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'Encounters and Calamities' : The History  
of a North Indian Qasba in the Nineteenth  
Century

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The sources

The history of colonial India has generally been written on the basis of British official records, for the simple reason that non-official sources are neither quite so abundant nor as easily accessible. This is especially true for the period upto the end of the nineteenth century, that is, before organisations like the Indian National Congress had emerged and the memoirs of leaders, as well as newspapers and journals in Indian languages and in English, became available in some number. This paper seeks to re-examine a small part of this earlier colonial history in the light of a local historical account, or more precisely a chronicle of events entitled 'Wāqeat-ō-Hadesat : Qasba Mubarakpur', written in the 1880s and preserved in Urdu manuscript in the qasba of Mubarakpur in the district of Azamgarh in eastern U.P. I hope through this re-examination to say something about the way in which the people of Mubarakpur perceived the formidable developments of the period, something of how they read their history.

In the past it has generally been the anthropologist rather than the historian who has undertaken this kind of task,<sup>1</sup> and several distinguished anthropologists have written about the experience of small towns and cities under colonialism. As we shall see, some of their observations and conclusions are not entirely inappropriate to the history which is the subject of this paper. Mubarakpur was a major textile centre in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries specialising in the production of silk and mixed silk-and-cotton fabrics known as sangi and ghalts, and dependant to a large extent on the patronage of the courts and nobility of Awadh, Nepal and other places. The establishment and consolidation of a centralised colonial power, the representative of a powerful manufacturing nation, entailed considerable dislocation in Mubarakpur and its environs. The cloth trade was seriously affected, though it survived better here than in many other textile-centres of the region. The rules under which land was held were altered, and - with



their rent-free lands being reduced, other lands fragmented and sub-divided sold under the pressure of heavy taxation and increased dependance on cash, credit and markets - many like the Sheikh muslim zamindars of Mubarakpur and neighbouring areas came under severe pressure. Professional moneylenders and traders apparently entered a period of increased prosperity at the turn of the nineteenth century, but did not make such headway as to over-throw the existing relations of power in the gasba of Mubarakpur or the countryside around. In Mubarakpur, there were other colonial innovations, among them the establishment of a police outpost, an Imperial Post Office and a Middle School. Nevertheless, while the power of the panchayat and the zamindars was much reduced, these remained the major court of appeal for most local disputes; and most of those who studied still obtained a traditional religious education.

The "advance towards vagueness" that Geertz writes about, for Modjokerto in east central Java<sup>2</sup>, might be a suggestive description of the nineteenth century history of Mubarakpur too. The "uncertainty", the "sense of disequilibrium and disorientation" that he and others find among the population of such towns by the end of the colonial period<sup>3</sup> is, however, scarcely a satisfactory indication of the local people's perceptions and responses, or of their will to live with dignity, to carve out and preserve for themselves areas of independence and honour.

The problem remains one of finding sources adequate to our purpose. In the case of Mubarakpur, while the official colonial records provide us a particular elite perception, necessarily biased in a certain way, what the Wāqeāt-ō-hādesāt provides is an alternative elite perception, closer to the ground to be sure, but not the less one-sided for that. Sheikh Mohammad Ali Hasan, its author, was a member of a local muslim zamindari family. He wrote the chronicle at an advanced age, within a few years of his death in 1888. And the Wāqeāt, without ever referring to the wider politics of the emerging public associations (Muslim or other), mirrors several of the contemporary concerns and attitudes of elite Muslim groups in many different parts of northern India - of men who were in many cases from a zamindari background



similar to his, who felt their position in political and economic affairs (and, then, important areas of their erstwhile cultural domination) threatened.

We have nothing comparable to the Wāgeāt that emanates from the lower classes of Mubarakpur. Yet we are allowed glimpses of how the ordinary labouring people of the qasba spoke and acted - both in the official record relating to a succession of violent outbreaks in the nineteenth century and in Ali Hasan's detailed narration of these and other events. I have been fortunate enough also to gain access to two sketchy but valuable documents that come from the weavers of Mubarakpur : one, a petition drawn up by the leaders of the weaving community to try and clear themselves from blame for the violent outbreak of 1813, the other, the occasional 'notes' (or diary) of a weaver that dates from the end of our period.

In what follows, I first summarise some of the basic information regarding numbers, occupations and class differences among the people of Mubarakpur in the nineteenth century, and then set out side by side the alternative versions of the history of the qasba as it appears in the official accounts and Ali Hasan's chronicle. I then use the evidence that can be drawn out of these histories, and the weavers' own isolated statements, to make a few comments regarding subaltern consciousness in nineteenth century Mubarakpur.

### The qasba

The most important elements in the population of Mubarakpur were the zamindars, the weavers and the traders-moneylenders. There was also a sizeable body of cultivating tenants and labourers, as well as men and women belonging to various other service groups. In 1813 the population was estimated at between 10,000 and 12,000. Of these 3000 were supposed to be "weavers of the Mussulman caste śik (i.e. Julahas) while some were wealthy Hindu traders.<sup>4</sup> In 1881, according to the census of that year, the population was 13,157 (9066 Muslims and 4091 Hindus). Among "actual workers" the principal groups were 143 "landholders"; 560 "cultivators and tenants"; 1877 weavers; 43 halvais (makers and sellers of Indian sweets); 49 pansaris (condiment sellers); 254 "general labourers" and 44 "beggars".<sup>5</sup> By 1901, the population had risen to 15,433 inhabitants - 11,442 of them Muslims and the remaining 3,991 Hindus.



The zamindars were the 'leaders' of the gasba, in historical memory - since their ancestors had re-established the place in the eighteenth century and presumably induced weavers, traders and other groups to come and settle there<sup>6</sup> - and by virtue of their recognition as revenue-payers and local 'representatives' by the colonial authorities. They received a small kargahi for every working loom (kargah) in the gasba, said to be no more than a few annas in the 1830s but "highly prized by the Zamindars and cheerfully paid by the weavers".<sup>7</sup> They also collected certain feudal dues from the local traders and merchants of various castes, as well as other dues and services from the weavers and members of other artisanal and service castes.<sup>8</sup> For "agriculturists" what the Settlement Officer, J.A. Reid wrote for the district as a whole in 1877, applied to Mubarakpur as well. High-caste tenants, both resident and non-resident - and of these there were few in Mubarakpur - paid a fixed rent in cash or grain; and non-resident low-caste tenants did the same. But resident low-castes called parjas (praja - subjects) rendered to the landlord "a number of petty dues and services besides rent, and ... look (ed) upon him as a feudal superior". In villages, or gasbas such as Mubarakpur, with several proprietors the parjas were generally distributed among them, but the distribution was not necessarily proportionate to the land held. "A parja allotted to a sharer remains solely his, though the man cultivate land under another sharer, and even though he cease to cultivate land under his superior. The sale and mortgagage of parjas - that is, of the dues and services they render - is not unknown".<sup>9</sup>

By this time, however, the Sheikh zamindars of Mubarakpur held "only a few villages" and were said to be "in difficulties".<sup>10</sup> That there were as many as 143 "landholders" listed among the inhabitants of Mubarakpur, and others living in neighbouring Sikhthi and Amlo also held parts of the gasba, indicates the extent of the sub-division of zamindaris. There is evidence, too, from early in the century of the impoverished state of several of these zamindars. Thus Rikhai Sahu, "a Mahajan of considerable wealth" who was killed in the course of a major clash between Hindus and Muslims in April 1813, was reckoned to be "the chief person" residing in the gasba; and at least two of



the zamindars of Mubarakpur were in debt to him. Also prominent in the events of April 1813 (apparently instrumental in drawing into the fight Hindu zamindars and their men from a wide area around) was Devi Dube of Amlo - "second to (Rikhai Sahu) in point of wealth and influence and more intimately connected with the surrounding zamindars for his having the management of landed property to a considerable extent in the neighbourhood".<sup>11</sup>

It was the traders and moneylenders who profited most in this period from the cloth trade that was the very life blood of Mubarakpur. Eight or ten years before the outbreak of 1813, Rikhai Sahu had built a grand thakurduara outside the south-eastern limits of the gasba which the Gorakhpur Magistrate described after personal inspection as "a beautiful building ornamented with marble images, adorned with gold and silver ornaments". "Such a magnificent building was not be found anywhere else in Azamgarh", Ali Hasan records in his chronicle of events in gasba Mubarakpur.<sup>12</sup> Family tradition has it that under the headship of Babu Ramdas, and therefore probably not long after the events of 1813, the family had a grand rangmahal constructed at Ayodhya for use by any relatives who went there on pilgrimage.<sup>13</sup> Again, Bicchuk Kalwar, who was one of the principal targets of attack in another major outbreak of violence in 1842, had "by great care, pecuniousness, and usury raised himself to be a dabbler in Mahajunee", and built for himself a "fine, delicate" two-storied house not long before that event. According to the officials who undertook a detailed enquiry in the gasba following this outbreak, Bicchuk was "a hard unrelenting creditor" who had "several of the reckless and profligate Mussulman weavers of Mubarakpur" in his debt.<sup>14</sup>

That "recklessness" and "profligacy" alone were not responsible for this state of affairs is, however, made abundantly clear by other evidence. In 1881-82, there were 65 karkhanas (or firms) employing a total of 315 artisans for the manufacture of silk and satinette in Mubarakpur and the neighbouring (and far smaller) weaving centre of Khairabad. Together with another 2,168 artisans who worked "independently", these weavers produced sangi and ghalta valued at approximately Rs. 3½ lakhs per annum.<sup>15</sup>



Yet, as was reported for the most important silk-weaving centre of this area, Banaras, the weavers were bound down by "hopeless indebtedness to the firms who employ them, and their remuneration depends as little on the demand which may exist for their goods as if their condition was one of actual slavery". "Even those (who are) styled independent for want of a better word are in reality in the hands of mahajans, who advance them what is necessary for the support of life and absorb all the profits of their labour",<sup>16</sup> In Banaras, a man who produced in one month a brocade worth Rs.200 was paid a pittance of 2 annas (1/8 of a rupee) per day. In Mubarakpur and Khairabad, we are told, "the julahas ... are miserably poor, but the master weavers are some of them very well off. Three of them are landholders and own indigo factories".<sup>17</sup>

Such are some of the bare facts of 'economic' relations as they existed among the principal groups of inhabitants in nineteenth century Mubarakpur. It remains to say a word about the relations of the qasba with the towns and countryside around. There is evidence of prolonged zamindari quarrels for control of land and power in this region during the eighteenth century.<sup>18</sup> This contest appears to have been accentuated by the uncertain conditions produced by the end of Nawabi rule, and the nineteenth century is replete with instances of tension and conflict between the zamindars of Mubarakpur and those of neighbouring villages and estates.

At the same time, in more everyday terms, Mubarakpur was like other qasbas something of a nodal point for the economy of the surrounding countryside. Milk and vegetable sellers brought their goods to sell here; a number of weavers came in to work from their homes in nearby villages; and of course the landholders, tenants and cultivators of the place held and worked a certain amount of land outside Mubarakpur. But in the vicinity there were other centres that vied for this position of leadership as meeting-place and reference-point.



Six miles south-east of Mubarakpur stood the substantial qasba of Muhammadabad Gohna (or simply Muhammadabad), residence of pargana officers and a gazi under Nawabi rule and headquarters of the pargana and tahsil of Muhammadabad under British administration (see Map). Eight miles west of it was Azamgarh town, founded and nurtured by the important family of the Rajas of Azamgarh since the seventeenth century, enjoying fairly good road communications at least from that time, and further favoured when it was adopted as the headquarters of a British district from 1832.

