

Chapter X

The Mughal-Nawabi Legacy under “Siege” in the Age of Empire (1860s–1880s): Familial Grants and the Waqf of *Khanqah-e Karimia*, Salon, India

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1. The Context

During pre-colonial times, the transmission of knowledge and the imparting of education were primarily carried out at the initiative of individuals and/or the institutions established by them. The state, governments and their officials often took the lead in patronizing these initiatives quite liberally. Initially such ventures were a huge success, and also gained a considerable reputation, but they could only survive for a short span. The survival of state-sponsored and/or individual centric institutions became difficult with the death of rulers and/or patrons. Hence, one comes across few state-sponsored centres that survived for more than a century. This is true not only for the Indian subcontinent, but for most of the Islamic East, with some exceptions.

The state usually supported individuals with land/cash grants to carry out their endeavours in the field of various branches of knowledge. The recipients were members of existing religious and literary elites, men of noble lineage, and other similar notables. Of particular note is the migration of some of the noblest families of the Arabian Peninsula who fled to Khurasan, Central Asia, and the Indian subcontinent, especially after the Umayyad governors desecrated the two holy cities of Mecca and Medina at the close of the seventh century.¹ Moreover, the expansion

¹ It was during the rule of Yazid (d. 683), the son of Muawiya b. Abu Sufyan, that a punitive expedition was dispatched to the holy cities against Abdullah b. Zubair. The city of the Prophet was attacked from the volcanic plain of al-Hurrah on 24 August 683. The victorious Syrian army is said to have unleashed a reign of terror on the citizens of Medina for three days; thereafter the victorious army proceeded to the city of Mecca, where Ibn Zubair had taken refuge. During the siege of the holy city, the Ka'ba itself caught fire and was burned to the ground. Operations were suspended on 27 November 683 after the death of

of the political authority of the Caliphs beyond the limits of the Arabian Peninsula, especially in regions like Central Asia, North Africa, and the Indian subcontinent, required the services of these people for various purposes. Hence the migrants were ensured “an honorable existence in their new homes,” where they were fully integrated into the newly established order. In addition, the migrants enriched the cultural life of the region by introducing elements of elite culture and new societal norms brought from the holy land to the newly emerging centres in the Islamic East.

The pace of migration however accelerated considerably after the rise of Chengis Khan (d. 1227), whose forces destroyed the flourishing cities of Central Asia and Khurasan. Some of the major centres of Muslim civilisation and culture like Samarqand, Balkh, Badakhshan, Nishapur and numerous other towns were so thoroughly destroyed by the Mongol forces that almost no trace of their earlier achievements and magnificence was left. Those able to escape the slaughter took flight to wherever they could get safe asylum. Hundreds of families crossed the Indus and reached the Upper Gangetic Valley of Northern India, where they were able to find safety under the newly established Delhi Sultanate and its reigning Sultan Shams al-Din Iltutmish (r. 1211–1236). The historian of the period, Minhaj al-Siraj Juzjani, who also served as the chief Qazi (judicial officer) during the reign of Iltutmish’s son Muizzuddin Bahram Shah (r. 1240–1242), very specifically says:

The kingdom of Hindustan, by the grace of Almighty God, and the favour of fortune under the shadow of the guardianship of the Shamsi race, and the shade of the protection of Iltutmish’s dynasty became the focus of the people of Islam, and the orbit of the possessors of religion. [Juzjani 1954: Vol. 2, 642]

In the following century, Isami wrote in his *Futuh al-Salatin* that the Delhi Sultanate had become a “miniature” of the Islamic East; a place of refuge for scholars, theologians, craftspeople, and everybody who was a scholar or a celebrity or possessed any connection with the noble and scholarly families, prior to the Mongol devastation. He says:

Many genuine Saiyids have arrived from Arabia, the traders of Khurasan, many learned men from Bukhara, and numbers of Sufis and ascetics from every town and every race have gathered here. Scholars well versed in the Unani system (of medicine) have also arrived from Rum. These people have

Yazid. For details, see [Hitti 1970: 190–192]. The traditional account of the migration of the families of the Companions of the Prophet and his household invariably recalls these events as the ultimate reason for their abandonment of the holy cities.

gathered in the city of Delhi like moths gather around a candle. [Isami 1948: 114–115]

2. Migration, Settlement, and the Making of a “New” Intellectual Tradition

The hundreds of migrant families settling in the small towns and important centres of the region, which later came to be included in the Mughal *subas* of Awadh and Allahabad, were mainly those who had moved further east from Delhi and its environs. Most of these were from Central Asian towns and Khurasan. They carried the elements of “Islamic culture” to the small towns and the remote parts of the realm. At every such place they established a number of *maktabs* and *madrasas* to cater to the needs of an emerging Muslim population. Shaikh Rizquallah Mushtaqi, writing about the reign of Sultan Sikandar Lodi, says very specifically:

... in each town and region, where the forces of Islam have gained an upper hand and have become popular, *masajid*, *jam‘at khana*, and *khanqah* were established and capable people were appointed in the *maktabs* and the *madrasa* as the *mu‘allim* and *muddarris*. In these institutions, the *umra’* and their sons and the sons of soldiers acquired knowledge and busied themselves with prayer and meditation. Those who could afford discharged their duties in the way of God. The institution so established trained the inmates for the emerging needs of the administration and the bureaucracy; Qazis, expert accountants, scribes, and other state functionaries were the products of these institutions. [Mushtaqi, f. 18]

An early incident suggests that the teaching and learning process was considered a noble and virtuous act as demonstrated in one of the *majlis* of Shaikh Nasiruddin Mahmud (d. 1356) known as Chiragh-e Delhi. A *danishmand* from Sahali (in Awadh) had come to visit the Shaikh. The Shaikh recalled:

The people at Sahali are pious and most of them have matrimonial alliances here and the women of that place are more pious than the men. The Shaikh also inquired of the *danishmand* about his profession. On being told that he teaches the children, the Shaikh said: “This is a virtuous act, engagement with the sinless entities and engagement with the Quran. In addition, since you remained in the mosque, you are with ablution on for the entire day, it is a nice work and a good engagement.” [Qalandar 1959: 107]

The students trained at these centres of learning were directly absorbed into the administration and given postings at various places in the realm. They were

assigned land grants, either in lieu of some services or for the maintenance of a certain institution.

