Local History in the Making: *Tārīkh Nigārī* at Qasbah Amroha (1878-1934)

Soheb Niazi

The soil of Amroha, abode of the grandeur of our ancestors	*khāk-ĕ-Amroha, diyār-ĕ-azmat-ĕ-ajdād hai*
in whose each particle the world of grief resides	*jis ke har zarre meṅ ek dunyā-ĕ-gham ābād hai*
oh! what honoured and respectable people here reside	*wāh kyā ma'mūra 'azza-o-sharaf ābād hai*
today we are immersed in the memory of this beautiful land	*āj ham heṅ aur is arz-ĕ-ḥasīn kī yād hai*
those localities those by-lanes and those ancestral homes	*wo maḥalle wo galī kūće wo ābāī makāṅ*
those familiar markets and that loving landscape	*jāne pahćāne se wo bazār wo piyārā samāṅ*
in every locality reside diverse residents	*har maḥalle meṅ hamārī mukhtalif ābādiyaṅ*
a tribe of diverse individuals but all one family	*mukhtalif afrād ke kunbe magar ek khandā*

Yād-e-Māzī (Remembrance of the Past[i])

Introduction

It is said that a poet flourished in every by-lane of the northern Indian *qasbah* town of Amroha. In addition to boasting a flourishing poetic tradition, inhabitants of the *qasbah* are known to be proud collectors of *shijras* (family trees) of their ancestors. This is evidenced by the abundance of local family and community histories published by authors based in Amroha. One of the most prominent poets of the *qasbah*, Rais Amrohvi (1914–1988) hailed from a family of poets, painters, and film

directors.[ii] In a poem titled *Yād-e-Māzī* (Remembrance of the Past), Ra'īs conjures an image of the *qasbah* through its spatial markers as well as the myriad identities that shaped it.

Amroha is depicted in the poem as an abode marked by the grandeur of its ancestors. The nostalgia of the *bāzār* (marketplace) of Amroha in Ra'īs' poem reveals the economic transformations that *qasbahs* as market towns across the United Provinces underwent during colonial rule in the nineteenth century. The *qasbah* towns, as hubs of economic activity, saw the advancement of the interests of a class of traders and merchants, who were not always confined to a particular *qasbah* but often enjoyed the vast networks that such towns had on offer and those that developed during this time across the United Provinces. Parallel to this advancement of traders and merchants, *qasbah* towns boasted a traditional landed elite, such as the *saiyids* of Amroha, who by the middle of the nineteenth century owned about three-fourths of the landholdings that came under the jurisdiction of the *taḥṣīl* of Amroha (Alexander, 1881).

It is in the midst of these economic transformations that a flourishing tradition of *tārīkh nigārī* prospered at *qasbah* Amroha during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. This article will trace the different historical writings composed in Urdu by various authors from Amroha. The period under study has been classified into two broad chronological phases, the first period is between 1878-1917 and the second period is between 1918-1934. Further, the historical writings are classified according to the broad genre that they represent, which are the following – family history, social history, and *qaumī* (community) *tārīkh*. The early historical writings in the late nineteenth century were primarily written as family histories. This genre of historical writing evolved into more comprehensive social histories. Finally, as a response to the contestation of genealogy and lineage a genre of history developed that combined the genres of family and social history, that is *qaumī tārīkh* or community history.

The article is divided into three sections. The first section provides an overview of the development of *tārīkh nigārī* in Urdu. The second section covers the period of 1878-1917; a period in which several family histories were written, but this was also the period which saw the first social history of Amroha, the *Tārīkh-e Asgharī*, as well as the *Mirāt-ul Ansāb*, a text on genealogy and lineage. The third section covers the period of 1917-1934; a period of contestation and polemics, during which Mahmud Ahmad Abbasi's three volume *Tārīkh-e Amroha* was published and subsequently several critiques of the work that focused on the genealogy of specific families and *qaumī tārīkhs* were written in response to Abbasi's work.

History writing was a well-established tradition in the Arabic and Indo-Persian literary world before it developed in its vernacular Urdu form. [iii] Works on the history of Hindustan were first composed in the thirteenth century and continued to be reproduced, adapted, translated and annotated in the nineteenth century.[iv] Examples of some historical works that were frequently cited as historical sources by historians and scholars in the nineteenth century especially in the works of Amroha's historians, included - Abul Fazal's *Ā'in-e Akbarī* [v], Abdul Qadir Badayuni's *Muntakhab-ut Tawārīkh*[vi], Firishta's *Tārīkh-e Firishtā*[vii], and Ziya al din Barani's *Tārīkh-e Firuz Shahī* [viii]. These texts provided a historical background to the nineteenth century *tārīkh* works, shaping their ideas, concepts as well as impacted their style, genre, conventions and content. Beyond stylistic conventions, these historical works also became the basis of social contestations over lineage and descent and were deployed as 'documentary evidence' for land records in legal disputes.

The Tradition of *Tārīkh Nigārī* in Urdu

History writing or *tārīkh nigārī* in Urdu first began in the form of translations and adaptations of Persian historical works and later formed an important genre of prose writing in the vernacular language (Khan, 2005; Habibullah, 1960). While prose writing in Urdu was believed to have developed and evolved under 'modern' influences, a survey of historical writing in Urdu foregrounds the influence of both the Arabic and Indo-Persian schools of historical writing (Habibullah, 1960). *Tarikh nigari* in Urdu retained and later experimented and readapted the historical genres of the Indo-Persian and Arabic traditions such as the *tazkira, manāqib, sīrat, qasidā, hikāyāt, ilm-al nasab* among others.[ix]

Asār-us Sanādīd, a history of the architecture and antiquities of Delhi, authored by Sayyid Ahmad Khan is considered the first major historical work in Urdu.[x] Another form of historical writing that emerged in Urdu was the genre of *sīrah* or *sīrat* writings; historical biographies of the Prophet of Islam. Several authors in the nineteenth century took up the task of writing their own versions of the *sīrat*, such as Saiyid Ahmad Khan[xi], as well as Shibli Nomani, the founder of the Darul Musannefin at Azamgarh. The Darul Musannefin emerged as an important school for the production and publication of historical works in Urdu (Aquil, 2008).

A companion and contemporary of Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Altaf Hussain Hali composed the *Mussadas* (1879) and the *Shikwā-e-Hind*, epic poems that captured the imagination of the historian and in its poetic form encouraged oral renditions of the history of Hindustan (Tignol, 2016). A comprehensive history of Hindustan was authored by Zakaullah of the Delhi College, who wrote the *Tārīkh-e Hindustan,* a formidable

composition that comprised of ten volumes.[xii] The nineteenth century also witnessed the foundation of colonial institutions such as, the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal as well as the Fort William College in Calcutta. Both these institutions came out with translations of important historical works from the preceding centuries and influenced contemporary historical works.

