CHAPTER 7

TERRITORIALITY

Localism denounced by revolutionaries—territoriality defined—local character of tribal peasant revolts—ethnic space—physical space—time as a correlate of space—territoriality and consciousness among non-tribal peasantry: caste, locality and culture—Kunbi territorial ties and Maratha peasant movements—territoriality of the uprisings of 1857-8 as recognized by counter-insurgency—peasant violence focused on local enemies: local administration and local moneylenders—local units as the social base of violence: Rajputs, Mewatis, Gujars—local revolts seen as caste revolts—uprisings in single-caste villages in support of mutineers of respective castes—ethnic solidarity as an instrument of rebel mobilization—the political aspect of caste ambition as a factor of insurgency: Gujars, Patwars, Monas—intercaste mobilization at the local level: some instances—Meghar Singh’s rebellion: its course and character—intersection of ethnic and physical space—territoriality as a positive aspect of insurgency.

How far can insurgency spread? Is there a natural limit beyond which it cannot carry in spite of its speed and the versatility of the means of its transmission? This is a question which some of the great rebellions in history forced their leaders to ask. They were disappointed to find that even the most powerful of peasant uprisings were often unable to exceed local boundaries. Trotsky gave voice to a common exasperation in this respect when he commented on the failure of the Russian revolution of 1905 to generalize itself in the countryside. ‘Local cretinism is history’s curse on all peasant riots’, he wrote. Even Mao Tse-tung who took on the whole a more positive view of peasant militancy found peasant ‘localism’ a serious impediment to party-building in the Hunan-Kiangsi border area in 1928, that critical year of retreat and regrouping in the career of the Chinese revolution. Ten years later, at the beginning of the war of resistance against Japan, he was still unhappy about the existence of localism in

1 Trotsky: 65.  2 Mao: I 93.
peasant guerilla units and guerilla bases ‘which are frequently preoccupied with local considerations to the neglect of the general interest’. 

These observations link both these leaders directly to a historiographical tradition going back to Engels. The latter in his famous work on the German Peasant War of 1525 dwells again and again on this particular limitation and shows how the want of co-operation between the armed peasantry of neighbouring regions led often to their defeat. Words and imageries signifying the peasants’ inability to rise above local considerations abound in his text. ‘The mass of the peasants never overstepped the boundaries of local relations and local outlook.’ They were ‘confined to their local horizon’. Indeed, what ‘ruined the Peasant War’ was, according to him, their ‘stubborn provincialism’ and ‘appalling narrow-mindedness’, qualities which he described as ‘always inevitable among the peasant masses’. 

What is this consciousness which is so bitterly denounced by revolutionaries as a limiting factor of peasant insurgency? It is made up, in its Indian form, of a sense of belonging to a common lineage as well as to a common habitat—an intersection of two primordial referents which, for the purpose of the present discussion, we shall call territoriality. The relation between its two components, consanguinity and contiguity, was the subject of an argument among scholars for a long time. Maine, and following him Morgan, had attributed to the former a sort of historical precedence and structural primacy until R. H. Lowie demolished this theory to prove that ‘the two principles... however antithetical, are not of necessity mutually exclusive’. He showed that in the historically earlier social formations ‘both the bilateral (family) and the unilateral (clan, sib, moiety) unit are rooted in a local as well as a consanguine factor’. Our use of the concept of territoriality in this chapter and elsewhere in this work agrees with his conclusion that ‘the two types of union—by blood tie and local bond—are in reality intertwined’. In this we conform to the practice of Indian sociology, especially in the field of village studies where the notion, if not the term

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8 Mao: II 108.
6 Maine: 105–9; Lowie: 53, 66, 73 et passim.
itself, often occurs in descriptions of unity and discord. What we intend to do however is to try and extend its application to the series of larger and more intense, hence qualitatively different, rural conflicts which rocked the subcontinent under the Raj from time to time.

With the exception of the uprisings triggered off by the Mutiny (to which we shall turn later on in this chapter) the most extensive disturbances of this type until 1900 were those caused by tribal peasant revolts. Even these were on the whole local in character—a fact which appears to have impressed many observers close to those events. The Birsai ulugulan ranged over an area of 400 square miles, yet in retrospect the General Administration Report of Chotanagpur Division for 1899–1900 could describe it as no more than a ‘localised affair’.6 In much the same vein the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal commented on the hool as it was still sweeping irresistibly through Damin-i-Koh: ‘I do not see reason to believe that the rising is any but a local one’; and again, ‘Every thing that has been heard confirms me in the conviction that this rising is merely local.’7 Dalton, too, in his account of the Kol insurrection of 1832, noticed a tendency on the part of the rebels not to operate beyond their immediate neighbourhoods. ‘It does not appear that the Kols in their work of destruction moved far from their own homesteads’, he wrote.8

In each of these instances the range of the rebellion was contingent on a whole set of material conditions relating to the economic life of the populations concerned, the terrain on which they fought, their strength in arms and men as against that of their foes and so on. The force and combination of these factors differed from one local event to another and gave each of them its particular character. What was common to them all, however, was the manner in which the rebels’ view of the enemy as an alien provided the domain of an uprising with its subjective determinations. These latter were made up of two categories of concepts denoting ethnic space and physical space, each of which again had a negative and positive aspect

6 Singh: 194.
7 JP, 19 July 1855: Lieutenant-Governor’s Minutes (12 & 16 July 1855).
8 Dalton: 172.
depending on whether it sought to define the domain in terms of the otherness of the alien or in those of the self-identity of the insurgents themselves.

Hostility towards ‘foreigners’ which was such a prominent feature of the rebellions mentioned above, antedates them by a considerable length of time. In the Chota Nagpur plateau it was perhaps as old as the last quarter of the seventeenth century when the jagirdari system was first introduced there. In Damin-i-Koh, too, thanks to the intrusion of Hindu landlords and moneylenders into what was originally designed as a Santal sanctuary, it had at least two full decades to mature before the outbreak of the hool. In the event the term diku, used generically in the local tribal languages to describe anyone belonging to ‘non-tribal out-groups’, came to acquire a meaning which indicated at the same time both the ethnic and the class aspects of the exploitation of the peasantry of these regions. The semantic range assigned to this lexeme in Hoffmann’s *Encyclopaedia Mundaria* and Bödding’s *Santal Dictionary* clearly brings this out. Diku in these works stands for ‘a Hindu’, ‘a Hindu landlord’, ‘Hindi or Sadani’, ‘a Hindu or Bengali of the better class’, etc., and diku-n—‘to become the landlord of a village’. It has also been noticed that in at least one language of the Mundari group *di* means ‘that’ and the plural diku—‘those’, a telling deixis which leaves little room for doubt about the speaker’s insistence on his own separate identity. Linguistic evidence such as this was recorded by missionaries and administrators at a time when the memory of some of these tribal insurrections was still quite vivid. Yet nearly sixty-seven years after the last of these great revolts and twenty years after the end of the Raj the pejorative associations of the term were found to be still quite firmly embedded in popular mentality among the adivasis of Chota Nagpur. A survey conducted by a group of sociologists in this area in 1967 showed that it had not only retained its dual function of signifying the non-autochthones (such as Hindus, Musalmans, Europeans, Marwaris, Biharis, Bengalis, etc.) and class enemies (such as rural

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* Roy: 165.  
* See Sinha *et al.* Much of our argument on this particular point is based on the results of this survey and on the linguistic information presented in this excellent article.
capitalists, banias, moneylenders, rajas, zamindars and landlords’ servants), but had acquired for itself a new and expressive moral connotation. Diku, said many of the Munda, Oraon and Ho informants, deriving, ironically enough, from an alien etymology, meant for them ‘trouble-makers’ (dik dik karnewale). The stereotype which was thus established was backed by a host of other words, phrases, imageries and adages to emphasize the malevolence, avarice, meanness and generally the negative qualities of the outsider. Looter, deceiver, exploiter—such were the epithets predicated on him. He was unreliable and fearsome. His eyes (diku med) were like those of a dog, for he fawned on his master for small favours and snarled at all others to keep them away. He was unfriendly: he would not recognize his own neighbour. ‘A deko friend a thorn tree; they prick’: so ran a Santal proverb. When a Munda oppressed another, he was said to be—dikuing. And if he set himself up as a zamindar and lived off rents extracted from other Mudas, he was regarded as dikized.

No wonder then that the diku figured as a major target of violence when the time came for the tribal peoples of Damin-i-Koh and Chota Nagpur to settle scores with traders, moneylenders, landlords and their staff. This was indeed so conspicuous a feature of these insurrections that their essentially anti-colonial character was often overlooked by some observers who regarded these as nothing but a conflict between some of the exploiting and exploited sections of the Indian population itself. Yet the very error of this perception was itself an authentic register of their impact on contemporaries if only because it has a lot to tell us about the way these uprisings looked at the time (as different from what they were). For there could be no mistake about the fact that resentment against the alien intruders was what provided, for each of these massive explosions, the spark that ignited the fuse. Bindrai, the Kol leader, spoke for all tribal insurgents of the nineteenth century when he explained why his people had taken to arms in 1832:

The Pathans had taken our Hoormut and the Sing our Sisters and the Koour, Harnath Sah had forcibly deprived us of our Estates of Twelve Villages which he had given to the Sing. Our Lives we considered of no Value, and being of one Caste and Brethren, it was agreed upon that we should commence to cut, plunder, murder and
eat... It is with this resolution that we have been murdering and plundering those who have deprived us of both honour & homes...

The selective violence of that rebellion measured up to the bitterness and anger of these words. In villages where the tribal people and the dikus lived together as neighbours, it was on the latter that the Kols concentrated their attack. To the local representatives of the Raj this looked clearly like a movement aimed at the expulsion of the diku. ‘The whole of the Moondas and Coles’, they said in a report on the progress of the insurrection, ‘have taken up arms against the respectable inhabitants of the country, burnt and plundered their houses and property, and expelled them.’ Their superiors in the Calcutta Council too acknowledged that the ‘extermination or expulsion of every inhabitant of the Country, who came under the designation of Foreigner’ was what the rebels wanted, although, more aware than their subordinates of the overall implications of the uprising, they mentioned ‘the utter annihilation of the Government’ as its other objective.

Even the violence of the Santal hool which made no distinction between the sarkar and the diku and focused on both with equal intensity from the very outset, was considered by some observers as exclusively directed against the latter in its early stages. This can be clearly seen, for instance, in the semi-official account, ‘The Sonthal Rebellion’, published in the Calcutta Review of 1856 and regarded as one of the most important sources of information about that event. There is much internal evidence to show that its author had access to the reports received by the Bengal Government about the uprising and its initial thrust in Damin-i-Koh, all of which spoke emphatically of the rebels’ hostility both towards the government and towards zamindars and mahajans. He had also read or been told about the parwana issued by Sido and Kanhu on the eve of the hool. It accused the dikus as well as the sahibs of ‘sins’ committed against the Santals, announced the end of the Raj (‘the Thacoor has ordered me saying that the country is not the Sahibs’) and asked the white men to retire to the other

16 BC 1363 (54227): Vice-President’s Minute (30 Mar. 1832).
side of the Ganges failing which, it said, there would be war: 'The Sahibs and the white Soldiers will fight... The Thacoor himself will fight. Therefore you Sahibs and Soldiers [will] fight the Thacoor himself.'\textsuperscript{16} One could hardly mistake this as anything but a clear declaration of belligerence addressed both to the colonial authorities and their protégés, the native exploiters of the tribal peasantry. Yet the author of the \textit{Calcutta Review} article read in this text nothing but the Santals' determination 'to banish the traders and zamindars and all rich Bengalees from their country' and to commit 'the instant slaughter of all the muhajuns, of the Darogahs'. The parwana, he wrote, 'expressly disclaimed all intentions against the government',\textsuperscript{17} an error echoed a decade later by William Hunter when he wrote that even on 7 July 1855, the day the hool broke out at Bhagnadihi, the Santals 'do not seem to have contemplated armed opposition to the Government'.\textsuperscript{18}

What generated such optic illusion it is difficult to say. Perhaps a degree of official complacency made many nineteenth-century administrators look away when confronted with the evidence of failure in the machine they were given to run with a sense of historic mission. For the Raj had by this time come to believe firmly in its role as protector and benefactor of the peasantry, so that whenever a jacobie occurred it was comfortable for the authorities to look upon it simply as a revolt of the underdog against his native oppressor rather than against the colonial government. Whatever the reason, the blind spot which had thus developed inspired a false historiography dedicated to absolving the regime of any responsibility for making the life of the tribal peoples too miserable to bear. Its filiation was by no means limited to the school of British administrator-historians like Hunter. Indian scholars such as S. C. Roy too ignored the anti-colonialist content of these uprisings and helped to perpetuate the myth that they were

\textsuperscript{16} TTP. \textsuperscript{17} CR: 245.

