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# Sacred Symbol as Mobilizing Ideology: The North Indian Search for a “Hindu” community

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Always have Indians identified themselves by their caste, by their ancestral village: “Our family were Khattris from the West Punjab countryside.” “Murud, at one time a fairly prosperous village, is my native place.”<sup>1</sup> In the late nineteenth century, however, an important new process of forging group identities which transcended these local attributions came to characterize South Asian social history.<sup>2</sup> This was in part prompted by the efforts of an alien British administration to identify the constituent units in Indian society. Drawing on European historical experience, the administrators applied the collective labels “Hindu” and “Muslim” to groups who were far from homogeneous communities. Participants in Hinduism, active only in localized religious practices and not subject to, or coordinated by, any central organizational structure,

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<sup>1</sup> Autobiographical opening sentences from, respectively, Prakash Tandon, *Punjabi Century* (Berkeley, 1968) and D. D. Karve, *The New Brahmans* (Berkeley, 1963).

<sup>2</sup> This emphasis on group identity formation, focusing as it does on the internal dynamics, sheds important light on the competition which took place within what the rulers often assumed was a monolithic community. This fruitful approach has been followed in my dissertation “Religious Rites and Riots: Communalism and Community Identity in North India, 1870–1940” (in preparation for the Department of History, University of California, Berkeley) in order to disentangle what has been characterized as “Hindu-Muslim” conflict. It looks instead at the connection between cultural and religious developments, changes in social mobility, and related definitions of “community” and the political arena (in which many of these labels acquired currency) without unduly weighting the considerations of any one characteristic. The general orientation owes much to the work of George Rudé, E. P. Thompson, Eric Hobsbawm and especially (because so closely relevant) Natalie Z. Davis, See Anand A. Yang, “Sacred Symbol and Sacred Space in Rural India: Community Mobilization in the ‘Anti-Cow Killing’ Riot of 1893,” in this volume, for citations relating to this general literature and to the study of communalism in South Asia.

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certainly could not be treated as a coherent community. Even Muslims, more effectively united by a revealed scripture and a relatively standardized set of practices, varied widely: a member of the Moghul empire's administrative elite would not have identified himself with a butcher. Yet access to opportunities for political participation and patronage was increasingly affected by reference to these labels; at first members of the groups merely used the labels against the British for their own purposes, but in time the labels took on a reality they had not had.

This was also in part due to the self-conscious efforts simultaneously being made to reform and redefine the content and observances of religious life. Such efforts proceeded at different paces for different groups, though it is possible to identify at least broad trends within these "Hindu" and "Muslim" collectivities. For the latter the search can be dated from the early eighteenth century; it led to the formation of competing collectors of *ʿulama* (men learned in the Law) with different visions and definitions of Indian Islam, organized around schools designed to train specialists in each of these competing visions. For those designated "Hindu" the efforts at reform and redefinition began later and contained less emphasis on education (perhaps because there was not a need to deal with a revealed Law). Developing as opportunities for participation in British governmental structures and related political arenas widened, the "Hindu" efforts at ideological definition and organizational format were generally designed specifically to fit these new opportunities and arenas.<sup>3</sup>

The late nineteenth century in particular was marked by a wide range of experimental explorations of the definition of the community behind each of the labels. By the second decade of the twentieth century these community identities had taken on a reality which could be expressed in a newly developed vocabulary or idiom drawing heavily on religious symbols.<sup>4</sup> In the process, however, the need to use the idiom to express the common denominator among a variety of beliefs and practices meant that the symbols became largely divorced from their original significance. And once that divorce was complete, it became possible in the 1920s and 1930s to infuse a political<sup>5</sup> meaning into the now real community identity,

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of the earlier experiments among Hindu groups, see Sandria Freitag, "Community and Competition in Religious Festivals: The North Indian Prelude," paper presented to the Social Science Research Council Conference on Intermediate Political Linkages held in Berkeley, California, March 1978.

<sup>4</sup> For a description of this process among Muslims, see chapter 4 of my dissertation, "Religious Rites and Riots."

<sup>5</sup> Though I am aware that recent scholarship has worked to expand the use of "political" to include a wide range of activities in the social and governmental spheres, I use it here in the old, more narrowly defined sense of pertaining to administrative and governmental structures and related arenas of activity and patronage. The reason for this is explained in the dissertation.

a meaning which eventually created a demand for the separate states of India and Pakistan. Study of this process of community definition is, therefore, of interest not only for what it tells us of Indian social history, but for the important political repercussions before and after Independence in 1947.

For reasons too involved to discuss here,<sup>6</sup> this process of community definition was, in north India, essentially an urban phenomenon. As such it was most pronounced in the area known as the United Provinces, or U.P., the most highly urbanized area of India. The pattern of so-called "communal"<sup>7</sup> riots throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries attests to the importance of cities as sites for this process of community definition. There is, however, one important exception to the pattern, the collection of riots known as the Cow Protection Riots of 1893. While they may have been different in content or organization in different parts of the subcontinent, it seems clear that in north India these riots mark the only time between the "Mutiny" of 1857 and the Kisan Sabha (Peasant Organization) activities of the 1920s that important mobilizing and ideological connections were forged between the city and the countryside.

This paper examines the development of the Cow Protection (or *Gaurakshini Sabha*) movement in the north Indian area of U.P. to see just how these connections were formed; it does so by focusing on the *ideological content* and *organizational efforts*, including the exercise of leadership and methods of mobilization, utilized by the movement. The two issues are important focal points, for the process of community definition was especially characterized by the interaction between organizational experiments and ideological explorations. Each of these two issues will therefore be examined in sections which deal with, respectively: (1) the setting, a discussion which compares patterns of social organization and related religious observances in city and countryside; (2) the development of community identity through organizational and ideological experiments in the urban context; (3) specifics of the Cow Protection movement, especially its methods of organization in the cities; (4) connections between city and countryside which made possible the

<sup>6</sup> For a fuller discussion of an urban model which applies Victor Turner's concepts of "communitas" and "structure" (see note 12), see Freitag, "Community and Competition."

<sup>7</sup> "U.P." will be the term most often used for that general area in north India, now known as Uttar Pradesh, which underwent several name and boundary changes in this period. It was known variously as the two separate provinces of North-Western Provinces (NWP) and Oudh, the combined province of NWP & O, and finally the United Provinces (U.P.) of Agra and Oudh. The names have been retained as used in the source citations. Though "communalism" in the South Asian context is generally defined as the use of religion as the dominant form of identification, scholars seem to presume a politicized character to that identification. The word is therefore inappropriate for this period and will be avoided in this article.

transfer of Cow Protection ideology and organization to the rural environment; and (5) efforts in the countryside to fit Cow Protection ideology to existing social configurations in a new definition of community.

#### THE SETTING

Forging a connection between city and countryside, particularly one based on religious identity, was not easily managed. In Clifford Geertz' useful terminology, religion in this context was a "cultural system"; more than an ideology, it was a system of symbols, ideas and institutions which "synthesize[d] a people's ethos—the tone, character and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood—and their world view—the picture they [had] of the way things in sheer actuality are, their most comprehensive ideas of order."<sup>8</sup> As such, religion was an integral part of local social organization and certain basic differences distinguished the urban and rural milieus of north India. Though we cannot develop fully here models<sup>9</sup> which suggest these differences, we can quickly outline the major distinctions.

An Indian city could be characterized by nothing so much as the lack of an overarching civic identity, a lack of social cohesion and sense of civic community. An urban center was instead a collection of *mohallas* (neighborhoods) originally shaped through immigration patterns, economic activities and government service. These in turn related to kinship, caste, linguistic and occupational affinities. Religion, particularly in the guise of religious festivals, was one of the few "glues" which bound together members—especially male members—of different urban *mohallas*.<sup>10</sup>

In a village,<sup>11</sup> by contrast, religion and religious rites—as well as most other activities—were conducted by kinship units and (in certain circumstances) those aligned with the dominant family units. Where a religious observance caused *urban* groups to coalesce in horizontal alignments based on ideological affinities, then, such festivities in the countryside were observed by groups aligned vertically through kinship, caste and patron-client relationships. This is not to say that these same kinds of

<sup>8</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, (New York, 1973), p. 89.

<sup>9</sup> Freitag, "Community and Competition."

<sup>10</sup> See for instance C. A. Bayly, *Local Roots of Indian Politics: Allahabad 1880-1920* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 43-45, for a dynamic example of *mohalla* organization to 1869.

<sup>11</sup> Though most of this evidence is drawn from recent village studies, Oscar Lewis has argued convincingly that the "essential structure" of the festival cycle has remained "unchanged" and "remarkably stable" for several centuries. Those significant changes—usually reflecting alterations in the social structure—which he isolates all occurred in the early twentieth century, after the period we are discussing here. In any event, for our purposes—that is, the contrast between urban and rural styles—the contrasts are not overdrawn. *Village Life in Northern India* (New York, 1958), especially pp. 243-46.

alignments were not present in the urban context, but that a man would owe allegiance to a variety of leaders of economic, social, kinship and caste activities; in the countryside these activities were much more likely to be concentrated in the hands of one or a very few leaders. Rural patron-client ties were consequently stronger and more vertical in alignment. (The difference could be contrasted visually by comparing a trapezoid with a pyramid). Such vertical alignments provided clear identities and affiliations for everyone in a variety of rural contexts; but they also tended to define participants *against* others involved in the same observance, rather than forging a sense of “communitas”<sup>12</sup> among the participants.

