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RETURN TO EMPIRE : THE SIKHS AND THE BRITISH IN THE PUNJAB, 1839-1872

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

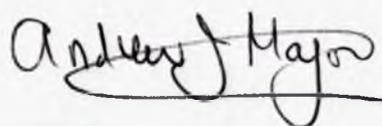
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The Australian National University, Canberra

December 1981

DECLARATION

This thesis is my own original work

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew J. Major". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent horizontal line underlining the name.

ANDREW J. MAJOR

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ABSTRACT

THE THESIS IS A STUDY OF THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE PUNJAB BETWEEN 1839 AND 1872. ITS PURPOSE IS TO ACCOUNT FOR, AND EXPLAIN THE SIGNIFICANCE OF, THE PUNJAB'S TRANSITION FROM SIKH KINGDOM TO BRITISH IMPERIAL PROVINCE. EARLY-NINETEENTH-CENTURY PUNJAB WAS ESSENTIALLY A FRONTIER SOCIETY, WITH VERTICAL, CLAN-BASED POLITICAL CLEAVAGES AND A PRONOUNCED MARTIAL SPIRIT. THE SIKH KINGDOM, WHICH EMERGED IN THE WAKE OF THE MUGHAL EMPIRE'S COLLAPSE, WAS A MILITARY PATRONAGE STATE, WHOSE STRUCTURE REFLECTED THE NATURE OF PUNJABI SOCIETY, AND WHOSE STABILITY DEPENDED UPON SATISFACTION OF ITS CHIEFTAINS' AMBITIONS THROUGH CONSTANT TERRITORIAL EXPANSION. WHEN EXPANSION STOPPED IN THE MID-1820s, TENSION ENSUED INTERNALLY, ESPECIALLY AFTER MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH'S DEATH IN 1839. THE BRITISH, WHO WERE IN THE PROCESS OF BUILDING A NEW SUBCONTINENTAL EMPIRE, EXPLOITED THESE TENSIONS, AND IN SO DOING, WERE DRAWN EVER DEEPER INTO THE KINGDOM'S DOMESTIC AFFAIRS. PUNJABI COLLABORATION AND RESISTANCE DETERMINED THE STAGES BY WHICH THIS PENETRATION PROCEEDED. A GENERAL CRISIS OF AUTHORITY IN 1848 RESULTED IN THE ANNEXATION OF THE PUNJAB A YEAR LATER. AFTER 1849 THE BRITISH SET ABOUT TRANSFORMING THE PUNJAB INTO A TRANQUIL AND PROSPEROUS TERRITORY. THE CORNERSTONE OF THEIR POLICY WAS THE DIMINUTION OF THE PRIVILEGES AND INFLUENCE OF THE OLD MILITARY AND LANDED ELITES - IN PARTICULAR, THE CHIEFTAINS. BUT THE IMPERIAL CRISIS OF 1857-58 COMPELLED THE BRITISH TO REVERSE THEIR POLITICAL STRATEGY. IN 1857 THE OLD, ELITIST MILITARY FORMATIONS WITHIN PUNJABI SOCIETY WERE QUICKLY REVIVED - FORTUNATELY FOR THE BRITISH, THESE FORMATIONS WERE NOT YET EXTINCT - AND PUNJABI COLLABORATION ENABLED THE BRITISH TO SURVIVE THE CRISIS. THE DECADE AFTER 1858 SAW THE INSTITUTIONALISATION OF THIS REVERSAL OF POLICY. THE ATTENTION OF THE OLD MILITARY AND LANDED ELITES, HAVING BEEN TURNED OUTWARDS ONCE AGAIN

IN 1857, WAS PERMANENTLY DIVERTED TO THE ADVANTAGES OF COOPERATION WITH THE IMPERIAL STATE. BY THE EARLY 1870s, THE PUNJAB WAS IN MANY RESPECTS A CHANGED REGION; BUT, AS THE SUBSEQUENT POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC HISTORY OF THE REGION SHOWS, THE OLD MILITARY AND LANDED ELITES HAD MANAGED TO ADAPT THEMSELVES REMARKABLY WELL TO THE CHANGED POLITICAL CIRCUMSTANCES. THE HISTORY OF THE PUNJAB BETWEEN 1839 AND 1872 IS THEREFORE ESSENTIALLY THE STORY OF THE CONTINUITY - DESPITE GREAT VICISSITUDES - OF AN INDIGENOUS, DOMINANT POWER STRUCTURE AND ITS SYSTEM OF VALUES INTO (AND, EVENTUALLY, BEYOND) THE PERIOD OF EUROPEAN, COLONIAL RULE.

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This thesis owes much to many people. I am especially grateful to my supervisor, Professor D.A. Low, for his patience, encouragement and advice. Professor Low's guidance has been an intellectually stimulating experience. I am also most grateful to the Australian National University for providing the research facilities and financial assistance without which the project could not have been undertaken. The staff at the National Archives of India and the Central Secretariat Library, New Delhi, and at the Punjab Secretariat Record Office and Library, Lahore, provided courteous assistance during my stay in India and Pakistan. I would also like to mention the kindness shown to me in Amritsar by Dr Indu Banga, of the Department of History, Guru Nanak University, and in Lahore by my colleague, Dr Imran Ali, and his family. To all my friends in New Delhi, I am similarly grateful. My colleagues in the South Asia History Section, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, and the School of History, University of New South Wales, have helped in many ways. I hope they will forgive my not mentioning them all by name. But I must acknowledge my debt to Dr Michael Pearson, who read all the draft chapters with great promptness (and an encouraging degree of enthusiasm), and offered numerous helpful criticisms. I am also grateful to Ms Maria Giuffre, who typed the thesis and was - as were so many others - always a source of encouragement.

ABBREVIATIONS

Official Positions

BOA	Board of Administration
C and S	Commissioner and Superintendent
CC	Chief Commissioner
COD	Court of Directors
DC	Deputy Commissioner
EAC	Extra Assistant Commissioner
FC	Financial Commissioner
GG	Governor-General
GoI	Government of India
GoP	Government of the Punjab
JC	Judicial Commissioner
Offg	Officiating
SC	Settlement Commissioner
Secy	Secretary
SS	Secretary of State for India

*Official Proceedings*1. *National Archives of India*

FC	Foreign Consultations
FD	Foreign Department
FDP	Foreign Department Proceedings
FM	Foreign Miscellaneous
FP	Foreign Proceedings

FPC	Foreign Political Consultations
FPP	Foreign Political Proceedings
FSC	Foreign Secret Consultations
FSP	Foreign Secret Proceedings
NAI	National Archives of India, New Delhi

2. *Punjab Secretariat Record Office*

Bk	Book
GDP	General Department Proceedings
JDP	Judicial Department Proceedings
LRL	Lahore Residency Letters
PDP	Political Department Proceedings
PS	Punjab Secretariat Record Office, Lahore
RD	Revenue Department
RDP	Revenue Department Proceedings
WE	Week Ending

Official Reports and Publications

"CKO"	"Correspondence relating to the Kooka Outbreak" (Parliamentary Papers)
DG	<i>District Gazetteer</i>
LPD	<i>Punjab Government Records: Lahore Political Diaries, 1847-1848</i>
MRR	<i>Punjab Government Records: Mutiny Records: Reports</i>
PAR	<i>General Report on the Administration of the Punjab</i>

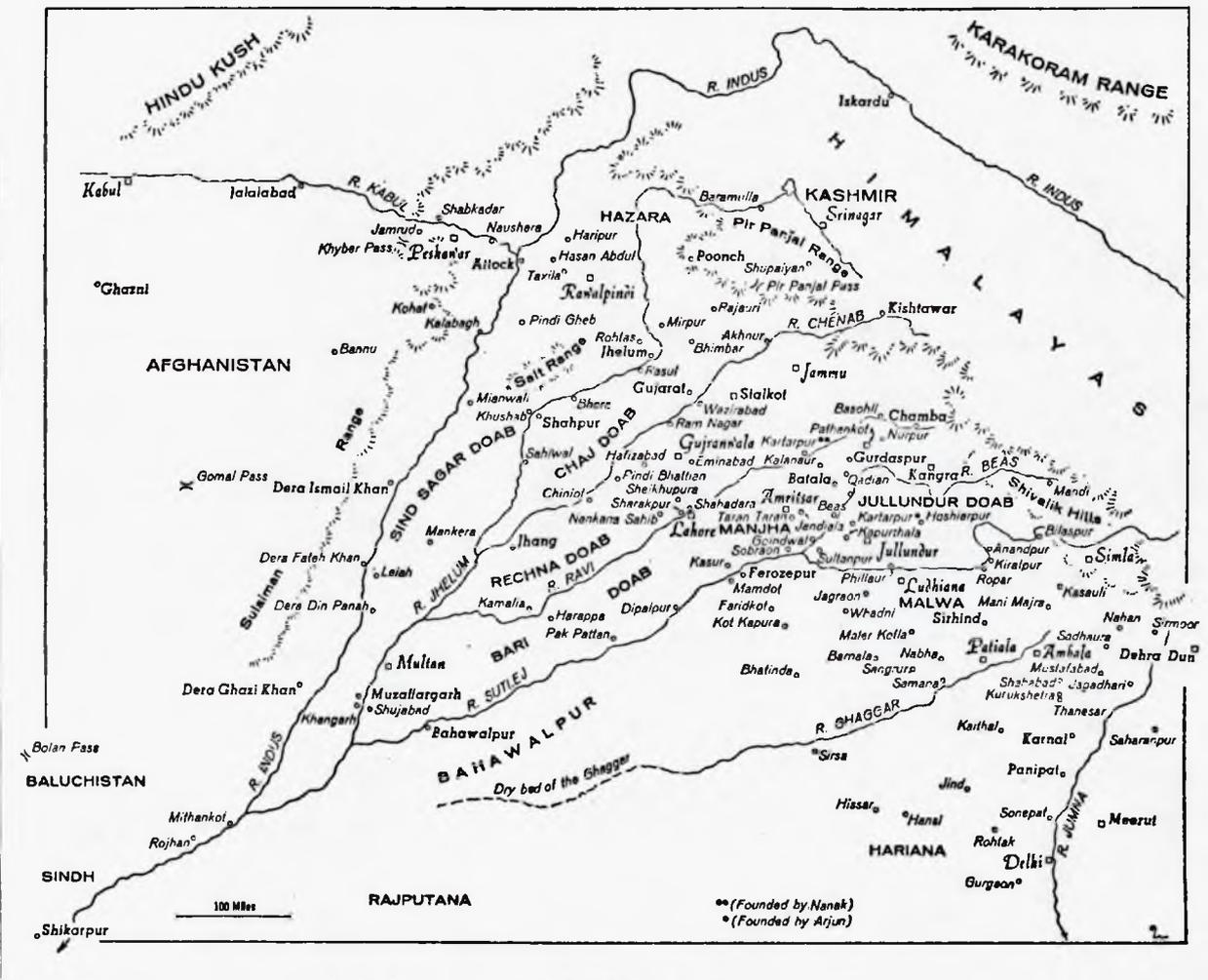
- "PP" "Papers Relating to the Punjab, 1847-1849" (Parliamentary Papers)
- "PPTA" "Papers Relating to the Punjab Tenancy Act" (Parliamentary Papers)
- SR *Settlement Report*

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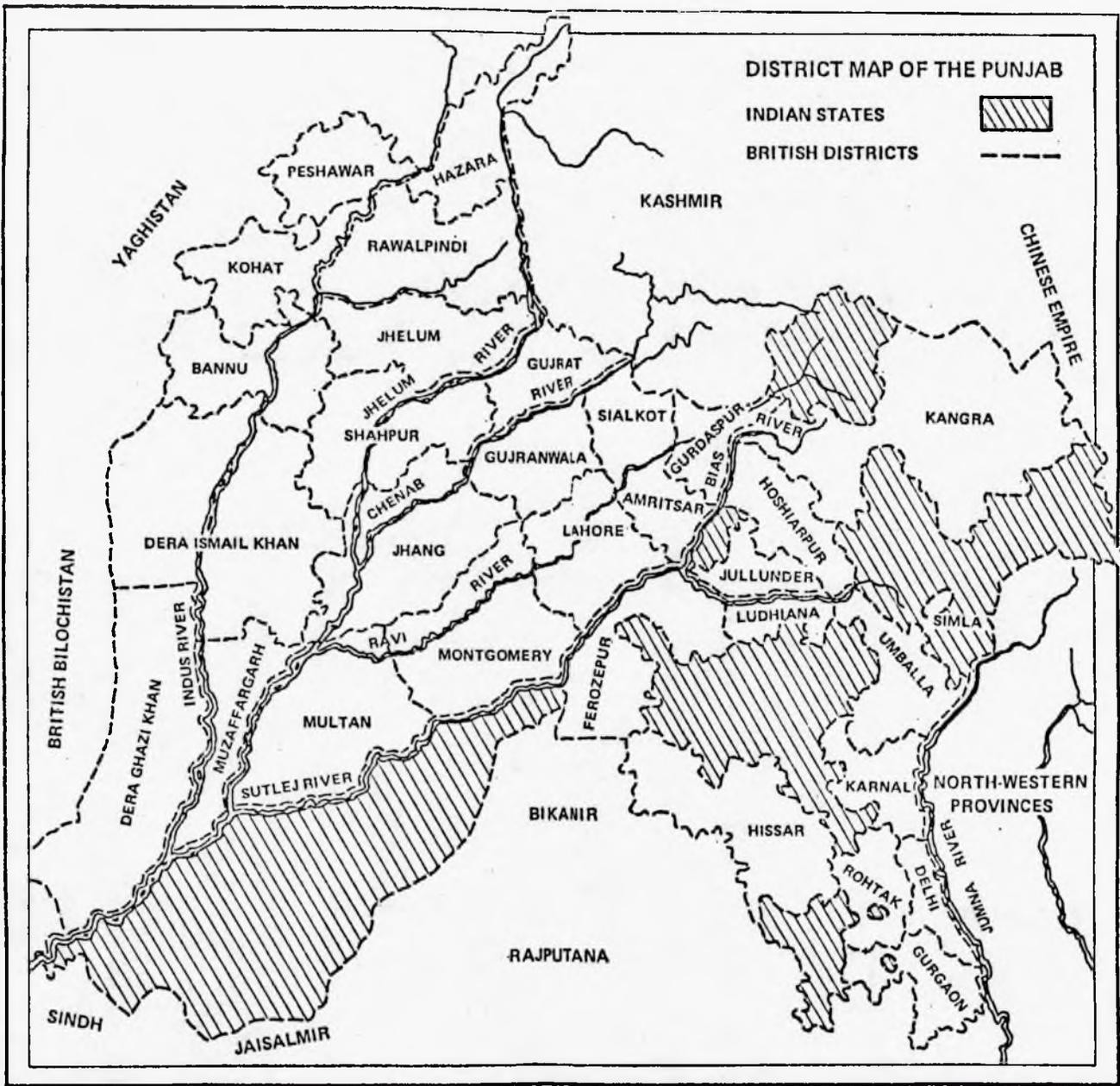
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MAP 1



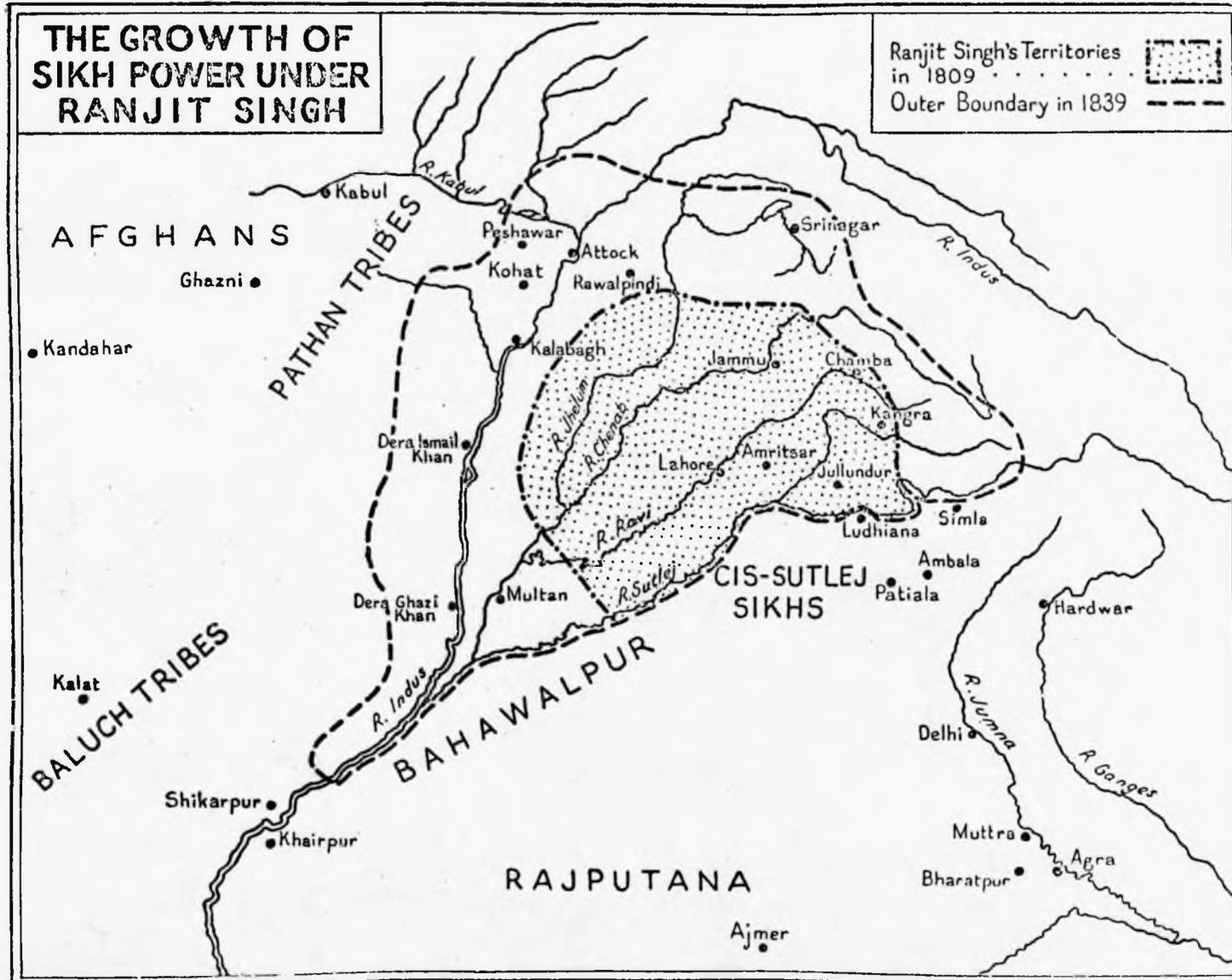
Source : Khushwant Singh, *A History Of The Sikhs*, vol 2, 1839-1964 (Princeton, N.J., 1966), p.4.

Source : P.H.M. van den Dungen, *The Punjab Tradition: Influence and Authority in Nineteenth-Century India* (London, 1972), inside back cover.



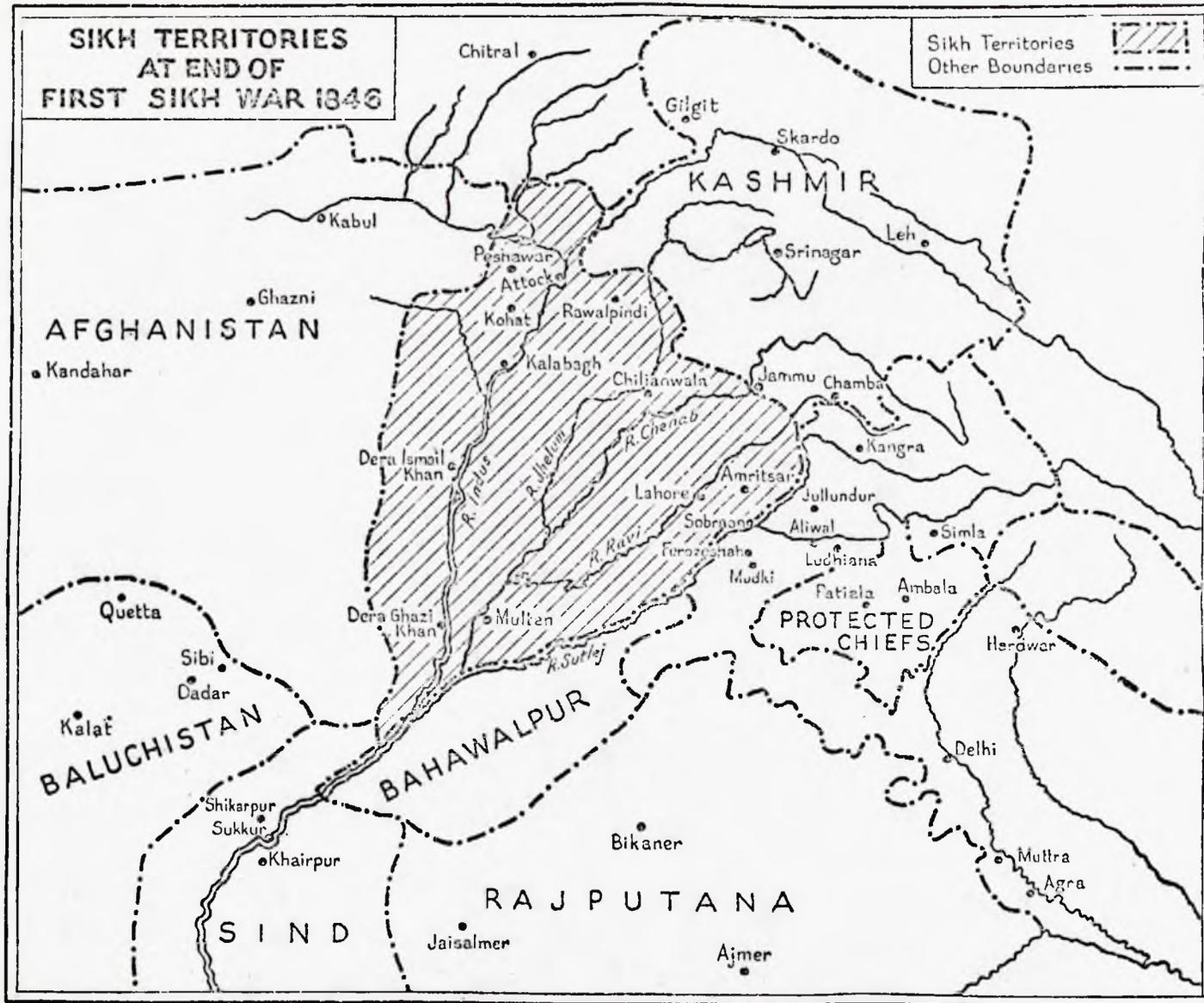
MAP 2

Source: C. Collin Davies, *An Historical Atlas of The Indian Peninsula* (OUP, Madras, 2nd edn 1959), p.63.



MAP 3

Source : Davies, *Historical Atlas*, p.65.



MAP 4

INTRODUCTION

It is generally agreed that the one hundred years between the battle of Plassey in 1757 and the outbreak of the Great Rebellion in 1857 constitute a crucial period in the history of modern South Asia. For it was during these years that most of those regional States that had emerged in the wake of the Mughal empire's dissolution were overrun by a foreign mercantile organisation - the English East India Company - and forged into a new, British subcontinental empire. In dismantling these regional political systems and replacing them with new provincial administrations, and in creating - as a necessary and integral complement to their political and economic domination - a bourgeois property system and a bourgeois legal and institutional apparatus, the British would seem to have been responsible for decisive political, economic and social changes. Writing in 1853, at the height of British imperial confidence and action in South Asia, Marx observed: "England has to fulfil a double mission in India: one destructive, the other regenerating - the annihilation of old Asiatic society, and the laying of the material foundations of Western society in Asia".¹ Historians from Marx's time onwards have seen in the rise of a British empire in South Asia the triumph of a materially superior civilisation; and they have characterised the early impact of British rule in terms of such dramatic changes as the breakup and transformation of the "traditional" society and economy, the emergence of a new "middle class" and the growth of a "modern", bureaucratic State.

Historians nowadays, while they agree that the period between Plassey and the Great Rebellion is an important one, are no longer able uncritically to accept the sweeping interpretations advanced by observers of South Asian society in the nineteenth century, and by historians until the middle of the present century. Cohn has noted that generalisations about the rise and initial impact of British rule are virtually impossible. He points out that the regions that were penetrated by British power over the course of these hundred years differed greatly in their social and political structures, and that British political and administrative policies

1. Karl Marx, "The Future Results of the British Rule in India", in David Fernbach (ed), *Karl Marx, Surveys from Exile: Political Writings* (London, 1973), vol 2, p.320.

varied from region to region and changed throughout the period.² More recently, Stokes has affirmed the essential complexity, rather than simplicity, of the relationship of the imperial State to social structure and change in South Asia at this time, and has pointed to the static nature of the tradition/modernity dichotomy still employed by some social scientists.³ Historians of Africa's colonial period have then argued that continuity of indigenous institutions, formations and values is just as important a feature of colonial history as change. Changes that do occur under colonial rule often have their roots in the pre-colonial period.⁴

The historiography of nineteenth-century Punjab is quite backward. The story of the Punjab's annexation by the British in 1849 - an act that brought to a close nearly a century of Punjabi freedom from direct imperial rule - is a highly eventful one. It was studded with diplomatic missions from the East India Company to the exotic court of the Sikh Maharajas, with intrigues and assassinations at that court, with bitter rebellions and great battles, with the clash of grand personalities and ideologies. Not surprisingly, it is a story that has been told many times before, both by British and by Punjabi historians. Cunningham's *History Of The Sikhs*⁵ and Hasrat's *Anglo-Sikh Relations, 1799-1849*⁶ are amongst the best of these accounts.

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2. Bernard S. Cohn, "The Initial British Impact on India: A Case Study of the Benares Region", in *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol xix, no 4 (Aug 1960), p.418.
 3. Eric Stokes, *The Peasant and the Raj: Studies in Agrarian Society and Peasant Rebellions in Colonial India* (Cambridge, 1978), chap 1.
 4. See, for example, J.F. Ade Ajayi, "The Continuity of African Institutions under Colonialism", in T.O. Ranger (ed), *Emerging Themes of African History* (Dar es Salaam, 1968), chap 17.
 5. J.D. Cunningham, *A History Of The Sikhs* (Delhi, reprint 1972).
 6. Bikrama Jit Hasrat, *Anglo-Sikh Relations 1799-1849: A Reappraisal of the Rise and Fall of the Sikhs* (Hoshiarpur, 1968).

But for the most part, the literature on this subject is dominated by the narrow, subjective concerns of either imperialist or nationalist scholarship, and little interest is shown in the deeper, longer-term historical processes that might have been at work.⁷ The question is not whether the British had a right to conquer the Punjab, but why and how they did conquer it when they did; not whether certain Punjabis betrayed the cause of freedom, but why they acted in the way they did, and whether this had any significant bearing on the British takeover.

Similarly, the story of the operation of a British administration in the Punjab in the two decades after 1849, of the changes wrought by that administration and of the adaptation of Punjabis to British rule, has been subjected to certain distortions. For a long time - until the British quit the subcontinent in 1947, in fact - colonial censorship prevented Punjabis from writing honestly about this period of their history. Among the few British studies that were critical of colonial policies (but not, it should be added, of the fact of colonial rule) was Thorburn's *The Punjab in Peace and War*.⁸ Otherwise, the historical literature on this period was dominated until 1947 by the biographies of the great colonial administrators - in particular, the biographies of the Lawrence brothers: Edwardes and Merivale's *Life of Sir Henry Lawrence*,⁹ Gibbon's *The Lawrences Of The Punjab*¹⁰ and Bosworth Smith's *Life of Lord Lawrence*.¹¹ As might be expected, these works tended to glorify the lives of their subjects. Implicit in this, moreover, was a glorification of British rule *per se*: all of these works drew a sharp distinction between the Sikh period (invariably characterised as having been chaotic and insecure) and the early British period (peaceful and increasingly prosperous); and all of them contrived to reduce the impact of British rule to an acceptable

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7. For example, one of the Punjab's most respected scholars of Sikh history, Sita Ram Kohli, has dismissed the political history of the Sikh court during the absolutely critical years 1840-49 as having "but melancholy interest for the students of Sikh history" : Kohli's forward to Lala Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-Ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar iv, pts i-iii (trans by V.S. Suri, Chandigarh 1973), p.xxi.
 8. S.S. Thorburn, *The Punjab in Peace and War* (Patiala, reprint 1970).
 9. Herbert B. Edwardes and Herman Merivale, *Life of Sir Henry Lawrence* (London, 1873).
 10. Frederick P. Gibbon, *The Lawrences Of The Punjab* (London, 1908).
 11. R. Bosworth Smith, *Life of Lord Lawrence* (London, 1901), 2 vols.

laundry-list of "reforms". Such was the stuff of officially-sponsored history in the colonial period.¹²

So powerful, however, was the principal image conveyed by this colonial literature - the image of a Punjab transformed and modernised after 1849 by a paternalistic British administration - that it left an indelible mark on the imagination of a whole generation of non-British historians in the post-independence period. Studies like Chhabra's *Social and Economic History of the Panjab (1849-1901)*,¹³ Mathur's *British Administration of Punjab (1849-75)*¹⁴ and van den Dungen's doctoral thesis, "Land Transfer, Social Change and Political Stability in the Punjab, 1849-1901"¹⁵, while they are much more objective and analytical in their treatment of the early impact of colonial rule than are the older, British accounts, still start from the premise that 1849 is the crucial date in modern Punjab history, and that the years after 1849 constitute a period of rapid and momentous British-sponsored change. Seldom in this comparatively recent literature is there more than a perfunctory discussion of the fundamental "structural" conditions of change (for example, landscape and human geography), or of fundamental continuities of Punjabi institutions and traditions. Consequently, the early colonial period retains something of the mythical character that it was vested with by the British historians. A satisfactory general history of nineteenth-century Punjab, it must be concluded, has yet to be written.

This thesis, a study of the political history of the Punjab between 1839 and 1872, has a fairly specific purpose: to explain the background,

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12. Tandon has recalled that as a schoolboy in the Punjab in the 1920s he had to read history textbooks that divided Indian history into three periods, Hindu, Muslim and British, and ended with a chapter titled "*Angrezi Raj ki Barkaten - Blessings of the English Raj*". "This was always a standard question in our examinations. There was a list of about a dozen blessings like law and order, irrigation canals, roads and bridges, schools, railways, telegraph and public health" : Prakash Tandon, *Punjabi Century, 1857-1947* (Berkeley, 1968), p.13.
13. G.S. Chhabra, *Social and Economic History of the Panjab (1849-1901)*, (Jullundur, no date).
14. Y.B. Mathur, *British Administration of Punjab (1849-75)*, (Delhi, no date).
15. P.H.M. van den Dungen, "Land Transfer, Social Change and Political Stability in the Punjab, 1849-1901" (unpub Ph.D. thesis, Australian National University, Canberra, 1966).

process and short-term consequences of the Punjab's transition from sovereign region to British imperial province - its return to empire. Nonetheless, it is to be hoped that the thesis will be a contribution to scholarly understanding of changes and continuities in South Asia more broadly during the nineteenth century. The questions that it seeks to answer could be applied - indeed, in certain cases, have been applied - to other regions in the subcontinent, and to the Afro-Asian world of nineteenth-century European imperialism generally. The wider implications of the findings of the thesis are taken up in the Conclusion.

If the Punjab's return to empire is to be subjected to the sort of reassessment that we have suggested is necessary, the first task will be to locate the starting-point of our analysis firmly within nineteenth-century Punjab itself. What kind of society was it? How was it structured, and what were its dynamics? These questions are investigated in Chapter One, through an inquiry into the historic impact of landscape and geographic position on patterns of population distribution, socio-political organisation and economic activity. Chapter Two takes the political analysis further, through an inquiry into the evolution, organisation and functioning of the Sikh kingdom. The concern here is with the nature of the regional political system before the advent of British rule. Who had power, and how was that power administered? How was power legitimised? What were Maharaja Ranjit Singh's relations with his chieftains? This last question is a most important one. It would seem that the Sikhs and the British both tried, in different ways, to keep the chieftains in check - yet, in the event, neither regime could operate effectively without their support. The chieftains of the Punjab are therefore a key social and political group: in the third to seventh chapters of this thesis an effort is made to follow their fortunes, both collectively and with respect to certain prominent families, through the vicissitudes of the five "rulership" periods into which we have divided the period between 1839 and 1872. This will enable us to answer what is one of the primary questions raised by a study like this: when an indigenous State is superseded by a colonial State that reorganises the administrative system, what happens to those groups and individuals who previously had a stake in the exercise of political power?

The following two chapters examine the politics of the Punjab's return to empire. Why did Sikh monarchical authority undergo decay between Ranjit Singh's death in 1839 and the outbreak of the first Anglo-Sikh war in the winter of 1845-46? Why did Anglo-Sikh diplomatic relations deteriorate during this period? Chapter Three looks at these questions, and suggests that the conventional answers - the notions that the crisis of the Sikh monarchy was due to a lack of aptitude on the part of Ranjit Singh's successors and that the war was a result of British territorial designs - are far from adequate. Imperial takeovers seem seldom to have been the straightforward and sudden conquests they are often portrayed as; and the historian need no longer feel like an apologist for empire if he detects an element of reluctance on the part of the imperialists or a degree of collaboration on the part of the indigenous political structure. Chapter Four investigates the gradual takeover of the Sikh kingdom by the British from early 1846 to early 1849: the transition from "informal" to "formal" imperial control. What were the methods and the stages by which, and the political levels at which, the British made this transition? How important was either Punjabi collaboration or Punjabi resistance as one of the determinants of the move by the British from one stage of control to the next?

The remaining three chapters follow the dual theme of British political strategies and Punjabi responses through the first two decades of direct British rule in the Punjab. How did the British set out to rule the newly-acquired province, and in what ways did their rule differ from that of the Sikhs? How did Punjabis adjust to the new circumstances, and to what extent were they able to influence British policies? What was the extent and nature of the British "impact" by the early 1870s? Chapter Five looks at what was perhaps among the boldest political steps ever taken by the British in South Asia: the construction of an authoritarian and paternalistic provincial administration that by-passed almost completely the chieftains and those lesser men of influence whom the Sikhs - for all the levelling tendencies of their rule - had still recognised as rightful, "traditional" intermediaries. Why did the British embark on such an experiment in political exclusivity and authoritarianism? How did the old elites of Punjabi society, and the subordinate classes, who were supposed to be the beneficiaries of this new style of government,

respond to this experiment? These questions are considered by way of an inquiry into the mentality and the work of the "Punjab School" between 1849 and 1856. Chapter Six, which examines the Punjab's role in the Great Rebellion of 1857-58, raises another important question concerning the post-annexation experiment by the British: had it weakened decisively the desire and the capacity of Punjabis, especially the Sikhs, to rise up against the British again? The answer, in short, would seem to be that it had not; and Chapter Six explains how the British were able, in the nick of time, to turn the Punjab around from the possibility of full-scale insurrection to general collaboration. Chapter Seven takes the political story through to 1872. It shows how in the 1860s the British sought to shore up their authority in the Punjab by building up the wealth, status and power of the old elites. It also shows, on the other hand, how the material condition of a large section of the Punjabi peasantry was beginning to undergo a marked deterioration by the time of the Kuka outbreak of 1872. Was there, in the decade after the Great Rebellion, a permanent retreat, at once deliberate and unintentional, from the "Punjab School's" earlier experiment? What had the Punjab's return to empire come to mean by the early 1870s?

Finally, there is the question of sources for the study of Punjab history between 1839 and 1872. This thesis draws heavily on three kinds of "primary" sources - all of them British sources. First, there are the files of the Political Department of the Government of India for the period 1830-65, held in the National Archives of India, New Delhi, and the various files held in the Punjab Secretariat Record Office, Lahore: the Lahore Residency Letters (1846-49), the Board of Administration records (1849-53), the Chief Commissionership records (1853-58) and the files of the General, Judicial, Political and Revenue Departments of the Punjab Government (the Lieutenant-Governorship) for the period 1858-68.¹⁶

16. The other major repository of British files in Lahore is the Board of Revenue (the office of the Financial Commissioner, Punjab). I applied for, but was not granted, permission to consult these files. Similarly, my application for permission to visit the headquarter offices of Lahore, Gujranwala and Sialkot Districts had not been "processed" by the time I was obliged to leave Pakistan.

Second, there are the official reports published by the Indian and Punjab Governments: census reports, annual administration reports, district land revenue settlement reports, and so forth. Third, there are the printed documents, including Parliamentary Papers, private papers and selections (both official and non-official) from the official records. Taken together, these three kinds of sources represent a considerable body of detailed information on conditions, events and trends in nineteenth-century Punjab.

The chief shortcoming of these British sources is, of course, the fact that they present an almost exclusively British viewpoint; and the danger is that, if he encounters a particular notion (for example, the notion that Sikh rule was extortionate in its policies towards the cultivators of the Punjab) sufficiently often, the historian may be seduced into mistaking prejudice for historical reality. Alternative sources for the period covered in this thesis are comparatively few, especially for the historian who has no knowledge of Persian.¹⁷ Even if language were not a barrier, however, the problem of imbalance would remain. It is not just that nineteenth-century rural Punjab was not a particularly literate society, but also that British censorship discouraged most of those Punjabis who were literate from committing their thoughts about British rule to paper.¹⁸ Non-British sources for local-level studies are by no means absent;¹⁹ but these are of little real use for

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17. The chief Persian sources for the Sikh period that have not been translated are the Khalsa Darbar Records, held in the Punjab State Archives, Patiala. It would seem that these records contain detailed information on Sikh land revenue administration and *jagir* grants: see Sita Ram Kohli, *Catalogue of Khalsa Darbar Records*, vol 2 (Lahore, 1927).
18. Barrier has observed: "The patriarchal rigidity that once characterized British administration in the Punjab - - - also deterred many prominent Punjabis from keeping private correspondence and family records - - - many Punjabi social, political, and religious leaders burned their correspondence from fear of British prosecution" : N. Gerald Barrier, *Punjab History In Printed British Documents : A Bibliographic Guide to Parliamentary Papers and Select, Nonserial Publications, 1843-1947* (Missouri, 1969), p.1.
19. For a useful introductory essay on these, see Tom G. Kessinger, "Sources For The Social And Economic History Of Rural Punjab", in W. Eric Gustafson and Kenneth W. Jones (eds), *Sources On Punjab History* (Delhi, 1975), pp. 9-39.

a regional, political study like this thesis. In the end, the regional historian of mid-nineteenth-century Punjab has no choice but to rely heavily on the British sources, and to supplement them with whatever (translated) Persian sources are available to him. Still, as this thesis hopefully shows, it should be possible to "read" the British sources with care, and to write a history of the early colonial period that does not do injustice to the people who were on the receiving end of colonial rule.

CHAPTER ONE

THE FRONTIER SOCIETY

Introduction

Our purpose in this first chapter is to investigate what may, for what of a better expression, be called the holistic constitution of Punjabi society in the early decades of the nineteenth century. We want to capture both the essential character of that society - the way of working that made it different from other societies - and the inner dynamic that had brought it to its existing state on the eve of British conquest and would carry it through its immediate colonial future.

Given the enormous complexity and diversity of "traditional" South Asian society generally, this may appear to be an all but impossible task. Certainly, when we begin to probe the structure of Punjabi society at this time we soon realise that we are dealing with not one but a number of formations - ethnic, status, religious, economic, and so forth - and that these overlap in a bewildering variety of ways. Then, perhaps, we are forced to retreat to the position adopted by van den Dungen: "There is no single uniform way in which society in this region can be described."¹ But if we enquire into the historical and geographical origins of the Punjab's social diversity, the difficulty of describing pre-colonial society in holistic terms diminishes markedly. By focusing on the historic impact of physiographic environment, we can, in fact, see the Punjab as a particular kind of society - a frontier society.

Now the term "frontier society" can mean two things. It can, in the first place, mean a society which is situated at the frontier of a dominant civilisation or at the boundary of a settled and developed territory. To a certain extent, this fits the Punjab, because the Punjab was located at the outer limits of both a north Indian civilisation and

1. P.H.M. van den Dungen, "Changes in Status and Occupation in Nineteenth-Century Panjab", in D.A. Low (ed.), *Soundings in Modern South Asia History* (London, 1968), p.61.

a British subcontinental empire. But it would be more accurate to note that the Punjab was situated at the place where the boundary of north Indian civilisation met and overlapped that of another dominant civilisation - a central Asian and overwhelmingly Islamic civilisation - and that the Punjab had always been a point of cultural transition, and a channel of human movement, from central Asia to northern India. From the perspective of historical geography, then, the Punjab is probably best characterised as a "route zone".² The second usage of "frontier society" refers to a general condition of society, to a condition of heterodoxy, restlessness, and lawlessness which physical distance from the centre of regularised civilisation both permits and encourages. It is primarily in this sense that we call the Punjab a frontier society.

In a way, there is nothing new in such a categorisation. It has long been recognised that the Punjab's location at the junction of the ancient trade and raid highways out of the nomadic plateaus of Central Asia towards the rich and fertile Gangetic plain had, until the arrival of the sea-borne European imperialists, made it the primary arena of conflict between contestants for political control of South Asia,³ and that this long exposure to political instability had bred in the Punjabi people a distinctive temperament of "flexibility, enterprise, and pragmatism."⁴ One has only to consider the fact that between the beginning of the eleventh century and the turn of the eighteenth century the Punjab was invaded on no fewer than seventy occasions and ruled by no fewer than a dozen, successive non-Punjabi dynasties,⁵ to appreciate the significance of the region's location.

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2. Cohn categorises the Punjab as a cultural and political "route" zone "transitional between the center around Peshawar or over the Hindu Kush [mountain range] into Afghanistan and cultural-political centres around Delhi and Agra" : Bernard S. Cohn, *India: the Social Anthropology of a Civilization* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1971), p.25.
 3. See, for example, Hugh Kennedy Trevaskis, *The Punjab of To-Day*, vol. 1, *An Economic Survey of the Punjab in Recent Years (1890-1925)*, (Lahore, 1931), p.1.
 4. Satish Saberwal, *Mobile Men: Limits to Social Change in Urban Punjab* (New Delhi, 1976), p.vii.
 5. Ikram Ali Malik (ed.), *A Book of Readings on the History of the Punjab, 1799-1947* (Lahore, 1970), pp. iii-xxviii; Leslie S. Saunders, *Report on the Revised Land Revenue Settlement of the Lahore District in the Lahore Division of the Panjab, 1865-69* (Lahore, 1873), (hereafter *SR Lahore 1865-69*), p.20.

Where our approach is somewhat novel is our wish to emphasise, in addition to this strategic consideration, the historical importance of the Punjab's internal physiography. Indeed, it is the general thrust of the argument in this chapter that the main features of pre-colonial Punjabi society - its vertical structural cleavages, its sub-territoriality, its attachment to honour-bound cultural values, its marked disposition towards militaristic and clannish thought and action, and so forth - cannot be explained without reference to what Stokes has aptly called "economic ecology".⁶ We shall argue that the uneven distribution of the Punjab's two great natural resources - fertile soils and water for irrigation - had worked against the economic, political, and cultural integration of the different social groups which had, over the course of many centuries, moved into the region and settled there. Between nomadic pastoralists and settled peasant cultivators, for example, the universal and ancient antagonism had persisted, fuelled as it was by competition for resource control and, not infrequently, by religious differences. Similarly, the ancient tension between town and countryside, which was rooted in mutually mistrustful and exploitative relations, had endured. These antagonisms and tensions were built into the structure of pre-colonial Punjabi society and were its primary moving force. When the authority of the overarching State collapsed or was weakened - as happened on several occasions during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries - these antagonisms and tensions degenerated quickly into open lawlessness and predatory violence. It was not for nothing, then, that the British often compared the Punjab to that other turbulent society that they knew so well: the Highlands of Scotland.

Region and subregion

What exactly do we mean by "the Punjab" and "central Punjab", and why have we chosen to make the latter the special focus of our study?

Since the sixteenth century, when it first came into common usage, the term "Punjab" has been employed to denote not one but several regions: a geographical region, a cultural region, and any of a number of political

6. Eric Stokes, *The Peasant and the Raj: Studies in Agrarian Society and Peasant Rebellions in Colonial India* (Cambridge, 1978), p.7.

or administrative regions.⁷ We shall employ it in the geographical sense. The actual word *panjab*, which is a Persian compound meaning "five waters", indicates the region - the "land of the five rivers", the watershed of the Indus river's five major tributaries: Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej.⁸ In other words the Punjab region consists of the five *doabs* ("two waters"), or inter-riverain tracts, that lie between the Indus and Sutlej rivers. The names of these *doabs* are Sind Sagar, Chaj, Rachna, Bari, and Jullundur (See Map 1). Their combined area is just under 52,000 square miles.⁹ This region of the five *doabs* has a certain cultural dimension too, since it is the homeland of the Punjabi language¹⁰ and of what are claimed to be distinctive, Punjabi customs, folklaws, and legends.¹¹

The subregion of "central Punjab" we define, somewhat more arbitrarily, as the central and upper portions of the Rachna and Bari Doabs - an area of about 12,000 square miles (or nearly one-quarter of the region). In the early years of British rule it had an administrative name - the Lahore Division, made up of five Districts: Amritsar, Gujranwala, Gurdaspur, Lahore, and Sialkot (See Map 2).¹² The importance to us of

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7. J.S. Grewal, *Miscellaneous Articles* (Amritsar, 1974), pp. 1-10.
 8. These rivers unite to form the Panjnad ("five streams") before joining the Indus: O.H.K. Spate, *India and Pakistan: A General and Regional Geography* (London, reprint 1960), p.464. Throughout this study the common spelling of Punjab (with "u") and other place names (eg "Jullundur") is retained.
 9. *Report on the Census of the Punjab, taken on 10th January 1868* (hereafter *Punjab Census 1868*), no author (Lahore, 1870), General Statement no 2.
 10. For a map showing prevalent languages, see *Census of India, 1891*, vol xix, *The Punjab and its Feudatories*, pt 1, *The Report on the Census* (hereafter *Punjab Census 1891*), by E.D. Maclagan (Calcutta, 1892), p.261.
 11. See H.A. Rose, *A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province* (Patiala, reprint 1970), 3 vols; R.C. Temple (ed.), *Panjab Notes and Queries* (Allahabad, no date), 4 vols; and R.C. Temple, *The Legends of the Punjab* (Patiala, reprint 1962-3), 3 vols.
 12. In 1859 a new Amritsar Division was formed out of Amritsar, Gurdaspur, and Sialkot Districts. In 1884 the Division was abolished, its three districts being restored to the Lahore Division.

the subregion of central Punjab is that it contains the region's two premier cities - Lahore, the traditional capital of the Punjab, and Amritsar, its commercial capital - in addition to a large number of the region's towns and villages; and it is the homeland of the Sikhs, the religious community which exercised political sway over the Punjab immediately prior to the British conquest.¹³ Most of the political events that shook nineteenth-century Punjab had their epicentres in central Punjab. We shall gain a better understanding of those events if we narrow down the focus of our study, wherever it is practical to do this, to developments in this important subregion.

Economic demography

Compared with the dramatic terrains - the Hindu Kush and Himalaya mountains especially - that surround the Punjab, the internal landscape is tediously uniform. The badland country of the Salt Range in the northern Chaj and Sind Sagar Doabs and the rolling sand dunes in the lower portion of the Sind Sagar Doab do provide some relief; but the remainder of the Punjab is simply a flat plain of sandy loams and clays. However, in the pre-colonial period, before the British transformed much of the landscape through their construction of mighty irrigation canals, there did exist considerable surface diversity:

The face of the country [wrote the authors of the first administration report on British Punjab] presents every variety from the most luxuriant cultivation to the most sandy deserts, and the wildest prairies of grass and brushwood. A traveller, passing through...the northern tracts, would imagine the Punjab to be the garden of India; again returning by the road which intersects the central tracts, he would suppose it to be a country not worth annexing.¹⁴

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13. We have excluded the Jullundur Doab from the subregion of central Punjab for two main reasons. First, under Sikh rule this Doab was relatively peripheral to, and independent of, the political centre. Second, the Doab came under British rule three years before the rest of the region. Until the formation of the (British) Punjab Province in 1859, political and administrative developments in this Doab (called the Trans-Sutlej Territories between 1846 and 1849, and the Trans-Sutlej Division after 1849) were generally several steps ahead of those in the remainder of the region.
14. "General Report upon the Administration of the Punjab Proper [the four western-most *doabs*] for the years 1849-50 and 1850-51" (hereafter "PAR 1849-51"): Foreign Miscellaneous (hereafter FM), no 356, para 4 (National Archives of India, New Delhi [hereafter NAI]).

The crucial factor behind this diversity was, of course, the differing availability across the region of water for either cultivation or natural vegetation.

This brings us to a most important sociological point: in pre-colonial Punjab the land - whatever its inherent fertility - was but minimally productive, and therefore incapable of supporting more than the thinnest population, without adequate and regular supplies of water from rainfall, rivers, wells, or canals. This is easily demonstrated. According to the provincial census of 1868 (the first remotely reliable enumeration), the population of the Punjab region was just under 9.5 millions, 4 millions (or 43 per cent) of whom lived in central Punjab.¹⁵ Table 1 : 1 shows the district-wise¹⁶ distribution of this population, together with cultivation percentages and annual rainfall figures, from which a direct correlation between annual rainfall on the one hand and population and cultivation densities on the other can be inferred.¹⁷ The rough pattern that emerges from these statistics is one of three basic hydrographic zones in early-nineteenth-century Punjab. These zones swept transversely across the *doabs*, parallel to the northwest to southeast inclination of the Himalayas, and were marked out by the 15 and 20 inch annual *isohyets*.¹⁸ As the distance from the Himalayas increased, the rainfall decreased and the depth of the watertable became greater. Hence the supply of water on the land, and with it the extent of cultivation and density of population, diminished.

15. *Punjab Census 1868*, General Statement no 2.

16. In this table, and in subsequent tables of a similar form, the districts are listed in the order in which they appear in the statements in the *Punjab Census 1868*. Only those districts of the Province lying within the five *doabs* are listed.

17. This correlation was noted by the authors of both the 1868 and 1881 census reports: *Punjab Census 1868*, p.10; Denzil Charles Jelf Ibbetson, *Report on the Census of the Panjab 1881* (Lahore, 1883), (hereafter *Punjab Census 1881*), p.35.

18. For a map showing *isohyets*, see Trevaskis, *The Punjab of To-Day*, vol 1, p.2.

TABLE 1 : 1 *Annual rainfall, area, percentage of cultivation, population and population density by districts for region and subregion*

District	Average annual rainfall in inches*	Area in square miles	Percentage of cultivation on total area	Population	Population per square mile
Jullundur	30.4	1,333	79.7	794,764	596
Hoshiarpur	36.4	2,086	56.3	938,890	450
Amritsar)	25.9	2,036	70.5	1,083,514	532
Sialkot) sub-region	38.8	1,970	64.3	1,005,004	510
Gurdaspur)	30.1	1,341	72.3	655,362	489
Lahore)	17.0	3,624	42.1	789,666	218
Gujranwala)	26.9	2,657	35.3	550,576	207
Rawalpindi	33.3	6,216	24.1	711,256	114
Jhelum	21.7	3,910	30.5	500,988	128
Gujrat	27.4	1,900	51.6	616,347	324
Shahpur	13.6	4,699	13.6	368,796	78
Multan	6.6	5,882	16.5	471,563	80
Jhang	10.1	5,712	11.1	348,027	61
Montgomery	9.6	5,577	15.0	359,437	64
Muzaffargarh	6.6	3,022	18.8	295,547	98

Source: *Punjab Census 1868*, General Statement no 2.

* *Punjab Census 1881*, Abstract no 14, p.35.

These three hydrographic zones may be identified as the moist zone (basically Jullundur, Hoshiarpur, Amritsar, Sialkot, and Gurdaspur Districts) which received more than 20 inches of rain each year, and which in 1868 had a cultivation rating of more than 50 per cent and a population density of above 400 persons per square mile; the marginal zone (basically Lahore, Gujranwala, Rawalpindi, Jhelum, and Gujrat Districts) which received between 15 and 20 inches of rain, and which had a cultivation rating of between 20 and 50 per cent and a population density of between 100 and 400 persons per square mile; and the arid zone (basically Shahpur, Multan, Jhang, Montgomery, and Muzaffargarh Districts) which had a cultivation rating of below 20 per cent and a population density of below 100 persons per square mile. Thus early-nineteenth-century Punjab consisted of an eastern and central zone of agricultural security and a western zone of agricultural insecurity, between which lay a zone of transition. Let us briefly describe these three zones.

The moist zone was bounded on the north by a narrow strip of submontane country which, because of its proximity to the Himalayas, received as much as 38 inches of rain each year.¹⁹ Most of this rain was received during the monsoon season (late June to early September), at which time the rivers often broke their banks, inundating the surrounding countryside with silt-laden floodwaters known as *sailab*.²⁰ Throughout the rainless months the soil was kept moist by the countless mountain streams that intersected the countryside and by wells which, because the watertable lay close to the surface, were cheap to build and easy to work. Elsewhere in the moist zone, where the rainfall was less and the rivers generally kept within their banks during the monsoon (the exception was the Beas, whose low left bank periodically supplied the Jullundur Doab with fertilisations of *sailab* floodwaters), artificial irrigation was more important. The upper Bari Doab was watered by the Shah Nuhr Canal.²¹

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19. E.A. Prinsep, *Report on the Revised Settlement of the Sealkote District (1863) of the Amritsar Division* (Lahore, 1865), (hereafter *SR Sialkot 1863*), pp.7-8.
20. John Lawrence's introduction to summary land revenue settlement reports, 31 March 1848: Foreign Secret Consultations (hereafter FSC), 28 April 1848, nos 57-66 (NAI).
21. For a report on this canal, which supplied water to the Shalamar gardens at Lahore and the Har Mandar Sahib ("Golden Temple") at Amritsar, see Major R. Napier, "Report on the Husli Canal", 20 Feb 1848: FSC, 28 April 1848, nos 57-66 (NAI).

And the watertable was still sufficiently high to make irrigation from wells both cheap and easy. In the 1840s the countryside about Batala, in the Gurdaspur District, was described as "the land of wells".²² With ample supplies of water and level, arable soils, the moist zone offered (as the statistics provided in Table 1:1 indicate) the most favourable conditions for intensive agriculture in early-nineteenth-century Punjab. In the subregion of central Punjab the moist zone had an apt local name - the Des, or cultivated and inhabited country.²³

In the marginal zone, which separated the moist zone from the arid zone, conditions were somewhat different. The riverbanks here were too steep to permit the construction of canals into the interiors of the *doabs* (thus were the British-built canals, which ran down the centres of the *doabs*, such mammoth engineering feats). Wells were no easy alternative: the watertable here had fallen to 40 or 60 feet; and a fifty-foot well required the labour of sixteen men and sixteen bullocks, day and night, to irrigate about 26 acres.²⁴ Yet without wells the land was hardly productive. Thus the country about Tarn Taran, in the south of the Amritsar district, was "entirely dependent on well irrigation".²⁵ In the vicinity of Lahore city there were, in the 1830s, about twelve operative wells to every village.²⁶ A failure of the rains (which was

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22. Edward Lake's report on the summary settlement of the upper Bari Doab, 25 Dec 1847: *ibid.*
23. R.H. Davies, *Report on the Revised Settlement of the Gurdaspur District in the Amritsar Division* (submitted 1856, published Lahore, 1871), (hereafter *SR Gurdaspur 1856*), p.1; *Gujranwala District Gazetteer 1883-84* (hereafter *District Gazetteer* is abbreviated to *DG*), pp.2-3; J.H. Morris, *Report on the Revised Settlement of the Goojranwala District in the Lahore Division* (effected 1856, submitted and published Lahore, 1860), (hereafter *SR Gujranwala 1856*), p.21; R.H. Davies, R.E. Egerton, R. Temple and J.H. Morris, *Report on the Revised Settlement of the Lahore District in the Lahore Division* (submitted 1858, published Lahore, 1860), (hereafter *SR Lahore 1858*), pp.3, 17-19; *SR Sialkot 1863*, pp.7-8.
24. n 21 above.
25. R.H. Davies and W. Blyth, *Report on the Revised Settlement of Umritsur, Sowrian and Turun Taran Pergunnahs of the Umritsur District* (Lahore, 1856), (hereafter *SR Amritsar 1856*), p.22.
26. Major R. Leech, "Table showing the fertility and produce of the land in the vicinity of Amritsar and Lahore in 1837" : FSC, 18 Nov 1843, no 17 (NAI).

fairly common in the marginal zone) spelt calamity for these villages, for then all but the deepest wells dried up, the crops were threatened, and the spectre of famine haunted the land. In 1783, when there had been no rain for five consecutive harvests, the people had been forced to eat leaves and bark and even, in some extreme cases, resort to cannibalism.²⁷ Except in the Hithar, or damp lowlands of the riverbeds, agriculture was thus a fairly precarious enterprise in the marginal zone. And once again the local place names reflect conditions accurately. The area to the south of Lahore city was known as the Nakka, or border country,²⁸ while the triangular piece of *doab* upland between the cities of Lahore, Amritsar, and Kasur was known as the Manjha, or middle country.²⁹

In the arid zone, which covered more than half of the Punjab region, the annual rainfall was below 15 inches - in places it was as little as 5 inches. Moreover, the depth of the watertable, between 80 and 100 feet, virtually prohibited the construction of wells. Cultivation thus shrank back to the occasional oasis, to the damp riverbeds, and to a narrow strip of well land along the riverbanks. The interior of each *doab* was left a barren and only sparsely inhabited wilderness. The greater portion of the Sind Sagar Doab was a sand desert known as the Thal. The waterless central portions of the lower Rachna and Bari Doabs were known as the Bar,³⁰ described in the middle of the century as a "sad and strange scene" of "interminable wastes, overgrown with grass and bushes, scantily threaded by sheep-walks and the foot-prints of cattle."³¹ More desolate still was the Bar at the southern end of the Bari Doab. The following description comes from the British-compiled Multan District Gazetteer of 1883-84:

27. *SR Lahore 1865-69*, pp.36-8; W.G. Waterfield, *Report on the Second Regular Settlement of the Gujrat District, Panjab* (Lahore, 1874), (hereafter *SR Gujrat 1874*), p.173.

28. *Lahore DG 1883-84*, p.2; J.S. Grewal and Indu Banga (trans and eds), *Early Nineteenth Century Panjab: From Ganesh Das's "Chār Bāgh-i-Panjab"* (Amritsar, 1975), p.132.

29. *Ibid*; *SR Amritsar 1856*, pp. 1, 21, 80; *SR Lahore 1858*, p.17.

30. *SR Gujranwala 1856*, p.21.

31. "PAR 1849-51" : FM, no 356, paras 5-6 (NAI).

It is utterly without cultivation, quite destitute of anything which can be called grass, and its only trees are a few stunted bushes of the inferior class. It is simply a vast plain of hard clay (*pat*) unrelieved by any signs of human life as far as the eye can reach.³²

However, it is worth pointing out that the southern Bar had not always been such a desolate place; in early medieval times the extent of cultivation there was probably commensurate to that in the moist zone.³³ Exactly what caused such a dramatic change in the Bar's fortune is not altogether clear, but it does seem that about eight or nine centuries ago the Punjab's rivers suddenly shifted course towards the west, leaving the cultivated lands literally high and dry.³⁴ The resultant impoverishment was later exacerbated by the nomadic invasions of the Punjab and by the great political struggle and social displacement that accompanied the collapse of the Mughal empire in the eighteenth century and the emergence of Sikh power in the region.

Social organisation

The essential principle of social organisation in nineteenth-century Punjab (as in most pre-industrial societies) was kinship rather than class. This does not prohibit a general class analysis of nineteenth-century Punjab - the division of the agrarian population into general categories like landlords, peasant proprietors, and tenant cultivators, for example. But it is important to remember that in the full Marxian sense, classes are to be defined in terms of their different relationships to the production process, and that these relationships cannot be understood except within the context of an analysis of the State, in whose structure of power and juridical institutions all such relationships are deeply embedded. We shall therefore postpone any class analysis until the next chapter, wherein an analysis of the Sikh State will be undertaken.

32. *Multan DG 1883-84*, p.5.

33. See the District Gazetteers and Settlement Reports of Multan, Muzaffargarh, Gujranwala, and Lahore Districts.

34. *Multan DG 1883-84*, p.7; *SR Lahore 1858*, pp.8-9, 18. For a map showing ancient river courses, see K.N. Dikshit, "Exploration along the Right Bank of River Sutlej in Punjab", in *Journal of Indian History*, vol XLV, pt 111, Aug 1967, facing p.564.

The broad kinship units in the Punjab were the caste and the tribe. Let us define these units, as Weberian "ideal types". The caste (*zat*) is an endogamous social group which is based upon occupation and is ranked within a hierarchical caste system on the basis of ritual duties and prohibitions. It is divided into a number of exogamous descent groups (*gots*) arranged into a sort of lesser status hierarchy. Each *got* is further divided into a number of genealogically "shallow" lineage groups consisting of a small number of closely related families. Social relationships within the lineage group, and occasionally within the *got*, are channelled through an institution called the *biradari* (fraternity) which is made up of adult males. The whole caste system is a highly fluid one, for changes in the political or economic standing of the individual *got* or *zat* can result in elevation (and, of course, degradation) on the hierarchical scale - a process which is generally termed *sanskritisisation*.³⁵

The tribe (also *zat*), on the other hand, is a more permanent and a less ritualistically directed social group; it might follow a particular occupation and entertain notions of social defilement, but its corporate identity is based primarily upon community of blood and the corollaries of that - common customs, common language or dialect, common habitat, and an internal political structure headed (usually) by a paramount chieftain.³⁶ In the Punjab the tribe was often divided into clans (also *gots*) which tended, once they had achieved political and economic power in their own right, to become tribes. The tribal and clannic equivalent of the *biradari* was a political assembly called the *jirgah*.³⁷

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35. M.N. Srinivas, "The Cohesive Role of Sanskritization", in Philip Mason (ed), *India and Ceylon: Unity and Diversity* (London, 1967), pp.67-82.
36. Maurice Godelier, *Perspectives in Marxist Anthropology* (Cambridge, 1977), chap 3.
37. *Chiefs and Families of Note in the Punjab: A Revised Edition of "The Punjab Chiefs" by Sir Lepel H. Griffin, K.C.S.I., of "Chiefs and Families of Note in the Punjab" by Colonel Charles Francis Massy, Indian Staff Corps, and of "Chiefs and Families of Note in the Punjab" by Major W.L. Conran, Indian Army, and Mr H.D. Craik, Indian Civil Service; Revised and corrected up to July 1, 1939, under the orders of the Punjab Government by G.L. Chopra (hereafter Griffin et al, Chiefs and Families), (Lahore, rev edn 1940), vol 2, pp.256, 280.*

The actual predominance of either caste or tribe as the unit of social organisation in nineteenth-century Punjab was closely connected to the economic ecology of the region and to its communal demography. On this last point we should note that there were three great religions in the Punjab - Islam, Hinduism, and Sikhism. In 1868 Muslims numbered nearly 6 millions (63 per cent of the total population); in the subregion they numbered 2.2 millions (55 per cent). Hindus numbered just over 2 millions (in the subregion, 880,000) and made up 22 percent of the population in both region and subregion. Sikhs were everywhere the minority community. Their total strength in the region was less than 800,000 (8 per cent); in the subregion - their traditional homeland - they numbered just over 511,000 (less than 13 per cent).³⁸

Table 1:2 sets out the district-wise division of the population into the three religious communities. From this it will be seen that the meridian of Lahore city, which bisects the subregion of central Punjab, represented the dividing line between the predominance of Islam and the increasing numerical strength, eastwards of this meridian, of Hinduism. This is an important point in that it indicates the differing extent to which areas of the population had been penetrated by those Brahmanical traditions which are so necessary for the evolution and maintenance of a caste system.

In the arid western and southern districts, where nomadic pastoralism was the main economic activity, and where the influence of Islam - with its normative egalitarianism - was greatest, the tribe in something like its pure form was predominant. For example, in the Jhelum and Rawalpindi Districts in the northern portion of the Sind Sagar Doab the blood-proud and once politically dominant Janjuahs and Gakkhars occupied unbroken ancestral tracts called *ta'aluqas* and preserved the ceremonial custom of investing one clan head with the title of paramount chieftain (Sultan or Raja).³⁹ In the marginal zone and in the central and eastern districts of the moist zone, where nomadic

38. The figures are from *Punjab Census 1868*, General Statement no 7.

39. n 37 above.

TABLE 1 : 2 *Distribution of religious communities as percentages of total population by districts for region and subregion*

Percentage of total population of

District	Muslims	Hindus	Sikhs	Others	Total
Jullundur	45.09	40.06	14.74	0.11	100
Hoshiarpur	33.86	44.25	8.46	13.43	100
Amritsar)	46.36	17.66	24.24	11.74	100
Sialkot)	59.90	21.76	5.00	13.34	100
Gurdaspur) ^{sub}	45.32	38.12	6.10	10.46	100
Lahore) _{region}	59.54	14.73	15.10	10.63	100
Gujranwala)	64.94	18.91	7.07	9.08	100
Rawalpindi	87.33	8.54	3.42	0.71	100
Jhelum	86.66	9.80	2.77	0.77	100
Gujrat	87.24	8.63	3.35	0.78	100
Shahpur	82.84	14.54	0.85	1.78	100
Multan	76.38	18.45	0.19	4.98	100
Jhang	77.81	16.46	0.86	4.87	100
Montgomery	77.15	19.42	3.42	0.01	100
Muzaffargarh	84.54	12.43	0.87	2.16	100

SOURCE: *Punjab Census 1868, General Statement no 7.*

pastoralism gave way to peasant cultivation, and where the influence of Hinduism began to make itself felt, the clan (*got* or *moore*) occupying a smaller territorial section called the *tappa* was predominant.⁴⁰ The clan was usually headed by a lesser chieftain called the *muqaddam* or *chaudhari*. In many cases the clan took its name from the progenitor who, with his immediate kinsmen, had broken away from the tribe to found a new colony in the wasteland. The number of new Sikh and Hindu clans had burgeoned since the mid-eighteenth century, partly on account of the increased political standing of these communities since the collapse of Mughal authority, and partly on account of the encouragement given by the Sikh State to the colonisation of the wastelands in the vicinity of the capital. In the western districts, on the other hand, few new clans had been formed, partly because the general aridity presented limited opportunities for agricultural expansion, and partly because the Sikh State had not looked with favour upon the desire of intermediate Muslim landowners to consolidate their influence at the local level.⁴¹ In the eastern districts of the Punjab the clan increasingly adopted the rigid restrictions of caste. This led Sir Denzil Ibbetson, who was the original ethnographer of the Punjab, to observe in 1881 that the Punjab Province "affords a peculiarly complete series of stages between the purely tribal organisation - - - of the [northwest] frontier hills and the [almost purely caste organisation of the] village communities of the Jamna districts."⁴²

Status and power

Given this west to east gradation from the predominance of tribe to that of caste, it might be thought impossible to detect any strict

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40. See *Maps Connected with the Report on the Revision of the Land Revenue Settlement of the Gujranwala District, 1866-67*, and *Maps Connected with - - - Lahore District, 1865-69* for maps of these districts showing the tracts occupied by the agricultural tribes and clans.
41. H. Mackenzie, *Report on the Revised Settlement of the Goojerat District in the Rawul Pindie Division* (Lahore, 1861), (hereafter *SR Gujrat 1861*), p.29.
42. *Panjab Castes: Being a reprint of the chapter on "The Races, Castes and Tribes of the People" in the Report on the Census of the Panjab [1881] published in 1883 by the late Sir Denzil Ibbetson, K.C.S.I.* (Patiala, reprint 1970), (hereafter Ibbetson, *Panjab Castes*), p.22.

hierarchical pattern to nineteenth-century Punjabi society. At least that is the burden of van den Dungen's assessment.⁴³ But Ibbetson would not have agreed with this and nor does McLeod. Ibbetson felt that, whatever the ideological and structural differences between pure caste and pure tribe may have been, *zat* membership was, in the final analysis, tantamount to membership of broad, socially and politically ranked occupational groups. He therefore divided - in the manner of a crude class analysis - the various castes and tribes of the Punjab into three great groups: the landowning and agricultural; the professional and mercantile; and the vagrant, menial, and artisan. The general classification of the populations of both region and subregion in 1881 according to these three groups is given in Table 1:3.

This is not an especially precise classification, for there were (as Ibbetson was quick to acknowledge) numerous instances of individual *gots* following occupations that were quite different from those according to which their parent *zats* were classified. Nevertheless, it is a useful classification in that it underscores McLeod's pertinent observation that Panjabi society consists of two parallel status hierarchies - one rural (Ibbertson's landowning and agricultural group) and the other urban (the professional and mercantile group) - across the bases of which stretch the low-status and underprivileged classes (the vagrant, menial, and artisan group).⁴⁴

Looking at the statistics provided in Table 1:3, we see that the landowning and agricultural group was the largest group in both region and subregion. Members of the professional and mercantile group - mainly, but not exclusively, urban dwellers - represented slightly less than one-fifth of the population. Roughly one-third of the region's population, and slightly more of the subregion's, fell into the underprivileged group.

43. van den Dungen, "Changes in Status and Occupation", in Low (ed), *Soundings*, p.63.

44. W.H. McLeod, *The Evolution of the Sikh Community: Five Essays* (Delhi, 1975), p.103.

TABLE 1:3 *General distribution of castes and tribes as percentages of total population for region and subregion*

Caste or tribe	Region	Subregion
<i>Landowning and agricultural</i>		
Biloch, Pathan, etc	3.1	0.8
Jat	18.4	22.1
Rajput, etc	9.8	6.0
Minor dominant tribes (Gakkhars, Awans, Kharrals, etc.)	7.1	2.4
Minor agricultural tribes (Sainis, Arains, Ahirs etc.)	7.3	7.9
Foreign races (Sheikh, Mughals, Turks, etc.)	2.2	1.6
<i>Total</i>	47.9	40.8
<i>Professional and mercantile</i>		
Brahmans, etc.	2.7	3.7
Sayyids, etc.	1.6	1.1
Faqirs	1.0	1.3
Minor professional castes (Nais, Mirasis, Jogis, etc.)	3.3	3.7
Mercantile castes (Aroras, Khattris, Banyas, etc.)	9.4	7.6
Miscellaneous castes (Kashmiris, etc.)	1.3	1.8
<i>Total</i>	19.3	19.2
<i>Vagrant, menial, and artisan</i>		
Vagrant and scavenger castes	6.9	10.4
Leather-workers	4.6	3.2
Weavers	4.2	4.1
Watermen, cooks, etc.	3.6	4.5
Blacksmiths, carpenters, etc.	4.6	5.9
Potters	2.7	3.2
Washermen, dyers, etc.	1.8	1.9
Oilmen	1.8	2.3
Other artisans and hill menials	2.0	3.8
<i>Total</i>	32.2	39.3
<i>Not given</i>	0.6	0.7
Total	100	100

Source: Ibbetson, *Panjab Castes*, Abstract no 64, pp.28-9.

But when we look at these statistics district by district, we see, once again, the influence of economic ecology. In the arid western and southern districts the rural status hierarchy was a relatively large one. This is to be explained by the fact that nomadic pastoralism did not produce sufficient surplus wealth to sustain a large urban population, and that the relative freedom from occupational restraint permitted by Islam meant that menial and artisan tasks were often performed by members of the landowning and agricultural tribes. Thus in both Rawalpindi and Muzaffargarh Districts the landowning and agricultural group accounted for about 60 per cent, the professional and mercantile group for about 17 per cent, and the vagrant, menial, and artisan group for about 23 per cent of the population.⁴⁵ But in the moist central and eastern districts the rural status hierarchy was a considerably smaller one, a fact which is to be explained by the class differentiation permitted by intensive agricultural production and the occupational restrictions imposed by Hinduism. In Amritsar District, for example, the landowning and agricultural group accounted for only 36 per cent of the population, whereas the professional and mercantile group and the vagrant, menial, and artisan group accounted for 22 per cent and 42 per cent respectively.⁴⁶

Which tribes and castes occupied the rural and urban status hierarchies? In the western districts the apex of the rural hierarchy was occupied by frontier tribes such as the Biloch and Pathan. Beneath them were minor dominant tribes (those whose dominance was limited spatially or was a thing of the past) like the Awan, Gakkhar and Kharral, and minor agricultural tribes (those who had never enjoyed dominance) like the market-gardening Arain. The urban hierarchy was headed by Hindu mercantile castes like the Khatri and Arora (though it should be noted that in the southwest the Arora were often an agricultural caste as well).

In the central and eastern districts Jats and Rajputs (upon whom more in a moment) occupied the apex of the rural status hierarchy, with minor dominant tribes like the Dogra and Gujar, and minor agricultural tribes

45. Ibbetson, *Panjab Castes*, Abstract no 64, pp.28-9.

46. *Ibid.*

like the Arain, Kamboh, and Saini beneath. Khattris and Aroras still dominated the urban hierarchy, but with a much larger stratum of professional castes - in particular Brahmans - beneath them. In the sub-hierarchical group specialised castes (oilmen, blacksmiths, carpenters, and leather-workers) were more important than they were in the western districts.⁴⁷

The actual physiographic location of the particular landowning and agricultural tribes and clans is best illustrated by a north to south slice through the subregion of central Punjab. In the moist zone Rajputs occupied the submontane frontier and - with Gujars - the northern riverbanks. Labanas occupied the southern riverbanks. The *doab* uplands in the moist zone were held by Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh Jats.⁴⁸ In the marginal zone market-gardening Arains occupied the banks of the Ravi, while Muslim Dogras and Hindu Kambohs occupied the banks of the Sutlej. Jat clans such as the Aulak, Bhular, Dhariwal, Dhillon, Gil, Man, Sidhu, Sindhu, and Virk - all of them Sikh clans - occupied distinct bands of upland running across the *doabs*. Towards the south of the marginal zone semi-pastoral Muslim clans of the Rajput and Jat tribes, such as the Bhatti, Chatha, and Tarar, and the Bhagsinke nomads were to be found.⁴⁹ In the arid zone the banks of the Sutlej were held by Muslim Rajput clans like the Joya and Wattu, the banks of the Ravi by the Kharral, Khatia, Fattiana, Murdana, and Wahniwal, and the banks of the Chenab by the Kachala, Tahim, and Taragar. These clans were almost exclusively pastoral. Small colonies of Khattris, Pathans, and Sayyids were located about Multan city. The southern Bar, insofar as it was inhabited, was the home of the pastoral Langrial.⁵⁰

How are we to explain this pattern? To the extent that cultivating groups occupied the moist zone and the northern portion of the marginal zone, while pastoral groups occupied the southern portion of the marginal

47. *Ibid.*

48. *SR Gurdaspur 1856*, pp. 1, 44-5.

49. *SR Amritsar 1856*, pp. 1, 30, 80; *SR Lahore 1858*, pp.9-10; *Lahore DG 1883-84*, p.65; *Gujranwala DG 1883-84*, pp.20-3.

50. *Gujranwala DG 1883-84*, pp. 20-36; *Montgomery DG 1883-84*, pp.60-2; *Multan DG 1883-84*, p.50.

zone and the greater part of the arid zone, the pattern is self-explanatory. But why Rajputs at the submontane border, Arains and Gujars along the northern riverbanks, and Jats in the centres of the northern *doabs* when all were cultivating tribes? The answer has to do with the political history of the most important of these tribes - the Jat.

British officers in the nineteenth century, Ibbetson included, doubted whether there was much in the way of a real distinction between Jats and Rajputs. Rajputs claimed the ancient warrior (*Kshatriya*) status, whereas Jats did not. Rajputs spurned widow remarriage and the use of female labour in the fields, whereas Jats did not. Otherwise, Jats and Rajputs seemed to be the same - racially, they appeared to be of the same stock; and there were many Jat and Rajput *gots* that had the same name.⁵¹ Perhaps Jats were only fallen Rajputs - fallen because they had transgressed the social restrictions to which Rajputs still adhered. This was a very popular idea amongst British colonial officers, who were inordinately fond of patronising the Jat as a manly, stalwart, and practical sort of people.

Recently Habib put forward a new and less romantic theory. Jats, he suggested, may be traced to a pastoral people of the same name who migrated northwards from Sind, via Multan, into central Punjab sometime between the seventh and eleventh centuries. Using an irrigation system based upon the wooden Persian wheel, these people opened up the dry central portions of the *doabs* to settled cultivation. While these Jats gradually abandoned their old pastoral habits in favour of peasant cultivation, they still retained their pastoral traditions - notably their militarism - and their pastoral social status.⁵² It is quite possible that the movement of these people from Multan into central Punjab was prompted by the westward shift of the rivers that we referred to earlier -

51. Ibbetson, *Panjab Castes*, Abstract no 78, p.133.

52. Irfan Habib, "Jatts of Punjab and Sind", in Harbans Singh and N. Gerald Barrier (eds), *Essays in Honour of Dr Ganda Singh* (Patiala, 1976), pp. 92-103.

on the lower Indus, in the vicinity of Multan city, the term Jat still denoted a herdsman or camel grazier in the nineteenth century, whereas elsewhere in the Punjab it denoted a landowning cultivator.

Building on Habib's thesis, McLeod has shown how by the middle of the seventeenth century Jat peasants had replaced urban Khattris as the primary social component of the Sikh community, with the result that the ideology and institutions of Sikhism came to be profoundly influenced by Jat cultural and militaristic traditions.⁵³ By this time the Jats of central Punjab occupied the position of landowning and revenue-paying elite peasants. The regional information provided in the *Ain-i-Akbari* (c.1595) points to a concentration of Jat *zamindars* in the Mughal province (*suba*) of Lahore.⁵⁴

Like so many other rural elites in the subcontinent, the Jats of central Punjab seized the opportunity provided by the collapse of Mughal authority in the eighteenth century to free themselves from the overlordship of the empire's ruling class.⁵⁵ In the Punjab at this time the ruling class was represented, in the main, by Rajput landlords and revenue intermediaries. The rise of Sikh power in the Punjab (which we shall examine more closely in the next chapter) began with the process whereby Jats - led by Sikh Jats from the Manjha in the Bari Doab - first drove the Rajputs back to either the riverbanks or the submontane border⁵⁶ and

53. McLeod, *Evolution of the Sikh Community*, pp.9-12.

54. Abul Fazl' Allami, *Ain-i-Akbari* (trans by H. Blochmann, Calcutta, 1891), vol 2, pp.310-33. It should be noted that the term *zamindar* is used here as it occurs in the literature on Mughal India - to denote a peasant who possessed special rights in the land and a State-recognised responsibility for the collection and transmission of the revenue - and not in the sense common in the Punjab where it means "cultivator" generally. We shall elaborate this distinction - between "intermediary" and "primary" *zamindars* - in the next chapter.

55. Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System of Mughal India* (Bombay, 1963), pp.318-51.

56. "It is somewhat curious and interesting to observe how closely the general boundary between the Rajput and Jat country follows that between the submontane and plain zones" : L.W. Dane, *Final Report on the Revised Settlement of the Gurdaspur District, 1892* (Lahore, 1892), (hereafter *SR Gurdaspur 1891*), pp.7-8.

then pushed the Muslim pastoral tribes back to the Bar, assuming virtually complete control of the fertile Des for themselves.⁵⁷

In the early-nineteenth century the legacy of this protracted struggle for land control lingered on. Land, it should be noted, was essentially a possession held by virtue of the force at the command of the tribe or clan. Thus in Montgomery District, where the social superiority of the pastoral clans *vis-a-vis* the cultivating clans had a clear expression,⁵⁸ the cultivators used to construct little towers, in which a couple of matchlocks were kept, over their wells.⁵⁹ And within pastoral society itself, inter-clan conflict over access to grazing grounds or waterholes was fairly frequent.⁶⁰

The essentially political nature of land control can be seen in the structure of the village, which was invariably an integral part of a larger territorial and clannish power structure. Most villages were at least partially fortified and extremely suspicious of outsiders. Along the turbulent northwestern frontier the village (*abadi*) was a stronghold of the fighting and landlord tribes, and was surrounded by a string of hamlets (*dhoks*) inhabited by tenant cultivators. The area controlled by the central *abadi* could be very large - in the trans-Indus Attock

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57. For an account of the struggle between Hindu and Sikh Jat cultivators and Muslim pastoralists in the Hafizabad *tahsil* (administrative subdivision) of the Gujranwala District, see *Gujranwala DG 1883-84*, p.21.
58. The Baghelas, Fattianas, Kharrals, Khatias, Murdanas, and Wahniwals, who held land along the banks of the Ravi and grazed their herds on the Bari and Rachna Doabs, called themselves "Great Ravi"; all the cultivating clans living within their territory were called "Nikki (small) Ravi" and recognised the former as social superiors: *Montgomery DG 1883-84*, pp.60-2. It is interesting to note, in this context, that in the northwestern districts the agricultural tribes which claimed Rajput status and therefore often avoided cultivating their own lands themselves (eg the Gakkhar and Janjuah) called themselves "Sahu" (gentle), or well-born, as opposed to *zamindar*, which implied low-birth: Rose, *Glossary of Tribes and Castes*, vol III, p.345.
59. *Montgomery DG 1883-84*, p.36.
60. G. Ouseley and W.G. Davies, *Report on the Revised Settlement of the Shahpooor District in the Rawulpindee Division, 1866* (Lahore, 1866), (hereafter *SR Shahpur 1866*), pp.62-3.

District it could vary between 80 and 140 square miles, and it could include between fifteen and twenty *dhoks*.⁶¹ Further east, where agricultural security, denser population, and elements of the caste system combined to produce a more complex rural society, the village (*mauza*) was both smaller⁶² and more internally structured along the lines of land control. The village brotherhood - the landowning families - lived together at the centre of the village, while *kamins* (artisans and menials) and what Gandhi was to call *harijans* ("untouchable" castes) resided in progressively more distant, outer sections. Furthermore, these truly peasant villages were often divided into sections (*tarafs*, *pattis*, or *panas*) and subsections (*thoks* or *thulas*) along the lines of religion and *got* or sub-*got* status.⁶³

One of the more important functional consequences of the political nature of land control was the pivotal position in society of certain elite groups. The actual position of these rural elites varied considerably over the region. To a large extent, their power depended upon the local power of the overarching State. In the arid western and southern districts, where State power was necessarily weakest, the position of the tribal chieftains and other local notables was strong and patriarchal: they were acknowledged, from both above and below, as the "natural" leaders of society and defenders of its interests. In the central and eastern districts, on the other hand, where tribal association had been fragmented by the continuous process of colonisation of the fertile wastes, and where peasant cultivation produced a very definite and valuable surplus, the position of the elites was both more patrimonial and more prebendal: as "influential" landholders, they were widely recruited by the State to act as administrative intermediaries of a proto-bureaucratic type.

We shall investigate the social composition of these rural elite groups and their operation within a regional political system in greater

61. *Attock DG 1883-84*, p.47.

62. For example, in Sialkot District the average size of the village was only 450 acres with only 270 inhabitants: *SR Sialkot 1863*, p.38.

63. Trevaskis, *The Punjab of To-Day*, vol 1, p.12.

detail in the next chapter. Here we may simply note that the rural elites provided the linkage between local-level political systems, which were comprised of communities united by the tie of kinship and a common approach to the problem of survival, and a political system at the regional level. They did this through their leadership of factions. The faction (*paarti*) has been identified as a typical feature of Punjabi politics. It is a leader-based, fairly enduring, vertical structure of power which is oriented towards the protection of individual and kin-group honour (*izzat*) and the securement of favours and services. These structures, which either enmesh or confront each other, have diverse patterns of recruitment - they may be organised around patron-client relationships, religious ties, and kinship - and extend across the whole political system, linking village with village, village with locality, locality with locality, and locality with region.⁶⁴

The British were somewhat astounded by the prevalence of factionalism in the Punjab. One officer, J.E. Cracroft, who toured Rawalpindi District in the 1860s, had this to report:

One feature in the constitution of society, as it exists at present chiefly in the Western portion, participated in by Hindoo and Mohamedan alike, is the spirit of faction. The whole of Pindee Gheb is divided into two parties, into the politics of which the people of neighbouring tracts zealously enter. This spirit tinges all the transactions of life, and renders investigation into rights and Judicial cases generally very difficult and lengthy.⁶⁵

In the absence of an effective police and judicial system, factionalism could easily degenerate into inter-tribe and inter-clan blood feuding. These feuds, which often began with the abduction of a woman, the theft of some cattle, or the encroachment of one clan into the territory of another, might then become the pivotal force in local politics. For example, in 1847 there was discovered in the Sind Sagar Doab a feud

64. Joyce Pettigrew, *Robber Noblemen: A Study of the Political System of the Sikh Jats* (London, 1975), pp.26, 29-33, 63-77.

65. J.E. Cracroft, *Report on the Settlement of the Rawul Pindee District* (Lahore, 1864), (hereafter *SR Rawalpindi 1864*), p.32.

between two groups of villages that had been going on for more than twenty years and had involved the deaths of fifty-one men and the theft of 3,000 cattle.⁶⁶

Residence and economic activity

There were several large cities in nineteenth-century Punjab.⁶⁷ Lahore (with a population of 98,924 in 1868) was the traditional political capital of the region. Within its walls lay the Red Fort - the palace of the emperor Akbar and subsequently of Ranjit Singh - the magnificent Badshahi mosque, and the nine *mohallas*, or residential blocks, with their mansions (*havelis*) and landscaped gardens (*baghs*). The twelve *mohallas* outside the city walls had been razed to the ground during the political struggles of the eighteenth century, but were re-built during the last years of Sikh rule and after 1849, when the British established their cantonment and civil headquarters at Anarkali. Lahore was also famous for its manufacture of gold-woven fabrics, jewellery, and weapons - the essential accoutrements of pre-modern aristocracies everywhere - although after the British conquest the craftsmen of the city turned increasingly to manufacturing articles for more general consumption. In 1847, two years before the establishment of British rule, Lahore contained about 30,000 houses and 9,000 shops.⁶⁸

Amritsar (population 135,813) was the religious capital of the Sikhs, the city that had grown up around the Har Mandar Sahib (or "Golden Temple")

66. *Punjab Government Records: Lahore Political Diaries, 1847-1848* (Allahabad, 1909-11), (hereafter *LPD*), vol 5, *Political Diaries of Lt. Herbert B. Edwardes, Assistant to the Resident at Lahore, on deputation to Bunnoo - 1847*, pp.34-5.

67. Except where otherwise noted, the following descriptions of the cities and large towns are based upon Grewal and Banga (trans and eds), *Early Nineteenth Century Punjab*; E.D. Lucas, *The Economic Life of a Punjab Village* (Lahore, no date), pp.8-9; and *General Report on the Administration of the Punjab and its Dependancies for the year 1867-68* (hereafter *PAR 1867-68*), pp.83-5. The population figures are from *Punjab Census 1868*, General Statement no 6.

68. For the results of a census of Lahore city taken in 1847, see Foreign Secret Proceedings (hereafter *FSP*), 25 Feb 1848, no 58 (NAI).

and become the centre of both the Baisakhi and Diwali festivals. It was divided into separate localities (*katras*), each of which was named after its philanthropic founder. But as its sanctity had grown so had its reputation as a safe haven for merchants, especially Khatri merchants - the original converts to Sikhism. By the nineteenth century Amritsar was the chief emporium of the Punjab. To the city came the staple products and manufactures of the region - rocksalt from the Jhelum District;⁶⁹ silk and chintz fabrics from Multan; jewellery and weapons from Lahore; paper from Sialkot; brocades from Gujrat; cotton fabrics from the Jullundur Doab - and of the neighbouring countries - precious metals, spices, and tea from Tibet; fine shawls from Kashmir;⁷⁰ horses, fruit, and drugs from Afghanistan; gold, copper, and silver from Persia and Bokhara. These goods were then carried, via either the southern or the eastern routes, into the subcontinent. The exports of the subcontinent - British woollens, velvets, and hardware; Indian cottens, base metals, chemicals, sandlewood, and ivory - were carried back along the same routes to Amritsar for local consumption and re-export to Central and West Asia.⁷¹ Amritsar city made a tidy living from its profane exertions: in the mid-1850s its import-export trade was estimated to be worth about £3.5 millions per annum.⁷²

Multan (population 56,826) was a southern river-port city dominated by a fortress reckoned to be among the most impregnable in the subcontinent, and by a class of Khatri merchant-bankers who carried on one of the more

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69. For the value and organisation of the rocksalt industry, see "A Geographical Sketch of the Punjab" (1830, no author): FM, no 206 (NAI).
70. In the early 1830s the Kashmir shawl industry, though on the decline, produced shawls for export that were worth, at Amritsar, £180,000 per annum: FSP, 9 April 1832, no 7; 16 April 1832, no 9 (NAI).
71. For the organisation of this trade, see *ibid.*
72. *Selections from the Records of the Government of India (Foreign Department)*, no XVIII, *General Report on the Administration of the Punjab Territories, 1854-55 to 1855-56* (Lahore, 1858), (hereafter *PAR 1854-56*), p.53. An idea of the value of this sum may be gained by noting that the aggregate capital of all joint stock companies operating in India at the turn of the nineteenth century amounted to £36 millions: Paul A. Baran, *The Political Economy of Growth* (Penguin, Middlesex, 1973), p.278.

sophisticated financial operations in that part of the world. Concerning the latter, a British officer wrote in a secret report to his government in 1846:

The Banking influence of Mooltan is considerable, greater than that for which Shikarpore [on the lower Indus] has so long been celebrated, and there are Sowcars and Shroffs [financiers] in its Bazars who are reputed to be capable of commanding a million specie. The Mooltan Hoondees [bills of exchange] are the great mediums of transacting business over the whole of the vast countries, where agents are scattered, and are always considered as cash from the Caspian to the Ganges....⁷³

Besides these three great cities, there were a number of sizeable towns, each noted for its specialised manufactures: Jullundur (33,673), Batala (28,725), Sialkot (25,327), Gujranwala (19,381), Rawalpindi (19,228), Wazirabad (15,730), Kasur (15,209), Gujrat (14,905), and Jhang (9,124).