Consequently, Mubarakpur seems never to have been very important as a commercial or administrative centre. Whereas a bazaar or retail market for the sale of sundry commodities was held here twice a week in the later nineteenth century, Muhammadabad had a similar bazaar four times a week. Significantly, too, the list of "principal occupations" for Muhammadabad at the beginning of the 1880s included "petty bankers and traders" and "shopkeepers" as well as "landowners", "agriculturists", weavers and other artisans. Recall that the first two groups were not numerous enough to be mentioned in the corresponding list of "principal occupations" for Mubarakpur.<sup>20</sup>

It is interesting to compare the above information with that regarding Maunath shanjan (or Mau) the other major cloth-producing centre of Azamgarh district in the nineteenth century. Mau, with a population that was only slightly larger than that of Mubarakpur in 1881 (14,945 against Mubarakpur's 13,157), appears to have combined in itself the roles of Mubarakpur and Muhammadabad, and added a little more besides, since it was that much further from the district headquarters (see Map). A bazaar was held here daily, and the "principal occupations" included: employment under the Government or municipality; "ministers of the Hindu religion"; domestic servants; hackney-carriage keepers and drivers; palanquin keepers and bearers; "messengers"; landholders; cultivators and tenants; agricultural labourers; carpenters; weavers; cloth merchants (bazzaz); tailors; shoe-makers and sellers; washermen; corn and flour dealers; general labourers; and beggars.<sup>21</sup>



The accompanying map of road links in the mid-nineteenth century shows, too, the poor state of the long-distance communications of Mubarakpur. This is one reason why Maharajganj on the Choti Sarju river, which lay some 15 miles north-west of Azamgarh town and not far from the border of Awadh, had become the chief mart for cloths from Mubarakpur (as well as from Mau, Kopaganj and other places).

The nineteenth century brought important changes in communications, the direction of trade and Mubarakpur's general outlook on the world. The movement of traffic to and from Azamgarh seems always to have been northward towards the Ghaghra, and southward towards the Ganga, not eastward and westward. This remained the case throughout the nineteenth century both for Azamgarh district as a whole and for the qasba of Mubarakpur. But soon after the uprising of 1857-59 the old road from Allahabad and Jaunpur through Azamgarh town and Jianpur to Dohrighat and (across the Ghaghra) to Gorakhpur was metalled. So was the road linking Dohrighat with Mau and Ghazipur. Within the next couple of decades metalled roads were also developed to connect Azamgarh town directly with Ghazipur and Banaras, and (through Muhammadabad) with Mau on the east. By the end of the century a branch railway line had also been laid to connect Azamgarh and Muhammadabad with Mau, from where a section of the Bengal and North-Western Railway ran to Banaras.

The opening up of the interior and the growing influx of mill-cloth from Britain led also to a reversal in the direction of the cloth trade. In the later nineteenth century the East Indian and Oudh and Rohilkhand Railways, fed by the improved roads, became the main passages out of Azamgarh district for sugar exports to the south and west and indigo exports to the east, and into it for imports of not only raw cotton and grain but cloth, metal and "other manufactured wares".<sup>22</sup> After the artificial "boom" in exports created by the East India Company's "investment at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the balance of trade in quality



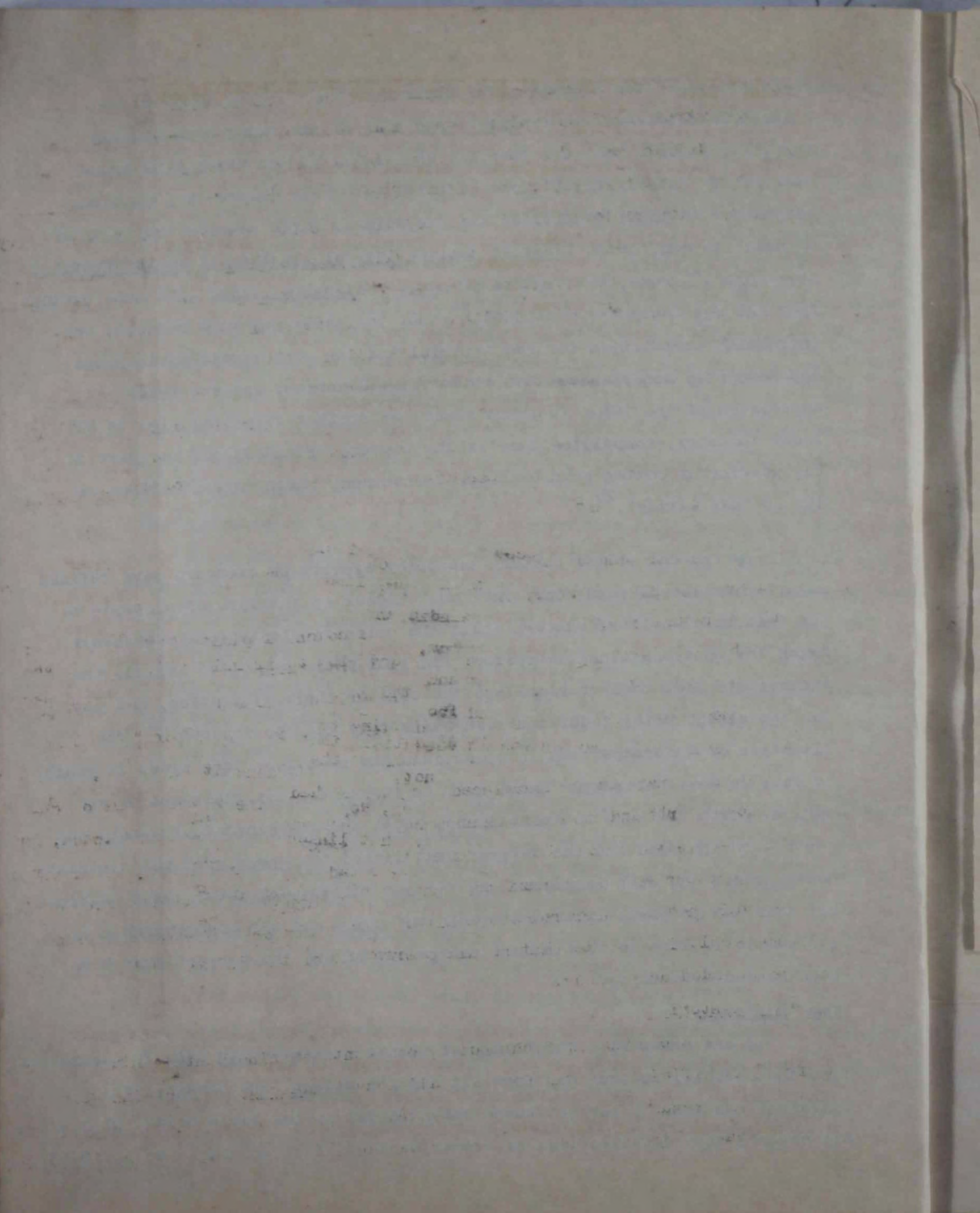
cloth had soon turned against the district. The weaving industry of Mubarakpur survived rather better than that of the other neighbouring textile centres : "in silk fabrics, especially of the mixed kind manufactured in this district", one official observed, "there is a peculiar adaptation to local conditions and prejudices, which enables the industry to hold its own, or at least to decline less slowly than it would otherwise have done".<sup>23</sup> Thus, the exports of sangi and ghalta (along with some cottons from Mau and Kopaganj) continued.<sup>24</sup> But the scale was much reduced; the increasing competition for raw material and its cost tended to increase dependance on moneylenders and other intermediaries; and the trade depression of the 1870s to 1890s dealt yet another crippling blow to the local industry, compelling many of the weavers of Mubarakpur to shift to the weaving of cotton handkerchiefs and turbans which were now "more in demand than satins".<sup>25</sup>

By the end of the century the chief exports of Azamgarh were refined sugar and oilseeds (and, one might add, labour in the form of migrants to the industrial belt of eastern India and colonial plantations overseas): "with the money obtained therefrom, and from their relatives abroad, the inhabitants meet their revenue and the cost of their litigation, and pay for the cloth, metal goods and foodgrains they have to import".<sup>26</sup> The situation of Mubarakpur was in essentials the same. By this time, it would be fair to say, Mubarakpur faced not, as it had done at the start of our period, north and west to Maharajganj, Nepal and the kingdom of Awadh, but south - to the road and the railway that linked the gasba with the district headquarters and with Ghazipur, Banaras and faraway Calcutta. What bearing all this had on power relations within the gasba and the consciousness of its people is a theme that should emerge out of the 'histories' that have been handed down to us.

### Two 'histories'

If one draws up a chronology of events in nineteenth century Mubarakpur from the official records and from Ali Hasan's Wageat, one obtains very different results. I set out these chronologies in the table below, placing Ali Hasan's more detailed list of events on the left. (see Table on pp.10-13)







Chronology of Events in Mubarakpur in the Nineteenth Century

According to the 'Waqeat-o-Hadesat'				According to the Official Records			
Event	Date	Nature of Occurrence	Supposed Implications*	Event	Date	Nature of Occurrence	Supposed Implications*
I	Late 1790s	Shia-Sunni riot. One killed	Pro-Shia stance of local Nawabi officials	1	1801	'Accession'. Establishment of direct British administration in Azamgarh and eastern U.P.	Establishment of law and order
II	1810 (1226 Hijri)	'Nakku Shahi'. Shia-Sunni quarrel; Nakku seriously wounded					
III	1813	'Rikhai Shahi'. Great Hindu-Muslim clash. Arson and looting for nine days. Rikhai Sahu and numerous others killed	Growing insolence of Hindu money-lenders. Bravery of the Mubarakpur Muslims	2	1813	Great 'disturbance', sanguinary battle and plunder for days until British magistrate and troops arrived	Religious fanaticism. Breakdown of law and order
IV	n.d.	Suicide of a Brahman					
N1	n.d.	Cow killed, head placed on platform. Riot averted by local officials	Greatness of British rule				
V	n.d.	'Katvaru Shahi'. Katvaru, a tailor, apprehended and killed during a burglary					

Contd...11/



Event	Date	Nature of Occurrence	Supposed Implications	Event	Date	Nature of Occurrence	Supposed Implications
VI	n.d.	'Ali Shahi' Quarrel between two teams of wrestlers. One killed					
VII	1832(1247H.)	'Daka Zani'. Several dacoits apprehended and killed while attacking a moneylender's house	Bravery of the townsfolk				
VIII	1834	'Sukhlal Shahi'. Piglet killed and placed on Panj-i-Sharif. Sukhlal Singh, Hindu <u>barkandaz</u> wounded, succumbed to injuries		3	1834	Dead pig on Panj-i-Sharif. Hindu <u>barkandaz</u> who went to investigate received several sword-cuts	Near breakdown of law and order
IX	1834-41	Successful tenure of Mirza Wali Beg as Thanadar of Mubarakpur		Ni	1835	Dead pig on a <u>chank</u> . <u>Thanadar</u> had it quickly removed	-do-
IX	1842	'Bicchuk Shahi'. Clash between Muslims and Hindu moneylenders. Several of the latter killed		4	1842	Serious riot. Several killed	Religious fanaticism. Breakdown of law and order
X	1849(1265H.)	'Doma Shahi'. Quarrel between two teams of wrestlers. One killed					
XI	n.d.	'Karima-Shahi'. Murder of a girl and theft of her jewellery					