The style of observance was also different. Where in the cities the effort was always to integrate the constituent groups into a coherent whole, in the countryside religious festivals were characteristically fragmented. Even when an observance involved a variety of village castes, the groups would celebrate in small if side-by-side activities or would take turns participating in either joint family or, at most, equivalent caste configurations.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, sacred spaces and symbols could not invoke the same feeling of “communitas,” for many villages lacked temples or other “religious buildings of any note.”<sup>14</sup> Indeed, McKim Marriott has noted that generally there was “no temple of the whole village, no one cremation ground, no sacred tank or well. Instead, dozens of different trees and stones and tiny shrines [were] made objects of worship separately by members of the many caste and lineage groups.”<sup>15</sup>

Within this fragmentation, certain social configurations were especially important, as we shall see in the section on Cow Protection in the countryside. In the eastern districts of U.P.—the areas in which Cow Protection took hold—the influence and prestige accorded to Brahmins (priestly caste) was especially high.<sup>16</sup> This influence was in part connected to their social position as high caste proprietors and cultivators, though they shared this status with Rajputs and Bhuinhars.<sup>17</sup> But it was also reinforced in the world of public religion by virtue of their high ritual status. Such influence undoubtedly cast many religious exercises in forms amenable to a more highly Sanskritized value system, emphasizing

<sup>12</sup> Victor Turner, *Drama, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca, 1974), for a discussion of “communitas.”

<sup>13</sup> Examples given by Lewis are legion. See *Village Life*, pp. 239–40, for a summary.

<sup>14</sup> D. L. Drake-Brockman, *District Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh*, vol. 33, *Azamgarh* (Allahabad: U.P. Government Press, 1911), p. 77 (hereafter cited as *Azamgarh Gazetteer*), and Lewis, *Village Life*, p. 198.

<sup>15</sup> McKim Marriott, ed., *Village India*, American Anthropological Association Memoir 83 (June 1955), p. 175; quoted in Lewis, *Village Life*, p. 237.

<sup>16</sup> Lewis' catalogue of the decline of the Brahmin in Rampur makes clear his earlier domination. See *ibid.* pp. 241–45.

<sup>17</sup> *Azamgarh Gazetteer*, pp. 105–06.

Brahminical forms of ritual, symbols of sacredness, and related values of purity and exclusion. This was reinforced by the traditional part played by Brahmins in some of the village festivals, but it was also simply part of the shared pool of values to which all the high castes subscribed, a system used to distinguish between their joint culture and that of the lower castes.<sup>18</sup> The significance of this distinction between high and low caste culture will become apparent when we examine the rural interpretations given to Cow Protection ideology.

The fragmentation was reinforced by the localized nature of many rural observances. Many—perhaps a quarter—of the village festivals were important only locally.<sup>19</sup> The most striking example of this would be the Rampur worship of the local deity Sanjhi during what would be Ram Lila elsewhere.<sup>20</sup> Though the women and boys of all castes in the village participated, it was a localized celebration. Another quarter were observances shared by villages within the region but not known widely throughout the subcontinent. Of these celebrations, many served the important function of connecting caste and kinship fellows in widely separated places. Once again, however, the festivals, whether localized to the village or regional in scope, worked as much to define those outside as those inside the tradition.

The remaining half of the festivals, though common throughout Hindu India, still represented only a selection from the vast repertoire available. It was possible to turn this process of selection to good effect in the Cow Protection movement. Moreover, the rituals even in these common festivals demonstrated that though the stories and traditions might belong to the Great Tradition, very often the observances did not. Thus localizing influences would reinterpret the Great Tradition in local observances.<sup>21</sup> In the promulgation of the stories we can discern channels of communication, utilizable for messages like those of Cow Protection, which would carry new messages to the countryside: touring troupes recited and acted out parts of the Ramayana<sup>22</sup> each year; performances at *mela* (fairs) to which villagers traveled provided another source; and additional information was gained by those who went on pilgrimages to the various centers located both close by and even at some distance from the village.

<sup>18</sup> A story related by the Wisers from 1930 illustrates this well. See *Behind Mud Walls, 1930–60* (Berkeley, 1971), pp. 18–19, for the story of the beating of Kacchis by village Brahmins. They had told with relish the story of Rawan having been conceived; the story repeatedly ridiculed Brahmins.

<sup>19</sup> The local focus of festivals is discussed in Lewis, *Village Life*, p. 234; see especially the comparison of information from the Wisers and Marriott with Lewis' own findings.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 215–17. The story has several fascinating implications both for the influence of women and for intercaste relations, since Sanjhi was a Chamar.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 235.

<sup>22</sup> See Wisers, *Behind Mud Walls*, pp. 16–17; and Lewis, *Village India*, p. 236.

Any movement which would appeal to the countryside of eastern U.P. then, had to invoke Brahminical symbols, had to overcome social fragmentation within a village, and had to expand the otherwise localized nature of rural observances. Normally these combined hurdles proved too formidable to communicate the issues and ideologies developed in the cities to the countryside. The following sections will explore why the Cow Protection movement proved singularly successful in bringing its message to the countryside in 1893.

#### HINDU DEFINITIONS OF COMMUNITY: THE URBAN PHASE

There were always a variety of messages about how the erstwhile community of Hindus should be defined and delineated. As the range of definitions increased so did the competition between those who espoused them. This competition is one of the most important characteristics of the last few decades of the nineteenth century. Indeed, it can be shown<sup>23</sup> that often Hindu-Muslim riots were caused not by friction *between* the two religions, but by an expansion of boundaries around a single religious community which was prompted by internal competition. That is, as one group of Hindus expanded or rehabilitated an old religious procession, a competing group would infuse religious symbolism into a popular bathing fair. It would thus appear to those outside the "Hindu" boundary that those inside were trying to expand the activities which reinforced Hindu identity, and that this was being done at the expense of those left outside.

This pattern of competition and friction was repeated through much of U.P. and was prompted by a variety of causes. The first cause was no doubt the widespread adoption of Western forms of organization and protest,<sup>24</sup> including "monster" protest meetings; new public associations on the Western model, with elected officers, rules for the membership, fund-raising drives, and printed records of the meetings; and the employment of "publicists" or propagandists to both publicize causes (through the new vernacular presses and in broadsheets) and to serve as stump-orators, connecting the urban areas of north India through their personal appeals. A second impetus was the increasing sensitivity among Hindus to Muslim efforts at community organization,<sup>25</sup> though these seem to have been internally focused and not principally designed to intimidate Hindus. Finally, introduction of the Arya Samaj into many U.P. towns polarized Hindus, forcing them to define and identity just what it was that they regarded as their community (see below). This process in turn made them much more self-conscious about their religious identity.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Freitag, "Community and Competition," develops this.

<sup>24</sup> See John R. McLane, *Indian Nationalism and the Early Congress* (Princeton, 1977), for discussion of this connection, though it may place too much emphasis on the early political role of religious community identity.

<sup>25</sup> These Muslim efforts are discussed in chapters 5 and 6 of my dissertation.

<sup>26</sup> Discussed briefly below, the interaction is detailed in "Community and Competition."



Though the most influential “Hindu” organization of the period, Cow Protection was preceded and accompanied by other organizational efforts among Hindus. The most prominent of these, though not in U.P. the most influential, was the Arya Samaj.<sup>27</sup> Supported in the main by professionals who were educated in English and attempting to reformulate their indigenous traditions to withstand Western criticism, the Arya Samaj had first taken root in 1877 in the Punjab. Soon exported to the cities of U.P. as well, its adherents there remained small in number and moderate in tone until after the turn of the century. Yet its impact was doubtless felt beyond its numbers, for it abrasively proffered a radical vision of Hinduism, one which emphasized monotheism and the Vedas and condemned idolatry. Supported, moreover, by upwardly mobile urbanites, it formulated a view of religion which treated the individual as the basic unit of action. Such tactics prompted reactions from a wide range of Hindus holding very different visions of their religion and community. In the program of Agra’s Sanatan Dharm can be seen one such reaction.<sup>28</sup> Founded shortly after the arrival in Agra of the Arya Samaj,<sup>29</sup> the Sabha’s membership “greatly outnumber[ed] the Aryas.” Defending the “old faith and practices” was its ostensible purpose, but the evidence suggests that Sabha actions were as much proselytizing as defending the “ancient rights” of Hinduism, by agitating to preserve to revive old religious observances and to infuse new religious symbolism into hitherto secular festivals. Second, it also took up the task of defending the “ancient rights” of Hinduism, by agitating to preserve aspects of existing festivals, such as the playing of music, selection of time-honored or otherwise prestigious routes, and aspects of observance (e.g., crowd cries of “Jaikara” at appropriate moments) considered essential to the successful exercise of the festival.

By the late 1880s other organizations of similar nature were being founded as well,<sup>30</sup> some with specific goals in mind (such as gaining control of a *mela* [fair] or local temple endowment), others designed to serve as umbrella organizations uniting all Hindus. These groups exhibit a wide variety of supporters, organizational formats,<sup>31</sup> and definitions of

<sup>27</sup> See J. N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India* (New York, 1918), and Kenneth W. Jones, *Arya Dharm* (Berkeley, 1976), for detailed discussions of the Arya Samaj.