Nonetheless, the Punjab was for the most part a land of villages and small towns: more than 90 per cent of the population in 1868 lived in the 21,374 settlements that had fewer than 5,000 inhabitants (and nearly 18,000 of these settlements had fewer than 1,000 inhabitants).⁷⁴ What were these little settlements like? In the first place, there was no real difference, except that of size, between the small town and the village:

Almost all the smaller Punjab towns [wrote Ibbetson] have extensive arable areas attached to them, and include considerable cultivating communities; and they often have little to distinguish them from the true village beyond their larger size, the greater extent, activity and importance of their trade, and the superior skill of their workmen. The difference, in short, is one of degree rather than of kind.⁷⁵

In the second place, living conditions in the typical village were far from idyllic. The village was generally a most insanitary place, and there was a high rate of infant mortality and post-natal disease

73. Lt-Colonel (later Sir) Henry Lawrence, quoted in M.L. Ahluwalia and Kirpal Singh, *The Punjab's Pioneer Freedom Fighters* (Bombay, 1963), p.30.

74. *Punjab Census 1868*, General Statement no 6.

75. *Punjab Census 1881*, p.18.

amongst women,⁷⁶ Rural life was regulated by the seasons,⁷⁷ by the generosity or otherwise of the local moneylender (*sahukar*, *shah*, or *mahajan*), without whose credit the villagers could not sink wells, build houses, celebrate marriages, or meet the State's land revenue demands,⁷⁸ and by an outlook on life that - in twentieth-century Western terms - can only be described as superstitious and religious.⁷⁹

But - and this is the third point - few of the villages were the isolated, ancient, and self-sufficient "little republics" that they are often thought to have been. As we have seen, there was little that was truly republican about their internal constitutions. Seldom were they really cut off from one another⁸⁰ or of great antiquity.⁸¹ Most important

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76. From *The Board of Economic Inquiry, Punjab: Punjab Village Surveys - 1. Gaggar Bhana, a village in the Amritsar District* (by S. Gian Singh, Lahore, 1928). For a similar village description, see C.A. Rose and W.E. Purser, *Report on the Revised Settlement of the Montgomery District in the Punjab* (Lahore, 1878), (hereafter *SR Montgomery 1878*), pp.53-4.
77. For divisions of time recognised by Hindu and Muslim peasants, see *SR Shahpur 1866*, p.33.
78. In the Punjab the peasant cultivator spoke of his *shah* ("king") or *mahajan* ("great person") as his banker and master. A common proverb stated: "No credit without a *shah*, and no salvation without a *guru* [religious teacher]" : Rose, *Glossary of Tribes and Castes*, vol 11, pp. 59-60; vol 111, pp.44-5.
79. For spirit worship, belief in the evil eye (*nazar*), and numerous superstitions, see *ibid*, vol 1.
80. The average distance between villages was as low as 0.8 of a mile in Gurdaspur District, and never rose above Shahpur District's figure of 2.7 miles: *Punjab Census 1868*, General Statements nos 2 and 6. That the rural population was accustomed to travelling considerable distances is proved by the huge crowds of outsiders drawn to the annual fairs held at various places throughout the region: "List of Fairs in the Punjab": *Selected Circular Orders of the Board of Administration in the General and Political Departments* (Lahore, 1971), Circular no 36-2815, 16 Sept 1869.
81. Only 355 of Jullundur District's 1,324 villages had been founded prior to the middle of the sixteenth century: W.E. Purser, *Final Report on the Revised Settlement of the Jullundur District in the Punjab* (Lahore, 1892), (hereafter *SR Jullundur 1891*), p.85. In Gujranwala District the majority of the villages were founded in the early decades of the nineteenth century itself: *SR Gujranwala 1856*, pp.27-8.

of all, they were, even though they produced most of their daily consumptive goods, by no means unconnected with local or regional markets.⁸² In the arid western and southern districts the villages produced firewood, fodder, and pastoral commodities like wool, meat, and dairy products (especially *ghee*, or clarified butter) for sale in the marketplace.⁸³ In the moist central and eastern districts the main products of the village were those of cultivation - in the spring (*rabi*) harvest: wheat, barley, gram, lentils, tobacco, linseed, safflower, and mustard; in the autumn (*khariif*) harvest: millet, maize, rice, lentils, sugarcane, and cotton.⁸⁴ Most of these crops - especially wheat, which was the real staple everywhere in the region - were grown for the market as well as for domestic consumption.

It was in the marginal zone, where the possibility of drought presented special problems, that the village had the least consistent connection with the marketplace. In good years, when the rains were plentiful, the land produced abundant harvests.⁸⁵ But when the rains failed, as they frequently did, the land became an inhospitable wilderness. At such times the cultivators of the marginal zone fell back upon the two alternative occupations that agricultural insecurity had long presented them with: crime and soldiering. Cattle-rustling was a well organized

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82. "In the developed regions, the concept of village self-sufficiency can no longer be maintained. The regional sources point towards the inter-dependence of groups of adjacent villages on the local demands both for commercial crops and non-agricultural products": B.R. Grover, "Approach and Methodology to the Study of Medieval Punjab": unpub Presidential Address, Medieval Section, Punjab History Conference, 10th session, Patiala, 28 Feb 1976.
83. For example, the Chhapribandi, a pastoral tribe of the lower Indus which owned 20,000 buffaloes, 10,000 cows, 10,000 sheep, and 4,000 camels, produced 15,000 *maunds* (a *maund* equals 82 lb) of *ghee* per annum in the 1830s: n26 above. In the 1850s the *ghee* produced in the Bar tract of Gujranwala District was worth £10,000 per annum; and the shopkeepers and traders of Lahore and Amritsar employed agents to follow the herdsmen and collect the *ghee*, the collection being guaranteed by advances of money made to the herdsmen: *SR Gujranwala 1856*, p.19.
84. Lt. Col. G.B. Tremenheere, "On the Present State of Agriculture in the Punjab": *Government of the Punjab: Selections from the Correspondence*, vol 1, 1853, no XII, appendix 1.
85. For a table showing produce rates in the Hafizabad *tahsil* of Gujranwala District, see *ibid.* The figures provided therein show that Bar land irrigated by wells was more productive, in good years, than tracts close to the rivers.

and almost respectable occupation in the marginal zone.⁸⁶ So too was service in arms. Thus the Manjha in the nineteenth century was a little Alsatia, where each man was, in addition to being a husbandman, "either a robber or a soldier."⁸⁷ It was Manjha villages that supplied the bulk of the Jat peasant soldiery that did so much to create and defend the Sikh kingdom of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have posited the centrality of the physiographic factor to any investigation into the constitution of pre-colonial Punjabi society. This has allowed us to conceptualise that society as an organic whole. But that society was not what social anthropologists used to call an "integrated" social system. The region's strategic location, and more importantly, the unevenness of its natural resources, had prevented the emergence of any desegregational basis to society beyond that of language and a certain general, cultural idiom. Thus the essential feature of pre-colonial Punjabi society was fragmentation: not so much the coexistence of diverse social elements, but rather their rivalries - the constant striving of these elements to undercut each other.

We have seen that Punjabi society at this time was a most status-conscious society, but that the status cleavages, which corresponded to the socio-economic cleavages, were vertical rather than horizontal - more between town and country, between town and town, and between territorial units like the village and the clan section, than between general castes and classes. We have seen that this vertical organisation of society was productive of fairly constant social tension and turbulence. We have also seen that political power in this society typically manifested itself upwards, through factions headed by members of the elite groups. For these reasons we have chosen to designate pre-colonial Punjab as a frontier society. This designation will support and inform our characterisation of the Sikh State and our subsequent analysis of the political developments that occurred between 1839 and 1872.

86. Cattle - theft was one of the most common crimes in the Punjab: *Punjab Census 1881*, p.52. For the organisation of this "profession", see "Disclosures of a cattle thief", in *Annual Report on the Administration of the Punjab Territories for the year 1861-62* (hereafter *PAR 1861-62*), pp.15-16.

87. n 22 above.

CHAPTER TWO

*THE SIKH KINGDOM**Introduction*

By all accounts the eighteenth century was an especially turbulent period in the history of the Punjab. Mughal authority in the region began to decline after the death of the emperor Aurangzeb in 1707, and was finished off by the blows dealt by a series of Persian, Afghan, and Maratha invasions and by a Sikh Jat peasant rebellion in the central and eastern districts. With the collapse of imperial authority, conditions in the countryside became confused and anarchic: "tribe fought against tribe, village against village; all but the strongest positions were abandoned, homesteads were deserted, and the face of the country became a wilderness."¹

Out of this situation arose the Sikh *misl*s, or warbands, organised at first for defence but later for plunder. In the second half of the century the *misl*s set about conquering central and eastern Punjab and, that achieved, each other. One *misl*, the Sukerchakia *misl*, emerged as the strongest. Its leader, Ranjit Singh, captured Lahore city in 1799. Two years later he assumed the title of Maharaja and began a personal reign that lasted until his death in 1839.

Ranjit Singh's kingdom is of historical interest for at least two reasons. In the first place, it was the first indigenous State in the Punjab in eight centuries (and the only one in nine centuries if British rule, which followed it, is counted). Does this mean that it was established on different, indigenous principles, and was it geared towards policies that differed from those pursued by non-Punjabi dynasties in the region? Secondly, the Sikhs were, as we have already seen, very much a minority community in the Punjab. How, then, did Ranjit Singh manage to maintain his authority over his numerous Muslim and Hindu subjects? Was his kingdom a typical "oriental despotism", wherein coercive force was freely resorted to? And to what extent were the Maharaja's policies shaped by the ideology of Sikhism? The aim of this chapter is to provide

1. *Gujranwala DG 1883-84*, p.22.

answers to these questions by examining the origin, structure, and working of the kingdom established by Ranjit Singh.²

From misls to monarchy

When Mughal authority declined in the first half of the eighteenth century, and the Punjab became the cockpit of would-be successors, Sikh Jats in central Punjab were ideally placed to incite a peasant-based liberation movement. They were, as we have already seen, part of the dominant peasantry in the central districts. They had a strong militaristic tradition. And most important of all, they possessed a sense of historic mission and a millenarian ideology, having only recently (1699) been forged into the Khalsa - the militant Sikh brotherhood - by Guru Gobind Singh (the tenth and last Sikh Guru) in response to Mughal persecution.

The rise of the *misls* and their coalescence into a single political system during the last six or seven decades of the eighteenth century is a complex story that cannot be recounted here.³ However, it might be asserted that with respect to the development of a personal rulership concept, the *misls* progressed through five distinct stages, each of which represented the operation of the *misl* as a political faction⁴ on an ever

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2. It must be stressed that what follows is intended to serve primarily as a background to the political story to be taken up in subsequent chapters. Space does not permit a comparative analysis. Clearly, with respect to matters like land revenue policy, the extent and character of *jagirdari* tenures, the emergence of new intermediate elites, and so forth, the Sikh kingdom displayed important dissimilarities as well as basic similarities to both the Mughal State and the other regional successor States: for references to some of the modern, comparative literature, see Richard B. Barnett, *North India Between Empires: Awadh, the Mughals, and the British, 1720-1801* (Berkeley, 1980), pp.4-6, 11-12. I hope to make a comparative analysis, in which the implications of these similarities and dissimilarities would be followed up, at a later date.
 3. For a narrative account, see J.D. Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs* (Delhi, reprint 1972), chaps 4-5; Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs* (Princeton, N.J., 1963), vol 1, pp. 101-84.
 4. Pettigrew also sees the *misl* as a faction: *Robber Noblemen*, pp. 26, 29-33.

wider territorial and recruitment basis, and with an ever closer approximation of "traditional" (Mughal) rulership. These stages (summarised in Fig. 2:1) are highly generalised "pure types". Moreover, since different stages frequently evolved in different parts of central Punjab at different times, it is difficult to put strict chronological dates to them. Nevertheless, the five-stage model is derived entirely from the chronological narrative of the period.

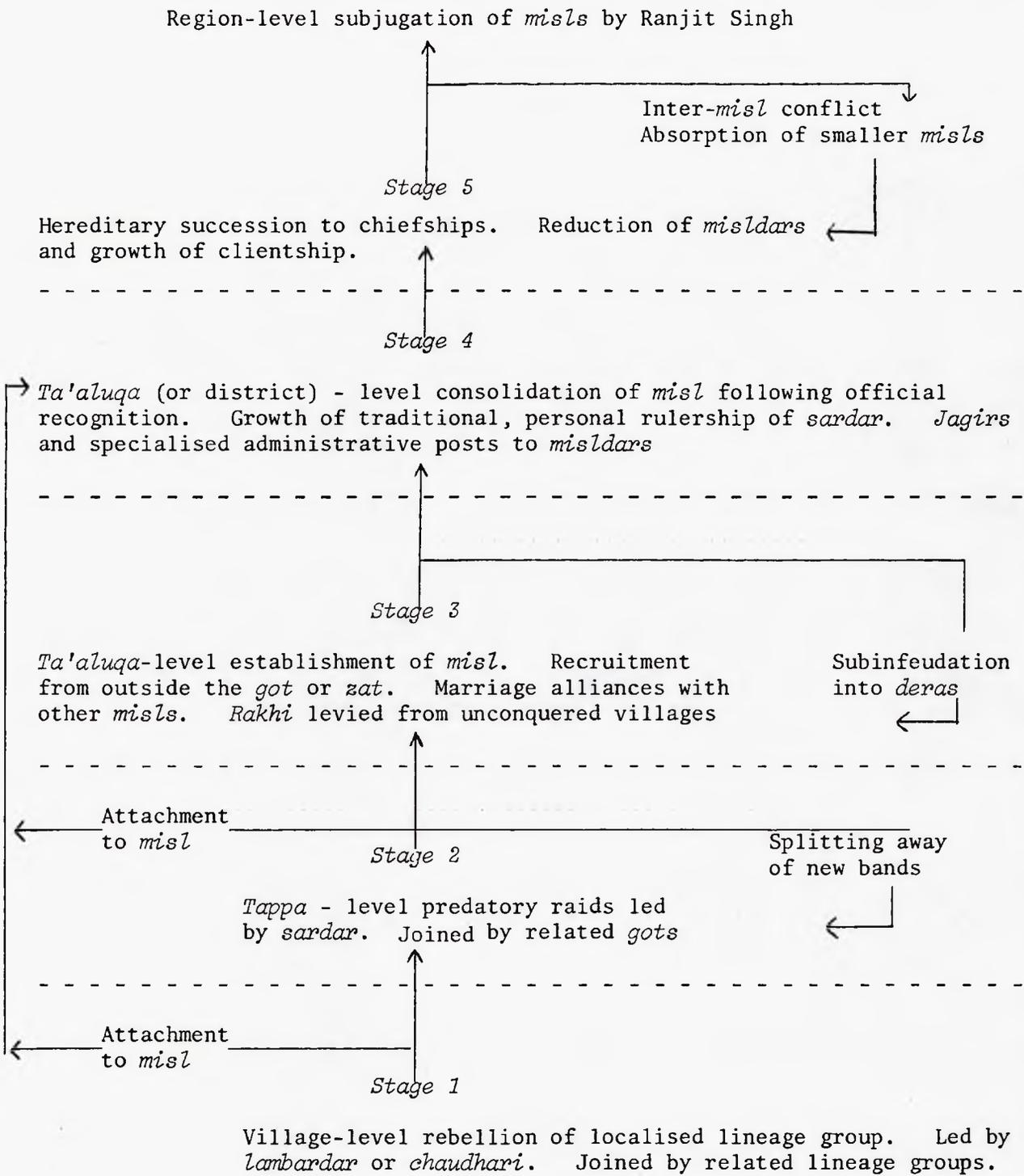
Stage one began with the refusal of a village or group of adjacent villages to pay the land revenue to the Mughal (or Persian, or Afghan, or Maratha) revenue collector. This revolt seems often to have been led by an influential *lanbardar* (village headman) or *chaudhari* (headman of a *tappa*). Cooperation with other local lineage groups (of that *got*) in that, or the neighbouring, *tappa* was sometimes necessary to resist the retributionary forces despatched against them by the authorities of the day. Individual *zamindars*, or perhaps the whole local lineage group, might now attach themselves to a rising *misl*.⁵ Otherwise, they proceeded to stage two.

In stage two the lineage group leader, who now styled himself *Sardar* (chieftain) and commonly adopted a cognomen taken from the name of his ancestral village,⁶ set off in the company of his kinsmen in search of plunder and land control in the villages of other, rival *gots* in the *tappa*. Spoils were divided according to predetermined shares. As many of his earlier followers split away to settle in the conquered villages or became *sardars* themselves, the *sardar* was joined by new followers from affinally-related *gots*. Towards the end of stage two the *sardar* often constructed

5. For example, Nodh Singh, who was Ranjit Singh's great-grandfather, having become a Sikh (in order to marry the daughter of Gulab Singh from the village of Majithia in Amritsar District), procured a horse and weapons and entered the service of Kapur Singh, who was then head of the Fyzullapur *misal*. See C.M. Wade, "A History of the Origin, Life and Progress of Maharajah Ranjit Singh to the Sovereignty of the Punjab" (no date): FM, 1830, no 206 (NAI).

6. For example, Ranjit Singh was born in the Gujranwala District but his father and grandfather had adopted the cognomen Sukerchakia from the Sukerchak village in the Manjha where Daisoo (Ranjit Singh's great-great-grandfather) had started the family's fortunes with a small patrimony of some land, three ploughs, and a well: *ibid*.

Fig 2:1 Summary of the Development of the Rulership Concept in the Sikh Misl



a small mud fort in his *tappa* to protect his family and followers from similarly adventurous bands - of which there were as many as four or five hundred⁷ - and from government military parties.⁸

The crucial factor in the transition to stage three was the establishment of the *sardar* and his band as military occupiers and revenue receivers of a *ta'aluqa*, often named after the fortified town which the band used as its headquarters. Only now could the band be called a *misl*, its members *misdars*. The word *misl* means "equal" or "alike". The *misl* was, at this stage, still a relatively egalitarian association: the *misdars* came together in a common purpose and it was recognised that the *sardar* could exercise strict control over his *misdars* only in times of war.⁹ In many cases the *misl* was subinfeudated into sections called *deras*, each headed by a separate *sardar*. This reflected the fact that members of the *misl* could now be recruited from outside the individual *got* or even *zat*. Marriage allowances between the families of *sardars* in different *misl*s led to a sharing of *ta'aluqas* and their revenues. In those areas remaining under the nominal authority of Lahore *rakhi*, or protection money, was extorted from the villages by the *misl*.¹⁰

In stage four the transition from factional leadership to personal leadership occurred, often following the official recognition of the individual *sardar* by the superior political authority of the day - Mughal, Persian, Afghan, or Maratha. The *sardar* who cooperated with the Lahore regime, or assisted one side - sometimes both sides simultaneously - in the military struggles for control of Delhi, was recompensed with imperial

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7. J.S. Grewal, *From Guru Nanak to Maharaja Ranjit Singh: Essays in Sikh History* (Amritsar, 1972), p.87.
 8. For example, Charat Singh (Ranjit Singh's grandfather) built a small fort at his wife's village of Gujraoli, north of Lahore. The Afghan governor of Lahore hired the services of a band of Sikhs and attempted to demolish the fort, but without success. See Sir Henry Lawrence, "Recent History of the Punjab" (1844), reprinted in *Selections from the Calcutta Review* (Calcutta, 1881), p.165.
 9. Major James Browne noted in 1787 that most *sardars* were distinguished from their followers only by their finer horses and weapons: Ganda Singh (ed), *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs* (Calcutta, 1962), p.17.
 10. *Rakhi* was levied from villages subdued but not yet occupied by the Sikhs. It varied in amount from one-fifth to one-half of the government share of the produce, and was comparable to the *chowt*, or one-fourth, levied by the Marathas in their territories. See Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs*, p.95, n 1.

titles, *khilats* (costumes of honour), *jagirs* (revenue assignments), kettledrums and banners, besides substantial, official autonomy - all the attributes, in short, of a vassal prince.¹¹ Many a *sardar* now set about consolidating and developing his personal rule in ways that - in both content and form - represented only a repetition of the practice of earlier rulers, the Mughals especially. The principle of *mulk-giri* (territorial possession) was extended: deserted villages were repopulated and new ones founded. Administrative and military functionaries were appointed. Coins were minted.¹² *Jagirs* were bestowed on faithful *misl*dars, and the ancient royal practice of granting *jagirs* or *ma'afis* (revenue-free lands) to pious individuals and religious institutions (grants known as *ma'id-i-ma'ash* or *dharmarth*) was revived. Ranjit Singh's grandfather, Charat Singh, was just one such powerful *sardar* amongst the many who established this sort of rulership.¹³

Stage five, which corresponds roughly with the last quarter of the eighteenth century, was characterised by a widespread breakdown of the *misl* system and a falling out amongst the *sardars*. An important factor here would seem to have been the general acceptance of the principle of hereditary succession to chieftainships.¹⁴ The role of kinship in the *misl* became less crucial (though it never was entirely obliterated) and was increasingly replaced by the concept of a semi-royal chiefly lineage. The once-independent followers of the *sardar* were reduced to retainers within a quasi-feudal relationship. A patron-client system was developed: specialised administrative posts were awarded to talented commoners or

11. For the example of Ala Singh, see Indu Banga, "Ala Singh: The Founder of Patiala State", in Singh and Barrier (eds), *Essays in Honour of Ganda Singh*, pp. 150-60. In many ways the career of Ala Singh illustrates perfectly the five-stage development of rulership under discussion.

12. For details on coins minted by *sardars*, see Singh (ed), *Early European Accounts*, pp. 15-16.

13. See *Maps Connected with the Report on the Revision of the Land Revenue Settlement of the Gujranwala District, 1866-1867*, and *Maps Connected with...Lahore District, 1865-69* for maps showing the distribution of petty principalities over the *ta'aluqas* of these Districts.

14. Grewal, *Guru Nanak to Ranjit Singh*, p.90.

non-Punjabis, and not just to *misl*dars.¹⁵ These non-*misl*dar clients also provided the *sardar* with an alternative source of loyalty and acted as a check upon the ambitions of his kinsmen. Thus, there were no longer any proper *sardar-misl*dar combinations, just *sardars* of greater or lesser importance jealously defending their individual patrimonies.¹⁶ The leading *sardars*, who had previously agreed to sink their differences and pool their individual military resources to form the Dal Khalsa or national army of the Panth (the Sikh community), to resist the invasions of the Afghan predator, Ahmad Shah Abdali, now turned against each other. Smaller *misl*s fell prey to larger ones. The most successful was the Sukerchakia *misl*, raised to greatness by Ranjit Singh's superior military leadership and shrewd marriage alliances.¹⁷ At the end of stage five Ranjit Singh clinched the transition to a regional monarchy by assuming the title of Maharaja and beginning the process of systematically subduing the remaining, autonomous *misl*s,¹⁸ confiscating their properties and reorganising their *sardars* into a dependent, feudalistic aristocracy.

15. For example, Gurmukh Singh Lamba was adopted by Ranjit Singh's father as a playmate for Ranjit Singh; in 1799 Ranjit Singh made him paymaster of his forces and superintendent of his treasury: Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 2, pp. 165-6. Two brothers of the Duggal family served the Wazirabadia and Sukerchakia *misl*s as managers of *jagirs*, etc: *ibid*, vol 2, p.112. Two Brahmins, Chhaju Mal and Lala Jawala Nath, whose families had served the Mughal emperors, were employed by the Kanheya *misl* as city *chaudhari* (mayor) and the Sukerchakia *misl* as *munshi* (writer, secretary) respectively: *ibid*, vol 2, p.43 and vol 1, p.308. The ties of clientship thus cut across kinship, regional and even religious identities.

16 Grewal, *Guru Nanak to Ranjit Singh*, p.90.

17. Ranjit Singh took wives from the Kanheya and Nakkai *misl*s and married his sons to daughters of prominent Sikh Jat families such as the Atariwalas.

18. There were, in popular estimation, twelve major *misl*s at the end of the eighteenth century. Seven of these - the Ahluwalia, Bhangi, Fyzullapuria, Kanheya, Nakkai, Ramgarhia and Sukerchakia *misl*s - occupied lands in the Punjab region and were jointly known as the Manjha Sikhs. The remaining five, amongst which the Phulkian *misl* was the most important, arose in the Malwa, or cis-Sutlej region; they were known as the Malwa Sikhs.

When Ranjit Singh captured Lahore and took his new title, his kingdom was scarcely deserving of the name. Much of central Punjab was still in the possession of powerful *misl*s like the Bhangi *misl*. The Jullundur Doab was held by the Ahluwalia *misl*. To the northeast, the lower Himalayas were held by Hindu Rajput chieftains (the Rajas of Mandi, Nurpur, Suket, etc). To the east of the region, the cis-Sutlej or Malwa region, from the Sutlej to the Jumna, was held by the Malwa Sikhs, original settlers and converts to Sikhism, who had also organised themselves into *misl*s (the Phulkian *misl*, for example, was composed of a group of patrilineally - related *sardars* who founded the royal houses of Patiala, Jind, Nabha, etc). From the northwest to the south, Ranjit Singh's dominion was cordoned by a double row of Muslim principalities. The inner row, beginning in Jhelum District and sweeping through Shahpur, Jhang, and Montgomery Districts to Kasur, comprised a string of small, independent chieftainships - the Awans and Biloches of Khushab and Sahiwal, the Tiwanas of Shahpur, the Sials of Jhang, the Chathas of Rasulnagar, and the Pathans of Kasur, for example - carved out by Punjabi Muslim tribes and clans in the eighteenth century. The outer row, mostly lying outside the Punjab region, comprised the rulerships of Kashmir, Hazara, Peshawar, Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan, Dera Ghazi Khan, Multan, and Bahawalpur. These were ruled by Pathan governors on behalf of the Afghan monarch at Kabul, though they were by now practically independent rulerships.¹⁹

It is not surprising, then, that Ranjit Singh should have been concerned to extend what the *misl*s had begun: the creation of a unified, expansionist, militaristic State. In the manner of the Rurik monarchs of Russia in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, he devoted the greater part of his reign to "gathering in" the Punjab lands and searching for secure boundaries to his kingdom. Briefly told, the political history of his reign falls into three periods.²⁰

19. Sita Ram Kohli's foreward to Lala Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-Ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar III, pts I-V (trans. by V.S. Suri, Delhi, 1971), pp. x-xi.

20. For a narrative account see Malik (ed), *A Book of Readings*, pp.7-58; Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs*, chaps vi-vii; Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, vol 1, chaps 11-18.

In the first period (1801-09) Ranjit Singh consolidated his position in central Punjab and extended his influence to the northeast and southeast. The Bhangi *misl* was subdued by force; the Ahluwalia *sardar*, Fateh Singh, exchanged turbans with Ranjit Singh as a symbolic gesture of brotherhood and friendship, though in reality he accepted a vassal status; and a number of other smaller *sardars* were dispossessed of their territories. Having been subdued, most *sardars*, along with their retainers, entered the Maharaja's army, helping to swell it into a formidable fighting machine. In 1807 the Pathan colony of Kasur was deprived of its independence and Bahawalpur was turned into a tributary state. Two years later Kangra was conquered. In 1806 Ranjit Singh had felt strong enough to launch the first of several expeditions against the Malwa Sikhs, believing that he might safely bring them into his political orbit without coming into collision with the British (who in 1803 had ended Maratha power in northern India and occupied Delhi). But the Malwa Sikhs sought British protection. In 1809 the British pressured Ranjit Singh into signing the Treaty of Amritsar which bound him to renounce any designs on the country to the south of the Sutlej. The cis-Sutlej states were declared to be under British protection.²¹ Thus, by 1809 Ranjit Singh's authority in central Punjab was firmly established; he had been forced, however, to accept the Sutlej as his southeastern boundary (see Map 3²²).

In the second period (1810-23) Ranjit Singh turned his attention towards the north and southwest. By 1816 most of the small hill principalities had been made tributaries of Lahore; the inner cordon of Muslim chieftainships had also been broken. Having subdued all the chieftains - Sikh, Hindu, or Muslim - who had any pretensions to independent

21. Mian Bashir Ahmed Farooqi, *British Relations with the Cis-Sutlej States, 1809-1823* (Punjab Government Record Office Publications, monograph no 19, Patiala reprint 1971); Victor G. Kiernan, *Metcalf's Mission to Lahore (1808-1809)*, (Punjab Government Record Office Publications, monograph no 21, Patiala reprint 1971).

22. This map is incorrect in that it shows the territory occupied by the inner cordon of Muslim chieftainships as having been incorporated into Ranjit Singh's kingdom by 1809 - in fact it was not incorporated until about 1816.

authority within the Punjab region, and having secured his northern and southeastern boundaries, Ranjit Singh then took on the more resourceful Pathan rulerships that constituted the outer cordon of Muslim power. These principalities were conquered and either annexed outright or turned into tributaries between 1818 and 1823: Multan (1818), Kashmir (1819), Dera Ghazi Khan (1820), Dera Ismail Khan (1821), Peshawar (1823). By 1823 the basic limits to Sikh expansion had been reached (Map 3).

In the third period (1824-39) Ranjit Singh made no new conquests of a major kind - there was scarcely any territory outside his kingdom that he was capable of acquiring. A Sikh garrison was established at Ladakh in 1835 for the purpose of exacting tribute and controlling the shawl-wool trade; but when, after Ranjit Singh's death, Sikh troops pushed on to Iskardo (1841) the British, who were then at war with China, demanded that they be pulled back. In 1836 Ranjit Singh decided to conquer Sind, but was prevented from doing so by the British, who had already signed a protection treaty with the Amirs of Sind (the British annexed Sind themselves in 1843). In the last period of his reign Ranjit Singh devoted his military energies to strengthening the boundaries that had already been established. For example, following the fanatical Wahabi insurrection of 1827-31, the northwest frontier, which had been ruled indirectly through local chieftains after its conquest in the early 1820s, was re-occupied and placed under the administration of governors appointed by the Maharaja: Dera Ghazi Khan was re-occupied in 1831; Peshawar was captured from the Pathans in 1834; Tank, Bannu, and Dera Ismail Khan were directly annexed between 1832 and 1836.²³

The structure of Sikh government

European philosophers, political scientists, and historians, from Machiavelli onwards have recognised the existence of fundamental differences

23. Narendra Krishna Sinha, "Ranjit Singh and the North-West Frontier Problem", in *Indian Historical Quarterly*, vol 5, Sept 1929, pp.513-17.

between the power structures of feudalism and "oriental despotism."²⁴

It is generally agreed that an essential aspect of feudalism, corresponding to its localised economic activity, is a localised distribution of power. In their ideal form, the feudal monarchies of Europe were always restricted by hereditary and independent aristocracies, by institutions representing the three great social estates, and by a whole range of jealously protected civil privileges and immunities. Anderson characterises this situation as the "parcellisation of sovereignty":

Political sovereignty was never focused in a single centre. The functions of the State were disintegrated in a vertical allocation downwards, at each level of which political and economic relations were, on the other hand, integrated. This parcellisation of sovereignty was constitutive of the whole feudal mode of production.²⁵

The essential feature of "oriental despotism", on the other hand, is a centralised structure of power: this corresponds to the absence of private property (especially landed property) which Marx and Engels identified as "the key to the whole of the East."²⁶ In their ideal form, the empires of the Islamic East were much more despotic than their European, feudal counterparts. They possessed centralised, patrimonial administrations; they recognised few, if any, inalienable civil rights; and they were without real aristocracies. To quote Anderson again, this time with reference to the Ottoman empire:

For Ottoman political theory, the cardinal attribute of sovereignty was the Sultan's unlimited right to exploit all sources of wealth within his realm as his own Imperial Possessions. It followed that there could be no stable, hereditary nobility within the Empire, because there was no security of property which could found it. Wealth and honour were effectively coterminous with the State, and rank was simply a function of positions held within it.²⁷

What kind of power structure was the Sikh kingdom? By the end of Ranjit Singh's reign the kingdom was a strong, militaristic State. It

24. The literature on this subject is vast, and full of controversy. For a useful summary of the main trends, see Ervand Abrahamian, "Oriental Despotism: The Case of Qajar Iran", in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, no 5 (1974), pp.3-31.

25. Perry Anderson, *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism* (London, 1974), p.148.

26. Engels to Marx, 6 June 1853: quoted in Abrahamian, "Oriental Despotism", p.5.

27. Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London, 1974), pp.365-6.

possessed a centralised administration with specialised departments and personnel. And it had a standing army of about 80,000 men,²⁸ which was equipped and trained along European lines, and which absorbed about 41 per cent of the total revenues of the State.²⁹ At the same time, however, the Kingdom exhibited many of the characteristics of the feudalistic, "segmentary" State.³⁰ Its territorial sovereignty, though recognised within the Punjab region and at the kingdom's eastern boundary, shaded off at the kingdom's western and southern boundaries (see Map 3) into a ritualistic hegemony backed up by periodic displays of force.³¹ The army, though a modern one by contemporary Asian standards, lacked a single command structure and was still recruited largely on the basis of kinship. The administration was strong and efficient at the centre, but there was a segmental duplication and combination of specialised offices at subordinate levels, and there were peripheral foci of administration over which the centre exercised only limited control. Finally, the authority of the Maharaja, which was absolute in theory, was restricted by his need to balance the claims of conflicting ideologies and social groups. On the continuum of governmental formations, the Sikh kingdom must therefore be placed at a position somewhere between the ideal, "oriental despotic" State and the feudalistic, "segmentary" State. Let us elaborate this observation by examining - in this section - the structure of Sikh government, and - in the next section - the politics of rulership.

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28. A.F.M. Abdul Ali, "Notes on the Life and Times of Ranjit Singh", in *Bengal Past And Present*, vol 31, Jan-June 1926, p.65.
29. Kohli's foreward to Suri, *Umdat-Ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar III, pts i-v, pp. xvii-xix. Kohli notes that at one stage there were more than forty Europeans in the Maharaja's employ.
30. For Southall's model of the "segmentary" State, see Aidan W. Southall, *Alur Society: A Study in Processes and Types of Domination* (Cambridge, 1953), pp. 248-9. For an earlier application of this model to South Asia, see Burton Stein, "The Segmentary State in South Indian History", in Richard G. Fox (ed), *Realm and Region in Traditional India* (Duke University, Program in Comparative Studies on Southern Asia, Monograph and Occasional Papers Series, monograph no 14, 1977), pp.3-15.
31. For example, in 1831 the vassal Nawab of Bahawalpur was ordered to send an outstanding amount of tribute. Suri, the chronicler of events at Ranjit Singh's court, reports of the order sent to the Nawab: "In case of delay triumphant troops would be appointed in that direction to lay waste to the country under his sway" : *Umdat-Ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar III, pts i-v, pp. 6, 11.

Sikh government was comprised of two complementary and interlocking systems. These may be termed the "national" and "local" systems on account of their different operational spheres and degrees of accountability to the political capital. (It must be pointed out that this is only a heuristic model: the Sikhs did not themselves refer to two systems of government). The "national" system was a pyramidal structure of authority, designed to meet the primary tasks of government: the maintenance of internal and external security, the collection of State revenues, and the dispensation of civil and criminal justice. Its apex was occupied by the Maharaja in his court, and it extended down through the province (*suba*) to its base at the level of the district (*ta'aluqa* or *pargana*). Within it were found a wide variety of offices, some highly specialised, others rather indefinite; some primarily military, judicial, or fiscal in nature, others representing an amalgamation of these functions. Structurally, the "national" system was a continuation of the administrative format that had existed in the *misl* and, before that, the Mughal periods, even though the nomenclature and number of operational units and administrative offices had often changed.³² It was, however, a system that Ranjit Singh and his advisors had had to reconstruct, and then modify as political circumstances changed. The "local" system, on the other hand, was an ancient and virtually unchanged structure of authority - an administrative and political remnant of countless, earlier dynasties. It was a solid, infrastructural system that was rooted in village society and stretched up through the *tope* and *tappa* to engage the "national" system. Through their "national" system officers, the Sikhs supported and utilised the "local" system to maintain rural law and order, and to secure their share of the agrarian surplus. Occasionally, they intervened in the succession to its offices. But, unlike the British who were to follow them, they generally refrained from interfering with its basic organisation and functions. The "local" system thus remained a distinct, semi-autonomous structure of authority and power.

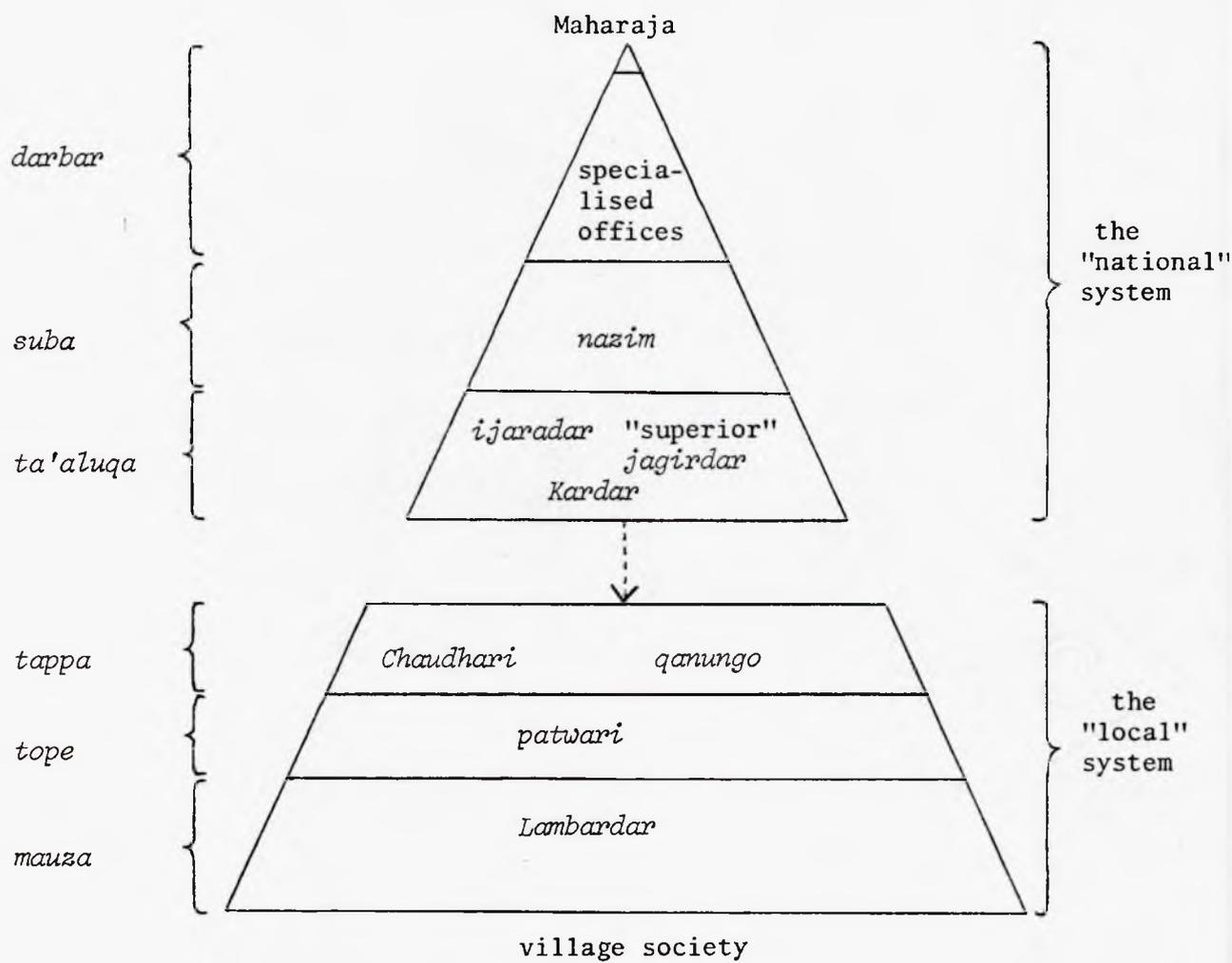
32. In her study of the Sikh agrarian system, Indu Banga has noted the basic continuity of Mughal administrative procedure: "The Agrarian System of the Sikhs (1759-1849)", (unpub Ph.D. thesis, Guru Nanak University, Amritsar, 1974); "Sikh Revenue Administration: The Framework", in J.S. Grewal (ed), *Studies In Local And Regional History* (Amritsar, 1974), pp.55-85.

Let us briefly examine the more important offices in each of the two systems of government (see Fig 2:2). At the *darbar* (court) level of the "national" system were certain specialised offices like those of *wazir* (chief minister), *diwan* (head of the finance department), *adalat* (chief judge),³³ *deorhiwala* (royal chamberlain), paymaster, postmaster, superintendent of customs, superintendent of the royal seal, and so forth. Each of these officers headed departments staffed by *munshis* (clerks and record keepers).³⁴ These officers were appointed by the Maharaja from within the ranks of the chieftains and clients at court and were directly responsible to him. Most received cash salaries and/or *jagirs*.

At the level of the *suba*, or province, was the office of *nazim* (provincial governor). It seems that for many years Ranjit Singh divided his kingdom into seven *subas*: Kashmir, Peshawar, Wazirabad, Multan, Pind Dadan Khan (with the salt mines), Kangra (with a portion of the Manjha), and the Jullundur Doab.³⁵ To each of these *subas* was appointed a *nazim*, generally a royal prince or leading chieftain. The *nazim* entered into a contract for his office. He might himself submit a tender for the administration of a particular *suba* or, conversely, a royal letter (*shukka*) addressed to him might propose the contract; often a good deal of haggling on both sides occurred before a sum of revenue and quantity of esoterica - camels, hounds, hawks, saffron and slave girls - were agreed upon and the contract (*pata-nama*) drawn up and signed.³⁶ The *nazim* was paid a handsome salary,³⁷ yet it was understood that any extra revenue

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33. It is often thought that there was no chief judge in the kingdom. But Ganesh Das refers to Sardar Waisaka Singh as holding the office of *adalat-i-panjab*: Grewal and Banga (trans and eds), *Early Nineteenth Century Panjab*, pp.32, 91, 124.
34. For the evolution of the central administrative departments, see Sita Ram Kohli, *Catalogue of Khalsa Darbar Records* (Lahore, 1927), vol II, pp.1-11.
35. FSC, 30 Oct 1847, no 95 (NAI).
36. For examples, see Ganda Singh (ed), *The Punjab in 1839-40: Selections from the Punjab Akhbars, Punjab Intelligence, etc. preserved in the National Archives of India, New Delhi* (Amritsar, 1952), pp. 7, 27, 34; Suri, *Umdat-Ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar III, pts i-v, pp. 185, 193.
37. For salaries of early *nazims*, see Sita Ram Kohli, "Land Revenue Administration under Maharajah Ranjit Singh", reprinted in *The Panjab Past And Present*, vol v, pt II, Oct 1971, pp. 434-53.

Fig 2:2 *Principal Offices in the Two Systems of Sikh Government*



that he managed to extract from his *suba* by lawful means - by extending cultivation or encouraging trade, for example - was his to keep. In theory, he was prevented from rack-renting his cultivators by being required to submit regular returns of produce and collections; in practice, he often fudged his returns. Within the territory under his jurisdiction the *nazim* was allowed to exercise almost unlimited military, fiscal and judicial authority. He often appointed his own subordinate officers: a deputy (*makhtar-i-kar*) or managing agent (*karkun*), an administrator of justice (*adalati*), governors of military forts (*thanadars*) and revenue collectors (*kardars*). Sometimes, the *nazim* sub-contracted a portion of his *suba*.³⁸

In the middle period of his reign, however, Ranjit Singh, for reasons of greater economic efficiency, broke up the central *subas* into smaller units placed under smaller contractors called *ijaradars*. We shall examine this in a moment. In the remaining, peripheral *subas* two different sorts of *nazims* would seem to have emerged. In Kashmir and Peshawar, tracts that were too distant, too turbulent or too poor to repay the costs of efficient administration, and where Sikh rule in its completeness was never really established anyway, the *nazim* was a temporary and rapacious governor. Eleven *nazims* were appointed to Kashmir between 1819 and 1845: the longest term enjoyed was seven years.³⁹ On the northwest frontier the *nazim* barricaded himself inside his fort and relied upon the local tribal chieftains to help keep the peace in the countryside and collect the land revenue. Because the land revenue demand here was low - one-quarter or even one-eighth of the gross produce, compared with the one-third or one-half share exacted in central Punjab⁴⁰ - and because the local chieftains had to be placated with remissions of one-quarter of the total collections (*chaharam*)⁴¹ the *nazim* at Peshawar often found it difficult to make an honest profit. Sometimes he resorted to cheating his government: an

38. For examples, see Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 2, pp.4-7, 125; Suri, *Umdat-Ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar III, pts i-v, p.205.

39. Banga, "Sikh Revenue Administration", pp. 58-9.

40. "PAR 1851": FM, no 356, paras 162-4 (NAI).

41. *Attock DG 1883-84*, pp.39-40.

examination of the Peshawar accounts by the central finance ministers in July 1840 showed that the last three *nazims* owed the government three *lakhs* of rupees.⁴² In terms of his limited authority, the *nazim* of Kashmir or Peshawar was in a position analogous to that of the court-appointed chieftain in the African kingdoms of Ashanti and Dahomey who was sent to "double" and "supervise" distant territorial chieftains.⁴³

In Kangra, the Jullundur Doab, and Multan, on the other hand, the *nazims* of the later period enjoyed much longer terms of office: Diwan Sawan Mal acted as *nazim* of Multan for about fifteen years (and was succeeded by his son, Diwan Mul Raj, in 1844), while Sardar Desa Singh Majithia and his son, Sardar Lehna Singh, acted as *nazims* of Kangra for over thirty years.⁴⁴ Provided they paid their specified revenues to Lahore on time and maintained peace and justice, these *nazims* were left to rule their *subas* rather like miniature Maharajas. Diwan Sawan Mal, for example, constructed an elaborate administrative system, made land grants, built canals, introduced new crops, and amassed a considerable, personal fortune.⁴⁵ His land revenue system was characterised by one British officer as having been "the highest possible development of the oriental theory of revenue administration, under which the producers are allowed to retain only so much of the produce as is absolutely necessary for their support, and what is not required for this purpose is appropriated

42. Ganda Singh (ed), *The Punjab in 1839-40*, p.214. A *lakh* equals 100,000. In the nineteenth century 10 rupees (hereafter Rs) were approximately the equivalent of 1 pound sterling (£).

43. Ivor Wilks, "Ashanti Government", in Daryll Forde and P.M. Kaberry (eds), *West African Kingdoms in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1967), pp. 206-38; J. Lombard, "The Kingdom of Dahomey", in *ibid.*, pp. 70-92.

44. n 39 above.

45. For details on Diwan Sawan Mal's government see *Multan DG 1883-84*, p.30; *Muzaffargarh DG 1883-84*, pp. 40-1. According to John Lawrence, Diwan Sawan Mal and his son "paid Ranjit Singh Rs 21,64,000 per annum and collected double that sum from their province": "Statistical Notes on the Punjab by the Commissioner and Superintendent of the Trans-Sutlej Territories on Special Duty at Lahore", 10 Nov 1846: FSC, 26 Dec 1846, nos 1325-7, p. 12 (NAI). A later British report indicates that Multan under Diwan Mul Raj yielded an annual revenue of Rs 3,495,542, from which he paid Rs 2,166,585 to Lahore and was left with Rs 1,228,957 as profit and management expenses: "PAR 1851": FM, no 356, para 178 (NAI).

by the State."⁴⁶ Misr Rup Lal, who was the *nazim* of the Jullundur Doab between 1832 and 1839, is reported as having developed a lenient, yet sophisticated and efficient, system of land revenue administration.⁴⁷

At the level of the *ta'aluqa* (*pargana*), or district, were certain police and judicial functionaries such as the *kotwal* (town or city police chief) and the *qazi* (Islamic civil judge).⁴⁸ The important authority figure in the *ta'aluqa*, however, was either the *jagirdar*, the *ijaradar*, or the *kardar*. Let us begin with the *jagirdar*. It is well known that, like earlier rulers, the Sikhs granted *jagirs* to all manner of servants and clients - from royal princes, chieftains, senior administrators, and high priests to soldiers, dancing girls, cultivators, and village holymen - in lieu of, or in addition to, cash salaries, or as charitable grants.⁴⁹ It seems probably that these *jagirs*, together with small *ma'afis* (grants of revenue-free land) and *incams* (deductions from the land revenue in favour of influential landholders), accounted for between 35 and 45 per cent of the kingdom's total fiscal resources (land revenue, tribute, and customs); in the central districts, close to the capital, the figure was

46. F.C. Channing, Senior Secretary (hereafter Sen Secy) to Financial Commissioner (hereafter FC), Punjab to Secy to Government (hereafter Govt), Punjab, 1 June 1882, no 687, p.3. This letter is reprinted as preface to Edward O'Brien, *Report on the Land Revenue Settlement of the Muzaffargarh District of the Punjab, 1873-80* (Lahore, 1882), (hereafter *SR Muzaffargarh 1873-80*).

47. R. Temple, *Report on the settlement, Under Regn IX, of 1833, of the District of Jullundhur* (Lahore, 1852), (hereafter *SR Jullundur 1852*), pp.12-13.

48. At the outset of his reign Ranjit Singh revived the offices of hereditary *qazis* and *muftis* (assistants) which had been prevalent in Mughal times. The services of *qazis* were used by non-Muslims as well as Muslims. See Grewal, *In the By-Lanes of History*, pp. 8-9; "The Qazi in the Pargana", in Grewal (ed), *Studies In Local And Regional History*, pp. 1-36.

49. These grants will be examined in greater detail in chapter 5.

higher - between 50 and 65 per cent of the district revenues.⁵⁰ Each one of these grants represented a temporary assignment of a portion of the State's legitimate revenues. But the size of individual grants and the social and political status of grantees were both subject to wide variation. Moreover, not all grants carried that accompanying assignment of fiscal and general administrative powers which is usually taken to be one of the defining features of a *jagir*.⁵¹ It is therefore necessary to make a broad distinction between two types of *jagirdar* : the "superior" *jagirdar* and the "inferior" *jagirdar*.

The "superior" *jagirdar*, with whom we are concerned here, was either a royal prince or a member of the feudalistic nobility (chieftains and commoners elevated to chiefly rank by the Maharaja). His *jagirs* were awarded in lieu of, or in addition to, the cash salary that went with his high administrative office or army post. These were worth upwards of several thousands - sometimes several *lakhs* - of rupees per annum⁵² and covered whole *ta'aluqas* or large portions of *ta'aluqas*.⁵³ The "superior"

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50. These percentages are only guesses, based on a variety of estimates. Prinsep quotes Captain Murray's estimate (c.1830s?) of the kingdom's total revenues which indicates that *jagirs*, etc. accounted for 42.3 per cent: Henry T. Prinsep, *Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab* (Patiala, reprint 1970), p.146. Cunningham's estimate of total revenues in 1844 indicates a figure of 35.5 per cent: Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs*, Appendix xxxviii. John Lawrence's estimate of revenues in 1848 (by which time the kingdom had lost Kashmir and the Jullundur Doab) indicates a figure of about 40 per cent: John Lawrence to H.M. Elliot, Secy to GOI, 31 March 1848: FSC, 28 April 1848, nos 57-66 (NAI). In Gujranwala District more than 50 per cent of the revenue was assigned under the Sikhs: *Gujranwala DG 1895*, p.164; in Montgomery District, 60 per cent: *Montgomery DG 1883-84*, p.62; and in Lahore District, 66 per cent: *SR Lahore 1858*, p.23.
51. Wilson defines a *jagir* as a tenure "in which the public revenues of a given tract of land were made over to a servant of the state, together with the powers requisite to enable him to collect and appropriate such revenue, and administer the general government of the district": H.H. Wilson, *A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms of British India* (Delhi, 2nd edn 1968), p.224.
52. See Major R. Leech, "List and Amount of the Jageers of the principal Jageerdars in the Punjab in 1837" (no date): FSC, 18 Nov 1843, no 20 (NAI).
53. For a table showing the allocation of eleven (out of twenty-six) *ta'aluqas* in Gujranwala District to *jagirdars* by Ranjit Singh, see R.P. Nisbet, *Report on the Revision of the Land Revenue Settlement of the Gujranwala District, 1866-67* (Lahore, ?), (hereafter *SR Gujranwala 1866-67*), pp.9-11; *Gujranwala DG 1883-84*, p.28.

jagirdar collected the revenue from the villages in his *jagirs* himself, or employed *kardars* for this purpose. Within his *jagirs* he commonly exercised additional powers such as those of magistrate and judge. Most *jagirs* awarded to "superior" *jagirdars*, particularly those employed in the army or non-specialised administrative offices, carried extra service obligations: the "superior" *jagirdar* was expected to attend court (*darbar*), or keep an agent (*vakil*) there, and furnish a specified number of cavalrymen (*sowars*) out of his *jagirs*.⁵⁴ Immediately prior to annexation one-quarter of the kingdom's total revenues was assigned to "superior" *jagirdars* - earlier than this the proportion may well have been greater.⁵⁵ The "inferior" *jagirdar*, on the other hand, was not an office holder as such, but merely a member of that vast group of minor officials, soldiers, and beneficiaries of the State who received their salaries and allowances in *jagirs* and related grants like *ma'afis* and *inams*. His *jagir* was worth anything between several hundred rupees and just a few rupees per annum, being the revenue due from a few villages, a single village, or a few wells and a piece of land. Occasionally, the "inferior" *jagirdar* collected this revenue himself, but it was more common for him to draw the equivalent in cash from the local treasury.⁵⁶ He exercised little or no additional authority within his *jagir*. The "inferior" *jagirdar* received his grant not only from the Maharaja but also from the "superior" *jagirdar* out of the latter's own *jagirs*.⁵⁷

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54. The Sikhs do not seem to have adopted the Mughal practice of double ranking *mansabdars* according to *zat* (personal rank) and *sowar* (number of soldiers to be furnished). But when, after the annexation of the kingdom, the British prepared statements of *jagirs* held by all the leading chieftains, making a distinction between those portions of *jagirs* held on terms of service (the computation was generally made at the rate of Rs 25 per annum per *sowar*) and those held as purely personal emolument, the ratio was found to be roughly two-fifths service and three-fifths personal.
55. John Lawrence to Elliot, 31 March 1848: FSC, 28 April 1848, nos 57-66 (NAI). In the following two chapters we shall see that after Ranjit Singh's death in 1839 the proportion of total revenues assigned in *jagirs* rose sharply and then dropped away after the British gained control of the *darbar*.
56. For assignments of revenue through *kardars*, see Banga, "Sikh Revenue Administration", pp.72-3.
57. "Superior" *jagirdars* commonly made *madad-i-ma'ash* or *dharmarth* grants and made over portions of their *jagirs* to their families and followers. It might be mentioned that at the death of a "superior" *jagirdar* or resumption of his *jagirs* for any other reason the Sikhs generally acknowledged the first type of sub-grant but not the second.

The second important official at the *ta'aluqa* level was the *ijaradar*, or revenue farmer. Towards the end of Ranjit Singh's reign military and civil government expenditure rose sharply.⁵⁸ This created the need for a more accurate forecast of State revenues and a more certain means of ensuring their remittance to the central treasury. From the early 1830s onwards Ranjit Singh therefore encouraged the practice of farming out the revenues of whole *ta'aluqas*, or blocks of *ta'aluqas* for periods of between three and six years. The royal salt mines at Pind Dadan Khan in the Sind Sagar Doab were also farmed out.⁵⁹ So were forts and cities: in May 1831, for instance, one Wasakha Singh, a "famous resident" of Chandiot, an ancient city in the Rachna Doab, presented himself before the Maharaja and was granted the contract of Akalgarh fort for Rs 15,000 and that of Chandiot for Rs 55,000 per annum.⁶⁰ The *ijaradar* made his own arrangements for the collection of the revenue. Whatever he managed to collect over and above the amount specified in his contract represented his personal profit. From time to time he would be called upon to submit his accounts - or those of the *kardars* under him - to the central auditing office.⁶¹ The *ijaradar* differed from the *nazim* in several respects. The territory under his jurisdiction was smaller. He seldom received a fixed salary. He signed a contract for a specific, limited period of time. He seldom took on any extra-fiscal powers. And though the *ijaradar* could also be selected from the circle of courtiers, he was more likely to be a minor official, like a *kardar*, or a private speculator from the merchant-banker class.⁶²

58. The salary expenditure alone of the army was Rs 30 *lakhs* in 1835 and rose to Rs 46 *lakhs* in 1840: Kohli, "Land Revenue Administration", pp.438-9.

59. "A geographical sketch of the Punjab" (no author, no date): FM, 1830, no 206 (NAI).

60. Suri, *Umdat-Ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar III, pts i-v, p.33. For other examples: *ibid*, pp. 159, 200; Ganda Singh (ed), *The Punjab in 1839-40*, p.164.

61. An examination of the accounts of Sardar Fateh Singh Ahluwalia's *kardars* in 1831 showed that he was Rs 190,000 in arrears. Ranjit Singh struck off Rs 15,000 to meet the expenses of the *kardars* and the same sum for jewellery for the Sardar's son, and ordered him to remit the balance: Suri, *Umdat-Ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar III, pts i-v, p.30.

62. Kohli, "Land Revenue Administration", p.439; Banga, "Agrarian System", pp.276-84. For a list of big *ijaradars*, and *nazims*, see Major R. Leech, "List and Amount of the Revenue Farms of parts of the Punjab in 1837" (no date): FSC, 18 Nov 1843, no 21 (NAI).

The third important official at the *ta'aluqa* level was the *kardar*. The term *kardar* was sometimes applied to a whole range of officials in the "national" system including, for example, customs officials.⁶³ Nevertheless, it was most frequently applied to the official charged with the general administration of the *ta'aluqa* - the counterpart, in other words, of the Afghan *amin* or the Mughal *'amil*. Some *kardars* were direct appointees of the Maharaja and were sent to work under a *nazim*, *ijaradar*, or "superior" *jagirdar*, or in a *ta'aluqa* over which the only higher authority was the Maharaja himself. Others were appointed by the *nazim*, *ijaradar*, or "superior" *jagirdar*. In Multan Diwan Sawan Mal employed five grades of *kardars* on salaries of between Rs 180 and Rs 720 per annum. These *kardars* were assisted by five grades of *muharirs* (deputies) on salaries of between Rs 96 and Rs 240 per annum.⁶⁴

According to Kohli, the salary of the *kardar* directly appointed by the Maharaja was broadly proportional to the annual value of the *ta'aluqa* in his charge. Most received between Rs 300 and Rs 1,500 per annum.⁶⁵ Some had several *ta'aluqas* in their charge, and their salaries were correspondingly higher. British officials who had come into direct contact with *kardars* in the 1840s were quick to point out that most of them had supplemented, sometimes even doubled, their fixed salaries by way of perquisites, illegal cesses, and bribes.⁶⁶ It would seem, however, that this practice became widespread only after central authority in the kingdom collapsed. A strong ruler like Ranjit Singh or a strong *nazim* like Diwan Sawan Mal generally kept a close eye on the *kardar's* activities

63. For some of the applications, see Banga, "Sikh Revenue Administration", pp.70-1. Many British officials employed the term generically to include all provincial officials (*nazims*, *ijaradars* and *kardars*). But while it is true that an individual could simultaneously be, say, both a *kardar* and an *ijaradar*, the actual offices were quite distinct.

64. *Muzaffargarh DG 1883-84*, pp. 40-1.

65. Kohli, "Land Revenue Administration", p.451.

66. For example Barnes (Settlement Officer, Kangra District), quoted in J.M. Douie, *Punjab Settlement Manual* (Lahore, 4th edn 1930), p.20. The authors of the first PAR wrote that because the pay of *kardars* was "uncertain and precarious", "it seemed to be tacitly understood that they must live by the perquisites of their appointments": "PAR 1851": FM, no 356, para 19 (NAI).

and level of affluence.⁶⁷ Besides, the *kardar* was not normally allowed to serve at one place for a lengthy period, and was thus unable to extend his power and influence in the *ta'aluqa*. Ganesh Das's information on the administrators of Gujrat shows that the average tenure of the *kardar* under the Sikh monarchs was only about two and a half years, compared with the average of about six years enjoyed by the '*amil*' during the reigns of the Mughal emperors Akbar and Shah Jahan.⁶⁸

The *kardar* who was an appointee of the Maharaja or strong *nazim* was the principal representative of government in the countryside. Accordingly, he exercised a multiplicity of duties. He was a revenue collector, an agricultural development officer, a treasurer, an excise and customs officer, and a judge and magistrate all rolled into one. A translated specimen of Diwan Sawan Mal's instructions to a *kardar* makes this very clear. The *kardar* is first enjoined to treat his subjects well, extend cultivation, and collect the revenue diligently. Then follow detailed instructions on the apprehension of criminals, the remittance of the *khariif* and *rabi* revenues in regular instalments, the recording of current prices, the annual settling of accounts, the maintenance of irrigation canals, the assessment of the revenue in consultation with "local" system officials, and the payment of salaries to soldiers under his charge.⁶⁹ Other duties expected of the *kardar* included the organising of religious festivals and the entertaining of important visitors to the locality.⁷⁰ In some ways, then the *kardar* resembles the Chinese local magistrate during the Ch'ing period or the French intendant under Bourbon Absolutism.

As the official directly responsible for the assessment and collection of the land revenue, and for the implementation of the State's general agrarian policies, the *kardar* provided the link between the "national"

67. For example, a translated specimen of Diwan Sawan Mal's instructions to a *kardar* includes the following warning: "Subsist on your pay. Covet not from any one, and rest your hopes on no one, nor let your *muharrirs* do so. If you do, you are strictly responsible" : *SR Muzaffargarh 1873-80*, p.52.

68. Grewal and Banga (trans and eds), *Early Nineteenth Century Panjab*, pp. 64-6.

69. *SR Muzaffargarh 1873-80*, p.52.

70. Suri, *Umdat-Ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar III, pts i-v, pp. 4, 34, 55.

and "local" systems of government. To appreciate this point we need to outline briefly the theory and practice of land revenue administration under the Sikhs. Who owned the land? Who paid the revenue? How much of the surplus product did the State demand? How was it collected? The full answers to these questions are exceedingly complex, partly because, as we have already seen, there was considerable diversity in the productivity of the land and the kinds of communities it supported, partly because Sikh rule was stronger in some tracts than in others, and partly because Sikh revenue administration was a constantly evolving, rather than static, system. What we have to say here therefore represents a series of highly generalised statements.⁷¹

When Marx described private property in land as "the great desideratum of Asiatic society"⁷² he was echoing the conclusion reached by many British officials in India that, since nearly everyone connected with the land possessed some recognised right in it, the land was owned communally, or rather - if the European definition of property be applied - not owned by anyone.⁷³ This conclusion is correct up to a point. In the Bar tracts of the arid zone, where grazing land was plentiful, proprietary rights in land scarcely existed. The only prescriptive rights to which the pastoral tribes attached any importance were the right to use certain wells and the right to enjoy a certain territorial sphere of influence.⁷⁴

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71. A more detailed picture will emerge in later chapters (especially Chapters 4 and 5) when we examine the land revenue settlements made by the British.
72. Karl Marx, "The Future Results of the British Rule in India" (1853), in David Fernbach (ed), *Karl Marx, Surveys from Exile: Political Writings* (London, 1973), vol 2, p.320.
73. Trevaskis wrote: "Prior to British rule the English conception of property in land as a transferable marketable commodity, absolutely owned and passing from hand to hand like any chattel, did not exist": Hugh Kennedy Trevaskis, *The Land of the Five Rivers: An Economic History of the Punjab from the Earliest Times to the Year of Grace 1890* (London, 1928), p.234.
74. G. Ouseley and W.G. Davies, *Report on the Revised Settlement of the Shahpooor District in the Rawulpindee Division, 1866* (Lahore, 1866), (hereafter *SR Shahpur 1866*), p.62.

In the cultivated tracts, where several cultivating groups often claimed an interest in the same piece of land, the rights were sometimes so conditional, so overlapping, so grudgingly admitted by the State that they could hardly be called proprietary rights. But, at the same time, sale and mortgage of land were not unknown: in most cases the Sikh rulers treated authenticated deeds of sale and mortgage as being of immutable validity.⁷⁵ Moreover, the Sikh rulers frequently cut through the maze of conflicting claims to land to create what were practically exclusive proprietary rights. Under Sikh rule landownership was not simply a question of either abstract principles or time-honoured rights and responsibilities. It was, rather, a highly political question involving the strength and fiscal imperatives of the State on the one hand and the resilience or adaptability of the cultivating communities on the other.

Basically, the Sikhs recognised two kinds of proprietors in most villages: "primary" *zamindars* and "intermediary" *zamindars*.⁷⁶ Where Sikh rule was strong the position of the "primary" *zamindars* was strongest; where Sikh rule was weak the position of the "intermediary" *zamindars* was strongest. The Sikhs had a clear preference for the former. "Primary" *zamindars* were peasant proprietors who cultivated the land themselves or with the help of hired village labour. Wherever possible, the *kardar* made the revenue settlement with them. In *suba* Multan the *kardars* employed by Diwan Sawan Mal created "primary" *zamindars* either by inviting cultivators to establish new villages in the waste, for which they were granted small agricultural loans (*takavis*) to cover costs, or by ousting

75. See the abstracts of sale and mortgage deeds in B.N. Goswamy and J.S. Grewal, *The Mughal and Sikh Rulers and the Vaishnavas of Pindori: A Historical Interpretation of 52 Persian Documents* (Simla, 1969), pp. 45-6, 48, 50-1. In some places, particularly in the densely populated riverbank tracts, the cultivators exercised the right of mortgaging their cultivation: *SR Gujranwala 1856*, p.55.

76. *SR Gujrat 1861*, pp. 104-7; *SR Jullundur 1852*, pp. 25-33; *SR Muzaffargarh 1873-80*, p.91. The British used a variety of terms to describe the two kinds of proprietors: "inferior proprietors" and "superior proprietors"; *maliks* (landowners) and *malguzars* (revenue payers); *malik adnas* (inferior proprietors) and *malik alas* (superior proprietors). I have preferred the terms "primary" *zamindars* and "intermediary" *zamindars* in keeping with Hasan's classification of medieval rural India into autonomous "chieftains", "intermediary zamindars" and "primary zamindars": See Nurul Hasan, *Thoughts on Agrarian Relations in Mughal India* (New Delhi, 1973), pp. 30-40. The position of the chieftains under Sikh rule will be examined in the next section of this chapter.

the old cultivators from their villages and locating more enterprising cultivators (often Brahmans and Khatris) in their place.⁷⁷ The rights of these "primary" *zamindars*, which included sale and mortgage, were conditional on continuous economic performance:

Under Sawan Mal there was a great deal of personal interference with the cultivators.... The *kardars* managed for the cultivators, made them cultivate, made the Hindus lend them money, and made the borrowers repay. The agriculturists were pitted against one another to cultivate. If one man did not cultivate his land, it was given to another who did.⁷⁸

In the northern tracts, particularly in the Manjha and Des, where the "primary" *zamindars* were members of the dominant *got* or *gots* in the village, the *kardar's* interference was tolerated less. These villages were coparcenaries, the lands and wells being divided amongst the cultivators on the basis of fixed, customary shares. Strangers were jealously excluded. Rarely was a cultivator permitted to transfer his share to an outsider even though he might be a resident of a neighbouring village or a member of the same *got*. Tenant cultivators⁷⁹ who enjoyed hereditary occupancy rights and paid the revenue themselves can be counted as "primary" *zamindars*; but other tenants were not allowed to engage for the revenue, plant trees or sink wells since these activities might be treated by the *kardar* as conferring "primary" *zamindar* status. As long as these peasant proprietors paid their revenue and kept up their village in a high state of cultivation the *kardar* left them to their own affairs. Indeed, he would assist them to preserve their traditions, to adjust their shares at the departure or death of a member of the coparcenary and to keep outside parties away.⁸⁰

"Intermediary" *zamindars* were all those persons who possessed a recognised right to a certain share of the produce of land which they were not cultivating themselves. Often, they enjoyed special rights in the waste land of the village - the right to graze their animals or gather fuel, for example - as well. A *zamindar* who possessed occupancy and

77. For an example, see the entry for Wara village in Arthur H. Cock's report on the summary settlement of the lower Rachna Doab, 21 Feb 1848: FSC, 28 April 1848, nos 57-66 (NAI).

78. *SR Muzaffargarh 1873-80*, p.87.

79. We shall examine the position of tenant cultivators in later chapters. Here we may simply note that because land was plentiful in pre-modern Punjab, tenants were not numerous; seldom did they exceed half the number of the proprietary cultivators.

80. *SR Jullundur 1852*, p.27.

cultivating rights in a piece of land but leased it to a tenant (who paid rent to the *zamindar* and revenue to the *kardar*) was an "intermediary" *zamindar*. Tribal chieftains who received the *chaharam* remission from the revenues were "intermediary" *zamindars*. Descendants of the original grazing tribes, former "primary" *zamindars* now ousted, former *jagirdars* or *ijaradars* who had managed to acquire some permanent control over the land, and "local" system officials (*chaudharis*, *lambardars*, *qanungos* and *patwaris* - upon whom more in a moment), all of whom received *inams* out of the village revenues, may be included in this category. It was a feature of Sikh rule that "intermediary" *zamindars* were never permitted to gain control of the village communities and their revenues in the manner of the *taluqdars* of northern India.⁸¹ In fact, wherever possible, the Sikhs tried to reduce "intermediary" *zamindars* with any pretensions to ruling power to the status of "primary" *zamindars* or even tenant cultivators. In the western portion of Rawalpindi district, where Sikh rule was established late and was always fairly weak, the old ruling tribes - Gakkhars, Junjuas, Goleras and Dumals - retained control of their lands and paid a light revenue. But in the eastern portion of the district Sikh rule was strong and uncompromising. Where the tribes were prepared to accept the heavier revenue demand the engagement was made with their village headmen. Where the tribes were not prepared to accept the revenue demand the villages were farmed out to *ijaradars*, outside cultivators were placed in the villages with all the rights of "primary" *zamindars* and the previous owners were expelled. At the same time, the tribal chieftains were gradually reduced. At first they were granted *jagirs* which were later resumed and replaced with *chaharam* grants; ultimately the *chaharam* grants were absorbed and replaced in a few instances with paltry *inams*.⁸² It might be noted that this process was not effected without bloodshed and considerable political commotion. Nor were the lost rights quickly forgotten, as the British were to discover when they came to make their own land revenue settlements.

81. Of course a *nazim* like Diwan Sawan Mal could be regarded as having been similar to a *taluqdar*. But, in theory at least, he was a non-proprietary State servant.

82. *SR Rawalpindi 1864*, pp. 117-18.

According to the ancient law of the land the ruling power in India has always been entitled to a share in the produce of the soil.⁸³ In theory, the Sikhs claimed an even half share, but this portion was actually taken only from the richest tracts. Over most of the kingdom, except at the periphery, where Sikh authority was limited, or in those tracts where cultivation was not yet fully established, the State's portion fluctuated between one-third and two-fifths of the gross produce depending on the seasons, the quality of the soil, the availability of water for irrigation, and the strength of the proprietary community. There were at least five modes of assessing the revenue. During the first and second periods of Ranjit Singh's reign (until 1824) the most common mode was the simple one of *batai*, or division of the harvested crop on the thrashing-floor into the shares of the cultivator and the State. The State's share was marked with a government seal (*tappa*) and stored in a warehouse until sold to a local merchant. Not infrequently, however, the *kardar* took up the speculation of the produce through his own agents.⁸⁴ From about 1824 the *batai* mode was supplemented by a new procedure called *kankut*, whereby the areas of standing crops were measured, the harvest estimated, and the State's share sold back to the cultivator at prices equal to, or above, the current market rates. The advantages to the *kardar* of the *kankut* mode was that he could collect the revenue in cash before the harvest and the fall in prices. But it was a calamitous system for the cultivator who, having to pay the revenue before the harvest, became indebted to the moneylender.⁸⁵ Certain crops that were difficult to divide or whose harvest was difficult to estimate - sugar, cotton and tobacco - were assessed by the *zabti* method, whereby fixed cash rates per

83. This paragraph is based on Cocks's report on the summary settlement of the lower Rachna Doab: FSC, 28 April 1848, nos 57-66 (NAI); "PAR 1851": FM, no 356, paras 162-4 (NAI); Kohli, "Land Revenue Administration", pp. 437-48; and Douie, *Punjab Settlement Manual*, pp. 19-21.

84. *SR Sialkot 1863*, pp. 52-3.

85. Lake's report on the summary settlement of the upper Bari Doab: FSC, 28 April 1848, nos 57-66 (NAI). Lake reports that the moneylenders charged interest rates of between 10 and 12 per cent. Also, *SR Gurdaspur 1856*, p.12. Davies mentions an interest rate of 25 per cent.

unit of land under the crop were applied. The fourth mode was the assessment of wells at rates varying between Rs 20 and Rs 80 per annum and ploughs at rates of between Rs 5 and Rs 30 per annum. Fifthly, the grazing tax (*tirmi*) was levied from the pastoral tribes on the basis of the number of animals in their possession. It should be added that besides the revenue proper, a number of cesses (*abwabs*) were imposed on the cultivators, presumably as a way of recovering at least part of the amount paid out of the State's share of the produce in *inams* and other petty expenses.⁸⁶ It is doubtful whether the *kardar* remitted all of this extra revenue as he ought to have done. Cocks described the *abwab* system as a "complicated" system that provided "a screen behind which local authorities could conduct their nefarious activities", and enumerated more than a dozen items which fell within its scope.⁸⁷

The actual collection of the revenue from the "primary" *zamindars*, and much of the detailed administrative work that accompanied it, were performed by officials in the "local" system of government. The *chaudhari* and *lambaradar* (or *muqaddam*) were the "big-men" of village society, the hereditary headmen of the dominant lineage groups. Under Sikh rule and, before that, Mughal rule, they wielded considerable influence, and this was recognised by the *kardar* as well as by the village community. As we saw when we examined the origins of the Sikh *misl*, the *chaudhari* and *lambaradar* were ideally situated to create supralocal forms of organisation. The Sikh authorities, especially the *kardars*, were at all times anxious to keep them on side. The *chaudhari* was headman of the *tappa*, or circle of villages. He helped the *kardar* collect the revenue from the "primary" *zamindars* and generally looked after the interests of his villages. In return for these services he was permitted to hold an *inam* of revenue-free land (or wells) and receive a commission of 5 per cent (*pachotra*) on the revenues collected. Very often, he managed to wring additional presents and privileges out of the *kardar*.⁸⁸ The duties and allowances of the

86. The amounts recorded under this head in the returns of certain *kardars* are equal to between 5 and 12 per cent of the revenue proper: Kohli, "Land Revenue Administration", p.447.

87. Cocks's report: FSC, 28 April 1848, nos 57-66 (NAI). Also, *SR Jullundur 1852*, p.26.

88. For example, many *chaudharis* told the British settlement officers that their grandfathers had been "Palkee Nisheen" (entitled to ride in a palanquin): *SR Sialkot 1863*, p.108.

lambardar were almost identical, the main difference being that his jurisdiction was the single village (*mauza*) or lineage section (*taraf* or *patti*) of the village.⁸⁹ Under the *kankut* system of assessment the surveyors (*kachchus*) and appraisers (*kaniyas*) were generally recruited by the *kardar* from the headmen families.⁹⁰

The other branch of the "local" system of government was concerned with the maintenance of revenue records. Here, too, the offices were hereditary. Traditionally, the records of each district had been compiled by an accountant called the *qanungo*. Since late Mughal times, however, there were often three or four *qanungos* to each *ta'aluqa*, which suggests that the *qanungo's* jurisdiction was the *tappa*. The *qanungo* kept a register of village boundaries and collected statistics on cultivation, harvests, and the disposal of the produce according to the assessment. He was paid either a cash salary of about Rs 360 per annum or a small percentage of the produce.⁹¹ Many *qanungos* were Khattris whose families had held the office since Mughal times.⁹² The *patwari* was a lesser version of the *qanungo*, just as the *lambardar* was a lesser version of the *chaudhari*. His jurisdiction was the *tope*, which could cover a large village or several adjacent villages. He followed the *kardar* and *kaniyas* at the time of assessment and recorded the details of the assessment in his field book (*khet khusrak*). His remuneration was usually a commission of between 1 and 2 per cent on the collections. In theory, the *patwari* was as much a servant of the village community as he was of the State. In practice, however, he often used his position as repository of all information relating to proprietary and cultivation rights to exert a personal influence over village affairs generally.⁹³ Unlike the British, who attempted to subject the whole "local" system of government to direct State control, the Sikhs were not particularly concerned about who the

89. *SR Amritsar 1856*, p.104; *SR Gurdaspur 1892*, p.57; *SR Lahore 1858*, p.12; *SR Sialkot 1863*, p.94.

90. *Sialkot DG 1883-84*, p.93.

91. Kohli, "Land Revenue Administration", p.452.

92. Throughout his work, *Char Bagh-i-Panjab*, Ganesh Das makes numerous references to Khattris holding the office of *qanungo* on an hereditary basis: Grewal and Banga (trans and eds), *Early Nineteenth Century Panjab*.

93. *SR Gujranwala 1866-67*, p.48.

patwari was, how he came to hold his office or what his relationship with the cultivators was, so long as the revenue kept flowing in.

Ranjit Singh and the chieftains

We may conclude this chapter with an examination of the politics of rulership. What sort of ruler was Ranjit Singh? What was the basis of his authority? What kinds of relationships existed between him and the chieftains?

We would suggest that, at a theoretical level, the answers to these questions are to be found in Weber's concept of "decentralised patrimonial authority."⁹⁴ Weber defined the "patrimonial" sub-type of "traditional authority" as that authority within a corporate territorial group that is still primarily oriented to tradition (as is the case with "gerontocracy" and "patriarchalism") but in its exercise makes the claim of full personal powers (as is the case with "sultanism"). "Patrimonialism" is also characterised by the presence of an "administrative staff" - especially a regular military force under the ruler's direct control. When, in a system of "patrimonial authority", particular powers and the corresponding economic advantages have become "appropriated", by members of the corporate group or the "administrative staff", that authority has become "decentralised."⁹⁵

The effect of the transition from "patriarchalism" to "patrimonialism" is to emancipate an important part of the structure of authority from the direct control of tradition. The ruler's authority is still traditionally legitimised, but the detailed means and ends of its exercise have fallen within the sphere of his personal prerogative. One consequence of this emancipation from traditionalism is the sudden and massive enlargement

94. Max Weber's *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (ed by Talcott Parsons, New York, 1964), pp. 341-58. For an excellent application of Weber's theory to the history of an East African kingdom, see Martin Southwold, *Bureaucracy and Chiefship in Buganda: The Development of Appointive Office in the History of Buganda* (East African Studies, No 14, Kampala, no date). The theoretical discussion of the following paragraphs is based on these two works.

95. Weber uses the examples of the Indian *jagirdar* and revenue farmer in his definition of "decentralised patrimonialism": *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, pp. 349-50.

of the ruler's orbit of free individual action and planning. But another equally fundamental consequence is the unloosening of a potential struggle for power which could not have developed under primary traditionalism. How can the ruler reconcile old kinship norms of authority, often still prevalent, with new State norms?⁹⁶ How can the members of the group be expected to demonstrate their blind loyalty - or, indeed, any kind of loyalty - to the ruler when many of the ties that traditionally bound them to him have been cut away? How is the ruler to ensure, where authority has become "decentralised", that his subordinates are not doing unnecessary governing?

Weber pays particular attention to the power struggle between the ruler and his "administrative staff". Where the administrators have appropriated certain powers and economic advantages, there is every possibility that they will build up a body of followers whose primary loyalty is to the administrators themselves, and will turn against the ruler. The ruler's task is to prevent this - to check the tendency for the administrators to transform themselves from a "status group" into an "aristocracy". Thus, he commonly adopts the following measures: he appoints the subordinates of the administrators himself and makes them responsible to himself, not the administrators; he frustrates the formation of local groups loyal to the administrators by frequently transferring the administrators from one place to another; he checks the aggregation of power groups based upon descent ties by avoiding the succession of kinsmen to important administrative posts; he exercises the right and the power to appoint whoever he chooses as administrators and to dismiss them, as he sees fit; he claims the right to attach any portion of an administrator's private wealth that could be said to be derived from administrative posts awarded by, and powers appropriated from, the ruler; and he demands extra-administrative service, particularly military service, from the administrators.

96. Fallers has demonstrated that the simultaneous establishment of authority in African kingdoms on kinship norms and State norms was often conducive to political instability and conflict: Lloyd A. Fallers, *Bantu Bureaucracy* (Cambridge, 1956), pp. 12-17, 227-38.

For their part, the administrators attempt to resist the successful implementation of the ruler's measures, either by publicly opposing them or by privately subverting them. Two important measures, which stop short of open rebellion, that they can adopt, are to jointly appeal for the ruler's acknowledgement of the inviolability of traditionalism (the ideological foundation of the State or a former sharing of power) and to individually claim exceptional treatment on the grounds of outstanding personal service or social rank.

If the resistance of the administrators becomes serious, the ruler is almost obliged to build up a "new staff", recruited from the ranks of the commoners in the corporate group or from outside the corporate group. The function of the "new staff" is to weaken the power of the "aristocracy" by providing the ruler with a group of more loyal administrators. The "new staff" may be appointed to a new set of offices alongside those occupied by the "aristocracy", in which case the relative power of the latter is reduced; or it may be appointed to those offices occupied by the "aristocracy", in which case the latter is at least partially driven from positions of power. When the ruler creates a "new staff" a crisis situation arises: the "aristocracy" may revolt and appoint a new ruler who is sympathetic to their expectations and demands; or, if the ruler is politically weak, the "new staff" may quickly transform itself into an "aristocracy", in which case the process of creating a "new staff" must be repeated. However, if the ruler survives the crisis and neither possibility eventuates, his own power will be considerably enhanced.

As Southwold remarks:

In such societies, therefore, provided the monarchical principle itself is not repudiated, there is likely to be a repetition of such processes under their various forms. Provided no Aristocracy succeeds in firmly entrenching its power, it is likely that the power of the Lord will gradually increase, since the residues of each cycle come to produce a system of such complexity that the sovereign alone has extensive freedom to manipulate it.⁹⁷

When the personal authority of the ruler becomes maximised, and the primary stress is upon arbitrary will emancipated from any traditional limitations, "patrimonial authority" could be said to have developed into "sultanism".

97. Southwold, *Bureaucracy and Chiefship in Buganda*, p.4.

The Sikh kingdom provides much of Weber's theory with specific historical confirmation. Ranjit Singh legitimised his authority by associating it with two important traditions - the tradition of Indian rulership and the tradition of Khalsa rulership. On the one hand, he consciously adopted most of the ancient rituals and symbols employed by Indian kings. For example, he sat on a throne (*gaddi*), held court (*darbar*), granted costumes of honour (*khil'ats*), patronised important festivals (like Baisakh and Divali), employed court astrologers, maintained ceremonial elephants, and possessed a special emblem of sovereignty (the famous "Koh-i-Nur" diamond). On the other hand, he consciously invoked the mystic authority of the Khalsa. He styled his government as the "Sarkar Khalsa" and had his coins (Nanakshahi rupees) minted not with his own profile but with the seal of the Khalsa. It is reported that he generally refused to wear the turban and other costumes of royalty, and that he preferred to be approached with a simple form of address ("Sarkar").⁹⁸ But Ranjit Singh was no religious bigot; given the minority position of the Sikhs in the Punjab, he could not afford to be. In fact, he was always determined to dampen the enthusiasm of the militant Sikh sects - in particular the Akalis, who never abandoned the hope that the monarchy would one day be transformed into the theocratic republic prophesied by Guru Gobind Singh.⁹⁹

Ultimately, however, Ranjit Singh derived his authority from, and owed his success to, his ability to exert an immense personal influence over the political affairs of his kingdom. We know, from the accounts of European visitors to his court, that he possessed an extraordinarily keen and inquiring mind.¹⁰⁰ We also know, from written copies of his orders, that he possessed an indefatigable capacity for work, and that,

98. Abdul Ali, "Notes on Ranjit Singh", pp. 52-3; Prinsep, *Origin of Sikh Power*, p.143; Khushwant Singh, *History of the Sikhs*, vol 1, p.201.

99. For the role of the Akalis (devotees of *Akal*: "The Eternal One, God") within the Sikh community, and for their notoriously reckless militarism (in which capacity they were known as Nihangs: "those without fear"), see Rose, *Glossary of Tribes and Castes*, Vol 11, pp. 9-10. For punitive measures taken against disorderly Akalis and Nihangs, see Suri, *Umdat-Ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar III, pts iv, pp. 174, 255-6, 400, 449, 593.

100. For some vivid - and most flattering - European impressions of Ranjit Singh's character, see Abdul Ali, "Notes on Ranjit Singh", pp. 42-4.

in military matters especially, he insisted on knowing the minute details of his government.¹⁰¹ But his greatest asset by far was his ability to manipulate and restrain the chieftains. In the thirty-eight years of his reign as Maharaja there were possibly only two instances of rebellion on the part of chieftains who had previously tendered their allegiance to him.¹⁰²

Ranjit Singh could not do without his chieftains. His system of government was never so monocratic or so universalistic that he could afford to ignore their high social and political status. The chieftains - comprising *sardars* who had survived the eclipse of the *misls*, tribal leaders who were taken into service following their subjugation, and commoners who were elevated to the ranks of the titled - formed the core of his "administrative staff". As we have seen, some of them managed to entrench themselves in top offices such as that of *nazim*. Others entrenched themselves in the army.¹⁰³ Broadly speaking, however, Ranjit Singh always desired to retard, rather than encourage, the growth of their powers and privileges - to limit them to an amorphous, dependent status category, rather than permit them to develop into an "aristocracy" capable of independent action. It was his policy to mix men of different background and religion in his army regiments in order to prevent mutiny.¹⁰⁴ He continually siphoned off the upper level of army officers, giving them duties as *nazims* or *ijaradars* or reducing them to "superior" *jagirdars* burdened with service obligations. In their place he elevated a whole new class of military commanders recruited essentially from the Sikh Jat

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101. S.R. Kohli, "A Book of Military Parwanas", in *Indian History Congress Proceedings*, vol 4, 1940, pp. 367-71.
102. At any rate, I have encountered only two instances; one occurred in 1821, the other in 1826 (both were short-lived and unsuccessful). For details, see Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 1, pp. 480-1; Abdul Ali, "Notes on Ranjit Singh", p.51.
103. The family of Jai Singh Man, for example, at one time held no fewer than twenty-two top military posts: Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 2, p.157. Most chieftains placed at least one of their sons in the Dera Khas - a regiment for sons of chieftains, from which officers were drawn: *ibid*, vol 1, p.495; Gulshan Lall Chopra, *The Panjab as a Sovereign State* (Hoshiarpur, 2nd edn, 1960), p.162.
104. *Ibid*, p.169.

villages of the Manjha.¹⁰⁵ The process involved a continuous recruitment of troops from the base of the "local system" of government and a transference of military and administrative officers back and forth between the top of the army and the upper levels of the "national system" of government.

It was also Ranjit Singh's policy to undermine, as far as could safely be done, the rural power base of the chieftains. Towards this end he adopted a number of strategies. *Jagir* grants to chieftains were usually located in the central districts, close to the capital, and were constantly shifted about and kept fragmented so as to prevent the grantees from establishing local roots.¹⁰⁶ Chieftains were often forbidden to hold more than a small portion of their ancestral lands in *jagir*.¹⁰⁷ When a chieftain died his *jagirs* were usually resumed and released to his family only after they had paid one-quarter or one-half of the value of the *jagirs* to the Maharaja as a gift (*nazrana*) which re-affirmed their vassalage.¹⁰⁸ Ranjit Singh encouraged the chieftains to build their palaces (*havelis*) in or close to the capital and to lead sumptuous lives. He quickly despatched his army to demolish any unauthorised forts constructed in the provinces by the chieftains.¹⁰⁹ He made himself an accessible source of ultimate authority and justice to the *zamindars* so that they could petition him, either at public *darbar* or during one of his many tours through the countryside, to intervene in any revenue dispute between them and their *ijaradar*, *kardar*, or *jagirdar*.¹¹⁰ He frequently played off one chieftain family - or one internal family faction -

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105. *SR Lahore 1858*, p.18. For the example of the Mokal family, who under Ranjit Singh rose from village cultivators in Lahore District to "considerable power" in the kingdom and held *jagirs* worth Rs 135,000, see Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 1, p.371.
106. This is made clear in the *jagir* statements drawn up by the British after the annexation of the kingdom. We shall refer to these statements in Chapter 5.
107. For example, Atar Singh Majithia was permitted to hold his ancestral *ta'aluqa* of Dhani in *ijar* but not in *jagir*: Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 1, p.415.
108. *Ibid*, vol 2, pp. 86-90. For an example of 63 per cent of a *jagir* being demanded as *nazrana*, see Foreign Political Proceedings (hereafter FPP), 3 April 1850, no 280 (NAI).
109. Suri, *Umdat-Ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar III, pts i-v, pp. 169, 533.
110. *Ibid*, pp. 298, 533; *SR Rawalpindi 1864*, pp. 65-6.

against another, and always asserted his right to decide succession questions.¹¹¹

An effective counterweight to the ambitions of the older, established chieftain families was found in what might be called a "new staff", comprising administrators initially recruited as clients and frequently later elevated to chieftain rank. We cannot say that at a particular stage in his reign Ranjit Singh felt compelled to create a "new staff" in response to an attempt on the part of the older chieftain families to turn themselves into an "aristocracy", because the patron-client relationship, as an alternative to the suzerain-vassal relationship, had been steadily developing ever since the *misl* period. Nevertheless, there are signs that a "new staff" had edged the older chieftain families out of many positions of power and influence by the end of Ranjit Singh's reign. Take the office of *kardar*, for example. There is evidence to suggest that in the early years of Sikh rule the office was dominated by Sikh and Muslim Jats.¹¹² But out of 107 *kardars* holding office between the mid-1830s and the late-1840s, only twelve were Muslims and only fifteen were Sikhs (and we may assume that some of these belonged to *zats* other than the Jat *zat*). The remainder were mostly Brahmans and Hindu Khatri.¹¹³ The fact that many of them had titles like *lalla*, *misr* and *diwan* - which denote skills of literacy and administration - suggests that, as the kingdom's revenue administration became more complex and more dependent on the maintenance of accurate records, they were recruited out of consideration for their experience and expertise.¹¹⁴ Members of the "new staff" also occupied important posts at the *darbar* level of the "national" system of government. We may cite the examples of Diwan Dina Nath, a Kashmiri Brahman (his father had served the Mughal emperors at Delhi), who became *diwan* of Ranjit Singh's civil and finance departments in 1834; Faqir (Muslim title of respect) Aziz-ud-Din Bokhari, who became one of the Maharaja's most trusted *vakils*; and Jamadar (head domestic

111. Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 1, pp.230,431; Suri *Umdat-Ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar III, pts i-v, p.23.

