Resilient communities: household, state, and ecology in south-eastern Panjab, c. 1750-1880

Joshi, G.

Chapter 3: Elite Households in Transition, c.1810-1880

The previous chapter has argued that community in precolonial south-eastern Panjab was located in the networks of households, lay and monastic, elite and common, that criss-crossed this region. The remainder of this study therefore considers the changes that this household-centric order underwent during the nineteenth century, subsequent to colonial conquest. The analysis is limited to a consideration of households as governing agents—the managers of resources, such as arable land, grazing and recruitment grounds, forests, but also of people. Regardless of variations in their form, these household networks were united by at least one common function, namely, that of providing for their members. In what follows, therefore, I reflect upon how this capacity for provision changed over the course of the nineteenth century. Who was in a position to provide, and for whom? Answering these questions casts light on the changing composition of lineages, as well as the shifting power dynamics within them.

To answer these broader questions, this chapter examines the way in which the colonial judicial and revenue administration redrew the boundaries of elite lineages in south-eastern Panjab—specifically those of the various warlords and notables, as well as ascetic preceptors. It first considers the demilitarization of the region by the East India Company, and the establishment of the '*Pax Britannica*'. Demilitarization successfully put an end to the raids which, as we have seen, constituted an important means of domain consolidation and provision for local lineages. Using the latent threat of conquest and complete dispossession, the colonial state then proceeded to use a new body of law to curtail the privileges of various local elites. The application of this law, which was shaped both by the state's particular interests and prejudices, as well as by its understandings of local custom, was an attempt to change the rules of the game of governance. As this chapter demonstrates, these attempts were reasonably successful in exerting control over elite households. Some lineages found themselves divested of much of their material capital, such as land, and consequently, of status. Within lineages, too, we see that colonial law stripped some members—notably women—of their wealth, and thereby, of much of their influence. In each case, these changes benefitted not only the colonial state, but indigenous actors too, such as the men that were designated the guardians and managers of women's wealth. The analysis is divided into five sections. The first of these considers the fate of the lordly lineages, from the Mughals to the various, Rajput and Sikh *riyasats* in the region. The second section is devoted to the monastic households of the various holy men—*pirs*, *sanyasis*, *fakirs* and *babas*—that were tied, if not to every village, then certainly to every clan in the region. I argue that although these monastics might have, in some cases, been dispossessed of their lands, bonds of devotion continued to integrate devotees with networks of worship and patronage surrounding teachers.

Demilitarization and the 'Pax Britannica'

The East India Company came into indirect possession of the better part of south-eastern Panjab in 1803, as the result of the Treaty of Surji Arjangaon, which it signed with the Maratha leader Daulat Rao Shinde during the Second Anglo-Maratha War. With this Treaty, the role of agent and protector of the Mughal Emperor passed from the Marathas to the British. The Company's concern with securing this tract stemmed from its strategic, rather than economic, value. As it well knew, this was the route that had repeatedly been exploited by conquering Central Asian armies between the tenth and eighteenth centuries to gain a foothold in the subcontinent. In the early nineteenth century however, it was not, in the first instance, nomadic tribes, but rather European rivals—specifically France—from whom the Company was anxious to protect this tract. These fears stemmed, in part, from the Company's history of conflict with the *Compagnie des Indes*. They were further fuelled by France's rapid rise under Napoleon, who had led his army not only across the length and breadth of the European continent, but

also into Africa. The British were concerned that a turbulent, and therefore weak, frontier would provide the French with an obvious point of attack.

These fears were not entirely unfounded, although they were arguably amplified by the contemporary political climate in Britain. At the close of the eighteenth century, there were a number of European mercenaries—some of them French—seeking to carve out independent fiefdoms in south-eastern Panjab. Of these soldiers of fortune, the one particularly of concern to the British was a certain Pierre 'Perron'. Perron had led several Maratha contingents under Shinde, during which time he had also served as James Skinner's commanding officer. Officially, he was no more than a Maratha subordinate, who themselves claimed to be no more than agents and protectors of the Mughal throne. However, neither Shinde nor the elderly emperor Shah Alam II exercised any real power in south-eastern Panjab. The former's direct influence was confined to the Deccan; that of the latter had been fatally weakened by, amongst other things, repeated invasions from Iran and Afghanistan. By contrast, Perron had not only military skill and local clients but—crucially—loyal troops under his command. By the late eighteenth century therefore, he had become *de facto* governor of the countryside west of Delhi.[1]

Not only was Perron's growing influence a latent threat to Shinde's Marathas, it was also regarded as a strategic problem by the British who identified the mercenary first and foremost in terms of his nationality. Viewed from the prism of European geopolitics, it was indeed alarming that Perron had founded 'an independent French state on the most vulnerable part of the Company's frontier.' Even more ominous, wrote a worried Arthur Wellesley, then Commander-in-Chief of the Company's Bengal Army, was the question of who would succeed Perron. The latter, having 'amassed a considerable fortune' was known to be 'anxious […] to retire to Europe and to dispose of his actual Command, and of his territorial possessions, to some person of the French Nation.' This, fretted Wellesley, would expose the British in India 'to every intrigue of the French […] and even to the ambition and hostile spirit of the person who now rules [that] nation.' For the stability of the Company's Indian colonies, therefore, it was imperative that south-eastern Panjab be wrested from Shinde and Perron, preferably by payment of a judicious bribe to the latter.[2] Although eventually, war could not be entirely avoided, the Maratha army was defeated under General Lake's command at the Battle of Assaye. The mantle of imperial guardian thus fell to the British, who deputed a representative, or 'Resident', to the Mughal court at Delhi to serve as the emperor's agent and guardian.

The Company soon realized, however, that what General Lake had succeeded in securing from Perron and Shinde was no more than a very superficial control of south-eastern Panjab. As formal agents of the depleted Mughal state, they had simply acceded to the apex of a political system in which symbolic authority was frequently divorced from effective power.[3] As far as actual governance was concerned, therefore, Shinde and Perron were only two of many actors on the region's crowded political stage; and although the latter had been influential, his defeat at the Company's hands did not automatically transfer the system of patronage he had built up to them. For the British, establishing an administration with regularized tax-collection, a permanent military presence and a police force would not only be time-consuming, it would also entail considerable expense. Far easier would be to cultivate clients amongst locally established landlords such as the Raja of Ballabhgarh and the Begum Samru, who, by virtue of their limited resources, posed little threat to the Company, and to whom the business of governing could be delegated. To this end, General Lake confirmed many revenue assignments and land grants that had

[1] According to Skinner's memoirs of his service in the Maratha army, Perron succeeded General De Boigne as leader of a Maratha brigade; he was subsequently made commanding officer of the regular forces in Hindustan. James Baillie Fraser, *Military Memoir of Lieut.-Col. James Skinner, C.B*, vol. I, 2012; 37, 110.

[2] IOR/H/621, Letter from Lord Wellesley to General Lake, 27 July 1803. British Library, London.

[3] See Chapter 2.

been bestowed by the Mughals and Marathas upon local rajas, and issued new grants of his own.[4] Grantees were permitted to continue farming the revenues of their holdings, on the condition that they acknowledged the suzerainty of the British, and on the understanding that they would maintain the peace within their individual fiefdoms. Relations were similarly cultivated with neighbouring states such as the Rajput kingdom of Bikaner, as well as the Phulkian states of Patiala, Nabha, Jind and Kaithal, who, although acknowledging the paramountcy of the Mughal court were, for all practical purposes, independent sovereigns.

This however still left a large tract of land, roughly comprising the country west of Rohtak all the way to the Satlaj River, to be disposed of. This area was largely inhabited by martial pastoralists identified simply as Bhattis and Ranghars, for whom raiding was a crucial component of maintaining and expanding power in the hinterland.[5] From the colonial state's sedentarist perspective, these communities were troublesome and needed to be closely monitored. At the same time, the Company under Lord Minto's oversight was certain that it did not want to invest precious resources in governing what was effectively a sparsely inhabited desert. Many of the Company's clients were, for similar reasons, equally unwilling to accept responsibility for this land. After much searching, the tract was finally gifted to a British ally named Abdul Samand Khan. Abdul Samand was an Afghan and had once been a client of the Marathas, changing allegiances to the British when it became clear that Shinde's political star was on the wane. He was given the right to farm revenues in this vast tract as a token of gratitude for the services he had rendered the Company in their campaign against Shinde. The gift was proffered with the prescient stipulation that, upon accepting it, Abdul Samand would surrender all rights to further military or financial help from the British. The arrangement seemed at the time to be an excellent one, as it rid the Company both of a client in need of remuneration and land in which it had but little material interest.[6]

It soon emerged, however, that Abdul Samand was unequal to the task of governing his newly-acquired fiefdom. The grant was made to him in 1806, and already in 1807, he was pleading with the Company for financial and/or military help. The problem appeared to be that Abdul Samand's new subjects had refused to pay him revenue and had even threatened to kill him if he tried to set foot in their villages. In using brute force to bring them to submission, he had lost several hundred men (including his own brother) and had spent some six *lakh* (600,000) rupees. His military ventures had, he wrote, yielded some result, with the attackers (identified as Ranghars and Bhattis) driven back and cultivators returning to abandoned villages. However, the debt he had incurred had put him under great pressure and he feared that if his credit dried up, he would not be able to maintain his troops and thus entirely lose control of the area. He nonetheless hoped that 'if Government will consent to an expenditure of a large sum of money for five or six years', peace might be established and the country might slowly return to a state of prosperity.[7]

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[4] Land grants made by the Mughal were of different kinds, differentiated on the basis of duration of tenure and the conditions under which the grantee was permitted to farm revenues. Thus, for instance, while revenue assignments or *jagirs* were in principle determined by an individual's official rank (*mansab*) and could be of limited tenure, but, at least in south-eastern Panjab, these could also be hereditary and were therefore called *istamrari*, or 'continuous'. *Inams*, on the other hand, were gifts of land, often made to religious institutions such as shrines or monasteries. For the purpose of this chapter, it suffices to treat these different categories together. Reference shall, therefore, only be made to 'land grants', without further specification. The revocation of these grants and the impact on elite households is considered in the following chapter.

[5] See Chapter 2.

[6] A summary of the manner in which Abdul Samand came to be responsible for settlement of Hariana can be found in Political Letter from Bengal to the Board of Directors in London, 1 October 1807. British Library, London.

[7] IOR/F/4/212/4735, Letter from Abdul Samand Khan to the Persian Secretary (of the Governor-General at Calcutta), 23 June 1807. British Library, London.

The British Resident at Delhi, Archibald Seton, did not, however, take a sympathetic view of the situation. Abdul Samand was, he felt, himself to blame for the position in which he found himself: rather than adopting a conciliatory stance, he had met the insubordination of his Ranghar and Bhatti subjects with violence. He had thus begun a feud that it was not at all clear he could win. Seton was nonetheless inclined to helping Abdul Samand, the stability of whose governorship he regarded as an important strategic goal. Viewed from the perspective of the Company's financial and political interests, there could be 'no comparison […] between the effectual occupation of the Province […] by a Chief closely connected with the British Government by every obligation of interest and attachment and its usurpation by a foreign power or its being left without any Government whatever, the scene of Rapine and disorder.'[8] Yet, even though Seton warned that Abdul Samand's downfall could produce a ripple effect across south-eastern Panjab that would cause the whole province to be 'overrun by hordes of Banditti', Calcutta remained firm: the conditions of the Company's original agreement were to be adhered to.[9] The only help that Seton could therefore provide the hapless Abdul Samand, was to issue an order calling for peace to be restored and for his authority to be honoured. Yet, although Seton optimistically mused that this would likely be enough to instil 'a sense of their duty' amongst the inhabitants of the tract, leading them to 'consent to pay their Rents', such was not the case. Realizing that no help would be forthcoming from the Company, a browbeaten and impoverished Abdul Samand requested simply to be relieved of his fief. The Company acquiesced, and in 1808 the tract reverted to direct British rule, while their client became the Nawab of Dujane instead.[10]

Abdul Samand's failed *nawabi* was just one of many upsets in the Company's early attempts to use indirect rule to suppress the raiding economy of south-eastern Panjab. For the entire first half of the nineteenth century, the region retained its strategic importance for British power in the subcontinent. Scarcely a decade after its conquest by Lord Lake, French power had diminished both in India and in Europe; but new potential foes loomed on the horizon. These included the Sikh ruler Ranjit Singh, whose rapid consolidation of the kingdom of Lahore had swallowed up lesser political fry on either bank of the Satlaj River. The Maharaja's death in 1845 and the subsequent annexation of his erstwhile domains by the Company extended the Raj's frontier in India to include the entire Panjab plain, and the Sikhs were superseded in British geopolitical preoccupations by Tsarist Russia. It was only now, with the commencement of the so-called 'Great Game'—Britain and Russia's contest for empire in Central Asia —that the strategic significance of south-eastern Panjab faded somewhat, to be replaced with the importance of Afghanistan.