Event	Date	Nature of Occurrence	Supposed Implications	Event	Date	Nature of Occurrence	Supposed Implications
XII	1850 (1266H.)	'Daka Zani'. Dacoits attacked a money-lender's house. Chased away by townsfolk	Solidarity and bravery of the townsfolk				
XIII	n.d.	'Tilanga Shahi'. Suicide of a nepoy carried away by his grief while participating in the lamentations at Muharram					
XIV	1851 (1267H.)	'Baqrudu Shahi'. Baqrudu killed in a game of <u>kabaddi</u>					
XV	n.d.	'Amanullah Shahi'. Amanullah, <u>hajjam</u> , apprehended and killed during burglary					
XVI	n.d.	'Fakhruddin Shahi'. Fakhruddin killed a pig and placed its carcass on the Jama Masjid, nearly causing a riot					
XVII	1857	Mubarakpur threatened repeatedly by the rebels, but preparations and warnings staved off any attack	Renowned bravery of townsfolk. Courageous leadership of the <u>zamindars</u> and <u>sardars</u> of the <u>gasba</u>	Nil	1857	No disturbance, though great distress among the weavers	Near breakdown of law and order. Yeoman service by local officials

Contd...13/



Event	Date	Nature of Occurrence	Supposed Implications	Event	Date	Nature of Occurrence	Supposed Implications
				5	1860	Introduction of local administration under Act XX of 1856. Local revenue to pay for police and 'improvement'	Extension of local self-government and works of 'improvement'
XVIII	1877	'Manohar Shahi'. Prolonged dispute over Manohar Das Agrawal's building of a temple inside the <u>qasba</u>	<u>Qasba</u> tradition defended				
N3	1860s-80s	Repair and extension of Jama Masjid, Imambarah, etc., through contributions of all castes and communities	<u>Qasba</u> tradition honoured				
				6	1893-94	"Religious disturbances"	Religious fanaticism. Breakdown of law and order
				7	1904	Riot	-do-

\* 'Supposed Implications' refers to inferences that are either explicitly drawn or implied in the relevant records.

N Occurrence or incident that is mentioned in the records, but not as a major 'Event'.



I have omitted from the right hand column some purely administrative 'Events' such as the establishment of a Police Station in 1813 or its reduction to a smaller police outpost later on, and included in both columns certain 'Non-Events' or 'Near-Events' (N.) that were recorded by the respective sources as being of significance for one reason or another. It is plain that what makes an Event in the official reckoning is a marked positive or negative correlation with the question of 'law and order'. Everything in this account is dated from the 'accession' of 1801, which allegedly divides darkness from light, the days of 'order' and 'improvement' from the previous regime of 'anarchy' and 'misrule'. 1857 is a notable Non-Event, for in this dangerous moment, when "order", "progress" and "civilization" were threatened all over northern India, Mubarakpur remained peaceful. Horne, the magistrate of Azamgarh, reported in September 1857 that the Muhammadabad tahsil was the "best" in the district, with "crime" low and roads safe. It was a matter for self-congratulation, as "there is great distress at present in Mubarakpur and Mhow, in each of which places there are about 5000 Julahas, who have lost all their capital by the robbery of their stocks of manufactured goods, which had been sent out for sale at the time of the outbreak". Moreover, "these people are generally very turbulent". On this occasion, however, they had been "excellently kept in order by the tehseeldar Mahomed Tukee, who deserves great credit every way".<sup>27</sup>

Almost all the other entries in the official chronology relate to outbreaks or threatened outbreaks of violence over the desecration of religious symbols - proof, in this view, of the essential irrationality and fanaticism of the local people, ingredients that would ensure a return to anarchy if ever the controlling hand of the colonial power were to be withdrawn. Often there is a harking back to 1813, the year of "the great disturbances" in Mubarakpur when "disorder reigned for several days unchecked".<sup>28</sup> Or, as the Azamgarh District Gazetteer of 1911 put it in a classic summary of the history of Mubarakpur since 'accession': The



Muhammadans [of Mubarakpur] consist for the most part of fanatical and clannish Julahas, and the fire of religious animosity between them and the Hindus of the town and neighbourhood is always smouldering. Serious conflicts have occurred between the two from time to time, notably in 1813, 1842 and 1904. The features of all these disturbances are similar, so that a description of what took place on the first occasion will suffice to indicate their character. In 1813 a petty dispute about the inclosing within the grounds of a Hindu temple of a little piece of land near a Muhammadan takia platform was followed first by the slaughter on the spot of a cow by the Muhammadans and then by the defiling of the platform and of a neighbouring inambara with pig's blood by the Hindus. The Muhammadans retaliated by cruelly murdering a wealthy Hindu merchant of the place named Rikhai Sahu, by plundering and burning his house and by defacing a handsome temple which he had erected. Hereupon the whole Hindu population of the vicinity rose and a sanguinary battle ensued in which the Muhammadans were overpowered after many had been killed and wounded on both sides. The inhabitants of the town fled and the place was given up to plunder for some days till a magistrate arrived with troops from Gorakhpur and restored order. Similar disturbances occurred in 1893-94 and punitive police were quartered on the town for several months".<sup>29</sup>

The power of auto-suggestion displayed here is truly remarkable. Consider the writer's statements on the "disturbances of 1893-94". 1893 was a year of widespread strife between groups of Hindus and Muslims, when the agitation for Cow-Protection led to violent demonstrations and clashes in many places in Azamgarh and other districts of this region.<sup>30</sup> Nowhere in the detailed official records relating to these events, however, or in contemporary newspapers, is it reported that Mubarakpur was involved in these outbreaks. Nor is the gasba included in the list of villages and towns upon which a punitive police force was imposed in their wake. But riots had occurred at numerous spots in Banaras and Ghazipur, Shahabad and Ballia, not to mention Mau and Kopa, Azmatgarh and a host of other places close to Mubarakpur. And in Mubarakpur itself, as the compiler of the



District Gazetteer saw it, "the fire of religious animosity" between Muslims and Hindus was "always smouldering". There were serious conflicts between them in 1813, 1842 and 1904 : or "from time to time" in his phrase. So the "disturbances of 1893-94" which are not mentioned at the beginning of this paragraph on the history of Mubarakpur, have become a major Event by the end of it : "and punitive police were quartered on the town for several months".<sup>31</sup>

Ali Hasan's Wāqēāt-ō-Hādesāt gives to us a very different 'history'. First, it contains no reference to the 'accession' of 1801, that favourite date of colonial administrators of the region. There is a statement, in the discussion on Event II, that the British power was already installed. But in this narrative, the Great Event, the turning-point is Event III - the 'Rikhai Shahi' of 1813. "British rule", it would seem, was established only when an English Magistrate and troops first arrived in Mubarakpur after the outbreak of violence in April that year. It was in 1813, we are told, after the 'riot', that a thana was established in Mubarakpur and courts in Azamgarh<sup>32</sup> - though the latter suggestion is clearly incorrect, for it was only in 1820 that a Deputy Magistracy under the Jaunpur Collectorate was established at Azamgarh, and Muhammadabad pargana (which contained Mubarakpur) was then part of Ghazipur district.

This difference in perspective is not attributable simply to the inevitable distance that separates a local from a wider - regional, national or colonial-view. If 1801 was the beginning of a new era in colonialist reckoning, for obvious reasons, 1813 was, for equally good reasons, a watershed in the eyes of the people of Mubarakpur which became a point of reference for a long time afterwards. This was not, however, as officials would have it, because of the "delightful license" to plunder that 1813 had provided.<sup>33</sup> (Otherwise 1857 would have been welcomed as another great opportunity for this pastime : on the contrary, the people of Mubarakpur prepared for battle to defend the gasba's moneylenders when these were threatened by rebels in the vicinity.<sup>34</sup>) What 1813 stood for locally was a dreadful calamity - such a blood-bath, writes Ali Hasan, that "God save



every Musalman from such a fate" (Wāqeat-ō-Hādesāt, p.18) - and what people feared was the repetition of such a massacre. So in N1 (see above table) thanadar Mirza Karam Ali Beg promised that what had happened in the 'Rikh Shahi' would not happen again (Waqeat, 22). Or, more strikingly, in Even the armed dacoity of 1832, Muslim youths like Fateh and his comrades moved to the defence of Babu Ramdas, Mahajan, with some slight hesitation because the dacoits were Hindus (mainly Rajputs) and the youths did not want to arouse Hindu fears of another 'Muslim' attack upon Hindus (Waqeat, 30). It is noteworthy too that Ali Hasan undertook to write this history, as "a labour of love" as he tells us in a prefatory statement, one day in the early 1880s when conversation turned to the bloodshed of 1813 and someone remarked that such a holocaust had never occurred before or since (Waqeat, 1).

The difference between the colonialist outlook and that of the Waqeat is revealed very clearly indeed in the criterion employed for the selection of Events. If it is the question of 'law and order', its consolidation, its breakdown or its being endangered, that made an Event in the colonialist reckoning, it seems to have been 'unnatural death' that did so in Ali Hasan's. Thirteen of the eighteen Events recorded in the Waqeat - all except II, XII, XVI, XVII and XVIII (see table) - involved the violent death of one or more persons, killed in the course of quarrels, riots, dacoities and, in two cases (IV and XIII) through suicide. Of the remaining five Events, too, two involved casualties. In the 'Nakku Shahi' Event II, Nakku was badly beaten up and left for dead, though Ali Hasan tells us that he died a natural death shortly after the termination of the court case that arose out of this incident. (Waqeat, 6-7). In Event XVI (1857), of course, there was a considerable amount of violence and deaths all around; and the author takes care to note what he calls "the only death of the Mutiny period" in Mubarakpur - that of a young lad called Magrooh, attacked one night as he was returning from the Katra bazaar by some constables from the local police outpost, possibly on account of a personal grudge (Waqeat, 73). The very title of Ali Hasan's chronicle,



Equally significant is the choice of other Non-Events (N2 and N3) that are included in the record, and of the remaining Event that was unaccompanied by unnatural death or grievous injury - the 'Manohar Shahi' of 1877 (Event XVIII). N2 refers to Mirza Wali Beg's "memorable" tenure as thanadar of Mubarakpur. What made it memorable, we learn from the brief entry, was that Wali Beg, a Shia, called excellent marsia readers to participate in the Muharram celebrations in the gasba; this was something that people still remarked upon forty years later when Ali Hasan wrote (Waqeat, 35).<sup>36</sup> N3 relates to the repair of the mazar of Raja Mubarak Shah, a Sufi saint of the eighteenth century after whom Mubarakpur was named, and the repair and extension of the Jama Masjid and Imambarah that were built adjacent to it, tasks that had gone on for twenty years and more from 1866-67 until the last pages of the Waqeat came to be written. And Event XVIII (which does not find place in the colonial 'history') was a long drawn out dispute that arose when Manohar Das, mahajan, challenged a long established custom by building a shivalaya (temple) within the limits of the gasba.

The last two entries lead us on to a rather different perspective. The Waqeat is the work of a Muslim who is steeped in, and deeply concerned about the traditions of an isolated gasba, settled in the eighteenth century by Sheikh Muslim zamindars and made prosperous by the patronage of the Nawabs of Awadh and other contemporary rulers. 'Mubarakpur', rather than 'British rule' or even the 'Muslim community', emerges as the real hero of this story. There is striking testimony to this in Ali Hasan's discussion of the defence of the gasba's Hindu moneylenders on different occasions when they were attacked by dacoits (Events VII and XII) and again in 1857 (Event XVII).

