergence of regional dynastic rulers who initiated new cycles of growth and regeneration. As a result of such studies, the debate on pre-colonial societies has received a new revival. However, as most of these studies mainly focus on the decline in terms of economic change, thus neglecting the political and cultural framework, the debate on the 18th century has been so far partial. A number of scholars focus on the 18th century in order to find the causes and explanations of various nineteenth century phenomena. The eighteenth century needs to be studied its own, not in terms of what preceded and what followed it. The political decline and the chaos that followed the loss of power by wreck of a golden age. The Indian muslims of that time searched their past, not only in an effort to comprehend the disaster, but also in order to feel that there had been a time of greatness.

Why has the eighteen century been regarded as a period of cultural decadence? There are several stands in the historiography of decadence which tend to strengthen the stereotypical view of the period. One of the reasons lay in the contemporary European perceptions of the ruling classes of India: the stereotypes of the sensual, cruel and circumspect Muslims found in the European travellers’ accounts who had not looked upon the dominant classes with a very friendly eye. Sir Thomas Herbert in A.D. 1634 found the “Indian moors saucy, proud, bloody, traitorous and cowardly”. In the second half of the eighteenth century, with the decline of the political power and when the nobility and aristocracy of the Empire was without its earlier riches, wealth and military power, such accusations of progressive decadence were more easily and frequently made. Robert Orme, an East India company official, writing in 1752 believed that ‘the Tartar(i.e.,the ancestors of Mughals) are known to be honest and simple in manners, if at times fierce and cruel’ but as regards their descendents he said that a ‘licentiousness’ and luxury peculiar to

this enervating climate have spread their corruption. Sometimes, a contemporary Indians author's views of his superior, strengthened such notions of the ruling class. Such was the impression derived from Siyar-al-muta'khkhirin, of Ghulam Husain published under the title: A character of Assof ud-Dowla, the Nawab of Awadh. Furthermore, the British who wrote the early Modern histories of India had their own interest in presenting a bleak portrayal of its immediate past. These Persian chronicles writers were invariably members of an erstwhile ruling elite who suffered as the imperial system brokedown. The decline of their fortunes has been portrayed in their own writings as the decline and decay of the entire society. The decline of the imperial edifice was tantamount to a total collapse of society. On the contrary, the period in question was one of great intellectual activity, as almost every branch of learning and scholarship was being pursued. It was not only poetry which lay at the heart of the cultural life of the period. Other traditional areas of learning nourished as well: historiography, the compilation of biographical dictionaries, as well as the sciences proper, like natural philosophy, astronomy, mathematics, geometry and medicine. Such a vast amount of literary works had been produced by the administrator-scholars and intelligentsia of the erstwhile ruling elite that it is almost impossible to do them all justice by providing a broad comprehensive view. Every discipline came to be cultivated by the members of displaced service' elite when necessity for maintenance turned them into historians, geographers, philologists, archaeologists and grammarians. Persian was the language of administration, scholarship and for the elite, as well as that of polite social intercourse. In Iran, the ornate taste in prose and poetry, characteristic of the seventeenth century, was replaced by a simple style, both innovatory and looking back to older literary models. This new style came to be known in Iranian literature as *bazgasht*, i.e. 'return'. On the Indian subcontinent, the seventeenth century poetical style, *Sabk-i. Hindi*, that originated in Persia, was cultivated and brought to perfection. It had also enjoyed favourable atmosphere in the Turkish and Tadjik literature and continued to be greatly admired and elaborated upon in the eighteenth century. The successor states which sprang up on the ruins of the Mughal Empire,

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71 Robert Orme (1728 – 1801) was a British historian of India. Son of a British East India Company physician and surgeon, he entered the service of the Company in Bengal in 1743. He returned to England in 1753, and was regarded as an authority on India. Orme wrote *History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan from 1745* (1763-78). He also published *Historical Fragments of the Mogul Empire, the Morattoes and English Concerns in Indostan from 1659* (1782).
such as Murshidabad, Hyderabad and Oudh, continued to work within the institutional framework of their predecessor. It was again members of the same bureaucratic families who filled various posts, high and low in the administrative set-up of these regional states. Even the British, after the grant of *Diwani* by Emperor Shah 'Alam in 1764, sought to integrate themselves within the Mughal imperial system. When the indigenous political system began to crumble— in order to give way to new political powers, it was the ideal type of the centralized Mughal slate which they wished to see reestablished. The elite tried to employ the same skills which their ancestors had learnt in their service of the empire. Therefore, it would not be simply a digression to establish a comprehensive picture of the contemporary world of bureaucracy.
PART-II