112. *SR Jullundur 1852*, p.13.

113. I have collected the names of these *kardars* from a variety of records.

114. Ganesh Das, himself a Khatri, wrote: "In the beginning, the *Khatri*s did not enter the service of the Sikh rulers on account of the regard they had for their own honour. They took to business. When the Sikh rulers realized that the affairs of government and finance could not be set right by degrading the *Khatri*s they called the *Khatri*s with due respect and entrusted all financial matters to them. Gradually, they came to serve the Sikh rulers with loyalty as they had served the rulers of former times. In the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh their respect and status increased and they were given high positions" : Grewal and Banga (trans and eds), *Early Nineteenth Century Panjab*, p.123.

servant) Khushhal Singh, son of a Brahman shopkeeper, who rose from palace guard to *deorhiwala* and thence to a top military command.¹¹⁵

The most powerful members of the "new staff", however, were the Rajput Dogra brothers from Jammu: Gulab Singh, Dhian Singh, and Suchet Singh. Their rise to power was nothing short of phenomenal. In 1814 they had been troopers in the Jammu cavalry on Rs 3 per day each.¹¹⁶ By 1837 they had been created Rajas, and had come to hold a strong grip on the kingdom's financial and political affairs. Raja Gulab Singh Dogra held revenue farms worth Rs 26 *lakhs*. Raja Dhian Singh Dogra was *wazir*, or chief minister, and held revenue farms worth Rs 100 *lakhs* and *jagirs* worth nearly Rs 23 *lakhs*.¹¹⁷ His son, Raja Hira Singh Dogra, became one of the Maharaja's great favourites. In 1837 a royal command was issued granting Hira Singh the privilege of a chair at the *darbar*.¹¹⁸ The Dogras used their proximity to the Maharaja to lord it over the other chieftains at the *darbar*. They secured administrative positions and presented bids for revenue farms for their relatives and followers.¹¹⁹ They accepted *nazrana* from other chieftains for interceding to secure the restoration of lost *jagirs* or the confirmation of hereditary titles.¹²⁰

Many of the older chieftain families bitterly resented the intrusion of the Dogras and responded either by attaching themselves to one of the royal princes as a means of insurance against loss of power and wealth.¹²¹

115. Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 1, pp.256-1, 296-307; vol 2, pp. 139-44.

116. Kohli, *Catalogue of Records*, vol II, p.50.

117. Leech, "List of Jageers" and "List of Revenue Farms": FSC, 18 Nov 1843, nos 20-1 (NAI).

118. Royal commands (*farmans*) addressed to Hira Singh are summarised in Hari Ram Gupta, *Panjab on the Eve of the First Sikh War* (Hoshiarpur, 1956), pp. xxxv-xxxvi.

119. For an example, see Ganda Singh (ed), *The Punjab in 1839-40*, p.7.

120. For an example, see Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 1, p.371.

121. The princes Kharak Singh, Nao Nihal Singh, Sher Singh, Kashmira Singh and Peshawara Singh administered revenue farms worth a total of Rs 2,624,168 in 1837, besides substantial *jagirs*: Leech, "List of Revenue Farms": FSC, 18 Nov 1843, no 21 (NAI). Many chieftain families profited by the marriage alliances they made with the princes: for an example, see Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 2, pp. 55-6.

or by building up the number of their own followers in the hope of being recognised as a powerful patron.¹²² In other words, politics in the kingdom tended to operate according to factions. While he was alive and active, Ranjit Singh was able to manipulate these factions by playing them off against each other, or by breaking them up by transferring their leaders from one post to another and from one part of the kingdom to another. War was a useful tool for controlling the factions, too, for when the chieftain establishments were stripped down to their military elements and sent on campaigns an important change was achieved: what had previously been informal groupings around nuclei of influence and patronage now were formalised into lines of command headed by the Maharaja himself.

However, towards the end of his reign, when his health began to fail and there were few military campaigns to provide a distraction, Ranjit Singh's ability to control the factions diminished. In 1835, when the Maharaja fell seriously ill, "extensive combinations are said to have been formed and mutual pledges of support exchanged among the different chiefs."¹²³ The crucial issue that began to crystallise was whether "new staff" chieftains like the Dogras were going to be permitted to continue lording it with upstart pride over the older chieftain families like the Sindhanwalias (who were collaterals of the royal Sukerchakias), the Mans, and the Povindias. We shall see, in the following chapter, that after Ranjit Singh's death in 1839, the kingdom was all but destroyed by the attempts made to settle this issue.

122. Many chieftains supported a large number of family retainers as well as *sowars* out of their *jagirs*: for the example of Sardar Jodh Singh, whose *jagirs* supported fifty family retainers, see Foreign Proceedings (hereafter FP), General "B" series, Feb 1862, nos 67-9 (NAI).

123. C.M. Wade, Political Agent (hereafter Pol Agent) to Governor-General (hereafter GG) at Ludhiana, to W.A. Macnaughten, Secy to Government of India (hereafter GoI) with the GG, 1 Jan 1838: Foreign Political Consultations (hereafter FPC), 14 Feb 1838, no 58 (NAI).

Conclusion

An inquiry into the origin, structure, and working of the Sikh kingdom yields several broad conclusions which are of significance for the rest of this study. First, the kingdom was essentially an expansionist, militaristic State. It followed from this that government was limited largely to the same basic tasks - the expansion and defence of the State, the exploitation of the wealth produced by the subjects through taxation, and the maintenance of internal law and order - that had preoccupied earlier, non-Punjabi rulers. Sikh government was also patterned, to a considerable extent, along the lines of previous governments, notably that of the Mughals. There was a centralised administration. There was also a decentralised, "segmentary" component to government and a distinction between what we have termed the "national" and "local" systems; this was in accordance with the fragmented nature of society that we pointed to in the first chapter. We suggest, then, that there was a general continuity to governmental strategy and structure throughout the pre-British period. Whether or not this continuity was broken with the coming of British rule is something that we shall have to investigate.

Second, despite this continuity, Sikh rule was responsible for some important changes in Punjabi society. The position of the "intermediary" *zamindars* was reduced considerably. This process was not as far-reaching or widespread as has been suggested by Kessinger - as we have seen, much depended on the strength of Sikh authority in any given tract - but he is correct in observing that the preference of the Sikh for "primary" *zamindars* "was a basic factor in the development of a system of land tenure under the British in which village cultivators who owned and farmed small holdings were predominant."¹²⁴ Sikh rule enhanced the prestige of the Sikh community, and probably encouraged more Hindus and Muslims to enter its ranks than would have been the case had the kingdom not emerged. Sikh rule also produced a new chieftain class - or, more correctly, maintained the important elements of that chieftain class

124. Tom G. Kessinger, *Vilyatpur 1848-1968: Social and Economic Change in a North Indian Village* (Berkeley, 1974), pp. 29-31. We cannot agree with Kessinger when he writes that Sikh rule "eliminated" the position of "intermediary" *zamindar*.

which had been thrown up during the period of the *misl*s and elevated new groups to chieftain status. How the Sikh community was affected by the demise of Sikh rule, and how the chieftains fared under British rule, are important questions that will have to be tackled later in this study.

Third, Ranjit Singh's authority was essentially of the "decentralised patrimonial" type. This meant that politics, for Ranjit Singh, was the art of manipulating society - and, in particular, the various factions within his government - in an effort to find an equilibrium that would leave his own position unthreatened. We shall have to consider, when we examine the growth of British authority in the Punjab, whether the agents of British imperialism employed similar tactics. Before that, however, we must look at what happened within the kingdom when Ranjit Singh was no longer around to keep these factions in check: we turn now to the decay of monarchical authority between 1839 and 1845.

*THE COLLAPSE OF MONARCHICAL AUTHORITY, 1839-46**Introduction*

Ranjit Singh died on 27 June 1839. To his successors he left a kingdom that stretched from the Sulaiman range to the Sutlej, and from Kashmir to Multan, with a formidable military machine, a full treasury, and a fairly efficient administration. Within seven years of his death, however, the hard-won gains of his thirty-eight years as Maharaja had been squandered to the extent that the continued existence of the kingdom lay entirely in the hands of the British. The *gaddi* once occupied by the "Lion of the Punjab" was by early 1846 the seat of a lapdog of the British. In the words of Sir Lepel Griffin, "The Sikh monarchy founded by Ranjit Singh was Napoleonic in the suddenness of its rise, the brilliancy of its success and the completeness of its overthrow."¹

Why did the authority of the Sikh monarchy collapse in so spectacular a fashion? At least three factors can be isolated. First, the succession was disputed. Although it had widely been assumed that Kanwar (Prince) Kharak Singh - Ranjit Singh's eldest son - would succeed to the *gaddi*, Ranjit Singh had avoided making this explicitly understood until the last possible moment - until only a week before his death, in fact.² The wisdom of his policy on the succession had been questioned amongst British envoys to the *darbar*,³ but there had been a practical side to his vagueness. By deliberately creating uncertainty on this point he had hoped to prevent, and was successful in preventing, the growth of secondary power centres around his younger sons that might oust him from power before his death (as Shah Jahan had been ousted by Aurangzeb). At his death, however,

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1. Quoted in Abdul Ali, "Notes on Ranjit Singh", p.43.
 2. Ganda Singh (ed), *The Panjab in 1839-40*, pp. 49-50.
 3. See, for example, Lieut. Alexander Burnes, "Report on the Military Power and Political Relations of the Punjab as ruled by Runjeet Singh": FSP, 21 May 1832, no 10 (NAI); Wade to Macnaghten, 1 Jan 1838: FPC, 14 Feb 1838, no 58 (NAI).

the younger royal princes⁴ could not accept the decision to install Kanwar Kharak Singh, who was widely reported to be an imbecile and who was certainly without talent or influence, on the *gaddi*; and, supported by their followers and flatterers, they set about pressing their own claims. For all Ranjit Singh's careful planning, the succession was not a smooth affair.⁵

Second, the succession dispute brought into sharp focus another structural weakness in the kingdom's polity, a deeper political issue - namely, the antagonism between the older chieftain families and the largely non-Sikh, and often non-Punjabi, "new staff" chieftains. We saw, at the end of the previous chapter, that it had been a measure of Ranjit Singh's political skill that, having consciously fostered this antagonism, he had been able to keep it on a slow boil and derive a personal advantage from it. Only a successor stamped with his qualities would have been able to do the same. However, Kharak Singh, partly because of his incompetence and partly because of the insecurity of his position, played himself into the hands of first one faction then another. By the time that his brother, Kanwar Sher Singh, ascended the *gaddi*, the antagonism had developed into an unmanageable confrontation. Just as the Mughal court had become divided along racial and family lines over the Deccan issue after Aurangzeb's death, so the Lahore *darbar* split over the issue of Dogra influence at Lahore and in the northern regions of the kingdom after Ranjit Singh's death. As had happened in the Mughal case, the violence generated by this issue converged on the office of *wazir*, or chief minister. And just as the conflict at the Mughal court had been settled by the creation of a separate Deccani kingdom ruled by

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4. These were Sher Singh, Tara Singh, Peshawara Singh, Kashmira Singh, Multana Singh and Dalip Singh. It is highly likely that Kharak Singh was Ranjit Singh's only real or legitimate son. Sher Singh and his "twin brother", Tara Singh, for example, were purchased from their respective parents by Rani Mehtab Kaur's mother and presented to Ranjit Singh as his own sons. Ranjit Singh was not deceived in the matter, but he always treated the children as his own: Barkat Rai Chopra, *Kingdom of the Punjab 1839-45* (Hoshiarpur, 1969), pp.5-6,95.
 5. It is worth noting that many central African kingdoms either fell apart or were absorbed by an external power after the death of a strong ruler because their systems of succession easily allowed for the possibility of civil strife and external intervention: Jan Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savanna* (Madison, 1966), p.246.

the *wazir's* family, so the conflict at the Lahore *darbar* was eventually settled by the creation of an independent Dogra kingdom in Kashmir.⁶

Third, the monarchy's authority was undermined by the emergence of the army as a major political force. As the succession question and the rivalry between the different *darbar* factions became dependent upon armed force for their resolution, the Sikh army became increasingly drawn into politics, first as the shadow maker of Maharajas and *wazirs* in the successive *darbar* revolutions, and ultimately as the *de facto* supreme authority. Ironically, it was the very source of the kingdom's strength, its large army, that, having been democratised in order to bolster the authority of the monarchy, eventually brought about the collapse of the monarchy and (as will be seen in the following chapter) the extinction of the kingdom.

These three factors are bound together in the history of the Punjab between 1839 and 1846. The collapse of the monarchy might not have occurred had only one of them been present. Together, however, they made up a fatal combination. In this chapter we shall examine the mix of these factors during each of the three crises of succession that occurred after Ranjit Singh's death. We shall also investigate the repercussions of the monarchy's collapse on the functioning of the provincial administration, and review the deterioration of Anglo-Sikh political relations leading up to the outbreak of the first Anglo-Sikh war. Basically, the events of the period 1839-46 (summarised in Table 3:1) created the social, political, and economic conditions for the later transference of power in the Punjab from Sikh to British hands. At the end of the chapter we shall suggest that British rule, in its earliest stages, was to a large degree dependent upon the cooperation of a group of men who came to the forefront of Punjabipolitics during this period.

The three crises of succession

The morbid events at the Lahore *darbar* during the period 1839-46 have been studied in detail before now, but in a rather unstructured,

6. For the Mughal story, see Satish Chandra, *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court, 1707-1740* (Aligarh, 1959), pp.4-10.

unanalytical way.⁷ We suggest that they may be divided into three periods, each of which started with a crisis of succession to the *gaddi* but soon developed into a crisis of a much wider political magnitude. Events in the first and second periods followed almost identical patterns, which may be summarised as follows. At the outset of his reign the Maharaja (Kharak Singh or Sher Singh) was almost entirely dependent on his *wazir* (Raja Dhian Singh Dogra) to ward off the claims of, or on behalf of, his younger brothers. However, once his succession was secure the Maharaja attempted to undercut the *wazir's* influence by encouraging one of his favourite servants (in both cases the manager of the former prince's revenue farms and *jagirs*) to act as a surrogate *wazir*. In order to arrest the decline of his own influence the legitimate *wazir* destroyed the upstart rival. For a short while thereafter relations between the Maharaja (or, in the case of the first period, the Maharaja's son) and the *wazir* were cordial. But soon the Maharaja again attempted to reduce the *wazir's* influence; this time he turned to the anti-Dogra faction for support. The *wazir* responded by building up his own power base at the *darbar* and in the countryside, especially the Jammu hills. Just as the hostility between the Maharaja and the *wazir* appeared to be on the verge of a showdown, the Maharaja (and, in the case of the second period, the *wazir* also) died. As we shall presently see, the major differences between the two periods were firstly, the different alignments amongst courtiers and chieftains that were produced, and secondly, the differing degrees to which the army became involved. Events in the third period followed a very different pattern. The new *wazir* (Raja Hira Singh Dogra) set aside the claims of the remaining adult princes to install a minor (Dalip Singh) on the *gaddi*, and then set about consolidating his own position. But by this stage the army had begun to assume an overtly political role, and the *wazir* was dependent on its goodwill (secured, in the main, by financial bribes) to keep the other royal princes and the anti-Dogra faction at bay. When the *wazir* could no longer satisfy the

7. Chopra, *Kingdom of the Punjab*; Bikrama Jit Hasrat, *Anglo-Sikh Relations 1799-1849: A Reappraisal of the Rise and Fall of the Sikhs* (Hoshiarpur, 1968), chaps xl-xvl; Sita Ram Kohli, *Sunset of the Sikh Kingdom* (ed by Khushwant Singh, Bombay, 1967).

Table 3:1 *Chronology of Important Events, 1839-46*

1839	June	Death of Ranjit Singh Accession of Kanwar Kharak Singh Raja Dhian Singh Dogra confirmed as <i>wazir</i>
	October	Assassination of Chet Singh
1840	November	Death of Maharaja Kharak Singh and Kanwar Nao Nihal Singh
1841	January	Kanwar Sher Singh proclaimed sovereign
	June	Assassination of Rani Chand Kaur
1843	September	Assassination of Maharaja Sher Singh, Kanwar Partab Singh and Raja Dhian Singh Dogra Assassination of Sindhanwalia chieftains Kanwar Dalip Singh proclaimed sovereign and Raja Hira Singh Dogra appointed <i>wazir</i> Army becomes supreme authority
1844	March	Rebellion of Kanwars Kashmira Singh and Peshawara Singh Rebellion of Raja Suchet Singh Dogra
	May	Rebellion of Sardar Atar Singh Sindhanwalia, Bhai Bir Singh and Kanwar Kashmira Singh
	December	Assassination of Raja Hira Singh Dogra and Pandit Jalla
1845	April	Chastisement of Raja Gulab Singh Dogra
	May	Jawahir Singh appointed <i>wazir</i>
	July	Rebellion and assassination of Kanwar Peshawara Singh
	September	Execution of Jawahir Singh
	November	Raja Lal Singh appointed <i>wazir</i>
	December	Sikh army crosses the Sutlej British declaration of war Battle of Mudki Battle of Ferozeshah
1846	January	Battles of Baddowal and Aliwal
	February	Battle of Sobraon
	March	Treaty of Lahore Treaty with Raja Gulab Singh Dogra

demands of the army he fell from power. Thereafter the army sold itself to the highest bidder, appointing its own creatures to the office of *wazir* and other high posts in the administration. At the end of the third stage, on the eve of the first Anglo-Sikh war, the authority of the Maharaja and the *darbar* was but a shadow of that which had prevailed in Ranjit Singh's day.

Let us now examine each of these three periods in a little more detail. The day after Ranjit Singh died the *wazir*, Raja Dhian Singh Dogra, called a meeting of a small group of courtiers to discuss the future of their *jagirs* and offices. This meeting was attended by the priest-chieftains, Bhai (Sikh title of respect) Ram Singh and Bhai Gobind Ram; the Bokhari brothers, Faqir Aziz-ud-Din and Faqir Nur-ud-Din; the *ex-deorhiwala*, Jamadar Khushhal Singh; the *wazir's* son, Raja Hira Singh Dogra; and the *diwan* of the civil and finance departments, Diwan Dina Nath. With the assistance of the *toshakhania* (keeper of the treasury), Misr Beli Ram, they drew up a confirmatory deed, to be signed by the new Maharaja, guaranteeing the security of their *jagirs*, "*naslan ba'd naslin, batanan ba'd batanin*" (literally, "from generation to generation, from loin to loin"). The following day Maharaja Kharak Singh and Raja Dhian Singh Dogra signed this deed and each of its authors in turn swore allegiance to the new Maharaja and his *wazir*.⁸

This meeting is significant in three respects. First, none of the established chieftains, the Sikh and Muslim chieftains of the *misl* period who now held top posts outside the inner *darbar* circle, in the provincial administration and the army, were invited to attend. With the possible exceptions of the two Bhai and the two Faqirs, none of those who did attend had any traditional social or political standing in the Punjab - in other words, they were "new staff" chieftains. Second, the purpose of their meeting, and of the deed that they drew up, was not simply to forge a new client-patron relationship with a new Maharaja, but rather to extract new concessions from a politically weak Maharaja. They claimed the right to hold their *jagirs* on an hereditary basis, a privilege that hitherto had been enjoyed by only the most powerful

8. Ganda Singh (ed), *The Panjab in 1839-40*, pp.68-70.

of the established chieftains. They also claimed the right to act as a council of permanent ministers, to make decisions on the running of the kingdom on their own initiative. That this was a novel proposition, without precedent in recent Punjab history or ideological justification in Sikh political tradition and theory, is evident from their observation to the Maharaja that:

as it is customary with the British authorities that whatever the members of Council do, is approved and confirmed by the King of England, we have come to this resolution like the members of Council, and, therefore, such a resolution is mature and very proper.⁹

In terms of the Weberian theory discussed in the previous chapter, we could say that what was happening here was an attempt by a small group of dependent "new staff" chieftains to turn themselves into a small independent "aristocracy". For what they were proposing amounted to a transformation of the very nature and structure of traditional rulership: they wanted to transform that rulership from the patrimony of the Maharaja to the heritage of a privileged ruling class. It must be pointed out that although Kharak Singh was obliged, by virtue of his weak position, to acknowledge these demands, they never came to much. Political events soon overtook them. Third - and this follows on from the last point - though this meeting of "new staff" chieftains called by the *wazir* represented a meeting on the basis of common interest and common status, there were many occasions over the next seven years when individual "new staff" chieftains deserted the *wazir* by joining the anti-Dogra, established-chieftain faction, or by refusing to associate themselves with any faction. This highlights an important feature of the political factions that operated in the period 1839-46 - namely, that while their leadership structures remained fairly constant and committed to specific, long-term goals, their membership structures were highly ephemeral, tending to fluctuate with each change in the wider political situation, with individual members joining or dropping out as the faction promised to be, or ceased to be, a vehicle for the realisation of their own ambitions.

For the first few weeks of Kharak Singh's reign the alliances between the Maharaja and the *wazir*, and between the *wazir* and the other "new staff" chieftains, provided mutual protection against the attempts of other royal

9. Ibid.

princes to repudiate the succession. Kanwar Sher Singh, Ranjit Singh's second son, had begun enlisting large numbers of soldiers in the vicinity of his estates in the upper Bari Doab, and had tried to induce the *thanadar* of the Kangra fort to hand over possession of the fort to him.¹⁰ The *wazir* instructed the *thanadars* of the various hill forts to remain loyal to the new Maharaja.¹¹ He then granted Sher Singh a written guarantee of safety that he might come in to Lahore to acknowledge his brother's succession.¹² When Kanwar Nao Nihal Singh, the new Maharaja's son, who had been sent to the Peshawar border as military commander at the time of Ranjit Singh's death, began issuing his own orders regarding political matters there, the *wazir* sent a strongly-worded command prohibiting his interference in any matters not connected with his military duties.¹³

Once these challenges had been overcome, however, Maharaja Kharak Singh found a new advisor in his favourite servant, Sardar Chet Singh Bajwa,¹⁴ who put himself forward as a rival to the *wazir*. The *wazir* was quickly deserted by the other "new staff" chieftains, as the Punjab Akhbar (intelligence report compiled by British agents at the *darbar*) of 16 July 1839 notes:

Bhaees Ram Singh and Gobind Ram, Missurs Beilee Ram and Ram Kisshun, though keeping up appearance with Raja Dhian Singh, are in reality attached to Koonwur Now-Nihal Singh. Dewan Deena Nath is anybody's. The Fuqeers keep neutral.¹⁵

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10. Ibid, p.50.
 11. Lala Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-Ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar lv, pts 1-111 (trans by V.S. Suri, Chandigarh, 1973), pp.6-7.
 12. Ganda Singh (ed), *The Panjab in 1839-40*, pp.78-9.
 13. Ibid, pp. 52, 80.
 14. Chet Singh was married to the niece of Mangal Singh Sindhu, brother-in-law of Kharak Singh. Since 1834 Chet Singh had displaced Mangal Singh as manager of Kharak Singh's civil and financial affairs: Griffin *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 2, p.56.
 15. Ganda Singh (ed), *The Panjab in 1839-40*, p.91.

The *wazir* found a new supporter of his own, with the appropriate name of Sardar Wazir Singh.¹⁶ Chet Singh ordered the imprisonment of Wazir Singh - this was effected with the maximum of humiliation - and the confiscation of his property.¹⁷ When Kanwar Nao Nihal Singh returned from Peshawar the *wazir* persuaded him that the ambitious favourite would have to be removed. Not surprisingly, the Maharaja refused to accept their joint advice that Chet Singh be dismissed. So, on the night of 8 October 1839 a party of courtiers, led by the *wazir* and the prince, assassinated Chet Singh in his master's presence. The first chieftain had been struck down. Chet Singh's property, valued at about Rs 60 *lakhs*, was seized. Misr Beli Ram, the *toshakhania*, and his two brothers, Misr Meg Raj (the treasurer of Gobindgarh fort) and Misr Rup Lal (until recently the *nazim* of the Jullundar Doab), had made the mistake of siding with Chet Singh before his assassination. They were now imprisoned and their property, valued at about Rs 80 *lakhs*, was seized.¹⁸

After this episode Kharak Singh all but retired from the political scene. Real authority was assumed by his son, Kanwar Nao Nihal Singh. At first relations between the prince and the *wazir* remained cordial and constructive. But before long the prince, too, desired to free himself from the *wazir's* embrace, and he found flattering supporters in the two Bhais and Tej Singh, the nephew of Jamadar Khushhal Singh. On the advice of the Bhais, the prince started dismissing old servants of the State who were suspected of having pro-Dogra leanings. One of the *wazir's* staunchest followers, Malik Fateh Khan Tiwana, the *ijaradar* of the Mitha Tiwana country in the Chaj Doab, was imprisoned for being in arrears with his revenues, but this was basically an anti-Dogra measure.¹⁹ In June 1840 the Bhais suggested that since most of the army garrisons were under Dogra influence Nao Nihal Singh should disband them

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16. The *wazir* secured for Wazir Singh the farm of Sialkot for Rs 18,000 per annum: *ibid*, p.123.
17. Two companies of troops carried Wazir Singh and his brothers through the bazaar, "beating them with shoes and with every other degradation": Punjab Akhbar, 7 Oct 1839: FSC, 6 Nov 1839, no 24 B (NAI).
18. Punjab Akhbar, 8 Oct 1839: *ibid*.
19. Griffin *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 2, p.195.

and replace them with his own soldiers.²⁰ A start was made on this. Certain revenue farms and *jagirs* in the hill region were taken from the Dogras.²¹ The *wazir* responded to these challenges to his influence by attempting to place the prince under the Maharaja's direct supervision.²² The court became split into two factions: the prince was supported by the two Bhais, Sardar Atar Singh Sindhanwalia, Jamadar Khushhal Singh and Sardar Tej Singh; while the *wazir* was supported by his brother, Raja Gulab Singh Dogra, and Faqir Aziz-ud-Din Bokhari.²³ However, before the split could develop into an armed clash both Kharak Singh and Nao Nihal Singh died in early November 1840. At the time it was widely rumoured, though there has never been any evidence for it, that the Maharaja had died from regular doses of poison administered on the *wazir's* orders, and that the collapse of the city archway that killed the prince on the following day had also been engineered by the Dogras.²⁴ Later events were to show that the *wazir* was not incapable of resorting to such measures in order to protect his position, however.

The second period began with a new succession crisis. Of the six remaining royal princes with claims to the *gaddi* Kanwar Sher Singh was the eldest and the only one who had been entitled to a chair at Ranjit Singh's *darbar*. He had failed in his attempt to get precedence over Kharak Singh at the death of Ranjit Singh, but now that the senior line of succession had come to an end his claim was admitted by the leading courtiers. But the Sindhanwalia chieftains, who were collaterals of the royal Sukerchakia family, regarded Sher Singh as an illegitimate impostor and upstart, and refused to recognise his claim. They found an alternative ruler in Rani (queen) Chand Kaur, widow of Kharak Singh and daughter of the late chieftain of the Kanheya *misl*. Rani Chand Kaur announced that

20. Ganda Singh (ed), *The Panjab in 1839-40*, p.216.

21. Chopra, *Kingdom of the Punjab*, pp.63-4.

22. Ganda Singh (ed), *The Panjab in 1839-40*, p.259.

23. Chopra, *Kingdom of the Punjab*, pp. 49, 63-4.

24. Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 2, pp. 22-4.

one of Nao Nihal Singh's widows was pregnant and demanded that she be accepted as regent while the birth of her grandchild was awaited. It was immediately admitted by the courtiers that Nao Nihal Singh's child, if a boy, would have a superior claim to that of Sher Singh. But the question remained as to whether Sher Singh or Rani Chand Kaur should act as regent.

Over this question most courtiers and chieftains divided into two sharply opposed factions. Rani Chand Kaur was supported by the Sindhanwalia family, Fateh Singh Man, Gulab Singh Povindia, the two Bhais, Jamadar Khushhal Singh and Tej Singh. Kanwar Sher Singh was supported by the Dogra Rajas, Bhai Gurmukh Singh (the arch rival of Bhai Ram Singh), the Atariwala family and Faqir Aziz-ud-Din Bokhari. Only Diwan Dina Nath and Sardar Lehna Singh Majithia remained entirely neutral.²⁵ At length a compromise solution was reached: Rani Chand Kaur became regent, assisted by a council of ministers, while Kanwar Sher Singh retired to his estates at Batala, leaving his son, Partap Singh, as his representative at Lahore. The *wazir*, realising that his presence at the *darbar* was despised, took leave from his duties and retired to Jammu. Before he left Lahore, though, he sent a secret message to Kanwar Sher Singh advising the prince to hold himself ready for an opportunity to seize the *gaddi*. Messages were sent to army officers who were sympathetic to the prince's cause urging them to join the prince when the call came, and promising them pay increases and other rewards.²⁶

After the *wazir's* departure the central administration fell into a state of confusion and inefficiency.²⁷ In January 1841 Kanwar Sher Singh responded to a call from the *wazir* and marched to Lahore. There he won over a large portion of the army with liberal cash handouts and

25. Ibid, pp.24-6.

26. Suri, *Umdat-Ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar lv, pts 1-111, p.133.

27. In the flowery language of the *darbar* chronicler: "the sweetheart of control and administration of the countries and troops could not be taken into lap": *ibid*, p.134.

and promises of pay increases.²⁸ It was at this point, as an armed clash between the prince's party and the queen's party became imminent, that Raja Gulab Singh Dogra took his Jammu troopers over to the queen's side. The reason for this action was not that he had broken with his brother, the *wazir*, but that Dogra wealth and influence might be preserved regardless of the battle's outcome.²⁹ Sher Singh's force began the assault on the 16 January. After several days of fighting the fort was captured by the prince's troops and the queen's supporters driven out. Rani Chand Kaur was pensioned off with a *jagir* and the Sindhanwalia chieftains retired to British territory to the south of the Sutlej. Kanwar Sher Singh ascended the *gaddi* on 20 January 1841. At the Maharaja's ceremonial investiture a week later the *khil'at* of investiture as *wazir* was again presented to Raja Dhian Singh Dogra.³⁰ For the time being the crisis was over.

Maharaja Sher Singh was determined to be a strong, personal ruler.³¹ Raja Dhian Singh Dogra was no less determined to be a strong *wazir*. When Sardar Jawala Singh, the former manager of Sher Singh's *jagirs*, began to aspire, as Chet Singh had done in Kharak Singh's reign, to the position of *wazir*, Dhian Singh Dogra maneuvered him into rebellion and then convinced the Maharaja of the need to destroy him.³² When Rani Chand Kaur re-commenced her intrigues with the Sindhanwalias, the British and the Sikh army, Dhian Singh Dogra persuaded the Maharaja to leave Lahore on a hunting expedition while he arranged for the Rani to be battered to death by her maid-servants.³³

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28. It is estimated that Sher Singh gave away Rs 5 *lakhs* during the twenty-four hours before the assault on the Lahore fort began; Chand Kaur gave away Rs 3 *lakhs*: Kohli, *Sunset of the Sikh Empire*, p.34.
29. We will see, in the next chapter, that at times of crisis this was a fairly typical mode of survival behaviour.
30. Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 2, pp. 26-30.
31. It is interesting that Sher Singh had both his name and the title of Maharaja inscribed on his seal and on the coins minted during his reign, something that previous Maharajas, including Ranjit Singh, had never allowed: Kohli, *Sunset of the Sikh Empire*, pp. 44-5.
32. *Ibid*, pp. 45-6. Jawala Singh's soldiers surrendered their leader only after they were granted a cash donation of Rs 30,000.
33. Suri, *Umdat-Ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar lv, pts 1-111, pp. 168-70. It is probable that the Maharaja and the *wazir* also conspired to have poison administered to Nao Nihal Singh's widow, which resulted in the delivery of a still-born child and her death.

But, as had happened soon after Nao Nihal Singh became effective ruler following Chet Singh's assassination, the Maharaja soon realised that if he were to exercise any real authority he would need to put a little distance between himself and the *wazir*. On the advice of Bhai Gurmukh Singh, but against the *wazir's* wishes, Maharaja Sher Singh restored Misr Beli Ram and his brothers to their old posts. Misr Beli Ram and Bhai Gurmukh Singh attempted to form an anti-Dogra, anti-*wazir* party at Lahore.³⁴ The *wazir* responded by recruiting some 6,000 new soldiers, mostly non-Sikhs from Jammu and the other hill provinces.³⁵ He also built up his own followers: Malik Fateh Khan Tiwana was given new revenue farms and several of his relatives were appointed as *kardas*;³⁶ officials dismissed by Sher Singh's party were picked up by the *wazir* and given new posts in the Dogra estates.³⁷

Maharaja Sher Singh attempted to free himself from this bipartisan struggle by raising a fresh "new staff". A number of traditional chieftain families which had fallen into oblivion during Ranjit Singh's reign were now resurrected: Jhanda Singh and Ganda Singh Butalia received new *jagirs* and positions of trust at the *darbar*; Gurmukh Singh Lamba was given a new *jagir* worth Rs 25,000; Atar Singh Kalianwala had his *jagirs* increased in value by Rs 89,300 and received the post of *adalati* at Lahore and a rank in the cavalry.³⁸ By 1843 Sher Singh had also created several new chieftains.³⁹ The Maharaja took steps to restrict the ability of chieftains to attach followers to themselves by writing orders conferring land in charity or granting other immunities. The *wazir* protested that the Maharaja's orders were contrary to custom.⁴⁰ The Maharaja invited the

34. Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 1, p.363.

35. Kohli, *Sunset of the Sikh Empire*, p.41.

36. Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 2, p.195.

37. *Ibid*, p.129.

38. *Ibid*, pp. 81, 167; vol 1, p.424.

39. Lieut. Col. Richmond, Agent to GG at North-West Frontier (hereafter NWF), to J. Thomason, Secy to GoI, 5 Sept 1843, no 156: FSC, 23 March 1844, no 455 (NAI).

40. "Items of Intelligence from Lahore", 23-8 Aug 1843: FSC, 23 March 1844, no 456 (NAI).

soldiers to make complaints to him about their officers, the idea being to discover which officers were in league with the Dogras.⁴¹

Sher Singh's growing antipathy towards his old allies, the Dogras, drew him steadily closer to his old enemies, the Sindhanwalias. Since the assassination of Rani Chand Kaur the Sindhanwalias had lost most of their influence at the *darbar*. However, they had not given up their designs on the *gaddi*. They had allowed Clerk, the British Governor-General's Political Agent at Ludhiana, to negotiate a reconciliation with Sher Singh and, that achieved, had returned from their exile in October 1842. Their *jagirs* had been restored and they had resumed their old places at the *darbar*. Having won Sher Singh's confidence they persuaded him to enter into a plan with them whereby the *wazir* would be assassinated,⁴² although it was their real intention to assassinate the Maharaja as well, which would enable the Sindhanwalias to wield the whole power of the State as guardians of the young Kanwar Dalip Singh. Sher Singh's reign ended, as it had begun, in violence. On 15 September 1843 Sardar Ajit Singh Sindhanwalia and his uncle, Sardar Lehna Singh, assassinated the Maharaja, the heir-apparent, Partab Singh, and the *wazir*, Raja Dhian Singh Dogra. But within a matter of hours the *wazir's* son, Raja Hira Singh Dogra, and the *wazir's* brother, Raja Suchet Singh Dogra, won over the bulk of the army and destroyed the Sindhanwalia chieftains.⁴³

The third period began when Raja Hira Singh Dogra set Ranjit Singh's youngest son, the five year-old Dalip Singh, on the *gaddi* with himself as *wazir*.⁴⁴ One of his first actions after that was to order the confiscation of the property of the Sindhanwalias and their followers, and the murder of Bhai Gurmukh Singh, Misr Beli Ram and Misr Ram Kishen for the part they had played in the assassination of his father.⁴⁵

41. "Items", 31 Aug 1843: FSC, 23 March 1844, no 457 (NAI).

42. Suri, *Umdat-Ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar lv, pts 1-111, p.247.

43. Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 1, pp. 404-7.

44. Hira Singh bestowed gifts worth about Rs 54,300 on various influential people in order to secure their support at the installation of Dalip Singh: Kohli, *Catalogue of Records*, vol II, p.250.

45. Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 1, pp. 363, 407-8, 508; vol 2, p.136.

This meant that in three days (15-17 September 1843) nearly a thousand men, including a Maharaja, a prince, a *wazir* and almost a dozen high dignitaries of the *darbar*, had lost their lives. With a Dogra Raja back in the office of *wazir*, it seemed as though the Dogra - Maharaja - Sikh equation had hardly changed, despite the great loss of life. By this stage, however, a fourth factor - the army - had entered the equation. Substantial political authority was beginning to be transferred from the *darbar* to the barracks.

Ever since Ranjit Singh's death there had been serious problems of discipline, involving desertions and claims for arrears of pay, within the ranks of both regular and *jagirdari* troops.⁴⁶ During Sher Singh's reign the army had established regimental committees called *panchayats*, on the pattern of the traditional village council.⁴⁷ These *panchayats* had enjoyed direct access to the Maharaja for the expression of grievances, and they had been used to dismiss officers who were out of favour with the *darbar* or unpopular with the troops. Recruitment to the army - often without the *darbar*'s prior sanction - was stepped up considerably during the period 1839-46. For example, the Dogras raised the strength of Rajput and Muslim contingents as a counter-poise to the predominance of Sikh Jats, and the anti-Dogra faction took appropriate retaliatory measures.⁴⁸ As a result the kingdom became an even more militaristic state than it had been in Ranjit Singh's day. In the late 1830s the total strength of the army (including garrisons) had been about 80,000 men.⁴⁹ The total cost of this army had been equal to about 41 per cent of the state revenues.⁵⁰ In 1844 the army had a total strength of 123,800 men (92,000 infantry, 31,800 cavalry), 228 pieces of light artillery and

46. Ganda Singh (ed), *The Panjab in 1839-40*, pp. 102, 106.

47. The village *panchayat* was a small council, made up of the representatives of the different sections of the village, which met to regulate social behaviour and settle small disputes.

48. Fauja Singh Bajwa, *Military System of the Sikhs* (Delhi, 1964), p.102.

49. Abdul Ali, "Notes on Ranjit Singh", p.65.

50. Kohli's foreward to Suri, *Umdat-Ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar 111, pts 1-v, p.xv11.

384 heavy field-guns. The total cost of this gigantic military machine was equal to about 66 per cent of the state revenues.⁵¹

During Hira Singh Dogra's short ministry the army began styling itself as the Khalsaji - and hence the embodiment of traditional Sikh legitimacy - and extorting promises of better service conditions and regular salary increases from the *darbar*.⁵² The *panchayats* endeavoured to prevent disorderly behaviour on the part of the soldiery, with only partial success.⁵³ The prestige of the *darbar* was now so low that a large section of the army adopted a completely mercenary attitude towards Hira Singh Dogra's administration and its problems. In March 1844 Kanwars Peshawara Singh and Kashmiri Singh led an unsuccessful revolt against the *wazir* and the minor Maharaja. The same month Raja Suchet Singh Dogra attempted to overthrow his nephew and was killed. In May Sardar Atar Singh Sindhanwalia (who had not taken a direct part in the assassinations of Sher Singh and Raja Dhian Singh Dogra), Bhai Bir Singh and Kanwar Kashmiri Singh were killed when they attempted to capture control of the kingdom. Raja Hira Singh Dogra was able to survive these challenges to his authority and the *darbar's* authority only because he was able to offer larger bribes to the army for its allegiance.⁵⁴

In the end, however, it was the army's extortionate demands that proved to be the undoing of the *wazir*. The reckless distribution of *jagirs* to the chieftains and cash handouts to the troops during the tumultuous years since Ranjit Singh's death had drained the treasury. There was now an urgent need to recover some of this wealth. Obviously, it would be political suicide to subject the army to a retrenchment programme: instead, the chieftains would have to disgorge some of their ill-gotten wealth. The *wazir's* counsellor, the Kashmiri Brahman, Pandit

51. Hasrat, *Anglo-Sikh Relations*, p.229; Bajwa, *Military System*, pp. 83, 96-7. The regular, trained army accounted for about one-third of the total strength, the remaining two-thirds representing the *jagirdari* levies.

52. Bajwa, *Military System*, pp. 97, n 5, 102-3.

53. *Ibid*, p.158.

54. Hasrat, *Anglo-Sikh Relations*, pp.224-6.

Jalla, introduced a programme of wide-spread and systematic *jagir* reductions and resumptions.⁵⁵ Not surprisingly, the chieftains were enraged by this. Even those who had supported the Dogras against the Sindhanwalias, like Mehtab Singh Majithia, now turned against the *wazir* and his counsellor.⁵⁶ As the *wazir's* authority at the periphery of the kingdom began to dissolve as well,⁵⁷ the majority of chieftains, *darbar* officials and army *panchayats* combined to denounce the Dogra ministry and demand the installation of Kanwar Peshawara Singh, exiled in British territory, as *wazir*. On 21 December 1844 Hira Singh Dogra and his counsellor, knowing that their days of power at Lahore were over, attempted to flee to Jammu. But the army pursued them and killed them.⁵⁸

Kanwar Peshawara Singh was not interested in the office of *wazir* - he claimed the *gaddi*; but support for him on this was as yet limited. So over the next five months a compromise between civil government and army rule was achieved with the establishment of a Supreme Council made up of leading chieftains and elected *panchayat* leaders (*chaudharis*). Rani Jindan, the mother of the minor Dalip Singh, set herself up as regent assisted by her brother, Sardar Jawahir Singh. There could be little doubt, however, that real power lay with the army. In April 1845, for example, the *panchayats* brought Raja Gulab Singh Dogra (who had been steadily building up his strength in the northern hills) to Lahore as a hostage and exhorted from him a promise of loyalty and an indemnity of

55. Ibid, p.240.

56. Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 1, p.496.

57. Ibid, p.482; vol 2, p.99.

58. Suri, *Umdat-Ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar lv, pts 1-111, pp.310-12. "The Army", wrote Sir Henry Hardinge, The Governor General, to Lord Ellenborough, the previous Governor-General, "sold Heera for [Rs] 300,000 and a rise in their pay to 14 rupees a month, being exactly the double of the British sepoy's pay": Hardinge to Ellenborough (Private), 8 Jan 1845: Bikrama Jit Hasrat (ed), *The Punjab Papers: Selections from the Private Papers of Lord Auckland, Lord Ellenborough, Viscount Hardinge, and the Marquis of Dalhousie, 1839-1849 on the Sikhs* (Hoshiarpur, 1970), p.79.

nearly Rs 7 lakhs.⁵⁹ A few days later the *panchayats* appointed Sardar Jawahir Singh as *wazir*.

The new *wazir* was little more than a puppet of the army, with only nominal power and authority. But if he could attach to himself a body of clients and supporters, as each of his predecessors had done, his power and authority might be considerably enhanced. Thus, once again a great shuffling of client chieftains took place. For example, Jhanda Singh Butalia (who had been picked up by Sher Singh) was now made *adalati* of Lahore in conjunction with Diwan Hakim Rai (one of Nao Nihal Singh's old favourites).⁶⁰ Similarly, the family of Diwan Kahan Singh Gharjakh (imprisoned by Hira Singh Dogra for having been retainers of the Sindhanwalias) were now given new *jagirs* and offices.⁶¹ But as long as Kanwar Peshawara Singh had designs on the *gaddi*, the *wazir's* position was uncertain. In July 1845 the prince rebelled again. He captured Attock on the northwest frontier with the help of the local Muslim tribes and proclaimed himself ruler of the Punjab. The *wazir's* knew that the only chieftains who could be counted upon to march against the popular prince were Malik Fateh Khan Tiwana (the old client of Raja Dhian Singh Dogra) and Sardar Chatar Singh Atariwala (the *nazim* of Hazara and the client of Raja Gulab Singh Dogra). Jawahir Singh desired to rid himself of the prince's challenge once and for all. He secretly instructed Fateh Khan Tiwana and Chatar Singh Atariwala to capture and kill the prince, hoping that since they were Dogra clients the assassination would appear, or could be made to appear, to be the outcome of a Dogra conspiracy.⁶² When they received news of the prince's death, however,

59. Some idea of the lawlessness of the troops by this stage is provided by the *darbar* chronicler's account of the march to Jammu to collect Raja Gulab Singh Dogra: "On their way they plundered and looted every village that they came across and robbed every *Thakarawara* [temple], *Dharmasala* [rest-house] and *Takia* [abode of a *faqir*] of Mussalmans that came in their way and in addition to that went into the house of every *Zamindar* and villager and seized all the belongings in the houses and committed adulteries and other such bad deeds with respect to the ladies....the condition of the protected country of the Maharaja became so devastated and disgusting that it could not be so even if it were overrun by an enemy": Suri, *Umdat-Ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar lv, pts 1-111, pp.313-14.

60. Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 2, p.81.

61. *Ibid*, p.136.

62. *Ibid*, p.197; vol 1, p.482.

the army *panchayats* were not at all deceived in the matter. In September 1845 Jawahir Singh was summoned before them, judged responsible for the prince's death, and executed on the spot.⁶³

The army was, for all practical purposes, the supreme authority now. It had made - and unmade - a *wazir*. It began issuing orders under its own seal (Sarbat Khalsa) to the regent, the military commanders and the civil administrators. How long this political arrangement might have lasted, or what it might have developed into, cannot be known, for within a few months, during which diplomatic tension between the kingdom and the British mounted, the army voluntarily abandoned its experiment with democratic republicanism in favour of a return to the old authority structure. In November 1845 the army appointed a new *wazir*, Raja Lal Singh. This man, a Brahman, had long been a client of the Dogras, and of Raja Hira Singh Dogra in particular. General Tej Singh, the nephew of Jamadar Khushhal Singh, was made commander-in-chief of the armed forces. It is difficult to say just how much real power and authority the army *panchayat*s intended to restore to the *darbar* by these appointments. The new *wazir* and the commander-in-chief were put into office for one purpose only, to provide traditional and peremptory leadership of the whole political system at a time of national crisis: presumably, if they failed in this they would be removed from office just as easily. What these appointments revealed fairly clearly is that however much the army had used the troubles of the *darbar* to further its own material and political aims, it was not a revolutionary force with any long-term political programme. For when the opportunity came to use their military strength in a politically decisive manner, as it did in late 1845, the *panchayat*s voted in favour of defending the monarchy and placing themselves under the command of *darbar* chieftains whom they had previously treated with contempt. As it turned out, this was the very worst decision they could have made. The *darbar* saw in the war an opportunity to break the over-powerful army, and treacherously cooperated in its defeat by a numerically inferior British army.

63. Hasrat, *Anglo-Sikh Relations*, pp.256-7.

A disrupted countryside

Before we consider the origin and outcome of the first Anglo-Sikh war we may pause momentarily to examine the situation in the Punjab countryside after 1839. Information on this is extremely patchy - primarily because of the attention devoted to Lahore events by the chroniclers and intelligence reporters of the day - but still the general picture can be reconstructed. As might be expected, the tumultuous events at the capital had a profound impact on the stability and prosperity of the countryside. After 1839 the authority of the *darbar* in the countryside, and particularly at the periphery of the kingdom, underwent a sharp decline. In 1839 minor insurrections broke out in the tributary Rajput States of the lower Himalayas and in the vicinity of Tank on the far side of the Indus.⁶⁴ On the near side of the Indus the Biloches rebelled in 1842, the Ghebas in 1845.⁶⁵ In 1843, and again in 1845, the pastoral tribes of the lower Sutlej and Ravi took advantage of the political situation at Lahore to resume their old predatory habits.⁶⁶ Several chieftains in the countryside used the opportunity provided by the events at the capital to settle old scores with rival families.⁶⁷ None of these disturbances remained unchecked for long, but while they lasted they posed a serious problem for the provincial administrators. This was because of the mutinous state of the provincial garrisons during this period. On numerous occasions between 1841 and 1844 the troops stationed on the kingdom's borders refused to follow orders until they received the same pay increases that had been extracted from the central authorities by the troops at Lahore.⁶⁸

The increase in the cost of the army after 1839 was passed on to the *zamindars* in the form of an increased land revenue demand. This created further tensions in rural society. At Hazara, for instance, where the

64. Ganda Singh (ed), *The Panjab in 1839-40*, pp.97-8, 100-4, 125.

65. Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 2, pp. 97, 338.

66. *SR Montgomery 1878*, p.38.

67. Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 1, p.367; vol 2, p.338.

68. Chopra, *Kingdom of the Punjab*, pp. 160-7, 317-19.

land revenue demand rose by between 8 and 25 per cent in the period 1842-44, resistance to the local administrators was so great that only one-third of the State's demand assessed by the *kankut* method was actually collected.⁶⁹ Over the greater portion of Rawalpindi District the revenue demand rose by 12 per cent in the period 1840-46 (and this despite a severe locust plague in 1843-44). But here the increased demand was realised only at the cost of increased *zamindar* indebtedness and forced transfer of proprietary rights.⁷⁰ Elsewhere it was necessary for *kardars* to overcome *zamindar* recalcitrance with force.⁷¹ With the rise of the army to political power, the *zamindars* of central Punjab - especially the Manjha - found protection against the *kardar* in their soldiering kinsmen. Diwan Ajudhia Parshad, a contemporary *darbar* official whose sympathies were obviously with the *kardars*, left this account of the situation in the central districts after Jowahir Singh's execution by the army:

Despite the best efforts of the Raja [Lal Singh, the new *wazir*] ...the *Fauj-i-Ghair-Ain* [irregular militia] became more insolent than ever. The *kardars* were seriously frustrated in the administration of the country. Kinsmen of soldiers refused to pay the taxes with the excuse that more than enough revenue had already been collected, or that their own receipts had become very little. If a report was lodged against them at Lahore, some members of the army maintained their cause. Often a gang of soldiers arrested a *kardar* or his agent and wrested from him the dues which he had managed to realise on the plea that the taxpayer's produce had not been adequate, or that the balance of their pay was to be adjusted. Only such *kardars* escaped this high-handedness as had friends among the troops, but those "benevolent" soldiers required a "fee" from the *kardar*....From every side the *kardars* complained about the refusal of persons to pay their dues to the Government, which made administration impossible.⁷²

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69. LPD, vol 4, *Journals and Diaries of the Assistants to the Agent, Governor-General North-West Frontier, and Resident at Lahore, 1846-1849* [Journal of Capt. J. Abbott], p.96.
70. *SR Rawalpindi 1864*, pp. 69-70. The *ta'aluqa* of Kuller in this district was given in *jagir* to Raja Gulab Singh Dogra in 1843. He increased the revenue demand by 18 per cent over that prevailing in the period 1838-42: *ibid*, p.72. An examination of Sikh and British revenue records covering the period from the beginning of Sikh rule to 1864 showed that in nineteen out of twenty-five *ta'aluqas* in Rawalpindi District the highest revenue demand occurred during the period 1839-46: *ibid*, pp. 81-108.
71. Ganda Singh (ed), *The Panjab in 1839-40*, pp.110, 123, 128, 175, 238.
72. Vidya Sagar Suri (trans and ed), *Some original sources of Panjab history: analytical catalogues of some outstanding Persian manuscripts and annotated translations into English of contemporary chronicles entitled Dewan Ajudhia Parshad's Waqai-i-Jang-i-Sikhan (Pheroshehr and Sobraon, 1846) and Muhammad Naqis' Sher Singh Nama (Tarikh-i-Punjab), (Lahore, 1956)*, pp.54-5.

There is sufficient evidence, however, to suggest that the obstruction of the work of the *kardars* by soldiers amounted to only half the story - that many *kardars* took advantage of the political instability throughout the kingdom to extend their own power and wealth. They did this in a number of ways. First, and most obviously, many of them simply fell behind in their revenue remittances and waited until the *darbar* threatened them with punishment before sending any instalment in to Lahore. As early as August 1843, during the reign of Sher Singh, the annual loss to the State from districts under *darbar*-appointed *kardars* was reported to be in the vicinity of Rs 20 *lakhs*.⁷³ Second, a number of *kardars* became quite rapacious in their dealings with the revenue-paying "primary" *zamindars*. In some cases the *kardar* bribed the members of the *panchayat*, the village council, to support his illegal demands from the *zamindars*.⁷⁴ In other cases he enlisted the support of local notables, religious leaders in particular, by alienating in their favour the greater portion of *inams* that were normally reserved for *zamindars*.⁷⁵ An idea of the extent of the *kardar's* rapacity may be gained from the following example. In 1845 the total revenue collected from Bar Miani *ta'aluqu*, a group of twenty-nine villages in the Chaj Doab, was Rs 18,000. Of this sum, Rs 4,000 (22 per cent) was realised by way of additional cesses and illegal fines. The following year the total collections rose to about Rs 20,000 of which Rs 4,000 (20 per cent) represented illegitimate demands.⁷⁶ Generally, the *kardar* got away with these illegitimate demands because the central administration's auditing of district accounts became very defective. Most *kardars* maintained false records, or no records at all, and *patwari* establishments were often permitted to run down.⁷⁷ As the first British Administration

73. "Items of Intelligence from Lahore", 23-8 Aug 1843: FSC, 23 March 1844, no 456 (NAI).

74. LPD, vol 6, *Political Diaries of Lieutenant Reynall G. Taylor, Mr P. Sandys Melvill, Pandit Kunahya Lal, Mr P.A. Vans Agnew, Lieutenant J. Nicholson, Mr L. Bowring and Mr A.H. Cocks 1847-1849*, p.368. It ought to be noted, however, that the *kardar* did not always get his own way with the villagers. Bowring recorded: "There is a story that the *Punches* were going to prefer a complaint against the late *Kardar* of Kuchee [in the Sind Sagar Doab], Doonee Chund, which he stopped by presenting them with pairs of gold bracelets. They took the bracelets, and then turning round, persuaded all their zemeendars to make the very same complaint against him": *ibid*, p.371

75. *Ibid*, p.431.

76. *Ibid*, pp. 400-1.

77. *Ibid*, pp. 371-2, 394.

Report pointed out: "There can be no doubt that all this laxity encouraged the fiscal officers to cheat the state, and overtax the people."⁷⁸ Third, some *kardars* built up their rural power bases by extending their jurisdictions, horizontally or vertically. The British officers who toured the countryside in the winter of 1847-48 reported several instances of this. In the upper Bari Doab a British officer, Lake, found a *kardar*, Lalla Tej Chand, who had a large number of *ta'aluqas* under his control. "The extreme points of his jurisdiction", wrote Lake, "cannot be less than ninety miles apart."⁷⁹ Nicholson found that at Chuniot, in the Rachna Doab, the *kardar*, Ram Rakha, had placed himself in authority over four other *kardars*.⁸⁰ And Bowring, a British officer who was on duty at Numul, in the Sind Sagar Doab, made this diary entry in early December 1847:

There is a curious arrangement regarding kardars here, by which Sain Das is set up as a kind of *Nazim*. Each of the districts under him has a kardar of its own, appointed by the Durbar, and he has consequently no less than 5 kardars [one of whom was his nephew] under his orders....⁸¹

We may assume that in some cases these new administrative arrangements would have been worked out with the *darbar's* knowledge and consent, for example, where a *kardar* extended his jurisdiction horizontally by taking up the administration of additional *ta'aluqas* on the *ijar* system. But it also seems likely that in some cases the new arrangement, especially where it involved the *kardar's* setting himself up over other *kardars* as a sort of *de facto nazim*, was worked out by the local power groups, without reference to the *darbar's* wishes. In such cases a struggle between the local power groups might be involved. For instance, another British officer, Cocks, reported on a power struggle at Ramnagar, in the Rachna Doab, between three groups

78. "PAR 1851" : FM, no 356, para 20 (NAI).

79. Lake's report on the summary settlement of the upper Bari Doab, 25 Dec 1847: FSC, 28 April 1848, nos 57-66 (NAI).

80. *LPD*, vol 6, p.304.

81. *Ibid*, p.375.

centred around the former *kardar*, the recently appointed *kardar*, and "the Council, as they call some Khutrees here, who appear at present the ruling faction and have arrogated to themselves the power of imprisoning, fining whom they like."⁸² The important point about all of this is, of course, that a strong central government, headed by a strong ruler like Ranjit Singh, would never have permitted the *kardars* to use their offices as a means to personal profit and influence in this manner.

Nor would a strong central government have permitted the responsibility for revenue collection at the provincial level to fall into the hands of a small number of inter-connected families. Yet this is precisely what seems to have happened in the period 1839-46. In November 1846 John Lawrence, the Commissioner and Superintendent of the British Trans-Sutlej Territories, then on special duty at Lahore,⁸³ submitted to his government a series of statistical returns of the kingdom's revenues based upon certain *darbar* records that he had been able to consult during his stay at the Sikh capital.⁸⁴ Part Four of his returns is a list of the different *diwanis*, or collectorships, into which the kingdom's territories were divided. Lawrence listed thirty-six *diwanis*, together with the names of the *diwans*, the location of the different *ta'aluqas* held by the *diwans*, and the details of the revenues of each *ta'aluqa*. Between them, the thirty-six *diwans* were responsible for the collection of 98.7 per cent of the total gross land revenue,⁸⁵ or 90 per cent of the total gross revenues if customs revenues are included.⁸⁶ Sixteen of these *diwans*

82. Ibid, pp. 425-6.

83. The administrative arrangements made at the conclusion of the first Anglo-Sikh war will be considered presently.

84. "Statistical Notes on the Punjab by the Commissioner and Superintendent of the Trans-Sutlej Territories on Special Duty at Lahore", 10 Nov 1846: FSC, 26 Dec 1846, nos 1325-7 (NAI).

85. The remaining 1.3 per cent were in the hands of "various persons" administering "various villages" worth Rs 120, 350 per annum: *ibid*.

86. See part three, "Abstract", of Lawrence's returns: *ibid*.

were *kardars* or *ijaradars* administering a single *ta'aluqa*, whose land revenues ranged from Rs 7,500 to Rs 269,985 per annum. The remaining twenty *diwans* were either *nazims* or large *kardars* or *ijaradars*, with smaller *kardars* beneath them, administering between two *ta'aluqas* worth Rs 80,745 per annum and twenty-nine *ta'aluqas* worth Rs 1,965,443 per annum. Twelve of these twenty *diwans* administered *ta'aluqas* whose revenues amounted to 53 per cent of the total gross land revenue of the kingdom. Now an examination of the names and backgrounds of these thirty-six *diwans* reveals some interesting patterns of *zat* status, religious affiliation, and kinship and affinal connection. Of the thirty-six, only four can be identified as Sikh by religion and only two as Sikh Jat by *zat*. Two only were Muslims. The overwhelming majority, thirty in number, were Hindus, mostly Brahmans and Khattris, with titles like *lalla*, *misr* and *diwan* - titles of literacy and administrative expertise. In the previous chapter we saw that towards the end of Ranjit Singh's reign the office of *kardar*, or district revenue collector, became monopolised by Brahmans and Khattris, members of a traditional, urban-based administrative elite. We suggest that between 1839 and 1846 the officers of *nazim* and *ijaradar*, or provincial revenue collectors, were also taken over by members of this elite. A list prepared by Major Leech of the thirteen great revenue farms of the kingdom in 1837 (in which he included *subas* under *nazims*) shows that all but two farms - *suba* Multan under Diwan Sawan Mal and *suba* Jullundur under Misr Rup Lal - were held by royal princes and great, landed chieftains.⁸⁷ But by 1846 only one of the *diwans* in John Lawrence's list - Raja Gulab Singh Dogra - belonged to that powerful social group. The rest were all members of either the minor chieftain group (that is, those chieftain families who in Ranjit Singh's day had held only subordinate positions in the army or the administration) or the traditional, urban-based administrative elite from which Ranjit Singh's "new staff" had been recruited).

An examination of the background of some of these *diwans* shows the existence of family connections between them, and between them and members

87. Leech, "List of Revenue Farms": FSC, 18 Nov 1843, no 21 (NAI).

of the central administration. The following examples should serve to illustrate this point. One *diwan*, Misr Sunder Das, was a nephew of Misr Beli Ram, the ex-*toshakhania*. Another, Misr Sukhraj, was Misr Beli Ram's brother. Mulraj, the *nazim* at Pind Dadan Khan, was also related to this family. Misr Amir Chand was a first cousin of Raja Lal Singh, the *wazir* appointed by the army in November 1845. Ram Dial was a first cousin of Harsukh Rai, also a *diwan*. Harsukh Rai's family was connected by marriage to the family of Diwan Sawan Mal of Multan. Two of Harsukh Rai's uncles had earlier served Diwan Sawan Mal as *kardars*. Devi Dial was a nephew of Diwan Mul Raj (Diwan Sawan Mal's son). Two *diwans*, Rattan Chand Duggal and Hakim Rai, were connected by way of a marriage between their families. Hakim Rai's son, Kishen Kour, was also a *diwan*. Hira Singh was Rani Jindan's brother. Chirag-ud-Din Bokhari was the son of Faqir Aziz-ud-Din Bokhari. Because almost all the other *diwans* had relatives who were employed in some other administrative capacity - often as *kardars* under themselves, in fact - we may conclude that during the period 1839-46 there was a marked tendency for key administrative offices in the countryside and at the *darbar* to become monopolised by a restricted number of influential, inter-connected urban-based families. It is not difficult to understand why and how this situation came about. The violent upheavals at the *darbar* during this period not only had wiped out a large number of the top chieftains and courtiers (as a result of which their followers often lost their offices), thus creating an opening for subordinate administrators, but had also produced a situation in which administrators in the countryside, at both district and provincial levels, had been freed from the *darbar*'s strict supervision and had thus been able to consolidate and extend their own authority and influence. In the early 1840s Diwan Sawan Mal, for example, had strengthened his fort and built up his own troops at Multan with a view to declaring his independence from Lahore should a suitable opportunity present itself. With this in mind he had placed a number of his own relatives and stalwart clients into administrative offices in and adjacent to *suba* Multan. In September 1844, however, he had been assassinated by a soldier. His son, Diwan Mul Raj, had taken over as *nazim*. The *darbar* demanded of Mul Raj a *nazrana* of 10 million rupees (one *crore*) for its acknowledgement of his succession. At that time the two Sikh battalions stationed at Multan by the *darbar* had mutinied,

demanding higher pay. Mul Raj's followers had attacked the mutineers and totally dispersed them. This victory had so baffled the *darbar* and strengthened Mul Raj's position that the new *nazim* had actually been able to negotiate the payment of a much smaller *nazrana*: after a period of intense bargaining the *darbar* had accepted Mul Raj's offer of Rs 18 *lakhs*, which was less than one-fifth of its original demand.⁸⁸

The implication of developments at Multan and in other parts of the countryside after 1839 was that the centrifugal tendencies of Punjabi political culture were once again overtaking its centripetal tendencies. Throughout the 1840s it became increasingly evident that, left to its own inclinations, the kingdom would shortly disintegrate into several parts - a Khatri State at Multan, a Dogra State in the Jammu hills, an autonomous trans-Indus frontier, and a small, pure Sikh State in the central districts.⁸⁹ In the past similar sets of circumstances had also carried with them the very real possibility of external intervention. So it was in the mid-1840s. Before the internal disintegration of the kingdom could occur the first Anglo-Sikh war broke out, and the political future of both the kingdom and its provincial power centres took on a rather different perspective. Our study of the period 1839-46 therefore properly ends with an examination of the origins, prosecution, and outcome of the war.

The first Anglo-Sikh war

The outbreak of hostilities between the Sikhs and the British in December 1845 was, as we shall presently see, very much the denouement of events within the kingdom since 1839. But it must also be understood in the wider context of Anglo-Sikh political relations since the beginning of the century. Even in the early 1840s there existed a widespread belief that war was inevitable, and had been for a long time. Yet, naturally,

88. Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 2, pp. 97-100.

89. See Lord Ellenborough's correspondence with the Duke of Wellington, 20 Oct and 18 Dec 1843, and with Major C.M. Broadfoot, British Political Agent at Ludhiana, 18 Nov 1844, in Hasrat (ed), *The Punjab Papers*, pp. 67, 69, 78.

the reasons for this belief were not always the same on one side of the Sutlej border as on the other.

To Ranjit Singh and his successors in particular, and to the Punjabi populace in general, it had seemed that the English East India Company had all along been bent on encircling the kingdom with a view to its absorption at an appropriate moment, and that sooner or later the Sikhs would be forced to fight in order to delay that moment. As Cunningham, who was a British officer with pro-Sikh leanings, pointed out in the late 1840s, such a perception was consistent with an Eastern view of history and civilisation: were not the British the rising star in the Indian firmament? Was their destiny not great, and the fire-power of their cannon not irresistible?⁹⁰ Nor was evidence of British ambition lacking, since almost every British Governor-General since Lord Wellesley (1798-1805) had contributed to their kingdom's encirclement. Wellesley had sanctioned Lord Lake's pursuit of Holkar, the remaining Maratha warlord, across the Sutlej to within a march of Amritsar (1804-5). Lord Minto (1807-12) had blocked Sikh expansion into the Cis-Sutlej region by moving British troops up to Karnal and Hariana, by placing the Cis-Sutlej chieftains under British protection, and by establishing a British garrison and Political Agency at Ludhiana (1808-10). Lord Auckland (1836-42), using the doctrine of escheat, had made Ferozepur, on the right bank of the Sutlej to the south of Lahore, a British cantonment (1838), thereby directly threatening the Sikh capital. Lord Ellenborough (1842-44) had used the Punjab as a military highway for the Afghanistan expedition (1838-42), the purpose of which had been to place a British puppet on the throne at Kabul, and had later scrapped the Tripartite Treaty (between the British, the Sikhs and Shah Shuja-the puppet) without consulting the Sikhs (1842). Ellenborough had also sanctioned Napier's malapert annexation of Sind (1843). Sir Henry (later Viscount) Hardinge (1844-48), the veteran of the Napoleonic wars, had taken the aggressive steps of doubling the total strength of British troops along the Sutlej border and assembling a fleet of boats that could be used to form a pontoon bridge across the river (1844-5). There is little wonder, then, that the Sikhs had come to regard a war with

90. Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs*, p.248.

the British as being just a matter of time.⁹¹

To be sure, there were British officers, both civil and military, who regarded the expansion of the Company into the Punjab as a natural and necessary mission of Christian civilisation, and who relished the thought of a war with the pugnacious Sikhs. "The Sikhs", wrote Auckland to Sir John Hobhouse, the President of the Board of Control in London, in early 1840, "are a swaggering and restive nation and proud of their military strength and there is not an officer in our army who does not avow an appetite for a Sikh war."⁹² Yet official British policy towards the Punjab had always been rather less straightforward than the Sikhs had feared or individual British officers had hoped. In part this is explained by the reluctance of the Company's Directors at home to sanction financially expensive wars and commercially dubious annexations at a time when the Company had seemed to be over-committed in the subcontinent already. It also needs to be remembered that official British policy towards the Punjab was tied up with a wider northwest frontier strategy that was itself not constant but rather an alternation between the "forward" and "moderate" schools in influence both in London and in India.⁹³ We do not have the space to make a detailed review of the vicissitudes of official policy since the turn of the century, but we may notice the main trends.

Towards the end of the costly Maratha campaign (1803-05) Lord Cornwallis had been sent out to India as Wellesley's replacement with specific instructions from the Company's Court of Directors not to engage in any more wars or make any more annexations. A treaty of friendship with Ranjit Singh had accordingly been signed in 1806. Its key proposition had been that the British would fall back to the Jumna in return for Ranjit

91. S.S. Thorburn, *The Punjab in Peace and War* (Patiala, reprint 1970), p.32; Jagmohan Mahajan, *Circumstances Leading to the Annexation of the Punjab, 1846-1849 (A Historical Revision)*, (Allahabad, 1949), pp.24-6.

92. Auckland to Hobhouse (Private), 23 Jan 1840: Hasrat (ed), *The Punjab Papers*, p.35.

93. The best study is Hasrat, *Anglo-Sikh Relations*.

Singh's causing the removal of Holkar from the Punjab. But within a few years both Ranjit Singh and the Company had changed their minds about the importance of the Cis-Sutlej region that lay between their territories: the Sikh monarch had felt strong enough to bring the chieftainships of the region into his orbit, while the Company, largely in response to a supposed Franco-Russian design on its Indian possessions, had come to see the region as a potentially troublesome frontier. Minto, the new Governor-General in 1807, had been instructed to make preparations for defending British possessions in the east against Britain's European rivals. He had therefore adopted the grand strategy of erecting a series of bulwarks - in Persia, Afghanistan, Sind and the Punjab. Metcalfe's mission to Lahore in 1808 (Malcolm had been sent to Persia, Elphinstone to Afghanistan, Seton to Sind) had coincided with Ranjit Singh's decision to launch his conquest of the Cis-Sutlej chieftains. Ranjit Singh had indicated his willingness to join the British in an anti-French pact provided that they recognised his claim to sovereignty over the Cis-Sutlej region. However, Minto had not been prepared to countenance the extension of Sikh power into that region (Sikh resistance in the face of a French invasion, it had been felt, could not be counted on), and while Metcalfe had spun things out at Lahore the Cis-Sutlej chieftains had been taken under British protection. Realising that his army was no match for the troops assembled by Minto, Ranjit Singh had backed down and signed the Treaty of Amritsar (1809) which bound him to renounce any claim to sovereignty over the territories to the east of the Sutlej.

The anticipated French expansion eastwards had never materialised, and after the collapse of the Napoleonic empire in Europe British interest in the politics of northwestern India had declined. During this lull in Anglo-Sikh relations (1809-30) Ranjit Singh had extended his own power towards, and then beyond, the Indus. The British, content to let the Sikhs grapple with the problems of stabilising the Indus frontier, had turned their attentions towards the more pressing matters of building up the opium-tea trade with China, overhauling their Indian administration and dealing with the Gurkhas (1815-16), the Pindaris (1817), the erstwhile Maratha confederacy (1818), and the Burmese (1824-26). While Ranjit Singh had established his dominion over the Punjab, the Company came to establish its dominion over most of the rest of the subcontinent.

It had not been until the early 1830s that the British had again adopted a "forward" policy towards the northwest. In part this change of policy had reflected a growing commercial interest in the Indus river system. Following Alexander Burnes's navigation of the Indus in 1831 - conducted under the pretext of delivering to Ranjit Singh the King of England's gift of a team of cart horses - and calls for a commercial treaty "in the interests of Commerce and Civilisation",⁹⁴ a Navigation Treaty had been forced upon both the Amirs of Sind and the Sikh Maharaja. Within a few years, however, the commercial potential of the Indus river system had been found to be somewhat limited.⁹⁵ A more important reason for the change of policy had been the anticipation of a Sikh expansion into Sind, which might have undermined the Company's position in Kutch (occupied in 1819), and fears of a Russian expansion into British India via Turkey and Persia. The Sikhs had been warned, in no uncertain terms, against making any advance into Sind, while the Amirs had been obliged to accept, as the price of British protection, the posting of a British Political Agent at Hyderabad (1838) - the first stage in the establishment of British imperial domination of Sind.⁹⁶ At the same time, however, the supposed Russian threat to India had highlighted the strategic importance to the British of the Sikh kingdom. It had been essential that the

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94. Wade, "Observations on the Commerce of the Punjab", enclosed in Wade to H.T. Prinsep, Secy to GG, 27 Feb 1832, no 7: FSP, 9 April 1832, no 7 (NAI). Burnes had also regarded the opening of the Indus system as providing "an increased outlet for the commodities of our Commercial Country": Burnes, Assistant to the Resident, Kutch, "On the Commercial Relations of the Punjab and the Probable Effects thereon by Opening the Indus", enclosed in Burnes to Macnaghten, 19 Feb 1832: FSP, 16 April 1832, no 9 (NAI).
95. The navigability of the Indus and its tributaries had proved to be restricted. Moreover, in 1837 both Burnes and Wade had reported that the exorbitant customs duties which Ranjit Singh permitted his officials to levy (a subject upon which various British envoys had failed to interest the Maharaja) placed a great hindrance on the region's commercial activity: Burns to Macnaghten, 4 Sept 1837: FPC, 20 Oct 1837, no 67 (NAI); Wade to Macnaghten, 6 Oct 1837: FPC, 20 Oct 1837, no 68 (NAI). In 1838 an Anglo-Sikh commercial expedition had carried samples of Punjab export commodities to Bombay, but most of the samples had proved to be of inferior quality and difficult to sell: FPC, 25 April 1838, nos 45-6; 26 Dec 1838, no 32 (NAI).
96. The Sind Story is told in Robert A. Huttenback, *British Relations With Sind, 1799-1843* (Berkeley, 1962).

kingdom henceforth be built up and maintained as a non-Muslim buffer state between British India and the Muslim powers to the west of the Indus. For example, in early 1838 Wade, the British Political Agent at Ludhiana, propounded to his government the need to

Secure the integrity of the Sikh nation as far as the Indus and mould these people and their already half disciplined troops to our wishes. Then we could make the Indus a formidable barrier and command an influence throughout Afghanistan either with one sovereign or separate chiefships as now existing....⁹⁷

Wade's approach had been adopted: the Sikhs had been drawn into the Tripartite Treaty of 1838, by which Shah Shuja was to be restored to the throne at Kabul, and their sovereignty over the Punjab had been guaranteed by the British. From this time onwards, until the annexation of the kingdom a decade later, British policy towards the Punjab had been founded on the notion of maintaining a buffer state. In its details, however, British policy had come to be shaped by political developments within the kingdom.

So long as Sikh authority had been strong, the long-term British objective had been attainable without any sort of interference in the internal affairs of the kingdom. In particular, the British had scrupulously avoided associating themselves with any of the political factions that had been formed during the last years of Ranjit Singh's reign. On two occasions in the past - in 1830 and in 1836 - the British had politely refused Kharak Singh's secret overtures for support of his claim to the *gaddi* at his father's death;⁹⁸ this line of policy had now to be continued.⁹⁹ Even when Ranjit Singh had died the British had stood aloof from the first succession crisis. Wade, then on a mission to Peshawar, had been instructed to observe "a perfect neutrality" in all the *darbar's* own affairs.¹⁰⁰ Once Kharak Singh had ascended the *gaddi*, Wade had been instructed to use his influence with the different

97. Wade to Macnaghten, 1 Jan 1838: FPC, 14 Feb 1838, no 58 (NAI).

98. Political despatch from Court of Directors (hereafter C o D), 10 Nov 1830, no 13: FP, vol 35 (NAI); Wade to Macnaghten, 10 Aug 1836: FPC, 19 Sept 1836, no 47 (NAI).

99. no 97 above.

100. T.H. Maddock, Offg Secy to G o I with GG, to Wade, 2 July 1839: FSC, 7 Aug 1839, no 12 (NAI).

chieftains he met to ensure their continued allegiance to the new Maharaja,¹⁰¹ even though it had long been felt in influential British quarters that Sher Singh would be the only fit successor, capable of averting a resurgence of anarchy in the Punjab following Ranjit Singh's death.¹⁰²

But with Nao Nihal Singh's assumption of *de facto* authority in late 1839, and his fomenting of an anti-British feeling amongst the Sikh soldiery, with a view to consolidating his position, many junior British officers had begun questioning the wisdom of a non-intervention policy. Several of the political officers in direct contact with the *darbar* had even taken policy decision-making into their own hands - to the annoyance of the *darbar* and the embarrassment of their own government. Wade, for example, had taken it upon himself to accuse Nao Nihal Singh in public of having usurped power, and to obstruct his authority, as a result of which the *darbar* had refused to recognise Wade's agency and demanded his recall. In April 1840 Auckland had been obliged to recall Wade from Ludhiana and replace him with George Clerk.¹⁰³ Another embarrassing situation created by the actions of an over-zealous "man on the spot" had occurred a year later, when the second succession crisis had broken out at Lahore. Auckland, with the Court of Director's approval, had decided to abandon the official policy of strict neutrality towards the *darbar's* affairs to the extent that the British would support Sher Singh against Rani Chand Kaur and the Sindhanwalias, if called upon to do so, and in return for certain considerations.¹⁰⁴ A British force of 12,000 men

101. H. Torrens, Dept Secy to G o I with GG, to Wade, 11 July 1839: FSC, 4 Dec 1839, no 80 (NAI). At that time Auckland, the then GG, had written to Hobhouse: "I sincerely lament the loss of an old ally [Ranjit Singh]. I will use my best endeavours with those who stand in his place to preserve unimpaired the relations which have so long subsisted between the British Government and the Punjab" : Auckland to Hobhouse (Private), 14 July 1839: Hasrat (ed), *The Punjab Papers*, p.31.

102. For example. Burnes, "Report on the Military Power and Political Relations of the Punjab as ruled by Runjeet Singh" : FSP, 21 May 1832, no 10 (NAI).

103. The *darbar's* angry reaction and Auckland's embarrassment are discussed in Auckland to Hobhouse (Private), 23 Jan 1840: Hasrat (ed), *The Punjab Papers*, p.35.

104. India despatch from Secret Committee, 30 April 1841: FSC, 30 April 1841, no 733 (NAI). Clerk had been informed that British assistance would require the surrender by the *darbar* of its Cis-Sutlej estates to the British, and all its trans-Indus territories to Afghanistan. Further, a sum of Rs 40 *lakhs* would have to be paid by Sher Singh to cover the cost of any military operations: Hasrat, *Anglo-Sikh Relations*, p.204.

had been collected at Ferozepore "to watch the Sikhs and act if necessary."¹⁰⁵ Clerk, however, had regarded the events at Lahore as favouring a more bold pursuit of British interests, and had overstepped his duties to propose to Sher Singh an immediate occupation of the Sikh capital by the British. This proposal, which had done nothing to bolster Sher Singh's reputation, had so infuriated the Sikh army that Clerk, then at the Sikh capital, had hastily retired to Ludhiana. Nor had Auckland been happy with his Political Agent's unsolicited initiative. Publicly the Government of India had acquiesced in it, for Auckland had rebuked Sher Singh for having failed to restrain his army. Privately, however, the Governor-General had rebuked his Political Agent as well:

I am always a little surprised [he had written to Clerk in March 1841] at your warlike tone in regard to Lahore, and I should find it more difficult, than you seem to think it would be, to frame a declaration of war with the Sikhs. Naunihal Singh was not without secret sins against us but he is dead and gone. Every demand made upon the Darbar has been complied with. Our convoys [to Afghanistan] and our merchants continue to traverse the Punjab frequently under Sikh escorts with stores and treasures of immense value.

But nothing justifies our interference.¹⁰⁶

The political development that had convinced Ellenborough, Auckland's successor, that military interference in the Punjab by the British would probably have to be undertaken, regardless of the *darbar's* wishes, had been the emergence of the republican Khalsa army as the major political force at Lahore after the onset of the third succession crisis late in 1843. It was highly possible, Ellenborough had felt, that Raja Hira Singh Dogra would seek to strengthen his position as *wazir*, and weaken the army's political power, by directing a movement of aggression against the British.¹⁰⁷ Even so, the new Governor-General had not been persuaded by the arguments of those officers who had advocated a "defensive" first strike against the Sikhs: for one thing, he had not yet entirely abandoned hope that a stable government at Lahore might somehow emerge; for another, the British had been far from ready at this stage to undertake military

105. Ellenborough to the Duke of Wellington (Private), 26 Oct 1841: Hasrat (ed), *The Punjab Papers*, p.57.

106. Auckland to Clerk (Private), 21 March 1841: *ibid*, p.45.

107. Ellenborough to Governor of Sind, 24 Dec 1843, no 30: FSC, 23 March 1844, no 18 (NAI).

operations along the Sutlej border.¹⁰⁸ Preparations for a military contest with the Sikhs had therefore been started at this time, with November 1845 as the projected date of completion.¹⁰⁹ Until these preparations were completed, it had been of the utmost importance that a premature outbreak of hostilities should not occur. "I will never threaten", Ellenborough had told Lord Ripon on 4 July 1844, "when I cannot strike, and I will never strike unless I strike very hard, and one blow will be enough. We have no cause of striking yet."¹¹⁰

Ellenborough had been recalled from India in July 1844, mainly because the Court of Directors had been unhappy with his part in the annexation of Sind, and with his adventuristic measures in Bundelkhand and Gwalior. However, his broad strategy towards the Punjab - that of fortifying the Sutlej frontier and simply watching events at Lahore, rather than becoming directly involved in them - had not been publicly condemned; indeed, such a strategy had been continued by his successor, Hardinge. Military preparations were pushed ahead, so that by January 1845 Hardinge was able to report the presence on the frontier of 36,000 men for offensive operations, with a rear-guard of 200,000 men for defensive purposes.¹¹¹ By this time Raja Hira Singh Dogra had been assassinated and the army had appointed Jawahir Singh as *wazir*. But Hardinge had been unwilling to interfere, even though several *darbar* chieftains as well as his junior officers had urged it.¹¹² The military democracy of the

108. Ellenborough to Wellington (Private), 20 Oct 1843; Ellenborough's Minute, 1 Nov 1843: Hasrat (ed), *The Punjab Papers*, pp. 67-8.

109. Ellenborough to Wellington (Private), 20 Nov 1843; 9 May 1844: *ibid*, pp. 69, 74.

110. Ellenborough to Ripon (Private), 4 July 1844: *ibid*, p.76.

111. Hardinge to Ellenborough (Private), 8 Jan 1845: *ibid*, p.79.

112. In early 1845 Raja Gulab Singh Dogra and several other influential *darbar* chieftains had approached Major Broadfoot, the GG's Agent on the North-West Frontier, with various proposals for assisting a British occupation of Lahore in return for guarantees of their preservation. Broadfoot had been instructed to decline these proposals. For an example, see FSC, 4 April 1845, nos 115-17 (NAI). Sir Frederick Currie, the GG's Political Secy, had informed Broadfoot of the G o I's reluctance to interfere, even though the withholding of aid that might be solicited "must bring about the destruction of the Sikh power" : Currie to Broadfoot (Private), 19 Jan 1845: Hasrat (ed), *The Punjab Papers*, p.81.

panchayats, Hardinge had agreed, was most dangerous; still, the trial of awaiting the emergence of a strong Sikh government must run its course.¹¹³ But, as we have already seen, a strong Sikh government centred on the *darbar* had not emerged: the army *panchayats* had taken more and more power into their own hands. By the middle of 1845 British intelligence reports indicated that British war preparations were being countered, with equal feverishness, on the other side of the Sutlej.¹¹⁴

After the execution of Jawahir Singh by the army in September 1845, Hardinge finally admitted the improbability of a stable Sikh government being formed out of the remaining *darbar* elements, and the probability of a violent solution to the problem. The few remaining *darbar* chieftains of influence had become fearful of the army, and desirous of its destruction so that they might regain their former power. But it was not worth using a British army to destroy the greater portion of the Sikh nation, Hardinge reasoned, simply to replace a few inconsequential chieftains in power. British interests would be better served by remaining aloof, yet fully prepared, until cause for an all-out war had been given.¹¹⁵

The spark that ignited this tense situation into one of open confrontation came sooner than most had expected. Early in November Broadfoot, who was the Governor-General's Agent on the North-West Frontier, had placed two villages near Ludhiana, villages that were the property of Maharaja Dalip Singh, under sequestration, on the grounds that criminals concealed in them had not been surrendered. This extraordinary measure, together with news of Hardinge's rapid advance towards the frontier, had removed any lingering doubts that the *panchayats* might have had as to the inevitability of war.¹¹⁶ The *darbar*, seeing an opportunity to rid itself of the army, now accepted the military leadership role demanded of it by

113. Hardinge to Ellenborough (Private), 8 March 1845: *ibid*, p.86.

114. For Broadfoot's reports, see FSC, 20 June 1845, nos 33, 56, 58; 15 Aug 1845, no 34 (NAI).

115. Hardinge to Ellenborough (Private), 23 Oct 1845: Hasrat (ed), *The Punjab Papers*, p.92.

116. "The men would assemble in groups and talk of the great battle they must soon wage, and they would meet around the tomb of Ranjit Singh and vow fidelity to the Khalsa" : Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs*, p.258.

the *panchayats*. On 11 December 1845 the Sikh army, under the joint command of General Tej Singh, the commander-in-chief, and Raja Lal Singh, the *wazir*, began crossing the Sutlej. Two days later Lord Hardinge, at the head of an advancing British army, issued a declaration of war, charging the Sikh state with having broken the treaty of 1809. The long - awaited contest between the two best armies in the subcontinent had begun.

The first Anglo-Sikh war, or Sutlej Campaign, was a short but very sharp affair. The two basic points about it that are of interest to us are first, that the ordinary Sikh soldiery proved to be - despite their inferior leadership - much more formidable opponents than the British had ever anticipated, and second, that the *darbar* was essentially more interested in the annihilation of its own army than in a victory against the British. A word should be said here about the respective strengths of the two armies. The combined British Army of the Sutlej had a strength of about 32,000 fighting men,¹¹⁷ most of whom were well-trained Indian mercenaries, and 109 heavy guns.¹¹⁸ At the time it was supposed that the Sikh army was three or four times larger. But historians have subsequently demonstrated that the estimates of Sikh strength given in the despatches of General Sir Hugh Gough, the British Commander-in-Chief, were grossly exaggerated, although they have not agreed upon an alternative figure. Gough and Innes, whose work is still the best account of the war, put the total Sikh force at about 100,000 men; they acknowledged, however, that no such force was ever collected at any one time against the British.¹¹⁹ Cunningham, who was known for his pro-Sikh sympathies, gave a figure of 35,000 or 40,000 men, with 150 pieces of heavy artillery.¹²⁰ Thorburn gave a figure of 30,000 regulars, 150 guns and 'unnumbered swarms

117. It should be remembered that in those days camp followers outnumbered the actual soldiers by six to one: Thorburn, *The Punjab in Peace and War*, p.43, n 1.

118. Hasrat, *Anglo-Sikh Relations*, pp. 266-7.

119. Gen. Sir Charles Gough and Arthur D. Innes, *The Sikhs and the Sikh Wars: the Rise, Conquest, and Annexation of the Punjab State* (Patiala, reprint 1970), pp. 66-7.

120. Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs*, p.262.

of horsemen and Akalis [militant warrior-priests]".¹²¹ Hasrat, the most recent authority, and one who made a critical analysis of all the official British despatches, gave a figure of about 50,000 men and 108 guns.¹²² It would seem reasonable to accept as valid Cunningham's general observation that, while numerous bodies of irregular horsemen and infantrymen might have swelled the Sikh army to more than double that of their opponents, the regular troops of the Sikhs never exceeded those of the British by more than a half.¹²³

Discipline and leadership, rather than weight of numbers and calibre of guns, were the decisive factors in the war. When the Sikh army crossed the Sutlej, its immediate object should have been to capture the unfortified British cantonment at Ferozepur before British reinforcements could arrive from Ludhiana. Instead, the Sikh commanders adopted the plan of isolating Ferozepur by placing half their army at Ferozeshah, a village situated about 10 miles to the southeast of Ferozepur, while the other half marched on to intercept the main body of the advancing British army. This plan backfired. The first battle took place at the village of Mudki, about 20 miles to the southeast of Ferozepur, on 18 December 1845. There a British force of 12,000 men, with forty-eight guns and four troops of horse artillery, inflicted a defeat upon a Sikh force of 3,500 cavalry, 2,000 infantry and twenty guns.¹²⁴ British losses were 215 men killed and 657 wounded; Sikh losses, though to have been great, were never ascertained.

121. Thorburn, *The Punjab in Peace and War*, p.35.

122. Hasrat, *Anglo-Sikh Relations*, p.35.

123. Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs*, p.262. In the following paragraphs the estimates of battle forces and casualties have been taken from Hasrat, rather than from Gough and Innes, where the two authorities do not agree.

124. Just to demonstrate the disparity between the estimates of other historians, Gough and Innes referred to the official British despatches, wherein the Sikh force at Mudki was estimated at between 20,000 and 30,000 men with forty guns (*The Sikhs and the Sikh Wars*, p.78), while Cunningham gave a figure of less than 2,000 infantry and between 8,000 and 10,000 cavalry with twenty-two guns (*History of the Sikhs*, p.265).

At the battle of Ferozeshah, three days later, a British force of 16,700 men and sixty-nine guns came very close to being beaten by a Sikh force of about 10,000 men and 100 guns. The first day of Ferozeshah was essentially an artillery battle, and the heavier calibre of the Sikh's guns (said to have been treble that of the guns used in the Napoleonic wars), together with the superior marksmanship of their gunners, initially told in their favour: by nightfall, one-third of the British guns had been put out of action, and their ammunition was nearly exhausted. However, during the night, while the Sikh guns continued to play with deadly effect, a British cavalry charge, led by the Governor-General himself, succeeded in breaking through the Sikh lines. By day-break, British victory seemed assured; but the cost had been great: half the British guns were out of action, and 2,415 men had died; on the Sikh side, between 4,000 and 5,000 men and seventy-three guns had been lost. As the sun rose on the second day of Ferozeshah, a most remarkable event occurred. A second Sikh force of about 30,000 men under Tej Singh's command arrived on the battlefield. As Tej Singh's artillery opened up, and his infantry advanced, the exhausted British army grimly prepared for a second battle. A Sikh victory now seemed inevitable; but Tej Singh, whether out of cowardice or an incompetent assessment of the situation, suddenly retired from the field, much to the amazement and relief of the British commanders.