The incorporation of various genres to narrate the past has been debated by scholars working on history writing in vernacular languages (Chatterjee, 2008; Desai, 2009). Rao-Shulman-Subramanyam have argued in the context of South Indian vernaculars, historical narratives are often embedded within non-historical literary genres and are marked by discursive signs that cause them to be recognized as historical narratives by a community of readers and listeners. This opens up the possibilities of exploring different genres of historical narratives that go beyond the 'modern' forms of academic history (Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam. 2001).

The *tazkira* or the biographical compendium is one such literary genre that forms a component of many historical works in the Indo-Muslim tradition. The *tazkiras* of poets or Sufi saints are innumerable, and the biographical aspect of the *tazkira* closely resembles genealogical writings, such as those produced at Amroha. Hermansen and Lawrence consider the genre of *tazkira* as "memorative, relying on memory and remembrance to communicate with the living legacy of prior Indo Muslim exemplars" (Lawrence, 2000, 150). Each entry of the *tazkira* has details regarding the rank, affiliation, profession and the locality of the individual's primary activities. A thematic characteristic of the tazkira is its emphasis on regional and urban locations, as the personalities that feature the compendium are essentially urban intellectuals. A *tazkira* can dwell into moods of nostalgia to boast about a 'golden era' of Islamic past or take the form of an urban ethnographic account of the authors location as a space characterized by hyperbolic and flowery praise of a place considered a centre of power, commerce and culture at a particular moment of historical time (Sharma, 2011).

At Amroha, a form of *tārīkh nigārī* in Urdu flourished in the nineteenth century that was based on the principles of *ilm-al nasab*; a distinctly local tradition that deployed genealogy as the central mode of historical narration (Szombathy, 2002, Ho,2006; Morimoto, 2012). A close reading of these Urdu *tārīkhs* requires an examination of the social and material context in which these texts are produced. *Tārīkh nigārī* at Amroha began primarily as a Saiyid preoccupation (Niazi, 2020). The interest in lineage and descent was not merely a literary exercise but reflected the changes in the patterns of patronage and ownership of land

for Muslim elites (Kozlowski, 1985). Further, the introduction of the Municipal Board in 1870 at Amroha triggered a contestation of social relations of power. It is such changes during colonial rule in late nineteenth century that led Saiyid *tārīkh nigārs* at Amroha to produce texts that claimed a *sharīf* (noble) lineage based on a model of descent from the family of the Prophet. The significance of a noble lineage was not only important to seek patronage in the form of endowments from the colonial government, but also to establish a hierarchy and hegemony over contestations arising at the local municipal level. By the early twentieth century, these negotiations were accompanied by a consolidation of lower caste groups asserting their communitarian identities and forming their own associations.

The *tārīkhs* at Amroha can be broadly divided into three categories – first, family histories that were based on an earlier historical tradition of *tazkiras*, second, historical works that were primarily on genealogy or *nasb*, and third, social histories that were modelled on colonial gazetteers including information on demography, geography and most importantly the inhabitants of the *qasbah*. A sub-genre of social histories was *qaumī tārīkhs* or community histories that were based on the history of a specific communities, such as the *Suhail-e Sahmī*, a history of the *qassāb* community of Amroha. The next section will examine historical works that were authored by writers from Amroha during the period, 1878-1917.

Tārīkh Nigārī at Amroha (1878-1917): From Family History to Social History

Several historical writings were produced in Amroha during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Among these, the *Ā'ina-e Abbāsī* is considered to be the first published *tārīkh* of Amroha. It is representative of the tradition of family histories, primarily providing an account of the *nasab* of the Abbāsī *saiyids* and other prominent families of Amroha who claimed Arabic lineage. Through the text, author Muhib-e-Ali Khan Abbasi (1827–1905) traces his family lineage to the Abbasid rulers whose lineage originates from Hazrat Abbās of the Banu Hashim clan of the Quraish tribe of Mecca. Subsequently, two years later, in 1880 another *tārīkh* of Amroha was published in Persian, the *Nukhbat ul-Tawārīkh,* authored by Maulana Saiyid Al Hasan Naqshbi. Like the Aina-e Abbasi, it was representative of the genre of family histories, being primarily an account of the Naqshbi *saiyids* of Amroha (Siddiqui, 2017, 33-48). In contrast to the genre of family histories, the *Tārīkh-e-Asgharī*, a comprehensive history of Amroha that was represented by the genre of social history was published in 1889. Authored by Saiyid Asghar Husain Naqvi, it included an ethnographic description of the *qasbah*'s various

muḥallās (localities) and discussed the lineage of the important inhabitants in each locality, thereby broadening the scope of *ilm al-nasab* writing. Two other *tārīkhs* were authored in this period, the first, *Tawārīkh-e Wāstīyā* (1904), a family history of Wāstī clan in Amroha, and the *Mirāt ul Ansāb* (1917), authored by Ziyauddin Ahmad Alvi, a history of the genealogy and lineages of prominent personalities, families and clans associated with Islamic history.

The *Ā'īna-e-Abbāsī* was published on 9 April 1878 in *Nayyar-e-Āzam,* a local weekly newspaper published from Moradabad (printed at *Matlā-e-Ulūm* Press).[xiii] It was a short text printed in the form of a 44-page tract. Following the conventions of the genre of *tazkira*, Muhib-e-Ali begins with a brief *hamd* (poem praising Allah) and *nāt* (poem praising Muhammad)*,* and subsequently, acknowledges and expresses gratitude to the Nawab of Rampur for bestowing the *laqab* of "Khan" on him.[xiv] A *hakīm* by profession, Muhib-e-Alī was well versed in Persian and Arabic and could boast the knowledge of *tibb* (Unani medicine).[xv]

In its first part, *Ā'īna-e-Abbāsī* narrates a brief Islamic history of the Arab world. It begins by narrating the lives of various Islamic Prophets and other important members of the Banu Hashim or *ahl-e-bait.* The past is narrated to underscore the significant role and social position of the *ahl-e-bait* through various eras of Islamic rule, especially during the Abbasid Caliphate.[xvi] The virtuousness of the *ahl-ĕ-bait* is often narrated through quoted verses, tales in the form of *hikāyats* with moral underpinnings, *shijras* (genealogical trees), scriptures (verses from the Quran or various Hadith traditions), or occasionally, by citing classical sources of Islamic history (*Ā'īna-e-Abbāsi*, 31).[xvii]

In the *Ā'īna-e-Abbāsī*, the reader boards on a journey, via genealogical trees and lineages, across important locations from the Islamicate world – from Mecca and Medina to Abbāsid-ruled cities such as Baghdad, Damascus, Khorasan, and Cairo, then closer home to Sindh and finally to Hindustan and Amroha. In comparison, *Tārīkh-e-Asgharī* focuses on *muḥallās* (localities); each *muḥallā* is treated with separate chapters in the text and the genealogies of important men of the locality are then elaborated. All the localities together form the *qasbah*. Even though the *qasbah* has its antecedents in the larger Islamic world, as in the *Ā'īna-e-Abbāsī*, the contemporaneity of *qasbah* Amroha is emphasized in the *Tārīkh-e-Asgharī*, and the author's ethnographic reflections on everyday life in the *qasbah* form an important component of the text.