When the 'Daka Zani' of 1832 (Event VII) occurred a large number of townsfolk turned out as the cry went up for help from the house of Babu Ramdas, mahajan: such a crowd congregated that "it was difficult to find standing space" inside or around the house. The dacoit gang was surrounded, engaged in battle and a number of its members killed.



Waqeāt-o-Hādesāt, with its suggestion of disasters and calamities, perhaps reflects this concern with violent, 'unnatural' occurrences and incidents, interruptions in the normal progress of the life of the qasba.

To put it differently, and perhaps more fairly, what makes an Event in the eyes of the author of the Waqeāt is its "public" character - the fact that the qasba community as a whole was interested, involved in or affected by a particular happening. It is possible to say a little more about this collective, the "public", for with all the attention to violence and death, there are certain other principles of selection at work in the compilation of this 'history'. The Waqeāt is very clearly a Muslim account. This perhaps is one reason why N1 in the table above, an incident in which a cow was killed and its head placed on a chauk, and an explosive situation developed, is mentioned but not given the status of an independent Event, whereas no. XVI which is very similar - a piglet being killed and placed on the Jama Masjid, and tension mounting - is discussed as a major Event, the 'Faqrud-din Shahi'. The nature of the discussion on this Event is even more revealing. Ali Hasan begins by saying that now he has to write about a great outrage, an insult to Muslims, perpetrated by a Muslim (Faqrud-din) : "but since the waqeat [occurrences, misfortunes] of the qasba are being related it is necessary to include this incident too" (Waqeāt, 56). "Faqrud-din" means "the pride of religion", but this man should have been called "Faqrushsheyatin" - "the pride of the shaitans (devils)", for he betrayed his religion by this base deed in the hope of profiting from the plunder that might follow. Fortunately such a calamity was averted. Faqrud-din was discovered to have been the rogue responsible for the act, arrested and sentenced to three years rigorous imprisonment. On his return he was not accepted back in to the community, for he was "zalil-o-khar" (base and disagreeable). He was still alive when Ali Hasan wrote, had become a faqir, wandered from village to village and was known as Pakhurdia badmaash (Waqeāt, 60).



Later on, Ali Hasan tells us, a wounded dacoit who was arrested told the Magistrate of the district that the gang included such renowned and dreaded dacoits as Bagi Singh and Chatar Singh, that they had attacked and looted all sorts of places before, including the Government treasury, but no one had stood up to them until they encountered the "warlike" (jangi) men of Mubarakpur (Waqeat, 30-2).

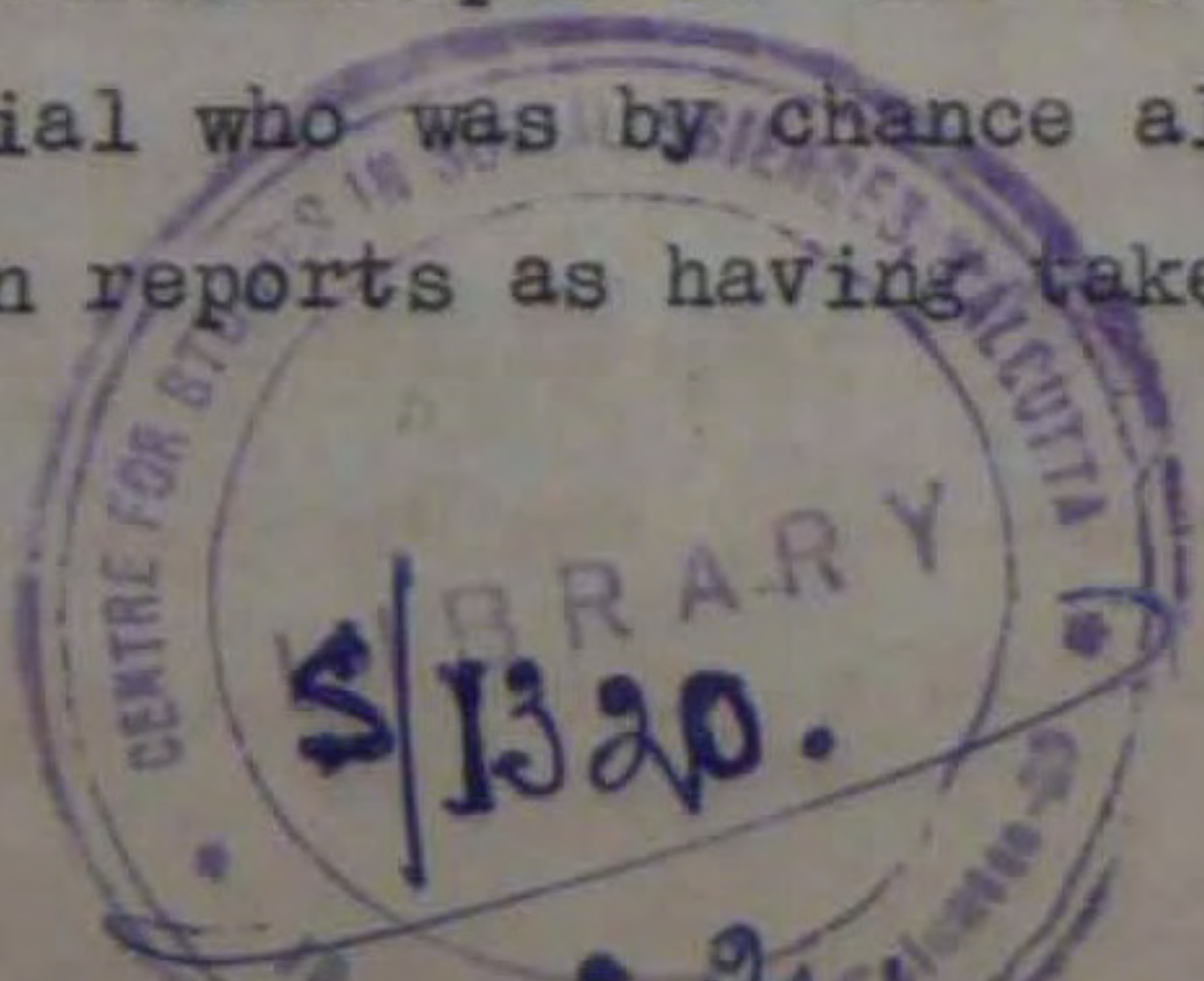
In 1857, Rajab Ali, the rebel land-owner of village Bamhur, a couple of miles south-west of Mubarakpur, announced his intention of plundering the mahajans of the gasba in a letter addressed to Sheikh Gada Husain, zamindar, and Baksh Mehtar, "sardar nurbaf", the head of the weavers. "Everyone" in Mubarakpur was enraged, writes Ali Hasan, and after consultations Gada Husain threw back the challenge to Rajab Ali with the warning that if the rebels tried to enter Mubarakpur to loot the mahajans, they would have to bear all the consequences. "Do you think that the inhabitants of Mubarakpur are dead that you have made this decision [to loot the mahajans]? If ever again such a threat [kalma, literally 'word'] escapes from your mouth, then you should prepare to defend your own village. Let us see who has the greater abilities in war" (Waqeat, 63). And, regarding a further message (possibly, a ruse) in which Rajab Ali expressed his desire to make offerings at the Panj-i-Sharif and Raja Sahib's mazar in Mubarakpur, the "Mubarakpur people together" wrote in reply that four or five persons could come, unarmed, and fulfil this wish for prayer. But if a larger number came, or any were armed, then : "tum . apnon ko misl shirini-niaz ke tassawur karna (you can think of yourselves as sweets which will be distributed and eaten). We have 1700 guns and 9 maunds of powder and shot ready for you" (Waqeat, 64).

It is noteworthy, too, that Ali Hasan emphasizes that all castes and communities, Hindu as well as Muslim, contributed to the repair of Raja Mubarak Shah's mazar and certain extensions of the Jama Masjid. We are told that the Hindu mahajans of Mubarakpur revered the memory of Raja Sahib, and lit lamps and made offerings of sweets at his mazar every Thursday.



But the poor state of the walls of the Jama Masjid, which lay in the same compound as the mazar, meant that "dogs and cats" got to these offerings and put out the lamps. Sometime in 1866-67 (hijri 1281) therefore, Sheikh Gada Husain, a widely respected and influential zamindar, appealed to the mahajans to help in the repair of these walls. Ali Hasan records that the latter responded very generously indeed at that time and later on, so that "the entire wall along the length of the mazar was built through the donation of the Hindus", and work estimated to take all of six months for repairing the walls and the floors, as well as for the construction of a washroom and excavation of a well adjacent to the mosque, was completed in four (Waqaat, 86, 88).<sup>36a</sup>

Ali Hasan's description of the defence of the traditions of the qasba in the 'Manohar Shahi' of 1877 - occurring as it did while the joint endeavours described above were still in progress - is, again, instructive. When it was discovered that Manohar Das had built a small shivalaya inside the compound of his house, anger flared up among the Muslims of Mubarakpur. It should be mentioned that there was already a history of such moneylender encroachment on the rights of the Muslims as embodied in the traditions of the place : in 1813, Angnu (Aknu?) Kalwar had built a shivalaya inside the qasba and an attempted extension of its boundary was the immediate cause of the outbreak of violence on that occasion; in the years before the 1842 outbreak, too, there had been continuous friction between the mahajans and the Muslims after Bicchuk Kalwar and Babu Ramdas Agrawal had extended a wall onto the road and thus created an obstruction in the path of the tazias taken out in procession during the Muharram.<sup>36b</sup> Now, in 1877, Sheikh Gada Husain and other Muslim leaders questioned Manohar Das over this new development, and, receiving no satisfactory reply, reported the matter at the Police Station in Muhammadabad and to the Collector in Azamgarh. The latter came to Mubarakpur to make an on-the-spot enquiry along with another English official who was by chance already there and some of the exchanges that Ali Hasan reports as having taken place before them are of the utmost interest.





Manohar Das argued that he had built the temple within the compound of his own house and the zamindar had nothing to do with that area. He pointed out, too, that the Muslims of Mubarakpur built mosques and other places of worship wherever they liked, without objection from any source; that no more than five or seven months ago, Faqir Kunjra<sup>/had</sup> erected a masjid close to a place that was sacred to the Hindus and "we did not object". Yet the Muslims wished to destroy the small shivalaya that he had built inside his own house : this was nothing but "a show of power and tyranny". To this, Muslim leaders replied that Faqir Kunjra had built his masjid with the permission of "us zamindars" : all the zamindars of Mubarakpur were Muslims, none Hindu - so "what right had the Hindus to object or allow?" (Wageat, 77-8, 31-2).

Gada Hussain put the rest of the case against Manohar Das's new shivalaya as follows : Raja Mubarak was "the guiding light of his age" and the founder of Mubarakpur. It was Raja Sahib's "blessing" that had maintained the prosperity of Mubarakpur, and it was his farman (injunction) that "when any person shall try to rise higher than me in this habitation [i.e. erect a building that rises higher than the height of Raja Sahib's mazār], he and his line will be no more". The qasba had many great and very wealthy mahajans, and many rich Muslims as well, Gada Husain said. But because of Raja Sahib's farman, "no one has a two-storied house". Only once was this injunction defied, when Angnu<sup>/ (Aknu?)</sup> Sahu had a shivalaya built inside the town. He spent a great sum of money and all the Hindus of the town worshipped there. But, Gada Husain went on, the shivalaya lasted less than ten years. In the plunder, arson and bloodshed of 1813, which raged for nine days and nights, the building was destroyed and Angnu killed while his son "so lost his mind that he began to eat the food of the Musalmans, and perished in his madness. Now no one survives from that family". (Wageat, 31-2). Ultimately the shivalaya was dismantled, but that is not the point of this digression.

