“Lucknow history from 1856”

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Lucknow lost its status as the capital of the Shī‘ī-ruled kingdom of Awadh with the annexation of the province by the British East India Company in 1856. Citing poor administration and mismanagement on the part of the final King of Awadh, Wājid ‘Alī Shāh (1237-1304/1822-1887, r.1847-1856), the Company brought the province under direct rule, relegating its former ruler to a capital-in-exile recreated in Murshidabad, Bengal. Following British occupation, the city became a major centre of the Indian Uprising (1857-58), which was locally focused upon a plot to instate Bīrjīs Qadr (1261-1311/1845-1893), the son of Wājid ‘Alī Shāh, to the throne. The Uprising drew local strength from Awadh’s status as a long-standing centre of recruitment for the East India Company’s Army, giving the province a strong cadre of well-equipped military mutineers, and a powerful class of semi-independent feudal landlords (*ta‘luqdār*s) with their own political interests and, sometimes, private armies. Following the notorious siege of the British Resident’s compound, and after vanquishing the rebel threat, the British demolished much of the city and brought it under direct command.

The decades following the Rebellion are often seen as years of cultural decline. Colonial-era Urdu essayists including ‘Abd-al Ḥalīm Sharār (1277-1345/ 1860-1926) penned nostalgic reflections upon the city’s Nawābī-era glories, deemed to be the lauded ‘last phrase’ of an ‘Eastern civilization’. Other Muslim authors of the colonial period reflected upon the city’s past with similar affection and, sometimes, satire. For instance, the novel *Umrāo Jān Adā* (1905) by Mirzā Muḥammad Hādī Ruswā (1273-1350/ 1857-1931) recalled the courtesan culture of Nawābi Faizabad and Lucknow; while the short story *Shaṭranj ke khēlārī* (“The Chess Players”) (1924) by the Hindi novellist Mūnshī Prēmchand (1297-1355/ 1880-1936) evoked and parodied the decadence and other-worldliness of the city’s courtly elites.

Nevertheless, Lucknow retained its status as one of British India’s most important Islamic cultural centres. It remained famous long after 1856 for its Islamic educational institutions and important *‘ulamā*-families, and a vibrant Islamicate public sphere marked by major public religious observances, publishing houses and influential public associations. It also remained known for its lavish *tehzīb*: a much-celebrated, unique urban culture that combined

elements of the city's Indo-Iranian and Islamic heritage, and other indigenous aspects drawn from the Indian and Awadhi environment.

After 1858, the city's cultural life was dominated by powerful Muslim *zamīndār*s (landowners) and *ta'luqdār*s from rural Awadh. Wealthy magnate dynasties such as the Rajas of Pīrpūr, Jehāngīrābād and Maḥmūdābād maintained residences in the city district of Qaiserbagh. By establishing Lucknow as their main urban seat and place of assembly, they were able to represent the landed interest to the British administration, and ultimately, established Lucknow as a centre of national Muslim politics until 1947.

Sustained by patronage from these noble elites, Lucknow retained its rich Islamic culture and lauded *tehzīb*, the latter of which remained imbued by its patrons' taste for elegance and invocation of *sharīf* (noble) motifs and credentials. Urban traditions of dress, dance, music, cuisine, arts and calligraphy continued, as well as traditions such as *musha'īrah* (poetry recitals) and *dāstāngō'ī* (storytelling). Many of the city's most distinctive cultural forms have continued, albeit sometimes in diminished form, until the present. The city was known especially for its large public religious gatherings such as public prayers, 'Eīd and *majālis* (gatherings convened for collective lamentation) held during Muḥarram. In particular, the *a'azādārī* (mourning) processions, held in the city to mark the specific days of Muḥarram – including the julūs-i-Mehndī and the 'Āshūrā – have remained extravagant calendric events, offeringg an ongoing link to the city's Nawābī heritage. Financially supported by *auqāf* (endowments) dating to the Nawābī period, and managed by dedicated public associations, they remain extravagant public events that are famous across India.