The *Tārīkh-ĕ-Asgharī* is structurally divided into two broad thematic parts. The first is the historical section where Naqvi cites several sources to establish historical facts about Amroha and the second consists of Naqvi's ethnographic reflections on various aspects of life in the *qasbah*.

The historical part of the work provides the geographical and demographical details of the *qasbah*. It narrates the history of Amroha as found in the common sources of Indo-Persian historiography on the Delhi Sultanate and Mughal rule. In addition, the text also includes historical details from colonial government gazetteers and records. The second part of the text includes a discussion of the important customs, traditions, and festivals celebrated by the inhabitants of Amroha. Naqvi describes the great festivals of Īd, Diwālī, Shab-ĕ-barāt, Dusehhra, Holī, Muharram and others, as they were celebrated by the inhabitants of Amroha. He also provides an engaging description of the major religious sites of the *qasbah*, notably nine major *dargāhs* and several important mosques.

Differences in the structure and content of the two *tārīkh* texts are evident from the nature of the historical sources they cite. The original text of *Ā'īna-e-Abbāsī* does not have any footnotes, annotations, or a separate document under the title of *mākhiz-e-tālīf* (bibliography). Various sources are referenced frequently throughout the text, but they are mostly paraphrased or provided without any proper citations. At the end of the work, Khan simply lists out his *mākhiz* (sources), mentioning the following historical works—*Rozat ul-Sufā*, *Tārīkh-e-Firishta*, *Waqkidī*, *Rozat ul-Ahbāb*, *Kitāb ul-Ansāb*, *Muntakhab ul-Tawārīkh* and *Ā'īn-e-Akbarī* (*Ā'īna-e-Abbāsī*, 111).

The *Tārīkh-e-Asgharī* uses all the above classic sources cited in the *Ā'īna-e-Abbāsī*. In addition, it also quotes extensively from colonial sources, such as the early gazetteers published for divisions of the North-Western Provinces and census figures to provide factual details regarding the geography and demography of Amroha. At the end of the text, an appendix is attached with a list of 144 *mansabdārs* in Amroha, including their names, the quantity of *manṣabs* and the ruler whose patronage they enjoyed (*Tārīkh-ĕ- Aṣgharī*, 238–47). [xviii]

In the *Ā'īna-e-Abbāsī*, the genealogy begins with the Banu Hashim, but differs from conventional Ālid genealogies in its inclusion of the Abbāsīs as part of the *ahl-e-bait*. [xix] Through the text, the rule of the Abbāsid Caliphate is referred to as a golden age in Islamic history. From the lands of the Abbāsids, the lineage of the Abbāsīs of Amroha travel towards Sindh and Multan. Muhib-e-Ali quotes *Tārīkh-e-Farishtā,* which mentions how fifteen Abbāsī princes crossed over to the lands of Sindh and Multan during the rule of the slave dynasty, under the reign of Ghayasuddin Balban (1200–87). Though Muhib-e-Ali does not identify specific individuals from this period as his ancestors, he nevertheless underscores the importance given to men of Hashmi origin and the *ahl-e-bait*, who were revered during the rule of the Khiljis and Tughluqs in Hindustan.

The earliest forefathers of the Abbāsīs of Amroha in Hindustan were two brothers, Maulana Maṭh and Maulana Babban. Muhib-e-Ali traces the lineage of his *khāndān* to Maulana Maṭh's son Lala Muhammad, who he claims was born in Punjab. While Muhib-e-Ali concedes that the name is *hindī*, he emphasizes on Lala Muhammad's important administrative position as a *mu'azzin* at Akbar's court at Agra (*Ā'īna-e-Abbāsī*, 52). The two brothers, Babban and Maṭh, moved to Amroha and worked as *mu'allims* (teachers) of the prince. They were granted *mu'āfī* (revenue free) grants, the rights of which, Muhib-e-Ali claimed, continued to be passed on to their descendants.

The *Tārīkh-e-Asgharī* does not provide genealogies of various families of Amroha as part of a separate theme but only includes them while discussing various localities of the *qasbah*. However, a separate chapter on the Sufī *pīr* Sharfuddīn Shāh Wilāyat and his offspring deals with the subject.[xx] Naqvi's own lineage is traced to Sharfuddīn whose lineage is eventually traced back to Hazrat Ali. The genealogy is a more conventional *saiyid* lineage in terms of its associations with Banu Hashim and the *ahl-e-bait*. The *Tārīkh-e-Asgharī* does not explicitly define who the *ahl-e-bait* comprises and neither does it show a reverence to the Banu Hashim or Arab lineage in the way *Ā'īna-e-Abbāsī* does. Rather than an emphasis on Arab lineage or an *ahl-e-bait* identity, Naqvī was interested in his identity as a *mu'āfīdār*. Naqvī emphasized that the *sādāt* of Amroha were awarded revenue free grants under the patronage of Firoz Shah Tughluq and that these continued to remain with members of his family in the late nineteenth century. [xxi]

While *Ā'īna-e-Abbāsī* emphasizes the importance of the *ahl-e-bait* and produced a genealogical account that was in the form of family history, *Tārīkh-e-Asgharī* narrates a genealogical history of the *qasbah* through an ethnographic description of its various *muḥallās*. It also includes descriptions of all local Muslim families, beyond only the *saiyid* and *ashrāf* Muslims, and specifically mentions a few non-*ashrāf* Muslim residents. Indeed, its most significant aspect is the way it lays out the genealogy and lineage through an account of the *muḥallās*. The discussion of the *qasbah* at the level of the *muḥallā* is a step towards the localization of genealogy itself. Each *muḥallā* is described through its various important residents and this is followed by a brief mention of their genealogical lineages. As mentioned before, the deployment of *muḥallās* for the description of the *qasbah* and its important men was not radically new; an emphasis on urban ethnography was also a component of the *tazkira* tradition. In the *Tārīkh-e-Asgharī*, the discussion of the genealogical lineages of important men is categorized on the basis of

muḥallās, an approach that seems unique when compared to other *tārīkh* works that were produced in Amroha.

The *muḥallās* in Amroha featured a dominant family or group of families but often also included other working-class communities living adjacent to the dwelling of the *sādāt* families. Naqvi lists about 51 *muḥallās* in Amroha – *Shafāt Potā, Bhangī Tolā* or *Dānishmand* to name a few (*Tārīkh-ĕ-Aṣgharī*, 80–235).[xxii] It is worth noting that Naqvi uses the *ashrāf–ajlāf* distinction to point to various Muslim social groups. Often, he also mentions non-Muslims who inhabit various *muḥallās*. Naqvi's work was exceptional because it provided a history of the *qasbah* through an ethnography of the local *muḥallās*, providing key insights into local history and events.

