

IDEOLOGY AND MUSLIM MILITANCY IN INDIA: SELECTED CASE STUDIES OF THE 1857 INDIAN REBELLION

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Abstract

This thesis examines the ways in which ideologies of royalism, militarism, and Jihad influenced the behaviour of contending Muslim factions in the 1857 Indian rebellion. The historiography has focused almost exclusively on the ideological motivation of Muslims who fought against the East India Company, with little mention of the large number of Punjabi Muslims and North West Frontier Pathans who chose to collaborate with the British against their co-religionists. The dominant themes of anti-colonialism, nationalism, proto-nationalism and Jihad that emerge in the literature overlook the role of moderating factors that link ideology to behaviour. Another tendency has been to apply the essentially modern concepts of nationalism and its variants to a pre-modern Indian Muslim setting. This thesis addresses these gaps by providing a framework for analysing the ideological functions of royalism, militarism and Jihad for both pro and anti-British Muslims. Drawing on insights from political and cognitive approaches of decision-making, this study demonstrates how the dynamics of information processing moderated the relationship between these ideologies and the combat behaviour of the belligerents. It finds that the process produced different outcomes of behaviour for the key individuals and groups in the 1857 rebellion. The methodology employed is comparative case studies of four regions with the most active Muslim resistance and collaboration groups. This thesis hopes to contribute to the growing literature on new approaches to the study of the 1857 Indian rebellion.

Glossary

<i>Ahl al-kitab</i>	Possessors of the divine books (literally); adherents of the Abrahamic faiths, that is, Christians and Jews
<i>Akbbar</i>	Newspaper
<i>Akbund</i>	A spiritual leader in parts of Central Asia
<i>Amir</i>	Prince or King
<i>Azan</i>	Muslim call to prayer
<i>Badal</i>	Revenge; reciprocity
<i>Badshah</i>	King
<i>Baghavat</i>	Revolt
<i>Baluchi</i>	Of Baluchistan, a province of present-day Pakistan
<i>Bania</i>	Member of the Hindu trading or merchant community
<i>Chamar</i>	Member of an Indian low caste
<i>Chishti</i>	A Sufi Order within Islam
<i>Daffadar</i>	Native sergeant of Indian cavalry regiment
<i>Dar-ul-Harb</i>	Adobe or zone of war
<i>Deobandi</i>	A movement within Sunni Islam that originated in India, which seeks to revive the practices and theological interpretations of early Sunni Islam; adherent of such a movement
<i>Derajat</i>	Common term for the Dera Ghazi Khan and Dera Ismail Khan divisions of the Punjab in present-day Pakistan
<i>Deen</i>	Faith
<i>Dharam</i>	Righteous conduct and thought, or loosely, religion
<i>Dreeshak</i>	A Baluchi tribe
<i>Fakeer</i>	A Muslim ascetic
<i>Farman</i>	Royal edict
<i>Fatwa</i>	Religious edict usually issued by a recognised Muslim jurist
<i>Ghazi</i>	Muslim warrior; Jihad veteran
<i>Haram</i>	Prohibited under Islamic law
<i>Hanafi</i>	The largest of the four Sunni schools of Islamic jurisprudence
<i>Hanbali</i>	One of the four Sunni schools of Islamic jurisprudence
<i>Hindustan</i>	Variously refers to as the entire land of present-day India, or the Upper Ganges plateau; or the land mass east of the Punjab
<i>Hindustani</i>	Of Hindustan

<i>Imam</i>	Mosque prayer leader; a Muslim leader considered by Shias to be a divine figure who is a successor of Prophet Muhammad
<i>Imambara</i>	Shia place of worship
<i>Imam ul-Muslimin</i>	Commander of the faithful/Muslim community
<i>Jagir</i>	Land grant to reward services or acknowledgement of authority
<i>Jagirdar</i>	Holder of a Jagir
<i>Jihad</i>	Muslim spiritual struggle; armed action against non-believers to defend or advance the cause of Islam, however interpreted
<i>Jihadi</i>	A person who wages Jihad
<i>Kaffir</i>	One who does not believe in God/Allah
<i>Khalsa</i>	Baptised Sikhs
<i>Khanqa</i>	Sufi hospice
<i>Khillat</i>	A richly adorned robe bestowed as an award, usually by Royalty
<i>Khosa</i>	A Baluchi tribe
<i>Kirar</i>	A term associated with Hindu salesmen or money lenders
<i>Kotwal</i>	An Indian police chief of a town
<i>Khutba</i>	Friday prayer sermon which acknowledges the legitimate Muslim ruler
<i>Kufr</i>	State of disbelief
<i>Kuffar</i>	Plural of Kaffir
<i>Lasbkar</i>	War band
<i>Leghari</i>	A Baluchi tribe
<i>Madrassa</i>	Muslim seminary; school
<i>Maharaja</i>	A Hindu King or Ruling prince
<i>Malik</i>	Tribal or village leader in South Asia
<i>Maliki</i>	One of the four Sunni schools of Islamic jurisprudence
<i>Mannat</i>	Fulfilment of vows
<i>Maulana/Maulvi</i>	A Muslim held in respect for his learning
<i>Mazari</i>	A Baluchi tribe
<i>Mujaddidiyya</i>	A Sufi order based on the teachings of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, a leading Indian Muslim saint, who was also known as Mujaddid Alaf Sani
<i>Mujahid/Mujahideen</i>	Muslim holy warrior(s)
<i>Mujtahid</i>	A recognised Muslim scholar, usually a Shia, who is capable of interpreting religious rulings from the Quran and the traditions of Prophet

<i>Mullah</i>	Muslim priest or learned person
<i>Munshi</i>	An interpreter or secretary in India
<i>Murid</i>	Disciple of a Muslim saint or holy person
<i>Mussalman</i>	Muslim
<i>Nang</i>	Shame; honour
<i>Naqshbandi</i>	A Sunni Sufi order, which traces its spiritual lineage to Abu Bakar, the Caliph, and Prophet Muhammad's companion
<i>Nawab</i>	A Muslim ruling prince or nobleman
<i>Nazar</i>	A present or offering
<i>Nazarene</i>	Christian
<i>Nau Roz</i>	Persian New Year
<i>Pakhtunwali</i>	Pathan code of conduct; belief system; way of life
<i>Pashto</i>	The language of the Pathans
<i>Pathan</i>	Indian term for Pushtun or Pakhtun, the Pashto speaking tribes inhabiting northern Pakistan and parts of Afghanistan
<i>Pir</i>	A Muslim saint or holy person
<i>Piri-Muridi</i>	Pir-Murid relationship
<i>Qadri</i>	A Sufi order of Islam
<i>Qazi</i>	Judge
<i>Qazi-ul-quzzat</i>	Chief Justice
<i>Quraish</i>	An Arab tribe
<i>Quraishi</i>	An Arab name which indicates descent from the Quraish tribe in Arabia at the time of Prophet Muhammad; the Prophet himself was descended from the Quraish
<i>Raj</i>	Royal rule/government
<i>Rajah</i>	Hindu King, prince or regent
<i>Ramazan</i>	The Islamic month of fasting
<i>Ranghar</i>	Muslim Rajput
<i>Rissaldar</i>	Senior native officer in an Indian cavalry regiment
<i>Rissaldar-Major</i>	Senior most native officer in an Indian cavalry regiment
<i>Sahih Bukhari</i>	A major compilation of the traditions of Prophet Muhammad by the Central Asian Muslim scholar, Imam Bukhari
<i>Sajjada nasheen</i>	Literally 'the Sitter-on-the-Prayer-Carpet'; successor of a saint
<i>Saligram</i>	The sacred form of Vishnu, a Hindu god
<i>Sardar</i>	Leader; head; chief

<i>Sirkar</i>	Administrative district; also government
<i>Sepoy</i>	An Indian soldier in service with the British in India; distortion of <i>Sipahi</i> (soldier) in Persian and Urdu
<i>Sh'afi</i>	One of the four Sunni schools of Islamic jurisprudence
<i>Shaikh</i>	A Sufi, patriarch or holy man
<i>Shia</i>	The second major sect of Islam along with Sunni; also a Muslim who belongs to the Shia sect
<i>Silsila</i>	Order; progression
<i>Subedar</i>	Governor of a Mughal province; native officer of an Indian infantry regiment
<i>Subarwardi</i>	A Sufi order
<i>Sunni</i>	The largest of the two main sects of Islam; also an adherent of Sunni Islam
<i>Swadharma</i>	Hindu term associated with righteous living, thought, and action
<i>Swaraj</i>	Self-rule
<i>Syed</i>	A descendant of Prophet Muhammad
<i>Taluqdar</i>	Head of a <i>taluka</i> or land area controlled by lineage, usually in Avadh, India
<i>Tammandar</i>	Chief of a Baluchi tribe
<i>Tulsi</i>	A plant held sacred by Hindus
<i>Ulama</i>	Scholars of Islamic jurisprudence and of the Quran; learned men; mosque prayer leaders
<i>Vakil</i>	Lawyer
<i>Vizier</i>	The chief minister of a state
<i>Wahhab</i>	Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, a Saudi scholar (1703-1792) who founded a movement in Islam, the influence of which also spread to the Indian sub-continent
<i>Wahhabi</i>	A follower of Wahhab; also movement associated with Wahhab
<i>Wali</i>	Title for the ruler of <i>Swat</i> , a former state in the North-West Frontier of present-day Pakistan
<i>Waliullah</i>	An influential Indian Muslim scholar and leader (1703-1762)
<i>Waliullahi</i>	Of Waliullah; movement associated with Shah Waliullah
<i>Waqf</i>	Properties held in religious trust
<i>Zamindar</i>	Holder of <i>zamin</i> or land who acquires a right to a part of the agricultural produce; also a free hold owner of agricultural land

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Introduction

The Indian rebellion of 1857 still invokes the imagination and passions of many in Britain, India, and Pakistan. Colonial and post-colonial historians consider it a critical event in Indian history because of its various socio-cultural, political, religious, and economic dimensions, and their effects on the subsequent course of British colonial, Indian, and Pakistani history. The 1857 event has been variously interpreted by scholars as an anti-colonial war, Sepoy mutiny, India's first war of independence, a localised conflict, legitimist war of restoration, and a war of religion. Debates on its nature, causes, and effects have been continuing ever since. Although the events of the rebellion will be dealt with in some detail in subsequent chapters, a brief narrative is in order at the outset.

The 1857 rebellion was not the first instance of armed uprising against the British. Instances of civil resistance included Rangpur uprising, 1783; Nagar uprising, 1830-31, Sanyasi and Fakir rebellion, 1763-1800, Moplah uprising, 1840s -1850s, Bhil rebellion, 1819-1831, Koli rebellion, 1844-46, and Santhal hul, 1855-56.¹ The purely military mutinies occurred at Manji in 1764, Tellicherry in 1780, Trichinopoly in 1785, Guntur in 1798, Vellore in 1806, Travancore and Hyderabad in 1812, Java in, 1815, Barrackpore in 1824, Assam in 1825, Sholapur, Malgaon, and Peshawar in 1838-1844, Amritsar in 1850, Barrackpore in 1852, and Bolarum in 1855.² But the 1857 rebellion, which too started off as a military uprising, was far more significant in magnitude, intensity and the number of casualties on both sides. It began with a series of protests and defiance by Indian Sepoys of the East India Company's Bengal Army at being ordered to use newly issued cartridges laced with cow and pig fat, which was offensive to Hindus and Muslims respectively. The first incident occurred at Berhampore (25 February, 1857), followed by Barrackpore (31 March, 1857), and then at Meerut on 10 May, 1857.³ What had been a military mutiny up to that point turned into a wider

¹ Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, *From Plassey to Partition : A History of Modern India* (Himayatnagar, India: Orient Longman, 2004), 160-165; Akshayakumar Ramanlal Desai, ed., *Peasant Struggles in India* (Bombay ; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 23, 75.

² S. L. Menezes, *Fidelity and honour: the Indian Army from the seventeenth to the twenty-first century* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001). 84-120.

³ Noah A. Chick, *Annals of the Indian Rebellion, 1857-58* (Calcutta: Sanders Cones and Company, 1859). pp. 36, 60, 99.

rebellion as thousands of civilians also rose against British rule across Northern India, and the hitherto nominal Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar was proclaimed as the sovereign ruler of Hindustan on 12 May 1857.⁴ Even as other parts of British India, and the Bombay and Madras Presidency Armies remained mostly uninvolved, the effects of the 1857 rebellion reverberated throughout the land, putting in jeopardy the dominance of the English East India Company (hereafter EIC). Ironically, the rebellion was eventually put down largely with the help of Indians who remained loyal to the British.

This thesis seeks to cast a fresh look at the events of 1857 to critically examine the question of Muslim participation, both as rebels as well as loyal soldiers helping the EIC to quell the rebellion. Muslim role in the conflict was critical, for although the initial violent protest was carried out by Hindu Sepoys, their Muslim colleagues soon joined in and proceeded to play a decisive role in the events that followed. By virtue of their dominance of the Bengal Army cavalry, the Muslim Sepoys became the strike force of the rebel army, whose combat performance therefore largely determined the outcome of the resistance against the British. The major political force behind the rebellion was similarly a Muslim leader - the restored Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar, who, apart from his role as the sovereign ruler of both the communities, was head of the Muslim polity in India, as well as its supreme religious leader. Much of the religious inspiration for the rebellion came from the Muslim clergy or *Ulama*, whose espousal of military Jihad attempted to mobilise not just all Muslims, but also Hindus to rise and destroy the British. But 'Muslims' were not a homogenous social category. The role of Muslims on the opposing side, especially those from British administered Punjab and its bordering North-West Frontier was equally significant, for without their enthusiastic support British success against the rebel Sepoys would have been doubtful, or at least inordinately delayed.

Historiography and theories of the 1857 Indian rebellion

The literature on 1857 is huge, with hundreds of reports, books, articles, diaries and memoirs that started appearing very soon after the commencement of the rebellion. The historiography and literature review for the current study is selective, in that it

⁴ Syed M. Husain, *Bahadur Shah Zafar and the war of 1857 in Delhi* (New Delhi: Aakar Books, 2006). 168-69.

focuses on the role of ideology and its impact on the militant behaviour of Muslim protagonists in the conflict. In order to arrange the material in conceptual order, this review organises the extant literature in terms of the ideological theories and movements that scholars implicitly or explicitly ascribe as motivators for the rebellion. The first part of the review analyses those works that treat Muslim role and motivations as part of the larger struggle which included Hindus against the British during 1857. The second half narrows the focus to Muslim participation and its ideological underpinnings. It is followed by an overview of the military dimension of 1857. Excluded from this review are works that focus on material factors as the prime motivators of the rebellion. These include Dirk Kolff, *Naikar, Rajput and Sepoy*,⁵ which concentrates on Sepoy labour issues in the North Indian military market in the late Mughal and early colonial period, and Eric Stokes, *The peasant and the Raj: studies in agrarian society and peasant rebellion in colonial India*,⁶ which focuses on agrarian discontent as a factor in the anti-British uprising. While not denying that the material factors that these pioneering works analyse may have played an important role in the rebellion, this thesis focuses solely on the ideological aspects of the conflict.

Nationalism

In one of the earliest documented works, J.W. Kaye argued that the 1857 rebellion was a popular attempt to overthrow foreign domination. The large-scale reaction was directed against the intrusive and innovative policies of an authoritarian EIC government, which had alienated the people by contravening Indian customs and religious beliefs. The religious leaders, royalty, Sepoys, and public at large shared the reaction, and were keen to restore the societal order of the past that lay in their memory.⁷ However, Kaye argues that the British represented a modern civilisation, while the uprising denoted a hostile response that was motivated by reactionary yearnings. V.D. Savarkar was the first Indian author to interpret the rebellion from a

⁵ D. H. A. Kolff, *Naikar, Rajput, and sepoy : the ethnohistory of the military labour market in Hindustan, 1450-1850* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁶ Eric Stokes, *The peasant and the Raj : studies in agrarian society and peasant rebellion in colonial India* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978).

⁷ J.W. Kaye, *A history of the Sepoy War in India 1857-1858*, 9th ed., vol. I (London: W.H Allen, 1880).

nationalist perspective, terming it '*The Indian War of Independence of 1857*'.⁸ Contrary to the general belief prevalent in colonial circles, he did not view the greased cartridges that offended the religious beliefs of Hindu and Muslim Sepoys of the Bengal Army as the primary cause of the uprising, since the EIC had already ordered their withdrawal before the Sepoy breakout at Meerut. Savarkar argued that the violent reaction by the Sepoys and the public was due to British atrocities, which had aroused nationalist and religious passions.⁹ The violence against the British was justified on the principle of retributive justice, and since the British were the enemies of the *Hindustani* nation, they must be destroyed. The guiding principle of the revolutionary struggle of 1857 was *swadharma* and *Swaraj*, which was shared by Hindus and Muslims, and which motivated them to fight jointly against the British.¹⁰ Writing on the first centenary of the rebellion, P.C. Joshi re-emphasised the nationalist character of the uprising, although from a Marxist perspective, arguing that it sought the destruction of EIC rule in India and its replacement with an Indian state, which made the uprising a national revolt.¹¹

In a much earlier work, Syed Ahmad Khan, a member of the Mughal elite serving with the EIC during the rebellion, had discounted the nationalist impulse.¹² In contrast to Savarkar, Khan avoided the term nation or national, referring to Hindus and Muslims as 'natives', and alluded to the social and religious divisions among the two communities.¹³ As a staunch EIC supporter, Khan suggested that the uprising, which he termed *baghavat*, could have been avoided if the British had appointed an Indian representative to the Legislative Council.¹⁴ Acting as an intermediary and informer, the representative would have been able to provide timely information to the government, which could have prevented the mutiny.¹⁵ Two other Indian accounts at the time similarly considered the event a temporary outburst rather than an outpouring of nationalism, and argued that it could at most be characterised as an incoherent aberration in the face of

⁸ Vinayak D. Savarkar, *The Indian War of Independence of 1857*, (London 1909), Accessed 12 September 2010. <http://books.google.com/books?id=aNNGAAAAIAAJ>.

⁹ *The Indian War of Independence of 1857*. 6.

¹⁰ *The Indian War of Independence of 1857*. 6.

¹¹ Puran C. Joshi, '1857 in our history', in *Rebellion, 1857: a symposium*, ed. Puran C. Joshi (Calcutta: K P Bagchi & Co., 1986), 139.

¹² Sir Sayyid A. Khan, *The causes of the Indian revolt* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2000).

¹³ *The causes of the Indian revolt*; History of the Bijnor Rebellion (1858) Accessed 09 March 2012. <http://www.columbiauniversity.org/itc/mealac/pritchett/00urdu/asbab/bijnor/index.html>.

¹⁴ *The causes of the Indian revolt*.

¹⁵ *The causes of the Indian revolt*.

modernising British outlook and policies.¹⁶ Although such explanations acknowledged the anti-British sentiment, there was a clear denial that the 1857 war was either national, or a war of independence.¹⁷

Proto-nationalism

Much of the scholarship after the first centenary of the rebellion took up the theme of 1857 as popular regional protest rather than a concerted national movement. Ranajit Guha lauds the rebellion as a subaltern struggle, and includes among subalterns not only the peasants, but also *zamindars* and others who were not members of the elite class.¹⁸ Irfan Habib argues that the rebellion collapsed because of its subaltern nature. The rebels had no centralized leadership or organisation, nor any ideology, at least in the Marxist sense, and although equipped as a modern force, they lacked any real notions of modernity.¹⁹ According to Habib, the 1857 event could be characterised as something more than 'regional patriotism'; however, it was not nationalism, but a form of Indian patriotism that prompted the rebel sections to join the revolt.²⁰ Religion was more of an abstract issue for them; the real issue was the fight against British imperialism. In a critique of the subaltern approach, Gayatri Spivak's '*Can the subaltern speak*', questions whether it is possible to assume subaltern consciousness from acts of insurgency that can be accessed only through colonial documents, especially since these texts are full of representations of peasant rebels as criminals or mutineers.²¹ Under such circumstances, scholars should recognise not a single 'peasant consciousness', but a variety of

¹⁶ Dosabhoj Framjee, *The British raj contrasted with its predecessors: and an inquiry into the disastrous results of the rebellion in the North-west provinces upon the hopes of the people of India* (London: Smith, Elder and Co, 1858); pseudonym Hindu, *The mutinies and the people; or Statements of native fidelity exhibited during the outbreak of 1857-58* (Calcutta: I.C. Bose, 1859).

¹⁷ Ramesh C. Majumdar, *The Sepoy Mutiny and the revolt of 1857*, 2nd ed. (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1963).

¹⁸ Ranajit Guha and Gayatri C. Spivak, eds., *Selected subaltern studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

¹⁹ Irfan Habib, '1857: Issues and Paradigms', in *The Great uprising of 1857 : commentaries, studies and documents*, ed. Syed Najmul R. Rizvi and Saiyid Zaheer H. Jafri (New Delhi: Anamika Publishers & Distributors, 2009), 19.

²⁰ '1857: Issues and Paradigms', 17-18.

²¹ Gayatri C. Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak? ', in *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. P. Williams and L. Chrisman (New York: : Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 66-111.

intersecting identities derived from the economic, social, historical and political structures that peasant communities inhabited.²²

C.A. Bayly emphasises the need to take into account the sense of loyalty to locality and institutions that existed in pre-colonial India, but cautions against taking either a primordial or a westernised nationalist approach.²³ He argues that 'glorification of the land and people was deeply rooted in the thought and literature of the subcontinent'.²⁴ He notes the existence of indigenous words and pre-colonial accounts that glorify the deeds of nobles and ordinary people who sacrificed their lives in defence or love of the territories, reflecting a sense of 'traditional patriotism'.²⁵ According to Bayly, 'traditional patriotism was more than a feeling. It was associated with and fixed in particular locales, and inherited a set of doctrines concerned with political representativeness'.²⁶ While there was a sense of attachment to the imperial systems at the centre, a 'regional patriotism' was also emerging with a commitment to specific regional or localised culture, which in turn led to distinct state formations such as Maharashtra.²⁷

Like Bayly, R.K. Ray in his *Felt Community* argues that a sentiment of patriotism existed in Indian society long before that of nationalism.²⁸ All Indians participated in shared communities of sentiment, characterized by an ethnic and religious patriotism for their homeland. In 1857, Hindus and Muslims, despite adhering to different faiths, formed a 'confederate people bent upon purging the shared land of an alien and impure presence'.²⁹ Patriotism among the rebels of 1857 took the form of a combined Hindu-Muslim religious crusade to protect their *Dharma* (Hindu way of life) and *Deen* (Muslim religion).³⁰ Ray visualizes the uprising as a multi-layered phenomenon, which was partly a racial war of the local population against their white oppressors, ideologically packaged as a religious war between true and false religions. He argues that in the minds

²² 'Can the Subaltern Speak? '.

²³ C. A Bayley, *Origins of nationality in South Asia : patriotism and ethical government in the making of modern India* (Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). vii-viii.

²⁴ *Origins of nationality in South Asia : patriotism and ethical government in the making of modern India*: 11.

²⁵ *Origins of nationality in South Asia : patriotism and ethical government in the making of modern India*: 11.

²⁶ *Origins of nationality in South Asia : patriotism and ethical government in the making of modern India*: 79.

²⁷ *Origins of nationality in South Asia : patriotism and ethical government in the making of modern India*: 21-26.

²⁸ Rajat K. Ray, *The Felt Community: Commonality and Mentality Before the Emergence of Indian Nationalism* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

²⁹ *The Felt Community: Commonality and Mentality Before the Emergence of Indian Nationalism*: 547-48.

³⁰ *The Felt Community: Commonality and Mentality Before the Emergence of Indian Nationalism*.

of most of the participants, whether Sepoys or civilians, the sense of religious differences significantly receded. Hindu contingents would elect Muslims as their representatives, while Muslim Sepoys accepted Hindu officers to lead them. Among the Muslims who voluntarily joined the rebellion under the impulse of joining a righteous war or Jihad, there was the same acceptance of the need for Hindus and Muslims uniting to fight for the common cause of overthrowing the British.³¹

Characterisations of 1857 as an anti-colonial, nationalist or patriotic struggle seem to impute a kind of modern political consciousness that had not yet manifested in mid-nineteenth century India. The proto-nationalist perspective's preoccupation with discovering the roots of anti-colonialism to provide a link to modern Indian nationalism has led to overlooking the divisions within and between the Hindu and Muslim communities. As Sabyasachi Dasgupta observes, this trend is evident in many of the published works since the 150th anniversary of the rebellion.³² Such versions of the conflict that attribute patriotism to communities and regions ignore the complex pattern of resistance and collaboration of different sections of Indian society with the Colonial Raj.³³

Muslim religious sentiment

The idea that religious sentiment was the primary ideological drive for the rebellion first appeared in the writings of Colonial officials, notably John William Kaye's, *History of the Sepoy War in India*.³⁴ This Muslim conspiracy theory became the precursor of numerous studies of the rebellion. Syed Ahmad Khan, perhaps out of eagerness to assuage prevailing British ire, rejected the Muslim conspiracy and Jihad explanation. Terming the Muslim fighters as vagabonds, drunkards and debauches, Khan questioned how such men who thought so little of religion could be called leaders of a religious war.³⁵ By turning against the British who were their employers and benefactors, they had proved to be *namak haram* (faithless to the salt), and by slaughtering innocents, especially

³¹ *The Felt Community: Commonality and Mentality Before the Emergence of Indian Nationalism*.

³² Sabyasachi Dasgupta, 'The Great Uprising of 1857: Commentaries, Studies and Documents by Syed Najmul Raza Rizvi; Saiyid Zaheer Husain Jafri', *Social Scientist* 38, no. 3/4 (2010): 94-98.

³³ 'The Great Uprising of 1857: Commentaries, Studies and Documents by Syed Najmul Raza Rizvi; Saiyid Zaheer Husain Jafri', 94-98.

³⁴ Kaye, *A history of the Sepoy War in India 1857-1858*, I.

³⁵ Khan, *The causes of the Indian revolt*: 56.

women, children and old men, they had brazenly violated the fundamental principles of Islam.³⁶ He was equally dismissive of the *Ulama* who had issued *fatwas* for an anti-British Jihad in 1857, contending that they were few in number who, moreover, did not occupy a prominent place in the community before the rebellion.³⁷ In Khan's opinion, a Muslim holy war or Jihad could not be declared against an enemy unless it clearly prevented Muslims from freely practicing their faith, and as the British had not done so, there was no reason to invoke a religious war against them.³⁸ It was not enough that Muslim-inhabited land was occupied by an alien power such as the EIC; there had to be clear measures by the latter against the religious freedom of Muslims for Jihad to become operative.³⁹

A focus on the Jihad factor returned with a number of works published after 1957. Ashraf, 'Muslim Revivalists and the Revolt of 1857', in P.C. Joshi, ed. *Rebellion 1857* shows the role of the Wahabi and Farazi movements stemming from deep resentment against the British for violating Hindu and Muslim religious precepts.⁴⁰ Iqtidar Alam Khan notes that Jihad was not limited to *Wahabi* influence, as many Sufis also took part in it.⁴¹ He contends that the Muslim combatants were unconcerned about the doctrinal legitimacy of Jihad or the establishment of a theocratic regime; rather their prime motive was to join Hindu and Muslim chiefs and Sepoys with the aim of overthrowing the alien British rule.⁴² A strong religious sentiment in the 1857 rebellion is however, unmistakably reflected in the declarations and popular slogans of the Muslim combatants, the religious elite, and the Emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar.⁴³

³⁶ *The causes of the Indian revolt*: 56.

³⁷ *The causes of the Indian revolt*.

³⁸ *The causes of the Indian revolt*.

³⁹ *The causes of the Indian revolt*.

⁴⁰ Kazi M. Ashraf, 'Muslim revivalists and the revolt of 1857', in *Rebellion 1857: a symposium*, ed. Puran C. Joshi (Calcutta: K.P. Bagchi, 1957; reprint, 1986), 71-102.

⁴¹ Iqtidar A. Khan, 'Theocracy And The Rebels Of 1857 : Assessing The Role Of The Wahabis', *People's Democracy : Weekly Organ of the Communist Party of India (Marxist)* XXXI, no. 22, Accessed 11 March 2014. http://pd.cpim.org/2007/0603/06102007_1857.htm.

⁴² 'Theocracy And The Rebels Of 1857 : Assessing The Role Of The Wahabis'.

⁴³ The most extensive coverage of the Jihad sentiment in 1857 is provided by Saiyid Athar A. Rizvi and Moti L. Bhargava, eds., *Freedom struggle in Uttar Pradesh: source material 1857-59*, vol. 1 (Uttar Pradesh: Publications Bureau, 1957); *Freedom struggle in Uttar Pradesh: source material Awadh: 1857-59*, vol. 2 (Uttar Pradesh: Publications Bureau, 1958); Saiyid Athar A. Rizvi, ed. *Freedom struggle in Uttar Pradesh: source material: Western districts and Rohilkhand*, vol. 5 (Uttar Pradesh: Publications Bureau, Information Department, 1960); *Freedom struggle in Uttar Pradesh: source material: Eastern and adjoining districts*, vol. 4 (Uttar Pradesh: Publications Bureau, Information Department, 1959); Salim Al-Din Quraishi, *Cry for freedom*:

More work on the religious dimension of 1857 has appeared since 2007, following the 150th anniversary of the event. In a seminal study that draws on a wide range of primary and secondary sources, Ayesha Jalal traces the historical evolution and meanings of Jihad in South Asia.⁴⁴ Her central argument is that as Muslim political power declined in India, the military mode of Jihad, or 'lesser' Jihad, was increasingly resorted to, but this was at the expense of the spiritual, or 'greater' Jihad, that is, the struggle to be ethical, which is by far the more important form of holy war. Jalal's contention is based on a *hadith* (reports about the sayings and actions of Muhammad), according to which the Prophet Muhammad is said to have told his companions returning from a military campaign that they had been waging a *jihad al-asghar*, or the lesser war, and now have to conduct the *jihad al-akbar*, or the greater war against the inner forces which prevent humans from becoming ethical. However, Jalal's reliance on this narration to make the case for an ethical Jihad against its military form is a misconstrual, as Prophet Muhammad does not seem to be disapproving the warriors for waging the military Jihad on this occasion, but is rather only making the point that the Jihad to cleanse one's spirit is a more difficult undertaking. At any rate, the authenticity of the hadith is questionable, considering the nearly unanimous consensus among Muslim theologians and jurists that Jihad basically means armed warfare against non-Muslims and apostates. The *Sahih Bukhari*, considered as the most authentic compilation of *hadith*, is very clear about just such a meaning.⁴⁵ Jalal does acknowledge the absence of her quoted hadith in the authentic hadith collections, but puts that down to the 'mind-set of the compilers and the political climate of the time'.⁴⁶

Jalal analyses in much detail the reasons why Jihad-as-armed-warfare has been practically ascendant in Muslim history. In India, the pattern for a political-military Jihad was set by the eighteenth-century philosopher, Shah Waliullah, and continued by his heirs in the North-West Frontier Jihad of the mid-nineteenth century against the Sikhs. Armed Jihad was again employed in 1857, on this occasion against the British by some of his family members and others. Yet, she asserts that even these two significant

proclamations of Muslim revolutionaries of 1857 (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1997); Iqbal. Hussain, ed. *Proclamations of the Rebels of 1857* (New Delhi: Indian Council of Historical Research, 2007).

⁴⁴ Ayesha Jalal, *Partisans of Allah: Jihad in South Asia* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2008).

⁴⁵ Ghassan Abdul-Jabbar, *Bukhari* (London: Tauris, 2007).

⁴⁶ Jalal, *Partisans of Allah: Jihad in South Asia*: 9.

instances of Jihad, especially the 1857 rebellion, reveal the 'temporarily expedient use the rebels made of religion'.⁴⁷ In other words, the legal and ethical pre-requisites for waging Jihad were overlooked in favour of personal interests. Moreover, many among the Muslim community, including the Ulama, opposed this armed Jihad on religious grounds. Some Sunni Ulama were wary of their Shia counterparts because of the increasing influence the latter might manage through co-opting the Jihad leadership. Others 'made pragmatism a virtue and refused to proclaim a Jihad since success was hardly assured'; while still others, out of a need to preserve Hindu-Muslim unity during the rebellion 'blunted the millenarian edge of the movement'.⁴⁸

What Jalal does not take into account is that for the combatants themselves it is easy to conceive of Jihad as an armed struggle, since the 'Other' is clearly recognisable, the course of action is delineated, and the rewards of success are evident. By contrast, the concept of Jihad as an ethical struggle is vague and distracting, for it does not help soldiers on the battlefield, or the Muslim masses eager to join them in combat. It would seem that ethical righteousness would appeal more to those with an intellectual or mystical orientation, than those who face or court do-or-die situations.

In another major study, *The Last Mughal: The fall of a dynasty, Delhi 1857*, William Dalrymple recasts the 1857 rebellion as a 'clash of rival fundamentalisms'.⁴⁹ On the British side, this fundamentalism was represented by overzealous evangelical missionaries and the newly arriving Englishmen, who were increasingly replacing the earlier generation, which tended to appreciate Indian beliefs and practices. Opposing them were the *Wahabi* Muslims, who were however, divided on the issue of participation in the rebellion; while some among them joined the ranks of the *Mujahideen*, others remained indifferent. As the uprising gained momentum, the act of invoking the name of Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar served to unite the disparate population. Even though the uprising contained both Hindu and Muslim supporters, British hostility and retribution was directed more at Muslims due to the presence of the

⁴⁷ *Partisans of Allah: Jihad in South Asia*: 125.

⁴⁸ Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy*, 2nd ed. (NY: Routledge, 2004). 93.

⁴⁹ William Dalrymple, 'The last Mughal and a clash of civilisations ', *New Statesman* (2006), Accessed 13 March 2014. <http://www.newstatesman.com/node/154510>.

Mujahideen element among them, and the use of Muslim rhetoric to justify a Jihad against the British.⁵⁰ Dalrymple argues that differences between the orthodox *Wahabi* camp and the liberal Sufis, among whom he counts the Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar, amounted to a contest in which the Wahabi impulse for Jihad in 1857 overcame the peaceful orientation of the Sufis. In Dalrymple's view, this contest is an ongoing one, contemporary instances of which are the Jihadi movements in Afghanistan and Pakistan, who follow the same *Deoband* (a school of thought within Sunni Islam, which believes in a literal reading of the Quran, and is given to eradicating what it believes are heresies and misinterpretation of Islam) world-view that a number of Ulama represented in the India of 1857.⁵¹

Contrary to what Dalrymple suggests, not all Muslims fighting in the name of Jihad during the rebellion were affiliated with the *Wahabi* or *Deobandi* movements, as it included members of several other orders. The distinction that he makes between Sufi Muslims who were supposedly reluctant warriors or oblivious to the conflict, and the belligerent faction is arbitrary, given that Muslims from different schools of thought, including the Sufis, were distributed across the pro-British and rebel factions. One of the major Sufi orders, the *Naqshbandi-Mujaddidiyya* was closely associated with Muslim revivalism and militancy throughout Indian history.⁵² In fact, Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi (1564-1624), the leading Muslim scholar and Jihad ideologue was head of this order. Simon Digby, in his seminal work, *Sufis and soldiers in Aurangzeb's Deccan: Malfuzat-i Naqshbandiyya*, has shown that there were a number of instances of militancy on the part of ascetics and Sufis in the past.⁵³ The major figure of Digby's work, Baba Palangposh, an ascetic who mixed personal piety and self-denial with participation in Aurangzeb's military campaigns in the Deccan, illustrates this orientation.⁵⁴ Thus, prominent Sufis figures in India tended to view spiritual warfare as complementary, rather than antithetical to military Jihad.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ *The last Mughal: the fall of a dynasty, Delhi, 1857* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006).

⁵¹ *The last Mughal: the fall of a dynasty, Delhi, 1857*: 485.

⁵² David Cook, *Understanding Jihad* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2005).

⁵³ Simon Digby and Baba Shah Mahmud, *Sufis and soldiers in Aurangzeb's Deccan : Malfuzat-i Naqshbandiyya* (New Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁵⁴ *Sufis and soldiers in Aurangzeb's Deccan : Malfuzat-i Naqshbandiyya*.

⁵⁵ Cook, *Understanding Jihad*.

The complex question of the extent to which the rebel Sepoys and civilians were inspired by religion is re-examined in a recent study by Crispin Bates and Marina Carter, *Holy Warriors: Religion as Military Modus Operandi*.⁵⁶ They avoid the general tendency in the historiography which seeks to link the revolt to *Wahhabis* and *Jihadis*, and instead highlight the role played by religious motifs in mobilizing the people for the struggle against British rule. Opposition to colonial subjugation too was articulated in religious terms. As the authors show, much of the vocabulary used by the Sepoys was derived from religion. At the same time, Bates and Carter note that religious fervour was fanned by the official church establishment in Britain to portray the military conflict as a holy war.

More recently, there has been a fresh effort by a number of scholars who collaborated on a project organised by Edinburgh University, culminating in the multi-volume series, *Mutiny at the Margins*.⁵⁷ The various volumes review the rebellion from diverse perspectives, focusing in particular on the socially neglected marginal groups and some of the geographic areas that have hitherto been unrepresented in colonial as well as Indian accounts. Volume four of the series, *Military aspects of the Indian Uprising*,⁵⁸ is of particular relevance to the present study as it deals not only with the as yet unresolved matter of how to define the 1857 event, but also with the military nature of the conflict. The editors recognise the difficulty of discerning the reasons why so many Sepoys rebelled, and so many others chose not to, especially since those who fought on the two sides have, with two exceptions, left us no accounts of their experiences and motives.

In an important chapter in this volume, Sabyasachi Dasgupta examines these exceptional Sepoy narratives published in the late nineteenth century texts, Sitaram Pandey's, *From Sepoy to Subedar*, and Durgadas Banerjee's, *Amar Jivan Charit*,⁵⁹ to make sense of the sentiments of the Sepoys. Both Sitaram and Durgadas served lengthy terms

⁵⁶ Crispin Bates and Marina Carter, 'Holy Warriors: Religion as Military Modus Operandi', in *Mutiny at the Margins: New Perspectives on the Indian Uprising of 1857*, ed. Carter Bates and Gavin Rand (Los Angeles; New Delhi: SAGE, 2013), 41-60.

⁵⁷ Crispin Bates et al., eds., *Mutiny at the margins: New perspectives on the Indian Uprising of 1857*, 5 vols. (Los Angeles; New Delhi: SAGE, 2013).

⁵⁸ Crispin Bates and Gavin Rand, eds., *Mutiny at the margins: New perspectives on the Indian uprising of 1857*, vol. 4 (New Delhi: SAGE, 2013).

⁵⁹ Sabyasachi Dasgupta, 'Durgadas and Sitaram: Tales of Loyalty in the Great Indian Uprising', in *Mutiny at the Margins: New Perspectives on the Indian Uprising of 1857*, ed. Gavin Rand and Crispin Bates (Los Angeles; New Delhi: SAGE, 2013), 76-92.

in the Bengal Army, the former as a trooper and the latter as a clerk, and remained loyal to the British during the revolt. The authenticity of Sita Ram's narrative has not been satisfactorily established. However, Dasgupta suggests that even if it is more literary than archival in nature, it does reflect contemporary reality, and is therefore a useful document. Sitaram, who remained firm in his duty even when his son was sentenced to death for his participation in the revolt, was held up as an example for the Sepoys to emulate. Durgadas's narrative of his transformation from clerk to combat soldier during the crisis is significant in view of the colonial discourse about Bengali effeminacy. As Dasgupta argues, Durgadas was keen to portray his role as a valiant fighter to establish his martiality, and thereby that of the Bengali upper castes. These are valuable insights by Dasgupta, for they accord agency to the EIC Indian Sepoy. Whereas the bulk of the literature associates agency only with the rebel Sepoy, Dasgupta argues that many like Sita Ram and Banerjee had their own motives for being part of the British military enterprise, and that these motives were non-material.

Kaushik Roy's essay, *Combat, Combat Motivation and the Construction of Identities: A Case Study*, focuses on the dimension of brutality displayed by the combatants on both sides of the rebellion.⁶⁰ Racial hatred on the part of the European soldier tended to become vicious when dealing with an Indian foe who was perceived as less than human and hence incapable of bravery and chivalry. Feeling otherwise by acknowledging the rebels' honour and courage in fighting effectively would have amounted to delegitimising the Raj. Addressing the relatively overlooked issue of combat motivation, Roy, in probing the mentality of the Sepoys speculates that the Bengal Army rebels shared religious, cultural and regional bonds which helped them to fight the British.⁶¹ While such a perspective helps explain the initial Sepoy impulse at the onset of the rebellion, it cannot account for why many of the rebel Sepoy regiments then disintegrated, or appeared not to offer stiff resistance. On the other hand, the Roy study can be credited for bringing religious, cultural and regional factors to the fore, as it can be reasonably

⁶⁰ Kaushik Roy, 'Combat, Combat Motivation and the Construction of Identities: A Case Study', in *Mutiny at the Margins: New Perspectives on the Indian Uprising of 1857*, ed. Crispin Bates and Gavin Rand (Los Angeles; New Delhi: SAGE, 2013), 24-40.

⁶¹ 'Combat, Combat Motivation and the Construction of Identities: A Case Study'.

speculated that these would be closer to the hearts and minds of the Sepoys in the face of battle, as against abstract notions of nationalism or proto-nationalism.

Gautam Chakravarty's, *Mutiny, War or Small War? Revisiting an Old Debate*, argues that the rebellion of 1857- 58, should not be labelled as a mutiny or conventional war but rather as a 'small war', a term used to explain wars by colonial powers of the nineteenth century.⁶² These wars were fought not against regular armies belonging to stable political entities, but against an enemy with lower degree of organization, which limited itself to guerrilla activities, and was more difficult to deal with. The small wars were considered expeditions against savages and semi-civilised races, and justified the use of large-scale violence that did not distinguish between combatants and non-combatants. Chakravarty's argument is not very helpful in understanding the nature of the 1857 conflict as it fails to acknowledge the capacity of guerrillas and other sections of the population to be similarly wanton in their destruction and attacks on non-combatants. It also does not explain in the first place why subject people sometimes join up with the colonial power in combat against their own kind.

Apart from the Bates and Carter monograph and the *Mutiny on the Margins* series, which provide useful points of departure for this thesis, the extant literature reviewed above is not of much help in understanding the concept of ideology and its relevance in 1857. Representations of Muslim role continue to suffer from the tendency to portray it as a concerted and dedicated religious movement, as in jihadist explanations, despite the apparently mixed evidence. The nationalist, proto-nationalist, and some jihadist scholarship on the other hand, under-emphasises the significance of the Muslim religious factor in the conflict by viewing it merely as being in the service of anti-colonialism or nationalism. The tendency to portray anti-colonialism or proto-nationalism as nascent ideologies amounts to historical predetermination. Similarly, the idea that Hindus and Muslims were united in an ideology of common sentiment against

⁶² Gautam Chakravarty, 'Mutiny, War or Small War? Revisiting an Old Debate ', in *Mutiny at the Margins: New Perspectives on the Indian Uprising of 1857*, ed. Crispin Bates and Gavin Rand (Los Angeles; New Delhi: SAGE, 2013), 135-46.

the British ⁶³ tends to be vague, and at any rate begs the question what ideology or ideologies generated such a sentiment.

Moreover, the geographical focus of existing works that is generally limited to Northern and Central India. Although this is the area where the rebellion erupted and reached its peak, it cannot explain why other regions, such as the Punjab and North-West Frontier did not rise against the British. Similarly, none of these sources address the key issue of why units of the Bengal Army that rose against the British ironically ended up fighting against mostly fellow Indian Sepoys: the Sikhs, Punjabi Muslims, and Pathans from the North-West Frontier, who constituted the majority of the EIC Army in 1857 following the disbandment and mutiny of the Bengal Army. Nor do they explain a similar paradox on the other side, that of Muslims of the Punjab and North-West Frontier ignoring appeals from the Mughal Emperor and his army to join the resistance against the British. While the literature on the Bengal Army Sepoys is voluminous, nearly all of the works on 1857 ignore the role and motivation of the Punjabi and North-West Frontier Muslims who did not join the rebels. The limited works that exist, attribute their decision to collaborate with the British to such non-ideological factors as mercenary or contractual obligations.⁶⁴ If Jihad was frequently espoused as the main driving force behind the anti-British uprising in North-West India - and the documentary evidence strongly suggests that these claims were consistently made by many of the participants - then the crucial question is whether it was an important issue for the pro-British Muslims of the Punjab and the North-West as well, assuming that the latter two groups would have been as conscious of their Islamic faith and the consequent salience of Jihad. Given that the Muslim-versus-Muslim aspect of the 1857 war did not centre on any avowed doctrinal issues, the question of how Jihad was interpreted and applied by the opposing Muslim camps becomes even more important. The historiography is also silent on whether the two Muslim camps were divided by different political, social and

⁶³ Kumkum Chatterjee, 'Rajat Kanta Ray. The Felt Community: Commonalty and Mentality before the Emergence of Indian Nationalism', *The American Historical Review* 109, no. 2 (2004).

⁶⁴ Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj, 1849-1947* (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1988); J. Cave-Browne, *The Punjab and Delhi in 1857; being a Narrative of the Measures by which the Punjab was Saved and Delhi Recovered during the Indian Mutiny* (Patiala: Languages Dept., Punjab, 1970; 1861); Thomas Malcolm and Caesar Caine, *Barracks and Battlefields in India; Or, the Experiences of a Soldier of the 10th Foot (North Lincoln) in the Sikh Wars and Sepoy Mutiny*, Second ed. (Patiala: Languages Dept., Punjab, 1971); Tan T. Yong, *The Garrison State: Military, Government and Society in Colonial Punjab, 1849-1947* (New Delhi: Sage Publications India, 2005).

religious ideological agendas, and if such differences can account for their divergent behaviour.

Consequently, as Wagner has noted, there remains a need to revisit the central events and developments in the rebellion to consider new approaches, or seek new methods of answering old questions.⁶⁵ In order to seek conceptual clarity about ideology, for both the rebels as well as the collaborators in diverse geopolitical settings, a new analytic framework that is based on models borrowed from the social sciences is proposed in the following section. Apart from promoting a better understanding of the concept of ideology as it functioned in 1857, such a framework facilitates comparative research in the context of Indian Muslim society which was marked by similarities as well as differences, both within and across its different sections.

Reconceptualising Ideology and Militancy

Ideology is admittedly a nebulous concept that has been beset by a multitude of definitions and usage over time. In its early treatment, scholars tended to attribute neutral or negative meanings to ideology. The negative connotation, for example, described ideology as an elite mechanism for controlling and managing society - a conception that implied the undesirability of ideology in societies.⁶⁶ It was usually with such a negative meaning that doctrines such as Marxism or nationalism began to be acknowledged as ideologies. However, from the 1960s onwards, the term ideology has been used to denote sets of coherent and consistent ideas that are independent of the positive or negative affects they might yield.⁶⁷ But the move toward a more neutral conception of ideology has not stopped the trend to use ideology as doctrine, dogma,

⁶⁵ Kim A. Wagner, 'The Marginal Mutiny: The New Historiography of the Indian Uprising of 1857', *History Compass* 9, no. 10 (2011): 764.