Understanding Rohilla ethnicity

When India during 18th century was experiencing the breakup of the Mighty Mughal Empire in the nook and corner of doab region, an small Afghan state was coming into being which would be called as the Rohilla Kingdom. In this chapter focus will be on Rohillas history, their origin and and their claiming a new kingdom in North India. Rohilla migration had been a part of a whole complex of a resettlement and migratory movements following the advent of Turks and Mongols in the area. Initially, they were driven to the Kabul region, probably due to increased competition with rival pastoralists for winter and summer grazing lands in the Kandahar area. This rivalry had interrupted the existing seasonal migration pattern and forced the Khashi tribes to look for new grazing lands. Towards the end of the fifteenth century they arrived near Kabul; but by the time Babar entered Kabul in 1504 they had already been ousted again by the Timurid ruler of the time, Mirza Ulugh Beg (1460-1502) and had been forced to take refuge more to the east: in the Lamghanat and near Peshawar. The Mandanr sub-tribe settled in the Samah, the relatively flat plains north of the Landai river. Most of the other Yusufzais proceeded Northwards to the more secluded hill valleys of Swat and Bajaur. The Yusufzais conquered the latter countries which were primarily, inhabited by Dardic and Tajik peasants with, only a few herding Gujars. In these places they were faced with ecological conditions which were different from those they were accustomed to in Kandahar and which were not very suitable for their pastoralist habitat. Their new lands were part of what Babar identified as Hindustan. When he approached the area for the first time from Ningnahar he exclaimed:

"...another world came to view, -other grasses, other trees, other animals, other birds, and other manners and customs of clan and horde. We were amazed, and truly there was ground for amaze." 73

It appears that, like Babar, the once pastoral Yusufzais had to cope with a great adaptive economic challenge. Initially, as a result of the destruction caused by

72 Ibid., pp. 168-226
73 "Babur, Babur-Nama, p.229.
their large herds, much damage was done to the existing cultivation, but in due course a relatively sophisticated farming and herding society re-emerged.\textsuperscript{74}

Along with the newly conquered lands, the indigenous peasants or \textit{dihqans} were assigned to the landholding Yusufzai clans. Hence, they were turned into dependent peasants (\textit{faqirs}, in fee sense of poor, destitute, subdued), paying rent on the land they cultivated, or into retainers (Pl. \textit{m'la-tarr}) who performed all kinds of services to their patron (\textit{Khawand}) as herders, artisans or commercial agents, mostly in return for a small payment in grain or rice. Usually we find these dependant bondsmen indiscriminately referred to as both \textit{faqirs} and \textit{hamsayas}.\textsuperscript{75} Apart from these bondsmen there were dependants of a different category called \textit{ghulams} or slaves. They were more closely attached to the person of their patron and were frequently entrusted with all kinds of functions within their master's household. Although they were not as free as \textit{the faqirs} and \textit{hamsayas}, they generally enjoyed a higher status in society because they were more closely associated with their master and his family.\textsuperscript{76} Through this twofold client relationship of \textit{faqir}(mendicant)/\textit{hamsaya}(neighbour) and \textit{ghulam}(servant), the conquering elite of Yusufzaïs could incorporate both the indigenous and the other populations into their own polity. This allowed them to integrate outsiders without having to assimilate them and, internally, fee Yusufzai \textit{ulus} continued to signify the dominant stratum. For the outside world, however, ethnic distinctions were far less rigid. Most of the Roh area where the Yusufzai tribes had settled during the sixteenth century was very difficult territory for establishing imperial control fi-om outside. Hence, the area always

\textsuperscript{74} The Swat valley has been extensively described and analyzed by numerous anthropologists, amongst the foremost are: F. Barth, \textit{Political Leadership among Swat pathan} (London, 1959); A.S. Ahmad, \textit{Millennium and Charisma among Pathans: A Critical Essay in Social Anthropology} (London, '1976) and by the same author, \textit{Pukhtun Economy and Society} (London, 1980) (mainly on the Mohmand but with many comments on Swat); C. Lindholm, \textit{Generosity and Jealousy: The Swat Pukhtun of Northern Pakistan} (New York, 1982).