Soon after the turn of the century, another *tārīkh* was published in Amroha, titled as, *Tawārīkh-e Wāstīyā* (1904), authored by Saiyid Rahim Bakhsh, Amrohvi. The *Tawārīkh-e Wāstīyā* was written in Urdu, although the prose is heavily influenced by Persian terminologies. The text compiled information and sources from the three existing *tārīkhs* that were published before it. However, as Rahim Baksh explained in the section, *sabab-e tālīf*, the three previous *tārīkhs* – *Āʾīna-e-Abbāsī, Tārīkh-e-Asgharī* as well as *Nukhbat-ul Tawārīkh* – had several errors regarding the lineages of certain families, and it was to correct these that he attempted to write anew, the history of the *sādāt* of Amroha (*Tawārīkh-e Wāstīyā,* 5-6). Published by Matubua Gulzar Ahmadi in District Moradabad, the *Tawārīkh-e Wāstīyā* followed a structure of a conventional *tazkira* by beginning with a *nāt* and *hamd*. Like Naqvi, who pays tribute to colonial officials in the *Tārīkh-e-Asgharī*, Rahim Baksh also begins by thanking the Lieutenant Governor and the administration in District Bijnor. These tributes to colonial officials are indicative of the fact that these *tārīkhs* were not merely scholarly exercises, but rather the narration of the past through lineage and descent, a highly contested practice, was reflective of the broader social and material transformations that were taking place in *qasbahs* such as Amroha.

The *Tawārīkh-e Wāstīyā* is divided into four thematic parts. The first part of the text narrates the history of Amroha during different historical periods. This part of the text has chapters that presents a similar history that the *Tārīkh-e-Asgharī* explicates, such, as the account of Amroha during the time of Nathe Khan (b. 1779), a *wazīr* in Sarkar Sambhal during Asaf-ud Daula's reign or an account of Mir Khan (b 1804), a *nawāb* from Tonk. This part ends with a chapter that provides an account of Amroha during the '*ghadar*' of 1857.

The second part of the text gives an account of the condition of the *zamindari* at Amroha, of the dargahs of various saints at the *qasbah*,

especially of the Sharfuddin Shah Wilayat. The third part of the text deals exclusively with the lineage and descent of Shah Wilayat which is drawn from Hazrat Imam Hussain (*Tawārīkh-e Wāstīyā,* 108). The last part, which comprises of the majority of the text provides, like the *Tārīkh-e-Asgharī*, an account of all the *muḥallās* of Amroha with the lineages of each of its important inhabitants. While the *Tārīkh-e-Asgharī* listed 51 *muḥallās* of Amroha, the *Tawārīkh-e Wāstīyā* lists 33 localities (*Tawārīkh-e Wāstīyā ,* 108-549).

Another significant text published in this period that exclusively mobilised formal techniques of narrating the past through genealogy and lineage was the *Mirāt-ul Ansāb*. The text was authored by Ziyauddin Alavi Amrohvi and was published by the Rahmati Press, Jaipur in 1917. A vast oeuvre of works on genealogy existed in Arabic, however, Alavi's text made available the *shijras* (genealogical trees) and lineages of the Prophet, his family and companions to Urdu readers. The text's importance can be gauged from the fact that for its first edition, fifteen thousand copies were printed, and these were immediately sold out. The text was compiled from original manuscripts of old *shijras* obtained from Haj trips to Medina over a period of 7 years. It contained a total of four thousand fifty-five *silsilās* of which fifty-eight were of various Prophets, ninety-six of Caliphs and companions of the Prophet, a hundred and seventy of various *buzurg* and *ulemās* and three thousand and six hundred and seventy-four *silsilās* of various prominent men and families from Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey and various regions in the Arab world. In addition to these, the text provided the lineages of several prominent Sufis and other *sādāt* (pl. saiyid) families in India, especially those residing in various *qasbahs* of UP, such as the *Bārhā* Saiyids of Muzaffarnagar and other Saiyid families of Amroha including the lineage of his own family. These genealogical lineages were produced on the basis of citing various sources (seventy-four) such as *Sahih Bukhārī, Maktub Imām Zabānī, Tafsīr Kabir, Tārīkh -e Kāmil Ibn Kasīr, Rozat-ul Ahbāb, Kunzul Ansāb* etc.

In the years to come, *Mirāt-ul Ansāb* was itself cited by various historical works from Amroha that produced and contested genealogical lineages of families that held local power and patronage. By the second decade of the twentieth century, the social landscape significantly altered as non-*ashrāf* Muslim social groups formed their own associations and organizations and became an important part of towns and cities across the United Provinces. Genealogy remained the central mode of narrating the past, but in order to confront social and material transformations, it took up a form that was based on contestations and refutations.

Tārīkh Nigārī (1918-1934): From Social History to Qaumī Tārīkh

likhī main ne tārīkh apne watan kī	Wrote the history of my homeland
Huī jis se haq kī rahnumāī	Which guides to the truth (of my homeland)
sadaqat se jurrat se kī us meṅ ẕāhir	With caution with courage in it revealed
sab ahl-ĕ-watan kī burāī bhalāī	The good and bad of the people of my homeland
huā main na marūb hargiz kisī se	Neither was I awestruck surely by anything
nahī kī riāyat kuch apn ī parāī	Nor did I consider my traditions foreign
jo hai ek saććc mu'arrikh ka maslakh	Doctrine that of the truthful historian
udhar ashāb khāmā kī bāg uthī	I upheld there the reins of ashāb khāmā ˣˣⁱⁱⁱ

Mahmud Ahmad Abbasi was born in Amroha in 1885, the same year that the Indian National Congress was founded. He not only witnessed the highs and lows of many significant movements, struggles and processes of nation building but actively contributed to the corpus of historical works focusing on the Muslim past.

Mahmud Ahmad Abbasi's works deserve an intellectual history project of its own. Besides the 3 volumes—*Tārīkh-e Amroha* (1930), *Tazkīrāt-ul Karām* (1932) and *Tahqīq-ul Ansāb* (1934) and the *Tahqīq Saiyid-o-Sādāt* —he also published works on the historical figures of Muawīya and Yazīd. The first volume, *Tārīkh-ĕ-Amroha*, is a history of the town that incorporates colonial sources and modern methods. The second volume, *Tazkīrat-ul Karām* was based on a traditional form of the *tazkira* genre and discussed the lineage of important individuals and families in Amroha, including notable *ulamā* and Sufi saints. The third volume, the *Tahqīq-ul Ansāb*, is an exclusive volume on genealogy, dealing with the social contestations on lineage and descent among various Muslim groups at the *qasbah.*

His three-volume series on the history of Amroha, as he poetically defines in the couplets, he penned at the end of one of the volumes, was marked by a passion for rigour, precision, and objectivity (Abbasi, *Tazkīrat ul-Karām*, 396–7). Yet, his writings offended and provoked responses from representatives of several Muslim communities, whether they were *saiyids*, *shaikhs*, Shias or Sunnis, the *mīrāsīs* (genealogists) or the *qassābs* (butchers).

