

A HISTORY OF RAJASTHAN



RIMA HOOJA

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Dedicated to

Bhupendra Hooja (1922–2006)

In turn student leader (Lahore), radio broadcaster (AIR and BBC, London), government publicist (Delhi Administration), journalist, author, senior civil servant (IAS), writer, editor, publisher, activist, perennial seeker of knowledge, and a learned and warm hearted mentor to many.

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INTRODUCTION



RAJASTHAN, ALSO REFERRED TO AS ‘RAJWARRA’, ‘RAETHAN’ AND ‘Rajputana’ in the past, is synonymous in popular perception as the land of rajas and maharajas, chivalry, forts and palaces, the fabled Thar desert, and hardy folk — ordinary men and women — with a treasure-trove of ancient lore, music, dance, ballads and myths. It is this, and similar aspects of, the rich historical heritage that the present book on Rajasthan’s history has attempted to summarise and present.

While the present-day state of Rajasthan is a relatively recent entity, formed in the wake of Indian independence in 1947, the region has a very long history. As such, the book tries to cover a broad spectrum encompassing the basic political, socio-cultural and economic history of the area comprising the area of present-day Rajasthan from the earliest times to the present. It is relevant to note here that in recent years, the importance of regional studies, complementing existing ‘mainstream’ history, has been recognised, and regional or local history forms part of the academic syllabi of most Indian universities. However, in the case of Rajasthan, though specialised scholarly books and short tracts in Hindi and English, covering specific topics, written by academics are available, there exists a lacuna for a comprehensive, yet easy-to-read, book on Rajasthan’s history aimed at both the general reader and scholar alike.

In an age where it isn’t politically correct to see works with a strong chronological and dynasties-related stress, I should state at the outset that there *is* a strong element of both these aspects in this book! For one thing, the nature of texts and sources so far available (e.g. *khyats*, *rasos*, *kavya*,

etc.; the numerous genealogical *vamshavali* and *pidhivali* etc., court records, epigraphs, inscribed eulogies; coins; oral traditions) make it far easier to present a certain kind of information. Such information focuses more on the elite and the merchants, traders, religious groups; the several warrior clans and their battles; the grants given to bards, priests, religious sects; the literary, architectural and cultural achievements; and so forth. Of course, there is also considerable information about land revenue etc. and work has been done in the past couple of decades on some chronological periods, covering 'late medieval' to pre-modern and modern subaltern aspects, as well as 'late medieval' to pre-modern and modern economic and land-related aspects. Despite such work — much of it substantive — there are still lacunae for many, earlier, aspects of the socio-economic, subaltern, peoples' oriented etc., 'everyday' life of the 'average citizen'.

As such, I look at this present book as fulfilling the role of providing a basic framework of the 'old-fashioned' political history — with generous admixture of other aspects — for Rajasthan through the centuries. To this, I hope to eventually add a couple of further volumes at some point in the future. In these, I will try and take up alternative approaches and subject-matters, and do better justice to the people of the past few millennia who have lived in Rajasthan.

History is much more than a mere chronological arrangement of events and incidents, however. Thus, the book has also tried to provide a general overview of aspects like the literature, religions, art and architecture, position of women, etc. — all of which go into the making of history and culture. However, the limitations of space — and occasionally a paucity of information — have determined to a degree the amount of general socio-cultural, economic, subaltern and gender-related etc. aspects that one has been able to put into this work. Perhaps this can be resolved by another, differently oriented, book in the near future!

Furthermore, despite the not inconsiderable bulk of this work, there remain many other associated aspects of human life that have, due to space constraints as much as being outside the immediate scope of this work, remained scantily touched upon. The history of indigenous science and the development of technology in this region, for instance, have not really been

examined in this book — and indeed require a full separate book in itself to do justice to the subject!

To take the example of metals and metallurgy: the erstwhile princely state of Mewar has long been recognised for its mineral wealth, including abundant copper ores which began to be worked from c. third millennium BC onwards. There are also large deposits of lead and zinc in and around Zawar, about forty kms southeast of Udaipur. Zawar has been an important centre of zinc production for contemporary India, and in the 1950s the Zawar hills were described as possessing India's richest deposits of lead, zinc and silver! Zinc production here has been carried out in recent years by Hindustan Zinc Ltd., public sector organisation. Fascinatingly, recent studies have shown that zinc smelting was known in the Zawar area at least by the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries AD, if not somewhat earlier (as is discussed further in this book). This date precedes zinc-smelting in most other parts of the world, especially Europe!

While this aspect of science and technology is looked at in this text, many others are not — mainly because of constraints of space. In a different vein, but by way of further whetting the appetite of interested readers, one may also mention just one of the ingenious local methods that evolved to cope with the restrictions imposed by the climate and terrain. On display at Jaisalmer's palace-museum is a device for cooling a room, which is fabricated from wood, metal and frames set with vetiver-grass (*khus*). This pre-modern cooler incorporates a manually turned spoked wooden wheel, which in turn moves small wooden fan-blades set within a large drum-like structure with wetted frames of *khus* on both sides. As the wheel turns, the fan-blades revolve, drawing and circulating *khus* cooled air through the chamber!

It is openly known that there are various accounts of different periods of the past available to us. For Rajasthan, these are in the form of scanty archaeological data, coins of kings (occasionally queens) and kingdoms, and references in various works of literature and various languages like Sanskrit, Prakrit, Persian, Apabrahmsa, Rajasthani (i.e. Dingal, Pingal) etc. The sources also take the shape of genealogies and archival records, oral traditions and travellers' accounts, as well as numerous inscriptions on

copper-plates grants, stone-slabs inset at wells, reservoirs and other water-structures, within caves, on the walls of temples and mosques, and at forts and palaces.

There is, however, an obvious limitation in the amount of knowledge or information that any one of the above categories can convey by themselves. For example, in the case of the archaeological, epigraphical, numismatical, and art and architectural types of data, our 'recreation' of the past based on any one of these is limited by the fact that only a portion of the data has survived down to our times. And that too, in the case of epigraphs, provides a pre-selected perspective, since most inscriptions were engraved as proclamations by the state or king, or to record grants, or the construction of a place of worship, or to commemorate a victory, and so forth. As such, epigraphs are usually different from casual graffiti. For, while graffiti may or may not provide an alternative side to the story, it *can* provide additional insights into bygone eras!

Surviving archives in the shape of documents (or inscriptions) in Sanskrit, Prakrit, Persian, Rajasthani etc., pertaining to administrative details, or revenue-records, or listing of estates, or honours, or various taxes and cesses levied, or letters exchanged between two or more kingdoms or chiefdoms, etc., also carry the burden of selectivity. For, not every aspect of everyday life of every category of inhabitant of any area is generally covered in such archival records, but rather, things which seemed relevant for the purpose of recording at the time! Similarly, literary works, genealogies, and travellers' accounts etc. have usually recorded, or in the case of the tales and myths have memorised and handed down to future generations, those aspects that appeared important, or noteworthy, or relevant to the recorder or story-teller. Furthermore, the epigraphic, literary and archival records for the period spanning c. sixth century BC to sixth century AD in Rajasthan's history, are fewer than compared to the centuries that followed, and this gap can give a skewed notion about human existence!

It is not as if the area has been oblivious to the notion of history. There is a long tradition of bardic accounts, customary histories, genealogies and ballads which were maintained, transmitted and publicly recited on

occasions by groups like the Charans, Bhats, Badvas, Barhats, Ranimangas and/or Bhopas, as the case may be. Some of this information was penned in the form of *khyats*, *vamshavali*, *vats*, *rasos*, etc. in Rajasthani. However, while *khyats* by Nainsi, Bankidas, Dayaldas, Murari Dan and others provide valuable information, it should be borne in mind that at times the *khyat*-compilers blended legendary ancestors and events with real people as generously as they eulogised a patron and criticised their patron's (or his ancestor's) opponents.

One should add here, that there is a rich oral and written tradition, mainly — though not solely — pertaining to dynastic histories. Popular heroes, including of the non-elite category, are a part of this tradition, as for instance in the story of Devnarayan, or the '*Bagdavaton ki Katha*'. Oral transmission, even of written texts, has been an important feature of traditional rural and urban life in most parts of Rajasthan. The public performance of the tale of Pabu-ji in villages, using the '*Pabu-ji ka Phad*', or a painted scroll depicting the story of Pabu-ji, and entailing several nights of recitation, is an example of this. At another end of the social scale, it was common for the ruling groups to be entertained in their '*baithaks*' and *durbars* after sunset by storytellers and bards, who related and re-told the heroic deeds of past (and occasionally contemporaneous) men and women¹. However, since impeccable, authenticated and/or verifiable sources of history are of primary importance to historians, one problem faced while delving into the oral and traditionally communicated aspects of the history of Rajasthan, is that of intermeshing and verifying the rich oral tradition with 'history' arrived at through following the accepted rigours of the discipline!

Accounts of travellers like Xuanzang (previously spelt as Hiuen Tsang), or later ones like Tavernier, Bernier, Finch, Manucci, Thomas Roe, Terry, Captain Mundy, Bishop Heber who saw Jaipur in 1825, Manrique, Frey Sebastian and various others too have left a vivid picture of some of their observations, and are important in this respect.

There is also another distinct body of writing, mostly dating from the nineteenth and early twentieth century AD. This category includes works on regional or sub-regional histories by people like Col. James Tod, Kaviraj

Shyamaldas, Suryamal Mishran, G.H. Ojha, etc. It also includes the various official reports of British Political Agents, Residents, Agents to the Governor General and others, besides reports, gazetteers, compendiums and books compiled by British officers like Powlett, Erskine, Tod, Lockett, Willis, etc.; as well as the subsequent works of various twentieth century historians.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century saw some exploration, excavation, survey and conservation work in some of the princely states. For instance, the erstwhile state of Jaipur established a Department of Archaeology and Historical Research in 1926, appointing Dayaram Sahni, who had retired from the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), as its first director. Later, K.N. Puri served in that capacity. Excavations and conservation work at various sites, dating to different time-periods, were conducted under both men. Prior to this, Maharaja Ganga Singh of Bikaner appointed an Italian indologist and linguist, Luigi Pio Tessitori, to undertake a general architectural-cum-cultural survey of Bikaner. Tessitori also studied parts of Marwar. In the 1940s the Austro-Hungarian-Briton — Sir Aurel Stein — traversed parts of the erstwhile states of Bikaner, Jaisalmer, and Bahawalpur, which lay further to the west, and found evidence of settlements.

Thus, over time, not only have there been several kinds of writings, narratives, chronicles and oral transmissions of traditions about the area comprising the modern state of Rajasthan, there still exist ample archival, epigraphical, numismatical, architectural, archaeological, and art-history etc. related information records. All these form a valuable source of information for any writer attempting to compile Rajasthan's history into book-form — and, in utilising these, one must acknowledge an unredeemable debt to the hands and minds that created and lived these 'traditions', sources and bodies of knowledge; as also to the multitudes who have lived and died in this area over the past thousands of years, and played their part in shaping the reality we live in today.

¹ Laxmi Kumari Chundawat, author of many books in Marwari and Hindi, traces her fascination with such tales to the regular evening recitations and story-sessions of her childhood at Devgarh fort in the early twentieth century.

SECTION
ONE



1

THE LAND AND THE BACKGROUND SETTING



INTRODUCTION



THE MODERN STATE OF RAJASTHAN CAME INTO BEING IN THE MID twentieth century, when nineteen princely states and two chiefdoms of Rajputana, who had previously signed individual ‘Instruments of Accession’ to the newly independent nation-state of India in 1947, were merged together between 1948-1950. With the later addition of the previously British-administered Ajmer-Merwara, Abu *taluka* and a few other ‘enclaves’, which were amalgamated and merged with the Greater Union of Rajasthan on 1 November 1956 — in accordance with the provisions of the States Reorganisation Act, 1956 — this took the form of the present-day Rajasthan. The territories and boundaries of these erstwhile princely states and chiefdoms, and of Ajmer-Merwara were adjusted upon ‘Integration’ to facilitate better administration within the new state of Rajasthan.

As a result of these administrative re-adjustments, the boundaries and extent of the modern districts of Rajasthan do not necessarily cover only those precise areas that formed part of an erstwhile state of the same name; or even all of it. In the larger historical picture of the region comprising present-day Rajasthan, however, these re-adjustments often (but not always) echo some previous territorial division. They also take into account, as has been the case for Rajasthan through the ages, the geography and physical distinctions of the region. This latter aspect has played an important part in the shaping of the region’s history.

The present day state of Rajasthan (erstwhile Rajputana), which Tod and other nineteenth century writers tell us was also called ‘Rajwarra’ and

‘Raethan’ (land of the Rais, e.g. Rajas — hence the derivative: Rajputana), is roughly rhomboid in shape, encompassing a total area of approximately 3,42,239 sq kms. Located between latitudes 23° 3’ N to 30° 12’ N, and between longitudes 69° 30’E to 78° 17’E, modern Rajasthan is the largest state of India, following the formation of the separate state of Chhattisgarh, out of Madhya Pradesh in November 2000. It is flanked on the west and northwest by Pakistan, on the north and northeast by the Indian states of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, on the southeast by Madhya Pradesh and on the southwest by Gujarat.

Modern Rajasthan comprises 6 administrative divisions, 32 districts, 241 *tehsils* and 237 *panchayat samitis* or development blocks, with a total of 222 towns and some 41,353 revenue villages. According to the figures available from the 1991 census, the total population of the state stood at 43,880,640 persons (of which 22,935,895 were males and 20,944,745 females). In the year 2001, according to the Census of India 2001 provisional population totals, these stood at 56,473,122 persons, of whom 29,381,657 were males and 27,091,465 females.

The region has yielded evidence for a long cultural sequence, stretching from the prehistoric Old Stone Age or Palaeolithic period onwards. Before looking at the history of the region in a chronological order, however, it may be relevant to focus briefly in this chapter on the geography and physiography etc. of the present state of Rajasthan; as such aspects are essential for any attempt to understand the past. These factors have played their part in determining the types of crops grown, areas of agricultural or pastoral activities, settlement-patterns, human adaptations, locations of states etc. The same geographical etc., factors have gradually given rise to numerous popularly recognised cultural zones and sub-zones and so forth, which are often demarcated by physical features like enclosing hills, plateaux, rivers and arid or fertile tracts.

THE BACKGROUND SETTING: GEOGRAPHY OF RAJASTHAN

The region comprising Rajasthan is almost synonymous in popular mind with the famed Great Indian Desert or Thar Desert¹. From the geographical point of view, however, the most striking feature in the topography of Rajasthan is the Aravalli Range. The Aravallis take their name from the term '*Ada-vala*', meaning a beam or an obstruction lying across the path, which the Range, quite literally, does. The Range is older than the Himalayan in geological time, and is considered to be one of the oldest folded mountain ranges in the world².

Running in a northeast to southwest direction, the Aravalli Range divides Rajasthan into two distinct geographical units. The western part, comprising nearly sixty per cent of the total area of Rajasthan, is arid or semi-arid. The eastern part is comparatively fertile and semi-humid.

The western portion, lying to the north and west of the Aravalli range, consists mainly of the Sandy Arid Plains (including the Thar Desert), forming the traditional *Maru* region of sand, sand dunes and arid conditions, and the Semi-Arid Transitional Plains comprising the northwestern *baggar* area of Rajasthan. This latter Semi-Arid Transitional Plains tract contains the Luni river Basin, and the 'Interior Drainage' area, along with a small area comprising the Ghaggar plain.

This arid and semi-arid region is a vast expanse of land, with numerous sand dunes, often stretching for miles. Isolated low hills and lime stone outcrops are characteristic. Its old names — *Maru-bhumi* and *Maru-sthali* — meaning 'desert land', have also been interpreted as 'land of death and thirst' in folklore. The Thar Desert lies in this part of Rajasthan, and extends westwards into Sindh in Pakistan. The common local name for a large part of this western half of Rajasthan is Marwar, though strictly speaking other erstwhile kingdoms like Jaisalmer and Bikaner also shared this region. One of the traditional terms used for this subregion — particularly the Jaisalmer, Bikaner, western and northern Jodhpur, Churu and Shekhawati parts — in early historical times was '*Drumkulya*'.³ Another was '*Maru-kantar*'. In a different context, a part of the desert land now part of the administrative division of Bikaner was apparently known as '*Jangal*' (also '*Jangal-desh*'). The overall area is believed to be a natural

northerly extension of the Gujarat plains, with the progressive desiccation culminating here in a true desert.

The main river of this part of Rajasthan is the Luni (literally, 'Salty' or 'Brackish'). This has a number of tributaries, including the Bandi, Jojri and Sukri etc., all but one of which join it from the south. These rivers carry water for only a few weeks or even days during the monsoon, running dry in summer. Recent researches suggest that climate and climatic change probably played its part in the varying amounts of water that have come down the Luni river over the centuries. The broad beds of the Luni and its tributaries have been considerably filled by aeolian and alluvial sediments. In the extreme north, are the shallow beds of the now mostly dry rivers Ghaggar (identified by some as a remnant of the ancient Saraswati river), and its tributary Chautang (possibly ancient Drishadvati). It has been postulated that in prehistoric times some of the water-courses of this region would have drained into a more active river system (identified as the 'lost' Saraswati by some). The area is known for its salt deposits and lakes too, especially at Sambhar, Degana, Kuchaman, Pachbhadra and Didwana. Salt has been extracted from several of these deposits and lakes over the centuries.

Vegetation is sparse, and mainly comprises shrubs, grasses and low trees — many of which serve multiple uses as food supplements, medicinal herbs and seeds, fodder, palisades to protect and corral livestock, and fuel and wood. The main varieties of traditional natural vegetation include *Khejri*, *Rohida*, *Hingota*, *Thor*, *Kair*⁴, *Phog*, *Dhak*, and *Bhurat*. Annual rainfall varies between fifty cm to ten cm and less. Thus, prior to the advent of canal and tube-well irrigation and modern methods of farming, cultivation was often limited to the rainy season '*Kharif*' crop, except where scarce irrigation facilities allowed a winter crop. Since the water-table is nearly 100m deep at places, the traditional crops have included millets like *bajra* (pearl millet or *Pennisetum typhoideum*) and *jowar* (Great millet or *Sorghum vulgare*), the *moth* lentil, other coarser food-grains and desert produce, as these have required relatively little moisture for cultivation. With difficult farming conditions and a relatively low population up until recently, animal husbandry, pastoralism and pastoral nomadism has also been an important aspect of the local economy.

It is vital to note, however, that the desert is not a ‘dead’ or empty place! In fact, desert conditions are something human (and animal) populations have learned to live with, adapt to, and utilise to the best of their abilities, and contrary to popular belief, desert-areas have never meant an absence of either life or human activities. Rather, the inhabitants of different sub-zones of this area have learned how to make full use of the scarce resources as and when available.

For example, the writings of Marwar’s famous seventeenth century writer and state minister, Muhnot Nainsi, has recorded that the Luni river seasonally overflowed its banks — which was termed ‘*rel*’, and on the ‘alluvial soil’ thus deposited wheat and gram were grown. In addition, wells were dug inside the bed of the river to tap underground water; and the water-lifting device called ‘*arhat*’ (miscalled as a ‘Persian’ wheel) was used to lift up water⁵. Nainsi further recorded that the confluence of the rivers Gilari (Guhiya) and Sukri at the town of Sojat created a small fertile tract in which wheat, cotton and sugarcane was cultivated; and orchards with pomegranates, mangoes, lemons and roses, etc., were maintained by the landed elite near the river banks⁶. In a somewhat similar vein, La Touche observed, at the beginning of the twentieth century, that “Wherever water can be obtained from wells, and whenever, as occasionally happens, there are favourable rains, excellent crops of wheat and millet are raised, and the whole country is clothed with a luxuriant crop of grass, affording pasturage to large herds of cattle and sheep. The ‘desert’ thus supports a large population, taught by experience to make the most of their means of subsistence, precarious though they may be, and to store up the superabundant harvests of the good years for use during less favourable seasons”⁷.

Describing a different part of western Rajasthan in the early years of the nineteenth century, James Tod observed in his now famous *Annals and Antiquities of Rajast’han*, that Jaisalmer traditionally knew two kinds of ploughs. One type was yoked to one or two oxen; and the other to a camel. For ‘treading out the grain’, the people used oxen, as in all parts of India, and not infrequently they yoked the cattle to their *bakerries*, or carts and passed the whole over the grain⁸. Tod further noted that: “There is not a

running stream throughout Jessulmer; but there are many temporary lakes or salt-marshes, termed *sirr*, formed by the collection of waters from the sand-hills which are easily dammed-in to prevent escape. They are ephemeral, seldom lasting but a few months; though after a very severe monsoon they have been known to remain throughout the year. One of these, called the Kanoad Sirr, extends from Kanoad to Mohungurh, covering a space of eighteen miles, and in which some water remains throughout the year. When it overflows, a small stream issues from the Sirr, and pursues an easterly direction for thirty miles before it is absorbed: its existence depends on the parent lake. The salt which it produces is the property of the crown, and adds something to the revenue”⁹.

One may also note here that excessive aridity, or varying stages of desertification, interspersed with spells of greater rainfall, affecting greenery and desert-conditions, has fluctuated over the centuries. India’s National Institute of Science’s 1952 symposium¹⁰ on the Rajputana desert recorded evidence suggesting that western Rajasthan probably had better foliage-cover during the Mauryan period (c. third-first centuries BC); and that up to c. AD 600 there were settlements along the dried-up beds of the Ghaggar-Hakra. The symposium further concluded that by about c. AD 1000, as desiccation continued, the population of the western part of the Ghaggar-Hakra valley became increasingly ‘nomadic’. There seem to have been several hydrological and tectonic changes in the Punjab and Sindh regions too between c. 700-1800 AD¹¹, which affected the course of the rivers in these areas, as also the northern limits of the desert. On the basis of his analysis of archival and history-related data, G.S.L. Devra has suggested that the flow of water through the Ghaggar-Hakra streams may have been greater till about the twelfth-thirteenth centuries AD¹². Even afterwards, the flow seems to have becoming gradually lesser, so that the Ghaggar had not completely dried up even up to the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries AD¹³.

One should also bear in mind the ‘greening’ of part of the desert area that occurred in modern Sri Ganganagar district, following the efforts of Bikaner’s Maharaja Ganga Singh and his staff, which began with the inauguration of the Gang Canal on 26 October 1927, by the Viceroy of India, Lord Irwin. Similarly, while the long-term effect of Rajasthan’s

‘Indira Gandhi Nahar Project’ (IGNP — the erstwhile Rajasthan Canal Project) is open to debate, already crops like cotton, wheat, sugarcane and mustard have become the norm in the districts of Sri Ganganagar and Hanumangarh as a result of these contemporary facilities for irrigation. This aspect can also help us in understanding the probable economy of sites like Harappan period Kalibangan etc., or in a later context, Bhatner, Maroth, Mumanwahan, Derawar, etc.¹⁴ that are situated on the banks of once perennial rivers.

It should also be kept in mind that well-established trade and travel routes have traversed this area in historical times¹⁵ — and ‘inhospitable’ terrain does not mean lack of interaction with other areas! The modern administrative districts of Barmer, Jaisalmer, Bikaner, Churu, Sri Ganganagar, Jhunjhunu, Sikar, Nagaur, Jodhpur, Jalore, Pali and, as of July 1994, Hanumangarh, etc. today form part of this geographical area to the west and northwest of the Aravalli divide.

The second major geographical unit of Rajasthan lies to the east and southeast of the Aravalli divide. The modern administrative districts that fall within this region include Udaipur, Chittorgarh, Rajsamand, Banswara, Dungarpur, Kota, Bundi, Baran, Jhalawar, Bhilwara, Ajmer, Jaipur, Tonk, Dausa, Dholpur, Karauli, Bharatpur and Alwar etc. Rainfall here varies between 100cm to 60cm per annum. The area is watered by a network of rivers, many of them perennial, belonging to the Chambal-Banas and Mahi system. The major tributaries of the river Banas, which eventually joins the river Chambal, include the Khari, Morel and Berach; while those of the Mahi include the Som and Jakhar. While blown sand is uncommon, the beds of the larger rivers (including the Banas, Kothari and Khari), are usually deep in sand. These river beds are usually cultivated during the summer months by nearby villagers who grow melons and cucumbers etc. on the sandy beds. In some places, the banks of the major rivers are composed of geologically ‘Sub-Recent’ conglomerate cemented by ‘*kankar*’ (calcium carbonate). The population density has, through historical times, been higher here than in the area west of the Aravalli Range. The southern part of this region is known commonly as the old ‘Medpat’ or Mewar area.

The whole is a fairly well-defined zone in geographical terms, bounded on the west by the Aravallis, on the south and southeast by the northern scarps of the Central Indian Vindhyas, and on the north and northeast by the alluvium of the Indo-Gangetic plain. It is a hilly and uneven area that includes fertile river plains, the highlands and plateaux of *Bhorat*, the southeast Rajasthan '*Pathar*' region and the zone's northeastern hilly tracts. In contrast to the mainly arid and semi-arid part of Rajasthan, in this area fertile tracts and valleys with alluvium, loam and black soil are common. The higher land was covered with dense forests until relatively recently. In fact, most of the denudation and deforestation has occurred in the last forty or so years!

This area's Banas-Berach river system, which forms part of the 'Eastern Plains', may be viewed as comprising two physiographic units namely, the Banas basin and the Chappan plain. (Some geographers have referred to the Banas, Mahi and Gambhiri basins as part of an 'Eastern Plain Eco-System'). While the Pre-Vindhyan gneisses and Aravalli System schists and phyllites of this area have eroded into crumbling outcrops, the more resistant quartzite has formed steep and narrow ridges, while limestone outcrops have resulted in steep-sided, flat-topped ridges and plateaux. Stones like chert — which was used for making tools and equipment in pre- and protohistoric times — are associated with these outcrops.

The Banas Basin covers the eastern part of Udaipur, western Chittorgarh, Bhilwara, Tonk, Jaipur, Dausa, western Sawai Madhopur and southern Alwar districts. The meandering Banas and its tributary rivers have cut wide, but shallow, valleys here. The area is a dissected plain of Archaean gneiss, lying at an average height of 475m above sea level, which slopes moderately towards the east and northeast. The maximum height of the plain in the west, where the Aravallis are also exposed, is about 582m near Deogarh. From Udai Sagar (east of Udaipur), the watershed runs in an easterly direction. It forms the southern boundary of the Mewar plains, drained by the Banas and its tributaries Berach, Kothari, Khari, and others.

In the west and southwestern part of the Banas Basin, the higher hummocks and hills have thin soil cover, and a topography marked by

eroded granite and gneissic rocks. To the east, the land slowly falls to an undulating rocky plain, interspersed with fertile cultivable tracts. In contrast to the scantier alluvium deposits of the western sections of the plain, in the eastern and northeastern sections the thickness of the alluvium deposits increases and the plain assumes a more level aspect. North and east of Ajmer, the alluvium has covered the underlying gneiss completely. Further north-northeast, the Banas and other river basins of the Eastern Plain gradually merge with the thick alluvium of the Indo-Gangetic Plain.

To the south and east of Chittorgarh, the Banas plain is fringed by Central India's Vindhyan Range. This section of the Banas plain is drained by the tributaries Gambhiri, Wagan, etc. It is a flat, alluvial fertile tract of land, and is considered to be a continuation of the Malwa plain that lies further south. The rich black cotton soil of this area supports crops like rice, wheat, cotton and sugarcane. The 'South-eastern Rajasthan Pathar' — or 'tablelands', with fertile black soil on flat hill tops area — to its east and southeast limit the extent of the Banas plain in those directions, forming a semi-barrier—though not impassable — between the lands known during several centuries of recorded history as Mewar and Hadauti (the Kota-Bundi area).

The Chappan Plain lies to the south of the Banas Basin, and includes southeastern Udaipur, Dungarpur, Banswara, and southern Chittorgarh districts. It is situated south of the great Indian watershed of the Aravallis and is drained by the Mahi and its tributary rivers. These rivers eventually flow out into the Gulf of Cambay. The gradient of the Mahi tributaries is about eight metres to twelve metres per kilometre, and there has been far greater erosion of the gneissic plain south of the Aravalli watershed, than to its north. Thus, the Chappan plain has a higher proportion of low hill ranges with narrow valleys between them, and a deeply dissected landscape. The Chappan plain has a high density of Bhils¹⁶. The uneven terrain is locally known as 'Vagar' (also 'Bagar'); with the local dialect referred to as 'Vagari' or 'Bagari'. This southern 'Vagar' is different from the similarly named 'Baggar' cultural sub-zone, which forms part of the arid northwestern zone across the Aravallis, and which now forms part of the area called Shekhawati. The 'Vagar' area includes the hilly tracts of Banswara and Dungarpur.

The hills of the Chappan shut off the Banas basin from the Gujarat plains that lie to the southwest, while its valleys serve to act as passes that have traditionally been used for passage and transportation of trade-goods. Thus, the natural defences provided to southern and southeastern Rajasthan by the Aravallis has, on the one hand, prevented easy domination of the region by Gujarat or Malwa, and vice-versa, while, on the other hand, enabling communication and access between regions. Of course, it is these same trade-routes and passes that have also doubled as the marching-routes of armies across the centuries. There is, thus, a long history of Mewar-Gujarat and Mewar-Malwa contact throughout the historical period. (In the context of physical, economic and human geography, one may note that the old 'Bombay-Baroda and Central India' or B.B. & C.I. line (Khandwa-Ajmer railway) was constructed through the natural corridor between the southern Aravallis and the eastern Vindhya).

East of Chittorgarh, the Vindhya encircle the Banas plain. The country is hilly, with one series of parallel north-south hills, with narrow valleys between them, lying east of Chittorgarh; a second — the Bundi range, extending in a northeastern direction from near Mandalgarh in district Bhilwara; and a third, to the northeast of Chittorgarh, running parallel to the Banas near Jahazpur in district Bhilwara. These form part of the southeastern Rajasthan Pathar of the Vindhyan scarp land and Deccan Lava Plateau¹⁷. An old name for part of this area was *Uparmal* — which broadly stretched from between the vicinity of Chittorgarh-Bijolia-Mandalgarh and Kota-Bundi-Jhalawar, up to Ajmer to their northeast. The region is drained by the Chambal, Kali Sindh, Parvati and Parwan rivers.

Agriculture has been a traditional major occupation, and rainfall was sufficient to make dry-farming a reasonable risk. A number of villages have their own irrigation tanks. Two crops a year are common. Wheat, maize, sugar cane, cotton, millets and oilseeds are among the major crops grown. Limited poppy cultivation, on government permits, is allowed. A description from the late nineteenth century AD informs us that, "In the plains, cotton, oilseeds, *jawar*, *bajra* and Indian corn are sown in the rains; in the cold weather barley, gram, wheat, sugarcane, opium and tobacco [are cultivated]. Many kinds of flower and fruit trees can [also] be grown"¹⁸.

Sheep and goat play an important role in the regional economy east of the Aravalli divide too.

Much of the rich long-standing forest wealth of this part of Rajasthan has been decimated in the last fifty years or so years, which has probably affected the climatic condition or the ecological balance to some extent. It also means that a re-construction of the older situation is more difficult. At the turn of the nineteenth century, animals like the antelope, ravine-deer or gazelle, leopards, tigers, wild boar, *sambhar* (*Cervus unicolor*), *chital* (*Axis axis*, previously classified as *Cervus axis*) and wild fowl were common. Writing about Mewar, towards the end of the nineteenth century, Mehta noted that, “Camels and cattle are said not to be numerous. Sheep and goat are very plentiful. Good horses are scarce. Deer of many species are found among the mountains and forests. Wild boars, hyenas, jackals, hares, porcupines, monkeys, wolves, foxes and bears are also found. The tiger is found in some places, while panthers are numerous. There are many kinds of birds, including parrots, vultures, hawks, herons, cranes, partridges, pigeons, peacocks, wild ducks &c. Among the reptiles, serpents and alligators are worth noticing here. There are many kinds of fish in the lakes and rivers here, and very good fishing is to be had at certain seasons of the year”¹⁹. Literature from the courts of various pre-modern local rulers abounds in references to hunting and the fauna hunted.

As recently as the 1950s, the Mewar jungles and the Bhainsarorgarh and *Uparmal*/Bijolia jungles to its east abounded in several species of faunae. *Chital* were common in the narrow valleys of the southern parts of Udaipur and Chittorgarh, while black-buck, hare partridge, sand grouse and other game birds and fowls, ‘*nilgai*’ (*Boselaphus tragocamelus*) etc. were found in more open country. The numerous tanks and lakes attracted wild fowl, and, along with the rivers, contained a substantial quantity of fish. The forests occupied 4,600 sq miles of the territory of erstwhile Mewar, according to the *Imperial Gazetteer of India* of 1908. In the case of earlier periods, inscriptions like the Rasiya-ki-Chhatri Inscription of AD 1247 record that the hilly region and forests of Mewar (and the tract later called Hadauti) abounded in tall trees of many named varieties.

Thus, the two geographical units on both sides of the Aravalli divide also form broad, but distinctive, cultural zones, which are further divisible into many sub-zones.

THE ARAVALLI RANGE

The present relief of the Aravalli Range is only a remainder of a worn-down mountain range, which is believed to have formerly extended much beyond its present limits. There are many discontinuous ridges. Several of the isolated hills are prominences left standing while the surrounding soil and rocks have been washed away. The average elevation of this range is more than 600m above mean sea level, though summits exceeding 1000m can be noted, especially in the Abu region, where the Guru Shikhar peak is 1727m above sea level.

The Aravalli Range is believed to have been peneplaned and uplifted thousands of years ago during the geological periods known as the Palaeozoic, Mesozoic and Tertiary eras. Some of the older surfaces are no longer to be seen though, and the earliest of the peneplanes preserved in the relief of the Aravalli Range date from the late Mesozoic era. Geomorphologically, the range may be divided into three sections, namely the northern, central and southern. Quartzite of the Alwar series and other basal grits form the main ridges in the northern section, while the resistant granites and rocks of the Aravalli system are the core of several highlands in the southern section. The softer phyllites and limestones have been eroded to form low hills and broad valleys.

Low, scattered ridges extend from near Delhi towards the southwest. The elevation gradually increases near Jaipur, Udaipurwadi and Khetri, to the southwest of Delhi, with the Aravallis forming a well marked continuous range. Peaks like Babai (780m), Kho (920m), Raghunathgarh (1,055m) and Harshnath (820m) occur here. From Ajmer onwards, several parallel ranges become conspicuous. The Aravalli hills beyond Ajmer-Merwara up to Beawar, occupy a width of about fifty kms. This is the central Aravalli region of Rajasthan from where the Range fans out towards

the Abu Block or Plateau of Sirohi, the highlands of Mewar and the rugged country of Dungarpur and Banswara in the south and southeast.

The highest elevation of the Aravalli range lies northwest of Udaipur, between the medieval fort of Kumbhalgarh and Gogunda, on the Borhat plateau (of the southern Aravalli region). Of note are the high peaks like Guru Shikhar (1,727m) in the Mount Abu Block, and Kumbhalgarh (1,206m) and Gogunda (1,090m.) to the northwest of Udaipur. The range gets reduced further southwest to scattered butts around 60 metres in height around Palanpur and Khedbrahma²⁰.

The Borhat plateau has an average elevation of 930m above sea level, though several ridges rise to a height of 1240m. Until the mid twentieth century, the hills and narrow valleys of the Borhat Plateau were thickly covered with forest and wild life was abundant. (Various traveller-accounts and other records of journeys through Mewar, and other parts of Rajputana, provide a useful and comprehensive account of contemporaneous flora, fauna and landscape in the early nineteenth century AD, which re-affirm the fact that extensive de-forestation has taken place. Much of the forest clearance and wide-scale tree-felling has occurred in the last half-century or so). From this plateau, spurs extend in southern, southwestern and southeastern directions and the Aravallis encompass the Banas and Chappan plains. The northeastern hilly region lies to the north of the eastern plain, forming the northeastern part of the Aravalli range.

THE MAJOR RIVERS OF RAJASTHAN

The Aravalli range also forms the main watershed for north India, channelling the drainage of that part of northern India into the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal. The Luni river system rising from the western slopes of the Aravalli Range (near Ajmer) flows through the semi-arid transitional plains into the Rann of Kutch and Arabian Sea, while the Banas and other streams, rising from the eastern slopes of the Aravallis, join the Chambal. The Chambal, in turn, flows into the Yamuna-Ganga river system which drains into the Bay of Bengal. The main watercourses, like the

Banas, Sabarmati, etc. and the tributaries of the Luni, are more or less parallel to the Aravalli Range, one group flowing to the northeast and the other towards the southwest.

The northwestern slopes of the Aravalli Range are influenced by the blown sands of the Thar desert, which has almost choked the drainage channels. Only seasonal streams feed the drainage of the Luni river. The Luni has several tributaries — mostly seasonal. The main tributaries are the Lilri, Rajpur, Guhiya, Bandi, Sukri, Jawai and Jajri. In the northern portion of Rajasthan are the shallow beds of the now mostly seasonal rivers Ghaggar (identified by some as a remnant of the ancient Saraswati river), and its tributary Chautang (possibly ancient Drishadvati).

The hydrography of the southeastern slopes is better defined. The hills have protected this region from the desert sands, and the Banas and Sabarmati flow in opposite directions with numerous perennial effluents. In the case of the Chambal-Banas system, the Chambal and Banas bear signs of super-imposed drainage following a Mesozoic upwarping of the Range and the Deccan Trap activity respectively. These structural relations have influenced the past hydrography of the Aravalli and its neighbourhood, though the present drainage pattern is said to be devoid of any geologic control. All the major streams have base-levelled their courses and their curve of erosion is free from irregularities.

The river Chambal, identified with the Charmanvati of Sanskrit literature, rises near Mhow, in Madhya Pradesh, and enters Rajasthan about 200 miles (320km) from its source. Thereafter, it breaks through the Aravalli plateau and continues to flow northeastwards. Near the city of Kota, the Chambal is a broad sluggish stream, flowing between overhanging cliffs and rocks. These, until recently, were covered with thick brush-wood and forests. The Chambal joins the river Yamuna (also Jamuna), 25 miles (40km) south-west of Etawah in Uttar Pradesh. Its tributaries include the Kali Sindh, Parvati, Chhoti Kali Sindh and the Banas.

The Banas rises from the Aravalli range, about five kilometres from Kumbhalgarh, and joins the Chambal at Rameshwar, a sacred site in Madhya Pradesh, near Sawai Madhopur, after flowing about 500kms

through Udaipur, Bhilwara, Tonk and Sawai Madhopur districts of Rajasthan. The Berach and Kothari rivers join the Banas near Mandalgarh. The Khari meets the Banas near Deoli. The Banas flows southwards in its initial course, till it meets the Gogunda plateau. It then turns eastwards and enters the plain near Nathdwara. Continuing east-northeastwards, it approaches the hills near Mandalgarh, where the tributaries, Berach and Kothari join it. The Banas then flows in a northerly direction towards Tonk, before turning to the east and joining the Chambal.

Its tributary, the Berach, rises in the hills north of Udaipur, where it is known as the Ahar river in its initial course. (The Ahar river bears the same name as a village called Ahar — which was once known as Aghatpur, and was an early capital of Mewar. It has lent its name to the copper-using c. third-second millennia BC Ahar Culture, described in the next chapter). From Udaipur, the Berach takes an easterly course, turning northeastwards near Chittorgarh, to eventually join the Banas west of Mandalgarh, after a course of almost 200kms. The valleys of the Berach river are frequently deep and narrow. Most (though not all), of its course is perennial. The three main tributaries of the Berach are the Wagli, Wagan and Gambhiri. These tributaries all flow south to north and parallel to each other.

The other two major tributaries of the Banas are the Kothari and Khari. The Kothari rises from the Aravallis near Dewair, and flows east for 145kms before joining the Banas a few kilometres north of its confluence with the Berach. The Khari rises in the hills north of Deogarh. It flows in a northeasterly direction, initially, and then flows east, joining the Banas near Deoli. The Khari has a sandy bed and is dry for the major part of the year. The Dai, Sodra and Mashi are other tributaries that rise from the northern part of the Aravalli hills and flow eastwards to meet the Banas.

The main river of the Dungarpur-Banswara region (called '*Vagar*'), in the extreme south, is the Mahi, with its main tributaries the Som, and the Jakam. Smaller seasonal rivers and rivulets which flow through the area now covered by the modern district of Dungarpur include the Majhan, Vatrak, Bhader, Gangali, Sapan and Veri Ganga. In the eastern part of this '*Vagar*' area, comprising the erstwhile state, and now district, Banswara it is the Anas, Kagdi and Nal tributaries which are important.

THE GEOLOGY OF RAJASTHAN

The geological sequence of Rajasthan has been described as the “most complex rock structure in solid geology”²¹. The ‘fundamental’ base of this geological succession is gneissic rock dating to the geological period classified as the Archaean era. Known as Bundelkhand Gneiss, the formation of this has been described as a “consolidation of the first sial crust of the earth”²². Over this have been deposited the geological formations of the Aravalli system, the Raialo series, the Delhi and Vindhyan systems, the Jurassic, Cretaceous and Deccan Trap, and others, spanning the Archaean to the Mesozoic, as well as the limestones, alluvium and sands of the Tertiary and Quaternary periods²³. These are briefly described below.

The Bundelkhand Banded Gneissic complex and associated Berach Granite of the Archaean period, described as being among the oldest rocks in India²⁴, form the floor over which the later sedimentaries, starting with the Aravallis, were deposited. These early rock formations are themselves an unresolved mixture of igneous and sedimentary materials. The Banded Gneissic complex occurs over a wide area, stretching from Kishangarh in the north to Banswara in the south. It is chiefly composed of granites, gneisses and schists, traversed by pegmatite, aplite, etc. The schist often contains bands of garnet, sillimanite and staurolite. Berach Granite exists as a wide belt along the Berach river, west of Chittorgarh. Its composition includes quartz and feldspar deposits.

Over this Bundelkhand gneiss and Berach granite occurs the Aravalli System, comprising metamorphosed sediments. This is largely clay with extensive bands of quartzites and limestones, phyllites, dolerites, slates and schists, along with intrusive acidic igneous rocks. The Aravalli rocks are found in two broad belts. One belt runs from near Sawai Madhopur, through Bhilwara, to Kankroli and around the Berach Granite to Bari Sadri. The other starts from near Nathdwara and Udaipur, and running along the eastern flanks of the main Aravalli Range, extends almost up to the Narmada valley of Central India, where it meets the Deccan Traps. Valuable deposits of manganese and iron are found in these formations, especially in

the Udaipur-Banswara area. Rich deposits of zinc, lead and silver occur at Zawar, while substantial quantities of asbestos, soapstone, etc. are found in other parts of eastern and southeastern Rajasthan.

The next significant rock formations of the 'Rajputana Succession' is the Raialo Series. This comprises limestones, frequently metamorphosed to marble, along with sandstones, garnetiferous mica schists and steatite. Fine examples of the Raialo series rocks are found near Rajnagar-Kankroli, spreading to Udaipur in the south and the Jahazpur hills in the northeast. The Raialo Series lies over the Aravalli system, and is, in turn, followed by the Delhi System. The geological formations constituting the Delhi System of the Algonkian (or Proterozoic), era mark the most prominent morphological feature of Rajasthan, namely, the Aravalli Range.

The Delhi System is composed largely of quartzites near the base, the Alwar series, and schists and phyllites towards the upper levels, the Ajabgarh series. Occasionally, limestones and hornstone breccia also occur. These have been extensively intruded by granites, pegmatites, calc-gneisses, calc-schists and other calcareous rocks. The granites, which often form the batholithic masses, as can be noted around Mt. Abu for instance, are known as Erinpura Granites. This is a biotite granite, and when foliated presents the appearance of gneissic rocks. It often contains bands of hornblende. The Delhi System contains deposits of metallic ores, including copper. Barytes, beryl, cobalt, feldspar, mica and rare-earth minerals also occur. Copper deposits are known at Khetri, Singhana, Kho and several other places in eastern and southeastern Rajasthan. (Copper pyrites and malachite occur at several places, albeit in small quantities, and appear to have been exploited during protohistoric times for making copper tools etc.).

(Writing in the early part of the nineteenth century, James Tod recorded in his *Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'han*, the Aravalli and its subordinate hills were rich both in mineral and metallic products, and Mewar had profited from this²⁵. "...The mines are royalties; their produce a monopoly, increasing the personal revenue of their prince. 'An-Dan-Kan' is a triple figurative expression, which comprehends the sum of sovereign rights in Rajast'han, being allegiance, commercial duties, and mines. The

tin-mines of Mewar were once very productive, and yielded, it is asserted, no inconsiderable portion of silver: but the caste of miners is extinct, and political reasons, during the Mogul domination, led to concealment of such sources of wealth. Copper of a very fine description is likewise abundant, and supplies of the currency, and the chief of Sallombra even coins by sufferance from the mines on his own estate. Soorma, or the oxide of antimony, is found on the western frontier. The garnet, amethystine quartz, rock crystal, the chrysolite, and inferior kinds of the emerald family, are all to be found within Mewar; and though I have seen no specimens decidedly valuable, the Rana has often told me that, according to tradition his native hills contain every species of mineral wealth".²⁶⁾

The highly metamorphosed Delhi System is succeeded by the Vindhyan System. While the Pre-Cambrian to Cambrian Lower Vindhyan formations are mainly composed of limestones, shale, Malani acid intrusives and extrusives, and post-Delhi Erinpura granites, the Upper Vindhyan deposits of the Cambrian era are mostly made up of sandstones, limestones and shale. The Vindhyan System forms extensive plateaux and scarps around Chittorgarh, Kota, Bundi and Karauli. The succession starts with grit and conglomerates at the base, followed by shale and slates (Nimbahera and Binota shales), overlain by limestone (Nimbahera limestone) and shale (Suket shale). Thus, there is a succession of quartzitic sandstones, shale, conglomerate and limestones. The Bhandar, Kaimur, Rewa and Semri series belong to the Upper Vindhyan deposits.

The effect of the Carboniferous period is not as marked on the geological formations of southern and eastern Rajasthan, as it is towards western Rajasthan, where ice-transported boulder beds from the Upper Carboniferous era are found near Bap in Jaisalmer. Similarly, though the Deccan Trap extends into southeastern Rajasthan, the Mesozoic and Tertiary formations of the Jurassic, Cretaceous, Deccan Trap and Eocene periods have mostly affected the western and northern parts of Rajasthan. The uppermost stratum of the geological sequence of Rajasthan is made up from the alluvium, sand and calcium carbonate '*kankars*' of the Quaternary period.

WATER COLLECTION AND STORAGE SYSTEMS

The Rajasthan region has a small number of natural lakes — including salt lakes. However, since the essentiality of water for basic survival has long been well-recognised by all, through the ages, various indigenous methods for effective collection of rain-water and water from local rivers, reservoirs and natural lakes have been evolved and practiced across Rajasthan. In consequence, a vast number of reservoirs, artificial lakes, tanks, *kunds*, step-wells or *baoris*, wells, ponds etc., have been built and renovated across the centuries.

Along with this, adaptive storage and management strategies (including rotated use of ponds and *tankas* in areas of scarce rainfall), have been practiced. These traditionally ensured considered utilization — rather than wanton wastage — of water, even in regions where water-scarcity was not an obvious problem. Such strategies and practices included systems like *johads*, anicuts, check-dams, *khadins*, *nardis*, *tankas*, *adlaz*, *jhalara*, *modhera*, *vapi*, *medhbandhi* (earthen structure on fields to prevent water from flowing out). Water-lifting devices like draw-wells, ‘*rabat*’ (a ‘Persian-wheel’ like system, derived from what is described in Sanskrit/Prakrit terminology as the ‘*arghat*’ water-wheel), and ‘*dhekli*’ systems were developed too. Between them, all these systems met the drinking water, irrigation, agricultural and other water-related needs of the people of the area even in years of lesser than usual rainfall.

A number of artificial lakes were created too, over the centuries, by various rulers, or even merchants and traders — as we shall note further in this book, and natural ones deepened, re-inforced and maintained. These include the Ana Sagar and Visal lakes at Ajmer; the Ghadsisar reservoir-lake built at Jaisalmer in AD 1367 by Bhati ruler, Rawal Ghadsis; the Kishore-Sagar etc. at Kota; various lakes at Udaipur city (including the famous Pichchola, whose construction is ascribed to a prosperous Banjara trader), and the Raj Samand built by Maharana Raj Singh of Mewar in the last quarter of the seventeenth century.

Water was used not just for agricultural, irrigation, occupation and industry-related and domestic needs. Since water generally held importance

in ritualistic practices, structures like tanks, reservoirs, wells, step-wells etc. were invariable accompaniments to religious complexes, temples and sacred groves etc²⁷. Besides this, the royalty and aristocracy (alongside with endowing public reservoirs, wells and step-wells etc., and providing state patronage to larger irrigation works, ‘*bunds*’ and embankments, etc.), combined water bodies with their palaces and gardens. As such, a range of water-related architectural features — both religious and secular— developed over the ages. These were influenced by local and sub-regional conditions.

Examples of water-related architecture include lateral steps built on the banks of rivers, reservoirs and dams — or *ghats*, which form a characteristic feature at various pilgrimage sites and religious enclosures; wells; royal pleasure pavilions fronting or situated on islands within rivers and lakes; and ornamental pools and water gardens attached to palaces. Other types of water-related architecture include deep stepped ‘*kunda*’ basins; village tanks and wells which served as community areas for bathing, watering animals, and meeting places etc. for rural communities; and hunting pavilions used by royalty and aristocracy at water-holes frequented by animals. The ornate step-wells of Rajasthan, as for example at Abaneri and Bundi, to name but two places, which tapped deep aquifers, evolved in time into elaborate structures, with a series of steps leading down, past pavilions, platforms for drawing water by a rope, balconies and corridors, to lower levels, and subterranean chambers, kept cool by the very nature of the structure. These step-wells not only fulfilled the water needs, but also served the concerned populace as gathering places.

Alongside this, since the palaces and forts of the rulers and their feudatories incorporated water-bodies to meet drinking water needs as well as for aesthetic and weather-conditioning purposes, elaborate systems of transporting water within palaces and forts, and of fountains and water-channels that ran through chambers and gardens were devised. Thus, forts like Jalore, Siwana, Nagaur, Ranthambore, Jaisalmer, Bikaner, Mandore, Jodhpur; Chittorgarh, Mandalgarh, Kumbhalgarh, Amber, Jaigarh, Nahargarh; etc. all combined functional tanks, reservoirs, storage-tanks, etc. with architectural features and devices that served to hold and transport water, and please the eye. Within the palaces, variations on systems of

copper pipes carrying water for cooling terrace pavilions, channels flowing through royal chambers, fountains and water-gardens, and under-water collection tanks were the norm. Thus, here too, various water-storage methods were devised, as were a range of water-lifting mechanisms²⁸. The fort of Amber, near Jaipur, capital of modern Rajasthan, for instance, has an ascending chain of water-lifting buildings dating to the sixteenth century. These served to lift water from a reservoir at the base of the fort to its very peak, and thence to the upper-most chambers of the hilltop palace. Similar systems are known from practically all the medieval fortresses of the area.

TRADITIONAL GEOGRAPHICAL, POLITICAL AND CULTURAL DIVISIONS

The change or retention of names over time is a convoluted issue. In the case of Rajasthan, as the land has been occupied by various groups of humans since time immemorial, older names marking long-ago geographical and political divisions are often super-imposed on each other. For instance, terms like *Maru*, *Marwar*, *Jangal*, *Valla*, *Matsya*, *Pragvat*, *Medpat* (or *Mewar*), *Sadpadalaksh*, *Arbuda*, *Ulook*, *Ahichhatrapur*, *Uparmal*, and many more similar terms have been used at different times for different sub-regions that now comprise Rajasthan. These will be mentioned at relevant places throughout the book. The layers of names appear confusing when we look at them without any chronological context. For, the passage of centuries means certain place-names are used only when the history of an area is recalled; while simultaneously popular usage has resulted in a strange admixture of very old and relatively new names being used to refer to certain other geographical, cultural or erstwhile political divisions of Rajasthan!

There are several early textual references to areas that have long been traditionally identified with the area constituting Rajasthan. For example, the ‘*Yudha-kanda*’ chapter of Valmiki’s *Ramayana*, and the ‘*Udhyoga-parva*’, ‘*Virat-parva*’ and ‘*Bhishma-parva*’ chapters of Ved Vyas’s *Mahabharata*, list names like Pushkar, Virat-Nagar, Marudhanva, Marukantar, Jangal, Matsya, Salva, and Surasena²⁹. These are popularly

believed to be applicable to the areas and peoples historically known as such in the history of Rajasthan.

There is a large body of literary sources which are believed to have referred, directly or indirectly, to Rajasthan through the ages. Among these are included works like the *Gopatha Brahmana* portion of the *Rig Veda*; Panini's *Ashtadhyayi* and Patanjali's commentary on it, the *Mahabhasya*; some *Jatakas*; and the *Skanda Purana*, *Padma Purana* and other *Puranas*, besides innumerable epigraphs.

The term 'Maru', for instance, occurs in the *Rig-Veda* (1.35.6), the *Ramayana* ('*Yudha-kanda*'), the *Mahabharata* ('*Vana-parva*'), *Bhagvat*, *Brihat-Samhita*, and later in the Puranic listing of peoples. So does the word 'Dhanva' in the *Ramayana* and *Bhagvat*. Both these terms apparently refers to the desert part of Rajasthan³⁰. Popular belief also links the northern portion of present-day Rajasthan, which includes the districts of Sri Ganganagar, Hanumangarh and Bikaner, with part of the area Vedic hymns referred to as the land of 'Brahmavarta', which was watered by the rivers Saraswati and Drishadvati. The territory referred to in the *Mahabharata* as 'Jangal', which apparently lay adjacent southwardly to lands of the Madra and Kuru kingdoms, appears to have formed part of this region. (This has long been identified with parts of the erstwhile kingdom of Bikaner, and the modern administrative division of Bikaner). During the post-Gupta period, Ahichhatrapur — identified with modern Nagaur — was apparently the capital of Jangal for a while. Later the area formed part of the territories held by the Chauhans of Shakambhari (modern Sambhar).

Part of Jangal as well as the area around the famous Harshnath temple of central northeastern Rajasthan, which includes parts of the modern districts of Sikar, Jhunjhunu, Churu and Nagaur, was once known as 'Ananta-gochara', or 'Ananta' too. When the Chauhans of Shakambhari (modern Sambhar) began to expand their political dominance, this area, as well as the adjoining tracts (including the rest of Jangal), became part of the land that gradually came to be known as 'Sapadalaksha'. (The term is said to be linked to the Chauhans being master of one and a quarter lakh habitations). The Chauhan kings themselves used titles like '*Sapadalakshiya-Nripati*' (King of Sapadalaksha).

Similarly, *Medpat* is an older Sanskrit form for the erstwhile state of *Mewar* in southeastern Rajasthan — of which Chittorgarh and Udaipur remain among the more famous capital cities. Apparently taking its name from the people known as Medas (also spelt Meds), who were living in the area before Guhila supremacy was established around c. seventh century AD, the term ‘Medpat’ literally signifies ‘land of the Medas’. On the basis of his researches, the late Dr. G.H. Ojha suggested that these Medas/ Meds / Mers could be descendants of the Sakas (Scythians) who had established their sway over parts of northern and western India during the first-second centuries AD³¹. (Like many such words, the word ‘Mer’/ ‘Med’ is pronounced with an ending that is in between the English letter ‘R’ and ‘D’. Perhaps ‘Merdh’ would be a more phonetic, if unusual, transliteration! In some areas, e.g. Ajmer and Beawar, the softer ‘R’ is used to denote ‘Mers’ (after whom the British administration in the nineteenth and twentieth century referred to the region as the administrative tract of ‘Ajmer-Merwara’), who are locally perceived today as different to the ‘Meds’ of other areas).

A part of the region known as Medpat and Mewar was, it seems, also known as *Pragvat* in the past. The Karanbel Inscription of Jayasimha Kalachuri refers to kings Hanspala and Vairisimha of Mewar as being rulers of Pragvat. The Pragvat or Porwal community of merchants and traders trace their origins to this Pragvat area³². (The Porwal community has commanded great influence over the centuries, especially in Gujarat and southern Rajasthan, where members of the community served as military-commanders, generals and administrators to various ruling houses. Lunakshah, the founder of a sect of Jains called ‘*Sthanakvasi*’, was a Porwal).

The portion of Medpat that later formed the kingdoms of Dungarpur, Banswara and Pratapgarh-Deoliya was popularly referred to as ‘Vagar’ (also ‘Bagar’). The term apparently has geographical connotations; and though it is physically distanced from northern Rajasthan’s ‘Baggar’ area, scholars hold that both the ‘Vagar’ of southern Rajasthan and ‘Baggar’ of northern Rajasthan are derived from a common root-word linked to geography. Both the physiography and climate seem to have played their part in the name-game, for the green mantle that always covered the Jagar

and Raga hills led the area to be referred to as ‘Deshharo’ (literally, Green Land). In a similar vein, part of the tracts along the banks of the river Mahi, which later became known as Pratapgarh-Deoliya, was previously known as ‘Kantal’. The word is indicative of an area that lies along the banks — i.e. ‘*kantha*’, of a river.

Pragmatism seems to have led to some of the names. For example, the land lying between Pratapgarh-Deoliya and Banswara appears to have gained the name of ‘Chhappan’ because the tract contained fifty-six (in local parlance, *chhappan*) habitations. The tract between Dungarpur and Banswara was called ‘Meval’ — possibly because part of the local population was known as the ‘Mev’ people. The land adjacent to this ‘Meval’ and Deoliya was called ‘Moodol’. (The term may be derived from ‘Mandal’ or unit). Not all sources of names are that obvious, however. Though it would not be far wrong to realise that the fertile plateau-land stretching from modern Bhainsarorgarh to Bijolia became known as the ‘Uparmal’ tract to literally signify, a high ‘upper hill’ plateau terrain. This Uparmal was also known as ‘*Uttamadrishikhara*’ and the extensive forest around it as the *Bhim-Vana*.

With the rise of Gurjara-Pratihara power, and probably a strong local Gurjara political presence in the western part of the Rajasthan region, a large portion of what we now think of as ‘Marwar’ came to be known for some centuries as ‘Gurjaratra’. This probably formed a part of the wide swathe of land to which the Gurjars/ Gujars gave their own name in the course of their gradual expansion over the area now part of Pakistani Punjab through to the modern-day state of Gujarat. The Daulatpura Inscription of King Bhoja I mentions ‘Gujaratra-bhumi’ — or the land of Gurjaratra, and also one Shiva village of the Dendavanaka³³ ‘*vishaya*’ (district or unit). In a like manner, the Barah Inscription refers to someone named Dedduka, who migrated from Mangalanaka village (modern Mangalana, near Didwana) of Gurjaratra-Mandala³⁴. However, it seems that by around the early fourteenth century the words Gurjaratra, ‘Gurjara-desh’ and ‘Gurjaresh’ (king of Gurjaras) came to have a more limited usage, and became applicable solely to the area now known as the state of Gujarat. Jinapala’s fourteenth century *Khartaragachchha-pattavali* has mentioned

Gurjaratra several times, along with reference to a tract of land known as 'Maruvatra'. This 'Maruvatra' apparently included Jalore and Samiyana.

Around the same time as the usage of the term 'Gurjaratra' flourished, the terms 'Valla', 'Travani' and 'Mada' were in vogue to describe different parts of the area we now think of as the Barmer, Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, and Pakistan's Bahawalpur and Sindh areas. And, during the c. sixth-twelfth centuries AD the term 'Arbuda' included the general Sirohi-Palanpur area, as well as the hill on which modern Mount Abu is now located. This Abu area has been referred to as '*Ashtadshashata*' too, implying governance over one thousand and hundred habitations, in texts like '*Upadesha-Tarangini*', '*Upadeshasaar*', Vinaychandra's '*Kavya-Shikshu*', well as the Jhadoli Inscription of VS. 1255 (AD 1198), and the Delwara Vimal Vasahi Temple Inscription of VS. 1350 (AD 1293).

As may be noted from the above references, the names and geographical spread of the various traditional divisions and 'cultural' sub-groupings have, obviously, been added to, or modified, over time. At times, more than one traditional term is used to designate a sub-area in an unconscious harking back to different epochs of history. Sometimes a tract is still called after a group that held and then lost political dominance in that zone over five or six centuries ago. Sometimes these cultural divisions have paralleled the territorial extents of past kingdoms, but that is not a hard-and-fast rule. Sometimes these have been named after one of the many groups living in the area — but it should be borne in mind that this, obviously, does not mean that no other communities lived there!

Before going on to look at Rajasthan's history (in which the different traditional names and politico-cultural divisions will be referred to at their relevant places, rather than haphazardly, as has been done here), it may be useful to summarise the main popularly accepted divisions that are still recognised today. These have, until recently, been regarded as distinct entities in their own rights³⁵.

Let us look first at tracts lying to the east of the Aravalli range. Popular tradition regards the region as containing four main cultural zones, along with a vast number of sub-zones. The four main zones are known as

Dhoondhar, Mewat, Hadauti and Mewar. These roughly approximate the areas covered by modern-day Jaipur-Dausa-Tonk etc., Alwar-Gurgaon etc., Kota-Bundi-Jhalawar etc., and Udaipur-Chittorgarh-Bhilwara-Dungarpur-Banswara etc., respectively

Of these, the *Dhoondhar* portion has as many as twelve sub-zones, all of which are commonly recognisable to the inhabitants of the area. These sub-zones are referred to as *Dhoondhar, Torawati, Kathera, Gorawati, Chaurasi, Nagarchal, Rajawati, Dangbhang, Kalimal, Dang, Dungarwara* and *Jadonwati*.

The *Dhoondhar* sub-zone (within the larger tract of Dhoondhar), is believed to take its name from a once celebrated sacrificial mound called *Dhund* near Jobner³⁶. It is centred around the urban habitations of Jaipur and Amber, and includes the hinterland area for an extent of about fifty miles. The hilly tract to the north, comprising Srimadhapur, Neem-ka-thana, Udaipurwati, Bairat and Kotputli areas is known as *Torawati*. The *Torawati* tract is said to take its name from the Tomar (also spelled and pronounced as Tanwar or Tuar) Rajputs, who were dominant here several centuries ago. The region lying south of Sambhar lake and east of Kishangarh is called *Kathera*. It includes the areas of Bardoti, Narena, Marwa, Mamana, Sali, Sali, Sakhoon, Dantri, Palasoli, Harsauli, Rahlana, Gagardoo and Dhandhonli. Towards the west, still within the Kishangarh region, is the tract called *Gorawati*, while to the south of *Kathera*, flanking *Gorawati*, is the tract popularly referred to as *Chaurasi*. The term, in its literal sense, means eighty-four, and it is said that this area takes its name from a traditional grouping of eighty-four habitations around Malpura, Panchwar and Lawan, in present-day Tonk district.

Dhoondhar's *Nagarchal* sub-unit, with the ancient archaeological site of Nagar as its centre, includes Uniara and Deoli, and is located in Tonk district, bordering modern Bundi district, while the *Rajawati* sub-unit lies to the northeast of *Nagarchal* and east of *Chaurasi*, with Newai at its heart. The *Dangbhang* tract — mainly a scrub-land and forest zone, covers a large part of Sawai Madhopur district, while the *Kalimal* tract covers the Gangapur, Bamanwas and Nadoti portion of the same district. The *Dang* cultural unit is composed of Hindon, Mahua, Toda-Bhim, Bayana, Weir and

Rupbas areas³⁷. To its west, and to the north of *Kalimal*, lies the cultural sub-unit known as *Dungarwara*, which approximates the present-day district of Dausa. The last of the major sub-units that make up the traditional cultural area of *Dhoondhar* is known as *Jadonwati*. This comprises Karauli, Sapotra, Dholpur, Bari, Rajakhera and Baseri tracts and takes its name from the Rajput clan known across many centuries, variously, as Yaduvamshi, Yadava, Jadu, Yadu and Jadon³⁸.

The *Mewat* zone is made up of five major units. These are known as *Mewat*, *Abirwati* (made up of the sub-units of *Rath* and *Bighota*), *Machheri*, *Nahera* and *Kather*. Among these six, the sub-zone of *Mewat* covers much of modern-day district of Alwar and part of the district of Bharatpur, besides a contiguous portion that lies within the modern state of Haryana. This tract encompasses some 150km of the Alwar-Bharatpur territories from north to south, and about 125km from east to west. To its south is *Dhoondhar's* *Dungarwara* and the *Dang* sub-zones, and to its southwest *Torawati*. To the north of the sub-zone of *Mewat* is an area that has been known in past centuries as *Ahirwati*. This larger *Ahirwati* tract is today perceived as comprising two sub-units, namely, *Rath* and *Bighota*. The term *Rath* apparently means a 'tract of ruthless people'³⁹. This area comprises the Kot Qasim, Burhi-Bawal and Pur tracts of Kishangarh, and Tapukara, Guwalda and Bhiwadi tracts of Tijara *tehsil*.

Mewat zone's small tract of *Bighota* is to the west of the *Rath*, and includes the area of Behror, Barod, Neemrana, Giglana and Mandhar in Alwar district's Behror *tehsil*. Two out of the remaining three sub-zones of the larger *Mewat* division — namely, *Machheri* and *Nahera*, lie between the *Mewat* sub-zone and *Dhoondhar's* *Dungarwara* and *Dang* sub-zones. *Machheri* takes its name after a local settlement of established political importance, and encompasses the eastern parts of Alwar district's Thanaghazi and Rajgarh *tehsils*, while *Nahera* comprises the western parts of these *tehsils*. The last major sub-unit of the *Mewat* region — namely, *Kather* is the area northwest of Bharatpur, along with the lands around Nagar, Gopalgarh, Pahari and Kaman, and a small adjoining portion of Alwar district.

The *Hadauti* cultural zone comprises the tract known, since about thirteenth century AD, as *Hadauti (Harauti)*, as well as the tract of *Sondhwar*. The *Hadauti* sub-unit, spread across modern-day districts of Kota, Bundi, and northern Jhalawar, is situated south of *Dhoondhar's Nagarchal* and the *Dangbhang* cultural units. (*Mewar's Kherad* and *Balnot* cultural sub-units lie to its northwest and west respectively). The southern portion of Jhalawar district, which includes Pirawa, Panchpahar and Gangdhar, and has also been called as '*Chaumahala*' during certain periods of history, is now also known popularly as the *Sondhwar* area. This takes its name from the term '*Sondhia*', which was the name of a local group Rajputs, apparently of 'mixed descent'⁴⁰.

In the case of the area long-famous as *Medpat* and *Mewar*, the major sub-components of this broader cultural region include the sub-units of *Mewar*, *Sarwar*, *Bhorat*, *Bhomat*, *Chhappan*, *Vagar* (or *Bagar*), *Balnot*, *Kherad* and *Uparmal*. The *Mewar* sub-component is made up of the area long regarded as the main heartland of the kingdom of Mewar. To its north lies the cultural sub-division of *Sarwar* which includes part of modern-day Bhilwara and Ajmer districts. The *Bhorat* and *Bhomat* tracts lie to the west of the Mewar sub-zone. The *Bhorat* is a plateau-land that includes most of the Kumbhalgarh and Gogunda parts of erstwhile Mewar state which now fall mainly in the present-day districts of Rajsamand and Udaipur. The *Bhomat* consists of the Kotra-Phalasia portion of present-day Udaipur district along with the contiguous part of Sirohi district's Pindwara *tehsil*. Sites of historical importance that lie within this subregion include Jagat, Samoli, Amjhar, Tanesar, Bedla, and Basantgarh (Vasantgarh).

To the southwest of the Mewar heartland lies the hilly tract of *Chhappan*. This was traditionally viewed as possessing many Bhil settlements — though Bhils were not its only occupants. The adjoining tract of *Vagar (Bagar)* is a sprawling hilly area too. The erstwhile states of Pratapgarh-Deoliya, Dungarpur, Banswara and the chiefship of Kushalgarh are located in this region. The areas popularly known as *Balnot* and *Kherad* are located to the northeast of central Mewar. *Balnot* comprises the Kotri-Mandalgarh portion of the modern district of Bhilwara, while the tract flanking both sides of the Banas river, along with the Jahazpur area and the hilly terrain of northwest Bundi district is known as the *Kherad* area. This

Kherad apparently takes its name from a local village of the same name. A major proportion of the local inhabitants of this tract call themselves 'Parihar'. They are believed to be Meenas, but do not inter-marry with other Meena groups. (It seems that an inscription in Kherad village records that they settled there in the twelfth century⁴¹). The *Uparmal* zone includes portions of the erstwhile states of Mewar and Bundi. (For almost half a century, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, this area was the centre of an important popular movement, known after the name of the local estate of Bijolia, as the 'Bijolia Movement').

Towards the west and northwest of the Aravalli divide is, as already mentioned, the area commonly known as '*Marwar*'. The Thar desert is a fairly marked presence for this portion of Rajasthan. To the north of the Thar desert, and extending from the Bikaner-Hanumangarh area into Pakistan's Sindh province is an area that was formerly referred to as '*Pat*'. The area is more rugged, but also more flat — or '*pat*' — than the Thar. The loose sandy soil lies over a bed of clay and silt.

In popular perception, the larger region of Marwar contains a large number of sub-units, including the sub-zone that too is called *Marwar*. This *Marwar* sub-zone is the central heart of *Marwar* in which Jodhpur is located. It has to its west the tracts popularly known as the *Tharel*, *Dhat*, *Thaal*, *Tirrud*, *Khaawar*, *Khairalu*, *Thalaicha*, *Eendowati*, *Mehwo* and *Sewanchi*; while its south and southeast are *Mallani*, *Deorawati*, *Seath*, *Reath* and *Bhakar*. East of the central heart of the *Marwar* sub-zone are the lands known as *Nyar*, *Godwar* and *Merwara*, and towards the north, northeast and northwest are the tracts of *Shekhawati*, *Puniah*, *Baggar*, *Bidawati*, *Mohilawati*, *Godara*, *Bhagore*, *Pugal*, *Johiyawar* or *Johiyawati*, *Asiagh*, *Saran*, *Beniwal* and *Bhatner*.

The *Thaal* is one of the names for the vast arid sandy tract that includes Jodhpur district's Phalodi *tehsil*, and the northern half of Pokhran, while the term *Tharel* has been used for the eastern half of Jaisalmer district, lying just due south of the *Thaal*. The sub-zone of Barmer district's western Sheo and Chohtan *tehsils* and the contiguous part of Jaisalmer district to its southwest is called *Dhat*. The tract called *Tirrud* apparently takes its name from local springs and an abundance of wells in and around

the vicinity of Pokhran and its hinterland. The shrine of Baba Ramdeo (also Pir Ramdeo), is located here, and is the site for an annual religious fair to which devotees travel from afar. The sparsely inhabited adjacent sub-zone of *Khaawar* stretches towards Jaisalmer district on the one hand, and the sub-zone of *Dhat* on the other, and broadly covers the eastern part of Sheo *tehsil*. To its south lies the *Khairalu* tract, which it is believed, takes its name from the local tree called *Kair*.

Immediately to the west of the sub-zone of *Marwar* is the sub-zone known as *Thalaicha*. This is a small tract of sand hills and dunes, centred on the site of Shergarh. Until recently, its population mainly consisted of the Thalaicha sub-clan of Rathore, Jat cultivators and Charans belonging to the Pongulli sub-group. Next to this is a small area that is still called *Eendowati* after the Eenda sub-clan of Parihars. This stretches southwards, from the north of Balotra, towards the Luni and is bounded on the south by the cultural sub-zone of *Mehwo*. *Mehwo* flanks the river Luni, and includes places like Majal, Samdari, Kanana, Jasol, Balotra, Tilwara, Sindri, Nagar, Gudha, etc. An important annual fair is held at Tilwara near a shrine dedicated to Mallinath, one of the Rathore chiefs of Marwar, who lived a warrior's life before turning to spiritualism. Between the rivers Luni and Sukri lies the cultural sub-unit known as *Sewanchi*. On the far side of the Sukri river (which originates from the Aravallis) is the tract famous as *Mallani*. The old site of Satyapura — now better known as Sanchore, lies in this tract, and the local Brahmins of this area are known as 'Sanchora'⁴².

South and southeast of the central *Marwar* sub-zone are the tracts known as *Bhakar*, *Seath*, *Reath*, *Nyar*, *Godwar* and *Merwara*. Chiefly inhabited by the Garasias, who traditionally preferred a dispersed settlement pattern, and lived in the less-accessible reaches of the region, the desolate rugged hills of the *Bhakar* sub-unit extends south of the Sirohi-Mt.Abu area. The *Seath* and the *Reath* cover different portions of the erstwhile kingdom of Sirohi. The *Deorawati* sub-zone also covers part of the Sirohi region. The tract called *Nyar*, mainly inhabited by Garasias too, is a hilly region flanking central *Marwar* and *Merwara*.

The fertile *Godwar* sub-zone lies to the west of the *Nyar*, and includes Bali, Desuri, Kharchi etc., parts of erstwhile Mewar and Marwar, some part

of the Aravalli hills extending into neighbouring Sirohi region, and part of the Luni basin. Historically, the Godwar tract was for a long time part of Mewar, and prior to that the nucleus of the early medieval Chauhan kingdom of Nadol. In the past, Nadol was also referred to as '*Saptashata*'. The land referred to as *Merwara* is a narrow strip of hilly terrain and fertile soil that lies along the flank of the Aravallis in what is today the Beawar (established in the early nineteenth century as '*Naya Shahar*'), Nasirabad, Todgarh portions of Ajmer district. The tract takes its name from the local people, who were known as the *Mers*.

The Aravalli range intersecting the region around Sikar in a northeastern direction marks the boundary separating the *Torawati* part of the larger *Dhoondhar* cultural zone from the *Shekhawati* portion of the *Marwar* cultural zone. This *Shekhawati* area comprises Sikar, Lachhmangarh, Fatehpur, Ramgarh, Khetri, Bissau, Nawalgarh, Surajgarh, Mandawa, Jhunjhunu, Singhana and Chirawa. It is sometimes referred to as part of the larger cultural unit called the *Baggar* (also *Vaggar*) which also includes the contiguous parts of Churu and some southeastern parts of Ganganagar/Hanumangarh districts. The term '*Baggar*' has a long antiquity, and is variously described as indicating the nature of the land, or alternately, is believed to be connected with the name of a local grass. The lands traditionally part of the *Puniah* cultural sub-zone include the Rajgarh, Dadreva, Sidmukh, and Sankhu parts of Churu district's Rajgarh *tehsil*.

The area named *Mohilawati* or *Mohila*, after the Mohila Chauhans, includes the lands of Chhappar, Bidasar, Mulsisar, Harasar, Gopalpura, Chadwas and Sandwa in Sujangarh *tehsil*. The adjacent area of *Bidawati* comprises mainly Ladnu and its hinterland in the district of Nagaur. From a geographical perspective, this zone is a small oasis, fringed by sand dunes along its north. Among the other traditionally perceived cultural units, the *Godara* unit comprises Punrasar, Gusaisar and Dhandusar, parts of erstwhile Bikaner kingdom's Dungargarh *tehsil*, and the *Bhagore* tract includes Bikaner, Jaimalsar and Satasar in erstwhile Bikaner state, along with Chattargarh and Beethnokh in Kolayat *tehsil*. *Pugal* comprises the area of Karmewala, Khajuwala, Siasar, Chougana, Dantor, Ballar, Chattargarh, Motigarh, Satasar, Karnisar and Bhatiyan in the northwestern part of

Bikaner, while the *Johiyawar* or *Johiyawati*, or *Johiya*, tract extends across Jaitpura, Mahajan and Kummana areas of Lunkaransar *tehsil*.

The area now covered by modern districts Sri Ganganagar and Hanumangarh (“notwithstanding its traditional ethnics having been disturbed by the large influx of folks from the neighbouring Punjab”⁴³) is still popularly referred to by its old names of the *Asiagarh*, *Saran*, *Beniwal*, and *Bhatner* cultural units. Out of these four, the *Bhatner* unit is the northernmost, with Bhatner (now called Hanumangarh, about 200km north of Bikaner) as its chief fortress-town. The *Asiagarh* tract comprises parts of the present-day Churu district, as well as the Rawatsar and Baramsar parts of Nohar and Bhadra *tehsils*, while *Saran* comprises Kaijur, Phoag, Buchawas, Sowae, Badinoo and Sirsilah, and *Beniwal* the Manoharpur, Bae, Bukurko, Sunduiria and Kooie area.

All these above areas have had a certain popular cultural identity up until recent times, and the old names are even now instantly recognisable in the rural areas. Occasionally, these identities are additionally blurred and often overlain with older names and territorial or cultural divisions. Furthermore, given the large area that comprises the modern-day state of Rajasthan, and the physiography of the region, there are some variations in overall settlement patterns, food habits, lifestyle and dialects etc. between the different cultural tracts and zones.

This complicated present-day mosaic is further enhanced by the different occupations and range of ‘ethnic’ affiliations of the population of these tracts. Besides Brahmins, who are classified as those who traditionally lived by performing religious duties, Rajputs, who served as warriors, and Mahajan and Jain traders, Muslims, Kayasthas, etc., there are numerous groups and sub-groups who practiced a range of other occupations well into recent decades. (Today, of course, modernisation has cracked the mould of occupations being decided solely by place and community of birth). There are groups who have specialised as pastoralists — among them the people referred to in present-day Rajasthan as belonging to the Ahir, Gujar, Gadaria, Raika, Rebari groups. Others traditionally lived mainly as agriculturalists. They include communities labelled as Dangi, Jat, Rajput, Bishnoi, Dhakar, Kachhi, Kunbi, Lodha, Mali, Meo, Patel, Rawat, Sirwi,

Dhanak, Sondhia, etc. Still others have earned their livelihood from craft-related activities. Among them are groups traditionally referred to as kumhar (potters), lohar (black-smiths), sunar/saraf (gold-smiths), kasera (brass-workers), tatera (copper-smiths), weaving, carding and textile-printing and dyeing groups like balai, koli, cheepa and rangrez etc., wood-workers and carpenters like khati and sutar, leather-working groups like meghwal, raigar, chamar, bhambi, bola etc. Other occupation groups include teli (oil-extractors), kalal (traditional wine-distillers — about which there are many folk-songs), dhobi (washer-folk), nai (barbers and marriage negotiators), darzi (tailors), kasai and khatik (butchers), manihar (bangle-makers), tamboli (dealers in betel-leaf and betel-nut), and ghosi (milk and butter sellers) etc.

There are also many smaller craft or occupation-related traditional groups, many of whom have lost their traditional means of livelihood due to the rapid modernisation of Rajasthan in the latter part of the twentieth century, and have found alternate work. Such groups include gavaria (rope-makers), dabgar (makers of leather-containers), gancha (basket-makers), patwa (braid and thread-workers), bharbhujia (grain-roasters — rather like popcorn-makers, except that their stocks include millet, wheat, rice etc. as well as maize), and even traditional village watchmen and watch-and-ward workers like bedia, dhanak, naik, chowkidar meena, etc. Traditional village/local healers and animal-doctors like bhopa, ojha, bagri and santhia etc. have also lost out to modern health facilities, though many of the bhopas and ojhas still continue to be consulted in rural areas.

Still others are traditional bards and genealogists (Charan, Bhat, Badva, Barhat), or have followed, in recorded history, occupations connected with music and entertainment (dholi, mirasi, langa, manganiyar, kaamad, sargara, bhand, nat, sansi, kanjar, kalbelia). Others — brahmin, bairagi, jogi, jaga, gosain, sadhu, swami, purohit, bhopa, sadh, dadu-panthi, sanjogi, are connected with work as priests of various sorts, or religious special-sect related activities. Yet others, like thori, naik, baori, boliya, etc. previously lived as traditional hunters, fowlers and bird-catchers etc., while groups like the kir earned their livelihood as boatmen and ferrymen, or from fishing.

Many of the numerous groups listed above no longer practice family-related, or caste-based, or other traditional occupations. Furthermore, a lot more people have moved to urban areas than was the case through most of the previous centuries of recorded history.

Some groups are popularly regarded as 'indigenous' to the area (a view with which anthropology-related studies largely concur). These are the Meena, Bhil, Garasia, 'Bhil-Mina', Sahariya, Damar etc. communities, which have been classified as 'Scheduled Tribes' by the Government of India's 1950 'Schedule of Tribes'. (Revised in 1976, this 'Schedule' is, in turn, based upon the Government of India's 1936 listing of 'Backward Tribes'). Yet others are known to have come in at different chronological periods in history. This latter list includes the Gurjars/Gujars, Jats, certain Rajput clans, Nagauri (Multani) Pathans, and many others long settled in Rajasthan. And, more recently, Punjabi and Sikh farmers who were invited by the administrations of Kota, Bundi and Bikaner etc. as agrarian settlers in the early twentieth century, and other people uprooted by the 1947 Partition-related violence and re-settled in Rajasthan.

Despite all the changes and transformations that have come during the course of the past century, however, there is a general sense of belonging to the larger geographical (and administrative) entity that is known today as the state of Rajasthan. For this, an overall commonality of regional history is responsible to a large degree. It is this history of Rajasthan that shall be looked at in the ensuing chapters of this book.

¹ There are various theories about the origin of the Thar Desert. Studies over the past few decades have led to the working out of a tentative outline of the climatic history of Rajasthan during the geological period referred to by scientists as the 'Quaternary'. It is thought that the Thar Desert came into existence about 200 Ky.

² V.C. Misra's *Geography of Rajasthan*, National Book Trust, New Delhi, 1967, details the local geography.

³ Covind Agrawal's *Churu Mandal ka Shodhpurna Itibas*, Lok Sanskriti Shodh Sansthan, Nagar-Shri, Churu, 1974, pp.17-18.

- ⁴ The tree is highly regarded and has many cultural associations. Its pods are edible, its narrow leaves and twigs provide fodder, and the wood is put to various local uses.
- ⁵ Cited in B.L. Bhadani *Peasants, Artisans and Entrepreneurs*, Rawat Publ., Jaipur & New Delhi, 1999, pp.5.
- ⁶ *ibid.*
- ⁷ T.D. La Touche 'Geology of Western Rajputana', *Mem.Geolog. Survey of India*, Vol.35, No.1, 1911, pp.9.
- ⁸ James Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'han* 1832 [reprinted 1957] Vol.11, ch.VII, pp.225.
- ⁹ *ibid.*
- ¹⁰ A. Ghosh 'The Rajputana Desert: Its Archaeological Aspect', In S.L. Hora (Ed), Symposium on Rajputana Desert, *Bulletin of the National Institute of Sciences of India* 1, 1952.
- ¹¹ See, C.F. Oldham 'The Saraswati and the Lost River of the Indian Desert', *Jour. Royal Asiatic Society*, 1893, pp.49-76; H.G. Raverty, *The Mihran of Sind and its Tributaries*. [Reprinted Lahore, 1979]; D.P. Agrawal, S.K. Gupta & P. Sharma. (Eds) 1988. *Palaeoclimatic and Palaeoenvironmental Changes in Asia*, Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi, among others.
- ¹² G.S.L. Devra 'Some Problems in the Delimitation of the Rajputana Desert during the Medieval Period', in Rakesh Hooja & Rajendra Joshi (Eds.) *Desert, Drought & Development*, Rawat, Jaipur & Delhi, 1999, pp.371-382.
- ¹³ *ibid.*, pp. 377-378.
- ¹⁴ For details, see Devra *op.cit.* 1999, pp. 371-382.
- ¹⁵ Chroniclers of Mahmud Ghazni noted that while travelling from Multan to Somnath, the Sultan had to cross the desert, for which elaborate arrangements for ensuring water-supply etc. were needed (Nazimi, Muhammad 1931, *The Life and Times of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna* [Reprinted, Delhi 1971]).
- ¹⁶ Bhils, Meenas, Garasias, Sahariyas and Kathodis, are listed as 'tribals' by the Government of India's 'Schedule'.
- ¹⁷ V.C. Misra 1967, pp.36-37.
- ¹⁸ F.L. Mehta *Handbook of Meywar and Guide to its Principal Objects of Interest*, Times of India Steam Press, Bombay, 1888, pp.33.
- ¹⁹ Mehta, 1888, pp.33.
- ²⁰ See, among others, S.S. Dhabriya *Udaipur and its Umland: A Study in Urban Geography*. Unpublished Ph.D dissertation, University of Jodhpur, Jodhpur, 1971.

- ²¹ V.C. Misra *Geography of Rajasthan*, National Book Trust, New Delhi, 1967, pp.10.
- ²² *ibid*, pp.11.
- ²³ See A.M. Heron's 'Geology of south-east Rajputana', *Mem.Geolog. Surv.of India*, Vol. XLV, pt 2, 1922; The geology of south-eastern Mewar, Rajputana', *Mem.Geo. Surv.of India*, Vol. LXVIII, pt 1, pp. 1-120, 1936; 'Physiography of Rajputana', *Proc.Ind.Sc.Conf.*,1938; 'The Geology of Central Rajputana', *Mem.Geo.Sury. of India*, Vol. LXXIX, 1953; also, V.C. Misra 1967; & K.P. Rode 'Geological History of Rajasthan', *Physical Sciences Studies* 6, University of Rajasthan, 1960, pp.44-54, among others.
- ²⁴ Heron, *op cit.* 1936.
- ²⁵ James Tod *Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'han*, 1829 (1957 edition), Vol.1, pp.21.
- ²⁶ *ibid*.
- ²⁷ Lack of space does not permit a full study of this subject in this present volume. Interested readers may refer to works like Anil Agrawal and Sunita Narain (Eds). *Dying Wisdom: Rise, Fall and Potential of India's Traditional Water Harvesting Systems*, Centre for Science & Environment, New Delhi, 1997; J.A.B. Hegewald's 'Water Architecture in Rajasthan' in *Stones in the Sand*, Marg, Bombay, 2001, pp.78-89; and *Water Architecture in South Asia*, Leiden, Brill, 2002; and Anupam Mishra's *Talab*, Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi, 1994, & *Rajasthan Ki Rajat Boondey*, Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi, 1995.
- ²⁸ Hydraulic devices can be noted in the fore- or background of miniature paintings.
- ²⁹ See G.H. Ojha *Rajputane ka Itihas*, 1927, Vol. I, pp. 94-98.
- ³⁰ See, among others, the works of Ojha (*ibid*), Govind Agrawal (*op.cit.*), and Dasharatha Sharma's *Rajasthan Through the Ages*, Vol. I, Rajasthan Archives, Bikaner, 1966.
- ³¹ Ojha also regarded as significant the similarity between the words *Mihir* and *Mer*.
- ³² The Porwal community traces its origin from Padmavati, capital of Pragvat. (The terms 'Pragvat' and 'Porwal' are used interchangeably). According to a Jain tradition about the Pragvat Porwals, the Jain *acharya* Swayamprabha Suri once reached Padmavati with his disciples on the eve of a great *yagna* sacrifice, which entailed animal sacrifice. Thereupon, the *acharya* preached the tenets of Jainism before the local king Raja Padma Sen and his court. Impressed, the king and 45,000 of his subjects accepted Jainism, and became known in time as the Porwals of Pragvat. (The animals originally intended as sacrifices were set free too).
- ³³ This has been identified with the town now known as Didwana.
- ³⁴ See Dasharatha Sharma's *Rajasthan Through the Ages*, 1966, pp.15.
- ³⁵ Using data collected in various Census operations and other studies and field-visits, U.B. Mathur's *Folkways in Rajasthan*, Folklorists, Jaipur, 1986, lists Rajasthan's major cultural divisions and sub-divisions.

³⁶ Tod's *Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'han* (1832 [1957] Vol.11, pp.280), stated that the "etymology of Dhoondhar is from a once celebrated sacrificial mount (*d'hoond*) on the western frontier, near Kalik Jobnair". However, J.P. Stratton, in *The Jaipur-Amber Family and State* (1885, cited in VS. Bhargava *The Rise of the Kachhawas in Dhundhar (Jaipur)*, Shabd Sanchar, Ajmer & New Delhi, 1979, p.1, fnl), held that the term "Dhund is applied to waste desert-like place, with its broad stretches of arid sand and plains mostly unfilled"; and that the area was named "after a demon king Dhundhu. A cave at Galta is ascribed to Dhundhu and a stream rising north of Ajmer and flowing southward flanking the Jaipur hills is called Dhundhu river". The term Dhoondhar, later synonymous with Amber Raj', was used by medieval writers, including Rizaqullah Mushtaqi, Abul Fazl and Nainsi.

³⁷ Mathur, *op.cit.* 1986, pp.4, notes that the term 'Dang' is said to have its roots in the term 'Dang' used for the six main six Jat groups of the area: namely, Sinsiwar, Khuntali, Chahar, Nohwar, Sogarpur and Manga Jats.

³⁸ *ibid*, pp.2-5.

³⁹ *ibid*, pp.2.

⁴⁰ *ibid*, pp.6.

⁴¹ *ibid*, pp.7.

⁴² Mathur, 1986, pp.10.

⁴³ *ibid*.

2

A PICTURE UNFOLDS:
THE PRE-AND PROTO-HISTORY OF
RAJASTHAN



INTRODUCTION



THE PAST HAS ALWAYS PLAYED A CRUCIAL ROLE IN SHAPING THE future, with many existing institutions and customs, and aspects like trade-routes, types of crops, modes of mineral exploitation, preferred building styles and materials, and so forth having their roots in processes initiated in prehistoric and early historic times. These have obviously been influenced and transformed over time as a result of many stimuli; one of them being cultural interactions. Thus, a general understanding of the prehistory and protohistory of this region is desirable when we attempt to comprehend historic and contemporary Rajasthan.

Through multi-disciplinary researches over the past forty years or so in the fields of archaeology, geology, geomorphology paleobotany and related fields, a general picture of the overall cultural sequence for pre- and protohistoric Rajasthan, from the 'Old Stone Age' (or Palaeolithic period) down to the beginning of historical times has now emerged (see [Table 1](#)). For the period before written history becomes available to us, archaeological evidence points to the existence of stone-using groups of the Palaeolithic and, after that, the 'Mesolithic' period. These are followed by copper using cultures, dating between circa third to second millennia BC, such as known from Kalibangan and the Ghaggar valley of northern and northwestern Rajasthan, the Ahar culture sites of southeastern Rajasthan, and the Jodhpura-Ganeshwar complex. Later occur the Post-Harappan 'cultures', including Painted Grey Ware (PGW) as known from the iron-using Noh-Jodhpura group of sites and others; and still later the early historical period remains. These include the rich terracotta plaques from Rang Mahal; other Mauryan, Buddhist, Indo-Greek, Yaudheyas, Sunga-

Kushan period remains, and pottery like the Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW) of the early historic period.

CLIMATE AND CLIMATIC CHANGES IN PRE- AND PROTO-HISTORIC TIMES: A SUMMARY

As far as the palaeo-climate, or environmental conditions during the pre and protohistoric through to early historic periods are concerned, there have been many studies on the palaeo-environment of Rajasthan¹. In general, the data indicates certain climatic fluctuations during the last ten thousand years. It is believed that western Rajasthan, Sindh and parts of Gujarat have become increasingly arid during the past three thousand years, though conditions southeast of the Aravalli divide have, apparently, not altered drastically during this period. However, caution must be exercised, given the prevailing data-base, while expressing views about climatic changes, or lack thereof. Broadly speaking, it would appear that Rajasthan's environment has been influenced by two main factors, namely, change in rainfall pattern, and change in river channels due to neo-tectonics.

It may be relevant to take cognisance of Gurdip Singh's work², on the pollen evidence from four lakes of Rajasthan, namely Pushkar, Sambhar, Didwana and Lunkaransar. This has yielded an interesting sequence that may be summarized as follows:

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| Phase I | Before 8000 BC: A period of extreme aridity leading to the formation of extensive sand dunes as represented by wind-borne sand deposits at the base of lake sediments. |
| Phase II | c.8000-7500 BC: Pollen Zone A — Increase in rainfall; formation of fresh water lakes; lake sedimentation. |
| Phase III | c.7500-3000 BC: Pollen Zone B — Slight decline in rainfall, but fresh water conditions persisted. |

Presence of 'cerealea' type pollen and carbonized vegetable remains in lake sediments suggesting possible beginning of slash-and-burn type agriculture.

Phase IV

c.3000-1000 BC: Pollen Zone C — This phase is further subdivided into Pollen sub-zones C1, C2 and C3, and indicate the following:

During Pollen sub-zone C1 (c.3000-1800 BC) there was considerable increase in rainfall (possibly 50cm more than at present). Expansion of agricultural settlements as exemplified by pre-Harappan and Harappan sites.

During Pollen sub-zone C2 (c.1800-1500 BC) there was a decline in rainfall.

During Pollen sub-zone C3 (c.1500-1000 BC) present conditions apparently came into being.

What is significant in the above is the presence of cereal-type pollen samples, associated with traces of charcoal, radio-carbon dated to between c.7500 and 3000 BC. This implies the possibility that slash-and-burn type of agriculture was known in the region now called Rajasthan as early as 7000 BC. Additional data is needed to clarify the position.

Following Singh's above-cited and other works with colleagues³ on pollen studies on the cores raised from the saline lakes of Didwana, Lunkaransar and Sambhar in Rajasthan, various theories were propounded concerning the origin of the salinity of these lakes. The four main theories, succinctly summarised by Possehl⁴, are: (i) The salinity is marine and results from the regression of the Tethys Sea; (ii) The salt derives from brine springs in the region; (iii) It is wind-borne, from the Arabian Sea and the Rann of Kutch; and (iv) According to Singh's hypothesis, it results from a concentration of salt through the evaporation of lake water with dissolved salts in it.

However, the salt lakes are all from one area of Rajasthan, and are under one climatic regime. On the other hand, there are freshwater lakes, like Pushkar lake near Ajmer, and the lake at Gajner, thirty kilometres south of Bikaner, that were fresh-water lakes under the same climatic conditions that are said to have led to hyper salinity in Didwana, Lunkaransar and Sambhar lakes. This would suggest that salinity of lakes depends on a balance between rainfall and surface drainage on the one hand, and subsurface conditions on the other, and a change in total average annual rainfall, or surface and subsurface drainage can apparently affect these bodies of water. Thus, changing palaeochannels and tectonic movements could change both surface run-off and also subsurface drainage, affecting the salinity of the lakes.

While Pushkar and some other lakes have access to subsurface water which more than neutralises evaporation, it does not mean that the lakes of Sambhar, Lunkaransar and Didwana — separated from each other by a few hundred kilometres — could have remained unaffected by severe changes in rainfall patterns. Studies have indicated that during the mid-Holocene, summers were much wetter and there was also considerable winter rainfall. Higher summer and winter rainfall during the mid-Holocene would have lowered the salinity of the lakes in question. It seems that there was a long dry period from 3500 BP (i.e. Before Present) to 2000 BP. Other recent work indicates that the period from 3900 BP seems to have been marked by low precipitation and decreased river run-off.

Besides the ‘rainfall factor’, neotectonic movement of lineaments in Rajasthan has resulted in changes in the courses of the Ghaggar and Drishadvati as indicated by the distribution of archaeological sites⁵ and through satellite imagery. The Harappan settlements of Kalibangan etc., described further in this chapter, were on the banks of the Ghaggar. As a result of tectonic changes, the Sutlej joined the Indus System and the Drishadvati the Yamuna drainage, and the Ghaggar dried up.

Various other studies have yielded valuable data⁶; and numerous others are ongoing. Among the latter are a series of linked projects about the quaternary stratigraphy and palaeoenvironmental history of the Thar desert by researchers at the Physical Research Laboratory, Ahmedabad, and

their associated colleagues⁷, besides other inter-disciplinary work at Jayal, Bap-Malar, Kanod etc. in western Rajasthan. In addition, between 2000-2002 an Indo-Japanese group lead by Prof. Yoshinori Yasuda of International Research Centre for Japanese Studies, Kyoto, carried out drilling of lacustral deposit at Sambhar and did intensive surveys and soil sampling from western and southeastern Rajasthan. The pollen analysis of cores is going on in the laboratories.

With more data, a fuller picture of prehistoric climate and environment, and the role this played in shaping and changing the life styles and habitats of human communities should, undoubtedly, emerge.

THE PREHISTORY AND PROTOHISTORY OF RAJASTHAN

The broad divisions for Rajasthan's pre- and protohistorical period are, in chronological order:- (i) Palaeolithic, which may be sub-divided into (a) Lower Palaeolithic, (b) Middle Palaeolithic, and (c) Upper Palaeolithic; (ii) Mesolithic; (iii) Chalcolithic; and (iv) Iron age (see [Table 1](#)).

TABLE 1 CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF THE PRE- & PROTOHISTORY OF RAJASTHAN

Geological Period	Time	Culture/Industry
Pleistocene	c. 5,00,000 years BP	Lower Palaeolithic, chopper-chopping tools, hand axes, Acheulean tools etc.
"	c. 50,000 BP to 20,000 BP	Middle Palaeolithic: scrapers, borers, flakes, prepared cores
"	c. 20,000 BP to 10,000 BP	Upper Palaeolithic: blades, burins
Holocene	c. 8,000 BC to 2,000 BC	Mesolithic: microliths, blades etc.
"	c. 2,500 BC to 1,000 BC	Chalcolithic: Pre & Mature Harappan Culture, Ahar Culture, Ganeshwar-Jodhpura
"	c. 1,000 BC onwards	Early Iron Age: Jodhpura, Noh, Ahar Period II etc., Early Historical and beyond

Note: BP stands for Before Present, with AD 1950 as its take-off point. Thus, 10,000 BP is the equivalent of 8,000 BC.

It should be noted that a 'Neolithic' (or 'New Stone Age') period has not been recognized in the context of Rajasthan to date. Thus, in the light of current data, the technological and cultural transformation in Rajasthan is from the Mesolithic, or Late Stone Age, to the Chalcolithic, or copper and stone blades using age, with no intermediary 'Neolithic' phase.

The situation regarding 'Megalithic' assemblages in Rajasthan is, similarly, unclear. Carlleyle had reported the discovery of a megalithic site of considerable importance at Dausa nearly a hundred years ago. Three types of monuments had apparently been found here in the course of Carlleyle's exploration in the latter part of the nineteenth century. These comprised stone circles with a cromlech or a menhir in the centre, cairns and a large mound of earth and a monolith. Carlleyle also reported 'roundish shaped earthen vessels with lids containing human bones' at a mound of occupational debris north-east of Dausa⁸. He also found four earthen vessels lying in a regular line below two large boulders at Bairat,

along with some smaller vessels immediately in front of an Ashokan rock edict also at Bairat. All of these have been described as cinerary urns containing human bones, and seem to indicate a general tradition of urn-burials, often associated with the 'megalithic'. However, as D.H. Gordon noted, until the general area of Bharatpur and Alwar is thoroughly explored and its remains properly investigated, such cairns, megaliths and occupation sites do little to help us with regard to the problem of the megaliths⁹. Thus, further work is needed to clarify the situation with regard to sites with 'megalithic' remains in the region.

THE PALAEOOLITHIC (OR 'OLD STONE AGE') PERIOD

The Palaeolithic period is commonly referred to as the 'Old Stone Age', during which humans mainly used tools made from stone, and did not know the art of smelting metal and making metal tools, nor of pottery. This Old Stone Age period belongs to the geological era known as Pleistocene. It may be sub-divided for purposes of study into the Lower Palaeolithic, Middle Palaeolithic, and Upper Palaeolithic phases, on the basis of the size, appearance and methods of manufacture of the main stone-tools used during each different phase. Thus, broadly speaking, the Lower Palaeolithic is characterised by stone tools known as pebble tools, hand axes, cleavers, chopper-chopping tools, and related shapes. The people living during the period classified as the Middle Palaeolithic age, on the other hand, used smaller, lighter, tools based on flakes struck from cores; while those of the Upper Palaeolithic mainly used even lighter stone tools and parallel-sided stone blades and burins.

It may be relevant to point out here that 'dry' as the information about stone tool types etc. may appear, modern-day humans should not dismiss the mental faculties and abilities of prehistoric peoples out-of-hand. Bear in mind that the human brain is supposed to have remained more or less unchanged for over 50,000 years! Thus, 'ancient' people from that time on certainly possessed the faculty of thinking and feeling almost exactly as a present-day person might! Notwithstanding, of course, the obvious fact that present-day people have the advantage of subsequent technological,

scientific and cultural developments and history — and its pitfalls — to guide and channelise our activities!

LOWER PALAEOOLITHIC

Sites belonging to the Lower Palaeolithic (i.e. the earliest part of what is popularly called the ‘Old Stone Age’) have been found mainly concentrated in the area east of the Aravalli hills. In the context of Rajasthan, tools of this Lower Palaeolithic period roughly date between c.5,00,000 and 50,000 before the present (BP). During the 1950s and early ’60s, especially, considerable quantities of palaeolithic tools, in the shape of hand axes, cleavers and flakes, were found along the banks of the major rivers of the region, specially the rivers Chambal, Banas, Berach, Gambhiri, Wagan, Khari, Kothari, Chandrabhaga and Kadmali¹⁰.

Some of these sites are reported to be exceptionally rich. These include Nagari, near modern Chittorgarh, which has been described as one of the richest Palaeolithic sites of the region and of India¹¹, Chittorgarh on the river Gambhiri, and Kota on the river Chambal. Here tools have been found *in situ* in vast quantities from alluvial deposits. Other sites include Mandpia, Bigod, Deoli, Nathdwara, Bichore, Sonita, Bhainsarorgarh, Parsoli *nulla*, Haripura, Rathajna, Sigoh, Tajpura and Navghat. The data has led archaeologists to hypothesise that human and animal populations existed in ample numbers in southeastern Rajasthan during Lower Palaeolithic times. The plentiful tool assemblages found at these sites, taken together with the thick gravel deposits that were formed during this period indicate favourable environmental conditions, including adequate and reliable rainfall, for human habitation in the area. (These climatic conditions apparently persisted into the time-zone of the Middle Palaeolithic period in this region).

Till recently, relatively few Lower Palaeolithic sites were known from other parts of Rajasthan. However, Carlleyle had reported stone tools from Dausa in 1871, C.A. Hackett of the Geological Survey had discovered Acheulean hand axes and cleavers during the last quarter of the nineteenth

century AD from the erstwhile states of Jaipur and Bundi, and Seton Karr reported Acheulean hand axes from Jhalawar in 1928. However, with the discovery of sites like Bhangarh on the river Sanwan in district Alwar and Govindgarh, near Pushkar, on the river Sabarmati in district Ajmer, the picture has slowly altered.

In the Bhangarh valley, the north has basal cemented gravel superimposed by silt, while the south has two cycles of implement bearing gravel beds, alternating with silt deposits. Broken blocks of cemented gravels are strewn on the pebbly bed of the river. The Bhangarh industry is mainly of the Abbevillio-Acheulean type, of which a development up to the emergence of Levalloisian tools is indicated. Acheulean assemblages have now also been recorded at several places, including Jalore and Pushkar in the Dry Zone on the margins of the Thar Desert, usually in the vicinity of lakes or minor streams, as well as from several sites in districts Ajmer, Alwar, Pali, Tonk and Jaipur. Geomorphic data regarding Lower Palaeolithic tools found near Pushkar in the Hokhra basin of Ajmer district suggests that these artefacts are associated with a relatively dry or semi-arid phase, as compared to the moist and humid conditions noted for this area during the succeeding Middle Palaeolithic period¹².

Tools of the Rajasthani Lower Palaeolithic, found loose as well as fixed in river gravels, are of a mixed and generalized character. They include Acheulean hand axes, scrapers, simple flakes and blades, chopper-chopping tools and cleavers. The material used for the tools is usually quartzite, derived as pebbles from river beds. Occasional use has been made of quartz.

The evidence shows that the Lower Palaeolithic people took into account factors like availability of water, raw material to make tools, and other elements necessary to a hunting and gathering way of life when selecting habitation-sites. These could be on the banks of rivers, or in the open, or even in rock shelters. It may be relevant here to state that tools found — whether during the Lower Palaeolithic, or in other ages — represent, variously, habitation sites, or factory sites associated with sources of raw material, or places that combine these two functions.

Though archaeological evidence indicates a gradual transformation over time from the use of large stone axes and chopping stones of the 'Lower Palaeolithic' period to a more efficient stone tool technological kit comprising small blades and flakes by the 'Upper Palaeolithic' period, the exact sequential relationship is not fully known. Nor is the process of transition and transformation, between the Lower Palaeolithic cultures of Rajasthan and the Middle Palaeolithic ones that followed them. These aspects can only be better understood after further explorations and excavations of sites belonging to both periods. However, it seems that there must have been more than one developmental stage of the Lower Palaeolithic in Rajasthan.

MIDDLE PALAEOOLITHIC

In contrast to the distribution pattern of the Lower Palaeolithic sites, sites with tools of the 'Middle Palaeolithic' period are found from both the geographical sub-divisions of Rajasthan — namely, the areas east as well as west of the Aravalli. These are broadly datable to between c. 50,000 BP and 20,000 BP. The Aravalli range appears to mark a geo-cultural dividing line. In this context, the archaeologist V.N. Misra noted that the tools from sites to the east of the Aravalli were preceded by and developed from the Lower Palaeolithic tradition, but those of the Middle Palaeolithic industry to the west of the Aravalli did not reflect local antecedents¹³. The most fundamental distinction perceived between the Middle Palaeolithic tool industries of the two regions was in the quantity of reworked flakes. The percentage of reworked flakes is about five to seven per cent of the total assemblage in the tools east of the Aravalli, while this ranges between twenty-one to forty-five per cent at sites west of the Aravalli. The western group also include a wider range of artefacts¹⁴.

In fact, it is during the Middle Palaeolithic period that sites begin to appear in profusion in the Luni basin and parts of Western Rajasthan. Misra¹⁵ interpreted this as indicating the probable colonization of the Luni basin by Stone Age humans under more favourable climatic conditions than exist today. In the view of La Touche¹⁶, the occurrence of wide flow

channels and thick cemented gravel deposits in the middle reaches of the river Luni and its tributaries suggests that these rivers carried much more water during the Middle Palaeolithic period, and that rainfall was much higher during that period than is the case today.

Recent geomorphological, pedological and archaeological studies in western Rajasthan have similarly indicated that the climate underwent a more wet and humid phase during the Middle Palaeolithic period¹⁷. This wetter phase was followed by a long dry period, during which extensive sand accumulation took place over the thick and deeply weathered soil horizon of the earlier phase. This, in turn, was followed by another period of increased precipitation, and the sand dunes were stabilized during this second wet phase¹⁸.

In the region east of the Aravalli range, Middle Palaeolithic tools occur in the river valleys of the Wagan and Kadmali of the Banas-Berach river system in district Chittorgarh and the valley of river Chambal in district Kota. Sites include Dhanet, Hajiakheri, Bhutia, Beawar and Champakheri, among others. Some tools occur stratified in cemented sandy pebble gravels, overlying a mottled clay or silt deposit. It is surmised that these gravels were laid down when the rivers had considerably aggraded their courses and were flowing in relatively graded valleys, and the presence of cross-bedding in them is suggestive of meandering courses and changing currents.

The tools of the Middle Palaeolithic found in the eastern part of Rajasthan are smaller than the lower Palaeolithic ones that chronologically preceded them. The Middle Palaeolithic tools are made from fine grained stone like chert, quartz, jasper and agate, in addition to the quartzite used from Lower Palaeolithic times. Characteristic tools from the Banas-Chambal region include a variety of side-scrapers, end-scrapers, points, borers, flakes and blades struck from stone cores, usually carefully prepared. Levallois and disc core techniques have been used for making the tools. There is an absence of chopper-chopping tools, while hand axes and cleavers are rare.

In western Rajasthan, Middle Palaeolithic sites have been discovered at many places along the Luni river and its tributaries like the Jojri, Reria, Bandi, Sukri, Lilri and Guhiya, especially in districts Pali and Jodhpur, though no assemblages have been found south of Pali and Sojat. The sites include Nagri, Mogara, Baridhani, Samdari, Dundara, Luni, Srikrishnapura, Golio, Hundgaon, Bhawi and Pichak, among others. This very rich Middle Palaeolithic culture of the Luni basin has been given the nomenclature of 'Luni Industry' by Misra, and is dated between approximately 45,000 BP to 25,000 BP.

Though the Middle Palaeolithic sites of the Thar region do not give many direct indications of the way of life of those who inhabited them or used them, the Allchins are of the opinion that it is possible to draw a number of inferences, both from individual sites and from their relation to the topography of the region¹⁹. Apparently, cooler and damper conditions seem to have prevailed during Middle Palaeolithic times. In such an environment, the makers of the Luni industries built huts or wind breaks of some kind at certain seasons of the year. The many small concentrations of tools they left on the banks and gravel terraces of the old river systems indicate that they were often on the move. Sites of this kind suggest that as far as possible, tools were made where and when they were needed, and not carried for long distances. On the other hand, the larger sites associated with isolated or particularly good sources of raw material suggest that, for certain purposes, people were prepared to make stone artefacts at these places, and carry them away with them for use elsewhere.

The raw material employed in the tools of the Luni industry comprises chert, jasper, agate, silicified wood, rhyolite, feldspar, porphyry and quartzite. The material was locally obtainable from the limestone and Malni volcanic rock formations exposed in the vicinity of the Luni river system. The Luni industry tools include a large variety of side and end scrapers, unifacial as well as bifacial points, borers, flake-knives and Levallois flakes and blades. It seems that the Levallois technique of striking stone tools was used more frequently in this region, as compared with eastern Rajasthan. Hand axes and cleavers occur in small proportions. The presence of these tools-types, according to Misra²⁰, indicates that the Middle Palaeolithic Luni industry is derived from the Acheulean tradition, and that Stone Age

humans 'colonized' the Luni valley towards the close of the Acheulean phase.

Middle Palaeolithic tools, made largely from locally available fine-grained quartzite, and comprising flakes struck from prepared cores, keeled and end scrapers, chopping-tools, cleavers, points and burins, as well as different types of cores, have also been discovered from a weathered soil level at sites in Ajmer district, along the shores of the freshwater lakes at Budha Pushkar and Hokhra²¹. In fact, data indicates that the Pushkar area, with its unique source of fresh water, permitted a more or less continuous occupation of the lake basin from the Lower Palaeolithic period onwards, through to the Middle and Upper Palaeolithic, and then Mesolithic and later ages.

UPPER PALAEOLITHIC

Until relatively recently, this phase of the Old Stone Age was not very well understood in the context of Rajasthan. Thus, recent discoveries as well as the sequence provided by the above-cited studies of the Pushkar basin have proved valuable additions to the body of available information.

Typical Upper Palaeolithic tools are parallel-sided blades struck from pre-prepared cores, and burins. Other tools include scrapers of different types made from both blades and flakes. Notably though, scrapers do not form the major part of the Upper Palaeolithic assemblages, when compared with the stone tools of the preceding Middle Palaeolithic era. In fact, the method of producing parallel-sided blades from a carefully prepared core is the basic technological innovation of the Upper Palaeolithic.

Small slender blades and cores of the Upper Palaeolithic tradition have been found at several sites in the beds of the Luni river and its tributaries, and on the surface in the limestone hills near Sojat, in western Rajasthan, marking the Thar Upper Palaeolithic industries. Initially, especially during the 1960s, the absence of stratigraphy made it difficult to ascertain whether these were associated with the Middle Palaeolithic (i.e.

Luni) industry of Rajasthan, or belonged to an independent Upper Palaeolithic tradition. In subsequent years, however, the characteristics of the Thar Upper Palaeolithic industries was found to be fairly consistent, based primarily upon the preparation of parallel-sided blades made from prepared unidirectional cores, along with the continuation of Middle Palaeolithic techniques of core and flake production.

The whole tool kit of the Thar Upper Palaeolithic is on a markedly smaller scale than that of the Middle Palaeolithic of the same region, and is lighter too, and Upper Palaeolithic sites in the Thar region are more sparsely distributed than is the case with Middle Palaeolithic ones²².

Blade and burin stone assemblages have also been found from many other parts of Rajasthan. At Budha Pushkar in Ajmer district, Upper Palaeolithic living and working floors were discovered at several places on the weathered soil horizon. Both tools and clusters of waste material were noted at many places which archaeologists describe as 'factory sites' or 'working areas'. (These 'factory sites' are, quite literally, places where early humans appear to have fabricated a lot of tools, as if at a factory. On the basis of scattered raw materials, finished and unfinished tools, the debris of discarded pieces, and very little evidence of an every-day habitation, such 'factory' areas or sites can usually be seen to be clearly distinct from a site where the data indicates a living area only). The tools noted in the Budha Pushkar area include blades, burins, scrapers and what the discoverers call "appropriate by-products"²³. The Pushkar area, as mentioned already, has delineated a sequence from the Lower Palaeolithic period onwards. In a like manner, at Mogara hill, an isolated outcrop of rhyolite in the Dry Zone near Jodhpur, tools of the Lower, Middle and Upper Palaeolithic, as well as the Mesolithic, have been found at different small working areas²⁴.

The Allchins believe that the Upper Palaeolithic industries, primarily a technological entity, represent a marked and fairly consistent change in methods of making stone tools, and therefore also probably in some of the underlying concepts relating to their use²⁵. In their view, the technique of making parallel-sided blades is an essential basic element of all the Upper Palaeolithic industries of South Asia, and many of its later Mesolithic

industries. (In fact, such blades continued to have been used until the beginning of the Iron Age). It is suggested that Upper Palaeolithic industries made their appearance in the arid regions of Western India (and Pakistan) towards the end of the late Pleistocene humid phase, with Upper Palaeolithic techniques developing as an element of the Middle Palaeolithic industries of the Luni (and Rohri in Sindh) groups²⁶. These became a dominant part of the stone working technique wherever the Thar region remained habitable during the final Pleistocene arid phase.

Thus, there appears to an element of continuity from the Middle Palaeolithic to the Upper, and later to the Mesolithic, as indicated in certain limited localities such as Pushkar, where the artefacts appear to represent a continuous local cultural and technological tradition²⁷.

THE MESOLITHIC (OR 'LATE STONE AGE') SITES OF RAJASTHAN

Chronologically succeeding the Palaeolithic or Old Stone Age is a phase of stone-tool usage in most parts of India which archaeologists have classified as 'Mesolithic'. The term 'Mesolithic', in its literal sense means 'Middle Stone Age' since it chronologically follows the period of the Old Stone Age or Palaeolithic and precedes the New Stone Age or Neolithic. However, it has been widely realised that not all regions went through the New Stone Age phase of using polished stone tool axes along with early agriculture and pottery-manufacture. In regions like Rajasthan no 'Neolithic' period can be recognized. Here, humans gradually started to manufacture smaller stone tools known as 'microliths' and also took to a lifestyle involving some pastoralism or even incipient agriculture in addition to the previous hunting-gathering way of life. In usage, therefore, the Mesolithic signifies a period that is often described as comprising the 'Late Stone Age'. (There has been a protracted discussion on the terminology of 'Late Stone Age' versus 'Mesolithic', especially during the middle of the twentieth century, which we need not enter into here)²⁸.

In the context of South Asia, the term 'Mesolithic' covers the lifestyles of a wide range of predominantly stone-using groups from about

c.9000 BC (i.e. the beginning of the geological era called 'Holocene'), to around c.1000 BC or thereabouts, when the Iron Age began — and in places even later²⁹. Marked by an emphasis on very small stone tools — microliths — this Mesolithic period initially gained notice in India in 1867 following Carlleyle's discovery of microliths from Vindhyan rock-shelters. In the years that followed, considerable work has been done on the microlithic industries of South Asia³⁰.

Several sites with microlithic — or small-sized stone tools, ascribed to the Mesolithic (or 'Late Stone Age') period, are known from different parts of Rajasthan³¹. Here, the transition from Upper Palaeolithic to Mesolithic seems to have been a gradual, steady process of development, which involved a change in the choice of raw materials used for tool manufacture, a partial change in the range of types of artefacts, and a reduction in the size of tools. Thus, though smaller in size, parallel-sided blades continued to form the basis of Rajasthan's Mesolithic industries much as they had done during the Upper Palaeolithic period. Simultaneously, the techniques of the Middle Palaeolithic continued as a minor part of the Mesolithic tradition too, though once again the tools were smaller than before.

Two regions of Rajasthan which have been particularly explored and have yielded Mesolithic sites are (a) southeast Rajasthan, especially the Mewar plains, and (b) the lower Luni basin of western Rajasthan.

Of these, the bulk of the microlith-using 'Mesolithic' sites discovered so far are located east of the Aravalli divide, in the area of southeastern Rajasthan. More than seventy microlithic sites of this Mesolithic period have been found on rocky limestone outcrops, especially in the districts of Udaipur, Bhilwara and Chittorgarh³². Here raw materials like chert, agate, chalcedony and quartz occur in profusion. Some of these sites, like Nimbahera, Bagor and Mandpia, have been reported as being exceptionally rich. However, at many sites the archaeologically relevant material consists almost exclusively of fluted and simple cores, waste flakes, chips and a few blades, with markedly few finished tools, or other artefacts of occupation. Misra interprets such sites as factory sites or workshop sites, where Stone Age hunters, taking advantage of the easily available raw materials,

manufactured their tools, taking the finished tools to their camps or living sites, and leaving behind the waste debris³³.

The most famous of these is the site of Bagor³⁴, where excavations have yielded an exceptionally rich lithic assemblage. Bagor has proved to be an extensive camp site on the river Kothari in district Bhilwara, twenty-five kilometres west of the town of Bhilwara. The site of Bagor (25° 21' N; 74° 23'E), is located on a prominent dune, and the habitation deposit is 1.50m thick. Excavations at Bagor have revealed three phases, now classified as Period I Phase I, Period I Phase II and Period II.

Period I Phase I, is very rich in microliths and animal remains. It is categorised as Mesolithic, with a hunting-gathering economy. Stone-paved floors and circular alignments of stones have been found, the latter possibly an indication of circular huts. Quantities of charred and broken animal bones were found on the floors, along with stone tools. A human burial, with the body laid out in an extended fashion in an east-west orientation, with the head to the west, was found inside the settlement. There also appears to have been a limited use of agate and garnet beads. On the basis of the three radio-carbon dates for this phase, it may be dated between c.4500 BC and c.3200 BC.

Period I Phase II, is marked by a decline in the quantity of microliths and animal bones. Copper objects appear for the first time, as does pottery. The copper objects include three arrowheads, a broken spearhead and an awl or antimony rod. These five copper items were found with two of the burials belonging to this period. There is a greater use of ornaments of stone and bone. Beads of banded agate, carnelian, garnet and bone — these latter extremely small in size, were found. Three human burials were excavated, once again within the settlement, but this time in a flexed position in an east-west orientation, with the head to the east. The burials were accompanied by offerings of pottery, copper objects, ornaments and food in the form of meat interred with them as grave goods. A necklace of stone and bone beads was discovered *in situ* around the neck of one skeleton, with a terracotta spindle-whorl/bead placed alongside it. Pieces of ochre and hematite were also noted, as were spherical sling-stones, hammer-stones,

shallow querns and rubbing stones. Stone-paved floors and outlines of circular huts were noted continuing in this phase too³⁵.

The two radio-carbon dates for this phase indicate a time-span of between c. 2800 and c. 2100 BC. These dates point to general contemporaneity with the Mature Harappan period as well as with the chalcolithic Ahar Culture. The presence of copper objects, pottery and grave goods etc. in conjunction with a slight decrease in animal bones and microliths, and the occurrence of perforated stones probably used as weights for digging-sticks, suggests the beginnings of rudimentary agriculture and pastoralism, in place of a purely hunting gathering economy. These also indicate contact with other contemporary settled farming communities in Mewar and Malwa³⁶. Period I Phase II of Bagor reflects probable cultural interaction between microlith-using Bagor and other 'complex' cultures, as well as the transition from a purely hunting economy to a more mixed one. The material remains recovered from the site have, thus, raised several questions about the relationship of the 'Mesolithic' with the 'Chalcolithic' period in this part of India.

The ensuing phase, formerly referred to as Phase III, is now classified as Period II. It has not been radio-carbon dated. It is marked with the occurrence of iron objects (including one socketed arrowhead and one tanged one), and plain wheel-made pottery, kiln-baked bricks, tiles, stone structures and glass beads. Agriculture and stock-breeding was practiced. The dead were buried in an extended position with a north-south orientation and head to the north. A few microliths and animal bones occur. The excavators hold that the Period II occupation took place after the site had been abandoned for a time, and that the presence of microliths in the deposits of this period are because of secondary intrusion due to the sandy character of the occupation floor. The excavators would place this Period II around the latter half of the first millennium BC, though Sankalia³⁷ had suggested a time-frame of between c.600 BC to AD 200.

The two most important elements at Bagor are the exceptionally rich microlithic industry and the plentiful faunal remains. These latter include bones of domesticated sheep and goat, cattle (both wild and domesticated),

several species of wild deer, wild boar, turtle, fish, rat, monitor lizard and jackal³⁸. The microliths mainly consist of geometrics like blunted back blades, points, scalene and isosceles triangles, oblique blunted blades, lunates, trapezes and 'petit tranchets'. In addition to these, there are also some tools made on flakes and cores. These include side, end and round scrapers and burins. Notably, the proportion of non-microlithic tools like scrapers and burins is insignificant when compared to the microlithic ones.

The microlith-using Mesolithic sites of western Rajasthan occur in a slightly different topographical context. In the districts of Pali, Barmer, Nagaur and Jodhpur many surface sites, usually located on sand dunes, were noted. Near Sojat, on the other hand, sites like Dhaneri and Sojat were found on limestone outcrops, and on the surface at Jadan and Kanawas near such rocky slopes. Sites have also been reported from the sand dunes along the shores of the freshwater lake at Budha Pushkar and Hokhra near Ajmer, as well as the Pachpadra salt basin in the Thar desert³⁹.

Data pertaining to a microlithic habitation site of western Rajasthan comes from the excavation conducted at Tilwara⁴⁰. As in the case of the Bagor excavations, work at Tilwara has also aided our reconstruction of the probable lifestyle of Mesolithic communities⁴¹. Tilwara (25° 51' N; 75° 50'E), is located on a low sand dune in the old flood plain of the Luni river, some twenty kilometres west of Balotra in district Barmer. The thickness of the deposit is about fifty centimetres. (Though it may be noted that a small number of microliths occur down to a depth of ninety centimetres).

Two occupation phases were discerned. Phase I (in the lower thirty centimetres) yielded a small quantity of animal bones and a microlithic industry. Though a few stray pottery sherds were found, archaeologists believe this phase was actually unassociated with pottery and the sherds found are intrusions. A number of *kankar* blocks, brought to the site from the adjoining river bed, were noted indicating structures⁴². Circular alignments of stones, with diameters between three to five metres suggest the presence of circular huts. Circular hearths, containing ashes and pieces of charcoal, were also found.

Phase II (the upper twenty centimetres strata) also had grey and red plain pottery. The excavators suggest that this pottery is an intrusion from a later occupation, which has got mixed-up with the microliths over the millennia due to human and animal movement over the sand dune. No radio-carbon dates are available for Tilwara.

The animal remains from Tilwara include both wild and domesticated species. These include bones of cattle, goat/sheep, pig, jackal or dog, spotted deer and hog deer. The animal bones are indicative of a mixed economy based on stock-raising and hunting-gathering. Spherical stone-balls have also been noted, and these may have been used as missiles for hunting purposes.

The microliths at Tilwara are made from chert, chalcedony, quartzite, quartz and rhyolite. They consist of a mainly geometric microblade industry, though some scrapers made on flakes and burins are also present. A small proportion of long blades (not present in the Bagor industry) also occur. The main tool types are blunted back blades, obliquely truncated and/or blunted back blades, points, lunates, triangles and trapezes.

Microliths of a similar tradition have also been found along the shores of the Pachpadra salt basin a few kilometres north of Tilwara by Gurdip Singh. In this regard, Misra⁴³ believes that there is a strong possibility of discovering Mesolithic habitation sites on the shores of the Pachpadra and other salt basins in view of the fact that these saline lakes of Rajasthan were initially freshwater lakes. Mesolithic sites are also known from various parts of eastern, central and north-eastern Rajasthan, including places like Pushkar, Bainara, Achrol, Belsan, Biharipura, Jhir, and so forth.

Symbiotic relationships with nature and human adaptations to the physical world around us have been an important feature right from prehistory down to the present. Data demonstrates that it was during the Upper Palaeolithic-early Mesolithic period that humans began to more actively manipulate nature to suit themselves instead of merely utilizing it. Over time, therefore, the Old Stone Age hunting-gathering way of life was supplemented by animal husbandry and incipient agricultural practices. (Still later would come settled agriculture, with its accompanying 'cultural

baggage’). It may also be relevant to bear in mind that there seems to be a broad overlap in the chronology of several ‘Mesolithic’ cultures and the earliest agricultural settlements coming to light in the Indus basin, south-eastern Rajasthan, and elsewhere.

Further work on microlith-yielding sites, along with C 14 dates, is necessary for a fuller understanding of both of the Mesolithic period of Rajasthan, as well as the causes and processes behind the transition from the Palaeolithic to the Mesolithic, and then from the Mesolithic to Chalcolithic, and later iron-using technologies.

CHALCOLITHIC CULTURES

Numerous copper-using sites, dating between circa third to second millennia BC, are known from different parts of Rajasthan. Most, but not all of these sites (Ganeshwar being a notable exception), appear to have been based on sedentary agriculture. They are marked with a range of distinct potteries. In addition, copper artefacts have been found, often as ‘chance discoveries’ over a large span of territory. One of the most intriguing of these is a copper channel-spouted bowl found as part of a hoard of 103 copper artefacts, from Kurada (wrongly spelt as Khurdi in initial reports), in district Nagaur. ([Table 2](#) lists other major finds of artefacts found from explorations or as ‘chance discoveries’).

The copper-using sites of Rajasthan demonstrate knowledge of exploitation and utilization of locally available sources of copper. They can be broadly divided, geographically and ‘culturally’, into three distinct groups, with all three having certain distinct cultural characteristics. (However, it should be kept in mind that this perception of different ‘cultures’ is based on existing data and our interpretation of it. Thus, as and when new information or new sites come to light we may need to modify our current views regarding them).

In the north and northwest of Rajasthan occur the sites belonging to the Pre-Harappan, Mature Harappan and Post-Harappan periods, along the

banks of the Ghaggar-Hakra river and its associated water-courses. The most noteworthy of these is the site of Kalibangan (district Hanumangarh), which lies some 310 km northwest of Delhi, along the left bank of the river Ghaggar in north Rajasthan. Kalibangan has been described by its excavators as “a Harappan Metropolis beyond the Indus Valley”⁴⁴. The name ‘Kalibangan’ means, quite literally, ‘black bangles’, and the surface of the site still has fragments of weather-stained terracotta bangles strewn all over the area. The Harappan culture phase was succeeded by Painted Grey Ware-using and then early historical (Sunga-Kushan) period sites in the region.

In central and northeastern Rajasthan occurs the Ganeshwar-Jodhpura copper cultural complex. This is chronologically followed by the iron and Painted Grey Ware-using Noh-Jodhpura group of sites, and then early historical period remains. In southeastern Rajasthan occurs the white-painted, Black-and-Red ware (and associated potteries) using Ahar Culture group of sites. After a chronological gap, these are followed in the mid-first millennium BC or thereabouts by iron-using levels, Northern Black Polished Ware, and early historical period remains. The Chalcolithic period sites from the three above regions show distinctive cultural characteristics.

TABLE 2
COPPER ARTEFACTS FOUND FROM EXPLORED SITES IN
RAJASTHAN

S. No.	District	Site	Artefact/s
1.	Ajmer	Ekalsingha	Bar Celt (Ahar type)
2.	Ajmer	Budha Pushkar	Fish hook (Indus type)
3.	Alwar	Balambasai	Copper rings & Celts
4.	Alwar	Dantiya	Small bar Celts, bangles
5.	Bharatpur	Malah	Harpoons, swords, chisels, celts (Gangetic type)
6.	Bikaner	Sabania	Copper celts (Indus script)
7.	Bikaner	Pugal	Arrowhead (Indus type)
8.	Bikaner	Chhapri	Copper Celt
9.	Bundi	Namana	Copper Celt; Ahar-type, Black-and-Red Pottery, and Microliths etc.
10.	Chittorgarh	Pind-Padaliya	Celts
11.	Jaipur	Chicwari	Harpoon, celts (Gangetic type)
12.	Jaipur	Mairh	Celts
13.	Jaipur	Nandlalpura	Celts (Gangetic type)
14.	Jaipur	Sarangpura	Male figurine
15.	Jaipur	Jorpura	Celts (Ganeshwar type)
16.	Jaipur	Kiradot	Bangles (Indus type)
17.	Jalore	Elana	Flat Celt (Indus type)
18.	Nagaur	Kurada/Khurdi	Spouted bowl, Celts, etc.
19.	Nagaur	Chapri	Celts (Indus type)
20.	Pali	Bhandar	Celts
21.	Sawai Madhopur	Kota-Maholi	Celts (Gangetic type)
22.	Udaipur	Jhadol	Vestiges of copper bits
23.	Sirohi	Varmaan-Revdar	Bangles, rings, swords, three sizes of ingots, bar Celts, and flat Celts etc.

THE EARLY, MATURE AND POST-HARAPPAN SITES OF RAJASTHAN

Prehistoric agricultural settlements were initially noted in the Ghaggar-Hakra valley by Sir Aurel Stein⁴⁵. These sites stretched from Hanumangarh (in former Bikaner state) in the east up to the erstwhile state of Bahawalpur (now in Pakistan). Later explorations by Ghosh and others in the area, as well as in adjoining parts of Pakistan and Haryana, brought to light further sites belonging to the Pre-Harappan, Harappan and Post-Harappan periods

along the banks of the Ghaggar-Hakra and associated rivers⁴⁶. This river-system is often believed to be identical with the ‘lost’ Saraswati-Drishdavati river system, and in recent years some scholars have preferred to use the term ‘Saraswati-Indus Culture’, rather than the longer established term — ‘Harappan Culture’.

The Ghaggar-Hakra river system is now largely dry except for the monsoon season. Geographical and palaeo-climatic evidence suggests that this river system is the residue of a larger water-course that once watered the northern Rajasthan and Punjab plains in ancient times. Some of the recent findings suggest that the Ghaggar-Hakra once flowed to the south of the Sutlej river, and then southward to the east of the Indus river, with the present-day Thar desert on its left bank. (Popular belief and recent research have led many to hypothesise that this river-course may be part of the so-called ‘lost’ Saraswati river that figured so much in early Indian history. On the other hand, other scholars believe that the ‘original’ Saraswati was a much wider, deeper and faster-flowing river, for which the geographical information given in relevant Vedic literature would suggest an Afghanistan location. In such a case, the Saraswati tentatively identified and associated with the Ghaggar-Hakra channels may have been named after the ‘original’ one, which flowed through a different region of southern Asia. Furthermore, regardless of whether or not the Ghaggar-Hakra is identical with the Vedic Saraswati, it was apparently a river of significance for this part of the subcontinent in the c. third-first millennia BC. As such, irrespective of its name during that period, some scholars have suggested that pre-Harappan and Harappan ‘cultures’ spread into Haryana and parts of eastern Punjab through Rajasthan along the Ghaggar-Hakra rivers).

Besides the now renowned site of Kalibangan, other Harappan Culture sites identified from this area include Tar Khanwala Dera, Sothi, Karoti, Sherpura, A.Nohar. Anupgarh, Pugal, Badopal, Baror, Bhagwansar-1, Bhagwansar-2, Binjor-1, Binjor-3, Bugian, Jogiason Chak-1, Mallawala Tibba, Mathula, Motasar Tibba-1, Motasar Tibba-2, Sardargarh-2, Chak-11, Chak-15/3, Chak-21, Chak-43, Chak-50, Chak-71, Chak-72/3, Chak-75, Chak-80, Chak-84, RD-92/89, 85 G.B., 86 G.B., 87 G.B., Rang Mahal and Pilibangan.

Extensive excavation between 1961 and 1969 by the ASI at Kalibangan revealed the remains of a sizeable walled Pre-Harappan settlement. (This is now regarded as ‘Early Harappan, rather than ‘Pre-Harappan’, by many scholars, though others prefer to use the term ‘Pre’). This has been designated by archaeologists as Kalibangan Period I. This lay beneath the remains of a large fully developed Harappan period settlement — now referred to as Kalibangan Period II⁴⁷. The excavations also brought to light the grid layout of a Harappan metropolis beyond the geographical limits of the Indus Valley for the first time, leading excavators to dub it as the ‘first city’ of the Indian cultural heritage⁴⁸.

The Pre- (or ‘Early’) Harappan period at Kalibangan, classified as Kalibangan Period 1, is also known at related sites of what archaeologists had once designated as the ‘Sothi Culture’. (Such sites include, besides Kalibangan and Sothi, Bugian, Jogiasson, Karoti, Nohar, Sherpura and R.D. 89). Similarly, the Mature Harappan phase — Kalibangan Period II — represented by the overlying levels at Kalibangan, is also known from other Harappan Culture sites in that region.

Three distinct mounds were excavated at Kalibangan, exposing a distinct and sizeable early settlement beneath the ‘Mature’ Harappan levels. This Early Harappan settlement was found to be about 250m from north to south, and 180m from east to west, in size, and was fortified by a plastered mud-brick wall. Mud-brick houses with three to four rooms and a courtyard were found. The mud bricks were of the dimensions of 30cm x 20cm x 10cm. Drains lined with sun-baked bricks were also found, along with a 1.50m wide east-west running lane.

One remarkable discovery was that of a ploughed field situated to the southeast of the settlement. The field showed a grid of furrows, with one set more closely spaced (approximately 30 cm apart) running in an east-west direction and the other more widely spaced (approximately 1.90m apart) running in a north-south direction. Interestingly, this pattern closely resembles present-day agricultural practices in the area, in which two types of crops are planted in the same field. These are usually pulses in one direction and mustard in the other; the combination being dependent on the size and growth behaviour of the plants. No plough or plough share remains

have been found from the excavations, however. Thus, the material from which the plough was fabricated, its shape, and the type of crop/ crops grown can only be inferred. Cereal-type pollen has been attested in the deposits of Pre-Harappan Kalibangan 1. To date, this discovery of a ploughed field surface remains the earliest such archaeological evidence of proto-historic agricultural practices in the world!

Five building phases were found in this 'Pre-Harappan' Kalibangan Period I settlement. Pot-like hearths were found in the rooms. A series of ovens, both above and below ground, were also discovered in a house. Equally noteworthy was the existence of cylindrical pits lined with lime plaster, possibly for storing drinking water! Other finds included small blades of chalcedony and agate, bangles of copper, terracotta and shell, beads of carnelian, shell and terracotta, as well as steatite disc beads.

Terracotta objects like a toy cart, wheels, bull figurines etc. also came to light. Besides these, quern-stones, mullers, bone points, and fifty-six copper objects, including antimony rods, rings, pins, beads, bangles and copper flat axes were unearthed. The pottery was wheel-made, though it varied in range and archaeologists have classified it into six categories, referred to as Fabrics A, B, C, D, E and F, on the basis of fabric, form, painting and decoration style, and general technique.

The radiocarbon (or C¹⁴) dates available for this Pre-Harappan Kalibangan Period I settlement span a time-period between circa 2920 BC to 2550 BC⁴⁹. A cluster of six dates between 2550 and 2440 BC suggest the beginning of the Mature Harappan period (i.e. Kalibangan Period II) at the site.

Some scholars suggest, on the basis of other corroborative data, that this 'Pre-Harappan Kalibangan Period I' should now be regarded as part of the 'Early Indus' (or Early Harappan) class of sites. In keeping with this, the other sites akin to Kalibangan Period I in Rajasthan — earlier designated as 'Sothi Culture' — should, similarly, be considered part of the Early Indus tradition.

The settlement pattern altered slightly at Kalibangan during Period II, i.e. the Mature Harappan period (for which at least nine successive building phases were noted in the course of the excavations). There were now two distinct parts to the settlement — a ‘citadel’ area and a ‘lower city’. The citadel, situated atop the remains of the earlier Pre-Harappan occupation levels, was excavated on the western mound. The ‘lower city’, represented by an extensive mound, was unearthed from the eastern mound. This was situated to the east of the citadel mound. In addition to these, a third mound, located about eight metres east of the lower city was also excavated. This yielded a structure containing five fire-altars.

The citadel complex, a parallelogram of 240m by 120m, revealed two, almost equal, but separately patterned portions. These were rhomboid in plan. Both were enclosed by a thick mud-brick wall, reinforced at regular intervals with rectangular bastions. There were two entrances — one each from the north and south respectively — to the southern rhomb of the citadel. This part contained mud-brick platforms. One platform had seven fire-altars in a row, one of them containing animal bones. Consequently, it has been suggested that the people of Kalibangan Period II may have practiced fire-worship and animal sacrifice. The northern rhomb of the citadel appears to have contained only residential houses. The remains of a north-south running thoroughfare was also traced for a length of forty metres.

The settlement pattern of the ‘lower city’ was on a plan of a parallelogram measuring 360m by 240m, fortified by a mud-brick wall. The plan of the lower city is comparable to Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Lothal, Surkotda and Banawali. Wide streets and lanes intersected each other at right angles, and divided the town into blocks on a grid-pattern. The houses were built from mud-brick, and had a courtyard surrounded on two or three sides by rooms. A tiled floor was noted in one area. Baked bricks were used for drains, wells, door-sills and bathing platforms.

In addition to this, a cemetery area was also uncovered at some distance from the residential area. Three types of burials were found. One kind was an extended burial in rectangular or oval graves, a second kind was pot-burial of pottery and funerary items in circular pits, and the third

was rectangular or oval grave-pits containing only funerary objects and pottery. Thus, it seems that the latter two types of burials were unassociated with actual skeletal remains.

A range of potteries, including ‘typically Harappan’ wares was found in the excavated levels of Kalibangan Period II. Other objects included seals and sealings with typical Harappan characters and writing, blades of chert, and terracotta objects including animal and human figurines, bullock-carts, beads and typical Harappan triangular ‘cakes’. In addition, beads of steatite, gold and semi-precious stones, stone weights and measures, and a variety of objects made of carnelian, faience, shell, copper and stone were also found. The copper objects, numbering about 1200, included arrowheads, bangles, beads, pins, chisels, spearheads, celts, blades and fish hooks⁵⁰.

Special mention must be made of some of the finds. Among these are a cylinder seal, a terracotta ‘cake’ incised on the obverse with a horned human figure and on the reverse with a human figure pulling an obscure object, a terracotta human head, a copper bull, a terracotta feeding cup with a cow’s head on the rim, a terracotta graduated scale, and an ivory comb. Barley and wheat were found, but there is no evidence for rice. The settlement remained restricted within the walled area of its original layout throughout its existence. During the later phases of Period II the fortifications of both the citadel and lower city were neglected.

This Mature Harappan Kalibangan Period II has been dated between c.2500 BC and 2000 BC⁵¹ Previously, the Pre-Harappan Kalibangan Period I was thought to date between circa 2400 BC to 2250 BC, and the Mature Harappan Kalibangan Period II between 2200 BC to 1700 BC. However, with the ‘MASCA calibration’ or correction of C¹⁴ dates, this earlier time-framework stands revised.

One question that comes to the mind of every visitor who sees at first-hand the sprawling site of Kalibangan (and the small museum situated on-site) concerns the causes for the ‘end’ of the protohistoric ‘metropolis’ settlement at Kalibangan. According to the late B.K. Thapar, one of the co-

excavators, “...one of the compelling reasons for the abandonment of the site was the drying up of the river Ghaggar and the consequent denudation of the watershed by overgrazing and deforestation. The settlement must have been seriously affected by the shortage of a perennial water supply for both agricultural and drinking purposes. Environmental studies at Kalibangan have indicated a picture of alternating captures of the Yamuna by the Indus and Ganga river systems respectively. Among the series of alternating captures there was an eastward diversion to the Ganga system around 1750 BC which incidentally coincides with the abandonment of the site. We may not, therefore, look to foreign invasions or repeated high floods or transmutation to sub-Indus Cultures as contributory factors for the decline or fall of the settlement”⁵².

While we cannot discuss at length here all the various factors which led to the decline of the Harappan civilization in South Asia in general, it is important to emphasize that the causes were many, and there were perhaps different immediate causative factors in different parts of the widespread Harappan civilization area of influence. In the context of Rajasthan, the climatic situation and increasing desiccation of the sub-region must have played a vital role in its decay, as has been noted at Kalibangan and the other Harappan settlements of the area. The decline of the rivers as major water ‘highways’ would also have adversely affected trade and communication with regions to the west and east, and hastened the deterioration of the Harappan culture in the area. (Of course, scholars have gradually come to realize that certain traits and aspects of the Harappans were modified and adapted by later cultures.)

In fact, as various other studies show, settlements flourished along the Ghaggar-Hakra (?Saraswati-Drishadvati) basin whenever adequate water flowed through the rivers of the area. Thus, besides other climatic factors, hydrological changes played a major role in the growth and decline of early farming and urban cultures in northern Rajasthan (and adjacent regions like Haryana).

THE AHAR CULTURE

The Chalcolithic is represented in southeastern Rajasthan by several sites classified as belonging to the 'Ahar Culture'⁵³. This copper-using 'Ahar Culture' (so-named after the first site, i.e. 'type-site', to be found, as is the archaeological convention), has been recognized as being distinct and distinguishable from the chalcolithic sites of the Pre-Harappan, Harappan and Post-Harappan 'cultures' known from northern Rajasthan. The transition from the Aharian Black-and-Red Ware using agriculture-based sites of the Chalcolithic to later iron-using and the early historic period is insufficiently understood at present. Though archaeologists and historians have evidence for the introduction of iron-working, and the sequence from Chalcolithic to Iron Age and early historic period levels in southeast Rajasthan has been established for the region, much of the reconstruction is speculative, based, as it is, on literary allusions and folk-memory.

Over ninety sites of the Ahar Culture have been noted to date, concentrated in the river-valleys of the Banas and its tributaries in southeastern Rajasthan, especially in the districts of Udaipur, Chittorgarh, Dungarpur, Banswara, Ajmer, Tonk and Bhilwara⁵⁴. These include Ahar, Gilund, Bansen, Keli, Balathal, Alod, Palod, Pind, Khor, Arnoda, Nangauli, Champakheri, Tarawat, Fachar, Phinodra, Darauli, Joera, Gadriawas, Purani Marmi, Aguncha, and Ojiyana among others⁵⁵. Some sites with Ahar Culture levels are also known from Jawad, Mandisor, Kayatha and Dangwada in Madhya Pradesh.

Two of these, Ahar (24° 35' N; 73° 44' E) and Gilund (25° 01' N; 74° 15' E), both in Rajasthan, were partially excavated during the late 1950s and early 1960s⁵⁶. More recently, R.C. Agrawala⁵⁷ has worked at Ojiyana (25° 53' N; 74° 21' E), and the 1994 season saw the commencement of excavations at the site of Balathal (24° 43' N; 73° 59' E). Subsequently, the ASI has carried out limited excavations at Ojiyana, and a team from Deccan College, Pune and the University of Pennsylvania (USA) on Gilund. A detailed excavation report of the original work at Gilund in the 1960s is still awaited, but with subsequent excavations at Balathal⁵⁸, Ojiyana and Gilund (the latter is continuing), along with the previously conducted excavations at Ahar, a general picture seems to be becoming clear.

Ahar, the type-site of the Ahar Culture, has yielded a copper-using proto-historic period, labelled by the excavators as Ahar Period I', as well as an iron-using early historical phase, known as Ahar Period II. The excavators reported a break in occupation between the two periods⁵⁹. The proto-historical copper-using Ahar Period I has provided radio-carbon or 'C14' dates of between c.2580 BC to 1500 BC, or even later (with MASCA calibration), while the early historical period (or Ahar Period II) has been dated from about post 1000 BC onwards. This contains artefacts made of iron, Northern Black Polished Ware, and Kushan and other historical period artefacts, three seals bearing inscriptions in the 'Brahmi' script, and six coins — including one second century BC coin of Apollodotus, among other things.

As far as information from the current Gilund excavation is concerned, the following information summarises the available results: "Recent excavations at Gilund have produced much interesting evidence for life in southern Rajasthan during the Bronze Age. A large, public building with massive parallel walls of high quality mud brick has been found. Within the walls of this building a bin, which contained over 100 seal impressions of unbaked clay, was found. Some of these seal impressions are very much like the seals of the Jhukar Culture of Sindh, as documented by the excavations at Chanhu-daro. The Gilund seal impressions would seem to date to the early second millennium BC"⁶⁰.

Meanwhile, the recent few seasons of excavation at the site of Balathal have also yielded a twofold cultural sequence of Chalcolithic and Iron Age. The Chalcolithic Ahar Culture period has so-far provided radio-carbon dates between c.2350-1800 BC, while the Iron Age levels are dated between fifth century BC and third century AD by the excavators. The area occupied by the Iron Age people at the site is smaller and is largely confined to the central part of the mound under excavation at Balathal. (This Iron Age period is discussed further on in this chapter).

The inference drawn on the basis of the various excavations as well as the evidence from the explored sites is that a distinctive copper-using regional culture was in existence in southeastern Rajasthan by the later half of the third millennium BC. Among the characteristic features of this

copper-using Ahar Culture is a variety of potteries — including a particular kind of painted Black-and-Red pottery. Other artefacts include copper objects, terracotta human and animal figurines — the latter often representing a bull-shape, and beads of semiprecious stones and terracotta — the latter either plain or decorated with incised designs. Stone mullers and grinding-stones have also been found in large numbers. Overall archaeological evidence also indicates an economy based on plant cultivation, animal husbandry and limited hunting and fishing, and the general absence (in any substantial quantity) of stone blades and microliths — which are an ever-present feature of almost all of South Asia's Neolithic and Chalcolithic cultures.

In addition to the distinctive Black-and-Red pottery, often painted with geometrical designs in white pigment, the Ahar Culture sites have yielded certain other, equally distinctive, pottery-types. These include a brightly slipped red ware, a tan ware (with some similarity to the Late Harappan pottery of Gujarat in fabric and shapes, according to archaeologist V.N. Misra and his colleagues⁶¹), a burnished black ware, an incised thin red ware, and an incised and decorated grey ware.

Excavations at Ahar have yielded three phases in the protohistoric Chalcolithic Period I, namely Ahar Period Ia, Ib and Ic⁶². There is evidence for rice, domesticated cattle, and in much smaller quantity domesticated sheep, goat, buffalo, pig and dog, besides bones of wild faunae that were hunted. Millet (*Pennisetum typhoideum* or 'bajra') was also found, but due to the disturbed nature of the levels between Period Ic and Period II, it is not certain if it was known in the Chalcolithic period, or only in the historical iron-using Period II.

Copper artefacts, including flat axes or 'celts', rings, bangles, kohl sticks, and thin sheets of copper as well as copper wire and tube and slag are an important feature at Ahar. In addition, at Ahar a circular pit, measuring 1.5m in diameter and 0.6m in depth, and containing copper slag and ashes was excavated, and is believed to be linked with copper-smelting. Other remains from Ahar include stone saddle-querns, terracotta objects like beads, bangles, ear-studs and animal figurines, beads of semi-precious stones — including one of lapis lazuli, and stone, shell and bone objects.

Balathal is also noteworthy for the profuse use of copper. These include choppers, knives, razors, chisels, and barbed and tanged arrowheads. According to the excavators, these objects were manufactured from copper sheets beaten into the desired shapes. They further believe that some of the fire-places found within the structure complex excavated were furnaces for smelting and working copper. Beads of terracotta, carnelian, agate, steatite, etc. also occur, as do many small terracotta bull figurines — which may have ritual significance.

The site of Balathal was also marked by the manufacture of a variety of fine and coarse ceramics, including large quantities of tan ware (which reportedly has some similarity to the Late Harappan pottery of Gujarat in fabric and shapes⁶³). In addition, pottery kilns and sherds found ‘in situ’ within one structure appear to indicate the continued occupation by a family of potters of one part of the site over more than one generation.

As far as the economy is concerned, agriculture, animal-husbandry and occasional hunting-fishing-fowling is indicated. As at Ahar, at Balathal too there is clear evidence for domesticated cattle, with a small number of sheep, goat and buffalo⁶⁴. Bones of wild animals make up five per cent of the total assemblage studied in a preliminary study. They include bones of the Gaur buffalo (*Bos gaurus*), varieties of deer and ‘nilgai’. Fish bones were also found, as were a small number of bones of domesticated pig. The overall break-up conforms surprisingly well with faunal analysis results from Ahar!

Unlike Ahar, however, where though rice was found there was no evidence of wheat, Balathal has yielded evidence for the cultivation of wheat and barley, besides a variety of pulses and lentils, the common pea, ‘bor’ (*Zizyphus jujuba*) and oilseeds⁶⁵. According to V.N. Misra⁶⁶, cereals and lentils appear to have been produced in considerable quantities and were stored in storage bins, of which several examples have been found. These cereals and lentils were ground into flour on stone-queens which have been found in large numbers. Food was cooked on U-shaped hearths (‘chulhas’). Unleavened bread is assumed by the excavators to have been

the staple food. Further information, which will become available only when the full report is published, is awaited.

Data from Gilund, and surveys and surface-collections at other sites⁶⁷ corroborates the general picture from Ahar and Balathal. To summarize this data, there is evidence for agriculture and saddle-shaped querns and grinding-stones/ mullers. There is also evidence for on-site copper metallurgy based upon local sources of chalcopryrite ore, along with the occurrence of copper artefacts like axes, bangles, wire, copper-slag and ashes. A distinctive 'Aharian' pottery, beads of carnelian, terracotta, shell, schist, glass and faience also occur. A notable feature is the occurrence of the 'dish-on-stand' type of ceramic. The discovery of the lapis lazuli bead from Ahar Period I, mentioned above, is noteworthy, as it seems to indicate long-distance interaction. Lapis lazuli has also been found during excavations at the site of Balathal. All this certainly has implications for understanding trade and contact between Ahar and contemporary cultures.

At the site of Gilund two mounds, labelled as 'eastern' and 'western', measuring 45 feet and 25 feet respectively above the surrounding fields in height, and covering an area of about 500 x 250 yards, were partially excavated during the 1959-60 season. The excavators remain unclear as to whether the two mounds were separate blocks from the very beginning, or the result of erosion over the millennia. Both mounds were found to have been under occupation during the chalcolithic (Ahar Culture) period. Only the eastern mound was occupied during the later periods though. Here the lowermost portion revealed a chalcolithic stratum, the middle structures were datable to a few centuries before and after the Christian era, and the uppermost levels showed early medieval structures⁶⁸.

Excavation was conducted in three areas designated as GLD-1 (with its extension GLD-1A), GLD-2 and GLD-3. Unfortunately, since the excavations were only partial, the trenches in the upper and middle parts of the relevant excavation area (GLD-1A) on the eastern mound could not be carried down to the chalcolithic levels, and so the picture for Gilund remains incomplete, particularly in regard to the continuity or otherwise of the occupation from the Chalcolithic Period.

Both burnt-brick and mud-brick structures were found in the chalcolithic context of Gilund. One of the earliest structural complexes that was partially unearthed from GLD-2 covered an area of 100 feet x 80 feet. It comprised four parallel north-south walls, joining, at the southern end, an east-west wall. Parallel to the latter were two more walls, from which, in turn, emerged another set of three parallel north-south walls. Made of mud-brick (the average size being 13 x 5 x 4 inches) laid with mud-mortar in alternate courses of headers and stretchers, the walls ranged in thickness from 2 feet 6 inches to 3 feet. The space between the parallel walls was filled with sand, while the inner face of the innermost wall and outer face of one of the cross-walls were plastered with mud mixed with lime. The extent and alignment of these walls indicated some massive building complex, but given the small scale of the excavation, its exact nature could not be determined.

An equally interesting complex, this time ascribed to the 'middle levels', was exposed in the GLD-3 excavated area. As far as excavated, this consists of a main wall, running west to east and then turning north-north-east, with a cross-wall on the inner side and a parallel wall, following the alignment of the main wall, on the exterior. Made from kiln-baked bricks (their dimensions being 14 x 6 x 5 inches), over a stone-rubble foundation, and having a width of 1 foot 10 inches, the main wall, including the 'return', was traced to a length of 36 feet without reaching the ends on either side. It had a reddish plaster, about an inch in thickness, consisting of sand and clay mixed with lime. The outer wall, running parallel to the main wall at a distance of 4 feet 6 inches, was marked by two openings. One of these, measuring 3 feet in width, marked a probable entrance into the complex in the form of a downward earthen ramp consolidated by rubble pitching. The outer opening, which was not fully excavated, seemed to follow the general pattern of the former. Charred remains of wooden posts were noted at three places along the main wall. Other associated deposits found also point to some kind of fire within the complex.

Trench GLD-1 on the eastern mound also yielded a complex, including a platform made of kiln-burnt bricks. This came from the lowermost sub-period of the excavated trench. Another sub-period was marked by a structure made from dressed stones, roughly circular in shape

and about eight feet in diameter. Yet another sub-period revealed several rooms, oriented roughly east-west and north-south, with walls made of mud-bricks (brick-size being 16 x 9 x 2¾ inches) over stone-rubble foundations. Clay-lined circular or U-shaped ovens were noted in two of the rooms. (It may be noted that a U-shaped oven has also been found at Balathal, as is described below).

Besides this, mud-brick houses, clay-lined storage pits, ovens, different floor-levels, and roofing materials were noted from different excavated sub-period levels at Gilund. Other finds included terracotta animal figurines and ‘gamesmen’ with a variety of heads — including one resembling a ram, beads of terracotta, agate, chalcedony, steatite etc., pottery, fragments of copper, spherical stone balls, saddle-querns and microliths.

At the site of Ahar, excavations yielded fifteen structural phases during the Chalcolithic Period I, with remains of rectangular stone and mud structures, built on foundations of locally available undressed blocks of schist. The walls were reinforced by either a bamboo screen or by the addition of quartz pieces in clay — a practice still current in the region. The floors were, variously, either of hard burnt clay, or black clay mixed with yellow silt, and were sometimes also paved with a bedding of blocks of cemented gravel from the nearby river. The structures measured 9.15m x 4.60m on an average, although longer walls running to a length of 13.70m, and divided into rooms by mud or mud-brick walls, indicated larger buildings. The houses generally had north-south as their longer, and east-west as their shorter axis.

Timber appears to have been used sparingly for the central upright pillars, and was probably also used for the long horizontal beams that supported the roof. Roofs were sloping and thatched with bamboo, grass and leaves⁶⁹. Most buildings contained large-sized hearths (or *chulhas*) with two and more cooking-positions or ‘mouths’. The data indicates that the Aharians lived in settlements with rectangular houses, with the structural remains pointing to the existence of sizeable buildings.

The more recent work at Balathal has also brought to light large, multi-roomed rectangular or squarish mud, mud-brick and stone structures. An intriguing discovery is that of a massive stone-revetment and mud-filled fortified structure belonging to the Chalcolithic period. This fortified enclosure appears to be roughly rectangular in shape, and consists of four ramparts or walls made of rammed mud and revetted with semi dressed stones both on the inner and outer faces, which enclose a large space of about 500 sq metres within them. The enclosing walls range in width from 4.80m to over 5 metres.

In one of the structural phases a mud-brick northern wall over a foundation of stones, running in an east-west direction, and measuring 9.45m in length and 90cm in breadth, was noted. Yet another building, classified as Structure 9, consists of a large rectangular area in the northeastern part of which two circular silos, plastered with clay and cow dung, have been exposed. The most complete and complex structure exposed in the chalcolithic levels to date has been designated as Structure 10. This consists of six rooms that have so far been exposed.

Besides the above, other structures have been exposed at Balathal and are described in detail by the excavators⁷⁰. In addition, many storage bin platforms, fire places, querns, pottery and animal bones were noted in situ in some of the rooms excavated here. One of the rooms within Structure 10A contains a well preserved domestic hearth, consisting of a U-shaped oven made of mud-bricks, with its eastern arm preserved to a length of 80cm and a width of 20cm. The western arm is 1m in length and 20cm wide. The width of the surface of the oven is 1.10m. The sides and bottom of the hearth are burnt dark red, indicating prolonged use. Another patch of burnt earth to the north possibly represents another oven. The excavators have therefore concluded that this room was used either as a kitchen or a copper working place. Similar evidence has been reported from Ahar and Gilund. In Structural Phase III, a rectangular building labelled as Structure No.5 has revealed evidence of intense burning activity, pottery kilns, ash and potsherds, leading to the structure's tentative identification as the residence of a potter.

The floors found at Balathal are made of a bedding of stone chips above which alternate layers of black clay and brown silt were laid, before being plastered with mud and cow-dung. The excavations at Gilund in the 1960s also brought to light evidence for roofing consisting of reed matting plastered with clay or mud.

Though a very few fragmentary human bone remains were found from Ahar (Period Ib & Ic) and the on-going work at sites like Balathal, Gilund and Ojiyana may reveal additional human remains, at present there is little information available regarding the disposal of the dead from any site categorized as belonging to the Ahar Culture in Rajasthan.

THE GANESHWAR-JODHPURA COPPER COMPLEX

The third group of chalcolithic sites, ascribed to the Ganeshwar-Jodhpura copper complex, occur in central and northeastern Rajasthan. Here the sequence indicates a succession of 'cultures' using (so-called) 'Ochre Coloured Pottery' (OCP), an unpainted black-and-red pottery (distinct from the Aharian Black-and-Red), and Painted Grey Ware, followed by early historical period remains.

The earliest of these, chronologically, is the 'Ochre Coloured Pottery Culture'. Though this term is actually a misnomer, as has been widely recognized, it is still in use for purposes of discussion and categorization. OCP is known from excavations at Noh (district Bharatpur), Jodhpura (district Jaipur), and now Ganeshwar (district Sikar), besides surface discoveries. Barring Ganeshwar, this pottery has generally been found in badly weathered condition, usually in water-logged soils. As a result, our knowledge of this cultural phase has remained relatively incomplete until recently, as has been the case with the OCP in Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and Haryana. Data from Ganeshwar has, thus, helped further our understanding of the OCP-using cultural grouping.

The pottery shapes and fabric display an affinity with certain ceramics of the Late Harappan period. This may indicate that the OCP was linked

with the eastward expansion of the Late Harappan culture. At Noh and Jodhpura, the succeeding phase is characterized by an unpainted black-and-red pottery, with PGW levels following the black-and-red pottery levels. The black-and-red and PGW sequence also occurs at many other sites in districts Jaipur, Ajmer, Tonk and Bharatpur.

Excavations at Jodhpura (27° 31'N, 76° 5'E) during the 1970s (1972-73; 1974-75), confirmed the stratigraphical position of the chalcolithic period OCP, and then unpainted black-and-red preceding PGW⁷¹. Similar sequences were also found at Noh, in Rajasthan, as well as at Atranjikhera in neighbouring Uttar Pradesh. At Jodhpura, the six trenches revealed the existence of five distinct cultural phases or periods, ranging from the protohistoric to the historical period Sunga-Kushan era⁷².

The five periods at Jodhpura are marked by the following main features: Period I is characterized by ceramic ware long described as 'Ochre Coloured Pottery', abbreviated to OCP. From the Jodhpura excavations data, it is now apparent that this 'Ochre Coloured Pottery', found in extremely weathered condition over much of Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana and parts of Rajasthan, was actually a red-slipped ware, generally with incised designs on its exterior. Period I can be sub-divided into phases IA, IB, IC, and ID. By phase ID, the Jodhpura OCP pottery complex expanded to include a range of shapes. Among these, storage jars, mini-pots, vases (including with different sized flared rims), basins, bowls and lids, and handles predominate. The decorations are in the form of either (i) incised designs, or (ii) appliqué, or (iii) painted bands of black/blue. The shapes and decorations of this phase are reportedly comparable with the ceramics of Mitathal I, Atranjikhera and Lal Qila.

Other features noted at Jodhpura Period I include building activities in phase IC in the form of rammed earth floors reinforced with horizontally imbedded pot-sherds, and a number of post-holes (indicative of the fact that wooden posts once existed at the spot) in a semicircular arrangement. This has led archaeologists to suggest that the people lived in circular huts. Pieces of burnt daub also occur, showing that the huts were plastered with mud-plaster. At some places, there are patches on the floors left from prehistoric fire being lit at those spots over a prolonged period of time!

By the time of phase ID, the site contains mud-brick structures containing rooms of the scale of about 4.20m x 3.53m, with the mud-bricks varying in size between 18 to 30 cms in length, 11 to 26 cms in width and 6 to 7 cms in thickness. The bricks were laid in two courses, joined by mud-mortar. In addition to this, terracotta and stone beads, a dish-on-stand, terracotta 'cakes', and bone spikes also occur from the phase ID levels.

Period II is characterized by a black-and-red pottery, different to the Aharian Black-and-Red. The Jodhpura black-and-red bears close affinity to the Noh material. Incised decorations are conspicuous. This ware seems to denote a distinct cultural phase between the preceding OCP and the later PGW yielding levels. Other associated ceramics of Period II are Coarse Red and Black Slipped potteries. A dish-on-stand in black-and-red ware has also been reported.

Period III is marked by painted and plain grey pottery categorised as part of the 'Painted Grey Ware' tradition. The designs, executed in black pigment, comprise spirals, sigma, *swastikas*, dots, circles and lines. The pottery bears a close affinity with Hastinapur II and Noh III. In addition, iron objects including arrowheads, bone points, some copper artefacts, stone and terracotta beads (including *ghata* or pot shaped beads), bone sockets etc. were also discovered. The most noteworthy feature of Period III was the discovery of the two furnaces. These were apparently used for iron-smelting and forging of iron objects. The hearths are of the 'open' type, with bellows. Probably local ore was utilized. It has been hypothesized that the first furnace was for extracting the metal by direct reduction of the ore. The small bloom that was separated was then heated in the second (open hearth) furnace to the required temperature and forged on a platform between the two furnace-hearths.

Period IV at Jodhpura has yielded iron objects (including arrowheads), terracotta and stone beads, conch-shell bangles, as well as human and animal figurines. Some of these figurines have been classified as 'mother-goddess' and 'eye-goddess'. Two floors were also excavated. The discovery of a painted head of a bull made from grey ceramic is noteworthy. The pottery includes a profusion of unslipped red ware, some NBPW sherds, and some black-and-red and Painted Grey Ware (PGW).

Period V is characterized by pottery typical of the early historical, i.e. Sunga and Kushan, periods. The ceramics are red in colour, usually wheel-turned, and of a fine to medium fabric treated with slip or wash. Common shapes include bowls, lid-cum-bowls, and lipped bowls with spouted channels. Some sherds, bearing symbols of the *triratna*, *swastika* and fish were found. These resemble pottery from Hastinapur IV and Noh V Other artefacts found in this period are iron and copper objects, terracotta and stone beads, a copper coin, and objects of ivory, bone and shell.

Charcoal samples from different levels and periods of Jodhpura have been radio-carbon dated. These dates indicate a bracket between c. 2500 and 2200 BC for the upper 'OCP' pottery yielding levels. This implies that the beginnings of the OCP period may go back to c. 2800-2700 BC⁷³, or even to as early as c. 3000-2800 BC.⁷⁴ Some scholars have, thus, called it the 'Jodhpura Culture' of the Pre-Harappan period⁷⁵.

An equally long sequence, stretching from OCP to Sunga-Kushan period, has been unearthed through the excavations conducted at Noh (27° 15' N; 77° 39' E) in district Bharatpur, during the 1960s and early 1970s⁷⁶. The site yielded evidence for five periods. OCP potsherds were present in the levels ascribed to Period I. The Noh OCP sherds were orange to deep-red in colour, with a wash. Two sherds bore incised linear decorations. A "bead-shaped object" in this ware was noted.

Period II was marked by the use of the (non-Aharian) unpainted black-and-red ware. This black-and-red formed a distinct phase between the OCP and PGW levels. The black-and-red pottery bore conspicuous incised decorations. Associated potteries were Coarse Red and Black Slipped wares. The presence of shapeless pieces of iron was a distinctive feature of Period II. A *ghata* bead and bone spike was also found.

Water erosion and site disturbance due to floods or similar activity was noted in the levels of Period III and some layers of Period IV, and rolled pieces of black-and-red and grey ware were found mixed with river gravels. PGW and NBPW were both found in these levels, as was black-and-red ware. According to the excavators, black-and-red pottery was no

longer the main ceramic type during this period. A large number of stone, terracotta, copper and bone beads were recovered, along with bone sockets and terracotta wheels, gamesmen and decorated figurines. Objects of iron, including arrowheads, spearheads, a ring, rod and (possibly a) dish, and other miscellaneous iron and copper artefacts were also found. Besides these, ivory pins, ear studs, hammer-stones, crucibles and a PGW sherd bearing the impression of cloth were among the other artefacts recovered from Period III levels at Noh.

Black-and-red pottery was totally absent in Period IV at Noh, while PGW continued, albeit in “...a baser fabric”⁷⁷. Northern Black Polished Ware, with a fine lustrous finish, was found in profusion. The sherds of NBPW at Noh ranged in shade from black to silver to blue. Several floor levels were noted. Other finds included beads of terracotta, glass, ivory and stone, a steatite casket, corroded copper coins, and terracotta figurines of animals and humans. Charred barley samples were also found.

Period V was characterized by material akin to the Sunga and Kushan levels of many north Indian sites. It yielded eight structural phases. Both burnt brick as well as mud-brick structures were noted, the brick sizes of the former category being 39 x 23 x 5 1/2 and 29 x 23 x 5 1/2. A covered drain was also found. Equally noteworthy was the occurrence of a ring-well or ‘soak-well’ made from sixteen rings of baked clay. A well-preserved four-armed hearth, a large two armed one, and a group of three hearths in a straight row, were among the other discoveries.

One of the most interesting discoveries was a *kunda* with dimensions of 50cms in length, 43cms in width and 20cms in depth. This was possibly a place for offering oblations. Such a conjecture is supported by the discovery of a bone seal from the same layer bearing the inscription ‘*pap hattase*’ (scholars state that the correct form should have been ‘*pap harttuh*’) in Brahmi characters. Both these finds could indicate the revival of Vedic Brahmanical practices in Rajasthan.

The pottery is typical of the early historical period being, as at Jodhpura (and elsewhere), a wheel-turned ware in red. Common shapes included bowls, lid-cum-bowls, and lipped bowls with small spouted

channels. Some sherds had *triratna* and *swastika* symbols, as noted also at Jodhpura V and Hastinapur IV. Among the other finds were a number of fine male and female terracotta figurines with elaborate head coiffures and jewellery. Copper coins, antimony rods, potters stamps, a toy cart, bangles of shell, glass and terracotta, dice, and stone and terracotta beads were also found. Among the historical period coins, one may note the presence two Kushan period coins. One is an 'Elephant-Rider' type of coin belonging to the Kushan king Huvishka, while the second is a coin of the Kushan king Vasudeva. This latter depicts Vasudeva dressed in the Persian style, offering oblations in a fire-altar, while the reverse side has a figure identified tentatively as the god Siva.

Thus, the OCP to historical period transition in this part of Rajasthan is indicated by the Noh-Jodhpura data. However, it is Ganeshwar which has thrown more light on the chalcolithic period of this area. The site of Ganeshwar (37°40'N; 75° 51.30'E) caught the attention of archaeologists following the examination of the 'Neem-ka-Thana Treasury Hoard' consisting of sixty flat copper celts, in late 1977, by a team from the Rajasthan State Department of Archaeology & Museums.

Subsequent exploration and excavations at Ganeshwar brought to light over five thousand copper objects in association with OCP⁷⁸. The copper artefacts included arrowheads, beads, chisels, rods, rings, bangles, fish hooks, spiral-headed pins, spearheads, celts and balls, all apparently manufactured from copper derived from local mines. The discovery of such a large quantity of copper objects from a single small archaeological site is significant. According to the excavators, the site is near mines and in association with a distinctive pottery from beginning to end. This pottery was formerly referred to as OCP but has since been designated as the 'Ganeshwar-Jodhpura Ware' by the Rajasthan archaeologists. The thin blades, arrowheads and fish hooks are characteristic of Indus sites and have not been found in the copper hoard sites of western Uttar Pradesh. The presence of a round terracotta cake at Ganeshwar is also significant in this regard.

The geographical location of Ganeshwar is also important. For one thing, Ganeshwar (like Ahar) is located in the Aravalli belt, which abounds

in copper deposits, as for example at Khetri, Dariba, Ahirwala, Baleshwar, Chiplata, Behar, Mothooka and Singhana, which are marked by signs of ancient mining and smelting activities. Furthermore, the Khetri copper mines are situated a mere sixty kilometres away. In addition to all this, the site of Kalibangan is situated about 250 kilometres from Ganeshwar and it has been suggested that the nearby river Kantali may have provided direct access from Ganeshwar to Kalibangan and the rest of the Indus system in the past. The Kantali previously flowed towards the now dried Drishadvati river of the Ghaggar-Hakra system, joining it near Nohar-Bhadra-Sothi in northern Rajasthan, thus linking the Ganeshwar-Khetri copper mines area with the old Saraswati-Drishadvati river valley sites like Kalibangan, and thence the main Indus system. All these apparently carried more water during the third to second millennia BC and could have been easily navigable.

It may be relevant at this point to look at the cultural sequence found at Ganeshwar in some detail. This indicates the transformation, over time, from a hunting-gathering 'Mesolithic' economy and technology to a well-developed copper one. The excavations have revealed three cultural phases.

Phase I, marked by a deposit of 30 to 50cm, indicates a hunting-gathering (possibly pastoral) settlement. Microliths and animal bones occur in profusion, but no pottery was noted. The lowermost levels of Phase I have a predominance of bones of small game and birds, while the later levels have larger bones. Unlike the smaller bones, these are often charred and nearly always broken and split open, perhaps for the extraction of marrow. The majority of the bones recovered apparently belong to wild faunae. The main raw materials used for tools were quartz and chert. Quartz appears to have been used on a large scale, but the majority of the finished tools found are made of chert.

The industry is essentially geometric. The main tool types are retouched and blunted back blades, obliquely blunted blades or pen knife blades, triangles, points, crescents, and trapeze and transverse arrowheads. Scrapers and burins made on flakes occur in very small numbers. A complete absence of crested guided ridge technique — a ubiquitously characteristic feature of the Indian microlithic industry — has been noted.

Tools were apparently manufactured within the settlement, as testified by the fact that the finished products are invariably in association with a quantity of waste material.

Phase II, with a deposit of 40 to 60cms, is characterized by the introduction of copper artefacts and pottery for the first time at Ganeshwar. The pottery, christened as 'Ganeshwar-Jodhpura ware', occurs in a large quantity, as do microliths and animal bones. There is evidence of circular hut outlines and floors paved with river pebbles and schist slabs quarried from the nearby rocks.

The pottery is partly hand-made and partly wheel-made. The majority of the ceramics are made from inadequately fired micaceous coarse clay, with a dark smoky core. The pottery is now fragile and was found to crumble fast after exposure. The surface was treated with a slip of even thickness. This varies in different pots. Originally the surface had a bright red slip, but over time this has largely faded away and the present surface colour for most sherds is a dull brown!

A small number of sherds, however, are made from well-levigated fine clay, well fired and sturdy, with an ochre-colour core. The pottery forms include narrow and wide mouthed jars, small squat *handis*, *lota*-like carinated vessels of various sizes, shallow pans, bowls of various sizes and deep basins. An interesting find is that of a miniature narrow-mouthed cylindrical pot, which was perhaps used for storing some liquid. Another miniature bowl-like form found near this pot probably served as its lid. Some of the pots bear incised decorations like groups of straight or wavy lines, chevrons, herring bone patterns and crisscross markings. These were left unpainted. While technologically unspectacular, the Phase II pottery covers the entire functional spectrum of storage, cooking etc.

Copper implements are few in number during Phase II. These include five arrowheads, three fish hooks, one spearhead and one awl. The implications are that Phase II marks the introduction of copper at Ganeshwar, along with the transition from a predominantly 'Mesolithic' to a chalcolithic way of life. (There is some analogy here with the 'Mesolithic' site of Bagor, particularly with the Bagor Period I phase II levels, for which

interaction with chalcolithic Ahar has been postulated⁷⁹. Significantly, however, the small numbers of copper objects at Bagor Period I phase II have usually been interpreted as ‘imports’ as they were found as grave goods. The Ganeshwar Phase II copper objects, on the other hand, do not occur as grave goods).

Phase III is characterized by a profusion of copper implements. In fact, copper accounts for a staggering ninety-nine per cent of the total material remains excavated. These include copper arrowheads, rings, bangles, chisels, balls and celts. The principal varieties of pottery include goblets, beakers, handled bowls, elliptical vases, cylindrical vases, lids, jars, offering stands, dishes, basins and miscellaneous types of pottery showing Pre-Harappan affinity. The pottery is mainly incised. Alternatively, it bears painted designs in black and sometimes pink pigment.

The archaeological record, at this juncture, reflects very clearly, a slow but steady decline in the quantity of microliths and animal bones. The evidence of Ganeshwar Phase III has added a new horizon to the issue of early copper technology in India, and the interaction and relationship between sites ascribed to different ‘cultures’ or cultural groupings.

Combining the archaeological data with geographical factors, it has been hypothesized that the Pre- (or ‘Early’) Harappan and Mature Harappan sites of northern and northwestern Rajasthan received copper ingots and objects (perhaps through intermediaries) from the Ganeshwar region⁸⁰. It is further hypothesized that a substantial portion of the copper requirement for neighbouring parts of (present-day) Pakistan, Punjab and Haryana that were part of the Harappan world could have been met by the metal production from the Ganeshwar/ central and north-eastern Rajasthan area⁸¹.

The contention that Ganeshwar copper artefacts are found at Harappan sites like Kalibangan, Lothal, Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Banawali and even Chanhudaro is backed by spectrometric analysis of the metal. This suggests that the Khetri-Ganeshwar area of Rajasthan was a source for the copper found in sites of this period from Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and even the Deccan. Some of the artefacts show a very pure

copper; while others show an alloy of 3-12% of tin⁸². Additional sources for Harappan copper requirements cannot, of course, be denied.

In fact, the Ganeshwar excavators have suggested that the copper articles at Kalibangan, some 1200 in number, were made and supplied by the people of the Ganeshwar-Khetri region⁸³. These include copper arrowheads of the Ganeshwar type found in the Pre-Harappan (Period I) levels and the copper fish hooks found in the Mature Harappan (Period II) levels of Kalibangan.

Laboratory analysis of the copper celts from Ganeshwar has indicated that these contained copper (97%), silver (0.2%), arsenic (0.3%), lead (1%), nickel (0.6%), zinc (0.1%), and a nominal quantity of tin (0.1%). The celts and other copper objects have been described in considerable detail by the excavators. The phenomenon of groups of round indentations on the butt portion of the celts, in which the groups may contain various different combinations of dots, ranging from a single dot, to two, three, four and six dots, has also been discussed. The various combinations of dots bear similarity to markings on some celts from the sites of Navdatoli and Kayatha, where incised pottery was also found from associated levels. Celts with circular marks have also been noted from 'copper hoard' sites of western Uttar Pradesh. Given the large number of such celts at Ganeshwar, the excavators have suggested that similar celts may have been supplied to other sites from this part of Rajasthan.

Microliths, in association with copper arrowheads, found at Ganeshwar indicate the probable predominance of a hunting-based economy, along with a developed metallurgical technology. So far, evidence for settled agrarian practices (as found at Ahar, Gilund, Kalibangan, etc.) is lacking.

The ceramics found at Ganeshwar all belong to the so-called OCP category. It is identical in shape and design to the Jodhpura OCP, being a red-slipped pottery. The pottery is frequently decorated with profuse incised etc. linear designs, and is often painted. The excavators have noted an affinity between this ware and some of the Pre-Harappan fabrics at

Kalibangan Period I, Sothi, Siswal, Bara and several sites in Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh. They believe that this OCP were originated in the Sikar-Jaipur region of Rajasthan, and spread out via the local rivers.

The dates suggested for Ganeshwar are between 2800 and 2000 BC.⁸⁴ There is even a possibility that the origins of the Ganeshwar culture may be as early as c. 3000-2800 BC.⁸⁵ Correlating the Jodhpura data with the Ganeshwar assemblage, it is possible that while the pre-copper Ganeshwar Phase I may be dated to c. 3800 BC or even earlier, Phase II probably emerged around 2800 BC, and Phase III was in existence in 2000 BC.

The excavators are of the opinion that, given the data from Jodhpura (which continues the saga of the OCP and ensuing black-and-red, Painted Grey Ware, Northern Black Polished Ware and early historical Sunga-Kushan periods), the OCP phase in this part of Rajasthan should now be termed as the 'Ganeshwar-Jodhpura Culture'. A survey of this part of Rajasthan has brought to light about two hundred other chalcolithic sites⁸⁶, which may have formed part of a larger Ganeshwar-Jodhpura cultural complex. It is probable that the Ganeshwar-Jodhpura culture evolved contemporaneously with the Early Indus/Pre-Harappan period and continued to flourish, with further evolutions and transformations, up to early historical times.

The discovery and study of other copper-producing and manufacturing sites from different parts of Rajasthan would throw more light on issues like the origin, extent, chronology, interrelationship etc. of the copper-using cultures of the region, as well as the introduction of iron and the artefacts and potteries associated with iron-using cultures.

Meanwhile, given the present state of research which indicates the existence of several copper-using and/or producing sites in Rajasthan during the third to second millennia BC, which are classified on the basis of current knowledge into the three groupings discussed above, several questions come to mind. For one, what kind of inter-relationship, if any, did

these groupings have with each other, and/or with other contemporaneous (non-sedentary and non-agriculture based 'hunting-gathering') peoples?

It is believed that the Early, Mature and Late Harappan sites along Rajasthan's Ghaggar valley had trade and exchange with the Indus valley to the east and north, and with sites in present-day Haryana, Punjab etc. It has also been hypothesized that they probably also interacted with the Ganeshwar-Jodhpura group of sites. The possibility of contact with the Ahar Culture group of sites of southeastern Rajasthan, either directly or through intermediaries, can also not be ruled out. This is suggested by the discovery of a lapis lazuli bead at Ahar, the presence of dish-on-stand and other 'Harappan' shapes in pottery at Ahar and Gilund, and certain building features at Gilund. The excavations at Balathal, begun from the 1994 season, are reportedly yielding some corroboratory data too. Additional archaeological data is needed to clarify the picture.

On the other hand, the Ahar Culture undoubtedly had some level of contact with chalcolithic sites of the Kayatha, Malwa and Jorwe 'cultures' further south in present day Madhya Pradesh and beyond. Of course, this interaction between Ahar and the Kayatha, Malwa and Jorwe 'cultures' groups of sites needs to be further examined. Meanwhile, archaeological evidence from the Period I Phase II levels of the microlith-using site of Bagor, which has yielded several copper objects, including three arrowheads, suggests that there was some degree of interaction between Bagor Period I Phase II and contemporaneous copper-using Ahar (Period I) sites⁸⁷. Such interaction between microlith-using predominantly hunting-gathering-pastoral groups and copper-manufacturing sedentary agricultural sites during prehistory, though, is only a small part of a largely unknown broader phenomenon.

As regards the Ganeshwar-Jodhpura (and later Jodhpura-Noh culture) sites, interaction with areas to the east, i.e. the Ganga valley, as well as to the north and west, i.e. with the Saraswati-Drishadvati-Indus region, has already been postulated. The issue of contact and interaction with Ahar Culture sites, and with sites further south (e.g. in Madhya Pradesh etc.), however, still requires detailed further study.

One final point about Chalcolithic age settlements in Rajasthan needs to be made before we go on to the period when iron began to be used. It is interesting that, with the exception of the Ghaggar-Hakra basin area, to date there appears to be no evidence for agriculture-based settlements of the Chalcolithic period from the semi-arid and arid zones of western Rajasthan. In fact, as Misra underlines⁸⁸, despite extensive and systematic explorations in this region there is no evidence of such settlements even during the late first millennium BC, when the Iron Age had already commenced in northern and eastern Rajasthan (and the Indo-Gangetic plain)!

IRON AGE CULTURES

Let us come now to iron-using sites. The introduction of iron tools and technology marked a new phase in human history. The availability of iron tools, coupled with the use of fire to burn scrub-land, enabled people to clear vast new lands for agricultural purposes and establish new settlements there. For the northern part of the subcontinent, this occurrence probably took place sometime around the end of the second and beginning of the first millennium BC.

THE PAINTED GREY WARE USING SITES

In the context of northern and eastern Rajasthan (and the Indo-Gangetic plains as such), this emergence of iron technology and the expansion of post-Harappan settlements is associated with a series of sites yielding a distinct pottery now labelled as 'Painted Grey Ware'. This is a fine, thin grey pottery painted with geometrical designs in black pigment. PGW is very different from the Late Harappan pottery in shapes, fabric, decorative pattern and firing technique.