After Ferozeshah, both armies retired to lick their wounds. A month later the Sikhs re-crossed the Sutlej and engaged the British in the minor battle of Baddowal (21 January 1846), in which a small British force was obliged to retreat from the field, and then fought the Battle of Aliwal (28 January), in which Sardar Ranjor Singh Majithia's force of about 15,000 men was thoroughly routed by an 11,000 - strong army under the command of General Sir Harry Smith. Here the Sikhs lost 3,500 men and sixty-seven guns : British casualties amounted to 151 men killed. Aliwal was a welcome victory for the British, doing much to restore flagging morale amongst their Indian mercenaries. The Sikhs fell back to the Sutlej to prepare for a last, all-out battle.

The decisive Battle of Sobraon was fought on 10 February. The Sikhs had dug themselves in at a bend in the Sutlej river, with a bridge of boats connecting them with Tej Singh's artillery on the opposite bank, to

their rear. The British army, re-supplied from a convoy that had arrived from Delhi two days earlier, took up its positions in a six-mile arc, facing the Sikhs. At day-break, as the fog lifted, the guns of both armies opened up, and continued firing for nearly three hours. Cunningham described the scene:

The field was resplendent with embattled warriors, one moment umbered [sic] in volumes of sulphurous smoke, and another brightly apparent amid the splendour of beaming brass and the cold and piercing rays of polished steel. The roar and loud reverberation of the ponderous ordnance added to the impressive interest of the scene, and fell gratefully upon the ear of the intent and enduring soldier.¹²⁵

The Sikh artillery, pride and joy of Ranjit Singh, was proving equal to the British best.

By early morning it became clear to the British commanders that only a cavalry and infantry charge like that undertaken at Ferozeshah could dislodge the Sikh troops and silence their guns. The order went out for a direct assault on the Sikh positions. Wave upon wave of British cavalry and infantry fell upon the Sikh entrenchments until at last a breach was made. As the heavy guns gradually lessened, and then fell silent, the battle became one of bayonet and sword, during which British soldiers experienced fiercer hand-to-hand fighting than on any previous occasion in India. Cavalry and infantry eventually won the day for the British at Sobraon as they had at Ferozeshah. This time Tej Singh did not even appear on the battlefield to threaten a reversal: when the British charge began, he and Lal Singh fled to Lahore, leaving behind them a sunken boat in the middle of the pontoon bridge and a condemned Sikh army. When the Battle of Sobraon was over, the Sikhs had lost every gun and more than 3,000 men - Gough and Innes gave a figure of 10,000¹²⁶ - many of whom had been driven into the Sutlej and drowned. British casualties amounted to 320 killed and 2,063 wounded. Sobraon was a massive, decisive victory for the British.

It has been asserted by some Punjabi historians that the British won the first Anglo-Sikh war owing to the treacherous collaboration of

125. Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs*, p.282.

126. Gough and Innes, *The Sikhs and the Sikh Wars*, p.182.

the Sikh commanders, Tej Singh and Lal Singh, who were interested only in saving their own skins and retaining their status and wealth. For example, it has been pointed out that shortly after the Sikh army crossed the Sutlej in mid-December, Lal Singh contacted the British to suggest a desultory Sikh offensive in return for considerate treatment at the termination of the war, and that shortly before Sobraon he sent emissaries to the British with valuable information concerning the position and strength of Sikh entrenchments. It has also been claimed that Tej Singh deliberately retired from the field at Ferozeshah when he could have won, and that he purposefully sank the bridge of boats at Sobraon in order to cut off the Sikh retreat.¹²⁷ This assertion - that, but for the treachery of their leaders, the Sikhs would not have lost the war - would appear to be wishful thinking. Certain representations to the British undoubtedly were made, as they long had been made, but there is scant evidence to suggest that the British actually benefitted by them - their own intelligence methods, after all, were not exactly unsophisticated. Nor is there conclusive proof that Tej Singh's actions at Ferozeshah and Sobraon were the result of anything more than military ineptitude on his part.¹²⁸

This is not to say that the *darbar*, of which Tej Singh and Lal Singh were prominent members, seriously desired a military victory over the British, if that were possible. On the contrary, all the evidence points to the conclusion that the *darbar*, no less than the British, desired the humiliation of the Sikh army and the destruction of its republican authority. After the Battles of Mudki and Ferozeshah, Raja Gulab Singh Dogra, who had kept aloof from the war, but had continued to offer his services to the British, was invited to Lahore and offered the post of *wazir* so that he might begin negotiating a settlement with the British that would ensure the survival of the *darbar*.¹²⁹ To the British, the Dogra's intercession

127. Mahajan, *Circumstances Leading to the Annexation of the Punjab*, pp. 27-32; Ahluwalia and Singh, *The Punjab's Pioneer Freedom Fighters*, pp. 8, 21-5.

128. Hasrat, *Anglo-Sikh Relations*, pp. 283-4; Gough and Innes, *The Sikhs and the Sikh Wars*, pp. 65, 104, 138.

129. Hardinge to Ellenborough (Private), 7 June 1846: Hasrat (ed), *The Punjab Papers*, p.95.

was highly welcome. Three days after the Battle of Aliwal, Hardinge informed his wife that negotiations were under way:

I have a communication from Rajah Golab Singh, which may lead to overtures for an arrangement; he is to be made minister and says he is ready to do whatever we like to order. I am obliged to be very cold and haughty; but propose to allow him to come to propose terms and make a beginning. It is indispensable that the Sikh Army should be disbanded. Their state of anarchy and mutiny is the cause of all the mischief. [British] India is already so overgrown and large that we do not want territory. We shall keep what we have confiscated on this side [the Trans-Sutlej region], make them pay the expenses of the war, clip their wings and lessen their power, but I have always been averse to annex [the Punjab] and I still hope to keep up a Sikh nation.¹³⁰

Just before the Battle of Sobraon an agreement was reached between Raja Gulab Singh Dogra and the British, to the effect that the *darbar* would openly denounce the actions of the Sikh army and Dalip Singh would remain as the minor Maharaja, provided that the British army could occupy Lahore unopposed. The ordinary Sikh soldiery were not informed of this agreement, and went to their deaths in their thousands at Sobraon, fully believing that they were fighting for the preservation of their kingdom.

The British army moved across the Sutlej after the Battle of Sobraon, and occupied the Sikh capital on 20 February 1846. By the Treaty of Lahore, signed on 9 March 1846 by Frederick Currie and Henry Lawrence on behalf of the British Government, and by seven *darbar* chieftains on behalf of Maharaja Dalip Singh, the Lahore Government formally surrendered to the British its Cis-Sutlej estates and the Trans-Sutlej province (the Jullundur Doab), and agreed to the payment of an indemnity of Rs 1.5 *crores* (£1.5 million). Since the Lahore Government would probably not be able to pay this sum, additional territories situated in the hills between the Beas and the Indus, including the provinces of Kashmir and Hazara, were surrendered as equivalent for Rs 1 *crore*. Other important articles of the treaty stipulated that the Sikh army should be pruned back to 20,000 infantry and 12,000 cavalry; that the British should control tolls and ferries on the rivers Beas and Sutlej as far as the Indus confluence; that British troops should have free passage through the Maharaja's territories; that the Lahore Government would recognise the independent

130. Hardinge to Lady Hardinge, 31 Jan 1846: *ibid*, p.101.

sovereignty of Raja Gulab Singh Dogra in such territories as the British Government decided to make over to him; and that, while the British Government would not exercise any interference in the internal administration of the Lahore State, the Governor-General would exercise the right of giving his advice on any matters that might be referred to him.

Two days later a number of supplementary articles were added to the Treaty. One stipulated that at the Lahore Government's solicitation a British force would remain at Lahore until the end of the year to protect the minor Maharaja and the citizens of his capital during the reorganisation of the Sikh army. Another provided the Lahore Government with the assistance of the local British authorities for the recovery of revenue arrears due from the *kardars*, *ijaradars* and *nazims*. On 16 March 1846 a separate treaty was signed by Raja Gulab Singh Dogra and the British Government. The provinces of Kashmir and Hazara, which the British had taken in part payment of the war indemnity, were made over to the Raja and his lineal male heirs in perpetuity in return for the payment of Rs 75 *lakhs* (£750,000) and the acknowledgement of British supremacy.¹³¹ With the signing of these treaties an important chapter in the history of the Punjab came to a close.

Conclusion

There are two broad conclusions to be drawn from our study of the period 1839-46. The first is that Sikh monarchical authority collapsed as a result of a basic structural weakness in the kingdom's political system. The inability of the *darbar* to throw up another Maharaja stamped with the qualities of Ranjit Singh after 1839, and the tumultuous events that stemmed from that failure, have usually been explained in terms of the weak characters of the various royal princes and the venality of most of the chieftains. Some historians have also stressed the republicanism of the army or the external pressure exerted by the British. We do not deny the importance of these factors, but would see them essentially as

131. The Treaty of Lahore, the list of Supplementary Articles, and the treaty with Gulab Singh Dogra are reproduced in Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs*, appendices xxxiv-vi.

symptoms of the Sikh-Dogra antagonism that Ranjit Singh had deliberately incorporated into the political system of his kingdom. During his reign this antagonism had worked in his favour. After his death, however, it worked to the detriment of the whole kingdom. We have shown that it was the "prime mover" of events within the kingdom after 1839 - that it lay at the bottom of the three succession crises, the emergence of the army as a rival political force, the weakening of the bonds between the provincial and central levels of the "national" system of government, and the drift towards a war with the British.

With the creation of an independent Dogra kingdom in Kashmir at the end of the war, this antagonism was removed from its place at the heart of Punjabi politics. But by this time the accumulated costs in human lives were quite appalling. Between the death of Ranjit Singh and the termination of the war, no fewer than two Maharajas, one queen, four royal princes, and at least forty-five prominent chieftains (including three *wazirs*) died. Most were the victims of a bout of political violence that was unusual even for Punjabi society. For example, thirty-six of the forty-five chieftains who had died were killed in the factional warfare of the period; of the remaining nineteen, twelve were killed in the first Anglo-Sikh war, while only seven died of natural causes.¹³² In all probability, the *darbar*, the Sikh community, and the Punjab generally, were better off for the elimination of some of these personalities. But the deaths of others represented a serious loss. The heroic death of Sardar Sham Singh Atariwala at Sobraon, for instance, deprived the kingdom of one of its most capable, senior chieftains.¹³³ The loss of life amongst the ordinary populace was even more tragic. How many petty chieftains, soldiers, servants and innocent by-standers were killed in the factional warfare cannot be known, but the figure would doubtless be in the hundreds. Thousands of warriors, acknowledged by the British to

132. Major G. Carmichael Smyth (ed), *A History of the Reigning Family of Lahore, with some account of the Jummoo Rajahs, the Seik Soldiers and their Sirdars* (first published 1847, reprinted Lahore, 1961), "List of Sirdars and Chiefs", pp. xxxix-1.

133. For the story of Sham Singh Atariwala, see Ahluwalia and Singh, *The Punjab's Pioneer Freedom Fighters*, chap 1.

have been some of the best they had ever encountered in India, perished on the battlefields of the war. The British Commander-in-Chief wrote of the slaughter of the Sikh soldiery at Sobraon:

Policy prevented my publicly recording my sentiments of the splendid gallantry of a fallen foe, and I declare, were it not from a conviction that my country's good required the sacrifice, I could have wept to have witnessed the fearful slaughter of so devoted a body.¹³⁴

Still, if there were numerous losers as a result of the Sikh-Dogra antagonism, there were many winners as well. Raja Gulab Singh Dogra is an obvious example. By the end of the period he had realised, largely as a result of his astuteness (Hardinge called him "the greatest rascal in Asia"¹³⁵) and his impeccable sense of timing his two life-long ambitions: he had been, temporarily, *wazir* at Lahore, and he had got his own kingdom in his native hills. Of particular interest to us, however, are two groups of men who managed to ride out the political storms of the period, and in some cases to profit by them. The first comprised that small elite of Hindu, professional administrators who took advantage of the situation at the capital by building up their wealth and power in the provinces. We have examined the methods by which these *nazims*, *ijaradars* and *kardars* extended their influence in the countryside, and the relative powerlessness of the *darbar* to do anything about it. In the next chapter we shall examine the attempts made by British officers, working through the *darbar*, to reduce the influence of these provincial administrators, and the resistance that these measures provoked. The second group comprised those chieftains and administrators who, though they were always close to the centres of the political storms at Lahore, emerged at the end of the period unscathed. How had they managed to survive? The answer to this question is worth pursuing in some detail because it will not only assist our understanding of the operation of factional politics during this period but also suggest the important role played by these men in the transition from Sikh to British rule.

Basically, these men - men like General Tej Singh and Diwan Dina Nath - survived because they were able to use the factions that were spawned by the Sikh-Dogra antagonism as vehicles for the realisation of

134. Quoted in Gough and Innes, *The Sikhs and the Sikh Wars*, p.138.

135. Hardinge to Lady Hardinge, 2 March 1846: Hasrat (ed), *The Punjab Papers*, p.104.

their own ambitions, without ever fully committing themselves to those factions. In the political idiom of modern India, they were the "*chamchas*" of their day. The word "*chamcha*" is a wholly indigenous term (it is derived from *chamach*, meaning "spoon", and has been popularised by Bombay filmland, whose heroes and heroines have used it to describe a person who ingratiates himself and does another's dirty work - as a spoon takes the place of fingers in the eating of food). We may note that it has stronger pejorative connotations than "flatterer" or "opportunist". As a political species, the "*chamcha*" might come into full bloom in stages - for example. he might first appear as a follower or assistant, then go on to become a flatterer, and finally assign to himself the role of conscience keeper¹³⁶ - but whatever the stage of his evolution his sole concern is essentially the maximisation of his own advantage. Though it is derived from an Indian political situation far removed in time and context from that of mid-nineteenth-century Punjab, and though it carries very definite pejorative overtones, the concept of the "*chamcha*" may not be entirely inappropriate to our study. For one thing, it ascribes a more active, calculated role in factional politics than does the concept of the "faction member". For another, it implies an ability to adapt to and gain personal advantage from a changing political situation as well as a relatively static one. The men whom we would dub the "*chamchas*" of the period 1839-46 were ideally placed, and ideally talented, to benefit by the transition from Sikh to British rule. Moreover, as we shall see, they played a crucial role in that transition. The concept of the "*chamcha*" might therefore be regarded as an indigenous variation on that of the "collaborator".

Some examples may prove instructive. Harsukh Rai was an administrator who possessed remarkable political resilience. He belonged to a respectable Khatri family from Gujranwala District. Several members of his family had married into the family of Diwan Sawan Mal, the *nazim* of Multan, and had served him as *kardars*. Harsukh Rai had come to Lahore in 1836 and had attached himself to Raja Dhian Singh Dogra, who had found him a

136. This analysis is attributed to Mr Atal Bihari Vajpayee; it was made in 1978 when he was India's External Affairs Minister in the Janata government: S. Sahay, "A Close Look: Role of Hangers-On in Politics", in *The Statesman Weekly* (Calcutta and New Delhi), 16 Feb 1980, p.12.

lucrative post at the *darbar*. Sher Singh, when he became Maharaja, appointed Harsukh Rai *kardar* at Sheikhpura. When Sher Singh and Dhian Singh Dogra fell out in 1841, Harsukh Rai transferred his allegiance to Sher Singh; but the *wazir* was still powerful enough to procure his dismissal in retaliation. Harsukh Rai was later appointed *kardar* at Haveli, where he became very unpopular on account of his grasping administration. In 1845 he sided with Kanwar Peshawara Singh against Jawahir Singh, the *wazir*, and lost his office, his *jagirs* and his personal property. But when Raja Lal Singh rose to power Harsukh Rai attached himself to him and rose also. He was appointed to a high military rank, and received the command of the brigade which Lal Singh had begun forming as his personal body-guard. He was also made *kardar* at Patti. But when the *wazir* fell from power after the Battle of Ferozeshan Harsukh Rai again lost his rank and office. It would seem that he kept aloof from the rest of the war. At the end of the war he attached himself to the British and through their influence received the post of *kardar* of the Manjha. Although he was soon dismissed from his new post because of his oppressive conduct, he remained loyal to the British; and after the annexation of the kingdom he served as a *tahsildar* and then as an Extra Assistant Commissioner.¹³⁷

Malik Fateh Khan Tiwana had a rather similar career. The Tiwanas of Shahpur had served Ranjit Singh as rough-riders and *jagirdari* officers after he had conquered their country. Fateh Khan had come to Lahore in 1837 and had attached himself to Raja Dhian Singh Dogra, from whom he had received various appointments. In 1840 he was imprisoned by Nao Nihal Singh essentially because he was one of the *wazir's* creatures. On the death of Nao Nihal Singh the *wazir* regained his influence, and Fateh Khan's fortunes, and those of his relatives, rose accordingly. When Maharaja Sher Singh and Raja Dhian Singh Dogra were assassinated by the Sindhanwalias in September 1843 Fateh Khan was present. But he avoided his patron's fate:

137. Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 2, pp. 117-18.

Fateh Khan was with the Raja just before his murder; but as the assassins and their victim passed into the Lahore fort, he fell behind and allowed himself to be shut out. No man was more versed in intrigue than he; he saw a catastrophe was impending, and had no such love for the Raja as to desire to share his fate.¹³⁸

Accused by Raja Hira Singh Dogra of complicity in his father's death, Fateh Khan fled across the Indus to Bannu. There he instigated a rebellion amongst the Indus tribes against the *darbar*; this rebellion was quelled, and Fateh Khan again retired to the other side of the Indus. When Hira Singh Dogra and Pandit Jalla fell from power he hurried back to Lahore, knowing that he would be well received by Jawahir Singh, the new *wazir*, with whom he had been in communication. Jawahir Singh made him a *nazim*. But, as we saw, there was a price to this favour, and that was the doing of the *wazir's* dirty work: in July 1845 Fateh Khan assisted in the capture and murder of the rebel prince, Peshawara Singh. Jawahir Singh lost his life at the hands of the *panchayats* for his role in this gruesome affair. But not so Fateh Khan: he once again sought refuge beyond the Indus, and then in the Tiwana country. When the war broke out Fateh Khan decided that it was time to desert the Sikhs altogether, and offered his military services to the British (there is no evidence that his offer was actually accepted, however). After the war Fateh Khan was imprisoned by the *darbar* for refusing to settle his revenue arrears. But the British obtained his release when the Multan rebellion broke out, and Fateh Khan then fought on the British side in the second Anglo-Sikh war. There he was killed. The Tiwanas, however, remained steadfast in their loyalty to the British after the annexation of the kingdom, and rose to become one of the wealthiest and most politically influential families in British Punjab.¹³⁹

General Tej Singh, Diwan Dina Nath, Bhai Ram Singh and Faqir Nur-ud-Din Bokhari are examples of leading "new staff" chieftains and *darbar* officials who survived the collapse of the monarchy and the violence generated by the Sikh-Dogra antagonism because they were able to give the appearance of neutrality during the various crises at Lahore.

138. Ibid, p.196.

139. Ibid, pp. 195-210.

Their loyalty, they often declared, was to the memory and the example of the Sarkar, the late Ranjit Singh. In actual fact they cared only for themselves. True, at the critical moment of each succession crisis, when violence became imminent, they publicly announced their support for one political faction (usually the stronger faction), but that did not prevent them from privately indicating their support for the rival faction. Nor were they really so neutral at other times as they claimed to be. Their survival strategy was to back all comers - including the British (hence Tej Singh's "treachery") - rather than associate themselves consistently with any particular individual or group. Smyth, a contemporary British observer of *darbar* politics, wrote in 1847 that they

were always in fact found to be the very people that have done and continue to do more injury than any other - as they are never on one side but always sure to be trifling and deeply intriguing on both sides of every matter and question. They are always and in reality unconnected with any party, but in fact at the bottom instigating in both or every party. It may be said that they are even unconnected among themselves, and each, to forward his own private ends, would sacrifice his nearest of kin; and, it is remarkable, that those very people always, at least to the present moment, contrived and so managed their policy, that while they benefitted themselves during all the disturbances, well feathered their nests - still not one of them ever has been a sufferer in any of the disturbances. 140

It should not surprise us to discover that these men collaborated with the British after 1846. In fact they really had no option, for - though the Sikh-Dogra antagonism had been finally settled - the basic contest between "traditional" and "new Staff" chieftains remained unresolved. We shall see in the next chapter that some *misl* - descended, "traditional" chieftains hated these men for their shameless "treachery", and continued to regard them as upstarts who needed taking down a peg or two. The British, for their part, depended on the administrative experience of these men, but realised that their vulnerable position as collaborators could easily induce them to play a double game. Consequently, there was always a strong likelihood of the British raising a "new staff" of their own, in which case these men would be left isolated and ineffectual. Thus, although men like Tej Singh and Dina Nath had survived the period of competition and conflict following Ranjit Singh's death, there were serious tests of their political skills yet to come.

140. Smyth (ed), *History of the Reigning Family*, "A List of the Principal Sirdars and Chiefs in the Punjaub, classed according to the party they were supposed to side with after the death of Shere Singh", pp. xliiii-xliv.

If the first broad conclusion is that the collapse of monarchical authority and the failure or otherwise of the elites to avoid being pulled down with that collapse are to be explained in terms of the structure of the kingdom's political system, the second conclusion must be that the British had, by the end of the war, taken a very important step towards annexing the Punjab. Since the beginning of the century the Sikh kingdom had figured as a pawn in the "Great Game" of global hegemony played out between Britain and her European rivals, Russia and France. A strong Sikh State under Ranjit Singh had been tolerated - to an extent even encouraged - by the British because it had acted as a non-Muslim buffer State between British possessions in India and the Muslim countries beyond the Indus via which first the French and then the Russians had been expected to make their conquests in the East. The Sikh kingdom had been a bulwark against a turbulent northwest frontier.

For several years after Ranjit Singh's death in 1839 the British hoped that the kingdom would continue to fulfil this role. Such a hope was shattered, however, by the emergence of the Sikh army as a political force, for this development turned the Punjab itself into a turbulent frontier. We would argue that this represents the first "local crisis"¹⁴¹ in the story of the establishment of British imperial rule in the Punjab. The fact that no direct British action on this crisis occurred until two years later is to be explained by British military unpreparedness. As we have seen, it was only when the arming of the Sutlej frontier was completed that the British abandoned all restraint in their dealings with the *darbar* and virtually challenged the Sikhs into making their desperate crossing of the Sutlej.

The war was fought not for possession of the Punjab but for the destruction of Sikh military power. That this was so is abundantly evident from the policy adopted by the British at the end of the war. In a letter to Hobhouse in September 1846 Hardinge outlined the three

141. The concepts of "local crisis" and "indirect" rule are drawn from the arguments of Robinson and Gallagher on nineteenth-century British imperialism. These arguments will be examined in greater detail in the next chapter.

alternative courses of action that had been open to him.¹⁴² The first was to annex the whole kingdom up to the Peshawar border. This certainly would have solved the problem of pacifying the Punjab, but it would have brought the British into direct contact with an even more turbulent frontier beyond the Indus. Moreover, possession of the Punjab would have been a source of weakness rather than strength at this particular period of British rule in India. Given the fact that the Punjab rivers were flooded for half of every year, occupation of the region would have required the stationing of a separate British force in each of the *doabs*. It was also estimated that military and civil administrative costs would exceed the total revenues of the Punjab by more than one million sterling, at a time when opium revenue was precarious and the Company was already suffering an annual fiscal deficiency of that amount. The second course was to recover the costs of the war by annexing the territory up to the Ravi (the heartland of Sikh power), and by dividing the three remaining *doabs* into smaller principalities. Hardinge had rejected this course on the grounds that frequent and inconvenient interference on the part of the British would be required to keep these small principalities in check. The third course of action was to weaken the Sikh kingdom by depriving it of one-third of its territory (the Jullundur Doab alone was worth about Rs 20 *laks* per annum in revenue) and obliging it to reduce its armed strength considerably. The weakened kingdom could still be expected to act as a non-Muslim buffer State without the power to be a disruptive force.

As we saw, Hardinge adopted the third course of action. By the treaties signed in March 1846 the Sikhs were given another chance to establish their authority over the greater portion of the Punjab. Dalip Singh was recognised as the rightful, minor ruler, and a British army was stationed in Lahore until the end of the year to ensure that his subjects also recognised his title. Raja Lal Singh was again appointed *wazir*. Rani Jindan was recognised as regent. And a British military officer, Major (later Sir) Henry Lawrence, previously the British Resident

142. The rest of this paragraph is based on Hardinge to Hobhouse (Private), 2 Sept 1846: Hasrat (ed), *The Punjab Papers*, (London, 1873), p.417.

at Nepal, was posted to Lahore as the Governor-General's Political Agent for the North-West Frontier, charged with the task of transmitting directly to the *darbar* the British Government's advice and goodwill.

But this amicable arrangement, which was lauded in the Governor-General's official proclamations as furnishing the proof of his forbearance towards the Sikhs, did nothing to disguise, from those who had eyes to see, the fact that the Punjab was now a client State of the British. Privately, Hardinge admitted as much.

In all our measures taken during the minority [he wrote to Henry Lawrence on 23 October 1847], we must bear in mind that by the Treaty of Lahore, March 1846, the Punjaub never was intended to be an independent State. By the clause I added, the chief of the State can neither make war nor peace, nor exchange nor sell an acre of territory, nor admit an European officer, nor refuse us a thoroughfare through his territories, nor, in fact, perform any act (except its own internal administration) without our permission. In fact, the native Prince is in fetters, and under our protection, and must do our bidding.¹⁴³

Thus, in early 1846 the kingdom constructed by Ranjit Singh was in the curious position of being governed, formally, by a minor Maharaja who had no real power, and, informally, by the British who had the real power though they sought to camouflage this. The question that engrossed many Punjabis and Englishmen then, and that must engross us now, is how long this paradoxical situation could continue before fresh "local crises" either forced the British to withdraw from the Punjab or pulled them in still deeper.

143. Quoted in Herbert B. Edwardes and Herman Merivale, *Life of Sir Henry Lawrence* (London, 1873), p.417.

*THE BRITISH TAKEOVER, 1846-49**Introduction*

There was a time when the suggestion that European imperialism in the nineteenth century was not primarily motivated by industrial capitalism's need for politically subject markets, and that imperial annexations were often caused as much if not more by changes in Afro-Asian political and economic systems as by changes in the European system, would have been treated by all but apologists of empire with scepticism if not outright ridicule. That was before Robinson and Gallagher put forward their revisionist interpretation. Not that their interpretation has not itself been criticised as an incomplete theory or even as a deliberate whitewash of economic imperialism. But since its first formulation, nearly thirty years ago, many cherished notions of what nineteenth-century imperialism was and how it operated have had to be at least re-examined. Thanks to Robinson and Gallagher the study of imperialism as a major epoch in world history has been rescued from its former descent into oblivion.¹

The essence of the Robinson-Gallagher argument is that nineteenth century imperialism was an "excentric" historical phenomenon. That is to say, it was properly a function of neither a Eurocentric sphere of influence nor an Afro-Asian sphere of domestic politics and economics but rather of the varying intersections of both spheres. It occurred because of, and at the point of, the meeting of the two worlds. Their argument begins with a re-examination of the British sphere of influence in the nineteenth century. They call this sphere of influence the "empire of free trade". Contrary to received wisdom, they argue, official perceptions of this empire, and of the best methods for its protection,

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1. J. Gallagher and R. Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade", in *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, vol VI, pt 1, 1953, pp.1-15; *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism* (with Alice Denny, London, 1961); "The Partition of Africa", in F.H. Hinsley (ed), *New Cambridge Modern History*, vol XI, *Material Progress and World-Wide Problems, 1870-1898* (Cambridge, 1962), chap 22. Ronald Robinson, "Non-European foundations of European imperialism: sketch for a theory of collaboration", in Roger Owen and Bob Sutcliffe (eds), *Studies in the Theory of Imperialism* (London, 1972), chap 5. Selected works of Robinson and Gallagher, together with selected responses from their critics, have been reprinted and discussed in Wm. Roger Louis (ed), *Imperialism: The Robinson and Gallagher Controversy* (New York, 1976).

remained constant throughout the century. The apparent aggressive imperialism of late-Victorian statesmen, as manifested in the "scramble" for Africa, was in fact inherently little different from the apparent anti-imperialism preached by their counterparts in the mid-Victorian period. It is easily demonstrated that the earlier period was in fact no less one of territorial expansion; but that is not really the point. The crucial point is that by and large British statesmen in both periods preferred to protect this "empire of free trade" (which was based upon power in India, established in the previous century) by controlling non-European countries "informally" (through gun-boat diplomacy and the dangled loan) rather than by controlling them "formally" through expensive and potentially troublesome annexations. According to Robinson and Gallagher, British global strategy might be summed up in their famous dictum: "trade with informal control if possible; trade with rule when necessary".²

But of course annexations did occur with marked regularity throughout the nineteenth century. What made them necessary, Robinson and Gallagher argue, were not so much new economic interests as strategic interests arising out of the need to protect existing economic interests. Furthermore, what caused new territories to be annexed were not so much threats to strategic interests as a result of political changes in Europe, though these did exist (witness the "Great Game" played out in northwest South Asia between Britain, France and Russia), as threats to strategic interests as a result of "local crises" in the political systems of Africa and Asia. Thus, for example, the feverish partition of Africa by the European powers in the last quarter of the century was set off by changes in the domestic politics of Egypt and South Africa, which in turn placed Britain's control of India, and thence her entire Afro-Asian "free trade empire", in jeopardy. These non-European "local crises" which sucked the European powers into an annexationist situation occurred at the periphery, as well as along the main communication routes, of empire. For this reason the concept of the "turbulent frontier" is also often advanced in explanation of European imperial expansion.³

2. Gallagher and Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade" (in Louis [ed], *Imperialism*), p.67.

3. John S. Galbraith, "The 'Turbulent Frontier' As A Factor In British Expansion", in *Comparative Studies In Society And History*. vol 2, 1959-60, pp. 150-68.

The Robinson-Gallagher argument goes further than this, however, in that it sees a crucial non-European component to the nature and process of imperialism. This is the Afro-Asian sphere of domestic politics and economics. European imperialism's innate obsession with commercial efficiency - what Stokes has called its "constant tendency towards economy of effort"⁴ - meant that neither "informal control" nor "formal rule" would have been feasible were it not for the collaboration of local brokers with a vested interest in the establishment and maintenance of the imperial connection. Imperial agents were simply too thin on the ground, too powerless and often, despite their inborn sense of superiority, too out of their depth in an alien culture effectively to dominate these societies by themselves. They had to work with and through local brokers, who for their part saw in the imperial agent, and later the whole imperial superstructure, a means to the realisation of their own personal interests. The actual equation struck between imperialists and collaborators varied greatly as to place and time, but generally speaking it made imperialism a two-way relationship of dependence and exploitation. It is in this sense that imperialism must be understood as an "excentric" phenomenon.

Furthermore, collaboration and its counterpart, resistance, can be seen as constituting a dual mechanism by which both the motivation and mode of imperialism were determined once the initial intersection of the two spheres of interest was made. For, if one indigenous elite chose to collaborate with the imperialists there was often a counter-elite that opted for resistance. Or, an elite that had at first chosen collaboration frequently grew disenchanted with the imperialists and swung over to resistance. Either way, the imperialists were obliged to take some responsive action to restore the balance or else they were forced to leave. Thus the collaborative-resistance mechanism largely determined not only the style of imperialism but also its whole chronological process, from its establishment through to its final breakdown. For example, the "local crisis" that caused the imperialists to move from "informal control" to "formal rule" was nearly always a collapse of an indigenous collaborative system that had been working well. Whether this collapse was due to the

4. Eric Stokes, "Traditional Resistance Movements And Afro-Asian Nationalism: The Context Of The 1857 Mutiny Rebellion In India", in *Past and Present*, no 48, August 1970, p.102.

rise of a resisting counter-elite or to a change of heart on the part of the original collaborating elite, the imperialists could only involve themselves still deeper in domestic politics, unless they were to withdraw altogether. In the words of Robinson:

...the transition from one phase of imperialism to the next was governed by the need to reconstruct and uphold a collaborative system that was breaking down. The breakdown of indigenous collaboration in many instances necessitated the deeper imperial intervention that led to imperial takeover.⁵

Critics of the Robinson-Gallagher argument have claimed that it works best - some have said only at all - when it is applied to the histories of the peripheral regions of empire, to those annexations that occurred at the geographical and commercial outer limits of established empire. Strategically important these peripheral regions might well have been (particularly if they were "turbulent frontiers"), but commercially important they generally were not (initially, at least). The classical model of economic imperialism cannot properly be re-assessed, much less refuted, from such a limited perspective. It is not our purpose to enter into this controversy. But we would acknowledge the applicability of the Robinson-Gallagher argument to the history of the Punjab in the nineteenth century. We have already seen that for the first forty years of the century British policy towards the Punjab had been shaped more by strategic considerations than by any desire to exploit the region's rather limited commercial potential. These strategic considerations, being of global significance, had dictated that the Sikh kingdom be maintained as a vigorous but friendly State. It could be said that British policy during these decades had rested upon a "pre-imperialist collaborative relationship", for Ranjit Singh had been happy to play the role of regional strongman and ally in return for British recognition of his sovereignty over the Punjab. This relationship had broken down after his death with the onset of a number of domestic political crises which had turned the Punjab into a "turbulent frontier". The British had then found it necessary to intervene militarily and to establish their "informal control" over a revamped and weakened kingdom. In this chapter we shall examine the operation of this "informal control" and the reasons for its abandonment, on 29 March 1849, in favour of "formal rule". We shall argue that the

5. Robinson, "Non-European foundations", p.139.

transition from the one to the other was a gradual process, that the British were drawn progressively deeper into domestic affairs as they responded to new political crises produced by the indigenous mechanism of collaboration and resistance.

Basically, the events of the years 1846-49 (summarised in Table 4:1) may be divided into four chronological periods, each representing an enlargement of the scale of imperial penetration, and each characterised by a different pattern of political cooperation, competition, and conflict. In the first period, from March to December 1846, the system of "informal control" established by the Treaty of Lahore was put to the test when the *wazir*, a headstrong and ambitious man, attempted to dominate the kingdom's administration. The British representative at the *darbar*, the Political Agent for the North-West Frontier, counselled the *wazir* on the need for moderation, but in doing so allowed himself to become the nucleus of opposition to the *wazir*'s policies. A solution to the problem of who was to dominate *darbar* politics - the *wazir* or the Agent - was found in December 1846, when the *wazir*'s complicity in the Kashmir revolt was used to banish him from the kingdom and draw up a new protection treaty. In the second period, from December 1846 to August 1847, the British Resident at Lahore (as the Agent was now re-designated) assumed a more active, and a more direct, role in the kingdom's administration. In this period the Resident acted rather like a *wazir*, working with and through the *darbar* to have his reforms implemented, yet always dominating the *darbar*. Moreover, just as *wazirs* in the past had found it necessary to bolster their authority and make their reforms palatable by distributing *jagirs*, offices, and honours, so the Resident was obliged to perform the role of political patron. Opposition to the Resident arose, but it was firmly dealt with: the Prema conspiracy was crushed, recalcitrant *kardars* were punished, and the former queen regent was removed from the capital because of her intrigues. In the third period, from August 1847 to April 1848, the Resident superseded the authority of the Sikhs in all but the strict legal sense. The political and administrative authority of the *darbar* was parred back to a minimum necessary only to maintain the illusion that the kingdom was an autonomous State. During this period the Resident and his British assistants undertook reforms that only a strong Maharaja could have contemplated. Many of these reforms were highly unpopular, however, so that by early 1848 dissatisfaction was rife throughout the

Table 4:1 *Chronology of Important Events, 1846-49*

1846	March	Treaty of Lahore
	September	Kashmir revolt
	December	Banishment of Raja Lal Singh Treaty of Bhyrowal
1847	February	Prema conspiracy
	August	Removal of Rani Jindan to Sheikhpura
	December	Resignation of Diwan Mul Raj
1848	April	Murder of Anderson and Vans Agnew at Multan
	May	Removal of Rani Jindan to Benares
	August	Hazara revolt
	September	Seige of Multan begun Desertion of Raja Sher Singh
	November	Battle of Ramnagar
1849	January	Battle of Chilianwala Fall of Multan
	February	Battle of Gujrat
	March	Annexation of the Punjab

kingdom. In the last period, from April 1848 to March 1849, a general crisis of authority developed. A purely local revolt against the *darbar* blew up into a political crisis that engaged practically the whole society. The second Anglo-Sikh war was in fact a civil war between collaborators (supported by the British) and resisters, with important communal and millenarian overtones. Once the war was over the general crisis of authority was resolved by Lord Dalhousie's decision to annex the Punjab.

Informal control tested

Following the signing of the Treaty of Lahore Rani Jindan, the mother of the minor sovereign, was recognised as queen regent. Raja Lal Singh and General Tej Singh were reconfirmed in their offices of *wazir* and commander-in-chief respectively. They and the other chieftains who had signed the peace treaty - Bhai Ram Singh, Diwan Dina Nath, Faqir Nur-ud-Din Bokhari, Sardar Chatar Singh Atariwala, and Sardar Ranjor Singh Majithia - formed an ill-defined regency council. Henry Lawrence was appointed Agent to the Governor-General for the North-West Frontier and was stationed at Lahore for the conduct of political relations with the *darbar*. His brother, John Lawrence, was appointed Commissioner and Superintendent of the Trans-Sutlej States (the Jullundur Doab), while the protected Sikh chieftains of the Cis-Sutlej States were placed under the supervision of Major Mackeson.⁶

It was clear from the outset that the Agent's tasks of political reconciliation and supervision of administrative reform placed him in a very delicate situation. Two days after the signing of the peace treaty Hardinge warned Lawrence of the possible dangers:

The Sikh chiefs, excluded from power, will probably intrigue against the present Government, and may attempt to excite the soldiery against those who were parties to the Treaty of Peace It will therefore be necessary to be at all times in a state of military vigilance...⁷

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6. Mackeson's former position, that of Political Agent at Ambala, was now transformed into a Commissionership. For the punishment (which included the confiscation of land, imprisonment, abolition of police jurisdiction and customs duties) of the minor Cis-Sutlej chieftains (those of Ladwa, Rupar, Anandpur and Kapurthala) who had sided with the Lahore State during the war, see *Ambala DG 1883-84*, pp. 25-6.
 7. Hardinge to Lawrence, 11 March 1846: quoted in Edwardes and Merivale, *Life of Lawrence*, p.386.

For his part, Lawrence believed that the way around these dangers lay in his ability to persuade the *darbar* to respect the *jagirs* of the chieftains and to disband the Sikh army and settle its arrears of pay in a methodical and equitable manner. But this was advice which the *wazir* was reluctant to act upon.

Rajah Lal Singh was not a popular *wazir*. He had many enemies amongst the chieftain families (it will be remembered that he had long been a client of Raja Hira Singh Dogra) and was greatly despised by the bulk of the soldiery not only for his cowardly leadership during the war but also for his open liaison with the Rani.⁸ His method of overcoming this disability was the complete reverse of that advocated by the British Agent. Rather than conciliate his enemies, he embarked upon a path of deliberate confrontation in the hope that if he was not liked he might at least be feared. He deducted two month's pay from the arrears of all troops and called it a "congratulatory offering from the soldiers themselves".⁹ He resumed or reduced the *jagirs* of at least eleven powerful families.¹⁰ Lawrence reported that Sher Singh Atariwala was dismissed from the post of *nazim* at Peshawar, and that when he applied for the farm of Julalpur district he received from the *wazir* "what is now a common reply, viz., that he should have it if he would raise the revenue".¹¹ Such retrenchments were necessary and might even have proved acceptable to the chieftains were it not for the fact that simultaneously the *wazir* was promoting new client chieftains of his own¹² and even transferring *jagirs* worth Rs 10 *lakhs* to himself and his family. Lawrence cautioned Lal Singh against the employment of double standards:

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8. Hardinge to Hobhouse (Private), 2 Sept 1846: Hasrat (ed), *The Punjab Papers*, p.107.
 9. Quoted in N.M. Khilnani, *British Power in the Punjab, 1839-1858* (New York, 1972), p.36.
 10. Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 1, pp. 337, 356, 372, 415, 425, 447, 477, 500, 503; vol 2, pp. 57, 201.
 11. Lawrence to Frederick Currie, Foreign Secy to Govt, 8 Aug 1846, no 155: FSP, 26 Dec 1846, no 1008 (NAI).
 12. Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 2, pp. 116, 289-90.

The Durbar has confiscated many Jagheers [he wrote to him on 11 July 1846]; in reference to them I would again observe that it is neither politic nor just to deprive old faithful families of their bread, and that you must reckon on the future enmity of the families of all those who are now so deprived. But when these retrenchments are accompanied by lavish grants to yourself, the measure becomes altogether unjustifiable.¹³

So little was the *wazir* amenable to this advice that he next proceeded to try and topple the virtually autonomous *nazim* of Multan.

The *suba* of Multan, which included the districts of Multan, Leiah, Dera Ghazi Khan and Khangarh and part of Jhang district, had since 1829 been governed by Diwan Sawan Mal on an annual payment to the Lahore government of Rs 21 *lakhs*. As we saw in the previous chapter, Sawan Mal was assassinated in September 1844. Raja Hira Singh Dogra, who was then *wazir*, had demanded a succession *nazrana* of Rs 1 *crore*¹⁴ from Mul Raj, who was the ex-*nazim*'s son. Mul Raj, as we saw, managed eventually to have the *nazrana* reduced to Rs 18 *lakhs*. The war had then broken out, and Mul Raj had been able to evade responsibility for the debt. But now that peace had returned the *darbar*'s claim could not be denied. Raja Lal Singh regarded Mul Raj as an old enemy and eagerly desired his ruin. He demanded of the *nazim* the payment of the outstanding *nazrana* and Rs 7 *lakhs* of arrears. When Mul Raj flatly refused these demands a Lahore military force was sent to subdue him. The *wazir*'s demands were perfectly justifiable, but it was widely rumoured - and Lawrence was inclined to agree - that his real motive was to establish his brother as *nazim* of Multan.¹⁵ After a sharp skirmish between the *nazim*'s troops and the Lahore force, in which the latter came out second best, the *nazim* appealed to the British Agent at Lahore for a safe conduct to the capital in order that he might put his case to the *darbar*. Mul Raj arrived at Lahore in October 1846 and began immediately to bargain for more easy terms than had been previously granted. Lawrence, back in Lahore after a short absence due to illness, used his influence over both the *nazim*,

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13. Trans letter Lawrence to Lal Singh, 11 July 1846: FSP, 26 Dec 1846, no 956 (NAI).
14. Major G. Macgregor, the Assistant Agent, reported that the *nazrana* demanded by Hira Singh Dogra had been Rs 50 *lakhs*: Macgregor to Lawrence, 6 May 1846, no 43: FSP, 26 Dec 1846, no 908 (NAI). We have treated the higher figure given in Griffin *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 2, p. 100 as the more authentic.
15. Lawrence to Currie, 16 July 1846, no 128: FSP, 26 Dec 1846, no 956 (NAI).

and the *darbar* to settle the dispute. Mul Raj was confirmed in the office of *nazim*, but was obliged to make good his debts. The districts, including portions of Leiah and Jhang, which had been occupied by the Lahore force - amounting to one-third of *suba* Multan - were detached and placed under the *darbar*'s immediate control. The contract for the remainder of the *suba* was revised, so that Mul Raj was now bound to pay the *darbar* an annual sum of nearly Rs 20 *lakhs*, which represented an enhancement of 27 per cent on the former sum paid for these districts.¹⁶ The details of the settlement of the Multan dispute are important for two reasons. First, they demonstrated the British Agent's concern to bolster the central authority of the *darbar* against the centripetal forces within the kingdom. Second, and in the long term more significantly, they were eventually to lead to the Multan revolt that challenged the *darbar*'s authority and then caused its extinction altogether. But at this point we must backtrack a little, for while the Multan dispute was being settled events of a more immediate significance were occurring.

In August 1846 John Lawrence, who was on duty at Lahore during his brother's temporary absence, reported that Raja Lal Singh was busy enlisting Afghan and Punjabi Muslim troopers as his personal body-guards¹⁷ and that a large force of men and guns had been placed under the command of his cousin, Misr Amir Chand, the *nazim* of Rawalpindi in the Sind Sagar Doab.¹⁸ It looked as though Lal Singh was playing communal politics in order to strengthen his own position. In September John Lawrence heard rumours that Lal Singh was in contact with Dost Mohamed Khan, the Afghan king, and that the substance of their communications was that Lal Singh and his supporters would assist the Afghans to recover Peshawar from the Sikhs

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16. Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families* vol 2, p.100; Hasrat, *Anglo-Sikh Relations*, p.292.
17. John Lawrence to Currie, 24 Aug 1846, no 3: FSP, 26 Dec 1846, no 1029 (NAI). It was later discovered that Lal Singh had secretly cast nine cannon for his personal use: LPD, vol 3, *Political Diaries of the Agent to the Governor-General, North-West Frontier and Resident at Lahore, 1st January 1847 to 4th March 1848*, p.27.
18. John Lawrence to Currie, 4 Sept 1846, no 9: FSP, 26 Dec 1846, no 1039 (NAI).

if the Afghans would help Lal Singh to establish himself in his Rawalpindi *jagirs* on a permanent basis. "Raja Lal Singh, it strikes me", wrote John Lawrence, "has all along had his thoughts bent on securing to himself a principality in the Punjab in the event of being unable to secure himself as Vazir".¹⁹

The *wazir's* activities did not pass unnoticed or unchallenged by his enemies, however. Already the Sikh troops stationed at Peshawar had threatened mutiny if their pay arrears were not settled forthwith, while at Rawalpindi more than a thousand Sikh soldiers had actually deserted their posts on the grounds that four months' pay was being withheld.²⁰ Many chieftains took their complaints to the acting Agent. John Lawrence had been instructed by Hardinge to sound out each of the leading chieftains on their opinions on the likelihood of Raja Lal Singh's administration surviving the withdrawal of the British garrison from Lahore at the end of the year. Diwan Dina Nath assured John Lawrence that the *wazir's* regime would survive.²¹ But most chieftains expressed doubt on the matter. Faqir Nur-ud-Din Bokhari warned that the withdrawal of the British garrison would be the signal for mutiny and rioting by the Sikh troops; Khushhal Singh Katgarhia informed John Lawrence that the *wazir* was "widely despised", and that the only chieftain around whom the influential men of the kingdom would rally was Sardar Lehna Singh Majithia (who was acceptable because he was a political moderate)²²; and Sardar Mungul Singh, who was the late Maharaja Kharak Singh's brother-in-law, complained that recently his *jagirs* had been reduced from Rs 175,000 to Rs 30,000.²³ Sardar Chatar Singh

19. Ibid.

20. Lawrence to Currie, 8 Aug 1846, no 155: FSP, 26 Dec 1846, no 1008 (NAI).

21. Hardinge to Hobhouse (Private), 2 Sept 1846: Hasrat (ed), *The Punjab Papers*, p.107.

22. Hardinge described Lehna Singh as "a well informed and a clever Sikh". He would "be a much more popular minister than Lal Singh, but...is personally timid, and in all probability, would shrink from the attempt [to place him in office]": *ibid.*

23. John Lawrence to Currie, 24 Aug 1846, no 3: FSC, 26 Dec 1846, no 1029 (NAI).

Atariwala and his son, Sardar Sher Singh, also complained about the *wazir's* maltreatment of "old and faithful servants" of the Sikh State, and suggested that the British might check his "misconduct".²⁴

Faced with all these complaints, John Lawrence met the *wazir* and three senior *darbar* chieftains on 1 September. He warned them of the need for a conciliatory *darbar* policy on *jagirs*. He got them to agree that a return of all large *jagirs* should be drawn up and examined by the *darbar* and the British Agent. The claims of those chieftains whose *jagirs* had been reduced should be reconsidered, and compensation offered where necessary; furthermore, future reductions on account of fiscal needs should be made on a *pro rata* basis, and outright resumptions should occur only in cases of proven misconduct.²⁵ The *wazir* bitterly resented the acting Agent's interference because this new *jagir* policy would, if implemented by the *darbar*, reduce greatly both his own ill-gotten wealth and his powers of patronage. Not surprisingly, he proceeded to try and subvert the new policy. On 4 September the acting Agent reported that the *wazir* had given instructions for the preparation of false *jagir* statements.²⁶ A few days later the *wazir* called together the leading chieftains and berated them for having taken their complaints to the acting Agent. He insisted that they sign a document affirming their allegiance to him and the minor Maharaja.²⁷ Most signed. But Ranjor Singh Majithia, Mangal Singh Siranwali and Fateh Khan Tiwana refused to comply with the *wazir's* demand.²⁸ All three had been victims of his malice, and were now disposed to look to the Agent for protection. In fact Ranjor Singh Majithia even approached John Lawrence with what he claimed was a

24. Abstract trans letters Chatar Singh and Sher Singh to John Lawrence (no date): FSP, 26 Dec 1846, no 1032 (NAI). It should be pointed out here that Chatar Singh was an old client of Raja Gulab Singh Dogra, for whom the *wazir*, although he had been a client of Raja Hira Singh Dogra, had a bitter enmity.
25. John Lawrence to Currie, 2 Sept 1846, no 8: FSP, 26 Dec 1846, no 1037 (NAI).
26. John Lawrence to Currie, 4 Sept 1846, no 9: FSP, 26 Dec 1846, no 1039 (NAI).
27. John Lawrence to Currie, 7 Sept 1846, no 12: FSP, 26 Dec 1846, no 1040 (NAI).
28. John Lawrence to Currie, 9 Sept 1846, no 14: FSP, 26 Dec 1846, no 1041 (NAI).

widely-supported suggestion: the British should take over the direct management of the kingdom until the minor Maharaja came of age - about eight years away.²⁹

This was an idea which John Lawrence had already put to his government himself.³⁰ We do not know, but perhaps he had also planted it in the minds of some of the chieftains. In any case, it was an idea which was well received in Calcutta: writing to Hobhouse on 19 September Hardinge observed that since the *darbar* was now united in its concern for the future of the kingdom after the withdrawal of the British garrison, an opportunity existed to permit the occupation to be extended on the condition that a British minister would carry on the government in the name of the minor Maharaja.

This [he continued] would be the second step gradually preparing the way, with the consent of the people, and without any violation of good faith for the exercise of British preponderance in the Punjab. Such a system would enable the British Government to govern the Punjab up to Peshawar more easily and cheaply than on any other terms.³¹

Hardinge made it clear, however, that such an arrangement was not to be proposed to the *darbar*; it could come into being only from "the supplication of the assembled Chiefs".³²

The political crisis at Lahore now moved quickly to a head. News was received that Gulab Singh Dogra had been unable to take possession of Kashmir, that Shaikh Imam-ud-Din, the *nazim*, had acted on Raja Lal Singh's advice to expell Gulab Singh's officers. The British Government acted quickly on what was seen to be a breach of the March treaties, despatching eight British regiments, supported by 17,000 Sikh troops, to bring the rebel

29. Ibid.

30. John Lawrence to Currie, 29 Aug 1846, no 5: FSP, 26 Dec 1846, no 1032 (NAI).

31. Hardinge to Hobhouse (Private), 19 Sept 1846: Hasrat (ed), *The Punjab Papers*, pp. 113-14.

32. Ibid.

nazim to heel. On 1 November Shaikh Imam-ud-Din surrendered to Henry Lawrence on the condition that if he could substantiate his claims that he had acted on Raja Lal Singh's orders, his own conduct would be overlooked. He handed over to the Agent documents signed by Raja Lal Singh which proved conclusively that the *wazir* had encouraged the revolt. Here was the perfect opportunity, recognised by the *darbar* and the British alike, to get rid of Raja Lal Singh once and for all. On 3 and 4 December 1846 a Court of Inquiry, presided over by Frederick Currie, the Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, and comprised of the two Lawrence brothers and two British military officers, was held at Lahore. No *darbar* members participated in this inquiry into the *wazir's* conduct, presumably because the *wazir* was a member of the *darbar* and because a unanimous verdict and a harsh sentence were required. But almost every chieftain and official of status was present to hear the *wazir* pronounced guilty of having instigated the Kashmir revolt. Lal Singh was stripped of his office, his title and his *jagirs* (which were valued at Rs 194,849³³). On 13 December he was banished from the Punjab, never to return.³⁴

After Lal Singh's removal from office the *darbar* again requested the continued presence of the British Agent and the British garrison at Lahore after the expiration of the period laid down in the Articles of Agreement signed at the beginning of the year. On 15 December Frederick Currie called a meeting of all the chieftains at his camp at Lahore to communicate to them the terms on which the Governor-General would agree to the *darbar's* request. Currie had been instructed to emphasise that

33. Kohli, *Catalogue of Khalsa Darbar Records*, vol 2, p.306. Twelve months after Lal Singh's removal from office treasure belonging to the ex-*wazir* worth Rs 23 lakhs was unearthed and confiscated to the state: John Lawrence, officiating Resident at Lahore, to H.M. Elliot, Foreign Secy to Gol, 12 Jan 1848, no 4: Lahore Residency Letters, 1847-49 (hereafter LRL), Book (hereafter Bk) 178, no 4 (Punjab Secretariat, Lahore [hereafter PS]).

34. Lal Singh lived at Agra in British territory on a monthly pension of Rs 2,000 until Oct 1852 when he was permitted to move to Dehra Dun. In 1862 his request to return to the Punjab was refused. He died in Sept 1867, after which his son, Ranbir Singh, was allowed to reside in the Punjab. The full story of Lal Singh's trial is told in R.R. Sethi, *Trial of Raja Lal Singh* (Punjab Govt Record Office Publications, monograph no 16, Lahore, 1933).

his negotiations with the chieftains resulted from an initiative made by the *darbar*, not the British Government. The paper which was read to the chieftains therefore began with an assertion of the Governor-General's "strong belief in the need for an independent government at Lahore". But, it went on, if the Maharaja and the chieftains sincerely desired the maintenance of British assistance the Governor-General would be prepared to revise the earlier treaty. The paper proceeded to the conditions:

If solicited to aid in the administration of the Government during the minority of the Maharaja, the British Agent must have full authority to interfere in and to control all matters in every department of the State for the benefit of all connected with the Reasut [State authority].³⁵

The actual details of administration would be superintended by a Council of Regency appointed by the Governor-General and acting under the control and guidance of the British minister. The Rani was to be relieved of her duties as regent. The right of the Governor-General to order the occupation of any fort or military post in the interests of internal security was to be recognised. Furthermore, a fixed sum in monthly instalments would be set apart from the State revenues to pay for the British peace-keeping force. After some debate between Currie and the chieftains on the sum to be paid for this force, a figure of Rs 22 *laks* per annum was agreed upon.

Thereupon each chieftain signed his accordance with these conditions.³⁶

The next day the articles of Currie's paper were drawn up and ratified as the Treaty of Bhyrowal.³⁷ The Council of Regency was constituted with the following members: Bhai Nidhan Singh (who was nephew to Bhai Ram Singh), Diwan Dina Nath, Faqir Nur-ud-Din Bokhari, Sardar Tej Singh, Sardar Atar Singh Kaliwala, Sardar Ranjor Singh Majithia, Sardar Shamsheer Singh Sindhanwalia, and Sardar Sher Singh Atariwala.³⁸ We do not know the criteria on which the Council members were selected, other than that they were to be competent and influential chieftain-administrators. Still, it may be worth noting that a neat balance was struck between "new staff" and "traditional" chieftains: the first four members named above represented

35. A copy of Currie's paper and a report on his meeting with the chieftains is included in Currie to Hardinge, 15 Dec 1846: FSP, 26 Dec 1846, nos 1275-6 (NAI).

36. Ibid.

37. The treaty is reproduced in Hasrat, *Anglo-Sikh Relations*, appendix 15.

38. FSP, 26 Dec 1846, no 1278 (NAI).

the "new staff" raised by Ranjit Singh, the second four the "traditional" *misl*-descended Sikh families. With the constitution of this Council Rani Jindan's services as regent were no longer required. Under the terms of the Treaty she surrendered all her authority, and was awarded an annual pension of Rs 150,000. Hardinge was pleased - and not a little surprised - that the arrangement planned in September had been implemented with so little fuss. The experience of the conquest of Sind had made him "cautious" in Punjab affairs, and had convinced him of the necessity of "sliding gradually into annexation".³⁹ That slide, which was not without its perils, had now begun.

Informal control extended

With the eclipse of both the *wazir* and the regent queen, Henry Lawrence (whose official designation was now British Resident at Lahore⁴⁰) became the most powerful figure in Punjabi politics. It was not just that the Treaty of Bhyrowal vested almost viceregal powers in his office and backed those powers with the authority of 10,000 British bayonets, but also - and equally importantly - that he was looked upon by the people of the Punjab as a source of justice and largesse. The lists of "Visits Paid And Received" by Lawrence, which are appended to his weekly political diaries, show that he was swamped with requests for appointments and *jagirs*.⁴¹ Some visitors to the Residency were tireless in their efforts to recommend themselves and their families for service. Of Rai Kishen Chand, who was a prominent *darbar* official, Lawrence wrote: "A more persevering suitor for *jageers*, etc. I never met. For once that he comes to me on public business, he comes twice to me about his own affairs".⁴²

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39. Hardinge to Hobhouse, 21 Jan 1847: Hasrat (ed), *The Punjab Papers*, p.117.
40. Henry Lawrence was Resident from 1 Jan 1847 to 30 Nov 1847. John Lawrence was acting Resident from 21 Aug to 17 Oct 1847 while his brother was at Simla. When Henry Lawrence travelled to Europe on sick leave on 30 Nov 1847 John Lawrence officiated as Resident until the arrival of Henry Lawrence's replacement, Frederick Currie. Between 18 Oct and 30 Nov 1847 John Lawrence was on special duty at Lahore (while still holding his post of Commissioner and Superintendent of the Trans-Sutlej States). After Feb 1847 Henry Elliot was the Foreign Secretary to the Government of India.
41. *LPD*, vol 3, p.9, for example. On 29 Jan 1847 a weekly timetable was drawn up to regulate visits to the Residency: *ibid*, p.12.
42. *Ibid*, p.177.

Lawrence's real wish was to get on with the business of disarming the countryside and restoring the efficiency of the administration, especially the revenue system. But these matters could not be attended to until the claims and grievances of the chieftains had been settled. Towards the chieftains a conciliatory policy was adopted. Many chieftains who had lost their *jagirs* under Raja Lal Singh now had them restored at the Resident's instigation.⁴³ In August 1847 Diwan Dina Nath informed the *darbar* that the Resident had fixed the sum of Rs 364,400 to be distributed in *jagirs* amongst the members of the *darbar*.⁴⁴ A number of new administrative appointments also provided an opportunity to assuage the feelings of chieftains who had recently been elbowed out of their posts. For instance, Chatar Singh Atariwala was restored to the post of *nazim* at Hazara on a salary of Rs 12,000 per annum, which he drew in addition to his *jagirs* which were worth Rs 298,000. His *naib* (deputy), on a salary of Rs 5,000, was Jhanda Singh Butalia, previously *adalati* (judge) at Lahore in conjunction with Diwan Hakim Rai.⁴⁵ Diwan Hakim Rai was appointed *adalati* at Peshawar on the Resident's recommendation. Gulab Singh Atariwala, who had served under Lawrence during the Afghan campaign, at which time he had given "great satisfaction", was appointed *nazim* at Peshawar, again on the Resident's recommendation.⁴⁶ Lehna Singh Majithia, who had retired to Benares "on pilgrimage" just before the war had broken out, returned to the capital at the Resident's invitation in February 1847 and was re-appointed *nazim* of the Manjha.⁴⁷ His half-brother, Ranjor Singh, who had been a leader of the anti-British party at the *darbar* in 1845 but had subsequently

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43. Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 1, pp. 415, 425, 447, 503.
44. *LPD*, vol 3, p.241.
45. *Ibid*, pp. 132, 188; Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 2, p.81.
46. Lawrence to Elliot, 15 April 1847, no 43: FSC, 29 May 1847, no 119 (NAI); *LPD*, vol 3, p.25.
47. Lawrence to Currie, 7 Jan 1847, no 4: FSC, 30 Jan 1847, no 176 (NAI); Lawrence to Elliot, 15 April 1847, no 43: FSC, 29 May 1847, no 119 (NAI). Amongst his compatriots Lehna Singh had a reputation of timidity: when, on returning to Lahore, he requested to be received with a salute, the other *darbar* chieftains laughed and asked, "What country Lehna Singh has been conquering?": *LPD*, vol 3, p.19.

implored the British to maintain their control over the kingdom, was appointed *adalati* of Lahore city and its environs.⁴⁸

Naturally, these conciliatory measures were well received by the chieftains. On 8 June 1847 Diwan Dina Nath obsequiously read to the Resident a letter which he was sending to John Lawrence expressing gratitude for the confirmation of his *jagirs* (and, no doubt, his inclusion in the Council of Regency also): "Formerly [he wrote of himself] he fed from the Maharajah's table; now he feeds from that of the British."⁴⁹ And at *darbar* on 2 August Tej Singh "expatiated on the devotion of the Council to the...Resident."⁵⁰ These measures might have reconciled the chieftains to the presence of the British Resident, but they had done little to reconcile the chieftains to one another; behind all the "*chancha*-esque" platitudes of obeisance and gratitude towards the Resident the old inter-chieftain rivalries continued in much the same manner as before. In attempting to find solutions to these rivalries the Resident was drawn ever deeper into Punjabi politics.

One of the first rivalries with which Lawrence had to contend was that between Lehna Singh Majithia and his half-brother, Ranjor Singh. During Lehna Singh's absence from the kingdom Ranjor Singh had collected and spent the revenues from the Majithia estates. On returning to the Punjab, however, Lehna Singh disputed Ranjor Singh's right to any part of the patrimony on the grounds that Ranjor Singh's mother was only a slave-girl. Lawrence proposed a compromise solution to the sharing of the patrimony, but Lehna Singh rejected it, saying that he would invoke the authority of the ancient laws, the Dharma Shastras, if necessary. Ranjor Singh retaliated by misappropriating the revenues of his office and building up a secret store of weapons. Lawrence had no choice but to

48. Currie to G.A. Bushby, Offg Secy to Gol, 9 Jan 1846, no 8: FSC, 26 Dec 1846, no 272 (NAI); Lawrence to Elliot, 15 April 1847, no 43: FSC, 29 May 1847, no 119 (NAI).

49. Quoted in *LPD*, vol 3, p.163.

50. *Ibid*, p.241.

recommend Ranjor Singh's dismissal from office. This the *darbar* promptly ordered in May 1847.⁵¹ This case of inter-family rivalry might have been unique in its public prominence, and in its severity of solution; but it was not so unique in its occurrence:

I am very much troubled [Lawrence reported in August 1847] by family contentions between brother chiefs; almost every family has its feud, and the matter of a well, or a house, affects individuals with a more lively anxiety than the most important affairs of the State.⁵²

More serious, from Lawrence's point of view, were the rivalries that threatened to break up the Council of Regency. A bitter rivalry developed between Sher Singh Atariwala and Tej Singh which took on the features of a "traditional" chieftain - "new staff" chieftain contest. Tej Singh's lowly origins, his previous "treachery", his public boasting that he enjoyed a special influence over the Resident, his habit of calling *darbars* at his own home, rather than at the palace, in order that he might dominate the Council: all these things earned him Sher Singh's odium.⁵³ In reply, Tej Singh accused Sher Singh of corruption, and observed that had it not been for the generosity of the Resident the Atariwala family would have sunk into oblivion.⁵⁴ So bad was the feeling between the two chieftains that by February 1847 the Council and the *darbar* as a whole had become split into two sharply opposed factions, one led by Sher Singh, the other by Tej Singh.⁵⁵ On 7 February Tej Singh informed the *darbar* that he had discovered a plot to assassinate him. This became known as the Prema conspiracy case. Gradually, the plot was unravelled amid mounting suspicions and accusations. Prema was a Kashmiri soldier who had recently been expelled from Maharaja Gulab Singh's service. He came to Lahore early in February and fell in with certain minor *darbar* officials, amongst whom was included Rani Jindan's confidential *munshi* (secretary),

51. Ibid, pp. 42, 65, 71, 84, 89, 91-2, 94, 108-11.

52. Lawrence to Elliot, 2 Aug 1847: Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, vol 41, "Papers Relating to the Punjab, 1847-1849" (hereafter "PP"), inclosure 2 in no 8.

53. *LPD*, vol 3, pp. 42, 50, 103, 165.

54. Ibid, pp. 85, 134-5.

55. Ibid, pp. 45, 147.

and certain holymen, whose leader was Bhai Maharaj Singh, a Sikh guru who was said to be much venerated by the women of the Manjha and to number amongst his disciples the mothers and wives of several prominent chieftains.⁵⁶ Rani Jindan, whose hatred of Tej Singh was well known, was thought to be the instigator of the plot. The plan adopted by Prema and his accomplices was to assassinate Tej Singh - and, so said some witnesses at the subsequent trial, the British Resident and his assistants as well.⁵⁷ The names of nearly every chieftain except Tej Singh, Dina Nath and Nur-ud-Din Bokhari were linked with the conspiracy, and for that reason the *darbar* was reluctant to make a proper investigation.⁵⁸ But the Resident insisted that the suspects be brought to trial. Bhai Maharaj Singh escaped. Prema and the others were seized, however. They were tried, convicted and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment.⁵⁹ Rani Jindan's complicity could not be proved, although the Governor-General was in favour of banishing her from the kingdom regardless.⁶⁰

Lawrence now decided that Rani Jindan and the chieftains had been sufficiently humoured, and that it was time for him to exert his command over them. He therefore took a number of measures that undermined their power. He decided not to order the disarming of the people of the western, Muslim majority districts in order that "the Durbar should be kept in some degree of awe of their ability to rise and redress their own grievances."⁶¹ He imposed on the Rani new rules for her conduct which restricted her ability to entertain visitors at the palace.⁶² He issued

56. Ibid, p.182.

57. "Abstract of the Depositions in Preyma's Case": "PP", inclosure 3 in no 9; "Remarks on the Preyma Case by Mr John Lawrence": ibid, inclosure 4 in no 9.

58. "Remarks on the Preyma Case by the Resident", 11 Aug 1847: ibid, inclosure 5 in no 9.

59. The sentences ranged from five years imprisonment to life imprisonment. The prisoners were sent to jails in British India. For details see John Lawrence to Elliot, 14 Sept 1847: idib, inclosure 3 in no 12.

60. Hardinge to Hobhouse (Private), 14 Aug 1847: Hasrat (ed), *The Punjab Papers*, p.120.

61. The people of the Manjha and other districts occupied by Sikh Jats, on the other hand, were to be "deprived of fire-arms, and as close a watch [was to] be kept over them as [was] possible without irritating interference": Lawrence to Elliot, 15 April 1847, no 43: FSC, 29 May 1847, no 119 (NAI).

62. *LPD*, vol 3, pp. 102, 134-5, 162, 167, 181.

a *rubakari* (pronouncement) to the effect that one of his assistants would attend *darbar* on Wednesdays and Fridays (the Resident himself only attended *darbar* on Saturdays), at which time the minor Maharaja should make an appearance. Tej Singh and Dina Nath perceived correctly that this arrangement was meant to put their administrative work under closer British scrutiny.⁶³ Lawrence made moves to stop the practice of chieftains holding private *darbars*.⁶⁴ He got the *darbar* to agree to two important principles. The first was that henceforth no *darbar* chieftain was to take on a revenue farm or arrange for a revenue farm to be given to one of his dependants.⁶⁵ The second was that henceforth no *jagir* was to be resumed, released, or bestowed without reference to the Resident and no *jagir* title (*sanad*) regarded as valid without the Resident's countersignature on it.⁶⁶

However, the most significant measure taken by Lawrence was his decision to place the judicial and revenue administration of the countryside under closer British supervision. This represented a two-pronged move against the power of the chieftains (at both the *darbar* and *suba* levels of the "national" system of government) and the power of the *kardars* (at the *ta'aluqa* level). This two-pronged move was made in three ways. First, Lawrence sent four of his young assistants to the northwest provinces to manage the local administration. Lieutenant Nicholson was sent to the Sind Sagar Doab, Major George Lawrence to Peshawar, Captain Abbott to Hazara and Lieutenant Edwardes to Bannu. Their duties were to oversee the work of the *nazims* and *kardars*, to maintain the safety of the roads, to protect the people from criminals, and to uphold discipline amongst the government troops.⁶⁷ This was the system of management that was successfully used by Sir Richard Jenkins during the minority of the Raja of Nagpur, and by

63. Ibid, pp. 207-8.

64. Ibid, pp. 50, 165.

65. Ibid, p.89.

66. Ibid, pp. 109, 183. In August an order was sent out to all *jagirdars* informing them of the new rule and directing them to produce their *sanads*: ibid, p.249.

67. See, for example, Lawrence to Nicholson, 25 June 1847: "PP", inclosure 7 in no 6.

Sir Charles Metcalfe when he was Resident at Hyderabad.⁶⁸ It worked well in the Punjab too. When George Lawrence sent his brother a letter he had received from Diwan Hakim Rai, the *adalati* at Peshawar and a long-time favourite of Diwan Dina Nath, in which he had "taken airs" by claiming his "right" to receive presents and bribes from the local populace, the Resident at once sent the letter to the *darbar* with the request that Diwan Hakim Rai be dismissed from office. "His recall", Lawrence wrote, "will do good, and convince parties that they must look to us and not to Dewan Deena Nath."⁶⁹

Second, Lawrence decided to place the country between the Chenab and the Indus, which from a political and military point of view was less sensitive than the northwest frontier, under three chieftains as "Governors and Chief Adalutes over the Kardars" in the manner that the Manjha was under Sardar Lehna Singh Majithia and Lahore city and its environs was under Sardar Ranjor Singh Majithia (and after his dismissal, General Kahn Singh Man).⁷⁰ This proposed arrangement provided Lawrence with an opportunity to raise a "new staff" of his own, to appoint to these posts chieftains whose newly acquired wealth, power, and influence would offset that of the *darbar* chieftains. The Resident took that opportunity. Mangal Singh Siranwali, a "plain soldier-like sort of man"⁷¹ was made *adalati* of the Rachna Doab. Ram Singh Julawala was made *adalati* of the Chaj Doab. And General Lal Singh Moraria, who in 1846 had been called the leader of the discontented party at Lahore,⁷² was made *adalati* of the Sind Sagar Doab. Lawrence portrayed Lal Singh Moraria as a man who was much disliked by the majority of the Durbar; feared by some, hated by others, but allowed by all to be a clever fellow. His sudden rise is offensive to many of the Sirdars whose own grandfathers were ploughmen or barbers.⁷³

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68. Elliot to Lawrence, 3 July 1847: *ibid*, inclosure 8 in no 6.
69. Lawrence to Elliot, 2 Aug 1847, no 95: FSC, "C" series, 28 Aug 1847, no 186 (NAI).
70. Lawrence to Elliot, 15 April 1847, no 43: FSC, 29 May 1847, no 119 (NAI).
71. no 69 above.
72. John Lawrence to Currie, 22 Sept 1846, no 19: FSP, 26 Dec 1846, no 1046 (NAI).
73. no 69 above.

Lawrence cared not a whit about the social origins of Lal Singh Moraria, Ram Singh Julawala, and Mangal Singh Siranwali so long as they possessed the personal qualities he was looking for.

They are all men [Lawrence wrote on 2 August 1847] who are much more influential and more enterprising than any of the old Sirdars: they are also more easily satisfied. All had already been more or less mulcted of the gains of the days of anarchy and feared to lose what remained; simply leaving alone such men would not have satisfied their minds, and I could perceive in Lal Singh's demeanour the anxiety that he felt. We must have sent him and the others out of the country, or imprisoned them (which would have been most arbitrary); or have done as we have: Rs 12,000 a year, added to their jagheers, makes them rich, and the command over a Doab is an honor they could never have aspired to under Runjeet Singh.⁷⁴

Not that the Resident's "new Staff" appointments were seen in this light by those who stood to lose by them. Already, several *kardars* had indicated that they would rather abandon their *ta'aluqas* than serve under Sardar Lehna Singh Majithia; "if they do", Lawrence had observed, "they shall not get others".⁷⁵ The Resident was now even more determined to stand by his appointees: when two *kardars*, on the part of themselves and their regiment of cavalry, petitioned against being put under the command of Lal Singh Moraria, who they denigrated as being "a 'new man', but yesterday getting Rupees 2 a day; whereas the Ghorchurrahs [cavalrymen] are the best blood of the Punjab",⁷⁶ the Resident intervened quickly. The *darbar*'s proposal was to furnish the two *kardars* with a different contingent of soldiers. Nothing doing, protested Lawrence: the days when the Sikh soldiery could choose their own stations and their own commanders had ended; and as for the *kardars*, they were at liberty to resign and retire to their homes.⁷⁷ And in August 1847 Lawrence informed the *darbar* that it should fine the *kardar* of Gujrat for neglecting the orders of, and being disrespectful to, Ram Singh Julawala, the *adalati* of the Chaj Doab. Lawrence was eager to demonstrate "to all parties that I will support the Nazims and Adaluttees even against the Durbar."⁷⁸

74. Ibid.

75. *LPD*, vol 3, p.66.

76. Quoted from the intelligence report, 26 June 1847: *ibid*, p.191.

77. Ibid.

78. no 69 above.

Obviously, the *kardars*, who had grown accustomed in the past seven or eight years to ruling their *ta'aluqas* as though they were their own patrimonies, had to be brought into line. This was Lawrence's third move. The central accounts of *darbar*-appointed *kardars* and *ijaradars* were inspected, and where necessary orders for the immediate settlement of arrears were issued.⁷⁹ *Kardars* were ordered to furnish fortnightly accounts, to keep a book of fines imposed on the *zamindars*, to show their *zamindars* the papers which indicated the extent of their revenue obligations, and to refuse bribes.⁸⁰ They were also warned of the consequences of exceeding their specific duties:

Ram Diyal [reads an extract from the Resident's diary], Kardar of Goonjah, is reprovved by the Durbar for interfering in the customs collections of Umritsur, which is the business of Misr Saheb Diyal and not his. Misr Saheb Diyal is reprovved for interfering in the judicial administration of the same city which is entrusted to Jymul Singh; and Jymul Singh is reprovved for the same offence as Ram Diyal. The division and distinct independence of appointments is a thing little understood by native officials; or rather all offices are looked upon as sources of profit, and every man tries to monopolize as much as he can. The consequence is a great clashing of rival authorities, most injurious both to public business and to private interests.⁸¹

In June two *kardars* were dismissed, on the Resident's orders, for breaches of these new regulations. One was fined Rs 3,700 by the *darbar*.⁸² On 3 July Lawrence reported that seven *kardars* had been removed from office, one having been imprisoned. "I propose", the Resident continued, "in gross cases, to fine and imprison, and even to confiscate Jagheers, where they are held, as is generally the case."⁸³ A perusal of his weekly diaries reveals that over the next few months a good many *nazims*, *ijaradars* and *kardars* were so punished for proven misconduct, and that the vacant

79. *LPD*, vol 3, pp. 56, 119, 369.

80. *Ibid*, pp. 41, 142, 144, 269-70.

81. *Ibid*, p.164.

82. Lawrence to Elliot, 18 June 1847: "PP", inclosure 2 in no 5.

83. Lawrence to Elliot, 3 July 1847: *ibid*, inclosure 1 in no 7.

offices were filled by men known to him and appointed on his recommendation.⁸⁴ Of course the Hindu professional administrators who had until now monopolised these offices bitterly resented the attack on their wealth and power, and what seemed to them to be an ungrateful repudiation of their past services to the State.⁸⁵ But there was little they could do about it, except to grumble amongst themselves. Even their friends and patrons at the *darbar*, who in the old days would have protected and extended their interests, were powerless to help them now. Lawrence's diary entry for 26 June 1847, made on his return from that morning's *darbar*, illustrates this point. At *darbar* Lawrence had taken the opportunity provided by reports of misconduct on the part of two *kardars* to express his displeasure at the general conduct of all *kardars*. This had evoked a challenge which, according to Lawrence, had easily been defeated:

Dewan Deena Nath warmly defended the Kardars, with whom he is generally supposed to have good reasons for friendship [it will be remembered that he was the head of the finance department]. If these reports *are* true his corrupt practices will be materially interfered with by the removals and disappointments of his creatures. I do not, however, forget that the Dewan has many enemies who lose no opportunity to blacken him. He was opposed to the recall of either Dewan Moolraj [the *kardar* of Pind Dadan Khan] or Devee Diyal [the *kardar* of Kadurabad], 'respectable men', he said, 'whose hearts would be sufficiently broken by this public discussion'. I said I did not understand the respectability of men who robbed and ill-treated their neighbours; on the contrary, the higher the rank of the offender, the greater the offense and necessity for an example He almost instantly recovered his tone and temper, allowed that the Kardars were much to blame and in his blandest tone commenced a long story on another subject. In the end, as soon as I had left the Durbar, it was agreed to recall the two Kardars in question as soon as ever arrangements could be made to supersede them.⁸⁶

Of course this is only the Resident's version of the incident: had the Diwan and other members of the *darbar* also been in the habit of maintaining personal diaries we might be obliged to reconstruct a somewhat different story. Nevertheless, the impression that is conveyed, either directly or implicitly, by the extant sources for the period May-July 1847

84. *LPD*, vol 3, pp. 80-1, 153, 190, 202, 207-8, 217, 284, 293-4.

85. *Ibid*, p.81, for example.

86. *Ibid*, pp. 189-90.

is one of a British Resident imposing his will, and his own standards of administrative, efficiency, upon a rather dissolute Sikh *darbar*. At *darbar* on 6 July, according to Lawrence, Diwan Dina Nath "complained that orders followed one another in such quick succession that it was most difficult to attend to them all."⁸⁷ Shortly thereafter Lawrence reported, somewhat smugly, that the twice-weekly attendance of his assistants at *darbar*, the purpose of which was to "force the arrears of justice through the Courts," was proving highly "inconvenient".⁸⁸ But perhaps the most telling evidence of the Resident's domination of the *darbar* is a piece of humour - always an indicator of tension and serious intent. In June the Resident had issued a *rubakari* (pronouncement or order) calling upon the *darbar* to prepare a *nakshah* (official report) of State expenses, listed under forty-one different headings. Amongst the *munshis* and chieftains of the *darbar* this *nakshah*, whose preparation was only slowly and unwillingly undertaken, became proverbially known as the "forty-one column *rubakari*" - or roster of forty-one reforms which the Resident was desirous of implementing.⁸⁹

By early August Lawrence was able to report that he had gained the upper hand at Lahore:

On the whole [he told his government's Foreign Secretary], the Durbar and the Chiefs give me as much support as I can reasonably expect. There has been a quiet struggle for mastery; but as, although I am polite to all, I allow nothing that appears to me wrong to pass unnoticed, the members of the Council are gradually falling into the proper train and refer most questions to me, and, in words at least, allow more fully even than I wish that they are only executive officers to do as they are bid.⁹⁰

Now was the moment for Lawrence to play his trump card against the chieftains of the *darbar*. If the chieftains had finally conceded that ultimate political power rested with the British Resident, not with themselves, why not reward their concession, and at the same time bind them more closely to the Resident by granting them titles of honour for good services to the State during the period of British occupation? And, since these titles would be the more appreciated if they could be vested with traditional

87. Ibid, p.208.

88. Ibid, p.222.

89. Ibid, pp. 190, 208, 256.

90. Lawrence to Elliot, 2 Aug 1847, no 95: FSC, "C" series, 28 Aug 1847, no 186 (NAI).

legitimacy, why not get the minor Maharaja to grant them at a special, ceremonial *darbar*? Lawrence drew up a list of seventeen chieftains and *darbar* officials whom he wished to reward, and passed it on to Dalip Singh. On 7 August Lawrence and his assistants were received at the palace with a salute of eleven guns - the number of guns, the exact timing of their entrance and other details of etiquette had previously been fixed as auspicious by the palace astrologer. Each of the seventeen recipients of titles was handed his *sanad* (title deed) and *khil'at* (robe of honour) by Dalip Singh, and in return offered his *nazrs* (cash presents) to the Maharaja and the British officers. Lawrence signed all the *sanads* on the back as a witness of their gift.⁹¹

It is evident that Lawrence had drawn up the list of recipients with care. All eight members of the Council of Regency were rewarded with titles. Tej Singh, who had long been despised by the "traditional" families as an upstart, was elevated to the rank of Raja of Sialkot, a rank that brought him additional *jagirs* worth Rs 28,000 per annum.⁹² Of course his enemies did not welcome his elevation to the aristocracy, as we shall presently see, but they must have recognised the point that Lawrence was making by these titles - collaboration with the British was now the surest route to status and wealth. Amongst the remaining nine recipients were included representatives of the most respectable Sikh families, such as Sardar Arjan Singh of Rangar Nangal, and long-standing servants of the *darbar*, such as Misr Rulla Ram, who for forty years had been the head of the customs department, and who since late 1846 had been the *kardar* of the large *ta'aluqa* of Jhang (which had been separated from *suba* Multan after the dispute between Diwan Mul Raj and Raja Lal Singh). One chieftain, Mehtab Singh Majithia, was given the title of Sardar in order to *reduce* his influence: Lawrence candidly admitted, "I thought I could not better get rid of him as a General than by promoting him to be a Sirdar."⁹³ By and large, however, the purpose of these titles was to conciliate the chieftains and win them over to a more cooperative

91. *LPD*, vol 3, pp. 245-6.

92. Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 2, p.148.

93. Lawrence to Elliot, 7 Aug 1847, no 97: *FSC*, 25 Sept 1847, no 84 (NAI).

position. Hopefully, the chieftains would realise that their personal interests were now inextricably bound up with those of the British:

Having during the last few months to carry many measures not altogether agreeable to the chiefs [Lawrence told Elliot], and having latterly been obliged to press them to much more exertion in the way of business than they had ever been accustomed to, these honors and the declaration that every official shall, according to his position and exertions, receive a fair salary, has given great and almost universal satisfaction. Heretofore, on all changes of ministry many were glad to save their lives at the expense of their jagheers and offices. Since December last no man, not even Rajah Lal Singh's Brothers, has lost anything on account of his connection with the fallen minister...⁹⁴

The ceremonial *darbar* of 7 August produced what was for Lawrence a further happy ending as well. Ever since he had imposed restrictions on Rani Jindan's public life, following her suspected involvement in the Prema affair, she had done her best to circumvent the Resident's authority (she had, for example, written letters of complaint to the Governor-General), and to discredit her arch-enemy, Tej Singh. On hearing that Tej Singh was to be invested with the title of Raja she had grown furious, and had successfully counselled her son, Dalip Singh, against applying the *tika* (forehead mark) of rank to Tej Singh.⁹⁵ This incident, which had marred an otherwise perfect ceremony, was now seized upon by the Resident as an opportunity to remove the Rani from the capital. He would have preferred her banishment from the kingdom altogether, as her former lover, Raja Lal Singh, had been banished. But the Council of Regency, afraid of becoming caught up in a national scandal, begged the Resident to take a more lenient measure.⁹⁶ So, on 19 August 1847 Rani Jindan was sent to Sheikhpura fort, about twenty-five miles northwest of Lahore, there to face what Lawrence called an "honourable retirement" on a reduced pension of

94. Ibid.

95. *LPD*, vol 3, pp. 184,200, 244-5.

96. Lawrence to Elliot, 20 Aug 1847: "PP", inclosure 8 in no 9; Hardinge to Hobhouse (Private), 5 Sept 1847: Hasrat (ed), *The Punjab Papers*, p.120.

Rs 48,000 per annum.⁹⁷ With the removal of Ranjit Singh's contumacious widow from the capital, and from direct access to her eight year-old son, the political ascendancy of the British Resident was - at once symbolically and in fact - completed.

The supersession of the Sikhs

Between August 1847 and April 1848 the Resident and his assistants enjoyed a respite from political tensions at the *darbar* which enabled them to get on with the business of ruling the kingdom. The keynote of their work during this period was reform: the last of the disbanded Sikh regiments were discharged and paid up; the customs system was reduced and simplified; a penal code was drawn up and sent to the administrators of justice; the finances of the State were scrutinised, and arrears from revenue collectors demanded; and a fixed, cash land revenue assessment was made and implemented. The fact that these reforms succeeded in restoring - and even extending - the centralised efficiency of Ranjit Singh's administration indicates that by this time the British had succeeded the Sikhs as rulers of the Punjab in all but the strictly legal sense.

The man who was mainly responsible for these reforms, and whose personality dominated Punjabi politics during this period, was John Lawrence. Between 21 August and 17 October 1847 he acted as Resident while Henry Lawrence was away at Simla. Between 18 October and 30 November 1847 he was on special duty at Lahore. And from 1 December 1847 until 6 March 1848 he officiated as Resident while Henry Lawrence travelled to Europe on sick leave and the Resident-designate, Frederick Currie, made his way up to the Punjab from Calcutta. John Lawrence was a quite different man from his elder brother. Both, of course, were hard-working and capable officers of the Company, and both were extremely paternalistic in their

97. Lawrence to Elliot, 20 Aug 1847, no 118: LRL, BK 175, no 118 (PS). The official proclamation of 20 Aug 1847, announcing the Rani's removal to Sheikhpura, concludes with the words: "Let all ranks, therefore, rejoice, throughout the kingdom, that the Right Honourable the Governor-General of India has so much at heart the peace and security of this country, the firm establishment of the State, and the honour of the Maharajah, and his Ministers": "PP", inclosure 9 in no 9.

dealings with Indians (as befitted the Utilitarian and Evangelical ideals of the day with which they had been indoctrinated). But there the similarities ended. Whereas Henry was a soldier-diplomat, with a touch of romanticism to his character, John was a civil administrator, whose only passion was for justice, order, and efficiency. Henry stood for the rule of the enlightened individual; John stood for the rule of dispassionate law. Henry, whose career had taken him to several native courts (where, one suspects, he had developed an envy of the pomp and splendour of aristocratic life), was a defender of the princes and chieftains of India. These men, he believed, could be turned into useful allies if British officers combined respect and kindness with firmness in their dealings with them. John, on the other hand, had been trained in the revenue department of the North-Western Provinces of British India (where he had become a staunch advocate of the Bird-Thomason policy of light revenue assessments) and saw himself as a protector of the poor. He regarded the princes and chieftains of India as being parasitic *jagirdars* and political allies whose worth was dubious.⁹⁸ They should, he thought, be reduced in importance or, better still, done away with altogether wherever British rule was imposed.⁹⁹

In time this difference of opinion as to the worth of a native aristocracy was to set the two brothers at loggerheads. But for the time being each brother was able to follow his own administrative policy without antagonising the other. It was characteristic of Henry Lawrence that the most important measure undertaken by him during the short period that he was at Lahore was his calling of another ceremonial *darbar* on 26 November 1847 at which nineteen chieftains and officials were awarded traditional

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98. "The existence of the Jageerdar", he wrote in October 1847, "is as inconsistent with the civilization and improvement of the country [the Trans-Sutlej States], as that of the Baron of the feudal ages would be now in Europe.... They will always...be opposed to our dominion, and ready for a change; gradually therefore to get rid of them is a political and social necessity": John Lawrence to Elliot, 16 Oct 1847, no 209: FPC, 31 Dec 1847, no 2288 (NAI).
99. For a fuller (but highly eulogistic) sketch of the characters of Henry and John Lawrence see Philip Woodruff (Philip Mason), *The Men Who Ruled India*, vol 1, *The Founders* (London, 1953), pt III, chap xl. See also, Frederick P. Gibbon, *The Lawrences Of The Punjab* (London, 1908).

titles in recognition of their good services. This must have been a highly popular measure, for Lawrence reported that after he had announced the distribution of titles to be conferred, the chieftains spoke "of my being 'a second Runjeet Singh' to them."¹⁰⁰ The analogy was appropriate, not only in the sense that it was now the Resident who was the fountainhead of patronage but also because, like the former Maharaja, Lawrence used these titles as a means of balancing out the claims and ambitions of the rival chieftains. Eleven chieftains were granted titles denoting aristocratic status. Raja Tej Singh was granted a bombastic Persian title, similar in its wording to that granted to him by Ranjit Singh in 1837.¹⁰¹ Diwan Dina Nath was made Raja of Kalanaur, and received additional *jagirs* worth Rs 20,000 per annum.¹⁰² Sardar Sher Singh Atariwala, who was another member of the Council of Regency and who was Tej Singh's bitter rival, was also made a Raja.¹⁰³ The other eight chieftains, who represented the leading Sikh families, were granted the title of Bahadur (meaning "brave warrior") - a title often given to the nobles of the Mughal court. Eight officials, including Diwan Mul Raj, the *nazim* of Multan, were given traditional Persian titles denoting administrative excellence.¹⁰⁴

A few days after the bestowal of these titles Henry Lawrence left the Punjab and John Lawrence became officiating Resident at Lahore. Over the past four months, when he had acted as Resident and then been on special duty at Lahore, John Lawrence, had demonstrated a flair for pushing through dramatic reforms that his elder brother had only suggested, in a tentative manner, to the *darbar*. The *lambarbars* of some thirty Sikh villages in the Manjha had been summoned to Lahore to help frame a code of basic Sikh civil and criminal law which had then been issued to the various *adalatis*.¹⁰⁵

100. *LPD*, vol 3, p.352.

101. FSC, 31 Dec 1847, no 137 (NAI); Suri, *Umdat-Ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar III, pts i-v, p.359.

102. Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 1, p.259.

103. It had been proposed to bestow the title on his father, Sardar Chatar Singh, but at the last moment Chatar Singh requested that his eldest son receive it instead: *ibid*, p.483.