This strategic imperative gave Company policy in south-eastern Panjab a broad goal, viz., maintaining a buffer zone between its valuable possessions further east and any potential rivals seeking to destabilize these from the West. The Company's various Governors-General were also reluctant to use military force unless absolutely necessary, preferring to govern indirectly through their various allies and vassals. Beyond these general principles however, there remained ample room for ambiguity about the specific tasks and modus operandi of governance. Part of the problem was purely logistical, as the episode of Abdul Samand's brief governorship demonstrates. In those early days, the Company possessed only sparse information about the region and south-eastern Panjab seemed a poor investment for its straitened resources. To this extent, the challenges the Company faced in establishing its rule were

[8] Political Letter from Bengal to the Board of Directors in London, 1 October 1807. IOR/F/4/212/4735, British Library, London. Calcutta's representation of the matter to the Board was informed by Seton's reports from Delhi. For these, see letters from Archibald Seton to N.B. Edmonstone, 16 January 1807, 22 January 1807, 27 January 1807.

[9] For Calcutta's response see Letter from N.B. Edmonstone to Archibald Seton, 31 January 1807. IOR/F/4/212/4735, British Library, London.

[10] F/4/371/9239, British Library, London.

more or less similar to those faced by other states before them. Added to these logistical difficulties, however, was an ideological incoherence particular to the British about precisely what their mandate entailed. It had been clear from the very beginning that the Company was not in India simply as a trading enterprise, not least because maintaining the Indian colony was central to Britain's global expansionist programme.[11] But to what extent was it a paramount or suzerain power, and in what measure was it simply an agent of friendly indigenous states? Furthermore, whether paramount or not, was the colonial state also responsible for the welfare of its subjects? If so, how might the general welfare best be served? Did indigenous institutions, legal and customary, provide a sufficient framework for good governance? In what measure did these need to be preserved or indeed reformed?

Even as it grappled with such issues of motive and method, the Company felt compelled to intervene in south-eastern Panjab to try to put an end to the frequent raiding of 'its' territories by neighbouring states and itinerant martial populations. At first, it restricted itself to the task of simply policing the area, establishing police and military posts at sites such as Karnal, Hansi and in and around the city of Delhi. To this end, it also enlisted the help of indigenous states, such as the Phulkian and Bikaner rajas, as well as smaller feudatories of the Mughal court. Yet, while such chieftains could provide valuable support to the Company, the patchwork of jurisdictions that criss-crossed south-eastern Panjab was also an obstacle to policing. Not all of the Company's avowed allies were equally committed to the prosecution of theft, murder and plunder, especially when these did not occur in their territories. Indeed, some even encouraged raids on neighbouring domains, claiming a share of the loot for themselves and protesting innocence when confronted by the Company.[12] On other occasions, chiefs had to strike a delicate balance between upholding their agreements with the colonial state, and not overstepping their remit as rulers by interfering in their subjects' affairs.[13] For all these reasons, the Company resolved to slowly weed out the myriad principalities, revenue farms and small states in south-eastern Panjab in the interests of establishing a single, uniform judicial and fiscal administration in the region. In the process, it entered into very little direct military confrontation. The exception to this was its staggered campaign against the Bhattis (1808, 1810, 1818), who had established themselves at the forts of Rania, Sirsa and Fatahabad under the dual leadership of Nawab Khan Bahadur Khan and his son, Zabita Khan. After negotiations with the said nawabs to put an end to their cattle raids on the rural settlements around Hansi and Hisar yielded no results, the Company sent its troops to seize the Bhattis' forts. In 1818, the Bhattis were expelled from their last stronghold, the fort of Rania, and were thus effectively 'pacified'.

The timing of this final conquest was particularly significant, for it coincided with the Company's decisive defeat of the Marathas and their 'Pindari' campaign. With these victories, the British proved they possessed the most effective military, not only in south-eastern Panjab, but in all of the Indian subcontinent, paving the way for 'administrative imperialism'.[14] This inaugurated the *Pax Britannica* in South Asia. For close to thirty years, until the Anglo-Sikh Wars of 1845-9, the Company was able to consolidate its territories in the region without large-scale armed conflict. This was important, for military missions such as those against the Bhattis were expensive. During the Company's campaign of 1810, one expedition undertaken by a party of James Skinner's battalion ('Skinner's Horse'), the goal of which was simply to disperse the Bhattis, was attended by the death of a cavalry officer, while another three were wounded. In addition, the Company lost seven horses, of which six had died from exhaustion

[11] David Washbrook, 'The Indian Economy and the British Empire', in *India and the British Empire*, ed. Douglas M Peers and Nandini Gooptu (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 44–74, at 60-61.

[12] Board's Collections, H/776, 'Reports of Judicial Officers of Various Districts', 12 December 1825, ff.1579-80.

[13] See Chapter 2.

[14] D. H. A. Kolff, 'The End of an Ancien Régime: Colonial War in India, 1798-1818', in *Imperialism and War: Essays on Colonial Wars in Asia and Africa*, ed. J.A. Moor and H.L. Wesseling (Leiden: Brill, 1989).

in the desert, while nineteen had been so weakened by the exertion of the campaign that they were rendered permanently 'unserviceable'.[15] All this to scatter what the Company referred to as 'Banditti'. From the colonial perspective, therefore, it was particularly fortunate that in most cases, simply the latent threat of violence was sufficient for the Company to enforce its mandate in its dealings with indigenous chieftains.

Unsurprisingly, the implications of the *Pax Britannica* for indigenous actors, whether various warlords, chieftains, and princes or their extended networks of clients, were less than advantageous. Once the use of military force to resist the Company became infeasible, states found their sole recourse to be peaceful, but highly unequal, diplomatic negotiations. The results of such deliberations were determined according to a new and developing body of colonial law. All manner of political questions, from boundary disputes to the right to succession were adjudicated in accordance with this novel jurisprudential standard. Besides the consequences of this non-militarized form of doing politics for the various chiefs, warlords and notables of south-eastern Panjab, which will be examined in the following section, the *Pax Britannica* also dealt a fatal blow to the military labour market.[16] As Dirk Kolff has shown, this market had historically been sustained by the fierce competition amongst the many political actors that crowded the South Asian political landscape. At the supply end of the equation, it provided rural populations a way to supplement their livelihoods from farming or livestock-rearing.[17] From the 1820s onwards, while the supply of potential military labour remained, patronage for soldiers dried up in the face of the Company's monopoly on warfare. The opportunities for service offered by the colonial state, while significant for certain rural groups—including Panjabi Sikhs from mid-century onwards—could not compare with the precolonial demand for military labour. The consequences of the diminishing demand for military labour will be considered in the following chapter. Below, I turn first to the fate of elite households under colonial rule.

The fate of the riyasats *of south-eastern Panjab*

The Mughals and their dependants

If by the end of the eighteenth century, Mughal imperial power was much reduced in most of its former domains, the Emperor nonetheless retained a not insignificant symbolic influence. As Skinner's *Tazkira* informs us, even those warlords who were effectively autonomous, would not miss the opportunity to be awarded titles and other tokens of honour by the King. In great part, what remained of the Emperor's influence on the eve of conquest derived from his role as a patron, the head of a sprawling network of relations, dependents, and clients, each of whom sought an improvement in their personal fortunes through his gracious intercession. In the vicinity of the imperial capital at Delhi, material expression of this patronage was to be found in the numerous grants of land given to various individuals and institutions. These *jagirs*, or revenue assignments, were given for a variety of purposes and tenures. *Jagirs* listed as *jaidad* were given for services rendered, and on the understanding that the *jagirdar* would provide military assistance—often mentioned in terms of cavalry—to the Emperor in times of war. *Madad-e-ma'ash* ('by way of livelihood') grants were given to clients, from artists to holy men and relatives, in place of a money income; often, a specific monetary worth was attached to these. *Waqf* grants were given to religious institutions for their maintenance. Where grants were listed as *istamrari* or *altamgha*, they were understood to have been given in perpetuity and were thus hereditary.

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[15] Letter from Major Adams to Archibald Seton, 19 July 1810. IOR/F/4/351/8193. British Library, London.

[16] Kolff, 'Ancien Régime'.

[17] See D. H. A. Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput, and Sepoy: The Ethnohistory of the Military Labour Market in Hindustan, 1450-1850* (Cambridge [etc.]: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Dirk H. A. Kolff, 'Peasants Fighting for a Living in Early Modern North India', in *Fighting for a Living: A Comparative Study of Military Labour 1500-2000.*, ed. Erik-Jan Zürcher (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014), 243–65.

It was evident, early on, to the East India Company that if the capture of Delhi and the adjacent hinterland were to be rendered profitable, then, despite its claim to rule as an agent of the Mughal Emperor, it would have to undertake some drastic reforms to this extended network of patronage. This need was especially acute, since the military campaigns that the Company undertook in its attempt to 'pacify' the north-western frontiers of its Indian possessions were very nearly ruinously expensive. Indeed, the cost of extending its political and military apparatus to south-eastern Panjab was feared to be so immense, that it was not until the 1810s that the Company took the first, tentative steps towards establishing a direct revenue administration in the region. It was therefore unsurprising that the Company's earliest attempts at governing prioritized efficiency and profitability. While it weighed the long-term gains from infrastructure investments against their immediate costs, the British Resident, Charles Metcalfe ordered a review of all the revenue assignments and land grants that existed in the region under the Mughal administration.

The review of the *jagirs* ordered by Metcalfe in the immediate vicinity of Delhi, and executed by his assistant William Fraser, extended to all the above forms of land grant. It did not, however, take the various nominal tributaries of Jaipur, Delhi, and Lahore, who had had managed to become lords of their own autonomous *riyasats*, into consideration. It was also limited in geographical scope, extending only to a handful of parganas, clustered in the south-eastern corner of our region.[18] Yet, Fraser estimated that the continued existence of these estates meant that every year, some 235,000 rupees of the land revenue of the imperial dominions would remain in the hands of Mughal clients and dependants, rather than making its way to the Company treasury.[19] Metcalfe therefore recommended that, wherever these exemptions could be revoked 'consistently with justice', the Company do so, and if necessary, compensate the loss of income incurred by the grantee with a money pension.[20] The minimalist and utilitarian approach that he and Fraser adopted trod roughshod over the finer distinctions between different kinds of land grants and the conditions and tenure associated with each.

Despite its limited scope, Metcalfe and Fraser's investigation is therefore important, not only for the impact it had upon the Mughal *riyasat* as a patron, but also as an early example of the tension between colonial views on property and local practices of patronage. A crucial point of difference lay in divergent definitions of 'legitimate' grantors. The category of people that the Company regarded as legally entitled to holding, managing, transferring, and inheriting property, specifically land and the rights to its revenues, was far smaller than the actual class of people who, in fact, exercised these rights on Mughal soil. Fraser and Metcalfe departed from the principle that all land belonged to the Mughal Emperor. Therefore, only he, or those ruling in his name—the Marathas under Daulat Rao Shinde, or the Company itself—had the right to gift land, or rights in land. Any grants not made or approved by the Mughal Emperor, Shinde or the British, were therefore treated as 'illegal' and liable to revocation.

Eventually, the Company did not adhere uniformly to these principles. As we shall see, in practice, exceptions were made, for the Company, too, cultivated a politics of patronage. Some *jagirdars* were too important to dispossess; others could be made 'to feel [their] obligation' to the Company for being allowed to keep their estates. Nonetheless, as a result of this review, a large class of landholders found its privileges abolished, and their patrimonies abruptly seized by the Company. The economic distress thus precipitated was explained in Company rhetoric as the unavoidable collateral in a move towards a more just and transparent land revenue administration. Entitlements in land were therefore formally

[18] The districts reviewed were Haveli Palam, Ganaur, Kharkhouda, Sonipat and Panipat.