\textsuperscript{75} Before the eighteenth century there still appears to be a distinction between the two; \textit{hamsaya} meaning a dependant tribe belonging to the Afghan \textit{ulus}; and \textit{faqir} an indigenous son- Afghan "landless" peasant but later the distinction became blurred, both meaning landless dependants or clients. Elphinstone, at the beginning of the nineteenth century is still describing them separately (Elphinstone, \textit{Account}, 1, p. 228; 2, p. 27). For treating them as identical, see e.g. Muhammad Hayat, \textit{Afghanistan}, pp. 114-29, and H.W. Bellew, \textit{An Inquiry into the Ethnography of Afghanistan} (Graz, 1973), pp.88-9. See also H.G. Raverty, "An Account of Upper Kash-kar and Chitrail, or Lower Kash-kar, together with the Independent Afghan State of Panj-korah, including Tal-ash", \textit{JASB}, 33 (1864), pp.148-9.'

\textsuperscript{76} Mohammad Hayat, \textit{Afghanistan}, p.4; H.W. Bellew, \textit{A General Report on Yusufzais} (Lahore, 1864), pp. 183-4.
retained the reputation of being a focus of turbulence and revolt. The southern plains of the Yusufzais in the northern Kabul valley were more easily accessible. But whenever the danger of violent incursions did arise, the inhabiting tribes could always move with their herds into the safe northern valleys and return whenever they wished. The whole area was of strategic importance since it immediately bordered on the Khyber Pass and on the northern highway which, from the sixteenth century onwards, served as a lifeline linking the imperial centres of Delhi and Agra with Kabul and its hinterlands in Iran and Central Asia. Apart from this main route, there was a secondary though not unimportant northern route splitting off to Chitral. This route entered Swat through the Malakand pass, and via the Panjikora Valley, Dir and the Lahore Pass it reached Chitral, a relatively busy commercial centre in the western Himalayas. Chitral not only had this important southern access to Peshawar and Hindustan and another one going to and Kabul, it was also located on the east-west connection of Badakhshan with Gilgit Kashmir, part of the tracks of the ancient Silk Road. Another route branched off to Sarikol and Yarkand in the north. During the 18-19th centuries the route through Badakhshan and Chitral became an alternative for merchants travelling from Bukhara to Yarkand and Kashgar in anticipation of disturbances in Kokand or Eastern Turkestan. Besides, since the Chinese authorities regularly refused permission for caravans to pass through Eastern Turkistan and Ladakh to India, Kokand merchants were often forced to be content with buying Indian goods at Sarikol. Many of these mountain routes presented difficulties for transport and during the winter most of them were considered almost impassable. On the other hand, Mastuj pass, north of Chitral, was relatively convenient and it Badakhshan and farther westwards Kunduz and Balkh within reach of Chitral. Trade caravans mostly used this route because it was most practicable for beasts of burden, mainly asses and oxen. The Chitral route was "by far the shortest way from Badakhshan to Hindustan. An additional advantage of these routes was that they were relatively peaceful and that protection costs were relatively low, whereas the passage through the Khyber and other southern passes

77 Also called Chitral. Babar refers to it as Katur and the Afghan sources use Qashqar (Qashgar) which is different from Kashgar (Kashghar) in Eastern Turkestan.
could sometimes be extremely hazardous. Via the Mastuj route, products from Badakhshan, mainly horses and lapis lazuli, were exchanged for Indian goods like textiles and indigo. In order to profit from these northern links several Afghan trading communities such as the Khalils and Gugyanis settled amongst the Yusufzais. Whenever the Khyber pass was blocked by one or another disturbance or excessive tolls they could turn to the north and travel, via Chitral and Badakhshan, farther on to the oasis cities of Central Asia. Besides, many non-Afghans and Hindu merchants were active in this area. Most notable were the Parancaas who, like the Powindas, had trade relations which covered an area which stretched from Calcutta in eastern India to Orenburg in southern Russia.  