104. FSC, 31 Dec 1847, no 137 (NAI). For an account of the ceremony which closely followed that of 7 August, see *LPD*, vol 3, p.362.

105. "PAR 1851": FM, no 356, pp. 26-7 (NAI); *LPD*, vol 3, p.350.

With a view to encouraging the kingdom's commercial activity John Lawrence had got the *darbar* to agree to the abolition of customs duties on nearly half the articles of trade which had previously been taxed by the State.¹⁰⁶ And, despite sustained resistance offered by some of the Sikh members of the *darbar*, he had also persuaded the *darbar* to withdraw the eighty year-old prohibition against the calling of the Muslim *azan*, or public summons to prayer.¹⁰⁷ Now that he had Punjabi affairs to himself John Lawrence set about renovating the kingdom's administrative system.

He was most concerned to reduce wastage and what he regarded as unnecessary expenditure. He personally scrutinised the returns of *kardars* and *ijaradars* and ordered the *darbar* to punish those officers who were found to be guilty of maladministration.¹⁰⁸ He cut the minor Maharaja's daily expenditure on alms back to Rs 100, which, according to the *darbar*, was about one-thirtieth of the sum previously spent by Ranjit Singh.¹⁰⁹ On 16 December 1847 he told Elliot:

At present we are practising as much economy as possible. Not a rupee is paid away, but on an order countersigned by the Resident. The daily receipt and expenditure are punctually recorded and examined by myself, and I steadily refuse to allow of the disbursement of any sum which can be avoided.¹¹⁰

106. "The Administration of the Punjab" (no author), in *The Calcutta Review*, vol 21, pt 41 (1853), pp. 229-30; *LPD*, vol 3, p.287. This reform was much appreciated by the merchants of Amritsar and Lahore: they sent a deputation to John Lawrence to convey their satisfaction, and in Lahore they illuminated the city for two nights: John Lawrence to Elliot, 25 Sept 1847, no 153: FSC, 30 Oct 1847, no 95 (NAI).

107. *LPD*, vol 3, pp. 249, 275, 287, 294, 359, 372-3, 378. John Lawrence displayed a commendable sense of justice (but a lack of knowledge of Punjabi history) when he wrote: "They [the members of the *darbar*] cannot understand the political advantage of toleration to every form of religion": John Lawrence to Elliot, 25 Sept 1847, no 153: FSC, 30 Oct 1847, no 95 (NAI). Hardinge supported this measure, and indicated his readiness to uphold it by force if necessary: Elliot to John Lawrence, 30 Sept 1847, no 322: FSC 30 Oct 1847, no 96 (NAI).

108. John Lawrence to Elliot, 12 Jan 1848: FSP, 25 Feb 1848, no 56 (NAI); *LPD*, vol 3, pp. 293-4, 369, 373, 377, 379.

109. *LPD*, vol 3, p.372.

110. John Lawrence to Elliot, 16 Dec 1847: FSC, 25 Feb 1848, no 42 (NAI).

That day he also drew up a set of new rules to govern the duties of the various classes of administrators. The *darbar* was to meet daily at a fixed hour, and business was to be transacted according to a prescribed agenda. Dalip Singh was to make an appearance at each *darbar*, after which he would receive lessons in the Persian language and would also be tutored by one of the British Assistants in English literature and science. Each member of the Council of Regency was given specific administrative duties. For instance Raja Sher Singh Atariwala was to have charge of the minor Maharaja and the fort; Raja Tej Singh was to issue all reports and preside over the Council, where he was to have a casting vote; Raja Dina Nath was put in charge of revenue matters; Faqir Nur-ud-Din Bokhari was made responsible for public works; Bhai Nidhan Singh was to superintend religious matters. All orders issued by the *darbar* with respect to fiscal matters, military affairs, and administrative appointments or dismissals were to be forwarded to the Resident for his countersignature. Regulations governing the work of the *adalatis*, *kardars*, and other provincial officers were laid down. Those who violated these regulations more than once were to be fined or removed from office.¹¹¹

The next step was to renovate the land revenue system by negotiating a more equitable revenue demand with the *zamindars*, and by further rationalising the administrative machinery by which that revenue was collected. John Lawrence was a self-acknowledged advocate of moderate land revenue assessments:

As an officer bred up in the revenue department [he had written to his government in September 1847], I may give undue value to the matter. I have, however, seen the British provinces, before, and after, a good settlement; with a high assessment and a low one...and the result of my experience is that, to benefit the people at large, and render the country truly flourishing, you must fix a moderate land-tax for the Government, and secure to the community that they shall enjoy, on paying that quota, the results of their own industry.¹¹²

111. John Lawrence, "Rules for the Guidance of the Lahore Durbar", 16 Dec 1847: FSC, 25 Feb 1848, no 43 (NAI).

112. John Lawrence to Elliot, 25 Sept 1847: "PP", inclosure 6 in no 12.

During the winter of 1847-48 he sent his Assistants - Abbott, Bowring, Cocks, Edwardes, Lake, and Nicholson - to those districts that were under *darbar*-appointed *kardars* to make cash land revenue settlements for a period of at least three years. These settlements achieved an abatement of about 10 per cent on the previous land revenue demand;¹¹³ with the simultaneous abolition of rural customs duties, *kardars'* fines, and extra cesses (*abwabs*), the abatement amounted to about 28 per cent.¹¹⁴ For a variety of reasons these Summary Settlements (as they became known) broke down within a few years, and had to be replaced with even more lenient settlements. We shall examine this in some detail in the next chapter. For our present purposes it will be sufficient to explore their administrative and political ramifications.

Most significantly, the Summary Settlements reduced the power and wealth of the *kardars* to pre-1839 levels, and imposed upon these officials a code of public service that looked forward to the days of British rule rather than back to the early days of Ranjit Singh. Three points should be made on this. First, the *kardar* could no longer treat his office as a means to acquiring a personal fortune. The amount of revenue that he was to collect from his villages was precisely determined and fixed for at least three years by the officiating Resident's Assistants, leaving him no scope for overtaxation. Because he was to collect this revenue in cash he could not play the grain market as he had been able to under the old *batai* (division of the harvest) method of assessment. All extra cesses except the grazing tax (*tirmi*) were abolished, and this, together with the simultaneous abolition of customs duties on many items of rural trade (such as wheat and *ghee*, or clarified butter), deprived him of a large portion of his former, unlawful income. He was now prohibited from levying from the *zamindars* any kind of fine without the express authorisation of the provincial *adalati*, who was a superior judicial authority.¹¹⁵

113. John Lawrence to Elliot, 31 March 1848, no 60: FSC, 28 April 1848, nos 57-66 (NAI).

114. Over the four *doabs* (excluding *suba* Multan) the gross revenue demand was reduced from Rs 7,444,244 to Rs 5,369,930: "PAR 1851": FM, no 356, p.167 (NAI).

115. *LPD*, vol 3, p.281.

Furthermore, John Lawrence's new regulation fixing a time limit of twelve years to cases of rural debt that might be brought before the *adalati's* court prevented the money-lending Khattris - to which *zat* most *kardars* belonged - from claiming interest on, or settlement of, loans to *zamindars* that were - as was often the case - several generations old.¹¹⁶

Second, the *kardar's* influence over village politics was reduced greatly. The fact that the new revenue settlements were made directly with the village headmen (*lambardars*) and other "primary" *zamindars* (the members of the *panchayats*, or village councils, for example) circumvented the *kardar's* ability to manipulate the *zamindars*. In fact the relationship between the *kardar* and the *zamindars* became reversed, at least temporarily, as the report of Arthur Cocks indicates:

All my enquiries were made coram populo [in public]. The whole district I may say seated around me in the open air. The *zumeendars* were most unsparing in their remarks, and the officials [the *kardars*] in a state of anxiety as to what would transpire. I found no information was to be obtained from the local officers [the *qamungoes* and *patwaris*], who were either under the influence of fear or gold. Their replies to my interogations consisted of backing up the most unscrupulous demands of the people.¹¹⁷

Formerly, the *lambardars* and *panchayat* members had depended on their *kardar's* charity for receipt of their *inam*, or remission of part of the village revenue. All legitimate claims to *inams* of 5 per cent of the village revenues, including those that had long been disallowed by the *kardar*, were now recognised and granted.¹¹⁸

Third, the number of *kardars* was reduced with a view to eliminating all but the most efficient. "Hitherto", reported Cocks, "the authority of a person drawing a salary of Rs 30 a month, and appointed to the charge of perhaps ten [villages], has been as unlimited as [that of] the Nazim of the District [some *nazims* drew Rs 5,000 a month in salary]."¹¹⁹

116. Ibid, vol 6, p.416.

117. Cock's report on the summary settlement of the lower Rachna Doab, including the district of Jhang: FSC, 28 April 1848, nos 57-66 (NAI).

118. Ibid; *LPD*, vol 6, pp. 394, 403.

119. n 117 above.

In the Bari Doab the number of *kardars* was reduced from nineteen to six.¹²⁰ In the *suba* of Jhang, which comprised sixteen *ta'aluqas* and 980 villages, the number of *kardars* was reduced from forty to six.¹²¹ Each of the four *doabs* (the *suba* of Multan being excluded since Diwan Mul Raj's contract had not yet expired) was divided into a number of smaller revenue circles each based on a large town. To each circle was appointed (or -re-appointed, as the case might be) a single *kardar* possessing strictly defined fiscal and judicial powers and presiding over a small administrative establishment which might include, amongst a set number of clerks and troopers, up to two deputy *kardars*. So far as was possible the extent of territory and the monthly salary of each *kardar* was fixed according to a uniform rate. At the same time, it was deemed necessary to encourage the more ambitious and efficient *kardars*: Arthur Cocks thought it to be "advisable to have some appointments better paid than others; the most zealous officers to be promoted to them as vacancies occur."¹²²

Naturally enough, the professional administrators who had hitherto dominated and exploited the office of *kardar* were highly antagonistic towards the new land revenue settlements which did so much to reduce their power and wealth; but, apart from a few individual attempts to obstruct the passage of the new settlements,¹²³ there was little that they could, or were prepared at the moment to attempt to, offer in the way of resistance. The real resistance came - and this is the second significant aspect to the Summary Settlements, for it was to solidify the "ordinary peasant" approach that the British were to take on later land revenue settlements - from the elites of village society, the "primary" *zamindars*. Although their *incams* were now guaranteed, and their autonomy *vis-a-vis* the

120. John Lawrence to Elliot, 31 March 1848, no 60: FSC, 28 April 1848, nos 57-66 (NAI).

121. *LPD*, vol 6, pp. 436, 441; n 117 above.

122. *Ibid.* The average salary of the six *kardars* re-appointed at Jhang was Rs 1,700 per annum. The average expenditure allowance (for the payment of wages, etc) was increased from Rs 2,819 to Rs 11,750 per annum.

123. *LPD*, vol 6, pp. 318-19, 322, 434.

kardar considerably enhanced, the *lambarbars* and *panchayat* members disliked the new cash assessments and clamoured for a return to the old *batai* and *kankut* methods under which:

the amount of revenue paid by each person bears an inverse proportion to his respectability. He who can afford to bribe the appraiser pays little or no revenue, whereas he who is too poor to pay his way is ground down to the dust.¹²⁴

The power of the "primary" *zamindars* to mobilise the rest of the village against the new cash settlement was quite formidable. Bowring recorded his experience of one such encounter with contumacious villagers in the Sind Sagar Doab in the following manner:

The villagers came out in a body shouting and demanding justice in the most persevering manner, and making a desperate attempt at a bonfire to show the darkness of the land. On enquiry into the cause of the tumult, it appeared that they had had a bad crop and had some difficulty in paying up their revenue for the last season, although their [new] assessment was so light that it did not amount to more than 2/3 of what they had been accustomed to pay for a long series of years. I believe nothing would satisfy them completely, short of taking off the revenue altogether.¹²⁵

Elsewhere it was reported that the villagers had refused to accept their *pattas* (revenue agreements) altogether (in which case the British officers had signed the *patta* with a revenue farmer and left him to deal with the villagers) or had sent their women as emissaries to the British officers in the expectation of receiving a more lenient assessment.¹²⁶ "It was", concluded John Lawrence, as he submitted to the Government of India the various settlement reports, "a work of much difficulty to introduce the new system - the ignorance and indifference of one party, and the venality of the other opposed many obstacles which may now be said to be fairly overcome."¹²⁷ He was right about the obstacles, but on the degree to which they had been overcome he was expressing undue optimism.

Late in September he had informed his government that the Punjab was "tranquil" and that its population was "day by day learning to appreciate

124. Lake's report on the summary settlement of the upper Rachna Doab: FSC, 28 April 1848, nos 57-66 (NAI).

125. Bowring's diary entry 24 Nov 1847: *LPD*, vol 6, p.368.

126. nos 117 and 124 above; *LPD*, vol 4, p.138.

127. John Lawrence to Elliot, 31 March 1848, no 60: FSC, 28 April 1848, nos 57-66 (NAI).

the benefits of British interference."¹²⁸ Comforting though this assessment might have been to his government it was quite fictitious. By early 1848 the signs were there that if some Punjabis had reason to be thankful for the British supersession of the Sikhs at least as many had reason to think, and talk, about a return to the halcyon days of Sikh monarchical rule when the opportunities for a well-connected or ambitious man had virtually been without limit. Amongst the disbanded soldiery, for whom the Khalsa army had always been such an important ladder to wealth and honour, these feelings were bound to run very high. It is necessary to note at this point that since 1846 the army reductions had been made largely at the expense of Sikh Jat soldiers: in 1845 fifty-two of the sixty-two battalions of regular troops had been basically Sikh Jat in composition, while only eleven of the twenty-five battalions permitted under the terms of the Treaty of Lahore were Sikh Jat; in other words no fewer than forty-one Sikh Jat battalions had been disbanded by the end of 1846.¹²⁹ The majority of these unemployed soldiers had returned to their Manjha villages where they had been penned up on land that was almost entirely dependent for its fertility upon a scanty and unreliable rainfall (and where in the past a large portion of the land revenue demand had been met from soldiers' remittances).¹³⁰ In April 1847 Henry Lawrence had expressed surprise that the army reductions, though they were obviously causing considerable distress, had occasioned no great anti-British feeling.¹³¹ Within the year, however, there existed unmistakable signs that such a feeling had developed. In January 1848 John Lawrence discovered that it was a common idea amongst the citizenry of Lahore that the British were in the habit of enticing ordinary people into a certain chieftain's house and there distilling human fat from them by roasting them over a slow fire, heels uppermost.¹³² Three months later his successor, Frederick Currie, reported

128. John Lawrence to Elliot, 25 Sept 1847, no 153: FSC, 30 Oct 1847, no 95 (NAI).

129. FSC, 26 Dec 1846, no 1029 (NAI). The retrenchment had been pushed even further after the Treaty of Bhyrowal, with the upper limit to the Sikh army's strength being brought down from 32,000 to 26,690: FSP, 31 March 1848, no 52 (NAI).

130. "PAR 1851": FM, no 356, p.23 (NAI).

131. Lawrence to Elliot, 26 April 1847, no 46: LRL, Bk 175, no 46 (PS).

132. *LPD*, vol 3, p.413.

that "prophetic rumours" of a coming day of revolt against the British were circulating in the Manjha villages.¹³³ And in October he referred in one of his reports to "a very general spirit of disaffection pervading the length and breadth of the land, and affecting particularly the army and the disbanded soldiery."¹³⁴ Clearly, a general crisis of authority was now at hand.

The general crisis of authority

The crisis was set off by a revolt at Multan. Towards the end of 1847 the *nazim* of Multan, Diwan Mul Raj, had journeyed to Lahore to complain against the interference of the *darbar* in the management of his *suba*, and - in the event of his complaints being set aside - to tender his resignation. John Lawrence had been quite keen to take over the direct administration of the *suba* - but not just yet. He had persuaded Mul Raj to accept an extension to his contract until the end of April 1848 (the beginning of the *rabi* harvest). Late in March 1848 Sardar Kahan Singh Man was appointed as Mul Raj's successor, although in reality his position was to be only nominal, for his work was to be supervised by two British Officers, Vans Agnew and Anderson. A fortnight later the three men, escorted by a body of Sikh troops, made their way down to Multan. On their arrival there Vans Agnew reported to Currie: "Everything seems to bear out the character Mooltan has always borne for peace and quietness."¹³⁵

Actually, Multan was seething with disaffection, primarily on account of false rumours that Mul Raj's soldiers and officials were all about to lose their jobs. On 19 April one of his soldiers attacked and wounded Vans Agnew as the British officers rode out of the Multan fort. The next day the guns of the fort were turned on the mosque where the two British officers and the *nazim*- designate were camped. The Sikh escort joined

133. Currie to Elliot, 6 April 1848, no 66: LRL, Week Ending [hereafter WE] 8 April 1848, nos 202-6 (PS).

134. Currie to Elliot, 4 Oct 1848, no 246: LRL, WE 7 Oct 1848, no 1669 (PS).

135. Vans Agnew to Currie, 14 April 1848: "PP", inclosure 8 in no 26.

the mutinous soldiery, Kahan Singh Man was taken prisoner and Vans Agnew and Anderson were brutally hacked to death.¹³⁶ It is almost certain that Mul Raj had no part in this mutiny - in fact he seems to have been virtually a prisoner of his own soldiers when the attack on the Mosque took place.¹³⁷ Within a few days, however, he assumed leadership of the mutiny, turning it into a revolt. A proclamation was issued under his authority, calling for the ousting from the kingdom of the hated *farangis* (foreigners), the restoration to power of the young Maharaja and his mother, and the reintroduction of the death sentence - lifted by John Lawrence - for cow killing.¹³⁸

News of the revolt quickly spread across the country, triggering off further disobedience. In the first week of May a plot by some disbanded soldiers to capture the Lahore fort with the assistance of the Hindustani sepoys was uncovered, and two men were executed.¹³⁹ Rumours had it that Rani Jindan was the brains behind this plot - that even from within the Sheikhpura fort she continued to exert a malevolent influence. A formal trial of the queen based on scanty evidence was out of the question, for it would only provoke increased hostility towards the regime. But she had to be silenced. The solution adopted by the British was to remove her from the fort and banish her to Benares; furthermore, her pension was again reduced, this time to Rs 12,000.¹⁴⁰ Any hopes that the British might have had that her banishment could be passed off as an honourable retirement to a pilgrimage centre were soon dashed, however, for a week after her departure the Sikh soldiers were reported to be enraged by the action,

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136. Vans Agnew to Currie, 19 April 1848: "PP", inclosure 9 in no 26; K.C. Khanna, "The Multan Outbreak of April 1848" in *Punjab University Historical Society Journal*, vol 2, Dec 1933, pp. 166-74.
137. Sita Ram Kohli, *Trial of Dewan Mul Raj* (Punjab Govt Record Office Publications, monograph no 14, Lahore, 1932); Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 2, pp. 100-4.
138. For a translation of the proclamation of the Multan Sikhs, addressed to the troops under Edwardes, 22 April 1848, see "PP", inclosure 3 in no 27.
139. Currie to Elliot, 11 May 1848, no 90: LRL, WE 13 May 1848, no 405 (PS).
140. Currie to Elliot, 16 May 1848, no 93: LRL, WE 20 May 1848, no 440 (PS); GG's Secret Despatch to Secret Committee, no 50 of 1848: FD (NAI).

saying amongst themselves that there no longer was any legitimate authority worth upholding except Mul Raj's.¹⁴¹

The first important show of solidarity with the Multan rebels came from Bhai Maharaj Singh, the religious leader from the Manjha. Ever since the Prema conspiracy he had evaded capture by the authorities. With his hand of followers, some two or three hundred in number, he had roamed up and down the Bari Doab, preaching of the day when the Khalsa would again triumph, but never remaining at any one village longer than it took to impart this message. The local authorities - the *adalatis*, *kardars*, and *thanadars* - had been given strict instructions to seize him. It had become apparent, however, that many of them were turning a blind eye to his activities or were actually assisting him. The reward for his capture had been progressively raised - with each report that he had evaded capture - to the enormous sum of Rs 10,000, a clear proof of his importance. On receiving news of the Multan revolt Bhai Maharaj Singh decided to join Mul Raj. He paraded through the Manjha villages with drums, recruiting the disbanded soldiery, until his followers numbered five or six thousand. In June he set off for Multan, which he reached safely, despite having lost many of his men along the way in engagements with the *nazim* of Jhang's troops and some Muslim *jagirdars* whom the Resident had despatched to destroy him.¹⁴²

The Multan revolt also stirred up the chieftains of the northeast foothills (the Rajas of Datarpur, Jaswan, Kangra and Nurpur) and the Jullundur *jagirdars*, all of whom were anxious to overthrow British rule in the Trans-Sutlej States.¹⁴³ Perhaps the most noteworthy of these disgruntled chieftains was Baba Bikram Singh Bedi, whose lineal descent from Guru Nanak gave him exceedingly high status within the Sikh community. After the annexation of the Jullundur Doab in 1846 the Baba had run headlong

141. Currie to Elliot, 25 May 1848, no 105: LRL, WE 27 May 1848, no 515 (PS).

142. For details see "PP", inclosure 33 in no 27, inclosure 5 in no 28, inclosure 18 in no 29.

143. For details see "PP", inclosure 14 in no 38, inclosure 24 in no 42.

into a confrontation with John Lawrence. He had refused to surrender to the British his guns and his forts; John Lawrence had confiscated his *jagirs* (the offer to the Baba of a compensatory pension was haughtily declined) and forcibly evicted him from his forts. When the Multan revolt broke out the Baba turned his hometown of Una, in the Hoshiarpur District, into a centre of revolt and incited the hill Rajas into open revolt. When these revolts were smashed by John Lawrence's soldiers the Baba crossed the Beas with his followers to join the main revolt.¹⁴⁴

Still, there was at this stage little to suggest that the trouble at Multan and in the Jullundur Doab might blow up into a political crisis of national proportions. The Sikh soldiery, disaffected though they undoubtedly were, were unlikely to mutiny *en masse* without the leadership of the chieftains: the rank and file unity of the *panchayat* days had long since been eliminated. The chieftains, for their part, were not as yet ready to assume such a leadership role. Edwardes confidently asserted that they were still "heart and soul on our side, which is the side of jagheers, titles, employments and whole throats."¹⁴⁵ It would be more valid to say that they were not as yet faced with a real crisis of authority. They were unanimous in believing that the Multan revolt could and should be subdued at once, although they pointed out that given the excitability of the Sikh troops plus the fact that the *darbar* paid Rs 22 lakhs annually for the maintenance of a British peace-keeping force, it was a job for the British. Currie was in agreement on both counts.¹⁴⁶ But both Lord Dalhousie, the new Governor-General, and Lord Gough, the British Commander-in-Chief, were against an immediate assault on Multan: they preferred to postpone any such move until the winter months - the optimum campaigning season for British soldiers in India.¹⁴⁷ Five months passed before the

144. Ahluwalia and Singh, *The Punjab's Pioneer Freedom Fighters*, chap 5.

145. Edwardes to Currie, 13 July 1848: reproduced in Herbert Edwards, *A Year on the Punjab Frontier in 1848-49* (London, 1851), vol 2, pp. 515-16.

146. Currie to Elliot, 10 July 1848: "PP", inclosure 24 in no 32; Currie to Major-General Whish, 10 July 1848: "PP", inclosure 25 in no 32.

147. Elliot to Currie, 11 July 1848: "PP", inclosure 27 in no 32.

siege of Multan was begun, and during that time several developments occurred which created a real crisis of authority for the chieftains. When that crisis arrived a large number of them opted for rebellion regardless of the dangers to their *jagirs*, titles, offices or their lives.

Two developments helped to weaken the resolve of many chieftains to oppose the Multan revolt. Both were consequences of the decision not to put the British troops into action right away. The first was Currie's despatch - against the *darbar's* advice - of a large Sikh force under the command of Raja Sher Singh Atariwala to Multan. Not being equipped with the heavy siege guns that could have enabled it to oust Mul Raj from the Multan fort, there was little that this force could do except contain the revolt and engage the rebel soldiers in the occasional skirmish. The morale of the *darbar* force steadily declined: small groups of soldiers began deserting to Mul Raj's camp, while Raja Sher Singh and his fellow officers complained that they were constantly being vilified by the rebels as being Muslims for betraying the cause of the Khalsa.¹⁴⁸ The second development was the unauthorised raising of Muslim levies for service at Multan by Herbert Edwardes, the Resident's Assistant at Bannu. Immediately after receiving news of the Multan revolt Edwardes began enlisting Pathan and Biloch tribesmen, promising them plunder and high pay. This was carried out through an intermediary named Faujdar Khan, described by Edwardes as being "an exceedingly clever Puthan...who is related to many of Mooltan's chief officers, and knows every mercenary on both sides of the Indus."¹⁴⁹ Just as he was preparing to cross the Indus and march towards Multan with his tribesmen, Edwardes received a note from Currie directing him to confine his operations to the far bank of the Indus. Edwardes contemptuously dismissed Currie's justification of inaction¹⁵⁰ and, true to his training in the John Lawrence school of administration, took matters into his own hands. On 14 June he crossed the Indus and the Chenab, inflicted a crushing defeat on part of Mul Raj's force and

148. Edwardes to Currie, 19 Aug 1848: "PP", inclosure 30 in no 35.

149. Edwardes to Currie, 27 April 1848: "PP", inclosure 6 in no 27.

150. The siege of Multan, he angrily wrote to Hodson, the Resident's Assistant at Lahore, "could not be put off like a champagne tiffin, with a three-cornered note to Mulraj to name a more agreeable date!": quoted in Khilnani, *British Power in the Punjab*, p.135.

surrounded the Multan citadel. Of course these daring exploits showed just how easy it would be to suppress the Multan revolt: all that was now required was a few siege guns and a team of sappers. But the fact that these exploits had been carried out by Muslim irregulars, whose religious and militaristic passions had deliberately been whipped up, under the command of a British officer who had ignored the Resident's orders (not to mention the *darbar's* advice), gave great offence to the Sikh chieftains, and from this time onwards the whole Multan affair began to assume a distinct communal aspect in the minds of many Sikh chieftains: perhaps, they began to think, there was some fundamental truth in the claims of the rebels that they were making a stand in defence of the Khalsa.

The turning point in the making of the ensuing crisis came with the outbreak of a sympathetic revolt at Hazara in August. There James Abbott, the Resident's Assistant, had grown convinced - long before there was ever any real evidence for it - that the local Sikh brigade was conspiring with the Multan rebels. His solution to the problem was amazingly shortsighted: he too began enlisting Muslim mercenaries, and reviving a *jihad* (holy war) mentality amongst them by appealing to "the memory of their murdered parents, friends and relatives to rise and aid me in destroying the Sikh forces."¹⁵¹ What is more, he suspected that the Sikh *nazim* of Hazara, Sardar Chatar Singh Atariwala, was plotting for a general uprising against the British. When Chatar Singh complained to Lahore about the Assistant's bellicose and arrogant behaviour Abbott attempted to expel him from his position of civil and military authority at Hazara. Privately, Currie delivered Abbott a sound reprimand for his unwarranted suspicions and his unauthorised actions.¹⁵² Publicly, however, he stood by his Assistant. Chatar Singh was offered terms that amounted to his dismissal and the resumption of his *jagirs*. Finding that his professions of loyalty and friendship were being ignored, and smarting from the Resident's continued refusal to arrange the marriage of Maharaja Dalip Singh with his daughter,¹⁵³ Chatar Singh

151. Abbott to Currie, 17 Aug 1848: LRL, WE 26 Aug 1848, no 1353 (PS).

152. Currie to Abbott, 24 Aug 1848: "PP", inclosure 19 in no 36.

153. Chatar Singh's daughter was betrothed to Dalip Singh. On several occasions Raja Sher Singh had approached the Resident with a view to arranging a marriage date, but nothing had been done: Ahluwalia and Singh, *The Punjab's Pioneer Freedom Fighters*, p.61.

called upon the Sikh regiments at Hazara, Peshawar, Attock, and Bannu to join him in a war of liberation. He also implored his son, Raja Sher Singh, to join the Multan patriots. For several weeks the Raja resisted his father's pleas. It was only on 14 September when Edwardes dismissed him from service at Multan, implying that he could no longer be trusted, that Raja Sher Singh Atariwala and a number of other chieftains went over to Mul Raj's side.

Hitherto [Sher Singh wrote to his brother, Sardar Gulab Singh, the next day], Captain Edwardes has treated me with great kindness; but, within the last week, his feelings towards me have changed. I resolved, therefore, yesterday, to join the Sing Sahib [Chatar Singh], and devote myself to the cause of our religion...God is between us. If we live we shall meet; if not, God wills it.¹⁵⁴

Thus, the failure of the British to deal promptly with a local revolt at Multan, together with their disparaging treatment of some of the *darbar*'s leading officers, drove a number of chieftains into open resistance. For these chieftains the fruits of collaboration had gone sour, and their proclamations, calling on the Hindustani and Sikh soldiers in the Punjab, the British Sikh regiment at Hoshiarpur, and the protected Cis-Sutlej chieftains to join their rebellion, all referred to the price which the kingdom had paid by allowing the British to gain control of it.¹⁵⁵ A general manifesto issued by Raja Sher Singh and nine other Sikh chieftains accused the "tyrannous and crafty Feringees" of having maltreated Rani Jindan, of having reduced the glory of the kingdom founded by Ranjit Singh, and of having oppressed the Sikh religion - all of which were, to a certain extent, true. The manifesto called on all "servants of the Khalsajee, of the holy Gooroo, and the Maharajah" to rise up and kill the *farangis*, cut off the *daks* (postal systems) and proceed to Multan without delay, on pain of being "excluded from the pale of the Sikh faith."¹⁵⁶ Dalhousie regarded Sher Singh's defection and his manifesto as a declaration of war against the British Government and began the mobilisation of an army of reconquest.

154. For a translation of this letter, see "PP", inclosure 29 in no 38.

155. For translations of these proclamations, see "PP", inclosures 26-31 in no 40.

156. "Manifesto issued by Shere Singh", no date: "PP", inclosure 32 in no 38.

I have drawn the sword [he wrote to Sir George Couper on 8 October 1848], and this time, thrown away the scabbard. If the Sikhs, after this is over, rise again, they shall intrench themselves behind a dunghill, and fight with their finger-nails, for if I live 12 months, they shall have nothing else left to fight with.¹⁵⁷

Before we examine the conduct and outcome of the second Anglo-Sikh war we should try and develop our analysis of the rebellion a little further. On the face of it, the rebellion was a xenophobic and conservative reaction against the changes of displacement engineered by the British since 1846. This reaction began at the lower levels of society, amongst the disbanded soldiery and the superior peasant castes of the Manjha, and was taken over by the chieftains once popular support for the Multan revolt and the idiosyncratic behaviour of the British demonstrated to them that their own position was in danger of being destroyed both from below and above. In Africanist terminology, the rebellion was an instance of "primary resistance" - that is, the violent anti-imperialist reaction of an essentially unmodified tribal society.¹⁵⁸ On closer examination, however, the rebellion turns out to have been a much more complex affair.

In the first place, not all chieftains joined the rebellion. At the time it was estimated that thirty-four chieftains, or *jagirdars* with the rank of Sardar or its equivalent, were openly "loyal" to the British-dominated *darbar* at Lahore;¹⁵⁹ later, the number was put at more than

157. Dalhousie to Couper, 8 Oct 1848: Hasrat (ed), *The Punjab Papers*, p.190.

158. "Primary resistance" is a form of resistance that is both logically and temporally antecedent to "secondary resistance" (the more organised protest of millenarian movements, reform associations, trade unions, and independent churches) and "nationalism" proper (modern mass-based political parties). For a discussion of these concepts, including "post-pacification revolt" (which we will examine in a moment), see Eric Stokes, "Tradition Resistance Movements And Afro-Asian Nationalism: The Context Of The 1857 Mutiny Rebellion in India", in *Past and Present*, no 48, Aug 1970, pp. 100-18. For a critical application of these terms to the history of resistance in the German Pacific empire, see Peter J. Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders Under German Rule: a study in the meaning of colonial resistance* (Canberra, 1978).

159. "List of Sirdars and others attached to the Lahore Government, who have not openly joined the Rebels": "PP", inclosure 53 in no 44.

sixty-two.¹⁶⁰ Sixty-three chieftains (together with another thirty-six who ranked as Sardars but held commissions as Generals or Colonels in the Sikh army) were deemed to be "rebels".¹⁶¹ Thus, the crisis of authority which produced the rebellion divided the chieftain class.

Second, there was no direct correlation between material deprivation and socio-political displacement on the one hand and rebellion on the other. It is true that some "rebel" chieftains - for example Diwan Mul Raj, Diwan Hakim Rai, and Sardar Ranjor Singh Majithia - had experienced a loss of wealth and influence because of British interference in the administration of the kingdom. Several chieftains had earlier complained that the new summary settlement of the land revenue had reduced the value of their *jagirs*.¹⁶² But, as we have already seen, the British had been careful to treat all *jagirdars* equally. What is especially significant is the fact that many of the leaders of the rebellion were chieftains who had actually benefited from British interference; they were, as Dalhousie told the Secret Committee, "those who have received the most marked consideration and favor, and have derived the most substantial benefit from the establishment of British authority."¹⁶³ Among the "rebel" chieftains were eight¹⁶⁴ who had received titles at Lawrence's recommendation. Among them were several who had received high administrative posts: Lal Singh Moraria, for example, who was one of the ringleaders of the rebellion, had been made *adalati* of the Sind Sagar Doab by Lawrence in 1847. Further proof that those who rebelled the most were not those who had lost the most is afforded by an examination of the *jagirs*¹⁶⁵ held by thirty-eight

160. n 167 below.

161. "List of the openly-disaffected Sirdars of the Lahore State, ascertained to be in rebellion and insurrection": "PP", inclosure 21 in no 43.

162. *LPD*, vol 3, pp. 412, 420.

163. Dalhousie to Secret Committee, 22 Nov 1848, no 3: "PP", no 40.

164. Mul Raj, Chatar Singh Atariwala, Sher Singh Atariwala, Gulab Singh Atariwala, Hira Singh (Rani Jindan's brother), Rattan Singh Kerchakia, Kahan Singh Majithia, and Arjan Singh of Rangar Nangal.

165. After the annexation of the kingdom Raja Dina Nath was instructed to prepare returns of the *jagirs* held by the principal chieftains. These returns were submitted to the Government of India for its decision on the confirmation or resumption of the *jagirs*: FP, Part "A", Feb 1861, nos 297-8 (NAI).

"rebel" chieftains¹⁶⁶ and sixty-two "loyal" chieftains.¹⁶⁷ On average, the "rebel" chieftain's *jagirs* (Rs 19,572) were only slightly less valuable than those of the "loyal" chieftain (Rs 20,961). As a group the "rebel" chieftains were actually more financially secure than their "loyal" counterparts: only 34 per cent of the "rebel" chieftains held *jagirs* worth Rs 10,000 or less, while for the "loyal" chieftains the corresponding figure was 61 per cent.

How, then, are we to explain the fact that some chieftains joined the rebellion whilst others did not? Unless we are to believe that the patriotic, communal, and personal sensitivities of some chieftains - and they were not all Sikh by religion - were more hurt by the presence of the British than were those of other chieftains, we shall have to look to the situations and experiences of individual chieftains. Of course we will never know what was in each chieftain's mind when he made his decision whether to join the rebellion or not. But we can isolate three important general factors.

First, where a chieftain was at the time of the outbreak was of crucial importance. Most of those who remained "loyal" were at Lahore when the Multan and Hazara revolts broke out, and they stayed there under the watchful eye of the British throughout the early and critical phase of the ensuing war. Even had they wished to join the rebellion it is unlikely that they would have been able to break through the tight security the British imposed on the capital. The "rebel" chieftains, on the other hand,

166. "Return of Sikh Chiefs engaged in the late Rebellion, showing the amount and value of their Jageers lately resumed and the Allowances it is proposed to grant to each": FSP, 26 May 1849, nos 68-71 (NAI); "Appendix to Statement No 1 (forwarded to Government on 1 June 1849)": FSP, 28 July 1849, nos 46-48 (NAI). I have excluded from the first return the *jagirs* held by various Afghan chieftains.

167. "A List of the Principal Jagheerdars of the Punjab not concerned in the Insurrection of 1848-49, shewing what they have enjoyed hitherto, and what provision is recommended for them hereafter": FSP, 29 Dec 1849, no 49A (NAI); "First Supplementary List of the Principal Jagheerdars of the Punjab...": FPP, 3 April 1850, nos 279-82 (NAI); "Second Supplementary List...": FPP, 31 May 1850, nos 108-10 (NAI); Revenue Department Proceedings [hereafter RDP], 27 July 1850, nos 127-8 (PS). I have excluded from the first return two *jagirs* held by royal ladies. In addition to these four returns a small number of individual cases of "loyal" *jagirdars* was submitted to the Government of India.

were nearly all in the countryside, either before Multan or at some provincial post, when they decided to go over to the rebel side. They had the opportunity to join the rebellion - or, in some instances, given the mood of the troops, had almost no choice in the matter. We may note here, moreover, that the *kardars* who joined the rebellion were generally those whose *ta'aluqas* lay in rebel-controlled territory, that is, in the southwest and northwest of the country. In *suba* Multan the *kardars* were Mul Raj's own men, and - as might be expected - they enthusiastically threw in their lot with that of the rebel soldiers. Of them, Edwardes wryly observed: "It is a new thing these men of the pen buckling on the sword. Moolraj's rebellion has made all the Kuthrees mad."¹⁶⁸ In the north Chatar Singh Atariwala received the support of most of the *darbar*-appointed *kardars*; where he did not he appointed his own *kardars* in their place.¹⁶⁹

Second, a number of chieftain families quite deliberately chose both resistance and collaboration as a way of ensuring their political and economic survival. The younger male members of the family - or perhaps the members of a cadet branch, if there existed extended family solidarity - might join the rebellion with the family's contingent of *jagirdari* horsemen, while the senior members supported the *darbar* and the British. That way the family's fortunes were secured whatever the outcome of the conflict. In the Chhinah family of Amritsar District, for instance, seven men became "rebels" and three remained "loyal".¹⁷⁰ Many of the supposedly "loyal" *kardars* in those tracts that remained under the direct authority of Lahore also hedged their bets by working for both the British-dominated *darbar* and the rebels.¹⁷¹ This suggests that for many the general crisis of authority was not so much a do-or-die crisis of existence as it was

168. Edwardes to Currie, 5 June 1848: reproduced in Edwardes, *A Year on the Punjab Frontier*, vol 2, p.301.

169. *LPD*, vol 4, p.252; vol 6, p.354.

170. Case no 2 of "First Supplementary List of Principal Jagheerdars": FPP, 3 April 1850, nos 279-82 (NAI).

171. *LPD*, vol 4, pp. 171-2, 176, 194; Edwardes, *A Year on the Punjab Frontier*, vol 2, pp. 262, 574.

just another - albeit particularly violent - factional crisis to which they responded in much the same manner as they had in the past.

Third, a number of chieftains opted for either resistance or collaboration as much out of a desire to humiliate and destroy personal enemies as out of a desire to either expel or retain the influence of the *farangis*. Resistance to, or collaboration with, the imperialists was often an extension of a local, indigenous power struggle. The Muslim tribesmen along the Indus frontier who rallied to the calls of Abbott and Edwardes for military service against the Sikhs were not prompted solely by their religious and mercenary proclivities: in many cases they had - or at least their tribal leaders had - an issue of local magnateship to settle.¹⁷² Several Sikh chieftain families were divided over the rebellion primarily owing to some long-standing internal family feud. For instance, the descendants of Sardar Sham Singh Atariwala actively participated in the war against Chatar Singh Atariwala and his sons - who belonged to a cadet branch of the family - in order to avenge an old family dispute.¹⁷³ Similarly, two branches of the Sodhi family of Jhelum District joined the rebellion and plundered the houses of a third "loyal" branch of the family by way of settling an ancient rivalry; when the war began to go against the rebels, however, the third branch was quick to repay the injury.¹⁷⁴ And, most significantly, the leaders of the rebellion eventually identified their rivals at the *darbar* - rather than the British - as their real enemies, and in so doing revived the old antagonism between "traditional" and "new staff" chieftains. On 24 November 1848, as the Sikh and British armies stood poised for battle, Raja Sher Singh Atariwala and his fellow "rebel" chieftains sent a lengthy note to Frederick Currie. In it they praised the British for their kindness towards Ranjit Singh and his successors. How, then, they asked the Resident, had the present confrontation come about? "The reason",

172. For a classic example of this, see Edwardes to Currie, 20 May 1848: "PP", inclosure 6 in no 28.

173. FSC, 24 Nov 1849, nos 55-64 (NAI).

174. Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 2, p.248.

they continued, "is to be found in the evil dealing, and faithlessness, of the members of the Durbar, who have neither regarded the credit of their own kingdom, nor respected the good name of the British."¹⁷⁵

They proceeded to list some fifteen grievances, chief amongst which were the maltreatment of Rani Jindan, the oppression of the Sikh religion, and the reduction of the kingdom's former glory. The British Government, "acting on the suggestion of evil-disposed persons", had contravened all the treaties. The real villains of the piece were singled out:

Raja Tej Singh, whose incapacity was well known to Maharajah Runjeet Sing, and who only received an appointment in the army on account of the Maharajah's affection for Jemadar Khosal Sing [Tej Singh's uncle], has been promoted to the highest station in the kingdom [the presidency of the Council of Regency], notwithstanding that he never led the troops of the Khalsa, as...[others] have done, and, in no instance, has been known to display any ability, or courage, or to have been entrusted with any share in the government of the country.¹⁷⁶

Moreover, Mul Singh, who had been a common clerk on Rs 30 per month in the service of Tej Singh's family, was now entirely in the confidence of the British Resident. "This has greatly grieved, and disgusted, the Sirdars and others", continued the leaders of the rebellion. Their note concluded with an invitation to the British to investigate these grievances so that peace and stability within the kingdom might be restored.¹⁷⁷

In the light of the foregoing discussion, it must be queried seriously whether "primary resistance" is the correct term to apply to the rebellion of 1848. One thing is certain - the rebellion was in several respects a quite different type of resistance from that offered by the Sikhs just three

175. "Raja Shere Sing and the Sirdars of his Camp to the Resident at Lahore", 24 Nov 1848: "PP", inclosure 24 in no 41.

176. Ibid.

177. Ibid. Currie did not reply directly to this note but simply issued a *rubakari* to the effect that the British would enter into no communication with the rebels until they laid down their arms: "Roobukaree of the Resident at Lahore", 27 Nov 1848: "PP", inclosure 27 in no 41. Elliot informed Currie that he had been right to refrain from giving a direct reply, and wrote that "the Governor-General directs me to request that you will inform the memorialists that you have been instructed to state that the memorial has been received by the Governor-General, and that his only answer will be the advance of the British army": Elliot to Currie, 2 Dec 1848: "PP", inclosure 36 in no 41.

years previously. In 1845 the resistance to the British came from a traditional power structure that, although it was on the verge of total collapse due to its own inherent weaknesses and the external pressure of the imperial power, nevertheless managed to gather sufficient strength for a concerted bid for its own survival. The resistance was relatively straightforward and united, involving most of the members of the power structure in a common purpose. In 1848, however, the traditional power structure had been substantially dismantled and reorganised following the pacification. Imperial power had engaged the society more directly and had evoked in consequence a more disjointed reaction. The resistance was a rally of dissimilar elements, reflecting diverse interests and strategies, and was held together loosely by a xenophobic sentiment expressed in the form of religious ideology and the glorification of a now extinct socio-political order, but was limited to only part of the country and portions of its population. At the same time, it cut across class and communal divisions, and bore some resemblance to a civil war situation. These differences between the two instances of resistance suggest that 1845 was closer to "primary resistance", whereas 1848 was more like a "post-pacification revolt"; that 1845 (despite the complexity of its origins) was a fairly straightforward response of an indigenous power structure under threat of imperialist conquest, whereas 1848 was a reaction of a certain section of that indigenous power structure to conquest.¹⁷⁸ In later chapters we shall attempt further to refine these Africanist categories of resistance (including that of "secondary resistance"); here we would argue that the distinction between "primary resistance" and "post-pacification revolt" serves basically to remind us of the extent and direction of the changes that had occurred between 1845 and 1848.

We may now examine briefly the war that the rebellion of 1848 had produced. Like the first Anglo-Sikh war it was a short but extremely bitter one. From the start it was an unequal war. The combined fighting strength of the rebels could not have been more than 30,000 men and about 160 guns.¹⁷⁹ By contrast, the British had a main "invasion" army of 24,404,

178. n 158 above.

179. Hasrat has shown that Lord Gough's estimates of Sikh strength were once again grossly exaggerated, but his own estimate of 23,000 men makes no allowance for Mul Raj's force or the Afghan force that joined the rebels at the battle of Gujrat: Hasrat, *Anglo-Sikh Relations*, pp. 327-8.

an "occupation" force at Lahore of 10,000, a Sutlej "frontier" force of 5,962, a "seige" force at Multan of 21,030, supported by a Lahore *darbar* force of 5,300, and various units of Muslim mercenaries whose total strength was 38,000. Taken together, these figures give the stupendous total of 104,696 men. Of course these forces were deployed at various places in the country. Still, the regular "Army of the Punjab" - exclusive of the *darbar* troops and the Muslim irregulars - which converged on Gujrat for the decisive battle of the war had a massive strength of 45,404 men and 145 guns.¹⁸⁰

Given their numerical inferiority and limited supplies, the rebels ought perhaps to have fought a guerilla war in the Manjha and the northern Bari and Rachna Doabs where they had strong grass-roots support. Raja Sher Singh's cavalry were keen to prosecute such a war since their families and property were mostly in those regions. Sher Singh, however, was anxious to join his father at Gujrat in the Chaj Doab, and having broken through Edward's cordon around Multan on 9 October he set off in a northwesterly direction.¹⁸¹ This meant that when Lord Gough's army crossed the Ravi on 16 November the rebels were forced to fight a series of pitched battles against a superior foe in the inhospitable and isolated environment of the northern Chaj Doab. Nevertheless, the rebel soldiers acquitted themselves like the veterans they were.¹⁸² At Ramnagar on 22 November a battle was fought with each side sustaining only minor losses and claiming in consequence a victory. At Chillianwala on 13 January 1849 Sher Singh's force came within an ace of destroying Gough's army. The Sikhs had entrenched themselves in the ravines and dense jungle that lay to the west of Chillianwala village. Gough drew up his army in the orthodox pattern - heavy elephant-drawn guns in the centre, infantry and field-guns to the left

180. Ibid, pp. 326-7.

181. According to British intelligence, Sher Singh parted company with part of his cavalry over this issue, leaving them, without artillery, on the left bank of the Chenab: Currie to Elliot, 1 Nov 1848: "PP", inclosure 12 in no 40.

182. For details on the war, see Gough and Innes, *The Sikhs and the Sikh Wars*, pp. 198-250; Hasrat, *Anglo-Sikh Relations*, pp.328-46. Selections from the British military despatches are reproduced in Hasrat (ed), *The Punjab Papers*, pp. 247-80.

and right, cavalry and horse-artillery upon his flanks. After an hour of cannonade Gough ordered the infantry forward. The result was disaster. Once inside the jungle the British infantry lost order and formation, and fell prey to the Sikh musketry and cavalry. After three hours of confusion, during which the British lost 697 men killed and 1,641 injured, Gough called a retreat. Chillianwala was a clear victory to the Sikhs.

But British superiority in numbers, equipment, and supplies soon began to tell. On 22 January the British siege of Multan, which had been carried on for the past month, succeeded and Mul Raj and his 4,000 bodyguards were captured.¹⁸³ Strengthened and re-supplied, Gough's army then moved forward to meet the combined forces of Sher Singh Atariwala and his father, Chatar Singh. The two armies came face to face at the town of Gujrat in the Chaj Doab on 21 February 1848. Sheer fire-power won the day - and the war - for the British. A sustained cannonade of three hours broke the back of the Sikh resistance and enabled the British infantry to drive through the enemy positions. The Sikhs lost between 3,000 and 5,000 men and fifty-three guns. British casualties were ninety-six killed and 700 wounded. On 10 March the Atariwalas and their 16,000-strong army abandoned their attempt to flee from General Sir Walter Gilbert's pursuing force and surrendered.¹⁸⁴ The war was over.

All that remained to be settled was the crisis of authority. Since the beginning of the war Dalhousie had sought to convince the home authorities of the need to destroy not only the rebels but the Sikh power as a whole.¹⁸⁵ To this suggestion, Sir John Hobhouse, the President of the Board of Control, had merely replied that the Government of India's recommendation would be considered when the time came to re-evaluate the administrative arrangement

183. Mul Raj was tried for the murder of Vans Agnew and Anderson and found guilty. On account of extenuating circumstances, the sentence of death was commuted to one of life transportation. Mul Raj died near Benares in August 1851.

184. GG's Secret Despatch to Secret Committee, no 18 of 1849: FD (NAI).

185. Dalhousie to Hobhouse, 8 Oct 1848: Hasrat (ed), *The Punjab Papers*, p.190.

provided for by the Treaty of Bhyrowal.¹⁸⁶ Now that the war was over, however, Dalhousie pushed ahead with his plans to annex the kingdom, without waiting for the approval of the London authorities.¹⁸⁷ On 27 March he sent Henry Elliot, the Foreign Secretary of the Government of India, to Lahore to negotiate the terms of the annexation with the Council of Regency.¹⁸⁸ On the morning of 29 March 1849 the ceremonial ratification of the annexation took place. The great Hall of Audience inside the Lahore fort, where Ranjit Singh - and, before him, the Mughal emperors - had sat amid pomp and splendour, was on this occasion crowded with military and civil officers. Europeans stood on the right; Indians on the left. A paper, proclaiming the annexation of the Punjab, was read aloud in Persian, then in Urdu. The ten year-old Maharaja Dalip Singh stepped forward and affixed his signature and seal to the document that deprived him and his heirs and successors of "all right, title, and claim to the sovereignty of the Punjab, or to any sovereign power whatever."¹⁸⁹ Elliot described this, the last Sikh *darbar*, in the following way:

The whole ceremony was conducted with grave decorum. No Sirdar was armed. The costly jewels and gaudy robes, so conspicuous in the Sikh Court on other public occasions, were now thrown aside.

The whole announcement appeared to be received with a degree of indifference bordering on apathy, and not a word or whisper escaped, to betray the real feelings pervading the hearts of that solemn assembly, which had met to witness the ratified dissolution of the great empire, established by the fraud and violence of Runjeet Sing.

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186. Hobhouse to Dalhousie, 7 Dec 1848: *ibid*, p.197. Many Company officials in London felt that the British were morally and legally bound to uphold the Treaty of Bhyrowal, that the minor Maharaja and the *darbar* should not be punished on account of a rebellion that was as much against their authority as it was against that of the British Resident: Hobhouse to Dalhousie, 7 Nov 1848 and 24 Nov 1848: *ibid*, pp. 194, 196-7.
187. For his justification of this, see Dalhousie to Hobhouse (Private), 7 April 1849: *ibid*, pp. 227-30.
188. "Note, by Mr Elliot, of a Conference with the Members of the Council of Regency, held at the Lahore Residency, on the 28th of March, 1849": "PP", inclosure 7 in no 51.
189. The document is reproduced in full in Hasrat, *Anglo-Sikh Relations*, appendix 16. Soon after the annexation Dalip Singh was removed to Hindustan. In 1853 he was baptised a Christian. For details of his subsequent life in England and his reconversion to Sikhism, see Khushwant Singh, *History of the Sikhs*, vol 2, p.87, n 6. Rani Jindan joined her son in England in 1861 and died there two years later.

As I left the Palace, I had the proud satisfaction of seeing the British colours hoisted on the citadel under a Royal salute from our own artillery - at once proclaiming the ascendancy of British rule, and sounding the knell of the Khalsa Raj.¹⁹⁰

The "Koh-i-Nur" diamond, Ranjit Singh's emblem of sovereignty, was confiscated and presented to Queen Victoria. Imperialists had once again annexed the Punjab.

Conclusion

After two wars with the Sikhs the English East India Company emerged as the supreme authority in the land of the five rivers - the fourteenth principal dynasty (and the thirteenth non-Punjabi one) in 850 years. However, the British had not set out purposefully to subjugate the Punjab and seize the mantle of rulership from the Sikhs, even though many - perhaps most - Company officers believed that the Punjab would eventually become a British province. Had they been committed to an annexationist ambition and plan, the Punjab would have become part of British India long before 1849.

Since the turn of the century the British had wanted influence over the region rather than ownership of it. After Ranjit Singh's death in 1839 they had felt obliged to interfere, minimally at first but in an increasingly more detailed way, in the politics and administration of the kingdom in order to maintain that influence. The two Anglo-Sikh wars were manifestations of the disruptive impact of that interference. They were fought, by the British, not to acquire more territory or even more power over an independent kingdom but essentially to re-establish an influence they were in danger of losing. At the end of each war the British acquired more power than had originally been intended. In the previous chapter we saw that the first Anglo-Sikh war was fought to settle a "local crisis" that had arisen from the twin pressures of an internal collapse of monarchical authority and an external buildup of imperial military

190. "Report, by Mr Elliot, of the Proceedings held at a Durbar in the Palace of Lahore, on the 29th of March, 1849": "PP", inclosure 8 in no 51.

strength. In this chapter we have seen that after 1846 the British moved steadily from a position of "informal control" to "formal rule". To be sure, they knew what they were about (witness Hardinge's description of his Punjab policy as one of "sliding gradually into annexation"). To be sure, also, they skillfully used every opportunity to extend their influence and power, by adapting themselves to the internal socio-political conditions necessary for the accumulation of influence and power, by utilising their role within the inner logic and dynamics of the kingdom's power structure (witness Henry Lawrence's ritualised distribution of titles and his efforts to portray himself to the people as a neo-Maharaja¹⁹¹). But, in the last analysis, the transition from "informal control" to "formal rule" was governed by the outbreak of fresh "local crises" that pulled the British still deeper into domestic politics. Each of these crises was a crisis of collaboration and resistance that was as much an extension of ongoing tendencies within domestic politics within the Punjab as a direct response to the presence there of the British.

We have seen too that after the Treaty of Lahore a crisis developed over the *wazir's* attempts to impose his will upon the *darbar*. The British Agent (Henry Lawrence) had been drawn into a showdown with the *wazir* largely because of the encouragement and support that he had received from the *wazir's* enemies. After the banishment of the *wazir* and the signing of a new treaty Lawrence (now Resident) worked through the traditional power structure, acting like a surrogate *wazir*, to implement his reforms. The paradox of the situation, however, was that while Henry Lawrence was subverting Punjabi politics to British ends he was himself being subverted to the ends of some Punjabis. The amount of influence over him achieved by some persons provoked a crisis of resistance by others, notably the former queen regent, who resented the growing influence of the sycophantic

191. It is interesting that Henry Lawrence, who had returned to India just before the end of the second Anglo-Sikh war, and who was much averse to the annexation of the kingdom, suggested to Dalhousie that a proclamation be issued in his own name with the words: "I wish it to be known that I have returned to this country with a desire to restore peace to the Punjab", after which he would negotiate a more liberal peace settlement with the rebels. He also suggested that Rani Jindan be allowed to return to the Punjab. Dalhousie scotched both suggestions and described Lawrence as being "plus Sikh que les Sikhs": Dalhousie to Hobhouse, 6 March 1849: Hasrat (ed), *The Punjab Papers*, pp. 220-1.

Tej Singh. After the removal of the queen from Lahore the new Resident (John Lawrence) set about dismantling and restructuring the traditional system of government. By this stage the British were, to all intents and purposes, the real rulers of the kingdom. Resistance to them developed, nonetheless, beginning with a groundswell of popular and millenarian protest. This became a general crisis of authority, and a conjuncture for civil war, when a number of chieftains dropped collaboration and opted for resistance. The British went into the second Anglo-Sikh war to uphold the authority of the British-dominated *darbar* and came out of it the legal masters of the Punjab.

Indigenous collaboration and resistance, then, are the two main themes of the period 1846-49. Together they constituted the mechanism that determined the rise, penetration, and culmination of British imperial power in the Punjab. More than that, they were to exercise a profound influence on the style of imperial rule after 1849. Those Punjabis who had resisted the British in 1846-49 were not to be provided with an opportunity to regain favour until 1857, while those who had collaborated had mostly collaborated themselves out of political effectiveness. Consequently, as we shall see in the next chapter, British rule in the eight years after annexation was an experiment in exclusivity and authoritarianism.

CHAPTER FIVE

*THE IMPERIAL EXPERIMENT, 1849-56**Introduction*

The years of Lord Dalhousie's term as the English East India Company's Governor-General (1848-56) were years of supreme imperial confidence and action. Dalhousie was a shameless expansionist who seized every opportunity to extend British rule in India. By a series of annexations, beginning with that of the Punjab in 1849 and ending with that of Oudh in 1856, he pushed out the empire's frontiers to what were virtually their final limits. Dalhousie was also a zealous reformer. He planned and began work on the Indian railway system. He introduced the telegraph, and developed roads and canals. Schools, hospitals, court-houses, and jails were built where they had not existed before. And social legislation designed to effect a moral regeneration of Indian society, such as the prohibition of widow-burning (*sati*) and female infanticide, was pushed through. Dalhousie provided able and energetic leadership in an age when most Englishmen - much influenced by the doctrines of muscular Christianity and crude Benthamite Utilitarianism - believed firmly that they had a civilising mission in India.

Dalhousie's crowning achievement was the creation of what became known as the Punjab "system" of colonial government, operated by a handful of dedicated British officers: the "Punjab School". The annexation of the Punjab provided Dalhousie with a clean slate - an opportunity to introduce all his reforms more thoroughly and more quickly than was possible in the older British provinces. It was an opportunity that was not lost. Dalhousie appointed his best officers to the Punjab, and he provided them with unprecedented executive powers. Nowhere in the empire had a programme of development and modernisation ever been attempted on the scale that was tried in the Punjab after 1849. In 1851 the Board of Administration - the body that had been established to supervise the government of the new province - described this programme of reform as "an imperial experiment, imperially conducted."¹

1. Quoted in Khushwant Singh, *History of the Sikhs*, vol 2, p.94, n 16.

To the British, the success of this experiment was obvious right from the start. In 1853 an anonymous contributor to the influential *Calcutta Review* asserted that reforms which had taken at least twenty-five years to be implemented elsewhere in British India had taken only four years in the Punjab. All past errors of British rule, it was further asserted, had been avoided in the Punjab, and the result was little short of spectacular:

We know not where else to look, in order to find a parallel to this metamorphose, from riot to tranquillity, to peace from misrule, that has taken place in India, before our very eyes, over the plains of the Punjab.²

Certainly, the achievements of the "Punjab School" between 1849 and 1856 were considerable: the new province was pacified and the foundations of its later prosperity were laid.³ And yet, conditioned as we have often been by the imperialist tradition of a golden Punjab age and heroic Punjab administrators, we have often paid insufficient attention to the cake beneath the icing. For instance, it has not always been appreciated that the greater portion of the "Punjab School's" work in the early years was of a conservative, political nature and not at all undertaken with a view to material or moral progress. The viability of a Pax Britannica in the Punjab rested ultimately on the ability of the British to consolidate their political position, to maintain law and order, and to extract the State's share of the agrarian surplus, rather than on their pursuit of modernisation. Similarly, it has not always been allowed that the work of the "Punjab School" often proceeded with very little of the smoothness and certitude that is claimed in the official British records. Many Punjabis resisted British reforms vigorously, while within the ranks of the "Punjab School" itself there was a good deal of disagreement over the necessity of these reforms and the manner of their implementation.

2. *The Calcutta Review*, vol xix, no xxxvii (1853), pp. 305-6.

3. The standard account is Y.B. Mathur, *British Administration of Punjab (1849-75)*, (Delhi, no date). For a study of the official mind of the "Punjab School", see P.H.M. van den Dungen, *The Punjab Tradition: Influence and Authority in Nineteenth-Century India* (London, 1972).

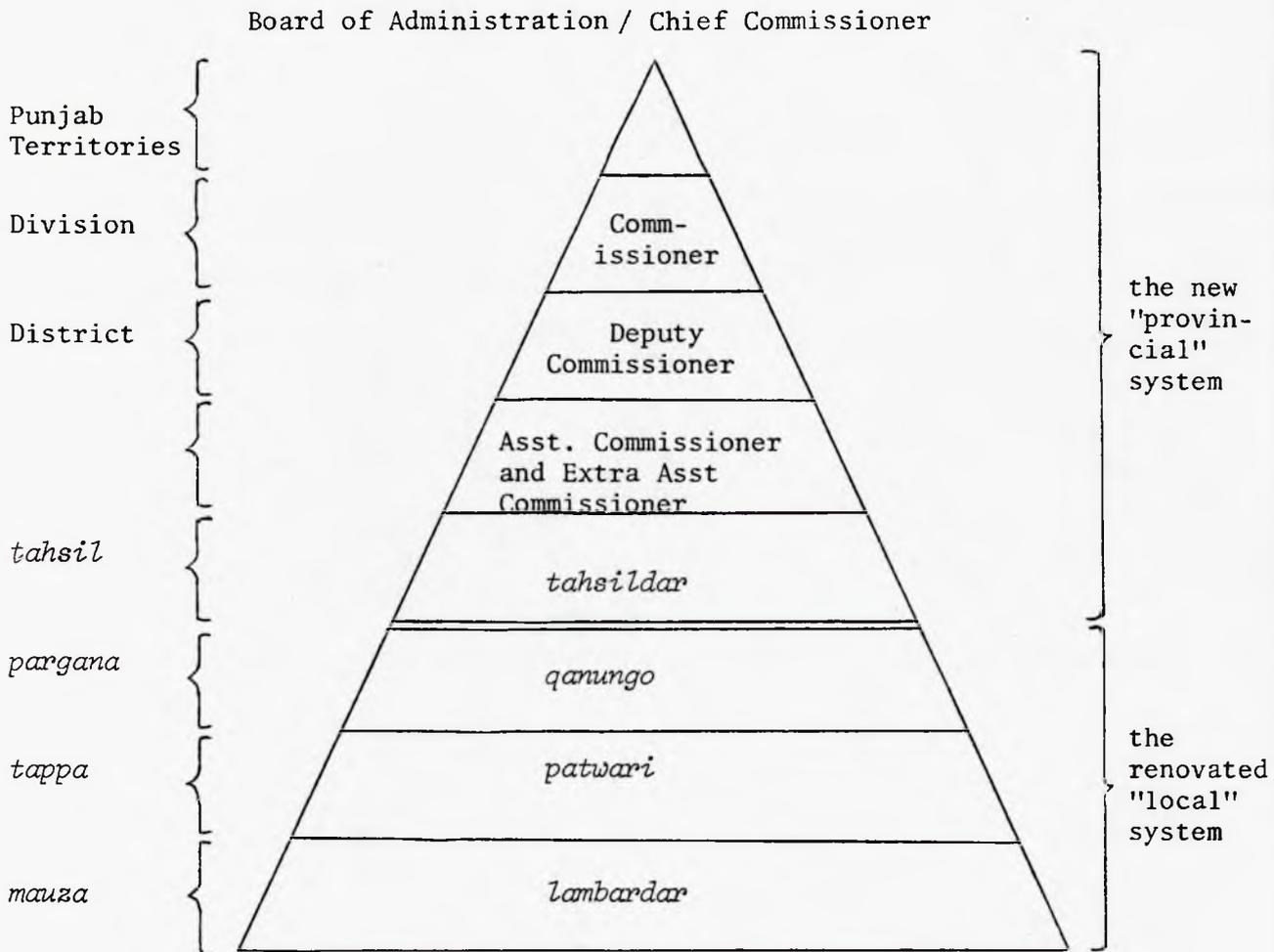
In this chapter we shall attempt to redress this imbalance. It is our contention that the "imperial experiment" that was conducted in the Punjab between 1849 and 1856 was essentially an experiment in authoritarianism and political exclusiveness. The British attempted to rule the Punjab more directly - with less reliance upon political intermediaries - than had the Sikhs. The political, economic, and social transformation that occurred during these years was due primarily to this exclusiveness and the methods employed to sustain it. In seeking to measure and explain this transformation, we shall concentrate upon five areas of political reform that have not, in our opinion, been explored adequately in the existing historical literature. These areas are: the construction of a new "provincial" system of government; the renovation of the traditional "local" system of government; the quest for a permanent pacification; the curtailment of revenue assignments; and the introduction of a new land revenue system.

Non-regulation administration

Having annexed the Punjab, the British had to govern it. How would this be done, and by whom? The answers to these questions were supplied by Dalhousie on 31 March 1849. The Punjab Territories⁴ were to be placed under a new, five-tiered, provincial system of government (headed by a Board of Administration), designed to be superimposed upon, and interlocked with, a renovated version of the traditional "local" system of government (see Fig 5:1). Before we examine the different levels of this new provincial system, which replaced the "national" system of the Sikhs, we may notice three general features of the new system. First, although it involved, at each successive level, the same non-separation of fiscal, judicial, and police powers that had characterised the Sikh "national" system, the new provincial administration was a much more centralised and bureaucratic system, with a clear line of command stretching down from top to bottom and a fairly clear delimitation of responsibilities and rewards at successive levels. Second, only the subordinate levels were open to Indians. Third, it was a system of government whose day-to-day

4. The erstwhile Sikh kingdom (now called the "Punjab proper") and Cis-Sutlej and Trans-Sutlej Territories jointly were called the "Punjab Territories" until the formation of the Punjab Province in 1859.

Fig 5:1 *Principal Offices in the British Government of the Punjab*



operation was based upon an extremely flexible interpretation of basic administrative precepts contained in printed codes and circulars, rather than upon a strict observance of legislative Regulations, as was the case elsewhere in British India.⁵ For this reason, the Punjab "system" of colonial government was often termed the Non-regulation System of administration.

Non-regulation administration was the instrument and theoretical touchstone of that unique paternalistic despotism practiced by the "Punjab School" between 1849 and 1856. It was cheap and quick government carried out primarily by means of executive order. Dalhousie's concern to make it work in the Punjab led him to assign the cream of his administrative talent to the newly-annexed region. Henry and John Lawrence were appointed, along with Charles Mansel,⁶ to the triumvirate that was the Board of Administration. The older provinces were ransacked for additional talent. Forty-nine British civil and military officers of the Company, representing "as efficient a body of public servants as have ever been employed in a single province in India", were chosen to serve under the Board.⁷ At the same time, Dalhousie maintained a tight, personal control over the Punjab administration. For example, the Board was required to submit to Calcutta weekly abstracts of all its paper-work, and to obtain the prior sanction of the Governor-General before implementing any important decisions. As we shall see, Dalhousie's intervention in certain crucial matters, upon which the Board's members were divided, was to prove decisive.

The Board was the apex of the new administrative system. Its three members (each of whom received a salary of Rs 3,500 per month) were empowered to conduct foreign relations with the neighbouring "native" States (for example, Kashmir, Bahawalpur, and the Protected Sikh States

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5. For the codes, circulars, and *ad hoc* rules upon which civil and criminal justice and land revenue administration in the Punjab were to be based, see Dalhousie's instructions to the Board of Administration (hereafter BOA), conveyed in Elliot to BOA, 31 March 1849, no 418: FSC, 28 April 1849, no 73 (NAI).
 6. Mansel was a civil administrator who, like most of the new Punjab officers, had previously served in the North-Western Provinces (later U.P.). In 1851 he was eased out of the BOA and replaced by Robert Montgomery.
 7. Elliot to BOA, 31 March 1849, no 418: FSC, 28 April 1849, no 73 (NAI). Twenty-five of these British officers were military men: the highest rank was that of Major.

of the Cis-Sutlej region), and within the Punjab Territories to settle the land revenue demand, regulate the excise, supervise the police, and impose the death penalty for serious crimes (and, typically, just what constituted a "serious crime" was something that was left to their discretion). Why did Dalhousie place the administration of the Punjab under the supervision of a three-man Board when a single officer might have performed the same function? Dalhousie claimed, in a letter to the President of the Board of Control in London, that had Henry Lawrence, in his opinion, been as fit to administer alone the civil government of the Punjab as he was to direct the necessary political and military arrangements, the three-man Board would not have been constituted. "But", Dalhousie concluded, "Sir Henry Lawrence is not Sir Thomas Munro [the great administrator of South India]; and he had neither the experience nor the qualifications which would have justified me in continuing all the civil government to him alone."⁸ In view of the conflict that was to develop between the Board's members over the question of *jagirs*, we can only suppose that what Dalhousie meant by Lawrence's lack of "qualifications" was his inability to see eye-to-eye with his brother, and with the Governor-General, on the need for fiscal stringency.

Henry Lawrence accepted the post of President of the Board - a post that conferred no overruling powers - and took on responsibility for political and military affairs. John Lawrence became the Junior Member and occupied himself with his first love: revenue affairs. Charles Mansel (and later Robert Montgomery), as the Senior Member, concerned himself with the administration of justice and the police.

This arrangement was short-lived, however. One of the less savoury experiences of the Residency period had been the discovery that over certain matters the Lawrence brothers could not agree: fundamental differences in temperament and political viewpoint lay between them. So long as the Board of Administration was directly accountable to him, so Dalhousie reasoned in 1849, these differences might be kept in check. But, as we shall presently see, the nature

8. Dalhousie to Hobhouse (Private), 25 May 1849: Hasrat (ed), *The Punjab Papers*, p.239.

of the Board's work only intensified these differences, and in 1853 both Lawrences submitted their resignations. By this stage the Punjab was thoroughly pacified, and Henry Lawrence's strengths, in particular his political connections with the Sikh chieftains, were no longer of such great value. John Lawrence's dispassionate clerical efficiency was much needed, however. Dalhousie therefore dissolved the Board of Administration, appointed John Lawrence as Chief Commissioner of the Punjab Territories, and dispatched Henry Lawrence to Rajputana as Governor-General's Agent. Structurally, the change was not a great one, because as Chief Commissioner, John Lawrence continued to work with two high-ranking colleagues - a Financial Commissioner and a Judicial Commissioner. But effectively, as we shall see, the dissolution of the Board of Administration signalled the ascendancy of John Lawrence's personal style of administration.

At the next level down in the new administrative system were seven Commissioners, the heads of the seven Divisions - Cis-Sutlej, Trans-Sutlej, Lahore, Jhelum, Leiah, Multan, and Peshawar - into which the Punjab Territories were now divided. The Commissioner (who received a salary of Rs 2,750 per month) acted as Civil and Sessions Judge over his Division, hearing appeals from the courts below him and referring to the Board (or Chief Commissioner) only those criminal cases that involved a sentence of death or transportation for life. In addition, he exercised general superintendence over the police and revenue administration of his Division. But his primary duty would seem to have been that of acting as a check against excessive administrative zeal on the part of his Deputy Commissioners, the officers at the next level down. Dalhousie's instructions to the Board of Administration in March 1849 stressed this point: each Commissioner would be required to "exercise a stricter supervision and control over the Deputy Commissioners than would be required where a regular routine of business is well established and understood."⁹

9. Elliot to BOA, 31 March 1849, no 418: FSC, 28 April 1849, no 73 (NAI).

Representing the third level were twenty-seven (later twenty-nine) Deputy Commissioners (on monthly salaries of between Rs 1,000 and Rs 1,600), each in charge of a single District. In revenue and criminal justice matters, the Deputy Commissioner exercised the powers of Collector and Magistrate: he supervised the collection of the land revenue and excise, and he could sentence to up to four year's imprisonment. In matters of civil justice, he was empowered to try suits for property of unlimited value. All these powers made the Deputy Commissioner an almighty figure in his District. Thorburn called him "a little king within his own domain, subject to loosely defined limitations."¹⁰ In the popular imagination, he was *ma-bap* - the embodiment of authority - a paternalistic figurehead who spent most of his day on horseback, touring his district, inspecting the local administrative establishments, listening to the grievances of "his people", and always on the look-out for any sign of political unrest.¹¹

The fourth level was occupied by two classes of magisterial assistant to the Deputy Commissioner: the Assistant Commissioner (monthly salary Rs 500-700) and the Extra Assistant Commissioner (monthly salary Rs250-500). These officers were empowered to try middle-order criminal and civil cases. Their *raison d'être* was simply to relieve the great burden of magisterial work that would have otherwise been placed upon the Deputy Commissioners. In the Lahore Division (the subregion of central Punjab) during the first year of British rule, for example, the twenty Assistant Commissioners and Extra Assistant Commissioners (EACs) handled 45 per cent of all the criminal and civil cases disposed of, which was more than twice that handled by the five Deputy Commissioners.¹² These two offices represented the highest point in the new administration to which Indians could aspire. However, the assistant Commissioner was

10. Thorburn, *The Punjab in Peace and War*, p.165.

11. For an excellent description of the life of a Deputy Commissioner (hereafter DC) in the early 1860s, see G.R. Elsmie, *Thirty-Five Years in the Punjab, 1858-1893* (Edinburgh, 1908), pp. 114-15.

12. Montgomery, Commissioner and Superintendent (hereafter C and S) Lahore Division, to P. Melvill, Secy to BOA, 16 July 1851, no 400: FM, no 359 (NAI).

generally a European, often a young civil servant being trained for a higher post. Out of sixty-four Assistant Commissioners holding office in the Punjab in 1855, only five were Indians.¹³ The EAC, an uncovenanted civil servant, was, on the other hand, generally an Indian. In 1852 nineteen out of thirty, and in 1855 twenty-four out of forty-two, EACs were Indians.¹⁴

This raises the important question of the extent to which Punjabis - as opposed to other Indians - entered the lower reaches of the new administration after annexation. One historian has advanced the thesis that although the establishment of British rule in the Punjab created a host of openings for experienced, educated, Indian subordinates, these men had to be recruited from the older provinces because they "were not available within the Punjab."¹⁵ To what extent is this a valid thesis? Certainly, the predominance of non-Punjabis in the lower reaches of the administration is unmistakable. In the Lahore Division at the start of 1857, for instance, five out of the six Indian EACs, "about one-half" of the nineteen *tahsildars* (upon whom more, in a moment), one-third of the Indian police officers, and between one-third and more than one-half of the clerks and record-keepers in the various revenue and police officers were Hindustanis - Kayasthas from the North-Western Provinces and Baidays, Brahmans, and Kayasthas from the Bengal Presidency - rather than Punjabis.¹⁶

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13. For lists of Indian Assistant Commissioners and EACs employed in 1855, see Montgomery, Judicial Commissioner (hereafter JC), to R. Temple, Secy to Chief Commissioner (hereafter CC), 21 July 1855, no 259: Judicial Department Proceedings (hereafter JDP), 4 Aug 1855, nos 15-17 (PS).
 14. *Selections from the Records of the Government of India (Foreign Department)*, no v1, *General Report on the Administration of the Punjab Territories, Comprising the Punjab Proper and the Cis- and Trans-Sutlej States, for the years 1851-52 and 1852-53* (Calcutta, 1854), (hereafter *PAR 1851-53*), para 504; also, JDP, 4 Aug 1855, nos 15-17 (PS).
 15. Kenneth W. Jones, "The Bengali Elite in Post-Annexation Punjab: an Example of Inter-Regional Influence in Nineteenth-Century India", in *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol 111, no 4 (Dec 1966), pp. 376-93.
 16. *Punjab Government Records*, vol v111, *Mutiny Records: Reports* (hereafter *MRR*), (Lahore, 1911), pt 1, p.227.

But is this predominance of non-Punjabis to be explained solely in terms of the absence of suitable men in the Punjab? Returning to the thirty-one Indian EACs employed in the Punjab between 1849 and 1855,¹⁷ we may note that the three who can positively be identified as Punjabis - Jaimal Singh Khunda, Harcharan Das, and Jodh Singh Rarijala - had all served the Sikhs as either *adalatis* (judges) or *naib-adalatis* (deputy judges).¹⁸ However, at least ten others had held the same posts in the pre-annexation period.¹⁹ What had become of them? By 1849, or thereabouts, one had died, another had left the Punjab, and two had gained employment as *tahsildars*. The remaining six were retired; but of these six, four would have been barred from employment under the British anyway, because they had opposed the British in the war of 1848. This suggests that Jones's "incompetency" thesis is not a sufficient explanation for the low representation of Punjabis in subordinate administrative offices after 1849: that some eminently - qualified Punjabis would have been politically unacceptable to the British must also be taken into account.

Two further observations regarding the Indian EAC may be made. First, his religion would seem to have been an important factor in his appointment, for the British maintained a proportional representation for the three religious communities. Of the eleven Indian EACs mentioned in the first annual administration report, five were Muslims, five were Hindus, and one was a Sikh.²⁰ Of the nineteen mentioned in the next report, nine were Muslims, nine were Hindus, and one was a Sikh.²¹

17. n 14 above.

18. Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 2, pp. 40, 50, 106.

19. These are: Devi Dayal Akalgarhia, Jhanda Singh Butalia, Ram Singh Julawala, Lena Singh Majithia, Ranjor Singh Majithia, Kahan Singh Man, Lal Singh Moraria, Diwan Hakim Rai, Sodhi Nihal Singh, and Mangal Singh Siranwali. Information on the post-1849 fortunes of these ten men is to be found in a variety of sources, but especially Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, 2 vols.

20. "PAR 1851", para 355: FM, nos 356-7 (NAI).

21. PAR 1851-53, para 504.

And of the twenty-four in the 1855 list, eleven were Muslims, eleven were Hindus, and two were Sikhs.²² Second, the Indian EAC who gave satisfaction - and most would seem to have done²³ - was rewarded with periodic salary increments and promotions (usually within the several grades of Extra Assistant Commissionership, but occasionally to the rank of Assistant Commissioner²⁴).

The fifth level in the new administration - the point of meshing with the "local" system - was the office of the *tahsildar*. Each district was divided into three, four or even five administrative and fiscal subdivisions called *tahsils*. Each *tahsil* was under the charge of a *tahsildar*, an Indian officer (the lowest gazetted officer) on a monthly salary of Rs 150-200. He was supported by a staff of record-keepers, clerks, and messengers.²⁵ In 1856 there were 108 *tahsildars* in the Punjab Territories. Under them were 576 record-keepers and clerks and 2,317 messengers.²⁶ The *tahsildar* had a variety of duties. As subcollector, he collected the land revenue and excise, and inspected the records of "local" system officers like *qanungos* and *patwaris*. As submagistrate, he tried petty criminal cases carrying punishments of small fines or up to eight week's imprisonment. In judicial matters he decided civil suits for property valued at up to Rs 300. During the first year of British rule the thirteen *tahsildars* posted to the Lahore Division dealt with almost 36 per cent of all the criminal and civil cases disposed of these.²⁷

If the European Deputy Commissioner provided a vital link between provincial and district administration, the Indian *tahsildar* linked

22. JDP, 4 Aug 1855, nos 15-17 (PS).

23. I have encountered only one instance of an Indian EAC being dismissed for corruption: *SR Lahore 1865-69*, p.95. In another case, charges of corruption were investigated but dropped: JDP, 1 March 1856, nos 15-17; 15 March 1856, nos 11-12 (PS).

24. For examples, see *History of Services of Gazetted Officers Employed in the Punjab* (Lahore, 7th edn 1887), p.122; FP General "B", Feb 1862, nos 67-9 (NAI); Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 1, p.478.

25. For details of a new *tahsildari* established in Gurdaspur District in 1853, see FPC, 18 March 1854, no 28 (NAI).

26. *PAR 1854-56*, p.31.

27. n 12 above.

district administration with the "local" system. This meant that like the Deputy Commissioner - to whom he was immediately responsible, and with whom he was expected to forge a close working (but not social) relationship - the *tahsildar* had a political, as well as administrative, role to play. For example, the *tahsildar* was encouraged to exert a general influence (but not a direct control) over the local police.²⁸ His value to the British lay not just in his administrative expertise but also in his knowledge of the locality; his insight into the character of the people; his familiarity with their institutions and traditions.

Given the *tahsildar's* duties, it would seem reasonable to suppose that a large proportion of them were Punjabis. Unfortunately, we cannot establish this with any degree of certainty.²⁹ All that we can say - looking through the names that appear in various reports - is that many of them were former *kardars*, *naib-adalatis*, and *munshis* ("loyal" ones, of course) or were relatives - often sons or nephews - of men who had held such positions under the Sikhs. Many Punjabi *tahsildars* went on to become EACs in the 1860s.³⁰ Moreover, the principle of proportional representation for the three religious communities was applied to the appointment of *tahsildars*, too. Of the 113 *tahsildars* employed in the Punjab Province in 1862, forty-eight were Muslims, fifty-six were Hindus, and eight were Sikhs.³¹

There are three important conclusions to be drawn from our study of the new "provincial" system of government created by the British after 1849. First, the British reserved the three top levels - the provincial, divisional, and district levels - for themselves; Indians were admitted to only the subordinate levels, as Assistant Commissioners,

28. "PAR 1851", para 105: FM, nos 356-7 (NAI).

29. Except that, as already noted, about one-half of the *tahsildars* in Lahore Division were Punjabis.

30. For examples, see Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 1, pp. 260-1, 278, 302, 304-5, 324; vol 2, pp. 15, 40, 49, 95, 115-16, 186, 385.

31. JDP, 5 April 1862, nos. 20-1 (PS).

EACs, and *tahsildars*. Clearly, British rule in the Punjab was to be ruled by the British: it was to be direct, British decision making, not a delegation of substantial authority to middle-men like the *nazims*, *diwans*, *ijaradars*, and *kardars* that had existed under Sikh rule.

Second, the subordinate levels that were open to Indians were dominated in the early years of British rule by non-Punjabis. This is to be explained in part by the fact that suitably experienced men were not plentiful in the Punjab, and in part by the fact that many potential Punjabi recruits, having recently been in rebellion against the British-dominated, Sikh *darbar*, were unacceptable. But this was by no means a permanent situation: in time Punjabis gained both the experience and the trust of the British necessary to allow them to oust the Hindustanis from these subordinate offices. By 1887, for instance, all but nine of the 119 Indian EACs employed in the Punjab were Punjabis.³²

Third, the careful maintenance of a communal balance between the Indians appointed to the offices of EAC and *tahsildar* during the early years of British rule benefitted Muslims at the expense of Hindus. We have seen that during the latter years of Sikh rule, offices like those of *diwan*, *kardar*, and *munshi* had been monopolised by urban Hindu families, especially Khatri and Arora families with long traditions of administrative service. During the early years of British rule, Muslims (especially those from professional *zats* like the Sheikh, Sayyid, and Saddozai) were provided with the opportunity to squeeze some Hindus out of their monopolistic position. It is true that in the 1870s and 1880s, Hindus were able to reassert their dominance at the lower levels of provincial administration, because they were quick to acquire the Western educational qualifications that had by then been made a pre-condition of service.³³ But from the 1890s onwards, Muslims - particularly those

32. *History of Services of Gazetted Officers Employed in the Punjab* (1887), pp. 119-43.

33. According to an imperial return of civil service appointments to positions worth not less than Rs 150 per month (the starting salary of a *tahsildar* in the Punjab), Hindus held 53 per cent in 1867 and 62 per cent in 1871: Sir Patrick O'Brien, "Amended return showing number of appointments in India, of not less than 150 Rs a month in value, filled up during the years 1867-71 by the appointment of Natives of India, distinguishing those held by Hindoos from those held by Mahomedans": Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, vol 54, 1875 (Accounts and Papers, vol 13), p.249.

belonging to the rural elites - along with Sikhs, took more to Western education. By 1910 Muslims outnumbered Hindus in the provincial civil service.³⁴

The renovation of "local" government

We saw in the second chapter that the Sikhs had inherited from their predecessors an essentially traditional system of local government - the offices of *qanungo*, *patwari*, *chaudhari*, and *lambardar* - which they did not change, or attempt to place under direct and constant supervision from the political centre. But it was not in the nature of British ideas about rulership to tolerate the fiscal inefficiency and political ambiguity that such non-interference had generally given rise to. After the annexation, with the commencement of the regular, district revenue settlements, they took the opportunity to overhaul this "local" system of government and interlock it with their new "provincial" system. This reflected a desire on their part to extend their power down to the grassroots level of Punjabi society. Just how successful they were, is the question that must engage our attention here.

Ideally, the structure of local government³⁵ under the British was to be the same as under the Sikhs (though different administrative terms were sometimes used). That is, each *tahsil* was to be divided into two *parganas* (with a *qanungo* to each *pargana*); each *pargana* was to be divided into two or more *chaklas* (with a *chaudhari* to each *chakla*); each *chakla* was to be divided into several *tappas* (with a *patwari* to each *tappa*); and each *tappa* was to be made up of seven or eight *mauzas* (with a *lambardar* to each *mauza*).³⁶ In practice, however, such a neat hierarchy was seldom if ever established, while the tasks of appointing suitable men

34. The story is told in detail in Patricia A. Thompson, "The Provincial Service in the Punjab in the Late Nineteenth Century" (unpub M.A. dissertation, Sussex University, 197).

35. Our discussion in this section is limited to rural local administration. For details on urban self-government (municipalities, "notified areas" and small towns), see *A Brief Account of the Administrative System of the Punjab* (prepared for the members of the Indian Statutory Commission, 1928; Lahore, 1928?), pp. 27-9.

36. *SR Sialkot 1863*, p.107.

to the different offices, and of ensuring that they actually adhered to the responsibilities with which they were charged, proved more arduous than was at first expected. Let us examine each grade of office, beginning with that of *qanungo* - the highest officer in the non-gazetted "local" system.

In the Lahore Division, where the regular land revenue settlements were first commenced, it was initially decided (on the grounds of fiscal efficiency) that only one *qanungo* should be appointed to each *tahsil*. The *qanungo*'s main duties were to supervise the annual preparation of village revenue accounts, and to check periodically the records maintained by the village accountants, the *patwaris*. He received a monthly salary of Rs 25 (in other Divisions, Rs 20) and was usually recruited from the ranks of either the traditional *qanungoi* families or especially talented *patwaris*. It was soon discovered, however, that a single *qanungo* was simply not able to maintain the revenue records of a *tahsil* that might embrace as many as 700 *mauzas*, for whose accounts as many as 100 *patwaris* might be responsible. Edward Prinsep, who was increasingly to become the authoritative figure in central Punjab land revenue matters,³⁷ described the existing *qanungoi* system in 1854 as a "useless, because inefficient, agency."³⁸ He proposed the division of each of the four *tahsils* in Sialkot District into two *parganas*, with one *qanungo* to each *pargana* and a head-*qanungo* (on Rs 50 per month) at the district headquarters. This proposal was approved in 1855,³⁹ and then adopted

37. Prinsep served in the Punjab between 1850 and 1874. He was successively Settlement Officer (hereafter SO) in the Lahore Division, DC Sialkot District, and Settlement Commissioner (hereafter SC) for Amritsar, Gurdaspur, and Sialkot. From 1866 to 1874 he was SC for the Punjab Province, and the champion of the "Aristocratic Reaction" (which we shall investigate in the last chapter).

38. Prinsep to C. Raikes, C and S Lahore Division, 11 Dec 1854, no 155: FPC, 10 Aug 1855, nos 341-61 (NAI).

39. Extract from the proceedings of the President of Council of India in the Financial Department, 3 Sept 1855, no 3381: FPC, 14 Sept 1855, nos 132-40 (NAI); *SR Sialkot 1863*, p.107. It should be noted here that the regular settlement of Sialkot District was completed in 1856, but that the records were destroyed by the "mutineers" in 1857, thus allowing for a revision of the settlement, the report on which was submitted in 1863.

in other districts.⁴⁰ Thereafter, it would seem, this *qanungo* system operated with tolerable efficiency.⁴¹

Beneath the *qanungo*, in the traditional set-up, was the *chaudhari*, or headman of a group of contiguous villages. Hitherto, the *chaudhari*'s importance rested on the fact that he was a man of local prestige and influence, whose collaboration with respect to the collection of revenue, the extension of cultivation, and the settlement of local disputes the State officers like the *kardars* were anxious to purchase through *inams* and other, non-official, bribes. Would the British also patronise him as the Sikhs had? Initially, it seemed that they would not. The services of a few, individual *chaudharis* were retained where they were judged to be especially "influential" - where, in other words, it was considered preferable to have their influence working for, rather than against, the British settlement officer's authority. As a general class, however, the *chaudharis* were by-passed in the administrative restructuring that occurred at the time of the first regular settlements: a clear indication that the British meant to rule the Punjab countryside without employing non-specialised middle-men. The disposition of *chaudharis*' claims to *inams* (to be investigated presently) provide further evidence that as a class the *chaudharis* were on the road to official extinction. Still, not every settlement officer recognised the wisdom in excluding these men from the local administration.⁴² In the 1860s, as we shall see in a later chapter, there developed a concerted effort on the part of officers like Prinsep to reinstate the local notables on a regular basis.

There was one class of local administrators that the British could not possibly by-pass, however: the *patwaris*. British land revenue

40. *SR Gujranwala 1856*, p.58.

41. In Jullundur District two of the original eight *qanungos* had to be dismissed on account of "inefficiency": *SR Jullundur 1892*, p.139. But, otherwise, I have encountered no evidence of British dissatisfaction with *qanungos* after 1855.