This pottery was first discovered during excavations at the site of Ahichchatra in northern UP between 1940-44. It was subsequently noted at several sites in the Ganga-Yamuna and Sutlej basins, including the sites of Atranjikhhera, Hastinapur and Sravasti. Some scholars believe that the

distribution of PGW over a vast stretch of area including northern and eastern Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and a part of Madhya Pradesh, implies that there once existed a homogeneous cultural unit. Many would like to link this with the 'Aryan' way of life described in the early Vedic literature.

The overall picture obtained from various different PGW sites of India suggests that the people lived in mud-houses, cultivated wheat, rice and barley, and tended and used domesticated cattle, sheep, goat and horse⁸⁹. However, unlike the Harappans, an 'urban' tradition does not appear to have been the obvious basis of PGW culture. The PGW culture is broadly ascribed to the period between approximately c.1000 BC and c. sixth century BC. (It was around this latter period that much of India saw the establishment of early historical period regional kingdoms and republics known as the '*Solasa Maha Janapadas*' or the 'Sixteen Great States').

In the case of the Rajasthan area, in view of the scant existing data, one can only surmise about aspects of the life and culture of PGW-using settlements here. The Painted Grey Ware pottery-type is associated with iron-use, and (as mentioned above), excavations at Jodhpura by the Rajasthan State Department of Archaeology and Museums have unearthed evidence of iron-smelting in the PGW levels. It is now being suggested that the extension of PGW sites may mark the expansion of sedentary agriculturist communities into new areas⁹⁰.

In Rajasthan, a number of PGW sites are known from two areas in particular, namely the Ghaggar-Hakra basin in the north; and the eastern and northeastern part of the present-day state. While in the Ghaggar valley there is a break between the Harappan and PGW period settlements, in the second zone the evidence from Noh and Jodhpura reveals a continuity from the Ganeshwar-Jodhpura 'OCP' to an unpainted black-and-red ware and then to the PGW levels.

In the case of the Ghaggar valley (where partial excavation at one or two of these PGW sites like Sardargarh point to small-sized settlements), it is significant that the PGW yielding sites of this part of Rajasthan do not

occur over the previous Harappan culture mounds, but are located at a little distance from them and demonstrate “...a clear chronological gap and break in human habitation between the Harappan culture and the P.G.W. culture”⁹¹. (However, at the site of Bhagwanpura (district Kurukshetra) in the adjoining state of Haryana, PGW has reportedly been discovered immediately over and in association with Harappan culture material!)

In northern Rajasthan, the PGW sites are not succeeded by Northern Black Polished Ware yielding sites, as is the case with sites like Noh and Jodhpura of central northeastern and eastern Rajasthan. Rather, the Ghaggar valley area seems to have been abandoned after the PGW period, with new settlements appearing there after a gap of some centuries during the Sunga-Kushan period around the beginning of the Christian era.

The second sub-region of Rajasthan where Painted Grey Ware is known from is the east and northeast of the state, especially in the districts of Bharatpur, Jaipur and Ajmer. Among the many sites here are Bairat (district Jaipur), Bijwa (district Alwar), Jodhpura and Noh. Further south, the PGW yielding sites extend down into districts Tonk and Bundi up to Deoli on the river Khari. Interestingly, there is not much evidence as yet to suggest that the PGW spread extensively across western and southern Rajasthan. However, fresh discoveries may well lead us to change this view at some point in the future!

Reference has already been made to the sites of Jodhpura and Noh, where evidence for ‘Iron Age’ cultures has been found on top of the chalcolithic copper-bronze age levels. At both these sites, the PGW culture overlies the black-and-red ware deposits, which in turn follow the Jodhpura-Ganeshwar ‘OCP’ ware.

Let us briefly review the post-chalcolithic phase at these sites. Period II at the site of Jodhpura, which has black-and-red pottery akin to that found at Noh and other central Rajasthan sites (and different to the Aharian Black-and-Red) marks a distinct cultural phase between the preceding copper-using OCP and the later iron-using PGW. The succeeding Period III has a profusion of Painted Grey Ware, two furnaces used for iron-smelting and forging of iron objects, iron and copper artefacts, stone and terracotta beads,

and so forth. Thus, there is evidence for local production of iron at this site. Period IV has also yielded iron objects, beads etc., conch-shell bangles, human and animal figurines, and NBPW, while Period V contains pottery of the early historical periods, including lid-cum-bowls, and lipped bowls with spouted channels. At times symbols like the *triratna*, *swastika* etc. occur on potsherds. Other artefacts during Period V include iron and copper objects, beads, a copper coin, and objects of ivory, bone and shell.

In a like manner, at the site of Noh, already described in the preceding pages, Period II (which followed the 'OCP' yielding Period I) was conspicuous for its (non-Aharian) unpainted black-and-red ware. It marked a clear stage between the preceding OCP and succeeding PGW levels. Some nondescript iron pieces also occurred. There was evidence of disturbance due to floods or similar activity in the levels of Period III (and certain layers of Period IV). Thus, the excavators noted pieces of black-and-red ware mixed with river gravels, as well as PGW and NBPW from these levels. The other objects included a large number of stone, terracotta, copper and bone beads, wheels, gamesmen and decorated figurines of terracotta, and iron artefacts like arrowheads, spearheads, ring, rod, and other miscellaneous items. Copper artefacts were also found, along with ivory pins, ear studs, crucibles and so forth.

During Noh Period IV, Northern Black Polished Ware occurred in profusion, along with beads of terracotta, glass, ivory and stone, a steatite casket, corroded copper coins, and terracotta figurines of animals and humans. Charred barley samples were also found. Period V revealed terracotta figurines, copper coins, bangles of shell and terracotta, dice, beads, and pottery belonging to the Sunga and Kushan period, besides structural remains and a soak-well.

The PGW yielding site of Sunari (tehsil Khetri, district Jhunjhunu) has yielded evidence for iron-smelting too. Sunari is situated on the right bank of the river Kantli, approximately 15 km west of Neem-ka-Thana, and 125 km from Jaipur. Excavated in 1980-81 by the Rajasthan State Department of Archaeology and Museums, Sunari has yielded important evidence for iron-smelting associated with the pottery known as the Painted Grey Ware⁹². Besides two furnaces/smelters close to each other, blow-pipe,

crucible, slag, and iron objects were recovered. These include an iron-bowl, tanged and socketted arrowheads, knife, ring, iron lumps, spearheads, and possibly a much weathered large celt (nearly five kilograms in weight).

One furnace is of the open-type, and is believed by the excavators to have been used for smelting the ore. The second furnace has yielded evidence for the attachment of the blow-pipe. The Jodhpura furnaces are described as being similar, according to the archaeologists of the State Department of Archaeology and Museums.

One may note here that chalcopyrite and haematite are locally available in the vicinity of Sunari, and that the whole area around it is rich in terms of ore-availability and early sites. Among these are places like Toda, Siyor, Jamalpura, Kala Pahari, Moriija, Rampura, Maunda, Dabla, Bagavas, Baniya-ka-Vas and Tateri.

Three cultural periods have been recognised at Sunari. These have been classified by the excavators as follows:

- Period I: Iron implements, furnace, profuse PGW
- Period II: Mauryan period; sherds of NBPW, lots of iron, also copper *shruva* — a long-handled ladle used to offer oblations to a ritual sacred fire, and shell objects; Buddhist stone plaque with tree and stupa depicted; (nearby sites called Bihari, Biharipura — believed to be derivatives of the word “vihar” — are indicative of Buddhist influence during Mauryan period, according to local scholars).
- Period III: Historical 300 BC to AD 200: animal figurines, red ware pottery; a coin in the ‘*Bahini*’ script; a large vessel of four feet and nine inches in height (rather similar to a contemporary jar, locally known as a ‘moonh’).

IRON IN SOUTHEAST RAJASTHAN

As regards southeastern Rajasthan, while the majority of Ahar Culture sites do not have PGW culture levels following the chalcolithic period phase, at

the site of Chosla, intriguingly enough, PGW has been found on an Ahar Culture mound. At Ahar itself, the excavation of the early historical period levels, i.e. Ahar Period II levels, brought to light three distinct phases, dating from about post 1000 BC onwards, and marked by the advent of iron. The excavators categorized them as Ahar Period IIa, IIb, and IIc⁹³.

Period IIa was associated with Northern Black Polished Ware, iron objects, the use of soak-pits, terracotta sealings with Brahmi characters and third century BC material, IIb with Kushan period pottery, Indo-Greek coins and other historical period artefacts, among other things, and IIc with medieval period pottery. Ahar Period II thus shows the occurrence of iron-using that followed the chalcolithic 'Ahar Culture' Period I after a gap of several hundred years in this part of Rajasthan. However, it is significant that no PGW was found here.

The recent work at Balathal has substantially added to our knowledge about the Iron Age in this part of Rajasthan. (Though unfortunately, a large part of the Iron Age deposits had been inadvertently destroyed by local farming activity years prior to the recent excavations at this site). It seems that the Chalcolithic period settlement at Balathal was abandoned around 1800 BC for reasons as yet unknown, and after a gap of more than about 1200 years the site was reoccupied by a people who used iron technology and possessed a material culture distinctly different from the earlier chalcolithic one. Excavations have revealed a variety of iron objects, including flat celts — which the excavators describe as 'cobbler's knives', arrowheads, chisels, nails and slag, as well as the presence of a number of iron-smelting furnaces here. Locally available iron ore deposits were probably utilized.

The most remarkable Iron Age period discovery at Balathal is a massive mud fortification or rampart. It is roughly rectangular in plan. This fortification consists of a mud wall which is 4.80m wide at the top and 3.15m high. The wall steadily widens downwards, and its base, when fully excavated, is likely to be considerably thicker than its top. The rampart-wall has a stone revetment of semi-dressed stones on both the outer and inner sides. The wall is further strengthened by rectangular bastions at all the four corners. The length of the wall measures 30m east-west and 15m north-

south, thus enclosing an area of about 450 sq m. On its surface, the wall has a covering of stones in two parallel rows, each with a width of 1.25m and a gap of 1.30m between them. Initial excavation of these rows of stones gave a deceptive appearance of two parallel stone walls. It was only after deep digging along the inner and outer sides of the parallel rows of stones that the true nature of the mud fortification was realized. In fact, to date this is the earliest known fortified Iron Age structure in Rajasthan⁹⁴. However, recent archaeological evidence indicates that this structure has its origins during the earlier chalcolithic period.

This structure, which covers most of the central part of the mound, appears to have dominated the activities of the early part of the Iron Age at the site. There is considerable evidence of burning activity, indicative of some kind of industrial activity. This fortified enclosure is uniformly covered by a white ashy layer, the result of destruction by fire of one or more wooden structures that once stood on top of the fortification. Habitation continued even after the destruction of the mud rampart, and there are several iron smelting furnaces, slag and iron tools on and above the western side of the fortified area.

As the excavators put it, the fact that “...the same spot at Balathal was reoccupied during the Iron Age after a gap of nearly 1200 years, suggests its importance as a strategic location... The construction of a fortress-like structure requires community effort and enormous wealth. The exact function of this rampart cannot be determined at this stage, but it could have played a very significant role in the economic organization of the Iron Age people. The evidence for iron smelting and the manufacture of iron implements at the site in the post-rampart period further suggests its economic importance in the later Iron Age”.⁹⁵

The pottery found from the Iron Age levels falls into two categories. One is a Red Ware and the second a Black Ware. Both are wheel-made, but poorly fired. Excepting the occasional incised or appliqué decoration, the pottery is plain, with a drab appearance and very little surface treatment. The shapes include globular pots, bowls, jars, basins and lids. Significantly, as was the case at Ahar Period II, no sherds of Painted Grey Ware have been noted at the site of Balathal either. Among other Iron Age period finds

of note at Balathal are copper coins and objects, terracotta human and animal figurines — including a remarkable depiction of a tortoise, beads of pottery, carnelian, glass and terracotta, bangles of glass, terracotta and shell, a ring-well (or soak-well) and a small fragment of woven cloth datable to the fifth century BC. The ring-well belongs to the post-fortification deposit, and was made of six terracotta rings placed one above the other. Such ring-wells were commonly used in northern India during the early historical period for draining waste water from houses.

NORTHERN BLACK POLISHED WARE

In eastern Rajasthan, just as was the case in the Ganga valley to the east, the Painted Grey Ware gave way, around circa fifth-sixth century BC to a ‘culture’ marked with the use of a new ceramic called, after its appearance and area of predominance, as the NBPW as well as iron and coinage. Not all three elements appear simultaneously, though, for at many sites (as already discussed) iron had already appeared earlier with PGW.

This Northern Black Polished Ware is a thin, well-baked, and lustrous pottery, marking a high point in the Indian ceramic tradition. Some scholars hold that this may have evolved towards the end of the fifth century BC from the PGW tradition, and saw its especial development and diffusion during the Mauryan period. The Mauryan age is noted for its organised political and economic life, with a systematized coinage and a script (Brahmi) used for almost the whole of the subcontinent. Fortified cities, with a considerable urban population, flourished as did trade and commerce both within and outside the country.

Thus, in a broader Indian perspective, it may be relevant to note that NBPW occurs at all the major early historical sites of north India, including Taxila, Hastinapur, Kausambi, Pataliputra, Rajgir, Varanasi, Rajghat, Vaisali, Ujjain, etc., and the NBPW period witnessed the urbanization of the Ganga valley. South of the Ganga-Yamuna doab, the ware declines in quantity, though a small number of NBPW sherds have been found as far south as Amravati. At sites like Nagda, Maheshwar, Nasik and Bahal in

central and western India, NBPW either occurs along with or after local black-and red wares or is completely absent.

The occurrence of NBPW in Rajasthan has already been discussed for sites like Jodhpura and Noh. Besides Jodhpura's Period IV (already described above), profuse quantities of NBPW have been found from Bairat (Viratnagar), very close to the site of Jodhpura. At Noh and Jodhpura, NBPW deposits, which overlie the PGW levels, are succeeded by Sunga-Kushan period remains.

Similarly, at the site of Ahar in southeastern Rajasthan (as already mentioned), Period IIa levels are associated with Northern Black Polished Ware, iron objects, the use of soak-pits, terracotta sealings with Brahmi characters and third century BC material. This is succeeded by Period IIb levels bearing remains datable to the early centuries AD, including Kushan and Indo-Greek period material. This is roughly the era in which the capital city of Madhyamika-nagari (modern Nagari, near Chittorgarh), discussed further in this book, came into being.

Since the NBPW using period is associated with the 'Second Urbanization' of India (the Harappan Civilization being described as the 'First Urbanization'), coinage, a script, and in many cases historically identifiable political units, this phase broadly marks a watershed between the pre- and proto-historic age and recorded history. For, by the beginning of the Christian Era, settled life based on agriculture, animal husbandry and iron technology had become established over much of Rajasthan — as we shall see in the next chapter.

EARLY ART

The earliest form of artistic expression found in Rajasthan goes back to prehistoric paintings and creative markings found within natural caves and rock shelters. These occur from different parts of Rajasthan, especially the districts of Kota, Jhalawar, Chittorgarh, Sirohi, Bhilwara, Sawai Madhopur,

Ajmer, Alwar, Jaipur, Udaipur, Dholpur and Bharatpur. The past couple of decades, in particular, have seen numerous fresh discoveries.

The Aravalli hills and Chambal river valley region are exceptionally rich in examples of rock art, and the region around Kota-Jhalawar-Rawatbhata, stretching south towards Madhya Pradesh's Gandhi Sagar Dam and beyond, has yielded many examples of fine rock art. Notable sites include those at Chaturbhuj-Nathdwara, Alania (Alniya), Chattaneshwar and Kapildhara. Chaturbhuj-Nathdwara is marked by almost a four kilometre stretch of paintings, making this one of India's most remarkable 'art galleries'. (In addition, ostrich shells with engravings have also been found from Chandreshar, near Kota).

Early art in rock-shelters has been found from at least five sites, located along the banks of the river Alania, around the site of Alania, some twenty-two kilometres from the city of Kota. The painted motifs found here have a robust look, and have generally been executed using a dark red pigment. The rock-art found around Alania includes depictions of deers, bulls, cattle, goats, tigers, elephants, human figures, and hunting scenes.

The land surrounding Bhilwara, Chittorgarh and Mandisor (in adjoining Madhya Pradesh) is another area rich in sites with rock art, as is the region around Bharatpur, Fatehpur Sikri and Dholpur, stretching southwards towards Shivpuri and Central India. Pahargarh is among the noteworthy sites. The Alwar region is also rich in rock art. Here, the features include depiction of spotted deer and a series of vertical lines (apparently not naturally occurring), which have been noted from Bairat and the area around river Sabi. In fact, there is a rich belt of rock art stretching from Bairat near Alwar in the north to Darra near Kota, and on south to the region near Mandisor and further southwards towards Bhopal (MP), which seems to have commonality.

From Narsingharh, an engraved stupa has been found. There also occur shelter-complexes with Buddhist remains and examples of the '*shankh-lipi*' script, and P.L. Chakravarti, Vijai Kumar and others of the Rajasthan State Department of Archaeology and Museums, have reported

over 250 examples of rock art on granite. Rock art has also been reported around Jodhpur and Barmer in western Rajasthan, on local sandstone.

Most of Rajasthan's pre-historic art is in the form of paintings on walls and roofs of rock-shelters and caves, though some examples of engraving also occur, and many of the examples of rock art known to Rajasthan have been discovered in areas where natural caves have been formed out of sandstone, limestone or granite. The motifs include depictions of deer, buffaloes, bears, rhinoceros, tigers, goat, fish, ostriches, elephants, bison, hunt-scenes, composite animals, archers, humans carrying spears, and other human figures, in addition to geometrical designs.

There are also examples of a rider astride humpless cattle, and a chariot with spoked wheels. Paintings showing archers bearing long bows are, in the view of Giriraj Kumar⁹⁶, founder-secretary of the Rock Art Society of India (RASI), chronologically earlier in date to depictions of archers wielding shorter bows. Some human figures appear to be wearing head-dresses, while in other cases, the depictions are almost abstract in character. From the artistic point of view, many of the rock paintings found to date have a marked degree of movement and fluidity.

In many works, the outline is drawn with red ochre, with the inner portion filled with pigment. This is usually white. In the case of animals like buffaloes, only red ochre seems to have been used. However, in chronologically earlier depictions, only the colour green has been used. The front portion of buffaloes has been completely filled with red and the remaining rear part of the figure with strokes. The use of geometrical designs for filling the interior sections in animal depictions is an important feature of Rajasthani rock art, somewhat reminiscent of the Bhimbetka 'style'. In some cases, traces of overlapping were observed in the paintings. This may imply frequenting of these rock shelters by early humans possibly as part of ritual or magic or creative expression. The pigments used were mainly derived from hematite, ochre and red ochre. In addition, at certain sites 'cupules' or 'cup marks', i.e. round marks carved out of stones have also been found. This is an intriguing feature. Bone harpoons and ostrich

shells with engravings have also been reported from some parts of Rajasthan.

The art spans a broad spectrum of time, and according to some, it ranges from approximately 30,000 BC to c. 3,000 BC.⁹⁷ According to Giriraj Kumar, some of the rock art found in the Chambal valley and Aravalli hills of Rajasthan dates back possibly from the Acheulean period, and certainly from the Upper Palaeolithic onwards up to early historical times.

While absolute dating of Rajasthan's rock art is not possible at present, due to lack of appropriate dating techniques, relative dating on the basis of the contents of a painting, style, materials used and overlapping by later paintings, indicates that the paintings may be broadly divided into three phases. These correspond with the stages dominated by (i) hunting-gathering; (ii) animal husbandry and early agriculture; and (iii) occurrence of rock art with Brahmi script and associated early historic period symbols (e.g. Buddhist). At present, emphasis is also being given to aspects like the 'structural analysis' of rock art, including a study of the environs where examples occur, in order to obtain a more holistic picture of prehistoric artistic creativity.

Thus, the emerging picture of Rajasthan's pre-history and proto-history is a fascinating one, indicating not only the development and transformations of different 'cultures' within the region, but also their interaction with other groups and communities of people and or 'cultures' in widely disparate parts of the Indian subcontinent. More information from future survey, explorations and excavations will, undoubtedly, add to this picture.

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60; D.P. Agrawal, *Man and Environment in India through Ages*, Books & Books, New Delhi, 1992, etc.

- ² G. Singh 'The Indus Valley Culture seen in the context of Post-Glacial Climatic and Ecological Studies in Northwest India', *Archaeology and Physical Anthropology in Oceania*, 6 (2), 1971, pp. 177-189.
- ³ G. Singh, R.D. Joshi, S.K. Chopra & A.B. Singh 'Late Quaternary history of vegetation and climate of Rajasthan desert', *Phil.Trans.Royal Soc.London*, 1984, pp.467-501; C. Singh, R.J. Wasson & D.P. Agrawal 'Vegetational and seasonal climatic changes since last full glacial in the Thar desert', *Rev.Palaeobot, &Palynol* 64, 1990, pp.351-58.
- ⁴ G.L. Possehl, *The Indus Age*, Oxford & IBH, New Delhi, 1999, pp.263-265.
- ⁵ *ibid*, 1999, pp.257-265.
- ⁶ See, among others, S. Mishra et.al. 'Prehistoric cultures and Late Quaternary environments in the Luni Basin around Balotra', *Man and Environment*, 24, 1999, pp.38-49; S.K. Tandon et.al. 'Comparative development of Mid- to Late Quaternary fluvial and fluvio-aeolian stratigraphy in the Luni, Sabarmati and Mahi river basins of western India', *Gondwana Geological Magazine*. Sp Vol. 4, 1999, pp. 1-16; S. Mishra and S.N. Rajaguru 'Late Quaternary Palaeoclimates of Western India: A. Geoarchaeological Approach', *Mausam* 52, 2001, pp.285-296.
- ⁷ Pers. Com. Dr. A.K. Singhvi. Dr. Singhvi also provided off-prints and information, for which I am very grateful.
- ⁸ D.H. Gordon, *The Prehistoric Background of Indian Culture*, pp.161.
- ⁹ D.H. Gordon, *op cit*.
- ¹⁰ See journal 'Indian Archaeology — A Review' [hereafter MR] 1954-55 onwards; H.D. Sankalia, *Prehistory and Protohistory of India and Pakistan*, Deccan College, Poona, 1974; V.N. Misra, *The Stone Age Cultures of Rajputana*. (Unpub. Ph.D thesis), University of Poona, 1961; 'Stone Age Research in Rajasthan — A Review'. In D. Sen & A.K. Ghosh (Eds.) *Studies in Prehistory*, K.L. Mukhopadhyaya, Calcutta, 1966; & *Pre- and Protohistory of the Berach Basin, South Rajasthan*, Deccan College, Poona, 1967.
- ¹¹ H.D. Sankalia, *op.cit*. 1974, pp.126.
- ¹² B. Allchin and A. Goudie, 1974. 'Pushkar: Prehistory and Climatic Changes in Western India' *World Archaeology* 5(3), pp. 358-363; B. Allchin, A. Goudie & K.T.M. Hegde, *op.cit*. 1978.
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- [17](#) Misra 1962; B. Allchin *et al* 'Prehistory and Environmental Change in Western India: A Note on the Budha Pushkar Basin, Rajasthan', *Man* 7(4), pp.541-564, 1972; Allchin *et al* 1978; Allchin & Goudie, 1974.
- [18](#) Allchin *et al* 1972; & 1978.
- [19](#) Allchin and Allchin, 1982, pp.55-56.
- [20](#) Misra 1962, 1967, 1968.
- [21](#) Allchin *et al.*, 1972, pp.541-564; Allchin and Goudie, 1974, pp.358-363.
- [22](#) Allchin and Allchin, 1982, pp.60.
- [23](#) Allchin and Goudie, 1974, pp.361.
- [24](#) Allchin and Allchin, 1982, pp.43.
- [25](#) *ibid.*
- [26](#) *ibid.*, pp.57.
- [27](#) *ibid.*, pp.58; Allchin *et al* 1978.
- [28](#) Interested readers may refer to V.N. Misra and M.S. Mate (Eds.) *Indian Prehistory*: 1964. Deccan College, Poona, 1965; and Allchin *et al* 1978, pp.93-95; among others, for an overview of the debate.
- [29](#) Allchin and Allchin, 1982, p.35.
- [30](#) See V.N. Misra's 'Microlithic industries in India', in V.N. Misra and P. Bellwood (Eds.) *Recent Advances in Indo-Pacific Prehistory*, Leiden, 1985, pp. 111-122.
- [31](#) See, among others, V.N. Misra 'Evolution of the pattern of human settlement in the arid and semi-arid regions', In P.L. Jaiswal (Ed.) *Desertification and its Control*, Indian Council of Agricultural Research, New Delhi, 1977, pp. 10-2; & H.D. Sankalia *Prehistory and Protohistory of India and Pakistan*, Deccan College, Poona, 1974.
- [32](#) V.N. Misra *op.cit.* 1967. Also, Hooja, *The Ahir Culture and Beyond: Settlements and Frontiers of 'Mesolithic' and Early Agricultural Sites in South-eastern Rajasthan c.3rd-2nd Millennia BC*, B.A.R, Oxford, 1988.
- [33](#) Misra, *op.cit.* 1967.
- [34](#) V.N. Misra 'Two microlithic sites in Rajasthan — A preliminary investigation', *The Eastern Anthropologist*, 24(3), 1971; V.N. Misra 'Bagor — A late mesolithic settlement in north-west India', *World Archaeology* 5(1), 1973, pp. 92-110; & J.R. Lukacs, V.N. Misra and K.A.R.

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³⁵ Period I Phase II is discussed at length in Hooja 1988.

³⁶ Hooja 1988.

³⁷ H.D. Sankalia, 1974, pp.262.

³⁸ For details see P.K. Thomas 'Role of Animals in the Food Economy of the Mesolithic Cultures of Western and Central India', In A.T. Clason (Ed.) *Archaeozoological Studies*, Oxford & Amsterdam, pp. 322-328, 1975.

³⁹ See, among others, Misra 1961; Allchin *et al* 1972, pp.541-564; Allchin *et al* 1978; Allchin and Goudie 1974; Allchin and Allchin 1982.

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⁴² Sankalia 1974, pp.274.

⁴³ Misra, *op cit.* 1977.

⁴⁴ B.K. Thapar 'Kalibangan: A Harappan Metropolis Beyond the Indus Valley' *Expedition* 1975, pp.19-32.

⁴⁵ Aurel Stein 'A Survey of Ancient Sites Along the 'Lost' Saraswati River', *Geographical Journal*, 99, 1942, pp. 173-182.

⁴⁶ Among others, see A. Ghosh 'The Rajputana Desert: Its Archaeological Aspect', In S.L. Hora (Ed.), Symposium on Rajputana Desert, *Bulletin of the National Institute of Sciences of India* 1, 1952, & 'Indus Civilisation: Its Origins, Authors, Extent and Chronology', in V.N. Misra and M.S. Mate (Eds.) *Indian Prehistory:1964*. Deccan College, Poona, 1965, pp.113-156; Katy F. Dalai 'A Short History of Archaeological Explorations in Bikaner and Bahawalpur along the 'lost' Saraswati river, *Indica* (Bombay) 17 (1), 1980, pp. 1-40; M.R. Mughal 'Present State of Research on the Indus Valley Civilization', *International Symposium on Mohenjodaro* (Feb. 1973), Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Pakistan, Karachi, 1973, M.R. Mughal 'New Archaeological Evidence from Bahawalpur', *Man and Environment*, Vol. IV, 1980, pp.93-98, & M.R. Mughal 'The Post-Harappan phase in Bahawalpur distt. Pakistan', in B.B. Lal and S.P. Gupta (Eds), *Frontiers of the Indus Civilization (Sir Mortimer Wheeler Commemoration Volume)*, Indian Archaeological Society, New Delhi, 1984, pp.499-503; Suraj Bhan 'The Sequence and Spread of Prehistoric Cultures in the Upper Saraswati Basin', in D.P. Agrawal and A. Ghosh (Eds.) *Radiocarbon and Indian Archaeology*, Bombay, 1973; Suraj Bhan and J.G. Shaffer 'New Discoveries in Northern Haryana', *Man and Environment* vol. II, 1978, pp. 59-68; Y. Pal, B. Sahai, R.K. Sood and D.P. Agrawal 'Remote Sensing of the 'Lost' Saraswati River', *Proc. Indian Acad. Sci. (Earth*

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[49](#) Allchin and Allchin 1982, pp.159.

[50](#) R.C. Agrawala 'Aravallis, the Major Source of copper for the Indus and Indus-related cultures', In Lal and Gupta (Eds.), *Frontiers of the Indus Civilization*, New Delhi, 1984, pp.160.

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[52](#) Thapar 1975.

[53](#) Sankalia et al 1969; Sankalia 1974; Misra 1967, 1969; Hooja 1988.

[54](#) Misra 1967, 1969; Sankalia et al 1969; Hooja 1988.

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[59](#) Sankalia et al 1969.

[60](#) Shinde and Possehl, personal communication, February 2003.

[61](#) Misra *et al.*, 1995, pp.57.

[62](#) Sankalia et al 1969.

[63](#) Misra et al., 1995, pp.57.

[64](#) Thomas and Joglekar's initial study of faunal remains at Balathal showed about 73% of the bones of domesticated animals to be from cattle, 19% sheep/goat, and 3.10% buffalo. (See P.K. Thomas & P.P. Joglekar 'Faunal Remains from Balathal, Rajasthan: A preliminary analysis', *Man & Environment*, XXI (1), 1996, pp.91-97).

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- [66](#) See V.N. Misra, *op.cit.*, 1997, pp.270.
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- [77](#) *ibid.*
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- [79](#) See Hooja 1988.
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- [81](#) R.C. Agrawala and V. Kumar 1982, pp.128; Allchin and Allchin 1982, pp.193.
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- [83](#) Agrawala and Kumar 1982; Agrawala 1984.
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- [85](#) Agrawala 1984, pp.161.
- [86](#) See R. Hooja and V. Kumar 'Aspects of the Early Copper Age in Rajasthan', in B. Allchin and F.R. Allchin (Eds.) *South Asian Archaeology*, 1995, Oxford and IBH, New Delhi, 1997, pp.

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[92](#) Vijai Kumar and H.C. Misra 'Prachin sthal Sunari: Shekhawati Sanskriti ke Nutan Ayam', *Journal of Shri Jagdish Singh Guhlot Research Institute*, vol.1, no.2, 1985, pp.95-98.

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[94](#) Misra *et al.* 1995, pp.72-75.

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SECTION
TWO



THE EARLY HISTORICAL PERIOD —
C. 500 BC TO AD 300



INTRODUCTION



WHILE THE PRE- AND PROTO-HISTORY OF RAJASTHAN CONTINUES TO be pieced together gradually on the basis of archaeological data, our understanding about the very early historical period of this area is aided additionally by scattered references in various literary works, and through numismatics, epigraphs and architectural remains. Such records are among the various sources upon which the recapturing of bygone history, culture, economy, polity, religious beliefs, everyday life, and so forth, of a region, or a land, are usually dependent.

For instance, early Buddhist writings noted that caravans passed at night through the sandy parts of the land now called Rajasthan, guided by professionals known as ‘*niyyamaka*’¹ Similarly, the habits of the ‘*Daseraka*’ people (inhabitants of western Rajasthan/ Marwar) were apparently noteworthy enough for the writer of a work called the *Padataditaka* to include them in that text²! Many other different literary sources have referred to the early history of what is generally identified with the region we today know as Rajasthan. These include works like the *Rig Veda’s Gopatha Brahmana* portion; the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*; Magha’s *Sisupala-Vadha*; Varamihira’s *Brihat-Samhita*; Mahuka’s *Harlata*; various *Puranas*; Hemachandra’s *Abhidhana-Chintamani*; Rajshekhar’s *Kavya-Mimansa*; and texts like the *Jaina-granth-prashasti-samgraha*, to name but a few.

There are also innumerable epigraphs, which, despite many lacunae, throw light on the early happenings of this part of south Asia. Inscriptions, both on stone as well as in the form of copper-plate grants, are found in various parts of Rajasthan dating from about the second century BC onwards. These record not only deeds regarded as being particularly heroic or pious concerning their donors, but also throw light on aspects like the literary, linguistic, political, social, religious and economic conditions of that time³. Coins too provide valuable information about past kings, kingdoms and politics, as well as about economics trade-links and routes etc. Admittedly, of course, coins have their limitations. This is particularly true regarding accurately dating events of the early historical period due to aspects like human interference, disturbed archaeological levels, and the practice of using and hoarding coins for years after they were first struck or minted!

However, in spite of the fragmentary information obtained from literary, archaeological, architectural, epigraphical and numismatical etc. sources, much of the very early history of Rajasthan up to around c. second century BC is based on an amalgam of known facts and myths. Of necessity, therefore, the various legends and early literary references need to be regarded judiciously, with due care to aspects like chronology, additions or exaggerations to the basic story over the centuries, historical rigour etc.

The frequent references in early Vedic literature to the region along the banks of the river Saraswati, and its tributary Drishadvati, for instance, are traditionally regarded as being applicable to parts of modern-day northern Rajasthan, besides parts of the Punjab, where dwelt, among others, the Bharata tribe. One Rig Vedic tradition, preserved in the *Gopatha Brahmana*, holds that following a grand victory of a king named Sudas of this Bharata tribe against a confederacy of ten kings (*'Dasa-Rajna'*), on the banks of the river Parushini, some of the defeated tribes moved to newer areas. As a result, groups like the Satvatas (also known as Bhojas and Yadavas), the Shalvas and the Matsyas moved further into Rajasthan and firmly established themselves here.

Often the names associated with certain groups of tribes continued in usage over the years, sometimes even spanning physical boundaries. The

various groups living in very early historical times in the area that today comprises the modern state or province of Rajasthan, and regarding whom inscriptions, coins, literary reference or other archaeological evidence is available, include the Matsyas, Shalvas, Bhojas, Uttambhadras, and the Yaudheyas.

Different old legends and literary references encapsulate references to geographical areas, or ancient communities, and so forth. The term 'Maru', for instance, occurs in the *Rig-Veda* (1.35.6), the *Ramayana* ('*Yudha-kanda*'), the *Mahabharata* ('*Vana-parva*'), *Bhagvat*, *Brihat-Sambita*, later in the Puranic listing of peoples, (as does the word 'Dhanva' in the *Ramayana* and *Bhagvat*) and historians believe that this apparently refers to the desert part of Rajasthan. It is in this context that the Junagarh (Girnar) Inscription of the Saka ruler Rudradaman I of Ujjain, dated AD 150, refers to this part of Rajasthan (which he managed to subdue) as 'Maru'. In later centuries too, this continued to be known variously as 'Maru-desh', 'Marudhar', and 'Marwar' — becoming almost synonymous, due to its harshness, with the phrase 'land of death'.

The *Ramayana* relates how, while on his march to Lanka to rescue his wife Sita from Ravana's captivity, Rama became angry at the obstructive attitude of the Lord of the Seas and notched a fiery arrow (which would result in terrible desiccation), to his bow. At this, the Sea-god pleaded forgiveness. Rama pardoned the transgressor, but since his bow-string was already drawn, he shot his arrow of destruction in the direction of a far-off area with no inhabitants (the present Rajasthan desert). A local Marwari belief holds that the spot where that arrow fell is near Bilara in Jodhpur, and that the arrow caused a spring called the Bana Ganga to flow forth from the place. The *Ramayana* further states that parts of northern Rajasthan were once inhabited by the nomadic Abhiras (considered in the text as a non-Aryan tribe, due to the uncouth ways of whom the river Saraswati went underground); and that later on 'civilised' Aryans spread into this area!

Citing the Puranic literature, Pargiter points to the tradition which holds that while moving northwards, at the conclusion of the Kurukshetra war between the Kauravas and Pandavas; the Yadavas were attacked by these 'rude' Abhiras of what is now Rajasthan. The *Mahabharata*

associates the Abhiras with Sudras⁴, and describes them as inhabiting the region around 'Vinashana' where the Saraswati lost itself in the sands. According to the *Mahabharata*, upon going into exile, the Pandavas travelled westward from Hastinapura, till they reached the 'Kamyaka forest' on the bank of the river Saraswati, by a level and arid desert. The epic also speaks of the river as disappearing in the midst of the desert!

On the basis of various Greek and other delineations in works like *The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* and Ptolemy's geographical descriptions, McCrindle concluded that 'Aberia' or 'Abirla' — the land of the Abhiras — included western and southwestern Rajasthan. (One may take cognisance here of western Rajasthan's Ghatiyala Inscription of AD 861, ascribed to Kakkuka, the brother of Bauka of the Mandore Pratihara dynasty. Found at the village of Ghatiyala (Rohinskupa) twenty-five miles or forty kilometres from Jodhpur, this inscription states that the village and its vicinity had become deserted because of the Abhiras, but Kakkuka provided protection and facilities to 'mahajans' (the mercantile group) and ensured the re-population of the area. This would suggest that the Abhiras had apparently continued to inhabit the western regions of Rajasthan and were known for their 'predatory ways' during the ninth century AD. Significantly, a tract around present-day Rewari was traditionally known as 'Ahirwati'!).

Yet another traditional story centred on the Rajasthan desert has Kuvalasva, eleventh in descent from Manu, as its hero. To rescue a sage named Uttanka, Kuvalasva marched against an *Asura* (usually regarded as a demon) called Dhundu, near a shallow sand-filled sea, destroyed the subterranean quarters of the *Asura* and put an end to his fiery home, thereby winning the appellation of 'Dhundumara' ('slayer of Dhundu'). This legend, according to Dr. Pusalkar, probably indicates that Kuvalasva 'Dhundumara' subjugated the indigenous people (the *Asuras* and aborigines, in Pusalkar's view), in this part of the land.

Popular belief also links the northern portion of present-day Rajasthan, which includes the districts of Sri Ganganagar, Hanumangarh and Bikaner, with a part of the area Vedic hymns referred to as the land of 'Brahmavarta' which, according to the *Rig Veda*, was watered by the rivers

Saraswati and Drishadvati. The historian G.H. Ojha located the territory referred to in the *Mahabharata* as ‘Jangal’, which apparently lay adjacent southwardly to lands of the Madra and Kuru kingdoms (hence the usage of the terms ‘Madreya-jangal’ and ‘Kuru-jangal’ areas), with this northern Rajasthan region⁵. In substantiation, he also cited a Sanskrit text, the *Sabda-Kalpadruma-Kosa*, which described ‘Jangal-desh’ as a land where water and grass were scarce, high winds blew amidst intense heat, and food grains grew in abundance after rains⁶. (Centuries later, the Shakambhari Chauhans ruling over parts of Rajasthan’s traditional ‘Jangal’ area in the tenth-eleventh centuries AD were often styled as ‘Jangalesh’, meaning ‘Lord of Jangal’, while the later Rathore kings of erstwhile Bikaner state held a similar appellation of ‘Jangaldhar Badshah’ from the late seventeenth century onwards).

Adjacent to the ‘Brahmavarta’ of the Vedic texts, was the region of ‘Brahmarishi-desh’⁷ to which traditional Vedic geography attributed the country of the groups known as the Kurus, Panchalas, Surasenas and Matsyas. The *Manu-Smrili* listed the Matsyas in the traditional ‘Brahmarishi-desh’. The text upheld their steadfastness to noble ideals, and recommended that for forming the most effective vanguard of an army, the warriors ought to be selected from amongst the Matsya, Panchala and Surasena peoples. Since a portion of the eastern Rajasthan area (around parts of modern Bharatpur, Alwar, Dausa and Jaipur districts) is associated with the Matsyas and Surasenas, both popularly and on historical grounds — scholars have suggested that some of eastern Rajasthan formed part of this ancient ‘Brahmarishi-desh’ division.

However, it is important to bear in mind here that the reconstruction of not just Rajasthan’s early history prior to circa 600 BC, but that of many other parts of the subcontinent, is heavily dependent on literary references in Vedic, Buddhist, Jain and Puranic texts. As such, there are many missing gaps that need to be filled, or require archaeological attention, for this period of the region’s history.

(As Chakrabarti notes⁸, “...The Puranas are the major storehouse of Indian folk-memory, the tradition being continuous from the major Puranas

to the many Mahatmyas or panegyrics in honour of a variety of things including pilgrimage or tirthayatra. On the other hand, there are various recensions which have been edited and re-edited through time with old matter discarded and new matter added [but] when viewed in the light of testimony of various other miscellaneous texts, coins and inscriptions, there is an internal consistency of the evidence....The problem with the pre-Buddhist literary tradition of India — the tradition of the four *Vedas* and the associated literature down to the *Upanishads* — is that their absolute dating, internal stratification and cultural interpretation have all been so deeply buried in the morass of often conflicting hypotheses and so closely linked to the premise of Aryan invasion towards the end of the Indus civilization that something as tangible and chronology-bound as archaeological data can logically find no place in it. ...However, if one gives up the thought of correlation and focuses on the literary tradition alone, one cannot help being aware of a very shadowy segment of time under the rubric of ‘traditional history’.”

“In H.C. Raychaudhuri’s analysis of this history, it begins with the king Parikshit who ruled over the Kuru country between the ancient river Sarasvati and the Ganga (i.e. the Indo-Gangetic Divide) after the battle described in the epic *Mahabharata* was over. The Kuru capital was first at Asandivat (modern Asandh near the Drishadvati) and then at Hastinapur (on the bank of a dried-up course of the Ganga near Meerut), before being shifted to Kausambi in the lower Doab. Parikshit’s son, Janamejaya, reputedly annexed Taxila, and this suggests, among other things, a political unit extending from the Potwar plateau in the northwest to the upper Doab. In the east, the kingdom of Videha under Janaka was the most important centre of power, corresponding to the central section of north Bihar with the Gandak or Sadanira as its western boundary. Its capital Mithila remains unidentified. The founder of this kingdom was Videgha Mathava who came from the bank of the Sarasvati following the fire-god who went burning along the earth from the banks of the Sarasvati. Janaka was reputedly a great performer of sacrifices and his court was the gathering point of many Brahmins from the upper areas of the Ganga plain.”⁹

“There were eight other states in north and northwest India: Gandhara (Peshawar and Rawalpindi area), Kekaya (between Jhelum and Chenab),

Madra (between Chenab and Ravi), Usinara (possibly modern Haridwar area), Matsya (Alwar area), Panchala (Bareilly, Budaun, Farrukhabad and the adjoining districts of Rohilkhand and central Doab), Kasi (Banaras area) and Kosala (roughly the trans-Sarayu plain). Now or soon afterwards one hears of Vidarbha (Berar), Kalinga (Mahanadi delta), Assaka or Asmaka in the Nagpur area and Dandaka (perhaps Nasik area). One also knows of tribes in trans-Vindhyan India: Andhras, Savaras, Pulindas and Mutibas.”¹⁰

“These historical geographical units seem to become less shadowy in the Buddhist and Jaina sources which possibly relate to the sixth century BC. The Buddhist text *Anguttara Nikaya* mentions Kasi, Kosala, Anga (roughly the Bhagalpur area of Bihar), Magadha, Vajji/ Vriji (the Vaisali area of north Bihar), Malla (the Kasia of eastern UP), Chetiya or Chedi (eastern Bundelkhand), Vamsa or Vatsa (the Kausambi area of Uttar Pradesh), Kuru, Panchala, Machchha or Matsya, Surasena (the Mathura area of Uttar Pradesh), Assaka / Asmaka (perhaps with Adam as its centre), Avanti (the Ujjain area of Madhya Pradesh), Gandhara and Kamboja (in some parts of the northwest close to Gandhara, with its western boundaries possibly touching Kafiristan in northeast Afghanistan). The Jaina *Bhagavati Sutta* list is the following: Anga, Vanga (the Ganga delta between the Bhagirathi and the Padma), Magadha, Malaya (Kerala coast), Malava or Malavaka, Achchha, Vachchha or Vatsa, Kochchha (Kutch), Padha (Pandya in the Madurai area or Paundra in north-Bengal), Ladha (Lata or Gujarat or Radha in the plateau section of West Bengal), Bajji or Vajji, Moli or Malla, Kasi, Kosala, Avaha and Sambhuttara (perhaps the Sambhuttara parts of West Bengal to the west of the Bhagirathi). These sources may not be exactly contemporary but they suggest that before the birth of the Buddha definite geographical and political territories emerged in the subcontinent from the northwest to the east on the one hand to the south on the other. Their territorial identifications may not also always be certain but there is no doubt about the basic tenor of the evidence, which, in fact, conforms to what one learns from the Brahmanical sources”¹¹).

EARLY KINGDOMS AND REPUBLICS

One is on somewhat firmer ground from around the circa 600 BC period onwards. It was during the period of the ‘*Solasa Maha-Janapadas*’ or the ‘Sixteen Great States’ (both kingdoms and republics) — a phase regarded as commencing around the sixth century BC, and being roughly contemporary with the advent of Buddha (?c.563-483? BC), and Mahavir (c.?540-468? BC) — that the Indian subcontinent saw the establishment of several regional kingdoms and republics in different parts of the country about which information other than legend-based is available. Sometimes there are variations in the listing of the names of these Janapadas in different traditional texts, but states like Magadha, Kosala, Kashi, Anga, Avanti, Lichchavi, Matsya, Chedi, etc. were obviously important. This Maha-Janapadas period is referred to by twentieth century historians, as the ‘Second Urbanisation’ of India¹²; being marked by the growth of towns and cities as capitals of regional kingdoms and trading centres.

As far as the Rajasthan region is concerned, the northwestern desert parts of the region find relatively little mention in the early Buddhist and Jain literature concerning the Maha-Janapadas. Parts of Rajasthan were apparently swept into the power struggle between the kingdoms of Avanti and Gandhara during the age of Buddha, though, as Pradyota of Avanti and Pukkusati of Gandhara extended their respective boundaries. For, it seems that from time to time, the Matsyas were faced with acknowledging the overlordship of whichever of these two kingdoms was in a more commanding position at a given point in time¹³.

The Matsyas were one of the prominent kingdoms of early Rajasthan, but whether their long-term locale was the Rajasthan area, or a wider swathe of land, is not certain. An early reference to the Matsya people occurs in the *Rig Veda* where they are counted among the adversaries of King Sudas. The same text informs us that King Turvasa attacked the Matsyas, in order to acquire wealth for a sacrifice. The name of the Matsyas figures along with the ‘Vasa’ (Vatsa) group in the *Kaushtiki Upanishad*, and with the Shalvas in the *Gopatha Brahmana*. The *Satpatha Brahmana* located the Matsyas near the Saraswati river, on the banks of which a Matsya king Dhvasan Dvaitavana performed the ‘*Ashvamedha*’ horse-sacrifice. (The place of the sacrifice is mentioned elsewhere as Lake Dvaitavana¹⁴). The name of an early capital of the Matsyas, the exact

location of which is uncertain, was Upaplavya. By the time of the events recorded in the *Mahabharata*, however, the centre of the Matsya power-base, in particular their capital appears to have shifted further southeastward, with Viratnagar (also simply, Virat), as their capital.

Present-day Viratnagar (Bairat), located about sixty-six kilometres (forty miles) from Jaipur, is traditionally regarded as being identical with the Matsya capital of Viratnagar, which finds mention in the *Mahabharata* as the capital-city of King Virat's large Matsya kingdom¹⁵. (Known until recently by its derivative form of Bairat — which is how it features in local, archaeological, gazetteer-level and other references, Bairat has been formally re-designated as Viratnagar within the last decade. The 'Bairat' form is, however, being used in this book for consistency and overall clarity — excepting when citing a traditional reference that specifically used the 'Viratnagar' form).

The legend goes that it was at the court of the Matsya king Virat in Viratnagar that the five Pandavas heroes and their wife Draupadi passed their thirteenth year of exile incognito. This was in keeping with their terms of exile. These stated that after twelve years of wandering and living in forests, the Pandavas had to remain in hiding (*agyaat-vaas*), from the forces of their Kaurava cousins for a further period of one full year or else face twelve more years of continued exile.

The ancient character of Bairat and its surrounding area was tentatively studied in the nineteenth century AD during the reign of Maharaja Sawai Ram Singh of Jaipur (r. 1835-1880) by his *qiledar* (fort-commander) Kita-ji Khangarot. It was also explored by Alexander Cunningham and A.C. Carlleyle during the latter half of the nineteenth century, and Bhandarkar in the early twentieth. The total area of the ruins of ancient Viratnagar/ Bairat is described as being more than two and a half miles in circuit¹⁶.

Alexander Cunningham noted in his writings that the site of Bairat he explored was situated on a sprawling mound of ruins. The ruins were about one mile in length by half a mile in breadth, or some two and a half miles in

circuit, of which the inhabited town, when he saw it, occupied less than one-fourth of the area¹⁷. Cunningham observed that the surrounding fields were covered with broken pottery and fragments of metal-slag from ancient copper-works. He further noted the existence of a number of large mounds about half a mile to the east of Bairat, as well as immediately under the Bhim Doongri hill to the north, and hypothesised, rather correctly, that they were probably the remains of some large religious establishment¹⁸.

Of this vast area comprising the ancient ruins of Bairat, “some 400 feet by 190 feet” of the site was partially excavated by *Rai Bahadur* Daya Ram Sahni for the Archaeology Department of the erstwhile Jaipur State in 1936¹⁹. (Chakrabarti has emphasised the point that Sahni’s excavation was conducted around a Buddhist establishment outside the old fortified city of Viratnagar²⁰). Sahni’s excavation revealed archaeological remains of the Maurya and immediately post-Mauryan period. This included remains of a monastery, as well as a Buddhist stupa within a circular shrine, originally surrounded by wooden pillars supporting the entablature (described further below).

Subsequently, in an attempt to establish a stratigraphical sequence and garner information about the antiquity of iron in this area, the site was re-excavated by N.R. Banerjee and an Archaeological Survey of India team in 1962-63²¹. The discovery of Painted Grey Ware pottery pieces and other associated material from what was designated as Period I levels in the 1962 excavations indicated that the antiquity of the site pre-dated the Mauryan age. The excavations revealed a sequence in which the use of iron was apparently recorded from the earliest occupation onwards. The succeeding Period II was marked mainly by Northern Black Polished Ware, as has also been noted at Sravasti in Uttar Pradesh, and is known to have been in use widely during the Mauryan period, along with various other associated artefacts. Period III levels yielded pottery and objects of the early centuries AD.

Following this, the site was apparently deserted and reoccupied after a lapse of time, as attested by the occurrence of medieval period Glazed Wares²². One may also note here that this Viratnagar/ Bairat is believed to

find mention in the annals of the seventh century AD. Chinese traveller and Buddhist pilgrim to India, Xuanzang — better known to Indian school children as Huien Tsang or Hsuan-tsang²³.

Besides Bairat, the territories traditionally associated with the Matsyas included parts of the modern districts of Alwar, Jaipur and Bharatpur. A later Buddhist text, the *Anguttara-Nikaya*, lists Matsya among the ‘Maha-Janapadas’ or major political states of that period. The name of Matsya continued in use for this area apparently even up to the ninth century AD, for the land is so termed both in the Gwalior Prashasti (or inscription) of the Imperial Pratihara ruler Bhoj I, and the Khalimpur Inscription of the Pala ruler Dharmapala of Bengal. (The term seems to have retained considerable significance in local perception even afterwards. In the mid twentieth century AD, during the integration of princely states in the wake of Indian Independence, four states — Alwar, Bharatpur, Dholpur and Karauli — combined together to form the ‘Matsya Union’!)²⁴

Over time, the Matsyas were linked variously with the Chedis and Shalvas (according to the *Mahabharata*), and with the Surasenas (according to the *Anguttara-Nikaya* and the *Mahabharata*). The ‘Virat Parva’ of the *Mahabharata* includes a passage in which King Susarma of the Trigarthas emphatically reminds the Kuru prince Duryodhana that in the past they have been defeated more than once by the Matsyas and the Shalvas²⁵.

The Shalvas also find mention in the *Gopatha Brahmana* (1-2-9). Here too they are referred to as being connected with the Matsyas inhabiting ‘Brahmarishi-desh’. The Shalvas were probably near neighbours and/or a twin tribe with the Matsyas²⁶. Besides the Matsyas, the *Mahabharata* mentions the ‘Madreyas’ (people of Madra) and ‘Jangalas’ (people of Jangal) in connection with the Shalvas. The epic also furnishes the name of the Shalva capital as being Mrittikavati. This has not been positively identified yet, though Cunningham identified the present-day city of Alwar—which according to him was known in ancient times as Shalvapura, and later as Shalvar — as a capital of the ancient Shalvas.

On the basis of the location of the various other early kingdoms, therefore, the Shalvas are believed to have inhabited the territory adjoining the Matsyas and Jangalas, and extending between Alwar and north Rajasthan. The grammarian Panini mentions a renowned breed of bulls known as Shalvakas, which were reared in the country of the Shalvas. The Shalvas had a number of recognised off-shoots in early historic times, known as *Shalvavayavas* (also *Shalvaputras* — literally sons or descendants of Shalva). Some of these are credited with ruling over different parts of Rajasthan. The *Shalvavayavas* included the Udubara, Tilakhala, Bhadrakara, Yugandhara²⁷, Bhulinga and Sharanda branches. Of these, the Bhadrakaras were probably based in the northeast of modern Rajasthan, while the Bhulingas lived to the north-west of the Aravalli hills. We learn also of a Sarvaseni or Shalvaseni sub-group. VS. Agrawala and Dasharatha Sharma located them in the northwestern part of Rajasthan, to the west of the Uttambhadras, for this Shalva splinter state “...according to the *Kasika* inhabited a very dry region”²⁸.

Another group that is mentioned in early literature — the Uttambhadras — was apparently also a branch of the Shalvas. Their original capital was probably located at the present-day town of Bhadra in district Hanumangarh. These Uttambhadras may have been identical with, or a sub-branch of, the Bhadrakaras of northern Rajasthan. They subsequently find mention in the Nasik Cave Inscription, dating to the early second century AD, of the Saka general Ushavadata. Here, Ushavadata lists the Uttambhadras as enemies of the Malavas, whom he helped by repulsing an attack by the Malavas.

(Also known as Rishabadutt, this Ushavadata was the son of Dinika, and son-in-law of the Western Saka *Kshatrapa* — or Satrap, king Nahapana, of the Ksharata dynasty based at Nasik. Following the ouster of the Saka rulers from Punjab and the northwestern parts of the subcontinent, one of the Saka branches had established the Ksharata dynasty under king Bhumaka. Bhumaka’s coins are found across Gujarat to Malwa. Nahapana was one of the most important rulers of this line known to historians. His reign probably spanned at least forty-six years. A coin hoard found at Jogalthambi, near Nasik, has yielded coins of Nahapana over-struck by the seal of the Satvahana king, Gautamiputra Satkarni).

The Surasenas find mention too in Puranic literature along with the Matsyas. They are the ‘Soursenoi’ of the early Greek writers, with their capital called ‘Methora’ (Mathura). (Besides its traditional association with events related to Krishna, Mathura was an important centre of Buddhism, Jainism and Vaishnavism in early historical times. The ‘Mathura School of Art’ that flourished here, contemporaneous with the Kushan and Gupta empires, is world-renowned. Mathura was also a centre for the Kushans and one branch of the Sakas. One cannot, however, delve in great detail into Mathura’s local history in the present book).

Besides Mathura, the Surasena Janapada included adjoining parts of Alwar, Bharatpur, Dholpur and Karauli districts of Rajasthan. The Surasenas were noted for their proficiency and knowledge about sacrificial lore. Some part of the lands held by the Surasena group was apparently known as Bhadânaka, which in its *Apahrahmsa* form was Bhānaya — a name that has come down to us as Bayana (in Bharatpur district). Buddhist Pali literature like the *Anguttara-Nikaya* lists the Surasena land among the ‘Sixteen Great *Janapadas*’. Besides Mathura, Bayana²⁹ and Kaman (the last in Rajasthan’s Bharatpur district) were the chief cities of the Surasenas.

Yet another of the early groups that are known to have inhabited Rajasthan at this time were the Yaudheyas. Derived from Sanskrit and signifying a warrior, the Yaudheya tribe is mentioned in the famous text *Ashtadhyayi* by the fourth century BC Sanskrit grammarian Panini, as ‘*ayudhjivi Kshatriya*’ or Kshatriya warriors living by the profession of bearing arms. According to the *Mahabharata*, Yaudheya was a son of Yudhishtira, the eldest of the five heroic Pandava brothers, from whom were descended the Yaudheyas. Their tutelary deity is described as being Brahmanyadeva (Karttikeya, also called Kumar), the commander-in-chief of the gods according to early mythology³⁰, though a later Jain tradition refers to the Yaudheyas as worshippers of goddess Chandamari (perhaps Chamunda)³¹.

Though the heart of the Yaudheya territory is originally believed to have been eastern and southern Punjab, they also held sway over adjoining tracts which included tracts of present-day Rajasthan, Haryana and western

Uttar Pradesh, as attested to by the numerous finds of Yaudheya clay seals and coins. In this context, it is significant that the tracts flanking both banks of the Sutlej river are often called ‘Johiyawar’ — a derivative meaning land of the Johiyas (Yaudheyas) — even today. The term ‘Johiya’ is a variant or derivative of ‘Yaudheya’. (By c. fourteenth-fifteenth centuries AD several sub-branches of the Yaudheya — or Johiya, as they were already called by this period — had accepted Islam. Such Johiya Muslims are still a significant group in north-western Rajasthan, especially the territories of the erstwhile Bikaner state).

Some coin-moulds of the Yaudheyas have been found at Rohtak. The finding of Yaudheya coin-moulds is significant given that Jain stories mention ‘Rohitak’ as being the capital of the Yaudheyas. Such a connection is also mentioned in the *Mahabharata*³², but historians like Dasharatha Sharma have suggested that the Yaudheyas may have had more than one branch, and hence more than one capital³³. One of the Yaudheya clay seals found at Ludhiana in Punjab describes them as possessing “*Yaudheyanam Jaya-mantra-dharanam*”, or being warriors (Yaudheyas) who possess the spell, or magical charm, of victory. Yaudheya coins generally have the words ‘*Bahudhanakey Yaudheyinama*’ — which seems to indicate ‘Of the Yaudheyas of Bahudhanak land’. Scholars have classified Yaudheya coins into at least six distinct types. Each of these types is further divisible into many sub-groups. The earliest of the Yaudheya coins have been dated to around the first century BC. Some Yaudheya coins depict their war-god deity of Brahmanyadeva, while others show a bull facing a *yupa* pillar.

This may be an appropriate point to note that coins in India are generally held to go back to about circa fifth century BC, when ‘punch-marked’ coins make their definite and marked appearance. Coinage of sorts is probably indicated in the references to ‘*shatman*’ and ‘*nishka*’ that occur in Vedic literature, but in lieu of adequate proof, we cannot be sure of the dates, appearance and value ascribed to these. (Some scholars believe that certain bits of silver found from the Gandhara area of north-western India, that are 100 ratti³⁴ each in weight may be examples of the ‘*shatman*’ form). Punch-marked coins seem to have been in use in different parts of south Asia from around fifth to second century BC, in particular. After that

period, the punch-marked variety gradually gave way to other types of coins.

The earlier punch-marked coins, linked with various circa sixth-fourth century *Janapadas* (and as such, the age of Mahavir and Gautam Buddha), include a bent bar, and coins with one to four symbols over their obverse and reverse sides. These coins have an average standard weight of about twenty-four *rattis* in the silver issues. Later period punch-marked coins have five bold symbols on their obverse and one to four small symbols on reverse sides, and the silver issues have a standard weight of around thirty-two *ratti*³⁵. Copper punch marked coins also bear five, and sometimes, six symbols on their obverse side. They are usually eighty *rattis* in weight, though this is not an invariable standard. The various silver and copper punch-marked coins of different *Janapadas* bear a range of distinctive markings and emblems. The motifs include the sun, a crescent hill (*Chandra-Meru*), a male figure holding the rod of justice (*danda*) and a water-vessel (*kamandala*) in his hands, a tree enclosed within a railing, peacock perched on a hill, etc.

In the context of Rajasthan, both copper and silver punch-marked coins have been found, as is further detailed below, from various sites like Bairat, Rairh, Nagar, Nagari, Sambhar, as well as from Noh, Sikar, Ismailpur, Ahar, and several other sites. Besides punch-marked coins, coins struck by a different technique, and akin to those found from Hastinapur, Kausambi and Atranjikhera in Uttar Pradesh, have also been found at Rairh and Noh. These types of coins, in the case of Rairh and Noh, carry symbols like the 'Cross and Balls', crescent hill, tree enclosed by a railing, bull, peacock, serpent, *Nandipada*, and a female figure holding a lotus (believed to be a '*yakshi*'), on both its obverse and reverse sides.

RAJASTHAN BETWEEN THE C. 300 BC - AD 300 PERIOD

The next historically vouchsafed chapter of events concerning this region is linked with the period of the establishment of the Mauryan Empire by Chandragupta Maurya (r. 323-300 BC), in 323 BC. This period is roughly

concurrent also with the migration into what is today called ‘Rajasthan’, of certain republican tribes who had fought or been forced to give way against Alexander’s onslaught of c. 327-326 BC against the northwestern part of the subcontinent.

Both Greek and Indian records inform us about various groups, including the ‘Malloi’ or Malavas, the ‘Sibae’ or Sibi, and the ‘Aggalassoi’ or Arjunayanas, who apparently thought it prudent to migrate — perhaps in stages — from the northwest and Punjab to areas of comparative safety in and around present-day Rajasthan³⁶. Many of these tribes that migrated into what comprises Rajasthan today, thrived as independent or semi-independent republics, with fluctuating fortunes, during the period of the late Mauryan, Sunga and Kanva rulers between c.200-28 BC.

In the period following the decline of the Mauryan Empire by the first century BC, and the weakening of Sunga control, Greek or *Yavana* intrusions into the southeastern part of Rajasthan find a mention in Patanjali’s *Mahabhasya*. It is known that around c.250 BC Diodotus, governor of Bactria, who was of Greek origin — as were many other ‘Bactrian Greeks’ settled in that area — asserted his independence from the Seleucid Empire, and established his own dominance over the area³⁷. (Around the same time, the Iranian province of Parthia declared its own independence too).

In time, the Bactrian Greeks (and the Parthians) managed to extend their territorial control over parts of India, especially in the period following the decline of the Mauryan Empire. (The subsequent rulers of Greek descent living and ruling over the present-day areas of Afghanistan, Pakistan and parts of India are referred to as Indo-Greeks). The resultant intermingling of Bactrian Greek and Indian cultures influenced art, coinage, aspects of daily life, dress etc., as such intermingling had done in the past — and would continue to do in the centuries that followed. (We shall not digress by discussing here the extremely well-known style of art known now as the Gandhara School — about which much has been written elsewhere³⁸. However, elements of Gandharan art *have* influenced the subsequent art of parts of Rajasthan).

Among the Bactrian Greek and Indo-Greek kings were Diodotus, his son Diodotus II, the usurper Euthydemus, his son Demetrius, who ruled around c. 170 BC, and Menander ('Milinda' in Buddhist literature), who ruled from c. 110 BC and established his capital at Sakala (modern Sialkot). Later, he converted to Buddhism, and came to be regarded as a learned philosopher-king. Indo-Greek domination of the northwestern part of south Asia under Demetrius, Menander, Eucratides etc., is well documented³⁹, especially through the occurrence of Indo-Greek coins across northwestern and northern India. The coins date from c. second century BC onwards. The norm seems to be to depict the head of the ruler who issued the coins on the obverse, and the image of a deity or deities on the reverse. Early examples bear inscriptions in Greek. Later examples from northwestern India have also used the Kharoshti script. In Rajasthan, Indo-Greek coins have been found at Naliasar-Sambhar, Bairat, Nagari, Ahar, etc⁴⁰.

In addition to the Indo-Greeks, the Kushans and Sakas (or Scythians) also came to dominate large tracts of land in the northwestern and northern part of the subcontinent between c. 100 BC and c. AD 200.

A word here about the Kushans and Sakas. Group movements in Central Asia during the turn of the millennium resulted in displacements of various groups from the areas in which they had been residing, accompanied by the establishment of newer communities in those territories, and the search for better lands by the displaced peoples. The process was a long-drawn out one; sometimes gradual and at other times abrupt. As a consequence, some groups and communities, squeezed in eastwardly or southeastwardly directions, eventually found themselves on the northwestern fringes of the South Asian subcontinent. From here, some of these — notably the Scythians or Sakas, the Yueh-Chi ancestors of the Kushans, and others, spread further southeastward into India. Both the Kushans and Sakas were eventually successful in establishing not merely a foothold of territory, but large kingdoms and empires.

It is held that some of the Scythian (Saka) branches, were ousted from their previous area of abode in Central Asia by the Yueh-Chis (who were, in turn, being territorially challenged by other groups like the Huns). These Scythian-Sakas established themselves in the north-western part of South

Asia, around the upper reaches of the river Indus. Here, the Sakas (Scythians) spread out and established themselves in different areas under various chiefs (*Kshatrapas*⁴¹ or Satraps). From around c. 127 BC Saka chiefs like Moga, Azes I and Azes II went on to rule over parts of Afghanistan and northern India, with Taxila, in the north-west, one of the major centres of the Sakas. Around c. 28 BC, their political might suffered a reverse in the Afghanistan-India area at the hands of the 'Indo-Parthians'⁴², which led many of the Sakas to move further southeastward into the Indian subcontinent. Subsequently, Mathura in the Gangetic valley, and Nasik and Ujjain in western and central India, became centres of Saka hegemony, under different chiefs. These chiefs used the title of '*Kshatrapa*', or sometimes, '*Maha-Kshatrapa*'.

Meanwhile, following a general struggle for ascendancy between the various groups by then inhabiting Afghanistan and the northwestern part of the Indian subcontinent, one of the Yueh-Chi branches — the group that is famed in South Asian history as the Kushans, emerged as an important power around the turn of the millennium. The Kushan king, Kujula Kadphises I, ruled over Afghanistan and the Punjab from around c. AD 25. He was followed by Vima Kadphises II, and the latter by the famous Emperor Kanishka, who made Purushpur (modern Peshawar) his capital-city. Kanishka is remembered for numerous achievements, including the summoning of a General Council of Buddhist monk-scholars in Kashmir. His reign is generally believed to have commenced sometime between c. AD 78 and AD 128.⁴³ Kanishka's successors included Huvishka, Vashishka and Vasudeva I.

Kanishka's large empire, which included parts of Central Asia, Afghanistan, India and Pakistan, extended, in time, from Bihar in the east to Khorasan in the west, and from Khotan in the north to Konkan in the south. The vast empire's boundaries probably included the area comprising modern Rajasthan. The region certainly formed part of the Kushan sphere of influence. Kanishka's Sui Vihar Inscription of 'Year 11' found at Sui Vihar, some sixteen miles from Bahawalpur (Pakistan), establishes his occupation of the Bahawalpur area and the region around it⁴⁴. This is believed to include northern Rajasthan.

Significantly, coins of Kadphises I are not found in Rajasthan, though gold and copper coins of very much later rulers have been found in significant numbers from Rajasthan. This is probably indicative of the expansion of Kushan hegemony across northern India. Kushan influence is particularly apparent on the art and pottery of this part of Rajasthan during the first to third centuries AD, just as are elements of the Gandharan and Mathura Schools of Art⁴⁵.

Aurel Stein found Kushan coins belonging to Kadphises II from old mounds that he explored at Suratgarh and Hanumangarh (known as Bhatner till AD 1805) in northern Rajasthan. Kushan coins have been discovered at Rang Mahal, Sambhar and Pisangan, and Kushan seals too are known from sites like Rang Mahal. Two coins of the 'Elephant-Rider' type belonging to the Kushan ruler Huvishka, have also been found in Rajasthan. One of these was found at Sambhar and the second at Noh, near Bharatpur. The Noh excavations also brought to light one coin of the Kushan king Vasudeva, which shows the ruler, draped in the Persian mode of clothing, offering oblations to a fire-altar on the obverse, while the reverse bears a figure believed to be the deity Siva.

Besides coins and seals, the northern part of Rajasthan, particularly the modern administrative districts of Hanumangarh and Sri Ganganagar (formerly part of erstwhile Bikaner kingdom), has yielded other kinds of Kushan period remains too. From the ancient habitational mound of the old fortress-town of Hanumangarh, situated on the bank of the Ghaggar, a number of terracotta decorative plaques and tiles in the late Kushan style were found (as were coins). Along with these, two terracotta capitals, with stepped pyramids along their edges, were found at the depth of 15' from the top of the mound⁴⁶. In addition, it seems that a pedestal of terracotta, broken into two parts, which apparently belongs to the same period as the plaques, was found near the third, or inner, gate of the entrance to the old fort⁴⁷.

The cultural and religious inter-blending that seems to have taken place under the Kushans is well-illustrated by the wide range of Graeco-Roman, Iranian and Indian deities that are depicted on Kushan coins. In the

field of art too, the Kushan period creations reflect this inter-mingling, with aspects of the imperial art of Iranian style blended with the Buddhist art that emerged from a fusion of Graeco-Roman and Indian traditions. Iranian influence may be noted on the gold coins issued by the Kushan kings and the 'Kanishka' statue now in the Mathura Museum (and princely portraits found at Surkh Kotal in Afghanistan). The Graeco-Roman and Indian style is typified by the Gandhara and Mathura schools of Kushan art.

The Sakas too played a role in the regional history of Rajasthan of this time. Some of the inscriptions of Saka *Kshatrapa* Nahapana (r. AD 78-124), of the Western Saka Ksharata lineage based at Nasik (and a descendant of King Bhumaka, to whom reference has already been made above), are important in this respect. The inscriptions state that Nahapana held Pushkar (in eastern Rajasthan), besides the lands of '*Parad*' (modern Surat), '*Shoorparak*' (Sopara), '*Bhrigukachchha*' (Broach), '*Dashpur*' (Malwa) and '*Prabhas*' (Kathiawar). (These latter-named areas today form part of the modern states of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh). Corroborating the inscriptions, Nahapana's coins are found in parts of Rajasthan⁴⁸. A somewhat similar tale of Saka dominance becomes apparent from the text engraved on the Junagarh Inscription of the Saka Era 72 (or AD 150), belonging to the Saka king, Rudradaman. According to the inscription, King Rudradaman, who belonged to the Kardamaka dynasty of the Sakas based at Ujjain, and was a grandson of King Chastan, defeated not only the Malavas and Yaudheyas inhabiting Rajasthan, but also conquered the lands known as 'Maru', besides Kachcha, Sindhu and other territories⁴⁹.

One may take note here of a large hoard of 2393 silver coins found at Saravaniya (in the erstwhile State of Banswara). The coins include those ascribable to eleven Saka *Maha-Kshatrapas* — or kings. These include the Saka rulers Rudrasimha I (r. AD 181-192), Rudradaman I, Sanghadaman, Damasena, Damajadshri II, Viradaman, Yashodaman I, Vijaysen, Damajadshri III, and Rudrasimha III. There are also a number of coins which bear the names of 10 *Kshatrapas* — sons of *Maha-Kshatrapas*, who had the right of succession, governed independent tracts, and held the privilege of striking coins in their own names, along with that of their father, during the father's lifetime. Among such Saka *Kshatrapa* coins from

Saravaniya the chronologically earliest ones belong to the *Kshatrapa* Rudrasen I (AD 199), with coins of *Kshatrapa* Yashodaman II (AD 317-322) marking the other end of the chronological scale.

The coins in this hoard are round in shape, and weigh around thirty to thirty-five grains. The discovery of these coins has helped throw light on the history of this part of Rajasthan during the c. AD 181-353 period, and has been interpreted to mean probable Saka control over the tract. The last-mentioned, Rudrasimha III, is said to have been defeated by Chandra Gupta Vikramaditya II in AD 388, and it is possible — but by no means certain — that this part of Rajasthan slipped out of Saka hands following Rudrasimha's defeat. Saka coins have also been found at places like Pushkar, Chittor and Sambhar, testifying to Saka presence in other parts of Rajasthan.

In this context, the archaeologist H.D. Sankalia and his colleagues had postulated that there may be some connection between the mineral wealth of southern Rajasthan and the attraction it held for neighbouring regions, including the Saka *Kshatrapas*, who are known to have minted silver coins⁵⁰. For, a branch of the Sakas annexed northern Gujarat and western Rajasthan, i.e. ancient Svabhra and Maru, during the c. first centuries BC to AD, and even founded a city at Shamalaji/Devnimori in northeastern Gujarat. (Excavation carried out in 1959-60 on the Buddhist remains at Devnimori indicated permanent habitations on the southern fringes of the hills between Rajasthan and Gujarat by about the second century AD.⁵¹)

Besides coins of the Sakas *Kshatrapas* of Nasik and Ujjain, coins of the Mathura Saka *Kshatrapas* have been noted from the site of Noh, near Bharatpur. The Noh excavations yielded a copper coin of Hagamasha. Coins of Virasena and Varunamitra have also been reported from this site.

Thus, it appears that the local chiefdoms/kingdoms/republics existing in the Rajasthan faced the challenge of Indo-Greek, Kushan and Saka hegemony, with mixed fortunes, until their eventual token subjugation by the Gupta Empire in the fourth century AD.

Let us now look at the history of Rajasthan between the c.300 BC to c. AD 300 period in some detail now.

During the period of the Mauryan Empire (with its capital at Magadha, and several provincial capitals headed by ‘governors’), there are indications of Mauryan influence — and even domination — over parts of Rajasthan. In the more obviously visible sphere of art and architecture, Mauryan and immediately post-Mauryan (Sunga-Kanva [c. 184-28 BC], and Kushan etc.) brick, wood and sometimes stone-built architectural remains have been found from various parts of Rajasthan. These include remains of Buddhist stupas and monasteries found at Bairat, Nagari, Chittorgarh, and Lalsot.

Buddhist scriptures tell us that following the death of Gautam Buddha in the sixth century BC, his relics were divided and stupas were raised over them. J.C. Harle (1994) has noted that by Ashoka’s time (r. circa ?274/2 -232 BC) “...the stupa, then a low dome, less than a full hemisphere, was mounted on a cylindrical drum or base of no great height; the whole structure must have been surrounded by a wooden fence (*vedika*), of a characteristic shape, usually with entrances at cardinal points and sometimes elaborately carved gateways as well...Stone versions of a hundred or more years later plainly betray their wooden origins”⁵². Of the numerous stupas raised by Emperor Ashoka across different parts of his vast empire — legend gives their number as 84,000 — several were incorporated over time within subsequent stone stupas built on the same sites.

In the case of Bairat, where as already noted above, the 1936 excavations brought to light a circular shrine and Buddhist monastery, the stupa’s enclosing circular shrine had a diameter of 8.23 m. It was composed of lime-plastered panels of brickwork alternating with twenty-six octagonal pillars of wood. Double circular in plan, and separated by a circumambulation path for the use of devotees, this structure can be counted amongst the earliest such brick and timber constructions still extant. Large-sized bricks and timber were the main materials used. In its original form, the shrine was entered from the east through a small portico, supported on two wooden pillars, and was encircled by a path for ritual

circumambulation, once again with an opening on the east. The entire complex was apparently enclosed at a later date within a rectangular compound containing an open space for assembly in front of the entrance. Pieces of a polished stone umbrella or *chhatra*, which may probably have once crowned the stupa, were recovered in the excavations.

The remains of a Buddhist monastery, complete with cloister and cells, were found nearby. Excavations also unearthed a brick platform, besides a variety of other artefacts of different periods. Among these were chert flakes and cores, Mauryan period stone pillars and a polished stone bowl. In addition, various potteries — including the early historical Northern Black Polished Ware, and bricks, tiles, and terracotta images of different time-periods, were unearthed⁵³. So too were miniature votive tanks used in ritual practices, and coins from different periods. Along with terracotta, images made from white kaolin clay were also noted. These depict figures identified with deities like Indra, Aindri, Kamdeva, Rati, Mahishasura-Mardini etc.

One of the objects found during excavations at Bairat was a small clay jar containing thirty-six coins. D.R. Sahni's excavation-report noted that eight of these were punch-marked coins and were found wrapped in a piece of cloth, while the other twenty-eight, which lay loose in the jar, were of Creek and Indo-Greek kings⁵⁴. Of the Greek/Indo-Greek category of coins, one was issued by Heliokles (c. 140 BC), the second son of Eucratides and the last Greek king of Bactria, while one each belonged to the Indo-Greek kings Apollodotus and Antiaklides. Sixteen of the other coins, covering five types, belonged to King Menander; two to King Hermaios along with his Queen Kalliope (c. AD 20-45); and four to King Hermaios without Kalliope. Coins of Strato I and Antimachus have also been reported from this site. The coins are round in shape, and weigh under half a *drachma* in weight, or about thirty-six to thirty-eight grains in standard weight. The obverse of the coins has the concerned ruler's bust and an accompanying legend in the Greek script, and the reverse side has images of a Greek deity, or a bull. The fact that sixteen coins of Menander were found may have special significance in understanding the history of Buddhism in this part of Rajasthan, given Menander's (later) leanings towards Buddhism, and the remains of Buddhist structures found at Bairat.

Besides these, two inscriptions from the reign of the Mauryan emperor, Ashoka, have been discovered in the vicinity of present-day Bairat, forty miles (sixty-six kilometres) northeast of Jaipur. (Apparently, the expanse of the habitation was quite extensive formerly). One, now generally referred to as the 'Bhabru-Bairat Rock Edict', was 'discovered' by one Major Burt in the late nineteenth century AD. This was apparently 'found' at Bhabru⁵⁵ (more correctly, Bhabra, twelve miles north of Bairat), and it currently forms part of the Asiatic Society collection at Kolkata (formerly spelt and pronounced as Calcutta). The other inscription, 'discovered' by A.C. Carlleyle in 1872-73 at a nearby hill known as Bhim-Doongri (or Bhimji-ki-Doongri), is a version of Ashoka's 'Minor Rock Edict I'. Both these edicts, like the majority of the Ashokan inscriptions, are in an early Brahmi script, and are carved on rock.

Of these, the 'Bhabru-Bairat Rock Edict' (recorded on a boulder near the precincts of a Buddhist monastery, atop a hill, according to Vincent Smith⁵⁶), is unique in that unlike most of Ashoka's edicts, which were copied or modified and used in more than one locale, the Bhabru-Bairat inscription has no known 'twin' in some other part of the Mauryan empire! Describing Ashoka as the 'King of Magadha', this inscription recommended certain passages from the Buddhist canon to his people.

It may be translated as follows:

"His Grace the King of Magadha addresses the [Buddhist *Sangha*] Church with greetings and bids its members prosperity and good health.

'You know, Reverend Sirs, how far extend my respect for and faith in the Buddha, the Sacred Law [*Dhamma*] and the Church [*Sangha*].

Whatsoever, Reverend Sirs, has been said by the Venerable Buddha, all that has been well said.

However, Reverend Sirs, if on my own account I may point out (a particular text), I venture to adduce this one:- “Thus the Good Law will long endure”.

Reverend Sirs, these passages of the Law, to wit:

[1] The Exaltation of Discipline (*Vinaya-samukkase*);

[2] The Course of Conduct of the Great Saints (*Aliya-vasani*);

[3] Fears of what may happen (*Anagata-bhayani*);

[4] The Song of the Hermit (*Muni-gatha*),

[5] The Dialogue on the Hermit’s Life (*Moneya-sute*);

[6] The Questioning of Upatishya (*Upatisa-pasine*);

[7] The Address to Rahula, beginning with the Subject

of Falsehood (*Laghulovade musavadam adhigidhya*)—

spoken by the Venerable Buddha — these, Reverend Sirs, I desire that many monks and nuns should frequently hear and meditate; and that likewise the laity, male and female, should do the same.

For this reason, Reverend Sirs, I cause this [Edict] to be written, so that people may know my intentions (*abhipretam*)”.

Regarded as relatively early in date, this Bhabru-Bairat edict “...expressly alleges the authority of the Venerable Buddha as the basis of the king’s moral doctrine, and that authority undoubtedly is the one foundation of As’oka’s ethical system”⁵⁷. Vincent Smith has suggested that Ashoka may have resided over one rainy season at the monastery at Bairat, possibly during the thirteenth year of his reign, when both, the text recorded

in this edict, as well as in the other edict found nearby⁵⁸ were inscribed at the Emperor's command.

The other Ashokan edict from Bairat, noted by Carleyle during 1872-73, is situated at the nearby Bhim-Doongri hill. A recension of Minor Rock Edict I, and thus bearing affinity with the texts on Ashoka's Rupnath, Maski, Brahmagiri, Jattinga-Rameshwar, Siddhapura and Sahasram edicts, the Bairat version of Minor Rock Edict I is inscribed on the lower part of the southern face of a huge block of volcanic rock.

The text of this runs as follows:

“Thus says *Devanaampiya* (Beloved of the Gods — i.e. Emperor Ashoka) -

For more than two and a half years I was a lay disciple, without exerting myself strenuously.

But it is more than a year since I joined the Order (*Sangha*), and have exerted myself fully.

The men who were previously unassociated with the righteousness in *Jambu-dvipa* have now become associated with the gods.

For this is the fruit of exertion. Nor is this to be achieved by greatness only; because immense heavenly bliss may be obtained even by the humblest and smallest of humans who exerts for the path of piety. For this purpose, the proclamation is being made - “Let small and great strive and exert themselves”.

My neighbours too should learn this lesson, and may such exertion towards piety long endure.

And this purpose will increase. Yes, surely it shall increase. At least half as much again will it increase!

And this determination must be written on the rocks as opportunity offers. And measures must be taken to have it engraved upon stone pillars.

And you must proclaim this message. As far as your jurisdiction extends, you must send it out everywhere.

This proclamation was made by the body of ‘Vyuthena’ (missionaries), who were 256 in number”.

Both these edicts are inscribed on rock and, like the majority of the Ashokan inscriptions, are in an early Brahmi script. Besides repeating Ashoka’s belief in Buddhism and so forth, the edicts throw some light on contemporaneous religious beliefs, as well as the missionary work undertaken by Emperor Ashoka.

These two inscriptions of Emperor Ashoka found at Bairat, taken together with the remains of Bairat’s roughly contemporaneous stupa and enclosing circular shrine, as well as a monastery, provide an idea about the territorial extent of the Mauryan Empire into this part of the subcontinent. The occurrence of brick, wood and stone architectural remains of Mauryan period stupas etc. from other parts of Rajasthan, notably Nagari, Chittorgarh, and Lalsot, also emphasise the importance of both Buddhism, and the possible missionary sway — if not overt territorial hold — of Ashoka over this region.

The occurrence of what has been called the ‘*Shankh-lipi*’ or conchshell writing, which is actually a form of ornamented Brahmi script, on rock-walls in the vicinity of Bairat may be noted here too. Some historians believe that this was used by Buddhist monks to record sayings of the Buddha and other tenets on cave-walls, and later as Buddhism began to decline and there was a Brahmanical revival the script became almost a ‘secret’ writing.

(Brahmanical revival is indicated by texts engraved on *Yupa* pillar inscriptions like the Nandsa *Yupa* of AD 225 found in present-day district

Bhilwara, the two Barnala *Yupas* of c. AD 227, from Barnala, near Lalsot, in district Dausa⁵⁹, Badva *Yupa* of AD 38-239 from district Kota, Bichpuri *Yupa* of AD 264, found near Uniara in district Tonk, and Vijaygarh *Yupa* of AD 371-72 etc., which emphasise the prevalence of Vedic/Brahmanical sacrifices etc.)

Similarly, the discovery of two hoards of Mauryan punch-marked coins — one of 326 coins and the other of 3076 silver coins (buried around the beginning of the second century BC) — at Rairh, situated eighty-seven kilometres from Jaipur, taken together with the excavated evidence from that site, re-enforces the fact that eastern Rajasthan was under the Mauryan sphere of influence. Rairh, located along the banks of the Dhil, an effluent of the river Banas, in the modern-day district of Tonk, seems to have been among the urban centres of the time. (Daya Ram Sahni regarded Rairh as an important centre of Mauryan art and culture).

Excavated in 1938 by Dr. K.N. Puri, Rairh yielded artefacts associated with the Malava group, as well as a Chunar sandstone bowl. The latter find strengthened the prevalent hypothesis regarding the Mauryan connections of the site. The excavations indicated that Rairh was flourishing from about the third century BC to at least the end of the second century AD, and continued to be occupied for several centuries longer. Some early Gupta period remains were also noticed. Steatite caskets found at this place were reported as being similar to the relic caskets found at other Buddhist sites in India. Also reported was “...a stone slab with the drawing of a tree inside a railing and a human figure with a peculiar headdress standing to the left, which might be of the pre-Christian period”⁶⁰.

In addition, excavations at Rairh revealed remains of parallel walled structures, terracotta ‘ring-wells’ (which are actually soak-pits), tools and implements of iron, large amounts of iron-slag and steatite objects. Besides these, a range of ceramics, miniature vases, votive tanks, and various types of human and animal terracotta figurines and plaques belonging to different periods were noted. A terracotta seal bearing an inscription in the Brahmi script was found. Other items reported included beads of carnelian, gold, onyx, rock-crystal, chalcedony, amethyst, turquoise, lapis lazuli, beryl, aquamarine, glass, shell, terracotta, and stone. Some ivory and shell

handles, bangles, rings, ear-rings, bronze needles and a circular bronze mirror, a gold pin, skin-rubbers, antimony-rods, dice, as well as bone and horn spikes were found too.

The profusion of iron objects found at Rairh include sword-blades, spear-heads, daggers, knives, sickles, axes, adzes, some arrow-heads, nails, rings, door-fittings and fragments of a chain. On the basis of the iron artefacts, slag and remains of on-site metal-working, scholars believe Rairh was among the major metallurgical centres of its time. Artefacts made of bronze too were found, along with a small amount of gold ornaments, and two lead ingots.

The terracottas found from Rairh include figures on horse-back and elephant-back, and numerous female figurines categorised as 'mother-goddesses', besides a nude male figure, and depictions of *yakshis* (also called *yakshinis*). Moulded plaques depicting Siva and Parvati, and various other deities were also noted. One of the plaques, depicting a *yakshi*, is regarded as a particularly noteworthy example of the Kushan and Gupta period terracottas found at that site. The figurines give an indication of the styles of clothing, ornamentation, and hairstyling in vogue at the time. Figurines of humped bulls, horses, elephants, monkeys, tigers, cows, ram, fish, dog and birds, as well as wheeled carts and bird-chariots, probably intended to serve as children's toys, were found too. A fragment of cloth (in which a collection of coins had been tied) and numerous spindle-whorls were also noted in the excavation.

Constructions seem to have been mainly of mud-bricks, with baked brick platforms, though remains of a baked brick house ascribable to the Mauryan period, and two more dating to the second-third centuries AD period, were also unearthed. Some pottery models of houses (or possibly miniature-shrines modelled like houses), and fragments of roof tiles as well as pottery finials suggest the nature and style of architecture known at the site. These indicate that the better quality structures at Rairh, which were probably located within a walled-in enclosure, possessed slanting tiled roofs supported on gabled walls, with decorative finials on the ridge, and one or more door-way marking the entrance to the interior of the building. Drains of pottery-pipes and bricks were noted in the excavations, as was the use of

‘ring-well’ type of soak-pits for drainage. This last was of the kind noted at sites like Taxila, Sravasti, etc.

The discovery of Malava coins, a lead-stamp seal of the Malava Janapada bearing the legend ‘*Malava-Janapadasa*’, and five separate hoards of punch-marked coins led the excavator to conclude that ancient Rairh was an important settlement of the Malava tribe under the suzerainty of Maurya and Sunga kings.

These Malavas — identified with the ‘Malloi’ of Greek records, were among the warrior groups that had left Punjab in c. second century BC in the wake of the political upheaval caused by Alexander’s arrival in the northwest of the subcontinent. They are described as being the ‘most civilised’ among all groups. The Malavas appear to have gradually extended their dominion over parts of the present-day districts of Jaipur, eastern Ajmer, Tonk, Sawai Madhopur, and northern Bundi and Kota, as well as further southeastward towards Mewar⁶¹. They thrived as a recognised state from c. third century BC until at least the fifth century AD, with fluctuating fortunes. (The hardest blow faced by them appears to have been at the hands of the Gupta emperor, Samudra Gupta, as we shall note further in the book). They are associated with a calendar era commencing, like the Vikram Era, from 57 BC. This was known as ‘*Krita Samvat*’ — also referred to as the ‘*Malava Samvat*’⁶².

A tablet of copper unearthed during excavations at Rairh bears a two lined inscription in the Brahmi characters of the third century BC on one side, along with the recognised Malava symbol designated as ‘Cross and Balls’ by numismatic experts. The inscription mentions ‘*Senapatisa Vachhaghosha*’ implying a *Senapati* or commander-in-chief named Vachhaghosha. A set of six copper coins in varying sizes and weight, but carrying the words ‘*Senapatisa Vachhaghosha*’, have also been found. It is not certain whether this was the name of a local chief or commander of the group, or whether there was a span of time during which control was seized by someone who issued the ‘Senapati’ coins of Vachhaghosha⁶³. As we shall note further, according to a fragmentary inscription found at Bayana (near Bharatpur), least one Yaudheya chief used the title of ‘*Maharaja*-

Mahasenapati’ (king-general), during c. 300 AD. As such, it is a matter of conjecture whether terms like ‘Senapati’ were used for leaders or commanders or chiefs of the various different groups of Rajasthan during this general period. Perhaps the discovery of more coins would throw light on this matter!

A different group of seven coins, bearing the word ‘*Vapu*’ in early Brahmi characters, and ascribed to the c. 250-200 BC period, was also found at Rairh. It is not clear whether the ‘*Vapu*’ mentioned on these coins was a chief, or a clan deity of the Malavas. While relatively little is known about the Malavas of Rairh, the words ‘*Vasubhutisa*’ and ‘*Sharvadatta*’ (or ‘*Sharabhdatta*’) have been noted engraved on two seals, and may be indicative of the personal names of two Malava chiefs. Rairh has also yielded a set of fourteen copper coins, bearing three names with a ‘*Mitra*’ word-ending. The words are ‘*Surya-Mitra*’, ‘*Brahma-Mitra*’ and ‘*Dhruva-Mitra*’, and appear to be personal names.

Nagar (ancient Malava-Nagar, also Karkota-Nagar), near Uniara (district Tonk), like Rairh, was apparently a major settlement of the Malavas — perhaps even the capital of the Malava *Janapada*. In 1872, A.C.L. Carlleyle found a profusion of over 6000 Malava copper coins covering the surface at the site of Nagar⁶⁴, leading him to record that the coins lay as thick as sea-shells on a shore!

One may note here that Malava coins are quite small in size, and round to rectangular in shape. Ascribed to an approximate period between c. second century BC to c. third century AD, these coins are mainly of copper. The ‘type’ of Malava *Janapada* coins that occur in the largest number bear the inscription *Malava-Janapadasa* (‘of the Malava state/people’) or *Malavanam Jayah* (‘victory to the Malavas’) in Brahmi script on the obverse. The reverse of these coins carry motifs like a vase, lion, bull, king’s head, *Nandipada*, tree enclosed by a railing, triangle headed staff, or a peacock. Two other ‘types’ of coins, which have been discovered in association with the coins described above, are similar in fabric and weight with the above-mentioned Malava coins, except for the wording or legend that they carry. In the case of one ‘type’, there is no legend at all, though in all other respects the coins are like the Malava

Janapada coins. These coins may have been prepared ‘blanks’ awaiting further finishing, or else recognisable enough as Malava by their symbols. The third ‘type’ of coins differ only in so far as in bearing legends like ‘*Gajava*’, ‘*Haraya*’, ‘*Jamaka*’, ‘*Magacha*’, ‘*Masapa*’, ‘*Pachha*’, ‘*Bhapamyana*’, etc. Whether these words stand for the names of chiefs, or territorial sub-units, or local deities or totems, or indicate the value of the coins is an issue that still needs to be worked out, though! Malava coins have been discovered across the area comprising the present-day Tonk, Jaipur and Ajmer districts — in particular at Rairh and Nagar.

In the case of Nagar, the site dates back to c. third century BC, as evidenced by various seals, terracotta objects and other artefacts. Small-scale excavations at Nagar (as at Rairh), also revealed later period brick houses and other remains, including punch-marked coins, fragments of copper rings, pins and weights, beads of agate, carnelian, rock-crystal, garnet and amethyst, and a small number of objects made of gold, ivory, and conch-shell. The range of terracotta items found from Nagar include figurines and moulded bricks. The figurines include a well-described ‘*Mahishasura-mardini*’ (the goddess slaying the buffalo-demon), besides images of Rati-Kaama, Indra-Indrani and others. One terracotta plaque from Nagar, eleven inches in height, depicting ‘*Mahishasura-mardini*’ is regarded as a particularly unique specimen of the early plastic arts of Rajasthan.

On the basis of the name ‘Karkota-Nagar’ which was also used for the site of Malava-Nagar/Nagar, some historians have suggested that it may have temporarily passed into the hands of the Nagas. It has been pointed out that in later years, these Malavas were contemporaries of the Nagas of Padmavati, and in fabric, some of the Malava coins are similar to those of the Naga coins⁶⁵.

Around the beginning of the second century AD the Malavas came into conflict with one of their neighbours — the Uttambhadras (possibly the Uttambhadras of the Ajmer region), as well as with the Western Saka *Kshatrapas* of the Ksharata dynasty founded by Bhumaka. The confrontation with the Sakas led to a partial eclipse of Malava power. We learn, in particular, that the Saka general Ushavadata (who was married to

the Saka king Nahapana's daughter, Dakshamitra) having led a victorious expedition against the Malavas, later bathed in the sacred lake at Pushkar, where he donated three thousand cows and a village to Brahmins⁶⁶. This would imply that this part of Rajasthan came under the Saka sphere of influence — even if not permanently. Saka presence is indicated also through the coins of Saka rulers Bhumaka, Nahapana, Chastan and Rudradaman I found around the Pushkar-Ajmer area.

Though the Malavas appear to have been defeated by various Saka rulers or their deputies, in particular Bhumaka, his successor Nahapana, and Nahapana's son-in-law, Ushavadata, of the Saka Ksharata dynasty ruling Western India, as also by Rudradaman of the Kardamaka dynasty of Ujjain (and a grandson of king Chastan), in the first-second centuries AD, the Malavas later re-asserted their authority over their lands⁶⁷.

By the third century AD the Malavas had apparently succeeded in defeating the Sakas and had re-established their local supremacy. It is more than probable that the Malavas took advantage too of the intra-dynastic power-struggle between Western Saka ruler Jivadaman and his uncle Rudra. In this context, it is significant that the Nandsa *Yupa* or pillar inscription, mentioned previously, refers to an *Ekashashthi-ratra yagna* ceremony in the year *Krita Samvat* 282 (i.e. AD 225) held by a Malava chief named Soma, following a Malava victory believed to have been against the Western Sakas⁶⁸. (Altekar deciphered the name as being Shri Soma, while Venkataramayya felt it was Nandi Soma)⁶⁹. After this victory, the Malavas continued to flourish, yet again, till their power suffered a check during the reign of Emperor Samudra Gupta of the Gupta dynasty (r. c. AD 350-375) in the fourth century AD.

Written in the Brahmi script, and composed in Sanskrit, the Nandsa *Yupa* also records gifts and donations made to Brahmins by the Malava chief Soma on the occasion. This pillar was discovered *in situ* at the small village of Nandsa (five kilometres north of Gangapur, and approximately fifty kilometres west of Bhilwara), in district Bhilwara.

An abbreviated translation of the text on this twelve and a half feet high pillar is presented here to give a ‘flavour’ of the era, and the style of writing of the times. It runs as follows:

Upon the full moon of the month of Chaitra in the Era *Krita Samvat* 282, this pious and worthy organiser of the ritual *Mahasatra* known as *Ekashashthi-ratra* sacrifice, who having been born into the Malava *gana* (people/republic), and by the prowess of his might and valour expanded the boundaries of the inheritance bequeathed by his father and grandfather, and enabled the glory of the Malavas to span the earth up to the sky above; who has provided a constant stream of charitable donations to Brahmins, and by means of the *Vasordhara* ritual created/provided sanctified land for the construction of temples to Brahma, Indra, Prajapati, the sages and Vishnu, leaving no space to spare for sin and wickedness to take root; who has vowed to uphold the traditional duties of a virtuous and righteous ruler as prescribed by the ancient sages, including constructing numerous sparkling halls and buildings, rest-houses, ponds, wells, and temples, championing truthfulness, and perpetually striving for the welfare of his subjects; and who, being born into the resplendent Malava clan — which has yielded countless *Raja-rishis* (royal-sages) and is as illustrious among clans as the Ikshavaku clan — is the grandson of Jayanartan Prabhakar, the son of Jayasoma, and the chief of Sogiya; I, that Malava chief Soma, on the occasion of the glorious *Ekashashthi-ratra* sacrifice, hereby give away cows and alms in donation to Brahmins.⁷⁰

A different inscription from Nagar, dating to AD 264, records the raising of a sacrificial pillar by someone called Ahisharman, son of one Dharaka *Agnihotri*⁷¹. This Ahisharman may have been a Malava chief. (In subsequent centuries, like many an old site, Nagar appears to have enjoyed intermittent periods of decline and prosperity, as indicated by various literary references, seventh to eleventh century structures, wells, water-reservoirs, step-wells and temples, and the Mandkila Tal Inscription of *Vikram Samvat* 1043, or 987 AD⁷²).

Among the other migrant tribes who moved into Rajasthan in the wake of the Greek incursions into the northwestern part of the subcontinent, the Sibi settled in south-eastern Rajasthan, establishing a capital city at Madhyamika-Nagari (modern Nagari, nine miles, or thirteen kilometres, north of Chittorgarh). The Sibis are regarded as being identical with the Sivas/ Sivis, who first find mention in the *Rig Veda* as inhabiting the Punjab region. The ‘original home’ of the Sibi, according to various early historic references, appears to have been somewhere in the Punjab or northwestern India, possibly at Shorkot (now in Pakistan).

Later Buddhist *Jataka* literature — particularly the *Sivi Jataka*, *Unmadanti Jataka* and *Vessantara Jataka*, include references to a Sivi kingdom and king, naming two of their cities as Ariththapura (in Sanskrit — Arishtapura), and Jetuttara. N.L. Dey, in his *Geographical Dictionary*, has suggested that this Jetuttara is identical with the Madhyamika-Nagari established by the displaced Sibis in southeastern Rajasthan. (Based on Dey’s identification of Jetuttara with Nagari, some scholars have further identified this post-Alexandrian Rajasthani capital-city of the Sibi republic with the ‘Jattararur’ named as the capital of Mewar by the Arab traveller Alberuni centuries later⁷³. Madhyamika-Nagari may, thus, be considered a fore-runner, in political terms, of the various kingdoms that flourished later in the region, including that of the Guhila Rajputs, who became established here from c. sixth century AD onwards⁷⁴.

The Sibi settlement of Madhyamika continued to be occupied for several centuries. This ‘Madhyamika-Nagari’ has been referred to in several records, including texts like the *Brihat-Samhita* and the *Kumara-Pala-Charitra Sangraha*, besides Patanjali’s oft-quoted reference in his *Mahabhasya* (a commentary on the *Ashtadhyayi* composed by the famous grammarian, Panini). This work by Patanjali mentions a siege of Madhyamika by Creeks. The sentence runs as follows — “*Arunad-yavanah Saketam, arunad-yavanah Madhyamikam*”⁷⁵. This attack probably dates to the second century BC; perhaps while Pushyamitra Sunga (who later seized power at Magadha and established the Sunga dynasty), was still a commander of the Mauryan forces. According to Dasharatha Sharma, the Sibi capital’s importance may be gauged from the fact that “...the Bactrians

in their attack on India besieged not only Mathura but also Madhyamika”⁷⁶. The fragmentary Barli Inscription from Barli (district Ajmer) appears to refer to this Madhyamika too, for the word ‘*Majhimike*’ — possibly signifying an inhabitant of Madhyamika — has been used in the fourth line of the inscription.

(This Barli Inscription was found from the temple of Bhilot Mata, about a mile from the village of Barli, which is in turn located thirty-six miles southeast of Ajmer, in the district of Ajmer. The epigraph was removed to the Government Museum at Ajmer. It is engraved in early Brahmi script on a white stone that seems to have originally formed part of a hexagonal pillar. The language used is described as Prakrit mixed with Sanskrit. Unfortunately, the four lines of writing are weathered and partially obliterated. As such, its reading, meaning and date have been a matter of debate between senior scholars, including K.P. Jayaswal, D.C. Sircar, R.R. Haider, G.H. Ojha, etc. Pending additional work, the Barli Inscription has been ascribed to sometime between the c. fifth and second century BC).

A Kushan period inscription from near Mathura mentions a religious centre at Madhyamika. It seems to have been an important city from about the second century BC, for the Ghosundi-Nagari Inscription refers to a King Sarvatata of the Parashar *gotra*, who performed an *Asvamedha* sacrifice at Madhyamika. It probably remained a site of significance well into the succeeding centuries, when it may have lost its political independence. (A place named ‘Madhyamika’ finds mention in the *Mahabharata* too, in connection with the conquest of the ‘Vatadhanas’ by Nakula, one of the Pandavas brothers. Some historians suggest that the Vatadhanas are identical with the Sungas who usurped the empire at the fall of the Mauryas, on the grounds that the words *vata* and *sunga*, both meaning a banyan tree, are synonymous terms). Madhyamika-Nagari probably came under the influence of the Western Saka *Kshatrapas* around c. second-third centuries AD.

Nagari (or ancient Madhyamika), was explored by A.C.L. Carlleyle in 1872 and was excavated by Bhandarkar in 1919-20⁷⁷. The excavations brought to light the remains of a stupa and other structures, inscribed stones, terracotta figurines, moulded plaques, sculpture, moulded and

ornamental bricks with figures of birds, human heads etc., and punch-marked Sibi Janapada coins, and Saka *Kshatrapa* etc. coins⁷⁸.

The punch-marked copper coins date to c. second to first century BC, and bear the legend '*Majhimikaya Sibi Janapadasa*' ('Madhyamika of the Sibi Janapada'), in Brahmi script. These have been found at Nagari, and in its vicinity. These Sibi Janapada coins bear the symbols of a tree or *swastika* on the obverse, and a six-arched hill and *Nandipada* on the reverse side. These coins are between sixty-three to ninety-eight grains in weight. In the case of the Saka period coins, besides examples found in Bhandarkar's (and later N.R. Banerjee's) excavations, A.C. Carlleyle had, in the late nineteenth century, found Saka coins of Atridaman (? Bhartradaman) and Asadama (?Yashodaman) at Nagari.

Some terracotta specimens showing the influence of Gandharan-Kushan art too are available from Nagari. These bear some stylistical resemblance to the Gandharan terracottas, though the traces of Hellenic influence are not pronounced, possibly because the Sibis who established Nagari as their capital had migrated away from the Punjab region soon after Alexander's incursions⁷⁹. The moulded bricks from Nagari, measuring 13"x9"x2½" in size, carry three categories of ornamentation on their surface. The first is of ornamented tiles decorated with designs of lotus, foliage, flowers, etc. They seem to have formed a string course, and were probably arranged on the face of the walls (possibly the outer ones) as decoration. A second kind comprises reliefs of birds in the pose of preening their feathers, or feeding, or with outstretched wings. The third kind depicts pairs of male and female human heads. They are made of light red clay with a dark red slip. Some of the other famous Nagari terracottas are of a later period, and have been dated to about AD fifth century⁸⁰. Bhandarkar found the Nagari terracottas to be of a high order of merit and texture, and declared them comparable to the Gandharan material⁸¹.

Excavations were renewed at Nagari in 1962 (under the leadership of N.R. Banerjee) by the Archaeological Survey of India⁸², partially in order to co-relate Nagari's defences with the habitational levels. These revealed three phases or periods, of which the earlier two (pre-defence) apparently

revealed an absence of structures. A cyclopean defence wall fortified the city during Period III, which is attributed to the early centuries AD. The 1962 excavations confirmed the occupation of the site from c. fourth century BC to seventh century AD.

In fact, given the excavated remains and literary references to Madhyamika, it is even possible, in my view, that the migrant Sibis took over, or settled around an existing, older settlement at Madhyamika. The presence of such a settlement would have been already known and established in contemporary memory!

Nagari also yielded a rectangular enclosure, commonly known today as the 'Hathi Bada'. This is built out of massive blocks of laminiferous stone⁸³. This appears to have been connected with the shrine to Vasudeva-Samkarshna, and the *Narayan-Vatika* sacred grove, which are referred to in the Ghosundi-Nagari Inscription of c. 200-160 BC⁸⁴. The inscription is written in Brahmi script, using the Sanskrit language. While throwing light on the evolution of Vaishnavism, it also provides one of the earliest recorded references to the existence of an image to Vasudeva-Samkarshna in c. second-first century BC. However, the exact depiction remains unknown, and it is thought the image may have been made from some perishable material. The Ghosundi Inscription also refers to the holding of an *ashvamedha yagna* ritual by one King Sarvatata, about whom we do not have more information. Yet another Nagari Inscription at Nagari dating to c. third-second centuries BC lays stress on the Buddhist doctrine of *karuna* (compassion). Taken together with the discovery of stupa remains at Chittor and Nagari, this latter epigraph highlights the importance of Buddhism in this part of Rajasthan during the period under survey.

Another of the other early partially excavated sites, which helps throw light on various aspects of life in early historical Rajasthan is that of Naliasar-Sambhar. Naliasar-Sambhar lies some six kilometres from Sambhar. (Sambhar is known for its lake⁸⁵ — famed for its salt-production, in the vicinity of which the later city of Shakambhari developed as the early capital and stronghold of the Chauhan kings of Rajasthan). The site has yielded remains indicating the continued occupation of this place from

about the third century BC (the period of the Mauryas) up to the eleventh century AD.⁸⁶

(By the eighth century, nearby Shakambhari (now Sambhar), founded in the seventh century by a Chauhan king called Vasudeva, near a temple to goddess Shakambhari, had become the thriving capital of the Chauhan kingdom. The local salt lake of the area appears to have been exploited for salt-production from at least the seventh century AD onwards, though the antiquity of salt-preparation at this site may go back much further, and remains a matter of research. Local tradition links the older habitational area with the Puranic story of Devayani, the daughter of Shukracharya, and her rival, the princess Sharmishtha⁸⁷).

Explored by an Assistant Commissioner of Inland Revenue named Lyon, Naliasar-Sambhar was further examined in 1885 by T.H. Hendley. He laid out some trial trenches at this site and concluded that it had been a Buddhist town. During 1936-38 the site was partially excavated by D.R. Sahni, the first director of erstwhile Jaipur State's Department of Archaeology and Historical Research⁸⁸. His excavations revealed six occupation-levels.

The lowest of these, which was attributed by Sahni to the pre-Sunga period, yielded two punch-marked coins. Above this was a level ascribed by the excavator to the first century BC. In the two levels over this, lay the remains of the Kushan period. Among the finds from these two levels were coins of the Arjunayanas and Yaudheyas, one copper coin of the Kushan ruler, Huvishka, and an Indo-Greek coin of Antimachos Nikepharos. The fifth level was ascribed to the Gupta period, while the overlying sixth level, which also yielded six Indo-Sassanian coins, was classified as belonging to the ninth and tenth centuries AD.

Among other finds, fifty-five copper coins of the Malavas, a silver coin of Diomedes (ruler of the Kabul region), and later material, including a silver coin of the Gupta emperor, Kumar Gupta, was also found during the excavations. Besides the coins, a range of other objects, including a facet sealing, pottery, iron spearhead and other objects, beads of carnelian,

faience, glass, stone etc., spindle-whorls, dice, and human and animal terracotta figurines were found. Artefacts made of gold, copper, steatite and shell were also recovered. There is evidence for on-site pottery production, bead-polishing, manufacture of terracotta, conch-shell and steatite objects, and metal-working. A terracotta sealing found here depicts a sacrificial *Yupa* post surrounded by a railing. Below the shaft are the words 'Imadasamasa' (Indrasarman) in Prakrit, written in the Brahmi script of about second century BC.

Naliasar-Sambhar's architectural remains of the Kushan (and Gupta) period include planned, straight, streets, with houses of sun-dried and kiln-baked bricks, sometimes rising up to two or more storeys. Some buildings were planned around a courtyard, with rooms on two, three, or all four sides. A miniature pottery-model of a house is revealing. This depicts a rectangular chamber with a gabled roof crowned by finials. The doorways are large, with horizontal lintels. These are flanked by small window openings, placed high. Similar windows were depicted on the sides, with pierced lattices on the rear wall.

The terracottas from the Kushan-Gupta period found at Naliasar-Sambhar, include handmade as well as mould-fabricated items. The range of terracotta artefacts includes human and animal figurines. The terracotta objects recovered from excavations included humped bulls and elephants, toys, plaques bearing depictions in relief, hollow pendants made of double-stamped discs joined along the edges, seals, decorated pottery spouts, and miscellaneous objects. Some of the Naliasar-Sambhar figurines date to c. second-first century BC, while others were ascribed to a later period by the excavator. Deities like Siva, Uma-Maheshwar, Durga in her buffalo-demon slaying (*Mahishasura-mardini*) form, and other *devas*, *ganas*, *yakshas* and *yakshis* (*yakshinis*) etc. are represented too — some of them in a typically Gupta style. Among the human figurines from Naliasar-Sambhar, some seated in the Kushan style call to mind the statues of Kushan kings now housed in the Mathura Museum.

One pottery tablet depicts a male minstrel playing a four-stringed lyre; while in another one — not too dissimilar to coins of the famous Gupta emperor, Samudra Gupta, playing on his lyre — the musician plays a

curved six-stringed instrument. A majority out of the nearly 200 animal figurines found are representations of the humped bull. Other animals are also represented. For example, one of the terracotta pendants depicts a lion fighting with an elephant. Among other terracotta depictions, an ape is shown sitting on a tripod, while a plaque bears, in relief, an elephant being attacked by a wild buffalo, with possibly a boar in the lower part of the composition. Besides remains of earlier periods, quantities of sculpture and artefacts of the Kushan and Gupta periods occur at Naliasar-Sambhar too, along with later period remains.⁸⁹ One famous terracotta plaque shows a flying image made in the Gupta style.

Another tribe, that of the Arjunayanas (who, like the Yaudheyas, claimed descent from one of the Pandava heroes of the *Mahabharata* — in their case Arjun), had come to occupy a portion of eastern Rajasthan. This area fell in what had previously been Matsya territory (comprising parts of the modern districts of Bharatpur, Alwar and Dausa). The Arjunayana lands lay roughly southeast of the territory occupied by the Yaudheyas. Coins in the early Brahmi script bearing the words ‘*Arjunayanam Jayah*’ have been found in the area indicating Arjunayana presence during c. second-first century BC. The Arjunayanas seem to have been subdued by the Sakas around the end of the first century BC⁹⁰.

Later, they apparently rebelled against Kushan domination successfully — possibly in coalition with the Yaudheyas and a smaller tribe called Kunindas — and re-established their independence. This state of affairs may not have been long-lasting though. Some historians deduce that later on, the Arjunayanas may have aided the Malavas against the Sakas of Ujjain and Nasik etc. from time to time. In this context, they also point to the similarity in the wording on their coins and seals with that of the Malavas. Around the middle of the fourth century AD, the Arjunayanas, like the Malavas, accepted Gupta suzerainty⁹¹. However, they may not have lost their prominence in totality, for much later, writing in the sixth century, Varahamihira referred to the Arjunayanas as an important people of the northern or northwestern division of India.

The Uttambhadras, referred to in early literature, remained a known group during the c. 300 BC-AD 300 period too. On the basis of their coins, and literary references, at least one group of them seem to have inhabited the area around Pushkar⁹². They seem to have been neighbours and rivals of the Malavas. They may have been allies of the Sakas of Western India around the second century AD. For, it seems (as already noted elsewhere in this chapter), that they received assistance from Ushavadata (also called Rishibhadata), the son-in-law and viceroy of Nahapana, in their struggle against the Malavas around AD 119-123.

Another group about which we have some information, albeit scanty, is that known as the Uddehikas. The *Brihat-Samhita* mentions them as living in the 'Madhyadesha' region. Alberuni's text places them around 'Bazana' — generally identified with Bayana, near Bharatpur. Significantly, coins bearing the words *Udehaki* and *Udehaki Suyamitasa* in Brahmi script have been found around Bayana in Rajasthan. These coins are assigned to the second half of the first century BC.

(Apparently, coins bearing the legend '*Udehaki Suyamistasa*' were also noted during the excavations at the site of Rairh, in modern-day Tonk district. It is possible that '*Suyamistasa*' may be connected with the '*Surya-Mitra*' coins already mentioned. Meanwhile, it has been reported that during survey and explorations by the Rajasthan State Department of Archaeology & Museums in the districts of Tonk and Sawai Madhopur, 'Udei' and 'Vachha' were found to be place-names of old sites attributable to the early historical period⁹³. As such, B.M.S. Parmar, a former director of the department, feels that there may have been a link between these place-names and both, the *Senapati Vachhaghosha* coins of the Malavas, and the '*Udehaki Suyamistasa*' coins mentioned above⁹⁴. The matter would need to be studied further).

Perhaps some other groups, about whom we find no mention in the accounts of Alexander's historians or contemporaneous Indian writings, also came to Rajasthan around this period, or already resided in the region. For instance, coins of a *Janapada* called Rajanya have been discovered, in which the Brahmi and Kharoshti scripts have been. These are assignable to

the second and first centuries BC. On the basis of the dual scripts, it is believed that the Rajanyas probably resided — at some time — somewhere in northern or northeastern Rajasthan where both Brahmi and Kharoshti were used. G.H. Ojha places the Rajanyas in the Bharatpur-Mathura area, particularly since the ‘Lakshmi and Bull’ type of Rajanya Janapada coins appear to be modelled on the coins of the Saka Kshatrapas of Mathura. The Rajanya coins bear the words ‘*Rajanya Janapadasya*’ (meaning, ‘Of the Rajanya Janapada’).

The Yaudheyas, to whom we have already referred, apparently remained an important group throughout the approximately six-hundred years spanning the Mauryan to Gupta empires period. Their mode of governance, at least in the eastern Rajasthan area, may have been quasi-monarchic, for a fragmentary inscription from Bayana dating to c. AD 300 designates their chief as a ‘*Maharaja-Mahasenapati*’ (king-general), who was appointed to the post by the Yaudheya people.

In northern Rajasthan, where the domination of the Indo-Greeks and Kushans appears to have been pronounced, the Yaudheyas of northwestern and northern Rajasthan probably alternated between being independent rulers and subordinates of these kingdoms, as they faced the Indo-Greek and Kushan challenge. (Reference has already been made to Kanishka’s Sui Vihar Inscription of ‘Year 11’, which suggests that parts of Rajasthan were included within the Kushan empire).

The Yaudheyas were, in part, responsible in later years for ending Kushan domination over their area. They contested the authority of the Sakas too, raising the standard of revolt against Kushan-Saka domination in the early part of the second century AD. Around AD 145, the Saka *Maha-Kshatrapa* Rudradaman I came into confrontation with the Yaudheyas, for his Junagarh Inscription of Saka Era 72 (AD 150) states that he was victorious over the Yaudheyas. Rudradaman I found them worthy enemies; for he describes them as untamed and proud even in defeat.

The Yaudheyas made another bid for independence from Kushan suzerainty towards the end of the second century AD and were successful. The issue of a new currency by the Yaudheyas — bearing the words

Yaudheya-ganasya-Jayah ('Victory to the Yaudheya Republic/ People') on the obverse — probably commemorated their triumph. Following this, the Yaudheyas continued to gain in power during the third century AD, until the Guptas eventually subdued them.

While we have few details about either clearly identifiable Yaudheya habitations, or Kushan or Gupta outposts as such, it may be relevant to take note here of the northern Rajasthan site of Rang Mahal (two kilometres north of Suratgarh), in district Hanumangarh, which was excavated by the Lund University's Swedish team led by Dr. Hanna Rydh during 1952⁹⁵. Situated on the river Ghaggar, the site revealed evidence of habitation spanning the c. second to seventh centuries AD period. A variety of antiquities, including coins, terracotta reliefs, pottery, animal and human figurines in clay (and less commonly faience and kaolin), stone weights and querns, iron arrowheads, seals, copper objects and other artefacts dating from the Kushan period onwards were found here. Of the 132 beads found in the excavations, 85 proved to be clay, and the rest were variously, of bronze, carnelian, glass, plaster, shell, coral, quartz and kaolin.

The excavations also revealed evidence of a broad street, besides fragments of a drainage system using cylindrical pipes, which were noted in some structures. Some of the buildings revealed floors of burnt brick. The houses were generally small — one was two-roomed — and built of sun-dried bricks. The size of the bricks varied, but approximated 32cms x 23cms x 7cms. Rang Mahal (and contemporaneous surveyed sites) has also yielded a dark-red pottery decorated in black pigment, besides some moulded pottery. Pots, bowls, spouted-jars, knob-handled lids, and lamps were among the shapes found. On the basis of bones and botanical remains, the excavators were able to conclude that cattle were numerous at the site. Other domesticated animals were buffalo, sheep, goat, camel, dog, ass and horse. Besides these, remains of wild boar, gazelle, partridge, cat, hare and tortoise were found at the site. Wheat and rice were both known⁹⁶.

One hundred and six coins ascribable to the main branch of the Later Kushans, the Sakas (Scythians) and the Kidara Kushans found here suggest the influence of these dynasties/ groups in the region. Special mention may be made of the coins of the Kushan rulers Kanishka, Huvishka, Vasudeva I,

and Kanishka III (the latter's coins are ascribable to AD 205), among others. The terracotta plaques from Rang Mahal are akin to those found from a number of nearby sites of the area, like Badopal, Pir Sultan ki Tekri, Munda etc. Some of the plaques depict Krishna and popular incidents connected with him, and may indicate the prevalence of the cult of Krishna in this area. The themes depicted also include representations of Siva. The treatment of drapery and hair show some influence of the Gandharan School. Along with the terracotta figurines, the plaques give an indication of the modes of clothing and ornamentation prevalent at the time. Many of these plaques are now in the Bikaner Museum⁹⁷. In addition to these well-known terracotta plaques from Rang Mahal, Badopal, Pir Sultan-ki-Tekri etc., remains of stupas have been noted too at Bhadrakali, Munda and Pir Sultan-ki-Tekri. Some of these date to the Kushan and others to the subsequent Gupta period.

Many of the local ruling groups asserted, or re-asserted, their position in Rajasthan following the decline of Kushan and/or Saka influence over various parts of the region. The most important among these were the Malavas, Arjunayanas and Yaudheyas. These various groups probably reached the zenith of their power in the period between c. AD 250 to 320, when the Saka-Kushan kingdoms had declined, and there was no single sovereign authority in control of the northern and north-western parts of the subcontinent. Detailed knowledge about local states and polity remains scanty, however, though a few inscriptions and coins etc. provide the names of some local dynasties, besides other information.

For instance, the Badva *Yupa* Inscription of *Vikram Samvat* 295 (i.e. AD 238), found in south-eastern Rajasthan's present-day *Anta tehsil* near Kota, lists the names of the local Maukhari rulers of that area. Erected by the sons of one king Bala, the Badva *Yupa* Inscription on four *yupa* pillars is now on display at the Government Museum, Kota. The inscriptions tell us that *Mahasenapati* Bala was the Maukhari chief in the early decades of c. third century AD and had three grown-up sons who assisted him in the task of administration. The Badva *Yupa* Inscription records that Bala's three sons, called Balasingh, Balavardhan and Somadev, had performed the Vedic sacrificial rites of *triratra* and *jyotishtom* and donated a thousand cows each upon the completion of the *yagna*. The inscription indicates the religious

leanings of the family — and probably indicates the nature of their patronage too. On the basis of the title of *Mahasenapati* used by Bala, which denoted, at the time, a feudal chief ruling over a district — it is believed that the Maukharis of the Badva-Kota region were a feudatory power owing allegiance either to the Western Saka *Kshatrapas* of Ujjain, or to the Nagas of Padmavati.

ASPECTS OF SOCIETY, ECONOMY, RELIGION, ART AND ARCHITECTURE DURING THIS PERIOD

While there is inadequate information about many aspects of the early historical period of Rajasthan, from about the circa fourth to the third centuries BC onwards various epigraphs help the historian and archaeologist's task in putting together the jigsaw puzzle of past events and phenomena. These aid in shedding light on socio-economic, religious and architecture-related aspects of the c. BC 500 to AD 300 period.

Among such epigraphs is a fragmentary one, incised on rock, found at Khandela⁹⁸ (some forty-five kilometres from Sikar), in the area now famous as Shekhawati. The Khandela Epigraph, which has been dated to around c. third century BC on palaeographical grounds, records the death through a poisoned arrow of a teacher called Mula and the subsequent erection of a memorial to him by his pupil named Mahesh. This throws light on a lesser known facet of the past.

Similarly, the two Mauryan period inscriptions of Emperor Ashoka found at Bairat (mentioned above), provide positive proof about the territorial extent of the Mauryan Empire, and emphasise that monarch's leanings towards Buddhism. They also point to the relative importance of the Buddhist monastery, circular temple and stupa at Bairat among contemporaneous centres of political and religious power in Rajasthan. The discovery of Buddhist stupas and other remains at Nagari, Chittor and Lalsot, taken alongside the Nagari Inscription of c. third to second century BC stressing the Buddhist doctrine of *karuna* (compassion), also point to the importance of Buddhism in Rajasthan.

At the same time, the c. second century BC Nagari (Ghosundi) inscriptions illustrate the gradual evolution of Vaishnavism incorporating the cults of Vasudeva-Samkarshna and Narayana. It seems that it was between this period and c. first century BC that the synthesis of Vasudeva-Krishna with Narayana-Vishnu was fully established in the Rajasthan area⁹⁹. This is confirmed by south-eastern Rajasthan's Amaleshwar (Amvaleshvara) Inscription from near Pratapgarh (now in district Chittorgarh), which refers to the installation of a stone pillar or '*shail-bhuja*' by a devotee of the Bhagvat cult, as well as by information available on the famous Besnagar Inscription from Central India, on a pillar raised in honour of the god Vasudeva by the Greek envoy Heliodorus. (Of course, archaeologically reconstructing the process of this syncretism, and the consequent changes in iconography, philosophy and religious practices that may have occurred, remains to be further understood).

In the post-Mauryan c. third century AD period, the *yupa-stambha* inscriptions at Nandsa, Barnala, Badva and Bichpuri (already referred to above), and other epigraphs etc., underline the revitalisation of the Brahmanical beliefs in Rajasthan. This evidence from inscriptions is further corroborated by various archaeological and architectural data indicating the importance of Buddhism and Jainism during the Mauryan period, and later of the Vasudeva and other cults.

Various structural remains, including stupa-remains, epigraphs, and so forth indicate that Buddhism flourished in many parts of Rajasthan, including at Viratnagar and the Matsya kingdom, Pushkar, Lalsot, Rairh, Chittor and Madhyamika Nagari areas, in particular. In the context of Pushkar, Har Bilas Sarada has drawn attention to Buddhist inscriptions datable to c. second century BC at the Sanchi stupa (Madhya Pradesh) which "...mention charitable donations made by *bhikshus* [monks] Arhadina, Nagarakshita, Arya (venerable) Buddharakshita, Himgiri, Pusak and Isidata (a woman), all inhabitants of Pushkar"¹⁰⁰.

In the case of Jainism, there exists a long-established tradition of the twenty-fourth Jain Tirthankar, Mahavir, having visited ancient Shrial (Bhillamalla, or Bhinmal) and Arbud (Abu). Successive Jain preachers also traversed the region.

(In fact, the community known as ‘Shrimal’ traces its roots to this ancient western Rajasthan town of Shrimal, which was also known as Bhillamalla (modern Bhinmal). Jain literary sources state that about twenty-five centuries ago an *acharya* (teacher; spiritual preceptor) named Swayamprabha Suri, who was the fifth *pattddhar* of Lord Parshvanath, the twenty-third Jain Tirthankar, visited Shrimal with his disciples on the eve of a great *ashvamedha yagna*. All was in readiness, including scores of animals that would be ritually sacrificed. The *acharya* went to the palace of the local king, Raja Jai Sen, expounded the Jain doctrine to the king and his courtiers and pleaded for the life of the sacrificial animals. According to Jain tradition, Jai Sen was so moved by the preacher’s words that he not only abandoned the notion of the *ashvamedha yagna*, but also accepted Jainism, along with his family, courtiers and many subjects. (The Jain version holds that 90,000 people of Shrimal accepted Jainism, which would make Shrimal a very populous city indeed!) The *Upkeshagachcchappattavalli* of the Jains states that King Jai Sen was succeeded by his son Bhim Sen, who was a staunch follower of Saivism, and came down hard on those who had embraced Jainism during his father’s reign. This led a large number of them to abandon Shrimal and migrate. These migrants became known as Shrimals, after the name of their original home, while Bhim Sen — so goes the Jain version — changed the name of his capital from Shrimal to Bhinmal, after his own name!)

While it may be difficult to verify the above tale with any great measure of success in the present state of our knowledge, King Samprati, the grandson of the Mauryan emperor, Ashoka, is traditionally regarded as having been an adherent of the Jain faith. He is believed to have ruled over the western half of a divided Mauryan Empire, where he built many forts. In the context of Rajasthan, it is traditionally believed that the ruins of Samprati’s numerous hill-forts were re-used centuries later by subsequent chiefs and kings of different tracts of Rajasthan, to form the foundations and bases of their own forts.

Meanwhile, as Buddhism and Jainism flourished, by the later Mauryan period Vedic religious practices had demonstrably begun to be partially reformed, and also to incorporate various other belief-systems. This led, over time, to the development of the several cults honouring

deities like Vishnu, Siva, Devi, Vasudeva-Samkarshna, and so forth¹⁰¹. (Reference has already been made to the evidence from Nagari regarding the worship of Vasudeva-Samkarshna in c. 200 BC) At Bairat, terracotta images depicting Indra, Aindri, Kamdeva, Rati, *Mahishasura-mardini* — the goddess slaying the Demon-Buffalo, etc. were found, while the terracotta figurines found at Naliasar-Sambhar include depictions of Siva, Uma-Maheshwar, and *Mahishasura-mardini*, among others. We have already noted that the Yaudheyas worshipped Brahmanyadeva or Karttikeya as the God of War, as well as the fierce Chamunda form of the Goddess.

The c. third century AD terracotta plaques from Badopal, Rang Mahal, Pir Sultan ki Tekri, Munda etc. bearing images of Krishna and illustrating popular incidents from the life of Krishna — like *Dana-lila*, *Goverdhan-Krishna* etc., indicate the probable prevalence of Krishna devotion in that area. The themes depicted also include numerous representations of Siva, and of figures tentatively identified with the mother-goddess Hariti, and figures mentioned in Vedic literature, like the ‘*Ajaekapada*’ figure. These too are indicative of the religious trends of the period.

During this period, veneration of yakshas, accompanied by a proliferation of yaksha images — including large free-standing ones — is also known, especially from eastern and northern Rajasthan. Mauryan, Sunga and Kushan period art is marked especially by prominent ‘yaksha’ figures, which used to be placed on platforms or under trees and ritually worshipped. Yakshas are typically depicted as barefooted standing figures, between five and eight feet in height, with sturdy powerful bodies draped in a dhoti-like nether-garment, and a typical Mauryan-Sunga-Kushan style twisted turban and embellished with earrings and four-stringed necklaces. Over half-a-dozen yaksha images, in varying sizes, have been noted from Rajasthan’s Bharatpur district; geographically within the sphere of the Mathura ‘School of Art’. One famous example of a Yaksha image is the eight foot high figure found at Noh (district Bharatpur). Datable to the c. first centuries BC-AD Kushan period, this figure is locally known and revered today by the name of ‘Jakhaiyya’. A broken torso of a c. AD first century yaksha figure from Viravai village shows the figure with his right hand placed on his waist and wearing a belted-on sword. Archaeological

evidence suggests that, apparently, there were no temples or other buildings used to house or cover these yaksha figures.

While yaksha-worship may have been a cult in itself (some scholars have linked yakshas with the Jaxartes/Oxus river and with migrations into India), in later centuries, following an amalgamation of various cults, the yaksha figure continued to be revered in the form of folk-deity and village guardian. In fact, it appears that as early as c. third-second centuries BC yakshas, and their female yakshini counterparts, were beginning to be adapted into Buddhism too, and depicted accordingly. The 'yaksha cult' appears to have been freely incorporated into other traditions, and continued to be in use well into the first century AD. This phenomenon is implied in the Kushan period Siva-lingas from Gamri, near Noh, and from the nearby Chauma Bhandpura in the contiguous district of Agra (UP), which depict the image of a yaksha as well as of Siva. By the Gupta period, though, the Yaksha figure had lost its earlier position as a God-like being, and it features as a demi-god and guardian figure in 'classical' Hindu iconographical tradition thereafter. Today, this yaksha legacy is perhaps partially reflected in Rajasthan's folk-tradition of erecting a free-standing image or symbolic stone as the village 'guardian' deity.

Yaksha and yakshinis (also known as *shasan-devi*) feature in subsequent Jain iconography too as attendant semi-divine beings to the twenty-four Jain Tirthankars. (And, by the tenth-eleventh centuries AD yakshas and yakshinis would be well-established as subsidiary deities within Jainism. In addition, it seems that sometimes a Hindu goddess was transformed into a Jain *yakshini*, retaining her original name and iconographical specialities, but with a different mythology unconnected with her Hindu origins¹⁰²).

Despite the patronage provided to Buddhism (and Jainism) by the Mauryan ruling family, Pushyamitra Sunga, who overthrew the last Mauryan emperor, encouraged a Brahmanical revival. In Rajasthan, this revival is vouchsafed by the discovery of pillars known as *yupas*. The various *yupa* bear inscriptions dating to the third century AD, namely those engraved on the Nandsa *Yupa* of AD 225 (district Bhilwara), Barnala *Yupa*

of AD 227 (district Jaipur), Badva *Yupa* of AD 238-239 (district Kota), and Bichpuri *Yupa* of AD 264 (near Uniara in district Tonk), among others.

As far as the sculptural or art tradition is concerned, from around the third-second century BC onwards, terracotta, stucco and stone sculptures in the Mauryan-Sunga style can be noted from various parts of Rajasthan. The ensuing Kushan period was marked by Yaksha images, Siva-lingas (among them the one from Nand, near the ancient pilgrimage site of Pushkar), besides various Buddhist and Brahmanical sculpture¹⁰³ in the 'Mathura Art' style. Miniature votive tanks (like those found at Noh, Bairat and Nagar), as well as terracotta plaques were made too. Well known examples of contemporaneous art include a panel from Noh with four Bodhisattva figures, and Kushan period sculptures from Nand.

Kushan contribution to, or impact on, the art tradition in Rajasthan may be especially seen in the field of terracotta plaques and figurines. Among these are some of the examples from Naliasar-Sambhar, and the stone sculptures and Siva-lingas found at Nand. Mention may also be made here of a door-jamb of red sandstone noted at Hanumangarh fort, near the second or middle gate of the entrance. This contains three superimposed panels, one of which depicts the seated image of Surya, the Sun god, wearing boots and holding a lotus flower in two hands. By the third century AD terracotta plaques, stone images and, little later, free-standing temples of the Classical Gupta form began to appear¹⁰⁴.

(One may note, though, that even after stone sculpture became more common, particularly from the reign of the Gupta emperors, terracotta was to remain a medium of artistic creativity. Thus, terracotta and unbaked clay continued to be used both for manufacturing utility items and toys and so on as well as a medium of expression in the centuries that followed. The tradition seems to have never ended in the case of utility items and toys. In addition, clay and terracotta figurines are still made for certain religious festivals and rituals like Gangaur, Diwali, Teej, etc., (as are papier mâché ones now), where the requirement is for a temporary or impermanent form, which can be immersed in water or ritually 'sent away' at the conclusion of the festival or ritual. Certain folk-deities and folk-heroes — like Teja-ji — are depicted using terracotta or similar materials too. The tradition is

common in many places, with certain centres, like the village of Molela, near Udaipur, famed for traditional (and now innovative) terracotta modelling even in the contemporary context).

THE RAJASTHAN REGION AT THE BEGINNING OF CIRCA AD 300

Besides art and architecture, other changes too would come to the region of Rajasthan during the period that the Gupta emperors held sway over much of northern and eastern India, while the Vakatakas were to do the same in the Deccan and western India, and the Pallavas were strong across southern India. For one thing, some of the smaller 'republics' of the region would be amalgamated into larger, neighbouring tracts. In the centuries that followed, further changes and transformations would occur. For example, by this period, while resurgent Brahmanical religion was firmly established, and Jainism continued to thrive and gain in adherents, Buddhism was beginning to lose a position of eminence in Rajasthan. It is also from around this period that the fusion of various religious cults and sects (including into what took shape as 'Classical Hinduism' under the Gupta emperors) becomes iconographically recognisable.

We shall look at all this, and more, in the ensuing chapters.

¹ Dasharatha Sharma *Rajasthan Through the Ages*. Vol.1, Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner, 1966, pp.29-30.

² *ibid.*

³ Besides Harappan 'graffiti' on potsherds etc. at Kalibangan, which have remained undeciphered, other inscriptions, starting with Brahmi, as is the case with the Bairat epigraphs of Ashoka's time, are in different scripts and languages; e.g. Sanskrit, Pali, Devnagari script, Persian, and so on.

⁴ A later text, Patanjali's *Mahabhasya*, associated the Abhiras with the Sudras, as does the Puranic tradition.

⁵ Ojhn, G.H. *History of Rajputana*. Vol.V, Pt.1, Vedic Yantralaya, Ajmer 1939, pp. 1-2.

⁶ Ojha. *ibid*, pp.1.

⁷ Rapson's *Ancient India*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1914, pp. 50-51, suggests that this included parts of east Punjab (former Patiala state), Delhi, Alwar and adjacent areas, Mathura district and the Ganga-Jamuna Doab area.

⁸ D.K. Chakrabarti 1999. *India: An Archaeological History — Palaeolithic Beginnings to Early Historic Foundations*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, pp.266-267.

⁹ *ibid*, pp.266-267.

¹⁰ *ibid*.

¹¹ *ibid*.

¹² Historians regard that or the Indus Valley or Harappan Civilization as being the First.

¹³ See R.P. Vyas 'Ancient Period', *Rajasthan State Gazetteer*, Government of Rajasthan, Jaipur, Vol.11, 1995, pp.17.

¹⁴ Dhvasan Dvaitavana's name figures in the *Satpatha Brahmana* as an 'Ashvamedhin' king. (See, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's *Vedic Age (The History & Culture of the Indian People)*, Vol.1, pp.254.

¹⁵ See, among others, B.C. Law's *Historical Geography of Ancient India*, Paris, 1954, pp.333-334.

¹⁶ Archaeological Survey of India Report, Cunningham Ser., Vol.11, pp.245; & Cunningham's *The Geography of Ancient India*, 1871, pp.288, London.

¹⁷ Cunningham, *The Geography of Ancient India*, 1871, pp.288, London.

¹⁸ *ibid*.

¹⁹ D.R. Sahni *Archaeological Remains and Excavations at Bairat*, Jaipur, 1936.

²⁰ D.K. Chakrabarti *The Archaeology of Ancient Indian Cities*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1997, pp.220.

²¹ See *Indian Archaeology — A Review*, 1962-63, pp.31.

²² *ibid*.

²³ As per the current Pinyin Romanization, the name of this Chinese pilgrim, who travelled to India and back in c.629-645 AD, is spelt as 'Xuanzang'. In the Wade-Giles Romanization, it would be 'Hsuan-tsang'.

²⁴ This Matsya Union was a short-lived entity. It was integrated on 15 May 1949 into present-day Rajasthan.

- ²⁵ *Mahabharata*, ‘Virat Parva’, 30, 1-2. Also, in K.C.Jain’s 1972 *Ancient Cities and Towns of Rajasthan*, Motilal Banarasi Dass, New Delhi, pp.25.
- ²⁶ V.S. Agrawala and Dasharatha Sharma held that they inhabited the region north of Matsya territory.
- ²⁷ The Yugandharas lived on the western side of the river Yamuna. Dr. VS. Agrawala hypothesized that they may have founded the town of Jagadhari (Yamunanagar).
- ²⁸ Sharma *op.cit.* 1966, pp.50-51.
- ²⁹ Also called Shripath.
- ³⁰ See R.C. Majumdar, (Ed.) 1952, *The Age of Imperial Unity (The History & Culture of the Indian People — Vol.II)*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, pp. 166.
- ³¹ Sharma, 1966, pp.53, 58.
- ³² *Mahabharata*’s ‘Sabha-parva’ tells us that the Yaudheyas ruled over ‘Bahudhanyaka’ and ‘Maru’ with their capital at ‘Rohitak’, and were brought to heel by Nakula, one of the Pandava brothers.
- ³³ Sharma, 1966, pp.52.
- ³⁴ A *ratti* (also called *gunji* and *Krishnala*) is a small red and black seed of an indigenous plant *Arbus precatorius*, which has traditionally been used by goldsmiths and others as a measure of weight. Its weight approximates eight grains of rice: about eighteen grams.
- ³⁵ Interestingly, a Pali text called ‘*Ashta-katha*’ states that when King Ajatashatru changed his capital from Rajagriha to Pataliputra the weight of coins too was changed from twenty-four to thirty-two rattis!
- ³⁶ See D. Sharma 1966, among others. For a summary, see Hooja, 1988.
- ³⁷ Among others, see A.L. Basham *The Wonder that was India*. [Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1954], 2nd Edition, Fontana and Rupa & Co., Calcutta-Allahabad-Bombay-New Delhi, 1971, pp.59-60.
- ³⁸ For Gandharan art, see works like J.C. Harle 1994, *The Art and Architecture of the Indian Subcontinent*. Yale University Press, New Haven & London; & M. Bussagli and C. Sivaramamurti (Eds.), [no date] *5000 Years of the Art of India*, Harry N. Adams Inc. New York, & The Tulsi Shah Enterprises, Bombay, among others.
- ³⁹ Basham 1971, *op.cit.*
- ⁴⁰ There is a possibility that the ‘*drachma*’ coin of the Greeks and Indo-Greeks is the root for the ‘*dramma*’ coins used in Rajasthan, and for the popularly used Rajasthani term ‘*damrdi*’, which until recently meant any small coin, including ancient, weather-worn, examples found at old sites, or through archaeological excavations! The word was also applied to small denominations of coins.

- ⁴¹ The term seems derived from the word 'Kshatrapavan' in Old Iranian, meaning ruler of a state or district.
- ⁴² Connected with *Pars*, or *Parthia* (in Persia), and bearing Persian names and customs. The Indo-Parthian states or *Satrapies* were governed by *Satraps*. The domination of the Indo-Parthians lasted between c. 28 BC and c. AD 50.
- ⁴³ There are many theories about the year Kanishka's reign began. AD 78 is the most popularly supported date at present. The date of AD 128 has also been proposed and supported by many scholars as the date his reign commenced. Prof. A.K. Narain places Kanishka's date between c. AD 117-127 (Narain, A.K., 'An Excursis on the date of Kanishka', *Indian Journal of Buddhist Studies* Vol. 7, pp.23-51, 1995; & pers. comm).
- ⁴⁴ D.C. Sircar, 1942. *Select Inscriptions hearing on Indian History and Civilization*. Vol. I, Calcutta, pp.135.
- ⁴⁵ E.g., see Hermann Goetz 1950. *The Art and Architecture of Bikaner State*. Bruno Cassirer, Oxford.
- ⁴⁶ Cited in K.C. Jain, 1972, pp.146.
- ⁴⁷ *ibid*.
- ⁴⁸ The Western Sakas remained powerful during c, first century BC to c. fourth century AD in Rajasthan, and the southwestern part neighbouring Malwa and Gujarat probably lay within the range of their political domination.
- ⁴⁹ See D.C. Sircar 1942, (Vol.1), pp.172.
- ⁵⁰ H.D. Sankalia *et al.*, *Excavations at Ahar (Tambavati): 1961-1962*. Deccan College, Poona, 1969, pp.3.
- ⁵¹ R.N. Mehta & S.N. Chowdhary *Excavations at Devnimori*, M.S. University, Baroda, 1966.
- ⁵² J.C. Harle 1994, pp.26.
- ⁵³ Sahni, D.R. *Archaeological Remains and Excavations at Bairat*, Jaipur, 1936.
- ⁵⁴ *ibid*, pp.21.
- ⁵⁵ Sahni questioned Bhabra being the original site of the edict as no other associated remains were noted there!
- ⁵⁶ Vincent A. Smith [3rd Edition 1919]. *As'oka — The Buddhist Emperor of India*, [reprinted Arihant Publishers, Jaipur, 1988], pp. 32-35.
- ⁵⁷ *ibid*, pp.32.
- ⁵⁸ *ibid*, pp.35, 36, 155.
- ⁵⁹ Now at the Dilaram Bagh Government Museum, Amber.

- [60](#) D. Sharma *Rajasthan Through the Ages*, Vol.1, Bikaner, 1966, pp.55.
- [61](#) The area known as Malwa in Central India also takes its name from the Malavas, some of who moved further south from Rajasthan in subsequent centuries.
- [62](#) Dasharatha Sharma (1966, pp.52), felt that the Aulikaras of Mandisor (in modern Madhya Pradesh), who used the *Krita* Era even though they were subordinate to the Gupta Empire, may have been of Malava extraction.
- [63](#) Alternate views were put forward by the site's excavator and scholars like the late D.C. Sircar. The issue has remained unresolved. For a discussion, see Jain, 1972, pp.122.
- [64](#) At the time part of the *Uniar* *thikana* or fief-held estate of Jaipur state.
- [65](#) Jain, *Ancient Cities and Town of Rajasthan*, 1972, pp.107.
- [66](#) The coconut, now a major element of Indian rituals and ceremonies, probably reached the east coast of India around the middle of the first century BC, and the west coast about a century later. Ushavadata, son of Dinika and son-in-law of Nahapana, helped propagate its spread, particularly through gifting coconut plantations to Brahmins. Coconuts may have first become known in Rajasthan through Ushavadata's pilgrimage to Pushkar.
- [67](#) By the first half of the second century AD, the Western Sakas were jousting for supremacy with the Satvahanas further to the south. Around c. AD 124 Nahapana was defeated and killed in battle by the Satvahana king Gautamiputra Satkarni. (Coins of the former have been found over-struck by the latter's name at Jogalthambi).
- [68](#) Coins of Saka king Rudrasena III were found in the region.
- [69](#) Cited in K.C. Jain's *Ancient Cities and Towns of Rajasthan*, 1972, pp.106.
- [70](#) I have given a loose rendering of the text, deliberately using flamboyant language that approximates the original epigraph, rather than the more crisp and business-like late twentieth century 'modern' English, to convey the flavour of the Nandsa and other contemporaneous epigraphs.
- [71](#) Jain, 1972, pp.106.
- [72](#) *ibid*, pp. 108-111.
- [73](#) Jain, 1972, pp.27-28.
- [74](#) A fact which may well be equally true too, in other areas of Rajasthan, for many of the other early settlements.
- [75](#) The sentence also refers to the siege of Saket, situated in the Gangetic Doab, by the 'Yavanas', i.e. Greeks.
- [76](#) Sharma 1966, pp.14.

- [77](#) See D.R. Bhandarkar, *The Archaeological Remains and Excavations at Nagari*. Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India, No.4, Calcutta, 1920.
- [78](#) Two copper punch-marked coins were noted from the present-day village settlement of Nagari in the course of my own archaeological fieldwork in the region during 1982-83.
- [79](#) Sharma 1966, pp.57.
- [80](#) D.R. Bhandarkar 1920.
- [81](#) *ibid*, pp.127.
- [82](#) See *Indian Archaeology — A Review*, 1962-63, pp.19-20.
- [83](#) Dr. Dilip Chakrabarti (pers. comm.) suggests that an epictical structure found beneath may be pre-Mauryan.
- [84](#) An inscription dating to AD 424, found *in situ* in the walls of the stone enclosure, refers to the building of a brick temple to Vishnu by three brothers at the site. So does another inscription dating to c. seventh century AD. An even later epigraph from the same site refers to structures dedicated to ‘Manorath Swami’.
- [85](#) Sambhar Lake extends for 190 sq km at its fullest, and is described as India’s largest saline lake. Scientific evidence, including of fresh-water fossils, suggests that Sambhar was a fresh water lake till around the beginning of the geological period known as the ‘Quaternary’.
- [86](#) See, Daya Ram Sahni’s *Report on Naliasar Excavations*, 1952; & and his *Archaeological Remains and Excavations at Sambhar, during V.S. (993-94 (1936-37))*.
- [87](#) The ‘Adi Parva’ section of the *Mahabharata, Bhagvat Purana* vol. IX, chapters 18 & 19, Geeta Press, Gorakhpur.
- [88](#) The state of Jaipur started its Department of Archaeology & Historical Research in 1926. Following D.R. Sahni, K.N. Puri became the next director of this department.
- [89](#) Daya Ram Sahni (1952) *Report on Naliasar Excavations*.
- [90](#) The Empire of the Saka king Maues (c. 20 BC-AD 22) extended up to Mathura in the east.
- [91](#) D. Sharma 1966, pp.55.
- [92](#) K.C. Jain, 1972, pp.28.
- [93](#) B.M.S. Parmar, ‘Coinage’, *Rajasthan State Gazetteer, Vol.3*. Directorate District Gazetteers, Govt. of Rajasthan, Jaipur, 1996, pp.345.
- [94](#) Parmar, *ibid*, pp.345.
- [95](#) See Hanna Rydh *et al.* 1959. *Rang Mahal (The Swedish Archaeological Expedition to India 1952-1954)*. CWK Gleerup Publishers, Lund & The New Book Company, Bombay.

[96](#) *ibid.*

[97](#) See H. Goetz, *op.cit.*

[98](#) Also known as Khandill and Khandelapura, the site had considerable importance for Saivism and Jainism over the ages, with many temples and structures built here. The Khandelwals trace their origin from Khandela. In the sixteenth century, it became the seat of a renowned Shekhawat warrior-chief, Raysal 'Darbari'.

[99](#) See S.N. Dube's 'Early Foot-prints of Bhagvatism in Rajasthan', in S.N. Dube (Ed) *Religious Movements in Rajasthan — Ideas and Antiquities*, Centre for Rajasthan Studies, Univ. of Rajasthan, Jaipur, 1996, pp.20-33.

[100](#) Har Bilas Sarada, 1911, *Ajmer: Historical and Dacriptive*. [Rev. Ed. 1941], Civil Lines, Ajmer, pp.393.

[101](#) For an overview, see various articles in S.N. Dube (Ed) *Religious Movements in Rajasthan — Ideas and Antiquities*, Centre for Rajasthan Studies, Univ. of Rajasthan, Jaipur, 1996.

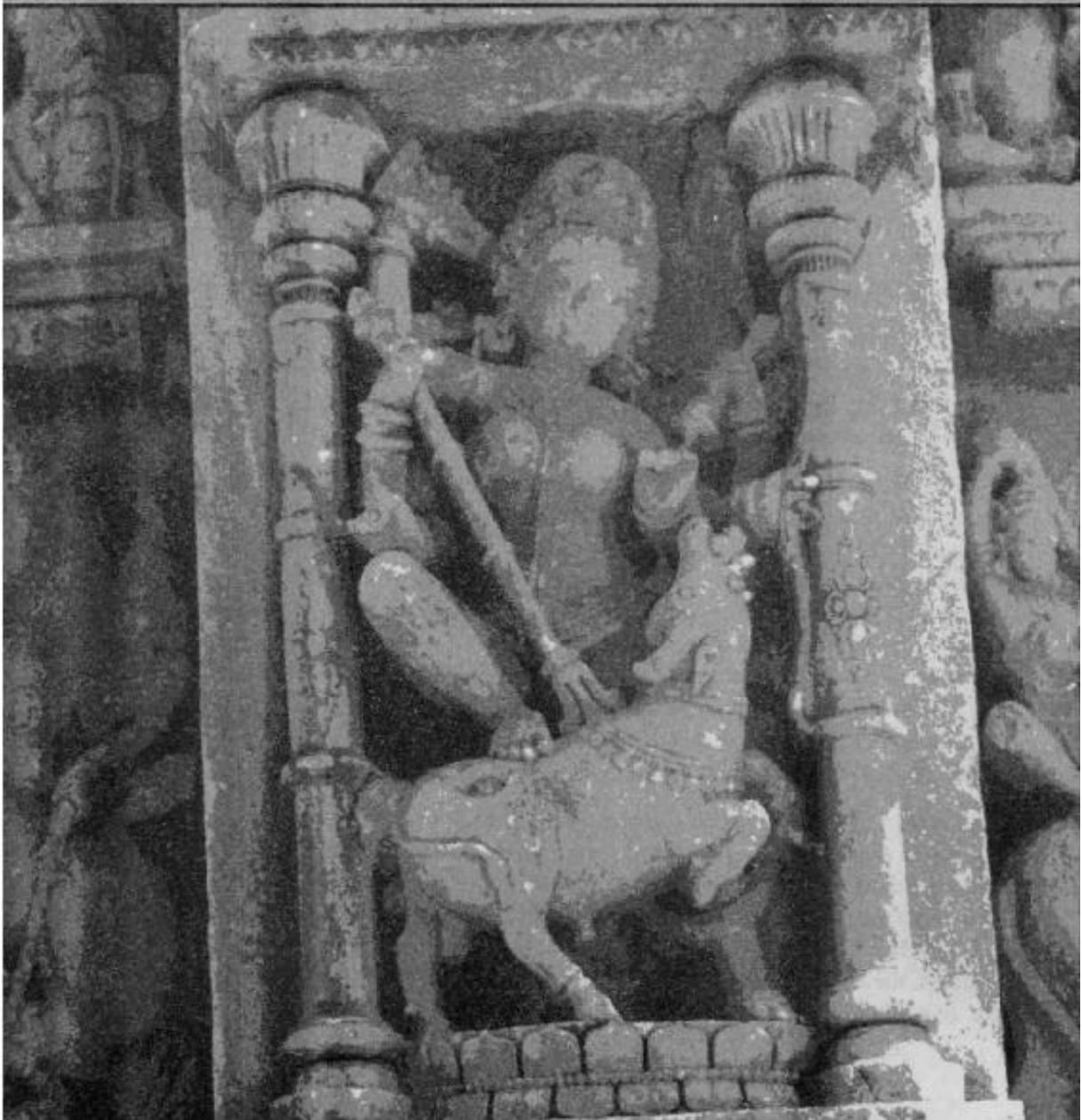
[102](#) J.N. Banerjea 'Iconography', in Majumdar (Ed.) *The Age of Imperial Kanauj*. Vol.IV, Bombay, 1955, pp.299.

[103](#) Harle feels Brahmanical icons began to be made in the Kushan period. "Their appearance coincides with the emergence of the two great theistic systems, the S'aiva and the Vaisnava, each with its pantheon" (1994, pp.64).

[104](#) Apparently the earliest extant freestanding temples in South Asia date from the Gupta period, although few examples survive (Harle, 1994, pp.87).

4

RAJASTHAN BETWEEN
C. AD 300 AD 700



INTRODUCTION



WITH THE DECLINE OF KUSHAN POWER, VARIOUS LOCAL STATES OR groups in Rajasthan re-asserted their dominance over certain regions and sub-regions of Rajasthan around the end of the second and beginning of the third century AD. Among them were groups like the Arjunayanas, Malavas, Yaudheyas, Abhiras, Sibis, etc. mentioned in the preceding chapter. However, regional power equations would see considerable alterations and change during the c. AD 300-700 period, as we shall see in this chapter.

Unfortunately, as is the case for earlier periods, there is scanty evidence for a detailed reconstruction of the ensuing period too. Despite that, various inscriptions and other data help us in filling in some of the blanks in the historical jigsaw puzzle to a far greater extent than was possible in the case of the preceding centuries.

The Badva *Yupa* Inscription of *Krita* Era 295 or AD 238-9, for instance, mentions a principality of the Maukharis in the Kota region of south-eastern Rajasthan, which, according to some, probably acknowledged the overlordship of either the Western Sakas or the Nagas of Padmavati. (This Padmavati has been identified with Padam Pawaya, northeast of Narwar in present-day Madhya Pradesh). While we have briefly discussed Saka interaction with the Rajasthan area in the previous chapter, further research about the Naga kingdoms vis-à-vis Rajasthan seems an issue that can lead to some interesting results! It may be stressed here that, on the basis of place-names connected with 'Naga' — like Nagari, Nagda, Nagaur, Nagadhari, Nagapalli, Takshakgarh etc., some historians have concluded

that the domains of the Bharasiva Nagas of Padmavati extended over parts of Rajasthan.

Significantly, these Padmavati Nagas were part of the powerful clan — and confederacy, which was crushed in the mid-fourth century AD by the Gupta emperor, Samudra Gupta. There may have been other Naga clans who held political authority over different geographical areas of Rajasthan at different points of time. Place-names and local lore often indicates such a possibility (as noted further in this chapter). Interestingly, in chronologically later historical contexts, the snake motif has played an important role in Rajasthan, with deified folk-heroes like Teja-ji being associated with reviving snakebite victims.

One needs to conjecture less, as there is marginally more historical data available, in the case of the Malavas, Yaudheyas, Arjunayanas, and Abhiras etc. around the beginning of the fourth century AD — i.e. c. AD 300. For example, the Arjunayanas were important in the Alwar-Jaipur-Agra area, the Malavas in parts of Jaipur-Tonk-Ajmer, Abhiras in northern and north-western Rajasthan, Yaudheyas in northern and north-eastern Rajasthan and parts of adjoining Uttar Pradesh and so on.

By the second half of the fourth century AD, however, it appears that many of these local powers — including the Malavas and Yaudheyas — had been forced to acknowledge the overlordship of the Imperial Gupta dynasty that held power from Magadha¹. For, it is believed that the principalities and tribes in what today constitutes modern Rajasthan were among the many kingdoms, chiefdoms and units that paid tribute in cash and kind to the Guptas and sent their representatives to attend at the Imperial court.

RAJASTHAN DURING THE TIME OF THE GUPTA EMPIRE

In its earlier stages, under the kings Srigupta and his son Ghatotkacha (both of whom are referred to as ‘Maharaja’), and then the latter’s successor, *Maharajadhiraja* Chandra Gupta I (r. AD 320-335), who is known to have

started the 'Gupta Era' calendar, Gupta sovereignty had mainly extended over Magadha and the eastern portion of the Ganga-Yamuna doab area. During the reign of Chandra Gupta's son and successor, Samudra Gupta (r. AD 335-375), however, the empire expanded rapidly to incorporate many eastern and northern regions of the subcontinent². In time, Samudra Gupta's hegemony was to cover a wide swathe of territory, and his supremacy came to be recognised over much of the Indo-Gangetic plains, Central India, portions of southern India, and modern Assam and Nepal³. This territorial expansion affected the small chiefships and tracts of Rajasthan too.

The twenty-second line of Samudra Gupta's Allahabad Pillar Inscription (also known as the '*Prayag Prashasti*'), which was composed by Harisena, records much more than Samudra Gupta's triumphal ascendance over numerous states conquered by him. It specifically names not only the nine kings who were conclusively defeated and their kingdoms annexed, but also lists five tributary kingdoms, and nine feudatory tribal states bordering the Gupta Empire, that had acknowledged the Imperial Gupta sovereignty.

Among the nine defeated rulers named in Samudra Gupta's Allahabad Pillar Inscription, two — namely, Nagasena and Ganapati-Naga, belonged to the powerful Naga clan that had established three kingdoms at Padmavati, Vidisha and Mathura. Two other defeated monarchs were Achyuta, who ruled from Ahichchhatra (near Bareilly in U.P.), and Chandra-varman, who ruled over parts of western Bengal. The names of the remaining five rulers whose kingdoms were merged into Samudra Gupta's spreading empire were Rudra-Dev, Matila, Nagadatta, Nandin and Balavarman.

The five states that accepted Samudra Gupta's supremacy and paid tribute to him were Samtata, Kamarupa, Nepal, Davaka and Kartripura. These are described as being situated on the frontiers of Samudra Gupta's dominions. It is believed that the nine feudatory tribal states that had accepted Gupta superiority were similarly located on the fringes of the rapidly spreading Gupta Empire. The names of these nine feudatory tribal states are recorded on the Allahabad Pillar Inscription as the Malava, Arjunayana, Yaudheya, Madraka, Sanakanika, Abhira, Prarjuna, Kaka and

Kharparika people. According to the text of the inscription, the chiefs of the tribal states were encouraged to pay tribute and render homage to the Gupta emperor, to attend on him when summoned, and to carry out imperial commands. The chiefs of forest-dwelling peoples or 'atavikas', similarly, accepted Samudra Gupta's supremacy.

Of the above list of nine tribal feudatory states, it is probable that some of them lived in and around the area that today comprises Rajasthan. For instance, the Malavas, who have been discussed in the preceding chapter too, held sway over parts of eastern and southeastern Rajasthan. The Arjunayanas too, as testified by their coins and seals, had been a known presence in parts of Rajasthan, during the pre-Gupta period, as noted previously, and were probably a neighbouring group to those of the Yaudheya sub-branches that lived within Rajasthan.

The Yaudheyas were apparently spread over a greater territory that extended up to the river Yamuna in the east, and included parts of Rajasthan, as well as parts of the Punjab in the west. (The tracts flanking both sides of the river Sutlej continued to be known after the Yaudheyas — from which the later term Johiya is derived — as 'Johiyawar'/'Johiyabar', well into living memory). In fact, in the case of the Yaudheyas, while their power may have been broken temporarily during the Gupta empire, the Yaudheyas would remain a potent force in the centuries that followed. Thus, nearly two centuries after Samudra Gupta's victory over them, an inscription of c. sixth century *Vikram Samvat* from Vijaygarh (also Vijaymandirgarh, or Bayana, in district Bharatpur), made a reference to the existence of the Yaudheyas. (Even in subsequent centuries, the Johiyas (Rajput Kshatriyas and Muslim converts alike) were to hold power and pelf over many tracts of northern Rajasthan and the Punjab, and find frequent mention in medieval records⁴).

It is not certain whether the Abhira people listed in Samudra Gupta's Allahabad Pillar inscription had any affiliation with the Abhiras referred to in connection with parts of northwestern Rajasthan, or whether the Abhiras subjugated by Emperor Samudra Gupta were the groups living in Central India, in the Jhansi-Bhilsa area known subsequently as 'Ahirwara'. However, the Sanakanikas were almost certainly not a Rajasthan-based

community, and seem to have been a group inhabiting the Bhilsa area of Madhya Pradesh. The Prarjuna, Kaka and Kharparika tribal feudatory states to Samudra Gupta too do not seem to have any known connections with the area now called Rajasthan, and were probably located in what today constitutes the Madhya Pradesh and/or Chhatisgarh area. The Madrakas — perhaps linked with the older ‘Madra’ people, apparently occupied the area between the rivers Ravi and Chenab during Samudra Gupta’s period, with their capital at Sakala (Sialkot).

It would seem that the Rajasthan area was within the sphere of influence, if not more overt control, of Samudra Gupta. As such, Rajasthan probably knew the administrative and socio-economic structure common to the rest of the Gupta Empire holdings, though we have little actual information about this. One would assume that the political condition of Rajasthan would probably not have altered too drastically under Samudra Gupta’s successors — the powerful Chandra Gupta II Vikramaditya, Kumar Gupta and Skanda Gupta. Chandra Gupta II is known to have campaigned against and defeated the Saka ruler of western India, and made a prolonged stay in the Malwa region. (The latter is also borne out by two inscriptions at Udaygiri Hill, and another at Sanchi, issued by his subordinates). If anything, Imperial Gupta influence would have become stronger, not weaker, over this part of the empire!

In fact, there is no evidence to the contrary, and, in testimony to Gupta presence in this region, several Gupta period coins have been found from various parts of Rajasthan. These include a range of well-recognisable coins struck during the reigns of Chandra Gupta I and his successors Samudra Gupta, Chandra Gupta II Vikramaditya (r. AD 375-415), Kumar Gupta I (r. AD 415-455) and Skanda Gupta (r. AD 455-467). These include Samudra Gupta’s ‘battle-axe’ type, and Chandra Gupta II’s ‘archer’ type of coins. Coins bearing the Garuda symbol have been found in substantial numbers too.

Notable among the Gupta period coins found from Rajasthan is the hoard of 1821 gold coins discovered eleven kilometres from Bayana (in the Bharatpur area). The find also throws valuable light on the Bharatpur-Bayana-Kaman area of Rajasthan during the Gupta period. This

Naglachhela hoard (well-discussed in the late A.S. Altekar's writings), contains coins attributed to Chandra Gupta I, Samudra Gupta, and Chandra Gupta II Vikramaditya. In addition, this hoard has yielded thirty gold coins with the legend '*Kachogâma-chakritya Divam, Karmamiruttameyr-jayati*' and the flag-with-disc symbol (known as '*chakra-dvaja*') on the obverse. These coins have the figure of the goddess Lakshmi and the words '*Sarvarajochchheta*' ('Victor of All Kings') on the reverse. The name of 'Kacha' on these coins is intriguing, particularly as the weight, devices and titles of these gold coins implies they were issued by one of the early Gupta monarchs, but the formal Gupta genealogies do not contain the name of 'Kacha'. The discovery of the Bayana hoard has thus led to a prolonged debate over the identity of this Kacha Gupta, and his relationship with Samudra Gupta or Chandra Gupta II, or even the latter's brother, Rama Gupta.

Gold coins ascribed to the Gupta rulers have also been found from Bundewali Doongri, near the village of Morali (district Jaipur) and Rairh in district Tonk, besides six Gupta gold coins from Bairh, near Rairh, found in 1962. G.H. Ojha had discovered twenty gold coins from Ajmer, and many others from erstwhile Mewar state. He also found five silver coins of the Gupta kings at Ajmer. Gold and silver coins of the Guptas have been reported from many other parts of Rajasthan too. Silver coins of Emperor Kumar Gupta have been reported from Naliasar-Sambhar. These depict the deity Karttikeya with his peacock celestial vehicle. The coins are on the pattern of the silver coins of the Western Saka Kshatrapas, except for the legend and the use of a peacock symbol in the case of Emperor Kumar Gupta's coins.

We have already noted the occurrence of Saka coins found at Sarvaniya in the erstwhile state of Banswara. There is a strong probability that this area could have slipped from Saka domination after the defeat of the Saka Kshatrapa Rudrasimha III at the hands of Emperor Chandra Gupta Vikramaditya II in the latter part of the fourth century. Subsequently, the area may have either been administered locally, or could have passed into the control of the Gupta empire.

Little direct information is available about the Rajasthan region's administration during the Gupta period. However, one may take note of a Gupta seal from Dhalia, near Bikaner, bearing the inscription '*Samekajaka Kumaramatyadhikaranasya*'. The text implies the existence of a local administrative representative of the empire in the northern Rajasthan area. Unfortunately, our information about Rajasthan's polity and administrative structures vis-à-vis the Gupta empire is fairly sketchy at present. The same may be said about contemporaneous economic and social conditions in Rajasthan. Though the well-known terracotta plaques found at northern Rajasthan sites like Rang Mahal, Badopal, Munda, Pir Sultan-ri-Theri, attributed to the late Kushan-early Gupta period, and depicting scenes of everyday life besides the already-mentioned themes on Krishna, Siva, *Mahishasura-mardini*, throw light on the art and society of the age.

In light of the fact that several trade-routes are known to have traditionally traversed through Rajasthan, and in view of the rich hoards of gold and silver (and copper) Gupta coins found here, there is every possibility that Rajasthan benefited from long and short-distance trade under the Guptas. The state of the local economy may have been partially manifested through the temples that were built and the sculptural art that flourished in Rajasthan during this general period.

By about the mid-fourth century AD, with the Gupta empire firmly established over many parts of South Asia (and other dynasties like the Vakatakas holding sway over other parts), there was a proliferation of stone temples and sculptures. Stone gradually began to overshadow the previous predominance of brick, wood, terracotta etc. This proliferation, and the general Classical Gupta (and contemporaneous Vakataka etc.), art convention (which is well known and has been amply described and discussed in numerous texts), made its impact felt on the local art and architecture of the Rajasthan region. It was in this period that the '*shikhar*' roof became part of Rajasthan's temple architecture, along with other conventions established during the Gupta period. Rock-cut temples were also carved — as exemplified at Kholvi, Binnayaga and Hathiagaur, in the Jhalawar area of south-eastern Rajasthan.

One may add here that the various large empires and kingdoms known to northern India over time e.g. the Mauryan (c. third-second century BC), Sunga (c. second century BC), Kushan (c. first centuries BC-AD), Gupta (c. fourth-sixth centuries AD), Harsh Vardhan (seventh century), Gurjara-Pratihara (c. eighth-tenth), etc., probably enabled a uniformity in religious iconography and sculptural styles over larger areas than would normally have been thought geographically probable. This — along with later canonical injunctions — may be a factor influencing the overall ‘pan-Indian’ nature of South Asian iconography; of course with regional variations!

In Rajasthan, fine examples of the stone sculpture and temples of this period are known from sites like Jagat (Udaipur area), Amjhera (Dungarpur area), Osian (western Rajasthan), the Harshad-Mata temple at Abaneri (near Jaipur), and Badoli (Kota area). The temples at Badoli, Charchauma, Krishna Vilas and Mukundarra in south-eastern Rajasthan indicate the leanings towards both Saivism and Vaishnavism on the part of the temple-donors during the Gupta and post-Gupta period. The Siva temple at Charchauma has an inscription, which scholars have declared to be in the Gupta period script. This implies, both, the influence of Saivism in this area, as well as contacts of this zone with the wider world of the Gupta empire.

The Bharatpur region, which is contiguous to the Mathura area, has many examples of Gupta art too. The area has yielded an imposing number of sculpture and other evidence, including coins, especially from Bayana, Kaman, Nihar, and other sites. (This underscores the probability of the Bharatpur-Alwar area forming part of the Gupta empire). The statues from Kaman include an idol of Vishnu’s Varah (boar) incarnation, a bas-relief of the Vishnu incarnations, another depicting the marriage of Siva and Parvati, and Siva-lingas and other representations of Siva. Huge rock-cut statues of Krishna’s brother, Balarama, and of Revati, etc. have been noted at Rupavas. These emphasise the importance of Krishna (and Vaishnavism in general), as well as Saivism in the eastern Rajasthan area during the Gupta period.

There are several Gupta period statues of particular note that were found in the western Rajasthan area too. These include a stone idol of a standing ('*sthanaka*') Vishnu from Bhinmal, and a life-size '*sthanaka*' Vishnu in red sandstone, belonging to the late Gupta period, found at Pali. (This latter was sent to the Jodhpur museum). Mandore yielded, among other things, an early fifth century panel depicting Krishna holding up the Goverdhan mountain on his finger. A broken statue of '*Padmapani-Deva*' too was found buried beneath several layers of earth at Mandore. Yet another statue found at Mandore was later taken away and installed within a temple to Mahavir at Bhinmal. One may also take note of the fact that the base of a fragmentary terracotta relief from Munda bears a fragmentary inscription reading as '*Yashodakriti*' in the Gupta period script. This has been interpreted as stating that it is the image of Yashoda, the foster-mother of Krishna.

Many terracotta and even kaolin (china clay) plaques and figurines of the Gupta period too have been noted from excavations and explorations at sites like Sambhar, Nagari, Rairh, Nagar, Rangmahal, Badopal, Munda, Pir Sultan-ri-Theri, and so on as noted elsewhere. Metal images too have been found from the later Gupta period onwards, mainly from the Abu area.

In sculpture, the Gupta period established and perpetuated the then prevailing accepted iconography for depicting Vishnu, Siva, and the other deities, and resulted in the further codification of the iconography for future generations.

Most of the Gupta dynasty emperors declared their devotion to 'Vasudeva-Vishnu' on coinage, epigraphs etc. (as did some other contemporary ruling houses), and idols and shrines of Vishnu proliferated over different parts of the subcontinent, including Rajasthan. The situation regarding temples and idols of Siva, the Great Goddess, and Surya was similar. Innovations in sculptural forms, styles and materials went hand-in-hand with a certain crystallisation of iconography, even while the sculptors of the Gupta period introduced certain major conventions.

For example, in the case of the iconography of Vishnu, it is from the Gupta period that the image of a four-armed Vishnu bearing a mace (*gada*),

discus (*chakra*), lotus (*padma*) and conch-shell (*shankh*) became firmly established in the iconographical tradition. From this period onwards, it was aspects like the placing of these four attributes in the hands of Vishnu statues in different set or prescribed permutations that determined the character of that specific idol. Among other ‘innovations’ were the Vaikunth and Vishvarupa idols of Vishnu. The former displayed additional visages — usually those of Vishnu’s Narsingh and Varah incarnations — attached onto the right and left shoulders of a Vishnu image; and the latter was a twenty-armed idol, with a halo incorporating various other portrayals of Vishnu images, to depict the all-pervasive aspect of God.

However, though many Gupta (and even Kushan) period statues have survived the vagaries of time, few temples can be found in their original unaltered fourth-fifth century AD form today in Rajasthan. Extant examples include the pillared portico and temple at Mukundarra, near Kota in south-eastern Rajasthan, which bears similarities with the Gupta period temple at Sarnath, and the fifth century Bhramara-Mata temple at Chhoti Sadri, near Chittorgarh. An inscription that was once *in situ* in a niche within the temple referred to the goddess by the names of ‘*Trishulapani*’ (the trident-holder) and ‘*Asura-samharini*’ (slayer of the Asuras). The Charchauma temple of the Kota area also dates back to the Gupta period in its basic form, though it was renovated in subsequent centuries. Sometimes, we are left only with references to old temples. For example, the Nagari Inscription of V.S. 481 (AD 424), records that a brick-temple to Lord Vishnupada (Vishnu) was built at Nagari (near Chittor) by three brothers. There is no extant structure marking this today. The same may be said in the case of what the late D.R. Bhandarkar believed were remains of an early Gupta period shrine dedicated to Siva at the centre of the mound at Nagari.

Other datable examples of Gupta period architecture from Rajasthan include two large rectangular stone pillars — or *toranas*, depicting scenes from the life of Krishna, which were noted in the ruined fort of Mandore (near modern-day Jodhpur in western Rajasthan), and removed in the mid-twentieth century to the Jodhpur Museum. These once carried an inscription in the Gupta period script, which is now illegible. Mandore and its vicinity probably had some importance during the Gupta period (just as it did later as the capital of the Pratiharas of Mandore). One may take note, in

particular, of an enormous earthen jar (measuring 4' 7½" in height and 10' in circumference), that was apparently excavated at Mandore, and bears letters in the script of the Gupta period incised upon its rim⁵.

SOME LOCAL CHIEFSHIPS IN RAJASTHAN DURING THE GUPTA AGE

It is also from the Gupta period onwards that there are a significantly greater number of inscriptions and other literary evidences, which aid our reconstruction of local histories⁶. This is especially true regarding certain local ruling clans and dynasties, about whom not much else is known.

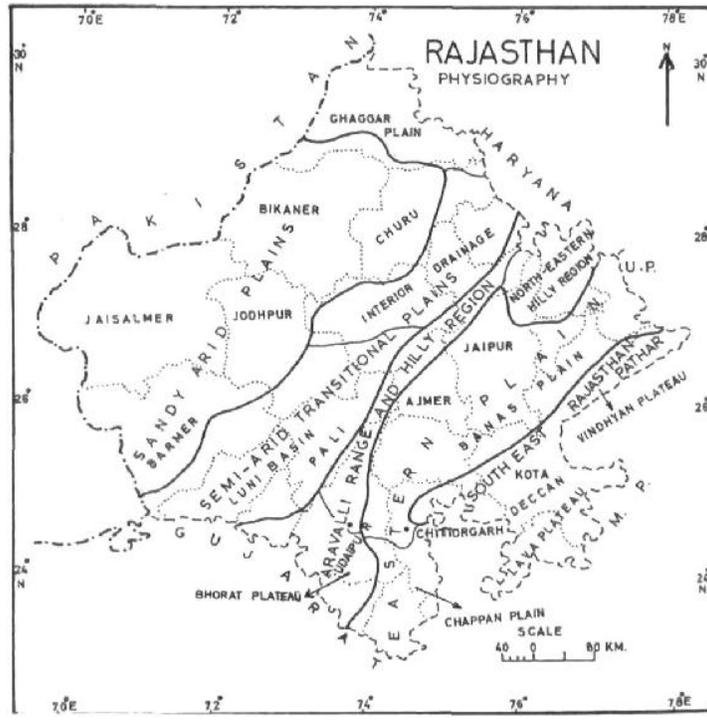
For instance, eastern Rajasthan's Bayana (Vijaygarh) Stone Inscription of *Vikram Samvat* (VS) 428, i.e. AD 371-2, records the names of various rulers from a tribe called Varika, besides describing the raising of a sacrificial post by one Vishnuvardhan after completing the performance of the *Pundarika* sacrifice. The inscription describes Vishnuvardhan as being the son of Yashovardhan, grandson of Yashoraj and the great-grandson of Vyaghraraj. It has been suggested that Vishnuvardhan could have been a feudatory of Samudra Gupta. As Yaudheya presence is known in and around Bayana till c. AD 300 (including through the fragmentary Bayana Inscription of AD 300 referring to a '*Maharaja-Mahasenapati*' of the Yaudheya people), it is not clear whether the Varika tribe seized power from the Yaudheyas or were a branch of the Yaudheyas; nor whether it was the expanding Gupta empire that eclipsed the local Yaudheyas and allowed the Varikas to rise.

Yet another inscription, this one from Gangadhar (old Gargarata in Jhalawar district, some eighty-four kilometres south-west of Jhalarapatan), dating to *Vikram Samvat* 480 (AD 423), refers to the Aulikara dynasty that ruled in this part of south-eastern Rajasthan (possibly from its capital of Dashapur — modern Mandsaur in Madhya Pradesh). The Gangadhar Inscription describes the works of public welfare promoted by King Vishva-Varman, son of King Nara-Varman, and commemorates the construction of a temple to Vishnu by the king's minister, Mayurakhshaka. Vishva-Varman

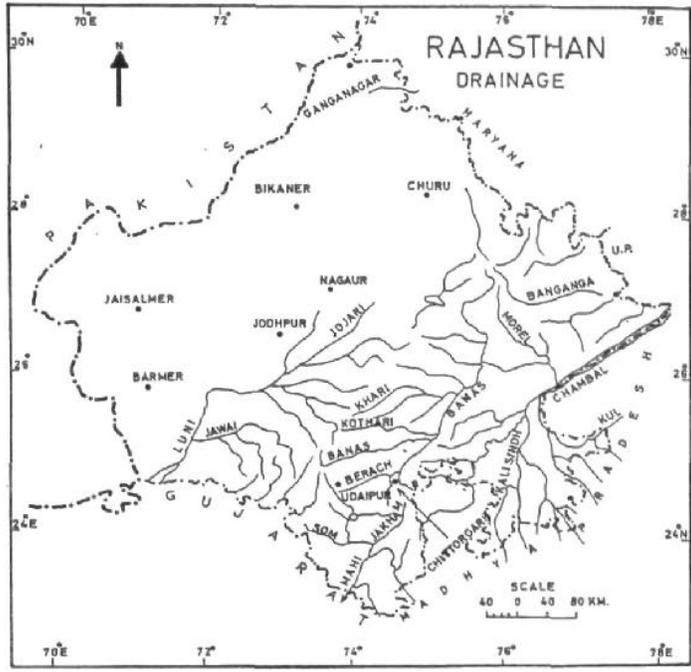
is described as having descended from King Jaya-Varman (perhaps the first of his line), who ruled in the latter half of the fourth century AD, as did Jaya-Varman's son and successor, Simha-Varman. Simha-Varman's son, Nara-Varman, was ruler by AD 404, and his son, Vishnu-Varman, was on the throne in the year the inscription was recorded. The inscription also refers to the construction by the same minister Mayurakhshaka of a temple in honour of the Divine Mothers, 'full of *Dakinis*, who shout loudly in joy and stir up the very oceans with mighty winds that are created by the power of their magic rites' (verse 23). (The epigraph indicates a mother-goddess cult). The inscription further mentions Mayurakhshaka constructing a drinking-water well at Gangadhar. Gangadhar is described as being situated on the banks of the river Kali Sindh (known as the river Gargara in the fifth century), while its king is described as devoting himself to works of public good like the building of irrigation wells, tanks, temples, gardens and causeways.

According to D.C. Shukla, the Aulikaras, also known as the Vardhana dynasty, founded an independent state that went on to establish their hegemony over neighbouring regions. They were probably a branch of the Malavas. The Aulikara dynasty included heroes like Vishnu-Vardhana who, in a later century, is said to have 'dazzled' the Hun king (probably Mihirkula), with the might of his shining sword and, as indicated through inscriptions found at Mandsaur, Chhoti Sadri and Chittor, blocked Hun advance beyond 'Chitrakuta' (Chittor)⁷.

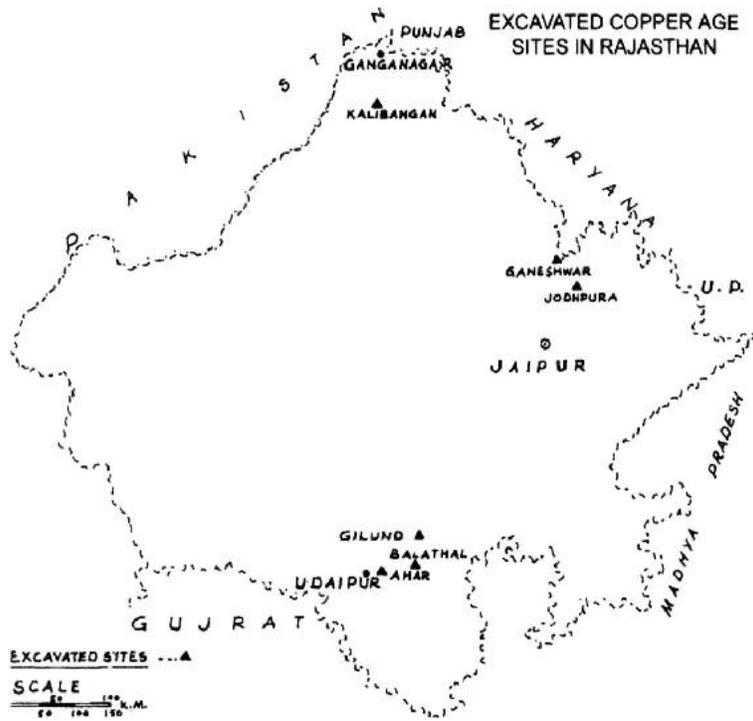
The Bhramara-Mata Temple Inscription of *Vikram Samvat* 547 (AD 491), from the Bhramara-Mata (or Gauri) temple near Chhoti Sadri (district Chittorgarh), informs us that King Gauri of the Manavayani lineage built this temple. The eulogy or *prashasti* of the inscription was composed by Bhramara-Soma, who appears to have been Gauri's court poet. Taken in conjunction with a roughly contemporaneous, albeit undated, fragmentary inscription discovered at Mandsaur, this throws light on the existence of a Kshatriya dynasty that belonged to the Manavayani *kul* (ancestry, lineage or family) and ruled over a tract along the southern Rajasthan-Malwa border around the second half of the fifth century AD. They probably owed allegiance to the Aulikaras of Mandsaur.



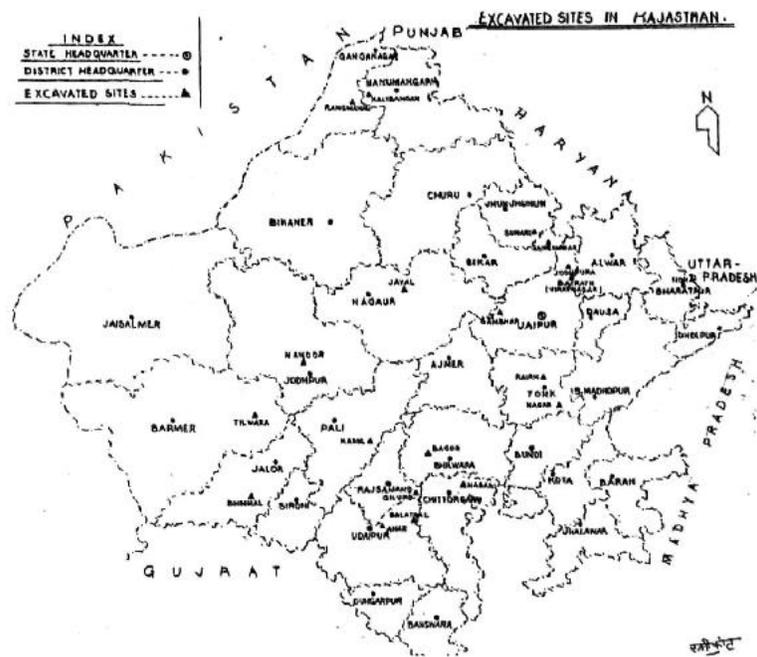
The physiography of Rajasthan.



