CHAPTER - I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF LUDHIANA DISTRICT.

GEOGRAPHY

Ludhiana, or as it was popularly called 'Lodiana', at the beginning of the period of study (1810), was the most remote of the English stations in India at that time. It was situated on a small 'nala' or creek about five miles from the River Sutlej. This formed the Eastern Boundary of the Punjab under Ranjit Singh and separated his territories from those under British influence.¹ Ludhiana under early British rule was the territory which comprised forty-five villages around the town, which were acquired by the British from Raja Bhag Singh the uncle of Ranjit Singh, in lieu of Rs.500 per month.² Since no maps or details of this territory are available it is impossible to state exactly what the area acquired was or the names of the forty-five villages.

The earliest description to be found of Ludhiana as a district was in the settlement report of the year 1852 - 53.³

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¹ Lowrie, J.C., Two Years in Upper India (New York, 1850), p. 129.
² Foreign Political Consultations, Nos. 45-54, 19th Oct. 1810. (to be referred hereafter as F.P.C.)
As it existed then, it was the most western of the three districts of the Ambala Division. The main portion of the District lay between 30°53' and 31°0' North Latitudes and 75°24' and 76°27' East Longitudes. On the north, it was bounded by the River Sutlej across which lay the Jullundur Doab, and on the East, was Ambala district. To the south, it was separated from the villages of Delhi and Hissar divisions by the tract of country which was partitioned between the chiefs of Patiala, Jhind, Nabha and Malerkotla. To the west, the Ferozpur district formed its boundary. Ludhiana district had four tehsils viz., Samrala, Jagraon, Safai Luskree Khan and Ludhiana.

The river Sutlej flowed along the district for a distance of sixty miles. A small rivulet, 'Budha Nala' flowed adjacent to the Ludhiana town.

**EARLY HISTORY.**

Ludhiana's early history is not easy to trace. In the earliest available accounts, it is referred to as 'Sunnet' or 'Sunnet Kath', and was a 'Tibba' or hillock, on which the original population resided. The year in which it was so known is not specified, but may probably be around the eleventh century of the Christian era.

1. Ibid. Also refer Map (p. 6).

   Bote Shah *Tazikhi-Punjah, MSS.* (1848), p. 32.
   Also in Gulem Shika *Tawarkh-i-Wakari, MSS* (1864) p. 10 (hereafter mentioned as T.k.)
   Also in Tolbort, T.W., *The District of Ludhiana* (Lahore, 1869) p. 88-91.
The population comprised mainly of Rajputs who were the first settlers. They found this country during the reign of Muhammed of Ghor (1193-1206). It was then an uninhabited area. They are said to have obtained from Muhammed of Ghor, the grant of the tract along the 'Sutlej' and the 'tibba' of Sunet, around which they settled.

**COMING OF THE LODIS.**

The Lodis came to 'Sunet' in the middle of the fifteenth century. Ludhiana literally meaning 'coming of the Lodis', had its origin during this period. The arrival of the Lodis marked the first attempts to establish a settled government in these areas, as would be evident from the following paragraphs.

In the reign of Sikander Lodi (1489 - 1517) son of Bahlol Lodi, the people around Ludhiana were oppressed by Baluchis who plundered and tyrannized the inhabitants. The latter appealed to the Emperor for protection. Sikander Lodi sent two Lodi chiefs, Yusuf Khan & Naik Khan with an army. They established their headquarters at a village called Mir Hota, about three miles from Sunet, and restored order.

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3. Ibid, p.34.
in the neighbouring countryside. Yusuf Khan crossed the Sutlej to curb the depredations of the Khokhars who were in the territory later known as Jull-undar. He settled in Sultanpur. Naik Khan remained at Milpota as the Emperor’s representative and called the place ‘Lodhiana’.  

Two other references, record the name of this representative as Nihang Khan. But the rest of the account is familiar Nihang or Naik Khan died after a lapse of five to ten years. Mohammed Khan succeeded him but died two years thereafter. He was succeeded by his son Jalal Khan who was reported to be a brave and valorous ruler.  