42. For example, Prinsep noted that the *chaudharis* were "about the only class not satisfied with my Settlement." He expressed the opinion that their *inams* had been reduced due to an "oversight", and hoped to restore their status and improve their remuneration: *SR Sialkot 1863*, p.108.

administration in the Punjab required detailed survey and settlement records (village boundaries had to be defined and recorded, fields had to be surveyed and mapped, tenurial rights had to be recorded and kept up-to-date) and it was to the *patwaris* that the British looked for the compilation and maintenance of these village records. It may be said that the British re-created the *patwari* class in the Punjab after 1849, since the old *patwaris* were invariably found to be insufficiently educated for the job, and new men - preferably Persian-literate men from the locality - had to be recruited and trained.⁴³ Thus, in the Sialkot District the *patwaris* were "altogether a new class, raised and educated by [the] settlement."⁴⁴

Because they wanted to attract the best possible candidates, the British offered their *patwaris* high salaries. *Patwaris* in the Punjab received a commission of between 4 and 7 per cent on the revenues paid by the villages whose records they maintained (in the Lahore Division most *patwaris* looked after the records of between five and seven villages, and received an annual salary of between Rs 98 and Rs 126⁴⁵), which was two or three times the percentage traditionally received by *patwaris* in India.⁴⁶ This relatively large alienation of State revenue was thought to be worth it if a superior *patwari* agency resulted. In the early 1850s it was claimed (at the level of official propaganda, anyway) that such a superior agency had been established. The second

43. Though the son of an old *patwari* or "dhurwae" (weighman) was preferred to an outsider if he showed signs of talent and a readiness to undergo training in the *patwari* "schools" that were established: *SR Lahore 1858*, pp. 4-5; Temple, C and S Lahore Division, to Financial Commissioner (hereafter FC), 23 Jan 1860, no 15: reproduced in *SR Gujranwala 1856*, para 15. From the 1860s onwards a working knowledge of Urdu was a prerequisite for employment as a *patwari*: *SR Gujrat 1861*, p.130.

44. *SR Sialkot 1863*, p.106.

45. *SR Amritsar 1856*, pp. 6-8; *SR Gujranwala 1856*, p.58; *SR Gujranwala 1866-67*, p.49; *SR Gurdaspur 1856*, pp. 8-10; *SR Lahore 1858*, p.15; *SR Sialkot 1863*, appendix 17.

46. FC to Secy to Govt, Punjab, 2 Feb 1865, no 65-413: reproduced in *SR Rawalpindi 1864*.

Punjab Administration Report spoke of the formation, in the Lahore Division after 1849, of "a class of village accountants such as are not to be met with anywhere, even in Hindoostan", and went on to praise these *patwaris* for their uniformly high skills in Persian, accountancy, arithmetic, mensuration, and mapping.⁴⁷ It was not long, however, before a different and disturbing picture emerged.

It turned out that the vast majority of *patwaris* were nowhere near as competent as the British first thought. In Lahore District, for instance, the *patwaris* appointed at the commencement of the regular settlement operations were unable to fill out the settlement forms correctly, and consequently nearly every village had to be re-measured.⁴⁸ Moreover, the high salaries offered to *patwaris*, together with the powers vested in them, tended to attract the wrong sort of men to the office, and to encourage corruption. The *patwaris* in Sialkot District exhibited a marked tendency to "lord it" over their villages.⁴⁹ In the Hafizabad *tahsil* of Gujranwala District the *patwaris* became non-resident *patwaris*, and often combined some other profession with that of village accountant. Their possession of the settlement papers containing information on tenurial rights enabled them to exercise a despotic influence - Nisbet called it the "patwaris' 'raj'" - over the *zamindars*. When the revised settlement of the District was begun in the 1860s, many of these *patwaris* were replaced, residence in the *tappa* was made compulsory, and the completed settlement papers were handed over to the *lambardars*, or village headmen.⁵⁰

The worst feature of *patwari* corruption was the formation of cliques between Hindu *patwaris* and their caste-fellows in *qanungoships*, *tahsildarships*, and private moneylending businesses. This became almost the norm from the 1870s onwards, when the increasing sophistication of civil court procedure, the decreasing vigour of British administrative vigilance, and the rising value of agricultural land and produce all combined to encourage the Hindu commercial castes to monopolise and exploit subdistrict administration. Many *patwaris* took to moneylending and to forging entries relating to mortgages in their records so that

47. PAR 1851-53, para 290.

48. SR Lahore 1858, p.15.

49. SR Sialkot 1863, p.106.

50. SR Gujranwala 1866-67, p.48.

they or their relatives could initiate civil court actions to expropriate their peasant debtors. These cliques proved extremely difficult to break up. In Jullundur District, where Khattris and Brahmans made up more than two-thirds of the *patwari* staff in the early 1890s, a British settlement officer reported:

The Patwari is in reality 'Hakim' [ruler], though the District Officer may be so in name. These cliques, combined with the system of subscriptions (chanda) to help each other, so common among our subordinate officials, and the extensive banking and trading carried on by the Patwaris or their near relations, render small fines perfectly devoid of effect. Dismissal is the only thing a Patwari dreads, and he is practically safe from that, as only in the most extreme case will a District Officer take a step so fraught with risk to any authority he may have, as to remove a Patwari.⁵¹

And in the Gujranwala District, where the British settlement officer attempted to break the monopoly of the Hindu moneylenders by appointing agriculturalists to *patwariships*, the Khattris and Aroras holding most of the *qanungoships* and *tahsildarships* went out of their way to criticise the work of the new appointees. "It will therefore be necessary", the settlement officer concluded in 1894, "for deputy commissioners hereafter to watch carefully future appointments, and see that things do not revert to their old groove."⁵²

Of course, not all *patwaris* were incompetent and corrupt. But these traits were sufficiently common to ensure that the re-creation of the *patwari* class after 1849 was anything but a success story. In fact, until the day the British left the Punjab the *patwaris* were a source of trouble and frustration.⁵³ In the twentieth century a number of reforms, like the reservation of at least half of all new

51. *SR Jullundur 1892*, pp. 139-40.

52. M.F. O'Dwyer, *Final Report on the Revision of the Settlement of Gujranwala District 1889-1894* (Lahore, 1894), (hereafter *SR Gujranwala 1889-94*), p.31.

53. Clive Dewey has drawn a direct link between *patwari* incompetence and the unreliability of official agricultural statistics in British Punjab: "*Patwari and Chaukidar: Subordinate Officials and the reliability of India's Agricultural Statistics*", in Clive Dewey and A.G. Hopkins (eds), *The Imperial Impact: Studies in the Economic History of Africa and India* (London, 1978), chap 17.

patwariships for members of the agricultural tribes, were introduced. But the opportunities for *patwari* vice remained, and were taken. In 1928, for instance, sixty-nine *patwari* were dismissed, and many more were suspended or degraded, on counts of record falsification, absenteeism, misappropriation of revenue, and so forth. In 1929 and 1930 forty-eight and fifty-one *patwaris* respectively were dismissed from office.⁵⁴

The base of the "local" system was the office of *lambardar*, or village headman. At the commencement of the regular settlement operations the plan of the British was to avoid the Sikh practice of recognising a separate *lambardar* for each clan section (*taraf* or *patti*) in the village: to recognise, instead, only one *lambardar* per village or, at most, one *lambardar* per Rs 500 of revenue.⁵⁵ Thus, in the first few years of British rule a large number of claims to the office of *lambardar* and to *inams* granted by the Sikhs were disallowed.⁵⁶ But the settlement officers soon ran into difficulties. The office of *lambardar* was a highly prized one - not, it would seem, for the perquisites that went with it (since the British resumed all but a few *inams* and allowed only the *pachotra*, or commission of 5 per cent on the revenue collected), but rather for the status and hidden benefits that it conferred. Competition for *lambardarships* was intense and disruptive: everywhere settlement officers reported the readiness of claimants to resort to litigation. Consequently, it was often found expedient to reinstate those whose claims had earlier been disallowed.⁵⁷ In central Punjab a separate *lambardar* therefore came to be appointed to each clan section in the village, and the average amount of revenue collected by

54. Government of Punjab, *Report on the Operations of the Department of Land Records, Punjab: for the year ending 30th September 1929* (Lahore, 1930), pp. 4-7; *Report on --- Land Records, Punjab: for the year ending 30th September, 1930* (Lahore, 1931), pp. 3-7.

55. *SR Amritsar 1856*, p.104; *SR Gurdaspur 1892*, pp. 57-8.

56. *SR Gujranwala 1856*, p.57.

57. In 1855 the FC ruled that *lambardars* could not be replaced simply on the grounds that the revenue collected by them was too small, and that new *lambardars* could not be appointed without a full inquiry into their claims and qualifications: *ibid.*

each *lambardar* varied, across the districts, from Rs 332 to as little as Rs 214;⁵⁸ in Rawalpindi District the average collection was only Rs 186.⁵⁹ Most settlement officers found it more expedient to maintain the existence of two or three *lambardars* than to risk creating a feud in the village by retaining one and dismissing the others.⁶⁰

In 1865 the Financial Commissioner argued that British district officers should be given wide discretionary powers with respect to the appointment of *lambardars*, since it was, in his opinion, desirable to reduce the number of *lambardars* and prevent the office from becoming an automatic, hereditary one.⁶¹ But this was easier to theorise about than put into practice. It was exceedingly difficult for a settlement officer to reduce the number of *lambardars* or overthrow the traditional pattern of hereditary succession when, as Prinsep found in Sialkot District, "appeals went up as far as the Financial Commissioner, and some rejected candidates even paid a visit to Calcutta."⁶² In some districts, where intra-village factionalism was high, the settlement officers more or less handed the selection of the *lambardars* over to the assembled village communities themselves.⁶³ And with the subdivision of village holdings over time, the number of *lambardars* actually increased quite dramatically in many districts.⁶⁴

58. *SR Amritsar 1856*, p.104; *SR Gujranwala 1856*, p.57; *SR Lahore 1858*, p.12.

59. *SR Rawalpindi 1864*, p.139.

60. *SR Lahore 1858*, p.12.

61. FC to Secy to Govt, Punjab, 2 Feb 1865, no 65-413: reproduced in *SR Rawalpindi 1864*.

62. *SR Sialkot 1863*, p.94.

63. See, for example, *SR Gujrat 1874*, pp. 158-9.

64. For example, in Gurdaspur District, which contained 1,380 *mahals*, or revenue "estates" (usually coterminous with the *mauza*, or village), in the 1850s, there were 4,348 *lambardars* and 2,135 *ala-lambardars*, or chief headmen (whose introduction we shall examine in the last chapter), in the early 1890s: *SR Gurdaspur 1856*, pp. 3-5; *SR Gurdaspur 1892*, p.57.

From the evidence brought forward in the foregoing paragraphs, it would have to be concluded that the renovation of "local" government after 1849 fell well short of British expectations. The British had been desirous of a subdistrict administrative system that was more streamlined, more efficient, and more controllable than that which they inherited from the Sikhs. But when they came to undertake the necessary renovation they discovered that they had underestimated the strength of local-level administrative traditions and the relative weakness of their own position at that level. Consequently, they were obliged to retreat, in practically every instance, further and further from their original administrative blueprint. We do not mean to imply that, as a result, their ability to govern the Punjab countryside was drastically threatened. What we do claim is that for all their deliberate and systematic interference, the British were unable completely to impose their bureaucratic vision of "good government" on rural Punjabi society. On that score alone, we would suggest, the paternalistic tradition has to be re-evaluated.

In search of a permanent pacification

There can scarcely be any more striking feature of early British rule in the Punjab than the extent to which it was bolstered by a reservoir of coercive power. After annexation the greater portion of the regular army that had been used to conquer the Punjab in 1848-49 was retained there as an occupying force. At the beginning of 1857 the authority of the British in the Punjab was backed up by no fewer than 59,000 soldiers (63 per cent Hindustanis, 20 per cent Europeans, 17 per cent Punjabis) and about 9,000 military police.⁶⁵ The purpose of this occupying force was, of course, to keep the Punjab in a state of subjugation while the "Punjab School" pushed ahead with the tasks of disbanding the erstwhile Sikh army, disarming the population, and raising and administering a civil police force.

Following the battle of Gujrat and the general surrender of the rebel army, large numbers of armed Sikh soldiers had begun returning to their

65. *MRR*, pt 2, p.328.

villages in the Manjha. Fearing a renewal of hostilities, Dalhousie had ordered the British Commander-in-Chief, General Gough, to take steps to disarm "this turbulent population while they are still disheartened and in fear of punishment."⁶⁶ A general muster of the Sikh soldiery was therefore called at Lahore shortly after annexation. Ten regiments (five of infantry, five of cavalry) and three batteries of artillery were taken into British service. The remaining troops, numbering scores of thousands, were disarmed, paid up, and disbanded. Pensions were granted to the long-serving and the infirm.⁶⁷

The Board of Administration then issued a proclamation for the disarming of the general population, to be carried out by British military officers.⁶⁸ Within a year of annexation the Board reported the results of this disarming operation: nearly 120,000 weapons (mostly swords and matchlocks) had been collected from the districts lately annexed, and nearly 1,000 persons had been punished for concealing weapons. By far the most weapons had been collected from the two most martial tracts of the Punjab - the Manjha and the Salt Range tract in the Jhelum Division.⁶⁹

The Board also ordered the demolition of 172 of the 248 mud forts that existed in the Lahore Division. Of the 76 left intact, many were

66. Dalhousie to Gough, 12 March 1849, no 117: FSC, 31 March 1849, no 171 (NAI).

67. "PAR 1851", pp. 71-2: FM, no 356 (NAI).

68. For the orders given to these officers, see Gough and Innes, *The Sikhs and the Sikh Wars*, p.272.

69. FSC, 31 May 1850, nos 42-3 (NAI). The following is an abstract of the statement in the report:

<i>Division</i>	<i>Total arms seized</i>	<i>Total persons punished</i>
Lahore	38,994	432
Leiah	1,991	1
Jhelum	72,653	511
Multan	5,794	12
Peshawar	407	-
<i>Total</i>	119,839	956

N.B. Figures for Cis-Sutlej and Trans-Sutlej Divisions not provided. Figures for Peshawar Division refer to Hazara District only.

in the Manjha.⁷⁰ Dalhousie feared that these forts would be used in any insurrection that might break out in the Manjha, so he ordered their demolition, too, except where they could be used to quarter troops or police establishments.⁷¹ Sir Charles Napier, who was the Commander-in-Chief in India after 1849, ridiculed Dalhousie's phobia about the military importance of these forts and the possibility of a serious insurrection in the Manjha (he also ridiculed just about every aspect of Dalhousie's administration).⁷² Despite the fact that the Manjha was now completely surrounded with British troops, Dalhousie's concern lest the defeated Sikhs resort to guerilla warfare there was not entirely without foundation, however.

With the disbanding of the Sikh army, thousands of Sikh Jats were once again penned up on the marginal land of their Manjha villages. Their situation was worsened by a dramatic fall in agricultural prices immediately after annexation, and by a punitive revenue demand imposed by the British settlement officers. These conditions led to a revival of *dacoity*, or social banditry, the "favorite crime" of Sikh Jats.⁷³ The Board of Administration punished captured *dacoits* with monitory severity, in some cases inflicting capital punishment even where death or serious injury had not been caused, but lethal weapons had been used. For example, in Amritsar District thirty-seven sentences of capital punishment were handed down in the first year after annexation. The number in the second year was seven. Nearly all were for *dacoity*.⁷⁴

Nor could the possibility of an insurrection in the Manjha be discounted while the leaders of the late rebellion were still living there or had connections there. Bhai Maharaj Singh - the prophetic leader who had raised the Manjha in 1848 - was not captured until

70. FSC, 29 Dec 1849, nos 45-8 (NAI).

71. FSC, 31 May 1850, nos 47-9 (NAI).

72. Lt-General Sir Charles James Napier, *Defects, Civil and Military of the Indian Government* (London, no date), pp. 396-7, 406.

73. "PAR 1851", pp. 128-9: FM, no 356 (NAI).

74. "The Administration of the Punjab" (no author), in *The Calcutta Review*, vol 21, pt 41 (1853), p.232.

December 1849, by which time he had already begun a millenarian movement among the Sikhs of the Bari and Jullundur Doabs aimed at ejecting the British from the Punjab and restoring Khalsa rule. Bhai Maharaj Singh was not brought to public trial, but was transported to a Singapore jail, where he died in 1856.⁷⁵ The other rebel leaders - the Atariwalas, the Morarias, Surut Singh Majithia, Diwan Hakim Rai - were not placed on trial with Diwan Mul Raj after annexation, because Dalhousie recognised that they had neither started the rebellion nor mistreated their European prisoners, and that they had surrendered unconditionally.⁷⁶ But they were stripped of their titles and *jagirs*, and placed under what amounted to house-arrest. The Atariwalas, for example, were ordered to retire to their viilage, 20 miles east of Lahore, where their activities were to be strictly limited, on pain of being "punished as enemies of the British Government, and on no account pardoned."⁷⁷

Chatar Singh Atariwala soon ran afoul of these restrictions. In early September 1849 the government informer stationed at Atari village reported that Chatar Singh had used the occasion of a religious festival to assemble a large number of Brahmans at his house, and that his servants were maintaining communication with that part of the Sind Sagar Doab which he had previously held in *jagir*. Other reports suggested that the Morarias and Surut Singh Majithia had been corresponding with the Atariwalas, and that Diwan Hakim Rai had been receiving unauthorised visitors at his house in Sialkot. This information scarcely represented evidence of seditious intent on the part of these chieftains (indeed, the authenticity of the reports of the government informer at Atari village was not above question, for it appeared that he might have been bribed by the rival branch of Chatar Singh's family). Nevertheless, when he received copies of these reports, Dalhousie ordered the Board

75. For further details, see Ahluwalia and Singh, *The Punjab's Pioneer Freedom Fighters*, pp. 44-57.

76. Dalhousie's Minute, 18 Sept 1849: FSC, 24 Nov 1849, no 55 (NAI).

77. "Translation of a Roobakaree from Sir H.M. Lawrence K.C.B., Agent to the Governor General and Resident at Lahore, dated 7th April 1849": FSP, 26 May 1849, no 70 (NAI).

of Administration to make a preemptive strike against these chieftains.⁷⁸

On 1 October 1849 the Board conducted lightning-quick dawn raids on the homes of these chieftains. The chieftains and the adult males of their immediate families were arrested. Denied even the ceremony of a public trial, these men were just as quickly transported out of the Punjab to jails in various parts of northern India. It was only in 1853 that they were released. By then they were broken men. Their pensions were increased quite handsomely,⁷⁹ but they were forbidden to return to the Punjab. Their exile was symbolic of the supremacy of the British over their homeland. Most of them spent the last few years of their lives at either Benares or Calcutta - as forgotten champions of a forgotten cause.⁸⁰

We conclude this section with a look at the police force raised by the British after 1849 and at the suppression of crime. In the early years of British rule the police were ranged under two different heads: the "preventative" police with a military organisation, and the "detective" police with a civil organisation. The former, comprising infantry for guarding jails and treasuries, and cavalry for guarding civil stations and highways, were largely recruited from the *darbar* regiments that had supported the British in 1848. Muslims outnumbered Sikhs and Hindus in both infantry and cavalry wings.⁸¹

The "detective", civil police fell under three heads: a regular establishment paid for by the State, the town and city watchmen paid for by the urban communities, and the *chowkidars*, or rural constables, paid for by the village communities. The regular establishment was made up of 6,900 policemen. Police and revenue jurisdictions were so arranged that two or more of the 228 police subdivisions - each with an inspector, a couple of deputies and about thirty constables - coincided with one of the seventy-five *tahsils*.⁸² This enabled the *tahsildars*

78. Elliot to BOA, 18 Sept 1849, no 285 (A): FSC, 24 Nov 1849, no 56 (NAI).

79. For details, see FSC, 26 Aug 1853, nos 80-92 (NAI).

80. For details, see FD, Political despatch to Secretary of State for India (hereafter SS), 8 Aug 1860, no 94 (NAI); FPP (A series), Dec 1869, nos 171-6 (NAI); Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 1, pp. 417,492.

81. "PAR 1851", pp. 49-50: FM, no 356 (NAI).

82. For tabular statements of fiscal and police jurisdictions in Sialkot District, see FPC, 14 Sept 1855, nos 132-40 (NAI).

to exercise a general supervision over the local police. Throughout the Punjab, and particularly in the western districts, the regular police establishment was linked to the local, social power structure through the recruitment of tribal leaders as deputy inspectors.⁸³ Furthermore, a rough communal balance was maintained within the ranks of the police: in 1871 the non-European component of the Punjab Police Force (the military police and the regular civil police having been amalgamated in 1861) was made up as follows - Muslims, 52 per cent; Hindus, 31 per cent; Sikhs, 17 per cent.⁸⁴

The other two heads of the civil police were urban watchmen, of whom there were more than one thousand, and rural *chowkidars*, of whom there were more than 30,000. These men were generally drawn from the lower castes.⁸⁵ Their duties were to make night patrols around the city wards or villages, and to report to the regular police on movements of strangers and on local disturbances. In 1851 *chowkidars* were armed with spears; in 1855 they were provided with swords.⁸⁶

The strength of the combined police force in the Punjab at the end of the first year of British rule was around 46,000. At the end of 1856 it had risen to more than 53,000, which gave a police-population ratio of one policeman to every 239 people.⁸⁷ The Punjab was a more intensely policed province than any other in British India. In 1865 the ratio of police (excluding urban watchmen and *chowkidars*) to population in the Punjab was 1: 757. At that time the ratio in Oudh was 1: 1,087; in the Central Provinces, 1: 1,153; in the North-Western Provinces, 1: 1,189; in Bengal Presidency, 1: 1,633 (and in England and Wales, 1: 907).⁸⁸

83. See, for example, *SR Rawalpindi 1864*, pp. 140-65; *SR Gujrat 1861*, p.153.

84. *Report on the Administration of the Punjab and its Dependencies for the Year 1870-71* (Lahore, 1971), (hereafter *PAR 1870-71*), appendix II. D. 3.

85. See, for example, *SR Gurdaspur 1856*, p.8.

86. *SR Amritsar 1856*, sections dealing with Parganas Sowrian and Amritsar; *SR Gurdaspur 1856*, pp. 8-10; *SR Sialkot 1863*, appendix 16; *SR Gujrat 1861*, pp.149-52.

87. *PAR 1854-56*, p.10.

88. *General Report on the Administration of the Punjab Territories for the year 1865-66* (Lahore, 1866), (hereafter *PAR 1865-66*), para 49.

If we add to the strength of the combined police force in 1856 (53,226) the 59,656 troops of the army of occupation, we get the incredible ratio of one armed servant of the State for every 113 persons. Clearly, early British rule in the Punjab was propped up by a massive amount of coercive force.

What was the extent of crime, and how successful were the police in combatting it? The official figures show that crime increased annually during the first six years. By 1854 the number of reported crimes per annum stood at 45,715: a ratio of one crime to every 278 persons. The following year the number dropped to 41,268, which gave a ratio of one crime to every 308 persons; and this ratio continued to fall thereafter. The official explanation of this pattern was that the increase until 1854 was attributable to the ever-improving reporting system (rather than any actual increase in the criminal tendencies of the population), and that the decline after 1854 was attributable to the growing efficiency of the detective system in discouraging crime.⁸⁹ There would seem to be some truth to this. In Gujranwala District, for instance, 844 cases of cattle-theft were reported in 1850. Only 25 per cent of these cases were brought to trial, however, and only 42 per cent of those persons apprehended were convicted. But by 1856 the number of reported cattle-thefts in the district had declined to 197, while 75 per cent of those apprehended were convicted.⁹⁰ But we cannot be sure that the British did not manipulate some of the crime statistics in order to justify the imposition of their rule. They claimed, for example, that *thugi* (ritualistic robbery and murder) had flourished in the Punjab during the period 1845-49, there being in excess of 100 of these murders in each of those years. During the first three years of British rule 552 men were arrested (328 were executed or imprisoned) on suspicion of *thugi* activities. By 1852 only thirty-five such murders were reported; by 1853 the figure had fallen to one.⁹¹

89. *PAR 1854-56*, pp. 6-14.

90. *PAR 1867-62*, paras 41-3.

91. *PAR 1851-53*, paras 166-8; "The Administration of the Punjab" (no author), in *The Calcutta Review*, vol 21, pt 41 (1853), pp. 233-4.

It is worth noting that the volume of reported crime was considerably higher in the Lahore Division than elsewhere. During the year 1850-51, for instance, the number of reported crimes was 7,982 in the Lahore Division, while the comparative numbers were 3,235 in the Jhelum Division, 3,330 in the Multan Division and 2,535 in the Leiah Division. Serious crime was more prevalent in the Lahore Division, too. During the first two years eighty-three capital sentences were handed down in that Division, whereas in Jhelum, Multan, and Leiah Divisions the comparative numbers were nineteen, thirteen, and twenty-three respectively.⁹² Part of the explanation of this pattern has to do with Lahore Division's greater population. Yet we cannot overlook what the first Punjab Administration Report called "the more violent nature of the people of the Manjha."⁹³ We have already seen that one result of the disbanding of the Sikh army after 1849 was the flooding of the agriculturally insecure Manjha with disgruntled Khalsa soldiers who found, for a few years at least, an outlet for their thwarted ambitions in *dacoity*.⁹⁴ The British were by no means unaware of the connection between crime and agricultural insecurity. It was precisely for that reason that the first major public works scheme to receive official sanction after 1849 was the Bari Doab canal system, which was to run through the heart of the Manjha, and which was viewed as the best measure for ensuring the "permanent tranquility" of that tract.⁹⁵

The question of revenue assignments

The Sikhs, once they had conquered the Punjab, had supported their public servants and conciliated the rural elites by granting them revenue assignments (*jagirs* and *incams*), revenue-free lands (*ma'afis*) and pensions. How would the British, now that they were masters of the Punjab, treat

92. Taken from a "more or less perfect" return of crime in "PAR 1851", p.125: FM, no 356 (NAI). See also *PAR 1851-53*, paras 181, 206, 209.

93. "PAR 1851", p.126: FM, no 356 (NAI).

94. Davies, settlement officer in the Bari Doab, claimed that former Khalsa soldiers were "extravagant---bad cultivators---litigious and false---given to intoxication": *SR Amritsar 1856*, p.37.

95. FSC, 28 April 1848, nos 57-66 (NAI); FPP, 4 Aug 1849, nos 87-93 (NAI).

these grants? Would they recognise any of them, and on what terms? Would they permit recognised *jagir* grantees to retain any administrative powers within their grants? These are vitally important questions, for the answers to them tell us a good deal about the extent to which the British were concerned to maintain and utilise an extra-bureaucratic power system. In particular, the answers to these questions provide an insight into the great friction that developed between the Lawrence brothers and led Dalhousie to dissolve the Board of Administration.

When he came to issuing his general instructions to the Board, Dalhousie had, on the question of assignments, to choose between the radically divergent policies espoused by the two Lawrence brothers. Henry Lawrence held that it would be both politically sensible and morally just to uphold in full and in perpetuity the grants and powers of those Punjabis who had stood by the British in 1848-49, while those who had opposed the British should be conciliated through practicable magnanimity. John Lawrence, on the other hand, was intrinsically opposed to the notion of alienating, especially on a permanent basis, State revenues to persons he would have regarded as unproductive "hangers-on". His policy had not changed since 1846, at which time he had, as Commissioner of the Trans-Sutlej Territories, forcefully advocated the strategy of abrogating

every Jageer possible, simply granting to the occupants of any number of years, a life interest, so as gradually and steadily but without a convulsion, to ensure⁹⁶ the annihilation of every Jageer tenure in a course of years.

Dalhousie opted for John Lawrence's line of policy. His instructions to the Board of Administration specified that no grant should be upheld in favour of any person who had joined the late rebellion. No person confirmed in his grant should be permitted to retain any administrative or magisterial power within that grant. All grants upheld should be subjected to the normal revenue assessment so as to prevent rack-renting. Every person confirmed in his grant should be obliged to yield up all documents (*sanads*), and should be issued with a new *sanad*, under the Board's seal, declaring the grant to be a gift of the British Government (the purpose of this instruction was to help disabuse grantees of the notion that they possessed inherent rights in their grants by virtue of

96. "Note by the Commissioner and Superintendent of the Trans-Sutlej Territories", 16 Nov 1846: FPC, 31 Dec 1847, no 2195 (NAI).

long occupancy of special consideration on the part of former rulers). Finally, the maximum period for which various types of grants might be upheld, and the conditions that should be imposed, were set out.⁹⁷

Over the four years of its existence, the Board supervised, in general accordance with these instructions, the disposition of many thousands of claims - the value of grants claimed ranged from just a few rupees per annum to several *lakhs* of rupees per annum. In its first administration report the Board classified these claims into three broad groups of grants:⁹⁸

1. PERSONAL GRANTS

- pensions
- royal ladies
- family provision
- influential landholders

2. RELIGIOUS GRANTS

- endowments
- charity
- holymen

3. SERVICE GRANTS

- household
- military
- civil
- feudal

97. Elliot to BOA, 31 March 1849, no 418: FSC, 28 April 1849, no 73 (NAI). It is interesting to note that this last set of rules was practically a verbatim replica of the rules Lord Hardinge had provided John Lawrence with in 1847 to govern the disposition of claims in the Jullundur Doab: GOI, FD, to C and S Trans-Sutlej States, 23 Feb 1847: FPC, 31 Dec 1847, no 2197 (NAI). The fundamental condition demanded by both Hardinge and Dalhousie was the relinquishment to the State of one-quarter of the *jagir* grant as *nazrana* (offering). John Lawrence, it would seem, was responsible for the installation of the (mistaken) notion that the levying of *nazrana* was a strict, systematic practice on the part of the Sikhs: see, for example, John Lawrence to Henry Lawrence, 28 Nov 1846, no 690: FPC, 31 Dec 1847, no 2443 (NAI); John Lawrence, quoted in Melvill to Offg Secy to GOI, 3 March 1853, no 68: RDP, 5 March 1853, no 4 (PS).

98. "PAR 1851", para 235: FM, no 356 (NAI).

Such a classification was, of course, a device for administrative convenience, not an accurate taxonomy of revenue assignments and pensions under Sikh rule. Nevertheless, it may be adopted as a framework for our discussion of the disposition of claims.

We begin with "personal grants". State pensions were small cash/*jagir* allowances that the Sikhs had granted in superannuation to former servants, or in recognition of either hardship or special service. Most of these pensions had been paid by the *kardars* out of the district treasuries.⁹⁹ The British maintained certain portions of these pensions, according to length of service and related considerations.¹⁰⁰ Cash/*jagir* grants held by royal ladies were generally upheld for life, though the *jagir* portions were commuted, wherever possible, into cash pensions of equivalent value.¹⁰¹ Family provision grants - especially where they had been made by *jagirdars* themselves, rather than by the Sikh rulers - were usually disallowed.¹⁰²

The most important "personal grants" were *inams*, or revenue deductions in favour of influential landholders (in particular, *chaudharis* and *lambardars*). Many of these *inams*, especially the smaller ones, represented recent grants from the Sikh *kardars*. However, almost as many were of long standing, held by hereditary *lambardars* and members of the proprietary lineages whose ancestors had founded villages in the wastelands. There was scarcely a village in the Punjab that did not contain at least one *inam lambardari* or *inam zamindari*. These *inams* were investigated and disposed of at the time of the regular land revenue settlements. We have already seen that after 1849 the British tended to by-pass the *chaudharis*, and that those *lambardars* whose services were retained were rewarded with small cash deductions from the village revenues. Presumably,

99. For examples, see FPP, 8 April 1853, no 165 (NAI). In 1849 these pensions were worth, in total, about Rs 3 *laks* per annum: FSP, 28 July 1849, no 39 (NAI).

100. For examples, see FPP, 3 April 1850, nos 227-9 (NAI); FPC, 11 Feb 1853, nos 53-5 (NAI).

101. "PAR 1851", para 240: FM, no 356 (NAI).

102. For example, FPC, 12 March 1852, no 95 (NAI); FC, 27 April 1854, no 15 (NAI).

claims to *inams* (especially those granted by the *kardars*) would not now be recognised. Generally, this was in fact the case¹⁰³ - the *inamdars* whose grants were upheld were invariably those *chaudharis* and *lambardars* who had assisted with the settlement operations.¹⁰⁴ In only a few instances were *inams* (or portions of them) upheld on account of the local importance of the claimants.¹⁰⁵

The second of the Board's categories was that of "religious grants". Incorporated under this heading were many thousands of *jagir*, cash, grain, and revenue-free land (*ma'afi*) grants made by the Sikhs in charity (*dharmarth*) or piety (*madad-i-ma'ash*). The vast majority of these grants, being of small value, were investigated and reported by the officers who conducted the regular settlement operations. The presentation of the results of these investigations makes it difficult for us to analyse the treatment of these grants.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, we shall concentrate on the larger "religious grants", which were reported to the Board, and thence to the supreme government, for a final decision.

Endowments, the first of the Board's subcategories, were grants made by the Sikhs (and, in some cases, the Mughals) for the support of mosques, temples, shrines, and places of shelter (*sarais* or *dharmshalas*) for travellers, the sick, and the poor. By and large, the British appreciated the social importance and utility of these institutions, and upheld in perpetuity their maintenance grants, subject only to the upkeep

103. For example, only one-quarter of the combined rupee value of 107 *inams* claimed in Amritsar and Gurdaspur Districts was upheld (for life), even though more than one-third of these *inams* had been granted prior to Ranjit Singh's period: FPP, 11 July 1856, no 211; 8 Aug 1856, no 207; 5 Sept 1856, nos 111, 113 (NAI).

104. RDP, 8 Nov 1856, nos 41-6 (PS). For the upholding of the *inams* of fifteen *chaudharis* who had given this kind of assistance, see *SR Amritsar 1856*, p.28.

105. For an example, see FPP, 5 Sept 1856, no 111 (NAI), case no 5.

106. In the settlement reports enormous numbers of small cases are often lumped together under the term *ma'afi* (sometimes *lakhiraj*) without reference to either form (*jagir*, *ma'afi*, or cash) or purpose (personal, religious, service) of bestowal. In addition, usually only the aggregate value of grants upheld (and not grants claimed) is specified.

of the institutions and the good conduct of their wardens.¹⁰⁷ But not all British officers looked upon these institutions with toleration. One Assistant Settlement Commissioner described them as "the residence of certain idle hereditary servitors---the resort often of vagrants or ill-disposed vicious persons."¹⁰⁸ Dalhousie's instructions to the Board had specified that endowments of "great value" were to be restricted to a smaller amount "from obvious motives of political expedience."¹⁰⁹ Consequently, many of the larger endowments were reduced in value by one-half or more.¹¹⁰ Even so, none of these grants were treated with anything like the severity shown elsewhere. In several cases, where the grantees were later acknowledged to have been treated unfairly, the earlier decisions on their claims were set aside and new ones were handed down.¹¹¹ And British officers were expressly forbidden to interfere in the internal affairs of the institutions supported by these endowments. "The people must manage their own religious institutions", ran a Chief Commissioner's Circular of 1858. "If such institutions suffer from internal disputes, that is their business not ours."¹¹²

Charitable grants were small subsistence allowances, worth between Rs 20 and Rs 80 per annum in most instances, which the Sikhs had made in *dharmarth* to individuals for a variety of religious purposes: for giving water to travellers, for lighting tombs, for reading prayers, for making offerings, and so forth. Most of these grants were now resumed.¹¹³

107. For examples, see RDP, 17 Sept 1853, nos 48-53; 25 Feb 1854, nos 62-5; 6 June 1857, nos 16-18; 4 Dec 1858, nos 22-4 (PS).

108. *SR Gujranwala 1866-67*, p.13.

109. Elliot to BOA, 31 March 1849, no 418: FSC, 28 April 1849, no 73 (NAI).

110. For the example of a grant held by a Sikh temple in the Manjha, see RDP, 14 May 1853, nos 38-41 (PS).

111. For an example, see RDP, 30 Dec 1854, no 35; 25 Oct 1856, nos 6-8 (PS).

112. Secy to CC to all C and S's, 25 Aug 1858, Circular no 23: FPC, 21 Jan 1859, no 351 (NAI).

113. For example, 207 charitable grants in Lahore and Gujranwala Districts were treated thus: 75 per cent of the total allowances claimed was resumed, and small cash donations were sometimes made instead: RDP, 10 April 1852, no 193 (PS); FPC, 21 May 1852, nos 141-4; 18 June 1852, nos 181-6 (NAI). For other examples, see FPP, 7 Jan 1853, nos 243-4 (NAI); RDP, 29 Oct 1853, nos 38-42 (PS).

Grants to holymen, though they were also *dharmarth* subsistence allowances, were distinguished from charitable grants on account of their greater value and their hereditary nature. Also, they were held almost exclusively by Sikh holymen - Bhais, Granthis, Akalis and Nihangs - and leading representatives of the *gots* to which the Sikh Gurus had belonged - Bedis, Bhallas, Sodhis. In a sense, they were as much political as religious grants, for many of their recipients, far from having led cloistered lives, had been warrior-priests and militant champions of the principle of Sikh theocracy. There can be no doubt that Ranjit Singh had looked upon these *jagir* grants as a means of conciliating the Sikh ultra-orthodoxy. How would the British view them?

Not surprisingly, this question had produced two quite different answers in 1846, at the time of the investigation into the Jullundur Doab *jagirs*. Henry Lawrence had argued that *jagirs* held by holymen represented religious gifts from the Sikh rulers and that, like endowments, they should be upheld in perpetuity where no offence against the British had been committed. John Lawrence, on the other hand, had asserted that the maintenance of these *jagirs* was inconsistent with the spirit of British rule: to uphold them in perpetuity would be to preserve a class of men "too proud and self sufficient to work for [their] own bread."¹¹⁴ He had advocated the resumption of as many of these *jagirs* as was possible, and the imposition on the remainder of the *nazrana* levy of one-quarter. In 1847 the supreme government had decided in favour of John Lawrence's policy. So it was in 1849, too. Dalhousie revived Hardinge's earlier ruling that *jagirs* held by holymen were not inherently different from those held by the chieftains, and that claims to them should be adjudicated according to the same principles.¹¹⁵

It would seem that, by and large, these principles were followed: holymen who had remained aloof from the 1848 rebellion were confirmed in

114. "Note by the Commissioner and Superintendent of the Trans-Sutlej Territories", 16 Nov 1846: FPC, 31 Dec 1847, no 2195 (NAI).

115. Elliot to BOA, 31 March 1849, no 418: FSC, 28 April 1849, no 73 (NAI).

their *jagirs* - usually for their lives only - subject to the relinquishment of one-quarter as *nazrana*.¹¹⁶ But there were certain cases where the Board recommended the release of some portion of the *jagirs* in perpetuity. To these recommendations, the supreme government responded in a quite arbitrary fashion, sanctioning some but rejecting at least as many - especially those where John Lawrence's full concurrence was missing.¹¹⁷ Arbitrary decisions like these were neither understood nor appreciated by the Court of Directors in London. In April 1854 the Court drew the Government of India's attention to the fact that on numerous occasions the Governor General had sanctioned the Board's perpetuity recommendations while yet rejecting the same recommendation in cases of what appeared to be "exactly parallel circumstances".

The impossibility [continued the Court's letter] of tracing any fixed principle through the various decisions---induces us now to lay down as a rule that if a Jagheer has been in the uninterrupted possession of one family for 60 years, a part of the Estate---shall descend in perpetuity to the lineal male heirs of the Jagheerdar, who held the Estate at the time when the Country came under our Government.¹¹⁸

The Court did not intend that this be taken as an inflexible rule: obviously, there would be cases where it could not be applied fully, or at all. But in all such instances of deviation from the new rule, the Court was entitled to receive a special report. Furthermore, all cases where the final decision was pending were to be re-examined in the light of this new rule.¹¹⁹

Dalhousie's official response to the Court's letter¹²⁰ was so indignant and hostile, however, that the Court backed down. In February 1855 it claimed, rather half-heartedly, that its instructions

116. For the disposition of *jagir* claims by 109 Bedi families, see FPP, 14 Jan 1853, nos 212-23 (NAI). For the disposition of twenty-five cases of claims by Granthis, see FPP, 14 Jan 1853, nos 234-5 (NAI). For the disposition of claims by Bhallas in various districts, see RDP, 3 Sept 1853, nos 54-9 (PS).

117. For examples, see RDP, 16 Nov 1850, no 26; 19 Feb 1853, no 23; 4 April 1857, nos 4-5 (PS).

118. Political Despatch from COD: FC, 27 April 1854, no 15, paras 40-4, 79-82, 84, 90 (NAI).

119. Ibid.

120. The greater portion of Dalhousie's reply is quoted in Political Despatch from COD: FC, 7 Feb 1855, no 5 (NAI).

had in no way been intended (as Dalhousie had suggested) as a revocation of past decisions. The Government of India was free to disregard the sixty-year rule. All that the Court wished now to suggest was that in future a more lenient attitude be shown towards those *jagirdars* who had enjoyed long possession of their grants.¹²¹ But for the majority of *jagir* claimants this request came too late: by 1855 most medium and large *jagir* claims had already been decided. It was extremely unlikely - during Dalhousie's term of office at any rate - that the Government of India would reconsider those decisions voluntarily. Only those few individuals who knew how to tap the higher levels of influence in London stood any chance of getting a reconsideration of their claims.¹²²

We turn now to "service grants", the most important class of grants from a political as well as fiscal viewpoint. Household grants were small *jagirs* and cash allowances held by *khidmatgars* (personal servants - cooks, gardeners, musicians, and so forth) of the Sikh royal families. These grants were resumed, long-serving claimants being pensioned off at rates determined by length of service.¹²³ Military grants were *jagirs* held by officers of the erstwhile Khalsa army. Where these men had joined the late rebellion, the Board's duty was clear: no *jagirs* could be upheld. Table 5 : 1 shows the sanctioned disposition of claims by 184 rebel officers. The entire *jagir* portion of these claims was resumed. Slightly more than one-quarter of the cash portion was released as life pensions. These pensions represented less than 10 per cent of the total grants previously enjoyed. At one stroke, then, the annual income of these men was reduced, on average, from Rs 1,665 to Rs 163.

Where the soldiers had not joined the rebellion, the Board's duty was more complicated. According to the rules, "service grants" claimed by "loyal" grantees were to be upheld, subject to the relinquishment of

121. Ibid.

122. For the example of two Sodhi brothers of Gurdaspur District who in 1857 successfully petitioned the British Parliament for the release of part of their *jagir* in perpetuity, see RDP, 4 April 1857, nos 4-5; 28 Nov 1857, nos 24-6 (PS).

123. The scale of pensions was as follows: for 25-30 years of service, one-quarter of the former grant; for 30-35 years, one-third; for 35 or more years, one half. Where the grant was a superannuation allowance, it was maintained in full: "PAR 1851", para 235: FM, no 356 (NAI).

Table 5 : 1 *Disposition of jagir and cash grants held by two groups of regular army officers involved in the late rebellion*

	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 2</i>	<i>Total</i>
1. Number of cases	93	91	184
2. Annual value of grants (Rs)			
<i>Jagir</i>	103,856	93,671	197,527
Cash	53,500	53,577	107,077
Total	157,356	147,248	304,604
3. Disposition of grants (Rs)			
A Resumed			
i <i>Jagir</i>	103,856	93,671	197,527
ii Cash	33,490	43,633	77,123
iii Total	137,346	137,304	274,650
B Upheld			
Cash pensions	20,010	9,944	29,954

Sources: Group 1: "Statement of the Resumed, or Proposed to be Resumed, Jagirs of Officers of the Regular Army who fought against the British with Amount of Pensions Proposed to be Conferred upon Them": FSP, 28 July 1849, nos 46-8 (NAI); Group 2: "Roll of 91 Rebel Sirdars and Petty Officers who were concerned in the Rebellion": FPP, 27 Sept 1850, nos 73-4 (NAI).

one-quarter as *nazrana*, each case to be open to reconsideration at the grantee's death. In addition, the Board was entitled to recommend more favourable treatment in certain cases, such as where the grant had been enjoyed for a long and unbroken period (as with small *jagir* patrimonies won by the sword of the grantee's ancestor), or where the grantee had performed some special act of loyalty to the British during the late rebellion. It seems that what often happened, when the Board came to consider these claims, was that a compromise was reached between the extreme wishes of the Lawrence brothers: Henry Lawrence accepted a higher rate of resumption in the case of some claims in return for preferential treatment in the case of others. The disposition of claims by 350 "loyal" irregular soldiers, shown in Table 5 : 2, makes this clear. Sixty-three per cent of the combined (*jagir* and cash) claims was resumed. The incidence of resumption was higher in the case of *jagir* claims (41 per cent) than cash claims (16 per cent). On the other hand, 41 per cent of that amount upheld was upheld beyond the lifetimes of the claimants (39 per cent on a perpetuity basis). Not that this entailed any great fiscal sacrifice by the State: within a few decades fully 76 per cent of the combined grants claimed in 1849 would be recovered, first by resumptions and later by lapses. The real sacrifice was therefore borne by the majority of the claimants. The disposition of these claims terminated, for many military families of medium social and political status, an era of comparative prosperity and secure employment that had begun with the rise of the Sikhs.¹²⁴

Civil grants were *jagirs* and cash allowances held by civil servants of the old regime. Where, for reasons of old age or incompetency, these men were not taken into British service, they were upheld in one-quarter,

124. Case no 3 in pt 1 of the statement, that of Gurdut Singh, provides a typical example. Gurdut Singh was a 46 year-old Jat, of Kurial village in Gujranwala District, who had served in the irregular force for 30 years. His grand-uncle had ruled the district (Shekhupura) before the rise of the Sikh monarchy, and four successive generations of the family had served the Sikh State. In 1849 Gurdut Singh held a *jagir* worth Rs 360 and a cash grant of Rs 161 per annum. The BOA's decision on his claim was to concede a life pension of Rs 360 per annum in lieu of both.

Table 5 : 2 *Disposition of jagir and cash grants held by a group of irregular soldiers not involved in the late rebellion*

1.	Number of cases	350
2.	Annual value of grants (Rs)	
	<i>Jagir</i>	139,472
	Cash	27,834
	Total	167,306
3.	Disposition of grants (Rs)	
	A. Resumed	
	i <i>Jagir</i>	56,969
	ii Cash	4,352
	iii Total	61,321
	B. Upheld	
	i <i>Jagir</i>	
	For life only	38,979
	For two lives	2,651
	In perpetuity	40,873
	ii Cash pensions	
	For life only	23,282
	For two lives	200
	iii Total	105,985
4.	Cash donations given (Rs)	11,185

Source: Pension roll no 44, pts 1, 2 and 3, "Statement of Jageerdar and Mushmool Sowars (or Military Rent-free Tenantry) of the Irregular Force of the Late Lahore Durbar" : FPP, 26 Dec 1851, nos 254-5 (NAI).

one-third or one-half of their former grants, according to length of service.¹²⁵ But wherever possible, this was on a life basis only, and cashpensions were substituted for *jagirs*. A statement of the disposition of claims by twenty-three *munshis* (writers), for example, shows that 25 per cent of the total grants claimed was upheld (on average, the *munshi's* grant was reduced from Rs 3,423 to Rs 872 per annum). Fully 98 per cent of that upheld was upheld for life only. And about 65 per cent of that upheld was in the form of cash pensions rather than *jagirs*.¹²⁶ *Kardars* who had remained "loyal" in 1848 and were not taken into British service were treated with slightly more indulgence. Table 5 : 3 shows the disposition of claims by sixty-four *kardars* and family members. Only 58 per cent of the total grants claimed was resumed; nine per cent of that upheld was upheld in perpetuity; and 62 per cent of that upheld was in the form of *jagirs*. On average, the *kardar's* annual income was reduced by 60 per cent - from Rs 3,045 to Rs 1,226.

Feudal grants, being *jagirs* held by the chieftains, were in every way the most important of the "service grants", and we intend spending a little time examining their treatment by the British. The crucial question that we hope to be able to answer is this: just how interested were the British in maintaining a chieftain class in the Punjab? Given that there was room for only a few chieftains in the new administration and police force, would the British be prepared to lend the financial support necessary to ensure the survival of the rest?

So far as the rebel chieftains were concerned, the Board's duty was quite clear: these chieftains were to be stripped of their titles and *jagirs*, and granted life pensions not in excess of Rs 300 per month.¹²⁷ Table 5 : 4 shows the disposition of claims by thirty-eight rebel chieftains and their families. All the *jagirs* were resumed. Cash pensions, the average value of which was Rs 128 per month, were bestowed. In only

125. For pensions to a former *naib-adalati* and an acting *adalati*, see GDP, 14 July 1849, no 795 (PS); RDP, 16 Feb 1850, no 18 (PS).

126. Pt 1 of "Statement No 1 of Jageers and Cash Allowances of Certain Durbar Munshees and Kardars": FPP, 3 April 1850, nos 193-5 (NAI).

127. Elliot to BOA, 10 May 1849, no 199: FSP, 26 May 1849, no 71 (NAI).

Table 5 : 3 *Disposition of jagir and cash grants held by two groups of kardars and their families*

	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 2</i>	<i>Total</i>
1. Number of cases	26	38	64
2. Annual value of grants (Rs)			
<i>Jagir</i>	53,015	72,075	125,090
Cash	31,260	38,514	69,774
Total	84,275	110,589	194,864
3. Disposition of grants (Rs)			
A. Resumed			
i <i>Jagir</i>	28,345	46,763	75,128
ii Cash	22,639	16,090	38,729
iii Total	50,984	62,853	113,837
B. Upheld			
i <i>Jagir</i>			
For life only	23,170	20,772	43,942
In perpetuity	1,500	4,540	6,040
ii Cash			
For life only	8,621	21,424	30,045
In perpetuity	-----	1,000	1,000
iii Total	33,291	47,736	81,027
4. Cash donations given (Rs)	-----	4,025	4,025

Sources: Group 1: Pt 2 of "Statement No 1 of Jageers and Cash Allowances of Certain Durbar Munshees and Kardars": FPP, 3 April 1850, nos 193-5 (NAI); Group 2: "Statement No 2 of Jageers and Cash Allowances of Certain Kardars and Others in Service of the Lahore Durbar at Annexation": FPP, 6 Sept 1850, nos 31-2 (NAI).

Table 5 : 4 *Disposition of jagir grants held by two groups of chieftains involved in the late rebellion*

	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 2</i>	<i>Total</i>
1. Number of cases	24	14	38
2. Annual value of <i>jagirs</i> (Rs)			
Service	331,059	87,800	418,859
Personal	287,022	37,850	324,872
Total	618,081	125,650	743,731
3. <i>Jagirs</i> resumed (Rs)	618,081	125,650	743,731
4. Cash pensions given (Rs)	42,670	15,640	58,310

Sources: Group 1: "Return of Sikh Chiefs engaged in the late Rebellion, showing the amount and value of their Jageers lately resumed and the Allowances it is proposed to grant to each": FSP, 26 May 1849, nos 68-71 (NAI); Group 2: "Appendix to Statement No 1 (forwarded to Government on 1 June 1849)": FSP, 28 July 1849, nos 46-8 (NAI).

one case did the Board recommend the maximum pension of Rs 300 per month.¹²⁸ The annual income of these chieftain families was thus reduced, on average, by 92 per cent - from Rs 19,572 to Rs 1,536. How did they cope with such a drastic diminution in income? Most of them simply pulled in their belts and went back to the agricultural livelihood from which they had risen.¹²⁹ But some, who had large families to support and inadequate landed resources, struggled to adapt to their new circumstances. For example, in October 1849 Saunders, who was the magistrate at Amritsar, reported that one chieftain, Surut Singh Majithia, was in financial difficulty: since the resumption of his *jagirs* he had been unable to pay for "the common necessities of life", and had been running up an account with the local shopkeepers while awaiting his first pension payment.¹³⁰ Clearly, the British intended to humble the rebel chieftains. The palaces of many a rebel chieftain were confiscated or destroyed - the idea being, as one Commissioner put it, to force him to "resort to a meaner abode, and thus diminish his importance."¹³¹

The "loyal" chieftains received more favourable treatment. Whether they were treated fairly, however, was a keenly disputed question in the early 1850s. Let us consider the facts. Table 5 : 5 shows the disposition of *jagirs* claims by sixty-two loyal chieftains and their families. Altogether, nearly half of the *jagirs* claimed were resumed. The service portion of each *jagir* was, of course, automatically invalidated by the post-annexation dissolution of feudal levies. And, according to Dalhousie's rules, one-quarter of each personal *jagir* should have been relinquished in *nazrana*. As it turned out, each case was decided on its own merits, so that the *nazrana* demand was sometimes imposed, sometimes not. Altogether, only 11 per cent of personal *jagirs* was resumed.

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128. That of Kahan Singh Majithia, case no 19 in group 1 of the table. The BOA recommended the full pension because Kahan Singh had only joined the rebellion from timidity. Dalhousie objected, but finally sanctioned the recommendation.
129. Kahan Singh, for example, used his two ceremonial elephants to plough the ancestral fields in Majithia village: Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 1, p.416.
130. Saunders to Montgomery, C and S Lahore Division, 6 Oct 1849: FSC, 24 Nov 1849, no 61 (NAI).
131. Edward Thornton, C and S Jhelum Division, to Melvill, 25 Sept 1851, no 479: annexed to "PAR 1851", p.175: FM, nos 356-7 (NAI).

Table 5 : 5 *Disposition of jagir grants held by four groups of chieftains not involved in the late rebellion*

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Total
1. Number of cases	36	10	3	13	62
2. Annual value of <i>jagirs</i> (Rs)					
Service	493,013	49,837	3,513	16,565	562,928
Personal	604,661	96,873	5,219	29,880	736,633
Total	1,097,674	146,710	8,732	46,445	1,299,561
3. Disposition of <i>jagirs</i> (Rs)					
A. Resumed					
i Service	490,653	49,837	3,513	16,565	560,568
ii Personal	66,281	10,208	415	6,100	83,004
iii Total	556,934	60,045	3,928	22,665	643,572
B. Upheld					
i For life only	415,314	72,112	443	14,480	502,349
ii For two lives	6,050	4,953	---	-----	11,003
iii In perpetuity	119,376	9,600	4,361	9,300	142,637
iv Total	540,740	86,665	4,804	23,780	655,989
4. Cash pensions given (Rs)					
For life only	38,822	4,225	-----	3,850	46,897
For two lives	3,625	6,840	-----	-----	10,465
In perpetuity	3,456	2,040	-----	-----	5,496
Total	45,903	13,105	-----	3,850	62,858

Sources: Group 1: "A List of the Principal Jagheerdars of the Punjab not concerned in the Insurrection of 1848-49, showing what they have enjoyed hitherto, and what provision is recommended for them hereafter": FPC, 29 Dec 1849, no 49A (NAI); Group 2: "First Supplementary List of the Principal Jagheerdars of the Punjab---": FPP, 3 April 1850, nos 279-82 (NAI); Group 3: "Second Supplementary List---": FPP, 31 May 1850, nos 108-10 (NAI); Group 4: RDP, 27 July 1850, nos 127-28 (PS). Case no 8 of Group 2, involving total *jagirs* of Rs. 16,780, does not specify the amounts granted in service and personal *jagirs*. I have divided the total amount according to the usual proportions, ie. 2/5 service, 3/5 personal.

This moderate application of the *nazrana* rule, together with the bestowal of Rs 62,858 worth of pensions, meant that the "loyal" chieftain's annual income was reduced, on average, by only 45 per cent (compared with 92 per cent in the "rebel" chieftain's case) - from Rs 20,961 to Rs 11,594. But - and this was the point of bitter dissension between the Board's members - the provision made for the heirs of the "loyal" chieftain was negligible. Some time after the disposition of these claims, John Lawrence maintained that it had been the Board's policy and practice to recommend the release of "about one-third" of large *jagirs* in perpetuity.¹³² While such a rule of thumb might have been applied to a few cases included in Table 5 : 5, the composite picture is a quite different one. Only 11 per cent of the total *jagirs* claimed, and only 22 per cent of those upheld, was upheld in perpetuity. Only 9 per cent of the cash pensions substituted for *jagirs* was bestowed in perpetuity. This meant that, within three generations, the State would recover no less than 89 per cent of the *jagir* revenues claimed by loyal chieftains in 1849.

It would seem, therefore, that John Lawrence and Dalhousie were not particularly concerned to preserve a loyal aristocracy in post-annexation Punjab. The treatment of the claims of the six "loyal" members of the erstwhile Council of Regency¹³³ provides further proof of this. These chieftains, it will be recalled, had been placed in high administrative offices during the Residency period: two of them, Tej Singh and Dina Nath, had been created Rajas. We may expect to see their cooperation during the pre-annexation period rewarded after 1849, not least because they possessed written guarantees, given to them by Henry Elliot on the eve of annexation, that their *jagirs* and cash salaries would not be reduced during their own lives, and that where their grants conveyed a perpetual title they would be upheld in perpetuity.¹³⁴ But

132. Quoted in Melvill to Offg Secy to GOI, 3 March 1853, no 68: RDP, 5 March 1853, no 4 (PS).

133. Raja Tej Singh, Raja Dina Nath, Faqir Nur-ud-Din Bokhari, Bhai Nidhan Singh, Atar Singh Kaliwala, and Shamsher Singh Sindhanwalia.

134. PP, inclosure 8 in no 51.

the British failed to honour these pledges. Elliot's guarantees brought these chieftains no special treatment whatever. Table 5 : 6 gives the details. On average, each of these chieftains lost 38 per cent of his previous *jagirs* (this included nearly Rs 2,000 worth of personal *jagirs*). Only 11 per cent of the total *jagirs* claimed, and only 18 per cent of those upheld, was upheld in perpetuity. In 1862 Lord Canning, who was Dalhousie's successor after 1856, noted that the non-observance of Elliot's earlier guarantees "is not, so far as the official papers go, clearly explained."¹³⁵

However, we can gain some appreciation of how these guarantees came to be set aside by examining the official correspondence on the claims of two of these chieftains: Raja Dina Nath and Faqir Nur-ud-Din Bokhari.¹³⁶ Raja Dina Nath claimed *jagirs* worth Rs 46,550 per annum. The members of the Board were unanimous that these *jagirs* should be upheld for life. What they could not agree upon, however, was whether any portion should descend to the Raja's heirs. Henry Lawrence argued that at least Rs 4,000 worth should be upheld in perpetuity "as a politic measure". Charles Mansel agreed with this. But John Lawrence disagreed entirely. "My objection to giving the Rajah Jagheers in perpetuity", he wrote on the statement, "is simply that he is but a man of yesterday, of no connection or local influence in the Country, and has only risen to what he has lately been since Runjeet Singh's death." Faqir Nur-ud-Din Bokhari claimed *jagirs* worth Rs 13,225 and a cash salary of Rs 7,660. Henry Lawrence recommended that both be upheld for life, and that each of the Faqir's sons and nephews be granted Rs 1,000 per annum in perpetuity as "good policy". Mansel agreed with the first part of Lawrence's recommendation, but thought that all that would be required at the Faqir's death would be an increase in the cash pensions elsewhere provided for his youngest sons. Predictably, John Lawrence argued that only the Faqir's *jagirs* ought to be upheld, and then only for the Faqir's own life.

135. Canning's Minute, 10 March 1862: FPP "A" series, March 1862, nos 318-20 (NAI).

136. This paragraph is based on Melvill to Elliot, 9 Oct 1850, no 541: FPP, 22 Nov 1850, no 117 (NAI).

Table 5 : 6 *Disposition of jagir and cash grants held by six members of the former Council of Regency not involved in the late rebellion.*

1.	Number of cases	6
2.	Annual value of grants (Rs)	
	<i>Jagir</i>	
	i Service	173,650
	ii Personal	320,240
	iii Total	493,890
	Cash	13,660
	Total	507,550
3.	Disposition of grants (Rs)	
	A. Resumed	
	<i>Jagir</i>	
	i Service	173,650
	ii Personal	11,984
	iii Total	185,634
	Cash	
	Total	----- 185,634
	B. Upheld	
	<i>Jagir</i>	
	i For life only	253,585
	ii In perpetuity	54,671
	iii Total	308,256
	Cash	
	i For life only	13,660
	Total	321,916

Source: "Statement showing the Emoluments in Land and Cash of certain Principal Chiefs of the Punjab, as enjoyed by them before the Annexation of the Punjab, and upheld to them by the British Government after Annexation": FPC, 20 Jan 1860, nos 20-24 (NAI).

Because the Board was split on these two cases, the decision on each was left to the Governor-General. This provided Dalhousie with an opportunity to air his objections to perpetuity grants, and to demonstrate, once again, his support of John Lawrence. In an official Minute, dated 7 November 1850, he reaffirmed his opposition to the notion of permanent alienations of public revenues. There were, he admitted, certain situations (such as that of chieftains whose families had held their *jagirs* in hereditary succession under Sikh rule) where he was prepared to be more flexible; but the cases of the Raja and the Faqir did not fall within that category:

These two officers [he continued] are entitled to great consideration at the hands of the British Government and so far as regards themselves and their immediate heirs, I think that their interests should be liberally provided for.

But neither of them represent [old chieftain] families in the Punjab: they can possess no local influence: they do not command any general attachment or sympathy, and I am, therefore, unable to see any weight in the considerations of policy which are urged as inducements to settling upon their families possessions in perpetuity.

When we have provided handsomely for Rajah Deenanath and for the Fukeer during their lives and for their immediate connexions after them, we have done, in my judgement, all that justice or policy can require.¹³⁷

Dalhousie's decisions were as follows. Raja Dina Nath was to retain for his life all his *jagirs* (except the sum of Rs 3,240 which he paid in pensions and for the police in his estate at Kalanaur: these would now be paid by the State). Nothing was to be upheld after his death, although at that time his son's pension might be increased slightly. Faqir Nur-ud-Din Bokhari was to retain both his *jagirs* and his cash salary. But nothing was to be upheld after his death.¹³⁸

Now a moment's reflection will reveal the historic irony in the position taken by Dalhousie and John Lawrence on these claims. In 1847 chieftains like Dina Nath and the Faqir had been courted and pampered by the British because they were "new staff" chieftains and

137. Dalhousie's Minute, 7 Nov 1850: FPP, 22 Nov 1850, no 118 (NAI).

138. Ibid.

could be relied upon not to identify with the "traditional" and largely anti-British chieftains. Now, four years later, they were ditched because they possessed no "local influence". It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Dalhousie and John Lawrence would have gone to almost any length to discredit Henry Lawrence's views on the necessity of maintaining a "loyal" aristocracy.

Three further points of evidence may be mentioned briefly. First, in 1849 the Board recommended - John Lawrence's dissent notwithstanding - that Raja Tej Singh be permitted to retain limited magisterial powers in his estates at Sialkot, in recognition of his good services. Dalhousie refused to sanction the proposal.¹³⁹ After the dissolution of the Board, the Raja petitioned against this decision, alluding to Elliot's written guarantee on the inviolability of his *jagirs* and titles. But John Lawrence, now Chief Commissioner, declined even to forward the petition to Calcutta, since, in his opinion, Dalhousie's earlier decision was final.¹⁴⁰

Second, in 1849 the Board recommended - again, John Lawrence's dissent notwithstanding - that in order to help "soften" the impact of British rule in the Cis-Sutlej Division, the more important *jagirdars* there should be granted personal exemption from the jurisdiction of the new civil and criminal courts: it was hoped that such a boon might give these *jagirdars* "something of the character of the privilege of the Peerage in Great Britain."¹⁴¹ Though he was sympathetic to John Lawrence's objections, Dalhousie sanctioned this proposal. But he made it perfectly clear that no such exemption could be extended to the *jagirdars* of the Trans-Sutlej Division or the "Punjab proper".¹⁴²

Third, in 1852 the Commissioner of the Trans-Sutlej Division, D.F. McLeod, sent the Board a statement of thirteen pensions that he proposed

139. GDP, 21 July 1849, no 837; 29 Sept 1849, nos 32-3; 20 Oct 1849, nos 82-3 (PS).

140. FP, Part "A", Feb 1861, nos 297-8 (NAI).

141. G. Christian, Secy to BOA, to Elliot, 10 Oct 1849, no 238: FPC, 17 Nov 1849, no 91 (NAI).

142. Elliot to BOA, 5 Nov 1849, no 2234: FPC, 17 Nov 1849, no 92 (NAI); GG's political letter to COD: FC, 4 June 1851, no 36 (NAI).

to grant to families whose *jagirs* had recently lapsed. These *jagirs* belonged to a special class, being grants originally acquired by conquest and later confirmed by the Sikh rulers. Under Hardinge's *jagir* rules of 1847, these *jagirs* should have been upheld in perpetuity. But at that time, and largely owing to John Lawrence's insistence, they had been upheld for one life only. Many *jagirdars* of this class who were still alive were now petitioning McLeod and the Deputy Commissioners of Hoshiarpur and Jullundur Districts for an upgrading of their grants to grants in perpetuity. McLeod suggested that in future these *jagirs* should not be resumed automatically on the death of the grantees, but that each case be re-investigated to determine whether a further release was in order.¹⁴³ If implemented, this suggestion would almost certainly have led to a questioning of the validity of many of John Lawrence's earlier *jagir* recommendations in the Jullundur Doab.

It seems quite possible that the issues raised by McLeod contributed to the final split between the Lawrence brothers, for the file was not sent to Calcutta until more than one year later. By that time John Lawrence, as Chief Commissioner, had Punjab affairs - and Dalhousie's ear on them - to himself, and he had no difficulty in persuading the Governor-General to veto McLeod's proposal. The Jullundur *jagirdars*, the Chief Commissioner argued, in what was now familiar language, were but parasites on both the State and the "people of the soil". They were strangers to the Doab, unconnected with, and generally disliked by, its population. They were "in no respect a source of strength to the British Government."¹⁴⁴

It should not be imagined that there were no chieftains who were treated with liberality by the British after annexation. In the western Muslim-majority districts especially, the collaboration of individual tribal patriarchs was sought quite deliberately. In Shahpur District, for example, the Tiwana Maliks were rewarded for their past services and bound to the new regime by the creation of new *jagirs* in their ancestral tracts.¹⁴⁵ Other chieftains were able to secure better

143. McLeod to Melvill, 21 May 1852, no 843: RDP, 28 May 1853, no 17 (PS).

144. Quoted in Melvill to Offg Secy to GOI, 2 July 1853, no 323: RDP, 28 May 1853, no 20 (PS).

145. *SR Shahpur 1866*, p.43.

than usual terms for themselves because they enjoyed close, personal relations with British officers. Sardar Nihal Singh Chhachhi was one such chieftain. The son of a trader, and married into an old chieftain family, Nihal Singh did not command much "local influence". But he had served the Residency at Lahore in the pre-annexation days as a sort of aide-de-camp, and he was able, when his *jagir* claim came up for consideration in 1849, to produce no fewer than eight testimonials from various British officers referring to his "character" and "services". The Board treated his claim as a "special case", granting him a life pension of Rs 2,000 and upholding his *jagirs* in their entirety.¹⁴⁶ Nihal Singh was thus the only chieftain not to be deprived of the service portion of his *jagirs*.¹⁴⁷

But these were exceptional cases. By and large, Dalhousie and John Lawrence were in no way intimidated by the collective influence of the chieftains. It was not their intention that the British would share power in the Punjab with a chieftain class, and it was still less their intention to alienate State revenues in preservation of a non-governing chieftain class. The disposition of the claims of the chieftains to *jagirs* reflected and confirmed this policy. By the mid-1850s the Punjab chieftains were, if not exactly a class doomed to complete extinction, at least a class whose fortunes had never been at a lower ebb, and would only get worse as *jagir* lapses occurred. The Sikhs, for all the levelling tendencies of their rule, had never managed to achieve such a massive, and apparently permanent, humbling of the chieftains.

To sum up, then: the treatment of claims to revenue assignments in the early years of British rule was, essentially, the story of the triumph

146. Case no 16 in "List of Principal Jagheerdars": FPC, 29 Dec 1849, no 49A (NAI).

147. Apparently, Nihal Singh had, during the Residency period, incurred certain, unspecified "extra expenses", as a result of which he was saddled with debts of Rs 10,000 by 1849. In 1852 he submitted that he was Rs 27,000 in debt. To help him out of these "embarassing circumstances", the British relieved him of his obligation of supporting four of his eight troopers: PDP, 11 Dec 1852, no 17; 22 Jan 1853, no 37 (PS). But by 1869 Nihal Singh's debts had increased to Rs 114,667. Lord Mayo, who was then GG, sanctioned the Punjab Government's proposal to grant Nihal Singh a loan of Rs 1 *lakh* (at 5 per cent interest), in order that he might repay his debts: FPP "A" series, June 1869, nos 281-3 (NAI).

of John Lawrence's policy of abrogating as many assignments as possible. Under Sikh rule, we concluded earlier in this study, between 35 and 45 per cent of the State revenues had been alienated in the form of assignments. Under early British rule the percentages dropped quite dramatically. In 1851 the Board estimated the annual value of grants upheld, or likely to be upheld, in the "Punjab proper" at about Rs 30 *lakhs* - or slightly more than 20 per cent of the total revenues - and pointed out that in time, as compulsory lapses occurred, this figure would be reduced still further.¹⁴⁸ Indeed, with the announcement of the regular and revised land revenue settlements, the long-term results became apparent. In Montgomery District the amount of land revenue alienated through grants had fallen from 60 to 12 per cent by 1854.¹⁴⁹ In Gujranwala District the amount had fallen from about 50 to 25 per cent by 1867.¹⁵⁰ In Lahore District the amount had fallen from 66 to 20 per cent by 1858.¹⁵¹ And over the whole of the Punjab Province less than 10 per cent of the gross acreage of all revenue-paying tenures was held in assignments by 1870.¹⁵²

The greater part of this reduction was sustained, of course, by the chieftains. We have seen that, as a class, the chieftains - like those lesser middle-men, the *chaudharris* - had little or no role to play under early British rule. Consequently, the British were able to cut back on revenue assignments to a degree that the Sikhs had never been able to. The theory was that the savings made on assignments would enable a reduction on the land revenue demand simultaneously to be made. Thus the British would be the better placed to protect that stratum of rural society that really mattered - the substantial, revenue-paying peasantry.

The policy of the Sikh Government [runs a passage in the third Administration Report] was to tax heavily the agriculturists, and to make large assignments of Revenue to the nobility as payment for service and support. But the policy of the British Government is to tax lightly the agriculturists, to pay its servants from its own Treasury, to excuse the native nobility from service, and to gradually reduce their assignments of Revenue.¹⁵³

148. "PAR 1851", paras 244-5 and Appendix B: FM, nos 356-7 (NAI).

149. *Montgomery DG 1883-84*, p.62.

150. *SR Gujranwala 1866-67*, p.12.

151. *SR Lahore 1858*, p.23.

152. *PAR 1870-71*, pp. 22-4.

153. *PAR 1854-56*, p.27.

Land revenue and peasant protection

The most pressing problem facing the British after 1849 was that of land revenue. It was not just that land revenue furnished three-quarters of total State revenues in the early years of British rule. The fact that it was paid by a peasantry which comprised three-quarters of the region's population - a peasantry whose contentment and prosperity were more vitally affected by the manner in which it was assessed and collected than by any other circumstance - made land revenue a highly important political, as well as fiscal, question.¹⁵⁴ It is therefore no exaggeration to say that the very viability of British rule in the Punjab rested upon the ability of the new rulers to formulate and administer an efficient and equitable land revenue policy.

Dalhousie believed that such a policy existed ready-made in the land revenue system of the North-Western Provinces; and after annexation this system was imported, along with a number of its most experienced practitioners, into the Punjab.¹⁵⁵ There were three cardinal principles to this system. Let us examine them briefly. First, the *jama*, or revenue demand, ought to be a moderate one. At the first regular settlement, inhabited lands were to be divided into assessment circles, the basic unit of which was the *mahal*, or estate (the *mahal* was usually, not not necessarily, coterminous with the *mauza*, or village). Upon each *mahal* there was to be assessed, on general considerations (such as soil type and irrigation facilities), for a term of twenty or thirty years, a cash sum, so calculated as to leave "a fair surplus profit over and above the net produce of the land."¹⁵⁶

154. Ibid, pp. 21-2.

155. Douie noted that altogether nineteen of the best of James Thomason's officers were sent to the Punjab (Thomason was the principal architect of the North-Western Provinces system): James M. Douie, *Punjab Settlement Manual* (Lahore, 4th edn 1930), p.8.

156. J. Thomason, "Remarks on the System of Land Revenue Administration Prevalent in the North-Western Provinces of Hindoostan" (1849), reproduced in D.G. Barkley, *Directions for Revenue Officers in the Punjab* (Lahore, 1875), pp. vii-xvii.

Second, that surplus profit was held to be an heritable and transferable right: a private proprietary right in the land. At the time of settlement, registers of land titles were to be drawn up, showing which persons enjoyed this right. The position of hereditary tenant cultivators was to be recognised and secured. But full proprietary rights were to be conferred upon only those persons who could claim the right to engage to pay the *jama* - the dominant cultivators possessing traditionally recognised, pre-emptive rights of cultivation. In this respect the North-Western Provinces system differed markedly from the Bengal system, where the old Mughal revenue farmers or their successors had been recognised as great landlords, from the Central Provinces system of village landlords, and from the Oudh system of a revenue-paying territorial nobility.

Third, in view of the cohesive strength of the north Indian village and the prevalence of customary shares in lands and wells, the *mauza* was held to be a coparcenary community, and wherever possible joint responsibility in revenue matters was to be upheld. That is, the revenue engagements were to be taken not from each individual peasant proprietor, as was the case under the *ryotwari* system of Madras and Bombay, but from representatives of the village community, while the community as a whole was to be responsible for the internal distribution of both the revenue demand and the surplus profit. Given the complexity of most north Indian village tenures (*mahals* were generally held by a number of cultivating proprietors with overlapping rights), joint responsibility was an administratively sensible principle. It was also politically expedient, in that it allowed the village communities to continue to manage many of their own affairs, and - to a certain extent - it helped to protect the peasant proprietor from the moneylender and forced sales of land. Joint responsibility was therefore seen as an important mechanism for preserving traditional rural society.¹⁵⁷

The introduction of this land revenue system into the Punjab was, it would seem, a great success. Despite their moderation of the *jama*

157. According to Thomason, one of the chief virtues of the North-Western Provinces system was that "it professes to alter nothing, but only to maintain and place on record what it finds to exist": *ibid.*

and their expenditure on public works, the British still managed to extract a clear profit of more than £4 millions from the Punjab Territories between 1849 and 1856.¹⁵⁸ And adherence to the principles of tenant protection, peasant proprietorship and village joint responsibility brought the administration into particularly close touch with the agricultural classes and their problems, gaining for the "Punjab School" that enviable reputation for sympathetic and successful paternalism. A closer look at land revenue administration in the Punjab between 1849 and 1856 reveals a somewhat different picture, however. The introduction of the North-Western Provinces system was no easy matter. Agricultural distress - the result of unfavourable seasons and over-assessment at the time of the summary settlements - forced the British to make several reductions on a *jama* that was already thought to be sufficiently low. Peasant resistance to cash settlements, together with a tendency on the part of many settlement officers to apply the letter of North-Western Provinces revenue law in circumstances where this was clearly inappropriate, led to the commission of numerous judicial mistakes which had subsequently to be rectified. By 1856 a viable land revenue policy was beginning to emerge, but only after considerable difficulties and dangers had been experienced.

The first regular settlements in the "Punjab proper"¹⁵⁹ were begun in circumstances that were anything but propitious. The summary settlements of 1847-48, rough and ready though they were, had worked well enough for a year or so: the *zamindars*, buoyed up by high agricultural prices, had managed to pay their revenue with regularity, if not with ease. But shortly after annexation, just as the new settlements were being negotiated, these summary settlements began breaking down almost everywhere. As a result, the new settlements were thrown into turmoil.

158. Calculated from the revenue and expenditure statements in the first three Administration Reports. Military expenditure, being an imperial charge, is excluded from these calculations.

159. The regular settlements east of the Beas and Sutlej were begun before, and finished soon after, 1849. The regular settlements in the central and southwestern districts were completed shortly before or shortly after 1857. In the northwestern districts the regular settlement work was interrupted by the events of 1857, and was not completed until the mid- 1860s.

The immediate cause of the breakdown was a dramatic collapse of agricultural prices. The return of thousands of ex-soldiers to the land, together with a couple of wet seasons, produced a run of unusually abundant harvests; the markets became flooded with produce, and prices dropped by almost 50 per cent. This cheapness of grain meant that the *zamindars* experienced great difficulty in obtaining cash to pay the revenue - a situation that was exacerbated by the fact that large sums of money which would previously have remained in the Punjab were now being remitted outside by non-Punjabi soldiers and government employees.¹⁶⁰

It was soon realised, however, that the root cause of the breakdown was over-assessment at the time of the summary settlements. In 1847-48 the *jama* had been based upon the average of Sikh collections in kind over the previous three years, the money value having been calculated upon the average prices of those same years. A reduction of 10 per cent had been allowed and all *abwabs*, or extra cesses, had been abolished. But what had not been realised at the time was that prices in the years 1844-46 had been exceptionally high. Prinsep later found, by going back over the prices for thirty years in sixteen large towns, that the 1844--46 prices were "the very worst" that could have been taken: the two staples, wheat and barley, had then been selling at 40 per cent above the thirty year averages.¹⁶¹ With the collapse of prices and the shortage of cash after 1849, the highly cultivated and highly assessed villages of the moist zone were faced with great hardship; these villages, where labour and capital investments in agriculture were often considerable, had now to compete in a glutted market against the villages of those tracts which had been fertilised by a casual abundance of rain. "Hundreds of fine villages", it was reported, "unable to get a price for a produce, failed to pay their highly assessed revenue."¹⁶² Matters were brought

160. *PAR 1854-56*, p.28. The pay of the army of occupation alone was about Rs 165 *lakhs*: "PAR 1851", p. 190: FM, no 356 (NAI).

161. *SR Sialkot 1863*, pp. 55-6. In Sialkot District at the regular settlement lists were prepared showing the villages "heavily", "moderately", or "lightly" assessed at the summary settlement, and more than one-half of the villages were placed under the first heading: *ibid*.

162. *PAR 1851-53*, paras 301-3.

to a crisis with the outbreak of an epidemic of murrain amongst cattle in 1851, which carried off thousands of animals, and with a failure of the rains in the arid zone in 1852-53, which dried up wells and caused pasturage in the Bar to fail. All over the newly acquired territories, land fell out of cultivation, wells were deserted, and revenue balances accumulated. In the Gujranwala *tahsil*, for instance, a balance of over 17 per cent accrued and more than 300 wells were deserted in one year.¹⁶³

Zamindar hostility towards fixed assessments and money payments became widespread. When Henry Lawrence travelled through Gujrat District he received numerous petitions against the prevailing assessments.¹⁶⁴ In 1852 the *zamindars* of Rawalpindi District "turbulently clamoured for reduction."¹⁶⁵ In Sialkot District the revenue machinery began to break down: the *tahsildars*, who were ex-*kardars*, "played into the hands of headmen, who very often wilfully withheld payments and deterioration led to degenerate practices."¹⁶⁶ And in Muzaffargarh District the derangement of the summary settlement was intense:

The district correspondence between 1850 and 1857 reads as if there was continued famine in the district, while at the same time magnificent harvests are reported. During these years revenue defaulters were in jail for three months or more. *Lambardars* threw down their *pattas* [revenue agreements] in court and clamoured for reduction. Proposals were made to sell villages for arrears of revenue.¹⁶⁷

Ironically, distress and unrest were least severe in those districts, such as Lahore, where large tracts were still in the hands of *jagirdars*, who continued, for the time being, to receive their payments in grain.¹⁶⁸

163. *Gujranwala DG 1883-84*, p.144; *SR Gujranwala 1856*, pp. 23-4; *PAR 1851-53*, para 319; *Sialkot DG 1883-84*, p.95.

164. For the reproduction of a memorandum, "On Goojerat Assessments, by the President of the Board of Administration" (no date), see *SR Gujrat 1861*, pp. 47-8.

165. *PAR 1851-53*, paras 306-14.

166. *SR Sialkot 1863*, p.56. Prinsep noted that much of the *takavi* (loan) money doled out to the *zamindars* of Sialkot District for the replacement of cattle and repair of wells between 1852 and 1854 was only paid back as revenue. "Tehseeldars even did not hesitate to encourage this practice, to shew that they were doing their best to get in the outstanding Revenue": *ibid*, p.57.

167. *Muzaffargarh DG 1883-84*, p.122.

168. *Lahore DG 1883-84*, p.129.

Faced with the spectre of widespread rural disorder, the British had no choice but to grant immediate relief. In some districts a revision of the summary settlement was made, which allowed for a reduction on the *jama*.¹⁶⁹ In other districts temporary remissions were granted.¹⁷⁰ Over the whole of the Punjab Territories (excluding the Trans-Sutlej and Peshawar Divisions) revenue balances totalling Rs 15 *lakhs* (13 per cent of the *jama*) were written off as remissions in the period 1851-52 to 1852-53.¹⁷¹ It was against this background that the regular settlement operations were begun.

Not surprisingly, the opportunity was taken at the new settlements to lower the *jama* on a more systematic basis. In Amritsar District, for instance, a reduction on the summary *jama* of more than 30 per cent was made in one *tahsil*,¹⁷² while over the whole District the reduction was more than 5 per cent.¹⁷³ In two *tahsils* of Gurdaspur District the reduction amounted to nearly 18 per cent.¹⁷⁴ In both Sialkot District and Gujranwala District the reduction was more than 18 per cent.¹⁷⁵ It was thought that these reductions were sufficiently large to avert further distress, partly because Dalhousie, in looking to rapid economic development in the Punjab, had ordered ten-year, rather than twenty-year or thirty-year, terms of operation for the regular settlements west of the Beas, and partly because it was anticipated that agricultural prices would soon recover from their post-1849 slump.

169. For instance, in Gugeira (later Montgomery) District, where the drought of 1852-53 had caused the failure of the Khanwa canal, a revision was made, reducing the demand by 23 per cent: *PAR 1851-53*, para 319.

170. In Rawalpindi District relief was twice afforded on a general basis in 1852, and thereafter numerous occasional or partial remissions were granted: *ibid*, paras 306-14.

171. *Ibid*, paras 341-2.

172. *SR Amritsar 1856*, pp.83-118 (report on Narowal Tundi).

173. *Amritsar DG 1883-84*, pp. 52-3.

174. *SR Gurdaspur 1856*, p.47.

175. *SR Sialkot 1863*, p.71; *SR Gujranwala 1856*, p.44.

As it turned out, however, many of the new settlements were approved for slightly longer terms, and agricultural prices, though they began to pick up from about 1855-56, did not undergo any substantial rise until the end of the decade.¹⁷⁶ This meant that when signs of distress reappeared, the authorities were prepared quickly to grant further reductions on the *jama*. For instance, in Gujranwala District, where fresh revenue balances had begun to accrue by 1857, a reduction of about 4 per cent on the regular *jama* was made in 1858 in 157 *mahals*. (It is worth noting that at the time of the revised settlement in the 1860s about one-quarter of the District's villages were classified as having been "heavily" assessed at the regular settlement.)¹⁷⁷ In Sialkot District in 1858-59 the reduction on the summary *jama* was increased from 18.2 per cent to 22.8 per cent.¹⁷⁸ In 1860 the Financial Commissioner, Robert Cust, made the sweeping remark that "our Punjab settlements have all been pitched too high."¹⁷⁹ That year the general standard for Punjab assessments was lowered from two-thirds to one-half of net *mahal* assets.¹⁸⁰ Thus the experience of the 1850s produced in Punjab administrators a marked predisposition towards great moderation in assessment. That predisposition remained a key feature of British policy thereafter, so that in the year 1904-05 the incidence of land revenue demand upon cultivation in the Punjab was nearly 6 per cent lower than it had been in the year 1854-55.¹⁸¹

176. For prices, see *SR Amritsar 1856*, p.102, Appendix B; *SR Jullundur 1892*, p.155, Appendix X11 (report on Now Shehr); *SR Montgomery 1878* pp. 154-5; *PAR 1871-72*, p.150; *Punjab Census 1881*, p.53.

177. *SR Gujranwala 1894*, pp. 15-16.

178. *SR Sialkot 1863*, p.71.

179. Quoted in Douie, *Punjab Settlement Manual*, p.27.

180. *Ibid*, p.25.

181. GOI (Dept. of Revenue and Agriculture) to Secy of State for India, 6 Feb 1908, no 4, enclosure no 1, "Statement showing Land Revenue Assessments, Cultivated and Irrigated Areas of Each District of the Punjab in 1855 and at Each New Settlement up to date", and enclosure no 3, "Statement showing the Relative Burden of Taxation on the Land in the Punjab at each Quinquennial Period from 1854-55": British Sessional Papers, House of Commons, 1908, Cd 3991, vol 74, pp. 733-38, "Land Revenue Assessments in the Punjab since 1855."

The second key feature of British land revenue policy in the Punjab was the investment of the dominant peasantry with the proprietary right in land, and the protection of hereditary tenants. The Sikhs, it will be recalled, had generally recognised two classes of proprietors - "primary" *zamindars* and "intermediary" *zamindars* - although they had always preferred to deal with the former and try and reduce the importance of the latter. In their refurbishing of sub-district administration, and in the process of their regular settlements, the British carried this levelling tendency one stage further. As we have already seen, the office of *chaudhari*, which in the past had been monopolised by "intermediary" *zamindars*, was more or less done away with in the early years of British rule. The allocation of proprietary rights confirmed the obsolescence of "intermediary" *zamindars* (in the settlement literature they were called *ala maliks*, or superior proprietors, as distinct from *adna maliks*, or inferior proprietors).

The tendency [writes Douie] was to commute the superior rights where they were established into a moderate percentage on the revenue, and to take engagements from the inferior proprietors and allow them the sole management of the estate. The latter were looked upon as the valuable element in the community, the former as an interesting survival of a state of society which had passed away and should not be revived. Still less were our officers disposed to assist in the process which had been making the *mukaddims* or headmen virtual proprietors in some parts of the country; and the allowance of 5 per cent on the revenue, which they were allowed to collect from the community as *lambardar's* fees or *pachotra* was a small recompense for the privileges which they were forced to relinquish.¹⁸²

The result of the judicial work of the regular settlements was thus a more thorough and immutable levelling of rural society down to the level of the "primary" *zamindars* than the Sikhs had been able to achieve. Except in the western districts, where for political reasons the British upheld many "intermediary" *zamindars*, the social structure of the Punjab after 1856 could be compared to a broad pyramid of "primary" *zamindars*, sitting on a smaller base of tenant cultivators (about one-half of whom had been entered in the records as hereditary tenants and were, therefore, virtually indistinguishable from "primary" *zamindars*), topped off by an even smaller obelisk of landlords. In 1870 less than 3 per cent of the 55,000 villages which paid land revenue were owned

182. Douie, *Punjab Settlement Manual*, p.58.

by landlords, whereas nearly 56 per cent (incorporating 83 per cent of the gross acreage) were owned by "primary" *zamindars* (the remaining 42 per cent, incorporating less than 12 per cent of the acreage, were mostly owned by "primary" *zamindars* but had an intermediary, such as a *jagirdar* or *taluqdar*, interposed between occupant proprietors and government).¹⁸³

Let us examine some of the difficulties that were experienced in bringing about this fundamental levelling of rural society, beginning with the creation of proprietary rights in the pastoral zone. After 1849 the pastoral tribes of the Bar - the Bhattis, Chathas, and Tarars - were restored to most of their ancient possessions, from which they had been ousted by the Sikhs; and as a reward for their services in 1848-49 they were permitted more or less to define their own boundaries.¹⁸⁴ Knowing the great respect which the British attached to proprietary rights, and anticipating the great rise in land value following the extension of irrigation canals, these pastoralists quickly set about appropriating vast portions of the Bar. In the Hafizabad *tahsil* of Gujranwala District, for instance, estates of between 5,000 and 10,000 acres were staked out during the regular settlement; one pastoral village, which contained only two working wells, even appropriated 23,000 acres.¹⁸⁵ The government's decision to sell off blocks of waste land (*rukhs*) to local and outside entrepreneurs at what were, considering the extremely low revenue demand in this zone and the possibility of access to canal water, ridiculously cheap prices, also produced a great scramble for land.¹⁸⁶ Within a few years, however, the evils of this land craze - particularly its ruinous impact upon the long-established and highly assessed villages

183. *PAR 1870-71*, pp. 22-4.

184. For the story of the Multani Pathans, upon whom the British conferred a new superior proprietary right as a reward for their services with Edwardes at Multan in 1848-49, and how they managed to turn themselves into inferior proprietors, see *SR Muzaffargarh 1873-80*, pp. 92-3.

185. *SR Gujranwala 1894*, p.19.

186. *SR Montgomery 1878*, pp. 148-51.

near the riverbanks - began to attract attention. At the revised settlements (late 1860s) measures had to be taken, though they were much resisted by the pastoral villages, to limit the size of estates and increase the revenue demand.¹⁸⁷

In the cultivated tracts to the north of the Bar, enormous difficulties were encountered when it came to investigating, defining, and recording proprietary rights. The enquiries into present and past land usage, which the settlement officers had to make in order to prepare accurate settlement records, had the effect of stirring up thousands of old landed disputes, many of which had lain dormant since the establishment of Sikh rule. Since they were usually unfamiliar with Punjabi land tenures, and because they were unable to spend enough time in a village to acquaint themselves with its organisation and history, the settlement officers had to resolve these disputes as best they could. (In Rawalpindi District, for example, local genealogists were called in to help settle old and complex disputes.)¹⁸⁸ Not surprisingly, many mistakes in the initial recording of proprietary rights were made.¹⁸⁹ This is shown by the large number of summary suits relating to proprietary rights that were instituted in the revenue courts¹⁹⁰ during the early 1850s: in the year 1852-53, for instance, nearly 18,000 suits of this type were instituted throughout the Punjab Territories (excluding Peshawar Division.)¹⁹¹

187. Ibid., *SR Gujranwala 1894*, p.19; *SR Shahpur 1866*, pp. 62-3.

188. *SR Rawalpindi 1864*, pp. 120-9.

189. The second Administration Report warned: "No great reliability can, even now, be placed on the records of landed rights": *PAR 1851-53*, para 291.

190. Until 1865 suits relating to land and land revenue were heard in revenue courts which, though constituted in the same way as the civil courts and presided over by the same judges (Deputy Commissioners, Assistants, Extra Assistants, and *tahsildars*), operated under different procedural rules. Act xix of 1865 established a Chief Court in the Punjab and made suits relating to land ordinary civil suits, to be judged under the Code of Civil Procedure for India: Y.B. Mathur, "Judicial Administration of the Punjab, 1849-75", in *Journal of Indian History*, Vol XLIV, pt 3 (Dec 1966), p.721.