<sup>28</sup> Freitag, “Community and Competition.”

<sup>29</sup> Swami Dayanand Saraswati gave a series of lectures in 1880, and a lodge was founded the following year. In the early 1890s the number of Aryas in the district was under 1,000 but in the following decade the numbers almost trebled. H. R. Nevill, *District Gazetteers of the U. P.*, volume 8, *Agra* (Allahabad, 1905), p. 72.

<sup>30</sup> See the excellent section in Bayly, *Local Roots*, analyzing the place of several of these organizations in the late nineteenth-century urban context (pp. 104–17).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115, where he argues that neither the Sanatan Dharm Sabha nor the Bharat Dharm Mahamandal became new ascriptive organizations like the Arya Samaj.

Hinduism. If arranged on a continuum bounded at one end by the Arya Samaj, the Sanatan Dharm Sabha at the other end could be labeled “traditionalistic.” Working as it did with local groups of powerholders, the Sanatan view of Hinduism took as its basic unit of action the group, organized variously around functional units based on neighborhood, kinship, caste or occupation. Between the two ends of the spectrum were arrayed organizations which shared a common concern for the role of religion but supported differing definitions of that religion.

One of the most effective of these latter was the Bharat Dharm Mahamandal, which joined campaigns for Western-style education, publication programs and modern publicity techniques with the reinvigoration of what was perceived as traditional Hinduism. At its 1890 meeting, for instance, resolutions were passed urging “the due performance of fixed religious ceremonies,” protesting the Age of Consent Bill (raising the marriage age), and condemning “extravagant marriage expenses.” Other speeches encouraged the study of Hindi and Sanskrit, and a subscription program was organized for a Sanskrit College at Delhi.<sup>32</sup> The “wealthy” and “influential” members of the Mahamandal<sup>33</sup> looked to the Raja of Darbhanga (a traditionally powerful landholder) for substantial financial support and to Pandit Madan Malaviya (a religiously educated member of the “new” urban middle classes) for leadership. Before the turn of the century, the Mahamandal remained loosely organized, depending—as did most such organizations at the time—on local, often ad hoc, arrangements for recruitment and implementation of its program.<sup>34</sup> Thus the Mahamandal could be located somewhere near the middle of the continuum between the Sanatan Dharm Sabha and the Arya Samaj. It pursued both traditionalistic goals—trying, for example, to protect the ceremonial aspects of religion—and those more often considered reformist—i.e., limitation of marriage expenses. Whatever the goals, the organization did utilize at least some modern tactics to forward its program, as its subscription drive and publications attest.

Despite the fact that these organizations often worked against each other, their very existence—and the organizing and propagandizing efforts they mounted—still worked to achieve together that important and new goal: consciousness among Hindus that they constituted members of an identifiable community. There were issues, too, on which the various organizations could unite, issues which could be distinctly

<sup>32</sup> See the report of the [second?] annual meeting held at Delhi, 1890, in the *Bharat Jiwan* for November 24, 1890, in *Selections from the Vernacular Newspapers* [hereafter cited as *SVN*] published in the . . . North-Western Provinces, Oudh . . . for the year 1890, p. 794.

<sup>33</sup> Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements*, p. 320, quoting the *Indian Social Reformer*, vol. 22, p. 121. Farquhar's dates for the Mahamandal, as for the Santan Dharm Sabha, are clearly incorrect.

<sup>34</sup> See *ibid.*, for the story of its refounding in 1902 with a stronger organizational format.

recognized as “Hindu” issues. An early example of this initial unity of effort was the Allahabad-based Prayag Hindu Samaj,<sup>35</sup> which drew on the energies of both traditionalistic Hindus and members of the Arya Samaj. Active in a wide variety of “Hindu” causes, it became involved in the Hindi vs. Urdu language controversy, produced Hindi school texts, worked for control of the largest fair (the Magh Mela), and even represented “Hindu” interests in a minor commercial dispute.

Among Hindu organizational efforts, the most widespread and dramatic was made by the Cow Protection movement. Its unparalleled success in north India can be attributed to at least two important characteristics: first, its platform appealed alike to orthodox, traditionalistic and reformist Hindus; and second, its organizational structure united urban centers and their rural surroundings. We have referred to this unprecedented alliance of town and countryside before, and will return to it later in the discussion; for now let us concentrate on the cow.

#### THE COW PROTECTION MOVEMENT

It would be misleading to discuss Cow Protection without making first the striking point that there were in fact *two* movements, or at least two phases, each with distinctive features within distinctive time periods. The earlier, the urban phase, began—like many religiously focused movements—in the Punjab. Dayananda Saraswati formed the first Gaurakshini Sabha in 1882<sup>36</sup> and soon after published a book on the subject as well. The cow was a powerful symbol to call into play, for not only was it sacred in itself but its by products played essential roles in most Hindu rituals.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, it allowed more Westernized Hindus to defend an important facet of Indian life in terms deemed legitimate by the Western world, for the cow occupied as well a pivotal position in the agrarian economy. Yet the sacred side of the argument was clearly the most significant: this is made clear by the dramatic intensification the movement underwent when, in 1888, the North-Western Provincial High Court decreed that a cow was not a sacred object and hence not covered by section 295 of the Indian Penal Code which stipulated that

Whoever destroys, damages or defiles any place of worship, or any object held sacred by a class of persons, with the intention of thereby insulting the religion of any class of persons, or with the knowledge that any class of persons is likely to consider such destruction, damage or defilement as an insult to their religion, shall be punished with imprisonment . . .<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> For further details, see Bayly, *Local Roots of Indian Politics*, pp. 107–8.

<sup>36</sup> Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements*, p. 111.

<sup>37</sup> See, for instance, discussion of the cow as sacred symbol in Yang, “Sacred Symbol and Sacred Space.”

<sup>38</sup> India Office Records (hereafter IOR). L/Public and Judicial/6/376, file 298 for 1894, “Note on Agitation Against Cow Killing.” p. 4, footnote. Although there was an earlier judgment, this is the one which seems to have galvanized the movement.

And it is made clearer still by the quite conscious avowal, of the various groups arrayed along the Hindu spectrum, to work together in defense of the cow.

Yet this strong ideological component of the movement was more significant in the urban phase than in the later, rural phase. The contrast is perhaps most dramatically underscored if we look for a moment at the persons against whom the movement defined itself.<sup>39</sup> In the cities, and before 1890, those seen as the opposition were representatives of different ideological systems. It is therefore no surprise to see attacks made not only on Muslims but on other groups as well.

. . . Pandit Mathura Prasad, a preacher in the service of the Cow Protection Society of Lucknow and Babu Lalita Prasad, the President of the Society . . . were charged with having exhibited on the 10th of May before a crowd of people, among whom there were native Christians, an image of Jesus Christ suspended by neck, and with having told the people that the image was that of the God of Christians who was struck with shoes and who was the son of an unchaste woman . . .<sup>40</sup>

And as we shall see, the opposition in the countryside reflected much more parochial frictions. The Sabha activities in Gorakhpur and Azamgarh, for instance, often took as their targets very different people. While in Azamgarh district activities were aimed almost exclusively against Muslims, especially butchers,<sup>41</sup> in Gorakhpur the Nats, Banjaras (both groups traveling through the region) and especially Chamars (local Untouchables) were equally castigated.<sup>42</sup>

Not, of course, that all of those active in the Gaurakshini Sabhas even in the cities agreed on the exact nature of the ideological component. Certainly the reformers were trying to use the movement for their own purposes. Indeed, the British administration's Special Branch made much of the connections between the Gaurakshini Sabha and (the nascent nationalist movement) the Indian National Congress, following the Congress session of 1891.<sup>43</sup> And there is some evidence that Congress members were at least attempting to connect in Indian minds support of Congress and adherence to the Cow Protection movement. The Swami Alaram, for instance, addressed two meetings in Mirzapur in late 1890.

<sup>39</sup> For a sustained analysis of the importance of religion in ideology in the cities, see David Gilmartin, "Tribe, Land and Religion in the Punjab: Muslim Politics and the Making of Pakistan" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1979).

<sup>40</sup> The *Dinkar Prakash* for June in *SVN*, 1888, 419-20.

<sup>41</sup> IOR. L/P&J/6/365, file 55 for 1894, "Report on Azamgarh," by H.E.L.P. Dupernex, Officiating Magistrate of Azamgarh, to Commissioner, Gorakhpur Division, 9.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, file 84 for 1894, "Note [by Hoey] on the Cow-protection Agitation in the Gorakhpur District," pp. 2-4.

<sup>43</sup> Several Congress delegations addressed the Sabha, which met in the Congress pavilion. *Ibid.*, "Note on Agitation Against Cow killing," p. 8.

At the second he “referred to the advantages of union, and supported the aims and objects of the National Congress.”<sup>44</sup>

Much more to the point, we can see in such Sabha rules as those adopted in Gorakhpur substantial evidence of efforts at social reform. When the Sabha organized there, those attending the meeting were shown rules adopted by other Sabhas. They voted to adopt all but one of the rules, which they deleted, and then added eight more of their own. The final version admonished, for instance, against “foolish expenditure on marriages,” stipulating the maximum number of persons to go in a *barat* (procession), and the number of rupees to be expended in the ceremony of *tilak* (spot of color placed on the forehead).<sup>45</sup> Similarly, emphasis was placed on the education of women.