Jalal Khan fortified Lodhiana. It is worth mentioning that the fort was well constructed from fairly strong bricks brought from Soneet. Soneet had many uninhabited buildings and houses. From Anchi Ram’s account, it is evident that Raja Munjah, a Hindu Rajput ruler, ruled in very early times. He was considered very cruel and tyrannical. His oppression drove away the inhabitants who never returned. From the

1. Loc. Cit.
   Griffin, Sir, L., Raja of the Punjab. (Lahore 1870) p. 86.
4. Loc. Cit.
buildings it was apparent that a large town had existed at Sunet.

Jalal Khan's two sons partitioned the country around Ludhiana amongst the people of the town and a number of villages came into existence. During the time of Jalal Khan's grandsons, Ali Khan and Khizr Khan, the Lodi dynasty was overthrown by Babar, and the Lodis of Ludhiana became ordinary subjects of the Mughul Empire. It was believed that the descendants of the Lodis continued to live in these areas, but there was no evidence of them when the British came to Ludhiana in 1809.

From these accounts it may be concluded that the establishment of Ludhiana city and the first systematic attempt to govern the country around it were during the early part of the reign of the Lodi dynasty, who held the throne of Delhi from 1450 - 1525.

MUGHAL RULE

The advent of the Mughals did in no way impede the progress of Ludhiana and its surrounding areas. The Mughals established a strong government at Sirhind, to which Ludhiana and the areas adjoining were attached as a 'Mahal' or a 'Pargonna'. Sirhind with the rest of the Empire passed into

2. Loc. Cite.
the hands of the Sur dynasty in 1540. Their reign lasted for fifteen years. In 1555, in the vicinity of Machiwarah, twenty-five miles east of Ludhiana, Humayun fought the Sur ruler and ascended the throne of Delhi.\(^1\)

Akbar succeeded Humayun in 1556. Most of the inhabitants of the Ludhiana district, ascribe the advent of their ancestors and the founding of their villages to the reign of Akbar.\(^2\)

The Ain-i-Akbari\(^3\) lists six mahals or pargunnas around the Ludhiana area: Tihara, Natru Bhundri, Ludhiana, Machiwarah, Pael and Duraha. The first three were large villages in the Jagraon tehsil; Pael and Duraha were situated in the Patiala territory between Ludhiana and Samrala. It is thus evident that these six mahals which comprised the Sirmind 'Sarkar', a division of the Delhi Province, comprised most of what later to be the Ludhiana district and some adjacent parts of the Patiala territory.

**RISE OF THE SIKHS.**

During the century and a half after the reign of Akbar, Ludhiana emerged as an important centre in the rise of the Sikhs as a political power. It was the religious

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1. Loc. Cit.
fanaticism of the Mughul Emperors against them, that goaded them into banding together.

Guru Arjan Dev had fallen a pray to the religious fanaticism of Jehangir. Guru Tegh Bahadur had been executed under the orders of Aurangzeb. Mass persecution of millions of helpless non-muslim subjects took place under orders of the Imperial officials. Guru Gobind Singh was also persecuted. His sons were immured and mercilessly butchered, by Wazir Khan, the Mughul Fanjdar of Sirhind. As a result of all this, an appeal was made to the Sikh people by Guru Gobind Singh, to join together under the leadership of Banda Bahadur. There was a great stir and all the Sikhs joined under the banner of their leader.

In 1710, they attacked the city of Sirhind and were victorious over Wazir Khan's army. But the Sikhs found it difficult to maintain the power they had acquired after their great victory. They continued to harass the authorities through Skirmishes and became a great menace. In 1716 Banda Bahadur, and some of his followers were captured and executed. After his death began a period of continuous severe persecution of the Sikhs. They then fled to the Sivalik hills.

2. Loc. Cit.
3. Ibid., p. 31.
4. Ibid., p. 32.
5. Ibid., p. 66-66.
6. Ibid., p. 231.
7. Ibid., p. 260.
However in 1718, for a while, the attention of the government was diverted towards other affairs and the policy of religious persecution underwent a change. The Sikhs crept out of their hideouts and returned to their homes.