What emerges from the evidence is a certain picture of the author of the Wāqeat-ō-Hādesāt, or should we say the 'authors'. For it is necessary to stress the unusual nature of this 'history', which appears



very much in the form of a collective catalogue. Quite unlike the practice of the standard 'histories' we have become used to since colonial times,<sup>37</sup> there is no attempt here to authenticate the chronicle that is presented. The narrative, it appears, requires no 'proof'. It is the inherited knowledge of the gasba, or at least those sections of it that for Ali Hasan represented the gasba. In the sole instance of direct authorial intervention found in the manuscript, which comes in the preface referred to above, it is stated that the idea of putting together this chronicle arose out of a conversation in the Middle School at Mubarakpur, when someone remarked that the bloodshed of 1813 had been unprecedented and unrepeated, and Gada Husain asked Ali Hasan to undertake this task as "a labour of love" (Waqeat). It is important to look at the construction of this narrative, then, not simply as the product of a single authorial voice, but rather to carefully consider its different constitutive aspects. For this reason it may help to dwell a little longer on the Waqeat's perception of some of the wider changes that came with colonialism.

#### The Wāqeāt and the British

Where the Waqeat refers directly to these changes is in the area of administrative control, and here it appears at one level to share the perspective of the colonial authorities. The importance of having good local officials is stressed (see N1 and N2 in table above). There is implicit recognition of the strength of British rule: thus when writing of how groups of men from Sikhthi, a village adjoining Mubarakpur, joined in the plunder of 1857, the author remarks that they had not stopped to consider what would happen to them afterwards (Waqeat, 61).<sup>38</sup> Again, Ali Hasan expresses much admiration for individual British officials - "Penny",<sup>39</sup> who emerges as the hero of 1857-58, fighting bravely and successfully against very great odds, or Tucker, officiating Magistrate at the time of the 1842 outbreak in Mubarakpur, who was "a very worthy (capable) Englishman" (Waqeat, 36). We have indeed a formal acknowledgement of "the greatness of British rule". In the incident listed as N1 above, when a cow's head was



placed on a chauk in the gasba, the thanadar, Mirza Karam Ali Beg apparently handled the situation with efficiency and tact. He assured the inhabitants that what had happened in the 'Rikhai Shahi' of 1813 would not happen again, that no one from the countryside would be allowed to invade Mubarakpur, and that they should not panic and flee. He also sent an urgent message to the District Magistrate, who came with a troop of sepoy and camped in the gasba for several days. Thus "a riot was averted". "All this was the greatness of British rule". (Waqeat, 22-23).

Yet, in spite of this sympathy for the British and their administration, it is, as we observed in the last section, the differences in perception revealed by the two accounts that really stand out. We may obtain a better appreciation of this if we pursue some of the above points of similarity further. While Ali Hasan recognizes the importance of having fair-minded and experienced officials appointed by the state, he emphasizes also the wisdom and influence of local leaders which is recognized only obliquely in the colonial account. Writing about Event I, a clash between Shias and Sunnis in the gasba, he accuses the Nawab's amil of favouring the Shias because he was, like the Nawab himself, a Shia. But Shahab Mehtar, the head of the Mubarakpur weavers, "wise and respected", "the like of whom is not to be found in our times", who had had to journey to Lucknow before the Nawabi officials agreed to act at all, now saved the situation and restored amity between the sects (Waqeat, 5). At the time of Event II, another Shia-Sunni conflict, Shahab Mehtar "who was still alive" again intervened, unravelled a complicated court case and obtained the release of the innocent men who had been arrested by the police of the Muhammadabad thana. (Waqeat, 7).<sup>40</sup> In 1857-58, to take just one more instance, it was in Ali Hasan's view the determination and foresight of the zamindars and sardars (leaders) of Mubarakpur that was responsible for the maintenance of peace in the gasba: in the British official's view, we may recall, this achievement was credited to the tahsildar of Muhammadabad, Mohammad Taqi. If "Penny Sahib Bahadur" had lived, Ali Hasan comments, the local zamindars and sardars would certainly have been rewarded and decorated (Waqeat, 73) - a notable example of the acceptance of colonial standards and colonial aspirations by the 1880s.



But that this was not always how the Muslims of Mubarakpur, or even their zamindars and leaders, had responded to the colonial power is amply demonstrated by local actions in the aftermath of the Hindu-Muslim fight of April 1813. Then, the intervention of the colonial power had produced a quick closing of ranks and a display of considerable suspicion and hostility towards the new regime by both Hindus and Muslims of the region. Eight months after the 'riot', the Gorakhpur Magistrate reported his failure to obtain the kind of evidence that was required, in spite of the transfer of two sets of officials suspected of being insufficiently energetic in the pursuit of their enquiries. He felt that further delay in the commitment of the trial was pointless. In part this was because both sides, "having been guilty of great outrage", were afraid to come forward. More significant however, was his observation that "the parties have now mutually agreed to adjust their grievances". Further: "The accounts existing between the Muhammadans and Hindoos which were destroyed by the fire or otherwise have been re-adjusted and new bonds and agreements have been entered into by the parties concerned, and I am of the opinion that a considerable quantity of property plundered must have been restored or that an understanding exists between the parties that it shall be when an opportunity offers ..."<sup>41</sup>

By the 1880s some of this had changed, and the change is reflected in the pages of the Waqeat. A particular class of Muslims speaks to us here, at (need I add?) a particular time: these are men from an impoverished zamindari background, acquainted with Arabic and Persian and Islamic theology, beginning to pick up elements of a 'modern' English education, having to reckon with the wealth of moneylenders-traders and other 'upstarts', sometimes sharing a belief which was gaining ground in certain quarters that British power alone could defend their positions and their culture. Ali Hasan now emphasized the importance of 'Muslim' tradition and 'Muslim' unity, and with these the 'benefits' of British rule. He harked back to Shia-Sunni conflicts that are supposed to have plagued the gasba of Mubarakpur both before and immediately after the establishment of the colonial power (Events I and II). One wonders whether this does not have more to do with the Shia-Sunni and other sectarian differences that were coming to the fore in the later



nineteenth century than with the state of affairs as it existed in the last years of Nawabi administration.<sup>42</sup>

Shahab Mehtar, "the like of whom is not to be found in our times", and "the greatness of British rule" is a curious juxtaposition. Yet it is not quite so curious if one bears in mind the overall perspective of the Waqeāt-o-Hādesāt. What is honoured in Ali Hasan's chronicle is a body of traditions, customs and values that were, for him, the life of the qasba. There is a fundamental consistency here. British rule is saluted, as is the memory of Shahab Mehtar, for both served (or might serve) in their different ways, more or less efficaciously, to uphold these traditions and the position of the class that was above all responsible for creating them.

#### A Weaver Speaks

To what extent did the other, lower-class Muslims of Mubarakpur - in particular, the weavers who constituted by far the largest segment of the population - share Ali Hasan's perspective and entertain the same hopes, fears and expectations? The available records do not enable us to give a definite answer to this question. They do, however, indicate some of the elements of one.

There was without doubt an important area of beliefs and concerns shared by these different classes. We get some idea of this from a comparison of the Waqeāt with the 'notes' (or diary) kept by Sheikh Abdul Majid ('c.1864-193?'), a weaver of muhalla Pura Sofi in Mubarakpur. Abdul Majid writes some time after Ali Hasan, his 'notes' dating mostly from the 1910s and 1920s, but he pays similar attention to disputes between Hindus and Muslims of the qasba. Thus, Event XVIII in Ali Hasan's chronicle, the dispute over the temple built by Manohar Das in 1877 is remembered and described by Abdul Majid in a note headed 'Mubarakpur ka waqea' ('An event in Mubarakpur').<sup>43</sup> The 'balwa' ('riot', 'insurrection') of 1904, the latter part of which at least was witnessed in person by the diarist, is traced to its "root" - Mian Khuda Baksh, son of Fateh Kalandar, zamindar of Mustafabad



(a hamlet near Mubarakpur), who planted a pig's head in a masjid in the hope of using the commotion that would ensue to settle scores with a rival zamindar. In a reaction reminiscent to Ali Hasan's when he wrote of the baseness of Faqrudin in the "Faqrudin Shahi" (Event XVI), Abdul Majid remarks on Khuda Baksh that this 'kam-zāt' ('base' person, 'of low origin') was behind all the trouble.<sup>44</sup> At a certain level 'Muslim unity' is accepted as natural and essential in this weaver's diary as in the Wegeat. Hence the Muslim police official during whose time, in 1906, Hindus of Mubarakpur were first permitted to blow shankhs (conch-shells) at prayer, is accused of having taken a bribe from the Hindus.<sup>45</sup> And, as Ali Hasan had written of the Muslims who gave evidence against other Muslims after the 'riot' of 1842, so Abdul Majid comments on Muslim witnesses against Muslim 'accused' during the Non-co-operation Movement of 1921-22: "These Musalmans are responsible for having sent other Musalmans to jail".<sup>46</sup>

Other evidence indicates that Abdul Majid's outlook was not a departure from the views of the local weavers in the nineteenth century. Members of the weaving community had taken a leading part in raising contributions for and supervising the work of repair and construction of the mazar, Jama Masjid and Imambarah in the 1860s and 1870s<sup>47</sup>. The concluding sentences of Ali Hasan's chronicle expressed the hope that the system of public subscriptions organised by the weavers would within a short time, enable them to buy land to be bestowed as waqf (charity) on the Masjid, and the prayer that God may grant the weavers of Mubarakpur such favour that they would "with their abilities and determination forever maintain this system of subscriptions" in the service of religion.

In 1842, there was a striking demonstration of local Muslim unity in the face of an insult to their faith. On the occasion of the 'Bicchuk Shahi' (Event IX in Ali Hasan's list), the "simultaneous attack" by several thousand Muslims, "headed by old offenders", on the houses of five Hindu merchants-moneylenders, was so swift - it was launched "within fifteen minutes" of the carcass of a pig being found on the imambarah at day-break



that the Magistrate saw in it evidence of "design, unanimity and previous arrangement... throughout".<sup>49</sup> Yet, even if the dead pig was planted on the imambarah as a pretext (a suggestion that the weavers and other Muslims of the town indignantly rejected), the evidence speaks unmistakably of a large number of angry Muslims gathering by the imambarah to discuss their course of action. Bearing in mind the obstacles deliberately thrown in the path of the tazia procession by Bicchuk Kalwar and his associates at the Muharram for several years prior to this, we may infer that the "unanimity" observed here was one of purpose, rather than of 'design' or 'conspiracy'.<sup>50</sup>

In 1877 it was a general body of Muslims at prayer (namaaz parhne wale) who, on noticing the trishul at the top of Manchar Das's recently completed shivalaya, went to ask of Gada Husain whether he had given permission for the building. The Hindus, they remonstrated, would sound the shankh and bells in the temple morning and evening; these and the bhajans would disturb the namaaz. And it was the threat of violence which weighed heavily with the Collector when he decided to order the dismantling of the shivalaya.<sup>51</sup>

Similarly, in 1904, it was some weavers of Pura Sofi who discovered that a small unenclosed mosque which was being constructed by them in the open fields outside the gasba had been desecrated with the carcass of a piglet. They returned immediately to raise the matter in one or two mosques in their muhalla. A party went out to consult the zamindars of Sikhthi, in whose estate this section of Mubarakpur fell. An attempt was also made to get the local police to take action and then a deputation of weavers went out to Muhammadabad to report the matter at the police station there. Barring the brief consultation with the zamindars of Sikhthi, which was followed by further discussions in their own muhalla, the weavers appear to have acted on their own - gathering a large crowd at the defiled mosque by the sound of a drum, marching north to Gujarpar where the temple was defiled by the killing of a cow seized on the way, and then marching back



to the town and through it (inviting "neighbours and friends" to join them) onto the Mubarakpur temple which lay just beyond its southern extremity, where a cow belonging to the priest and a calf confiscated on the way south from Gujarpur were slaughtered and the images smashed.<sup>52</sup>

In 1813, too, the investigating Magistrate had observed that "Shah Mehtar, the Surdar of the Musulmans" (this refers to Shahab Mehtar, the head of the weavers) was at the time of the outbreak absent in Gorakhpur : "had he been present the act [that set off the violence] would probably not have been committed".<sup>53</sup> The sequence of events leading up to this outbreak is described in the Waqeāt-ō-Hādesāt as also in a petition presented to the Gorakhpur court in 1813 by Shahab Mehtar and four other weavers of Mubarakpur, and a comparison of these is instructive.