⁶⁶ Theodor W. Adorno, *The Authoritarian personality* (New York: Harper, 1950); Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (New York: International Publishers, 1971).

⁶⁷ Robert Axelrod, 'The Structure of Public Opinion on Policy Issues', in *Power, Participation, and Ideology*, ed. Calvin J. Larson and Philo C. Wasburn (New York: McKay, 1969), 363-71; Lance Bennett, W., 'The Growth of Knowledge in Mass Belief Studies: An Epistemological Critique', *American Journal of Political Science* 21, no. 3 (1977): 465-500; Carol A. Cassel, 'Issues in Measurement: The "Levels of Conceptualization" Index of Ideological Sophistication', *American Journal of Political Science* 28, no. 2 (1984): 418-29; Stanley Feldman, 'Structure and Consistency in Public Opinion: the Role of Core Beliefs and Values', *American Journal of Political Science* 32, no. 2 (1988): 416-40.

political belief, or agenda, to refer to communism, fascism, liberalism,⁶⁸ and Islam.

Another trend involved employing the term in political, sociological, and psychological theories to describe patterns of political differentiation among masses, elites, and organisations.⁶⁹

Various scholars have attempted to delineate the diverse notions of ideology in order to render it a more robust theoretical and empirical concept. A recent effort in this direction comes from John Gerring, who defines ideology as a set of political ideas that are bound together with a minimal level of consistency, and that stand in contrast to competing sets of ideas.⁷⁰ However, in order to make the meaning conceptually tighter, Gerring suggests that scholars add context-specific attributes so as to specify the range of usage.⁷¹ For example, ideology may be used to refer to thought, language, or behaviour, or all of these attributes simultaneously; or to describe competing political agendas or power relations.

Building on Gerring's definition, ideology is defined here as a set of political, religious and social beliefs and values that promote a particular way of understanding the world, and shape relations between members of a group and out-groups, and among members themselves. This approach offers the advantage of linking ideological stances to specific groups by analysing the internal characteristics of key members in order to better understand the ideological functioning of the selected group.⁷² It also enables the inclusion in ideology of a number of more specific elements, especially those that are salient in armed conflicts, such as doctrines, narratives, and symbols. According to Ball, Dagger and O'Neill, ideology performs four core functions for its adherents: explanatory, evaluative, orientative, and programmatic.⁷³ The explanatory function raises the awareness of a particular group of people that a certain issue deserves their attention. Ideologies explain to the 'in-group' why social, political or religious conditions

⁶⁸ Kathleen Knight, 'Transformations of the Concept of Ideology in the Twentieth Century', *The American Political Science Review* 100, no. 4 (2006): 619-26.

⁶⁹ Donald P. Green, 'On the Dimensionality of Public Sentiment toward Partisan and Ideological Groups', *American Journal of Political Science* 32, no. 3 (1988): 758-80.

⁷⁰ John Gerring, 'Ideology: A definitional analysis', *Political Research Quarterly* 50, no. 4 (1997).

⁷¹ 'Ideology: A definitional analysis'.

⁷² Misagh Parsa, *States, ideologies, and social revolutions a comparative analysis of Iran, Nicaragua, and the Philippines* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

⁷³ Terrence Ball, Richard Dagger, and Daniel I. O'Neill, *Political Ideologies and the Democratic Ideal*, 9th ed. (New Jersey: Pearson Education, 2014). 5-6.

are as they are. Since individuals often seek explanations in times of crisis, ideologies are particularly appealing to the group that perceives itself to be under threat. The second function is evaluative, whereby the ideology assigns blame for the prevalent predicament of the in-group to some 'out-group'. The out-group is identified with a certain behaviour that, according to the narrative offered by the ideology, undermines the well-being of the in-group. The orientative function of ideology is concerned with generating a group identity by identifying and highlighting the common characteristics of those individuals who adhere to, or are potential adherents of the in-group ideology. The fourth function of ideologies is a programmatic one in which the ideology offers a specific program of action that claims to remedy the in-group's predicament, and urges its adherents to implement that course of action.⁷⁴

Three types of ideologies form the focus of this study: Royalism, culturalism, and religiosity. This selection is based on the observation that they represented the core of Indian Muslim beliefs at the time about how society was structured, how it ought to be structured, and their own place in it.

Royalism is defined as adherence or attachment to a monarchy, or to the principle of monarchic government.⁷⁵ A group, which, regardless of its political or religious orientations, supports a monarch or monarchy, especially in times of war, may be termed Royalist.⁷⁶ Conceptualised thus, royalism is a form of political ideology.

Culturalism as defined by Eriksen and Stjernfelt is 'the idea that individuals are determined by their culture, that these cultures form closed, organic wholes, and that the individual is unable to leave his or her own culture, but rather can only realise him or herself within it'.⁷⁷ Culture here is defined as the behaviours and beliefs characteristic of a particular social or ethnic group.⁷⁸ However, the Eriksen and Stjernfelt definition is too restrictive, since as Berg-Schlosser and Morlino point out, it is unusual for a group's social characteristics to be so entrenched that an individual member may find his exit

⁷⁴ This categorisation is based on *Political Ideologies and the Democratic Ideal*: 5-6.

⁷⁵ Jason McElligott, *Royalism, Print and Censorship in Revolutionary England* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2007). 6.

⁷⁶ *Royalism, Print and Censorship in Revolutionary England*: 6.

⁷⁷ James M. Eriksen and Frederik Stjernfelt, 'Culturalism: Culture as political ideology', *Eurozine* (2009), Accessed 28 March 2014. <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2009-01-09-eriksenstjernfelt-en.html>

⁷⁸ E.B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture: The origins of culture* (Harper, 1958). 1.

option unthinkable.⁷⁹ On the other hand, social groups are seldom ever perfectly homogenous as member expectations, values and activities tend to vary. However, in societies that are differentiated on ethnic or class lines, it becomes very difficult for members of a group to have close social ties with other groups that do not subscribe to that group's collective social aspirations and programme.⁸⁰ A system of differentiation that is based on class, ethnic, and caste lines is close to Weber's concept of social stratification, which holds that such systems are sustained on the basis of wealth, power, and prestige in society.⁸¹ In the context of India, tribal and military groupings were the norm in Muslim, and for that matter, Hindu society. Two forms of social ideology can be ascribed to the tribal and military structures: tribalism and militarism. Tribalism is defined as an affinity for, and commitment to strong ties between members of a tribe, clan, or extended family,⁸² and militarism as attachment to, and glorification of a professional military class, military spirit, and the pursuit of military ideals.⁸³

Religiosity refers to an individual or community's attachment to religion across a range of dimensions. Although there is no consensus on the nature and type of religious dimensions, Glock,⁸⁴ Verbit,⁸⁵ King,⁸⁶ and Lenski,⁸⁷ provide a rich framework, from which the following dimensions are adapted for this study: Devotional, which entails adherence to 'popular' or folk rituals, including conversion/allegiance through *Sufis* (Muslim mystics), ritual recitation of the *Quran*, and veneration of Prophet Muhammad and his progeny; Intellectual, which denotes knowledge of the basic tenets of one's

⁷⁹ B. Badie, D. Berg-Schlosser, and L. Morlino, *International Encyclopedia of Political Science* (SAGE Publications, 2011).

⁸⁰ *International Encyclopedia of Political Science*.

⁸¹ Max Weber, *The theory of social and economic organization* (New York: Free Press, 1947).

⁸² Erlend H. Hvoslef, 'Tribalism and modernity in Kirgizia', in *Ethnic Encounter and Cultural Change: Papers from the Third Nordic Conference on Middle Eastern Studies, Joensuu, 1995* ed. Muhammad Sabour and Knut S. Vikør (Bergen, Norway: Nordic Society for Middle Eastern Studies, 1997), 98.

⁸³ Peter Hunt, 'Athenian militarism and the recourse to war', in *War, Democracy and Culture in Classical Athens*, ed. David M. Pritchard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 226.

⁸⁴ Charles Y. Glock, 'On the Study of Religious Commitment', in *Religion's Influence in Contemporary Society: Readings in the Sociology of Religion*, ed. J.E. Faulkner (Ohio: C. E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1972), 39.

⁸⁵ Mervin F. Verbit, 'The Components and Dimensions of Religious Behaviour: Toward a Reconceptualization of Religiosity', in *American mosaic: social patterns of religion in the United States*, ed. P.E. Hammond and B. Johnson (New York: Random House, 1970), 26, 27.

⁸⁶ Morton King, 'Measuring the religious variable: Nine proposed dimensions', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (1967): 173-85.

⁸⁷ Gerhard Lenski, *The religious factor; a sociological study of religion's impact on politics, economics, and family life* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1961). 21-24.

religion, and a continuous struggle to understand religion better; and Doctrinal, which refers to the acceptance of the prescribed doctrines of one's religious denomination or school of thought. The present study adds the concept of *Jihad* as a dimension of religiosity- treated here as the resort to arms for the purpose of advancing or defending Islamic beliefs and practices, however interpreted, to this framework as a type of ideology that can be assessed in terms of its intellectual, doctrinal, and devotional dimensions.

As with the initial attempts to conceptualise ideology, the term militancy is beset with value-laden meanings. In current usage, militancy generally denotes armed action by non-state actors, and often terrorism. In a recent attempt to interpret the term more objectively, so that it can be applied to the actions of different actors in varied scenarios, D'Arcy proposes a definition of militancy as 'an action or activity that is grievance-motivated, adversarial, confrontational, and collectively carried out'.⁸⁸ In the grievance-motivated sense, militants do not seek adventure, or personal gain. Rather, they are motivated largely by a desire to protest against something, and to pursue a perceived need for change. Militancy is also 'adversarial' in the sense that it treats others not as potentially amenable to being convinced or won over, but rather as intransigent adversaries to be pressured, and if possible, defeated by means of struggle. Militancy may be confrontational in that, rather than avoiding conflict and seeking accommodation and compromise, it seeks to initiate or intensify conflict. Finally, militancy is a collective act that is not typically carried out by individuals acting independently, but rather as group members in concert with fellow members.

D'Arcy identifies four types of militant action, which can be undertaken discretely, or in combination: Symbolic defiance, physical confrontation and destruction, and institutional disruption. In the symbolic mode, militants adopt defiance through 'symbolic' or 'theatrical' acts, designed to publicly reject the legitimacy of some person, practice, policy or institution. In the physical confrontation mode, the actor engages in some form of armed conflict with adversaries or authority figures, which may include

⁸⁸ D'Arcy, Steve. "What Do We Mean by "Militancy"? ZNET. May 11, 2011. Accessed March 31, 2015. <https://zcomm.org/znetarticle/what-do-we-mean-by-militancy-by-steve-darcy/>

acts of destruction and damage of property belonging to or associated with an adversary. Institutional disruption refers to acts that attempt to disrupt the functioning of some institution, by boycotting work for example, or carrying out protests, or preventing officials from performing their duties. As D'Arcy maintains, 'almost all cases of militancy can be classifiable in terms of at least one, and sometimes more than one of these four modes'.⁸⁹

There are several advantages of adopting this framework in examining the military nature of the 1857 conflict. It incorporates the actions of not only the Sepoys who took up arms against their EIC employers, but also of their counterparts on the other side. Secondly, it includes the actions of para-professionals and warrior bands such as the police levies and the irregular war bands and regiments raised by tribal chiefs in some of the affected regions. Third, it has the scope to include the activities of the religious and political elite, more so as militancy incorporates adversarial political and religious actions that are short of armed confrontation. Thus, it has better explanatory power than the restrictive labels of war, limited war, small war, or mutiny etc., that pervade the literature.

This study proposes a framework for analysis in which the, social, religious and political dimensions of ideology are correlated, and are linked to militant action through the process of information processing and dissemination, and courses of action. This framework is applied to the contending Muslim Sepoys, royalty, and Ulama in their respective capacity as representatives of the military, political and religious elite of Indian Muslim society. Such a comparative ideology approach to understanding Muslim behaviour in the 1857 conflict has not previously been attempted. As part of this agenda, this study contributes to the existing historiography on Muslim participation and motivation by re-examining the ideology of Jihad to discover in what ways and to what extent it was a factor, both in the Muslim versus British and the Muslim versus Muslim aspect of the rebellion.

⁸⁹ D'Arcy, Steve. "What Do We Mean by "Militancy"? ZNET. May 11, 2011. Accessed March 31, 2015. <https://zcomm.org/znetarticle/what-do-we-mean-by-militancy-by-steve-darcy/>

Research questions

The central question that this thesis seeks to address is how ideology functioned among the key Muslim participants in the rebellion of 1857 - both those who rose against the East India Company as well as those who fought on the side of the British to suppress the rebels. In order to answer this central question, it will draw from the theoretical literature discussed above and the primary sources listed below and will ask two sub-sets of questions. It will explore, first of all, how the ideologies of royalism, culturalism, and Jihad were understood, expressed and utilised by the contending Muslim Sepoys, royalty and Ulama during the 1857 rebellion. Secondly, it will examine the issues associated with the interpretation and pursuit of these ideological dimensions, and how the key groups and their leadership coped with them. This thesis is organised thematically across four regions: Delhi (including Meerut); Avadh; Punjab (including the princely states of Bahawalpur and Maler Kotla); and the North-West Frontier (the Pathan majority districts of British Punjab, and the epicentre tribal areas between these districts and Afghanistan). It was in these regions where the rebellion was fought, and its outcome decided. Delhi and Avadh were the epicentres of the anti-British resistance, led respectively by the Mughal and Avadh royalty and supported by large sections of the landed elite, religious figures, and the public. By contrast, the Punjab and the North-West Frontier on its fringe remained loyal to the British, and formed the mainstay of the British military power that confronted the rebel movement and ultimately put it down, largely with the help of the Punjabi Muslims and Frontier Pathans. A focus on these areas thus provides us with the scope to examine the ideological motivations that prompted the contrasting behaviour of collaboration versus resistance.

The Punjab and Frontier were distinct from their counterparts in terms of their administration, political status, societal structure and history, even as they shared other characteristics like religion and caste. Though the North-West Frontier was an administrative part of British Punjab, it is treated as a separate region for present purposes because of its unique history, different ethnic makeup, and the nature of its political interactions with other Indian entities and outside powers. Punjab and Avadh had been recently absorbed into British India, but were otherwise very dissimilar; and while both Avadh and Delhi had been monarchies, which in Delhi was at least symbolically intact at the time of the rebellion, Avadh royalty was recently displaced by

direct British rule. On the other hand, there was much that was common between Avadh and Delhi: a shared military history from earlier pre-British times, common language and social customs, and a similar military culture. Hence the regional categorisation also enable us to explore how the differences as well as similarities among the Muslims of these areas came into focus and influenced their capacity for militancy during the 1857 conflict.

Sources used

This thesis draws upon a number of primary sources, which include published archival material. The Indian sources focusing mainly on Delhi and Avadh, a number of which are in Urdu, consist of monographs, diaries, newspapers, religious edicts, statements, and proclamations. Monographs by those who witnessed the rebellion, or had access to others who did, include Zahiruddin Dihlavi, *Dastan-e-Ghadar* (a narrative of 1857);⁹⁰ Moinuddin Hasan Khan, *Khadang-i ghadar* (the arrow of the mutiny);⁹¹ Syed Ahmed Khan, *Causes of the Indian revolt*;⁹² Sitaram Pandey, *From Sepoy to Subedar*;⁹³ Kanhaiya Lal, *Tarikh-i baghavat-i Hind 1857: maharbah-yi azim* (History of the Indian revolt, 1857: The Great War),⁹⁴ and the multiple volumes of *Freedom struggle in Uttar Pradesh*.⁹⁵

Sita Ram's book is a rare narrative by a Sepoy employed in the Bengal Army, who remained loyal to the British throughout his long service, including the rebellion years. The original version was reportedly written in 1861 by Subedar Sita Ram Pandey on his retirement from the Bengal Army, at the behest of his commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel James T. Norgate. According to the preface of Norgate's 1873 English edition, a copy of the original manuscript was given to him by Sita Ram's son, which was subsequently translated into English, with more editions subsequently appearing in

⁹⁰ Zahir Dihlavi, *Dastan-i ghadar* (Lahaur: Sang-i Mil Pablikeshanz, 2007).

⁹¹ M.H. Khan and K.A. Faruqi, *Khadang-i ghadar* (India: University of Delhi Department of Urdu 1972).

⁹² Khan, *The causes of the Indian revolt*.

⁹³ SitaRam Pandey et al., eds., *From sepoy to subedar; being the life and adventures of Subedar Sita Ram, a native officer of the Bengal army, written and related by himself* (London: Papermac, 1988).

⁹⁴ Kanhaiya Lal, *Tarikh-i baghavat-i Hind 1857: maharbah-yi azim* (Lahore: Sang-e Meel Publications, 2007).

⁹⁵ Rizvi, *Freedom struggle in Uttar Pradesh: source material: Eastern and adjoining districts*; *Freedom struggle in Uttar Pradesh: source material: Western districts and Rohilkhand*; Rizvi and Bhargava, *Freedom struggle in Uttar Pradesh: source material Awadh: 1857-59*; *Freedom struggle in Uttar Pradesh: source material 1857-59*.

print.⁹⁶ Moinuddin Khan's narrative is based on his observations and experiences as the chief of police in Delhi during the tumultuous events of 1857. The book was however, published posthumously after his death in 1885, in accordance with his wishes.⁹⁷ Zahir Uddin Dihlavi, another Delhi resident, who was associated with a courtier of Bahadur Shah Zafar prior to the rebellion is believed to have written his account sometimes during his retirement from EIC service, although the exact date has not been determined.⁹⁸ Kanhaiya Lal's, *Tarikh-i baghavat-i Hind 1857: maharbah-yi azim* is a comprehensive and carefully researched account of the key episodes and personalities in the rebellion. Although Lal was careful not to be critical of the British, he does attempt to present an unbiased view, particularly of the events surrounding the fall of Delhi and its aftermath. Syed Ahmed Khan, the most prominent Indian Muslim loyalist during the rebellion, wrote *The Causes of the Indian revolt* under the original Urdu title, *Asbab Sarkashi Hindustan* in 1858, followed by the English version in 1873.⁹⁹ Among all the major figures of the rebel movement, the most extensive data relates to its supreme leader, Bahadur Shah Zafar. The most popular Urdu newspapers reporting from Delhi in support of Bahadur Shah Zafar during the rebellion years were the *Dilli Urdu Akhbar* and the *Sadiq-ul-Akhbar*.¹⁰⁰ Some of the editions are preserved in the National Archives of India, New Delhi, which are also available in print.¹⁰¹

For Indian sources that concentrate mainly on Avadh, the richest collection of primary materials being utilised is the multiple volumes of *Freedom struggle in Uttar Pradesh*.¹⁰² The six volume series are a rich repository of archival documents, diaries, letters, intelligence reports, parliamentary papers, and proceedings of the foreign, political, revenue, and judicial departments. Together they provide a comprehensive account of the events in Uttar Pradesh for the period 1857-59. These sources, in addition, contain a number of

⁹⁶ Pandey et al., *From sepoy to subedar; being the life and adventures of Subedar Sita Ram, a native officer of the Bengal army, written and related by himself*.

⁹⁷ Khan and Faruqi, *Khadang-i ghadar*.

⁹⁸ Asghar Hussain Khan Ludhianwi and Salahudin Ahmad, *Dastan-e-Ghadar* (Story of the Mutiny) (1955), reprinted in Mohammad Ikram Chughtai (comp.), *1857: Roznamche, Muasir Tehriren, Yaddashten* (1857: Diaries, Memoirs and Contemporary Writings) (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel, 2007), p. 864.

⁹⁹ Khan, *The causes of the Indian revolt*.

¹⁰⁰ M. Atique Siddiqi, *Attharab sau sattavan, akhbar aur dastavezen* (Dihli: Maktabah-yi Shahrah, 1966).

¹⁰¹ See *Attharab sau sattavan, akhbar aur dastavezen*.

¹⁰² Rizvi, *Freedom struggle in Uttar Pradesh: source material: Eastern and adjoining districts*; *Freedom struggle in Uttar Pradesh: source material: Western districts and Rohilkhand*; Rizvi and Bhargava, *Freedom struggle in Uttar Pradesh: source material Awadh: 1857-59*; *Freedom struggle in Uttar Pradesh: source material 1857-59*.

royal proclamations by the Begum of Avadh which address several matters concerning Avadh-British relations, the mistreatment of Avadh royalty by the British authorities, and refrains to the Sepoys and the general public to unite against the British and destroy them.

Colonial accounts by comparison are too numerous to mention, but the ones often consulted for this research are works by George Bruce Malleeson,¹⁰³ Charles Ball,¹⁰⁴ Noah Alfred Chick,¹⁰⁵ John William Kaye,¹⁰⁶ G. W. Forrest,¹⁰⁷ Frederick S. Roberts,¹⁰⁸ Sir William Muir.¹⁰⁹ Official sources include *Records of the Delhi Residency and Agency*,¹¹⁰ *Selections from the records of the Government of the Punjab and its dependencies : Trial of Muhammad Bahadur Shah, Titular King of Delhi, and of Mogul Beg, and Hajee, all of Delhi, for rebellion against the British Government, and murder of Europeans during 1857*,¹¹¹ and the series, *Mutiny Records Correspondence - in two parts*,¹¹² and *Mutiny Records Reports - in two parts*.¹¹³ The Trial proceedings which appeared in 1870, and are available in print contain not only the deposed Emperor's statement and those of witnesses against him, but also numerous copies of his routine missives issued during the rebellion years, as well as his proclamations against the British. The Records of the Delhi Agency spanning 1807-57 contain directives, reports, and exchange of official correspondence by successive EIC Residents, their deputies, and senior members of the EIC administration on revenue and governance matters concerning Delhi. More importantly, they discuss the nature

¹⁰³ George B. Malleeson, *The mutiny of the Bengal Army : an historical narrative* (London: Bosworth and Harrison, 1857).

¹⁰⁴ C. Ball, *The History of the Indian Mutiny: Giving a Detailed Account of the Sepoy Insurrection in India : and a Concise History of the Great Military Events which Have Tended to Consolidate British Empire in Hindostan ; Illustrated with Battle Scenes, Views of Places, Portraits, and Maps, Beautifully Engraved on Steel*, vol. 1 (London Printing and Publishing Company, 1858).

¹⁰⁵ Chick, *Annals of the Indian Rebellion, 1857-58*.

¹⁰⁶ Kaye, *A history of the Sepoy War in India 1857-1858*, I.

¹⁰⁷ G.W. Forrest, *A history of the Indian mutiny, reviewed and illustrated from original documents*, vol. II (Edinburgh; London: W. Blackwood, 1904).

¹⁰⁸ Frederick S. Roberts, *Forty-one years in India. From subaltern to commander-in-chief* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1901).

¹⁰⁹ W. Muir and W. Coldstream, *Records of the Intelligence Department of the Government of the North-west Provinces of India During the Mutiny of 1857* (Agra: T. & T. Clark, 1902).

¹¹⁰ Punjab Secretariat, 'Records of the Delhi Residency and Agency', (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1911; reprint, 2006).

¹¹¹ *Selections from the records of the Government of the Punjab and its dependencies : Trial of Muhammad Bahadur Shah, Titular King of Delhi, and of Mogul Beg, and Hajee, all of Delhi, for rebellion against the British Government, and murder of Europeans during 1857*, (Lahore: Punjab Printing Company Limited, 1870).

¹¹² Punjab, *Mutiny records : correspondence in two parts* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1911; repr., 2005).

¹¹³ *Mutiny Records: Reports in two parts* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1911; repr., 2005).

and course of the EIC relationship with Bahadur Shah Zafar in the crucial years prior to the rebellion.

Barely utilised by historian of the 1857 rebellion, but invaluable for this thesis, the *Mutiny Reports*, and its companion volume, *Mutiny correspondence* have an extensive amount of material on the Punjab and the North-West Frontier. Published over the period 1857-58, this material, which was initially maintained in the archives of the Punjab Civil Secretariat, has been available in print since 1911. It has recently been reproduced and compiled by Lahore-based Sang-e-Meel Publications, titled, *Mutiny Records Correspondence - in two parts*,¹¹⁴ and *Mutiny Records Reports - in two parts*.¹¹⁵ The official reports and correspondence were authored by an assortment of colonial officers, who included deputy commissioners, commissioners, secretaries of the government of India, and army officers. They contain a vast amount of information related to British military plans, administrative measures, troop recruitment, and assessments of the security and political situation in the Punjab during the course of the rebellion. Although there is only cursory mention of Punjabi Muslim and Pathan motivation, the detailed data on the latter's recruitment, organisation, and military activity warrants careful re-examination to discern the underlying ideological motives for their pro-British and anti-rebel attitude during the rebellion. Similarly useful sources on the Punjab and the North-West Frontier are the various *District Gazetteers* of British Punjab which, though published after the rebellion, have useful information on the rebellion years that complements the data in the *Mutiny Records* series. These gazetteers too have been compiled from various district headquarters and reprinted by Sang-e-Meel Publications.¹¹⁶

The availability of all this data in print, combined with a historical case studies approach that draws on methodologies from the social sciences, has mitigated the need for archive visits for the purposes of this thesis.

¹¹⁴ *Mutiny records : correspondence in two parts*.

¹¹⁵ *Mutiny Records: Reports in two parts*.

¹¹⁶ Particularly useful compilations are Edward Maclagan, *Gazetteer of the Multan District* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1926; repr., 2001); Punjab, *Gazetteer of the Lahore District, 1883-4* (Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1989).

Chapter I: Delhi

Introduction

As the centre of the 1857 rebellion, Delhi witnessed the most decisive military operations between the rebel Sepoys and the EIC Army. The city contained the largest concentration of Sepoys through the critical phase of the war against the British. It served as the seat of Mughal power where the Emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar, a hitherto nominal potentate, had reasserted himself as the Mughal sovereign at the onset of the rebellion. This chapter examines the question of how the ideologies of royalism, culturalism, and religiosity motivated the Sepoys, Ulama and royalty of Delhi to rise against the British. It argues that the idea of royalism as a political ideology strongly appealed to the three groups, but was ultimately unsuccessful as a political programme on account of the Emperor's failure of leadership, a counterproductive ideology, and an inability to gain powerful allies against the British. The Sepoys, though dedicated to the restoration of his rule, were handicapped due to a sense of alienation that they experienced from the breakdown of a military ideology that fell apart as a result of their uprising, and for which they could not subsequently develop a substitute ideology. Consequently, they experienced loss of morale, professional pride, and military cohesion, which adversely affected their combat performance, and in turn limited their ability to spearhead the royalist cause. The Ulama on their part, successfully rallied the Sepoys with calls for Jihad, but the anomalies in their religious beliefs, and the gap between their pronouncements and subsequent conduct revealed an ambivalent commitment to Jihad. As this chapter will show, no ideological strand by itself adequately explains the behaviour of the actors, as all three played their role as motivating factors at different stages of the rebellion for each of the actors.

Sepoys

When the first batch of rebellious Sepoys comprising a large Muslim component of the 3rd Light Cavalry poured into Delhi on 11 May 1857, one of their first acts was to

restore Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar to the Mughal throne.¹ In this situation of political uncertainty, and no political programme of their own, there was no-one else the Sepoys could turn to for leadership. From that day onwards, the rebel Army and its leadership displayed a consistent commitment to the restoration of Bahadur Shah Zafar, whom they believed was the rightful ruler of Hindustan. Even when the Emperor appeared ready in the end to surrender to the EIC authorities, the Sepoy commander, General Bakht Khan pleaded with him not to give himself up, and made the offer that he accompany the remnants of the Sepoy Army out of Delhi so the war could be resumed elsewhere under the royal leadership. However, Bahadur Shah Zafar was adamant, and the Sepoy Army had to leave without him. Although the main force was still intact, and a number of Sepoys proceeded to join the war in Avadh where their colleagues of the former Bengal Army were engaging the British, the large Delhi force was left without a supreme leader for the rest of the war, and the Royalist cause they associated with him.

During the earlier phase of the war, sometimes in July 1857 when Sepoy numbers had increased in Delhi, a Court of Administration was set up by the Sepoys to manage the military and civilian affairs of the city.² Its membership consisted of two Sepoys each of the cavalry, infantry and artillery wings of the Army, as well as four civilians, presided over by the commander-in-chief of the Army.³ All matters before the Court were to be decided by majority vote, and in case of dissension, the issue was to be referred to the Emperor, whose decision would be final.⁴ According to Mahmood Farooqui, the object and functions of the Sepoy Court indicated early attempts at governance,⁵ while M. Atique Siddiqi has gone so far as to suggest that their charter of duties amounted to 'the first constitution of India'.⁶ However, rather than as an organ of political governance, the Administrative Court functioned like an EIC administrative body whose composition and procedures the Sepoy leadership would have been familiar with.⁷ It

¹ Mahdi Husain, 'Bahadur Shah and the war of 1857', in *1857 in the Muslim Historiography*, ed. Muhammad I. Chaghatai (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2007), 38.

² Mahmood Farooqui, 'Delhi: 1857', ed. Shivanand (Ghadar Jari Hai 2008).

³ 'Delhi: 1857'.

⁴ 'Delhi: 1857'.

⁵ *Besieged: voices from Delhi, 1857* (New Delhi: Penguin Viking, 2010). 53-55.

⁶ Siddiqi, *Attharab san sattavan, akbbar aur dastavezen*: 279.

⁷ Thomas George P. Spear, *Twilight of the Mughuls: studies in late Mughul Delhi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951). 205-08.

was little more than an ad hoc arrangement to manage the administrative affairs of Delhi, including procurement of funds and arranging supplies. As a body, it appears to have been concerned only with 'doing away with mismanagement and removing disorder from the civil and military establishment'.⁸ The Court was ill-equipped to perform an effective political role. As career soldiers, Sepoy members of the Court held an apolitical outlook as part of their military culture. At Delhi, the princes, royal advisors, and the Emperor provided the required political leadership. Being outsiders who had no exposure to court politics, and for whom the key figures of the city were strangers, the Sepoys were hardly in a position to exercise political authority.

In their primary role, the Delhi Sepoys were organised under two military formations: the Bareilly and Neemuch brigades, commanded by Bakht Khan and Hira Singh respectively, both of whom were former *Subedars* in the Bengal Army.⁹ The brigades consisted of some fourteen thousand Sepoys from several regiments that had rebelled in Bareilly, Neemuch, Meerut, and in Delhi itself.¹⁰ Their performance however, suffered on several counts. A number of incidents were observed in which senior Sepoy officers interfered with each other's battle plans, and even failed to come to the assistance of a fellow commander's forces. There was also confusion over who was in command of which regiment made worse by the duality of command between Prince Mirza Mughal, and Bakht Khan with the former as commander-in-chief, and the latter as Lord Governor General.¹¹

The crisis of military leadership and cohesion had set in as early as May, 1857, when the Sepoys rose against their British officers at the Meerut Cantonment. As a consequence, the Sepoys experienced a sudden institutional and leadership vacuum which had

⁸ Surendra N. Sen, *Eighteen fifty-seven* (Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Govt. of India, 1957). 75.

⁹ *Selections from the records of the Government of the Punjab and its dependencies : Trial of Muhammad Bahadur Shah, Titular King of Delhi, and of Mogul Beg, and Hajee, all of Delhi, for rebellion against the British Government, and murder of Europeans during 1857*: 187.

¹⁰ Khurshid M. Rizvi, *Tarikh-i jang-i azadi-e Hind, attharah sau sattavan : Dilli, Mairath, Avadh aur Rubilkhanda* (Rampur: Rampur Raza Library, 2000). 284. Translation mine; For a detailed breakdown of the regiments see Muir and Coldstream, *Records of the Intelligence Department of the Government of the North-west Provinces of India During the Mutiny of 1857*: 79-80.

¹¹ *Selections from the records of the Government of the Punjab and its dependencies : Trial of Muhammad Bahadur Shah, Titular King of Delhi, and of Mogul Beg, and Hajee, all of Delhi, for rebellion against the British Government, and murder of Europeans during 1857*: 82-83.

hitherto been occupied by the EIC, and that created a state of alienation and confusion. As Durkheim's social theory postulates, in times of social change and upheaval, clear societal standards and expectations for individuals vanish; that without clear rules, norms, or values, people feel anxious, rootless and confused, or experience what is termed as a state of 'normlessness'.¹² The violent eruption by the Sepoys not only disintegrated their structure as an organised EIC force, it also damaged military *esprit de corps* and the sense of belonging that the men felt as members of well-knit units. As their ties with the EIC broke, the men faced the prospect of surviving in an environment that was unfamiliar and ambiguous. There was no central authority or delegated command they could relate to, and from which they could draw an alternative military culture. Bahadur Shah Zafar, who had been restored to the Mughal throne at the behest of the Sepoys themselves, turned out to be an inept leader who moreover, remained aloof from the former Bengal Army now under his command. The Sepoy Army's non-commissioned and junior officers, suddenly thrust into the roles of generals and colonels, had no experience of managing the morale of such a large body of troops, or of conducting military warfare at the higher level. A deficit of trained and committed leadership, weak chain of command, competing loci of authority, and disorganisation and ad hoc-ism in fighting formations created demoralisation among the Sepoys, adversely affecting their behaviour. The Sepoys regularly disobeyed their officers, failed to organise into battle formations, and neglected to wear their uniforms.¹³ Many of them lost their will to fight during forays against the EIC force, throwing away their weapons and running away, or pretending to be wounded.¹⁴ There were instances of Sepoys deserting, or opting out of the conflict, and others attacking the British half-heartedly.¹⁵ Being unable to completely shed their past EIC military culture, Sepoy units could be seen marching to military tunes which had been taught to them by their British officers, and displaying EIC colours and uniforms.¹⁶ Some of the Sepoys started styling themselves as colonel and general *sahibs*, prompting a concerned Delhi citizen to

¹² E. Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research*, Twelfth ed. (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 2009). 136.

¹³ W. H. Carey, *The Mahomedan Rebellion: its premonitory symptoms, the outbreak and suppression* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1857; repr., 2007). 68.

¹⁴ *The Mahomedan Rebellion: its premonitory symptoms, the outbreak and suppression*: 68.

¹⁵ Lal, *Tarikh-i baghavat-i Hind 1857: maharbah-yi azim*: 53.

¹⁶ Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, *The Great Uprising in India, 1857-58: Untold Stories, Indian and British* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell & Brewer Incorporated, 2007). 63.

remark, 'writing to them creates a lot of problems as one does not know which mode of address will please them, and which will displease them'.¹⁷ The Sepoys were frequently quarrelling with each other, refusing to obey their senior officers, and avoiding combat on various pretexts.¹⁸ Sepoy factions were divided on the issue of supporting Bakht Khan, who had been appointed as their commanding general by the Emperor, so much so that a delegation even approached the latter, complaining that Bakht Khan was unsuitable to lead the Delhi Force.¹⁹ The situation became so uncertain that military orders and operational directives that should have been the sole prerogative of senior officers in the rebel Army were sometimes issued by junior ranks who were not trained to lead. A stark instance of this was a military plan announced by a Muslim *Daffadar* addressed to all military officers in Delhi, advising them on how to form their ranks in battle and the tactics to be employed.²⁰ This trend was evident among their Sepoy counterparts in Avadh as well, as we shall see in the next chapter. The importance of cohesion in fostering and maintaining a sense of militarism will be highlighted in the following chapters on the Punjab and the North-West Frontier, where its existence was an important factor in combat effectiveness as opposed to its relative absence and resultant lack of fighting spirit among the Sepoys under discussion here.

The state of the rebel Bengal Army currently active in Delhi had been very different in the past. Until the 1857 uprising, the Bengal Army Sepoys bore a long EIC military tradition going back a hundred years.²¹ A strong military culture developed in the Bengal and other EIC Presidency Armies over the period. Based on kinship ties, regimentation, chain of command, and professional training, military units fostered a sense of belonging and pride as the Sepoys went through years of shared experience of peacetime service and combat. The culture of discipline, cohesiveness, and pride of performance that emerged came to define their distinct militarism, serving as a guide map for their behaviour. The mainly high-caste Hindu and Muslim Sepoys who joined these units considered the profession of arms not merely a means of livelihood, but a

¹⁷ Farooqui, *Besieged: voices from Delhi, 1857*: 83-84.

¹⁸ *Besieged: voices from Delhi, 1857*: 259.

¹⁹ Syed M. Haq, 'Memoirs of Hakim Ahsanullah Khan', in *1857 in the Muslim Historiography*, ed. Muhammad I. Chaghatai (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications 2007), 34-35.

²⁰ Farooqui, *Besieged: voices from Delhi, 1857*: 41-42.

²¹ H.E. Raugh, *The Victorians at War, 1815-1914: An Encyclopedia of British Military History* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2004). 46.

source of privilege and pride. It was an attractive outlet for these martial tribesmen who valued a life with scope for adventure, high status, security of service, and respect and honour from their families and tribal communities.

Sepoy association with their British officers was not always harmonious. By the mid nineteenth century, strains began to appear in the relationship. It has been suggested that camaraderie between the European officers and Sepoys weakened as many of the officers were transferred to newly raised regiments, and some of the ablest opted for EIC political service as British India gained newer territories.²² Those who had arrived from other regiments were generally unfamiliar with these Sepoys, and relatively indifferent to their sensitivities.²³ EIC military expansion, which led to an induction of personnel from the Punjab, posed a potential threat to the monopoly of the Rajput, Brahmin, Mughal, Syed, and Pathan tribesmen of Avadh, Bihar and Rohilkhand, who formed the traditional recruiting base of the Bengal Army.²⁴ There was also an increase in the proselytising activity of some military officers and European missionaries, which had been largely benign till the 1830s.²⁵

The significance of the service factor in the Sepoy motivation to rebel has been over-emphasised. Officer turnover in the regiments, though greater than before, was a routine feature of military life, so that the Sepoys and the newly posted officers would have been able to adjust to one another. Sepoy attachment to their regiments as symbolised by flags, bands, parades and manoeuvres remained in place, and continued to be a source of pride and inspiration. New inductees from the Punjab, drawn mostly from Sikh soldiers of the disbanded Army of Maharajah Ranjit Singh, and Punjabi Muslim tribes were few in numbers, and did not markedly alter the existing ethnic composition of the EIC regiments.²⁶ Similarly, proselytization attempts were not widespread, and they continued to be officially discouraged by EIC authorities.²⁷ Much

²² Kaushik Roy, *War, Culture and Society in early modern South Asia: 1740-1849* (New York: Routledge, 2006). 62.

²³ Wredenhall R. Pogson, *Memoir of the mutiny at Barrackpore* (Serampore Press, 1833). 16.

²⁴ Kaushik Roy, ed. *Warfare, State and Society in South Asia, 500 BCE-2005 CE* (New Delhi: Viva Books, 2010), 433.

²⁵ Penelope Carson, *The East India Company and Religion, 1698-1858* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: Boydell Press, 2012). 240.

²⁶ R.K. Mazumder, *The Indian Army and the Making of Punjab* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003). 11.

²⁷ *Allen's Indian Mail and Register of Intelligence*, vol. XV (London: Wm. H. Allen, 1857). 518.

of the missionary work being undertaken was, at any rate, directed at the civilian population.²⁸ Thus, even as service ties appear to have weakened, the military culture that bound the Sepoys with their regiments and British officers essentially remained intact.

What sparked the rebellion had less to do with service grievances than with cultural and religious issues. Matters between the Sepoys and their British commanders came to a head on the issue of greased cartridges to the Bengal Army. As news started to spread among the Sepoys that these cartridges, first manufactured in 1856, were laced with cow and pig fat, which was repugnant to Hindus and Muslim respectively, protests and violent reactions erupted in various cantonments, starting with the famous incident involving Sepoy Mangal Panday of the 34th Bengal Native Infantry at Barrackpore in March, 1857.²⁹ The disobedience recurred at Meerut on a much larger scale when the 3rd Bengal Light Cavalry, a predominantly Muslim regiment, refused to handle the cartridges at a parade ordered by their commandant on 24th April, 1857.³⁰ Of the ninety Sepoys on parade, five accepted the ammunition for the drill, but the others, most of whom were Muslims, refused to obey the order.³¹ All eighty five were shackled, had their uniforms ripped off, and were then court-martialled and sentenced to ten years of prison with hard labour.³² From the British perspective, this was standard punishment for a gross and deliberate disobedience of the code of military conduct. The Sepoys on the other hand, considered the treatment a direct attack on their sense of honour at being humiliated in full view of their colleagues and the entire military garrison at Meerut. Reaction came swiftly as the condemned men cursed their British officers, and urged their colleagues to defy them.³³ The spectacle and appeals had a strong effect, as the next day, the 3rd cavalry troopers who had witnessed the punishment rushed to the jail where their colleagues were being held, freed them, and proceeded to attack and kill the British officers and destroy their homes before setting off for Delhi. It is now a

²⁸ *Allen's Indian Mail and Register of Intelligence*, XV: 518-19.

²⁹ Mangal Panday, a Brahmin, had refused to bite a greased cartridge in defiance of his officers, and then attacked them and made an attempt on his own life. He survived, and was tried by court-martial and hanged.

³⁰ Alfred D. Mackenzie, *Mutiny Memoirs: Being Personal Reminiscences of the Great Sepoy Revolt of 1857* (Allahabad: Pioneer Press, 1891). 6.

³¹ Majumdar, *The Sepoy Mutiny and the revolt of 1857*: 77.

³² *The Sepoy Mutiny and the revolt of 1857*: 77.

³³ J.W. Kaye, *A history of the Sepoy war in India, 1857-58*, vol. 2 (London: W.H. Allen, 1870). 51-52.

well-known story, but the question is, what provided the ideological motivation behind this act of rebellion. Damaged pride and honour from the incident was merely the catalyst, as has often been argued, the actual grievance being the violation of their religious beliefs through the use of the repugnant cartridges. The Sepoys were convinced, says the extant literature, that the British were determined to destroy their religion through the cartridges and other attempts to coerce or deceive them to give up their religion and convert to Christianity.³⁴ In short, religion - or '*deen and dharam*' - is regarded as the motivating ideology behind the revolt of the Sepoys.³⁵ Several statements and behaviours attributed to the Sepoys during the course of the rebellion attest to the significance of the religious factor in their resistance. The Sepoys often mentioned with bitterness the attempts by the EIC authorities to interfere with their caste and religion, and vowed to kill the Europeans whenever they chanced upon them.³⁶

It might be pointed out however, that it was a stronger motivating factor for the Hindu Sepoys, especially the Rajputs and Brahmins among them, than for their Muslim counterparts. The high caste Hindus were very sensitive about losing their social and religious status. Any act that violated the strict rites and sanctions laid down by their faith, whether by their own volition or unconscious deed or that of others to defile them, would result in permanent ostracism and disgrace. Thus sharing food or utensils with a low-caste person, or consciously or unconsciously touching or eating meat, all the more if the latter was beef or tallow, which, as a product of *gao-mata* (the sacred cow) was inviolable, would bring indelible calamity. However, the Muslim Sepoys' contention that the greased cartridges were a core religious issue for them was a misperception.

It is overlooked in the extant literature that the Muslim Sepoys should have had no reason to fear loss of religion by merely handling lard-laced cartridges. A pig and its

³⁴ See for example Pandey et al., *From sepoy to subedar; being the life and adventures of Subedar Sita Ram, a native officer of the Bengal army, written and related by himself*, 165; Hussain, *Proclamations of the Rebels of 1857*, 98-99.

³⁵ Tapti Roy, *The politics of a popular uprising: Bundelkhand in 1857* (Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). 53.

³⁶ *Selections from the records of the Government of the Punjab and its dependencies : Trial of Muhammad Bahadur Shah, Titular King of Delhi, and of Mogul Beg, and Hajee, all of Delhi, for rebellion against the British Government, and murder of Europeans during 1857*: 113.

derivatives are of course *haram* (impermissible) for Muslims, but eating or biting pork (or for that matter any other prohibited substance) unknowingly, or under threat of severe punishment or death does not deprive a Muslim of his faith.³⁷ Even if the deed is deliberate, a person is promised divine forgiveness provided there is realisation that a sin or transgression was committed, and a sincere resolve made to not repeat it. No purification ritual, elaborate penance, or priestly sanction or intercession is required for the cleansing process. The pig-fat content in the controversial cartridges was not unequivocally established in the first place, and there were repeated British assurances and steps to allay Muslim and Hindu fears on that account.³⁸ Even if the EIC authorities were being disingenuous, the affected Muslim Sepoys had a number of courses open to them to safeguard their faith. They could have petitioned the authorities to stop the distribution of cartridges. Indeed, that is what some of them reportedly did, but this recourse was not accepted by their commanding officer.³⁹ In that case, the men could simply have resigned from service as it was a strictly volunteer Army, or agreed to use the cartridges to avoid severe punishment, and quit after the event. Compared with what their Hindu colleagues faced, Islam provided them greater flexibility in rituals and rites as well as easier methods of atonement for sins or undesirable acts, and did not deny them religious identity if they transgressed under threat or use of force, or deception by others. So the issue of religion being a motivating ideology for the Muslim Sepoys needs to be looked at more carefully.

The issue of European missionary activity and enforcement of Christianity in India was the other major Sepoy grievance against the EIC, as this was directly related to their allegation that they were being forced to convert. Christian evangelism, which was benign until the early 1800s, had started to intensify in the 1830s with the circulation of religious tracts deemed offensive to Hinduism and Islam, and the establishment of

³⁷ A.Y. Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Text and Translation* (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Islamic Book Trust, 2009). 2: 173.

³⁸ Kim A. Wagner, *The great fear of 1857: rumours, conspiracies and the making of the Indian uprising* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010). 80.