Linked to Muḥarram was the city's tradition of *marṣīyah*: an elegiac poetic genre, usually in Urdu, that lamented the martyrdom of Imām Ḥuṣayn ibn 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and his comrades at the hands of the Umayyād Khalīfah, Yazīd ibn Mu'āwiyah. *Marṣīyah* were often structured in couplets or quatrain or sestain stanzas (known as *musaddas*), and sometimes extended to long dirges designed for public narration. Major *marṣīyah* poets of the late-Nawābī era, including Mīr Babar 'Alī Anīs (1216/17-1291; 1802/3-1874) and Mirzā Salāmat Alī Dabīr (1218-1292/ 1803-1875) continued their work after 1856, as did their respective disciples, who maintained a renowned level of artistic rivalry. Public and private recitations of *marṣīyah* remain commonplace seasonal events.

Colonial-era Lucknow's Islamic culture was heavily linked with that of the Awadhi *qaṣbah*s, the small, rural townships in neighboring districts that were dominated by *sharīf* Muslim landed families. These outlying settlements were themselves often home to Islamic schools, shrines and reputed scholarly families, and like Lucknow itself, they are often retrospectively lauded as distinctive cultural environments rooted in Indo-Islamic traditions. Many of colonial Lucknow's social and religious Muslim leaders had their family origins in Awadhi *qaṣbah*s like Barabanki, Sihala, Taqiyya, Malihabad and Radauli, meaning that the city remained intertwined with its rural outposts; many of the city's most famous Muslim residents continued to identify themselves by their *qaṣbah*-affiliations.

In the same period, Lucknow evolved into an important centre of lithographic printing, and possibly India's foremost centre for the production of Islamic books. Munshī Newal Kishōre (1251-1312/ 1836-1895) set up the Newal Kishōre Press in 1858, which published over 5000 titles before 1900, of which over 2000 were in Urdu, Farsi or Arabic. These included productions of the Qur'ān and works of Ḥadīth, as well as the first printed versions of a range of Urdu manuscripts, short stories and orally-narrated tales. The city was also host to numerous other Islamic printing presses and private libraries.

Drawing upon the city's long past in both Sunnī and Shī'ī learning, Islamic education and scholarship remained powerful in Lucknow, with the city known for its excellence in both rational and received Islamic sciences. It also remained home to a number of great scholar-households, who have latterly been commemorated in biographies (*tazkirah*s). Chief among these on the Sunnī side was the Farangī Maḥāll, a household of Sunnī scholars and Ṣūfīs best known for developing the *Dars-i-Niẓāmī* curriculum, which they compiled in the eighteenth century and taught thereafter. Their circle produced major luminaries like 'Abd al-Ḥāyy Lakhnawī (1264-1304/ 1848-1886), one of nineteenth-century India's most influential Islamic scholars: an expert on Ḥadīth and *fiqh*, he is especially known for his renewal of *ijtiḥād* within the Ḥanafī tradition, and achieved huge reach through his authorship of *fatāwā*. The Farangī Maḥāll family also produced major social and political leaders, including the *shaykh* and community leader 'Abd al-Bārī (1878-1926), who established a *madrasah* for the family's students and became a major community and political figurehead.

Lucknow has also been home for the Nadwa't al-'Ulamā movement. Originally founded in adjacent Kanpur (Cawnpore) in 1893, Nadwa't al-'Ulamā was created as an association of

'ulamā and other Islamic leaders, aiming to build common ground among different schools of thought and compose a modernist agenda of Islamic learning. Receiving financial support from the Muslim-ruled princely states of Hyderabad and Bhopal, Nadwa't al-'Ulamā was subsequently recrafted into a religious school (*madrasah*), founded in Lucknow in 1323/1905. Under the guidance of its principal Shiblī Nu'mānī (1273-1332/ 1857-1914), a liberal Islamic scholar author from nearby Azamgarh, the school developed an accommodative curriculum that combined traditional patterns of Ḥanafī learning along the lines of the established *Dars-i-Niẓāmī* with modern disciplines. The school now has a student body of approximately 6000, and a network of affiliated *madrasah*s across India.