[19] Letter from C.T. Metcalfe to the Secretary to the Governor General, 20 September 1813. 'Foreign Political Consultation', 24 October-7 November 1818, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

[20] Letter from C.T. Metcalfe to the Secretary to the Governor General, 7 February 1818. 'Foreign Political Consultation', 24 October-7 November 1818, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

brought in line with legal principles espoused by the Company in its other Indian territories. It was moreover up to the colonial government, rather than the Mughal Emperor, to determine where exceptions to these rules could be made, placing the Company at the pinnacle of the imperial pyramid of patronage. This intervention *de facto* placed a whole range of previously honoured relationships and embedded entitlements on an inferior legal footing, inaugurating the long process whereby family, dependence, provision, and kinship were to acquire new and narrower legal meanings. A few examples will help to illustrate this point.[21]

One of the principles for revoking a grant frequently invoked by Metcalfe and Fraser was the presumed non-transferability of gifted land. As the former observed in a letter to Calcutta, those beneficiaries who had been gifted estates by the 'Superior Government', could not be viewed, at least by the Company, as having the authority to further parcel that land out to their family, friends, and dependants. Citing this arbitrary principle, Metcalfe and Fraser were able to declare a whole range of grants to be 'illegal'. In the Haveli Palam, the hinterland immediately south of the Mughal capital at Delhi, whose revenues were earmarked for defraying the costs of the imperial household, the two Company officers found a host of estates that had been granted by an Emperor to a family member or client, and which had been further redistributed into smaller grants. For instance, one village called Bibipur, appeared to have been gifted by Afrasiab Khan, the *chela* (disciple and attendant) and adopted son of the Mughal courtier Najaf Quli Khan, to the caretakers of his adoptive father's mausoleum. The revenues from the village were intended 'for keeping the expense of Servants, illuminations & co. at the Tomb of Nujuf Khan'. That 'Afrasiab Khan had not the authority to make the grant', appeared to Metcalfe a sound legal reason to resume authority over Bibipur, but he refrained from doing so since the village had been in the courtier's family for close to a century. He did, however, think it necessary 'to ensure that the produce of the village indeed be used for the upkeep of the tomb', rather than for the personal profit of its overseers.

While Bibipur might not have been immediately seized by the Company, Metcalfe expressed the opinion that it seemed excessive to grant land and villages to tombs, shrines and other 'religious' establishments for their upkeep. This was especially so when, rather than the Emperor, it was someone within the extended imperial network of clients, or a locally influential person, who had made the grant. Where such grants—known as *waqf* (to institutions) and *madad-i-ma'ash* (to holy men)—were found, he suggested their replacement with a money income. On this principle, numerous small grants were revoked. These included, for instance, an unnamed shrine near the Qutb Minar (perhaps that of the Sufi *pir* Bakhtiyar Kaki) in Delhi, that had been gifted a village for its upkeep by 'a Muslim concubine' of son of the late Raja of Bharatpur. Likewise, property granted to the Kalkaji shrine by Daulat Rao Shinde was seized and replaced with a money pension to soften the blow. Notably, not only Muslim and 'Hindu' shrines were thus affected. The village of Emradpur given by Shah Nizamuddin, a descendant of the famous *pir* of Delhi, to a Padre Gregoire, which had fallen to the Padre's successor, Padre Angel, was also repealed by Metcalfe. Padre Angel's claim that the grant had been made not to Padre Gregoire personally, but rather to the Roman Catholic church, was dismissed by Metcalfe as 'absurd'.

A further point of friction between the British understanding and local practice of property right pertained to tenure. With an eye to its treasury, the Company was naturally disinclined to approve of grants and revenue-exemptions in perpetuity (*altamgha, istamrari*). Moreover, Metcalfe was of the opinion that in the eighteenth century, many grants that had in fact lapsed, were not revoked because of

[21] All examples are taken from William Fraser's report, entitled 'Report on the Jageers held by Individuals in several of the Districts of this Territory' (c.1812-14), which is to be found enclosed with the above-cited cover letter from Metcalfe to the Secretary of the Governor-General, 7 February 1818. 'Foreign Political Consultation', 24 October-7 November 1818, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

the disarray in which the imperial administration found itself. It therefore used its own, restricted definitions of 'grantor', 'grantee' and 'heir' to limit the tenure of such privileges. There were various ways this could be done. In some instances, questions of the grantor's authority and tenure intersected. Although endowments made by the Marathas and their French general Michel Perron, for example, were recognized in some instances by the Company, they could not be regarded as permanent and hereditary, as these were merely 'temporary subordinate governors' without the authority to make permanent bequests. Even grants made by the Mughal Emperor, Shah Alam II could be questioned based upon the date that they were made. Take the case of Rai Sadhu Ram, who had been gifted six villages by the Mughal Emperor to keep in perpetuity. Because the grant was relatively recent—dating to 1748, Shah Alam's 20th regnal year—Fraser was inclined to treat it as spurious, or at the very least, illegitimate, as the King possessed little effective power by this time. Metcalfe agreed, explaining to the Governor-General in Calcutta that land was of such little value immediately prior to colonial conquest, that grants made 'when the poor King was languishing in extreme Poverty and wretchedness and had no Territories to bestow' were in fact, entirely nominal and ought to be treated as such. 'Long possession', wrote Metcalfe, 'seems in general to constitute almost the only trustworthy evidence [of a genuine grant]'.

If a grant's permanence and antiquity seemed beyond doubt, its legitimacy could nonetheless be questioned by limiting legal inheritance to male descendants alone. In the case of Mirza Joghal, for example, whose family had held the estate of Neem Sarai in Delhi for 127 years, Metcalfe made the continuation of the grant subject to the incumbent grantee being descended from the original grantee, that is, a son of the same line. Where multiple sons existed, the estate was split amongst them; and, if a brother died without issue, his share of the grant was to revert to the Company. Thus, of the six villages granted by the Emperor to his former physician, Ziq-ullah Khan, three had been resumed by the British in view of the death of the original grantee. The other half was grudgingly allowed by Metcalfe to remain in the hands of the late physician's relatives so as not to offend the Emperor. However, he specified that the grant was to be annulled on the death of either the grantor or grantee, whichever was first.

The subject of inheritance was complicated by the matter of adoption. The Company imposed strict, gendered limits upon which adopted children were legally recognizable as heirs. A famous case in which precisely this matter arose was the succession of Begum Samru ('Sombre'), the widow of the Germanophone mercenary, Walter Reinhardt 'Sombre'. After her husband's death in 1762, the Begum had succeeded to his *jagir* at Sardhana, just east of the Yamuna River. From this base, she controlled an army and administration that grew to some 8,000 men, and managed additional estates and customs posts in the vicinity of Delhi. As a widow, Begum Samru had adopted the infant son born to her step-granddaughter, Juliana, and Juliana's husband, an East India Company officer named Colonel Dyce, and raised him as her own child. This son, David Ochterlony Dyce Sombre, was made the Begum's legatee during her lifetime, but his claim to his adoptive mother's *jagir* was eventually not honoured by the Company once the Begum died. This was on the grounds that he was the adopted son of the *Begum*, rather than of her late husband, Reinhardt Sombre, and could therefore not succeed to the mercenary's estate. Dyce Sombre took the Company to court in England, where the case dragged on decades after his death. When, in 1872, the matter was finally resolved, the Court confirmed that the Begum's lands at Sardhana were not hers to bestow.[22]

[22] Cf. Michael H. Fisher, 'Becoming and Making 'Family' in Hindustan', in *Unfamilar Relations. Family and History in South Asia.*, ed. Indrani Chatterjee (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 95–121, at 121. *The Time*, 13 May 1872. [*The Times Digital Archive;* Retrieved 6 April 2020]. By contrast, the court found that the military supplies kept at Sardhana, and which had also been seized by the Company, were the Begum's personal property, and that her heirs were owed compensation for them.

The case of Begum Samru's succession demonstrates how the Company disenfranchised women, making them temporary stakeholders in the property of their male kin, rather than the independent proprietors and managers thereof. While Begum Samru was therefore allowed to retain the estates granted to Reinhardt Sombre by the Mughals and the Marathas, as a widow, she was not permitted to transfer these to her heirs and dependants. As Dyce Sombre wrote in his petitions to the Company, this not only meant that he had been deprived of part of his inheritance, but also that her servants and dependents were left bereft of any income despite, in some cases, decades of loyal service.[23] Daughters and mothers were likewise cut off from the right to gift or otherwise transfer landed property. If exceptions were made to this principle, it was usually because of the identity of a woman's *male* kin. The 'illegally' procured estates of Qudsia Begum, mother to the Mughal Emperor, were, for instance, left untouched, so as not to offend him. Similarly, the estates near Palwal of the late Najaf Khan's daughter, Jawahari Begum, were maintained, mostly because she was married to Nawab Hisam-ud-din Haider, who 'both by rank and by character is one of the most respectable Gentlemen in Dihlee'.[24] The fact that these had been left to Jawahari Begum by her mother, who in turn had received them from the Company as compensation for the loss of her fort of Kanaud (Mahendragarh), did not, in the eyes of Metcalfe and Fraser, confer her possession with any legitimacy.

The issue of the entitlements of women, religious institutions, and various clients of the 'Supreme Government' had broader implications for the ability of each of these actors to maintain their respective networks of dependents. At stake in these cases of property transfer was the question of how far the obligation to provide for one's kin, dependents and clients could be allowed to stretch. Who could be construed to be a 'dependent'? And for how long? And what did 'provision' entail? Metcalfe and Fraser's review, suffused with pecuniary considerations, illustrates how divergent British and Indian views on this matter were. In an early letter to the Governor-General, Begum Samru described the wide circle of her dependents as including not only those who had served her, but *their* kin, too, some of whom were 'accustomed to comfort, and even to affluence'. As such, she wished to use her considerable estate to maintain them in a state of plenty even after she died.[25] Within the local context, then, the issue of transferability was determined, at least in part, with reference to these obligations.

From the Company's perspective, by contrast, to allow such privileges and favours to become 'entitlements', and to look to them as a means of sustaining generations of extended family and dependents had distinct political and economic disadvantages. Beyond the loss of revenue this entailed, it also led to the disintegration of centralized state power, as each estate developed into an autonomous patrimony, as well as a competing node of patronage and influence.[26] Viewed from a more utilitarian perspective, a grant was given to an individual grantee, for a specific, time-bound purpose. When that purpose was served, or the grantee deceased, the property in question was to lapse to the 'Supreme Government', in this instance, the Mughal state and its British 'agents'. Maintenance could, at most, be offered to the grantee's immediate family for a fixed period; but certainly no obligations to extended kin, servants and clients could be entertained. For the imperial lineage in particular, Metcalfe and Fraser's intervention represented one more humiliation heaped upon the scores of indignities it had

[23] David Ochterlony Dyce Sombre, *Mr. Dyce Sombre's Refutation of the Charge of Lunacy Brought Against Him in the Court of Chancery* (Dyce Sombre, 1849), 436-7. [Available on Google Books; consulted 21 April 2020.]

[24] Fraser, 'Report on the Jageers'. 'Foreign Political Consultation', 24 October-7 November 1818, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

[25] 'Letter from D.O. Dyce Sombre to N.B. Edmonstone, Secretary to the Government in the Political Department, Fort William, 9 July 1807', in Dyce Sombre, *Refutation*, 403.

[26] See Sumit Guha, 'Patronage and state-making in early modern empires in India and Britain', in Anastasia Piliavsky, ed., *Patronage as the Politics of South Asia* (Delhi, India: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 104-122, for the distinction between patronage and patrimonialism.

already suffered over the past century. Not only was it militarily diminished, but even its symbolic power, as a patron and provider, had been drastically pared down by the Company. Indeed, the Company now positioned itself as the patron of the Emperor more effectively than the Marathas had done. In their review of estates, Metcalfe and Fraser did not even spare those villages whose revenues were part of the personal income of the King. While Shah Alam was therefore not stripped of his own, personal *jagir*, Metcalfe mused in the margins of the report 'whether lands granted in this manner to the King and Royal Family are to be considered as perpetually alienated from the lands of the Govt. or as resumable on the demise of the respective incumbents'?[27]

The Sikh and Rajput principalities

As Chapter 2 has shown, in the early nineteenth century, there were a number of *riyasats* of varying size that dotted the landscape of south-eastern Panjab. Each of these states had been founded by a warlord or a warband, whose comrades (*hamrah*) and clients were often rewarded in the usual manner, either with a revenue assignment (*jagir*), or with an office (*naukri*), or both. Depending upon the resources at their disposal, some, like the rajas of Kalsia gave their extended kin parcels of revenue-free land (so-called *mo'afi* grants) to distribute amongst *their* dependents and thus bring under cultivation. Many of these client *jagirdars* effectively became the lords of their own patrimonies (*wirasat*), paying nominal tribute to their patrons, and banding together in times of war against a common enemy. Over the course of the nineteenth century, each of these lineages were to find their proprietary rights curtailed by the Company, and their ability to provide for their dependents and clients thereby severely limited. So, too, were the terms on which they governed 'autonomously' transformed, to better meet the colonial state's expectations.

