

SAHARANPUR.

A GAZETTEER,

BEING

VOLUME II

OF THE

DISTRICT GAZETTEERS OF THE UNITED PROVINCES OF
AGRA AND OUDH.

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BY

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Medieval.

The Mauryan dynasty was finally overthrown in 184 B.C. and gave place to that of the Sungas, which lasted till 72 B.C., though the influence of the latter probably did not extend so far west as Saharanpur, which with more reason may be included in the dominions of the Saka satraps of Muttra. The invasion of Menander about 155 B.C. perhaps embraced this district, but at all events there are no extant remains of this most confusing epoch. The same may be said of the subsequent Kushan domination, which in the first and second centuries of the Christian era seems to have extended as far eastwards as Benares. The last of the great Kushans was Vasudeva, who seems to have brought about a general Hindu revival, and on his death in 226 A.D. the country became divided up into a number of petty principalities, of which not even the names remain. Then followed the Gupta empire, which included the upper Doab from 320 till at least 480, when Skanda Gupta died. It was during this period, it is said, that the town and fort of Manglaur were founded by Mangal Sen, a local chieftain who acknowledged the Guptas as suzerains. Probably, too, Mayapur rose to increased importance during this era, for in the seventh century it was described by the Chinese pilgrim, Hiuen Tsiang, as very populous and about $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles in circumference.* The fall of the Guptas was largely due to the incursions of the White Huns, who pressed eastwards into the Gangetic valley; but their rule was of short duration, and no paramount power appeared till the rise of Harsha of Thanesar, who from 606 to 647 ruled all Hindustan and many other provinces of India. From the time of Harsha's death to the establishment of the Tomar kingdom of Dehli, in the middle of the eleventh century, replaced in 1151 by the Chauhans under Visala Deva, the history of Saharanpur is a complete blank, unredeemed even by tradition.

Muselman
invasions.

The early Muhammadan historians seldom mention this district; for though it appears that the ancient highway connecting the Punjab with the east passed through Saharanpur and Deoband to Meerut, it seems to be the case that whoever held Dehli held the Doab as far north as the Siwalik hills. Consequently the transfer of the capital implies the transfer of the

* *Beal, Buddhist Records of the Western World*, I, p. 197.

Doab. The case was different in Rohilkhand, where local chieftains held sway, secure in their distance from the seat of Musalman garrisons and in their places of refuge in the forests and the mountains to the north. The first reference to the highway in question, though even this is doubtful, occurs in the writings of Al Biruni, who lived between 970 and 1039 A.D. In his itinerary he mentions a place called Sharasharaha, between Kanauj and Thanesar, and this General Cunningham identified with Sarsawa, which was certainly a place of importance in old days as commanding the passage of the Jumna.* A second mention of Sarsawa is made in the account of Mahmud's campaign against the Hindu princes in 1018, though this again is open to doubt. If the invader, as we are told, followed the route along the foot of the hills and then crossed into the Doab, going from Baran or Bulandshahr to Muttra and thence to Kanauj, he would have passed Sarsawa first, whereas the chronicles take him to Sharwa, identified by Cunningham as Sarsawa, after his reduction of Asni.† This Sharwa was the seat of Chand Rai, one of the chief men in Hindustan, who after much fighting had made peace with Jaipal and had given his daughter to the latter's son, Bhim Pal. The difficulty may perhaps be accounted for by the statement that Chand Rai was frightened by Mahmud's conquests and therefore retired to the hills, Sarsawa possibly being not his capital but one of his forts. The place was taken; but Chand Rai escaped through the forest to the hills with the Musalmans in hot pursuit, and on the 6th of January 1019 a battle was fought, in which the Hindus were utterly routed and an enormous amount of plunder and innumerable slaves fell into Mahmud's hands. Whatever be the place intended, it is certain that about this period the northern portion of this district fell out of cultivation and that little improvement took place for several centuries.

The routes taken by Saiyid Salar Masaud and Ahmad Nialtigin did not touch Saharanpur, nor is there any reference to the district in connection with the conquests of Hindustan by Qutb-ud-din Aibak, the general of Shahab-ud din Ghori, in 1196.

The
Musalman
conquest.

*E. H. I., I., p. 67. | †*Ibid.*, II, pp. 42, 47 and 49.