Hence, as a rule, there was always some measure of accommodation reached between the imperial authorities and the local Afghan leaders. For the Mughals it was crucial that no one single tribe or group could gain the upper hand and dominate the area as this could in the end threaten access to their interests in Central Asia. So they had to engage themselves in the local affairs and to make the best possible use of the internal conflicts between the different local factions by entering and shifting alliances in order to keep the balance. Despite all the heroic stories of Afghan resistance against the Mughals, many Afghans were highly co-operative in establishing a stable imperial and commercial network. After 1530 the Yusufzais, together with most of the mercantile tribes in the Peshawar area, joined with the Mughals in order to oust the always obstreperous Dilazak Afghans along the Khyber route. Many local Afghans decided to join the Mughal ranks and in return received some important lands jagir across the Indus. An example is provided by the Muhammadzai-Khweshgi Afghans who in the wake of the Yusufzai migration had moved into Hashtnagar. The Khweshgis, generally known as horse-traders, had offered Babar and Humayun excellent service as suppliers of horses and mercenaries in support against their Sur co-tribesmen. Not surprisingly they received a Jagir in Kasur and held the post of faujdar of the nearby Lakhia Jangle; as we have noticed already, an area traditionally associated with horse breeding and an extensive grazing area where horses from Central Asia could rest and recuperate before being

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80 Raverty, *Notes*, p. 196.
Other Afghans were delegated with the task of controlling the many passes through the dangerous mountain ranges of the north-west. The Afridi Afghans, for example, were entrusted with guarding the Khyber pass and the Khalils with the road between Attock and Khyber. As a result they changed from highway robbers to imperial custom officials levying transit duties. This change was just nominal but it assured their incorporation into the Mughal imperial structure. Of course, there were always groups and individuals who were not able or not willing to take a share in the profits of trade and empire. One personage who has become famous for opposing Mughal rule was Bayazid Ansari, who tried to appeal to a supra-tribal following and thereby undermined the Afghan political establishment and its traditional balance of power. Bayazid was a champion of religion and the founder of the millenarian Raushaniyya movement. He was not an Afghan himself but a Barki whose parents had moved from Waziristan to the Punjab. He and his father had been engaged in horse trade between India and Central Asia and as a merchant he had become frustrated by what he considered to be the oppression and excessive tolls of the Mughal government. During his many trading missions he had frequently visited khanqahs of darwishes and yogis in order to direct his attention to other worldly matters. In due course he launched a fiercely anti-Mughal and anti-orthodox campaign and he sent missionaries to far off places like Delhi, Badakhshan, Balkh and Bukhara - all of which had been within his former commercial range as a horse-trader. Bayazid's successor Shaykh `Umar even dared to call himself the badskah-i-afghan and began to demand the appropriate tributes from the Afghan tribal leaders. Although Bayazid had a substantial Yusufzai following, the elite of Yusufzai landholders were not involved with him because his teachings undermined their traditional tribal leadership and their thriving business with the outside Mughal world. In general, Afghan tradition credits two Yusufzai orthodox `ulama', Saiyid

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84 In Afghan tradition darwishes are frequently associated with horses as they act as breeders and traders and their khanqas had sometimes fine stables, see Ni'matullah, Makhzan, Dora trans., 1. pp. 16-7,20,27,30-1.
Ali Tirmizi and his pupil Akhund Darweza, for opposing the Raushaniyya sect. The writings of Akhund Darweza became the canon of faith for the Yusufzais and were still influential in shaping the religious ideas of the later Rohilla leaders. Not the heterodoxy of Bayazid Ansari but the Sunni orthodoxy of Akhund Darweza developed into an indispensable ingredient of eighteenth-century Indo-Afghan identity. In the end, the Raushaniyya movement was fully absorbed in the system which it had aimed to overthrow. In the first half of the seventeenth century Its leaders were encouraged to take service with the Mughals and were turned into Mughal mansabairs endowed with several jagirs in northern India. Still on the basis of their charismatic leadership and spiritual guidance, they drew many recruits from their tribal Raushaniyya following in Roh. Many of these recruits were Bangash Pathaans who some years later succeeded in establishing their own principality at Farrukhabad. It appears that, although during the late seventeenth century the Raushaniyya movement had lost much of its mujadidi (thousand years of prophesied millenium) and mystical appeal. It had retained much of its vigour as a recruitment network for Afghan mercenaries.