Since the Delhi government was pre-occupied with ambitious aspirants for the throne, the Sikhs took the opportunity to launch into a career of pillage and plunder. They continued their depredations until 1733, when the Governor adopted a policy of conciliation, and offered a 'Jagir' (a grant of land in free hold or for a quit rent) and a title for their leader. This policy appealed to the Sikhs. Tired of their long and tedious wild life, they accepted the Jagir and many settled in the areas around Amritsar and Ludhiana. But a majority continued their old strategies much to the annoyance of the weak Muhammadan government at Sirhind.

In these areas, principal among the Sikh settlers were the Phulkian Chiefs, Ala Singh of Patiala, and Rai Kalha(II) of Raikot, who held sizeable lands. They carved out their areas and asserted their independence. Large agriculturists in Sirhind, Raikot and Pakhowal also sought to establish their own

1. Loc. Cit.
3. Ibid., p. 54.
4. Loc. Cit.
Ferozepur district, in all about 1,360 villages. Under the suzerainty of the Rais, the Sanewals of Raipur had some local authority, but they were only malguars or contractors for the revenue.

In parganna Khanna, some villages were held by a servant of Tara Singh Ghaiiba, who ultimately established supremacy for himself at Khanna. The rest of the territory in the parganna, was divided between the Kheri, Bhari, Ajner and Japu Majra, Sardars, and members of the Soutivala and Naishanwala confederacies.

This partition of the country appeared to have been recognised by the various parties and during the latter half of the eighteenth century there seem to have been no encroachments on neighbouring territories by any of the chiefs. Relations between them were apparently amicable.

The condition of the country from various accounts that are extant seemed to have been one of prosperity. The rule of the Rais was referred to as being mild. A fourth of the produce was fixed as their due. But the smaller chiefs were not so benevolent. They took full revenue in kind and were

1. Loc. Cit.
2. Ibid., p. 33.
3. Loc. Cit.
4. F.O.C. No.11 - 13, 2nd Jan., 1809.
reported to have been tyrannical.\(^1\) Nevertheless, the condition of the proprietary body was not one of indigence. It was a commonly held belief that their condition was much better during this period than in the subsequent years during Ranjit Singh's reign.\(^2\)

The peace which the country had enjoyed after the fall of Sirhind was interrupted by the appearance on the scene of Bedi Sahib Singh Una. He crossed the Sutlej towards the end of the eighteenth century - 1794\(^3\), with an army of Sikhs proclaiming a religious war. He was turned aside from Malerkotla by the Patiala chief but in 1798 again crossed and attacked the Rais of Raikot.\(^4\) At that time Rai Alias was a minor, but his agent, Roshan, a Gujar gathered an army and fought ten miles south west of Ludhiana. Roshan was killed in the fight and the Rais army dispersed. The Phulkian chiefs who had always maintained amicable relations with their neighbours of Raikot, came to the rescue of the Rais and drove out the invading army from all the villages which had been seized by them.\(^5\)

**Invasions from the North**

During the eighteenth century, the importance of the

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1. Also in *T.W.* p. 36.
Ludhiana district as a centre of activity did not decline. The invading army of Nadir Shah Durrani, crossed the Sutlej at Ludhiana (1739), marched through the district along the route connecting Lahore and Delhi and ravaged the entire countryside.1

Ahmad Shah Abdali entered India on his first expedition in 1747-48. On reaching the Sutlej at Ludhiana, he found his passage opposed by Vazir Komair-dain, with a large force which advanced from Sirhind. On a sandy plain near Moonpur, a few miles to the north east of Khanna, desultory fighting continued and Ahmad Shah was compelled to retreat. According to the villagers’ accounts, the losses were heavy on both sides. For a long time the odour of the corpses made by the cultivation of the fields impossible.3

Ahmad Shah entered Punjab again in Dec. 1751 and besieged Lahore4. This time he was successful. Mirz-ul-mulk, the representative of the Mughul government, paid homage and promised allegiance to Ahmad Shah. Events would have been different if he had lived for long, but in 1753 Mirz-ul-mulk died.5

3. Loc. Cit., Also F.P.C. No.11-13, 18th June, 1809.
5. Loc. Cit.
jurisdictions. They took advantage of the gradually declining Central power and emerged as independent in their own jurisdictions. 1