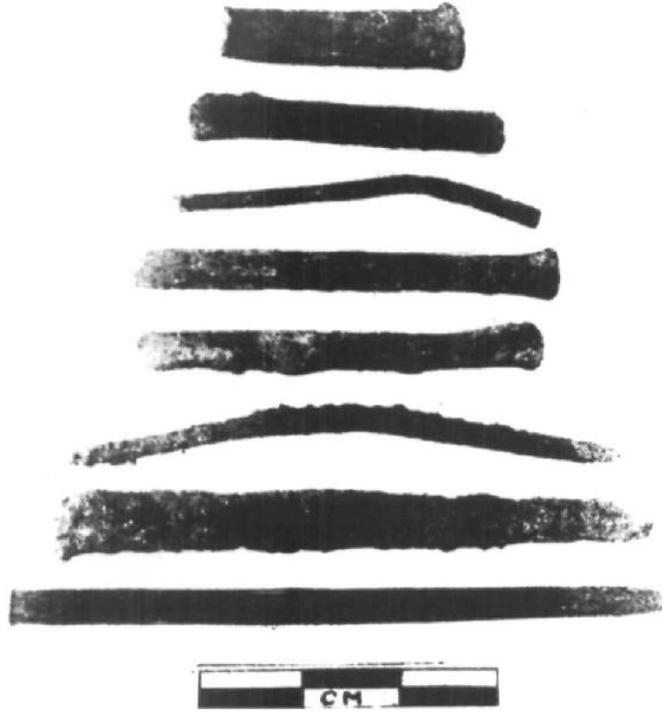
The main rivers of Rajasthan.



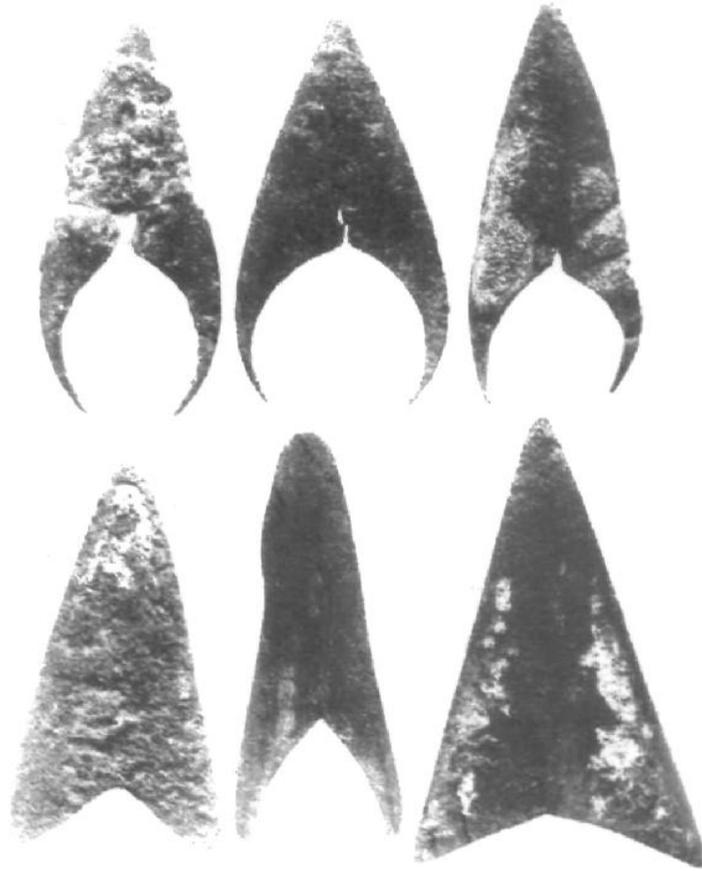
Excavated Copper Age sites in Rajasthan.



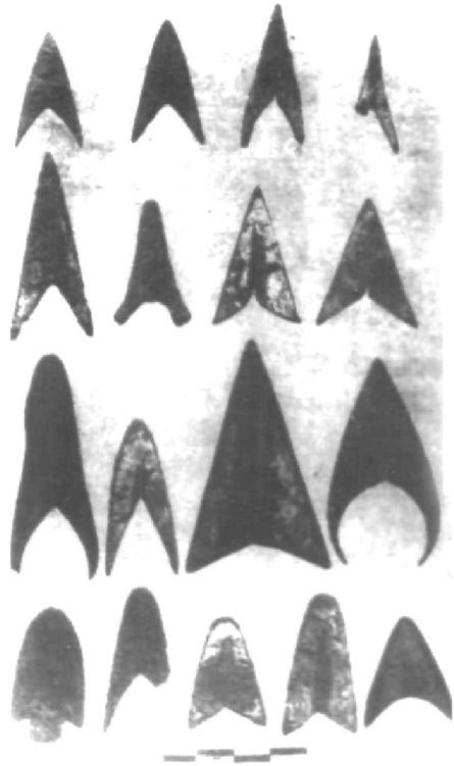
Excavated sites in Rajasthan.



Copper artifacts from Ganeshwar.



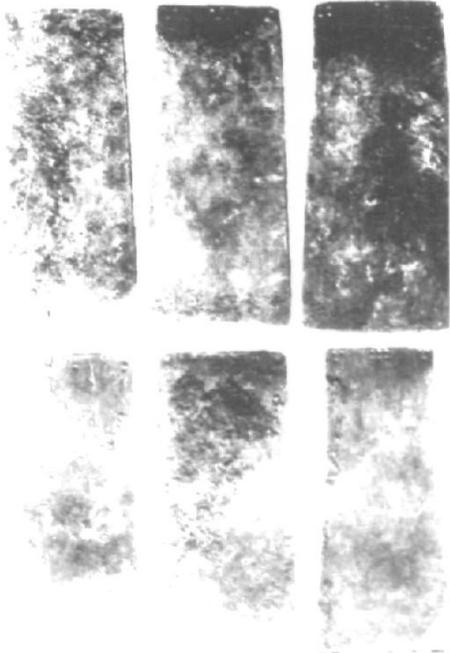
Tanged arrowheads from Ganeshwar.



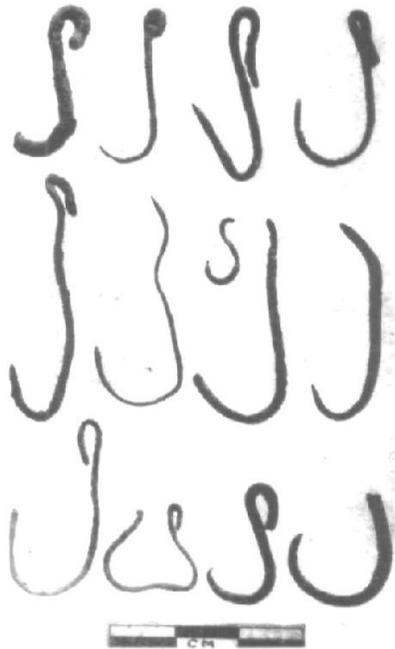
Copper arrowheads from Ganeshwar, near Neem Ka Thana, district Sikar.



Copper objects from Ganeshwar.



Copper axe heads from Ganeshwar.



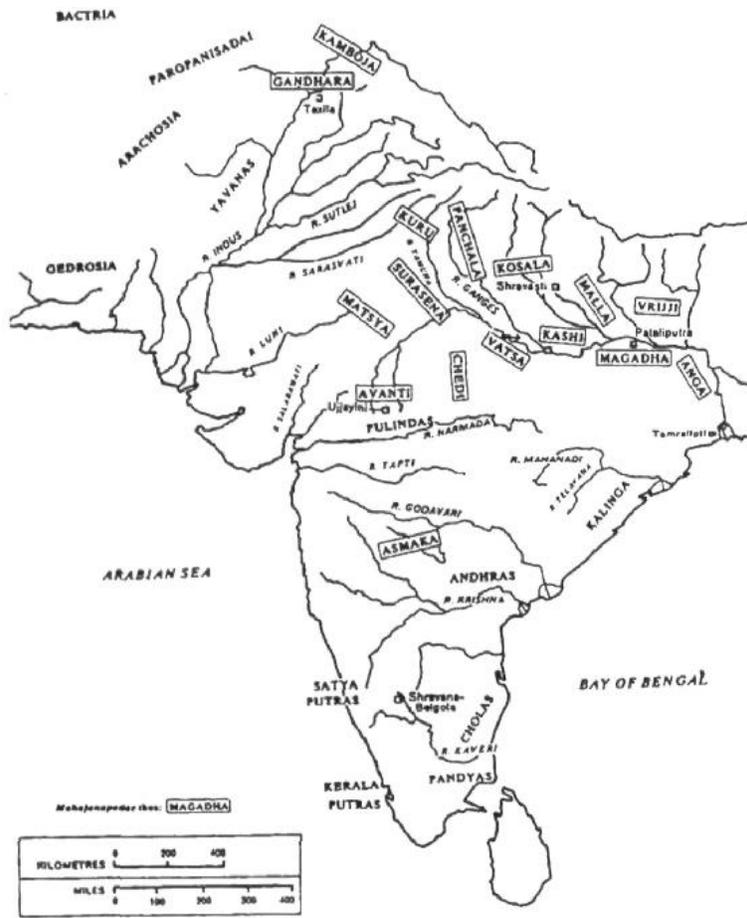
Copper fish-hooks from Ganeshwar.



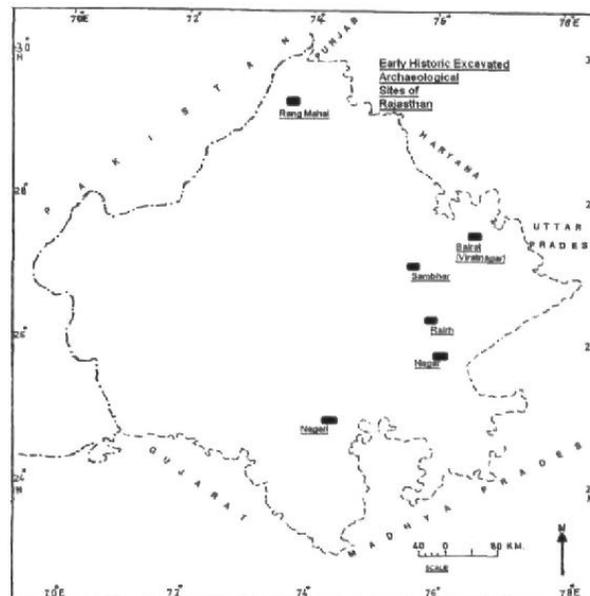
Bronze statue – believed to be protohistoric – found at Sarangpura, near Jaipur (Now with the Rajasthan State Dept. of Archaeology & Museums).



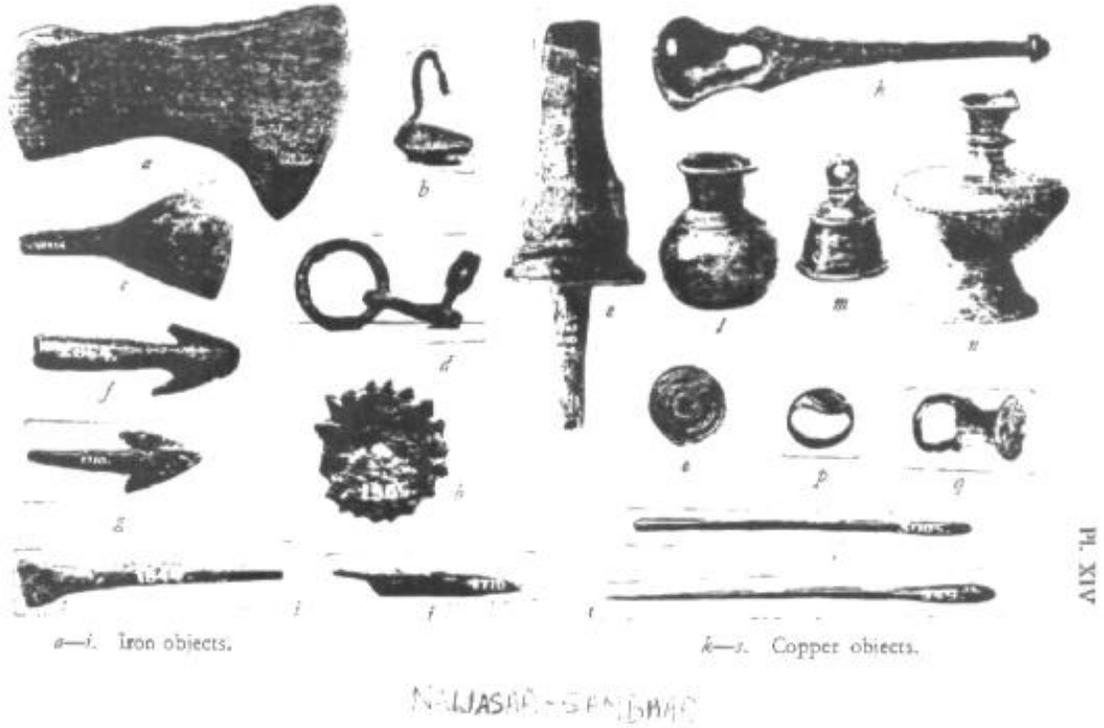
Side view of Bronze statue found at Sarangpura.



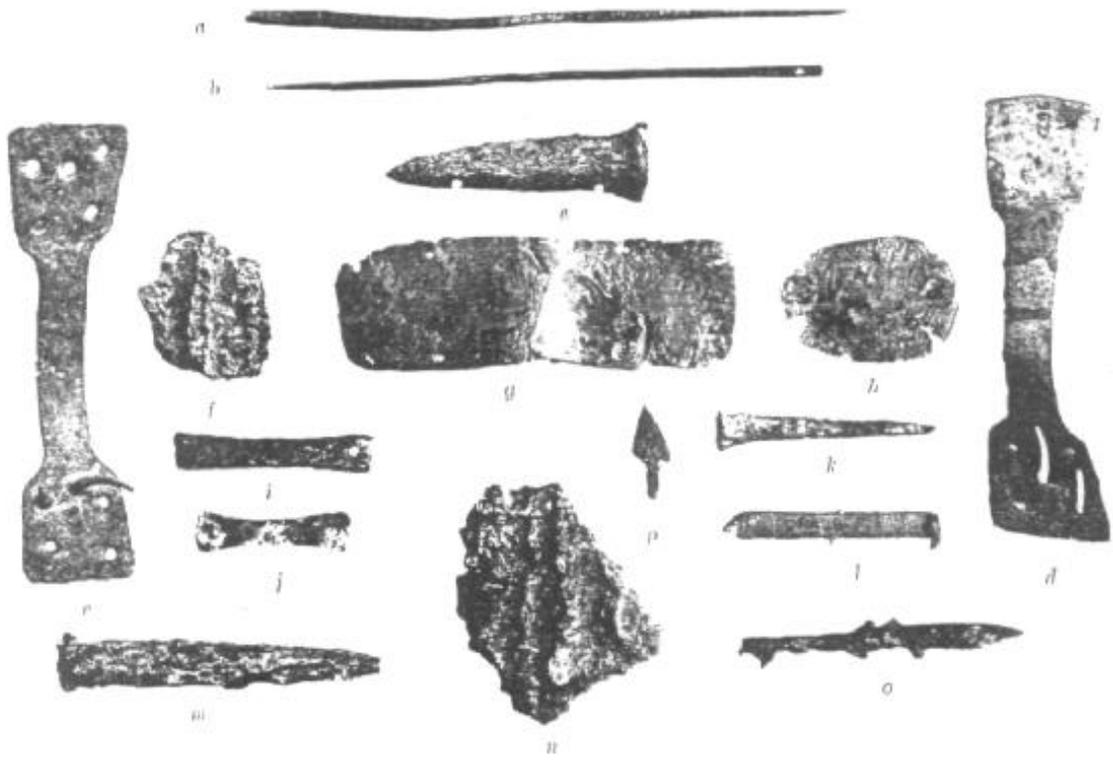
A rudimentary sketch-map of India in c. 300 BC.



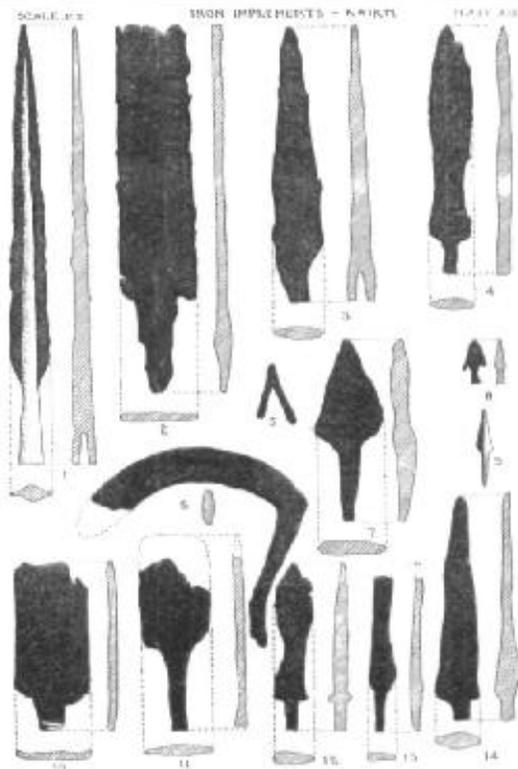
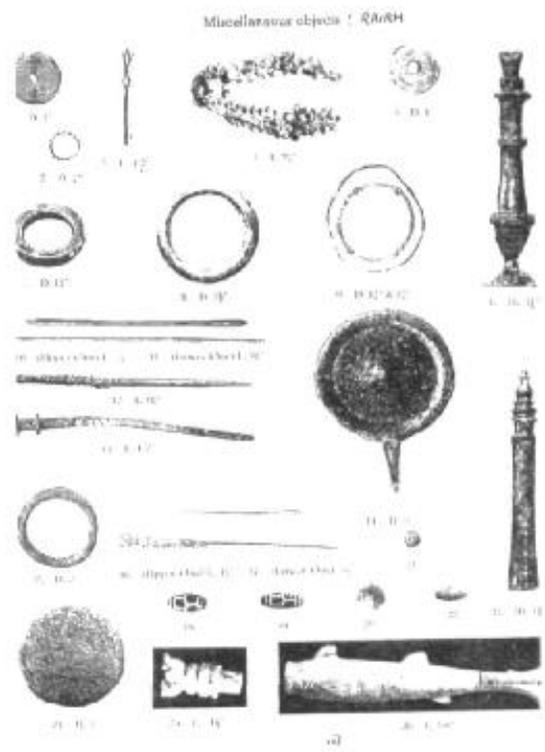
Early historic excavated archaeological sites of Rajasthan.



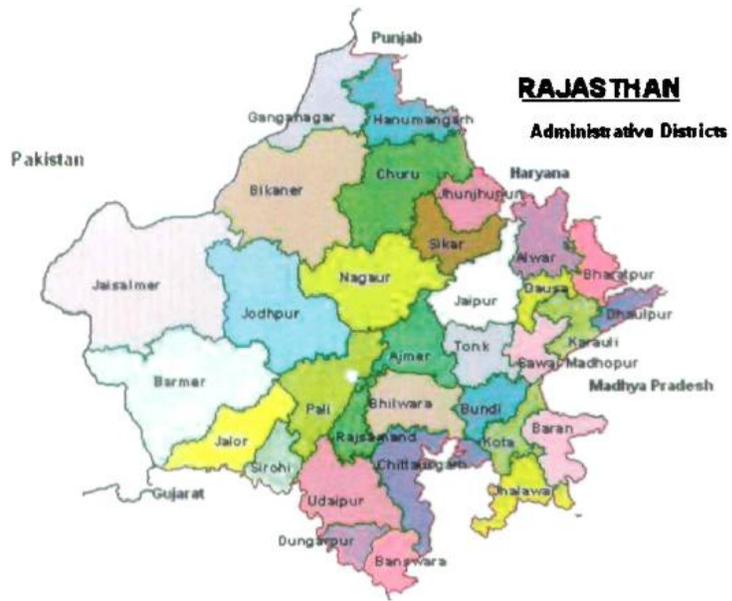
Objects found during excavations at Naliasar-Sambhar.



Objects found during excavations at Bairat (or Virat Nagar).



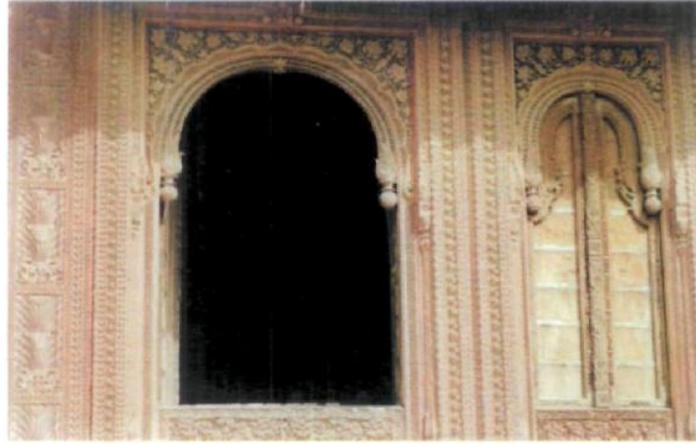
(top and below): Various objects from the excavations at Rairh. (Reproduced courtesy Archaeological Survey of India).



Rajasthan – Modern Administrative Districts 2005.



Shifting sand dunes of western Rajasthan.



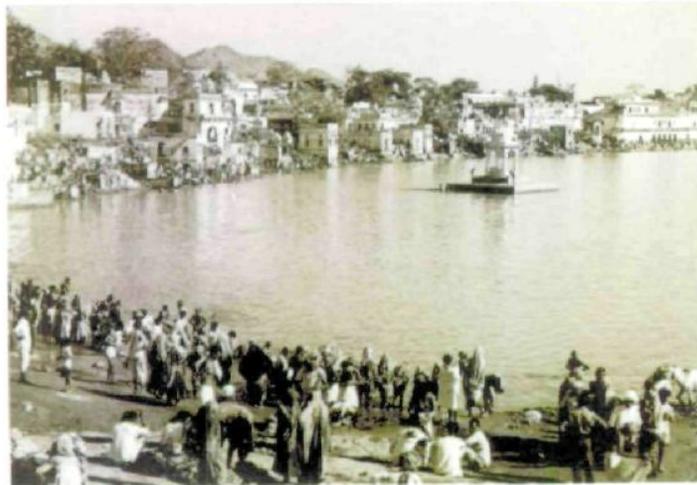
The carved stones of Jaisalmer's Mohangarh Fort.



Outside Mohangarh Fort, near Jaisalmer.



A Rajput re-telling tales of the past.



Pilgrims at the holy lake of Pushkar.



The inner bastions within one of Rajasthan's many forts.



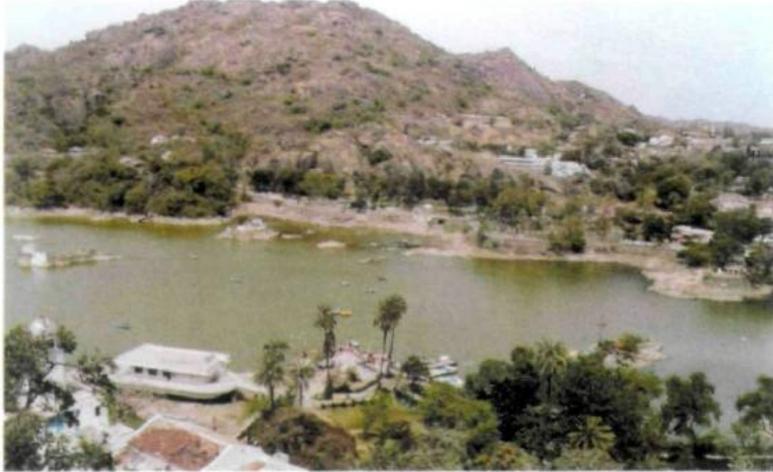
A Rajput with his sword – circa AD 1960.



Musicians of western Rajasthan.



Continuing an oral tradition – a narrator in front of his painted 'Phad' scroll. (mid-twentieth century).



Nakki Lake, courtesy B.M. Agrawal).



Mid-twentieth century view of Jaipur city.



A view of the excavations at the Ahar Culture site at Balathal.
(Courtesy: Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt. of Rajasthan).





A view of the excavations at the Ahar Culture site at Balathal.
(Courtesy: Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt, of Rajasthan).



Pottery excavated from Balathal: 1996-97 season.
(Courtesy: Professor V.N. Misra, Dr. V.S. Shinde and Dr. J.S. Kharakwal).



A portion of the excavated site of Ahar.



Balathal excavations: Fortified enclosure (1998-99 season).
(Courtesy: Professor V.N. Misra, Dr. V.S. Shinde and Dr. J.S. Kharakwal).



Pottery from the Ahar Culture site of Ojiyana.



Incised pottery from Ganeshwar.



A view of the Gilund excavations. (Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt. of Rajasthan).



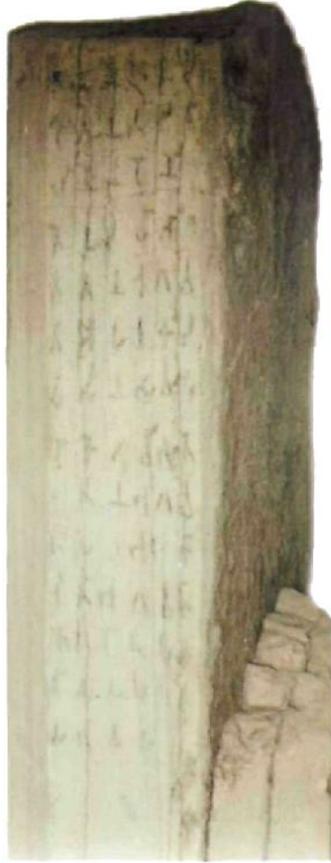
Excavations at Kalibangan.



Archaeological remains of a Buddhist shrine and attached monastery at Bairat.



An early epigraph from Rajasthan (Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt. of Rajasthan).



A Brahmi script epigraph from Rajasthan. (Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt. of Rajasthan).



One of the Badva yupastambha pillars, now at the Kota Govt. Museum, Kota.
(Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt. of Rajasthan).



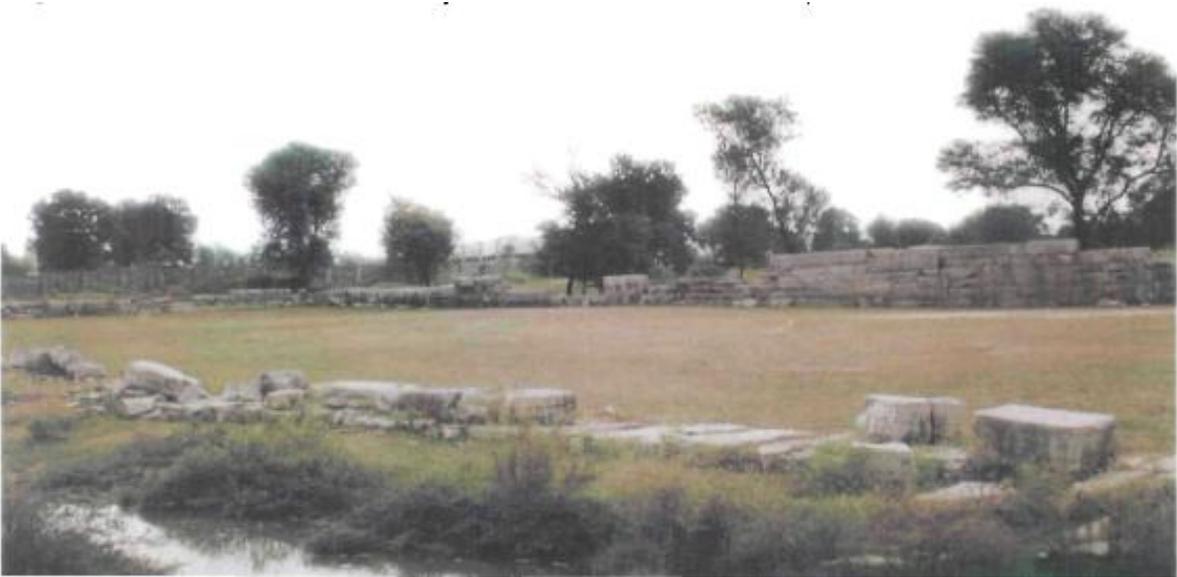
Closer view of a Badva pillar, highlighting the inscription.



Part of the sprawling site of Nagari, near Chittor.



Sculpted remains at Nagari.



Nagari's 'Hathi Bada' enclosure – originally built in c. second century BC.



Step-well and other remains at Ghosundi, near Nagari.



Remains of the Buddhist monastery at Bairat.



Kushan coins from Rajasthan. (Left), a gold coin of Huvishka, and (right) a coin of Kidara Kushana (Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt. of Rajasthan).



Gupta period garuda-dhvaja gold coins of Samudra Gupta (right) and Chandra Gupta II (left) (Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt. of Rajasthan).



Ko-Kot series coins of AD fifth-sixth centuries from Rajasthan

(Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt. of Rajasthan).



Coins – an Imperial silver punch-mark coin from Rairh, and a copper Indo-Sassanian coin (Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt. of Rajasthan).



A terracotta yakshi figurine from Rairh.



Rear-view of a terracotta yakshi figurine from Rairh.
(Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt. of Rajasthan).



Yaksha image from the site of Nagar (Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt. of Rajasthan).



Mahishasura-Mardini Museum. image from Nagar [Malava or Karkota Nagar]
(Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology Museums, Govt. & of Rajasthan).



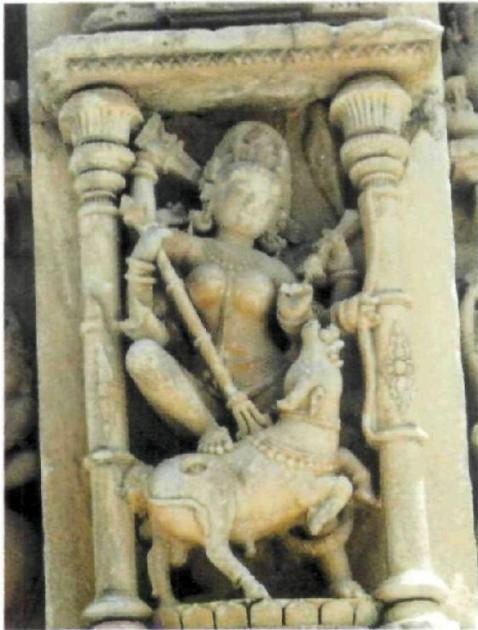
Headless statue of a Yaksha, Bharatpur



A side view of the famous temple at Jagat (Photo courtesy B.M. Agrawal).



Entrance doorway of Jagat temple complex.



Mahishasura-Mardini. (detail from Jagat temple).



Seventh century idol of Ganesh from Amjhera, now at Dungarpur Govt. Museum. (Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt. of Rajasthan).



Gupta period sculpture of Uma-Maheshvara from Kaman area, now at Bharatpur Govt. Museum. (Courtesy Sujas, DPR, Govt. of Rajasthan).



Chaturmukhi Shivlinga, Kansua temple, near Kota.



An image of Brahma (Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt. of Rajasthan).



A Gupta period sculpture of 'Sarvato-Bhadra' Adi-Nath (Tirthankar Rishabh-Deo), now at the Bharatpur Govt. Museum. (Courtesy Sujas, DPR, Rajasthan).



Terracotta plaque from Rang Mahal depicting 'Ajaekapada', now in the Bikaner Museum (Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt. of Rajasthan).



Chakra-Purush (Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt. of Rajasthan).

The inscriptions indicate that the first ruler of this line was Punyasoma, who was succeeded by his son, Rajyavardhan. After Rajyavardhan, came his son, Rashtra. In his turn, his son, 'Maharaja' Yashagupta, followed Rashtra. Yashagupta's son and successor was Gauri. Since the name of a prince called Gobhata also features in the Bhramara-Mata Temple Inscription, scholars have suggested that he was a son of King Gauri. The Mandsaur Inscription records the name of King Gauri's mother as being Harisura. As Queen-Mother, she gave donations to Brahmins and performed penance. After her death her son, King Gauri, famed for constructing wells, water-tanks and '*mandaps*' in towns and villages of his own kingdom, had a tank excavated in her name (in order that the merit would accrue to her) at Dashapura, the capital of *Narendra* (i.e. king) Adityavardhan. If Adityavardhan is taken to be a king of the Aulikara dynasty kings, it would suggest that the Manavayanis were subordinates of the Aulikaras.

THE GUPTAS, THE HUNS AND THE SITUATION IN RAJASTHAN

For more than a century, the Imperial Guptas maintained their hold over a large empire that probably included the region now comprising Rajasthan. From around the middle of the fifth century AD, however, the Guptas had to face a series of incursions and invasions on their north-western frontier as successive waves of Huns from central Asia began their attacks on South Asia.

The Huns are described as a nomadic pastoralist people. One of their branches invaded south-eastern Europe around c. AD 370 and over the next seven decades or so built up an enormous empire there and in central Europe, while another, the Hsiung-nu (Xiongnu) branch was active in the territories of the vast Chinese empire. The Hephthalite branch of Huns invaded Iran and India in the fifth and sixth centuries. During the first half of the fifth century, when the Gupta emperor, Kumar Gupta (r. c. 415-455?), was reigning over much of northern India, the threat of Hun invasion from Bactria began to manifest itself in a series of incursions.

For almost a century, successive Gupta kings worked at keeping the Huns from crossing the Hindu Kush mountains into their kingdom. In particular, under the Emperors Kumar Gupta (r. AD 415-455) and Skanda Gupta (r. AD 445-467), the son and grandson, respectively, of Chandragupta II Vikramaditya, the Gupta empire was successful in beating back the Hun hordes in a series of fights and battles.

Skanda Gupta personally commanded many of these hard-fought battles, first as crown-prince and later as emperor. (Some historians believe that the resistance put up by the Indians and the Chinese during this period not only weakened the Huns, but was also partly responsible for the ferocity with which they invaded Europe). However, towards the end of the fifth century, the Huns managed to break through into northern India. The Huns active in India served as viceroys for a greater Hun overlord. For a while, the Hun dominion extended from Persia right across to Khotan, with Bamiyan in present-day Afghanistan serving as one of their capitals.

Meanwhile, after Skanda Gupta's death, the central authority of the Guptas had begun to gradually decline. During the reign of Skanda Gupta's successors, some of the more powerful regional fief-holders established themselves as independent chiefs. It appears that for a while portions like Malwa and Rajasthan were ruled by one Budha Gupta, and subsequently, the Eran area by a Bhanu Gupta, whose connection with Skanda Gupta is unclear. The larger, more easterly part of the empire was held by Skanda Gupta's brother, King Puru Gupta, and after him his successors, among them Budha Gupta, Narsimha Gupta Baladitya, Kumar Gupta II, Vishnu Gupta and so on.

An epigraph dating to Gupta Era year 165 (corresponding to *Vikram Samvat* 541), i.e. AD 484, informs us that the Hun chief Tormana attacked and seized many tracts from Budha Gupta⁸. By AD 512, Tormana and his Hun forces had overrun much of northern India, reaching southwards as far as Eran (ancient Airikina), in present-day Madhya Pradesh. Eran has provided a late fifth century inscription describing Tormana as the 'suzerain lord' of the local kings. This is inscribed on a large Varah sculpture, depicting Varah as a theriomorphic boar.

By the beginning of the sixth century AD, the Huns had succeeded in further wresting considerable territory from the western part of the erstwhile Gupta empire. An epigraph of one Bhanu Gupta, datable to Gupta Era 191, or AD 510, indicates that by the time this epigraph was inscribed, Tormana and the Huns held the mastery of Gandhar, Punjab, and Kashmir. Furthermore, they had been successful in adding much of Rajasthan and Malwa, etc. to their territories. Thus, the control of the Guptas over this general area was a thing of the past, and between *circa* AD 500 and 570, five Gupta emperors attempted to retain a precarious hold over many threatened tracts.

THE POST-GUPTA PERIOD — C. AD 500-700

Under chiefs like Tormana, the Huns struck at many parts of northern India. One of their branches is known to have reached Malwa in AD 510 and the

Gwalior area some years later. This obviously affected Rajasthan too, and around c. AD 500 there is evidence for widespread and severe devastation in Rajasthan by the 'White Huns'. This is indicated in the destruction noted at Bairat in eastern Rajasthan, and around the northern Rajasthan sites like Rang Mahal, Badopal etc., for example.

Tormana died soon after his victory over Malwa and Rajasthan, and was succeeded by his son, Mihirkula. Like his predecessors, Mihirkula, who is known to have been ruling around AD 520-533, proved a mighty warrior and conqueror, adding further tracts, including Sindh, to his dominions. According to works like Kalhan's *Raj-Tarangini*⁹, the travelogue of Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang (previously spelt as Hiuen Tsang), and some epigraphs, Mihirkula's main capital was Shakal-nagar, in the Punjab.

The account of a Chinese traveller called Tsang Yueh, who visited the westerly kingdom of Gandhar around c. AD 520, records that the kingdom was ruled by a great warrior king, who was a Hun ('Yaithileyto' being the Chinese term used), and whose vast army included 700 elephants¹⁰. Tsang Yueh was informed that the Huns who had captured the area had acknowledged one Lailih as their king, and that the present king of Gandhar [possibly Mihirkula] was third in descent from this Lailih¹¹. This reference is generally assumed to correspond with Mihirkula. (Mihirkula approximates closely with the popular concept of the dreaded Huns. Tsang Yueh has described him as uncouth in manner and an iconoclast, especially in his hatred for Buddhism. Tradition states that Mihirkula ordered a comprehensive suppression of Buddhism, which resulted in the killing of many hundreds of Buddhists, and the destruction of 1600 stupas and monasteries in the Gandhar area alone).

A tenth century AD text called *Niti-Vakya-Amrita*, by Jain scholar Somadev Suri, recounts a tradition according to which an unnamed Hun king won a victory over Chitrakuta (Chittorgarh). The reference may be to the Hun king, Mihirkula.

(In this connection, one may well conjecture whether it was after the Huns had overrun the old city of Madhyamika [perhaps by that time known as Chitrakuta], which lay in the plains below where now the present-day fortress of Chittorgarh loftily towers, that Madhyamika was finally abandoned in favour of the newer fortified Chitrakuta [Chittorgarh]. A fortified hill-top settlement would undoubtedly be easier to fortify and defend).

The Huns did not hold their conquests in the Rajasthan (and Central India) area indefinitely, and it would seem that boundaries were fluid during much of the first half of the sixth century, as local chiefs occasionally rallied together against Hun domination. In AD 532, a ruler named Yashodharman of Mandsaur in Malwa successfully led a confederacy that included the Gupta emperor, Narsimha Gupta Baladitya of Magadha and many other rulers, against the Hun king Mihirkula. Mihirkula was driven from the Gangetic plain towards his northerly capital, which had been usurped, in the meantime, by his brother. Mihirkula then moved towards Kashmir and captured it. He died in that region soon afterwards. With his death, the political impact of the Huns subsided. Yet, in a span of roughly fifty years, the Huns not only managed to hasten the decline of Gupta power but also deplete the energies and strength of the empire, as successive Gupta kings and various other local and/or subordinate chiefs found themselves constantly warding off Hun attacks. (The tide of Hun invasions finally receded by the end of the sixth century when the Turks and the Persians attacked them in Bactria).

Meanwhile, Yashodharman of Malwa — about whom historians know relatively little — apparently extended his control into parts of Rajasthan. According to verse nineteen of the Mandsaur Inscription of *Vikram Samvat* 589, Yashodharman's '*Rajasthaniya*' (or governor), who was named Abhayadatta, governed the territories extending from 'the Pariyatra mountains up to the river Narmada, and beyond to the sea'. One fragmentary inscription found at Chittorgarh mentioning a '*Rajasthaniya*', of Mandsaur and Madhyamika may, therefore, probably be connected with Yashodharman's reign.

It would appear that Yashodharman — and/or his confederacy of fellow-chiefs and kings — was not the only challenge for the Huns. For, on the basis of various inscriptions found at sites like Mandasaur, Chittor and Chhoti Sadri, we learn that the Hun king, Mihirkula, was prevented from advancing beyond Chittor, being “dazzled by the sword” of the hero Vishnu-Vardhan¹². This Vishnu-Vardhan is described as a scion of the Aulikara sub-branch of the Malavas that had established itself at Dashapura¹³ (Malpura). It is unclear whether there was any closer connection between Yashodharman and Vishnu-Vardhana — or whether the two are identical!

Despite the ebb and flow of fortunes and expansion and shrinking of territories won and lost, it would appear that various smaller groups of Huns remained entrenched in local pockets across Rajasthan, from where they fought or made peace with regional non-Hun kings and chiefs. The latter, similarly, often rallied and combined to expel Hun control from their areas. The Bhim Chaunwari Inscription from the Kota region, which also records the gallant fight put up by one Dhruvaswami against the Huns, and his eventual death, refers to this period graphically too.

Hun coins in copper and silver have been recovered from different parts of Rajasthan. The find-sites include places like Sambhar, Jalore, Nagaur, Chohtan, Abaneri, Khoh, Ranivavas, Khejroli, Losal, Desuri, Sardargarh, Piplaj, Juna Khera near Jhalawar, and several other parts of the erstwhile princely states of Mewar, Marwar, Kota, Jaipur, etc. The Indo-Sassanian style of coins probably introduced, and definitely used, by the Huns during this period apparently influenced later coinage. One may clarify here that this coinage, where used, in Rajasthan during the c. sixth to tenth centuries AD period, and for some time afterwards too, has been termed by numismatists as ‘Indo-Sassanian’ in the earlier stage and ‘Gadhiya’ or ‘Gadiya’ in a subsequent stage. The Indo-Sassanian coins were an imitation in terms of type of metal, weight and motifs of the Sassanian dynasty coins and depicted a king’s bust on the obverse and a fire altar with a motif on the reverse side.

The coins of the Huns, while being on the pattern of Sassanian coins, are not as finely executed. Several variants and derivative coins in silver

and copper are known to have been in use up to c. eleventh century¹⁴. The later issues are progressively cruder, squat in appearance, and the symbols and inscriptions on them become practically illegible. Such coins, in time, came to be known as ‘Gadhiya’ or ‘Gadiya’ coins in Rajasthan. These were issued, among others, by several of the later Guhila rulers of Mewar. One explanation given for the term is that at a later stage, the king’s bust was so crudely executed on the coins that it became confused with the depiction of an ass or donkey! That is the reason that works like the ‘*Upakeshagachhapattavali*’ describes these coins (*mudra*) as ‘*Gadhiya mudra*’ or ‘donkey coins’.

Quantities of both Indo-Sassanian and Gadhiya coins have been found from different parts of Rajasthan. The coins mainly conform to the *dramma* standard weight of sixty-seventy grains. (A hoard of about four quintal-weight of Indo-Sassanian coins, found from a place called Kasindra, in Sirohi district, was recently acquired by the Rajasthan State Department of Archaeology and Museums, and is now in the Government Museum at Jodhpur. These coins are an alloy of silver and copper, unlike various other hoards of similar coins, which are either of pure unalloyed silver or of copper).

There is evidence also to suggest that some of the Hun invaders settled down in Rajasthan. In fact, the small fortified town of Bijolia — once called Vindhyaavali — situated some eighty kilometres north-east of Chittorgarh in a valley of the ‘Uparmal’ hills¹⁵ of the Aravalli ranges, is believed to have been founded by the Huns¹⁶. (Bijolia attained importance as a place sacred to the Jains and Saivas a few centuries later, during the reign of the Chauhans and Guhilas). Apparently place-names ending in ‘kantha’ or ‘kanta’ — for example, Banaskantha and Sabarkantha in modern Gujarat, are also a legacy of the Huns!

The eventual acceptance of the Huns as one of the thirty-six ‘original’ Rajput clans is well-known¹⁷ (The literal meaning of ‘Rajput’ is one who is a descendant of a king. The term gained prominence during the medieval period). The Huns are listed among the sixteen true Rajput clans mentioned in a c. fourteenth century text called the *Kanhad-de-Prabandh* too.

According to the sixth verse of the Atpur Inscription of Shakti Kumar, datable to *Vikram Samvat* 1034 — i.e. AD 977, King Allata of Mewar, who belonged to the Guhila Rajput clan, married a Hun princess named Hariyadevi. At the beginning of the twentieth century Ojha noted that the ‘Kunbi’ or ‘Kalbi’ community of the Abu-Sirohi region fully acknowledged its Hun descent, and used the term ‘Hun’ as their surname¹⁸.

Along with inroads by the Huns, the decline of the Imperial Guptas (and, in the context of the Deccan and some parts of southern India, of the Vakataka empire), resulted in many kingdoms and chiefdoms vying against each other for territory and power. In north-western, northern and eastern India, several major powers emerged successful in establishing their domination over substantial tracts of land. These included the Maukharis of the Barabanki-Jaunpur-Gaya area, the ‘Later Guptas’ of Magadha, the Maitrakas of Vallabhi, and the Pushyabhutis of Thaneshwar; while in the Deccan and southern part of South Asia, it was the Chalukyas of Badami (Vatapi) and Kalyani, Pallavas of Kanchipuram, Pandyas of Madurai and Cheras of Kerala, who were politically most prominent and dominant.

(All of these kingdoms have been written about and discussed in ample detail by different historians in the pan South Asian context. However, in the context of Rajasthan’s history, one may note that the Maukharis of the Barabanki-Jaunpur-Gaya area, also called ‘Mukharas’, appear to be an ancient tribe, and it has been queried whether their clan-name is a derivative of ‘Maurya’. Some scholars have suggested that the Maukharis using the title of ‘Mahasenapati’ who find mention in Rajasthan’s Badva Yupa Inscription of AD 238 from Kota, *may* have been a branch of the wider Maukhari tribe).

In their quest for supremacy, these kingdoms fought and forged alliances with each other over the next few generations, until King Harsha Vardhan of Thaneshwar and Kanauj (r. AD 606-647), emerged as a strong contender to the title of emperor. His southern neighbour, the Chalukyan ruler, Pulakesin II, long remained Harsha Vardhan’s most powerful rival and adversary. (The Chalukyas of Vatapi thrived between c. AD 550-853. Prominent rulers included Pulakesin I and Pulakesin II. The Chalukyan

king, Kirtivarman was defeated by the Rashtrakuta ruler, Dantidurga around AD 756).

Harsha Vardhan, the younger son of King Prabhakar Vardhan, belonged to the Pushyabhuti line that had made Thaneshwar (ancient Sthanishvara) its capital. (Their ascendancy was confirmed during the reign of Prabhakar Vardhan, a descendant of Pushya Vardhan. Prabhakar Vardhan strengthened his status by marrying the sister of King Mahasena Gupta of the Later Guptas. Later, his daughter, Rajyashree, was married to Grahvarman of the Maukhari dynasty).

Harsha succeeded to the throne of Thaneshwar at the age of sixteen in AD 606 amidst a grim scenario of battles amongst rival kingdoms. (The course of events included the defeat and murder of Harsha's sister's husband, the Kanauj king, Grahvarman (d. c. AD 605) of the ancient, powerful, Maukhari dynasty¹⁹, at the hands of the king of Malwa, followed soon afterwards by the tragic premature death of his elder brother, King Rajya Vardhan, as the latter avenged the foul murder). Along with the throne of Thaneshwar, Harsha obtained the administration of the kingdom of Kanauj, which he ruled, thereafter, as regent on behalf of his widowed sister, Queen Rajyashree. Kanauj became his main administrative seat.

Harsha soon expanded his domain, and came to reign over a substantial area. Emperor Harsha Vardhan's reign did not merely stress territorial acquisition and subjugation of contemporaries, though that too was achieved over much of northern, eastern and central India. He also paid due care towards public welfare, central and provincial administration, record-keeping, education and centres of learning, the economy, and architectural, artistic and literary achievements.²⁰ At the time of his death, Harsha's empire extended from the river Sutlej in the north, to the river Narmada in the south, and from Bengal in the east to the Saurashtra part of modern-day Gujarat in the west.

While it is possible that Harsha's empire had a relationship with Rajasthan similar to that of the Guptas and Mauryas, i.e. token allegiance, with or without total control, there seems to be little direct evidence at

present to substantiate or refute this point. Similarly, not much can be said regarding the influence of, and interaction with, other major powers of the time, including the Chalukya dynasty of King Pulakesin, on Rajasthan. What is known for certain is that small local chiefships and principalities gradually emerged, and in their own local struggle for power, some later rose to positions of greater authority and domination over larger tracts of land, while others sank to positions of subordination, or even ceased to exist as separate political entities.

SOME LOCAL KINGDOMS OF RAJASTHAN

In the context of Rajasthan, following the break-up of the Gupta Empire and Saka and Hun hegemony, various regional dynasties became active. Among others, by around the sixth century AD, Mori dynasty rulers — believed by many to have some links with the Imperial Mauryan dynasty, which had counted Ashoka and his grandson Samprati among its members — established their rule in the south-eastern Rajasthan region. Their territorial hold included parts of Kota and Chittor, and it is popularly held that the Moris eventually made Chittorgarh their capital. Legend holds that the original fort of Chittor was built at the command of one Chitrangad Mori (Maurya), also referred to as Chandra Rai Mori. Tradition also ascribes the tank that carries his name and the now ruined original palace-structures at Chittor to this long-ago Chitrangad Mori, and holds that it was from a later descendant of this Mori line that the Guhilas eventually wrested political dominance.

Once again, scattered inscriptions are invaluable for putting together the riddle of regional history. In this context, the Bhillamala-born poet Magha's *Sisupala-vadha*, as well as Chief Rajjila's Vasantgarh Inscription of Vikram Samvat 682 (AD 625) indicate that during the first quarter of the seventh century AD, Bhillamala (also known as Shrimal and Bhinmal) and Abu were ruled by the Chavadas, under king Varmalaat. The king, Varmalaat referred to by Magha, as well as in the Vasantgarh Inscription, seems to be identical.

In the case of Magha of Bhillamala, his text refers to the powerful King Varmalaat, at whose court his (Magha's) grandfather, Suprabhdeva, was Varmalaat's *Saravadhikari* (representative or senior-most officer i.e. prime minister). This would indicate that Varmalaat was ruler of Bhillamala. If we add to this the information contained in the Vasantgarh Inscription, namely that Lord Rajjila, who was the son of Chief Vajrabhata Satyashryam, and like his father before him, a feudatory of the great king Varmalaat, became the lord-protector of Arbuda (Abu), with his capital at Vat, it would seem that Varmalaat's suzerainty extended into the Abu region. (Vat was an early name of Vasantgarh²¹).

Another text, the *Brahmasfuta Siddhanta*, written by the astrologer-mathematician Brahmagupta (son of Jishnu), of Bhillamala, and datable to AD 628, gives the name of the contemporary king of Bhillamala as Vyaghramukha of the Chapa (Chavada) dynasty. This may mean that Varmalaat, who was known to be ruling in AD 625, was succeeded not long after by Vyaghramukha. However, not enough is known at present to conjecture further about this — or even their mutual relationship. (Interestingly, a text called *Nisheethachurni*, written in AD 676, has recorded that a silver coin current at the time in Bhillamata/Shrimal was called 'Varmalaat', supposedly after the name of the king²². The *Brihata-katha-kosha* has referred to a 'Varmala' type of coins too, which Dasharatha Sharma²³ suggests may have been a coin issued by King Varmalaat of Bhillamala).

Despite such references, there is scanty information about these Chavadas, who are believed to be identical with the group variously referred to as Chapa, Chapotaka, Chavotaka, etc. in Sanskrit epigraphs and literary allusions. (The AD 914 copper-plate grant of Dharanivarah — the Chapa dynasty fief-holder in the Kathiawar area of the Pratihara king, Mahipal of Kanauj — traces their origin to the bow, i.e. *chapa*, of Siva). They seem to have ruled over Bhillamala, and somewhat later over Vadvan (in Kathiawar) and Anhillawara (Patan). Anhillawara — or Anhillapur — is said to have been settled and established as his capital by the Chapa (Chapotaka) dynasty King Vanraj in AD 764, and continued to be ruled by his descendants till AD 960. The political power of the Chapas seem to have been waning by the first quarter of the eighth century AD, when the

Pratiharas begin to find mention as the lords of the Bhillamala and surrounding regions.

Here it may be relevant to recall that the Chinese traveller, Xuanzang (Hiuen-tsang), who came to India during the reign of Harsha Vardhana of Thaneshwar-Kanauj and travelled substantially, wrote about a 'country' some 5,000 *li* in circuit called *Kiu-che-lo*. Historians believe that this reference is to the kingdom of the Gurjara-Pratiharas ('Gurjara-rashtra'). Xuanzang (Hiuen-tsang) named the capital of Kiu-che-lo as *Pi-lo-mo-lo*. This has been tentatively identified with Bhillamala. The pilgrim-traveller noted that the ruler of this realm was a young man celebrated for his wisdom, valour and exceptional qualities, who happened to be of the warrior category by birth, and a believer in the teachings of the Buddha.

Inscriptions and/or coins also help us to learn about other sub-regions. For instance, it is known that Jhalarapatan in south-eastern Rajasthan was ruled by a chief named Durgagana in Vikram Samvat 746, i.e. AD 689. (Punch-marked coins found at Jhalarapatan point to its still greater antiquity). King Durgagana is described as the 'chief of kings', whose subjects 'lived joyfully and free from misfortunes'²⁴. It was during Durgagana's reign that one Voppaka, who seems to have been an influential courtier or military-commander and is described as the brother of someone called Deva, built a Siva temple at Jhalarapatan around AD 686.

A later inscription, dating to the eighth century, from Jhalarapatan's Sitalleshwar Mahadev temple, records the visit of a chief called Sankargana, while the Kansua Inscription of AD 738 provides the name of a Brahmin prince called Sivagana, who was a feudatory of King Dhavala (Dhavalatman) of the Mauryan lineage. The use of 'gana' as the name-endings for the three chiefs mentioned in three separate inscriptions may indicate the possibility that the inscriptional records belong to a common Jhalarapatan area dynasty.

In the case of a different part of Rajasthan, there are suggestions that Bairat in northeastern Rajasthan was ruled, in AD 641, by a very warlike, impetuous and brave ruler from the Vaisya caste. (In this case, we do not

know *when*, or in fact, *whether* the Matsyas had lost the throne in the interim!)

As far as Bairat is concerned, it may be useful to consider the account of the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang (Hiuen-tsang), dating to AD 634, once again. According to his writings. the capital of the kingdom of *Po-li-ye-to-lo* (which the French translator, Reinaud has identified with *Pariyatra* or *Bairat*), was situated at 500 *li*; or 83 $\frac{2}{3}$ miles, to the west of Mathura, and about 800 *li*, or 133 $\frac{2}{3}$ miles, to the south-west of the kingdom of *She-to-tu-lo* (identified as *Satadru* or the *Sutlej*)²⁵. This capital was 14 or 15 *li*, or about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles, in circuit, while the kingdom itself was 3000 *li*, or 500 miles, in circuit. It was famous for its sheep and oxen, but apparently produced few fruits or flowers! This *Po-li-ye-to-lo* or *Pariyatra*, we are informed, yielded crops of spring wheat and other grains, including a ‘peculiar kind of rice’ that was ready for harvesting in sixty days.²⁶

At the time of Xuanzang’s visit the capital-city (which may be Bairat) possessed eight Buddhist monasteries, but they were much ruined, and the number of monks was small, reflective, no doubt, of the declining position of Buddhism in Rajasthan by this period. Brahmins of different sects, about 1000 in number, possessed twelve temples, with numerous followers; the bulk of the population being described as heretical. (Cunningham has deduced that the population-size of Bairat at the time of the visit of the Chinese pilgrim may have been about 30,000, of whom about one-fourth were probably Buddhists²⁷). The people were brave and bold, and their king, who was of the race of *Fei-she* (perhaps Vaisya), was famous for his courage and skill in war.

Xuanzang’s general account of the life and habits of the people of the areas of India through which he travelled can, perhaps, be useful for extrapolating contemporaneous socioeconomic life in Rajasthan during that period. The Chinese pilgrim noted that: “In cultivating the land, those whose duty it is sow and reap, plough and harrow, and plant according to the season; and after their labour they rest a while. Among the products of the ground, rice and corn²⁸ are most plentiful. With respect to edible herbs and plants, we may name ginger and mustard, melons and pumpkins, the

Heun-to[?] plant, and a few others. Onions and garlic are little grown; and few persons eat them; if anyone uses them for food, they are expelled beyond the walls of the town. The most usual food is milk, butter, cream, soft sugar, sugarcandy, the oil of the mustard seed, and all sorts of cakes made of corn [cereal grains] are used as food. Fish, mutton, gazelle, and deer they eat generally fresh, sometimes salted; they are forbidden to eat the flesh of the ox, the ass, the elephant, the horse, the pig, the dog, the fox, the wolf, the lion, the monkey, and all the hairy kind. Those who eat them are despised and scorned, and are universally reprobated; they live outside the walls [of the town], and are seldom seen among men”²⁹.

“With respect to the different kinds of wine and liquors, there are various sorts. The juice of the grape and sugar-cane, these are used by the Kshatriyas [sic] as drink; the Vaisyas use strong fermented drinks; the Sramans and Brahmans [sic] drink a sort of syrup made from the grape or sugar-cane, but not of the nature of fermented wine. The mixed classes and base-born differ in no way from the rest, except in respect of the vessels they use, which are very different both as to value and material...Although they have saucepans and stewpans, yet they do not know the steamer used for cooking rice. They have many vessels made of dried clay, they seldom use red copper vessels: they eat from one vessel, mixing all sorts of condiments together, which they take up with their fingers. They have no spoons or cups, and in short no sort of chopsticks. When sick, however, they use copper drinking cups”³⁰.

“As the administration of the government is founded on benign principles, the executive is simple,...and the people are not subjected to forced labour. The private demenses of the crown are divided into four principal parts; the first is for carrying out the affairs of the state and providing sacrificial offerings; the second is for providing subsidies for the ministers and chief officers of the state; the third is for rewarding men of distinguished ability; and the fourth is for charity to religious bodies, whereby the field of merit is cultivated. In this way the taxes on the people are light, and the personal service required of them is moderate...Those who cultivate the royal estates pay a sixth part of the produce as tribute. The merchants who engage in commerce come and go in carrying out their transactions. The payment is in strict proportion to the work done”³¹.

“With respect to the ordinary people...they are upright and honourable. In money matters they are without craft, and in administering justice they are considerate. They dread the retribution of another state of existence, and make light of the things of the present world. They are not deceitful or treacherous in their conduct, and are faithful to their oaths and promises. In their rules of government there is remarkable rectitude, whilst in their behaviour there is much gentleness and sweetness. With respect to criminals and rebels, these are few in number, and only occasionally troublesome. When the laws are broken, or the power of the ruler violated, then the matter is clearly sifted and the offenders imprisoned. There is no infliction of corporal punishment...”³²

In his writings, Xuanzang (Hiuen-tsang) also provided a general description of Indian towns. While one cannot be certain if his description was applicable to Bhillamalla and Bairat, his graphic picture of urban and rural life in early seventh century AD northern and western India may well probably approximate the conditions in Rajasthan during that period. According to him: “The towns and villages have inner gates; the walls are wide and high; the streets and lanes are tortuous, and the roads winding. The thoroughfares are dirty and the stalls [shops] arranged on both sides of the road with appropriate signs. Butchers, fishers, dancers, executioners, and scavengers, and so on, have their abodes without the city. In coming and going these persons are bound to keep on the left side of the road till they arrive at their homes. Their houses are surrounded by low walls, and form the suburbs. The earth being soft and muddy, the walls of the towns are mostly built of brick or tiles. The towers on the walls are constructed of wood or bamboo; the houses have balconies and belvederes, which are made of wood, with a coating of lime or mortar, and covered with tiles. The different buildings have the same form as those in China: rushes, or dry branches, or tiles, or boards are used for covering them. The walls are covered with lime and mud, mixed with cow’s dung for purity. At different seasons they scatter flowers about...”³³

THE GUHILAS

It was around this early seventh century AD period that the Guhilas — who went on to become one of the dominant powers in later centuries — became a noticeable presence in Rajasthan. An inscription from Nagar (Malava-Nagar — the erstwhile capital of the Malavas) of Vikram Samvat 741 (AD 684), records that one Dhanika (believed to be the Guhila chief of Chatsu, twenty-six miles south of modern Jaipur), son of Guhila, built a step-well at Nagar. This was intended ‘for the use of his subjects, for the performance of the rituals associated with Shankar (a name of Siva), and for the acquisition of religious merit’. The Nagar Inscription notes that the architect-builders used by Dhanika were the *Sutradhars* Suryavarman, Garahvarman and Gangavarman, who are described as the sons of Grahabhata, a master-architect-artisan from Bhinmal³⁴.

On the basis of the above inscription, and a later inscription from Chatsu, it seems that the Chatsu area was held by a branch of the Guhilas from c. AD 600 onwards. The founder of the Chatsu line was a Bhartrapatta, who is described as being endowed by the attributes of both the Brahmins as well as the Kshatriyas. The statement may have multiple meanings about the origins of the family. Bhartrapatta was succeeded by Ishanabhata, Upendrabhata and then Guhila I. The latter’s son was Dhanika, the donor of the step-well mentioned in the Nagar Inscription. Dhanika’s successors were Āuka, Krishnaraj and Sankargana. The latter is commemorated for his war-victories in the Chatsu Inscription of Baladitya, as we shall note in the following chapter.

Another branch of the Guhilas appear to have been dominant further south around the same time, in the area of Medpat (or Mewar). This is indicated, among others, by the Samoli Inscription of AD 646, found at the village of Samoli, in the Bhomat area of erstwhile Mewar, which mentions Guhila control along the Sirohi-Mewar border. (Other contiguous parts of the Abu area were under the Abu kings). Shiladitya, the Guhila king of Mewar, referred to in this inscription, is described as a ‘vanquisher of his enemies’, a ‘giver of delight to the Gods, Brahmins and Gurus’, and ‘a second moon [sent to the earth to cast lustre] for his clan’³⁵.

In time, various sub-branches of the Guhila clan began to consolidate their authority over different areas. Among these were the Guhila sub-

branches that ruled from Kishkindha, Dhod, Nagar, Chatsu and Nadga (later Nagda-Ahar).

The origin-myth of the Guhilas (and, of course, the later *shakhas* (or sub-divisions) deriving out of the Guhilas) describes them as descendants of the Sun (*Suryavanshi*), and consequently descendants of Rama and his ancestor Raghu (hence the use of the term *Raghuvanshi* as well). Yet another belief links these solar-descended Guhilas with Nausherzad, an exiled son of Persia's famous emperor, Naushervan 'the Just'. (This emperor is better known to present-day generations of Iranians as 'Anushirvan-e-Adil').

Tod's narration about the lineage may be recounted here, since for his account of Mewar in his *Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'han*, he used various traditional genealogies, local folklore and other written texts and epigraphs to put together a version that met with traditional approval.

Tod writes:

"At least ten genealogical lists, derived from the most opposite sources, agree in making Keneksen the founder of this dynasty; and assign his emigration from the most northern of the provinces of India to the peninsula of Saurashtra in S. 201, or AD 145. ...though...Jey Sing, the royal historian and astronomer of Amber, connects the line with Soomitra (the fifty-sixth descendant from the deified Rama)...Rama had two sons, Loh and Cush; from the former the Rana's family claim descent. He is stated to have built Lahore, the ancient Loh-kote; and the branch from which the princes of Mewar are descended resided there until Keneksen emigrated to Dwarica. ...[In Saurashtra he]...wrested dominion from a prince of the Pramara race, and founded Birnagara in the second century (AD 144). Four generations afterwards, Vijay Sen...founded Vijay, supposed to be where Dholka now stands, at the head of the Saurashtra peninsula. Vidurba was also founded by him, the name of which was afterwards changed to Seehore. But the most celebrated was the capital, Balabhipoora.

“...[Some generations later, however, occurred]...the sack of Balabhipoora. The legend of this event affords scope for speculation, both as regards the conquerors and the conquered, and gives at least a colour of truth to the reputed Persian ancestry of the Rana...The solar orb, and its type, fire, were the chief objects of adoration of Siladitya of Balabhipoora...There was a fountain (*Sooryacoonda*) ‘sacred to the sun’ at Balabhipoora, from which arose, at the summons of Siladitya (according to legend) the seven-headed horse Septaswa, which draws the car of Soorya, to bear him to battle. With such an auxiliary no foe could prevail; but a wicked minister revealed to the enemy the secret of annulling this aid, by polluting the sacred fountain with blood. This accomplished, in vain did the prince call on Septaswa... : the charm was broken, and with it sunk the dynasty of Balabhi.

“...Of the prince’s family, the queen Pooshpavati alone escaped the sack of Balabhi, as well as the funeral pyre, upon which, on the death of Siladitya, his other wives were sacrificed. She was a daughter of the Pramara prince of Chandravati, and had visited the shrine of the universal mother, Amba-Bhavani, in her native land, to deposit upon the altar of the goddess a votive offering consequent to her expectation of offspring. She was on her return, when the intelligence arrived which blasted all her future hopes...Excessive grief closed her pilgrimage. Taking refuge in a cave in the mountains of Mallia, she was delivered of a son. Having confided the infant to a Brahminee of Birnugger named Camlavati...she mounted the funeral pile to join her lord. Camlavati, the daughter of the priest of the temple, was herself a mother, and she performed the tender offices of one to the orphan prince, whom she designated Goha, or ‘cave-born’. The child was a source of perpetual uneasiness to its protectors: he associated with Rajpoot children, killing birds, hunting wild animals, and at the age of eleven was totally unmanageable: to use the words of the legend, “How should they hide the ray of the sun?”

“At this period Edur was governed by a chief of the savage race of Bhil; his name, Mandalica. The young Goha frequented

the forest in the company with the Bhils, whose habits better assimilated with his daring nature than those of the Brahmins. He became a favourite with the Vena-pootras, or ‘children of the forest’, who resigned to him Edur with its woods and mountains. The fact is mentioned by Abul Fuzil, and is still repeated by the bards, with a characteristic version of the incident, of which doubtless there were many. The Bhils having determined in sport to elect a king, the choice fell on Goha; and one of the young savages, cutting his finger, applied the blood as the teeka of sovereignty to his forehead. What was done in sport was confirmed by the old forest chief. The sequel fixed on Goha the stain of ingratitude, for he slew his benefactor, and no motive is assigned in legend for the deed. Goha’s name became the patronymic of his descendants, who were styled *Gohilote*, classically *Grahilote*, in time softened to *Gehlote*”³⁶.

This story of a Rajput of noble birth seizing power from a Bhil or Nishada or other forest-dwelling peoples appears to have parallels from other parts of Rajasthan, (and Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat etc.) too, with local legends and official histories mentioning the overthrow of various indigenous chiefs and rulers, usually Bhils and Meenas, by various dynasty-founding non-tribal clans who had entered the territories that they would subsequently rule as either refugees or invaders³⁷. Thus, the legend about Guha gaining control of “Edur with its woods and mountains” and slaying the Bhil chief who had been his benefactor, has points in common with other popular myths, including that of Dulha Rai or Dhola (mentioned further in this work), the founder of the Rajput Kachchwaha dynasty of Amber-Jaipur. One of the stories associated with Dulha Rai too tells of how he took power turbulently from the Meena chieftain who was his adoptive ‘Uncle’.

Interestingly, the late G.H. Ojha has strongly disputed the connection with Vallabhipur’s king Shiladitya, and the queen Pushpavati story as narrated by Tod³⁸. Ojha has pointed out that at least six kings by the name of Shiladitya are known to have ruled over the Gujarat area called Valla, or Vallabhipur, in ancient times. The fame of at least one of these Shiladityas was well known to Jain chroniclers, who later confused Mewar’s famous

sixth century AD Shiladitya of the Guhila dynasty as being a descendent of the Vallabhipur line. This, Ojha asserts, was the genesis of the belief regarding Guha's descent from the last king Shiladitya, who was killed when Mlecchas attacked his capital. For, this story had become strongly entrenched by the time Tod came to write about the Guhilas.

Contrary to the legend, however, Ojha has underscored the fact that a copper-plate grant of Vallabhipur's last king, Shiladitya, dates to Gupta Era 447, i.e. Vikram Samvat 823, or AD 766. This Shiladitya's reign apparently ended with the sack of Vallabhipur in AD 769 — by which time, he contends, the Guhilas had been well-established in south-eastern Rajasthan for over a century and more! Ojha further points out that some of the early epigraphs, copper-plate grants and texts of the Guhilas state their connection with Anandpur (Badnagar), also in Gujarat, rather than with Vallabhipur³⁹. The Vikram Samvat 1034 (AD 977) Atpur Inscription of Shakti Kumar, states that Guha came from Anandpur. One of the lines in this inscription indicates, according to the readings of it by historians like Dr. D.R. Bhandarkar, Dasharatha Sharma and G.N. Sharma, that Guha belonged to a *Vipra* (Brahmin) family, who gave delight by his glorious achievements. However, Ojha interpreted the line more as an allegory for Guha being the 'giver of delight' to Brahmins in the sense of a charitable chief, and maintained that Guha was not a Brahmin, but a descendant of the ancient *Suryavanshi Kshatriyas* or warriors of solar-descent of India.

The traditional versions hold that over time, the Sun-descended *Raghuvanshi* Kshatriya ancestors of the Guhilas had ruled over different territories. With time, came changes in the appellatives used by them over the centuries. Tod noted the changes in the clan name in the following words: "...The first change in the name of the tribe was on their expulsion from Saurashtra, when for the generic term of *Sooryavansi* was substituted the particular appellation of *Gehlote*. This name was maintained till another event dispersed the family, and when they settled in Ahar, *Aharya* became the appellative of the branch. This continued till loss of territory and new acquisitions once more transferred the dynasty to Seesoda, a temporary capital in the western mountains. The title of *Ranawut*, borne by all descendants of the blood royal since the eventful change which removed the seat of government from Cheetore to Oodipoor, might in time have

superseded that of *Seesodia*, if continued warfare had not checked the increase of population; but the Gehlote branch of the Sooryavansi still retain the name of *Seesodia*”⁴⁰.

THE GUHILAS OF MEDPAT/MEWAR

There is relatively little factual information about Guha and his immediate successors who ruled over Mewar. Given this, more than a little, uncertainty about the very early kings, there are discrepancies in the order of listing in various *vanshavalis* (genealogical tables), which were compiled in later centuries.

For example, Ms.No.132 (*Sisodya-ki-Vanshawali*) of the Tod Collection of Manuscripts at the Royal Asiatic Society, London, which dates from c. nineteenth century, but is based on older tables, lists the immediate successors of Guhaditya in the following order:- the Rawals Khumman, Goind, Bappa, Salvahana, Naravahana, Mahendra, Allhu, Simha, Sagat Kumar, Ambapasad, Kirit-brahma, Nara-brahma, Naravey, Usm, Bhairatta, Karan-aditya, Bhavsingh, Gatrasingh, Hansraj, Yogaraj, Khairad, Bersi, Tejsi, Samarsi and Karan. After Karan Singh’s name, the genealogy does not list Karan Singh’s older son, Kshem Singh who inherited the throne of Mewar and the ruler’s title of ‘Rawal’. Rather, it lists the name of Rahap, the progenitor of the Ranas of the Sisodia branch, and (along with Mahap), one of Karan Singh’s younger sons, who received a younger brother’s share and the estate of Sisoda. (Rahap — like all his successors — is styled not as ‘Rawal’, but as ‘Maharana’ in Tod manuscript no. 132).

The late G.H. Ojha’s researches led him to disagree with some of the early genealogical listings provided in nineteenth century works like Shyamaldas’ *Vir Vinod*, etc. Ojha⁴¹ places the early genealogy of the main Guhila dynasty in the following descending order from Guha: after Guha (or Guhadutta/ Guhil), came Bhoja, then Mahendra, and then Naga(aditya). The founding of the town of Nagda, situated at the foot of the Ekalingji hill, some fifteen kilometres from modern Udaipur city, which became an early

capital of the Guhila kings, is popularly ascribed to King Nagaditya. (Though local legends also link it with the Nagas). The next chief of this line, according to Ojha, was Shiladitya. The Samoli Inscription of Vikram Samvat 703, or AD 646 mentioned above, dates from his reign.

(The Samoli Inscription is an invaluable document from several perspectives. For, among other things, this inscription informs us that a merchant community headed by one 'Shresthi' Jentaka/Jayantaka, which had migrated from Vasantgarh, started an *agara* (mine) at Aranyakupagiri (? Zavar). This became a source of livelihood for his people. As desired by his community, Jentaka had a temple to goddess Aranyavasini (Durga) erected. There is mention of eighteen specialist 'engineers' and scores of healthy workers, and the whole indicates mining during the c. seventh century AD period in the Zavar area, where silver, lead and zinc still occur and are still mined).

A plethora of inscriptions⁴² indicate that it was under Shiladitya that the Nagda Guhilas gained political dominance across the region. Traditional genealogies place him as the fifth ruler after Guhaditya. The Samoli Inscription states that he won numerous battles and brought happiness and prosperity to his subjects. James Tod, D.C. Sircar and Dasharatha Sharma have identified this Shiladitya with the renowned 'Bappa Rawal', who firmly established the Guhilas as masters of Mewar. Shiladitya not only consolidated the gains of his predecessors, he appears to have also extended the territorial sway of his branch of Guhilas. This branch ruled for a while from Nagda (the Nagahridya or Nagadraha of Sanskrit inscriptions), before first Atpur (Aghatpur) and then Chittor became its successive capitals. After Shiladitya, his son Aparajit became the ruler of Mewar, retaining his capital at Nadga. According to the Nagda Inscription, dating to Vikram Samvat 718 (AD 660-661), which describes Aparajit's commander-in-chief, Varahsimha, son of Siva, as being powerful and crushing the strength of adversaries, Varahsimha's wife, Yashomati, built the temple of Vishnu at Nagda in AD 661.

After the Guhila king, Aparajit, Ojha's listing places Mahendra II (whom the nineteenth century bard, court-poet and writer of the work *Vir-Vinod*, Kaviraj Shyamaldas, identified with the renowned Bappa Rawal⁴³).

Following this Mahendra, the next ruler of the line, according to Ojha, was Kalabhoja. It is this King Kalabhoja who has been identified with Mewar's famous Bappa Rawal by G.H. Ojha⁴⁴, while D.R. Bhandarkar held that Kalabhoja's successor, Khumman, should be identified as Bappa Rawal. The identification of the famous Bappa Rawal⁴⁵ is, thus, not without dispute. It is even possible that the term 'Bappa' was not an individual's name, but an honorific used for more than one of the early Guhila chiefs! Possibly one of the earliest epigraphic references to Bappa Rawal occurs in the Ekalingji Inscription of AD 971, during the reign of King Naravahana, which describes Bappa as the 'the Moon' amongst the princes of the Guhila dynasty that flourished at Nagahridya (Nagda).

In fact, tradition holds that it was Bappa Rawal who took the famed fort of Chitrakuta (Chittor) from Man Mori, the last of the Mori kings of Chittor. For this, and other activities of his life, Bappa apparently had the blessings of a holy man named Harit *rishi*, whom Bappa had accepted as his spiritual preceptor (guru) at a young age. It is said that it was this sage who initiated Bappa into Saivism, and encouraged him to build the now-famous Ekalingji temple at Nagda, the Guhila capital. It is claimed that the Ekalingji temple has been revered as the shrine of the family-deity of the Mewar ruling clan since that period. Harit *rishi* also invested Bappa with the title of *Dewan* (regent) of Ekalingji, which title has been proudly borne by rulers of the line since that time. Bappa is also said to have helped the Pratihara king, Nagabhata I, in driving away Arab invaders. It is popularly held that he abdicated the throne in later life — an event traditionally believed to have occurred around c. AD 753, and spent the remainder of his life in prayer and meditation at Ekalingji, where a memorial-cenotaph still honours his memory.

However, while the issue of whether or not it is Kalabhoja who is identical with Bappa, or his son and successor, Khumman I, remains an open-ended one, it is generally accepted that Kalabhoja was succeeded by his son, Khumman I. We shall take up the subsequent history of the Guhilas of this part of Rajasthan in the next chapter.

THE GUHILAS OF KISHKINDHA (KISHKINDHPURA)

One branch of the Guhilas, which had established its capital at Kishkindha, also known as Kishkindhpura (modern Kalyanpur), sixty-eight kilometres south of Udaipur, is known to have ruled the area during the c. seventh-eighth centuries AD. On the basis of the feudatory titles used by the chiefs of this branch, it appears likely that they may have owed homage to King Harsha Vardhan of Thaneshwar and Kanauj (r. 606-642). After the death of Harsha, they appear to have shifted their allegiance, like other contiguous contemporary groups, like the Moris of south-eastern Rajasthan. This branch was subordinated by its contemporaneous Nagda-Ahar branch of the Guhilas during the eighth century.

Information about the reign of three Guhila kings belonging to the Kishkindhpura line is available from two seventh century copper-plate grants and some inscriptions. One of the copper-plate grants was issued in the 'year 48' by King Bhavita, the nephew of King Devagana, while the other was issued in the 'year 83' by King Babhata, apparently the son of Devagana. The second grant makes no mention of Bhavita, though it includes a reference to *Rajaputra* Ghorghataswami, who seems to have been Babhata's son. It thus appears that following the reign of his paternal uncle, chief Devagana, Bhavita ruled Kishkindha, but whether this was a planned succession or usurpation is unclear. The same is the case with Babhata, son of Devagana, becoming the ruler of Kishkindha after his cousin Bhavita. It can only be conjectured whether the copper-plate grants indicate a peaceful transition of power or coups and counter-coups!

Among the inscriptions, one records the grant by Bhavita for the increase of the fame and merit of his uncle and predecessor chief Devagana, of a village in the Purapatta *vishaya* (or administrative division) to a Brahmin called Asangasharman of the Daundayana *gotra*. Some further members of the Kishkindha Guhila family, namely Padda, Kadachhi and Kadachhi's wife, Vonna, are known from various (undated) inscriptions found at Kalyanpur (Kishkindha). Padda is believed to have lived in the first quarter of the seventh century and preceded Devagana, while Kadachhi is assumed to have followed Babhata. We learn that one Amnaya built a Siva temple 'out of money earned by righteous means' during the reign of

‘Maharaja’ Padda. Kadachhi’s wife, Vonna, constructed a temple to Siva, along with a grant of forty *drammas* for future repairs and maintenance, at the behest of her Saiva teacher Kutukkaacharya.

Yet another ruler of this line appears to have been Bhatti, who has used the title of ‘Maharaja’ in his Dhulev Copper-Plate Grant of the ‘year 73’. This Dhulev Plate records that ‘Maharaja’ Bhatti was ratifying the grant of the *agrahara* village Ubbaraka, which was made [but not formally ratified through the execution of a grant-deed] by his late father to the Brahmin Bhattinaga of the Chandratreya *gotra* and Vajasaneya *shakha*. The name of Bhatti’s dead father is not given. While this Dhulev Plate Grant of Maharaja Bhatti of Kishkindhpura adds to our general information, his relationship with Bhavita and Babhata is uncertain. If his ‘year 73’ follows the same calendar as the above-mentioned copper-plate grants of Bhavita (‘year 48’) and Babhata (‘year 83’), that would make him an intermediate ruler between the two. There is every possibility of his having been a son or younger brother of Bhavita, or alternately an elder brother of Babhata. However, Bhatti’s connection with Bhavita and Babhata remains unclear, given the dispute over the era used in the *Dhulev Plate Grant*.

(Debating the reckoning of the time-period, historians G.H. Ojha and D.C. Sircar held that the reading of the ‘year 73’ should be in the Harsha Era, which is equivalent to AD 679. On the other hand, V.V. Mirashi believed that the Bhatika era calendar was being referred to, while Samar maintained that the calendar in question marked time according to a local era, starting from the acquisition of the throne by the famous Guhila ruler of Mewar, Bappa Rawal. As the Dhulev Plate mentions a ‘Maharaja Bappa’, Samar suggested, on the basis of legends associated with the famous Bappa Rawal of Mewar, that the Bappa referred to in the Dhulev Plate was identical with the famous Bappa Rawal. Furthermore, according to Samar, this famous Bappa Rawal was actually a chief of the Kishkindha Guhila branch (and not the main Mewar branch), who, in the wake of unsettled conditions, subordinated the main Guhila line and usurped the throne of Mewar⁴⁶).

Yet another of the inscriptions from Kishkindha refers to a Raja Akshay Kirti and bears the date of *Samvat* 802. (This was discovered by

G.H. Ojha and has been translated by him).

THE PRATI HARAS OF MANDORE

Besides the Guhilas, among the other dynasties about which there is more detailed information during this period are the Pratiharas of Mandore. Inscriptions indicate that among the older names for Mandore were Maddodara, Mandovar, Mandavyapur, and Mandavyapur-durg. Legend holds that the hermitage of the sage Mandavya was originally located here, from which Mandavyapura took its name⁴⁷. (The suffix of ‘pur’/‘pura’ usually means a city, as do words like ‘nagar’, ‘palli’ and ‘pattan’, while the term ‘durg’ is used for a fort or a fortified place).

On the basis of Kakukka’s Ghatiyala Inscription of Vikram Samvat 918 (AD 861), and his brother Bâuka’s Mandore Inscription of Vikram Samvat 894 (AD 837), it appears that the two belonged to a Pratihara family that had descended from a Brahmin named Harishchandra (Harichand), and his Kshatriya wife, Bhadra. Harishchandra, who had one Brahmin and one Kshatriya wife, is described as being ‘well-versed in the *Vedas* and other *shastras*’. It is unclear whether he was a ruler himself, or whether he obtained territory when he married his Kshatriya wife, Bhadra; or indeed, whether he married the Kshatriya Bhadra *after* acquiring a kingdom. Even the title of ‘*Rohilladhi*’ that has been used for him does not help resolve the issue, since the meaning of this term ‘*Rohilladhi*’ is unclear. What is clearer is that Harishchandra and his family seem to have lived at Mandore around the beginning of the seventh century AD.

Harishchandra had four sons — Bhogbhata, Kakkuka, Rajjila and Dadda, by his Kshatriya wife, Bhadra. (Meanwhile, tradition holds that Harishchandra’s sons by his Brahmin wife became the Brahmin Pratiharas). Later inscriptions state that all four of Harishchandra’s half-Kshatriya sons had the prowess to rule a kingdom — a phrase that can be (and has been) interpreted to mean that each ruled over an individual kingdom. The four brothers are said to have collectively made themselves masters of Mandore through the strength of their arms. This may even be indicative of a forcible

acquisition of Mandore, followed by a period of joint-rule, and eventually — to preclude a division of the Mandore holdings — a separation of ways in search of individual conquests.

As such, some historians have suggested that they were the founders of Pratihara lines that ruled over *Lata* (Gujarat), Avanti, Kanauj etc., as well as Mandore. (For example, Dadda is believed to have first ruled over Mandore, and then moved south and founded the line that later ruled over Broach and other parts of Gujarat, with a capital at Nandipuri). However, in the light of available data, nothing definite can be said on this aspect of a common Mandore ancestry of all the Pratihara dynasties of that general period!

Of the brothers, the third — Rajjila — is the direct ancestor of the subsequent Pratihara kings of Mandore. Though some fortifications seem to have existed at the site before the Pratiharas of Mandore came to power, Rajjila is credited with the building of the massive ramparts of the fort during his reign in the seventh century AD.

The family soon asserted their authority over a wide tract. Rajjila's son, Narabhata (? c. AD 625-650), who was renowned for his valour, assumed the title 'Pellapeli'. (The meaning of this term is not fully clear, but it appears to imply sovereignty over others). His son and successor, Nagabhata, established himself at Medantaka (later known as Merta), making it his capital. (Some credit Narabhata with this). Nagabhata's elder son, Tata, apparently abdicated in favour of his younger brother, Bhoja, and retired to the hermitage of Mandavya at Mandore to practice austerities. R.C. Majumdar has suggested that Tata was the Gurjara ruler mentioned by the Chinese traveller Xuanzang.

Following the reigns of Tata, Bhoja, Yashovardhan and Chanduka in the succeeding three generations (c. possibly AD 640-720), we find the name of Shiluka as the next ruler. Shiluka bears the reputation of being a great warrior. According to his descendant Bauka's Mandore Inscription of AD 837, Shiluka extended his sway across a wide tract of land. Shiluka carried the boundaries of his state as far west as the areas called 'Valla' (in the Jaisalmer region) and 'Travani' (beyond modern Tanot, and extending

north-west towards the Punjab and Multan area), after defeating the Bhati chief Devraj of Lodrava. The latter is described as the *Vallamandala Palaka*, or ‘Protector or Enhancer of the [power] of the Valla region’. (We shall look at the Bhatias in greater detail further in this work).

Shiluka is credited with being a great builder, in addition to being a renowned warrior-king. He ordered the building of a water tank, founded a town, and constructed the lofty temple of Siddheswara Mahadeva at a holy site named Treta. It was apparently during the last days of Shiluka’s reign that the Arabs, led by Junaid, conquered ‘Al-Bailman’ (possibly Bhinmal) and ‘Jurz’ (possibly Gujarat, or land of the Gurjaras), as mentioned by Biladuri, and raided ‘Marmad’ (possibly Marwar). These references possibly apply to part of Shiluka’s kingdom.

Following Shiluka, we find the names of Jhota, Bhilladitya and Kakka as the ensuing three generations of rulers. Kakka won laurels for his family by fighting against the Gaudas at Monghyr, and assisting Nagabhata II of the Imperial Pratihara dynasty (discussed further in this book), against Dharmapala of Bengal.

THE NAGAS AND EARLY TOWNS OF RAJASTHAN

Let us turn now to the issue of Nagas, which was briefly touched upon in the introductory part of this chapter. Place-names and folk-lore seems to indicate the association of the Nagas with many of Rajasthan’s sites and settlements. There are many old habitations and urban centres that are linked with the Nagas. In some cases, historical evidence of a connection with Naga dynasties is available, in other cases, there exists a strong local tradition, which has usually not been critically analysed. Among the various towns and cities linked with Nagas at some point of their existence are the sites of Mandore, Nagaur, Toda Raisingh and Nagda.

The ancient town of Mandore became — as already noted above — the capital of the Pratiharas of Mandore (Mandavyapura) in the seventh century AD (and was to eventually become a capital of the Rathores of

Marwar some centuries later)⁴⁸. The antiquity of Mandore pre-dates the Pratiharas, though. A very strong local tradition states that the Nagas once held Mandore. Significantly, the river, along the banks of which Mandore is situated, is known as Nagadri, and the water-tank is still called Naga-kunda, and the nearby hillock as Ahi-shail (Ahi Peak, or Naga Hill). (The word 'Ahi' also means 'Naga' or a snake, as do terms like 'Bhujanga'. Equally significantly, the goddess 'Nagnechi-ji', the presiding deity of Mandore and the Rathores of Marwar, who during the fifteenth century made Mandore their capital, takes her name from that of the settlement where a Rathore chief installed her image). The town was in existence at least by the fourth century AD, as is vouchsafed by some inscriptions in characters of the early Gupta period found near the cave of Nahada Rao. It is probable that the growth of Gupta hegemony led to the general decrease of Naga hegemony. Mandore remained an important urban centre of Rajasthan during later periods too.

Like Mandore, the general antiquity of the town of Nagaur⁴⁹, now the administrative headquarter of a district of the same name, is well recognised, both by historians and in traditional accounts. Epigraphic, literary and other sources tell us that the place was known variously as Nagpur, Naga-durg, Naga-ur, Nagana, Naga-Pattan, Ahipur, and Bhujanganagar in early historic times.

Nagaur is said to take its name from its traditional founders, the Nagas, who apparently originally ruled here. From the seventh century AD, it was probably governed by the Chauhans of Shakambhari, who seem to have been vassals of the Imperial Pratiharas of Kanauj, and was included in the Chauhan Sapadalaksha kingdom. According to the *Dharmopadesamalavivarana* of Jayasimha Suri, in AD 858 it was under the Pratihara ruler Mihir-Bhoja (also Mihirbhoja)⁵⁰.

Raghavendra Singh 'Manohar' has noted a traditional couplet that runs as follows:

*Parmaran rughaviya Naga gaya Patal
raha bapda asiya, kinri jhumey chaal*⁵¹

This couplet implies that upon being defeated by the Parmars, the Nagas have gone [to rule over] *patal*, the underworld.

The researches of historian G.H. Ojha led him to believe that this settlement was once known as Ahichchhatrapur (literally ‘the canopy of Ahi’ i.e. a place under the protection of the Ahis or Nagas), and that it was famous as the capital of Jangaladesh. (Dasharatha Sharma has contested this view, for he locates Ahichchhatrapur near Sambhar)⁵². Works connected with Jainism also refer to Ahichchhatrapur as being the capital of ‘Jangaladesh’ in early times. Thus, on the basis of geography, tradition as well as historical data, the present consensus accepts Nagaur as being identical with the Ahichchhatrapur (which was also once the capital of Jangaladesh). The Bijolia Rock Inscription of Chahamana Someshwar dating to Vikram Samvat 1226 (AD 1169-70) informs us that Samantadeva, one of the early ancestors of the Chauhans of Shakambhari (Sambhar) and Ajmer, originally ruled over Ahichchhatrapur in about the seventh century AD.

Later, the town changed hands several times over the centuries, passing into the possession of the Ghaznavides, then again Chauhans, Ghori, the Delhi Sultanate, a local dynasty founded by Shams Khan Dandani, Sher Shah Suri and Mughal etc. control, interspersed with periods of conquest and occupation by other neighbouring states⁵³. The town of Nagaur is protected, like many a traditional town of Rajasthan, with a tall, thick, defensive wall with sturdy battlements, which has seen more damage in recent decades than even that wrought by attacks and warfare! Nagaur is famed for the five-domed shrine of a Sufi saint of Nagaur, which was built by Akbar. Another old mosque — the Shams Masjid — takes its name from the thirteenth century chief, Shams Khan Dandani, the one-time governor who founded his own dynasty here. Travel books have mentioned solitary standing minars as being all that remain of an old mosque at Nagaur.

Rajasthan’s State Department of Archaeology and Museums believes that the foundation-stone of the present fort of Nagaur, which overlooks the town, was laid on the ‘Vaisakh Sudi’ 3 in *Vikram Samvat* 1111 (i.e. AD 1054). The thickness of these walls tapers from thirty feet (nine metres) at the base to twelve feet (four metres) at the top. Substantial additions and

alterations were made to this fort in the course of the ensuing centuries. For example, the Mughal emperor, Akbar put in seventeen jet fountains, and Shah Jahan a mosque. The additions by Maharaja Bakhat Singh of Marwar in AD 1731 were the last major ones effected. In its present form, double walls of massive proportions protect the fort — the outer one twenty-five feet (eight metres) and the inner one fifty feet (sixteen metres) high.

Toda Raisingh is another township, which, in its early settlement phases, is traditionally associated with the Nagas. Significantly, it lies in the tract popularly referred to as *Nagarchal* (mentioned in an earlier chapter) — which may strengthen the hypothesis regarding a Naga link for the area! Toda Raisingh is located in the present-day district of Tonk, some 125 km south of modern Jaipur, and about 32 km from the ancient town of Chatsu (now spelt and pronounced as Chaksu). Epigraphic and literary sources list Takshakgarh, Takshakpur, Todaga-Pattan and Ishtikapur among the older names of this site. (Significantly, like the term ‘Naga’, the word ‘Takshak’ too means a snake⁵⁴).

The hill-range of the Aravallis within which the site is located is still known as Takshakgiri; while a cobra-hood shaped rock formation near the local Ambasagar tank is revered as ‘Takhaji’. The early historic Malava republic sites of Nagar (Karkota-Nagar or Malava-Nagar) and Rairh are not far geographically from Toda Raisingh. (The Naga connection with those Malava republic sites has been briefly touched upon in a previous chapter). It is believed that around the third-fourth centuries AD this area was under the domination of the Nagas ruling Mathura and Padmavati, or one of their subordinate branches. Later, around the seventh century AD onwards, this site came under the control of the Guhilas of Chatsu, and still later Chauhans, Solankis, the Pathan Lal Khan, the Solankis owing allegiance to the Sisodias of Mewar, the Mughal emperor, Akbar, and the Kachchhwahas⁵⁵.

Some eleven kilometres south-west of Toda Raisingh lies Visalpur (better known today as Bisalpur), which was founded in the twelfth century AD by the Shakambhari Chauhan ruler Vigharaja IV, who also used the name of Bisaldev. (In fact, an inscription of AD 1187 gives the name of the town as Vighrapur — after Vigharaja IV alias Bisaldev). The town was

apparently established on the ruins of a much older city known as Vanapura, named after an ancient sage called Vana-rishi. Some remains of this pre-Vigraharaja IV town's fortification wall, citadel and ancient temples are still extant⁵⁶. Interestingly, in its earlier phase, this Vanapura too is said to have been ruled by the Takshakas (Nagas) of Toda Raisingh, after which it remained under the possession of the Guhilas of Chatsu in the tenth and eleventh centuries⁵⁷.

Thus, we can see that there is a strong indication of Naga domination over certain parts of Rajasthan during the third-sixth centuries AD, which seems to dwindle away by around c. seventh-eighth century AD. It is important to sound a note of caution as far as the place-name and folk-lore association is concerned, however. For instance, Nagda is one of the old capitals of the Guhilas of the Mewar region. It is situated at the foot of the Ekalingji hill, and is considered to be a place of great antiquity. Sanskrit inscriptions give its old name as Nagahridya and Nagadraha. While the founding of the town of Nagda is ascribed to King Nagaditya, father of King Shiladitya of the Guhila lineage, there are local legends, which associate this place too with the Nagas. However, in the present state of knowledge, it is difficult to say much beyond recording both the local belief and the historically accepted fact regarding the founding of Nagda. The site may, of course, overlie a former Naga habitation too, but that is at present unproven.

Interestingly, many 'ancient' sites associated in folk-lore and legend with being ruled over by the Nagas at some time in the history of the site, are also recognised historically (and in the present-day) as important centres of either Saivism or Jainism, or even both. The nature of relationship between Saivism and the Nagas; and similarly, between the twenty-third Jain Tirthankara, Lord Parshvanath, whose canopy and other emblems are associated with a hooded snake (Naga) and the Nagas, may provide intriguing lines of further study in this regard.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND ECONOMIC PRACTICES IN RAJASTHAN IN THE GUPTA AND POST-GUPTA PERIOD

Various inscriptions of the Gupta and post-Gupta period from Rajasthan throw some light on contemporaneous administrative systems and hierarchies prevalent, besides the general religious beliefs of the period, and the occupation of some of the citizens. For example, the Dungarpur Inscription of AD 689 provides us with various designations and terms used at that time. These include the words *nripa* meaning a king or chief (probably used in this particular context to indicate a subordinate ruler), *nripa-suta* meaning prince, or son of a chief, and *sandhi-vigraha-adhikrita* literally ‘maker of treaties’ or minister for war and peace. The royal priest was called a *purodha*, and the commander of the army a *senadhyaksha*. Other epigraphs and texts provide an alternative term of *baladhikriya* to denote the commander of the army.

The word *rajasthaniya* seems to have remained in use to mean a viceroy. We also find the word *uparkia* used for a governor of an area, and a word still familiar to modern Indians — *mantri* — used for a minister. Other terms in use during this general period included *kumaramatyā* (minister or officer attached to the crown-prince), *vishayabhogapati* (administrator of the *vishaya* land-unit), and *gramadhipati* (village chief or head). The word *pratihar* seems to have been used with multiple related meanings ranging from door-keeper to officer-in-charge of the gate of a capital-city or the palace.

Land-revenue shares due to the state were probably collected in kind, for one of the terms that occur on inscriptions is that of a *pramatri* — or officer in charge of measures, whose role included measuring the king’s share of grain etc. One also comes across the term *chata*, which seems to have meant an officer in-charge of forced labour. That there was some sort of policing system in the urban centres is apparent from the use of terms like *chaurodharanika*, or official dealing with crimes of theft, and *dandapashika* — or head of a group of police.

Trade and commerce was obviously profitable enough, and regular enough, for various local kingdoms to have their own *shaulkika* (collector of custom duties and cesses etc.), and *vyapratāka* (superintendent of trade). We also come across the words *pratisaraka* (superintendent of servitors; also a collector of tools), *gamagamika* (courier or messenger), *bhat* (bard),

besides reference to a range of servitors and attendants who were known as *sevaks* and *bhatas* etc.⁵⁸.

ART AND ARCHITECTURE IN RAJASTHAN DURING THE c. AD 500-700 POST-GUPTA PERIOD

Gupta influence on the architecture and art of the Rajasthan region is visible at places like Godwar, Mukundarra, Bhinmal (Bhillamala), Mandore, Kaman, Osian, Bedla etc. The Gupta period art tradition continued and developed, and further evolved in the post-Gupta age too. This is borne out by the still visible temples at Jagat, Thanesar, Kalyanpur, Amjhera, Nagda, Samoli (all in south-eastern Rajasthan), and the c. AD 636-637 Siva temple at Kusuma (now considerably re-built and ‘modernised’, and known as the Ramchandra-ji temple)⁵⁹, west of Mount Abu. These are among the notable examples of temple architecture and iconography in Rajasthan of the c. fifth-sixth century onwards period. Paucity of space, however, precludes the detailing of these in this work.

In the period spanning the sixth to eighth centuries AD a profusion of idols in different materials, and temples in stone, became the norm in different parts of Rajasthan like Alwar, Dholpur, Karauli, Chittorgarh, Udaipur and Dungarpur, among others⁶⁰. Interestingly, the Vagar part of south-eastern Rajasthan has yielded a temple dedicated to goddess Vasundhara Devi from the village of Vasundar, in present-day Dungarpur district. This temple provides us with one of the earliest inscriptions from this area — namely, of Vikram Samvat 718, or AD 661. It also underlines the geographical importance of this area, as well as the fact that the Vagar region was not always quite the back-water that modern-day people believe it to have been!

In south-eastern Rajasthan, local greenish-blue schist (known as *pareva* stone) was often used. This is true in the case of the famous sculptures found at sites like Amjhera and Jagat in south-eastern Rajasthan. (That is not, however, to suggest that the use of this *pareva* stone was restricted only to this period! The famous Jain idol of Kesariyanathji, a Jain

shrine dedicated to Rishabhdeva, the first Jain Tirthankara, situated at Rikhabhdev in present-day Udaipur district, is made from *pareva* stone. Tradition holds that this idol was once installed in a temple at Baroda (Vatapadraka), the ruins of which may still be seen scattered around an old banyan tree⁶¹. The idol is venerated at 'Kala Bapji' by the Bhils of the erstwhile Dungarpur and Mewar states).

Stone was not the only medium, though, for several hoards of bronze and brass images of Jain Tirthankaras have been discovered, particularly from Akota and Vasantgarh, testifying to a rich tradition in metal sculpture. J.C. Harle, for instance, has made a special mention of two dated idols of 669 and 699 of Parshvanath from Vasantgarh⁶².

Mention may also be made of the seventy or so rock-cut Buddhist caves dating to the c. AD 600-700 period, located on the hill near the village of Dhamnar, about eighty kilometres south-west of Jhalarapatan. An inscribed clay seal indicates that this area was previously known as 'Chandangiri Maha-Vihar', thereby stressing the link of these caves with a Buddhist monastic establishment. The largest of these Dhamnar caves is known as the 'Bhima Bazaar'. This contains two rock-cut images of the Buddha in a seated posture. The 'Bhima Bazaar' cave is a combination of a *chaitya* and *vihar*, with a large rectangular court with a *chaitya* in the centre, enclosed on three sides by rows of small cells. Each side has a smaller chapel in its central cell. Another of the noteworthy caves, the 'Badi Kachari', is in the form of a large *chaitya* hall, square in plan, with a pillared front portico enclosed by a stone railing. A group of smaller caves, known as 'Chhota Bazaar' contain a number of rock-cut images of the Buddha.

The evidence indicates that temples or other types of shrines were built in honour of Vishnu, Siva, Shakti, other mother-goddesses, Surya, the Jain Tirthankars and Buddha, during the Gupta as well as the post-Gupta period, and that Buddhism had not entirely disappeared from the region.

The general period from about c. AD 600 onwards also saw the development of many towns and administrative bases, as various ruling

dynasties added to established settlements, or built new ones. These include Nagda, Chatsu, Kishkindha, Bhinmal, Jalore, Mandore, Sambhar and Nagaur, to name but a few. Hill-forts (*giri-durg*) and fortified towns protected by desert wastes (*dhanva-durg*) were known too.

In the ensuing centuries, many of these would continue to serve as capitals of kingdoms — even though the rulers and ruling houses of the kingdoms would often change. Others would grow as trade-centres, even as many new urban settlements and hill-forts would be established — as we shall read in the following chapter.

¹ Romila Thapar 1966, *History of India*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, pp.157.

² For general details about the Gupta Empire, including Samudra Gupta's conquests, see works like R.C. Majumdar (Ed.) *The Classical Age*, Vol.III, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1954, pp.7-45; S.R. Goyal *History of the Imperial Guptas* 1967, Central Book Depot, Allahabad, Udinarayan Rai *Gupta Samrat veh Unka Kal*, 1971, Lokabharati, Allahabad; among others.

³ See Majumdar *op.cit.* 1954, pp.7-13.

⁴ Later Rajasthani texts like '*Boat Johiya-ri*' describe the exploits of Johiya heroes like Depal-De Johiya, etc.

⁵ D. Sharma, 1966, pp.67.

⁶ Among such inscriptions is one dated the year 289 of the Gupta Era, that is, AD 608 (the Gupta Era is said to have started in AD 319), from the temple of goddess Dadhi-Mata in district Nagaur of western Rajasthan.

⁷ D.C. Shukla *Early History of Rajasthan*, Bharatiya Vidya Prakashan, Varanasi, 1978, pp. 117-128.

⁸ See G.H.-Ojha's *Sirohi Rajya ka Itihas*, [rep. 1999], Rajasthani Granthagar, Jodhpur, 1911, pp.104.

⁹ A historical chronicle of India by Kalhana, a Kashmir Brahmin, written in 7,826 Sanskrit verses in AD 1148.

¹⁰ Cited in Ojha, 1911 [rep. 1999], pp.105.

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² D.C. Shukla, pp. 117-128.

¹³ *ibid.*

- [14](#) Coins of later dynasties like the Pratiharas and Guhilas, etc. were influenced by Indo-Sassanian and Hun coins. The coins of the Chauhans appear to have been influenced by the coins of the Afghanistan area.
- [15](#) *Uparmal* range was once known as *Uttamadrishikhara*, and the extensive forest around it as *Bhim-Vana*.
- [16](#) K.C. Jain's *Ancient Cities and Towns of Rajasthan*, Motilal Banarasidass, New Delhi, 1972, pp.400.
- [17](#) Interestingly, the antics of an extra hot-tempered and raucous infant in a contemporary Rajput home may still lead to the bemused comment, "See this Hun that has come into our family!"
- [18](#) Ojha, 1911 [rep. 1999], pp.107.
- [19](#) In AD 551 Grahvarman's great-grandfather, King Ishanavarman, had taken the title of *Maharajadhiraj*, upon the death of the last Imperial Gupta ruler, Vishnu-Gupta.
- [20](#) For details, see among others, Radha Kumud Mookerji (1925) *Harsha*, Motilal Banarasidass, Delhi-Patna-Varanasi [3rd Ed. 1965]; and D. Devahuti *Harsha; A Political Study*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1970.
- [21](#) Situated about eight kilometres south of Pindwara, along the Saraswati river, it was known as Vata-akara, Vatasthana, Vatanagar, Vatapura, Vashishthapur, or simply Vat possibly due to an abundance of *vat* (banyan) trees.
- [22](#) Cited in K.C. Jain, 1972, pp. 164.
- [23](#) D. Sharma 1966.
- [24](#) Cited in Jain, 1972, pp.131.
- [25](#) Alexander Cunningham's *The Ancient Geography of India*, Vol.I, London, 1871, (reprinted: Low Price Publications, Delhi, no date) pp.284.
- [26](#) See, D. Sharma, 1966, pp.67.
- [27](#) Cunningham *The Ancient Geography of India*, (*op.cit.*), pp.289.
- [28](#) The term 'corn' has been used by the translator, Beals, in accordance with the English usage, where the word means cereals like wheat, oats and barley. Thus, unlike in modern American usage, traditional English use of 'corn' (like the German word 'kern'), does not apply only to maize (*Zea mays*).
- [29](#) From S. Beal (ed.) *Hiuen Tsang's Travels in India*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, cited in B.N. Pandey (ed.) *A Book of India*, Rupa & Co., New Delhi, 1991, pp.39-40.
- [30](#) *Ibid.*
- [31](#) *Ibid.*

- [32](#) Ibid, pp.40-41.
- [33](#) Ibid, pp.42.
- [34](#) Jain, 1972, pp. 108-109.
- [35](#) Rajasthan District Gazetteers — Udaipur, Govt. of Rajasthan, Jaipur, 1979, pp.31.
- [36](#) Tod, 1829 [1957] Vol.I, pp.176-181.
- [37](#) See N.N. Vyas, R.S. Mann and N.D. Chaudhury (Eds.) *Rajasthan Bhils*, MVTRT1, Udaipur, 1978; Hooja 'Prehistoric hunter gatherers: Fore-runners of the 'Tribal' Tradition?', *Shodhak*, Vol.13, Pt.B, no.38, 1984, pp.77-86, Hooja *op.cit.* 1988; & Hooja 'Expressing Ethnicity and Identity: Frontiers and Boundaries in Prehistory', *Indian Journal of Social Work*, LVII, No. 1, January 1996, pp.91-114.
- [38](#) See Ojha, 1911 [rep. 1999], pp.119-120.
- [39](#) Ibid, pp. 120.
- [40](#) Tod, *Annals and Antiquities...*, Vol.I, pp.176.
- [41](#) See G.H. Ojha's *Rajputane ka Itihas*, 1926; and *Udaipur Rajya ka Itihas*, 1931.
- [42](#) Among them the AD 646 Samoli Inscription, AD 1274 Chittor Inscription, AD 1285 Abu Inscription & AD 1460 Kumbhalgarh Inscription.
- [43](#) Shyamaldas (1890) *Vir-Vinod*, Udaipur Rajyantralaya, Govt. of Mewar State [Re-issued edited by M.L. Sharma and B. Gupta & published by Rajasthan Granthagar, Jodhpur, 1985], pp.250-251.
- [44](#) *History of Mewar*, Vol.I, pp. 102-104; *Udaipur Rajya ka Itihas*.
- [45](#) 'Rawal' means a king or a chief.
- [46](#) Cited in K.C.Jain, 1972, pp.211.
- [47](#) In the seventh century AD it was to this 'hermitage of Mandavya' with its flowing streams that the Pratihara ruler Tata retired to meditate and practice austerities, after abdicating in favour of his younger brother. A ninth century AD inscription records the performance of a fire-sacrifice by a worshipper of Keshav in the area.
- [48](#) K.C. Jain, 1972, pp. 168-175, provides some details about Mandore through the ages.
- [49](#) For details about Nagaur, see Jain, 1972, pp.242-250.
- [50](#) Jain 1972, pp.243.
- [51](#) Raghavendra Singh 'Manohar', *Rajasthan key prachin nagar aur qasbey*, Rajasthan Patrika, Jaipur, 1999, pp.121.

[52](#) On the basis of more recent data, Jain, 1972 fn.10, pp.242-243, agrees with the view-point of Ojha.

[53](#) Jain 1972 pp.243-246.

[54](#) In early Indian legend, Takshak is the name of a powerful and renowned serpent king. He was a son of the sage Kashyap and his serpent-wife, Kadru. Takshak's equally well-known serpent brothers include Vasuki, Karkota, Naga, Shesha-Nag, etc. Takshak's descendants became known as 'Takshakas'.

[55](#) For general details, see Jain, 1972, pp.256-261.

[56](#) Jain 1972, pp.409.

[57](#) *ibid.*

[58](#) See D. Sharma 1966; Jain, 1972, pp. 212-213.

[59](#) See Harle, 1994, pp.138-139.

[60](#) Among them, the famous 'Skanda-Mata' images of c. sixth to early seventh centuries AD from Thanesar-Mahadev.

[61](#) Rajasthan District Gazetteers — Dungarpur, 1974, pp.39.

[62](#) J.C. Harle 1994, pp.148.

SECTION
THREE



RAJASTHAN BETWEEN
C. AD 700-AD 1200



INTRODUCTION



DURING THE POST-GUPTA YEARS, VARIOUS WARRIOR CLANS, MANY OF whom do not appear to have always been associated with the Malavas, Sibis, Arjunayanas, or Nagas etc. groups that had previously been politically important in Rajasthan, gradually became established as the political masters of different parts of Rajasthan and northern India. In Rajasthan, these clans often replaced the earlier ruling houses, or republics, or chiefships. Over time, several of these would become termed as 'Rajputra' or 'Rajput'¹. In the literal sense, the word means 'son of a king', or one who is descended from kings. It is, perhaps, also linked to the word 'Rajanya' used for 'Kshatriyas' in earlier Vedic and Puranic literature.

Predominant among the ruling clans of Rajasthan during this period were the Pratiharas of Maru and Gurjaradesh, Guhilas of Mewar, Mauryas of Chittor and Kota, and Chauhans, among others. There were other clans and groups too that ruled over relatively small tracts during the c. AD 700-1200 period. Some of these were to rise to greater importance and fame in future centuries. Among these were the Yadavas², Kachchwahas, Yaduvamshi Bhatias, etc. And there were yet others that would cease to enjoy prominence as a state (or in some instances, even cease to exist as a viable political force), in later years like the Nagas, Chapas (Chavadas), Mauryas, Bhadanakas, Badgujars and Dahiyas, and indigenous groups like the Meenas and Bhils.

The history of the period between c. AD 700 to 1200 — spanning the rise of the Pratiharas and early ‘Rajput States’ up to the downfall of the Chauhan ruler, Prithviraj III (better known in history as Prithviraj Chauhan), against the forces of Muhammad of Ghor (more properly, Shihabuddin Muizuddin Muhammad bin Sam of Ghor or ‘Ghur’) at the Second Battle of Tarain in 1192 — is better recorded as compared with the centuries that went before.

Several epigraphs, copper plate grants and art and architectural remains are available as aids in piecing together the strands of events. Also available are various texts and other accounts both by local bards and court scribes etc., as well as by Jain monks or Turko-Indian annal-keepers etc. Some of these writers belonged to the courts of other neighbours (like the Delhi Sultans, for example). The accounts were sometimes contemporaneous and sometimes penned a few generations later.

A feature that becomes overtly obvious when we look at the dynastic history of the eighth to twelfth centuries, is the fluidity of political boundaries of various kingdoms as different states competed for supremacy and sovereignty over their near and distant neighbours, or other prominent contemporaneous powers. This is perhaps a universal aspect common to practically every period of human history, but with the availability of better records, it becomes easier to note from this period onwards in the context of Rajasthan.

Thus, the Rashtrakutas of Manyakheta in the Deccan, Chalukyas (also called Solanki) of Gujarat, Parmars of Malwa, Arabs from Sindh, the Ghaznavides and their deputies in Multan etc., and later the forces of Muhammad of Ghor etc., were as much a part of the power-struggle in Rajasthan as were states that are believed to have had a ‘Rajasthani’ derivation, like the Imperial Pratiharas and Chauhans (or Chahamanas /Chahamanas), etc.. This was equally true in the context of the roles of these latter kingdoms in other parts of northern, western, central and eastern India, like Gujarat, Malwa, Kanauj, Delhi, Bengal etc.

CONTACT, ‘ISOLATION’ AND TRADE ROUTES

It might be relevant at this point to reconsider the firmly established notion regarding the 'isolation' of Rajasthan because of the harsh climatic and geographic realities imposed by the vast Thar Desert. Rajasthan has long been viewed as providing/becoming a safe refuge; whether for c. 300 BC tribes leaving the Punjab in the face of Alexander's invasions, or Rajputs (e.g. like the Rathores of Marwar) doing the same when their ancestral homelands were conquered by Ghaznavide or Ghori armies. That Rajasthan was often a refuge for many groups is, admittedly, one truth. That it was an isolated 'back-water', however, needs reexamination! (The more so, considering that this present chapter includes a discussion on the empire of the 'Imperial' Gurjara Pratiharas, which began from Bhillamala and Jalore (ancient Jabalipur³), both in the arid part of Rajasthan, before spreading out to make the ancient city of Kanauj its capital).

A look at Indian history shows that over the ages there has been considerable trade across the desert, and evidence underlines the fact that over the centuries there have existed several established trade and/or pilgrimage routes across Rajasthan (and neighbouring Sindh). For example, by about c. tenth-thirteenth centuries, there are various references to trade routes connecting urban settlements like Pali, Jalore, Barmer, Nadol, Bhillamala, Lodrava, Nagda, Arbuda and Aghatpur (Ahar). Tenth century Pali in western Rajasthan is described as receiving trade-goods from far off lands, generally identified with Kashmir, Central Asia, China, Iran, Iraq, Arabia, Africa, etc. The *Sarneshwar 'Prashasli' Temple Inscription* of VS 1010 (AD 953) describes trade between Aghatpur (Ahar), *Madhyadesha*, *Lata* (part of Gujarat), *Takkadesh* (northern Punjab) and Karnataka. More or less contemporaneous epigraphic records state that *Madhyadesha* (located between the Himalayas on the north, the Vindhyas on the south, Sindhu on the west, Prayag in the east, Agra and Delhi on the north-east) was connected with various parts of what today comprises Rajasthan.

Itinerant traders like the banjaras have traditionally been connected with trade, including of salt, food grains and probably worked-metal, too. In addition, various literary sources from Rajasthan indicate interaction with, and knowledge about, many other regions of India. For example, the ports of 'Shuraparaka' (modern Sopara) and 'Tamralipti' (modern Tamluk) find regular mention in literary works and the oral story-telling traditions of

Rajasthan, in connection with trade and tales of strange lands and sights encountered by traders from Rajasthan!

Furthermore, over the centuries several armies regularly traversed the desert to reach other parts of northern or western India⁴. There are adequate records of such instances, including of clashes between the local land-holders and invaders. And, as detailed below in the course of this chapter, numerous fighting contingents from different parts of what is now called Rajasthan participated in far-off campaigns under their more powerful local chiefs and overlords. This was a feature that would be repeated in later centuries (including under the Mughals), as is noted further in this book!

RAJASTHAN BETWEEN C. AD 700-1000 (EIGHTH-ELEVENTH CENTURIES AD)

Broadly speaking, a predominant aspect of the period between c. AD 700-1000 was the expansion and consolidation of the empire of the 'Imperial' Pratiharas. In this, the Guhilas of Chatsu and Mewar, the Pratiharas of Mandore, the Chauhans of Shakambhari and Nadol, and the Tomars also played a major part. The Imperial Pratihara expansion, in part, followed from the processes set in motion by Arab incursions into Rajasthan at the start of the eighth century AD. In contrast, the ensuing c. AD 1000-1200 period was marked by a struggle for supremacy between the Chauhans of Shakambhari, Chalukyas (Solankis) of Gujarat (Anhillapattan or Anhillawara)⁵, and the Parmars of Malwa⁶. It was during this period that the once important Parmars of Abu and Guhilas of Mewar fell to a somewhat subordinate position. In addition, if the beginning of the eleventh century witnessed Ghazni's march across parts of Rajasthan, the end of the twelfth saw the fall of the Chauhan kingdom of Shakambhari-Ajmer-Delhi at the hands of Muhammad of Ghor.

RELATIONS WITH THE ARABS DURING THE EARLY EIGHTH CENTURY AD

Following the enhanced contact between Sindh and the Arabs in the first half of the eighth century, there was the well-discussed punitive Arab expedition of AD 712 led by Mohammad bin Kasim against Sindh's King Dahir, whose capital was Debal⁷. Thereafter, the Arabs soon gained political control over Sindh and Multan⁸. At this time, many parts of what now constitutes Rajasthan was under the political domination of various groups or clans for whom the term 'Rajput' is used. (Some of these groups have been discussed in the preceding chapter, while others are described in detail further in this chapter).

Later, Junaid, who became the Arab governor of Sindh in AD 724 and soon subdued dissensions and rebellions in that region, embarked on a series of raids against areas west and south-west of Sindh, including Kathiawar and Ujjain etc. His commanders are reputed (according to works like the *Fateh-ul-Baldan*), to have conquered 'Bailman', which has been tentatively identified with Bhinmal, over-run parts of 'Marmad', variously identified as the Maru, or Mada, or Maru-Mada area, and in general posed a serious threat to western India, including Rajasthan. The 'Baggar' part of northern Rajasthan is believed to have been part of the tracts that faced Arab attacks between c. AD 725-738.

That the kingdom of the Chavadas (Chapas) was one of those at the receiving end is attested by the Kalchuri Copper-Plate Grant dating to AD 739, which refers to the Arab invasion faced by the Chavadas and the Gurjaras. The Arab attack probably dealt a serious — even death — blow to the political might of the Chavadas of Rajasthan. It also enabled the Pratiharas and other groups to shake off Chapa authority where that existed. In the previous chapter, we have looked at the rise of the Pratiharas of Mandore. These events probably occurred during the last days of the reign of the Pratihara ruler Shiluka of Mandore, who had extended the western and northern boundaries of his state to include *Valla* and *Travani*. Marwar, at the time, was probably part of Shiluka's kingdom, while the tract referred to as 'Maru-Mada' may have either formed part of the Bhati-controlled lands, or Shiluka's, or been split between these two as well as the Chavadas who apparently held Bhinmal.

Along with western Rajasthan, the Arabs attacked Malwa and Broach, and apparently also threatened the independence of Kanauj and Kashmir⁹. It was at this time, believes D.C. Shukla, that Kanauj's King Yashovarman and Kashmir's King Lalitaditya Muktapida — both fired by ideas of *digvijaya* — tried to bring western Rajasthan under their respective spheres of influence, while at the same time checking further Arab penetration¹⁰.

Information about the Arab incursion also comes from the important Navsari Plates Inscription dating to AD 738 of a governor of the Chalukyas of Gujarat, Pulakesin Avanijanshreya of *Lata* (part of present-day Gujarat). The Navsari Plates immortalise events and titles bestowed upon Pulakesin by his grateful overlord sovereign. The titles include terms like 'the ornament of the Chalukya family'; 'the solid pillar supporting *Dakshinapatha*'; and 'the repeller of the unrepelled'. These commemorate Pulakesin's achievements in successfully beating back the invading '*Tajika*' [Arab] army, which, 'wishing to enter the Deccan with a view to conquering all the southern kings, came in the first instance to reduce the *Navasarika* country'. The inscriptions note that the 'glittering sharp swords' of the invading army had 'destroyed the prosperous *Saindhava*, *Kachchhella*, *Saurashtra*, *Chavotaka*, *Maurya* and *Gurjara* kings and others'.

In Rajasthan, it fell to Nagabhata I of the Gurjara Pratihara dynasty, then probably a feudatory of the Chapas of Bhillamalla or Bhinmal (believed to identifiable as the 'Chavotakas' of Pulakesin's inscription), to effectively resist the Arab challenge with his allies and subordinates from the region. With the presumably absolute destruction of ruling houses like the Chapas of Bhillamala, and weakening of others like the Mauryas, dynasties prominent in the preceding period began to be replaced, challenged or absorbed by old rivals or new, or hitherto less important, ones. Most of these (old and new) soon became known as 'Rajputs'.

It may be relevant, therefore, to first look briefly at the issue of the origin of the Rajputs before continuing with the tale of the Gurjara-Pratihara Nagabhata I, other contemporaneous dynasties and clans, and their successors.

THE RAJPUTS: THEIR 'ORIGINS' AND CONSOLIDATION OF POWER IN RAJASTHAN

The 'Rajputs', as a group that substantially dominate the history of much of northern India from c. seventh-eighth century AD onwards, have attracted considerable attention from scholars and historians, especially the question of who were the Rajputs and what was their origin¹¹.

To summarise a long drawn-out and protracted debate, Col. James Tod regarded the Rajputs as being descendants of the Scythic peoples of Central Asia. Dr. D.R. Bhandarkar held a similar view, while Vincent Smith was of the opinion that whereas some of the Rajput clans were of Indian origin, others had a 'foreign' origin¹². In another text, Smith argued that the term Rajput "merely denotes a tribe, clan, sept or caste of warlike habits, the members of which claimed aristocratic rank, and were treated by the Brahmans as representing the Kshatriyas of the old books. The huge group of Rajput clan-castes includes people of the most diverse descent. Many of the clans are descended from the foreigners who entered India, ...while many others are descended from indigenous tribes. ...The upper ranks of the invading hordes of the Hunas, Gurjaras, Maitrakas, and the rest became Rajput clans, while the lower developed into Hindu castes of less honourable social status, such as Gujars, Ahirs, Jats and others"¹³.

Smith listed among "clan-castes of foreign descent...the proud and chivalrous Sisodias or Guhilots of Mewar, the Parihars (Pratiharas), the Chauhans (Chahumanas), the Pawars (Pramaras), and the Solankis, otherwise called Chaulukyas or Chalukyas"; while he regarded the "Rashtrakutas of the Deccan; the Rathors of Rajputana whose name is only a vernacular form of the same designation; the Chandels and the Bundelas of Bundelkhand", among the "examples of ennobled indigenous people"¹⁴.

In sharp contrast, C.V. Vaidya attempted to prove that Rajputs were fully identical to the Kshatriyas of ancient India, and that only the purest of Kshatriya blood flows in the veins of the Rajputs. G.H. Ojha too believed that the Rajputs were descendants of the Kshatriyas of ancient times. However, among this category he grouped not only the traditional Indian

Kshatriya lineages claiming descent from Surya (the sun) or Chandra (the moon), and listed in the *Puranas*, but also (non-Indian) warrior groups like the Kushans, Sakas (Scythians), Pahlavas (Persians), ‘*Chinas*’ (Chinese), and others. These latter, Ojha maintained, had temporarily lost their Kshatriya status as a result of remaining away from the contact of Brahmins¹⁵.

On this latter point, Dasharatha Sharma noted, rather acidly, that “...when Dr. Ojha tries to support his view about the pure Ksatriya descent of the Rajputs by quoting Manu’s statement that the Paundrakas, Cholas, Dravidas, Yavanas, Sakas, Paradas, Pahlavas and Chinas were all Ksatriyas who had become Sudras on account of giving up Vedic practices in the absence of their contact with Brahmanas, he obviously goes beyond the sphere of valid historical reasoning”¹⁶.

Sharma was inclined, though, to agree with Vaidya and Ojha on another matter. This was a conviction that the legend of the *Agni-Kula* Rajputs, cited by Chand Bardai in his *Prithviraj-Raso*, and by some other traditional Rajasthani chroniclers, and mentioned in the Sisana Inscription of the Chauhans of Bedla and subsequent texts, originated during the sixteenth century AD or thereabouts¹⁷. This origin-myth holds that the respective progenitors of the Pratihara, Solanki (Chalukya), Parmar and Chauhan (Chahamana) Rajput clans originated miraculously from a sacrificial fire during a yagna, or religious ritual centred around a holy fire, conducted by the ancient sage Vashishtha, thereby becoming ‘fire-born’ or *Agni-Kula* Rajputs.

If this myth indeed has its roots in the sixteenth century, it would question the premise held by many about the origin-myth of the so-called *Agni-Kula* clans of the Pratiharas, Solankis, Parmars and Chauhans. Namely, that the origin-myth indicates some kind of ritual purification of foreign or non-Indian warrior groups through the sacred fire of a yagna etc., who could thus be admitted to the traditional Indian (Brahmanical or Hindu) social fold as Kshatriyas. If, on the other hand, the myth has an earlier origin, but was orally transmitted through earlier centuries before

being finally penned down in the sixteenth century, the premise of ritual purification would still stand!

Dasharatha Sharma and Gopi Nath Sharma believe that the Guhilas, Parmars and Chauhans were originally Brahmin by caste, but having adopted a military career and the traits of the Kshatriyas, became accepted as warrior Rajputs, since “all warrior clans have an inherent right to be regarded as Ksatriyas”¹⁸. Elaborating on this point, Smith noted that, in “ancient times the line of demarcation between the Brahmans and the Kshatriyas, that is to say, between the learned and the warrior group of castes, was not sharply defined. It was often crossed, sometimes by change of occupation, and at other times by intermarriage. Ordinarily, the position of the leading Brahman at court was that of minister, but sometimes the Brahman preferred to rule directly, and himself seized the throne”¹⁹.

Early Indian history has several examples of Brahmin ruling dynasties, including that of the Sunga and Kanva royal families. (Both familiar through standard school text-books to practically every school-going student in India as being, one after the other, the usurping successors to the empire of the Mauryas). “Similar cases of Brahman dynasties occur later. In the seventh century Huien Tsang noted the existence of several Brahman Rajas, as at Ujjain and in Jijhoti or Bundelkhand. Usurpations by Brahman ministers also continued to happen. When a Brahman succeeded in founding a dynasty, and so definitely taking up Kshatriya work, his descendants were recognized as Kshatriyas and intermarried freely with established Kshatriya families...During the transitional stage, while a Brahman family was passing into the Kshatriya group of castes, it was often known by the composite designation of Brahmakshatri. Several cases of the application of that term to royal families are recorded, the most prominent being those of the Sisodias of Mewar and the Senas of Bengal”, noted Smith, more than eighty years ago²⁰.

Analysing all the evidence available, many modern historians now believe that the Rajputs include elements from both Indian and non-Indian groups. As Dasharatha Sharma puts it, “Of the Rajput families of the eighth century, many must have been the descendants of the ancient Aila [i.e. the

Moon] and Iksvaku [i.e. the Sun] families. When the other castes survived, the Ksatriyas [sic] alone need not have disappeared. But there are reasons to believe that the Guhilas, the Chauhans and the Paramaras [sic] were originally Brahmanas...We cannot be sure about the origin of the Chapas who think that they were born of the bow of Siva, or of the Solankis whose ancestor is believed to have come out of the *chuluka* (cavity formed with hands to hold water). The Hunas are the well-known tribe of Tormana and Mihirkula. The Bad-gujars claim a solar Ksatriya origin; but the word Gujar which forms part of their name obviously needs explanation...”²¹.

Exploring the complicated issue of origins, particularly as they relate to the Chauhans (or Chahamanas), in his definitive work entitled *Early Chauhan Dynasties*²², Sharma noted how “Bards and Rajasthani chroniclers regard them [Chauhans] as fire-born; their *gotrochchara* makes them lunar Ksatriyas; and Dr. G.H. Ojha, relying on a number of old *kavyas* and other records, maintains that they are Rajputs of the solar race. Ratnapala’s plates [Sevadi Plates dating to *Jyestha vadi* 8, VS 1176, i.e. 22 April, AD 1120] state that Chahamanas [the progenitor of the clan] was born from the eyes of ‘lord of the eastern quarter’. Further, there are the views of many writers, Indian as well as European, who regard them as descendants of some foreign tribe or other”²³. (D.R. Bhandarkar, for instance, suggested that the Chauhans were Khazars and originally belonged to a priestly section of a ‘foreign tribe’²⁴).

However, Dasharatha Sharma himself held that the Chauhans or Chahamanas were originally Brahmins²⁵. As evidence, he cites the Bijolia Inscription of VS 1226 (AD 1170), which refers to chief Samanta of ‘Anant’ as being a *vipra* (Brahmin) of the ‘*Sri Vatsa gotra*’ (ancestry); the ‘*Kyam Khan Raso*’ by Jan (a Muslim Chauhan); verse 4 of the Sundha Inscription of the Chauhans of Jalore; and verse 7 of the Achaleswar Inscription of the Chauhans of Chandravati (Abu)²⁶.

Interestingly, the various Rajput clans themselves are not bothered by origin-debates, nor by crises of self-identity, since the popular common belief— among Rajputs as well as non-Rajputs — remains that the Rajputs are warriors (Kshatriyas) with long and ancient warrior lineages. As such,

twentieth century Rajputs accept, without any hesitation, the traditional genealogies which have been handed down to them as part of their heritage, and which are still recounted to them at ceremonial occasions by their bards (Charans, Barhats, Badvas, Bhats etc.). (In this context, it is interesting to note that, according to their own respective traditions and histories, several of the Rajput ancestral clans or dynasty founders migrated to present day Rajasthan from elsewhere).

The Rajputs of Rajasthan are not over-concerned either over the date or period when the term 'Rajput' entered common usage. However, epigraphical and literary evidence would indicate that it was probably sometime during the c. twelfth-fourteenth centuries AD period that the usage of terms like *Rajputra*, *Kshatriya*, *Rautt* and similar words denoting connections with kingship, and *Rajput* became established as more or less synonymous words.

Asopa informs us that "Rajput is a corrupt form of the Vedic word *Rajputra*. It occurs in *Rigveda*, *Yajurvedic Kaphak Samhita*, and *Aitareya Bramana* of the *Rigveda* as a synonym for *Râjanya*. ...In *Mahabharata* also the word *Rajputra* has been used in the sense of nobles and chiefs, as well as ordinary Kshatriyas. The literal meaning of Kshatriya again is the son of a *Kshatra*. ... So the primary meaning of *Rajanya* and Kshatriya is the same and *Rajputra* is used for either of the two words though its meaning becomes distinct as we proceed on the long road of time... As pointed out by G.H. Ojha in *Rajputane ka Itihasa* Vol. I, *Rajputras* have been referred to in Kautilya's *Arthasastra*, Kalidasa's *Malvikagnimitra*, Asvaghosha's *Saundarananda* and Banabhatta's *Harshacharita* and *Kadambari*. The word has been used with different connotations by these authors. In Kautilya's work it implies sons of the king while by Kalidasa and Asvaghosha it is used for nobles. Banabhatta in the first work uses it in the sense of nobles and in the latter work as sons of the nobles"²⁷.

Citing D.C. Sircar's work, Asopa further observed that "...in Kalhana's *Rajtarangini* (VII.390) the word *rajaputra* is used in the sense of a mere land-owner, but if it is read with VII, vv.1617 and 1618 of the same book it would be clear that they acclaimed their birth from the 36 clans of the Rajputs. That would lead us to believe that by the beginning of the 12th

century AD these clans had already come into existence”²⁸. Asopa has listed various 11th-13th century references to the term ‘*Rajputra*’ from inscriptions found at Abu, Chittor, and in various contemporaneous texts²⁹. B.D. Chattopadhyaya³⁰ too has drawn attention to various other examples, including the Delhi Shivalik Pillar Inscription dating to AD 1163 of Chauhan king Vigraharaj IV (Bisaldev), which refers to a ‘*Rajputra*’ named Shri Sallakshanapala, who was Vigraharaj’s *maha-mantri* (chief minister).

THE IMPERIAL PRATI HARAS — THEIR RISE, ZENITH AND DECLINE: FROM NAGABHATA I TO THE SUCCESSORS OF TRILOCHANAPALA

Let us return now to the tale of Nagabhata I and the Imperial or Gurjara-Pratiharas, who were first to become masters of Bhinmal and Jalore and eventually of the once imperial capital-city of Kanauj in the Gangetic valley of northern India. We need not digress here by analysing the term ‘Gurjara-Pratihara’ and their origins, an issue already debated at length by earlier historians, including D.R. Bhandarkar, R.C. Majumdar, and others, without a universally accepted conclusion! One may note though that the name ‘Gurjara’ does not seem to appear before the end of the sixth century. There has been some confusion among early twentieth century historians over the relationship between the Mandore Pratiharas of the Harichandra line and the later and more important line of the Gurjara-Pratiharas, also called Imperial Pratiharas by historians. It is to this latter line that Nagabhata I belonged.

Nagabhata I (r. AD ?739-760?), as we have noted, was originally perhaps a feudatory of the Chapas of Bhillamala. Traditional accounts imply that he was a soldier of fortune³¹, who made his capital at Jalore, some 120 kms south of present-day Jodhpur. He gained prominence after the downfall of the Chapa kingdom in the course of resisting the invading forces led by the Arabs who controlled Sindh. The Gwalior Prashasti — a later inscription by one of his most eminent descendants, King Bhoja I, ascribes him with having appeared like Lord Narayan (Vishnu) “in response to the prayers of the oppressed people to crush the large armies of the

powerful *Mlechchha* ruler, the destroyer of virtue”. It is believed that he may have joined forces with the Rashtrakuta ruler Dantidurga (r. c. AD ? 753-760) of Manyakheta, and others in this task.

(This branch of the Rashtrakutas, with its capital at Manyakheta, rose to prominence under Dantidurga, who defeated Kirtivarman, the mighty Chalukyan ruler of Badami (Vatapi) in c. AD 756. Prominent rulers of this line include Krishna I, Dhruva, and Krishna II. Over time, the Rashtrakutas would not only dominate the Deccan, but occasionally also control substantial territories in northern as well as southern India. By about AD 982 they were a spent force in the Deccan, and were eclipsed by the Chalukyas of Kalyani).

It is significant, in this context, that there is a contemporaneous reference to a special ceremony called the ‘*Hiranyagarbha-mahadana*’ ritual (which entailed the construction of a golden ‘cosmic’ egg and its subsequent donation to Brahmins), in the presence, and on behalf, of many kings (*rajanyas*). This seems to have been jointly performed at Ujjayini (modern Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh) sometime after the Arab forces were driven back. Nagabhata probably participated in this. Verse 9 of the Sanjan Plates, a Rashtrakuta record written some 115 years later, stressing and lauding the role of Dantidurga against the invading Arabs, tells us that the *Gurjaresha* (i.e. ‘Lord of the Gurjaras’³²), had been assigned the task of the *pratihara* or sentinel (also door-keeper or guardian) at this ceremony. Sharma suggests that “it was perhaps at the sacred site of Ujjayini that the clans from Rajasthan, impressed by Nagabhata’s valour and qualities of leadership, decided to tender their allegiance to him”³³. The ceremony concluded, as intended, with an allegorical cosmic re-birth of the participatory rulers and their lineage, an apt symbolism given the future ascendance of both Nagabhata I and the Gurjara-Pratiharas, and Dantidurga and the Rashtrakutas!

Nagabhata I soon extended his control over a vast area, including, as the Hansot Inscription of AD 758 notes, the tracts around Bhillamala, Jalore, Abu, and briefly, Lata (southern Gujarat), and Malwa. Jalore became his capital. The ‘*Kuvalyamala*’, a text composed by Uddyotan Suri at Jalore in the Saka calendar year 700 (i.e. AD 778), during the reign of the

Ratnahastin king, Vatsaraja, indicates that under Nagabhata and his successors, Jalore developed into a thriving city, adorned with temples, and the mansions of the rich.

Among Nagabhata I's feudatories was one Bhartravaddha II of Bhrugukachchha (a place known as Broach for much of the twentieth century). Nagabhata I was a patron of scholars, artists and sages. The Jain scholar Yakshadeva was among those to whom Nagabhata extended his patronage. Some scholars suggest that this Yakshadeva is identical with the 'Kshamashramana' Yakshadatta referred to in the text *Kuvalyamala*, whose pupils are credited with beautifying 'Gurjara-desh', of which Bhillamala was the chief town, with many temples.

The Pratiharas could not retain possession of Malwa and Lata indefinitely, however, for their erstwhile ally, King Dantidurga Rashtrakuta, successfully wrested these two territories from the Gurjara-Pratiharas. We cannot be sure whether this loss occurred in the reign of Nagabhata I himself, or during that of one of his immediate successors. What is certain from the Samanagarh Inscription and the Dasha-avatar Temple Inscription is that the Rashtrakuta king, Dantidurga, conquered Lata and Malwa sometime before his death in AD 758. (The Hansot Inscription of AD 758 suggests that this occurred in AD 757).

Nagabhata I was succeeded by his nephew Kakkuka, after whom another of Nagabhata's nephews, Devaraja or Devashakti (the younger brother of Kakkuka) came to the throne. Their reigns are tentatively dated between AD 760 to c. 775. The later Gwalior Prashasti Inscription of Bhoja I hails Devaraja as having curbed 'Mahidharas' (kings) and their 'Urupakskas' (literally, 'strong wings'), which may mean that he was victorious over rival kings and their strong subordinate allies. It was the fourth ruler of this dynasty, Vatsaraja (r. ?775-799), the son and successor of Devaraja and his queen, Bhuyika-Devi, who earned the 'Imperial' status for his line; a position that the Pratiharas were to justifiably claim for the next couple of centuries.

Consolidating his territorial sway, Vatsaraja took over surrounding neighbouring tracts too; for an inscription in the Mahavir temple at Osian

testifies to his rule over Osian. (Osian is described as a flourishing town, adorned with temples and inhabited by people of different communities. After the reign of Vatsaraja, Osian was attacked and destroyed by the Abhiras, who are described as ‘*mlechchhas*’ and ‘wicked’ people!) Having brought much of Rajasthan under him as a first step, Vatsaraja embarked on the ambitious project of becoming master of all the land lying between the two seas. Two dates for the earlier part of Vatsaraja’s reign are AD 778, when the previously mentioned *Kuvalyamala* was composed at Jalore, and AD 783, when Jijasena’s *Harivamsa Purana* referred to Vatsaraja as the ruler of Ujjain and of the ‘western quarter’.

The Gwalior Prashasti Inscription of Bhoja I records that Vatsaraja defeated the Bhandis. The identity of these Bhandis remains a contested issue amongst Indian historians, though R.C. Majumdar suggested they be identified with the Bhattis (Bhatīs) of Rajasthan. As the Mandore Pratihara Shiluka is known to have defeated Devraj Bhati, one could perhaps consider regarding the reference to Vatsaraja’s victory over the ‘Bhandi *kul*’ as referring to this *if* Mandore’s Shiluka had acted on behalf of a liege-lord in the form of Vatsaraja. However, it is said that ‘Bhandi’ was also the clan-name of the maternal family of King Harsha Vardhana of Kanauj and Thaneshwar. It is known that Vatsaraja reduced a king, Indrayudha of Kanauj, to the status of his feudatory. As such, if the Kanauj throne was held, at that time, by a descendant of Harsha Vardhan’s maternal family, then the reference in the Gwalior inscription may well apply to the victory over this Kanauj king, Indrayudha of the ‘Bhandi *kul*’. The matter requires further exploration!

We know that Vatsaraja was called ‘*Ratnahastin*’ King Vatsaraja by this time. Interestingly, the title *Ratnabastin* occurs also on coins found in Kanauj and some other parts of the Gangetic valley, Rajasthan and the Saurashtra part of the modern state of Gujarat, and may have been used during that period as a royal title by more than one chief or king.

According to the information given in the Radhanpur Plate Inscription and the *Prithviraj Vijaya* (a late twelfth century text by Jayankabhatta, eulogising Prithviraj Chauhan III and his ancestors), Vatsaraja even led an expedition against the distant eastern kingdom of Gauda (Bengal), then

ruled by the Palas under King Dharamapala. (The Pala empire dominated eastern India, with occasional forays into northern and Central India, well into the middle of the ninth century AD. The Pala king, Dharamapala (d. AD 810) had once occupied the prized city of Kanauj and held a grand *darbar* attended by many vassal-rulers. As such Gauda, and its successor state, came into conflict from time to time with the Imperial Pratiharas, and the latter's successor-states).

Dharamapala, these records say, was deprived of his two white royal umbrellas, and forced to flee, hotly pursued by the Pratihara forces. Vatsaraja's general for this campaign may have been Durlabhraj I of the Chauhan clan of Shakambhari. The *Prithviraj Vijaya* describes Durlabhraj I as having "washed his sword at the confluence of the river Ganga and the ocean, and savouring the land of the Gaudas", no doubt in the course of the Pratihara campaign. The Baroda Inscription of AD 812 also refers to Nagabhata's victory over the Gauda king Dharamapala.

Through vigorous campaigning, Vatsaraja had extended his dominions to include a large part of northern India, cutting a swathe across from the Thar Desert in the west up to the frontiers of Gauda in the east, and northwards up to Kanauj. However, while he was still in the process of consolidating his growing empire, he was forced to face a powerful opponent in the form of his own southern neighbour and rival — the Rashtrakuta king, Dhruv Dharavarsha. Sometime between AD 786 and 793, during the final years of Vatsaraja's reign, the Pratihara king suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of Dhruv Dharavarsha and his Rashtrakuta army. This apparently deprived Vatsaraja of nearly all the territory that he had won outside Rajasthan, and the Pratihara ruler was driven to take shelter at Jalore.

This defeat temporarily influenced the entire power structure between the Imperial Pratiharas, the Rashtrakutas and the Palas. The satisfied victor Dhruv Rashtrakuta soon turned his attention back to his Deccan and southern lands. He died in AD 793, leaving the field open for the Palas of Bengal. Meanwhile, the Pala king, Dharamapala, had taken advantage of the lowering of Pratihara prestige by installing his own nominee, Chakrayudha, on the throne of Kanauj. The act was apparently acclaimed

by the *Bhojas*, *Matsyas*, *Madras*, *Kurus*, *Yadus*, *Yavanas*, *Avantis*, *Gandharas* and *Kiras* according to Dharamapala's Khalimpur Inscription. Obviously, the states and rulers who had been or were likely to have been threatened by the soaring ambitions of Vatsaraja Pratihara were not loath to see his discomfiture.

Vatsaraja died sometime during the AD c. 794-799 period, and was succeeded by his son, Nagabhata II (r. ?799-833), who successfully guided the patrimony he had inherited along the path to empire. Nagabhata II, having soon avenged his father's defeat, extended his sway over a large part of northern and Central India. The Gwalior Prashasti Inscription of his grandson, Bhoja I, credits Nagabhata II with defeating the kings of *Andhra*, *Sindhu*, *Vidharbha*, and *Kalinga*, who "succumbed to his youthful energy as moths do to fire". So also, it seems, did the Pala feudatory king, Chakrayudha of Kanauj in AD c. 816, when Nagabhata II invaded the Gangetic region and captured Kanauj.

Kanauj now became the new capital of Nagabhata II. The Gwalior Inscription further informs us that, "vanquishing the lord of Vanga" (Bengal), Nagabhata II seized the hill-forts of the kings of *Anarta*, *Malava*, *Matsya*, *Kirata*, *Turushka* and *Vatsa*. In the wake of all these victories, Nagabhata II emerged as the most powerful ruler of northern India.

The only real major check suffered by Nagabhata II came at the hands of the Rashtrakuta king, Govinda III (r. AD 793-814), who like his predecessor, Dhruv, defeated the Gurjara-Pratiharas early in the ninth century, perhaps sometime around AD 806-807. Having annexed Malwa, Kosala and Kalinga amongst other lands, Govinda III eventually turned his attention southwards. This, in effect, left Nagabhata II free to pursue his expansionist designs afresh, particularly against the Pala empire; who were, like the Rashtrakutas, old enemies of his Gurjara-Pratihara dynasty.

The huge Pala army, famed for its elephant force of 50,000, besides other wings, led by King Dharmapala, faced Nagabhata's forces, which included contingents led by his Rajasthan feudatories, at Mudgagiri (modern Mungher/ Monghyr in Bihar). Nagabhata II was victorious. The Chatsu Inscription of Baladitya of AD 813 states that Shankaragana, a

Guhila chief fighting on behalf of Nagabhata II, fulfilled his vow by “defeating Bhata, the Gauda ruler, in battle, and presented the earth at his master’s feet”. The victory strengthened the position of the Gurjara-Pratiharas, and left no doubts as to their ability to stake a claim to empire in northern and western India.

There is evidence to suggest that by this time, much of the area comprising modern Rajasthan, especially the tracts in and around Marwar, formed part of the dominions of the Imperial Pratiharas. An inscription from the village of Buchkala (near Bilara), dated VS 872 (AD 815) designates the region as the ‘*Sva-vishaya*’ (own province) of the *Parambhattarka Maharajadhiraja Parmeshwara Shri Nagabhatadeva* (the Great Ruler, King of All Kings, All-Powerful Lord Nagabhata-deva), the son of *Maharajadhiraja Parmeshwara Shri Vatsaraja*.

The Buchkala Inscription also credits him with having the overlordship of many powerful local chiefs and rulers; a fact corroborated by other records, including through the Chatsu Inscription of Baladitya mentioned above. Similarly, Bauka’s Mandore (Jodhpur) Inscription of VS 894 (AD 837), records the participation of Kakka (Bauka’s father) in Nagabhata’s famous battle of Mudgagiri against the Gaudas. Yet another inscription, known as the Harshanath Temple Inscription, (also ‘Harsha Inscription’), which dates to VS 1030 (AD 973), refers to Shakambhari’s Chauhan chief Guvaka I (son of Durlabhraj I), attending Nagabhata II’s court³⁴. A Chalukya chief named Vahukadhavala also numbered among his vassals.

Nagabhata II’s reign saw the establishment of the might of the Pratiharas as a major power in northern India. It was a time when there was a tripartite struggle for supremacy over the north, in which the Imperial Pratiharas saw victories, tempered by only a few setbacks. Nagabhata II’s long reign came to an end in c. AD 833. (Jain *acharya* Chandraprabha’s text, *Prabhavak-Charitra*, suggests that Nagabhata died in August AD 833).

Famed for his patronage of scholars and poets as much as for his abilities as a warrior and leader of men, he is regarded as amongst the ablest

and valorous of his line. Beginning his reign with fewer powers and resources as compared to his contemporary Rashtrakuta and Pala monarchs, Nagabhata II died master of an empire that would last over the next century and a half.

He was succeeded by his son, Ramabhadra, who had a very short reign (c. AD 833-836), marked by internal as well as external troubles. One cause for the former were ambitious feudatories, while external problems came at the hands of the Pala ruler, Devapala, who apparently was successful in regaining part of the Pala territory, which had been conquered by Nagabhata II.

Mihir-Bhoja, also known as Bhoja I (r. 836-?892), succeeded his father, Ramabhadra. He is regarded by historians as being the greatest of the Imperial Gurjara-Pratihara rulers. One of his titles was that of *Adi-Varah* (derived from the primeval 'Great Boar' incarnation of Vishnu). Another was '*Prabhasa*'. When Bhoja I ascended the throne "...Devapala was still ruling in Bengal. On the western side, the danger from the Arabs of Sindh had never ended. In the south Amoghavarsha, an inheritor of the traditions set up by the redoubtable Rastrakuta rulers, Dantidurga, Dhruva and Govinda III, could always be a potential danger to the Pratihara Empire; and within the empire itself the increased power of the feudatories who had helped Ramabhadra against his enemies could ultimately be more of a source of weakness than strength"³⁵.

Not enough is known about Bhoja's early life and achievements. It is more than probable that Bhoja I first consolidated his position locally (including against the feudatories holding Jalore, Mandore and Kalanagar), before turning his attention against the old Pratihara enemies — the formidable Palas of Gauda. Under King Devapala (c. 810-850), the Palas of Gauda are reputed to have "eradicated the race of the Utkalas, humbled the pride of the Hunas and scattered the conceit of the Dravidas and Gurjaras", according to the Badal Inscription. The last-mentioned reference in the inscription may indicate a confrontation between Bhoja and Devapala in which the former was worsted during the early part of his reign.

Perhaps after initially consolidating his inheritance, Bhoja I then turned towards Central India, the Deccan and Gujarat. Stepping into a struggle for the throne of Gujarat between Dhruva II of the Gujarat Rashtrakuta dynasty and his younger brother, Bhoja led a cavalry raid into Gujarat, with the stated objective of supporting the claim of the latter. The raid was repulsed by Dhruva II. Amoghavarsha's army may also have taken up arms against the Imperial Pratiharas at this point. Bhoja I was able to retain dominion over parts of Gujarat and Malwa, but further expansion in that direction was effectively checked. This may have led Bhoja to concentrate on the lands other than those under the Rashtrakutas for the time being.

The enmity between the Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas smouldered on, however. A phase of retaliation and counter-retaliation continued, until Amoghavarsha's son and successor, Krishna II, along with the king of the Gujarat line of the Rashtrakutas, also called Krishna II, jointly attacked Pratihara territories sometime before AD 888. A major battle between the Rashtrakutas and Pratiharas followed at Ujjayini. The Gurjara-Pratiharas were conclusively defeated. Not long after, however, retribution followed on the part of the Pratiharas, for we know that towards the end of his reign Bhoja I exterminated the Gujarat line of the Rashtrakutas.

His successes came in other directions too. In his capacity as Bhoja's feudatory, the Guhila chief of Chatsu, named Harsha, is described as "defeating the northern rulers with the help of the mighty elephant force", and "loyally presenting to Bhoja the special '*Shrivamsha*' breed of horses, which could easily cross seas of sand". Dasharatha Sharma³⁶, among others, feels that this may refer to a successful expedition across the Thar Desert against Sindh and Multan (then under Arab domination).

Among the kingdoms and lands over which the mastery of Bhoja I was acknowledged were *Travani*, *Valla*, *Mada*, *Arya*, *Gurjaratra*, *Lata* and *Parvarta*. His Daulatpura Inscription of Dausa area, dating to VS 900 (AD 843), confirming a grant originally made by King Vatsaraja and continued by Nagabhata II, emphasises his status in that region. Another inscription tells us that his territories extended to the east of the Sutlej river. Kalhan's *Raj-Tarangini* states that the territories of Bhoja touched Kashmir on the

north, and that Bhoja had wrested land from a north Punjab kingdom ruled by a 'Thakkiyaka' dynasty. Following the death of Bengal's Devapala, Bhoja I expanded his boundaries eastwards well into previously Pala-held lands (perhaps as far as Gorakhpur) too.

Rajasthan, at this time, appears to have remained firmly within the Pratihara sphere of hegemony, with ancillary evidence including the occurrence of Bhoja's coins at sites like Baghera (old Vyaghra; also Varahnagar), seventy-four kilometres south-east of Ajmer. Bhoja's 'Adi-Varah' type of coins remained prevalent in Rajasthan subsequently too. Their metal is an alloy of silver and copper and they depict 'Varah' (Adi-Varah) — the boar-faced incarnation of Lord Vishnu — with a human body and a boar's head along with a solar disc on the obverse. The reverse of these coins carries the legend '*Shrimad Adi Varah*', and the king's name. (Such coins are mentioned in the Kaman Inscription and in the thirteenth century text *Dravya-Pariksha*, by Thakkar Pheru, who served as mint-master etc. to Delhi's Sultan Alauddin Khilji).

By the close of Bhoja I's reign, Pratihara domination extended eastward as far as Gorakhpur, and included much of modern U.P. and the Gangetic Doab, Central India and Malwa, Rajasthan, the Saurashtra part of modern Gujarat state, and parts of Punjab and Bihar. According to the accounts of an Arab traveller called Sulaiman, who visited India in AD 851, the kingdom of '*Juzr*' (identified with the Gurjara-Pratihara realm), formed a large 'tongue of land'. Sulaiman commented that the king of Juzr had the best and largest cavalry and army in India; gold and silver 'dust' was in use for commercial transactions, and the rule of law prevailed in those domains. (A somewhat later text called *Hudud-ul-Alam* by a tenth century Persian geographer also noted that many of the kings of India obeyed the powerful 'Rai of Qinnauj', whose mighty army had 150,000 horses and 800 elephants. In fact, besides Sulaiman, accounts of travellers like Abu Zaid, Al-Masudi and Al-Gardizi, etc. have lauded the military might and constant vigilance and battle-readiness of the Gurjara Pratiharas, along with their determination to check any incursions into their lands by the Arabs of Sindh and Multan).

By this period, Kanauj had long functioned as the firmly established capital-city of the Imperial Pratiharas. The administration was well-run, the economy, according to travellers' accounts and other records, flourished, and there was overall prosperity in the Pratihara domain. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the name of King Bhoja — often combined and confused with the achievements of later kings called Bhoj, including the equally famous Bhoj Parmar of Malwa — has become legendary throughout India.

Bhoja I was succeeded by his son, Mahendrapala I (r. AD ?892-910). The event possibly took place in c. AD 892, though some traditions aver that Bhoja voluntarily abdicated in favour of his son around AD 885 and went away to spend his remaining life in meditation and prayers at Girnar. During the reign of Mahendrapala I, Imperial Pratihara authority flourished over a large tract. It stretched from Una, in the Gujarat peninsula of Saurashtra, in the west to Paharpur in north Bengal, in the east, and from *Valayika-visaya*, in the Nepalese Terai, in the north to Siyadoni and Terahi in Central India. Mahendrapala also fought against Shankar Varman, the king of Kashmir, and may have suffered a reverse, for he yielded the 'Takk' portion of the Punjab territories formerly annexed by Bhoja I to Kashmir.

By this time, the Pratihara feudatory chiefs — *samantas* — became very powerful locally and, as such, often uncontrollable. One possible cause for this was the fact that, as the Pratihara empire had expanded eastward, the earlier Pratihara capitals of Bhinmal and Jalore had yielded their importance to the famed ancient city of Kanauj. Kanauj — the *Kanyakubja* of ancient India — was a city with a long history, and had been the capital of Emperor Harsha Vardhan in the first half of AD seventh century. Geographically well located (and being more central for the expanded Pratihara empire), Kanauj by now held the status of the Pratihara metropolis.

With this transposition of the hub — perhaps even the heart — of the Pratihara world, by the end of the ninth century the Pratihara rulers were almost like absentee-landlords to Rajasthan. As a consequence, gradually some of their feudatories in Rajasthan and other areas, at some distance from the royal capital, began to assert their independence more and more.

As such, we know that Mahendrapala I found it necessary to put down the 'rebellion' begun in Samastra during his father's reign.

Mahendrapala, like his predecessors and contemporaries, was a patron of the arts. His guru was the famous poet, dramatist and writer, Rajshekhar. Rajshekhar was from the Yayavara family of poets, and is described as being a Brahmin. Rajshekhar's wife, Avanti-Sundari, belonged to the Chahamana clan. She too was a noted poet. Rajshekhar's works include the *Karpura-Manjari*, *Kavya-Mimansa*, *Haravilas*, *Bala-Ramayana*, and the *Bala-Bharata*. Some of Rajshekhar's writings provide a vivid picture of the elegancies of life in contemporaneous Kanauj, along with descriptions of the dress, ornaments, fashions and manners of the women of Kanauj, which were apparently superior to those of the rest of the world! It is held that Rajshekhar's Prakrit play, *Karpura-Manjari*, and a ten-act Sanskrit drama, the *Bala-Ramayana*, were first staged during Mahendrapala I's reign. After Mahendrapala I's death, which probably occurred around c. 908-AD 910, Rajshekhar continued to live at the Pratihara court under the patronage of Mahipal (r. ?911-931), the next Imperial Pratihara ruler.

Some historians believe that a war of succession ensued after Mahendrapala's death, and for a short period one Bhoja II (r.?910-912), a half-brother of Mahipal, sat on the Pratihara throne of Kanauj. The history of the time is confused. What is certain is that the power of the Pratiharas was weakened by dynastic infighting, and that sometime around AD 915-916 the Rashtrakuta king, Indra III, a grandson of the famous Amoghavarsha, led his armies and allies northwards, conclusively defeated Mahipal and sacked Kanauj.

Mahipal, perhaps with the help of his feudatories and allies, eventually regained his throne, for Rajshekhar refers to Mahipal as a 'pearl of the family of Raghu' and as the 'Maharajadhiraja of *Arya-varta*' in his play *Bala-Bharata*. The play may have been written when Mahipal had repulsed his enemies, regained his patrimony, and attained the pinnacle of his career. In short, despite the rather rocky start to his reign, Mahipal is regarded as a successful ruler, who maintained the prestige of his lineage, even though he saw the loss of some territories in the east and a growth in the powers of Pratihara feudatories.

Following Mahipal's death in c. AD 931, Imperial Pratihara authority began to slowly decline over many areas, including Rajasthan. Local chiefs became more assertive, and traditional enemies struck further blows to the disintegrating Gurjara-Pratihara empire. Mahipal's immediate successor — or perhaps a parallel rival-ruler — may have been the half-brother Bhoja II already referred to above. Very little is known about Bhoja II and his reign, though the inscription on the Asiatic Society Plate belonging to the next Pratihara king, Vinayakapala (r. 7931-943) speaks of Bhoja [II] as the “brother at whose feet Vinayakapala meditated”.

During the reign of Vinayakapala, the Rashtrakutas launched attacks against the Pratiharas, sometime between AD 937 and 940. Under their crown-prince, the Rashtrakutas were successful in threatening and probably wresting Kalinjar and Chitrakuta (Chittor) from Pratihara overlordship, for Rashtrakuta records refer to their conquering Chitrakuta. Chittor was later taken by the Guhila chief Bhartrapatta II, who assumed the title of *Maharajadhiraja*, while Kalinjar was finally taken by the Chandella chief, Yashovarman³⁷. Yashovarman, according to the Khajuraho Inscription, proved to be a ‘scorching fire to the Gurjaras’, as he challenged Pratihara authority over ‘Malwa’, ‘Kosala’ and ‘Kuru-Pradesh’.

In the same period, the Shakambhari chief Vakpatiraj I too defied the authority of Vinayakapala. He is regarded as having successfully beaten back the attack of a Pratihara *Tantra-Pala* (provincial governor) and assumed the title of Maharaja. Meanwhile, Mularaj Chalukya laid the foundations of his dynastic kingdom in Gujarat in c. AD 941, conquering land and establishing his capital at Anhillapattan. The Parmars of Dhar also made a bid for total independence, which was thwarted by the Kalachuri general of Vinayakapala. By the time Vinayakapala died in c. AD 943, the empire of the ‘Imperial’ Gurjara Pratiharas was beginning to prove less than invincible to its contemporaries. His successor, Mahendrapala II (r. ?943-948), obviously had a short reign, for not long after it was Devapala (r. ? 948-950) who sat on the throne of the Gurjara Pratiharas. (Dasharatha Sharma believed that Devapala ascended the throne in AD 949, while G.H. Ojha held that Devapala was the king killed by Allata of Mewar in AD 948).

By now, the two hundred year old Pratihara empire was entering its twilight phase. More and more erstwhile feudatories and others threw off their allegiance and proclaimed themselves as Maharajadhiraja. According to G.H. Ojha, the Pratihara ruler Devapala, was defeated and killed in battle by Mewar's Guhila ruler, Allata in AD 948. Allata may have been incited by his Rashtrakuta relatives of Manyakheta.

The succession after Devapala is not clear. On the one hand, it appears that Vijayapala succeeded Devapala. However, there are at least three more or less simultaneous names that are referred to in three separate inscriptions as being the ruler of Kanauj during the AD 954 and 956 years. These names are — Vinayakapala (mentioned in the Khajuraho Inscription of AD 954), Mahipala (mentioned in the Bharatpur Inscription of AD 955), and Vatsaraja (mentioned in the Osian Inscription of AD 956). It would seem, therefore, that there was either a power-struggle and/or a division of territories between rival scions of the Pratihara dynasty, or many short-reigns in succession. Of course, the situation may be simpler — and the above names can simply be the additional appellations of a single individual!

In any event, the period saw the further decline of the Pratiharas, and during the period that Vijayapala reigned over Kanauj, the Rashtrakutas under Krishna III invaded Pratihara lands yet again. Meanwhile, others like the Chandellas, Mularaj I and the Chalukyas of Anhillapattan, Siyaka II and the Parmars of Malwa, were strengthening their own lands by whittling away at those held by the Pratiharas. It was also during Vijayapala's reign that the Chauhan ruler Simharaj of Shakambhari took up arms against his Pratihara over-lord. Though Simharaj lost his life in battle, his successor Vighraharaj II re-established Chauhan authority and assumed imperial titles. Meanwhile, Simharaj's younger brother, Lakhan (Lakshman, also called Lakha), founded a kingdom of his own at Nadol around c. AD 967.

Pratihara rule seems to have continued over Kanauj and parts of northern India for some more time, but their control over Rajasthan and the western part of the one-time Imperial Pratihara territories gradually slackened and withered away. By the end of the tenth century, the Pratiharas controlled little more than the Gangetic Doab. Vijayapala was succeeded by

Rajyapala and it was during the latter's reign that the Imperial Pratiharas suffered a mortal blow.

As is noted elsewhere, by the turn of the tenth century the rulers of Ghazni (also Ghazna), had turned their attention towards the Indian subcontinent for a variety of reasons. Initially, the Hindushahi dynasty of Punjab faced the brunt of their activities. But once the Hindushahi king, Jaipal, and later his son, Anandpal, fell, the Pratihara dominions were threatened. The Pratihara ruler Rajyapala could not face the challenge alone. In 1014, Mahmud of Ghazni successfully sacked the city of Thaneshwar. Four years later, in early December 1018, first Baran (modern Bulandshahar) and then Mahaban (Mathura) fell to Mahmud's army.

Later that month, came the turn of the once-mighty Kanauj. Rajyapala is said to have fled the city, seeking shelter across the river in the fort of Bari. Kanauj was plundered. Later, once Sultan Mahmud had returned to Ghazni, Rajyapala and the Chandellas went to war, supposedly because the Chandella king, Vidyadhara (Bida) rebuked Rajyapala for his cowardice and flight. In the ensuing bloodshed, Rajyapala was killed by one Arjun Kachchhapaghata of Dubkund, a feudatory of the Chandella king, Vidyadhara. (Interestingly, during the ensuing centuries, genealogists would trace a link between the Kachchhapaghatas and the Kachchwahas of Dhoondhar, who gained a position of eminence in Rajasthan).

This was not the last of the Imperial Pratihara line, though, for Trilochanapala, the son and successor of Rajyapala became the next ruler. By now, the Pratihara capital was not the sadly devastated Kanauj, however, but the nearby fort of Bari. Around c. 1019-1020 Trilochanapala's truncated kingdom had to face Ghazni's attacks afresh, while the Pratihara king himself fled and sought shelter, until the marauder had withdrawn to Ghazni. Trilochanapala's Jhusi Inscription of AD 1027 tells us he still held the Pratihara throne and titles in that year, even if his territorial sway was extremely limited! Not much is known about the Pratiharas who succeeded Trilochanapala, though the Kara Inscription of AD 1036 (recording a donation), mentions one 'Maharajadhiraja Yashapaladeva', who may have been a Pratihara descendant.

Slowly the once-powerful Imperial Gurjara Pratihara dynasty had passed into history, while their erstwhile capital came under other hands, initially that of a local Rashtrakuta dynasty, and eventually of the Gahadavalas.

THE IMPERIAL PRATI HARAS AND CONTEMPORARY ART AND ARCHITECTURE IN RAJASTHAN

Before leaving the tale of the Gurjara-Pratiharas, one should note a major contribution made under their patronage. When the Gurjara-Pratiharas held sway as masters of Bhinmal, Jalore and eventually Kanauj, and had a large empire extending over much of northern India during the c. eighth-tenth centuries AD period, they and their contemporaries (and subordinates), had enhanced and added to Rajasthan's sculptural and architectural tradition. In the area of architecture, typical features that appear standard for the post-Gupta era included a temple *shikhar* or tower rising above the sanctum sanctorum, and a square or rectangular *garbh-griha* (or sanctum sanctorum), for the temple's main idol. The latter was fronted by a pavilion-like *mandap* with ornate columns, rising to an embellished and much carved ceiling. Often, a small half (or *ardha*) *mandap* is also present, situated in front of the inner sanctum portion. These temples were built in the 'dry order', with superimposed stones joined by mortar. The practice is said to have its roots in the pre-Gurjara Pratihara period.

The temple was generally enclosed by a courtyard with ornamental *toran* gateways. The pillars holding up these *toran* gateways had ornamental bases, with niches on four sides housing different sculpted figures or motifs. The two uprights of the *toran* pillars were each topped by a semi-circular arch with an elongated end, resembling the head of the *makra* mythical water-being³⁸, which met mid-centre. With their balconied *mandaps*, pillars with half roundels, and other characteristic features, Chittorgarh's much renovated eighth century Kalika-Mata temple, and Ahar's Adi-Varah temple built for Mewar's King Allata in AD 953, reflect this Gurjara-Pratihara style. The c. eighth century temple of Harshat Mata, at Abaneri (near Jaipur) is another well-known example representative of the post-Gupta 'Gurjara-Pratihara' style of the Rajasthan area. Other

temple-complexes of note from this general period include the Nakti Mata temple at Bhawanipura (Jaipur district), Sikrai Mata temple at Sikrai near Khandela, Dadhi-Mata in Nagaur area, Nilkanth Rajorgarh near Alwar, Siva temple at Kalyanpur (near Udaipur), and the Krishna-Vilas, Atru, Menal, and Badoli's temples (especially of Ghateshvar and Mahishasura-Mardini) of the Kota area.

Despite our use of terms like 'Pratihara' etc. art styles, one should bear in mind that the art tradition of this general period was not dictated solely by the tastes or patronage of one or other of the dominant regional political states. As had been the case in earlier centuries, the process of blending and amalgamation; of innovations and the establishment of then applicable conventions; of certain syncretism among existing cults and hence the manifestation of this in sculpture and architecture, continued unabated, to create an overall style that had regional commonalities. Thus, Rajasthan's art style has sometimes been categorised by art-historians as falling within a broader Western India style. Within this too, there are sub-variations: so that structures in eastern Rajasthan generally have shared features with those from areas adjoining them to the east and north; and those in southern and southeastern Rajasthan with Malwa and Gujarat; and so forth.

Among other temples representative of the c. AD 750-850 or so period are the Osian group (comprising the Harihara I & II, Surya, Mahavir and Sachchiya-Mata temples at Osian) in western Rajasthan. The Buchkala temples, with their squat little niches and low pediments (akin to Roda in northern Gujarat, on the Rajasthan-Gujarat border); and Chittor's Kshemankari temple (situated near the Kalika-Mata temple), are also representative. Other architectural examples of this general period that are worthy of special note include the temples at Menal, Amjhera, Bhumdana, Lamba and Dabok.

The Kakuni group of temples, situated near the Parvan river, and spread over a large area in the vicinity of the village of Ganeshpura, some sixty kilometres from the town of Baran in the Chheepa Barod tehsil of modern Baran district, has also yielded many fine statues dating to the ninth-tenth centuries AD. A large number of these are on view at the

government museums at Jhalawar and Kota. There is evidence that formerly a sprawling town existed near these temples.

One should also emphasise here that development and innovation in the field of art and architecture continued over the c. ninth-thirteenth century period too. Not just that, sometimes temples were rebuilt on top of older structures dating to the Gupta and Post-Gupta period in a major way. (A case in point being Chittorgarh's above-mentioned Kumbha-Shyam temple, re-built by Rana Kumbha, atop the remains and sub-structure of a c. ninth century AD Kukudeshwar temple). Other temples from this period, which were later renovated include the Siva temple at Kalyanpur.

Since building work is time-consuming and labour-intensive, and as most of these temple and temple-complexes were built over a span of time, this is frequently visible in the minor stylistic changes seen in the construction. The Badoli temples, for example, were built and added to over a period of two centuries, beginning from the mid-ninth century, and have brick *shikhars* or towers in the earlier phase, along with rather austere look. Pointing out that the mid-ninth century Kameshwara temple at Ahuwa (district Pali) has some unusual architectural features, as does the Harshat Mata temple at Abaneri, J.C. Harle feels that these are probably linked stylistically to the now-vanished temples of the Punjab and the western Uttar Pradesh to the north³⁹. The late ninth century, white marble, Brahmaswami temple at Varman, near Kusuma, shows later stylistic developments⁴⁰.

Other notable architectural remains spanning this general period — and the centuries that immediately followed — include those at Kiradu, Barmer, Bhinmal, Bijolia, Bhand-Devra, Abu, Sambhar, Phalodi, Ajmer, Nagaur, Nagda, Pallu, Amber, Sanganer, Ranthambore, Ghanerao, Jalore etc. The roughly contemporaneous temple of Dharmanath (originally a Vishnu temple in which a Shiva-linga was established in the medieval period), situated north of the Buddhist caves, is a monolithic structure in the *Nagar* style of architecture that is stylistically along the lines of the famous Kailash temple at Ellora. (Though the Ellora temple is in the *Dravida* style of architecture).

This general period — in particular the period between the ninth century and the end of the twelfth century, also saw the transformation of the ‘uni-cella temple’, housing a single deity in the *garbh griha*, to bi- and tri- and eventually penta-cella (or *panch-ayatana*) temple-complexes. This was a development Rajasthan shared with neighbouring Gujarat and Central Indian areas like Malwa. These were areas geographically contiguous and culturally linked with southern and western Rajasthan. The development seems linked to deliberate attempts at effecting philosophical harmony and religious accord between various cults. The bi-cellae temples were invariably dedicated to Siva and Vishnu, the tri-cellular ones to Siva, Brahma and Vishnu, and the penta-cellular ones (or *Panch-ayatana*) to Siva, Vishnu, Ganesh, Shakti and Surya. Early examples of the penta-cellae temples from Rajasthan include two *Hari-Hara panch-ayatana* temples and one *Surya panch-ayatana* temple from Osian dating to the eighth-ninth centuries⁴¹.

Illustrated manuscripts were not unknown either. Examples of this include the *Samaraichkatha* by the Jain monk Haribhadra Suri, written on bark-paper — *tar h-patra* — at Chittor during the eighth century AD, which also contained illustrations. Another eighth century work from Mewar, Uddyotan Suri’s *Kuvalyamala*, refers to such a blending of literature and art. The Jain *bhandar* or libraries at Jaisalmer have preserved early illustrated works like *Das-Vaikalika-Sutra* (reminiscent of the mural tradition of Ajanta to some), which have painted wooden (rather than bark, or palm-leaf etc. derived *patras*) ‘leaves’/folio. The wooden ‘covers’ which held the manuscripts together generally bore miniature paintings too.

THE GHAZNAVIDE RAIDS

Let us turn now to the invasions by the masters of Ghazni that affected the socio-economic and political condition of large parts of northern and western India between the end of the tenth and first quarter of the eleventh century.

Towards the end of the tenth century, chief Subuktigin (r. 976-997), the Amir of Ghazni (now part of modern-day Afghanistan), turned his attention southward, and came into conflict with the Hindushahi ruler, Raja Jaipal, and other princes of north-western India. Subuktigin was a former slave, and later son-in-law, of Alaptigin, the founder of the Ghaznavide state. Alaptigin had been appointed the 'Amir' (governor) of Khorasan in 961 by the Samanids, a dynasty of Zoroastrian origin, that ruled from its capital of Bokhara between c. AD 864-1005. Within a year of his appointment, however, Alaptigin fell out with the Samanids, and seizing the strategically located fortress of Ghazni in present-day Afghanistan, which served as an entrepot for trade with India, Central Asia and western Asia, became its independent master (r. 962-976).

Alaptigin's son-in-law and heir, Subuktigin successfully extended the territorial control of Ghazni from Khorasan in Central Asia up to the borders of the Hindushahi dynasty that ruled the terrain across Punjab and the north-west of the Indian subcontinent. Subuktigin and the Hindushahi ruler Jaipal now came into direct confrontation. A state of mutual attacks on each others' territories, along with victories and defeats, continued between c. AD 986 to c. 991, by which time, it is believed, the confederacy led by Jaipal was defeated in the Kurram valley and Peshawar passed into Ghaznavide control.

By AD 998, the throne of Ghazni had descended to Subuktigin's son Mahmud (r. 998-1030). Though later generations have referred to Mahmud and his immediate successors by the title of 'Sultan', all of them apparently continued to call themselves 'Amir' (governor) or 'Saiyyid' (chief). Mahmud soon cut all ties with the Samanids, declared direct allegiance to the Abbasid Caliph Al-Qadir (991-1031), and became a bulwark of Sunnism⁴² which was faltering under the domination of different branches of Shias in Persian Iraq and in Sindh⁴³. Mahmud of Ghazni soon launched a series of incursions into the Indian subcontinent during the early decades of the eleventh century.

"It was the custom of the Sultan to quit his capital early in October and utilize the cold weather for his operations", Smith informs us. "Three months of steady marching brought him into the heart of the rich Gangetic

provinces; and by the time he had slain his tens of thousands and collected millions of treasure he was ready at the beginning of the hot season to go home and enjoy himself. He carried off crowds of prisoners as slaves, including no doubt skilled masons and other artisans whom he employed to beautify his capital; as his successors did in later times”⁴⁴.

Many sources corroborate the fact that Mahmud beautified Ghazni by erecting fine buildings and mosques. For a man who is today recalled mainly for the death and destruction he wrought across the northern and western part of the Indian subcontinent in the course of his numerous incursions, it is ironic to note that Mahmud Ghazni’s court became a centre of literary, artistic and scholarly activity! Patronage was provided to poets, artists, writers and the learned at the Ghazni court. Notable among these men was Firdausi, the author of the *Shah-Nama*.

Having inflicted a severe defeat on King Jaipal near Peshawar in the early winter of AD 1001, around November, (following which the released king of the Hindushahi dynasty took his own life in atonement for his defeat), Mahmud later launched a series of attacks against Multan⁴⁵. In 1008, Multan’s Ismaili ruler was overthrown. Meanwhile, having snatched a decisive victory offered by an accident and a quirk of fate against the strong confederacy of Indian rulers led by Anandpal (son and successor of Jaipal), Mahmud Ghazni’s penetration gradually extended into other parts of India. (Smith observed that: “Historians are not clear concerning either the exact number or the dates of his raids. The computations of Sir Henry Elliot that Mahmud made seventeen expeditions may be accepted. Whenever possible he made one each year. Hindu authorities never mention distinctly his proceedings, which are known only from the testimony of Muhammadan authors, who do not always agree”⁴⁶). Among the urban centres and/ or renowned capitals of the day that were targeted and looted were Bhimnagar (as Kangra was then known) in 1009, Mathura in 1018, Kanauj in 1019, and Somnath in 1024 or 1025⁴⁷.

Mahmud Ghazni’s marches brought him into contact with Rajasthan on more than one occasion. The strategically located Bhatner (identified by Devra⁴⁸ with the ‘Bhatia’ mentioned in earlier records, and now called

Hanumangarh) in northern Rajasthan was attacked and captured, possibly around AD 1004. In the course of a campaign in AD 1009 he attacked the town of Naraina, which may at the time have formed an integral part of the lands held by the Chauhans of Shakambhari. Cunningham had identified this with the Narayanpur in Alwar district, but a general consensus holds that the place attacked by Mahmud Ghazni is a site situated some sixty-six kilometres northeast of Ajmer and about thirteen kilometres from Sambhar (Shakambhari). This Naraina was referred to as Naranyana, Narana, and Naranaka in texts and inscriptions. (Along with towns like Satyapura (Sanchor), Shrimal (Bhillamalla), Aghatpur (Ahar) and Korta (Korantaka), Naraina was among the centres of Jainism that find mention in Dhanpal's tenth century text, *Satyapuriya-Mahavirauttsava*.)

Later, in the course of an expedition against Somnath in Gujarat in year 414 of the Muslim Hijri calendar (AD 1024-25), Mahmud Ghazni marched across the desert through Multan, attacked the Bhati-held Lodrava, and took Satyapura (Sanchor). Mahmud then proceeded to Anhillapattan (Anhillawara) and then to Somnath, which was taken and sacked after a fiercely contested battle⁴⁹. (Sanchor, also referred to as Sachchaura, and situated along the bank of the river Luni, in the midst of the arid Thar desert region, about 200 kms southwest of Jodhpur, was already in existence by AD tenth century. In AD 993 it apparently formed part of the 'Gurjaradesh' ruled by the Chalukya [Solanki] king, Mularaj 1, founder of Anhillapattan in Gujarat, for, in that year Mularaj I bestowed Varanaka village in '*Satyapura Mandala*' [or administrative unit], to sage Dirghacharya, on the occasion of a lunar eclipse).

The Ghazni Sultan's successors, his son Masud I (r. 1031-41), down to later rulers like Bahram Shah (r. 1118-1152), Khusrau Shah (r. 1152-1160), and Khusrau Malik (r. 1160-1186) continued to have some contact with Rajasthan, either directly or through their governors and representatives. In fact, the title of *Uttar-disha Bada-Kinvada* (guardian of the northern portal) given to at least one Bhati king — Vijayraj of Jaisalmer — indicates the pressure faced by Rajasthan during the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

It was during this phase of interaction between the Ghaznavides and Rajasthan that in AD 1112 Nagaur was captured by Mohammad Bahlim,

whom ‘*Yamin-ud-daula*’ Bahram Shah of Ghazni (r. 1118-1152) had appointed governor of the Ghaznavide dominions in India. Mohammad Bahlim fortified the town of Nagaur, and having brought his army, dependants, and vast treasure with him, made Nagaur an operational base as well as his seat of power. Some time afterwards, possibly worried by Mohammad Bahlim’s aspirations for independence, Bahram Shah attacked Mohammad Bahlim and defeated him. The victorious Sultan Bahram Shah now appointed Salar Hussain, son of Ibrahim Ali, as the governor of lands conquered in India by the Ghaznavides. Soon afterwards, either the Chauhan king, Ajayraja, or his son Arnoraj defeated the Muslims and took back the territory of Nagaur⁵⁰.

We also know that Arnoraj, the renowned Chauhan king of Shakambhari-Ajmer, defeated Muslim forces conclusively when Ajmer was attacked. Chauhan-held territories were attacked later too, during the reign of the last of the Ghaznavide dynasty rulers, Khusrau Malik (r. AD 1160-1186) of Lahore.

The issue of Mahmud’s invasion and subsequent contacts also brings us to the traditional belief that artisans and work-force were carried away to Ghazni by Mahmud of Ghazni and others. Without digressing into a detailed study about the origins of the Romany people - generally called ‘gypsies’, it may be relevant to note here their popular belief that the ancestors of the Romanies left India in the train of various invaders, either as workers, or craftspersons, or slaves etc. While such a process may have already been set in motion even when the Bactrian Greeks and Huns etc. were interacting with India, it is talked about more in relation to the invasions of Mahmud of Ghazni - and subsequently of Mohammed of Ghor, Timur etc.

One may add here that the fate of the non-elite larger population is not always clear from the traditional records. Sometimes we are told that a specific captured fortress or town was pillaged, but not always is there a mention of the populace being put to the sword. The long accepted norm was to leave ordinary farmers and tillers etc. alone, but it is difficult to judge when this was practiced and how often this ‘unwritten code’ was transgressed. If, as the Romany diaspora claims, they are of Indian descent,

and if, as the work of some historians and linguists indicates, the ‘gypsies’ originated from western India, they may be part of a larger displaced population that was the result not so much of a single decisive battle or event (i.e. capture and forced transportation to Ghazni), but of a generally disturbed period of battles, sieges and economic hardships. In such a situation, some groups could well have migrated away from Rajasthan in search of food, work and security. (The religion angle perhaps not being so crucial at the time for them).

OTHER IMPORTANT CLANS AND CHIEFDOMS IN RAJASTHAN BETWEEN C. AD 700-1000

Meanwhile, as may be noted from the above account about the Gurjara Pratiharas and their empire, several other Rajasthan-based clans, particularly the Guhilas, Pratiharas of Mandore and the Chauhans, also played a role in Pratihara state-formation during the c. AD 750-1000 period, often acting as generals and feudatories. Sometimes they resisted the Imperial Pratiharas and/or supported Pratihara rivals. In the process, many of them built up, or established, or resurrected their own kingdoms too. And, once the Imperial or Gurjara-Pratihara empire began its downslide, there was a struggle for pre-eminence over what today constitutes the Rajasthan area in the course of which many of these other clans and kingdoms witnessed mixed fortunes. (This post-Imperial Pratihara struggle for supremacy over Rajasthan during c. eleventh-thirteenth centuries AD — the major contenders in which were the Chauhans of Shakambhari, the Chalukyas of Gujarat, and the Parmars of Malwa — and the incursions of Mohammed of Ghor, is discussed further below).

Let us now turn, therefore, to some of these other clans or states about which historians have knowledge for the period under study.

THE PRATI HARAS OF MANDORE

The rise of the Pratiharas of Mandore up to the reign of Shiluka has already been briefly described in a previous chapter. Following Shiluka, the next three Mandore Pratiharas rulers were Jhota, Bhiladitya and Kakka respectively. Jhota is believed to have committed religious suicide at the end of his reign, according to the ambiguous wording of Bauka's later inscription. (This is the Mandore Inscription of AD 837, which was installed within a temple to Vishnu by Bauka. This was removed in later centuries and re-installed in the fort at Jodhpur).

By now, the Pratiharas of Mandore acknowledged the suzerainty of the Imperial Pratiharas. Kakka won laurels for his family by fighting against the Gaudas at Mudgagiri (Monghyr), and assisting Nagabhata II of the Imperial Pratihara dynasty against Dharmapala of Bengal (as mentioned above). Kakka was proficient in grammar, logic, astrology, the arts and poetic metres. He was also, apparently, acknowledged as a poet of repute in more than one language.