\textsuperscript{18} Hunter (1897): 240. Hunter (ibid.: 238 n. 69) says that he never came across a copy of this parwana ('one of those curious missives'), but relies on the authority of 'an accurate contemporary writer with the whole facts before him'—presumably the anonymous author of CR to say: 'The ultimatum is said to have insisted chiefly on the regulation of usury, on a new arrangement of the revenues and on the expulsion, or as some say, the massacre, of all Hindu extortioners in the Santal country.'
nothing but demonstrations of ethnic antagonism. Suresh Singh is right in joining issue with the latter on this point and insisting on the predominantly political and anti-colonialist character of the Birsaiite ulgulan. Yet as he himself points out, even this, perhaps the least racially oriented of all the great tribal rebellions of the nineteenth century, was marked by ‘an under-current of hostility against Dikus’ particularly in its earlier and preparatory phase.19

Going by Hoffmann’s testimony it is clear that the malevolence of the diku had already been codified by this time in such imageries as snakes (bing), witches (najom) and tigers (kula) in Mundari usage.20 It was to be expected therefore that sentiments of fear and hatred such as these would be used to power any violent mobilization of the masses in this region. Indeed it is not difficult to locate this as an important element in Birsaiite agitation on the eve of the ulgulan. The Munda leader’s parable of stones and clods related during his visit to the Chutia temple in 1898 provides an example. He pointed to a structure of stones topped by clods of earth to serve as a crude stove of the kind often used in the country for cooking outdoors, and apparently made his followers believe that the stones and clods changed places before their very eyes, just as Mundas and dikus, he told them, were bound to do one day.21 Again, at an important assembly of the tribe at Dombari hill the following year he unfurled a two-coloured flag with its white symbolizing the purity of the Munda and red the exploitation by the diku and prophesied that ‘there was going to be a fight with the dikus, the ground would be as red as the red flag with their blood’.22

Thus the domain of the rebellion defined itself negatively by exclusion of the diku just as the tribe defined itself in terms of the otherness of the alien. But the parallelism extends even further. There are many ideas relating to ethnos used by a tribe positively to assert its own identity. One of these, the notion of an ethnic space, occurs in all the tribal revolts discussed above. In each of them the domain of insurgency was considered to be as large as the tribe itself, a coincidence emphasized in all those preparatory acts (discussed in Chapter 4) of ritual

19 Singh: 191.  
20 Ibid.: 190 and n. 25.  
21 Ibid.: 79.  
22 Ibid.: 85, 147.
solidarity, ceremonial gathering and gerontic consultation as well as in the tendency of that violence, once it broke out, to permeate the entire tribal diaspora. The Santal insurrection was hardly a fortnight old when the authorities were alerted to the contact it had already established ‘with the numerous population of the same tribe which inhabit[ed] the districts of Pachete, Manbhoom, Singbhoom and other districts south of the Grand Trunk Road’, and feared ‘that the insurrection [might] spread from Beerbhoom to those districts which [were] the original site of the Sonthal tribe’. In this respect Major Sutherland’s perceptive comment on the Kol disturbances of 1832 could apply to the whole genre. One of the officials most knowledgeable about Chota Nagpur and the first amongst them to examine the nature of that event, he wrote:

The insurrection had no limit but that which it found in the class of people by which it was instigated. Had the Country between Chota Nagpoor and Calcutta on the one hand and Benares on the other been inhabited by Dannger Coles, the insurrection would have spread to those places. The Coles are one large family which can unite for any purpose good or bad. It is perhaps fortunate for us that they are not more extensive, and that there are not many such families in India.

The tribe, in other words, was not merely the initiator of the rebellion but was its site as well. Its consciousness of itself as a body of insurgents was thus indistinguishable from its recognition of its ethnic self. ‘The tribe remained the boundary for man, in relation to himself as well as to outsiders’: this observation made by Engels about the Iroquois was true of the Indian adivasis, too, not merely when they lived in peace with themselves and the Raj, but even more so when they took up arms both as a positive and a negative affirmation of their ethnicity.

Corresponding to ethnic space there was also their notion of physical space which figured prominently in every tribal rebellion and constituted an important element of its territoriosity. Its function was to enable the insurgents to assert their own

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24 BC 1363 (54227): Sutherland’s Note to Vice-President’s Private Secretary (Mar. 1832).
identity in terms of what they claimed to be their homeland. As with the category of *ethnos*, antagonism towards the diku provided it with its negative determination. It had its roots in the undoubted fact of the expropriation of the adivasis. ‘They have taken away from us our trees, fishes, lands and jagirs’, said Singrai, the Kol.²⁶ The massive alienation of tribal lands to outsiders in the years preceding the insurrection which he led, testified to the truth of his indictment and was indeed officially acknowledged as one of its primary causes: ‘We have reason to believe that lands were taken by the Rajah and the Jageerdars from Coles or Raoteeas and given to Farmers for an increase of Revenue, and it is easy to understand that the ousted parties would try by all means to recover their lands.’²⁷

This was confirmed by a well-informed administrator who, commenting on the event seven years later, ascribed it to ‘no one cause so much as the dispossession of the Moondas and Mankies who are the Bhoonears of Sonepoor of their lands’.²⁸

These dispossessed *bhumi hrs* were among the most active participants in the Bhumij rebellion and the Sardar agitation which formed the most important links between the revolt of the Kol and that of the Birsaitees at the end of the century. Bindrai, one of the Mankis most responsible for inspiring the Kol to rise in arms, joined forces with Ganganarayan in the Bhumij rebellion in 1833, while from 1858 onwards the ‘class of uprooted *bhumi hrs*’ constituted, according to Singh, ‘the core of the Sardar movement’.²⁹ Both represented the uneasy response of the tribal peasantry of Chota Nagpur to the combined impact of the diku and the colonial government on an agrarian order which was the very basis of their livelihood as well as of their way of life. The protracted campaign of the Sardars was in fact called *mulkui larai*, meaning, literally, the fight for the land.³⁰ Spread over a period of forty years the larai exceeded the purely economic objective it had assigned itself in the initial stages, and what was originally conceived as a struggle for land assumed, by a series of transformations, the character of a struggle for a homeland. When, therefore, the hour struck for

²⁶ BC 1363 (54226): ‘The Translation of the Statement of Sing Rai... taken at Inchagur... on the 14th of February and subsequent dates’.
²⁷ BC 1363 (54227): Vice-President’s Minute (30 Mar. 1832).
²⁸ J. C. Jha: 151.
³⁰ Ibid.
the ulgulan, the ritual chants of the Mundas rang with lament for a lost primordial disum. Here are some stanzas from Suresh Singh’s translation: 31

The land given to us in the beginning [of Creation] by Singbonga
was snatched away by our enemies
We shall assemble in large numbers with weapons in our hands
The new sun of religion was born, the hill and valley were lit up
The zamindars harassed and put us to trouble
Biswa Bhagwan is our leader...
We shall not be afraid of the monkeys
We shall not leave the zamindars, moneylenders and shopkeepers
[alone]
They occupied our land
We shall not give up our khutkatt rights
From leopards and snakes we reclaimed our land
The happy land was seized by them

O Birsa, our land is afloat
Our country drifts away...
The big enemy, the sahebs donning the hat
Seized our land

But the notion of an ‘original home’ was more than a mere zero sign of rebel consciousness. Neither the Kols nor the Mundas resigned themselves to mourning an absence. Territoriality expressed as a sense of physical space had also a positive side to it. In the insurrection of the Kols this was indicated by the fact of their ‘never having attempted to cross the Subarnareeka [Subarnarekha] River (which at that season is nearly dry) into the adjacent Pergunnahs of Patcoom and Seldah of the Jungle Mehals, which while those Pergunnahs presented every temptation to plunder from the opulence of the many Inhabitants, were wholly unprotected and could not, it appears, at that time have offered any resistance’. 32 Obviously for them that river was the frontier by which the realm of insurgency defined itself—a sort of geopolitical sign of the aims of the uprising, similar to what the Ganges was to be for the Santal hool later on in the century.

This positive spatial aspect of territoriality was even more

31 Ibid., Appendix H. The translation has been slightly modified.
32 BC 1363 (54227): Blunt’s Minute (4 Apr. 1832). The same point is made in his earlier minute of 28 January 1832 as well.
clearly emphasized in the ulgulan. The recovery of the lost homeland of the tribe (ekasi piri tirasi badi, to mention it by its picturesque name) was a central aim of Birsa’s campaign, and he educated his people for this task by ceremonial visits to their ancestral sites and his emphasis on recovering the tribal ‘records of rights’. The idea was obviously powerful enough to be incorporated into their religion. Some Birsaite hymns like the one cited below bear witness to this:

O Lord, Chutia Garh was our ancestral place... The Lord [Birsa] on his return from Jagarnathpur took brothers and sisters to Chutia Temple. He went there to bring the records of rights, manners and customs for us to support our ancestral rights which had been taken away by the enemy. Now we shall worship the Tulsi plant... We shall live according to the religion in our lands and spread it all over.\(^{33}\)

What had begun thus as a simple declaration of spiritual faith absorbed in the course of the ulgulan some of the anxieties generated by that conflict. ‘O Dharati Aba’, they chanted then, ‘help us today/... With your strength turn bullets to water/ Let all enemies fall prostrate/O Dharati Aba, ours is the land, ours the country.’\(^{34}\)

The adivasi view of the otherness of the diku in spatial terms was an element of the territoriality of the hool too. The self-differentiation of the autochthones in this particular respect is perhaps more clearly enunciated in the Mare Hapram Ko Reak Katha\(^{35}\) than in any other recorded tribal tradition. Its account of the early history of the Santals sets them apart from the dikus by their residence in clearly demarcated areas even when there was no hostility between them: ‘They settled in the more open parts, we in the hills and the jungles.’ But that was a long time ago when they lived together in peace in the legendary land of Champa. Since then however their relation had been one of continuous antagonism. Wherever the tribe settled down in the course of their restless wanderings they invariably clashed with the ‘others’, that is, Hindus and Musalmans. They lost Champa to the former who followed close on their heels into

\(^{33}\) Singh: Appendix K.

\(^{34}\) Ibid.: Appendix H. Slightly modified.

\(^{35}\) MHKRK: xci–xciii, clxxvi–clxxvii.
the plains (*tandi desh*) and ousted them from there. The Santals pushed on still further but only to come into contact with the Musalmans (*Turuks*) and flee in fear. ‘We moved on and on like caterpillars.’ In the ‘Shikar country’, they cleared the king’s jungles and acquired some villages for themselves. ‘But the Hindus chased us away even from there and seized our lands and settlements.’ Eventually they came down to the plains again, and were ‘driven by Hindu oppression and hunger’ to cross the Ajay and spread over the hilly tracts to the north and east up to the Ganges. ‘We had to fight many a battle with the dekos’, says the *Reak Katha*; ‘and we are not reconciled to them even today. Wherever we clear up some land for a settlement, the dekos come and grab it.’ Inevitably, therefore, this grievous sense of loss formed a part of the complex motivation for the uprising of 1855. As a Santal folk song has it:

Sido, why are you bathed in blood?
Kanhu, why do you cry *Hul, Hul*?
For our people we have bathed in blood
For the trader thieves
Have robbed us of our land.36

However, in the hool, no less than it was in the ulgulan, the fight for land merged in the general struggle for a homeland. According to Dalton, the region between the Ganges and the Kasai was regarded by the Santals as their ‘fatherland’.37 Sherwill mentioned Monghyr as its westernmost point. This was confirmed by yet another officer who wrote about their plan to march ‘via Bhaugulpore to Monghyr to take possession of the Fort, which they affirmed to be the western boundary of a Kingdom once their own’.38 Whatever its precise geographical boundaries (as a country of the mind it didn’t need any) its presence as an ideological factor in their rebellion was obvious. Even before it actually broke out, ‘mysterious allusions’ were often made to a certain Morgo Raja of the Pareshnath hills who, it was believed, would set up ‘an independent kingdom of the south country, meaning the original country of the Sonthal tribe’.39 And in the third week of July 1855 when the hool was

36 Archer: 207.  
37 Dalton: 208.  
still going strong, the colonial authorities were alarmed at the prospect ‘that the insurrection may spread from Beerbhoom to those districts which are the original site of the Sonthal tribe’. The insurgents themselves referred to the Ganges as a frontier of this ‘original site’. In the parwana issued by Sido and Kanhu on the eve of the insurrection, they asked the Europeans to retire to the other side of that river. ‘If you are satisfied with the Thacoor then you must go to the other side of the Ganges’, they advised. This, according to the Reak Katha, was to apply to all other outsiders as well. One of the elders whose testimony is recorded there, mentions that ‘the Ganges was regarded as our frontier at the time of the rebellion’ and the diku would have been driven beyond it but for the intervention of the sahibs on their behalf. Old man Jugia’s reminiscences, too, confirmed this. ‘Sido and Kanhu then commanded’, he said, ‘we shall slay all the rajahs and mahajans, and chase away all other Hindus beyond the Ganges; we shall then rule ourselves.’ The insurrection was thus a consciously defined space for them.

A correlate of the category of space was a sense of time. As such, this also entered into the subjective determination of territoriality as one of its elements and helped a tribal rebellion to define its domain in terms of the insurgents’ relation to the diku. Expressed in its most generalized form as a contrasted pair of times (then/now), a good past negated by a bad present, its function was to endow the struggle against the alien with the mission of recovering the past as a future.