³⁹ *The great fear of 1857: rumours, conspiracies and the making of the Indian uprising*: 80; See also Ball, *The History of the Indian Mutiny: Giving a Detailed Account of the Sepoy Insurrection in India : and a Concise History of the Great Military Events which Have Tended to Consolidate British Empire in Hindostan ; Illustrated with Battle Scenes, Views of Places, Portraits, and Maps, Beautifully Engraved on Steel*, 1: 47-48.

missionary societies.⁴⁰ Although there was no prohibition in Islam on members of other faiths to preach their religion among the Muslim community, where Christian evangelists overstepped was in publishing literature that occasionally included content which was either uncomplimentary or insulting to Islam.⁴¹ When the missionaries occasionally used intemperate language against Hindu gods or Prophet Muhammad, they met with outright hostility.⁴² Missionary preaching in public places and distribution of religious tracts were also largely unsuccessful as few Hindus or Muslims took note of these activities.⁴³ Similarly, chapel preaching was unsuccessful because hardly any Hindu or Muslim dared to go to such places for fear of condemnation by their communities.⁴⁴ Consequently, there was very seldom a case of conversion from Hinduism or Islam to Christianity in Northern India.⁴⁵

The question inevitably arises as to why then the Muslim Sepoys invoke the issue of religion so vehemently and persistently against the British, when the religious grounds for doing so were weak? This was not merely a case of religion serving a rhetorical function, but rather one of heuristic processing with the Sepoys making perfunctory religious judgements on the greased cartridges and Christian evangelism. According to the heuristics or low-information processing model, knowledge plays only a marginal role in shaping opinions and attitudes about issues.⁴⁶ The concept is based on the assumption that people tend to be cognitive misers and minimise the stress entailed in decision-making and attitude-formation.⁴⁷ Accordingly, most individuals do not attempt to develop an in-depth understanding of issues which would require significant cognitive effort. Instead, they tend to collect only as much information as they think is necessary to make a given decision. They rely on cognitive shortcuts or heuristics to efficiently sift through the complex or large amount of information.⁴⁸ Examples of

⁴⁰ Raj B. Sharma, *History of Christian Missions: North India Perspective* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 2005). 163.

⁴¹ *History of Christian Missions: North India Perspective*: 163.

⁴² *History of Christian Missions: North India Perspective*: 167.

⁴³ *History of Christian Missions: North India Perspective*: 163.

⁴⁴ *History of Christian Missions: North India Perspective*.

⁴⁵ James Kennedy, *Life and work in Benares and Kumaon, 1839-1877* (London: T. F. Unwin, 1884). 334.

⁴⁶ Samuel L. Popkin, *The reasoning voter: communication and persuasion in presidential campaigns* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991). Chapter 2.

⁴⁷ Jeffery Nevid, *Psychology: Concepts and Applications* (Boston, MA: Cengage Learning, 2008). 251.

⁴⁸ Serena Chen and Shelly Chaiken, 'The heuristic-systematic model in its broader context', in *Dual-process Theories in Social Psychology*, ed. Yaacov Trope. Shelly Chaiken (Guilford Press, 1999), 74.

heuristics include religious or ideological predispositions, cues from the external environment about which issues are important or how they should be interpreted, and perceptions of others' opinions or attitudes. Thus the Sepoys avoided detailed information processing, and relied on the simple heuristic rules in order to persuade themselves of the validity of their religious grievances against the British. In a heuristic mode, Muslim Sepoys retained the partial knowledge of Quranic prohibition on pork, while avoiding the caveats in the sacred text that made it permissible or excusable. They similarly regarded the first available information on missionary efforts at conversion as a basis for their outrage, disregarding rejoinders in the sacred texts that Muslims ought not to feel insecure on account of their faith, and should simply ignore any attempts at conversion. However, the initial religious information once absorbed, served to motivate them in their struggle against the British. This belief was then sustained through what has been termed as confirmation bias, or belief bolstering, that is, the tendency to preserve an existing belief by avoiding reflection on prior judgements and disregarding any disconfirming evidence or information.⁴⁹

Though the cartridge issue served as the initial religious motive, once revenge had been exacted on that account through killing and destruction sprees at Meerut and Delhi, the Muslim Sepoys needed an additional stimulant to maintain their fighting spirit through the course of the conflict. This need was fulfilled through resort to Jihad. In order to obtain the necessary justification and inspiration for a holy war, they nominated the Ulama as their leaders, wherever such individuals could be found and were willing to provide guidance and inspiration. At Delhi they approached the Emperor, telling him that the English were 'depriving them of their Hindu and Muslim religion', and seeking his protection and blessings for their armed struggle.⁵⁰ Considering that Bahadur Shah Zafar was also the symbolic head of the Islamic faith in India, this was an attempt on the part of Sepoys to obtain his sanction for the sacred cause. In the same spirit, the Sepoy leader, General Bakht Khan, who had become a *murid* (disciple) of one Maulvi

⁴⁹ J. Dan Rothwell, *In Mixed Company: Communicating in Small Groups* (Boston, MA: Cengage Learning, 2012). 234.

⁵⁰ *Selections from the records of the Government of the Punjab and its dependencies : Trial of Muhammad Bahadur Shah, Titular King of Delhi, and of Mogul Beg, and Hajee, all of Delhi, for rebellion against the British Government, and murder of Europeans during 1857*: 40.

Sarfaraz Ali, sought the latter's spiritual blessings for the uprising.⁵¹ Bakht Khan then played a decisive role in rallying the Delhi Ulama to issue a *fatwa* (edict) of Jihad against the British.⁵² His close relationship with Maulvi Sarfaraz Ali prompted him to acknowledge the Maulvi as head of the Mujahideen in Delhi, and petition the Emperor to encourage Hakim Ahsanullah Khan, the royal physician and principal advisor to the Emperor, as well as other prominent members of Delhi society to join Maulvi Ali in military operations against the British.⁵³

However, we should be cautious about seeing too much of the Jihadi spirit among the Sepoys, because, apart from instances of bravery that it instilled at the individual level, the spirit of Jihad did not strongly manifest at the group level. There was a shared awareness among the Muslim Sepoys and their leadership that theirs was a composite Army, in which the Hindu participation was critical, and so caution was needed to avoid too emphatic an expression and pursuit of Islamic Jihad. While Jihad was thus not a significant external influence on the Sepoys as a group, its value as an intrinsic source of inspiration for the individual Sepoy would have been greater. An instance illustrating this occurred on the 1st of August, 1857, when a number of rebel combatants, which would have included Sepoys as well, rallied out of the gates of Delhi to give battle to the besieging British force at the outskirts of the city. As reported, the attackers' 'religious zeal was rekindled by loud cries from the minarets of the city mosques' while they shouted the Muslim battle cry of Allah-o-Akbar'.⁵⁴ There were also some instances of British regiments encountering individual rebel Sepoys in command of a group of Mujahideen, and attired in green robes, symbolising Islamic identity and zeal. Mujahideen of The men fought viciously but failed to drive the British force from its positions.⁵⁵ Apart from such utility of Jihad as an extrinsic motivator, it retained an intrinsic value as a psychological tool of inspiration for the Sepoys, similar to what has been described in Terror Management theory. According to this theory, people are motivated to resist the terror of death by investing in belief systems or ideologies like

⁵¹ Ilmuddin Salik, 'Jarnail Bakht Khan', in *1857, tarikh, ilmi aur adabi pahl*, ed. Muhammad I. Chughtai (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2007), 353. Translation mine.

⁵² 'Jarnail Bakht Khan', 356.

⁵³ Haq, 'Memoirs of Hakim Ahsanullah Khan', 36.

⁵⁴ G.W. Forrest, *A History of the Indian mutiny*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood and sons, 1904). 112-13.

⁵⁵ *Selections from the Letters, Despatches and Other State Papers Preserved in the Military Department of the Government of India, 1857-58*, vol. IV (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1912; reprint, 2006), 30-31.

Jihad that instil life with meaning, such as security and identity.⁵⁶ Muslim Sepoys in the 1857 rebellion would have been able to take up the role of *Ghazis* who could gain glorified status as Jihad veterans. Another way to manage the terror of death is through a belief in the promise of immortality, which provides the sense that one is part of something greater than oneself - than life itself.⁵⁷ This element of terror management corresponds with the notion of martyrdom, which entails sacrificing one's life in the name of God in exchange for the divine promise of immortality. Either type of motivation provided salvation and spiritual fulfilment for the Muslim warrior, and was the most potent psycho-religious weapon he could muster in battle.

Royalty

It is often claimed that Bahadur Shah Zafar's initial reaction at the outbreak of rebellion in Delhi had been one of surprise and disapproval. When the first batch of rebellious Bengal Army Sepoys from Meerut approached him to assume *de facto* authority as the Mughal sovereign and lead them against the British, he responded that he had not called them up, and reprimanded them for acting in a 'wicked' manner.⁵⁸ In Dalrymple's view, the incident indicates the helplessness and pressure Bahadur Shah Zafar was experiencing due to Sepoy assertiveness and manipulation.⁵⁹ During his trial following the failed rebellion, the Emperor himself claimed in defence that he had been acting under coercion of the Sepoys, and was forced to affix his seal on various orders at their behest.⁶⁰ Yet there is enough indication that Bahadur Shah's decision to assume leadership of the rebellion was not made in haste, nor under Sepoy pressure. As we shall see later, he had enough reasons of his own to feel aggrieved against the EIC. As for the

⁵⁶ Sheldon Solomon, Jeff Greenberg, and Tom Pyszczynski, 'A terror management theory of social behavior: The psychological functions of self-esteem and cultural worldviews', *Advances in experimental social psychology* 24, no. 93 (1991): 159.

⁵⁷ Eva Jonas and Peter Fischer, 'Terror management and religion: evidence that intrinsic religiousness mitigates worldview defense following mortality salience', *Journal of personality and social psychology* 91, no. 3 (2006): 553.

⁵⁸ *Selections from the records of the Government of the Punjab and its dependencies : Trial of Muhammad Bahadur Shah, Titular King of Delhi, and of Mogul Beg, and Hajee, all of Delhi, for rebellion against the British Government, and murder of Europeans during 1857*: 40.

⁵⁹ Dalrymple, *The last Mughal: the fall of a dynasty, Delhi, 1857*: 411.

⁶⁰ Talmiz Khaldun, 'The Great Rebellion', in *Rebellion 1857: A Symposium*, ed. Puran C. Joshi (Calcutta: K.P. Bagchi & Co, 1957; reprint, 1986), 39.

Sepoys, the situation before the Sepoy Army's advent in Delhi was unclear, and even though news of their unrest and outbreaks at Barrackpore, Berhampore and Meerut might have reached him, Bahadur Shah Zafar could not be certain of their motives and capabilities. But after the Sepoys arrived in Delhi, he realised the magnitude of their surge and accepted their allegiance and military services upon hearing their persistent requests to spearhead their cause. When they told him, 'come lead us, we will win the entire Hindustan for you, he seemed convinced of their resolve, and placed his hand on their heads in the traditional acknowledgement of his blessings'.⁶¹ Moreover, there were no European soldiers in Delhi at the time, and the local EIC troops had already joined the rebel Sepoys from Meerut, so there was apparently little or no immediate risk for Bahadur Shah Zafar in assuming the mantle of leadership in such a situation.

The matter of being coerced to sign royal orders was rebutted by a personal courtier who testified at the trial that no one had access to the royal seal, which the Emperor always kept in his private chambers.⁶² It is highly unlikely that the Sepoys were in a position to force the Emperor to sign any documents against his will as they hardly stood to benefit from such a deed. They and their commanders were dependent on the Emperor's leadership as evidenced by the urgency with which they had reached Delhi in order to obtain his sanction, and their continuing acknowledgement of him as the sovereign ruler of Hindustan. They could thus ill afford to intimidate or defraud him. On his part, the Emperor certainly seemed conscious of the steadfast Sepoy allegiance, and did not hesitate in asserting his authority over them as evident in his numerous directives. He was quite successful at having those of his orders or wishes, which he considered crucial, implemented. None of the notables whom he summoned could refuse his call, and he would not hesitate in making drastic and controversial changes in leadership.⁶³ In other words, it was loyalty to the monarchy or royalism that worked as a powerful bond between Bahadur Shah and his Sepoy followers, and that was used by Bahadur Shah Zafar to assert his authority.

⁶¹ Cited in Husain, 'Bahadur Shah and the war of 1857', 50.

⁶² Pramod K. Nayar, *The trial of Bahadur Shah Zafar* (Hyderabad, India: Orient Longman, 2007). 201.

⁶³ Farooqui, *Besieged: voices from Delhi, 1857*: 94.

But Bahadur Shah's cultural predisposition as the embodiment of Mughal comportment marred his relationship with the Sepoys. He frequently criticised them for not displaying the mannerism that was expected in the court of a Mughal monarch by indulging in such acts as barging into the royal chambers without permission, and not taking off their shoes in his presence.⁶⁴ In a special directive to Prince Mirza Mughal, he castigated the Sepoys of the 54th BNI for bivouacking in the royal gardens, and promptly ordered their removal.⁶⁵ In another missive, he ordered Mirza Mughal to arrange for their quarters outside the city precincts.⁶⁶ Bahadur Shah Zafar's relationship with General Bakht Khan similarly suffered from occasional cultural tension. When Bakht Khan presented himself at the palace to offer his services, Bahadur Shah Zafar and his courtiers noticed his failure to observe the required obeisance in the royal presence by walking up to the Emperor without explicit permission, and holding his hand.⁶⁷ The display of assumed familiarity infuriated a courtier, who pushed Bakht Khan back, and the two then nearly drew their swords at each other.⁶⁸ The Emperor was reluctant to bestow *Khillat* on Bakht Khan, but changed his mind on the recommendation of some of his advisors, and acknowledged Bakht Khan's status by awarding him a sword on the occasion.⁶⁹ Subsequently, he was appointed as the Lord Governor General of the rebel Army at Delhi.⁷⁰

The Emperor's mistrust of Bakht Khan resurfaced towards the end of the rebellion. When the fall of Delhi became imminent, and Bakht Khan asked the Emperor to accompany him and his still largely intact force out of Delhi and continue the war

⁶⁴ *Selections from the records of the Government of the Punjab and its dependencies : Trial of Muhammad Bahadur Shah, Titular King of Delhi, and of Mogul Beg, and Hajee, all of Delhi, for rebellion against the British Government, and murder of Europeans during 1857*: 209.

⁶⁵ *Selections from the records of the Government of the Punjab and its dependencies : Trial of Muhammad Bahadur Shah, Titular King of Delhi, and of Mogul Beg, and Hajee, all of Delhi, for rebellion against the British Government, and murder of Europeans during 1857*: 24.

⁶⁶ *Selections from the records of the Government of the Punjab and its dependencies : Trial of Muhammad Bahadur Shah, Titular King of Delhi, and of Mogul Beg, and Hajee, all of Delhi, for rebellion against the British Government, and murder of Europeans during 1857*: 35. The sepoy had placed the Hakim under house arrest, suspecting him of being a British spy.

⁶⁷ Abdul Latif and Khaliq A. Nizami, *1857 ka tarikhi roznamah : qil'ab-yi Dilli ka nihayat ahm aur mo'tabar Farisi roznamah ma'ab Urdu tarjuma o havashi jis men 1857 ke tarikhi hangamah ke cashm did vaqi'at bayan kiye gae hen* (Dilli: Nadvat al-Musannifin, 1971). 39. Translation mine.

⁶⁸ *1857 ka tarikhi roznamah : qil'ab-yi Dilli ka nihayat ahm aur mo'tabar Farisi roznamah ma'ab Urdu tarjuma o havashi jis men 1857 ke tarikhi hangamah ke cashm did vaqi'at bayan kiye gae hen*: 39.

⁶⁹ Rizvi, *Tarikh-i jang-i azadi-e Hind, attharah sau sattavan : Dilli, Mairath, Avadh aur Rubilkeband*: 287.

⁷⁰ Haq, 'Memoirs of Hakim Ahsanullah Khan', 32-34.

elsewhere, Bahadur Shah Zafar refused the offer at the behest of Hakim Ahsanullah Khan. The latter cautioned the Emperor about the risks associated with a journey full of hardship and uncertainty.⁷¹ Confronting Bakht Khan in the Emperor's presence, the Hakim accused him of harbouring an ambition to usurp power for himself, and avenge his Afghan kinsmen who had been defeated by the Mughal ancestors of Bahadur Shah Zafar.⁷² Such counsel might not have had the desired effect if the Emperor had not been harbouring misgivings of his own about the General's Rohilla Afghan lineage. Cultural factors thus undermined the relationship between the Emperor and the Sepoys.

The cultural factor also influenced Bahadur Shah's attitude towards the British, and motivated him to rise against them when the opportunity arose in the form of the Sepoy rebellion. His troubled interaction with the British can be traced to the beginning of his rule in 1837, when the EIC officials, who had been careful in observing protocols and courtesies in the courts of local rulers in the past, started curtailing these rituals.⁷³ Lord Auckland even insisted on being treated as an equal by Bahadur Shah Zafar by making his visit to the Emperor conditional upon the latter returning his call.⁷⁴ Offended at the slight, Bahadur Shah Zafar refused the Governor General's offer, and the meeting never materialised.⁷⁵ Lord Auckland was also adamant that the Emperor should dispense with the practice of bestowing *Khillat* and requiring *Nazar*.⁷⁶ The customary *Nazar* by the EIC resident on behalf of the Governor-General and Commander-in-chief on the occasions of Eid, *Nau Roz*, and Bahadur Shah's birthday was discontinued.⁷⁷

Bahadur Shah Zafar was equally adamant on projecting his royal status and commitment to high cultural norms. Despite occasional EIC curbs and snubs, he strove

⁷¹ Nisar A. Faruqi, 'General Bakht Khan', in *San Sattavan Ki Dilli Aur Bahadur Shah Zafar*, ed. Aslam Parvez (Nai Dilli: Anjuman Taraqqi-yi Urdu (Hind), 2008), 285.

⁷² 'General Bakht Khan', 285.

⁷³ Michael H. Fisher, 'The Resident in Court Ritual, 1764-1858', *Modern Asian Studies* 24, no. 3 (1990): 423.

⁷⁴ Husain, *Bahadur Shah Zafar and the war of 1857 in Delhi*: 132.

⁷⁵ Mujib Ashraf, *Muslim attitudes towards British rule and Western culture in India in the first half of the nineteenth century* (Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, 1982). 43.

⁷⁶ Husain, *Bahadur Shah Zafar and the war of 1857 in Delhi*: 132-55.

⁷⁷ Evidence of Hakim Ahsan Ulla, Supplement to the Proceedings on the Trial of Muhammad Bahadur Shah, ex-King of Delhi. In *Selections from the records of the Government of the Punjab and its dependencies : Trial of Muhammad Bahadur Shah, Titular King of Delhi, and of Mogul Beg, and Hajee, all of Delhi, for rebellion against the British Government, and murder of Europeans during 1857*: 256.

to uphold Mughal comportment and expected all those he dealt with, including EIC officials, to acknowledge and respect these norms. Court rituals and courtesies were an integral part of the Mughal cultural ideology, highly valued for the expressions of respect, honour and grandeur they conveyed about a Mughal sovereign. These practices moreover, had a political significance in that they conveyed to all concerned the state of relations and status of each party in the elaborate system of exchanges at court.⁷⁸ As a Mughal sovereign, Bahadur Shah Zafar considered it his exclusive privilege to bestow titles and distinctions on visitors and distinguished officials,⁷⁹ and to receive their *Nazar*. He felt insulted at the repeated and deliberate breach of Mughal protocol by the British, which amounted to demeaning his royal status. He could not tolerate the encroachment upon his dignity,⁸⁰ and vented his frustration on a number of occasions. In February 1838, he wrote to Queen Victoria, complaining that 'the etiquette and tokens of respect which former governors always observed towards this house have been completely abolished', and expressing the hope that the 'ancient customs and usages belonging to the Imperial family of Hindustan will be restored'.⁸¹ A month later, he wrote to the Lieutenant Governor of the North West Province, reminding him of the British government's assurance to his grandfather, Shah Alam II that the 'honour, dignity and happiness of the Mughal Royal House will always be upheld by it'.⁸² In 1843, he demanded of the governor general to 'restore the practice of presenting nazar to him', direct the EIC officials to stop treating the 'descendants of Timur' on equal terms, and 'revert to the practice of presenting themselves to Mughal royalty as supplicants'.⁸³ However, the British remained unreceptive to his cultural sensitivities, and consequently there was a standoff between the two sides.

Another point of contention with the EIC was its subversion of Mughal political status and norms. The dominant issues were that of succession to the Mughal throne, and the future standing of Mughal royalty. Dispute over the succession first surfaced in 1856 upon the unexpected death of Mirza Fakhru, the acknowledged crown prince at the

⁷⁸ Fisher, 'The Resident in Court Ritual, 1764-1858', 425.

⁷⁹ Krishnaji N. Chitnis, *Medieval Indian History* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 2003). 68.

⁸⁰ Spear, *Twilight of the Mughuls: studies in late Mughul Delhi*: 76.

⁸¹ Cited in Husain, *Bahadur Shah Zafar and the war of 1857 in Delhi*: 145.

⁸² Ashraf, *Muslim attitudes towards British rule and Western culture in India in the first half of the nineteenth century*: 43.

⁸³ Husain, *Bahadur Shah Zafar and the war of 1857 in Delhi*: 140-41.

time. Bahadur Shah Zafar demanded of the EIC Resident to appoint Mirza Jawan Bakht, his son from his wife Zeenat Mahal, as the next heir. To buttress his case, the Emperor attached a declaration of support by the other princes in favour of Mirza Jawan Bakht.⁸⁴ However, Mirza Kavaish, the eldest prince, complained to the EIC Resident that the Emperor had extracted the signatures from the Princes in return for monetary inducements, and put forward his counter claim to succession as the eldest in the line of succession.⁸⁵ Thereupon, the Governor General rejected Bahadur Shah Zafar's suggestion to appoint Mirza Jawan Bakht, and instructed the Resident to confirm Mirza Kavaish as the Crown Prince.⁸⁶ The decision was intended to indicate to the Emperor that EIC's political considerations were more important than his personal preference. Mirza Kavaish's request was only accepted on the condition that he would not be given the title of *Badshah*, and would be referred to as the Prince instead.⁸⁷ He would also have to vacate the Red Fort and receive a reduced monthly stipend from the EIC.⁸⁸ These measures had important implications, for as Lord Canning, the Governor General (1856-1858) and subsequently Viceroy of India (1858 to 1862) described the situation, 'after all these actions ... there is nothing left to show that the British Rule is in any way subject to the will of the Badshah'.⁸⁹

The lack of political sovereignty that Bahadur Shah had to contend with was not a new development. The process was well under way in the reigns of his father and grandfather. His grandfather, Shah Alam II had become dependent upon EIC protection following his defeat at the battle of Buxar (1764), and the subsequent EIC capture of Delhi from the Marathas in 1803. Henceforth, his authority was restricted to his residence in the Red Fort, where he could hold audience and give and receive *naẓar*, but could only exercise control over his household.⁹⁰ His son and Bahadur Shah Zafar's father, Akbar Shah II, was allowed to bear the title of Emperor like Shah Alam II, but

⁸⁴ Sattar A. Kapadia, *The Eighth Section of the Series on the Mutiny in Delhi: The Agony of Delhi*, (Lanand Thakur and Sons, 2003), Accessed 08 November 2013.
<http://www.kapadia.com/TheMutinyinDelhi.html>.

⁸⁵ Ghulam R. Meher, 'Bahadur Shah ka aik nadir farman', in *1857, tarikhi, ilmi aur adabi pablu*, ed. Muhammad I. Chughtai (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2007), 328.

⁸⁶ Kapadia, *The Eighth Section of the Series on the Mutiny in Delhi: The Agony of Delhi*.

⁸⁷ *The Eighth Section of the Series on the Mutiny in Delhi: The Agony of Delhi*.

⁸⁸ *The Eighth Section of the Series on the Mutiny in Delhi: The Agony of Delhi*.

⁸⁹ *The Eighth Section of the Series on the Mutiny in Delhi: The Agony of Delhi*.

⁹⁰ J.L. Mehta, *Advanced Study in the History of Modern India 1707-1813* (New Delhi: New Dawn Press, 2005). 141.

his authority was similarly confined to the Red Fort.⁹¹ What mattered most to them was the preservation of their symbolic status and its acknowledgement by the British, and not a *de facto* royal status, which they were not inclined to seek given the ascendant status of the EIC, and the possibility that they might face further financial withholdings by the British if they raised such issues. Bahadur Shah Zafar had similar experiences, but with an important difference. Unlike his predecessors, who could at least expect the continuation of a line of monarchs, however powerless, as well as retention of their title as Emperors, Bahadur Shah Zafar knew that he was the last Mughal monarch, whose status had moreover been downgraded to that of King, and whose heir had in fact already given up any claims to Mughal kingship upon British pressure, accepting instead the lower status of prince, and agreeing to permanently vacate the Red Fort upon his succession.⁹²

Although Bahadur Shah Zafar never demanded the restoration of *de facto* Mughal sovereignty from the EIC, he would have been conscious of the symbolic political significance underlying the succession and status issues, considering his outspokenness on this account with the British. Even as he seemed to be seeking mere vestiges of political authority, not pursuing these would have amounted to forfeiting the basis on which he or his successor could repossess full sovereignty at an opportune moment in future. Failure to uphold his dignity and status would also not have been welcomed by the population, including the Muslims, who still regarded the Mughal Emperor as head of the Muslim polity in India,⁹³ with the divine right to rule.⁹⁴ The idea that the Muslim King or Sultan in India had divine attributes, which justified his right to rule was borrowed from Islamic Persian culture,⁹⁵ and it remained popular among the North Indian Muslim community⁹⁶ well into the 1850s. Yet, this idea as we shall see, held no attraction for the Muslims of the Punjab and the North-West Frontier for reasons that will be explored in those regional chapters. When the rebellion broke out in May 1857,

⁹¹ *Advanced Study in the History of Modern India 1707-1813*: 141-42.

⁹² Kapadia, *The Eighth Section of the Series on the Mutiny in Delhi: The Agony of Delhi*.

⁹³ S.M. Burke and Salim Al-Din Quraishi, *Bahadur Shah: the last Moghul emperor of India* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1995). 83.

⁹⁴ L. Balabanlilar, *Imperial Identity in Mughal Empire: Memory and Dynastic Politics in Early Modern Central Asia* (London; New York: I. B. Tauris, 2012). 69.

⁹⁵ A. Eraly, *The Mughal World: Life in India's Last Golden Age* (India: Penguin Books, 2007). 223.

⁹⁶ *The Mughal World: Life in India's Last Golden Age*: 69.

it altered the entire political environment, rendering the succession and status issues irrelevant.⁹⁷ Henceforth, Bahadur Shah Zafar's political outlook and strategy were geared towards the overthrow of the EIC. The rebellion marked a turning point in his political ideology, which changed from the notion of nominal sovereignty to that of substantive sovereignty. In pursuit of the latter, he resorted to a balance-of-power strategy. His balance-of-power strategy seemed to have been based on two premises. The EIC could not be trusted because of its unlimited political and military nominal ambitions, and its propensity to destroy Indian cultural and religious practices. Secondly, no Indian state, including the resurrected Mughal entity, was able to defeat the EIC on its own, but would achieve the capacity if it formed an alliance with the others in order to offset the British preponderance. As an instrument of royalist ideology, balance-of-power sought to reinforce the anti-British sentiment generated by the Sepoy uprising. At the same time, it aimed at creating an alliance system that was flexible in terms of distribution of power, rather than one with a monopoly of Mughal authority.

The political environment precluded a restoration of the old empire as it existed during the era of the great Mughals. The regional states had long since broken away from the Mughal centre and established strong subsidiary alliances with the EIC. In order to woo them to his side, Bahadur Shah Zafar had to offer these states alternative security arrangements that would be mutually beneficial. In a quest to gain allies, the Emperor turned to the nearby states of Bullubgarh and Jhajjar. A number of missives were sent to the Rajah of Bullubgarh directing him to appear in the royal court at Delhi so that details of the state's co-operation in assisting the war effort could be worked out.⁹⁸ The Rajah was also asked to send his cavalry and infantry to augment the troops at Delhi, and to make a financial contribution.⁹⁹ Despite repeated calls however, the Rajah kept putting off a meeting, and failed to contribute any funds or troops, claiming his preoccupation with maintenance of law and order in his state, and the paucity of

⁹⁷ Meher, 'Bahadur Shah ka aik nadir farman', 325-28.

⁹⁸ *Selections from the records of the Government of the Punjab and its dependencies : Trial of Muhammad Bahadur Shah, Titular King of Delhi, and of Mogul Beg, and Hajee, all of Delhi, for rebellion against the British Government, and murder of Europeans during 1857*: 44-57.

⁹⁹ *Selections from the records of the Government of the Punjab and its dependencies : Trial of Muhammad Bahadur Shah, Titular King of Delhi, and of Mogul Beg, and Hajee, all of Delhi, for rebellion against the British Government, and murder of Europeans during 1857*: 44-57.

resources.¹⁰⁰ Relations cooled following Bullubgarh's hesitation in extending assistance, prompting a rebuke by Bahadur Shah Zafar.¹⁰¹ Cooperation was similarly sought from the Rajah of Jhajjar, but he too avoided sending any money in response to the Emperor's request.¹⁰² By September 1857, when the war had clearly swung in favour of the EIC and disaffection set in among the Delhi Sepoys, Bahadur Shah Zafar approached the Rajahs of Jaipur, Bikaner and Alore for assistance, even offering to transfer his sovereign authority to them if they would agree to form a coalition committed to destroy the British.¹⁰³ Overtures were also made to the rulers of Iran and Afghanistan to support the uprising. A Mughal emissary purportedly carried a letter by Bahadur Shah Zafar to the Emperor of Persia complaining of the excesses and mistreatment by the British, and seeking Persia's military and financial help in the war.¹⁰⁴ The moves failed to elicit positive responses as the states were conscious of the ascendant British power, and the Emperor's limited capacity to match or exceed the advantages that they held by virtue of their alliance with the British.

Compared with his political ideology which was marked by ad-hocism, Bahadur Shah Zafar appeared to pursue a more sustained religious agenda. Throughout the rebellion he resorted to religion as a tool of inspiration and mobilization against the British through several proclamations invoking the theme of religion-in-danger on behalf of both Hindus and Muslims. The accusations pertained to proselytization attempts, insults to Hinduism and Islam, punishment of Hindus and Muslims for being true to their faiths, and violation of established religious practices. The cartridge defilement issue, which had become the *casus belli* for the rebellious Sepoys, was also taken up by Bahadur Shah Zafar. In one of his *farmans*, he repeated the universal charge that the British had 'ordered the Brahmins and others of their Army to bite cartridges, in making

¹⁰⁰ *Selections from the records of the Government of the Punjab and its dependencies : Trial of Muhammad Bahadur Shah, Titular King of Delhi, and of Mogul Beg, and Hajee, all of Delhi, for rebellion against the British Government, and murder of Europeans during 1857*: 44-57.

¹⁰¹ *Selections from the records of the Government of the Punjab and its dependencies : Trial of Muhammad Bahadur Shah, Titular King of Delhi, and of Mogul Beg, and Hajee, all of Delhi, for rebellion against the British Government, and murder of Europeans during 1857*: 44-57.

¹⁰² Shamsul Islam, *Letters of spies: and Delhi was lost* (New Delhi: Vani Prakashan, 2008). 66.

¹⁰³ Aslam Parvez, 'Bahadur Shah Zaffar aur athara sau sattavan', in *San Sattavan Ki Dilli Aur Bahadur Shah Zafar*, ed. Aslam Parvez (Nai Dilli: Anjuman Taraqqi-yi Urdu Hind, 2008), 113-14. Translation mine.

¹⁰⁴ Husain, *Bahadur Shah Zafar and the war of 1857 in Delhi*: 158, 60-61.

up of which fat had been used'.¹⁰⁵ Offering his interpretation of the Muslim Sepoys' reaction, the Emperor stated that though 'the Mussalman soldiers perceived that by this expedient the religion of Brahmins and Hindus only was in danger... they also refused to bite them'.¹⁰⁶ This was a remarkable explanation, which was at odds with the belief of the Muslim Sepoys themselves, who claimed that the fat content in the cartridges was just as offensive to them as it also contained pig fat, and was thus a deliberate attempt to destroy their religious identity. Bahadur Shah Zafar was implying that Muslim Sepoys were motivated by a sense of cultural solidarity with their Hindu colleagues, rather than by any perceived threat to their own religiosity from the greased cartridges. In other words, the fat-laced cartridge was not, *per se* a critical religious concern for Bahadur Shah Zafar.

Bahadur Shah Zafar could ill afford to alienate the Hindu Sepoys who formed the majority of his Army in the war, or the large Hindu population which was similarly loyal to him. He had therefore to be careful not to hurt their religious sensibilities. On the other hand, he possibly felt he could set aside the Muslim Sepoy grievance about the alleged pig-fat content in the cartridges on the basis that Islam did not deprive Muslims of their religious identity for handling prohibited substances like pork, if the act was done inadvertently or under compulsion.¹⁰⁷ Yet, he appeared convinced in one of his *Farmans* that 'the English will utterly overthrow our religion if they remain in India', and appealed to the Hindus for the sake of 'Ganges, Tulsi and Saligram'; and to Mussalmans by their 'belief in God and the Quran' to unite in slaughtering the English, 'for by this alone will the lives and faith of both be saved'.¹⁰⁸ The Hindus were assured that in deference to their religious feelings, 'the slaughter of kline will cease', and to enforce it, 'a solemn agreement has been entered into by all the Mussalman chiefs of Hindustan,

¹⁰⁵ The King of Delhi's Circular Letter to the Princes and People of India In Noah A. Chick and David Hutchinson, *Annals of the Indian rebellion, 1857-58; containing narratives of the outbreaks and eventful occurrences and stories of personal adventures* (London: Charles Knight and Co. Ltd., 1974). 102.

¹⁰⁶ The King of Delhi's Circular Letter to the Princes and People of India In *Annals of the Indian rebellion, 1857-58; containing narratives of the outbreaks and eventful occurrences and stories of personal adventures*: 102.

¹⁰⁷ Although pork and its by-products are strictly forbidden in Islam, there is an important caveat: 'He has only forbidden you what dies of itself, and blood, and flesh of swine, and that over which any other (name) than (that of) Allah has been invoked; *but whoever is driven to necessity, not desiring, nor exceeding the limit, no sin shall be upon him* surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful'. See Qur'an 2:173, emphasis mine.

¹⁰⁸ The King of Delhi's Circular Letter to the Princes and People of India In Chick and Hutchinson, *Annals of the Indian rebellion, 1857-58; containing narratives of the outbreaks and eventful occurrences and stories of personal adventures*: 102-03.

binding themselves that if the Hindus will come forward to slay the English, the Mussalmans will from that very day put a stop to the slaughter of cows'.¹⁰⁹ Further, 'those of them who will not do so, will be considered to have abjured the Quran, and such of them as will eat beef will be regarded as though they had eaten pork; but if the Hindus will not gird their loins to kill the English, but will try to save them, they will be as guilty in the sight of God, as though they had committed the sins of killing cows and eating flesh'.¹¹⁰ By prohibiting and threatening to ostracise Muslims for beef slaughter, Bahadur Shah Zafar was inverting the basic Muslim belief that they could eat anything that had not been declared *haram* in the Quran.¹¹¹

Several other calls were made by the Emperor to annihilate the British in the name of religion. One of these described the EIC besieging force deployed on the ridge outside the city gates as 'kaffirs' and 'debased heathens who have not been meted their rightful end', and who must now be destroyed.¹¹² In another instance, Bahadur Shah Zafar urged his Army to 'destroy the enemies of religion', and declared, 'whoever colludes with the enemies of faith will be a culprit in the eyes of God and the Prophet, and will be punished accordingly'.¹¹³ There was an irony in the message, however. The besieging force not only had Europeans, but also a significant number of Muslims from the Punjab and North West Frontier. Together with their Sikh and Gurkha colleagues, the Muslim component was larger than its British counterpart.¹¹⁴ Since the Emperor made no distinction between them, he apparently considered all as 'kaffirs'. Yet the term cannot be applied to any Muslim, or even Christians and Jews as they hold the status of *ahl al-kitab* (people of the divinely ordained books, that is, Christians and Jews) in Islam, and hence cannot be considered non-believers or kaffirs.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁹ *Annals of the Indian rebellion, 1857-58; containing narratives of the outbreaks and eventful occurrences and stories of personal adventures*: 103.

¹¹⁰ *Annals of the Indian rebellion, 1857-58; containing narratives of the outbreaks and eventful occurrences and stories of personal adventures*: 103.

¹¹¹ Abdullah Y. Ali, *The meaning of the glorious Quran: text, translation and commentary* (Cairo: Dar al-Kitab Al-Masri, 1934). 2: 172-73.

¹¹² Farooqui, *Besieged: voices from Delhi, 1857*: 40.

¹¹³ *Besieged: voices from Delhi, 1857*: 41.

¹¹⁴ Michael Barthorp and Douglas N. Anderson, *The British Troops in the Indian Mutiny 1857-59* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Osprey, 1994). 38.

¹¹⁵ Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Text and Translation*: 2: 62, 5:69.

Pejorative terms like kaffir, heathens, and destroyers of religion served several useful purposes. Such terminology formed the language of war, designed to divert attention and debate from the complex issue of who could wage war in the name of Islam, and indeed, against whom it was permissible. Imputing negative attributes and actions to the opponents made them appear extremely dangerous and inhuman, which enabled their destruction by the royal Army without guilt. The 1857 rebellion was no exception, during which Bahadur Shah Zafar attempted to employ such terminology as a rallying call in his *Farmans* in order to boost his Army's morale. Since he was simultaneously appealing to the Hindu community, he reconstructed the concept of Jihad to evoke their support as well.

The linkage between Bahadur Shah Zafar's religious orientation and an intrinsic motivation for Jihad is difficult to establish. His sectarian identity was ambiguous, containing elements of Sufism, Sunni-ism and Shi'a-ism. He was known to visit Sufi shrines, particularly those of the famous saints, Nizamuddin Auliya and Bakhtiyar Kaki,¹¹⁶ and claimed to be a Sufi himself, even attracting a number of *murids* (disciples), which included some Sepoys of the EIC regiments stationed at Delhi.¹¹⁷ The process of initiation involved the provision of a document to each disciple listing Bahadur Shah Zafar as his Sufi master, and the names of those Sufis to whom the Emperor's Sufi order could be directly traced. The practice came to the notice of the EIC Resident at Delhi, who forbade the Emperor to initiate any more *murids* from the EIC Army. Despite the EIC ban, a religious link had been established between the Emperor and his *murids* in the Sepoy Army.¹¹⁸ Bahadur Shah Zafar's Sufi practice had the approval and encouragement of the Sufis of Delhi, who firmly believed that Mughal Emperors had a divine right to rule.¹¹⁹ The Emperor's *Pir* was one Ghulam Nasir-ud-din, whose father had been the *Pir* of Bahadur Shah Zafar's father.¹²⁰ Bahadur Shah Zafar moreover served as patron of the tomb complex of Khwaja Qutb Sahib, a Chishti saint in the

¹¹⁶ Husain, 'Bahadur Shah and the war of 1857', 571.

¹¹⁷ Spear, *Twilight of the Mughuls: studies in late Mughul Delhi*: 74.

¹¹⁸ Husain, *Bahadur Shah Zafar and the war of 1857 in Delhi*: 158-59.

¹¹⁹ Spear, *Twilight of the Mughuls: studies in late Mughul Delhi*: 74.

¹²⁰ Saiyid Athar A. Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India*, vol. 2 (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 2002). 308.

Delhi suburb of Mehrauli.¹²¹ The Sufi connection had important implications, for it lent legitimacy to Bahadur Shah's use of religion during 1857. In the words of one of his close advisors, the Sufi masters of Delhi, because of their respected stature in society were able to 'impress upon the minds of the people that the Emperor was the divine vice-regent in spiritual matters upon earth, and that it was a creditable act to adopt him as their spiritual guide'.¹²² The *Delhi Urdu Akhbar*, the city's leading newspaper, which regularly chronicled the events of the rebellion went to the extent of eulogising the Emperor as 'one of the leading saints of the era who has been approved of by the divine court', and calling upon 'the Army and the people to consider the approval of the Emperor as akin to the approval of God and His Prophet'.¹²³

The orthodox Sunni Ulama of Delhi, on the other hand, suspected Bahadur Shah Zafar of being a Shi'a for his devotion to Imam Ali, and his regular participation in celebrations of the Shia festival of Muharram.¹²⁴ A large contribution he had made to a Shi'a shrine in Avadh was treated as further evidence of his Shia faith.¹²⁵ The Ulama even threatened to delete his name from their Friday sermons, and to excommunicate him from Islam for his Shia leanings.¹²⁶ This prompted the Emperor to issue a denial through a pamphlet, supported by a note from Mirza Ghalib.¹²⁷ Considering the difficulty of ascribing his religious identity to a specific sect, it became possible for members of all three denominations (Sunni, Shi'a, and Sufi) to claim him as one of their own. Royal visits to, and patronage of sacred sites such as Sunni and Shia mosques, and hospices or tombs of venerated saints neutralised the occasionally acrimonious orthodox Sunnis, and increased the adoration and respect of the wider Muslims community.¹²⁸ Bahadur Shah Zafar's association with religious symbols and public

¹²¹ Zia Inayat-Khan, 'A hybrid Sufi order at the crossroads of modernity : the Sufi order and Sufi movement of Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan' (Duke University, 2006), 60.

¹²² *Selections from the records of the Government of the Punjab and its dependencies : Trial of Muhammad Bahadur Shah, Titular King of Delhi, and of Mogul Beg, and Hajee, all of Delhi, for rebellion against the British Government, and murder of Europeans during 1857*: 250.

¹²³ Maulvi Baqar Ali, *Delhi Urdu Akhbar*, 14 June 1857 cited in Farooqui, *Besieged: voices from Delhi, 1857*: 365-66.

¹²⁴ Dalrymple, *The last Mughal: the fall of a dynasty, Delhi, 1857*: 82.

¹²⁵ Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib and Daud Rahbar, *Urdu Letters of Mirza Asadu'llah Khan Ghalib* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1987). xxxiii.

¹²⁶ Dalrymple, *The last Mughal: the fall of a dynasty, Delhi, 1857*: 82.

¹²⁷ Ghalib and Rahbar, *Urdu Letters of Mirza Asadu'llah Khan Ghalib*: xxxiii.

¹²⁸ Gregory C. Kozlowski, 'Imperial Authority, Benefactions and Endowments (Awqaf) in Mughal India', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 38, no. 3 (1995): 357.

displays of religiosity enabled him to foster what has been termed as the 'cult of the sovereign', a Timurid tradition that symbolised not only the religious but also the political reverence of Mughal sovereigns.¹²⁹

At the same time that Bahadur Shah Zafar was leading the resistance movement and making attempts to guide and inspire his followers by capitalising on their religious and political support, he was reportedly considering the possibility of a settlement with the British. As early as June 1857, he sought the advice of his inner most circle, consisting of Queen Zeenat Mahal, the Princes, and his closest advisors, Hakim Ahsanullah Khan, and the court *Vakil*, Amir Abbas on the matter.¹³⁰ Other trusted nobles were summoned to gauge their opinion as well. After much deliberation, a unanimous view emerged that the royal government should disassociate from the Bengal Army Sepoys at Delhi, and align itself with the British.¹³¹ Following some hesitation on the Emperor's part to take such a critical decision, his advisors suggested that it would be best to first assess how EIC officials react to a proposal of friendship.¹³² Consequently, Bahadur Shah Zafar directed that a letter be written to the British indicating his sincere desire for a rapprochement, the reply to which would then determine the specific course to be adopted.¹³³ There was however, no response to the initiative. In September 1857, when the conflict appeared to be drawing to a close, Bahadur Shah Zafar contacted the British with a specific offer to surrender, allow the EIC troops entry into the city, and hand over to them those of his Sepoys who had murdered European women and children, provided that the Emperor's life and that of his wife and son by her were spared, and Bahadur Shah Zafar re-installed on the throne.¹³⁴ Nothing came of it, because by then the British forces surrounding Delhi were probably confident that they

¹²⁹ 'Imperial Authority, Benefactions and Endowments (Awqaf) in Mughal India', 357.

¹³⁰ Latif and Nizami, *1857 ka tarikhi roznamah : qil'ab-yi Dihli ka nihayat abam aur mo'tabar Farisi roznamah ma'ah Urdu tarjuma o havashi jis men 1857 ke tarikhi hangamah ke cashm did vaqi'at bayan kiye gae hen*: 137.

¹³¹ *1857 ka tarikhi roznamah : qil'ab-yi Dihli ka nihayat abam aur mo'tabar Farisi roznamah ma'ah Urdu tarjuma o havashi jis men 1857 ke tarikhi hangamah ke cashm did vaqi'at bayan kiye gae hen*: 137.

¹³² *1857 ka tarikhi roznamah : qil'ab-yi Dihli ka nihayat abam aur mo'tabar Farisi roznamah ma'ah Urdu tarjuma o havashi jis men 1857 ke tarikhi hangamah ke cashm did vaqi'at bayan kiye gae hen*: 137.

¹³³ *1857 ka tarikhi roznamah : qil'ab-yi Dihli ka nihayat abam aur mo'tabar Farisi roznamah ma'ah Urdu tarjuma o havashi jis men 1857 ke tarikhi hangamah ke cashm did vaqi'at bayan kiye gae hen*: 137.

¹³⁴ Octavius Henry St. George Anson and Harcourt S. Anson, *With H.M. 9th Lancers during the Indian mutiny: The letters of Brevet-major O.H.S.G. Anson* (W.H. Allen, 1896). 129. Forrest, G.W., ed. *Selections from the Letters, Despatches and other State Papers Preserved in the Military Department of the Government of India, 1857-58*. vol. 1. (Calcutta Military department press, 1893). Reprint, 2006. 365.

were on the verge of victory, and hence saw no benefit in any negotiation or compromise with him.

Ulama

Of all the actors involved in the rebellion, the North Indian Ulama made the most extensive use of Jihad as an ideological tool against the EIC in their capacity as guardians of Islam in India. However, a close examination of their proclamations and behaviour reveals a significant amount of ideological ambivalence and confusion, which diluted the effectiveness of Jihad as an ideology against the EIC. Their Jihadist ideology provides a useful point of comparison with their peers who were active in the Punjab and the North-West Frontier, and in a seemingly similar position to influence the religious ideas and behaviour of the Sepoys and royalty in those regions.

The Ulama grievances against the EIC are traceable to EIC policies and the work of European missionaries in the decades leading up to 1857. As the EIC established its authority in the North West Provinces, especially after *de facto* control over Delhi in 1803, it started embarking upon policies that had critical implications for Indian society, including the Muslim clergy. Traditionally, education of the Muslim community had been the monopoly of the Ulama, who imparted religious education blended with the study of Arabic and Persian through a network of *madrassas* and private tuition. The system was able to function with local donations and the patronage and grants of Mughal Emperors and regional potentates.¹³⁵ EIC authorities initially patronised Muslim and Hindu education, following the educational policy announced by Governor General Warren Hastings.¹³⁶ In 1835 however, Western education and English were introduced in government schools, and funds that were hitherto available for the traditional sources of education, including *madrassas*, were increasingly diverted to government schools.¹³⁷ These measures imperilled the future growth of *madrassa* instruction. Based on religious lessons and basic literacy, it was the only form of education the Ulama were

¹³⁵ Talmiz Khaldun, "The Great Rebellion," In Kazi M. Ashraf and Puran C. Joshi, eds., *Rebellion, 1857: a symposium* (New Delhi: Bagchi, 1957; reprint, 1986), 19.

¹³⁶ Elmer H. Cutts, 'The Background of Macaulay's Minute', *The American Historical Review* 58, no. 4 (1953): 832.