The initial critical responses to Mahmud Ahmad Abbasi's first volume came from various Saiyid families of Amroha itself. These families claimed that Abbasi had provided a false account of their lineage and to contest his narrative they published their own pamphlets or *tārīkhs* in response. The first such critique came a few months later from Saiyid Mussawwir Hussain Najam who wrote a pamphlet titled, *Tārīkh-e Amroha par Review*. This pamphlet was published by Munshi Abdul Majeed at his Jayyad Press in Moradabad. The pamphlet began by debating the idea of defining *sharāfat* on the basis of *nasb*, arguing against Abbasi's definition of who to include as the Saiyids. The main complaint of Mussawwir Hussain was that his family was not included as Saiyids in the *Tārīkh-e Amroha* and through this text he questioned the basis on which Abbasi defined his criteria.

Another similar critique was published by Maulvi Saiyid Aal-e Ahmad Rizvi who was a *wakil* (lawyer) and former Honorary Magistrate at Amroha. His text, *Tārīkh-e Amroha ke ek note par Ajmālī nazar* (1930), was published by University Press Aligarh in the same year. The text was published as part of a series of books published by the Anjuman Islah wa Taraqqi-e Sadat-e Rizvia an organization of the Rizvi Saiyids in Amroha. This text charged Abbasi of pre-conceived biases which according to Rizvi was not the sign of good historian. However, Rizvi clarified that his text was a 'friendly' critique of Abbasi's historical work, as he considered him a 'brother' and no critique of his work should taint their relationship. Rizvi's critique of Abbasi's work was on one major point, the description of the role of his own family during the events of the revolt of 1857.

A comprehensive critique of Abbasi's work was published three years later in 1933 in the form of a pamphlet titled, *Tanqīd-e Mahmūd*. This pamphlet was published by Saiyid Muhammad Siraj-ul Haq (with 'help' from the Himayat-e Islam Press, Lahore) who defended various critiques of his family, that is Shah Abdul Majid Alavi's lineage and descent as presented by Abbasi in his work. He regarded Abbasi's *Tārīkh-e Amroha* to be confrontational and full of biases. Siraj-ul Haq provided a list of various documents and *farmāns* issued in favour of his family that established them as Saiyids.

Such vehement critiques did not deter the enthusiasm of Mahmud Ahmad Abbasi who went on to publish two more volumes and, in the process, became famous across north India, with his work hurting the sentiments of not only Saiyids, but various other Muslim communities. In 1934, Abbasi published the third volume of his work, the *Taḥqīq-ul Ansāb*, where he elaborated on the significance of *ilm-al nasab* as a tool for identifying and distinguishing various claims of lineage and descent in Muslim societies. *Ilm al-nasab* was particularly prominent among Arab

descent families, who, according to Abbasi, took the principles of *nasab* with them wherever they went. Such families carefully preserved their genealogical records, and in Amroha as well, several Hashmī and Quraishī families did the same. Elaborating on the subject of *nasab*, Abbāsī identifies five types or categories of *nasab* – *ṣaḥī ul-nasab, maqbūl-ul nasab, mashūr-ul nasab, majhūl-ul nasab* and *mardūd-ul nasab* (Abbasi, *Tahqīq ul-Ansāb,* 17–18). Each of these types was superior to the other, with *ṣaḥī-ul nasab* considered the most superior lineage and *mardūd-ul nasab*, the weakest. These types were determined by the collective judgements of genealogists, for instance, it was imperative that all the genealogists would have to agree to qualify for *ṣaḥī-ul nasab*; *maqbūl* would require the agreement of the majority with a few dissenting voices; and *mardūd* would be considered the least authentic claim. If a family wrongly claimed descent from a chain, the members of the chain would not accept the family in their genealogical tree.

These various types of lineages were derived from principles that governed the discipline of genealogy. Abbasi listed three main principles based on which a person or family's *nasab* could be derived. First, for a lineage to be authentic, it should be traceable to at least a hundred years or a minimum of three and a maximum of seven generations. Secondly, if a particular lineage was derived from a prominent saint or personality, it should be verified by genealogists, based on a proof that was definitive or derived from a verified work of genealogy. Thirdly, in some cases, lineages could be authenticated on the basis of oral traditions in the form of ballads, folktales or hearsay (Abbasi, *Tahqīq ul-Ansāb,* 18).

Such profound emphasis on *nasab* suggests that the discussions on genealogy and descent were not merely a literary exercise. The principles of *ilm-al nasab*, derived from narratives and an early history of the Arab world, were applied to social norms and values of the *ashrāf* in early-twentieth-century north India. For the north Indian *ashrāf,* a great concern was the *naslī ikhtilāṭ* (racial mixing or miscegenation) among lower classes who were believed to have converted to Islam from Hinduism. The regulation of *kufū* sought to address and resolve this problem of racial mixing. In addition to the principles of *kufū*, discourses of racial mixing found in the writings of colonial ethnographers were exploited to legitimize the hierarchical social order.

The colonial discourse on race laid emphasis on ethnicity but also on colour. These ideas were a concern for the *saiyids* of Amroha who were making claims of pure lineage and descent. Abbasi noted that due to racial mixing in society, the *sādāt* had turned 'brown' and the *ajlāf* were becoming fair (Abbasi, *Tahqīq ul-Ansāb,* 10). Couched in the language of race and colour, this observation points towards the broader social and

material transformations that were creating perceptible economic / industrial shifts in society. Several non-*ashrāf* Muslim *birādarīs* had begun making efforts towards social mobility to reform their communities and seek a higher social status for themselves. One of the steps in this process was to contest *saiyid* narratives and claim an Arab lineage. Abbasi acknowledges these social changes in the preface to the *Taḥqīq ul-Ansāb*, where he writes about his motivation for writing a separate volume on *nasab*,

Now it has become so usual that not only people with arabī or ajamī lineage, those commonly known as the sādāt or shurfā, but also Muslims with hindī lineage, those giroh (group) and birādarīs (communities) that have lived in contemptible and backward conditions, have begun to make new claims regarding their lineages. Astonishing explanations are provided, books and magazines are being inked, associations are being created, conferences are being founded, some are eager to be called Quraishī, and others want to be called Ansāri or Numānī.