Still, the Gorakhpur rules show that traditionalists were able to accomplish their purposes as well. The bulk of the rules, of course, exhorted certain basic agrarian practices for the care and protection of kine (rules 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 19, 23). But several of them were aimed as well at the observation of proper Hindu ritual, such as number 14, which reiterated that “on all *dwija* castes (i.e., Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaisyas) it shall be obligatory to recite the *gayitri* at the three divisions of the day . . . and he who fails in this shall be expelled from the brotherhood”; and number 16, which stated that “women shall be instructed as to the contribution of *chutki* [the handful of rice set aside daily for Sabha support] in proper fashion with due regard to *pardah* [seclusion of women].”<sup>46</sup> Certain aspects of traditional religious life, then, were selectively emphasized by the traditionalists. It is arguable that those aspects were also especially appealing to the socially mobile reformers, concerned as they were with incorporating into their lifestyles certain appropriate, higher caste practices.

For all of these reasons the Cow Protection movement proved highly successful, and organizing efforts swept the urban centers of U.P. between 1888 and 1890. In the first year, for instance, collective activities on behalf of the cow were reported in cities such as Cawnpore, Lucknow, Ghazipur, Benares, Aligarh, Partabgarh and, preeminently, Allahabad.<sup>47</sup> An example drawn from Azamgarh district indicates the typical

<sup>44</sup> *Khichri Samachar* for Nov. 22 in *SVN*, 1890, p. 813. See also “Note on Agitation,” p. 7, and Oday Pertap Singh, the Raja of Bhinga, “The Cow Agitation, or the Mutiny-Plasm in India,” *Nineteenth Century*, April 1894, pp. 667–72. Discounting for the obvious paranoia of the Special Branch, and the self-serving nature of the Raja’s argument, it is doubtful that these efforts were particularly successful.

<sup>45</sup> IOR. L/P&J/365, file 84 for 1894, “Note on the Cow-Protection Agitation.” p. 3.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Culled from *ibid.* and *SVN*, 1887–93. Conspicuously absent from this roster of sites are the towns of Rohilkhund in the far north of the province; exceptions were Bareilly, Hardwar (as a pilgrimage site it was one of the organizing centers for the Cow Protection movement) and nearby Dehara Dun.

organizational structure.<sup>48</sup> A large meeting would be called by someone with local influence. At Azmatgarh, for instance, 5,000–6,000 people attended a meeting organized by Karria Misr, a highly influential *zamindar* (landowner) and family priest of the government treasurer. Though the treasurer was absent, “earthen vessels and other necessities” were supplied by his household to those attending the meeting. At the meeting, participants were exhorted to protect the cow. A picture of a cow, representing the residence of all the Hindu gods, was placed on a stool before the platform, and copies of it were circulated. The speaker urged his listeners to only milk “the cow” after its calf had been satisfied and told them that the cow was a “universal mother” since every man drank cow’s milk.<sup>49</sup> It was therefore matricide to kill a cow. Since the picture included a man, taken by Muslims and Hindus alike to represent a Muslim, with a drawn sword, the lesson was obvious. To prevent such matricide, the participants would agree to establish a Sabha, adopt rules, and choose officers. The local sponsors would often speak as well, and the most prestigious supporter, usually presiding at the meeting, would indicate his support and enthusiasm.<sup>50</sup>

The feeling of shared cause and values, even of “*communitas*,” fostered by such a meeting was then given an organizational framework. A collection network would be set up for the realization of *chutki*.<sup>51</sup> These household contributions of grain were given to a local agent or *sabhasad* (evidently at least one was assigned per village or urban *mohalla*)<sup>52</sup> who converted them to cash; in Azmatgarh this was done by the stamp vendor Bairon Pershad, Agarwala. While in some areas these collections were retained locally, in others the money worked its way up the chain of command to the central figures. In Gorakhpur a *sabhapati* was designated for every 40 or 50 villages; each of these could then report to a divisional representative. Whether retained or forwarded, the money was intended to buy cows otherwise destined for slaughter, to establish or maintain *gaoshalas* (cattle pounds or cow refuges), and to pay the traveling preachers<sup>53</sup> who held follow-up meetings throughout the surrounding area.

<sup>48</sup> The following details are based, except as noted, on the description for Azamgarh in “Report” by Dupernex.

<sup>49</sup> “Note on Gorakhpur,” p. 1.

<sup>50</sup> See, for instance, descriptions of meetings in Pratabgarh and Darbhanga in *SVN*, 1888, *Bharat Jiwan* for 28 May and 10 Sept., respectively, pp. 346 and 614. The Darbhanga meeting, as an example, was organized by the Marwaris there, and presided over by the Maharaja. Pandit Jagat Narayan of Benares spoke.

<sup>51</sup> Gorakhpur rules specified that each household was to put aside a *chutki* of rice equal to one paisa per member.

<sup>52</sup> See lists of agents, “Report” by Dupernex, pp. 14–18.

<sup>53</sup> The Nagpur Society even organized classes to instruct these lecturers. “Note on Agitation against Cow Killing,” p. 10.

The agents designated for each area were also responsible for enforcement, which took several forms. To Muslims a combination of incentive and coercion was applied. The Rani of Majhauai, for instance, deputed an agent to buy 80 head of cattle butchers were taking through Salempur.<sup>54</sup> She also promised to give local butchers rent-free land if they would give up their trade in cattle. To prevent cow sacrifice at the important Islamic festival of Bakr<sup>c</sup>Id, Muslims were subject to boycott and, in several places, were compelled by large crowds to sign agreements or *ikrarnamas* promising not to sacrifice.<sup>55</sup> Against recalcitrant Hindus the enforcement procedures were equally emphatic. Lachhman Paure described what happened to him:

Five days ago I sold a bullock<sup>56</sup> to Waris Khan. No one interfered at the time of the sale. Two days after Gurbin Sahu, Niranjan Sahu, Maharaj Sahu came up to me and asked why I had sold a bullock to a Muhammadan. I said it was nothing unusual. They then said I should be cut off from water and from my food vessels. Debidial Sahu and Bechu Sahu and others assembled together and said that all my work should be stopped. They pulled down the tiles of my roof and smashed my earthen vessels. Gurbin Sahu and Maharaj Sahu then went and stopped the irrigation of my sugarcane field. Gurbin then slapped me, and he and others stopped the Kahars who were carrying sweetmeats for my daughter's entry into her father-in-law's house. All these people threatened that if I did not get the bullock back they would loot my house and kill me.<sup>57</sup>

Sometimes the coercion was applied more formally, as in the trials conducted by some Sabhas. One such example was "Gao Mahdrain (Cow Empress) vs. Sita Ram Ahir of Haidi." For impounding a cow to the Government Pound which was then sold to a butcher, Sita Ram Ahir was first made to buy back the cow and then to stand trial. "The court was formally held in ——'s house in ——. Sita Ram pleaded guilty and was sentenced Rs. 4.8.0 fine." When he refused to pay, he was sentenced to 24 days outcasting and various religious penalties.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Evidently she did not pay the full price and managed to compel the sale, for the difference had to be made up by local butchers. "Note on Gorakhpur." p. 5. The cattle were then distributed free to Ahirs and others on her estate.

<sup>55</sup> See, for instance, the boycott in Aligarh as discussed in various vernacular newspapers during 1890. The agreements are discussed in "Sir Charles Crosthwaite's Speech in Azamgarh" (reprinted in full in an appendix to "An Appeal to the English Public on Behalf of the Hindus of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh . . ." by Pandit Bishan Narayan Dar (Lucknow, 1893), p. 10. Included in IOR. L/P&J/6, vol. 368 for 1894, file 328, and in Dupernex's "Report," p. 9.

<sup>56</sup> The British administrator Dupernex used the fact that Azamgarh Cow Protectionists did not distinguish between cows and bullocks as proof that the movement had ulterior motives. See below for quote.

<sup>57</sup> Dupernex's "Report" on Azamgarh, p. 10.

<sup>58</sup> Confidential letter to Advocate General, from D. J. Lyall, Secretary to the Government of India, Home Dept., IOR. L/P&J/6, vol. 367 for 1894, file 298. As noted in my "Religious Rites and Riots," ch. 2, evidence of this kind of self-sufficiency among clandestine organizations was viewed as especially threatening by the British administration.