The traditions of the Santals are overlaid with nostalgia. Collected as folklore fifty years after the hool, some of these refer to a state of grace from which they are believed to have fallen by sinning against God (Thakur Baba). Others, recorded closer to the event, in 1871, are informed by a more secular vision. They look back to an age of relatively greater affluence and purer ethical conduct. The decline since then is said to have been caused by factors of two different kinds—those which are internal to the tribe itself and those for which the responsibility lies with the diku. ‘Times have degenerated

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40 JP, 23 Aug. 1855: Grey to GOI, Military Department (21 July 1855).
41 TTP.
42 MHRK: xci, clxxvi.
43 For some specimens see Bompas: 401–2.
now': the Santals no longer observe the customary norms of
deferece due from women to men, from daughters to mothers,
sons to fathers, and the youth to the elders; the majhis have lost
their ancient authority; disputes, so rare in the past, are com-
mon even among affines; there is no longer that peace and
accord with which people used to live together in former times;
the high standards of sexual morality once based on religion
and maintained by the fear of reprisal and communal sanctions
have given way to seduction and promiscuity; industry which
in the past made the people produce what they needed for
their own immediate consumption has disappeared and sloth
taken over; and so on.\(^4^4\) As against these there are some other
symptoms of moral and material decline attributable directly
to the intrusion of the dikus into Santal life. Some of these are
vices acquired by the Santals when they came into contact with
the aliens. Specified in the Reak Katha\(^4^5\) these are as follows:

**Begging**: ‘Formerly there were no beggars. The few who go around
begging in the villages nowadays have learnt to do so from the dikus.
This is generally disliked. Nor is this necessary. For whoever is willing
to work can find enough subsistence within the village.’

**Stealing**: ‘Formerly the Hoir Hapans (Santals) never stole. But
nowadays they have learnt to do even this in emulation of the dikus.’

**Quarrelling**: The Santals often fight among themselves over land and
quarrels break out over the use of boundaries between fields. ‘These
two forms of dispute have now spread all over our land, thanks to the
element set by the deko hapans (Hindus). There were no such disputes
in the past.’ It is the dikus ‘who are making us fight between ourselves
and grab each other’s properties. Where they are, there’s no amity . . .
Had the ‘deko pusis’\(^4^6\) not been there amongst us, we the Santals
would have been better off morally.’

**Lying**: ‘From the very beginning until the other day we the Santals
didn’t know how to tell a lie; we said only what we saw with our own
eyes, whether this concerned our enemies or our own brethren. Since
the advent of the sahebs some of our people have been hanged to
death only because they owned up to the truth . . . It was not cus-
tomary with us to produce the witnesses one after the other before our

\(^{4^4}\) MHKRK: cxxxvii–cxxxviii.  \(^{4^5}\) Ibid.: cxxv, cxlii, cxlvii.

\(^{4^6}\) According to Bödding, the term ‘deko pushi’ means ‘a Hindu cat, a term of
contempt (said to be due to the Hindus, like cats, being particularly fond of milk
and fish). As a Santal saying goes, ‘You may pass with a Santal, you will never pass
with a Deko-cat (i.e. you may deceive a Santal, but not a Hindu).’ Sinha et al.: 127.
own tribunals; they were all presented together and made to face each other. And yet no one would commit perjury. But the Santals have now learnt the language of intrigue from the dikus and like them are selling off their life and honour for a tumbler of country liquor."

The dikus, however, were held responsible not merely for the moral corruption of the Santals but also for the loss of their material prosperity. The intrusion of the moneylender and trader in the economic life of the tribe was recorded in its tradition as a watershed dividing a happy past and a poor present. The phenomenon was integrated into the legends of its early wanderings and assigned a place in popular imagination by many a hostile proverb and imagery. ‘Formerly no one borrowed from the mahajans’, said Kaloyan, the wise old man of the race, in his ancestral account,47 ‘nor indeed were there any mahajans around. It was only in Shikar country that they latched on to us for the first time . . . Since then until this very day we have been in their clutches and they are tearing away at us like vultures . . . As the saying goes: . . . “The Hindu sahukar will chew up even the dry bones of the aged and the decrepit.” As a matter of fact it was their extortion which put us on the run again from Shikar as well. However, at the beginning they were not so unscrupulous about charging interests . . . but their oppression increased as time passed . . . We, too, on our part have to take some of the blame. People fall into the mahajans’ clutches without considering the pros and cons of what they are doing [while transacting with them].’

A sense of time expressed in terms of a then/now distinction may be said to have been implicit in the Santal hool if for no other reason than that it was a determined and conscious attempt to end the tyranny of the diku. However, it would be reading too much into the evidence to say that the termination of an unbearable present was regarded by the rebels as the means of recovering the past. We know that the establishment of some kind of a political kingdom was a part of their stated aims, and that the parwana issued by their leaders had, indeed, announced the advent of ‘the reign of Truth’ and ‘True justice’.48 But it would be rash to suggest that this rather hazy vision of the shape of things to come was to any significant degree invested with the qualities of an idealized past. By con-

47 MHKRK: cxxxix. 48 Ibid.: xci; TTP.
trast, the temporal component was more fully developed in the Birsaita ulgulan. Its spatial objective, the purloined disum, was assigned a place in time not only as a memorable past but also as a desirable future in the Munda imagination. The domain of rebellion extended thus in both directions from the subject’s locus in an embattled present.

A tendency to look back in time had featured in the Sardar agitation too, but it was only under Birsa’s leadership that the distinction between past and present came to acquire a decisive ideological function. Codified in the form of the antinomy Satjug/Kaljug, it derived at the same time from the Hindu myth of the four epochs (yugas: Satya, Treta, Dwapara, Kali) and Judaeo-Christian millenarism, imbibed respectively from the Vaishnava contacts of his early youth and his schooling at a missionary institution as a child. Whatever its origin, the opposition between the two jugs figured most prominently in the religious discourses and rituals by which he prepared his tribe for the uprising of 1899–1900.

In the Birsaita homiletics the difference between the past and the present conditions of the Mundas is represented as a contrast between conditions characteristic of Satjug and Kaljug. The comparison ranges over all the salient aspects of material and spiritual life. In Satjug the Mundas were directly ruled by Niranjan, the creator of the universe. In Kaljug they are ruled by Queen Mandodari, the spouse of the mythical demon-king and archetypal evil, Ravana. The contrast between life under divine rule and subjection under the Raj presided over by Queen Victoria could not be more clearly stated.

Land constituted the material basis of the blissful life of the Mundas in Satjug. Their ancestors cleared the jungle and made the land habitable for man. They lived in harmony with nature and with the wild beasts around them. They set up colonies, controlled floods, excavated wells and tanks and learnt the use of natural springs for the supply of fresh water. They introduced agriculture and made the earth ready to bear the grains and fruits they needed. In Kaljug the Mundas have been expropriated of this land which once belonged to them. They have been robbed by zamindars and mahajans who have

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49 For our information on this subject as given in this section we have relied entirely on Singh: 27, 36, 147, 160–3 & Appendix K.
made their way in their midst like ‘a substance smooth like oil’ and ruined them. In general, the natural economy of their Golden Age has been replaced by a money economy, industry and commerce, their freedom and self-sufficiency by the tyranny and exploitation of the dikus. As a result they have nothing left of their ancient prosperity. In Satjug they used to gather seven harvests from each sowing; in Kaljug they have only one harvest per sowing. In that happy ancestral past they used to eat their meals out of gold and silver dishes. Now they starve to death. In the old days no one died of disease. Now it is common to suffer from and die of illness. Gone is the time when there was no sorrow on earth.

This decline in material well-being corresponds to a moral degeneration. Thanks to the dikus, Munda society has been penetrated by alien influences. The prevalence of karam and paika dances is symptomatic of a general and widespread corruption of their race in Kaljug. A high standard of social and spiritual morality was characteristic of their culture in Satjug. The Mundas in those days would commit no violence against their kinsmen. Sexual morality was strictly observed and unlike the dikus, men would not exceed the socially prescribed degree of joking with women. Spiritually, Satjug was characterized by an emphasis on religious faith and ritual observance. The rules of purity were taken seriously. No one would eat or drink before taking his bath. Alcohol was forbidden. People wore the sacred thread on their person and sanctified themselves by sandal paste marks. They prayed and made ritual offerings at their ancestral temple. They turned away from the anti-gods (Asur) and worshipped the sacred tulsi plant twice every day. All this has disappeared from Munda life in Kaljug.

This contrast between the two jugs was used by Birsa to encourage his people not only to reject their inglorious present but also to fight for a better future and Satjug was his blueprint for that future. He prophesied the end of Kaljug in chiliastic terms: ‘O men, beware! This world will not end like this . . . it will end in great misery. I will turn deep waters into outlets. I will crush the hills.’ And the reign of the enemies of the Mundas was to be ‘destroyed in a violent conflict’. All ‘the Romans, Germans, British, Rajas and Zamindars, Satans and devils’ would be driven away from the land. ‘The Zamindars are now
very happy and they laugh at us. But their allotted period, their time-limit is over.’ The land was to regain its former purity when washed with the sacrificial blood of ‘a white goat’, that is, the white men. The Mundas would then march to Delhi, occupy the ‘throne’, and ‘rule in the land’. Eventually, ‘when they win back our kingdom, they will make merry and their happiness will never end’. This was to be the beginning of yet another Satjug, a recapitulation of the original: ‘And the cultivation of only one field will do for us. The people will not take land even if it is tied to their neck. There will be no war in the land. All will be done in accordance with religion. Just as our ancestors ruled according to their religion, so shall we reign.’

The coming end of Kaljug and advent of Satjug was a theme on which Birsa played again and again in his sermons at mass congregations and parables told to smaller groups of disciples. At Thakurdura, for instance, he looked into a dried up well and exclaimed that Satjug had arrived and Kaljug was on its way out. The termination of the bad present was ritually enacted at some of the larger gatherings of his people on the eve of the ulgulan. A contemporary account of the Birsaite assembly at Dombari in February 1898 offers us a glimpse of this picturesque ceremony:

...to perform the last rites of the enemies an artificial grove was improvised on Dombari hill. And they cut a banyan tree in the name of the Queen and observed the Holi festival. They placed the earthen lamps all over the tree and pitched a red and white flag near it. Then they danced the Karma dance of Kaljug. They chopped it from one side. A red flag was pitched on one side a white flag on the other. For the faithful, all the Birsaites, an artificial enclosure was built and the white flag pitched. All customs and manners, dance, garland, bangle, flowery finger ring and flower comb of Kaljug were prohibited and given up... And he [Birsa] put them [his enemies] to death. He danced on the dancing ground to the accompaniment of drum beats and declared that the Empire of the British Queen had come to an end. They proclaimed that in the name of the Queen they would shoot arrows at her effigy. They set the plantain tree on fire and cut it down and did away with it in her name.

It was thus that the wicked epoch and its institutionalized form, the Raj, were symbolically destroyed to make way for a
return to Satjug and Munda rule. The Hindu festival of Holi celebrated by burning the effigy of Holika, the she-demon, to mark the end of the old year and usher in the new, was its ritual equivalent. And since the function of nime is to make a wish come true, the ulgulan when it came darkening the sky with arrows and dotting the land with columns of fire, was to be the actualization of that ceremony performed at Dombari hill. Enmeshed as it was in the fantasy of a Satjug, it was nevertheless a step forward in the direction of a real future. In that future the Mundas were not destined to walk on earth as twenty-one foot tall giants like the fabled supermen of the Golden Age dreamed up by Birsa. However, thanks to this dream they gained immensely in stature as rebels fighting for a life free from the domination of foreign and native oppressors.

It will be wrong to deduce from what has been said above that territoriality was characteristic of the outlook and uprisings of the tribal peasantry alone. On the contrary, this was an element of consciousness common to all of the rural populations including Hindus and Muslims and deeply ingrained in their view of society, politics and culture secular as well as religious. The growth and consolidation of a colonial empire with its centralized bureaucracy, army and legal system, its institutions to purvey a western-style education, its railways, roads and postal communication, and above all the emergence of an all-India market economy did much to undermine the force of territoriality. Yet the habit of thinking and acting on a small local scale, continued throughout the colonial period and particularly until the end of the nineteenth century: the nationalization of politics on a sub-continental scale was still to take some time fully to develop.

It is generally believed that the Pax Britannica contributed much to the reinforcement of casteism at the expense of territoriality. Yet in a curiously paradoxical way it was this very process which guaranteed the survival of the latter and most caste populations, including, as Dumont points out, even the widely distributed Brahman castes of Uttar Pradesh, tended to

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5. Facts and words quoted in this paragraph are taken from Srinivas (1960): 16; Miller: 410, 418; Dumont: 199, 200; Mayer: 151, 212–13, 271–2; Pocock: 131, 159; and Inden & Nicholas: 33.
concentrate in a few districts as their respective foci. For territoriality, though by no means identical with caste consciousness, was still for a long time to count as one of its basic components. Miller's observation about the system of territorial segmentation in Malabar as 'a necessary correlate of a rigid caste system' could be said to apply to all of India, for everywhere, as in Malabar, it was the function of these small local units to promote intercaste relations and sustain the caste hierarchy at the village level. They represented the villager's notion of the size and spread of his own subcaste—a correspondence so direct, indeed, that in many cases a subcaste was known by the name of its locality. The range of affinal links of a village subcaste group was yet another instance of such correspondence. Described by Mayer as a 'subcaste's region' it acted, among other things, as a catchment area for marital transactions involving its members. Pocock's study of such transactions among the Patidar of Gujarat shows how until recently the territorial factor used to be a determining influence on marriage alliances concluded by the members of an ekada. And one may cite linguistic usages such as parasamparke bhai ('neighbourhood-related brother'), gramsamparke kaka ('village-related father's younger brother'), etc., in Bengali as further evidence of the link between kinship and locality. Altogether it is difficult not to accept Mayer's observation that at 'the level of the effective caste group and subcaste group... we step down to purely local relationships'.