It is clear, however, that the tract was included in the dominions of the Sultan, and was probably administered from the capital. In many parts of the country, no doubt, the conquest was but nominal at first, for we are told that in 1217 Shams-ud-din Altamsh subjugated all the territory up to the Siwaliks, presumably for the first time, and captured Mandawar in the Bijnor district.* In 1253, after a campaign in the hills of the Punjab, Nasir-ud-din crossed the Jumna at Rajghat and traversed the north of the district, making the passage of the Ganges at Hardwar, whence he turned southwards to Budaun.† This progress seems to have been due to a local rebellion in the northern Doab and Rohilkhand, which in the latter had compelled the governor to abandon Sumbhal.

Founda-
tion of
Saharan-
pur.

The next event of importance was the first incursion of the Mughals in 1308, under the command of Ali Beg Gurgan, a descendant of Changiz Khan. With a force estimated at 40,000 horse he swept through the Punjab, crossed the Jumna and Rajghat and then passed along the foot of the hills into Bijnor, to be utterly defeated by the army of Ala-ud-din near Amroha.‡ Shortly afterwards another invasion followed, and plundered the northern Doab; but the Sultan sent his troops to hold the fords of the Jumna and completely annihilated the Mughals on their return. These events must have retarded the development of the district, which had already commenced, but the overthrow of the invaders re-established security, and the rapid spread of agriculture in these parts is expressly mentioned. During the reign of Muhammad bin Tughlaq the city of Saharanpur was founded, apparently at the order of the Sultan himself, who called it after a celebrated saint named Shah Haran Chishti, whose shrine remains an object of veneration to this day. Progress was again checked by the Mughals, who returned in 1329 under Tarmsharin Khan, following the old route. He was the brother of Kathlagh Khwaja, king of Khorasan, and his expedition was the largest yet sent into India.§ Having pillaged all the Punjab, his troops turned into the Doab, proceeding to the confines of Budaun after an unsuccessful siege of Meerut. The historians declare that he was defeated and driven back; but it is

*E. H. I., II, p. 241. †*Ibid.*, p. 353. ‡E. H. I., III, p. 198. §*Ibid.*, V, p. 435.

more probable that he was bribed to withdraw, the more so as both Muhammad and his successor, Firoz Shah, did their utmost to conciliate the Mughals, of whom they were terribly afraid. To protect this district from future attacks, posts were established along the Jumna with good effect, since none of the many inroads that subsequently occurred seem to have extended into the Doab. It was during a tour of inspection of these garrisons that Firoz saw the pillar of Asoka at Khizrabad and ordered its removal to Dehli. In 1379 the Sultan made a progress through Samana and Umballa, and thence came to Saharanpur; he received the submission of the Raja of Sirmor and other hill chiefs, and then returned to his capital.* In 1387 he again visited the Siwaliks and hunted in the Dun, and it is curious to note that the rhinoceros was then to be found here. Shortly afterwards his son Muhammad rebelled, and on being driven from Dehli he fled northwards to Saharanpur and the hills, where he remained till the death of his father in 1389.

Nine years later the district was again overrun by the invading hordes of Timur, who himself has recorded the events that took place on this expedition.† After the defeat of Mahmud and the capture of Meerut and Dehli, he sent Jahan Shah to march up the left bank of the Jumna, and to ravage the country while Timur in person took the bulk of his forces to the Ganges and thence into Bijnor, crossing the river at Tughlaqpur in Muzaffarnagar, near the Balawali ferry. He then won three victories in a single day, on the last occasion defeating a large force which had collected below the Chandi hills, opposite Hardwar. Resting for the night, he cleared the hills of the fugitives and crossed the river, encamping five miles below Hardwar. He then determined to return, and had actually proceeded two marches southwards, when he retraced his steps on hearing that the enemy had assembled in strength in the Siwaliks. On being joined by Jahan Shah, of whose doings no record exists, he appears to have marched to Hardwar, where he forced the defile against the opposition offered by Bahruz, the chieftain of the Dun. He camped that day at Hardwar and then went to Bahrah, a dependency of Bakri, in the country of Mayapur.

* E. H. I., IV, p. 14. | † *Ibid.*, III, pp. 451 and 505.