Thus, following the mass migration of notable families from Central Asia, the Upper Gangetic Valley emerged as a strong intellectual and academic centre with a proverbial reputation which people nostalgically recalled even after its heyday was over. Ghulam 'Ali Azad Bilgrami (d. 1761), while paying glowing tribute to the cultural life of the region, said that "this eastern region since the olden days (*qadim al-ayyam*) has been the cradle of knowledge and a centre for scholars (*ma'adan-e ilm wa 'ulema*)." According to him:

The Mughal *suba* of Awadh and Allahabad enjoyed special status as compared to other provinces of the empire in the sphere of intellectual activities. There were innumerable intellectual centres and numerous scholars. These two *suba* had a major settlement of Muslim intellectual elite (*shurufa wa najaba*) every 5 to 10 *kroh*. They had been well-provided by the earlier *salatin* with cash and *madad-e ma'ash* grants. [Bilgrami 1971: 213–214]

This generous patronage by the ruling elite, "facilitated the establishment of mosques, *madrasas*, and *khanqahs* all over the province, where the teachers of all disciplines were busy in the dissemination of knowledge." Azad goes on to elaborate that "the students trained at these institutions went to other parts of the country and established and strengthened this intellectual tradition further." It is important to note that Azad Bilgrami specifically says that "the well-provided section of the society took extra care of the requirements of these scholars and considered serving them an act of great benefit (*sa'adat-e 'uzma*) for themselves."

The consequent growth of the new intellectual tradition in the region had become so prominent that the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan (r. 1628–1658) proudly referred to this region as *Shiraz-i Hind* (*purab shiraz-i mamlakat-i ma ast*). However, the situation here underwent a drastic change, especially with the establishment of the rule of the Awadh Nawabs. The old educational establishments did not enjoy the same degree of patronage available to them in earlier times. In fact, Azad Bilgrami criticises the early two Nawabs, Burhan al-Mulk Sa'adat Khan (d.1739) and his successor, Safdar Jung (d.1754) for resuming the cash and land grants (*wazaif o- suyurghalat*) "of the old and new families." As a result, he says, "Muslim learning suffered very heavily in both Allahabad and Awadh provinces"; especially in the small towns and *qasbas* he named above [Bilgrami 1971: 213–214]. This situation forced the people to abandon their scholarly pursuits and take up a military profession, a curious statement which establishes the close link between the classes of scholars and army men throughout pre-colonial times. The two professions closely complemented one another in the expansion and consolidation of the emerging power structure throughout this period. Consequently, educa-

tional institutions of long standing with a strong scholarly tradition ceased to exist; and Azad Bilgiri laments that the intellectual tradition established in the region over a period of centuries had come to a sad end.

Bilgiri goes on to add that when Safdar Jung succeeded to the seat of Nawabi rule and obtained the additional charge of the *subadari* of Allahabad, the grantees of this *suba* too became victims of the policy of resumption. This grim situation continued down to the time Bilgiri wrote his book (1761). After Safdar Jung was appointed the *wazir* of the Mughal Empire by Emperor Ahmad Shah (1748), the situation of the grantees went from bad to worse. By way of an optimistic note, Azad adds that in spite of all the havoc inflicted on the grantees, the tradition of “rational sciences” (*ma‘qulat*) continued to be patronised there in a way seen nowhere else in India. Some of the greatest scholars of the time continued teaching these subjects in some of these seminaries [Bilgiri 1971].

It is clear that the creation of an elite Muslim culture owed much to the migration to the Upper Gangetic Valley mainly after the Mongol devastation of Central Asia and Khurasan. This is not to say that the region had not witnessed migration prior to the rise of Chengiz Khan, but the mass migration of the families of notables and scholars took place after this great catastrophe. There are numerous local histories (compiled only in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) and historical documents available in the colonial records tracing the saga of migration of the families of scholars and Sufis in every part of Awadh and Northern India that invariably links their arrival in the regions of their settlement only from this period.

3. The “Mughal Nawabi Legacy” under the British Empire

An articulate section belonging to the class of the revenue grantees emerged as important ideologues propagating against the evangelical activities of Christian missionaries and the hegemonic exploitative policies of the British Empire in some regions of the Indian subcontinent. Traces of their ideological input can be found within numerous resistance movements organised during the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Their role came into prominence during the Great Uprising of 1857, the most serious military threat to the very foundation of British colonial hegemony east of Suez. Numerous proclamations and tracts issued by the rebel leaders during the course of the Uprising bear the imprint of this section of society. Therefore it was natural for the British colonial masters to turn against the revenue grantees as a class.

With the suppression of the Uprising of 1857, the “white men” were able to crush the “black men’s” misdemeanors effectively and re-establish their hegemony through the use of brutal force. The British Crown decided to end the East India Company’s rule of the Indian colonies: now all the domains passed to it. In the

new age of imperial control, the “native” society and its institutions were redefined and redesigned to confirm to the norms of the ruling race. The newly established “rule of law” treated the earlier institutions contemptuously. The erstwhile civil and military ruling elite had been effectively subdued and now it was the turn of the ideologues and apologists to be controlled in a manner that reduced them to “toothless entities” within civil society. In the emerging paradigm, socially respectable institutions and individuals were not recognised for any of their merits and the academic, intellectual, Sufic or familial background was meaningless. Only their “loyalty and services” to the British colonisers in the period of the Uprising of 1857 counted [Jafri 2009: 258, note 33].

The experiment of the officials of the East India Company, especially in the Bengal Presidency (the region which was subjugated earlier) to deal with the class of the *ma'afidars*, especially during the period of infamous “Inam Commission” (1828–1846) through which the English were able to destroy not only the Muslim educational setup but also to reduce large sections of the Muslim elite to the level of paupers. The way this Commission functioned has been vividly described:

Special courts were created, and during the next eighteen years the whole province was overrun with informers, false witnesses, and stern pale-faced Resumption Officials... As a result of this gigantic exercise an outlay of £800,000 upon resumption proceedings, an additional revenue of £300,000 a year was permanently gained by the state... a large part of this sum derived from lands held free by Musalmans or by Muhammadan foundations... [Hunter 1964: 139]

The horrors of the Inam Commission were still fresh in the memory of its victims as late as the 1870s, as was testified by no less a person than W. W. Hunter.

Hundreds of ancient families were ruined, and the educational system of the Musalmans which was almost entirely maintained by rent-free grants received its death blow. The scholastic classes of the Muhammadans emerged from the eighteen years of harrying, absolutely ruined... [Hunter 1964: 139]

The participation of a large number of *ma'afi* holders during the Uprising of 1857 as the class of people who left their imprint on the proclamations issued by various rebel leaders, had made them prime suspects in the eyes of the British authorities. The landed elite of the area, especially the *ta'aluqdars*, who enjoyed the full backing of their caste groups (something displayed quite effectively during the Uprising) and who were still capable of mustering a large number of retainers, were treated quite differently. The *ma'afi* holders however had no such backing: hence they could be treated in whatever way the authorities decided. Historically

speaking, the holders of superior fiscal rights had an inherent class contradiction with the revenue grantees and therefore had little sympathy with their “poor cousins” [Jafri 2016: 16].

An analysis of the records of a Sufi institution which existed in the area at least 200 years prior to British control and earned the laurels of the British officials prior to the annexation of Awadh, shows that it was now subjected to a “new set of rules” and within two decades it was condemned as “a burden and quite scandalous for its financial dealings!” The analysis is organised into two sections: the first deals with the aura and the stature of the family in pre-colonial times, and is followed by a discussion of the imperial re-designing of the institution between 1861 and the 1890s.