During the first half of the seventeenth century the Mughals were deepening their involvement in the affairs of their north-western frontier. They were drawn into hotly contested issues, with the Safavids for the possession of Kandahar and with the Tuqay-Timurids for Balkh and Badakhshan. As a consequence of intensified Mughal campaigning, Afghans, both in India and elsewhere, became even more involved in Mughal politics. Because of their regional know how, their co-operation became of considerable weight, both as mercenaries and as guardians of the long-drawn supply lines. In 1648 the Mughals finally lost Kandahar to the Safavids and by this time Balkh and Badakhshan also. As one of the consequences of declining Mughal power the other Yusufzai and other Afghan tribes enjoyed more and more latitude in their movements and patterns of migration. All too frequently, new waves of Yusufzai

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86 See for example W. Irvine, "The Bangash Nawabs of Farrukhabad: A Chronicle (1713-1857)" , JASB, 48, 1 (1879) p.84; Hafiz Rafiamat Khan based his Khulasat ul-ansab partly on the work of the Tazkirat of the Akhund Darweza and in 1767 a transcription of the work was made in his capital of Pilibhit (Hafiz Rehmat, Khulasat, ff.18a,100b).
87 Muhammad Waliullah, Turikh-i Farrukhabad, BM.Or. 1718, f.10b; Elphinstone, Account, 2, p.51. For more details, see W. Irvine, "The Bangash Nawabs of Farrukhabad: A Chronicle (1713-1857)" , JASB, 47, 1 (1878), pp.357-64.
88 McCheesney, Waif, p116.
migration have been linked to increased impoverishment of the Peshawar area.\(^89\)

As we have noticed above, in the wake of Yusufzai migration to the Peshawar area numerous other Afghans moved from Kandahar to Peshawar. Most of them were rather small groups of nomads with an interest in extending their trading connections. This was a fairly gradual process and a follow up of the more massive movements of the sixteenth century. One of these mercantile groups was the Baraich sub-tribe who inhabited the area around Shorawak in eastern Kandahar. From the sixteenth century onwards the majority of them had settled in and around Peshawar, more specifically in Chachh Hazara and Samah. Those Baraichs who stayed behind in Kandahar progressively merged more numerous and dominant tribes in the area. During the eighteenth century, of all 11 Baraich subdivisions who had once existed in Shorawak, only three had retained their former identity.\(^90\)

One of the many Baraichs who had moved to the Peshawar area and settled amongst the Yusufzais was Shihsb-ud-Din. Although as a Baraich he could not boast Yusufzai descent he gained acceptance within their society as a great saint and pir. As an itinerant mendicant he was reported to have wandered through the wilds and mountains around Aitock and Langarkot spending his time in prayer and meditation. In due course he became known as Shaikh Kola Bate (i.e., God's dog) and his descendants adopted the name of Kotakhail. As so many of the Afghan saints, he was buried on the main road from Peshawar to Kabul. His third son Shaikh Muti continued his father's profession and settled, down as a pirzada (sajjada-nishin) in the village of Turn Shahamatpur.\(^91\)

With family connections with Shorawak and Piston (famous for its excellent cavalry horses), the Baraichs were particularly well placed to deal in horses. Peshawar they could extend their trading network to Badakhshan and India by their relatives to far-off horse fairs. One example of such practice is presented by of Shaikh Muti, Shah 'Alam Khan. At the beginning of the eighteenth century he used his contacts with his adopted son (farzand-i lutfi) Daud Khan who had left his

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89 For the Himalayan slave trade, see the works of Muller-Stellrecht: Hunza und China and "Menschenhandel"; also Grevemeyer, Herrschaft.
90 "Hafiz Rahmat, Khan khulasat, ff.59b-61a
91 Muhammad Mustajab, Gulistan, pp.5-8; Hafiz Rahmat, Khulasat, ff.19b-29a; Abroad CAli, Nazahat uz-zamair, CUL, Oo.6.85, ff.4a-9a
adoptive father's village in Roh and settled near the north-Indian town of Haridwar. which, as we have mentioned already, was well known for its annual horse-fairs. have also seen in chapter three how Da'ud Khan managed to embezzle the money from his adopted father which was remitted to him by bill of exchange, and now. equipped with the horses purchased at Haridwar, started a career as a highway-robber.\footnote{See p.110}