The city has also remained an important seat of Shī'ī learning. Major *auqāf* (endowments), created by Awadh's former monarchs and courtiers, enabled Shī'ī scholars to perpetuate some of the schooling networks that had been established under the Kings of Awadh. The Ḥusaynābād Trust, for instance, continued to fund pilgrimage education in Najaf and Karbalā' and maintained links among Lucknow's Shī'īs to these centres. Lucknow has also been host to a range of modern Shī'ī *madrasa*s, including the Jāmi'yyah Nāẓmiyyah (est. 1308/1890), Sulṭān al-Madāris (1892), Madrasa't al-Wā'īẓīn (1337/1919). It is also the base for Tanẓīm al-Makātib, an influential Shī'ī educational organization that was founded in 1968 by Sayyīd Ghulam 'Askarī. It presides over hundreds of Shī'ī *maktab*s and *madrasah*s across India, some for men and some women, and runs various publishing and proselytization initiatives.

Simultaneously, Lucknow has been the seat of a number of Shī'ī *mujtahīd* families, who have exerted influence across South Asia. One family, with origins in the nearby *qaṣbah* of Kintūr, produced *mujtahīds* like Mīr Ḥamīd Ḥusayn Moussawī (1830-1880) and Nāṣir Ḥusayn (1867-1942), who are best known for their authoritative excursus of Shī'ī systematic theology and polemic entitled '*Aqabāt al-Anwār fī Imāmat al-A'īmma't al-Aṭhār*. Another major family, retrospectively known as the Khandān-i-Ijtihād, derived from the *qaṣbah* of Nasirabad, and were collectively descended from Dildār 'Alī Nasīrābādī (1166-1235/ 1752-1820), the original chief *mujtahīd* of Nawābi Awadh. This family has generated many powerful Shī'ī figureheads in many generations, including Sayyīd 'Alī Nāqī Naqwī (1323-1408/ 1905-1988), who has been one of independent India's most influential Shī'ī *mujtahīds*. He has been known especially for his engagements with socio-religious issues, and his presentation of Imam Ḥusayn as a model for all mankind.

The concurrent renewal of Sunnī and Shī'ī religious movements in Lucknow, combined with provocations around public rituals, has led to periodic outbursts of Shī'ī-Sunnī violence in various years, often occurring during Muḥarram processions and other mass religious events. Both colonial administrations and post-independence governments have often responded with curfews on such events to maintain public peace.

The city's long-standing Ṣūfī heritage, that goes back to medieval saints such as Shāh Mīnā Raḥmatallah (d. 884/1479), a *shaykh* of the Chishtīyyah and Suhrawardīyyah, has endured into the present, and has given rise to new forms. Ḥājjī Ḥāfiẓ Sayyīd Wāriṣ 'Alī Shāh (1224-1323/ 1817-1905), an initiate into the Chishtīyyah order from the township of Dewa near Lucknow, became one of the region's best known *pīr*s (saints). He founded the Wārṣī sub-order which admitted members from any religion and so enrolled Hindus as well as Muslims, and his tomb, known as Dewa Sharif, is a major site of pilgrimage, especially upon its founder's *'urus* (death anniversary).

The presence of a large community of Muslim landowners, officials and *sharīf* ('noble') families ensured that Lucknowi Muslims played an enormous role in Muslim politics, even nationally, before 1947. Muslims from Lucknow and Awadh were heavily represented in socio-political movements such as the All India Muslim League, India's most important Muslim-led political party, after its foundation in 1325/1906. The alliance, which dominated Indian Muslim politics until 1947, held several of its most important sessions in Lucknow, and the city was the party's *de facto* centre for approximately two decades after its creation.