Ab to ye ṣirf itna mutaadi ho gaya hai ke na ṣirf wo log silsila--nasb arbī wa ajami qabā'il se mutasnil karte aur urf-e-ām meṅ 'sādāt wa shurfā' kehlāte heṅ balke hindī al aṣal musalmānoṅ meṅ se wo giroh aur birādiriyaṅ jo qarhāna qarn se ba e'tibār tamaddunī wa mŏ'āsharatī ḥālat ke q'ar-e-maẕallat wa pastī meṅ rehti ćali āyi heṅ, apne apne nasb ke muta'alliq naye naye dāwe kar rahi heṅ. Aḵẖwa aur maẕẖakā ḵẖez taujihāt pesh ki jāti heṅ, kutab wa rasā'il ke aurāq siyah ho raheṅ heṅ, anjumaneṅ ban rahen heṅ, conferenceṅ qayam ho rahī heṅ, koi Quraishī kehlāne ka diwāna hai, koi Ansārī wa Numānī banne ka."

(Abbāsī, *Taḥqīq ul-Ansāb*,1)

The *birādarīs* making new claims regarding their lineages were those that sought the title of shaikh. In Amroha, as well as in other towns of the United Provinces, several communities that the saiyid/ashrāf considered the *peshawar aqwām* were beginning to form associations, both social and political, to claim a new identity. Most prominently, the *julāhās* (weavers) and the *qassābs* (butchers) formed the All India Jamī'at ul -Ansār and the All India Jamī'at ul-Quraish (AIJQ) in the 1920s. Abbasi devoted extensive space in his writings to debate the claims of *nasab* made by representatives of these groups. The AIJQ had a strong presence in Amroha. The general secretary of the all-India based organization, Haji Zafar Ahmad, a resident of the *muḥallā Paćdara* of Amroha, was the owner of a brick kiln and a former Honorary Magistrate.

Together with his son, in 1933, Manzur Ahmad, he published *Kitāb Tārīkh-ĕ-Suhail-e-Sahmī* (The Book of the History of *Suhail-e-Sahmī*), a text that sought to challenge the claims advanced by Mahmūd Ahmad Abbāsī's writings. [xxiv] Abbāsī in his work, claimed that the contention of the *qassāb*s regarding Arabic origin from the Quraish tribe was false, and that the *qassāb*s of Hindustan, including those in Amroha, were of *hindī nasl*. The *Suhail-e-Sahmī* was an account of the history of the *qassāb* community in Hindustan and provided the genealogical lineage of Haji Zafar Ahmad's family in Amroha. The text was published with the support of various members of the community. It was published by Hafiz Nasir Ali, the Secretary of the AIJQ, and supported by Sadatullah Quraishi, the head of the Madarsa Iṣlāḥ-e-Qaum in Amroha. Hājī Zafar Ahmad's family had a special connection with Shāh Wilāyat and organized important activities at the *dargāh* during the annual *'urs*. Haji Zafar had founded an *Anjuman* (association) and a *maktab* (school) for the education of children.

The *Suhail-e-Sahmī* compiled some of the important essays from these smaller pamphlets and put together reviews of these texts and critiques of Abbāsi's work, authored by several prominent personalities from Amroha and other nearby *qasbahs*. These reviewers were not confined to the *qassāb* community but had sympathizers from other *ashrāf* communities as well. The text, in some sense, attempted to create a record of the network of *qassāb* Muslims in the United Provinces and proved to be a show of strength and support for their community.

An important component of the *Suhail-e-Sahmī* was the *shijra* (genealogical tree) and the *khilāfatnāma* that was provided to establish the lineage of the family of Haji Zafar Ahmad. The lineage of Hāji Zafar Ahmad's family was traced to Haji Hafiz Khan Suhrawardy. According to the *Suhail-e-Sahmī*, Hafiz Khan was the seventeenth generation of Amr Ibn al-Ās (573–664).[xxv] Hafiz Khan was believed to be a companion to the Sufi saint, Sharfuddīn Shāh Wilāyat, who hailed from a town called Wasit in Iraq. It was claimed that together with the saint, he crossed the river Chenab to migrate to Amroha and settled there. In Amroha, Khan was devoted his life for *khidmāt* (service) of his saint for thirty years. Several *hikāyats* circulated about how he received the *khilāfat* of Shāh Wilāyat. Hafiz Khan died at the age of ninety in 1388. Every year at the *dargāh* of Shāh Wilāyat on the last day of the *'urs* of the saint, known as the *Qul*, there was a celebration in the name of Hafiz Khan. On this day, the arrangement for food, lighting and other festivities was organized by Hājī Zafar Ahmad's family in Amroha.

The *Suhail-e-Sahmī* produced a 600-year-old *khilāfatnāma*, which detailed this relationship of Hafiz Khan and Shāh Wilāyat of Amroha. The

Suhail-e-Sahmī also carried several reviews of this *k̲h̲ilafatnāma* which upheld its authenticity and validity. These claims were supported by the presence of Sharfuddīn Shāh Wilāyat's seal on the *k̲h̲ilāfatnāma* as proof that the *khilāfat* was indeed granted to Hafiz Khan. Further, the *k̲h̲ilāfatnāma* was a valuable document since it also provided details of the family's genealogical lineage. This *k̲h̲ilāfatnāma* was the basis on which the *qassāb* community of Amroha could contest the stigmatization of their community in Mahmud Ahmad Abbasi's historical works.

Conclusion

This article maps the tradition of *tārīk̲h̲ nigārī* at the *qasbah* of Amroha during the period 1878-1934. The period under study witnessed a flourishing tradition of local histories in Urdu that were written by authors based in Amroha. As I show, this period can be divided into two broad chronological phases, the first, between 1878-1917 and the second period, between 1918-1934. The historical writings published at Amroha can be classified according to the broad genres that they represented, such as family history, history of genealogy and lineages, social history as well as *qaumī tārīk̲h̲* or community history. While early historical writings in the late nineteenth century were primarily written as family histories, this genre of historical writing evolved into a comprehensive category of social histories. Finally, as a response to the contestation of genealogy and lineage a genre of history developed that combined the genres of family and social history to take shape as community history. Through the discussion of the different *tārīk̲h̲s* of Amroha, particularly their form, structure and arguments, this article highlighted the how these texts were part of a terrain of contested narratives that was reflective of social and political change at the local level.

The local histories discussed in the article were produced within the context of an evolving social and material context, wherein, local patronage and politics, patterns of land ownership as well as social hierarchies were transforming. In such a context, these historical works were deployed as 'documentary evidence', where *shijras* and lineages were produced in place of land records to legitimize claims of ownership and status of respectability. These *shijras*, *farmāns* and *k̲h̲ilāfatnāmās* were often reproduced in these local histories or cited and referenced through older classical works of history. Furthermore, these local histories provide a wealth of information with regards to various aspects of social and economic life at the *qasbah* of Amroha. These histories in Urdu are an important source for the local historian of the *qasbah* for whom these texts provide a valuable addition to colonial sources such as gazetteers and administration reports. These local histories, with their rich

information on inhabitants and localities of *qasbah* Amroha can be a rich resource for developing micro histories of specific individuals, families and communities that can potentially deepen our understanding of everyday life of *qasbahs* in colonial India. Moreover, the re-publication of many of these *tārīkh*s in the form of new editions in the twentieth century by family members of the original authors or newer patrons reflects the continued relevance of local history in Amroha and other such *qasbah* towns in India. The contestation of history, social hierarchy, genealogy and lineage is an ongoing process that regenerates an interest in local history that make its exploration and pursuit not confined to merely academic and scholarly interests.