At least initially, though, the Company was unwilling to increase its administrative and military presence in the region, because of the prohibitive costs that this would entail. Moreover, it feared that the summary annexation of a host of principalities would spark widespread rebellion. A staggered absorption of these chieftaincies into the colonial empire was therefore considered more practical. The first step was to integrate these polities into the Company's web of patronage, by holding out the prospect of non-intervention and autonomy to them, in exchange for which the latter would become its allies and acknowledge British paramountcy. Chiefs, princes, and warlords in the region were thus formally designated subordinate partners of the colonial state and fellow keepers-of-the-peace. Given the imbalance of power and resources that existed between the Company and these local actors, it is unsurprising that the latter expressed a willingness to become clients of the colonial state. This imbalance also allowed the Company to dictate terms to its allies, thereby ensuring that their autonomy was circumscribed by colonial interest.

A clear expression of the subordinate position of indigenous states to the Company was that succession to the throne of any *riyasat* became, at first *de facto*, and from the 1860s onwards, *de jure*, subject to the approval of the colonial government. At least in the early nineteenth century, British involvement in matters of succession was sometimes sought by purported heirs in the midst of a succession dispute. At other times, where such disputes led to violent conflict and were therefore perceived to be a threat to order, the Company intervened of its own accord. It did so, for instance, in the case of Alwar, a tributary state of the Raja of Jaipur situated in the hilly terrain of Mewat, at the frontier with the Thar Desert. The Raja of Alwar, Bakhtawar Singh, died in 1815, whereupon succession to the *gaddi* led to conflict between two factions at the court. One claimant to the throne was Balwant Singh, Bakhtawar Singh's son by a woman described by James Skinner as a courtesan (*tawa'if*). The

[27] Fraser, 'Report on the Jageers'. 'Foreign Political Consultation', 24 October-7 November 1818, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

other, Banni Singh, was 'the son of a brother' who had died during Bakhtawar's lifetime, although the way in which Skinner uses the term brother—both in the biological sense, as well as an equivalent of 'comrade' (*hamrah*)—leaves the question of his descent open.[28] Of the two claimants, Banni appears to have enjoyed the support of his father's kin, while Balwant was the candidate favoured by Ahmad Baksh Khan, a powerful minister. When the dispute became violent, the British intervened, confirming Banni Singh as the rightful raja, and giving Balwant the *jagir* of Tijara, allegedly worth 200,000 rupees in annual revenues, in addition to an identical sum payable to him by the state of Alwar as compensation.[29] Were no heir born to Balwant, Tijara would be ceded back to Alwar; an adopted heir would not be recognized.[30]

Early colonial involvement in the succession of *riyasats* quickly led to similar restrictions upon inheritance, possession, and transfer, as had been implemented in the Mughal dominions in south-eastern Panjab and elsewhere in Britain's Indian colonies. The 'Doctrine of Lapse', whereby principalities that had no male heir were ceded to the colonial state, was effectively extended to the region much before Dalhousie's tenure as Governor-General, and served as the pretext for the confiscation of the territories of, most notably, the Raja of Kaithal in 1843.[31] Where there was no direct descendant but a 'collateral' heir—that is, a nephew, cousin or uncle in the male line—his inheritance would not encompass the entire state, but would be calculated according to the degree of his kinship to the deceased *raja*. This principle was used to confiscate between a third and half of the domains of the state of Jind, whose Raja died sonless in 1834. The Company acknowledged the succession of a cousin of the late king, but only to those domains that had been held by their common ancestor. All land acquired subsequently by the Rajas of Jind was claimed by the colonial government. [32] The colonial state justified this decision on the grounds that both 'Hindu' law, as well as Sikh custom allocated descendants distinct shares in the estate of the patriarch.

Despite claiming to follow 'customs' of inheritance, which themselves were fluid and constantly evolving, the colonial state in fact disregarded precedent where convenient, meaning that its stance on adoption was at once rigid and inconsistent, guided primarily by self-interest. In the case of Kaithal, for instance, the nomination of an heir to the *entire* state from within the Bhaikian lineage was not accepted by the Company.[33] Bhai Gulab Singh of Arnauli, a relation of the late king's, was allowed to succeed to a small part of the Kaithal domains, equal to that held by the common ancestor of Kaithal and Arnauli. This was despite providing proof of the precedent within the Bhaikian lineage of the property of a childless man devolving in its entirety to non-filial male relations.[34] Similarly, the principality of Ferozepur, which was ruled by Mai Lachhman Kaur after her husband died without a son, was confiscated by the colonial state, notwithstanding the claims put forth by two of the late king's nephews

[28] *Tazkira*, ff.97v-98r.

[29] Letter from F. Hawkins, Resident of Delhi, to Mr. Chief Secretary Swinton, 7 October 1829. British Library, London. IOR/F/4/1343/53424.

[30] 'Engagement on the part of Maha Rao Raja Sewaee Benee Sing' 21 February 1826, C. U. Aitchison, *A Collection Of Treaties Engagements And Sanads 1909 Vol. III. The Treaties, &c., Relating to the States in Rajputana.* (Superintendent Government Printing India Calcutta, 1909), 325. [Accessible on archive.org; retrieved 8 April 2020].

[31] Letter from Lord Ellenborough to the Secret Department of the Court of Directors, 20 April 1843. See case of Rani of Radaur below. British Library, London. IOR/F/4/2014/90003.

[32] *Phulkian States Gazetteer*, 215; Aitcheson, *Collections*, vol. VI, 53.

[33] Denzil Ibbetson and J.M. Douie. *Gazetteer of the Karnal District*. (Mufid-i-am Press; 1892), 48-9.

[34] Lepel Henry Griffin, *The Law of Inheritance to Chiefships as Observed by the Sikhs Previous to the Annexation of the Panjab* (Lahore Punjab Print Co, 1869), 99.

Figure 7. Rani Ind Kaur, widow of Rup Singh of Radaur. Tazkirat al-umara.

to succeed.[35] As Lepel Griffin, Civilian and keen observer of Panjab wrote, 'the British Government had no intention of maintaining […] the rights of collaterals' to succeed, as to do so would have deprived it of a considerable number of territories.[36] The suspicion that the British were intent upon dispossessing local princes led to resentment and culminated in protests. The confiscation of Kaithal was resisted militarily, if only fleetingly, by Mai Sahib Kaur, mother of the deceased king, who had exerted considerable influence over the governance of the state, having served twice as regent. The Bhais of Arnauli, likewise disgruntled, chose to side with Lahore during the Anglo-Sikh wars of 1845-9. In 1862, the Crown moved to assure Indian princes that their rights to nominate an heir from amongst their 'collateral' kin would henceforth be recognized.[37]

If the British stance on adoption grew somewhat more flexible over the course of the nineteenth century, the reverse was true of its position on the right of women to rule. Whereas it had taken some efforts to secure the regency of Rani As Kaur of Patiala in the period 1809-12, deeming her to be a much more suited and able administrator than her husband, Raja Sardar Singh, this was something of an exception. Proceeding from the principle of female managerial ineptitude, the British early on established a precedent of intervention in the affairs of woman-led *riyasats* whenever they perceived it to be necessary. An early example of such intervention is to be found in the case of Radaur, a small chiefdom north-east of Thanesar, established in the late eighteenth century by a warlord named Dulcha Singh. When Dulcha's son, Rup Singh died at a young age, his widow, Ind Kaur (Fig. 6), succeeded to the throne. According to Skinner, when the Rani's 'mismanagement' (*be-intizami*) led to open conflict and the threat of fission (*fitna*) in the state, the Company took over the governance of Radaur, even while maintaining Ind Kaur as a figurehead queen.[38] In an attempt to keep her domains within her family, Ind Kaur adopted her grandson, but, as in the case of Begum Samru and Dyce Sombre, the adoption was

[35] Lepel Henry Griffin, *The Law of Inheritance to Chiefships as Observed by the Sikhs Previous to the Annexation of the Panjab* (Lahore Punjab Print Co, 1869), 94; 77-78.

[36] Ibid., 93.

[37] Each state was issued with an individual *sanad* or proclamation, the terms of which were tailored according to the religion and 'caste' of the ruling house. For representative samples, see for instance 'Adoption Sunnud granted to Rana Sumbhoo Singh of Meywar (Oudeypore), 1862', in Aitchison, *Collection*, vol. III, 35; 'Adoption Sunnud granted to the Nawab of Patowdee', C. U. Aitchison, *A Collection Of Treaties, engagements, And Sunnuds Relating To India And Neighbouring Countries, Vol.VI. The Treaties, &c., Relating to the Punjab, Sind, and Beloochistan, and Central Asia.* (Calcutta: Foreign Office Press, 1876), 10; and 'Translation of the Sunnud given to his Highness the Maharajah of Puttiala by His Excellency, the Viceroy and Governor-General, 5 May 1860', Ibid., 60 [Archive.org; retrieved 8 April 2020].

[38] *Tazkira*, f.230r.

not recognized.[39] Nor were the nominated heirs of Mai Diya Kaur of Ambala, who adopted her sister's son, and Mai Lachhman Kaur of Ferozepur, who adopted a man outside the circle of blood kin, permitted to ascend the throne.[40] In 1837, the colonial government formally forbade women from ascending to the throne of any *riyasat*.[41]

Yet, as we have seen, even where women were not formal heads of state, they could exercise considerable power, as partners, mothers, and regents. Indeed, the Company repeatedly found its plans being foiled by the zenana, leading it to intervene, on more than one occasion, to intimidate a ruler's female kin. The mothers of the kings of Bharatpur, Kaithal and Khetri were each removed by force for interfering in matters of state.[42] Even where the Company intervened on *behalf* of a queen, as it did in the case of Patiala, it was only to prevent the state from devolving into the control of a *rival* queen, less favourably-disposed to colonial rule.[43] Although the colonial state's ability to restrict female influence upon men in the privacy of the zenana was limited, it did its best, nonetheless, to curb the role of women in governance by driving a wedge between household and state. In 1858, when India passed to Crown rule, an explicit clause was inserted in Queen Victoria's proclamation to Indian princes, relegating the oversight of kings not yet of age to a 'council of regents' selected by the British Government, and supervised by a colonial appointee, a so-called 'Political Agent'.[44]

The details of some of the estates which 'lapsed' to the colonial government by excluding the claims of women and non-filial men are worth noting to emphasise just how lucrative the state's policy on succession was. According to Skinner, for instance, the annual revenues of Radaur, whose queen he portrays as being beset by 'a hundred problems and worries', yielded an annual income of Rs. 145,000.[45] The estate of Diya Kaur at Ambala, which was acquired by the Company in 1820 only to be quickly sold off, generated more than Rs. 94,000, the lion's share of which was used to defray military costs.[46] (Indeed, according to Lieut. Murray, the Company officer who oversaw the sale, this sum would have been considerably higher but for the 'mismanagement and imbecility of female rule'.[47]) At the death in 1819 of another Diya Kaur, the widow of Sardar Sher Singh of Kalsia, the Company acquired her estate of Bilaspur, in the Himalayan foothills.[48] The estate included the proprietorial rights to half of the Kalesar Sal forest that spanned some 14,000 acres. This the Company leased out to a merchant-contractor, who aggressively felled the forest, selling its timber, as well as the resin tapped from the trees.[49] The estates confiscated from Jind were valued at an annual income of Rs. 182,000.[50] Most lucrative of all were the domains of the late Raja of Kaithal, which, it was hoped, would yield an annual revenue of Rs. 400,000 once they had been 'improved' by extending the cultivated extent.[51]

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[39] Griffin, *Law*, 52-3.

[40] Griffin, *Law*, 50-51.

[41] Griffith, *Law*, 101.

[42] Aitcherson, *Collection*, vol. III, 97, 261.

[43] Lepel H Griffin, *The Rajas Of The Punjab. Being the History of the Principal States in the Punjab and Their Relations with the British Government.*, 2nd ed. (London: Trübner & co., 1873), 124-5.

[44] Aitchison, *A Collection Of Treaties,engagements, And Sunnuds, VI*, 51-2.

[45] *Tazkira*, ff.230r-230v.

[46] Letter from H.M. Elliott, to G. Swinton, June 7, 1824. IOR/V/27/47/1. British Library, London.

[47] 'Report on the Reserved Lands in the Protected Sikh and Hill Territories' by Lieut. Murray, c.1824. IOR/V/27/47/1. British Library, London.

[48] Griffin, *Rajas*, 154.

[49] Kalesar Sal Forest', under 'Miscellaneous Papers', *Punjab Record*, 1866, pp.13-17.

[50] *Phulkian States Gazetteer*, 216.

[51] Letter from Lord Ellenborough to the Secret Department of the Court of Directors, 20 April 1843. IOR/F/4/2014/90003. British Library, London.