191. *PAR 1851-53*, para 347. Several settlement officers noted the readiness of the peasants to take their landed claims to the new British courts: *SR Lahore 1858*, p.15; *SR Jullundur 1852*, p.55; *SR Sialkot 1863*, p.111.

One of the most fundamental errors concerned the recording of tenant status. In the North-Western Provinces two classes of tenants had been generally recognised. These were the *maurusi* (or occupancy or hereditary) tenant, and the *ghair-maurusi* (or non-hereditary) tenant-at-will. The *maurusi* tenant, whose status was usually recognised by twelve years of occupancy, had a right to hold his land so long as he paid the rent fixed by the settlement officer, and to pass it on to his descendants on the same terms. The *ghair-maurusi* tenant, on the other hand, held his land on a year-to-year basis only, and his rent was determined by agreement between himself and his landlord. Because of the abundance of cultivable land, tenants were not numerous in nineteenth-century Punjab: in central Punjab, for example, there were nearly twice as many proprietors as tenants in the 1860s.¹⁹² Still, under Sikh rule something very like occupancy tenant right had been recognised by both the *kaardar* and the "primary" *zamindar* - by the former because it was important to have cultivation maintained at the highest possible level, and by the latter because permanent tenants were a measure of a proprietor's status, as well as sharers of the revenue burden - even though the degree of privilege and rental rates had differed in different parts of the country.

During the process of the first regular settlements, tenants were recorded as being either *maurusi* or *ghair-maurusi* tenants. Until 1855 the rule of twelve years of occupancy was the foremost and almost the sole criterion for granting the title of *maurusi*, and under that criterion the tenant question in twelve out of twenty-seven districts was decided in a most mechanical way. After 1855 it was admitted that other criteria, such as the landlord's power of eviction, ought to be taken into consideration.¹⁹³ But by then many tenants had been entered as *maurusi*.

192. The numbers were: proprietors, 601, 123; tenants, 312, 200: *Punjab Census 1868*, p.31.

193. For correspondence on this question between the settlement officer of Shahpur District, the Commissioner of Jhelum Division, and the Chief Commissioner, see RDP, 15 Dec 1855, nos 10-12 (PS).

In Lahore District, for example, about 50 per cent of tenants had been given the right of hereditary occupancy.¹⁹⁴ The fact that in most districts the proprietors had not objected to this - in not a few instances they had clamoured for it - and had even been reluctant to press their claims for *malikana*, or rent,¹⁹⁵ was taken as an indication that the generous granting of *maurusī* status was both just and politic. In the 1860s, however, when the return of agricultural prosperity brought more benefits to the *zamindars*, and they began to assert their claims to *malikana*, it was realised that large numbers of tenants who had been classed as hereditary tenants during the early 1850s ought to have been classed as mere tenants-at-will.¹⁹⁶ Whether or not the former records of right should be altered then became - as we shall see in the last chapter - a matter of great controversy.

In the early 1850s there was a more perplexing problem associated with proprietary rights, however, and that was the tendency of many *zamindars* in central Punjab either to refuse to accept the revenue engagements and be recorded as proprietors or, having accepted the engagements, to renounce their proprietary rights. Some British officers explained this as a hangover from the days of Sikh rule, when the *zamindars* had frequently renounced their rights, thus threatening to throw their estates into confusion, as a means of persuading the *kardar* to moderate his extortionate demands.¹⁹⁷ Certainly, in the districts east of the Beas, where the regular settlements were begun prior to the great collapse of prices, many *zamindars* had continued to play their old game for no other reason than that of getting the best possible revenue deal.¹⁹⁸ But west of the Beas such behaviour was more the direct

194. *SR Lahore 1858*, p.7.

195. Many proprietors were happy to have their tenants pay just a share of the *jama*: *ibid*, p.14; *SR Amritsar 1856*, pp. 31-2, 82; *Montgomery DG 1883-84*, pp. 75-6.

196. In 1859 the Secretary to the Punjab Government, R.H. Davies, admitted that "it may perhaps have happened that the title of hereditary cultivator has been too easily granted, or that the rights attending it may have been unduly magnified": Davies to Offg FC, 26 Aug 1859, no 967 (Revenue): reproduced in *SR Gurdaspur 1856*, pp. 60-1.

197. For example, *PAR 1851-53*, para 292.

198. For an example, which led to the creation of a new species of superior proprietary right (*talūqdari*) by the settlement officer, Temple, see *SR Jullundur 1852*, pp. 42-3.

consequence of British over-assessment. Once the fact of over-assessment was acknowledged, the linkage was understood and many of the erroneous judicial decisions that had been made in the face of *zamindar* recalcitrance could be reversed. In Gujranwala District at the time of the regular settlement, the *zamindars* were so sorely tried by the over-assessment of 1847-48 and low prices, that they were utterly adverse to binding themselves to any fixed cash assessment, even when a substantial reduction on the *jama* was offered. They were adverse to the very idea of a new settlement. In 1860 Temple, who had by that time been appointed Commissioner of Lahore Division, painted a vivid picture of the difficulties with which settlement officers in central Punjab had had to contend:

No officer who had not seen these people from 1853 to 1855, would believe how provoking and contumacious they sometimes were; some of them would even assemble in numbers and almost behave like a mob. Sometimes a circle of villages would combine to offer passive resistance to the progress of the settlement. Sometimes proprietors would desert their land, believing that no other occupant would be forthcoming; and that they would ultimately be re-admitted on reduced terms. Sometimes they would say that they would renounce their proprietorship rather than engage for any fixed assessment. And in this, as in all other proceedings, *they shewed a strong tendency to combine.*¹⁹⁹

In Gujranwala District the settlement officer, Morris, dealt with *zamindar* recalcitrance in two ways. First, where the *zamindars* refused to engage for the revenue, he temporarily alienated management rights over the estate to a farmer (*mustajir*) who agreed to pay the revenue, making his own terms with the proprietors. There was nothing illegal about this course of action: indeed, it was resorted to wherever *zamindars* refused to engage.²⁰⁰ But in the late 1850s, when it was realised that even the regular *jama* had often been pitched too high, an opportunity was given to the proprietors of recovering their position by engaging for a reduced *jama*, provided that the *mustajir* could be induced to

199. Temple to FC, 23 Jan 1860, no 15 (original emphasis): reproduced in *SR Gujranwala 1856*, pp. 8-10. Prinsep also noted the tendency of Jat *zamindars* "to combine when they wish to carry a point": *SR Sialkot 1863*, section dealing with Chukla Aikwala (no page).

200. Eleven villages were put under *mustajirs* in Sialkot District: *SR Sialkot 1863*, p.68.

surrender his right before the expiry of his contract. In most of the twenty-odd cases where this applied, an arrangement satisfactory to both parties was easily and quickly reached.²⁰¹

Morris's second course of action, taken where the *zamindars* voluntarily renounced their rights, was to transfer - often for a nominal sum only - the proprietary rights over the estate to another, more solvent, *zamindar* or some outsider who was willing to maintain payment of the assessed revenue. In 280 cases, involving 14,000 acres of land, proprietary rights were transferred to other *zamindars*. In fifty-one estates proprietary rights in lands and wells were wholly or partly transferred to outsiders, usually urban capitalists.²⁰² These transfers, which expropriated the old proprietors in favour of capitalists and speculators in land, were thought to be necessary, if the spread of *zamindar* contumacy was to be checked. But they were quite illegal, and, besides, they negated the principle of peasant protection. They became the subject of a long and bitter controversy among revenue officers in the mid-1850s. In 1858 the government sanctioned a proposal by the Commissioner of Lahore Division to re-open these cases with a view to reinstating the old proprietors at a reduced *jama*. Where the proprietary rights had been transferred to other *zamindars*, reinstatement was generally achieved through a system of compensation. But in many of the other cases, where wealthy capitalists like the Diwans of Eminabad and the Khattris of Gujranwala had taken over, reinstatement proved impossible, for the new proprietors flatly refused to relinquish the property.²⁰³ For their part, the revenue officers learned a most salutary lesson: over-assessment could easily lead - as it had in the early settlements in the North-Western Provinces - to a disintegration of traditional rural society.

201. *SR Gujranwala 1856*, pp. 8, 47.

202. In Wazirabad *tahsil* an estate of 451 acres was sold up for an arrear of Rs 125. Another estate, where the owners, "a sturdy but contumacious body of Sikh Jats", had refused to engage and acknowledge proprietorship, was transferred in perpetuity to a Khatri, Jhanda Singh of Batala, for the nominal sum of Rs 500, and at Jhanda Singh's insistence the old proprietors were denied the right to cultivate: *SR Gujranwala 1894*, pp. 14-15.

203. *Ibid*, p.15.

The third key feature of British land revenue policy in the Punjab was the recognition and maintenance of the village as a coparcenary community. As has been mentioned, this had both administrative and political advantages. In the North-Western Provinces three broad categories of village tenure had been identified. These were the *zamindari* tenure, where the estate belonged to a single proprietor (in which case it was not a coparcenary tenure) or where the possession of village lands was not separately defined among the different shareholders; the *pattidari* tenure, where - to a lesser or greater degree - each proprietor owned a specific ancestral share in the whole estate, which regulated his revenue responsibility; and the *bhaichara* tenure, where - to a lesser or greater degree - each member of the brotherhood was in separate possession of his part of the estate and paid only that portion of the *jama* which was assessed on the land in his possession. These three categories of tenure, with their own sub-categories ("landlord" and "communal" in the case of *zamindari*; "imperfect" and "perfect" in the case of both *pattidari* and *bhaichara*), were held to correspond to different historical stages of village evolution; that is, with the passage of time and growth of civilisation most villages had changed - or would change - from a simple "landlord" *zamindari* type through the *pattidari* type to a complex "perfect" *bhaichara* type.²⁰⁴

Few villages in nineteenth-century Punjab conformed exactly to one or other of these ideal types. It was far more common for a village to be a mixed type, with different sections of the proprietary body following different tenurial forms, or different tenurial forms being followed in the cultivated lands, the wells, and the waste. Nevertheless, at the first regular settlements every village was classified as being either a *zamindari*, a *pattidari* or a *bhaichara* village. Countless mistakes were of course made. Sometimes this was due to the determination of the villagers, especially the *lambardars* and other members of the village elite, who were used to enjoying the lion's share of the profits, to withhold the detailed information that was necessary for an accurate classification.²⁰⁵ More frequently, however, mistakes were made because

204. *SR Sialkot 1863*, pp. 85-93.

205. *SR Gujranwala 1856*, p.51.

the subordinate settlement staff who were entrusted with this judicial work (they were usually Indian EACs) did not fully understand the terms *zamindari*, *pattidari* and *bhaichara*, and did not bother to investigate prevailing rights and customs.²⁰⁶ Since it was easy to say that possession was the standard of every proprietor's right and responsibility, and since many Sikh Jat villages declared themselves to be in agreement with this principle, the tenure prevailing in most central Punjab villages was declared to be the *bhaichara* tenure.²⁰⁷

Many settlement officers were amazed, however, by the strength of attachment - even in the most recently founded Sikh Jat villages of the Manjha - that was shown to the idea of ancestral shares. Villages that had initially been classified as *bhaichara* often expressed a desire to revert to the *pattidari* system of shares, even in the case of separate holdings. The reason seems to have been a desire to distribute the burden imposed by a high, fixed *jama*.²⁰⁸ It was therefore necessary at the revised settlements to eliminate the risk of village unrest by making an investigation into past tenurial practices and re-classifying as *pattidari* those villages that had wrongly been classified as *bhaichara*. In Sialkot District, where the regular settlement was re-made after 1857, this re-classification was undertaken in 120 villages in one *tahsil*, while over the whole District minor adjustments to the records of possessions and shares were made in 881 estates.²⁰⁹ In Gujranwala District at the revised settlement the number of *pattidari* villages was increased from 543 to 976 and the number of *bhaichara* villages decreased from 470 to eighty-five.²¹⁰ In Gujrat District the recorded tenure of 155 villages was changed, mostly from *bhaichara* to *pattidari*.²¹¹ But some influential

206. *SR Gujranwala 1866-67*, p.61.

207. *Ibid*; *SR Lahore 1858*, p.13. Outside central Punjab, however, the *zamindari* tenure was often prevalent: see, for example, *Montgomery DG 1883-84*, p.72.

208. *SR Lahore 1858*, p.26; *SR Gurdaspur 1856*, p.15; "PAR 1851", pp.201-2: FM, no 356 (NAI).

209. *SR Sialkot 1863*, pp. 89-90.

210. *SR Gujranwala 1866-67* p.64.

211. *SR Gujrat 1874*, p.61.

British officers regarded such a change as a retrogressive step - both Temple and Prinsep, for example, thought that *pattidari* tenures hindered the development of land and accumulation of capital²¹² - and in general the change was made only when the whole village expressed a wish for it. The *bhaichara* tenure remained the predominant one: of the 30,740 villages listed as coparcenaries in 1870, about 41 per cent were classified as *bhaichara*, 31 per cent as *pattidari*, 17 per cent as mixed *bhaichara* and *pattidari*, and 11 per cent as *zamindari*.²¹³

If the *bhaichara* tenure had the advantage of freeing the thrifty and enterprising peasant proprietor from responsibility for the insolvency of his coparceners, it had the disadvantage of making all land in his village an object of mortgageable value. The British countered this threat to village solidarity with the law of pre-emption. In 1852 the Board of Administration directed that if a proprietor wished to sell his share, he must first offer it to the whole community or to an individual coparcener at a reasonable price, fixed by agreement or, failing that, by the revenue authorities. Four years later the same rule was extended to usufructuary mortgages.²¹⁴ However, the law of pre-emption did not prevent the peasant from becoming indebted to the moneylender. In the days of Sikh rule peasant indebtedness had been common.²¹⁵ With the introduction of British cash assessments and the fall of agricultural prices it increased greatly. At the same time, the introduction of British civil courts provided moneylenders with unprecedented facilities for the recovery of these debts. During the early years of British rule the number of suits

212. Temple, Secy to CC, to FC, 12 Aug 1856, no 695 (Revenue): reproduced in *SR Gurdaspur 1856*, p.47; *SR Sialkot 1863*, pp. 94-5.

213. *PAR 1870-71*, pp. 22-4.

214. Douie, *Punjab Settlement Manual*, p.186.

215. *SR Gurdaspur 1856*, p.12; *SR Amritsar 1856*, pp. 97-8.

tried in the civil courts increased steadily, from 51,270 in 1852 to 81,112 in 1857.²¹⁶ By far the largest portion of these suits related to bonded debts of agriculturists. In 1857 about 77 per cent of civil suits were suits for the recovery of debt.²¹⁷ While the money value of land remained low, and while the "Punjab School's" vigilance against moneylender intrusion into coparcenary villages was tight, sales of landed property in satisfaction of peasant debts were not frequent. But from the time of the revised settlements (middle and late 1860s) onwards, for reasons which we shall explore in the final chapter, such alienations began occurring on a wide scale. Then, as we shall see, the British had a potentially serious political problem on their hands.

Conclusion

By late 1856 the Punjab of Ranjit Singh was considerably changed. Gone were the Maharajas and their colourful retinues. Gone, too, were the little kings of the countryside: the *nazims* and *kardars*. In their place had come a group of foreign and more sober-minded rulers, whose pleasures were more those of road-making and bridge-building, than those of the court and the hunt. A couplet from the "Ballad of Hari Singh Nalwa"²¹⁸ presents a Punjabi vision of the new masters:

Straight from Lahore came the Firangi, with hat on head,
Employing many masons in metalling the roads, holding a
stick in his hand.

Between 1849 and 1856 the British spent more than £3 millions on public works in the Punjab.²¹⁹ Old roads were improved and new ones made. Work was begun on the extension of the Great North-Western Railroad to Amritsar. Existing irrigation canals were repaired and the Bari Doab Canal built (it was completed in 1859). The electric telegraph was introduced. Schools, courts, and jails were established.

216. *PAR 1851-53*, p.82; *PAR 1854-56*, pp. 6-7; *PAR 1856-58*, pp. 3-4.

217. *PAR 1856-58*, pp. 3-4.

218. Reproduced and translated in Rose, *Glossary of Tribes and Castes*, vol 1, pp. 720-2. For a vivid account of how many Punjabis perceived their new masters, see Tandon, *Punjabi Century*, pp. 11-12.

219. *PAR 1854-56*, p.65.

But, as we have seen in this chapter, the real "imperial experiment" that was conducted in the Punjab during these years was an experiment in the accumulation and exercise of political power: the British set out to rule the Punjab more directly and more exclusively than they had hitherto ruled any region in the subcontinent.²²⁰ The construction of a new "provincial" system of government, the renovation of the old "local" system, the measures taken to maintain law and order, and - most importantly - the curtailment of revenue assignments were all proof of this. Of course, these political and administrative reforms may be seen as the basic prerequisites of "modernisation"; the British themselves certainly regarded them in this light. They were, however, essentially conservative reforms: their aim was not a revolution of "traditional" Punjabi society but rather a strengthening of those aspects and elements that defined and confirmed British power, and a weakening of those that encroached upon it. It is here that the true essence of the "Punjab School's" paternalism, and the extent of the early transformation wrought by it, may be seen.

Early British rule fell unevenly on social groups within the Punjab.²²¹ The old intermediaries - in particular, the chieftains and the "intermediary" *zamindars* - bore the brunt of the impact, and by 1856 their position was much changed. As a result of the restructuring of the administration, the disbanding of the Sikh army, and the investigation into *jagirs* and *inams*, large numbers of the privileged classes, including families whose rise had pre-dated that of Ranjit Singh himself, were put on what seemed to be the road to obscurity.²²² This enabled the British, who concentrated all top-level governmental functions in their own hands, to attempt to

220. The comparisons and contrasts between early British rule in the Punjab and British rule elsewhere in nineteenth-century India will be discussed in the Conclusion of the thesis.

221. This point will be elaborated in the remaining two chapters; space does not permit it here - and, besides, the full impact of early British rule was not evident until well after 1856.

222. It should be pointed out that here the British were often only completing a process begun by the Sikh monarchs. In Sialkot District, for example, there were by 1849 only two chieftain families left whose fortunes had been established prior to Ranjit Singh's ascendancy; and their *jagirs* were confiscated after 1849 on account of their "disloyalty" in 1848: *SR Sialkot 1863*, pp. 42-50.

do what no previous rulers of the Punjab had done, which was to transfer almost entirely the base of their political support from the intermediaries to the upper stratum of the peasantry. Of course, the main purpose of the land revenue settlements made after 1849 was to regularise the extraction of the State's share of the agrarian surplus; and, as we have seen, the paternalistic anti- "feudalism" of the "Punjab School" was never so progressive as to be concerned with the plight of the non-proprietary peasantry, beyond a predilection for conferring upon many of them a superior tenant status. Nonetheless, the opportunity was taken at the time of the settlements to extend to the peasantry as a whole a degree of security and protection considerably greater than than which it had ever enjoyed. By 1856 - despite enormous difficulties, mistakes, and compromises - the foundations of a solidly pro-peasant colonial regime had been laid. The question was whether this "experiment" of political exclusivity and of by-passing the intermediaries of the old order in favour of the peasantry had succeeded in laying the foundations of a viable and secure colonial regime. At the beginning of 1857, that question was about to be put to the test in a most dramatic fashion.

CHAPTER SIX

A TIME OF RECKONING, 1857-58

Introduction

On 10 May 1857 the sepoy regiments cantoned at Meerut, a town about forty miles northeast of Delhi, rose against their white officers, liberated the jail and plundered the European quarter. They then marched to Delhi where, having overcome a small body of British soldiers, they forced their way into the royal palace and proclaimed the decrepit and unwilling Bahadur Shah - descendant of the Mughals and pensioner of the British - Emperor of a new, free Hindustan. Thus began the Great Rebellion (or Mutiny) of 1857, a conflagration that rapidly engulfed most of north-central India and was not extinguished until Gwalior, the last of the rebel strongholds, fell to the British on 20 June 1858.

The unexpectedness of its eruption, the savagery that it produced on both sides and the completeness of its suppression were to make the Great Rebellion the most written-about event of British Indian history.¹ Yet it remains an historical enigma. Today, after more than a century of British imperialist and neo-imperialist writing on the subject, and after about three decades of Indian and Pakistani nationalist revisionism, the causes and character of the Great Rebellion - which has alternatively been labelled a "sepoy mutiny", an "independence war", a "first freedom struggle", a "Muslim rebellion", even a "revolution" - are still imperfectly understood and highly controversial.² One of the more puzzling aspects

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1. Shailendra Dhari Singh, who has made a study of fifty English-language "Mutiny novels", estimates (conservatively, one imagines) that there exists more than two hundred non-fictional accounts of 1857 by British authors alone: *Novels On The Indian Mutiny* (New Delhi, 1973), p.33, n 137. In the Select Bibliography of his *Recent Writings on the Revolt of 1857: A Survey* (New Delhi, 1975), Kalyan Kumar Sengupta lists forty-seven books and sixty-two articles on 1857 by Indian and Pakistani historians.
 2. Hugh Tinker, "1857 And 1957: The Mutiny And Modern India", in *International Affairs*, vol. 34, no. 1 (Jan 1958), pp. 57-65. For a denunciation of the trend towards regionalism and communalism in modern Indian and Pakistani scholarship, see Sengupta, *Recent Writings*, pp. 56-7. For a series of superb analyses of 1857, which show that a nonpartisan viewpoint is attainable, see Stokes's "Mutiny Rebellion" articles, which are reproduced in his *Peasant and the Raj*, papers 5-8.

of the Great Rebellion, and perhaps the area where imperialist and nationalist clichés retain their greatest hold on the popular historical imagination, is the role of the Punjab in 1857. Did the people of the Punjab sympathise with the cause of the Hindustani rebels, and did they attempt to subvert British rule in the Punjab?

To the older imperialist historians like Cave-Browne, Gibbon, Kaye and Malleon,³ whose principal concerns were to show that the rebellion was mainly a sepoy mutiny, and to recount the heroic deeds of those Englishmen who, with the assistance of Divine Providence, "saved" India, these questions had to be answered in the negative. To them, the Punjab was the province that acted as a breakwater against the storm in 1857: when the mutiny burst forth most Punjabis registered their satisfaction with British rule in a solid demonstration of loyalty both within the Punjab itself and in the military action to recapture Delhi, Lucknow and other strongholds of the mutineers. Of particular significance was the steadfast loyalty of the Sikhs, who relished the opportunity provided to them by the British to humble the *purabiah* ("easterner") sepoys who had defeated them in 1846 and in 1848-49, and to ravage Delhi, the city where nearly two centuries earlier their ninth Guru, Tegh Bahadur, had been executed at the order of the emperor, Aurangzeb. These ideas of the Punjab's loyalty in 1857 were generally accepted by the first generation of Punjabi historians writing in the post - Independence period.⁴

The imperialist interpretation of the Punjab's role in the Great Rebellion does not prove satisfactory on closer inspection, however. For one thing, it plays down the severity of many of the measures taken by the British to avert a general uprising in the Punjab; for another, it ignores, or quickly passes over the fact, that, these measures notwithstanding, several popular insurrections (of which at least one,

3. Rev. J. Cave-Browne, *The Punjab And Delhi In 1857* (Languages Dept. Punjab reprint, 1970); Gibbon, *The Lawrences Of The Punjab*; Sir J. Kaye and G.B. Malleon, *History of the Indian Mutiny* (London, 1898), Vol. 2.

4. For example, Khushwant Singh, *History Of The Sikhs*, Vol. 2.

the Gugera insurrection, assumed the proportions of a full-blown agrarian rebellion) broke out in the Punjab. Of late, therefore, a new generation of Punjabi historians has resolved to lift the stigma of loyalty from the Punjab. Hari Singh and Salahuddin Malik,⁵ for example, have denounced the idea of Punjabi collaboration in 1857 as an imperialist myth: the facts, they suggest, show that in 1857 the Punjab was actually seething with discontent; that although some Punjabis collaborated with the British, most either participated in the Great Rebellion or were awaiting the right opportunity to do so; that the British held the Punjab only because they unleashed a reign of terror there.

But this regionalist/communalist interpretation, like the imperialist interpretation, is at best a half-truth. To assert that anti-British feelings existed in the Punjab on the eve of the Great Rebellion is valid enough; but to claim that these feelings were widespread, and that most Punjabis acted upon them, is to take a great liberty with the facts. Similarly, to note, as Malik does, that most of the civil disturbances occurred in the Muslim districts of the Punjab is sufficiently well-grounded; but to go on from there to suggest that the participants in those disturbances acted in the way they did primarily because they were Muslims, and because they desired the restoration of Mughal power, is crudely to oversimplify an historical situation that demands more subtle analysis. In this chapter we shall try and put the Punjab's role in the Great Rebellion in a better historical perspective. Our discussion of the important events (summarised in Table 6:1) will seek to answer three basic questions. Why did the people of the Punjab resist for so long the general tendency to rebellion? Why, at last, just as the rebellion in Hindustan was on the point of collapse, did outbreaks begin to occur in the Punjab? And how did the British reward those Punjabis who had stood by them in their hour of weakness?

5. The argument of Singh's unpublished dissertation is summarised in Sengupta, *Recent Writings*, pp. 38-9. Malik's arguments (to which we shall return later in this chapter) are published as "The Punjab and The Indian 'Mutiny'", in *Journal of Indian History*, vol 50, pt 2 (Aug 1972), pp. 343-74; "The 1857 Gogira Rebellion In Southeastern Panjab: A Forgotten Muslim Response To British Rule In India", in *International Congress of Orientalists, 29th Congress, 1973: Proceedings of Section Inde Moderne*, vol 2 (1976), pp. 88-92.

TABLE 6:1 *Chronology of Important Events, 1857*

March		Unrest and incendiarism at Ambala cantonment
May	10	Outbreak at Meerut
	11	Massacre of Europeans in Delhi
	12	Arrival of news from Delhi in Punjab
	13	Disarming of sepoy at Lahore
	14	Ferozpur mutiny
June	7	Jullundur mutiny
	8	Siege of Delhi begun
July	7	Jhelum mutiny
	9	Sialkot mutiny
	26	Gugera jailbreak
	30	Lahore mutiny
August	28	Peshawar mutiny
September	2	Dhund attack on Murree station
	3	Suppression of Dhund insurrection
	14	Assault on Delhi
	17	Outbreak of Gugera insurrection
	20	Fall of Delhi
October	29	Suppression of Gugera insurrection

The turning of the general crisis

When the news of the massacre of Europeans in Meerut and Delhi was flashed up the telegraph line to Lahore on the morning of 12 May 1857, the Punjab administration was caught almost completely unawares. Looking back, it was easy to see that there had been warnings: for several months prior to the Meerut rising it had been known that the sepoys cantoned in the Punjab were greatly disturbed about the introduction of the infamous "greased" Enfield cartridges; in March unrest and incendiarism had broken out at the Ambala cantonment, and this had soon spread to the Hoshiarpur, Jullundur and Phillour cantonments; and in the first week of May government spies had provided information about plans for a general sepoy rising in the Punjab. But these warnings had been ignored by the military authorities, partly because most British officers in sepoy regiments had refused to believe that their own men were capable of mutiny,⁶ and partly because most Englishmen in general had been unable to appreciate the seriousness of the cartridge issue.⁷ Consequently, on 12 May 1857, the Punjab administration suddenly found itself confronted with four difficult tasks: men and supplies had to be assembled and sent down to Delhi; about 37,000 potentially - mutinous Hindustani sepoys had to be overawed; a long and troublesome frontier had to be guarded against outside attack; and a civil population of about thirteen millions had somehow to be kept back from insurrection.

Given that there were in the Punjab at the time only 10,000 European soldiers, and that the fidelity of the 10,500 Punjabi irregulars and

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6. When, subsequently, the 55th Native Infantry mutinied at Peshawar, their commanding officer, Colonel Spottiswoode, committed suicide: *MRR*, pt 2, p.152.
 7. *Ibid*, pt 1, pp. 3, 35-6, 47, 151, 277; pt 2, p.258. Once the Great Rebellion was over, Herbert Edwardes expressed a fairly typical British opinion on the cartridge issue when he observed that "it is lamentably characteristic of the conservative barbarism of India that a common piece of civilization - an improved rifle - has convulsed the empire, and called up 150,000 Asiatics to affirm by force of arms that spirit can be defiled by matter and religion converted in the stomach" : Edwardes, C and S Peshawar, to Montgomery, 23 March 1858, no 64: *ibid*, pt 2, p.143.

9,000 military police could only be hoped for, the situation demanded stern measures. The "Punjab School" responded with characteristic resoluteness and promptness. On the morning of 13 May four regiments of sepoys were disarmed at Lahore; simultaneously, the Ferozpur arsenal, which contained 7,000 barrels of powder and a large store of weapons, was secured.⁸ Over the next three months disaffected or "suspect" sepoy regiments were disarmed at more than a dozen places in the Punjab. Other precautionary measures were quickly taken. Following the issue of a series of directives by the Judicial Commissioner, Robert Montgomery, to all Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners,⁹ a policy of strict censorship, which included the opening of private mail and the gagging of the native press,¹⁰ was implemented; undesirable Hindustanis were weeded out of the lower ranks of the administration and sent down to Hindustan in caravans (by December more than 2,500 had been deported from the Punjab)¹¹; the guards at jails and treasuries were strengthened; and at the riverbanks, boats were seized and ferries guarded, thus ensuring the division of the Punjab Territories into "so many portions like the water-tight compartments of a ship."¹²

But, despite these measures, the position of the British in the Punjab was far from secure; until the fall of Delhi on 20 September 1857, it was, in fact, critical. Between May and September no fewer than twelve sepoy mutinies occurred in the Punjab. On 14 May the 45th Native Infantry rose at Ferozpur and attempted to capture the arsenal. Having been driven off, they burnt the civil headquarters and, accompanied by a large portion of the 57th Native Infantry, made off to Delhi.¹³ A week later the 55th Native Infantry mutinied at Hoti Mardan in the

8. Ibid, pt 2, pp. 198-9.

9. Montgomery's Circulars are reproduced in *ibid*, pt 2, pp. 300-05, 313-16.

10. The editor of a Peshawar newspaper was imprisoned; one press was closed in Multan, another in Sialkot: *PAR 1856-58*, p.10.

11. *MRR*, pt 1, pp. 250-1. In addition, a system of passports was introduced, the aim being to restrict the movement of Hindustanis into the Punjab.

12. *PAR 1856-58*, p.9.

13. *MRR*, pt 1, pp. 48-51.

Peshawar Division, just as they were about to be disarmed. The mutineers escaped into the Hazara mountains; but they were pursued and, with the assistance of the local tribes, hunted down and destroyed like wild beasts.¹⁴ On 7 June the 6th Light Cavalry and the 36th and 61st regiments of Native Infantry broke from Jullundur, marched to Phillour, where they were joined by the 3rd Native Infantry, and got away to Delhi.¹⁵ With so many mutineers finding their way to Delhi, British authority in the Punjab seemed to be crumbling rapidly. As it turned out, however, few mutineers were to get further south than the Sutlej after June, because the rivers were rising, and because the British were now determined at all cost to use their available British troops to destroy mutinous sepoy regiments before they had travelled too far.

On 7 July the 14th Native Infantry mutinied at Jhelum when attempts were made to disarm them. A pitched battle was fought and the mutineers were defeated. Of the 500, forty escaped, three were imprisoned, 119 were transported for life and the remainder either perished in battle or were executed after a drumhead court-martial.¹⁶ The 46th Native Infantry and part of the 9th Light Cavalry rose at Sialkot on 9 July. Having massacred a number of Europeans, plundered the treasury, burnt the courthouses, blown up the magazines, and released more than 300 prisoners from the jail, the 1,200 mutineers marched off towards Gurdaspur. Immediately, the local villagers swarmed into the Sialkot station and plundered it. When order was restored, a day or so later, these villagers were severely punished: about fifty of them were flogged or imprisoned, and fines totalling Rs 7,000 were imposed upon their villages. As for the mutineers, they were pursued by Brigadier-General Nicholson's Movable Column of British and Punjabi troops, driven into the Ravi near Gurdaspur and annihilated: Nicholson hanged or shot every mutineer he caught.¹⁷ On 14 July part of the 5th Native Infantry deserted the Thanesur station, in the Cis-Sutlej Division, and fled to Delhi.¹⁸

14. Ibid, pt 2, pp. 113-20, 151-2, 277-8, 290-93.

15. Ibid, pt 2, pp. 345-6.

16. Ibid, pt 1, p.384; pt 2, pp. 245-6, 347-8.

17. Ibid, pt 1, pp. 239-44; pt 2, pp. 238-9, 240-42, 351-2.

18. Ibid, pt 1, p.32.

On 30 July the 26th Native Infantry rose at Lahore, murdered their commanding officer and set off across the Manjha towards the Ravi. Unbeknown to them, the Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar District, Frederick Cooper, and the Assistant Commissioner at Kasur, R.W. Thomas, acting on instructions from Lahore, had already raised the people of the Manjha against them by stirring up the Manjha's hatred of *purabiah*s, and, even more effectively, by offering a reward of Rs 50 for every refugee sepoy caught dead or alive. As Montgomery later observed, "the smothered martial spirit of the people was kindled into a flame; escape for a deserter was hopeless, for every village became to him as a nest of hornets."¹⁹ Consequently, on 31 July, the 26th were attacked by a large party of police and villagers, led by the *tahsildar* of Ajnala, as they attempted to cross the Ravi. More than 150 of the mutineers were killed. Later in the afternoon, when they saw Cooper approaching at the head of a unit of cavalry, they sought refuge on an island in midstream. Thirty-five of them were drowned. The rest either were captured or gave themselves up in the "insane" belief, as Cooper later put it, that they were going to be given a fair court-martial "after some luxurious refreshment".²⁰ But Cooper wanted blood, just as Nicholson had a few days earlier. Two captured mutineers were hanged, and six were blown away from guns, by the orders of their own British officers. The remaining 282 Cooper sentenced to summary execution by firing squad (237 were so executed, but forty-five suffocated to death in a small room in the Ajnala *tahsil* office while awaiting their turn). The multitude of the 26th's camp-followers was "taken care of" (these are Cooper's euphemistic words) by the local villagers. Cooper's actions were condoned by his superiors; in fact, he was congratulated on his "energy and spirit". Montgomery requested of him only that any remaining mutineers be sent to Lahore: "You have had slaughter enough", the Judicial Commissioner wrote. "We want a few for the troops here and also for evidence."²¹ Most of the stragglers who were rounded up and sent to Lahore were blown away

19. Ibid., pt 2, p.235. See also *ibid.*, pt 1, pp. 234-5; *PAR 1856-58*, p.12.

20. Frederick Cooper, *The Crisis in the Punjab from the 10th of May until the Fall of Delhi* (London, 1858), pp. 154-6.

21. Quoted in Christopher Hibbert, *The Great Mutiny: India 1857* (Penguin, Middlesex, 1978), p.132.

from guns. One way or another, therefore, 568 of the 600 mutinous sepoys of the 26th were destroyed.²²

The later mutinies were equally inglorious affairs. On 19 August the 10th Light Cavalry broke from Ferozpur and disappeared into the wastes of northern Rajasthan.²³ A week later, at Peshawar, 871 men of the 51st Native Infantry, which was widely regarded as having been one of the finest sepoy corps in the Bengal Army, took up arms against their European officers. Within thirty-six hours, however, they had all been run down. Of the 697 men taken alive, 564 were executed by sentence of drumhead court-martial.²⁴ On 21 September, at Mianwali in the Leiah District, thirty men of the 9th Irregular Cavalry mutined. All were quickly destroyed.²⁵ Finally, at Ambala, on the last day of September, remnants of the 5th and 60th regiments of Native Infantry fled the cantonment upon seeing that they were about to be confined in the jail. But the British soldiers gave pursuit, and within ten minutes 135 sepoys had been butchered and thirty-three made prisoners. Only forty made good their escape.²⁶

While these mutinies were taking place a considerable portion of the civil population either broke into open rebellion (we shall examine the Murree and Gugera insurrections presently) or drifted towards the brink of rebellion. In the Cis-Sutlej Division, many of whose inhabitants were linked by ties of kinship to the rebellious districts of the North-Western Provinces, sympathy with the rebels was strong. The Muslim Gujar clans in Ludhiana District, for instance, were "in constant communication from village to village with the Delhie rebels."²⁷ With emissaries from Delhi (often disguised as fakirs) spreading word of the collapse of British authority in northern India, and with the constant

22. *MRR*, pt 1, pp. 246, 274-6.

23. *Ibid.*, pt 1, pp. 55-6.

24. *Ibid.*, pt 2, pp. 174-5.

25. *Ibid.*, pt 2, pp. 84-5.

26. *Ibid.*, pt 1, p.20.

27. G. Ricketts, late D.C. Ludhiana, to G. Barnes, C and S Cis-Sutlej, 22 Feb 1858: *ibid.*, pt 1, p.108.

passage of mutinous sepoys through the Division, most people became convinced that the British cause was a hopeless one. Consequently, with the notable exception of the Protected Sikh Chieftains (the rulers of Patiala, Jhind, etc.), they displayed a marked reluctance to provide the British with supplies and recruits.²⁸ Moreover, the belief that British power was doomed led to a sudden upsurge of violent crime, not only amongst the "hereditary thieving races" like the Harnis and Sansis, but also amongst a wide section of the rural population as a whole.²⁹

Close to the Umballa cantonment [the Commissioner of the Division later reported] a villager posted himself on the road with a gun in his hand, and plundered at his leisure...Villages in Thanesur [District], headed by their lumberdars, turned out in broad day fully armed and equipped, with drums beating and flags flying, to prey on the weaker villages. Frequent fights occurred, and the police were afraid even to report the state of affairs. The country was getting rapidly disorganized.³⁰

The Commissioner and his subordinate officers took punitive action. Several disobedient villages were heavily fined (one was burnt down); and the city of Ludhiana, accused of having aided the Jullundur mutineers, was disarmed - in the process of which two residential blocks were deliberately levelled - and fined Rs 55,000.³¹ A petty insurrection in the Raja of Nabha's territory was crushed by the Deputy Commissioner of Ferozpur District.³² The police were urged to attack robbers; an order issued on 2 June stated that "no responsibility will be incurred by the [police] man who takes the life of a robber in the act of crime, but, on the contrary, such bold deeds will be rewarded by promotion."³³

28. Ibid., pt 1, pp. 6-7.

29. Ibid., pt 1, p.108; *PAR 1856-58*, p.5.

30. Barnes to Montgomery, 5 Feb 1858, no 54: *MRR*, pt 1, pp. 10-11.

31. Ibid., pt 1, pp. 98-9; pt 2, pp. 214, 217. The populations of the Cis-Sutlej and Trans-Sutlej Divisions were not systematically and universally disarmed until 1858. Then nearly 110,000 weapons were collected: *General Report on the Administration of the Punjab and its Dependencies for 1858-59* (Lahore, 1859), (hereafter *PAR 1858-59*), pt 3, para 12.

32. *MRR*, pt 1, p.53.

33. Ibid., pt 1, p.9.

Many robbers who were taken alive were summarily executed by the civil authorities, as provided for by Act XIV of 1857.³⁴ Altogether, 123 "criminals" were executed in the Cis-Sutlej Division in 1857.³⁵

Elsewhere in the Punjab Territories (with the exception of the Murree hills and the Gugera District) there was, despite extensive rebel propaganda, relatively little sympathy with the cause of the Hindustan rebels.³⁶ Nor were most people yet convinced that the time had come to feign sympathy. Edward Thornton, Commissioner of Jhelum Division, found the popular response to the news of the Meerut and Delhi uprisings "very peculiar":

Great interest was exhibited [he continued], but there seemed less of the shock of surprise than I had expected to see. The explanation seemed to be that their eyes had witnessed political convulsions so frequently that they did not regard it as probable that the course of any Government would be equable and undisturbed.

A time of peril to the Government of the day was to them so common that they conveyed to each other the whole case by use of a single word. There was a "Roulah" or it was a time of "Shorish". Either of these terms sufficed to explain our state to a native of the division. All "Roulahs" did not according to their experience subvert the Government, nor, on the other hand, were all "Roulahs" successfully tided over by the Government. So a prudent man would be observant and profess loyalty until he saw his way clearly.³⁷

There were, however, signs to indicate that some men looked upon the present difficulties of the government as providing an opportunity to

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34. The Act empowered any two civil officers sitting in commission to try and execute any traitor or participator in violent crime. Typically, John Lawrence had delegated these powers to his junior officers at the outset of the crisis, before Act XIV reached Lahore: *ibid.*, pt 2, p.204.
35. *Ibid.*, pt 1, p.21.
36. For translations of rebel placards and proclamations in the Punjab, see *ibid.*, pt 1, pp. 255-60. For wild rumours spread by Delhi emissaries, see *ibid.*, pt 1, pp. 327-8, 369; pt 2, p.247. Munshi Jiwan Lall, who kept a diary of events inside Delhi in 1857, noted on 3 June, "In the Punjab, it was stated [at *darbar*], there was...little sympathy with the mutiny": C.T. Metcalf (trans), *Two Native Narratives of the Mutiny in Delhi* (Delhi, reprint 1974), p.112.
37. Thornton to Montgomery, 23 Feb 1858, no 80: *MRR*, pt 1, pp. 315-16.

revive old factional disputes,³⁸ and that the dominant tribes were preparing to defend their interests, should British power be annihilated. Towards the end of May it was rumoured, for instance, that the clan heads in the Bar tract of Shahpur District had met secretly to pledge themselves to a common course of action should the locally - cantoned sepoy rise in mutiny.³⁹ It was also discovered that throughout the Jhelum Division the fighting tribes were simultaneously manoeuvring for a trial of strength between themselves, and reasserting their old seigniorial rights over ordinary cultivators.⁴⁰

At this juncture, with their loyal police and military establishments stretched to the limit, the British could not hope forcibly to suppress this factionalism. But it could be manipulated. Here is Thornton, speaking after the crisis was over:

The numerous factions into which the population is divided forms a remarkable feature in the upper part of the Sind Sagur Doab. Heretofore our endeavour had been to soothe and obliterate if possible the feelings that kept up these divisions. Now, however, the want of unanimity in the people was an advantage we could not forego, and one faction was to a certain degree played off against another.⁴¹

Recruitment of soldiers and additional police was the key to this divide - and - rule strategy. In the Shahpur District the Tiwana chieftains were encouraged to raise about 1,000 horsemen for service as additional police in various parts of the Punjab. Many of these horsemen were heads of villages or were related to the headmen. "The presence of such a number of these among our armies," wrote the Deputy Commissioner, Gore Ouseley, "afforded an excellent guarantee for the good behaviour of those who remained at home."⁴² In the Rawalpindi District the people were

38. Thornton noted that in some instances if a man sided with the British, "it in itself rather inclined his opponent to disloyalty": *ibid.*

39. *MRR*, pt 1, p.395.

40. *Ibid.*, pt 1, pp. 323-6; *SR Gujrat 1861*, pp. 147-8.

41. Thornton to Montgomery, 23 Feb 1858, no 80: *MRR*, pt 1, p.324.

42. Ouseley to Thornton, 25 Feb 1858: *ibid.*, pt 1, pp. 396-7.

reluctant to enlist for distant service. But they were keen to serve as additional police in their own district for short periods. This was agreed to, since, as Thornton later put it, it "gave us the means of rewarding the well disposed and of inducing them to repress the remainder of the population."⁴³

Recruitment was, in fact, the strategy that swung the Punjab as a whole around from crisis to loyalty in 1857. It channelled the inter-clannic rivalries, growing uncertainties and frustrated ambitions of a large section of the population into acceptable competition and adventure. As soon as the news of the Meerut and Delhi massacres reached Lahore, John Lawrence got Nihal Singl Chhachhi (that old and faithful friend of the British) to draw up a list of the leading chieftains who had been deprived of their *jagirs* on account of their disloyalty in 1848-49. Lawrence then wrote to each, urging them, as Lawrence's personal secretary, Arthur Brandreth, later expressed it, to "retrieve their character" by coming in to Lahore with a specified number of retainers. As these chieftains came in, Lawrence organised them and sent them off to join the British camp on the Ridge above Delhi.⁴⁴ The district officers successfully mobilised the lesser chieftains.⁴⁵ "As almost a general rule", Thornton reported, "men who had been against us in the war of 1848-49, and who had lost wealth and rank in consequence, behaved especially loyally on this occasion."⁴⁶ Between them, the various chieftains of the Punjab produced about 14,000 irregular levies for service within the Punjab and under the walls of Delhi.⁴⁷

43. Thornton to Montgomery, 23 Feb 1858, no 80: *ibid.*, pt 1, p.317.

44. Brandreth, quoted in R. Bosworth Smith, *Life of Lord Lawrence* (London, 1901), vol 2, p.13.

45. For examples, see *MRR*, pt 1, pp. 7-8, 160-62, 365-6, 386; *SR Gujrat 1861*, p.153.

46. Thornton to Montgomery, 23 Feb 1858, no 80: *MRR*, pt 1, p.327. Some formerly disgraced chieftains even began to readopt their old titles of honour, and to assume new ones, without British permission: *ibid.*

47. *Ibid.*, pt 2, p.339.

Once the Punjab's general lack of sympathy with the Hindustan rebellion began to show, the British set about recruiting additional regular police and soldiers. Nearly 5,000 new men were induced into the regular, civil police force (an increase of about 52 per cent) between May and September.⁴⁸ And eighteen new regiments of infantry (about 34,000 men) were raised in the Punjab in 1857.⁴⁹ Nearly half of these recruits were drawn from the Lahore and Jhelum Divisions (the two Districts which had the highest recruitment figures were those of Lahore and Rawalpindi)⁵⁰ - from, in other words, the preeminently martial tracts of the Manjha and the Salt Range.⁵¹ By recruiting the hereditary peasant-soldiers of these tracts and sending them off to Delhi at once, the British probably ensured the survival of their rule in the Punjab. "The fiercer spirits", it was later observed, "were everywhere enrolled, and the very class most likely to create disturbance at home was drained off to serve abroad."⁵²

The Murree and Gugera insurrections

About the time that the Delhi rebels were making their final stand against the British siege machine, two desperate insurrections broke out in the Punjab. Neither of these insurrections, it must be said, amounted to much: each was a fairly limited-scale affair, involving a small number of people living in a backwater part of the Punjab, and each was speedily suppressed. But how are they to be explained, with respect both to their causes and to their characters? To contemporary British officials, who were inclined to see "treachery" almost everywhere at this time, these insurrections were nothing more than instances of opportunism - according to John Lawrence, for example, they "arose from no grievance or special cause whatever" but "merely sprang from the popular belief that British

48. *PAR 1856-58*, p.9.

49. *MRR*, pt 2, pp. 339-40.

50. For a return showing the number of "extra Establishment" recruited in the various Divisions and Districts, see *ibid.*, pt 2, p.317.

51. Montgomery observed that many villages in the Manjha "have been almost decimated by the number of recruits who have flocked to form our new regiments in memory of the bygone days when they bravely fought against us under the banners of the Khalsa": Montgomery's Report: *ibid.*, pt 2, p.231.

52. *PAR 1856-58*, p.53.

power was mortally stricken."⁵³ To a modern, nationalist-communalist historian like Malik, on the other hand, the insurrections are further proof that in 1857 most Punjabis, and especially Muslim Punjabis, were ardently hopeful of, and in some cases actively working for, a Mughal restoration.⁵⁴ Each assessment, we would maintain, is somewhat short of the mark.

The first insurrection broke out amongst the Dhunds of the Murree and Hazara hills in the northwestern corner of the Punjab. A proud, independent mountain people,⁵⁵ the Dhunds had risen against the Sikhs in 1837, and had been crushed as a result.⁵⁶ In 1851 the British had established a sanatorium for their European soldiers at Murree. Although the mountain people had gained a new market for their agricultural products and their labour, the establishment of the sanatorium and the construction of roads through their territory had not been to their liking. They particularly disliked the government's banning of their traditional practice of firing the mountain slopes to fertilise the soil. In 1858 Thornton noted that this ban "had always been a grievance."⁵⁷

The first sign of trouble came in May, when the people openly flouted this order by lighting many forest fires. Between May and July the British authorities received several reports suggesting that about eight Dhund villages had formed a "dua-i-khair", or solemn compact, for the defence of the hills.⁵⁸ The authorities responded to these reports by

53. From Lawrence's "Mutiny Report", conveyed in R. Temple, Secy to CC, to G. Edmonstone, Secy to GOI (with the GG), 25 May 1858, no 75-322 (Political): *MRR*, pt 2, p.364.

54. n 5 above.

55. According to the 1881 Census, the Dhunds numbered about 12,000 in Rawalpindi District and about 38,000 in Hazara District: Ibbetson, *Panjab Castes*, Abstract 81, pp. 150-51.

56. Griffin *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 2, pp. 306-7.

57. Thornton to Montgomery, 23 Feb 1858, no 80: *MRR*, pt 1, p.320.

58. *MRR*, pt 1, pp. 329-31, p.333; pt 2, p.247.

calling about a dozen village headmen in to Murree, ostensibly to advise the Assistant Commissioner, Lieutenant Battye, at the sanatorium, but in reality to act as hostages.⁵⁹ On 18 July a sweeper boldly hinted to an English lady that all Europeans at Murree would soon be slaughtered. After that, rumours of a Dhund "conspiracy" became almost commonplace. Finally, on 1 September, one of Lady Lawrence's bodyguards warned the British that an attack on Murree was imminent. With only 180 able-bodied soldiers to defend the sanatorium, to which a large number of European women and children had by this stage been evacuated, the Assistant Commissioner thus found himself in a grim situation.

Early in the morning of the next day a party of 300 Dhunds attacked the European quarters at the sanatorium. But they were driven off by the Assistant Commissioner and his men, who had maintained an all-night vigil. One man was killed on each side. The next day the Commissioner of Jhelum Division, Edward Thornton, arrived at Murree with reinforcements and dispersed the main body of attackers. Members of those tribes which had a history of opposition to the Dhunds, such as the Dhanials, together with *jagirdars* like the Pirs of Palassi, whom the Dhunds recognised as religious superiors, were called upon to assist with the suppression of the Dhunds. Over the next few weeks most of those who had participated in the attack were hunted down and punished. Eleven Dhund villages were burned to the ground, and about 3,000 cattle and 350 acres of land were confiscated. Fifteen men were executed, and 202 were imprisoned.⁶⁰

Once the Dhund insurrection was over, the British discovered that the "conspiracy" had been a much more extensive one than had been thought. Not only had many of the Hindustani servants at the sanatorium been in league with the Dhunds (two Hindustani doctors employed at Murree were subsequently executed for their part in the insurrection), but plans for

59. Ibid., pt 1, pp. 318, 322, 329-30; pt 2, p.247. In July these hostages complained to Battye that an American missionary had been preaching in the bazaar, where they were then residing, and that he had told them that both their religion and their Prophet were false. Battye apparently took no action on their complaint: *ibid.*, pt 1, p.329.

60. Ibid., pt 1, pp. 341-6, 357, 360; pt 2, pp. 124-7, 248; *SR Rawalpindi 1864*, pp. 89-90.

the attack on Murree had extended far beyond the territory of the Dhunds, well into Hazara and down to the plains around Rawalpindi; a general rising of hill tribes, in other words, had been planned.⁶¹ Fortunately for the British, the other tribes - which, because they possessed clearer political structures (the Dhunds had no paramount chieftain), were capable of speedier and more organised mobilisation than the Dhunds⁶² - had pulled out from the wider "dua-i-khair" at the last moment. Had the Dhund insurrection been successful, however, these tribes would almost certainly have risen, too.

A larger and more serious insurrection, in which different tribes did combine, with considerable effectiveness, occurred in Gugera (later Montgomery) District. Situated in the lower Bari Doab, between Lahore and Multan, Gugera District was for the most part a wild expanse of stunted brushwood and waving grass - the natural home of the pastoralist. The lands along the west bank of the Sutlej were held by the Rajput Wattus. The Ravi valley, in Gugera, Jhang and Multan Districts, was occupied by the Great Ravi tribes - the Joyas, Khatias, Kharrals, Sials and Wattus⁶³ - and clans - the Baghelas (a Khatia clan), Wahniwals (a Jat clan), Fattianas and Murdanas (both Sial clans). Each of these tribes and clans occupied a distinct domestic tract, within which there were

61. *MRR*, pt 1, pp. 337, 343-4, 347, 357; pt 2, p.249.

62. *Ibid.*, pt 1, p.344.

63. These were mostly Rajput tribes. According to the 1881 Census, their numbers in the three districts of Multan Division were as follows:

	Joyas	Khatias	Kharrals	Sials	Wattus
Gugera	6,562	3,809	21,448	7,886	11,644
Jhang	2,203	774	3,216	36,811	353
Multan	5,532	7,558	3,356	23,597	100

Source: Ibbetson, *Panjab Castes*, Abstract 80, pp. 140-41; p.174.

also located the villages of the socially inferior cultivators, and exercised dominance over general portions of the Bar grazing grounds in the Bari and Rachna Doabs. Although they were united by the ties of occupation, religion and, in some cases, inter-marriage, and by a common disdain towards outsiders, these tribes and clans were much given to factionalism. Between the Sials and the Kharrals, for example, there existed a long history of bitter rivalry, while the Kharrals were themselves divided into two factions (based on the Upera and Lakhera *gots*), between which there was a long-standing feud.⁶⁴

The commonest expression of this factionalism was cattle-theft. Purser, who conducted the revised settlement in Gugera District in the 1870s, categorised these pastoralists as "the last of the essentially robber tribes" and claimed that they were "more or less addicted to cattle-stealing."⁶⁵ However, these tribes and clans were quite capable of sinking their differences in order to defy their two common enemies: the State revenue collector and the Hindu moneylender. They used to speak with pride of the *kardars* they had killed during the years of Sikh rule, and of the long periods when they had paid no revenue because the Sikhs had been unable or afraid to collect it.⁶⁶ In 1843 the Ravi tribes and the Wattus along the Sutlej had risen *en masse* against the Sikhs. The Kharrals and Sials had risen again in 1845-46. And in 1848-49, at the prompting of the British, all the Ravi and Sutlej tribes had plundered the Hindu and Sikh villages, whose property they had been allowed to divide up amongst themselves.⁶⁷ Ahmad Khan Kharral, head of the Upera *got*, had led no fewer than five insurrections against the authority of the Sikhs, and had gained a reputation far and wide as a fearless robber baron.⁶⁸ It was he who initiated the insurrection of 1857.

64. Ibid., p.174.

65. *SR Montgomery 1878*, p.47.

66. Ibbetson, *Panjab Castes*, p.146. This perhaps explains the complex story of how, between 1800 and 1849, the different *ta'aluqas* of Gugera District were constantly switched back and forth between *khalsa* (under a *kardar*), *jagir* and *ijar*: for details, see *SR Montgomery 1878*, p.39.

67. *SR Montgomery 1878*, p.38; *MRR*, pt 2, p.45.

68. Ibbetson, *Panjab Castes*, p.175.

Basically, what happened in 1857 was this. At the commencement of the general crisis the civil station of Gugera was occupied by a company of the 49th Native Infantry and a unit of mounted police. The officiating Deputy Commissioner, Lieutenant Elphinstone, used the police to disarm the sepoys, who were then sent off to Lahore, about 75 miles away. When the flames of rebellion spread to Sirsa District, to the east of the Sutlej, in the first weeks of June, a large portion of the police was sent across the Sutlej. A troop of Biloch Horse, recently dispatched to Gugera, was found to be mutinous, and had to be sent back across the Indus to be disbanded. A new unit of mounted levies, raised amongst the Sials of Jhang District, was substituted and this allowed the remainder of the Gugera police to be sent to the North-Western Provinces.⁶⁹

It would seem that these changes, particularly the gradual removal of the local police and the substitution of Sial levies, had an unsettling effect on Gugera District. In the first week of July a Sutlej village refused to pay a balance of revenue, and cattle-theft and highway robbery flared up in that portion of the District. On 26 July a mass breakout from the Gugera jail was attempted. About twenty prisoners escaped, but fifty-one were killed or wounded by the police. Ahmad Khan Kharral, who had - along with the other pastoral chieftains - been obliged since the beginning of the crisis to reside at the civil station, took the opportunity to slip away. He was captured and brought back to Gugera, however, and was forbidden to leave the station without Elphinstone's permission.⁷⁰

The insurrection began on 17 September, just three days before the fall of Delhi, when Ahmad Khan and the other Ravi chieftains deserted the Gugera station. Ahmad Khan retired to his village, Jhamra, on the west bank of the Ravi. A small force of troopers, led by the Extra Assistant Commissioner, L. Berkeley, set off in pursuit of the Kharral chieftain. When Berkeley reached the Ravi, Ahmad Khan appeared on the

69. *MRR*, pt 2, pp. 10-11, 37.

70. *Ibid.*, pt 2, pp. 43-4.

opposite bank and shouted across "that he had renounced his allegiance to the British Government and considered himself a subject of the King of Delhi, from whom he had received orders to raise the whole country."⁷¹

On the arrival of reinforcements, Berkeley's party crossed the Ravi and marched on Jhamra. Ahmad Khan and his followers escaped, but his village was burned down, the families were arrested, and 700 cattle were seized. After the Ahmad Khan re-crossed the river to join forces with the Wattus on the east bank. On 20 September the rebels, having attempted to attack Gugera station, were driven into the dense thickets along the riverbank. The next day a party of Sikh and British horsemen caught up with Ahmad Khan and killed him.⁷² Although the Kharrals now submitted, and the Wattus soon retired to their villages, the insurrection was by no means over, for about this time the Fattianas and Murdanas rose in rebellion. On 22 September these clans ambushed and killed Berkeley and about fifty of his men at a swampy spot beside the Ravi. And towards the end of the month the Joyas, Khatias, Baghelas and Wahniwals also rose. As Elphinstone later observed, "the whole country as far as Toolumba, in the Mooltan District, was in open insurrection."⁷³

The British poured reinforcements into Gugera District from Lahore and Multan in an effort to prevent the insurrection from spreading across the whole of the southern Bar. But the pursuing foot soldiers, slowed down by heavy artillery, could not keep up with the rebels, while the

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71. Elphinstone to G. Hamilton, C and S Multan, 30 Jan 1858, no A: *ibid.*, pt 2, p.46.
72. *Ibid.*, pt 2, pp. 46-9. The man who claimed to have killed Ahmad Khan was Dhara Singh Nakai. In 1848 Dhara Singh had joined the rebels at Multan. Ahmad Khan, having induced him to fortify his house at Satgarha in the lower Manjha, had then betrayed him to the British. In 1857 Dhara Singh betrayed Ahmad Khan and provided the British with information that ensured the conviction of many of Ahmad Khan's followers: Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 1, pp. 287-8.
73. Elphinstone to Hamilton, 30 Jan 1858, no A: *MRR*, pt 2, p.51. It was at this stage that many of the police began to surrender their weapons to the rebels. For an example, see *PAR 1856-58*, pp. 8-9.

cavalry frequently found itself lured into the jungles and confronted with an enemy whose skill in guerilla combat was second to none.⁷⁴

At Chichawatni a relief force from Multan was besieged for three days by about 2,000 rebels. Rebel marksmen moved about over the tops of the houses, concealed under the petticoats of the village women.⁷⁵

In the first week of October the Khatias, Baghelas and Wahniwals, having thoroughly plundered the town of Kamalia in the Jhang District, joined forces with the Fattianas and Murdanas and retired into the Jullee jungle on the west bank of the Ravi, "a place renowned as having successfully withstood the attack of the Sikhs in former insurrections."⁷⁶ For two weeks the rebels frustrated the attempts of the British to enter their jungle stronghold. Finally, on 22 October the rebels broke out of Jullee, crossed the Ravi and, driving their herds before them, fled across the Bar towards the Sutlej. The British columns gave chase, caught up with the main body of rebels at Churur Tezi Ka on 29 October and inflicted a decisive defeat on them. The Gugera insurrection was over.⁷⁷ It was now time for the British to teach the pastoral tribes the lesson that "rebellion is not a profitable speculation."⁷⁸ The rebel leaders were rounded up and executed or deported; the rebel tribes, besides having thousands of cattle and camels confiscated, were fined more than Rs 5 *lakhs*.⁷⁹ Military roads were cut through the jungles to enable new police posts to be established.⁸⁰

74. F.C. Marsden, who was DC of Gugera after November 1857, wrote of the Fattianas and Khatias: "few men understand bush-fighting better than they do or are better shots: they scatter and assemble by beat of *dhole* [war drum] in a very short space of time, with the different sounds of which they are as familiar as trained Light Infantry": Marsden to Hamilton, 31 Jan 1858: *MRR*, pt 2, pp. 62-3.

75. *Ibid.*, pt 2, p.71.

76. Elphinstone to Hamilton, 30 Jan 1858, no A: *ibid.*, p.2, p.54.

77. *Ibid.*, pt 2, pp. 56-62, 75-8.

78. Edward Reike [?] to Hamilton, 28 Dec 1857, no 445: *JDP*, 2 Jan 1858, no 8 (PS).

79. *SR Montgomery 1878*, p.40; *PAR 1856-58*, p.11.

80. *Montgomery DG 1883-84*, p.39.

How should the Gugera insurrection be interpreted? Neither the contemporary British view of it as a case of crude opportunism⁸¹ nor Malik's assertion that it was "entirely Muslim, and quite nationalistic in character"⁸² will do. To be sure, the rebels waited until the position of the British in the Punjab was weakest - when every available man was under the walls of Delhi - before they rose. And it cannot be doubted that they were fired by the idea of a Muslim political revival. But there is a problem: not all the pastoral tribes and clans of the southern Bari arose in 1857. The Suttlej Wattus, for example, remained aloof from the rebellion, while the Lakhera *got* of the Kharrals actively collaborated with the British, as did the Sials of Jhang District and the Langrials of Multan District.⁸³ To a certain extent, the fact that some tribes and clans rebelled, whereas other did not, can be explained in terms of factional divisions within the pastoral community - divisions between, for example, the Sials on the one hand and the Khatias and Kharrals on the other, and between the two main Kharral *gots*. The individual chieftain's decision either for rebellion or for collaboration would have been influenced by the course adopted by his traditional rival.⁸⁴

Economic conditions also help to explain the inconsistency of response. The greater portion of the southern Bari Doab was, by the mid-1850s, on the verge of a massive shift from pastoralism to peasant agriculture. Under Diwan Sawan Mal's administration, great encouragement had been given to cultivators who were prepared to colonise the wastes. The British, through their policies of improving irrigation facilities, conferring proprietary rights in land and making waste-land grants on favorable terms,

81. For example, Montgomery explained the insurrection as a case of the pastoralists believing "that they might indulge their inborn love of plunder without any fear of a check": Montgomery to Temple, 24 March 1858, no 149: *MRR*, pt 2, p.267.

82. Malik "The 1857 Gogira Rebellion", p.90.

83. *SR Montgomery 1878*, p.45; Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 2, pp. 359-62, 369; FC, 30 March 1860, nos 121-4 (NAI).

84. For example, it was the head of the Lakhera *got* of the Kharrals, Safraz Khan, who provided Elphinstone with the news that Ahmad Khan had deserted the Gugera station on 17 September: *MRR*, pt. 2, p.45.

had accelerated the transition to settled cultivation. The immediate social and economic consequences of these policies were not uniform, however; and this was reflected in the pattern of political response in 1857. For example, the Sutlej Wattus, who had recently taken to agriculture and were enjoying the considerable benefits brought by the the upgrading of the old Khanwah and Sohag inundation canals, did not join the insurrection.⁸⁵ Throughout the remainder of the Gugera District, however, economic conditions were far less auspicious. The Bari Doab Canal was in the process of being constructed through the heart of Gugera District (on its completion, in 1859, this canal extended into Multan District).⁸⁶ At the same time, thousands of acres of waste land were being leased by capitalists in anticipation of the profits to be made once the canal was operating. Purser later noted that "there was a mania for acquiring land in those days; and land anywhere near the canal would have been taken on any terms."⁸⁷ To cultivate, these lessees had to lure tenants away from the old, established villages. This had a "disastrous" impact on most of the old villages, where barely one-third of the land within the village boundaries was under the plough as it was.⁸⁸

Added to this was the fact that agricultural prices in Gugera District remained low for many years after annexation, whereas elsewhere in the Punjab they were on the rise again by the mid-1850s. Table 6:2 shows the average annual prices paid for the main crops by the Hindu shopkeepers (*bantias* or *kirars*) in the district towns of Dipalpur and Hujra between 1839 and 1857. Clearly, although prices had made a slight recovery from their post-annexation slump by 1857, the agriculturists of Gugera District were still having to part with twice as much produce for the same amount of money as they had had to in the years before annexation. Low agricultural prices hurt the Great Ravi pastoral tribes, too, because they reduced the value of the one-quarter or one-third share of the produce which the pastoralists received from the cultivators as

85. *SR Montgomery 1878*, p.45.

86. *PAR 1858-59*, p.20.

87. *SR Montgomery 1878*, pp. 148-51.

88. *Ibid.*

Table 6:2 *Agricultural Prices in Gugera District, 1839-57*

Year	Price in Seers per Rupee					
	Unhusked Rice	Wheat	Gram	Millets		
				Jowar	Kangni	China
1839	28	34	40	24	33	33
1840	22	29	38	35	30	26
1841	35	31	40	44	60	47
1842	35	50	57	49	115	90
1843	32	47	60	62	120	105
1844	34	42	51	42	70	55
1845	35	40	51	45	75	60
1846	35	36	50	35	61	54
1847	47	32	40	35	70	52
1848	36	47	60	26	45	37
1849	28	23	26	20	32	25
1850	60	37	45	51	61	52
1851	51	60	80	60	95	70
1852	56	52	60	62	82	57
1853	51	50	80	40	80	51
1854	48	40	52	48	90	69
1855	63	50	69	56	105	85
1856	50	45	61	36	99	70
1857	59	50	85	60	90	70

Source: *SR Montgomery 1878*, pp.154-5.

landlord's rent (*malikana*). Taken together, low prices and the encroachment of capitalist lessees explain a good deal about the sacking of Kamalia by the Khatias, Baghelas and Wahniwals in the last week of September 1857. The pastoralists caused little or no physical harm to the townspeople, but they did plunder all the valuables and burn the stores of grain. Most significantly, they destroyed the records of the hated moneylenders.

On visiting the town [wrote a British officer] it presented one scene of misery, desolation, and wilful destruction; the streets from one end to the other were literally paved with the shredded books of the bunneeahs. The rebels it appears revelled for several days at the expense of the inhabitants, and, as the cultivators [sic]...are always deeply indebted to the money-lenders and bunneeahs, it was an object with them to efface all proof of their indebtedness. They did so most effectually.⁸⁹

In the final analysis, both the Gugera and Murree insurrections can be seen as instances of "delayed primary resistance". Both occurred in isolated tracts where Sikh authority had always been weak, and where most of the inhabitants had taken the side of the British in 1848-49. Both were tribal insurrections, led by tribal chieftains (or village headmen, in the case of the Dhunds). And both were limited-scale affairs: the Murree insurrection involved fewer than twenty Dhund villages; and even the much larger Gugera insurrection was not joined by all the pastoral tribes and clans, or - with only a few exceptions - by the cultivating tenants of those pastoralist who did rebel. The Gugera and Murree insurrections were essentially conservative and elitist movements which emerged from within traditional, local power structures that had only just begun to be challenged and undermined by British colonial rule. They were, in a broad sense, smaller, Muslim versions of the "primary resistance" that the Sikhs had already offered in 1845-46.

89. "Narrative of the movements of Major C. Chamberlain's Column" (no author, no date): *MRR*, pt 2, p.74.

The rewards of collaboration

Delhi fell to a combined army of British and Punjabi soldiers on 20 September 1857. But the Great Rebellion was not over yet. Large parts of the Gangetic plain and central India remained in rebel hands. In the winter of 1857-58 the British, using troops sent out from Britain and the cream of the Punjabi recruits, broke the rebel strength in a series of set campaigns in Rohilkhand, Oudh and Bundelkhand. It was not until the first week in July 1858 that the Governor-General, Lord Canning, was able to proclaim peace.

Once the rebellion in the northwest was over, many of those Punjabis who had played a conspicuous part in its suppression were rewarded by the British. At least forty-seven prominent chieftains were rewarded for their "loyalty" in 1857 with titles like Khan Bahadur or Sardar Bahadur (both mean "Great Chieftain"), with military honours like the Order of British India or the Order of Merit, with cash *khil'ats* (presentations), with *jagirs*, with pensions, with land grants (wherein either a proprietary title or a landlord title was conferred), or with a combination of these prizes. Table 6:3 provides the available details in a composite form.⁹⁰

Table 6:3 - *Rewards to a group of chieftains who remained "loyal" in 1857*

Number of Chieftains	Rewards							Number of land grants
	Number of titles and honours	Cash <i>khil'ats</i>		<i>Jagirs</i>		<i>Pensions</i>		
		Number	Value RS	Number	Value RS	Number	Value RS	
47	19	18	22,900	19	25,250	8	6,260	8

90. The sources are: Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 1, pp. 195-6, 220, 250-51, 356, 363-4, 416-17, 453, 468-9, 492, 500; vol 2, pp. 40, 91, 108-9, 118, 188, 203-5, 224, 234, 238, 248, 276, 290-91, 294, 315, 324, 328, 331, 333-4, 339, 345, 359-62, 369, 376-7, 381, 385; *SR Lahore 1858*, pp. 22-3; *Titled Gentlemen and Chiefs other than Ruling Chiefs* (no author, Government Civil Secretariat Press, Lahore, 1878), pp. 100-01, 112-13. Unfortunately, the value of *khil'ats*, *jagirs* and pensions is not always specified; the details provided in Table 6:3 are therefore incomplete.

It is worth noting that several of these chieftains received large land grants in Oudh, and became principal *talukdars* (landlords) there. For example, Ali Reza Khan Qizilbash of Lahore District, who had, at his own expense, raised a troop of horsemen for service before Delhi, was granted a *talukdari* of 147 villages (worth Rs 15,000 per annum) in Oudh.⁹¹ It is also worth noting that fourteen of these chieftains came from families whose *jagirs* and titles had been confiscated following their "disloyalty" in 1848-49. For many such families, the Great Rebellion presented a golden opportunity to regain at least some of their former wealth and official standing; and the importance of their "loyalty" at this time, particularly the example they set other Punjabis who might otherwise have wavered, cannot be underestimated. Take the case of Kahn Singh Rosa, a former Colonel in the Sikh army, who had fought the British in 1848-49, and had lost *jagirs* worth Rs 2,880 at annexation. When the Great Rebellion broke out in 1857, Kahn Singh was one of the first chieftains selected by the Chief Commissioner for service before Delhi. Kahn Singh was wounded at Delhi, but he saw out the campaign, serving as an informant and propagandist for the British. In 1858 the British rewarded him with the grant of several villages (including his own) in *jagir*, and a confiscated house in Delhi worth Rs 4,000.⁹² Another good example is provided by the case of Jawahir Singh, the son of the famous Sikh general, Hari Singh Nalwa. In 1849 Jawahir Singh had led the dashing charge of Sikh irregular cavalry at Chilianwala; and after annexation, he and his two brothers had lost *jagirs* worth Rs 14,200. In 1857 Jawahir Singh was selected for service in Hindustan. He was in action against the rebels on no fewer than eighteen occasions; and at the end of the campaign he was rewarded with the Order of British India and a *jagir* worth Rs 1,200 per annum (half in perpetuity).⁹³

91. Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 1, pp. 250-51. For other examples, see *ibid.*, vol 1, pp. 468-9; *PAR 1858-59*, p.31.

92. *Titled Gentlemen*, pp. 112-13.

93. Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 2, p.91; *Gujranwala DG 1883-84*, pp. 34-6.

Besides these prominent chieftains, there were numerous lesser chieftains - minor *jagirdars*, clan heads and *lambardars* - who were rewarded for their services in 1857. Many of them had served as extra police, or had played a key role in the pursuit and destruction of fugitive sepoys. Rewards received by these men included small cash *khil'ats*, plots of revenue-free land, jewelry, firearms and ceremonial turbans.⁹⁴ Those who received land grants were also presented with a *sanad* (deed), in which it was specified that the continuance of the grant would be conditional on the good conduct of the grantee and his family.⁹⁵

A few Punjabi soldiers received official rewards, too.⁹⁶ But most of those who had been recruited as additional soldiers in 1857 were expected to be satisfied with the large share of booty that had fallen to them - they were "never backward in its acquisition" - after the capture of Delhi, Lucknow and other rebel centres.⁹⁷ However, with the reorganisation of the Indian Army after 1858,⁹⁸ a good many of those peasant recruits found permanent employment as soldiers. By 1860 there were many villages in the Manjha, for example, that had twenty-five or fifty men in military service.⁹⁹ (It was estimated at this time that,

94. There are numerous examples in Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, 2 vols. For petty rewards in Multan Division, see FC, 30 March 1860, nos 121-4 (NAI); Political Department Proceedings (hereafter PDP), 27 Nov 1858, nos 1-6 (PS). For the same in Lahore Division, see PDP, 19 June 1858, nos 1-3; 14 Aug 1858, no 7, (PS).

95. FPC, 2 July 1858, nos 195-200 (NAI); RDP, 3 July 1858, no 44 (PS).

96. For the example of a waste-land grant to a soldier, see FDP, Revenue B, Dec 1862, no 26 (NAI).

97. *PAR 1858-59*, p.12. For an eyewitness account of Sikh looting and plundering in Delhi, see Hibbert, *The Great Mutiny*, p.319, quoting Richard Barter.

98. This reorganisation was based upon a report from a commission under General Peel (1858). Peel's commission recommended that the proportion of Indian to European troops should be fixed at two to one, and that no Indians should be taken into the artillery. The following figures show the changes within the Regular army in the Punjab - the Punjab Irregular Force, which comprised 29,500 men (16,000 Europeans, 13,500 Punjabis), is excluded - between early 1857 and 1862:

		Early 1857	1862
<i>Europeans</i>	(Men	12,650	16,000
	(Guns	70	90
<i>Indians</i>	(Men	41,500	13,500
	(Guns	36	-

Source: *PAR 1861-62*, para 183.

99. *SR Lahore 1858*, p.17.

including soldiers, there were about 60,000 Punjabis in the employ of the British, and that their combined pay was about Rs 72 *lakhs*, or the equivalent of half the land revenue demand in the Punjab Province).¹⁰⁰ The "loyalty" of Punjabi recruits in 1857 was in fact an important factor behind that change of British military policy whereby, from the 1880s onwards, the "martial races" of the Punjab - and in particular, Sikhs and Muslims - were deliberately recruited to form the backbone of the armed forces in British India. For example, in 1862 Punjabi battalions made up 21.4 per cent of the Indian infantry. By 1892 the figure had increased to 29.6 per cent; and by 1914 it stood at 43.8 per cent.¹⁰¹ The Punjab's reputation as the "swordarm" of the modern State in South Asia - it is a reputation that is still largely warranted today - can therefore be dated back to 1857.

Conclusion

It would be quite wrong to maintain that the authority of the British was not seriously threatened in the Punjab in 1857. The upsurge of violent crime in the Cis-Sutlej Division, the general restlessness of the population in the Jhelum Division, the numerous mutinies of Hindustani sepoys, the marked reluctance of the urban business community to contribute to the financing of the Delhi campaign,¹⁰² the fact that in June the Chief Commissioner was prepared to abandon Peshawar in order that the rest of the Punjab Territories might the better be garrisoned¹⁰³ and, finally, the Murree and Gugera insurrections -

100. *PAR 1858-59*, p.12.

101. Based on figures provided in T.A. Heathcote, *The Indian Army: The Garrison of British Imperial India, 1822-1922* (Melbourne, 1974), p.104; S.P. Cohen, *The Indian Army: Its Contribution to the Development of a Nation* (Berkeley, 1971), p.44.

102. For the unwillingness of the merchant-banker class to invest in the 6 per cent Loan opened in the Punjab in 1857, see *MRR*, pt 2, p.201.

103. Portions of John Lawrence's private correspondence with Herbert Edwardes (C and S Peshawar) and Canning (GG) on this subject are reproduced in Bosworth Smith, *Life of Lord Lawrence*, vol 2, chap. 2. It is interesting that the subject receives no mention in any of the official "Mutiny Reports".

all these developments demonstrated the tenuousness of British authority in the region in 1857.

In the event, however, the Punjab - as a whole - held for the British. We would suggest that there were three basic reasons for this. First, as we have seen, the Punjab authorities took prompt and resolute action to check the drift towards mutiny and civil lawlessness. One of the reasons why they were able to do this was, of course, that they had at their disposal a relatively large number of British troops (about one-quarter of all regular British soldiers in India, and almost one-half of those in the Bengal Army, were cantoned in the Punjab at the beginning of 1857). Though most of these British troops were eventually sent down to Hindustan, the role that they played in disarming the sepoy regiments and in pursuing fugitive sepoys in the period between May and August 1857 would appear to have been crucial. The official statistics on the punishments meted out, under the terms of Act XIV, by the civil and military authorities in 1857 give at least an idea of the extent to which "anti-public" behaviour was, wherever possible, firmly repressed: altogether, 2,384 persons were executed, and 3,244 persons were imprisoned, flogged or fined, in the Punjab in 1857.¹⁰⁴ Second, the Punjab simply was not sufficiently combustible for a full-scale civil rebellion in 1857. Many individuals may have had reason to feel less than satisfied with British rule; but there was no general grievance, or set of grievances, to unite the whole of Punjabi society against the British: to make the sub-imperialism of the Hindustanis an attractive alternative to British rule. It is worth noting here that, although the spring and autumn harvests of 1856 had not been abundant, agricultural prices in most districts had at least risen to something like their pre-annexation levels. In the spring of 1857, however, the harvest had been a bumper one; and since the markets were not overstocked from the previous year, prices had remained high.¹⁰⁵ It is also worth noting that the worst effects of British land revenue law in India - notably, forced sales and transfers of proprietary titles -

104. *PAR 1856-58*, p.7.

105. *Ibid.*, p.16.

had not yet appeared in the Punjab (here the difference between the Punjab and the North-Western Provinces in the decades before 1857 is particularly striking). In 1856-57 there had been only three forced sales, and only fourteen transfers (to a revenue farmer) in the Punjab. In 1857-58 there were no sales, and only seven transfers. In 1857 fully 99 per cent of the land revenue demanded, was collected in the Punjab.¹⁰⁶ Clearly, agricultural security, even prosperity, was an important factor behind the Punjab's general "loyalty" in 1857.

Third, and most importantly, the British forestalled any proclivity that the Punjab as a whole might have been developing towards independence of action by deliberately reviving the Punjab's old martial traditions and directing them towards the defence of the empire. It is certain that without Punjabi assistance the British would not have reestablished their authority in northern India as quickly as they did. Fortunately for the British, the old martial traditions were not so dead, and the Punjab was not (despite the general disarmament after 1849) so destitute of weapons, that the old, chieftain - based military establishments that had been such a prominent feature of Ranjit Singh's army could not be revitalised in 1857. Indeed, after the call for levies had gone out, the British were often agreeably surprised at the rapidity with which both men and arms were produced.¹⁰⁷ But we should be most wary of ascribing this "loyalty" to the British cause to any deep-seated attachment to British rule, or belief in its legitimacy. Even John Lawrence was not so impressed by the flocking of Sikh soldiers, old and new, to the recruitment stations as to suppose that "thoughts of future triumphs and future independence did not cross the imaginations of these people; that aspirations of restoring the Khalsa were not excited during the summer of 1857."¹⁰⁸ Basically, those Punjabi chieftains who, together with their old retainers, stood by the British in 1857 - and this applies particularly to those who had rebelled in 1848-49 - did so on the basis

106. *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

107. *Ibid.*, p.11.

108. Temple to Edmonstone, 25 May 1858, no 75-322 (Political): *MRR*, pt 2, p.364.

of what, in another context, Ajayi has called the "politics of survival."¹⁰⁹ With the memory of two, recent defeats of the Sikhs behind them, most Punjabi chieftains were anxious to stay with the British in 1857, even when it appeared that the British had only a minimal edge over the rebels. For their part, the British learned an important lesson in 1857: when it came to a political crisis as serious as that of the Great Rebellion, they really could not afford to be without the support of the "influential" sections of Indian society; and after the Great Rebellion was over, they were quick to acknowledge this through their distribution of rewards. Since 1849 the British had, in the interests of their "imperial experiment" in the Punjab, deliberately avoided sharing power with that class in Punjabi society that proved so supportive in 1857. The question to which we must now turn is this: how far was the "Punjab School" prepared to modify its political strategy in the decade after the suppression of the Great Rebellion?

109. J.F. Ade Ajayi, "The Continuity of African Institutions under Colonialism", in T.O. Ranger (ed.), *Emerging Themes of African History* (Dar es Salaam, 1968), pp. 197-9.

CHAPTER SEVEN

*THE RETREAT FROM THE EXPERIMENT, 1859-72**Introduction*

Once the Great Rebellion had been suppressed, the British set about rebuilding and safeguarding their political position in the subcontinent. This involved three broad changes. First, following Queen Victoria's Proclamation of 1858, the East India Company was abolished in favour of direct control of British India by the home government. In London the Company's Board of Control gave way to a new ministerial office, that of Secretary of State for India, and the Company's Court of Directors was merged into a new advisory department known as the India Council. In India the Governor-General became also the Viceroy, or personal representative of the British monarch.¹

Second, the army in India was reorganised along the lines of the Peel Commission's recommendations: the proportional strength of European troops was increased; the artillery was placed in European hands; the recruitment of sepoys was directed away from high-caste Hindustanis towards those communities - such as Sikhs, Punjabi Muslims and Gurkhas - which possessed unmistakable "martial" traditions and whose continued "loyalty" could, it was felt, be counted on; and a policy of strict noninterference with the religious and social customs of the sepoys was adopted.

Third, and this was the most important change, British political policy in India was widened to accommodate the interests of those elite groups which had, less than ten years ago, been branded by Dalhousie as

1. Governors-General after 1858 are usually referred to as Viceroys, and we shall follow this convention. The Viceroys holding office during the period covered in this chapter were: Lord Canning (until March 1862), Lord Elgin (March 1862 - Nov 1863), Sir Robert Napier (temporary, Nov-Dec 1863), Sir William Denison (temporary, Dec 1863 - Jan 1864), Sir John (later Lord) Lawrence (Jan 1864 - Jan 1869), Lord Mayo (Jan 1869 - Feb 1872) and Lord Northbrook (1872-76).

the selfish, reactionary and eminently displaceable classes in Indian society. Dalhousie's old programme of material improvement was not by any means abandoned after 1858; in fact, the construction of public works, the refinement of the imperial bureaucracy and the development of overseas trade were all pursued with extra vigour - now that the paper planning stage had been passed - in the decade after the Great Rebellion. What was largely abandoned after 1858 was Dalhousie's old programme of social and moral improvement, which had been based on the notions that the more India was "westernised" the better, and that only the middle and lower social classes were deserving of British protection. British political policy in the decade after 1858 was essentially elitist and conservative.

Lord Canning, upon whom the storm of 1857 had burst, stayed on in India until 1862 to lay the foundations of this new policy. His wooing of the remaining ruling princes into a formal, subordinate partnership with the British (which put an end to Dalhousie's doctrine of lapse), his settlement with the *taluqdars* of Oudh (a concession to the elite in northern India that would have been anathema to Dalhousie) and his remodelling of the Governor-General's Legislative Council (an instrument created by Dalhousie in 1853) to include a few Indian members, selected from the ranks of the leading princes and the landed gentry - these are just the best-known manifestations of that "aristocratic reaction" which reshaped British thought and action in India in the decade after the Great Rebellion.²

Our task in this last chapter is to assess the impact of this "aristocratic reaction" in the Punjab Province (the Punjab now became a Lieutenant-Governorship³) between 1859 and 1872. Given Dalhousie's special interest in, and close association with, the administration of

2. The best general study is still Thomas R. Metcalf, *The Aftermath of Revolt: India, 1857-1870* (Princeton, 1965).

3. The Lieutenant-Governors holding office during our period were: Sir John Lawrence (Jan-Feb 1859), Sir Robert Montgomery (Feb 1859 - Jan 1865), Sir Donald McLeod (Jan 1865 - Jan 1870), Sir Henry Durand (June 1870 - Jan 1871) and Sir Henry Davies (1871-77). In 1858 Delhi and its surrounding territories became part of the Province.

the Punjab between 1849 and 1856, it might be supposed that the Punjab would have been the region least likely to be affected by the abandonment of the old political policy. On the other hand, the Punjab had weathered the storm of 1857, and had helped "save" the empire at that time, primarily because, at the critical moment, the British authorities in the Punjab had been prepared to revive the old, elitist military formations within Punjabi society. We have already seen that after 1858 Punjabi militarism was preserved, institutionalised and channelled to serve British imperial needs. To what extent, it must now be asked, was there a broader retreat after 1858 from the earlier "imperial experiment" in the Punjab?

There are four sections to the chapter. Section one examines the efforts made by the British to shore up their authority in the Punjab in the early 1860s by associating "influential" Punjabis with their administration both at the provincial level and the local level. Section two examines the great controversy that developed within the Punjab Government in the late 1860s, between the "Aristocratic School" and the "Punjab School", over the question of superior tenants' rights. The following two sections examine the material conditions of the Punjabi peasantry in the late 1860s and early 1870s, and the political implications of those conditions. Section three is concerned with the origins of wide-scale peasant indebtedness and land alienation, while section four looks at the causes, character and significance of the Kuka outbreak of 1872.

The enlistment of "influence"

On 14 February 1860 a grand imperial *darbar*, presided over by Lord Canning, was held at Lahore. On behalf of the assembled chieftains, the Raja of Kapurthala rose to thank the Government of India for the rewards it had recently distributed amongst the chieftains of the Punjab in recognition of their services in 1857-58. The chieftains were particularly grateful, the Raja said, for the clemency and kindness shown by the Government to those of them who had fought against the British in 1848-49: the trust reposed in those formerly "disloyal" chieftains in 1857 had enabled most of them to restore themselves to honour. The chieftains of the Punjab now prayed, the Raja concluded, that the Government

would add to the many blessings of British rule the establishment of a college at Lahore for the education of their sons. In his reply to the Raja's address, Canning thanked the chieftains for their latest professions of loyalty, and observed that the Government had already been thinking about the need for a chieftains' college: such a college, he assured them, would be founded as soon as the state of education in the Punjab was sufficiently advanced. He also announced that it was his intention to authorise the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab to confer certain administrative powers on the leading chieftains.⁴

As it turned out, the chieftains had to wait twenty years before they got their own college (the Aitchison Chiefs College) at Lahore. The administrative powers promised by Canning were forthcoming, however. In April 1860, in reply to the Government of India's earlier call for a report on whether there were in the Punjab any chieftains or prominent landholders who might safely be entrusted with limited fiscal and judicial powers within their estates, the Punjab Government forwarded to Calcutta the reports of the various Commissioners in the Punjab. Most of the Commissioners were enthusiastic about the contemplated measure, and nominated several men from each of the Districts in their Divisions as suitable candidates. It was the possibility of political advantage, rather than administrative convenience, that made the contemplated measure so attractive. As the Commissioner of Lahore Division, Richard Temple, put it:

Those who know the actual condition of the Punjab nobility will have been struck by the *sad consequences of forced idleness* which enervates all the manlier qualities, and induces first dissipation and sometimes leads ultimately to disaffection [original emphasis].⁵

The Punjab Government agreed that it was time for a change of policy towards the chieftains. R.H. Davies, who was the Government Secretary, expressed it thus:

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4. Political Despatch to Secretary of State for India (hereafter SS): FD, 23 Feb 1860, no 17 (A); FC, 24 Feb 1860, nos 51-3 (NAI).
 5. Temple to Secy to Government of Punjab (hereafter GOP), (no date), no 37: FDP, Part A, May 1860, nos 167-76 (NAI).

The total deprivation of all power sustained by the principal chiefs and natural leaders of the people has heretofore been one of the embarrassments of our administration. It may be that immediately after conquest they would not value and might possibly abuse a limited and responsible jurisdiction, inferior to that which they had recently exercised without control. But in the interval which has elapsed they have experienced the humiliation of diminished importance and the irksomeness of forced idleness. They are ready therefore gratefully to accept a share of power which they might formerly have disdainfully declined.⁶

On 26 May 1860 the Punjab Government announced the names of twenty-five prominent chieftains (twelve of whom had their estates in the Cis-Sutlej Division) who were to be given limited administrative powers. These chieftains were to be invested with the special powers of an Assistant Commissioner, which meant that they would be able to decide revenue and criminal cases whose value did not exceed Rs 300. They were also to be placed in charge of the village constabulary within their estates; and in return for performing these police duties, they were to receive small *inams*.⁷ A year after these limited powers had been conferred, the Punjab Government reported that the measure seemed to be working extremely well.⁸

Still, not every British officer in the Punjab regarded the measure as a good thing. For example, in 1860 the Commissioner of the newly-created Amritsar Division, R.N. Cust, had argued that it would be "a dangerous and unpopular measure with the inferior classes to vest these Chiefs with powers which they are personally unfit to wield, and which their followers will abuse."⁹

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6. Davies to Secy GOI, FD, 3 April 1860, no 272: *ibid*.
 7. Davies to Secy GOI, FD, 26 May 1860, no 326: FDP, Part A, June 1860, nos 71-5 (NAI).
 8. FDP, Judicial A, Nov 1861, nos 83-4 (NAI).
 9. Cust to JC, 18 Feb 1860, no 22: FDP, Part A, May 1860, nos 167-76 (NAI). Cust also drew the JC's attention to the fact that "throughout this Division the Village system of Revenue management prevails, based on the prescription of centuries and the consent of a willing population, and the name of Talooqdar is unknown": *ibid*.