It is said in Ali Hasan's narrative and in the weavers' petition that the merchants-moneylenders were becoming arrogant, "puffed up by their earnings" and "drunk on their wealth". According to the former it was roughly around the time of the construction of Rikhai Sahu's thakurduara that Angnu Kalwar, another prospering mahajan, also built a shivalaya in the middle of Mubarakpur and all the Hindus of the town began to worship there. Adjacent to the shivalaya was a chauk (or platform) on which tazias used to be kept during the Muharram : and the Hindus, out of consideration for their Muslim neighbours, used to suspend the singing of bhajans and the playing of music during prayers for the ten days of the Muharram. Thus four or five years passed in peace. Then, writes Ali Hasan, some among the Hindus argued that they should not have to suspend their worship for "ten to twelve" days : "Islam reigns over us for that period". So "the mahajans of the town, puffed up with their earnings", had a wall built around the Muslim platform - and this was the immediate cause of the "famous Rikhai Shahi", the "biggest", bloodiest and most fearful 'Event' of all.<sup>54</sup>



The petition by Shahab Mehtar and other representatives of the weavers ("representatives of those who have suffered") puts the matter in a slightly different, and broader, historical context. It observes that Hindus and Muslims had lived together in amity until then, with tolerance and respect for one another's religious practices and customs; but "since the Hindus have gained amaldari [from amils - important government officials] the killing [sic.] of Muslims has begun".<sup>55</sup> The petitioners quote Devi Dube and Rikhai Sahu as saying to the panchayat, when the Muslims brought the question of the extension of the boundary wall before it, that they would spend a lakh of rupees if necessary on the shivalaya and "leave not a trace of you people [the Muslims]". In addition, they explain the slaughter of a cow on the chauk in front of Angnu Kalwar's shivalaya in terms of a religious necessity.

Among Muslims, and among "the lower castes of other religions", says the petition, there is a practice of doing a minnat (prayer for a particular blessing) at an imambarah, masjid, Qadam Rasool or any dargah,<sup>56</sup> and sacrificing a cow or performing some other act of piety when the prayer is answered. Just so, "someone" (a weaver called Boodhan, according to the Magistrate's report), had one a minnat at this chauk, and promised the sacrifice of a cow if his wish was fulfilled. Now, seeing the boundary wall of the shivalaya being extended to enclose the chauk, a step that would end his chances of making the sacrifice there, he had killed a cow at the spot "to fulfil his minnat". There may be no truth in this story; for a petition submitted after such destruction and murder as occurred in 1813 to a court that will determine the punishment to be meted out to the petitioners or their friends, has good cause for exaggeration and fabrication. But the fact that Boodhan, when arrested soon after the 'riot', confessed his deed and explained the killing of the cow in similar terms<sup>57</sup> lends some credence to it. What in any case is significant, in the present discussion, is the fact that such an argument was put forward at all in defence of the act.



Thus far the evidence points to substantial agreement among the Muslims of Mubarakpur. Yet it would be surprising if there were no variations in outlook. There were after all marked differences of status among both the Muslims and the Hindus of the gasba. The distinction between the sharif (or ashraf, the 'respectable' classes) and the razil (literally 'base', the labouring people) was well established. And Ali Hasan revealed his perception of these distinctions of community and birth in his peculiar interpretation of the Mubarakpur people's anger on receipt of Rajab Ali's letter threatening an attack on the mahajans in 1857 : how could "this Rautara [new Muslim] zamindar" dare to contemplate such action?<sup>58</sup>

In spite of all the influence of their Mehtars and sardars, there was a difference between the weavers and other lowly classes, on the one hand, and the 'pure' or 'noble' Muslims of the upper classes, on the other, which the weavers were not easily allowed to forget. As a Maulvi of the town put it to me, until well into the twentieth century "no one was willing to give them [the weavers] the sardar's position in public prayers" or indeed to sit behind them in the congregation.<sup>59</sup> There is a clear recognition of this division between those with wealth and social standing and those without in Abdul Majid's comments on the 'riot' of 1904 : "It occurred at the instance of the notables [bade log, literally, big men]", he wrote in his diary. "The lower classes [chote log, literally, small or unprivileged people]" were taken unawares. "If the latter had known that they would in their haste commit excesses and be punished for them [in place of the bade log who had inspired the disturbance], they would certainly never have taken such action."<sup>60</sup>

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the weavers struggled to close this gap between sharif and razil Muslims, in a movement that gradually spread across most of northern India. The caste appellation, Julaha, was in all probability of Persian origin (from jula-ball of thread), but many commentators sought to derive the word from the



Arabic juhala ('the ignorant class'). The weavers responded with the argument that it came from jils (decorated), jal (net) or ujla (lighted up, or white), from which perhaps came one of the other names that the community used for itself (the one that Ali Hasan also employed) in the later nineteenth century - nurbafs or "weavers of light". By this time, Muslim weavers in many places had come to reject the name Julaha altogether, and insisted that they be called Ansaris (after a claimed Arabic ancestor who practised the art of weaving) or Momins (that is, 'the faithful' or 'people of honour')<sup>61</sup>. Yet it was to be a long and determined struggle before the community of weavers could overcome the marks of social inferiority and ignorance implicit in the 'impure' status, and indeed the very name, ascribed to them : and even then the label would not come completely unstuck.

The marked distinctions of caste and class noticed above were bound to make for important differences of outlook among diverse groups of Muslims in Mubarakpur, as elsewhere. One aspect of these differences is highlighted by another comparison of Ali Hasan's Wageat with Abdul Majid's diary. What the advent of colonialism meant for the people of Mubarakpur is perhaps not unfairly summed up in the following terms : more rigorous administrative demands and control, following the establishment of a centralised colonial power; improved communications, increased traffic, and a significant change in the direction of the cloth trade; and higher prices of food and of the raw materials needed for the local cloth industry, at least for important stretches of time. Of these new trends, however, it is only the first that finds place in Ali Hasan's 'history'.

The fortunes of the cloth trade are a notable silence. For if it was the bazaar and the palace, the "Islamized trader" and the "Hinduized aristocrat" who in Geertz's phrase, "stamped (their) character" on the Indonesian towns of Modjokuto and Tabanan<sup>62</sup>, it was the weaving of silken fabrics and the Muslim Julaha that gave to Mubarakpur its distinctive figure<sup>63</sup> as the above pages should have made clear. Large stocks of finished goods were lost by the weavers in 1857-58 (as we learn from a single-line entry in the colonial records). The miserable condition of the majority of the



local weavers was testified to by officials who enquired into the region's industry and trade in the early 1880s. Large numbers of these 'workers in silk' were being forced by the later nineteenth century to turn to the weaving of ordinary cottons - a far less 'honorable' vocation.

Yet these occurrences feature nowhere in Ali Hasan's chronicle.

"Processes" are of course not expressed as "public" Events in this particular 'history'. But what of the loss of substantial stocks by the weavers in 1857? We do not get any hint of the longer-term process or this sudden loss in the not inconsiderable space devoted by the author to 'Non-Events' or

'Near Events' either.

Abdul Majid's sketchy diary offers a sharp contrast in this regard.

Everyday life figures prominently here - births, deaths ('natural' as well as 'unnatural'), marriages and scandalous affairs in the qasba.<sup>64</sup> And while this certainly has something to do with the fact that 'diaries' and 'histories' even 'local histories', are different genres, there is no understating the concern with the cloth trade and its progress - a concern that is entirely missing from the Wageat. The haphazard entries in the diary contain numerous detailed statements regarding the price of different kinds of cloth and of silk thread, as of grain and other necessities, and comments on their implications. Thus, on 10 August 1919. "This year the trade has been such that Mubarakpur has become prosperous [aabaad, literally, 'populated' or 'full of life']<sup>7</sup>. Until this year there has never been such a (prosperous) trade - nor will there be (again) .... And this year as many as 142 members of our brotherhood have proceeded to Hajj-i-Kaaba from here". Again, in July 1920, "This year the outlook for the trade is not so happy. Silk thread has become very expensive".<sup>65</sup> Or, on a different subject, referring to the

soaring prices of goat-skins in November 1916, the price having touched Rs.3 and Rs.4 per skin by this time, "Many of the big and wealthy Muslims have taken to trading in these skins".<sup>66</sup>



The concern with immediate problems of subsistence that is reflected here may be one reason why the weavers of Mubarakpur appeared on the whole somewhat more ambiguous in their response to British rule than the Ali Hasans of the 1880s. In respect to the cloth trade, colonialism had certainly not been an unmixed blessing. I have written at some length elsewhere about the hardships suffered by the weavers of eastern U.P. owing to the dislocation of their market and supplies of raw material, and the increased dependence on intermediaries and new trails of migration that developed.<sup>67</sup> Whether it was because of this experience of being buffeted about, or because of Gandhian support for handicraft industry or some other local factors, we know that the weavers of Azamgarh were, with most of their community throughout the rest of U.P. and Bihar, supporters of the Congress struggle for independence long after the emergence of a Hindu-Muslim schism at the level of provincial and 'national' politics.<sup>68</sup>

Abdul Majid's own evidence on this is somewhat paradoxical. At more than one place in his diary, he refers to the death of some distinguished British personage - Lord Kitchener or the wife of the Lieutenant-Governor of U.P. - and expresses a feeling of deep sorrow: "The subjects (of the Lieutenant Governor) were deeply grieved and they mourned for four days, and whatever we could give as charity we gave".<sup>69</sup> Again, referring to the boycott of the Prince of Wales on his visit to Calcutta in December 1921, he writes: 'Afsos Sad afsos! (shame! Undying shame!) As far as my understanding goes, we cannot obtain Suraj [Swaraj] by such means'.<sup>70</sup>

But we know from other sources that Abdul Majid was very close to the police and local officials: "Abdul Majid, resident of Pura Sofi, although he is an ordinary person [i.e. of no great wealth or distinction], always informs police officers of any secret - [meetings?] in the gasba that he comes to know about".<sup>71</sup> It is probable that this relationship had something to do with the opinions he formed. In addition, it is not entirely clear what significance one can attach to this reverence for (or fear of)



distant overlords like Lord Kitchener, the Lieutenant-Governor's wife and the Prince of Wales. For not only does the diarist add to the above comment on the Prince of Wales' visit : "Yes, if God wills it, then there can be Suraj"<sup>72</sup> He also condemns those Muslims who were responsible, as prosecution witnesses, for sending other Muslims to jail for their part in Non-co-operation activities.<sup>73</sup>

In any case, the weavers of Mubarakpur seem to have taken an active part in the Non-co-operation Movement. Abdul Majid records meetings of the 'panchayat of twenty-eight' (referring to the twenty-eight mohallas of Mubarakpur) and of the 'chaurasi' (or 'eighty-four', which drew in the leaders of the weavers from a considerable number of villages and gasbas to decide on matters of importance) that were called to enforce the boycott of foreign cloth.<sup>74</sup> It is also clear from his evidence that the leaders of the Khilafat Committee in Mubarakpur were mostly members of the weaving community<sup>75</sup> the Sheikh zamindars of the gasba appear to have maintained a low profile during this period.