4. Family Fortunes in Pre-Colonial Times

The social upheavals and political uncertainties during the Umayyad and the Abbasid Caliphates were often remembered by the migrant families from the holy cities when they moved to their new-found destinations in the various towns of the Indian subcontinent. The migrations had been an on-going process throughout the Islamic East. They were not just to the lands of plenty seeking opportunities to look for possible avenues of employment. The migrations by the descendants of “*ahl-e bayt*” (the descendants of the members of the family of the Prophet) and the descendants of the close companions of the Prophet from the city of Medina were always nostalgically recounted by the survivors in horrifying detail about the Umayyad repression. These families found their new homes in Indian cities and coastal towns from the eighth century. Due to their piety and spirituality these migrants were able to attract the attention of local rulers and chieftains. Their stature in the world of scholarship and attainment in the *ma'qulat* and *manqulat* were recognised by the state and society when subsequently Islamic culture became a part of the life of the Indian subcontinent.

The traditional account of the ancestors of the Salon family of Sufis (who subsequently established a *khanqah* as well) testifies that their ancestors migrated from Medina (Hijaz) to Yemen. From there, a branch moved to Bukhara in Central Asia and further east to Nagaur (an emerging town in northwestern India during the Delhi Sultanate period). An ancestor of the Salon branch, Shaikh Hamiduddin (d. 1244), was appointed a Qazi during the reign of Sultan Muizuddin Bin Sam. He attracted the attention of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya (d. 1325) in his *mal'uzat*, the *Fawaid-al fu'ad*, as “the person who along with Qazi Minhaj al-Siraj Juzjani (the author of *Tabaqat-e Nasiri*) popularised *sama* (Sufi music) in the city of Delhi.” At the same time, the great Shaikh kept on referring to the *Lawaih* of Qazi Hamiduddin Nagauri which was being used as a textbook by scholars of higher

studies in Delhi and other cities. The way he was referred to in the numerous *majlis* of the Shaikh makes it clear that after his death he enjoyed quite a celebrity status in higher academic circles for his learning and spirituality [Sijzi 1990: passim].

Fazlullah Jamali too, in his *Siyar-ul 'Arifin* (compiled in 1537) describes him as “the mountain [*Koh-e Qaf*] of learning and dignity” and compares him with the famous scholar of *Hadith*, Sufyan al-Thaury. After serving as the Qazi of Nagaur for three years he is said “to have renounced the world and proceeded to the Islamic East at Baghdad.” He met the famous scholar Shaikh Shahabuddin Suhrawardi, the author of *'Awarif-al Ma'arif*, and became his disciple. After undertaking a tour of the holy cities, he returned to India and spent his time with Shaikh Qutubuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki (d. 1235) for the rest of his life [Jamali 1976: 210–222].

Another branch of the family migrated to Jaunpur, the capital of the newly established Sharqi Dynasty. Here, Shaikh Nathan Jaunpuri (d. 1540), the author of *Sahaif al-Tariqa* and Shaikh Minallah Adhhan (d. 1568) of the family acquired much fame as Sufis; from the latter, the family began to use the *nisba* Addhani² [Addhan 1995]. A biographical note by Mulla 'Abdul Qadir Badauni (d. 1605), the historian and ruthless critique of some of the policies of the Mughal Emperor Akbar, is worth quoting in some detail:

[He] was the disciple of his ... father, Shaikh Bahauddin,...who was, in his time, deferred to by the holy men of the age. He reached the full period of man's natural life,...being seventy or eighty years of age; his sons attended him, likewise his grandsons, in their degrees... Although he had acquired much exoteric knowledge, yet he never gave instruction therein. He possessed to the highest degree a perception of God, a keen longing after ecstatic songs and dances, and the faculty of being overcome by religious ecstasy. Whenever he heard the stanzas of the holy song he would arise in ecstasy and would involuntarily join in the dance, with such violence and strength that several persons could not, by their bodily power, restrain him.

Badauni tells us that he took extra care in performing the obligatory prayers as well.

He would perform the recitation of the sayings of Muhammad and the supererogatory prayers in a sitting posture... He left a numerous progeny, of aus-

² A collection of 89 letters of Shaikh Bahauddin Nathan was compiled by his son Shaikh Minallah Addhan in AH 869 entitled *Sahaif al-Tariqa*. Probably the only surviving manuscript of this work is in the British Museum (Add. No. 16848). It has been published by Miyani Muhammad Saeed with original facsimiles, summaries of the letters, notes, and a very useful introduction [Addhan 1995].

picious disposition, and his wise son's gray-bearded men used to sit on either side of him in his illustrious assembly.

In addition to his fondness for *sama* and his dutifulness regarding his obligatory prayers, he was a scholar and writer of some repute:

He compiled so many treatises of his sayings regarding the divine law, the path of holiness, and the Truth, that they are beyond the reckoning of ordinary people, nay of most of those who are specially endowed, nor can the hand of any imperfect and lewd person even touch the skirt of the interpreter of those divine secrets. [al-Badaoni 1973: Vol. 3, 66–68]

His son Shaikh Allahabad (d. 1590?) established himself as a famous *muhaddith* and wrote commentaries on *Hidaya* (the digest of the Sunni jurisprudence of the Hanafi school of law) and *Kafiyah* [Dehalvi 2005: 70–83]. The family may not have been associated in any way with the bureaucratic set-up of the *Sharqi* administration.

It is this familial background and the individual stature of the members of the family that contributed immensely to the charisma and reputation of Shaikh Pir Mohammad, who was born in 1585 at Salon, where his father had moved earlier. After his initial education at Salon, he was sent to Manikpur (known at the time as *dar al-'ilm*, the abode of knowledge) for higher studies in rational and traditional sciences at the Kala Madarsa. After an “incidental encounter” with Shaikh ‘Abdul Kareem, he enrolled as the latter’s pupil. Even after completing his study of the *Tafsir-i Bizawi* (a *Quranic* commentary incorporating the *Mu‘tazilite* point of view as well) and the *Hidaya*, Shaikh Pir Muhammad remained for quite some time under the spiritual guidance and instruction of his preceptor. He went back to Salon only when asked to do so by his *pir*.

According to family tradition, Shaikh Pir Muhammad was advised by his *pir* to “avoid the path of confrontation” and “try and become acceptable to all persons.” The following *doha* (couplet) in the Awadhi language survived as the “motto” of the institution for generations.

Piran Rasan tham key, kar miskini bhes:
 Mithey bolo nay chalo sab hai tumaro des.
 (O! Piran Hold your tongue, become a recluse, utter sweet
 Words, follow the straight path, the whole world will be yours.)

Shaikh Pir Muhammad, in addition to his own familial background and his formal association with the popular Sufi order of the area, seems to have acquired legitimacy from the pre-existing centres of people’s reverence at his new home.