In the few years preceding the capture of Sirhind the boundaries of the territory of the Rais, had been surreptitiously extended. Eastwards the boundary extended from Badowal and Dhandra to include the town of Ludhiana. The southern and eastern villages in the uplands extended to within a few miles of Machiwarah. The northern boundary was the river Sutlej which then flowed under the high bank, along the course of the Budha Nala. Their position now got stabilized. 2

The lowlands opposite the territory of the Rais were held to the south of Ludhiana by the Kakar Sardars and Diwan Nokham Chand and to the north by Tara Singh Chaiba (also a Kakar). 3

The Maloud Sardars had already established themselves south of the Ludhiana tehsil. Sudha Singh an adventurer from Loharu in the Ferozepur district secured a few villages around Sanewal. With these exceptions, the rest of the district as it was apportioned later under the British belonged to the Rais. They also had a considerable part of the

2. T.W. p. 29.
3. Ibid., p. 31-32.
4. Loc. Cit.
In the confusion that ensued, Sirhind and the neighbouring areas around Ludhiana were to witness many a battle, among the aspirants for the governorship of the Punjab\(^1\). In 1755, Adina Beg Khan emerged victorious. He took over the administration of Sirhind and its dependencies.\(^2\)

In 1757 Adina Beg secured the help of the Sikhs, who by this time had become very powerful. He employed them and granted them the right to plunder.\(^3\) With the aid of Raja Bhup Singh\(^4\) Sodhi Baragh Singh and Jassa Singh Bhullalwala, Adina Beg attacked the residing Afghan troops at Lahore and completely routed the army. Chace resulted as the Sikhs resorted to loot and plunder. There was no semblance of order. The government of the province was rendered impotent.\(^5\)

A period of constant rivalry and warfare ensued between the representatives of Ahmad Shah Abdali on one side and Adina Beg Khan and the Sikhs on the other. Sirhind, Ludhiana and the adjoining areas witnessed many battle encounters. By Sept. 1757, the Marathas had driven away the Durrani plenipotentiary out of Delhi and had the outskirts of Delhi under their jurisdiction. Adina Beg invited them to enter the Punjab.

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2. Ibid., p. 83.
4. Ibid., p. 91 , Also Sinha, N.K., Loc. Cit.
and terminate the Afghan rule altogether. They came and seigeed Sirhind, after which they proceeded to Lahore. Timur Shah, Ahmad Shah's representative had already fled from Lahore. But the Marathas, Sikhs and Adina Beg combined forces and overtook him, ravaged and plundered his camp, alayed most of the soldiers and carried away the booty. The Marathas did not want to stay in the Punjab. They agreed to lease it to Adina Beg for Rs. 75 lakhs a year.

The Sikhs, meanwhile, grew stronger and challenged Adina Beg's authority. A constant struggle followed. The whole countryside was ruined by the continuous fight between the two. In 1768 Adina Beg died. This gave the Sikhs full leeway to continue their activities.

Ahmad Shah, in 1761, once again entered India, occupied Lahore and defeated the Marathas in the third battle of Panipat. After this he returned to Afghanistan, this time appointing Zain Khan as the governor of Sirhind. The following year, in 1762, the Chiefs of Phulkian, Maloudh, Malerkotla, Kapurthala, Saikot and other Cis-mutlej areas, assisted by numerous bands of Sikhs from Manjha territory got together.

They put up a formidable army against Zain Khan. Ahmad Shah on learning of this, attached before the Sikh army could mount an offensive and completely annihilated the forces. This disaster called 'Ghallu ghara' (great massacre) did not apparently affect the Sikhs.  

Around 1764, three years after the battle of Panipat, they attacked Sirhind again, completely razed the fort to the ground and killed Zain Khan. The sack of Sirhind marked the success of the Sikhs against the Murraris and ended the last vestige of Ahmad Shah's influence over this part of the empire.

Thus the Sikhs emerged triumphant from their long drawn struggle and firmly established their sway. They proclaimed their de facto sovereignty and struck coins probably for the first time in 1766. They formed themselves into Mialis or confederacies.

MARATHAS AND THE SIKHS.