Bauka succeeded his father, Kakka. Bauka's mother, Padmini, was a princess of the 'Bhatti'⁵¹ (Bhati) clan. Part of Bauka's reign probably coincided with reign of the Imperial Pratihara ruler, Ramabhadra. It was during Bâuka's reign that the kingdom of Mandore was attacked by a ruler named Mayura. The identity of this Mayura is not clear. Some historians assume that he was perhaps a chief of the 'Mori' or Maurya clan, which had once ruled over large parts of Rajasthan. Mayura apparently defeated Bauka's Brahmin Pratihara kinsman-king and his forces, and having sacked the city of Nandavalla, advanced against Bauka. Picking up the gauntlet, Bauka met and defeated the invader in the fiercely fought battle of Bhuakupa. The event may be definitely assigned to a date before AD 837, when an inscription commemorating the fact was recorded.

Bauka's half-brother and successor, Kakkuka (a son of Kakka by his wife Durlabha Devi), became renowned as a general of the Imperial Pratihara ruler, Bhoja I. Five inscriptions of Kakkuka have been noted from Ghatiyala. Four of these are in Sanskrit and one in Maharashtri Prakrit, with a small portion in Sanskrit. These date to VS 918 (AD 861), and provide valuable information not only about the reign of Kakkuka, but also about his predecessors. An inscription (designated as Inscription No. 1) informs

us that Kakkuka gained fame in the lands called *Maru, Mada, Valla, 'Tamani' (Travani), 'Ajja' (Arya), Gurjaratra, Lata and Parvarta*. Since Kakkuka was a contemporary of the Imperial Pratihara king Bhoja I, it is believed that the inscription refers to victories gained by Kakkuka as a commander or governor (*Tantra-Pala*) of Bhoja I. Kakkuka also claimed credit for establishing peace in the hill-tracts of the '*Vadanayana-Mandal*' after burning the habitations of the forest-dwelling people. Kakkuka seems to have combined a stern ruler's role with that of a patron of the arts and literature, and to have been versed in textual and spiritual knowledge and a poet himself.

We learn that Kakkuka erected one commemorative victory-pillar each at Mandore and Rohinskupa (Ghatiyala) respectively. Ghatiyala, we are informed, had been deserted because of the activities of the Abhiras, and inscriptions tell us that it was Kakkuka who, having defeated the Abhiras around AD 861, provided protection and other facilities, thereby ensuring the re-peopling of the place. He built houses and shops and gave the *mahajans* (trading community) special privileges to induce them to live in the area. The town of Osian had also apparently suffered because of the Abhiras, and it was only after Kakkuka forced the Abhiras to vacate the territory that it was eventually re-populated by a 'prince of Bhinmal'. It may be this re-occupation of a much older, deserted town that is reflected in the popular tradition according to which Osian — or Upakesh/ Uvashish was founded by a prince of Bhinmal.

To digress momentarily, the Jain *Upakeshagachchha-prabandh*⁵², written in AD 1326, records the tradition of the founding of Osian in the following manner. Prince Sripunja, son of Surasundara, the Pratihara king of Bhinmal (also called Shrimal), had differences with his father, and quitting Bhinmal, he founded a new kingdom at Osian. To inhabit his town, he invited Brahmins, Vaisyas and people of other classes from Bhinmal. Another tradition ascribes the founding of Osian to Prince Utpal Kumar, also known as Upal Deo or Upakesh/ Uvashish, son of Shripunj and grandson of Bhinmal's King Bhim Sen, who left Bhinmal along with his followers and founded a new town Upkeshnagar (a variant being Uvashish), i.e. Osian. Later, a Jain acharya, Ratnaprabha Suri, successor to Acharya Swayamprabha Suri, visited Osian, accompanied by five hundred monks.

At the time there were no Jains in the town; the ruler and his subjects being devout Saivites. The Acharya and his entourage decided to spend their four months *chatura-masa* or monsoon-retreat period in the town. During this rainy season, the king's son-in-law, Trilokya Singh was bitten by a snake. When known treatments failed, King Upal Deo sought the Acharya's help. Miraculously, a mere touch of the Acharya's hand revived the dying Trilokya Singh. As the news of the Acharya's miracle spread, King Upal Deo and his family accepted Jainism, along with many courtiers and subjects. The *Upakeshagachchha-prabandh* records that when Osian was sacked in AD 1195, the survivors left the town, never to return. Jain tradition says these Jains of Osian were given the appellation of 'Oswal', after the name of their native-town, Osian. These Oswals gradually gained a prominent position for their community in different princely states of Rajasthan.

One of the inscriptions at Ghatiyala sheds light on Kakkuka as a human being. It informs us that he was fond of six things — a lute, sweet vocal music, the autumnal moon, the flowers of the *malati* jasmine, the company of a cultured woman, and conversation with good people. The Prakrit inscription repeats facts mentioned in his other inscriptions and stresses his love for his people and the efforts he made on their behalf. Another of his inscriptions claims that Kakkuka made the land "fragrant with the petals of blue lotuses, and pleasant with groves of mango and *madhuka* trees, as well as sugarcane".

Unfortunately (as is often the case in the history of clans and dynasties), there is inadequate information about the successors of Kakkuka, during the c. AD 861-1018 period. An epigraph of AD 936 from the village of Chirai in the Jodhpur division refers to one Jaskaran, son of Pratihara Durlabharaj, but it is not known whether he belonged to the Mandore Pratihara dynasty. (One may add, in this context, that tradition lists twenty-six main branches of the Pratihara clan. It was the 'Eenda' sub-branch of Pratiharas that held Mandore at the latter part of the fourteenth century AD, and gave it as a bride's dowry in AD 1395 to their Rathore son-in-law Rao Chunda).

It would appear that for a while Mandore and the tracts surrounding it (including Osian, which retained its fame as an important town⁵³), probably passed into the overlordship of the Chauhans of Nadol- though the Pratiharas of Mandore may have retained local suzerainty. Mandore also went briefly into the hands of Sultan Iltutmish of Delhi's Slave Dynasty in AD 1226, but was retaken by the Chauhans, who held it for much of the thirteenth century, until its short-term conquest by Delhi's Sultan Jalaluddin Firoze Khilji in AD 1294.

THE CHAUHANS OF SHAKAMBHARI AND NADOL

One of the clans that rose to pre-eminence in Rajasthan during the period under review was that of the Chauhans. Dasharatha Sharma, who researched the Chauhans substantively⁵⁴, notes that the region once known as 'Ananta-gochara', or 'Ananta' (centred around Harshnath in central north-eastern Rajasthan, and including parts of the modern districts of Sikar, Jhunjhunu, Churu⁵⁵ and Nagaur), was a stronghold — possibly even a long-time homeland — of the early Chauhans. Since Ahichchhatrapura, a word that signifies Naga (or snake) linkages, was their chief town, Sharma suggests some connection between the Chauhans and the Nagas, a group about which we hear a lot in early Indian history.

As noted above, in a Chauhan inscription from Bijolia – namely the Bijolia Inscription of Someshwar dating to VS 1226 (AD 1170), Samant, one of the early Chauhan rulers, is described as a *vipra* or Brahmin of the Vatsa (*gotra*, or lineage). The text of this inscription is in Sanskrit, and is engraved on a large rock, to the north of a water-reservoir attached to the Parshvanath temple at the Bijolia temple-complex. Along with recording the construction of a shrine to Tirthankar Parshvanath by a Digambar Jain named Lolak, verses ten to twenty-eight of the epigraph provide a detailed list of names of the rulers of the Chahamanas (Chauhans) of Shakambhari and Ajmer. Significantly, the list corresponds closely with the text of the *Prithviraja-Vijaya*.

While a detailed history of the early expansion of the Chauhan clan as a whole cannot be undertaken in this book, the Dholpur Inscription informs us that one Chand-Mahasena Chauhan, who may have been a feudatory of the Pratihara King Bhoja I, ruled at Dhavalapuri (Dholpur) in VS 898 (AD 842)⁵⁶. Various branches and sub-branches of the Chauhans, including those living in the Ganga-Jamuna Doab region, find mention in scattered inscriptions and other references⁵⁷. Works like the *Kyam Khan Raso* by Jan inform us that the Chauhans have twenty-four main branches (with numerous sub-branches and further off-shoots). These have been listed with variations, omissions and additions in still later works like Nainsi and Bankidas' respective *Khyats*, and Tod's *Annals and Antiquities*.

Among the numerous references to Chauhan-held tracts and territories, one may take cognisance here of one of the several grants recorded on the Pratapgarh Inscription in four parts. Dating to VS 1003 (AD 946), this grant notes that the village of 'Dharapdraka' was given towards the upkeep and daily services at the temple of Indraditya-Deva at 'Ghontavarshika' (present-day Ghontarsi, seven miles east of Pratapgarh). The inscription, while recording that this temple was built by 'Maha-Samanta' Indraraj Chahamana, also provides information of the achievements of Chauhan chiefs like Govindaraj, Durlabharaj and 'Maha-Samanta' Indraraj. The inscription also gives details about the overlord of the Chauhans — the Kanauj Pratihara ruler Mahendrapala II, son of 'Maharaja' Vinayakapaladeva and Prasadhana-Devi' and lists some part of the Imperial Pratihara family-tree. Other information provided in this Pratapgarh Inscription are the names and titles of various functionaries, field-measurement details for agricultural lands, the taxation system, and aspects of contemporaneous religious life. The first part of this same inscription records the grant of the village of 'Kharparapadraka' to the goddess 'Vat-Yakshini', whose shrine was connected with the monastery of 'Hari-rishishwar'. Intriguingly, another grant on the same inscription, dating to four years earlier, records the grant in VS 999 (AD 942), by the Guhila chief, 'Shri Bhartrapatta, son of Shri Khumman' of land in the village of 'Palasakupika' to the above-mentioned temple of Indraditya-Deva at 'Ghontavarshika', built by Indraraj Chauhan!

Shakambhari (modern Sambhar) became linked with, what eventually became the most important branch of the Chauhans, after a chief named Vasudev Chauhan founded a settlement at Shakambhari in AD seventh century. Little is known about this Vasudev — to whom a later text '*Prabandh-Kosh*' ascribes the date of VS 608 (AD 551), but the name of the settlement, 'Shakambhari', honours the goddess Shakambhari, who has a temple here. It was probably during the chiefship of Vasudev Chauhan that the importance of controlling the naturally occurring local salt-lake at Shakambhari was first realised by the Chauhans. This may have been the motivation for establishing a permanent Chauhan-administered settlement here.

Salt, usually consumed in the form of sodium chloride, is recognised as a vital dietary necessity in the human diet. While groups living mainly on animal products can get enough natural salt from the flesh, milk and blood of animals without specially supplementing their diet, it is particularly essential for people living in the tropics whose staple foods are cereals or root crops, and whose diet is largely (even if not wholly), vegetarian⁵⁸. Salt also has uses other than as a food additive⁵⁹. As such, it is possible that salt could have been locally panned, or prepared by boiling down briny water from saline lakes, at various natural salt-lakes and salt-pans in Rajasthan, including Sambhar, even during prehistoric times. This may have, then and subsequently, been traded, both over short distances by passing from hand to hand, and over longer ones via itinerant traders and nomadic groups.

Thus, the actual exploitation of salt at the site of Shakambhari (Sambhar) probably predated the Chauhans. Prior to Vasudev's establishment of a township at Shakambhari, smallscale salt-making may have been carried out by local groups — possibly even semi-nomadic specialists — for several centuries, if we judge by overall evidence from other parts of the world⁶⁰. Realising the economic importance of controlling the site, Vasudev Chauhan could well have been the first of his line to establish his headquarters at the salt-lake itself.

Such a scenario is indicated by extant local traditions, which assert that a divine '*Vidhyadhar*' created the massive salt lake during the reign of

King Vasudev. Other traditions hold that it was during the reign of Vasudev's son, Manikyadev Chauhan (or Samanta) that the process of making salt from the saline waters of the local lake was discovered by one Kalptaji, who is described as being a 'Kayastha' (scribe-cum-administrator) by caste. King Manikyadev apparently rewarded Kalptaji's innovative brain by making him the state treasurer, and granting him and his descendants the right to recover in perpetuity a certain amount of money per each measure of salt prepared.

This right was later called '*bharti kharch*'. It is traditionally believed that this was directly recovered from the Banjaras and other traders in salt down the ages by Kalptaji's descendants, until the British took over salt-production at Sambhar Lake through a treaty in AD 1870. (Banjara traders are reputed to have traded the Sambhar salt to distant places, including north-western sites like Peshawar, Kabul, and even Tashkent. In the early nineteenth century, James Tod noted that the productive salt-trade "...industry still employs thousands of hands, and hundreds of thousands of oxen, and is almost entirely in the hands of that singular race of beings called *Bunjarras*, some of whose *tandas* or caravans amount to 40,000 head of oxen. The salt is exported to every region of Hindustan, from Indus to the Ganges, and is universally known and sold under the title of *Sambhur Loon* or 'salt of Sambhur', notwithstanding the quality of the different lakes varies, that of Pachbhadra, beyond the Looni, being most esteemed"⁶¹).

Kalptaji and his descendants further held the privilege of being called '*Manikya-bhandari*'. Whether Kalptaji discovered a new and more efficient way of producing and processing salt, or whether he belonged to a group that was previously connected with salt-exploitation at Sambhar, which led to his services being acquired — and then rewarded — by the Chauhans of Shakambhari, is a matter of further research. However, even shorn of this legend, it is clear that once the implication of possessing and efficiently processing a continuous supply of salt was mastered, the Shakambhari salt-lake became an important source of revenue for the Chauhans⁶². One of the several *in situ* inscriptions at the Harshanath (or Harsha) temple dating to AD 973, records that the traders of Shakambhari donated one '*vimshopaka*' (name of a coin; literally a twentieth part) per heap of salt and one '*dramma*' per horse sold by them, to the Harshnath temple.

Vasudev's Shakambhari Chauhan line descended through Samant to Naradev or Nripa, ruler of Purnatalla, and then to Jayaraj (or Ajayraj), son of Samant. There is scanty information about these chiefs. On the basis of an inscription of the 'Harsha Era' found from Khandela (district Sikar), and other inscriptions from parts of eastern Rajasthan, R.V. Somani suggested that Emperor Harsha Vardhan of Kanauj and Thaneshwar captured the Shakambhari area during the time of Samant's successor, Naradev⁶³. For, it is held that Naradev suffered a major setback at the hands of some enemy, and was even forced to desert his capital⁶⁴. Still, it is not certain that this enemy was indeed Emperor Harsha Vardhan (or even one of his commanders).

Naradev's successor, Jayaraj (or Ajayraj), a son of Samant may have re-established local Chauhan hegemony – and possibly retaken Shakambhari (if it had indeed been lost), for the much later text, *Pratihviraj-Vijaya* describes him as a powerful chief. Jayaraj was followed by Vighraharaj I, after whom came Chandraraj I. Chandraraj was succeeded by Gopendraraj, also referred to as Gopendraka.

It was in this Shakambhari Chauhan family that Durlabharaj I, son of Gopendraka, was born sometime in the mid-eighth century AD. Later, as a general (and feudatory) of the Gurjara-Pratihara monarch Vatsaraja, Durlabharaj I led the Imperial Pratihara armies as far as Ganga Sagar and the Bay of Bengal (as mentioned above), in the Pratihara campaign against King Dharmapala of Bengal. Durlabharaj I probably participated in the defeat suffered by Vatsaraja and the Pratiharas at the hands of the Rashtrakuta king, Dhruv Dharavarsha.

Durlabharaj I was succeeded by his son, Guvaka I (also known as Govindaraj I), who is said to have been a famed and acclaimed warrior⁶⁵ at the court of the Imperial Pratihara king Nagabhata II (successor of Vatsaraja). Under his liege-lord Nagabhata II, Guvaka is said to have fought against the 'kings' (and possibly also the Arabs) of Sindh. Construction work on the famous temple at Harshnath probably began during Guvaka's reign (with additions made to it by succeeding generations). There is inadequate information about Guvaka I's immediate successor, his son

Chandraraj II. The latter was succeeded by his son, Guvaka II, who is described in line fourteen of the Harshanath Inscription as being as great a warrior as Guvaka I (his grandfather). Guvaka II's sister, Kalavati Chauhan, is known to have married the 'paramount sovereign of Kanyakubja'. The reference is possibly to the Imperial Pratihara king Bhoja I (who ascended the throne in c. AD 836 and reigned for about fifty years). The marriage would have added to the consequence of the Shakambhari Chauhans, already renowned as warriors and generals.

Chandanraj succeeded his father, Guvaka II, as the next Chauhan chief of Shakambhari. Chandanraj is credited with defeating and killing a Tomar chief named Rudra. The period marks the commencement of a struggle for supremacy between the Chauhans and the Tomars. In the next generation, Chandanraj's son and successor, Vakpatiraj I, who took the title of 'Maharaja' according to the Harshanath Inscription, emphasised local independence by thwarting the attack of the Pratihara Provincial governor or '*Tantra-Pala*', Kshamapala, on the Chauhan land of Ananta. Vakpatiraj's fine cavalry apparently played a decisive part in the defeat of Kshamapala. Vakpatiraj I is credited with one hundred and eighty-eight victories in a later period text called the *Prithviraja-Vijaya*⁶⁶, and even if that figure is an exaggeration, it is indicative that Vakpatiraj I consolidated political power locally and extended the territorial sway of the Shakambhari Chauhans.

Vakpatiraj I's Pushkar Inscription states that this Chauhan ruler built a temple to Siva at the pilgrimage site of Pushkar. Taken together with stanzas in the Harshanath Inscription recording that Vakpatiraj's mother, Chandanraj's wife, Queen Rudrâni, who was also called Atmaprabha, lit one thousand lamps daily in worship of Siva at Pushkar, it would seem that not only had Pushkar enjoyed a continuing importance as a pilgrimage centre over several centuries, but that the Shakambhari Chauhans probably had some hold over the Pushkar-Ajmer area by this time, besides the other areas including Sambhar, Nagaur etc. that they already held.

Vakpatiraj I was succeeded first by the short-reigning Vindhayaraj, also referred to as Vindhyapati, and then by Vindhayaraj's younger brother, Simharaj. (Another of Vakpatiraj I's sons, Prince Lakshman, went on to found a separate kingdom centred at Nadol, as shall be noted further in this

text). Simharaj seems to have been the first of his line to assume the title of ‘*Maharajadhiraja*’, which is indicative of the growing strength of the Shakambhari Chauhans in relation to the Imperial Pratiharas.

Continuing hostilities with the Tomars, Simharaj killed the Tomar ruler, Salavana, in battle, and put to flight or imprisoned Salavana’s allies. The latter remained incarcerated by Simharaj until the ‘*Raghu-kule bhuchakravarti*’ — the “great sovereign of the earth, who was of the family of Raghu”, who was the common overlord of both Simharaj Chauhan and his imprisoned opponents, personally came — supposedly up to Shakambhari — to secure the release of the latter. The reference seems to indicate the personal intervention of the Pratihara sovereign Vijayapala, who is addressed by the grandiose titles of ‘*Parambhattarka Maharajadhiraja Parmeshwara*’ etc. in the Rajorgarh Inscription of VS 1016 (AD 959-60), found near modern Rajgarh (Alwar district).

Simharaj gave several villages in grant to the Harshanath temple. Sometime after Vikram Samvat 1013, a date that is mentioned on inscriptions occurring at Haras and Thamvala, Simharaj met his death. This was probably at the hands of a powerful confederacy of his rivals and numerous enemies — that perhaps even included the forces of his Kanauj-based Imperial Pratihara overlord, and the Chauhans were temporarily deprived of Shakambhari. This is borne out by references to Vighraharaj II, the son and successor of Simharaj, as having “rescued the fortune of his family and the Goddess of Victory from the distress that had befallen them”.

Vighraharaj II soon asserted his sovereignty vis-à-vis the Pratiharas and assumed royal titles. He also seems to have held the reputation of being a renowned cavalry commander, as indicated by his title of ‘*Khurarajondhakaara*’. The Harshanath Temple Inscription of Vighraharaj II, dated VS 1030 or AD 973, provides information about this ruler, including the fact that he and his relatives made lavish donations to the Harshanath temple built by an earlier ancestor, Guvaka II. Among other battles, Vighraharaj II took up arms against the Chalukyan ruler of Anhillapattan, Mularaj I, whom he defeated. According to the *Prithviraja-Vijaya*, the might of Vighraharaj II forced Mularaj Chalukya to flee for

refuge to the Kantha fort and shut himself up there, while Vighraharaj continued the course of his campaign by carrying his arms south-westwards as far as Brigukachchha (Broach). Here the Chauhan king ordered the construction of a temple to his tutelary goddess, Ashapuri Devi (also Ashapura Devi).

This expedition, undoubtedly resulted in considerable spoils of war and the annexation of fresh territory for the Chauhans. It seems that “the waters of the river Narmada were muddied by the passage of the hooves of Chauhan horses”. Broach was afterwards retaken by the Chalukyas, and the Chalukyan king Mularaj I entered into an alliance with the Chauhans of Nadol, a collateral branch of Vighraharaj II’s own Shakambhari Chauhan line. Chalukyan-Nadol alliance partially succeeded in diverting the attention of Vighraharaj II from the southwest.

Vighraharaj II was succeeded by his younger brother, Durlabhraj II, for whom there are dated references of AD 996 and 999. Sometime before AD 996, Durlabhraj II fought and defeated Mahendra, the Chauhan ruler of Nadol. This seems to have been in retaliation for the Nadol Chauhans having sided with the Chalukyan Mularaj I, the arch-enemy of the new Chauhan king’s late brother, Vighraharaj II. Mahendra sought shelter at the court of King Dhavala Rashtrakuta of Hastikundi. Durlabhraj II is credited with conquering the territory known as ‘Assositana’ or ‘Rassositana’, the location of which historians have yet to pin-point with exactitude.

By the close of the tenth century AD, the Chauhans of Shakambhari — once feudatories of the Imperial Pratiharas — were, thus, a growing power that had whole-heartedly entered the struggle for political supremacy (or perhaps political survival) in Rajasthan.

The next Shakambhari Chauhan ruler was Govindaraj, about whom little is known. The *Prabandh-Kosh*, a literary work belonging to a later period, speaks of the defeat of Sultan Mahmud [of Ghazni] by King Gandu or Govindaraj. The lateness of the source, however, makes the information a little unreliable, according to Dasharatha Sharma, who feels the Shakambhari ruler may have had a brush with the Ghaznavide forces when Mahmud led his expedition to Somnath through parts of Rajasthan⁶⁷.

However, K.C. Jain, who has discussed the prosperous town of Naraina⁶⁸ that was attacked around AD 1009 by Mahmud of Ghazni, suggests that since the Chauhan capital of Shakambhari was located only thirteen kilometres from Naraina, Govindaraj was probably the local king who reputedly fought valiantly against Mahmud of Ghazni. In this connection, Jain has pointed out that Ferishta noted that Mahmud proceeded to Somnath by way of Sambhar⁶⁹.

As the Chauhan kingdom continued to gain ascendance and became one of the most powerful north Indian states during the c. AD 1000-1192 period, we shall take leave of the Shakambhari Chauhans at this chronological point, and take up the remaining narrative of their dynastic history in the wake of the Ghaznavide attacks, a little further in this chapter,

THE NADOL BRANCH

Nadol, mentioned as Naddula in Sanskrit manuscripts and inscriptions, became an independent principality of the Chauhans under Lakhan (also called Lakha and Lakshman) sometime around c. AD 967. “The Chohan bards”, Col. Tod tells us, “speak in very lofty terms of Rao Lakha, who “collected transit duties from the further gate of Anhulwarra, and levied tribute from the prince of Cheetore”⁷⁰. Lakshman was one of the sons of the Shakambhari Chauhan ruler Vakpatiraj, and a younger brother of two successive Shakambhari Chauhan kings, the short-lived Vindhyaaraj and the battle-hardened ‘*Maharajadhiraja*’ Simharaj. (It was Simharaj, as detailed above, who was defeated by a coalition force of Chauhan enemies, leading to the temporary loss of Shakambhari, following which Vighraharaj II restored the fortunes of the Shakambhari Chauhans).

Analysing accounts of Lakshman’s reign found in different chronicles, Dasharatha Sharma states that, if one were to “...leave out the details of supernatural aid given to him by the goddess Asapura”, Lakshman probably “...started from his paternal kingdom with barely a handful of followers. The protection which he afforded to the people against the incursions of the Meds made his rule welcome to the people in the Nadol region. It is not

also unlikely that he added to his usual income by some free-booting expeditions”⁷¹.

Lakshman, the founder of the Nadol line, probably had a long reign, for one inscription of Kelhan Chauhan, a later ruler of Nadol, places him as ruling in VS 1039, i.e. AD 982. Similarly, Tod mentions obtaining copies of two inscriptions of ‘Lakha’ dating to VS 1024 and 1039 (i.e. AD 968 and 983) respectively from Nadol in the course of his touring Rajputana⁷². Lakshman is credited with fortifying Nadol and building the gateway known as ‘Surajpole’.

Lakshman (Lakha) was succeeded by his son, Shobhit. According to the Sundha Inscription, Shobhit “took away the glory of the Lord of Abu”, and according to the Sevadi Plates of Vikram Samvat 1176 of Ratanpal, he was the ‘Lord of Dhar’. This seems to imply that Shobhit won victories against the powerful Parmars who ruled over the kingdoms of Abu-Chandravati and Malwa, respectively, and possibly also against the Chalukyas of Gujarat. (Dasharatha Sharma⁷³ suggests Abu was taken by Shobhit from Mularaj I of Gujarat). Shobhit was followed by his son, Baliraj, during whose reign Munja Parmar of Malwa seized Abu and its surrounding territory. After Baliraj, his uncle Vigrahapal ascended the throne. Shobhit, Baliraj and Vigrahapal died within the span of fourteen years during which their contemporary Parmar ruler was the ambitiously victorious Munja (AD 974-c.997).

Munja is famous for inflicting a severe defeat on the combined forces of the Guhilas of Mewar and the ‘Lord of the Gurjaras’, *Gurjares*; a term that may apply either to the Imperial (or Gurjara) Pratihara king Rajyapala, or to the king of Gujarat, the Chalukyan Mularaj. The latter seems more probable, for we know that after the Parmar king, Munja, defeated the Guhilas and the *Gurjares*, the king of Mewar and part of the Gujarat army found sanctuary at Hastikundi, where the Rashtrakuta king, Dhavala held sway, while King Mularaj took refuge with his ally, King Baliraj of Nadol. Under Shobhit, Baliraj and Vigrahapal, the Nadol Chauhans, not surprisingly, had friendly relations with the Chalukyas of Gujarat. One reason for this was their mutual fear of the revived power of the

Shakambhari branch of the Chauhans, on the one hand, and, on the other, the aspirations of Munja Parmar.

Possibly as a result of the pro-Chalukyan policy, Nadol was attacked during the reign of its next ruler, Mahendra, the son and successor of Vighrahapal, who ascended the throne before VS 1053 (AD 996), by his Shakambhari cousin, Durlabhraj II. Mahendra was forced to seek refuge at the court of Hastikundi's Dhavala Rashtrakuta. Mahendra gave one sister, Durlabh-devi, in marriage to Durlabharaj Chalukya of Gujarat, while a second sister, Lakshmi, was married to Nagaraj, Durlabhraj's younger brother. According to some versions, Mahendra was succeeded by his son, Ashvapal, whose son and successor Ahila repulsed an attack of Bhima 1, the Chalukyan king of Gujarat. Ahila was succeeded by his paternal uncle, Anhila, who was one of the sons of Mahendra.

Anhila is regarded as one of the most energetic and renowned rulers of the Nadol branch of the Chauhans, and seems to have enjoyed considerable fame as a warrior-king. Traditional accounts hold that having inherited a kingdom that comprised 700 villages, he set about expanding his borders and by defeating and killing in battle numerous neighbouring kings, he made himself master of 7,000 villages! Anhila's exploits included the defeat of Bhima I of Gujarat and the slaying in battle of Sadha, a commander of King Bhoja Parmar of Malwa, besides defeating the Shakambhari Chauhans, led by King Viryarama, the successor of Vakpati II, and occupying Shakambhari. He is also credited with fighting the '*Turushkas*' (a term used during this general period, and over the ensuing centuries, across Rajasthan and north India to mean the Muslim Turks').

Anhila was followed by his son, Balaprasad. The latter is credited with forcing King Bhima I of Gujarat into releasing the imprisoned Krishanraj Parmar of the Abu-Chandravati and Bhinmal area. Balaprasad was followed on the throne of Nadol by his brother, Jinduraj. According to an inscription dated AD 1075, Jinduraj was victorious in a battle fought at Sandera (also Sanderai), some sixteen kilometres northwest of Bali in present-day district Pali. According to the later Sundha Inscription of King Chachigdev (Chachik Dev) of Jalore, dating to VS 1319, i.e. AD 1262,

Nadol's Chauhan king Jinduraj "burst through the multitude of his enemies" and achieved victory at Sandera.

Jinduraj's eldest son and successor, Prithvipal, is said to have destroyed the army of King Karna, described as the 'Lord of the Gurjaras'. Prithvipal was succeeded by his brother, Jojalla-deva, for whom we have an inscription from Nadol and another from Sadaji, both dated AD 1090. Jojalla is credited with having captured Anahillapura and holding it for a short period. However, it seems that Jojalla faced internal problems, as his right to rule was challenged by his nephew, Prince Ratanpal, who was Prithvipal's son.

Following Jojalla, his younger brother, Asaraja, ascended the throne of Nadol. *Maharajadhiraj* Asaraja's wife, Queen Chandala-devi, had the temple of Chandaleshvar built at Nadol, and Asaraja himself is known to have granted the village of Pinchhavalli to this temple in AD 1114. K.C. Jain has noted that there are inscriptions spanning the c. AD 1110 and 1143 period for Asaraja⁷⁴. But it seems that Asaraja's reign was neither peaceful nor uninterrupted, for he was forced to surrender Nadol to Ratanpal between AD 1115 and 1119. The kingdom may have been divided, as subsequently, there are inscriptions of Rayapal, Ratanpal's son, spanning the AD 1132 to 1145 period.

It may be noted that Col. James Tod had collected "two originals [inscriptions] on brass"⁷⁵. One of these copper-plate grants, dated *sudi* 14 in the month of *sawan* of VS. 1218, relating to endowments for a temple to the Jain *Tirthankar* Mahavir, lists the genealogy of the Nadol Chauhans⁷⁶. (This is now generally referred to as the Nadol Copper-Plate Grant of Alhandeva). The genealogy enumerated on the copper-plate reflects some circumspect editing-out of names of 'rival' relatives, as may be seen in the following listing transcribed by Tod:- first came Lacshman Raja, who was succeeded by his son Lohia [Shobhit], and Lohia by his son Bulraj. Then came, in the next generation, his son Vighraha Pal; to be succeeded by Mahendra Deva; whose son was Sri Anhula, "the chief amongst the princes of his time, whose fortune was known to all". His son was Sri Bal Presad, who had no son and was therefore succeeded by his younger brother, Jaitr

Raj. The latter's son was Prithwi Pal, "endued with strength and fiery qualities". As Prithwi Pal too had no son, he was succeeded by his younger brother Jul; and he by his brother Maun Raja, "the abode of fortune". His son was Alan Deva, the bestower of the gifts recorded as being made by the copper-plate inscription in perpetuity for the service of the white temple of Mahavir in the town⁷⁷.

The Nadol Inscription of VS 1198 records some of Rayapal's innovative administrative and policing methods. The four Nadlai Stone Inscriptions, dating between AD 1132 and 1146, also provide information about Raypal and his times. Meanwhile, it seems that internecine rivalry continued to plague the fortunes of Nadol and affect the lives of ordinary citizens during this time, for during the c. 1143-1144 period, Asaraja's son, Katudev (?Kuntapal?), occupied Nadol for a while. He was probably aided in this by the powerful Chalukyan king, Jaisimha Siddharaja of Gujarat (r. 1096-1142). However, Rayapal was successful in recovering Nadol before AD 1145. Rayapal's wife, Queen Padma-devi, and two of their sons, Sahanpal and Sahajpal, are known to have had shrines constructed at Nadol.

Following Rayapal, his son Sahajpal ascended the throne of Nadol. He did not long enjoy his patrimony, though, since the success of the Chalukyan king, Kumarapal of Gujarat, against the Shakambhari Chauhan king Arnoraj affected the fate of Nadol too. The victorious Kumarapal restored Nadol to another of Asaraja's sons, Alhan (Alhan-deva), sometime between AD 1145 and 1148. However, it appears that Arnoraj may have driven Alhan out of part of his patrimony (possibly even Nadol) around 1149, since soon thereafter Kumarapal took Nadol back into his direct control. Instead, the ruler of Gujarat gave the administration of Kiradu, Latahrada and Siva over into Alhan's hands.

Alhan gave the administration of the Barmer area into the charge of his son, Kumarasimha. Later, under Alhan's son, Kelhan, Kumarasimha's son, Ajaysimha, held the governance of the area. An inscription of AD 1166 records the gift of a well to the Mahaswami temple at Barmer by this Ajaysimha, nephew of Kelhan of Nadol. (Barmer, variously referred to as Baramera, Bayadmer, Bamnera, and apparently even Vagbhatmeru in literary and epigraphic records, is about 209 kms south-west of Jodhpur.

This seems to have formed part of the domains of the Kiradu Parmars, before going into the hands of the Nadol and then Jalore Chauhans).

Gujarat's hegemony over parts of Rajasthan is also reflected in the fact that in AD 1150 Kumarapal captured the old town of Pali, which had formed part of the territories of the Nadol Chauhans, but which seems to have fallen into the possession of the Shakambhari-Ajmer Chauhans around this time. (It is recorded that a Jain monk named Sthirachandragani, who was copying Abhaydeva's *Panchashaka-vritti* text at Pali, had to leave his work unfinished for a while due to the invasion. The monk escaped to Ajmer, the capital of Arnoraj, where he eventually completed his task!) Pali remained under Kumarapal's control, being held in 1153 by Kumarapal's feudatory, Vahadadeva.

One may emphasise here that by this time, the Chalukyas of Gujarat had gained an upper hand in the political dynamics of the general region. Thus, among the Nadol rulers, Asaraja, Alhan, and later Kelhan, Jaitsimha and Samantsimha⁷⁸ are known to have owed allegiance to the Chalukyas of Gujarat. In keeping with this relationship, some of these later chiefs of Nadol served in the army of the Chalukyas too.

Meanwhile, the Gujarat king had placed Nadol under his officer (*dandadhisha*) Vaijjaldeva Chauhan. However, in the face of his lack of success against the Chauhan king, Vighraharaj IV (Bisaldev) of Ajmer-Shakambhari, who apparently "reduced Nadol to a bed of reeds", Kumarapal restored Nadol to Alhan sometime between AD 1159 and 1161⁷⁹. (According to one version, it was chief Kuntapal of Nadol who was defeated by the Shakambhari Chauhan ruler, Vighraharaj IV (Bisaldev). Kuntapal's daughter, Lakhana-devi, had the shrine of Lakhanesvar built within the famous Tripurushadeva temple of Nadol). Alhan made several endowments, including of villages, to the Tripurushadeva temple and other shrines within his domain, and made a temple to Siva at Nadol. His queen, Shankara-devi, built a shrine to Gauri within the Chandaleshvar temple that Queen Chandala-devi had constructed during Asaraja's reign.

Alhan was succeeded by his son, Kelhan, for whom there are several dated inscriptions spanning the period AD 1163 to 1192. Among these are the Sanderav Inscription of VS 1221 (AD 1164) and the Lalrai Inscription

of VS 1223 (AD 1176). Kelhan is known to have participated in several battles and campaigns. Among these, he fought — probably as a subordinate of the king of Gujarat — against Bhillima Yadav, the king of Devgiri (Deogiri). Kelhan also took up arms against Mohammad Ghori in 1178, when Nadol was attacked by the Ghor forces in the course of their march, by way of Kiradu, against Gujarat (discussed elsewhere in this chapter). Later, the Nadol forces joined the Chalukyan ruler Bhima II of Gujarat and other allies, including Dharavarsha Parmar of Abu, against Mohammad Ghori's forces in 1196. There is some confusion over the result, for it seems that at first Gujarat and its allies were worsted, but in a second battle, Ghori was injured and forced to leave the field.

In the interim, Kelhan was succeeded by his son, Jaitsimha. Soon afterwards, Nadol was attacked by Qutb-ud-din Aibak⁸⁰, the able commander of Mohammad of Ghor. This took place in 1196. After a determined resistance, Jaitsimha had to vacate his fort at Nadol. Subsequently, Jaitsimha and his Nadol troops joined hands with allies like King Dharavarsha Parmar of Abu, and Dharavarsha's famous brother, Prahlanan, in meeting the advancing Ghor army in battle in 1197. The Sundha Inscription places the battle at Kayhadra, near Abu. Jaitsimha was among those who fell in the fight, while the battle ended in a victory for Aibak. It also effectively marked the end of an era for the Nadol Chauhans, who now sought to regroup their strength and pelf in other areas.

Jaitsimha's successor was Samantsimha, for whom some inscriptions spanning the period between VS 1256 to 1258 — i.e. AD 1199-1201, have been reported. Among them is one concerning charitable endowments to the Sun temple at Barmer by this ruler of Nadol, which implies that the Kiradu-Barmer area was in Nadol's possession at that date. We also learn about one "Dhandhaladeva, son of Viradhavaladeva of the Chahamanana family, [who] ruled Godwar as a vassal under the Chalukya Bhima II from AD 1209 to 1226"⁸¹.

Meanwhile, Kirtipal, one of the younger sons of Alhan had founded a separate kingdom of his own at Jalore, after his brother, Kelhan, became ruler of Nadol. Driven by a spirit of adventure, and eager to seek his fortunes, in 1181 Kirtipal defeated the Parmar chief Asala of Kiradu, a

vassal of the Chalukyan king, Bhima II of Gujarat, and captured Jalore from him, making it his own capital. Kirtipal was also successful in defeating Samantsimha of Mewar. (Samantsimha had earlier defeated the Chalukyas in alliance with the Shakambhari Chauhans). Kirtipal was succeeded (probably in AD 1182?) by his son, Samarsimha. To Samarsimha goes the credit for the extensive ramparts and several other building works at Jalore. The third ruler of Nadol's collateral Jalore Chauhan line was Samarsimha's son, and Kirtipal's grandson, Udaysimha. The Sundha Inscription throws light on the territorial sway of this powerful ruler.

This Jalore branch that sprang from the Chauhans of Nadol would continue in existence as independent rulers till the early part of the thirteenth century, when Jalore was besieged, sacked and temporarily occupied by Alauddin Khilji around c. AD 1310-11 and its Chauhan ruler, Kanhar Deo (also Kanhad-De), and his heir, Vikram (Biram), killed in the fighting.

Nadol is known to have been among the prominent towns of Rajasthan during the c. tenth-twelfth centuries period, with a number of still extant structures bearing out the testimony of inscriptions and tradition⁸². Besides Nadol, Korta (Korantaka), Sanderai, Nadlai, Khed, and even the old habitation of Pali (ancient Palli, and Pallika⁸³), were among the long-established towns controlled by the Chauhans of Nadol during much of this period. One may note here that King Kelhan of Nadol assigned the town of Sanderai to his queen, Jalhana-Devi.

In the 1990s, extremely limited excavations were undertaken by the Rajasthan State Department of Archaeology and Museums at Nadol (now in district Pali). The excavations indicated that Lakhan's fortified settlement of Nadol was probably constructed atop an older habitation, as evidenced by limited Kushan period materials found in excavations. A broad fortification wall, largely intact, ringing the entire mound was visible, as were the remains of some temples, and at least thirteen small *kunds* and step-wells (some being used for irrigation by local farmers) distributed over a wide area. The small-scale excavations revealed the remains of a Sun temple, step-well, a substantial building complex, other architectural and sculptural remains, pottery, some coins, and a range of other antiquities.

The Sun temple has been ascribed to the late tenth century AD Gurjara-Pratihara style by the excavators. Two associated statues were found at the entrance of the inner sanctum sanctorum of this temple. The excavated step-well is located near the temple complex. It consists of a stepped corridor at the ground level, niches at regular intervals, a multi-storied pavilion, and a draw-well at the rear with a *kund* for storing surplus water.

Excavations also revealed the remains of a large structure, which the excavators believe could either be a palace or a substantial temple complex, built from massive stone blocks, as well as sun-dried and kiln-baked bricks. The excavated portions revealed living quarters, a possible kitchen, and either a water-drain or some system of drainage. A stone inscription stating '*Prasad Vinirmatey*' in early Devnagari letters was discovered from this complex. A seal bearing an inscription '*Maharajadhiraj Rao Shri Lakhan*' in early Devnagari letters was also discovered. Excavations unearthed several stone sculptures and other remains. Indo-Sassanian and their later type coins, including those known as '*Gadhiya*' coins referred to in another part of this book, were also recovered, as were coins belonging to the Nadol branch of Chauhan rulers like Lakhan, Shobhit, Mahendra, Prithvipal and Rayapal.

Excavations unearthed remains of fairly sizeable houses, that were rectangular in shape. These had plinths of roughly dressed local schist stone, and partition walls made of baked bricks. These houses contained built-in storage jars sunk into the floor, large hearths and grinding stones and querns. Loose grains of cereals and legumes such as wheat, black gram, *moong*, *moth*, rice, *arhar* and *kulthi* were found, as were a large number of cooking pans with coarse exterior. The pottery found was mostly wheel turned, of a fine fabric, and red in colour. The shapes included bowls, lid-cum-bowls and lipped bowls with spouted channels. Some broken pieces of pottery bearing '*triratna*' and '*swastika*' symbols were noted, as were terracotta figurines, both male and female, with elaborate coiffeurs and jewellery. Animal figurines included horses and bulls.

Covered drains were discovered, along with the remains of what is thought to have been a goldsmith's workshop. This latter contained a

furnace with an opening for the bellows and a tall vessel, possibly for holding water. The neck of a large jar was firmly fixed to the floor for supporting the water vessel. Small vessels for drawing water and crucibles and moulds for casting were also noted.

Like Nadol, most towns of that period, including Nagaur, Mandore, Lodrava, Pali, Merta, etc., was also well-fortified too. In fact, high protective walls and other defensive fortifications appear to have been an important feature for all the medieval towns and cities of note, and historical records tell us that these were regularly strengthened and repaired by successive rulers and occupants. Though a published report on the Nadol excavations is still eagerly awaited, it is undisputed that even these partial excavations have provided a fascinating view into the urban life of the period.

THE MAURYAS OF CHITTOR AND KOTA

In an earlier section of this book, it was noted that by around c. sixth century AD the 'Maurya' or 'Mori' clan were a recognised power in the Chittor and Kota parts of southeastern Rajasthan. They are mentioned in a record from Jhalarapatan dating to AD 690, for example. We also have references to them in the context of battles and wars with other clans and kingdoms, as mentioned elsewhere in this chapter. Despite this, however, our knowledge about the history of this apparently once-renowned clan during the eighth-ninth century remains fragmentary.

For instance, the Kansua Inscription, dated VS 795 (or AD 738), of one Brahmin ruler, Shivagana, found at Kansua (near the modern city of Kota), informs us that Shivagana was a friend of King Dhavala of the Maurya lineage⁸⁴. In a like manner, the Dabok/Dhod (Dhavagarta) Inscription⁸⁵, from south-eastern Rajasthan states that the *Guhilaputra*⁸⁶ chief Dhanika was a feudatory of *Parambhattaraka Maharajadhiraja Parameshwara* Dhavalappadeva. Given the available evidence, it is possible that this king had some association with the King Dhavala referred to in Shivagana's Kansua Inscription.

On the basis of yet another fragmentary inscription, this time from Mathura (in modern Uttar Pradesh), Dr. D.C. Sircar reconstructed the names of four successive Maurya rulers who, it is suggested, reigned over a part of eastern Rajasthan as well (besides Mathura). They were Krishnaraj, Chandragupta, Aryaraj and Dindiraj.

Similarly, it seems that during “...the month of *Magha*, the year 887, Chitrakuta (Chitor [sic]) was ruled by a prince named Dharnivaraha who patronised Mahuka, a descendant of the poet Magha and writer of a treatise called the *Haramekhala*. If the year be referred to is the Vikrama [sic] era, Dharnivaraha must have been ruling there in AD 831. Maurya princes with names ending in ‘varaha’ are known also from the Bonai plates of the Maharaja Ranaka Udayavaraha of a Maurya family which migrated to Orissa from Chitor”⁸⁷. These Bonai Plate grants referred to above mention a Buddhist Mayura *vamsha* (Mayura dynasty), which originally came from Chitrakuta mountain and went on to rule over the ‘Vanai’ *mandal* (division or tract).

Of course, well enmeshed in popular tradition and memory are the names of at least two Maurya, or rather, ‘Mori’, chiefs. One of these is Chitrangada Mori, to whom some traditions ascribe the building of the fort of Chittor. Others, holding that the famous fort of Chittor pre-dated even Chitrangada, believe that he was responsible for the excavation and construction of a water-reservoir at the fort, that was known as the ‘Chitranga’ water-tank as far back as AD 1287 (as it still is today).

There are other references to Chitrangada Mori too. According to one legend, preserved mainly in Jain texts, a ruler of Kanauj named Shambhalish killed the Maurya king, Chitrangada and captured his fort, only to restore it much later to the dead Maurya king’s son. If ‘Shambhalish’ be equated, Sharma suggests⁸⁸, with *Shambhar-Ish* (i.e. Lord of Shakambhari, meaning a Chauhan prince), the legend may refer to a defeat of the Mauryas by a Chauhan general, fighting as a feudatory-chief on behalf of his Imperial Pratihara overlord-king (the Kanauj connection). In such a situation, Chittor could have become a Pratihara dependency, and like many of their contemporaries, the Mauryas of Chittor may have continued to rule their ancestral domain, albeit as feudatories now of their

Pratihara overlord, occasionally becoming semi-independent from Imperial Pratihara control. This state of affairs could have continued until Pratihara control withered away, and the Guhilas eventually took the fort of Chittor (perhaps with the help of the Rashtrakuta ruler, Krishna III).

The other Mori king whose memory is preserved in local popular history is *Raja* Mana Mori, who is traditionally regarded as the last Mori to rule over Chittor and from whom Bappa Rawal of the Guhila lineage is believed to have taken Chittor. In his *Annals and Antiquities*, Col. Tod details how Bappa Rawal, whom the annals of the Rana's house expressly state to be a nephew of the Mori prince of Chittor, succeeded to the throne of the Moris at the age of fifteen after several adventures⁸⁹. (The 'relationship' seems based on one tradition, which says that Bappa Rawal's mother was from the Parmar clan, of which the Moris were, in later times, eventually considered a sub-branch). Tod further gives a translation of an inscription "in the Nail-headed character", that he noted on a column from the banks of lake Mansarovar, reputedly constructed near Chittorgarh by King Mana himself, giving details about some of the Mori rulers of Chittor⁹⁰. (The original stone is believed to have been lost at sea subsequently).

According to this Mansarovar Inscription, one of the king's great ancestors was King Maheshwar of the Tvashtri family, from who descended Raja Bhima, 'Lord of Avanti', who carried his arms up to where the holy river Ganga meets the sea. His descendant was the great Raja Bhoja, and his son King Mana, who was "surcharged with good qualities, and with whom fortune took up her abode"⁹¹. Tod read the date of this inscription, when Raja Mana "the lord of men, the King of Malwa formed this lake" as the Malava *Samvat* year 770, which converts to 713-14 AD⁹².

However, if the date of Mana Mori's inscription has been accurately read, it would indicate an inconsistency with the statement of the writer Mahuka, namely that his patron, King Dharanivaraha, "...who certainly was not of the Guhila family, [was] ruling there in 831 AD"⁹³. To complicate the scenario still further, popular tradition holds that the temple of Kukadeshvar

at Chittor was built in AD 755 by one King Kukadeshvar, who is not known from the lake Manasarovar inscription, nor any other listing.

Another inscription of King Mana, found at lake Puthauli, provides the names of six rulers of his line in a quite different order. This places Chitrangada as the senior-most ancestor named, followed by Bhoja, Bhima, Maheshwar, Jitari and then finally Mana, in order of descent. Interestingly, the eighth century AD Jain ascetic-preacher-scholar Haribhadra Suri, whose writings include the *Neminath-Charitra* and *Samaraicha-katha*, was the priest of a king Jitari, the ruler of Chitrakuta. The dynasty to which this king Jitari belonged is not recorded, though in light of the above-mentioned inscription, it would appear that there was at least one Mori king of that name who ruled Chittor.

Meanwhile, D.C. Shukla has drawn attention to the fragmentary Shankarghatta Inscription of VS 770 (AD 713) discovered in a Siva temple, which refers to a king 'Manabhanga of the Grahapati-jati'. This Manabhanga appears to have built a magnificent palace, constructed a temple and excavated some water-tanks and cisterns at Chittor. Shukla holds that since this king Manabhanga is not a Mori, and since the Shankarghatta Inscription indicates that Manabhanga was ruling over Chittor in VS 770, one should reject the popular belief about the existence of any king called Mana Mori. Some other scholars have suggested that King Manabhanga of the Shankarghatta Inscription should be regarded as identical with the Mana of the Manasarovar inscription, and thus with Mana Mori. However, the very name 'Manabhanga' carries the connotation of 'Destroyer of Mana', and is also a word-play on 'Destroyer of Pride' ('*Man*')!

One can try to reconcile the popular tradition about Mana being the last Mori ruler of Chittor from whom Bappa Rawal took Chittor, with the information available from the concurrent *Mansarovar Inscription* of Mana Mori and the Shankarghatta Inscription of King Manabhanga in the following way: It is possible that a Mori dynasty *did* hold Chittor once, and that a descendant called Mana Mori was ruling Chittor in early part of the *Malava* era 770, which is the same as VS 770 (i.e. AD 713), when the Mansarovar was excavated. Later, the same year, 'Bappa Rawal', a term of

reverence used for an early Guhila ruler of Mewar, whose identity has been hotly debated by historians, defeated Mana Mori and captured Chittor. By virtue of having humbled the pride and defeated (or killed) Mana Mori, he *may* have been poetically described on the Shankarghatta Inscription as ‘Manabhanga’, the destroyer of Mana and Mana’s pride, even though that was not his proper name. This approximate time-period would also agree with the general period ascribed to the Guhila chief Kalabhoja — whom several historians, including Ojha, have identified with ‘Bappa Rawal’. In the absence of more data at present, one may only conjecture about the true state of affairs.

It is significant, in my opinion, that Chitrakuta (or Chittor) was one of the strategic goals during the overall struggle for supremacy between the Imperial Gurjara-Pratiharas, Chalukyas of Gujarat, Parmars of Malwa, Chauhans and Guhilas. As such, it changed hands more than once, and the lines between tradition and fact may have become blurred over actual events. Interestingly enough, as the Mauryas of Rajasthan became demonstrably less powerful — and particularly after the loss of Chittor — a tradition developed by which the ‘Moris’ became viewed as a branch or sub-clan of the powerful Parmar Rajputs. (And, it is as a sub-clan of the Parmars that Tod knew the Moris of Rajasthan!)

THE NAGAS

In the post-Gupta and post-Hun incursions period, information about the existence of one Naga ruling family of the southeast Rajasthan region comes from the Shergarh Inscription of VS 847, or AD 790. Taking its names of Shergarh, Sherpur or Sherkot from Sher Shah Sur according to local belief, and known formerly as Koshavardhan, the deserted town of Shergarh is sited on the river Parwan, about 145 km south-west of Kota. The Shergarh Inscription, found at the site’s Barkhedi Gate, gives the name of some ruling chiefs of a Naga dynasty. These are Bindu-naga, Padma-naga, Sarva-naga and Devdutt. The name of chief Sarva-naga’s wife is given as Shree in the epigraph. The inscription further states that *Samanta* Devdutt, of the Naga lineage, caused a Buddhist *vihar* and *chaitya* to be erected to the east of the Koshvardhana mountains. While this may indicate

that Devdutt was a follower of Buddhism, it should not be forgotten that over the centuries it was not uncommon for rulers to patronise the major religions, often simultaneously! In fact, Shergarh was also a stronghold of Saivism and Jainism⁹⁴.

The usage of the title of *Samanta* by Devdutt indicates that these Nagas acknowledged the overlordship of some other regional power. In Devdutt's time, the overlord may well have been a Pratihara ruler, possibly Vatsaraj or Nagabhata of Kanauj. While detailed information about Devdutt's Naga dynasty is not available, it seems that the Nagas continued to be politically noticeable up to the end of the eighth century in this area. (This would strengthen my hypothesis, proffered in an earlier chapter, regarding the probable hegemony once enjoyed over the region by either the Padmavati Nagas or some other Naga branch).

In the succeeding centuries, the already slender references to Nagas become even fewer gradually. However, one interesting lead comes from an inscription found at the tenth century Ramgarh Siva temple (better known as 'Bhand Devra' because of its broken or '*bhand*' condition, near the village of Ramgarh, in the Kishanganj tehsil of Baran district, some fifty kilometres from Baran in south-eastern Rajasthan). The inscription dates to VS 1219 (AD 1162). It states that the Siva temple had originally been built by Raja Malay-Varma of the Naga dynasty, to commemorate his victory over his enemy, and that it was restored by Raja Trisha-Varma of the Naga lineage in the year of the inscription. This would suggest that branches of the Nagas held lands as chiefs and princes in south-eastern Rajasthan into the mid-twelfth century.

Similarly, documenting events of the twelfth century, the *Prithviraja Vijaya* records how Bhuvanaikamalla (one of the ministers at the court of Prithviraj III of Ajmer-Delhi-Shakambhari, and also the king's great-uncle), successfully subdued the Nagas. It is more than probable that, over the ages, a process of assimilation absorbed the independent 'Kshatriya' identity of Naga kingdoms and fief-holds. Here one may also mention that Brahmanical and Jain iconography abounds in Naga motifs. Examples from Rajasthan include the eleventh-twelfth centuries AD sculpture found at ancient Dhavalapuri. This old township lies just south of, and partially

beneath, the latter habitation now better known as Dholpur. Images of Nagas in both human and serpent form have been discovered here, including a Naga statue having six hoods, an exquisite Nagini (female Naga) figure depicted as part woman and part serpent, and an idol of Naga installed by *Maharajadhiraja* (king) Sivaditya.

THE PARMARS

Early epigraphic records, like the Harsola Grant, connect the Parmars with the Rashtrakutas, but according to subsequent inscriptions, issued from about the second-quarter of the eleventh century AD onwards, the Parmars trace their origin from a sacrificial fire-pit at Abu. The popular version — the salient features of which are found in Padmagupta Parimala's tenth century work, *Navasahasanka-Charita* — holds that sage Vashishtha performed a ritual yagna atop the Arbuda hill in order to recover his wish-fulfilling (*Kamadhenu*) cow, Nandini, from sage Vishvamitra, who had seized her. From this sacrificial fire originated a divinely-created hero, who duly retrieved the cow for Vashishtha. The sage bestowed the name 'Parmar' meaning 'slayer of the enemy', on this hero who had sprung out from the fire, and made him a king.

Over time, rulers of the Parmar line established capitals at Dhara-Nagari (modern Dhar) and Ujjayini (Ujjain)⁹⁵. One of the early Parmar chiefs of the Arbuda-Malwa area about whom we have information is Upendra, also known as Krishnaraj. He lived sometime in the first quarter of the ninth century AD, and was probably worsted by the Rashtrakuta king, Govinda III around c. AD 812. The Parmars may have remained subservient to the Rashtrakutas for a while thereafter. Following Upendra-Krishnaraj, his elder son, Vairsisimha ascended the throne, while the younger one, Dambarasimha and his successors established mastery over the Vagar part of Rajasthan, with Arthuna (Uttbumaka, also called Utthunaka), as their capital. Vairisimha was succeeded by his son, Siyaka 1, and the latter by his son, Vakapati I. The connection with the powerful Rashtrakutas seems to have been maintained through all this period. Vakapati I took part in various campaigns on the side of the Rashtrakuta

king, Indra III. These included the battle against the Imperial Pratihara army of Mahipala I “on the banks of the river Ganga”.

Vakpati I’s son and successor, Vairisimha II, also called Vajrata, suffered when the Pratiharas took retaliatory action against the Rashtrakutas after the death of Indra III. The Pratiharas and their Kalachuri allies seized much of Malwa’s lands up to the banks of the river Narmada, including the Parmar cities of Ujjayini and Dhara, and a Pratihara governor was posted at Ujjayini. However, sometime after AD 946, Vairisimha II succeeded in recapturing Malwa with the help of the powerful Rashtrakuta king Krishna III. Vairisimha II was followed by his son, Siyaka II, also known as Harsha.

By this time, the once-mighty empire of the Imperial Pratiharas had started to disintegrate, and other strong established kingdoms like those of the Rashtrakutas, Kalachuris etc. were facing challenges from vigorous smaller states. As such, following the death of the Rashtrakuta king Krishna III, Siyaka II Parmar made new allies and new enemies, conquered additional lands, and won and lost his share of battles, before throwing off his allegiance to the Rashtrakutas. Krishna III’s Rashtrakuta successor, Khottiga, marched against Siyaka II. Battle was joined on the banks of the river Narmada, at a site called Kalighat. Siyaka II was assisted by the collateral branch of Vagar Parmars, whose chief was killed in action fighting valiantly. The hard-fought battle turned in favour of Siyaka II, who followed up his advantage by pursuing Khottiga’s retreating Rashtrakuta army up to the gates of their capital, Manyakheta. Manyakheta had never before fallen to an enemy. However, Parmar Siyaka II’s forces encountered no great opposition in occupying and plundering this Rashtrakuta capital, around AD 972.

Siyaka II’s successor, Munja Parmar, also known as Vakapati II and Utpal (r. c. 974-c.997 AD), who appears to have been the seventh of the line to rule Malwa, succeeded to the throne shortly afterwards, sometime between c. 972-974. Under him, Parmar authority was established over a wide swathe of land. Munja Vakapatiraj II took the titles of *Amoghavarsha*, *Utpalraj*, *Prithvi-Vallabh* and *Shri-Vallabh*. He is known to have won victories over his several neighbours and foes. Among these were the Kalachuris led by their King Yuvaraj II and the Guhilas of Medpat. In both

cases, the capitals, Tripuri and Aghatpur respectively, were plundered by Munja. He also carried his arms against the Chalukya king of Anhillapattan, the Gujarati kingdom of *Lata*, and the Huns of 'Hun-Mandal', which lay to the north of Malwa. (This 'Hun-Mandal' could have been a part of the erstwhile Hun-dominated tracts in the Uparmal-Arbuda-Malwa part of southern Rajasthan and northern Malwa, of which reference has been made earlier).

One of Munja's notable victories was against the combined forces of the Guhilas of Mewar and the 'Lord of the Gurjaras' — '*Gurjaresh*'. The term '*Gurjaresh*' used in the concerned epigraph indicates either the Gurjara Pratihara king Rajyapala, or the Chalukyan king Mularaj I of Gujarat. The latter seems a stronger possibility. For, it is known that after one defeat at the hands of Munja Parmar, King Shakti Kumar of Mewar, and part of the Gujarat army found sanctuary at King Dhavala Rashtrakuta's court at Hastikundi, while King Mularaj of Gujarat took refuge with his ally, King Baliraj of Nadol.

Munja also marched against the Chauhans of Nadol, whose king at that time was Baliraj. Nadol was attacked by Munja, but could not be captured, but Munja was successful in seizing Abu and its surrounding territory — possibly from the Nadol Chauhans, who held it at the time. (Dasharatha Sharma has pointed out that for a time Abu was under Shobhit, the Chauhan ruler of Nadol, and the father and predecessor of Baliraj⁹⁶). He also took some of the more westerly tracts like Jalore, Bhinmal and Kiradu.

Later tradition has maintained that the Parmars who subsequently ruled from Abu, Jalore, and Kiradu-Bhinmal were connected with Munja and his brother, Sindhuraja. Thus, it is held that Munja made one of his sons, Aranyaraj, governor of the Abu area, and another son, Chandan, governor of Jalore, and his nephew Dusal, son of Sindhuraja, governor of the old Bhillamala/Shrimal tract. Munja was not merely a land-hungry king and astute military commander, though. He is known to have been a good poet, and a patron of art and literature. Writers at his court included Dhananjaya, Bhatta, Halayudha, Dhanika, Padmagupta Parimal, Amitagati, and scores of others. Munja is also credited with the construction of numerous water-reservoirs, wells and temples across Malwa.

Munja died sometime around AD 993-997 following a failed campaign against Taila II of the Deccan Chalukyas, in which he carried his sword deep into enemy-country, crossing the river Godavari against the wishes of his advisors, especially his veteran minister, Rudraditya. Munja was captured by his enemy, confined in the Chalukyan capital, and when Taila II learned of secret plans to rescue the Malwa king, he was put to death at Taila's orders.

Munja's successor, his brother Sindhuraja (r. c. AD 997-1000) was equally successful in his campaigns. He is credited with defeating the Chalukya king, Satyashraya, conquering '*Aparanta*', plundering the territory of the Somavamshi kings of Kosala, and assisting a Naga dynasty king against his 'demon-king' neighbour. He also defeated the chief of the '*Hun-Mandal*' to the north of Malwa. Sindhuraja asserted his dominance over the junior Parmar branch that held southern Rajasthan's Vagar area too, when he suppressed the attempts of Chandapa, the ruler of Vagar. However, in common with Munja's reign, Malwa saw not just warfare but a flourishing of art and literature under Sindhuraja's patronage. Sindhuraja adopted the titles of '*Kumara-Narayan*' and '*Navasahasanka*'. It was at Sindhuraja's court that the poet Padmagupta composed his *Navasahasanka-Charita* based on the life of *Navasahasanka* Sindhuraja of Malwa.

If Malwa had gained territorially, politically, economically, and culturally during the reigns of Munja and Sindhuraja, Sindhuraja's son and successor, Bhoja (r. c. AD 1000-1055), carried the Malwa Parmars to the pinnacle of their achievements. Under Bhoja, the empire of the Malwa Parmars extended up to Chittorgarh, Banswara and Dungarpur in Rajasthan, and covering Bhilsa, Khandesh and Konkan, stretched as far as the upper course of the river Godavari towards Maiwa's south. On the basis of Bhoja's numerous inscriptions, dating between AD 1020 and 1047, and literary and other data, considerable information is available about the reign of Bhoja, his contemporaries, and the history of several parts of contemporaneous Rajasthan. During much of this time, the Parmars of Abu and other Parmar sub-branches appear to have remained as somewhat subordinate allied to the Malwa line. However, the fortunes of the Rajasthan-based Parmars were determined not just by the might of the Malwa dynasty, which served to provide partial protection at times. Their

fortunes were also tied intrinsically with their own relations with the Chalukyas of Gujarat, Chauhans of Shakambhari-Ajmer-Delhi and of Nadol, the Guhilas of Aghatpur (Ahar) and other parts of Mewar, and a range of other inter-state regional politics, as we shall see.

THE PARMARS OF ABU

The Abu Parmar traditions speak of an early ancestor named Dhumraj, but one of the earliest historically known rulers of this line appears to be Sindhuraj, who is referred to as the 'maharaja' of the area called 'Maru-Mandal' or the region/ province of Maru. (The use of the title '*Mandaleshwara*' or '*Mandalika*', meaning Lords of the 'Mandal' (province or division of land) by the Abu Parmar chiefs may indicate that they were once feudatories of more powerful overlords). Sindhuraj was succeeded by Utpalraj. This Utpalraj has apparently been wrongly identified by D.C. Ganguly, as being the same as Malwa's Parmar ruler Vakpati Munja, who was also known as Utpalraj. However, it seems the Abu Utpalraj preceded Munja of Malwa by at least three generations.

Utpalraj was followed by his son, Aranyaraj, and the latter by his son, Krishnaraj. Krishnaraj is known to have been ruling around AD 967 on the basis of a dated inscription engraved on the pedestal of an idol of Mahavir at Varkana. This inscription dating to VS 1024, i.e. AD 967, tells us that the image was installed by Vardhaman of the 'Veshtika' family, during the reign of King Krishnaraj I.

Krishnaraj was succeeded by Dharanivarah. It was during Dharanivarah's reign that the powerful Solanki (Chalukya) ruler of Gujarat, King Mularaj, attacked the Abu region. Dharanivarah found himself constrained to seek shelter. It is unclear if this Parmar Dharanivarah of the Abu area is identical with the Chavada king Dharanivarah of Vardhaman who is mentioned as seeking refuge with the Rashtrakuta king, Dhaval at Hastikundi (Hathundi), as is recorded in the Hastikundi Inscription of VS 1053 (AD 997). In any event, it would appear that the Abu Parmar Dharanivarah managed to regain his kingdom, for a grant-record dating to AD 1002, which was made by his son Mahipala, tells us that the Parmars

were masters of Abu. Dharanivarah may either have accepted Gujarat's suzerainty and been given back his Abu kingdom, or he may have won it back by the sword.

After Dharanivarah, the succession passed to Mahipala, also known as Dhruvabhata and Devaraj. Mahipala Dhruvbhata-Devaraj's son and successor was Dhandhuka, who is believed to have ascended the throne of Abu in AD 1010. By this time it seems that Chandravati, situated along the banks of the river Banas, near the base of the Abu peak, was well established as one of the important towns, possibly even the capital of the Abu Parmars who were ruling over the Arbuda' area. The land of the Parmars of Abu was also referred to as 'Ashtadhashatidesh', possibly an indication that the Parmars ruled over that many villages, hamlets and towns. (Known variously as Chaddavali, Chaddauli, Chandravai etc. Chandravati would remain a major habitation during the c. tenth to early fifteenth centuries AD period, first under the Abu Parmars, and later the Deora Chauhans).

It was during Dhandhuka's reign that the Chalukyan ruler, Bhim I of Gujarat, sent his armies against Abu, sometime before c. 1029-30. Dhandhuka was forced to seek refuge with Bhoja Parmar, the powerful king of Malwa and overlord of Chittor and many other parts of Rajasthan. Vimal Shah, one of the ministers of the Gujarat king, was made governor of Chandravati. To him goes the credit for erecting the magnificent Vimal Vasahi temple to the first Jain Tirthankar, Rishabh-Dev (also known as Adi-Nath), at Delwara. Built in AD 1031, under the supervision of the architect Kirtidhar, this has remained one of the architectural splendours of Rajasthan even today.

Vimal later helped mediate between his master and Dhandhuka, enabling the eventual restoration of the latter to his title and lands. The acceptance of Chalukyan overlordship was perhaps a condition to this restoration. Meanwhile, the area was obviously not free from other external attacks. For Dhanpal's poem, the *Satyapuriya Shri Mahavir Utsaha*, in the Apabrahmsha language, indicates that the prosperous city of Chandravati⁹⁷ was plundered by the forces of Mahmud of Ghazni in AD 1024, when he

traversed through this part of Rajasthan enroute to Gujarat and the Chalukyan capital of Anhillwara.

After Dhandhuka, three of his sons, Puranpal, Dantivarman and Krishnaraj II, seem to have ruled in succession. We also learn that Dhanduka's widowed daughter ordered the construction of a temple to Surya, the Sun, at Vasantgarh, and had the Saraswati well renovated. Her brother, King Puranpal, who was on the throne in the 1040s, seems to have attempted to throw off his allegiance to the Chalukyas of Gujarat. Relations between the Abu Parmars and the Gujarat Chalukyas further deteriorated, and around c. AD 1060, when Krishnaraj II held the Abu throne, Bhim I of Gujarat managed to bring the Abu Parmars back under his suzerainty. Krishnaraj was imprisoned, but obtained his freedom again with the help of the Chauhan chief of Nadol, King Balaprasad. Some information about the life and times of Krishnaraj II is available to us from two inscriptions from Bhinmal, which date to AD 1060 and AD 1066 respectively.

The situation thereafter is more than a little unclear vis-à-vis Abu-Gujarat relations, and it is quite possible that there persisted a state of hostility between them, with Gujarat attempting to enforce its supremacy, and the Abu Parmars resisting or accepting, as the situations developed. Krishnaraj II was succeeded by Yogaraj, the son of Dantivarman. In his turn, Yogaraj's son, Ramadev, succeeded to the Abu throne.

The succession of Krishnaraj's nephew and great-nephew may have been the impetus for some of Krishnaraj's direct descendants establishing themselves at Bhinmal. In this regard, it is significant that two inscriptions about Krishnaraj's achievements occur at Bhinmal – indicating that this was probably held by the Abu Parmars at the time. Furthermore, Krishnaraj's grandson, Devaraj is said to have held the Bhinmal tract subsequently as the local chief of that area (as is noted below).

It seems that after the death of Ramadev, the throne was seized by Prince Kakaldev, the son of Krishnaraj II. Kakaldev was succeeded by his own son, Vikramsimha. According to texts like Hemachandra's *Dvyashrey Mahakavya* and Jina-mandan-upadhyaya's *Kumarapal-Prabandh*, Vikramsimha carried his sword into battle on many occasions. He took part

in several battles, including those fought between the forces of the Chauhan king, Arnoraj and King Kumarapal of Gujarat in c. 1144-45 near Abu. An inscription of AD 1145 refers to Vikramsimha as the '*Maha-Mandaleshwar*' — meaning 'Great Lord/King of Mandal'. Vikramsimha attempted to re-assert Parmar independence against the Chalukyan kingdom of Gujarat, but as his contemporary on the throne of Gujarat was the powerful Kumarapal, the attempt was doomed to failure.

Kumarapal of Gujarat defeated and imprisoned Vikramsimha and placed Yashodhavala, son of the late King Ramadev on the throne of the Abu Parmars. Yashodhavala, who is known to have been ruling during the AD 1145-1150 period, fought and killed Ballala, king of Malwa, on behalf of Kumarapal of Gujarat. During this period, the kingdom of Abu remained closely allied with the Chalukyan kingdom of Gujarat.

In his turn, Yashodhavala's son and successor, Dharavarsha (r. c. 1163-1219), who ascended the throne sometime before AD 1163, aided Kumarapal in the latter's campaign against Mallikarjun of Konkan. There are several epigraphs associated with King Dharavarsha which date between AD 1163 and 1219, and appear to indicate that this ruler had a long reign. Dharavarsha's equally valorous younger brother, Prahladan, is credited with inflicting a severe defeat on the Guhila king, Samantasimha of Mewar, during the reign of Kumarapal's successor, Ajaypal of Gujarat, after Samantasimha had beaten off the Chalukyan attack.

It appears that during this period Ranasimha, son of the previously overthrown Abu Parmar king Vikramsimha, successfully wrested control of the kingdom. He is also credited with defeating the warriors of Malwa on the banks of the river Parla, and acquiring the tract of '*Antara*'. However, in the face of the support given to Dharavarsha by the king of Gujarat, Ranasimha could not rule over the Arbuda-Chandravati area for long, and Dharavarsha soon found himself back in the saddle. Dharavarsha and Prahladan were contemporaries to four of the Chalukyan rulers of Gujarat. These were Kumarapal, Ajaypal, Mularaj and Bhimdeva II. The Abu Parmars also maintained close ties with the Chauhans of Nadol. Two of Dharavarsha's wives, Queen Shringar Devi and Queen Giga Devi, were the daughters of the Chauhan king, Kelhan of Nadol.

Sometime before AD 1187, Dharavarsha also found himself faced with an attack by the Chauhans of Shakambhari-Ajmer, led by their king, Prithviraj III. This is believed to have occurred in the course of Prithviraj III's campaign against Gujarat, and in part entailed a nocturnal attack on Abu. The attack is said to have failed because of the bravery and leadership of Dharavarsha's equally famous brother, Prahladan Dev. In fact, the infamous night-attack finds mention in a text titled *Partha-Parakrama-Vyayoga*, penned by Prince Prahladan.

Prahladan was apparently a man of many parts. Described as a warrior and a learned man, he was used as the hero of text titled *Kirti-Kaumudi* by the poet Someshwar. Prahladan himself also wrote plays. He has also been praised in an inscription within the Luna Vasahi temple built by Tejpal in AD 1231. Prahladan (r. c.1219-1230) succeeded his brother sometime after AD 1219. He also founded the city of Prahladanpur, which later became abbreviated to Palanpur, and centuries later became the capital of an independent state ruled by the Nawabs of Palanpur.

Dharavarsha's valour and military prowess were widely acknowledged. Verse 15 of the Patanarayan Temple Inscription of VS 1344 (AD 1287) records the strength and ability of this ruler at archery, stating that Dharavarsha could pierce and slay three water-buffaloes with a single arrow. As if to corroborate — or perhaps commemorate — this, there is a famous sculptural composition at the Mandakini *kund* of the Achaleshwar temple within Abu's Achalgarh fort. This depicts King Dharavarsha with three buffaloes, pierced through by the same arrow.

(There is a legend behind Dharavarsha venting his spleen on three buffaloes in this manner! The story is that three demons had taken to terrorising the local people at Abu, and could only be placated daily by means of a tank full of *ghee* (clarified butter). This tank used to be filled up every evening at Abu, and the demons would take the form of buffaloes to drink it up each night. When the matter was brought before King Dharavarsha, he stood in wait for the demon-buffaloes to appear, and flexing his mighty bow, slew all three of them with a single arrow).

Following the fall of the mighty Prithviraj III of the Shakambhari-Ajmer Chauhans, Qutb-ud-din Aibak led campaigns against various other kingdoms (as is noted elsewhere in this chapter), in an attempt at consolidating power on behalf of his master, Mohammad of Ghor (or 'Ghur'). In this context, Hasan Nizami's *Taj-ul-Maasir* tell us that during Qutb-ud-din Aibak's advance against the Gujarat capital of Anhillapattan in AD 1196, the forces of Gujarat were strengthened by the presence of Dharavarsha of Abu. Dharavarsha was one of the commanders on behalf of Gujarat and its allies. (The chief of Nadol and his forces also fought in this battle). It would seem that the results of this confrontation, which took place at Kayhadra, near Abu, were somewhat inconclusive. Gujarat and its Malwa and Nadol allies appear to have lost the first battle, but won the second, leading their enemy to turn back.

The next campaign of the Ghori forces against Gujarat may have been the direct result of the previous battle. Before long, in 1197 the Abu-Chandravati area found itself facing an attack by Mohammad of Ghor's able lieutenants led by general Khusrav. Dharavarsha of Abu and his allies from the kingdoms of Nadol and Gujarat rallied together. Battle was joined at Kayhadra, but ended in defeat for the Parmar-Chalukya-Chauhan combine. However, though the battle was lost, the Abu Parmars were able to recoup their strength in time under Dharavarsha. Later, Dharavarsha assisted King Vir Dhaval of Gujarat in repulsing an attack by Sultan Iltutmish of the Delhi Sultanate. Dharavarsha was succeeded by his famous brother, Prahladan around AD 1219, as we shall see in a later chapter.

THE PARMARS OF VAGAR

Besides Malwa and the region of Abu-Chandravati, the power of the Parmars extended over other contiguous parts in southern and western Rajasthan too. One such sub-branch were the Parmars of Vagar, who made Arthuna (Uttbumaka, also Utthunaka) their base. These Parmars ruled over parts of the area that now comprises Dungarpur and Banswara, probably in the capacity of feudatories or junior allies to the more dominant Parmars of Malwa.

The ancestor from whom this branch traced its descent appears to have been Dambarasimha, the younger son of Upendra (or according to some of Krishnaraj), and younger brother of King Vairisimha of Dhar. Utthunaka (now known as Arthuna), became his capital⁹⁸. Dambarasimha was succeeded by an unknown number of descendants, until the time one Dhanika ascended the throne. Throughout this period, the close ties with Malwa had obviously continued, for the Panaheda Inscription records that Dhanika built the Dhaneshwar temple near the temple of Mahakala at Ujjain.

The Arthuna (or Vagar) Parmars fought on the side of their senior branch when needed. Thus, some scholars hold that Dhanika's successor, his nephew Chachchha, fought on the side of Siyaka II of Malwa against the Rashtrakuta king Khottiga, and lost his life in a battle fought at Khalighat sometime around AD 972. (Though the historian G.H. Ojha believed that it was not Chachchha, but his successor, Kankadev who fell in this battle⁹⁹).

Chachchha's successor, Kankadev, is remembered for "destroying the forces of the king of *Karnata*", who was an enemy of Malwa's King Sri Harsha (i.e. Siyaka II), on the banks of the river Narmada. As had happened in the case of his predecessor, Kankadev too lost his life in the cause of Malwa. His successor was Chandapa, after whom came Satyaraj. The Panaheda Inscription tells us that Satyaraj's queen, Rajyashri, belonged to the Chauhan clan.

In continuation of the well-established alliance with Malwa, Satyaraj joined the side of King Bhoja Parmar of Dhar, in Malwa's war against the Chalukyas of Gujarat. Satyaraj was followed by Limbaraj, and the latter by Mandalika (r. circa mid-eleventh century AD). Mandalika, Satyaraj's younger son, who is called Mandal-Deva in the Arthuna Inscription, seems to have been a feudatory of Malwa's kings Bhoja and Jayasimha Dev. He is described as seizing a powerful commander-in-chief called Kanha, along with his horses and elephants, and presenting them all to his master, Jayasimha. However, there is no information about which kingdom and king Kanha was serving as commander-in-chief. Mandalika built the temple

of Mandaleshwar, after his own name, at Panaheda (near Banswara) in AD 1059.

Mandalika was succeeded by his son, Chamundaraj (r. c. AD 1070-1100). Chamundaraj is credited with defeating one Sindhuraja, but we do not know to which dynasty or kingdom this Sindhuraja belonged. The Arthuna Temple Inscription of VS 1136 (AD 1079) states that Chamundaraj built the Mandaleshwar Siva temple in memory of his father. Vijayraj, the son of Chamundaraj, succeeded his father. On the basis of two inscriptions, we know that Vijayraj was ruling around c. AD 1108 and 1109.

Of these inscriptions, one dating to AD 1108 comes from an idol of Hanuman at Arthuna, and informs posterity that it was made during the reign of Parmar Vijayraj. A different one, from AD 1109, states that the pious Bhushan built a Jain temple and performed the consecration ceremony of Rishabh-Nath's idol during the reign of Vijayraj. One of Vijayraj's ministers was named Vaman. He is described as the son of a Kayastha called Rajapal, and his post as '*Sandhi-Vigrahika*' or 'Maker of Treaties', i.e. minister for war and diplomacy.

There is a gap in our knowledge regarding local rulers after Vijayraj. Given the constant struggle for supremacy between the Chalukyas (Solankis) of Gujarat and the Parmars of Malwa during the eleventh-twelfth centuries, it is not improbable that the Vagar Parmars were soon afterwards subordinated or displaced. This could well have happened in the wake of the Chalukyan king, Bhim I of Gujarat, having occupied Dhar, the capital of the Malwa Parmars, after the death of King Bhoja Parmar in *circa* AD 1055, and become master of the overall region. The Chalukyas may have maintained military superiority in the general area thereafter. This is corroborated by an inscription belonging to Bhim I's grandson, King Jaisimha Siddharaja, found at Talwara, in present-day Banswara district. This *Talwara Inscription* refers to the construction of a temple dedicated to Ganapati by the Chalukyan king, in commemoration of his victory over one Narvarman Parmar. Having conquered Vagar, Jaisimha Siddharaja exercised sway over the area, with the Vagar Parmars as his feudatories¹⁰⁰.

Later, the Vagar tract appears to have come under the domination of Samantsimha, the eldest son of the Guhila Rawal Kshemsimha of Mewar. According to one version, the fortunes of war brought the Guhila chief Samantsimha to the Vagar area after his crushing defeat at the hands of the Chalukyas of Gujarat and Kirtipal Chauhan of the Nadol (and later Jalore) line. With his capital occupied sometime before VS 1236 (AD 1179), Samantsimha apparently sought refuge in the Vagar area. Here, he killed Chaurasimal of Baroda (old Vatapadraka), established his own capital-in-exile at that site, and began to exercise his sway over the region. (Vatapadraka or Baroda, some forty-five kilometres from present-day Dungarpur, fell within the Ghaghradora part of the ‘Sthali Province’ of the Parmar kingdom of Malwa in the eleventh century, as evident from King Bhoja Parmar’s inscription of AD 1020 — postdating his conquest of Konkan — found here. Later, Baroda was held by the Arthuna Parmars¹⁰¹). Another version, recorded in Muhnot Nainsi’s *Khyat* holds that Rawal Samatsi (Samantsimha) voluntarily gave his kingdom to his younger brother, and retired to Ahar, from where he proceeded against Chaurasimal of Vagar, killed him and established his mastery over the region¹⁰².

An inscription of c. (?)AD 1171 found at Jagat (a site renowned for its architecture), tells us that this Guhila king gifted a golden *kalash* to crown the towering spire at the temple of Amba Devi at Jagat. Another inscription of his reign, this time in what later constituted the kingdom of Dungarpur, was noted within the Shiv temple at Boreshwar, along the bank of the river Mahi. This dates to VS 1236, or AD 1179.

Samantsimha was never able to recover sovereignty over Mewar. His reign over Vagar too does not appear to have lasted more than a decade or so. For, the Virpur Copper Plate Grant of AD 1185 indicates that when the Chalukya king, *Maharajadhiraj Parmeshwara Parambhattaraka* Bhimadev II was ruling over Anahillapur, his subordinate, the *Maharajadhiraj* Amritpal, son of *Maharajadhiraj* Bhratrapatta of the Guhiladutta family, ruled Vatapadraka in Vagar. As Samantsimha had lost his kingdom and capital because of hostility with the Gujarat Chalukyas, and as Bhim II of Gujarat’s hold over the Vagar area is corroborated by a different inscription of AD 1196 from Divada (in erstwhile Dungarpur state), it is possible that Bhima II of Gujarat had a role, either directly or through intermediary

allies, in bringing to an end Samantsimha's rule over Baroda, and thereafter allowing Amritpal to rule there, subject to Gujarat's authority being recognised.

The *Dungarpur Khyat* informs us that the wife of Samantsimha was Pritha-Bai, a Chauhan princess of the Shakambhari-Ajmer line. As such, G.H. Ojha holds that after Samantsimha was deprived of his estates in Vagar, he sought a place at the court of his brother-in-law, King Prithviraj Chauhan III. Serving with Prithviraj III, Samantsimha took part in the battle of Tarain, where he met a heroic death in the fight against Muhammad of Ghor¹⁰³.

Whether there was any connection or relationship between Samantsimha and Baroda's subsequent 'Maharajadhirajas' Bhratrapatta and his son Amritpal, all of whom acknowledged Guhila ancestry, is unclear at present. However, it would suggest that the formerly preeminent Parmars of Arthuna could not recoup their power enough to re-assert dominance over this area subsequently. In fact, various temple inscriptions at Jagat (AD 1220 and AD 1249), and one at Bekrod (AD 1234), indicate that it was a series of Guhila chiefs, namely, Jayatasimha, his son Sihadadev, and grandson Vijaisimhadev, who ruled over part of the Vagar area from Baroda over the ensuing years. We shall return to the history of this area in a later section of this book.

THE PARMARS OF JALORE

In the case of Jalore (ancient Jabalipur) and its hinterland, an inscription from Jalore, which dates to AD 1087, provides us with the names of seven Parmar chiefs, who appear to have held sway in this area. These seven names are Vakapatiraj, Chandan, Devaraj, Aparajit, Vijjal, Dharavarsha and Visal. Of these, the first, Vakapatiraj is believed to have reigned around c. AD 960-985. Visal obviously reigned around 1087, for in that year his queen, Meylar Devi, donated a golden spire-cupola (*kalash*) to the Sindhurajeshwar temple.

In the light of the name of the temple, and of what we know of the twelfth century Parmars of Kiradu/Bhinmal described below, whose fourth chief, Someshwar, recovered ‘Sindhurajpur’ and strengthened ‘Sindhuraj’, it may be postulated that the Jalore Parmars ruled over a tract called ‘Sindhuraj’. They may have been dislodged post c. AD 1087, and later descendants, or a collateral branch, may well have moved to Kiradu — for whatever reason, re-established Parmar control from there, and finally succeeded in winning back ‘Sindhurajpur’ and ‘Sindhuraj’!

While the dynastic listing is incomplete, it would seem that the Parmars of this area continued to be vassals of the Chalukyan kings of Gujarat. The last known Parmar chief to hold Jalore seems to have been Asala Parmar (?Kuntapal), for we know that in AD 1181, Prince Kirtipal of Nadol defeated the Parmar chief Asala of Kiradu/Bhinmal and captured Jalore from him, making it his own capital.

THE PARMARS OF KIRADU AND/OR BHINMAL

One Dusal, son of Sindhuraj Parmar, is believed to be the founder of the Kiradu-Bhinmal Parmar line. It appears that in the early years of the eleventh century AD, a descendant named Devaraj obtained the area known as ‘*Maru-Mandal*’ from the Shakambhari Chauhan king Durlabhraj. It is possible that Bhinmal was the original capital of this sub-branch. Devaraj’s grandson was Krishnaraj (known to have been ruling at least around c.1059-66). However, much of our information about this dynasty comes from the Kiradu Inscription of AD 1161. This informs us that Kiradu and the area around it, including Barmer¹⁰⁴, was under the Parmars.

This Kiradu Inscription engraved in Kiradu’s Shiv temple, lists the names of successive Parmar chiefs of the area as being Krishnaraj (believed to be identical with the Krishnaraj who was the grandson of Devaraj), Sochchharaj, Udayraj and Someshwar. Of these, Udayraj is described as having participated in many campaigns, including against the kingdoms of Choda, Gauda, Karnata and Malwa. These may have been as a subordinate of the Chalukyas of Gujarat.

His son, Someshwar, too was a subordinate of Gujarat, and it was through the support and patronage of the famous King Jaisimha Siddharaja of Gujarat (r. 1096-1142) that Someshwar was able to 'recover' his patrimony of 'Sindhurajpur'. The implication seems to be that 'Sindhurajpur' was a territory or town held by the Kiradu Parmars that had been temporarily lost to them. The assumption is strengthened when we learn that during the reign of Siddharaja's successor, King Kumarapal of Gujarat, Someshwar managed to make his 'Sindhuraj' kingdom powerful and strong, with Kiradu ('Kirat-kupa') as his capital.

In 1161, Someshwar Parmar defeated 'Jajjak' and seized the fortresses of Tanot and Nausar. These were later returned. He is also reputed to have obtained 1700 horses in tribute from 'Jajjak'. (The reference seems to be to the Bhati Chachiga Deva, also called Chachik Deva — except that there is a discrepancy with the known dates of the latter).

Someshwar seems to have ruled upto c. AD 1171. There is some ambiguity about whether the Kiradu and Bhinmal tracts remained under the same successor after Someshwar. For, we find that after Someshwar Parmar, the Kiradu area was held by *Maharajputra* Madanbrahma-dev, after whom came Asala. Both these chiefs appear to have been vassals of the Chalukyan kings of Gujarat. In AD 1181, Nadol's prince, Kirtipal, defeated the Parmar chief Asala, and capturing Jalore from him, made it his own capital.

However, other data indicates that around c. AD 1182 one Jayatsimha Parmar ruled over the Bhinmal area, and was succeeded by Salakha. We are either looking at two contemporaneous sub-branches of the Parmars occupying adjoining tracts more or less simultaneously here; or the story of different successive chiefs of the same line, being dislodged from one part of their holdings, and then re-consolidating themselves in another part. In any event, even if Jayatsimha and Salakha were members of Someshwar's dynasty, by the early years of the thirteenth century, the Bhinmal area too had passed out of the control of the Parmars into the hands of the Chauhans of southern Marwar.

Art and architecture flourished in the Jalore, Kiradu and Bhinmal area under the local Parmars and their neighbours, and the famed sculptures and temple-architecture of Kiradu and Barmer, besides that of Bhinmal etc. have been the subject of several illustrated books and booklets.

THE GUHILAS OF CHATSU, MEWAR AND DHOD

The Guhilas had continued to extend their sway over the area south-west of Medpat (or Mewar), including along the Sirohi-Mewar border, from the mid-seventh century AD onwards. By the beginning of the eighth century, different branches of the Guhila clan had either become firmly established, or were in the process of consolidating their authority, at places like Kishkindha, Dhod, Nagar and Chatsu, while the Nagda (later Nagda-Ahar) branch of the Guhilas had seen an enhancement in its prestige under a ruler called Shiladitya, believed to be fifth in descent from Guha.

As mentioned previously, Shiladitya was succeeded by Aparajit, after whom came Mahendra. The next important ruler of this dynasty was Kalabhoja, a grandson of Aparajit. (G.H. Ojha identified him with the famous Bappa Rawal, as we noted in a previous chapter). The Abu Inscription of AD 1285 credits Kalabhoja with “punishing the Lord of *Karnata* (Karnataka), and bringing to an end the amours of the *Choda* (Chola) women”. This ‘valorous’ Kalabhoja was succeeded by his son, Khumman I. This is of the view that it was during the reign of this king that Al-Mamun, the Caliph of Baghdad, attacked Chittor, but several historians disagree with this. Khumman’s successor, Mattat, led the Guhila forces to a victory over Malwa, which is fulsomely described in the Chittorgarh Inscription of VS 1331.

Mattat was succeeded by Bharatrapatta I (Bharatrabhatta). Ojha has identified him with the Bharatrabhatta mentioned in Baladitya’s Chatsu Inscription, though the identification is by no means certain. After Bharatrapatta I came Simha. Dasharatha Sharma believes that it was during Simha’s time that Bhoja I, the Imperial Pratihara monarch, captured Chittor from the Mauryas and handed over its governance to Simha, on the condition that Pratihara supremacy be acknowledged. Simha was succeeded

by Khumman II. Ojha believed that the attack on Chittor by Al-Mamun, the Caliph of Baghdad, took place during Khumman II's reign, though Dasharatha Sharma refuted this view. Ojha's view is partly based on a later text called *Khumman-Raso*.

On the basis of the Sirur Grant of AD 866, R.V. Somani holds that Khumman II lost Chittor to the Rashtrakuta ruler, Govinda III¹⁰⁵, and that afterwards the Imperial Pratihara King Bhoja I took possession of the fort. The latter event may well have been more in the nature of the recovery of occupied territory from the Rashtrakutas. The Mewar area had frequently remained under Pratihara domination, and the retaking of Chittor may well have been the motivation for Pratihara action, rather than a full-scale attack for territorial expansion by Bhoja I against his Guhila feudatories.

The next two rulers to succeed to the Mewar throne were Mahiyak (Mahayak) and, after him, Khumman III. Our knowledge about their respective reigns is minimal, though the consensus is that they ruled between c. AD 877-926 — a time when the Imperial Pratihara power was at its zenith. The next Guhila ruler of Mewar was Bharatrapatta II (Bharatrabhatta II), who, as mentioned above, took advantage of the weakening of Pratihara power by assuming the independent title of *Maharajadhiraja*. He may also have taken control of Chittor, possibly with the acquiescence or help of the Rashtrakutas and their king, Krishna III. The conjecture is strengthened as Bharatrapatta had matrimonial relations with the Rashtrakutas, having married the Rashtrakuta princess Mahalakshmi, according to verse 5 of the Atpur (Ahar) Inscription of Shakti Kumar, dating to VS 1034 (AD 977). The inscription has referred to this ruler as the “ornament of the three worlds [of heaven, earth and the nether-world]”.

The reign of Bharatrabhatta II marks the accelerated ascendance of the Guhilas of Mewar. One may take note here once again of the previously-mentioned Pratapgarh Inscription (which records numerous other grants made four years afterwards by the will of Kanauj's Pratihara emperor). This tells us that in AD 942 'Shri Bharatrapatta, son of Shri Khumman' granted land in the village of Palasakupika to the temple of Indraditya-Deva (the Sun), built by the Chauhan ruler Indraraj at Chontavarshika (present-

day Ghontarsi, seven miles east of Pratapgarh). This information helps throw light on the probable south-eastern expanse of his territories at the time, though it is difficult to tell whether the Chauhans and Guhilas squabbled for mastery over that tract, or whether, both as co-feudatories of the Imperial Pratiharas shared borders.

Bharatrabhatta II was succeeded by his son, Allata, whose mother was Bharatrabhatt's Rashtrakuta queen, Mahalakshmi. Allata is known traditionally as 'Alhu Rawal'¹⁰⁶. He is regarded as one of the most competent and successful early rulers of Mewar. Among his military-cum-political achievements was the defeat and death in battle at his hands, of an Imperial Pratihara ruler, commonly identified with King Devapala.

In a previous chapter, we have noted that the Atpur Inscription records, in its sixth verse, that King Allata married a Hun princess named Hariya-devi. (To their daughter is attributed the establishment of Harshapura, now called Harsaur, to which reference is made elsewhere in this text). Interestingly, it has not been adequately analysed so far (nor, indeed, has the question been voiced), whether there was a powerful pocket of Huns in or around Mewar at the time — possibly even based in Malwa — whom Allata may have subdued, or found necessary to acquire as allies for political purposes!

It was during Allata's reign that Aghatpur (also called Atpur; present-day Ahar, now within the outskirts of Udaipur city), became a second capital for the Mewar Guhilas of his clan. Prior to this, Aghatpur was already known in Bharatrabhatta II's time as the holy pilgrimage site of Gangodbheda (now called Gangobheva), when the temple to Adi-Varah was built in AD 943. Aghatpur (Atpur) soon became a prominent cultural, religious, as well as commercial centre¹⁰⁷. Long-distance trade already seems to have been flourishing during this general period. For instance, the Sarneshwar 'Prashasti' Temple Inscription of VS 1010 (AD 953) refers to trade between Aghatpur (Ahar) and Karnataka. An indication of the administrative structure under Allata is available from the above inscription too, which, among other things, lists Allata's ministers and officials, the Guhila administrative system, and prevalent weights and measures used. It also mentions that '*Rupaka*', '*Dramma*' and '*Drammardha-vimshaka*' (one-

fortieth of a '*dramma*') were among the coins current in Mewar at the time. These coins fall into the Indo-Sassanian 'Gadhiya' category. Mewar seems to have thrived during this period, including in the field of literature¹⁰⁸, as well as art and architecture. The art tradition is well-illustrated by the example of the Ambika temple at Jagat. (One inscription here dates back to AD 960).

Allata's successor was Naravahana, who is acclaimed in verse eight of Shakti Kumar's Atpur Inscription as 'the destroyer of enemies', 'forebearer of Kshatriyas', and the 'abode of knowledge'. The same inscription tells us that his queen was the daughter of a Chahaman (Chauhan) chief called Jejaya. It was in Naravahana's reign that the now-renowned temple-complex of Ekalingji was constructed in AD 971 by the Lakulish, or Pashupat¹⁰⁹, sect of Saivism. The Ekalingji Inscription of AD 971 refers to a great debate on religion and sects held in Naravahana's court, between adherents of Saivism, Jainism and Buddhism. In this, Naravahana seems to have followed in the footsteps of his predecessor, Allata, who apparently conducted such debates at his court from time to time. Two of the litterateurs who flourished during Naravahana's reign were the poets Amra and Yogaraj.

Naravahana was followed by the short-reigning Shalivahana. The next ruler to ascend the throne of the Nagda-Ahar branch of Guhilas was Shakti Kumar. His Atpur Inscription provides details about the prosperity of Atpur (Aghatpur) at the time. Shakti Kumar attempted to establish his control over adjoining parts of south-eastern Rajasthan (including the area later known as Hadauti). This brought him into conflict with the energetic and valorous Parmar ruler, Munja of Malwa. In the fighting that ensued, Munja Parmar of Malwa apparently defeated the elephant forces and other troops of Mewar, plundered the Guhila capital, Aghatpur, and occupied Chittor and the areas around it (as mentioned elsewhere in this chapter).

Chittor seems to have remained under Parmar overlordship for quite some time thereafter, for we know that Munja's nephew, Bhoj held sway over this area too. Bhoj is credited with having the Tribhuvan Narayan temple built at Chittor and is known to have visited it often. One of the subsequent Parmar rulers of Malwa, Naravahana, who became king of

Malwa before c. AD 1094, was overlord of Chittor too, and granted certain endowments at Chittor. In fact, Chittor was part of Malwa-held lands during Yashovarman's reign in AD 1133, for when King Jaisimha Siddharaja of Gujarat defeated Yashovarman in 1136, Chittor was annexed by him. Later, Jaisimha Siddharaja's successor, Kumarapal, who is believed to have personally visited Chittor, made Sajjan the governor of Chittor in AD 1150. Around 1151, the Shakambhari Chauhan king, Vighraharaj IV (Bisaldev), took Chittor from the Chalukyas of Gujarat, capturing Governor Sajjan's elephant forces and annexing part of Mewar.

In the interim, the defeated Mewar chief, Shakti Kumar was driven to seek shelter with the Rashtrakuta king, Dhaval, while some of his feudatories acknowledged Parmar overlordship. Shakti Kumar of the Nagda-Ahar Guhila line was succeeded by Amba Prasad. This ruler has also been referred to as Amra Prasad. By this time, many of the other erstwhile feudatories of the Imperial Pratiharas were well-launched on the path to territorial expansion. Thus, Guhila-held Mewar was soon faced with a formidable foe in the form of Vakpati II, the Chauhan ruler of Shakambhari. Mewar was invaded; Amba Prasad killed on the battle-field; and the '*Uparmal*' tract (around Bijolia) was annexed by King Vakpati II. This *Uparmal* area remained under the Chauhans over several ensuing centuries.

On the basis of a study of different dynastic lists and epigraphs etc., G.H. Ojha concluded that Amba Prasad was succeeded by Shuchivarman, Narvarman and Kirtivarman (all three probably Amba Prasad's brothers). Very little is known about these chiefs. Kirtivarman was succeeded by Yogaraj, Vairatth, Hanspal and Vairisimha, respectively. Of these kings, Yogaraj, it seems, was deposed around AD 1012 by Bhoj Parmar of Malwa. In his stead, Bhoj raised Vairatth to the chiefship of Mewar. Mewar's subordination to the Parmars of Malwa continued through Bhoj's reign.

According to the Kumbhalgarh Inscription of VS 1517 (AD 1444-45), Vairisimha is credited with the building of a protective rampart around the city of Aghatpur. Aghata had earlier fallen into Parmar hands, so it would appear that Vairisimha probably recovered it following the death of King Bhoj Parmar. The long feud between the Parmars of Malwa and the Mewar

Guhilas was ended around this time. This was achieved through the marriage of Vairisimha's son and successor, Vijaysimha with the daughter of King Udayaditya of Malwa. This ensured peace along Mewar's southern flank.

(One may also take note here of a hoard of 244 copper coins from the old site of Chandravati, near Abu, which the Government Museum at Mt. Abu has acquired. Of these, 233 coins are assignable to Vairisimha (Vayarsalla), the Guhila chief of Mewar, while nine pertain to king Karnadeva (c. AD 1064-94), the Chalukyan ruler of Gujarat).

Vijaysimha, who ruled in the early part of the twelfth century AD, consolidated his position through a judicious matrimonial alliance with his Kalachuri neighbours too. This, according to an inscription found at Bheraghat, was achieved through the marriage of his daughter, Alhan Devi, with the Kalachuri ruler, Gayakarnadev. Vijaysimha is credited with having moved the capital back from Aghatpur to Nagda. The extent of Mewar's domains at this time may be partly gauged through the Paldi Grant Inscription¹¹⁰ of VS 1173 — i.e. AD 1116. This records that *Maharajadhiraja* Vijaysimha donated a fifth of the produce of Palli (present-day Pali) to one Unlacharya, son of the Acharya Sahiya of Nagahridya, on the occasion of a solar eclipse, to obtain religious merit for his parents and himself. G.H. Ojha has reported another inscription dating to VS 1164 (AD 1107) from Vijaysimha's reign¹¹¹.

Vijaysimha was succeeded by Arisimha, Choudasimha, Vikramsimha and Ranasimha. The last-named is also known as Karansimha. Ranasimha is believed to have built a hill-fort at Ahor. After Ranasimha (alias Karansimha), his eldest son, Kshemasimha, became the ruler of Mewar. From Ranasimha, alias Karansimha, descended two prominent branches of the clan.

The main branch was descended from Ranasimha's eldest son, Kshemasimha, and this continued to rule Mewar using Chittor as the state's capital, along with the title of 'Rawal' for the ruler. Mahap and Rahap were the younger sons of Ranasimha. Mahap was granted the estate of Sisoda

along with the title of 'Rana', but appears to have been disinherited later. He was succeeded by his brother, Rahap, whose descendants became known as 'Sisodia' after the name of the village — Sisoda — which they continued to hold as their allocated fief. This junior branch, descended from Ranasimha's younger son, Rahap, used the title of 'Rana' ¹¹².

Rahap's date of accession as chief of the Sisoda village and surrounding tract is given as *Samvat* 1202 (AD 1145) in Ms.No.132 (*Sisodya-ki-Vamsavalli*) of the Tod Collection of Manuscripts at the Royal Asiatic Society, London. This genealogy names his successors in order of their reigns, along with their respective life-sketches, and information like the number (and clan) of their wives, concubines and children. The listing is as follows: Narpat, Dinkar, Jaskar, Nagpal, Purnapal, Prithimal, Bhunag-Si, Bhimsingh, Shri Jaisingh, Lakhmsi, Arsi¹¹³, Ajaysi, and Hammir (who recovered Chittor from Delhi Sultanate's occupation). Hammir was followed by Khetsi, Lakha, Mokal, Kumbha and his sons, Uda¹¹⁴, and Raimal, respectively, and then the rest of the descendants, in the order that is well-known to history (and is taken up later in this work).

Kshemasimha's successor, Samantsimha, is described in the Abu Inscription of AD 1285 as being "more handsome than even the Lord Kama Deva [the god of love] himself". This handsome king had a rather turbulent reign. Samantsimha was successful in defeating the Chalukyas, and seriously wounding their king 'Ajaipal'. However, the victory proved short-lived, and some time afterwards, the Guhila king suffered a defeat at the hands of Kirtipal, an ally of the Chalukyas, founder of the Jalore branch of the Chauhans and son of the Nadol Chauhan ruler, Alhan¹¹⁵. Following this defeat in battle, and having lost the support of his feudatory nobles, Samantsimha was apparently forced to quit Mewar.

It is held that he migrated to the Vagar (Bagar) area of present-day Dungarpur-Banswara, where he recouped his resources, killed a local chief called Chaurasimal and captured his capital, Baroda. Four inscriptions dating from Samantsimha's period throw light on some incidents associated with his life. Two, both dating to VS 1228 (AD 1172), are from Jagat (in the Chappan region of southeast Rajasthan). A third is from Solaj (district

Dungarpur), also in the Vagar area, dating to VS 1236 (AD 1179); and the fourth, dating to VS 1224 (AD 1168), is from Ghanta Mata temple, some 30 miles from Udaipur¹¹⁶. The dates and find-spots of the inscriptions suggest that Samantasimha was able to consolidate his position in the Vagar area, and establish his rule with Baroda as his capital, sometime between c. AD 1171 and 1179. (Dasharatha Sharma regarded Samantasimha as the ancestor of the branch of Guhilas that later ruled over the Vagar [Dungarpur] area of southern Rajasthan. We shall return to the history of this area later).

One may also take note here of an inscription dating to AD 1207, which records the grant to a Brahmin named Ravideva of an *arghata* at Aghatpur. (An *arghata* is a well in which water is drawn using what is often called the ‘Persian wheel’ method). The grant was made in the name of the Chalukyan ruler, Bhimadeva II (Bhima II) of Gujarat, who claimed suzerainty over the territory of Medpat (Mewar). Thus, it is clear that Samantsimha had already lost Aghatpur before that date, either directly to the ruler of Gujarat, or to one of Gujarat’s subordinate-allies — either the Abu Parmars or the Chauhans of Nadol. Sometime afterwards, Samantsimha’s younger brother, Kumarasimha, managed to retake much of the Guhila territories with the assistance of the Chalukyas, and was probably ruler of Mewar by AD 1182. In return for the help rendered by the Chalukyas, Kumarasimha had to cede Aghatpur (Ahar) to the king of Gujarat. This may be the reason that the 1207 grant referred to the Chalukyan Bhimdeva as being master of the area and donating lands and the *arghata* well at Aghatpur.

Kumarasimha was succeeded by Mathanasimha. An inscription dating to AD 1182 records that when *Maharajadhiraja* Mathanasimha reigned over ‘Nagadraha’ (Nagda), 190 *drammas* were given by one Deddaka to the Siva temple in the village of Ata. Mathansimha made Uddharana of the Tamtarada family the *Talaraksha* (city constable) of Nagadraha. On the death of Mathanasimha, Padmasimha succeeded to the throne. He appointed Yogaraj, the eldest son of Uddharana, the *Talaraksha* of Nagda — probably in succession to the father. Padmasimha is known to have given the nearby village of Chirakupa (present-day Chirwa) to a warrior named Yogaraja, who served with the Mewar army. (Yogaraja built the temples of

Yogeshvara and Yogeshvari at Chirwa. These were restored by his successor, Madan, who gifted some land to meet future maintenance-costs).

Padmasimha was followed by Jaitrasimha (Jaitra Singh). Jaitra Singh, who came to the throne of Mewar in AD 1213, went on to guide Mewar to greater fame, as we shall see in a later section.

THE GUHILAS OF DHOD

One branch of the Guhilas is known to have ruled from Dhavagarta (later called Dhod). Not much is known about them, but the Dhod Inscription dating to the seventh century AD describes the Guhila chief Dhanika of Dhavagarta as a feudatory of *Parambhattaraka Maharajadhiraja Parameshwara* Dhavalapadeva. If, as suggested by some historians, this king Dhavalapadeva is identical to the king Dhavala of the Maurya lineage mentioned in Shivagana's Kansua Inscription of AD 738, the Guhilas of Dhod were probably feudatories of the Mauryas of Chittor and Kota part of south-eastern Rajasthan.

Later, Dhod seems to have passed into the possession of the Chauhans (Chahamanas), for we learn that in 1168 Kumarapal, son of *Thakur* Mangalraj, governed Dhod as a feudatory of Prithviraj II of Shakambhari. Under both the Guhilas and the Chauhans, Dhod developed as a religious centre of renown. Over the centuries, several notable temples were raised, including the Nityapramoditadeva temple built in 1163 by feudatory Kumarapal (to whom reference has been made above). Queen Suhada Devi, wife of the Chauhan king, Prithviraj II, is known to have granted land to this temple, and later, in AD 1172, one *Bhttaraka* Prabhasarasi had a monastery built near the temple for housing 'Kapilla ascetics' from foreign lands.

THE GUHILAS OF CHATSU

Another branch of the Guhilas continued to govern the Chatsu area. In fact, the ancient settlement at Chatsu (now called Chaksu), some forty-two kilometres south of Jaipur, is believed to have been in existence since about the sixth century AD. Literary and epigraphical sources indicate that its formal name was Champavati, of which Chatsu seems a derivative. Local traditions also hold that the place was once called ‘Tambavati-Nagari’ (literally the city of copper)¹¹⁷, and later as Pahhpavati, after the name of a ruler called Pahopa. In time, Chatsu became an important centre for the Guhilas.

In the eighth and ninth centuries, the Guhila rulers of Chatsu were feudatories of the Pratiharas, and are known to have borne arms in their service. For instance, after the Guhila chief Auka of Chatsu, his son Krishna, who flourished in the last quarter of the eighth century, accepted the supremacy of the Imperial or Gurjara Pratihara ruler Vatsaraja. The Chatsu Inscription of Baladitya records that Krishna’s son and successor, chief Shankaragana, fighting on behalf of the Imperial Pratihara king, Nagabhata II, fulfilled his vow of defeating ‘the Gauda ruler Bhata’, probably a feudatory-cum-commander of Dharamapala of Bengal, in battle and “presenting the earth at his sovereign’s feet”.

Shankargana’s wife, Yajja, a devotee of Siva, is described as the daughter of the ‘*Maha-Mahibhrt*’ — meaning the ‘Great Lord of the Earth’. Dasharatha Sharma believes this implies she was the daughter of Shankargana’s overlord — possibly even an Imperial Pratihara princess. Chief Shankaragana and Yajja’s son, Harsha, became the next Guhila chief of Chatsu.

Harsha is known to have been a feudatory of the Imperial Pratihara king, Bhoja I. Harsha is described as defeating the ‘northern rulers’ with the help of a mighty elephant force, and presenting King Bhoja with “horses of the special ‘*Shrivamsha*’ breed that could easily cross the seas of sand”. The implication of the latter statement is clearly towards a successful westerly expedition that entailed crossing the desert.

Interestingly, K.C. Jain has pointed out that the expression ‘*Chitrakuta bhupala*’ (literally, Guardian or Lord of the Land of Chitrakuta), has been

used for Harsha in the Benares Copper Plate of the Kalachuri Kama¹¹⁸. This seems to imply that Harsha also had mastery over Chitrakuta. It appears that Harsha apparently suffered a defeat too, though, at the hands of the Kalachuri Kokalla I, a feudatory of the Rashtrakuta ruler, Krishna II, at some point in his career.

Harsha was succeeded by his son, Guhila II. Like his predecessors, Guhila II appears to have taken part in campaigns beyond his immediate neighbourhood, for he is credited with “conquering the king of Gauda with the help of his ‘*Saindhava*’ horses (i.e. horses from Sindh), and receiving tributes from the princes of the east”. It seems that the Guhilas of Chatsu were rich in good horses at this time, or had access to them, given the reference to the special ‘*Shrivamsha*’ breed of horses in the case of Guhila’s father, Harsha, and the ‘*Saindhava*’ horses mentioned in Guhila’s own context. Just about a century later, the Chauhans of Nadol would mention their possession of finely bred horses too. Significantly, in later centuries, the ‘Marwari’ and other desert-bred horses of Rajasthan were to enjoy no small acclaim for their hardy character, speed and battle-worthiness. One may add that horses, horse-breeding and horse-stealing has long been a feature in numerous local stories from Rajasthan!

Given the already established links of the Chatsu Guhilas with the Imperial Pratiharas, it appears that Guhila II joined either Bhoja I or Bhoja’s successor, Mahendrapala I (who ascended the throne in final years of the ninth century), in a victorious campaign against the Gauda king. The Gauda king was probably Nayanpala of the Pala dynasty of Bengal. Some silver coins discovered at Agra, with the legend ‘Sri Guhila’, are ascribed to this Guhila II of Chatsu¹¹⁹. Guhila II’s queen, Ajja, was a Parmar princess, described as the daughter of King Vallabharaja. In due course, it was Guhila II and Ajja’s son, Bhatta, who succeeded to the estates of the Chatsu Guhilas. Bhatta, apparently a contemporary of the Imperial Pratihara ruler, Mahipal, is credited with defeating the “king of the Deccan on behalf of his sovereign”. This is taken to mean that Bhatta joined hands with the Chandella ruler Harsha, to aid King Mahipal in his war against either the Rashtrakuta king, Indra III, or possibly Amoghavarsha II or even Govinda IV

Bhatta was succeeded by his son, Baladitya. It is this chief Baladitya's Chatsu Inscription that has provided considerable information about the fortunes of the Guhilas of Chatsu. Baladitya's wife, Rappava, a Chahumana (Chahamana, i.e. Chauhan) princess, is described as the daughter of King Sivaraja Chahumana. In commemoration of his wife, Baladitya built the temple of Murari (Vishnu), following her death. The names of three of Baladitya's sons — Vallabhraj, Vigharaj and Devraj — have come down to us, though nothing much seems to be known about their political fortunes. After the Guhilas, Chatsu appears to have come into the possession of the Chauhans (Chahamanas). Over the succeeding centuries, it ceased to have its individual political entity as a separate state and become a tract prized and seized from time to time by more powerful neighbours like the rulers of Mewar, Marwar and Amber.

THE BHATIS OF WESTERN RAJASTHAN

Before its accession to the newly independent nation-state of India in 1947, the region comprising the erstwhile state of Jaisalmer had long formed part of the territories associated with the Bhati (Bhatti) clan. The BhatIs traditionally trace their descent from Lord Krishna and the events recorded in the Indian epic *Mahabharata*. They are among the clans that claim a lunar descent, and thus categorise themselves among the 'Yaduvamshi' (i.e. descended from Yadu) groups of India.

Their own legends speak of a large-scale migration from the Yadava kingdom of Dwarka, following the death of Lord Krishna and the destruction of their capital-city and kingdom. These legends hold that branches of the migrant Yadavas of Dwarka settled in parts of Sindh, Punjab and the NWFP (North West Frontier Province) of present-day Pakistan, and Afghanistan. According to one tradition, one of these migratory branches, moving in a north-westward and then a more westerly direction, even settled far from India in an alien land. (This land was Egypt, according to some versions). Having lived there several generations, they believe that the journey was then traced back in reverse, which thereby brought the descendants of the original migratory group back nearer their original homelands!

Tod notes the traditional belief of the clan regarding Yadu migration, covering thirty centuries. This apparently carried them “...from Indraprestha, Surajpura, Mathura, Praga, Dwarica, Judoo-ca-dang (the mountains of Jud), Behera, Gujni in Zabulistan; and again refluents into India, at Salbahana or Salpoora in the Punjab, Tunnote, Derawul, Lodorva in the desert, and finally Jessulmer”¹²⁰. The Bhati tradition of the long trail taken by their ancestors before finally arriving at Jaisalmer is partially summarised also in a local Jaisalmeri bardic couplet, which runs as follows:

*‘Mathura, Kashi, Pragvad, Gajni aru Bhatner,
Digam, Derawal, Lodrava nammo Jaisalmer’*

“From Mathura, to Kashi (Banaras), Prag (Prayag, modern Allahabad), Gajni (Ghazni) and Bhatner (modern Hanumangarh), Digam, Derawal, Lodrava and [finally], the ninth [capital], Jaisalmer”. (In a play of words, typical of Rajasthan’s compositional style, the poet has used the words ‘*nammo Jaisalmer*’, which can be interpreted as either ‘*nava*’ or ninth, or ‘*namo*’, or the offering of obeisance. Given the context of the couplet, one would suspect the poet intended both meanings to apply simultaneously, for the ninth and blessed capital of Jaisalmer was to spell the end of the travels of this particular branch of the Yaduvamshi clan!)

We shall not detail in this book all the different generations that have, according to traditional belief, elapsed between the time of Krishna and immediate ancestors of the Bhatias who made Rajasthan their home. The long listing in the traditional genealogies includes a king Yadubhan (Judbhan), who ruled over Behera (believed to be somewhere in present-day Afghanistan), and his descendants, down to a king Subahu. Subahu’s successor was his son, Ruj. Both Subahu and Ruj seem to have faced attacks by Khorasan’s ruler, King Farid Shah.

Some historians from Rajasthan believe that Ruj ruled over the tracts around Peshawar, and ascribe to him a date around AD 543. However, tradition — and Tod’s translation of some Jaisalmer genealogies indicates that Ruj’s kingdom also included portions further to the west of Peshawar. Ruj is believed to have reigned for twelve years.

On the basis of Bhati traditions and genealogical records, Tod relates that during the final part of Ruj's reign, "...tidings arrived that from the shores of the ocean, the barbarians (*Mletcha*), who had formerly attacked *Soobahu*, were again advancing, having Ferid Shah of Khorasan at the head of four lakhs of horse... The Raja...marched to Harreou to meet him; while the foe encamped two coss from Koonjsheher. A battle ensued, in which the invader was defeated with the loss of thirty thousand men, and four thousand on the part of the Hindus. But the foeman rallied, and Raja Rihj, who again encountered him, was wounded and died just as [the Raja's son] prince Guj returned with Hansavati, his bride, daughter of Jud-bhan of the east. In two battles the king of Khorasan was vanquished, when he obtained an auxiliary in the king of Room (*Romi-pati*)... [Thereafter] Raja Guj called a council of ministers. There being no stronghold of importance, and it being impossible to stand against numbers, it was determined to erect a fortress amidst the mountains of the north. Having summoned his friends to his aid, he sought council of the guardian goddess of his race; who foretold that the power of the Hindus was to cease, but commanded him to erect a fort and call it *Gujni*. While it was nearing completion, news came that the kings of Room and Khorasan were near at hand"¹²¹.

On learning of this invasion, Guj fought and defeated the attackers, even as the Shah of Khorasan died of an illness. Thereafter, Guj consolidated his hold over the neighbouring tracts, with his newly-built and fortified 'Gujni' — present-day Ghazni, as his capital and base. Guj is also believed to have invaded Kashmir and married the daughter of Kashmir's defeated ruler. His son from this marriage was Prince Shalivahan. When the prince was twelve years old, another force from Khorasan attacked Guj's kingdom. Tod records, "Raja Guj shut himself up for three entire days in the temple of Culadevi: on the fourth day the goddess appeared and revealed to him his destiny; that Gujni would pass from his hands, but that his posterity would reinherit it, not as Hindus but as Mooslems; and directed him to send his son Salbahan amongst the Hindus of the east; there to erect a city to be named after him"¹²².

On hearing the revelations of the goddess, Raja Guj asked some of his family to accompany Prince Shalivahan to the east to make a pilgrimage to Jwala-mukhi, while he made preparations to meet the Khorasani invasion.

In the fierce fighting, many thousands were killed. Among them were the Yaduvamshi King Guj as well as his foe, the ruler of Khorasan. Khorasan's prince rallied and besieged Gujni. For a month, Gujni was valiantly defended under the leadership of Guj's uncle, Sahdeo. At long last, the defenders of Gujni gave up their lives in a final battle, entailing the fight-to-the-death known as a *shaka* and Gujni was occupied by Khorasani soldiers. Thus, the Yaduvamshis lost Gujni and its kingdom.

Meanwhile, Guj's son, Prince Shalivahan, reached Punjab with his companions, and having learnt and bemoaned the disaster that had overtaken his home-kingdom, he established a settlement called Shalivahanpur — or Shalbhanpur (the Salbahanpoor of Tod) in the Punjab. This settlement is believed to be what is today known as Sialkot (in Pakistan).

Shalivahan seems to have consolidated his power locally, gained the allegiance of surrounding chieftains, and reputedly conquered all of the Punjab in due course. Shalivahan later attacked Gujni, fought and defeated Jalal (Jellal) who held it, and handed over the administration of Gujni to Balund, who was the eldest of Shalivahan's fifteen sons. He himself returned after that to Shalivahanpur (Shalbhanpur) in the Punjab, where he died soon afterwards, after a thirty-three year reign.

For some time, Balund ruled from Gujni, while his other brothers established themselves in different parts of Punjab. Later, as external pressures on Gujni increased once more, Balund shifted his capital to Shalbhanpur, leaving Gujni in the charge of 'Chakito', one of his grandsons. In later years, this grandson, Prince 'Chakito' is said to have married the daughter of the Uzbek (Muslim) king of Balkh-Bokhara, accepted Islam, and inherited his father-in-law's kingdom of Balkh-Bokhara. This 'Chakito' is regarded as the ancestor of the Chagtai Mongols!

Meanwhile, in the tracts ruled from Shalbhanpur, Balund had been succeeded by his eldest son, Bhatti. Bhatti immediately set about extending his territorial sway. It is held that this Bhatti is the ancestor after whom,

according to the traditional genealogical tables of the Bhatīs, the appellation of 'Bhatti' ('Bhati) became the 'clan-name' of his Yaduvamshi descendants.

In Rajasthan, the Bhatīs are associated with commencing an era of their own, dating from AD 623, known as the '*Bhattika Samvat*'. Tradition would like to link this era with Bhatti, son of Balund. There is also a belief that this Bhatti was also the founder of Bhatner (now called Hanumangarh). However, it is generally held that it was during the reign of one of Bhatti's later descendants – most probably his grandson, Manjam Rao (sometimes referred to as 'Manjas Rao'), that the Bhattis (or Bhatīs) first gained strength in the western Rajasthan desert area. If that is the case, it would appear that the individual called King Bhatti himself had nothing to do with the founding of Bhatner.

The generally accepted version suggests that King Bhatti's older son and successor, Mangal Rao, was forced from his capital of Shalbhanpur by the invasions of Dhundhi, the ruler of Ghazni. Driven from his capital after fierce fighting, Mangal Rao is said to have quit his patrimony, and along with family members and some courtiers, sought shelter in the Thar-Parkar desert area, probably moving south-westwards along river-courses and along old established travel-routes. Meanwhile, his younger brother, Masoor Rao, and the latter's sons and retainers sought refuge in the 'Lakhi' jungles.

(Tod informs us that Masoor's eldest son, Abhey and his descendants later mastered the area, to rule it as the Abohar line of Bhatti's descendants, while Masoor's younger son, Sarun, became the progenitor of the Sarun (Saran) Jats¹²³. Tod also relates that the descendants of three of the sons of Mangal Rao, who had been left hidden in the homes of his subjects, inter-married with Jats and became the progenitors of the 'Kullorea', 'Moodna', and 'Seora' Jats, while the off-spring of two others became barbers and potters¹²⁴).

Possibly it was not feasible for the displaced Shalbhanpur Yaduvamshis to become established and gain dominance in the already populated tracts around Lahore etc. south of Shalbhanpur, nor in the

similarly well-peopled areas around Multan and Uchch etc. to the south-west. (The impact of Arab expansion was already being experienced in the latter areas). As such, Mangal Rao and his son, Manjam Rao, eventually led their group into what today comprises western Rajasthan. Historians believe that this general south-westwards drift of the Bhattis from the Punjab and their coming into the *Valla* and *Mada* part of Rajasthan probably occurred around VS 808 (AD 751).

In time, the Bhattis were to become prominent in the *Valla* and *Mada* area, and attain a certain amount of political domination over parts of present-day Rajasthan's districts of Jaisalmer, Hanumangarh, Sri Ganganagar, and some parts of adjoining Barmer and Bikaner districts. They were certainly a strong 'clan' by about the c. eleventh-twelfth centuries AD or so. Of course, numerous other communities and groups were already active in that area, often as political rivals to the Bhattis.

For, besides the Bhattis, groups like the Jamarda, Varah, Bhutta, Langa, Channa, Mohiya and Lodara¹²⁵ Rajputs already had small chiefdoms and principalities in the Thar-Parkar desert area, extending into present-day Pakistan's Cholistan area. Eventually, the Bhattis from Shalbhanpur (Sialkot) succeeded in gaining dominance over a major part of the area, through subduing various existing chiefdoms and holdings, and in time Bhati domination would be exercised, in part, from their capitals and strongholds of Tanot, Derawal (Derawar), and Lodrava.

Some aspects of the genealogy of the Bhattis of Jaisalmer have been partially reconstructed in Nainsi's *Khyat*. However, in the absence of firm historical data, the early part of this has remained difficult to verify, or to date. Nainsi's listing, from the period of 'Bhati' is as follows: — Bhati was followed by Vachha Rao, Vijay Rao, Manjam Rao, Kehar, and Tannu. Then came Vijay Rao II, Rawal Devaraj, Munda, Vachha Rao II and Dusajh Rao. (Col. James Tod's listing more or less is similar, except that he has omitted Vachha Rao I and Vijay Rao I). One may note, for one thing, that the name of Manjam Rao's father, which Tod informs us was Mangal Rao, is missing from the above list. Other omissions or additions cannot be ruled out, given the poor state of our knowledge at present!

Manjam Rao married the daughter of the Sodha Rajput chief of Umarkot. This probably further stabilised the position of the Bhattis (Bhatis) in the area. Manjam Rao's elder son, Kehar became renowned for his exploits during his father's lifetime. He is credited with the construction of the fort of Tanot (some seventy-five miles north-west of modern Jaisalmer), named in honour of the goddess Tanno Devi. (Later, Kehar was to give a version of the goddess's name to his elder son. This was Prince Tannu, better known as Tannu-ji). The fort took time to complete, and is traditionally held to have been finished only by VS 787 — i.e. AD 731.

In the interim, Kehar proceeded to stamp his authority over surrounding tracts, indulging in raids (including stock-raiding) and expeditions against neighbours. In fact, cattle, horse, camel and general raiding and looting of the strongholds as well as vulnerable hamlets of neighbours are a motif that recurs frequently in thousands of stories from the desert area. Albeit, with an unwritten 'code of conduct' and rules-of-the-game as to what comprised fair game and what actions were permitted! The stories of such raids are not time-bound and seem to span several centuries — indicating this was the scenario for a considerable period. Significantly, the frequency of such raiding did decrease each time a powerful political unit emerged in any part of the desert! The issue undoubtedly deserves further analysis!

During Kehar's reign, Tanot was attacked by the local Varah Rajputs, but the attack was beaten off. Kehar's son, Tannu-ji, used his long reign (eighty years according to common belief), for consolidating the growing strength of the Bhattis in the western Rajasthan and eastern Cholistan desert area. He is credited with defeating and laying waste the lands of the local Varah Rajputs and the Langas of Multan. A joint attack against the Tanot Bhattis by the 'Pathans' led by Hussain Shah, along with groups like the Langas, Khinchis, Khokars (Ghakkars), Johiyas, and others, was successfully beaten back under Tannu-ji's leadership. Tannu-ji seems to have taken up arms against the 'Parihar' (Parmars/Panwars) of the Bhatinda area to the north and north-east of Tanot too.

Tannu-ji's long reign is traditionally believed to have ended in VS 870 (AD 814), when his eldest son, Vijayraj succeeded him. The Bhattis

expanded their territories under Tannuji's successor, Vijayraj. Old enmities thrived afresh, though and it was probably in retaliation for their past defeats that the Varahs and Langas launched a joint offensive against Tanot during the chiefship of Vijayraj. They were beaten back on at least one occasion. However, tradition states that following an intrigue centred on a wedding party, Vijayraj and many of his clan were killed by the Varahs and Langas, and the fort of Tanot was invested. Another version states that Tanot was besieged by a joint force comprising the Parihar (Parmar) Rajputs who ruled over Bhatinda, and other neighbouring Varah Rajputs. The Rao and the bulk of the Bhati warriors fell fighting, while the women and children within Tanot fort committed the act of group-immolation known as '*jauhar*'¹²⁶). However, Vijayraj's son, Devraj, whose mother was a Bhutta Rajput, survived. In one version, he escaped from the wedding-party massacre and sought refuge with a Brahmin, and in the other, which makes him an infant at the time of the fall of Tanot, he is said to have been secretly smuggled out to safety before the fall of Tanot.

On growing up, this Devraj is credited with repairing the fortunes of his clan. He made Deogarh, or Derawal (Derawar), situated west-north-west of modern Jaisalmer, his capital. Having re-consolidated the depleted strength of the Bhatias, Devraj defeated the Varahs, Langas, and Lodaras, and assumed the title of '*Maha-Rawal*' (great king). From this time on, the Bhati chiefs would use the title of 'Rawal' rather than 'Rao'.

Devraj's dates are uncertain. According to some, this is the same Bhatti Devraj who was a contemporary of Shiluka Pratihara of Mandore and is referred to in Bauka's Inscription of AD 837 as having been defeated by the Parihar ruler of Mandore in AD 757. According to others, there existed a Devraj who was eleventh in descent from Bhatti. This reckoning does not fit Vijayraj I's son Devraj either. By all accounts, it appears that there was more than one early Bhati ruler bearing the name of Devraj in the Rajasthan area. It is even possible that Devraj was the additional name or title of one or more of the earlier Bhati dynasty rulers of the *Valla* and *Mada* area. Thus, if Tannu-ji's grandson Devraj was *not* the Devraj who was a contemporary of Shiluka, and if we disregard the listing of his being eleventh from Bhatti, we could list this Devraj as being Devraj II. It would, perhaps be best to regard him as being distinct from some earlier Bhati

chief named Devraj — who may or may not have been an ancestor — who was defeated by. Shiluka and called the *Valla-mandala Palaka* in Bauka's inscription of AD 837:

Later period bardic and traditional records of the Bhati clan tell us of a Devraj Bhattika, eleventh in descent from Bhati, who subdued the Lodara Rajputs of the Thar desert area of western Rajasthan, and wrested the town of Lodrava from the Lodara Rajput ruler, Nripabhanu. In this connection, one may note an inscription dating to AD 913, which records the setting up of a four-sided '*goverdhan*' pillar by one Bhadraka, son of Ramdhara, who was born in a Kshatriya family. (A '*goverdhan*' pillar is normally four-sided, with images of Brahma, Vishnu, Siva and Surya on its different sides). In the present state of knowledge, it is not clear whether this should be attributed to the Lodara Rajput-held Lodrava, or to the period following its acquisition by the Bhatils!

Leaving behind the confusion over the dates (and entity) of two or more rulers called Bhati Devraj, let us return to the Devraj, son of Vijayraj and grandson of Tannu-ji, who ruled from Derawar and restored family fortunes. This Devraj II expanded his political and territorial power, fighting against old enemies like the Varahs etc., and strengthened Bhati hold over the area. He is said to have reigned for fifty-six years¹²⁷. Devraj II was ambushed and killed by the Channa Rajputs.

Devraj II was succeeded by his son, Munda. Not much is known about his reign. According to Tod, Munda was succeeded in VS 1035 by his son, Bachera (the Vachha Rao of Nainsi's list). It may have been this Rawal Bachera — or Vachha Rao, who was ruling over Lodrava in the early part of the eleventh century when Mahmud of Ghazni attacked that old town in the course of his march towards Gujarat in AD 1024-25. Though ably defended, the citadel of Lodrava was unable to withstand the Ghaznavide attack and finally fell to Mahmud after fierce fighting. However, Tod says that Rawal Bachera died in battle with the Baluchs¹²⁸.

Vachha Rao (Bachera) was followed by his eldest son, Rawal Dusajh Rao. (Though, according to the Jain tradition, a Rawal 'Sagar Bhati' ruled

at Lodrava around AD 1034, when Jineshwara-Suri, a pupil of Vardhamana-Suri of the Kharatara-gachchha (sub-sect) visited Lodrava¹²⁹). The dates remain shaky, and there *may* have been some intervening ruler or rulers during this period. One is on somewhat firmer historical ground from the reign of one Vijayaraj (who may be categorised as Vrjayraj II), who ruled over Lodrava in the mid-twelfth century AD. He is said to have been the younger son of Dusajh Rao – which could well be the fact, though it does stretch the chronology slightly.

Vijayaraj II was apparently a contemporary of the Shakambhari Chauhan ruler Vigharaj IV, with whom he co-operated in fighting against Khusrau Shah (r. 1152-1160) of Ghazni¹³⁰. Epigraphical evidence tells us that this Vijayaraj assumed the grandiose title of *Parambhattaraka Maharajadhiraja Parameshwara*. He also enjoyed the title of *Uttar-disha Bada-Kinvada* or the ‘Portal [or Sentinel] of the Northern Quarter’. Several twentieth century historians from Rajasthan have suggested that this sobriquet may be indicative of the role played by Vijayaraj II and his Bhati compatriots as brave fighters who barred passage across their territories.

According to Nainsi, ‘Vijay Rav’, the son of ‘Rav Dusajh’ was a famed and charismatic man. Nainsi has recorded that when the young Prince Vijay Rav went to Patan [Anhillapattan] to marry King Jaisimha Siddharaja’s daughter his fame had preceded him. The inhabitants of Patan talked about his munificence and hinted at a desire for drinking camphor-scented water. At this, the flamboyant bridegroom bought all the camphor available in the markets of Patan and put it into the local Sahasralinga Lake, so that even the poorest resident of Patan could savour camphor-flavoured water. This extravagant, but ingenious action earned him the title of ‘*Lanja*’, which may best be translated as ‘the Flamboyant’. Tod relates the traditional view that it was during the wedding ceremonies at Patan that Vijayaraj’s new mother-in-law addressed him as the great *Uttar-disha Bada-Kinvada*, for being the barrier between the Chalukyan kingdom and “the King who was becoming strong” — purportedly a reference to the Ghaznavides or Ghorides.

One inscription from Vijayaraj’s reign, found engraved on a ‘*goverdhan*’ pillar at Lodrava and dating to AD 1163, notes that the ‘*Rajini*’

(Queen) Rajala Devi built a tank and erected the memorial ‘*goverdhan*’ at Lodrava in memory of her daughter’s son, Sohagapala¹³¹. Three other epigraphs are known for Vijayraj. These are dated the *Bhattika* Era years 541, 543 and 552, respectively. The first of these is a rather damaged, inscription found near Vijadasar tank, near the boundary of Sirawa village, near Asanikot. This records Vijayraj’s endowment for a temple to the Great Goddess, and is dated to 541 Bhatika Samvat (AD 1165)¹³². Yet another inscription, the Chamunda-Mata Inscription of 543 Bhatika Samvat (AD 1167), mentions further buildings endowed to the Chahina Devi temple-complex¹³³. The fourth inscription is on a ‘*goverdhan*’ at the Dhanava tank, near Joga village, and is known as the *Dhanava Inscription* of 552 Bhatika Samvat, or AD 1176. This refers to Vijayraj simply as ‘Maharaja’, and records the installation of an idol by his ‘*Patta-Rajini*’ (chief queen)¹³⁴.

Vijayraj was succeeded by his son, Bhoja-deva, who is said to have lost his life fighting Muhammad of Ghor in the defence of the then Bhati capital of Lodrava. The incident is commonly believed to have occurred around c. AD 1176-1177 or so. Lodrava seems to have briefly gone into the hands of the Ghori forces. Bhoja’s ascension had not been to the liking of his uncle, Vijayraj’s elder brother, Jaisal. (Jaisal probably resented having been passed over in the succession in favour of his younger brother, in the first place). Local traditions suggest that not only had Jaisal not helped Bhoja-deva when Lodrava was besieged, he turned a blind eye to Muhammad of Ghor’s advance and siege of Lodrava, and even had a hand in the downfall of his nephew.

Upon Bhoja’s death, his uncle Jaisal (Vijayraj’s brother) ascended the throne of the Bhatias. Jaisal consolidated and extended the frontiers of his kingdom through incorporating areas like Pugal, Chohtan and even the lands of Rohri and Sukkar. (Both the last named tracts now form part of the Pakistani province of Sindh).

It was Jaisal who, realising that Lodrava was difficult to defend against invaders, started work on the fortress-capital that still bears his name —Jaisalmer. Strategically located atop the local Trikuta Hill, the new fortress-town, located some sixteen kilometres from Lodrava, was to

become the future capital of the Bhatias of the area. One traditional view holds that the founding of Jaisalmer took place on the twelfth of *Shravan Shukla* (which happened to be a Wednesday), of the VS year 1212 (i.e. AD 1155)¹³⁵. However, a date of AD 1155 or 1156 would mean that Jaisal had started work on the new citadel-town during the reign of his brother, Vijayraj, and not *after* becoming ruler and following the intervening reign — howsoever brief — of his nephew, Bhoja-deva. While such a step is not impossible, it doesn't accord with existing beliefs or facts, and one must look for a later date for the foundation-ceremony. The fort was completed sometime before AD 1187 (VS 1244) by Jaisal's son and successor, Shalivahana.

Jaisalmer soon became another of the towns that attracted Jain preachers, as is known from a plethora of Jain records. In common with other urban centres and capitals of Rajasthan during this general period, at Jaisalmer (and Lodrava, and many other sites), rulers and the laity, Jain and non-Jains alike, appear to have been actively involved in the installation of idols and related activities. They constructed and repaired various shrines and water-tanks etc., and organised occasional religious gatherings where distinguished teachers were sometimes specially invited from afar to preach¹³⁶.

Shalivahana is believed to have been a strong ruler, who was probably very successful in consolidating his kingdom. His reign followed the previous unsettled period after a Ghori attack on Lodrava resulting in the death of Bhoja-deva and scores of other defenders and the fall of the town, followed by the relatively short reign (five years, according to Nainsi's *Khyat*) of his father and predecessor, Jaisal. However, Shalivahan seems to have held his own amidst the generally unsettled conditions prevailing, and possibly embarked on territorial expansion, for the compilation made several centuries afterwards by Nainsi asserts that Shalivahan led victorious campaigns against near and distant lands, among them "Jharkhand, Mewar, Gujarat, Abu, Konkan, and Rameshwar"¹³⁷.

Shalivahan was succeeded by Vaijal (Beejal-deva). Tod tells us that Beejal usurped the position of Shalivahan, while Nainsi derides Beejal for

his wicked morals. Tradition too speaks of a wicked and impious King Vijjal. Seen in this light, it is possible that the Vaijal or Beejal referred to by Nainsi and Tod may well be identical with the 'evil' Vijjal of bardic tradition.

Vaijal had a short reign, and was either dethroned, following which he committed suicide, or murdered at the instigation of the Bhati clansmen. After Vaijal, Kailan (r. 1200-1218) ascended the throne of Jaisalmer. He is described as the younger brother of Shalivahan, and Nainsi has ascribed a reign of eighteen years to him. Kailan was probably followed by Chachigadeva (Chachik-deva), after whom came Karan Singh, Lakshman Singh (Lakhan-Sen), Punyapal and Jait Singh. Among them, Kailan's grandson, Karan Singh, is said to have been on the Jaisalmer throne in VS 1340 (AD 1283), and to have had a long reign. Throughout this general period, the Jaisalmer part of western Rajasthan continued to have interaction, ranging from trade and commerce to mutual cattle-raiding and warfare, with its various neighbours (among them the westerly 'Bilochis' and 'Multanis'). We shall take up the history of the BhatIs of Jaisalmer from Kailan's period onwards in another chapter.

THE TOMARS

The Tomars (also Tanwar/Tuar) become prominent fairly late in the course of Rajasthan's history. The information available at present points to somewhere around the late ninth-early tenth century AD. As is the case with many clans and dynasties, the early history of the Tomars is obscure. Some Puranic sources suggest that the original home of the Tomars was in the Himalayan region, where they lived alongside groups known as Hamsamargas, Tanganas and Kashmiras¹³⁸.

The Tomars, it seems, were a warrior clan. It is not known when they moved southwards, nor by which route. One undated inscription of the reign of the Imperial Pratihara ruler Mahendrapala refers to a Tomar *bhunath* ('lord of the land') Gogga who, along with his two brothers, built a triple temple to Vishnu at Prithudaka. (Prithudaka, or modern Pehowa, is now a town in Kaithal *tehsil* of district Karnal in Haryana, near the Punjab-Haryana border). The Tomars appear to have gradually established themselves in the Delhi and eastern Rajasthan area, though it is not clear when they became the rulers of Delhi. An inscription of the Gurjara-Pratihara king, Bhoja I, found built into the ninth step of Delhi's famous Purana Qila, indicates that the Pratiharas were masters of Delhi until the late ninth century AD.

We have mentioned above that the Shakambhari Chauhan ruler, Chandanraj, killed a Tomar king called Rudra. It is not clear which territories Rudra Tomar controlled, however, and what led to hostilities with the Chauhans at that point in time. Dasharatha Sharma feels that Rudra may have been a member of the Pehowa Tomars, and that the Tomar-Chauhan confrontation may have stemmed from their taking sides in the intra-family quarrels of the Pratiharas. Sharma suggests that Kshamapala, the Pratihara '*Tantra-Pala*' (governor) defeated by Chauhan Vakpatiraj I (son of Chandanraj), was a Tomar who fought with the backing of the contemporary Pratihara overlord; and that Salavan, the Tomar chief killed

by Chauhan Simharaj (son of Vakpatiraj I and grandson of Chandanraj) was a Pratihara army commander¹³⁹.

It may have been this long service and association with the Imperial Pratiharas that enabled the Tomars to occupy Delhi and its surrounding area, "...first probably as Pratihara generals, then as their governors and finally as its rulers"¹⁴⁰. Part of their domains extended eastwards from Delhi into eastern Rajasthan. We need not detail the reign of the Tomars of Delhi here, though, except in so far as it affected Rajasthan. Some of the Tomar rulers, known on the basis of their coins and inscriptions, include Sallakshanpal, Ajaypal, Kumarapal, Anangapal, Madanpal, and Mahipal. There is a view that when Mahmud of Ghazni attacked Thaneshwar in AD 1011, the *raja* of Delhi — a Tomar — called on other rulers to assist him in defending Thaneshwar, (which was part of his kingdom), saying that the town was a key to northern India. None of the neighbouring states came to the help of the Tomars, however, and Thaneshwar fell.

In the face of a spate of Ghaznavide attacks, including during the reigns of Mahmud Ghazni's successors, the Tomars rallied to face the incursions time and again. And, it seems that under the leadership of the Tomar king, Mahipal, a confederacy of north Indian rulers came together to recover Hansi, Thaneshwar and Kangra temporarily from Ghaznavide control.

By the end of the twelfth century, however, irritated with the lack of help from their neighbours in the face of constant Ghaznavide incursions into their territories, the Tomars were driven to changing their policy of confrontation with the Ghaznavides to one of conciliation. This new policy, which "had almost been forced on them by the political conditions of the period", according to Sharma, "...did them no good; for now convinced of their inveterate hostility, the Chauhans under Vigraharaj IV delivered a determined attack on Delhi and captured it in c. AD 1151. His nephew, Prthviraja [sic] II, put Hansi, which had once been a Tomara possession, under a trusted commander"¹⁴¹.

Even after the capture of Delhi by Vigraharaj IV, the Tomars continued to rule the area, only this time as Chauhan feudatories. And that is the position they would hold for the rest of the period under review in the present chapter. Later, after the fall of Delhi to Muhammad of Ghor's forces sometime in 1192-1193, some of the Tomar groups probably moved westward into the Alwar and Shekhawati areas of Rajasthan. For, even today some tracts in Rajasthan bear names like 'Torawati', indicating connection with the Tomars; and the 'Tanwar' clan name is well-known amongst the Rajputs.

OTHER GROUPS

Some of the other contemporaneous groups are less well known. For example, the eighth century AD Kaman Inscriptions throw light on a king Vatsadaman and his Surasena branch that ruled over Kaman (some sixty-four kilometres from modern Bharatpur), and its vicinity, from about the sixth century AD onwards, with King Phakka being the first ruler of this branch¹⁴². Kaman (known variously as Kamayaka, Kamayaka-vana, Kadamba-vana, Kamawati, etc. over the centuries), was obviously an ancient habitation, for an old fort already existed there in the eighth century AD during Vatsadaman's reign.

As already noted, the Surasenas were an old group, tracing their descent from Yadu, and appear to have retained their roots in this general area (which lies adjacent, as already noted, to Mathura), despite the vagaries of fate. Some of the Surasena branches that later ruled the Bayana-Alwar-Dholpur area are better known as Yadavas and Yaduvamshis: literally, descendants of Yadu.

The Kaman Inscriptions, taken together with the information in various inscriptions from Bayana (including those of AD 955 and AD 1043), provide some knowledge about the area. For one thing, these indicate that Phakka and his Surasena dynasty descendants held political control over different parts of the Bharatpur-Kaman-Bayana area between around AD sixth and twelfth centuries. According to the AD 955 Bayana

Inscription, one of Phakka's descendants was King Vappuka (Vappa), whose son Rajayika married Sajjani of the Mayurika family. Their son, whose name is not given, married Yashakari of the Parmar line, and had a daughter called Chitrlekha. The princess Chitrlekha, in turn, married a chief named Mangalaraj and had four sons. The name of the first son is not mentioned in the inscription, but the remaining three were called Indrajit, Lakshmanraj and Chamundaraj. Queen Chitrlekha then built a temple to Vishnu at Bayana, during the reign of the emperor Mahipal (possibly the Imperial Pratihara ruler Mahipal?). Since one Lakshminiwas is known to have been the ruler of Kaman in AD 1032, when the Jain poet Durgadev completed his text, the *Rishtasammuchaya*, some scholars have tentatively identified this Lakshminiwas with the Lakshman, son of queen Chitrlekha, mentioned in the Bayana Inscription of AD 955.¹⁴³

Another of the Surasena chiefs of the area, referred to as 'Kardama-Bhupati', which may have been his name or merely his title, is said to have been a contemporary of Malwa's Parmar king, Munja. He was apparently initiated into Jain monkhood by Abhaydeva-Suri, becoming the monk Ghaneshvara-Suri, and later founding Jainism's *Raja-gachchha* sub-sect. These Surasena chiefs of the Bayana and Kaman area appear to have acknowledged the overlordship of the Imperial Pratihara ruler, King Bhoja I, during the ninth century. In his turn, Bhoja I is known to have presented a sum of money to Pramanarasi, a revered local figure of Kaman.

Another area about which there is limited information, but which appears to have retained — even enhanced — its importance from previous centuries, was Jhalarapatan near modern Jhalawar, in south-eastern Rajasthan (one of the names for it being Chandrawati, though this is different to the architecturally equally splendid Chandravati¹⁴⁴ near Abu). Jhalarapatan/Chandrawati, situated on the river Chandrabhaga, seems to be an extremely ancient habitation, and has yielded early historical punch-marked coins. However, it is particularly known for its later architectural splendours, particularly of the c. seventh-twelfth centuries AD period.

Jhalarapatan/Chandrawati seems to have been a large town of significance, which attracted merchants and pilgrims of several faiths alike. Six short single-line inscriptions from the Siva temple at Semli, near

Jhalarapatan, probably dating to the ninth-tenth century, give the names of some individuals described as being '*Rajadesika*', a title indicating a governor or administrative official of a district. These '*Rajadesikas*' include Sangana, Subhakara, Rahu, and Jassa. However, further details are not known about these men, nor is it clear who was the sovereign for whom they acted.

POST-IMPERIAL PRATIHARA STRUGGLE FOR SUPREMACY

Following the gradual decline of Pratihara power, along with the Ghaznavide incursions in the eleventh century AD, the period between c. AD 1000 and 1200 witnessed a struggle for supremacy in Rajasthan. The major contenders, as already mentioned, were the Chalukyas (also called Solankis) of Anhillapattan in Gujarat, the Parmars of Malwa, and the Chauhans of Shakambhari, with the Guhilas of Mewar, Parmars of Abu, and Chauhans of Nadol being minor (often subordinate) participants.

The Chalukyan king, Bhimadeva I of Anhillapattan, was successful in expanding his domain over Nadol and Abu, but was checked from further advance into Rajasthan by the Parmars of Malwa, who too were interested in territorial expansion. In their turn, the Parmars of Malwa under Munja overran Aghatpur (Atpur), then a prosperous town, and occupied Chittor and its surrounding region at the end of the tenth century AD during the reign of the Guhila ruler Shakti Kumar of Mewar. For the time being, Chittor became the base of the Parmars in their operations against the Chauhans of Shakambhari and Nadol.

During the reign of the famous Parmar ruler Bhoja, his dominions in Rajasthan included the regions comprising the modern-day districts of Chittor, Banswara and Dungarpur. However, Bhoja suffered a major setback when the Chalukyas of Anhillapattan combined with the Chalukyas of Kalyan and the Kalachuris of Tripuri to challenge Parmar supremacy. The death of Bhoja left his kingdom in a state of chaos, from which it was finally rescued by Udayaditya. Udayaditya and his successors continued to rule over certain parts of Rajasthan up to the end of the thirteenth century AD.

During this c. 1000-1200 period, the Parmars of Abu ruled their area as feudatories of the Chalukyas of Gujarat. It was during the time of Abu's Parmar king, Dharavarsha, who had a long reign of fifty-six years spanning AD 1164-1219, that the Chauhan king, Prithviraj III led his famous night attack against Abu (mentioned below). The Abu Parmars, along with their allies, suffered a major defeat at the hands of Qutb-ud-din Aibak during the closing years of the twelfth century, when a triple alliance made up of the Abu Parmars, the Chalukyas of Gujarat and the Nadol Chauhans were beaten at the battle of Kasahrada in 1197.

Another branch of the Parmars, the Parmars of Vagar, with their capital at Arthuna (Uttbumaka/Uttthunaka), ruled over parts of the area now comprising Dungarpur, Banswara, etc. as feudatories or *Samantas* of the powerful Parmars of Malwa.

Meanwhile, the Chauhans were the third major contestant in the tripartite struggle for supremacy during the c. AD 1000-1200 period. The Chauhans ruling from Shakambhari (Sambhar) had made themselves independent of Pratihara dominance towards the end of the tenth century (as we have noted already). During the ensuing period, the fortunes of Chauhans thrived under rulers like Vakpati II, Chamundaraj, Durlabhraj III, Vigraharaj III, Ajayraja (the reputed founder of the city of Ajaymeru), Arnoraj, Bisaldev (or Vigraharaj IV), Prithviraj II, Someshwar and Prithviraj III, with occasional set-backs. The reverses that occurred came usually — but not solely — at the hands of their by now traditional Chalukyan and Malwa Parmar rivals.

THE CHAUHANS OF SHAKAMBHARI-AJMER DURING THE C. 1000-1200 PERIOD

Let us now pick up the further narrative of the Chauhans of Shakambhari from the reign of Govindaraj (or Govindaraj III¹⁴⁵) onward. He is referred to as '*Vairigharatta*' ('Destroyer of the Enemy'), in the *Prithviraj-Vijaya* composed by Jayankabhatta during the reign of a later descendant, the famed Prithviraj Chauhan (or Prithviraj III). Ferishta's reference in the

Tarikh-e-Ferishta to the ruler who stopped the advance of Mahmud of Ghazni thus seems applicable to this Govindaraj, particularly since (as noted already), a later literary work called *Prabandh-Kosh* also asserts that 'king Gandu' defeated Sultan Mahmud. Govindaraj's son and successor, Vakpati II, defeated and killed the Guhila chief Amba Prasad of the main Nagda-Ahar (Aghatpur) dynasty in battle.

Old enmities bore fruit during the reign of Vakpati II's successor, Viryarama. Viryarama and his Shakambhari Chauhans were defeated by their Nadol branch, led by King Anhila of Nadol. Subsequently, King Viryarama was killed in battle fighting the Parmar king, Bhoj. Through this defeat of the Chauhans, Parmar supremacy over the region was re-asserted for the time-being.

It seems the Chauhans also lost Sambhar, but this was recovered by Viryaram's successor, Chamundaraj, who also re-established Chauhan supremacy. He was succeeded by Sinhatt, and the latter by Durlabhraj III.

According to the Bijolia Inscription, the Chauhan ruler Durlabhraj III (d.1079) led an expedition against Gujarat's Chalukyan king, Kama Deva. Durlabhraj III apparently lost his life in a battle against the Ghaznavide ruler of Lahore, Ibrahim (a Yemeni Turk). His brother and successor, Vighraharaj III, who came to the throne in AD 1079 entered into an alliance with Udayaditya of Malwa against Karna.

The rivalry with the Chalukyas of Gujarat continued into the next generation. Vighraharaj's successor, Prithviraj I, who is known to have been ruling around AD 1105, is reputed to have killed seven hundred Chalukyas who had dispossessed Brahmins of their property. He donated golden cupolas to adorn Jain temples at Ranthambore. The next ruler, Ajayraj (r. ? 1108-1132?), also called Ajaydev, Salhana and Alhana, remains one of the better known Chauhan rulers in popular memory. He is also credited with the founding of the city of Ajaymeru or the modern day Ajmer. Known, variously as Ajaydurg, Ajaygarh and Ajayapura after its founder, the fort built by Ajayraj lent its name in due course to the entire town that grew along the base of the original fort. According to the *Prashasti of*

Avasyakaniryukti, written in AD 1141, the town below ‘Ajaydurg’ was known as ‘Prithvipur’ — probably after Ajayraj’s father, King Prithviraj I.

Sometime before c. 1123 Ajayraj shifted his capital from Sambhar to Ajmer. Henceforth, Ajmer became the chief seat of the Shakambhari Chauhans. It also gained fame as a major centre of the arts, literature and learning, and a place where various religious beliefs, sects and sub-sects thrived, and continued to do so in later centuries. (The Ajaymeru or Taragarh fort towering over the main habitation of Ajmer is attributed to Ajayraj, though some legends ascribe it to the seventh century. It is located atop a hill top that is near inaccessible, except on its southern face. The twenty feet thick battlements of the fort were made from large blocks of cut and shaped stone, and the fort itself, with its nine gates, was once almost two miles in circuit).

Ajayraj asserted his authority over Malwa, defeating its Parmar king, Naravarman, son of Malwa’s Udayaditya Parmar and, according to the Bijolia Inscription of VS 1226, taking prisoner Naravarman’s commander, Sollan, besides slaying three great warrior-heroes of Malwa — Chachchiga, Sindhula and Yashoraja — in the battle. He also captured the fort of Srimarga.

Around this time, the Nagaur area seems to have been come into the hands of the ‘*Turushkas*’ (‘Turks’ — probably Ghaznavides), and Ajayraj probably opposed the Ghaznavides, including the governor of Nagaur, Bahlim, on more than one occasion. A later text, the *Prithviraja Vijaya*, also credits him with a great victory over the ‘*Gajana Matangas*’ (a term believed to mean the Ghaznavide Muslims). The reference may be to Ajayraj’s confrontation with the Ghaznavide forces prior to the capture of Nagaur, or to a battle with Governor Bahlim, or against the Ghaznavide Sultan Bahram Shah himself, following Bahlim’s revolt, resulting in Bahram sending troops and taking the field in person against Bahlim.

The *Prithviraja Vijaya* has credited Ajayraj with ‘filling the earth with silver coins’. In this connection, one may note here that numerous silver and copper coins of Ajayraj have been found around the Mathura area. These carry the legend ‘*Shri Ajay Deva*’. Ajayraj’s queen, Somala Devi

(also Somalekha), issued coins in her own name. Her coins are of copper, and depict a man mounted on a horse, or on an elephant, on the reverse, and her name '*Shri Somala Devi*' in Nagari characters on the obverse. (Various other coins of different Chauhan rulers of the Shakambhari-Ajmer line have been found across Rajasthan. Epigraphs and textual references tell us that Chauhan coins included the *Dramma*, *Vinshopaka* and *Rupaka*. Thakkar Pheru in his thirteenth century text, *Dravya Pariksha*, refers to the Chauhan coins known as *Bisalpriya Dramma*, *Ajaypriya Dramma*, etc.)

Ajayraj's successor, Arnoraj (r. 1132-?1151?), fought several battles and entered into a number of alliances with various chiefs and rulers to consolidate his power. He won victories against the Malwa ruler, Naravarman, and campaigned against some of his rivals of the Punjab, Haryana, Gangetic Doab and Sindh areas. Arnoraj also excavated the now-famous Ana Sagar Lake at Ajmer and filled it with water diverted from the 'river Chandra'. This was apparently done to purify the area where so much blood had been spilt in the course of a battle with the 'Turushkas' (Turks), who had attacked Ajmer and Pushkar, that the very soil had turned red, as if the earth wore a '*Kusmbha* coloured robe'.

During Arnoraj's reign, the Shakambhari Chauhan hostility with the Chalukyas, which was by now practically a tradition, continued unabated. Arnoraj probably came off the worst from at least one of the main encounters with his Chalukyan rival, the famous king, Jaisimha Siddharaja of Gujarat. Eventually, a judicious alliance was forged between the two rival kingdoms. This was the marriage between Arnoraj and Princess Kanchan Devi, the daughter of the Chalukyan king, Jaisimha Siddharaja.

An undated inscription found at Sambhar lists Chalukyan genealogy from Mularaj to Jaisimha Siddharaja. This could indicate that Jaisimha Siddharaja had succeeded in temporarily wresting Sambhar from Arnoraj during the prolonged hostilities between the two, and the inscription marked Chalukyan hold over Sambhar. On the other hand, the epigraph may have been engraved at the command of Arnoraj's Chalukyan queen, Kanchan Devi, after hostilities had ended. In the latter case, the epigraph would have served both, to commemorate her father's exploits, and her own genealogy and heritage. Such inscriptions eulogising the natal clan and kingdom of a

queen are not unknown. In any case, the matrimonial alliance with Arnoraj enabled the Chalukyan ruler to acquire Chauhan assistance against Yashovarman and Malwa.

Later, following the death of King Jaisimha Siddharaja of Gujarat, his successor, Kumarapal Chalukya, won two victories over Arnoraj. One of these took place near Abu in AD 1145, and the second was probably fought at the very gates of Ajmer, in which Arnoraj was wounded and some of his senior commanders killed. Eventually, Arnoraj successfully proposed a matrimonial alliance between his daughter and the Chalukyan king, Kumarapal in c. AD 1150, as is recorded in a contemporary Chittorgarh Inscription. It seems that Arnoraj's defeat at the hands of Kumarapal — and consequent lowering of prestige — was more than the pride of his son could bear, for, not long after, Arnoraj was murdered by his own son, Jagaddev.

Jagaddev's reign was short-lived, for their father's murder was rapidly avenged by one of Jagaddev's younger brothers, Vighraharaj IV, still popularly remembered as 'Bisaldev'. It was this charismatic Vighraharaj IV, alias Bisaldev (r. ?1151-1164), who attacked and slew the governor Sajjan holding Chittor on behalf of the Chalukya king Kumarapal¹⁴⁶. He also captured Nadol, took Pali, and invested and burnt Jalore: all ruled by Chalukyan feudatory-allies who had sided with Kumarapal against Bisaldev's father, Arnoraj, and established his own administrators at Chittor, Nadol and Jalore. Having annexed a part of Mewar, including Chittor, Bijolia, Mandalgarh and Jahazpur, and generally consolidated his kingdom, Bisaldev successfully repulsed a large Ghaznavide army led by Sultan Khusrau Shah (1152-1160), which had advanced as far as Vavvera (six miles from Khetri in central-north-eastern Rajasthan). He wrested Delhi (Dhillika) from the Tomars in either AD 1151 or 1153, but allowed them to continue to hold the area as Chauhan feudatories. He also took Hansi (Asika) from the Ghaznavides, re-emphasising the might of the Chauhans.

The Delhi Siwalik Pillar Inscription of VS 1220 (AD 1164), informs us that Bisaldev's kingdom extended up to the Siwalik hills, and included the modern Jaipur division. The Bijolia Inscription of VS 1226, indulging in a bit of word-play, states that Vighraharaj deprived the *Bhadana-pati* or

‘Lord of the Bhadanakas’ of his lustre (*bha*)¹⁴⁷, — indicating that this Chauhan ruler scored a victory over the strong Bhadanakas. Bisaldev was much more than just a warrior, though. Like many of his predecessors, he patronised the arts. The poet and dramatist Somadeva, who wrote the drama *Lalita-Vigraharaj*, flourished at Bisaldev’s court. (This drama was inscribed on the walls of a building that is now called the ‘Adhai-din-ka-Jhonpra’, as further described below). Among his contemporaries, Bisaldev was known as a ‘*Kavibandhava*’, meaning ‘a friend of poets’. He wrote a Sanskrit play called *Harkeli*, patronised many writers and poets, and presided over literary soirees convened by his minister for war and peace, Padmanabha.

Bisaldev (Vigraharaj IV) also built numerous forts, towns (mostly called Visalpur, or derivatives of ‘Visal’), and temples. He is also responsible for the lake that still bears his name — Bisal-sagar — at Ajmer. Many regard his reign in the light of the ‘Golden Age’ for the kingdom of Sapadalaksha, as it was marked by great achievements in a range of fields. One of the towns founded by him is described as being in the Girwa hills (of Mewar) near a great chasm where the river cascades through a deep gorge, and in the monsoon season its waters pool to form a lake that Bisal named after his father Arnoraj. The description approximates closely with Menal: the old name of which was ‘Maha-nal’ (literally, ‘Great Chasm’). Considering that Bijolia is not too far distant from here, and given that this whole area was under the Chauhans by this time, one wonders whether Bisaldev also built new structures at Bijolia, and gave that ancient habitation of ‘Vindhyavali’ a form of his own name? In other words, that the word ‘Bijolia’ is a derivative from Bisaldev’s name, even though the older habitation there was once called Vindhyavali!

To him is also attributed a large building that has been identified by different authorities as either a great Sanskrit college or a temple to Saraswati. This was built in c. AD 1153, within Ajmer’s ‘Andar-Kot’ (literally, the innermost or original citadel) area. The building’s wall-panels bore the inscribed version of Somadeva’s play, the *Lalita-Vigraharaj*, Bisaldev’s play *Harkeli*, and parts of a Chauhan eulogy. Since inscribing dramas inside temples is far from usual practice, the possibility of the building having been a college is greater. Only a few portions of the panels inscribed with the plays and eulogy may be seen today, for the whole

structure was substantially demolished at the end of the twelfth century, following the fall of Prithviraj III. It was later partially re-modelled to serve as a mosque, with a white marble *mehraab* added in AD 1199. A towering stone-screen wall with seven arches was added in AD 1213, during the reign of Delhi's Sultan Iltutmish. It is now known as the 'Adhai-din-ka-Jhonpra'.

The next two rulers had short reigns. First came Aparajit-Gangadeya, Bisaldev's minor son. Apparently he was displaced, and probably killed, by Jagaddev's son, who ascended the throne as Prithviraj II. Then, in AD 1169 (VS 1226), the throne passed to Arnoraj's youngest son, Someshwar (r. 1169-1177). Someshwar had previously lived for a while at Kumarapal's Chalukyan court and seen military service in the Chalukyan campaign against King Mallikarjuna. (The latter is simply referred to as 'the ruler of Konkan' in the text *Prithviraj Vijaya*). He was successful in maintaining Chauhan hold over the far-flung kingdom. Someshwar's domain extended southward to include Bijolia in the Udaipur region. Someshwar was succeeded in 1177 by his minor son, Prithviraj III, better known in history as Prithviraj Chauhan.

THE AGE OF PRITHVIRAJ III

The life and death of Prithviraj III (r. 1177-1192), immortalised in history simply as Prithviraj Chauhan, is popularly regarded as marking a watershed in early medieval Indian history by many. Several also perceive his defeat at the Second Battle of Tarain as a crucial turning point in the establishment of Muslim rule in different parts of India, (in particular, the Delhi Sultanate). Let us look at the reign of this flamboyant and charismatic ruler in some detail.

The political condition of India by the third quarter of the twelfth century AD, when Prithviraj III ascended the Chauhan throne, was somewhat different to a century and a half earlier, when Mahmud of Ghazni had led several expeditions into India. Much of the Punjab area was now ruled by the successors of Khusrau Shah, as the older (pre-Ghaznavide) Hindushahi dynasty had been displaced. That kingdom was in a state of

disintegration though, and Hansi and Bhatinda had come under Chauhan rule. Parts of Sindh and Multan were under the Sumras and Qaramiths respectively, while the rest of the northern India plains were ruled by different Rajput/Kshatriya kingdoms and principalities. Most of these states were on terms of hostility with each other (especially their immediate neighbours). Among these, Kanauj was held by the Gahadavalas, who had displaced the Imperial Gurjara-Pratiharas, while Bundelkhand remained under the Chandellas. Bihar and Bengal were ruled by the Pala and Sena dynasties respectively. In Rajasthan, the most powerful kingdoms of the period were that of the Guhilas (or Guhilots) of Chittor and the Chauhans of Shakambhari-Ajmer-Delhi.

The latter, as masters of Shakambhari, had extended their domain under rulers like Vakpati II, Chamundaraj, Durlabhraj, Ajayraja (founder of Ajaymeru), Arnoraj, Bisaldev, Prithviraj II and Someshwar, to include Delhi (AD 1153), Hansi, and parts of Mewar. Further south, the once powerful Parmars of Malwa, with their capital at Dhar, had lost their position to their long-standing rivals, the Chalukyas of Gujarat, practically becoming Chalukyan feudatories. The latter, in a position of pre-eminence, were adversaries of the Guhilots of Chittor and the Chauhans. (The Chauhan principality of Nadol had already submitted to the Chalukyas of Gujarat). Meanwhile, the Kachchhapaghatas reigned over Gwalior, Dubkund and Narwar.

It was in this scenario that Shihabuddin Muizzuddin Muhammad bin Sam of Ghor (Ghur) or 'Muhammad Ghori' as he is commonly known, (r-AD 1173-1206), began his quest for territorial expansion into India¹⁴⁸. In AD 1175, he attacked and captured Multan. This considerably weakened the hold of the Ismailis in the region. Another target was upper Sindh, (which had reverted into Ismaili hands since the time of the early Ghaznavides), and Muhammad of Ghor soon led expeditions against both upper and lower Sindh. After occupying Uchchh in 1175 and annexing adjoining parts of Sindh, Muhammad of Ghor advanced against Gujarat in AD 1178, which was then ruled by the Chalukyan ruler Bhima II (?Mularaj II?). The bravery and spirited fight put up by him and his allies (among them Kelhan of Nadol, his younger brother, Kirtipal Chauhan, founder of the Jalore line, and the Parmar ruler of Abu, King Dharavarsha), forced the

enemy back from the vicinity of Abu, in Rajasthan¹⁴⁹. According to the Sundha Inscription, this decisive battle took place at Kasahrada, near Abu.

Enroute, marching by way of Kiradu in western Rajasthan, Muhammad of Ghor reached Nadol and captured it. (After which, according to the *Prithviraja Vijaya*, a messenger from Muhammad Ghori was sent to Prithviraj asking him to pay tribute and homage, but Prithviraj turned down the proposal¹⁵⁰). Following this, Muhammad of Ghor turned his attention to the Punjab and territories adjoining his own kingdom for augmenting his resources. Having captured Peshawar in 1179, he invaded Lahore in 1181, forcing the Ghaznavide ruler of Lahore, Khusrau Malik to sue for peace, and in 1182 conquered Debal, forcing the Sumra rulers of lower Sindh to accept Ghori suzerainty. In AD 1184, Lahore was attacked for a second time, and the surrounding countryside ravaged. Having taken the strategically located Sialkot, Muhammad of Ghor further fortified it. Khusrau Malik of Lahore made an alliance with the Khokhars of the Salt Range mountains (at the time still Hindus), but was unable to re-take Sialkot. In AD 1186, Muhammad of Ghor invaded Lahore for the third time, captured its ruler through deceit and sent him to the Balarwan fort in Ghorjistan (where the Ghaznavide was later killed in 1192), thus bringing to an end the rule of Khusrau Malik and the Ghaznavides in that area. With the possession of Sindh, Multan and the Punjab to supplement his dominions of Ghazni and Ghor, Muhammad now had a strong hold over a large tract of land.

Meanwhile, Prithviraj III (probably born in c. VS 1223 or AD 1166), had ascended the throne of the Chauhans of Shakambhari-Ajmer as a minor in VS 1234, i.e. AD 1177, upon the death of his father, Someshwar. He inherited a kingdom that stretched from Thaneshwar (the famed capital of seventh century Emperor Harsha Vardhan of the Pushyabhuti line), in the north to Jahazpur (in Mewar) in the south. With the kingdom came the title '*Samanta*' and 'Lord of a Hundred Chiefs'.

During the minority of Prithviraj III his mother, Karpur Devi acted as regent, and proved to be an excellent one. Citing bardic accounts and traditional belief, Tod recorded that Prithviraj's mother was the daughter of King Anangpal of Delhi and that the maternal grandfather had made

Prithviraj III heir to the Tomar kingdom of Delhi¹⁵¹. As King Anangpal Tomar's other daughter was the wife of Vijaychandra, the Gahadavala king of Kanauj, and mother of Jayachandra, Prithviraj III's right to the Delhi throne was to remain constantly challenged by Jayachandra. Though the popular view also subscribes to Anangpal having left his kingdom to his grandson, Prithviraj Chauhan, according to other historical sources there is no evidence to show that Prithviraj's mother was Anangpal Tomar's daughter. On the contrary, historical evidence indicates that Prithviraj's mother was a Kalachuri (Chedi¹⁵²) princess called Karpur Devi, who was the daughter of Achalraja of the line of the Kalachuris of Tripuri.

The chief minister, during the period of regency governance, was a Rajput of the Dahima clan¹⁵³ named Kadambavasa, popularly known as Kaimasa. Another minister that we know of during the regency period was named Bhuvanaikamalla. He was the young king's great-uncle — being the younger brother of Karpur Devi's father, and as such exercised great influence in the state. The *Prithviraja Vijaya* has eulogised his role in subduing the Nagas successfully.

Within three years of the death of Someshwar, young Prithviraj personally assumed the reins of administration, bringing the period of regency governance to an end. The *Prithviraj Raso* and *Prithviraj Prabandh* record that Prithviraj did so by having his chief minister, Kadambavasa, killed. The *Prithviraj Raso* justifies the act by stressing on the minister's association with a favourite concubine, while the *Prithviraj Prabandh* attributes the assassination to the actions of one Pratap Singh, who successfully convinced the young Prithviraj that Kadambavasa was responsible for the repeated attacks by Muslim forces. In sharp contrast to these derogatory accounts about the minister and his murder, the *Prithviraja Vijaya* speaks highly of him, comparing his devotion and service to that of Hanuman to Lord Rama in the epic *Ramayana*¹⁵⁴.

Interestingly, it appears that the murder of Kadambavasa (Kaimasa) in no way marked the downfall of his family. Tod, citing Chand Bardai's *Prithviraj Raso*, informs us that "...The Dahima [Rajput] was the lord of Biana, and one of the most powerful vassals of the Chohan emperor,

Pirthiraja. Three brothers of this house held the highest offices under this monarch, and the period during which the elder, Kaimas, was his minister was the brightest in the history of the Chohan: but he fell victim to a blind jealousy. Poondir, the second brother, commanded the frontier at Lahore. The third Chaond Rae, was the principal leader in the last battle, where Pirthiraja fell, with the whole of his chivalry, on the banks of the Caggar. Even the historians of Shabudin have preserved the name of the gallant Dahima, Chaond Rae, whom they style Khandirai; and to whose valour, they relate, Shabudin himself nearly fell a sacrifice”¹⁵⁵. Furthermore, one of the wives of Prithviraj Chauhan came from the same family, and “...Rainsi, his [Prithviraj’s] only son, was by this sister of Chaond Rae, but he did not survive the capture of Delhi. This marriage forms the subject of one of the books of the bard [Chand]”¹⁵⁶.

Not long after Prithviraj assumed full powers, the standard of revolt was raised by Nagarjuna. Nagarjuna was a younger son of the late Vigharaj IV (Bisaldev), and brother of the short-lived king Aparagangadeya, and hence was a legitimate rival claimant to the Chauhan throne. Nagarjuna occupied the fort of Gudapur, at which Prithviraj marched against him with a large army consisting of horses, elephants, camels and infantry. Gudapur was besieged and taken, and though the Pretender escaped, his mother, wife and bulk of followers were captured. Prithviraj returned to Ajmer, laden with a large booty and other spoils of war. Subsequently, many of the captive prisoners were beheaded; their heads being hung upon the battlements and main gate of the capital as both a warning and deterrent for other rebels.

After this signal victory, Prithviraj turned his attention against the Bhadanakas (against whom a previous Chauhan ruler, Bisaldev, had secured a victory, as already mentioned). The kingdom of the Bhadanakas was probably bounded by the Kachchhapaghata lands and river Chambal in the south-east, the kingdom of Kanauj and river Yamuna in the north-east and the lands of the Chauhans to the north and west. (Thus, their lands seem to have included much of the present-day districts of Gurgaon, Bhiwani, and Hissar in Haryana, besides parts of the Punjab as well as of Alwar and Bharatpur in Rajasthan)¹⁵⁷.

Since this made the Bhadanakas neighbours to the Chauhans, and thus a source of constant threat to the Chauhan-held region around Delhi, Prithviraj embarked on a series of successful wars against them. These ended in the overthrow of the Bhadanakas¹⁵⁸. Lauding the Chauhan victory, Jinapati Suri, a contemporary poet, stated that the lustre and valour of Prithviraj was incomparable when his sword turned against the irresistible elephant force of the Lord of the Bhadanakas.

Following this defeat of the Bhadanakas, Prithviraj III commenced on his career of *digvijaya* or 'world-conquest'. His next expedition was against Parmardin Deva Chandella of Jejakbhukti. The relations between the Chauhans and Chandellas had long been hostile. These further worsened, according to the version given in *Prithviraj Raso*, when the Chandella king put to death some of Prithviraj's soldiers, while he was returning from Delhi to Sameta. In AD 1182, Prithviraj ravaged the territory of the Chandellas up to Madanpur (in Bundelkhand)¹⁵⁹. In spite of the stiff resistance put up by the Chandellas, in which a chief called Malkhan met his death at the defence-point of Sirsagarh fort, much of Jejakbhukti was laid waste.

The traditional versions given in the *Prithviraj Raso* and *Alhakhand* say that at this point Parmardin Chandella requested a truce, while he sent for two heroes, the Banafara brothers Alha and Udal, who had left his court because of his displeasure with them and joined the service of King Jayachandra of Kanauj. The two brothers did not wish to serve Parmardin, but are said to have returned to Mahoba out of love for their country. Along with the Chandella army, Alha and Udal faced the Chauhans at Mahoba and fell fighting valiantly. Parmardin Deva was defeated and Mahoba and Kalanjar sacked. (Some verses in the *Sarangadharapaddati* and the *Prabandh-Chintamani* corroborate that Prithviraj Chauhan decisively defeated Parmardin Chandella). However, there is evidence, including from two inscriptions of Parmardin from Kalanjar and Mahoba, dating to AD 1183, which indicates that the Chauhan victory was probably short-lived. In a later inscription from Kalanjar, Parmardin Chandella is described as '*Dasharna-adhipati*'. Be that as it may, the campaign against the Chandellas undoubtedly added to the number of Prithviraj's enemies, brought the Chandellas and Gahadavalas together against a common foe,

and obliged Prithviraj to increase military expenditure and vigilance on his south-eastern frontier.

Prithviraj III also turned his sword against the powerful kingdom of Gujarat. (Prior to this, in 1178, on the advice of minister Kadambavasa, the kingdom of Sapadalaksha had chosen not to join the forces of Gujarat in repelling the attack of Muhammad Ghori, despite the Chalukyan call to arms). According to the *Kharatara-gachha-pattavali* of Jinapala, in the course of his *digvijaya*, the Chauhan warrior led his army against the Chalukyan ruler, Bhima II of Gujarat, sometime before AD 1187. In the absence of any reliable accounts, it is not possible to say much about the campaign. The *Kharatara-gachha-pattavali* of Jinapala mentions a treaty between Prithviraj and Bhima II, concluded in or before VS 1241 (AD 1184).

It was probably during the course of the Gujarat campaign that Prithviraj led his famous night attack on the Parmar ruler of Abu, Dharavarsha. This has been referred to in a work called the *Parthaparakrama-vyayoga* by Prahladan, the younger brother of Dharavarsha. The attack is said to have been a failure owing to Prahladan Parmar's valour.

In the course of Prithviraj Chauhan's aggressive campaigns against the Bhadanakas, Chandellas, Chalukyas and Abu Parmars, he had probably also come into conflict with the ambitions of the Gahadavala ruler of Kanauj, Jayachandra (Jayachand). Relations between the Chauhans and Gahadavalas — never too cordial to begin with — deteriorated further during Prithviraj's reign.

Under Govindachandra (the grandfather of Jayachandra), the Gahadavalas of Kanauj had become a prominent power in the Indian subcontinent, even though later the Chauhan ruler Vigharaj had defeated Vijaychandra (the son of Govindachandra and father of Jayachandra) once. Jayachandra of Kanauj was, thus, not only eager to curb Prithviraj's growing ambitions and quest for territorial expansion¹⁶⁰, he was also keen to avenge his father's defeat by the Chauhans, while maintaining and expanding the prestige of the Gahadavalas of Kanauj. As Dr. Gopinath Sharma phrases it, "...the conflicts of their [Prithviraj Chauhan's and

Jayachandra's] mutual interest, soaring ambitions and old rivalries formed the pivot round which their enmity revolved. Both were inclined to be aggressive if opportunity offered”.

Tradition, on the other hand, ascribes the immediate cause of their intense and bitter hostility to the romance between Prithviraj and Jayachand's daughter, Princess Sanyogita (spelt variously as Samyogita, Sanyukta, and Samyukta), which resulted in her abduction — with her acquiescence — from her *swayamvara* ceremony in Kanauj. (A *swayamvara* entailed a princess choosing her bridegroom from an invited assembly of kings and princes). The tale has been immortalised in Chand Bardai's *Prithviraj Raso*. The main aspects of the story include Sanyogita's wedding *swayamvara*, to which Prithviraj III was deliberately not invited, while his statue was placed at the gate to show him disdain; Prithviraj's daring abduction of Sanyogita from the midst of the crowded *swayamvara* ceremony in the Gahadavala court; his subsequent performance of the *Rajasuya Yagna* to denote his status as an invincible sovereign; and his apathy towards governance and state matters due to his infatuation for his bride. This event is popularly believed to have occurred after the First Battle of Tarain (or 'Taraori') in 1191, and shortly before the second and final battle between Muhammad of Ghor and Prithviraj III.

There has been a prolonged debate amongst historians regarding the historicity of Sanyogita. Some scholars regard the whole story as the romanticised narratives of sixteenth century bards, and have emphasised the point that, in their opinion, the *Prithviraj Raso* was not penned down until about the sixteenth century AD. It has also been suggested that, despite popular belief, Chand Bardai was not a contemporary of King Prithviraj Chauhan. However, other scholars suggest that the events have a kernel of truth.

We may note here the traditional view that Rajasthan's *Raso* style of literary composition, which mainly comprise poems celebrating heroic tales (*veer-gathas*), date back to an early period. Within this tradition, one of the earliest known *rasos* seems to be a 1,400 verses recension of Chand Bardai's *Prithviraj Raso* to which many verses were added in subsequent times. This 1,400 verse version deals with an account of two famous battles

that Prithviraja fought with Jayachandra and Muhammad Ghori and his marriage with Sanyogita. It is held that the subsequent process of transmission — including as an orally recited tale — led to changes and additions to Chand Bardai's shorter *Prithviraj Raso*. Over time, a large number of recensions of the *Prithviraj Raso* came into being, with the largest of these being about 40,000 verses long, in which historical events have been overshadowed by bardic creativity. It is believed that the extended version of this much-expanded *Prithviraj Raso* is a work of late seventeenth century. However, scholars who believe in the historicity of Sanyogita (and of Chand Bardai being a bard — possibly Prithvibhatta — at Prithviraj Chauhan's court), say that the additions and embellishments in the later versions do not detract from the substance of the original tale given in the earliest recension. It has also been pointed out that the oldest sections of the *Prithviraj Raso* are undoubtedly in the language and poetic style known as the '*Lata Apabhramsha*' (also '*Latiya Apabhramsha*') — something typical of the twelfth-thirteenth centuries, which was later overtaken by other linguistic styles. Thus, several of Rajasthan's scholars feel that the original recension of the *Prithviraj Raso* should be assigned to c. AD 1235-40 — i.e. within three to four decades of the death of Prithviraj Chauhan.

Significantly, Sanyogita finds no mention in various works contemporaneous to Prithviraj Chauhan, like the *Prithviraj-Prabandh*, *Prabandh-Chintamani* and *Prabandh-Kosh*. Nor is she mentioned in later works like *Rambha-Manjari*, a play written in c. AD 1403 by Nayanchandra Suri, with Jayachandra of Kanauj as its hero, or the *Hammir-Mahakavya*, which deals with the ancestors of the Chauhan hero, Hammir of Ranthambore. However, the *Prithviraj-Vijaya* does tell us that Prithviraj fell in love with a celestial nymph (*apsara*) called Rambha, while another text, the *Surjan-Charitra* gives the name of the princess as Kantimati (in place of Sanyogita). Those who believe in the historicity of Sanyogita cite these as examples of chroniclers using euphemisms.

Summarising the debate, the late Dasharatha Sharma pointed out that the *Hammir-Mahakavya* is silent not just about Sanyogita, but also about Prithviraj's victories against Nagarjuna, the Bhadanakas, Chandellas and Chalukyas. It also makes no mention of the numerous other marriages of

Prithviraj III, about which information is available from diverse sources! Furthermore, asserts Sharma, the (Sanyogita) tradition is found at least in three languages, namely, Sanskrit, Persian and old Rajasthani, and appears to have its roots in the contemporary poem *Prithviraj-Vijay*. Observing that Kanauj's inscriptions, texts and traditions would obviously not refer to any such contentious subject as the abduction of a princess, Sharma held that the entire story, including Sanyogita's abduction from the Kanauj Court, did not seem "inconsistent with the character of Prithviraja"¹⁶¹. Sifting fact from fiction and legend from event across the centuries is not easy, especially when folklore and popular belief is concerned. In this case, tradition subscribes to the Sanyogita story.

The same tradition further holds that Prithviraj defeated Muhammad of Ghor in battle seven times, before the decisive Second Battle of Tarain in 1192. The *Tarikh-i-Ferishta* and other Muslim chronicles, on the other hand, refer only to two battles between Muhammad Ghori and Prithviraj Chauhan; the first being the First Battle of Tarain in AD 1191 in which the Ghori forces suffered a complete rout, and the second on the same battleground (the Second Battle of Tarain), just over a year later, which the Chauhans lost. Dasharatha Sharma believes that "the discrepancy can be reconciled by supposing that the Ghori generals began raiding Prithviraja's empire soon after their capture of Lahore, but were repulsed repeatedly by the Chauhan forces stationed at the frontier. While these frontier clashes have been magnified into big battles by the Hindu chroniclers, the Muslims have gone to the other extreme and overlooked them altogether"¹⁶².