¹³⁷ Mufti Intizam ullah Shahabi, 'Maulana Fazl-e Haq Khairabadi', in *1857, tarikhi, 'ilmi aur adabi pahl*, ed. Muhammad I. Chughtai (Lahore: Sang-e Meel Publications, 2007), 23.

equipped to provide, and remained the sole option for Muslim youth as well. The EIC sponsored government schools were beginning to attract potential Madrassa students, lured by opportunities for better education and employment in British India.¹³⁸ Another obstacle to traditional madrassa education appeared in the form of the Delhi College. The college, which opened in 1825, was established by the EIC for providing European education alongside Oriental instruction to the local elite.¹³⁹ It was especially attractive for the Indian youth aspiring for service with the EIC.¹⁴⁰ The students, some of whom were Muslim, not only viewed it as an opportunity for gainful and prestigious employment, but also as a 'means to upward social mobility'.¹⁴¹ The Ulama now faced the prospect of losing out this influential segment of Muslim youth to institutions like the Delhi College. The patronage and financial support of Indian rulers and local communities that the Ulama used to receive was also drying up due to deteriorating economic conditions of the Muslim community.¹⁴² Consequently, prospects of Ulama employment, and the strong socio-cultural and religious bonds that tied them with the larger Muslim community through traditional educational institutions were increasingly at risk.¹⁴³

Following these initial changes, English was introduced as the official language of British India during 1836-37. The measure endangered the employment of a large number of Muslims as *Munshis*, *Qazis*, and *Kotwals*. These appointments required mastery of Persian and Urdu,¹⁴⁴ which were mainly taught by the Ulama. Cognizant of avoiding drastic changes in the administrative system, the British continued to hire Muslim functionaries, especially the *Qazis*, as they were needed to assist the courts in the application of Muslim law to Muslim litigants.¹⁴⁵ However, unlike the past when they were held in high esteem by Muslim rulers, the *Qazis* were to now work as mere assistants to the British judges. Until the arrival of the British, the Muslims and Hindus

¹³⁸ 'Maulana Fazl-e Haq Khairabadi', 23.

¹³⁹ Muhammad A. Syed, *Muslim response to the West: Muslim historiography in India, 1857-1914* (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 1988). 19.

¹⁴⁰ Anu Kumar, 'New Lamps for Old: Colonial experiments with vernacular education, pre- and post - 1857', in *1857, essays from Economic and Political Weekly* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman in association with Sameeksha Trust, 2008), 108-09.

¹⁴¹ 'New Lamps for Old: Colonial experiments with vernacular education, pre- and post -1857', 112.

¹⁴² Talmiz Khaldun, "The Great Rebellion," In Ashraf and Joshi, *Rebellion, 1857: a symposium*, 19.

¹⁴³ Talmiz Khaldun, "The Great Rebellion," In *Rebellion, 1857: a symposium*, 19.

¹⁴⁴ Shahabi, 'Maulana Fazl-e Haq Khairabadi', 23.

¹⁴⁵ Syed, *Muslim response to the West: Muslim historiography in India, 1857-1914*: 15-16.

were governed by their respective religious laws as determined by their religious communities. But under the British they were subjected to different laws, which were controversial for both communities. Particularly alarming for the Muslims was the Anglo-Mohammedan law, which modified the Sharia law, creating a hybrid system with selective implementation of the Sharia.¹⁴⁶ As interpreters and custodians of Islamic law, the Ulama had enjoyed the monopoly and honourable status associated with their role, which was now decreasing. At the same time, they faced a challenge from the emerging Muslim scholars, who were claiming that the old Islamic law and education could not cope with modern discoveries and developments, and needed to be replaced.¹⁴⁷

Confiscation of Muslim properties, establishment of orphanages for native children, and expanding missionary activity by the EIC were similar causes for suspicion. When the EIC established a number of orphanages, it was perceived as a deliberate strategy to convert Hindu and Muslim children to Christianity.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, as part of its land settlement process, the EIC had taken over a number of mosques, shrines and madrassas which were unable to provide property deeds, and demolished some mosques for road construction, or handed them to missionaries for their housing or conversion to churches.¹⁴⁹ Prior to 1813, EIC laws did not permit Christian missionary activity on British Indian soil.¹⁵⁰ During that year, the British parliament passed a resolution permitting missionary work in India, and the first Anglican Bishop was ordained at Calcutta in 1814, followed by the entry of European missions in 1832-33, apparently under EIC patronage.¹⁵¹ The missionary activity that ensued was not confined to preaching the principles of Christianity, but also included attacks on Muslim beliefs and practices.¹⁵² The Delhi chaplain, Midgley Jennings, was specially resented for his threats to take over many of the mosques in Delhi, and aggressive attacks on Islam

¹⁴⁶ Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2002), p. 21. See also Radhika Singha, *A despotism of law: crime and justice in early colonial India* (Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). vii-viii, 49.

¹⁴⁷ Ashraf, *Muslim attitudes towards British rule and Western culture in India in the first half of the nineteenth century*: 141.

¹⁴⁸ Carson, *The East India Company and Religion, 1698-1858*: 219.

¹⁴⁹ Dalrymple, *The last Mughal: the fall of a dynasty, Delhi, 1857*: 68-69.

¹⁵⁰ Cutts, 'The Background of Macaulay's Minute', 839.

¹⁵¹ Mushirul Hasan, *A moral reckoning: Muslim intellectuals in nineteenth-century Delhi* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005). 87.

¹⁵² *A moral reckoning: Muslim intellectuals in nineteenth-century Delhi*: 87.

and the person of Prophet Muhammad.¹⁵³ The missionaries appeared to be attracting some members of the Hindu lower and untouchable castes. This segment of the population formed a large pool of potential converts for Muslim missionaries as well, so the competition to attract them would have been intense.

Christian proselytization did not appear to be making much gain, but the conversion of two prominent Hindus caused alarm, not only for the Hindu elite and clergy of the city,¹⁵⁴ but also for their Muslim counterparts who would have feared that some influential Muslims might similarly succumb. Fervid evangelicalism convinced them that the missionaries were making a concerted effort to dilute the appeal of Islam in India.¹⁵⁵ The acrimony gave rise to a polemical duel with the missionaries. On the 10th and 11th of April, 1854 a public debate was arranged at Agra between the German missionary, Karl Gottlieb Pfander, and the Indian Muslim theologian, Maulana Rahmatullah Kairanawi, assisted by Dr. Wazir Khan, a medical doctor serving at the local government hospital.¹⁵⁶ Centred on Muslim criticism of the Bible, the debate attracted a large audience of Muslims and Europeans. While Pfander attempted to persuade his opponents on the authenticity of the Old and New Testaments and the belief in Trinity, his Muslim rivals tried to negate the central precepts of Christianity by claiming that the Bible had been corrupted, and Muslims should not be shaken in their faith because of Christian proclamations.¹⁵⁷

The spirited stance at the debates did not however, develop into a concerted movement to counter the EIC/Christian socio-religious activism. The fear of increasing marginalisation generated different coping strategies. Some Ulama compromised with the situation by taking up positions with the government whenever such opportunities arose, while others remained aloof. Then there were those Ulama who were conscious of the need to review the status of Indian Muslims under the EIC, a non-Muslim

¹⁵³ William Dalrymple, 'Religious Rhetoric in the Delhi Uprising of 1857', in *Rethinking 1857*, ed. Sabyasachi Bhattacharya (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2008), 34; Carson, *The East India Company and Religion, 1698-1858*: 90-91.

¹⁵⁴ Dalrymple, *The last Mughal: the fall of a dynasty, Delhi, 1857*: 74-75.

¹⁵⁵ Avril A. Powell, 'Muslim-Christian Confrontation: Dr. Wazir Khan in Nineteenth-century Agra', in *Religious controversy in British India : dialogues in South Asian languages*, ed. Kenneth W. Jones (Albany, NY: State Univ. of New York Press, 1992), 219-32.

¹⁵⁶ 'Muslim-Christian Confrontation: Dr. Wazir Khan in Nineteenth-century Agra', 22.

¹⁵⁷ Mark I. Beaumont, *Christology in Dialogue with Muslims: A Critical Analysis of Christian Presentations of Christ for Muslims from the Ninth and Twentieth Centuries* (U.K.: Paternoster, 2005). 116.

power, and devise an appropriate strategy. The main issue for such Ulama who were resentful of the encroaching EIC power, was whether Jihad had become obligatory to counter the British/Christian threat. The question first arose in 1803, when Lord Lake captured Delhi after defeating the Maratha Army, and made Emperor Shah Alam II a *de facto* prisoner of the British.¹⁵⁸ Apparently concerned about the state of subservience to a non-Muslim power, Shah Abdul Aziz, a religious luminary who was the son and spiritual successor of Shah Waliullah, the pre-eminent Muslim ideologue of his time, pronounced the EIC's possessions in India *dar-ul-harb* (the zone of war).¹⁵⁹ Issued sometimes after 1803, the *fatwa* clearly implied that it had become incumbent upon Muslims to wage an anti-British Jihad, or if they were somehow unable to do so, to proceed on *Hijrat* (migration from a territory where Muslims face non-Muslim occupation). Although the term Jihad does not appear in the declaration, Jihad and Hijrat are the obvious consequences when a territory has been declared as subject to war. Some of the passages in the fatwa though are contradictory, mitigating the powerful impact the declaration might otherwise have conveyed. In one instance in the fatwa, Shah Abdul Aziz decried the existing situation for the 'absence of any check on the Christian officers' such that 'in administration and justice, in matters of law and order, in the domain of trade, finance and collection of revenue - everywhere the *Kuffar* are in power'.¹⁶⁰ Yet, he allowed Muslims to accept service with the domineering and exploitative British.¹⁶¹ The British were accused of 'demolishing mosques without the least hesitation' and not letting any Muslim or *zimmi* enter any town or city in their control without permission. On the other hand, he grudgingly acknowledged that 'there are indeed certain Islamic rituals like Friday and Eid prayers, *Azan* and cow-slaughter with which they do not interfere'.¹⁶²

In another passage, the Maulvi bestowed the extraordinary title of '*Imam ul-Muslimin*' on Emperor Akbar Shah II.¹⁶³ This was despite the fact that no Emperor, including

¹⁵⁸ Naeem Qureshi, *Pan-Islam in British Indian Politics: A Study of the Khilafat Movement, 1918-1924* (Leiden: Brill, 1999). 175-76.

¹⁵⁹ Jamal Malik, *Islam in South Asia: A Short History* (Leiden: Brill, 2008). 252.

¹⁶⁰ Cited in Taufiq Ahmad Nizami, *Muslim political thought and activity during the first half of the 19th century* (Aligarh: Singh for T.M. Pubs., 1969). 23.

¹⁶¹ Jalal, *Partisans of Allah: Jihad in South Asia*. 69.

¹⁶² Harlan O. Pearson, *Islamic Reform and Revival in Nineteenth-century India: The Tariqah-i-Muhammadiyah* (New Delhi: Yoda Press, 2008). 33-34.

¹⁶³ Cited in Nizami, *Muslim political thought and activity during the first half of the 19th century*: 23.

Aurangzeb who had a reputation for religious zealotry, ever received the honorific since it was reserved for Muslim rulers who could trace their ancestry to Prophet Muhammad, and were recognised as spiritual heads by the Muslim community. The concept of Hijrat was also turned on its head by allowing Muslims to pursue economic profit and interest and other similar benefits which were not allowed in a Muslim country, but which they could indulge in as long as the non-Muslim authorities did not interfere with their religious rights. The most trenchant criticism of these contradictions came from Shah Muhammad Ismail, a nephew of Shah Abdul Aziz, and a religious scholar in his own right: 'Under the conditions specified you declare that India is not *dar-ul-harb*, but you then contradict your own words and call India *dar-ul-harb* only as far as regards the validity of accepting interest by the Muslims of the country. This amounts to pious fraud for worldly prosperity'.¹⁶⁴

Given such internal divisions, it is unsurprising that Jihad as espoused by the leading Muslim ideologue at the time lost much of its effectiveness as a mobilising tool, even as the concept remained the core component of Muslim ideology. The tool was however repeatedly used, as can be discerned in the conduct and statements of the Ulama during the rebellion years, many of whom were followers of Shah Abdul Aziz. Several of these Ulama issued fatwas extolling Jihad, mobilised the general population and Sepoys against the British, and endorsed and abetted Bahadur Shah Zafar's authority as the Mughal sovereign. At Delhi, a Jihad proclamation was signed by thirty Ulama, including a number of disciples of Shah Waliullah's family.¹⁶⁵ The proclamation declared that in view of the British siege of Delhi and their military operations, Jihad against them had become incumbent upon all able-bodied residents of Delhi, and indeed all Hindustanis.¹⁶⁶ Although it remains undetermined if all the Ulama whose names appeared on the Delhi fatwa actually took part in the Jihad, or even signed the proclamation, the names of Liaquat Ali, Sadr ud-Din Azurda, and Dr. Wazir Khan are identified as some of the leading figures of Jihad in several accounts of the rebellion.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ Pearson, *Islamic Reform and Revival in Nineteenth-century India: The Tarīqah-i-Muhammadiyah*: 35.

¹⁶⁵ Nasir Kazmi and Intizar Husain, *1857, Khayal nambar* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2007). 258-59.

¹⁶⁶ Imtiaz A Khan Rampuri, 'Maulana Fazl-e Haq Khairabadi aur 1857 ka fatwa Jihad', in *1857, roznamche, mu'asir tabirien, yaddashtien*, ed. Muhammad I Chughtai (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2007), 878.

¹⁶⁷ See Kazmi and Husain, *1857, Khayal nambar*: 258-59; Hafeez Malik, *Moslem nationalism in India and Pakistan* (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1963). 191-92; Mahmood Ahmad Ghazi, *Islamic renaissance in*

The three, along with many others were subsequently tried and sentenced by the British. Maulvi Liaquat Ali became active at Allahabad in early June 1857, following the rebellion by the Sepoys of a Bengal native infantry and detachments of cavalry and artillery. At the height of the war, he commanded about four thousand rebels, and was appointed as Viceroy of Allahabad by the Emperor.¹⁶⁸ Being a former madrasa teacher, he was very successful in attracting both civilians and Sepoys to his camp and motivating them against the British.¹⁶⁹ The Maulvi issued two proclamations of Jihad in June 1857 that were widely circulated in Allahabad and surrounding regions.¹⁷⁰

The first proclamation, written in rhyme, draws inspiration from injunctions of the Quran and examples of Prophet Muhammad to wage war against enemies of Islam, and makes a case for why Muslims must engage the British in combat.¹⁷¹ Muslims are reminded of the opportunity the current situation provides them to restore Islam to the glory it enjoyed twelve hundred years ago; of the promised rewards of paradise that await them if they fall in battle; and conversely of condemnation to hell if they fail to take up arms in the name of Islam.¹⁷² Those who are destitute or unable to fight are exhorted to contribute to the holy cause by donating money or providing succour to the holy warriors, as they too would be rewarded by God.¹⁷³ There is a rejoinder that Islam is losing its strength in India, that if our predecessors had not embarked on Jihad, they could not have conquered India in the first place; and that it was by the sword and not through slothful behaviour that they had become ascendant in this country.¹⁷⁴ The second proclamation directs its readers to follow any individual who assumes the responsibility of leading the Jihad, and to consider him as an *Imam*.¹⁷⁵ The people were assured that sufficient arms and munitions of war had been provided by Birjis Qadr, the regent of Avadh, and by Bahadur Shah Zafar, the Emperor of Delhi, under whom the

South Asia 1707-1867: the role of Shah Wali Allah and his successors (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 2002). 209-10.

¹⁶⁸ Robert Meek, *The Martyr of Allahabad: Memorials of Ensign Arthur Marcus Hill Cheek, of the Sixth Native Bengal Infantry, Murdered by the Sepoys at Allahabad* (London: J. Nisbet, 1857). 13.

¹⁶⁹ Clare Anderson, *Subaltern Lives: Biographies of Colonialism in the Indian Ocean World, 1790-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). 126.

¹⁷⁰ Lal, *Tarikh-i baghavat-i Hind 1857: maharbab-yi azim*. 211.

¹⁷¹ *Tarikh-i baghavat-i Hind 1857: maharbab-yi azim*. 211.

¹⁷² *Tarikh-i baghavat-i Hind 1857: maharbab-yi azim*. 211.

¹⁷³ *Tarikh-i baghavat-i Hind 1857: maharbab-yi azim*. 211.

¹⁷⁴ *Tarikh-i baghavat-i Hind 1857: maharbab-yi azim*. 211.

¹⁷⁵ *Tarikh-i baghavat-i Hind 1857: maharbab-yi azim*. 212.

people of various religions and denominations of Hindustan had united to expel the *Nazarenes* and *Kuffar*.¹⁷⁶

The content of the two proclamations reveals the ideological confusion in the minds of the Muslim clergy about the exact religious status of the British vis-à-vis Islam. If they were indeed Nazarenes, theological caution was required in pronouncing Jihad against them given their status as 'people of the book', who were consequently treated as believers by the Quran. Labelling them Kaffir, or conflating them with the latter was problematic, as Islam reserves the term for non-believers, which includes Hindus, but not Christians or Jews. In the same contradictory vein, the proclamation concludes by inviting 'Muslim brothers' to flock to Allahabad, put the Kuffar in the city and its vicinity to the sword, and enjoy the benefits of an Islamic rule.¹⁷⁷ That left open the question of whether Hindus were to be included in the struggle, much less the state of those Hindus who were already fighting alongside Muslims. The numerous references to the virtues and necessity of Jihad, and the notion of Muslim superiority in the declaration would not have appealed to the followers of Hinduism; nor would they have accepted the establishment of an Islamic government as the Maulvi appeared to be suggesting.

The confusion in Maulvi Liaquat Ali's Jihad ideology is also apparent from the testimony following his capture and trial by the British in 1872.¹⁷⁸ Given his visible role as a prominent leader of the rebellion, he was not in a position to deny his involvement when questioned. Consequently, he pleaded guilty but with the caveat: 'some people had persuaded me to do my best to stave off the mischief that must ensue in the absence of authority and order'.¹⁷⁹ He also claimed to have prevented the killing of Europeans and Indian Christians as well as the destruction of property and public utilities during the rebellion.¹⁸⁰ This seems to be an attempt to alleviate the stress he was undergoing at the trial, having to justify wrongful or un-Islamic acts. By admitting that only part of what he did was wrong, the Maulvi was consciously or unknowingly diverting his prosecutors

¹⁷⁶ *Tarikh-i baghavat-i Hind 1857: maharbab-yi azimr.* 213.

¹⁷⁷ *Tarikh-i baghavat-i Hind 1857: maharbab-yi azimr.* 213.

¹⁷⁸ Anderson, *Subaltern Lives: Biographies of Colonialism in the Indian Ocean World, 1790-1920*: 126-27.

¹⁷⁹ *Subaltern Lives: Biographies of Colonialism in the Indian Ocean World, 1790-1920*: 128.

¹⁸⁰ *Subaltern Lives: Biographies of Colonialism in the Indian Ocean World, 1790-1920*: 129.

from the more serious aspects of his actions during the conflict. Maulvi Liaquat Ali also testified that he was not motivated by a desire for personal gain during the rebellion; rather, he was simply chosen by the people for his religious influence, and was told if he did not do as requested, he would incur the displeasure of his Emperor.¹⁸¹ The attempt to shift responsibility for his conduct to his supporters, and indirectly to Bahadur Shah Zafar, amounted to distracting his British accusers from his own role and from the forceful ideological content of his proclamations. By claiming that someone else made him do what he did, the Maulvi was inadvertently acknowledging that he had a choice about how to respond in the situation, but failed to choose wisely.

The second prominent figure associated with the Jihad, Mufti Sadr ud-Din Azurda, was the *Sadr Amin* of Delhi, having been appointed to that post by the British prior to the rebellion.¹⁸² Along with his judicial role, he was an examiner at the Delhi Anglo-Oriental College, and a leading religious and literary figure of the city.¹⁸³ He was known to possess considerable diplomatic skills, a trait that was effectively put to use throughout his service at Delhi, including the tumultuous rebellion period. Being close to both the Emperor and the EIC resident, he used to play an important mediating role between the two in the pre-rebellion years.¹⁸⁴ He is however, one of the most controversial Ulama of 1857, whom both the rebel and anti-rebel factions could claim as one of their own. Some of Azurda's close Ulama friends had signed the Delhi fatwa together with him. That did not deter a party of Sepoys of the rebel Army from attempting to raid his house on the suspicion that he was collaborating with the British.¹⁸⁵ Ironically, the British did not trust Azurda either, and put him on trial for being a fatwa signatory. He was charged for the act, and for inciting the public against the British. Azurda denied the charge, claiming he had been forced to sign under pressure of the rebel Sepoys. In an ingenious move, he disclosed that a close examination of his signatures would reveal he had misspelt an Urdu word by not inserting two dots over two letters, so that instead of its meaning 'with satisfaction' alongside the signatures, the word could just as easily

¹⁸¹ *Subaltern Lives: Biographies of Colonialism in the Indian Ocean World, 1790-1920*: 129.

¹⁸² Rampuri, 'Maulana Fazl-e Haq Khairabadi aur 1857 ka fatwa Jihad', 874.

¹⁸³ Saiyid Athar A. Rizvi, *Shah `Abd-al-`Aziz: puritanism, sectarian, polemics and Jihad* (Canberra: Marifat, 1982). 96.

¹⁸⁴ Dalrymple, *The last Mughal: the fall of a dynasty, Delhi, 1857*: XIX.

¹⁸⁵ M. Dayal, *Celebrating Delhi* (New Delhi: Ravi Dayal Publisher, 2010). 33.

be interpreted as 'with duress',¹⁸⁶ which is what he intended. The trick also probably worked to his advantage with his own side, as his fellow signatories might have thought that he meant 'with satisfaction', but forgot to insert the two dots! Although the British court could not thus prove his complicity in the *fatwa* matter, half of his property was ordered to be confiscated.¹⁸⁷

This strategy of ambivalence in matters of invoking armed Jihad was possibly deliberately adopted to minimise the distortion arising from a state of mixed loyalties, as Azurda, like many others, was a former employee of the EIC who had benefited from government service, and developed close associations with their former employers. At the same time, he had an affinity with the Mughal Emperor for the nostalgic and glorious past he represented, and which was still valued by the Muslim gentry. When Bahadur Shah Zafar was restored to the throne as Emperor, Azurda saw it as an opportunity to gain access to the royal court for suitable employment. Yet, when it became apparent to him after arriving in Delhi that the situation was not as favourable for the Emperor and his rebel Army, and the possibility of a British victory remained, he was careful to avoid too close a contact with Bahadur Shah Zafar,¹⁸⁸ thus keeping his options open.

The third Jihad notable, Dr Wazir Khan, had been an assistant surgeon at a hospital in Meerut from where he defected to join the Rebellion in 1857.¹⁸⁹ As discussed above, he had been closely involved in the Pfander debates in the early 1850s. Once Agra came under rebel attack, Wazir Khan became an active participant, travelling to Delhi, Bareilly and Avadh to join the military operations in progress, and serving in the company of such Rebellion leaders as Bakht Khan, Feroze Shah, Khan Bahadur Khan and the Nana Sahib.¹⁹⁰ When captured and put on trial by the British, he tried to exonerate himself, like many others, partly by laying blame elsewhere while disclaiming any part himself. Wazir Khan's unease with Christian missionary activity would have been the most likely

¹⁸⁶ Shahabi, 'Maulana Fazl-e Haq Khairabadi', 508.

¹⁸⁷ Swapna Liddle, 'The Delhi College: traditional elites, the colonial state, and education before 1857', ed. Margrit Pernau (Oxford University Press, 2006), 125-44.

¹⁸⁸ Dalrymple, *The last Mughal: the fall of a dynasty, Delhi, 1857*: 159.

¹⁸⁹ Rizvi and Bhargava, *Freedom struggle in Uttar Pradesh: source material Awadh: 1857-59*, 147-49.

¹⁹⁰ Rudrangshu Mukherjee, *Awadh in revolt, 1857-1858: a study of popular resistance* (Delhi ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1984). 141-42.

motive for his subsequent involvement in the Rebellion. On the other hand, his statement of denial indicates that he was either a reluctant Jihad warrior who could not admit his role because of a sense of guilt; or that he had been a genuine believer in Jihad, but subsequently became convinced of making the wrong decision. Either state of mind indicates a weak commitment to the pursuit of Jihad by trivialising his role in it. If concern for personal well-being or fear of death was the prime motivator, then he was negating the very spirit of Jihad, which entails readiness and resoluteness to the extent of laying down one's life for the sacred cause.

Conclusion

The three ideological strands of royalism, culturalism and religiosity came into sharp focus at Delhi where the Sepoys, the Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar, and the Ulama appeared to fervently employ these ideologies as sources of inspiration in the war against the EIC. The Sepoys were the most dedicated to royalism, although they did not have any vision of what a monarchic arrangement they wanted after the Mughal triumph, and had to suffer setbacks due to insufficient support from Bahadur Shah Zafar. A culture of militarism motivated them against the British, but the structures on which it was based and the fighting spirit such structures promoted had been destroyed by the rebellion, creating confusion and demoralisation which adversely affected their subsequent combat performance. Religiosity was a more enduring ideology for the Sepoys, and although it could not substitute for a cohesive military ideology, it was a source of intrinsic inspiration for the individual combatant. Bahadur Shah Zafar, held forth to the right to rule, or Mughal royalism through pursuit of a balance of power strategy with the neighbouring states. He was likely contemplating a segmentary system with much of the power devolved to the states if that was the cost that had to be incurred to bring them onto his side against the British. But his efforts in that direction were hampered by the state of ambivalence he was experiencing as evident in his simultaneous attempts to compromise with the British, and by the staunchly pro-British states he was attempting to woo. Moreover, he was an inept commander-in-chief whose lack of leadership traits and a failure to devise effective military strategies to defeat the British sealed the fate of the rebellion. His religious outlook and policies on the other hand, positively contributed to the war effort by encouraging and maintaining Hindu-Muslim harmony, which created a large and united front against the enemy. But that

entailed innovative ways of interpreting Jihad, which made the concept controversial, and which in turn would have discouraged many of the spirited pro-Jihad believers from joining the war. The Jihad tool was more enthusiastically employed in the conflict by the pro-emperor Ulama as compared to the other actors. However, it did not have the desired effect beyond rhetoric because of the ambivalent interpretations of the concept by the Jihadist Ulama, and the indifference of the wider Ulama community, which was itself divided on the legitimacy of Jihad in the circumstances surrounding 1857.

Chapter 2: Avadh

Introduction

This chapter examines the ideological orientations and behaviour of the Avadh Muslim elite during the rebellion of 1857-59. The first section describes the political environment and social structure of Avadh society, setting up the context for the study. The main part that follows seeks to understand how royalism, religiosity, and culturalism influenced the attitude and conduct of the Sepoys, royalty and Ulama of Avadh towards one another and the British. It needs to be explained why the large and well-trained army of Avadh failed to drive out the British despite being united in their hatred for the latter. Although the Nawab of Avadh had been exiled from the state well before the rebellion began, the Begum of Avadh appeared to have successfully filled the leadership vacuum by providing sound leadership; yet except for a few instances she could not succeed in leading a solid effort against the British, which needs to be explained. The Ulama at Avadh were the most active of all religious elite in India in espousing and employing Jihad against the British. Yet, why was it that despite the fervour, their resistance too met with failure?

Background

Throughout its history, Avadh occupied a prominent position in North India due to its strategic location, rich agricultural base, potential for military recruitment among the local Brahmin, Rajput and Muslim population; and a vibrant administrative, intellectual and religious elite. It was governed as a province under successive Delhi Sultanates and subsequently, the Mughal Empire.¹ Dynastic princely rule, which had been the norm since 1722,² assumed the status of a kingdom in 1818 with British encouragement,³ an arrangement that lasted till 1856 when the last Nawab, Wajid Ali Shah, was compelled

¹ Stephen M. Edwardes and Herbert Garrett, *Mughal Rule In India* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors Limited, 1930; repr., 1995). 174.

² Kidambi S. Santha, *Begums of Awadh*, 1st ed. (Varanasi: Bharati Prakashan, 1980). 1.

³ Muhammad Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1969). 505.

by the British to abdicate his throne. Avadh was a favoured destination of Muslim scholars, poets, jurists, and artists from Iran and Central Asia, as well as Delhi, particularly during the late Mughal period when the traditional Mughal patronage of skilled immigrants declined as a result of eroding Mughal power. The newcomers were attracted to the state due to the patronage of its Nawabs, and the greater opportunities that it offered compared with other regions of India. Most of the local Muslims, however, had converted from Hinduism under the influence of Avadh ruling elite or the proselytising activity of religious scholars and missionaries.⁴ According to the earliest census records, Muslims comprised about eleven per cent of the total population, with Hindus making up the vast majority.⁵ However, in Lucknow city itself, Muslims were more numerous at forty per cent of the local population.⁶

The soldier class of Avadh was drawn from the Brahmins, Rajputs, *Ranghars* (Muslim Rajputs), Syeds, and Rohilla Pathans of the province, who formed the manpower for the army of Avadh Nawabs as well as the EIC's Bengal Army.⁷ The largest component of the Bengal Army, the Bengal Native Infantry (hereafter BNI) mostly consisted of Avadh Hindu soldiers, while its mounted counterpart, the Bengal Native Cavalry, was predominantly Muslim.⁸ The Avadh Sepoys had strong links to the Avadh countryside, being small farmers themselves who hailed from the numerous villages and *jagir* (rural estates) settlements strewn throughout the state.⁹

The Ulama of Avadh society were divided into Shi'a and Sunni denominations. Of these, the Shi'a enjoyed considerable prestige, wealth and power, and dominated the state judiciary.¹⁰ A number of them were *zamindars*, but preferred the role of court and judicial officers in Lucknow and Faizabad, as serving in urban centres provided greater

⁴ Kishori S. Lal, *Indian Muslims: Who are They*, (Voice of India, 1990), Accessed 23 April 2013. <http://voiceofdharma.org/books/imwat/Chapter3>.

⁵ J. Charles Williams, *The report on the census of Oudh*, vol. I (Lucknow: Oudh Government Press, 1869). Para 115 Table F.

⁶ *The report on the census of Oudh*, I. Para 116.

⁷ Francis G. Cardew, *A sketch of the services of the Bengal native army, to the year 1895* (New Delhi: Today & Tomorrow's Printers & Publishers, 1971). 5.

⁸ Chick and Hutchinson, *Annals of the Indian rebellion, 1857-58; containing narratives of the outbreaks and eventful occurrences and stories of personal adventures*: 10-11.

⁹ I. Habib, 'The coming of 1857', *Social Scientist* (1998): 7.

¹⁰ Juan R. Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shiism in Iran and Iraq religion and state in Awadh, 1722-1859*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), Accessed 19 September 2013. <http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft0f59n6r9/.272>.

opportunities for influence and prosperity.¹¹ The authority of the chief *mujtahid* (leading Shi'a cleric, guide and religious scholar) of Lucknow was recognised and respected not only in Avadh, but throughout North India.¹² Supervision of popular gatherings in *Imambaras*, regular observance of public and private Shi'a ceremonies, as well as delivery of sermons fostered a strong socio-religious bond between the Shi'a religious elite and the public. The Avadh royalty, belonging to the Shi'a faith themselves, openly patronised the Shi'a Ulama and institutions under them.¹³ The Sunni Ulama exerted a similar influence over the majority Sunni population, and despite the doctrinal differences between the two sects, they appeared to co-exist with their Shi'a counterparts without apparent tension.

Avadh royalty consisted of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, his primary and secondary wives, the Queen mother, and the princes. Within this clique, the Nawab was the locus of authority, although traditionally Queen mothers held some influence, as did an occasional favourite chief or secondary wife. Begum Hazrat Mahal, who was a secondary wife at the time of the rebellion, gained much prominence after Nawab Wajid Ali Shah's abdication and exile in 1856. She first entered the royal household as a concubine with a humble family background, and then graduated to spousal status. She came to prominence when the rebellion events started unfolding in 1856.¹⁴

The Ulama, particularly those who were *Syeds* and had been enjoying preferential treatment for their revered status under the Shi'a Nawabs, saw their social, religious and political status greatly curtailed upon British annexation.¹⁵

Sepoys

The Bengal Army Sepoys serving in Avadh were deeply disaffected when Nawab Wajid Ali Shah was forced to abdicate and leave the state on exile as the British annexed the

¹¹ *Roots of North Indian Shīsm in Iran and Iraq religion and state in Awadh, 1722-1859.* 284.

¹² *Roots of North Indian Shīsm in Iran and Iraq religion and state in Awadh, 1722-1859.* 284.

¹³ *Roots of North Indian Shīsm in Iran and Iraq religion and state in Awadh, 1722-1859.* 38.

¹⁴ George Hutchinson, *Narrative of the mutinies in Oude* (London: Smith, Elder & co., 1859). 22.

¹⁵ Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shīsm in Iran and Iraq religion and state in Awadh, 1722-1859.* 80.

state and set up their own civil and military administration in Lucknow.¹⁶ Sepoy sympathy with the Nawab was strong since as many as sixty thousand had seen service with the royal Avadh army under supreme command of the Nawab.¹⁷ Upon British annexation and consequent disbandment of the royal army, only one third of them found employment with the British, while many of the rest refused to join the newly raised British force, because they hoped the Avadh ruling dynasty would be reinstated.¹⁸ Those Sepoys who had joined the EIC army also felt alienated from their new employers because of unfamiliar military procedures and a standard of discipline they could not identify with.¹⁹ But they did not retaliate against the British at this juncture. This was due in large part to the Nawab releasing all his troops and officials from his allegiance at the time of his departure from Lucknow, and directing them to be obedient and loyal to the British rulers.²⁰ Consequently, while there was some disquiet among the troops at the time, no attempt was made to rebel.²¹ Instead, it was the series of events in the mainly Avadh manned EIC regiments at Berhampore and Barrackpore on 27 February,²² and 29 March 1857 respectively,²³ followed by the much worse occurrence at Meerut on 10 May 1857, which set off the full-scale Sepoy rebellion. The British had fourteen native regiments of infantry, six of cavalry, and seven batteries of artillery under their command in Avadh, all of which were to mutiny in 1857.²⁴ The European part of the EIC force at Avadh consisted of only one infantry regiment and a company of artillery.²⁵ By contrast, the strength of the insurgent Sepoys was sixty to seventy thousand infantry and cavalymen, with forty or fifty artillery Sepoys.²⁶ The entire rebel force was deployed in nine formations, the largest portion of which was commanded by Begum Hazrat Mahal and her chief advisor, Mammu Khan, from a base near

¹⁶ Chick and Hutchinson, *Annals of the Indian rebellion, 1857-58; containing narratives of the outbreaks and eventful occurrences and stories of personal adventures*: xxvi.

¹⁷ Martin R. Gubbins, *An account of the mutinies in Oudh: and of the siege of the Lucknow residency* (London: Richard Bentley, 1858). 69.

¹⁸ *An account of the mutinies in Oudh: and of the siege of the Lucknow residency*: 69.

¹⁹ *An account of the mutinies in Oudh: and of the siege of the Lucknow residency*: 69.

²⁰ Saiyid Athar A. Rizvi, *A socio-intellectual history of the Isna Ashari Shi'is in India*, vol. 2 (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1986). 86.

²¹ McLeod Innes, *The Sepoy revolt, a critical narrative* (London: A.D. Innes & Co., 1897). 35.

²² *Narrative of the Indian mutinies of 1857, Compiled for the Madras Military Male Orphan Asylum*, (Madras: Asylum Press, 1858). 2.

²³ *Narrative of the Indian mutinies of 1857, Compiled for the Madras Military Male Orphan Asylum*: 5.

²⁴ Francis R. Sedgwick, *The Indian Mutiny of 1857* (London: Forster Groom & Co., 1920). 148.

²⁵ George B. Malleson, *History of the Indian Mutiny 1857-1859*, vol. III (London: W.H. Allen, 1888). 239.

²⁶ *History of the Indian Mutiny 1857-1859*, III: 270-71.

Faizabad.²⁷ The remaining troops, some of whom were led by the Mughal prince, Firoze Shah, were widely dispersed throughout Avadh.²⁸ An administrative council comprising fourteen members, four of whom were Muslim officers of the former Bengal Army, was also set up to administer the affairs at Lucknow.²⁹

In parallel with the Delhi Sepoys, the initial impulse by Avadh Sepoys on account of the controversial cartridges had been due to the feeling of outrage that the latter shared as members of the Bengal Army community. But as in Delhi, the Avadh brotherhood-in-arms or military cohesiveness unravelled when they rose in rebellion. Unit cohesion, which has been defined as 'the bonding together of members of a unit or organisation in such a way as to sustain their will and commitment to each other, their unit, and the mission',³⁰ could not be developed in the aftermath of the initial surge. As Epps postulates, 'cohesion is the only condition that ensures the survival of military formations in combat situations in the face of overwhelming odds and situations that are [performance] ambiguous and stressful'.³¹

Research has shown that there is a correlation of cultural cohesiveness with combat performance.³² The incohesive state of the Avadh rebel force as evidenced by its haphazard deployment and lack of sufficient will to withstand combat, hence severely limited its effectiveness as a fighting force. Despite an overwhelming numerical superiority, the rebel army suffered defeat on many fronts across the state. The only major victory it scored was at Chinhat on 30 June 1857, where it routed an EIC force.³³ The first major setback occurred during the siege of Lucknow, in which about eight thousand rebel Sepoys and several hundred civilians had surrounded the British, who were forced to take refuge in the EIC Residency when the rebellion broke out at Lucknow. However, except for a few concerted attempts to storm the British defences during the first few weeks of the siege, the Sepoy army was unable to maintain pressure,

²⁷ *History of the Indian Mutiny 1857-1859*, III: 270-71.

²⁸ *History of the Indian Mutiny 1857-1859*, III: 270-71.

²⁹ Mukherjee, *Awadh in revolt, 1857-1858: a study of popular resistance*: 138.

³⁰ 'Cohesion in the US Military', (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1984), ix. Cited in ; Geoff Van Epps, 'Relooking Unit Cohesion: A Sensemaking Approach.', BiblioGov. 3.

³¹ 'Relooking Unit Cohesion: A Sensemaking Approach.' 2.

³² J.E. Parco and D.A. Levy, *Attitudes Aren't Free: Thinking Deeply About Diversity in the U.S. Armed Forces* (Alabama: Air University Press, 2010). 250.

³³ Mukherjee, *Awadh in revolt, 1857-1858: a study of popular resistance*: 82.

and could not break through. So much so, that they failed to interdict the force despatched by the British to relieve and evacuate the besieged British soldiers and families. At the battle of Amorrah in Avadh on 5 March 1858, a Sepoy force of fourteen thousand appeared on the flanks of the nearby EIC military detachments, but failed to press the advantage, while the EIC force quickly recovering from the surprise appearance went into attack and routed the rebel force which retreated in disorder, leaving all its guns and other equipment behind.³⁴ In another major development, remnants of rebel Sepoy regiments who had made their way into Avadh, were defeated at Sultanpore, and driven across the Goomti during August 1858.³⁵ A similar pattern ensued across various theatres of war across the state.

The rebel army confronting the British was amply equipped and well positioned for attack and defence, but failed to overcome the enemy. The lack of an integrated structure diminished the value of its superior numbers and the strategic advantage it held by fighting on familiar territory. The Sepoys were operating in dispersed formations with hardly any coordination between them, and apparently lacked a well thought out strategy for defeating the British. There was also a deficit of leadership, and in this respect the situation was worse than at Delhi, where there were at least two native brigade commanders. In the military, leadership can be a matter of life and death, so military culture places tremendous importance on developing and maintaining the ability to lead under conditions of stress. People in the military, particularly those in the kind of circumstances experienced by the Avadh Sepoys during the turmoil of 1857-59, need leaders who are able to make decisions, to communicate, and crucially to understand and promote group norms and values - an area in which the Avadh army was severely lacking.

The crisis of leadership in the Avadh army was exacerbated by a mix of rebel Sepoys who had been absorbed in the EIC force at Avadh not long ago with stragglers from various other EIC military units, as well as the Bengal Army Sepoys, who, upon retreating from Delhi, had joined the Avadh military effort. Such an amalgam was

³⁴ George H.D. Gimlette, *A postscript to the records of the Indian mutiny: An attempt to trace the subsequent careers and fate of the rebel Bengal regiments, 1857-1858* (London: H.F. & G. Witherby, 1927). 16.

³⁵ *A postscript to the records of the Indian mutiny: An attempt to trace the subsequent careers and fate of the rebel Bengal regiments, 1857-1858*: 16.

formed up in haste and without prior planning; nor did it have sufficient time to materialise as a cohesive force before engaging the British. Thus, the rebel force in Avadh could not generate the sense of military bonding that characterises military units which have a history of shared experience, and whose members have established attachments with traditional symbols such as common badges, flags, and uniforms. In this respect, the state of the army was similar to that of its rebel counterparts in Delhi and Meerut as shown in the previous chapter.

A dispirited condition in the Avadh military had set in with the first acts of rebellion. The sudden and violent eruption disintegrated their structure as an organised EIC force, which damaged their morale and the sense of belonging that these men had felt as members of closely knit units. As their EIC military culture collapsed, the men faced the prospect of surviving in an unfamiliar and ambiguous military environment. They were unable to raise alternative structures that were as cohesive, and from which they could derive an alternative military culture. Their former supreme commander, Nawab Wajid Ali Shah was in exile and apparently in no position to lead the rebellion.

Another consequence of the fragile Sepoy military outfits was the collapse of group norms such as discipline and clarity of mission, which are essential features of military culture. This in turn produced a sense of alienation, and depleted the *esprit de corps* of the men which was reflected in their anomalous behaviour during combat. A number of rebel regiments were observed marching in battle at Kanpur and Lucknow to British military tunes, displaying their former EIC regimental flags, and wearing the campaign medals they had earned under British service in India and abroad.³⁶ The 41st BNI attacked the fort at Fatehgarh to the strains of 'The Girl I left Behind Me', while the troops of Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah used 'The Bluebells of Scotland' as a slow march, and he took the salute to 'God Save the Queen'.³⁷ Rebel sepoys of the 10th Irregular infantry retained their EIC regimental flag throughout their campaigns, until it was subsequently captured at Lucknow by an EIC European cavalry regiment.³⁸ Remnants

³⁶ George F. MacMunn and Alfred C. Lovett, *The armies of India* (London: A. and C. Black, 1911). 97.

³⁷ Gimlette, *A postscript to the records of the Indian mutiny: An attempt to trace the subsequent careers and fate of the rebel Bengal regiments, 1857-1858*: 44.

³⁸ Anson and Anson, *With H.M. 9th Lancers during the Indian mutiny: The letters of Brevet-major O.H.S.G. Anson*: 224.

of several other rebel regiments, including those that had retreated into Nepal in 1859, demonstrated the lingering attachment they felt for their former regiments by retaining symbols of the latter.³⁹ There were also incidents such as the one at Fatehgarh, where Sepoys of the former 10th Oudh Irregular Infantry were flying an embroidered Muslim flag, ironically alongside their former British colours.⁴⁰

Several other instances of anomalous behaviour arising from the Sepoys' attachment to an older military culture were observed during the war. While in some regiments the officers were murdered with atrocity, great care was taken in others to conduct them to safety. In some cases, rebel Sepoys offered British officers command of Sepoy detachments and asked that they lead them under the service of Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar.⁴¹ There were also reports of Sepoys demanding the ranks and regalia of their British officers as the condition for safe conduct.⁴² Particularly surprising were incidents where the bulk of a regiment, or the older native officers, with tears in their eyes, would swear loyalty to their officers, and then proceed to kill them.⁴³ At Faizabad, the 15th Irregular Cavalry after incarcerating their British officers overnight, purportedly with a view to killing them, changed their minds the next day and even arranged for them to leave on boats supplied by the Sepoys.⁴⁴ But just after letting them depart, they sent a message to another rebel regiment, the 17th BNI, which was in the path of the departing party of the British, to slay them, upon which the Sepoys of the 17th BNI intercepted and attacked the boats, shooting down most of the occupants.⁴⁵

Just as the Sepoys at Delhi, the Muslim Sepoys of the rebel army at Avadh perceived this war as much of a religious cause as their Hindu colleagues. From the start of the rebellion till its very end, the Avadh Sepoys were consistent in the claim that the British were embarked upon a grand plan to deprive them of their religion by making them use the defiled cartridges, whether by force or deception. Several instances of this sentiment were observed during the rebellion. Amidst an encounter at Lucknow, a group of

³⁹ *With H.M. 9th Lancers during the Indian mutiny: The letters of Brevet-major O.H.S.G. Anson*: 224.

⁴⁰ *With H.M. 9th Lancers during the Indian mutiny: The letters of Brevet-major O.H.S.G. Anson*: 222.

⁴¹ MacMunn and Lovett, *The armies of India*: 97.

⁴² *The armies of India*: 98.

⁴³ *The armies of India*: 98.

⁴⁴ George B. Malleson, ed. *Kaye's and Malleson's history of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8*, vol. IV (London: W.H. Allen, 1889), 268.

⁴⁵ *Kaye's and Malleson's history of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8*, 268.

Sepoys when asked by a British officer why they had mutinied, gave the typical response, 'we are fighting for our religion, which you meant to destroy'.⁴⁶ Upon being challenged, 'in what manner have we threatened your faith', the immediate rejoinder was, 'by giving us greased cartridges'.⁴⁷ For the British, such an attitude amounted to outright disloyalty as they saw themselves as the providers for these men, who had been given employment which was especially honoured in Indian society, and which had brought other benefits such as pensionable service and the opportunity to work with their own clan chiefs and kinsmen. The Sepoys on their part were infuriated that despite having constantly put their lives at risk fighting on behalf of the EIC, their religious beliefs had been so blatantly violated in attempting to convert them to Christianity by tricking or forcing them to use the repugnant cartridges. The Sepoys therefore reckoned that if they failed to stop the British, they might be subjected to similar misconduct by the latter in future.

However, the cartridge incident was not as important from an Islamic standpoint for reasons that were explained in the previous chapter. Yet, as in Meerut, Delhi and other stations where the Sepoys had arisen, it was the perception of violated religion that mattered, not the doctrinal caveats that made it a doubtful Islamic cause for a holy war or Jihad against the British. But here the cartridge story assumed importance for additional reasons. For the Sepoys, most of whom hailed from Avadh, the state's annexation and its consequences had conditioned their minds to believe that the British were capable of committing any absurdity, including depriving them of their religion through the supply of greased cartridges. The action of the British Government with respect to Avadh had destroyed their faith in the British, so that they were ready to credit the latter with any nefarious design. Hence, even when their British officers kept reassuring them that the greased cartridges would not be issued again, and that they had already been withdrawn, the Sepoys did not believe them, and kept insisting the British were bent upon destroying their religious feelings.⁴⁸ But by refusing to consider the possibility that the British did not take the measure on purpose, knowing fully well how

⁴⁶ Thomas H. Kavanagh, *How I won the Victoria cross* (London: Ward & Lock, 1860). 70.