Caste, of course, is pre-eminently Hindu and casteism alien to canonical Islam. Yet in the local societies where Hindus and Muslims live together the latter, too, are assigned ranks, rights and obligations in what amounts virtually to caste terms. This, according to Imtiaz Ahmad, involves them in an actual recognition of caste distinctions and its rationalization in religious terms. No wonder, then, that the divisions within Muslim society too are partly conditioned and the relations between them governed by territoriality. Thus, the Muslim Meos of Rajasthan and Haryana parallel the Bengali practice mentioned above in attributing an imaginary kinship to fellow villagers: 'The entire community is visualized as an extended family and members of each generation born in the village are believed to be like siblings, unless, of course, they are actually
closely related in a different way. A study of a local Muslim population in a West Bengal district has shown how it regards itself as an aggregate of ethnic communities called jats (meaning castes in colloquial Bengali) with a single jat living on its own in each of the ten villages out of a group of thirteen and two living together in each of the remaining three villages, but with one jat vastly outnumbering the other in every case even there. A clear pattern of territorial segmentation has been noticed among the Muslims of south India too. In Malabar the division between the father-right and mother-right Moplahs who ‘usually form two different compartments’, corresponds, in spite of a certain overlap, to fairly distinct regional concentrations—the former in the interior of South Malabar and the latter in the coastal regions of North and South Malabar and Mangalore. In Tamil Nadu the four subdivisions of the Muslim community ‘appear to be distributed within territorially distinct parts of the state’ with Kayalars and Marakayars located primarily along the Coromandel coast and Labbais and Rawthers in the interior. The division between the last two groups again corresponds to that between a predominantly southern and a northern cluster. With all four endogamy helps to reinforce their separate identities in both kinship and territorial terms. Very much the same pattern holds for Uttar Pradesh where local Sheikh Siddique groups (which for all practical purposes act as subcastes) assert their identity positively in terms of endogamy and common habitation within a particular circle of villages and negatively by refusing to acknowledge by inter-marriage or otherwise the rest of the Sheikh Siddiques in that neighbourhood as members of their own caste. Finally, it may be in order to mention that over 60 per cent of Meo marriage alliances in a Rajasthan village were found to have been contracted within a radius of twenty miles and over 90 per cent within a radius of thirty miles—clearly a case of ‘kinship enforced by propinquity’ (to quote Lowie’s happy phrase) and a close parallel to the Patidar practice cited above.

Territoriality thus is no less essential to the Hindu and Muslim way of thinking and acting in society than it is to that of the

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81 Facts and citations in this paragraph up to this point are taken from Ahmad: xxvii, 36, 39, 49, 51, 63, 65, 66, 113, 117a, 169. 82 Lowie: 69.
tribal peasantry. Indeed, this is what links even the local administrative units, such as the village and the nād as Srinivas says of Coorg, to ‘the sentiments of the people’. Such sentiments permeate all levels of the superstructure. In politics these can be traced back to a period of about a thousand years beginning with the later Vedic age when petty kingdoms were slowly evolving out of local tribal settlements—grāmas, amalgamating into rāshtras—and tribal chiefs transforming themselves into kings, a process ritualized, for instance, in the picturesque Hiranya-garbha (‘Golden Womb’) ceremony which, conducted by Brahman priests, helped the chieftains of the ātavika tribes to be ‘reborn’ into another caste or even into a caste for the first time. ‘Royal prerogative’, writes Kosambi of the earlier part of this period, was still ‘seriously restricted by tribal custom and tribal law’ and territoriality, that hallmark of tribal polity, was made explicit by such punishments as ostracism—that is, by actually cutting off the territorial bond between an offender and his local community or as the term aparuddha implies, by pronouncing him to be a person denied the right of access. Subsequently as castes began to emerge ‘the essentials of tribal society were retained in this transition, namely endogamy’ and ‘expulsion from the jāti remained the most potent and dreaded punishment, as expulsion from the gens or tribe had been earlier’. Vestiges of such correspondence between politics and territoriality are still to be found both in the authority of the local caste panchayats and in such expressions of rural justice as the temporary banishment of a man beyond the village boundary in order to punish him for the highly polluting offence of causing the death of a cow.

In many parts of colonial India the village boundary was and perhaps is even today a particularly sacred mark of territoriality. A host of godlings and rituals were its ubiquitous symbols. Srinivas mentions a ‘familiar deity in Telugu and Tamil villages’ whose name, Ellamma, literally means ‘boundary-mother’. Poleramma and Kalamman were two other boundary goddesses listed by Whitehead in his account

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54 This and other observations on ancient India in this paragraph are based on Kosambi (1972): 51, 87–8, 171 et passim, and Kosambi (1975): 148–62, 318 et passim.
of the village gods of south India. He also describes the worship of the boundary stone, *ellai-kal*, which ‘is very commonly regarded as a habitation of a local deity, and might be called a shrine or symbol with equal propriety’. In one such village near Puddukkottai he found an elaborate ceremony involving as many as nine boundary stones. The central Indian village studied by Mayer, too, had a number of shrines of this kind—three of them devoted to Adyapal Maharaj, the lord of the southern, western and eastern gates of the village, two to Bisesa Maharaj and Udreyrao Maharaj, deities who presided over its northern and south-eastern borders respectively and one to Chira, a holy stone that divided the village from a neighbouring hamlet. And in Coorg the nāḍ-boundary was the ritual site for the customary ‘plantain honour’ done to a groom on his way to the bride’s village as well as for offerings made on the outbreak of an epidemic to Mariamma, the goddess of pestilence.\(^{66}\)

Suffused thus with religiosity the territorial sentiment itself tended to be spiritualized to some extent. In Coorg, for instance, ‘it was common for deities to be identified with their nāḍs’ and consequently, for chauvinism with religion. ‘A patriot’, says Srinivas, ‘was also a devotee.’ Raiding and defending temples, ‘the most sensitive part of a nāḍ’, victories and defeats in such encounters and deeds of great daring on such occasions were the stuff of which the folklore of local patriotism and the legendary reputation of individual heroes was made. At the hour of the birth of a hero in a nāḍ, it was believed, the tower of the most important temple in its rival nāḍ would crack.\(^{67}\)

However, local solidarity was not made up merely of feuding over temples even in Coorg. The closing up of ranks by all villagers irrespective of caste in the face of a natural calamity befalling any one *okka*, the ritual mourning by all of bereavement in any single household, the village dance which concluded the harvest festival, the communal hunt which followed and the terminal feast, literally called ‘village harmony’, on the occasion of certain festivals, were all highly formalized expressions of a territorial tie which was no less secular than religious. In Malabar, too, Miller found this tie to be very strong indeed:

\(^{66}\) For the information cited here see Srinivas (1952): 180, 204; Whitehead: 24, 32, 33, 35, 101–4; Mayer: 102.

\(^{67}\) Srinivas (1952): 69, 203.
'The desam was the locus of nearly all intercaste relations from the lower (non-military) Nayar subcastes downwards.' So was the 'village region' in Malwa. A correlate of the subcaste's region but less obviously articulated in institutional terms, it was a significant element of the villager's idea of himself as a member of a local community. As Mayer defined it:

This [village] region is never made manifest, for the village as such never invites guests or acts as a body in this way... Nevertheless the village region to some extent exists because villagers do think of an area in which they are at home, where people are not felt to be strangers. In the same way as a subcaste member coming from a distance is not admitted until he can claim some connection with 'recognized' relatives, so villagers see the people outside their region as strangers, with different customs, different ways of speech, etc.

It is important to notice how the villager's self-identity in terms of his own region was negatively defined. If solidarity was one axis of territoriality, exclusion was another, and the latter had many determinations depending on the context in which it functioned. It could take the form, as it did in Malabar, of denying immigrant astrologers or barbers a desam avakasam—that is, the right to practise their traditional occupation in a desam without the approval of the family which had the hereditary privilege to render these services in that particular area. Or it could find expression in a tragic dilemma like that of the Coorg physician, Kunge, dramatized customarily at harvest festivals. He was split between his sense of duty to attend to a severely wounded man from a friendly nad and his obligation to heed his mother's injunction not to do so on the ground that the man belonged to a village traditionally hostile to her native nad and the wound had been received during a feud between the two. The mother prevailed and the warrior died testifying to the fact that a non-tribal villager's hatred of an 'outsider' could fully match a Santal's or a Munda's antagonism towards a diku.

One such outburst of hatred, historic rather than legendary, was witnessed in the Deccan riots of 1875. Moneylenders were

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70 Miller: 413; Srinivas (1952): 203.
the invariable targets of these jacqueries of the Kunbi peasantry. Their attempt, in all cases, to seize and destroy the bonds, decrees and other related documents held by their creditors, their willingness to spare the latter any further violence once the incriminating papers were obtained and resort to physical assault only if the bonds were not surrendered, leave no doubt about the precise character of the riots as a conflict between moneyed capitalists and the agriculturists exploited by them through usurious transactions. Yet this conflict was so overdetermined by territoriality that it was, for the peasant, no less a resistance to ‘foreigners’ than a struggle against oppressors.

The great majority of the moneylenders—vanis, as they were locally known—were, indeed, not natives of Maharashtra. They had migrated from Gujarat and Rajasthan and settled in the Kunbi villages of Ahmadnagar and Poona districts. The power of their purse made them indispensable to the local peasant economy without, however, assimilating them into the local society. Their insistence on maintaining intact all affinal and ritual ties with their native provinces, their aggressive techniques of money-making and above all their indifference to local sentiment had done nothing over the decades—centuries in the case of the older immigrant families—to endear them to the Kunbis even during Maratha rule. What, however, had been until then a state of uneasy symbiosis broke down altogether under the combined impact of the ryotwari system and the judicial procedure introduced by the British. It helped the vani to enmesh the peasant even further in usury and displace at the same time the village community and the traditional elite who under the old regime mediated between the state and the cultivator as well as between the latter and his creditor.\footnote{Kumar: 34–5, 151–5.} No wonder then that within two decades of British rule the moneylenders came to be regarded not merely as ruthless exploiters of the peasantry but also as elements who stood clearly outside the local tradition and subverted it. This image was not made up of peasant prejudice alone. In official statements, too, they could be represented as ‘chiefly foreigners, different in religion from their clients, entirely out of sympathy with them, and accustomed to retire with their profits after a sufficiently long
course of business to their homes in Rajputana. As for the Kunbis themselves the idea of the vani as an outsider appears to have been a directive principle of their violence in 1875. It was aimed almost exclusively at moneylenders, but within that class it discriminated carefully between the 'indigenous' and the 'alien', as the Deccan Riots Commission observed:

The Marwari and Gujar sowkars were almost exclusively the victims of the riots, and in villages where sowkars of the Brahmin and other castes shared the money lending business with Marwaris it was usual to find that the latter only were molested.

A negatively defined territorially was thus as basic to Maratha peasant insurgency as it was to the tribal uprisings above. However, there is some evidence to suggest that the territorial tie operated among the Kunbis not merely as a measure of exclusion. They also appear to have used it, as did the Santals and the Mundas, to promote solidarity between neighbouring villages against their common foe. A letter sent by the inhabitants of Kallas in the summer of 1875 to those of Akola reproaching them for not joining in the campaign of excommunication against Marwaris 'who are deemed as excluded from the community of this village', appealed for cooperation, 'for the good of all of us... as we consider Kallas and Akola as one village.' One wonders if in sending out this appeal the Kunbis of Taluka Indapur were drawing consciously on a tradition of Maratha peasant militancy based on coterritoriality. For the latter is known to have played an important part in popular resistance to fiscal surveys in Khandesh in 1852. This movement derived its strength from the solidarity of the Pajna and Tilole Kunbis who lived in the Savda and Yaval regions of that district. As the officials most concerned with this event wrote at the time, 'The fact of all the chief men of the Pajnne and Teelolee castes to which the mass of the cultivators in the Yawul and Sowda districts belong, being residents of the villages of Sowda Mahal, accounts for the

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63 DRCR: 3.
64 DRCR(C): 210.
agitation having originated and attained its greatest development there.\textsuperscript{65}

Nothing brings out more clearly the role of territoriality as a positive factor of rebel mobilization among the non-tribal peasantry than the massive jacqueries triggered off by the Mutiny. What made insubordination within the army particularly dangerous for the Raj was its linkage with peasant violence especially in large areas of what is now known as Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Here the insurrection of the sepoys boiled over and spread beyond barracks, cantonments and sadar stations into the surrounding countryside to acquire innumerable local bases for its articulation. These figure in many accounts of the rebellion as an acknowledgement of its territoriality by those who had the most to lose from it. As many as sixty-two villages were named by Qazi Kamaluddin, Munshi Lachhman Sarup and Shivabans Rai Vakil, three pillars of Sikandarabad society in their statements describing the sack of that town by the populace from its immediate neighbourhood.\textsuperscript{66}

The colonial authorities, too, were keen on tracing the agrarian violence to its local roots. Many amongst them were completely taken aback by the outbreak of these jacqueries and their force and extent. H. D. Robertson, Assistant Magistrate of Saharanpur, who had toured the tranquil countryside around Deoband on official business in April 1857 wrote thus in utter astonishment at what he saw there on his return six weeks later: 'Troops might mutiny, but I could hardly realize this rapid change among peaceful villagers.'\textsuperscript{67} His words echoed the sentiments of those who functioned at the lowest levels of the administration close to the villages. And it is their response to the sudden rise in the local temperature that summer which explains more than anything else why their narratives of the Mutiny exude such a strong sense of place.