In the winter of AD 1190-91, Muhammad Ghori captured Tabarhindh (Bhatinda) in the dominion of Prithviraj, placing it, with a garrison of twelve hundred horses, under the charge of Kazi Zia-ud-din of Tulak. Meanwhile, Govindaraja, the Chauhan representative holding Delhi, long tired of the routine pillaging and frequent skirmishes with Ghori troops, requested assistance. Prithviraj immediately marched against Muhammad Ghori at the head of a large army that included two hundred thousand horses and three thousand elephants. Many of his feudatories, including Govindaraja of Delhi, accompanied him with their contingents.

Both the armies met at Tarain — or Taraori (now in Haryana's Karnal district), eighty miles (113 km) north of Delhi and fourteen from Thaneshwar. Both the Chauhan and Ghori armies adhered to their respective traditional battle-formations. The fighting was fierce. Prithviraj put to flight the right, left and vanguard of the Ghori army. The Ghori Sultan, however, continued to fight on. Finding himself face to face with Govindaraja, he hurled his spear with all his might at the Delhi governor, knocking out two of his teeth. Though wounded, the gallant Govindaraja, in turn, flung his own lance at the Sultan, seriously injuring the latter. The blow and loss of blood had the Sultan reeling in his saddle. He would have fallen had not a young Khalj warrior recognised him. The soldier quickly sprung up on the horse behind the Sultan, and supporting him carried him off safely from the battle-ground. The disaster caused a panic in the Ghori army. Leaderless, the Ghori troops rapidly fled in the field in disorder.

The victorious Chauhan ruler pursued the enemy for about forty miles. According to the *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* (Raverty's translation), the Muslim horsemen did not draw rein till they reached a point of safety from pursuit, where the Sultan and Khalj youth also joined them in due course, and the dispersed elements of the defeated army being united once again, returned in good order to their own dominion. In the duration, Prithviraj occupied the fort of Sirhind and re-established Chauhan supremacy in the Punjab.

The severe defeat did not dishearten Muhammad of Ghor. Having punished and publicly disgraced all the officers and *amirs* who had fled the battle-field, the Sultan turned his attention towards raising a stronger army that would help him in avenging his defeat at the hands of Prithviraj Chauhan. With this object in mind, he sought the assistance of the ruler of Ghataika.

Finally, when his preparations were complete, Muhammad Ghori advanced in AD 1192 with 1,20,000 men to Lahore. From here he continued towards Tarain, the scene of his rout the year before. At the same time, an emissary from Muhammad was sent to Ajmer with a proposal that Prithviraj acknowledged Ghori suzerainty. The proposal was met with contempt by the Chauhan king. Instead, he marched to meet his enemy with

a vast army that included cavalry, elephants, and a large body of infantry soldiers. As many as one hundred and fifty Rajput chiefs mustered to his banner.

Despite the seemingly invincible Chauhan army, however, the position of Prithviraj was not so secure. For one thing, his army commander, Skanda, was engaged in a war elsewhere. For another, a general called Udairaja failed to join him in time. Furthermore, a minister of Prithviraj's council named Someshwar, who had been dismissed, with his ears cut off, on suspicion of treason, struck back at his former master by joining the Ghori camp. In addition, traditional accounts state that while Muhammad Ghori had devoted his time and energies to reorganising his forces during the year that had elapsed, Prithviraj had, in the interim, 'abducted' the beautiful Sanyogita (who had chosen Prithviraj as her husband through garlanding his statue); thereby incurring the further enmity of the powerful Gahadavala kingdom of Kanauj. Not just that, he had spent more time in the company of his new queen than he had on matters of administration and the state. As Sharma phrases it, "...Prthviraja had enemies enough but no friends"¹⁶³.

Having reached the field of Tarain, and encamped there with his army, Prithviraj sent a letter to Muhammad Ghori, suggesting that the latter withdraw his army and be satisfied with the possession of the Punjab. The Sultan did not reject the letter straightaway. Instead he asked for time to write to his brother in Ghazni and seek his permission to withdraw to his own territory. In the meantime, he agreed to a truce till he received his instructions from Ghazni.

His ruse worked. Relying on Ghori's assurance, the Rajputs relaxed their vigil and spent the night in ease in their camp. The Sultan's forces, on the other hand, were busy. Concealing his movements by keeping a large fire burning throughout the night in his army encampment, Ghori advanced to the Chauhan camp in the darkness, by a different route, with the main body of his troops.

Prithviraj's naïvety at this juncture, especially in view of Ghori's stratagems in capturing Uchchh and Lahore, has been criticised by various

historians. They have also commented on the fact that Prithviraj was not inexperienced in the line of night attacks either, for he had himself led one such against Dharavarsha Parmar of Abu. As such, instead of being alert for some such action on the part of his determined and skilful Ghor enemy, Prithviraj apparently passed the night preceding the battle in relaxation and was fast asleep when the Ghor forces reached his tent! “For such conduct a general, however strong or able he might be, deserved to lose an empire and all the power that he had”, is Sharma’s severe indictment¹⁶⁴. “...The King’s behaviour just before the second battle of Tarain was neither that of a hero nor of a great general, awake to all the possibilities and probabilities of warfare, but that of a novice in the art of finesse and of a common reveller”¹⁶⁵.

Just before day-break, while Prithviraj slept in his tent, and the rest of the Rajputs were just beginning to awaken, an attack was launched. Confusion ensued in the Rajput camp, but though taken by surprise, and attacked from all sides, the Rajputs fought back fiercely as best they could. At the same time, the Rajput cavalry swung into action. Finding the resistance strong, the Sultan temporarily fell back. He then divided his troops into five divisions, with orders to advance and made a show of retreat. The Muslim divisions attacked the Rajputs from all sides and then put on a pretence of retreating from the fray. At this followed an unsystematic and ill-advised pursuit by the Rajputs. From morning till sunset the battle raged fiercely and the Ghorian generals used these tactics. This “...increased the Rajput disorder still further and made the Rajput army easily vulnerable by an enemy who had already thought out every move of his strategy”¹⁶⁶.

A fearful carnage ensued on both side, but the sustained attack of Muhammad Ghor’s mobile cavalry finally overpowered the Rajputs. The Chauhan forces were routed; with the ruler of Delhi, Govindraja, amongst those slain. Prithviraj left the battle-ground, but was eventually overtaken and captured near Sursuti (modern Sirsa, the place seems originally to have been ‘Saraswati’). This is supported by works like the *Prithviraj-Prabandh*, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, and *Hammir-Mahakavya*, which also state that he was later put to death after a spell in captivity. Minhaz-us-Siraj and Ferishta’s accounts state that after he fled the battlefield, Prithviraj was captured and

put to death, while the *Virudha-vidhi-vidhvansa* is the only text that asserts that the Chauhan king was killed on the battle-ground of Tarain. The victorious army quickly invested the strong forts of Hansi, Sursuti, Samana and Kohram, before the Sultan marched to Ajmer (along with his royal Chauhan captive, according to the *Prithviraj-Prabandh*). Thereafter, Ajmer was occupied and plundered.

(Ajmer, as we have already noted, had been a major city cum capital of the Chauhan rulers for several generations, and had seen much construction and beautification under successive rulers. Hasan Nizami's *Taj-ul-Maasir*, a work in Persian, has left us a contemporaneous description of Ajmer. Nizami described Ajmer as an exceedingly beautiful city, with light, beauty and a profuse variety of flowers. He noted the purity of its air and earth, and its abundance of trees and water. In Nizami's view, the 'seven-coloured' gardens of Ajmer were resplendent with flowers adorning the gardens and plains. He likened the vista to a vision of Paradise, and stated that the fountains of Ajmer's sweet waters seemed to compete with the spring water of Paradise).

According to Hasan Nizami's *Taj-ul-Maasir*, the Ghori Sultan was willing to spare Prithviraj's life following the investment of Ajmer, in return for the Chauhan accepting his suzerainty. However, in Nizami's opinion "ancient hatred was deeply rooted and concealed in the bottom of Prithviraj Chauhan's heart", and the defeated raja was soon detected in an intrigue and beheaded by the order of the Sultan. The *Prabandh-Chintamani* also records that the Sultan had every intention to let Prithviraj continue to hold the Ajmer throne, but was subsequently roused to anger by Prithviraj's later actions, and ordered the execution of the Chauhan king. A thirteenth century Jain work, the *Kanya-Nayaniya-Mahavir-Pratima-Kalpa* refers to Prithviraj Chauhan being put to death by Ghori in VS 1248 (AD 1192), following which Prithviraj's minister, Ramadeva sent an urgent message from Ajmer to some Jain groups mentioning the event and warning them to hide their idols from the 'Turukkas'.

The account of Prithviraj's death as presented in the *Prithviraj Raso* differs substantially, though it has a few points in common with the *Prithviraj-Prabandh*. According to Chand Bardai's *Prithviraj Raso*, after

Prithviraj was captured, he was blinded and taken to Ghazni. There, his faithful court-poet (Chand Bardai himself) encouraged him to take revenge against the Ghori Sultan by arranging an archery display, in which the blinded Rajput king would shoot at a target by sheer sound alone. The event gathered a large crowd. The Sultan himself took his place at a balcony overlooking the archery-court. The blinded Prithviraj notched an arrow to his bow and drew his bow-string taut. At that crucial moment, his faithful bard recited a couplet that provided Prithviraj with details about the distance, direction and height where the Sultan was seated. Prithviraj shot his arrow in that direction. It immediately pierced the Sultan and killed him. Meanwhile, the loyal troubadour stabbed his master, thus enabling him to die in a manner befitting a king.

Interestingly, it is this version that today finds popular expression (including in its film rendition) whenever the tale of Prithviraj is retold. As far as historical facts go, however, it is well known that Muhammad of Ghor did not die until 1206, and that too not at the hands of Prithviraj III. Rather, he was assassinated on 15 March 1206 at Damyak. The assassins, according to some sources, were Hindu Khokars, and according to others, Ismailis.

It may be relevant, in this context, to take note of one type of coin issued by Prithviraj III¹⁶⁷, which bore the names jointly of Prithviraj and Muhammad bin Sam¹⁶⁸ (i.e. Muhammad of Ghor). This coin was apparently issued from the Delhi mint and, according to some twentieth century historians, may have been issued after Prithviraj III's defeat and capture at the hands of Muhammad of Ghor.

This would suggest that Ghori's intended policy towards the Chauhans may have been no different to that adopted by many victorious kings: to re-instate the vanquished ruler or a near relative to their ancestral throne in return for a pledge of allegiance and the promise of regular tribute! In fact, the Imperial Pratiharas had done so in the not so recent past vis-à-vis the Chauhans of Sapadalaksha, the Guhilas, and others in Rajasthan, as had the Chauhans themselves with their tributaries. It would also help understand the fact that, following the death of Prithviraj III,

Ajmer was made over to one of Prithviraj's sons, Govindaraj, on the explicit condition that he would pay annual tribute to the Ghori Sultan.

Evaluating Prithviraj's reign and defeat, the late Dasharatha Sharma, who made a detailed study of the early Chauhan dynasties writes as follows: "Thus ended the life and career of one of the most brilliant and romantic rulers of Hindu India...That he had some great qualities is generally admitted. He was a dashing soldier and brilliant cavalry leader. His victories over the Bhadanakas, Chandellas, Gahadavalas and also over the Muslims in the first battle of Tarain prove his title to greatness as a soldier and general..."¹⁶⁹

Prithviraj was not merely a dashing warrior, however. Fond of poetry and a patron of scholars, his court was graced by luminaries like the poet-historian Jayanak, the writer of the *Prithviraj Vijaya*, Vidyapati Gaud, Janardhan, Prithvibhatt, the royal bard who was proficient in traditional lore and has been identified by some writers with Chand Bardai (the author of *Prithviraj Raso*), and many others, "...who received due recognition and were occasionally called into conference by Padmanabha, the Minister in charge of *Pandits* and poets"¹⁷⁰.

"But with all his virtues, Prithviraja had faults serious enough to deny him a place among the greatest rulers of India. He lacked foresight; he had not also statesmanship enough to see that the times had changed and old policies required to be either entirely discarded or to be adapted to the changing circumstances of the day. He seems to have prided himself on being a *digvijayin*... He never realised that with the Ghori hammering at the gates of his northern frontier, a thorough pursuit of this policy could not be anything but suicidal. Instead of making new friends and presenting a united front...he made enemies on all sides by his raids on Jejakabhukti, Kanauj, and the empire of Gujarat. The attacks brought him fame and wealth, but they also brought him the ill-will of his neighbours; consequently when he was defeated at the second battle of Tarain, not a single ruler came forward to support the tottering empire of Sapadalaksa", noted Sharma¹⁷¹.

“Even standing alone Bhimadeva II of Gujarat and Prthviraja III had, respectively, been able to defeat Muhammad Ghori on two different occasions, at the battle of Kasahrada in AD 1178 and at that of Tarain in AD 1191. United together, these two could have not merely stemmed the tide of Muslim invasion, but also freed the Northern Punjab from Muslim domination. But the policy of *digvijaya* of Prthviraja and the advice tendered to him by his counsellors...in AD 1178 ... so far estranged the Chalukyas that, acting exactly as Prthviraja had done fifteen years earlier, they made not the slightest move against the Muslims until the power of the Chauhans of Sapadalaksa had been completely destroyed. If traditional accounts are to be believed...Prthviraja’s policy towards the Gahadavalas had been equally bad, and Jayachandra...rejoiced instead of grieving when he heard of the Chauhan ruler’s defeat and death...”¹⁷².

“Prthviraja never seems to have out-grown the faults and foibles incidental to his youth”, Sharma wrote elsewhere of the Chauhan ruler, who was about twenty-five or twenty-six years old at the time of his defeat¹⁷³. Sharma underscores the point that Prithviraj possessed a large share of good-natured indolence, for while he could be active when he chose, he could be equally lazy¹⁷⁴.

The death of Prithviraj III marked the passing of the nearly five hundred years old kingdom of the Chauhans of Sapadalaksha, with its rich heritage and way of life, which his immediate successors could not rejuvenate. (A Jain teacher, Ashadhara, wrote that when Sapadalaksha was conquered by ‘Shihab-ud-din’ [Mohammad Ghori], he left his native country, like many others, from fear of the conquering army, and migrated with his family to Malwa).

After Prithviraj’s death, his younger brother, Hariraj Chauhan, kept up a running battle against Ghori’s paramountcy until his own death not long afterwards. He also made repeated attempts to dislodge his nephew, Govindaraj, who held Ajmer with Ghori’s consent. On one occasion, Govindaraj was driven out of Ajmer by his uncle, but the timely intervention of Qutb-ud-din Aibak (Ghori’s commander and governor, who was later to become Sultan of Delhi, after Muhammad bin Sam of Ghor’s

death), re-installed him on the throne of Ajmer. (One may note here that in 1193, when Muhammad left for Khorasan, he left the consolidation of the Ghoride conquests across north-western India to Qutb-ud-din Aibak. In time, Aibak used Delhi as a vital base, and turned his attention against states and groups resisting Ghoride suzerainty during c. AD 1195-1203, including several campaigns against Rajasthani states).

Hariraj's commander took Delhi, but was later driven out of it. Hariraj eventually took his own life by fire, after being besieged within Ajmer's fort by Aibak's forces, with no resolution or external assistance in sight. However, by then Hariraj's determined exertions had already forced his nephew, Govindaraj, into vacating Ajmer around the end of the twelfth century. Govindaraj established himself at Ranthambore, from where he ruled as a semi-independent chief.

OTHER RULING FAMILIES AND CLANS OF RAJASTHAN UP TO C. AD 1200

Towards the closing years of the twelfth century, the Nadol branch of Chauhans, who had at one-time enjoyed prestige, was led by Jaitsimha. He initially held out against the forces led by Ghor's able general, Qutb-ud-din Aibak, in AD 1196. However, Jaitsimha was soon forced to vacate both the fortified towns of Nadol and Pali. Forming an alliance with the Chalukyas and the Abu Parmars — all erstwhile adversaries — the Chauhans and their allies were defeated by Qutb-ud-din Aibak's forces at the battle of Kasahrada (1197), in which Jaitsingh lost his life. By AD 1231, though, Nadol had passed into the hands of Udaysimha, the ruler of Jalore.

Among the other ruling clans of the period were the Badgujars, who lived in parts of the area comprising the modern districts of Alwar and Dausa. Over time, they had to yield further territory and importance to the Kachchwahas in the Dausa area, and in even later centuries, the Khanzadas and Mewatis in the Alwar-Mewat area. In fact, amongst the several views concerning the founding of Alwar, one is that medieval Alwar was established by Aladhurai, a scion of the Kachchwaha family of Amber in VS 1106 (AD 1049), after he had defeated the local Badgujars of that area.

Cunningham's view that in early historic times Alwar was a habitation called Shalvapura has been noted in a previous section. Some Muslim chroniclers have referred to a 'Salmur' or 'Salwar', located in the hills south of Delhi, which some suggest may be identified with Alwar. The re-use of older, often long-abandoned, habitation sites is a facet of human history. Thus, there is a possibility that Alwar was an earlier habitation site, perhaps of the Shalvas in early historical times, which was re-inhabited in later centuries, possibly due to the same geographical, ecological and, perhaps, economic, factors which had made it a suitable habitation site in an earlier era. This may have happened on more than one occasion, hence the popular beliefs linking the founding of medieval Alwar with different individuals or groups. One view holds that the Nikumba Rajputs built the fort and old town of Alwar; another that Nadol's chief Alhan founded Alwar¹⁷⁵.

In their turn, the Kachchwahas would, during the course of the ensuing centuries, rise to occupy a place of significance not just in the region, but also in the politics of India as a whole. The Kachchwahas are believed to have established their hold in the territory of Dhoondhar (comprising portions of the Jaipur-Alwar-Dausa area of eastern Rajasthan) sometime around c. eleventh-twelfth centuries AD. The fifth Kachchwaha ruler of Dhoondhar is believed to have fought and died at the Second Battle of Tarain as a feudatory of Prithviraj III. (We shall look at the Kachchwahas of Dhoondhar in detail further in this text).

Meanwhile, the Chandellas of Revasa, the Daliyas, and the Dahiya held power — perhaps in succession — in the region of Maroth (old Maharoth; also Maharashtra-nagar¹⁷⁶), and Parbatsar, probably as feudatories of the Chauhans. (The Daliyas appear to have been a sub-group of the Chauhans, and took their name from an ancestor called Dala. The Maroth area was once known as 'Dalati' after these Daliya Rajputs).

The terms 'Dadhichik', 'Dahiyak' and 'Dadhich' have been used for the Dahiya in literary references. According to the Kinsariya Inscription (found from the village of Kinsariya in the Jodhpur division), datable to AD 999, the Dahiya originated from the sage Dadhichi. They were feudatories of the Chauhans. The inscription provides a partial dynastic history of this

clan, listing the names of Meghnad, Vairi Singh and Chach. It was Chach, son of Vairi Singh, who had the temple of Kevaya-mata (Bhavani) built in AD 999. Chach's elder son was Jagadhar Rawal, while his younger son was Vilhan. The latter is still remembered in local traditions, and apparently held sway over the entire Maroth region, with his capital at Depara, some six kilometres from Maroth, where an old fort still stands.

The Dahiya continued to find mention in the ensuing era too, as attested by an inscription of AD 1215 from Manglana (Jodhpur), which provides a genealogical list of the names of the *Mahamandaleshwars* Kaduvraja, Padmasimha, Maharaja, and Jaitrasimha of the Dadhichacka family, and indicates that Jaitrasimha was apparently a feudatory of King Valhandev Chauhan of Ranthambore. A later commemoration-pillar, situated near the Vaya-mata temple at Maroth, which dates to AD 1243, refers to Vikram, son of Dahiya Kirti Singh, and his queen, Naeel Devi. (Later, the Dahiya seem to have lost Maroth to the Gaur Rajputs, in memory of which Maroth and its surrounding villages have yet another alternative name, that of 'Gaurati' also 'Gorawati', meaning 'land of the Gaur'!)

One tradition even holds that the Janglu area of western Rajasthan, in particular the town of Janglu (old Jangalakupadurg, also Ajaypur, both terms being used in inscriptions dating to AD 1176), was settled by the Dahiya during the era of Prithviraj Chauhan of Ajmer. According to this tradition, when Ajaya-dey, a Dahiya chieftain's daughter from Rinot, was travelling with her entourage to Ajmer to be married to King Prithviraj, the party traversed through the (then) uninhabited Jangal area. Deciding that the area should be peopled, Ajaya-dey ordered the construction of a fort, which was named Ajaypur after her, and where several of her Dahiya escorts were asked to make their permanent home for ever after. While the truth of the tale is undetermined, and it is more plausible that Ajaypur/ Jangalakupadurg was founded by Ajayraj Chauhan, who also established Ajmer (Ajaydurg or Ajaymeru), and whose coins have been found as far north-west as Bhatner (now Hanumangarh), it is an indication of the popular perspective regarding the erstwhile spread of the Dahiya clan.

It is, indeed, possible that the Dahiya held the area of Janglu during the twelfth century, accepting the overlordship of the Chauhans of Shakambhari-Ajmer. Following the collapse of the Shakambhari-Ajmer kingdom at the end of the twelfth century, it seems that Janglu was held for a while by local Chauhan chiefs, for an inscription dated AD 1231 from Rayasimra records the demise of Chief Vikram Singh Chauhan, son of Lakhan¹⁷⁷. As it is known that the Sankhla — a sub-clan of the Parmars, eventually came to rule over Janglu and its surrounding lands, it is possible that Rai-Si (Rai Singh) Sankhla, son of Mahipal, seized the area from the above-mentioned Vikram Singh Chauhan. (It appears that one of the sublines of the Sankhla also flourished at Roon (Runa), in what would eventually be part of Marwar's territory, where the chiefs used the title of 'Rana').

The Dahiya, interestingly enough, find mention on a pillar inscription from Jhalrapatan in south-eastern Rajasthan too. The inscription mentions the names of one 'Dahiya *Rautta* Bhivasiha', and his son, '*Rautta* Uda', both of whom may have been local rulers during the twelfth century. Popular belief ascribes the original construction of the fort of Jalore to the Dahiya too. The Dahiya obviously retained some importance even into the seventeenth century AD, for Nainsi, writing in his famous *Khyat*, associated the areas of Derawar, Parbatsar, Sawar, Ghatiyani, Harsaur and Maroth with the land of the Dahiya Rajputs. All these sites had a long antiquity.

(One early name of Harsaur, the extant remains of which go back to circa ninth century AD at the very least, is Harshapura. It has been identified with the Harshapura built by a daughter of the Hun princess, Hariya-Devi and King Allata of Mewar in the tenth century, mentioned in the VS 1034 (AD 977) Atpur Inscription of Shakti Kumar¹⁷⁸. Seventeenth century Jain treatises link its antiquity to a first century BC city ruled by one king Subhattapal. However, there is a paucity of historical or archaeological data to support this view at present! Harsaur and its surrounding territory formed part of the dominion of the Chauhans of Shakambhari-Ajmer from about the eleventh century AD onwards. The Dahiya may have administered the area on behalf of the Chauhans. Later, Harsaur passed into Muslim hands, and still later was occupied by Rathore

Rajputs, before becoming part of the *sarkar* (or province) of Ajmer under Akbar, and then passing into the possession of the Kumpavats, Mertia-Rathores, and, finally, the state of Marwar).

(The dates of the earlier among these political transitions are uncertain. However, an inscription of AD 1538 at the '*chhatri*' [cenotaph] marking the death of one Rathore ruler called Abhairav is significant; that being the general time-period when a famed ninth century Brahma temple was destroyed. An inscription of AD 1182 records endowments made to this already established famous temple. A subsequent inscription of AD 1542 states that a water-tank was excavated at the site where the Brahma temple had formerly stood, and its inaugural rites were performed by Queen Khulhaa Bhattiyani, the Bhati clan wife of the local Rathore king, Kalyanmal¹⁷⁹. Oral, epigraphical, sculptural and architectural evidence indicates that Jainism and Brahmanical religion flourished at Harsaur over the ages. To these were added the *Nath-panth* and other belief systems in later years).

Besides the Dahiyas, Sankhlas, and others, the Yadavas (part of the ancient Surasenas), who traced their ancestry from Yadu, son of King Yayati of the lunar lineage, were important too during this period. As already mentioned, they were active for several centuries in the Bharatpur, Mathura, Bayana and Kaman area, and later became established in the Dholpur-Karauli area too. While the exact history remains a matter of further research, it is believed that one of the rulers of the numerous Surasena branches was a King Ichhapal, who ruled over Mathura and its hinterland around AD 879. (It is not certain what was his precise relationship with the chief named Kulachand, who ruled Mahaban (near Mathura), with its strong forts and army, in 1018, when Mahmud Ghazni attacked the area, and defeated and killed Kulachand).

One of Ichhapal's descendants was the eleventh century AD, King Vijaypal, who eventually moved his capital from Mathura to the safety of the Mani hills (near present-day Bayana), in the face of frequent invasions and incursions, including that of Mahmud of Ghazni, which the ancestral capital was facing. (This Vijaypal seems identical with the king Vijayadhiraj mentioned in the AD 1043 Bayana inscription). Here he built

the Vijaygarh (or Vijay-Mandirgarh) fort around AD 1040-1041 at the site of Bayana (or Shripat, as Bayana was called in two eleventh century AD inscriptions).

Some details about the '*Parambhattaraka*' King Vijaypal, including the name of his son and successor, Tawanpal (Tahanpal), are provided in his Bayana Inscription of c. 1043. Khyat writers have referred to his conflict with the Ghaznavides¹⁸⁰. Vijaypal lost his life, and his new fort, in an encounter with the Ghaznavides in AD 1093. According to some traditional bardic accounts, out of Vijaypal's eighteen sons, Gajapal and his successors settled in Jaisalmer area, and Madanpal founded Mandarela where he built a fort, while Tahanpal (or Tribhuvanpala, also referred to as Tawanpal) succeeded Vijaypal.

Tahanpal (r.?1093-1140?), embarking on a fresh bid for power, constructed a strategically located new fort — known after him as Tribhuvangiri — or Tahangarh (also Tawangarh; now being called 'Timangarh'), some twenty-three kilometres to the south of Bayana. This fort was situated in the midst of hills and thick forests, and apparently took about ten years to be built. (Enclosing some eight square kilometres area within its fortificatory walls, Tahangarh is a typical medieval fortress-town with palaces, wells (like the '*nanad-bhaujai-ka-kua*'), ponds and water-reservoirs, houses of ordinary citizens, temples and gardens etc. There is also a main market-street, *chowk*, barracks for soldiers, a granary, stables, an armoury, and stores for foodstuff, oil, fodder etc. The fortifications protected the entire town within its walls. These defence walls were reinforced with bastions, battlements and watchtowers. The wall was pierced by two main gateways – the Jagan-Prol and the Surya-Prol). The site is mentioned in many later Jain texts as a place of learning, temples and prosperity. One Jain scholar had written that the prosperity of Tribhuvangiri could be compared only with that attainable in heaven! Tahangarh was also a major centre of Saivism, particularly of the Pashupati sect during the twelfth century.

Consolidating local possessions, Tahanpal proceeded to extend his sway over some tracts that are today divided amongst the administrative districts of Alwar, Bharatpur, Karauli, Dholpur, Agra, Gwalior and

Mathura. It seems that by AD 1133, Tahanpal had assumed the title of ‘*Parambhattarka Maharajadhiraj Parmeshwara*’.

His successors included Dharampal (founder of Dholpur), Ajaypal and Kumarapal (Kunwarpal). It is possible that the latter two were contemporaries who ruled over separate areas, since Kumarapal (Kunwarpal) was ruling Tribhuvangiri (Tahangarh) in AD 1157, when the Jain *acharya* Jinachandra-Suri visited it; while the Mahaban Prashasti Inscription found near Mathura mentions a king Ajaypal who ruled there in AD 1150. This Ajaypal was succeeded by his son, Haripal. This is clear from an inscription of AD 1170 from Mahaban, which dates from Haripal’s reign. Haripal was succeeded by Sahanpal, as is attested by yet another local inscription — this time dating to AD 1183. As such, it would seem that the Surasenas/Yadavas remained a force to be reckoned with across different parts of the Mathura-Bharatpur-Bayana area almost up till the closing years of the twelfth century.

In 1196, the long reign of Kumarapal (Kunwarpal) ended when the forts of Tawangarh and Vijay-Mandirgarh (Bayana), as well as their surrounding region, was occupied by Muhammad of Ghor (Shihabuddin Muizzuddin Muhammad bin-Sam Ghori). Recovery from this blow took time. As a result, the Bayana-Tahangarh branch of Surasenas/Yadavas became reduced to the position of relatively marginal fief-holders for the time being. The fall of Tahangarh and its ruler, Kumarapal, finds mention in two near-contemporary accounts — Hasan Nizami’s *Taj-ul-Maasir*, and Minhaz-us-Siraj’s *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*.

Nizami’s *Taj-ul-Maasir* informs us that in the year 592 of the *Hijri* calendar (i.e. AD 1196), Muhammad bin-Sam Ghori, and his lieutenant Qutb-ud-din Aibak marched towards Thangar [Tahangarh]. Thereafter, noted Nizami, that centre of idolatry became the abode of [God’s] glory, following the taking of the hitherto impregnable fortress and the defeat of the local ruler, Kunwarpal (Kumarapal), whose life was spared¹⁸¹. The administration of the fort and area around it was then conferred on Baha-ud-din Tughril by the Sultan. In a like manner, the *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*¹⁸² records that Sultan Ghazi Muizzuddin [Muhammad Ghori] conquered the fortress of Thankar [Tahangarh] in the country of Bayana, and after dealing

with the Rai [i.e. Raja], gave the governance of it into the hands of Baha-ud-din Tughril. The latter improved the condition of the land so much that merchants and men of credit came to it from many parts of Hindustan and Khorasan. To encourage them to settle, they were given houses and goods in the area. Baha-ud-din Tughril later established Sultankot (near Bayana), and made that his military-base and residence¹⁸³.

Around the same time, as a result of Muhammed Ghori's successful campaigns in the Mathura-Bharatpur area at the end of the twelfth century, some of the other migrating Yadavas (old Surasenas) established themselves in the Alwar-Tijara part of eastern Rajasthan. For example, Tijara, situated atop a hill about forty-eight kilometres north-east of present-day Alwar city, is said to have been founded by a Yaduvamshi Raja Tejpal of Sarhata (a habitation some six kilometres from Tijara). Popular belief holds that Tejpal was descended from the Bayana branch of the Yadavas, whose ancestor had left Bayana and established himself around Sarhata in the wake of the attacks and defeats inflicted on the Bayana Yaduvamshis by the Turkish/Muslim forces in the twelfth century. One line of Tejpal's descendants is popularly believed to have eventually converted to Islam, and became referred to as the 'Khanzadas' — literally, sons of Khans, i.e. great leaders — of the Alwar-Mewat area. We shall take up the tale of the Yadavas in greater detail in the following chapter.

Other ruling groups about whom we have some information during this period include the Rashtrakutas of Dhanop and Hastikundi. Of these, the Rashtrakuta branch which had its capital at Hastikundi (later called Hathundi) in the tenth century AD, seems to have been founded by one Harivarma. On the basis of two available dates, we know that Harivarma's son, Vidagdha, was ruling in AD 916, and the latter's son, Manmata, was on the throne in AD 939. Vidagdha is credited with building a temple to the Jain Tirthankar, Rishabh-Dev (Adi-Nath), and giving grants to this temple and to his preceptor, Balaprasad. The grants were renewed by Vidagdha's son and successor, Manmata. Such patronage to Jainism continued over the ensuing generations, and Hastikundi — with its temple of Rata Mahavir, as well as its Hastikundiya-*gachchha* (or sub-group of pontiffs) — became one of the exceeding important centres of Jain pilgrimage and learning. Manmata's son, Dhavala, seems to have been the most powerful of the

Hastikundi Rashtrakuta rulers. Interestingly, he figures most prominently in several accounts as a king at whose court numerous fellow-rulers sought temporary shelter!

For instance, it is known that when the combined forces of the king of Mewar (believed to be Shakti Kumar) and the ‘Lord of the Gurjaras’ — *Gurjaresh* — was defeated by the Parmar king Munja of Dhar, and the Guhila capital of Aghatpur (Ahar) plundered, the vanquished Guhila king sought temporary refuge at the court of King Dhavala of Hastikundi. So did a large part of the army of the ‘Lord of the Gurjaras’ (who seems to have been the Chalukyan ruler Mularaj I of Gujarat). Later, the Chauhan chief, Mahendra of Nadol, following his defeat at the hands of the Shakambhari Chauhan king, Durlabharaj II, sought shelter at Dhavala’s court. The Chavada ruler of Vardhaman, Dharanivarah, (who is known to have been ruling in AD 914 as a vassal of the Pratihara ruler, Mahipal I), was yet another contemporary who was provided asylum by Dhavala when Dharanivarah’s kingdom was invaded and overthrown by the Chalukyan king, Mularaj I. Despite living through such dramatic times, King Dhavala seems to have been strong enough to have kept his kingdom intact, for he was fairly aged when he abdicated the throne in favour of his son, Balaprasad. The latter is known to have been ruling in AD 997. The Rashtrakutas of Hastikundi are associated by some with the ‘Hathundia Rathores’ known in subsequent centuries¹⁸⁴.

Among other groups were the Mohilas of the Chhappar and Dronpur portion of the Bikaner division of north-western Rajasthan. The Mohilas were a sub-branch of the Chauhans, and Nainsi’s seventeenth century *Khyat* informs us that the Mohilas of the Chhappar-Dronpur area - which had become known after the Mohilas as ‘Mohilawati’, had defeated the ‘Bagaria Rajputs’ previously ruling over that area and extended their own mastery over it. In their turn, the Bagaria Rajputs are described as having snatched the area around Dronpur from the ‘Dahliyas’ descendants of a long-ago king named Shishupal.

The Johiyas (Yaudheyas) who were established in parts of north-eastern and northwestern Rajasthan, and various sub-groups of Jats were among other prominent communities dominant at the time. (We shall not go

into the issue of the origin of the Jats here. Suffice it to say that the Jats were, during much of this period, mainly an agriculture and pastoralism-based rural group, with numerous village and 'sub-group' headmen). Other prominent groups during this time included the Dodiya branch of Parmars who, according to Chauhan inscriptions, had formerly controlled the Jahazpur (or Anwalda) and Gagron tracts as feudatories of the Chauhans, and later held the Sardargarh part of Mewar as feudatories of the Guhilas.

The Badgujars who dominated some parts of the Alwar-Dausa region were politically important too, particularly during the c. ninth to c. twelfth century AD period. The site known today as Nilkantha Rajorgarh (after the famous tenth century AD temple of Nilkantha Mahadev built in the Gurjara-Pratihara style), and situated some forty-five kilometres southwest of the district capital of Alwar, is known to have been a large fortified habitation called 'Rajyapur'. (Rajyapur became better known as Parshva-Nagar or Paranagar in later centuries, after a colossal statue raised in honour of the Jain Tirthankar Parshva Nath here. The present-day name of Rajor is derived from Rajyapur).

Rajyapur was a capital of the local Badgujars, who were at the time feudatories of the Imperial Gurjara Pratiharas ruling from Kanauj. The names of two of the tenth century AD Badgujar ruling-chiefs who used Rajyapur as their capital are mentioned in the Rajorgarh (also Rajor) Inscription. One was Savata, who is known to have been master of the town in AD 923, and the other was his son and successor, Mathandeva, who was a vassal of the Gurjara-Pratihara king, Vijayapala in AD 960. Mathandeva, like his ancestors apparently, was a follower of Saivism, and to him goes the credit of building the now renowned temple to Siva at Rajyapur. He called it Lachchukeshvar Mahadeva after his mother, Lachchuka, though in time the temple has become popularly known as Nilkantha Mahadeva, giving its name to the area as Nilkantha Rajorgarh. Local temple records inform us that King Mathandeva gave the village of Vyaghrapataka (present-day Baghor) — with its pasture-lands, trees, grass and produce of grain etc. — as a grant to this temple. Monasteries and resting-houses for ascetics, wandering sages, and pilgrims etc. were also provided. Rajyapur was a centre of activity for the Jains too, and an inscription dating to VS 979 (AD 923), during the reign of Mathandeva's predecessor, King Savata,

records the construction of a temple and the installation of the statue of the Jain Tirthankar Shanti Nath at Rajyapur by one Sarvadeva, son of Dedullaka and grandson of Arbhata, of the Dharkata family¹⁸⁵.

It is held that among the chiefs of the Badgujar line of Rajyapur was one Ajaypal, who lived in the tenth century and to whom is ascribed the founding of the nearby town of Ajabgarh. An inscription of AD 1152, located in Rajyapur's temple to Chaturbhujanath, refers to the installation of the idol of Vishnu in his Chakaraswami form by Valhana, Nalhana, Arjuna and others, who were sons of one Delhana and grandsons of a dedicated Vishnu devotee named Ralhana, during the reign of one Prithvipala¹⁸⁶.

Also significant were the Nikunpa (Nikumba, Nikumbha) Rajputs of Alwar-Jaipur, who had seized the Alwar area from the Badgujars; and the Gaur Rajputs, who seem to have once been powerful Chauhan feudatories, particularly in the Juniya, Sawar, Devaliya, Rajgarh, and Srinagar parts of Ajmer, as well as around Maroth.

The Nikunpa (Nikumba) Rajputs of the Alwar-Jaipur area are believed to have had a major centre at Abhanagari, present-day Abaneri, before they made Alwar their capital. To an eighth century AD king, Chandra or Chand of this dynasty, who finds mention in both local traditions and Jain '*pattavali*' texts, is ascribed the architecturally famous Chand *baori* (step-well) at Abaneri, with its exquisite sculptures. Some versions hold that later the Nikumba Rajputs founded Alwar, and ascribe the fort and town to them. Other traditions believe that they took the town from the descendants of the Kachchwaha chief Alhadurai, who had made Alwar his base in VS 1106 (AD 1049), after subduing the local Badgujars. Later, the Nikumbas apparently lost Alwar to the Badgujar Rajputs of Macheri, also spelt as Machheri. An inscription of AD 1382 lists among the ancestors of Macheri's Asala-dev the chiefs Matsya-dev, Pipala-dev, and Jagannath. Matsya-dev is credited not just with making Macheri the capital of his line, but also wresting Alwar from the Nikumbas.

Scattered references indicate smaller political units too. For example, an eleventh century inscription from Jhalarapatan (Chandrawati) records the

names of ‘Raja Shri’ Kusum-dev and his father, ‘Raja Shri’ Balhan-deva. Unfortunately, other dynastic etc. details are not available, and another inscription from Jhalarapatan, dating to VS 1143 AD or 1086, records that the Parmar ruler Udayaditya of Dhar was master of the region at that period.

ASPECTS OF THE ART AND ARCHITECTURE, RELIGIOUS TRENDS, AND ADMINISTRATIVE AND ECONOMIC PRACTICES IN RAJASTHAN DURING THE C. AD 1000-1200 PERIOD

We have already noted the art tradition that had developed in Rajasthan during the period that the Imperial Pratiharas held a position of supremacy over many parts of this region. Art and architecture thrived across the Rajasthan region in the ensuing centuries too. There was a basic commonality of style, as Hindu and Jain statues in the ‘post-Gupta style’, and temples to Siva, Vishnu, Shakti, Surya, the Jain Tirthankars, etc., and the other deities were made in different parts of Rajasthan. However, local artists and materials ensured an individuality and the development of sub-regional stylistic traits within the overall accepted tradition.

The Delwara complex of temples in the Abu region — especially the Jain Vimal Vasahi temple of AD 1031, and the Luna Vasahi one of AD 1231, are among the much-discussed examples of the heritage of Rajasthan during this period. Other notable architectural remains spanning this general period onwards, include those at Kiradu, Barmer, Pallu, Bijolia, Bhand-Devra, Abu, Bhinmal, Sambhar, Phalodi, Ajmer, Nagaur, Nagda, Harshad-mata (Sikar), Sanganer, Ranthambore, Ghanerao, Jalore, Chandrawati-Jhalarapatan, etc.

Meanwhile, Buddhism continued to lose its hold in Rajasthan, even though there are references to Buddha and Buddhist ‘*bhikkus*’ (monks) in eighth century Jain works from Rajasthan. At the same time, Jainism continued to grow in strength. This was partly because of the role of reformer-preachers like Haribhadra Suri of Chittor, who moulded Jainism to fit in with the realities of his contemporary world. From the c. 700 period onwards, the Jain usage and adaptation of ‘Hindu’ iconography and vice-

versa is also noticeable. One example is the eighth century statue of Kuber from Bansi (near Chittor), which depicts a Jain Tirthankar in the coiffeur and another above Kuber's head. One may also take cognisance of the idol of 'Sacchiya Mata', which attracts thousands of Jain pilgrims every year to her shrine in Osian in western Rajasthan. Scholars have established that this was originally a '*Mahishasura-mardini*' idol ('Great Goddess slaying the Demon-Buffalo') of Hinduism. Jain texts and traditions state that she was a fierce goddess to whom animal sacrifices and wine was offered as oblations, until the revered Jain teacher, Ratnaprabh Suri, converted her to her present benign form, and to vegetarianism and Jainism¹⁸⁷. Jain adaptations have used other 'Hindu' deities in a transformed manner, including as door-keepers and attendants of the Tirthankars.

Around this time, composite iconographic forms became established as part of the sculptural tradition in different parts of Rajasthan. Examples of this may be noted at Osian, for instance, where the trend of idols like Hari-Hara, combining Vishnu and Siva, may be seen. At least one type of composite or syncretic image, that of 'Surya-Hari-Hara-Pitamah' (the Sun, Vishnu, Siva and Brahma), occurs mainly in Rajasthan, besides some parts of Central India and Gujarat. Other examples include two statues made by combining Chandra (the Moon) and Kuber installed as one of the Eight *Dikapalas* or Guardians of the Eight Directions¹⁸⁸. The first is a tenth century two-armed figure from Dhod, and the second is a twelfth century four-armed one from the Menal temple-complex (both in erstwhile Mewar), holding the attributes of both Chandra and Kuber.

The sculptural depiction of the twenty-four Vishnu emanations or *vyuhus* (also called *ayudha-purushas*), also date from around the tenth century AD onwards in Rajasthan. In Mewar, these sculptures were mainly carved on door-jambes, lintels etc., within Vishnu temples up till the sixteenth century. Among the other deities, frequently depicted images included those of Vishnu incarnations, Siva, Surya, the mother-goddesses, Brahma, the Jain Tirthankars, etc. However, these were by no means the only depictions preserved in stone or metallic form, and mention has already been made of sculptures of Nagas, particularly from the site of old Dhavalapuri — i.e. modern Dholpur. Among the human and serpent-formed Naga sculpture found from Dhavalapuri, a six-hooded Naga, a Nagini

depicted as part woman and part serpent, and the Naga idol king, Sivaditya have attracted considerable attention from art-historians.

The importance of Surya (the sun) can be gauged by the splendid Sun temples constructed in different parts of Rajasthan. Special mention may be made of the Sun temple at Jhalarapatan (about five kilometres from the town of Jhalawar). This much-discussed temple dates to c. eleventh-twelfth centuries AD. The eleventh-twelfth century Sun temple known as 'Budhadit' (literally 'Old Sun'), which has lent its name to the adjacent village of Budhadit, provides a good example of statues and a shrine connected with sun worship too. It is situated about sixty kilometres from Kota, in the Digod tehsil of Kota district.

Rajasthan seems to have had a tradition for illustrated manuscripts too by this time, as testified by a few extant examples that may still be seen. Among these is the illustrated *Samarach-katha* by the Jain monk Haribhadra Suri, written on palm-leaf/bark — *tar h-patra* — at Chittor during the eighth century AD, Uddyotan Suri's *Kuvalyamala*, and the c. AD 1060 illustrated *Audhniryukta-Vriti*, written in Prakrit. The tradition was to flourish further in the ensuing centuries, and includes an illustrated manuscript of the *Kalpa-Sutra* completed in AD 1150.

This general period also saw the development of many towns, boroughs (*qasba*), trading posts, administrative centre and hill-forts, as various ruling dynasties added to established settlements and capitals, or built new ones. (In fact, the statement is applicable to the period between c. AD 700-1200 as a whole). These habitations included Nagda, Ahar (Aghatpur), Chatsu, Arthuna, Chandravati-Abu, Chandrawati-Jhalarapatan, Lodrava, Bhinmal, Jalore (Jabalipur), Mandore (Mandavyapur), Sambhar (Shakambhari), Chittor (Chitrakut), Ajmer (Ajay-meru), Jaisalmer, Sanchore, Nagaur (Ahichchhatrapura), Phalodi (Phalavardhika), Pali, Nadol, Sandera, Nadlai, Korta, Khed, Dholpur, Didwana, Bayana, and Jaisalmer, to name but a few. Fortification appears to have been an important aspect for the protection of these places, as is testified by textual references, as well as by the ancient remains of much repaired and renovated old city and fort walls at these sites¹⁸⁹.

The towns and townships did not spring up haphazardly, though, and epigraphs and literary references indicate that there seem to have been certain rules for planning and layout of towns. (Though perhaps not as clearly prescribed in the regional or local texts of this period) Not just that, it appears that Ingoda *qasba* and Delwara had planned areas for different castes and occupational groups e.g., a ‘Brahmapuri’ for Brahmins, and so forth¹⁹⁰. The several urban centres of this period possess water-tanks or *kund*, wells, roads, temples, and other structural remains.

The towns and larger settlements appear to have served as administrative seats as well as market-towns, or sometimes larger trade-centres. It is significant that towns and administrative capitals along the long-established trade-routes, including the ones running through desert-areas, remained vulnerable to attack, since possession of these aided control of the routes and associated markets, merchandise and taxes. That trade was obviously profitable — even if subject to the usual dangers of that activity, and the items of a wide variety, can be judged from the goods mentioned in different literary sources.

Dasharatha Sharma culled through literary and epigraphic sources to list wheat, the *moong* lentil and other lentils (pulses), resin, oil, betel leaves, spices, salt, *manjishtha* (red madder), horses, textiles, coral, camphor, musk, sandalwood, the *agar* incense, nutmeg, coconuts, sugar and jaggery (molasses), pepper, ivory, by-products of the *Mahua* (*B. Latifolia*) tree, and dates, as being among the trade-goods that passed through Rajasthan¹⁹¹. As may be judged from the above list, not all the items were locally produced. Many of these were goods from other regions that either came to Rajasthan’s markets, or transitted through the area as they were moved along trade-routes to better, more profitable, markets.

(This may be an appropriate point to digress briefly regarding one of the above trade-items — namely, textiles. Like its neighbouring states of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, and the Pakistani province of Sindh, Rajasthan has had a long connection with textiles, including hand-held block printing, embroidery, weaving and dyeing. Though few ancient examples survive, early records provide us with some limited information about this aspect of life. References in

literary works and art depictions indicate that woven and embroidered wall-hangings and floor coverings etc. were probably known, as was printed and plain cloth of different types. Vegetable and indigo dyes were known, as was red madder. Oral and literary traditions speak of weavers and fabric dyers in both urban and rural contexts. Some of the fabrics and textures described in literature indicate that a wide variety of textiles, including imported silk was known to the extremely privileged¹⁹²).

The rich trade was probably one reason why the coinage prevalent during this general period of c. AD 700-1200 ranges from gold to copper, and even the humble *cowrie* shell. Literature and epigraphs mention the prevalence of gold coins known as '*dinar*' and '*suvarna*' (this latter being 80 *ratti* or 144 gms in weight), silver '*dramma*' and '*rupaka*' — including those called '*Ajayapriya-dramma*', '*Ajayapriya-rupaka*', '*Visalapriya-dramma*', besides '*Gurjari-mudra*' and other gold, silver and copper coins used in different areas.

Among other aspects of life during this period, there is evidence for irrigated agriculture in some villages, and for land-revenues being collected in kind, besides other kinds of taxation. The different titles of various administrative officers and of land or territorial units too are available from different epigraphs and textual references.

Many rulers used titles like *Maharaja*, *Nripa*, *Nripa-pati*, *Bhup*, during this c. AD 700-1200 period, while others, depending on the ascending fortunes of their dynasty and state, also adopted more flamboyant additional titles like *Parambhattarka*, *Maharajadhiraja*, *Parmeshwara*, *Rajendra*, etc. Epigraphs and texts tell us that the queens gave charitable grants, and were often addressed by the title of *Rajni*. Reference has already been made to the fact that Ajayraj Chauhan's queen Somala Devi issued coins in her name — though this was apparently not the usual practice. The crown-prince, or heir-apparent — variously referred to as *Yuvraj* or *Maharaj-Putra* — seems to have exercised certain administrative powers.

Interestingly, some epigraphs indicate that members of a ruler's family occasionally issued land-grants in their own right, out of the lands held by them. An example of this is recorded in the Harshanath Inscription

of VS 1030, which states that the Princes Chandanraj and Govindaraj, sons of King Simharaj Chauhan, gave away donations out of the ‘*Sva bho apta*’ — or lands held by them for their own use. The brothers had sealed the grant with the words ‘*Sva hasta ankit Shasanam*’ — indicating that they were ‘marking’ or recording the gift with the sign of their own hands. However, from other records it is not always clear whether such lands were inherited or gifted areas to younger sons and other members of a ruling family as free-holds, or as fief-holdings.

Subordinate chiefs appear to have enjoyed local autonomy, subject to overall loyalty to their liege-lord, during this c. AD 700-1200 period. They apparently had their own courts and councils, mirroring the situation at the court of their sovereign. This would seem to be a tradition that may be noted in the ensuing periods of Rajasthan’s history too, when the local fief-holder and *thakurs* etc. replicated and echoed the administrative, social and economic patterns of their overlord in their own territories. The Jain *Kharatara-gacchha-pattavali* refers to the presence of several subordinate chiefs at the court of Prithviraj III Chauhan. The Bijolia Inscription of VS 1226 indicates that the Chauhan court knew two categories of ‘*samanta*’ or subordinate chiefs. One group had fief-lands in the ‘Sapadalaksha’ and ‘Uparmal’ area, and the other were vassal-chiefs from lands newly vanquished by the Chauhan armies. The latter were required to help their sovereign in battle when required, and to give a certain sum of money in token of their subjugated status.

Among the administrative officers, one comes across terms like *mantri*, *maha-mantri*, *sarvadhikari*, *sachiva*, etc. used for ministers and administrative heads. The *senapati* (army commander), *sadhanika* (cavalry commander), *baladhipa* (leaders of contingents), *sandhi-vigrahaka* (minister for war and treaties, i.e. external affairs), *rathanaka* (commanders of chariot divisions), etc. were obviously important. Other officials and functionaries included the *mandaleshwar* (incharge of a ‘mandal’ land-unit), *tantra-pala*, *pratihara*, *pratisarika*, *sutaka*, *akshapattalika*, etc.

One also comes across terms like ‘*pancha-kula*’, which seem akin to the ‘panchayat’ or five-member village councils known from various other eras and areas of South Asia. The mercantile community had its own

version of a 'Mahajan-Sabha' or guild to handle matters. Among other groups of that period, inscriptions etc. refer to Vaishyas and Jains, *shresthi* — merchants and traders, 'Kayasthas', Brahmins, sects like the Saivite Lakulish groups, Jain teachers and their followers, etc. Texts like Jinadatta Suri's *Charchari* and *Upadesha-Rasayana-Rasa*, and Abdul Rehman's *Sandesh-Rasaka* indicate that dramas based on religious tales were enacted in towns and villages.

One may add a few lines here about the post-Gupta 'Rajput' social system. As in earlier times amongst warrior-groups, the immediate clan was the basis of the socio-political entity of the concerned groups. The Rajput clans — once again, in common with the way earlier groups had viewed their ancestry — traced their descent from a common ancestor, whether historical or mythical. In time, the 'Rajput' clans and their off-shoots would come to dominate a tract of land, but this too, is something we have already observed in the case of the Malavas, Yaudheyas etc. who were politically dominant over parts of Rajasthan during earlier centuries. The kings and chiefs generally allocated lands in villages or settlements to kin and subordinates as fiefs for their maintenance. Service and loyalty was expected in lieu of the grant of fiefs. Fief-holders, in turn, usually further sub-allocated lands and villages to lesser local landholders and individuals, once again with conditions and reservations. Lands given to temples, or to Brahmins or Jain sects for religious duties, were usually free from obligations of payment of taxes to the state. Often, other taxes and revenues were charged at lower rates from Brahmins and any individuals or other groups entitled to special grant-remittances.

Certain texts and epigraphs provide some information about land taxes etc. While this may not have applied uniformly across all of Rajasthan, it provides a window to possible practices. For instance, some lands were apparently classed as *Samakar bhumi* on which a fixed tax was collected. There were also categories recognised as *Udakhil bhumi* (uncultivated land) and *Pochil bhumi* (soft soil), etc. Prithviraj III Chauhan's Phalodi Inscription of VS 1236 refers to 1/5th of gross produce being collected as land-revenue, along with terms like *Udarang* (permanent tenants), etc. This gives an indication of the land-revenue system of the period.

Some of these practices would change marginally over the next few centuries, in part under the influence of the Delhi Sultanate that came into being at the *fin de siècle* of the twelfth century, and later under the influence of the Mughal court. However, to a large extent, the practices and traditions that were to prevail in the area we know as Rajasthan would draw their roots from established customs and trends, as we shall see further in this book.

RAJASTHAN AT THE END OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY AD

By the close of the twelfth century, the Chauhans of Shakambhari-Ajmer-Delhi — masters of *Sapadalaksha* and parts of northern India — were a broken power. Ghori's forces controlled several parts of modern-day Rajasthan, with the Ajmer and Nagaur areas being major centres of their domination. The former Chauhan capital of Shakambhari (modern Sambhar) too had passed into the hands of Ghori's armies. And Delhi, which had been one of the chief cities, if not, on occasions, an alternative capital, of the Chauhans would soon become the capital of a new Sultanate that would be based at that city.

Ranthambore was ruled by a scion of Prithviraj III under Ghori's suzerainty, the Chauhans of Jalore under the strong Udaysimha were more or less independent, and the Guhilas of Mewar — ascending from their period of eclipsed power — were on their way to greater eminence under Jaitrasimha. The Bhatias, too, continued to rule in the Jaisalmer area. As regards the Parmars of Abu; despite their defeat (along with the Chalukyas of Gujarat and Nadol Chauhans) by Qutb-ud-din Aibak at the battle of Kasahrada, the Parmars retained Abu, still acknowledging Chalukyan suzerainty as before.

The mastery of large sections of Rajasthan was once more open to anyone who had the strength, ability and guile to achieve it, or not, as the case may be. The field was wide open and the thirteenth century stretched ahead,

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- ¹ See works like J.N. Asopa's *Origin of the Rajputs*, Bharatiya Publishing House, Delhi, 1976, pp.4-9, among others. "Nearly all the kingdoms", V.A. Smith noted in *The Oxford History of India*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, [2nd ed. 1922, pp.172], "were governed by families or clans which for ages past have been called collectively Rajputs. That term, the most generally used, is sometimes replaced by Chhatttri, the vernacular equivalent of the Sanskrit Kshatriya, or by Thakur".
- ² The ancient Surasenans of the Mathura-Bayana area were by this time better known as Yadavas. Still later they would also be called Jadons, Judus, etc. They thrived in the Mathura-Bayana area in c. seventh-tenth centuries AD.
- ³ Also called Suvarna-giri and Kanchan-giri, both meaning 'Golden Hill', after the name of the local hill.
- ⁴ Devra (op.cit. 1999, pp. 371-382) has discussed the march-routes of the Chazni and Ghor chiefs, as well as traditional trade-links, and the activities of the locally dominant groups of this Thar-Parkar desert region.
- ⁵ For more on the Gujarat Chalukyas, see Majumdar (Ed.) *The Age of Imperial Kanauj*, Vol. IV, Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, Bombay, 1955, pp.104-106, and *The Struggle for Empire*, Vol. V, Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, Bombay, 1957, pp.74-81; as well as D. Sharma *Rajasthan Through the Ages*, 1966, among others.
- ⁶ For more on the Malwa Parmars, see Majumdar (Ed.) *The Age of Imperial Kanauj*, Vol. IV, 1955, pp.94-99, and *The Struggle for Empire*, Vol. V 1957, pp.66-72; and Sharma 1966, among others.
- ⁷ See, M.K. Fredunbeg's translation of *The Chachnamah*, Vanguard Books, Lahore, 1985; and S.A.A. Rizvi *The Wonder That Was India* (Volume II), Rupa & Co., New Delhi, 1993, pp.8-10; among other works.
- ⁸ See *Chachnamah*, 1985; and Rizvi, 1993, pp.11-13; among other works.
- ⁹ See Elliot & Dowson's *The History of India (as told by its own historians)* Vol. I, pp.126, 441-442.
- ¹⁰ D.C. Shukla *Early History of Rajasthan*, 1978, pp.195-196.
- ¹¹ See J.N. Asopa *Origin of the Rajputs*, Bharatiya Pub. House, Delhi, 1976; and B.D. Chattopadhyaya 'The Emergence of the Rajputs as Historical Process in Early Medieval Rajasthan' in K. Schomer et.al. (Eds.) *The Idea of Rajasthan*, Vol.II, American Inst. of Indian Studies, Manohar, Delhi, 1994, pp. 161-191, among others.
- ¹² V.A. Smith, *Early History of India*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1904 [4th edition 1923].
- ¹³ V.A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, [2nd ed. 1922], pp.172-3.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid*, pp.173.
- ¹⁵ C.H. Ojha *Rajputane ka Itihas*, Vol. I, pp.49.

- [16](#) D. Sharma, *Rajasthan Through the Ages*, 1966, pp. 104.
- [17](#) Ojha, *ibid*, pp.72; Dasharatha Sharma, *Early Chauhan Dynasties*, S. Chand & Co. Delhi, 1959, pp.3.
- [18](#) Dasharatha Sharma 1966, pp.105.
- [19](#) V.A. Smith *Oxford History of India*, 1922, pp.173.
- [20](#) *Ibid*, pp.173.
- [21](#) D. Sharma 1966, pp.105.
- [22](#) D. Sharma, *Early Chauhan Dynasties*, S. Chand & Co, Delhi, 1959.
- [23](#) D. Sharma, *Early Chauhan Dynasties*, 1959, pp.3.
- [24](#) Sharma, 1959, pp. 7
- [25](#) *Ibid*.
- [26](#) *Ibid*.
- [27](#) J.N. Asopa, *Origin of the Rajputs*, Delhi, 1976, pp.4-5.
- [28](#) J.N. Asopa, *Origin of the Rajputs*, Delhi, 1976, pp-5.
- [29](#) *Ibid*, 1976, pp.9-10.
- [30](#) B.D. Chattopadhyaya *The Emergence of the Rajputs as Historical Process in Early Medieval Rajasthan* in K. Schomer et.op.cit., Vol.II, 1994, pp. 180-183.
- [31](#) D. Sharma 1966, pp.121.
- [32](#) The term 'Ish' stands for god, king, or lord in Sanskrit.
- [33](#) D. Sharma, 1966, pp.120.
- [34](#) See, Dasharatha Sharma's *Early Chauban Dynasties*, 1959, pp.30.
- [35](#) D. Sharma, 1966, pp. 149-150.
- [36](#) Sharma 1966, pp.154.
- [37](#) It may first have been wrested from the Rashtrakutas by the Chedi ruler, Yuvaraja I.
- [38](#) A makra is a legendary water-dwelling creature, depicted in sculpture as part sea-monster and part-crocodile.
- [39](#) Harle, 1994, pp.148.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ A *Panch-ayatana* is a temple-complex of five (*panch*) shrines (*ayatanas*) of Siva, Vishnu, Shakti, Surya and Ganesh within a single complex. The structure has a central shrine dedicated to one particular deity, with four other shrines, dedicated to the remaining four deities around it. The idol within the central shrine denotes the main deity of that particular *panch-ayatana*. Idols of Siva, Vishnu, Shakti, Surya and Ganesh have a predetermined position in *panch-ayatanas* in accordance with whichever of the five deities is housed in the central shrine. A fifteenth century example of the *panch-ayatana* temple from Kumbhalgarh (Mewar) was erected during Maharana Kumbha's reign and built by the famous architect Mandan.

⁴² Mahmud was later given the title of 'Yamin-ud-Daula', meaning 'the right hand of the State', by the Caliph.

⁴³ S.A.A. Rizvi, in A.L. Basham (ed.) 1975, pp.246.

⁴⁴ Vincent Smith *The Oxford History of India*, pp.191.

⁴⁵ Over the ages, Multan seems to have retained its importance as a major urban centre, the political control of which remained vital for the control of the surrounding tracts. By AD 985 an Ismaili Fatimid dynasty had proclaimed its independence in Multan (from Baghdad's Abbasid Caliphate).

⁴⁶ V.A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, op.cit. pp.191.

⁴⁷ For details see, among others, R.C. Majumdar (Ed.) *Struggle for Empire*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay.

⁴⁸ Devra, *op.cit.*, 1999.

⁴⁹ On his return, the Sultan traversed Sindh, taking a more westerly route than was used for the onward march.

⁵⁰ K.C.Jain, 1972, pp. 243. Sometime after AD 1121, Gujarat's Jaisimha Siddharaja captured Nagaur. It remained in the possession of his successor, Kumarapal, before reverting to Chauhan hands.

⁵¹ The pronunciation of 'Bhati' is common in modern Rajasthan for the Hindus of this clan, while the term 'Bhatti' usually is applied to those of the clan converted to Islam. However, early records clarify that in the past, the term 'Bhatti' was commonly used for Hindus and Muslims alike.

⁵² For the Shvetambara sect of Jainism, a '*gachchha*' indicates a group of monks who (along with lay followers) trace their preceptorial descent from certain eminent monastic acharyas or teachers. Without differing substantively on aspects of doctrine and belief, the *gachchhas* have had varying interpretations of issues of practice, including rituals, and trace their pupillary descent through different spiritual lineages. Over eighty-four separate *gachchhas* are said to have arisen since c. seventh-eighth centuries AD, but only a few have survived as modern orders. These include the Kharatara (located mainly in Rajasthan), Tapa and Anchala *gachchhas*.

- [53](#) See, among others, Jain, 1972, pp.180-184.
- [54](#) Dasharatha Sharma's Early *Chauhan Dynasties*, 1959; besides several other papers.
- [55](#) For more on the Churu sub-region, see G. Agrawal's *Churu Mandal ka Shodhpurna Itihas*, Lok Sanskriti Shodh Sansthan, Nagari-Shri, Churu, 1974.
- [56](#) D. Sharma, 1959, pp.18-19.
- [57](#) D. Sharma, 1959, pp. 18-22.
- [58](#) Some African communities traditionally boiled down vegetable matter to extract its naturally occurring salt.
- [59](#) Salt was used in Egypt over 4000 years ago for flavouring of food, soap-making, embalming, preserving food, meat and skins, and refining silver etc. Besides sodium chloride, or common salt, another naturally occurring sodium salt, sodium carbonate — also known as 'natron', meaning 'holy' in Old Egyptian — was particularly valued by the ancient Egyptians. In South Asia, rock salt or 'haline' has been prized and traded across long distances. Similarly, in various parts of the world, sea salt has remained a valued commodity.
- [60](#) Archaeological work on salt, including production methods, trade-routes and their control, and the role that salt played in the economies of various kingdoms or states of Africa, includes John Alexander's 'Salt production and the salt trade' (1997, pp.535-539), in Vogel [Ed.] *Encyclopedia of Precolonial Africa*, Altamira Press, Walnut Creek.
- [61](#) Tod, *op. cit*, Vol.II, pp. 133.
- [62](#) Salt is still produced at Sambhar.
- [63](#) R.V. Somani *Prithviraj Chauhan and his Times*, Publication Scheme, Jaipur, 1981, pp.5.
- [64](#) D. Sharma, 1959, pp.28.
- [65](#) Though the actual battles in which he took part have not been detailed in the epigraphs.
- [66](#) A figure Dasharatha Sharma (1966) regards as an obvious exaggeration.
- [67](#) D. Sharma 1966, pp.223.
- [68](#) See Jain, 1972, pp.316-320.
- [69](#) Jain, 1972, pp.317.
- [70](#) Tod 1829, vol.1, pp.550.
- [71](#) D. Sharma 1966, pp.223.
- [72](#) Ibid.

- [73](#) D. Sharma, *Early Chauhan Dynasties*, 1959, pp.122.
- [74](#) Jain, 1972, pp.280.
- [75](#) Tod 1829, vol.I, pp.551.
- [76](#) Tod 1829, vol.I, appendix no. VII, pp.630.
- [77](#) Ibid.
- [78](#) There are two inscriptions, dating to AD 1199 and 1201 respectively, for Samantsimha.
- [79](#) Jain, 1972, pp.281.
- [80](#) Qutb-ud-din Aibak was sold into slavery as a child and raised at Nishapur. Later, he came into the possession of Muhammad, and was soon appointed to military command.
- [81](#) Jain, 1972, pp. 282.
- [82](#) See Jain, 1972, pp.278-284.
- [83](#) Located seventy-two kilometres south-east of Jodhpur, Pali has a long history and a recorded association with several religious sects. A major trade-centre, its very name is derived from the term 'town' (Palli). The Paliwals of Pali, and its architecture etc. are described by Jain 1972, pp.292-297, among others.
- [84](#) The British Museum in London reportedly possesses a partly effaced, fragmentary, inscription of Shivagana.
- [85](#) Jain (1972, pp.3, fn.4) has discussed the dispute over the dating of the Dabok Inscription. It was initially read as VS. 807 (AD 750) by D.R. Bhandarkar, and later corrected by him as indicating year 407 of the Gupta era (AD 726-27) Haider read the date as year 207 of the Harsha Era (AD 813), and D.C. Sircar read the date as year 701, which he believed was in Vikram Samvat, which converts to AD 644.
- [86](#) I.e. 'Descendant of the Guhilas'.
- [87](#) D. Sharma 1966, pp.227.
- [88](#) D. Sharma 1966, pp.227.
- [89](#) Tod, Vol.I, pp.181-187.
- [90](#) See Tod, vol.I, appendix no.111, pp.625-627.
- [91](#) Ibid, pp.625.
- [92](#) Ibid, p.626; also pp.187.
- [93](#) Sharma 1966, pp.227. See footnotes on the same page for additional references.

- [94](#) For additional details about Shergarh, see Jain 1972, pp.237-241.
- [95](#) See Majumdar (Ed.) *The Age of Imperial Kanauj*, 1955, pp.94-99, & 1957, pp.66-72.
- [96](#) Sharma, *Early Chauhan Dynasties*, 1959, pp.122.
- [97](#) Architectural, literary, and religious activities at Chandravati are mentioned in Jain, 1972, pp.341-347.
- [98](#) For its architecture, see Jain, 1972, pp.347-349, among others.
- [99](#) G.H. Ojha (1936) *History of Rajputana: History of the Dungarpur State*. Vol.III, Pt.I, Ajmer, pp.23-24.
- [100](#) C.H. Ojha, *History of Rajputana: History of the Banswara State*. Vol.III, Pt.II, Ajmer, pp.38, 1937.
- [101](#) See also, Jain, 1972:353-357.
- [102](#) Ojha, 1936, pp.31.
- [103](#) Ojha, 1936, pp.53.
- [104](#) Jain, 1972, pp.350-353 has summarised the architectural, literary and religious heritage of Barmer.
- [105](#) R.V. Somani, 1.976, *History of Mewar*, Mateshwari Pub., Bhilwara, pp.47.
- [106](#) See also Allata's name in the listing of the Sisodya-ki-Vamshavalli, Ms.No.132, Tod Collection, Royal Asiatic Society, London, cited in a previous chapter.
- [107](#) Among others, see Jain 1972, pp.219-224; and Hooja 1988. The Jain text *Rasa-Samgraha*, and an *in situ* inscription in a temple to Tirthankar Parshvanath at Ahar, record that the minister of King Allata constructed the temple at Aghatpur and installed an image of Parshvanath within it. The temple inscription informs us that Mayura, Shripati and Mattata served as *Akshapatalikas* to the kings Allata, Naravahana and Shakti Kumar, respectively.
- [108](#) Among the famed scholars of the tenth century was Mewar-born Vagabhatta, author of *Kavya-Anushasan*.
- [109](#) The Pashupat sect, particularly popular in the Gupta period, was founded in AD first century by Lakulish.
- [110](#) Cited in Jain, 1972, pp.215.
- [111](#) G.H. Ojha *Rajputane ka Itihas–History of Udaipur*. Vol.1, pp.445-46.
- [112](#) Ojha, *ibid*, pp.446-47; and Ojha 1911 [rep. 1999], p. 121.

- [113](#) Arsi, along with his father Lakhmsi, six brothers and numerous kin, died fighting at the *shaka* of Chittor.
- [114](#) Interestingly, the name of Rana Kumbha's immediate successor, his son and murderer, Uda, is listed in the above-cited manuscript, though tradition says that the parricide's name was removed from genealogical tables.
- [115](#) Ojha, *Rajputane ka Itihas—History of Udaipur*, Vol. I, pp.450-51.
- [116](#) Ojha, *Ibid*, pp.451-53.
- [117](#) The term has been used for several sites in Rajasthan. At some of them, archaeological work has shown evidence of early metal-producing proto-historic sites. The rest remain unexamined!
- [118](#) Jain, 1972, pp.226.
- [119](#) K.C.Jain, 1972, pp.205.
- [120](#) James Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'han*, 1832 [repr. 1957] Vol. II, chapter VII, pp.172.
- [121](#) Tod, *Ibid*, pp. 174-175.
- [122](#) *Ibid*, pp.176.
- [123](#) Tod, *Ibid*, pp.179.
- [124](#) Tod, *Ibid*, pp.180.
- [125](#) Believed by some to be a branch of the Parmars.
- [126](#) According to Rani Laxmi Kumari Chundawat, writer and authority on the oral traditions and legends of Rajasthan, Sindh and Gujarat.
- [127](#) Tod, *op.cit.*, pp.191.
- [128](#) Tod, *Ibid*, pp.192.
- [129](#) Jain, 1972, pp.369-370.
- [130](#) In the ongoing struggle for supremacy between the Ghaznavides and the rulers of the Ghor hill regions between Herat and Kabul, Ghazni's ruler Bahram Shah was defeated in a battle near Tiginabad (Qandhar) by Alauddin Husain '*Jahan-soz*' ('Destroyer of the World'). Bahram Shah fled to the Punjab, leaving the city of Ghazni to be plundered. During Khusrau Shah of Ghazni's reign, the Ghorides reduced Ghaznavide rule to the Punjab area only.
- [131](#) Jain, 1972, pp. 370.
- [132](#) G.N. Sharma, *Rajasthan ka Itihas*, 1998, pp.100; and D. Sharma, *Rajasthan Through the Ages*, 1966, p.281.

- [133](#) G.N. Sharma, 1998, pp.100; and D. Sharma, 1966, pp.281.
- [134](#) Ibid.
- [135](#) K.C. Jain has argued that it occurred after 1163, and not in 1156, as held by Col. James Tod.
- [136](#) See Jain, 1972, pp.370-371, 374-379; among others.
- [137](#) Cited in G.N. Sharma, 1998, pp.101.
- [138](#) Sharma 1966, pp.224; also his paper 'New light on the Tomaras of Delhi', *Indian History Congress* 1956.
- [139](#) Sharma 1966, pp.225.
- [140](#) Ibid.
- [141](#) D. Sharma 1966, pp.259.
- [142](#) Jain, 1972, pp.267.
- [143](#) Jain, 1972, pp.269.
- [144](#) For details about the city of Chandravati near Abu, see, among others, Jain, 1972, pp.341-347.
- [145](#) Technically Govindaraja III, since the full Sanskrit form of the names of Guvaka I and Guvaka II reads as Govindaraja I and Govindaraja II, respectively.
- [146](#) Kumarapal had defeated Ballala of Malwa, and occupying Chittor, placed it under his governor, Sajjan.
- [147](#) The term *bha* being used here as deliberate word-play.
- [148](#) Hailing from the region around Ghor (also spelt as 'Ghur') in Central Afghanistan, which had been conquered and Islamized by the Ghaznavides, Muhammad's elder brother, Ghiyas-uddin (d. 1202), acquired power in c. 1162. Muhammad remained his brother's loyal lieutenant; taking Ghazni in 1173, and helping his brother against Khwarezm for the lordship of Khorasan.
- [149](#) Help against Ghori was apparently sought by Bhima II from Prithviraj Chauhan's court, but was refused.
- [150](#) Dasharatha Sharma 1966, pp.290, citing Canto X, 42 of the *Prithviraja Vijaya*.
- [151](#) Tod, 1829, Vol.1, pp.208.
- [152](#) See Sharma, *Early Chauhan Dynasties*, 1959, pp.72-99.
- [153](#) Current beliefs link the Dahima community (including Dahima Rajputs and Dahima Brahmins), to the goddess Dadhimati, whose temple in the Goth-Manglod (or Dadhimati) region of

Marwar is revered by all Dahimas. Tradition recognises distinct descents of Dahima Brahmins, Dahima Rajputs, Dahima Jats, etc. from this area. This may bespeak a former common habitational zone, rather than a mythical common ancestor.

[154](#) In the view of Gopinath Sharma, the “story of the alleged murder of the Minister bears little credence against the facts of his services and high esteem recorded by the court poet. The entire story of his murder reads like a romance and is hardly creditable. However, it is not unlikely that the ambitious prince [Prithviraj III] might have succeeded in removing Kadambavasa and formed a new set of supporters led by Pratap Singh”.

[155](#) Tod 1829, vol.1, pp.99.

[156](#) Ibid, pp.99.

[157](#) *Skanda-Purana*’s ‘Kumarika-khand’ calls the land of the Bhadanakas (*Bhadanaka-desh*) a kingdom with 100,000 villages.

[158](#) The event occurred sometime before VS 1239, i.e. AD 1182, according to the *Kharataragachchha-pattavali* of Jinapala, cited by Dasharatha Sharma in his *Early Chauhan Dynasties*, pp.91. The defeat of the Bhadanakas was so complete and decisive that they cease to find mention in the annals of the ensuing centuries.

[159](#) The Madanpur Stone Inscription states that Prithviraj, son of Someshwar, laid waste the land of Jejakbhukti in AD 1182.

[160](#) Works like the *Taj-ul-Maasir* attribute to Prithviraj the ambition of conquering the whole world.

[161](#) D. Sharma, 1966, *Rajasthan Through the Ages*, pp.294-95.

[162](#) Sharma Ibid, pp.296.

[163](#) D. Sharma, 1966, pp.297.

[164](#) D. Sharma, *Early Chauhan Dynasties*, 1959, pp.86.

[165](#) Ibid.

[166](#) Sharma 1966, pp.298.

[167](#) Earlier coins issued by Prithviraj and his forebears include the ‘Bull and Horseman’ type of coins, bearing the words ‘*Shri Samanta*’ ‘*Spalati Deva*’, ‘*Madan Deva*’ in Nagari script, which occur across Rajasthan.

[168](#) The reference is to Muhammad of Ghori.

[169](#) D. Sharma 1966, pp.299.

[170](#) Ibid.

[171](#) D. Sharma, *Early Chauhan Dynasties*, 1959, pp.72-99.

[172](#) Ibid.

[173](#) D. Sharma, 1966, *Rajasthan Through the Ages*, pp.300.

[174](#) Ibid.

[175](#) Jain (1972, pp.379), cites various beliefs about Alwar.

[176](#) See Jain, 1972, pp.335-341.

[177](#) Jain, 1972, pp.309.

[178](#) See K.C. Jain's *Ancient Cities and Towns of Rajasthan*, 1972, pp.327.

[179](#) Jain, 1972, pp.329.

[180](#) R. Pande 'A Brief Sketch of the History of Karauli State', *Shodhak*, 31, 2002, pp.281-292, and 'Yadavas of Shri Path', *Shodhak*, 7, 1978; Jaisalmer Khyat, Archaeological Survey of India, Vol.20, pp.38; Karauli Gazetteer, pp.2.

[181](#) Transl. in Elliot & Dowson *Mohammadan Historians*, Vol II, pp.226-227, Government Press, 1885.

[182](#) Raverty's transl. of *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, pp.545.

[183](#) K.C. Jain, 1972, pp.362-363.

[184](#) Notes K.C.Jain (1972, pp.273), "Among the Marwar Rathors [sic], a clan named Hathundia is well known...[who] are probably the descendants of the Rashtrakutas of Hastikundi. [Furthermore]...the Rathors of Hathundi are noticed in Sirohi and other parts of Rajasthan".

[185](#) Cited in K.C. Jain, 1972, pp.197.

[186](#) Cited in K.C. Jain, 1972, pp.195.

[187](#) Ibid.

[188](#) Harphool Singh 'Dikapala Parampara ko Rajasthan ki Adbhut Deyn', *Rajasthan Sujas*. January, 1998, pp.56.

[189](#) Gopi Nath Sharma's *Rajasthan ka Itihas*, 1988, pp.543 notes the fortified walls of Vair Singh's eleventh century Adhar Nagar.

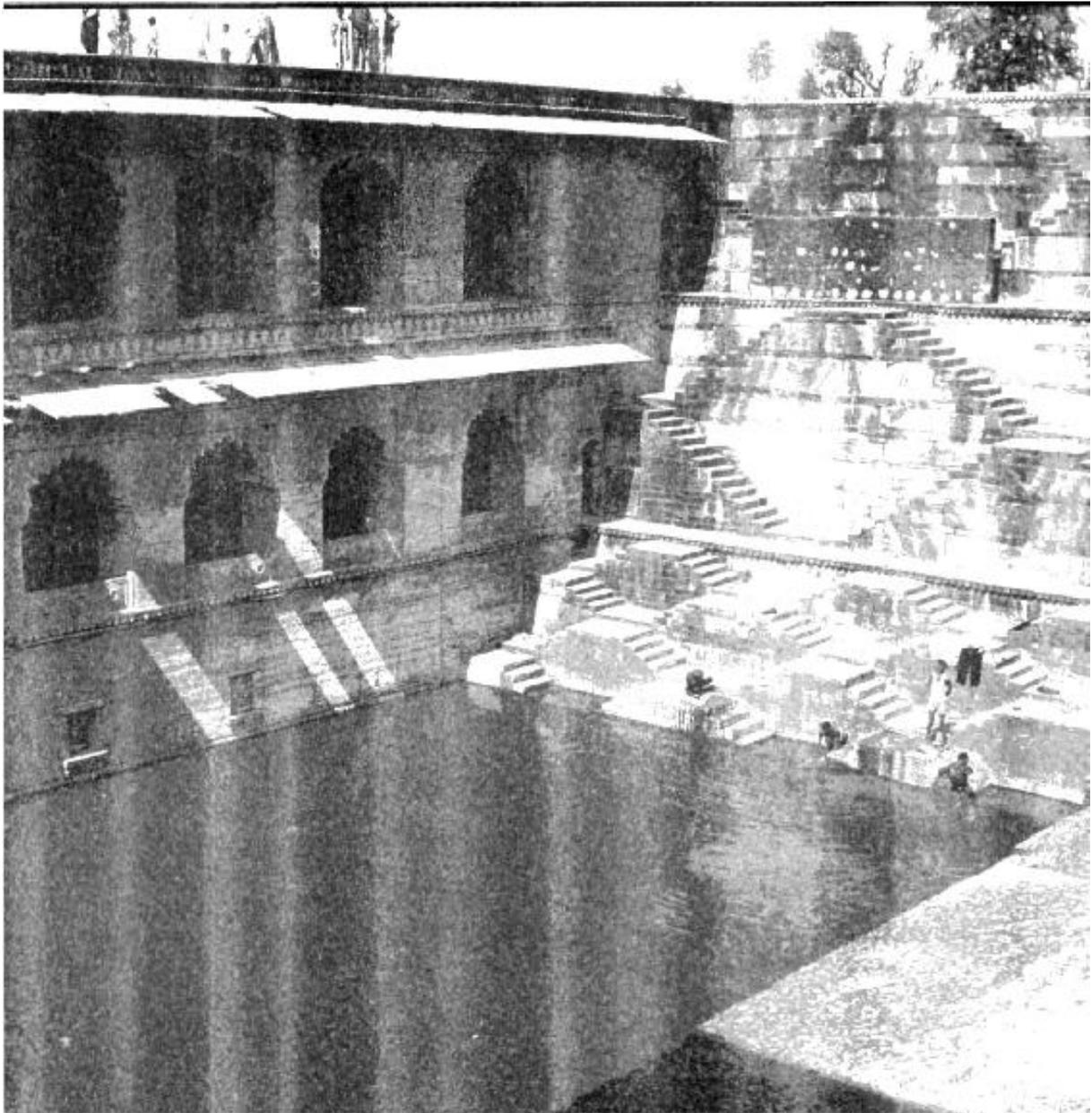
[190](#) Ibid.

[191](#) D. Sharma, 1966, pp.491.

[192](#) In more recent times, certain colours, motifs and technologies have been regarded as the specialities of different areas. Among these one may list the blockprints of Sanganer and Bagru in erstwhile Jaipur state, Pali in erstwhile Marwar state, and the prints and woven

fabrics of Barmer-Jaisalmer area. Also the printed jalam of Chittorgarh and block-prints of Akola and other parts of erstwhile Mewar state, the tie-and-dye (bandhini), and other dyed textiles from Jodhpur, Nagaur, Didwana, Jaipur and various parts of Shekhawati like Sikar, Nawalgarh, Jhunjhunu, Fatehpur, Lakshmangarh, and Churu and Ratangarh in the erstwhile Bikaner state.

RAJASTHAN BETWEEN
C. AD 1200-AD 1500



INTRODUCTION



THE DAWN OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY IN RAJASTHAN SAW A REGION that was redefining the boundaries of several of the older states, and drawing new ones in the case of some others. This was in response to the existing political realities and power vacuums caused by the fall of dominant established kingdoms. This phenomenon would be repeated on several occasions during the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (as we shall see further), especially in the face of battles, sack of capitals, and external attacks. It was not, perhaps, until the policy of alliances with Rajput states was fostered in the mid-sixteenth century AD by the Mughal emperor, Akbar, alternated with basic old-fashioned brute force where alliance failed, that there would occur a new and different level of interaction between the imperial powers ruling from Delhi and the states of the Rajasthan region. Akbar's policy was to also influence the relations between the various kingdoms within Rajasthan themselves — but that still lay far in the future!

Not surprisingly, therefore, motifs like migration from devastated capitals to new lands, and of fresh state formations for a variety of reasons, occur prominently in several of the traditional chronicles covering the histories of many Rajput ruling groups during the thirteenth to fifteenth century. It was in their hands that political power seems to have remained concentrated, generally speaking. (There were exceptions like the Khans of Nagaur, and, of course, at places where the Delhi Sultanate placed its governors or other administrators etc.) Examples of 'Rajput' movements and state-building exercises include, among others, the branches of the Chauhan clan who came to rule the Jalore and Ranthambore, and later the

Sirohi and Bundi-Kota areas, and the Rathores who believe that they came to Rajasthan following the destruction of their ancestral capital of Kanauj.

We need to bear in mind, however, that despite the frequent warfare, sack of older capitals and establishment of new ones — or in other words, shift in the foci and loci of power-centres (with accompanying economic and other hardships for the ordinary populace), the traditional versions of Rajasthani history indicate an overall continuity in the political order. Numerous records stress that where possible, scions of a besieged clan would be transferred to places of sanctuary when a final, decisive, defensive battle seemed imminent; or a collateral branch of the main clan would attempt to re-establish the clan's hold elsewhere. In addition, as had been the case before, some new political units also came into being in different parts of Rajasthan from time to time.

TRANSFORMATION, CONSOLIDATION AND THE RE-DRAWING OF OLDER BOUNDARIES IN RAJASTHAN IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY AD

Following Muhammad of Ghor's victory in the Second Battle of Tarain in 1192, and the resultant fall of Ajmer, at the end of the twelfth century, the Ghori leader's able commander, Qutb-ud-din Aibak, led several campaigns against various Rajasthani states. These took place during the closing years of the twelfth century, and continued after Aibak became the first Ilbari Turk 'Mameluke' or 'Slave Dynasty' Sultan of Delhi (r. AD 1206-1210). As a result of the activities of Ghori and his lieutenants in northern India as a whole, there occurred some obvious alterations in the status and extent of several local kingdoms of Rajasthan.

In the case of the Chauhans, the might of the old Chauhan kingdom of Ajmer-Shakambhari had come to an end by the early years of the thirteenth century. Rajput and Muslim accounts state that Prithviraj III's son and successor, Govindaraj eventually quit Ajmer (probably sometime around AD 1195) and established himself at Ranthambore. This was in part because his uncle, Hariraj, the younger brother of Prithviraj Chauhan III,

who had not accepted Ghor's supremacy, succeeded in divesting Govindaraj of the territory around the Chauhan capital of Ajmer.

Hariraj Chauhan could not hold his ancestral capital for long. It is held that Hariraj sent one Jatwan (probably Jaitra) to Delhi, but the Chauhan attempt against Delhi was unsuccessful for a second time. Eventually, Hariraj was besieged within Ajmer's fort, and ended his life by immolation in a blazing pyre. Afterwards, Ajmer remained in the hands of Ghor's commanders, while Govindaraj carved out a fresh territory for himself in the Ranthambore area. To safeguard his holding Govindaraj gave rich presents to Qutb-ud-din Aibak (Ghor's commander, who afterwards ruled as Sultan of Delhi from AD 1206-1210), and accepted his suzerainty.

Though the Chauhan hold over Ajmer was gone, the new Chauhan base at Ranthambore became important during the thirteenth century. Govindaraj's son and successor, Valhan (or Balhan Dev) Chauhan of Ranthambore, initially seems to have paid tribute to Delhi's Sultan Iltutmish (r. AD 1211-1236), but later openly asserted his independence. Under his successors, Ranthambore became a powerful state. Despite being attacked and besieged by Sultanate forces during the reigns of different Delhi Sultans, Ranthambore would remain important until its fall at the hands of Alauddin Khilji of Delhi (r. 1296-1316) at the beginning of the fourteenth century (as we shall see below).

The Nadol branch of the Shakambhari Chauhans too had lost their capital. And, while some of the surviving Nadol Chauhans sought refuge at the collateral court of Jalore, others sought newer lands following their defeat at the hands of Qutb-ud-din Aibak in 1197, topped by the further defeat of the 'triple alliance' of the Abu Parmars, Chalukyas and Nadol Chauhans. This latter occurred at the field of Kasahrada, again at the hands of Aibak.

The Chauhans of Jalore became a potent force, though, during the thirteenth century and the early years of the century that followed, until they too met a fate similar to that of their cousins of the Ranthambore branch at the hands of Sultan Alauddin Khilji. Concurrently, in the course of the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries AD, other branches and sub-divisions of the

Chauhans — like the Deoras, Hadas, Mohilas etc. — either consolidated their existing position, or established their might for the first time, over parts of Abu-Chandravati-Sirohi, Bundi-Kota, and some areas of north-western and western Rajasthan.

Mewar, under the Cuhilas, remained among the more powerful political states in Rajasthan at the beginning of the thirteenth century. The Mewar Cuhilas and their sub-clans continued to consolidate and add to their territories, and consequently, prestige, over the years. However, the Abu Parmars, the Parmars of Arthuna or the Vagar area, and other former feudatories of the Gujarat Chalukyas and Malwa Parmars etc. slowly lost their pre-eminence in the southern and south-eastern Rajasthan sub-regions over the course of the c. AD 1200-1300 period.

In western Rajasthan, besides the already established chiefdoms of the Parmars, Chauhans, Bhatias etc., a new group — that of the Rathore Rajputs, who traced their lineage from the dispossessed ruling family of Imperial Kanauj — gained in strength and stature. So did the already well-entrenched Bhatias living in the Jaisalmer, Pugal, Lodrava, and Barmer subdivisions of the region. (We shall look at the dynastic political histories of various kingdoms in detail further on in this chapter).

Meanwhile, the fortified town of Nagaur, which had passed into the hands of Muhammad of Ghor after the defeat of the Chauhan ruler Prithviraj III, became an important base for both Ghori and later Delhi Sultanate rulers. We know that in AD 1195, Nagaur was administered on behalf of Muhammad of Ghor by Ikhtiyar-ud-din Muhammad bin Bakhtiyar, who belonged to the Khalji Turkic tribe of Ghor, and enjoyed an illustrious military career¹. Between c. AD 1195 to AD 1270, Nagaur was governed by a series of Delhi Sultanate governors. However, its possession was hotly contested.

So was possession of virtually all strategic sites — forts and capitals and trading towns alike, during the course of the period covered in this chapter. The contenders were not just clans already inhabiting parts of Rajasthan, but also new migrants as well as the expanding Sultanate of Delhi. We have already commented on the established trade and travel

routes that traversed Rajasthan. These were crucial for Rajasthan's neighbours in all directions of the compass too. For instance, the better-used routes between Delhi and Gujarat or Malwa passed through either Pali or Jalore, or Mewar and the Vagar area; while the Multan to northern India and Delhi, or Multan to Gujarat etc. routes passed through the Thar desert and towns like Bhinmal, or Pali, or Jalore, or Bhatner, etc. Thus, keeping these routes open, or better still, possessing as much length of them as possible, was one — though not the only — motivating factor that led the rulers of the newly established Sultanate of Delhi to maintain its presence in the Rajasthan area.

In addition, Rajasthan's proximity to Delhi meant that the Sultanate felt constrained to ensure its own safety through the subjugation of potential rivals and powerful neighbouring states. This applied not just to Rajasthan, but the tracts to the east, north and north-west, and south of Delhi as well — and as a perusal of history-books shows, the various Delhi Sultans *did* turn their attention to all these areas too, and not just towards Rajasthan.

RAJASTHAN AND THE DELHI SULTANATE DURING AD 1200-1300

Let us turn now towards the Delhi Sultanate and its relations with the states of Rajasthan during the thirteenth century (i.e. c. AD 1200-1300), as this was a dominant aspect of interstate political relations in Rajasthan during the thirteenth century.

Following the assassination of Muhammad of Ghor in 1206, his lieutenant in the Delhi-Gangetic Doab area, Qutb-ud-din, technically still a slave, obtained manumission and set about strengthening his position as Muhammad's successor (r. 1206-1210). He had the advantage of being connected through marriage ties with the strongest of his potential rivals. His wife was the daughter of Taj-ud-din Yildiz, one of the more northern based rival-claimants to Muhammad of Ghor's estates and honours; his sister was married to Qubacha, another possible rival; and daughter to Iltutmish. Using his fighting and diplomatic skills, Qutb-ud-din was rapidly able to consolidate his rule as the first of the Ilbari Turk 'Mameluke' or 'Slave Dynasty' Sultans, with Delhi as his capital. Aibak also managed to

capture Ghazni from Yildiz, but then lost it to him again — and thereafter, had to remain content with only the Indian possessions of his late master. Surviving inscriptions describe Qutb as '*Malik*'. The construction of the Qutb Minar at Delhi began under his direction, but Aibak died before it was completed.

Meanwhile, in his capacity as Muhammad of Ghor's commander, Qutb-ud-din Aibak had already seen to the suppression of many of the states of neighbouring Rajasthan — as already noted. As Sultan, Aibak followed a policy of non-annexation as far as the states comprising Rajasthan were concerned. After Aibak, succession passed briefly to Aram Shah (r. 1210), whose precise relationship with Aibak is still a matter of discussion. Some historians believe him to have been Aibak's son; others say he was a brother, or close kin. Aram Shah was unable to deal effectively with internal and external problems, as well as court intrigues.

Qutb-ud-din Aibak's son-in-law, Iltutmish, who had been one of the premier commander-governors of Muhammad of Ghor and Qutb-ud-din Aibak, ascended the throne of Delhi as the next Sultan of Delhi (r. 1211-1236). Iltutmish, better known in Indian history as '*Altamash*', drew his initial strength from the conquests of Qutb-ud-din Aibak. He was soon able to establish the entity of the Sultanate of Delhi on a firm basis. Considered by some to have been the greatest of the '*Slave*' kings, Iltutmish defeated Yildiz (1215). He then suppressed Qubacha (who had made himself the independent ruler of Multan, Lahore and parts of the Punjab), forced the Sultanate's governor in Bengal to obedience, and added considerable new territory, including lower Sindh, to the empire. In time, Iltutmish gained firm control of the main urban strategic centres of the north Indian plains, from which he could keep neighbouring states in check.

Many of the holdings of the Delhi Sultanate had been lost during the brief period that Aram Shah had occupied the throne, and Ajmer and Nagaur were probably the only two major urban centres of Rajasthan under the Delhi Sultanate at the time of Iltutmish's accession. As Rajasthan was a neighbouring region, Sultan Iltutmish turned to deal with matters here once he had consolidated his own position vis-à-vis rivals like Yildiz and Qubacha etc. In AD 1217, Mandore was captured by Iltutmish's son,

Nasiruddin Mahmud, governor of Lahore, though in the face of strong local opposition by the Rajputs, the Ilbari prince could not maintain his hold over the region for long. However, in AD 1226, Iltutmish re-captured Mandore. Sultan Iltutmish also moved against Ranthambore the same year and captured it. (This Chauhan-held fortress had previously been attacked by Qutb-ud-din Aibak in 1209, remained subordinated for a few years, and asserted its independence sometime after AD 1215 under its Chauhan chief, Balhan, who was dead by 1226). Iltutmish marched against Jalore too in 1228-29. While he obtained an indemnity in the form of a hundred camels and ten horses etc., in return for according Sultanate recognition to the Jalore ruler, Udaysimha Chauhan, the indications are that the honours rested evenly between the two protagonists.

By AD 1230, the Delhi Sultan's authority was firmly established over Sambhar, Ajmer, Mandore, Bayana, and Nagaur. Iltutmish is believed to have clashed with the ruler of Mewar too, though it is difficult to unravel some of the more exaggerated traditional accounts to get at the course of events. Mewar records hold that their Guhila clan king, Jaitra Singh, successfully checked the intrusion of Delhi's '*Suratrana*' (probably Sultan Iltutmish, and subsequently his son, Nasir-ud-din Mahmud), into Mewar.

One may add here that it was Iltutmish who initiated the practice of dividing his realm-holdings into several *iqtas*. An *iqta* may be broadly defined as a system of granting the revenue of a specified area in lieu of salary to a senior commander. An *Iqtadar* (holder of an *iqta*) was more a military bureaucrat than feudal lord, maintaining local law and order, and administering the lands held in *iqta* through officials known as '*Amils*'.² These *Amils* were recruited and controlled by their respective *Iqtadars*. The latter were not owners of the land allocated to them, and could be transferred from one *iqta* to another. The process served to check undue local consolidation of power by an *Iqtadar* in his allotted *iqta* holding. In Rajasthan, Sultanate-held Nagaur was among the lands given out in *iqta*.

Iltutmish's eldest and most able son, having predeceased his father in 1229, the Sultan nominated his eldest daughter, Raziya, as his successor. She was an able, intelligent and courageous woman, and had taken an interest in matters of governance during her father's lifetime. However,

Iltutmish had other sons, and the Sultanate's nobles too were unwilling to accept a woman as their ruler. Iltutmish, however, overbore all opposition and managed to obtain the approval of his nobles and courtiers. To formally mark this, Sultan Iltutmish had silver *tanka* coins struck, including Raziya's name as his designated heir, on them. However, following Iltutmish's death in April 1236, his decision was reversed and the nobles accepted Iltutmish's eldest surviving son, Ruknuddin Firoz Shah as the next Sultan of Delhi (r.1236). Intrigues, poor governance, discontent, a fraternal rebellion by Ghiyas-ud-din, the Sultan's brother and also governor of Awadh, and the withdrawal of support by key nobles led to the downfall of Ruknuddin within seven months.

Raziya (r. 1236-1240) now succeeded her brother. Iltutmish's able daughter, Sultan Raziya, attempted to consolidate and re-strengthen the Sultanate. During this period, she sent an expedition to relieve the besieged Sultanate garrison within Ranthambore fort, but much of her time and attention was directed on matters within the boundaries of the Sultanate, including suppressing the rebellion of the governor of Lahore etc. Raziya was opposed at practically every step by the strong Turkish courtiers and nobles, and was eventually defeated in battle, imprisoned and finally murdered, in the wake of the conspiracies and intrigues of her powerful Turkish nobles.

In the interim, Iltutmish's third son, [Muizzuddin] Bairam Shah (r. 1240-42), had been raised to the throne by the nobles. The Delhi Sultanate's Turkish nobles were by this time a strong force. They have been collectively referred to by historians as the 'Group of Forty'. Balban, later to be sultan, was one of the stronger members of this 'Group of Forty'. The Mongol invasion of the Punjab in 1241, coupled with internal conspiracies led to the downfall of Bairam Shah, and he was put to death in May 1242. The throne now passed to Iltutmish's grandson and Ruknuddin's young son, Alauddin Masud Shah (r. 1242-1246). The Sultanate remained a hot-bed of intrigues, however. The external threats increased too. In the interim, Balban had gained in stature and was practically the deciding voice at the court. He was also an able commander, and when the Mongols crossed the river Indus and besieged Uchchh, Balban — by then governor of Nagaur — was sent to Lahore to deal with them. He succeeded in forcing the Mongols

to retreat to their own territories. Meanwhile, a fresh conspiracy saw Alauddin Masud Shah dethroned and replaced by another of Iltutmish's sons — Nasir-ud-din Mahmud (different to Iltutmish's eldest, long dead son), in June 1246.

The factional infighting that followed Iltutmish's death was followed, in turn, by a period of stability during the reign of Nasir-ud-din Mahmud (r. 1246-66). During much of this time, it was Balban — also known as Baha-ud-din Ghiyas-ud-din Balban — the *Ulugh Khan-i-Azam*, or 'Great Khan of the Realm', who wielded actual control over the Sultanate. After the new sultan became the son-in-law of Balban in August 1249, the latter's hold over the Sultanate increased further. While Balban would himself later reign as sultan of Delhi (r. 1266-1286), in effect after 1246 the Sultanate remained largely controlled by him. Under Balban's guidance, the Delhi Sultanate fought off several Mongol invasions.

During the reign of Nasir-ud-din Mahmud, and then during his own reign from AD 1266 to 1286, Balban ensured the strengthening of the Delhi Sultanate. We know, for example, that in 1248, the leading commander of the Sultanate, Ulugh Khan — later Sultan Balban of Delhi, ravaged the Chauhan-held lands of Ranthambore, then ruled by Vagbhata, though the Delhi troops could not conquer Ranthambore. Balban marched against Ranthambore and other parts of Rajasthan in 1253-54 too (as is detailed below).

Balban suffered a temporary setback when Sultan Nasir-ud-din Mahmud bestowed favours during 1253-54 on a courtier named Imad-ud-din Raihan, who was an Indian Muslim. This saw the simultaneous temporary eclipse of the power of Balban (by then enjoying the title of *Ulugh Khan-i-Azam*, and *Naib-i-Mamlakat* [Regent of the Kingdom]), Balban was transferred to his *iqta* of Nagaur. However, following the downfall of Raihan, Balban was reconciled with the sultan, his son-in-law, and in December 1254 returned to the capital of the Delhi Sultanate. In the time he was at Nagaur, Balban had led his forces against neighbouring tracts, as mentioned further in this chapter.

While the Sultanate remained on the defensive against the constant Mongol presence on its north-western frontier during this time, Balban also took action to suppress rebellions and expand the borders of the Sultanate in all directions. He ensured a range of reforms, and managed to keep the neighbouring kingdoms and chiefdoms — including those in Rajasthan — under control. Balban's total repression of the 'Mewatis' — inhabitants of the Alwar-Tijara-Gurgaon area — is described in detail further in this chapter.

Balban was succeeded by one of his grandsons — Kaiqubad (r. 1286-1290), but in the face of conspiracies and rebellions, and the machinations of the Delhi *kotwal* (or city administrator) and his ambitious son-in-law, the young man soon lost his throne and his life amidst palace coups and intrigues.

On June 13, 1290, Jalaluddin Firuz Khilji (r. 1290-1296) took power — initially as regent for Kaiqubad's infant son, but subsequently as the Sultan of Delhi. Jalaluddin was an aged man at the time he became Sultan, but under the Khilji (also spelt and pronounced as 'Khalji'), dynasty (1290-1320), the Delhi Sultanate would become an imperial power. The Khilji tribe was of Turkish origin, though it had long been settled in Afghanistan, and it seems that because the Khiljis were thought to be an Afghan tribe, Jalaluddin was initially unpopular and not welcome in Delhi! His nephew, who was also his son-in-law, Alauddin (afterwards Sultan Alauddin Khilji), had a notable military career, having led an expedition into the Deccan, and captured Elichpur and its treasure. He would go on to conquer many more areas subsequently.

In AD 1294, Mandore was captured by Jalaluddin Khilji. It would remain under the Delhi Sultanate's occupation until c. AD 1301, before coming into the hands of the Eenda branch of the Parihar (Pratihara) Rajputs, and then reverting into Sultanate hands around c. AD 1308. In 1296, Alauddin murdered Jalaluddin, and ascended the throne of the Delhi Sultanate, removing other contenders. Sultan Alauddin Khilji of Delhi would rule for twenty years. His numerous successes included the capture of Gujarat in c. AD 1299. His forces also repelled serious Mongol attacks by the Chagatais of Trans-Oxania during the 1297-1306 period. We shall

take up the subsequent events of Alauddin Khilji's reign pertaining to Rajasthan (and the c. 1300-1400 period in Rajasthan as a whole), further in this chapter, and focus first on some of the powerful states of Rajasthan during the c. AD 1200-1300 period.

THE CHAUHANS OF RANTHAMBORE

We have already seen how Prithviraj III Chauhan's son, Govindaraj, left Ajmer and made Ranthambore his base sometime around AD 1195 or so. Govindaraj's son and successor, Balhan (or Valhan) Dev Chauhan of Ranthambore, initially seems to have accepted the subordinate relationship vis-à-vis the nascent Delhi Sultanate, which he had inherited from his father, but sometime after AD 1215 Balhan threw off the yoke of the Delhi Sultans. This is indicated by the Mangalana Stone Inscription dating to AD 1215, found at Mangalana, some twenty-four kilometres west of Sambhar. Apparently Valhana's domain, even if truncated, extended from Ranthambore almost up to the old capital of his ancestors.

A word now about the fortress-town of Ranthambore. This is a site that features prominently, time and time again, in the history of Rajasthan. Ranthambore appears to already have been in existence by at least the mid-eleventh century AD. It is known that in AD 1105, the Chauhan king, Prithviraj 1, who ruled from his capital at Shakambhari, donated golden cupolas for some Jain temples that pre-dated his reign and were already standing at Ranthambore. Siddhasena Suri, writing in the twelfth century, counted Ranthambore, which at the time formed part of the kingdom of the Chauhans of Shakambhari and Ajmer, among the established Jain holy sites.

Balhan's successor, Prahlad, probably remained subordinated to the Sultanate. Prahlad is said to have neglected the work of governance and spent his time in hunting, according to the *Hammir Mahakavya*. After Prahlad's death, it seems that the mutual jealousies between Prahlad's son and successor, Vir Narayan, and Balhan's younger son, Vagbhata, plunged the state into disorder³.

There are suggestions that Vir Narayan Chauhan was enticed to Delhi and deceitfully poisoned in 1226 by Sultan Iltutmish of Delhi⁴, and later Ranthambore occupied by Sultanate troops after a siege. Minhaj — or to use his full name, Minhaj-ud-din bin Siraj-ud-din, the author of a contemporary Persian work, *Tarikh-i-Naasiri*, has noted that the fort fell into the Sultan's hands after a siege lasting some months. Ranthambore was subordinated but not annexed to the Delhi Sultanate. (Though some historians have suggested an alternate date of around c. AD 1230-34, rather than 1226, for this conquest).

Following the death of Iltutmish in 1236, Vagbhata, the uncle of Vir Narayan, who had not accepted Sultanate suzerainty, and had established himself independently in a small base near the Malwa-Ranthambore boundary, took advantage of the internal problems centred on the Delhi throne. Rallying the Chauhans and other warriors of Ranthambore, Vagbhata made a bid for re-taking it. He seems to have been joined in this endeavour by other dispossessed Rajput groups of the area. Ranthambore was besieged. The Sultanate's garrison within the fort (referred to as 'Shak' (Sakas) in Rajasthani texts), were driven to dire straits due to lack of supplies as Chauhan supremacy apparently prevailed. It seems that Iltutmish's daughter, Sultan Raziya (r. 1236-40) had to send Malik Qutb-ud-din Hussain to help the beleaguered Turki garrison sometime around AD 1238. Eventually, the Sultanate forces evacuated Ranthambore, and Vagbhata took control of the fortress.

Vagbhata ruled from Ranthambore as an independent chief for the next twelve years or so. He is credited with beautifying Ranthambore, and constructing the temple of Bahar Deo⁵, which was among the buildings destroyed during the sack of Ranthambore in 1301, following Alauddin Khilji's victory. He also built a magnificent temple at Jhain, which evoked comments from Muslim chroniclers. During this time, the Sultanate continued to exert pressure on the Chauhan-held lands. Among other attacks, it is known that in 1248, the leading commander of the Sultanate, Ulugh Khan — later Sultan Balban of Delhi (r. 1266-86), ravaged Vagbhata's kingdom, though the Sultanate forces failed to invest Ranthambore fort. We learn that while Vagbhata reigned as 'Rai' (ruler) of Ranthambore one of the Sultanate deputy commanders, Baha-ud-din Aibak,

was killed, trying to attack Ranthambore and the army commanded by him retired to Delhi in discomfiture.

Vagbhata has been described by the chronicler Minhaj as the ‘greatest of the Rais of Hindustan’. This implies that Vagbhata of Ranthambore was a powerful potentate of his generation. Vagbhata was succeeded by his son, Jait [Jaitra] Singh, sometime around AD 1248-49. Jait Singh (r.? 1249-1283), is credited with several victories over contemporary chiefs and kings. He is said to have “burnt, as does the Sun”, Jai Simha of Mandap — generally identified as the Parmar ruler Jai Simha of Malwa; “sharpened the edge of his axe on the throat of the Kurma king”, believed to be a Kachchwaha ruler of Dhoondhar/Amber; and defeated a king of ‘Karkaral-giri’. He is further credited with capturing hundreds of soldiers of the kingdom of Malwa at ‘Jhamphaithaghat’, who were first thrown into prison in Ranthambore and then enslaved. Jait Singh also successfully repelled attacks by Ulugh Khan (Balban) in 1253, besides facing other attacks by the forces of the Sultanate (including those sent by Nasir-ud-din of Delhi, under Malik-un-Nawab).

Jait Singh’s successor was Hammir, the second of the ruler’s three sons. It is held that Hammir’s early successes led Jait Singh to voluntarily offer his throne, within his own lifetime, to Hammir. Hammir’s exploits soon won him wide acclaim⁶. However, with the ascension of the Khiljis to the throne of Delhi, a new and more vigorous phase of Sultanate military policy was unveiled. Rajput and Sultanate chronicles indicate that soon after Jalaluddin Khilji became Sultan in 1290, he marched through Ranthambore’s territories, but was badly defeated by the Chauhans, led by Hammir’s commander, *Senani* Bhim Singh, near Jhain, and had to retreat to his own capital in some haste.

While Jalaluddin Khilji did not venture another attack on Hammir in person, other areas of Rajasthan were attacked by the Sultanate’s forces. The situation intensified subsequent to Alauddin Khilji becoming Sultan and events moved towards a final and decisive confrontation between Hammir Chauhan and Alauddin Khilji (as is described below).

THE CHAUHANS OF JALORE

It has already been noted that while the Chauhan held states of Ajmer and Nadol were a spent force by the end of the twelfth century, other Chauhan-ruined holdings like Ranthambore and Jalore were still important. The kingdom of Jalore continued to gain in prestige and strength during the opening decade of the thirteenth century.

Udaysimha (r. 1205-1257), the third ruler of the Jalore Chauhan line to ascend the throne (after the founder, Kirtipal, and his successor Samarsimha), successfully extended the boundaries of his state to include Nadol, Bhinmal, Mandore, Barmer, Ratanpur, Sanchore, and other surrounding areas. The Sundha Inscription lists various lands, including Vagbhatmeru (Barmer), over which he held sway. Some of these territories, like Sanchore⁷, had been held by the Chalukyas or the Parmars (and their feudatories) formerly. Udaysimha's territorial expansion appears to have brought him into conflict with neighbours like the ruling chiefs and rulers of Sindh and Gujarat, as well as Sultan Iltutmish of Delhi.

Iltutmish opted to challenge Udaysimha's growing power, and attacked the fortress-capital of Jalore in AD 1228. According to a contemporary Persian work, the *Taj-ul Maasir*, Udaysimha sought shelter in the surrounding jungle, and after being hard-pressed, finally sued for peace. The peace terms included rendering one hundred camels and twenty horses to Iltutmish, in exchange for Udaysimha regaining possession of the fort of Jalore. This indicates that the result of their confrontation probably left neither side in a wholly victorious or commanding position! In fact, some five years later, when Iltutmish marched against the Guhilas of Mewar, Jalore's Udaysimha acted in alliance with neighbouring chiefs and forced the Sultan to retreat without an encounter. In 1236, Iltutmish managed to capture Mandore, but soon afterwards, Udaysimha was successful in recovering it. This may have occurred after Iltutmish's death.

Udaysimha's son and successor, Chachigadeva (Chachik Deva), probably reigned from AD 1257 to 1282. Inscriptions describe Chachigadeva as having "destroyed the roaring Gurjara lord Virama, enjoyed the fall of the tremulous Patuka, deprived Sanga of his colour and

acted like a thunderbolt for the furious Nahara”⁸ Chachigadeva was followed by his son, Samant Singh (r. 1282-? 1292/or? 1298). Samant Singh was followed by son, Kanhar Deo.

Rajput tradition, as preserved in texts like the *Kanhad-de-Prabandh* and oral tales, maintains that when Alauddin Khilji decided to march against Gujarat, he wished to use the direct route that led through Jalore’s territories. With that in mind, he sent a robe of honour to the Jalore court, and asked that the Sultanate armies be allowed passage through Chauhan-held lands, but this was not acceptable to the Jalore ruler, Kanhar Deo, who turned down both Alauddin’s honour and request. Alauddin used an alternative route traversing Mewar’s territories for the outward march, but on the return march the Khilji commanders used the Marwar-Jalore route, possibly with the intention of teaching the Jalore kingdom a lesson. Instead, a Chauhan attack at the Sultanate army’s camp at Sakrana, some eighteen miles from Jalore, left the Khilji army discomfited, and bereft of many of the precious items being carried away from Gujarat to Delhi. For a while, Alauddin had his hands full with the Mongol problem on his north-western frontier, and other matters. Later, when he turned his attention towards Rajasthan, the capture of Jalore was to be one of his goals.

THE PARMARS OF ABU

Meanwhile, in the case of the kingdom of the Abu Parmars, in spite of the defeat suffered in 1197, it was able to recover from the effects of this in time. Subsequently, Dharavarsha helped King Vir-Dhavala of Gujarat in repelling an attack by Sultan Iltutmish of Delhi. Following the long reign of Dharavarsha, during which his younger brother, Pahladan, won equal renown, Dharavarsha was succeeded by Pahladan (r. c.1219-1230), sometime around AD 1219. After Pahladan, Dharavarsha’s son, Somasimha, succeeded to the Abu throne.

The previous close links with Gujarat seem to have carried over into this period as well. As such, in AD 1231, Tejpal Porwal, a minister of the Gujarat king, Vir-Dhavala, along with his brother Vastupal, also a minister

to the same ruler, built the Luna Vasahi temple to Jain Tirthankar Neminath at Delwara, near Abu. (The inscriptions record that Tejpal's wife, Anupama Devi, was the daughter of Dharaniga, son of Gaga, a Porwal Mahajan (businessman) of Chandravati, and that Tejpal made his wife's brothers — Khiba Singh, Aba Singh and Udala, trustees of the temple to Tirthankar Neminath).

The Abu Parmar king, Somasimha, was followed by his son, Krishnaraj, after whom came Pratapsimha, also known as Patal. By this time, the Guhila king, Samarsimha (Samar Singh) of Mewar had occupied the kingdom of Abu. As such, Pratapsimha sought the help of the Vaghelas to recover his patrimony from Samarsimha's successor, who is named in the Abu traditions as Jaitra-Karna. Pratapsimha also accepted the suzerainty of the Vaghela king, Sarang Dev. The Patanarayan Temple Inscription informs us that during Pratapsimha's reign a Brahmin named Delhan had the Patanarayan temple renovated in VS 1344 (i.e. AD 1287). Pratapsimha was succeeded by his son Arjun. The latter is known to have been ruling around AD 1290. After Arjun, the Abu throne probably passed to Vikramsimha.

Inscriptions indicate that by this time the Abu Parmars had taken to using titles like '*Raj kul*' and '*Maharajakul*'. It was during Vikramsimha's reign that the Chauhans of Jalore took over a major portion of the western part of Abu's territory. Within a couple of generations, probably around c. AD 1311, the Deora Chauhans led by Rao Lumbha seized the Abu Parmar capital of Chandravati, which thereafter served as the capital of what was to become the Deora Chauhan kingdom of Abu-Chandravati-Sirohi (as we shall see further in this chapter).

NAGAUR: A MUCH CONTESTED POSSESSION

In common with strategic sites like Ajmer, Ranthambore, and to some extent, Bayana etc., as opportunities presented themselves areas of Rajasthan occupied by the Delhi Sultanate continually declared themselves independent, or were wrested away from the Sultanate by local Rajput rulers, chiefs and warriors.

Bayana, for instance, was held by Iltutmish and his successor Delhi Sultans. In AD 1250, during the reign of Delhi's Nasir-ud-din Mahmud, Qutlugh Khan was its governor, while under Balban, the governorship was held by Nusrat Khan. In the next century, after Sultan Firoze Shah Tughlaq's death, the area was held, from c. AD 1369 to 1459, by the powerful Auhadi family. The Auhadis oscillated between allegiance to the Delhi Sultanate or the Sharqi rulers of Jaunpur, counter-poised with asserting local independence and autonomy, until Delhi's Sultan Bahlol Lodi took firm possession of the area.

Occasionally, as political control (whether local or at the capital of Delhi) weakened in the years that followed, various Muslim nobles and military commanders similarly attempted to take Nagaur. As a result of this, Nagaur and its surrounding area often changed masters. Nagaur seems to have remained important for the Delhi Sultanate, right from the early period that Ilbari (or Mameluke) Sultans ruled, through to the age of the Lodis.

For instance, during the course of the uprisings against the Delhi Sultanate's control over parts of Rajasthan during the 1220s, following which Sultan Iltutmish of Delhi (r. 1211-1236) took Ranthambore and Sambhar in 1226, and after a stiff resistance from Udaysimha of Jalore, forced a tribute from that kingdom in c. 1228-1229, Nagaur was reconquered by Iltutmish in 1228, and remained a part of his domains. Around 1242, the governorship of Nagaur was in the hands of Malik Izz-ud-din Muzaffar Balban Kishlu Khan⁹, who also held Mandore and Ajmer, as part of the Sultanate lands connected with the governorship. Nagaur was later placed under a different, more famous, Balban — namely Baha-ud-din Ghiyas-ud-din Balban, the *Ulugh Khan-i-Azam*, or 'Great Khan of the Realm'.

When the rise of a Sultanate courtier called Imad-ud-din Raihan (an Indian Muslim), who became a favourite of Sultan Nasir-ud-din Mahmud, led to a temporary fall from favour for Balban, the latter was transferred to his *iqta* of Nagaur. From here, he led the Sultanate troops against Ranthambore, Bundi and Chittor during AD 1253-54. He was later reconciled with the Sultan, his son-in-law, and in December 1254 returned to Delhi. All through this period — and later during Balban's own reign as

Sultan of Delhi¹⁰ (r. 1266-86), Nagaur continued to be of strategic importance, especially due to its geographical position.

RAJASTHAN AT THE BEGINNING OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY AD

Delhi's Sultan Alauddin Khilji (r. 1296-1316) is known to have striven to be a 'world conqueror' like Alexander the Great, and even issued coins referring to himself as the second Alexander. While his military successes remained confined within the borders of South Asia, these successes were, in themselves impressive and numerous. These included the conquest of Ranthambore (1301), Chittor (1303), and Malwa (1305). By 1311 Jalore, Siwana, Sanchore and Mandore had fallen to him too. Alauddin Khilji, assisted by his commanders and subordinates — in particular his lieutenant, Malik Kafur (later the Sultan's deputy or 'Malik Naib') — ensured the expansion of the Delhi Sultanate's territories into southern India and the Deccan too. This included the capture of Warangal, overthrow of the Hoysala dynasty south of the Krishna River, and occupation of Madura (Madurai) in the extreme south during AD 1308-1311, and the acquisition of a vast amount of treasure and booty.

The expansionist tendencies of Sultan Alauddin Khilji of Delhi had long-ranging consequences for several of the contemporary kingdoms and chiefdoms of Rajasthan. Alauddin Khilji's troops are known to have marched through Rajasthan enroute to Gujarat. Soon after, Khilji and his forces also marched against kingdoms and chiefdoms within Rajasthan¹¹. The Pandukha Inscription of VS 1358, or AD 1301, has referred to 'Alavadi' (Alauddin Khilji) of 'Joginipura' (Delhi) and his viceroy, 'Tajadi-Ali' (Tajuddin Ali) at 'Medantaka' (Merta), testifying to the passage, or presence, of the Delhi Sultanate forces in this part of Marwar by that period. A contemporary account of some of the Khilji Sultan's victories is provided by the famous poet-writer-philosopher, Amir Khusrau, whose AD 1316 work *Ashiq* (also known as *Dewal Rani Khizr Khan*), in Persian, details Alauddin's successes against Gujarat, Chittor, Malwa and Siwana.

Jaisalmer is believed to have fallen to the Delhi Sultanate during the 1299-1300 period. This was followed by Sultanate victories over some of Rajasthan's most powerful fortress-capitals of the time. Well before the end of Alauddin's reign, the capitals-cum-chief fortresses of the states of Ranthambore, Mewar, Siwana and Jalore too had fallen into his hands, as is detailed below.

THE CHAUHANS OF RANTHAMBORE AND ALAUDDIN KHILJI

As noted, immediately after his accession, Alauddin Khilji, the Sultan of Delhi, had begun to expand the boundaries of his domain. His successes in Gujarat enabled him to turn his attention towards the kingdoms of present-day Rajasthan. By 1299-1300, Alauddin Khilji's forces had probably already overrun Jaisalmer. It was soon the turn of Ranthambore, which — as has been noted above — was ruled by Hammir (r. ?1282-1301), a descendant of the famous Chauhans of Shakambhari-Ajmer, and the third son of Jait Singh (also referred to as Jaitra Simha) Chauhan of Ranthambore. Credited with victories over the rulers of Garhmandal, Mewar, Abu and Dhar, Hammir is said to have been enthroned around c. 1282-83, apparently during his father's lifetime. A brave warrior, and a patron of the arts, literature, and architecture, Hammir was known for his charity and religious generosity too. The poet Bijaditya was among the litterateurs at his court.

Among other things, Hammir built a three-storey 'golden' pavilion known as '*Pushyak*' at Ranthambore. The Kamlaji or Kamaleshwar Shiva temple, in the present-day Indergarh tehsil of Bundi district, some seventy kilometres from Bundi and eighty-five kilometres from Kota, was also built in Hammir's reign (and damaged later). An attached *kund* (water-tank) bears an inscription detailing the heroism of Hammir and his father, Jaitra Singh.

Ranthambore was probably perceived as a fitting endeavour for Sultan Alauddin Khilji's ambitions. According to the contemporaneous writings of Amir Khusrau, Ranthambore, which possessed a massive fortification wall that was three *kos* in circumference, was situated at a distance of some two

weeks march from Delhi. By the time of Alauddin Khilji, Ranthambore held the reputation of being an impregnable fort and a stronghold of the valiant. In fact, around AD 1290-91 Sultan Jalaluddin Khilji (r. 1290-96) had been unable to capture it.

Furthermore, the ruler of Ranthambore had given shelter to the Mongol rebels Mohammad Shah and Kehbru, who were accused of leading a mutiny against Sultan Alauddin Khilji near Jalore. (K.S. Lal has pointed out that though no contemporary historian has stated this fact as a cause for the invasion “...circumstantial evidence supported by later writings unmistakably does strengthen the hypothesis”¹²).

Thus, in AD 1300 Alauddin ordered two of his commanders, Ulugh Khan, the governor of Bayana (Vijaygarh) and Nusrat Khan, governor of Kara, to invade Ranthambore with all the forces at their command. The joint army of the two generals advanced towards the stronghold of Ranthambore. Enroute, they captured Jhain (which had been attacked previously and taken during the reign of Jalaluddin Khilji in 1290), and plundered it. (One may note here Amir Khusrau’s admiration of the local wood-working done at Jhain).

It is popularly held that some distance short of Ranthambore, Ulugh Khan despatched a letter to Hammir. This informed Hammir that Sultan Alauddin Khilji bore no grudge against the Chauhan chief, and that if Hammir either executed or handed over the fugitives wanted by the Sultan, the invading force would return to Delhi, leaving Ranthambore unmolested. Emphasizing the fact that the wanted men had not proved loyal to the Sultan who had bestowed much honour and patronage on them, and hence, would scarcely be faithful to their new Rajput benefactor, the message concluded with a warning that if the ruler of Ranthambore refused to act in accordance with the demands made in the letter, he should be ready to face the momentous consequences that would result.

Hammir, however, was scarcely the man to buckle under such a threat. According to Nyaya Suri’s *Hammir Mahakavya*, Hammir had won recognition as a fearless warrior and general in many battles, and had ample conquests to show for it. The text relates how Hammir defeated Arjun, the

ruler of Bhimaras, and then took tribute from the famed fort of Mandalgarh, before striking southward to march against Ujjain and Dhar and defeat the Parmar king, Bhoj of Malwa. From Malwa, he began his northward journey homewards. His victorious path traversed through Mewar (which was ruled by Guhila Samarsimha), Abu (which was under Parmar Pratapsimha, a subordinate of the Vaghela king, Sarang Dev of Gujarat), Vardhanpura, Changaa, Pushkar, Maharashtra (?Maroth), Khandila (Khandela), Champa (Chatsu) and Karkarala (at this last Hammir received the homage of the king of Tribhuvangiri, i.e., Tahangarh, Bayana).

On his return, the dashing victor had performed the *koti-yagna* sacrifice of thanksgiving under the direction of his priest, the *Purohit* Vishvarupa. The Balvan Inscription mentions Hammir's victory over King Arjun of Malwa. It has been assumed, therefore, that Hammir led two victorious expeditions against Malwa. One was apparently during the reign of Malwa's King Arjunavarman, and the following one during that of King Bhoja II of Malwa.

Thus, over the years, Hammir had successfully added to the boundaries of his patrimony, annexing far-off territories like Shivpur (near Gwalior) in Central India and Balvan in Kota to his dominions. He had also beaten back the attack by Alauddin Khilji's predecessor, Sultan Jalaluddin Khilji in 1290-91. Proud of his lineage and his military prowess, he held that the traditional notions of providing sanctuary to the needy would not be foresworn in the case of the Mongol refugees evading the Sultan's wrath. Thus, he is said to have replied that while he did not court the enmity of Alauddin Khilji, he could not betray his guests and give them up to sure death.

According to the *Hammir-Prabandh* written by Amrit Kalash, the local mercantile community advised Hammir to surrender the fugitives, so that the ordinary populace would remain unharmed, but Hammir spurned such counsel as being contrary to a ruler's duty and pledged word, as well as to the norms of granting sanctuary to refugees. Another work, the *Hammirayan*, blames the merchants for their cowardly attitude. However, the *Hammir Mahakavya* of Nyaya Suri holds that it was the wrong economic policy of Hammir that led to his downfall, for the ruler had given

a substantial sum of money and lands in *jagir* to the Mongols Mohammad Shah and Kehbru, and the burden of this liberality had weighed heavily on the people and the economy of the land. (The gift of lands and wealth to the two Mongols by Hammir is mentioned in the *Hammir-Prabandh* too).

On receiving Hammir's reply, Ulugh Khan ordered the Delhi Sultanate's troops to continue their march to Ranthambore. Upon arrival, he camped in the vicinity of the towering fortress, and ordered his soldiers to construct the necessary platforms and batteries for the various engines of war — like stone throwing catapults¹³ — that were to be deployed, in keeping with medieval warfare. Meanwhile, Hammir had completed his own preparations to withstand the siege. According to Yahya, Rai Hammir had 12,000 cavalry, several famous elephants and numerous infantry troops at his command, while Amir Khusrau mentions Hammir as having about 10,000 horses.

When the siege commenced, the Ranthambore forces let loose an unceasing shower of arrows and defensive projectiles at the enemy. One of these struck general Nusrat Khan, and he died at the main gate, known as the 'Naulakhi' gateway, of the fort. The sudden loss of such an able commander sent the Sultanate camp into shocked mourning. Taking the silence in the enemy camp as a sure sign of despondency, Hammir's troops exchanged their positions of defence for one of attack. Their fierce assault forced Ulugh Khan and his army away from Ranthambore, and the besiegers were forced to fall back upon Jhain.

On learning about the course of events from Ulugh Khan, Alauddin Khilji decided to personally lead a strong force against Hammir and his fortress, the stronghold of Ranthambore. In the course of his march, an unsuccessful attempt was made on the life of the Delhi Sultan by his nephew, Ikat Khan. Not long after this, Umar Khan and Mangu Khan rose in revolt in Badaun and Awadh, and one Haji Maula launched a rebellion in Delhi. Despite these predicaments, Alauddin continued his march undaunted, until he finally camped in the vicinity of Ranthambore.

“...The investment of Ranthambhor had proved to be a long-drawn out affair. ...The [Sultan's] army was reduced to extreme distress but not a

single soldier dared to desert the camp for fear of the Sultan's imposing a fine of three years pay upon him. While the open country around had altogether been ruined, a spirit of despair had begun to overtake the Imperial [Delhi] troops. Cut off from the capital, the soldiery was certain in its belief that they were destined to perish under the impregnable walls of Ranthambhor. In secret Alauddin would deliberate with his confidential nobles about the causes of the successive revolts and the seriousness of the situation, but outwardly...he pressed the siege with great vigour"¹⁴.

The besiegers made several unsuccessful attempts to fill the moat and pierce the defences of the fort during the prolonged siege. When they used wood for this, it was promptly burnt by the defenders throwing down burning faggots onto the wood; and when they tried raising an external platform to assault the battlements, the besieged intensified their defensive shower of projectiles, arrows and fire. Eventually, however, the long siege began to take its toll, as provisions fell short within the fort and famine raged to such an extent that one 'grain' of rice could be purchased only for two 'grains' of gold¹⁵. According to the *Hammir Mahakavya*, one Surjan Shah, who bore an enmity towards Hammir, was won over by Sultan Alauddin Khilji. The Sultan used Surjan as a medium for secretly placing cow hides (an item of ritual pollution given the sacred nature of a cow for Hindus), in the provision-stores of the fortress, thereby polluting the remaining store of food-grains within the fort. While acute starvation hit the besieged, the Sultan ensured the open-handed distribution of gold among his troops to raise their morale.

By late summer in 1301, it became apparent that the fort could not be held by its defenders for much longer. Preparations were made to sally forth for one final battle against the enemy outside the walls. Alongside, preparations were also made for the accompanying rite of *jauhar* — that act of group self-immolation by the women, children and other dependents of a besieged fort or town, which has been long eulogised by traditional bards and others. Such immolation was performed as a last resort, when it was realised that holding out against the enemy was no longer possible, and with no help in sight, death seemed the only honourable way out of the impasse. Following the act of *jauhar* by the women, it was the practice for the remaining population of the fighting men of a besieged place to charge

defiantly onto the battle-field for one last time, and fight to the very end as befitted a warrior. This act was known as ‘*shaka*’.

That is what took place at Ranthambore in July 1301¹⁶. “A blazing fire was lit and the ladies of the Rai [Hammir], led by the chief queen Ranga Devi perished on the pyre. The remnant of the Rajput soldiery, their nobles and king donned saffron garments and dashed forth to engage the enemy in a last combat. A detailed description of Hammir’s last fight is given in the Rajput sources. According to *Hammir Mahakavya*, nine brave men fought by his side in his last hour — his brother Viram, Tak Gangadhar, four Mongol (brothers), Kshetra Singh Parmar and two others...Muhammad Shah and Kehbru, grateful to the last to the Rajput king for his hospitality and sacrifice, fought side by side with their patron. At last the great Rana Hammir fell, fighting gallantly on the field of battle, as yet in the prime of his life. Isami asserts that none of the Raja’s family was captured alive”¹⁷. The Chauhans of Ranthambore would never again become a potent force in regional history!

According to contemporaneous accounts, the fall of Ranthambore on July 11, 1301 (3 *Zilquda* of the year 700 *Hijri*), was accelerated by the defection of two of Hammir’s ministers, Ranmal and Ratipal. It seems that Ranmal, while visiting the Sultan’s camp for settling terms on behalf of the Rajputs, agreed to desert to the Khilji side, and obtained a written undertaking from the Sultan promising him total amnesty. Ranmal showed the document to his friends, and some of them, together with Ratipal, left the beleaguered fortress for the safety of the Sultan’s camp. After the fall of Ranthambore, however, Alauddin Khilji ordered that the two treacherous ministers of Hammir be put to death, declaring that men who had proved faithless to their own king could scarcely be expected to be faithful to him!

In keeping with this sentiment, when the badly wounded Mongol, Mir Muhammad Shah, was brought before Khilji as a captive, the victorious Sultan of Delhi acknowledged the manner in which Muhammad Shah and Khebru had fought alongside the Rajput king who had given them refuge, and ordered that Muhammad Shah’s wounds be dressed. Though seriously injured, Muhammad Shah spurned Alauddin’s offer and openly insulted him. Swift punishment followed for the Mongol, but it was, nonetheless, an

'honourable' death that was meted out to him by the lights of that period, for Alauddin Khilji, lauding the integrity and bravery of the prisoner, commanded that Muhammad Shah be trampled under-foot an elephant, and then given a decent burial befitting an honourable man.

After the Khilji conquest of Ranthambore, the fort was sacked and plundered. Several of its buildings were razed to the ground by zealots. Meanwhile, having entrusted the fort, together with the territory of Jhain, to the care of Ulugh Khan, Alauddin Khilji himself returned to Delhi, where he was soon engrossed in matters of state and warfare against the Mongols in the Punjab and around Delhi.

The investment of the legendary impregnable fortress of Ranthambore, accompanied by the termination of one branch of the Chauhans that traced its ancestry from the Chahamanas of Shakambhari-Ajmer, had a sobering effect upon its neighbours, both near and far. Meanwhile, other chiefdoms and kingdoms in different parts of India were still to taste the steel of the Delhi Sultan. One of these was the kingdom of Mewar.

CHITTOR AND ITS CONQUEST BY ALAUDDIN KHILJI

During the course of the thirteenth century, the Guhilas of Mewar had successfully further consolidated their power, taking advantage of the temporary weakness of the neighbouring kingdoms of Gujarat and Malwa, and of the Parmars of Abu etc. Thus, under rulers like Jaitra Singh (r. 1213-?1252), who made Chittor his capital, the Guhilas rose to a position of preeminence in the region.

A major check to the power of this clan occurred at the hands of Alauddin Khilji, as he cut a victorious swathe across India. Historians inform us that in AD 1299, a large Khilji army had passed near the borders of Mewar, but since at that time the objective of the Delhi Sultan was Gujarat, the Khilji commanders did not make any serious attempt against the sovereignty of Chittor. The advent of the fourteenth century was not so

lucky for the Guhilas of Mewar¹⁸. In early 1303, Sultan Alauddin Khilji of Delhi finally turned his attention to Chittor. Under his personal leadership, his forces besieged the fort of Chittor for about seven months. Chittor finally fell, after a valiant resistance, in late August of the same year.

Alauddin Khilji's expedition against the famed fortress of Chittor has become an important part of regional folk-memory. Contemporary and post-Khilji records about the campaign are not lacking either. Besides Amir Khusrau's works, *Ashiqā (Dewal Rani Khizr Khan)* and the *Khazain-ul-Futuh* (also called the *Tarikh-i-Alai*), which provide a graphic eye-witness account of the siege of Chittor, the slightly later *Tarikh-i-Firoze Shahi* of Zia-ud-din Barani¹⁹ briefly mentions Alauddin Khilji's conquest of Chittor. So does Isami's *Futuh-us-Salatin*, in which Isami gives 'Sonarsia' as the name of the ruler of Chittor. The writings of Yahya and Haji-ud-Dabir also refer to the conquest of Chittor. Other later works in Persian that provide some information about Alauddin Khilji's campaign against Chittor include the *Tarikh-i-Ferishta* by Muhammad Qasim Ferishta, the *Tabqat-i-Akbari* by Nizamuddin, and Abul Fazl's *Akbarnama*. The fort of Chittor itself contains an inscription in Persian, datable to AD 1310, lauding Alauddin as a Sultan blessed with victories.

Other works that throw light on Alauddin Khilji's Chittor campaign include a text composed around 1336 by one Kakka Suri called the *Nabhinandana-jinodhara-prabandha*, which states that 'Alavadin' captured the Lord of Chitrakuta, took away his treasures and made him move from one city to another like a monkey on display. A much later literary composition, the *Gora-Badal-Chaupai* by Jatmal, dating to AD 1613, tells us about the imprisonment of Chittor's ruler Rawal Ratan Singh by Alauddin Khilji and the role played by the valiant heroes Gora and Badal in rescuing him. Yet another later text, Malik Muhammad Jayasi's oft-cited *Padmavat*, written around c. AD 1540, is centred around Alauddin Khilji's attempts to acquire the beautiful wife of Chittor's Rawal Ratan Singh, Queen Padmini, whom Jayasi describes as a princess from *Singhal-dvipa* (Sri Lanka).

The tale, according to Jayasi's *Padmavat*, runs as follows: Princess Padmini of 'Singhal-dvipa' was renowned for her beauty. Ratan Singh, the

ruler of Chittor, heard about her beauty and peerless qualities, fell in love with her, and travelled to her land in disguise, donning the garb of a mendicant. He succeeded in winning her love, and also her hand in marriage, and brought her back to Chittor with him. Their idyllic existence at Chittor was disturbed some time later, when a magician called Raghavdev caught sight of Padmini. For, struck by her extraordinary beauty, Raghavdev went to the court of the Sultan of Delhi, Alauddin Khilji, and told him about the unsurpassable beauty of the young queen of Chittor. Alauddin now laid siege to Chittor, with the objective of acquiring Padmini, but despite all efforts, he was unable to conquer the fort. He therefore adopted another tactic, and sent a message to Ratan Singh, begging that he be permitted one glimpse of Queen Padmini, after which he would leave the region and return to his capital, Delhi.

The message, continues the *Padmavat*, led to some discussion within the fortress. This is hardly surprising, since the prevailing custom of veiling and segregation precluded ‘outsiders’ from looking at high-born women residing within *raolas* and *zenanas*, i.e. women’s quarters, where strangers were not permitted entry — and here it was a matter that completely breached known etiquette! It was finally decided that Alauddin be allowed to enter Chittor fort and look upon an ingeniously devised reflection of Padmini. This was obtained by asking Queen Padmini to stand on some steps beside a small lake, within the palace-complex within the fort. The Sultan was then permitted to look upon the Queen’s water-reflected image through a mirror strategically placed within a small palace turret-room across the lake from where she stood. After catching a glimpse of Padmini’s mirrored reflection in this manner, the *Padmavat* tells us that Alauddin was ceremoniously escorted to the main gate of the fort by Rawal Ratan Singh, as courtesy demanded.

(As an aside, one may note here that Chittor fort’s original main gate, which was in use at the time under discussion, today lies in a disused condition across the width of the fort, in what is currently regarded as the rear of the fortress. The present-day main entrance gateway of Chittor fort dates from Rana Kumbha’s period in the fifteenth century!)

At this Great Gate, Ratan Singh was treacherously disarmed and carried away as a prisoner to the Sultan's camp. A message was sent to Padmini that Rawal Ratan Singh would be released if she agreed to enter Alauddin Khilji's *harem*. There was consternation in Chittor over the message.

Eventually, a communication was sent to Alauddin. The Sultan was informed that Padmini was willing to accede to his conditions, provided she could have one final private interview with her husband before she entered his harem. The Sultan agreed to this. Sometime later, under the watchful eyes of Khilji's soldiers, 1,600 covered palanquins, ostensibly carrying Padmini and her hand-maidens and serving women, but in reality occupied by fully armed Rajput warriors under the leadership of two Rajput nobles, Gora and young Badal, were carried into the Sultan's camp. Once there, the valiant Rajputs emerged from the palanquins with weapons drawn. Fierce fighting followed. Ratan Singh was freed and carried to safety within Chittor fort by his men, but the brave Gora, Badal and scores of the rescuers were killed, as were innumerable opponents. Jayasi's *Padmavat* carries the story further and describes how Alauddin once again attacked Chittor. Despite a gallant defence, the fort could not withstand the siege indefinitely and eventually Sultan Alauddin Khilji succeeded in occupying Chittor.

The *Padmavat*, thus, highlights a personal reason for the Khilji conquest of Chittor. Significantly, while contemporary sources are silent about the very existence of Padmini, the *Padmavat* and later traditions attribute Alauddin's interest in Chittor less to political necessity and more to his fascination for its beautiful queen, Padmini.

It may be relevant, therefore, to briefly discuss the historicity of Padmini, which many recent historians — among them G.H. Ojha, K.S. Lal, and A.R. Qanungo — have doubted. These critics regard the Padmini legend, and the doomed love of Padmini and Ratan Singh, as romantic fiction, which gained general currency because of Malik Muhammad Jayasi's sixteenth century literary work, the *Padmavat*. Among the arguments broadly put forth for rejecting the historicity of Padmini, the three most prominent ones are as follows. Firstly, Amir Khusrau, who accompanied Sultan Alauddin Khilji in his campaign against Chittor, and

who has provided a first-hand, eye-witness, account makes no mention of Chittor's Queen Padmini and the Sultan's attempt to acquire her. Secondly, other contemporary writers also make no reference whatsoever to Padmini. Thirdly, it is only later traditions which seem to be based upon Jayasi's AD 1540 *Padmavat*, which give us the Padmini story, albeit with varying details, often differing from one another on several essential points.

It may be pointed out here that given Alauddin Khilji's 'expansionist' policy, and his record of various successful campaigns, including against Jaisalmer, Ranthambore and Gujarat, the invasion of Mewar seems a natural corollary to his ambitions, before which personal reasons like besieging Chittor out of desire for the beautiful Padmini appear to be unnecessary.

On the other hand, some other historians — among them A.L. Srivastava²⁰ — believe that the Padmini story has a kernel of truth. In their view, the existence of Chittor's peerless queen should not be dismissed out of hand. Srivastava²¹, for instance, points out that Amir Khusrau's work compares Alauddin Khilji with King Solomon, talks of the Sultan's Queen [Bilquis] of Sheba as being in the fortress of Chittor, and styles himself as the legendary 'Hud-Hud' bird (which had originally carried the news about the beautiful Queen of Sheba to King Solomon). Based upon his reading, Srivastava feels that Khusrau's narrative implies that Alauddin had entered the fort of Chittor (accompanied by Khusrau himself), prior to its final capitulation. After this, Khusrau places the episode of the ruler of Chittor coming to the tent of the Delhi Sultan and submitting to Khilji authority, following which Alauddin ordered the massacre of the surviving inhabitants of Chittor fort.

Supporting the historicity of Padmini, Srivastava believes that "reading between the lines brings to light the main incidents of the story", told in veiled terms by Amir Khusrau, who was perhaps not in a position to be more frank²². He further points out that being a court-based writer-poet, Amir Khusrau's works have omitted mention of several episodes unpalatable to the Sultan — among them the murder of Jalaluddin Khilji by his nephew, Alauddin; Alauddin's defeat at the hands of the Mongols; and the Mongol siege of Delhi. Srivastava also asserts that it would be wrong to

say that Jayasi had concocted the entire story of Padmini. He holds that ‘Jayasi wrote out a romance, the plot of which he derived from Amir Khusrau’s *Khazain-ul-Futuh*’, and while conceding that “most of the romantic details of Jayasi’s *Padmavat* are imaginary”, asserts that “the main plot of the story that Padmini was coveted by Alauddin and was shown in a mirror to the lustful Sultan who had her husband arrested, is most probably based on historical truth”²³. He further suggests that “the women performed *Jauhar* after Ratan Singh’s arrest and then the Rajputs fell on the invaders and rescued the Rana, but they were cut down to a man, and the fort and the country passed into Alauddin’s hands”²⁴.

In this debate about the existence or otherwise of Padmini, one should note that the Padmini story forms part of the local bardic tradition of Rajasthan, though it may be difficult to date the oral traditions conclusively. The legend of Padmini eventually became so well-known that in time Ferishta, Haji-ud-Dabir, the traveller Manucci, Marwar’s Nainsi and, still later, Col. James Tod and Bundi’s nineteenth century chronicler Suryamal Mishran, have referred to it in their respective works. All this has led some twentieth century historians to suggest that while the story of Padmini should not be totally rejected as a figment of literary imagination, it is difficult, given the present state of our knowledge, to uphold Padmini’s historicity as a definite historical fact.

Much has been written about the siege, and the bravery of its defenders — prominent among who were Rana Lakhan-Si (Lakshmanasimha, or Lakshman Singh) of the Sisoda estate, and his seven sons — members of the junior line of the Mewar ruling family. There were many others too, as listed and remembered in traditional annals and works like Tod’s *Annals and Antiquities of Rajast’han*²⁵.

At long last, with no hope of survival in sight and the fall of the fort imminent, Chittor saw the re-enactment of valour and sacrifice that forts like Tanot had witnessed previously or would witness in later centuries, and which Rajput bards have immortalized. The besieged warriors of Mewar donned saffron-hued *kesariya* robes, signifying their intention to fight to death. Simultaneously, the women of Chittor collectively immolated

themselves through the rite of *jauhar*. Then the mighty gates of Chittor were flung open, and the grim defenders erupted forth from the fort, wielding their weapons in one final last combat against the might of the Delhi army.

The sources differ with regard to the fate of the ruler of Chittor. While later writers, including Nainsi, state that he met a heroic end in the defence of Chittor, Amir Khusrau's contemporaneous *Khazain-ul-Futuh* asserts that after the capitulation of Chittor, its ruler came before the Sultan, who spared his life. Isami's version is similar. There are references to the ill-treatment of the captured king of Chittor by Alauddin in the *Nabhinandana-jinodhara-prabandha*, and of his imprisonment and rescue at the hands of Cora, Badal and a loyal body of Mewari soldiers in the *Gora-Badal-Chaupai*. However, the traditionally held belief is that the ruler of Chittor was once captured by the Sultan during the course of the siege, but was later rescued by a band of warriors led by Cora and Badal, and managed to reach the safety of his fortress. Once there, he again took part in the heroic defence of the fort, where he finally died in action.

After the last of its defenders had fallen in battle, Chittor was occupied around August 26, 1303, and sacked by Alauddin's forces. Amir Khusrau mentions the large-scale massacre of the general population and trail of destruction that ensued. The great fortress was renamed Khizrabad by Alauddin, and its administration handed over to his eldest son and heir, Prince Khizr Khan. (The still extant bridge, spanning the river Gambhiri, at the base of the fort of Chittor, was built at the orders of Prince Khizr Khan during this period).

Later, perhaps around c. AD 1313 or 1314, as it became more imperative that Khizr Khan maintain an active role at Delhi, Alauddin decided to give the administration of Chittor fort into the charge of Maldeo Sonagra of Jalore. Maldeo was the brother of Kanhar Deo, the ill-fated Chauhan chief of Jalore (to whom reference has been made elsewhere in this chapter). The *Tarikh-i-Ferishta* indicates that Maldeo Sonagra's appointment carried with it the condition that he paid regular tribute to Delhi, and promised to serve the Sultan with a fixed number of troops and

cavalry, when called upon to do so. The subsequent history of the Guhila-Sisodia clan after the fall of Chittor is detailed further in this chapter.

THE FALL OF SIWANA

Despite hard-won victories over Ranthambore and Chittor, Alauddin Khilji's campaigns were far from over. In 1305, Alauddin marched against Malwa. Following the conquest of Malwa, Alauddin Khilji sent his general, Malik Kafur, to handle matters in the south, while he himself seized the opportunity to attack Siwana in western Rajasthan. At the time, Siwana was ruled by Satal Deo of the Parmar clan. His reputation was that of a powerful ruler who had defeated many other chiefdoms in combat, and whose suzerainty was acknowledged by several smaller chiefs. Despite the fall of Ranthambore and Chittor, Satal Deo remained unawed by Khilji might and refused to submit to Alauddin.

Alauddin marched against Siwana on July 2, 1308, and immediately upon arriving beneath its ramparts, proceeded to encircle the fort. The right wing of his army was stationed to the east and west of the battlements, with the left wing at the north, and the centre entrusted to the command of Malik Kamal-ud-din Gurg (known as 'the Wolf'). A constant shower of missiles was kept up from the *manjriqs* (large catapults or stone-throwing engines of war), and Alauddin Khilji's forces "...resorted to many stratagems, but all in vain. The Rajputs defended the fort stubbornly, threw fire and stone from the battlements and for months together 'breath was choked by the sound of the Turki flutes and Hind[v]i bells'"²⁶.

The fall of proud Siwana eventually came about because of the activities of a traitor named Bhaile. According to the writer Padmanabha, the traitor Bhaile was induced to indicate a passage to the Khilji commander through which a *manjriq* was carried. This was used to discharge a cow's head into the drinking-water reservoir atop the fort. With the pollution of their water-supply, the garrison and all within immediately stopped drinking water.

The act sealed the fate of Siwana, just as the placing of polluting cow-hides in the grain-stores of Ranthambore had decided the fate of that fortress. After much further fighting, the Khilji forces finally entered the fort. Satal Deo tried to retreat towards Jalore but was ambushed and killed on November 10, 1308. The administration of Siwana was entrusted to Malik Kamal-ud-din, and the Sultan of Delhi returned to his capital victorious yet again.

THE CHAUHANS OF JALORE AND ALAUDDIN KHILJI'S CONQUEST

Within a few years of his conquest of Ranthambore, Chittor, Malwa, and Siwana, Alauddin Khilji turned his attention towards the subjugation of Jalore. At the time, this old township and its fortress was under the Chauhan chief, Kanhar Deo (who was also known by the names of Saligram, Gokalnath and Krishna III). Kanhar Deo (r. circa?1292 or?1298-1310) was the son of Som, also called Samant Singh.

The Jalore Chauhans had risen in power and stature over the years. As noted above, around AD 1205, under the third ruler of the Jalore Chauhan line, Udaysimha (r. 1205-1257), the scattered might of the Nadol branch of Chauhans had been partially absorbed by their collateral branch based at Jalore. Udaysimha added more territories to the desert kingdom, He was succeeded by Chachigdeva (Chachik Dev), after whom came Samant Singh.

Samant Singh was probably a feudatory of Bhim Deva, the Chalukyan (Solanki) ruler of Gujarat. Around AD 1288, Samant Singh is known to have ruled over Hastikundi, which had formerly been held by the Rashtrakutas, as well as Satyapura (San chore) and its surrounding region. Barmer too seems to have formed part of Jalore's territories around this time, for in AD 1291, an endowment was made towards regular arrangements for a religious-fair at Barmer's Sun temple, and in AD 1295 a pillar was erected at the Jain temple there. It is probable that around 1292 AD Kanhar Deo either became associated as heir-apparent or co-ruler with his father's governance. He probably succeeded his father on the throne of Jalore around c. AD 1298.

It is thought that once Alauddin Khilji had consolidated his authority over other parts of Rajasthan, including western Rajasthan, Kanhar Deo's semi-independent position could not have been allowed to continue indefinitely. According to the information put together from traditional sources in the *Khyat* written a few centuries later by Nainsi, Jalore faced two sieges during the period of Sultan Alauddin Khilji of Delhi. The first, states Nainsi, occurred in 1298 when the Sultanate's army was returning from Gujarat, while the second took place in 1311. Historians question Nainsi's version about the first siege, as he has constantly referred to the Sultan's presence at Jalore, whereas it is known that Alauddin had not led his forces against Gujarat.

However, Ferishta too has mentioned two expeditions against Jalore. According to his version, the Sultanate's first expedition against Jalore took place in the *Hijri* year 704 (i.e. AD 1304). Ferishta tells us that as the Sultan's generals Alaf [Alp] Khan and Nusrat Khan and the Khilji troops were returning victorious from their conquest of Malwa, they arrived at Jalore, where its ruler 'Nahar Deo' — taking lesson from the fate of 'Koka' (of Malwa) — offered his submission to the Sultan of Delhi without any show of resistance. The next expedition, according to Ferishta, came about in AD 1308 because Sultan Alauddin Khilji once declared at his court — where Kanhar Deo too was present (in his capacity as a feudatory) — that there was none among the Hindu rajas who dared to challenge the might of his arms. The remark is said to have fired the pride of the Chauhan Rajput chief of Jalore, who immediately picked up the gauntlet, declaiming loudly that "If I wage a war and do not come out successful, I may be killed"²⁷! This effrontery enraged the Delhi Sultan, and, in turn, he ordered the invasion of Jalore, to which place Kanhar Deo had already made his escape and begun preparations for battle.

Some twentieth century historians are of the view that this story is rather inexplicable in the light of Ferishta's version that Nahar (Kanhar) Deo had already accepted Khilji overlordship in 1304, and was even present in court. Why then pick a fight four years later? Strange and improbable as the story may sound, a similar version is found in the writings of Haji-ud-Dabir, a contemporary of Ferishta.

(Without going into the issue in detail here, it seems that we ought to re-examine and re-assess the entire ‘sovereign’ and ‘dependent’ king relationship at various different phases (chronological and societal) of Indian history, rather than continue to regard this relationship solely in the light of master and feudatory. As we have already seen in earlier sections, there were a range of options and a permutation of relations that existed between various expanding or established imperial or paramount powers, vis-à-vis smaller states. This applied in the case of the Guptas, Harsha Vardhana, Gurjara-Pratiharas, Shakambhari Chauhans, etc., and later the Delhi Sultanate, Mughals, Marathas, and the East India Company (EIC), when several contemporaneous states accepted the supremacy of the larger power, without fully submerging their individual state’s identity or abrogating their own ‘royal’ powers. From such a perspective, yielding to a superior force can also be viewed as an act of ‘real politik’, rather than stark categorizations by some twentieth century historians of events and resultant reactions purely from the light of ‘patriotism’).

Nainsi propounds quite a different reason to that provided by Ferishta and Haji-ud-Dabir for the attack on Jalore. He says that a Khilji princess fell in love with Kanhar Deo’s son, Vikram, who was in attendance at the Delhi court on behalf of his father, Kanhar Deo. According to the Gujarati work *Kanhad-de-Prabandh* (penned in c. AD 1465) by Padmanabha²⁸, the name of this princess was Firoza, and she was Alauddin Khilji’s own daughter! Since she remained adamant about marrying Vikram in the face of threats and opposition from the Sultan and the ladies of the harem, Alauddin Khilji commanded the Jalore prince to marry Firoza. However, Prince Vikram was unwilling to marry a ‘Turk’, claims the *Kanhad-de-Prabandh*. Thus, he left for Jalore under the ruse that he was going to assemble the traditional bridegroom’s party (*baraat*), with which he would soon return to claim his bride from her father’s palace. In turn, the canny Sultan kept back a prince from the House of Jalore as hostage at his court, and when Vikram did not return after a considerable passage of time, the furious Sultan ordered his forces to march against Jalore on a punitive mission. Nainsi has repeated the version found in *Kanhad-de-Prabandh* in his *Khyat*.

K.S. Lal holds that neither Nainsi's, nor Ferishta and Haji-ud-Dabir's, reasons seem convincing²⁹. In his view, the real cause of the Khilji attack on Jalore was to end its independence, just as the Sultan had done in the case of several other kingdoms. Such a step was merely a continuation of Alauddin's existing policy of imperial expansion.

The known course of events is as follows: Sometime towards the end of the first decade of the fourteenth century AD, a Delhi force was sent against Jalore, but met with several reverses. The siege was a prolonged one once again, and according to the *Kanhad-de-Prabandh* version, the Sultan's armies were consistently beaten back. Faced with such humiliating retreats on the part of his troops, Alauddin Khilji despatched a strong force under the command of Malik Kamal-ud-din Gurg, one of his successful veteran generals. Kamal-ud-din 'the Wolf' pressed the siege with vigour. Simultaneously, claims the *Kanhad-de-Prabandh*, a man called Sejwal Bikram, a Dahiya, was tempted by the offer of gold and riches to guide the Sultan's men to a secret entrance leading into the fort of Jalore.

Sejwal did not live long to enjoy the fruits of his act of treachery. He is said to have been killed by his patriotic wife, Hira-Dey, when she learned of his deed. However, even as Hira-Dey informed Kanhar Deo about her husband's treachery, the secret entrance revealed by Sejwal was exploited fully by Kamal-ud-din. The unexpected presence of Sultanate soldiers within the fort, while her battlements were still unbreached, resulted in a bloody hand-to-hand combat as the besieged people of Jalore struggled to hold the place. It proved an impossibly uphill task. A fiercely fought battle raged within the now vulnerable fort.

After Kanhar Deo and his son, Vikram, had fallen in action, along with scores of their followers, Jalore was invested by Kamal-ud-din. A general massacre followed, but one of Kanhar Deo's brothers, Prince Maldeo, survived the fall of Jalore. (He later secured the 'pardon' and goodwill of Alauddin, and was soon thereafter appointed governor of Chittor in place of Prince Khizr Khan Khilji, the Sultan's son and heir). To mark the victory over Jalore, Alauddin ordered the building of a mosque (still extant) inside the famous fort.

Nainsi's date of VS 1368 (AD 1311-12) for the fall of Jalore, conflicts with that given by Ferishta — 708 *Hijri* (AD 1308). The confusion is confounded by the fact that like many sieges, the one at Jalore was prolonged over several years. K.S. Lal favours Nainsi's date of 1311 for the fall of Jalore. According to him: "In 1308 the conquest of Siwana was underway and a large army was sent to the Deccan also. It is, therefore, probable that Jalor was attacked at a later date. But Nainsi's date finds corroboration in the *Tirtha Kalpa* of Jain Prabha Suri who says that in *Samvat* 1367 i.e. AD 1310, Alauddin destroyed the temple of Mahavira at Sanchore. The desecration of this temple must have been a part of the larger enterprise, namely the invasion of Jalor. Reu [a well-known early twentieth century historian from Marwar] also concluded that Jalor capitulated in AD 1311 "[30](#)."

(Though Sanchore and Barmer were both plundered by Alauddin Khilji and his forces around this time (c. 1310), evidence suggests that the sites were probably not occupied or annexed for long. Sanchore is known to have been under a chief called Haripaladev Chauhan in AD 1334 and a later inscription of AD 1387 states that Kamala Devi, wife of Chief Pratapsimha Chauhan, restored the century-old temple of Vayeshvara at Sanchore. Barmer, too, is known to have been held by the Chauhans around the same time. In this context, we learn that a Chauhan ruler called Shikhar Singh subsequently held Barmer, and according to Jain records, he accorded an enthusiastic welcome to the Jain teacher, Jinapadma-Suri in 1334. Thus, it would seem that the Chauhans were able to recover their strength in some small measure following Khilji's departure.).

VICTORS AND THE VANQUISHED — SOME ASPECTS

Reams have been written about the reasons that enabled invasions to so often result in victories for the attacker, in spite of the legendary valour of the warrior class of Rajasthan on the battlefield. And this, in spite of the courageous defence put up by the various Rajput kingdoms not only during the time of Alauddin Khilji, but also other 'Turki'/Muslim sultans of Delhi. Historians have pointed fingers, for one, at the general tendency of the Rajput kingdoms and chiefdoms to fight the invasion-forces singly and

separately. Criticising this, the historians have commented that whether the invader was Mahmud of Ghazni, Muhammad of Ghor, Aibak, Iltutmish, Balban, or the Khiljis etc., the Rajput kingdoms did not forge a common battle-alliance or confederation, even when the citadels of their near neighbours were being besieged. This applied even when common sense should have indicated that it could be their turn next. Thus, though individual fortress-capitals of the Rajputs offered stubborn resistance, their neighbours were often content to mind their own affairs and exult in the downfall of hitherto powerful rival clans.

The relations between Siwana and Jalore are an example of this attitude, for even when the fall of Siwana was imminent, the ruler of Jalore, a citadel situated at a distance of about fifty miles (eighty kilometres) from Siwana, made no move to come to its assistance. Similar patterns can be seen in other cases. Going back a century or so, the same point is made by twentieth century historians about rulers like Prithviraj III of Ajmer, Jayachandra of Kanauj, and Bhim II of Gujarat not coming to the aid of each other despite having a 'common enemy' — i.e. a foreign opponent. Citing other examples even further back in time, many historians underscore the point of internal rivalry preventing sovereign Indian kingdoms assisting each other against foreign aggressions time and again. A classical example cited is that Alexander's Indian opponent King Porus did not receive support from his powerful fellow-Indian neighbouring kingdom ruled by King Ambi, and that if the two Indians had put aside their differences and combined against Alexander, the Macedonian Greek would have been conclusively beaten back.

However, structuring our understanding of past interactions and inter-relationships between different kingdoms from the socio-political thinking and perspective of a twentieth century nation-state clouds the ground-realities as they probably existed at different points of time in human history. We cannot digress here into a discussion of traditional South Asian notions of territories called 'Jambudvipa', 'Bharat-khanda', 'Bharat-Varsha'; nor of the concepts of state, land, country, '*desh*', etc.; or of what constituted a state; and of perceptions of homeland, country, political units versus cultural entities. However, it is important to note that essential to the Indian concept of an all-powerful 'world' monarch or a *chakravartin raja*,

was the fact that such ‘world’ monarchs also wielded sovereignty over a number of subordinated or subjugated kings or chiefs, whose lands had not been wholly annexed. These subordinated kings often continued to rule over their former pre-subjugation units, which separately comprised a sort of semi-independent kingdom, yet collectively formed part of a greater state. In addition, the existence of several sovereign kingdoms within a broader socio-cultural geographical unit was also often the ground-reality. This was true for Rajasthan as well during the early medieval period.

This was no different to what it had been for previous kings of earlier times (including during what is usually categorised as the ‘ancient’ period of Indian history). Thus, the safety of individual kingdoms rather than the welfare of the more nebulous greater whole was probably paramount in the minds of the concerned ruling groups! In fact, it should be borne in mind that fighting each other — inter-state, inter-clan, and intra-clan — is known from different periods and is something that has a long human history — and not just in Rajasthan too!

One of the other causes attributed for the fall of many of the thirteenth-fourteenth century Rajput kingdoms is the vulnerability of their forts. The forts, which became a strong-point of the Rajputs, and which enabled them to resist sieges over a prolonged period of time, were also, in a sense, their ‘Achilles heel’. Constructed atop hills and peaks in most cases, or in locales otherwise difficult-of-access to an attacker, the forts were excellent for defensive purposes. They could also shelter a large number of ordinary people from the surrounding areas in addition its normal inhabitants made up from the ruling clans and their relatives, courtiers, garrison, merchants, administrators, priests, scribes and so forth. However, when a prolonged siege occurred, the forts would, perforce, become isolated from the food-supplies and resources of its surrounding country-side. (And even from those farmers or other rural people from the immediate vicinity who had been unable to gain the security of the fort in time).

Thus, a prolonged siege lasting several months — or even years, meant extended hardships for the defenders — non-combatants and the garrison alike. For one thing, the besieger encamped in the plains below the

fort usually managed to cut off supply-routes to the encircled fortification. Since the crowd within a fortress far exceeded its usual population during a siege, such action would put pressure on the stored provisions whenever the siege became long-drawn out. The crowding and pressure on drinking-water, sanitation and other facilities sometimes resulted in the outbreaks of epidemics within the besieged fort, further weakening the position of its defenders. In such situations, very often the final straw would come — as in the case of Ranthambore, Siwana and Jalore — when attackers used ‘inside help’ to cause religious pollution of provision-stores or the water-supply (through the use of a cow’s head or hide); or to enter a fortress using secret passages.

Some historians have also faulted the adherence to out-dated traditions of warfare on the part of the Rajputs during c. twelfth-fourteenth centuries AD. Steeped in old traditions, the Rajputs, in sharp contrast to the sultans of Delhi, were apparently relatively ignorant of the changes in military strategy and war tactics introduced from Central Asia, especially by the Mongols. The armies of the Delhi Sultanate, on the other hand, had adopted many of the Mongol tactics of ambushade, camouflage and feigning retreats. They also possessed technologically newer engines of war like *arrada*, *gargach* and *manjniq*.

The Rajputs, on the other hand, long continued to favour an older style, which included using war-elephants in open engagements, and the perpetuation of the psychology that reiterated that death in battle was a glorious and desirable end for the life of any Rajput warrior! Another drawback for the Rajputs was their reliance on quotas of soldiers provided by fief-holding subordinates or suzerain dependencies in times of battle and emergencies. These could occasionally be withheld. In addition, frequently, when a fort in Rajasthan was encircled and isolated by enemy troops, reinforcements could not always break through enemy ranks to relieve the besieged.

Many of the above factors were undoubtedly at play when Alauddin Khilji achieved his hard-won victories against various kingdoms in Rajasthan. However, these features were not specific only to the Rajputs of Rajasthan. Other ‘medieval’ and ‘feudal’ systems of governance and

warfare carried a somewhat similar ideology and behaviour-pattern! It must be noted, too, that the success of the Delhi sultans in Rajasthan was basically short-lived. For, in common with similar situations in other parts of South Asia (and the world), as soon as the occupation-forces slackened their hold, some local 'hero' or other attempted to claim, or reclaim, the concerned territory or territories.

Besides the simplistic, but oft-given, explanation of imperialistic expansion as a major motive for the assault against the Rajput kingdoms by Alauddin, who is reputed to have fancied himself as the 'Second Alexander', the position of the Sultanate's capital, Delhi, must also be borne in mind. Like the rulers who had preceded him on the throne of Delhi, Alauddin realised that in order to maintain the safety and strength of his capital, his immediate neighbours needed to be either subdued, or destroyed, or turned into allies. Prior to Alauddin, his uncle and predecessor on the Delhi throne, Jalaluddin Khilji, had also campaigned against local states and kingdoms of Rajasthan, just as had the Delhi sultan's like Qutb-din Aibak, Iltutmish and, to some extent, Raziya Sultan and Balban, who preceded the Khiljis during the thirteenth century. The existence of trade and travel routes that went through portions of Rajasthan and were used for various campaigns by the Sultan's armies, for example against Gujarat and Malwa, etc. would also have had an influence on the area that today comprises the state of Rajasthan.

By the second decade of the fourteenth century, Alauddin had secured his position from his immediate neighbours from the west and south-west. The impact of this on the region comprising Rajasthan was considerable. Over the years, Alauddin Khilji's forces campaigned against various kingdoms in Rajasthan from around 1299, when Jaisalmer seems to have been invested, till the fall of Jalore in c. AD 1311. This naturally affected the local, regional, power balance, particularly with the fall of a number of established Rajput ruling houses within a short space of time.

The forts won by Alauddin in Rajasthan did not remain under his control for long, though, and eventually were re-possessed by Rajputs — though not necessarily by the clans that had previously held them. Some surviving groups tried to re-establish their dynasties in the general vicinity

of their previous kingdoms, while others moved away towards more 'secure' tracts and attempted to establish themselves there. In some areas, newer groups filled the political power vacuums. Occasionally, these were local clans or sub-clans that may have previously been subservient to a stronger one. In others, it was migrants — voluntary or otherwise, or displaced communities, from another sub-region who assumed dominance in what were, for them, newer tracts.

THE DELHI SULTANATE AND ITS IMPACT UPON RAJASTHAN DURING THE FOURTEENTH AND FIFTEENTH CENTURIES

While Rajasthan continued to feel the after-effects of Alauddin Khilji's onslaught for a considerable time to follow, the death of Sultan Alauddin Khilji in January 1316 brought about many changes to the power-structure within the Delhi Sultanate. On Sultan Alauddin's death his favourite (and the Sultanate's deputy or 'Malik Naib'), Malik Kafur acted quickly. Malik Kafur's conspiracies and intrigues during the preceding period of Alauddin's illness had already led to the Sultan disinheriting his eldest son, Prince Khizr Khan, and the annihilation of several important members of Alauddin's family³¹. He now imprisoned, blinded, and otherwise swept aside the other heirs to Alauddin's estate, and raised a minor son of Alauddin Khilji to the throne, under the title of Shihabuddin Umar. For a short while, this enabled Malik Kafur to become the *de facto* centre of power in the Sultanate, before he was killed by soldiers who declared (Qutb-ud-Din) Mubarak Khan, one of Alauddin Khilji's surviving sons who had escaped the fate of being blinded, as sultan of Delhi.

The young Mubarak Khan began his reign well enough. He withdrew several of his father's harsh administrative regulations, crushed a rebellion in Gujarat, and re-conquered Devagiri. However, his infatuation for a Hindu convert slave called Khusrau Khan, who came from the war-honed Barwar community of Gujarat, brought him infamy and soon led to his being overthrown and put to death in April 1320 by that very favourite Khusrau. In turn, Khusrau ascended the throne and ensured that the surviving heirs of the old Khilji dynasty were wiped out.

Khusrau's mismanagement and excesses eventually led to Ghazi Malik Tughlaq, one of the experienced Turki officer-administrators-cum-commanders, who had previously held the office of governor of the Dipalpur-Multan area, among other things, to rally a party of Turki chiefs. Then, assisted by his valorous and equally talented son, Malik Jauna (later Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq), Ghazi Malik defeated Khusrau in two decisive battles, and took over the reins of administration of the shattered Sultanate himself in September 1320. Taking the name of Ghiyas-ud-din (r. 1320-1324), it was this sultan who established the rule of the Tughlaq dynasty. Subsequently, the Tughlaqs ruled as sultans of Delhi between 1320-1412.

Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq was succeeded by his son, Muhammad bin Tughlaq (r. 1324-51), an able man, with ideas that seemingly were ahead of his times. Muhammad bin Tughlaq, busy with other matters, did not need to further subjugate the Rajasthan area. Muhammad's successor was his cousin, Firoze Shah Tughlaq (r. 1351-1388), who asserted control over northern India, including parts of Rajasthan. Firoze Shah Tughlaq had cordial relations with the Bhatias of Abohar, which was the clan of his mother, Naila (wife of Rajjab, the younger brother of Sultan Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq). An inscription of AD 1363 recording the construction of a well through the efforts of one Bamdeva, who is described as being submissive to Islam, indicates that at the time Sambhar was part of the domain of Sultan Firoze Shah Tughlaq of Delhi³². It also refers to salt-production at Sambhar, a certain portion of which was allotted for the maintenance of the well.

Following the death of Firoze Shah Tughlaq in 1388, there was a period of convoluted politics involving a struggle for the Delhi throne. Several of the provincial governors appointed by the Delhi Sultanate took advantage of the situation, and over the next few years many would declare their independence. Meanwhile, one of Firoze Tughlaq's grandsons occupied the throne under the title of Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq Shah II (r. 1388-89), much to the fury of Prince Nasir-ud-din Muhammad Tughlaq, who was the son of Firoze Shah Tughlaq. Prince Nasir-ud-din Muhammad attempted in vain to wrest the throne from his nephew, and finally sought refuge at Nagarkot, now known as Kangra. (Mewat's Bahadur Nahar and

his forces helped the Sultanate's troops during this period, as we shall see further below). Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq Shah II was murdered in early 1389, and the throne taken by Prince Abu Bakr Shah, another grandson of Sultan Firoze Shah Tughlaq.

Prince Nasir-ud-din Muhammad Tughlaq once more staked his claim to the throne. Though unsuccessful, his following continued to grow, and soon his authority was accepted across Hansi, Hissar, Lahore, Multan, and other areas north-west of Delhi. In April 1389 he proclaimed himself sultan at Samana — even though his rival was still formally the Delhi sultan! In August 1390, Nasir-ud-din Muhammad Tughlaq took possession of Delhi and ascended the throne as Sultan Muhammad Tughlaq of Delhi (r. 1390-1394). He was succeeded by Humayun, who ascended throne as Sultan Alauddin Sikandar Shah (r. 1394-95). The latter was succeeded by Nasiruddin Mahmud (r. 1395-1398), whose claim was challenged by Nusrat Shah, a grandson of Fateh Khan.

However, it was the invasion of northern India by Timur in 1398-99 that proved a major blow to the Sultanate. Timur marched right up to the capital of the Delhi Sultanate, and entered Delhi. The city was subsequently sacked from December 17, 1398 to January 1, 1399. The Delhi Sultanate had been weakened by Timur's incursion and the sack of its capital. Not unnaturally, the Sultanate took time to recover from the effects of these. In the meantime, across northern, north-western and western India, as well as in the Deccan, more and more independent states became established. Northern India was virtually divided among a number of states. One of the strongest amongst these was the Sharqi dynasty Sultanate of Jaunpur.

Soon thereafter, the Saiyid dynasty came to power in Delhi under Sultan Khizr Khan (r. 1414-1421). The Saiyids claimed to be descendants of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. They were to rule over the Sultanate from 1414 to 1451, until displaced by the Afghan Lodis (1451-1526). Khizr Khan had previously served as governor of the Punjab. Like his three successors, he had to face constant pressure and challenge from Jaunpur's Sharqi sultans to the east and the Khokars of the Punjab (particularly the valleys of the Jhelum and the Chenab rivers). Khizr Khan also sent troops

against the Mewatis (as noted elsewhere), and otherwise also remained occupied with raids to collect revenue.

Khizr Khan was succeeded by his son, Mubarak Shah (r. 1421-1434). Mubarak Shah was forced to deal with several hostile forces more or less simultaneously. To the north and west of the Delhi Sultanate were groups like the Khokars, Turks (or 'Turkbachchas' who held the areas of Sarsuti, Amroha, several *parganas* in the Doab area, and the fort of Tabarhind [Sirhind]), and Mongols³³. To the south-east were the hostile states of Malwa and Jaunpur. Mubarak Shah also needed to deal with the people of the Mewat area, which lay contiguous to Delhi (as we note further in this chapter).

Following the assassination of Mubarak Shah in February 1434, Muhammad Shah (r. 1434-1445) became the next sultan of Delhi. After overcoming the initial difficulties, the new sultan abandoned himself to a life of luxury and pleasures, which allowed court-intrigues and conspiracies full play. It is said that the Mewati chief Jallu —Jalal Khan Mewati — and his followers, in collusion with some of the nobles of the Delhi court, encouraged the Khalji Sultan of Malwa, who was encamped at Tilpat, to seize the Delhi throne. Muhammad Shah apparently took timely action and with the help of Bahlol Lodi, an Afghan belonging to the Lodi tribe and the governor of Sirhind, resolved the situation.

After Muhammad Shah's death in 1445, the prestige of the Sultanate declined rapidly under Ala-ud-din Alam Shah (r. 1445-1451), the son of Muhammad Shah. In 1448, Alam Shah abandoned Delhi for Badaun. The Saiyids did not hold the Sultanate for long after this. For, three years later, Bahlol Lodi, already ruler of the Punjab, seized Delhi. Bahlol Lodi, one of the Sultanate's prominent military leaders, had already gained the support of the other nobles and military commanders, in particular the Afghans. The transfer was more peaceful than was usual, for the last of the Saiyid Sultans was allowed to retire unmolested to Badaun, where he died in 1478.

Sultan Bahlol Lodi (r. 1451-89) encouraged other Afghans to settle in the fertile plains of the Indo-Gangetic Doab, distributed rich *iqtas* (revenue collection rights) among them, and built up his military strength with the

aid of their contingents. Under the Lodis, there was marked influx of Afghans into India, which went a long way to swelling the Delhi Sultanate's fighting numbers. Bahlol was a vigorous leader, who managed to hold together a loose confederacy of Afghan and Turkish chiefs with his strong personality. Bahlol avoided flaunting personal power, stressing that he was nothing more than 'first among equals', and his court is described as resembling "...more an Afghan tribal assembly than the council of a great king"³⁴.

Starting with only the control of the region adjacent to Delhi, Bahlol extended the boundaries of the Sultanate to the borders of Bengal. A considerable part of Bahlol Lodi's reign was devoted to subduing Hussain Shah Sharqi of Jaunpur (r. 1458-1477), dealing with Malwa, and consolidating his hold across the Ganga-Yamuna area. Twice besieged in Delhi, he finally defeated and partially annexed Jaunpur in 1479. In the midst of all these actions, the area of Rajasthan also drew his attention from time to time. His relations with areas adjoining or nearer to Delhi, like Mewat, the Hissar-Shekhawati region, and Nagaur, as well as more distant areas, like Mewar and Sirohi, are mentioned further in this chapter.

Bahlol was succeeded by his second son, Sikandar Lodi (r. 1489-1517), whose vigorous rule saw the expansion of the boundaries of the Delhi Sultanate in every direction. He gained control of Bihar and founded Agra on the site known as Sikandarabad. He is known to have given protection to the Khan of Nagaur.

Let us look now at the individual states of Rajasthan during this period, including not just their interaction with the Delhi Sultanate, but with each other, and with other neighbouring states like Malwa, Gujarat, Multan, etc.; as also their internal condition etc. during the AD 1200-1500 period.

THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE STATES OF RAJASTHAN (C. AD 1200-1500)

In addition to the general trends and events described above, it may also be useful to look separately at the chronological political history of various major states of Rajasthan, which continued to remain in existence, or were established, during the period under discussion in this chapter. Such states include the kingdoms and chiefdoms of the Guhilas and their branches; the Chauhans of Ranthambore, Jalore, Sirohi and Bundi; Kachchwahas of Amber; the Bhatias of western Rajasthan; Kyam-khanis of Shekhawati; Rathores of Marwar and Bikaner; the Mewatis; the Khanate of Nagaur, and so forth.

THE GUHILA-SISODIAS OF MEWAR

As we have noted already, the Guhilas were a clan of some importance during the c. AD 700-1200 period. In time, they became one of the most powerful political groups in Rajasthan, following the vacuum caused by Prithviraj Chauhan's defeat at the hands of Muhammad of Ghor and the eventual downfall of the Chauhan kingdom of Shakambhari, which altered the political power balance in Rajasthan.

Taking advantage also of the relative weakness of the kingdoms of Gujarat and Malwa — their neighbours to the south and south-west — the Guhilas of Mewar successfully consolidated their power under successive rulers. For instance, we learn from an inscription in the famous Luna Vasahi temple at Delwara built by Tejpal and Vastupal in AD 1231 that Samant Singh (Samantasimha) of Mewar, the successor of Kshema Singh of Mewar, fought against Prahlanan Dev, the younger brother of Abu's Parmar king, Dharavarsha. According to Ojha, Samant Singh's successors were Kumarsimha (Kumar Singh), Mathanasimha (Mathan Singh), Padmasimha (Padam Singh), and Jaitrasimha (Jaitra Singh). However, there is relatively little information about Mewar during the reign of Kumarsimha through to the reign of Padmasimha. The situation changes when we come to the period of Jaitra Singh.

Jaitra Singh (r. 1213-?1252), seems identical to the 'Jaital' during the early part of whose reign Iltutmish overran much of Mewar and invested

Nagda³⁵. The Chirwa Inscription of VS 1330 (i.e. AD 1273), tells us that Nagdrahapura (Nagda) was destroyed, while Padmaraja (the son of the Yogaraja to whom the previous ruler of Mewar, King Padmasimha, had granted the village of Chirakupa, or Chirwa) fell fighting against the army of the invading sultan near Bhutala. Meanwhile, the Vaghela chief, Vir-Dhavala, advanced to help Jaitrasimha, and on receiving news of this, the Sultanate army withdrew. Probably, it was the downfall of Nagda that motivated Jaitra Singh to make Chittor his permanent capital in place of Nagda.

Jaitra Singh is credited with successfully checking later intrusions led by the Delhi sultans Iltutmish and Nasiruddin Mahmud, respectively, into the area. He seems to have also come into conflict with the rulers of neighbouring Gujarat, Malwa and Nadol. He probably emerged the victor; for, as the Ghagsa Inscription of his son, Tej Singh, informs us, “the rulers of Malwa, Gujarat, Maru and Jangal could not curb the pride” of Jaitra Singh. According to the Uparganva Inscription of AD 1404, Jaitra Singh captured Vagar and gave its administration into the hands of his son, Sihad (also called Sihadadeva). Sihad’s descendants continued to hold Vagar, ruling first from Baroda, and later from Dungarpur over subsequent decades.

Contemporaneous Jain manuscripts penned during Jaitra Singh’s reign also provide general information about this period. Among other things, the name of Jaitra Singh’s chief minister is recorded as having been Jagatsimha/or Jayatasimha. Described in the fifteenth century Kumbhalgarh Inscription as the ruler of ‘Chitrakoot, Medpat, Aghat and Vagar’, epigraphic and other evidence indicates that Jaitra Singh died sometime between c. AD 1252 and 1260 (VS 1309-1317), though the exact year is still disputed.

Jaitra Singh was succeeded by his son, Tej Singh (Tejasimha), (r.? 1252-?1267 or? 1273). Tej Singh took the titles of ‘*Parambhattarka*’, ‘*Maharajadhiraj*’, and ‘*Parmeshwara*’. Depending on how one determines the dates of Jaitra Singh’s reign, there is a probability that it could have been Tej Singh who defeated the forces of the sultan of Delhi in AD 1253. The expedition was probably led by Balban, who had temporarily lost the

favour of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud of Delhi, and was based at his *iqta* estate of Nagaur. In 1255-56, Qutlugh Khan (Nasiruddin's step-father) rebelled and fled toward Chittor. He was apparently pursued by Balban, but could not be captured. It is unclear whether Qutlugh Khan merely traversed through the territories of the kingdom of Mewar, or actually sought shelter at Chittor.

Among the literature penned during Tej Singh's reign was an illustrated copy of the *Shravaka-pratikramana-churni*, written on palm-leaves at Aghatpur in AD 1261, when one Samuddhara was chief minister. One of Tej Singh's wives, Queen Jayatalla Devi, appears to have been influenced by the Jain teachers who thronged Chittor, for she had the temple of Shyam Parshvanath constructed, as known from the Chittorgarh Inscription of AD 1278, engraved during the reign of her son, Samar Singh. Another of Tej Singh's queens, Rupa Devi, daughter of Chachig Dev Chauhan of Jalore, is mentioned in the Budtara Inscription as the donor of a step-well there³⁶.

Samar Singh (Samarsimha) (r.?1267 or ? 1273-1302) succeeded to the throne of Mewar after the death of his father, Tej Singh. It was during Samar Singh's reign that the forces of Sultan Alauddin Khilji traversed through Mewar's territory enroute to Gujarat in AD 1299. According to the writings of the Jain spiritual leader, Jinaprabh Suri, when Sultan Alauddin Khilji's younger brother, Ulugh Khan, marched for Gujarat in VS 1356 (AD 1299), in response to the call by a Gujarat minister called Madhav, he entered Mewar's lands. Thereupon, Rawal Samar Singh punished Ulugh Khan for his temerity in attacking Mewar. On the other hand, the writings in Persian by Sultanate chroniclers state that the 'Lord of Chitrakoot' protected Chittor by giving tribute to the Sultan's brother, in order to maintain peace³⁷.

Samar Singh also found himself faced with the might of Ranthambore's Hammir (r.?1282-1301), for, as already noted, Nyaya Suri's *Hammir Mahakavya*, tells us that when Hammir of Ranthambore embarked on his campaign of *dig-vijay* as a world-conqueror, his journey took him through Mewar, which was under the Guhila Samarsimha (Samar Singh) at the time. Given their undoubted contemporaneity, it seems that Samar

Singh was the Mewar ruler referred to by Nyaya Suri. If, as the *Hammir Mahakavya* states, Samar Singh was subordinated by Hammir of Ranthambore, it would seem that Mewar continued to have its share of attacks, enemy depredations and the financial burden of paying tribute, during Samar Singh's reign. If Mewar was also forced to pay tribute to Ulugh Khan, as the Persian sources state, this factor would have been an added strain for Mewar's treasury! In retrospect, it seems that Samar Singh's reign saw Mewar walk a tight-rope between powerful neighbours intent on extending their hegemony — though possibly no one could have foretold just how close the end was for the ruling house of Mewar, and scores of their kin.