Lucknow was also the key centre for pan-Islamic mobilisation in colonial India, and ultimately, for the Khilāfat movement (1919-1924), a religio-political mobilization that supported the Ottoman Sultan's status as Khalīfah and opposed the European occupation of the Ottoman Empire's Arab provinces. The movement was partly led by 'Abd al-Bārī of Farangī Maḥāll, and was the site for many Khilāfat committees and rallies.

The political backgrounds of many of Lucknow's leading Muslim families meant that the city also played a prominent political role in Muslim politics in the eventful decade before India's independence. The city was heavily embroiled in the Pakistan movement, with city residents like Chaūdhry Khāliq al-Zamān (1307-1392/ 1889-1973) among its most vociferous

advocates. Simultaneously the city was a major centre for nationalist Muslim organisations that aligned themselves with the Indian National Congress and opposed the creation of Pakistan and India's partition, notably the All India Shi'a Political Conference, which was founded in 1354/1935.

Especially in the 1930s-40s, the city's historic cultural pedigree and contemporary political turbulence combined to make Lucknow a centre for radical, politically-oriented literary movements, pioneered by a young generation of Muslim authors. Sajjād Ẓahīr (1899-1973), Lucknow resident and communist, was among the founders of the Progressive Writer's Association, a radical literary group that held its first session in Lucknow in 1355/1936. The movement's authors produced novels and short stories, chiefly in Urdu, with secular and leftist leanings, and established literary magazines such as *Nuqūsh*, *Ṣavērah* and *Adab-i-Laṭīf*. The movement's conveners also recalibrated Lucknow's old custom of elite literary *musha'īrah*s as large, public gatherings, aiming to foster middle-class engagement. Simultaneously, other notable poets emerged from the *qaṣbah*s outside of Lucknow, including Jōsh Malīḥābādī (1894-1982), whose works of Urdu in the formats of *nāẓm*, *rubā'īyyāt* and *marṣīyah* combined classical Islamic genres and vocabulary with revolutionary themes inspired by contemporary politics.

India's partition wrought much turbulence upon the Muslim families of the city and its hinterlands, as latterly documented by Muslim novellists such as Attia Hosain (1331-1418/ 1913-1998). The emigration of much of the city's Muslim social and political leadership, together with post-independence land reforms that disadvantaged much of the Muslim landed aristocracy, led in turn to the weakening of many of the Islamic institutions, schools and public ceremonies that such families had supported. This has led to a sense that the Muslim communities of Lucknow – now the capital of Uttar Pradesh, India's largest province – have been impoverished both socio-economically and culturally since independence.

A popular awareness of the city's illustrious history and unique *tehzīb* has, nevertheless, endured, with nostalgia for past glories continuing to offer an anchor for the city's contemporary identity. Evocations of the city in short stories and novels, and later, in film and music, have established the city's wider reputation. The city also frequently hold events and festivals celebrating various aspects of its culture.

Despite the decline of Lucknow's Islamicate culture, the city has remained a leading centre of South Asian Islamic thought and learning, and its scholarly heritage have given rise to important modern Islamic thinkers. Abū' al-Ḥasan 'Alī Ḥasani Nadwī (1332-1420/ 1914-1999), a student and later the principal of Nadwa't al-'Ulamā from the 1960s, became one of India's most important scholars and Muslim community representative on social and political issues. His many books covered numerous subjects including Islamic worship and education, and Indian Muslim responses to religious decline, and life in a secular, pluralist nation.

Moreover, and separately from the city's scholarly circles, Lucknow's heritage of both Islamic learning and social radicalism have established Lucknow as a space of reformist and liberal Islamic mobilisation, including Muslim women's movements. One of India's earliest Muslim women's groups, the Bazm-i-Khawātīn, emerged in Lucknow in 1352-3/1934, as did the All India Muslim Women's Personal Board generations later in 1425/2005, which was created to promote to promote women's rights and demand the reform of Muslim personal laws. Muslim women's groups in the city have also established innovative religious practices that are distinct to the city, including women's public congregational prayers, and the foundation of the 'Anbar Masjid, a mosque for women.

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