

## A critical study on Awadh and its situation during the Mughal raj

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### Abstract

The Mughal province of Awadh extended over the territory entirely consisting of alluvial plains, lying between 79.60 and 940 longitude E. and 260 and 28.4 latitude N. The limits of the suba are described by Abul Fazl in his Account of Twelve Provinces' It was bounded on the east by the province of Bihar and to the north lay the Northern mountains; sarkar Manikpur of suba Allahabad was situated on the south of the province, while on the western side was sarkar of Kannuj of suba Agra. The distance from sarkar Gorakhpur to Kannuj was computed at 135 while only 115 kos were said to separate the northern mountains and the southern boundary of the suba.

**Keywords:** Awadh, plains, province, boundary, separate

### Introduction

To some extent, the boundaries took into account the physical features of the Upper Gangetic plains. Besides the Himalayan barrier to the north, the river Ganges separated it from the Mughal province of Agra and the river Sarju fixed: the boundary line between Gorakhpur of Awadh and sarkar Jaunpur of Allahabad.

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In importance the river Gumti, though much small was next only to Ganges and Dacha. Its right bank 'Was made up solid kankar giving the appearance of a mountainous range, while the left bank was low and sandy to the maximum extent of 3 miles it was an arid wasta. Beyond this zone the soil was quite fertile. The water was unfit for drinking because it was heavily loaded with yellowish clay. Fish abounded in all seasons. At some places, the Sai was as broad as the Gumti, but had only half of its depth. The Sai could accommodate boats of 300 mounds during rainy season, but because of its zig-zag course, it was avoided by navigators in favour of the Ganges and Gumti.

The Tons had its source in the Deoha, being essentially an arm of that river was shallow, and little navigation could be carried through it. The small river Lon flowed in the northwest.

Ghulam Haiwat, in his memoir of the Gorakhpur district (1B10) tells us that the city of Gorakhpur was surrounded by forests. He says that the tappa of pargana Anola, Bansi, Silhat, Basti, Maghar and Gorakhpur were desolate owing to the scarcity of peasants, the denseness of angels and the inroads of the wild elephants.

Another category of the forests consisted of the jungle situated either on the low land on the higher grounds. These were carefully preserved from clearing by the zamindars of the

area. These offered him a safe place from the tyranny and the rapacity of the chakledar." The face of the country was level plain, but river Gumti had cut the soil at some places creating ravines to the depth of 50 ft. These ravines were made use of by the zamindars who planted trees to create jungles and so made hide outs for themselves. In the midst of these forests every land-holder of consequence used to build mud-forts surrounded by a ditch and dense fence of living bamboos. The chakledirs were always helpless against such fortifications of the zamindars were too green to be set fire to and within the range of match locks from the parapet, they cannot be cut down by the force."

Sleeman laments that such defenses could easily be broken down but n9ude force had seldom either the means or the skill for such purpose• Sleeman has listed twenty four belts of forests in the kingdom of Dudh which were being used by the zamindars to challenge the authority of the government officials. They were spread in all parts of the kingdom, and it was computed that about 886 sq. miles of area were covered by such forests. Sleeman offers us the figures for the estimated area under forest in the districts of Awadh.

### Social Culture

In order to increase revenue, and, perhaps, remove the zamindars' hide outs the clearing of the forests for the purpose of cultivation was raged by the government. A number of incentives were given to the peasants for carrying the work of reclamation. Forest-land was lightly assessed by the revenue officials of the Nawab-Wazirs free for the first year of occupancy, charged at only two per bigha.

In these lands the irrigation facilities were available abundantly as the water-table was found just at the depth of 10 feet. However, due to the unremitting destruction of the forest, adverse effects were produced on the general climate, Butter thought that the annual average rainfall declined and the water table went down, thus creating difficulties for irrigation. This situation could have certainly been controlled by a "systematic

artificial planting to counteract the parching effects produced by the removal of these natural protectors of the soil."

But reclamation continued unabated.

It may be assumed, then, that by 1885-6 such extensive tracts of forest comprising about half a million acres had come under cultivation. Wild animals found their way in these deep and long stretches of green-belts. The forest of Gorakhpur was famous for containing numerous elephants. Tigers too were found in great number between of Gorakhpur and the mountains.