It follows that those rulers who resisted the terms imposed upon them by the British government were punished. In the wake of the Anglo-Sikh wars (1845-9), those Sikh and Muslim chiefs of south-eastern Panjab, who had supported Lahore in the conflict rather than the Company, found themselves reduced to the position of *jagirdars*. These included the principalities of Arnauli, Mamdot, the Singhpuria domains, the *nawabi* of Kunjpura, and several others. While their estates were not necessarily confiscated, their civil and judicial administrations were taken over by the Company, and they themselves became subordinate to British law, which gave the colonial government even greater room for interfering in their affairs. The *jagirs* were subject to the same rules of inheritance that applied to 'autonomous' states like Patiala: non-filial males could inherit the *jagirdari*, as long as they were descended from the same male ancestor as the deceased *jagirdar*, and adoption was recognized by the men of the lineage.[52] The reduction of states to mere revenue assignments naturally entailed a loss of status and power for noble houses. Men, who had themselves commanded a police force, army, and revenue administration, formally became subjects without governing privileges.

For women, however, the loss was perhaps even greater, as their integration within the colonial judicial system meant that not only were they excluded from the inheritance of *jagirs*, but that even their claims to maintenance and private wealth would be adjudicated by a British magistrate. After 1854, under what came to be known as the 'Punjab Civil Code', women's proprietorial rights were subject to Muslim or 'Hindu' law, or, if they belonged to Sikh communities, to the custom of their lineage, as established by judicial precedent. Moreover, the state's implementation of its own rules pertaining to female inheritance grew stricter as the century progressed. Thus, whereas until mid-century, the widows of influential men were occasionally allowed to retain possession of their deceased husbands' land for the duration of their lifetimes, from mid-century onwards, widows and unwed daughters were to be given money pensions instead, and the land put into the hands of their father or husband's male kin. Moreover, where exceptions were found to have been made, these were to be revoked. Pensions were intended for their *personal* maintenance, and could not exceed more than half of the annual revenues of the *jagir*.[53]

While moveable property like money, gold and jewellery could be sheltered from the intrusive eye of the colonial state, the forests, pastures, and villages once held by noblewomen were thus steadily confiscated by the British. So, too, were some of the donations and endowments they made, as well as the offices (*naukri*) they bestowed upon their kin, clients, and retainers. When Diya Kaur of Ambala's lands were confiscated at her death, some 40 percent of the more than 6,000 acres of land that she had given to various holy men, relatives and shrines was likewise seized. In addition to this, her retinue of Sikh cavalrymen and foot soldiers, 'who held lands in lieu of military service' were dismissed from their posts, and their lands also 'resumed'.[54] When such confiscations were made *immediately* after a man's death, noblewomen were rendered dependent upon the generosity of the male kin of their deceased husband, father, brother or son. Apart from the pecuniary loss they suffered as individuals, their dispossession also stripped them of the resources to take care of their kin, clients, and dependants. If they felt unfairly treated, they could have recourse to British courts; however, the outcome of such action was often disappointing, for, as we have seen, the colonial state's position upon female proprietors was not favourable. Women's inheritance claims, whether bolstered by evidence of custom or even by specific documentation, such as gift deeds, were inclined to be disbelieved and dismissed.

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[52] Aitchison, *Collections*, vol. VI, 61.

[53] 'Sirdar Soba Sing vs. Mussumat Attur Kour and Mussumat Golab Kour' under 'Civil Judgments', *Panjab Record*, 1868, 79-80.

[54] 'Report on the Reserved Lands in the Protected Sikh and Hill Territories' by Lieut. Murray, ca.1824. British Library, London. IOR/V/27/47/1.

There were certainly some exceptions to this general rule. In a case that came before the Chief Court of Lahore in the 1860s, for example, the mother and childless widow of Hira Singh, a *jagirdar* of the Singhpuria lineage, petitioned the court to have a parcel of land that had been held privately by the deceased, returned to them. The land at stake was in addition to Hira's share in the Singhpuria *jagir*, which was held by the Singhpuria lineage collectively; it was owned by him alone, not constituting part of the Singhpuria lands. At Hira's death, it had been seized, along with his *jagir*, by his brother, Soba Singh, who was his 'heir-at-law'. Soba pleaded that the land was his to claim as Hira had set money aside for his mother and wife in his will. The lower courts—that of the Assistant Commissioner, and Extra Assistant Commissioner—had found in favour of the plaintiffs, Attar Kaur and Gulab Kaur. The Chief Court was, however, inclined to side with Soba, as there seemed no reason that this piece of land should be subjected to a different law of inheritance than Hira Singh's *jagir*. Only when the court-appointed arbitrator—a Sardar Kishen Singh of Kandauli, near Thanesar—assured the state that it was customary for childless widows to hold the land of their male kin for life, did the Chief Court restore the land to Attar and Gulab.[55]

The fact that Gulab and Attar succeeded in securing a favourable verdict was, in all likelihood, at least partly attributable to the relatively small size of the holding concerned—some 35 acres to be shared by both women, and presumably, their dependants—'by no means an excessive quantity'.[56] Colonial perceptions of what constituted sufficient maintenance were not frequently generous. For example, the widows of the Sardar of Bela, a small estate near Machhiwara in Ludhiana district, were each calculated by the colonial courts as being entitled to a tenth of their late husband's property, which amounted to no more than Rs. 75 per month. This was considered too little by the Deputy Commissioner, who increased the income to Rs. 100 per month. In addition to this, they were each given a one-time 'donation' by the state, of Rs. 1,000. They were also permitted to retain 'certain articles of personal property such as pots and pans, female clothing and ornaments, zenana tents, a *ruth* (chariot), a *gari* (horse/bullock-cart), a couple of horses, and a couple of mules', and to continue staying in their home, which was the fort of Bela.[57]

The extent of women's entitlements were also made dependent upon their relationship to their deceased male kin, and the validity of these relationships were assessed within a colonial paradigm of family. Female partners particularly invited scrutiny as the state sought to ascertain the precise nature of their relation to the man. As such, the 'maintenance' granted to widows was determined with reference to their presumed position. When Sardar Gurbaksh Singh of Mani Majra died, for example, he left behind four wives and a concubine. The most senior wife, Pertab Kaur, was given an annual income of Rs. 800, in addition to a garden, whose receipts were expected to sustain her. The other three wives also received a garden, as well as a yearly income of Rs. 500. Worst off proved to be Malko, Gurbaksh Singh's concubine, who was given no garden and an annual stipend of Rs. 200. The courts conceded that the women's incomes be doubled once their deceased husband's debts were paid off in full.

The paltry sum accorded to Malko highlights the disdain the British felt for sexual partnerships not consecrated by marriage. Here, there was some continuity between colonial and indigenous attitudes, for, as we have seen in Chapter 2, Muslims, Sikhs and 'Hindus' also discerned different grades of heterosexual cohabitation. The most honourable unions, termed *shadi*, *nikah* or *vyah*, were those in which women of elite birth were taken into the home of a man of likewise noble descent. Besides these,

[55] 'Sirdar Soba Sing vs. Mussumat Attur Kour and Mussumat Golab Kour' under 'Civil Judgments', *Panjab Record*, 1868, 79-80.

[56] Ibid., 80.

[57] 'Jusmaer Singh vs. Mussumat Hur Kour', under 'Civil Judgments', *Panjab Record*, 1869, 73-84; at 83.

however, there were also other ways in which women and men could cohabit, sometimes collectively termed *chadar-dalna* (placing a sheet) the simple rite with which the relationship was sometimes acknowledged.[58] These included *karao,* in which a widow would remarry from amongst her dead husband's brothers; concubinage; and slavery, the latter two merging into each other. Yet, even though not all these relationships were considered equally sacred, they did not necessarily or uniformly influence the right of women to maintenance. As Griffith noted, there were 'many cases in Sikh families of women, who were no more than ordinary concubines, claiming, on the death of their lord, the estate for themselves or their sons, as lawful wives married by *chadardalna*.'[59] As has been noted previously, the difference in status accorded to noble spouses wedded by *shadi* and concubines and slaves appears to have been in the degree of their obligation, and the sacrifices expected of them.[60] The schematic and sharply hierarchical understanding of marriage woven into colonial law extended to progeny born out of wedlock as well, who were deemed to have a lesser, imperfect claim upon their dead father's inheritance. This was, once more, in contrast with indigenous practice, which was elastic. Amongst the Jat Sikh lineages, for instance, it was widows who were the conduits of inheritance to the male kin of their dead husbands, with little distinction being made between their rank. Indar Sen of Thanesar, for instance, appears to have taken a concubine/slave named Hara, who his brother Chandar married upon his death. Chandar thereby succeeded to the chieftaincy, eclipsing the claim of the son born to Indar and Hara.[61]

This is not to say, however, that the consecration of cohabitation was not considered important in the local context.[62] When the Company sought advice from the Phulkian rajas on who, of two rival claimants, to recognize as heir to the throne of Radaur (before it was confiscated), they expressed a preference for the man born of a slave, rather than the one born of an adulterous relationship, as the mother of the former 'was at least the property of her master'.[63] For the colonial state, however, slaves, concubines and their offspring were considered to have a lesser claim to inherit than 'real' wives and their sons. This explains why their intervention in the succession dispute for the throne of Alwar, discussed previously, resulted in the crowning of Banni Singh, the candidate of noble descent, rather than of Balwant, whose mother Musi was a courtesan (*tawa'if*). Although each prince was supported by a different faction at court, it is worth noting that Skinner mentions that neither's claim was regarded as superior, and that, as such, both sat on the throne together as youths. The Company's recognition of Banni as king neglected this history of co-governorship. Nor did it take into account the fact that Musi had burnt herself on the funeral pyre of her husband, as concubines of some of the elite lineages of Rajputana did. For the Company, Musi's relationship with Bakhtawar Singh remained invalid, even though her 'sacrifice of love' (*sadegh-e-mohabat*), as Skinner described it, had secured her a place in

[58] Griffith, *Law*, 19-20, for *chadardalna*. Indrani Chatterjee, 'Introduction' to Indrani Chatterjee, *Unfamiliar Relations: Family and History in South Asia* (New Brunswick, N.J [etc.]: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 12-13; Malavika Kasturi, ''Asceticising' Monastic Families: Ascetic Genealogies, Property Feuds and Anglo-Hindu Law in Late Colonial India', *Modern Asian Studies* 43, no. 5 (2009): 1039–1083; Vijay Pinch, 'Gosain Tawaif: Slaves, Sex, and Ascetics in Rasdhan, ca. 1800-1857', *Modern Asian Studies* 38, no. 3 (2004): 559–597. See also Chapter 2.

[59] Griffith, *Law*, 20.

[60] See Chapter 2.

[61] Griffith, *Law*, 23.

[62] See Chapter 2.

[63] Griffith, *Law*, 56.

popular memory as a *sati* and earned her the title of 'Maharani', or queen.[64] Notwithstanding his mother's ennoblement in death, Balwant Singh's claim to the throne of Alwar was denied.[65]

Ascetic households in the nineteenth century

Amongst the lands of the lay lineages of precolonial south-eastern Panjab, were scattered the hermitages (*maths, deras, asthals, khanqahs*) and shrines (*dargah, peeth*) of various holy men. Skinner sketches a picture of the ascetics that held and managed these sites—these included Sikh Akalis, Sanyasis, Bairagis, Kanphat Jogis, Udasis, Sufis and many others, each belonging to a particular ascetic tradition, passed on from teacher to disciple within discrete monastic lineages (*silsila, sampradaya, khandan*).[66] The grounds attached to these sites might include a rest house (*dharamshala*) and prayer halls (*masjid, gurudwara*), as well as some land, whose revenues would cover the expenses of the ascetic household. Ascetics would, in turn, perform certain services for their lay disciples, instructing them in ethical questions and providing them with succour and guidance through life's many travails. Some also served as ritual functionaries and priests (*pujari, pandit, purohit, maulvi*), officiating ceremonies such as marriages and funerals. One's teacher, however, was not necessarily also one's priest. Yet, whatever the specific obligations that bound them together, the households of preceptor and disciple were each other's natural counterparts.

Ascetic households also served as a link between their immediate surroundings and wider, sacred geographies. Disciples remained morally and spiritually bound to their gurus, even if they left his home and settled elsewhere. Thus, if a *chela* left his *guru's* home and set up a refuge or shrine at another site, the bond between preceptor and initiate tied not only the two households, but also their respective patrons together. The webs of patronage and tutelage thus woven have been referred to by scholars as 'monastic geographicity'.[67] They were not stable, as teachers and disciples moved from place to place. Nor did they necessarily coincide with political boundaries. Within these networks of monks, saints, and devotees, devotion was directed towards the person of itinerant teachers, and was not reducible to conventionally accepted markers of religion, viz., a pantheon, or particular rites and scriptures. Nor was asceticism characterised by the traits—particularly isolation and celibacy—that contemporary European observers associated with this state. To the contrary, many ascetics cohabited with women, and the language of sensuality and love was often used to express devotion to god by teacher and disciple alike.[68]

How were these preceptors' households, and the networks they generated, transformed in the nineteenth century? Two aspects of this question are addressed here. The first is that of connectivity. As Indrani Chatterjee has shown for eastern India, the chains of devotional, as well as commercial, exchange that historically linked far-flung monasteries and shrines were, in many instances, broken, as the colonial state redrew political boundaries and rendered these impermeable.[69] To what extent does the same hold for south-eastern Panjab? A second aspect to be considered is that of jurisdiction. As Chatterjee notes, monastic and lay lineages by turns shared and competed for 'sovereignty' over the same spaces. Tensions between the two led to the proliferation of the former, as worldly rulers searched

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[64] *Tazkira*, ff.97v-98r.