⁴⁷ *How I won the Victoria cross*: 70.

⁴⁸ Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of mind: colonialism and the making of modern India* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001). 127.

deeply their Hindu and Muslim Sepoys revered their faiths, the Sepoys were bolstering their own belief.

The pattern of denigrating Christianity and Europeans thus continued, and a number of proclamations against the British began to appear near the military barracks in Lucknow, where a large number of Sepoys lived.⁴⁹ One such poster exhorted all Muslims and Hindus to rise and murder the British; another denounced those Indians who 'remain passive as born of the pigs of Europeans, born of crows, despised by the Gods, hated and spat at by all true sons of Mahabeer Jee, and Muhammad'.⁵⁰ Although religious attachment and emotion was an important motivator, it could not have the desired effect on its own, as a strong military culture which was lacking in this case, was equally vital for instilling and sustaining their will-to-fight.

As compared with their counterparts at Delhi, the Avadh Sepoys' ideological commitment to Royalism was complex. The Avadh Sepoys and their leadership did affirm a collective belief in the restoration of Mughal sovereignty, and pledged their loyalty to Bahadur Shah Zafar once the latter had been restored to his seat in Delhi. Their primary loyalty till then had been with Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, who had the status of king himself. Since the Nawab had ceased to be a factor in Avadh politics in view of his exile, and had not appointed a successor, the only apparent choice open to the Sepoys for leadership was Bahadur Shah Zafar. At the local level, they pledged allegiance to Begum Hazrat Mahal, and to her son Birjis Qadr, but only on the condition that Birjis Qadr obtain sanction from Bahadur Shah Zafar to rule on the latter's behalf, and not as an independent sovereign like Nawab Wajid Ali Shah. However, the Sepoys were thereby undermining the authority of Begum Hazrat Mahal to exercise direct authority in the state in violation of the principle of autonomy of leadership, which did not bode well for their relationship with the Begum. Another complicating factor in the Sepoy pursuit of Royalism was the attachment of a number of Sepoys with Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah, a leading member of the Ulama active in the

⁴⁹ Rizvi and Bhargava, *Freedom struggle in Uttar Pradesh: source material Awadh: 1857-59*, 3,7.

⁵⁰ *Freedom struggle in Uttar Pradesh: source material Awadh: 1857-59*, 7.

rebellion at Avadh, who had set up his own government in the state which appeared to pose a challenge to the political legitimacy of the Avadh Begum.

Royalty

Compared with other regions of North India, the EIC influence had appeared in Avadh much earlier when the EIC forces defeated the combined army of the Mughal Emperor, Shah Alam II, Mir Qasim, the Nawab of Bengal, and Nawab Shuja-ud-Daula of Avadh at the battle of Buxar (1764), and as one of the consequences, obtained significant concessions from Shuja-ud-Daula through the treaty of 1801.⁵¹ The treaty forced Avadh to cede its territories of Rohilkhand and Allahabad, which were incorporated into British India, and to hand over control of its army to the EIC.⁵² Henceforth, the Nawabs were bound to act upon the advice of the Company officials in the internal and external affairs of the state.⁵³ These procedures put the state under *de facto* control of the British, paving the way for eventual British annexation in 1856. British attitudes and policy changes tended to ignore the sentiments and traditions of local rulers and nobility.⁵⁴ The increasingly haughty and autocratic attitude of British authorities towards Avadh royalty was particularly galling for the latter, who had acceded to every British demand, and now felt deprived of whatever importance they held until the annexation.⁵⁵

Begum Hazrat Mahal's role in the rebellion has its antecedents in the events surrounding her husband, Nawab Wajid Ali Shah's abdication in 1856. Upon being forced to choose between signing over the accession of the state and its outright annexation by the British, the Nawab had wavered and beseeched the British resident to withdraw his ultimatum, but without success.⁵⁶ His final decision not to sign the instrument of accession seems to have been influenced by the Queen mother and

⁵¹ Barbara N. Ramusack, *The Indian Princes and their States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). 68.

⁵² *The Indian Princes and their States*: 68.

⁵³ G.S. Chhabra, *Advanced Study in the History of Modern India*, vol. 2 (New Delhi: Lotus Press, 2005). 214.

⁵⁴ Innes, *The Sepoy revolt, a critical narrative*: 16.

⁵⁵ *The Sepoy revolt, a critical narrative*: 16.

⁵⁶ Andrew Ward, *Our bones are scattered: the Cawnpore massacres and the Indian Mutiny of 1857* (New York: H. Holt and Co., 1996). 61.

Begum Hazrat Mahal herself.⁵⁷ Hazrat Mahal did not accompany the Nawab on his exile to Calcutta, the reasons for which are not clear. Her decision to remain at Lucknow could have been a matter of personal choice; or perhaps the King did not want her to accompany him; or the Queen mother, who had decided to proceed to England in the meantime to plead her son's case with Queen Victoria,⁵⁸ might have wanted Hazrat Mahal to remain behind and manage the royal affairs in her absence and that of the Nawab. At any rate, the Begum remained at Lucknow, where she quickly filled the power vacuum and emerged as the most prominent leader of the rebellion at Avadh.

Soon after the Sepoy surge at Lucknow, Begum Hazrat Mahal moved to have her son, Birjis Qadr, the heir apparent, installed on the throne. However, the final decision as mentioned above, was made by the Sepoys. Begum Hazrat Mahal would have been aware of the political vulnerability of Bahadur Shah Zafar at the time. The Mughal military effort at Delhi was making no headway against the British siege force at the outskirts of the city, which had now been greatly augmented with loyal troops from the Punjab, the North-West Frontier, and Nepal. Yet, the fact that regardless of his limited or ineffective jurisdiction, Bahadur Shah Zafar was perceived as the central figure of the rebellion around whom all Indians opposed to the British had coalesced, influenced her decision to not press a claim of kingship for Birjis Qadr. Perhaps, the Begum envisioned the eventual revival of an earlier arrangement during the eighteenth century, when the Avadh Nawab functioned as a de-facto head of the Mughal government in his capacity as grand vizier of the Mughal Emperor.⁵⁹ Or perhaps she hoped to achieve a fully sovereign status for Avadh royalty in the event the restored Mughal authority ultimately collapsed, and was prepared to bide her time until that point.

The Begum's relationship with the Sepoys under her command was complicated, not least because of their assertiveness in the matter of Birjis Qadr's investiture. While in Nepal with the retreating remnants of her army in 1859, she complained about the arrogant attitude of her troops to the Nepalese prime minister and commander-in-chief: 'On the one side I had the British as enemies, on the other, the troops made us as

⁵⁷ P. J. O. Taylor, *A star shall fall: India 1857* (New Delhi: Indus, 1993). 216.

⁵⁸ Abdul H. Sharar, Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, and Veena T. Oldenburg, *The Lucknow omnibus* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001). 65.

⁵⁹ Mukherjee, *Avadh in revolt, 1857-1858: a study of popular resistance*. 136.

goats';⁶⁰ and that 'it was neither my pleasure nor my son's that he was made a King... if my son had been [the real] King, the troops would have been under his orders; whereas he is under their orders'.⁶¹ The alienation had become evident in the earlier phases of the war when during an encounter with the British at Lucknow in 1857, the Begum berated the Sepoys for their lack of courage: 'the whole army is in Lucknow, but it is without courage; why does it not attack; is it waiting for the English to be reinforced, and Lucknow to be surrounded'?⁶² Appealing to their sense of manly pride, she even 'taunted them by an offer of breeches, which are worn in India by the gentle instead of the hardy sex'.⁶³ On another occasion, when her chiefs demanded recognition and remuneration for their role in the rebellion, she lashed out at them in these words: 'Ye wretches that plunder the city and destroy my people; ye that trample the weak and fly from the strong, and you clamour for pay and reward? How can I pay when the Treasury is within the Baillie guard? How can I reward you when the enemy is as fear-striking as a lion in his den? And yet ye brag and boast, ye murderers of innocent babes, killers of unresisting women, and massacre-agents of the weak fugitives and prisoners. Shame and thousand curses upon ye... Go away, ye barking dogs, and do not show your black faces until better deeds prove that ye are men'.⁶⁴

Begum Hazrat Mahal's refrains did occasionally seem to succeed in inspiring some confidence among the Sepoys, which accounts for why they did not abandon her altogether, and a number of them chose to remain with her, accompanying her in exile in Nepal. Her trail of resistance which led all the way to Nepal demonstrates a more sustained commitment to royalist ideology than that of her counterpart, Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar, who, as we have seen in the previous chapter, gave himself up to the EIC authorities relatively early in the war, even though the bulk of the forces under his command were not ready to give up.

⁶⁰ James H. Grant and Henry Knollys, *Incidents in the Sepoy war, 1857-58: compiled from the private journals of General Sir Hope Grant ... together with some explanatory chapters* (Edinburgh; London: W. Blackwood, 1873). 371.

⁶¹ *Incidents in the Sepoy war, 1857-58: compiled from the private journals of General Sir Hope Grant ... together with some explanatory chapters*: 371.

⁶² Rizvi and Bhargava, *Freedom struggle in Uttar Pradesh: source material Awadh: 1857-59*, 260.

⁶³ Cited in Kavanagh, *How I won the Victoria cross*: 145-46.

⁶⁴ Cited in P.C. Mukherji, *The Pictorial Lucknow*, Reprint ed. (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2003). 46-47.

Throughout the course of the rebellion, Begum Hazrat Mahal issued or authorised a number of proclamations concerning an array of issues. These proclamations provide useful insights into the beliefs and values that formed her ideology and that motivated her behaviour towards the British, the Nepalese authorities, as well as her compatriots. One such declaration was a spirited response to Queen Victoria's proclamation of 1858 announcing direct control of India by the British crown. Severely criticising the measure, the Begum appealed to fellow Indians not to be misled by the change from EIC administration to direct British rule:

The laws of the Company, the settlement of the Company, the English servants of the Company, the Governor-General, and the judicial administration of the Company, are all unchanged ... Our ancient possessions they took from us on pretence of distributing pay; and in the seventh article of the treaty they wrote on oath that they would take no more from us. If the arrangements made by the Company are then to be accepted, what is the difference between the former and the present state of things? These are old affairs; but, recently, in defiance of treaties and oaths, and notwithstanding that they owed us millions of rupees, without reason and on the pretence of the misgovernment and discontent of our people they took our country and property, worth millions of rupees. Further, it is written in the proclamation, that they want no increase of territory, but yet they cannot refrain from annexation. If the Queen has assumed the government, why does her Majesty not restore our country to us when our people wish it? It is well known that no King or Queen ever punished a whole army and people for rebellion; all were forgiven, and the wise cannot approve of punishing the whole army and people of Hindustan, for so long as the word 'punishment' remains, the disturbances will not be suppressed. There is a well-known proverb, *Murta kya na karta* (A dying man is desperate). It is impossible that a thousand should attack a million, and the thousand escape.⁶⁵

Hazrat Mahal might have been hoping that Queen Victoria might yet restore the Avadh regent under British patronage with all political and military powers to be retained by the British - a situation that existed in the state prior to the rebellion. This is what she appears to be alluding to in her proclamation when complaining about Queen Victoria for 'not restoring our country and property'. She also seems to be implying that if Queen Victoria's amnesty scheme was generous enough to extend to all Hindustanis, she and her followers might yet avail of it. The feeling of having no choice but to

⁶⁵ 'Miscellaneous Items', *The Moreton Bay Courier*: 1846 - 1861, 21 May 1859, 2-3.

continue fighting would then presumably cease. Following the successive failures of Avadh royal forces to defeat the British, the Begum had begun contemplating a conclusion of the war that would enable her to retire from her political role, and obtain a pension for her son before transferring power to the British.⁶⁶ She even sent overtures of peace to General Outram, but the General declined to accept her terms, following which, she determined to continue the war, and launched further preparations for resistance.⁶⁷

Taking up the issue of religion in her counter-proclamation, Hazrat Mahal challenged the Christian religion and vehemently criticised the various measures to impose it upon Hindustanis:

In the proclamation [by Queen Victoria] it was written that the Christian religion was true but no other creed would suffer oppression, and that the laws would be observed towards all. However, that religion is true which acknowledges one God and knows no other. Where there are three Gods in a religion neither Mussalmans nor Hindus -nay, not even Jews, Sun-worshipers, or Fire-worshipers, can believe it true. To eat pigs and drink wine, to bite greased cartridges and to mix pig's fat with flour and sweetmeats, to destroy Hindu and Mussalman temples on pretence of making roads, to build churches, to send clergymen into the streets and alleys to preach the Christian religion, to institute English schools, and pay people a monthly stipend for learning the English sciences, while the places of worship of Hindus and Mussalmans are to this day entirely neglected; with all this, how can the people believe that their religion will not be interfered with? The rebellion began with religion, and for it millions of men have been killed. Let not our subjects be deceived: thousands of men were deprived of their religion in the North-West, and thousands were hanged rather than abandon their religion.⁶⁸

Herein was a strong affirmation of the Begum's belief that Christianity was a false religion that was moreover being forced upon the Hindus and Muslims; yet religion was the *raison d'être* of the latter, who would die, and were indeed dying for it rather than give it up. But there was an irony in her dismissal of the central Christian tenet of Trinity. Fellow Hindus, on whose behalf the Begum was also making the proclamation, similarly did not believe in the unity of God, and in fact worshipped more than three deities. Judging by that standard, it was the Hindus who in Muslim estimation could qualify as

⁶⁶ *The Pictorial Lucknow*: 51.

⁶⁷ *The Pictorial Lucknow*: 52.

⁶⁸ 'Miscellaneous Items', 2-3.

disbelievers, and thus subject to potential ostracism or war; and not the Christians who were commonly believed to be 'people of the book' according to the Quran, which accorded them the status of believers.⁶⁹ Apparently, socio-cultural solidarity with Hindus, which had come about as a result of a long period of cooperation and coexistence, coupled with political necessity and the strategic imperative of cementing a military alliance against the British, necessitated innovative ways of interpreting Islam and Christianity in order to achieve her goals of defeating the British. A similar irony is evident in her denigration of the British and other Europeans in India for drinking wine. Alcohol was not a prohibited substance for them, but rather for the Muslims, as Islam prohibits it, just as it does pork.⁷⁰ The Muslim royalty and aristocracy in India on the other hand, were well-known for alcohol consumption. Among Avadh royalty itself, only Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, and his father, Nawab Amjad Ali Shah were non-drinkers, while their predecessors were conspicuous in their excessive use of wine, which was often witnessed in public gatherings.⁷¹

Another impassioned proclamation, which was issued by Birjis Qadr, and addressed to the Muslims of Avadh, Kosheya, Rampur and Moradabad, reinforced the emotions and beliefs expressed in earlier declarations.⁷² It also appeared to be an attempt to dispel any impression the Muslims might have about the status of Christians as fellow believers. Citing from the Quran, the proclamation states, 'O ye, the people who follow the religion [Islam] do not make the Jews and Christians your friends. He who forms friendship with them becomes positively one of them, inasmuch as the friend of a Jew is a Jew and that of a Christian, a Christian. Certainly God does not guide the tyrants, i.e., the infidels in the path of righteousness'. Supporting the injunction, the proclamation argues, 'This sacred text plainly shows that the forming of friendship with the Christians is an act of infidelity and that consequently he who is on friendly terms with them is not at all a Muslim'. It is thus 'the bounden duty of all the Muslims who are

⁶⁹ Among the People of the Book there is an upright community who recites the revelation of God during the night and fall prostrate before Him. They believe in God and the Last Day, enjoin what is right and forbid what is evil...Cited in Ali, *The meaning of the glorious Quran: text, translation and commentary*. Al-Imran 3:113-15.

⁷⁰ *The meaning of the glorious Quran: text, translation and commentary*. Maida 5:90-91

⁷¹ R. Bhatt, *The Life and Times of the Nawabs of Lucknow*, Second ed. (Lucknow: Rupa & Company, 2006). 197-98.

⁷² Rizvi and Bhargava, *Freedom struggle in Uttar Pradesh: source material Awadh: 1857-59*, 123-25.

the brethren of each other, to become the implacable enemies of the Christians. The non-execution of this duty by the Muslims will lead to the loss of their faith and they will in consequence become apostates'.

Addressing those who had misgivings about the kind of treatment they would receive from the British if the latter managed to re-establish their power, Birjis Qadr cited a reassurance from the Quran: 'those whose faith is defective lose no time in forming friendship with the Christians under the apprehension lest the absence of such friendship should entail some misfortune on them,' yet 'God will shortly grant victory to the Muslims or give such a turn to events that they will repent of their folly in having entertained groundless doubts'. The Muslims are then cautioned that if they act in a 'cowardly, effeminate and irresolute' manner and 'not be in union with each other, the English will overcome them, hang and shoot them, blow them up...apprehend their families, dishonour their females...plunder their property, try to make them Christians, burn or throw into the filth the holy Quran and other religious books, pull down the mosques, and put an end to the very name of Islam'. To lend doctrinal weight to these assertions, the pamphlet informs the Muslims that the proclamation has been 'upheld by the followers of both Sunnis and Shi'as'.⁷³

This was a powerful reaffirmation of the Islam-in-danger belief, but with a twist: it attempted to evoke a Muslim equivalent of the Hindu loss-of-caste argument resulting from the British issue of the cartridges, by making a case that Islam was similarly in peril under the British. The declaration in fact, goes further by clearly declaring that Christians are the enemies of Muslims as enjoined in the Quran, so that by implication, even if the cartridge incident did not constitute a sufficient religious cause for a Muslim uprising, it was incumbent upon Muslims to consider Christians as their inherent enemies, and thus destroy them.⁷⁴ However, instead of striving for ideological clarity on how Muslims should treat the British/Christians, reliance on such verses for the purpose of mobilising the Muslims would have ironically added to the Muslim

⁷³ Foreign Political Proceedings, 30th December. 1859, No. 1693, pp. 615-17; National Archives, New Delhi. Cited in *Freedom struggle in Uttar Pradesh: source material Awadh: 1857-59*, 123-25.

⁷⁴ *Freedom struggle in Uttar Pradesh: source material Awadh: 1857-59*, 123-25.

confusion on the relationship with the Christian community, since as shown above, there are also verses in the Quran clearly empathetic to Christians.

Religious, political and social beliefs were similarly expressed in another proclamation by Birjis Qadr. Addressed to all inhabitants of Avadh, the pamphlet, issued on 25 June 1858 declared that 'all Hindus and Mussalmans are aware that four things are dear to every one of them - first, religion; second, honour; third life; and fourth, property'. It assured them that the new Avadh government fully respected these rights, and allowed everyone to 'remain steadfast in his religion...and uphold his honour according to his worth and capacity, be he a person of high descent of any caste or denomination: Syed, Mughal, Pathan or Shaikh among the Mussalmans, or Brahmin, Khatri, Bais or Kaith among the Hindus; all these retain their respectability according to their respective ranks, and all persons of a lower order such as Sweeper, Chamar, Dhanook or Passee cannot claim equality with them'. In this same proclamation, the British were accused of violating these four beliefs by 'depriving the Hindus and Mussalmans of their religion and wanting them to become *Nazarenes* (Christians)'. Under their influence, 'thousands of people have embraced Christianity and are continuing to do so'. The British 'consider the honour and respectability of every person of the higher orders equal to those of the lower orders, nay, in contrast to the latter, they treat the former with contempt and disrespect, and at the instance of a *chamar* (a member of the untouchable community) force the attendance of a Nawab or Rajah, and thus subject him to indignity'. Moreover, the British 'hang the respectable people, destroy their families, and raze their homes, leaving them with nothing'. Further, 'wherever they go, they disarm the people, and hang, shoot or blow up anyone they like, and deprive anyone they choose of his faith and honour'. The zamindar class is also advised to be wary of British measures to extract revenues, as this is a subterfuge to control the rural elite 'so that the British ... might force them to become Christians, or hang or dishonour them'. Consequently, 'the Hindus and Mussalmans are hereby warned, that whosoever among you wishes to protect his faith, honour, life and property, should come forward to fight alongside the *Sirkar* [the Avadh government] against the English'.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ *Freedom struggle in Uttar Pradesh: source material Avadh: 1857-59*, 121-22.

This was a remarkable enunciation of the cultural ideology of not only the Avadh royalty, but the prevalent socio-cultural beliefs of Indian society. Accusing the British of treating *chamars* and Nawabs alike as an insult to the high-born was an expression of the entrenched social divisions that existed in Indian society, and that were being projected with the same passion as the other matters raised in this proclamation. Such proclamations also amounted to a strategy of vilifying the enemy by portraying him as less than human, so that the pitch of hatred that is required to destroy him by all means, even if such tactics may be prohibited by one's own religion, can be maintained.

The themes of religion-in-danger and resentment against British treachery were also invoked by the Avadh royalty in a number of missives to the Maharajah of Nepal in order to seek his alliance.⁷⁶ Addressing two letters to the Maharajah dated 9 and 11 May 1858, Birjis Qadr denounced the British for 'breaking the treaty [with Avadh], dethroning my father, Wajid Ali Shah, and sequestering his state, palaces, and everything he had'. The British were accused of 'committing every sort of violence, and pulling down temples, mosques, *Imambaras*, and [other] sacred places'. The threat to religion posed by the British was taken up in some detail, informing the Maharajah that 'the British some time ago attempted to interfere with the faith of both the Hindus and Mussalmans by preparing cartridges with cow's fat for the Hindus, and that of pigs for the Mussalmans, and ordering them to bite them with their teeth.... The Sepoys refused, and were ordered by the British to be blown away from guns on the parade ground. This is the cause of the war breaking out...' Appealing to the Hindu Maharajah's religious sentiments, Birjis Qadr stated that he was 'convinced that you pay great attention to religion and faith; and ... are also aware that the British do not care either for the religion or life of the Hindus and Mussalmans, and their cunning and treachery...is not unknown to you'. The Maharajah was invited to 'preserve the standard of religion...and join in killing the British, which is the only way to save the religions of both the Hindus and Mussalmans'.⁷⁷ In a similar vein, the Viceroy of Lucknow, Muhammad Khan approached the Maharajah, accusing the British of 'depriving the inhabitants of this country [Hindustan], of their religion, faith,

⁷⁶ *Freedom struggle in Uttar Pradesh: source material Avadh: 1857-59*, 444-48.

⁷⁷ *Freedom struggle in Uttar Pradesh: source material Avadh: 1857-59*, 444-45.

dominions', and inviting him to 'enter into agreements to kill, and get rid of, these infidels'.⁷⁸

In addition to eliciting the religious sympathy of the Maharajah, who was a Brahmin himself, this was an exercise in realpolitik. Avadh was completely isolated at the time and needed an ally, or at least a non-belligerent state in the vicinity where some of its defeated or deserting Sepoys could seek refuge. Since Nepal was already allied with the British, there was a possibility that such diplomatic moves might persuade the Maharajah to intercede with the British to not chase the Avadh Sepoys seeking asylum in his territory. But the Maharajah, who remained committed to the British throughout the course of the Indian rebellion, played a critical role in suppressing the Avadh rebels. The Gurkha troops of Nepal took active part in a number of successful campaigns in Avadh, especially at Gorakhpore and Lucknow.⁷⁹ By 1859, Maharajah Jang Bahadur knew that the Begum was isolated and appeared to be fighting for a lost cause. He saw no benefit in invoking British displeasure by letting the Begum's troops, who had taken refuge in Nepal, launch attacks on the pursuing British force. According to Kaye's and Malleson's account, the Maharajah 'not only informed the armed rebels who had entered Nepal that he would afford them no protection, but he allowed British troops to cross the border into Nepal to disarm the considerable body that had gathered there'.⁸⁰

Ulama

Compared to the Sepoys and royalty, the Ulama were more vociferous in the cause of Jihad. In Avadh, the resistance was spearheaded by Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah, Maulvi Sarfaraz Ali, and Maulvi Liaquat Ali, who remained the most zealous religious leaders in the state during the rebellion years. Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah led a large force of five thousand irregular cavalry, some infantry, and nine artillery guns, and fought a number

⁷⁸ *Freedom struggle in Uttar Pradesh: source material Awadh: 1857-59*, 446.

⁷⁹ P.S. Stoney, *The History of the 26th Punjabis: 1857-1923* (UK: Naval & Military Press, 2012). 54-55, 57.

⁸⁰ Malleson, *Kaye's and Malleson's history of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8*, 205.

of battles against the British at Lucknow, Faizabad, Shahjahanpur and Rohilkhand.⁸¹ He was a disciple of one Mihrab Shah, a Sufi *Shaiikh* at Gwalior, from whom Ahmadullah Shah had taken a pledge to wage Jihad against the British.⁸² Before his arrival in Avadh, Ahmadullah had issued a circular in Madras which called upon 'all true believers to rise against the English infidels and drive them from India', declaring that the only way this could be accomplished was through a Jihad; that moreover, 'whoever fell in such a war would be venerated as a martyr, while anyone who held back would be execrated as an infidel and a heretic'.⁸³

When the Bengal Army Sepoys at Faizabad rebelled on 8 and 9 June 1857, they promptly placed the Maulvi as their head.⁸⁴ A similar tendency on the part of Sepoys to elect Ulama to lead them was in evidence at Delhi as shown in the previous chapter. As the rebellion spread, Maulvi Ahmadullah attracted a large following of disciples who built a cult of invulnerability around him, which he apparently encouraged himself. At Muhammadi, Ahmadullah declared himself an independent ruler on 15 March 1858 and ordered the coins to be struck in his name. There he joined the rebel leaders, Azimullah Khan, Prince Firoze Shah, and Ismail Khan. General Bakht Khan became his vizir, Maulvi Sarfaraz Ali Jaunpuri his *qazi-ul-quzzat* (Chief Judge), and Nana Rao Peshwa was made the *divan* (Chief Revenue Officer). The other members of the council were Maulvi Liaqat Ali Ilahabadi, Dr. Wazir Khan Akbarabadi, Maulvi Faiz Ahmad Badauni and Prince Feroz Shah.⁸⁵ Ahmadullah Shah's political ambitions were revealed earlier during his stay at Aligarh where he was said to have declared that he would 'sit on the throne and issue his own coins, the whole army will obey him, and the treasure will also be under his control'.⁸⁶ This political agenda obviously brought him into conflict with Begum Hazrat Mahal.

⁸¹ William H. Russell, *My Diary in India, in the Year 1858 - 9*, vol. 1 (London: Routledge, Warne and Routledge, 1860). 152.

⁸² Salahuddin Malik, 'Ahmad Ullah Shah's nationalist struggle against British colonialism in India', *Islamic Studies* 26, no. 1 (1987): 49.

⁸³ 'Ahmad Ullah Shah's nationalist struggle against British colonialism in India', 50.

⁸⁴ Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shiism in Iran and Iraq religion and state in Awadh, 1722-1859*. 274.

⁸⁵ Syed M. Amir, 'The Great Uprising and Civil Rebellion in Shahjahanpur : A Study of Anti-British Resistance in 1857', *Shodh Sanchayan Bilingual Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences* 2, no. 1 & 2 (2011): 4.

⁸⁶ Saiyid Zaheer H. Jafri, 'The Profile of a Saintly Rebel: Maulavi Ahmadullah Shah', *Social Scientist* 26, no. 1/4 (1998): 41.

The setup of Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah's own government suggests that he distrusted the Avadh royal government, and was pursuing his own political ambitions as evidenced by minting coins in his name, and requiring the *khutba* (Muslim Friday sermons) to be read in his name (invocation of the Muslim ruler's name during the Friday congregation prayer). Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah's relationship with the Avadh government tended to be fragile. Mummoo Khan, Begum Hazrat Mahal's advisor, viewed the Maulvi as a potential threat to his position as commander of the Avadh forces, and succeeded in having him imprisoned for a while.⁸⁷ Ahmadullah Shah's establishment of his government at Shahjahanpur created a rift with Prince Firoze, Bahadur Shah Zafar's eldest son as well, who had in the meantime joined the rebel army in Avadh.⁸⁸ Consequently, both parted ways with Ahmadullah Shah after this development. Ahmadullah Shah's quest for political empowerment, which, since it appeared independent of Begum Hazrat Mahal's government, indicates that the Maulvi, even as he never refused to acknowledge the principle of royalty as personified by the Begum, was pursuing a different political ideology.

Not all members of the Avadh Ulama seemed to harbour similar political ambitions, and the religion-in-danger belief was a far greater motivation for them to fight against the British. Ahmadullah Shah's peer, Maulvi Liaquat Ali authored a proclamation calling upon all Hindus and Muslims to 'be ready to destroy the English for the purpose of defending their respective religions, otherwise neither will the faith of anyone remain, nor their lives, property, children or honour be safe'.⁸⁹ The proclamation accuses the EIC officials of asking Queen Victoria's permission to 'kill fifteen Moulvees and Pundits out of every hundred in India, as well as five hundred thousand of Hindu and Muslim Sepoys and Ryots', as that would enable them to 'make all the people of India Christian in a short time'. Queen Victoria is vilified as 'that ill-starred polluted ... (expletive) who gave her consent to the spilling of this innocent blood,' and the English officials in India castigated for being 'the accursed men who on receipt of her permission commenced committing general slaughter on the pretext of the cartridges'. Had it not been for the 'bold Sepoys who butchered the English and put an end to all their power',

⁸⁷ Tanzim Ul-Firdous, *Jang-e Azadi 1857* (Karachi: Qirtas, 2012). 152-53.

⁸⁸ *Jang-e Azadi 1857*: 125.

⁸⁹ Rizvi and Bhargava, *Freedom struggle in Uttar Pradesh: source material Awadh: 1857-59*, 160.

the latter 'would in a short time have killed everyone who refused to become a Christian'. Extending an appeal to all sections of Hindustani society, the proclamation urges the 'Kings, Vizirs, Rajahs and Nawabs to slay the English in the field of battle'. The general population - men, women, slaves, and children are urged to 'put the accursed English to death by shooting them with arrows, guns, stones, bricks, vessels,' and to destroy or hurt them in any other manner, including 'slapping them, beating them with shoes, flinging dust in their eyes, scratching and dragging them, gouging out their eyes, breaking their noses'.⁹⁰

The third prominent religious leader active in Avadh, Maulvi Muhammad Sarfaraz Ali, was equally contemptuous of the British for the damage they were believed to have wrought upon Hinduism and Islam in India. In a letter to Maharajah Jang Bahadur of Nepal on the authority of Birjis Qadr, Sarfaraz Ali described the British as 'impure infidels, tyrants, and enemies of the religion, both of Hindus and Mussalmans', who 'have fought against the army of the faithful, and slain thousands of Hindus and Mussalmans without cause'. He complained to the Maharajah about his alliance with the 'infidels', and criticised it as 'unbecoming the dignity of Princes and Kings'. Asserting that 'the chiefs of every tribe should fight for their religion as long as they live', the Maulvi asked Maharajah Jung Bahadur to 'make arrangements so that these enemies of the faith may abandon their present purpose, and meet with punishment'. As compensation, Jang Bahadur was assured: 'by this means you will obtain renown in this world, and in the next; secondly you will give satisfaction to our government, and it will be the means of increasing friendship between us'.⁹¹

The most comprehensive document detailing the ideology of the Ulama opposing the British was the '*Futteh Islam*' (Victory of Islam).⁹² In common with nearly all other proclamations by the royalty and senior members of the royal Avadh government, this pamphlet mirrors the intense hatred and distrust of the British, and of Christianity. Thus, 'the execrable Christians are openly committing oppression and tyranny', by 'killing innocent men, plundering their property, setting fire to their houses and burning

⁹⁰ *Freedom struggle in Uttar Pradesh: source material Awadh: 1857-59*, 161.

⁹¹ *Freedom struggle in Uttar Pradesh: source material Awadh: 1857-59*, 447.

⁹² Unless otherwise indicated, the excerpts below are from *Freedom struggle in Uttar Pradesh: source material Awadh: 1857-59*, 150-60.

them down, sometimes with children inside. These accursed Christians are so ungodly and inhuman that they forcibly press many poor people into their service...use them as shields in the battlefield...exposing them to shots, behind whom the Christians can operate in relative safety', but 'in fact these outrageous acts are a prelude to the downfall of these accursed people'. The people are reminded that 'this accursed lot have considered themselves as equal to the great Pharaoh, but they will, please God, be butchered in the same manner'. Fellow Hindustanis are warned that 'if they [the British] succeed in re-establishing their authority, great misfortunes will befall the Hindus, Mussalmans, Sepoys, Kings and Viziers'.

The pamphlet also accuses the British of defiling the local faiths by 'attempting to deprive the sepoys of their religion by applying impure substances to the cartridges',⁹³ but 'such measures led to their destruction like dogs' at the hands of their subjects, who were as a result, 'converted into enemies'. The people are cautioned that a 'delay in the annihilation of these Christians is involving the loss of many innocent lives, a circumstance which renders the waging of a religious war with the execrable Christians one of our bounden duties, enjoined by the Prophet'; and that 'whoever will not take advantage of this opportunity to wage a religious war, will repent in future as such a chance will never come again.' A rejoinder is made to the rebel troops: 'it is you sepoys who have kindled the flames, and these cannot be extinguished but by you'. Specific and detailed instructions are provided for combat strategy, tactics, and logistics to successfully engage the British, and the sepoys and other combatants are assured that 'God be praised, the necessary material for the execution of that duty has through His assistance been now put in our possession, i.e., the guns etc., required for a religious war', which are 'through Divine favour now in the possession of the Muslim Kings of Delhi and Lucknow; may God save the Kings of the Muslims and make them victorious.' However, there is some apprehension about the fighting ability of the Sepoys: 'you are now flying before a small body of Europeans, whom even the shoemakers and spirit-sellers can put to death'; and 'it is unlawful for holy warriors to take flight'; but they are encouraged to 'rise quickly in the name of God, and go forth to slay the infidels'. Those engaged in combat against the British are reminded that

⁹³ The reference here is to the use of cow and pig fat in the preparation of the new cartridges.

according to the Quran, even 'one hundred pious Muslims can, by the power of God, overcome two hundred infidels', but 'this blessing can be obtained if a holy leader is first appointed and then a religious war be undertaken'.

The author ⁹⁴ of *Futteh Islam* further explained the Islamic requirements of leadership in the following way: 'Appoint a *Quraishi* [one belonging to the *Quraish* tribe of Arabia] to lead you', but 'if you do not find one at this time when the infidels are in power...appoint another Mussalman who is a chief and in power...and solemnly declare yourselves as his followers'. The preference for Quraishi leadership is justified as 'the Arabs are the bravest of all nations in the whole world and the Quraishis are the most courageous amongst the Arabs. Hence God made the last Prophet a descendent of the Quraishi family and caused the Quraishis and all other Arabs to be his descendants and the followers of his faith, in order that when the Arabs and the Quraishis should be zealous for their religion, such religion might be propagated throughout the world. Certain sages have therefore pronounced it unlawful to appoint commanders except of the Quraishi family'. Quraishi descendants in Hindustan are identified as 'Syuds, Siddikies, Farookies, Osmanees, Alvees, and Abbassees Shaikhs', but 'if a Quraishi cannot be found', especially 'at a time when infidels are in power', then 'any Mussalman chief endowed with even a few qualities of a leader and observing the tenets of Muslim law can, as a matter of necessity, be selected as chief'.

An attempt is then made to invite the Hindu populace to join such a Muslim holy enterprise: 'The Hindus should join the (Muslim) Chief with a view to defend their (Hindu) religion, and should solemnly pledge themselves to be faithful; the Hindus and Mussalmans as brethren to each other, should also butcher the English, inasmuch as formerly the Mussalman Kings protected, as they felt incumbent to do, the lives and property of the Hindus with their children in the same manner as protected those of the Mussalmans, and all the Hindus with heart and soul were obedient and loyal to the Mussalman Kings. The Hindus will remain steadfast to their religion, while we retain ours. Aid and protection will be offered by us to each other. The accursed Christians were anxious to make both the Hindus and the Mussalmans, Christians...the people of

⁹⁴ The author of the pamphlet has not been determined.

every city, whether Hindu or Mussalman, should be unanimous in attacking simultaneously this accursed nation'.

Conscious of the popularity of Sufism among a large segment of Indian Muslims, the author of *Futteh Islam* further stresses that 'the solemn promise of a sepoy to his commander on the occasion of a religious war is as binding as that of a person to his spiritual guide...when a man makes such solemn declaration to his spiritual guide, he feels that he will derive spiritual benefit from him; he entertains strong feelings of attachment and devotion toward him; looks upon all his acts as correct and good and considers it easy under his (the spiritual guide's) orders to sacrifice his life, property and honour in the path of God. In like manner, the sepoys in obeying the orders of their commanders (who is regarded as a spiritual guide) will, with readiness devote their lives to the service of the Almighty'.

Unlike these three Ulama, who happened to be Sunnis, the Shi'a clergy of Avadh did not apparently issue any proclamations of Jihad. Yet, their religious role in the conflict was not insignificant. Given the importance of religious ideology in the 1857 rebellion, the active role of Avadh royalty, especially that of Begum Hazrat Mahal, and the British annexation of Avadh, most Shi'a were affected just as adversely as others, and were thus not inclined to be quietist under the circumstances. The thousands of tradesmen and labourers who fought the British in Avadh alongside rebel Sepoys would most likely have included not only Sunnis and Hindus, but also Shi'as. Some first-hand accounts of the rebellion suggest that the Shi'as did indeed participate widely in the disturbances.⁹⁵ This was especially so after the fall of Lucknow, when *Taluqdars* joined the revolt in great numbers. Although Hindu rajas dominated in much of the anti-British activity in the countryside, some Shi'as played a crucial role. Mahdi Husayn, the governor of Sultanpur, for instance emerged as the key figure in southern Avadh for organising rebel forces in the districts, as did the Shi'a Taluqdars of Mahmudabad and Bhatwama.⁹⁶

The Shi'a rural leaders gave no evidence of holding back because holy war was illegitimate during the Occultation. Of the twenty-three prominent Shi'a Ulama in

⁹⁵ Gubbins, *An account of the mutinies in Oudh: and of the siege of the Lucknow residency*: 48.

⁹⁶ Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shiism in Iran and Iraq religion and state in Awadh, 1722-1859*. 272.

Avadh, twelve actively served with Begum Hazrat Mahal's government, and nine regularly attended the court. Mirza Muhammad Ali used his influence to get for his brother command of the Fateh Jang Platoon under Husamu'd-Dawlah. Sayyid Asghar Husayn and Mir Khadim Husayn were employed in the Najib battalion, and Maulvi Hakim Hamzah Ali by the assistant to Mamun Khan.⁹⁷ Little evidence is available about the activities of Shi'a Ulama outside Lucknow, but it is known that Jafar Ali Jarchavi, a renowned Shi'a scholar of Lucknow, was arrested with a few other Shi'a notables of his town in Bulandshahr in 1857 for participating in the rebellion.⁹⁸

However, there were exceptions to Shi'a participation. Sayyid Ijaz Husayn Kinturi, an employee of the British bureaucracy, helped the British despite their tearing down his house near the residency.⁹⁹ Sayyid Ali Deoghatavi, the Shi'a prayer leader in Faizabad, denied involvement in the revolt.¹⁰⁰ The most celebrated instance of a major Shi'a scholar keeping his distance from the rebel government was that of *Mujtahid* (chief Shi'a adjudicator and head of the Shi'a community) Sayyid Muhammad Nasirabadi of Avadh. One of his sons served with the EIC, but another was a rebel. Sayyid Muhammad himself would make several private visits to the Begum and Birjis Qadr, along with his close disciples to pray for success against the British.¹⁰¹ Yet, he never declared a holy war throughout the rebellion.

An explanation for Sayyid Muhammad's seemingly contradictory behaviour may lie in the events taking place in the winter of 1857, when the British siege of Lucknow had commenced, and his doctrinal rival, the Sunni Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah was increasing his influence in Avadh. These developments may have led him to believe that a British victory was perhaps desirable. Indeed, when asked by many of his followers to grant a fatwa for Jihad against the British, he was emphatic that this could not be sanctioned by any passage or warrant of the Quran, that war against the infidels could only be justifiable when waged by a Shi'a Imam and not otherwise.¹⁰² It was also reported that in

⁹⁷ *Roots of North Indian Shūsm in Iran and Iraq religion and state in Awadh, 1722-1859.* 273.

⁹⁸ *Roots of North Indian Shūsm in Iran and Iraq religion and state in Awadh, 1722-1859.* 273.

⁹⁹ *Roots of North Indian Shūsm in Iran and Iraq religion and state in Awadh, 1722-1859.* 278.

¹⁰⁰ *Roots of North Indian Shūsm in Iran and Iraq religion and state in Awadh, 1722-1859.* 274.

¹⁰¹ *Roots of North Indian Shūsm in Iran and Iraq religion and state in Awadh, 1722-1859.* 276.

¹⁰² *Roots of North Indian Shūsm in Iran and Iraq religion and state in Awadh, 1722-1859.* 278.

his own circle, the Mujtahid condemned the war as quite unjustifiable and against the spirit of the Law as contained in the Quran.¹⁰³

On the other hand, the chief mujtahid permitted his disciples to preach Jihad, and enter the rebel government's service. Accordingly, a number of Shi'as, including younger members of his family, became Jihad advocates. However, since he had given a ruling in the 1830s allowing Jihad when the lands of Islam were attacked, and since many Iranian *Mujtahids* had sanctioned Iran's wars against Russia earlier in the century, Sayyid Muhammad adopted a cautious public position during the Indian rebellion. According to Gubbins, perhaps he felt uncertain of who was going to triumph in the conflict - the British, or the rebels, or his extensive investments in British Government securities might have divided his loyalties.¹⁰⁴ But Cole suggests that by refusing to recognize the struggle as a Jihad, Sayyid Muhammad could have been attempting to set apart his religious leadership from that of his Sunni religious rival, Ahmadullah Shah, and points to a similar conflict in Allahabad, where the Shi'a Ulama refused to call for Jihad, although the Sunni Maulvi Liaquat Ali did so unequivocally.¹⁰⁵ In Cole's view, ideological ambivalence as well as traditional religious rivalry with their Sunni counterparts were the likely causes of different Shi'a positions on the rebellion.

Although Cole appears to discount the role of the Taqiyya or dissimulation factor in Shi'a ideology, the concept offers a more plausible explanation as a religious belief and strategy of action for the Lucknow *Mujtahid* and other Shi'as who adopted an ambivalent attitude during the rebellion. Taqiyya, which means 'prudence', 'carefulness' or 'wariness' is an article of faith among the Shi'a community, which allows members of the community to 'conceal their true beliefs in a time of crisis or persecution'.¹⁰⁶ The concept of Taqiyya has its source in the Quran (3:28): 'Let not the believers take unbelievers for their allies in preference to believers. Whoever does this has no connection with Allah, unless it be that you but guard yourselves against them out of

¹⁰³ *Roots of North Indian Shiism in Iran and Iraq religion and state in Awadh, 1722-1859*. 278.

¹⁰⁴ Gubbins, *An account of the mutinies in Oudh: and of the siege of the Lucknow residency*. 49.

¹⁰⁵ Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shiism in Iran and Iraq religion and state in Awadh, 1722-1859*. 279.

¹⁰⁶ Laila Parsons, 'The Druze, the Jews, and the Creation of a Shared History', in *Muslim-Jewish Encounters: Intellectual traditions and modern politics*, ed. Ronald L. Nettle and Suha. Taji-Farouki (New York: Routledge, 2013), 141.

fear'.¹⁰⁷ In practice, it has come to mean that Muslims may exercise their faith in secret, or put off any expression or act till such time the imminent threat to their person has passed. Taqiyya thus 'guarantees, when necessary, the safety of the individual Muslim or community'.¹⁰⁸ In the Shi'a faith, hiding one's beliefs is moreover, justified on the basis that true belief is in the heart, known only to God.¹⁰⁹ Another way of interpreting Taqiyya is as a heuristic device that is available to Muslims to conduct their relations with outsiders.¹¹⁰ This is the mode in which it was applied by the Shi'a Ulama in Avadh, particularly the chief Mujtahid, as it allowed him to take varied positions on Jihad, depending on whom he was addressing, or dealing with during the rebellion years.

Conclusion

The Sepoy army at Avadh failed to defeat a much smaller British force despite having the additional advantage of fighting on home ground and enjoying wide public support, including the full backing of Begum Hazrat Mahal. In that respect, they enjoyed a more favourable position than their Delhi counterparts, who in the end were abandoned by Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar. Although the Avadh Sepoys were committed to the cause of restoring Bahadur Shah Zafar, and retained loyalty to the exiled Avadh Nawab even in his absence, they did not seem as dedicated to their own supreme commander, the Begum. This is attributable in part to the loss of cohesion and confidence within their own ranks that had set in as soon as their regimental culture broke down with the rebellion, and which in turn brought about a sense of alienation and indiscipline. Their interference in the state administration through the Sepoy Council was also an impediment to their primary responsibility of combating the British. The Begum on her part, remained resolute in her opposition to the British, and made repeated efforts to galvanise the Sepoys, but received little response. Her efforts to gain the support of

¹⁰⁷ Cited in G. Böwering, P. Crone, and M. Mirza, *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2013). 135.

¹⁰⁸ L. Clarke, 'The Rise and Decline of Taqiyya in Twelver Shi'ism', in *Reason and Inspiration in Islam: Theology, Philosophy and Mysticism in Muslim Thought*, ed. H. Landolt and T. Lawson (London; New York: I.B. Taurus, 2005), 46.

¹⁰⁹ S.A. Nigosian, *Islam: Its History, Teaching, and Practices* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004). 49.

¹¹⁰ Parsons, 'The Druze, the Jews, and the Creation of a Shared History ', 141.

neighbouring Nepal did not materialise either, as the Maharajah of Nepal remained a resolute British ally and took an active part in putting down the Avadh rebellion. The Avadh Ulama were passionate in rallying the population against the British through repeated proclamations of Jihad that demonised the enemy and encouraged strong Hindu-Muslim unity against a common enemy. But their Jihad pronouncements suffered from internal contradictions, as evidenced by the dichotomies between their pronouncements and behaviour during and after the rebellion, which blunted the message of Jihad that they had set out to transmit and implement. Ironically, Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah, the most active religious leader among them, who was also the most effective military commander in Avadh, lent only half-hearted support to the Begum as he was harbouring political ambitions of his own. The collective commitment to Royalism therefore, also lost its edge. However, the royalist, cultural and religious ideologies did play a role by providing the initial stimulus to the three actors to rise against the British, and to carry on the resistance for at least two years.