Information about some of the endowments and grants made by Samar Singh is provided by about eight inscriptions or texts. These include the two Chittorgarh Inscriptions of AD 1278 and AD 1287, the Abu Inscription of AD 1285; the Dariba Inscription of AD 1299 Chirwa Inscription of AD 1273, and the Rasiya-ki-Chhatri Inscription of AD 1274. (This latter not only lists rulers of the Guhila line, it also refers to life in Mewar in general, including sites like Nagda and Delwara, practices like slavery and caste-distances, the titles of learned men, and Vedic sacrifices, etc.). The contemporaneous Jain *Anchala-gacchha-pattavali* states that the Rawal banned the taking of animal-life in his kingdom after listening to the preaching of Jain *Acharya* Amitsimha Suri. Between them, these throw valuable light on life in Mewar during the late thirteenth century.

Jainism appears to have continued to thrive at Chittor, along with other beliefs, throughout the period, as indicated by the regular gifts and land-grants made, as well as the written tradition of different Jain sub-schools. Literature and cultural activities flourished too, as did art and architecture. Epigraphs and textual references inform us that Padam Singh, Kel Singh, Shilpi Keylan and Shilpi Karma Singh were among the known architect-artisans of the time. The '*Kirtistambha*' — a twenty-three metres (seventy-five feet) high tower-like structure within Chittor fort, built in honour of Jain Tirthankar Rishab-Dev (also called Adi Nath), by the merchant — or *Shreshthi* — Jija Bagherwal (and completed by his son Punya), dates from Samar Singh's reign.

Samar Singh was succeeded at the beginning of the fourteenth century by his son, Rawal Ratan Singh (c. AD 1302-1303). Ratan Singh's reign ended (as already noted), with the sack and occupation of the Guhila capital of Chittor by Sultan Alauddin Khilji of Delhi. The occupation of Chittor followed its hard siege, culminating in a '*shaka*' and fight-to-the-finish by its defenders. With the fall of Chittor, the senior ruling branch of the Guhilas of Mewar perished.

It was Hammir, a member of the junior Sisodia branch (descended from Chittor's Rawal Ranasimha, also called Karan Singh), who, would eventually wrest back the ancestral capital of Chittor some years later. The title of 'Rawal' which had been held by the main Mewar Guhila branch died out with Rawal Ratan Singh³⁸. Instead, the title of 'Rana', which was already being used by the Sisodias up to this point, began to be used for the main ruler of Mewar from the time of Hammir onwards.

Meanwhile, Chittor — re-named Khizrabad — was handed over by Alauddin to his son and heir, Khizr Khan, who gave its administrative responsibility into the hands of Malik Shahin. Later, the Malik fled to Rai Karan of Gujarat. At this, perhaps sometime between c. AD 1311-1313, Alauddin gave Chittor into the charge of Maldeo, the Chauhan prince from Jalore (brother of Kanhar Deo Chauhan of Jalore, and a survivor of Jalore's fall), who belonged to the Sonagra sept of the Chauhans. According to contemporary Khilji records and Nainsi's later *Khyat*, Maldeo appears to have been a capable administrator, who governed the fort and its surrounding area for about seven years. In acknowledgement of this, on Maldeo's death in 1321, his son Jaisa was permitted to take charge of Chittor in his father's place.

Jaisa did not enjoy his position as governor of Chittor for long, though. Taking advantage of the political events at Delhi, where a palace coup had ended the Khilji dynasty, Prince Hammir (r. 1326-1364), who belonged to a collateral branch of the Guhilas known as 'Sisodia', occupied Chittor, ousting the administration of the Sonagra Chauhans. Once again, the old capital of Chittor was back in Guhilot possession. This time, in the hands of the collateral or junior branch, which had held the estate of Sisoda and traced descent from Prince Rahap, one of the sons of Rawal Ranasimha

(Karan) of Mewar. As such, though the Sisoda branch too were descendants of Guha and members of the Guhila (Guhilot) clan, the appellation of 'Sisodia' came to be widely used for the ruling family of Mewar from this time onwards. So too did the title of 'Rana'.

As we have noted, the Mewar Guhila branch, along with numerous warriors and chiefs of its sub-branches, had suffered greatly in the course of the fight with Alauddin Khilji over Chittor. While the direct line of the ruling Rawals of Mewar had perished in the siege of Chittor, one surviving member descended from the royal line was Ajay-Si [Ajay Singh] of the Sisodia branch of the Guhila ruling family.

Tod wrongly described him as the favourite son of the ruler of Chittor. Ajay-Si was certainly not Rawal Ratan Singh's son. The confusion may arise from the fact that Ajay-Si was the son of Lakshmansimha (Lakshman Singh), who belonged to the royal lineage of Bappa Rawal and his descendants down to Rawal Ranasimha (Karan Singh). As is held by popular tradition, and as the later *Eklinga-Mahatmaya* and the Kumbhalgarh Inscription tell us, Rana Lakshmansimha (better known as Lakhem-Si, or Lakhan-Si), died defending Chittor against Alauddin Khilji, along with seven of his sons. The sequence of events is not very clear, but Lakshmansimha appears to have held the command of the fort during the last stages of its last defence. It is possible that he took charge of the struggle against the Delhi sultan after the capture, or surrender, or death of Rawal Ratan Singh, sometime prior to the final battle, and was acknowledged as king — being Ratan Singh's nearest surviving kin — by his compatriots. Echoes of this come through in Tod's narration, and in the oral traditions of Mewar; for we learn that Lakhem-Si and seven of his sons donned the royal mantle and crown, in turn, and sacrificed their lives one by one, for Chittor and its guardian-deity.

Ajay-Si, the son of this Lakhem-Si, was apparently ordered by his sovereign to leave the fort prior to Chittor's final battle and '*shaka*' in order that the lineage could continue. This tradition, as retold in Tod's words, tells us that "Ajeyasi, in obedience to his [king's] commands, with a small band passed through the enemy lines, and reached Kailwarra in safety. The Rana, satisfied that his line was not extinct, now prepared to follow his brave

sons; and calling around him his devoted clans, for whom life had no longer any charms, they threw open the portals and descended to the plains, and with a reckless despair carried death, or met it, in the crowded ranks of Alla[-ud-din]”³⁹

From the security of Kelwara (Kailwarra as Tod spelt it), situated in a high valley within western Mewar, Ajay-Si attempted re-building the tattered might of Mewar. The path was strewn with difficulties. At his death, the probable date for which is around 1314, Ajay-Si was succeeded by his nominated heir — his valorous nephew Hammir. The son of Ajay-Si’s dead elder brother, Prince Arsi, the young Hammir had already amply displayed his courage, and was chosen as heir-presumptive by Ajay-Si in preference to his own sons. (Mewari traditions hold that one of Ajay-Si’s sons, Sajjan Singh, went towards the Deccan when his cousin Hammir was anointed heir-presumptive by Ajay-Si, and that it is from Sajjan Singh that the Maratha warrior-hero Shivaji is descended. These traditions place Shivaji eleventh in direct descent from Sajjan Singh and twelfth from Ajay-Si).

Mewari chronicles tell us that Hammir was the son of Prince Arsi and the valorous daughter of a poor Rajput of the Chundano tribe. (The Chundanos are a sept of the Chauhan clan). While out on a hunting expedition in the forest of Undwa, Prince Arsi observed her bravery in impaling a wild boar while protecting her family-fields, and similar acts of courage. Impressed, Arsi made enquiries about her parentage and the very next day asked her father for her hand in marriage. Tod informs us that to the surprise of Prince Arsi and his companions, the Chundano Rajput refused, but “...on going home, told the more prudent mother, who scolded him heartily, made him recall the refusal, and seek the prince. They were married and Hamir.[sic] was the son of the Chundano Rajpootnee. He remained little noticed at the maternal abode till the catastrophe of Cheetore [sic]”⁴⁰.

Hammir set before him the goal of re-taking Chittor and restoring the position and prestige of Guha’s descendants in Mewar. The mountain stronghold of Kelwara, in the heart of the Aravalli range, became Hammir’s headquarters. In order to strengthen his position, the strategically located

fort of Jilwada was captured. This became both a centre for carrying out offensive action against his enemies as well as a strategic defensive post. The fort of Idar in the Abu-Sirohi region was also occupied to bulwark his position still further. The Sringrishi Inscription dating to VS 1485, i.e. AD 1428, which was composed by one Yogeshwar and engraved by a man called Phana, provides valuable historical information about these and other achievements of Hammir, as well as of his successors — Kheta, Lakha and Mokal.

Having consolidated his might in various ways, Hammir and his loyal band began to plunder the area surrounding the fort of Chittor in order to pressurize and over-awe the enemy within, and gauge its true strength. There are many romantic tales associated with Hammir and the manner in which he took Chittor. The bards too have sung his praises. However, in the absence of adequate contemporary records, it is not certain which of the stories most closely approximates reality. (Among other things, he is said to have gained the blessings of Barwadi, a Charan holy lady of Khod, in Gujarat). One version says Maldeo Sonagra offered the hand of his daughter in marriage to Hammir, and that Maldeo's daughter and a minister called Jal Mehta helped Hammir in capturing Chittor. (Tod has presented the Mewari traditions provided to him on this in his *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*).

Whether through a mixture of planning and force, or a passage of arms, Hammir succeeded in recovering Chittor sometime in or around AD 1337. Obviously, the political upheaval at the Delhi court, following Alauddin's death, also played its part in smoothing Hammir's path to some extent.

Having occupied Chittor and re-established the might of Mewar, Hammir extended its boundaries in all directions. This brought him into opposition with groups like the Meenas of the Bundi area, against whom Hammir was successful. It is more than probable that Rana Hammir was the Mewar ruler who helped the Hadas, led by Deva Hada, establish themselves in the Bundi area (as is noted elsewhere in this text). He also entered into alliances to augment and fortify the position of Mewar. Hammir is regarded as the "real founder of the glory of Mewar" by many. The traditional annals

of Mewar state that Hammir's reign saw the addition of Ajmer, Ranthambore, Nagaur, Bhainsarogarh and Sui-Sopur to his kingdom, and that his influence was recognised by the rulers of Marwar, Amber, Bundi, Gwalior, Raisen, Chanderi, Sikri, Abu and Kalpi — all of whom paid him homage. Hammir's name, therefore, still remains synonymous with gallantry and valour in the popular mind.

Some traditions state that when expelled from Chittor fort by Hammir, the Sonagra Chauhan administrator of Chittor, Jaisa, fled to Sultan Muhammad Tughlaq's court at Delhi. On learning the news, the sultan marched against Hammir, but was defeated and taken prisoner in a battle fought near the village of Singoli. The sultan was released by Rana Hammir after three months in captivity, and after ceding Ajmer, Ranthambore, Nagaur and Sui-Sopur, a sum of money and one hundred elephants to the Mewar ruler.

This is not directly corroborated by any other evidence, but R.C. Majumdar tells us that "...according to a Jain temple inscription, dated AD 1438, a Muslim army was defeated by Hammira [sic]. That Mewar acknowledged the suzerainty of Tughlaq Shah is proved by an inscription in the fort of Chitor [sic]. So the Muslim-Rajput clash evidently took place in the reign of Muhammad Tughlaq. It is also quite clear from contemporary chronicles that Muhammad Tughlaq and the later Sultans practically left Rajputana severely alone..The story of Hammira's success against the Muslims cannot, therefore, be regarded as altogether baseless. We may accept the conclusion of [G.H.] Ojha that not only Mewar but nearly the whole of Rajputana became practically independent of Delhi Sultanate, but as he rightly observes, the story of the defeat and imprisonment of Muhammad Tughlaq cannot be regarded as true in the absence of corroborative evidence. Possibly the Muslim army was led by some general and not the Sultan himself"⁴¹.

The reigns of the rulers who succeeded Hammir — Kheta (r. 1364-1382), Lakha (r. 1382-1421), and Mokal (r. 1421-1433), saw not only the further strengthening and expansion of Mewar, but also a flowering of intellectual and artistic activities. Temples, palaces and water-reservoirs were constructed, and *bunds* erected along several irrigation-tanks. All three

successive rulers granted lands and monetary grants, etc. towards the construction or renovation of temples of various deities too.

Hammir's son and successor, Kheta, or Kshetra Singh (r. 1364-1382), successfully annexed areas like Ajmer and Jahazpur from Lilla Pathan, and added the whole of the Chappan plains territory to his patrimony. Kheta re-annexed Dusore and Mandalgarh, which had been occupied by the Hada Chauhans, and forced the subjugation of the Hada Chauhans of, both, Bambvada and Bundi. Bundi, at the time probably ruled by Napuji, was regarded as a feudatory by Mewar, and it is possible that under Napuji Bundi had shown too much self-will. Bundi obviously acknowledged its obligations as a 'vassal' status for, according to the Menal Inscription of AD 1389, when Mewar took to the field against the army of Malwa, the Hadas fought on the side of Kheta. Kheta defeated Dilawar Khan Ghori, also known as Ami Shah, the Sultan of Malwa in this battle. Another opponent whom he defeated was Ranmalla of Idar, who was imprisoned. The adventurous Kheta eventually met his end at Bundi, in a quarrel with the Hada chief of Bambvada "...whose daughter he was about to espouse"⁴². The Mewar tradition holds that its forces promptly avenged this death, killing 'Lal Singh', the ruler of Bundi, and occupying the principality.

Following Rana Kheta's death in 1382, Lakha (r.1382-1421), the eldest of his seven legitimate sons succeeded to the throne of Mewar. Tod tells us that Lakha's "first act was the entire subjugation of the mountainous region of Merwarra, and the destruction of its chief stronghold, Beratgurh, where he erected Bednore"⁴³.

Various inscriptions, like those of Sringerishi, Eklingji, Bhavnagar and Kumbhalgarh, acclaim Lakha for making the hilly areas as well as the frontiers of Mewar, free from rival chiefs and enemies by the might of his arms. He led campaigns and battles against the Mers and Bhils, fought the Sankhla Rajputs of 'Nagarachal' (which formerly comprised the Jhunjhunu-Singhana-Nurbana area), and countered the forces of Mahmud Shah Lodi's Delhi Sultanate ('*Turukshas*' or '*Turkis*', as the traditions phrase it). He also avenged the murder of his father by the Hadas, through forcing their subservience. Bundi was eventually returned to the Hada Chauhans.

It was also, as Tod informs us, in Lakha's reign that there occurred "...an event of much greater importance than settling his frontier, and which most powerfully tended to the prosperity of the country, [which] was the discovery of the tin and silver mines of Jawura [Zawar], in the tract wrested by Khaitsi [Kheta] from the Bhils of Chuppun. Lakha Rana has the merit of having first worked them"⁴⁴.

Actually, archaeological explorations suggest that the original workings at the silver-lead-zinc yielding mines around Zawar may pre-date Lakha by over one millennia. Lead and silver workings were known in southern and south-eastern Rajasthan from early historical times. There were zinc mines at Dariba and Potlan in Bhilwara district too, but little is known about their dates and working. In the Zawar area itself, besides remains of ancient mines, some iron chisels and unusual pestle-like hammers have been recovered *in situ* from ancient workings in the Mochia mine. Remains of wooden stairways, haulage scaffolds, and staging and drainage leets etc. also survive in many mines. Samples taken for radio-carbon (C14) dating from a scaffold and leet in the Zawar Mala mine have given C14 dates of 170 +/- 60 BC and AD 30 +/-50. These dates are comparable to other ancient silver/lead workings at Rajpura-Dariba and Rampura-Aguncha, both located in the same sub-region of Rajasthan.

In a different context, the Samoli Inscription of AD 646 records that mining was carried out in that general area of Mewar during the seventh century AD. Possibly, these mines were abandoned for some centuries prior to Lakha's period. In that sense, Lakha may have been the first 'medieval period' ruler to re-encourage the importance of the lead-silver yielding Zawar mines and order the task of metal extraction to be taken up on behalf of the state.

(Associated with the lead/silver mines of Zawar is the aspect concerning the eventual production of zinc. Work in the Zawar mines area regarding early zinc production in India, has led a joint team of researchers from the MS University Baroda, the British Museum, and Hindustan Zinc Ltd. to conclude that an indigenous process of zinc smelting was known here as early as at least the fourteenth-fifteenth century AD, amply pre-dating zinc production in Europe⁴⁵. Providing details about mining

techniques, ore sources, and preparation of ‘charge’, zinc distillation process, and so forth, the researchers believe that originally only silver and lead was worked at Zawar, with zinc smelting following as a natural later development, probably during the fourteenth-fifteenth century. Zinc extraction and smelting at the Zawar mines developed into a major industry in the sixteenth century and continued to flourish until its extinction in the late eighteenth century. This is also attested by the considerable slag heaps at the village of Zawar Mata, some twenty-five miles southeast of Udaipur, zinc retorts, disused furnace-sites etc. as well as many remains of old structures, houses and temples in Zawar Mata area).

The discovery of the silver and lead mines around Zawar was a boon for fifteenth century Mewar. It brought economic stability, encouraging trade and commerce on a far wider scale than in the years immediately preceding the discovery, financed the kingdom’s war and defence machinery, and allowed a range of constructive activities to be carried out over the years. The text, *Vir-Vinod*, composed in Mewar during the nineteenth century by writer-poet ‘Kaviraj’ Shyamaldas, states that the construction of the famous Pichchola lake of Udaipur was the enterprise of one *banjara* (an itinerant nomadic trader, often classed as a gypsy; member of one of the nomadic communities of India), who had prospered by the trade he carried out across Mewar.

The prosperity that accompanied the exploitation of the Zawar mines served to improve the economic situation within the kingdom, and Chittor, Delwara, Zawar etc. were among the major trade-centres of the time. It is believed that smelting activity in the reign of Rana Lakha earned a net revenue of rupees three lakhs per annum. The overall prosperity also helped to finance, both, the defence-related, and construction-related, activities of the state. Not surprisingly, therefore, this, coupled with Lakha’s military achievements, has helped preserve his name with honour in traditional annals. According to Tod, “...Lakha is a name of celebrity, as a patron of the arts and benefactor of his country. He excavated many reservoirs and lakes, raised immense ramparts to drain their waters, besides erecting strongholds. The riches and mines of Jawura were expended to rebuild the temples and palaces...”⁴⁶.

While Mewar prospered and extended its frontiers under Lakha, one of the Rana's marriages towards the latter part of his life affected the future destiny of both Mewar and its neighbour Marwar. It also resulted in the voluntary renunciation of all claims to the throne of Mewar by Lakha's eldest son, Prince Chunda (and his heirs), in perpetuity.

According to the popular version, it began when a mission from Marwar bearing the proposal for the marriage of a Rathore princess, Hansabai (daughter of the famed warrior-king Rao Chunda of Marwar [r. 1384-1428] and sister of the equally valorous Prince Ranmal), with Rana Lakha's eldest son and heir, Prince Chunda of Mewar, arrived at the Mewar court. The Marwar heralds were accompanied by all the customary betrothal paraphernalia. Prince Chunda happened to be absent from the *darbar* (court) of Rana Lakha when the proposal was ceremoniously communicated, and the traditional betrothal coconut proffered, by Marwar's emissaries.

On hearing the proposal, the aging Rana remarked in a jestful manner, in front of all the nobles and officers present at court, that the offer was obviously not intended for a greybeard like him, since such proposals were directed at the young and it was not the place of the older warriors to expect them. When Chunda subsequently learned of his father's remark, the affronted and proud prince declined to accept an offer of marriage which his father had publicly declaimed — even in jest — could well have been addressed to his account.

Chunda's declaration caused consternation at Chittor. There was now a crisis of etiquette involved too, for the customary betrothal coconut from Marwar had already been proffered at court, and could not be returned. A refusal at this stage would be an insult not just to the kingdom of Marwar, but to the entire Rathore clan. The Rana was furious, but his eldest son remained obdurate. It was then decided that Rana Lakha would marry the Rathore princess himself "...provided Chonda [sic] would swear to renounce his birthright in the event of his [Lakha] having a son"⁴⁷.

At this, Prince Chunda willingly renounced in perpetuity every right to the throne of Mewar, which was his by both the right of primogeniture as well as the custom of the land, in his capacity as the eldest son and the heir-presumptive of the Rana. He also pledged to protect and pay the allegiance due from a loyal subject to any son born from the forthcoming marriage between his father and the Marwar princess. In recognition of his abrogation of his traditional right, Chunda was later conferred the privilege of occupying the premier place in the councils of Mewar. It was also declared that his symbol — the mark of his lance — would be appended on all deeds, documents and grants, in addition to the mark or endorsement made on these by the ruler. (One may add here that up till the merger of Mewar into modern-day Rajasthan in 1949, the Rawals of Salumber, senior-most amongst Chunda's various descendants, continued to enjoy rights accruing to their fifteenth century ancestor).

On Lakha's death (apparently fighting the Turks') in 1421, his son Mokal (r. 1421-1433), born of the Rathore princess, Hansa-bai, succeeded to the throne. As he was a minor at the time, his eldest half-brother, Prince Chunda began to look after the affairs of state on Mokal's behalf. However, Hansa-bai, now the queen-mother of Mewar, doubted Prince Chunda's integrity and intentions, and resented the influence he had over the nobles and courtiers of Mewar. Accepting the situation with grace, Chunda opted to leave Chittor.

He retired to Mandu, where he was honourably received by Hushang Shah Ghorī (r. 1406-1435), the sultan of Malwa. (Hushang Shah's father, Hussain Ghorī, had been given the title of 'Dilawar Khan' by Sultan Firoze

Shah Tughlaq and confirmed in the governorship of Malwa by Firoze's successor, Sultan Nasir-ud-din Muhammad, in 1390-91. He declared himself the independent sultan of Malwa, with his capital at Dhar, following Timur's sack of Delhi. Hussain Ghori's son, Alp Khan, better known as Hushang Shah, founded Mandu and Hushangabad. Mandu became the new capital of Malwa).

In the interim, Mewar's Queen-Mother Hansa-bai solicited and obtained the help of her brother, Ranmal of Marwar, for administering the state on behalf of the young Rana Mokal. Over the next few years, Ranmal fulfilled his role admirably. He also organised campaigns against various enemies threatening Mewar at the time. Among them, Firoz Khan of Nagaur who had taken to plundering Mewar's territories, Sultan Shihabuddin Ahmad Shah of Gujarat — better known as Ahmad Shah I (r. 1411-42), and the Hadas of Bundi. However, his growing influence over Mewar and interference in affairs of state, and his practice of bequeathing high posts to fellow kinsmen from the Rathore clan, became suspect in the eyes of the nobles of Mewar.

To some extent, this popular feeling against Ranmal extended to his nephew, Rana Mokal, too. Court conspiracies were whispered about. As resentment against the overt Rathore 'domination' grew, some nobles took the opportunity of drawing in two of Mokal's uncles, Chacha and Mera (who were the natural sons of Rana Kheta, Mokal's paternal grandfather by a non-Rajput concubine). Mahapa Panwar too was part of the conspiracy. On an expedition in the western hills, Mokal was murdered in 1433.

Mokal's reign as an adult was relatively short, but like his predecessors, his court too encouraged literature and the arts in his kingdom. Just as his father's court had included artists and scholars (among them the poets Jhoting Bhatt and Dhaneshwar Bhatt), many artists and writers — like Yogeshwar and Bhatt Vishnu — flourished at Mokal's court too. Inscriptions tell us that Manna, Fanna and Vishal were among the famous sculptors of Mewar during this time.

Mokal's reign saw the continuation of the policy adopted by his immediate ancestors of strengthening existing forts and fortifications.

Mokal had the temple of Samidheshwar at Chittor built⁴⁸, ordered the construction of ramparts around the Eklingji temple, and of several lakes for irrigation purposes, and also granted lands for religious purposes. All these were part of the tradition that would be continued and carried forward to a scintillating peak by his son and heir, Kumbha.

Rana Kumbha (r. 1433-1468), is remembered in history not merely as a warrior-king, but also as a scholar whose reign marked a period of multifaceted artistic creativity and socioeconomic prosperity for Mewar. Kumbha succeeded to the throne of Mewar in an uncertain atmosphere of conspiracies, distrust and confusion, following the murder of Rana Mokal. One group of courtiers and nobles took up the claim of one of Mokal's murderers, declaring him master of a portion of Mewar. Meanwhile, various chiefs of areas subjugated by Mewar, or lying along its borders, also made their respective bids for independence from Mewar's domination. In addition to these internal problems, there existed a very real external danger posed by the neighbouring kingdoms of Malwa and Gujarat. The dowager queen-mother of Mewar, Kumbha's grandmother Hansa-bai, once again called upon her brother, Rao Ranmal of Marwar, to help Mewar out of its predicament.

Ranmal helped the young Rana in restoring law and order in the area known as 'Magra'. With the assistance of local Bhils, the offenders against the state were tracked down in the more remote regions to which they had fled, and either killed or forced to seek refuge elsewhere. Some of them, led by Mahapa Panwar and Chacha's son, Ekka, fled to Mandu, while others were imprisoned. In the process, Ranmal is said to have taken Chacha's daughter captive and married her, while five hundred other girls from the families of the traitors and fugitives were captured and handed over by Ranmal to his favourites.

Objection to this came from one of the Mewar princes, Raghavdev. Raghavdev was one of the sons of the late Rana Lakha, and a younger brother of the Sisodia prince, Chunda, who was still in voluntary exile from Mewar. Raghavdev was helping with the administration of Mewar, on behalf of his nephew, the young Rana Kumbha at the time. (Raghavdev's own inheritance included the estates of Kelwara and Kowaria). Denouncing

the victimization and enslavement of the innocent girls and women, he took them into his protection. He was also apprehensive about the growing influence of the Rathores at court, and organised a party of loyal Mewari nobles to rid the kingdom of Rathore domination.

Meanwhile, Ranmal found Raghavdev to be a threat to Rathore interests. He too, therefore, organised a conspiracy against the Mewar prince. Raghavdev was invited to the *darbar* and offered a traditional robe of honour. Unknown to Raghavdev and his supporters, the sleeves of the robe had previously been sewn together in such a way as to restrict movement. Thus, as Raghavdev attempted to put on the garment, his arms became entangled and confined within the sewn sleeves-ends, and, unable to reach his own sword for protection, he fell an easy prey to Ranmal's men, who immediately cut him down.

Writing over three and a half centuries after the murder of Raghavdev, James Tod noted in his *Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'han*, that "Raghoodeva [sic] was so much beloved for his virtues, courage and manly beauty, that his murder became martyrdom, and obtained for him divine honours, and a place among the *Di Patres (Pitri-deva)* of Mewar. His image is on every hearth, and is daily worshipped with the Penates. Twice in the year his altars receive public homage from every Sesodia [sic], from the Rana to the serf"⁴⁹.

The assassination of Raghavdev had quite obvious repercussions for Mewar-Marwar relations. At Chittor, ordinary citizens and nobles alike were already strongly resentful of Ranmal's authority and the Rathore domination over the Sisodia court. Many now began to fear for the life of their young Rana, and the chiefs began to take steps to curtail Ranmal. Even the once rebellious Mahapa Panwar as well as Ekka, the son of Chacha, returned from Malwa to offer their swords in the service of Mewar!

Meanwhile, Chunda, the eldest son of Rana Lakha, was asked to return to Mewar to avenge his brother's foul murder and to put an end to Rao Ranmal Rathore's domination at Chittor. While Chunda re-entered Mewar and removed Rathore outposts from the vicinity of the fortress of Chittor, a group of Sisodia nobles conspired against Ranmal within the fort.

They gained the help of a woman called Bharmali, with whom Ranmal was enamoured. She plied Ranmal with drink, and when he fell asleep in a drunken stupor, she tied him to the bed with his own turban. In that state, he was unable to defend himself adequately against the assassins sent by the Sisodia nobles. It is said that, tied as he was to the bed, Ranmal still managed to pull himself upright to his feet, but with his arms, torso and legs pinioned, there was no escape for the doughty old Rathore warrior. Around the same time, a fortuitous warning enabled Ranmal's son, Jodha to make his escape, along with the surviving band of Rathores.

It was an ignoble end for a warrior (who was also the ruler of Marwar in his own right), who had spent several years at Mewar and helped in its administration at more than one crucial point in the kingdom's history. While the old adage of 'He who lives by the sword, dies by it' could be applied equally to practically all of Ranmal's warrior-contemporaries (Kshatriya or otherwise), who were brought up to believe in the 'code' of the warrior, and to aim for a 'warrior's death'; the maxim of 'As ye sow, so shall ye reap' can be used to understand the reasons for Ranmal's murder.

Undoubtedly, Ranmal Rathore served Mewar loyally for several years, particularly during the period that his nephew, Rana Mokal, was a minor and needed the protection of his interests, and, in fact, his very life. Ranmal did the same once again while the position of the new Rana of Mewar, Mokal's son, and Ranmal's great-nephew, Kumbha was insecure following Mokal's death. However, Mewar traditions convey the deep sense of alienation, resentment and distrust that remained constantly prevalent amongst the Sisodia nobles and courtiers of Mewar against Ranmal, and his band of loyal Rathore men-at-arms.

This feeling seems to have become magnified many times over by the time that Ranmal returned to Chittor as an unofficial 'regent' the second time around in 1433! Perhaps his manifold achievements, his stature amongst contemporary warriors, his close relationship with the immediate ruling family of Mewar, and his ambitions, combined to make his arrogance difficult to take for the Sisodia nobility, who suspected Ranmal's long-term intentions over Mewar and its people.

The Marwar traditions portray Ranmal as a good and loyal man, who stood by Mewar during its lean times, and was unjustly rewarded by being murdered. Mewar traditions, on the other hand, hold that Ranmal's influence was harmful for Mewar, and that the Rathore was a wicked and personally ambitious prince. The truth lies somewhere between these two extremely one-sided views.

(There also seems to be a salutary lesson here, concerning the importance of whose viewpoint is used for looking at a past situation, and what norms should be formulated, or what is the 'correct' and 'impartial' perspective for judging the actions, achievements and failures etc., of rulers, military leaders, administrators, and even ordinary citizens, of ages where the practices and morals were in response to situations and times different than our own! It also brings us to the issue of who is a 'good' ruler. Those who flamboyantly conquered neighbouring and far-off lands — as have been eulogised by traditional chroniclers nearly the world over? In fact, the bulk of inscriptions available to historians today celebrate battle-victorious all-conquering kings, and the bulk of tales of yore handed down over the centuries laud such monarchs as ideals! There were also those who fought defensive battles and, perhaps, concentrated more on ensuring peace and justice to their subjects. This latter category of kings and chiefs were mildly lauded for their excellent qualities by bards, whose writings simultaneously seem to have yearned for a more action-oriented warrior-leader! [The more recent schools of historical analyses — French Annales, Marxist, Subaltern, etc. etc. — provide approaches that are in sharp contrast to this 'traditional' one that Rajasthan's bards have upheld, of course]).

Ranmal undoubtedly helped buffer the young Mokal and Kumbha at critical periods in their individual reigns. However, it cannot be denied that some of the measures adopted during the early part of Kumbha's reign approached on intrigue and bad judgement. These enhanced the existing distrust and quarrels between the Sisodia and Rathore nobles and their men-at-arms. The Sisodias nobles — and people of Mewar, in general — undoubtedly also contrasted the imperious behaviour of Ranmal of Marwar with the chivalrous and loyal manner in which another of the Rana's blood-relatives, the late Rana Lakha's eldest son, Prince Chunda quietly served Mewar time and again, and then equally gracefully removed himself from

the scene, in tacit acceptance of the wishes and insecurity of his step-mother, Queen-Mother Hansa-bai. The feeling of ill-usage amongst the Sisodias, and the arrogant pride flaunted by the Rathores, finally led to a situation where peaceful co-existence between two equally war-hardy and proud clans became impossible within the confines of a single fortress.

The breach of relations between Mewar and Marwar took several years to heal. A large part of Marwar, including the capital, Mandore, was occupied by the forces of Mewar. Ranmal's son, Rao Jodha took up his arms against this. The situation continued for several years, until peace terms were eventually agreed between Kumbha and Jodha.

In the interim, having secured his position internally, Kumbha turned his attention to his neighbours. He carried his arms against Sirohi, Bundi (Vrindavati), Sambhar, Malwa, Gujarat, Amber, and, of course, Marwar. He annexed certain portions of these kingdoms to Mewar. For example, Mandalgarh, Jahazpur and the region referred to as *Uparmal* (of which Bijolia forms a part), were recovered from the Hadas of Bambvada and Bundi, and Pindwara, Ranakpur and Abu were seized from the Deora Chauhans of Sirohi. Similarly, Nagaur, Naraina, Ajmer, Sambhar (old Sapadalaksha), and Chatsu (modern Chaksu) were wrested from the Khan of Nagaur; and the Zawar area from the kingdom of Dungarpur. Marwar's capital of Mandore had, of course, already been invested by Kumbha's army.

The Ranakpur Inscription of AD 1439 informs us that by that date Kumbha had won the forts of Sarangpur (in Malwa), Nagpur (i.e. Nagaur), Naranak (Naraina), Ajaymeru (Ajmer), Mandore, Mandalakar (Mandalgarh), Bundi, Khatu and Chatsu. Among other areas annexed by Kumbha were Didwana, Ranthambore, Sirohi, Gagron, and Toda.

(One may note here that, like Ranthambore and Sambhar etc., Didwana was an important town, particularly for its salt industry, that had changed hands often, and dated back to at least the early eighth century AD, if not earlier. The name, Didwana, seems derived from the term 'Dendavanaka' used in ninth and tenth century epigraphic and literary records. Gagron fort, eleven kilometres from Jhalawar, strategically located

atop a hill overlooking and protected by the confluence of the Kali Sindh and Ahu rivers on three sides, was also important by this time. It finds mention in the *Mand-Raso*, dating to the reign of the ninth century Mewar king, Khumman. By the twelfth century, the Khinchi Rajputs were well entrenched at Gagron fort, but Malwa's Sultan Hushang Shah conquered it in 1423. Thereafter, Mewar and Malwa were to fight many sanguine battles for its possession).

The tracts of Malpura, Amardadri (Amber), Nardinagar (Narwar), Giripur (another name for Dungarpur) were captured too, and then either retained or returned back to their rulers, in exchange for their acknowledging his sovereignty. Within Mewar, Kumbha asserted his control over certain areas that showed signs of independence. Among these were Yagnapur (Jahazpur), Yoginipur (Jawar), Vardhavan (Badnor) and Hammirpur (Hamirgarh). Kumbha's vigorous policy resulted in an unprecedented expansion of the boundaries of Mewar, besides the acquisition of immense wealth, including ransoms, indemnities and loot!

Kumbha is also credited with burning down the Malwa stronghold of Sarangpur and taking countless enemy soldiers prisoner. The rivalry between Mewar and Malwa was longstanding. In part, being neighbours with a common border was cause enough, particularly as dissenting or exiled nobles from one of the kingdoms often got shelter and status at the rival court. (Rana Lakha's eldest son, Prince Chunda had enjoyed the hospitality of the Mandu court, where he was granted the area of Hallur in *jagir* for his maintenance).

The Mewar-Malwa rivalry escalated when, within a year of the death of Sultan Hushang Shah Ghorī (r. 1406-1435), the throne of Malwa was usurped from his successor, Muhammad Shah (r. 1435-36), by one of the court nobles, Mahmud Khalji (r. 1436-69). Hushang Shah's grandson, Masud Khan took shelter with the Sultan Shihabuddin Ahmad Shah of Gujarat (r. 1411-1442), while Umar Khan, one of Hushang Shah's sons visited Mewar to seek Rana Kumbha's help against Mahmud Khalji. The Rana's promise of help to Umar Khan against Mahmud Khalji, the garrisoning of Mewar's frontier outposts, and Kumbha's assertion of overlordship over Hadauti, Mandisor, Gagron and other border areas over

which Malwa claimed suzerainty, were viewed with natural suspicion by Mahmud Khalji.

Matters came to a head with Kumbha's demand that Mahapa Panwar, who was among those responsible for the death of Rana Mokal and had subsequently sought shelter in Malwa, be turned over to Mewar. Sultan Mahmud Khalji disdained to comply. The refusal was cause enough for hostilities. The armies of Mewar and Malwa clashed at Sarangpur in 1437. The latter army was conclusively routed here.

According to the bardic tradition, which is repeated in Kumbha's Ranpur and Kumbhalgarh inscriptions, after Sarangpur was burnt down, countless enemy soldiers were taken prisoner by Kumbha. Furthermore, the Rana laid siege to Mandu, the capital of Malwa, and carried off its sultan, Mahmud Khalji, captive to Chittor, the Mewar capital, in 1437. Mahmud Khalji was kept prisoner at Chittor for about six months, before being granted his freedom and an honourable return to his own kingdom. This act of generosity has been favourably commented upon by Abul Fazl, the sixteenth century contemporary of the Mughal Emperor Akbar.

Kumbha is popularly credited with having erected the now famous landmark of Chittor fort — a 37m (122 feet) high, nine-storeyed, Tower of Victory, in commemoration of this victory over Malwa. (More properly a Tower of Fame' or '*Kirti-Stambha*', the term 'Victory Tower' or '*Vijay-Stambha*' has been used by many historians and other writers (including in tourist guides) for describing Kumbha's triumphal monument, since Chittor fort possesses an earlier '*Kirti-Stambha*'. This earlier tower is a twenty-three metres (seventy-five feet) high twelfth century structure raised by a Jain merchant called Jija in honour of the first Jain Tirthankar, Lord Adi Nath, also called Lord Rishab-Dev). Construction began on Kumbha's tower by the architect Jaita and his sons in AD 1440. It is said to have been completed in 1448, and bears an inscription of AD 1460. Decorated with sculpture and friezes on its internal and external surfaces, with an internal staircase running through the whole, the tower's design was probably inspired by the twelfth century Jain *Kirti-Stambha*.

In 1442, taking advantage of Mewar's problems with Marwar as well as intra-factional fighting with Prince Khem Karan (Rana Kumbha's brother), Mahmud Khalji of Malwa marched against Mewar to avenge his earlier defeat. He first assaulted the fort of Kumbhalgarh and then Chittorgarh, but failed to capture either due to the spirited resistance of the defenders. Malwa-Mewar differences continued over the coming decades. Failing to capture portions of Mewar proper, Mahmud Khalji targeted areas within Kumbha's sphere of influence, taking Gagron from the Khinchis in 1444, and occupying Ranthambore in 1446. In 1455, he seized Ajmer after conclusively defeating Gajadhar, governor of the fort. Saif Khan was established in his stead to hold Ajmer for Malwa. The Malwa sultan followed this up by besieging Mandalgarh in 1457.

Meanwhile, taking advantage of the ongoing Mewar-Malwa hostilities, and often other simultaneous actions involving Kumbha, Sultan Qutb-ud-din Ahmad Shah (i.e. Ahmad Shah II) of Gujarat (r. 1451-1459) took the opportunity of invading Mewar. (The Gujarat Sultanate, founded by Zafar Khan alias Muzaffar Khan [r. 1407-1411], had seen Shihab-ud-din Ahmad Shah I [r. 1411-1442], and Muhammad Shah [r. 1442-1451] on the throne before Qutb-ud-din Ahmad Shah II [r. 1451-1459]. Ahmad Shah II would later be succeeded by Mahmud Shah [r. 1459-1511]).

Ahmad Shah II of Gujarat used the pretext of answering the appeals made to him by the Deora Rajput ruler of Sirohi and from his relative, Shams Khan II of Nagaur, for help in recovering their lands from Mewar. Malik Shaban was deputed to lay siege to Abu and another contingent of Gujarat's forces was sent to take back Nagaur for Shams Khan. However, Gujarat's attempts were not successful, and the Sultan eventually returned to his capital after suffering losses.

In 1457, Gujarat and Malwa combined to jointly attack Mewar, with armies from Gujarat directing their efforts against Kumbhalgarh, and those from Malwa against Mandalgarh. In the face of stiff opposition from Kumbha and his men, the invaders eventually withdrew to their own respective territories, after suffering great hardship, and losing many soldiers in their attempt. (Ferishta's account, backed by the Kumbhalgarh Inscription, suggests that differences arose between the Malwa and Gujarat

camps concerning parcelling out Mewari lands adjoining their respective borders). That Mewar also suffered in the process is undeniable. Eventually, however, Kumbha succeeded in wearing down the opposition of his neighbours and establishing the strength of his own defences to provide long-term protection to the kingdom of Mewar.

Various contemporary sources, among them the Ranpur Inscription of AD 1439, the Nandia Copper-plate Inscription of AD 1437, the Chittor Vijaystambha Inscription of AD 1460, and the Sanskrit work, *Eklinga Mahatmya*, tell us about Kumbha's several victories and other achievements. They also throw light on the political condition, as well as the art and literature of that time, as do several other contemporary or near-contemporary inscriptions and records. These include the Ranakpur Temple Inscription of AD 1439, which included a list of the rulers of Mewar up to Kumbha, while also throwing light on aspects like Mewar's economic condition in the fifteenth century AD, and relations between Mewar and Hadauti, etc.; the Kumbha Kirti-Sthambha Prashasti Inscription of AD 1460, recording Mewar's expansion under Kheta (Kshetra Singh) and Kumbha, and the art and literature of the period, etc.; the Kumbhalgarh Inscription, also dating to AD 1460, describing Chittor, the Trikuta hills, Kumbhalgarh fort etc, along with various practices and customs like *ashrams*, *tuladan* etc.; and the post-Kumbha Eklinga Inscription of AD 1488, detailing the wars and battles of Mewar's Mokal, Kumbha and Raimal against the sultans of Delhi and Gujarat. (The court-poet of Mewar in Raimal's reign being Maheshwar).

Persian texts like the *Maathir-i-Mahmud Shahi* by Shihab Hakim and the *Tarikh-i-Muhammadi* by Muhammad Bihamad Khani throw some light on Malwa's relations with Mewar during Kumbha's reign, just as the *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* by Ali Muhammad Khan provides some information about Gujarat's relations with Mewar at the time. Similarly, Muhammad Qasim Hindu Shah's *Tarikh-i-Ferishta* helps corroborate the fact that Idar, Nagaur and Jalore were under the political sphere of influence of Kumbha.

Kumbha's reign saw the rise of Mewar to a position of pre-eminence. The victories also provided natural frontiers to the state, which would henceforth remain guarded by a chain of well-garrisoned new, old and

freshly renovated fortresses. Among the forts built or renovated by Kumbha were Kumbhalgarh (designed by the architect-artisan Mandan atop the remains of a far-older fort called Machindrapur), Achalgarh, Basantgarh, Machan, Kolan and Vairat. In fact, it is believed that of the eighty-four traditional forts of Mewar, thirty-two were built or repaired by Kumbha! Of these, Kumbhalgarh in particular was used by Kumbha like a second capital.

To some extent, we may say that the architecture of Kumbha's reign is inseparable from both, the flamboyant Maharana himself and his architect-artisan (or *sutradhar*) Mandan, son of Kshetra, whose texts were useful to contemporary and later architects. In an age of numerous architects and effusive building activity, Mandan holds a special place because alongside work as an active architect, he compiled several Sanskrit manuscripts on architecture. These are the *Vastu-Mandan*, *Rupa-Mcmdan*, *Prasad-Mandan*, *Raj-Vallabh-Mandan*, *Vastusaar*, *Vastushastra*, *Apatattva*, and *Devata-Murti-Prakarnam*. Mandan personally gave substance to the instructions embodied in his texts by translating them into reality at the several building-works put into his care by his discerning sovereign. Prominent amongst these is the fort of Kumbhalgarh.

Situated on a hill-peak of the Aravalli range, Kumbhalgarh (also Kumbhalmer), rises some 213 metres (700 feet) above the surrounding countryside, with a commanding view of the Aravallis to its east, south and west, and part of Marwar's desert terrain to its north-west. The Kumbhalgarh Inscription (AD 1460) records that Mandan began construction here in VS 1495 (AD 1448). In time, this fort became Kumbha's second and more favoured capital.

The narrow approach to the fort lies past a series of protective walls and defensive fortifications, which enclose several nearby hillocks. Successive battlements and bastions, seven fortified gates and a winding approach to the upper reaches ensured additional security for the main habitation area of the fort. The formidable bastions were designed to remain inaccessible to an attacking enemy, and the high battlement wall was built broad enough for several horsemen to ride abreast across it. Within this, were built a palace, several temples, a granary, stables for horses and

elephants, an armoury for small arms, gun-powder, swords etc., and a larger armoury (used in later centuries for cannons etc.). There were also barracks for soldiers, several store-houses for items like grain, oil, salt, food-stuff, as well as fodder for horses etc., and other buildings. All these, rather mandatory aspects of traditional medieval Rajput hill-forts, were positioned in accordance with the instructions contained in Mandan's own texts, with which these also conformed in appearance and proportion.

The ruler's palace was situated, citadel-like, within an inner fort called 'Katar-Garh', commanding a panoramic view of the surrounding area. Kumbha's own apartments within his palace were relatively simple (as seems the case at Chittor). These consisted of two main chambers, one over the other, flanked by side-rooms. As at Chittor, the secluded *zenana* apartments were separated from the general palace area by a narrow walled gallery. Both areas were self-sufficient, with several sets of apartments, halls, temples, stores, watch-towers, etc. Katar-Garh enclosed several structures, like the Jhalia Mahal, Badal Mahal and Tara Burj. (Some of these were added or renovated by Kumbha's successors — including Maharana Fateh Singh [r. 1884-1930]. Later rulers made additions at Chittor too).

As upheld in Mandan's treatises, Kumbhalgarh was provided with a number of water tanks and *kunds*. These were mainly located in the lower reaches, where agriculture could be carried out too. Inter-connected reservoirs ensured irrigation facilities. Most of the houses, and some temples and other structures were located on the higher contoured levels, though these were well below Katar-Garh. Temples at Kumbhalgarh datable to this period include the Neelkanth Mahadev, Kumbha-swami and Mama-Deo temples, among others. Besides these, Mandan built a *vedi* (altar) at Kumbhalgarh for the performance of the *yagnas* (ritual oblations through sacred fire-altars), which Maharana Kumbha regularly performed. The altar, within its original two-storied, dome-topped building still stands, though it has been considerably altered since Kumbha's time.

Construction was carried out in annexed territories too. To consolidate Mewar's hold over tracts seized from Sirohi, and to serve as military posts, Kumbha gave Mandan the task of re-fortification and repair at the ancient

fort of Achalgarh in 1450-52. Around 1452, Mandan was also charged with the construction of a fort at Basantgarh — a site in the Abu-Sirohi region with an equally long history.

Achalgarh (near modern Mt. Abu), located on a peak in the Abu range of the Aravallis, had originally been fortified and inhabited some four centuries earlier by the Parmar rulers of Abu, atop an older site. For Kumbha, it was a vital stronghold, guarding the southern reaches of Mewar against Malwa, Gujarat, Sirohi, Nagaur and Jalore. Mandan's construction work at both Achalgarh and Basantgarh included fortifications, gates, watch-towers, guardrooms, a large granary, armoury, temples, palace, and water-reservoirs. Once again here, the architectural lay-out, style, proportions and plan of specific buildings corresponded fully with Mandan's treatises on architecture. For example, water-reservoirs were built nearer the base of the fort, while the palaces were located, citadel-like, on higher points. (One may note here that traditional formulae held the centre of a town or an elevated area as ideal locations for a ruler's palace).

Besides various new or renovated forts, Kumbha ordered the strengthening of old fortifications and construction of additional defensive structures at several places. Among these were circular bastions, towers, and seven extant defensive gates (namely Padan Pol, Bhairon Pol, Hanuman Pol, Ganesh Pol, Jordla Pol, Lakshman Pol and Ram Pol), built at Chittor, along with a paved chariot-way leading to the fort.

New palaces were built across Mewar too, and old ones enlarged. The relatively simple palace named after Kumbha at Chittor is now mostly in ruins, but enough of it remains to form an idea of mid-fifteenth century (pre-Mughal) Rajput civil architecture. (It also conforms with both, Mandan's treatises, and his Kumbhalgarh palaces). Mandan prescribed a model palace-complex as consisting of separate sets of apartments for the king, heir-apparent and other princes, closely approximating the later-day *mardana* portion of Rajput (and Mughal) palaces. Along with this, there was an inner palace (*rawala/raola* or *zenana*) area, reserved for the use of the queen and women of the royal family, and their servitors and attendants, again self-contained with separate sets of apartments. Essentials for a well-planned royal palace included an assembly hall, dining area, public

chambers, a picture-gallery, a concert-hall for music or to watch dancing, treasury, armoury, stables, store-houses, kitchen, temples and small shrines, and guard-rooms. These guidelines appear to have been closely followed for Kumbha's palaces at Chittor, just as they were for Kumbhalgarh.

Kumbha's enclosed Chittor palace complex was entered through the Badi Pol and Tripolia gates. Within the now dilapidated complex, separate structures, including stables for horses and elephants, a hall for public audience, a balcony from which the ruler is believed to have offered daily oblations to the Sun, a temple to Siva, pillared corridors, courtyards, and the heir-apparent's apartments, may still be seen. It is more than probable that earlier structures were also re-used for Kumbha's palace-complex.

But Kumbha was not just a king who lived his life in the saddle, attacking his neighbours or fending off their attacks to the exclusion of good governance and the finer aspects of life. His reign was marked by a period of prosperity for his subjects — wars notwithstanding. Trade and commerce flourished, and Mewar attracted travellers from different parts of South Asia. Kumbha ordered the building of water-reservoirs, excavation of lakes, digging of wells, and construction of tanks and step-wells. He is responsible for erecting several temples, and other structures too. These include the 'Vijaystambha'/Kirtistambha, Kumbha-Shyam temple, Sringar-Chauri and Adi-Varah temple, all at Chittorgarh; the Nilkanth temple at Kumbhalgarh, and so-called 'Mira' temple at Eklingji.

Kumbha also built and renovated numerous public inns, monasteries and schools across the length of Mewar. He granted lands and money to diverse sects and religious groups, without displaying narrow feelings of bigotry, and also donated liberally to Saiva, Vaishnava and Jain temples. His courtiers followed his example of performing charitable acts and the construction of wells, temples and other buildings. Such examples include the famous Ranakpur temples, and some of the Jain temples at Sirohi and Chittor. Gardens were apparently laid out too. Though none survive now in their fifteenth century form, we can partially visualise their probable form with reference to the texts of Mandan, Kumbha's architect-artisan. Mandan has referred in his texts to gardens as being an integral part of towns and cities, and recommended a variety of fruit-bearing and flowering trees and

shrubs, along with flowers and other plants suitable for gardens. Among the essentials for a good garden in Mandan's view were raised seats or *vedika*, pavilions or *mandap*, and small tanks or water-reservoirs — and these were probably features of the gardens laid out during Kumbha's reign.

Court patronage under Rana Kumbha extended to include the arts and learning in every form. Thus, artists and scholars from different areas converged on Kumbha's court. Among them were Tilla Bhatt, Muni Sunder Suri, Mahesh, Atri, Jinasena Suri, Jivaraja, Jinvardhan, Pandit Udavasilingani, Bhriugu, Kanha Vyas (author of *Eklinga-Mahatmya*), Somnath, Jhoting and Lakshmi Sagar Suri. These were among the acknowledged litterateurs of their era. (Mahesh and Atri composed the long Sanskrit inscriptions engraved at Chittor's 'Vrjaystambha', and at Kumbhalgarh).

Besides Jaita and his sons (Napa and Punja), the famous architect-scholar, Mandan, and his brother Natha, as well as Deepak [Deep], a Sompura Brahmin from Mundata who designed the famous Chaumukha temple at Ranakpur (erected in AD 1439 by one of Kumbha's favourites — Dharnaka), were among the architect-artisans at Kumbha's court. The names of many other architects patronised by Kumbha are found in different epigraphs, including the Ranakpur Temple Inscription of AD 1439 (VS 1496).

Learned in sacred lore like the Vedas and Shastras, Kumbha was equally knowledgeable in logic, philosophy, mathematics, political science, grammar, metaphysics, the science of music and literature. The Kumbhalgarh Inscription states that writing poetry was as easy for Kumbha as was going into battle. He was the author of four dramas, and several commentaries on earlier texts. (One of these, the *Rasik-Priya*, is a commentary on the *Geet-Govind*. It also contains a short account about his predecessors).

An accomplished musician and player of the *veena* instrument, he had to his credit over five texts on music and musical theory, among them the famous *Sangeet-rajya*, *Saugeet-mimansa*, *Sudaprabandha* and *Sangeet-Ratnakar*. He is known to have composed numerous poetic invocations to

various deities, which he set to classical ragas and talas. It was generally held that Kumbha's knowledge of the science of music was unparalleled for the era, as a result of which the title of '*Abhinav Bharatacharya*' was conferred upon him. In addition to his other accomplishments, Kumbha apparently also had mastery over the Sanskrit, Prakrit, 'Medpati', 'Karnataki' and 'Maharashtri' languages. Not surprisingly, therefore, Kumbha was given the title of '*Paramguru*', the highest preceptor of kings.

It may be noted here that such a high degree of learning was not unique to Kumbha and his age. Traditional records have upheld the picture of an ideal king as being one who combined in himself the qualities of a *chakravartin* (or world-conquering) warrior-king and commander-in-chief par excellence, who always strove to provide protection to all his subjects, along with possessing a high scholastic stature that enabled him to appreciate the finest nuances of religious and 'classical' texts, poetry, philosophy, the arts, and all fields of learning. The ideal ruler was further expected to provide patronage to scholars, artists, intellectuals and similar people, give liberal charitable grants to different sections of society, including to Brahmins and religious centres; and encourage the construction of temples and works of public utility; and aspects like trade and commerce. This was, indeed, a lot to expect from one individual, and not all rulers could — or did — live up to this standard. However, as various references show, there were numerous kings and chiefs who combined in themselves qualities of leadership, gallantry and learning, just as there were numerous others who ran contrary to the norms expected from a 'good' king!

Kumbha is said to have turned insane towards the end of his life. In 1468, this remarkable man was assassinated through the machinations of his own son, Uda (Udaikaran). The parricide, Uda (r. 1468-1473), did not enjoy the throne of Mewar for long. The angered and alienated nobles and courtiers soon offered the throne of Mewar to another of Kumbha's sons, Raimal, who captured Kumbhalgarh, and defeated and deposed Uda.

(Uda left Mewar with his family and escaped to Sojat, only to be killed later by lightning. This was probably considered divine retribution by the populace. He became so despised in Mewar that bards nicknamed him 'hatyaro' (murderer), and many omitted his name from the genealogical

lists of Mewar! One tradition holds that Uda had approached the sultan of Malwa proposing a joint venture against Raimal. To cement the relationship, he had suggested the marriage of his daughter to the Malwa sultan).

Raimal (r. 1473-1508), initially had to placate and deal with Sahasmal and Surajmal, two of the sons of his deposed brother Uda, as well as a cousin, also called Surajmal. The latter was a son of Prince Khem Singh, and one of the many grandsons of the late Rana Mokal. Raimal strengthened his position through judicious matrimonial alliances with the ruler of Sirohi and the Yaduvamshi chief of Girnar. He was soon faced with an attack on the capital of Mewar, Chittor, by Sultan Ghiyas-ud-din Shah of Malwa (r. 1469-1501), who took up arms in the cause of the deposed Uda.

Breaking the siege, Raimal on his part, valiantly carried the battle into the territory of Malwa, as had been done by his father before him. He is credited by Mewar's chroniclers with causing considerable disorder in Malwa. Over time, Raimal also successfully dealt with attempts on Mewar by Zafar Khan and Nasir-ud-din. The pre-occupations of the Lodi Sultanate of Delhi with its own growing dissensions and problems during this period were also a boon for the well-being of Mewar.

Though Mewar remained outwardly secure during Raimal's reign, internal dissensions and feuds within the ruling family — in particular between the princes of Mewar — were a very real problem, as we shall see when we take up the further history of Mewar in a later chapter.

OTHER GUHILA STATES

In an age marked by territorial expansion by many kingdoms, it had gradually become customary for many a younger son or nephew of a warrior clan to either seek his own fortune in relatively new and 'uncharted' terrain, or to accept the grant of certain lands as his patrimony. Certain individuals occasionally did both! The lesser-favoured and disinherited scions of ruling clans invariably feature as heroes of numerous local bardic

tales, as they built up their own small or large states, often in unfamiliar terrain and territories. Such adventurers were often aided by kinsmen and supporters who were themselves without an expectancy of a personal inheritance. The process of division and sub-division also resulted in the development of sub-clans. Known as a '*khanp*', such sub-clans usually took their name from individuals who were scions of a ruling clan, or otherwise popularly acclaimed warriors.

Thus, over time, many new states, ruled by collateral branches of various clans and sub-clans, came into existence in different parts of Rajasthan. This was true in the case of the various 'Suryavamshi' Guhila-related lines too.

THE GUHILOTS OF VAGAR/DUNGARPUR

Mention has been made in a previous section of the Parmars who ruled over the Vagar (also pronounced and spelt as 'Bagar') area of southern and south-eastern Rajasthan, during the tenth-twelfth centuries AD. This dynasty had its capital at Utthunaka (Uttbumaka; its modern name being Arthuna). Besides the Parmars, other major groups living in the area for whom historical references are available include the Bhils and some Chauhan clans. The Chalukyas (also called Solankis) of Gujarat also had a hold over parts of this area.

In the final quarter of the twelfth century AD (as noted already), Mewar's Guhila chief, Samantasimha, sought refuge in the Vagar area, following his defeat at the hands of Kirtipal of Jalore and the Chalukyas of Gujarat, along with the loss of his capital-city. Samantasimha established a principality centred around his new small capital of Baroda sometime around c. 1171 or so. This probably proved short-lived. Ojha holds, on the basis of the Virpur Inscription, that having been forced to quit his estates, Samantasimha subsequently found a place at the court of Prithviraj Chauhan III, and finally met a hero's death at the battle of Tarain. While Samantasimha's attempt at wielding authority in the Vagar area may have been brief, the Guhilas seem to have remained an important force in the

area, even in the face of the continued dominance of the Parmars of the Vagar area.

It was left to a later ruler of Mewar, Jaitra Singh to re-establish Guhilot supremacy over the Vagar area once held by Samantasimha. The Uparganva Inscription of AD 1404 informs us that Jaitasimha (usually identified with Mewar's thirteenth century ruler, Jaitra Singh (r. 1213-? 1252), who is referred to as 'Jaitasimha', 'Jaita', 'Jaital' and 'Jaisa' in various records), occupied Vagar and handed over its governance to one of his sons, Sihad (also called Sihadadeva). Inscriptions found in Vagar indicate that by AD 1221. Baroda (Vatapadraka) was Sihad's capital. Sihad's descendants continued to hold Vagar, ruling first from Baroda, and eventually from Dungarpur.

Over the ensuing period, the Guhilas continued to consolidate their hold in the area. Later descendants frequently used the appellation of Ahariya, in commemoration of their connections with Ahar — the one-time capital of the Guhilas. The chiefs took the title of 'Rawal' (meaning 'king'), in common with the title in use by the Mewar Guhila rulers.

Inscriptions at Jagat (AD 1220 and AD 1249), Bekrod (AD 1234), etc. provide some information about the Guhila chiefs who ruled from Baroda during the early part of the thirteenth century. An inscription from Jagat dating to AD 1249, for instance, records the setting up of a '*swarna-danda*' (temple flag-staff made of gold), by Vijaisimhadev (Jaisimhadeva), son of King Sihadadev, and grandson of King Jaitasimha of the Guhila clan that had its capital at Baroda (Vatapadraka). Another inscription, dating to AD 1251 states that the Shaiva temple of Vijaynath at Jhadol was built during the reign of King Vijaysimha.

Vijaysimha was followed by Devapaladev, who is referred to as 'Deda' in the local *khyats*. Devapaladev is credited with seizing Galiakot from the Parmars after a fierce contest. (Situated on the Mahi, fifty-eight kilometres southeast of Dungarpur and nineteen kilometres from Sagwara, Galiakot is said to take its name from an erstwhile Bhil chief of the area. As seen today, Galiakot has picturesque ruins, a massive old fort, and *Pir Syed*

Fakhruddin's shrine, which is visited by thousands annually, particularly from the Dawoodi Bohra community).

Around this time, the battlefield seems to have moved closer to Arthuna, the old capital of the Parmars of the area, as a result of expansion and consolidation of territory by the Guhilas. Thus, the Chirwa Inscription of AD 1273 refers to a battle fought near Arthuna. According to this inscription, Madan, son of (?Jaitrasimha's) officer Kshema, fought on the battlefield of Utthunaka on the side of Jaisal against '*Panchalagudika*' Jaitramal. Jaisal has been identified with Mewar's Jaitrasimha (Vijaysimha's grandfather and Deda's great-grandfather), by various twentieth century scholars. These scholars have also suggested that the '*Panchalagudika*' Jaitramal mentioned as being his opponent may have been the Parmar king, Jayatungidev of Malwa.

Devapaladev's successor, Vir Singh Dev, was ruling in c. AD 1280-1303, as known from certain of his inscriptions. These include a copper-plate grant of AD 1286 (VS 1343), found at Marh (some five kilometres from Baroda), which records Vir Singh's gift of a house and some land to a Brahmin called Talha, for the spiritual welfare of the '*Maharajakul*' Devapaldev⁵⁰. The Marh Copper-plate Grant also provides the names of various contemporaneous ministers, merchants and priests, among them, the minister Vaman, Khetala, *Purohit* Mokal, *Vyas Somaditya*, *Rajguru* Sudah, *Seth* Paras, Bhim, and *Shrotriya* Vavan. Two other inscriptions of AD 1302 from Varvasa also record land-grants, while an earlier one, dating to AD 1280, records the construction of a stone cistern.

By this period, Baroda seems to have become a substantial habitation that attracted pilgrims, traders and preachers of various sects. The fact that Vagar lay on one of the time-tested routes connecting northern India/Delhi with Gujarat and Malwa probably contributed to this in no small measure. There were also predictable drawbacks in this, and some *khyats* tell us that in AD 1299, when the Delhi Sultanate's commander, Ulugh Khan, led his contingents through Vagar, bound for the campaign against Gujarat, they laid the area to waste!

According to some versions, it was during the reign of Rawal Vir Singh, that there occurred a decisive clash between the Guhilots of Vagar and the Bhils of the area now called Dungarpur. The *khyats* attribute its genesis to the insistence of Dungaria, a powerful chief of these Bhils, over marrying the daughter of a wealthy *mahajan* (merchant) named Sala Shah. (The orally transmitted tradition tells us that Sala Shah lived at the village of Thana, some five miles from present-day Dungarpur town). The merchant, unable to thwart Dungaria, pretended to give his consent, while simultaneously approaching Rawal Vir Singh Dev (master of Galiakot, according to some versions), for help. Vir Singh and his men, substituting themselves as members of the bride's palanquin-bearers and attendants, plied Dungaria and his men with strong liquor and then attacked the Bhil chief and his followers. Dungaria was defeated and killed in this battle, along with many Bhils, and Rawal Vir Singh became master of a large tract of land. The area came to be known as Dungarpur, after the name of the defeated Dungaria.

Tradition has it that two of Dungaria's widows were about to place a curse on Vir Singh, when the Rajput placated them. He agreed to their conditions, and declared that a memorial to Dungaria would be constructed on the highest hill (also known as *dungar*) overlooking the dead Bhil chief's erstwhile 'capital' village; and that the area wrested from the Bhils by the Guhilot Rajputs of Bagar would forevermore serve as the kingdom's capital, and be called 'Dungarpur' in honour of the dead Bhil chieftain. The Rawal further vowed that the privilege of anointing each successive (Rajput) Rawal of Dungarpur at the time of their coronation-ceremony would rest in perpetuity with a Bhil descendant of Dungaria's line. (This custom was apparently adhered to thereafter. The practice was for a Bhil to anoint the 'Raj-Tilak' or 'Tika' with blood drawn from his finger on the forehead of each new Dungarpur ruler. This may be viewed as yet another instance of acquiring popular legitimacy for a political take-over!). It is commonly held that the two temples of Dhanna and Kalimata on a hill near Dungarpur were built for Dungaria's widows, as atonement, by Vir Singh.

However, there are some problems with the *khyat* version. For one, the incident is generally attributed to circa AD 1358 — at which time Vir Singh was not ruler of Vagar. For another, while it is known that a Sala

Shah was a minister of Rawals Gopi Nath (alias Gajapal, r. 1424-1447), and Som Das (alias Somas, r. 1447-1480), both of whom ruled over Vagar nearly 150 years after Vir Singh Dev's reign, there is no known reference to a rich merchant of that name at Vir Singh's court. Of course, this is hardly conclusive in itself, for Vagar could have had several merchants called Sala Shah in the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries!

A different version indicates that Vir Singh Dev may not have had anything to do with the founding of Dungarpur. According to this, the name 'Dungarpur' has its origins in a later Guhilot ruler of Vagar, namely Rawal Dungar Singh (r. circa AD 1331-1362), who used it for his newly founded capital. According to this version, Rawal Dungar Singh transferred the capital of Vagar from Baroda to the present-day fortified town of Dungarpur (also referred to as Giripur), which he established atop the former holding (*pal*) of Dungaria Bhil, and named either in honour of the Bhil chief, Dungaria, or after himself. In any case, subsequent rulers of the line henceforth used Dungarpur as their capital in place of Baroda. In time, Dungarpur, lying some sixty miles south of Udaipur, developed into a major urban habitation

Vir Singh Dev, according to the *khyats*, met his end during the siege and sack of Chittor by Sultan Alauddin Khilji of Delhi. He was succeeded by Bhachund (Bhachundi, or Bhajund) There is inadequate knowledge about the Vagar/Dungarpur area and its rulers during the mid-fourteenth–mid-fifteenth centuries. Some of the scanty information comes in the form of credit for constructing various buildings, or reservoirs, or fortifications. For example, little is known about Bhachund, barring the fact that he is popularly credited with building the Hanumat Pol at Dungarpur. An action possible only if Dungarpur was indeed founded by his predecessor, Vir Singh, rather than by his successor, Dungar Singh!

Whether Dungar Singh (r. 1331-1362) founded Dungarpur from scratch, or whether he enlarged a settlement established during Vir Singh's reign, he certainly made Dungarpur his capital, and as such encouraged the construction of the fort and town-buildings. His son, Karam Singh I (r. 1362-? 1396?), is credited with furthering the construction-work on the fort and town of Dungarpur. An inscription dating to AD 1396 refers to a

construction at the command of Queen Manak-Dey, wife of Rawal Karam Singh. It is not clear from the inscription if Rawal Karam Singh was still living at the time. However, given that the inscription refers to Manak-Dey as queen, and the wife of Karam Singh, rather than as the queen-mother, and mother of Karam Singh's successor could mean that Karam Singh was still ruling at that date.

Karam Singh was succeeded by Kanhad Dev (r. ?1396-1398?), who is also remembered as a builder. Buildings from his reign include the gateway, which is called the Kanhad-Pol, after the Rawal. Kanhad Dev's successor was Pratap Singh (r. 1398-1424), renowned as 'Pata Rawal'. Pratap Singh is responsible for the construction of the Potala water-reservoir or lake, and the Potala-Pol gate. Pratap Singh's minister, Prahlad, is credited with building a Jain temple in AD 1404. Three inscriptions of Pratap Singh's time dating to AD 1399, 1404 and 1411 have been noted.

Inscriptions are almost our only source for information, too, about the nature of administration and some designations used for ministers and counsellors during this general period. Of particular value are sources like the Jagat Inscription of VS 1277 (AD 1220), Baroda Inscription of VS 1349 (AD 1292), and Kanhad Dev Inscription of VS 1456 (AD 1399), as well as the *Badva Khyat*. They refer to officers like '*mahamatya*' (great councillor/minister), '*sandhivigrahika*' (maker of treaties/diplomatic head), '*mantri*' (minister), and so forth. One of the Jain texts penned at Dungarpur during this period, Jayananda's *Pravasagitikatraya*, written in 1370, suggests that there were five Jain temples and some nine hundred families residing in Dungarpur by that time.

Following Pratap, his son, Gopi Nath (r. ?1424-1447), also referred to as Gajapal, Ganesh Raja, Gaep, Gop and Gopal, ascended the *gaddi* (throne) of Dungarpur. He is said to have forced several Bhil chiefs to submit, which is indicative of the fact that local resistance to the Rajput kingdom had not entirely been placated, despite more than a century of Guhila rule in the Vagar area. Relations with neighbouring Gujarat too seem to have been uneasy.

The *Tabqat-i-Akbari* suggests that at the advance of the Sultan of Gujarat, Ahmad Shah (r. 1411-1442), in 1433, Ganesh Raja (Gopi Nath) fled, but later returned and proffered tribute to the sultan. Ahmad Shah's successor, Sultan Muhammad Shah of Gujarat (r. 1442-1451), also plundered the Vagar area, and received submission and tribute from this same Ganesh around AD 1446. Mewar's famous Maharana Kumbha too attacked 'Giripur', leading Gajapal to abandon his capital temporarily. Interestingly, a later '*Prashasti*', dating to AD 1468, in the Shanti-Nath temple at Antri, offers an alternate view of the political events, stating that King Gajapal, also renowned as Gopinath, defeated the army of 'the haughty [*madamatta*] Lord of the Gurjara country' and seized his wealth.

In fact, despite the external threats to Dungarpur and the Vagar area, it seems Rawal Gopi Nath was able to extend patronage to the arts and of architecture. To him is credited the construction of the Gaipsagar [Gaib-Sagar] lake at Dungarpur, among other things. Such activities and patronage of the arts apparently holds as true for his predecessors as for his immediate successors, namely Rawal Som Das (r. 1447-1480) and Rawal Ganga Das (r. 1480-1497). In common with the kings and chiefs of the era, all of them encouraged the construction of various new structures, including temples, as well as the repair of old ones, by their relatives, courtiers and local merchants. Such activities are testified by the Dev Som Nath (VS 1491), Antri (VS 1525), Rampol (VS 1530), Itava (VS 1536), Talwada (VS 1538), and Kanba (VS 1553), etc. inscriptions. As had happened under predecessors, charitable works, including the grant of land to Brahmins, were a feature of the reigns of these rulers too. Som Das's chief minister, Salha Raj, is reputed to have fed two thousand people a day during a famine that affected the area in AD 1464.

However, as already noted, the fifteenth century period also saw constant aggression: both from the south, as the sultans of Malwa and Gujarat extended their sway into this region and beyond it northwards; and from the north, as the rulers of Mewar (including Kumbha and Raimal), used portions of this region to expand their own territorial domination as well as march against the strongholds held by Malwa and Gujarat. The tiny state of Dungarpur was unable to meet the constant incursions with any

great degree of success, and its territorial sway fluctuated with the fortunes of its several powerful neighbours.

Ferishta's record tells us, for instance, that in 1458 Sultan Mahmud Khalji of Malwa marched against Dungarpur, and encamped on the fringes of the lake. 'Rai Sham Das' (Som Das) fled to Kohtahna (the hills), from where he sent two lakh *tankas* (a form of coinage) and twenty-one horses. Later, Mahmud's successor, Sultan Ghiyas-ud-din Shah of Malwa (r. 1469-1501), attacked Dungarpur too. (Interestingly, in later-period Dungarpur versions, Som Das is said to have defeated both Mahmud and Ghiyas-ud-din). The heroic resistance offered by Ratakala, son of Bilia, and his small force of defenders during the storming of Dungarpur at this time still forms the subject-matter of folk commemorations and bardic elegies.

This general period does not appear to have been one for merely facing invasions and sending tribute to buy off invading armies, though. During the reign of Som Das, for example, the state of Dungarpur, under its chief minister, Salha Raj, seems to have followed a vigorous policy on at least one occasion, and put down the Bhils around Chanda-Udavataka (Chundavada) to 'make the district of Katara free' from the activities of the latter. Similarly, according to the much later inscription of AD 1561 in the Baneshwar temple at Dungarpur, it appears that Som Das's successor, Rawal Ganga Das, fought and defeated King Bhan of Idar.

Ganga Das was succeeded by Udai Singh (r. 1497-?1527). Soon after his accession Udai Singh, possibly realising the geographically vulnerable position of Dungarpur at that time and the toll exacted by constantly opposing Mewar as well as its southern neighbours, opted to cooperate with its parent-state of Mewar and participate in all the wars that kingdom fought against Malwa and Gujarat.

We shall take up the further history of the Vagar-Dungarpur-Banswara area further in this book. .

THE DEORA CHAUHANS OF SIROHI

In earlier sections, we had noted that Abu and its surrounding region had, over the centuries, been under the political hegemony of groups like the Mauryas, the Saka Kshatrapas, Chavadas, Guhilas, and Chalukyas/Solankis. From about the tenth century AD up to well into the first decade of the fourteenth century AD, the region was held by the Abu branch of the Parmars.

Around the beginning of the fourteenth century, Lumbha (r. AD 1311-1321 AD), who belonged to the Deora sept of the Chauhan clan, and was one of the sons of Beejad and his wife, Namall Devi, defeated the local Parmars of Abu and Chandravati, and founded the Deora Chauhan kingdom encompassing the Abu region. In subsequent epigraphs, like Abu's Achaleshwar Temple Inscription of VS 1377, i.e. AD 1320, the Deora Chauhans traced their descent from King Samarsimha Chauhan of Jalore, and his son Manavsimha. In the Deora version, Manavsimha (also written, variously, as Mansimha and Mahansimha in epigraphs, and referred to popularly as 'Mahan-Si'), was the *elder* brother of Udaisimha, who had become the ruler of Jalore after the death of Samarsimha. Mahan-Si's son was Pratap, who was perhaps known as Devraj⁵¹. (Though other views hold that this was another name of Pratap's son Beejad). Pratap's son was Beejad (also called Dashashyandan and Dasharatha), who was the father of Lumbha⁵².

The clan's traditional genealogical chroniclers, the 'Badvas', date Lumbha's acquisition of Abu to c. AD 1311, which seems borne out by an inscription of VS 1377 (AD 1320) at Abu's Achaleshwar temple, which commemorates Lumbha obtaining "the heaven-like land of Chandravati and Arbud (i.e. Abu) through his valour".

These traditional chroniclers hold that Lumbha, son of Rao Beejad, and his supporters seized the throne from a Parmar king named Hun. Though disagreeing with their version, Ojha has reproduced the gist of the story in his history of the kingdom of Sirohi, written in Hindi⁵³. According to this tale, the displaced Deora Chauhans, including Lumbha and his four brothers, who were the sons of Rao Beejad⁵⁴, reached the Arbud area, in search of a tract of land to call their own. Here, in the valley beneath the

capital of Abu, the Deora Chauhans met a local Charan. The Deoras told this Charan that their quest was innocent, as they were, seeking suitable bridegrooms for twenty-five of their unmarried sisters and daughters.

The Charan suggested they approach the king of Abu, Hun Parmar, whose large family included several unmarried brothers, sons and cousins. The Deoras convinced the Charan to undertake this office on their behalf, and accordingly the Charan went to the court of the Parmar king of Abu and laid the whole matter before him. One of the assembled Parmar courtiers warned the king that the Chauhan clan had occupied lands all the way from Nadol, and due caution should be applied in having any dealings with them! Taking note of the warning, King Hun told the Charan that the Parmars would willingly take a marriage-party (*baraat*) with twenty-five bridegrooms to the Deora camp (near Badeli village), provided one of the five sons of Beejad Chauhan agreed, in the interim, to stay in the Parmar court as a token hostage.

The Charan carried this message back to the Deoras. On hearing the reply, Rao Lumbha returned with the Charan to the Parmar king's camp, while the other Deoras made due preparations for receiving the Parmars. These preparations entailed disguising twenty-five young male warriors in women's bridal clothing, with instructions to strike down the prospective bridegrooms at a suitable moment. The unsuspecting Parmar marriage-party was accorded a ceremonial welcome, and plied with liquor. Thereafter, the twenty-five Parmar bridegrooms, conducted to the inner quarters for the supposed marriage ceremonies, were promptly killed by the 'brides', while the rest of the Chauhans outside slew the remaining members of the Parmar marriage party. Next, a Deora messenger went to the Abu ruler's camp, and was ushered into the presence of King Hun Parmar, who was then in conversation with the Deora Rao Lumbha. As pre-arranged, Lumbha asked the messenger which clan had garnered fame at the weddings, to which came the reply that the Chauhans had. This was the signal for which Lumbha was waiting, and he immediately attacked king Hun Parmar and killed him. In this manner, the Deora Chauhans gained the mastery over the kingdom of Abu from the Parmars who had long held it⁵⁵.

Ojha holds that the above story is fanciful in many senses, and asserts that the Abu Parmars were already very weak by this time, and that the Tokran Inscription of VS 1333 (AD 1277), from the village of Tokran, near Abu, details the lands the Deoras had already taken from the Abu Parmars by that time. According to Ojha, there are clear indications that by the third quarter of the thirteenth century, the Chauhans were firmly established in the region west of Abu, including some lands lying in the valley beneath the capital of Abu. He believes that in their attempt at retaining sovereignty the Parmars fought a decisive battle with Lumbha and his Deora clansmen, in which the Abu Parmars were conclusively defeated⁵⁶.

Three inscriptions of Lumbha's period provide information about his reign. Two of these come from Delwara's Vimal Vasahi temple, and the third from the Achaleshwar temple. From these we learn, among other things, about Lumbha's renovation of the *mandap* in the Achaleshwar temple, setting up donor statues of his queen and himself there and donating a village called Hetthuji to the temple. The inscriptions also record that Lumbha had two sons called Tej Singh and Tihunak; and that Lumbha's chief minister was named Devseeh. It appears that around AD 1315, Lumbha conquered the famous city of Chandravati from the Solankis who held it at the time.

Lumbha probably died in 1321. Epigraphical evidence clearly indicates that after Rao Lumbha his kingdom was ruled, in succession, by his son Tej Singh (r. 1321-1336), followed by Tej Singh's son Kanhardev (r. 1336-1345?). Tej Singh used the pre-Deora city of Chandravati as his capital. After Kanhardev, Samant Singh (r.? 1345?) ascended the throne. Interestingly, the names of these three rulers do not figure in Nainsi's *Khyat* and the *Sirohi Khyat*, though there is contemporaneous epigraphical evidence that clearly points to their respective reigns! In the case of Rao Kanhardev, there is even sculptural evidence, for he donated his inscribed statue dated VS 1400 (AD 1343) to the Achaleshwar temple. Inscriptions have lauded these rulers for bestowing endowments of villages to the temple of Vashishtha⁵⁷ and for other religious purposes, renovating the temple of Achaleshwar⁵⁸, and providing patronage to the arts.

However, obviously following a later tradition, Nainsi has listed the name of Sulkha, who came to the throne after Samant Singh, as Lumbha's immediate successor, followed by Ranmal and Shivbhan (or Shobha). Elsewhere though, while describing the acquisition of Abu by the Deora Chauhans, Nainsi tells us that Lumbha, son of Deora Beejad, was killed while fighting King Hun, upon which another of Beejad's sons, Tej-Si, became king of Abu. However, more than one contemporaneous epigraph clearly indicates that Lumbha ruled as king of the Abu area for many years, and that Tej Singh, who was his son, and not brother, succeeded him, to be followed by two other successors before Sulkha ascended the throne.

This discrepancy between epigraphical evidence and traditional genealogical listings, (which were drawn up during the reign of later descendants), perhaps indicates that Tej Singh's lineage ceased to reign over the Abu-Chandravati area after Samant Singh, and the throne passed to the line descended from Lumbha's second son, Tihunak⁵⁹. Later genealogists apparently ignored the branch of Tej Singh, which interceded between Lumbha and Sulkha, and placed Sulkha's name directly after that of Rao Lumbha. According to G.H. Ojha, many such examples of 'editing' traditional genealogies are known⁶⁰. Such a measure would also reconcile the chronological gap between Lumbha, who probably died in 1321 and Sulkha's successor, Ranmal, who died around 1392.

Ranmal was succeeded by his elder son, Shivbhan (r. 1392-1424), also known as Shobha⁶¹. It was during the reign of Rao Shivbhan, that an alternative capital came into being in the form of the newly built town of Shivpuri, which was built in 1405. (Up to this period, the Deora Chauhan rulers had mainly used Chandravati as their capital). This was a strategic site, located in the shadow of the Sirnawa hill. As further protection for the new town of Shivpuri, a fort was constructed on top of the Sirnawa hill. This Shivpuri, over time became known as 'Old Sirohi'.

Sahastramal, better known as Sensmal or Sahasmal (r. 1424-1451), who succeeded his father, Shivbhan, found Shivpuri somewhat unsatisfactory, being insalubrious and exposed to the attacks of hostile

neighbours. He thus shifted to a new site, some two miles west of Shivpuri, in 1425, naming it Sirohi.

Sahasmal managed to substantially expand the boundaries of his kingdom in all directions, annexing many neighbouring lands. These included the tracts near the Sirohi-Marwar border known as Mal-Magara, held by Solanki Rajputs, and border villages of Mewar. His territorial expansion eventually brought him into conflict with Mewar's Rana Kumbha (r. 1433-1468). As a consequence, Kumbha carried the conflict deep into the territory of the Deora Chauhans of Sirohi, annexing the eastern part of the kingdom to Mewar around c. AD 1437.

To further consolidate Mewar's hold, Kumbha ordered the renovation and re-fortification of the fort of Achalgarh in 1452 (which had been built by the Parmars of Abu), and the construction, in 1452, of a fort at Basantgarh (Vasantgarh), a site with a long history⁶². (This Vasantgarh was once known as Vat, and variations of that name. An AD 1042 epigraph notes the belief that Vat (Vasantgarh) was the site of the hermitage of the famed ancient sage, Vashishtha, where Vashishtha had erected a temple to Arka (the Sun) and Bharga, and later established the city of Vat with the aid of Vishvakarma, the divine architect of the gods. Resplendent with lofty mansions, orchards and water-tanks, and protected by ramparts, Vat was also called Vashishthapur, in honour of the sage). Kumbha's renowned architect-artisan, Mandan, was put in charge of work at both of these forts. To commemorate this victory over the Abu region, Kumbha also ordered the construction of the temple of Achaleshwar Mahadev at Achalgarh, besides the temple of Kumbha-swami, a palace and a *kund*.

Simultaneously, it appears that Sahasmal, the Deora Chauhan chief of Sirohi, continued to resist Mewar's supremacy, and made efforts to oust Kumbha's troops from his territory. There are indications that he possibly even approached the rulers of Gujarat and Malwa for this.

The next ruler of Sirohi, Sahasmal's son, Lakha (r. 1451-1483), was both an able administrator and a diplomat, who was successful in forging alliances with the neighbouring states of Mewar and Gujarat, both of which were much more powerful than Sirohi at the time. In fact, one should bear

in mind the fact that in spite of the protective advantages of natural terrain enjoyed by Sirohi, it was not invulnerable. (The case with states like Dungarpur and Banswara was the same). Thus, prudent alliances whenever a neighbour became extra powerful were more a necessity than a royal whim! In fact, one of Lakha's eight queens, Rani Lakshmi Kanwar, was the daughter of Rana Kumbha of Mewar⁶³, while Champa Kanwar, Lakha's daughter (by a non-Sisodia queen), was married to Kumbha's son, Rana Raimal (r. 1473-1508). These matrimonial alliances undoubtedly helped in mending fences with neighbouring Mewar.

Simultaneously, Lakha, like his father Sahasmal, carried his arms against the remaining pockets of Solanki supremacy, killing the Solanki chief, Bhoj, and annexing many lands held by the Solankis. Solanki *khyats* record that a fierce combat took place between Maharao Lakha and Solanki Bhoj, in which Lakha and his three sons, and Bhoj and his five sons, met their end. After this, the remaining Solankis found refuge with the heroic Prince Prithviraj, the dashing son of Rana Raimal of Mewar, before they eventually obtained the lands of Desuri after slaying the 'Maddechias' who previously held that area. However, it is established that Lakha was not killed in battle against the Solankis. In fact, despite the tumultuous times in which he lived, during which, according to Persian accounts like the *Tabqal-i-Akbari*, Sirohi was besieged and burnt for the third time in its short existence, Lakha lived to see the return of peace to his kingdom.

The return of peace enabled the populace displaced during the previous years of fighting to re-establish themselves after Abu and its surrounding region were finally regained by Rao Lakha. He is also responsible for having the temple of Kalika Mata and the Lakhelav (Lakha Rao) tank constructed near Sirohi.

Like his father before him, the next ruler, Rao Jagmal (r. 1483-1523), maintained friendly relations with Mewar. Allying with Mewar's Rana Raimal, Sirohi's forces joined the armies of Mewar in their successful action against Bahlol Lodi in 1474.

Sirohi's history from this point forth is continued in a later chapter, while we turn next to another branch of the Chauhans — namely, the

Hadas.

THE HADA CHAUHANS OF BUNDI

The part of south-eastern Rajasthan comprising the modern districts of Bundi, Kota, Jhalawar and Baran became known as Hadavati (or Hadauti), after the Hada sept of the Chauhans, who gained political ascendancy over the local Meena and indigenous Bhil groups of this region in the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries AD.

The Hada Chauhans are regarded as an important sept of one of the twenty-four branches (*sakhas*) of the Chauhan clan. Their bards have long declaimed that this branch migrated from the Chauhan kingdom of Nadol, following Nadol's defeat by Qutb-ud-din Aibak. A scion of the Nadol Chauhan family called Manik Rai II eventually established a small principality in eastern Mewar, with Bambvada as his headquarters. Over the following generations, his descendants continued to exercise their sway in that area.

Prince Hada Raj, also called 'Hado', was born in the sixth generation from Manik Rai II. It is from his name that the Hada sept is believed to take its name. One of Hada Raj's descendants was Deva (Devi Singh) Hada. It was Deva, who, with the assistance of the forces of a Rana of Mewar, (possibly Hammir, or his successor, Kheta), captured the Bundi valley and its surrounding area from the local Ushahara (Usra) Meenas led by their chief, Jaita Meena, and established the Hada principality of Bundi.

According to one belief, the newly founded Hada capital was named Bundi after the name of the valley in which Bundi is located, the Bunda valley, the Meena inhabitants of which were, thus, known as the Bunda Meenas. Whatever be the truth of it, it is significant that in this case too, as with the tale of Guha and many other dynasty-founders of medieval Rajasthan, there appears to have been an attempt to placate the indigenous defeated groups from whom regional political mastery had been seized.

Such placation probably went hand-in-hand with attempts to thereby legitimize control by the Rajput (or other) newcomers.

Some traditional chroniclers, among them Surajmal Mishran, the famous Dingal language poet, who composed the *Vamsha-Bhaskar* in VS 1897 (AD 1840), date the event of Deva's conquest of Bundi to VS 1298 (AD 1241), while some others place the event around AD 1340. Tod was of the opinion that Jaita and his 'Oosarras' acknowledged the overlordship of Deva in VS 1 398 (AD 1342)⁶⁴. This confusion over dates requires further study, though there appears to be a general agreement among modern historians over the listing of rulers and course of events.

In time, Deva Hada added Khanpur to the territory he already held around his new capital-town of Bundi. He also acquired Patan, (which he wrested from Manohardas Guhila), and Ghanoli, Lakheri and Karwar (all three taken from Jaskaran Dahiya), According to the Mewar annals, he continued to acknowledge his position as a feudatory of Mewar. The Bundi forces later helped Rana Kheta of Mewar in his fight against Malwa. (This issue of dependent-dominant relationship between a lesser and a greater kingdom, in which the nominally independent entity and administrative autonomy of the former went hand-in-hand with the token acknowledgement of the sovereignty of the latter, to whom annual or seasonal tributes could be offered, requires further analysis. It is a feature that regularly crops up in any survey of the history of Rajasthan).

According to some traditions, Deva is also credited with defeating a 'Turkish' army near Lakheri. Deva (Devi Singh) was succeeded by his son, Samar Singh. There is a suggestion that Deva may have voluntarily abdicated his throne.

Samar Singh's reign saw the addition of further new areas to the fledgling Hada principality. The Kota region, including the tract around Akailgarh and the Mukundarra pass, was conquered from the Kotia sept of Bhils who inhabited that area. Samar Singh's younger son, Jaetsi (Jait Singh), took a major role in this conquest. According to some versions, these Bhils were led by a chief called Kotia, who was honoured in death by his victorious Hada opponents when Jait Singh's son, Surjan, named the

new settlement established there by the Hadas as 'Kota', after the defeated Bhil chieftain. It is significant that modern Kota was founded near the original Bhil settlements of Akailgarh and Asalpur. Subsequently, Jait Singh was allowed to retain control over the region and administer it from Kota, albeit as a feudatory of Bundi. Traditional chronicles place this event around c. AD 1274, but if Tod's calculations were correct, this date may be too early.

Samar Singh's attempts at further territorial expansion brought him into conflict with the local Gor (?Gaur), Parmar and Med Rajput groups — all of whom are considered as Rajputs in local annals. (One may note here Tod's comment regarding the Gors. He wrote, in the early nineteenth century, that: "The Gor was a celebrated tribe, and amongst the most illustrious of the Chohan [sic] feudatories: a branch until a few years ago held Sooe-Soopoor and about nine lakhs of territory"⁶⁵). From these groups, Samar Singh took Kaithun, Siswali, Barod, Railawan, Ramgarh, Mau and Sangod. The possession of these areas meant that the collective sway of the Hada Chauhans extended beyond present-day Kota and Bundi districts, as well as incorporating portions of eastern Mewar.

Samar Singh is believed to have successfully defended Bundi and Ranthambore against the troops of the Delhi Sultanate. Some historians have linked this with a possible attack by Balban, a great commander and future sultan of the Delhi Sultanate, as Balban and his forces are said to have passed through this part of Rajasthan around AD 1252-53. (Balban held the title of 'Ulugh Khan', meaning 'Great Khan of the Realm', at that time, besides being the father-in-law of Sultan Nasir-ud-din Mahmud of Delhi). Some years later, when the 'Turks' marched against the Hada ancestral fort of Bambvada, Samar Singh was among those who fought for the Hada clan's traditional stronghold, and met his end as one of the heroic defenders of that fort.

Samar Singh was succeeded by his son, Narpal, better known as Napuji. Napuji continued the task of consolidating the Hada state. He subjugated the Khinchi chief, Mahesh Das, and occupied Palaitha. He also subjugated Ropal Solanki, and added the Solanki-held town of Toda to Bundi's territories. Various Meena groups, who had not till then accepted

Hada sovereignty, were also vanquished. Meanwhile, Samar Singh's younger son Jait Singh, who had been responsible for the Hada victory over the Akailgarh-Kota-Mukundarra area in Samar Singh's reign, had been allowed to retain control over the region and administer it from Kota, albeit as a feudatory of Bundi.

Tod relates that Napuji was assassinated by the Solanki chief of Toda, whose daughter he had married⁶⁶, while some twentieth century historians believe Napuji died facing Alauddin Khilji around AD 1304. Once again, given the uncertainty of dates, it is difficult to assert whether Napuji could have been a contemporary of Alauddin Khilji of Delhi.

Napuji (Narpal), was succeeded by his short-reigning son, Hallu or Hamir. The historical records (and dates) remain a little confused for this period. For, Rana Kheta of Mewar is said to have defeated the Hada chief of Bundi and made Bundi acknowledge its vassal status vis-à-vis Mewar. (The name of the ruler is variously given in traditional annals as either Napuji, or his son and successor, Hamir, also called 'Allu' and 'Hamu'). The tale of this invasion may imply that the expanding borders of Bundi were beginning to encroach on Mewar's lands, and the Mewar ruler probably felt that its former feudatory was getting too independent.

The reign of Hamir, also called 'Allu', 'Hamu-ji' and 'Mahir-ji', is remembered in Bundi's traditions for having defeated an invading force from Mewar, and for the subjugation of the chief of Siswali. Hamir is said to have later abdicated in favour of his son and departed for Varanasi to lead the life of a religious seeker.

Tod in his *Annals and Antiquities...*⁶⁷, and afterwards the renowned nineteenth century court-bard of Bundi, Suryamal Mishran, in his *Vamsha-Bhaskar*, have recorded that during Hamir's reign, Rana Kheta of Mewar made an abortive attempt to occupy Bundi. Despite possessing greater numbers, Kheta was forced to retreat back to Chittorgarh empty-handed, following a surprise night-attack on the Mewar encampment by the Hada defenders of Bundi, led by Hamir. Upset and humiliated at this, the Rana vowed that he would not take even a morsel of food until he had invested

Bundi. As the real Bundi lay at a distance of some sixty miles, the anxious Mewar courtiers decided to erect a mock Bundi that could be assailed by the Mewar ruler. When this became known to a band of Hada clan warriors who were in the service of the Rana, their clan pride was fired. They rushed to the site and took up its defence, and fighting for the honour of Bundi, lay down their lives in repelling the siege of the artificially created mock 'Bundi'.

On the basis of contemporaneous records, however, G.H. Ojha has rejected this tradition. In fact, Mewar-related inscriptions (like the Eklingji Inscription of VS 1485), record that Kheta defeated the Hadas and subjugated Hada lands. The Mewar-Bundi relationship seems to have remained rocky, for Mewar's Rana Kheta lost his life later in another fight with the Hadas of Bundi. (According to some versions, when Kheta had gone to marry a Hada princess of Bambvada.) Mewar annals say that their forces avenged the death of their ruler by slaying one 'Lal Singh', ruler of Bundi, and occupying the principality. Bundi was later returned to the Hada Chauhans by Kheta's successor, Lakha, after Bundi had expressed suitable regret and so on.

The name of a ruler called Lal Singh does not figure in the traditional Bundi accounts, though. As such, one would imagine that if this 'Lal Singh' indeed ruled over Bundi, it was probably *after* the reigns of both Napuji's successor Hamir, as well as that of Hamir's older son, Bir Singh. For we do know of one Lal Singh who may have had the legitimacy to ascend the Hada throne of Bundi — possibly during a period of attacks and confusion. The Bundi tradition tells us that Hamir's younger son was called Lal Singh. (This Lal Singh had two sons, and each founded a sub-clan named after them). This Prince Lal Singh may have ruled over Bundi after his elder brother. Alternately, he may have taken the throne by force. It is known that Bir Singh's eldest son, Bairisal (also called Biru, or Bar), ruled over Bundi, and was a contemporary of Mewar's Rana Lakha, and Bairisal's line maintained their claim on the Bundi throne thereafter. Thus, it is not impossible to believe that *if* Lal Singh had occupied the throne of Bundi for a short while, the subsequent genealogical tables could have deliberately left out his name from the listing of Bundi's kings. Of course, a simpler

explanation may be that the Mewar annals got the name of their opponent wrong.

Hallu's son and successor, Rao Bir Singh (r. 1405-1420), probably challenged the authority of Mewar too, for Rana Lakha is known to have led his forces against the Hadas, capturing Mandalgarh and Bambvada. (Though the fort of Bundi was probably successful in withstanding the Mewar army).

Bir Singh was succeeded by his eldest son, Bairisal (r. 1415-1459). Bairisal had to deal with several attacks from the stronger neighbouring states of Mewar, Malwa and Gujarat. Among other things, in 1432 Sultan Ahmad Shah I of Gujarat forced the Rao of Bundi to pay tribute to him. Sultan Mahmud Khalji of Malwa attacked Bundi too — probably more than once. In 1459, the Sultan of Malwa, Mahmud Khalji, invaded Bundi. Bairisal died fighting, and the capital fell. Traditional versions hold that two of Bairisal's sons, Amar and Samar, were captured and taken to Mandu as prisoners. There, they are said to have accepted Islam, taking the names of Samarkandi and Umarkandi. Meanwhile, Bhandu (Bhan Deo, or Subandh Deo), another of the sons of Rao Bairisal, succeeded the dead Rao.

Rao Bhandu (r. 1459-1503), eventually re-took Bundi. Bhandu is remembered not just for attempting to bring order back to the broken kingdom, but also for distributing free grain to many famine-stricken areas during the severe famine of VS 1542 (AD 1486). Tradition holds that he was forewarned about the impending famine in a vision, and thereafter, he filled up the kingdom's granaries in advance, and later disbursed the collected food with a liberal hand to people from far and near. Later, the Mandu Sultan's forces occupied Bundi again and conferred its administration to Bhandu's brothers, Samar and Amar, who were by then known as 'Samarkandi' (?Samar Khan?) and 'Umarkandi' (?Umar Khan?). The anointed Rao of Bundi, Bhandu, retired to the hills of Matunda, where he died in c. 1503.

Rao Bhandu was succeeded by his son, Narain Das (r. 1503-1527). We shall look at the history of Bundi during his reign in the following chapter.

THE BHATIS OF WESTERN RAJASTHAN

Like his immediate predecessors, Kailan of Jaisalmer (r. ?1200-1219), took up arms against various neighbours. Among these was a Bilochi chief named Khizr Khan, whose invasion from across the Mehran (river Indus), was successfully repelled by Kailan⁶⁸. Kailan is generally ascribed a reign of nineteen years, from AD 1200-1219.

Kailan was followed by his eldest son, Chachik Deva (Chachiga Deva), whose reign spanned thirty-two years. The period of his reign has been calculated as being the AD 1219-1251 period, according to Tod⁶⁹, and other historians. Chachik Deva continued to strengthen the Bhati position. He battled against the Channa Rajputs, forcing that clan to seek shelter with the Johiyas, and invaded the tracts in Sindh held by the Sodha chief Urmsi of Umarkot (also called Amarkot).

We also learn that Chachik utilised the services of the Sodha warriors, along with his own Bhati troops, to chastise the Rathores who had recently become established in the Khed area, and were proving to be ‘troublesome neighbours’ for the BhatIs. Chachik is said to have pushed against the Rathores, even up to Balotra, until “...Chadoo and his son Theedo averted his wrath by giving him a daughter to wife”⁷⁰.

Chachik Deva was succeeded by Karan Singh (r.? 1251-1279?). Karan is generally believed to have been Chachik’s son by many historians, but on the basis of the Jaisalmer traditions and annals, Tod informs us that Chachik’s only son had predeceased the father, leaving two sons —Jaetsi (Jait Singh) and Karan. Of them, Karan, the younger, succeeded the grandfather, while the elder, Jaetsi (Jait Singh) left the land and took service in Gujarat.⁷¹

Karan Singh of Jaisalmer is associated with the death of the governor of Nagaur, Malik Izz-ud-din Muzaffar Balban Kishlu Khan. The story goes that ‘Mozuffer Khan’ wanted to marry the daughter of a *Bhomiya* or landed petty chieftain called Bhagwati Das Varaha. The Rajput chieftain tried to escape the Khan’s territory secretly, with his family, chattels and movable

property, but was intercepted, and in the ensuing battle four hundred Varaha Rajputs were killed, and the women abducted. Bhagwati Das appealed for aid to Karan Singh, who immediately attacked Nagaur, defeated its forces, killed the wicked 'Mozuffer Khan', and helped Bhagwati Das regain his possessions and estate.⁷²

(This may be an appropriate point to comment on the position and rights of a '*Bhomiya*' land-holder. '*Bhomiya*s' are usually regarded as being warriors who had fought for the defence of the boundary of the state or village in person, or were descended from someone who had died performing such a role, and had been granted some land — called '*bhom*' or '*bhoum*' in recognition of their valour. Hero-stones were often set up for such dead protectors, and became places of veneration by local village communities. *Bhomiya*s could normally not be dislodged. They were also not expected to render much by way of taxes to their state. Bigger *Bhomiya*s did not always carry the obligation of providing fixed service to their chiefs or kings, but the smaller ones generally served as special messengers, or otherwise helped the state's officials, and ensured security to merchants and other local neighbours. In Marwar, landholders called '*Bhomicbara*' were apparently in existence prior to the arrival of Rao Siha and his Rathore kin in the region, and we learn that the feudatories of Sanchore and Mallani fell into this category. In subsequent centuries, the '*Bhomiya*' category of land-holders were expected to give a small sum in the name of '*faujabal*' (contribution to the army), or '*khichari laag*' (a type of food-tax). *Hukumat* cess was sometimes also charged in later centuries from a *Bhomiya*, though by and large, a *Bhomiya* was not expected to render '*Hukumat-nama*' or any other charge on succeeding to his estate. Nor was it necessary for a successor to have the land grant formally renewed by a ruler or over-lord at each succession. *Bhomiya*s generally distributed their land-holdings equally amongst their sons, unlike in the case of *jagir* lands, where the main *jagir* estate went to the eldest son, and the others got a smaller portion as their inheritance. Furthermore, lands allocated to *Bhomiya*s could generally not be taken back except in the case of a grave misdemeanour on the part of a *Bhomiya*).

Karan Singh's reign lasted for twenty-eight years according to Tod, twenty-eight years and five months according to Nainsi, and twenty-eight

years and twenty days according to the *Bhati Vamshavali*. However, according to the Jain text, '*Kharatara-gachchha-brihad-guruvavali*', when *Acharya* Jinaprabodha-Suri visited Jaisalmer in VS 1340 (AD 1283), he was provided full hospitality by King Karan Dev and his courtiers and army. This means Rawal Karan was still living at that date. Another reference to Karan comes from a Janglu record, but that would indicate an even later date for Karan.

Meanwhile, it would appear that even while the Bhatīs were expanding their territory, the pressure on them persisted from stronger neighbours on all sides. For instance, the areas around Bhatner seem to have changed hands frequently. The Delhi Sultanate too possessed it off and on, for we know that Sultan Balkan's relative, Sher Khan, who was a governor of these parts, repaired the forts of Bhatner and Bhatinda, before he died at Bhatner in AD 1269, and where a mausoleum was raised in his memory.

Dasharatha Sharma believes that Karan was succeeded by his elder son, Jaitra Singh, though Sharma admitted that this name has been omitted by many previous historians, or become confused with the other Jait Singh — namely Jaetsi, the son of Tej Rao, grandson of Chachik Deva, and brother of Karan⁷³. General belief, meanwhile, holds that Karan was followed by Lakshman or Lakhan-Sen (r. 1279-1283). Nainsi's *Khyat* tells us that Lakhan-Sen was married to a daughter of Kanhar Deo of Jalore. Lakhan-Sen was followed by Punyapal (r. ? 1283-1285). Dasharatha Sharma believes that Lakhan Sen was the younger brother, and Punyapal the son of Jaitra Singh I, the son and successor of Karan Singh⁷⁴.

The ill-tempered Punyapal, also called Punya-Sen, was dethroned within two and a half years by his nobles, who collectively opted to recall Jait Singh (Karan Singh's older brother) from his voluntary exile in Gujarat. (Sharma listed this ruler as 'Jaitasi or Jaitrasimha II'⁷⁵).

Jait Singh probably ascended the throne of Jaisalmer around c. 1285, and ruled for about eighteen years. Local traditions and chronicles state that it was during the reign of this Rawal Jait Singh, to whom they attribute a

reign spanning the AD 1276 to 1294 period, that Jaisalmer was subjected to a prolonged siege by Sultan Alavdi' of Delhi (Alauddin Khilji of Delhi).

The traditional version goes that during the reign of Alauddin Khilji at Delhi, the Bhatias plundered the valuable tribute being carried, via Bhakkar, from Thatta (in Sindh) and Multan to Delhi. The angry Sultan sent a large army to punish the Bhatias for their temerity, and the fortress of Jaisalmer was besieged for nine long years. (According to Nainsi, the siege of Jaisalmer continued for twelve years). The siege was obviously not total, for Bhati warriors, led by Rawal Jait Singh's grandson and great-grandson, kept the invasion-forces under persistent counter-siege, cutting off enemy supply-lines, and ensuring passage to materials intended for Jaisalmer's defenders⁷⁶. The Rawal died in the eighth year of the siege, and was cremated within the fort. Jait Singh I's eldest son, Mularaj succeeded him as Rawal, and continued the defence of the fortress. At long last, the defenders took the decision for a '*shaka*' — with the women and children performing *jauhar* by fire and sword, and the men falling in battle. Thereafter, the fort was occupied by the Sultanate's garrison for about two years⁷⁷.

However, if the AD 1276-1294 period indeed covers the reign of Jait Singh, Alauddin Khilji, who is known to have reigned as the sultan of Delhi from AD 1296 to 1316, could not possibly have invested Jaisalmer as sultan in AD 1295 during Jait Singh's reign. The issue is further clouded by the fact that the Jain Kharatara-gachchha sect's tradition holds that Jait Singh was ruling Jaisalmer in AD 1299, when Jinachandra-Suri came to Jaisalmer at the king's request, and was personally accorded a fitting welcome by Jait Singh. This latter date for Jait Singh seems far more probable than the AD 1276-1294 span, for according to Jain records, King Karan was reigning during the 1283-87 period; and in any case, if Jait Singh ascended the throne in c. 1286 rather than 1276, his reign would span the 1286-1304 period. This would fit the known time-frame for Alauddin Khilji's activities in Rajasthan better too.

One possible explanation that could reconcile the traditional beliefs with known dates and facts could be that under the Khiljis the Delhi Sultanate launched more than one attack against Jaisalmer in the final years of the thirteenth century. An earlier one, possibly even led under the

generalship of Alauddin Khilji, took place before 1295 when Jalaluddin Khilji (r. 1290-96) was sultan of Delhi, and a later one during the period of Jalaluddin's nephew cum son-in-law and successor, Alauddin Khilji. If that be the case, there is a possibility that the oral bardic versions, while being essentially based on truth, have, in the re-telling, confused the accounts of two separate attacks — which may have entailed long campaigns — into the one single siege that is traditionally recalled.

The attack on Jaisalmer during Sultan Alauddin Khilji's reign seems to have begun in AD 1299, when its Bhati king Jait Singh I was ruling. The besieged fort withstood the assault and encirclement until, at long last, scarcity of food and provisions played their inevitable part in deciding the issue. By this time, Jait Singh may have already lost his life, as tradition holds, and the crown taken up by his son, Mularaj. It was at this stage that the women of Jaisalmer fort performed *jauhar*, while the men, led by Rawal Mularaj, and his younger brother Ratan Singh, flung open the gates of the fort and rushed forth to die fighting to the last. Some sources suggest that Mularaj died in an earlier sortie, and that Ratan Singh (or Ratan-Si), succeeded him as Rawal and carried out the defence of Jaisalmer, until the final *shaka*. In any event, once Jaisalmer was invested, it is known to have remained in Khilji hands for the next few years.

Some Rathores of the Mallani area appear to have tried to occupy Jaisalmer around this stage, but were thwarted by Duda, another of Jait Singh I's sons. Duda is said to have repaired the fort of Jaisalmer, occupied the vacant ancestral throne, and attempted to re-build Bhati authority in the area. Duda is mentioned in the Sambhav-Nath Temple Inscription of VS 1497 (AD 1440), as Ratan-Si's successor, and Ghadsi's predecessor. Local annals describe one of Duda's sons, Prince Tilak Singh, as a renowned warrior, who raided Jalore and towns further afield, like Ajmer. However, these traditions suggest that once again the sultan of Delhi attacked Jaisalmer and King Duda and his son Tilak Singh lost their lives, along with seventeen hundred clansmen. It is unclear if this happened within a short period after Alauddin Khilji's above-mentioned siege of Jaisalmer, or was perhaps even the final act to that event.

The Bhati capital of Jaisalmer was later restored to Ghadsi, one of the scions of the Bhati clan, by Nasiruddin Khan. The challenges before Rawal Ghadsi (r. ?1316-1361) included restoring administration and order in the kingdom, and ensuring its protection from external forces. This he successfully achieved with the cooperation and aid of his kinsfolk, fief-holders and vassals. One inscription compares him to a lion wreaking havoc among the elephant-like *Mlechchhas*, to wrest the hereditary kingdom from them⁷⁸.

In the tradition of predecessors like Jaisal, the founder of Jaisalmer town, who was responsible for constructing a water-reservoir/dam, Ghadsi ensured full attention to water-collection and its public availability through excavating the Ghadsisar reservoir. A memorial tablet inscription set up during the reign of 'Maharaja Shri Kesari', provides the date of 'Maharaja' Ghadsi's death as being AD 1361.

After Ghadsi's death, the crown of Jaisalmer passed, in succession, to Kehar (Kesari), and Lakshman. They, like Ghadsi and the rest of Jait Singh I's immediate predecessors and successors, had to strive against the ambitions of various neighbouring clans, chiefdoms and kingdoms, including the kingdoms of Multan and Amarkot (also spelt Umarkot). However, the Bhatias did not merely carry out the role of defending their own territories from attack. In the tradition of the times, the Bhatias of western Rajasthan immersed themselves equally whole-heartedly in local and regional conflicts, besides involving themselves in the problems of sundry friendly or hostile neighbours and kinsfolk, and conducting plundering expeditions in surrounding areas.

Despite that, they also found time to encourage the building of temples, pavilions and other buildings, and the digging of lakes and water-tanks. For instance, Rawal Lakshman is responsible for the renowned temple of Lakshmi Nath at Jaisalmer. Jaisalmer's Chintamani Parshvanath temple too was repaired during Lakshman's reign at the behest of *Acharya* Jinaraja, in AD 1416, and an idol of Parshvanath brought from the older capital of Lodrava to be placed within the renovated building, which was later named Lakshman Vilas.

Lakshman's successor, Rawal Vairsi, or Vairya Singh (r. 1396-1448), is known to have recovered the old Bhati-ruled town of Bikampur, which had been occupied by Ranmal of Marwar. Situated about one hundred and fifty-five kilometres from Jaisalmer, this Bikampur (old Vikrampur) has yielded an inscription datable to AD 1179 which informs us that Rana Katiya, son of 'Maha-Samanta' Palhan Panwar (Parmar), a feudatory of Prithviraj Chauhan III ruled here at that date. At the time, Vikrampur was the capital of a *mandal* (province), which included 'Phalavardhika' (Phalodi). Since an earlier inscription of VS 1145 (AD 1088), situated within the old Lokeshwar (now called Kalyana-rai) temple at Phalodi refers to a 'Raja Hathadev Panwar', it is possible that a branch of the Panwars held the Bikampur-Phalodi area as vassal-chiefs during the twelfth century. Subsequently, Bikampur formed part of the domain of the Bhatias of Jaisalmer.

Bikampur was also an important centre of Jainism. The *Kharatara-gachchha* sub-group of the Shvetambar Jain branch was a strong influence here, and its teachers like the early twelfth century *Acharya* Jinavallabha Suri, frequent visitors. *Acharya* Jinadatta Suri, a contemporary of the Chauhan ruler, Arnoraj, built a temple to Mahavir at 'Vikrampur', and sent the laity (*sravakas*) a copy of his *Chaitya-griha-vidhi-svaroopā Charchari Kavya*, and later another text written by him, for their study. *Acharya* Jinapati Suri had a prolonged association with Bikampur too, and during his visits of c. AD 1173, 1175, and 1183, he initiated monks, preached to the laity and performed the consecration ceremony of a holy site. Among other Jain teachers associated with Bikampur were Jineshvara Suri, who initiated new monks in AD 1265, and Jinaprabhodh Suri, who came to participate in religious activities at Bikampur in 1284.

According to the Vairsi Inscriptions of VS 1493 and 1497 (i.e. AD 1436 and 1440), Rawal Vairsi also provided assistance to Jodha of Marwar. This was during the period that Jodha was recovering the patrimony lost to him following his father's murder at Chittor, and the punitive occupation of much of Marwar by Mewar's forces. Vairsi is credited with the construction of some of the gates and buildings erected at Bikampur as well as the splendid temple of Surya at the capital city of Jaisalmer.

Jain records too mention several religious activities carried out during King Vairsi's reign⁷⁹. These include the installation of an idol of Suparshvanath in the Chintamani temple by one Pasad and his family in AD 1436. The construction of the Sambhavnath temple by Saha Hemraj and Puna in 1437 and related consecration ceremonies that were held in 1440 in the presence of *Acharya* Jinbhadra and Vairsi himself, are also recorded. So are details concerning the preparation of a copy of the famous Jain text, *Kalpa-Sutra*, at Jaisalmer in AD 1440.

One may note here that by this time Jaisalmer had already become a repository of Jain records and texts from many other parts of the land. These Jain *bhandars* or libraries at Jaisalmer have preserved early illustrated works of the c. AD 1200-1500 period, like *Das-Vaikalika-Sutra* (reminiscent, according to some scholars, of the mural tradition of Ajanta), which have painted wooden 'leaves' or folios (rather than bark, or palm-leaf etc. derived *patras*). The wooden 'covers', which held the manuscripts together generally bore miniature paintings too. J.C. Harle notes, in *The Art and Architecture of the Indian Subcontinent*, that the earliest paintings of the thirteenth century available in western India are in the form of small illustrations of the Jain Tirthankars, the *Kalpa Sutra* and the Kalika-Acharya stories. These are painted on palm-leaf in the 'Western Indian' miniature style. Illustrated manuscripts of this style were widely prevalent in Gujarat, Kathiawar, and south western Rajasthan as the prosperous Jain merchants of these regions considered presentations of such manuscripts to their preceptors as an act of piety. The preceptors deposited these in various Jain *bhandars* (literally, stores, or book-collections), where these were carefully preserved and exhibited occasionally as part of *jnana puja* (reverence of books as receptacles of knowledge).

In addition, purportedly because of the potential security provided by the citadel at Jaisalmer, as well as that provided by the surrounding inhospitable desert terrain against the Delhi Sultanate etc., many other collections were deposited in various different *bhandars* at Jaisalmer. The propensity continued over the ensuing centuries too. It is believed that the Jain *Acharya* Jinabhadra Suri spent the better part of his life in further collation of the texts, besides ensuring the replication of many of these by having them copied as acts of piety. Since their original accumulation,

several such *bhandars* or collections of manuscripts, have mainly remained in the hands of a select group, often hidden in closely guarded secret chambers beneath temples etc. Not unnaturally, Jaisalmer also has a sizeable collection of exquisite Jain temples — many fabricated from golden-yellow stone, which are both places of worship and repositories of invaluable old manuscripts.

The next ruler of Jaisalmer, Chachak Dev II (r. 1448-62), seems to have had much to occupy his attentions on his western and north-western frontiers; as vouchsafed by the *Chachak Inscription* of VS 1518 (AD 1461). He is known to have lost his life in a fight against the Langah chief of Multan. Chachak seems to have been among the warrior-heroes of his times. The traditional tales inform us that impressed by his ability, Sumra Khan Seyta, the Muslim chief of the Seyta clan, which had formerly been politically eminent, and ruled over territory around Jalalabad, married his grand-daughter, Sonal, daughter of Habith Khan, to the non-Muslim Chachak Dev⁸⁰.

Devakaran or Devidas (r. 1462-1497), the son of Chachak II, made surprise attacks against Rao Bika of Bikaner. He is eulogised in the Jaisalmer *Khyat* as striking terror into the hearts of his foes, particularly the Chayals, Mohilas and Johiyas. Additional light is thrown on Jaisalmer during this period through Jain traditions. These tell us, among other things, that copies of the *Kalapaka-vyakarna Vrittisaha* and *Trishashti-shalaka-purusha-charita* were penned at Jaisalmer in 1469 and 1479 respectively, during Devakaran's reign. Other acts of piety are recorded too⁸¹. Devidas was succeeded by Rawal Jait Singh II, also known as Jaitsi (r.1497-1527?). We shall cover the period of his reign, and that of his immediate successors, in a later part of this book.

Besides Jaisalmer, there were Bhati chiefdoms centred on Pugal and other parts of the Thar Desert. For instance, we learn that the strategically located stronghold of Bhatner was taken in 1391 by Timur from a Bhati Rajput king named Dulachand. Bhatner was described as being so exceedingly well-fortified that it was renowned across the land. Bhatner remained a coveted fort, the possession of which changed hands between local Johiyas, Chayals and Bhatris (Hindu and Muslim Bhatris), and

remained hotly contested, mainly between them, during the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries AD.⁸²

THE SANKHLAS OF JANGLU

The 'Jangal' area of what eventually came to form part of the territories of the new kingdom of Bikaner towards the latter part of the fifteenth century, had witnessed the traversing of numerous travellers, traders and troopers from many an armed force, big and small, across the centuries. Sometime in the latter part of the thirteenth century, Janglu— or Jangalakupadurg (also called Ajaypur) — with its established fort, became the capital of a branch that owned descent from the ruling clan that held Roon (Runa) in Marwar. These were the Sankhlas of Janglu. The group is also referred to as Janglawa Sankhlas, as distinct from the parent-branch of Runecha Sankhlas who continued to hold the Roon or Runa area.

Sankhla hegemony over Janglu seems to have been established by Rai-Si (Raisimha), the son of Mahipal and grandson of the third Rana of Roon (Runa), who migrated to this area. Rai-Si apparently initially established his authority over Raisisar, a village some sixteen kilometres north-west of Janglu. (The name implies that Rai-Si was either its founder or that the place was re-named after him). Subsequently, he was able to take possession of Janglu, possibly after slaying Vikramsimha (Vikram Singh), son of Lakhan Chauhan. Tradition avers that Rai-Si was aided in his endeavour by a Brahmin of the Dahiya called Kesho (Keshav). One wonders whether this is indicative that intrigue and conspiracy helped Rai-Si find mastery over Janglu in a manner that appears to mirror many a similar tale of the seizing of power from established lines by a vigorous and dashing 'newcomer'. Interestingly, a tank at Janglu is called Kesholaya and is said to have been built by Keshav, and an inscription, dating to AD 1292, on a *devali* near this tank carries the name of Keshav.

After Rai-Si, his son, Lakhan-Si (Lakshmansimha) or Anakh-Si, became the chief of Janglu. To him is attributed the establishment of the town of Lakhanisar, which took its name from his. Lakhan-Si was followed

by Khinva-Si (Kshemasimha). According to one inscription dating to AD 1324, Khinva-Si's daughter, Dulha Devi, was married to King Karna Deva of Jaisalmer. The inscription records that 'Rani Dulha Devi, daughter of Rana Kshemasimha of Jangalakupa, and wife of Rawal Kama Deva of Jaisalmer', ordered the excavation of a water-tank at Vasi, some twenty-four kilometres north-west of present-day Bikaner.

Khinva-Si was succeeded by Kumara-Si (Kumarasimha). Two *devali* inscriptions at Raisisar refer to two of Kumara-Si's sons, Vikram and Pratap-Si, who seem to have died within the life-time of their father in AD 1325 and 1329, respectively. Following Kumara-Si, Janglu was held by Raja-Si, Munja, Uda, Punyanpal, Manakpal, and Napa in succession.

By this time, Janglu was obviously facing attacks from its various neighbours. Among them were the Baluch or 'Bilochis' from the Cholistan/Bahawalpur and Multan area, as well as the Bhatias, Mohilas and other groups. Driven from Janglu as a result of this in the latter part of the fifteenth century, Manakpal's son, Napa (Napo), sought shelter at the court of Marwar's king, Rao Jodha, the founder of Jodhpur. Here, Napa drew the attention of Jodha's son, Bika, to Janglu and the lands beyond it.

Subsequently, Napa not only acted as a guide across the harsh intervening terrain, he actively helped Bika in carving out the kingdom, (which included the erstwhile territories of Janglu), that would become famous as Bikaner. According to Nainsi's writings, in acknowledgement of these valuable services Bika granted to Napa, and Napa's descendants, in perpetuity, the privilege of holding the keys of the fort of Bikaner.

THE RATHORES OF MARWAR

The Rathores are amongst the traditionally listed thirty-six Rajput clans. Their genealogies trace the ancestry of these *Suryavamshi Kshatriyas* (warriors claiming descent from Surya, the sun-god), from the heroes of the solar dynasty — including Rama — mentioned in the epics and other ancient Indian literature.

Some scholars connect the Rathores with the Rashtrakutas, an imperial dynasty that established itself in the Deccan plateau during the early AD eighth century. Rashtrakuta inscriptions refer to the assumption of imperial titles by Dantidurga Khadgavaloka by AD 753. Later descendants like Dhruva I extended Rashtrakuta power as far northwards as Ujjain in present-day Madhya Pradesh, and as we have already noted in earlier chapters, some of the Rashtrakuta branches had prolonged interaction with Rajasthan based kingdoms and chiefdoms.

However, the more recent keepers of traditional genealogies of the Rathores and other bardic chroniclers link the Rathores with the once-resplendent kingdom of Kanauj in northern India, which an early forebear, Nayan Pal, had conquered in AD 470, and which once controlled a large part of the Indo-Gangetic plain. These traditions connect the Rathore Rajputs with King Jayachand (also spelt Jayachandra, and Jai Chand) of the Gahadavala dynasty, who was the last great ruler of Kanauj.

As noted previously, during the final decades of the twelfth century, Kanauj under Jayachand came into conflict with the growing power of Prithviraj III, the Chauhan ruler of the Delhi-Ajmer-Sambhar region. Both men were charismatic leaders, renowned for their bravery and valour on the battlefield. The intense rivalry between the two kings unfortunately coincided with the adventurous expeditions into the Indian subcontinent by Muhammad of Ghor. Following Muhammad of Ghor's victory over the forces of Prithviraj Chauhan in the Second Battle of Tarain in 1192, in 1194 it was the turn of Jayachand and the kingdom of Kanauj to face the might of Ghor upon the battleground of Chandwar. Jayachand died in battle, leaving the Ghori chief victorious and the might and splendour of the fabled Imperial Kanauj shattered.

By AD 1212, eighteen years after the overthrow of Kanauj, circumstances forced many of the grandsons and nephews of Jayachand, and other junior scions of the family, to leave the territories of their ancestral kingdom permanently. Twelve years later, Kanauj was totally merged into the nascent Sultanate of Delhi.

Out of the Kanauj émigrés, one branch of the Kanauj ruling family apparently journeyed westward. According to some narratives, they were on their way to a pilgrimage to Dwarka, venerated as the city of Lord Krishna. Arriving eventually at the pilgrimage site of Pushkar, these travellers were invited to settle in Pali, in the ‘Maru-sthali’ or Marwar part of Rajasthan. That region — long synonymous as the land of sand-dunes and death — was largely under the political control of other warrior clans like the Parihars (Pratiharas), Balecha-Chauhans, Guhilas and Mohilas at the time.

It was as dwellers of this land that the Rathores would rise to enjoy a position of political prestige and power. Tradition holds that the first prince of the displaced Kanauj royal family to establish himself as a chief in any part of Marwar was Siha, son of Set Ram, who probably reached Marwar about c. AD 1243.

Interestingly, the Bithu Memorial (twenty-one kilometres north-west of Pali), dating to the twelfth of the *krishna-paksha* (the ‘dark-half’ or waning moon) of the month of *Kartik*, of VS 1330 (i.e. October 9, AD 1273), set up by Parvati, widow of Rao Siha, refers to Siha, son of ‘Shri Seta *Kanwar*’ as a ‘Rathada’. The inscription has not used any royal titles for either Siha or his father. Nor has it harped upon a Gahadavala descent⁸³.

When Rao Siha, entered the region in AD 1243, Pali was a rich trading city⁸⁴. Traditional accounts tell us that the inhabitants of Pali, particularly the Brahmins (probably Gaurs, who became known in later years as ‘Paliwals’ after the name of their city), who controlled the trade in the region, sought Siha’s help against the frequent raids of the Meds and the Meenas. The local Meds, described as ‘bandits’ and ‘cattle-raiders’, whose activities were proving disastrous for the long-distance traders of Pali, were apparently notorious for constantly harassing the Brahmins and traders. As the local chief of Pali had failed to protect the trade and town adequately, the leading citizens invited Rao Siha for help. Thus Siha — possibly in keeping with prevalent notions of the duties of a Kshatriya — took up arms to provide protection for the inhabitants and trade-routes of Pali.

Having occupied Pali, Siha went on to put down the Meds. Simultaneously, Siha became the ruler of Pali, taking the title of 'Rao'. For Siha, it marked the rise of the political mastery of the area. He seems to have fought against local Meenas too. According to accepted tradition, Siha died in 1273 fighting off a Muslim force that attacked Pali and put to death its prosperous Brahmin community.

(Tradition has long held that many thousands of Brahmins were massacred in 1273 on that day, which happened to mark the festival of Rakhi. The survivors left Pali and sought refuge elsewhere, becoming established later in parts of Gujarat, Mewar⁸⁵, Jaisalmer and other neighbouring areas⁸⁶. These Brahmins were called 'Paliwals', taking their name from that of their ancestral town of Pali. They stopped celebrating the festival of Rakhi as a mark of respect for those killed at Pali on Rakhi day).

The Bithu Memorial not only provides the year of Siha's death, it also gives some information about the establishment of Rathore power in Marwar. (As is the case with various memorial tablets, the ornaments and draperies of the figures depicted on the Bithu Memorial also throw light on Siha and Queen Parvati's era)⁸⁷.

Siha's descendants and other kin added to the lands under the clan's control, wresting hard-fought territory from neighbours belonging variously to clans like the Panwar (Parmar), Bhati, Solanki, Chauhan, Johiya, Parihar (Pratihara), etc., as well as the states of Gujarat, Malwa, Multan, and Delhi. They are listed and described in the bardic accounts of the Charans as brave warriors; hardy, simple, proud and god-fearing. L.P Tessitori has noted how, in the space of four generations, the Rathore clan "...succeeded in subjugating to its sway the greatest part of the Rajputana desert from the chain of the Aravalli to the bed of the Naiwal, a stretch of over three hundred miles"⁸⁸.

Though there is inadequate information about the full achievements of the successors of Rao Siha, and the early Rathores of the region in general, some of their exploits continue to be commemorated in public memory and folk-lore. Folk-memory has also kept alive the fame of chiefs like Rao

Raipal, who shared out his grain with his subjects during a severe famine, and Prince Pabu-ji (c. 1239-1276), grandson of Rao Asthana, who died protecting a herd of cows, thereby honouring his pledged word. (The legend of Pabu-ji includes his offering protection to certain people in the face of Baghela opposition; his marriage with the daughter of Amarkot's chief and hasty departure mid-ceremony to rescue the stolen cows of Kachhela, a Charan woman. His death followed soon afterwards, following combat with his brother-in-law, Jindrao Khinchi, the chief of Jayal, in the course of rescuing the raided cattle. Pabu-ji has been immortalized in Rajasthani memory and is regarded as one of the deified warrior-saints of Rajasthan, along with Goga-ji, Teja-ji, Ramdeo-ji and Harbhu-ji. He is often regarded as an incarnation of Lakshman, the younger brother of Rama, and as the patron deity of camels).

Siha's immediate successors were his warrior-king son, Asthana, and grandson, Dhuhar. Having inherited his father's mantle, Rao Asthana (r. 1273-1291), continued to hold the Pali area, but later probably made the village of Mundhoch his base. From here, he successfully attempted to extend the frontiers of his nascent state. There is a tradition that it was during Asthana's reign that the territory of Khed (near Balotra, in present-day Barmer district), was captured by the Rathores from the Guhilas (Gohils) who held it at the time.

According to tradition (accepted by G.H. Ojha and Dasharatha Sharma among others), around c. twelfth-thirteenth centuries AD there was a principality centred around Khed, some ten miles from the modern town of Balotra in the present-day district Barmer, which was held by a branch of the Guhila clan. Located on a bend of the river Luni, Khed (also called Khet and Lavana-Khed, the latter because of local salt-production), appears to have been a fairly prosperous township at that time⁸⁹. It may, therefore, be relevant to briefly look at the local history of this principality, before reverting to the issue of how it came into Rathore hands.

Khed was probably once held by the Parmars of Jalore, and had later come into the possession of the Chauhans of Nadol. Jain records tell us that Nadol's chief, Kelhan, apparently invited the Jain preacher-saint, Jinapati-Suri, to visit 'Lavana-Khed' in AD 1194. Subsequently, Khed apparently

formed part of the dominions held by Nadol's collateral branch ruling from Jalore. For, some three-quarters of a century later, the Sundha Inscription of King Chachigdev (Chachik Dev) of Jalore, dating to VS 1319 (AD 1262), recorded that Khed was among the lands held by Jalore's king, Udaysimha. His descendants, Chachigdev, Samant Singh and Kanhar Deo, probably remained the overlords of the region. However, there are many gaps in information about the history of this small chiefship and it is not clear whether the local feudatories were the Guhilas of Khed (as tradition avers), or some other clan or group.

Khed came into the hands of the westward moving Rathores sometime in the latter part of the thirteenth century. Tod attributes its fall to conquest by Rao Siha. However, Siha's field of action probably did not extend as far westward as Khed. The Nagar Inscription of the Rathore Maharawal Jagmal, a descendant of Siha through his elder son Asthana, notes that Khed was conquered by Siha's younger son, Soniga. However, Nainsi's famous *Khyat* (which is a later work), credits the conquest of Khed to Soniga's elder brother, Rao Asthana, himself.

According to Nainsi's version, the Dabhis, who occupied many of the high posts of the Guhila principality of Khed, had developed differences with the ruling clan. Keen to see an end to the political power of the Guhilas of Khed, these Dabhis entered into a conspiracy with the Rathore chief, Asthana. Some days later, the Guhilas (Gohils) invited the Rathores led by Asthana to a banquet at Khed with the objective of persuading the Rathores to settle in lands other than around Khed. Here, upon receiving a pre-arranged signal from the Dabhis, the banquet guests suddenly drew their weapons and cut down their unsuspecting Gohil hosts!

Dasharatha Sharma holds that version given in the Nagar Inscription ascribing the conquest of Khed to Soniga deserves greater credibility on two counts. Firstly, the Nagar Inscription provides a much earlier version than Nainsi's *Khyat*. Secondly, the version seems to be impartial, because even though Jagmal, who had the inscription recorded at Nagar, was a direct descendant of Asthana (and not Soniga), the victory over Khed is credited to Asthana's younger brother, Soniga.

Asthana is credited with capturing the Idar area from the Bhils who held it. He met his end fighting off an attack on Pali by the Delhi Sultanate troops of Jalaluddin Khilji in AD 1291. Asthana was followed by his son, Rao Dhuhar (r. 1291-1309). Dhuhar led his clan against their neighbours, and captured Mandore (ancient Mandavyapur) from the Parihars. (Mandore was later lost). He is reputed to have occupied 150 villages in the Barmer area, though the number varies in different texts. Dhuhar fell in battle — possibly against the Chauhans — in AD 1309 at a place called Tirsingadi (Tingadi), near Khed. His memorial-stone still exists here. Dhuhar is remembered not just for his skills as a warrior, though. As the late G.H. Ojha noted, Dhuhar is traditionally associated with bringing the idol of the clan's patron-deity, the goddess Chakreshwari, from Karnataka in southern India. He installed the image at the village of Nagana, where the idol later became famous by the term 'Nagnechi Devi' (also 'Nagnechi-ji'), after the name of the village⁹⁰.

Relatively little is known about the history of the area during the reigns of Rao Dhuhar's successors. Traditional *khyats* credit Rao Dhuhar's eldest son and successor, Raipal, also called Rajpal (r. 1309-13??) with seizing Barmer from the Parmars (though there is evidence to indicate that Barmer was probably held by Chauhans at the time). Raipal is also credited with the capture of Mahewa (now better-known as Mallani) from the Parmars. It is held that he also attempted to seize Mandore, but the activities of Sultan Alauddin Khilji of Delhi in the Siwana and Jalore areas proved an effective check to Rathore attempts at territorial expansion for a while.

Raipal was succeeded by Karanpal, and the latter by his eldest son, Bhim. According to the *khyats* of Bankidas and Dayaldas, like Raipal, these Rathore chiefs too fought the Parihars, Bhatias and Turkish soldiers, and extended the territories held by the Rathores up to Jaisalmer and the banks of the river Kak in western Rajasthan. Similar valour apparently marked the exploits of their various successors, as has been eulogised in traditional chronicles and folklore. Both Karanpal and Bhim lost their lives fighting against Bhati-led alliances.

Karanpal's younger son, Rao Jalansi (r. ?13- d. 1328) is remembered for having defeated Sodha Rajputs of Umarkot, the Solankis of Bhinmal

and the Muslim governor of Multan, before he too fell in battle around c. 1328, while leading his troops against the Bhatīs and Turks'. Jalanasi's eldest son and successor, Rao Chhada (r. 1328-1344), now picked up the gauntlet, and set about avenging his immediate predecessors, while at the same time expanding the frontiers of Rathore-held lands. He forced the Sodhas to yield up horses as war-indemnity, marched against the ruler of Jaisalmer, and fought the Muslim governors of Jalore and Nagaur. The *khyat* tradition says that Chhada attacked and plundered the tracts of Jalore, Bhinmal, Sojat and Pali. In time, Chhada also met a heroic death on the battlefield, which was an end upheld as being honourable, ideal, and desirable for the warrior community during this (and indeed, practically every), period. He lost his life on the battlefield near the village of Rama, in the tract of Jalore, in an engagement against the Sonagra and Deora Chauhans in 1344.

Chhada's successor, Tida (r. 1344-??), exacted revenge for his father's death by defeating the Sonagra Chauhans. He established Rathore control over Bhinmal, turned his attention against the fighting forces of the Bhatīs, Balecha Chauhans, Solankis, etc. and garnered monetary indemnities from them, before falling in action while defending Siwana from an attacking Muslim army. His successor, Tribhuvanshi, and after him Mallinath (b. circa 1358, d. 1399), also took up arms against their neighbours. It seems that Rao Mallinath, son of Salkha, grandson of Rao Tida and tenth in descent from Rao Siha, took the throne from Tribhuvanshi forcibly. He fought the Sonagras, Deoras, Bhatīs, Turks, and in c. 1378 Firoze Shah Tughlaq's *subedar* of Malwa, Nizamuddin, besides the ruler of Gujarat. He also added the territories of Bhinmal and Umarkot to the Rathore dominions. As a result, within a few generations of Siha, Rathore suzerainty was firmly established over much of western Rajasthan.

It may be important to bear in mind here that the earlier power-balance in the area had been affected by the fall of several of the established local powers, some prior to the rise of the Rathores and some concurrently. In this context, we have already looked at how Alauddin Khilji brought about the downfall of the Chauhans of Jalore, of the Parmar chiefdom of Siwana, and the temporary eclipse of the Bhatīs of Jaisalmer at the end of the thirteenth and beginning of the fourteenth centuries AD.

Amongst his many victories, Mallinath also conquered the area of Mahewa in western Marwar. The area subsequently later came to be called Mallani after the charismatic Mallinath. A warrior to the core, as was his flamboyant son Jagmal, (the hero of a traditional ballad, who subsequently ruled over Mallani as a separate chieftdom), Mallinath fought his brothers and asserted his control over the clan, taking on the title of 'Maharawal'. Later he took to spiritualism, becoming initiated as *a yogi* by Ugam-Si Bhati around c. 1389, under the influence of his wife, Rupan-Dey. Thereafter, Mallinath renounced, both, his royal authority and lifestyle, as well as his leadership of the Rathore clan. Not surprisingly, Mallinath has since been acknowledged as a mystic-saint, and a grand religious-cum-cattle fair has long been held in his honour at Tilwara every year.

Rao Chunda (r. 1384-1428), Mallinath's nephew, became the twelfth Rathore to rule in Marwar. He was the son of Mallinath's brother, Prince Viram Deo (Viram-de). Viram Deo had held Mahewa for a while, re-naming it after his own name as 'Virampura', before meeting his end while fighting the Johiyas around c. 1383 at Gajanera.

Using old chronicles and bardic records, Tessitori concluded that Chunda, a man without inheritance, who had been assigned the small outpost of Salavari by his relative the Rawal of Mahevo [sic], made himself master of Mandore and gained the dignity of the title of 'Rao'⁹¹. Having inherited the impetuosity of his clan, and possessing his share of skills as a warrior, administrator and leader, Rao Chunda led his clan and kinsmen to greater glories.

Meanwhile, around c. AD 1395. Chunda had married into the Eenda branch of the Parihar Rajput clan, who were masters of Mandore. The ancient walled city and fortress of Mandore (old Mandavyapur) was, by this time, popularly regarded as being as old as the events of the epic *Ramayana*. With his marriage, Chunda obtained Mandore in dowry, along with one thousand surrounding villages. Subsequently Mandore became Chunda's capital and the centre of the Rathore principality. Soon afterwards, in 1396, Chunda was called upon to defend Mandore against a siege led by Zafar Khan, governor of Gujarat for the Tughlaq sultans of Delhi. (Zafar Khan later became an independent ruler of Gujarat in his own right, taking the name of Sultan Muzaffar Shah [r. 1407-11]). In this, Chunda was successful, particularly when news of Timur's advance into India convinced the attacker to come to terms with Chunda. Chunda agreed to pay an indemnity or tribute to the Tughlaqs, but kept control of Mandore.

Later, after Timur's invasion, the payment of this tribute was stopped, and Chunda led his troops against the Sultanate's garrison at Nagaur. Conquering further tracts of territory and taking full advantage of the political disturbances prevalent, including within the Delhi Sultanate area once Tughlaq control started weakening under the later Tughlaq sultans, Chunda soon occupied places like Sambhar, Didwana, Khatu and Ajmer too. Chunda also seized the town of Phalodi, after defeating his brother, Jai Singh.

(Didwana's strategic and economic importance cannot be underestimated. The Gurjara-Pratiharas, Chauhans and Delhi sultans were among those who held Didwana and its hinterlands. Under Firoze Shah Tughlaq mosques and other buildings were erected here in AD 1377 and 1384. Later, Marwar, Mewar, Gujarat and Delhi vied for the possession of Didwana and Sambhar, both sites being major salt-producing centres. In AD 1397, Gujarat's Sultan Muzaffar Shah (alias Zafar Khan) marched to Sambhar and Didwana to chastise 'rebels').

While his numerous successful military campaigns and conquests brought Rao Chunda of Marwar power and prestige, it also earned him the enmity of the numerous neighbours whose territories he had impinged

upon. In 1428, the combined forces of the Bhati Rao of Pugal, the Sankhla of Janglu and the governor of Multan, Khidar Khan, attacked Nagaur. Caught relatively unprepared, Chunda took "...the only honourable course open to a Rajput in similar straits: [to] sally forth and rush into the thickest of the enemy to court an immortal death"⁹².

Chunda was succeeded, as per his wishes, by his younger son, Kanha, who had been declared the heir-apparent by the Rao during his lifetime. Chunda's declaration in favour of Prince Kanha had resulted, at the time, in the voluntary departure from Marwar of the disinherited eldest son, Ranmal.

(Rao Chunda is stated to have had fourteen sons. At the time, polygamous marriages had become common among the Rajput chiefs and elite, who used matrimonial alliances as a means of strengthening their clan's power, etc., just as royalty and nobility had done in the past. This meant that a younger son by a favourite queen, or a queen from a powerful clan, was often favoured over an older son by a different queen. That this was an important aspect in deciding succession issues has already been highlighted, for example in the instance of Prince Chunda of Mewar abrogating his rights to the throne in favour of a then unborn half-brother! That it remained a crucial deciding factor in later centuries too will continue to be seen further in the course of this work).

Following Chunda's declaration that promised the throne of Marwar to a younger son, his eldest son, Prince Ranmal made his way to Chittor, the fortress-capital of the neighbouring state of Mewar. As we have already noted above, Ranmal's sister and Rao Chunda of Marwar's daughter, the Rathore princess, Hansa-bai, was married to Rana Lakha of Mewar. Ranmal thus felt sure of a welcome at his brother-in-law's court. Ranmal soon became very powerful at the Mewar court, and his period of voluntary exile at Mewar, particularly after the death of his brother-in-law, Rana Lakha, was to have long term consequences for the future interrelations of Marwar and Mewar (as we have seen in earlier section already).

Kanha ascended the throne in 1428, only to die shortly afterwards. Rao Satta too had a short reign. With the succession issue open once again,

Ranmal returned to Mandore and wresting back his inheritance, with the help of Mewari forces, became the new Rao of Marwar (r. 1428-1438). Ranmal was a skilled warrior, and like his father before him, he attempted to add to the lands under Rathore domination.

The *khyat* tradition records that the Rathore Rao Ranmal of Mandore carried his arms against the Bhatias of western Rajasthan. The *khyat* of Bankidas makes a specific mention of Rao Ranmal occupying Bikampur, after killing the local Bhati chief Kelana. At the time Jaisalmer was ruled by Rawal Lakshman, and Kelana may either have been one of the chiefs subordinate to him, or the reference may be to the powerful Rao Kelana of Pugal. This Rao Kelana of Pugal is known to have expanded his territories up to Bhatinda and Abohar, invaded Dera Ghazi Khan (west of Multan), and defeated the Biloches. Kelana of Pugal was among those responsible for the death of Ranmal's father, Rao Chunda of Marwar (r. 1384-1428).

Ranmal also occupied Nagaur, and defeated Hasan Khan, the Pathan chief of Jalore. He brought Nadol, Jaitaran and Sojat under his control too. His acquisition of Bikampur is corroborated by a Jain inscription of VS 1524 (AD 1467) stating that one Nagaraja installed an image through Jinachandra Suri when Ranmal ruled Bikampur⁹³. Ranmal is also known to have introduced certain reforms in both Marwar and Mewar. Some of these entailed bettering the existing system of weights and measures.

Circumstances soon took Ranmal back to live in Mewar, however. For, following the death of Rana Lakha, Rao Ranmal of Marwar became the chief advisor to his sister who was now the formally recognised queen-mother of Mewar, Hansa-bai, during the period her son, the young Rana Mokal, was a minor. Some years later, upon the premature death of Mokal, Ranmal was once upon called upon by his sister Hansa-bai for assistance in administering Mewar until such time as Mokal's young son could take over the reins of administration independently. Thus, Ranmal (accompanied by some of his twenty-four sons), returned to the court of the Sisodias, nominally as the caretaker for his sister's minor grandson, Rana Kumbha. In reality, however, the Rathore ruler became the real seat of power in Mewar, much to the dismay of the Sisodia clan, until his assassination at Chittor around c. 1438.

Ranmal's death and the accompanying falling out between Marwar and Mewar resulted in Mandore and the surrounding lands of the Rathores being occupied by Mewar's armies. For a short while, Ranmal's successor, his son Jodha (r. 1438-1489), was driven to seek shelter in the Janglu part of north-western Rajasthan, where he took up abode in the village of Kahuni, some ten miles from present-day Bikaner city. (The village is named as Kavani in some accounts).

Soon, though, Jodha picked up the gauntlet thrown by Mewar, and set about trying to retrieve the prestige and lost territories of his family. Besides his own Marwar Rathores, he mustered together a following from amongst the warriors of clans like the Deora Chauhans, Eenda Parihars, his Rathore kinsmen from Mallani, and the Sankhlas and Bhatias of the Pugal, Jangal and Jaisalmer tracts. It took Jodha several years to strengthen his vulnerable position, during which he continued fighting his enemy to recover the occupied portions of his patrimony fully. It is said that Jodha took the battle deep into Mewar State's territory to satisfy honour and avenge the death of his father, Ranmal.

Defeating his enemies, Jodha gradually brought areas like Merta⁹⁴, Phalodi⁹⁵, Pokhran, Bhadrachal, Sojat, Jaitaran, Siwana, parts of Nagaur and the Godwar area under Marwar's sway. Finally, the one-time capital of Mandore appeared within his grasp, and Jodha regained it in AD 1453. He also added new tracts to his domains. Among these, the Chhapar Drona area was captured after Jodha led an expedition against the Mohilas of Chhapar Drona. The Mohilas of Chhapar Drona were headed by his own son-in-law, the Mohila chief Ajit Singh. He is also credited with victory over the Pathans of Fatehpur.

Eventually, Rao Jodha of Marwar and his kinsman, Rana Kumbha of Mewar entered into diplomatic negotiations to end the strife between the two kingdoms. Peace terms were settled. The Mewar tradition attributes the eventual declaration of peace to be the result of the ties of blood between the rulers of the two kingdoms: ties which the dowager queen of Mewar, Hansa-bai upheld before her Mewar grandson, Kumbha, and Marwar nephew, Jodha. To further cement the new understanding, a matrimonial

alliance was arranged, with the daughter of Jodha, Shringar Devi, marrying Kumbha's son, Raimal.

Peace having been established between Marwar and Mewar, in 1459 Rao Jodha laid the foundation of a new fort which was fated to become the future capital of Marwar. (Legend says that to maintain ancient custom, according to which a human ought to be sacrificed/ buried alive beneath the foundations of a new fort so that his spirit could protect and lend it stability and longevity, one Rajiya Bhambi volunteered to be the sacrifice. In return, his family was granted certain privileges in perpetuity)

Located atop a hill, some six miles south of Mandore, the new capital took its name from its founder. As long as the Rathores ruled over Marwar, Jodhpur would remain its capital city, and even today it is a major city of Rajasthan. With Jodhpur as their capital, the Rathores of Marwar would go on to gather further territory and status as one of the premier powers of the region. Besides territories already taken by Jodha's commanders and kinsmen, areas like Mahewa and Sambhar etc. too soon came under Marwar's control.

Jodha, like his predecessors — and like many a warrior-chief of his epoch — was an ambitious and fearless man. So too were his fourteen sons, several surviving brothers (Ranmal had twenty-four sons), and numerous clansmen, who were all veterans of many a battle and a skirmish. The clan had grown both in strength and in number in the two centuries or so that had passed since their ancestors had arrived in Marwar. Despite the setback suffered at the death of Rao Ranmal and the occupation of Marwar, the Rathore clan was still composed of strong warriors. Thus, in order to secure the frontiers of his state, Jodha followed the policy of assigning troublesome border areas to his sons and kinsmen. This served the dual purpose of providing the main state with a number of buffer-zones in the form of dependent, yet semi-autonomously governed, collateral fiefdoms, as well as assuaging the ambitions and individual thirsts for territorial expansion among the young warriors of the clan.

This rapid territorial expansion was fuelled by the enterprise of the numerous members of the clan and its collateral branches. Of the twenty-

four sons of Rao Ranmal, Akhai Raj, in turn, had two sons, Maheraj and Panchana. From Meheraj's son Kumpa descended the Kumpawat sub-branch, while from Panchana's son Jetha descended the Jethawat sub-branch. Another of Ranmal's sons, Champa, a brother of Jodha, became the ancestor of the Champawat sub-branch.

Of Jodha's own sons, Prince Duda annexed the area of Merta, which his direct descendants — famed as the 'Mertia' Rathores — were to hold and rule for several generations thereafter. Prince Satal conquered a part of the territory of the Bhatias, and founded a village called Satalmer, after his own name. Prince Suja secured Sojat, Prince Raipala captured Asop from Fateh Khan of Nagaur. Prince Karmasi founded Khimsar, and became the ancestor of the Karamsot sub-branch of Rathores, while Prince Bika, with the help of his uncle Kandhal, occupied Janglu, Deshnoke, and Kodamdesar, to the north and west of Marwar, and founded a separate kingdom that came to be known as 'Bikaner' after his name. Bikaner was to exist as a separate entity thereafter for nearly five centuries. (The history of Bikaner is separately discussed further in this chapter). From Jodha's grandson, Uda descended the sub-branch known as Udawat.

Over time, it would become customary for nobles descended from the line of Jodha's brothers to take their seats at court and councils at the right hand of the ruler of Marwar, while the left was reserved for the descendants of his own immediate line. Locally, they were called '*Jeewani*' and '*Davi Misal*'. The relations of these nobles with their king constituted a unique type of relationship that had its influence on the kingdom's administrative structure. The concept of the 'state' being the joint property of the clan as whole, with the clan-chief/ ruler being merely the first among equals formed an important part of governance and interaction between the ruler and the clan. The poorest of members of the clan, even if they held a mere acre or two of land, shared the pride of having descended from the same origin as their ruler, and bore themselves accordingly! (This relationship would be forced to undergo a change in the nineteenth century following treaties and new concepts that came in with the British East India Company).

Rao Jodha died in April 1489 (though according to some calculations, he died in AD 1488). Apparently, the coronation '*teeka*' was offered to Joga, but he was deemed of unsound mind, and another of Jodha's sons, the short-reigning Satal (r. 1489-1491 or 1492), ascended the throne of Marwar. Satal fell in battle at the battle of Kosana in 1492, whereupon another of Jodha's sons, Suja (r. 1492-1515) ascended the *gaddi* (throne) of Marwar.

The early part of Suja's reign was marked by the siege of Jodhpur at the hands of Rao Bika of Bikaner. The siege was lifted only after the intervention of the queen-mother of Marwar, who prevailed on Suja to let Bika take away to Bikaner the coveted symbols of ancestral royalty (believed to date back to the migration from Kanauj). Over the course of his relatively long reign, Rao Suja was unable to check the ambitions of his various subordinate kinsmen. However, the Sindhals of Chanod and Rajpur were subjugated. Upon Suja's death in AD 1515, the throne of Marwar passed to his grandson Ganga, despite the claim put forward by Biram-Deo, one of Jodha's direct descendants from the line of the old Rao's eldest son (as we shall see in a later chapter).

THE RATHORES OF BIKANER

The generally accepted Bikaneri version about the foundation of their kingdom revolves around a crucial *darbar*, or court-audience, in the parent-state of Marwar, where Prince Bika, the second eldest amongst the then surviving sons of Marwar's Rao Jodha, arrived slightly late, saluted his father according to etiquette, and found a seat next to Rao Kandhal, one of his paternal uncles. The subsequent whispered conversation between Bika and Kandhal apparently irked their monarch, for Rao Jodha loudly inquired whether the uncle-nephew duo were sitting together and planning future territorial conquests for the glory of their clan. Such a public taunt could, in keeping with the times, merit but one answer, and Rao Bika and uncle Kandhal had accepted the challenge, pledging before the assembled courtiers never to return to Jodhpur until they had subjugated new lands. The challenge accepted in court by the prince and his royal uncle to leave Jodhpur and go forth to conquer new lands is now part of Bikaneri lore!

Fortuitously perhaps, a Rajput named Napa, who belonged to the Sankhla clan and was the ousted chief of Janglu, situated to the north of Marwar, was present at court that day. Having been dispossessed by stronger Bilochi neighbours, Napa Sankhla stood up in court and suggested that Bika and Kandhal turn their attention towards Janglu and the territories to the north, offering to guide an expedition across the desert wastes.

As we have already seen, setting up collateral states, splinter-kingdoms and new chiefships was an established aspect of the political life of Rajasthan during not just this period, but preceding and succeeding periods as well. (Indeed, it appears to be a true fact for practically all complex states all over the world!) It was a practice not discouraged by many a wise ruler when it was realised, at a given point of time, that the ambitions and strength of arms of his immediate relatives, or other kinsmen, could prove detrimental for the smooth accession and reign of the next heir to the throne and the well-being of the kingdom/chiefdom, often because the ambitions and leadership qualities of the former category of men were formidable.

Not surprisingly, therefore, Prince Bika's decision to conquer further lands was welcomed by his father. Whatever be the real reasons for the expedition, Bika apparently parted on cordial terms from his father, and on September 30, AD 1465 rode out from the fort of Jodhpur, accompanied by his uncles Kandhal, Rupa, Mandalo and Nathu, brothers Joga and Bida, and a band of nobles and warriors. With him were many other supporters, including Napa Sankhla and Parihar Bela, Bika's Master of Horses, and a force of one hundred cavalry and five hundred foot soldiers. Also included in the accompanying group were officers, scribes and merchants, the core for a future administration in a new land.

The area that was to form the new kingdom of Bikaner had been populated and ruled by many different peoples in the centuries preceding the advent of the Rathores (as we have noted in preceding chapters). When Bika arrived in the region in the fifteenth century, it was divided into numerous segments under local chiefs. The dominant groups included the Johiyas, Chauhans, Sankhlas, Parmars, Bhatias (and Bhattis), Khinchis, Chayals, Kyam-khanis and Jats.

Some of these groups had accepted Islam, others shared their 'clan' or community's name with both Jats and Rajputs. (The Ismailis also seem to have become active in western Rajasthan by this time). It was a time of flux and transition at the group, social and individual level, in these desert areas. Not surprisingly, therefore, at the political level too, the precise boundaries of the territories of the numerous groups living in this general region and their periods of supremacy had fluctuated over time.

In Bika's age, it was the Bhatias who controlled the territories to the north and west, while to the east, north-east and south-east were the settlements of different Jat clans. Beyond them was the fortified settlement of Bhatner (now known as Hanumangarh, in commemoration of a famous victory by a later ruler of Bikaner in AD 1805, achieved on a day sacred to Hanuman). Around this renowned Bhatner were the settlements of the chiefly Muslim Bhattis, Johiyas and others. The neighbouring region of Hissar was held by a governor (*subedar*) on behalf of the sultan of Delhi. The Kyam-khanis of Shekhawati and the Mohilas were among other neighbours.

Many of the groups lived from cattle-rearing and pastoral activities. Tod noted that the Jats and Johiyas "...of these regions, who extended over all the northern desert, even to the Garah, led a pastoral life, their wealth consisting in their cattle, which they reared in great numbers, disposing of the superfluity, and of the *ghee* (clarified butter) and wool, through the medium of Sarsote (*Sarasvati*) Brahmins (who, in these regions, devote themselves to traffic), receiving in return grain and other conveniences or necessities of life"⁹⁶. (These activities were obviously of importance in times of peace. Thus, recording the subsequent subjugation of the Puniah (Punia) sub-sect of Jats in the late sixteenth century, Tod noted that, following the political annihilation of the six Jat cantons of the desert, the Jats became fully occupied in "...agriculture and their old pastoral pursuits, and are an industrious taxpaying race"⁹⁷).

Many of the politically influential groups claimed Rajput descent. Of these some, like the Johiyas and Bhattis, had accepted Islam. And all of them had a warlike tradition of which they were proud and which they flaunted! Consequently, Bika engaged in numerous battles for territorial

mastery before his overlordship was accepted by the earlier inhabitants of the area. Rao Bika (r. 1465-1504) was also fortunate enough to obtain the blessings and support of Karni-ji. She was a holy woman, who was revered as a living saint, and had made the village of Deshnoke her abode. (Deshnoke lies about sixteen miles to the south of the present-day city of Bikaner).

Born in the Charan community, Karni-ji had performed miracles from her early childhood, and was already popularly deified as an emanation or incarnation of the mother-goddess long before Bika sought her blessings. (The Charans claim a semi-divine origin. In Rajasthan, they have long been acknowledged as genealogists and bards; and are themselves the subject-matter of many stories related to showing rulers the correct path in times of crises, and for encouraging Kshatriya men and women — through words and through stirring verses — to uphold their obligatory duties).

Legend holds that Karni-ji prophesied to Prince Bika that he would surpass his father in might and glory and many would acknowledge his overlordship, for his destiny was higher than his father's. (Karni-ji herself became the patron-deity of the ruling house of Bikaner). Following the advice of Karni-ji, Rao Bika initially established his base at Chandasar in Janglu. Three years later he moved to Deshnoke, where the saint herself lived. For the next six years, Bika lived at Deshnoke, until finally, with Karni-ji's blessings and approval, he proclaimed himself king in 1472, with Kodamdesar as his capital.

In the duration, with many military successes to his credit, including against the Bhatias, Jats, Johiyas, Khinchis, and the Hissar *subedar*, Sarang Khan, Bika expanded his conquests northwards and north-eastward to include Sirsa, Bhatinda, Ladnu, Bhatner (now re-named Hanumangarh), Singhana, Rini, Nohar, Pugal, and the tracts surrounding these places. The Johiyas of Badopal were subdued too, as were the Bhattis of the Bhagore area. Bika also attached some villages held by different Jat sub-groups. Some tracts held by the Kyam-khanis and Pathans were annexed too, as was substantial Khinchi-held territory.

(Bika's uncle, Kandhal campaigned further north. He and his subordinate-kin subdued the "...communities of Asiagh, Beniwal, and Sarun, which cantons are mostly occupied by his descendants, styled 'Kandulote Rahtores', at this day"⁹⁸. The traditional pre-Modern relationship within a Rajput clan is well-illustrated by Tod's comment on the Kandhalot Rathores, that "...although they form an integral portion of the Bikaner state, they evince, in their independent bearing to its chief that their estates were 'the gift of their own swords, not of his patents'."⁹⁹)

A modicum of diplomacy, backed by the might of Bika's sword-arm, obtained for him the support of the Jats, specially after the elders of the numerous settlements of the Godara sub-group of Jats met together at Sheikhsar and collectively decided to enter into terms with Bika. In return for Bika's protection from the Bhatias to their west, and help against others — including rival sub-sects of the Jats, these Godara Jats accepted Bika's supremacy, even while securing an undertaking that their own traditional rights and community privileges would remain inviolate. (In return, the descendants of the Godara elders from Sheikhsar and Roneah also obtained the right of the coronation, '*Raj-Tilak*', of the Bikaner rulers in perpetuity).

In time, Bika held mastery over 2,670 villages, including those of the Jats who had 'opted' to accept his protection. To the fortunes of war was added a judicious matrimonial alliance with Rang Kanwar, the daughter of the Bhati chief of Pugal, Rao Shekha. (Like most of Bika's undertakings, this marriage too carried the blessings of Karni-ji herself).

With his position secure, Bika sought a more appropriate site for a new capital city. A place called Rati Ghati was found to be suitable and work began on a fort at this spot in 1486. In its vicinity, Bika founded his new capital in 1488. Taking its name from his (and, we are informed, in part from a Jat named Nera, who was owner of the site) the place was named as Bikaner. Bikaner's geographically strategic position, especially vis-à-vis the Punjab, Sindh, Multan, Delhi, Shekhawati, and other parts of Rajasthan, and its access to the old northerly and westerly travel and trade-routes was to ensure that it would play its role in the affairs of the subcontinent from time to time.

As the frontiers of Bika's kingdom continued to expand, the new Rathore state came into conflict with the Sultanate of Delhi. It was in battle against the forces led by Sarang Khan, the Sultanate's governor of Hissar, that Bika's uncle and former companion-in-arms, Rao Kandhal — by then a veteran fighter aged seventy-three — fell fighting gallantly in 1489. The death was avenged by joint action on part of Kandhal's brother, the aged Rao Jodha from the parent-state of Marwar, and nephew Rao Bika of Bikaner. Both rulers personally led their forces and in a fiercely fought battle at Dronpur, that saw heavy losses on both sides, put Delhi's imperial troops to flight. The Rajput code of honour demanded no less!

It was a code that stressed chivalry, honour, justice, loyalty and valour. A code that lauded keeping one's pledged word even at the cost of one's own life, and avenging an injustice, or even a slight — real or imagined! Of course, the code was transgressed on occasions. Transgression, however, meant universal condemnation, for which forgiveness came only through a glorious death in battle or a redeeming act of a clansman or descendant.

Though the parent-state and collateral-state had joined hands over an issue of clan-honour, their future relations over the next few centuries would remain rocky. (This was often the case with most of the other Rajput kingdoms of Rajasthan and their collateral branches too). On occasions, they were even to besiege each others' capitals, without ever losing sight of the fact that they were bound by ties of blood and kinship.

The first such incident occurred soon after the deaths of both Rao Jodha of Marwar and his son and successor, Rao Satal. After their joint victory at Dronpur, records Powlett's *Gazetteer*, Rao Jodha commended his son, Bika, for his valour and exploits which had filled the father's heart with delight; and asked two things of him. The first was that Bika should give up a certain tract around Ladnu which he had won, to Jodhpur; and the second that Bika should remain content with what he had won, and never seek to deprive his brothers in Jodhpur of any part of their patrimony. "Promise me this", added the old chief, and Bika dutifully replied that he would never take Jodhpur from his brothers, and, notwithstanding that he could not admit that his father had any right to Ladno [sic], he would freely give up that too. But he must beg that the cherished family heir-looms, the

throne, the royal umbrella brought from Kanauj and other objects of veneration, be sent to him if he became the eldest member of the family. Jodha promised that these be sent”¹⁰⁰.

Following the death of Rao Satal in 1492, Bika, in his capacity as the eldest surviving son of the old Rao, asked for the venerated heirloom emblems of royalty which he had already been promised in the eventuality of his older brother’s demise. The heirlooms included an ancestral throne made from sandalwood (believed to date back to the rulers of Kanauj, from whom the Rathores claim descent), the State Umbrella, a diamond-studded shield, a sword, a dagger, a ‘*nagara*’ drum, the idol of the family’s presiding deity, and a white charger.

When Rao Suja, the half-brother who was the new ruler of Marwar, refused to hand these over Bika laid siege to Jodhpur. Eventually Suja’s mother, Queen-Mother Jasmade, intervened in the matter. She personally appealed to her step-son, Bika, and entreated him to lift the siege. Bika agreed, on condition that the heirlooms were handed over to him. When this was complied with, Rao Bika lifted the siege and returned to Bikaner in triumph, bearing with him the ancient and highly venerated heirlooms of his clan.

By the final year of Bika’s reign, the Rathore kingdom of Bikaner covered 40,000 square miles of territory and encompassed 3,000 villages within its boundaries. And, upon Bika’s death in 1504, he left behind an established kingdom and administration, which his heirs could build upon (as we shall see in the next chapter).

THE KACHCHWAHAS OF DHOONDHAR (OR AMBER/JAIPUR)

In common with many of the Rajput dynasties, the origin-myth of the Kachchwaha clan, which came to rule the Dhoondhar (also spelt as Dhundhar) region of Rajasthan, has its share of romanticism. Bardic literature and popular tradition holds that the founder of Dhoondhar’s Kachchwaha dynasty, Prince Dulha Rai (referred to, variously, as Dhola Rai

and Duleh Rai), was a descendant of a branch of the solar dynasty which traced its origin to King Kush, one of the twin sons of Rama (the hero of the epic *Ramayana*).

Over the centuries, this branch had migrated often, with the stages of the migration remembered in the dynasty's traditions. And, they had eventually become established in Central India. Some historians have identified this branch with the 'Kachchhapaghata' clan.

History records that at least three branches of a clan known as Kachchhapaghata ruled over a substantial area, stretching along the river Chambal, in what today comprises the state of Madhya Pradesh during the tenth to twelfth centuries AD. These had their respective capitals at Gwalior, Dubkund and Narwar. (A brief reference to Arjun Kachchhapaghata of the Dubkund branch occurred in the previous chapter). Of these, the most prominent appears to have been the branch that ruled from Gwalior between c. AD 950 to 1128. The 'Sas Bahu' Temples Inscription of AD 1093 at Gwalior Fort lists the genealogy from Lakshman, the first of the branch of the family that ruled from Gwalior, up to the reign of Mahipal, who died sometime before c. AD 1104. Similarly, the names of three of the rulers of the Narwar branch — Gagan Singh (r. 1075-1090), Sarad Singh (r. 1090-1105) and Vir Singh (r. 1105-1125) are available from the Nalapur Mahadurg Grant of AD 1120 issued by King Vir Singh.

It was from Central India that, according to traditional belief, Dulha Rai, a scion of the clan, came to Rajasthan. Some genealogies, besides works like the *Kachhavamsha Mahakavya* and *Kurma-Vilas*, assert that 'Dhola' came from Gwalior, while writers like Nainsi, Bankidas and Tod hold that he came from Narwar. Dulha Rai established a new dynasty that went on to rule over the area known as Dhoondhar. This was the Kachchwaha dynasty.

There are several theories regarding the clan name of 'Kachchwaha' or 'Kachhawa'. For instance, Pt. Jhabarmal Sharma holds that when the clan migrated from Rohtasgarh to the region known as 'Kacchawaghar', they found the area ruled by the 'Kachhapas', whom they conquered and then assumed the titles of 'Kachhapaghat' ('Destroyers of Kachchapas'),

‘Kachhap-ari’ (‘Enemy of Kachchapas’), and ‘Kachhap-ha’ (‘Victor over the Kachchapas’) [101](#) .

Jhabarmal Sharma asserts that it is from these that the later term ‘Kachhawa’ came to be derived. The late Dr. M.L. Sharma noted in his *History of the Jaipur State*, that the ‘Kachchawas’ called themselves Kachhapaghata for about three hundred years [102](#). They are referred to as ‘Kachhapaghat Vamsatilaka’ and ‘Kachhapaghatanvayasara-Kamlamartanda’.

Later bardic chronicles and traditional *khyat* literature have used the terms Kachhapaghata, Kachchwaha, Katsawaha and Kurma (meaning tortoise) as synonyms for Kachhawa. Epigraphs like the Balvan Inscription of AD 1288, Chatsu Inscription of AD 1499, Sanganer Inscription of AD 1601, and Rewasa Inscription of AD 1604 refer to the dynasty as ‘Kurma’ too. Apparently the term ‘Kachhawa’ became more popular from about the late sixteenth century during reign of Raja Man Singh of Amber. Poets of that period, like Amritraj in his *Mancharitra Kavya* composed in AD 1585, Narottam in his *Mancharitra*, and Murari Das in *Man Prakash Kavya*, have used the terms *Kurma* or *Kurmbha* for Raja Man Singh’s dynasty.

Using manuscripts like *Kacchavaha-Ki-Vamsavali* (Mss.131), *Hakikat* (Mss.9), *Kacchaha-Ki-Vamsavali* (Mss.81b) — all now part of the Tod Collection’ of the Royal Asiatic Society (London), besides local informants, for his work, James Tod provided the traditional view, as understood by him in his *Annals and Antiquities of Rajast’han*. According to Tod: “The Cuchwaha or Cuchwa race claims descent from Cush, the second son of Rama, King of Koshula...Cuch, or some of his immediate offspring, is said to have migrated from the parental abode, and erected the celebrated castle of Rhotas, or Rohitas, on the Soane, whence, in the lapse of several generations, another distinguished scion, Raja Nal, migrated westward, and in S. 351 or AD 295, founded the kingdom and city of Nurwar, or classically, Nishida. Some of the traditional chronicles record intermediate places of domicile prior to the erection of this famed city: First, the town of Lahar, in the heart of a tract yet named Cachwagar, or region (*gar*) of the Cuchwahas; and secondly, that of Gwalior. Be that as it may, the descendants of Raja Nal adopted the affix of Pal, (which appears to be the

distinguishing epithet of all the early Rajpoot tribes), until Sora Sing (thirty-third in descent from Nal), whose son, Dhola Rae, was expelled the paternal abode, and in S. 1023, AD 967, laid the foundation of the state of Dhoondar”¹⁰³.

Tod viewed ‘Dhola’, who “...subsequently married the daughter of the prince of Ajmer, whose name was Maroni”¹⁰⁴, and is the hero of a popular folk-tale and ballad celebrating the romance of Dhola and Maru, as being identical with the Dulha Rai who established the Kachchawaha kingdom in Dhoondhar. This is a common belief that has continued in the popular mind into the present times.

However, according to the late historian-archivist-scholar Raghbir Singh of Sitamau, the “famous folk tale of the romance of Dhola or ‘Salha Kumar’ of Narwar, and Maru was compiled in Jaisalmer by the Jain poet, Kushalabh, in about the middle of the sixteenth century AD, entitled *Dhola-Maru-ra Duha*. Its older manuscripts extant are dated 1651 and 1657 VS. But the clan to which Dhola belonged is not mentioned anywhere. In one of its later recessions Dhola is mentioned as a Chauhan prince. Narwar first became associated with the Kachhawa House of Amber only in the reign of Akbar, when he gave Narwar in *jagir* to Raja Askaran Kachhawa, the dispossessed son of Raja Bhim and grandson of Raja Prithviraj of Amber”¹⁰⁵.

Precise details about Dulha Rai’s arrival in Dhoondhar — and even the date — remain a matter of further study. One version holds that Sodh Deo, Dulha Rai’s father, established his hold over the Khoh-Maach area of Dausa on *Kartik Badi* tenth (i.e., the tenth day of the dark half of the month of *Kartik*) of VS 1023. This date converts as October fourteenth AD 967. After a long reign of forty years, three months and twelve days, Sodh Deo was succeeded by his son, Dulha Rai, on *Magh Sudi* seventh (seventh of the bright-half of the month of *Magh*), VS 1063 — i.e. January 29, AD 1007. These dates are by no means without controversy, however. Thus, on the basis of previous accounts and data, VS. Bhargava has deduced that “...Sodh Deo with his son Dulha Rai (whose real name was Tej Karan) left Gwalior

around 1128 VS (AD 1071) and entered the territory of Dhundhar, subdued the Badgujars and Minas and settled at Dausa, 50 km east of Jaipur”¹⁰⁶.

Tod’s version, based on Amber-Jaipur genealogies, is rather more romanticized. He writes:

“...On the death of Sora Sing, prince of Nurwar, his brother usurped the government, depriving the infant, Dhola Rae, of his inheritance. His mother, clothing herself in mean apparel, put the infant in a basket, which she placed on her head, and travelled westward until she reached the town of Khogong (within five miles of the modern Jeipoor), then inhabited by the Meenas. Distressed with hunger and fatigue, she had placed her precious burden on the ground, and was plucking some wild berries, when she observed a hooded serpent rearing its form over the basket. She uttered a shriek, which attracted an itinerant Brahmin, who told her to be under no alarm, but rather to rejoice at this certain indication of future greatness in the boy. But the emaciated parent of the founder of Amber replied, ‘What may be in futurity I heed not, while I am sinking with hunger’, on which the Brahmin put her in the way of Khogong, where he said her necessities would be relieved. Taking up the basket, she reached the town, which is encircled by hills, and accosting a female, who happened to be a slave of the Meena chieftain, begged any menial employment for food. By direction of the Meena Rani, she was entertained with the slaves. One day she was ordered to prepare dinner, of which Ralunsi, the Meena Raja, partook, and found it so superior to his usual fare, that he sent for the cook, who related her story. As soon as the Meena chief discovered the rank of the illustrious fugitive, he adopted her as his sister, and Dhola Rae as his nephew. When the boy had reached the age of Rajpoot manhood (fourteen), he was sent to Dehli [sic], with the tribute of Khogong, to attend instead of the Meena. The young Cuchwaha remained there five years, when he conceived the idea of usurping his benefactor’s authority. Having consulted the Meena *d’hadi*, or bard, as to the best means of executing his plan, he recommended him to take advantage of the festival of

the *Dewali*, when it is customary to perform ablutions *en masse*, in a tank. Having brought a few of his Rajpoot brethren from Dehli [sic], he accomplished his object, filling the reservoirs in which the Meenas bathed with their dead bodies. The treacherous bard did not escape; Dhola Rae put him to death with his own hands, observing, ‘He who has proved unfaithful to one master, could not be trusted by another.’ He then took possession of Khogong...”¹⁰⁷.

While the historicity of Tod’s tale has been looked askance by scholars, similar popular versions continue to be told and re-told in Dhoondhar even today. Interestingly, the Jaipur court has maintained a tradition of wearing black (with gold brocade) clothes and head-gear during the auspicious rituals connected with the festival of Diwali at court! This, according to some Kachchwaha elders, is to commemorate the Meenas who originally ruled over the territory.

The historian, Jadunath Sarkar (who had full access to practically all the records available in erstwhile Jaipur state’s archives for compiling his officially sponsored history), found that there were many conflicting versions of the origins of the “Kachhwa settlement in the land they now hold”, and that these had been written down from oral tradition only in the eighteenth century¹⁰⁸. Sarkar provided his own interpretation of the course of events.

According to him: “Sodo’s father, Ishwar Singh, gave away his ancestral estate of Narwar to his younger brother and Gwalior to his sister’s son, and retired to the life of a religious recluse...northwest of the Chambal river, on the route from Malwa to Rajputana. On his death, his son Sodo crowned himself at Nadarabari, but he seems to have been already aged, and continued as a *roi fainéant*, while all the activities of his State were guided by the insatiable ambition, dauntless spirit, inborn leadership and organizing genius of his heir, Dulha Rai, the real conqueror of Dhundhar. He was a youth of remarkable beauty and valour, for which he was called Dulha Rai or ‘the Bridegroom Prince’. His fame attracted to his banners the voluntary support of all the spirited chiefs in that neighbourhood. Dulha married the daughter of Ralhan-si, the Chauhan rajah of Lalsot district, and

received as his wife's dowry half the share of the fort of Dausa (and its adjacent district) which his father-in-law owned. The other half belonged to a Bar-Gujar [Badgujar] family"¹⁰⁹.

It appears that the initial path to state-building was facilitated for Dulha Rai when he married Kumkum-dey, the daughter of Ralhan-Si, the Chauhan chief of Lalsot (about fifty-seven miles south-east of modern Jaipur.). According to M.L. Sharma, "In order to seek the support of a powerful chief against his Badgujar rivals Ralhan-si offered the hand of his daughter to Dulha Rai of Gwalior...[and] to make Dulha Rai continuously interested in the affairs of Dhundhar, ...Ralhan-si gave him a part of his chiefship with half the town of Dausa. This town was then the capital of the surrounding districts which belonged partly to Ralhan-si and partly to a Badgujar chief. The latter resided at Dausa and held under him half of the town"¹¹⁰

(A word here about the town of Dausa, now the headquarters of a modern district of the same name. The present fort of Dausa is situated on a hill known locally as Devgiri. Interestingly, it is from a slope on the northern part of this Devgiri hill that the archaeologist A.C.L. Carlleyle had reported archaeological remains in the form of four round 'cairns' (or burials) built of, and topped by, stone, besides stone tools. One of the cairns was reportedly six feet in diameter and twenty-one feet in height, though no traces of it now remain).

Following the matrimonial alliance, the Chauhans encouraged the young Kachchwaha to subdue the Badgujars and drive them out of the area. On behalf of his father-in-law, Dulha Rai attacked the Badgujars and wrested the portion of Dausa held by them. In appreciation, Ralhan-Si handed over the newly acquired portion of Dausa and its surrounding territory to Dulha Rai, thereby helping to establish Kachchwaha dominion in that area¹¹¹. Dausa now became the capital of Dulha Rai Kachchwaha. It would continue to remain a major administrative centre of the Kachchwahas of Dhundhar in the ensuing centuries.

Tod's account is somewhat different. He writes that soon after taking possession of Khogong, Dhola "...repaired to Deosah, a castle and district ruled by an independent chief of the Birgoojur tribe of Rajpoots, whose daughter he demanded in marriage. 'How can this be,' said the Birgoojur, 'when we are both Suryavansi, and one hundred generations have not yet separated us?' But being convinced that the necessary number of descents had intervened, the nuptials took place, and as the Birgoojar had no male issue, he resigned his power to his son-in-law. With the additional means thus at his disposal, Dhola determined to subjugate the Se'roh tribe of Meenas, whose chief, Rao Natto, dwelt at Mauch"¹¹².

Bearing in mind the fact that matrimonial alliances have long been a means of strengthening (or acquiring) political power, it would not be improbable if Dulha Rai had, in fact, eventually married the daughters of both the locally prominent Chauhan and Badgujar chiefs, thereby gaining two powerful clans as kinsmen-allies. Probably it was after securing his position in this manner that Dulha turned his attention to other territories, which were held by various local Meena chiefs.

"At this time the country south-west of the present city of Jaipur was parcelled out among five family groups of ruling Minas, known as the *Panch-wara* or Confederacy of Five, who prided themselves on being of the purest blood among their fellow caste-men. But these people were not united into one political body. Each fort with the hamlets grouped around it for protection lived its isolated life and warred with its neighbours even when peopled by men of the same blood. A vague and ineffectual headship of the Mina caste was nominally acknowledged in the Mina lord of Amber hill. Here and there the Mina holdings were dotted with the forts of the Bar-Gujars, and...the Minas used to appeal when in distress, to the Bar-Gujar rajah of Deoti, as a suzerain"¹¹³.

Having established Dausa as his base, Dulha Rai went on to attack the Meena stronghold of Machi, then under a chief named Meiwasa. According to some accounts, his first campaign failed, but his next, which took place on the day of a festival of the Meenas, was successful¹¹⁴. Machi was subsequently renamed [Jamwa] Ramgarh. In thanksgiving for the victory, a

temple dedicated to goddess Jamwa Mata was erected at the site, which is still venerated by the clan, besides other worshippers. The fort of Deoti (some sixteen miles west of Dausa), held by a powerful Badgujar chief, was also invested by Dulha soon afterwards, as were two other forts held by the Badgujars.

In his continued bid for kingdom-building, Dulha then moved successfully against the Meenas of Khoh (six miles east of Jaipur), then ruled by a Meena chief called Chanda. Next, it was the turn of the Meenas of Jhotwara (three miles west of modern Jaipur), and Gaitor (two miles north-east of Sanganer), to face the arms of Dulha. Having successfully wrested these two strongholds, held by chiefs Jhota and Gaita respectively, from the Meenas, Dulha found himself in possession of a tract of land that was perhaps fifty miles long and thirty miles broad. For practical reasons, the capital was now shifted from Dausa to Khoh¹¹⁵.

Sarkar believes that the Kachchwaha occupation of Dhoondhar “...could not have taken place in one lifetime nor been completed by one stroke...And there were also temporary fluctuations in the fortunes of the conquerors. We can readily believe in the tradition which tells us that Dulha Rai, after his first success over the Minas, was defeated by them and left for dead on the field, and that he retrieved the disaster...Lastly, the Kachhwa leader made a statesmanly compromise with the vanquished race by granting to such of the aboriginal chiefs as offered him allegiance and promises of loyalty for the future, some landed estates, which have been held in hereditary succession ever since. Dulha also kept the rank and file of the Mina youths out of mischief, by employing them as watchmen and permanent servants of the State”¹¹⁶.

Interestingly, the tradition has long survived that the Meenas of Kali-Kho, who were displaced from their position of local supremacy by the coming of the Kachchwahas, were entrusted with the protection of the state treasures of Kachchwaha-ruled Dhoondhar, and of the person of the Rajput ruler. Nineteenth century records state that, previously, the privilege of applying the ‘*Raj Tilak*’ or mark of coronation on the forehead of the

Kachchwaha kings had vested with the Meenas of Khoh too, though later the custom had fallen out of vogue¹¹⁷.

Not much is known about the early rulers of this dynasty. On the basis of local traditions and genealogical tables, Jhabarmal Sharma has listed the successive rulers after Dulha Rai as being Kakildev, Hanu[t]-dev, Janhad, Pajvan, Malesi, Bijaldev (Jildev), Rajdev, Kilhan, Kuntal, Janssi (Joonsi), Udaikaran, Narsingh, Banbeer, and Chandrasen¹¹⁸. The Royal Asiatic Society's Tod Collection' manuscript no.9, titled as *Hakikat*, provides the names of Dulha Rai's successors in the following chronological order: Kakil, Jahnu, Janhar-dev, Panju, Malesi, Bijalsi, Rajdev, Kilhan, Kuntal, Jayensi, Udaikaran, Narsingh, Banbeer, Udai Raj, Chandrasen, and Pirthiraj.

Dulha's successor, Kakildev¹¹⁹ apparently continued to strengthen the nascent state. One of the dates tradition has ascribed to Kakil is *Magh Sudi* eighth (eighth of the bright-half of the month of *Magh*) of VS 1093 (i.e. January 28, AD 1037) which marks his formal coronation. Among Kakil's achievements are the seizing of the area of Amber from the Susawat Meenas, whose chief was called Rao Bhatto; the villages held by Nandla Meena; and the territory of Med and Bairat held by the Yaduvamshi/Yadava Rajputs¹²⁰. During a short reign, "troubled by frequent Mina revolts. ..all of which were in the end, suppressed"¹²¹, Kakil laid the foundations of the fortified walls of the future Kachchwaha capital of Amber, founded a new fort called Kakilgarh, and built the temple of Ambikeshwar Mahadev at Amber. (Amber's Sun temple apparently dating to c. tenth-eleventh century is one of that site's earliest extant monuments).

The early rulers of Dhoondhar may have offered allegiance to the Chauhans of Shakambhari-Ajmer, for Pajvan (Pajjun), the fifth in descent from Dulha Rai, is described in the *Prithviraj-Raso* as a feudatory of Prithviraj Chauhan. It is said that when Prithviraj defeated the Chandella king, Parmardin, Pajvan was given the charge of governor of Mahoba. According to the *Prithviraj-Raso*, Pajvan, a veteran of sixty-four battles, fell fighting for Prithviraj Chauhan in the battle of Kanauj, as his liege-lord carried away Princess Sanyogita to Delhi.

The firm history of the region and its ruling dynasty between the time of Pajvan and Rajdev, who made Amber his capital, is equally inadequately known. It appears that these chiefs consolidated their local hold over the generations in the face of frequent conflicts with the local Meenas, Chauhans, Badgujars, and neighbours like the Yaduvamshi Rajputs, who had collectively held dominance across many parts of the Alwar-Bharatpur area previously.

Pajvan's son and successor, Malesi, is said to have consolidated the clan's position in Dhoondhar, particularly through a large number of judicious marriages. Several of his thirty-two sons are believed to have carved out land-holdings for themselves from adjoining tracts. There are indirect references to a possible attack by Sultanate troops during the reign of either Malesi or his successor, Bijaldev. According to some versions, Malesi gained victory over the ruler of Mandu at the battle of Rutroli. However, the matter of dating remains a problem. For example, according to Dasharatha Sharma, the '*Kurma-kshiteesh*' killed by Jait Singh of Ranthambore (father of Hammir of Ranthambore) according to the Balvan Inscription is probably identifiable with 'Kalyan'¹²² (Kilhan, the son of Rajdev), where as other calculations would place Kilhan's reign somewhat later!

Kilhan's successor, Kuntal, was called upon to protect his small state against the invasion of Mohammed Tughlaq. He was succeeded by Janssi (Joonsi). Janssi, was in turn succeeded — probably around VS 1423, or AD 1367 according to some historians, by his son, Udaikaran (r. circa 1367-1389).