Four years later, shortly after he had taken up the Viceroyalty, John Lawrence expressed his concurrence with the view, which was now also shared by the Commissioners of Ambala and Jullundur Divisions, that the exercise of fiscal powers (especially the right of some chieftains to collect their revenue in kind) by chieftains within their estates was definitely open to abuse.¹⁰ Lawrence's personal view was that "it is, perhaps, the first principle in equity that a man shall not be allowed to sit in judgement in a case in which his own interests are involved."¹¹

Nevertheless, so strongly had the tide of "aristocratic" opinion set in, that the number of these Jagirdari Magistrates (as they were called) was actually increased after 1860: there were thirty-eight of them by 1865.¹² More than that, the principle of conferring limited judicial powers was extended to permit the appointment of other chieftains and "influential" Punjabis as Honorary Magistrates, empowered to investigate and decide petty criminal cases (except those in which Europeans were implicated) that came before the regular courts in the cities.¹³ By 1866 there were twenty-two of these Honorary Magistrates, sitting in Boards; and between them, they handled about 6 per cent of all the criminal cases in the Province.¹⁴ After a short time, their powers were broadened

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10. For an example of abuse, which came to the Government's attention in 1866, see FDP, Revenue A, Jan 1867, nos 7-10 (NAI). By 1864 two chieftains had been deprived of their administrative powers on account of their mismanagement: *General Report on the Administration of the Punjab Territories for the Year 1863-64* (hereafter *PAR 1863-64*), para 25.
 11. Lawrence's "Observations on Revenue Administration Report of Punjab, 1862-63", in Secy GOI, FD, to Secy GOP, 31 May 1864, no 72: FDP, Revenue A, June 1864, no 22 (NAI).
 12. *General Report on the Administration of the Punjab Territories for the Year 1864-65* (hereafter *PAR 1864-65*), para 29.
 13. For rules for guidance of Honorary Magistrates, see JDP, 11 Jan 1862, nos 12-12½ (PS). For the appointment of two Honorary Magistrates at Gujranwala in 1862, see JDP, 24 May 1862, no 20 (PS).
 14. *General Report on the Administration of the Punjab Territories for the Year 1865-66* (hereafter *PAR 1865-66*), para 24.

to cover certain civil cases (such as those relating to marriage and betrothal) as well; and gradually the whole system of Honorary Magistrates was extended to the smaller, district courts.¹⁵

Throughout the 1860s, and into the 1870s and 1880s, dozens of Punjabi chieftains and prominent landholders were appointed Honorary Magistrates.¹⁶ This must be regarded as an exceedingly adroit move on the part of the British, for it turned the Punjabi elite's attention towards the fact that they could best serve their own interests by serving the British. The position of Honorary Magistrate did not carry any stipend, and the work was tedious in the extreme; yet it was a much sought-after position, because the British endowed it with elite status. In 1868 an old *jagirdar*, Pandit Radha Kishen, who had been head Brahman priest at Ranjit Singh's *darbar*, wrote to the Lieutenant-Governor, requesting the appointment of his son as an Honorary Magistrate. He pointed out that many of his social and religious inferiors had already received such appointments, and that it was a matter of honour to him that his family should not be upstaged. "The respectability of my family", he asserted, "is well known to Your Honor, but without some honorary post no consideration is bestowed by European Officers on a Native."¹⁸

Two other administrative measures designed to strengthen the chieftain class and attach it to British rule were introduced during Canning's Viceroyalty. First, there was an attempt to restrict the constant fragmentation of chiefly patrimonies. During the first decade

15. JDP, 23 Nov 1867, no 41 (PS).

16. For numerous examples, see Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, 2 vols. In Sialkot District in the 1880s there were eight Honorary Magistrates: *Sialkot DG 1883-84*, p.84.

17. *PAR 1864-65*, par 30.

18. Pandit Radha Kishen to Sir D.F. McLeod, Lahore, 13 Jan 1868: JDP, 25 Jan 1868, nos 49-51 (PS). It would seem that the Pandit's son was given a position on one of the new municipale committees that were created at this time: *ibid.*

of British rule, the Punjab administration had scrupulously avoided interfering with the various customary rules that regulated succession to landed estates and to *jagirs* and pensions granted for more than one life, beyond insisting that grants from, or confirmed by, the Government of India should descend to "heirs male of the body". In 1859 there arose a situation that tested the utility of this rather vague ruling. It involved the lawfulness of two possible distributions of the *jagirs* of a chieftain who had, before his death, taken out a customary will, bequeathing his property in equal shares to his three wives and their families. Strictly speaking, the property should have been apportioned equally between the three "heirs male" of the deceased chieftain; but the local British authorities, whose interest in the case was far more political than legal, tried to have the will overruled in favour of the elder son, arguing that he possessed "superior moral qualifications", and that he was of "purer" tribal descent than his two half-brothers (whose mothers belonged to socially inferior clans). The British-sponsored claim of the elder son was - as it should have been - thrown out of the civil courts. But the case induced the Punjab and Indian Governments to toy with the idea of making future grants of perpetuity *jagirs* conditional on the right of the British authorities to withhold recognition of certain, politically undesirable inheritance arrangements.¹⁹

In 1860 the Punjab Government resolved to substitute, wherever possible, the law of primogeniture for the various customary rules followed by the chieftains. Accordingly, the Commissioners were instructed to explain to the chieftains the "advantages" of primogeniture in the maintenance of the wealth and status of chieftainships, and to try and persuade the chieftains to sign a formal deed binding them to an observation of this law.²⁰ The success of the Government in converting the chieftains to the principle of primogeniture in the early 1860s was but partial: quite a few chieftains bound themselves to an observation

19. FPC, 16 Dec 1859, nos 45-9 (NAI).

20. FDP, Financial A, May 1864, no 14 (NAI).

of the new law of succession; but at least as many refused to do so, mainly out of consideration for their younger sons, who would otherwise be reduced to a position of dependency on the elder brother.²¹ The Government was unwilling to force a change to a law of succession that was so much at odds with customary practice. But, with the passage of the Punjab Laws Act of 1872, it took the opportunity to bring chiefly estates within the jurisdiction of the Courts of Wards, which gave Deputy Commissioners considerable scope for intervention in the affairs of these estates.²²

The second measure was an improvement in the position of some of the leading and conspicuously "loyal" chieftain families through an enhancement of the value of their perpetuity *jagirs*. In November 1859 the Government of India sent the Punjab Government a list of the names of twenty-four chieftains who had supported the British in 1848-49, and called for information on the provisions made after annexation for the heirs of these chieftains. This information was submitted by the Punjab Government in January 1860. A year later, the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab was invited to suggest whether the old *jagir* claims of any of these families were deserving of reconsideration. In communicating this invitation, the Secretary to the Indian Government noted that

His Excellency [Canning] is of the opinion that a more liberal arrangement might with advantage be made for the heirs of deceased Chiefs in the Punjab than that which was made in 1849, perhaps by assimilating their position to that of the heirs of Sirdars in the Cis-Sutlej States who succeed to the entire estates of their fathers.²³

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21. Lepel Griffin, "The Law of Inheritance to Chiefships, as observed by the Sikhs previous to the Annexation of the Punjab" (Lahore, 1869), para 71: reprinted in *The Panjab Past And Present*, vol vi, pt 1 (April 1972), pp. 141-98.
 22. The Act provided for Deputy Commissioners to be Courts of Wards within their respective Districts, subject to the control of their Commissioner and the Financial Commissioner. As a Court of Wards, the DC was empowered to take charge of the management of the estates of females, minors, idiots, lunatics and inheritors considered otherwise to be unfit for direct management. In the case of minors (under the age of eighteen), the jurisdiction of the Court of Wards extended to the education of wards. The Act (1v of 1872) is reproduced in Mathur, *British Administration of Punjab*, appendix 1. Trevaskis noted that the Act provided for the "almost wholly political" interference of the State in the estates of chieftains who were of "vicious or spendthrift habits": Trevaskis, *The Punjab Of To-Day*, vol 1, p.177.
 23. Secy GOI to Secy GOP, 11 Feb 1861: FDP, Part A, Feb 1861, nos 297-8 (NAI).

In January 1862 the Punjab Government resubmitted the original list, to which it had added the names of five more chieftains, together with the Lieutenant-Governor's recommendations. The Punjab Government agreed that the post-annexation disposition of the *jagir* claims of "loyal" chieftains had been too harsh, especially in the light of the good services performed by many of these chieftains and their sons in 1857-58, and the duties that many of them were now performing as Honorary Magistrates. Unless the provisions made after annexation were now revised, the Punjab Government's letter continues, "the Punjab must soon lose the services of an aristocracy which it would be wiser to preserve than fling aside."²⁴ The *jagirs* and pensions of fourteen of these twenty-nine families had already been considerably reduced, on account of recent deaths of chieftains, while nine families possessed no perpetuity *jagirs* at all. The Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Robert Montgomery, therefore proposed that perpetuity *jagirs* be granted to those families that had none, and that the value of the perpetuity *jagirs* held by the other families be increased. Taken together, his proposals involved the alienation of an additional Rs 123,032 per annum in perpetuity.²⁵

For reasons that are not clear, Canning was unwilling to sanction these proposals in their entirety. Instead, he made a selection from Montgomery's list of "some of the more influential Sirdars whose position it is considered expedient to improve."²⁶ Table 7:1 shows the eleven chieftains selected, and the *jagir* increases sanctioned.²⁷ New *jagirs* totalling Rs 12,620 were granted. However, the most significant change was the conversion of pensions and life *jagirs* into perpetuity *jagirs*. The total annual value of perpetuity *jagirs* previously held by the eleven families was increased by Rs 25,341 (87 per cent). Not surprisingly, Canning insisted that these perpetuity *jagirs* were to descend according to the law of primogeniture.²⁸

24. Secy GOP to Secy GOI, 11 Jan 1862, no 27: FDP, Political A, Feb 1862, no 159 (NAI).

25. "Estates of Punjab Chiefs", dated 15 Feb 1862: FDP, Political A, Feb 1862, no 158 (NAI).

26. Secy GOI to Secy GOP, 25 Feb 1862, no 188: FDP, Political A, Feb 1862, no 160 (NAI).

27. From a tabular statement: *ibid.*

28. It is interesting to note that in 1862 Canning also conferred the right of adoption on at least three chieftains: FDP, Political A, Feb 1862, no 159 (NAI); Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 2, p.501.

Table 7:1 Perpetuity jagir increases sanctioned by Canning in 1862

Families		Grants presently held			Proposed changes sanctioned			
No	Name of Chieftain	Jagirs Rs			Pensions Rs	Jagirs Rs		Pensions Rs
		Perpetuity	Life	2 Lives		Perpetuity	Life	
1	Raja Dina Nath (dead) - 2 sons	3,400			4,000	7,400		
2	Sardar Atar Singh Kalianwala (dead) - 1 son	11,937				15,000		
3	Nawab Iman-ud-Din Khan (dead) - 1 son	4,200	4,200			5,600	2,800	
4	Sardar Mehtab Singh Majithia		4,742	4,742		4,742	4,742	
5	Sodhi Nihal Singh (dead) - 4 sons	2,500	2,750			3,794	2,750	
6	Diwan Ajudhia Nath				7,500	1,000		6,500
7	Rai Misr Meg Raj		3,825			405	3,420	
8	Sardar Nihal Singh Chhachhi	7,200	5,975		2,000	10,000	3,175	2,000
9	Col. Jagat Singh Man (dead) - 2 sons		1,637			1,637		
10	Sardar Kahan Singh Nakkye		11,980		3,840	5,000	6,980	3,840
11	Nawab Sarfraz Khan		13,164				20,427 to be re- considered at death	
11	Total	29,237	48,273	4,742	17,340	54,578	44,294	12,340

When John Lawrence returned to India in January 1864, after five years' home leave, to take up the Viceroyalty, he therefore found himself to be the successor to an official policy towards the chieftains of the Punjab that was markedly different from the policy which he had - as Dalhousie's man "on the spot" - helped push through just over a decade ago. In the mid-1860s the old, radical Evangelical-Utilitarian ideas about *jagirdars* being "parasites" on the "people of the soil", and about the duty of the British being to ensure the gradual annihilation of all *jagirdari* tenures in the Punjab, were definitely at a low premium. As we shall see in the next section, Lawrence had not by any means abandoned the essentially pro-peasant stance of the "Punjab School". But he had reconciled himself to the general principle of the "aristocratic reaction" that had swept official India during his absence: the principle that the British could not hope to hold India in times of political crisis without the support of a contented aristocracy. That, of course, had been Henry Lawrence's point, made so frequently during the years immediately after the annexation of the Punjab.

Had Henry Lawrence been alive in the mid-1860s (he had been killed during the siege of Lucknow in 1857), he would, no doubt, have been enormously satisfied to see his younger brother going along with the new policy towards the chieftains of the Punjab. As Viceroy, John Lawrence sanctioned a number of the Punjab Government's proposals for a better deal for chieftains excluded from Canning's select list, thereby overturning earlier *jagir* decisions that he himself had argued for so strenuously.²⁹ As Viceroy, he also presided over two imperial *darbars* at which the new alliance between the British and the chieftains was publicly and symbolically affirmed. The first of these *darbars*, which was officially described as having been "the greatest the Punjab has seen since the time of the Mughals,"³⁰ was held at Lahore on 18 October 1864.

29. For examples, see: RDP, 16 April 1864, nos 5-7; 10 Dec 1864, nos 3-5 (PS); FDP, Financial A, Dec 1865, nos 3-5; Sept 1867, nos 7-9 (NAI).

30. *PAR 1864-65*, para 340.

It was, as most imperial *darbars* held by the British were, a grand public relations exercise. In a sense, it was also a moment of posthumous triumph for Henry Lawrence. When John Lawrence rose to address the assemblage, he spoke in Urdu, and he used words that could easily have been those of his brother:

Princes and Chiefs! It is with great satisfaction that I find nearly six hundred of you assembled around me in this Durbar. I see before me the faces of many friends. I recognise the sons of my old allies, the Maharajas of Kashmere and Puttiala; the Sikh Chiefs of Malwa and the Manjha; the Rajpoot Chiefs of the Hills; the Mohammedan Mullicks of Peshawur and Kohat; the Sirdars of the Derajat, of Hazara, and of Delhi. All have gathered together to do honour to their old ruler.³¹

At the close of his speech, Lawrence resumed his seat (actually a throne, placed in the centre of a platform which was covered with cloth of gold), and each of the chieftains was brought forward, in due order of precedence, to present his *nazr* (offering) of gold coin. The *khil'ats* from the Viceroy - "silver vases, gold clocks, inlaid rifles, silk dresses, strings of pearls and other jewels"³² - were then distributed. The Raja of Kapurthala received a British insignia, the Star of India, and three Muslim chieftains were created Nawabs.³³ At the second *darbar*, held at Agra on 19 November 1866, Lawrence knighted two Punjabi chieftains: Raja Sahib Dial (who had earlier been appointed to the Viceroy's Legislative Council) and Sardar Nihal Singh Chhachhi (who, it will be remembered, had started life as the son of a shopkeeper).³⁴ From this time onwards, insignia and titles like these were a standard feature of a British imperial reward system, and were regularly conferred on "loyal" Punjabi chieftains.³⁵

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31. Lawrence's address is reproduced in Bosworth Smith, *Life of Lord Lawrence*, vol 2, pp. 330-1.
 32. Bosworth Smith, *ibid*, p.332.
 33. Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 2, p.501; *Titled Gentlemen*, pp.100-1, 106-7.
 34. *General Report on the Administration of the Punjab Territories for the Year 1866-67* (hereafter *PAR 1866-67*), para 376.
 35. For some examples from the 1870s and 1880s, see Griffin, *et al.*, *Chiefs and Families*, vol 1, pp. 417-17, 432, 478-9; vol 2, pp. 204-5, 234, 339, 381; *Titled Gentlemen*, pp. 106-7.

At the same time that a new relationship was being forged with the leading chieftains, steps were being taken to resurrect that old class of lesser chieftains and middlemen - the *chaudharis*. When the British restructured the administration in the Punjab after 1849, the services of the *chaudharis* were almost totally dispensed with. By the early 1860s, however, it was becoming apparent that the British had by no means been completely successful in integrating the "provincial" and "local" systems of government, and that there was therefore a need for the same sort of linkage between the two systems that the *chaudharis* had provided under Mughal and Sikh rule. As the Punjab Government's general administration report of 1860-61 noted: "The absence of a privileged class of representative men, whose welfare is identified with that of the Government, makes a gulf between us and our subjects productive of mutual misunderstanding."³⁶

The resurrection of the *chaudhari* class after 1858 actually proceeded in a somewhat haphazard fashion. It began when several British district officers recommended the restoration of *inams* to former *chaudharis*. For instance, in 1860 Temple, who was the Commissioner of Lahore Division, suggested that *inams* be granted to certain "influential" landholders who would assist the police and revenue authorities and would "form a link much needed at present, between the authorities and the mass of the agriculturalists."³⁷ And in Shahpur District, where the British officer first appointed to the settlement operations had rejected virtually all claims to *inams*, Davies, who subsequently took over as Settlement Officer, recommended the restoration of *inams*, varying in value between Rs 50 and Rs 250 per annum, to fifty-five "principal land-holders and men of influence" as a politic measure.³⁸

36. *General Report on the Administration of the Punjab and its Dependencies for 1860-61* (hereafter *PAR 1860-61*), pp. 12-13.

37. Temple to FC, 23 Jan 1860, no 16: reproduced in *SR Lahore 1858*, p.25.

38. *SR Shahpur 1866*, pp. 99-101.

In 1861 the Lieutenant-Governor gave his approval to an experiment proposed by the local authorities in Gujranwala District whereby *inams*, ranging in value from Rs 150 to Rs 200 per annum, and debitable to the Police Department, would be granted to selected *zamindars* who, as Honorary Police Chaudharis, would be responsible for the suppression of crime in isolated rural areas.³⁹ Within a few years, this experiment had been extended to other Districts in the Lahore Division, and Honorary Police Chaudharis - whose duties had gradually been widened to those of general intermediaries - had come to be known, officially, as *zaildars*. In the mid-1860s these *zaildars* were described as being "the channel of communication,"⁴⁰ or "the missing link",⁴¹ between a mainly British "provincial" system of government and an entirely Punjabi "local" system of government. In truth, the *zaildars* - along with their assistants, the *ala-lambardars* (chief village headmen), who also came into being at this time⁴² - were more than this: they were, essentially, semi-official collaborators at the local level. The British, wanting to push their authority deeper into village society, were prepared to pay fairly handsomely for such collaborative services; and "influential" Punjabis were not backward in offering them.⁴³

39. PAR 1860-61, p.13.

40. Secy GOP to Inspector-General of Police, Punjab, 27 Oct 1865, no 1500: JDP, 28 Oct 1865, nos 27-9 (PS).

41. SR Lahore 1865-69, pp. 68-9.

42. The system of *ala-lambardars* (chief headmen) was introduced in 1865. The idea was to create in each village a superior *lambardar* who would carry out government orders and ensure peace and order. After some time, however, it was realised that the system was not working: it was unnecessarily expensive and it was creative of much internal village friction. In the 1890s the Punjab Government therefore decided gradually to abolish the office as the occupants died and to grant, instead, *sofed-posh* ("clad in white") *inams* to deserving village notables (ordinary proprietors as well as *lambardars*) on an occasional basis: Punjab Government, *Selections from the Records of the office of the Financial Commissioner, Punjab* (New Series, no 18), no 44, "Papers relating to the Ala-Lambardari Inams in Six Districts of the Lahore and Rawalpindi Divisions" (Lahore, 1896).

43. Given that, in Gujranwala District, each *zaildar* received an *inam* of Rs 100-200 per annum, a small cut (usually 1 per cent) from the land revenue and a grant of about fifty acres of land, it is little wonder that the office of *zaildar* was "an eagerly coveted one": SR Gujranwala 1866-67, pp. 47-9.

Finally, in 1872 the Punjab Government decided to rationalise the *zaildari* system by establishing guidelines for the remuneration, appointment and duties of *zaildars*. The semi-official collaborative role of *zaildars* was, in other words, formalised. It was affirmed that *zaildars* were not salaried government servants, but that their allowances (which ought to represent a deduction of 1 per cent from the local land revenue) were granted to meet expenses "incidental to their position". The Deputy Commissioner, who was to appoint them, was to consider, besides their suitability for the job, their popularity and tribal importance within their *zails* (circles). Their duty, broadly, was to act as "representatives of Government": they were to communicate government notices, report crime, assist the *tahsildars*, keep an eye on the *patwaris* and *lambardars*, attend on British officers visiting their *zails*, and so forth.⁴⁴

From this time onwards, the *zaildari* system was introduced everywhere in the Punjab.⁴⁵ Since *zaildars* were usually appointed from the ranks of *zamindars* who already possessed considerable social and political standing at the local level, it is scarcely surprising that the *zaildari* system provided the means for the resurgence of the old *chaudhari* class. In Gujrat District, for example, the ten *zaildars* holding office in the mid-1870s were all men - or sons of men - who had been *chaudharis* under the Sikhs.⁴⁶ It would seem that the old, local elite in rural Punjabi society had no difficulty whatsoever in moving into, and taking over, the new positions of *zaildar* and *ala-lambardar* created by the British after 1858. Once these positions were filled, the British soon discovered that dismissal for inefficiency or corruption was, on political grounds, "practically out of the question".⁴⁷

44. Resolution of Lieut-Gov, Punjab, in the Dept. of Agriculture, Revenue and Commerce, 29 Feb 1872, no 273: reproduced in Barkley, *Directions for Revenue Officers*, appendix iv, pp. 113-14.

45. It would seem that most *zails* incorporated between twenty-five and thirty villages, and that most *zaildars* were granted *inams* worth (at 1 per cent) between Rs 200 and Rs 300 per annum: J.A. Grant, *Final Report on the Revision of Settlement (1888-1893) of the Amritsar District* (Lahore, 1893), (hereafter *SR Amritsar 1893*), p.58; *SR Gurdaspur 1892*, pp. 57-8; *SR Jullundur 1892*, p.140; *SR Lahore, 1865-69*, pp. 68-9.

46. *SR Gujrat 1874*, p.xv.

47. *SR Jullundur 1892*, p.140.

The resuscitation of the old elites at the regional and local levels in the early 1860s was a paradoxical move on the part of the British. On the one hand, it undoubtedly strengthened the efficacy and legitimacy of their administrative authority in the Punjab. But, on the other hand, it necessarily reduced their room for political manoeuvre, and it cast a shadow of doubt over their claim that they were primarily concerned with the welfare of the subordinate classes in Punjabi society. In the mid-1860s the question of which social classes were most deserving of British protection was about to become the subject of an extremely bitter and protracted controversy.

The tenant-right controversy

We saw in the fifth chapter that, in accordance with the North-Western Provinces land revenue system, two categories of tenants were recognised in the Punjab by the British after annexation: hereditary (*maurusī*) tenants and non-hereditary (*ghair-maurusī*) tenants-at-will. Between 1849 and 1855 hereditary tenant status was conferred almost solely on the basis of twelve years' occupancy prior to the regular land revenue settlement. After 1855 it was admitted that other factors besides length of occupancy ought to be taken into consideration, and that in the twelve Districts already settled, the *patwarīs* - to whom it had generally been left to make the final entries in the village land records - had mistakenly recorded many tenants as hereditary tenants. At the time, the British had been content to let matters stand. Most proprietors had been happy enough to see their tenants recorded as hereditary tenants (only later was it realised that this was because they wanted their tenants to share the burden of a high revenue demand). And, in any case, the existence of a large number of privileged tenants fitted the "Punjab School's" ideal of a secure and contented peasantry.

All this changed when, in 1863, Edward Prinsep was appointed Settlement Commissioner, with the task of revising the regular land revenue settlements, the terms of which were expiring, in the Districts

of central Punjab.⁴⁸ Prinsep at once challenged the validity of the records of the earlier settlements with respect to hereditary tenant status, arguing that there were very few tenants who, during the Sikh period, would have enjoyed immunity from what had then been recognised as the proprietor's right of eviction. He requested permission to alter the settlement records accordingly, and restore the status of tenants to that which it had been before the annexation of the Punjab. Instead of giving Prinsep clear instructions on the matter, the Punjab Government - evidently thrown into confusion by Prinsep's challenge - called upon all district officers to make enquiries as to the status of tenants under Sikh rule. The result was the collection of "an appalling mass of correspondence"⁴⁹ and the initiation of a controversy that was to split the members of the Punjab Government, the Government of India and - eventually - the Secretary of State's India Council.

In a way, the bitterness of the controversy was out of all proportion to the objective importance of the tenant-right question in the Punjab, for in the Punjab proprietors outnumbered tenants two to one; and only one-fifth of all tenants had been recorded as hereditary tenants; so that the question affected only a small number of proprietors and tenants, and less than one-twentieth of the cultivated and cultivable land.⁵⁰ But the tenant-right question brought into the open the fundamental cleavage between the two parties which represented the "aristocratic" and "paternalistic" Schools of thought on matters relating to land tenures. The forces of the "aristocratic reaction" were strong in India at this time.

48. Prinsep was personally in charge of the revision in the three Districts of Amritsar Division (Amritsar, Gurdaspur and Sialkot), and supervisor of the officers appointed to Lahore, Gujranwala, Gujrat and Montgomery (Gugera) Districts.

49. *Report on the Administration of the Punjab and its Dependencies for the Year 1868-69* (hereafter *PAR 1868-69*), pt 2, p.36. The greater part of this "correspondence", consisting of reports, circulars, statistics, minutes, memorials and treatises, is reproduced in "Papers Relating To The Punjab Tenancy Act": Great Britain, House of Commons, Parliamentary Papers, Sessional Sets, Accounts and Papers, vol L111, 1870, pp. 389-802 (hereafter "PPTA").

50. *PAR 1868-69*, pt 2, p.36.

In the contemporaneous Oudh tenancy controversy the "Aristocratic School" in the Government of India was carrying all before it.⁵¹ Prinsep's challenge was therefore regarded by the paternalistic "Punjab School" as an intolerable one, regardless of the merits of his case. In 1869 the Secretary of State for India, the Duke of Argyll, aptly described the tenant-right controversy in the Punjab as having "involved a radical difference between two schools of theoretical opinion, who regard from two opposite points of view the slender basis of fact which alone appears to be ascertainable."⁵²

Whilst awaiting instructions from his superiors on what was to be done about apparently negligent recordings of hereditary status, Prinsep had, with characteristic thoroughness, instituted a quasi-judicial investigation into the validity of 60,000 cases of hereditary status in Amritsar Division, whereby proprietor and tenant were cross-examined before the assembled village as to the extent of their customary rights, disputed questions of fact being settled by the village *panchayat*. On this basis Prinsep decided that, out of the 60,000 tenants formerly recorded as having hereditary rights of occupancy, 46,000 were in fact mere tenants-at-will.⁵³ This empirical investigation led him to question the soundness of his training in the paternalistic tradition of land revenue administration. In January 1865 he wrote to the Financial Commissioner, Edward Lake, as follows:

It is upon evidence of so extensive and overwhelming a character that I have been led step by step, and month by month, in a period of 18 months, to give up my old views, and to make a ready confession to Government that I have hitherto worked upon insufficient knowledge. I perceive distinctly now what I did not realise before, that considerations of revenue management have influenced me too much when dealing with the rights of the landed classes....⁵⁴

51. Bosworth Smith, *Life of Lord Lawrence*, vol 2, pp. 414-21.

52. Argyll to GG in Council, 28 Oct 1869, no 80 RD: "PPTA", no 1.

53. *PAR 1868-69*, pt. 2, p.37.

54. Prinsep to Lake, 12 Jan 1865, no 12: "PPTA", no 11, pt 2.

The results of Prinsep's investigation, together with his devastating refutation of the arguments of those who were opposed to any revision of the record of rights,⁵⁵ provided handy ammunition to the members of the "Aristocratic School" in the Punjab - such as the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Donald McLeod, and the post-1857 generation of British officers - who were convinced that a section of the Punjabi proprietary class had been dispossessed as a result of the favour shown to the actual occupants of the soil at the time of the regular settlements. Considerable weight was lent to their case by the reports of the official Landlord and Tenant Inquiry Committee, which had met at Batala, Amritsar and Lahore between 1863 and 1865,⁵⁶ and of the Law Branch of the Punjab Anjuman (a small organisation of the Punjabi gentry and urban elite).⁵⁷

The "Aristocratic School's" case was vigorously disputed by the "Punjab School", represented by men like Brandreth, Lake and Temple - men who had actually conducted the regular settlements, and who were close friends of the new Viceroy, Sir John Lawrence (who was himself much displeased about the prospect of the overturning of his life's work in the Punjab).⁵⁸ The "Punjab School's" reply to Prinsep consisted of three arguments. First, there was the factual argument: under Sikh rule, the proprietor's right of eviction had existed only in theory, since the *kardar* had generally refused to allow it.⁵⁹ Second, there was the policy argument: even if the regular settlements had erred in favour of some tenants, a greater agrarian upheaval would now result if the record of rights was altered. Lake contended, for instance, that

55. Prinsep, "The Arguments on the Tenant Side with their Refutation" (1866): *ibid*, no 11, pt 3.

56. The Committee, having interviewed British and Punjabi revenue officials, members of the "native gentry" and representatives of all the agricultural classes, concluded that "hereditary" tenants' rights were a creation of British rule: for the Committee's reports, see *ibid*, no 11, pt 1, and Appendices 2-5.

57. The Punjab Anjuman (more correctly, the Anjuman-i-Punjab) was founded in 1865 by Dr G.W. Leitner (formerly Professor at King's College, London), who had recently been appointed Principal of the Lahore College. Its main aim was to pressure government into founding a university in the Punjab. For the Anjuman's submission that "hereditary" tenants had few rights under Sikh rule, see *ibid*, no 14.

58. Lawrence's Minute, 30 Aug 1866: *ibid*, no 11.

59. Sir Frederick Currie's Minute, 22 Nov 1869: *ibid*, no 7.

if the flow of the tide of opinion set in formerly in the Punjab too strongly in favour of the class we have called hereditary cultivators, there is great danger lest the ebb of the tide, which has now set in as strongly in the opposite direction, should leave them stranded and ruined.⁶⁰

Third, there was the procedural argument: Prinsep's settlements, based as they were on Regulation VII of 1822 (which provided for the correction, at the time of revision, of errors made at the regular settlement), were invalid, for the simple reason that Regulation VII did not apply in the Punjab. But this objection was overruled by the Punjab Chief Court (which was established in 1866). At the same time, however, the Court also ruled that, with respect to some of the steps he had taken (such as the granting of long leases to tenants who had been reduced from *maurusi* to *ghair-maurusi* status), Prinsep had exceeded his powers as Settlement Commissioner.⁶¹

It was against this background of mounting controversy and confusion that the Government of India decided to step in, cancel Prinsep's settlements and draft the Punjab's first tenancy legislation. Having been defeated in the Oudh tenancy debate, Lawrence was determined to throw the full weight of his reputation and his office behind the struggle for tenant protection in the Punjab.

The members of the Viceroy's Legislative Council were divided as to whether such legislation was wise or even necessary.⁶² Nevertheless, Lawrence went ahead and sketched out a Bill which had three main aims: to define and safeguard hereditary-right, to regulate the enhancement of rent paid by hereditary tenants, and to provide compensation for evicted tenants-at-will. This draft Bill was then entrusted to Edward Brandreth (the Commissioner of Rawalpindi Division and the Punjab member of the Legislative Council), who introduced a polished version of it into the Legislative Council on 17 January 1868.⁶³ But the opponents of the

60. Lake to Secy GOP, 26 May 1865, no 336: *ibid*, no 11.

61. Sir Erskine Perry's Minute, 30 Oct 1869: *ibid*, no 3.

62. For the different views, see "Notes by Members of Council of Governor-General" (23-30 Oct 1866): *ibid*, no 11, pt 3.

63. For Brandreth's draft, see *ibid*, no 14.

Bill raised such objections that it had to be shelved, to allow time for further discussion.⁶⁴ We do not have room here to describe all the discussion that did occur over the following nine months, except to note that during that time the Bill - which, with Brandreth's retirement, was made over to Richard Temple (the newly-appointed finance member, and one of Lawrence's most trusted colleagues⁶⁵) - was considered and amended by four different committees, was six times minuted upon by high Punjab Government functionaries, and was three times discussed in the Legislative Council.⁶⁶ Finally, on 19 October Temple reintroduced the Bill into Council at Simla, where - without any representatives of the Punjab Government or the Punjabi gentry present, and with standing orders having been suspended - he and Lawrence pushed it through.⁶⁷ Two days later the Bill received the formal assent of the Viceroy and became the Punjab Tenancy Act (Act XXVIII of 1868).⁶⁸

However, opposition to the Act did not immediately subside, but moved to London, where the Secretary of State, Argyll, was urged to exercise his veto. Six members of the India Council opposed the Act. Sir Erskine Perry, for example, described it as "a mischevious piece of legislation, and opposed to the sound [post-1857] policy of not interfering with native customs."⁶⁹ The Punjabi gentry, stirred up by Leitner, and supported by McLeod, reminded Argyll of the services they had performed in 1857, and requested him to disallow the Act.⁷⁰ In the end, the India

64. See an abstract of the Council's proceedings: *ibid*, no 22.

65. Temple's key role in the eventual passage of the Bill is carefully analysed in G.R.G. Hambly, "Richard Temple and the Punjab Tenancy Act of 1868", in *English Historical Review*, no LXXIX (Jan 1964), pp. 47-66.

66. *PAR 1868-69*, p.37.

67. See an abstract of the Council's proceedings on 19 October 1868: "PPTA", no 26.

68. *Ibid*, no 27.

69. Perry's Minute, 30 Oct 1869: *ibid*, no 3. For the five other minutes of dissent, see *ibid*, nos 4-9.

70. For a memorandum from 210 Punjabi chieftains and landowners to Argyll (Feb 1869) and a supporting memorandum from McLeod (18 April 1869), see *ibid*, no 28.

Council approved the Act, but only through the casting vote of the Secretary of State. On 28 October 1869 Argyll wrote to Lawrence's successor in India, Lord Mayo, informing him that the legislation would stand.⁷¹

What are we to make of the Punjab Tenancy Act of 1868? As a piece of agrarian legislation, it was not at all innovative, since its major purpose was simply to validate the "Punjab School's" earlier land revenue work. Argyll recognised this when he wrote:

The first great leading feature of the measure is that it sets up, as presumably correct, the First Regular Settlement of the Province, thereby setting aside, as of authority, the records of right contained in the Revised Settlement which was being conducted by Mr Prinsep, and his officers.⁷²

As a piece of tenancy legislation, the Act certainly proved effective in protecting the rights granted at the regular settlements; yet it was essentially only a stopgap measure, since its other provisions (relating to rent, compensation, succession, etc.) were not able to be enforced until a new, revised Punjab Tenancy Act (Act XVI of 1887) was passed two decades later.⁷³ The historical significance of the Act of 1868 is this: it was a great ideological victory for John Lawrence and the "Punjab School" in that - in one area of tenurial policy - it checked the ascent of the "Aristocratic School's" elitist and *laissez-faire* doctrines, thereby breathing some life back into the paternalistic, Utilitarian principles upon which British rule in the Punjab had been founded. But, ironically, at the same time that the theoretical aspects of the tenant-right issue were being contested, on paper and in the committee room, developments were occurring in rural Punjabi society that would - eventually - compel the two schools within the Punjab Government to join together to produce a truly innovative and thoroughly paternalistic statute: the Punjab Alienation of Land Act of 1900.

71. Argyll to GG in Council, 28 Oct 1869, no 80 RD: *ibid*, no 1.

72. *Ibid*.

73. For details, see Dietmar Rothermund, *Government, Landlord and Peasant in India: Agrarian Relations under British Rule, 1865-1935* (Wiesbaden, 1978), pp. 148-53.

The origins of peasant indebtedness

The decade after the Great Rebellion was a period of considerable agricultural expansion in the Punjab. Agricultural prices rose steadily, the area under cultivation increased and, with the development of communications, an export market for Punjabi produce began to be opened up.⁷⁴ This agricultural expansion is reflected in the fact that the annual profit extracted from the Province by the British rose from £863,149 in 1858-59 to £2,024,330 in 1871-72 (the total profit for these years being almost £23 millions).⁷⁵ It is equally reflected in the marked increase in peasant indebtedness at this time. For instance, in Gujrat District the total value of registered debts of *zamindars* more than trebled in the late 1860s, while by the early 1870s it was estimated that the total value of all *zamindari* debt in the District was equal to more than one-half of the land revenue demand.⁷⁶

As we saw in the first chapter, peasant indebtedness had not by any means been unknown in the Punjab before the advent of British rule. But it cannot be doubted that the British land revenue system, which required the payment of the revenue in a fixed cash sum by a specified date, greatly increased the *zamindar's* dependence on the rural moneylender.⁷⁷ Other developments contributed to the rise in indebtedness. In 1860-61 and again in 1868-69 the Punjab - especially that portion lying to the south of the Sutlej - was afflicted by drought, famine and epidemics. According to the British authorities, as many as 335,399 people died of cholera, smallpox and malignant fevers in 1869.⁷⁸ The two famines also

74. For a graph of price trends in the period 1857-71, see *PAR 1871-72*, p.150. The cultivated area increased by 31.6 per cent between 1855 and 1868 (largely because of the extension of irrigation facilities): H. Calvert, *The Wealth and Welfare of the Punjab: Being Some Studies in Punjab Rural Economics* (Lahore, 1922), p.102. In 1865 the railway line from Lahore to Multan (which was connected by steamboat with Karachi) was opened up. The wheat exported from the Punjab in the period 1871-73 was valued at Rs 4 lakhs: *ibid*, p.67.

75. Calculated from the revenue and expenditure statements in the general Administration Reports for these years. Military charges, being an imperial responsibility, are excluded from these calculations.

76. *SR Gujrat 1874*, p.102.

77. Even in the 1920s there was "a great deal of borrowing to pay the revenue": Calvert, *Wealth and Welfare*, p.131.

78. *PAR 1869-70*, p.1.

resulted in a heavy loss of plough cattle, which drove many *zamindars* further into the clutches of the moneylender.⁷⁹ At the same time, the British provided the moneylender with unprecedented facilities for the recovery of debt. Between 1865 and 1875 the judicial machinery in the Punjab was substantially modified, the idea being to bring the administration of the Punjab more into line with that of the Regulation Provinces.⁸⁰ This swing towards administrative centralisation and formalisation - which Thorburn later denigrated as being tantamount to a move from "paternal" to "machine" rule⁸¹ - definitely advantaged the moneylender. In 1865 civil suits involving land were transferred from the revenue courts of the Deputy Commissioner to the regular civil courts. A year later the Judicial Commissioner was replaced by the Chief Court, the Code of Civil Procedure (which asserted that all property was liable to attachment and sale in execution of a civil decree) was, with special modifications, extended to the Punjab and, thirdly, pleaders were admitted into the courts of the Punjab. Other changes quickly followed: in 1872 the Evidence Act and the Contract Act were passed; and in 1874-75 small civil courts - presided over by subordinate, "native" judges (*munsifs*) - were established to handle rural debt cases. These changes made moneylending a more secure occupation than it had ever been.⁸²

A direct consequence of this judicial reorganisation was a phenomenal increase in civil litigation in the Province during the late 1860s.⁸³ Whereas the number of suits instituted in the civil courts of the Punjab in 1860 had been 83,231, by 1866 it had risen to 165,970, and in 1870 it

79. *PAR 1861-62*, para 30; *PAR 1868-69*, pp. i-x. Many villages in Gujranwala District took a generation to recover from the drought and cattle losses of 1861: *SR Gujranwala 1894*, p.20.

80. For full details, see Mathur, *British Administration of Punjab*, chap 2.

81. Thorburn, *The Punjab in Peace and War*, chap 16.

82. It is scarcely surprising that, from the mid-1860s onwards, the number of moneylenders in the Punjab rapidly grew. Whereas the number of bankers and moneylenders (including dependents) returned at the census of 1868 was 53,263, the number returned at the census of 1911 was 193,890: Calvert, *Wealth and Welfare*, p.128.

83. To give a District example, in Sialkot District the number of civil suits rose from 2,147 in 1853-54 to 17,755 in 1873-74, while the average value of each suit decreased from Rs 71 to Rs 39 over that period: *Sialkot DG 1883-84*, p.2.

stood at 205,606.⁸⁴ The number of civil suits instituted in the Punjab in 1866 was more than twice the number instituted in the North-Western Provinces at that time, and more than the number instituted in Bengal, Oudh and the Central Provinces put together.⁸⁵ About one-third of all the civil suits instituted in the Punjab between 1860 and 1866 were suits between a moneylender (as plaintiff) and an agriculturalist (as defendant); and, since the account books of the moneylender were almost the sole form of evidence acceptable to the courts, the case nearly always went against the agriculturalist.⁸⁶

This increase in civil litigation throughout the 1860s did not immediately cause much concern on the part of the administration as to the material well-being of the subordinate classes in Punjabi society. On the contrary, many British officers regarded it as a sign of progress, and attributed it to "agricultural prosperity", to "the expanding transactions of the community at large" or to "the popularity of our courts."⁸⁷ There was, however, one aspect of this civil litigation that did begin to cause anxiety in the late 1860s, and that was the growing tendency for agricultural land to be sold or mortgaged (frequently, but not always, to professional moneylenders) in satisfaction of debt. In most Districts the alienation of proprietary rights (or, in the case of hereditary tenants, occupancy rights) began to occur on a noticeable scale after the famines of the 1860s.⁸⁸ By the early 1870s this had not yet become a major problem. In 1870-71, for instance, there were in the Punjab only 17,714 recorded cases of alienation of proprietary right by voluntary sale or gift (the average area involved was 10 acres) and only 137 recorded cases of alienation by compulsory sale (at an average of 78 acres).⁸⁹ Thereafter, however, as the value of land

84. *PAR 1862-63*, para 2; *PAR 1866-67*, para 3; *PAR 1870-71*, para 118.

85. *PAR 1866-67*, para 3. The ratio of civil suits to population in the Punjab in 1866 was 1:90. The ratios in the four other Provinces were much lower: Bengal (1:320), Central Provinces (1:260), North-Western Provinces (1:403), Oudh (1:390): *ibid.*

86. *PAR 1860-61*, p.1; *PAR 1866-67*, para 5. There were no checks against moneylenders tampering with their account books so as to alter the terms of the original debt.

87. *PAR 1864-65*, para 4.

88. See, for examples, *SR Amritsar 1893*, p.3; *SR Gujranwala 1894*, pp. 23-6; *SR Gurdaspur 1892*, p.8.

89. *PAR 1870-71*, p.25. See also *PAR 1869-70*, p.33.

continued to rise, alienations occurred at an alarming rate, and more and more of the cultivation came under the direct control of the moneylender.⁹⁰ It was then that the British became convinced that land alienation was threatening the stability of rural society - that it was a serious political problem, for which a legislative remedy would probably have to be found.⁹¹

Thus, the decade after the Great Rebellion was at once a period of general agricultural expansion and a period of adversity for a large section of the Punjabi peasantry. Agricultural prices and the value of land rose, cultivation was expanded and an export market was acquired; but an inflexible land revenue demand, two periods of drought and famine, and a civil judiciary which advantaged the banking and trading classes all encouraged the growth of peasant indebtedness and expropriation. To a considerable extent, it is against this background of peasant adversity at a time of general agricultural expansion that the Kuka outbreak of 1872 must be understood.

The Kuka outbreak

In the middle of January 1872 an outbreak of the Kuka sect occurred in Ludhiana District in the Ambala (formerly the Cis-Sutlej) Division.⁹²

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90. For instance, in Gujranwala District 13.5 per cent of the total cultivation was in the hands of the moneylender by the early 1890s: *SR Gujranwala 1894*, p.23. For the rise in the value of land after 1860, see *PAR 1862-63*, para 298; Calvert, *Wealth and Welfare*, p.66.
91. The story is taken up in Norman G. Barrier, *The Punjab Alienation of Land Bill of 1900* (Durham, North Carolina, 1966) and in van den Dungen, *The Punjab Tradition*.
92. The following summary narrative is based on two collections of British records. Records relating to the Kuka movement between 1863 and 1871 are contained in Nahar Singh (comp.), *Gooroo Ram Singh and the Kuka Sikhs (Rebels Against the British Power in India): Documents 1863-1871* (New Delhi, 1965). This collection (hereafter *Kuka Documents*) comprises, in the main, documents drawn from the NAI. Records relating to the events of 1872 are contained in "Copy of Correspondence, or Extracts from Correspondence, relating to the Kooka Outbreak": Great Britain, House of Commons, Parliamentary Papers, Sessional Sets, Accounts and Papers, vol XLV, 1872, pp. 645-706 (hereafter "CKO").

The Kukas (or Namdharis)⁹³ are an unorthodox sect of Sikhs. They trace their history back to 1847, when an Arora Sikh named Balak Singh, a member of the Udasi order (the oldest, and perhaps the most quietist, of the various Sikh orders), inaugurated a movement at Hazro in Rawalpindi District to rid Sikhism of Brahmanical influences - which were, with the waning of Sikh political dominance, beginning to blur the distinction between Sikhism and Hinduism. Balak Singh died in 1863, by which time he had been recognised by his followers - but certainly not by the rest of the Sikh community - as the eleventh Guru. At Balak Singh's death, the leadership of the movement passed to one of his principal disciples, Ram Singh, who was by caste a Tarkhan (carpenter).⁹⁴ Ram Singh transferred the centre of the movement from Hazro to his own village of Bhaini in Ludhiana District, where he carried on Balak Singh's monotheistic and moral teachings.⁹⁵

The essential features of the Kuka doctrine were - and still are - pious and reformist: converts were enjoined to spurn idolatry, caste distinctions and the taboo on widow remarriage, to abstain from the use of intoxicants, and, generally, to lead devout and virtuous lives. However, Ram Singh was no ordinary reformer but, like Balak Singh, a man who was happy to have his followers believe that the divine spirit which had dwelt in the bodies of the ten Gurus had once again assumed a human form. Ram Singh's followers put it around that he possessed miraculous powers, and that he was a reincarnation of Guru Gobind Singh. The latter claim was a particularly important one, because it suggested the possibility of a resurgence of theocratic militancy. In the eyes of the Punjab Government, this was confirmed when, in 1863, the following

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93. The term Kuka means "Crier", and was applied because, during their devotions and religious dances, Kukas would work themselves into a state of ecstasy and cry out the name of God. From the end of the nineteenth century the term Namdhari ("Adherent of the Divine Name") was more commonly applied.
94. For a report on the sect's history to 1867, see T.H. Thornton, Secy to GOP, to J.W.S. Wyllie, Offg Secy to GOI, FD, 2 Feb 1867, no 157-54: Singh (comp.), *Kuka Documents*, no X1A. Thornton notes that Ram Singh served in the army of the Sikh kingdom between 1844 and 1846; but, in a footnote, it is observed (by Singh?) that Ram Singh took service in 1836-37.
95. For accounts of Kuka teachings see the Memoranda compiled by J.W. Younghusband, Offg Inspector-General of Police, 28 June 1863: *ibid*, no I.

(translated) document was given to a police informer by one of Ram Singh's lieutenants:

The "Sakhi [testimony] of Guru Govind Singh"

I, Guru Govind Singh, will be born in a carpenter's shop, and will be called Ram Singh. My house will be between the Jamna and Sutlej rivers. I will declare my religion. I will defeat the Faringhis and put the crown on my head, and blow the sankh [conch-shell]. The musicians shall praise me in 1921 [1864]. I, the carpenter, will sit on the throne. When I have got one lakh and twenty-five thousand Sikhs with me, I will cut off the heads of the Faringhis. I will never be conquered in battle, and will shout "Akai, Akai [God, God]." The Christians will desert their wives and fly from the country when they hear the shout of 1¼ lakhs of Khalsas. A great battle will take place on the banks of the Jamna, and blood will flow like the waters of the Ravi, and no Faringhi be left alive. Insurrections will take place in the country in 1922 [1865]. The Khalsa will reign, and the Rajah and ryot [peasant] will live in peace and comfort, and no one shall molest another.

Day by day Ram Singh's rule will be enlarged. God has written this. It is no lie, my brethren. In 1922 [1865], the whole country will be ruled by Ram Singh. My followers will worship Wahaguru [God]. God says this will happen.⁹⁶

The Punjab Government was not, at this stage, inclined to see much that was threatening in Ram Singh's activities: indeed, it regarded many of his teachings as being positively beneficial. But it was concerned about the activities of his more turbulent followers, who had been reported as having spoken seditious words. From 1863 onwards, the authorities therefore maintained a careful watch on all the affairs of the Kukas.⁹⁷ It is from the regular reports of the district officers, the police and government spies, that we can reconstruct the sect's progress towards a confrontation with the colonial State apparatus.

96. From a report (11 June 1863) in *ibid.*

97. Minute (no date) by T.D. Forsyth, Offg Secy to GOP, on Younghusband's Memoranda: *ibid.*, no II.

Between 1863 and 1868 Ram Singh transformed the Kuka movement into a disciplined and well-organised sect. Kukas participated in elaborate rituals, and were recognisable by their distinctive dress - white clothes, a horizontally-tied turban and a necklace of white wollen cord, knotted to represent beads. Ram Singh set up a private postal system, whereby verbal and written messages were carried by runners, and a territorial organisation, composed of lieutenants and sub-lieutenants (*subhas* and *naib-subhas*).⁹⁸ The sect acquired a strong following in the eastern and central Districts, particularly Ludhiana, Ferozpur, Jullundur, Hoshiarpur and Sialkot Districts.⁹⁹ It was in these Districts that there were large numbers of the menials, artisans and poor cultivators who would be likely to find the most solace in Ram Singh's message.¹⁰⁰ At least four British officers observed that Kuka converts were drawn mainly from the ranks of Tarkhans, Chumars (outcaste leather workers), Mazhabis (outcaste sweepers who have become Sikhs) and the lower orders of Jats, while very few converts had been made from the professional and mercantile castes (Khatris, Brahmans and Banyas).¹⁰¹ The majority of Ram Singh's lieutenants were Jats and Tarkhans. Of the twenty-two lieutenants who attended Ram Singh during the Diwali festival at Amritsar in 1867, fourteen were cultivators by caste, and five were carpenters.¹⁰² Of the fifty lieutenants whose

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98. "A brief Narrative of the Kuka Sect, with some account of Ram Singh of Bhaini" (no author, no date): *ibid*, no XI. This territorial organisation worried the British, who thought that "in the hands of designing and unscrupulous men it can easily be made an engine of political danger": *ibid*. But it has been pointed out that the *Subha* system was only an extension of earlier organisational forms, introduced by the Gurus as a means of propagating the Sikh faith: Ganda Singh, "Was the Kuka (Namdhari) Movement A Rebellion Against the British Government?", in *The Punjab Past and Present*, vol 8, pt 2 (1974), pp. 325-41.
99. Memorandum by G. McAndrew, Deputy Inspector-General of Police, Ambala circle, 20 Nov 1871: Singh (comp.), *Kuka Documents*, no XLVII.
100. In 1868 it was contended that "it is only amongst a people steeped in ignorance that a movement so full of anomalies could spread and find favour": Offg Secy to GOP to Secy to GOI, FD, 1 Feb 1868, no 50-117: *ibid*, no XXI.
101. n.94 above.
102. Appendix II to Inspector-General of Police to Secy GOP, 20 Jan 1868, no 11-188: Singh (comp.), *Kuka Documents*, no XXB.

particulars were known to the British in 1871, twenty-eight were Jats and seven were Tarkhans (of the remaining fifteen, twelve belonged to ten different castes, while the caste of three is not specified).¹⁰³

In 1867 Ram Singh estimated his followers at 100,000; but the District Superintendent of Police at Ludhiana considered 60,000 to be an outside estimate.¹⁰⁴

In the late 1860s Ram Singh's more excitable followers were responsible for a number of public disturbances: there was a spate of desecrations of Hindu temples and Muslim tombs by Kukas between 1866 and 1868, a brawl between Kukas and Akalis nearly occurred when Ram Singh visited the shrine at Anandpur in 1867, and a minor Kuka riot took place in Ferozpur District in 1869.¹⁰⁵ The Punjab Government took no proscriptive action towards the sect as a whole, because it recognised that these disturbances were the work of a small lunatic fringe. Besides, by 1868-69 intelligence reports indicated that the popularity of the Kukas was on the decline.¹⁰⁶

The Government's confidence was short-lived, however, for in June 1871 a party of Kukas attacked the Muslim slaughter-house at Amritsar and murdered four butchers (three others were severely wounded). A month later a similar attack occurred in Ludhiana District, whereby a man and a woman were killed, and seven women and children were wounded. The perpetrators of these crimes were eventually rounded up, and seven of them were sentenced to death.¹⁰⁷ It was from this point onwards that the Government began to equate the Kuka sect as a whole - and not just its more extremist members - with sedition. In September 1871, for

103. See a statement in *ibid*, no XLVIII.

104. See T.D. Forsyth, C and S Jullundur Division, to Thornton, 11 March 1867, no 108: *ibid*, no XVI; also n.94 above.

105. See n. 94 above; an Abstract of police reports received in 1867: Singh (com.) *Kuka Documents*, no XXA; Thornton to Forsyth, 27 March 1867, no 279: *ibid*, no XVII; G. Hutchison, Inspector-General of Police, to Secy to GOP, Civil Dept, 14 Jan 1871, no 7-201: *ibid*, no XXXV.

106. Hutchinson to Thornton, 19 Jan 1869, no 10: *ibid*, no XXIX; Hutchinson to Secy to GOP, 30 Jan 1871, no 12-376: *ibid*, no XXXVI.

107. L.H. Griffin, Offg Secy to GOP to E.C. Bayley, Secy to GOI, 9 Sept 1871 (Confidential): *ibid*, no XLII.

example, an order was issued, prohibiting the enlistment of known Kukas into the police force.¹⁰⁸

The culmination of this growing tension was not far away. On 14 January 1872 a party of more than 100 Kukas launched an attack on the small town of Malodh in Ludhiana District. Apparently, their object was to obtain weapons - Malodh was the residence of an old Sikh chieftain family - but, having caused some damage and a great deal of commotion, they were repulsed. The next day they attacked the neighbouring town of Malerkotla, the capital of the little Muslim principality which bore the same name. Again, however, they were repulsed. By the time that the Deputy Commissioner of Ludhiana District, L. Cowan, arrived on the scene, sixty-eight Kukas had been captured.¹⁰⁹ Cowan then proceeded to mete out a form of "justice" which, in its barbarity, was rivalled only by the earlier action of Frederick Cooper at Ajnala in 1857 and the subsequent action of General Dyer at Jallianwala Bagh in 1919. Having decided - as he later put it - "that a terrible example was needed to put a stop at once to what was assuming the proportions of a *rebellion*, and to prevent a recurrence of similar outrages at a future time,"¹¹⁰ Cowan summarily ordered forty-nine of the prisoners to be blown away from guns. The next day the Commissioner of Ambala Division, T.D. Forsyth, arrived at Malerkotla, hurriedly tried sixteen more prisoners, and executed them in the same manner.¹¹¹

Meanwhile, Ram Singh and his surviving lieutenants had been arrested. Evidence of their complicity in the attacks on Malodh and Malerkotla was scanty, to say the least. In any case, the British were concerned that a trial of Ram Singh might be seen as a political, not as a criminal,

108. Central Police Office, Lahore, to all Deputy Inspectors-General of Police, 28 Sept 1871, Memo no 4505: *ibid*, no XLIII. All Kukas then in the police force, in Districts where the sect had a strong following, were to be transferred to non-Kuka Districts.

109. GOI to SS, 19 Jan 1872, no 7: "CKO", p.3 (of the collection).

110. Cowan to T.D. Forsyth, C and S Ambala Division, 21 Jan 1872 (original emphasis): *ibid*, p.23.

111. Forsyth to Secy to GOP, 20 Jan 1872: *ibid*, pp. 19-20.

trial. And so, just as they had transported Bhai Maharaj Singh out of the Punjab in 1849 without any public trial, the surviving leaders of the Kuka sect were transported to various British jails in 1872. Ram Singh was sent to Burma, where he died in 1888.¹¹²

The actions of Cowan and Forsyth at Malerkotla caused a great uproar in official circles, however. This is understandable: Cowan had obviously exceeded his duties, and Forsyth's judicial inquiry into the guilt of the sixteen men he subsequently executed had been altogether too hasty; but were these two officers to be disciplined? Both men claimed that they had acted in the interests of public safety. Although he considered the executions to have been unnecessarily severe, the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Henry Davies, adopted the time-honoured principle of the "Punjab School" of standing by the junior officer "on the spot".¹¹³ But the days when British officers in the Punjab could with impunity act fairly much as a law unto themselves were fast coming to an end. The Government of India overruled the Punjab Government on the matter of the Malerkotla episode, and pointed out that

The one thing which cannot be permitted to any civil or military officer in any case whatever, is the regular assumption of the office of the judge and of the legislator. No such officer has right to punish his prisoners, still less has he any right to punish them according to a law made by himself, after the fact, and in reference to the circumstances of a particular case.¹¹⁴

Consequently, Cowan was dismissed from government service, and Forsyth was transferred to Oudh. The Secretary of State for India sanctioned this decision.¹¹⁵

How should the Kuka outbreak itself be interpreted? In the decade or so after 1947, the tendency was for nationalist Punjabi historians

112. Rose, *Glossary of Tribes and Castes*, vol 2, pp. 560-61.

113. Griffin to Bayley, 7 Feb 1872, no 59c: "CKO", pp. 26-8.

114. Bayley to Secy to GOP, 30 April 1872, no 857: *ibid*, pp. 54-8.

115. SS to GOI, 18 July 1872, no 32: *ibid*, p.60. Cowan was granted a pension of Rs 300 per month.

to treat the Kuka outbreak as an early, but integral, stage of the great "freedom struggle" against British rule in India.¹¹⁶ This interpretation has obvious weaknesses, not the least of them being the fact that the victims of the Kukas's verbal and physical attacks were nearly all fellow Punjabis, not Englishmen. More recently, the political aspect of the Kuka movement has been played down. For example, Ganda Singh has regarded the Kuka movement as "a purely religious movement". Ram Singh, he says, "had no political aims and mission and preached no rebellious ideas." It was the "ill-directed enthusiasm" of some of Ram Singh's followers that brought the sect into a situation of confrontation with the authorities.¹¹⁷ McLeod, while he does not deny the political aspects of the Kuka outbreak, also shifts the focus of attention towards religious issues: he sees the Kuka sect as "a distinctively Sikh version of a common millenarian pattern." He continues:

Social instability had produced discontent, and discontent had found the holy man to whom it could attach its aspirations. Out of this there emerged the myth which drew together past glories, present frustrations, and future hopes. Battle was joined, not with deliberation but impulsively, and the movement was quickly crushed. The leaders were imprisoned, adherents quickly fell away and although a loyal remnant remained the discontent which had prompted the sect's rapid growth soon found outlets elsewhere.¹¹⁸

McLeod's thesis is an illuminating and vigorously argued one, and we would accept it more or less without reservation. What we do wish to do here, however, is to suggest that, typologically, there is an additional way of looking at the Kuka movement - that is, as an instance of "secondary resistance."¹¹⁹

116. See, for example, M.M. Ahluwalia, *Kukas: the Freedom Fighters of the Panjab* (Bombay, 1965) and Fauja Singh Bajwa, *Kuka Movement: an important phase in Punjab's role in India's struggle for freedom* (Delhi, 1965).

117. Singh, "The Kuka (Namdhari) Movement". In this article Singh rejects the arguments of those who had earlier criticised his interpretation.

118. W.H. McLeod, "The Kukas: A Millenarian Sect of the Punjab", in G.A. Wood and P.S. O'Connor (eds), *W.P. Morrell: A Tribute* (Dunedin, 1973), pp. 85-103.

119. See chap. 4, n.158 above.

The point really is this: the Kuka movement was neither the first nor the last millenarian-type movement to emerge from within the larger Sikh community. Since the seventeenth century, at least, Sikhism has been a prophetic religion with a propensity to throw up full-fledged millenarian movements (or, in the twentieth century, revolutionary religious-political movements) whenever the fortunes and cohesion of the Sikh community have been seriously threatened by external pressures. At the same time, however, the specific objectives, strategies and social constituency of these movements have varied, according to historical circumstances. Thus, these movements have succeeded one another in a logical, not merely temporal, progression. This becomes clear when we compare the Kuka movement with a slightly earlier millenarian-type Sikh movement: Bhai Maharaj Singh's crusade in the Manjha in the late 1840s.

At first glance these two movements appear to have been remarkably similar. Both prophesied the imminent return of Khalsa rule. And both centred around a holy man who, it was claimed, was a reincarnation of Guru Gobind Singh - it is interesting to note that in 1863 Ram Singh's lieutenant at Amritsar, Lal Singh, was preaching that Ram Singh was actually the second reincarnation of Gobind Singh, the first having been Maharaj Singh, in 1847.¹²⁰ But the differences are no less striking. In the first place, Maharaj Singh's following was drawn essentially from the middle and upper ranks of rural society in central Punjab: the substantial Sikh peasantry, the disbanded Sikh soldiery and some of the prominent Sikh chieftain families. Ram Singh's following, on the other hand, was drawn almost exclusively from the lower ranks of rural society. In 1867 Thornton observed that only a few "Sirdars and people of note" had joined the Kuka sect.¹²¹ By and large, the attitude of the elites within the Sikh community, and of the Sikh orthodoxy, towards the Kukas was uncompromisingly hostile. In the second place, Maharaj Singh's movement was an anti-British and anti-collaborator crusade, as is seen in his involvement in the so-called Prema conspiracy, his decision immediately to join the insurrection at Multan in 1848 and his continued

120. See the report of Captain Menzies, District Superintendent of Police, Amritsar, 31 May 1863: Singh (comp.), *Kuka Documents*, no I.

121. Thornton to Wyllie, 2 Feb 1867, no 157-54: *ibid*, no XIA.

resistance to British authority in the months after annexation. Ram Singh's movement, on the other hand, was essentially a crusade to restore the original purity and the social message of Sikhism. It was for Sikhism what the Ahmadiyya movement was later to be for north Indian Islam.

Maharaj Singh's movement occurred at a time of great political instability in the Punjab, when the British were in the process of superseding the Sikhs. His movement was an integral part of that 'post-pacification revolt' by which an important section of the old elite sought to turn back the tide of British dominance. Ram Singh's movement occurred at a time of political stability, yet of great social and economic change, when the long-term implications of British rule were beginning to take shape. By the mid-1860s, as we have seen, the elites in rural Punjabi society had been reconciled to British rule, and were again doing quite well for themselves. But Sikhism, which had previously been for many the religion of warfare and conquest, was undergoing a crisis of confidence, due to a temporary slump in its number of adherents.¹²² And the material conditions of a large section of the Punjabi peasantry were undergoing a marked deterioration - especially in the eastern and central Districts, where Ram Singh's following was strongest. The Kuka outbreak was a response to these unique historical circumstances. It was an instance of "secondary resistance" in that it was a relatively mute and incoherent political protest (as well as a messianic religious protest) against these circumstances, and in that it was - both temporally and logically - a stage of Sikh resistance to British imperialism that was transitional between the military resistance of the elite in the 1840s and the radical peasant anti-imperialism of the Ghadrites and the Babar Akalis in the early decades of the twentieth century.¹²³

122. A decline in the popularity of Sikhism was noticed almost immediately after annexation: *PAR 1851-53*, para 498. Between 1868 and 1881 the number of Sikhs per 1,000 of population in the five Districts of central Punjab declined from 125 to 115: *Punjab Census 1881*, p.140, Abstract no 56. The number of baptisms performed annually at the Akal Bungah of the Golden Temple at Amritsar between 1860 and 1883 reached its lowest point in 1871: *Amritsar DG 1883-84*, p.67

123. M.V. Harcourt has noted that several important members of the Ghadr party had previously been Kuka sympathisers: "Revolutionary Networks In Northern Indian Politics 1907-1935: A Case Study of the 'Terrorist' Movement in Delhi, the Punjab, the United Provinces, and adjacent Princely States" (unpub. Ph.D. thesis, Sussex University, 1973): see, for an example, p.195.

Conclusion

The decade after the Great Rebellion saw the British make a considerable retreat from their earlier "experiment" in the Punjab. In keeping with their perceived need to bolster their political authority and increase the efficiency of their administration, they took two important steps that were at complete variance with the style and spirit of the colonial regime which Dalhousie had set up in the Punjab after annexation. In a way, these two steps represent a *new* "experiment" in political control. First, the resuscitation of the old rural elites which had been undertaken in 1857, to meet a sudden emergency, was made permanent. The chieftains, great and small, who possessed the requisite "influence" were provided with new pecuniary privileges and employment opportunities - not, it must be admitted, to the extent that had been the case under Sikh rule, but certainly to a far greater extent than had been the case between 1849 and 1856. Henceforth, the chieftains were to regard their fortunes and status as being inextricably tied up with the maintenance of British rule. Second, the legal and administrative machinery in the Punjab was standardised with that of the Regulation Provinces. As the response of the supreme authorities to the Malerkotla executions showed, this meant that British officers in the Punjab were no longer to have the right to govern like little autocrats.

These two changes did not signify a complete departure from the paternalism of the "Punjab School". The passage of the Punjab Tenancy Act was a considerable victory for the "Punjab School", in that it checked - in one area of agrarian policy at least - the spread of "aristocratic", *laissez-faire* dogma. Ideologically, and to a considerable extent in practice also, the Punjab Government was to remain firmly committed to the ideal of a contented and prosperous peasantry. But, as we have seen, the material well-being of the peasantry was beginning to be undermined by new forces (which had been released by the imposition of British rule) by the late 1860s. The Kuka outbreak of 1872 was both an expression of these frustrations and dislocations and a forewarning of the peasant militancy that was to come.

CONCLUSION

Ranjit Singh was once shown a British map of the subcontinent. He asked what the red patches signified. On being informed by the cartographer that they represented the possessions of the East India Company, the Maharaja turned to his courtiers and remarked: "*Ek roz sab lal ho jaiga* - one day it will all be red."¹ As it turned out, the British never painted more than three-fifths of the map red, the remaining two-fifths being the territories of the Princely States. But the kingdom of Lahore was not destined to be among these: within ten years of Ranjit Singh's death the Punjab was part of British India.

It would be fair to say that the pre-conditions of British conquest of the Punjab lay as much, if not more, in the social and political structure of the region in the early decades of the nineteenth century as in the freebooting nature of the East India Company at this time. Geographic location and the uneven distribution of natural resources for agriculture had combined to produce in the Punjab a society whose main features were heterogeneity, vertical cleavage and martial spirit - a frontier society. Following the dissolution of the Mughal empire in the middle of the eighteenth century, there was an upsurge of competition and conflict between clan-based, local-level political systems in rural Punjab. It was out of this situation that emerged the Sikh *misl*s and, finally, at a higher level of political synthesis, the new regional system that was the Sikh kingdom. Although it was, to a considerable extent, based on Mughal administrative precepts and institutions and Mughal rulership traditions, the kingdom founded by Ranjit Singh was first and foremost a Punjabi military patronage State; and its real legitimacy was derived from its apparent commitment to the enduring, millenarian evocation of the Sikh community: "*Raj Karega Khalsa* - the Khalsa shall rule!" Nearly one-half of the kingdom's revenue was spent on the army, whose task it was to defend and extend the Khalsa's political hegemony.

Like all military patronage States, the Sikh kingdom required constant territorial expansion in order to retain the support of the

1. Khushwant Singh, *History of the Sikhs*, vol 2, 1839-1974, p.1.

small but powerful elite groups in Punjabi society, especially the chieftains. The chieftains, who were recruited both by ascription (from the leadership structures of the erstwhile *misls* and the dominant tribes and clans) and by achievement (from the ranks of the army), formed a loose regional political elite, with a near monopoly of top administrative and military offices. Their allegiance - and hence the dormancy of politically centrifugal forces within Punjabi society - could be counted upon so long as there was an outlet for their martial spirits and employment expectations. Towards the end of Ranjit Singh's reign, however, territorial expansion slowed down, and was then cut off, as the geo-political limits to Sikh overlordship were reached. Here, as was generally the case in such circumstances,² was the making of a potential crisis in the suzerain-vassal relationship ; with the cessation of military campaigns, there was every likelihood that the chieftains would attempt to establish themselves as a permanent territorial aristocracy, capable, perhaps, of overthrowing the Sikh monarch.

Ranjit Singh was perfectly aware of the dangers. He therefore built into the political structure of his kingdom a number of checks and balances, many of which resemble the rulership devices employed by African monarchs. Most important among these checks and balances was a "new staff" system, whereby non-Punjabis, and, in particular, Rajput Dogras from Jammu, were elevated rapidly to top positions of trust and dignity at the *darbar*. The great rivalry that Ranjit Singh deliberately fostered between the "old", Punjabi chieftains and the "new", non-Punjabi, chieftains allowed him to play one faction off against another, and thus to avert any direct challenge to his own position. But in adopting this strategy, Ranjit Singh had introduced into Punjabi *darbar* politics a fundamental tension that was to be exploited, with great effectiveness, by the imperialists. Of more immediate significance was the fact that this tension was to bring the imperialists into the kingdom in the first place.

2. For the crisis experienced by the Mughal empire in the 1660s, see Michael N. Pearson, "Shivaji and the Decline of the Mughal Empire", in *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol 35, no 2 (Feb 1976), pp. 221-35.

After Ranjit Singh's death in 1839, successive Maharajas proved unable to hold the rivalry between the two groups of chieftains in check, and practically the entire *darbar* was drawn into the vortex of factional conflict. Once started, the disintegrating proclivities of this conflict were almost incapable of being stopped. As the authority of the monarchy caved in, the army increasingly assumed a political role at Lahore, while in the countryside the forces of particularism, never far from the surface in rural Punjabi society, emerged : the Ravi and Sutlej pastoral tribes rose in rebellion; many villages refused to pay the revenue; and the *kardars* - mostly members of an urban elite - attempted to build up their wealth and independence. It is significant that the earliest direct interference by the British in the kingdom's internal affairs, and the buildup of British military pressure along the kingdom's eastern border, coincided precisely with the intensification of the monarchy's crisis. This was, it would seem, a common "initial imperial situation".³ But it would be wrong to suppose that the British had clear territorial designs on the Punjab in the early 1840s. The British went to war with the Sikhs in 1845-46 not to acquire the Punjab, but rather to settle a "local crisis" : to pacify what had become an intolerably turbulent frontier. Their primary objective - and it was one that was, to a considerable extent, shared by the Sikh monarchy itself - was to destroy a now republican Sikh army, and in so doing, to restore the kingdom to its former role, in the British scheme of things, as a compliant buffer State between British India and Islamic central Asia.

If the transformation of the Punjab from a frontier kind of society in general to a politically turbulent frontier between 1839 and 1845 set the stage for the first British conquest, the actual political situation that prevailed at the *darbar* in 1846 was to have a profound influence on both the style and the timing of the second and decisive British conquest. With the creation of a Dogra kingdom in Kashmir in 1846, the Sikh-Dogra antagonism was taken out of Punjabi politics. The underlying

3. The phrase is D.A. Low's : *Lion Rampant : Essays in the Study of British Imperialism* (London, 1973), p.9. For an African example of the situation being described, see D.A. Low, *Buganda in Modern History* (Berkeley, 1971), p.35.

rivalry between "old" and "new" chieftains remained unresolved, however. Consequently, the British officers who were sent to Lahore to supervise the implementation of the provisions of the peace treaty intruded into a situation almost tailor-made for manipulating rivalries and forging new alliances. Because they had at their disposal an army of conquest, but also because they were prepared to work within the existing power structure (witness Henry Lawrence's support for chieftains who were trying to get lost *jagirs* restored, and his direct appeals to ceremonial legitimacy, as in his countersigning of *sanads*), these British officers proved remarkably adept at playing Punjabi *darbar* politics.

Yet it would be quite wrong to assume that they always had the upper hand. The different factions at the *darbar* were, in reality, anything but the passive objects of British manipulation. Frequently, the British officers found themselves being manipulated to serve Punjabi ends. Even the most obsequious collaboration offered to the British stemmed from what has, in another - but not dissimilar - context, been described as "rational calculations of interest and probable consequence."⁴ In the final analysis, there was an interplay between British and Punjabi initiatives in the Punjab during the period 1846-49. And it was the new "local crises" produced by this interplay that dragged the British ever deeper into the domestic affairs of the kingdom. That the upshot of all this interference by the British was a general crisis of authority, and that the ensuing war of 1848-49 split Punjabi society down the middle, is indicative of the degree to which Punjabis were themselves active participators in, and shapers of, the drift towards annexation. Imperial takeovers were rarely the straightforward and one-sided affairs that the popular historical imagination usually credits them with having been. In the Punjab the transition from "informal" to "formal" imperial control - a transition that occurred by way of the four stages outlined in the fourth chapter of this thesis - was a highly complex process, in which the shifting forms and strengths of indigenous collaboration and resistance were crucial ingredients.⁵

4. John Iliffe, *Tanganyika under German Rule, 1905-12* (Cambridge, 1969), pp. 5-6.

5. Studies of certain other regions have also shown this : see, for example B. Swai, "The British in Malabar, 1792-1806" (unpub D. Phil. thesis, Sussex University, 1974).

The British colonial administration established in the Punjab in 1849 was unique in the amount of importance it attached to the goal of rapid and thoroughgoing modernisation. Elsewhere in the subcontinent political uncertainty and administrative inexperience had frequently meant that the main changes brought by British rule - the subordination of the regional political elite; the elimination of many of the old, local intermediaries; the renovation of the indigenous revenue system; the introduction of a Western legal system; the development of public works - had proceeded in a piecemeal and haphazard fashion. But in the Punjab, which was one of the last regions to be annexed, imperial confidence, administrative experience and an Evangelical-Utilitarian zeal for reform all came together in a rush. The work of the "Punjab School" between 1849 and 1856, carried out according to the Non-regulation system of administration, and guaranteed by the presence of an army of occupation, constituted an "imperial experiment", whereby the British would rule the Punjab with but minimal assistance from the chieftains and other, local-level intermediaries. To be sure, not every British officer agreed with this strategy (witness Henry Lawrence's disturbance over the *jagir* decisions pushed through by John Lawrence and Dalhousie); and in overhauling the traditional "local" system of government, combatting crime and introducing a new land revenue system that recognised "primary" *zamindars* as proprietors, the "Punjab School" encountered many difficulties. Still, by 1856 the foundations of an authoritarian, exclusive and paternalistic colonial regime had been cemented.

However, the outbreak of the Great Rebellion in 1857 shattered the "Punjab School's" mood of self-congratulation. It is clear that British authority in the Punjab was severely tested at this time. Not only were there twelve instances of mutiny on the part of the Hindustani sepoy regiments stationed in the Punjab Territories, but also a large portion of the province was swept by civil unrest of an order not experienced since the eighteenth century. (It does need to be understood, however - as an examination of the Gugera insurrection bears out - that the causes of this unrest often went much deeper than just crude opportunism or sympathy with the cause of the Delhi rebels.) The British took a number of measures to ward off a full-scale rebellion

in the Punjab. Without doubt, the most effectual of these was the reactivation of the martial tradition in Punjabi society in defence of the empire : the general call for recruits to serve before Delhi, and John Lawrence's personal call to the formerly "disloyal" chieftains to come forward with their old military establishments. Such a golden opportunity for service, adventure, plunder and the recovery of lost *jagirs*, was presented that, before they realised how critical the position of the British really was, Punjabis had flocked in their thousands to the British standard and had been sent out of their homeland. The decision to mobilise the Punjab was, we have argued, a masterly stroke on the part of the British, and John Lawrence in particular. It probably saved the empire. But it also cast a long shadow of doubt over the "Punjab School's" earlier approaches to government. The lesson of 1857-58 for the British seemed to be that, when it came to the crunch, they could not seriously hope to wean the Punjab away from militarism; that they could not - just as the Sikhs could not - rule the Punjab without the support of the elites.

The lesson was not lost on the British. After 1858 their political strategy in the province changed in two important respects. First, many of those Punjabis who had joined up in the hour of crisis were given permanent employment in the armed services. From the 1880s, in fact, the "martial races" of the Punjab were purposefully recruited to form the backbone of the Indian Army. Imran Ali has shown how these Punjabi soldiers were pampered with land grants in the canal colonies that were established from this time onwards - how canal colonisation greatly contributed to the entrenchment of the military in rural Punjabi society.⁶ Second, the elites in rural Punjabi society were coaxed back into something like their old positions as intermediaries. The old *chaudhari* class was resuscitated and conciliated through appointments to the offices of *zaildar* and *ala-lambardar*. These new offices provided the British with what they perceived to be a much-needed link between

6. Imran Ali, "The Punjab Canal Colonies, 1885-1940" (unpub Ph.D. thesis, Australian National University, Canberra, 1979).

the upper and lower levels of their administration. The chieftains were conciliated with new *jagirs*, new titles and limited administrative powers. Many chieftains who had been deprived of their *jagirs* and titles after 1849 were restored to "honour" after 1858. British policy towards the chieftains in the decade after the Great Rebellion was essentially preservative. In fact, it could be said that whereas Ranjit Singh had, after the late 1820s, been concerned to *prevent* the chieftains from transforming themselves into an aristocracy, the British, thirty years later, took steps to *ensure* the survival of the chieftains as a limited provincial aristocracy. The broad explanation of the difference in policy is, of course, this : in the late 1820s the Sikh kingdom was a military patronage State whose growth had all but come to an end, whereas in the late 1850s British Punjab was part of a still-expanding empire. It should not be imagined that after 1858 the British abandoned entirely their earlier "experiment" in the Punjab. The continued emphasis on the importance of public works and, more significantly, the 1868 victory of the "Punjab School" over the "Aristocratic School" on the question of superior tenants' rights preclude any such inference. Nonetheless, the deliberate association of "influential" Punjabis with their administration, the remilitarisation of Punjabi society, the watering down of the Non-regulation style of government, the steady deterioration of the material condition of a large section of the Punjabi peasantry - these post-1858 developments are indicative of at least a retreat by the British from the brave new world of 1849.

What, then, had the Punjab's return to empire come to mean after two decades of direct British rule? By the early 1870s the Punjab had undergone a number of important changes. There had been a shift from the "traditional" patrimonial government of the Sikhs to the "modern" bureaucratic regime of the British. Proprietary rights in the land had been given a legal definition; the land revenue demand had been fixed for ten-year or twenty-year periods; land revenue assignments and other privileged land tenures had been curtailed greatly. Communications, trade and public works had been expanded. In fact, the Punjab was at this time entering a period of quite phenomenal material

growth.⁷ All these changes may be summed up in a single phrase: an expansion of political scale. By 1872 most Punjabis had adjusted to British rule and were beginning to make use of the imperial connection. A fair degree of new horizontal mobility (increasingly manifested, from this time onwards, in the politicisation of communal culture) had begun to destroy the old vertical alignments in Punjabi society. The Punjab, once a frontier society, was being integrated into the cultural and political heartland of north India.

And yet all these changes were offset by a number of equally fundamental continuities. The history of the Punjab between 1849 and 1872 shows that the process of "modernisation" sparked off by colonial rule was a complex and frequently contradictory process. Rarely was it a case of colonial rule blowing apart a static "traditional" society to produce a new socio-cultural order. Rather, colonial rule attempted, wherever it could, to stretch the existing society to accommodate new goals; and socio-cultural change was essentially a multidimensional, non-linear process of adaption, whereby indigenous social groups, institutions and value systems made adjustments to the new circumstances. In the Punjab the British tried at first to bring into existence a new socio-cultural order; but the Great Rebellion caused them to question the wisdom of this "experiment", and after 1858 they scrupulously avoided tampering further with the "traditional" social structure.⁸ In the final analysis, the significance of the Punjab's return to empire lies in the continuity of an indigenous, dominant power structure. While it has not been much concerned with urban politics, this thesis has shown

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7. For example, the acreage under cultivation in the Punjab doubled between 1855 and 1921; the acreage irrigated by canals increased by nearly 600 per cent between 1868 and 1919; the land revenue doubled between 1872 and 1920; the gross value of produce increased by 200 per cent between 1868 and 1921: Calvert, *Wealth and Welfare*, pp. 54, 67-8, 102.
8. It is interesting to note that after forty years of British rule only 3.27 per cent of the whole population (and only 1.44 per cent of the landowning and agricultural population) was literate; while only 0.18 per cent (0.03 per cent) knew English: *Punjab Census 1891*, Appendix C, Abstract 60. R.A. John has argued that British educational policies were dictated by political considerations: "The Contribution Of British Educational And Administrative Policies To The Rise Of Nationalism In Nineteenth Century Punjab, 1835-1878" (unpub M.A. thesis, University of Newcastle, 1978).

that the old urban elite which provided the Sikhs with their *kardars* managed to retain its position in rural Punjabi life under British rule. Indeed, the very nature of the British land revenue system guaranteed the importance of the urban moneylender in rural society, and his monopolisation of local administrative offices like that of *patwari*. More substantively, the thesis has shown that the old rural elite, both at the regional level (the chieftains) and the local level (the *chaudharis*), was most successful in adjusting to the shift from patrimonialism to a more bureaucratic regime that British rule produced. This rural elite survived as a privileged and powerful group through the British and into the post-independence period.⁹ Ironically, it was the very class in Punjabi society that the British claimed they were most concerned to protect - the peasantry - that suffered the most during the first two decades of British rule.¹⁰ The Kuka outbreak of 1872, while not a true peasant revolt, hinted that serious challenges to British authority in the early decades of the twentieth century would be mounted not from the top, but from the bottom of Punjabi society.

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9. See, for example, Ronald J. Herring, "Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and 'Eradication of Feudalism' in Pakistan", in *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol xv, no 12 (22 March 1980), pp. 599-614.
10. For a useful summary of the (as yet, largely unsynthesised) data on declining peasant living standards in early-twentieth-century British Punjab, see Bhagwan Josh, *Communist Movement In Punjab (1926-47)*, (Delhi, 1979), pp.4-41.

GLOSSARY

- abadi*: in the northwest of the Punjab, a village.
- abwab*: a cess paid by the cultivator to the *Kardar*, in addition to the land revenue, under Sikh rule.
- adalati*: an administrator of justice under Sikh rule.
- Akali*: also *Nihang*: a militant follower of Guru Gobind Singh.
- 'amil*: under Mughal rule, the equivalent of a *kardar*.
- amin*: under Afghan rule, the equivalent of a *kardar*.
- azan*: public call to Muslims to prayer.
- bagh*: a garden.
- bania*: also *kirar*: a Hindu shopkeeper.
- batai*: under Sikh rule, a method of assessing the land revenue by a simple division of the harvest.
- Bhai*: a Sikh title denoting religious learning; a Sikh priest.
- bhaichara*: under British rule, a tenure in which land was held in severalty by different proprietors whose shares were regulated by the revenue payable.
- biradari*: a caste brotherhood; an institution for the settlement of village disputes.
- chaharam*: a remission of one-quarter of the land revenue.
- "chamcha"*: a modern Hindi word meaning "flatterer" or "opportunist".
- chaudhari*: a minor chieftain; the hereditary headman of a *tappa*.

- chowkidar*: a rural, village-paid constable.
- chout*: "one-fourth"; protection money levied by the Marathas.
- crore*: ten million.
- dacoit*: a bandit.
- dak*: post; postal system.
- darbar*: court; under British rule, a ceremonial occasion.
- deorhiwala*: a royal chamberlain.
- dhok*: in the northwest of the Punjab, a hamlet.
- dhol*: a war drum.
- diwan*: under Sikh rule, the head of the finance department; also a revenue collector.
- doab*: the tract between two rivers.
- faqir*: a Muslim mendicant.
- farangi*: a foreigner, especially a European.
- farman*: a royal command.
- gaddi*: a throne.
- ghee*: clarified butter.
- got*: also *moore*: an exogamous descent group; a subcaste; a clan.
- granthi*: a "reader" of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, the Sikh sacred scripture.
- guru*: a religious teacher.

- gurdwara*: a Sikh temple.
- harijan*: Mahatma Gandhi's term for an untouchable.
- haveli*: a palace or large house.
- ijar*: a revenue farm; *ijaradar*: a revenue farmer under Sikh rule.
- inam*: a deduction from the land revenue in favour of an influential landholder; *inamdār*: the holder of an *inam*.
- izzat*: honour.
- jagir*: an assignment of land revenue (under Sikh rule, in lieu of salary); *jagirdar*: the holder of a *jagir*.
- jama*: the land revenue demand.
- jihad*: the Islamic principle of internal and external struggle; an Islamic "holy war".
- jirgah*: the tribal equivalent of a *biradari*.
- kachchu*: a surveyor of lands and crops.
- kamin*: an artisan or menial.
- kaniya*: under the *kankut* system, an appraiser.
- kankut*: under Sikh rule, a method of assessing the land revenue by estimating the value of the standing crop.
- Kanwar*: prince.
- kardar*: under Sikh rule, a district revenue collector and administrator.
- karkun*: a managing agent.

- Khalsa*: the Sikh order, brotherhood, instituted in 1699 by Guru Gobind Singh; generally, the collective Sikh community.
- khariif*: the autumn crop.
- khet khusrah*: the *patwari*'s field book.
- khidmatgar*: a personal servant.
- khil'at*: a costume of honour (including robes and sometimes arms or horses) bestowed by a superior on an inferior as a mark of distinction.
- kotwal*: a city police chief.
- kshatriya*: the warrior section of the classical Hindu caste hierarchy.
- lakh*: one hundred thousand.
- Lalla*: also *Misr* and *Rai*: a Hindu title denoting literacy and administrative expertise.
- lambardar*: also *muqaddam*: a village headman; *ala-lambardar*: under British rule, a chief village headman.
- ma'afi*: also *lakhiraj*: (a grant of) revenue-free land; *ma'afidar*: the holder of a *ma'afi*.
- ma-bap*: "mother-father": authority.
- madad-i-ma'ash*: also *dharmarth*: a *ma'afi* granted to a pious individual or a religious institution.
- mahal*: under British rule, a revenue-paying estate; generally synonymous with *mauza*.
- Maharaja*: king; *Maharani*: also *Rani*: queen.
- makhtar-i-kar*: also *muharir*: a deputy.

- malguzar*: under British rule, a revenue payer.
- malik*: under British rule, a proprietor; *malik ala*: a superior proprietor; *malik adna*: an inferior proprietor.
- malikana*: rent.
- maund*: a unit of weight, about 82 lbs.
- maurusī* tenant: under British rule, a superior, hereditary tenant;
ghair-maurusī tenant: a tenant-at-will.
- mauza*: a village.
- misl*: a Sikh warband of the eighteenth century; *misdar*: a member, sometimes leader of a *misl*.
- mohalla*: also *katra*: an urban residential block.
- mulk-giri*: territorial possession.
- munshi*: a clerk.
- munsif*: under British rule, a "native" judge.
- mustajir*: under British rule, an estate manager and revenue farmer.
- naib*: a deputy.
- nakshah*: an official report.
- Nawab*: also *Khan* and *Sultan*: a Muslim chieftain title.
- nazim*: under Sikh rule, a provincial governor.
- nazr*: an offering or a present.

- nazrana*: the tribute paid by a vassal; under Sikh rule, the relinquishment of a portion of a *jagir* by a successor to that *jagir*.
- paarti*: a faction.
- pachotra*: a commission of 5 per cent on the land revenue collected, received by the *chaudhari* and *lambardar* as remuneration for their services.
- panchayat*: a committee of five; a village council.
- Pandit*: a Hindu title denoting religious learning; a Hindu priest.
- pata-nama*: a deed or a contract.
- pattidari*: under British rule, a tenure in which land was held in severalty by different proprietors whose shares were regulated by ancestral or customary shares.
- patwari*: a village accountant and record keeper.
- purabiah*: an "easterner".
- qamungo*: an accountant and record keeper at the *ta'aluqa* level.
- qazi*: an administrator of Islamic law.
- rabi*: the spring crop.
- Raja*: a Hindu and Sikh chieftain title.
- rakhi*: protection money levied by a *misl*.
- rubakari*: a pronouncement.
- rukh*: a block of waste land controlled by the State.

- ryotwari*: under British rule, a land revenue system whereby the engagement is made with the individual peasant proprietor.
- sahukar*: also *shah* and *mahajan*: a village moneylender.
- sailab*: floodwaters.
- sanad*: a title deed.
- sarai*: also *dharmasala*: a place of shelter for travellers.
- Sardar*: a Sikh chieftain.
- "*Sarkar*": government; Ranjit Singh's preferred form of address.
- sati*: widow self-immolation.
- shukka*: a royal letter.
- sofed-posh*: "clad in white"; under British rule, a type of *inam*.
- sowar*: a cavalryman.
- suba*: under Mughal and Sikh rule, a province.
- subha*: a Kuka lieutenant.
- ta'aluqa*: also *pargana*: under Sikh rule, a district; a clan territory.
- tahsil*: under British rule, an administrative unit below the District; *tahsildar*: the officer in charge of a *tahsil*.
- takavi*: an agricultural loan.
- taluqdar*: a superior proprietor; in the North-Western Provinces, a member of a revenue-paying territorial nobility.
- tappa*: under Sikh rule, a subdivision of a *ta'aluqa*; a seal.

- taraf:* also *patti* and *pana:* a village caste section.
- thanadar:* under Sikh rule, a governor of a military fort.
- thok:* also *thula:* a village caste subsection.
- thugi:* ritualistic robbery and murder.
- tika:* a forehead marking.
- tirni:* grazing tax.
- tope:* also *chakla:* under Sikh rule, a subdivision of a *tappa*.
- toshakhania:* a keeper of a treasury.
- vakil:* an agent.
- wazir:* a chief minister.
- zabti:* under Sikh rule, a method of assessing the land revenue by applying fixed cash rates to certain perishable and superior crops.
- zail:* under British rule, the circle of a *zaildar*, an influential landholder who assisted the regular civil authorities.
- zamindar:* in the Punjab, a peasant proprietor.
- zamindari:* under British rule, a tenure held by one or more "landlords".
- zat:* an endogamous descent group; a caste or tribe.

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