Following further instructions of his *pir*, Shaikh Pir Muhammad undertook a *chilla* (meditation for 40 days in a prescribed manner) at the tomb of Saiyid ‘Abdul Shakur and Saiyid ‘Abdul Ghafur (said to have been the companions of the legendary martyr Saiyid Salar Masud Ghazi, many of whose tombs are found in the region), popularly known as *Piran-i Paratha*. On completion of this Sufi ritual, Shaikh ‘Abdul Kareem himself came from Manikpur to declare Shaikh Pir Muhammad as his successor and asked him to take up abode with a *sanyasi* hermit. The family manuscripts record many anecdotes of his spiritual prowess vis-à-vis these *sanyasis*. Quite expectedly, he defeated them spiritually and finally settled at the place where the *khanqah*, *masjid*, *maqbara*, and the living quarters of the family presently stand (see Appendices 1 and 2 for the location map and the tomb of the family).

The appreciative attitude of the *pir* towards the *murid*, when the latter had carved a niche for himself in the world of spirituality and learning has been an established tradition among scholars and Sufis. It is only when such persons have attained a certain degree of respectability and popularity in their area as a scholar or a holy man that the patronage from society and the state begin to flow. The state can be seen as trying to reach out to civil society through this means, and the establishment of this *khanqah* is a case in point. The dynamics leading to state patronage are very interesting. In an obvious effort to build their social base from the grass-roots upwards, the Chishti mystics, in this case at least, first accepted patronage from local officials and the landed elite and only then sought imperial confirmation. Such prudence only added, at a later stage, to the appeal of their pluralistic and inclusive teachings.

Shaikh Pir Muhammad soon acquired considerable prominence as a mystic and theologian. His fame reached the ears of Emperor Aurangzeb (r. 1658–1707) who invited him to Delhi “to pay a visit to the shrines of his *pir*, so that the Emperor could also meet him (*mulaqat e aan maliki sifat karda aayad*).” This invitation was politely refused. At the same time we find that the local *jagirdar* had made over to him, under his delegated powers, by way of *nazr-i khadiman-i haqiq-wa ma‘arif-i agah* (an offering for the servants of one knowing the mystic truths), a grant of 200 *bighas* of land in the village of Mirzapur Bakhtiyar, *pargana* Nasirabad, *sarkar* Manikpur, *suba* Allahabad. However, as it was made by an official of the Mughal Empire, who was himself a holder of a *jagir* for a specific period, the grant could only be temporary in nature, coterminous with the tenure of the official concerned. Next, we find an imperial *farman* issued on 5th *Shawwal*, 19th RY/1676 recognising Shaikh Pir Muhammad directly as a grantee for the same piece of land. The Mughal chancery invariably designated such grants as *madad-i ma‘ash*,³ but the

³ In the literature at large, these grants are generally described as charitable grants, which had been bestowed upon the recipients for the charitable purposes. It was in this light that

farman is probably unique in the sense that instead of the standard formula, the high sounding description used by the *jagirdar* both in his *asnad* (deeds) and in the petition to the Mughal chancery, has been retained in the *farman*, in tune with the esteem in which the grantee was held locally (see Appendix 3 for the facsimile of the *farman*).

Patronage from the local landholding elite quickly followed the action of the state. However, in this case, the considerations seem to have been more complex than mere devotion to a mystic.

Shaikh Pir Muhammad died at the advanced age of 105 in 1687. During his lifetime, his son Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf was assigned the revenues of the village of Singhwal (renamed Ashrafabad in *pargana* Nasirabad) by the *zamindars* of the village. The revenue-paying capacity of the village appears to have been greatly reduced, something which is quite clear from the *hasil* figures of the village from 4th–17th RY, given on *zimm* (reverse of the *farman*). Thus, the *zamindars* transferred their rights to the mystic, who sought tax exemption from the Mughal authorities in the form of *madad-i ma'ash*. This was obtained in absolute perpetuity on 18th *Jamad* I, 20th RY/1679. Sheikh Ashraf was of a young age when he was made the beneficiary and thus no spiritual titles were put before his name and the standard formula of *madad-i ma'ash* was employed to describe the grant, in contrast with the respectful address and the unusual description of the grant for his father. It was only later on that he became a legendary figure and a cult seems to have developed around his personality.

With the setting of such initial precedents, the way seems to have opened up for ever-increasing patronage from all possible sources. The rising popularity of Sheikh Ashraf brought him additional laurels. By the end of Aurangzeb's reign, we find him in possession of large areas, spread over eight *parganas* in *suba* Allahabad and four *parganas* in *suba* Akhtarnagar, Awadh, either through imperial favour or through local officials and *zamindars*. All these were subsequently con-

the colonial officials as well as the nationalist leaders during the twentieth century looked on them. However, in the official documents as well as the chronicles of the Mughal period such grants were never understood in the modern connotation. Therefore, when making these grants, the words/expressions were especially meant to describe/convey the sense of charity or charitable use. The terms used to describe charity in the Islamic literature, like *sadqah*, *khairat*, *fitrah*, or *zakat*, were never employed either in the chronicles or in the archival papers to describe the *madad-i ma'ash* grants. Thus, to place *madad-i ma'ash* under the category of "charity" is inappropriate. Instead, common neutral terms like *suyurghal*, *a'imma* and *madad-i ma'ash* or *inam* and in the later period *ma'afi* were invariably used to describe these grants in the official papers of the Mughal and Nawabi periods. Such nomenclature is used irrespective of the religious affiliation of the recipient unlike the modern Indian State which makes a distinction not only on the basis of religious affiliation but also on the basis of sectarian affiliation [Moosvi 2012].

firmed as *madad-i ma'ash* by Bahadur Shah through his *farman* dated 17th *zilhij* 2nd RY/1708. On the *zimm* of this *farman*, a citation is made to the effect that:

...the grantee with a large number of mendicants is engaged in propagating the tenets of *sharia* and *tariqat* in the area and that in some for these villages he has established mosques and *musafirkhana* and, in the barren land, has caused habitations to emerge which have been named after his sons. [Appendix 4]

Probably the same considerations led to his obtaining yet another *farman* from Emperor Muhammad Shah on 19th *Rabi* I 10th RY/1729.

Shaikh Ashraf died in 1754 and an overseas merchant disciple, Saiyid 'Abdullah, constructed his tomb in 1757. His eldest son, Shah Muhammad Pir Ata, acquired fame unparalleled in the history of the institution. It was through him that the branches of the *khanqah* spread to far-off places like Hyderabad in the Deccan. By the time of Nawabi rule, the *khanqah* occupied a unique place in the province; the grants continued more or less and the *khanqah* seems to have been the largest of its kind in southern Awadh. Its annual income was estimated by Donald Butter in 1836 at Rs. 30,000 utilised in "entertaining *bairagis* and *faqirs* without any distinction of religion": "a large number of visitors flocked to the *khanqah* and at times there could even be about a hundred mendicants staying at the *musafirkhana*. These were attended to and looked after by the *sajjada nashin* of the *khanqah*, whose reputation was such that any new *chakladar* appointed in the *nizamat* of Salon promptly paid a visit and offered a few hundred rupees as *nazr*."