A most authentic source of our information of what happened in the rural districts of northern and central India in those days, these local reports and despatches bristle with place-names—the names of parganas and mauzas, particles of geography

\textsuperscript{65} BC 2354 (146775): Manafield & Wingate to Goldsmid (8 Jan. 1853).
\textsuperscript{66} FSUP: V 40–51.
\textsuperscript{67} Stokes: 164.
caught in a beam of history. An extract from a Collector’s report on the disturbances in a Rohilkhand district may serve to illustrate this. ‘When the mutineers came to Budaon from Bareilly’, he wrote, ‘the inhabitants of Surai Jullundri, Surai Miran, Naee Surai and Surai Nahr Khan and mohulla Brahempoor—all mohullas in the city of Budaon, and those of Nugla Shurkee, Rusoolpoor and of other adjoining villages united with them in plundering the furniture and property in the bungalows of the European officers and residents in the station . . . The villagers of Nugla Shurkee also in unison with the residents of the Brahempoor, Puttalee Surai and Naee Surai—mohullas of Budaon, plundered and destroyed the records of the Moonsiffees as also those of the Kotwalee. On the news of the outbreak at the Sudder Station becoming known in the pergunnahs of the district disturbances broke out in every direction.’ And he went on to list forty-five inhabitants of thirty-four villages in ten parganas as ‘individuals and villages [that] would appear to have been conspicuous in their own respective localities’.

But perhaps the most impressive tribute paid by the Raj to the territoriality of that rebellion was to pick out its rural sites as the focus of the counter-insurgency campaigns of 1857–8. These were military forays in which fire was as important an instrument of pacification as the sword—a pattern common to all British attempts to deal with the peasant wars of nineteenth-century India. Small mobile segments of what remained of the colonial army, often reinforced by all adult white men in a given area, penetrated into the countryside in Uttar Pradesh, just as they had done in Bihar and western Bengal two years earlier to suppress the Santal hool, and as on that occasion crowned most of the punitive raids on villages with exemplary acts of arson, execution and arrest. The activities of R. Spankie, Magistrate of Saharanpur, were fairly representative in this respect and deserve therefore to be recalled in some detail. This is how he described these in an official letter to the Commissioner of Meerut Division:

On the 21st May [1857] a large assemblage of Goojurs and Rangurs took place on the south and south-west of pergunnah Saharanpore.

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The village of Mulypore was looted close to the station and treasury. Some signal example was necessary. All the Europeans of the place accompanied me with the district sowers and twenty men of the 29th, with a view to disperse the assembly. The villagers would not meet us, and scattered, deserting their villages, three of which were burnt. A number of prisoners were captured and brought into Saharanpore.

... I determined on the 22nd May to march to the village of Gurhow some 7 miles from the station. I found it deserted... I went on to Nagul, three miles further, and thence to a round of villages on the right; they were all deserted. I managed however to find the Lumbardars of mauza Kunkuri and Phoraur. These men had refused to pay their revenue. I brought them into Saharanpore...

On the 23rd May I visited several villages on the Deobund Road and off it. On this occasion I was also accompanied by several gentlemen of the station. I burnt one village...

On the 30th May I went down towards Munglor accompanied by Messrs. Trench, Plowden and Edwards, and by Captain Garstin. We were joined at midnight at a given point by Mr. Robertson and Captain Wyld... Our intention was to attack the village of Manuckpore... we found the village all but deserted. It was burnt, and we captured a few prisoners...

On the 3rd of June the Goorkhas under Major Bagot arrived... On the same evening I took a portion of the Goorkhas and some of the 4th Light Cavalry to attack and disperse a body of Goojurs... The Cavalry pursued them for some distance... A few men were cut up, and some prisoners were made. Two villages were burnt. In this affair I was joined by Mr. Brownlow and most of the residents, and of course by my own officers...

A report on some of the auxiliary operations carried out in the same district by another officer, W. C. Plowden, fills in some of the details of this campaign—how on 21 May 1857 he and his troops punished the village Chowree by flogging its headmen and destroying their houses and how two days later they raided the village Tarpah in order to seize Bukshee, a rebel leader. ‘But though Bukshee remained at large, the object of our expedition was in a measure attained. The village of Tarpah was burnt to the ground. The headmen were secured and a quantity of cattle was captured.’ A year later, almost to the day, the village of Chit Baragaon, the principal seat of the Kausik Rajputs in Ghazipur district, which had provided a strong local base for

\[90\] For the source of our information and the extracts cited in this paragraph, see Nevill (1907): 183; FSUP: IV 269-70, 487 and V 98, 99.
Kunwar Singh, was given the same summary treatment. When the army attacked it after some hesitation—'the village was so strong'—it was found to be empty. 'Two of the notorious ringleaders were, however, fortunately caught lurking in the neighbouring ravines and immediately tied and executed; their houses and those of the other ringleaders were levelled to the ground.' Soon afterwards Brigadier Douglas's force reached Gahmar in the same district in pursuit of Amar Singh only to find him gone; so he 'burnt it, the villagers having openly sided with the rebels'.

What the pacification campaign sought to achieve thus by taking on the offending villages one by one was to cope with the concrete articulation of the rebellion, for territoriality as the intersection of geographical and social space was indeed what constituted this concreteness. The jacqueries of 1857–8 were strictly local affairs: they operated within discrete local vicinages and had their social bases in local units with clearly recognized boundaries.

To take up the first of these two aspects, the domain of each jacquerie coincided with the domain of the peasants' relationship with their local enemies—official as well as non-official. More often than not the villagers would turn on the nearest seat of government as the foremost and immediate object of their attack. In their eyes, a sadar station—the Anglo-Indian term for district headquarters—stood for sarkar itself. Situated usually in a small town its official buildings housed the court, the treasury, the police station, the jail and so on, and were the visible symbols of an authority which the peasants regarded with fear rather than affection at the best of times. Now that this authority had weakened and become vulnerable—a mutiny in a local garrison was often believed to be the signal of the end of the Raj—country literally invaded town to settle scores with tax collectors, court officials, policemen and not the least, those sinister files which ruined the cultivator by expensive and unintelligible legal processes.

Sadar stations therefore ranked high on the list of casualties in all accounts of the rebellion in the northern provinces.71 Mathura provided a typical case. Here a detachment of native

71 Our sources for the facts and direct citations used in this and the next para-
infantry mutinied in the afternoon of 30 May 1857. They killed a European officer, set fire to the administrative buildings, destroyed the public records, plundered the treasury, released all prisoners and then marched out of the town in the direction of Delhi. 'This state of things continued until the afternoon of the 31st [May] when the inhabitants of the surrounding villages made an inroad into the Sudder Station and plundered all the inhabited bungalows of the entire property belonging to the residents and from those which were not occupied they removed the doors and chowkuts, including those of the Government buildings; a few of the bungalows have also been burnt down by the insurgents.' Elsewhere in that district the people of Nohjhil and their neighbours pillaged a tax collector's office and destroyed all documents they found there. At Raya too the police station with all its records was burnt down by the villagers. Similarly, the demolition of the Bulandshahr district headquarters was the combined work of the Gujarans from the surrounding countryside and the inhabitants of that town: they burnt down the dak bungalow and other official residences, destroyed all government buildings and their records, carried off or consigned to fire whatever property fell into their hands and released all prisoners.

At Badaun, again, the pillage of the bungalows belonging to the Europeans, the attacks on administrative offices and the police station and the destruction of records were carried out by villagers from the immediate neighbourhood backed by the townspeople. In Bundelkhand the peasants from the surrounding villages poured into Jhansi, broke open the jail, liberated the detainees and set fire to all the bungalows. At Muzaffarnagar, too, some of the bungalows were burnt down, kacharhis destroyed, the jail barracks demolished and all their doors, shutters and iron rails carried off by the raiders who lived within an easy distance of the town. The pattern was the same everywhere. It repeated itself so often that one could hardly disagree with the Officiating Magistrate of the last named district when he observed: 'The burning of the cutcherries at Muzaffurnugger is not a solitary instance, on the contrary we

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*graph are FSUP: V 222 for Badaun; V 38, 39—Bulandshahr; III 47—Bundelkhand; V 689–91—Mathura; and V 76, 79, 81—Muzaffarnagar.*
see that throughout this rebellion the first thing the "budmashes" have done in getting a footing in a station has been to burn the Government offices.'

Not merely government offices, but all that represented the Raj either directly or by association in any particular area—railways and railway stations as in Ghazipur and Allahabad, indigo and opium factories owned by white planters in Jaunpur and Ghazipur, bungalows as a clearly distinguished form of European residence everywhere, dispensaries and colleges run by the government as at Badaun and even charitable asylums set up by Christian effort, in fact 'every building however large or however insignificant with which we are connected' was, as a District Magistrate wrote viewing the carnage around him in July 1857, 'burnt down and demolished with as much ill-will as our public offices'. Clearly no local representation of the authority of the Raj was safe from insurgent attack.

The other relationship which helped to determine the territoriality of this particular violence was the antagonism between peasants and moneylenders. The latter are described in all contemporary accounts as those who, apart from the government, were hurt most by the rural insurrection. 'I need scarcely say that the great feature in the rebellion here has been the universal ousting of all bankers, Buniyas, Marwarees, etc. from landed property in the district, by whatever means they acquired it, whether at auction, by private sale or otherwise.' This observation by the Collector and Magistrate of Hamirpur could apply equally well to almost any other part of the North-Western Provinces. Indeed, Spankie, the officer in charge of Saharanpur, was so greatly impressed by this phenomenon that to him it appeared 'as if the disturbances in the commencement were less directed against Government than against particular people and castes'. that is, against banias and marwaris. His idea that the uprisings developed in two stages—first against the mahajans and then against the regime—might have been true of particular instances, but there were innumerable occasions when the peasants attacked both these adversaries simultaneously or in reverse order.

In most cases, however, the insurgents made no attempt to

18 FSUP: IV 128, 479, 556-7; V 222.
19 For Hamirpur see ibid.: III 121 and for Saharanpur—V 94-5.
distinguish between them, for in their own experience, the two were inseparably linked. The economic and social aspects of that linkage have already been discussed in Chapter 1. What needs to be emphasized here is its local dimension. In the eyes of the common villager the mufassil towns symbolized the alliance between sarkar and sahukar. The coexistence there of administrative buildings and bania wards—the coexistence of kachari and haveli—was its topographical expression; the interplay between legal processes and usurious transactions—its function. By focusing his violence on a sadar station or a township endowed with a tahsildari office the peasant registered his response to the local character of this symbiosis. Robertson, Assistant Magistrate of Saharanpur, showed a clear grasp of this aspect of insurgent mentality when he explained: 'The creditors of the poorer class of cultivators invariably inhabit the larger towns, so that these towns naturally enough became a point of attack when the civil power was paralysed.' What he saw in that district fully confirmed this. For the raiders came in a large body from villages around Nakur, the headquarters of the pargana of that name, burnt down its police station and tahsil offices, and tore up and scattered all records including mahajans' bonds and accounts.

Again, the sack of Deoband where the bankers and baniyas had been living in constant fear of 'invasion from without and sedition from within', was the work of Pandar Rajputs and Gujars, all of whom belonged to the pargana of which that town was the principal administrative centre. As Stokes has noticed, all eight of the most offending villages selected by Robertson for his two punitive expeditions in this region 'stood close to the Kali Nadi or its tributaries north and east of Deoband and within a 4 to 5 miles radius'. The district headquarters of Muzaffarnagar too fell to the wrath of its surrounding countryside. 'Here as in other parts of the country', wrote its Officiating Magistrate, 'the Buneahs and Mahajans were in the majority of cases the victims and fearfully have many of them been made to suffer for their previous rapacity and avarice.' And here, as elsewhere, the villagers 'burnt the Government offices so that all the transactions of sale and mortgage of property of Maha-

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94 Sources for our evidence and citations in this and the next paragraph are Stokes: 165, 166, 172-4, and FSUP: V 82, 91, 96.
jans and other papers . . . might be destroyed', thus demon-
strating yet again their understanding—and dislike—of the
complicity between moneylenders and government at the local
level.

The territoriality of these uprisings of 1857–8 derived also from
their ethnic character. All contemporaries testify to this pheno-
menon. To some extent, of course, it is the very language of the
current system of classification which made them do so. For in
the nineteenth century it was customary with both native and
foreign observers to conceptualize Indian society in ethnic—
primarily caste—terms. Yet this taxonomic bias was itself an
index of the social organization which inspired it—that is, the
tendency of large populations belonging to the same caste to
congregate in contiguous areas and perpetuate this territorial
arrangement by ritual and kinship. It is common therefore for
the Mutiny records to describe the peasant rebellions of the
time as the revolt of particular ethnic masses—of the Rajputs,
the Mewatis, the Gujars and so on.