Chapter 3: Punjab

Introduction

This chapter opens with a survey of the societal order and political environment in pre 1857 Punjab, providing the context in which Muslim ideology and behaviour were formed towards the 1857 rebellion. The three sections that follow explore the ways in which Muslim Sepoys, royalty and Ulama of Punjab understood and applied the ideologies of royalism, culturalism and Jihad during the 1857 conflict. It is argued that whereas the Punjabi Muslims shared a similar interpretation of culturalism with their adversaries in Avadh and Delhi, it was pursued with greater consistency by the Punjabis, especially the Sepoys who were more committed to the military and tribal dimensions of culturalism. On the other hand, there was a lack of attachment to the concept of Mughal royalism on the part of all three groups. The province had always been treated as a fringe territory by the Mughal Emperors, and when Mughal influence all but disappeared due to successive Afghan, Sikh, and British inroads, whatever affinity may have existed for the Mughals was also gone. The ideological approach to Jihad by the Punjabi Muslim Sepoys and Sufi elite was unique, in that it was never given formal effect, yet that did not seem to adversely affect their religiosity, nor apparently create any ideological confusion given the determination with which they fought their adversaries.

Background

Muslim presence in the Punjab was initially established in the eighth century with the arrival of the forces of the Arab general Muhammad Bin Qasim in Multan via Sindh.¹ A much larger influx in the region occurred between the eleventh and sixteenth centuries, which is associated with the military campaigns of various Turk and Afghan generals, and the Mughal invasion of Babur. A number of Muslim missionaries and Sufis from Central and West Asia also arrived during this period, including such luminaries as Shah

¹ Maclagan, *Gazetteer of the Multan District*: 18.

Mir Surkhposh, Muhammad Ghaus, and Farid Ganj-i-Shakkar, who became founders of the Suharwardi, Qadri, and Chishti orders in the Punjab.² Internal migration contributed to Muslim numbers when a wave of Baluchis, Rajputs and Jats entered the region from neighbouring Baluchistan, Sindh and Rajputana in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.³ By the mid nineteenth century, the total Muslim population had reached seven and a half million.⁴ Agriculture, government service and soldiering were the mainstay of the majority, while a substantial number worked as artisans and labourers in village communities and cities. By contrast, the Hindus and Sikhs, the two principal non-Muslim inhabitants, formed the minority population with five and a half million.⁵ The Sikhs started replacing Muslim domination of agriculture and soldiering by the end of the eighteenth century. The Punjabi Hindus, who mostly belonged to the Khatri and Arora castes, were mainly engaged in trade and banking, and maintained a relatively large presence in Lahore, Multan and other urban centres.⁶

Most of the Muslim population lived in rural areas, formed into village and agnate communities.⁷ The tribal structure was composed of numerous clans, with members of a clan generally owing allegiance to a single chief.⁸ Due to a relatively egalitarian religious order and greater horizontal and vertical mobility than its pre-Muslim structure, the Muslim tribe functioned more as a social class than a rigid caste.⁹ The Rajputs, Jats, Baluchis and Pathans formed the major tribes with a high social, political, and military reputation among the Punjabis.¹⁰ The Pathan settlers, who had immigrated with successive Afghan incursions into the region, included the Sherwani Afghans of Maler Kotla, and the Pathans of Mianwali, Multan, and the *Derajat* among others. The Pathans were initially organised as patrilineal communities that projected ancient Pathan

² Khursheed K. Aziz, *Religion, land and politics in Pakistan: a study of Piri-Muridi* (Lahore: Vanguard, 2001). 4-6.

³ J. M. Wikeley, *Punjabi Musalmans*, Second ed. (Lahore: Book House, 1969). 15.

⁴ S.S. Thorburn, *The Punjab in Peace and War* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 1986). 186.

⁵ Masood A. Zahid, 'Orientalism's Last Battle in the 19th Century Punjab', *Pakistan Vision* 10, no. 1: 27-28.

⁶ 'Orientalism's Last Battle in the 19th Century Punjab', 27-28.

⁷ James Wilson, *Gazetteer of the Shahpur District, 1897* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1994). 95.

⁸ Mansel L. Dames, *The Baloch race: A historical and ethnological sketch* (London: Royal Asiatic society, 1904). 6.

⁹ Wikeley, *Punjabi Musalmans*: 7.

¹⁰ *Punjabi Musalmans*: 15.

culture and a preference for military life.¹¹ They settled alongside local Punjabi Muslims and gradually adopted indigenous languages and customs, but retained a pride in their heritage and continued to function as a military and land-owning class. The Jats, Rajputs and Baluchis were similarly associated with agriculture and the military profession. The chiefs of all four major tribal groups were selected by individual clans, who often had to fight through force of arms or personality to retain their leadership in the face of occasional challenges. Known as *Maliks*, *Sardars* or *Khans*, who were also invariably *jagirdars* or *zamindars*, the chiefs wielded extensive local influence and the ability to organise and lead their armed followers in combat.¹² However, except for occasional forays to encroach upon a neighbour's territory or seek revenge for a perceived wrong, there was no large-scale warfare between the tribes.¹³

The religious elite among the Punjabi Muslims consisted of *Pirs*, *Sajjada Nasheen* and *Syeds*. The *Pirs* or *Sufis*, who had the same elevated status in Punjab as the *Ulama* in Delhi and other parts of Northern India, were located at the apex of society and highly revered for their descent from Prophet Muhammad. Their *khanqas* and shrines served as platforms for initiating disciples, accepting offerings, bestowing blessings, and providing guidance on various issues concerning personal and collective affairs.¹⁴ Visitors and *murids* (sworn devotees) treated these centres as places of pilgrimage where they could seek spiritual enlightenment or renewal, individual blessings, and *mannat* from a living *Pir* or his *Sajjada Nashin*.¹⁵ The *piri-muridi*,¹⁶ evolved into a cult among Punjabi Muslims, which was so pervasive that nearly all families, and sometimes an entire tribe had a patron *Pir*.¹⁷

Sufi leaders of the Punjab did not seem to be as concerned with issues of Islamic jurisprudence as with the everyday spiritual needs of their constituency.¹⁸ Consequently,

¹¹ Henry W. Bellew, *A general report on the Yusufzais* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1864; repr., 2001). 74.

¹² Thorburn, *The Punjab in Peace and War*: 23.

¹³ *The Punjab in Peace and War*: 23.

¹⁴ Anna Suvarova, *Muslim Saints of South Asia: The Eleventh to Fifteenth Centuries* (London: Routledge, 2004). 10.

¹⁵ *Muslim Saints of South Asia: The Eleventh to Fifteenth Centuries*: 10.

¹⁶ MacLagan, *Gazetteer of the Multan District*: 120.

¹⁷ Suvarova, *Muslim Saints of South Asia: The Eleventh to Fifteenth Centuries*: 13.

¹⁸ J. Royal Roseberry, *Imperial rule in Punjab: the conquest and administration of Multan, 1818-1881* (Riverdale, Maryland: Riverdale Co., 1987). 4.

doctrinal matters and the transmission of standard religious learning were left to the purview of *Maulvis*, who were placed lower in the religious order. The Maulvi-Sufi differentiated order catered to the religious requirements of Muslims who were attracted to the streams for the separate benefits that each brought. Maulvis administered birth, marriage, burial and other rites, and provided advice on inheritance, property, and personal disputes. Unlike Pirs, however, these religious figures did not possess a cult following. Another branch of the religious elite, the *Syeds*, were located between the Maulvi class and the Pirs. Syeds constituted a very small proportion of the Punjabi population and like *Pirs*, held an elevated social and religious position.

The Punjabi Muslims lacked central leadership or political institutions of their own, and were governed by non-Muslim or foreign Muslim rulers throughout their history. In such an environment, local tribal and religious structures substituted for political-military units. These power centres were diffused across the clan chiefs, who also happened to be the landed elite, and the Pirs or *Sajjada Nashin*, who dominated the religious order. The role of individual and group interests and choices hence played an important part in the political conduct of these elite.¹⁹ They were not however, entirely autonomous in the exercise of influence. Shared beliefs, values and concerns of the clan members, who also constituted the community of disciples of *Pirs* and *Sajjada Nashin*, had to be considered and projected in the interests of solidarity, survival, and traditional values.

The political history of Muslim Punjab can be divided into three broad phases. Under Turk, Afghan and Mughal rulers, the area was administered as the provinces of Multan and Lahore with separate governors.²⁰ The foreign rulers treated it as an outlying territory, which only assumed greater importance for a short duration during the reign of Emperor Akbar, when it became a staging ground for campaigns against insurgent Pathan tribes to the north. Mughal authorities preferred to recruit frontier Pathans, Afghans, Persians, Turks, Hindu Rajputs and *Rangbars* (Muslim Rajputs of Rajputana), rather than Punjabi Muslims for their armies.²¹ The latter were also largely ignored for

¹⁹ *Imperial rule in Punjab: the conquest and administration of Multan, 1818-1881*: 37.

²⁰ Wikeley, *Punjabi Musalmans*: 22.

²¹ Rafiuddin Ahmed, *History of the Baloch Regiment: 1820-1939, the colonial period* (Abbottabad: Baloch Regimental Centre, 1998). 3.

important political positions at the royal court at Delhi.²² As Mughal and Afghan power went into decline during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, centrifugal tendencies began to emerge in the Punjab. Clan chiefs carved out or consolidated existing zones of influence in which they became largely independent, while the principalities of Maler Kotla in East Punjab and Bahawalpur to the South severed their feudatory ties with the Mughal and Durrani Afghan rulers.

Another consequence of the Mughal-Afghan decline was the rise of the Sikhs in the Punjab. Sikh dominance was a critical turning point in Punjabi history, as for the first time since the advent of Islam in the region, control of the region had passed to a non-Muslim power, whose warriors moreover had a history of conflict with their Afghan and Mughal predecessors spanning over a century. The Sikhs resented the support local Muslims had rendered to the Afghan King, Ahmad Shah Abdali during his military campaigns in the Punjab.²³ Muslim support for the British during the Anglo-Sikh wars (1845-1846; 1848-1849) intensified Sikh resentment. On their part, the Punjabi Muslims harboured anti-Sikh feelings for the religious restrictions the Sikhs had imposed upon them after coming to power.²⁴ Under Sikh control, local Muslims not only lost some of their religious freedoms, but also the privileged land-owning status they had hitherto possessed.²⁵

The political situation underwent another transformation when the British displaced Sikh rule during the political instability following the death of Maharajah Ranjit Singh. The entire Punjab, excluding Maler Kotla, Bahawalpur, and the Cis-Sutlej states, was annexed by the British following their victory in the Anglo-Sikh wars. Significant changes ensued in the newly acquired territory, now termed British Punjab, as the EIC officials put into place a system of governance and public relations that had little resemblance with past arrangements. These measures included an efficient administrative system, professional policing, and vastly increased employment opportunities, particularly in the military. British officials managed to restore peace in a

²² *History of the Baloch Regiment: 1820-1939, the colonial period*: 42.

²³ Khushwant Singh, *A history of the Sikhs* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963). 23.

²⁴ Imran Ali, 'The Punjab and the Retardation of Nationalism', in *The Political Inheritance of Pakistan*, ed. Donald A. Low (London: Macmillan, 1991), 33-34.

²⁵ Septimius S. Thorburn, *Musalmans and money-lenders in the Punjab* (London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1886). 10-11.

hitherto turbulent Punjab, adopt a policy of non-interference in local customs and religious beliefs, and maintain neutrality towards Muslims and Sikhs.²⁶

Sepoys

When news of the rebellion reached Punjab, numerous Muslim tribal chiefs and their followers promptly came out in support of the British government against the rebel Sepoys. In Central Punjab, the chiefs of Kasur provided foot and horse soldiers for guarding strategic ferries on the Sutlej and Ravi rivers, and performing other military and police duties.²⁷ Nawab Ali Raza Khan from Lahore, whose ancestors had arrived in India with the army of Nadir Shah of Iran, supplied a troop of armed horsemen for the campaign against the Sepoy army at Delhi.²⁸ Muslim chiefs of Gujranwala supplied levies for various operations in support of the British authorities.²⁹ In Southern Punjab, powerful *Tammandars* (clan heads) of the Baluch tribes of *Maṣari*, *Khosa*, *Dreeshak* and *Leghari* in Dera Ghazi Khan district furnished infantry and cavalry for manning military outposts in their areas of influence. Several hundred cavalry volunteers from Multan enabled the British to disarm the Sepoy regiments in the area that were suspected of revolt.³⁰ Ghulam Hassan Khan, a Pathan chief of Dera Ismail Khan, raised an entire cavalry regiment among local *Baluchis* and Pathans for service with the British in Avadh and Delhi. Also known as the Multani cavalry, it saw action at a number of theatres of war in 1857.³¹ Another spirited response came from three Rajput chiefs of the Tiwana clan from Shahpur district, who mustered hundreds of their clansmen for military operations against rebel Sepoys in Northern India and the Punjab.³² Northern Punjab was similarly active, where a leader of the *Khattar* tribe,³³ Muhammad Hayat Khan,

²⁶ Sailendra N. Sen, *History Modern India* (New Delhi: New Age International, 2006). 1.

²⁷ A. A. Roberts, *Reports on Events in the Lahore Division*, Mutiny records: Reports in two parts. Part I (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1911; repr., 2005). 262.

²⁸ Andrew J. Major, *Return to Empire: Punjab under the Sikhs and British in the Mid-nineteenth Century* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1996). 199.

²⁹ G. W. Hamilton, 'Reports on Events in the Multan Division', in *Mutiny records: Reports in two parts. Part II* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1911; reprint, 2005), 38.

³⁰ C. Browne, 'Reports on Events in the Leiah Division', in *Mutiny records: Reports in two parts. Part II* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1911; reprint, 2005), 89-91.

³¹ G. Smith and W.M. Thackeray, *The Cornhill Magazine* (London: Smith, Elder and Company, 1863). 45.

³² Lepel H. Griffin, *The Punjab Chiefs: Historical and Biographical Notices of the Principal Families in the Punjab* (Lahore: McGarthy Press, 1865). 533-34.

³³ Bakhshish S. Nijjar, *Origins and history of Jats and other allied nomadic tribes of India: 900 B.C.-1947 A.D* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2008). 388.

rallied to the British cause with a band of warriors that he had rallied especially for the purpose,³⁴ who then joined Brigadier-General John Nicholson's Punjab Moveable Column for the siege and assault of Delhi.³⁵

Apart from representation in clan levies and local police, a large number of Rajput, Pathan, Jat, and Baluch tribesmen joined the regiments that the British had started raising since their annexation of the province.³⁶ The First Baluch, an infantry regiment, was almost entirely made up of Punjabi Muslims, and it became part of Nicholson's Moveable Column that fought against the rebel Sepoys at Delhi.³⁷ The Tenth Punjab Infantry similarly attracted a significant number of Muslim tribesmen, and took an active part in various anti-rebel campaigns in West Punjab and Delhi.³⁸ The Eleventh Punjab Regiment, which had been raised just before the rebellion performed an important role in guarding the Multan cantonment, and dispersing the rebel Sepoys in the region.³⁹

The timely and overwhelming support of these Muslim combatants was crucial to British success against the rebel Sepoy army. Despite a successful assumption of power following the Anglo-Sikh wars, the Punjab Board of Administration faced a precarious situation when the 1857 rebellion broke out. As signs of disaffection rose among native regiments of the Bengal Army in the Punjab, the British were not in a position to counter the threat with the limited European troops at their disposal.⁴⁰ The loyalty of local Muslims, including those already enlisted in the military units formed during the Anglo-Sikh wars could not be relied upon, as they might be susceptible to the appeals being made by Bahadur Shah Zafar and his Sepoy leadership to overthrow the British.⁴¹ If the Sepoys in the British regiments of the Punjab had heeded these calls, it is highly unlikely the British could have succeeded in quelling the rebellion on their own. However, none of these fears materialised as the Punjabi Muslims, including their Sikh

³⁴ Griffin, *The Punjab Chiefs: Historical and Biographical Notices of the Principal Families in the Punjab*: 567.

³⁵ Charles Allen, *Soldier Sabibs: the men who made the North-West Frontier* (London: Abacus, 2001). 288.

³⁶ Browne, 'Reports on Events in the Leiah Division', 86-87.

³⁷ John F. Riddick, *The History of British India: a Chronology* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2006). 60.

³⁸ Browne, 'Reports on Events in the Leiah Division', 92-93.

³⁹ MacLagan, *Gazetteer of the Multan District*: 72.

⁴⁰ Major, *Return to Empire: Punjab under the Sikhs and British in the Mid-nineteenth Century*: 182-83.

⁴¹ One such proclamation, issued by the Hindu and Muslim rebel Sepoys of Delhi to elicit universal support contained specific appeals to Punjabis. See Roberts, *Reports on Events in the Lahore Division*: 255-58.

counterparts in the province, flocked to the British side against fellow Indians in overwhelming numbers. Dispersed across various military formations and theatres of war, the Muslim Sepoys fought ferociously and were successful in every campaign against the rebel Army. A list of the killed and wounded indicates the enthusiasm with which the Punjabi Muslims fought during the assault on Delhi that destroyed the epicentre of the Indian rebellion and led to the deposition of Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar.⁴²

The decision by these Muslims to stand by the British during the rebellion years was motivated by an interwoven ideology of tribalism, militarism, and religiosity. Converted from the Hindu warrior castes, Muslim Sepoys of the Punjab put great value on military virtues and took immense pride in their ancestry. Like their Hindu counterparts, they formed the bulk of the warrior and landowning class. The Rajput, Jat, Pathan and Baluch cultures to which they belonged were designed to foster a martial spirit and deem any occupation other than that of arms, government service, and land ownership as derogatory to their dignity.⁴³ A martial tribesman increased his prestige in the community by congregating with others of his kind rather than with those that he considered non-martial.⁴⁴ Nostalgia about past exploits and a fierce pride in lineage and tradition permitted even a poor tribal member to consider himself equal in status to any powerful landholder or influential member of his clan.⁴⁵

Unlike in Delhi or Avadh, the military impulse of the martial tribes found a suitable outlet in a professional army. The Sepoys developed strong military camaraderie with their British officers, and the relationship became stronger through the experience of combat during the Anglo-Sikh wars and then the 1857 rebellion. British commanders, with whom the men were in frequent contact, often exposed themselves to risk alongside the Sepoys. The British officers did not insist on too much discipline, which

⁴² Of the total British force of ten thousand at Delhi, nearly one third casualties were incurred by Punjabi Muslims. See Roberts, *Forty-one years in India. From subaltern to commander-in-chief*: 140.

⁴³ Thorburn, *Musalmins and money-lenders in the Punjab*: 26.

⁴⁴ John T. Hitchcock, 'The Idea of the Martial Rajput', *The Journal of American Folklore* 71, no. 281 (1958): 216-23.

⁴⁵ Lindsey Harlan, *Religion and Rajput women: the ethic of protection in contemporary narratives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). 27.

fostered high morale and inclined the men to fight more effectively.⁴⁶ They also carried the curved sword with which they were more comfortable, and could use to better effect than the standard British issue in the Indian army.⁴⁷ Service in the Irregular regiments was particularly attractive, where the soldiers and native officers wore uniforms conforming to their local style, which they preferred over the strictly European uniforms.⁴⁸

Unlike the Bengal Army which rebelled in Delhi and Avadh, a sense of *esprit-de-corps* developed among the troops in Punjab as a result of favourable terms of service, long association, shared responsibilities, and common interests. Service pay was excellent, with each cavalry trooper in a Punjabi regiment receiving twenty-five rupees per month, which was much higher than what his counterpart in an EIC regiment was paid.⁴⁹ The men had an opportunity to serve with their own clansmen in separate companies of the regiments as against the practice of composite units in the presidency armies.⁵⁰ While this strengthened the cultural ties between members of homogenous companies and platoons, it minimised inter-ethnic tension across the regiment, replacing it with healthy competition. Even as the overall command was exercised by British officers, the soldiers were directly led by experienced native officers who were often their clan chiefs, acquaintances and relatives. Such an arrangement instilled confidence and raised the morale in the ranks. The Sepoys respected their British officers as they had treated them well and were hence worthy of their trust.⁵¹ During the course of service, the men also developed a strong attachment to the concept of organised militarism as symbolised by regimental flags, distinctive dresses, marching bands, parades, badges of honour and other accoutrements.⁵² Such a military culture of horizontal cohesion, or the bonds between the Sepoys, and vertical cohesion, or the strong relationship with their

⁴⁶ Julius G. Medley, *A year's campaigning in India: from March, 1857, to March, 1858* (London: W. Thacker and Co., 1858). 4.

⁴⁷ T.A. Heathcote, *The Indian Army: the garrison of British imperial India, 1822-1922* (London: David and Charles, 1974). 39.

⁴⁸ *The Indian Army: the garrison of British imperial India, 1822-1922*: 38.

⁴⁹ Henry Steinbach, *The Punjab: being a brief account of the country of the Sikhs* (London: Smith, Elder and co., 1846; repr., 2005). 96.

⁵⁰ Richard G. Fox, *Lions of the Punjab: culture in the making* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). 146.

⁵¹ H. B. Edwardes, 'Reports of Events in the Peshawar Division', in *Mutiny records: Reports in two parts. Part II* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications; reprint, 2005), 155, 57.

⁵² Ahmed, *History of the Baloch Regiment: 1820-1939, the colonial period*: 31.

native and British officers stood in contrast to the incohesiveness that was rampant at both levels in the rebel Bengal Army. As shown in the previous chapters, the Sepoy crisis of organisation and leadership in Delhi and Avadh was marked by the breakdown of familiar military structures and a relative lack of cohesion, exacerbated by inexperienced and weak leadership.

An attachment to militarism that oriented the Punjabi Muslim Sepoys and their chiefs toward the British military establishment also provided an opportunity to redress the sense of deprivation they had been experiencing from Sikh domination of military service.⁵³ The Muslims were not in a position to pose a military challenge to the Sikhs, much less to the Anglo-Sikh collusion that was materializing following the enlistment of Sikh warriors of the former Khalsa army in the regiments the British were raising in the province. Yet, they could channelize their antipathy for the Sikhs by competing with them on a neutral platform such as the British military structure, where the Muslims could demonstrate their martial prowess while avoiding a direct confrontation, the costs of which would have been prohibitive. The institution of the British regiment provided just such an avenue, with the result that within a few short years leading up to the rebellion, the Muslims had joined these military units in substantial numbers, even forming the majority in the cavalry.⁵⁴

Alliance with the British was motivated by another grievance that the Punjabi Muslims held against the Sikhs. These Muslims had experienced the exorbitant tax policies and high-handed attitude of the Sikh soldiers and revenue collectors,⁵⁵ who sometimes razed entire villages.⁵⁶ But the changes they experienced with the British annexation were a welcome development. For the first time in their history, peasants and farmers, who comprised the bulk of the population, received permanent title to their land and the benefit of fixed and fair revenue.⁵⁷ Significantly, the British military and civil authorities introduced a system of land grants for selected Sepoys with good service, which, on top

⁵³ Yong, *The Garrison State: Military, Government and Society in Colonial Punjab, 1849-1947*: 60.

⁵⁴ Omar Khalidi, 'Ethnic Group Recruitment in the Indian Army: The Contrasting Cases of Sikhs, Muslims, Gurkhas and Others', *Pacific Affairs* 74, no. 4 (2001): 540.

⁵⁵ Lepel H. Griffin, *The rajas of the Punjab: being the history of the principal states in the Punjab and their political relations with the British government* (Lahore: Punjab Printing Co., 1870). v-vi.

⁵⁶ *The rajas of the Punjab: being the history of the principal states in the Punjab and their political relations with the British government*: v-vi.

⁵⁷ Prakash Tandon, *Punjabi century, 1857-1947* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968). 13-14.

of the promise of regular pensions, served as an incentive to seek military service, just as it had in the Bengal Army.⁵⁸ Employment was also opened up in the popular police, judiciary and other departments of the new colonial government.⁵⁹

Punjabi Muslim native officers and Sepoys had an agricultural background, and they valued their estates and small farms, not only for economic benefit, but also for the respect and confidence associated with ownership of land in Punjabi society.

Attachment to land was an important feature of tribal ideology. The tribal communities considered land as a source of security, which additionally determined their status and provided a sense of belonging and identity. Such a concept of 'place attachment' refers to the range of thoughts, beliefs, feelings and behaviour that are evoked in reference to a specific geographic location. As Milligan explains, connections to a physical locality occur in two interconnected dimensions, which he terms the interactional past, and the interactional potential.⁶⁰ The former refers to the memories and previous experiences of interactions associated with a site, while the latter is the imagined or anticipated experiences perceived as likely or possible to occur in a site.⁶¹ For the tribal Sepoys and their chiefs, the threat to, or loss of landholding status that they faced from the Sikhs threatened not only a disruption of their livelihood, but also a complete social and cultural dislocation from their environment. This factor pushed them towards the British, whose land settlement and revenue policies as discussed above had created trust and goodwill among the Muslim tribal-military community, one of the consequences of which was the Punjabi Muslim decision to collaborate with the British during the 1857 war.⁶²

A cultural ideology that valued military service, land holding status, and tribal affinity was not an impediment to religiosity. Punjabi Muslim Sepoys remained deeply conscious of their religious ideology. Upon their conversion to Islam, the tribesmen had

⁵⁸ Douglas Peers, 'South Asia', in *War in the Modern World Since 1815*, ed. J. Black (New York: Routledge, 2003), 47.

⁵⁹ Asad A. Khan, 'A Temporal View of Socio-Political Changes in Punjab', *A Research Journal of South Asian Studies* 24, no. 2 (2009): 304.

⁶⁰ Melinda J. Milligan, 'Interactional Past And Potential: The Social Construction Of Place Attachment', *Symbolic Interaction* 21, no. 1 (1998): 1.

⁶¹ 'Interactional Past And Potential: The Social Construction Of Place Attachment', 1.

⁶² Griffin, *The rajas of the Punjab: being the history of the principal states in the Punjab and their political relations with the British government*: v-viii.

adopted the common rituals and beliefs associated with the new faith, yet they continued to retain a strong belief in the social and military superiority that was associated with their pre-Muslim traditions. As observed in numerous campaigns of the 1857 rebellion, Muslim Sepoys regularly performed the ritual prayer and routinely rode into battle with the Qur'an in their saddle-brows,⁶³ even as they knew that many of their enemies were fellow Muslims who would be invoking the same divine help in combat.⁶⁴ The paradox of resorting to religion in combat against their co-religionists was resolved by treating the latter as aliens with whom very little besides Islam was shared. There were few Delhi and Avadhi Muslims among the Punjabi Muslim population. Their language and cultural norms were alien to the local population. Some of them were employed as clerks or other petty officials in the Punjab government, with whom the Punjabi Sepoys, who were mostly confined to their villages or military garrisons, had little interaction. There were also some Indian Muslim military deserters in the Punjab from EIC regiments who had taken refuge in the province under various guises, and were hence held in disdain by the locals for having abandoned a service that was considered to bestow respect and honour.⁶⁵ Such perceptions created an image of Hindustanis as the 'Other', which enabled Punjabi Muslims to cope with the ideological confusion they would otherwise have experienced in identifying fellow Muslims as foes.

It is significant that no call for a collective Jihad was ever made to inspire Punjabi Muslims in combat during the rebellion years. Yet, neither had any *fatwas* or appeals been issued by local religious authorities forbidding Jihad against the rebel force. The Punjabi Muslims were highly susceptible to the religious and political influence of their Sufi leadership.⁶⁶ As the Sufis openly supported the British drive against the rebel Sepoys, even though refraining from a declaration of Jihad against the rebels, local Muslim Sepoys and officers, a large number of whom were disciples of these Sufis, took that as a cue to sanctify their combat participation. By contrast, the process of Jihad transmission in Delhi and Avadh occurred somewhat differently, and with different consequences. Although the Delhi and Avadh Ulama had made clear and impassioned

⁶³ Edwardes, 'Reports of Events in the Peshawar Division', 155.

⁶⁴ Smith and Thackeray, *The Cornhill Magazine*: 43-46.

⁶⁵ Shahamet Ali, *The History of Bahawalpur: With Notices of the Adjacent Countries of Sindh, Afghanistan, Multan, and the West of India* (London: James Madden, 1848). xv.

⁶⁶ Suvorova, *Muslim Saints of South Asia: The Eleventh to Fifteenth Centuries*: 12.

calls for Jihad, these did not have the same powerful impact on the Sepoys there. As discussed in those chapters, the Ulama community in Northern India was divided on the legitimacy of Jihad against the British, and a large number of them stayed away from the conflict. Thus the message of Jihad the Sepoys received from the external environment was a mixed one, and this in turn had a demoralising effect on their combat spirit. Punjabi Muslim Sepoys on the other hand, received no ambiguous messages from their religious elite who appeared unanimous in supporting the war, and taking part in combat themselves. At the same time, the Punjabi Muslims remained indifferent to the religious grievances that their counterparts were so emphatically expressing against the British, which clearly suggests that they either questioned their credibility, or considered them of minor importance. At any rate, in the Punjab itself, the British appeared to have done none of what they were being accused of in Northern India, so it did not raise any alarm among the Punjabis. Their Sufi leadership too, never expressed any concern about British violation of Islamic norms and sensibilities. All of this created a sense of religious security among the Punjabi Muslim Sepoys and their native officers, which enabled them to ignore the messages that the rebel elements were communicating to them to desert the British and join the resistance under Bahadur Shah Zafar.⁶⁷ It also raised their morale or will-to-fight against their foes, whether Hindu or Muslim, in combat. An instance of this religious zeal was evidenced at Hurdwar on 17th April, 1858, when the men of the Multani regiment of cavalry became 'flush with excitement' during an assault on a rebel force and 'raised their hands towards heaven', as they pounced upon the enemy with the Muslim war cry of 'Allah-o-Akbar' (God is great).⁶⁸

Punjabi Muslims had nothing at stake in the revival of Mughal rule. Punjab was treated as a fringe territory by the Mughals, even when the empire was at its zenith under Emperors Akbar and Aurangzeb.⁶⁹ Opportunities for military employment under the Mughals were non-existent for most Punjabis as the Mughals and their agents preferred Hindu Rajputs, Persians and Afghans.⁷⁰ It was therefore unlikely that the pattern would

⁶⁷ Frederick Cooper, *The crisis in the Punjab: From the 10th of May until the fall of Delhi* (London: Smith, Elder and Company, 1858). 23.

⁶⁸ Smith and Thackeray, *The Cornhill Magazine*: 46.

⁶⁹ William Irvine and Jadunath Sarkar, *Later Mughals*, vol. II (Calcutta: M.C. Sarkar & Sons, 1922). 101.

⁷⁰ Tandon, *Punjabi century, 1857-1947*: 26.

change in the event Mughal rule was restored. Moreover, when the rebellion came, it was viewed in the Punjab as an affair which was restricted to a few areas of Hindustan, and which the Mughal Emperor and his Sepoys had launched for their own interests.⁷¹ It therefore had no bearing on the Punjabis, whose primary concern was with local conditions and how these could be manipulated or tailored to align with their own ideological motives and priorities. As the Mughals had long since retreated from the Punjab in the face of successful Afghan and Sikh inroads, whatever policies and ideologies the Punjabi Muslims pursued had only to take into account the attitude and conduct of the Sikhs, and their successors, the British. Under these conditions, the Mughals had become irrelevant for the security and well-being of Punjab. Consequently, the Punjabi public, which included the Muslim Sepoys, felt no affinity for, or commitment to the concept of Mughal royalism. Their own royalty as represented by the potentates of Bahawalpur and Maler Kotla was similarly uninclined towards Bahadur Shah Zafar and the Begum of Avadh, which reinforced the general sentiment of the Punjabi Muslims against the Hindustani royalty.

Royalty

Among the autonomous states of Punjab that supported the British, Maler Kotla state was founded by a Muslim dynasty, whose founder, Bayazid Khan, was a Sherwani Pathan from Afghanistan who served as a senior officer in the Mughal army. As an acknowledgement of his military services, Emperor Aurangzeb had granted him princely title and the right to turn his *jagir* into an imperial principality.⁷² His successors gradually expanded the territory and established a significant military presence in the Cis-Sutlej region of the Punjab in the ensuing years. When the 1857 rebellion broke out, Maler Kotla's share in the total military force formed in Punjab on the British call was limited, but it was significant because of its proximity to the strategic Grand Trunk

⁷¹ Frederick Cooper, *The crisis in the Punjab, from the 10th of May until the fall of Delhi* (London: Smith, Elder, 1858). 23.

⁷² Iftikhar A. Khan, *History of the ruling family of Sheikh Sadruddin, Sadar-i-Jahan of Malerkotla, 1449 A.D. to 1948 A.D.*, ed. R.K. Ghai (Patiala: Publication Bureau, Punjabi University, 2000). 18.

road, which formed the main corridor between Delhi and Punjab.⁷³ If the Nawab had risen against the British, this vital supply line could have been disrupted, hindering British provisions and troops being rushed to reinforce the siege of Delhi. The action would also have assisted the safe passage of the rebel Bengal Army Sepoys making their way to Delhi from their garrisons in the Punjab. Adopting such a course however, would have entailed considerable political and military risk. Maler Kotla was surrounded by Sikh states, all of whom had pledged unequivocal support to the British, and were supplying large numbers of Sikh youths and military veterans to put down the Sepoy rebellion.⁷⁴ Given the protracted Muslim-Sikh hostility following the long Sikh rule over a predominantly Muslim Punjab, any action on Maler Kotla's part to aid the rebel Sepoys could have brought swift retribution by the Sikhs and the British. Moreover, Maler Kotla had long since become independent of the Mughal crown, and there was little, if any, interaction with the Emperor that might have prompted the Maler Kotla Nawab to risk the protection the British had afforded for an uncertain alternative arrangement. The Nawab moreover, was not inclined towards revival of ties with a royal, who, because of his pensioner status, the Nawab considered lower in social status than his own. As Cooper has observed, this tendency was pervasive among the princely states which had broken away from the Mughals,⁷⁵ and whose economic and military status, along with the display of cultural symbols of royalism had come to eclipse those of the Mughal royalty.

Accordingly, the Nawab of Maler Kotla ignored the pro-Mughal rebel faction in the 1857-59 uprising, and instead opted for collusion with the British.⁷⁶ The 1857 rebellion was not the first instance of Maler Kotla's involvement in military conflict on behalf of the British. The state had previously allied with them during the Anglo-Maratha war in 1803, followed by the Anglo-Nepalese war of 1815-16, when Nawab Muhammad Wazir Ali Khan personally participated in the campaign against the Gurkhas in Simla Hills.⁷⁷ Maler Kotla had also provided a military contingent to the British during the First

⁷³ George C. Barnes, 'Reports on Events in the Cis-Sutlej Division', in *Mutiny records: Reports in two parts. Part I* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2005), 7-9.

⁷⁴ Cooper, *The crisis in the Punjab, from the 10th of May until the fall of Delhi*: 19.

⁷⁵ *The crisis in the Punjab: From the 10th of May until the fall of Delhi*: 35.

⁷⁶ Somerset Playne et al., *Indian States: A Biographical, Historical, and Administrative Survey* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1922). 577.

⁷⁷ Khan, *History of the ruling family of Sheikh Sadruddin, Sadar-i-Jahan of Malerkotla, 1449 A.D. to 1948 A.D.*: 18.

Anglo-Afghan war of 1839, and was substantially involved in the Anglo-Sikh wars with hundreds of its soldiers fighting under British command.⁷⁸ The ties were first formalised when Maler Kotla sought and obtained the status of British protected state in 1809.⁷⁹ The alliance provided security to Maler Kotla and the other Cis-Sutlej states against any hostilities by the Sikh kingdom.⁸⁰ These links served as an incentive for Maler Kotla to remain attached to the British and offer military assistance during the rebellion, more so as none of its larger and more resourceful neighbours displayed any inclination to switch loyalties to Bahadur Shah Zafar and his Sepoy army. Consequently, the state's political ideology was dictated by the need for security, which could only be ensured through a balance of power strategy.

Maler Kotla's realpolitik was supplemented by a religious ideology that drew inspiration from the Suharwardi Sufi tradition. The state's Suharwardi linkage can be traced to Shaikh Sadrudin Sadri Jahan, who was mentored by Baha ul-Din Zakariya (d. 1262), or according to some accounts, by his grandson Rukn ud-Din Abu'l Fath (d. 1335) of Multan, both of whom were leading Sufis of the Suharwardi order in the region.⁸¹ Bahlol Lodhi, the Afghan Sultan of Delhi in 1454, awarded Sadri Jahan a large *jagir* (estate) as dowry,⁸² which enabled the Sufi to combine his spiritual authority with temporal influence.⁸³ This practice was similar to that of his Suharwardi patron saints who owned large *jagirs*. It was based on the belief that wealth and worldly authority were not obstacles in the spiritual path.⁸⁴ Sufi elite could utilise these assets for the benefit of the community of believers, and for various expenses associated with Sufi hospices and Jagirs. They also occasionally exercised political influence, including the decision to resort to armed warfare when deemed in their own interest or that of their followers,⁸⁵ or under pressure of powerful allies and adversaries. The royal family of Maler Kotla valued such a legacy of the founding Suharwardi Shaikhs. It consequently did not

⁷⁸ *History of the ruling family of Sheikh Sadrudin, Sadar-i-Jahan of Malerkotla, 1449 A.D. to 1948 A.D.* 46.

⁷⁹ George B. Malleon, *An historical sketch of the native states of India in subsidiary alliance with the British government* (London: Longmans, Green, and co., 1875). 340.

⁸⁰ William Lee-Warner, *The protected princes of India* (London; New York: Macmillan and Co., 1894). 134.

⁸¹ Anna Bigelow, 'Sharing the sacred: practicing pluralism in Muslim North India', (Oxford; New York: Oxford Scholarship Online, 2010), 33.

⁸² 'Sharing the sacred: practicing pluralism in Muslim North India', 33.

⁸³ 'Sharing the sacred: practicing pluralism in Muslim North India', 33.

⁸⁴ Hamid Naseem, *Muslim Philosophy: Science and Mysticism* (New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2001). 327.

⁸⁵ *Muslim Philosophy: Science and Mysticism*: 327.

perceive the need to seek religious or political inspiration from religious orders of different persuasions such as the Waliullah tradition espousing Bahadur Shah Zafar's cause in 1857.

A tradition of militarism combined with realpolitik was an enduring motivation in Maler Kotla's policies. Pursuit of internecine conflict and wars against outsiders was the norm for Sherwani Pathans in their original homelands. After arriving in Maler Kotla, they retained a feeling of pride in their ancient Pathan culture. A strong sense of valour and glorification of combat built into their ancient ways was to remain an abiding influence on their military conduct in Punjab. Shifting alliances and loyalties were a tactic of military and political opportunism, which brought recognition and legitimacy from members of the tribe, and forced both potential allies and adversaries not to take them for granted. Consequently, when the Mughal Empire declined in the mid-eighteenth century, Maler Kotla drew away from the centre and supported Ahmad Shah Abdali's invasion of the Punjab.⁸⁶ It also occasionally switched between allies and foes among its neighbouring Sikh states of Patiala, Nabha, and Jind.⁸⁷ Later, when Maharaja Ranjit Singh established his kingdom in the Punjab, Maler Kotla sought and obtained British protection to forestall a Sikh advance, while maintaining a degree of autonomy.⁸⁸

Bahawalpur, the other much larger Muslim principality, was founded by Sadiq Muhammad Khan who received the title of Nawab from Nadir Shah of Iran, when he invaded the Punjab in 1739.⁸⁹ The Nawab belonged to the Abbasi Daudputra tribe, which claimed descent from the Abbasid Caliphs, and came originally from Sindh where it had probably arrived from Arabia.⁹⁰ Compared with Maler Kotla, Bahawalpur's conduct in the rebellion had greater political and military implications for the restored Mughal government at Delhi, the British, and for Bahawalpur state itself.

As the largest Muslim principality in the Punjab, Bahawalpur's strategic significance was much greater than that of Maler Kotla, and equalled that of neighbouring Multan,

⁸⁶ A. Bigelow, 'Punjab's Muslims: The History and Significance of Malerkotla', *Journal of Punjab Studies* (2005): 64.

⁸⁷ 'Punjab's Muslims: The History and Significance of Malerkotla', 64.

⁸⁸ 'Punjab's Muslims: The History and Significance of Malerkotla', 64-65.

⁸⁹ Bakhshish S. Nijjar, *History of the united Panjab* vol. 3 (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 1996). 54.

⁹⁰ *History of the united Panjab* 3: 54.

Lahore and Rajputana. From such a location, it could have interdicted the movement of vital British supplies and troops to Delhi or Multan. Bahawalpur could also have provided sanctuary to the rebel Sepoys in the Punjab, or sent in its volunteers and battle-worthy army to support them. The British military establishment did not seem to be in a position to divert its meagre resources to force Bahawalpur's cooperation. Yet this vulnerability was not exploited by the state, whose resources could have been used to support the anti-rebel effort. The Nawab had a fully trained and experienced standing army of seven thousand men, besides a reserve of seven to eight thousand, including twenty nine hundred cavalry troopers.⁹¹ This considerable force could have been very effective in any anti-British operation undertaken independently, or in collaboration with the disaffected Bengal Army troops in the Punjab, particularly in neighbouring Multan.

However, as in the case of the Nawab of Maler Kotla, Nawab Fateh Muhammad Khan chose to support the British with the military force at his disposal,⁹² thus precluding the possibility of a major military challenge to the British in the Punjab. Bahawalpur state forces comprising two battalions took an active part in quelling the 1857 uprising in Avadh, and in effectively occupying and policing Sirsa district on the Punjab border.⁹³ They were additionally engaged in patrolling duties within the state boundaries and adjoining areas throughout the 1857-58 period. Earlier, in 1848, the Bahawalpur military had been actively involved on the British side in the Second Anglo-Sikh war with some three thousand soldiers pitted against the Sikh garrison at Multan, where they performed a decisive role in the defeat of the Sikh governor, Dewan Mulraj.⁹⁴ Bahawalpur's close ties with the British were first formalised through the treaty of 1833. Article One of the treaty established friendship and alliance between the East India Company and Nawab Muhammad Bahawal Khan and his heirs, and declared that the friends and enemies of one party shall be friends and enemies of both.⁹⁵ This was

⁹¹ Ali, *The History of Bahawalpur: With Notices of the Adjacent Countries of Sindh, Afghanistan, Multan, and the West of India*: xiv-xv.

⁹² Nijjar, *History of the united Panjab* 3: 55.

⁹³ Stuart B. Beatson, *A History of the Imperial Service Troops of Native States* (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of the Government Printing, India, 1903). 8.

⁹⁴ C. Grey, *European adventures of Northern India, 1785 to 1849*, ed. Herbert L. O. Garrett (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1993). 293.

⁹⁵ Nazeer A. Shah, *Sadiqnamah: The history of Bahawalpur State* (Lahore: Maktaba Jadeed, 1959). 34-40.

reinforced by a treaty in 1838 which stipulated that the Nawab and his successors shall be absolute rulers of Bahawalpur, and British jurisdiction shall not be introduced into that principality.⁹⁶

When the rebellion commenced in Northern India, the Nawab apparently considered annexing Multan to his territory in order to avail of the ambiguous military situation in Southern Punjab, but was advised against it by his vizier.⁹⁷ He seems to have been persuaded that it would be more prudent to remain allied with the British as they were more likely to prevail against the rebel Sepoy army in the end. Superiority of British statecraft, leadership and military tactics as evidenced in the Anglo-Sikh wars, successful British neutralisation of the Afghan threat on the Punjab frontier, and a steady hold over much of India up to that point made it unlikely that the British would fail in the current crisis. In its own neighbourhood, Bahawalpur could not afford to alienate the powerful Rajahs of Rajputana and the Cis-Sutlej potentates who were partners in the British effort to quell the rebellion, and could have attempted to neutralise the state if it took any measures against their interests. On the other hand, lending support to the British was likely to yield political and military dividends to Bahawalpur in the form of enhanced security and regional influence. By contrast, it could not expect any security from a Mughal government that itself appeared to be struggling, and was in a very vulnerable military position following the rebellion. Moreover, the Bahawalpur Nawabs had no historic ties with the Mughal Emperors, especially since the death of Emperor Aurangzeb, when Mughal power began to erode, and none with the distant Avadh.

Bahawalpur's realpolitik motives were reinforced by cultural and religious considerations. There were few Indians, whether Hindu or Muslim, amidst the local population. Their language and cultural norms were alien to the local Muslims. The Hindus were mostly engaged in trade and manual labour, which did not command respect in Punjabi Muslim society, which considered these professions socially undesirable.⁹⁸ Derisively labelled by local Muslims as *Kirar and Bania* (words synonymous with extortionist traders and money-lenders respectively in Punjabi usage), the Hindu

⁹⁶ Ali, *The History of Bahawalpur: With Notices of the Adjacent Countries of Sindh, Afghanistan, Multan, and the West of India*: 229-30.

⁹⁷ M.M. Din, *Gazetteer of the Bahawalpur state with map 1904* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2001). 60.

⁹⁸ Zahid, 'Orientalism's Last Battle in the 19th Century Punjab', 27.

stereotypes enabled the Muslim Sepoys to generally view Hindus as social outcasts who thus became the 'Other'. Indian Muslims by comparison, were treated little better, as they too tended to be employed in non-military or menial work in the state.⁹⁹ The British too formed the 'Other', but were considered in a more favourable light. The East India Company's civil and military officials strictly adhered to a policy of non-interference in the state's internal affairs, and appeared to respect mosques, Sufi hospices, and Muslim customary laws and practices. At the same time, there were no reported attempts by European missionaries or traders to pursue their activities in the state. British officials and other European visitors to Bahawalpur were careful in observing the formalities associated with the Nawab's court, which served to acknowledge and complement the respect and honour he held among his subjects.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, the British had restored to the Punjabi Sufis all the *jagirs* (land grants) that had been taken away from them during the Sikh rule. Given the tremendous popularity of these Sufis among Punjabi Muslims, especially of the descendants of Makhdum Sher Shah, Jalal-ud-Din Surkh-posh, the Suharwardi patron saint of Bahawalpur, an element of goodwill and admiration had developed for the British in Bahawalpur society.¹⁰¹ That these Sufis did not forbid cooperation with the British, and in fact encouraged Muslim military participation against the rebel forces in 1857 amounted to a tacit legitimisation of the war by Bahawalpur state as a pro-British Jihad.

The nature and impact of religiosity, culture, and royalism in the princely states of Bahawalpur and Maler Kotla had a number of similarities as well as differences with the royalty in Delhi and Avadh. The Nawabs of Bahawalpur and Maler Kotla viewed their status as superior to that of Bahadur Shah Zafar, whom they considered inferior because of his 'pensioner' status, which made him dependent on the British. Yet, as shown above, it was an impression that apparently remained with them even after the Emperor was restored by the former Bengal Army Sepoys. Such a perception was an important aid in formulating their image of the royal leadership in Delhi as the 'Other', which, as we have seen is important in identifying a foe in order to neutralise or defeat him. Bahadur Shah Zafar, and by extension Queen Hazrat Mahal, on the other hand,

⁹⁹ Shah, *Sadiqnamah: The history of Bahawalpur State*: 34.

¹⁰⁰ *Sadiqnamah: The history of Bahawalpur State*: 36.