Colonel W. H. Sleeman, while undertaking a tour in the kingdom of Oudh, refers to this establishment as the prime mystic institution of the kingdom. Shah Panah Ata was looked upon with great reverence by both Muslims and Hindus due to the sanctity of his ancestors and of the institution. He is said to have never left the *khanqah*: "he remained there to receive the homage and distribute the needy and the travellers belonging to all religions." Sleeman estimated the annual income from the grant held by Shah Panah Ata in 1850 at about Rs. 25,000. In addition to this income, several local officials and princes from places as distant as Bhopal, Sironj, and Rewa made substantial offerings. Taking all these into account, the actual income of the establishment was calculated to have been about Rs. 50,000 a year.

Relations of the establishment with the British were cordial to begin with. Complimentary letters were sent to Shah Panah Ata by the Governor-General of India and the lieutenant governors of the North-West Provinces. When Sleeman was passing through the district of Salon, Shah Panah Ata sent him "letters of compliments and welcome with a present of tame antelope, some fruits, and sugar." This goodwill gesture was reciprocated by Sleeman, who records that "his (the Shaikh's)

character is held in high esteem by all classes of people, of whatever creed, caste, or grade.” However, such polite exchanges did not prevent the mystic reacting to the annexation of the kingdom of Oudh in February 1856 with deep anguish. Shah Panah Ata thoroughly condemned this act by the British and expressed his feelings thus: *Zulm-i Wajid beh ze adl-i Company* (the [so-called] oppression by Wajid Ali Shah was better than the “justice” of the Company).⁴

Such open expression of anti-British sentiments led to the confiscation of properties of *sajjada nashin* between the annexation of Awadh and the mutiny, but this punitive move had to be withdrawn due to the strong social acceptability and prestige the institution held among Hindus and Muslims. Major Barrow made an initial inquiry into the credentials of the grantee, but none of the files and papers pertaining to this inquiry are available. They must have been burnt during the Revolt of 1857. A second enquiry was conducted in the 1860s by W. C. Wood (then deputy commissioner of Patpargarh), covering the history of landed properties accruing to the family since the period of Aurangzeb, details of buildings belonging to the institution and maintained out of the *waqf* funds, and incomes and heads on which expenditures were incurred. A distinction between the personal expenses of *sajjada nashin* and of the institution was made. On the basis of this report and on behalf of Lord Canning, a *sanad* was issued on 26 September 1862, recognizing the allodial rights of Shah Husain Ata over 22 villages in his grant. However, now the grant was made conditional: it was to continue only as long as the income was devoted to the maintenance of the *khanqah*, buildings, tomb, mosque, and the running of a school of “Muhammadan Education” and the continuance of the charities.

The *sanad* is quoted in full to illustrate a few points. It having been established after due enquiry that Shah Husain Ata held under-mentioned land in *tehsil* Salon, *zila* Patpargarh in rent-free tenure under the former government; the chief commissioner under the authority of the Governor-General-in-Council is pleased to maintain the tenure so long as the grantees perform their duties and keep the buildings and school according to the terms of the grant on the following conditions:

- a. That he shall have surrendered all *sanad*, deeds, and documents relating to the tenure in question
- b. That he and his successors shall strictly perform all the duties of landholders in matters of police and any military or political service that may be required of them by the authorities
- c. That they shall never fall under the just suspicion of favoring in any way the designs of the enemies of the British government
- d. If anyone of these conditions is broken by the present incumbent or any of his successors, the tenure will be immediately resumed. [Appendix 5]

⁴ This section derives much from [Jafri 2005: 219–244]. The evidence I used in this paper (my own translations) are reproduced here with minor additions and changes.

The patriarchs of this Sufi establishment might have been greatly revered personalities and scholarly figures for the earlier regimes but now they were assigned police, military, and political duties. Their status was reduced, if not to the level of “collaborators” then certainly to that of “informers.” Such humiliating stipulations do not leave much to the imagination by way of understanding how these institutions would have struggled to exist under the changed circumstances.

In the years that followed, the net result was endless litigation between the various branches of the family; allegation and counter allegation of financial mismanagement and embezzlement of funds of the *waqf* properties were traded back and forth. By 1876, within a short period of 16 years, the very institution that had earned the praise of people no less than Dr. Donald Butter and Sleeman was in disorder, with a substantial proportion of its property mortgaged and the *sajjada nashin* perpetually in debt to moneylenders. An institution that so far had been excellently managed was reduced to penury, courtesy of British policies and civil law. To date, there exist no comprehensive or regional studies of the degree of damage done to the Sufi institution by British policy, although there is no dearth of relevant source material.

5. British Colonial Policies and the Sufi Centres

The fate of this institution as a centre of spiritual training and traditional education took many twists and turn during colonial rule. In the wake of Summary Settlement, the then *sajjada nashin* of the *khanqah* submitted all 31 *farmans*, warrants, and title deeds for all the holdings of the *khanqah* and obtained a receipt for them. However, the originals were burnt during the events of 1857. After the restoration of British authority on 13 January 1859, Shah Husain Ata made a fresh application to the revenue authority in which he mentioned the names of the plots of land, estates, etc., and listed all the properties belonging to the *khanqah* at Salon. He stated that these had been in the possession of his ancestors for the last six generations and that the *farman* and *asnad* forming the title deeds of this property had been delivered in 1856 to Col. Barrow, who had issued a receipt for the same. The petition ended with the prayer that the properties be maintained as stipends or benefice-grants connected with the *khanqah*. An inquiry was instituted, in the course of which Shah Husain Ata again submitted a memorandum on 2 April 1859, providing the details of the properties included in the endowment, stating the origin of the title, the date of the grant, and the duration of the petitioners’ possession.

The Extra Assistant Commissioner’s decision regarding this petition, dated 30 April 1859, supported the claims of Shah Husain Ata and recorded the EAC’s firm opinion that “the ends of the charity for which these bequests have been made, be secured and the family so ancient and so esteemed be perpetuated. This being

wakf property (...) mortgages and sales will not be recognised, otherwise it will fast dwindle away.”

This opinion, however, did not meet with the approval of the higher authorities. On 18 February 1860 the Deputy Commissioner wrote “During the rebellion, the present incumbent of these rent-free grants rendered the British government no assistance and cannot, therefore, be considered to have any just claim on our government [...]” The Commissioner of Rae Bareilly (Raebareli) district concurred with this opinion and, for good measure, added some punitive measures to the observations of his deputy:

The incumbent of these rent-free grants rendered the British government no assistance during the rebellion [...] these 22 villages be granted in perpetuity on condition of (a) the offering of a *nazrana* [i.e. succession duty] of Rs. 28,000/- by the grantee on the receipt of the Governor General’s farman; (b) the payment of Rs. 28,000/- one year’s rental by each of the successors [...] As this is a trust fund, the government should reserve to itself the power of interfering in the expenditure, should it think proper to do so?