Udaikaran defeated the Kyam-Khanis of the northern Baggar region (later more famous as the Shekhawati area) sometime between VS 1439 and 1467, and secured that area as a part of the territories of the Kachchwaha state of Dhoondhar. His successor, Chandrasen, is also attributed with several military victories. However, we also learn that Mewar's Rana Kumbha triumphed over Amber and successfully obtained tribute from the Amber Kachchwahas. Two of Chandrasen's queens are known to have built temples to Siva at Amber and Mahar, while his daughter-in-law, Apurva

Devi, is credited with the construction of Amber's Lakshmi-Narayan temple.

Chandrasen was succeeded by his son, Prithviraj (r. 1503-1527). The history of Dhoondhar from the reign of Prithviraj is better known. However, that falls into the period that will be discussed in a later chapter of this book.

Meanwhile, as was the case with other kingdoms and chiefdoms of Rajasthan, sub-clans (*khanp*) tracing descent from the ruling family established themselves in different parts of Dhoondhar, or won fresh tracts where they established their local political mastery. Thus, from Shekha, one of the descendants of the clan, who established his control over the region still called Shekhawati, originated the Shekhawat sub-branch. Similarly, from Naru, another descendant, sprung the Naruka collateral branch of the Kachchwahas that later went on to forge the separate kingdom of Alwar. In a like manner, sub-clans called Patala, Pithawat, Nathawat, etc. came into existence in Dhoondhar.

THE SHEKHAWATS OF SHEKHAWATI

Let us look at Rao Shekha and his Shekhawat descendants, who went on to dominate part of the old 'Baggar' sub-region of north-central and north-eastern Rajasthan so thoroughly that the area came to be called 'Shekhawati'. Prior to Shekha's period, the major portions of this Baggar area were mainly under the political control of groups like the Nirvan (also called Nirban) Chauhans, Sankhla, Gaurs, Chandels, Tanks, Tanwar (or Jatu), and Kyam-Khanis. Shekha was a great-grandson of King Udaikaran of Amber; being the grandson of Prince Bala, the third of Udaikaran's seven sons, who had been granted the village of Barwara, near Amarsar, as his fief hold or estate around AD 1390.

On Bala's death in AD 1430, the eldest of Bala's twelve sons, Mokal, succeeded to his estate and honours, and soon went on to conquer Nan from the Sankhla Rajputs. Mokal had no male heir for many years. The lack of

an heir was often regarded as caused by some past ‘karmic’ action dating to a previous incarnation, to atone for which good deeds and worship were undertaken. Thus, the blessings of saints, irrespective of their specific religious or sectarian category, were much sought after. On the advice of his guru at Vrindaban, Mokal had taken to grazing cows in a forest near Amarsar, and it was during one of these expeditions that he had a chance meeting with a Muslim holy man (*fakir*) named Sheikh Burhan. The sheikh blessed Mokal and assured him that he would have a son.

Consequently there was immense rejoicing when a son was finally born to the youngest of Mokal’s four wives, Nirvan-ji¹²³, in AD 1433, in the wake of blessings bestowed on Mokal by Sheikh Burhan. The grateful Mokal named his new-born son ‘Shekha’ after the sheikh. Mokal also vowed that certain obligations and injunctions, suggested by Sheikh Burhan, would be observed by his descendants in perpetuity. (Sheikh Burhan’s shrine, located six miles from Achrol, and fourteen miles (twenty-two kilometres) from Amarsar, remains a place of veneration).

On Mokal’s death in AD 1445, the twelve-year-old Shekha succeeded to his father’s estates. Two years later, the fourteen-year-old Shekha added to his inheritance by attacking and killing Napa Sankhla at Saiwar, and taking possession of his lands. The death of Napa was a mortal blow to the power of the Sankhla Rajputs of that area. Thereafter, Shekha continued to first, consolidate his hold, and after that to make a fierce, and successful, bid for territorial expansion.

In keeping with the first, one of Shekha’s early moves was the founding of the settlement of Amarsar. This may have occurred in VS 1506 or AD 1449, though some scholars suggest a date of VS 1517, corresponding to AD 1460. Amarsar became Shekha’s main base, thereafter. In AD 1477, he built a fort called Shikhar-garh there. Shekha also built a Jagdish temple at Amarsar.

Many of Shekha’s measures had long-term consequences, both for him and later his Shekhawat descendants. One of these was the assertion of independence in the face of an insistence for fulfilling traditional obligations towards the ruler of Amber. By birth, Shekha was a junior scion

of the ruling Kachchwaha line of Amber. Since the ruler of Dhoondhar was acknowledged as the head ('*tikai*') of the Kachchwaha clan and family, it had become customary for the younger 'brothers' (the term being used in its wider sense to include cousins and their descendants down the line), to acknowledge this status by presenting all colts reared in their territories to the ruler of Amber. In due course, having consolidated his own position well enough, Shekha refused to give up his colts to King Chandrasen, who was by then ruler of Dhoondhar.

Predictably, punitive expeditions were sent against Shekha and several battles ensued. In a conclusive battle fought at Kukas, near Amber, in AD 1471 (VS 1528), Shekha defeated Chandrasen¹²⁴, and as per one of the clauses of the peace-treaty between the two opponents, the customary obligation of presenting a colt to the ruler of Amber was withdrawn.

From then on, Shekha may be deemed to have shaken off the nominal yoke of Amber, and came to be regarded as the full master of the lands he had captured. In the ensuing centuries, this land remained largely under the political domination of Shekha's descendants, who were called the Shekhawats, just as the wide tract of land they held became known as 'Shekhawati'.

Another measure of long-term significance was in persuading a group of five hundred 'Panni' Pathans of the Durrani clan, who were traversing Amarsar, to settle in the region. The Pathans were given an estate of twelve villages between them, which came to be known as the '*Bara Basti*' (literally, twelve habitations). Tradition holds that Shekha and the Pathans became very close, and the Pathans vowed that they and their descendants would abjure beef and never kill peacocks.

Friendship with these Panni Pathans had political and strategic advantages for Shekha, who made use of the Pathans in various ensuing campaigns. These included Shekha's campaigns during c. AD 1473 and 1477, when he took Dadri from Nop Singh Jatu, Hansi from Ikhtar Khan, Hissar from Heda Khan Kyam-Khani, and Bhiwani from other Jatu Rajputs.

In the interim, the local Gaur Rajputs had remained powerful in the region (part of which was called 'Gaurawati, in acknowledgement of that fact), and it was only a matter of time before Shekha felt it necessary to contend with them decisively. Shekha's enmity with the Gaurs was not unconnected with local political dominance and territorial expansion. The Shekhawat sub-clan traditions hold that out of the fifty-two battles and skirmishes that Shekha fought, twelve were battles against the Gaurs of Gaurawati. The Gaurs had apparently sought assistance from Delhi's Sultan Bahlol Lodi (r. 1451-89) too.

One of the major battles between Shekha and the Gaurs seems to have occurred around c. 1478. At the time, nearby Ghatwa (situated about twenty-four kilometres from Maroth), and its vicinity was held by a Gaur chief named Kol Raj. He arranged for the excavation of a water-tank for public use near the village of Jhoontri. There were standing orders that all who passed that way had to dig out a basket of earth from the site, thereby providing their mite towards the effort. When a Rajput traveller and his wife, strangers to that area, passed along the site of the partially dug tank, they were stopped and informed about Kol Raj Gaur's orders. The young Rajput willingly performed the allotted share of community labour. However, the Gaurs insisted that his wife also personally carried out a basket of soil with her own hands. The Rajput deemed this an insult. He protested that he had performed the required manual labour, and that his wife could not be forced to obey such a directive. A skirmish followed.

Heavily outnumbered by the jostling Gaurs, the young stranger fought single-handed until he was cut down. His funeral was performed by his widow near that same water-tank. She then scooped up a handful of dust from the tank and made her way to Rao Shekha's camp. Placing the soil before Shekha, she narrated the whole incident to him and called upon him to avenge the death of her husband and thereby uphold the honour of the Kachchwahas. Taking up the cause, Shekha led an attack against the Gaurs of Ghatwa. A fierce battle took place at the site of the partly-dug tank. Kol Raj Gaur was among the dead. His head was brought back to Amarsar by Shekha and shown to the aggrieved widow who had asked Shekha for justice, before being hung on the gates of Amarsar.

Over the ensuing decade, both sides continued their fight for territorial supremacy. The final battle between Shekha and the Gaurs took place in AD 1488 at the 'Khontiya' water-tank, near Ghatwa. In the course of the fighting, Rao Ridmal Gaur of Maroth and Rao Shekha faced each other in personal combat, and both suffered injuries. Shekha's sons, meanwhile, were contending with Nawal Raj Gaur, the son of Kol Raj, and his cohorts. Nawal Raj killed Shekha's eldest son, Durga¹²⁵, before falling in battle himself. By this time it was approaching sunset, and Ridmal of Maroth had withdrawn from the battlefield. The majority of the Gaur force retreated towards Ghatwa. It may have been a mock-retreat, with the intention of tempting Shekha to follow them into a trap. However, before the Gaur warriors were able to reach Ghatwa, Shekha's second son, Puranmal, attacked Ghatwa and set it on fire. Puranmal was fatally wounded in the encounter, but survived long enough to accept his father's accolades.

Meanwhile, the rising smoke from Ghatwa alerted the Gaurs retreating towards it of their loss. They rapidly dispersed in every direction open to them, and then tried to regroup and launch another attack against Shekha's forces. Before the Gaurs could do so, another of Shekha's twelve sons, Raimal, arrived on the scene with a strong force (which is said to have consisted of two thousand cavalry and many soldiers). This proved the final blow, and the Gaurs were decisively beaten.

Though Shekha emerged victorious, four of his twelve sons died fighting the Gaurs at the battle of Ghatwa. Shekha himself was seriously injured, and died soon afterwards at Ralawata. Tod tells us that at the time of his death, Shekha was master of 360 villages. Before dying, he designated his youngest son, Raimal (r. 1488-1537), as his successor, making Raimal the '*Patvi*' — i.e. king, chieftain or head. The other surviving sons received portions of Shekha's estate as their share.

It should be kept in mind that the practice of granting some villages and lands to younger scions was already a well-established one among practically all the land-holding warrior groups. Their lands, in turn, were divided up still further on occasions into smaller landholdings. Not surprisingly, therefore, junior and collateral branch descendants often served with the military force or administration of their main family, or with

another stronger power, local or otherwise. In this manner, they could acquire money, land-grants and fame in their own right. It was not uncommon for clan and sub-clan allegiance and obligations to run simultaneously with service with another master. Thus, there are many traditional tales recounted by bards (and at village gatherings) of hard choices made by certain warrior-heroes in the event of a clash of interests between the two loyalties.

Tradition says that soon after Raimal assumed control at Amarsar, Chandrasen, the ruler of Dhoondhar, sent his son, Prince Prithviraj, to proffer condolences at the death of Rao Shekha, and to state that the Kachchwahas of Amber, along with the Rathores, would unite to fight and eliminate the Gaur. Realising the gravity of the situation, Ridmal Gaur of Maroth made his way to Amarsar, pledged peace on behalf of the Gaur, and proposed a matrimonial alliance between his own daughter and Raimal. With the marriage, Ridmal gifted fifty-one villages to his daughter and son-in-law.

Raimal enjoyed a long and eventful life, during which period the descendants of Rao Shekha — already being designated as the Shekhawats — expanded territorially and consolidated themselves over a wide swathe of land. Raimal is credited with attacking and killing Nawab Alaf Khan of Fatehpur, with the support of the Gaur. We shall look at chronologically subsequent events concerning the Shekhawats in a later section of this book.

THE YADUVAMSHIS OF EASTERN AND NORTH-EASTERN RAJASTHAN

Besides the Bhatias of Jaisalmer, there were other clans enjoying political power in different parts of Rajasthan, during the period under discussion, who traced their descent from the ancient Indian hero Yadu. They styled themselves as '*Yaduvamshi*' (meaning descended from Yadu) *Ksbatriyas*. Prominent among them was the branch of Yaduvamshis or Yadavas (Jadons or Jadaons) who later came to rule over the kingdom of Karauli, and the Yaduvamshis of the Alwar-Bharatpur area.

The traditional genealogists assert that the Yadavas of Karauli have descended from one of the Surasena or Yadava branches. This branch, having migrated along with Krishna and the rest of the clan from Mathura to Dwarka, during the age of the epic *Mahabharata* because of the hostile activities of King Jarasandh of Magadha, did not remain at Dwarka after hearing of Jarasandh's death. Instead, they returned subsequently to the Mathura area. Their chroniclers state that a descendant of this Yadava branch, king Ichhapal, ruled over Mathura and its hinterland around AD 879.

The descent of the Karauli Yadavas (part of the old Surasena group) is taken from Ichhapal, through a King Jaitapal, down to King Vijaypal (who shifted the capital from Mathura to Bayana in the mid-eleventh century), and his successors, including Tahanpal, Kumarapal etc., as already mentioned in a previous section. Following the occupation of their territories by Muhammad of Ghor in 1196 during the reign of Kumarapal, this branch of the Yadavas lost its power and prestige over the ensuing century and a quarter. They apparently sought refuge in the wilderness to the south of Tahangarh, and when pressed further, moved across the River Chambal into the jungles of Sabalgarh, where their succeeding generations consolidated their hold, and lent their name to the tract, which became known as 'Jadonwati'.

A genealogy given in a work called the *Vritta-vilas* by Yadunath¹²⁶, states that after Kumarapal came, in turn, Ajaypal, Haripal, Sahanpal, Anangapal, Prithvipal, Rajapal, Trilokpal, Bapal Dev, Aasal Dev, Sahas Dev, Gughal Dev (Gokul Dev), and his son Arjun Dev. If the Ajaypal, Haripal and Sahanpal listed in Yadunath's genealogy are identical to the Ajaypal, Haripal and Sahanpal named in inscriptions found in the Mahana area (see previous chapter), it would imply that Kumarapal's direct line ended with his defeat. On the other hand, the *Vritta-vilas* may have confused and combined together the names of rulers of two sub-branches of one family. It is possible that Ajaypal was a brother or close relative of Kumarapal. He may even have been a son, in which case one would assume that Ajaypal was a co-ruler during his father's lifetime over the areas where his inscription was found!

It was during the reign of Gughal (or Gokul) Dev's son, Arjun Dev, also called Arjunpal, that the clan's fortunes eventually revived. Arjunpal (r. 1327-61), son of Gughal Dev (or Gokul Dev), "...taking advantage of the unpopularity of Miyan Makhan of Mandrayal, drove [out] the Turks and established his authority over his patrimony"¹²⁷. He strengthened his position by subduing the local Meenas too, as well as the Panwar Rajputs, who were also strong in the region. Arjunpal also successfully retook Tahangarh — the fortress-capital of previous chiefs of his line — from the Delhi Sultanate's control.

Arjunpal is credited with founding the town of Kalyanpur (present Karauli) in VS 1405, i.e. AD 1348. (Karauli lies about forty kilometres from Tahangarh). The town was reputedly resplendent, according to the *Khyat* tradition, with many temples, mansions, gardens and lakes, besides the royal palace¹²⁸. This would remain the capital of his descendants for nearly seven hundred years.

Among Arjunpal's successors were Vikramaditya, Abhaychand (Abhaypal), Prithvipal (Prithipal), Udaichand (Udaipal), Rudra Pratap, Chandrasen (Chandrapal), Gopal Das, Dwarka Das and Jagmani. (The names of the various rulers listed in the *Vritta-vilas* are slightly different. According to that text, after Arjun Dev (Arjunpal) came Vikramaditya, Vakhatavilas, Abhaychandra, Prithviraj, Rudra Pratap, and then Chandrasen, etc). It was during the rule of Prithvipal, in the first quarter of the fifteenth century, that the ancestral fort of Tawangarh (Tahangarh) was wrested afresh from the Yadavas by Afghans¹²⁹. The local Meenas too proved a formidable adversary for Prithvipal, and he failed in his attempt to suppress them. However, it seems he was able to repulse an attack by the ruler of Gwalior.

The reigns of Udaichand (Udaipal), Rudra Pratap (d. 1449) and Chandrasen (Chandrapal) followed. In AD 1454, Chandrapal (who had succeeded Rudra Pratap in 1449), was defeated by Malwa's powerful sultan, Mahmud Khalji, who stormed Karauli and seized it. The sultan handed over the administration of the town to his son, Fidvi Khan. Meanwhile, deprived of his kingdom, the Karauli chief retired to Untagarh,

where he lived out the rest of his life. Chandrapal's immediate successors ruled over a drastically truncated territory. The fortunes of this branch did not change until the reign of Gopaldas — variously described as Chandrapal's son or grandson — who took up his sword to consolidate his position locally. We shall take up the history of Karauli from the reign of Gopaldas in the next chapter.

While one branch of the Yaduvamshi warriors was carving out a new state in the Karauli area, in the Alwar-Bharatpur area the advent of the Turks and establishment of the Delhi Sultanate as a near neighbour resulted in the further weakening of other local Yaduvamshi chiefs during the AD 1200-1500 period.

There was certain general resistance led by the local chiefs¹³⁰, some of whom found it necessary to re-locate themselves (and their communities), in strategically defensible locales. Others migrated. Yet, others sank to positions of less prominence, only to be replaced by other, newer, fief-holders and chiefships. In time, some of these groups and their elite gradually converted to Islam. The Khan-i-Khana and *Khanzada* (literally, sons of Khans, i.e. great leaders) group of the Alwar area are among those who assert that they are descended from Yaduvamshis who had accepted Islam.

(One may add here that Powlett, in his *Gazetteer of Ulwar* noted that various Delhi Sultanate's records in the Persian language held that the Mewati chief Bahadur Nahar — discussed further in this chapter, was the ancestor of the *Khanzadas*, but the family traditions of the *Khanzadas* themselves traced their lineage further back¹³¹. According to the *Khanzada* traditions, Adhanpal (Anandpal), fourth in descent from Tahanpal, the Yadava/Jadon chief of Bayana, temporarily established himself at Durala, amidst the hills around Tijara and Firozpur (in Gurgaon, Haryana), but was later driven to Saretha, some miles to the north. In the reign of Sultan Feroze Shah Tughlaq of Delhi, Adhanpal's grandson, Lakhanpal, accepted Islam. He made Kotila his base. Powlett adds that many *Khanzadas* insisted that the term is derived from 'Khan Jadu' — or 'Lord Jadu', "and was

intended to render still nobler the name of the princely race from which they came”¹³²).

In all this, one cannot be certain whether during this period the ordinary farmers carried on their seasonal activities relatively undisturbed here (and in other areas of Rajasthan), or whether they were affected drastically in the wake of the Delhi Sultanate’s concentrated effort to subdue and dominate the people of the ‘Mewat’ region.

MEWAT AND THE ‘MEWATIS’ OF EASTERN AND NORTH-EASTERN RAJASTHAN

It would be relevant to briefly survey the history of the ‘Mewat’ region of north-eastern Rajasthan at this point. The area took its name from the local inhabitants, known as Mewatis or Meos in the works penned by various Persian chroniclers and in Delhi Sultanate and Mughal annals. These Mewatis are known to have been living in part of the area comprising the present-day districts of Alwar and Bharatpur in Rajasthan, and the contiguous Gurgaon district of Haryana, from the early medieval period onward.

As we have already noted, up to around the twelfth century AD, the area had formed part of the territories controlled mainly — but not solely — by Yaduvamshi Kshatriyas, who acknowledged the supremacy of the Chauhans of Shakambhari-Ajmer-Delhi, as well as by some of the Badgujar and Tomar groups. (The presence of the latter — many of whom made this area their home in the wake of the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate over their previous territories around Delhi — is still evoked by the epithet of ‘Torawati’, which is used for certain parts of the Jaipur-Alwar-Kotputli region). This is the same area that formerly had connections (as noted in previous chapters), with the Matsyas of early historical times. (In this regard, it may be interesting to pursue etymology and local traditions further, since the coincidence between the words ‘Matsya’ and ‘Mewat’ is indeed striking!)

The early history of the ‘Meos’ as a group or community is apparently unclear. According to the researches of Shail Mayaram, “It is believed that, sometime after the Arab conquest of Sindh, the Jats and a section of the Meds then mainly pastoral groups, moved to the Punjab. Another section, it is speculated, possibly traversed the Thar desert, crossing the Mewar and Merwara regions of Rajasthan, which derived their names from them. By the twelfth century we knew of early Meo — as they were now called — settlements in the upper Doab, around Meerut. Their lands were taken by groups of Rajputs (Tomars, Dors, Bargujars [Badgujars] and Chauhans). The Turk and Afghan conquerors further pushed them out of Delhi, towards the south-west. In the valleys of the rocky Aravalli range, they carved out their settlements and small niches of control. Politically autonomous, these seem to have been self-governing communities forging a precarious existence in the transition from pastoralism to agriculture, upon a land frequently subjected to drought. The establishment of the [Delhi] Sultanate, however, inaugurated a contentious period of conflict, with temporal power attempting to subjugate the ‘Mewatis’...This lasted until Akbar’s rule, when Mewat was firmly incorporated into the Mughal empire”¹³³.

The main group that finds mention in Delhi Sultanate texts, written in Persian, are peoples called Mewatis or Meo, who were often led by local *Khanzada* chiefs. The *Khanzadas*, as a group, trace their ancestry to the Yaduvamshi Kshatriyas/Rajputs who once held sway over the Mathura-Bharatpur region. As noted above, it is commonly held that several of these Yaduvamshi Rajputs accepted Islam over time, in particular, during the reign of Sultan Firoze Shah Tughlaq of Delhi (r. 1351-1388).

Due to their proximity to Delhi, the Meos or Mewatis and the Khanzadas¹³⁴ had a rather turbulent relationship with the Delhi sultans. They came into conflict with the newly established Sultanate of Delhi, and its Ilbari (or Mameluke, also called ‘Slave’), rulers on several occasions. Muslim chroniclers refer to the Mewatis in derogatory terms as bandits and ‘rebels’, who periodically needed to be quelled by force. The initial territorial expansion and consolidation of the Sultanate impinged on the lands of the ‘Mewatis’ and was, naturally, fiercely resisted. Some of the Mewati warriors even carried their arms up to the very outskirts of Delhi.

The response of the Delhi sultans was stern. A series of campaigns against the Mewatis took place under sultans like Iltutmish, Raziya, and Balban etc.

Meanwhile, some of the Chauhan descendants of the Shakambhari-Ajmer-Ranthambore line of Chauhans, dispossessed from Ajmer and/or later Ranthambore, established themselves in the 'Rath' part of north-western Alwar district, where they carved out small territorial units (like Neemrana, to which reference is made further in this book).

Balban sent expeditions against Ranthambore and the Mewat area. Balban's antagonists included the Yaduvamshi Rajput's tracing descent from the Bayana ruling house, who had settled in the tracts referred to in Persian records as the '*Kohpayah* of Mewat' (i.e. northern Alwar). Habibullah notes that Balban sent punitive columns from his *iqta* of Rewari against the "Hindu rebels of *Kohpayah*"¹³⁵. Habibullah further suggests that the frequent mention of Ranthambore in connection with operations in Mewat may imply a link between the so-called 'Mewati rebellion' and the Chauhans, which in turn, is probably an indication that the alleged Mewati trouble was possibly an organised Ranthambore-Mewat (Rajputs etc.) offensive against the Delhi Sultanate's hold¹³⁶.

There was apparently also an element of plundering involved in the activities Balban tried curbing. In 1256 the Mewatis, under the leadership of Malka, raided Hansi and carried away cattle, which was distributed among the Rajputs. Parts of Bayana, Siwalik and Haryana were also raided¹³⁷. On one occasion, the Mewatis reached up to the city of Delhi itself. In 1258, Balban ordered forth his columns. In the course of two punitive missions against Mewat, Malka was killed, villages razed and many Mewatis were put to the sword at Balban's orders.

Subsequently, after becoming sultan in 1266, Balban again took severe action against the Mewatis. In addition to that, the forests and scrublands in the vicinity of Delhi were cleared, so that they could not provide shelter to so-called unlawful elements, and a fort was constructed to guard the south-western side of Delhi against the incursions of the Mewatis. This fort was garrisoned using seasoned Afghan soldiers. A ring of military-

posts, similarly garrisoned with Afghans, was established across other parts of Delhi's hinterland, thereby providing a protective cordon against Mewati raids for the citizens of the Sultanate's capital city. For a while thereafter, the 'Mewati issue' ceased to be a problem for the Delhi Sultanate.

By the fourteenth century AD, many of the inhabitants of the Mewat area are known to have accepted the Muslim faith, though like many other groups, they too blended Islam with their indigenous culture and previously established beliefs. Among the local chiefs of the Mewat region who had accepted Islam by the latter part of the fourteenth century, was the powerful Bahadur Nahar 'Mewati', a Yaduvamshi warrior who had his stronghold at Kotila in the Tijara hills, and was renowned for his bravery and love of combat. (His descendants were among the people called *Khanzadas*).

Bahadur Nahar had a fairly turbulent relationship with the Sultanate, with his position oscillating from being a trusted court noble to a hunted refugee. In spite of this, he remained a figure to be reckoned with as far as the Sultanate's interest in Mewat was concerned, and is said to have occupied a prominent place at the Delhi Sultanate court for well nigh thirty years, especially during the reign of Sultan Firoze Shah Tughlaq.

Following the death of Firoze Shah Tughlaq in 1388, there was a period of convoluted politics involving a struggle for the throne. One of Firoze Tughlaq's grandsons occupied the throne under the title of Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq Shah II (r. 1388-89). This was not accepted by Prince Nasir-ud-din Muhammad Tughlaq, the son of Firoze Shah Tughlaq, who had formerly even acted as joint ruler with his father, and considered his own rights to the throne to be superior than those of his nephew. The prince therefore started military preparations at Sirmur to wrest the throne from Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq Shah II. The latter, in turn, despatched his forces under his *wazir*. Bahadur Nahar was part of the Sultanate's force. Prince Nasir-ud-din Muhammad Tughlaq was forced to yield ground, and finally made his way to safety at the hill fort of Nagarkot (Kangra). Meanwhile, Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq Shah II was murdered in February 1389. The throne was occupied by Prince Abu Bakr Shah, son of Zafar Khan, and another of the grandsons of Sultan Firoze Shah Tughlaq.

Prince Nasir-ud-din Muhammad Tughlaq once more staked his claim to the throne. Several factions had emerged by this period at the Delhi court, and these were split between supporting the two main Tughlaq rivals. Bahadur Nahar took up the cause of Abu Bakr Shah against Prince Nasir-ud-din Muhammad Tughlaq, and fought on the side of Abu Bakr. The defeated Nasir-ud-din Muhammad made Jalesar his headquarters, where many of the Sultanate's nobles rallied to his cause for another attempt at the throne of Delhi. The prince was unsuccessful a second time, but despite that, his authority gradually became established across the tracts of Hansi, Hissar, Lahore, Multan, and other areas north-west of Delhi.

By this time, Nasir-ud-din Muhammad Tughlaq's son, Prince Humayun, was indulging in plundering villages around Delhi. Sultan Abu Bakr opted to go on the offensive, and marched against Jalesar, but intrigues and conspiracies drove him back to his court posthaste. The intrigues eventually compelled Abu Bakr to leave Delhi and take refuge with Bahadur Nahar in Mewat. Consequently, his rival was able to take possession of Delhi and the Sultanate's throne in August 1390, as Sultan Muhammad of Delhi (r. 1390-1394).

The ascension of Abu Bakr Shah's rival marked a period of persecution for Bahadur Nahar, just as it did for Abu Bakr himself. Defeated and pursued by his rival's forces, Abu Bakr sought refuge at Tijara, which was one of Bahadur Nahar's strongholds. (Another was Bahadurpur, twenty-one kilometres north-east of Alwar, which was apparently founded, or possibly reestablished and restored to importance, by Bahadur Nahar). Tijara was besieged by the Delhi Sultanate forces, and the siege was lifted only after Abu Bakr and Bahadur Nahar surrendered. Abu Bakr was kept in confinement in the fort at Meerut, while Bahadur Nahar was bound to maintain fealty to the reigning sultan, granted a court-robe of honour, and allowed his freedom.

However, Bahadur Nahar's proud spirit seems to have been unable to accept this, and two years later, taking advantage of the sultan's illness in 1393, he made a bid for autonomy, plundering the Sultanate's territory almost up to the gates of Delhi. The sultan responded by sending his troops

against Bahadur Nahar. Tijara was besieged, and the Mewati chief forced to leave it for the relative security of Jhirka.

After the death of the sultan, Bahadur Nahar's fortunes changed again, and he once again rose to importance at the Delhi court — a state of affairs that apparently lasted for some three years. According to the *Tarikh-e-Ferishta*, during this time his power was such that rival claimants for the Sultanate throne apparently sought his support! The same text (*Tarikh-e-Ferishta*), further states that during Timur's invasion of India during AD 1398-1399, Timur sent an envoy to Bahadur Nahar at Tijara, to which the Mewati chief sent back 'a humble reply' and a present of two white parrots. The parrots had formerly belonged to the late Delhi sultan, and were to become Timur's prized possessions. Later, Bahadur Nahar and his son, along with several others who had taken refuge in Mewat, came to pay homage to Timur.

Bahadur Nahar's fortunes dipped again after Timur's departure, and following the downfall of the Tughlaq dynasty. In AD 1411-12, Saiyid Khizr Khan, one-time governor of Punjab, who ruled as the '*Rayat-i-Ala*' from Delhi, and nominally acknowledged himself as viceroy of Timur and later Timur's son, Shah Rukh, ravaged Narnaul, which was, at the time, under Bahadur Nahar's son, and then attacked and sacked Tijara. Within a decade, early in AD 1421, Khizr Khan, by then sultan of Delhi (r. 1414-1421), once again marched against Mewat. The Sultanate's army plundered Tijara and Sarahata, and besieged Bahadur Nahar in his stronghold of Kotal (also called Katila and Kotila). Some Mewatis escaped to the hills, while others offered their submission.

For the remainder of his life, Bahadur Nahar continued to be viewed as a 'rebel' by several successive sultans of Delhi, who sent their armies to subdue him and reduce Mewat to complete submission. Khizr Khan's successor, Mubarak Shah (r. 1421-33) sent his forces against Bahadur Nahar and the Mewatis on several occasions. The Mewatis and their chief matched the Sultanate steel with determination. Even after the fort of Kotila was invested and razed to the ground by Sultanate forces, the Mewatis continued to resist, seeking refuge, when driven hard, in the hilly terrain around Tijara. In the winter of 1424, Mubarak Shah marched towards

Katehar, plundered the land up till the foot of the Kumaon hills and compelled Rai Har Singh to pay revenue and tribute-arrears, before retracing his steps and marching to Mewat to deal with the Mewatis. The Sultan returned to Delhi in June 1425.

In 1425, Sultan Mubarak Shah marched against Mewat once again. This time, the Mewatis were led by Nahar's grandsons, Jalal Khan and Qadar Khan, better known as Jallu¹³⁸ and Qaddu, respectively. The Mewatis apparently resorted to a scorched-earth policy, as they retreated to the more defensible stronghold of Indor (Andwar), situated in the hills ten miles east of Tijara. They were besieged at Indor, but Jallu and Qaddu were able to escape towards Alwar. The Sultanate army pressed its attack and besieged them at Alwar. Unable to combat a superior force, Jallu and Qaddu sued for peace. They were pardoned, but Qadar Khan, being suspected of double-dealing, was made a captive, though Ferishta stated that both Qaddu and Jallu were imprisoned while attempting an escape.

Mubarak Shah returned to Delhi in July 1426. Later that year, he ravaged Mewat as he marched against the fortress of Bayana and besieged Muhammad Khan Auhadi, the successor of Amirkhan Auhadi, ruler of Bayana. Some of the deserters from Bayana fort provided information about a secret passage into the fort, which was used by Mubarak Shah's forces to enter Bayana on January 31, 1427. Muhammad Khan Auhadi was imprisoned, and Mubarak Shah returned to Delhi in April 1427, only to learn that Auhadi had managed escape. Auhadi's followers in Mewat rallied round him, attacked Bayana and occupied the fort. They were forced to abandon it in May 1428 by Mubarak Shah. Muhammad Khan Auhadi then made his way to Mewat.

In July 1428, Sultan Mubarak Shah sent another expedition into Mewat. Believing that Qaddu was colluding with Ibrahim Sharqi of Jaunpur, an enemy of the Delhi sultan, he ordered the execution of the imprisoned Qaddu. Jallu and other Mewatis had to face the might of the Delhi Sultanate forces under the command of Sarwar-ul-Mulk, the Delhi Sultanate's *vizier* (*wazir*). Jallu, along with Ahmad Khan, Malik Farukuddin, and a force of Mewatis, defended the fort of Alwar, where they had collected to make their final stand after being driven from Indor, with

great ferocity and determination. In the end, they were forced to submit, yield up hostages, and pay tribute.

In 1432, Sultan Mubarak Shah of Delhi again marched against Mewat to suppress Jallu. Upon learning about the arrival of Mubarak Shah at Jaoru (in present-day Gurgaon district of Haryana), Jallu retired to the fastness of Indor. The sultan seized Tijara; made it his headquarters, and ravaged vast areas of Mewat. Jallu eventually submitted and, once again, offered up tribute and commitments for future conduct. Mubarak Shah returned to the capital in January 1433. Following his murder in 1434, and the accession of Muhammad Shah, Mewat was left relatively undisturbed for a while by the forces of the Delhi Sultanate.

For over a decade and a half, an uneasy peace followed. Around c. AD 1451, it was the turn of the new sultan of Delhi, Bahlol Lodi (r. 1451-89), to launch an offensive against Mewat. Ahmad Khan 'Mewati', a chief of Mewat who had his main stronghold at Tijara, resisted the invasion, but he was eventually forced to accept the suzerainty of the Sultanate, and deprived of many fertile tracts of land, which were occupied by the Sultanate¹³⁹. Ahmad Khan Mewati nominated his uncle, Mubarak Khan, to be his 'representative' for full-time attendance at the Delhi court (a euphemism for a hostage for good behaviour). In 1482, Ahmad Khan took Alwar and made it his capital. Meanwhile, the Lodi sultan once again felt compelled to march into Mewat to chastise Ahmad Khan, as the latter had allied with Husain Shah of Jaunpur in an expedition against Delhi. According to some sources, Ahmad Khan fled to Jaunpur, leaving Mewat to be subdued by Bahlol Lodi, though Powlett¹⁴⁰ cited Babar's statement that Mewat was not included in the kingdom of Bahlol Lodi, and that the Lodi sultan never really subjugated the area.

It appears that Ahmad Khan was not the sole chief of the Mewat region. For example, two of the manuscripts, namely the *Shri-avashyaka-niryukti* and *Shri-upasagada-sangalmul*, which were penned at Bahadurpur (the founding of which is commonly ascribed to Bahadur Nahar), in AD 1475 and 1495 respectively, indicate that one Khanzada Maun Khan held Bahadurpur during that period.

During the period the powerful Sikandar Lodi (r. 1489-1517) was sultan of Delhi, Ahmad Khan Mewati continued to accept the Sultanate's domination. Alauddin Alam Shah, a brother of Sultan Sikandar Lodi, was appointed governor over Mewat, with Tijara as one of his bases. (He held the governorship for some time. The 'Pathan Tomb' near Bhartahari is credited to him). Following Ahmad Khan Mewati, another Khanzada, Alam Khan Mewati, became chief. Having enforced the Sultanate's suzerainty, Sikandar Lodi opted not to disturb Alam Khan Mewati, and allowed him to retain his territory. Later, Alam Khan Mewati held a position of honour at the Delhi court. Mewat's history over the succeeding centuries shall be taken up in a later chapter.

THE BADGUJARS

Besides the Yaduvamshis, Mewatis, and Kachchwahas, the Badgujars remained an important — if subordinated — group in eastern and north-eastern Rajasthan during the c. 1200-1500 period. We have already seen how the Badgujar clan's control over the Dausa area passed on to the Kachchwahas. They retained their eminence in some parts of what today comprise the modern-day districts of Alwar, Dausa and Jaipur, and even Bharatpur, through a judicious mix of matrimonial alliances with the rulers of Amber-Dhoondhar, political acumen and the might of their arms. This stood them in good stead over the years, even in the face of frequent skirmishes with Delhi Sultanate, and later Mughal, as well as Mewati troops.

In the Alwar region, the Badgujar rulers of Macheri, who had begun to rule from Macheri in the thirteenth century, owned descent from the Rajyapur (now Nilkantha Rajorgarh) line through one prince Matsyadeva, who founded his own separate kingdom centred around Macheri. Inscriptions found at Macheri (known as the Macheri Inscriptions), dating to VS 1426 and 1439 indicate that Rajgarh, Macheri and Deoti (Devati) were among the possessions of the Badgujars, and were among the small independent chiefships of the time that had successfully withstood the Delhi Sultanate. Later, the Rajorgarh area came into the political domination of the Khanzadas, who held much of this part of the Mewat territory as

feudatories of the Mughals, before it was assigned to the Kachchwaha rulers of Amber.

THE TANWARS OF DHOLPUR

The early traditional history of the Tanwars of Dholpur links them with the Tomars who held sway over the Delhi region around the eleventh century AD. According to popular belief, a ruler named Dholan Dev (Dhaval Deo), who belonged to the Tanwar clan, established his kingdom in the land between the rivers Chambal and Banganga, sometime in the early eleventh century, setting its capital at Belpur (about ten miles south-west of the present-day town and district headquarter of Dholpur). The event has been dated to around c. AD 1005. Remains of a fort in the ravines of the Chambal are ascribed to Dholan Dev too.

Part of the territory later came temporarily into the possession of the Yadavas of Karauli. To them goes the credit for the construction of the fort at Dholpur (old Dhavalapuri) in 1120. Dholpur was taken from its holders, along with Gwalior, when the region was invested by a general of Muizuddin Muhammad bin-Sam Ghori at the end of the twelfth century.

The strategic location of Dholpur (and Gwalior), straddling one of the old established trade-routes going south from the region of Delhi (and the Indo-Gangetic Doab as a whole), meant that from the military point of view also, it was a vital route to control. Due to its geographical position, therefore, the political mastery of the area would remain closely linked not only with the history of the kingdoms of Delhi and Gwalior between the twelfth to fifteenth centuries, but of several later kingdoms, empires, and ambitious military campaigners through into the nineteenth century.

THE KYAM-KHANIS OF SHEKHAWATI

Works like the *Kyam Khan Raso*, written in c. AD 1624 by Jaan of Fatehpur, and Nainsi's *Khyat*, provide some information about the rise of

the Kyam-Khani sub-group of Chauhans who became prominent in the area known today as Shekhawati between the mid-fifteenth to mid-eighteenth centuries AD. The Kyam-Khanis reigned over a substantial part of the region that today comprises the modern administrative districts of Jhunjhunu and Churu for nearly three centuries. They belong to a Chauhan sub-clan of Rajputs that converted to Islam during the period that Feroze Tughlaq (r. AD 1351-1388), was sultan of Delhi.

According to the *Kyam Khan Raso*, composed by Jaan, who traced his ancestry to a Dadreva Chauhan who had converted to Islam, it was the chief Karam Chand Chauhan of Dadreva who accepted Islam at the urging of Sultan Feroze Tughlaq. Karam Chand was given the name of Kyam Khan (variously rendered as Qaim Khan, Kayam Khan and Qyam Khan). The Kyam-khanis are his descendants, and trace their Chauhan lineage from ancestors like Bisaldev, Prithviraj and Hammir. The *Kyam Khan Raso* provides a genealogy of the earlier Chauhan rulers who preceded Karam Chand. Thus, we learn about the rule of Tihunpal and Mota Rai of Dadreva, who were the grandfather and father, respectively, of Karam Chand. (The Chauhans at Dadreva (later within the territory of erstwhile Bikaner State) in northern Rajasthan find mention in an inscription of VS 1272 or AD 1215).

As Kyam Khan, Karam Chand became the subedar of Hissar. He died around AD 1419, and was succeeded by his son, Taj Khan. Taj Khan remained subedar of Hissar till his own death in 1448. In the course of his governorship, Taj Khan and Ahmad Khan joined Firoz Khan of Nagaur in launching a successful attack against Rana Mokal of Mewar.

Later, Fateh Khan, the son of Taj Khan, was expelled from Hissar by Sultan Bahlol Lodi of Delhi. Thereafter, Fateh Khan carved out an independent estate for himself in the present-day Sikar district of traditional Shekhawati, and established the town of Fatehpur (named for its founder) in 1449. This town became the capital of Fateh Khan's principality, and its rulers became known as '*Kyam-Khanis*' after the name of Kyam Khan.

The traditional chronicles of the Shekhawats inform us that Raimal of Amarsar (r. 1488-1537), who was Rao Shekha's successor, attacked and

killed Nawab Alaf Khan of Fatehpur, to avenge the death of one Jassa Panwar¹⁴¹. The Fatehpur Kyam-Khanis continued to reign in the area for nearly 282 years. (The last independent Kyam-Khani Nawab of Fatehpur being Mayamb Khan, who ascended the throne in 1729. He lost his kingdom to Rao Shiv Singh of Sikar, with the conquest of Fatehpur in 1731).

Meanwhile, one of the other members of the Kyam-Khani family, Muhammad Khan, had occupied Jhunjhunu in 1450. His line continued to hold Jhunjhunu as their own chiefdom till AD 1730, when the last of them, Ruhel Khan Kyam-khani, died without any heir. The territory thereafter went into the hands of the Shekhawats, as we shall see elsewhere.

The Kyam-Khanis basically continued to observe the social customs and practices of their pre-Islamised days, and remained close to the Hindu Rajputs as far as marriage customs and other ceremonies and observances were concerned. Even their religious practices were to retain many aspects of their Hindu heritage — a feature shared by many clans and communities of Rajasthan who converted to Islam during this general period. (Things changed only during the twentieth century AD).

THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF NAGAUR REGION

We have already noted that Nagaur was an important nerve centre of medieval Rajasthan, and that its political control was fiercely contested. Nagaur became a mint town under the early sultans of Delhi, and one of the coins dated 608 of the *Hijri* calendar (i.e. AD 1211) issued by Sultan Shamsuddin Iltutmish, bears the mint name of Nagaur¹⁴². It seems that when emissaries of the Abbasid Caliph of Baghdad travelled to Delhi in AD 1228 they passed through the territories of Nagaur¹⁴³. The relative importance of Nagaur can also be gauged by the fact that people like the military commander Malik Izz-ud-din Kishlu Khan, and then *Ulugh Khan-i-Azam* Balban (prior to becoming sultan of Delhi), held the governorship and *iqta* (revenue collection rights) of Nagaur. For much of the thirteenth

century, Nagaur remained under the domination of the Delhi sultans, who posted their administrators here.

During the period of the Khilji sultans of Delhi, Amir Khusrau referred to Nagaur, in his work the *Khazain-ul-Futuh* (also called the *Tarikh-i-Alai*), as the place up to the boundaries of which fierce Mongol hordes (under the overall leadership of Kapak) came for plundering. The event occurred in c. AD 1306. One Mongol force, led by Kapak, crossed the Indus and advanced through Multan towards the river Ravi, while the other, led by Mongols Iqbal and Tai Bu, marched southward towards Nagaur. Sultan Aiauddin Khilji gave the charge of dealing with the Mongol threat to Malik Naib Kafur, who was assisted by Ghazi Malik Tughlaq. The Khilji forces defeated Kapak on the banks of the Ravi, and numerous Mongol warriors — including Kapak himself— and women and children were captured and sent to Delhi. The victory over Kapak complete, Malik Naib Kafur marched towards Nagaur next. The Sultanate army fell upon the Mongol force led by Iqbal and Tai Bu. The Mongols fled across the Indus, but were pursued and decisively defeated.

Epigraphical evidence indicates that under the Tughlaqs too the Delhi sultans held intermittent sway over Nagaur. However, whenever Tughlaq authority weakened, Nagaur slipped out of the control of the Delhi Sultanate. The ‘Tarkin Darwaza’, also called ‘Buland Darwaza’ (Great Gate), at the *dargah* of a Sufi saint, was constructed in AD 1333 (i.e. *Hijri* 733), during this period. During the fourteenth century, Hammir of Mewar (r. 1326-1364) is credited too with having occupied Nagaur (among other territories) as he successfully extended the frontiers of his patrimony and re-asserted the might of Mewar. Later, for a time, Nagaur passed into the hands of Rao Chunda, the Rathore ruler of Marwar (r. 1384-1428), whose vigorous policies saw the expansion of Rathore hegemony over much of western Rajasthan. It was at Nagaur that Chunda eventually met his end (as already mentioned above), following a joint attack by a confederacy of rivals and aggrieved neighbours, including Khidar Khan of Multan.

Nagaur subsequently became the chief town of an independent dynasty founded by Shams Khan Dandani. Shams Khan, the son of Wajih-ul-Mulk, was a noble of the Delhi Sultanate. He was also the younger

brother of Zafar Khan¹⁴⁴ (who as Muzaffar Shah I [r. AD 1407-1411] became the founder of the independent Sultanate of Gujarat). Having expelled the then governor of Nagaur, Jalal Khan Khokhan, and carved out a small independent state for himself, Shams Khan went on to earn fame as a warrior of many battles. He is credited with having fought successfully against Rana Mokal of Mewar (possibly in AD 1411). Shams Khan was succeeded by his son, Firoz Khan.

In AD 1416, Sultan Khizr Khan of the Delhi Sultanate's Saiyid dynasty, led a campaign towards Nagaur. (This was during the early part of his rule over Delhi, at which period Khizr Khan ruled as the '*Rayat-i-ala*', and nominally acknowledged himself as viceroy of Timur and Timur's son, Shah Rukh). This followed an appeal from Nagaur's Firoz Khan, who sought help against the aggression of his cousin, Sultan [Shihab-ud-din] Ahmad Shah I of Gujarat (r. 1411-1442), the grandson of Sultan Muzaffar Shah I (i.e. Zafar Khan) of Gujarat. Ahmad Shah apparently withdrew at the approach of the Delhi Sultanate army, and Nagaur temporarily accepted Khizr Khan's suzerainty. However, two years later, faced with the threat of attack by the sultan of Malwa, Firoz Khan of Nagaur transferred his allegiance to Gujarat.

Firoz Khan's reign saw a continuation of the struggle with Mokal of Mewar, during which the young Rana's Rathore uncle, Rao Ranmal, served the Mewar cause well. The Sringerishi Inscription of AD 1428, for instance, records (among other things) a Mewar victory over 'Piroja Khan' (i.e. Firoz Khan of Nagaur) and the discomfiture of 'Patasaha Ahmada' (identified as Sultan Ahmad Shah of Gujarat). Similarly, the later Kumbhalgarh Inscription of AD 1460 states that Rana Mokalendra (i.e. Mokal), defeated 'Piroja' and 'Mahammada' (Ahmad Shah of Gujarat). Mokal's Chittorgarh Inscription of AD 1428 also refers to a victory over 'Piroja'. In order to avenge his defeat, Firoz Khan of Nagaur forged a military alliance with the Kyam-khani brothers, Taj Khan of Hissar and Ahmad Khan. Together, they launched a vigorous attack against Rana Mokal. The Rana's forces buckled under the fierce attack. The joint Nagaur-Hissar attacking force is said to have seized a large booty, which included elephants and horses, besides the standards (*Neja and Nishan*) of Mewar¹⁴⁵. However, serious differences

later arose between Firoz Khan of Nagaur and the Kyam-Khani brothers, which led the erstwhile military allies to fight each other.

Certain Persian annals mention the defeat of Mewar's Rana Mokal at the hands of Nagaur's Firoz Khan and Ahmad Shah of Gujarat in 1433. It is not certain whether this is a reference to a major battle in which the Gujarat sultan, assisted by the Khan of Nagaur, faced the Rana of Mewar personally, or to one among the series of skirmishes and battles fought for superiority and territorial gains during this age. However, we do know that Firoz Khan joined Sultan Ahmad Shah of Gujarat in his campaign of 1432, when they both led their forces towards Didwana. It was during Firoz Khan's reign that the Shams Mosque (also called Saiyyed Mosque) was built in AD 1433-34 (*Hijri* 837).

Sambhar, Didwana and Naraina were subsequently taken in AD 1437 by Firoz Khan's brother, Mujahid Khan, who enjoyed the title of *Khan-e-Azam*. Thereafter, it appears that Khan-e-Azam Mujahid Khan held the Sambhar-Didwana-Naraina area as a separate principality, while his elder brother, Firoz Khan, ruled over the Khanate of Nagaur. To commemorate his victory, Mujahid Khan constructed a gateway and the city-wall at Didwana, repaired the fort and water-reservoir at Naraina in 1437, and erected the Jama Masjid of Naraina.

Following the death of Firoz Khan, his younger brother Mujahid Khan became the new ruler of Nagaur. Possibly "...the Nagaur dominion came to be dismembered into several parts, for there are inscriptional records to point out that while Shams Khan II held Nagaur, his uncle Mujahid Khan held sway over Sambhar, Didwana and Naraina as [a] separate kingdom"¹⁴⁶

Not long afterwards, Mujahid Khan's nephew, Shams Khan II (son of Firoz Khan), became master of Nagaur with the help of Rana Kumbha of Mewar. Kumbha gave assistance on the condition that once ensconced as the chief of Nagaur, his protégé would acknowledge the suzerainty of Mewar. As a token of this, the fortifications of Nagaur were dismantled. Having defeated Mujahid Khan, and occupied Nagaur as well as Didwana (from which he collected salt tax to emphasize its subordinate status), Rana Kumbha assigned Nagaur and Didwana to Shams Khan II.

Having gained an upper hand in the intra-family dispute over the Nagaur succession with the aid of Rana Kumbha, Shams Khan II later refused to comply with the previously settled terms with Mewar. Kumbha therefore occupied the territory. Shams Khan II of Nagaur now sought the help of his royal relative from Gujarat, Sultan Qutb-ud-din Ahmad Shah, also referred to as Ahmad Shah II (r. AD 1451-1459), who had succeeded Gujarat's Sultan Muhammad Shah (r. 1442-1451). In response, the sultan of Gujarat sent a force against Kumbha, but the Rana conclusively defeated the Gujarat army and occupied Nagaur. Kumbha's AD 1460 Kirti-sthambha Inscription (part II, verses 16-23), at Chittorgarh states that the Rana destroyed the town of Nagapura (Nagaur) and the lofty *masti* (mosque) built by Piroja (Firoz Khan), captured many Muslim women, and took possession of the treasures of Shams Khan while fighting in the country of 'Jangal', and also harassed the king of Gujarat¹⁴⁷.

Subsequently, in 1456, Sultan Qutb-ud-din Ahmad Shah of Gujarat marched against Kumbhalgarh. While the fort held, Persian sources state that peace was purchased through an indemnity paid by Mewar. In the interim, Sultan Mahmud Khalji of Malwa took advantage of Qutb-ud-din Ahmad Shah's absence from Gujarat and invaded that Sultanate, retiring only when he learnt of the return of the campaigning Gujarati army. Malwa and Gujarat eventually buried their differences, and entering into an alliance, jointly invaded Mewar in 1457 (as we have already noted in an earlier section dealing with Rana Kumbha). Within three months of peace being established amongst the three concerned kingdoms of Mewar, Gujarat and Malwa, Rana Kumbha once again attacked Nagaur, but retired upon learning about the approach of Gujarat's Sultan Qutb-ud-din Ahmad Shah, along with his main army.

By 1484, Firoz Khan II, the great-grandson of Shams Khan Dandani, founder of the dynasty, ruled over the principality of Nagaur. Known by the title of *Majlis-i-Aali*, Firoz Khan II appointed Malik Hizabr to carry out administration at the town of Didwana and the area surrounding it. He ensured that the city-walls of Didwana were repaired and reconstructed, as was the gateway known as 'Ladnu Darwaza'. In 1491, an old mosque was also repaired at Didwana¹⁴⁸.

Muhammad Khan was the last ruler of his dynasty to rule the Khanate of Nagaur. He enjoyed a long rule, during which time he accepted the suzerainty of Sikandar Lodi, the sultan of Delhi (r. 1489-1517). Muhammad Khan's decision seems to have been influenced by the activities of his brothers, Ali Khan and Abu Bakr, who were garnering support for their own claims. Apparently, Sultan Sikandar Lodi was more than willing to extend his patronage to Muhammad Khan, and compensated Ali Khan with the grant of the small fief of Sui near Ranthambore. (Later, Ali Khan was replaced by his brother Abu Bakr, when it became known that Ali Khan was guilty of duplicity in secretly dissuading Daulat Khan, the governor of Ranthambore, from transferring his allegiance from Malwa to Delhi). As a result, the Khanate of Nagaur and its affiliated areas came firmly into the orbit of the Lodi Sultanate. We learn that during Muhammad Khan of Nagaur's rule, which extended into the sixteenth century, copies of various manuscripts were written for presenting to Jain monks who visited Nagaur on pilgrimage. Among the texts copied were the *Sarasvataprakriya* (AD 1504), the *Kumarasambhava* (AD 1517), the *Yoga-Shastram* (AD 1519), and the *Shravaga-Charita* (AD 1528).

After the Lodis, Nagaur's history of continuously changing hands continued. It eventually passed into the possession of the Sur empire too, and an inscription of AD 1533 records the building of a mosque during the reign of Islam Shah, son of Sher Shah Suri. However, subordinate officers and nobles continually made their own bids for its mastery. Later, Nagaur formed part of the Mughal dominions¹⁴⁹. As such, from the reign of Akbar onwards, various Mughal emperors posted their governors here or bestowed its administration to Rajput rajas. (For example, in AD 1572, Emperor Akbar granted it to Rai Singh of Bikaner, though it was lost in AD 1634 by Karan Singh. Akbar's grandson, the Emperor Shah Jahan, then bestowed it on Prince Amar Singh Rathore, the elder son of Maharaja Gaj Singh of Marwar. Though Amar Singh was killed in 1644¹⁵⁰, following a duel with Salabat Khan, Nagaur was held by four more generations of his family. It was permanently acquired by the ruling family of Jodhpur (Marwar) at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Over the centuries, Nagaur remained an important Jain and Hindu centre of learning too. In addition, the famous thirteenth century Sufi saint,

Shaikh Hamid-ud-din (d. 1274), who was a disciple of the Chishtiya *silsila* (here meaning Sufi spiritual order or group) which included Khwaja Moin-ud-din Chishti (1143-1236) of Ajmer, made Nagaur his home¹⁵¹. Shaikh Hamid-ud-din Nagauri's Hindi verses are said to reflect yogic influence¹⁵². Nagaur became a major centre of the Chishtiya *silsila*. A few centuries later, two men who became prominent at Akbar's imperial court — namely, Shaikh Abul Fazl, and his brother, Shaikh Faizi, came from Nagaur. They were the sons of the illustrious Shaikh Mubarak of Nagaur.

RAJPUT RELATIONS WITH 'INDIGENOUS' GROUPS LIKE THE MEENAS, BHILS, AND MEDS AND SO ON

As must have been noticed, the story of a Rajput of 'noble birth' seizing power from a Meena or Bhil chief or tribe, or forest-dwelling peoples, is a common motif surrounding the founding of many of the Rajput kingdoms of Rajasthan. Many local traditions and tales, as well as genealogical tables refer to the overthrow of numerous indigenous chiefs and rulers, usually Bhils or Meenas, or sometimes Meds, by different dynasty-founding non-tribal 'Kshatriya' clans. These latter are generally described as having entered territories or tracts hitherto unfamiliar to them as either refugees or invaders, where they quickly became established, and over which they went on to establish their own domination. The early histories available for the Kshatriya/ Rajput states suggest that certain groups of previous inhabitants, especially Bhils and Meenas, were forced to give way to these newer settlers. Furthermore, as their traditional land was wrested from them, these Bhil or Meena groups either retired to inaccessible 'sanctuaries' within the thickly forested hill etc., or came to some sort of an understanding with the incoming people.

Thus, the popular story about Dulha, the founder of the Rajput Kachchwaha dynasty of Amber-Jaipur who, according to traditional belief, wrested power from his adoptive Meena chieftain 'uncle' and established his own kingdom, has features in common with the story of Guha, who did the same to his Bhil mentor. The theme recurs time and again in the annals of the Rajput kingdoms of Rajasthan. The kingdom of Bundi, Rajput annals

inform us, was established by the Hada Chauhan Rajput clan, who took the area from the Meenas of the Bunda valley. (The Meenas themselves are said to have previously taken refuge in that tract after their own lands in the Dhoondhar-Amber area were taken by Dulha Rai and his immediate successors). Similarly, the founding of the kingdom of Dungarpur is ascribed to the conflict between the established Bhils under Dungaria Bhil and Rajput newcomers to the area. Again, according to the Rajput traditions, it is held that the Rajputs of the Rathore clan killed Kushal, the Bhil chief of 'Kushalpada' and established their own kingdom in the area, calling it Kushalgarh after the vanquished Bhil chief. In a like manner, the area seized from Basna (Bansia) Bhil became the Rajput-ruled kingdom of Banswara, while land taken from the Kotia Bhils later became the kingdom of Kota.

Significantly, while the Meenas and Bhils etc. were apparently subjugated, in kingdoms like Mewar and Dungarpur it became part of the coronation ritual to have a Bhil of a particular lineage anoint the forehead of each successive (Rajput) ruler with a drop of blood from the former's (Bhil's) thumb. Tod witnessed one such coronation at Udaipur and wrote that the Bhil land-holders of Oguna and Undri still claim the privilege of performing the 'tika' or anointing for the Sisodias of Mewar. (A similar custom, involving the 'Meds' and the rulers of Porbandar [Gujarat], has been reported). These and other such customs may reflect the probable understanding, or compromise, or an unofficial treaty stemming from the requirement of political expediency, between the concerned parties.

In fact, we know of this in a 'non-tribal' context too — namely, the role of the Godara Jats in the coronation-ceremonies and other rituals of the rulers of the erstwhile kingdom of Bikaner, as has been noted previously in this chapter. Such rites and customs seem to be designed to legitimize the 'usurpation' of political power by one group of people, i.e. the non-tribal Rajputs, from the Bhils, Meenas, etc.¹⁵³. In this connection, it is interesting to note that the names of many of the erstwhile kingdoms of Rajasthan are derived from, or connected with, the names of people regarded as the defeated previous holders or lords of the land.

Unfortunately, a detailed continuous history — including the oral tradition — of the Bhils, Meds, and even the Meenas of Rajasthan is not known at present, though incidental indications can be gleaned from occasional ‘mainstream’ references. For instance, a Chauhan inscription dating to VS 898, or AD 842, at ancient Dhavalapuri (Dholpur) tells us about a charitable local ruler called Chand-Mahasena, son of Mahisarama and grandson of Isuka (probably a feudatory of the Imperial Pratihara ruler, Bhoja I). Chand-Mahasena’s Barah Grant, issued in VS 893, recorded his donations to Brahmins and building of a temple dedicated to the Sun in the forests adjoining Dholpur. To this chief, homage was paid by the “Lords of the *Mlehchhas*, settled on both the sides of the river Chambal...and chiefs like Anirjita, perhaps Lords of small villages lying near Dholpur, moved about the town with downcast looks”¹⁵⁴. Neither Anirjita, nor the ‘Lords of the *Mlechchhas*’ have been identified, but Dasharatha Sharma has suggested that they were Bhils, who he noted, are even now found on both the banks of the Chambal, and are expressly included by the medieval writer, Hemchandra, among the *Mlechchha* tribes of India¹⁵⁵.

The interaction between Dulha Rai and his immediate successors with the different Meena settlements of the Dhoondhar area is already obvious from the accounts referred to in the relevant section above. On the basis of Kachchwaha annals, Tod has related the traditional perspective and various details about this, including that the home of the ‘Meenas, Mynas or Mainas of Dhoondhar’ was in the range of mountains called *Kali-kho*, extending from Ajmer nearly to the river Jamuna¹⁵⁶.

Tod’s subsequent lines are of significance too. He notes that even up to the time of Raja Bharmal (sixteenth century), the Meenas had retained or regained great power, to the mortification of their Rajput superiors: with one of their independent strongholds being the ancient city of Naen. This was destroyed by Bharmal, who “levelled its half hundred gates and erected the town of Lowain (now the residence of the Rajawut chief) on its ruins”¹⁵⁷. The once mighty Naen and its Naen chief and their subsequent condition is reflected in a traditional saying which was translated by Tod as follows: “There were fifty-two strongholds, and fifty-six gates belonging to

the manly Myna, the Raja of Naen, whose sovereignty of Naen was extinct, when even of chaff (*bhoos*) he took a share”¹⁵⁸.

Tod’s writings re-emphasise the traditional belief that the Meenas had ‘ancient’ settlements and ‘great power’, before their might was broken (probably on more than one occasion), just as the case seems to have been for the Bhils. The settlements need not necessarily confirm to our modern notion of large urban towns, which some consider more ‘civilised’; nor should ‘great power’ necessarily bring to mind a vast empire and a ‘complex society’. There are other forms of governance and community life, and this may have been the case for the various Meena and Bhil groups of Rajasthan in their pre-Rajput contact phase. However, the subject requires further work!

In the context of the Meds too, the relations of the various states of Rajasthan with the community called ‘Med’ requires further study. We have already noted in an earlier chapter that an old name for Mewar was Medpat, which means landing of the Mers or Meds. The early twentieth century historian, G.H. Ojha has suggested that these Mers could be descendants of the Sakas (Scythians) who had established their sway over parts of northern and western India during the AD first-second centuries. (In this regard, it may be interesting to study possible connections, if any, with the Medes and Scythians!). Intriguingly, there are Meds (or groups with linguistically similar-sounding labels), in areas adjoining present-day Rajasthan too. Thus, the Med community are known in parts of Gujarat, and the Sindh-Bahawalpur and Cholistan part of the Thar-Parkar desert area of Pakistan also has a small community of pastoral nomads called Meds!

Between about tenth to fourteenth centuries AD there is a fascinating pattern to some stories of Rajput-Med conflict in which certain Rajput warriors were invited to certain areas where the local populace was fed-up of the ‘predatory’ actions of cattle-raiding and banditry by local Meds. Rao Lakhan, the founder of the Nadol branch of the Chauhans, in mid-tenth century, and Rao Siha, the first of the Rathores to establish himself as master of Pali in mid-thirteenth century AD are pertinent examples.

In other instances, somewhat echoing the interaction of Rajput incomers with established Meenas and Bhils in certain areas, there are references to the attempt by Rajput clans to establish their hold in a new area being physically opposed by local Meds, who challenged the newcomers' right to do so. Examples of this include the Rathore descendants of Siha who established themselves in Merta (ancient 'Medantaka', the place names being significant), and later became known as the 'Mertia-Rathore' branch; and the Hadas of Bundi-Kota, who are known to have subdued the Meenas, Bhils as well as Meds. In a like manner, it is held that one thousand Med villages were occupied by Rawat Bika of the kingdom of Pratapgarh-Deoliya in 1561!

Some branches of the Meds are recognised as a Rajput clan in many instances¹⁵⁹. This too becomes plausible in the light of their possible Saka origin, taken together with their 'warrior' tradition. After all, the Huns too are known to have gained acceptance as a 'Rajput' clan by the eighth-ninth centuries AD. The Meds seem to have had their own states too. As such, we learn from K.C. Jain's *Ancient Cities and Towns of Rajasthan*, that the settlement of Ramgarh (formerly called Srinagar), situated near a thick forest some sixty-seven kilometres east of Kota, was ruled by kings of the Med dynasty during the ninth-tenth centuries AD¹⁶⁰. He notes that this dynasty "...originated from the Meda [sic] or Meva, an aboriginal tribe, the people of which are still found in large number in this area. From an inscription of the tenth century AD, it is known that a king named Malaya Varma of the Meda dynasty, in order to commemorate his victory over the enemy, built a temple in honour of his deity. In AD 1162, this temple was repaired by Trisasavarma of the same dynasty. The old fort now in a dilapidated condition was probably built by the rulers of the Meda dynasty"¹⁶¹. Ramgarh's famed art and architecture was probably patronised by this Med dynasty.

Similarly, the Ajmer-Merwara area has a large population of a group called 'Mer' ('Mair'). (This is pronounced with a soft 'r' at the end of the word, and not with the 'dh' compound sound used for 'Med' elsewhere). Tod and other writers have written much on the Mer or 'Mair' communities, linking them to Meenas and to a part-Rajput descent from the Chauhans of Ajmer-Shakambhari; and describing how the Mers take their

name from living in the hilly tracts of ‘Merwara’, around Ajmer¹⁶². Tod had observed that “...colonies of the Mairs or Meras will be found as far north as the Chumbul, and even in the peninsula of Saurashtra”¹⁶³. The eventual division of Mer groups into those who accepted Islam in the c.twelfth-fifteenth centuries, and those who didn’t but continued with their pre-Islamic ‘Hindu’ practices (the two being categorised eventually as the ‘Merat’ and ‘Rawat’ groups, respectively), has also been discussed by Tod and more recently, by sociologists. (The divisions remained flexible in the past as regards matrimonial links and common behavioural patterns, but have begun hardening now, in the early part of the twenty-first century, into religion-based closed boxes).

Interestingly, Rani Laxmi Kumari Chundawat, a chronicler (and former member of Rajasthan’s Legislative Assembly), who has had access to many old records and folk-tales, feels that there may have once existed some *rajya* or state of the Mers (after whom the region became known as ‘Merwara’). This may even have been prior to the tenth-eleventh century Shakambhari Chauhan kingdom centred at Ajmer. She further recalls that until some decades ago it was not uncommon to be told that a particular Mer individual, already proudly using the designation of either (Hindu) ‘Rawat’ or (Muslim) ‘Merat’, was the descendant of a royal family. She recalls that in the 1940s-1960s the royal Mer lineages were not always traced back only to Prithviraj Chauhan (which is what is maintained today). On many occasions a Mer showed her the broken remnant of an ancestral ceremonial sword, which had apparently remained in the possession of the descendants of an erstwhile ‘royal’ family¹⁶⁴. Such individuals were treated like ceremonial chiefs by local and neighbouring villages on occasions like marriages and deaths. She further notes that two of her own ancestors — chiefs of the erstwhile *thikana* of Deogarh (which owed allegiance to the kingdom of Mewar), died in battle against the local Mers. Her family traditions aver that the preliminary fortifications raised at Deogarh by their earliest Rajput ancestors, were initially regularly attacked and destroyed by local Mers at night. This story seems to indicate, at a micro-level, the overall initial interaction between newcomer Rajputs and previous inhabitants.

One can extend this discussion further to take in the group known as ‘Meos’ or ‘Mewatis’, now inhabiting the Alwar-Tijara-Gurgaon area, and

ask what, if any, connections there can be between the Meos and the Meenas; or the Meos, the Mers and the Meds. Unfortunately, there is poor information regarding all of these groups, and one cannot focus solely on them in this text: no matter how fascinating the issue may be. Suffice it to say that today the ancient Meds of Medpat, Mers of the Ajmer-Merwara area, and the Meos of Mewat are viewed as distinct and separate communities. But was this always the case? Not enough is known at this juncture about them to speculate on this further in this chapter. Nor is there enough known to provide, at present, a more detailed history of the Bhil and Meena groups of Rajasthan either¹⁶⁵.

RAJPUT-MUSLIM INTERACTIONS AND MATRIMONIAL ALLIANCES

Social proximity or distance, and inter-community marriages are often issues of debate when it comes to Rajput (or Hindu) and Muslim relations. Often there are discussions about the matrimonial alliances between Rajputs and Muslims, and the point of reference becomes the marriage of the Mughal emperor, Akbar, to a princess from the Kachchwaha family of Amber (Jaipur) in the mid-sixteenth century AD. It is commonly believed that Akbar initiated the system of marriages between Muslim princes of the Mughal lineage and Rajput princesses, and that direct or indirect coercion was a major element in such marriages.

However, the traditional *khyats* and *baats* of Rajasthan provide a different picture. History too tells us that much before the establishment of Mughal rule in India, several Kshatriya and/or Rajput (Hindu) clans and groups across Sindh, Multan, the Punjab, Gujarat, and other parts of the subcontinent, had accepted the Muslim faith, for a variety of reasons, over the centuries. In Rajasthan and its bordering areas, there were Rajputs from the Bhati, Sodha, Johiya, Khokars, Mohila, etc. clans (and sub-clans or *khanps*) who had become Muslims during the c. AD 800-1500 period. The culture, traditions, language, rites and rituals, mode of dress, and food habits of these converts did not change dramatically, however. Just as before, therefore, not only did battles with other kingdoms and clans (Muslim, Rajput or others) take place, but so did marriages. In these

marriages, it was not simply coercion by might that was the deciding factor (though it well might be in specific cases), but the notion of marriage between equals, and for political and socio-economic reasons.

Reference has been made already to the marriage between a Bhati (Hindu) Rajput ruler of Jaisalmer, Rawal Chachak II (r. 1448-62), and Sonal, the Muslim grand-daughter of chief Sumra Khan Seyta. This does not appear to be the sole, or even a unique example of a marriage between 'Hindus' and 'Muslims' belonging to the ruling clans during the c. AD 1200-1500 period. Traditional annals (*vaat*) tell us that the heroes Jakhda and Mukhda were Bhati (Hindu) Rajputs, while their mother, Piyusandhi, was the daughter of a Muslim Biloch chieftain called Kangda. Local tradition holds that the Biloches were Kshatriyas who had converted to Islam. As such, it seems that the continuation of older marriage links and, through that means, the forging of clan and kingdom alliances, was not uncommon. Over time, no doubt, the practice did decline.

Another instance of a marriage between a Rajput 'Hindu' and Muslim concerns Rao Kelana, a powerful Bhati Rajput ruler of Pugal. Kelana had expanded his territories up to Bhatinda and Abohar, and was among those who were responsible for the death of Chunda of Marwar (r. 1384-1428). Rao Kelana invaded Dera Ghazi Khan (situated west of Multan), and inflicted a defeat on the Biloches. As part of the peace settlement that followed, Zubeida, the daughter of the Biloch chief Jam Ismail Khan, was married to the Bhati Rao. It is this same Jam Ismail Khan who is credited with the establishment of Dera Ismail Khan (near Taunsa Sharif, on the borders of present-day Pakistani Punjab and the NWFP).

The political importance of such matrimonial alliances is obvious, and examples may be found across the globe, from different periods. Modern-day Korea still reveres the memory of a princess from Ayodhya who they believe married a Korean prince over 2,000 years ago, and whose descendants acknowledge that link with pride. The point need not be unduly laboured! In Rajasthan itself, the c. seventh century AD Atpur Inscription of Prince Shakti Kumar records that a Hun princess, Hariya Devi, married Allata, the ruler of Mewar. Matrimonial alliances apparently continued to be one form of binding together two clans, or two kingdoms — even if

already pre-disposed to hostility or amity — in later centuries too. Thus, during the period under survey in this chapter, such ‘inter-religious’, or ‘intercaste’ matrimonial alliances were occasionally, though not routinely, resorted to between Rajput and Muslim chiefs too, out of political expediency.

To cite yet another example: in the mid-fourteenth century AD, the territories of the Bhati Rajputs extended from the Thar desert in the west up to Abohar. When, as political expediency, Rao Ranmal Bhati of Abohar married his daughter, Naila, to Rajjab, the younger brother of Sultan Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq of Delhi, the marriage agreement included a condition that the Delhi sultans would never invade Abohar, or cause harm to its citizens. The son of Naila, the Bhati (Hindu) princess, and Rajjab was Firoze Shah Tughlaq, who later became the sultan of Delhi. Despite his prejudice against non-Muslims, Firoze Shah Tughlaq showed respect to the Bhati Rajputs, who were Hindus, since his mother came from that clan! These inter-religious marriages may not have been the norm, nor even regarded as socially desirable, but it may be prudent not to regard them solely from the perspective of religious divide, which frequently colours the popular view of different periods of human history.

Another story of Hindu-Muslim marriage in the pre-Mughal, period is connected with Mrig-Tamaichi, the ruler of Thatta-Bhakkar in Sindh. Mrig-Tamaichi’s maternal uncle, Bukan Bhati was a powerful land owner of Sindh and held a high position in the Thatta-Bhakkar court. One daughter of Bukan Bhati, named Kashmeer-dey, was the wife of a renowned warrior called Depal-de Johiya, a Muslim Rajput hero. A marriage proposal was then received from Veeram-de Rathore (a brother of Rao Mallinath of Marwar, and father of Rao Chunda), proposing the marriage of his daughter in the family of Bukan Bhati. Fearing a plot against his life, in view of the fact that Depal-de Johiya and Veeram-de Rathore were enemies, Bukan Bhati suggested that first Veeram-de marry into the Bhati clan. The suggestion was accepted, and Veeram-de married a sister of Kashmeer-dey. This incident occurred around VS 1430 (c. AD 1373-74), and emphasises that during this period marriages between Rajput Hindus and Muslims were neither unknown nor socially disapproved.

The relationship between members of a family who had married into a different faith can be illustrated by the following reference from the *Kyam Khan Raso*. According to the *Raso*, one of the daughters of Marwar's Rao Jodha was married to Samas Khan, the Kyam-Khani chief of the Jhunjhunu and Fatehpur area of Shekhawati. Samas Khan's eldest son, Fateh Khan, was a son-in-law of the Delhi sultan, Bahlol Lodi. On the death of Samas Khan, Fateh Khan succeeded to his territories. His stepmother, Rao Jodha's daughter, put forward a claim for a share in the kingdom for her own son, Mubarak Shah, and on being refused, appealed to her father, Rao Jodha, for assistance. Jodha then advised his grandson, Mubarak Shah, to take the help of his maternal uncles, Rao Bika (the founder of Bikaner) and Rao Bida.

That connections between Hindu and Muslim relatives were maintained is seen from another fifteenth century example. The uncle of Rao Bika, Rawat Kandhal, had married into the Mohila clan. His wife's sister was married to a Khokar Rajput of Dhingsar. The Khokars had by then become Muslims. There are references to the visits of Rathore Kandhal's sons, Sura and Khinwa, to their Muslim cousin, Raju Khan Khokar. On one visit, Sura and Khinwa saw an exceptional mare, called '*Chanwar-dhal*', in the stables of their cousin, and acquired it through stealth. The loss of his horse was a blow to Raju Khan, who took to wandering about the land looking for the mare. When he came across his horse in the stables of his Rathore cousins, Sura and Khinwa, Raju Khan promptly rode it back to his own territory. At this, his cousins attacked Dhingsar to recover the prized horse, but were both killed in the ensuing fight. Some years later, around VS 1580, the by then grown-up son of Sura Rathore, attacked Dhingsar to avenge the deaths of his father and uncle. Raju Khan Khokar was killed in the attack. The young Rathore victor, Sura's son, forbade his soldiers from indulging in any form of loot or molestation at Dhingsar, saying, "The Khokars are our kin, and therefore their honour is our honour". He sought permission to enter the Dhingsar *raola* or *zenana* (inner palace) to offer his respectful greetings to the widow of Raju Khan Khokar, in acknowledgement of his relationship as a nephew of Raju Khan Khokar. In her turn, Raju Khan's widow accepted his salutations, and acknowledged that the young warrior had upheld his family honour by avenging his father's death. (The tale perhaps reflects more than interfaith interaction — and provides a window to the mindset of that era).

ASPECTS OF ART, ARCHITECTURE, LITERATURE, RELIGION, ECONOMY, SOCIETY AND GOVERNANCE, AND RELATIONS WITH NEIGHBOURING STATES, ETC. DURING C. AD 1200-1500

Despite some obvious changes that followed in the wake of the fall of many established states of Rajasthan at the hands of Muhammad of Ghor, there was a considerable degree of continuity from past centuries in the sphere of art, architecture, literature, economic practices, trade, and administration, and so forth.

This was particularly true as far as the Hindu and Jain sculptural tradition of Rajasthan was concerned, for there was a basic continuation of the previously established stylistic norms and formulae for religious iconography. The texts of Kumbha's architect-artisan Mandan (already mentioned earlier), is a reflection of this. Of course, many images were sculpted — mainly, though not solely, in stone, and installed within temples during this period — as has been mentioned in the course of this chapter. However, it would appear that stylistic *innovations* were far fewer, perhaps because of greater adherence to set norms! The tradition of metal-casting of Jain images in south-eastern Rajasthan seems to have continued during this period too, for it is clearly known that bell-metal (and bronze) statues were cast in the Vagar/ Dungarpur area. Ojha tells us that the colossal Jain bronzes installed at Achalgarh during Kumbha's reign were made by master-artists of Dungarpur¹⁶⁶.

The earliest paintings surviving from the thirteenth century are in the form of small illustrations of the Jain Tirthankars, or of incidents mentioned in the *Kalpa-Sutra* (written by Bhadrabahu in AD 1159), and *Kalika-Acharya-Kathanaka*. These were painted on palm-leaf, in what is generally known as Western Indian miniature style. Illustrated manuscripts of this style seem to have been widely prevalent in Gujarat, the Kathiawar peninsula, and south-western Rajasthan. One of the earliest known illustrated palm-leaf manuscripts known from within the geographical limits of Rajasthan is a Prakrit text called *Savaga-Padikkamana-Sutta-Chuni*. (The title would read as the *Shravak-Pratikraman-Sutra-Churni* in Sanskrit). This was prepared at the erstwhile capital and once-flourishing town of Aghatpur (modern Ahar, near Udaipur) in Mewar, around c. AD

1260, during the reign of the Guhila king, Rawal Tejasimha of Mewar. (The work is now stated to be at the Boston Museum, USA).

The introduction of handmade paper in Gujarat (and in Nepal — where it seems to have come from China) gave a new direction to the tradition of illuminated Jain manuscripts from the mid-fourteenth century or so onwards. The palm-leaves etc. previously in use provided folios that were relatively narrow for purposes of writing and illustrating. As the use of paper spread over much of western India, including Rajasthan, calligraphers/illuminators gradually began to make full use of the advantages of additional space provided — in relation to bark-leaf and palm-leaf products — by this medium, though the earlier horizontal format was not changed. The *Supashanah-Acharyyam*, prepared at the ‘*Deva-kula-Vatika*’ Delwara in Mewar in AD 1413, during the reign of Rana Mokal, is among the important extant dated examples of early fifteenth century illustrated manuscripts. It contains thirty-seven illustrations, and art-historians consider the colouring and composition of these illustrations as particularly noteworthy. This *Supashanah-Acharyyam* is said to belong to the same tradition as that of two well-known contemporaneous *Kalpa-Sutra* manuscripts, painted at Mandu in AD 1439 and Jaunpur in AD 1465, respectively.

Other examples of Jain illustrated manuscripts include works like the *Parshvanath-Charitra* of AD 1423 at the Patan Jain Gyan Bhandar. Many urban centres and other centres of Jain learning, including Chittor, Abu, Delwara, to name but a few, saw the production of numerous copies of Jain works like the *Kalpa-Sutra*, *Kalika-Acharya-Kathanaka*, *Adi-Purana*, *Maha-Purana*, *Neminath-Charitra*, *Angasutra*, *Nisithchurini*, etc. Some art-historians have pointed out that the style of the Jain medieval illustrated manuscripts were influenced by contemporary Malwa, Gujarat, Delhi and Jaunpur Sultanate paintings too.

In the related field of language and literature, the ‘Marwari’ language, which is said to trace its origins from c. ninth century *Nagar-Apabrahmsha*, had assumed a literary character by the fourteenth century. Known fifteenth century works include Dadhi Bahadur’s *Veer-Van* in Dingal, telling the tale of Rao Veeram Rathore’s battle with the Johiyas; and Padmanabha’s famous

Kanhad-de-Prabandh, composed around c.1465, covering the story of Jalore's Kanhar Deo. Rajasthani poems like the *Dhola-Maru-ra-Doha* by Kallol composed about VS 1530 (AD 1473.), also provide a glimpse into the literary traditions of the era, besides shedding light on the social life of Rajasthan in the fifteenth century.

The period between c. AD 1200-1500 also saw the establishment or further development of many more urban centres, forts, religious and market centres, and trading posts, under various rulers, minor chiefs and land-holders. Among them were centres like Jodhpur, Bikaner, Jaisalmer, Nagaur, Dausa, Amber, Ranthambore, Mandalgarh, Gagron, Dungarpur, Sirohi, Karauli, Bundi, Badnor (Bednore), Jobner, Ahuwa, Merta, Pali, Deshnoke, Kolayat, and Bikampur (Vikrampur). Shops, temples, step-wells, houses, public buildings, gardens and palaces were basic features of most towns. Traditional principles, with due recognition to local requirements and trends, were a factor in determining their overall location and architecture. (Though it is debatable whether only canonical formulae were put into practice).

Some of Rajasthan's settlements developed atop older habitations, to which new fortifications, palaces, gateways, temples, artificial lakes and reservoirs, etc. were added over time (often in a piecemeal manner) by various rulers, or even courtiers and merchants. This was the case at settlements like Bhinmal, Mandore, Nagaur and Jalore. In contrast, there were a number of towns and capitals that were established and settled from scratch at a datable point in history by specific rulers. In these, it seems that due attention was paid to the location of palaces, fortifications, and public areas. Such towns or capitals (Mandan calls the latter 'Raj-pur' or 'Raj-nagar'), include Jaisalmer, Dholpur, Dungarpur, Karauli, Bundi, Shivpuri, Sirohi, Amber fort, Ajmer, Nadol, Jodhpur, Bikaner, etc.

High walls and defences were an important feature for practically all the medieval towns and forts. Records tell us that these were regularly strengthened and repaired by successive rulers. The emphasis on protection undoubtedly motivated the re-use (with occasional renovations of defences), of strategically located sites over several centuries. Such sites include the fortress-towns of Chittor, Ranthambore, Jalore, Nagaur, Gagron,

Dausa, Siwana, Bundi, Jaisalmer, Amber and Mandore. Some medieval hill-forts were built over older (premedieval) remains. Occasionally these were sites associated with King Samprati, a grandson of the Mauryan emperor, Ashoka, who, local belief asserts, built many forts in Rajasthan! These are traditionally recognised as forerunners of later forts like Kumbhalgarh.

During this period, sporadic Muslim governance, or influence, over areas like Nagaur, Ajmer, Jalore, Merta, Shekhawati etc., and contact with the Sultanates of Delhi, Gujarat and Malwa, also influenced Rajasthan's civil and military architecture, with certain 'Indo-Saracenic' features being incorporated into the existing style. However, while the architecture of mosques and tombs of Sufi saints, etc. enlarged the scope of raw materials and techniques used, and the ordinary housing-styles etc., this did not materially affect the temple-architecture of Rajasthan at this time. As such, Rajasthan's existing temple-architecture tradition — in which scores of architects, artisans, masons and specialised workers, well-versed in the accepted working style were involved — continued to be used through into ensuing centuries too.

It needs to be re-emphasised here, that as had been the case in previous eras, during the c. thirteenth-fifteenth centuries too there were multiple levels of connections and interactions with the adjacent tracts of Sindh, Multan, Haryana and Punjab, Delhi, Malwa and Gujarat. These ranged from trade and commerce related ties, to other cultural interactions; and from warfare to alliances, in keeping with given situations. The Muslim-ruled Sultanates or chiefships of Delhi, Gujarat, Malwa, Multan, Thatta-Bhakkar, etc. were not in a permanent state of armed conflict with the Hindu Rajput states of Rajasthan; and on occasions scions of ruling families — whether Hindu or Muslim — sought shelter at neighbouring courts, and received due honours (as mentioned at relevant places further in this text). Artisans, musicians, scholars, writers, able councillors and the like were provided patronage at various courts too, irrespective of their religious persuasions.

Within Rajasthan too, the popular tradition revered those considered holy and wise without much overt problems about the religious or caste

factor. Khwaja Moin-ud-Din Chishti, the Muslim Sufi saint, who had made his headquarters at Ajmer, attracted many during his lifetime. After his death, his tomb at Ajmer became an important shrine visited by people from different communities. (It remains amongst the sacred sites of India, attracting as many as 300,000 pilgrims annually at the time of the *Urs*, or death anniversary commemorations). The Bhakti movement reformer-preachers and Sufi saints emphasised humanitarianism and access to the divine through devotion and love of all living creatures, and thus appealed to people across the confines of formal religious divides¹⁶⁷. As such, they were venerated as easily by the population at large, as were 'living goddesses' like Karni-ji, and deified warrior-heroes like Pabu-ji, Teja-ji, Goga-ji, Harbu-ji, Ramdeo-ji, Dev Narayan-ji, and Mallinath-ji, among others.

These deified warrior-heroes are worshipped for having given up their lives to protect the feeble, or in upholding their pledged word. In the mythology that has grown around them, many are now regarded as incarnations that came to the Earth to benefit of the masses of the area. Some of them — like Goga-ji and Ramdeo-ji are venerated both as Hindu incarnations and Muslim *pirs* (holy men), by Hindus and Muslims. The sites holy to them are usually referred to as *Than* (from *Sthan*, meaning place or site). Interestingly, most of these deified warrior-heroes lived and died in the western part of Rajasthan — though geography has not curtailed their subsequent veneration across boundaries. We have already mentioned Pabu-ji (c. 1239-1276), a Rathore who died protecting a herd of cows and honouring his pledged word. Two of his near-contemporaries were Teja-ji and Dev Narayan-ji.

Teja-ji (c. 1256-1304), son of Ramkunwari and Tahar-ji Dhauliya Jat of Khadnal (Nagaur), similarly fought a crucial battle to rescue Lacchha Gurjari's cows, which had been driven away by Mer raiders before returning, critically wounded and dying, to keep his fore-pledged word to a snake. To this snake, the badly wounded Teja-ji offered his tongue to bite, that being the only area not wounded by enemy swords. In turn, the snake vowed that thereafter anyone who called upon Teja-ji's protection would be safe from death by snake bite. This would also apply to animals placed under the protection of Teja-ji's name or amulet. *Shukla* tenth of the month

of *Bhadrapada* is popularly marked as the day sacred to Teja-ji, when his protection is particularly invoked by the rural population of Rajasthan even today.

Part of the epic tale of Dev Narayan-ji (born c.1243), also called Deva, son of the Bagdavati chief Bhoja and his Gurjar wife, Seydu, centres around conflict concerning cattle-wealth and the seeking of revenge for a wrong done to the Bagdavati sub-clan. Finally, Dev Narayan-ji, with the assistance of his half-brother, Bhuna, succeeds in killing Baghraj Parihar, chief of Bhinai (near Ajmer), who had been responsible for the deaths of Bhoja and other relatives years earlier, and rescuing stolen cows. Venerated by many, including Gujars (Gurjars), his shrines at Asind (Bhilwara district) and other places, draw numerous devotees.

Equally venerated in Rajasthani memory are the deified warrior-saints Ramdeo-ji, Harbhu-ji Sankhla and Goga-ji Chauhan. Goga-ji, son of Vacha Raj, Tod informs us, “.. .held the whole of ‘Jungul-des’ [Jangal], or the forest lands from the Sutlej to Heriana [Haryana]; his capital, called Mehera, or as pronounced, *Goga ca Mairi*, was on the Sutlej. In defending this he fell, with forty-five sons and sixty nephews; and...that day is held sacred to the *manes* of Goga by the ‘thirty-six classes’ throughout Rajpootana, but especially in the desert, a portion of which is yet called *Gogadeo ca t’hul*. Even his steed, *Javadia* has been immortalised and has become a favourite name for a war-horse”¹⁶⁸. He too is regarded as providing protection from snake-bite.

Ramdeo-ji (c.1358-1385), son of Maina-Dey and Ajmal-ji Tanwar, is reputed to have performed miracles from his infancy onwards, which made his name known across western Rajasthan. He attracted followers and adherents, and is regarded as an incarnation of Vishnu by some, and as a Muslim saint by others. He married Princess Neytal-Dey of Amarkot, granted Pokhran to his nephew, established the settlement of Runecha — now better known as Ramdevra, and is popularly believed to have entered living *samadhi* when his ‘tasks’ on earth were completed. Harbu-ji (b.1405), son of Maharaj Sankhla of Bhundel (Nagaur), was one of those who had come into contact with Ramdeo-ji, and following his lead, become a disciple of the latter’s guru, Balinath-ji. As a *sanyasi* (one who has

renounced worldly ties), Harbu-ji became known as a warrior-*yogi*. At a later point in his life, he blessed Rao Jodha and gave him his own dagger as a token. The settlement of Baingti is sacred to his memory.

Hinduism and Jainism were popular, and within the broader folds of these, there were numerous popular sects and groups too during this time, including those of the Lakulish Saivites, Jain sub-sects etc. Contacts with other parts of the subcontinent were a feature that affected religious life too. Thus, there were Rajasthan-born individuals like Dhanna — born in a Jat family in AD 1419, who went away to Banaras, became a follower of saint Ramanand and is remembered for his preachings and sayings, some of which are incorporated into the holy book of the Sikhs, namely, the *Guru Granth Sahib*, and there were devout people born in other parts of India — like the saints Ramanand and Raidas — whose influence permeated through to Rajasthan. Devotional poetry, exemplified by works like the *Tatvayetta* of the Vaishnav saint Jaitaran of Marwar, who flourished in the early fifteenth century AD, was a major aspect of contemporaneous life too, therefore. In addition, recent research also indicates that the Ismaili sect of Muslim preachers of Iran (Persia) was active in Sindh, Gujarat and Rajasthan during this time, and that the Ismailis influenced many local belief-systems and individual ('Hindu') preacher-reformers of western India in the thirteenth-fifteenth centuries.

Among the numerous sects and sub-sects, the Naths were important across much of northern and central India as a whole during this general period¹⁶⁹. While we cannot deal at length with the history of the various Nath sects known to Rajasthan, it should be kept in mind that many sites have had long traditional ties with the Nath teachers. For example, Harasaur was an important centre for a Nath sect established by Ramachandra in AD fourteenth century, and inscriptions provide the names of many local Nath-*panth* sages and their disciples. A later inscription at Harasaur, dating to AD 1546, records that Sanukha Nath accepted Surasa Nath as his disciple. The 'Nirgyani' sages who followed the teachings of Narasimha also flourished at Harasaur during this period.

Among the many other sects that flourished or were established during this period, one that still has a major presence in modern-day

Rajasthan is the community known as Bishnoi. This was founded by Jambho-ji. It is generally held that Jambho-ji was born at the village of Pipasar in western Rajasthan in c. AD 1451 His father, Lohat, belonged to the Panwar clan of Rajputs, and his mother, Hansa, was a Bhati Rajput from Chhapar. The young Jambho, set to grazing and herding cattle by the time he was seven, is believed to have expounded his first *shabad*, in which he talked about the importance of a teacher, at a very early age. (*'Shabad'* literally means 'word', but here it implies a religious/ moral discourse). He continued to herd cattle for nearly three decades thereafter, during which time his 'special' powers and accurate predictions gained public recognition across a wide area of surrounding countryside.

In 1483, after the death of both his parents within five months of each other, Jambho-ji renounced his property and took to an ascetic's life on a sand-dune at Sambharthal, near Pipasar. When a severe famine affected western Rajasthan, Jambho-ji provided help to the people and their animals, and became known for this as much as for his piety. Probably he had already started putting his eco-friendly tenets into practice. In the early winter of 1485 November, he formally initiated his uncle, Poolo, as first his disciple. His following grew rapidly thereafter, taking on the shape of a distinct sect. Followers came from different castes and sub-castes, and included the Jats (probably descendants of the Scythians who entered India in early historical times), Rajputs, merchants, as well as lesser castes. Some Muslims also become Jambho-ji's followers. It is believed that Marwar State's war kettledrum, or *nagara*, known as '*Bairisal*', was given to Rao Jodha by Jambho-ji.

Jambho-ji prescribed twenty-nine tenets. They included a vow to lead a simple life; vegetarianism, (which many people, particularly the Rajputs, did not practice at the time); abstinence from intoxicants, liquor, opium etc.; treating animals humanely; protecting living trees and foliage; not worshipping idols; etc. According to some versions, the sect is called 'Bishnoi' in acknowledgement of these twenty-nine dictums. However, others aver that the term 'Bishnoi' is derived from Vishnu's name (whom the sect venerates), and 'Bishnoi' is a corruption of 'Vishnoi'. Unlike most Hindus who cremate their dead (and thereby use up wood, a precious commodity in the desert), the Bishnois practice burial. Jambho-ji himself

was buried, at a place that came to be called Mukam (literally, a destination, or goal, or journey's end), following his death in AD 1536. A temple was subsequently built here by Jambho-ji's disciples, and now an annual fair is held at Mukam.

Jambho-ji repeatedly stressed that trees were important for life, and ensured that his followers created micro-level eco-friendly and wildlife-friendly havens around their respective villages; through planting trees, not cutting down any trees; through protecting birds and animals and not allowing anyone to kill within these little mini-preserves. In the centuries following Jambho-ji's death, the Bishnoi community flourished and with them, so did the wildlife and islands of foliage and greenery amidst a desert-land. (In AD 1730 came an acid test, when men serving Marwar's Maharaja Abhay Singh arrived in the village of Khejadli with the stated intention of cutting down the local trees, as wood was needed for the preparation of lime for construction purposes. The local Bishnois rallied to the site and objected vehemently, but to no avail. Finally, as the maharaja's wood-cutters advanced to chop down the trees, a woman called Amrita Devi locked her arms around a tree and challenged the wood-cutters to kill her first. She died at the hands of the wood-cutters, as did nearly three hundred and sixty-three other men, women and children. When the news of the wanton killings reached the maharaja, he passed a directive, forbidding in perpetuity the felling of green trees across the length and breadth of the entire kingdom of Marwar¹⁷⁰).

Trade and commerce was probably affected by general political conditions during this period, but contemporaneous records indicate that the merchants and caravans etc. carried on their work in both favourable and adverse conditions. As in previous centuries, established routes enabled the long-distance flow of goods. However, Rajasthan must have been affected to some extent by economic measures taken in the powerful and expanding neighbouring Delhi Sultanate. For example, Sultan Alauddin Khilji's market reforms and agricultural policy, which in part involved the registration of traditional banjara traders, to whom the Sultanate's peasantry was forced to sell their produce at low prices, which the banjaras carried to the towns and sold at prices fixed by the state, probably affected banjaras traversing and trading in Rajasthan. Also, as parts of Rajasthan were under

Alauddin Khilji's control, it would suggest that goods and traders from Sultanate-held areas of Rajasthan were subject to the sultan's policies.

The role and importance of the trading community becomes clear from the epigraphic and historical evidence from different kingdoms of this period. In Mewar, the richest among the mercantile community, (referred to mainly as '*Shreshthi*' during the c. twelfth-fifteenth centuries), made a major contribution not only to the trade and commerce but local art and architecture. Many of them belonged to the Jain faith, and had been bestowed titles like '*Jagat Seth*' (world merchant) or '*Nagar Seth*' (city merchant) by various local rulers. For example, *Shreshthi* Ralha was an important merchant, who organised many pilgrimages for the Jain community as well as Jain religious gatherings at Chittor during the first half of the thirteenth century, when Rawal Jaitra Simha ruled Chittor. Similarly, we learn that when the Jain teacher, Jinprabodh Suri visited Chittor in AD 1227, *Shreshthi* Dhandhal had idols of Jain Tirthankars installed within the '*Dev-kulika*' of the Shanti Nath temple.

Various titles, and occasionally personal names, of the councillors, ministers or administrative officials of some of the states of Rajasthan during this period are available to us from epigraphs. For example, the Sarnath Inscription tells us about a council that assisted Mewar's ruler in routine administration. Similarly, the Eklingaji Inscription lists designations like 'keeper of the fort', 'commander of the forces', 'confidential adviser of the State' etc. Such inscriptions inform us that Mewar's officials bore titles like *amatya* (secretary or minister), *sandhivigrahika* (minister for 'treaties' and external relations), *akshapatalika* (in charge of records), *bhishakacharya* (medical officer), *durgaraja* (fort-commander), *skandavarika* (officer for the army) etc. Some literary works refer to a '*pradhan*' or 'chief', who served as the ruler's prime minister or chief administrator in some kingdoms. However, not all the kingdoms used identical terminology.

The division of a state into units of administration was in vogue. The inscriptions of the Chauhans, the Guhilots and the Rathores not only testify to the existence of units within the states, but also throw light on the administrative pattern of the units variously known as the *gram*, *mandal*

and the *durg*. The head of the *mandal* was known as the *mandalpati* and that of the fort (*durg*) as *durgaraj* or *talarashan*. The head of a village was referred to as the *gramapati* or *gramik*.

It was during the thirteenth century that the practice of giving land as *jagir*, with associated rights and powers to govern it and collect its revenues, to officers or others in lieu of cash salary, was introduced by the early sultans of Delhi. The land-holding was called *jagir* after the Persian word *jagir*, meaning ‘to hold land’, and the holder was known as a *jagirdar*. The gift of a *jagir* could be either conditional or unconditional. If the *jagir* was granted with conditions attached to it, it meant that some form of service was expected in return, such as the collection and maintenance of troops for the benefit of the kingdom. An assignment of land was usually made for life, and on the death of the holder, that *jagir* estate reverted to the state, though it was possible for the heir to renew it on the payment of a fee. The practice often led to important commanders or others, who were therefore also large estate-holders, to set up near-independent ‘dominions’ of their own on their *jagirs*. The practice of handing out *jagirs* was slowed by Sultan Ghiyas-ud-Din Balban, abolished by Sultan Alauddin Khilji, but revived again by Sultan Firoze Shah Tughlaq. In time, the kingdoms of Rajasthan — where somewhat similar practices of handing out land-grants were already known — also began to use the term *jagir*. This was more so during the period of the Mughal emperors, when even the rulers of Rajput kingdoms and chiefdoms who had accepted Mughal suzerainty were granted personal *jagirs*, as we shall note in a later chapter.

RAJASTHAN AT THE END OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

The fourteenth-fifteenth centuries AD were, to some extent, a period of small states being incorporated by, or coalescing into, larger kingdoms. In fact, the entire c. AD 1200-1500 period shows how the break up of a set of large states towards the end of the twelfth and beginning of the thirteenth centuries was followed by an interim of uncertainty, in which a number of small states sought to establish themselves over the next century or so. This process was followed, once again, by the more powerful — or more fortunate — of these smaller states expanding their hegemony over other

neighbours, till geographically and physically larger states were again in place over different parts of Rajasthan. By the end of the fifteenth century, some of these states, among them Mewar and Marwar, were strong challengers for positions of eminence in northern India.

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- ¹ See, S.A.A. Rizvi *The Wonder That Was India (Volume II) 1200-1700*, 1993, pp.21-22.
 - ² See S.A.A. Rizvi in A.L. Basham (Ed.) *A Cultural History of India*, OUP, Delhi, 1975 [rep.1977], pp.248.
 - ³ G.N. Sharma 'The Chauhans of Ranthambhor', in M. Habib and K.A. Nizami (Eds.) *A Comprehensive History of India*, Vol.5, Pt.2, *Indian History Congress*, People's Pub. House, Delhi, 1970 [2nd ed, 1992], pp.829.
 - ⁴ D. Sharma, *op.cit.*, 1966, pp.616.
 - ⁵ K.C. Jain, *Ancient Cities and Towns of Rajasthan*, 1972, pp.331.
 - ⁶ See Dasharatha Sharma, 1966, pp.619-634.
 - ⁷ Sanchore remained of strategic, as well as habitational, importance from the tenth century AD onwards (see Jain, 1972, pp. 198-203). The AD 1288 Vayeshvara Temple Inscription records a donation made by 'Mehars' (?Mers) Prabha, Padam and Aspal, during the reign of the Chauhan king, Samant Singh.
 - ⁸ Dasharatha Sharma, 1966, pp.638.
 - ⁹ A leading Sultanate commander who hoped to become sultan of Delhi, but lacked adequate support.
 - ¹⁰ Balban's copper coins found from many parts of Rajasthan may be seen in various government museums in Rajasthan. They have his name in Persian and Devnagari, and are inscribed 'Ghiyas-ud-din Sultan'.
 - ¹¹ Alauddin's silver coins found in Rajasthan weigh 170 grains, and have the words 'As-Sultan-ul-Azam-Alauddin-Wadin-Abu Muzaffar Muhammad Shah' and 'Sikandar-Sani-Amirul-Momnin' in Persian.
 - ¹² K.S. Lal, 'Chauhan Resistance: Hammir and Kanhad Deo', in S.S. Ratnawat and K.G. Sharma (Eds.) *History and Culture of Rajasthan*. Centre for Rajasthan Studies, Univ. of Rajasthan, Jaipur, 1999, pp.116.
 - ¹³ The names of some of these were *arrada*, *gargach* and *manjniq*.
 - ¹⁴ K.S. Lal in Ratnawat and Sharma (Eds.), 1999, pp.118.

- [15](#) Ibid.
- [16](#) According to scholars, Amir Khusrau's contemporary writing on the siege of Ranthambore is medieval India's first recorded account in the Persian language about the rite of *jauhar*.
- [17](#) Lal, *op.cit.*, 1999, pp.118-119.
- [18](#) The Dariba Prashasti inscription of VS 1359 throws some light on the concerned period in general.
- [19](#) Born in India around AD 1285 Barani was a friend of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq, and spent seventeen years in Delhi. In 1357, Barani wrote the *Tarikh-i-Firoze Shahi* ('History of Firoze Shah') mainly using hearsay evidence and his personal experiences at court. This work also set down the duties of a sultan. His text, *Fatwa-e-Jahandari*, was influenced by Sufi mysticism.
- [20](#) A.L. Srivastava '*The Sultanate of Delhi*', Shiva Lal Agarwala & Co., Agra, 1950 [1997 edition].
- [21](#) Ibid, pp.143-144.
- [22](#) Ibid, pp.144-145.
- [23](#) Ibid, pp.145.
- [24](#) Ibid, pp.145.
- [25](#) Tod, '*Annals and Antiquities...* Vol.1, pp.213-216.
- [26](#) K.S. Lal, *op.cit.*, in Ratnawat and Sharma (Eds.) 1999, pp.120.
- [27](#) K.S. Lal, Ibid, 1999, pp.120.
- [28](#) Padmanabha wrote at the court of Akhey Raj — one of Kanhar Deo's descendants.
- [29](#) Padmanabha wrote at the court of Akhey Raj — one of Kanhar Deo's descendants.
- [30](#) Padmanabha wrote at the court of Akhey Raj — one of Kanhar Deo's descendants.
- [31](#) S.A.A. Rizvi, in A.L. Basham (Ed.) 1975, pp.253.
- [32](#) Jain, 1972, pp.253.
- [33](#) Kabul was held by a Mongol/Mughal governor.
- [34](#) Rizvi, 1975, pp.258.
- [35](#) Nagda retained its importance as a site for pilgrimage by different religious sects, including the Jains.
- [36](#) Ojha, *Rujputane ka Itihas* (Udaipur Rajya ka Itihas), Vol. I, pp.473.

- [37](#) Ibid, pp.477; & Jain, 1972, pp.227.
- [38](#) Guhila descendants who gained mastery of the Dungarpur area, however, used the title of 'Rawal', and later 'Maharawal' until all titles and 'royal' privileges were abolished by an Indian Constitutional Amendment in the third quarter of the twentieth century AD.
- [39](#) Tod, *op.cit.*, [reprinted 1957], Volume I, pp.215.
- [40](#) Ibid, pp.217.
- [41](#) R.C. Majumdar, in Majumdar (Ed.) *The Delhi Sultanate*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, Bombay, 1960, pp.70.
- [42](#) Tod [reprinted 1957] pp.22).
- [43](#) Ibid.
- [44](#) Ibid, pp.221-222.
- [45](#) See P.T. Craddock, I.C. Freestone, L.K. Gurjar, K.T.M. Hegde and V.H. Sonavane's 'Early Zinc Production in India', *Mining Magazine*, January 1985, pp.45-52; and P.T. Craddock and M.J. Hughes (Eds.) *Ancient Smelting and Furnace Technology*, British Museum Occasional Paper 48, London, 1985.
- [46](#) Tod *op.cit.*, Vol.I, [reprinted 1957] pp.221-222.
- [47](#) Ibid, pp.223.
- [48](#) The AD 1428 Samidheshwar Temple Inscription refers to Rana Mokal building a Vishnu temple.
- [49](#) Tod, *op.cit.*, Vol. I, pp.225. Apparently a son of the Guhila king, Bappa Rawal, was previously worshipped in this manner. (Ibid, pp.225, f.n.1).
- [50](#) Jain, *op.cit.*, 1972, pp.356.
- [51](#) The traditional bards, or 'Badvas' of Sirohi list Pratap by the name of Devraj (Deovda), and hold that the Deoras / Devras take their clan appellative from this Devraj.
- [52](#) G.H. Ojha, *Sirohi Rajya ka Itibas*, Rajasthani Granthagar, Jodhpur, 1911 [rep. 1999], pp.183-184.
- [53](#) Ibid, pp. 187-189.
- [54](#) Some of the genealogies give the names of four sons of Beejad as Lavanyakarna, Loond (also called Lumbha), Lakshman and Lunavarma (Luna). The death of Lavanyakarna in the lifetime of Beejad left Lumbha as the eldest surviving son of Beejad.
- [55](#) Ojha, 1911 [rep. 1999], pp. 187-189.
- [56](#) Ojha, 1911 [rep. 1999], pp.184, 189.

- [57](#) Vashishtha Inscription of VS 1394, or AD 1337, among others.
- [58](#) Several inscriptions of c. AD 1321-1344 from the Achaleshwar temple provide valuable information.
- [59](#) Ojha, 1911 [rep. 1999], pp. 192-193.
- [60](#) Ibid, pp.193.
- [61](#) Descendants of Ranmal's second son, Gaja, became known as Dungarot Deoras, taking their appellation from Gaja's son, Dungar.
- [62](#) K.C.Jain, 1972, pp.163.
- [63](#) Ojha, 1911 [rep. 1999], pp.200.
- [64](#) *Tod, Annals and Antiquities...*, Vol.II, 'Annals of Haravati', Boondi, Ch.I, pp.371.
- [65](#) *Tod, Annals and Antiquities...*, Vol.II, 'Annals of Haravati', Boondi, Ch.I, pp.363, f.n.6.
- [66](#) Ibid, pp.374.
- [67](#) Ibid, pp.375-376.
- [68](#) *Tod, op.cit.*, Vol.II, 'Annals of Jessulmer', Ch.III, 1832 [rep.1957], pp.197.
- [69](#) Ibid, pp.198.
- [70](#) Ibid, pp. 197-198.
- [73](#) Dasharatha Sharma, 1966, pp.680-681.
- [74](#) Ibid, pp.681.
- [75](#) Ibid.
- [76](#) *Tod, op.cil.*, pp. 199-200.
- [77](#) Ibid, pp.200-201.
- [78](#) Cited in Jain, 1972, pp.372.
- [79](#) See Jain, 1972, pp.375.
- [80](#) Information provided by (Rani) Laxmi Kumari Chundawat, who has studied and written much on the traditional annals, oral accounts and folk-songs of Rajasthan.
- [81](#) Jain, 1972, pp.375-376.

- ⁸³ Bhatner, like many towns of medieval Rajasthan, was a centre of Jainism through this general period, and also was a seat of the teachers of Jainism's '*Bada-gachchha*' sub-sect,
- ⁸³ For more on Rathore origins, see D. Sharma's *Rajasthan Through the Ages*, Vol.1, 1966, pp.687-690.
- ⁸⁴ Pali was an important centre of trade over the centuries. In the nineteenth century, it lay on the route used for transporting opium from Malwa to China. During that period, nearly two thousand camels loaded with opium are said to have passed through Pali annually. Pali's traders imported printed cloth from European countries.
- ⁸⁵ The Paliwal family that long served as hereditary *raj-purohits* (state priests) of Mewar traces its descent from Sarsal, who came from Sanderao (Pali) in the thirteenth century, and was appointed 'Raj-Purohit' by Rana Rahap. (Apparently on the advice of a Jain teacher Yashobhadra Suri, who had, according to Jain tradition, cured Rahap — possibly of leprosy). A later descendant, Garibdas was a key-adviser to Maharana Raj Singh I, and at the ceremony marking the completion of the Raj-Samand, he was granted a jagir of twelve villages by the Maharana, along with the privilege of performing 'Tuladan' in gold. Many Paliwals were, over time, given jagirs and *muafi* lands by various Mewar kings. In the twentieth century, Paliwals were politically active in Mewar. Vaidya Bhawani Shankar was among the founders of the Mewar Praja Mandal, and Prof. Narayandas, Nandlal Joshi and Raghunath Paliwal among the activists-leaders jailed during the Mewar Praja Mandal Satyagraha in 1939 and the Quit India Movement in 1942.
- ⁸⁶ Some of the Paliwals settled in Dhoondhar. In the twentieth century, Tika Ram Paliwal, a lawyer from Hindaun served as President of the Jaipur Rajya Praja Mandal and revenue minister for Jaipur State. Later, he became revenue minister and chief minister of modern Rajasthan.
- ⁸⁷ Memorial tablets or pillars generally fall into two categories: a four-sided one, with symbolic figures and inscribed lines on all sides; or a stone-slab with a relief figure and epitaph on its front portion only.
- ⁸⁸ Cited in *The House of Bikaner: Being a Narrative of the Antiquity, Lineage and Traditions, the High Izzat and Dignity and Rank and Status, the Potential Political and Military Power, and the Prestige, Influence and Importance of the Bikaner State and its Rulers from Ancient Times*, Govt. Press, Bikaner, 1933, pp.77.
- ⁸⁹ Khed and its religious and architectural aspects are briefly detailed in Jain, 1972, pp.297-301.
- ⁹⁰ G.H. Ojha *Jodhpur Rajya ka Itihas*, Vol.1, pp.167.
- ⁹¹ L.P. Tessitori, cited in *The House of Bikaner, Bikaner*, 1933, pp.77.
- ⁹² L. P. Tessitori, op.cit., 1933, pp.77.
- ⁹³ Jain *Ancient Cities and Towns of Rajasthan* 1972, pp.311.
- ⁹⁴ Merta, known also as Medantaka, Medatapura and Medanipura, had been taken by Delhi's sultan, Alauddin Khilji, and Taj-ud Ali appointed as its governor. In 1468, it was taken by Jodha's son, Duda.

- [95](#) Possibly taken on Jodha's behalf by Prince Nara, who is also credited with occupying Pokhran.
- [96](#) Tod, *The Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Vol.II ([1957 Ed.] Annals of Bikaner, Ch.I, pp.140.
- [97](#) Ibid, pp.145.
- [98](#) Tod, *op.cit.*, (chapter on *Annals of Bikaner*), pp. 142-43.
- [99](#) Ibid, pp. 143.
- [100](#) See, P.W. Powlett *Gazetteer of the Bikaner State*, 1874. (Reprinted Govt. Press, Bikaner, 1932).
- [101](#) Pandit Jhabarmal Sharma *Sikar Ka Itihas*, Rajasthan Agency, Calcutta, 1922.
- [102](#) M.L. Sharma *History of the Jaipur State*, 1969, pp.17.
- [103](#) Tod, *op.cit.*,1832 [1957], Vol.II, pp.280.
- [104](#) Tod, Ibid, pp.282.
- [105](#) Raghubir Singh's editorial 'Notes' in Jadunath Sarkar's *A History of Jaipur*, Orient Longman, Hyderabad, 1984, pp.28.
- [106](#) VS. Bhargava *The Rise of the Kachhawas in Dhundhar (Jaipur)*, Shabd Sanchar, Ajmer & New Delhi, 1979, pp.4.
- [107](#) Tod *Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'han*, 1832 [1957], Vol.II, pp.281.
- [108](#) Jadunath Sarkar *A History of Jaipur*, Orient Longman, Hyderabad, 1984.
- [109](#) Ibid, pp.22.
- [110](#) M.L. Sharma, *History of the Jaipur State*, 1969, pp.21.
- [111](#) In his *Rajasthan ka Itihas*, 1998, pp.105, G.N. Sharma places the establishment of Dulha Rai's kingdom around 1137 AD while Tod, as already noted above, dates the event to AD 967.
- [112](#) Tod, *op.cit.* Vol.II, pp.281-282.
- [113](#) Sarkar *op cit.* 1984, pp.23.
- [114](#) Sarkar Ibid, 1984, pp.24.
- [115](#) M.L.Sharma *op cit.*, 1969, pp.23.
- [116](#) Sarkar *op cit.*, 1984, pp.23.
- [117](#) See, among others, Fateh Singh Champawat's *A Brief History of Jeypore State*, 1889, pp.10; & Tod, *op.cit.*, vol. II, pp.141, 303, 347-348.

- [118](#) See Jhabarmal Sharma, op.cit., 1922, pp.6-8.
- [119](#) Pandit Jhabarmal Sharma, in his *Sikar Ka Itihas*, Rajasthan Agency, Calcutta, 1922, pp.6, notes that Moidal Rao was another of Kakildev's names, while Tod states that Moidal Rao was Kakil's son.
- [120](#) Sarkar, 1984, pp.24.
- [121](#) Ibid.
- [122](#) Dasharatha Sharma, 1966, pp.697.
- [123](#) In the traditions of the time, the name 'Nirvan-ji' recorded in the genealogical listing of the bards is not her first name, but that of her clan — the Nirvan Rajputs.
- [124](#) Ranbir Singh, *History of Shekhawats*, Publications Scheme, Jaipur, 2001.
- [125](#) Durga's descendants are called Taknet', from 'Rani Tankan-ji' as Durga's mother was called.
- [126](#) A text studied by G.H. Ojha and cited in D. Sharma 1966, pp.697-698.
- [127](#) G.N. Sharma, *Rajasthan Through the Ages*, Vol.II, 1990, pp.87.
- [128](#) See Jagdish Singh Gahlot's *History of Rajputana*, pp.602-03 & Ram Pande, 2002, pp.282.
- [129](#) In 1516, Delhi's Sultan Sikandar Lodi visited Tahangarh. In 1526, Alam Khan was its fort-commander.
- [130](#) G.N. Sharma, *Rajasthan Through the Ages*. (Vol.II), Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner, 1990, pp.112, gives the names of two such powerful chiefs as Mahesh and Mangal.
- [131](#) P.W. Powlett, *Gazetteer of Ulwar*, pp.4.
- [132](#) Ibid.
- [133](#) Shail Mayaram, *Resisting Regimes — Myth, Memory and the Shaping of a Muslim Identity*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1997, pp.26.
- [134](#) Referred to by some as the 'Yadu Bhattis of Mewat' (See Jain, 1972, pp.364).
- [135](#) A.B.M. Habibullah, *Foundation of Muslim Rule in India*, pp.101.
- [136](#) Ibid, pp.152-154.
- [137](#) Maya Ram (ed.) 1968. *Rajasthan District Gazetteers — Alwar. Govt. of Rajasthan*, pp.47.
- [138](#) An eulogy in Yashakirti's *Harivamsa-Purana*, written at Indor in AD 1443, states that a jalal Khan ruled Indor at that date. Historians believe he can be identified as Jallu.

- [139](#) The *Cambridge History of India* (Vol.III, pp.229), indicates that Ahmad Khan submitted without a battle, surrendered seven parganas to Bahlol, and agreed to hold the rest of his territory as a fief of Delhi.
- [140](#) P.W. Powlett, *Gazetteer of Ulwar*, pp.5.
- [141](#) Ranbir Singh, *History of Shekhawats*, 2001.
- [142](#) Jain, 1972, pp.244.
- [143](#) Ibid.
- [144](#) As governor of Gujarat, Zafar Khan was bestowed the titles of 'Muzaffar Khan' and 'Azam Humayun' by Sultan Nasir-ud-din Muhammad Tughlaq.
- [145](#) K.C. Jain, 1972, pp.245.
- [146](#) Ibid, pp.246.
- [147](#) A.K. Majumdar, in R.C. Majumdar (Ed.) *The Delhi Sultanate*, chapter X, Bombay, 1960, pp.162.
- [148](#) Didwana came under Mughal control during Akbar's reign, and construction was carried out in the names of different emperors up to Aurangzeb's time. 'Did-Darwaza' is attributed to Aurangzeb's governor, Didar Khan.
- [149](#) The Akbari mosque at Nagaur's Nakkhas *mohalla* was built in AD 1564-65 (*Hijri* 972) in Akbar's reign.
- [150](#) Amar Singh's sixteen-pillared cenotaph '*chhatri*', made of yellow sandstone, is located at Nagaur.
- [151](#) Rizvi, *op.cit.*, 1993, pp.242-243, provides a summary of the Shaikh's life and work at Nagaur.
- [152](#) Ibid, pp.256.
- [153](#) See Vyas *op.cit.*, 1978, pp.2-3; Mann, 1978a, pp.19-20; Chauhan, 1978, pp.32-35; Hooja, 1984.
- [154](#) K.C. Jain, 1972, pp.241.
- [155](#) Sharma, 1966.
- [156](#) Tod, *op.cit.*, Vol.II, pp.282.
- [157](#) Ibid, pp.282-283.
- [158](#) Ibid, pp.283.
- [159](#) For some discussion on the Meds reaching Rajput status, see among others, B.N.S. Yadava's *Society and Culture in Northern India in the Twelfth Century*, Allahabad, 1973.

[160](#) Jain, 1972, pp.439.

[161](#) Ibid.

[162](#) See Tod, *op. cit.*, Vol.1, pp.538-543.

[163](#) Ibid, pp. 543.

[164](#) Information provided by Rani Laxmi Kumari Chundawat.

[165](#) Tod collected a manuscript with some Meena genealogies, which this writer is in the process of examining, courtesy of the library and Council of the Royal Asiatic Society.

[166](#) G.H. Ojha, 1936, pp.69-71.

[167](#) Much has been written on India's Bhakti Movement and Sufi saints of this period of South Asia's history elsewhere, and we need not discuss this aspect further here.

[168](#) Tod, *Annals and Antiquities...*, Vol.II, pp.362.

[169](#) There is a hoary popular tradition, and a vast body of literature pertaining to different centuries on the Naths, including G.W Briggs's *Gorakhnath and the Kanphata Yogis*, (Calcutta, 1938), 3rd Edition Motilal Banarasidass, Delhi, 1982.

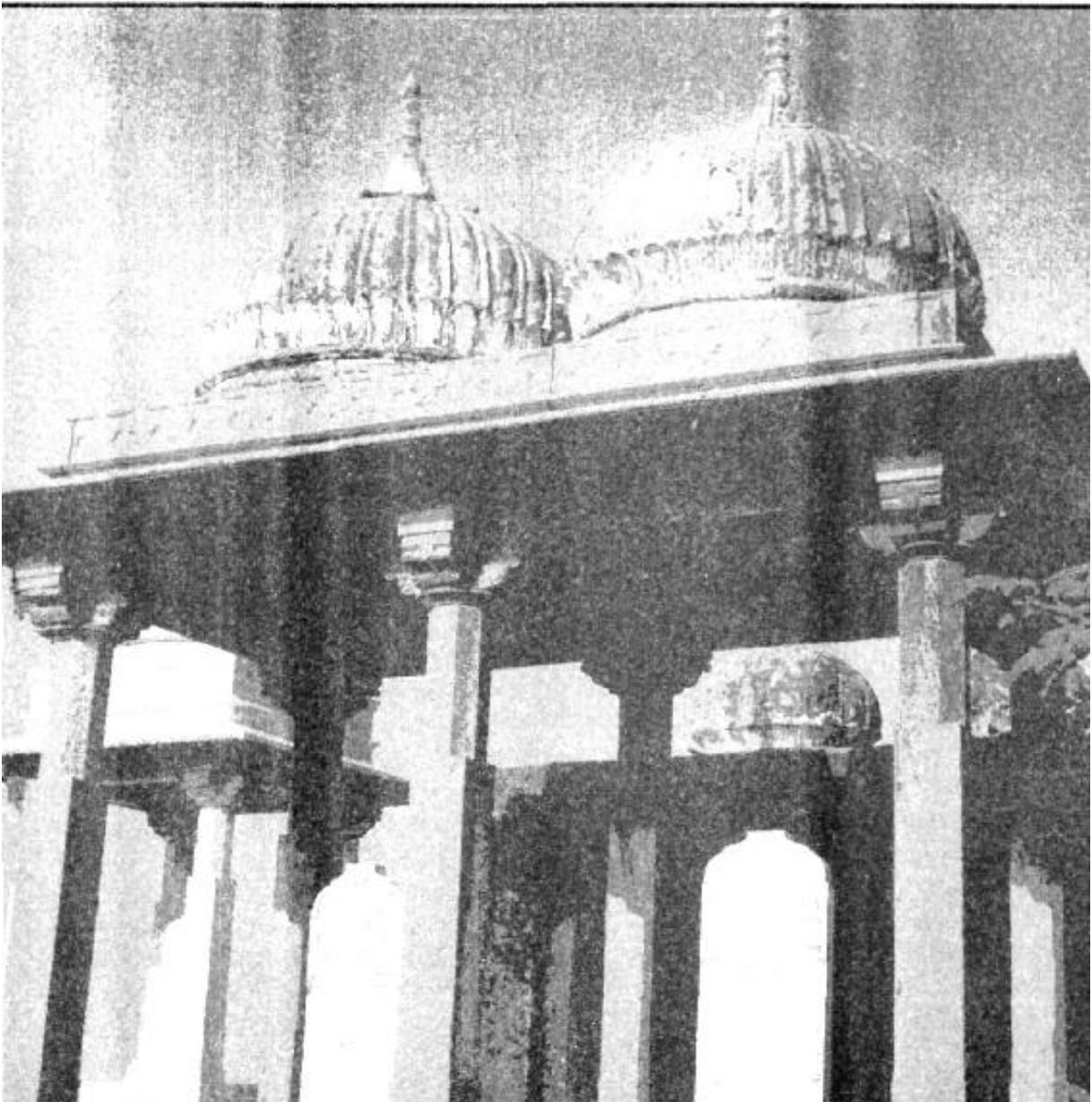
[170](#) In the past decade or so, the Indian government has instituted an award in the name of Amrita Devi for work towards saving the environment.

SECTION
FOUR



7

RAJASTHAN BETWEEN
C. AD 1500-AD 1600



INTRODUCTION



BY THE BEGINNING OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY, THE ENTITY OF various local kingdoms that had survived the vagaries of fortune and warfare through the previous centuries was firmly established. Thereafter, for the first couple of decades of the century there was a broad continuity regarding most matters within Rajasthan, including the relationships of various states with each other. This was also, generally speaking, true as far as the interactions of the Rajasthani kingdoms and chiefdoms with other neighbouring areas of Malwa, Gujarat, Sindh, Multan, Punjab, and the Delhi Sultanate region were concerned. To an extent, this state of affairs extended even after the First Battle of Panipat (1526) — which saw the end of the Lodi-ruled Delhi Sultanate, and the Battle of Khanua (1527) — when Babur, the Timurid Mughal chief of Kabul, was victorious over a powerful confederacy led by Mewar's Rana Sanga. It may be said to have continued into the period of Babur's successor, Humayun, and during the period that Sher Shah Sur and his successors held power, before Humayun managed to re-take control over northern India.

The situation altered significantly for the states of Rajasthan with the consolidation of Mughal authority under Emperor Akbar (r. 1556-1605), as we shall see further in this chapter. By and large, the larger states that went into alliance with, or else outlasted merger into, the Mughal Empire by Akbar, would, with minor changes, continue in existence until their eventual merger into Independent India in the mid-twentieth century. (As such, from this point onwards we shall look at the sections on various kingdoms of Rajasthan that were already in existence prior to this time

without adding the name of its ruling clan to its subheading wherever these are mainly continuations of the previous territorial domains or status quos).

Perhaps one may also underline here that while history is a composite of the actions of groups and events, and *not* solely the actions of a limited elite, there are periods when the choices made by various individuals go a long way in influencing — and possibly determining — the course of future events. This was true for Rajasthan in the sixteenth century, particularly in the case of rulers like Rana Sanga of Mewar (r. 1508-1528), Rao Maldeo of Marwar (r. 1531 -1562), Rana Pratap of Mewar (r. 1572-1597), and Raja Man Singh of Amber (r. 1589-1614), among others. Their interactions with contemporaneous rulers, including those of Delhi, Malwa, Gujarat determined the choices available to the populations over whom they were clan-leaders, kin, and ‘masters’. The results of warfare too played their part — as in the case of the battles of Khanua (1527), Samel (1544), Haldighati (1576), and numerous sieges which, as in previous centuries, continued to be a feature that influenced the lives of multitudes of people in the area. So too did the choice of ‘alliance’ or otherwise with the powerful Mughal Empire under Akbar and his successors, made by the ruling groups of different Rajasthani kingdoms and chiefdoms, affect the fates and fortunes of their subjects at large (as we shall see below).

THE SULTANATE OF DELHI, THE MUGHALS AND THE SUR DYNASTY RULERS

Before turning to the individual states of Rajasthan, let us first look at their powerful neighbour, the Delhi Sultanate and its successor Mughal (and Sur-ruled) empire, and their mutual inter-relationship during the sixteenth century. By the time that the fifteenth century drew to a close, Sikandar Lodi’s reign (r. 1489-1517) had begun to provide strength, security and territories to the Delhi Sultanate.

The Delhi Sultanate continued to remain a powerful adversary for several of the kingdoms and chiefdoms of Rajasthan (as well as other contiguous regions like Gujarat and Malwa) in the ensuing period. In 1502, the Delhi Sultanate’s forces marched against the Tanwar Rajput held

kingdom of Dholpur, but the fierce resistance of the ruler, Vinayak Dev, beat back the attackers, forcing the sultan to personally take the field. Dholpur was invested, its ruler forced to seek shelter at Gwalior (though he temporarily recovered Dholpur later, before losing it a final time), and Sikandar Lodi was able to concentrate on other conquests. The death of Jaunpur's ruler, Hussain Shah Sharqi, in 1505 freed Sultan Sikandar Lodi (r. 1489-1517) to deal afresh with regions to the south-west and west of the Delhi Sultanate.

Within a year, Sikandar Lodi had established the fortified town of Agra (1506), at what had before been a mere rural habitation. This served as an advance headquarters for campaigns against the chiefs and princes of the neighbouring areas. Besides campaigning against Gwalior, and conquering parts of the Sultanate of Malwa in 1514, and Narwar, Chanderi, etc. in central India, Sultan Sikandar Lodi also over-ran Nagaur in Rajasthan in 1510.

During the reign of Sikandar Lodi's eldest son and successor, Ibrahim Lodi (r. 1517-1526), the Delhi Sultanate clashed with some of the kingdoms of Rajasthan (as noted further in this chapter). Ibrahim's attempts at strengthening royal authority, and an unyielding attitude, including towards the Afghan nobles — some of whom were imprisoned and beheaded, made him unpopular. That added to the reasons leading Daulat Khan Lodi, governor of Punjab, and others to invite Babur — master of Kabul since 1505 — to overthrow Ibrahim Lodi.

Babur — the Mughal conquistador from Kabul and Samarkand, who went on to become the founder of the Mughal dynasty — traced his descent on his father's side from Timur (Tamerlane), and on his mother's side from Chengiz Khan (the Genghis Khan of western annals). He had previously invaded the Punjab four times. Following the assurance of support from various opponents and associates of Sultan Ibrahim Lodi, Babur marched against the Delhi Sultanate. On April 21, 1526, after days of clashes and skirmishes, a decisive battle took place at Panipat, about eighty kilometres north of Delhi, between the forces of Sultan Ibrahim Lodi of Delhi and Babur. The former is believed to have commanded a force of around 100,000 soldiers and a 1,000 elephants. Meanwhile, Babur's initial force of

about 12,000, with which he is said to have crossed the river Indus into northern India, had seen the addition of several Indian soldiers and nobles during his progress across the Punjab.

Even though Babur's force was numerically inferior to the armies amassed against it by Ibrahim Lodi, Babur had the advantage of guns and gun-powder. While gun-powder was not unknown in India, its use was apparently not common in Indian warfare at the time. Babur, on the other hand, had secured the services of two Ottoman Turk master-gunners called Ustad Ali and Mustafa. He was also familiar with the deployment of guns referred to as the 'Rumi' or 'Ottoman' device (so named after their use by the Ottoman Empire against Shah Ismail of Iran). Babur's memoirs tell us that in India he first used gun-powder during his attack on the fortress of Bhira. The wheeling tactics of Babur's cavalry also played their part.

The battle fought at Panipat is referred to as the First Battle of Panipat by historians. Ibrahim Lodi died, fighting valiantly to the last, and it was Babur who finally emerged victorious. The Lodi-governed Sultanate of Delhi gave way before Babur, who rapidly took control of the area up to Agra and Delhi, and then proceeded to establish his hold over the Indo-Gangetic valley at large. The Lodi treasury at Delhi and Agra became an asset to Babur at this point.

It soon became apparent that Babur (r. 1526-530) intended to consolidate his hold over India and to remain in the lands he had wrested here, instead of returning to Kabul¹. This soon brought Babur into conflict with Mewar's Rana Sanga, and in March 1527 the two led their forces against each other at the battlefield of Khanua (as detailed further below). Once again, Babur emerged victorious. The valorous Rana Sanga of Mewar died not long after from his wounds. Following the victory at Khanua, Babur moved against other challengers and by 1529 he had defeated the Afghans of eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

Following Babur's premature death in 1530, his dominions passed to his eldest son, Humayun (r. 1530-1540, and again 1555-56). Humayun inherited a kingdom that covered a large part of northern India, stretching from the Indus River on the west to Bihar on the east, and from the

Himalayas in the north, down to Gwalior in the south. However, despite Humayun's attempts to consolidate Mughal power in India, he was unable to blunt the growing might of a Sur Afghan named Farid Khan, who had gained the sobriquet of 'Sher Khan' and mastery over the fort of Chunar. Sher Khan rapidly became supreme in the Jaunpur, Bihar and Bengal area, proclaimed himself a ruler in 1538 in Bengal, and then went on to defeat Humayun at Chausa in June 1539 and Bilgram in May 1540. Bilgram gave Sher Khan the throne of northern India — which he ascended under the title of Sher Shah (r. 1540-1545), and forced Humayun to go into exile.

During his short reign, Sher Shah Suri introduced many administrative, military, and revenue-related reforms, which were to leave a deep-lasting impact on South Asia. Among these was Sher Shah's famous road-system running from Bengal to Peshawar — the forerunner of the 'Grand Trunk Road'. Sher Shah also "...reintroduced many healthy features of Ala-u'd-Din [Khilji]'s revenue system. The existing *parganas* were grouped in districts under the control of officers whose duties were carefully defined. The revenue was fixed on a measurement of land and carefully drawn schedule of rates...His decision to hold village headmen responsible for highway robbery and murder, and to compel them to restore losses of money and goods, restored peace in the villages and on the highways"².

On a different front, he successfully subjugated much of the northern part of the subcontinent, and clashed with several of the kingdoms of Rajasthan, including Marwar and Mewar. The brief reign of Sher Shah and his dream of a long-lasting Suri empire ended with his death in 1545 in an explosion during the siege of the fort of Kalinjar. He was over sixty years of age at the time. After Sher Shah, his second son, Jalal Khan, better known as Salim Shah, who was then at Rewa, succeeded him, taking the name of Sultan Islam Shah (r. 1545-1552).

The new Sultan took steps to strengthen his position against the intrigues of his brother, Adil Khan, who contested his accession, and the latter's supporters. His other measures to break the powerful clique of Afghan nobles included resuming *iqtas* previously bestowed on senior Afghan commanders, transferring them to newly created junior positions,

and ruthlessly suppressing a rebellion by the Niazi Afghans. He also ensured good governance and upgraded the army and artillery. Besides all this, to ensure a check on the activities of the Ghakkar tribe of the north-western frontier area, Islam Shah built a chain of fortresses on the upper Indus. This became known by the collective name of Mankot.

Islam Shah's premature death provided a death-blow to the Afghan Suri kingdom. Disorder and rivalry for supremacy soon wracked the land. Islam Shah's minor son, Firoze Shah, was murdered by the child's maternal uncle, Mubariz Khan — a nephew of Sher Shah (and thus Islam Shah's cousin as well as brother-in-law). Mubariz Khan ascended throne by the title of Muhammad Adil Shah (r. 1554-1556), or Adil Shah, as he is better known. Affairs of the state were mainly left to the sultan's minister, a Hindu named Hemu. Said to have started life as a dealer in saltpetre at Rewari, Hemu rose to high office through his own abilities³. He is believed to have been a resident of Machheri (also spelt Macheri) in Alwar district, and may have belonged to the merchant *bania* sub-caste called Dhusar, though there are some suggestions that, as Dhusar is also a sub-caste among Gaur Brahmins, Hemu may have been a Brahmin.

Within a short period, the provinces of Malwa and Bengal declared their independence. Several of Adil Shah's relatives took up arms against him, and two of his kinsmen, Ahmad Khan (later Sikandar Shah) and Ibrahim Khan (later Ibrahim Shah), both cousins of the late Sher Shah, staked their own respective claims to the throne. Hemu displayed intelligence, loyalty and leadership to deal with the situation. He is said to have won twenty-two battles for his sultan against the latter's rivals, Ibrahim Sur, Sikandar Sur, and Muhammad Shah Sur, and their supporters. The internal squabbles left Adil Shah holding the area between Agra, Malwa and Jaunpur, while Sikandar Shah Suri (r. 1555-56), a cousin of Sher Shah, and governor of Punjab, who had been declared emperor by his supporters, held the territories between Delhi and Rohtas. A third aspirant to Sher Shah's titles, Ibrahim Shah Suri (another cousin of Sher Shah), held lands extending towards Gujarat.

While this was the case with the successors to Sher Shah in India, the Mughal emperor-in-exile, Humayun, had found shelter with Shah Tahmasp

of Iran in August 1544, after many travels and travails, by way of Rajasthan and the Thar desert (as we shall see elsewhere in this chapter). His journey had taken him through Amarkot /Umarkot, where his son Akbar was born in October 1542, and past Qandhar, where his brother, Askari, sought to hold and imprison him. With some military assistance from the Shah, and the support of his brother, Hindal, Humayun took the Qandhar, Ghazni and Kabul tracts in Afghanistan from his brothers Askari and Kamran, captured Lahore in 1555, and moved towards Delhi. He met vigorous resistance from the Afghans, who gathered together to face him in battle at Sirhind. Victorious at Sirhind, Humayun continued his progress towards Delhi, and on July 23, 1555 sat once more upon the throne of Delhi. However, Humayun was not fated to hold the throne for long, and died on January 20, 1556, while descending in haste on the stairs of his library.

Humayun's heir-apparent, Akbar, at the time held the charge of governor of the Punjab, and was engaged in fighting the Afghans at Kalanaur (in modern Gurdaspur district), when he received news of the emperor's death. Humayun's loyal general, Bairam Khan, had already been charged with the guardianship of the young Mughal prince. Bairam promptly ensured the coronation of Akbar, and then helped his ward's attempt in gaining the throne of Delhi.

Akbar (r. 1556-1605), who consolidated the Mughal empire, is regarded as the greatest of the Mughal emperors (about whom much has been written elsewhere). An able and intelligent administrator, capable military commander and a gifted man, Akbar used warfare and diplomacy to extend the boundaries of his inheritance. He was successful in attaching practically all of northern and some parts of central India to the Mughal Empire, and used a combination of conciliation, alliances and military might to gain the support of contemporary Rajput states. Rajputs and other Hindus were taken into Imperial service — both civil and military. The efficient administrative and military structures that became established during this period would serve to strengthen and ensure the continuation of the Mughal Empire in the hands of his successors over the next century and a half or so.

However, that lay well in the future at the time Humayun died and left the young Akbar an uneasy crown, with many kinds of perils and dangers. For, not only did Akbar have only a small force at his command, Mughal hold over Punjab was not absolute either. On top of that, following the death of Humayun, the Afghans had driven out Mughal governors and officials from the Agra-Bayana area, and Mohammad Adil Shah Suri's minister Hemu, had defeated Tardi Beg Khan, the Mughal governor of Delhi on October 7, 1556, and occupied Delhi. (Delhi was suffering from a terrible famine at the time).

Adil Shah was at Chunar at the time, and Hemu decided to proclaim himself as an independent ruler. Vincent Smith notes that, "Hemu, who had won Delhi and Agra in the name of his master Adali, now began to reflect that his sovereign was a long way off, that he himself was in possession of the army and elephants, and that it might be better to gain a kingdom for his own benefit rather than for that of his absent employer. Accordingly, he distributed the spoil, excepting the elephants, among the Afghans who accompanied him and thus won them over to his side. With their concurrence he entered Delhi, raised the imperial canopy over his own head and exercised the most cherished privilege of sovereignty by striking coin in his own name (no coin struck by Hemu is known). He assumed the style of Raja Bikramjit or Vikramaditya, which had been borne by several of the most renowned Hindu monarchs in ancient times and so entered the field as a competitor for the throne of Hindustan against both Akbar and Sikandar Sur"⁴.

Hemu needed to consolidate his hold, but was soon forced to march at the head of a large army to meet the forces of Akbar. The two armies clashed at the battlefield of Panipat on November 5, 1556. The fiercely fought battle — known to history as the Second Battle of Panipat — took a crucial turn when Hemu was struck in the eye by an arrow. He lost consciousness, leaving his soldiers leaderless and ready to quit the field. With Bairam Khan quick to press the advantage, the battle of Panipat ended with victory for the young Akbar and the defeat and execution of Hemu. Akbar's forces soon occupied Agra and Delhi.

The Second Battle of Panipat brought to a decisive close the quest for supremacy between the Afghans and Mughals, and ensured the position of the young Mughal emperor, Akbar. Akbar, as is well known, subsequently went on to expand and consolidate the Mughal Empire across a considerable part of South Asia. (Of the Sur contenders, Adil Shah fell in battle against the governor of Bengal at Monghyr in 1556. Sikandar Shah Suri surrendered to the Mughals in May 1557, was given a fief in eastern India and subsequently expelled from it by Akbar, and died a fugitive in Bengal sometime during 1558-1559. Ibrahim Shah, after much wandering, took refuge in Orissa, where he was killed around 1567-68).

By 1562, Akbar was free to take his own decisions, untrammelled by several of his erstwhile advisors and guardians alike, and had taken control of the empire. His guardian, Bairam Khan, having lost Akbar's favour and ordered to proceed on pilgrimage, had already been murdered in January 1561 by a Lohani Afghan at Patan in Gujarat, enroute to Mecca. (In later years Bairam Khan's son, Abdur Rahim, rose to a high position under Akbar, and held the title of *Khan-i-Khana*). Akbar was also free, by this time, from the interference in state affairs of the *Atkah Khail* (brigade of foster-parents), particularly his foster-mother Maham Anaga and her son, Adam Khan. (The sons of the royal wet-nurses held the title of '*Kokaltash*' — shortened to *Kokah*, at the Mughal court. Amongst the rulers of Rajasthan the title of '*Dabhai*' was used in a similar manner).

The young emperor had also seen the occupation (albeit temporary) of Malwa by this period⁵, and the absorption of Ajmer, Gwalior and Jaunpur into his empire. (Ajmer changed hands many times through the first part of the sixteenth century, before Akbar's commander Kasim Khan occupied it in 1556. Akbar visited it in 1562, and continued to do so very regularly thereafter. His pilgrimage to offer thanks at the shrine of the Sufi saint, Khwaja Moin-ud-din Chishti, upon the birth of his heir, the future Emperor Jahangir, in 1570 is well known. The city became the capital of the Ajmer *suba* (province). Ajmer *suba* contained seven *sarkars* (divisions) and one hundred and ninety-seven *parganas* (districts), and served as the base for Imperial operations against Gujarat, Mewar, and Marwar etc. under different Mughal emperors. Akbar had city walls, the Akbari Masjid, Dargah Bazaar and, in 1575, a fortified palace built here. Part of this latter

became the 'Magazine' (arsenal depot) of the British in 1863. In 1908 the arsenal changed form to become the Rajputana Museum. The building now serves as Ajmer's museum).

The cementing of an alliance between Akbar and the ruler of Amber (Dhoondhar) in 1562 marked the beginning of an important phase, both for the Mughal Empire and for the diverse states of the present-day Rajasthan region. For, following the alliance with Bharmal of Amber, several other Rajput states came to an understanding with the Mughal court too. Thus, simultaneous with a vigorous expansion of Imperial frontiers, evolved Akbar's 'Rajput Policy' (as later historians have designated it), of friendship and matrimonial alliances⁶. This, along with his notions of sound governance⁷, reward to general merit, absence of religious bigotry and similar policies, brought the rulers of Rajputana into the service of the Mughal Empire and served to consolidate its foundations for the ensuing generations.

Over the next few years, many of the kingdoms of Rajasthan, like those of other parts of the subcontinent, either came to accept Akbar's sovereignty, or opposed him and faced the Mughal military might. In 1568 Chittor, for long the capital of Mewar, fell to Akbar. In February 1569 Ranthambore was yielded to him along with the submission of Rao Surjan Hada, the ruler of Bundi. By 1570 the rulers of Bikaner and Jaisalmer had accepted Mughal supremacy, and were soon followed by Dungarpur and Banswara.

Similarly, opposition to Akbar, whether in Rajasthan or elsewhere, was met with force too. This was true in the case of Kalinjar, Central India and the Punjab, Rana Pratap of Mewar, Rao Chandrasen of Marwar, Rani Durgawati of Garh-Katanga (Gondwana), Sultan Baz Bahadur of Malwa, Akbar's half-brother, Mirza Muhammad Hakim of Kabul, and the Afghan and other chiefs of eastern India, among others. Rebellions in Gujarat were crushed too, and the Mirza brothers — Ibrahim and Masud — suppressed.

(Some scholars have pointed out that Akbar incorporated Muslim states like Malwa, Gujarat, Bengal, but maintained a different policy

towards the Hindu Rajput states. This is sometimes attributed to the fact that the strong clan/kinship organisation of the Rajputs, and the nature of their polity, meant that even if the ruler of a Rajput state was destroyed, the branch or clan would not necessarily be destroyed. Rather, they would re-group to remain a future threat. In contrast, in most of the Muslim-ruled states of the time, the fall of the ruling dynasty effectively wiped the slate clean for any strong successor — whether from within or outside the existing system. Of course, the Afghan-ruled kingdoms also had a very strong and close-knit kinship based system — a fact which somewhat undermines the above theory!)

Accepting Mughal suzerainty curtailed smaller states from overt, individual, unauthorised territorial expansion into each other's kingdoms — which had previously been a common aspect, since such moves now became subject to Imperial censure and judgement. Thus, from around the period that Akbar's forged his 'Rajput policy', there followed a relative political permanence or stability in the existence, extent and boundaries of various regional kingdoms. This political durability of regional states within Rajasthan would largely continue to remain the case, irrespective of later Rajput-Mughal inter-relationship etc., in the future centuries too. (The situation would, however, see a marginal change by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when the decline of the Mughal Empire took on an accelerated pace. For, taking advantage of this, some of the stronger states of Rajasthan were to once again indulge in sporadic campaigns against each other, until treaties with the East India Company put a stop to such activities by the second decade of the nineteenth century).

In addition, in the long run, accepting Mughal supremacy by various kingdoms and chiefdoms of Rajasthan also came to mean that the Mughal emperors played a decisive role in the bestowal of the coronation *teekas* of successive Rajput rulers belonging to diverse States. As such, in place of the earlier stress on acceptance of a succession by clansmen and courtiers, Akbar and his successors occasionally recognised the succession of men who did not have the unqualified support of their traditional local courts and their clan. This challenged and undermined the existing relationship between Rajput rulers and their kin/clan to some degree. (It also partially fore-shadowed, to some extent, the more enhanced or 'extreme' situation

vis-à-vis the relationship between Rajasthan's Rajput rulers and their respective clans, which came to be established a few centuries later, in the wake of changes wrought by the British East India Company's Political Officers and Agents!)

However, despite Akbar taking upon himself the right to 'bestow' or 'approve' the succession of new rulers in various Rajput states, the traditional clan-based structure of Rajasthan's kingdoms and chiefdoms was not overtly interfered with by him or his successors. In fact, given the nature of the clan-dependent polity in the Rajput states of Rajasthan — which included fief-holding kinsmen joining the military expeditions of their ruler with their respective locally raised and maintained forces (*jamiat*), etc., it was advantageous to Emperor Akbar (and his successors) to have Rajput rulers continue to undertake designated military campaigns and tasks accompanied by their kin, clan, relatives and their respective local troops!

Without further detailing the numerous aspects connected with Akbar's empire and various other policies here, it may be relevant to observe that Akbar gave "...a new basis to the relations of the central government with the Hindu tributary chiefs. Under the sultans they were confined to the payment of tribute and offering military service whenever required. Akbar absorbed very many chieftains into his civil and military service"⁸.

Akbar also used the institution of the *mansab* (also called the *mansabdari* system, the term *mansab* meaning rank, office or holding an honour), to reward those who were in Imperial service. The *mansabs* were granted as a high award, and the holder of a *mansab* was expected to render service — military or civil — to the Mughal state. These *mansabs* were classified in thirty-three hierarchical grades, and ranged from *mansabdaris* often to *mansabdaris* often thousand — the last being an honour reserved for members of the immediate Imperial family. Some *mansabdars* were paid in cash from the Imperial treasury but more commonly they were given land-holdings or *jagir*, whose estimated revenue (*jama*) approximated the pay due for the holder's *zat*, and the later created *sawar* (mounted

horsemen) categories of *mansabs*. The *jagir* holders were known as *jagirdars*. *Jagirs* assigned in lieu of salary were known as *tankhwa jagir*.

“...For each rank was set an appropriate *jagir*, an area of land whose revenue the officer had to collect through his own officials; in later years, some officers holding civilian posts were paid in cash. For a Rajput chieftain, a *jagir* included the assessed revenue of his hereditary dominions (*watan jagir*); were it insufficient for his rank, he would be granted further *jagirs* in the imperial dominions. As the rajas’ loyal and meritorious service earned them higher and higher ranks, their share in imperial revenues steadily increased, making loyalty more profitable than rebellion. In Mughal parlance, such chieftains were known as *zamindar rajas*”⁹.

Every grade or rank of this *mansab* system was marked by the number of horsemen and contingent the holder was required to muster and bring into the field. Branding and descriptive rolls were introduced to prevent fraud. Technically, the acquired property of a *mansabdar* (i.e. *mansab*-holder) lapsed to the state after their death, though this did not apply to their inherited estates. In the case of the Rajput princes and chiefs, their ancestral lands were viewed as their *watan jagir* or hereditary lands: in which the Mughal emperor would confirm the rights of each successive ruler recognised by the Mughal state at each time of a new succession.

THE VARIOUS STATES OF RAJASTHAN DURING THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Let us now look at the individual states of Rajasthan during the sixteenth century.

THE STATE OF MEWAR

The long reign of Kumbha in Mewar had ended with his murder, and soon afterwards, the ouster of his successor and eldest son, Uda ‘the parricide’, by another son, Raimal. The reign of Rana Raimal (r. 1473-1508), is today

recalled less for his manifold achievements — which were by no means meagre (as has already been noted in an earlier section), and more for the rivalries and dissension between his numerous ambitious sons. The most important among these rivals were the royal princes, Prithviraj, Jaimal, Jai Singh and Sanga (Sangram).

The bravery and valour of all four was openly recognised, with Prithviraj having the additional advantage of being the eldest, and possibly best, among them all, insofar as the right of primogeniture could influence the succession. Sanga, the youngest, enjoyed the reputation of a man of intellect and sound judgement, and had succeeded in attracting a core group of nobles to his side, while Jaimal and Jai Singh were commonly held to be addicted more to pleasure and sport than to matters of state.

Among Sanga's sound supporters was Surajmal, who was a member of the Mewar ruling family, being a grandson of Rana Mokal and the son of Prince Khem [Kshem] Singh). Sanga and Surajmal are said to have joined hands to undermine the position of the heir-apparent, Prince Prithviraj. A tradition preserved in Mewari lore (also related by Col. Tod), highlights the dissension between the royal princes, in connection with which they finally decided to visit the venerated shrine of Charani Devi at Nagra Magra ("Tiger's Mount") to obtain an omen. "Pirithi Raj [sic] and Jeimal [sic] entered first, and seated themselves on a pallet: Sanga followed and took possession of the panther hide of the prophetess; his uncle, Soorajmul [sic], with one knee resting thereupon. Scarcely had Pirithi Raj disclosed their errand, when the Sybil pointed to the panther-hide as the decisive omen of sovereignty to Sanga, with a portion to his uncle...Pirithi Raj drew his sword and would have falsified the omen, had not Soorajmul stepped in and received the blow destined for Sanga, while the prophetess fled from their fury. Soorajmul and Pirithi Raj were exhausted with wounds, and Sanga fled with five sword-cuts and an arrow in his eye, which destroyed sight for ever"¹⁰.

The continued internal fighting between the rival brothers was obviously a real danger to the kingdom of Mewar, splitting supporters into camps and fanning the flames of dissent and ambition. (The Rupanarain Inscription of AD 1504 records that a Rathore warrior named Bida died

saving the life of Sanga while he was being pursued by his enemies). Thus, possibly tiring of the internal squabbles, or else in some fear for his own life, Rana Raimal exiled both Prithviraj and Sanga from Mewar.

Prithviraj made for the Godwar area, where he helped in ‘restoring order’ and in the Rajput re-taking of Meena-held towns, including Naddulya. He is also reputed to have recovered Toda from the Muslims. Later, he was recalled to Mewar, where he took part in numerous battles and skirmishes, including against his relative Surajmal. (It was this Surajmal who later went on to found the town of Deoliya, in what was to become the state of Pratapgarh-Deoliya).

The adventurous Prince Prithviraj, attended by his wife, Tara Bai of the Solanki clan, who is described by the bards as an extremely beautiful, excessively talented and exceedingly fearless and brave woman, became a figure of romantic chivalry and valour for Mewar. He was later poisoned, as he returned from a visit to Sirohi, allegedly by his brother-in-law, Rao Jagmal of Sirohi, who was the husband of Prithviraj’s sister, and Rana Raimal’s daughter, Ananda-Bai. The poison took effect as Prithviraj returned to Kumbhalgarh, and he died near the formidable protective gates of the impregnable fortress, where his cenotaph still stands.

Meanwhile, Prince Jaimal was killed by Rao Surtan, while Sanga’s travels eventually took him to the vicinity of Ajmer, where he joined the service of the local chief of nearby Srinagar, Karam Chand, who was from the Parmar clan (also called Panwar in later centuries). Later, learning of Sanga’s true identity, the Parmar chief married his daughter to the exiled prince.

In the duration, Raimal died in 1508. It is commonly held that before Raimal’s death, Sanga had been re-called to Mewar, and re-admitted to his father’s presence. Be that as it may, Sanga does not appear to have been his father’s first choice as successor! In fact, Prince Prithviraj having pre-deceased him, Rana Raimal — before dying — nominated Jai Singh as his successor. According to Nainsi’s account, the Mewari nobles bypassed the claim of Jai Singh, however, and instead invited Sanga to take his place on the throne of Mewar. This was not the first time, nor would it be the last,

that a group of prominent clansmen and nobles, or sometimes powerful court coteries, within various kingdoms of Rajasthan, took a major role in deciding the succession of new rulers.

The enthronement of Rana Sanga (r. 1508-1528) marked the commencement of a vigorous phase of expansion for Mewar — both in terms of territory and sphere of influence. In spite of the internal squabble between his sons, Rana Raimal had managed to bequeath a relatively large kingdom to his successor, even though the finances and military resources of Mewar had suffered greatly during the fraternal squabbles of the royal princes. The frequent battles and skirmishes with the neighbouring sultans of Malwa and Gujarat over the past three generations or so had also taken their toll. These neighbours still continued to bide their time for an opportunity to move against Mewar.

Stabilising Mewar was, thus, Sanga's first task. He is said to have appointed trusted officers for collecting revenue and managing law and order. Simultaneously, he continued with the established policy of forging alliances that could assist the state in times of need. As part of this, he raised the status of his Parmar father-in-law, Karam Chand of Srinagar (Ajmer), awarded the title of 'Rao' to Jagmal (his brother-in-law and Karam Chand's son), for his role in the investment of Chanderi, and entered into various alliances.

Among these were the alliances concluded with Raimal of Idar, with Medini Rai, a powerful Rajput chief from eastern Malwa who became a minister at the Malwa court; and with the crown-prince of Gujarat. The re-organisation of the army was carried through by measures, which included fresh recruitment of able soldiers; Existing forts and defensive posts along the borders of Mewar were adequately garrisoned too.

Having retrieved the strength of Mewar over time, Sanga turned his attention to the sultanates of Gujarat, Malwa and Delhi. There followed a number of battles and skirmishes between the forces of Mewar, Malwa, Gujarat and Delhi, particularly so during the period spanning c. 1514 to 1520. Despite an occasional setback, these mainly enhanced the power and prestige of Sanga, and of Mewar. On the basis of bardic tradition, Tod

records how: “The kings of Malwa, though leagued with those of Guzzerat...could make no impression on Mewar when Sanga led her heroes. Eighty thousand horse, seven Rajas of the highest rank, nine Raos, and one hundred and four chieftains bearing the titles of Rawul and Rawut, with five hundred war elephants followed him into the field”¹¹.

In the case of Mewar’s fragile relations with Malwa, matters came to a head afresh when internal trouble developed between Sultan Mahmud II and his minister, the Rajput chief Medini Rai, who had helped the sultan gain the throne. Around the same time the local Purbia Rajputs of Malwa rose against the Sultan. While Sultan Mahmud II appealed to the ruler of Gujarat for help and obtained it, Medini Rai came to Sanga’s court at Chittor and sought the Rana’s assistance. Rana Sanga provided willing support, defeating the sultan of Malwa in 1518-1519 and taking possession of Gagron, Bhilsa, Raisen, Sarangpur, Chanderi and Ranthambore, which were then under Malwa.

Mahmud II was taken as a captive¹² to Chittor in 1519, where Sanga is said to have personally attended to the sultan’s wounds. After some six months of internment as a royal captive at Chittor, Mahmud II was allowed an ‘honourable’ return to his own capital of Mandu, though one of his sons remained hostage at the Mewar court. Sanga received a jewelled belt and a crown as a gift from Mahmud II. Sanga also retained possession of Kalpi, Bhilsa, Ranthambore, Sarangpur and Chanderi. These were assigned to chiefs who paid tribute to Rana Sanga.

The growing hegemony of Mewar was also perceived as a threat by the neighbouring kingdom of Gujarat, given their relations in the preceding decades. Matters between the two states came to a head in 1519 over the question of succession in the kingdom of Idar. The two rival claimants to the throne of Idar, Raimal and Bharmal, won the support of Mewar and Gujarat respectively. Sanga established Raimal on the throne of Idar. In the course of the conflict that ensued, a contingent of the Gujarat army reached Idar to overthrow Raimal and install his rival on the throne. The forces of Sultan Muzaffar II of Gujarat were driven back by Sanga, however, who carried the fight deep into the territory of Gujarat, plundering Ahmadnagar and Visalnagar, and chasing the army of Gujarat as far as Ahmedabad.

The following winter, 1520, the Sultan of Gujarat joined hands with the Sultan of Malwa, who had suffered an equally humiliating defeat at the hands of Sanga previously. At their behest, forces of Gujarat and Malwa, led by their respective commanders, Ajaz and Qawan-ul-Mulk, took the field against Sanga's armies. The joint armies attempted to take the fort of Mandisor (now part of modern Madhya Pradesh), but failed. On his part, Sanga could not post a decisive victory over his opponents either¹³. Not long afterwards, Sultan Ibrahim Lodi of Delhi's bid to annex Ranthambore and Ajmer to the Delhi Sultanate led Rana Sanga to make peace with the sultan of Gujarat. (A text called *Parshvanath-shravan Sattavisi* by the sixteenth century poet Thakkur holds that Rana Sanga inflicted a defeat on Ibrahim Lodi when the latter attacked Ranthambore).

Meanwhile, the appearance of Babur (a descendant of Timur, and from 1505 onwards already master of Kabul), on the north-western frontier of India was probably beginning to influence the power equation in northern India. The warring kingdoms of Mewar, Malwa and Gujarat eventually opted to come to terms. Presents and mutual agreements, along with the exchange of hostages, became the means of resolving the conflict. (As had often been the case between various kingdoms and chiefdoms down the centuries). Apparently the mutual settlement did not blight overall Sanga's prestige and political influence, for many aspiring princes and nobles from the Gujarat court continued to seek Sanga's backing and came to his court at Chittor hoping for assistance against Sikandar, the crown-prince of Gujarat!

Sanga's activities vis-à-vis the neighbouring kingdoms of Malwa and Gujarat were, not unnaturally, a cause of some concern for the Delhi Sultanate. Sanga had also made use of a civil war between Ibrahim Lodi, the sultan of Delhi, and his younger brother, Jalal Lodi (whom Ibrahim had been pressurised by his headstrong Afghan nobility to recognise, albeit temporarily, as the independent ruler of Jaunpur), to make inroads into Lodi-held territories. These included tracts like Bayana, near Agra.

Ibrahim Lodi initiated action against Mewar, sending an army led by Mian Makhan. The Delhi Sultanate's army included commanders like Mian Hussain, Zar Baksh, Mian Farmuli and Mian Maruf¹⁴. Rana Sanga, in turn,

advanced against the Delhi army and dealt it a conclusive defeat. (Mian Hussain apparently opted to change sides as a result). The Rana also captured Chanderi, which Sultan Sikandar Lodi had invested in 1514 (along with Gwalior and parts of Malwa). Finally, Sultan Ibrahim Lodi himself took the field against Mewar. However, he too faced a severe setback at the battle of Ghatoli, with Sanga's triumph crowned by the capture of a prince of Delhi's ruling dynasty. (The *Waqayat-i-Mushtaqi* by Rizqullah Mushtaqi mentions a Lodi victory over Sanga, though this is not corroborated by other sources¹⁵).

Sanga's star was in the ascendant! In the words of Col. Tod, "...swaying, directly or by control, the greater part of Rajast'han, and adored by the Rajpoots for the possession of those qualities they hold in estimation, Sanga was ascending to the pinnacle of distinction; and had not fresh hordes of Usbecs [sic] and Tatars from the prolific shores of the Oxus and Jaxartes again poured down on the devoted plains of Hindust'han, the crown of the *Chacraverta* [Universal potentate] might again have encircled the brow of a Hindu, and the battlements of supremacy been transferred from Indraprest'ha [sic] to the battlements of Cheetore. But Babur arrived at a critical time"¹⁶.

Babur indeed arrived at a critical point, for while Sanga was leading Mewar to victories and military glory, the Delhi Sultanate found itself faced by the threat of attack from Babur (already ruler over the area of Kabul, Badakshan and Qandhar, and later to become the first of the Mughal emperors of India). Ibrahim Lodi, thus, perforce turned his attention away from Mewar, and now sought, instead, to consolidate the internal condition of the Delhi Sultanate. The decisive Battle of Panipat of April 1526 followed, giving Babur victory. Thereafter, as Babur began consolidating his hold over northern India, it became clear that a reckoning between Rana Sanga of Mewar and Babur was inevitable.

As a consequence of Sanga's exploits, the borders of Mewar by this period extended from near Mandu (the capital of Malwa), in the south to Peela Khal (Pilya Khal), a small rivulet near Bayana and Agra, in the north-east, and deep into the desert country (stretching towards the river Indus) west and north-west of Mewar. In addition, numerous fellow-princes had

accepted the pre-eminence or token leadership of Sanga. Asserts Tod, “The princes of Marwar and Amber did him homage, and the Raos of Gwalior, Ajmer, Sikri, Raesen [sic], Kalpee [sic], Chanderi, Boondi [sic], Gagrown [sic], Rampoor, and Aboo [sic], served him as tributaries or held of him in chief”¹⁷. Praising Sanga’s skill and valour, Tod further adds that “...ere called to contend with the descendant of Timoor, he [Sanga] had gained eighteen pitched battles against the kings of Delhi and Malwa. In two of these he was opposed by Ibrahim Lodi in person, at Bakrole and Ghatolli [sic], in which last battle the imperial forces were defeated with great slaughter, leaving a prisoner of the blood royal to grace the triumph of Cheetore”¹⁸.

That Sanga perceived Babur’s continued presence in northern India a threat is, thus, obvious. In fact, Rajasthan’s bards hold that Sanga wished to expel Babur from India totally. On his part, in his autobiography *Babur-Nama*, Babur has accused Sanga of a breach of faith and going back on an earlier agreement. According to Babur’s version, Sanga was among those who had sent an envoy to Kabul inviting Babur to India, and proposing joining hands against Sultan Ibrahim Lodi. Babur thus held that Sanga had subsequently gone back on his promise, including that of marching against Lodi-held Agra, while Babur concentrated on the Delhi region. (Modern-day historians seem to have a divided opinion about Sanga’s relations with Babur prior to the latter’s southward progression against the Delhi Sultanate, and some hold that Sanga tried to “...persuade Babur to invade Delhi”¹⁹).

In contrast, the traditional Rajput version holds that it was not Sanga — already powerful enough and mainly successful against various enemy states — who had sent an envoy to Babur at Kabul, proposing an alliance against their common foe, Ibrahim Lodi, but rather, it was Babur who sought an ally of undoubted ability and strength for his proposed expedition against the Lodi sultan! Thus, some hold that Rana Sanga agreed to Babur’s proposal, and, using Silhadi, the Tomar (Tanwar) chief of Raesen, as the medium of communication, sent a letter to that effect to Babur. However, Sanga subsequently changed his mind upon the advice of his nobles — which advice — given the nature of the state, and the relation of the ruler as

primus inter pares with his clansmen and nobles — could not be lightly ignored by any Rajput ruler or chief.

Looking back, it is possible that Sanga had believed that the forces of Babur and Ibrahim Lodi would have indulged in a long and protracted struggle, thereby providing an opportunity to Mewar to take advantage of the situation and expand its own power and territorial sway across northern India. Sanga may also have believed that, if victorious against the Lodis, Babur would eventually return to his estates in Afghanistan, thereby leaving a weakened — or even defunct — Delhi Sultanate, and a clear held for Sanga to establish his own hegemony. Such a state of affairs seemed to be furthest from Babur's mind, though.

As Sanga stepped up military preparations against Babur, some of the defeated Afghans, among them Prince Mahmud Lodi, a younger brother of Delhi's Ibrahim Lodi, joined the Mewar Rana with their troops. Hasan Khan Mewati, chief of Mewar, did the same, as did numerous Rajput and other chiefs and rulers, all of them together forming what present-day historians now refer to as a 'confederacy' under the generalship of Sanga. On February 21, 1527, the forces led by Rana Sanga of Mewar took the fort of Bayana, which Babur had seized and turned into one of the outlying Mughal outposts. From Babur's memoirs²⁰ we learn that Sanga's successes against the Mughal advance guard commanded by Abdul Aziz, and other forces, at Bayana, as well as his mastery over other forts (among them, Khandar and Ranthambore), severely demoralised the fighting spirit of Babur's troops encamped near Sikri.

While Babur's camp was passing through a crucial phase, Sanga confidently marched onwards towards Khanua (now part of Bharatpur district), some thirty-seven kilometres west of Agra. It was here that the battle lines were eventually to be drawn. Sanga and his forces took about a month to reach Khanua (travelling via Bhusawar etc.), where by now Babur and his force were entrenched. The forces led by Rana Sanga are estimated to have exceeded 200,000 (according to Babur's version). These included 10,000 Afghan cavalry, and an equal number of Hasan Khan Mewati's contingent. The reputation of Sanga had preceded him, and the state of mind of the ordinary soldier in the Mughal camp is clearly evident from the

fact that on the eve of battle, Babur was forced to take recourse to a bout of stirring oratory, as he called upon his soldiers to fight bravely and put their trust in the Almighty; accompanied by the public breaking of his own wine-cups and jars (signifying his renunciation of alcohol forever).

At Khanua, as had been the case at Panipat, Babur commanded his men to tie a number of wagons together to form an outer defensive ring, with a trench before them for additional protection. Guns on wheeled tripods and musketeers were placed at strategically placed gaps in these defences. By all accounts that have come down to us, the March 1527 battle of Khanua was fiercely fought.

“On the sixteenth March²¹ the attack commenced by a furious onset on the centre and right wing of the Tatars, and for several hours the conflict was tremendous. Devotion was never more manifest on the side of the Rajpoot, attested by the long list of noble names amongst the slain as well as in the bulletin of their foe, whose artillery made dreadful havoc in the close ranks of the Rajpoot cavalry, which could not force the entrenchments, nor reach the infantry which defended them. While the battle was still doubtful, the Tuar traitor [Silhadi Tomar, the chief of Raesen] who led the van [of Sanga’s army] went over to Baber [sic]...”²².

As the battle raged on, the tide inexorably turned against Sanga. Severely wounded, Sanga lost consciousness and in that state, was carried away from the battlefield by loyal supporters to a nearby site called Baswa. The Rana’s place was taken by Raja Ajja Jhala of Halwad, who had relinquished his rights to the throne of Halwad in Kathiawar, in deference to his father’s wishes. The royal emblems of the *chhatra* (umbrella) and *chanwar* (ceremonial whisk), were raised above Ajja’s head, and he took over the command in Sanga’s place. Ajja directed the operations with courage to his last breath. (Later, Sanga conferred the *jagir* of Sadri — now ‘Bari Sadri’ — on Ajja’s son, Simha, in recognition of the father’s sacrifice).

However, the advantage of fire-power enjoyed by the Mughal army, to which were added the havoc caused by the *tulughama* charge, as well as

superior generalship finally resulted in the victory of Babur's side. Traditional accounts tell us that among those of Sanga's side slain in battle were Rawal Udai Singh of Dungarpur (r. 1497-1527) and two hundred of his clan; Ratan Singh Chundawat of Salumber along with three hundred of his kinsmen; Raimal Rathore, a scion of the ruling house of Marwar, and the Mertia Rathore chiefs Khetsi and Ratan Singh, with scores of their men; and scores of others. These included men like "Ramdas the Sonigurra Rao; Ujo the J'hala; Gokuldas Pramara; Manikchund and Chundrbhan, Chohan chiefs of the first rank of Mewar' besides a host of inferior names. Husein Khan of Mewat, and a son of the last Lodi king of Delhi, who coalesced with Sanga, were amongst the killed..."²³

Analysing the battle of Khanua, G.N Sharma²⁴ notes that though Tod, Kaviraj Shyamaldas and Har Bilas Sarada have attributed Sanga's defeat to treachery on the part of Silhadi, there were a number of factors that contributed to the Rana's defeat. "First, the Rana had brought together a huge crowd of men most of whom were Rajputs of various clans, owing allegiance to their own tribal chiefs and believing in the traditional systems of warfare. The Rajput troops at Khanua were not amenable to discipline and were held together by the slender tie of allegiance to their chiefs and not to the ruler of Mewar. Secondly, ...Sanga's army was undoubtedly inferior in cavalry to that of Babar [sic] whose strength lay in the predominance of quick and mobile cavalry. Thirdly, the Rana possessed no artillery which was Babar's main strength..."²⁵

"Fourthly, ...Babar who had faced in numerous battles various races such as Turks, Mongols, Uzbeks, Persians and Afghans, besides Indians had not only successfully imbibed the peculiar mode of fighting of each and had made a synthesis of them all, but had with a real general's eye formed plans to suit the exigencies of the situation. The fort-like arrangements of his troops defended by an array of carts was a novel thing for Rana Sanga. Babar's turning parties, wheeling around to the Rana's rear delivered charges simultaneously with murderous fire poured by the enemy's guns in the front line of Babar's army. Like all Rajputs Sanga believed in frontal attacks and desired to overthrow the enemy's ranks by sheer physical force, which could not succeed against heavy guns. Fifthly, Babar wisely kept his

watchful eye on every portion of the field and supervised the activity of his men with the skill of a general. The Rana, on the other hand, threw himself head-long into the battle like an ordinary soldier and thus not only surrendered his position as the supreme general of his troops, but lost touch with various divisions of his army”²⁶. Moreover, his lethargic move and unnecessary delay after the battle of Bayana allowed Babar to make preparation and sealed the fate of the Rajputs.

Tradition holds that on regaining consciousness Sanga wanted to return to the battlefield immediately, and continue the combat. He was then informed of Babur’s victory. At this, Sanga vowed to take up the fight again, and replacing his usual turban for a length of cloth wrapped around the head, declared that he would never re-enter the gates of Chittor until he had defeated Babur. Having declared his intention of taking to the field against Babur again, Sanga attempted to remobilize his forces²⁷. Then, intending to cross swords with Babur once more, this time at Chanderi, Sanga moved up to Erich (also spelt as Irich and Airich), near Kalpi and besieged it²⁸.

However, several of his associates did not regard with favour the idea of commencing a fresh campaign against Babur. Fearing the consequences of what many of them regarded as a disastrous step and a futile battle, these men conspired together. The unsuspecting Sanga was administered slow poison. January 30, 1528 found the survivor of innumerable battles fighting a losing battle for his own life. He was carried to Kalpi, and then towards Mandalgarh, but “.. before he could reach Mandalgarh he died on or about January 30, 1528 AD”²⁹. His body was carried back to Mandalgarh, where it was cremated beside a rivulet, and a memorial *chhatra* built at the site.

Meanwhile, following Babur’s victory at Khanua, which had strengthened his position in the Agra-Delhi area, Babur continued to further consolidate his position. Bayana came back into Mughal hands. Babur was successful in capturing the fortresses of Dholpur and Gwalior, among others, besides annexing portions of Hasan Khan Mewati’s Alwar-Mewat tracts, and the conquest of Chanderi in Malwa. According to G.N. Sharma, “So far as the expansion of Mughal power was concerned the consequences

of the battle of Khanua were immense...Nevertheless, the battle, as far as the Rajput powers were concerned, was not so destructive as the battle of Tarain between Prithviraja III and Muizzuddin Ghorī. Though it weakened the power of the kingdom of Mewar and lowered its general prestige, it did not destroy the grip of the Sisodias over their kingdom, nor did it affect the social and economic conditions of life in the state”³⁰.

Rana Sanga is described as having been “...of middle stature, but of great muscular strength; fair in complexion, with unusually large eyes...He exhibited at his death but the fragments of a warrior: one eye was lost in the broil with his brother [Prithviraj]; an arm in an action with the Lodi king of Dehli [sic], and he was a cripple owing to a limb being broken by a cannon-ball in another; while he counted eighty wounds from the sword or the lance on various parts of his body. He was celebrated for energetic enterprise, of which his capture of Mozuffur [sic], king of Malwa, in his own capital, is a celebrated instance; and his successful storm of the almost impregnable Rinthumbor [sic], though ably defended by the imperial general Ali, gained him great renown”³¹.

Before his death, Sanga had apportioned off a part of his kingdom in favour of two of his younger sons, Vikramaditya and Udai, by allotting them the fort of Ranthambore and a *jagir* of around fifty to sixty lakhs. This move is commonly attributed to the urgings of the mother of these two princes, Queen Karnawati from Bundi’s ruling family, who was Sanga’s favourite. Karnawati apparently sought to ensure the property-rights of her own sons in the event of Sanga’s death and the succession of a step-son to the Mewar throne. (Sanga is said to have had twenty-eight wives, and seventeen sons — some of whom had predeceased their father). As the princes Vikram and Udai were minors at the time, Queen Karnawati, and her brother, Rao Surajmal Hada of Bundi, were entrusted the guardianship of the two princes.

In 1528, following the death of Sanga, his elder son, Ratan Singh (r. 1528-1531), became the new ruler of Mewar. Sanga’s widow and Ratan Singh’s step-mother, Karnawati, had established herself at Ranthambore along with her two sons by now, as Rana Ratan Singh had confirmed his half-brother Vikram in the possession of Ranthambore as his allocated

jagir. Karnawati had taken with her the golden crown and jewelled belt acquired by Rana Sanga from the Sultan of Malwa. Ratan Singh now asked Karnawati to return to Chittor with his half-brothers, the princes Vikram and Udai, along with these trophies. However, Karnawati was reluctant to bring her sons back to Chittor in the conditions that then existed there. There is even a suggestion that she tried to obtain external help for gaining the Mewar throne for her own sons.

Meanwhile, relations between Rana Ratan Singh and the Rao of Bundi, Surajmal, had continued to deteriorate. The Mewari chroniclers blame Surajmal for contemplating mischief against the Rana, and for inciting the widowed Queen Karnawati to act as she did. In turn, the Bundi chroniclers assert that the Mewar ruler wished to kill Surajmal of Bundi, and in 1531 took the opportunity presented during a hunting expedition to murderously attack Surajmal. The grievously injured Surajmal retaliated by plunging his own dagger into Ratan Singh, and mortally wounding him. Neither Ratan Singh of Mewar nor Surajmal of Bundi survived their injuries.

On the premature death of Ratan Singh, the throne of Mewar devolved upon his half-brother, Vikramaditya (r. 1531-1536), who stood next in line among Sanga's heirs. Local tradition and folklore hold that the arrogant and uncouth 'Vikram' or 'Bikramajeet' (as he is variously referred to) was totally oblivious to his responsibilities. They provide an image of a man blind to the external dangers which threatened the kingdom; preferring the company of sycophants and the like. Tod has noted that this ruler possessed "...all the turbulence, without the redeeming qualities of character, which endeared his brother to his subjects; he was insolent, passionate, and vindictive, and utterly regardless of that respect which his proud nobles rigidly exacted. Instead of appearing at their head, he passed his time amongst wrestlers and prize-fighters, on whom and a multitude of 'pâéks', or foot soldiers, he lavished those gifts and that approbation, to which the aristocratic Rajpoot...arrogated exclusive right"³². He is said to have enjoyed deliberately insulting old courtiers and nobles, as a result of which many loyal kinsmen and Mewari nobles left the capital and retired to their fief-holdings and *jagir* lands.

While that was the state of affairs at Chittor, Gujarat's Sultan Bahadur Shah, despatched an army to invade Mewar in 1532. Realising the seriousness of the situation, the Queen-Mother Karnawati sent Rana Vikramaditya away to Bundi. A settlement was reached with Bahadur Shah, and he was offered handsome gifts and money so that the siege would be lifted. Thereupon, Bahadur Shah went back to Gujarat.

The danger was not over, though. In 1534, Sultan Bahadur Shah of Gujarat once again besieged Chittor. The queen-mother of Mewar made a stirring call to arms for the defence of the ancestral fort of Chittor. The appeal rallied nobles and ordinary soldiers alike under the banner of the Sisodias — all committed to fight to the death, if need be, for the defence and honour of Mewar. Even those who had been forced to leave Mewar, or were otherwise disgruntled, or descended from Mewar exiles responded to the call in a tradition common to other warrior-clans of Rajasthan. Among those who came were “.. .the heir of Soorajmul [Rawat Bagh Singh], abandoning his new capital of Deola [Deoliya] ...in defence of the abode of his fathers. ‘The son of Boondi,’ with a brave band of five hundred Haras, also came; as did the Sonigurra and Deora Raos of Jhalore and Aboo, with many auxiliaries from all parts of Rajwarra”³³.

Tradition holds that the Queen-Mother Karnawati also asked for aid from Emperor Humayun, whom she addressed as her brother, and to whom she sent a *rakhi* — a symbolic bracelet or band of thread that a sister ties onto her brother's right wrist, in anticipation and acknowledgement of the protection offered by a brother. Emperor Humayun was at the time fighting the forces of Sher Shah Suri in Bengal, on a different front, far from Mewar. As such, he was not in a position to render immediate assistance to Mewar, though he did arrive in Mewar later, and the tale of how a Mughal emperor responded to his Rajput sister's *rakhi* is now part of the folklore of modern India.

Despite the odds, the warriors of Mewar put up a prolonged and valiant resistance. Rana Vikram was not present at Chittor. Tod has recorded the manner in which the Bundi prince, Arjun, and five hundred of his kin were killed; how “Rao Doorga, with the Chondawut chieftains Sutto and Doodo and their vassals bravely defended the breach and repelled many

assaults”; and how, setting “an example of courageous devotion, the queen-mother Jawahir Bae, of Rahtore [sic] race, clad in armour, headed a sally in which she was slain”³⁴.

Eventually the artillery charge of Rumi Khan carried the field for Gujarat. Faced with an impossible situation, Chittor once again took the decision in March 1535 for the awesome finality of the *jauhar* and accompanying ‘*shaka*’ for yet another time in its history. The infant prince, Udai, was sent away to his Bundi uncle for safety, while Queen-Mother Karnawati and the other women performed ritual prayers and prepared for immolation, and the men donned robes of *kesariya*, signifying their intent to give up their lives on the battlefield.

Rana Vikramaditya was not present within the fort to lead the men for the final battle. However, it was traditionally believed, as Tod reminds us, that Chittor’s guardian-deity required the fort to be defended by one who bore the emblems of royalty. As such, the defenders once again took “...recourse to the expedient of crowning a king, as a sacrifice to the dignity of the protecting deity of Cheetore. Bagh-ji, prince of Deola, courted the insignia of destruction; the banner of Mewar floated over him, and the golden sun from its sable field never shone more refulgent than when the changi was raised amidst the shouts of her defenders over the head of the son of Soorajmul”³⁵.

Karnawati then led the other women³⁶ and children into the flames without hesitation; just as she had, according to some versions, previously led troops against the fort’s besiegers. (A AD 1535 copper-plate refers to the *jauhar* by Rani Karnawati and the others). With the flames of the *jaubar* pyre still reflected in their eyes, the male defenders of Chittor mounted their horses and unsheathed their swords and lances. Thus girt, they sallied forth from the ancient fort of Chittor, under the command of Bagh Singh, and joined battle one final time, to fall fighting to the last.

The fort came into the hands of Sultan Bahadur Shah of Gujarat on March 8, 1535. However, the sultan of Gujarat could not consolidate his hold, for soon afterwards, Mughal troops arrived, forcing Bahadur Shah to

make a prudent withdrawal from the fort of Chittor. Tod has lauded Humayun for having "...amply redeemed his pledge, expelled the foe from Chittore, took Mandoo by assault, and, as some revenge for her king's aiding the king of Guzzerat, he sent for the Rana Bikramajeet, whom, following their own notions of investiture, he girt with a sword in the captured citadel of his foe"³⁷. However, G.N. Sharma found no evidence to support Humayun having visited Chittor before June 1536, and holds that".. .the Rajputs had occupied Chitor [sic] as soon as Bahadur Shah's back was turned"³⁸.

With the Rajputs once again in possession of Chittor, Rana Vikram returned from Bundi to re-occupy the throne. However, the Rana once again failed to live up to the expectations of his subjects. His various follies compelled the nobles to invite the exiled Banbeer to Chittor. Banbeer was a son of Sanga's dead brother, the valiant Prithviraj by one of his non-Rajput concubines, and like other offspring of such unions, held a certain status and recognition. (Actually, 'concubine' falls short of a suitable definition of terms like '*pardayat*', '*paswan*', etc. used for non-Rajput 'wives' of Rajput chiefs and rulers). According to some versions, it was Rana Vikramaditya who called Banbeer to his court, and subsequently placed the fullest of confidence in him. Banbeer, in his turn, waited for a suitable opportunity, and in 1536 murdered the Rana and staked his title to the throne of Mewar.

There was, however, an obstacle to Banbeer's claims to the honours of Mewar — namely, Prince Udai Singh, the youngest son of Rana Sanga, and after his brother Vikram, the rightful heir to the *gaddi* of Mewar. Banbeer resolved to remove this obstacle as soon as possible, and, sword in hand, made his way to the chamber of the prince to perform the deed in person. Within the inner palace, the danger became known to the young prince's wet-nurse, Panna, but there was not much time to send for outside help. Acting quickly, Panna sought the immediate assistance of a loyal servant, who smuggled her charge out of the fort secretly, hidden in a large fruit-basket, and covered with leaves. In order to deceive Banbeer and gain time for the prince to be carried to safety, the wet-nurse then placed her own sleeping son in the bed of the royal prince.

The deception succeeded more than the loyal nurse could have bargained for. Scarcely had the substitution been effected, when Banbeer entered the chamber. Enquiring after Prince Udai Singh, he beheld the young boy asleep in the royal bed. There was no stopping his murderous intentions. Banbeer's sword immediately despatched the sleeping unfortunate boy before the eyes of the loyal Panna. She could not reveal the truth, for that would endanger her charge and undo all that she had done to ensure the prince's safety.

“The little victim to fidelity”, Tod tells us, “was burnt amidst the tears of the rawula [palace], the inconsolable household of their late sovereign, who supposed that their grief was given to the last pledge of the illustrious Sanga. The nurse (*Dhae*) was a Rajpootanee [sic] of the Kheechee [sic] tribe...Having consecrated with her tears the ashes of her child, she hastened after that she had preserved...³⁹”. Udai Singh's small party travelled in secret, via the circuitous route of Deola, Dungarpur, Idar, and the valleys and tracts of the Aravalli hills, till they reached Kumbhalgarh.