[65] *Tazkira*, f.97v. Chatterjee cites a colonial officer who noted that while concubines and slaves of the various rajas of Rajputana were asked to commit *sati*, wives drawn from families of equal status were not. [Chatterjee, 'Introduction', in Chatterjee (ed.), *Unfamiliar Relations*, 13]. It is possible that Musi's *sati* was an attempt by the relatively young Alwar lineage to claim high social status.

[66] See Chapter 2.

[67] Indrani Chatterjee, 'Monastic 'Governmentality': Revisiting 'Community' and 'Communalism' in South Asia', *History Compass* 13, no. 10 (2015): 497–511, at 499. Chatterjee borrows the term from W. van Spengen, the scholar of Tibet.

[68] See Chapter 2.

[69] Chatterjee, *Forgotten Friends*, 257-8.

for alternative sources of legitimation. Likewise, influential spiritual lineages could take their pick amongst lay governors competing for their benediction. In the nineteenth century, however, the colonial state declared itself politically paramount in much of South Asia, subordinating not only princes and chieftains to its authority, but religious teachers and their establishments as well.[70] How did this affect ascetic households in our region?

Let us begin with a consideration of the latter aspect, that of ascetic jurisdiction. In like manner to many of the lay elite lineages of south-eastern Panjab, the households of preceptors and saints experienced a decline in their autonomy and a corresponding increase in the interference of the state. As has already been suggested above, the Company, although eager to avoid causing any offence that might lead to unrest, was simultaneously reluctant to confirm grants to religious institutions that exempted them from revenue obligations.[71] The colonial state thus began to define more precisely the circumstances under which land could be granted to ascetic households, the tenure of such grants, the obligations entailed, the purposes to which income thus derived could (and could not) serve, and the actors who could lay claim to it. It should be emphasised that monastic households had always been subordinate to some degree of external control, their subsistence needs being provided for by the laity, for whom they were obliged to provide spiritually, but also materially, especially in difficult times.[72] Under colonial rule, however, the reach of the state into pastoral affairs increased. As we shall see, such interventions were not always to the material disadvantage of particular households. Yet, on the whole, they represented a reduction in the ambit and autonomy of the pastoral remit of care, even as colonial law reconfigured the boundaries of ascetic households.[73]

The summariness of colonial interventions is captured in Metcalfe and Fraser's early review of *jagirs* granted in *mo'afi* or other tenures to various shrines and mausolea, which, as we have seen, recommended the confiscation of a number of monastic lands around Delhi. Yet, while this review had largely targeted ascetic households patronised by elites, as the colonial revenue administration expanded and grew more thorough, the preceptor's households attached to husbanding villages, too, found themselves interrogated by the state. The *wajib-ul-arz*, or settlement record, wherein the rights and obligations of *all* members of a settlement were recorded by the state, also included a note of all revenue exempt lands, the beneficiaries thereof, and the tenure of the grant. However, as we shall see in the case of lay husbanding lineages too, the tension between the schematic rigidity of administrative categories and the complex fluidity of reality, created fertile ground for disputes in which the state pronounced itself the final arbiter. A few examples of the many cases that reached the colonial courts will help illustrate the nature of these tensions.[74]

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[70] Indrani Chatterjee, 'Pastoral Care, the Reconstitution of Pastoral Power and the Creation of Disobedient Subjects under Colonialism', in *South Asian Governmentalities: Michel Foucault and the Question of Postcolonial Orderings.*, ed. Stephen Legg and Deana Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 58–80.

[71] See above.

[72] *Langars*, or public kitchens, and *dharamshalas*, or rest-houses, are two concrete instances of such material care.

[73] Cf. Malavika Kasturi, ''Asceticising' Monastic Families: Ascetic Genealogies, Property Feuds and Anglo-Hindu Law in Late Colonial India', *Modern Asian Studies* 43, no. 5 (2009): 1039–1083; Indrani Chatterjee, 'Pastoral Care, the Reconstitution of Pastoral Power and the Creation of Disobedient Subjects under Colonialism', in *South Asian Governmentalities: Michel Foucault and the Question of Postcolonial Orderings.*, ed. Stephen Legg and Deana Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 58–80.

[74] The cases referred to here are all drawn from the records of the 'Chief Court' at Lahore, which from 1866 onwards constituted the final court of appeal for Indian residents of Panjab province. Cf. Nasser Hussain, *The Jurisprudence of Emergency Colonialism and the Rule of Law* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), Appendix A. In what follows, I have referred to cases from the entire province, as provincial precedent served to guide legal decisions, and were compiled in the periodically updated *Punjab Civil Code*.

A common subject of dispute was the extent of monastic estates. In the event of an imprecise or contested record, it was up to colonial courts to determine which property to classify as 'ecclesiastical'. The resolution of such disputes frequently turned on appearances, as the following two cases demonstrate. The first case (ca.1863-8) involved two branches of the same family of *pirzadas* ('children of pirs'), whose ancestor, Syed Fazl Khan had founded a *khanqah* at Batala, north-east of Amritsar in the late seventeenth century.[75] Fazl Khan belonged to the Qadariya order of Sufis, who claimed spiritual descent from the Persian jurist Abdul Qadir Jilani. Fazl Khan set up a *madrasa* besides his *khanqah*, which became a renowned site of learning, and was gifted land by the Mughal Emperors, including a *jagir* of 100 villages granted by Farrukhsiyar. The *khanqah* appears to have survived the eighteenth century, despite the town of Batala being burnt by the armies of the warlord Banda Bahadur. Indeed, the Afghan warlord Ahmad Shah Abdali appears to have even granted Fazl Khan's descendants *jagirs* worth Rs. 12,000 per annum.

Over time, thus, the *khanqah* of Batala Sharif had acquired a large estate, including several wells and gardens. After the Company annexed Panjab in 1849, it had begun a survey of all its new lands, wherein a distinction had been made between the management (*matawali*) of the estate and the right to enjoy its revenues (*milkiyat*). The former had been assumed to have lain with the incumbent head of the spiritual lineage (*sajdanashin*), a man named Hussein Shah. The latter had been granted in equal parts to Hussein and his cousin, Hasan, who were the eldest males of the line, and lived together on the grounds of the *khanqah*. In 1863, however, Hussein appealed to have his cousin's name struck from the land revenue record, and to thus be declared the sole trustee of the estate. Hasan, for his part, was seeking a division of the entire estate, so that he could leave Hussein's household and settle somewhere else. A series of courts, beginning with that of the 'Assistant Commissioner' up to the Chief Court at Lahore, were thus called upon to determine the scope of the estates, and determine to whom these belonged.

The first issue—the definition of the property of the shrine—was already quite complex. Aside from necessitating an overview of all the land acquired by the *khanqah* and the specific conditions of each grant and purchase, the question arose as to whether a division ought to be made of the monetary donations given to the *pirzadas* as well. As the judge at the Chief Court of Lahore noted, similar disputes in other spiritual lineages had resulted in a division not only of physical and monetary wealth, but of *disciples* (*murid*), too.[76] While not resorting to such a far-reaching partition, the courts nonetheless distinguished three kinds of capital in possession of the *khanqah*—the right to occupy the grounds, the produce and income from the said land, and the donations received by the *khanqah*. Having calculated the estimated worth of each kind of property, the courts were then confronted with the question of their division. Who had a right to what? This, too, was a complex matter to adjudicate. The courts arrived at a resolution by separating the *person* of Hussein Shah and his cousin, Hasan, from their roles as preceptors, and by considering the reasonable purpose to which different kinds of revenue might be put.

After some back and forth, the Chief Court ruled that the revenue assignments themselves were not recorded as having been made to the *khanqah* per se, but rather to the various *pirzadas* as individuals.[77] As such, they did not constitute *monastic* estates, but private property. This in itself stemmed from the colonial state's endeavour to avoid recognizing institutional grants that would have to be respected in perpetuity, and instead to categorize grants as private and alienable unless the contrary was explicitly

[75] 'Hossein Shah vs. Zahoor Shah and Shamsooddeen' and 'Hossein Shah vs. Hussun Shah', under 'Civil Judgments', *Panjab Record*, Vol. III (Punjab Printing Company, 1868), 169-179.

[76] Ibid., 171.

[77] '*Mo'afi'* as opposed to *'waqf'* land.

stated by the donor.[78] Furthermore, as one judge noted, the *khanqah* did not fit the conventional (colonial) parameters of being a monastery, such as when 'the incumbent is secluded from the world, forms no family ties, and is succeeded by a disciple.' Rather, Hussein Shah was 'a family man, as ready to buy, and sell, and fight, and marry as his neighbours, […] at liberty to have prayers said at the shrine and entertain disciples or not, *as he pleases*.'[79] All property attached to the *khanqah* was, as such, subject to the same laws of inheritance as applicable to lay Muslim families, viz., to be split equally amongst heirs.

Clearly, there were grounds to dispute such an interpretation, for it is likely that many of the lands managed by Hussein Shah would not have been acquired by his family but for their holiness. Nor was the European understanding of monasticity as a celibate condition relevant to South Asia, as has been noted previously. However, by rendering the *khanqah*, and indeed the very office of *sajdanashin* (the living head of a spiritual lineage) a form of 'private' property, the courts facilitated the breaking up of the *khanqah*. Moreover, by distinguishing between monasteries intended for public good and those held as private estates, the Courts were liberating the monks from their obligation to care for their parish. Some officials were aware of this: a lower court had argued that the donations made by disciples 'should be expended on the *Khanqah* and School and not looked upon as personal income; in point of fact, this income just covers the expense of food for pilgrims and charity'.[80] However, the Chief Court disagreed, ruling that '[t]he offerings which people present at the shrine of departed saints belong to their heirs, and it is necessary that profits so accruing should be distributed among them alone'.[81]

The state's disinclination, for much of the nineteenth century, to recognize institutional (*waqf*) grants as a means of circumventing grants in perpetuity, provided ascetics and monks an avenue to declare their shrine or refuge a 'private' estate. Some examples of this could be found in south-eastern Panjab as well. Walker wrote that although there were several *dharamshalas* still open in Ludhiana district, their number had dropped significantly since colonization, as a result of the state's legal innovations. 'The grants of land were of course intended for the support of the institution […] but at the Regular Settlement the incumbent was in every case returned as owner of the land […] The result of this has been that the [preceptor] has in most cases taken a wife, closed the Dharamsala to the public, and he or his children are now mere landed proprietors'.[82] Walker's attribution of the closing of *dharamshalas* to the loose morality of their overseers—confirmed, he suggests, by their having taken wives and concubines—however neglects the fact that as opposed to *waqf*/institutional grants, *mo'afi*/private gifts of land were resumable by the government in the event of the absence of a direct male heir. As such, ascetic households were aware of just how tenuous their grip upon their estates was, for daughters might be born, and sons might die young. With an eye to the future, therefore, some might have begun restricting their public obligations and maximizing the profits from their lands while they still held them, to be able to provide for their families and extended network of dependents.[83]

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[78] Gregory C. Kozlowski, *Muslim Endowments and Society in British India*, Cambridge South Asian Studies (Cambridge, England; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 148.

[79] *Punjab Record, III;* 175-6; emphasis mine.

[80] Ibid., 174.

[81] Ibid., 179; the judgement reproduces a principle from a commonly used textbook of Islamic law, W.H. MacNaghten's *Principles of Mohammadan Law* (1825).

[82] T. Gordon Walker, *Final Report On The Revision Of Settlement Of The Ludhiana District In The Punjab* (Calcutta: Calcutta Central Press, 1884), 61 (henceforth *SR Ludhiana*).

[83] As an illustration, Hasan Shah, the cousin of the *sajdanashin* Hussein Shah of the Batala *khanqah*, appeared to have managed a household of more than 40 dependents. *Punjab Record, III*, 172.