Thus, the ground was laid for effective interference in the working of the institution. Moreover, this was not the only device through which the incumbents of these grants could be taught a lesson; there was also the opportunity which came in the form of “crisis from within the family.” After the death of the fourteenth *sajjada nashin* of the *khanqah*, Shah Karim Ata, in 1833, there arose a dispute among his descendants. To settle this, the then government of Awadh appointed as the head (*nazim*) of the area one Khadim Husayn Khan. As a result of his intervention the parties reached a formalised mutual agreement (*sulhanama*) dated 10 September 1835 to the effect that half of the entire property would remain in the possession of Shah Panah Ata, who would remain the *sajjada nashin* and would in that capacity pay out of his share the expenses of the *khanqah* connected with visitors and poor persons, while the remaining half of the property was to be equally divided between Shah Ahsan Ata and Shah Ghafur Ata. This arrangement, somehow made to work perfectly, lasted only for a short time. The British intervened once more, seeking to undo it by issuing on 26 September 1862, a *sanad* for the entire property in the name of the then *sajjada nashin*, Shah Husayn Ata. The other branches of the family resented this, and rightly so. While these other branches continued to retain their possessions in effect, they were still forced to resort to legal action to counter the official *sanad*. A curious line of argument was taken in the case by the Deputy Commissioner, who, in his reply of 6 June 1863, stated that he saw no reason to accede to the request, as such *asnad* had generally been understood to be merely a renunciation of revenue by the government and not the title deeds for the individuals whose names they bore. Such an interpretation was unheard of in

the legal history of the country. The decision was, of course, open to appeal, and an appeal was indeed made to the higher authorities. However, all of the revenue appellate courts, including those of the Commissioner, the Chief Commissioner, the Financial Commissioner, and even the Secretary of the State upheld the decision of the Deputy Commissioner. One can only imagine the degree of expenditure that the contesting members of the family must have incurred, leading to indebtedness and the mortgaging of property. In this situation, no one must have had the time to look out for the interests or the spread of “Muhammadan Education.” In this light, the observation, dated 1 October 1869, of the officiating Financial Commissioner is worth recalling here. He wrote:

If the parties cannot agree, they can waste their substance in litigation. Their establishment is already a scandal and there can be no object gained by maintaining it.

It appears that the British authorities tacitly encouraged the litigation within the family. In fact, it was the secretary to the government who suggested to the petitioners the grounds on which they could approach the authorities “for their rightful share”—those of “mismanagement and not fulfilling the conditions of the *wakf* by the main branch of the family.” A number of suits were filed in various civil courts, dragging the *sajjada nashin* and his family members into some of the most hotly contested lawsuits. The legal expenses were simply mind boggling. These civil suits left all the parties in constant debt. An idea can be had from a table which Justice Sayyid Mahmud included in his memorandum of 1884 to illustrate that the *sajjada nashin* had a debt against the *ma‘afi* villages and his own personal debts totalling Rs.74,955/- which was almost four times of his annual expected income from these villages. These debts were neither for the development of education nor for the maintenance of buildings but were incurred to meet legal expenses. Incidentally, the creditors included small peasants, boatmen, and artisans from their *ma‘afi* villages only.

The sixth *sajjada nashin* of the *khanqah*, Shah Husain Ata (in office 1860–1880), was an acknowledged scholar of *ma‘qulat* and *manqulat*, having been taught by erudite scholars like Maulavi ‘Abdul Qadir Dewi and Maulavi ‘Abdul Basit Jaysi, the pupils of Shah ‘Abdul ‘Aziz (d.1827), the famous *muhaddith* of his time. He was a poet as well as a connoisseur of music, but circumstances had pushed him to the wall. The Deputy Commissioner of Raebareli, in his report dated January 1875 noted:

He is now so embarrassed by the debts that he repairs to Allahabad when he hears of the attachment out by the creditors, and vice-versa when claimants appear at Allahabad.

Such an adverse report invited even harsher comments by the Commissioner, Mr. Carnegie, who recommended in July 1876 that “it was improper that a man in this bankrupt condition should be left longer in uncontrolled charge of this important endowment. It must be placed in other hands than those of the present *sajjada-nasheen*, or at any rate, on quite a different footing.”

It is necessary to point out that the British authorities totally disregarded both the familial stature of the incumbents of the institution and also the family settlement arrived at between the various branches of the family during the Nawabi era (with the complete approval of the State), and so almost destroyed the institution. This is in complete disregard of the earlier position of some British officers who were ready to recognise the familial stature as well as to show some consideration for such an illustrious family. For example, the Extra Assistant Commissioner of the region specifically mentioned in his report of 30 April 1859:

Thus...in my opinion, will the ends of the charity...be secured and a family so ancient and so esteemed be perpetuated. This being *waqf* property i.e. property given for charitable purposes, mortgages and sale will not be recognised, otherwise, it will fast dwindled away.

Such sane voices were disregarded by the higher authorities, who stated that since they has given “no assistance to the British government during the Rebellion...they could not be considered for having any just claim on our government.”

Perhaps the conduct of the incumbent of this institution during the Uprising of 1857 has hardened the British position in such a way that the colonial power could not spare the institution, now deeply indebted and involved in litigation and all type of negativity. This provided a further avenue for the colonial authorities to tighten their grip over the management as well as to increase their propaganda against the family.⁵

6. Towards a Conclusion

The *Khanqah-e Karimia* was an important Sufi institution imparting spiritual and theological training from the time of Baba Farid and Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya. The charisma of the *sajjada nashin* was also recognised by the Mughal Emperors, who endowed them with large land grants as *madad-i ma'ash*. The income from these grants was used to spread mystic ideology as well as to disseminate theologi-

⁵ The evidence from the colonial records used here was earlier cited in [Jafri 2006: 73–103].

cal studies. Soon it emerged as an important centre giving training to the people in mystic ideology so as to allow them to reach the stage of “the post graduate creed of Islam.”

In recapitulating and summarising the argument, it is quite clear that it was the familial status and the intellectual stature of the members of the family over the generations that attracted the attention of civil society as well as the ruling elite toward family members under the various regimes in medieval times. We have little information as to how the family was patronised by the state during pre-Mughal times and by the regional dynasty of the Sharqis, other than the appointment of a family member as Qazi in the fourteenth century. It was only during the time of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb that we see the first grant bestowed on the predecessor in interest of the Salon branch of the family in 1676. This grant also testifies to the familial stature of the grantee: it does not apply the usual formula of such a grant, instead, it uses highly honorific descriptions i.e. an offering for the servants of one knowing the mystic truth (*nazr-i khadiman-i haqaiq-wa ma'arif-i agah*). This trend somehow continued when another Mughal grant issued in 1708 acknowledged the fact that “the grantee with a number of mendicants propagates the principal of *sharia* and *tariqat*...and has also established mosques and *musafir khanas* and has helped habitations to emerge in the barren lands.” This is recognition of the wider reach of the family and at the same time an acceptance that the grant meant for the family was being used for humanitarian purposes. In later documents, the grants are given somehow the character of *waqf*. How did what began as a purely familial grant ultimately end up with the character of *waqf*?