Clearly such a complex apparatus could not be created and superimposed overnight. During the urban phase of the movement the most successful and long-lived Sabhas were built on such existing organizational frameworks as those provided by, or at least utilizing personnel from, the local Arya Samajes and Sanatan Dharm Sabhas. Existing cultural and social gatherings were, of course, ideal structures to tap for these purposes. The various bathing fairs and *melas* were often used; Allahabad's Magh Mela, for instance, was a golden opportunity for Cow Protection preachers to gain access to large and receptive crowds. But even everyday life in the city provided opportunities. In Cawnpore, "Hindu" speakers in 1888 delivered lectures along the main thoroughfares of the city, appealing for help in the agitation against cow slaughter. The message was also carried to the stage there, for "during the performance of the Laila Majnun at the theatre on the 21st of March, a calf and some Muslims boys were brought on the stage, and the latter, addressing the calf, highly praised kine."<sup>59</sup>

Sabha organizers also, it is clear from the list of *sabhasads* from Azamgarh city, worked through the existing urban networks of social organization, calling upon *mohulla* (neighborhood) leaders, occupational *chaudhuris* (headmen) and caste leaders.<sup>60</sup> Supporters in certain occupations were often able to turn these occupations to the service of the movement as well: collection boxes were prominently displayed by moneylenders, traders, liquor vendors; pleaders directed appeals to their rich clients. Publicists and their presses were of course most prominent in lending support. Though this was evident primarily in all of the printed materials used by Cow Protectionists (placards, pamphlets, the pictures and rules distributed at meetings), on occasion the leadership was even more direct. Such was the case, for instance, with Madho Prasad, editor of the vernacular newspaper *Khichri Samechar* and secretary to the Hitkarni Sabha. Not content with printing stories<sup>61</sup> detailing Muslim mistreatment of cows on the streets of Mirzapur, he led a group in seizing a cow they claimed was being beaten. As representative of the crowd, he fired off a telegram to the district magistrate, then brought together his much revered Babu Benimadho Das and Muslim leader Farzand Ali to work out a compromise.<sup>62</sup>

Often the economic functions of groups of supporters made it especially easy to organize their support. Many of those bankers, traders and others subject to the Pandri tax, for instance, paid 20 percent of their

<sup>59</sup> *Alam-i Taswir* for 6 April in *SVN*, 1888, 250–51.

<sup>60</sup> The list includes a halwai, teli, agarwalas, marwaris, etc. Dupernex's "Report," p. 5.

<sup>61</sup> For example, on 5 July and 8 Nov. 1890, in *SVN*, 1890, pp. 459, 744–45.

<sup>62</sup> Stories in *Public Service Gazette* for 8 and 16 Nov., and *Khichri Samachar* of 8 and 15 Nov. in *SVN*, 1890, pp. 744–45, 765–67.



assessments as a contribution.<sup>63</sup> This in turn, however, made them easy to identify. Attacks by disgruntled Muslims in Aligarh made it clear that they saw certain Hindu shopkeepers and *kayasths* (a scribal caste) as those most responsible for the communal tensions in that city in 1890.<sup>64</sup>

The support lent by prominent leaders was also, of course, central to the Sabha's success. During this early, urban phase officials often played key roles in organizing and garnering support for the Sabhas. At the large public meeting held in Partabgarh during 1888, for instance, those present included the English Deputy Commissioner<sup>65</sup> (who chaired the meeting) and District Engineer. Among the Indian officials participating were a subordinate judge, a *munsif* (lowest ranked civil judge), and the Vice President of the District and Municipal Boards. Also present were two local *taluqdars* (largest landholders).<sup>66</sup> Those so often labeled by the British as "natural leaders"<sup>67</sup> were, in fact, extremely active in the Cow Protection movement in this early period. In addition to several Oudh *taluqdars* (Raja Rampal Singh of Kalakankar was another active supporter), the Maharajas of Benares, Darbhanga, Hatwa and Bettiah were prominent on subscription lists and at the larger meetings.<sup>68</sup>

#### FROM CITY TO COUNTRYSIDE

When the movement moved to the countryside in and after 1890, there were several significant discontinuities with the pattern described above. These we will examine in some detail below. But there were also a number of significant continuities and connections between the urban and rural phases of the movement. While they are not the most important aspects of rural Cow Protection, they *were* influential in originally establishing the movement in the countryside. These had to do primarily with organization and communication networks. We have noted above that, as the Sabhas were established throughout U.P., a multitiered hierarchy of officers was instituted as well. When effective, this hierarchy provided important links between town and village, directing the flow of money from locality to the center, and the flow of information (primarily in printed form or carried by itinerate lecturers) from center to locality. In Azamgarh district, for instance, the collection of *chutki* generally followed the lines of British administrative units: the *sabhasads* for each

<sup>63</sup> IOR. L/P&J/6/367, file 298 for 1894, "Note on Agitation Against Cow Killing," p. 10.

<sup>64</sup> *Hindustan* for 17 and 19 Oct., *SVN*, 1890, p. 680.

<sup>65</sup> The "Note on Agitation," states that three Deputy Commissioners in Oudh were reported to have presided at Cow Protection meetings during 1888.

<sup>66</sup> *Bharat Jivan* for 28 May, *SVN*, 1888, p. 346.

<sup>67</sup> See detailed discussion of this concept of leadership and its ramifications for British policies of social control in my "Religious Rites and Riots," ch. 2.

<sup>68</sup> "Note on Agitation," pp. 4-5. In November of 1888, however, Benares cut off support of the cattle pound.

village in *pargana* Nizamabad passed on the subscriptions to *sabhapatis* Setu Ram and Antu Singh. They in turn gave the money to *faqir* Nagu Babu, "the leading spirit in fanning the agitation" in Azamgarh city, who was to buy cows and look after them.<sup>69</sup> Similarly, *sabhasads* in each village of Nathupur division of Sagri *pargana* handed over their collections to *sabhapati* Ram Saran Rai, who in turn gave them to Sabha president Ghansiam Narain Misr, a man significant for providing links between neighboring districts as he traveled between his landholdings in Ballia and Azamgarh.<sup>70</sup>

The direction of the flow was reversed with the preachers of Cow Protection. Such preachers seem to have been drawn from two very different groups. Some were local holy men, often already established in the countryside, whose usual wanderings were simply incorporated into the movement. Others were urban activists, perhaps previously in the employ of similar organizations and generally more in touch with the politicized movements of the town. Most prominent among these latter was Sriman Swami,<sup>71</sup> active throughout the movement. On behalf of the Allahabad Sabha (with Hardwar, a pivotal center), he traveled throughout India, preaching Cow Protection from Calcutta to Lahore, from Bombay through Bihar. During 1888 alone the Swami held 40 or 50 meetings across U.P. Other lecturers cut smaller swathes but similarly linked town and countryside: Gopalanand Tewari—a member of the Benares Arya Samaj—was connected with a near-riot in Ghazipur<sup>72</sup> as well as with the several meetings held at various locations in Gorakhpur.<sup>73</sup> Gopalanand's counterpart in Azamgarh was Khaki Baba (or Khaki Das). Both principal speaker and often chief organizer of these meetings, the holy man was confident enough in his role to address a letter—requesting financial support for the Sabha and for his pilgrimage—to the Muslim *tahsildar* (revenue officer) of Deogaon!<sup>74</sup>

Working with Khaki Baba was the *zamindar* Jagde Narain Singh, who personifies for us yet another pattern of the urban-rural connection.<sup>75</sup> The "soul of the movement" in Azamgarh, Jagdeo was also President of the Ballia Sabha, and traveled continuously between the two districts. Capitalizing on his Ballia estate location, he evidently developed an

<sup>69</sup> Dupernex's "Report" on Azamgarh, pp. 12 and 14.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 9, 11, 12, 15 and 16.

<sup>71</sup> A Madrassi previously known as Desika Chari, Sriman Swami, had a checkered background. The British, who obviously did not accept him as a legitimate leader, made much of the fact that he was an ex-convict. He briefly dropped from sight in 1891, prompting disgruntled questions from the vernacular press, but reemerged in 1892. "Note on Agitation," 8–10, and culled from *SVN*, 1888–1893.

<sup>72</sup> "Note on Agitation," p. 4.

<sup>73</sup> "Note on Gorakhpur," pp. 1 and 5.

<sup>74</sup> Dupernex's "Report" on Azamgarh, pp. 9 and 12.

<sup>75</sup> Information culled from *ibid.*, pp. 2, 5, 9, 10, and 12.

escape route along which captured cattle were spirited away from protesting butchers. Though he avoided direct involvement in the riots, he was—as we shall see—highly visible alike in Sabha activities and in the mobilization of men on the <sup>c</sup>Id. Moreover, he went often “to Allahabad to transact legal business in the High Court for those dupes who have at his instigation involved themselves by rioting and cattlelifting in criminal proceedings.”<sup>76</sup> Notices sent by Jagdeo (and leaders like him) were often the method most successfully used to mobilize men to attend meetings, capture cows, or prevent sacrifices. “The method . . . is simplicity itself. A leading fakir or pandit sends a letter to a friend adorned with a picture of a cow, informing him that a Sabha will be held on a certain date at a certain place. The recipient of the letter is enjoined to communicate its contents to five villages.” Alternatively, printed notices might be prepared, then posted and circulated throughout the affected area.<sup>77</sup>

These various kinds of urban-rural connections were called into play when the Cow Protection movement entered its second, distinctly rural phase. By 1891–1892 the center of support had shifted emphatically to the countryside, in particular to the rural eastern districts bordering Bihar: those of Ghazipur, Ballia, Azamgarh and Gorakhpur. Indeed, most of the U.P. areas in which riots occurred during 1893 had not organized Sabhas until that very year. This shift in Sabha activity when plotted on a map shows first a dramatic contraction from Sabhas blanketing urban U.P. to activities concentrated in the east, and then a further shift in 1893 to an almost exclusively rural area in the eastern district.<sup>78</sup>

The shift brought with it some important changes. The ideology, centered on the cow, remained. Only the sacred cow could have easily bridged the gap between Great and Little Traditions, between urban searches for community identity and rural values. The importance of Brahmins (priests) in the eastern districts doubtless facilitated this transition. Joined to the ideology in this rural context, however, was a very different way of mobilizing people, linked to a quite different system of social organization. Just how were these avenues of mobilization and systems of social organization brought to the service of an urban-initiated ideology?