Due to forest clearing operations, a good many of them were hunted down by English civilians as well as the military officers. Wolves and Jackals, too, were very common in these forests, posing a constant threat to the peasants as well as the domestic animals. The wolf was quite a menace in the southern districts of Awadh when Butter compiled his survey.

He says that they carried away a number of children from the small market attached to the Cantonment of Sultanpur. Superstition among the native population precluded their being killed; and their dens were observable along the sides of the 'ravines' throughout the country.

Whether any change in climate occurred in the course of the two hundred and fifty years is a matter on which the information available is rather slight. Butter was convinced of a "great change in the climate" by which he perhaps meant a decline in rainfall. Butter has appended tables showing the diminishing pattern of the as well as the Rharif crops. At the time of his writing the report even the 'produce in a good year' was much less than what it was 'before the great change in the climate'.

The average annual rainfall in Awadh according to him followed very irregular pattern. At the same time it was 'steadily decreasing on an average of 5 or 6 year'. Butter attributed such a change to the destruction of the.

### Research Study

It was predicted that the country was under the slow but definite process of becoming '1 barren ravines' as there were no forests left 'to ward off' the '1 fierce rays of the sun' and '1 dew deposition' thus creating 'springs of running water'.

The soil of the province was composed of different varieties. On occasions, it contained siliceous and calcareous earth, the latter in the form of stones which occurred in the limited horizontal layers at a depth of six to eight feet.

The stone ridges were generally found along the right banks of rivers. At many places, stones constituted the surface of the soil as well. The sites of the priemeval forests of Awadh and the regions between Ganges and Deoha had the rich and dark soil. In the southern districts of Awadh, the soil of gargana Salon, Jayis, Rampur and Manikpur was judged as the best and very productive in different varieties of the grain.

The Mughal province of Awadh came into being in the year 1580, when Akbar superseded the earlier divisions of the Lodi Sultans to make his own administrative arrangements. This set up entailed the formation of provinces (subas) with subdivisions, continuing under the older name of sarkars. Each sarkar contained a number of parganas. All the sarkars now included in suba Awadh are listed by Babur in his list of Lodi sarkars, but with Lucknow as Lakhnau-and-Balkar, and Gorakhpur as Saruar.

The limits of the new territorial divisions were determined by a number of considerations, not all based on physical geography. The total number of the parganas included in the suba is 138, but those actually listed come to 133 pargana only. Subsequent to the period when A' in was written, many changes occurred in the internal administrative units of the sarkars, many new parganas were constituted so as to raise the number of the total mahals in each sarkar. Sometime during the 17th century, pargana Kant in sarkar Budaun of suba Delhi being transferred to sarkar Khairabad. But except for this minor adjustment between the limits of Delhi and Awadh, the territorial limits of the Mughal province of Awadh seem to have remained intact. Within the the sarkars were subject to change, though the changes were perhaps not many. One change was merely of nomenclature.

Awadh remained a relatively trouble-free province of the Empire throughout the 17th century. But things began to change during the second quarter of the 18th century. With the general deterioration and slackening of central control, Burhanul Mulk and later on his two immediate successors Abul Mansur Safdar Jang and Shuja ud daulah were able to assert their independence from imperial control. However, this was a slow process. In 1739, Sahadat Khan joined the imperial forces to face Nadir Shah. The design fiction of Nawab-wazir was applied to them and their successors, at least till 1814, when Ghaziuddin Hyder designated himself King. Attempts were made by the Nawab-Wazir to get more and more area included under their jurisdiction. By 1728, their area of influence was pushed further east by the inclusion of fertile regions of Benaras, Ghazipur, Jaunpur and Chunargarh.

### Conclusion

The western borders of Awadh kingdom were extended upto Kannuj by the use of armed power against the hereditary Rajput chiefs. In 1735, Salidat Khan in addition to his duties, was invested with the faujdari jurisdiction. Asafuddaulah died in 1797, and this provided an opportunity to the Company to conclude a new treaty with his successors, first with Wazir 'Ali and then with Sahadat Ali Khan (1798-1814).

The treaty concluded in 1801, marks the watershed in the history of relations of the Company with *Awadh*. Under this treaty the broken crescent formed by Rohilkhand, Farrukhabad, Kara, Kora, Etawah, Fatehgarh, Kalpi, Gorakhpur and 'Azamgarh, yielding an annual revenue of Rupees 1,35,00,000, was ceded to the East India Company.

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