The withdrawal of the Afghans left the Sikhs face to face with the Marathas. The latter succeeded in recovering

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their political influence after the third battle of Panipat (1761), during the brief reign of Peshwa Madhav Rao I.\textsuperscript{1} His premature death in 1772 was followed by the first Anglo-Maratha war.\textsuperscript{2}

Then Mahadji Sindhia established his ascendancy in the court of Delhi. His policy was to divert the energy of the Sikhs by taking some of the chiefs into Maratha service. He tried to put a stop to their incursions; but had very little success.\textsuperscript{3} He also concluded a treaty with the Sikhs in 1785 in the name of Emperor Shah Alam II. But this proved to be unfruitful as the majority of Sikhs continued to oppose the Marathas.

The British at the beginning of the nineteenth century had their sovereignty well established over almost the whole of India. They were the recognised paramount rulers. But the Panjab was still outside their domain. The British government was gradually spreading its tentacles towards that area too.

In 1803 the British succeeded in ousting the Marathas from Delhi. In the Second Anglo-Maratha war on the outskirts

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2. Banerjee, A.C., \textit{Anglo-Sikh Relations} p. 7.
of Delhi, Lord Lake defeated the Maratha forces. With this victory the British began the last phase of establishing complete authority over the whole of India. For the Sikhs, the threat of a rival Maratha power in the Panjab, vanished. They were left to face a more formidable power — the British.

RISE OF RANJIT SINGH

Meanwhile a change occurred in Sikh politics. At the turn of the century emerged a strong Sikh leader, Ranjit Singh of the Sukerchakia mial. He was at that time considered the most powerful Sikh-chief in these areas. He had a large permanent force as well one in case of emergencies. With astute strategy he was able to gain control of Lahore at the close of the year 1799. With this occupation of Lahore began a new era in the history of these regions. It marked the beginning of the downfall of the independent Sikh chiefs on the one hand, and the establishment of the Sikh monarchy on the other.

By 1805, Ranjit Singh had established his sway to the north bank of the Sutlej; he contemplated conquest beyond it. The disputes between the States of Patiala,

4. Ibid., p. 128.
Nabha and Jind in 1806, afforded him the opportunity, when he crossed the Sutlej with an army.\(^1\) The last of the Rais of Raikot, Rai Alias, who held Ludhiana and its neighbouring areas, had been killed while hunting in 1802.\(^2\) The family was headed by the widow of Rai Alias, Bhag Bhari, and his mother Nurul-nisa.\(^3\) No opposition was offered to Ranjit Singh. He took possession of the town and the fort of Ludhiana.

The combined territory of Ludhiana and its neighbouring villages, he gave to the jurisdiction of his nephew, Raja Bhag Singh, of Jind.\(^4\) In two expeditions, the following year, Ranjit Singh stripped the Rais of all their territory, save two or three villages for their maintenance.

These conquests were divided by the Raja between himself and some of his adherants, Raja Bhag Singh of Jind received a few more villages in the Bassain ilaqua. Sardar Fateh Singh Ahluwalia, got nearly the whole of Jagraon tehsil and Sardar Gurjit Singh of Ladwa was given villages around Gujarwala.\(^5\)

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1. Loc. Cit.
3. Loc. Cit.
5. Ibid, and also in Jagnana-Punjab (Urdu), p. 110.
SITUATION ON THE EVE OF THE ESTABLISHMENT
OF THE POLITICAL AGENCY.

The Sikhs alarmed at the expansionist policies of
Ranjit Singh, sent a deputation to the British consisting
of Bhai Lal Singh of Kaithal and Chain Singh, Diwan of
Patiala asking for their protection. The British government
gave an ambiguous reply at that time, neither conceding to
the request nor refusing. In the meantime the British were
awakened to the probability of a French attack on India.
This was an after math of the Treaty of Tilsit 1807 between
Napoleon and Russia. With an assurance of aid from Russia,
it was probable that Napoleon would attack the British
in India, a corollary to his overall anti-British policy.
Minto, the then governor - general, found it expedient
to court the friendship of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, as his
territory formed the frontier of the British governments'
domain.

1. Foreign Secret Consultation No. 32, May 10, 1808.
   (Hereafter as F.S.C.) Also in, Kiernan, V.G.
   Metcalfe's Mission to Lahore, Monograph No. 21 Lahore
   1943 p. 4.