Another way of asking the question would be to inquire how factional alliances—the predominant form of social organization previously used for mobilizing outbursts of rural unrest—were tapped in 1893. For the pattern of social unrest in the countryside before the 1890s followed

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11, and “Note on Gorakhpur,” p. 5. Access to printing presses suggest urban-based assistance in these organizational efforts.

<sup>78</sup> It is possible that this shift in forces may have meant a move from larger to lesser marketing enters.

closely the pattern we have seen of hierarchical alignments, with feuding following factional lines. Dominant caste and family leaders periodically rallied their client-followers during periods of rural crisis; the great bulk of rural riot statistics refer to this kind of friction.<sup>79</sup> Such factional alliances were importantly affected in 1893, however, and this marked incorporation of the existing tradition of friction and violence into a broader concern. It can be argued convincingly that for the first time, ideology was incorporated into the normal violence of the countryside. The temporary amalgam of ideology and traditional forms of action elevated rural concerns above the usual localizing and fragmented definitions of community, at the same time drawing on established schisms in rural society for its strength.

This does not mean, of course, that factionalism was entirely subsumed by ideology. At least one example exists to show that on occasion it overwhelmed ideology: “. . . a number of people came together at Guardih and tried to frighten the Muhammadans from sacrificing . . . Later on in the day a strong body of Gaurakshanists marched up from Jahananganj, and a collision occurred between the two parties.”<sup>80</sup> Moreover, we have already seen that even the interpretation given to the ideology had a much more parochial flavor in the countryside, with ascendant but generally low caste groups providing the target for discontent. In these cases, however, it could be argued that these groups (butchers, itinerant packers, leather workers) were viewed as being “outside” the brahminized high caste culture cherished by these peasant activists.

It is significant that the spate of cow-oriented agitation, such as way-laying herds being driven by butchers, was part of a general complex of social unrest which dramatically escalated in 1893, with figures for agrarian riots, *dacoities* (organized robberies involving five or more) and religious riots the highest ever recorded for any of those categories.<sup>81</sup> Thus, any explanation for rural espousal of Cow Protection must move beyond the sudden if partial infusion of ideology into agrarian friction. Moreover, even given that in the early 1890s there existed a climate conducive to a Hindu ideological movement focused on the cow, given an organizational structure with a newly expanded base to include a broad range of “Hindu” activists, and given the unprecedented ability by a movement to link town and countryside, we must still ask why this particular urban-based communal movement was embraced so

<sup>79</sup> See, for instance, Anand A. Yang, “The Agrarian Origins of Crime: A Study of Riots in Saran District, India, 1866–1920,” *Journal of Social History* vol. 13 (winter 1979): 289–306.

<sup>80</sup> Dupernex’s “Report” on Azamgarh, pp. 4–5.

<sup>81</sup> *Report of the Administration of the North-Western Provinces for the Year ending 31 March 1894*, vol. 21, p. 18.

enthusiastically by its rural adherents. More especially, why was it so widely effective only in this eastern region of U.P.?

No direct connection between the unrest and economic downturns can be made, for there had been a good harvest and low food prices. Even the more sophisticated explanation of the "J-curve (indicating a sharp reversal after a general up-turn of economic conditions) does not seem to apply.<sup>82</sup> Indeed, the standard of living seems to have risen substantially in the last decade of the century, though this "marked improvement" was maintained only through a variety of strategies, for these areas included some of the densest population in the province. Moreover, the area could not utilize artificial irrigation to foster commercial cropping as did the west. Yet a good climate guaranteed a subsistence agriculture, and the value of agricultural produce had risen reassuringly.<sup>83</sup> One successful strategy adopted was that of emigration; between the years 1891 and 1900, Rs. 13,000,000 were annually remitted by the emigrants to their families still in eastern U.P.<sup>84</sup>

Local forms of social organization were profoundly affected by this relative prosperity. Unlike other areas of U.P., these districts were distinctive for their sharply hierarchical patterns on the land. While few large landholders existed, everywhere there had evolved a separation between cultivator and proprietor, with proprietors holding land generally through *zamindari* or "imperfect pattidari"<sup>85</sup> tenures. Even tenants were divided between "high" and "low" cultivators, the former doing as little direct cultivation as possible while receiving special rent concessions.<sup>86</sup> Though caste identity was not the determining factor, high caste status did generally coincide with noncultivation; thus the important proprietary and tenant castes were the Rajputs, Muslims, Bhuinhars and Brahmins. Landlord status was profitable in this area, for landlords lived on a combination of proceeds from cultivation of *sir* (home) land, moneylending, and rental returns (known as *malguzari*). Between 1899 and 1929, for instance, *malguzari* assets doubled.<sup>87</sup> Yet the significant trend in the last quarter of the nineteenth century saw these proprietors trying to retain landlord status even as they were being

<sup>82</sup> James C. Davies, "Towards a Theory of Revolutions," in Ivo K. Feierabend, *et al.*, *Anger, Violence and Politics: Theories and Research* (Englewoods Cliff, N.J., 1972), pp. 67-84.

<sup>83</sup> H. R. Nevill, *District Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh*, vol. 29, *Ghazipur*, p. 118 (hereafter cited as *Ghazipur Gazetteer*).

<sup>84</sup> *Azamgarh Gazetteer*, p. 118.

<sup>85</sup> Eric Stokes (in papers 3 and especially 10) uses this distinction to intriguingly explain why in this area the "institutional descent from landlord status failed to generate an answering entrepreneurial drive in the newer role of farmer." See his *The Peasant and the Raj* (Cambridge, 1978), quote from pp. 241-42.

<sup>86</sup> *Azamgarh Gazetteer*, p. 115.

<sup>87</sup> Stokes, *The Peasant and the Raj*, p. 240.

“driven closer” and closer to the soil.<sup>88</sup> Indeed, it is clear that, as in Ballia,

the value of the tenant right is very much greater than that of the proprietary right in most instances. The proprietary right is a multiple of rent less the revenue, generally 16 times. The tenant right is a much greater multiple of the rent, 20 or 30 or 40 times . . . [It is insignificant for his profit] whether a given individual is a zamindar or a fixed-rent tenant or an occupancy tenant. The material point is whether he holds his land at favorable or unfavorable rates, and whether he has got enough of it.<sup>89</sup>

Efforts to get more “of it” were pronounced. Most of the Bhuinhar and Rajput land losses were picked up by Ahirs and members of the “religious orders.”<sup>90</sup> Still, we must note that studies do seem to indicate that increased profits were generally garnered by the tenants enjoying favorable terms, and that the economic pressures were generally foisted by landlords onto the tenants-at-will.<sup>91</sup> When we speak of “peasants” growing wealthier, we are referring only to those able to profit by their fixed rates and favorable tenures.

We have, then, two parts of a process occurring, both of which would provide greater receptivity to a movement espousing agrarian cultural values and centering on the cow. On the one hand there was a peasant community enjoying increased prosperity and doubtless willing and able to support a movement focusing on the cow. On the other hand was an embattled landholding elite anxious to maintain its previously dominant status. Both groups could of course be served by support of Cow Protection, but it must have been particularly convenient for *zamindari* landlords to find a cause to which their peasants would readily rally, the very peasant response forming a reassurance of landlord status and control.

#### HINDU DEFINITIONS OF COMMUNITY: THE RURAL PHASE

Given this context for social unrest and receptivity, all that was needed was a catalyst. This was provided in 1893 in Azamgarh by certain actions taken by the young acting magistrate in preparation for the Muslim celebration of Bakr <sup>c</sup>Id. Azamgarh was one of the foremost centers of the disturbances; there were in all some “35 cases of unlawful assembly and rioting there, nearly all [of which] were the work of large bodies of excited

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 238–39, 79.

<sup>89</sup> D. T. Roberts, settlement officer in Ballia, divisional report in Report to the Board of Revenue on the Revenue Administration of the North-Western Provinces, 1882–1883, p. 26, cited in Stokes, *The Peasant and the Raj*, p. 219.

<sup>90</sup> Ahirs gained 42 percent more land. *Azamgarh Gazetteer*, 106–07. As Stokes suggests, patterns of land change were largely established by 1857. However, the early gains by Banias and Khattris (up to 70 percent) quickly tapered off. Service castes, such as Kayasths, had lost much of their land (down 20 percent).

<sup>91</sup> Elizabeth Whitcomb, *Agrarian Conditions in Northern India*, vol. 1, *The U.P. under British Rule 1860–1900* (Berkeley, 1972), p. 150.