We have in all this some glimpses of the Mubarakpur weavers' outlook on the nineteenth century world. This outlook differed in certain significant respects from that of the elite Muslims of the gasba but shared with it an important area of common concern. In common with exploited classes elsewhere in pre-capitalist societies, the weavers of Mubarakpur appear to have been further removed than their economically or culturally more privileged neighbours from direct political dealings with the colonial bureaucracy, and consequently somewhat more hazy about their relations with their rulers. They were more ambivalent too in their response to the putative 'Muslim' community; more concerned about the bare problem of survival; yet in some ways more 'independent' with their reliance on the panchayat<sup>76</sup> and their faith in the power of 'tradition'; and at the same time deeply concerned about the honour of the community.



"Ham log wahan maujud the. Yah dekhkar nihayat dil dukha" - "We were present there [when the Inspector of Police, Mohan Singh, trampled a copy of the Qoran underfoot during searches after the 'riot' of 1904]. We were deeply wounded by this sight".

"Bade-bade logon ka ishara tha, aur chote logon ne yah samjha ki sarkari intazam ki vajah se kuch nahin hoga".

"It was at the instigation of 'big men' [that the 1904 outbreak occurred]; the 'smaller folk' thought that nothing would happen because of official precautions".

"Inke intakāl ka hamare badshah ko bahut bada ranj hua, Aur hamko bhi bahut bada gam hua". - "His [Lord Kitchener's] death caused very great grief to our King. It also caused us very deep sorrow".

"In logon ne Musalman hokar Musalman ko qaid karaya" - "These people who are Musalmans are responsible for having sent other Musalmans to jail".<sup>77</sup>

What is indubitably represented in these extracts from Abdul Majid's diary is a consciousness of the 'collective' - the community. Yet this consciousness of community was an ambiguous one, straddling as it did the religious fraternity, class, qasba and mohalla.<sup>78</sup> Here, as in Ali Hasan's account, the boundaries of the collective shift all the time. It is difficult to translate this consciousness into terms that are readily comprehensible in today's social science - Muslim/Hindu, working class/rentier, urban/rural - or even to argue that a particular context would inevitably activate a particular solidarity. What is clear is that Ali Hasan is quite untroubled by the problems that confound the modern researcher as he moves from one notion of the collective to another through the 89 pages of his manuscript.



I have suggested above that there is, nonetheless, a certain basic consistency in Ali Hasan's stand. In Abdul Majid's random notes, too, it is possible to discern a similar consistency; for what they speak of is a fight on several fronts for self-respect and human dignity.<sup>79</sup> Honour (izzat) was inextricably linked, as we have seen, with certain kinds of worship, certain ritual practices; and any insult to these was unacceptable. But honour was also tied up, by the later decades of this century of dislocation, with the assertion of the rights of the chote log, the shedding of the degrading label of razil, and full acceptance in the equal fraternity of Islam that the Wahabis had propagated and other 'learned' Muslims now so often talked about.<sup>80</sup> If the positions of all men - high and low - seemed increasingly insecure in a fateful world, these were not fates that men and women - high or low - would accept without a struggle.



### Footnotes

- \* I am deeply indebted to Qazi Atahar of Muhalla Haidarabad, Mubarakpur who allowed me to use Sheikh Mohammad Ali Hasan's ms. history, Wāqeat-o-Hādesāt : Qasba Mubarakpur (which is maintained in Qazi Atahar's personal library), spent several days translating this and two other valuable documents (referred to in notes 43 and 55 below) that he had traced in the course of his own researches, and helped in many other ways with his intimate knowledge of the area. I owe thanks also to Maulvi Kamruzzaman, Babu Saroj Agrawal and others in Mubarakpur who were unstinting with their time in answering my questions and showing me around.

'Wāqeat-o-Hādesāt' : according to Platts' Classical Urdu Dictionary, Waqeat = "events, occurrences; accidents; grievous calamities, battles; conflicts; casualties; deaths"; Hadesat = "new things; accidents; incidents; events; occurrences; adventures; casualties; mishaps; misfortunes; disasters; calamities; afflictions". 'Events' and 'occurrences' would cover both these terms, but I have translated them as 'Encounters and Calamities' in the title of this paper as this seems to me to convey somewhat better the rhetoric and the sense of Ali Hasan's title.

1. This paper was completed before I was able to see C.A. Bayly's 'The Small Town and Islamic Gentry in North India : The Case of Kara' in K. Ballhatchet and J. Harrison, eds., The City in South Asia (London 1980) or the same author's Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars. North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion 1770-1870 (Cambridge 1983). Bayly's excellent account of the small town 'gentry' under pressure, based on local non-official as well as official sources, is not, however, directly concerned with consciousness and the perceptions of change that are central to this essay.
2. C. Geertz, The Social History of a Javanese Town (Cambridge, Massachusetts 1965); also Agricultural Involution, The Processes of Ecological Change in Indonesia (California 1968), 102-3, 123.
3. R.G. Fox, Urban Anthropology. Cities in their Cultural Settings, (New Jersey 1977), 139.
4. (UP Regional Archives, Allahabad) MG4, Judl. Series I, Acc.169, Vol.168, R. Martin, Magistrate Goruckpore - G. Dowdeswell, Camp Mobarruckpore, 25 April 1813.
5. F.H. Fisher, Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of the North Western Provinces, Vol.XIII, Pt.I Azamgarh (Allahabad 1885), 171.
6. D.L. Drake-Brockman, Azamgarh : A Gazetteer, being Vol.XXXIII of the District Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh.



(Allahabad 1911), notes that little is known of the early history of Mubarakpur. It was said to have been called Qasimabad earlier, and to have fallen into decay before it was resettled under the name of Mubarakpur in the eighteenth century (pp.260-1). For the way in which Maunath Bhanjan and Kopaganj, the other major weaving towns of Azamgarh district, were established and fostered, see my 'Economic Dislocation in Nineteenth Century Eastern U.P. : Some Implications of the Decline of Artisanal Industry in Colonial India' (Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, 'Occasional Paper' No. 37, May 1981), 15 & 34.

7. J. Thomason, Report on the Settlement of Chuklah Azimgurh (Agra 1837), 130-131.
8. (Azamgarh Collectorate Record Room) Zild Bendobast, Mauza Mubarakpur, Tappa Bihrozpur, Pargana Muhammadabad (1280 F., i.e. 1873 A.D.), Wajib-ul-arg, for 'Mubarakpur-Chak Sikhthi', 'Sikhthi-Shah Mohammadpur', 'Mubarakpur Rasulpur', esp. section 6.
9. J.R. Reid, Report on the Settlement of the Temporarily Settled Parganas of Azamgarh District, 1877 (Allahabad 1881), 86-7.
10. Ibid., 70.
11. MG4, Judl. Series I, Acc.169, Vol.168, Magistrate Gorakhpur's letter of 17 Dec. 1813, para 3.
12. Ibid., para 4; Ali Hasan, Waqaat-o-Hadesat, 9-10.
13. Interview with Babu Saroj Agrawal of Mubarakpur.
14. (UP Regional Archives, Allahabad), COG, Judl. Azamgarh, Vol. 68, File 47, Craigee-Morrisson, 25 March 1842.
15. Report on the Railway-Borne Traffic of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh during the year ending 31 March 1882 (Allahabad 1883), 37.
16. Loc.cit., and ibid. for year ending 31 March 1883 (p.37).
17. Loc. cit.
18. In the course of these struggles several of the local notables linked up with some of the greater powers beyond the district such as the Nawab of Awadh, the Raja of Banaras, and the Bangash Pathans who had at one stage extended their influence as far as Jaunpur. In an attempt to resolve the intrigues of men at a higher level, the Nawab of Awadh settled the revenue of Azamgarh in 1764 with "local farmers", among them Mir Fazl Ali of Muhammadabad. But following the Battle of Buxar, Azam Khan, the Raja of Azamgarh, appears to have regained favour at the court and his authority over the district. On his death in 1771 the district was put under a chakladar under whom it remained until 1801. See Drake-Brockman, Azamgarh Gazetteer, 172-2; A.L. Srivastava, The First Two Nawabs of Oudh (Lucknow 19



19. Several examples will be found in the discussion below. See also Thomason, Settlement of Chuklah Azimgurh (1837), 130-1; Reid, Settlement of Azamgarh District 1877, 70-1.
20. Fisher, Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of ... Azamgarh, 171, 176. I have some doubts about the accuracy of occupational details for Mubarakpur as found in this report but have unfortunately not managed to obtain the district census data for either 1881 or 1891. Nevertheless the general point made here I think remains valid.
21. Ibid., 169.
22. Reid, Settlement 1877, 23.
23. A. Yusuf Ali, A Monograph on Silk Fabrics Produced in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh (Allahabad 1900), 103. Emphasis added.
24. Ibid., 170; Fisher, Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of Azamgarh, 124.
25. Drake-Brockman, Azamgarh Gazetteer, 262. See also Gorakhpur Commissioner's Record Room, Dept. XIII, File 40/1905-9, 'Rules for the relief of distressed weavers' that became necessary (as the Chief Secretary to the Government put it in a circular to District Officers on 28 Jan. 1908) "owing to scarcity and high prices having rendered it difficult, and in some cases impossible for them [the weavers] to find a market for their manufactured goods".
26. C.E. Crawford, Final Report on the Seventh Settlement of the Azamgarh District of the United Provinces, 1908 A.D. (Allahabad 1908), p. 9.
27. Parliamentary Papers, House of Commons, Accounts and Papers, Vol. 44, Pt. 3, 1857-58, Memorandum on Azamgarh, 11 Sept. 1857 (p.571).
28. COG, Judl. Azamgarh, Vol.68, File 47, Thomason-Currie, 23 May 1835; ibid., Letter no. 96, Sessions Judge Azamgarh - Commissioner 5th Division, 29 May 1844.
29. Drake-Brockman, Azamgarh Gazetteer, 260-1.
30. For an account of these, see my 'Rallying Round the Cow : Sectarian Strife in the Bhojpuri Region, c.1888-1917', in R. Guha, ed., Subaltern Studies II (Delhi 1983).
31. Yet the District Gazetteers compiled by the British are relied upon heavily by most writers on the political history of colonial India. And the argument is still readily put forward that "the interpretation may be biased, but the facts are correct".