   Feroqui, B.A., British Relations with Cis-Sutlej States
   (Lahore 1941) p. 8.

4. Letter from Eimonton, Secretary to Government, to
   Metcalfe, F.S.C. No. 21-25, June 20, 1808.
   Also in Thompson, E., The Life of Charles Lord Metcalfe
   (London 1887) 1st ed. p. 75.
Charles Metcalfe (later Lord) was deputed as the British envoy to the court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh to establish an alliance.\(^1\) The French menace, seemed of little importance to Ranjit Singh. He was prepared to render support in lieu of recognition of his sovereignty over the Cis-Sutlej Chiefs.

The British government's immediate concern was to conciliate the Maharaja. But on this condition they gave an ambiguous reply, and for the time being, nothing concrete emerged from the talks, between Metcalfe and Maharaja Ranjit Singh.\(^2\) At this time, news from England and Europe arrived which caused a reversal in the policy of the British.\(^3\) An understanding was reached between England and Mahmoud II Sultan of Turkey, which considerably improved their relations with each other.\(^4\) This made England's position stronger in those areas. This seemed to influence subsequent British actions. Equally important, was the breakdown of the alliance between France and Russia. Alexander I resented the injury caused to Russian trade by Napoleon's Continental System.

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1. Loc. Cit.
against England. The failure of this system in Europe also strengthened England's position, and changed her policies in India. As a result, British apprehensions of French attack on India diminished and their entire perspective of relations with Ranjit Singh underwent a change. Towards the end of 1808, in consequence of acts of hostility committed by Ranjit Singh to the south of Sutlej, the British determined to comply with the wishes of the Cis-Sutlej chiefs. Metcalfe was instructed to declare the country between the Sutlej and the Jumna under British protection.

The course of these events necessitated the advance of a detachment of troops. Col. David Ochterlony, who was in command, led his troops towards the Sutlej and the territory of Lahore. There were many misgivings amongst the Sikh chiefs to this force entering their territories. They had asked for protection, but not for troops. It was felt that they would withhold a direct acquiescence in the proposed measure, but they would not attempt to oppose the advance of the troops.

1. Loc. Cit.
It was expedient for the British that the Sikh chiefs should know the course being taken by their government. Accordingly Cchterlony was to convince the chiefs, to appreciate the full benefit of our protection without considering as burdensome or injurious the mode in which this government deems proper to afford it.\(^1\) In lieu of the protection provided by the chiefs, the government, in the prosecution of its military arrangements and operations should have facilities and resources of the country at its disposal. This policy which the government proposed to pursue was declared to the chiefs through its representative Cchterlony. The forces under his command would then advance to Ludhiana where a temporary station was to be established.\(^2\)

The main purpose of the British in assuming the protection of the Cis-Sutlej States was, (a) to abate Ranjit Singh's ambitious designs on the territory east of the Sutlej, (b) to extend the sphere of the company's indirect suzerainty, and (c) to safeguard the northern most area of the territory under the government. However, it had no intentions of annexing the territory which it was safeguarding.\(^3\)

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For the time being the chiefs would be given protection against Ranjit Singh. They would have to co-operate actively and cordially for the defence of their country. For this no pecuniary contribution would be demanded from the chiefs.\(^1\) But this was not to be a precedent for future involvements, and if expediency demanded the government might take contributions for the expenses incurred in any expedition undertaken by them.\(^2\)

Direct negotiations continued between the chiefs and the British. Ranjit Singh realised the exigency of the situation and became conciliatory to the British envoy Metcalfe.\(^3\) He avoided direct involvement with the British government and realised, astutely, the trend towards which events were veering. He manifested a desire to tide over the situation. Consequently the treaty of Amritsar was signed on 25th April, 1809.

Though this Ranjit Singh agreed neither to commit nor suffer encroachments on the possessions or rights of the chiefs to the south of the Satlej. He was also guaranteed

\(\text{\footnotesize 1. Ibid.} \)
\(\text{\footnotesize 2. Ibid.} \)
possession of the conquests made by him on the left
of the Sutlej up to September 1808. The British government
agreed to have no concern with the territories and
subjects of the Raja of Lahore to the North of the Sutlej.¹

This brief history brings us to the commencement
of the period of study.