¹⁰¹ Din, *Gazetteer of the Bahawalpur state with map 1904*: 16.

faced the dilemma of 'othering' the very states such as Bahawalpur and Maler Kotla whom they were seeking as allies against the British, but who were proving to be unwavering in the latter's support. All four states however, had a similar concept of royalism or the principle of monarchical sovereignty as part of their ideology. Begum Hazrat Mahal of Avadh sought the nearest state of Nepal which had the wherewithal of becoming an ally against the British, given its functional fighting force. Bahadur Shah Zafar similarly sought alliances with other states to the point of offering to share sovereignty with them to create a constellation of states that could together meet the formidable British threat. This display of realpolitik in the service of royalism was no different from that of Maler Kotla and Bahawalpur, who as we have seen, observed a cautious approach towards the Sikhs, alternating between alliance and war, but remained staunchly on the British side when it became apparent that the new rulers of Punjab were more powerful and resolute than their predecessors.

In terms of religiosity, Bahawalpur and Maler Kotla's unanimous support from the religious luminaries of the Punjab contrasted with the situation in Delhi and Avadh. In Avadh, Hazrat Mahal was handicapped on this account due to the influential Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah's parallel government and his staunchly Sunni identity, which may have been another source of friction given the Begum's strong Shi'a background. Bahadur Shah Zafar's external religious support was comparatively more widespread and vociferous, but it was rendered ineffective due to the contradictions within the Ulama community on the application of Jihad against the British, and indeed on the very nature of Jihad and the use of religion in the conflict as evidenced by the innovative ways in which religion was being interpreted both by the Emperor and his Ulama supporters. The Sufis of the Punjab avoided these contradictions, yet indirectly but overwhelmingly placed their lot with the British, which encouraged the states of Bahawalpur and Maler Kotla, which had strong connections to Punjabi Sufism, to act accordingly.

Ulama

The Ulama of the Punjab were as forthcoming and enthusiastic in supporting the British as the Nawabs of Bahawalpur and Maler Kotla, the Sepoys, and their chiefs .

The Sufis belonging to the Suharwardi order performed a leading role in suppressing the rebel Sepoys of the Bengal Army stationed in Southern Punjab. Makhdum Shah Mahmud Qureshi, who was a successor of the popular saints Baha Uddin Zakariya, and Rukn-e-Alam, both of whom were patronised and visited by Mughal Emperors and Afghan kings,¹⁰² captured and killed hundreds of deserting rebel Sepoys at Multan after rounding them up with the assistance of his numerous followers.¹⁰³ Another Sufi figure, Makhdum Shah Ali Muhammad and his disciples pursued and killed nearly three hundred Sepoys on the banks of Chenab river.¹⁰⁴ A group of Sepoys who had found their way to Haveli Koranga after escaping from Multan were cornered and killed by Mehr Shah, a local Sufi leader, with the help of his disciples and chiefs of the local Rajput and Jat tribes.¹⁰⁵ Subsequently, a number of Sufi elite accompanied the British in an attack on one Ahmed Khan Kharral and his band of pastoral Jats, which was the only incidence of revolt by the Punjabis, albeit on a minor scale against the British in Southern Punjab.¹⁰⁶ Ahmed Khan Kharral was killed and his force destroyed, except for the few who managed to escape to a nearby jungle.¹⁰⁷

Such behaviour clearly shows that the popular Sufis did not endorse the Indian struggle against the British as a war of religion, or of Mughal restoration, and the rebellion thus had no legitimacy for them. The doctrinal meaning of Jihad was unclear, and the Indian Muslim community, including the religious authorities remained divided over its interpretations, and whether or not it was applicable against the British in 1857. This left room for a religious order or its head, or the Muslim community at large to safely take either position, as it would not be alone and risk universal rebuke. Paradoxically, it also diluted the impact of armed Jihad because of the lack of unity of purpose.

Suharwardi Sufis as a group were, at any rate, much less concerned with the doctrinal issues surrounding Jihad as opposed to the Waliullah-Naqshbandi order which was influential in Northern India, and some leading members of which had unequivocally called for Jihad against the British. While the Jihad effort in Delhi and Avadh had

¹⁰² Griffin, *The Punjab Chiefs: Historical and Biographical Notices of the Principal Families in the Punjab*: 491-92.

¹⁰³ Yong, *The Garrison State: Military, Government and Society in Colonial Punjab, 1849-1947*: 128.

¹⁰⁴ Roseberry, *Imperial rule in Punjab: the conquest and administration of Multan, 1818-1881*: 179.

¹⁰⁵ *Imperial rule in Punjab: the conquest and administration of Multan, 1818-1881*: 179.

¹⁰⁶ Hamilton, 'Reports on Events in the Multan Division', 9.

¹⁰⁷ Roseberry, *Imperial rule in Punjab: the conquest and administration of Multan, 1818-1881*: 180.

suffered because of the ambivalent Ulama attitudes and behaviour, the Sufi Ulama of Punjab, by avoiding the question of Jihad altogether, did not have to cope with the ideological contradictions inherent in the concept. In keeping with the spiritual tenets of their faith, the Sufis were more concerned with mysticism, spiritual regeneration, and devotional practices rather than with such questions as doctrinal nuances of Jihad, the strict Sharia code, literal interpretations of the divine texts, and ritual practice, which were more characteristic of the Waliullah Ulama.

There was another important point of contention between the Sufis and other schools of thought. Ever since its inception in Southern Punjab, the Suharwardi Sufi leadership tended to operate independently of other Sufi orders and religious luminaries active in other areas of India. The tradition can be traced to Baha Uddin Zakariya, the founder of the order in Multan who would discourage others, including even Sufis to encroach upon his area of influence. An instance of this was his displeasure at the advent of one Shams Tabrez, a zealous and popular Sufi in his own right, into Multan. It is said that Baha Uddin went to the extent of forbidding his disciples to deny food or any other form of support to the Sufi visitor.¹⁰⁸ Although the Waliullah Ulama had not yet established a noticeable presence in the Punjab by the mid-nineteenth century, their followers were making inroads into the North-West Frontier,¹⁰⁹ - a development that will be discussed in the following chapter on the North-West Frontier - from where the spread of Waliullahi influence to the Sufi zone of spiritual authority in the neighbouring Punjab could not be ruled out. Consequently, the Suharwardi Sufis would have feared the possibility of professional competition, which would have been an additional factor in their unresponsiveness, and in fact opposition to the Indian Ulama's calls for Jihad. It is also likely to have led the Sufis to consolidate their relations with the British as part of a balance of power strategy designed to strengthen their position against such external influences.

The Punjabi Sufis were beholden to the British for restoring their properties which had been confiscated during the reign of Maharajah Ranjit Singh.¹¹⁰ These properties,

¹⁰⁸ Griffin, *The Punjab Chiefs: Historical and Biographical Notices of the Principal Families in the Punjab*: 491.

¹⁰⁹ Nizami, *Muslim political thought and activity during the first half of the 19th century*: 52.

¹¹⁰ Griffin, *The Punjab Chiefs: Historical and Biographical Notices of the Principal Families in the Punjab*: 493.

besides giving them the status of landed elite, were critical sources of influence as they enabled the Sufi elite to distribute resources among their disciples, host pilgrims, attract followers and, as a result expand their religious and temporal influence and authority. Since such facilities were instrumental in attracting existing and potential disciples and dispensing of favours, they required large recurring expenditure. The needs were met from charity, *waqf* properties and *jagirs* attached to shrines and hospices, the sources for which were individual donors as well as governments.¹¹¹ The income from these was a potential means of support for the person of the Sufi as well, an indication of which is the lavish lifestyle of some of them, including the most exalted Suharwardi *pir* of the Punjab, Baha Uddin Zakariya.¹¹² Since maintaining the properties was very expensive, the Sufis relied on continued British goodwill and release of funds. The arrangement suited the British equally, as support from the Sufi elite brought respect and cooperation not only of the latter, but also of the public and the Muslim element in the British Army of the Punjab, which held the Sufi leadership in high esteem.

Considering the extensive popularity and veneration they enjoyed, the Sufi elite's active role in the war served to legitimise the military involvement of Muslim tribes and their chiefs in the conflict. Their role allayed any misgivings the local Muslims might have had in taking up arms against fellow Indians, many of whom were Muslims. Similarly, the Sufi elite were able to capitalize on their social status, venerated religious standing, political skill, and reputation for pious behaviour to support a pro-British war. Given that the Sufis, and by extension their discipleship were benefiting from the concessions and protection being accorded by the British as against what they had experienced under the Sikhs, this by itself could have been sufficient cause for them to conceptualise the 1857 conflict as a religious war, but not strictly speaking Jihad.

Conclusion The Punjabi Muslim society in the mid-nineteenth century valued an Islam that complemented, or at a minimum did not clash with its cultural ideology of tribalism and militarism, was spiritually self-satisfying, and sanctioned by its revered religious

¹¹¹ Riaz Hassan, 'Religion, Society, and the State in Pakistan: Pirs and Politics', *Asian Survey* 27, no. 5 (1987): 555.

¹¹² 'Religion, Society, and the State in Pakistan: Pirs and Politics', 555.

figures, implicitly or explicitly. The British method of rule, which was direct and informal, and which tended to be fair and mindful of the socio-cultural and religious practices of Punjabi Muslims brought the latter much closer to the British than would otherwise have been the case. Moreover, realpolitik dictated that they align with the British in order to prevent being eclipsed by the Sikhs, who were their traditional rivals and posed an existential threat to Punjabi Muslims. The Indian rebels of 1857 and their political and religious leaders became the 'Other' for the Punjabi Muslims as they had not been tested as fellow soldiers, allies, or patrons, and hence could not be trusted; nor was there any cultural affinity between them. The pro-British stance of leading Sufis kept the Punjabi Muslim Sepoys calm and unsympathetic to the cause of the 1857 rebels. The Sufi participation in physical combat served to allay any doubts the Punjabi Sepoys might have been harbouring about the religious justification for the war. On their part, the Muslim states of Bahawalpur and Kotla shared the political, religious and cultural orientation of the Sepoys, as well as the Ulama. They were moreover, motivated by a royalism that was based on political realism, which similarly orientated them towards the British, and away from the rebel movement of Northern India and its leadership.

Chapter 4: The North-West Frontier

Introduction

This chapter addresses the issue of why the North-West Frontier sepoys, Ulama and royalty failed to rise against the British during the 1857 rebellion, and instead provided them strong support against the rebel movement in Northern India. Considering their overwhelming numbers and military capability, the Pathan Sepoys and tribal levies could have taken the initiative to eject the British from the Frontier at a time when the latter appeared to be very vulnerable, yet they made no such move. Similarly, except from a small area, almost all the Ulama in the Frontier, despite their pre-eminent position in Pathan society and a history of involvement in past wars, appear to have taken little interest in any of the events surrounding the rebellion. The rebellion also presented an opportunity for Afghanistan to take back Peshawar from the British, which was the principal seat of Afghan governments in the past. Yet, the Afghan Amir did not attempt to use the Indian rebellion to his country's benefit, and the Afghan border remained quiet throughout the conflict. This chapter argues that Pathan beliefs and attitudes related to the military, tribal, and to a lesser extent, religious dimensions of ideology, influenced these choices during the rebellion years.

Background

The North-West Frontier, located in the extreme north west of the Indian sub-continent in present day Pakistan, is inhabited almost exclusively by *Pathans* (alternatively called *Pushtun*, *Pakhtun*), a people who invariably follow the Muslim faith, claim lineage from a common ancestor, speak *Pashto*, the language common to all Pathans, and profess commitment to their collective tribal belief system of *Pakhtunwali* (literally, the way of the Pathans). Muslim influence first reached the Frontier through warlords, kings and missionaries from Central and West Asia, sometimes in the tenth century. One of the first to arrive was Sabuktigin, an Afghan general of Turk origin

who led his army on military campaigns in India during the years 986-991.¹ The second wave commenced in 1009 with Mahmud of Ghazni, Sabuktigin's son, followed by Muhammad Ghori, his successors, and subsequently the so-called royal slave dynasty.² The last phase is associated with Babur, the founder of the Mughal dynasty, whose victory over Ibrahim Lodhi, the Pathan Sultan of Delhi, in the battle of Panipat (1526) brought more Muslim soldiers, traders, and missionaries. However, by the late Mughal period, and the interregnums of Nadir Shah of Persia, (1739-1747), and the Afghan warlord Ahmad Shah Abdali, Muslim inflow had decreased.

When Abdali's control of the Punjab weakened, the Sikhs who had long resisted Mughal and Afghan authority, managed to seize the territory in 1799 under the leadership of Maharajah Ranjit Singh.³ By 1818, the Maharajah had extended his Punjab Kingdom to the North-West Frontier after conquering Peshawar.⁴ The Sikhs lost control of the Frontier and the rest of Punjab to the British in 1849 following successive defeats in the Anglo-Sikh wars of 1845-1846 and 1848-1849.⁵ The British governed the Frontier as part of their administrative territory of Punjab, but the borderlands between Afghanistan and the Frontier extension of British Punjab remained un-demarcated as heretofore,⁶ and the Pathan tribes straddling both sides continued to move across freely as they had through the millennia.

Upon British annexation in 1849, the North-West Frontier was managed as part of the Punjab province by a special board of administrators appointed by the EIC.⁷ The board was abolished in 1853 and substituted with a chief commissioner, and judicial and financial commissioners.⁸ Assisted by a select group of civilian and military officers,

¹ Henry M. Elliot and William A.V. Jackson, *History of India, in Nine Volumes: Vol. V - The Mohammedan Period as Described by Its Own Historians* (New York: Cosimo, Incorporated, 2008). 36. For greater detail see; Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals-Delhi Sultanat (1206-1526) - Part One* (New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications, 2004); Romila Thapar, *Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2004). 425-34.

² Bakhshish S. Nijjar, *History Of The United Panjab*, vol. 1 (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 1996). 78-79.

³ J.S. Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998). 100.

⁴ Khushwant Singh, *Ranjit Singh: Maharaja of The Punjab* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2001). 130.

⁵ Pradeep Barua, *The state at war in South Asia* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005). 106-12.

⁶ The border was demarcated and formalised through a treaty between the two governments in 1893. For the text of the treaty see Percy M. Sykes, *A History of Afghanistan*, vol. 2 (London: Macmillan, 1940). 353-54.

⁷ William S. Meyer et al., *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, vol. 20 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909). 331.

⁸ *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, 20: 331.

these officials wielded extensive authority over the formulation and execution of various fiscal, judicial, political and military policies.⁹ Key members of this civil-military bureaucracy had already spent a number of years in the region before the British takeover, and were able to develop extensive knowledge of the region, its various tribes and clan chiefs, as well as the religious and cultural characteristics of Pathan society.

Six districts of Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan, Dera Ghazi Khan, and Hazara were created as Frontier districts, also termed settled districts, distinct from the contiguous tribal territories.¹⁰ However, no attempt was made to extend British control to the tribal territory in the north, which was home to numerous mountain tribes of the Pathans.¹¹ The Punjab government performed the dual function of administering these districts and managing affairs with the mountain tribes.¹² British officers who came in contact with the tribesmen had been carefully selected for their courage, perseverance, tact, and local knowledge. Under their supervision, a number of military expeditions were launched in the tribal territory prior to the 1857 rebellion.¹³ The expeditions were designed to probe the limits of British influence in the ungoverned areas, or take punitive measures against crimes by tribesmen in the settled districts, and usually took the form of blowing up defensive towers, burning crops, and confiscating livestock.¹⁴ When a tribe agreed to pay a certain amount in fine or give up a few rifles, the British would withdraw their troops.¹⁵ Sometimes, the encounters were indecisive, with the tribesmen engaging the EIC troops and levies in classic guerrilla warfare, and then retreating to their rugged mountain strongholds where the government troops could not effectively pursue them.

Pathan religious society was organised as a hierarchy, with *Syeds*, or persons claiming descent from Prophet Muhammad, at the top. Then came the *Akbundzadas*,

⁹ Azra A. Ali and Sajid M. Awan, 'Political developments and political parties in Punjab 1849-1947', *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences* 29, no. 1 (2009): 65-78.

¹⁰ William H. Paget and Herbert A. Mason, *A record of the expeditions against the North-West Frontier tribes, since the annexation of the Punjab* (London: Whiting, 1884). 2.

¹¹ Sana Haroon, *Frontier of faith: Islam in the Indo-Afghan borderland* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007). 1.

¹² Nijjar, *History Of The United Panjab*, 1: 62.

¹³ Olaf Caroe, *The Pathans, 550 B.C.-A.D. 1957* (London; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1958). 401-03.

¹⁴ *The Pathans, 550 B.C.-A.D. 1957*: 401-03.

¹⁵ Akbar S. Ahmed, *Religion and politics in Muslim society : order and conflict in Pakistan* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983). 18.

descendants of holy men having local or tribal repute. Last in importance were the *Sabibzadas*, descendants of *Mullahs* (priests) who had acquired a reputation for sanctity.¹⁶ The *Syeds* and *Mians* tended to avoid military conflict or political involvement for the most part.¹⁷ The *Akbundzadas* were also owners of agricultural land, and many of them headed the tribes to which they belonged. They had greater influence among the public during periods of political and military conflicts.¹⁸ The *Sabibzadas* and *Mullahs*, who generally performed ritual duties in the mosques and villages, did not occupy any position of political or religious significance, although they would occasionally use the pulpit to convey popular religious sentiment with overt or covert political content.¹⁹

The Pathan society constituted one of the largest segmentary lineage systems in the world, organised into a number of tribal divisions.²⁰ Throughout their history, the Frontier Pathan tribesmen had an ambivalent relationship with outside powers. Some of them joined the foreigners as soldiers, diplomats, traders, and colonists, while others remained engaged in internecine warfare, or clashes with the authorities.²¹ However, their kinsmen in the lowlands, who were associated with agriculture, commerce, and government service, and whose towns and agricultural holdings were occasionally under foreign control, were comparatively more susceptible to external influence.²² The Pathan tribe acted as a political unit, and usually contained a conglomerate of clans bound together by allegiance to a common chief.²³ Nearly every tribe had a nucleus of two or more clans that claimed descent from a common ancestor, although the cohesiveness between the various clans of a tribe was not strong.²⁴ It was not uncommon for a clan or some of its members to quarrel with their brethren, and leave the tribe to claim the protection of a neighbouring chief, whereupon they became his neighbour, and he was bound to protect them as they were to obey him.²⁵ The tribe also

¹⁶ Bellew, *A general report on the Yusufzais*: 184-89.

¹⁷ *A general report on the Yusufzais*: 184-89.

¹⁸ *A general report on the Yusufzais*: 184-89.

¹⁹ *A general report on the Yusufzais*: 184-89.

²⁰ Mukulika Banerjee, *The Pathan Unarmed: Opposition & Memory in the North West Frontier* (Oxford, UK: James Currey, 2000). 43-44.

²¹ Bellew, *A general report on the Yusufzais*: 23.

²² Denzil Ibbetson, *Panjab castes* (Lahore: Superintendent, Government Printing, Punjab, 1916). 58.

²³ Intelligence Branch Army Headquarters, *Frontier and overseas expeditions from India: Tribes North of the Kabul river*, vol. I (Simla, India: Government Monotype Press, 1907). ix-xiii.

²⁴ Bellew, *A general report on the Yusufzais*: 192.

²⁵ Headquarters, *Frontier and overseas expeditions from India: Tribes North of the Kabul river*, I: ix-xiii.

had a military component in the form of *lashkar*, a term applied to a band of warriors varying in numbers from a few hundred men to sometimes thousands.²⁶ The *lashkar* operated as a rapid and flexible force that could be employed for *Jihad*, inter-tribal warfare, raiding ventures into the Punjab or further afield, or even against a particular policy of the government of the day.²⁷

A major British aim in the North-West Frontier region was to secure written agreements with the mountain tribes whereby they would be responsible for the security of their territory and keep a check on other raiders, for which the government would provide allowances to them through their *Maliks* (tribal chiefs).²⁸ Under these arrangements, the tribes were not considered as subjects, and the measures appeared to be designed only to prevent them from carrying out looting raids on settled districts, and generally to keep the strategically sensitive border area peaceful.²⁹ Additional incentives included recruitment offers in the tribal militia, levies and military units that the British were forming in the Frontier region.³⁰ Consequently, no British effort was made to permanently occupy the tribal lands, or to interfere with the autonomous governance the tribesmen enjoyed inside their homeland.

The British military policy in the Frontier also intended to secure the un-demarcated northern border with Afghanistan to prevent any threat from Afghanistan, Persia, or Russia.³¹ Accordingly, new units were raised with Pathan, Punjabi Muslim, and Sikh soldiers for patrolling the area, while a network of local levies and police was created to safeguard internal security. The main military component, named as the Punjab Irregular Force, was to perform a decisive role in support of the British during the rebellion years of 1857-59. In May 1857, this force consisted of four regiments of Punjab Cavalry; one Corps of Guides Cavalry and Infantry; five batteries of Artillery;

²⁶ Bellew, *A general report on the Yusufzais*: 204.

²⁷ Matt Matthews, *An ever present danger: A concise history of British military operations on the North-West Frontier, 1849-1947*, (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press, US Army Combined Arms Center, 2010), Accessed 12 December 2013. <http://purl.fdlp.gov/GPO/gpo5105>. 9-10.

²⁸ Ty L. Groh, 'A Fortress without Walls: Alternative Governance Structures on the Afghan-Pakistan Frontier', in *Ungoverned Spaces: Alternatives to State Authority in an Era of Softened Sovereignty*, ed. Anne L. Clunan and Harold A. Trinkunas (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2010), 102.

²⁹ 'Ungoverned Spaces: Alternatives to State Authority in an Era of Softened Sovereignty', ed. A.L. Clunan and H.A. Trinkunas (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2010), 101.

³⁰ Caroe, *The Pathans, 550 B.C.-A.D. 1957*: 401-03.

³¹ James W. Spain, 'The Pathan Borderlands', *Middle East Journal* 15, no. 2 (1961): 168.

four regiments of Sikh Infantry; five regiments of Punjab Infantry; and one regiment of Gurkhas.³²

Sepoys

When news of the rebellion in Northern India reached the Frontier, the city of Peshawar alone had sixty thousand armed Pathans who bore their weapons with fierce pride in keeping with the Pathan tradition of carrying guns - a practice that the British had been careful not to curb considering the strong resistance it was likely to invoke.³³ Thousands of their fellow Pathans in the Frontier highlands were similarly armed, who were moreover expert raiders with a long history of warfare. Whether in concert or separately, these hillsmen and urban or lowland Pathans could have posed a serious military challenge to the British authorities in May 1857. The armed city dwellers could have risen in a civil rebellion, much like the peasants and townsmen across Avadh,³⁴ while the mountain tribes, whose membership according to one estimate was no less than 100,000 at the time,³⁵ could have resorted to raiding forays against selected targets such as cantonments, isolated military posts, and military convoys. If such a civil or military uprising had started, it is very doubtful the British would have been able to cope with their limited resources. There were no more than 15,000 European troops in the Punjab and Frontier in May 1857, as against some 23,000 local Sepoys serving with the native regiments that had been locally raised by the British, and 42,000 mostly disaffected Sepoys of the Bengal Army stationed in the region.³⁶ Even if the British were to commit their entire European force in the area, it would have been insufficient to overcome the overwhelming armed opposition.

As the situation unfolded, no rebellion by the Pathans materialised, except for a few incidents that will be discussed later. The Pathans in fact, turned out in very large

³² Headquarters, *Frontier and overseas expeditions from India: Tribes North of the Kabul river*, I: vi.

³³ Herbert B. Edwardes, 'Reports on events in the Peshawar Division', in *Mutiny Records: Reports in two parts, Part II* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1911; reprint, 2005), 153.

³⁴ Faruqui A. Taban, 'The Coming of the Revolt in Awadh: The Evidence of Urdu Newspapers', *Social Scientist* 26, no. 1/4 (1998): 17.

³⁵ Peter S. Lumsden and George R. Elsmie, *Lumsden of the Guides*, 2nd ed. (London: John Murray, 1900). 65.

³⁶ Roberts, *Forty-one years in India. From subaltern to commander-in-chief*: 36-37.

numbers in response to appeals by British officials to enlist in the paramilitary and combat units being earmarked for quelling the rebellion in Northern India, and bolstering internal security.³⁷ Numerous clansmen under the leadership of their chiefs cooperated with the British in safeguarding the cantonments, keeping peace in the countryside, and furnishing men for the irregular levies and regular regiments.³⁸ These men, who brought in their own arms and horses, were, in addition, employed to arrest any *fakeers* (mendicants), or others suspected of being spies.³⁹

A review of the activities of influential tribal chieftains and their retainers reveals the extent of collaboration with the British authorities. Nawab Muhammad Akram Khan, one of the leading *Maliks* of district Hazara in Peshawar division strengthened the garrisons by posting guards in his territory, and promptly furnished a contingent of armed horsemen for service with the British.⁴⁰ He led his clansmen in person during an operation against the *Syeds* and Hindustanis of Sittana in 1858, which was the only occurrence of *Jihad* against the British in the Frontier.⁴¹ Abdul Rahman Khan, a relative of the Nawab, similarly supplied a body of horsemen for service in 1857, which prevented the crossing through Hazara of the rebel 55th BNI from Swat into Kashmir; and later took part in combat against the Sittana *Mujabideen* in 1858.⁴² Other members of this influential family, along with their armed retainers and clansmen, took part in suppressing the Dhund outbreak at Murree in the Punjab, and remained engaged until asked to withdraw by the authorities.⁴³

The Hazara chiefs, Mir Zaman Khan, Kalandar Khan and Abdullah Khan assisted the British throughout the latter's rule.⁴⁴ They had accompanied an expedition in 1852 against the tribes of the Black Mountain and the Khagan Syeds.⁴⁵ In 1857, they contributed horsemen and foot soldiers to the levies which were being raised for duties

³⁷ Edwardes, 'Reports on events in the Peshawar Division', 153.

³⁸ 'Reports on events in the Peshawar Division', 108.

³⁹ 'Reports on events in the Peshawar Division', 111.

⁴⁰ Charles F. Massy, *Chiefs and Families of note in the Dehli, Jalandhar, Peshawar, and Derajat divisions of the Panjab* (Allahabad: Pioneer Press, 1890). 421.

⁴¹ *Chiefs and Families of note in the Dehli, Jalandhar, Peshawar, and Derajat divisions of the Panjab* 423.

⁴² *Chiefs and Families of note in the Dehli, Jalandhar, Peshawar, and Derajat divisions of the Panjab* 423.

⁴³ *Chiefs and Families of note in the Dehli, Jalandhar, Peshawar, and Derajat divisions of the Panjab* 437.

⁴⁴ *Chiefs and Families of note in the Dehli, Jalandhar, Peshawar, and Derajat divisions of the Panjab* 440.

⁴⁵ *Chiefs and Families of note in the Dehli, Jalandhar, Peshawar, and Derajat divisions of the Panjab* 443.

against the rebel Sepoys in Northern India.⁴⁶ Nawab Khan, another Hazara chief, who had previously fought against the Sikhs at Multan during the Anglo-Sikh war, was similarly forthcoming in helping the British.⁴⁷

Haji Muhammad Afzal Khan, the chief of the powerful *Saddozai* clan in Peshawar district obtained an appointment as *Rissaldar* in Stoke's Irregular Cavalry when the rebellion broke out.⁴⁸ Another notable, Aslam Khan, became a *Rissaldar* in the 5th Bengal Cavalry, and took part in many battles during the rebellion years.⁴⁹ He was subsequently appointed Vizier of Afghanistan with the title of Nazam-ud-Daula, while three of his sons were appointed as governors of Kabul, Lughman and Jalalabad.⁵⁰ One of them served with Herbert Edwardes, Commissioner of Peshawar; another son joined the British force in the siege of Delhi, while the third assisted the British authorities in maintaining order in the district.⁵¹

Fatah Khan, a Peshawar chief, conducted negotiations on behalf of the British with the *Bonerwal Swatis* (inhabitants of the region of Buner in Swat in upper North-West Frontier), who were in sympathy with the rebel Sepoys and the Sittana fighters.⁵² He commanded a troop of horse attached to an irregular regiment, and performed active military service for two years in Northern India.⁵³ Another member of the family, Abbas Khan, was appointed *Rissaldar* in the 2nd Punjab Cavalry on the recommendation of Herbert Edwardes in 1857; and he remained with this regiment throughout the siege of Lucknow, and subsequently in Rohilkhand, taking part in a number of battles.⁵⁴ Sardar Muhammad Khan Bahadur, a descendant of King Nadir Shah of Persia, who held much influence over the tribes of the Peshawar valley, fought alongside the British throughout the First Anglo-Afghan war, and after annexation of the Punjab, joined the Corps of Guides as *Daffadar*, rising to the rank of *Rissaldar-Major* during the rebellion.⁵⁵

⁴⁶ *Chiefs and Families of note in the Dehli, Jalandhar, Peshawar, and Derajat divisions of the Panjab* 444.

⁴⁷ *Chiefs and Families of note in the Dehli, Jalandhar, Peshawar, and Derajat divisions of the Panjab* 443.

⁴⁸ *Chiefs and Families of note in the Dehli, Jalandhar, Peshawar, and Derajat divisions of the Panjab* 450.

⁴⁹ *Chiefs and Families of note in the Dehli, Jalandhar, Peshawar, and Derajat divisions of the Panjab* 451.

⁵⁰ *Chiefs and Families of note in the Dehli, Jalandhar, Peshawar, and Derajat divisions of the Panjab* 448.

⁵¹ *Chiefs and Families of note in the Dehli, Jalandhar, Peshawar, and Derajat divisions of the Panjab* 449.

⁵² *Chiefs and Families of note in the Dehli, Jalandhar, Peshawar, and Derajat divisions of the Panjab* 455.

⁵³ *Chiefs and Families of note in the Dehli, Jalandhar, Peshawar, and Derajat divisions of the Panjab* 466.

⁵⁴ *Chiefs and Families of note in the Dehli, Jalandhar, Peshawar, and Derajat divisions of the Panjab* 466.

⁵⁵ *Chiefs and Families of note in the Dehli, Jalandhar, Peshawar, and Derajat divisions of the Panjab* 469.

Nawab Sirbuland Khan of Hoti was instrumental in saving the life of Lieutenant Home, the British civil officer at Mardan during the rebellion, sheltering him for three days, when the Sepoys of the 55th Bengal infantry rebelled; and he subsequently thwarted rebel Sepoy movement by inducing villagers to harass them and deny them any supplies.⁵⁶ The men of this rebel regiment perished in large numbers shortly afterwards, while attempting to make their way from Swat into Kashmir.⁵⁷

A chief of the Saddozai tribe, Sardar Bahadur Habib Khan, who had been the personal orderly of Major George Lawrence at Kohat, joined the Coke's Rifles with the rank of *Subedar* and fought in five different Frontier expeditions, besides participating in the campaigns in and around Delhi throughout 1857-58.⁵⁸

The keenness with which the Pathan tribal chiefs of settled districts collaborated with the British was due in part to the close ties that had developed when the Pathans allied themselves with the British during the Anglo-Sikh wars. Conditions under the Sikhs had been particularly difficult for the Pathans as they could not reconcile with Sikh occupation, and were unable to dislodge the Sikh army from the Frontier, a situation which resembled that of their neighbours in the Punjab. Consequently, when British-Sikh relations soured after Ranjit Singh's death, leading to British intervention in Sikh affairs and the Anglo-Sikh wars, the Pathans, as also their Punjabi Muslim counterparts, were quick to join the British military effort.

Ties with the British were further strengthened when, upon annexing the Frontier, the EIC authorities introduced a number of changes in the system of governance, including land settlement and revenue assessment. As with their Punjabi neighbours, land ownership, along with military service and trade, was the mainstay of Pathan society in the settled districts. Pathan land-owning status was jeopardised under the Sikhs who frequently acquired fertile farmland either through conquest, or heavy taxation which forced many of the owners to sell off their property as it became economically infeasible.⁵⁹ By contrast, agriculture began to flourish when the British annexed the

⁵⁶ *Chiefs and Families of note in the Dehli, Jalandhar, Peshawar, and Derajat divisions of the Panjab* 472.

⁵⁷ Allen, *Soldier Sahibs: the men who made the North-West Frontier*. 42.

⁵⁸ Massy, *Chiefs and Families of note in the Dehli, Jalandhar, Peshawar, and Derajat divisions of the Panjab* 478.

⁵⁹ Allen, *Soldier Sahibs: the men who made the North-West Frontier*. 90.

territory and introduced new policies that included fair land assessment. Thus land assessment exercises conducted by the British officials met with full co-operation by the Pathans throughout the Frontier districts, who promptly paid the revenue.⁶⁰ The new arrangement brought a degree of prosperity as money did not have to be set aside for bribery and extortion any more. Land was not merely considered a source of income in Pathan society; it also bestowed social status, power, and pride just as it did in the Punjab. Land ownership greatly contributed to clan survival and welfare. It served an organising function by allowing the landed elite, small farmers, and their retainers to strengthen bonds of social cohesion among themselves, and with other farming communities.⁶¹ Land also conferred political power, as the owners, because of the dependence of retainers and peasants on them, could mediate on the latter's behalf with the authorities. Such an arrangement fostered an element of trust and co-operation between the tribal chiefs, their associates and dependents, and the local British officials. However, the land factor was not as important in the conduct of the mountain Pathans towards the British, as their agricultural properties were located in areas in which the British government exercised no control. They were instead drawn towards the British for the favourable terms and subsidies they could extract from the latter in exchange for keeping a check on their raids and disruption of British military and commercial convoys.⁶² At the same time, these tribes, as also their kinsmen in the lowlands, benefited from the opportunities that the British had opened up in commerce and government service.⁶³ The British presence thus served as a source of revenue for these Pathans.

The Pathan military culture also acted as a major factor that brought them closer to the British. Apart from farming, the North-West Frontier was a major source of soldiery in keeping with the Pathan tradition of coveting military service, valued by both the valley and urban area Pathans, and by their kinsmen in the mountainous territories. During Sikh rule, recruitment among the Pathans was almost non-existent due to the acrimonious relations between the two communities. While the Sikhs bore bitter memories of the long Afghan occupation of the Punjab and Frontier which had

⁶⁰ *Soldier Sahibs: the men who made the North-West Frontier*: 90-91.

⁶¹ Bernt Glatzer, 'The Pashtun tribal system', *Contemporary Society: Tribal Studies* 5(2002): 9.

⁶² Haroon, *Frontier of faith: Islam in the Indo-Afghan borderland*: 7.

⁶³ Ibbetson, *Panjab castes*: 58.

witnessed many military clashes between soldiers and armed civilians of the two communities, the Pathans had to endure Sikh hostility and attacks on their property when the latter became masters of the Frontier.⁶⁴ The security environment changed dramatically with the British annexation, during which Pathan tribal levies played a crucial role by supplying a significant portion of the 18,000 army that defeated the Sikh force at Multan during the Anglo-Sikh war of 1848-49.⁶⁵

Pathan recruitment trend resumed when the British started establishing a stronger military presence in the region. As Pathan interest rose, enlistment, which was initially taking place in the police and levies, expanded to the regular and irregular regiments of the army. This post 1849 development in military collaboration is best exemplified by the Punjab Irregular Force. The cavalry and infantry wings of the force, collectively known as the Corps of Guides, were composed almost entirely of Pathans, and reputed as one of the ablest fighting formations in all of India.⁶⁶ Induction in the Guides cavalry and infantry regiments was not restricted to lowland Pathans, as their counterparts from the mountainous areas also joined in very large numbers, as did some Punjabi Muslims and Sikhs.⁶⁷ Led by experienced British and native officers, the Force was designed to initiate or respond to any tactical situation without constant recourse to central authority, or the cumbersome military chain of command.⁶⁸ Indeed, the force was even outside the purview of the British commander-in-chief of India.⁶⁹ Such a degree of autonomy suited Pathan customs and mode of warfare - or in short, their familiar military culture.

The Sepoys in such a setup were directly led by their own officers, who were fellow Pathans and men of distinction within their clans. The irregular composition of the Guides Corps allowed the native officers to exercise much greater authority than their counterparts in the native regiments of the EIC.⁷⁰ The Pathan officers were in direct

⁶⁴ C. A. Bayly, 'The Pre-History of 'Communalism'? Religious Conflict in India, 1700-1860', *Modern Asian Studies* 19, no. 2 (1985): 192.

⁶⁵ Roy, *War, Culture and Society in early modern South Asia: 1740-1849*: 160.

⁶⁶ J.W. Kaye and G.B. Malleon, *Kaye's and Malleon's History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8*, vol. II (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1897; repr., Reprint 2010). 351.

⁶⁷ Paget and Mason, *A record of the expeditions against the North-West Frontier tribes, since the annexation of the Punjab*: 4.

⁶⁸ Kaye, *A history of the Sepoy War in India 1857-1858*, I: 422.

⁶⁹ M. Barthorp and J.J. Burn, *Indian Infantry Regiments 1860-1914* (Oxford: UK: Osprey, 1979). 3.

⁷⁰ Allen, *Soldier Sahibs: the men who made the North-West Frontier*: 103.

command of their troops and greatly outnumbered the European officers, of whom only two were assigned per regiment: the commanding officer and his adjutant.⁷¹ The entire unit lived and operated as a tightly knit clan, albeit one in which individual initiative and daring was encouraged. Its training and mission replicated the hit-and-run tactics of the raids and ambushes that were regularly employed by the Pathans in their own tribal *lashkars*. Moreover, the uniforms of the soldiers and their officers conformed to local custom with only minor adjustments that were sensitive to the Pathan dress code.⁷² A major attraction for the men was the freedom they generally enjoyed from the stringent discipline and repetitive parades that their counterparts in the Bengal Army were routinely subjected to, and which the British officers assigned to the Guides Corps did not insist upon.⁷³

Raised in 1846, the Guides were already battle hardened by May 1857, having taken part in the Second Anglo-Sikh war and a number of expeditions in the North-West Frontier. Subsequently, they became part of the Punjab Moveable Column that was tasked with attacking the rebel army at Delhi and seizing the city. After their arrival at Delhi in August 1857, where they joined the Delhi Field Force that had been in place since early June 1857, the Guides went immediately into action.⁷⁴ The situation at Delhi, and at numerous other places where the fighting took place presented a paradox with the Pathans being pitted against fellow Indians, many of whom were Muslims. What motivated them under the circumstances was *esprit de corps*, or military morale that comes from unit cohesion, and has been shown to be an important determinant in the soldier's will to fight,⁷⁵ as discussed in the previous chapters. The cohesion of the Guides Corps and its correlation with military effectiveness stood out in this respect.

But other motivations were also possibly at work. The Pathans tended to view people belonging to other parts of India as inferior, labelling them 'Hind-ko' (of Hindustan) in a pejorative sense.⁷⁶ The negative image of the opponent was partly a result of the

⁷¹ *Soldier Sabibs: the men who made the North-West Frontier*: 103.

⁷² *Soldier Sabibs: the men who made the North-West Frontier*: 104.

⁷³ George J. Younghusband, *The story of the Guides* (London: Macmillan, 1908). 8.

⁷⁴ S.P. MacKenzie, *Revolutionary Armies in the Modern Era: A Revisionist Approach* (London; New York: Routledge, 1997). 100.

⁷⁵ Giuseppe Caforio, ed. *Handbook of the Sociology of the Military* (New York: Springer, 2006), 67.

⁷⁶ Caroe, *The Pathans, 550 B.C.-A.D. 1957*: 303.

cultural gap between the Pathans and other Indians. Frontier Pathans had never served with the Bengal Army, as membership in those regiments was limited to high caste Hindus and the Muslims of Northern India. Besides, the Frontier and the adjoining Punjab territory were not part of the British acquisitions before 1849, and there were few Hindus or Muslims from the distant lands of Northern India in the region prior to that time. Although the frontier-based Pathans and the Bengal Army Sepoys were fighting on the British side in the Anglo-Sikh wars, they were organised separately under British command. There was therefore little or no interaction between the two communities that might have fostered strong camaraderie of the kind that comes from common military service, especially under combat conditions. An additional factor that created a negative image of Hindustani Sepoys in the Pathan mind-set was the military campaigns these Bengal Army Sepoys had carried out against the Afghan kinsmen of Frontier Pathans during the recently concluded First Anglo-Afghan war (1839–1842). Pathan-Hindustani acrimony can actually be traced to the much earlier encounters between the two groups. Weak and ineffective as the Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar appeared in 1857, he and his Hindustani Sepoys were fighting to restore the Mughal civilization that the Pathans had frequently opposed in the past. Beginning in 1585, the Mughal Emperor Akbar had launched a full-scale military operation against the Pathan tribes.⁷⁷ In a major encounter, the Pathans encircled and annihilated the Mughal army, killing two thousand Mughal soldiers, including their commander Birbal, Akbar's favourite courtier.⁷⁸ A Mughal force under Raja Man Singh carried out punitive action in 1587, rounding up fourteen thousand Pathans, killing some of the leaders, and enslaving many others.⁷⁹ However, the war continued for nearly half a century.⁸⁰ The area could never be brought under full control throughout the Mughal period, except for some major towns and the valleys of Peshawar and Kohat.

Another cultural dimension that helps explain the Pathan sentiment against the 1857 rebel Army is the principle of retributive justice, or revenge (*badal*), which is enshrined as a core tenet of the Pathan tribal ideology of *Pakhtunwali*. Defined as the way of the

⁷⁷ Jaswant L. Mehta, *Advanced Study in the History of Medieval India*, Second Revised ed., vol. II: Mughal Empire (1526-1707) (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt Ltd, 1984). 261.

⁷⁸ *Advanced Study in the History of Medieval India*, II: Mughal Empire (1526-1707): 264.

⁷⁹ *Advanced Study in the History of Medieval India*, II: Mughal Empire (1526-1707): 265.

⁸⁰ Annemarie Schimmel, *Islam in the Indian subcontinent* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980). 87.

Pakhtuns,⁸¹ or '*Pashtun-ness*', Pakhtunwali is the ancient tribal code of all Pathans, and serves as a guide for individual and collective conduct.⁸² Along with *badal*, it has another component that is especially relevant to conflict situations: *nang* (honour).⁸³ Nang means that a Pathan's life is devoted to honour, he has to gain it under any circumstances, even at the cost of his life. If he loses face, or is subjected to a taunt, or is attacked or defeated by an enemy, it is incumbent upon him to redeem his honour.⁸⁴ If he fails to do so, he is ostracised from the clan, and even the family.⁸⁵

Adherence to this code binds the Pathans together under their approved chiefs, especially in times of war. *Pakhtunwali* has points of convergence as well as divergence with the concepts of militarism and Jihad. It fits particularly well with the requirements of militarism, which, as we have seen in the previous chapter, promotes and idealises military service. A Pathan combatant, including a Sepoy serving with a British regiment could avoid the discipline aspect of militarism by being very patient, even waiting a lifetime to get back at someone who may have wronged him before choosing the right time and place to strike back, often leaving no proof.⁸⁶ It was thus possible for a Pathan Sepoy to strike an enemy when he left service or proceeded on leave, keeping the mission secret from fellow Sepoys and commanders. What guided him in the act of *badal* was not necessarily the actual severity of the deemed offence, but his personal perception of how strongly he felt about it. Thus, one Pathan for example, may put another to death merely for sneering at him, while another individual may not feel the insult as deeply. It is hence quite possible that some Pathan Sepoys serving during the rebellion, whose ancestors had been subjected to alleged persecution or war by the Mughals would have seen the 1857 rebellion as an opportunity to get back at the Army of a restored Mughal Emperor. Others, whose friends and relatives, including clan members across the border in Afghanistan who had been attacked by the mainly Bengal

⁸¹ The terms Pukhtun, Pushtun, and Pathan are used interchangeably in the literature. The present study employs the term Pathan for the sake of consistency, and because it was more commonly used in Northern India and in colonial accounts of the time.

⁸² Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978). 282.

⁸³ Ibbetson, *Panjab castes*: 58.

⁸⁴ *Panjab castes*: 58.

⁸⁵ Akbar S. Ahmed, *Millenium and charisma among pathans : a critical essay in social anthropology* (London, Henley and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976). 63.

⁸⁶ Raj Wali S. Khattak, Fida Mohammad, and Richard. Lee, 'The Pashtun Code of Honour', *Research Journal of Area Study Centre, University of Peshawar, Pakistan*, Accessed 11 December 2013. http://www.asc-centralasia.edu.pk/Issue_65/01_The%20Pashtun_Code_of_Honour.html

Army Sepoys in British employ during the Anglo-Afghan war of 1839-42, would have had similar cause for *badal* against the rebel Bengal Army.

Along with *Pakhtunwali*, the Pathans were deeply attached to Islam. With Islam, *Pakhtunwali* holds in common the values of equality, hospitality, and bravery, yet Islam forbids violence in personal disputes, as against *Pakhtunwali*, which seems to promote or encourage revenge in such matters. Similarly, Islam has a host of strict preconditions and procedures on the permissibility and regulation of Jihad,⁸⁷ whereas *Pakhtunwali* has no formal code of war. How then would Pathan warriors in the 1857 rebellion have dealt with the dichotomy between *Pakhtunwali* and Jihad? One view is that in order to avoid confusion between the two ideologies, a Pathan tended to give them equal weightage. In such a case, *Pakhtunwali* was felt as a religion, just as Islam. In other words, for some individuals at least, *Pakhtunwali* assumes the status of a 'fifth creed of Islam', alongside the four established ones of *Hanafi*, *Sh'afi*, *Maliki*, and *Hanbali*.⁸⁸ Thought of this way, Islam and *Pakhtunwali* form an ideological repertoire from which the occasion and the particular emotion that it triggers at the moment determines which aspect of which creed would be drawn upon. Others who do not experience the ideological tension, and believe for example, that only Jihad equips them with the spiritual strength to face potentially fatal situations, would consciously or spontaneously turn to Jihad as the source of inspiration. But this would become a stress-producing rather than a stress-relieving experience if both antagonists were Muslim, and both strongly believed in Jihad. Relating to the 1857 conflict, how might the Pathan Sepoys have been motivated to fight an opponent Army with substantial number of Muslims in its ranks? The question is important, especially since, unlike the case in the three regions discussed in the previous chapters, where a number of Ulama had encouraged or practically taken part in Jihad against their opponents on different sides of the 1857 rebellion, this extrinsic source of religious inspiration was absent in the North-West Frontier, except in an isolated case which will be discussed presently.

One possible way to resolve the Muslim versus Muslim Jihad dilemma was to resort to individual prayer and invocation, which would have spiritually prepared them for the

⁸⁷ S. K. Malik, *The Quranic concept of war* (Lahore: Wajidalis, 1979). 46-49.