To start off with the Rajputs and a fairly transparent case of
territoriality relating to the most prominent of its ethnic con-
stituents, the rebellion in Bundelkhand was reported as the
work of the eponymous Rajput sept, regarded by Crooke as
‘almost entirely’ confined to that part of the country. A caste
with a strong sense of attachment to their traditional habitat—
their prohibitions against marriage included ‘residence among
foreign peoples’—they were active in vast numbers in the
Jhansi area. A rebel camp of over 20,000 men at Mhow was,
according to British army intelligence, made up entirely of
Bundelas. Again, it was the ‘fighting horsemen and kinsmen’ of
the Bundela gentry of Gohand in Hamirpur who were said to
be responsible for the serious and prolonged disturbances in that
district. In Azamgarh the uprising was led by the Palwars who
were very numerous there and belonged to the same gotra.
Their challenge to the Raj was serious enough to make its end
appear imminent in the eyes of the common people of the area:
‘When at Azamgarh the battle raged between the British troops
and the Palwars, many illiterate persons gathered and awaited
the result; if the Palwars became victorious they also would join
the Palwars.’
In the adjoining district of Jaunpur it was yet another hostile concentration of Rajputs—those of the Rajkumar sept—who constituted a threat to British power on this highly sensitive border of Awadh. The rebellion in Bhadohi, noticed below, came to be identified with the Monas, the most numerous and powerful caste of that pargana in Mirzapur district. The revolt headed by Shazada Firoz Shah in September 1857 at Mandsore in Malwa was based largely on the support of the local Mewatis who constituted nearly half of the insurgent army. Lieutenant-Colonel Durand recognized this as an advantage of some significance in his enemy's favour. 'It must be remembered', he wrote surveying the military situation from his camp at Mhow, 'that this Shazada has selected his point Mundisore judiciously enough, for that neighbourhood abounds with turbulent Mewatees.75

It was the Gujarās who were the main force behind the series of jacqueries that convulsed the north-western districts of Uttar Pradesh.76 In Saharanpur the 'hard-core areas' of the rebellion were the western part of Deoband pargana, eastern Rampur, a small sector of Nagal and all of the parganas of Nakur and Gangoh, forming what Stokes calls 'the Gujar heartland'. According to him, 'Here solid clan settlement provided a powerful framework of organisation for revolt. Of particular importance was the cluster of 52 villages in Gangoh and Lakhauti held by the Batar subdivision (gotra) of Gujarās.' In Meerut, too, they set the country afire. 'The Goojurs throughout this district are in open rebellion', reported the Magistrate on 28 June 1857. Some five thousand of them led by Shah Mal of Bijrul sacked the township of Baraut, looted a bazaar at Baghpat, and tried to wreck a strategic bridge on the Hindan river in order to cut off military access to that region. They elected Kadam Singh of Parichhatgarh as their raja 'in furtherance of the plan of establishing a Goojur Government'. And their raids on the prosperous and loyalist Jat villages who 'almost invariably

75 On the identity and role of the various groups as discussed in this paragraph see for Bundelas—Crooke (1896): II 163 and FSUP: III 607, 612–13, 626–7; Mewatis—FSUP: III 154, 156, 196; Palwars—Crooke (1896): IV 113 and FSUP: IV 105; Rajkumars—FSUP: IV 174.

behaved nobly in the support of law and order', helped to emphasize by contrast the specifically Gujar character of the uprising. In Bulandshahr again the principal area of the insurrection coincided with that of the compact Gujar settlements in Dadri and Sikandarabad parganas, described officially as 'the most turbulent part of the district inhabited principally by Goojurs'. The latter rose in arms as soon as they heard of the events in Delhi and Meerut and 'at once commenced plundering in all directions, burning Dak Bungalows and destroying the Telegraph'. The attack on the district headquarters of Bulandshahr and the pillage of the township of Sikandarabad were mainly the work of peasants of this particular caste from the surrounding villages—a classic case of country encircling the cities.

Most though by no means all of the villages from which the masses of armed peasantry issued from time to time to harry the nearest towns were single-caste settlements. In each of these nearly all the population, barring females acquired by marriage, claimed descent from a common patrilineage, consanguinal or mythical, and regarded themselves as members of the same clan or gotra. This belief in a shared ancestry made the village assert itself positively by acting as a solidarity unit and negatively by operating an elaborate code of discrimination against aliens. Habib cites a late seventeenth-century case to show that it was rare—and indeed risky, judging by the given instance—for a Rajput to take up residence in a Jat village. His remarks on the caste composition of the typical north Indian village during Aurangzeb’s rule applied to conditions in the eighteen-fifties as well:

Although any number of castes existed among the peasants in general, peasants of a village probably belonged most often to the same caste. This is true of many villages today. In Central Doab, for example, villages are often distinguished according as they contain Thakurs, Jats, Ahirs, Gujars or other castes of peasants. One can conjecture that this was still more the case when the ties of castes were much stronger . . . The peasants of a village were most often members not only of the same caste, but also of the same division or subdivision of that caste. They claimed the same ancestry and so belonged to the same bhajya-chara, brotherhood or fraternity. This fraternity by invoking ties of
blood, bound the peasants in a unity far stronger than could have been expected among mere neighbours. 77

These village-based primordial ties were the principal means of rebel mobilization, mauza by mauza, throughout northern and central India in 1857. Brought about by the peasants on their own initiative or by their landlord masters, its motivation in terms of caste or clan could vary according to idioms and occasions specific to particular localities. Often it was a case of mutineers returning home to inspire their relatives living in that area to take up arms emulating the sepoys. 78 This is how the soldier son of a Nadwasiya Gujar chief, ‘who had mutinied and come from Meruth made resistance’ in the Dadri region of Bulandshahr. Mutineers of local origin were the catalysts of the uprising in a part of Hamirpur too. ‘The Zemindars of Romere which forms part of Humeerpore are Thakoors’, wrote the district officer in his narrative of the events of 1857, ‘and many Sepoys, relatives of theirs, came in relating terrible tales of mutiny and bloodshed, which caused the Zemindars of the two thokes, Danda and Manjkhore, to band themselves together for plunder which they commenced early in June.’ Further to the east, Ghazipur was the home of ‘many Sepoys who had fled back to their hearths with halters round their necks’, as a Jaunpur Magistrate put it. Since ‘the sepoys themselves were residents of the district, wherever they went they found followers ready to their hand’. Indeed, more often than not, ‘these men served as rallying points and leaders to their neighbours and clansmen’. There were about one hundred and fifty of them in Zamania where, it was said at the time, ‘they formed nuclei round which large numbers of bad characters and disaffected zemindars rally whenever occasion offers’. Again in the Ballia and Rasra tahsildaris of Ghazipur where four to five hundred mutineers had returned to their villages, the local rebel force was recognized by the government as one ‘consisting partly of sepoys of that neighbourhood and of their brotherhoods among the zemindars’. Altogether the uprising in that district was universally credited to the dual initiative of army deserters and their peasant kin, for, as it was put in an official narrative of

77 Habib: 122–3.
78 The instances cited in this paragraph are taken from FSUP: III 114; IV: 140, 142, 272, 486; V 44.
events in the summer of 1858: 'The mutineers have almost everywhere in this district the sympathy of the population with whom most of them are connected by ties of kindred.'

A local insurrection, whatever its immediate cause, tended invariably to adapt itself to the existing pattern of ethnic solidarity in a given area. Allahabad provided a classic example. Here the Mewati response to the outbreak of the Mutiny was so instantaneous that it looked as if 'the Mewatis were the real contrivers of the rebellion of the sepoys and the Risala'.

Known for their strong sense of communal identity, they used the customary authority of a panchayat to effect a massive mobilization of their close-knit exogamous villages—fifty-one of these were specified by name—in the rural belt around that city. Indeed, they had made the insurrection their own so quickly and so completely that it was not easy to distinguish between its military and civilian moments. It was caste fellowship again which secured the support of the Thakurs of Serowlee Buzurg and Khurd for the rebel zamindars of Romeree mentioned above, while in Badaun district the disturbances in tahsil Gunnaur was the work of 'the Aheer Zemindars of Neore Beora, Bheraothee and other adjacent villages of the same brotherhood'. In Bijnaur, too, the local uprising was considerably extended by ethnicity as 'the Gujars of [the] other side of the Ganges helped the Gujars of this side in the latter's activities'.

The sack of Sikandarabad was yet another demonstration of caste solidarity as a generalizing agent of the rebellion. The more militant of the Gujar villages prepared for this action by sending out their men to rally the others who were less forthcoming. 'The men of Khugooabas and Jhendoo, zemindar of Nugla Nyusookh, went to the Goojurs' villages, threw down their pugries, incited them all to disorder and assembled them in Panchayat at Tilbegumpoor.' The result was a spectacular and systematic act of pillage in which the entire community was involved. Primordial loyalty of this kind provided the in-

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89 FSUP: IV 548.
90 This figure represents the total number of place-names plus the gaps indicating names which are not legible in the two lists published in FSUP: IV 549, 550.
91 For this and all the other instances cited in this paragraph see FSUP: III 118–19 and V 38, 45, 224, 246.
surgents not merely with bases for attack on the towns but also with asylum in nearby peasant homes when pursued by the enemy. A British officer was to recall later on how he and his men repulsed a party of raiders just about to charge into the sadar station of Bulandshahr, but found that ‘the main body spread over the country and concealed themselves in the neighbouring villages’. The raiders as well as the villagers who offered them refuge were Gujars.

Caste ambitions which motivated some of these jacqueries also helped to emphasize their regionality and ethnicity. Such ambitions directly related to a sense of loss on the part of a rebel community—loss of land, territory or prestige. It felt aggrieved because a substantial part of its lands had passed into the hands of moneylenders and auction purchasers; or because it had been ousted from what it considered its traditional homeland; or because a radical decline in the wealth or authority of its elite group had lowered its standing both in its own esteem and that of others. These were by no means mutually exclusive determinations, but coalesced to form the substance of almost any communal sense of deprivation. What brought them together was politics, for there was no loss, whatever its cause, that was not felt to be a loss of power. Even grievances arising from land alienations exceeded their purely economic character and were politicized. The ambiguity generated by such an overlap and its consequence for historiography may be seen in the difference between an administrator’s interpretation of a local uprising and a scholar’s. When the Rangars, a Muslim Rajput caste, broke out in revolt in Kunda Kalan, H. D. Robertson, the Assistant Magistrate of Saharanpur, could find no economic justification for it. ‘Unlike the improvident Goojurs their villages are generally populous and wealthy’, he wrote, ‘so that plunder could hardly be their inducement to disaffection.’ He ascribed the rebellion to sectarian enthusiasm, to ‘their bigoted daring’ as he put it. Eric Stokes has found this explanation far too narrowly political. Robertson, ‘like most British officials’, he says, ‘believed the revolt to be political in origin’. He puts his own emphasis primarily on economic motivation: ‘... in the Gangoh khadir the loss of nearly half the land to the mahajans must have affected sharply the attitude of the Kundra Rangars,
however much Robertson might form an impression of their comparative prosperity'. Both interpretations contain a great deal of truth about this event but by trying to exclude each other demonstrate a failure to grasp its ambiguity. What apparently happened was that in an atmosphere charged with uncertainties about the very survival of the Raj an accumulation of economic discontent had caught fire and exploded as a formidable defiance of authority. The administrator on the spot registered his immediate response to its etails; the historian, distanced by time, his reading of what triggered it. Neither came quite close to understanding its duplex character.

In some of the revolts involving these ethnic masses the political motivation could hardly be missed. They took up arms in order to recover what they believed to have been their ancestral domains. It was this which accounted for the power and extent of the Gujar uprising in Saharanpur for instance. Here the clan was so numerous that at one time the district was actually called Gujarat. A leader like Futtuah, therefore, found it possible to set himself up as a raja here with the object of ‘regaining the consequence tradition has assigned them in this part of the country, once the principality of their ancestors’. Again, the Palwars, a Rajput sept, connected with Azamgarh by tradition and myth, muscled their way into the Mahul region of that district in June 1857 and ‘claimed the villages of this pargana to be theirs’. In yet another eastern district, Mirzapur, the rebellion of both the Palwars and the Monas was said to have been inspired by their desire to make up for the decline in their former power. ‘Both clans had, as they conceived, a long standing grievance and lost superiority to recover.’ Of the two it was the latter who were particularly

83 Stokes: 166, 167, 170. 84 Crooke (1896): II 441.
85 Stokes: 166, 167.
86 For Palwar traditions see Crooke (1896): IV 111–12, and for their participation in the rebellion of 1857—FSUP: IV 102, 410. Judging by the documents published in FSUP: IV Palwar involvement in the Bhadohi disturbances appears to have been only marginal. Their leader, Sarnam Singh, was primarily responsible for the attack on the indigo factory at Palee. Apart from that they simply acted as auxiliaries and allies of the Monas who at one time were said to have been planning the rescue of some of the imprisoned Palwars like Dbowan Singh (FSUP: IV 80, 81). I suspect, however, that there is much more evidence yet to be recovered from the archives about Palwar involvement in Bhadohi.
active in the Bhadohi pargana of that district. The émeute they caused offers a clear example of the territorial and political ambitions of a caste as the motor of a local peasant rebellion.