If the household structure of the *pirzadas* was used as a pretext by the colonial state not to recognize Batala Sharif as a shrine, in 'Thakoor Dass vs. Musst. Hajee Begum'[84], it was the architecture of a prayer hall (*imambara*) that served a similar purpose.[85] Haji Begum was the widow of a prominent Shi'a imam of Delhi who had died with several debts owed to a moneylender named Thakur Das. The couple had bought a house near Delhi's Kashmiri Gate, and claimed to have been granted a mosque, some shops and an *imambara* adjacent to this. It emerged that during his lifetime, Haji Begum's husband had pledged his *'kothi'*—an ambiguous term meaning 'building', but often used to refer to a house—as security for his loans. Upon his death, Thakur Das had seized possession not only of the house in which the debtor and his widow had lived, but of the nearby mosque, shops and *imambara* which they had managed as well. Haji Begum moved the court to restore the latter to her possession. She argued that these constituted a single endowment, as the costs of maintaining the mosque and the *imambara*, as well as the expenses of hiring a *muezzin* and sweeper, were paid by using the rent generated by the adjacent shops. In other words, all three buildings together were part of the same monastic estate. Moreover, she claimed that the buildings qualified as institutional (*waqf*) grants, to be held in perpetuity and therefore, inalienable. In light of the ambiguity of the word '*kothi*', however, it fell to the Chief Court at Lahore to distinguish between what could be qualified as Haji Begum's personal (and therefore, alienable) property, and whether any of the disputed buildings could be deemed an endowment exempt from confiscation.

Unfortunately, Haji Begum possessed no written evidence of the grant of the complex to her family. She nonetheless protested that the fact of prolonged use—she and her husband had held the estate for some thirty years—as well as the well-established reputation of the site as a place of prayer, were sufficient to bestow *waqf* status on the estate. Haji Begum's claim was supported by Islamic jurisprudence, but the courts were still disinclined to write off the entire mortgage. Instead, the judges chose to assess the *waqf* status of each separate building in the estate individually. This was easily done for the mosque, which was clearly intended as a public site of prayer, open to all, and as such, indisputably a religious endowment. The shops, although 'evidently connected with [the mosque]' and intended to defray the costs of its maintenance, were deemed by the courts *not* to constitute part of the endowment, as they were dedicated primarily to commerce.[86]

The *imambara*, however, proved more difficult to classify, as there was nothing in its architecture to identify its use. As one judge noted, it was 'simply a handsome house built in the ordinary style'.[87] Of course, it was well-known that Shi'as came to this *imambara* to mourn on Muharram. In addition, there were spiritual and literary assemblies (*majlis*) held there every Monday, though these were not open to the entire public, rather only to the family, friends, and acquaintances of the couple. It was also known that Haji Begum and her husband had once used the *imambara* to stay in, when their own residence had been temporarily occupied by a British officer. Moreover, they had even rented it out briefly in 1858 to the British Government to house troops in the wake of the uprisings of 1858. On these grounds, the Chief Court found that the *imambara* qualified as private property that was used for religious and secular purposes alike, and had even generated revenue for Haji Begum and her husband. There therefore seemed no reason to exempt it from alienation in order to repay the debts incurred to Thakur Das.

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[84] 'Thakoor Dass vs. Musst. Hajee Begum' under 'Civil Judgments', *Panjab Record, III*, pp.247-258.

[85] An *imambara* literally translates as the 'enclosure of the imam'. It is a congregation hall where the elegies of Muharram are recited in South Asia.

[86] *Panjab Record, III*, 248.

[87] Ibid.

An indirect outcome of colonial law was to tilt the balance of power between donors and their preceptors in favour of the former. As we have seen in Chapter 2, this relationship could be strained, especially when elite or otherwise powerful patrons expected greater 'returns' upon their investments of generosity.[88] From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, however, as the pressure on arable land and grazing grounds increased in much of south-eastern Panjab, many lay patrons in rural settlements found themselves looking for ways to divest resident ascetics of some of the land that they had been granted in previous, more plentiful times. Ascetics, too, petitioned the courts to enhance their incomes. In other words, a combination of need and greed amongst donors fuelled disputes over land and the tendency to minutely detail and fix the terms of grants.

A surprising number of such cases ended up at the Chief Court in Lahore. For instance, in one case, Gulab Singh, the caretaker of an ancestral tomb built on *mo'afi* land in Ferozepur district, sued the village that had made the grant for a share in the commons (*shamilat deh*). It seems possible that this was simply an attempt by Singh to acquire a greater share in the disappearing commons, as, in addition to maintaining the tomb, he also held land as a member of the village brotherhood (*pattidar*). However, it is worth noting the grounds on which the Chief Court dismissed Singh's plea, namely, that a *mo'afi* grant to priests and religious functionaries did not extend beyond the enjoyment of the revenues of the granted plot itself however paltry these might be. Rights to the commons were reserved for cultivating landholders alone.[89] In another case, a handful of landholders were seeking to eject the village imam in order, it seemed, to divide up his land amongst themselves. The Chief Court ruled in the imam's favour, but only on the grounds that a minority in the village supported the eviction.[90] It did not dispute the principle noted by a lower court that the imam was a village servant whose grant was 'tenable only during the pleasure of the granters'.[91]

Besides clearly specifying the revocability of *mo'afi* lands, the courts also explicitly gave lay patrons a say in the succession of monastic institutions held on 'public' land. This precedent was set in 'Ajoodha Dass vs. Devi Dass', a case in which two rival *chelas* of the same lineage were competing to succeed the Udasi *guru* Balak Ram as the *mahant* or elder of a *dharamshala* in Ludhiana district.[92] Devi was a direct disciple of Balak's and thus claimed rightful succession, whereas Ajudha was the disciple of another *guru* who had served as disciple along with Balak Ram when they were both young monks. Devi's succession was opposed not only by Ajudha and by other Udasi ascetics in the area, but also by the villagers on whose land the *dharamshala* had been built. They claimed that as grantors, they had the right to elect the *mahant*. In response, Devi pointed to the established precedent of disciple succeeding *guru* without lay intervention. The Chief Court, however, dismissed this precedent as applicable only to large shrines and monasteries, and not to small *dharamshalas*. Instead, it ruled that 'custom' would guide its decision. To determine what custom stipulated, the court ordered its officers to make enquiries locally, amongst '*lambardars* [landholders] and *fakirs* [ascetics] of thirteen neighbouring villages', the very groups, in other words, that opposed Devi's succession! Unsurprisingly, 'custom' proved to support Ajudha's claim.[93]

Not only were certain grants to holy men made revocable, but the juridically-imposed distinction between ascetics and householder also meant that those who became *faqirs* were declared 'civilly dead'.

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[88] See Chapter 2.

[89] 'Bussawa Sing vs. Golab Sing' under 'Civil Judgments', *Panjab Record, III,* 107-11.

[90] 'Mazoola and others vs. Bahadur Khan and others' under 'Civil Judgments', *Panjab Record, III,* 182-3.

[91] Ibid., 183.

[92] 'Ajoodha Dass vs. Devi Dass', under 'Civil Judgments', *Panjab Record,* 1869, 195-7.

[93] Charles Boulnois, C. B Rattigan, and W. H Rattigan, *Notes on Customary Law as Administered in the Courts of the Punjab* (London, 1878), 136.

This implied that they were technically not allowed to hold property except by grace of a grant (*mo'afi*) from a lay patron; nor were they free to nominate an heir to the property they had held *before* entering a monastery. Exceptions to this rule were made where monks were able to 'convincingly' demonstrate that their lineage did not require ascetics to sever ties with the material world. Generally, though, householders who entered into a hermitage in their adult lives were required to surrender their estates, either to their nearest surviving relatives, or, if they merely *held* but did not *own* the property, to the rightful 'owner'.[94] In a case from the Ambala district, a man named Teku appeared to have joined an Udasi refuge and *thereafter* to have adopted a lay son to inherit his land. Teku was sued by a male relative of his named Basti, who, seemingly knowledgeable of colonial views on asceticism, declared the adoption legally void. Basti's claims were upheld, and Teku's land passed to him.[95] Where ascetics did acquire property, their being 'civilly dead' entitled the institution they were affiliated with to claim that property as its own.[96]

How did colonial interventions in the affairs of preceptors affect the status of the women and children in ascetic households? Clearly, this depended upon whether institutions were granted legal status as shrines and hermitages or not. In the case of Batala Sharif discussed above, the property of the two senior *pirzadas* was declared private, rather than *waqf*. It would therefore be subject, upon their death, to division amongst their legal heirs, that is, their sons or nearest male kin. Widows, mothers, and unmarried daughters would be granted a lifetime stake in the property for maintenance alone. On the other hand, where estates were legally recognized as refuges, there was no specific provision for *any* of the disciples constituting the household, as they were regarded as 'civilly dead'. The management of these estates then fell solely to an officer known variously as a *mutawalli* or *mahant*, who might or might not be an ascetic. Women could serve as estate managers as long as they were appointed to this position by the donor (in the case of *waqf* properties) or by the head teacher/monk (in all other cases); and, except for in Islamic institutions, women could also succeed to the position of head teacher and lineage elder.[97]

Legal status	**Effective function**	**Transferability under colonial law**
Shrine/refuge/monastery	Shrine/refuge/monastery	Land not gifted in perpetuity could be revoked Land purchased or received as permanent grant to be held in trust for institution
Private estate	Shrine/refuge/monastery	All property held in temporary grant was revocable Property purchased or received in permanent grant to be distributed amongst heirs of the holder of the property title

[94] This distinction will be discussed further below in the analysis of husbanding lineages. Cf. 'Gopal Singh and Others vs. Jowahir Singh and Others' in 'Civil Judgments', *Punjab Record, III* (1868),.1-2.

[95] 'Teku and others vs. Busti', in 'Civil Judgments', *Punjab Record, IX* (1874), 83-4.

[96] Cf. Boulnois et al., *Notes*, 137 and 'Tota Puri vs. Padam Puri', *Punjab Record, IX* (1874), 115-16.

[97] Boulnois et al., *Notes*, 137; Faiz Badruddin Tyabji, *Principles Of Muhammadan Law* (Bombay: D.B. Taraporevala Sons, 1913), 410.

Ascetics	Ascetics and householders	No right to hold, purchase, inherit or gift property *individually* All property purchased to be given to institution (if recognized as monastery) or to male next-of-kin
Householders	Ascetics and householders	Property subject to civil code, to be distributed amongst female dependants (specifically, wives, unwed daughters, mothers) and male heirs.

Table 4. Transferability of ascetic estates under colonial law (per grantee's status)

Type of grant	**Grantee**	**Transferability under colonial law**
Mo'afi for a fixed period	Ascetic	Revocable and transferable by donor
Mo'afi in perpetuity	Ascetic	Revocable upon the failure of a male heir
Waqf	Refuge, shrine, or other monastic institution	Neither revocable, nor transferable

Table 5. Transferability of ascetic estates under colonial law (per type of grant)

Despite the considerable infringement upon shrines and refuges by the state, the patronage of saints and ascetics continued in nineteenth-century south-eastern Panjab. The circulation of pilgrims and goods between different shrines, such as those of Guga Pir at Bhadra, Baba Farid Ganj-i-Shakkar at Pakpattan, Sakhi Sarwar near Dera Ghazi Khan, Ramdeo Gosain near Jaisalmer and Jhambhaji thus continued to link our region with the wider Panjab and Rajputana regions throughout this period. Pilgrimages continued to provide an opportunity for trade as well; the annual pilgrimage at Harmandar Sahib at Amritsar, for instance, was the occasion of a large cattle fair.[98] Similarly, the biannual fairs at the Bara Tirth shrine to Guru Gobind at Abohar drew between 7,000-9,000 pilgrims at a time, their donations of labour and money contributing to the upkeep of the shrine and its overseer alike.[99]

At the same time that the principal shrines of popular saints continued to draw large crowds and smaller shrines to these saints continued to sprout up, often at the level of the village or locality. According to Walker, for instance, in the Ludhiana district, many villages appear to have had a small edifice called a *Pir Khana*, where lamps would be lit, and food and money offered on Thursday evening. These *Pir Khanas* were in honour of the saint Sakhi Sarwar, and they were usually maintained by a community of ascetics that, in Ludhiana, had evolved into a distinct service group known as Bharais. These were non-celibate Muslim ascetics, who Walker describes as 'Sheikhs, because they belong to no other tribe.' Once a week on Thursday, they would go to the *Pir Khana* to light a lamp and beat a drum. Villagers would then come to the shrine to make obeisance of money and grain. The Bharais would

[98] Walker, *SR Ludhiana*, 58.