Works Cited

Abbasi, Mahmūd Ahmad. *Taḥqīq ul-Ansāb*. Delhi: Jayyad Barqi Press, 1933.

Abbasi, Mahmūd Ahmad. *Tārīkh-e-Amroha*. 1930. Fascimile of the first edition. Amroha: Hakim Sirajuddin Hashmi, 2014.

Abbasi, Mahmūd Ahmad. *Tārīkh-e-Amroha*. 1930. Reprint, Mumbai: Kitaab Daar, 2005.

Abbasi, Mahmūd Ahmad. *Tazkīrāt ul-Karām.* Delhi: Mahbub ul-Matab'a Barqi Press, 1932.

Abbasi, Muhammad Muhib-e-Alī Khān. *Āinā-e-Abbāsī*. 1878. Amroha: Hakim Sirajuddin Hashmi, 2009.

Ahmad, Aziz. 1969. "Literature in Arabic, Persian and Turkish." In *An Intellectual History of Islam in India*, by Aziz Ahmad, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 1969, 66-90.

Ahmad, Manzur Ahmad. *Kitāb-e-Tārīkh Suhail-e-Sahmī*. Amroha: Haji Zafar Ahmad, 1934.

Alam, Muzaffar. *The Languages of Political Islam in India* . Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2004.

Amrohvi, Rais. *Sādāt-e-Amroha: Ek Ta'āruf*. Amroha: Anjuman Sādāt-e-Amroha Registered, 1983.

Amrohvi, Saiyid Rahim Baksh. *Tawārīkh-e Wāstīyā*. Moradabad: Matbua Gulzar Ahmadi, 1904.

Amrohvi, Ziyauddin Alavi. *Mirāt-ul Ansāb*. Jaipur: Rahmati Press, 1917.

Aquil, Raziuddin. "The study of Islam and Indian History at the Darul Musannefin, Azamgarh." In *History in the Vernacular*, by ed. Raziuddin Aquil and Partha Chatterjee, Ranikhet: Permanent Black. 2008, 322-356.

Chatterjee, Partha. "Introduction." In *History in the Vernacular*, by ed. Raziuddin Aquil and Partha Chatterjee, 1-24. Ranikhet: Permanent Black. 2008.

Desai, Prachi. *Creative Pasts: Historical Memory and Identity in Western India, 1700-1960.* Delhi: Permanent Black. 2007.

E. Alexander, *Final Report on the Ninth Settlement of the Moradabad District.* Allahabad: Supt., Govt. Press, United Provinces, 1881.

Elia, Jaun. *Shāyad.* Karachi: Eliya Akademi, 1991.

Habibullah, A.B.M. 1960. "Historical Writing in Urdu: A Survey of Tendencies." In *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, ed. C.H. Philips, London: Oxford University Press. 1960, 481-96.

Hardy, Peter. "Some Studies in Pre-Mughal Muslim Historiography." In *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, ed. C. H. Philips, London: Oxford University Press. 1961, 115-127.

Hardy, Peter. *Historians of Medieval India: Studies in Indo-Muslim Historical Writing.* London: Luzac & Company Ltd. 1966.

Hardy, Peter. "The Treatment of History by Ziya Al-din Barani in the Tarikh-I-Firuz Shahi." In *Historians of Medieval India: Studies in Indo-Muslim Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Hardy, London: Luzac & Company Ltd. 1966a, 20-39.

Haq, Saiyid Muhammad Siraj-ul Haq. *Tanqīd-e Mahmūd.* Lahore: Himayat-e Islam Press, 1933.

Ho, Engseng. *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility Across the Indian Ocean.* London: University of California Press.2006.

Israili, A. H. *Morādabād ke Akhbārāt.* New Delhi: self-published, M.K.Offset Printers. 2010.

Khan, Javel Ali. *Early Urdu Historiography.* Patna: Khuda Bahkash Oriental Public Library. 2005.

Kozlowski, Gregory C. *Muslim Endowments and Society in British India.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.1985.

Lawrence, Marcia K. Hermansen and Bruce B. "Indo-Persian Tazkiras as Memorative Communications." In *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia*, by ed. David Gilmartin and Bruce Lawrence, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000. 149-175.

Morimoto, Kazuo. "The Formation and Development of the Science of Talibid Genealogies in the 10th & 11th Century Middle East." *Oriente Moderno* 18, no. 2 (1999): 541–70.

Morimoto, Kazuo. ed. *Sayyids and Sharifs in Muslim Societies: The Living Links to the Prophet.* London: Routledge, 2012.

Naim, C.M. "Syed Ahmed and his two books call 'Asar al-Sanadid." *Modern Asian Studies*, (2010): 1-40.

Najam, Saiyid Mussawwir Hussain. *Tārīkh-e Amroha par Review*. Moradabad: Jayyad Press, 1930.

Naqvi, Saiyid Asghar Husain. *Tārīkh-e-Aṣgharī*. 1889. Reprint, Amroha: Mir Anis Academy, 2007.

Niazi, Soheb. "Sayyids and Social Stratification of Muslims in Colonial India: Genealogy and Narration of the Past in Amroha." *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society, vol. 30, no. 3,* (2020): *467-487.*

Rao, Velchuru Narayana, David Shulman, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam. *Textures of Time: Writing History in South India 1600-1800.* Delhi: Permanent Black. 2001.

Rashid, Abdur. "The Treatment of History by Muslim Historians in Mughal Official and Biographical Works." In *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, by ed. C. H. Philips, 139-154. London: Oxford University Press.1961.

Rashid, Abdur. "The Treatment of History by Muslim Historians in Sufi Writings." In *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, by ed. C.H. Philips, 128-138. London: Oxford University Press.1961.

Rizvi, Maulvi Saiyid Aal-e Ahmad. *Tārīkh-e Amroha ke ek note par Ajmālī nazar*. Aligarh: University Press, 1930.

Rosenthal, Franz. *A History Of Muslim Historiography.* Leiden: E.J. Brill.1968.

Sharma, Sunil. "Sunil Sharma." In *Forms of Knowledge in Early Modern Asia: Explorations in the Intellectual History of India and Tibet, 1500-1800*, by ed. Sheldon Pollock, 240-256. Durham and London: Duke University Press.2011.

Siddiqui, Misbah Ahmad ed. *Tawarikh-ě-Amroha Ka Taḥqīqī wa Tanqīdī Jā'iza*. Delhi: Darul Eshaat-E-Mustafai, 2017.