Prior to the annexation of the kingdom of Awadh, internal problems within the family caused the Nawabi administration to intervene in the affairs of this grant and by way of a family settlement (fully recognised by the administration) half of the grant was given a formal *waqf* character while the other half was made personal, for the maintenance of other family members. The pre-colonial British officers had recognised the familial stature of the various members of the family at the time of their visit, especially Donald Butter (1834) and Sleeman (1849). Everything changed after the annexation in February 1856 and the Summary Settlement in June 1856 of the erstwhile Nawabi kingdom of Awadh. But the worst was yet to come.

The Uprising of 1857 in Awadh became a litmus test for the *ma'afi* holders who looked forward to the continuation of the grant, even if they had been in actual possession for many generations. It was this test that the family, as well as the institution, failed. They condemned the colonial act of annexation of the kingdom and the then *sajjada nashin* is said to have commented that the “so called oppression of Wajid ‘Ali Shah was better than the so-called justice of British rule (*Zulm-i Wajid beh ze adl-i Company*).” Coupled with this, they did not support or help the British in any way during the Uprising. This practically sealed their fate. Between

1862 and 1886, the institution was gradually robbed off its familial stature, social standing, and its service in the field of dissemination of knowledge. Their cases were taken up by the higher authorities in the most apathetic manner, and so ended the glorious chapter in the history of the institution.

7. Impact of Marginalisation

The marginalisation of institutions having mystic predilections had quite varied meanings for society, local chieftains, and the ruling elite. As a result of colonial policies, problems arose within the family, which became further complicated through the deep involvement of the various branches of the family in litigation. This definitely affected the normal functioning and the reach of the institution. The British government used this opportunity to erode the social basis of the family in a systematic manner. Such a situation encouraged the “votaries of reformist Islam” who were already equating Sufi practices with *bid'at* and *shirk* to attack the incumbents of Sufi establishments in general and this *khanqah* in particular. They now had the opportunity to join the administration in making allegations of financial mismanagement as well. Such pretexts of mismanagement, financial irregularities, and non-fulfillment of objectives of *ma'afi* grants became the major concerns of the Colonial Administration as well as civil society. The utility of the *khanqah* came to be questioned in the popular perception, although the memory of the *khanqah*, its traditions, and the familial stature of its incumbents in previous generations as well as throughout the twentieth century still invites widespread popular recognition. The “vacuum” created by the Sufi institutions, especially in the sphere of education and the dissemination of knowledge had to be filled, leading to the mushroom growth of institutions with a “radical ideology” affiliated with various groups. This jolted for the composite culture and cosmopolitanism of the region, something of a hallmark there, as no less a person than Donald Butter commented in 1838:

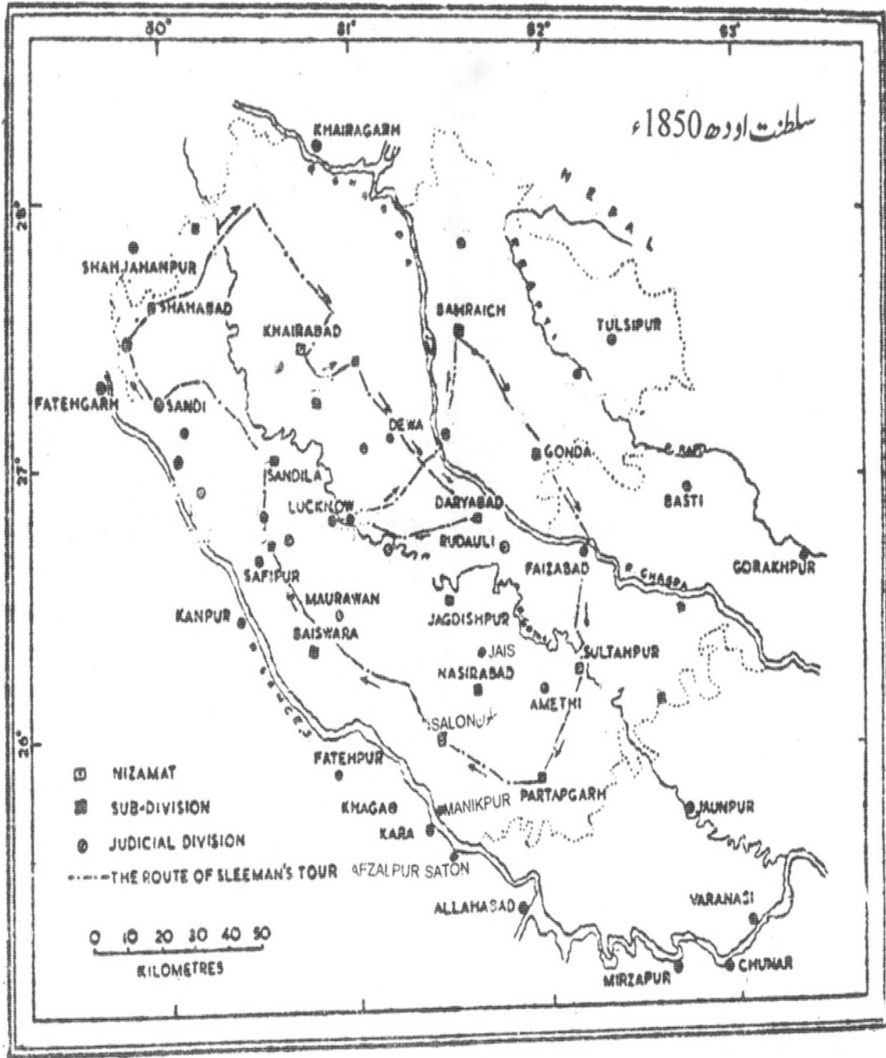
The religious excitability of the Muslims of Oudh seems to range lower than that of their co-religionists in Rohilkhand in the Haidarabad states, or even in Bengal. [Butter 1982: 165]

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Appendix 1: The Kingdom of Awadh in the 1850s and the Location of Salon



Source: Jafri 1998.

Appendix 2: The Tomb at the *Khanqah*

The dome and the upper view of *Rauza-i Ashrafi*, the main building of the *Khanqah-e Karimia* complex, Salon. The date of its construction as given in the chronogram (*in buwad astana-i Ashraf*) is 1757 (AH 1171).

