



Fig. 2: In Sisauli village at the residence of Mahendra Singh "Tikait". The hookah is in front of him. "Mantri" Kabool Singh (with turban) sits to his right. (Photo by author, January 1982)

need for a written history, and in public meetings he insisted upon learned persons being given a prominent place. His scholarly attitude and his insistence on historical accuracy did not always make him popular.

At the second Sarv Khap meeting in Shoron in 1956 Kabool Singh acted as general-secretary of the Sarv Khap Panchayat. At the 1963 meeting Ilam Chand Arya alleged that he had had no formal right to do so, and drew up an alternative list of office bearers.

Mantri Kabool Singh and Mahendra Singh Tikait entered the Goela dispute as representatives of the Balyans. As Balyan hard-liners they were in opposition to the other clans, and a compromise could not easily be furthered by them. Instead Ilam Chand Arya emerged as a mediator. He was perceived as a neutral person as his clan was not involved in the dispute. His previous opposition to Balyan interests made him acceptable to the Maliks, while his ties of friendship to many Balyans made him acceptable to them.

10. Political Mobilization and Clan Organizations

Later events have brought Mahendra Singh Tikait into the limelight. He barely figures in Pradhan's book, but Pradhan mentions that when he was made *tikait* or headman in 1941 the *khap* took up a collection and presented him with some land to alleviate his poverty (1966: 178 f.). He was only about eight years old at that time (R. Singh 1988:

86). The word *tikait* comes from *tika*, the turban worn by the headman of a head village (Pradhan 1966: 81 and K. S. Singh 1968: 211). From various sources we can glean a bit of information about his further career.⁶

According to Mahendra Singh Tikait himself he failed school in class six (Bhatnagar 1988: 15). Later he was treated at the Agra Asylum for mental disorders (Roy 1988: 7). In 1982 he told me that ten years before God had indicted him for eighteen crimes, but that he had now been forgiven and enjoined to devote himself to social work and the service of humanity. Accordingly he did so and by 1986 he had become the leader of the Uttar Pradesh branch of the Bharatiya Kisan Union (B. K. U.), or Indian Farmers Union.

The B. K. U. is a pressure group disassociated from political parties. It was originally formed in 1978 in Haryana (Roy 1988: 5). In Punjab it emerged from the Zamindara Union in 1980 or 1981. Both organizations had followers among the Sikh peasantry which in Punjab were mostly Jats (Bhushan 1984; Gill and Singhal 1984).

In Uttar Pradesh the B. K. U. was formed on the basis of the *khaps* as a kind of successor to the Sarv Khap Panchayat. According to Zaidi, the headmen of the *khaps* constituted the leadership of the Union:

6 I stayed with Mahendra Singh Tikait in Sisauli twice during my fieldwork. Most of the material for the case was gathered in or near Shoron, but I first heard about the Goela case in his house. In 1989 I briefly revisited Sisauli.