[99] Wilson, *SR Sirsa*, 142.

sometimes accompany pilgrims from their village to the shrine of Sakhi Sarwar, to give them guidance. Land was also cultivated for them by the lay population, a form of *dohli* grant.[100] Notably, Walker describes the worshippers of Sakhi Sarwar, at least those in Ludhiana district, as largely 'Hindu Jats', who were likewise followers of the Sikh Gurus.[101] In Karnal, by contrast, Sakhi Sarwar's worship was not centralized at one site; rather, women painted his portrait on the walls of their houses on the last day of the month of Sawan (July-August), and Brahmans would tie the sacred thread on their wrists.[102]

A similar pattern, the emergence of local shrines to a famous saint, characterized the worship of Guga Pir as well. Apart from his principal shrine in Bikaner, individual villages would construct an edifice to him known as a *mahari* or *mari*, where offerings would be made on a weekly basis. The *mari* was decorated with Guga's symbols, which were generally a pole adorned with a few peacock feathers and flags.[103] In Karnal, Guga's flag was blue; in Rohtak, red.[104] In Karnal, he was broadly prayed to weekly, on Mondays and the ninth of the month, when the local Jogis would carry the plume-adorned pole around, collecting people's offerings of food to Guga. Everywhere, however, he was revered at the end of the rains, in the month of Bhadon (corresponding roughly to the month of August).[105] At this time, some undertook a pilgrimage to his principal shrine at Bhadra, an event which Wilson said attracted some 20,000 visitors annually, both Hindu and Muslim.[106] Another fair in his honour, held at Chhapar in the Ludhiana district, attracted 50,000 people, likewise of different faiths, all of whom donated to Guga's shrine, which was here run by a local family of Brahmans.[107] Just as Brahmans who, properly speaking, were ritual functionaries and priests, but not necessarily ascetics, were absorbed into the worship of revered saints, so too did ascetics fulfil a broad range of ritual and devotional functions for the communities that supported them. Besides monuments to particular saints, they would also maintain the shrines of various deities worshipped in the locality. These included the goddess of smallpox, *Sitla devi* (from *sheetal*, or 'cool') and her sisters; the protectors of the crops and the village lands in general, known as *Bhairon*, *Khetrapal* and *Bhumia*.[108] The elements, too, were worshipped, especially *Agni* (fire) and *Dharti* (earth), as well as the sun (*Suraj*) and the moon (*Chand*). So, too, were the lineage's patriarchs.

Moreover, many monasteries, as well as the charitable institutions attached to them, survived into the late nineteenth century. In Rohtak district, for example, there appear to have been almost 300 *asthals*, home to more than 600 ascetics (although it is likely that Fanshawe, from whose settlement report these figures are drawn, was counting only the elder monks of each institution, not their *chelas*).[109] In Ludhiana district, Walker noted the existence of several *dharamshalas* that served at once as monasteries and rest houses, and where public kitchens, or *langars* were maintained. These included one at Bagrian and Jassowal near Ludhiana, both of which evidently disposed over 'hundreds of acres' of land but had recently closed (see below).[110] Yet, aside from such large estates, the practice of granting holy men and their institutions land to sustain themselves remained common. In some places, a plot of land was

[100] Walker, *SR Ludhiana*, 42.

[101] Ibid., 54.

[102] Ibbetson, *SR Karnal*, 152-3.

[103] Walker, *SR Ludhiana*, 60; Wilson, *SR Sirsa*, 142.

[104] Ibbetson, *SR Karnal*, 151-2; Fanshawe, *SR Rohtak*, 66.

[105] Ibbetson, *SR Karnal*, 151; Wilson, *SR Sirsa*, 142; Walker, *SR Ludhiana*, 60.

[106] Wilson, *SR Karnal*, 142.

[107] Walker, *SR Ludhiana*, 60.

[108] P.J. Fagan, *Gazetteer of the Punjab: Hisar District*. Lahore: Civil and Military Gazette Press, 1893, 72 (henceforth, *DG Hisar*).

[109] Fanshawe, *SR Rohtak*, 66.

[110] Walker, *SR Ludhiana*, 61.

granted to a monastic household to be cultivated itself. In such cases, depending upon the wealth of the grantee, the monastic household would either be exempt from contributing to the settlement's revenue payments, or would be asked for a nominal payment. Other donors would simply demarcate a portion of their own fields, whose produce would be delivered to a guru or priest. Villages might also allocate a share of the uncultivated commons to a grantee. Grants were referred to variously as *dohli*, *mo'afi* and *punartha*.[111]

Within the circumscribed limits of the locality—which usually incorporated the village, or, if settlements were small and lineage ties strong, the village cluster—preceptors and their disciples continued to serve as intermediaries in the worship of deities responsible for certain specific, protective functions. These included the goddess of smallpox, *Sitla devi* (from *sheetal,* or 'cool') and her sisters; the protectors of the crops and the village lands in general, *Bhairon* (from *bhai/bhay*, or 'terror') *Khetrapal* (from *kshetra*, or 'domain', and *pal*, or 'guardian') and *Bhumia* (from *bhumi*, or 'earth'). The worship of this *tirbaini* (*triveni*, 'trio') was not anthropomorphic, but instead entailed planting and making offerings to three kinds of trees widely revered for their therapeutic value: *neem* (*Azadirachta indica*), *bargad* or *bar* (*Ficus benghalensis*) and *pipal* (*Ficus religiosa*).[112] The elements, too, were worshipped, especially *Agni* (fire) and *Dharti* (earth), as well as the sun (*Suraj*) and the moon (*Chand*). So, too, were the lineage's patriarchs. Not all of these deities were benevolent. *Sitla,* for instance, had to be placated, as did *Bhairon*. Ancestors who had died unfulfilled in some way—be it without an heir, or those who had been 'martyred' before their time—were also thought to be prone to malevolence and were prudently appeased from time to time. On the other hand, those ancestors (*pitr*) who had been blessed in their lifetime, were believed to be of a well-willing disposition, keeping a protective eye out for their descendants.[113]

It is difficult to discern a fixed calendar behind the worship of these gods of the quotidian, partly because the rhythms of worship often differed from one locality to the next, and partly because worship was contingent upon personal and exceptional circumstances. According to Ibbetson, for instance, Sitla could be worshipped at multiple occasions in the year, including all Mondays and in the wake of a small-pox epidemic, but never during. Not unnaturally, her worship peaked as spring turned to summer, just before the onset of the smallpox season in May.[114] Tribute most frequently took the form of offerings of food—such as gram flour, *chapatis, ghee*, *gur*—libations of oil, the lighting of earthen lamps and, occasionally, the sacrifice of a rooster. Towards the late nineteenth century, her worship appears to have become anthropomorphic in pockets. In and around Karnal district itself, there were seven shrines to her, the largest of which was at Gurgaon, which drew 'huge crowds' from near and far.[115] Here, she was worshipped as a woman astride a donkey, and her shrine was managed by ascetics of the Nath and Jog orders. Devotees would offer gram flour to Sitla's donkey, as well as to a potter; and those who could afford to do so would offer fowl, pigs and goats as well.[116]

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[111] Channing, *SR Gurgaon*, 88; R. Maconachie, *Delhi: Final Report on the Settlement of Land Revenue in the Delhi District, 1872-77. O Wood & R Maconachie. Lahore, 1882*. Lahore: Victoria Press, 1882, 80 (henceforth *SR Delhi*); Fanshawe, *SR Rohtak*, 65; Walker, *SR Ludhiana*, 274, Wilson, *SR Sirsa*, 414.

[112] Fagan, *DG Hisar*, 72.

[113] Ibbetson, *SR Karnal*, 147-150.

[114] Both Wilson and Ibbetson attest to the time of worship, cf. Wilson, *SR Sirsa,* 143-44 and Ibbetson, *SR Panipat,* 1500. Smallpox season across South Asia seems to have varied between February and May; David Arnold, 'Smallpox and Colonial Medicine in Nineteenth-Century India', in *Imperial Medicine and Indigenous Societies* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1988), 45–65, at 46.

[115] Wilson, *SR Sirsa,* 141.

[116] Ibbetson, *SR Karnal*, 150.

Devotion at these shrines was not limited by sectarian affiliation. This was partly because the trials of daily life traversed sectarian divides, uniting everyone in a single congregation of mortals and sufferers, regardless of faith. Nor did the average husbandman believe that the 'big' gods—whether Shiva, Vishnu or Allah—concerned themselves with his fortunes. They were, as the settlement officer of Hisar remarked, 'too great' for daily worship.[117] Rather, the worldly affairs of everyday rested in the hands of the gods of the locality, who had therefore to be placated, regardless of one's 'official' faith. As Ibbetson observed, '[a] Musalman woman who had not offered to the small-pox god would feel that she had deliberately risked her child's life.'[118] As such, worship at the level of the locality maintained its heterogeneous character. This is visible, for instance, in the worship of Khwaja Khizr. Although the Khwaja is held to be a Muslim Prophet by some, he is famous across the Islamic world as a saint of water, his name translating literally to 'Master Green'.[119] He was known in south-eastern Panjab too, where he seems to have been worshipped in the general way—by lighting earthen lamps at his shrine (which, in the Khwaja's case, was the local well or reservoir). After the harvest, wrote Ibbetson, Brahmans were fed in his honour.[120] It is likely, however, that Ibbetson's reference to Brahmans was particular to Karnal, and that the Khwaja, like all village gods, would equally be satisfied with an offering to whichever holy men were present in the vicinity, whether Jogis, a Sufi *pir* or the local *maulvi*.

Conclusions

This chapter has explored the impact of colonization upon the elite households of south-eastern Panjab. It has argued that the interventions of the East India Company early in the nineteenth century started off a process whereby the ruling lineages of the region found themselves slowly dispossessed. The foundation for this dispossession had been slain by 1818 when the Company's decisive defeat of the Marathas, and the conclusion of campaigns against various itinerant soldiering-raiding groups such as the Pindaris and the Bhattis, had established their military supremacy in India.[121] Subsequent to this 'pacification', ruling houses were eager to reach agreements with the British, which was naturally deemed preferable to having their lands confiscated altogether by the state.

The Company's clear military superiority allowed it to dictate terms to local polities. As we saw in the instance of the Mughals, the Company appointed itself arbiter of the 'legitimacy' of the Emperor's grants to his network of kin, clients, and dependents. Notably, these decisions were not shaped by principle alone but also by political pragmatism. However, the goal was clear—the Company was eager to reduce the Emperor's circle of patronage, to enhance its earnings from its newly-acquired possessions in south-eastern Panjab. The 'downsizing' of the network of imperial clients was facilitated by the Company's very different views upon who had the right to profit from the land. Whereas the clientelage system was redistributive, and the Mughal Emperor's own legitimacy and prestige derived from his role as a patron, the Company viewed the land as its total property. Grants given by imperial clients to *their* clients or kin; gifts made by the emperor once his power was deemed by the Company to be nominal alone; land held by widows, mothers, sisters of grantees; all were considered illegitimate by the colonial state, and therefore, revocable. This early exercise in confiscation was to set many of the principles whereby the state would negotiate its relationships with other regional polities. If the demilitarization of south-eastern Panjab had dealt the first blow to the capacity of regional polities to govern, the colonial state's dismantlement of such networks of clients, as well as to redefine the 'right' that ruling households

[117] Fagan, *DG Hisar*, 72. Ibbetson similarly said that villagers considered the 'true' gods 'too high company' for themselves (*SR Karnal*, 142).

[118] Ibbetson, *SR Karnal*, 142.

[119] Alice Albinia, *Empires of the Indus: The Story of a River* (Hachette UK, 2012),101.

[120] Ibbetson, *SR Karnal*, 148.

[121] See Chapter 3.

possessed over their domains was to complete the process of undermining the *ancien régime*. This entailed, amongst other things, substantial losses for women, whose position was redefined as solely 'domestic', even as attempts were made to separate 'domesticity' and 'politics' from each other.

A similar pattern is visible in the state's dealings with the ascetic lineages of the region. Monastic domains had to be redefined with greater precision, and the state made the conditions of the acquisition of such properties its business. In order to distinguish between tenable and untenable claims, it applied fundamentally different principles to the arbitration of disputes than hitherto had governed such questions. Monasticity, for instance, was redefined in terms of celibacy and monastic property was distinguished from the income that sustained monastic households. Yet, even as ascetic lineages encountered such disruption, they continued to receive patronage from lay populations. Monastics were moreover absorbed into rural communities, serving a variety of functions in rural settlements, from preceptor to caretaker of the local *dharamshala* and public kitchen, as well as the functionary in diverse shrines, from those of the famous saints to those like Sitla, Bhawani, and the ancestors.

This chapter has shown that colonial paramountcy thus was built up by taking aim at competing centres of power, regardless of whether they were lay or monastic. In the following chapters, however, a more complex pattern emerges. Even as the effects of the *Pax Britannica* were felt upon old military elites, the state's intervention in local, rural affairs continued to create new elites, through whom it governed.