Appendix 3: Facsimile of the Certified Copy of the *Farman* Issued by the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb in the Year 1676

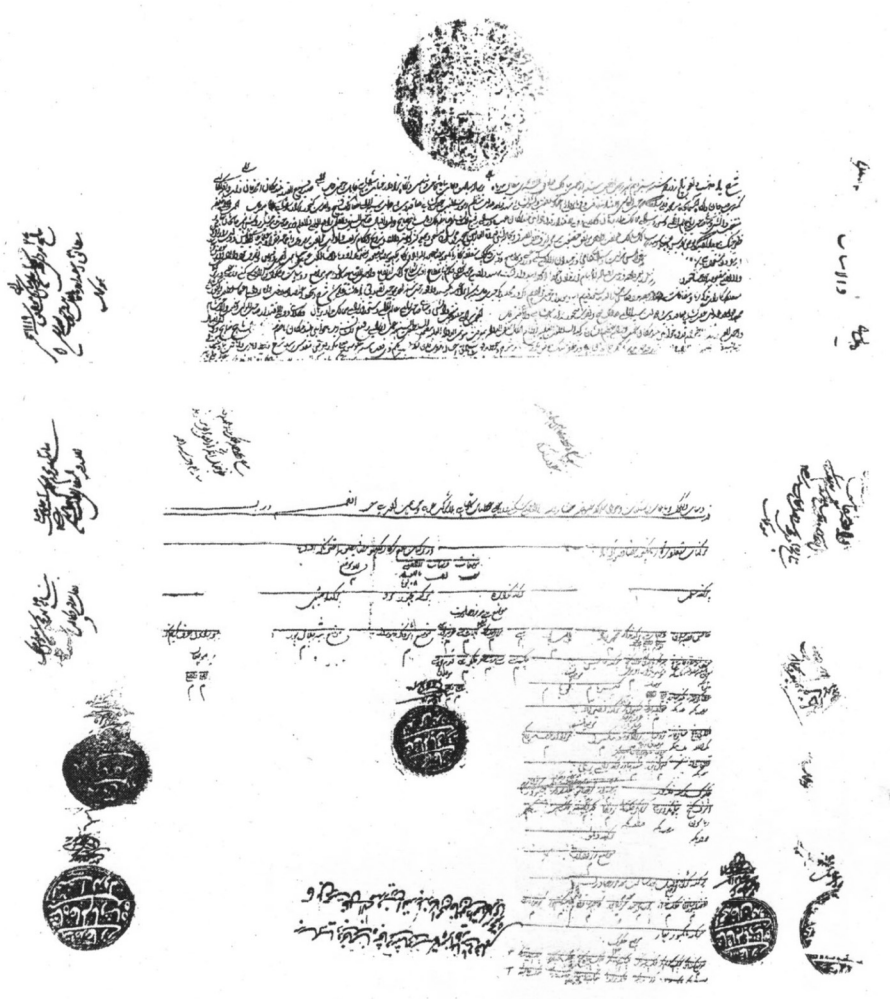
بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



حکام
 سواری و وصی بیکه تعالی موصی مزار
 میر محمد بیگ

مسلک میر کند نصیر آبا و تابع سرکار ماکبیر مصاص صوبه الہاماد و ز و جند نذر خادمان تحالوق و معاوضہ کا
 شیخ میر محمد ساکن کنہ سنون مقرر و برابر ارضی مریوزہ قالیق و مستقر و اید امیدوار اند کہ در این باب فرمان الہام
 مرحوم شود حکم جہا مطلع عالم مطلع صا ہر شد کہ زمین مسطور لار محمدیم سید ستور سان (مطوط قبضہ و تصرف و در
 ہندو معاہدہ اسانہا حسب الصحن میں رہے کہ حاصلات لار اصر و فایہ محتاج صحر و ہمنمودہ بدعا و بعد از دو
 افزون نمودہ است نمایند بایکہ حکام و عمال و جاگیر داران و کروڑہہ خاں و تہنمان اراضی مذکورہ
 انہا بار کہ از نذر و اصل و مطلعہ بفرستیل بدانہ ندمند و بعد از ان و جہا و ایشہ اجناس پیش و قضا و
 و جہا ساند و ضابطہ و محصل و جہا از خود از و حکام و بیگار و پیشکار و مقدم و ہنگامی جہا ہر کار
 و کل کیلف و لوہا و مطلعہ اسانہا ہر سال ہر سال سند مجدہ ظنہ از در محلی کبر ہونہ ہا

Appendix 4: The *Zimn* (the Reverse) of the *Farman* of Emperor Bahadur Shah I Issued in 1708. See especially the fourth to sixth lines for the citation.



Collection: Khanqah-e Karimia, Salon, India.

Appendix 5: The Copy of the *Sanad* Issued by the British Government in Favour of the Grantee, Shah Husain Ata on 26th September 1862

PROGS.
No.

(58)
GENERAL DEPARTMENT.

FILE
No. 102.

NORTH-WESTERN PROVINCES AND OUDH, APRIL, 1885.

No. 5.

APPENDIX C.

SERIAL
No. 10.

Sanad granting mudfi lands in certain villages of pargana Salone, zila Partabgarh, to Sháh Muhammad Husain Ata, Sajjadanashin of Salone.

Seal.
CHIEF COMMISSIONER,
OUDH.

WHEREAS after full investigation it appears that Sháh Husain Ata, the *Sajjadanashin*, holds possession of lands in the villages detailed below, situated in tahsil Salone in the district of Partabgarh, as muftis, the Chief Commissioner, with the sanction of His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General in Council, is pleased to continue to him the said lands so long as the income is applied to the building and the school for which they were granted, subject to the following conditions:—

1. That he shall have deposited with the Government such sanads and title-deeds, &c., as he may have in his possession relating to these lands.
2. That he shall duly perform the duties imposed upon the zamindars and render such assistance as may be required by the Government in matters relating to the police and also in civil and military affairs.
3. That he or his successor shall not give the least occasion for suspicion that he is in conspiracy with, or abets the enemies of the Government.

In the event of the breach of any of the above conditions by Sháh Husain Ata or his successors, the said land shall at once be resumed.

Mauza Mirzapur Bakhtisr.
Bazaar Karimganj.
Mauza Ashrafnagar Singhol.
Palhopur.
Khwajapur.
Kewalpur.
Ataganj Uari.
Madhopur Naniyan.
Arazi Chak Rampur.
Arazi Atannagar.
Pirnagar Mohiuddinpur.
Mauza Barolia.

Chak Firmnagar Mohiuddinpur.
Atannagar.
Ashrafganj.
Panabnagar Dharnia.
Chak Atarthariya.
Mauza Pura Baheliya, appertaining to Madhopur
Naniyan.
✓ Firdhiyapur.
✓ Chak Karimganagar Reoli.
✓ Dhan Kiera.
✓ Muhammadabad.

JAWAHIR SINGH,

The 26th September, 1862.

Record-keeper, Chief Commissioner's Office, Oudh.