If legend may be said even remotely to approximate history, the Monas must have wanted Bhadohi very badly indeed for themselves. A party of their ancestors who had set out from their rude homeland in Rajputana on a pilgrimage to Banaras, were so greatly impressed by this fertile region of what is now Mirzapur district and coveted it so fiercely that they won their way into it after a long and bloody contest with its former settlers, the Bhars. The precise date of this conquest is difficult to ascertain but it is known that the pargana was ruled by a succession of Monas chiefs for over two centuries until 1746–7 when it passed into the hands of the rajas of Banaras. However, ‘although the Raj had passed from the Monas clan yet the old reigning family was by no means extinct and was much looked up to in the pargunnah’. Indeed its standing was still high enough to enable it to involve the local population in its own dynastic strife when on the outbreak of the Mutiny the head of the clan, Udwant Singh, assumed his ancestral title of Raja of Bhadohi, and ‘on the strength of this newly regained nobility’ raised a private army of nearly two thousand of his caste fellows, took ‘benevolences’, organized pillage and felt bold enough to close the Grand Trunk Road.

The Monas had a reputation for turbulence going back at least to the seventeenth century. Peter Mundy travelling from Agra to Patna in the late summer of 1632 was much harassed by the ‘Buddoys’ who in their utter defiance of authority were almost a law unto themselves: ‘They neither regard the kinge nor his lawes vere much.’\textsuperscript{86} The same could be said of them with equal truth two hundred and twenty-five years later when in June 1857 they took up arms not only against the Raja of Banaras but also against the district administration regarded

\textsuperscript{86} Mundy: 119. For some of his other observations on Bhadohi and the Monas, all to the same effect, see ibid.: 90, 115, 118, 120, 122, 148, 180–1. Habib, however, considers the editorial identification of Mundy’s term ‘Manasse’ with the Mona Rajputs as ‘a wild guess’, and is certain that the author had ‘meant to write, if he has not actually written, “Mavasse”’, which, according to him, means the same thing as xor-talab, that is, ‘rebellious territory’.
by them ‘as more or less a partisan of the Rajah’. The insurrection of the sepoys and the civilian population in Allahabad, Jaunpur and Banaras which enclosed Mirzapur on three sides had already alerted the British authorities about the possibility of an outbreak in the most lawless pargana of the latter district. Already on 3 June 1857 the police officers of Bhadohi had been ‘ordered to intimate to the zemindars and other respectable men that they might keep armed men if they chose for the defence of their lives and their properties and to be able to assist each other in case of a general rising among the people’. On 7 June the thanadar of Bhadohi reported a dacoity in a village within his jurisdiction. Three days later a party of rebels crossed over from Jaunpur ‘to plunder some wealthy zemindars of the Bhudohey pargunnah’ but retreated before the combined forces of the police and the local gentry. The same day the sazawal of the Raja of Banaras was attacked and severely wounded by the villagers of Bhinda. The district authorities, to leave no doubt on which side they stood, allowed Munshi Darshan Lal, the Banaras Raja’s estate manager, to raise a force of two thousand men in order to meet the Monas threat. ‘Anarchy became universal. Oodwunt Singh and his people plundered and burnt the villages of those to whom they owed grudges, and the homes of Oodwunt Singh and his friends were in turn burnt and plundered by the adherents of the Rajah.’ The crunch came when Munshi Darshan Lal lured the Monas chief and two of his ‘dewans’ to come unarmed to a rendezvous where they were seized and made over to W. R. Moore, Joint Magistrate and Deputy Collector of Mirzapur, who promptly sent them to the gallows. This exemplary punishment produced a backlash for which the authorities were by no means prepared. Far from taming the Monas, it converted what was essentially a dynastic feud among the elite into a popular rebellion against the colonial power itself—a classic instance of a vertical mobilization turned horizontal. For out of the ensuing turmoil there emerged a local leader of the insurgents, a Monas of no aristocratic pedigree—‘his ancestors were only dependents of the old Monus Rajahs’—a man called Jhuri Singh who not only avenged Udwant Singh by killing Moore and presenting his head to the widow of the Monas chief, but involved the
Bhadohi peasantry in a protracted guerilla war against the Raj.\(^{87}\)

The territoriality of a rebellion is not of course a matter of coincidence between its domain and a caste region in every case. A locality larger than a village, such as a pargana or a district, could also be the site of an uprising in which peasants of two or more castes joined forces.\(^{88}\) In Badaun district, for instance, Muslims and Thakurs worked together in the jacqueries that broke out in Bisauli pargana, and these two groups plus Ahirs in pargana Sahaswan. In Bijnor district ‘the Mar-dhas and the butchers of Akbarabad after forming a big gang first looted the Patwaris of Akbarabad, then plundered the Jats of Sikandarpur, and then invaded Hajipur [and] looted Rampur’. The attack on Chandpur tahsil on 26 May 1857 was a joint operation by Mewatis and Pachandey Jats. The district of Bijnor as a whole was, according to its Magistrate, the scene of a collective violence of Banjaras, Gujars, Mewatis and Balochis all of whom had simultaneously taken to arms. In Saharanpur, too, ‘the Rajpoots in most parts of the District and the Goojurs throughout the whole District took advantage of the times to plunder and to commit all kinds of atrocities’. Spankie reported ‘a large assemblage of Goojurs and Rangurs’ to the south and south-west of Saharanpur pargana on 21 May 1857 and the subsequent pillage of Mullypore village close to the sadar station and treasury. Even in Bulandshahr district where the Gujars constituted the main force of the insurrection, they had the Girooas and the Gahlots as auxiliaries. All three groups were party to the sack of Sikandarabad and were represented at the panchayat at Tilbegampur which preceded and planned their combined onslaught. As one of the local

\(^{87}\) Apart from the source mentioned in n. 86 above the information presented in this and the preceding paragraph is based on Crooke (1896): IV 1-2; FSUP: IV 30, 49-50, 51, 53, 78-84; and Drake-Brockman: 99-100, 124-8, 207-9, 221-2, 241-2. Following Crooke (1896) and our sources we have used the caste name in its anglicized form, ‘Monas’.

\(^{88}\) For the instances cited in this paragraph see FSUP: V 41, 43, 45, 66, 95, 225, 253-4, 254-5, 266 as well as Currie to Lowe quoted in Stokes: 150, and Spankie to Williams (26 Sept. 1857): ‘The plundering tribe of Goojurs was the first affected and the Rangurs were not far behind them’ (FSUP: V 94).
raises put it, 'there was no village of the Goojurs and Girooas in the neighbourhood which did not take part in this affair'. Indeed, Walidad Khan himself seems to have had such a plurality in mind when he wrote to Delhi about 'Gujars and other country-folk of this neighbourhood' having 'raised their heads'.

For an example of a local rebellion which had its territoriality articulated as an intercaste mobilization involving many villages in several contiguous parganas cutting across three districts one could turn to the uprising headed by Meghar Singh in Ghazipur. In this the easternmost part of Uttar Pradesh bordering on Bihar the impact of the Mutiny did not register until about the middle of 1858. It took the incursion of Kunwar Singh's and Amar Singh’s forces into this region to shatter its apparent calm. A police report of 30 May 1858 from the officer in charge of the thana at Dildarnagar in Zamania pargana is the first record we have of disturbances in eastern Ghazipur. It spoke of a raid on Rajpur in the Chausa pargana of Shahabad by a force of two platoons of Amar Singh’s men—'250 or 300 armed persons who appeared to be absconders'—led by Meghar Singh, a Rajput zamindar of Gahmar in Zamania. The raiders killed a barkandaz and a patwari and were joined by a large number of sepoys who had returned home to their native villages in that pargana. They were said to have 'resolved to stay at Gahmar and Barah and to persuade the whole pargana to rebel against the Government'. For the next two days they camped in a grove at Dewal on the bank of the Karmanasa where the insurrection was publicly launched at an assembly of several thousand people from the neighbouring districts. Between 3 and 5 June they plundered and destroyed some factories and other buildings owned by an indigo planter at Gahmar and Bhadaura. The presence of Meghar Singh and four hundred 'rebel sipahis', that is, local peasants who had been in the army, was reported from the first of these two villages on 6 June. It was said that 'he went about from one village to the other to incite people to rebel', and apparently met with considerable success. For an informer's note dated 9 June mentioned 'sup-

88 The primary source of our information for this entire section is FSUP: IV 117-22, 280-9, 482-3, 486-7, 491-3. For all data outside this source we have relied on Nevill (1907): passim, and Oldham: 43, 64, 68, 69.
plies and other assistance’ sent him by the villagers of Naoli, Bara, Gahmar, Karepa and Bhorai.

On 11 June Brigadier Douglas arrived at Gahmar and burnt it down. But such exemplary punishment inflicted on what was regarded as the most wicked of all insurgent villages in the area had apparently little immediate effect, for according to an official telegram of 14 June the Magistrate of Ghazipur still found his district entirely disorganized. In fact the burning of Gahmar appears to have helped in spreading the revolt rather than containing it. The local police and revenue officials whose authority was the subject of universal defiance were sensitive to it. ‘Although the residents of Gahmar have left the place’, wrote a tahsildar on 18 June, ‘their zamindars are staying in the neighbouring villages at the distances of three, four or five kos and harbour evil intentions.’ For already two days before that Meghar Singh had been seen at the head of a force of one hundred at Diwathia, a village in Zamania pargana. ‘They had got together the rebels residing in the different villages’ and stopped over at Kashni. On 19 June they attacked Niwalwan in Chainpur pargana of Shahabad district and threatened a planter’s warehouse there. Throughout the rest of that summer the guerilla army went on adding to its size. Contingents of armed peasantry, many of them forced out of their villages by the increasingly vigorous counter-insurgency operations, and bands of army deserters with local ties poured into its ranks from all over the region. In August, for instance, one hundred sepoys crossed over from the other side of the Ganges to join Meghar Singh at Gahmar. Subsequently he was to recall how at one time he had as many as twelve thousand men at his command—a genuinely popular army which, he emphasized, ‘made no raids for plunder’. It was ‘the people of the six parganas’ ranged along the Ganges and the Karmanasa in the Ghazipur–Shahabad border area who, he claimed, ‘met our expenses’.

In the event, Meghar Singh met the fate of all roving rebels. By December 1858 his army disintegrated under the impact of sustained military operations by the British. He retreated into Nepal with only about five hundred of his followers but was forced by the local raja to withdraw from there and re-enter Indian territory in the spring of 1860. He moved around for
eight months as a pilgrim between various holy places—a motif which recurs in the careers of many of our defeated rebels—and surrendered himself to the authorities at Banaras on 7 November 1860. The statement that he made three weeks later before the court of the Special Commissioner there offers some of the most detailed information we have of a local rebel mobilization in nineteenth-century India.

It is clear from Meghar Singh’s recollection of the beginnings of the revolt in eastern Ghazipur that the mobilization there followed the classic pattern of parley and assembly common to peasant insurgency everywhere. The crucial meeting which decided on the insurrection was a conference of thirty-eight persons representing four castes from eighteen villages in three parganas—one of Ghazipur and two of Shahabad—linked by a river (vide Table 2 below). Evidently, it was dominated by those who spoke for Zamania pargana which contributed as many as thirty, that is, nearly four-fifths of the total number of delegates. This was quite appropriate too. For it was the fear of a pre-emptive strike by the colonial army against some of its villages which had triggered off that uprising in the first place. Besides, the two sites to figure most prominently in its preparation, namely, Biranji on the Karmanasa where it was planned and Dewal where it was inaugurated at a public gathering, were both located there. Above all it was Gahmar within that pargana which was clearly the epicentre of the revolt. The inhabitants of this village were largely responsible for its organization. They formed the party of scouts who were sent to Ghazipur to verify rumours concerning the imminence of British attacks and whose report hastened the decision in favour of the uprising. They also led the group of ten emissaries chosen by the insurgents to negotiate with Amar Singh for aid in arms and men. And it was this village which provided the rebellion with its leader Meghar Singh himself. The fact that fifteen out of thirty-eight delegates at the Biranji conference came from Gahmar and that the destruction of the latter was intended by the army to serve as an object lesson for all the unruly masses

80 The six threatened villages mentioned by Meghar Singh were Gahmar, Reotipur, Sherpur, Bara, Usia and Khareba. I have been unable to identify the last of these. All others belonged to Zamania pargana.
of Ghazipur–Shahabad region is a measure of the importance attached to it both by the rebels and their enemies.