Tignol, Eve. "A Note on the Origins of Hali's 'Musaddas-e Madd-o Jazr-e Islām.'" *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 26, no. 4, (2016) : 585–89.

---

[i] Rais Amrohvi, 1983, 17. All translations from English are mine.

[ii] Rais Amrohvi, and his younger brother Jaun Elia were famed Urdu poets and their brother Kamal Amrohi was a popular Indian film director and screenwriter. For an autobiographical introduction of their family, see Elia, 1991.

[iii] For discussion of historical writing in the Indo-Persian tradition, See, Alam, 2004; Hardy, 1966; Rashid, 1961 and Ahmad, 1969.

[iv] Peter Hardy discusses the work *Shajara i-ansab-u-Mubarak Shahi* a first of such texts, presented to Qutub ut-din Aibaq by the author in 1206, a genealogical account of Mubarak Shah of Multan. See, (Hardy, 1961, 116-7).

[v] *Ā'in-e Akbarī* or the "Constitution of Akbar", is a 16th-century, detailed document recording the administration of emperor Akbar's empire, written by

his vizier, Abu'l-Fazl. The *Ā'in-e Akbarī* was translated and edited by H.Blochmann in 1872. An edited and annotated version was published by the Nawal Kishor Press in 1863. This version was used by H. Blochmann to prepare his English translation of the text in 1872.

[vi] *Muntakhab-ut Tawārīkh or Tārīkh-e-Bada'unī* (*Selection of Chronicles)* by Abdul Qadir Badayuni(1540–1605) is a work of early Mughal history of India, covering the period from the days of the Ghaznavids down to the fortieth regnal year of Mughal Emperor Akbar. See a discussion of the work in (Lawrence, 2000).

[vii] *Tārīkh-e Firishtā*, also known as *Gulshan-e Ibrāhīmī*, by Muhammad Ibrahim Firishta (1560-1620), a Persian historian who wrote the history of Hindustan. An edition of the text was published by the Nawal Kishor Press in 1864. J Briggs also translated the text in English which was published in 1829.

[viii] *Tārīkh-e Firuz Shahī* was completed in 1357 by Ziya Al-Din Barani an important historian of the Delhi Sultanat. For details see, (Hardy, 1966a).

[ix] For a discussion of the various aspects and components of Muslim historiography, see, (Rosenthal, 1968).

[x] Khan, Saiyid Ahmad. *Asar us Sanadid.* 1847. Reprint. Aligarh: Sir Syed Academy, 2007. On Asar us Sanadid, see, (Naim, 2010). Sayyid Ahmad Khan also wrote the *Tārīkh-e Sarkashī Zilā Bijnor,* a journalistic account of the historical events during the 1857 rebellion in the district of Bijnor.

[xi] Khan, Saiyid Ahmad. 1870. *A Series of Essays on the Life of Muhammed and subjects subsidiary thereto*. London: Trubner. was a refutation of William Muir's work on the Prophet of Islam.

[xii] Maulvi Muhammad Zakaullah Khan (1832-1910) was an educationist and one of the prominent figures of the Delhi College. For a discussion of his work *Tārīkh-e Hindustan* (1915-18) see, Khan, 2005, 210-226.

[xiii] *Nayyar-e-Āzam* was first published in 1876 and was edited by S. Ibn Ali. For details see, (Israeli, 2010, 57-9) and (Siddiqui, 2017, 23-31).

[xiv] Briefly during the mutiny of 1857, he administered Amroha on behalf of the Nawab of Rampur and was bestowed with the *laqab* (title) of Khan for his services.

[xv] Referred to as Muhib-e-Ali from now onwards to avoid confusion with the other author Mahmud Ahmad Abbasi.

[xvi] The Abbasid Caliphate was the third of the Islamic caliphates to succeed the Islamic prophet Muhammad. The Abbasid dynasty descended from Muhammad's youngest uncle, Abbas ibn Abd al-Muttalib (566–653 CE), from whom the dynasty takes its name.

[xvii] The *Tārikh-e-Firishta* is quoted to highlight the importance of the kin of the Abbāsids and the Banu Hashim during Sultan Muhammad Tughluq Shah's rule. See, *Ā'īna-e-Abbāsi*, 31.

[xviii] Out of the 144 names that the appendix lists, 131 have the title *saiyid* attached to them (6 of them have the additional title of *Qāzī*, 5 have *Hakīm,* and 5 have the title *shaikh.*

[xix] Conventional Ālid genealogies differ on this, and do not include the

Abbāsī's as part of the *ahl-ě-bait.* For more on the Ālid genealogies, see, (Morimoto, 1999).

[xx] Genealogy of Saiyid Asghar Huṣain is as follows: *Hazrat Imam Alī – Jafrī Sanī- Haroon- Saiyid Alī- Saiyid Huṣain-Saiyid Daud-Abul Fazal-Abul Ma'ali-Saiyid Murtaza-Saiyid Alī -Saiyid **Sharfuddin Shah Wilayat-**Saiyid Chand-Saiyid Bade- Mīr Saiyid Muntakhib-Mir Saiyid Mubarak-Shah Abdul Azīz-Divan Saiyid Mohammad Mukhtar-Gazanfar Ali-Varis Ali-Abdul Vahid-Mansur Alī-Muhabbib Alī- Saiyid Azīz Alī- Saiyid Asghar Huṣain Naqvī.* See Naqvī, *Tārīkh-ě-Asgharī*, 72–80.

[xxi] This claim was commonly accepted and also observed in the land settlement reports prepared by colonial officers who also acknowledged that in Amroha more than half the land was made revenue free for the *sādāt* since Firoz Shah's rule. For details, see, (Alexander, 1881).

[xxii] Each of the *muḥallahs* was named after the people who inhabited these spaces or the descendants of some of its prominent inhabitants. *Shafāt Potā* was so called because the offspring of a Saiyid named Mohammad *Shafāt* inhabited the locality. For details regarding the *muḥallā,* see, *Tārīkh-ě-Asgharī*, 154–64. *Danishmand* was inhabited by *saiyid rizvīs* and was so called because its ancestors were considered wise and clever, see, *Tarīkh-ě-Asgharī*, 130–5. A part of *Bhangī Tola* was inhabited by the community which Naqvī calls "Halalkhor," indicative of those who do menial occupations, see, *Tārīkh-ě-Asgharī*, 103.

[xxiii] Quoted from the poem at the end of the autobiographical section titled "*Raqīm ul Hurūf, Banda-ě-Mahmūd,*" in Abbasi, *Tazkīrat ul-Karām*, 52. (Ashāb = Horse, Khāmā = Writer)

[xxiv] Henceforth *Suhail-ě-Sahmī.* The exact date of publication is not known, but it was published during the second half of 1934, as the latest of the letters at the beginning of the text.

[xxv] Amr Ibn al-Ās was the ruler of Egypt, a contemporary and companion of the Prophet Mohammad, and belonged to the Banu Sahm clan of the Quraish tribe.