Hindus who had been collected from the Ballia and Ghazipur districts to join in an attempt to prevent the Muslims [of Azamgarh] from sacrificing.”<sup>92</sup> Acting magistrate Dupernex began by requesting that all *thanadars* (subordinate police officers) send in lists of villages likely to riot on <sup>c</sup>Id. By return he directed that Muslims of those troubled villages should be requested to register by June 15th their intention to sacrifice. Dupernex evidently intended by this to pinpoint the possible areas of trouble, as the orders were designated only for disturbed villages and were presumed to apply only to Muslims who had been sacrificing by established custom for years past. But the order went out to *all* villages, and did not contain within its wording any warning about customary usage. Hindus protested that many of the numerous Muslims who registered had no established right to sacrifice. The protest was discounted by the authorities, who did not view the registration process as implying any authoritative sanction. They seem to have never really understood that this was indeed the way it was interpreted.<sup>93</sup> Certainly the move was an unfortunate one, because there was no way they could verify the claims of such Muslims in the ten days which remained before the <sup>c</sup>Id.

Perhaps as a reaction to this and other misunderstandings, as well as to heightened awareness of the treatment of the cow in the locality, there were concerted efforts to collect men at several locations to prevent sacrifices. The actual recruitment of men was performed by leaders already familiar to us:

The police guard . . . at Adri, the village midway between Mau and the border where the Ballia men assembled in the early morning, state that a number of zamindars were there on elephants, etc., marshalling the people. Three of the guards agreed that two of the leaders were addressed as Jagdeo and Ghansiam Narain. Early that morning . . . an Amin on the Ballia border had reported . . . that Jagdeo was on his way to Mau with a large body of men.

Moreover, “One of the first three prisoners captured in Ghazipur stated to me [Dupernex] that he had come to our district on the 25th to attend a sabha of Jagdeo by order of his zamindar.”<sup>94</sup>

Hundreds of men had gathered first at Jianpur, some three miles away. When driven off they evidently moved to the village of the treasurer’s priest Karria Misr, where they had previously gathered in the meeting discussed earlier, and then went on to Azmatgarh, determined to prevent the Muslim *zamindar* Muhammad Asgari from celebrating *kurbani* (sacrificing kine). The presence throughout the day and evening of some

<sup>92</sup> “Government Resolution on the Cow Disturbances in the Azamgarh District,” dated Naini Tal, 29 Aug. 1893, para. 5. Printed in full as an appendix to “An Appeal to the English Public,” p. 16, para. 11.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12–18.

<sup>94</sup> Dupernex’s “Report” on Azamgarh, pp. 11 and 1.

2,000 men was sufficient to prevent the *zamindar* from observing <sup>95</sup>Id in the customary manner.

At another riot location—the large mixed Hindu and Muslim community of Kopagunj—the Bakr <sup>96</sup>Id confrontation had been preceded in January by an attack by Hindu villagers on a herd of cattle being driven by butchers to Benares. The rescue had been prompted by a meeting of the Sabha held earlier in the day, and several *zamindars* had participated. Though the cattle were discovered at a village midway between Kopagunj and the Ballia border, the villagers forcibly reclaimed the cattle from the police<sup>96</sup> and took them to Ballia. The police force which had been posted at Kopagunj as a result was still present when Bakr <sup>97</sup>Id took place. On the morning of June 25th, several thousand men had “rushed up” to the police at “the chauki [police station]”<sup>97</sup> and threatened to loot it. After abusing the police they made a sudden rush into the bazaar and attacked the Muslims, who turned out to resist them. One of the strangers was killed and about a dozen Muslims were injured. After plundering the houses of one mohulla the crowd went off.<sup>98</sup>

Several things stand out in such a narrative. The first of these is the source of leadership in the countryside. We might have expected, from the list of supporters the movement boasted in its urban phase, that the *taluqdars* and *zamindars* would continue to be prominent. This was not the case.<sup>99</sup> No doubt their visibility marked them as early targets in the government campaign to discourage influential supporters of the movement. Officials were, of course, subject to the same pressure. The cases of three *tahsildars* (subdivisional revenue officials), though late, were no doubt representative. The three were transferred or demoted for, respectively, soliciting subscriptions from *taluqdars*, holding a Cow Protection meeting at his own house, and “inducing” subscriptions, and using his official position to aid the agitation.<sup>100</sup>

Leadership instead passed largely to lower levels: to *zamindari* landowners, to rural-based *raises* (respectable, influential persons), to “lower subordinate officials.”<sup>101</sup> In Kopagunj, for instance, the movement’s

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>97</sup> See Yang, “Sacred Symbol and Sacred Space,” for a discussion of attacks on space identified by rioters and administrators alike as specifically British.

<sup>98</sup> Dupernex’s “Report” on Azamgarh, p. 7.

<sup>99</sup> The one exception is the Rani of Majhauili. Her continued participation seems to have been possible because as a woman she was shielded from direct British pressure by her intermediaries.

<sup>100</sup> “Minute” in response to Wedderburn question in Parliament. IOR. L/P&J/6/370, file 557 for 1894.

<sup>101</sup> The few visible exceptions to this—i.e., the Rani of Majhauili and the “elephant-riding” leaders noted below—may have been special cases. As for the latter, they seem to have been leaders of large, joint *zamindaris* and thus operated much as their fellow *zamindars* would have done.



most active proponents were “Brahman village schoolmasters”; other active occupational groups included subpostmasters and *kanungoes*.<sup>102</sup> The magistrate lamented that he had “found it impossible to obtain information of any sort concerning the [Cow Protection] league from any minor official of this type. They either wilfully ignore what is going on around them or else they deliberately set themselves to misrepresent the true state of affairs.”<sup>103</sup>

Returning to Jagdeo Narain Bahadur for the moment enables us to see how this devolution of leadership worked in the rural context. Despite the fact that his once-impressive estate had been reduced in size, Jagdeo still commanded substantial influence in both Ballia and Azamgarh districts, as the testimony cited above (from the first prisoner captured) attests. This traditional position of influence was reinforced for a time when he held an administrative position as judicial *muharrir* (clerk). Still, as the prisoner testified, most of Jagdeo’s influence was indirect and was doubtless based on a combination of *zamindari* power, high social status, and effectiveness in leading his caste fellows.<sup>104</sup> Thus a letter from him was sufficient cause for Ghazipur *zamindars* to mobilize their men and for others of his caste living near Chiriakot to mass there, preventing sacrifices. Similarly, his caste connections to Jagdeo in Ballia were presumed to explain the reticence of the Muhammadabad *tahsildar*.<sup>105</sup> The same pattern can be traced among the “Babus of Surajpur,” Bhuinhars with estates in Azamgarh, Chapra and Chazipur. Active sympathizers of the Gaurakshini movement, the Babus evidently called on their caste fellows to assist in the Kopagnuj cattlelifting, and also built a cattle pound of their own which effectively circumscribed the operation of a government pound.<sup>106</sup> Among the Bisens, too, the Babus of Lar exercised a similar leadership. They were largely responsible for introducing the Sabha into Gorakhpur district and figured prominently among the 2,000 *zamindars* who attended the large meeting held at Majhauri, coming “with elephants, horses and palkis in great state.” Indeed, Magistrate Hoey of Gorakhpur enumerated in great detail the extent of the Bisen connection and influence through the Majhauri family and the villages which had been granted by their estate. In villages largely populated by Bisen *thakurs* (a term of respect indicating high social status), the caste connection provided the necessary climate in which the movement could take hold. It then spread among “the rest of the Thakurs and Brahmans of vast number of villages” bound to the estate by grants of

<sup>102</sup> Dupernex’s “Report” on Azamgarh, p. 11.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 11–12.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5–6.

villages “held from former Majhauri Rajas,” until “all Hindus are now in it, from the chauthri Ahirs of Mail to the Tewaris of Ukina, and Dubes of Barkagaon.”<sup>107</sup>

On the other hand, it would be misleading to suggest that these connections depending on caste, kinship or patron-client relationships were wholly responsible for the shape of the movement. We began, after all, by noting that the movement was embraced by a landlord group experiencing an increasingly precarious hold over its tenantry.<sup>108</sup> Indeed, at least one occasion—a riot at Salempore—proved how tenuous such control could be. News of nearby butchers moving cattle was brought to a meeting presided over by the holy man the Pohari of Paikauli, who suggested that the cows be purchased. While subscriptions were being collected, however, some of the participants urged they be taken by force instead, and the crowd rushed off, heedless of the Pohari’s attempts to remain within the law.<sup>109</sup>

In addition to shedding light on the nature of rural leadership, the riot descriptions illuminate as well the extent to which ideology affected the movement in the countryside. We noted earlier that the urban and rural targets of the movement were often quite different. While in the cities targets were generally representatives of different ideologies, in the countryside more parochial considerations earmarked certain caste or religious groups; the significant fact is that these local concerns varied with the locality. In Azamgarh, for instance, Gaurakshini Sabha members

practically preach[ed] a crusade against Muhammadans, and particularly against butchers. If reference is made to the list of cases . . . showing the ill-feeling between Hindus and Muhammadans, it will be seen that they refer mostly to quarrels about buffaloes and not cows. In the disturbance that occurred on the Bakr Id the Hindus made no distinctions between buffaloes and cows, and where there were no officials present to keep them in check they would hardly tolerate the slaughter of goats and sheep. The Azamgarh butchers have several times informed me during the past month that they have been stopped on the roads and threatened by villagers while leading along goats.