⁸⁸ Khattak, Mohammad, and Lee, 'The Pashtun Code of Honour'.

impending confrontation. Other acts of religiosity, such as war cries and recitation of Quranic verses before or during combat were also available to bolster morale. Pathan Sepoys were actually observed by their British officers to be deeply committed to their Islamic beliefs during the 1857 rebellion. They were prompt in their prayers and other rituals of the faith. An example of this was the Guides Corps, whose Muslim Sepoys observed fasts for the entire month of *Ramazan*, which was spent in a gruelling march from the North-West Frontier military station of Mardan to the theatre of war in Delhi.⁸⁹ Although Muslims are exempt from fasting when on a journey, or taken ill, the Guides Sepoys did not avail of the concession. Upon reaching Delhi, the Guides were deputed to meet an assault from the rebel 3rd Cavalry, which, as will be recalled, had earlier mutinied at Meerut. A Muslim Rissaldar of the Guides became engaged with a Rissaldar on the opposite side, who was most likely a Muslim as well given the preponderance of Muslims in the rebel Cavalry. As reported by an observer, 'After a few rapid cuts and guards, the head of the mutineer regular was swept from his body, and the Guide seizing the bridle of the dead man's horse ... sprang into the saddle, turned to his men, as he lifted his dripping sword over his head, and exclaimed, 'Allah-u-Akbar! and by the blessing of the Prophet, may we all get mounted in a similar manner'.⁹⁰ No Sepoy accounts exist from which it can be determined how far these spiritual aids helped raise the morale of the pro-British Pathan Sepoys, but considering there were no reported desertions or acts of malingering, or complaints by them during the long and difficult combat situations - a condition that was the opposite of what existed among many of their counterparts in Delhi and Avadh - this form of intrinsic Jihad would have played a vital role in raising their fighting spirit through the rebellion years.

Considering that no prominent Ulama among the Pathans called on Pathan Sepoys, or the general population to rise against the British in the name of Jihad, there was no extrinsic influence on the Sepoys to oppose the British given the mutually beneficial Pathan-British collaboration. At the same time, being staunch Muslims who were known to be uncompromising on the essentials of the faith, which included a belief in

⁸⁹ Younghusband, *The story of the Guides*: 67-68.

⁹⁰ R.H.W. Dunlop, *Service and adventure with the Khakee Rissalah or Meerut Volunteer Horse during the mutinies of 1857-58* (London: R. Bentley, 1858). 15-16.

Jihad, they turned to Jihad as an inner source of motivation. Such a recourse minimised the state of ideological confusion, and at the same time, served as a survival strategy in combat just as it did for the Sepoys in Delhi, Avadh, and the Punjab.

Royalty

The territory comprising the North-West Frontier did not have a history of monarchic government, and was administered by governors appointed by various Afghan, Mughal, and Sikh rulers. Yet, the *Amirs* of Afghanistan retained a historic connection with the region. Peshawar was the summer capital of the *Amirs*, who used to rotate it with Kabul as the winter seat of government, until the former was lost to the Sikhs in 1834.⁹¹ Even after Afghanistan had to cede control of it to the Sikhs, who were replaced by the British, the bonds endured because of family ties, ethnicity, and religion. However, this did not always translate into political influence. The tribal diversity and ancient feuds within Pathan society on both sides of the border precluded lasting co-operation or loyalty. There were periods in Pathan history though, when charismatic leaders from Kabul successfully maintained close links with the tribes, and were able to muster thousands of Pathan warriors from the Frontier for their military campaigns in India or within Afghanistan. However, since Ahmad Shah Abdali, no Afghan ruler was able to organise the North-West Frontier Pathans in large numbers for the pursuit of war. None of the Afghan royalty after Abdali held the charisma and leadership qualities that could attract the traditionally independent tribal hordes.

The Indian rebellion of 1857 appeared to present a political and military opportunity that the Afghan Amir, Dost Muhammad, might have exploited. As discussed above, the British were facing a precarious military situation in May 1857. Their range of operations was overstretched between Delhi and the Frontier, and because Delhi had to be retaken as quickly as possible, British military authorities were forced to move many of their regiments to that theatre, rendering the North-West Frontier vulnerable. In Kabul, there was a strong sentiment among some influential circles and members of the

⁹¹ Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010). 53.

public to capitalise on the situation by attacking and expelling the British from India.⁹² Dost Muhammad appeared at first to succumb to the pressure, but his son, Muhammad Azim Khan cautioned him about the British power, and consequently, Dost Muhammad, if indeed he was seriously contemplating the move, changed his mind.⁹³

The bitter and costly experience of the recent Anglo-Afghan war (1839–1842) would have convinced Dost Muhammad that the British, notwithstanding their current difficult situation, were quite capable of overcoming military challenges. Although they had suffered a disastrous defeat in the first phase of the recently concluded Anglo-Afghan War (1839-1842), the British returned to Afghanistan with a vengeance in August 1842, when they successfully relieved their beleaguered garrisons at Kandahar and Jalalabad, recovered their prisoners taken earlier, and destroyed Ghazni and parts of Kabul before making a successful withdrawal through the Khyber Pass.⁹⁴ Moreover, Dost Muhammad was released and reinstated in Kabul. He thus had first-hand experience of British military capability and the resolve with which they had pursued it in both India and Afghanistan, mostly with the help of its Bengal Army.

Afghanistan had not only to contend with the reality of British power, but also safeguard itself from the ever present Persian threat. To forestall Persian aggression and obtain British support, Dost Muhammad signed a treaty of peace and friendship with the British government in 1855. Article 1 of the treaty declared 'perpetual peace and friendship' between the two parties. Article 2 assured Dost Muhammad that the East India Company 'engages to respect those territories of Afghanistan now in His Highness's possession and never to interfere therein'. The Third Article carried a binding clause for the Amir: 'His Highness Ameer Dost Mohummud Khan, Walee of Cabool and of those countries of Afghanistan now in his possession, engages on his own part, and on the part of his heirs, to respect the territories of the Honorable East India Company and never to interfere therein; and to be the friend of the friends and

⁹² George P. Tate, *The Kingdom of Afghanistan: A Historical Sketch* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2001). 195.

⁹³ *The Kingdom of Afghanistan: A Historical Sketch*: 195-96.

⁹⁴ For details of the campaigns see Joseph Greenwood, *Narrative of the Late Victorious Campaigns in Afghanistan: Under General Pollock; with Recollections of Seven Years' Service in India* (London: H. Colburn, 1844). 209-46.

enemy of the enemies of the East India Company'.⁹⁵ This was followed by another mutual agreement in January 1857 upon the breakout of war with Persia. The British declared that 'Whereas the Shah of Persia contrary to his engagement with the British Government, has taken possession of Herat, and has manifested an intention to interfere in the present possessions of Ameer Dost Mohummud Khan, there is now war between the British and Persian Governments, therefore the Honorable East India Company, to aid Ameer Dost Mohummud Khan, to defend and maintain his present possessions in Balkh, Cabool, and Candahar against Persia, hereby agrees out of friendship to give the said Ameer one lakh of Company's Rupees monthly during the war with Persia'. The treaty carried a binding clause for the Afghan Amir as well: 'This Agreement in no way supersedes the Treaty ...on 30th March 1855 by which the Ameer of Cabool engaged to be the friend of the friends and the enemy of the enemies of the Honorable East India Company; and ... in the spirit of that Treaty, agrees to communicate to the British Government any overtures he may receive from Persia, or from the allies of Persia during the war, or while there is friendship between the Cabool and the British Governments'.⁹⁶ Apart from the financial subsidy to cover the expenditures of war with Persia, the agreement offered the services of British officers as advisors and observers to the Afghan government, albeit with the assurance that they would not interfere with the domestic affairs of Afghanistan.⁹⁷

The British guarantee to assist Afghanistan in the event of an attack on its territory by Persia provided a much needed reassurance as Afghanistan was not confident of averting a Persian advance with its existing resources. The 1855 treaty came just in time, because in the same year the Persians invaded Afghanistan with the object of taking Herat. The British, as expected, responded to Afghanistan's call for aid, and under British pressure, Persia withdrew. In 1857, Afghanistan declared war on Persia, and re-captured Herat, which had been under Persian annexation. This freed Dost Muhammad

⁹⁵ 'Treaty between the British Government and His Highness Ameer Dost Mohummud Khan, Walee of Cabool and of those countries of Afghanistan now in his possession', Accessed 20 February 2013. <http://www.khyber.org/history/treaties/treatybritishdost.shtml>.

⁹⁶ Charles U. Aitchison, ed. *A Collection of Treaties Engagements and Sanads: Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries Comp. by Sir Charles Umpherston Aitchison. Rev. and Continued Up to the End of 1929-30*, vol. 13 (Government of India Central Publication Branch, 1933), 238-39.

⁹⁷ William Dalrymple, *The return of a king: Shah Shuja and the first battle for Afghanistan, 1839-42*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), Accessed 20 March 2013. <https://archive.org/details/WilliamDalrympleReturnOfAKingTheBattleFBookZa.org> 238-39.

to start consolidating his kingdom further, and uniting what had previously been many independent local rulers under his dynasty.⁹⁸ In 1857 therefore, Dost Muhammad's preoccupation with Afghanistan's security, for which he greatly depended on the British prevented him from playing any role in the adjoining Punjab Frontier.

The treaties and the political conditions that had necessitated them meant that Amir Dost Muhammad of Afghanistan had little choice than to remain neutral in the rebellion in neighbouring India. The cultural and religious ties that he and the Afghan public felt with Pathans on the other side of the border, many of whom belonged to the same tribes, could not override realpolitik considerations. The latter dictated that Afghan security was paramount, and under the circumstances it was only the British government which was in a position to provide the necessary safeguards. Since the British were at war with the rebels, including the Hindustani Ulama and their followers operating in a pocket of the North-West Frontier, Afghanistan could ill-afford to endanger its relationship with the British authorities by siding with or even indirectly supporting the anti-British Jihad in the Frontier. The Amir acted similar to the Nawabs of Bahawalpur and Maler Kotla under study in the previous chapter. Like them, his primary concern was with enhanced security for his state, which, given the hostile external environment, only the British seemed able to provide at the time of the rebellion. The balance of power politics this royalism that this royalism led to was again similar to the strategies employed by his counterparts in the Punjabi Muslim states.

Ulama

At the time of the rebellion of 1857, there was no indigenous religious movement in the Frontier as in Delhi and Avadh, which could have appealed to the Pathans to throw off British rule by force. An exception was the Jihad activity of a few Ulama at the settlement of Sittana in the Swat region of the Frontier, who formed part of a group that was initially led by Syed Ahmad. As an icon of Jihad, and leader of the Islamic revivalist movement in India at the time, dedicated to an that sought to reassert Muslim

⁹⁸ *The return of a king: Shah Shuja and the first battle for Afghanistan, 1839-42.* 319-20.

power, the Syed arrived in the Swat region of the Frontier circa 1826 to wage a Jihad against the Sikhs.⁹⁹ Syed Ahmad had declared Hindustan *dar-ul harb*, but decided to launch his armed Jihad only against Sikh rule in the North-West Frontier.¹⁰⁰ He might have believed that a Jihad against the Sikhs was more feasible considering the overwhelming Pathan population in the area who viewed the Sikhs as oppressors and were likely to welcome the leadership of a committed Muslim leader who could help rid them of Sikh domination.¹⁰¹ The local Ulama do not appear to have played a significant leadership role in this Jihad, although at least some of them, including a number of Pathans who nevertheless saw this mainly as an opportunity to strike against the Sikhs, rallied to the Syed's side.¹⁰² Operating from the Sittana base, these fighters, led by the Syed fought a number of battles against the *Khalsa* army with mixed outcomes, and were ultimately defeated in an encounter with a Sikh force in 1831, during which the Syed, along with a number of his *Mujahideen* were killed.¹⁰³

The movement did not extinguish with the death of Syed Ahmad. Some of his supporters rallied again, and were joined by other Hindustani Muslims and a few local Pathans. They resumed their activities at Sittana, which became a centre of the 1857-58 anti-British uprising in the Frontier. When the rebellion broke out, some of the deserting Sepoys of the Bengal Army regiments in Peshawar and Mardan converged at Sittana to join the fighters there.¹⁰⁴ The British moved against them with a force that was composed of the Guides Corps and Pathan levies which attacked their positions in the mountains. The *Mujahideen* were surrounded and put up a desperate resistance, but were ultimately destroyed.¹⁰⁵ The local Pathans allied with the Sittana Hindustanis were not sufficiently motivated for Jihad, as unlike the Hindustanis, most of them chose not to make a last stand, and either gave themselves up or escaped from the battle.¹⁰⁶

⁹⁹ Qeyamuddin. Ahmad, *The Wahabi Movement in India* (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1966). 50.

¹⁰⁰ Ishtiaq H. Qureshi, *The Muslim community of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent, 610-1947 : a brief historical analysis* (Delhi: Renaissance Pub. House, 1985). 225.

¹⁰¹ Shireen K. Burki, 'The Creeping Wahhabization in Pukhtunkhwa: The Road to 9/11', *Comparative Strategy* 30, no. 2 (2011): 159.

¹⁰² Syed M. Haq, *The Great Revolution of 1857* (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1968). 40.

¹⁰³ Ghulam R. Meher, *Sarguzasht-i-Mujahideen* (Lahore: Shaikh Ghulam Ali and Sons, 1956). 235.

¹⁰⁴ Younghusband, *The story of the Guides*: 76.

¹⁰⁵ *The story of the Guides*: 77.

¹⁰⁶ *The story of the Guides*: 77.

The Hindustani Ulama and fighters had claimed that they wanted to establish Islamic rule throughout India. But they were unsuccessful in obtaining the level of local Pathan support required to sustain the Jihad from their base in the North-West Frontier. A major reason was the uncompromising attitude of the Hindustani Ulama on the implementation of Islamic laws among their Pathan followers in the years just preceding the rebellion, when they were busy waging war against the Sikhs in the region. Orthodox Islamic practices such as widow remarriage, and discouraging lavish dowry payments that these Ulama tried to enforce were highly unpopular as they did not blend with Pathan tribal customs.¹⁰⁷ When the rebellion struck, the principal opposition that the Ulama and their Mujahideen followers faced in Sittana appeared from the influential Abdul Ghaffur, the *Akhund* of Swat (1794-1877). A venerated figure, whose religious repute dated from his earlier days as a wandering ascetic, the Akhund settled down in Swat in 1845.¹⁰⁸ Some ten years later, he selected Syed Akbar Shah as the *Wali* (ruler) of Swat.¹⁰⁹ When the Sepoys of the 55th BNI fled from Nowshera,¹¹⁰ they found refuge in Swat with the support of Akbar Shah's son and successor, Mubarak Shah. But soon, the Akhund and a large number of his supporters expelled these rebel Sepoys.¹¹¹ The Akhund had earlier been averse to overtures by Sultan Muhammad, the elder son of Amir Dost Muhammad of Afghanistan to launch a Jihad against the British. He is reported to have responded, 'Infidels though they [the British] no doubt were, they were better rulers for the people of the country than the Dooranees [the Afghan Amirs].'¹¹² The perception was all the more significant, because unlike much of the Frontier and the other regions under analysis in the previous chapters, Swat was quite independent of British influence at the time.¹¹³

It cannot hence be assumed that the Akhund was under any British pressure, or was prompted in his beliefs by expectation of gains from the British, or conversely from Afghanistan. Instead, he appeared to be exercising religious agency. While there may have been an anti-Jihad sentiment among his discipleship, of which he would certainly

¹⁰⁷ Burki, 'The Creeping Wahhabization in Pukhtunkhwa: The Road to 9/11', 160.

¹⁰⁸ Ahmed, *Millenium and charisma among pathans : a critical essay in social anthropology*: xvi.

¹⁰⁹ *Millenium and charisma among pathans : a critical essay in social anthropology*: xvi.

¹¹⁰ Younghusband, *The story of the Guides*: 65-66.

¹¹¹ Bellew, *A general report on the Yusufzais*: 97.

¹¹² Cooper, *The crisis in the Punjab: From the 10th of May until the fall of Delhi*: 77.

¹¹³ M. Marsden and B.D. Hopkins, *Fragments of the Afghan Frontier* (London: C. Hurst & Co, 2011). 78.

have been aware, he was known to exercise autonomy in both his political and religious dealings as part of his personal ideology, with little regard to what kind of reactions it might evoke.¹¹⁴ As Raverty argues, he made the rebel Sepoys leave in keeping with his belief in discouraging guests and visitors to the state from staying longer than a few days, rather than from any other motive.¹¹⁵ On the other hand, he wholeheartedly welcomed anyone for a fixed period of hospitality, which explains why he had welcomed the rebel Sepoys when they first arrived in Swat.¹¹⁶ Similarly, the Akhund took exception to Mubarak Shah's efforts to exercise authority in line with his religious-political beliefs rather than limitations imposed by the external environment. As Sultan-i-Rome points out, relations between the two soured because the Akhund and much of the Swat population found the tithes imposed by Mubarak Shah as an exploitative measure which was unacceptable for them.¹¹⁷

Even if the Swat Ulama, including the Akhund had perceived the British as an enemy against whom Jihad was incumbent and led such a war, it is very doubtful that they would have made much of a difference to the outcome of the rebellion, whether in Northern India, or the North-West itself. As argued above, except for the isolated case of Swat, there was either a neutral or pro-British sentiment in the region among the Ulama community, and even actual enthusiasm among the Pathan public to fight on the British side. Moreover, as in the Punjab, there was no perception of religious persecution or the violation of local religious beliefs and practice by the British in the North-West Frontier. Moreover, like the Punjabis, they either did not believe in the cartridge story, or considered it a minor affair, which, in any event, neither they nor their supporters had experienced, and which therefore did not concern them. In other words, for them just as their Punjabi counterparts, Islam was in no danger from the British. On the other hand, it will be recalled that in the case of Delhi and Avadh,

¹¹⁴ H.G. Raverty, 'An account of Upper and Lower Suwat, and the Kohistan, to the source of the Suwat River: with an account of the tribes inhabiting those valleys', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 31, no. 3 (1862): 242.

¹¹⁵ 'An account of Upper and Lower Suwat, and the Kohistan, to the source of the Suwat River: with an account of the tribes inhabiting those valleys', 242.

¹¹⁶ 'An account of Upper and Lower Suwat, and the Kohistan, to the source of the Suwat River: with an account of the tribes inhabiting those valleys', 242.

¹¹⁷ Sultan-i-Rome, 'The War of Independence, 1857, and Swat', in *Mutiny at the Margins: New Perspectives on the Indian Uprising of 1857*, ed. C. Bates (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2013), 208.

religion-in-danger was the dominant theme in the ideology and conduct of the Ulama in those regions.

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the ideological motivations of key sections of Pathan society who remained loyal to the British throughout the rebellion years, despite the opportunities to rise against the latter. It has shown that Pathan Sepoys involved in the British campaigns against the rebel Sepoys of 1857 were motivated by an ideology of militarism and tribalism, which they associated with honour and pride. The strong ties that had been established with the British as a result of collaboration in the Anglo-Sikh war, as well as favourable local policies that benefited the Pathan population set the basis for military collaboration, for which they found a suitable outlet in the EIC military establishment. The 1857 rebellion also provided the Pathans an opportunity to compete on favourable terms in the military labour market, which had been monopolised by the Sikhs before the British advent, and which was in keeping with their . The Pathan Sepoys used the concept of Jihad intrinsically in order to reinforce the inspiration they drew from militarism for relieving the stress of combat. Such ideological usage of Jihad was similar to the way it functioned among their collaborators, the Punjabi Muslim Sepoys, and also their counterparts, the rebel Sepoys at Delhi and Avadh as argued in the previous three chapters. For the Pathan Sepoys and their chiefs, intrinsic Jihad was the only available source of religious motivation in the absence of any edicts or indirect encouragement by their Ulama to rise against their British employers, and lend support to the Hindustanis. The royalty, in the person of the Amir of Afghanistan by contrast, appeared to be driven solely by a political ideology of realpolitik based on considerations of state security and survival. Although the Amir did wield some political and military influence among the Frontier Pathans because of ancient historic ties, he was too occupied with serious security concerns for his own state to involve himself in the affairs in India by motivating his Frontier kinsmen to rise against the British. Moreover, his security treaties with the British, which had been a guarantor against Afghanistan's external enemies were a strong disincentive to becoming a party to the 1857 war. The Ulama of the Frontier played no noticeable role in the rebel movement, primarily because of the doctrinal confusion on the issue of whether Jihad was applicable against the British who had no record of religious

persecution against the Muslim population, especially in the North-West Frontier, and because they were also cognizant of the strong local sentiment that happened to be favourable to the British, and opposed to the Hindustani Sepoys and the Mughal royalty they were fighting to restore.

Conclusion

This study set out to discover the ways in which ideology motivated the behaviour of key sections of Muslim society on warring sides of the 1857 Indian rebellion. It has chosen to focus specifically on the Muslims because of the central role they played in key events of the 1857 rebellion. The research questions it posed were how the ideologies of royalism, culturalism and religiosity were understood and applied by the Sepoys, royalty, and Ulama during the conflict; the points of convergence and divergence between these ideological dimensions and behaviour; and the impediments in the ideological pursuits and attempts to cope with these. While the extant literature mostly focuses on the ideological inspirations for the rebels, this study also seeks to understand the motivations of those who actively supported the British. To show these contrasting situations, it chose four regional case studies: Delhi and Avadh, which experienced the most intense resistance against the EIC; and the Punjab and the North-West Frontier, where collaboration with the British was most pronounced.

The study has argued that in Delhi and Avadh, the restitution of the Mughal monarchy played a major role in motivating the rebels. Here the royalty, the Sepoys and the Ulama – the three major groups of actors in the rebellion - shared an understanding and affinity for restoration of Mughal rule. The cause was widely disseminated and it carried much appeal for the different sections of Muslim and Hindu society. However, there was no shared vision of what kind of a monarchical government the rebel factions wanted; nor a sustained or uniform commitment for the efficient functioning of the restored Mughal authority at Delhi, which adversely affected their capacity to conduct a successful war against the British. The rebellion of 1857 was the most critical turning point for Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar, whose position as a largely ceremonial ruler was transformed into that of a *de facto* sovereign when the rebel Sepoys approached him and he was proclaimed as the Emperor of Hindustan.

After assuming *de facto* control of Delhi, he made efforts to gain alliances with neutral and British protected states in order to offset the British political and military power, which was still intact despite the mass revolt of the Bengal Army. As an instrument of his political ideology, the balance-of-power strategy was devised to build upon the extensive anti-British sentiment generated by the Sepoy surge in Northern India. However, despite the flexible

distribution of power which he had proposed to the Indian states to make it attractive for them to join, their responses tended to be evasive or not forthcoming. The princely states had long since broken away from the Mughal centre and entered into subsidiary alliances with the EIC, which were proving beneficial to them in terms of political stability and military security. The external environment hence precluded a restoration of the old empire as it existed during the era of the great Mughals.

The Mughal royalist strategy might still have succeeded if it had been executed with resoluteness and a degree of success in military operations against the British. Paradoxically however, while Bahadur Shah Zafar was attempting to woo other states, he was reportedly engaged in secret communication with the EIC authorities to retain his throne. Apparently, the failure of his forces to defeat the British, or to even break the siege of the city by the latter, coupled with the lack of a positive response by the regional states convinced him of the futility of continuing the struggle, and led him to surrender to the British. The situation clearly suggests that due to a systematic corrosion of power the symbol of Mughal monarchy had by the middle of the nineteenth century lost its effectiveness as an ideological tool, despite the Sepoys desperately trying to invoke it and Bahadur Shah Zafar seemingly enthusiastic in trying to renew it. Due to the latter's weaknesses and ambivalence, the prospect of going back even to the decentralized Mughal polity of the eighteenth century was no longer a powerful enough motivation. It failed to inspire not only the many Indian princes, but also his close aides to counter the EIC, the new focus of political power in nineteenth century India.

In Avadh, Begum Hazrat Mahal, the wife of the exiled Nawab of Avadh, Wajid Ali Shah, who had assumed power when the Sepoy rebellion reached Lucknow, was more consistent in her aims and conduct during the rebellion. Despite having to deal with an undisciplined Army, and the occasional indifference and resistance of the Ulama and other figures in the state, the Begum persisted in attempting to assert her royal status and right to rule throughout the conflict. She frequently engaged with the people directly and through a number of proclamations in her endeavours to lead, unite, and inspire them against the British forces. She was able to re-establish the sovereignty of Avadh state despite the contradictions that had arisen due to the Nawab's failure to assert himself in the face of British pressure. Although aware that as a woman she might not be acceptable as a sovereign

ruler, she nevertheless succeeded as the de facto sovereign while her son, whom she successfully arranged as the regent, remained a nominal figure.

Unlike Bahadur Shah Zafar, the Begum often took to the field to lead her troops and raise their morale. Even when the bulk of her army became dispirited due to British military successes, and her advisors and associates began deserting or surrendering, the Begum chose to retreat to the jungles of Nepal with the remainder of her Sepoys rather than give herself up to the EIC authorities. Like Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar, she also adopted a balance of power strategy in pursuit of a royalist ideology so as to seek political and military alliances. Consequently, she and her representatives made a number of overtures to the Maharajah of Nepal to leave the British camp and join Avadh in the anti-British rebellion. The reason her attempts failed on this account was different than in the case of the Mughal Emperor. Whereas Bahadur Shah Zafar's commitment in pursuit of sovereign Mughal status was questionable considering his attempts to collaborate with the British during the rebellion, the Avadh Begum remained resolute in the defence and consolidation of the restored Avadh monarchy. That she failed to overcome the British was due to the lack of concerted support of some influential members of her own government, who appeared to be undermining her authority to lead; the occasional unwillingness of her troops to be led by her; and to the refusal of the kingdom of Nepal - a firm British ally - to come to her aid.

Delhi and Avadh Sepoys similarly acknowledged and respected the concept of royalism. The rebel Sepoys at Delhi had been the ones to persuade Bahadur Shah Zafar to exercise his authority as the Mughal sovereign, and assure him of their unequivocal support. However, they did not have a political programme or vision beyond his restoration. The Administrative Court that they had set up at Delhi was only meant to be a coordinating and management body to assist the Emperor, which too could not function effectively due to duplication of duties with the royal princes who were frequently at odds with the Sepoy leadership. Bahadur Shah Zafar was either unwilling or unable to resolve the tussle, which ironically hampered the effort that the Sepoys were making to sustain his rule. Like their Delhi counterparts, the Avadh Sepoys were devoted to the principle of royalism, specifically Bahadur Shah Zafar's right to rule as the Emperor vested with supreme authority, and Avadh as a princely province owing allegiance to the Mughal centre. However, the Nawab's decision to go into exile rather than resist the British, and especially his orders to the Avadh citizenry not to resist the British, considerably weakened the basis for resistance. In his absence, the Sepoys

were unable to transfer complete loyalty to the Begum as the sovereign. An element of friction therefore remained in their relationship with the Begum during the rebellion years. This negatively affected the Sepoys' capacity to concentrate on the professional aspects of soldiering, and in turn created a situation that worked to the benefit of the British.

A number of Ulama from Delhi and other areas of Northern India had also extended unequivocal support to Bahadur Shah Zafar during the rebellion by issuing proclamations calling upon the people to rally behind the Emperor in the Jihad against the British, and in some cases taking part in armed combat themselves. Equally significant was the fact that another section of the Ulama took a rather ambivalent position, neither openly supportive of Bahadur Shah Zafar, nor of the British. However, even those who were publicly loyal to the cause of Mughal royalism were entertaining personal doubts about the feasibility of the Mughal cause. This was revealed in the mutiny trials held in the aftermath of the failed rebellion, where nearly all of the Ulama who had been active in the rebellion either denied their involvement outright, or stated that they were reluctant participants acting under the pressure of public opinion or the orders of the Emperor, rather than of their own volition. On their part, the Ulama at Avadh, some of whom had previously been active in Delhi and other parts of India, appeared to be supportive of both Bahadur Shah Zafar and Begum Hazrat Mahal. In several proclamations, the Ulama appealed to the population to resist the British in support of the Mughal and Avadh monarchs, assuring them that both royals had arranged sufficient resources for the people to fight effectively against the British. However, as it transpired, some of these Ulama were pursuing personal political ambitions rather than acting in support of the centres at Delhi and Lucknow. The actions of Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah, who was leading a large number of fighters in Avadh during the rebellion is especially illustrative of this trend. The Maulvi set up his own government within a year of the rebellion, which included a number of prominent persons who had earlier been active in Delhi, and which was running in parallel to the royal government of Avadh. This led to much friction between him, the Avadh Begum, and her advisers, which adversely affected the efficiency of the Avadh rebel movement in Avadh. Thus in both Delhi and Avadh, where royalism was invoked as an ideology of rebellion, its effectiveness in motivating the rebels into focused action against the British seems to have been limited.

On the other hand, in the Punjab, where the rebellion was particularly weak, Muslim affinity for royalism was limited to the perpetuation of the princely states of Bahawalpur and Maler

Kotla. Both the states were concerned with their own security in 1857, rather than that of the restored Mughal kingdom and the regency of Avadh. The latter had no relevance for the Punjab royalty as it was too distant and had never been a factor in their external politics. The situation was not very different with respect to the restored Mughal power at Delhi. The Bahawalpur Nawabs had, in fact, never been under Mughal suzerainty, as since its foundation the state was a satellite of the Afghan kingdom. The most critical security threat for Bahawalpur was the subsequent Sikh kingdom which had ousted the Afghans from the Punjab. This development drove the state into seeking British assistance, and subsequently in allying itself with the British against the restored Mughal and Avadh powers in 1857. Maler Kotla similarly chose to remain allied with the British during their rule in the Punjab. With its small size and limited resources, it was considerably more vulnerable than Bahawalpur. Surrounded by powerful Sikh principalities, the Nawabs of Maler Kotla had to often rely on them for their protection, and avoid any measures that would be construed as hostile. It was precisely this ever-present threat that pushed the state into seeking British protection when the latter annexed the Punjab. Consequently, both Maler Kotla and Bahawalpur could not avoid aligning with the British in 1857, more so because the restored Mughal and Avadh entities appeared unable to replace the British as the predominant power.

The North-West Frontier, though without a history of monarchy, had been under direct and nominal Afghan and Mughal control through different phases of its history. Since the mid eighteenth century however, when these powers were replaced by the Sikhs, the Frontier's sole security concern as with the Punjab, was the Sikh presence and control of local resources. Thus the Frontier Pathans too sought British assistance to neutralise the Sikh influence, which remained a potential threat even after the British advent because of the traditional Sikh dominance of agriculture and the military service. The royalty of Afghanistan, which still held some influence over the area because of ethnic ties, was preoccupied with its disputes with Persia, and had become militarily dependent on the British, seemed in no position to lead or instigate a rebellion in the Frontier against the British. Like the states of Bahawalpur and Maler Kotla, Afghanistan had no links with the Mughal centre at Delhi since the Sikh domination of neighbouring Punjab, and it had moreover, a history of troubled relations with the Mughals which precluded it from coming to the aid of a restored Mughal emperor in 1857.

The Muslim Sepoys in the Punjab and North-West Frontier had not experienced Mughal rule or close interaction because of the Afghan and Sikh influence; nor were their ancestors associated with the armies of the Mughals, which used to draw recruits only from the martial Hindu and Muslim tribes of Northern India, as well as immigrant Persians and Afghans. There was thus not even an indirect connection of Punjabi Muslim Sepoys with Mughal royalty, and none with the Avadh royalty with whom there was no shared history whatsoever. Instead, their attachment lay with their own tribal chiefs, or the regional rulers of Bahawalpur and Maler Kotla, and subsequently with the British who were the dominant power in the Punjab following Sikh rule, and with whom they had regularly performed military and other government service. All the principal tribal chiefs and Sufi Ulama who commanded the largest following in the Punjab, which included the traditional Sepoy recruitment areas, had clearly displayed a political preference for the British, which served to assure the Punjabi Muslim Sepoys that they were on the right side of the Anglo-Mughal contest in 1857.

The Punjab-based Sufi Ulama on their part, avoided support for a Mughal Emperor and Avadh regent whose grip on power appeared to be weak, and under whom a viable political system had failed to materialise. On the other hand, the Punjabi Sufis had strong ties with the Nawabs of Bahawalpur and Maler Kotla and with the tribal chiefs of Punjab, who were their traditional patrons and disciples. A close relationship with the British followed when the latter assumed power after defeating the Sikhs, as the British patronised them, and in turn benefited from Sufi cooperation. The Ulama of the North-West Frontier too remained uninclined towards the resurrected Mughal rule. The Frontier Ulama orientation and commitment towards royalty was limited to the maintenance of traditional ties with the Afghan Amirs. In such an environment, the Frontier Ulama remained indifferent to the rebellion. Although a few of them were periodically active against the British at the time, the issues were limited to tribal autonomy, such as disputes over British rites of passage through tribal land, which were hence unrelated to any of the matters concerning the 1857 rebellion.

Culturalism was an important component of the ideology of the royalty, Sepoy, and Ulama in Delhi and Avadh. Both the monarchs were deeply conscious of the cultural content of their conduct, especially since it was the only medium through which they could express a vestige of authority, and which continued to be a source of respect for their thrones. Norms, such as bestowing robes of honour on distinguished individuals, requiring presentations of

jewellery and weapons by visitors to the Mughal court, and deference to their superior status as monarchs were highly valued by all Mughal Emperors and Avadh Nawabs. Consequently, when the British attempted to violate these values, it evoked a strong reaction. The grievances that the Mughal and Avadh royalty harboured against the British on this account served as an impetus for them to rise against the latter when the opportunity arose in the form of the Sepoy rebellion. In the case of Bahadur Shah Zafar, such fixation with culturalism, while it aided his perception of the British as the despised Other, also ironically complicated his relationship with his own Sepoys, whom he resented for their unruly behaviour and failure to observe the protocols associated with the Mughal court. For the Avadh royalty, the British refusal to let Nawab Wajid Ali Shah retain his throne and the symbolic power associated with it, even on a nominal basis and despite his numerous pleas, was perceived not merely as a political defeat, but as the ultimate disgrace.

Cultural sensitivity and the need to redeem individual and group honour guided Sepoy attitude and behaviour as well. When the Sepoys were punished for refusing to practice with the controversial cartridges by being fettered and having their uniforms stripped in full public view, the reaction had come immediately. The men, who were mostly Muslim Sepoys, appealed to their colleagues to avenge the disgrace by attacking the British wherever they could be found. This had the desired effect as the Sepoys at Meerut, including their peers in Avadh proceeded to attack and kill any European they could find and to seize or raze government property. The wanton destruction which spread to Delhi and other parts of Northern India somewhat diminished their popularity among other sections of the Muslim elite and members of the public. The unleashing of indiscriminate violence was not merely from a sense of lost pride and honour at being mistreated thus by their officers. It also paradoxically reflected a state of confusion that set in once their military culture that was associated with the British, and was so vital a part of their lives broke down with the act of mass rebellion. As their regiments disintegrated, so did Sepoy cohesion, sense of purpose, military discipline, and leadership, both horizontally, that is, within the Sepoy ranks, and vertically, or between them and their leaders. The rebel Sepoys at Delhi and Avadh were unable to replace the familiar military culture with a viable alternative from which they could draw inspiration, and continued to operate as an incohesive body. As a result, demoralisation set in, which adversely affected their war fighting ability in the 1857 conflict.

While the Sepoy grievances against the British were centred on the issue of the polluted cartridges and the harsh British treatment on that account, the Ulama of Delhi and Avadh ostensibly faced a wider socio-cultural threat in the form of several educational and administrative measures being undertaken by the British. These included curtailed funding for madrasa education, the rapid establishment and support for government and Christian missionary schools, and the lack of employment opportunities in the judicial and clerical professions, which the Ulama and madrasa graduates had traditionally dominated. The Ulama, however, coped with these challenges in diverse ways. While some went into seclusion, others sought or retained employment with the EIC. Another category consisted of those who attempted resistance by persisting with whatever missionary work and traditional education they could still undertake. Even among the latter Ulama however, many of whom were to initiate Jihad against the British in 1857, there was a division between those who tended to be anti-Hindu and others who believed in a culture of mutual respect and cooperation with that community. Then there were those who believed in keeping clear of the British because of the alien culture, which was repugnant to many Muslims and Hindus. Yet, there were also a significant number of Ulama who frequently interacted with the British, and were reconciled to their presence in India. The latter category paradoxically included some prominent figures associated with the traditionalist Waliullah School, some of whose icons were prominent in the subsequent 1857 Jihad against the British. In other words, the cultural threat posed by the British was perceived differentially by the Delhi and the Avadh Ulama, and their responses were varied too.

Culturalism functioned yet more differently among the Punjabi Muslim Sepoys and the Frontier Pathans. Like their counterparts in the Bengal Army, they formed the bulk of the warrior and landowning class, and highly valued military virtues. Their tribal cultures fostered a martial spirit and considered any occupation other than the military and farming as undignified. The military impulse of the martial tribes sought and discovered a suitable outlet in the professional army that the British had introduced, and when the latter offered the opportunity, they began enlisting in large numbers in the EIC regiments that were being raised in the area. Ties with the British, first established in peacetime, were strengthened in mutual combat experience during the Anglo-Sikh wars. A powerful motivation for gravitating toward the British was the perceived threat of Sikh dominance of military service, which could more effectively be countered by competing with them on the neutral platform

the British had provided, rather than incurring the prohibitive costs of open warfare with the warrior Sikh community. A sense of *esprit-de-corps* developed among the Muslim Sepoys as a result of favourable terms of service, shared responsibilities, and common pride in the British instituted regiments. An added incentive was the salaries of these Sepoys, which were much higher than those of their counterparts in the presidency armies, and the men had an opportunity as well to serve with their own clansmen in separate regimental companies as against the practice of composite units in the Bengal Army. Such a military culture became a source of motivation for the Punjabi Muslim and Pathan Sepoys, which united and sustained them as a fighting force during the 1857 rebellion, though on the side of the British.

As opposed to such conditions, a shared military culture with the Hindus and Muslims of other areas did not exist. The cultural distance was exacerbated by the lack of common or linked ethnic and social networks. There were few Delhi and Avadh Muslims in the Punjab, most of whom were employed as petty officials in the Punjab government, or as Sepoys on deputation from the Bengal Army, with whom the Punjabi Sepoys, who were mostly confined to their villages or military garrisons, had little interaction. There were moreover, a number of Indian military deserters from EIC regiments who had taken refuge in the Punjab under various guises, and were hence held in disdain for having abandoned a service that was considered to bestow respect and honour. The stereotyping created a general image of Indian Muslims and Hindus as the 'Other', which enabled Punjabi Muslims and Pathans to cope with the ideological tension they would have otherwise experienced in treating co-religionists and fellow Indians as foes. The Sepoy military ideology in the Punjab and Frontier remained solidly grounded in a military culture that though introduced by the British, perfectly suited Pathan and Punjabi Muslim martial traditions and beliefs associated with their tribal identities. As a military ideology, this culture successfully withstood the stresses of the 1857 war.

As an ideology, religiosity was a critical identity marker and motivator for the Muslim Sepoys, royalty and Ulama of Delhi and Avadh, who regularly invoked it in their statements and proclamations during the rebellion. While they strove to adopt and disseminate the values and norms associated with the faith, they also experienced tensions and contradictions in their understanding and experience of Islam, which became apparent in the 1857 conflict. For the Muslim Sepoys, as also their Hindu colleagues, the greased cartridge issue had provided the initial religious stimulus, which was subsequently taken up by the Ulama and

the royalty of Avadh and Delhi. A closer examination of the cartridge issue however, reveals that except in the case of Hinduism, it did not have much significance from an Islamic viewpoint, as handling prohibited substances under unavoidable circumstances does not deprive Muslims of their faith. Yet, the Muslim Sepoys genuinely believed their collective religious identity had been seriously compromised through the incident. The misperceived belief is attributable to heuristic information-processing, or a subconscious tendency on their part to process only the surface information prohibiting pork, without making an effort to consider the religious caveats on the issue. Either they were under pressure of a highly stressful situation which called for quick decision-making, or they did not favour the qualifications associated with the belief, as it clashed with a more entrenched and straightforward conviction that pork was proscribed in Islam. In order to seek an extrinsic source of motivation, the Muslim component of the Sepoy army, both at Avadh and Delhi leant towards the Ulama for religious inspiration. However, the ambivalent cues from the wider Ulama community in Northern India on the applicability of Jihad against the British became a source of ideological dissonance instead.

Another complicating issue was ironically the zeal for Jihad on the part of some sections of Delhi Muslims and a few Ulama, whose insistence on displaying Jihad symbols and carrying out open rituals of cow slaughter were resented by the Hindu majority colleagues of the Muslim Sepoys. As a source of inspiration, Jihad therefore, did not have a powerful impact on these Sepoys at the collective level. On the other hand, the religious zeal of the Muslim Sepoys does appear to have been sustained by recourse to a personal belief in Jihad as a weapon of war. This spirit found expression in at least some armed encounters with the British forces in which mixed bands of rebels, which included Muslim Sepoys, were reported to have fought to the death with religious war cries.

The Ulama from Northern India, who belonged to a variety of religious denominations, issued a number of proclamations and edicts deriding the British for defiling Hinduism and Islam, and appealing to the two communities to avenge the slights to their faiths. Apart from the cartridge incident, the zeal of European missionaries, circulation of Christian tracts deemed offensive to Hinduism and Islam, establishment of missionary societies, and the conversions, albeit limited, that were taking place, had caused much resentment in the Ulama community. Significantly however, the Ulama as we know were not the first to rise against British rule. They joined in only after the Sepoys had rebelled. Their motivations and role

also remained ambiguous as some of them appeared to manoeuvre on both sides, while many of the leading Ulama subsequently denied any role or wilful complicity in the rebellion when tried by the British. Nonetheless, the spirit of Jihad did inspire some Ulama at the personal level, as evidenced by their passion during combat and refusal to surrender or recant their beliefs and acts, a special example of which was Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah of Avadh.

The Delhi and Avadh royalty enjoyed consistent support by a number of local Ulama in their struggle against the British. The support was vital for Bahadur Shah Zafar as it provided the needed sanction for a religious war against the British, which he attempted to fully utilise in his proclamations and directives during the rebellion years. However, his eagerness to attract the Hindu masses and the Hindu rebel Army, which constituted the majority of his supporters, led him to innovate and conflate the popularly understood concept of Jihad, that is, armed warfare by the Muslim community to protect Islam, in ways that contradicted the Jihad message that some of his Ulama were delivering in their sermons. Consequently, the Emperor's religious call failed to attract mass Muslim following and would have been a source of confusion for that portion of his own Muslim Sepoys which might otherwise have felt more inspired from a clearer Jihad signal. In the case of Avadh, the Begum is not known to have inspired her Sepoys with religious war cries or displays of symbols eulogising Jihad as she led them into battle. This does not necessarily mean she was not inspired by religion in her war against the British. But her failure to do so certainly suggests that for her, like most other Muslim combatants in both Avadh and Delhi, Jihad served more as a personal or intrinsic source of motivation than as an extrinsic motivator. Religiosity was a critical component of the Punjabi Muslim and Pathan elite ideology as well, but in different ways and to different effect. The Sepoys appeared to be devoted to religious requirements and rites, much like their co-religionists in Delhi, Avadh and the rest of India. During the rebellion, they were observed to regularly pray and invoke the name of Allah in battle. The British were sensitive to their religious sentiment, and appeared to endorse it. However, it is significant that unlike the case in Delhi and Avadh, no call for a collective Jihad was ever made from any local quarter to inspire Punjabi Muslims and Pathans in combat. Yet, neither was any religious edict or appeal issued by local religious authorities forbidding Jihad against the rebel Army. While the Ulama of Punjab and Frontier did not invoke Jihad during the rebellion, their open and unanimous support of the British, which remained consistent

throughout the conflict, served as covert religious sanction, and hence a source of inspiration for the Sepoys. Since these Muslim Sepoys were highly susceptible to the religious and political influence of their Ulama, the local Sepoys took that as a cue to sanction their combat participation. Religiosity thus acted here in a very different way - not so much as a mobilizing ideology, but as a source of inspiration, courage, and confidence in a combat situation. It functioned yet differently among the Sufi Ulama of the Punjab, who were not so concerned with the doctrinal issues and debates on the ideology of armed Jihad as with issues of personal piety, meditation rituals and other rites associated with Sufism, which set up the basic divide with the pro-Jihad Ulama. Another complicating factor in the relationship was the tendency of the Punjab Sufis to guard against encroachments on their religious realms, so the attempts by the pro-rebel Ulama to reach out to other Muslims found no resonance with them. The Frontier Ulama by comparison, were likewise unaffected by the rebellion as they did not believe any religious issues were at stake. Although unlike their counterparts in the neighbouring Punjab, these Ulama are not known to have actively participated in the conflict on the British side, they did not discourage their huge following among local Pathans from joining up with the British against the rebel factions.

Like the Ulama, the royalty of Punjab and Frontier did not find it necessary to mobilise their Sepoys in the name of Jihad, as their prime ideological motive was state survival, which they had successfully achieved through British collaboration. The Mughal Emperor's frequent invocation of Jihad, and more generally a religious war that could appeal to Hindus as well, did not strike a chord with the Pathan and Punjabi populations either, who were more susceptible to the influence of their own rulers. The Punjab and Frontier royalty were receptive to the influence of their Sufi elite as against the attempts of the pro-Jihad Ulama of Northern India to rally all Indians in the war against the British. The princely states of Bahawalpur and Maler Kotla had historical links with the Sufi luminaries in the region, and these ties remained strong during the rebellion years. Since these potentates depended on the religious, cultural, and political support of the local Ulama, and these Ulama had displayed no inclination toward the anti-British religious elite of Northern India, the Punjab royalty remained indifferent to the Jihad appeals of the Delhi and Avadh Ulama and royalty.

This study has tried to argue that royalism, culturalism, and religiosity functioned as interconnected ideologies for the Sepoys, royalty and Ulama of both the pro and anti-British camps. However, the salience of each ideology, the level of commitment with which it was

pursued, and its endurance varied across the two rival groups, and within group members. Contrary to the extant literature, which either exaggerates the ideological impact of Jihad in the 1857 rebellion, or conflates it with the notion of a secular or combined Hindu-Muslim proto-nationalist call for liberation, this study has shown that Jihad did play an important ideological role for the Muslim actors, but in innovative ways, and at the individual rather than at the group level. The role of cultural ideology, though extensively researched in the existing literature, tends to emphasise the combined Muslim-Hindu spirit to oust the alien power, whereas this study has additionally examined the relatively neglected importance of military culture as a motivator in the conflict. Similarly, by studying the role of royalism from the perspective of balance-of-power or realpolitik thought, the present research has attempted to augment existing explanations of the motives of the Mughal and Avadh monarchs. Finally, by incorporating the ideological motivations and related conduct of the most under-studied set of actors in the 1857 rebellion - the Punjabi Muslim and Pathan Sepoys, potentates and religious elite who almost unanimously supported the British against fellow Indians - this study has provided a richer framework for the analysis of Muslim ideology in the 1857 conflict.

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