32. Waqeat-o-Hadesat, 20.
33. COG, Judl. Azamgarh, Vol.68, File 47, Sessions Judge Azamgarh - Commissioner 5th Division, 29 May 1844.
34. Ali Hasan, Waqeat-o-Hadesat, 60-73.
35. According to Ali Hasan, a similar punishment was meted out to those Muslims who gave evidence against Muslims involved in the attack on Hindu moneylenders and the temple in 1842. They were thrown out of the community and not re-accepted even after two of them had performed the haj to Mecca : "lekin yah daag hamesha ke live raha aur tamam Musalmanon men hamesha zalil-o-khar rahe"; Waqeat-o-hadesat, 45.
36. For the central place of the Muharram celebrations in the life of other such habitations, see Rahi Masoom Raza; Aadha Gaon (Delhi 1966) passim.
- 36a. For a similar corporate identity and pride in other Muslim qasbas in the region, and the role of the Sufis in their establishment, see Bayly, Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars Ch.9, esp.366-7.
- 36b. See Pandey, 'Rallying Round the Cow' for an analysis of the circumstances leading to these outbreaks.
37. Cf. the discussion regarding 'shifters' and authorial intervention in R. Barthes, 'Historical Discourse', in M. Lane, ed., Structuralism : A Reader (London 1970).
38. What happened afterwards is described by Ali Hasan himself in the following words : "The people of Mubarakpur, especially the Nurbaf [weaving] community, on behalf of the Government and at the orders of both Penny Sahib and the Tahsildar of Muhammadabad" took a prominent and profitable part in the loot of Sikhthi; Waqeat, 69 (emphasis added).
39. This name refers almost certainly to Mr. Pennywell, Deputy Magistrate of Azamgarh in 1857, but Ali Hasan appears to have confused his story with that of the European indigo planter, E.F. Venables. It is the latter who appears as hero and saviour in British accounts of the Mutiny in Azamgarh, and it was he - not "Penny", as Ali Hasan believed - who was fatally wounded in an encounter with the forces of Kunwar Singh in April 1858; S.A.A. Rizvi, ed., Freedom Struggle in Uttar Pradesh, Source Material, Volume IV (Lucknow 1959), 5-6, 77, 85, 139-40, 466.
40. We may note in passing that the earliest detailed report on Mubarakpur to be found in the colonial records acknowledged the influence of Shahab Mehtar : see p.28 below.
41. MG4, Judl. Series I, Acc.169, Vol.168, Magistrate's letter 17 Dec. 1813, paras 7-8.



42. For the later nineteenth century developments in Muslim public affairs, see F. Robinson, Separatism among Indian Muslims. The Politics of the United Provinces' Muslims, 1860-1923 (Cambridge 1974), Chs. 2 & 3; R. Ahmed, The Bengal Muslims 1871-1906. A Quest for Identity (Delhi 1981). The implications for the Muslim elite at the local level are spelt out in Bayly, 'The Small Town and Islamic Gentry in North India' and his Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars, 354-8. The 'Village Crime Register' for Mubarakpur, Pt. IV, entry for 1909 or 1910, notes that the gasba was inhabited by Muslims belonging to four sects : Sunni, Hanfi, Wahabi (also known as Ahl-i-Hadis) and Shia. "All these sects have their own separate mosques. They do not pray in one another's mosques. All take part together in the taziadari [at Muharram] but the Ahl-i-Hadis do not participate in this at all". Qazi Atahar's researches also indicate that Shia-Sunni and other sectarian differences among the local Muslims became significantly more pronounced in the later nineteenth century; see his Lazkara-i-ulema-i-Mubarakpur (Bombay 1974), 30-33. /more
43. The diary of Sheikh Abdul Majid, c.1864-193? is retained at the house of his descendant, Sheikh Wazir Ahmad, Muhalla Pura Sofi, Mubarakpur. The date of the above dispute is given as 1875-76 in the diary.
44. Entry headed 19 May, 1904. For details of this incident see Pandey, 'Rallying Round the Cow'.
45. Entry headed 29 June, 1906.
46. Entry headed 19 June, 1922.
47. Waqeat-o-Hadesat, 87-9.
48. Ibid., 89.
49. COG, Judl. Azamgarh, Vol.68, File 47, Craige-Morrisson, 25 March 1842.
50. Cf. IOL, Home Misc., Vol.775, Report on Benares City by W.W. Bird, 20 Aug. 1814, para 12, which notes : "The inhabitants by the most simple process imaginable can assemble in multitudes at any given spot on the shortest of notice. The method by which they do this bears a striking affinity to the practice of "gathering" in the Highlands of Scotland, and to a similar practice in Scandinavia. Swift and trusty messengers run full speed all over the City proclaiming in a single word the place of rendezvous, and invoking infamy and eternal vengeance on those who do not at the appointed hour repair to it. From the City the alarm is spread over the country. The first messenger conveys the symbol, which is a Dhurmputtree or paper containing a mystic inscription to the next village, and that to the next, till all know where, when, and wherefore they must meet. This practice is common not only among the Hindoos but the Mahomedans [here too, chiefly weavers] also, and in the disturbances of 1809 and 1810 was the means of collecting together an innumerable multitude at one spot in the space of no more than a few hours".



51. Waqeat-o-Hadesat, 78, records that the Magistrate warned Manohar Das that he was creating the conditions for a riot.
52. (Gorakhpur Commissioner's Record Room), Dept. XIII, File 63/1902-5, 'Judgement' in Mubarakpur Riot Case, forwarded by Magistrate Azamgarh, 5-1-1905, esp. evidence of Bechu, Julaha of Pura Sofi.
53. MG4, Judl. Series I, Acc.169, Vol.168, Magistrate's letter, 17 Dec. 1813, para 3.
54. Waqeat-o-Hadesat, 8.
55. 'Arzi ba Adalat Gorakhpur, ba silsila-i-jang Mubarakpur (Sat. 17 April 1813 A.D.)' signed by Sheikh Shahabuddin and four other nurbafs on 7 June 1813, Introduction and para 2 (Qazi Atahar made a copy of this petition from a copy he found in a rather poor condition with the late Maulvi Hakim Abdul Majid, Bakhri, Mubarakpur, and very graciously translated for me from the Persian).
56. Cf. W. Crooke, Religion and Folklore of Northern India (Oxford 1926), 166-9; E.A.H. Blunt, Caste System of Northern India (Delhi 1969), 292; H.R. Nevill, Bahraich : A Gazetteer, being Volume XLV of the District Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh (Allahabad 1903), 149-50.
57. MG4, Judl. Series I, Acc.169, Vol.168, Magistrate's letter, 17 Dec. 1813, para 3; Arzi ba Adalat (17 April 1813), para 3.
58. Waqeat-o-Hadesat, 62.
59. Interview with Maulvi Kamruzzaman, Mubarakpur.
60. Entry headed 29 May 1904.
61. W. Crooke, The Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh, Vol. III (Calcutta 1896), 69-70; C.A. Silberrad, A Monograph on Cotton Fabrics Produced in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh (Allahabad 1898), 1.
62. C. Geertz, Peddlers and Princes, Social Change and Economic Modernization in Two Indonesian Towns (Chicago 1963), 18.
63. This remains true to this day; thus a young educated Kayasth contractor who gave me a lift to and from the qasba on one occasion, said to me that this was only his second visit to the place because "mujhe to in lungi walon se dar lagta hai" (I am afraid of these lungi-clad folk). The lungi was the dress of lower-caste Muslims in this region, cf. Rahi Masoom Raza, Aadha Gaon, 65.



64. See ibid., passim, for a very rich 'anthropological' account which reveals very much the same kind of everyday concerns among other Muslim inhabitants in this region in a slightly later period.
65. Both these entries appear under the date, 10 Aug. 1919, but the second is clearly an addition made in a new paragraph.
66. Entry for Nov. 1916.
67. See Pandey, 'Economic Dislocation in Nineteenth Century Eastern UP', section VII. There appears to have been a wave of migration from Mubarakpur and other such places to Malegaon and other cloth-producing centres in western and central India during the rising of 1857-59, Hafiz Malegumi, Nakush (Malegaon, 1979), 70, 72, 116. (I owe this reference to Maulvi Kamruzzaman).
68. (National Archives of India, New Delhi) Rajendra Prasad Papers, File XV/37, Col.I, tlg. Hakim Wasi Ahmad, Pres. Bihar Jamiat-al-Momineen to Rajendra Prasad, received 12 July 1437; Rahi Masoom Raza, Aadha Gaon, 252-4; interviews in Azamgarh, Maunath Bhanjan and Mubarakpur.
69. Entries dated 12 July 1914 & June 1916.
70. 'Note' on Congress, Nov.-Dec. 1921.
71. Village Crime Register, Mubarakpur, Pt.IV (entry dated 1909 or 1910).
72. 'Note' on Congress, Nov.-Dec. 1921. Cf. also his note on Shibli Nomani, a Muslim "unequaled in Hindustan" who had had dealings with "great rulers all over the world", The "great rulers" here would seem to be on a par with those 'omniscient' and 'just', faraway and unseen rulers who provided the inspiration for numerous peasant uprisings in Russia, India and elsewhere in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; D. Field, Rebels in the Name of the Tsar (Boston 1976); I.J. Catanach, 'Agrarian Disturbances in Nineteenth Century India', Indian Economic & Social History Review, III, 1 (1966).
73. Entry for 19 June 1922.
74. Entries for 12 Dec. 1919, 8 Feb. 1920 & July 1921. L.S.S. O'Malley, Census of India, 1911, Vol.V. Bengal, Bihar & Orissa & Sikkim, Pt.I. Report (Calcutta, 1913), 462-3 explains the Chaurasi as follows: The lowest unit of caste government was the chatai, i.e., the right to sit together on a mat (or chatai) at a caste council meeting. Each Chatai had a headman and other functionaries, and its area depended on the strength of the caste locally: there could be several Chatais in one village or one Chatai for several villages. These Chatais were sometimes grouped into larger unions called Baisi or Chaurasi (consisting of 22 and 84 Chatais respectively). A Baisi could cover 10-15 miles, a Chaurasi 40-50. "The jurisdiction of the Panchayat is necessarily local, but the combination of different Chatais helps to make its sentence effective over a considerable area".



75. Entry for 19 June 1922.
76. O'Malley, Census 1911, Bengal, Bihar & Orissa, Pt. I, 461, notes that an organized system of caste government existed among most of the lower castes in Bihar, but not among the higher castes. He comments further that "none of the Musalman groups approach so closely to the Hindu caste system with its numerous restrictions as the Jolahas". The Julaha panchayat, headed by a sardar assisted by a chharidar, covered 10-50 houses, its sphere usually being coterminous with a village but sometimes covering several villages (p.489) (In Mubarakpur there appears to have been a panchayat, headed by a mehtar, for each of the muhallas of the gasba). See also F.H. Fisher, Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of the North-Western Provinces, Ghazipur (Allahabad 1883), 56-7; and n.50 & 74 above.
77. These quotations are taken from Abdul Majid's diary, entries headed 29 May 1904 (first two quotations), June 1916 and 19 June 1922.
78. For the importance of muhalla loyalty in the politics of Muslim weavers elsewhere, see J.C. Masselos, 'Power in the Bombay "Moholla", 1904-5', South Asia, No. 6 (Dec. 1976).
79. Dipesh Chakrabarty has pointed out to me how the semiotics of insult (honour/shame) carries over from this region to the industrial city, reproducing an identical structure of riots in the Calcutta mills in the later nineteenth and earlier twentieth century.
80. For a different but relevant example of the importance attached to izzat by the peasants of this region, see K. Mukherjee and R.S. Yadav, Bhojpur (Delhi 1980).