Insurgent mobilization in Zamania was a function of geographical as well as ethnic arrangements in that area—that is, of both those sets of factors which combine to make up territoriality as we have defined it. The pargana derived much of its

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**Table 2** Distribution of Rebel Delegates at Biranjhi Conference by Locality and Caste.\(^{81}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Pargana</th>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Pathan</th>
<th>Brahman</th>
<th>Rajput</th>
<th>Bhumihar</th>
<th>Tot.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ghazipur</td>
<td>Zamania</td>
<td>Bara</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Baranpur</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^{81}\) Source: FSUP: IV 284-5. For Utranhi in Meghar Singh’s statement I have read Utraval since its location in Zamania pargana is clearly indicated in the source. Nevill (1907) mentions a market called Utraon (Appendix, p. xxxv), but I have not included it here as its pargana location is given as Dehma. Delegates described by Meghar Singh as Kahatriyas have been classified here as Rajputs— for as Oldham says in his Memoir, the latter are called ‘Chuttrees’ in Ghazipur. The single Bhobar from Reotipur has been classified as a Bhumihar. In those instances where a delegate’s caste is not specified I have followed the convention of identifying Singh and Rai respectively as Rajput and Bhumihar surnames after the general pattern of correspondence between caste and surname as found in Meghar Singh’s statement as well as Oldham’s authority to the effect that ‘the Rajpootas of this district are commonly called Singh and the Bhoinhars Rai’. (Oldham: 43).
character from its separation on three sides from the rest of Ghazipur district by a broad bend of the Ganges and from being cut off from Shahabad by the Karmanasa on the remaining, eastern side. Within this arc the rivers with their deep beds and high banks, their floods and shallow backwaters and the alluvium deposited by them influenced not only the livelihood of the people as agriculturists but also their patterns of residence and communal life. The alluvial tract of the pargana boasted some of the largest villages in the district—in 1853 Reotipur had a population of 10,055, Gahmar 9,629, Sherpur 6,885 and so on—with their locations ‘determined solely by the configuration of the ground’, according to the District Gazetteer, ‘the houses being built on the most elevated spot so as to be beyond the reach of the floods’. A village under these conditions tended to develop as the focal point for a number of hamlets each of which was occupied by a distinctive caste while the site as a whole presided over dependent villages existing only in name but indistinguishable in fact from the surrounding fields excluded from residential use and given over entirely to agriculture.

Vicinage conditioned thus by river boundaries and village sites was emphasized further by the pattern of ethnicity in the pargana. It had been colonized like the greater part of the district by Rajputs and Bhumihars. The distinction between these two castes was often unclear. Some of their subdivisions bore identical names: Gautam, Kausik, Kinwar or Sikarwar could designate either a Rajput or a Bhumihar. Members of the two castes bearing the same clan name often referred to the same city or country as their original habitat, and at least in one case they claimed a common ancestry. It was therefore quite in order that all but one of the twelve villages represented at the Biranji conference should have sent men of one or the other caste to speak for them. The exception, Bara, described by the commander of a British gunboat as ‘full of Badmarshes’ and shelled by him preceding an assault on its ‘armed Musulmans’, delegated some Pathans. However, the plurality suggested by this fact is deceptive. For the Pathans of Zamania were mostly ‘not Pathans at all, but the descendants of converted Rajputs and Bhumihars’, as the District Gazetteer observes. To be more specific about it, the Musalmans of Bara

\* Oldham: 43.  
\* FSUP: IV 120–2.
were a branch of the Rajdhar Rai sept of Kinwar Bhumihars who had taken to Islam.\footnote{Oldham: 68.}

Thus the local mobilization inaugurated at Biranji was determined by two different kinds of proximity—geographical and ethnic. The former was reinforced further by communication in the form of a network of unmetalled roads which crisscrossed the pargana and the latter by the networks of caste and sept. A look at some of the villages for which we have information on both counts may indicate how the location of particular communities and their linkages were arranged along these coordinates. Bara which constituted the eastern terminal point of the arc of the Ganges around the pargana was directly joined by road to Gahmar. Its village lands lay along the Karmanasa connecting the local community with the peasantry on the Shahabad side of the river. Within the district it had its historical ties with Birpur, a village on the other bank of the Ganges, an ancient seat of Kinwar Bhumihars who had turned to Islam and dominated the two eastern parganas of Dehma and Muhammadabad. As such its delegation of three Muslims represented an element of mobilization with a pull reaching beyond its strictly local limits. Basuka adjoined Nauli on the east. Its owners were Bhumihar Sikarwars descended from Puran Mal whose progeny by several wives spread over a number of villages including Gahmar, Reotipur and Sherpur. Nauli itself was the headquarters of the Suklabansi Rajputs who had colonized a large tract of the country in this particular neighbourhood. They related in caste terms with Utrawal, a little to the north, which was the only other village on our list with a large Suklabansi settlement. Both, it should be noted, were represented by Rajputs. Both the villages lay on the road between Bhadaura and Reotipur. The latter was in 1853 one of the most populous of all the rural sites in Zamania pargana. Caste and proprietary interests tied it historically to Sherpur on the opposite bank. Together these two villages formed a great taluqa held for many generations by the Sikarwar Bhumihars whose estate extended here over thirty-five villages along a seven-mile front on both sides of the river. The first Sikarwar to acquire these lands had by his three marriages and their issue planted the clan in several parts of the pargana. Its connections
with Basuka have already been mentioned above. Yet other bonds with Gahmar and Usia added considerably to its ethnic range. At the former of these the Bhumihar Sikarwaras shared some kind of a primordial affinity with the Rajput sept of the same name. The latter, Usia, was one of the six villages a threat to which was the immediate cause of the uprising. Here they related to Bhumihars who together with those of seven other settlements in the neighbourhood had abandoned the Hindu faith for Islam. An important link was forged in this way between the Sikarwaras and the rest of the large mass of Muslim converts of Zamania. Thus the ethnic space of the twin villages of Reotipur and Sherpur, both represented appropriately enough by Bhumihars at the rebel conference, reached well beyond their geographical area into much of eastern and southern Zamania.

By caste as well as by the road that ran east towards the river from Ghazipur through Sohwal—a largely Bhumihar settlement represented by a member of that caste at Biranji—Reotipur was directly linked with Gahmar. And both its caste composition and its physical location appear to have made the latter ideally suited to generate the kind of initiative that it did in the insurrection led by Meghar Singh. Colonized by Rajputs of the Sikarwar clan who still owned most of the taluqa there it had its ties not merely with settlements of the same caste elsewhere in that pargana but also with the Bhumihar Sikarwaras of Reotipur—Sherpur and the Rajputs turned Muslim such as those of Bara and many other Zamania villages. Its ethnic range was thus nearly as wide as that of Reotipur. What however made Gahmar a place of relatively greater importance were two arterial roads the first of which situated it at a point equidistant between Ghazipur and Zamania, while the second, an older highway that bifurcated at the village, connected it with Banaras in one direction and Buxar at the other.

Communications such as these and the rivers whose junction a few miles further to the east below Birpur conferred on Gahmar a measure of strategic advantage, served as the practical instruments of rebel mobilization. They helped Meghar Singh, a Sikarwar Rajput zamindar and lambardar, to weld

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[85] The three variations of this name as found in the sources (FSUP: IV 180, 277, 280, 281, 282, et passim) are Megh Rai, Meghar Rai and Mygur Rai. Oldham refers
the primordial loyalties within the pargana into a fighting solidarity of all its principal ethnic communities, and what is equally important, to forge alliances beyond it. The roads carried his appeal westward to the raises of Mhanj and Narwan. The latter, in Banaras, was linked by tradition to Zamania pargana in so far as the Donwar Bhumhars of both places claimed common descent from ancestors who had once colonized the eastern part of Azamgarh district. The Karmanasa conveyed his message southwards to the principal men of Sassaram, and its ferries along the eastern border of Zamania helped him to negotiate for and secure the support of the two key parganas of Shahabad on the other bank, namely, Chausa and Chainpur, both of which were represented at Biranji, significantly enough, by seven Rajputs and Bhumhars out of a total of eight delegates from six villages. It was that river again which witnessed at Dewal, an ancient Bhumihar village and ferry ghat, the decisive meeting of the people of Zamania with ten to twelve thousand men who had assembled there from other parts of Ghazipur, Banaras and Shahabad districts to hail the proclamation of insurgency.

This description of events in eastern Ghazipur in 1858 provides us with yet another instance of territoriality as an intersection to him as Meygur Rai. The use of this surname differs from other references to him as Meghar Singh in the sources (FSUP: IV 283, 284, 491, 492, 493) and would make him a Bhumihar, going by local usage as noticed above (n. 91). However, the rebel leader's own deposition of 27 November 1860 helps to clear up all confusion about his identity. "My name is Meghar Singh," he said, "I am a Kshatriya. My father's name is Bhajan Singh. I am resident of Mauza Gahmar, pargana Zamania, District Ghazipur. My age is about 40 years. My profession is Zamindari and Nambardari" (FSUP: IV 283-4). This information agrees with what we know of 'Mygur Rai' from an entry in a 'Descriptive Roll of Leading Rebels' signed on 29 July 1858 by J. Bax, Officiating Magistrate, Ghazipur (National Archives of India: Foreign Department Proceedings, 31 Dec. 1858, No. 791). Here his father's name is given as 'Bhunjun Rai' and his caste as 'Rajpoot-Hindoo'. He is described as a person of 'dark complexion flat forehead unconnected eyebrows sheep eyes tall stature thin body, flat nose but projected on the point aged about 40 years'. The document mentions 'Mouzah Gahmar, Pergh. Zummanelah, Ghazeeepoor' as his 'former residence', and in keeping with the force of those two words, an index of his status as a roving rebel, the remarks noted against his name read: 'Leading rebels in Pergunnah Zumman[ee]rah'.

* Oldham: 69.
of ethnic space and physical space. It also shows that the domain of peasant insurgency need not be limited to single administrative units: it could indeed be as large as a pargana or even a number of parganas comprising many villages in a contiguous area extended over two or three neighbouring districts. And that takes us back to the question with which we began: how far does territoriality help or hinder the spread of a rebellion?

The answer provided by the evidence presented above is positive. Territoriality, in the conditions of nineteenth-century India, helped. The reason clearly lay in a décalage, that is, in the fact that the two kinds of space mentioned above did not quite coincide even when they converged. There were territorial units which were home to more than one ethnic group and there were ethnic regions which extended over more than one territorial unit. A peasant uprising tended, in either case, to fill in the gap by its own content and simulate a coincidence between community and habitat. An overlap of these two elements supplemented by the appropriation of one or the other by the act of rebellion was what constituted the latter’s domain. This is how the domain of the hool came to include such non-Santals as lower-class Hindus and the Paharia Mal in the predominantly Santal territory of Damin-i-Koh, and that of the Hindu and Muslim peasants’ revolt in the indigo districts of Bengal the adivasi labourers employed by the factories. Conversely, the domain of the Kol insurrection of 1832 exceeded the limits of its geographical site in Chota Nagpur and drew in the Larka Kols who crossed over from Singhbhum to fight for their tribal brethren, while, to mention some non-tribal instances, the domain of Kunwar Singh’s rebellion extended its ethnic range beyond Bihar to include his fellow Rajputs in the Ghazipur district of Uttar Pradesh and that of the Gujar uprising at Bijnor the members of that caste resident on the other side of the Ganges.

The role of territoriality in thus enlarging and defining the domain of insurgency is, of course, not a development unique to the colonial period of Indian history. Habib has identified this as a factor in the Jat revolt and ‘the “lawless” activities’ of Mewatis, Wattus and Dogars in the late Mughal empire. Caste, he says, ‘brought [the peasant] into contact with his peers in

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the most distant villages, through a thousand ties of blood and rites. If they took to arms, he could not stand aloof.'\textsuperscript{99} What, however, adds to the significance of territorality in the peasant rebellions during the period under discussion is that it provided the anti-colonialist mass struggles of our people with some kind of an armature, however imperfect this might have been, at a time when organized nationalism (barring some small militant groups) was elitist and collaborationist, and the class organizations of the working people were either non-existent or ineffective.

Quite clearly the domain of rebellion still fell far short of the domain of the nation, and the two arms of territorality, that is, co-residential solidarity and primordial loyalty, acted to no small extent in putting the brakes on resistance against the Raj.\textsuperscript{100} Narrow localism raised its head and impeded the progress of the insurgents at critical moments. Villagers would not allow a party of mutineers from other parts to cross the Ghaghrā at Azamgarh. Caste would fight against caste—Gujars against Rohs and Jats, for instance. The same caste could be at war with the British in one region and on their side in another, as witness the contradictory careers of Gujar leaders like Futtuah and Sahib Singh. Even when solidarity between ethnic groups triumphed over separateness for a time, it weakened soon under pressure from their common enemy: the Mals and the Kumars ceased to co-operate with the Santals as counter-insurgency operations intensified. And the use made by the government of some sections of the non-tribal peasantry in order to suppress the hool demonstrated how ethnicity was no substitute for class consciousness in uniting the people against colonialism. In the event all resistance splintered into 'the hundred local revolutions as well as the hundred local reactions following them'.\textsuperscript{101} Yet all such limitations notwithstanding, where else except in this fragmented insurgent consciousness is one to situate the beginnings of those militant mass movements which surged across the subcontinent in 1919, 1942 and 1946? Territoriality was not indeed the stuff with which to build a revolutionary

\textsuperscript{99} Habib: 332.

\textsuperscript{100} See FSUP: IV 188 and V 108–9, 146, 246–7, 251, 261 for the instances cited below.

\textsuperscript{101} Engels (1926): 152.
party, as Mao Tse-tung sadly observed at his base in the Ching-kang mountains. But not to recognize in it the elements of what made the broader and more generalized struggles of the Indian people possible in the twentieth century would be to foreshorten history.

102 Mao: I 93.