The demands to Muslims to cease sacrificing was

backed up by threats of boycotting and loot. Where the Muhammadans are weavers the threat of boycotting appears to be usually employed, the idea being that no cloth should be bought by Hindus from weavers and no grain sold to weavers by Hindu baniyas. The tall talk about loot is indulged in when a land-

<sup>107</sup> “Note on Gorakhpur,” pp. 5–6; see especially the table of villages held by Majhauri estate and other Bisens.

<sup>108</sup> This may well substantiate Gyan Pandey’s theory that such movements operated on at least two separate levels of value systems and supporters: those for an elite culture and those for a popular level. Oral presentation on peasant movements, given in Berkeley, January 1979.

<sup>109</sup> “Note on Gorakhpur,” p. 6.

owning Muhammadan community is dealt with. In two cases the Muhammadan villagers have informed me that the threat of plunder was qualified by a message that they would be left alone if they contributed a certain sum in money and a certain quantity of rasad for the purposes of the League.<sup>110</sup>

In much of Azamgarh district, then, a long-standing antagonism to Muslims was the predominant focus of Cow Protection, though the strength of this antagonism obviously varied with the locality. The movement could have taken a different form. In Gorakhpur, by contrast, Sabha rules warned against wounding the feelings of high status Muslims (perhaps a reflection of the affinity of feeling among upwardly mobile groups, be they Muslim or Hindu) and directed instead that actions even against butchers masquerading as Brahmins or holy men be limited to petitioning the authorities. There, on the other hand, lower caste Nats, Banjaras and Chamars were damned, for they bought cows and sold them to butchers, and were therefore to be held directly responsible for cow slaughter. Moreover, rule number 20 noted that

As a Chamar is a cow-killer it is most reprehensible that he should be employed to attend cows, or that cows, bullocks and so on should be left to his mercy: and therefore no Chamar shall, as far as is possible, be employed as a cowherd, and whether a ploughman be a Chamar or not, the employer shall first make sure, and if he be sure the ploughman will not be cruel to the bullocks, he shall employ him.<sup>111</sup>

As the rule suggests, these local antipathies existed, but were placed in a general ideological context. The coherent pattern throughout these rural eastern tracts, then, was to apply the ideology against existing parochial fissures, using the cow to separate from upper caste culture these low caste "outsiders." Chamars, often cultivators for upper caste tenants or landholders as well as tanners of hides, were obviously outside the twice-born Hindu matrix, as were Muslim butchers and weavers. The wandering "tribe" of Nats, like the peripatetic Banjaras (cattle graziers and carriers) too could not fully participate in the local Hindu culture. Moreover, it may be that anti-Chamar activity was in part a reaction to Arya Samaj appeals to convert and incorporate the lower castes.<sup>112</sup>

Ideology was thus reinterpreted in the countryside to accommodate parochial concerns. No doubt in part this reflects one type of accommodation in the ongoing effort to readjust the "fit" between cultural institutions and a changing social structure.<sup>113</sup> By emphasizing a common

<sup>110</sup> Dupernex's "Report" on Azamgarh, p. 9. For Muslim reactions, see my "Religious Rites and Riots," ch. 5.

<sup>111</sup> "Note on Gorakhpur," rules 6 and 20, pp. 2, 4.

<sup>112</sup> See Mark Juergensmeyer's forthcoming work on the Ad Dharm movement among north Indian Untouchables.

<sup>113</sup> This is developed fully in a discussion of Javanese practices in Geertz, *Interpretations of Culture*.

symbol and a target shared by both landlord and wealthier peasant, rural Cow Protection briefly united two groups whose interests at this time increasingly diverged. As the rural movements of the 1920s later demonstrated, the legacy of the 1893 mobilization—informed by ideology which both accommodated and partially transcended local factionalism—proved as influential as the temporary identification of interests of landlords and wealthy peasants. Indeed, several scholars have noted the role of the same groups, active in the 1890s, emerging again in the 1920s and 1930s, including a “survey . . . of Congress leaders and organizers in Agra, Allahabad, Azamgarh and Rae Bareilly districts [which] revealed heavy representation of small zamindars and patidars and, especially in Agra, relatively affluent merchants and moneylenders, apart from the independent professionals.”<sup>114</sup>

Changes in leadership, and the role of ideology, were accompanied by a third essential difference in rural communalism. The very nature of the collective violence in the countryside tended to be quite different. In part this reflected the difference in spatial organization of populations—concentration in urban *mohullas* contrasted with dispersion in villages—but it also reflected a difference in the relations between people in the rural context, where victims generally recognized assailants, and where psychological pressure often sufficed to accomplish the desired ends. The difference is more a matter of degree than of kind, of course. Still it remains a significant indicator of the differences in social organization in the two phases of the Cow Protection movement. Central to this difference was the rural practice of mobilizing supporters from one area to march on another. Thus the large crowds from Ballia overwhelmed Muslim <sup>C</sup>Id sacrificers in Mau and Azamgarh, while previous urban skirmishes—in 1890 in Aligarh, for instance—involved only (relatively small) local groups who attacked a nearby *mohulla* or other local target. Also relevant was the likelihood that attackers and victims would have been acquainted in a peasant society organized around common marketing structures.<sup>115</sup> On the other hand, the ratio of physical to psychological violence tended to be in inverse proportion to the size of the crowd involved. In much of Azamgarh district, for instance, attacks on persons or property proved unnecessary; the aims of the protesting crowd were accomplished simply by assembling large numbers near the places of proposed sacrifice.

<sup>114</sup> Gyanendra Pandey, “A Rural Base for Congress: The United Provinces 1920–40,” in D. A. Low, ed., *Congress and the Raj* (Columbia, Missouri, 1977), p. 214. Pandey cites as well conclusions of C. A. Bayly and Lance Brennan.

<sup>115</sup> See Yang, “Sacred Symbol and Sacred Space,” for a well-documented discussion of the connection.

## CONCLUSION

Cow Protection, as the most widespread and influential "Hindu" organization of the late nineteenth century, must loom large in the history of U.P. communal history. Though it is not the watershed it is often taken to be,<sup>116</sup> it retains special significance both as an important example of the trend toward the Hindu definition of community and as an unusually successful integration of city and countryside in support of a single ideological program. This paper has discussed the ideological content and the organizational structure used in Cow Protection. Each of these focal points was examined, first, in a comparative look at the urban and rural settings into which Cow Protection had to fit; second, in the urban context of the general development of community identity. A general description of the movement itself was then followed by a discussion of those characteristics which made possible the transfer of Cow Protection ideology and organization to the countryside and, finally, by an analysis of the efforts to fit Cow Protection to existing fissures in rural society.

The special significance of the Cow Protection movement has been attributed here to several characteristics: the two-phase nature of the movement, which provided an institutional base even as it connected both city and countryside; the ideological component of the appeal, which not only united different interest groups in the cities but also temporarily bridged the gap between landlords and wealthy tenants in the countryside; the integrative and hierarchical organization of leadership, which enabled the movement to continue by devolving leadership roles to the next level in society when the most prominent leaders were forced by the government to withdraw; and development of the mechanics of mobilization, which permitted both physical and psychological pressure to be brought against the targets of the movement.

Ideology, organization, and mobilization all helped bridge the gap between town and village. The building of an organizational base was made possible by the existence of local branches of preexisting associations such as the Arya Samaj and the Sanatan Dharm Sabha, which were incorporated into the Cow Protection movement. Established cultural and social events were similarly incorporated; and both urban and rural networks of social control, though they differed in nature from each other, were incorporated into the institutional hierarchy. New channels of communication were introduced as well, including itinerant preachers and an expanded communications network. Through these channels a coherent ideology was transmitted from the city to the countryside and

<sup>116</sup> Too often the events of 1893 are divorced from trends obvious at least from the 1870s and 1880s, if not earlier. Though the events stand out from preceding occasions for their dramatic intensity, they are certainly no more than the culmination of earlier processes (except insofar as they united ideologically the town and the countryside).

the presence of such an ideology significantly transformed the nature of rural protest in 1893. Though the shape of that ideology was affected by preexisting rural fissures, it did help unite, if briefly, increasingly competitive groups of landlords and wealthy tenants. Mobilization in the city had depended on the influence of leaders of occupational, neighborhood and interest groups. In the countryside, by contrast, hierarchical relationships—given shape by caste, kinship and patron-client ties—were used to mobilize for the cow. When, in the second phase of the Cow Protection movement, leadership devolved to the lower levels of rural leadership, these hierarchical connections could be exploited directly by *zamindari* landholders, rural-based *raises*, and lower officials like schoolmasters, *kanungoes*, and subpostmasters.

A superficial assessment would suggest that the dramatic impact of Cow Protection was short-lived, for the British soon stamped out much of the movement's organizational framework and communications network and brought heavy pressure to bear on the indigenous networks of social control.<sup>117</sup> Yet the legacy of ideology remained. Muslims, for instance, took a hard look at the experiences of the 1890s and reacted accordingly. Hindus in both city and countryside had as well acquired a new vision of community, one on which future action, increasingly communal in nature, could be based. And in 1894,<sup>118</sup> a branch of that essentially urban organization, the Arya Samaj, was at long last established in the rural eastern district of Azmatgarh.

<sup>117</sup> For a discussion of the British pressure, see my "'Natural Leaders', Administrators and Social Control: Communal Riots in the United Provinces, 1870–1925," *South Asia* vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 27–41.

<sup>118</sup> *Azmatgarh Gazetteer*, p. 76.