Tod tells us that the infant Udai Singh was placed in the care of the governor of Kumbhalmer (Kumbhalgarh), a Jain called Assa Sah, to be brought up incognito until such time as he was old enough to take the throne of Mewar, and there he remained for at least seven years, until his identity became known to all, at which all the chiefs and nobles rallied to acknowledge him as their rightful master. It should be borne in mind, though, that Udai Singh (whose father, Rana Sanga, had died in January 1528), could not have been an infant when he was taken out of Chittor in 1536, as the stories imply. Udai would have been a boy of at least eight or nine years of age at the very least. (According to G.N. Sharma's researches, he was about fifteen years old). Furthermore, within a year, many nobles of Mewar acknowledged him in 1537 as the Rana.

Meanwhile, at Chittor fort, Banbeer had donned the royal insignia of Mewar and commenced governance of the kingdom, despite the increasing disagreements with various chiefs and clan elders. When he ultimately learned that Udai Singh had survived, and in 1537 was being acclaimed the true Rana of Mewar by various nobles of Mewar, Banbeer sent an army to dislodge Udai Singh and his supporters from Kumbhalgarh. The attempt

was unsuccessful, but over the next few years Banbeer continued to hold Chittor and wear the crown. At the same time, Udai Singh's support-base also continued to increase, along with resistance to the usurper. Finally, in a decisive battle near Mauvli, Banbeer was defeated and probably killed. (The overly biased versions say he fled the field, and later escaped south with his family). Following this, Udai Singh was finally able to assume all the formal regalia and duties of the Rana of Mewar in 1540, unchallenged by usurping relatives and pretenders.

The turbulence of a series of short and/or ineffectual reigns, following the death of Sanga, as well as the frequent fighting and the trauma of the siege, second '*shaka*' and *jauhar* of Chittor, had taken its toll on the kingdom of Mewar. The administration and economy alike were in shambles. The task of Udai Singh (acclaimed Rana in 1537, formally occupied the throne from 1540 to 1572) was, therefore, not easy by any means.

Thus, in 1544, when Sher Shah turned his forces against Mewar, after subduing Marwar and its battle-honed ruler Maldeo, the young Udai Singh of Mewar, found his position vulnerable, with the court still ridden with problems as a result of the troubled years of Ratan Singh, Vikramaditya and Banbeer's administration. The Rana, therefore, opted to seek peace. As soon as the Afghan forces reached Jahazpur and encamped, the keys of Chittor were sent there and yielded up to Sher Shah. Aware of the price that battles or a prolonged siege exacted, Sher Shah accepted the offer and appointed Shams Khan as his deputy in the region (possibly to realise annual tribute from the Rana).

Udai Singh, or his advisers, may have realised the relatively vulnerable position of Chittor, vis-à-vis attacks from the Delhi Sultanate, Gujarat, Malwa, as well as even Marwar, which had become more than obvious over the previous couple of centuries. In 1559 a second capital was established in the Girwa portion of Mewar, located in the secure fastness of the Aravalli hills, further to the west-south-west. Facilities to shift there were provided to various families. The same year (1559) work began on a lake, which was excavated in order to bring a large area under cultivation. Called the Udai Sagar in honour of the Rana, this lake was completed in

1562. (The Rana's Solanki clan wife subsequently ordered the construction of the Prahlad-Rai-ji temple on the banks of the Udai Sagar). Mewar's 'second' capital went on to become the famous city of Udaipur. It would remain the capital of the Sisodias of Mewar until the merger of the state into independent India nearly four centuries later. (In due course, Udai Singh's daughter, Princess Kika Bai, whose mother Dheer Bai of the Bhati clan had been Udai Singh's favourite queen, built a market-street — the 'Bhattiyani Bazaar' — at Udaipur, in honour of her mother).

While Udai Singh concentrated on his new capital and on the general revitalisation of his kingdom, problems with neighbours continued to occur. Though the flamboyant Rao Maldeo of Marwar had formerly come to the aid of Rana Vikram by sending a force from Marwar during Bahadur Shah of Gujarat's attack on Chittor, Marwar and Mewar found themselves on opposite sides of the fence by 1556. By then, Haji Khan, a former slave belonging to Emperor Sher Shah Suri, had become master of Ajmer and Nagaur. Maldeo of Marwar, on a resurgent trail following previous travails at the hands of Sher Shah Suri, sent his troops against Haji Khan, but since Haji Khan was given help by Rana Udai Singh of Mewar and Rao Kalyanmal of Bikaner, Maldeo's forces were forced to retreat. Not long after, Rana Udai Singh and Haji Khan fell out with each other. (According to one version, the problem originated over a dancing woman, whom Udai Singh demanded as the price for having helped Haji Khan). Haji Khan now approached his former antagonist, Marwar's Rao Maldeo, and sought help against Udai Singh of Mewar. Maldeo agreed, and in January 1557 Maldeo and Haji Khan's combined troops met and defeated the forces of Udai Singh of Mewar at the battle of Harmoda. (Mewar's army was assisted by Jaimal of Merta and his troops).

Meanwhile, the Mughal emperor, Akbar, had been consolidating and expanding the territories he had inherited from Humayun in 1556. As we have already noted vis-à-vis Alauddin Khilji's marching routes, one of the traditional trade and campaign routes from Delhi to Gujarat (or, via Malwa on to the Deccan) ran along the territories of Mewar. It was necessary at one level, therefore, that the route be secured. It was equally important that Akbar strengthen his empire by acquiring whatever allies and subordinates he could. Mewar was one of the strongest and one of the best-known of the

states of its times, and its friendship or its defeat would have had a major impact on the minds of contemporary ruling houses, and potential rivals of Akbar's authority⁴⁰.

As such, Akbar now decided to move against the kingdom of Mewar. Rana Udai Singh entrusted the defence of the fort to the Rathore chief Jaimal 'Mertia' of Badnor (and formerly of Merta, whose ancestral land of Merta had already been occupied by Mughal forces). Rana Udai Singh himself remained thereafter at his new capital Udaipur, along with the majority of his court and counsellors. From this point onwards, the defence of Chittor fort was carried out, in the absence of Udai Singh, and, indeed, most of the Rana's several sons, by eight thousand Rajputs commanded by Jaimal 'Mertia'. The members of this garrison included warriors like Rawat Sahidas Chundawat of Salumber (the clan-chief of all the Chundawats), Rawat Duda of the Sangawat line, the Chauhan chiefs of Bedla and Kotharia, the Parmar chief of Bijolia, the Jhala chief of Sadri, the Sonagra ruler of Jalore, Isardas Rathore, and the Tanwar prince of Gwalior.

The long sanguine siege of Chittor stretched from October 1567 to February 1568⁴¹. The Mughals erected batteries for guns, which were used with deadly accuracy, and laid mines to create breaches in the defence-walls of Chittor fort. Akbar personally led the prolonged assault on Chittor. At long last, a musket shot — reputedly the result of accurate marksmanship by Akbar himself (though at the distance, Akbar did not immediately realise the identity of the man he had hit), killed Jaimal, the dauntless commander of Chittor's defence. Following Jaimal's death, and that of Rawat Sahidas, who fell at the Surajpol gate of the fort, a young warrior called Patta, who was a scion of the Jagawat sub-clan of the royal Chundawats of Mewar, and held the fiefdom of Kelwa, took over the task of Chittor's defence.

In spite of a gritty defence, the fort of Chittor finally fell to Mughal Emperor Akbar on February 25, 1568. The fall of Chittor was preceded, for the third time in the fort's long history, by the awesome rite of ritual group self-immolation by the women and children known as *jauhar*, and the subsequent fight to the finish (*shaka*) by the remaining male warriors. Courageous to the end, Patta exhorted and led his comrades-in-arms valiantly, until he too died in the performance of his duty. (Akbar later

ordered the erection of two memorials commemorating the valour of Jaimal and Patta outside the chief gate of his fort at Agra⁴²).

The subsequent sack of Chittor was accompanied by a massacre of the surviving populace of some 30,000 non-combatants — many of whom were peasants from surrounding areas who had sought shelter within the fort. The massacre was the first and, apparently, only such example of absolute carnage ordered by Akbar, and has remained an unredeemed blot on his otherwise illustrious career. The investment of Chittor by Akbar proved to be the darkest spot in the reign of Udai Singh and a severe blow for the kingdom of Mewar too. (Akbar is said to have even removed the great gates of Chittor and taken them away to his own Agra fort).

Akbar stayed at Chittor until the 28 February. Chittor was declared a *sarkar* (province) of the Mughal Empire, and placed under the charge of Asaf Khan. (A *sarkar* being a large territorial unit, or ‘division’, for purposes of administration). Akbar then proceeded back towards his own capital.

Meanwhile, in 1567 the fort of Mandalgarh too had been occupied by Akbar’s troops. This was eventually placed under the provincial administration of the Mughal *sarkar* of Chittor, as one of the twenty-six *mahals* (or sub-divisions) of the *sarkar*. Mughal forces occupied many other parts of Mewar’s territory, including ‘frontier’ areas like Badnor, Shahpura and Rayala, too. Not just that, Mughal influence or, alternately, control, was firmly established over most neighbouring territories as a result of the Mughal emperor’s vigorous ‘Rajput policy’. With Chittor and many other parts of Mewar under Mughal occupation, the hapless Rana Udai Singh established himself at Gogunda, where he died in 1572.

According to some versions, prior to his death, Rana Udai Singh had declared Jagmal, his favourite son, whose mother was Udai Singh’s much beloved queen, Rani Bhattiyani (Dheer Bai of the Bhati clan), as his heir and successor. By right of primogeniture, though, the claim of Udai Singh’s eldest son, Pratap (occasionally referred to by his nick-name of ‘Kika’), could be deemed stronger. Pratap was born on 5 June AD 1540, probably at Kumbhalgarh — though there are rival claims regarding his birth place, and

his mother was Queen Jayavanti of the Sonagra clan. (Of course, the right of primogeniture was never strictly followed in practice across the different states, as may already have been noted in the dynastic histories of practically all the kingdoms of Rajasthan, spanning practically every century!)

Pratap, who had already proved himself against the Chauhans of the Vagar area, had the support of the bulk of the nobles, as well as men like Akhai Raj Sonagra of Jalore and Ram Prasad Singh of Gwalior. With Pratap's half-brother, Prince Jagmal asserting his claim to the throne of Mewar, the succession was not a wholly smooth one. Thus, when Pratap finally took his place on the *gaddi* at Gogunda on 28 February 1572, Prince Jagmal left Mewar and found his way to Akbar's court.

Maharana Pratap (r. 1572-1597 AD), holds a special place in the annals and popular mind not just of Mewar, but of contemporary India as a whole for his spirited resistance against the might of the Mughal Empire during the reign of Emperor Akbar. (Interestingly, Pratap's senior contemporary, Rao Chandrasen of Marwar (r. AD 1562-1581), who similarly contested Mughal suzerainty until his death, is less of a popularly known figure outside of Rajasthan today, though yet another of Pratap's contemporaries, Rani Durgawati of the predominantly Gond principality of Garh-Katanga in Central India, is widely eulogised amongst present-day Indians for her heroic last stand against Akbar's governor at Allahabad, general Asaf Khan).

By the time Pratap ascended the throne of Mewar, several parts of Mewar, including Chittor — long the traditional capital of Mewar — as well as the fort of Mandalgarh, were already under Mughal occupation. This partial occupation and cordoning off of Mewar's territory by Akbar's commanders was proving a great strain on the resources of Mewar and her people. Mewar was effectively surrounded to its north, east and west by Mughal territory, or territories that had accepted Mughal supremacy. (As noted, the territories of Mewar lay on the natural route that connected Delhi and Agra with Gujarat and parts of Malwa, and through which the Mughal Empire's trade and commerce with those areas was also carried out). Only on its southern and south-eastern borders was Mewar free of the Mughal

sphere of influence. Akbar's policy for this region at the time was apparently aimed at a blockade of Mewar, in order to exert military and political pressure on its ruler to acknowledge Mughal paramountcy. This Pratap was not prepared to do!

The nineteenth century chronicler, Col. James Tod noted in volume I of his *Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'han*, that "Pertap [sic] succeeded to the titles and renown of an illustrious house, but without a capital, without resources, his kindred and clans dispirited by reverses: yet possessed of the noble spirit of his race, he meditated the recovery of Cheetore [sic], the vindication of the honour of his house, and the restoration of its power. Elevated by this design, he hurried into conflict with his powerful antagonist [i.e. Akbar], nor stooped to calculate the means which were opposed to him"⁴³.

Thus the confrontation between Akbar and Pratap — which led to the famous battle of Haldighati — needs to be understood against the wider backdrop of Akbar's imperial policies — which included expansion and consolidation of the Mughal empire, along with internal strengthening of government and governance. As far as the Rajput states were concerned, Akbar offered them the choice of alliance with, and allegiance to, the Empire; the alternative being facing the military might of the Mughal Empire.

By the time of Pratap's accession in Mewar, many of the kingdoms of present-day Rajasthan — including Amber, Bikaner, Jaisalmer, Sirohi (and the geographically contiguous Idar, now in Madhya Pradesh), had accepted Akbar's authority. Some rulers, like Marwar's Chandrasen, remained in opposition to him, while others had, along with their kinsmen and prominent nobles, accepted positions at the Mughal court and honours including *mansabs* (graded ranks) and *jagirs* (land-grants).

(Pratap's rival half-brother, Jagmal, too was treated with honour by Emperor Akbar, who granted him the *jagir* of Jahazpur in Mewar. According to some sources, Jagmal was later given *jagir* lands in Marwar and Sirohi too by Akbar. Other sons of Rana Udai Singh, like Sagar and Shakti Singh, are known to have lent their support to the Imperial Court at

different times⁴⁴. Similarly, the disgruntled elder brothers of Marwar's Rao Chandrasen, Ram and Udai, who had disputed the succession and fought a civil war, opted to join Mughal service instead).

The late R.P. Tripathi's work (*Rise and Fall of the Mughal Empire*) asserts that as far as Emperor Akbar's policy towards the Rajput states of India was concerned, he did not wish to either annex such states, or interfere in their social, economic and religious life. According to Tripathi, Akbar wanted the allegiance of these kingdoms to the new Imperial confederation, which implied four things: firstly, the princes were to pay some contribution to the Empire in the form of tribute; secondly, they had to surrender their 'foreign' policies and their right to settle their disputes through mutual warfare; thirdly, they were committed to sending a fixed military quota for the service of the 'confederation' (i.e. empire) whenever required; and fourthly, they were expected to consider themselves an integral part of the empire, and not merely individual units.

Akbar's policy, which included local autonomy to the Rajput rajas who accepted his suzerainty, inducting Rajput rulers (and their kinsmen) into Mughal service and treating them on par with the highest among Mughal courtiers, and fostering religious tolerance throughout his empire, helped cement Mughal-Rajput ties. (It may be relevant to take note here of an opinion expressed by the late historian, Dr. A.L. Srivastava, in his study of Akbar (*Akbar the Great*, vol. I), namely that there was no danger to Hinduism or the Hindu way of life from Akbar, who respected religious beliefs and susceptibilities of all classes of people and more specifically those of his Rajput allies and vassals). Matrimonial alliances between the emperor (and his sons) with Rajput princesses from a number of Rajput states also provided a strong additional bond. These same ties meant that Pratap's stand against the might of Akbar did not secure obvious compatriot assistance from the bulk of his fellow-Rajput rulers and chieftains.

Records tell us that Akbar tried to extract peaceful submission from Pratap on at least three occasions. For this, between 1573 and 1575, three successive emissaries were sent from the emperor to Maharana Pratap. They were Prince Man Singh of Amber (r. 1589-1614), Raja Bhagwant Das of Amber (r. 1574-1589), and Raja Todar Mai. The emissaries could not

make Pratap change his mind. However, it seems that at one stage Maharana Pratap was prepared for a compromise. He put on the imperial robe of honour sent to him by Akbar and (as corroborated by Abul Fazl), sent his eldest son, Amar (later to reign over Mewar, after Pratap's death, from 1597 to 1620 AD), to wait on the emperor along with Raja Bhagwant Das. As Pratap was apparently bent on not attending the Mughal court in person to offer homage to the emperor nothing further came of this venture, though. It also appears that Akbar was not prepared to return Chittor to Pratap, and this too was not acceptable to the proud Maharana.

Eventually, Akbar took a decision, probably sometime in March 1576, to force the issue vis-à-vis the submission of Mewar and Pratap to Mughal suzerainty. By this time Akbar had dealt with several of the outstanding problems plaguing his governance, including the Afghans of eastern India, Rao Chandrasen of Marwar (who had been forced out of Jodhpur, Bhadrajun, and eventually Siwana), and the rebellious Mirza brothers who had been crushed both in western U.P. and later Gujarat. The emperor now appointed Man Singh, the Kachchwaha prince from Amber, as the commander-in-chief of the Imperial army. Contemporary chronicles in Persian like Abul Fazl's *Akbarnama*, Nizamuddin Ahmad's *Tabqat-i-Akbari*, and Mutamid Khan's *Iqbalnama-i-Jahangiri*, suggest that Akbar appointed Man Singh because of the latter's bravery and far-sightedness.

The Mughal forces marched from Ajmer on April 3 1576. Among the other commanders and warriors that formed part of the Mughal army were included people like Asaf Khan, Baliyazi Khan, Shah Ghazi Khan, Raja Jagannath Kachchwaha (Man Singh's uncle), Rao Khangar, Madho Singh, Rao Loonkaran, Tabrizi, Mujahid Beg Khan, Syed Ahmed Khan, Syed Hashim Baraha, Mahtar Khan, Khwaja Mohammad Rafi Badakshani, Mahiwal Ali Khan, and numerous others. Also present, in attendance on commander Asaf Khan, was the chronicler Abdul Qadir Badauni, author of the '*Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*', who has left an eye-witness account in Persian on the campaign against Maharana Pratap⁴⁵.

Man Singh's troops halted at Mandalgarh, about seventy-five miles south of Ajmer and twenty-five miles north of Chittor, for around two months. During this period further preparations, including securing the

passage between Ajmer and Mandalgarh and the arrival of various other reinforcing units of the Mughal army, were carried out. Around the end of May, the Mughal army left Mandalgarh and marched in the direction of Gogunda, located around sixteen miles north-east of Udaipur. (This lies close to the valley now famous by the name of Haldighati, some seventeen miles north of Udaipur. The word means 'the Turmeric Pass', and is so called because of a yellow powdery substance found in the local rocks which erodes to give a strangely turmeric yellow colour to the soil. The *ghati* was originally actually a narrow pass or defile, strategically located at the neck of a hill, within a densely forested area. [It was widened during the early part of the twentieth century]). On reaching the vicinity of the village of Molela, situated on the banks of the river Banas, the Imperial forces made a temporary camp there till around the middle of June.

Meanwhile, marshalling his resources, financially and militarily, Pratap had, on his part, secured the support of an Afghan chief, Hakim Khan Sur. He also gained the assistance of the Bhils of the Bhomat area of Mewar. All passes of the hilly terrain had been fortified, too. In addition, vast tracts of the countryside, stretching up to near Chittor, had been burnt and devastated at the order of the Maharana, so that the Mughal forces could not depend on local supplies of food or fodder. For a while, Pratap waited at Lohasingh. Descending from the fort of Kumbhalgarh (also called Kumbhalmer), Pratap and his army moved to Khamnor, a village situated near the entrance of the Haldighati pass. All was now set for the forthcoming battle, which we today know by the name of the 'Battle of Haldighati', that was fought in June 1576.

According to the contemporaneous account of Badauni there was a total of five thousand cavalry under Man Singh at the battle, though some later writings, like the late seventeenth century *khyat* by Nainsi, maintain that Man Singh commanded forty thousand soldiers. A nineteenth century work, Shyamaldas's *Vir Vinod* asserts that the Mughal troops were 80,000 in number! Maharana Pratap is said to have had over three thousand warriors, including Bhils, fighting for him. Here again, sources differ on the actual numbers involved. On the basis of various compiled sources, the late G.N. Sharma stated that Pratap faced the Mughal army at the head of 3,000

horsemen, 2,000 infantry, 100 elephants, and 100 miscellaneous men who served as drummers, trumpeteers and pick-men⁴⁶.

The first attack came from the Rana's forces — possibly on 18 June, 1576. To repulse the initial attack, Prince Man Singh deputed an advance guard of 900 soldiers under the command of Syed Hashim Baraha. This contingent has been described by Badauni as the '*Jouza-i-Harawal*'. As far as the main Mughal army was concerned, among those in the front ranks were Raja Jaimal, Asaf Khan and Ghaziuddin Khan. On the right flank were men like Syed Ahmed Khan, and on the left Ghazi Khan Badakshani, Rao Lunkaran and his Shekhawat kinsmen, and the 'Sheikhzadas' of Sikri. Beyond the left flank was the reserve of the Mughal forces, under the command of Mahtar Khan. Man Singh himself commanded the Mughal army, seated atop an elephant.

Mughal and Rajasthani accounts led G.N. Sharma to provide the following picture about the battle formations of the Mewar ruler⁴⁷, which followed the traditional order of *harawal* (van), *chandrawal* (rear), *vama-parshva* (left wing) and *dakshin-parshva* (right wing), besides the main central body. We are informed that Rana Pratap's vanguard, led by Hakim Khan Sur, included his Afghan contingent, besides Kishan Das Chundawat of Salumber, Bhim Singh of Sardargarh, Rawat Sanga of Deogarh, Rawat Ram Das of Badnor (son of the hero Jaimal who died at the Chittor siege), and other troops. The right flank of the Mewar army was commanded by Raja Ram Singh Tomar of Gwalior, alongside whom were his three sons and other supporters. The left was led by Man Singh Jhala⁴⁸, with whom were chiefs like Bida Jhala of Bari Sadri and Man Singh Sonagra, son of Jalore's Akhai Raj, and others. Pratap led the centre, followed by his chief minister (*pradhan*), Bhama Shah, and the latter's brother, Tarachand (also a minister and a military commander of Mewar state), while the *chandrawal* (rear) was commanded by Raja Punja of Panarwa, alongside whom were Purohit Gopi Nath, Jagannath Mehta, Ratan Chand, Mahasani Jagan Nath, Keshao and Jaisa, Charans of Soniyana, besides others.⁴⁹

The main battle was fiercely fought, leaving hundreds dead on both sides. Abul Fazl noted that in the thick of the battle it was difficult to

distinguish between friend and foe! In the initial stages the Mughal forces were forced to retreat, but rallied subsequently. The two armies came together again at the plain of Rati-Talai (since called 'Rakt-Talai' or 'Lake of Blood' in commemoration of the gory battle), close to the narrow pass of Haldighati. According to Abul Fazl, the pitched battle between the two opposing armies was fought besides the village of Khamnor, while Badauni stated that it took place at Gogunda. (Badauni, an eye-witness, gives the date of 21 June 1576, for this).

On the basis of information made available to him during the opening years of the nineteenth century, Col. Tod went on to describe the confrontation between the Mughal and Mewar armies as the battle of Haldighati. Compiling available information, twentieth century historians⁵⁰ believe that the major fighting took place at the pass, and near the area still known as 'Badshah Bagh'. (The term probably owes its origin to the encampment by the Mughal army of the *badshah*, or emperor, Akbar).

In the heat of the battle, Mahtar Khan spread the rumour that Emperor Akbar himself was approaching, leading a large contingent of the Imperial Army! This ploy served to boost the morale of the Mughal forces, while producing an adverse effect on the Rana's men. (In fact, Akbar was not present at any stage of the battle of Haldighati). Seeing that the cause seemed lost, Pratap's nobles prevailed upon the Maharana to leave the battlefield. Man Singh Jhala, a noble belonging to the Jhala clan, took the Maharana's place in the thick of the battle, donning certain visible emblems of royalty like the canopy (*chhatra*) so as to give the enemy the false impression that Pratap was still fighting there. The Jhala chief fell in battle eventually. (In grateful acknowledgement of the sacrifice, Pratap later conferred upon the Jhala noble's descendants the right to bear those insignia of Mewar's royalty in perpetuity). The ploy thus enabled the Maharana to leave the battle ground in relative safety. Victory lay with the Imperial army.

Abul Fazl and Nizamuddin recorded the losses in the momentous battle as being 150 men killed on the Mughal side and 500 for Pratap's side, while Badauni cited the total number of dead as being 500, with 120 of

those being Muslims. On the other hand, later-day chroniclers from Rajasthan began to speak of the death of 20,000 soldiers.

The Maharana's horse, Chetak (upon whom the epithet 'the flying horse' has been admiringly bestowed), played a vital role in saving his master and enabling his safe passage from the battlefield. For this, the exploits of the faithful steed have a prominent mention in the bardic and written, as well as the popularly transmitted, sagas of Mewar. According to the story most generally agreed upon, Maharana Pratap's favourite horse, Chetak, served him devotedly for several years. The horse also carried the Maharana through the thick of the battle at Haldighati. Finally, there was a direct encounter between Man Singh of Amber, who was sitting atop his elephant, commanding the Mughal forces, and Maharana Pratap. As the two measured arms, and Pratap lunged with his spear at Man Singh, a sword held in the trunk of Man Singh's elephant struck Chetak's fore-legs, severely wounding the steed. Pratap drew back, but the damage was done.

Though grievously injured, the gallant horse was not lacking in courage, and despite his wounds, Chetak carried the Maharana away to safety from the battle ground, with the 'speed of the wind' (as the saying goes). The 'Flying Horse' finally fell to the ground, exhausted and dying, some two miles from Haldighati, near Balia village. Chetak's final effort had been to leap, with his master still on his back, across a wide chasm that was too broad for any enemy followers to cross. Pratap honoured his horse, and later a memorial was erected at the spot where the horse fell. The cenotaph still stands — mute testimonial to a faithful horse and his grateful master, and a powerful and much-cited symbol of loyalty and sacrifice for the population at large.

Among the other traditions associated with the oft-told tale of Chetak's legendary ride is that of a meeting between Pratap and his estranged brother, Prince Shakti (or Sakat) Singh. According to this, Shakti (Sakat) Singh followed the Maharana in his hasty departure from the battlefield of Haldighati. When he finally came upon his brother besides the fallen Chetak, he was filled with remorse at the thought that while the noble steed had given his life for his master, he himself had wasted so much time in opposing and hounding his own brother, and supporting Pratap's

enemies. Shakti then begged forgiveness from his royal brother. After an emotional reunion, Shakti offered his own horse, in place of the dead Chetak, to Pratap so that the Maharana could escape, and himself took guard to deal summarily with the enemy that sought the Rana of Mewar.

Many historians, among them Drs. G.H. Ojha, G.N. Sharma and Raghubir Singh Sitamau, however, have come to the opinion that this stirring story of the meeting between the two brothers, Pratap and Shakti Singh, after the fight at Haldighati is a legend without historical backing, that originated with the penning of the late seventeenth century *Raj-Prashasti* in Maharana Raj Singh's reign. Mughal annals make no mention of the presence of Pratap's then pro-Akbar brother during the Imperial campaign against the Maharana, and contemporaneous *khyat* writers too have made no mention of any meeting between Pratap and Shakti Singh. In fact, G.N. Sharma⁵¹ held that the once pro-Akbar Sakat Singh probably died fighting on Mewar's side within the surrounded fort of Chittor, during Akbar's siege of 1567-68 within Rana Udai Singh's life-time itself. Sakat Singh had apparently fallen out with the emperor in 1567, and one popular version says it was Sakat who brought the news of Akbar's impending invasion of Mewar to his father at the then Mewar court within Chittor fort.

Over the years, innumerable legends became attached to the saga of Maharana Pratap of Mewar. (One of these pertains to his insult to Man Singh of Amber through refusing to eat with the 'polluted' raja of Amber and taunting him to call his Mughal uncle for help — thereby underlining the Amber ruling family's marriage connections with the non-Hindu Mughals). However, historians have found that not all of these legends are verifiable. In fact, several stories about Pratap commonly told and retold in later centuries do not find any mention in contemporaneous Mewari annals!

Following the victory for the Mughal side, it is believed that Prince Man Singh of Amber gave orders that the Mughal army was not to pursue the Maharana's soldiers. This is attributed to the fact that Man Singh personally respected Maharana Pratap. Having defeated him in battle at the command of his emperor, Man Singh probably did not wish to further harass the ruler and troops of Mewar. For this, Man Singh incurred the

eventual, albeit short-lived, displeasure of Akbar. Soon afterwards, Imperial forces occupied much of Mewar.

Meanwhile, after escaping, Pratap headed towards Kumbhalgarh. However, the investment of the fortress of Gogunda by Man Singh, forced the Maharana to move in search of a fitter refuge. (The Mughal emperor later visited Gogunda in October 1576. Pratap eventually recovered it after Man Singh's departure). It seems that for a while the Rana stayed at the village of Koliyari, to the west of Gogunda, to take stock of the situation and make plans.

Pratap now tried to establish links with other chiefs and rulers, and create a loose coalition against the Mughals. Towards this end, he encouraged Narayan Das of Idar to revolt against Akbar, and probably had a hand in influencing Rao Chandrasen of Marwar's activities around the Nadol area. (Like Pratap, Chandrasen of Marwar continued to resist Mughal domination till his death). Pratap also influenced Rao Surtan of Sirohi and Taj Khan of Jalore, who, in the early months of 1576, had re-asserted their respective independence, to join him. Thereupon, Akbar moved sternly against all these allies.

An Imperial army was despatched under Tarsum Khan, Bikaner's ruler Raja Rai Singh, and Syed Hashim Barha to reduce them to submission. Taj Khan was driven to surrender to Rai Singh of Bikaner, while Surtan having been pushed into presenting himself at Akbar's court later quit the court without permission. Bikaner's Rai Singh and others were thereafter deputed to deal with the Sirohi chief afresh (as is noted elsewhere in this chapter). Thus, in time, Rao Surtan of Sirohi, Taj Khan of Jalore and Narayan Das of Idar were all subdued. Nadol too was captured by the Mughal forces around 19 October 1576.

Akbar entered the city of Udaipur in November 1576, and its administration was handed over to Jagannath Kachchwaha, a scion of the Amber ruling family, and Fakruddin. Mughal outposts were established at places like Pindwara, Haldighati and Mohi. Meanwhile, attempts on the part of the Imperial forces to trace Pratap in the hilly reaches and difficult terrain of the more inaccessible parts of Mewar proved futile. Towards the end of

the year, Akbar left the region and proceeded to Malwa, traversing through Dungarpur and Banswara, having made arrangements for continued action against the Maharana.

Over the next few years, while Maharana Pratap was not able to regroup his resources sufficiently to take on the Mughal army in a pitched battle, he continued to take offensive guerrilla action on every available occasion. In this, full use was made of the natural terrain of Mewar, with its then densely forested and inaccessible valleys and hills. (Imperial traffic along the traditional Mewar-Malwa, Mewar-Gujarat, and Ajmer-Gujarat routes were also threatened on occasion). The indigenous Bhils of the less accessible areas — skilled in the use of the bow and arrow, and knowledgeable about local mountainous paths and passes — proved to be his invaluable allies. Traditional accounts underline that a ‘scorched earth policy’ was adopted by the Mewaris, with crops destroyed and wells filled with earth and rubble, to deter the Mughal occupying forces, alongside constant attempts to sever the Imperial supply lines.

Between 1576 and 1585, Pratap foiled several expeditions headed by Mughal generals. Among them were battle-hardened and experienced commanders like Qutb-ud-din Khan, Raja Bhagwant Das of Amber, Shahbaz Khan, and Jagannath Kachchwaha. For instance, in October 1577, Akbar ordered a large expedition against Pratap, under the leadership of the Mughal ‘*Mir Bakshi*’, Shahbaz Khan. Pratap was tracked down to Kumbhalgarh fort. However, he managed to make his way out of the besieged Kumbhalgarh and reach Ranakpur, enroute to Chavand. Meanwhile, on April 4, 1578, the Mughal forces were successful in taking possession of the fort of Kumbhalgarh. (This was to prove the only time that this fort built by Rana Kumbha was ever invested by an outsider). Shahbaz Khan occupied more Mewari territory, and advanced towards Chavand. Kelwada too was occupied. In the wake of the fall of his stronghold of Kumbhalgarh, and Shahbaz Khan’s advance, Pratap went on to Bhomat hills of southern Mewar for a while, to consolidate and regroup his forces.

In May 1578, Shahbaz Khan left Mewar. The Maharana promptly moved against some of the Imperial outposts. That November (1578),

Pratap attacked the Mughal garrison at Kumbhalgarh, with the result Shahbaz Khan was once again deputed by Akbar to take necessary steps. (Shahbaz Khan was called upon to campaign sporadically against Pratap over the AD 1577-1579 period by Akbar). Once again, Pratap was forced to withdraw to safer areas, from where he continued to harass the Imperial lines. He also attempted to augment his shrinking resources from Malwa through acquiring supplies by force. In the late autumn of 1579 the emperor once more sent Shahbaz Khan into Mewar. The Mughal commander campaigned hard against Pratap, driving him further into less accessible terrain.

For a while, Pratap found security around in the village of Chulia in Idar, where he attempted to regroup his following. At this stage, records the *Vir Vinod* by Shyamaldas⁵² the Maharana was given financial assistance of 25 lakh rupees and 20,000 gold coins (*mohar*) by his minister, Bhama Shah, which Bhama Shah and his brother Tarachand had brought from Malwa. (Bhama Shah and Tarachand were sons of Bharmall, and members of a wealthy Kawaria family of Delhi. Bharmall had served as *qiledar* (fort-commander and administrator) of Ranthambore. In their turn, the loyal Bhama Shah's son, Jiwa Singh and grandson, Akheraj, would also serve Mewar as *pradhans* later.). Bhama Shah's much-lauded action, which allowed the Rana to continue his efforts against the Imperial armies, is still part of the oral tradition of Rajasthan. Maharana Pratap made Dholan, on the western fringes of Mewar, his base.

In June 1580, Akbar appointed Abdul Rahim *Khan-i-Khana* as the *subedar* (governor) of Ajmer, along with the charge of the campaign against Pratap. Consequently, Pratap was forced to evacuate Dholan, and retreat to a more insular part of Mewar in the Chappan area. Here Pratap established himself afresh, and later led expeditions against the neighbouring states of Dungarpur and Banswara. He also proceeded to attack and seize the Mughal outposts at Devar, Amet, Madariya, and Zawar. He later re-took Kumbhalgarh too. By 1583 western Mewar was back under Pratap's control.

Mughal pressure on Mewar had relaxed marginally by this time due to other internal crises, which impinged on the emperor's attention. The

problems included a revolt in Bengal and Bihar against certain of Akbar's reforms, which necessitated sending troops to that region; and the incursion into Punjab by Akbar's half-brother, Mirza Hakim. In December 1584, Akbar charged Raja Jagannath Kachchwaha afresh with the task of capturing Pratap and producing him at the Mughal court. At the approach of Prince Jagannath's expedition, the Maharana retreated further into the inaccessible reaches of Mewar. This 1584-85 expedition was, in effect, the last major campaign by the Imperial forces against Pratap. In 1585, the emperor moved to Lahore, in order to keep a better control over the north-western boundaries of his empire and the situation there. Thereafter, Akbar did not despatch any further expeditions against Pratap.

The same year (1585), Pratap established his new capital at Chavand (near present-day Dungarpur). It was a life of relative deprivation and hardship, though, since much of Mewar remained under Imperial occupation. In time, Pratap had his palace and a temple to Chamund-Mata built at Chavand. The *Amarsar* tells us that here Pratap was able to enjoy peace and establish order in Mewar.

Between 1585 and up to his death in January 1597, the Maharana succeeded in recovering the Chappan area, Vagar, and other substantive parts of Mewar. Gradually, ordinary people who had migrated out of Mewar during the turbulent years of Mewar-Mughal confrontation began to drift back to the land. Agricultural activity picked up, assisted by a series of good monsoon years. So, albeit cautiously, did trade and economic activities. Despite his best efforts, however, Pratap was never able to fulfil his ambition of recovering his ancestral capital, Chittor, even though he managed to restore Mewar's control over some of the area around Chittor. Mandalgarh too remained under Mughal authority.

Rana Pratap's determination and grit made him a popular figure during his lifetime. He was eulogised for adhering to the dream of maintaining the independence of Mewar and not accepting the sovereignty of the Mughal Empire. Over the centuries, he would remain established in popular mind and literature alike for the values he had stood for and the qualities he represented. In the winter of 1596-1597, Pratap sustained an internal injury while hunting. The fifty-seven year old Rana eventually

succumbed to this at Chavand on 19 January 1597. A cenotaph to him was raised at the nearby village-site of Bandoli.

(Tradition says that when the news of his death reached Akbar's court, the emperor did not rejoice, but fell into deep silence. At this a Rajasthani bard, Dursa Adha, who was present at the Court recited a verse extolling 'Pratap-Si', the 'noble Guhilot Rana'. His verse referred to Pratap as one who 'never bowed to Dilli [Delhi], and was victorious even in death, since on hearing the news the Emperor fell silent, sighed, and bit his tongue while tears welled up in his eyes'. Akbar's response to these verses, it is reputed, was to reward the poet!)

Rana Pratap was succeeded by his son, Amar Singh (r. 1597-1620), during whose reign an understanding was reached with the Mughals (as will be seen in the next chapter).

OTHER GUHILA STATES

THE STATE OF DUNGARPUR

During the reign of Rawal Udai Singh (r. 1497-1527), of Dungarpur, his opponents included the sultans of Malwa and Gujarat, against whom he fought hard to keep his territory intact. He also joined battle against these two kingdoms as an ally of Mewar during the reigns of Rana Raimal and Rana Sanga of Mewar. At times, he provided refuge to various princes and warriors from those two sultanates. Among them were Bahadur Khan, later to rule as Sultan Bahadur Shah of Gujarat, and two of Gujarat's officers Azad-ul-Mulk and Muhafiz Khan.

In the course of diplomatic manoeuvrings and skirmishes entailing neighbouring states, Udai Singh also assisted Rao Raimal in obtaining the throne of Idar, and defeating the army of the Nizam-ul-Mulk, who marched to establish another claimant on the Idar *gaddi*. As retaliation for this, Sultan Muzaffar Shah of Gujarat sent his forces against Dungarpur, and laid it to waste. Renowned for his courage and battle-skills as a warrior, he is credited by Babur with maintaining a cavalry strength of 12,000 horses.

Udai Singh died fighting on the side of Rana Sanga of Mewar at the battlefield of Khanua in 1527.

(One must note at this point, that while inscriptions, bardic literature and cross-references in contemporaneous records throw light on the kingdom of Vagar and its rulers, including their frequent wars, and the enemy armies that traversed the land, not much is known about the history of the local Bhils during these centuries. There are, of course, occasional (non-Bhil) references to military actions by various rulers to put down their 'rebellions' or 'acts of plunder and loot' in distant parts of the kingdom of Dungarpur. This lack of information includes anything that can be gleaned through the oral traditions and songs of the Bhils themselves).

Some time before marching to join Rana Sanga, Udai Singh had divided his kingdom between his sons, Prithviraj and Jagmal. He designated Prithviraj as the successor to the territories and estates of the Dungarpur tract lying west of the Mahi River, and granted to Jagmal the area now better known as Banswara, which lay to the east of the river. One version holds that Udai Singh carved out a separate kingdom for Jagmal out of love for his queen, Jagmal's mother. (Ojha cites an inscription in the Brahma temple at Chheench village (Banswara), which suggests that Jagmal was installed as ruler of Banswara as early as VS 1577 — i.e., AD 1520).

As a result of this clear division, the *gaddi* of Dungarpur was occupied, following the death of Udai Singh at Khanua, by Prithviraj (r. 1527-1549), while Jagmal ruled independently over the state of Banswara, centred on his own inheritance. However, in the long run, the partitioning of the kingdom effected by their father became a bone of contention between Prithviraj and Jagmal, and enabled Sultan Bahadur Shah of Gujarat to interfere in their affairs in 1531.

Askaran (r. 1549-1580) succeeded Prithviraj. His reign saw its share of combat and invasions, intermixed with long periods of peace and prosperity. It was during these latter spells that various buildings were erected, including a Shiva temple at Vaneshwar and a Vishnu temple at Dungarpur⁵³. When Rawal Jai Singh, the ruler of Banswara, died in 1568 Askaran made an attempt against Banswara. This proved unsuccessful,

though, and was not repeated. However, even Dungarpur's advantageous geographical position could not keep it aloof from contemporaneous events.

By this time, Akbar's policy of alliance versus absorption vis-à-vis lesser states was coming in to play. In April 1573 there was a confrontation with part of an Imperial army returning from Gujarat. (Amber's Prince Man Singh was part of this force). Dungarpur's forces were defeated⁵⁴ and the area looted. Subsequently, following the Battle of Haldighati of 1576, Rawal Askaran accepted the sovereignty of Emperor Akbar. In 1577 Askaran personally presented himself before Akbar, and was accorded due honours in return. Thereafter, Dungarpur remained allied with the Imperial cause.

During the course of Askaran's long reign, he willingly provided shelter to several beleaguered rulers, scions of ruling houses, or officers of other kingdoms, who had lost the grace and favour of their masters. Those provided refuge included Sultan Baz Bahadur of Malwa, Rao Chandrasen of Marwar (whose sister was one of Askaran's queens), and Malwa's governor, Sujawal Khan.

Askaran died in 1580, and was succeeded by his son, Sesmal — also referred to as Sainamal (r. 1580-1606). Sesmal is described in inscriptions as a virtuous and pious ruler, a poet and man of scholarship, and a brave warrior, during whose reign the state treasury was full, and the people prosperous⁵⁵. Sesmal continued to acknowledge Mughal authority, as did later successors. Over the next century and more, Dungarpur was among the states that acknowledged Mughal suzerainty and provided military service to the empire.

THE STATE OF BANSWARA

With the division of the Guhilot kingdom of Dungarpur in AD 1527, the eastern portion (soon known as Banswara) had become established as a separate fiefdom under Jagmal (r. 1527-1544), the son of Rawal Udai Singh of Dungarpur. As noted above, the partition was not to the liking of

Jagmal's brother, Prithviraj, who had become master of the other half of Dungarpur, and had resulted in a long period of hostile behaviour and rivalry between the brothers. In the long run, this division of erstwhile Dungarpur into two portions — namely Dungarpur and Banswara — weakened both branches.

In the initial years of the existence of his small kingdom, Jagmal sought the assistance of Bahadur Shah of Gujarat in resolving boundary disputes between Banswara and Dungarpur. Besides that, in order to establish his dominion over the territories willed to him by his father, in 1530 Jagmal was driven to defeat the local Bhil chieftain of the area, who was named Vasna (or Basna, also referred to as Bansia).

Jagmal is said to have established his capital on the site of the *pal* (habitation) of Vasna, situated in a narrow valley of the Kagdi River, surrounded by hills. The term 'Banswara' is believed to be a corrupt form of 'Vasnawara' meaning the settlement of Vasna. Other historians have derived the term from an abundance of locally prolific bamboo clusters or '*bans*'. Here, Jagmal built his fortified palace on a strategically located hill-top, some two kilometres from the present town of Banswara. In later years, a fort was built here by his successor, Rawal Jai Singh (r. 1544-68).

Like Prithviraj, who retained the title of 'Rawal' used by his predecessors on the *gaddi* of Dungarpur, Jagmal too adopted the title of 'Rawal', which linked him to the old ruling lineage of the Guhilas of Mewar. Jagmal's death probably occurred in the year 1544. During the reign of his immediate successors, the young state of Banswara was further weakened by internal conflicts and conflict with the local Bhils, as well as by expeditions organised against it by Mewar and Dungarpur. The wars and intrigues of the nobles are said to have weakened the kingdom to such an extent that Rawal Pratap Singh (r. 1568-1579) was driven to accept Akbar's suzerainty in 1576.

It was this Pratap Singh who built a protective wall around the capital city of Banswara. He is known to have invited various communities to come and settle there, giving rise to colonies like Kasarawara, Bhaj Palyan, Mahajanwala, etc. Such deliberate populating of towns and cities with

people skilled in a variety of crafts and trades is an aspect of Rajasthan's history that recurs frequently across different areas, and has remained an important catalyst to the economic activities of the region.

In 1583, the Bhils of Khandu rose against Man Singh (r. 1579-1583), Pratap's successor on the throne of Banswara. While the uprising was quelled, Rawal Man Singh lost his life. Following the death of the ruler, one of his nobles, a Chauhan named Man, usurped the *gaddi* of Banswara. At this, Dungarpur's ruler, Sesmal, sent a warning to Man Chauhan, and when that had no effect, sent his troops into Banswara to drive out Man Chauhan and assist the late Rawal Man Singh's rightful successor, Ugrasen, obtain his inheritance. However, the attempt failed.

Thereafter, incursions organised by Mewar or Dungarpur, or both, continued to occur with regularity over the years — notably in 1578 and 1583-4. These would recur in coming centuries too — as for example, in AD 1668, 1680, 1691, 1702, and 1724. In addition, as was the case with the parent-state of Dungarpur, Banswara too had to continually assert its status vis-à-vis both Mewar and the Mughal Empire.

THE GUHILOTS AND THE STATE OF PRATAPGARH-DEOLIYA

Yet another political unit which was carved out by a branch of the Guhilot clan is the state of Pratapgarh-Deoliya. In common usage, chroniclers and the populace at large have frequently also referred to it as Deoliya-Pratapgarh, reversing the order of the place-names, and even by the designation of either just Deoliya or just Pratapgarh too, on occasion.

Situated in the south-eastern part of Rajasthan, Pratapgarh-Deoliya was founded by Surajmal, an ambitious scion of the ruling family of Mewar, during the closing years of the fifteenth century. Surajmal was the son of Prince Khem [Kshem] Singh, the second son of Rana Mokal of Mewar (r. 1421-33). Khem Singh, upon receiving what he thought was a meagre *jagir* from Mokal's successor, Rana Kumbha, forcibly occupied the Sadri area of Mewar, including the surrounding villages around Sadri town,

and tried to establish his own independent principality. This was very much within the tradition of ambitious and/or disgruntled warriors — whether scions of clan chiefs and kings or not — who had the ability, the opportunity, and the support (military or financial or populist), to make such an attempt.

Unfortunately for Khem Singh, Mewar itself was then under an able and ambitious ruler, Rana Kumbha, who was keen to push the boundaries of Mewar in all available directions. As such, Kumbha was certainly not willing to encourage the setting up of an independent kingdom carved out from a part of his own! Khem Singh's plan was, thus, foiled by the vigorous policies of Kumbha. Khem Singh thereupon sought refuge at the Malwa court, from where, according to Mewar's annals — which would probably be biased against him anyway — he encouraged Sultan Mahmud Khalji of Malwa in his designs against Kumbha, and never lost hope of attaining the throne of Mewar for himself.

After Uda ascended the throne of Mewar, following the assassination of Kumbha, Khem Singh was successful in gaining Sadri. He continued to exercise his authority over it until his death in 1473 on the battlefield of Dadimpur. Khem Singh's son, the equally ambitious prince Surajmal, inherited his estates and the *jagir* of Sadri on the father's death. He too tried to establish a separate principality around Sadri, as had been visualised by his father before him. To attain this objective, Surajmal joined hands with Sarangadev — who was among the rival claimants for the crown of Mewar. He also attempted to foster the existing rivalry and dissension between the ambitious sons of Mewar's Rana Raimal, and was a strong supporter of Prince Sanga in the fraternal squabbles over power among the royal princes (to which reference has already been made elsewhere in this work).

Not meeting with success, Surajmal later sought help from the Sultan of Malwa, and joined in some of Malwa's attacks and incursions into Mewar. These too were not profitable for Surajmal. Finally, Surajmal opted to migrate into the Kanthal area to the south of Mewar, where, at long last, he was able to carve out his own principality!

To achieve this, Surajmal defeated and subdued the local Bhils of Kanthal, erected the town of Deoliya, and soon became known as the “lord of a thousand villages”⁵⁶. This was the core of the principality that later became known as ‘Pratapgarh-Deoliya’. (According to another belief, however, Deoliya was founded by Rawat Bika (r. 1552-1564), the grandson of Surajmal, and was so named in honour of Dewoo, a Med woman who had burnt herself following the death of her husband in battle against Rawat Bika).

The principality was never able to break free of Mewar’s sphere of influence, though, and in later generations continued to have a somewhat tumultuous and at times fragile relationship with Mewar (as was the case with other collateral states, like Dungarpur and Banswara). Surajmal has been eulogised for his pious acts, which included the construction of the Sur Sagar water-reservoir and making substantial land-grants in the name of charity. His death took place between c. AD 1528 and 1530.

Surajmal’s successor, Bagh Singh (r. ?1530-1535), took part in the battle of Khanua in 1527, during the lifetime of his father. He was among the scions of the clan who later responded to the clarion call for the defence of Chittor, when that ancestral capital of Mewar was besieged by Bahadur Shah of Gujarat. Given the command of leading the defence of Chittor, Bagh Singh died a hero’s death in 1535 at Chittor’s Patwan Pol, defending the fort against the forces of Bahadur Shah, that were subjecting Chittor to its prolonged siege (extending from 1534 to 1535).

Bagh Singh’s son, Rai Singh (r. 1535-1552) further consolidated and organised the kingdom and its administration. In 1536 he played his role in helping Panna Dhai and Mewar’s young Udai Singh during their escape from the usurper, Banbeer. Following the death of Rai Singh, his son Bika (r. 1552-1564) took over the task of strengthening the kingdom. In the course of his vigorous reign, he defeated local Bhils, and reputedly added six hundred villages wrested from Chauhan, Rathore and Dodiya Rajputs, to the kingdom of Pratapgarh-Deoliya. Tradition also credits him with occupying one hundred villages that belonged to the Meds in 1561.

Rawat Bika was succeeded by his son, Tej Singh (r. 1564-1593). Tej Singh is recalled as a valiant ruler, who was also a patron of learning. It seems that though he did not attend the Mughal court, he was categorised amongst the subordinate chiefs of Malwa in the political system of Akbar. Bhanu Singh (whose reign, along with that of his successors is taken up in the next chapter) succeeded Tej Singh in 1593.

THE STATE OF AMBER/DHOONDHAR

A slightly greater degree of information about the history of Amber is available from the period of the Kachchwaha ruler Prithviraj (r. 1503-1527) onwards. Prithviraj was a contemporary of Rana Sanga of Mewar, alongside whom he fought at the Battle of Khanua (1527), as part of the 'Rajput confederacy' organised by Sanga against Babur. As such, he is sometimes described by later chroniclers as a feudatory of Sanga.

This issue of feudatory-suzerain relationship should perhaps be viewed in the light of dominant kingdom versus smaller states, and not as the relationship between an absolute sovereign versus a subordinate feudal chief. The former kind of relationship seems to have a long history in the region. For instance, the supremacy of the Imperial Pratiharas was acknowledged at different points of time between the eighth to tenth centuries AD by smaller or less powerful states, such as that of the Chahamanas (later better known as Chauhans) of Shakambhari, and the Cuhilas of Mewar. In time, however, the Chauhans of Shakambhari took the place of the Imperial Pratiharas and had their own suzerainty accepted by less powerful kingdoms and chiefdoms. At a slightly later period, the Cuhilas and the Sisodias of Mewar occupied that position too. And so a cycle seems to have existed, of the stronger power gaining the 'homage' of lesser powers, and frequently tribute at pre-determined intervals from them, in the form of gold, or food-grains, or other material goods, or the promise of warriors and weapons in times of crisis.

In the case of the status of Prithviraj of Amber vis-à-vis Sanga of Mewar, it should be borne in mind that one of the queens of Prithviraj was a Sisodia princess from Mewar, who also happened to be the sister of Rana

Sanga. Thus it appears that Prithviraj — like many an independent chief accepting the nominal suzerainty of a more powerful neighbour — was perhaps not wholly the subservient ‘feudal’ chief in the sense that is understood by contemporary political scientists and historians, but rather a junior ally of Sanga. We shall revert to this point of feudatory-overlord relations in the context of medieval Rajasthan again.

Prithviraj assigned land-grants to his sons and close kinsmen, and is traditionally regarded as the initiator of what has come to be known as the ‘*Bara Kotri*’ or Twelve Households’ of the Amber Kachchwahas. (A *kotri* means, variously, a chamber, or branch, section/segment). The select group of kinsmen classified into these twelve *kotris* were assigned areas over which their respective descendants long held sway — albeit as subordinates of successive Amber rulers. The holders of these *bara kotri* formed the highest category of Amber’s nobility.

It was also during the time of Prithviraj that the ‘*kan-phata*’ Jogis of the Nath sect⁵⁷, which had once been predominant over the Dhoondhar area, with their base at Galta, near Amber, lost their position to the Vaishnavite Ramanandi sect⁵⁸. Prithviraj himself, once drawn to the Naths, and a near-disciple of the *Jogi* Chaturmath, who used to meditate in, and give discourses at, Amber’s Ambikeshwar temple, later withdrew his patronage from the Naths. This was apparently under the influence of his favourite queen, Bala Bai (daughter of Rao Lunkaran of Bikaner), who was a Vaishnav when she arrived at Amber as a bride, and subsequently became a follower of Krishnadas ‘Payahari’, an adherent and teacher of the Ramananda sect, when Krishnadas ‘Payahari’ arrived in Dhoondhar. There are still local tales about the miracles performed by Krishnadas as he asserted his supremacy over the Naths and made Galta the seat of the ‘Ramanandis’.

It was probably due to the influence of Queen Bala Bai and the Guru Krishnadas that Prithviraj of Amber had the idols of Narasimha and Vishnu installed within the Narasimha-ji and Sitarama temples. Prithviraj was among those who are eulogised for having fought valiantly at the battle of Khanua in 1527. When Sanga was struck on the head by an arrow and became unconscious on the battlefield Prithviraj was among the party of

warriors and princes that carried him off to the safety of Baswa. Prithviraj died later that same year on November 19.

A period of internecine struggle for the throne seems to have followed the death of Prithviraj. Prithviraj had nominated his second son, Puranmal (r. 1527-1534), as his successor. The choice may have been influenced by the fact that Puranmal's mother, Bala Bai was Prithviraj's favourite queen. Neighbouring rulers exploited the situation of internal strife. There are even suggestions that Humayun helped Puranmal's accession⁵⁹.

Puranmal's reign was short. According to one version, Puranmal laid down his life fighting Mirza Tatar Khan around c. 1534 AD. According to another, he died at the battle of Anaseri in 1534, fighting against the Mughal prince, Hindal (a brother of Emperor Humayun). Hindal had been granted the fief-hold of Alwar and its surrounding Mewat area, and needed to resort to the sword to take possession of his grant. He followed up his campaign against the Mewatis into Kachchwaha-held lands and attacked Amarsar. Amarsar was then held by Raimal of the Shekhawat sub-branch of the Kachchwahas, and Shekhawat accounts stress that Amber's Raja Puranmal laid down his life helping Raimal at the battle of Anaseri, near 'Shikhargarh', Amarsar⁶⁰. Yet another version holds that around c. 1533-34 Prithviraj's eldest son, Bhimdev (Bhim Singh), seized the throne and capital from Puranmal, thus deposing the younger brother.

Like Puranmal, Bhim Singh (r. 1534-1537), also had a short reign. He was followed by Ratan Singh, who ruled for some eleven years (r. 1537-1548). It was during his reign that, in 1544, Emperor Sher Shah Suri, already master of much of Marwar, and portions of Mewar, Sirohi and Ajmer, attacked Dhoondhar. Possibly taking his cue from Rana Udai Singh of Mewar, who had yielded up the keys of Chittor fort to the Afghan, Ratan Singh of Amber too found it prudent to accept Sher Shah's suzerainty⁶¹.

Meanwhile, Ratan Singh's paternal uncle, Prince Sanga — the fourth son of the famed Prithviraj, had established control over a substantial portion of territory, and founded the township of Sanganer (later renowned also for its block-printing on cloth). Upon Sanga's death, Bharmal (also

called Biharimal by some writers), who was yet another of the younger sons of the late Prithviraj of Amber, succeeded his brother as the next chief of Sanganer. For a while he concentrated on continuing Sanga's unfinished tasks.

Around this time, the Amber ruler Ratan Singh was poisoned in 1548 by his half-brother, Ashkaran. However, Ashkaran enjoyed the throne of Amber for a mere sixteen days, before being deposed by local feudal lords. Some historians believe that this could have been done at the instigation of Bharmal, who now became the new ruler of Amber.

Bharmal was over fifty years old by now, and a seasoned political survivor of the long-drawn out intra-family struggle for power. The caution and diplomacy engendered by that latter, combined with his natural shrewdness and advantage of age over his several power-hungry relatives, gave an edge to Bharmal when it came to statesmanship. The long reign of Bharmal (r. 1548-1574) was to see a new political equation between Amber and the Mughal Empire, which soon catapulted the Kachchwahas to the centre-stage of pan-Indian politics, diplomacy and administration as Mughal feudatories. This was based only in part upon the oft-discussed matrimonial alliance between Emperor Akbar and a Kachchwaha princess.

In his initial period as ruler of Amber, Bharmal was faced with considerable opposition. This came not just from various relatives, who were rival contenders to the throne, but also from Haji Khan Pathan, a former slave and military commander of Sher Shah Suri⁶², whom Bharmal managed to placate; as well as from the Mughal *subedar* (governor) of Mewat, Mirza Muhammad Sharif-ud-din Hussain. The last-named, supporting the cause of Prince Suja, a son of king Puranmal of Amber, attacked the Dhoondhar capital in 1558.

Bharmal sued for peace, promising a sum of money, in addition, to sending his son, Jagannath (whose mother was Queen Champavati of the Solanki clan), and two nephews — Raj Singh (son of the deposed King Ashkaran), and Khangar (son of Prince Jagmal of Jobner), as hostages in 1561. (All three youths being grandsons of the late King Prithviraj of Amber).

Despite the peace-treaty, Bharmal remained insecure. This could have been one reason for his taking the opportunity offered by Emperor Akbar's visit to Ajmer in AD 1562 to consolidate his position. (He is believed to have previously attended Akbar's court in 1556).

Dausa, which had already played some part in establishing Kachchwaha fortunes, lay on the travel-route of the Mughal emperor from his capital, Agra, to Ajmer. It was then under the administration of Bharmal's brother, Rupsi 'Bairagi'. (Prince Rupsi, whose mother was Queen Suhag Devi, a daughter of Gyan Rao Gaur, also held the *pargana* of Parbatsar as *jagir*⁶³). Bharmal now requested Rupsi to meet with Emperor Akbar on his behalf. According to the late Pandit Madhusudan Ojha (who compiled a history of 'Matsya-desh' while heading the '*pothikhana*', or archives and library section, of erstwhile Jaipur state), Rupsi initially sent his son, Jaimal, to wait on the emperor. Akbar, however, desired Rupsi's personal attendance. This was complied with.

Akbar's favour having been won, Bharmal waited on the emperor in person at the next Imperial halt enroute to Ajmer, which was at Sanganer. This meeting at Sanganer in 1562 was to have momentous consequences, both for the Kachchwaha dynasty as well as for the Mughals. Bharmal not only entered into an alliance with Akbar, he cemented their new friendship by offering the hand of his daughter⁶⁴ in marriage to the Mughal emperor. The marriage ceremony (which included full Hindu rituals) seems to have been solemnised at Sambhar⁶⁵. The title of 'Mariam-uz-Zamani' (d. 1622) was bestowed on the new queen. Following the marriage, Bharmal, accompanied by an entourage that included his sons, Bhagwant Das and Jagannath, and twelve year old grandson, Man Singh, proceeded to the Imperial court at Agra.

The alliance with Akbar undoubtedly influenced the rise to pre-eminence of the Kachchwaha ruling house of Amber at the Mughal court. Raja Bharmal received a *mansab* rank at court, and the princes Bhagwant Das, Jagannath Kachchwaha, Man Singh and the latter's younger brother, Madho Singh, obtained ranks of importance in the Imperial army. The honours were scarcely undeserved, though, for not just these above

mentioned individuals, but the various other members of Bharmal's Amber entourage at Agra soon proved their worth in their respective fields. The association would remain mutually beneficial over the next several generations too, with Kachchwaha arms, administrative skills and loyalty proving an asset to the mighty Mughal Empire, just as was the recognition, high honours, territorial stability and economic prosperity that followed in its wake for the kingdom of Amber.

By the time that Raja Bharmal died in AD 1574, he was a trusted and favoured member of the Mughal emperor's court, holding a *mansab* of 5,000. It is held that Bharmal earned the confidence of the Mughal emperor to the extent that whenever Akbar left his capital he used to place its safety in the charge of Raja Bharmal of Amber.

The capability of Bharmal's successor, Bhagwant Das (r. 1574-1589), as an administrator, warrior and diplomat received suitable recognition at the Imperial court. He was a prominent participant of several Imperial military campaigns and expeditions across Rajasthan, Gujarat, Kashmir and the Punjab (including the conquest of Ranthambore in 1569, and the battle of Sarnal in 1572), and was given the title of '*Amir-ul-Umra*' by Emperor Akbar. Like his father before him, Bhagwant Das also attained a *mansab* rank of 5,000. Following the policy previously adopted by Bharmal, in 1585 Bhagwant Das also opted to further strengthen Amber's geographically vulnerable position vis-à-vis the Mughals through the marriage of his daughter, Princess Man Bai (also Mani Bai or Manbhavati, afterwards known as Sultan-un-Nisa), with Akbar's eldest son, the Mughal Prince Salim (later Emperor Jahangir).

Like many a contemporary raja who had accepted Akbar's supremacy, Bhagwant Das spent many years of his life on Imperial service — away from his ancestral capital and, following his accession to the *gaddi* of Amber, his kingdom. In 1578 he was posted to the Punjab and north-western areas of the Mughal Empire. In 1583, towards the latter part of his life, Bhagwant Das was appointed *subedar* of the Punjab. He served in that capacity for seven years from 1583 till his death in the winter of 1589 at Lahore. A keen builder, he encouraged the construction of temples, palaces

and pavilions at his capital of Amber, as well as at places like Fatehpur Sikri, Agra and Lahore.

The next of the Kachchwaha rulers was Bhagwant Das's eldest son, Man Singh (r. 1589-1614), Man Singh had served a long and valuable apprenticeship as soldier and administrator during the reigns of his grandfather and father — Bharmal and Bhagwant Das, respectively. In the course of his career, first as a royal prince and then the ruler of Amber, Man Singh took part in as many as sixty-seven important military campaigns and battles. The various Imperial campaigns took him from Kabul, Balkh and Bukhara in the north-west to Bengal in the east, besides the southern and central part of the subcontinent⁶⁶.

Born to Bhagwant Das's chief queen, Rani Bhagwati Panwar, on 21 December AD 1550 (or *Paush vadi* 13, VS 1607, according to the Vikram Samvat calendar), Man Singh was twelve when he entered the Imperial Service, along with his grandfather's entourage, in 1562. His subsequent training enabled the young *kunwar* (prince) Man Singh to become familiar with traditional Rajput as well as the Mughal technique of warfare and tactics. Early in his fighting career, Man Singh took part in several battles and Imperial campaigns. These included Emperor Akbar's conquest of Chittor (1568) and siege of Ranthambore (1569), and the conquest of Surat (26 February, 1573).

Man Singh was given charge of a small Mughal force, which included generals Shah Quli Khan and Mahram Murat Khan, which was ordered to return to the Imperial capital from its Gujarat campaign by a route that took it through the Vagar part of the territories of Dungarpur. When confronted by Rawal Askaran of Dungarpur (r. 1549-1580) and his forces in April 1573, the Imperial army inflicted a defeat on Askaran and plundered the land. Man Singh is believed to have gone on to Mewar after this. Here he met with Maharana Pratap but his mission of convincing Pratap to acknowledge Akbar's suzerainty proved unsuccessful.

In 1574, *Kunwar* Man Singh formed part of the Mughal expedition sent to deal with the rebellious Daud Khan of Bihar and Bengal. Daud Khan was the son of Sulaiman Kararani. Kararani, originally the governor of the

south Bihar area, had extended his authority in 1564 over the neighbouring Sur Afghan held area of Bengal⁶⁷, in the wake of the disturbed local conditions there following the murder of the reigning king. Till his death in 1572, Sulaiman Kararani continued to acknowledge the supremacy of Akbar. During this period, he transferred his capital from Gaur to Tandah, and annexed the Hindu kingdom of Orissa. On Sulaiman Kararani's death, his son, Daud Khan, adopted a far different stance to that of his father. He incurred Akbar's disfavour by proclaiming his independence, and followed that up with attacking the outpost of Zamania (in the Ghazipur district of U.P.), on the eastern frontier of the Mughal Empire.

Leading the Imperial force to eastern India personally, Akbar embarked on vigorous action against Daud Khan. Abul Fazl's account tells us that the emperor took along Raja Bhagwant Das of Amber and his son, *Kunwar* Man Singh, besides some seventeen other noted generals and commanders. Having successfully expelled Daud Khan from Patna and Hajipur, the emperor (along with Man Singh, among others), returned to Fatehpur Sikri (by 1571 the new capital), leaving Munim Khan in charge of the eastern campaign. Forced to retreat towards Orissa, Daud Khan was defeated by the Imperial force at Tukaroi, near the eastern bank of river Suvarnarekha, in March 1575. He recouped, made a fresh bid for recover his lost territories that October, and was finally defeated and killed in a battle near Rajmahal in July 1576. Bengal was attached to the Mughal Empire, but within a few years the harsh policies of Akbar's *subedar* of Bengal, Muzaffar Khan Turbati, which came on top of Akbar's revenue and military reforms that left many officials disgruntled, gave rise to fresh rebellion in Bihar and Bengal⁶⁸. (Later, Akbar posted Man Singh first as governor of Bihar, and then Bengal, to deal with the situation, as we shall see further).

Meanwhile, in 1576, Man Singh was called upon to lead the Imperial campaign against Rana Pratap, the ruler of Mewar, who had refused to accept the sovereignty of Akbar. This culminated in the fiercely fought battle of Haldighati (already discussed earlier) between the forces of Rana Pratap and the Imperial forces.

Following Pratap's enforced quitting of the battlefield, some versions insist that Man Singh forbade the Mughal army from pursuing and harassing the defeated Mewar forces and their supporting troops. This action drew the emperor's displeasure and censure on Man Singh's head, but Akbar later admitted his unrepentant Rajput '*farzand*' (son), back into his favour. Meanwhile, Man Singh went on to capture the fort of Gogunda, and consolidate the position of the occupying Mughal armies across much of Mewar.

The Amber prince was then given the task the dealing with the rebellion in Khinchiwara (literally, the area of the Khinchis), which lay to the south of Bundi and Kota. Records tell us that Man Singh proceeded from Amber with a strong contingent, and subdued recalcitrant chiefs along the way. Having put down the trouble in Khinchiwara and established military outposts to safeguard Imperial interests, Man Singh next proceeded towards Malwa (which lay further south), conquering the principality of Oond on the way. His efficiency in putting down dissension and establishing good governance in Malwa so pleased the emperor that Man Singh's *mansab* rank was raised to 3,500.

Next, along with his father, Bhagwant Das (by then Raja of Amber), Man Singh was posted to the Punjab and north-western region along the still-fluid frontier of the empire. Both men, with their retinues, took up their new duties in the Punjab by April 1578. Over the course of his long stay in the Punjab and the north-western part of the empire, Man Singh was part of numerous campaigns, including against Badakshan, Kashmir and other areas. For a while, Sialkot in the Punjab was his headquarter, and tradition states that Man Singh repaired the old fort and beautified the city as *jagirdar* of Sialkot. His major achievements included chastising Sulaiman Mirza, who was an ally of Mirza Muhammad Hakim, the ruler of Kabul and the emperor's half-brother and rival. In January 1580 the Kachchwaha prince was charged with looking after the law and order situation of the north-western frontier part of the Mughal Empire in the regions around the river Indus. Man Singh took up his task with enthusiasm. That December, Man Singh inflicted a severe defeat on the forces of another of Mirza Muhammad Hakim's allies — a commander named Shadman, who had

attacked the fort of Neelab. Shadman was wounded by a Kachchwaha warrior named Suraj Singh, and died shortly afterwards.

As the *nazim* (administrator) of Sindh was perceived as having mismanaged affairs, Man Singh was sent to replace him. Meanwhile, Mirza Muhammad Hakim, the emperor's half-brother, once again took up arms against Akbar and advanced south-eastwards from Kabul, attacking Punjab, and for a time besieging the fort of Lahore. On hearing this, the emperor deputed various commanders, including Bikaner's ruler Rai Singh and the Amber family's Prince Jagannath Kachchwaha, to assist Man Singh. Simultaneously, on February 8, 1581, Emperor Akbar personally marched forward to measure swords with his half-brother. On learning of this, Mirza Hakim retreated towards his capital, sped on his way by Man Singh and the other Imperial commanders.

After this, Man Singh formed part of the Imperial expedition sent against Mirza Hakim in July 1581, under the command of Akbar's second son, Prince Murad. Mirza Hakim was defeated and fled towards the northern points of his realm. Kabul lay before the Imperial army. On August 9, 1581, Akbar entered Kabul, but restored the province to his half-brother after Mirza Hakim took a vow of loyalty, and re-appointed him *hakim* (governor) of Kabul. When the Mughal forces returned, Rai Singh of Bikaner and the others were sent on to the Punjab.

Akbar returned from Kabul to his capital later that year, while for the next few years, Man Singh continued, as before, to hold charge of the Indus region. The situation altered with the death of Mirza Muhammad Hakim in mid 1585. Akbar moved his court northwards — where it stayed till 1598. For a while the emperor was based at Hasan Abdal (near Taxila), partly in order to thwart the designs of Abdullah Khan of Trans-Oxania and his Uzbegs, who was keen to take Kabul. Man Singh was commanded by his emperor to proceed to Kabul without delay and bring that area and its people formally into the fold of the empire.

As ordered, Man Singh crossed the river Indus, reached Peshawar and accepted the submission of the people of that region, and then marched into Kabul and ensured the acceptance of Akbar's sovereignty. Pleased with Man Singh's achievements, Akbar appointed him *subedar* of Kabul.

As *subedar* of Kabul, Man Singh discharged his duties with great vigour, earning the grudging respect of the Afghans and Pakhtoons (or Pathans, as they are better known) as a warrior and commander. Man Singh was faced with the task of subduing the formidable Roshanias. Followers of Bayazid (d. 1580), they were led by his son, Jalal, and were notorious for looting travellers and caravans traversing the Khyber Pass between Peshawar and Kabul. Besides fighting the Roshanias and other frontier groups, Man Singh assisted in suppressing the Yusufzai tribe of the north-western region. The Yusufzai had been responsible for the death of Raja Birbal, along with about 8,000 Imperial troops, during an ambush in February 1586⁶⁹. Man Singh was placed under the overall command of Raja Todar Mai, another of Akbar's valued ministers and counsellors.

With the aim of having an operating base for launching an offensive against the Yusufzai, Man Singh promptly ordered the construction of a strong fort between the Buner Pass and Ohind (Wahind), which could also be used for defensive purposes. Satisfied with the preparations and strategy adopted by the Amber prince, Todar Mai left him in charge of future operations against the Yusufzai and returned to the court in March 1586. Man Singh's offensive against the turbulent tribe inflicted defeats, which temporarily blunted the zeal of the Yusufzai. During the latter part of the year Man Singh continued the Imperial campaigns against the Roshanias, Tarikis, Ghoris and other frontier groups, and in December 1586 inflicted a crushing defeat on them.

Around the same time, Akbar reorganised his administrative structure. As part of this, Man Singh was confirmed in his previous appointment as *subedar* of Kabul, with Zain Khan Kokah appointed his deputy, Nizam-ul-Mulk as the *dewan*, and Khwaja Shams-ud-din as the *bakshi*. The five-coloured flag of the Amber state (which continued to be used until after Dhoondhar's integration into Independent India) is said to have been

designed by Man Singh during this period, with the colours taken from the pennants of the main Afghan and Pathan groups defeated by Man Singh. It is believed that having defeated the tribes, he duly presented their flags and other booty to Emperor Akbar. The latter authorised Man Singh to use the colours as his own, as he had fairly won them. To these, Man Singh added the white already used in the pennant of his line — and thus was born the Dhoondhari '*panchranga*' (five-coloured) flag.

Man Singh's long and successful stint along the northern and north-western reaches of the Mughal Empire ended in March 1587, when the Amber prince was recalled from Kabul, and the province placed under the charge of Zain Khan Kokah. Abul Fazl's writings indicate that Man Singh was given a fresh assignment as the presence of the ever-victorious Man Singh and his warrior Rajputs in the *suba* (province) of Kabul was proving galling to the proud Afghans and Pathans. Whether or not that was the sole reason for his recall from Kabul, it cannot be denied that by the beginning of 1587 Man Singh had successfully established the Imperial might (for the time being) over the major local tribes of the areas under him. He had simultaneously established Mughal administration across the recently subdued province of Kabul. As one of the best commanders of the Mughal Empire, Emperor Akbar now put Man Singh's services to use in other areas.

That December, Man Singh was appointed *subedar* of the province of Bihar. In this fertile and strategically placed region, several big and small recalcitrant chiefs and land-holders, particularly, though not solely, the Afghans and Pathans, with their persistent dissension, uprisings and infighting, were proving a problem to the emperor. Some of them had previously sided with Akbar's rebellious half-brother, Mirza Hakim. Others were encouraged by Daud Khan's rebellion during the 1574-76 period, as noted above. Man Singh held charge of the province from December 1587 to March 1594, during which time he was successful in establishing stable administration and putting down scores of rebellious chieftains. Corroborating this, Abul Fazl noted that "when the Raja was sent from the Court to the province of Bihar, he united ability with courage and genius with strenuous action. By His Majesty's fortune, he administered the province excellently"⁷⁰.

Within a couple of years of his taking up his office in Bihar, Man Singh ascended the *gaddi* of Dhoondhar, following the death of Raja Bhagwant Das at Lahore on 13 November 1589. On hearing the news, Man Singh proceeded to Amber, where he was enthroned. The formal coronation ceremony, to which Emperor Akbar sent the *teeka* recognising his accession along with the decree conferring the title of 'Raja' and a *mansab* of 5,000 on Man Singh, took place on February 14, 1590. Soon afterwards, Man Singh returned to his post in Bihar.

Man Singh's major achievements in Bihar came in the following order. His first expedition was against Raja Puranmal of Gidhaur. Puranmal submitted, presenting several elephants and other precious articles as tribute for the emperor. He also offered the hand in marriage of his daughter to Man Singh's brother, Prince Chandrabhan. Man Singh next marched against Anant Chero of the Gaya district and forced his submission, as he did in 1590 with Sangram Singh of Khadagpur, who was defeated. Then came the turn of the Sayyids of Sambhupuri, also in the *Gaya pargana*, who were similarly subdued.

While in the district of Gaya, Man Singh founded a new town, located across the Phaglu near the town of Gaya. This was named 'Manpur' — or the city of [Raja] Man. Man Singh subsequently marched against Raja Gajapat of Hajipur, and the latter was forced to quit his estates. While Man Singh was busy with the *zamindars* and rajas of southern Bihar, two strong rebel chiefs from Bengal, namely Sultan Quli Qalmaq and Kackewa, launched attacks on the Purnia, Tajpur, Darbhanga and adjacent areas of eastern Bihar. Man Singh sent his eldest son, Prince Jagat Singh, against them and the invaders were forced to withdraw, leaving behind considerable booty.

(One may note here that "Akbar and his successors used the term *zamindar* for holders of all types of landed interests, except mere cultivators. ...Their rights were hereditary, but the state reserved the right to interfere with their succession, partition their rights, and even revoke them for negligence of duty or subversive activities... The *zamindars* inherited or built their own fortresses for protection alike from their rivals and arrogant officials"⁷¹).

With Bihar secured to the empire, Man Singh turned his attention to the neighbouring area of Orissa, which at the time was virtually under the control of Afghans led by Qutlu Khan and his son, Nasir Khan. In the first instance, Prince Jagat Singh was sent into Orissa, but he was defeated and captured. Man Singh now prepared to march in person, but before his campaign could get underway, Qutlu Khan died of an illness in August 1590. As a result, Qutlu Khan's followers and his son, Nasir Khan, proved amenable to a peaceful resolution to the issue. Man Singh agreed and the same month an agreement was entered into with Nasir Khan and the Afghans of Orissa, by which they accepted the sovereignty of the Mughal emperor. One hundred and fifty elephants formed part of the large tribute that was yielded up by them. Furthermore, they agreed to cede the famous temple of Lord Jagannath at Puri, along with the surrounding districts.

During the lifetime of Isa Khan, who was the *vakil* of the late Qutlu Khan, the contract was maintained in good faith. After Isa Khan's death, the Orissa Afghans rose afresh in rebellion against the empire in October 1591. Man Singh marched back from Bihar into Orissa that November, and by early 1592 had conclusively beaten the Afghans. One of his more striking victories was against the powerful Usman Khan, who held Sarangarh. The defeat of Usman Khan and taking of Sarangarh by Man Singh drove several lesser Afghan chiefs into surrendering before the Amber ruler. The town of Jaleshwar too was taken from the Afghans by Man Singh and Mughal authority established there.

Meanwhile, Raja Ramchandra, who had his stronghold at Khurda and was ranked amongst the more powerful of the Orissa *zamindars*, accepted Imperial authority in June 1592, but his subsequent attitude later drove Raja Man Singh of Amber into besieging Raja Ramchandra's stronghold of Khurda. The siege was lifted shortly afterwards at the command of the emperor, and Ramchandra surrendered and offered personal homage to Man Singh. The latter gave the administration of the Jagannath Puri temple into Raja Ramchandra's hands. (Ramchandra's descendants have held the charge over succeeding centuries). Man Singh also had a temple built here.

Through his military campaigning, the Kachchwaha *subedar* of Bihar had ensured that dissension and rebellions in both Bihar and Orissa were

subdued, with Mughal suzerainty acknowledged in both regions. Thus, in March 1594 the successful Man Singh was appointed governor of the adjoining *suba* (province) of Bengal, where Mughal suzerainty was being challenged by recalcitrant nobles, *zamindars* and others, and the intrigues and depredations of the Afghans — whose territories (including in Bihar and Orissa), had fallen to the expanding Mughal Empire, were proving a serious problem to Imperial authority.

Man Singh proceeded to Bengal in early May 1594 and took charge as the new *subedar* of the province. At the time, Tandah was the capital, but a number of reasons convinced Man Singh to contemplate shifting to a new capital. For one thing, the river Ganga, which had formerly flowed past Tandah, had changed its course. This had negated Tandah's erstwhile locational advantage of being connected by riverine transport etc., and had also made the city insalubrious. In addition, an epidemic had ravaged Tandah in 1575, noticeably decimating a substantial part of the once-large population of the Bengal capital, and robbing it of its former glamour. Most vital of all, Tandah did not provide Man Singh with a convenient base for launching military operations against the Afghan rebels troubling the *suba*.

Thus, Man Singh selected Rajmahal to be his new capital. At the time this was a *mahal* or sub-division of *sarkar* (district) Tandah (and later part of Bihar's Santhal Parganas area). Rajmahal was located on the banks of the Ganga, and was strategically well-located for Man Singh's purposes. In November 1595 the capital was moved from Tandah to Rajmahal, with the new capital named Akbarnagar' after the emperor. Man Singh erected a strong rampart, strengthened with bastions, around the city, and started a mint, which was authorised to strike gold, silver and copper coins.

That December, Man Singh marched against Isa Khan, the most prominent *zamindar* of eastern Bengal, particularly of the Dacca (Dhaka) and Mymensingh area. Having subdued the Afghans by the might of the Imperial force, Man Singh built the fort of Salimnagar, near Mymensingh (now in Bangladesh). The following year, the kingdom of Cooch Behar acknowledged Mughal supremacy. The ruler of Cooch Behar, Raja Lakshmi Narayan, had found himself faced with the challenge of Pat Kunwar, a rival claimant to the throne. As the latter had forged an alliance with Isa Khan

against Raja Lakshmi Narayan, the Raja, in turn, sought Imperial assistance and protection and offered his formal submission to the emperor's governor in Bengal. Raja Man Singh of Amber accepted his submission, along with a proposal that he marry the Cooch Behar ruler's sister, Princess Barbhavati. The extension of Imperial authority over Cooch Behar provided Man Singh with a convenient base for further action against recalcitrant chiefs.

In May 1597, Pat Kunwar was defeated conclusively, but that September it was the turn of the Imperial army to face defeat. Isa Khan joined hands with Pat Kunwar and inflicted a severe defeat on Man Singh's forces at Katrabu, near Dacca. One of Man Singh's sons, Durjan Singh, was among those killed in this battle. (Another son, Himmat Singh, also fell in combat during Man Singh's tenure as *subedar* of Bengal). Some time after this, Isa Khan surrendered to Man Singh. The powerful Afghan chief died two years later, in September 1599, and with his death ended one of the major rallying forces against Akbar's authority in eastern India.

Close on the heels of Isa Khan's death, came the death of Man Singh's eldest — and possibly favourite — son Jagat Singh, in November 1599 due to excessive drinking. (The prince's mother, Rani Kanakvati, later erected the Jagat Shiromani temple in his memory at Amber, which is considered an architectural trendsetter for its times, as it used certain stylistic features typical to eastern Indian architecture). Deeply troubled by his personal loss, Man Singh temporarily returned to Rajasthan, leaving the administration of Bengal in the hands of his grandson, Maha Singh, a son of Prince Jagat Singh.

Shortly afterwards, the Afghans of Bengal rose in rebellion against the Mughal Empire in April 1600, under the leadership of one Usman Khan. Maha Singh was unable to deal with the rebellion satisfactorily, and Raja Man Singh returned to Bengal to deal with the rebellion in person. In February 1601 he led the Imperial forces to a crucial victory over the Afghans at Sherpur Atar (district Murshidabad), and followed it up by suppressing the rebellion of Kedar Rai, the *zamindar* of Shripur (south Dacca) and Vikrampur, later that year. In addition, the rebellion of the *zamindar* of Magh, in the Arakan area (now part of Myanmar), was crushed. Jalal Khan, Kandarpa-narayan of Chandradvipa (Bakarganj) and

King Pratapaditya of Jessore were among the various other chiefs subdued by Man Singh during his governorship. (It was in the course of his Bengal campaigns that the idol of the patron-deity of the Amber ruling family, goddess Shila Devi, was brought to Amber from Bengal, and the image was established in a specially built temple). By 1604, Man Singh had succeeded in imposing Imperial authority across Bengal.

In August 1605 the emperor honoured Man Singh at the Imperial court of Agra. His *mansab* honour was raised to 7,000 *zat* and 6,000 *sawar* — an honour which till then had been bestowed exclusively on Mughal princes of the blood royal! Other court honours came his way too — as they had on previous occasions. (Emperor Akbar, who had bestowed the title of ‘*farzand*’ (son) upon Man Singh prior to the march against Pratap of Mewar, eventually granted him the title of ‘*Mirza Raja*’ as well). His triumphant return to the court and the honour of holding a *sapt-hazaari mansab* (*mansab* of seven thousand), confirmed Man Singh’s position as one of the most powerful military commanders of the Mughal Empire, and one of the most important individuals of Akbar’s era.

The failing health of Akbar encouraged Man Singh in his hopes of seeing the emperor’s grandson, Prince Khusrau (b. 1587), who was the nephew of the Amber Raja, as the next emperor, in place of the eldest Mughal prince, Salim. His resolve was probably strengthened by Akbar’s generally known distrust of, and antipathy towards, his eldest son, Prince Salim, by this time. Man Singh’s hopes of seeing Khusrau on the throne were shared by the ‘Khan-i-Azam’ Mirza Aziz Kokah, who happened to be one of the most powerful courtiers of the empire, besides being the father-in-law of Khusrau.

With the intention of keeping Prince Salim away from the Imperial court, and thereby ensuring a clear field for furthering Khusrau’s chances, Man Singh now prevailed on the emperor to appoint Prince Salim the next governor of Bengal, but the plan fell through as Salim refused to move from Allahabad to take up his charge in Bengal⁷². Meanwhile, the emperor had fallen ill. Man Singh and the Khan-i-Azam unsuccessfully tried to persuade him to leave Agra for the other bank of the river Jamuna, and when this

could not be managed, tried to hustle through a formal declaration making Khusrau the emperor's heir, but failed in this attempt as well⁷³.

Man Singh, in collusion with the Khan-i-Azam, now tried to arrange the capture of Salim, but the latter was able to elude the snares set for him⁷⁴. Undaunted, Man Singh tried to enlist the support of other powerful court nobles at a gathering convened in one of the halls of Agra fort. His passionate appeal failed to convince the bulk of the nobles. Led by Sayyid Khan Barha, these courtiers held, among other points, that to give the throne to a son (Khusrau) during the lifetime of his father (Salim) was not in keeping with tradition, particularly the canons and customs of the Chagtai clan from which the Mughal royal family was descended.

Man Singh now made his final attempt to gain the throne for his nephew by trying to take possession of the Imperial treasury, but found that he had been pre-empted in this by Sayyid Khan Barha and other supporters loyal to Salim. Prasad notes, "The only course left now to the Kachhwaha chief was resorting to the sword for deciding the issue. Raja Man Singh had a faithful army at his command which he could have utilised for installing Khusrau on the Imperial throne. But Raja Man Singh had become so broken-hearted on account of the failure of all his plans that he did not wish to seek a solution in the whirlpool of blood. Hence, being thoroughly disgusted, Raja Man Singh decided to proceed to Bengal along with Prince Khusrau. Consequently Salim was declared as the emperor of the Mughal Empire and it was approved by the dying monarch Akbar also"⁷⁵.

The death of Akbar on October 15, 1605, and the accession of Salim as Emperor Jahangir (r. 1605-1628), marked a new phase in Man Singh's life (just as it did for the Mughal Empire as a whole). Man Singh had held the highest of offices during Akbar's reign, but he had also had the audacity to try interfering with the succession to prevent his brother-in-law, Prince Salim — the Emperor Jahangir — from ascending the Imperial throne. His actions could rightly be regarded as seditious by the new emperor.

In the opinion of many, Man Singh's future hung very much in the balance! However, though Jahangir remained cautious and carefully

monitored Man Singh's activities, he apparently thought it prudent to let matters rest, and included the Amber ruler in the general amnesty he had announced upon his accession. (This included the release of thousands of prisoners). Man Singh was confirmed in his charge as the governor of Bengal, and he was directed to take up his duties in that *suba* at the earliest.

Discussing Jahangir's generous treatment towards Man Singh, Prasad emphasises that "Raja Man was the most outstanding personality of the Mughal Court. He was at the head of the strong Kacchwaha cavalry...Besides, Jahangir had not yet established himself firmly on the Mughal throne and it would have been inexpedient and unwise to remove and humiliate a powerful noble like Raja Man Singh. Moreover, the Raja had rendered immense services to the Mughal Empire and he was popular among the rank and file of the Mughal army. Had Jahangir done anything to harm the Raja, the latter would have openly backed up the cause of Khusrau and drawn the country into the vortex of civil war. There was another reason for adopting a liberal attitude towards Raja Man Singh...Usman Khan, an Afghan leader of Bengal was creating great trouble there. Raja Man Singh, who had earned great experience in Bengal affairs, could be safely depended upon for suppressing the Afghan leader, Usman Khan. Thus, the continuance of Raja Man Singh as the *Subedar* of Bengal was the result of mature deliberations and keen foresight"⁷⁶.

In June 1606, Man Singh was posted to Rohtas fort, where he remained till 1607. Then, he was directed to proceed south to join in the Imperial campaigns led by the Khan-i-Khana in that part of the country. Before marching to the south, Man Singh made what was to prove his last visit to his own state, during which time he dealt with matters relating to local administration etc., including making allotments of *jagirs*. Man Singh left Amber in July 1609 and went to the Deccan. However, unlike his spectacular successes in Punjab, Afghanistan, Bihar, Orissa and Bengal, his successes in the Mughal army's southern campaigns were more modest. It was while serving in the Deccan that the long and distinguished career of Man Singh came to an end, as, following a short illness, the Amber ruler died a natural death at Elichpur on July 6, 1614.

Among the stories about Man Singh which Amber's traditions have preserved is one relating to his march from Attock to suppress a rebellion. Faced with the obstacle of the Indus river while it was in full spate, the Imperial army hesitated to cross the river to the other bank. At this point Man Singh took the lead, and entered the fast flowing river with his horse, declaiming a couplet which punned upon the place-name of Attock' (a word which in Hindi/Urdu/Rajasthani also means 'to become stuck, or to hesitate' — atuck). The couplet ran as follows:

*Sabey bhumi Gopal ki, ya main atuck/Attock kahan?
Jakey mun man atuck/Attock hai, sohi atuck/Attock raha!*

(‘When all the Earth belongs to God, where is the place for hesitation [atuck]/ Attock?
Let the person with Attock/or hesitation [atuck] on his mind, remain stuck[atuck] at Attock!’)

Observing him cross the river without any trepidation, the rest of the army followed his example and very soon the whole force had crossed the Indus, and was able to march to a victory against the rebellion.

Regarded as one of the nine jewels (*nav-ratna*) of Akbar's court, Man Singh was recognised not just for his skills as a warrior and general, but also as an administrator and diplomat. Amber traditions describe him as an enlightened ruler, who encouraged scholarship, literature, poetry, architecture, and the arts. It was also during his reign that aspects of the Imperial administrative pattern, like the use of the *pargana* as a land-unit, approximating a modern 'district', was introduced. Each *pargana* comprised a large number of *mauza*. The size of Dhoondhar's *parganas* varied, with some made up of four hundred to one thousand villages⁷⁷.

Well-versed in Sanskrit, Persian, Rajasthani and Hindi, the Amber ruler was himself a poet, a man of letters and a patron of learning. He was familiar with all the noted litterateurs and poets at Emperor Akbar's court, including poets like Dursa-ji Adha, Holrai, Brahmabhatt, Gang and others as well as other contemporaries like Tulsi Das. His Amber court too

attracted writers and talents of the stature of Rai Murari Das, Pundarik, Dalpatraj, Narottam Kavi, Amritlal (also Amritraj), among others. In fact, the once-magnificent private library of the Amber-Jaipur rulers — the *pothikhana* — to which many subsequent rulers added, owes much to the collection put-together during Man Singh's reign. The munificent raja is said to have granted his chief bard, Hata Barhat, a hundred elephants, besides other honours. Narottam Kavi's and Amritlal's contemporaneous texts on Man Singh, (both titled *Man-Charitra*) provide considerable information about Man Singh's reign, down to aspects like musical instruments played at the Amber court.

In addition, possibly influenced as much by the art trends at the Mughal court, as by existing Rajput traditions, Man Singh encouraged the painting of murals on the walls of his palace at Amber. The themes reflected a blend of Mughal tastes and local sensibilities, with Mughal-style floral motifs and birds as well as panels depicting scenes from Lord Krishna's life. The predominant colours at this time appear to have been variants of reds, yellows and greens. The Amber-Jaipur School of painting probably dates to Man Singh's reign, and frescoes of what one some people call the 'early Jahangiri style' have been noted at Mauzamabad (Man Singh's birthplace), Bairat, and Amber. Some texts from the period contain illustrations, with the subjects (in common with other states of Rajasthan) including the *Raga-mala*, scenes from the Indian epics, the seasonal depictions of *Bara-masa*, etc. An illustrated copy of the *Bhagvat-Purana*, prepared at Ahmedabad in 1598 is among the material preserved in the Jaipur City Palace Museum collection of the rulers of Amber-Jaipur. There are suggestions that a copy of the *Geet-Govind* of c. AD 1550, containing numerous miniatures in the *Chaura-Panchasika* style once formed part of the kingdom's old *pothikhana* collection. However, at present little real information about miniature paintings dating to Man Singh's time (or that of his father and grandfather) is available.

Man Singh proved a great builder too — an activity possibly helped by the immense wealth and booty which had been bestowed on the commander-in-chief of the Mughal forces by his not ungrateful emperor. Among the architectural legacies left by Man Singh are the palaces within Amber fort, Man Mandir, Man Chat and Sarovar Ghat at Varanasi, the

Govind Dev temple at Vrindaban, and temples at Pushkar, Manpur, Puri, etc. He also built forts at Salimpur (Bengal), Manihari (Bihar), Ramgarh (Dhoondhar), founded the towns of Akbarnagar (Rajmahal), Manpur (near Gaya), and the small township of Baikunthpur (now called Baikathpur, in Bihar's Patna district), and carried out massive repairs and fresh construction, including of palaces, at the fort of Rohtas. Numerous other palaces, gardens, forts and other buildings were built by him in parts of Kashmir, Punjab, Bihar, Bengal and the Deccan, where he had served over the course of his long and illustrious career.

Man Singh also held the reputation of being a benevolent man, who supported charitable works. According to a story associated with Man Singh's magnanimity, a *fakir* once approached the famous poet, Gang, with an appeal for assistance. The poet wrote out a bill-of-promise, known as *hundi*, for a substantial amount in the name of Raja Man Singh and gave it to the *fakir*. Upon receiving the *hundi*, Man Singh not only immediately paid out the money without hesitation, he also sent a message back to Gang, chiding him for putting down such a 'small' amount on the *hundi*!⁷⁸

Despite his numerous marriages and a number of children, most of Man Singh's sons had either fallen in battle or died from excesses during the lifetime of their father. A consensus of scholars holds that Man Singh had only one surviving son — Bhao Singh — at the time of his death, though there are some indications that another son, Kalyan Singh, was also living at the time. Bhao Singh's ascension to the Amber *gaddi* was declared by the Emperor Jahangir, over the claims of the late Raja's grandsons (like Maha Singh, son of Man Singh's dead eldest son, Jagat Singh).

The further annals of Amber will be taken up in a later part of this book.

SHEKHAWATI

The early part of the sixteenth century saw the small sub-clan of Shekhawats, descendants of Rao Shekha, from whom they took their name,

follow a vigorous policy of territorial expansion and consolidation. Matrimonial alliances played their part in cementing ties, or healing breaches.

Shekhawat accounts tell us that around 1525, Prince Maldeo, son of Rao Canga of Marwar marched against the Gaur Rajputs over a boundary dispute. The Gaur sought the help of the Shekhawat chief of Amarsar, Raimal (r. 1488-1537), with whom they had links by marriage⁷⁹. Responding to the Gaur appeal, Raimal, with the help of his mounted warriors, launched a strong night-attack against Maldeo. Matters were thereafter settled through negotiation. Subsequently, Maldeo apparently visited Amarsar, and one of his daughters, Hansa-bai, was married to Raimal's grandson Lunkaran, son of Raimal's eldest son, Suja.

In early 1526, alarmed at the expansionistic intentions of Bikaner's ruler, Rao Lunkaran, who seemed to be pushing the growing frontiers of the young state of Bikaner through Shekhawat-held tracts and up to Narnaul, Raimal joined hands with the Nawab of Narnaul against Bikaner. In the ensuing battle at Dhosi on March 31, 1526, between the forces of Bikaner and those of Narnaul, Rao Lunkaran of Bikaner was among those killed.

Within a month of Dhosi, another battle was fought at Panipat between the armies of Sultan Ibrahim Lodi of Delhi and the founder of the Mughal Empire in South Asia, Babur; and within a year of that followed the battle of Khanua. Raimal was among those who fought against Babur in this battle, as was Amber's Raja Prithviraj. (Raja Prithviraj survived the sanguine battle, but died later that same winter). The affairs of Dhoondhar had influenced the Kachchwaha sub-branches on numerous previous occasions. The immediate future was to prove no different! Prithviraj of Dhoondhar's successor, Puranmal (r. 1527-1534), had a short reign. Some traditions hold that he died at the battle of Anaseri, fought near 'Shikhargarh' (Amarsar), helping the Shekhawats against the Mughals, when Prince Hindal attacked Amarsar⁸⁰. Whether or not Puranmal personally participated and died at the battle of Anaseri, Raimal and the Kachchwaha-Shekhawat joint forces certainly did and met with defeat.

The ensuing period between c. 1534 and 1548 was one of internal disputes, dissensions and squabbles in the kingdom of Dhoondhar (as already discussed elsewhere). Taking advantage of the state of affairs, Rao Raimal occupied certain tracts belonging to Dhoondhar. (Other contemporaries did not lag behind either. For instance, Karamchand Naruka of Uniara and his younger brother, Jaimal, who held prominent posts at court, also took over large chunks of territories from Dhoondhar). Thereafter, Raimal's interest — partially peripheral — in Amber's increasingly murky affairs continued for a while. (During the time Ratan Singh occupied Amber's *gaddi*, two of the sons of Amber's late king, Prithviraj, the princes Sanga and Bharmal, reached an understanding with Raimal for the return of Dhoondhar's lands, and his aid in sorting out matters at the Amber court. A conspiracy procured the death of the influential Karamchand Naruka. Karamchand's brother, Jaimal, avenged this by killing the second of Raimal's six sons, Tej Singh — then serving as a minister to King Ratan Singh. Later, a faithful adherent of Karamchand murdered Prince Sanga).

Meanwhile, relations between Marwar's Rao Maldeo (r. 1531-1562), and his relative, Biram Deo of Merta, had deteriorated (as is discussed elsewhere in this book). Events forced Biram Deo from Merta to Ajmer, and thence, via Didwana, to seek shelter at Raisol with Rao Raimal in Shekhawati around 1535. Possibly the matrimonial ties linking Raimal and Maldeo acted as a deterrent to Maldeo immediately pursuing his cousin into Raimal's lands, and for nearly a year Biram Deo was able to live in relative peace in the Shekhawati region.

When Raimal died at the ripe old age of eighty-eight in 1537, leaving Suja to succeed him to the Amarsar estates, the political map of the region was witnessing a number of changes. Within Rajasthan, the Rathore Rao Maldeo had consolidated Marwar and expanded its frontiers in many directions. Simultaneously, the Mughal emperor Humayun was facing a series of challenges, not least from the Sur Afghan, Farid Khan, alias Sher Khan, who was soon to ascend the throne of Delhi in 1540 as Emperor Sher Shah Suri.

Raimal's successor, Suja was soon expelled from Amarsar by Sher Shah. In his stead, Sher Shah granted the Amarsar area to Rasa Tank of Nagaur. Suja retired to Basai-Bansur in the Alwar-Mewat area, where he died in 1548. Shekhawati local traditions aver that Suja was punished for his refusal to attend Sher Shah's court and pay homage. Suja apparently took this attitude declaring he could not pay homage to a man whose father (Hassan) had been in his father Raimal's service, and who himself had spent a few years at Amarsar. However, it seems that it was more than pride, or a clash of egos that was behind Suja's expulsion.

Geographically, the Shekhawati region had always been in a strategically sensitive position. Not only was it close to the Imperial capital, and hence a threat as a potential base against Sher Shah, it also served as a buffer between Delhi-based empires and Marwar, Bikaner, Nagaur, Amber, and other Rajasthani states. In addition, certain established travel and trade-routes passed through it. Politically, Shekhawati was equally strategically balanced. For one thing, Maldeo of Marwar — a powerful ruler and always suspect as an adversary by Sher Shah — was related by ties of marriage to Suja. For another, local traditions insist Suja had provided some financial assistance to Humayun. This would make Suja doubly dubious in the eyes of Sher Shah, for there was a very real possibility of Suja placing the Shekhawati forces behind Maldeo in the event of a future conflict between Maldeo and Sher Shah. Sher Shah's expulsion of Suja from Amarsar, and the installation of Rasa Tank there was, thus, probably motivated more by pragmatism than imperial whim!

Though Sher Shah died in 1545, the presence of his successor, Islam Shah, on the Delhi throne forced Suja from attempting to re-occupy Amarsar. Following Suja's death in 1548, his six sons⁸¹ too marked time, waiting for an opportune moment to retake their inheritance. After the early death of Islam Shah, the Suri empire grew increasingly weaker, and more and more power began to be concentrated in the hands of the minister, Hemu. Sometime in 1554, Suja's sons went into Amarsar by night, where Raysal, the second eldest of Suja's sons, killed Rasa Tank. Thereafter, Suja's eldest son, Lunkaran, was installed as chief of Amarsar (r. 1554-1584).

Over the next few years, the Shekhawats re-consolidated their positions locally. Meanwhile, ex-emperor, Humayun, regained his throne and lost his life, enabling the accession of Akbar as the new Mughal emperor. Many of the descendants of Shekha soon found their way into Imperial service. Among them were Rao Lunkaran and his younger brother, the flamboyant Raysal. In time, Raysal was to win fame — and the sobriquet of ‘Darbari’ from Akbar — and carve out his own estate in Shekhawati.

Lunkaran served in various Imperial campaigns. Among them the expedition commanded by Mirza Sharf-ud-din Hussain to take Merta from Maldeo of Marwar’s control in 1562; the 1573 Imperial campaign to Gujarat; the battle of Haldighati, in which Lunkaran and his retinue served in the left wing of the Imperial army, and connected subsequent manoeuvres in Dungarpur and Banswara; and as part of Raja Todar Mal’s expedition to suppress rebellion in Bihar in 1579. Lunkaran held a *mansab* rank of 2000 *sawar*, and was appointed *faujdar* of Sambhar in 1571. He met his death in Gujarat in 1584, in the course of another Imperial campaign, and was succeeded by his son, Manohar, while other sons received smaller estates.

Besides Rao Lunkaran of Amarsar, his younger brother, Raysal of Lamiya (Lambhi), was among the Shekhawat Rajputs who earned fame during Akbar’s period. Probably born in AD 1538, Raysal held the estate of Lamiya prior to the start of his adventurous career in the service of the Mughal Empire. Tod cites the traditionally accepted tale of how Raysal, with the advice of Devi Das, the *kamdar* (estate-manager; bailiff; minister) of his elder brother, Rao Lunkaran, and one hundred and fifty horses from Raso Chandella of Rewasa to augment his own retinue, found his way to Akbar’s court in search of service⁸².

Accompanying the Imperial forces in one of their campaigns to the north-western frontier, Raysal distinguished himself in one of the battles through saving the life of a high-placed Imperial general and killing the commander of the enemy army. Shekhawati documents suggest that the high-placed Mughal general whose life Raysal saved was in fact Prince

Salim, later Emperor Jahangir, who had led the Mughal army to counter the invasion of the commander-in-chief of the ruler of Balkh⁸³.

Raysal did not wait to be thanked on the battlefield and, thus, though the deed was reported to the emperor, the identity of the saviour of the senior general remained temporarily unknown! On the return of the victorious army, the Emperor Akbar ordered a military review, with the stipulation that everyone wear the apparel they had worn in that battle, and be mounted on the same steeds as they had used while fighting. Thus dressed, when Raysal passed before the commander whose life he had saved (possibly Prince Salim), he was recognised at once and summoned into Akbar's presence, who rewarded him and admitted him into service.

In the years that followed, Raysal went on to participate in various Imperial army expeditions. These battles and campaigns included those connected with Gagrion (1561), Bhatner (1561), Chittor (1567-68), Nagaur, Haldighati (1576), the Gujarat expeditions (including battle of Sarnal, December 1572), Patan (1585), Sindh, Kabul, Kohistan, and the north-west. He earned the title of 'Darbari', and following a successful campaign against Bhatner⁸⁴, obtained the land-grants of the areas of Udaipur⁸⁵ and Khandela.

(Khandela, which has already been mentioned a few times in this work, is regarded as their place of origin by the Khandelwal Brahmins, as well as the Jain (Sarawagi etc.) and Hindu Vaisyas mercantile Khandelwal groups. The Khandelwal community is not known before about the eighth-ninth centuries AD, with one dated reference being an inscription of AD 1197⁸⁶. Over time, as Khandela's Jain, Brahmin, Vaisya, etc. inhabitants migrated to other regions and towns, they apparently carried the name of their town as their classification, and became known as Khandelwals. A Jain tradition holds that centuries ago the Chauhan king of Khandela — a town that even then possessed nine hundred Jain temples — became a Jain after contact with the Jain teacher Jinsena *Acharya*, who belonged to the spiritual line of the sage Aparajit).

In the mid-sixteenth century AD, Khandela (also called Khandila and Khandelapura), was held by Raja Peepa of the Nirvan sub-clan of Rajputs. The Nirvans of the Khandela area had not accepted the supremacy of the Mughals and apparently indulged in looting Mughal empire-dominated surrounding areas. Shekhawat traditions state that since one of Raysal's six wives was Peepa's daughter, Kisnawati, Akbar deputed Raysal to negotiate with his father-in-law. When that failed, Raysal resorted to the use of his sword, defeated Peepa and wrested control of Khandela. The emperor confirmed Raysal in his possession of the newly seized estates. The event is believed to date to around c. 1561. Thereafter, Khandela became the seat of Raysal 'Darbari' (r. ? 1561-1614?). Khandela was soon being called 'Raysalwada' after Raysal, just his descendants were to be known as the 'Rayasalot' line, after his name.

Raysal soon became one of Akbar's most trusted officers and accompanied the emperor on all important campaigns, besides holding the charge of superintendent of the royal harem⁸⁷. Over time, Akbar bestowed the title of 'Raja' on Raysal 'Darbari', besides the tracts of Rewasa⁸⁸ and Kasli (previously held by the Chandella Rajputs) and, as *Ain-i-Akbari* records, by AD 1602, a *mansab* of 1,250 *sawar*. Raysal also occupied some villages of the Udaipurwati area, twelve villages near Didwana, and nine villages belonging to the Tanwars. Following Jahangir's accession, Raysal's services were further rewarded⁸⁹.

Later, Raysal accompanied Abdur Rahim *Khan-i-Khana* to the Deccan, where he is known to have taken part in several battles, despite his advancing years, and to have been appointed in-charge of Burhanpur. Raysal's death took place either here, according to Abul Fazl's *Ain-i-Akbari*, or at the Khyber Pass, where Raysal had accompanied 'Muhammad Badshahi' on a Kabul expedition, according to one of the bardic accounts. The renowned Raja Raysal 'Darbari' was succeeded at Khandela by his son Girdhar (r. ? 1614-1623), while the other sons received smaller land-holdings⁹⁰.

Meanwhile, Rao Lunkaran, the incumbent of the ancestral seat of Amarsar, had been succeeded on his death by his son, Manohar (r. 1584-

1616). Manohar is described as having been such an exceptionally intelligent child that he had impressed Emperor Akbar years earlier, when Akbar was on his way to Ajmer. Consequently, Akbar arranged for the child's education and upbringing at the Mughal court, where he became a companion to Prince Salim (later Emperor Jahangir). In 1587 a new town founded by Akbar was named 'Manoharpur' after Manohar. Abul Fazl's *Akbarnama* notes that it was first known as Mul-Manoharnagar. Contemporary accounts like the *Tabqat-i-Akbari* (by Khwaja Nizamuddin Ahmad) and Jahangir's own *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* mentioned Manohar as being an accomplished poet with mastery over Persian, and Badauni referred to him as 'Mirza' Manohar. In 1595 Rao Manohar was given a *jagir* of 4000. In time his *mansab* rank was raised to 1000 *zat* and 800 *sawar*. Manohar and his relatives saw service in various capacities in Khandesh, Mewat and the Deccan, etc. One of his sons, Rai Chand, fell at the battle of Bangash in 1615. The grieving Manohar himself died shortly afterwards in the Deccan in 1616.

MEWAT AND THE MEWATIS

The 'Mewat' area (which term includes portions of Alwar, Bharatpur, Rewari, etc., and contiguous areas of the modern-day state of Haryana), had faced the iron fist of numerous Delhi sultans during the c. eleventh-fifteenth centuries. Time and again, the Mewatis had been forced into submission, and time and again, successive generations had struggled against the yoke of domination. Interspersed with this were periods of relative peace, often extending to the establishment of cordial relations with the Delhi Sultanate.

(It should be noted that as the majority of records available that pertain to Mewat during the eleventh-seventeenth centuries come from the Sultanate's chroniclers, we know more about the relations between Mewat and the Delhi Sultanate than we do about Mewat's relations with the kingdoms and chiefdoms of Rajasthan. That does not mean that there was no contact or interaction between the latter category, though. For instance, the geographically contiguous kingdom of Dhoondhar imposed its hegemony over the Mewat/Alwar area when and where possible).

As has already been noted earlier, Alam Khan Mewati, who was a contemporary of Sultan Sikandar Lodi of Delhi, enjoyed a high position amongst the ranks of the nobles, at the Delhi court. During Ibrahim Lodi's reign, Ahmad Khan's son, Hasan Khan Mewati, who enjoyed the title of 'Sardar', won considerable acclaim for his exploits. He used Bahadurpur (twenty-one kilometres north-east of Alwar) as his seat of administration.

In 1526, Hasan Khan Mewati fought against Babur at the battle of Panipat. Thereafter, fighting alongside Rana Sanga of Mewar, Hasan Khan and his strong contingent of Mewati warriors joined battle against the Mughals at the battle of Khanua in 1527 (as noted already). According to some versions, 10,000 Mewatis followed Hasan Khan Mewati at Khanua, while other sources indicate that he brought a force of 12,000 cavalry with him. Along with their leader, Hasan Khan, scores of Mewatis lost their lives on the battlefield of Khanua.

Hasan Khan's son, Nahar Khan, was soon driven to accept the supremacy of Babur, who had occupied large tracts of the Alwar-Bharatpur-Bayana-Agra region. It seems that after victory at Khanua, Babar moved through Mewar, and entered Alwar on April 7, 1527. Powlett's *Gazetteer* informs us that "Babar advanced four marches from Fatehpur Sikri and after the fifth, encamped six *kos* from the Fort of Ulwur, on the banks of the River Manisni (Ruparel). A messenger from Hasan Khan's son, Nahar Khan, arrived begging for pardon and on receiving an assurance of safety, Nahar Khan came to Babar, who bestowed on him a '*pargana*' of several *lacs* (of *dams*, of which forty go to the *rupee*), for his support." Babar then apparently gave command over Tijara to one of his commanders, Alwar fort to another, and treasure from Alwar fort to his son, Humayun.

In time, Mewar became practically a part of the Mughal Empire. As had been the case earlier under several Delhi sultans, who had posted their governors and administrative officers to hold and control the region, under Babur and his successors Mewar strongholds, including Tijara and Alwar, were held by Imperial officers. Following Babur's death, Prince Hindal (one of Babur's younger sons), was given the charge of the area by his brother, Emperor Humayun. Hindal campaigned against the Mewatis to secure his own position. (Hindal also made a bid for the throne held by his

brother, Humayun, but failed and for a while found himself forced to seek safety in the fort of Alwar).

Power, thus, slipped from the local Mewati Khanzadas into the hands of Imperial officers. In 1540, the governor of Tijara was one Umar Khan, while in 1552 it was ruled by Salim Shah Sur, better known as Sultan Islam Shah of the Suri dynasty. Maldeo of Marwar, in the course of his territorial expansion, became master of some parts of Mewat too. For, as we have noted elsewhere in this chapter, at the peak of Maldeo's power, his sway extended almost up to Delhi and Agra, and his eastern frontiers touched Bayana, Fatehpur Sikri and Mewat.

Following Humayun's defeat and flight, and Sher Shah Suri's assumption of the Imperial throne, the short-lived Afghan Empire took possession of the Mewatis tracts, in the same manner as they did of other areas formerly held by Humayun. Sher Shah, and after him, Islam Shah (r. 1545-1554) and Adil Shah (r. 1554-1556) held the fort of Alwar. (During Islam Shah's reign, an abortive bid for the throne by his brother ended with one of the co-conspirators, Khavas Khan, seeking refuge in Mewat. Islam Shah sent a contingent after him, but this was defeated near Firozpur Jhirka, and Khavas Khan escaped to Sirhind).

Later, following the Second Battle of Panipat and Hemu's defeat in it, a Mughal force led by Pir Muhammad Shirwani was sent into Mewat to take control of Hemu's wealth, since Hemu's wife and his father had found refuge at Deoti and Macheri, with Hemu's goods and treasure. The force was also charged with the task of subduing Haji Khan Pathan. The latter (Haji Khan) was a former slave and general of Sher Shah Suri, who had risen greatly in power and possessions, and appeared to have consolidated his hold in the Mewat area, possibly with intentions of establishing his own state. The Mughal force was resisted until Haji Khan fled to Ajmer, while Hemu's father was captured and put to death. Hemu's widow, however, managed to escape, with elephants, treasures etc. She reached Bajwara (two miles southeast of Hoshiarpur in the Punjab). Though she was pursued, only a part of the treasure could be recovered from her.

Mewat, which was had been held as a *jagir* by Tardi Beg Khan for a while (until he was beheaded at the orders of Bairam Khan while the young Emperor Akbar was away hunting), was now conferred on Pir Muhammad Shirwani, who also happened to be Bairam Khan's confidante. Mewat was gradually subdued, and its *khanzadas* and others were among those who later swelled the ranks of the Imperial army, and won distinctions on several occasions. One may add here that there were instances of Mughals marrying Mewati women. Emperor Humayun married the elder daughter of Jamal Khan, a nephew of the famous Hasan Khan Mewati, while the younger daughter was married to Bairam Khan. Once, after Humayun had regained his throne in 1555, Bairam Khan became offended over some matter and left Humayun's court. He went away to Alwar, to the family of his Mewati wife, and it required effort before he could be persuaded to return to court.

In time, Akbar's vigorous policy of expansion and consolidation of the empire placed the Bharatpur-Alwar-Dholpur tracts firmly within Imperial control. Besides Bayana (which Maldeo had seized in 1539, and which had subsequently served as an important military-station for Sher Shah, and the capital of his son, Islam Shah), Akbar successfully subdued adjoining areas like Bari, Toda Bhim, and Khanua. This entire region was placed under the *suba* of Agra. Within the bounds of the *Suba*, we learn from the *Ain-i-Akbari*, that the Mewat area came under the two *sarkars* of Alwar and Tijara during Akbar's period. The same administrative division seems to have remained in force under Akbar's successors, Jahangir and Shah Jahan.

(Powlett's *Gazetteer of Ulwur* informs us that the *sarkar* of Alwar was further sub-divided into forty-three *mahals* that contained 1,612 villages, with an area of 2,457, 410 *bighas* (1,535, 881 acres) that yielded a revenue of 5,924,232 *dams* or Rs. 1,48,105. In a like manner; the *sarkar* of Tijara had eighteen *mahals* and two hundred and fifty three villages, with an area of 2,00,976 *bighas* (1,25,600 acres), and yielded a revenue of 3,22,92,880 *dams* or Rs. 8,07,322)⁹¹.

In later years, Emperor Akbar bestowed the *jagir* of Mewat on his brother-in-law Mirza Sharf-ud-din Hussain. Sensing his rebellious attitude,

Jahangir, in the course of his own reign, appointed Nawab Mubariz Khan as governor of Mewat. (The Mewatis/Meos are accused of having a 'propensity to plunder', which they did not give up, in spite of coming under the implied benefits of 'good' Mughal administration!)

Besides the Mewatis and Khanzadas, with whom the Delhi Sultanate and later the Mughals and even the Afghan Suris clashed frequently, various other groups also controlled parts of the Alwar region during this period. Among them were the Badgujars and local Meena chiefs (both of whom have been mentioned in previous chapters), and the Kachchwahas of the Dhoondhar/Amber area.

Local tradition has it that the Badgujar chief of Deoti and Rajgarh, Ashokmal (or Ishwarmal), son of Raja Kumbh, and a contemporary of the Mughal emperor Akbar, refused to establish any matrimonial alliances with the Mughals. Since he also had problems with Raja Man Singh of Amber, a combined Mughal-Amber force was sent against him and he was dispossessed of Deoti and Rajgarh. Over time, the Badgujars lost territory and power to other, stronger, neighbours.

That situation was already familiar to the Meenas of the Alwar/Mewat area. At the time of Akbar, Kyara, near present-day Thanaghazi (erstwhile Ghazi-ka-Thana), was the capital of the Mewal Meenas, whose chief was Mokal-Si. The Imperial forces subjugated Kyara, and established the town of Mohamadabad at the site. More or less simultaneously, however, Emperor Akbar conferred the title of 'Rao' on an allegedly notorious robber, Bara Meena of Narhat, so that Bara would ensure the maintenance of law and order in the region. There is a general paucity of information about most of the smaller clans, groups and communities at this time, but it seems that territorial absorption of smaller areas into stronger neighbouring kingdoms remained the norm! In this connection, one may also add that the Jats — who would establish their own territorial sway a few centuries later, were probably small and marginal land-owners and agriculturists in the Alwar-Mewat-Bharatpur-Mathura area throughout this time.

In addition, there are references to other small chiefships that existed in the Alwar region during the c. twelfth-seventeenth centuries. Among

these were the chiefships at Mandawar (later also called Mandan and Madhan), and Neemrana (previously spelt as Nimrana), the chiefship of the Narukas of Mauzamabad, and the chiefship at Bhangarh.

In the case of Mandawar and Neemrana, one of the ancestors of the line, Madan Singh, commonly known as Rao Made, is said to have founded the village of Madanpur, which later became known as Mandawar. Other lands, including Barrod, were acquired by descendants. It is said that Feroze Shah Tughlaq attempted to force one of later descendants of this line, Rao Jhama, son of Rao Hasa, to become a Muslim, but Rao Jhama chose to die instead. However, Rao Chaand, son of Rao Jhama, allegedly accepted Islam in VS 1499 — or AD 1442. In protest, Chaand's uncle, Rajdeo left Mandawar and settled at Neemrana, which now became the capital of Rajdeo's branch of the chiefship. The descendants of Rao Chaand extended their hold as far as Bansur, but were expelled in VS 1560 (AD 1503) from Bansur by the Shekhawats led by Rao Suja (who made Basai his capital), and Rao Jagmal (who established himself at Hazipur). However, the Neemrana branch continued in their possession.

The Narukas, as already noted, were a sub-branch of the ruling Kachchwahas of Amber, being descendants of Prince Naru. It is held that one of the early Dhoondhar princes called Bar Singh gave up his right of succession to the *gaddi* of Dhoondhar. He migrated to the Jhak-Mauzamabad area of Alwar, where his estates thrived over time. His grandson was Naru, from whom came the sub-clan of the Naruka Rajputs. Over time the Narukas established themselves firmly in parts of the Alwar-Mewat region. They usually, but not always, pledged their allegiance to the Dhoondhar rulers of their ancestral Kachchwaha main branch.

As regards the Bhangarh chiefship: in 1599, Madho Singh, the second son of Raja Bhagwant Das of Amber, established his control over the Bhangarh area of Alwar. Bhangarh became his capital. He was succeeded by Shatrushal, Ajab Singh, Hathi Singh, Kabuli Singh and Jaswant Singh. The Jhak and Bhangarh chiefs continued to accept the overlordship of the Amber rulers. In 1639 Mirza Raja Jai Singh I of Amber took over the Bhangarh estate from its hereditary holder, granting him Macheri in lieu. (One branch of the Narukas subsequently held Macheri. We shall take up

the later history of this Macheri branch in another chapter). Bhangarh was eventually incorporated into the territory of Dhoondhar state.

We have already stressed the fact that the Mewat-Alwar-Bharatpur area was constantly subject to attacks and incursions by powerful neighbours, accompanied by ruthless suppression for alleged revolts, defiance and shows of perceived disloyalty. In addition, the area had enough rival groups within its own boundaries who fought to expand their lands, or to defend them. All of this led to rather insecure living conditions. Not surprisingly, therefore, Mewat has had its share of saints and devotees linked with the Bhakti movement, and/or the Sufi tradition. Almost all of them were of humble origins — often having no formal learning, and their preachings were of humanism, peace and love. They also disdained formal boundaries between Hinduism and Islam.

One of these was Lal Das (c. AD 1540-1648), a Mewati Muslim by birth, and a believer in all that was common to the Bhakti/ Sufi tradition. He lived at the village of Dhaoli Dhub in Alwar *tehsil* for many years, collecting and selling firewood for a living, before the news of miracles associated with him gradually spread far and wide. (An agitated elephant allegedly calmed down at his behest, and Chishti Gadan of Tijara, himself acknowledged as a saint, found him floating mid air deep in meditation). Later, Lal Das shifted to Bandoli village, sixteen miles north-east of Alwar, where he lived on the top of a hill, practicing austerities, unharmed by wild animals and reptiles, and healing the sick that had begun flocking to him — along with disciples — by that time. His disciples took him to Bahadurpur, from where he went to Todi village (now in district Gurgaon), and then continued moving place to place. He reputedly withstood the persecutions of the *faujdar* of Bahadurpur and the governor of Tijara, who were overawed and humbled, we are told, when they witnessed miracles associated with Lal Das at first-hand⁹².

Lal Das is believed to have died at the age of a hundred and eight at Nagla village in Bharatpur. His son, Pahara, and daughter, Sarupa, are said to have displayed miraculous powers too. The teachings of Lal Das, which are in simple verse, have been preserved by his disciples in the form of a *gutka* or condensed collection. Lal Das appears to have followed the *Kabir-*

panthis. Many people look upon him as a *pir* (Muslim saint). His followers are called ‘Lal Das Sadhs’.

THE STATE OF SIROHI

We have looked at the early history of the Deora Chauhans of the Abu-Chandravati-Sirohi area in a previous chapter. In 1504 Rao Jagmal (r. 1483-1523), defeated and captured Malik Majid Khan of Jalore in battle. The Malik was taken to Sirohi, where he was well-treated, before being eventually released upon the payment of a substantial ransom of 90,000 ‘*Firozi*’ coins, according to the *Sirohi Khyat*.

However, this same Rao Jagmal, whom Mewar’s history holds totally responsible for poisoning his brother-in-law, Prince Prithviraj of Mewar, faced a major internal challenge in the form of his younger brother, Prince Hamir, who gradually occupied substantial tracts of the kingdom. Their feuding brought Sirohi to the brink of disorder, and only ended with the death of Hamir, following a battle with Jagmal. It may have been a consequence of the feuding and possible accompanying disorder that led to an incident mentioned prominently in several Persian texts.

According to Persian texts like the *Tarikh Mirat-i-Sikandari*, *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* and *Tarikh-i-Ferishta* some traders approached Sultan Mahmud of Gujarat in AD 1487 to complain over the conduct of the ruler of Sirohi. They claimed that the Sirohi ruler had robbed them of four hundred highly-bred Iranian and Turkish horses which they had transported all the way from Iran and Khorasan, as well as of other goods, including the finest of Indian fabrics. The incident had occurred while the traders were transitting through the Abu valley, enroute from Delhi to Ahmedabad. The *Tarikh Mirat-i-Sikandari* records that upon learning about this, Sultan Mahmud of Gujarat compensated the traders the value of their goods, and wrote a letter to the ruler of Sirohi demanding the return of the illegally seized horses and goods. Failing that, the Sultan threatened to personally lead his forces into Sirohi. At this the king of Sirohi returned the horses and value of the other goods and begged forgiveness. The *Tabqat-i-Akbari* too gives a variant of this story.

While the ruler is not named in the Persian chronicles, the ruler of Sirohi in 1487 was Jagmal. However, in light of Hamir's rebellion, during which he occupied several villages, and even had the Brahmins of Asava village put to death⁹³, one possibility is that the horses were seized not at the command of King Jagmal, but that of his rebellious brother, Hamir. It is equally possible, though, that it was brigands, taking full advantage of Sirohi's internal disorders, who did the deed!

In any event, the death of Hamir marked the end of the rebellion, and eventually Jagmal was succeeded by his son, Akheyraj I (r. 1523-1533). An able ruler and an ambitious warrior, Akheyraj successfully carried his arms against the neighbouring kingdoms. Parts of Marwar too were over-run, as Akheyraj advanced far towards the north-west. In fact, the fort of Loyana built by Akheyraj in 1531 later became part of Marwar's territories when the area reverted to Rathore hands. In acknowledgement of his exploits on the battlefield, and the speed with which he advanced against his enemies and over-ran their territories, *kyat* writers bestowed the sobriquet of 'Udana Akha' and 'Udana Akheyraj', or the 'Flying Akheyraj', upon this ruler of Sirohi. The title of 'Maharaj Shri' has been used for him in the Vashishtha Inscription of VS 1589 (AD 1533). Akheyraj was one of Rana Sanga of Mewar's allies at the battle of Khanua.

Akheyraj I was succeeded by the elder of his two sons, Rai Singh (r. 1533-1543). The new king was about twelve years old when he came to the throne. Local Charans have praised him for his generosity. G.H. Ojha has recorded that Rai Singh bestowed 'kod-pasav' (i.e., money, gifts and honours worth one crore), including the village of Khann — which contained three hundred *rahat* ('Persian wheels') used for drawing water for agriculture, to a Charan named Mala Asiya. The Rao similarly awarded the village of Matasan, with its fifty *rahats*, as part of the 'kod-pasav' granted to Patta Kalhat⁹⁴. Sirohi's Rai Singh died, still in his early twenties, while leading the siege of Bhinmal, which was then under the suzerainty of the Pathans of Jalore. (The descendants of the Jalore Pathans eventually came to rule over the kingdom of Palanpur, which formed one of the twenty-two states of Rajputana until 1947).

After Rai Singh, the throne passed to his brother Duda (r. 1543-1553), Rai Singh's son, Prince Udai Singh, being a mere infant at the time. Local traditions say this was done as per the wishes expressed to his chiefs by Rai Singh from his death-bed. Rai Singh simultaneously charged Duda with the upbringing of Prince Udai Singh. During the decade that Duda ruled Sirohi he is credited with regarding himself in the light of a 'regent' serving his nephew, to the extent of placing the interests of his own son, Man Singh, secondary.

Conflicts with the Pathans of Jalore and the Baghela Rajputs marked the period, and it was in one such battle that Duda lost his life. On Duda's death, his nephew Udai Singh came to the throne. Udai Singh (r. 1553-62) granted Duda's son, Man Singh, the village of Lohiyana as *jagir*, but later, apparently consumed by jealousy, resumed the estate, and exiled his cousin. Man Singh sought employment and shelter at the court of Maharana Udai Singh of Mewar, where his bravery and merit was rewarded over time by the grant of lands etc. Some years later, Sirohi's Maharao Udai Singh died of an illness. In the absence of a male heir, Sirohi's nobles regarded the throne as having devolved on Duda's son, the exiled Man Singh.

Man Singh, then with Mewar's Maharana at Kumbhalgarh, was secretly informed and recalled to Sirohi, before the news of Udai Singh's death became generally known to the Maharana of Mewar. Ojha⁹⁵ notes that the Sirohi nobles held that Man Singh's life would be in danger if the Mewar court knew the real state of affairs before Man Singh was crowned: a not unnatural fear given that rivalry and real politick had seen such things happen on occasions in inter-state politics!

The reign of Man Singh (r. 1562-1571) was turbulent, in part due to the hot temper of the ruler, and in part due to pressure faced by Sirohi from various neighbours, as well as Akbar's Imperial forces. Marwar's famous *khyat* writer, Muhnot Nainsi, has called Man Singh a forceful king, who, besides leading his forces with valour in numerous battles against the forces of Akbar, subdued the power of the 'Koli' people. These Kolis were inhabitants of the Sauntpur-Palanpur tracts of Sirohi, and had remained unvanquished by previous Deora Chauhan rulers of Sirohi.

Unfortunately for Man Singh, his courage on the battlefield was matched by an unbridled and ungovernable temper. Soon after his ascension, he is said to have killed the mother and a pregnant widow of the dead Rao Udai Singh in 1563. His eventful reign culminated with his ordering the murder of his prime minister, Panchayan Parmar. In turn, Panchayan's nephew, a courtier called Kalla Parmar, avenged this death by stabbing and mortally wounding the Rao as he sat down to his evening meal. Man Singh died within hours of this attack. Like his predecessor, Udai Singh, Man Singh too left no male heir.

At this chaotic stage, Surtan (r. 1571-1610), son of Bhan, was raised to the throne of Sirohi. Surtan was a direct descendant of Rao Lakha, being the great-grandson of Prince Uda, the third brother of Rao Jagmal (Man Singh's own great-grandfather). The new ruler was about twelve years old at this time. Almost immediately Rao Surtan was faced by court intrigues originating from the machinations of his own kinsman, Bija (descended from Rao Ranmal's second son, Gaja), who had long been among the most important courtiers of Sirohi⁹⁶.

Bija's intrigues enabled him to briefly seize and occupy the throne of Sirohi for about four months, before he was successfully dislodged by another Deora Chauhan relative called Kalla. This Kalla was a grandson of Sirohi's Rao Jagmal, and a nephew of the famous 'Flying Akheyraj'. His father, Mehajal had been Akheyraj's younger brother, and his mother was a Sisodia princess from Mewar. Kalla's cause was initially assisted by force sent by Maharana Pratap of Mewar. Bija fled to Idar. But Kalla's short reign saw the alienation of several senior Deora kinsmen. Concurrently, the dispossessed Surtan's cause continued to attract many of Sirohi's courtiers, nobles and ordinary citizens. Bija too, temporarily, turned to Surtan and sought forgiveness for his previous trespasses, which was readily granted. Surtan further gained the assurance of help from Malik Khan of Jalore in return for the *parganas* of Siyana, Badgaon, Lohiyana and Dodiya.

Once sure of his strength, Surtan — who had made Ramsen his base — marched towards Sirohi to recover his inheritance. In turn, Kalla advanced to meet him. The two armies clashed some distance short of Kalandri in 1574. Kalla was defeated and forced to quit the field and the

kingdom, while the fifteen year old Surtan re-occupied the throne of Sirohi. The remainder of Surtan's long reign was to see as much, if not more, drama!

Soon, the unrepentant and ambitious Bija began plotting afresh to regain the crown he had once held, albeit briefly. Sirohi's annals praise the wise counsel and support provided to Rao Surtan by his Barmeri queen at this stage⁹⁷. Meanwhile, as Rao Surtan attempted to consolidate and rebuild the kingdom after the troubled times through which it had passed, he also found himself pitted against the might of Emperor Akbar's Imperial forces at regular intervals. Surtan had previously experienced this problem at the start of his reign when, according to Abul Fazl's *Ain-i-Akbari*, a punitive expedition was sent by Akbar against Sirohi in 1571.

Abul Fazl's contemporaneous version tells us about an Imperial campaign sent against Sirohi under the leadership of Rai Singh of Bikaner in 1576. Rao Surtan was driven from his capital city of Sirohi, and then from Abu, and forced to accept peace terms, including presenting himself at Akbar's court. (As already mentioned, it is known that Surtan of Sirohi rendered aid to Maharana Pratap following the battle of Haldighati, and this was perhaps the major reason for Akbar wanting him subdued).

In the absence of Rao Surtan, Bija Deora governed the territory of Sirohi, and later pressed his own claim to the *gaddi* of Sirohi. According to Ojha, Surtan took recourse to diplomacy at this point, partly to counter Bija's continued machinations, and entered into an agreement with Bikaner's ruler, Rai Singh (when the Bikaner ruler was travelling through the Sirohi region, enroute to Sorath). By this agreement, Surtan agreed to give half of Sirohi's territories into Imperial hands⁹⁸. Akbar charged Prince Jagmal of Mewar, the estranged half-brother of Maharana Pratap, with the administration of this ceded part of Sirohi. This was in part to placate Jagmal and use him as a counter-point against Maharana Pratap, and in part because Prince Jagmal's wife was a Deora Chauhan princess from Sirohi, being the daughter of Surtan's predecessor, Rao Man Singh.

Matters soon came to a head between Surtan and Jagmal. To some extent, this was due to Bija's clever manipulations. Additionally, the arrangement was probably proving irksome to the young Rao Surtan. Taking up his arms, Surtan eventually drove Jagmal from his territories. Jagmal and Bija repaired to the Imperial court, where Akbar entrusted Prince Rai Singh of Marwar (the third son of Akbar's implacable enemy, Marwar's Rao Chandrasen), Dantiwada's Koli Singh, and other commanders, with the task of assisting Jagmal against the Sirohi ruler⁹⁹.

Like previous campaigns against Surtan, this one too was a prolonged one, involving many skirmishes and fights. It culminated in the decisive battle at Datani towards the close of 1583, which saw a victory for Rao Surtan. Jagmal of Mewar, Prince Rai Singh of Marwar, Koli Singh of Dantiwada, were among the prominent Imperial commanders who were killed in the battle of Datani, along with scores of other Imperial forces. The losses were lighter on the side of Surtan. Additionally, Surtan gained prestige from having seized the *nakkara* kettle-drum and other war accoutrements and horses of Prince Rai Singh of Marwar and Prince Jagmal of Mewar.

However, Surtan was unable to rest on his laurels for long, as the emperor promptly sent another force under the command of Marwar's 'Mota Raja' Udai Singh and the Mughal general, Jam Beg. The invading armies forced Surtan to quit his capital yet again and retire to the heights of Abu, while the surrounding countryside was subjugated and looted during early 1584. Meanwhile, the opportunistic Bija, still biding his time, entered into yet another failed conspiracy, and then joined Jam Beg in an assault against Surtan's camp. Surtan and his forces met the attack near a place called Vasthanji. Bija was killed, and Jam Beg's forces defeated and forced to flee. 'Mota Raja' Udai Singh opened a different front by placing another of Sirohi's erstwhile rulers, the short-reigned Kalla, on the throne of the kingdom, but in due course Rao Surtan forced Kalla to flee Sirohi for a second time.

In fact, from about 1573 until his death in 1610, Rao Surtan is said to have fought fifty-two battles. These included battles against Mughal generals like Mir Muhammad Khan, Mohammad Khan, Khan-i-Kalan, Rai

Singh of Marwar, Jam Beg, and ‘Mota Raja’ Udai Singh of Marwar. (And these in spite of Sirohi having accepted Mughal suzerainty in 1576). The continued conflict led to Sirohi changing hands between Surtan and Mughal armies at least thrice during the reign of this Sirohi ruler. Some traditional accounts even hold that, through the clever device of a fellow Rajput ruler, Rao Surtan was once taken to Akbar’s court, where the Rao won the emperor’s favour, and was allowed to make an honourable return to his own kingdom, besides retaining Abu.

Not surprisingly, Rao Surtan’s valour in the face of constant warfare became a by-word for his contemporaries. Despite his life spent as a warrior, he is equally remembered in Sirohi’s bardic annals and epigraphs for numerous charitable acts and land-grants. One of his twelve queens, Champa Kanwar of Idar, donated a public step-well near Sirohi town in 1582. This is still known as the ‘Champavati *baori*’ (step-well). We shall return to Sirohi further in this book, and turn now to events concerning some of the other contemporaneous states of Rajasthan.

THE STATE OF BUNDI

As we saw in a previous section, the Hada Chauhan Narain Das (r. 1503-1529) succeeded his father, Rao Bhandu (Subandh Deo) of Bundi, in 1503. He is credited with re-establishing sovereignty over Bundi fort, and killing his uncles Samarkandi and Umakandi, who held possession of it. Besides re-consolidating the state, and putting down recalcitrant nobles, Narain Das took part in several military campaigns, and there are many tales about his courage and strength. He fought as an ally of Rana Raimal of Chittor against the sultan of Malwa. Impressed by his valour, the Rana married one of his nieces to the Bundi chief. Later, Narain Das joined the confederacy, headed by Rana Sanga, against the Mughal Babur, at the battle of Khanua in 1527. Rao Narain Das was killed not long after (either in 1527 or 1529); the victim of a conspiracy hatched and led by one of his feudal chiefs — the fief-holder of Khatkado. Narain Das was succeeded by his son, Surajmal.

During Surajmal’s reign (1529 -1531), the relations between Mewar and Bundi once more became turbulent. Rao Surajmal’s sister,

Karnawati¹⁰⁰, was married to Rana Sanga of Mewar, and Sanga had appointed Surajmal to be the guardian of her two sons, Vikramaditya and Udai Singh. Sanga had also granted the *jagir* of Ranthambore, including its famed fort, to these two sons. Following the death of Rana Sanga of Mewar, his eldest surviving son Ratan Singh, (who was Queen Karnawati's step-son) became the new ruler of Mewar. Relations between Rana Ratan Singh and Rao Surajmal were already rocky, according to the bardic accounts about the 'Enmity between the Hadas and the Sisodias' (*Hada-Sisodiyon-ka-bair*), even though, the close ties between the kingdoms of Mewar and Bundi had been further cemented by the marriage of Surajmal's sister, Suja Bai with Mewar's Rana Ratan Singh, and that of Ratan Singh's sister with Surajmal.

The Bundi chroniclers hold that very soon Rana Ratan Singh decided to put an end to Rao Surajmal of Bundi. The Mewar ruler, invited Surajmal to join in a hunting expedition, in the course of which Ratan Singh attacked Surajmal. The injured Surajmal, in turn, drew his dagger and plunged it into the heart of his attacker. Seriously injured, neither the Rana of Mewar nor the Rao of Bundi could survive their wounds. As a consequence, the Hadas and Sisodias became sworn enemies.

Surajmal was succeeded by his four year old minor son, Surtan (r. 1531-1554). His reign saw the loss of Kota to the Pathans, and Barod and Siswali to the Khinchis. An attack by Malwa forces saw Surtan taking shelter with Raimal Khinchi, even as the countryside was ravaged. When Surtan came of age, his behaviour proved intolerable to the Hada nobles and other fief-holders. He was dethroned around 1554 by his Hada feudal chiefs, with the help of Mewar. While Surtan is said to have retired to pass his remaining days in a village he renamed 'Surtanpur', the details about what followed in Bundi after Surtan was deposed is a little unclear.

According to Nainsi, the Mewar ruler conferred the throne of Bundi on one Surjan (about whose family details Nainsi is silent). Surjan is said to have already been in the service of Mewar at the time, and held a *jagir* of twelve villages. With the title to Bundi, Nainsi states that Surjan was given the command of Ranthambore fort as its *qiledar* (fort-commandant) by the Mewar ruler, as well as mastery over the tracts of Bundi, Patan, Kota,

Lakheri, Nainwa, Khairabad etc. Tod, on the other hand, recorded that Surtan was deposed by the nobles of Bundi, and since he had no son, the throne went to Arjun, a grandson of Rao Bando, and that after Arjun's heroic death at Chittor, the succession passed to his eldest son, Surjan.

(As noted previously, Arjun and five hundred Hada warriors had responded to the call for help made by Mewar's Queen-Mother Karnawati for the defence of Chittor against the invasion of Bahadur Shah. Thereafter, Arjun and the Bundi contingent had died a heroic death defending the Mewari capital of Chittor against the forces of Bahadur Shah of Gujarat in 1534-35).

Since Arjun Hada is said to have died in c. 1534-35, and Surtan was deposed for his cruel conduct and poor governance *after* he became an adult, Arjun could not have been Surtan's successor. However, it is far more feasible, as suggested by some twentieth century historians, that after Surtan was removed the Bundi throne was given to the dead Arjun's son, Surjan, who was in any case a direct descendant of Rao Bando. Mewar too would have looked upon the choice with favour, in view of the sacrifice made by the late Arjun in the defence of Chittor. That could also account for the conferment of lands and the *qiledari* of Ranthambore on Surjan. For, in keeping with custom, Mewar would have wished to reward the sacrifice of Arjun (and other warriors) by grants to his descendants.

The reign of Rao Surjan (r. 1554-1585) marks the beginning of a new era for Bundi. Changing political realities meant that while the Mughal Empire could not be ignored, at the same time, the potential threat from Mewar — to whom Bundi had once owed allegiance, and with whom it had long had a rocky relationship — was blunted. Surjan initially built-up a powerful army and re-took Kota, Barod and Siswali. Ranthambore (which had temporarily gone into Sher Shah Suri's hands) was occupied too — for despite the award of its *qiledari*, it would seem that it wasn't in Mewar's hands. One version holds that Surjan purchased the fort from Jhujhar Khan, the Pathan *qiledar* of the Suri Sultan, Muhammad Adil Shah (r. 1554-1556), while another states that Surjan bribed the previous *qiledar* into yielding possession.

Rao Surjan eventually came into conflict with the Mughal emperor, Akbar. In 1569 Ranthambore was besieged. Following a period of resistance and subsequent negotiations (in which Raja Bhagwant Das, the ruler of Amber, played his part), Surjan handed over the fortress of Ranthambore to Akbar, in return for honourable terms. The terms included exemption from the branding of Bundi's horse with the Imperial brand, not marrying Hada princesses to the Mughal ruling family and exemption from paying *jaziya* tax. Ranthambore was incorporated into the Mughal Empire, and Akbar assigned the fort to Prince Jagannath Kachchwaha to administer. Henceforth, as long as the Mughal Empire remained powerful, service to it, whether on the battlefield, or as administrators in different parts of India, was to remain a common motif in the lives of nearly all the male descendants of Bundi's ruling family and their nobles. (A situation common to all the other states of Rajasthan who had accepted Mughal suzerainty).

The Mughal court influenced several aspects of life too, including the art being created at the Bundi court. (The process worked both ways). Successive Bundi rulers patronised a local style that drew inspiration from both the traditional regional frescoes and illustrated manuscripts, as well as the Persia-inspired Mughal court art, resulting in a creative blend of their own, now categorised as the 'Bundi School' of art. *Raga-Ragini* and *Bara-masa* were favourite themes with the painters of the Bundi School. Art-historians regard the Chunar Raga-mala of c. 1591 as a landmark for the Bundi School.

Following Surjan's acceptance of Mughal supremacy, the area of Bundi-Kota became part of the *sarkar* of Nagaur. Surjan was given a *mansab* of 1,000 *zat*, and the *jagirs* of Manrudh and Garh Katanga, and despatched in command of an Imperial force to reduce Gondwana. He was also appointed administrator over the Gond area. Surjan took the Gond stronghold of Varigarh and brought the Gond chief to Akbar's court. Surjan was rewarded by the title of 'Rao Raja', a *mansab* rank of 5,000, and an additional twenty-six *parganas* of *jagir* near Bundi, along with the same number of *parganas* near Banaras (Kashi) as *jagir*. Afterwards, the governorship of Kashi (Banaras/ Benares, now spelt and pronounced as Varanasi), which included the tract of Chunar, was given to the Bundi chief. Banaras was to become Surjan's main seat of residence from this period

onwards, with the administration of Bundi being conducted by his eldest son, Duda.

We learn that through his piety, wisdom and generosity, Surjan was beneficial for the Mughal Empire and its Hindu subjects at large, and that “Owing to the prudence of his administration and the vigilance of his police, the most perfect security to person and property was established throughout the province. He beautified and ornamented the city, especially that quarter where he resided, and eighty-four edifices, for various public purposes, and twenty baths, were constructed under his auspices”¹⁰¹. Among these were travellers’ *serais*, water-bodies, palaces, *ghats* (steps and embankments along a river-front), and the Ranchod-ji temple at Dwarkapuri. It was at Banaras that the poet Chandrashekhar composed the *Surjan-Charitra* in honour of the Hada ruler. Surjan died at that venerated city in 1585.

Surjan Hada had nominated his son, Duda, to administer Bundi in his absence, but later, as per the wishes of Emperor Akbar, Surjan’s younger son Bhoj (r. 1585-1607), succeeded Surjan as Rao of Bundi. Akbar had previously granted the *farman* of Kota to this same Bhoj. Rao Bhoj, along with his brother Duda, distinguished himself in the emperor’s campaigns in Gujarat and Orissa. It is said that when Akbar wished to reward him, Bhoj asked permission to make regular annual visits to Bundi during the monsoon season! His valour at the siege of Ahmadnagar (1600), apparently led Akbar to order the construction of a bastion — the ‘Bhoj *Burj*’ — in his honour. Bhoj eventually became one of Emperor Akbar’s trusted commanders. However, local chroniclers hold that he later incurred the Emperor Jahangir’s displeasure over refusing to sanction any matrimonial alliances between princesses belonging to the Hada lineage (even on the distaff side), with the Mughal Imperial family. Bhoj died in 1607, and was succeeded by Ratan Singh.

The subsequent history of Bundi is taken up in the next chapter.

THE STATE OF MARWAR/JODHPUR

In Marwar the reign of Jodha's son, Rao Suja (r. 1492-1515), saw various subordinate chiefs and kinsmen asserting their independence. Among them were the chiefs of Merta, Pokhran and Barmer, who made every effort to be recognised as independent princes of the areas they controlled. The authority of Marwar was re-imposed in part by the relatively more vigorous policies of Rao Ganga (r. 1515-1531), the grandson of Suja.

Ganga's accession to the *gaddi* of Jodhpur led to a civil war-like situation, however, as his right to the throne was disputed by some courtiers and nobles who upheld the rival claim of his cousin, Biram Deo. Biram Deo was a grandson of Rao Jodha, being the son of Jodha's first-born, Dudha, who had predeceased his father. Biram Deo was only a young boy when Rao Jodha died and Jodha's eldest surviving son, Satal, succeeded to the throne of Marwar. Thereafter, upon Satal's death, his younger brother Suja (another of Jodha's sons), became the next Rao. As Suja's sons Bagha and Nara predeceased him, Suja reared his nephew Biram (son of his dead eldest brother Dudha, holder of Merta), to be his heir-apparent. Bagha's son Ganga was then a mere boy¹⁰².

Upon the death of Rao Suja, a sequence of events, which tradition has romanticised, led to Suja's grandson, Ganga, rather than his nephew, Biram, being offered the throne of Marwar by an important section of the nobles. They were led by the thakur of Bagri — a direct descendant of Rao Jodha's eldest brother, Akhey Raja. The prime minister (*pradhan*), Muhta Raimal, was absent from Jodhpur at the time. Biram Deo was granted the *jagir* of Sojat. Later, Biram was expelled from the Jodhpur fort. Vowing to avenge the wrong done to Biram Deo, Muhta Raimal accompanied the displaced Rathore prince to Sojat. Fighting later erupted between the two cousins. Biram is said to have looted some *parganas* of Jodhpur during this period.

Ganga's eldest son, Maldeo (later to become the ruler of Marwar himself), participated in the battles and assisted his father in seizing Sojat from their rebellious relative. In fact, Prince Maldeo had very early become not just the sword-arm of his father, but had also been actively associated with regard to political matters too. Rao Ganga eventually humbled the pride of Biram Deo by over-running his patrimony of Merta too.

Besides consolidating Marwar, Rao Ganga also joined Mewar's Rana Sanga — to whom he was related by marriage — in his campaign against Sultan Muzaffar Shah II of Gujarat in 1517. Their joint efforts led to the installation of Rao Raimal on the throne of Idar. Ganga later provided a contingent of four thousand warriors that included fief-holders and chiefs like Raimal and Ratan Singh, under the command of his son, Prince Maldeo, to assist Sanga's confederacy against Babur. The Marwar troops, commanded by Maldeo and others, took part in the Sanga-led siege of the fort of Bayana during February 1527. A month later, at the battle ground of Khanua, Maldeo led the Marwar contingent's charge on the left flank of Babur's army on sixteenth March 1527. (Later, when Sanga was rendered unconscious at Khanua, after being struck by an arrow to his head, and was evacuated from the battleground in that unconscious state, Maldeo along with Akheyraj Deora of Sirohi and Prithviraj of Amber formed part of the escort).

Meanwhile, Rao Ganga had all along been faced with keeping his numerous kinsmen and their collateral branches under his 'subjugation' and 'control', as was deemed fitting for the chief of the clan and the Rao of the kingdom of Marwar! His own uncle, Shekha, contested Ganga's authority, and joined hands with *Khanzada* Daulat Khan of Nagaur to capture Jodhpur in 1529. The challenge ended following a battle in which Daulat Khan was defeated and Shekha killed.

By this time, Maldeo was apparently growing tired of waiting in the wings. Perhaps he was also fired by vaunting ambition and wished to fill the void created in the general region by the death of Rana Sanga of Mewar. This vacuum, Maldeo had realised, Rao Ganga could not fill, in spite of his achievements. Rather fortuitously for Maldeo, he did not have long to wait, for Rao Ganga died on 21 May 1531, following a fall from a balcony located high above a sheer drop in the towering great fortress-town of Jodhpur.

The fall may have been an accident, but it is commonly held that Rao Ganga was pushed out of the balcony by Maldeo, who was apparently eager to gather the reins of the state into his own hands. According to local lore, one version of which was given by Nainsi in his *Khyat*¹⁰³, while Rao Ganga

was enjoying the effects of opium as well as a cool breeze, dispelling the heat of summer, at a palace balcony, his ambitious heir, Maldeo pushed him from behind. The unfortunate Rao plummeted to his death. Some nineteenth and early twentieth century writers like Pandit Visheshwar Nath Reu and Pandit Ram Karan Asopa have tried to exonerate Maldeo from the charge of patricide, by stating — without citing any corroborative information, that Rao Ganga died because of an accidental fall. However, many historians believe that given Maldeo's ambitions and his overall personality, he was quite capable of having done the deed traditionally ascribed to him!

Rao Maldeo (r. 1531-1562), whose mother, Queen Padma Kumari, was a princess from the Deora Chauhan kingdom of Sirohi, was born on fifth December, 1511. By the time he ascended the throne of Marwar on fifth June 1531, Maldeo already enjoyed the reputation of being an intrepid warrior. Tradition and popular accounts list him amongst the most important rulers that Marwar has known. It was during the course of his long reign of thirty years that Marwar would rise to an enviable position of high prestige and prominence. An ambitious king and successful conqueror, Maldeo was a fearless warrior in the tradition expected of all Rajputs.

For all that, however, when Maldeo ascended the throne in 1531, he inherited direct control over two only *parganas* (districts) of Marwar — namely Mandore and Sojat, besides the capital city of Jodhpur. He also inherited a political system which devolved to the ruler of the state only a loose general overlordship over various powerful clan feudatories. Rao Ganga had exercised token overlordship over nine powerful Rathore chiefs, who ruled in virtual independence over their respective sprawling estates centred around Jaitaran, Pokhran, Phalodi, Barmer, Kotra, Kher, Mahera, Siwana and Merta. Maldeo now attempted to assert his authority over them, and also to reduce powerful fief-holders and recalcitrant nobility to submission. Thus, from the beginning of his reign, Maldeo adopted a policy of transforming Marwar's rather qualified overlordship into firm and absolute control. Under him, Marwar would become a compact and strong centralised state, with continually expanding boundaries.

Maldeo was aided in his quest by the power vacuum created following the death of Mewar's Rana Sanga; for Sanga's immediate successors either

had short reigns, or were minors when they inherited the title, and in both cases, apparently lacked the calibre to reassert Mewar's erstwhile dominance and hegemony. At the same time, following the death of Babur in the winter of 1530, the Mughal emperor, Humayun did not immediately turn his attention to the region comprising present-day Rajasthan, but became involved against Sultan Bahadur Shah of Gujarat. This too served to give Maldeo the time and space to, both, consolidate Marwar and lay his plans for further expansion and domination. Nineteenth and twentieth century historians have acknowledged the political foresight, military leadership, constructive genius, and diplomatic ability of Maldeo in availing of the opportunity thus provided, while the medieval writer, Ferishta, who was closer in time to Maldeo, refers to him as 'the most potent prince in Hindustan'.

Not long after his accession, Maldeo led an expedition against the Sindhals of Bhadrajun, some fifty miles south of Jodhpur. Defeating the Sindhals, Maldeo occupied Bhadrajun. Bhadrajun was thereafter fortified at Maldeo's command. Raipur was also wrested from the branch of Sindhals holding it. Shortly after this, when Sultan Bahadur Shah of Gujarat invaded Mewar, Maldeo dispatched a contingent of his army to assist Rana Vikramaditya of Mewar.

In 1534 Daulat Khan of Nagaur attacked Biram Deo of Merta, in order to seize Merta. Taking advantage of this, Maldeo, in turn, sent his forces to take Nagaur. Nagaur was subjugated and the hapless Daulat Khan was forced to seek shelter at Ajmer. Maldeo now renewed the struggle with Biram Deo. In 1535 Biram Deo defeated Shamsheer-ul-Mulk, the representative of the sultan of Gujarat, and captured Ajmer. On learning about this victory of his estranged relative, Maldeo demanded that Ajmer be turned over into his (Maldeo's) hands. Maldeo put forward the logic that it would be difficult for Biram Deo to retain control over Ajmer in the face of the powerful army of Gujarat, which would undoubtedly be sent to recover it, whereas the Rao of Marwar could hold it. Biram Deo refused to yield to Maldeo's demand. At this, Maldeo despatched troops under the command of Kumpa and Jaita. Merta was sequestered, and Biram Deo was forced to quit his Merta estates and retire to Ajmer.

The matter did not end here. Rao Maldeo favoured Sahasa, a grandson of Var Singh, and granted him the *jagir* of Rian, which was located in the traditional territory of Merta. The infuriated and angered, Biram Deo rode for Rian and succeeded in killing Sahasa after a stiff combat. Maldeo now despatched troops from Nagaur (which he still held), under the leadership of Jaita, Kumpa and Akhairaj Sonagra. They successfully expelled Biram Deo not just from Rian, but also from Ajmer. Pursued by Maldeo's forces, Biram Deo was forced to seek shelter, first at Didwana, and then in Shekhawati, while Ajmer passed into Maldeo's possession.

Thus, by 1535, Maldeo succeeded in gaining control of both Nagaur and Ajmer. Soon areas like Didwana and Pachpadra also acknowledged his sovereignty. (Meanwhile, Biram carved out a temporary territory for himself centred around the habitations of Banhata and Barwara in the Shekhawat-Kachchwaha held lands of Shekhawati, but Maldeo's forces expelled him from there too. Biram Deo next found his way to Ranthambore, where the officer holding the fort advised him to continue onto Malwa and seek shelter with Mallu Khan and Sher Shah Suri. Biram thus eventually joined Sher Shah).

Over the ensuing years Maldeo continued to extend the borders of his kingdom. Taking advantage of the fact that the once-powerful Bhatias of the Jaisalmer region had fallen victim to internal dissensions and quarrels, Maldeo conquered the fort of Derawal and the tract of Bikampur and its surrounding lands. He then proceeded to push Marwar's frontier beyond Satalmer and Pokhran. Rawal Lunkaran of Jaisalmer was driven to sue for peace, and he proposed a matrimonial alliance between the Rao of Marwar and his daughter, Uma-Dey.

(The marriage was not to be a success, for the bride never forgave her newly married husband his amorous behaviour with one of her *davri* (maid-servants), and refused to have any conjugal relations with him. She lived out the rest of her life as a queen of Marwar, but in separate palaces at places of her choice. Her attitude towards Maldeo earned her the title of the '*Roothi Rani*' — the Irate or Aggrieved Queen, or 'the Queen-who-Sulked'. However, even as the 'aggrieved queen', she never drew back from the role and duties expected from a 'Rajputani', which had been instilled in her —

as in others of similar background and caste — from childhood, and further reinforced by the tales of Charans and bards. An example of this is her action in c.1542, when an attack on Ajmer by Sher Shah Sur appeared to be imminent¹⁰⁴. Uma-Dey was then in residence at Ajmer fort, as Rao Maldeo held the mastery of Ajmer at the time. Maldeo — himself not at Ajmer — commanded Charan Ishwar Das to ensure both, that Queen Uma-Dey was safely escorted to Jodhpur, and that defensive preparations and provisioning of the fort for battle Ajmer began. Uma-Dey, however, refused to leave the fort for the safety of Marwar's capital, declaring that it would be cowardice on her part — as a queen of Marwar, and a daughter of the Bhati clan — to leave the fort after learning of the approach of an enemy! Charan Ishwar Das was told to let Maldeo know that he could safely leave the management of the fort and battle-preparations to her charge, and that if the course of the battle proved unfavourable to Marwar, Uma-Dey vowed to die in battle and not commit *jauhar*. In the event, Maldeo drew away from offering assistance to the displaced Mughal emperor Humayun and the attack on Ajmer did not materialise. Uma-Dey finally agreed to leave Ajmer, having been promised the management of Jodhpur fort for the duration. Thereafter, Uma-Dey established temporary camp at Kosana, some fifteen miles from Jodhpur¹⁰⁵. Ashanand, a Charan poet at Maldeo's court, made Uma-Dey the central character of his well-known text, *Uma-Dey-Bhattiyani-ra-Kavit*. Interestingly, at Maldeo's death, Uma-Dey immolated herself as a *sati* of her own will — the same will that she had exercised previously to keep Maldeo at a distance).

With Jaisalmer in the position of a subordinate ally, Maldeo gained the advantage of Bhati troops. These served to assist Maldeo against his antagonists and neighbours, as he pursued his policy of territorial expansion and consolidation. (Ajmer was conquered with the help of the Bhatīs of Jaisalmer). In 1538 Maldeo attacked Jalore, annexing it and taking Sikandar Khan of Jalore captive. Sikandar Khan was imprisoned at Jodhpur, where he died some time afterwards. At Siwana, Maldeo ousted the Jaitmalot (i.e. descendants of Jaitmal) sub-branch of Rathores that had been holding the area, and did the same with the Chauhans of San chore. Maldeo proceeded to extend his sway further southward along the Luni river basin as far as the Thar-Parkar area. He also subjugated Bhinmal (ancient Bhillamalla) and Radhanpur, and plundered Nabara in Gujarat, to become the undisputed

lord of a large tract of land stretching between present-day Sindh/Cholistan desert (in Pakistan) in the west and northwest, up to Gujarat in the southwest. In fact, Maldeo added to his hereditary dominion of Jodhpur some forty *parganas*, or districts, including Ajmer, Barmer, Didwana, Bikaner, Sanchore, Jalore, Jaisalmer Sojat and Merta.

Besides bringing large tracts of western and northern Rajasthan under his domination, Maldeo also took advantage of the on-going contest for imperial power between the Mughal emperor Humayun and Sher Shah Sur to further expand his territories. In 1539, Maldeo extended his domination up to Bayana and its surrounding environs. He also defeated a branch of the Solanki Rajputs who ruled the region around modern-day Tonk and Toda, and established his suzerainty over the area. Alongside this, he also posted Marwari garrisons at Jaunpur in Mewar, and annexed the territories of Sambhar, Kalsi, Fatehpur, Rewasa, Chhota Udaipur (Udaipur-Shekhawati), Chatsu (now called Chaksu), Lawan and Malarana.

Immediately preceding this, during the 1537-38 period, Maldeo had seized another opportune occasion for extending Rathore hegemony and Marwar's sphere of influence. In 1537, he responded to the appeal made by the Sisodia nobles of the neighbouring kingdom of Mewar, on behalf of the young Udai Singh of Mewar, then a fugitive at Kumbhalgarh. While it was Udai Singh, the son of Rana Sanga and Queen Karnawati, to whom the throne had legitimately devolved following the deaths of his brothers, his right, along with the *gaddi* of Mewar, had been usurped by Banbeer, an illegitimate son of Mewar's Prince Prithviraj. Maldeo now sent a wing of his army to the aid of Udai Singh and his supporters. The combined forces of the Sisodias and the Rathores defeated the usurper Banbeer, and the traditional Mewari capital of Chittor was occupied on behalf of the legitimate Rana Udai Singh.

Modern historians believe that it was not so much altruistic chivalry alone that motivated Rao Maldeo's assistance, as his keen acumen and political foresight, which guided his actions. As a result of this help, Maldeo was not only able to further Marwar's position, he was also able to establish Marwari outposts and garrisons in the territory of Mewar as far as

Tonk and jahazpur, as well as at the foot of the passes leading to Ranthambore and Bundi¹⁰⁶.

Alongside this territorial expansion, fate proved beneficial to Maldeo when the death of Bahadur Shah of Gujarat in 1537 rid him of a powerful adversary. The death of Bahadur Shah relieved the Mughal emperor Humayun of a serious rival too, but before Humayun could secure his rather vulnerable position, he found himself faced by the recurrent challenge posed by the Afghan Sher Khan — later to rule under the name of Emperor Sher Shah Suri. While Humayun and Sher Khan faced each other over the ensuing years, Maldeo continued to expand the frontiers of Marwar.

Thus, in 1542 he invaded the kingdom of Bikaner and besieged its capital. Bikaner's ruler, Rao Jaitsi fell in battle at Suwa/Sahba, near Bikaner, after a gallant resistance, and the Bikaner area came under Maldeo's domination. Two of Jaitsi's sons, Kalyanmal and Bhim, who had survived the carnage, managed to escape and sought refuge at Sher Shah's court, where they joined hands with another of Maldeo's aggrieved relatives, Biram Deo of Merta, for redressal of their wrongs by encouraging Sher Shah to take action against Maldeo.

In the interim, much had altered at the imperial power-centre governed from Delhi and Agra. On 17 May 1540, the forces of Humayun were defeated at the battlefield of Bilgram. Humayun sought refuge temporarily at Agra, and then at Lahore and elsewhere, while the troops of the newly crowned Sher Shah sought to capture him. It was during this period of adversity that Humayun found himself at Bhakkar, where Maldeo is said to have sent an envoy bearing the promise of a force of 20,000 troops to assist the refugee in regaining his throne. Various twentieth century historians — among them the late K.R. Qanungo and Ishwari Prasad, have analysed the reasons for Maldeo's offer of help to Humayun — as well as his subsequently rescinding from that promise.

The alternative explanations suggested run as follows¹⁰⁷:

- 1.The ambitious Maldeo wanted to elevate Marwar to a position of eminence, akin to what Mewar had once enjoyed under Rana Sanga, and for this he wished to have cordial relations with the occupant of the Imperial throne at Delhi. By helping Humayun in regaining his lost grandeur, Maldeo could earn the gratitude of the Mughal Emperor, along with political and diplomatic ascendancy among his peers.
- 2.Maldeo was of the view that the expulsion of Humayun was a temporary phase, and that he would ultimately regain his lost territory (with or without Maldeo's help) from the usurping Sher Shah.
- 3.As Maldeo's opponents — including Biram Deo of Merta — had sought shelter with Sher Shah [previously known as Sher Khan]¹⁰⁸, Maldeo wanted to counteract any possible action they could encourage Sher Shah to take against Marwar. For this, he sought an alliance with Humayun and invited him to Marwar with the promise of bolstering the deposed Mughal Emperor's efforts against Sher Shah.
- 4.Maldeo was a shrewd strategist and seasoned warrior, besides being a diplomat, who realised that at that point in time (end of 1540 and beginning of 1541), Sher Shah's position on the Imperial throne was not fully secure. Sher Shah himself was in Bengal at the time, with a major portion of his army, with another sizeable part of Sher Shah's forces engaged in the Ghakkar area. Gwalior still held out against the Afghan Emperor's general Sujat Khan, and the chiefs of Malwa too were openly hostile towards Sher Shah. Maldeo probably took the entire situation into account, and realising that the time was opportune, offered to provide assistance to Humayun.

This is the view that is perhaps closest to the truth. It would also help explain why Maldeo eventually failed to hold to his promise; for when Humayun finally attempted to take up the Rao's offer the ground reality was very different to what it had been nearly a year earlier, when the offer had been made. Disagreeing with Abul Fazl's statement that Maldeo intended foul play from the beginning, Vyas believes that in the beginning Maldeo's intentions were genuine, but his offer of help to Humayun "...could not bear fruit as the latter... 'frittered away his energies in divided commands'. He

wasted about twelve months in Sind making fruitless adventures for occupying Sind and Gujarat. Maldeo's invitation must have been received by Humayun sometime between February and August, 1541, most probably, as Dr. Qanungo rightly thinks, in the month of June 1541 and the shortsighted emperor decided to avail of the invitation exactly after a year when the whole situation was altered. During the time Shershah [sic] had conquered Malwa and thereby consolidated his position"[109](#).

By the end of June 1542, not only was Sher Shah's conquest of Malwa, followed by his subsequent victorious return to Agra and Delhi complete, Sher Shah was also very much master of his conquests. Meanwhile, on May 7 1542, Humayun, still in Sind, left Rohri with his much diminished retinue for the city of Uchchh. From Uchchh, the displaced Mughal ruler's contingent moved in a south-westerly direction. Here, they fortuitously happened to light (accidentally according to some), upon the fort of Derawal, which was part of Maldeo's dominion. The next stage of the long, harsh, journey was in the direction of Phalodi. Enroute, the royal party halted briefly at Barsalpur.

According to the record left by Princess Gulbadan Begum, when Humayun and his retinue finally reached Phalodi an envoy came to him from Maldeo, bearing a 'homage' of gold coins along with the message that Bikaner was now Humayun's. The displaced emperor was apparently not happy with just this. He sent Atkah Khan as his envoy to Jodhpur, bearing a royal *farman* (order) to Maldeo, desiring to be waited upon in person. However, while Humayun was at Kul-i-Jogi (Jogitirtha, also called Jogo-Talaab), some eight miles north of Jodhpur, he became aware of Maldeo's hostile intentions, and hastily quit the region. This view is corroborated by the account of Jauhar, in his *Tazkirat-ul-Waqiat*. Jauhar stated that at Kul-i-Jogi the emperor learned of the dishonourable intentions of the Raja and resolved to set out for Umarkot (Amarkot) straightaway. Some other contemporary and near-contemporary Persian chroniclers have also criticised Maldeo for his inhospitable treatment of Humayun, which some hold amounted to treachery.

The issue requires some thought. It appears that Humayun's unexpected arrival in Maldeo's territory was unwelcome to the Rao of

Marwar in mid-1542. Maldeo knew how much the circumstances had altered in the year that had elapsed since he had first invited Humayun to Marwar and offered him the assistance of a 20,000 strong army. In fact, Maldeo had, at that time, mobilised 20,000 troops to join hands with the remaining Mughal contingents commanded by Humayun. When Humayun failed to avail of the invitation offered, Maldeo was propelled into diverting the energies of the large force he had raised against the neighbouring kingdom of Bikaner¹¹⁰ since it was a recognised axiom that a feudal army could not be kept simultaneously indolent and in service for an indefinite period! As a result, in the changed circumstances that prevailed by the summer of 1542, Maldeo was less prepared for honouring his former offer of aid to Humayun.

Along with this, Maldeo knew that while Humayun's strength and following had dwindled dramatically in the course of that crucial year, Sher Shah's strength had practically doubled. Well aware of the hapless Humayun's movements, Sher Shah marched across the Shekhawati area of Rajasthan during the height of the monsoon of 1542, sweeping northwards to take Nagaur, which fell into his hands around the same time that Humayun arrived in the vicinity of Phalodi. Nizamuddin's *Tabqat-i-Akbari* informs us that Sher Shah sent an envoy to Maldeo, bearing a letter that urged the latter to capture Humayun by whatever means possible. In return Sher Shah offered Maldeo the mastery of Nagaur, Alwar and whatever other place the latter wanted¹¹¹.

Maldeo was now faced with a dilemma. With Sher Shah practically at his doorstep, helping Humayun was fraught with all manners of dangers. Though Maldeo had access — in keeping with the prevailing system — to feudal levies provided by his clansmen and fief-holders, the majority of his regular troops were employed on garrison duty across his innumerable forts and posts situated over a widely scattered area ranging from the neighbourhood of Chittor to the frontier of Gujarat and Jaisalmer, and he needed time to mobilise both categories of fighting forces. And time was what he did not have once Sher Shah had moved his forces into Rajasthan!

While Maldeo sought a way out of the impasse, Humayun's suspicions over the intentions of Maldeo grew. The Mughal, already peeved

at the half-hearted welcome accorded to him on behalf of the Marwar ruler, became additionally wary on getting regular despatches that indicated the lack of preparedness, on the part of Maldeo, to lead an expedition against Sher Shah. Humayun's suspicions were fuelled by a message from his former librarian, Mulla Surkh, who was at the time in the service of Maldeo at Jodhpur. Mulla Surkh's message warned Humayun not to trust Maldeo, for the Marwar raja intended capturing Humayun. More or less simultaneously, Atkah Khan, who Humayun had sent to Maldeo's court to ascertain the situation and the Rathore ruler's true intentions, quietly escaped from Jodhpur and returning to Humayun's camp warned him that it was not the time to stand by and wait. Upon learning this, Humayun hastily led his small party away to the security offered by Amarkot, from where he would later attempt to get help from Iran.

Maldeo has been criticised by various Persian chroniclers for his conduct towards Humayun, which, according to some of them, amounted to treachery. Refuting this, Vyas argues that while Maldeo was unwilling to assist the fugitive ex-emperor under the circumstances that existed at the time, the charge of intended treachery appears baseless since Maldeo had had opportunity enough to have captured Humayun and handed him over to Sher Shah to gain the latter's favour, if he had wanted to do so¹¹².

According to Vyas, though Maldeo "...was not prepared to offend Shershah [sic] by helping Humayun...he had no intention of betraying the helpless emperor, at least so far as we can judge from Maldeo's subsequent actions...Had Maldeo entertained Humayun, both would have met disaster at the hands of Shershah who was already at striking distance. So Maldeo deliberately created a situation in which Humayun might retreat from the vicinity of Jodhpur without making it necessary for the Rathor [sic] chief to set his hand on him"¹¹³.

"The precipitate retreat of Humayun...eased the situation for Maldeo, who now sent troops in pursuit of the Mughals in order to keep up appearance with the inexorable Shershah sitting tight in his territory. The unlucky emperor, utterly bewildered, fled through the route of Phalodi, Satalmir [sic], Pokaran [sic], Devikot and Amarkot. Jauhar has described one incident which occurred during his return journey. Fifteen hundred

horsemen were seen pursuing the royal contingent. Shaik Ali with seven royal troopers met the enemy. Two of the enemy were severely wounded, the rest dispersed and fled away, defeated. It is unbelievable that fifteen hundred Rathor troopers lost the battle against seven Mughal troopers, unless it was a pretence for them to deceive the agent of Shershah who was perhaps treated to a stirring tale of a hot pursuit...Maldeo's real instructions to the pursuing column must have been something else than an attempt to capture the fleeing Mughals, and his men behaved accordingly"¹¹⁴.

Sher Shah was probably only partially deceived by Maldeo's actions against Humayun, and he was definitely sceptical about Maldeo's long-term intentions. Thus, about a year and a half after Humayun's precipitate leave-taking of Marwar, once Sher Shah was able to consolidate his position at Delhi, Agra, Gwalior and Raisen¹¹⁵, the Afghan emperor planned an expedition against Rao Maldeo in 1544.

Maldeo's continuously expanding borders and his attempt to establish his hegemony over much of Rajasthan had long been clearly recognised as a positive threat by his neighbours — including Sher Shah Sur. Mastery over the strategically important eastern part of Rajasthan that bordered the Delhi-Agra region became a further issue of contention between Maldeo and Sher Shah, and the boundaries of Maldeo's kingdom stretched to within fifty miles of Delhi. (Though there is little evidence to suggest that Maldeo's goal was Delhi and/or Agra).

In addition, Maldeo had reinforced the forts at Ajmer, Merta¹¹⁶ (where he also built the 'Malkot' fort), Mandore, Sojat, Siwana, Nagaur, Jalore and Jodhpur, and constructed new ones at strategic points. Additional protective walls were erected at Jodhpur and Merta, etc., while places like Pokhran, Siwana, etc. were fortified. He was also credited with having an army of 50,000 mounted warriors. A showdown between Maldeo and Sher Shah was, thus, inevitable. (It should be noted here that besides two of the sons of Jaitsi of Bikaner, Maldeo's relative, Biram Deo of Merta, whom the former had dispossessed from his estates, had also taken shelter at the court of Sher Shah).

Sher Shah is said to have made elaborate military preparations, and within a period of four months his force, which included 80,000 cavalry, besides infantry, artillery, war-elephants and possibly a camel corps, was ready for the campaign against Maldeo. The scale of preparations was kept secret by Sher Shah, and he compounded it by the route he took. In place of the then established route that went to Marwar via Bayana and Agra, Sher Shah used a different route to go from Agra to Marwar.

Contemporaneous writers have not provided specific details regarding Sher Shah's route. Marwari *khyats* mention his passing through Didwana. Twentieth century historians are of the opinion that Sher Shah probably marched through the Shekhawati area of Rajasthan to reach Didwana, where he fought a pitched battle against the troops of Marwar led by Kumpa. From here, marching with extreme caution, and throwing up defences and entrenchment at practically every halt, Sher Shah made his way to Samel — located on the western edge of the desert (and lying between Ajmer and Jodhpur), where his army entrenched itself, using the bed of the Samel river as a line of defence.

Meanwhile, the battle-seasoned and wary Maldeo had not been caught totally off his guard. Learning of Sher Shah's movement, he quickly marched to meet his foe, at the head of a large army (which, according to Jodhpur's annals included 80,000 cavalry, and according to the more sober estimate of Nizami's *Tabqat-i-Akbari*, comprised at least 50,000 horse). Maldeo and his troops made their base-camp at Cirri, some twelve miles across the river from Samel, where a defensive scrubland forest offering partial protection to the Marwar camp on one side.

Though both sides were well-entrenched, the leaders recognised their own respective weak points. Maldeo, for instance, well knew of the presence in Sher Shah's camp of the relatives he had dispossessed — notably Biram Deo of Merta and Kalyanmal of Bikaner. He was shrewd enough to also recognise the under-current of dissension amongst his own nobles and kinsmen fief-holders, most of whom had submitted very unwillingly to his aggressively centralised rule, which had meant the relative weakening of their own semi-autonomous local administrations.

Sher Shah, on the other hand, was in enemy territory — a mainly arid tract — where the difficulty of digging trenches in sandy terrain had already been brought home to him; and where the hazard of ensuring adequate food and supplies for his forces, without the facility of open supply lines from Delhi and the Mewat region, was more than obvious.

For about a month Maldeo and Sher Shah's forces lay in this manner, practically within sight of each other. Neither seemed prepared to show haste in taking the offensive. Realising that a prolonged wait could prove more advantageous to his foe, it was Sher Shah who finally made the first move.

It was not a battle manoeuvre, though. Instead, the wily emperor adopted a stratagem to weaken Maldeo and make him to doubt the loyalty of his Rajput officers. According to contemporary chroniclers writing in Persian, Sher Shah arranged for some letters addressed from him to various Rajput commanders to be dropped near Maldeo's camp. The letters promised that if the disaffected commanders and nobles of Marwar kept their word — as promised in their earlier letters to the emperor on which Sher Shah's reply was superscribed — their estates would be restored to them and they would be taken into royal favour.

Marwari traditions, on the other hand, accuse Biram Deo of Merta for devising this plan. According to their version, on Biram Deo's advice Sher Shah had false *farmans* addressed to Maldeo's commanders clumsily concealed inside shields. Those shields were then sold to the unsuspecting Marwar commanders through the medium of spies. Simultaneously, Biram Deo sent a message to Maldeo saying that though the Jodhpur king had dealt unfairly with his Merta cousin, Biram Deo thought it his duty to let Maldeo know that his chiefs had gone over to Sher Shah. For proof, Maldeo was told to have the new shields that his commanders bore examined before his eyes.

Whether the credit for the machination should go to Sher Shah or Biram, the ploy worked. On seeing the letters Maldeo immediately suspected doubting the loyalty and integrity of his commanders, including the famed Jaita and Kumpa¹¹⁷. He then ordered his men to retreat, and

himself withdrew, with the bulk of his troops, in the direction of Jodhpur. The decision proved fateful. For, by the time Maldeo later realised his mistake, it was to be too late to retrieve the situation.

Meanwhile, many of his nobles had refused to retreat. Upholding the fighting tradition, which was constantly eulogised by their bards and reinforced through regular re-telling of battle-tales centring around warrior-ancestors, they opted to fight the enemy. Thus, with a small force (4,000 cavalry according to some versions; and less than 12,000 men, cavalry and archers according to others), Jaita, Kumpa and other loyal warriors of Marwar attacked the centre of Sher Shah's army in January 1544, wreaking havoc with their suicidal charge. However, the elephant-charge ordered by Sher Shah, and the arrival of more Imperial troops led by Sher Shah's Afghan general, Jalal Khan, backed by the superiority of numbers and guns, eventually decimated the attackers and ensured victory for Sher Shah.

Though the attacking force of Marwar's warriors were cut down to the last man, and Maldeo had retreated without even fighting, Sher Shah's victory was hard-won. All things considered, the campaign had been no sine cure. In fact, Persian writers quote Sher Shah as exclaiming that: "For a handful of millet (*bajra*), I almost lost the Empire (*badshahat*) of Hindustan"¹¹⁸!

The crucial battle of Samel (1544) sealed the fate of Maldeo — at least for the time being. Sher Shah's forces rapidly marched onwards. One wing, led by Khawas was sent to secure Maldeo's capital, Jodhpur, while Sher Shah marched with the other against Ajmer — also held by Maldeo. Following the occupation of Jodhpur in January 1544, Maldeo was forced to seek shelter in the desert reaches of western Rajasthan around Piplod, near Siwana. Meanwhile, Biram Deo was restored to his patrimony of Merta and Kalyanmal to the *gaddi* of Bikaner.

More or less simultaneously, Sher Shah besieged and conquered Ajmer, which he then strongly garrisoned with part of his victorious army. After re-organising the administration at Jodhpur and establishing his garrisons there, as well as at the *thana* (garrison-post) of Bhangasar (which he garrisoned with 5,000 cavalry), and at places like Pali, Phalodi, Sojat,

Jalore, Nagaur etc., Sher Shah left Khawas Khan and Isa Khan Niyazi (with a strong cavalry contingent), in charge at the Marwari capital and returned to Ajmer. Sher Shah also proceeded to set up outposts up to Abu, in the higher reaches of the Aravalli hills¹¹⁹.

Meanwhile, the fortress-town of Ranthambore was already held by Sher Shah Suri, who had captured it in 1543. Ranthambore was handed over to his son, Prince Salim Shah, with Khidr Khan appointed its administrator. (The *Holi-Renuka-Charitra* written in AD 1551 mentions that Sher Shah appreciated and commended the knowledge of Ranthambore's renowned physician, Rekha. It was during the period of Sur rule over Ranthambore that the *Holi-Renuka-Charitra* and the *Jinadatta-Charitra* composed in 1549, were written and presented to a Jain religious teacher called Lalitakirti when he visited the place).

With the defeat of the powerful Maldeo, and the submission of a large tract of Rajasthan up to Abu, Sher Shah's sights were now set on Marwar's neighbour, Mewar. After a short spell in Agra dealing with accumulated matters of state, Sher Shah next turned his attention towards Mewar. To avert war, for which the Rana was little prepared at the time, Udai Singh of Mewar voluntarily sent the keys of the fort of Chittor to Sher Shah. Sher Shah accepted the gesture as a token surrender, and placing his administrative officers in position, opted not to occupy the territory of Mewar as a conqueror. From Mewar, Sher Shah turned towards Dhoondhar (Amber), where too his suzerainty was quickly accepted.

In effect, in a brief period of ten months, Emperor Sher Shah Sur successfully over-ran most of Rajasthan. It seems that here his emphasis was less on the permanent annexation of the various local kingdoms, and more on stressing his military superiority over the rulers and chiefs of Rajasthan. The late Dr. Qanungo has commented that, "Sher Shah made no attempt to uproot the loyal chiefs or to reduce them to thorough subjection. He found the task dangerous as well as fruitless. He did not aim at the complete subversion of their independence"¹²⁰. It may be noted here, however, that Sher Shah died not long afterwards (22 May 1545), while attempting to take the fort of Kalinjar, and as such did not have the time to consolidate his hold over his recent acquisitions and conquests in Rajasthan.

What his long-term policy in this regard may have been is thus a matter of conjecture! In any event, Delhi's Imperial control over Rajasthan slackened with Sher Shah's death. Soon afterwards, Mewar drove away the Imperial garrison posted at Chittor, and like the chiefs and rulers of Amber and Sirohi, stopped paying tribute to Delhi.

Similarly, though Maldeo had been forced to retreat to the fortress of Siwana because of the consequences of the battle of Samel in 1544, he soon retrieved his position after Sher Shah's death. By July 1545 Maldeo had recovered his ancestral capital of Jodhpur, and uprooted many of Sher Shah's chain of garrisons and outposts from Marwar. Within the next eighteen months (i.e. by the end of 1546), the Rathore king managed to take back practically all that he had lost to Sher Shah.

Over the next few years, Maldeo re-embarked on his old policy of territorial expansion. In 1550, he seized Pokhran from its chief, Kanha. The same year, he sent his forces to take Phalodi from its Bhati chief (possibly Hamir, though according to some sources it was Hamir's younger son Dungar-Si). Though unsuccessful in his attempt to sequester the region of Barmer and Kotda, Maldeo remained undeterred. In 1552, Maldeo dispatched a large army with his minister (*dewan*), Pancholi Netsi, against Jaisalmer, and forced a tribute from the Rawal of Jaisalmer. The same year, Maldeo made an unsuccessful bid to retake the fort of Jalore from Malik Khan Pathan and his 'Bihari Pathans', who were well entrenched there. Next, it was the turn of Merta to face Maldeo's might.

Though Sher Shah had restored Biram to his Merta possessions after Samel, Biram Deo died in 1553. Immediately thereafter, Maldeo re-captured and fortified Merta. This time he was not fated to hold it for long. Biram's son and successor was Jaimal, who was later to make a place for himself in the annals of Mewar — and Rajasthan as a whole, with his heroic last stand at the siege of Chittor in 1568. Jaimal now took up arms and, with the help of Rao Kalyanmal of Bikaner, soon drove out the Marwar garrisons from Merta's territory, and established his own control over it. Maldeo had not done with Merta, though, and before long the oscillating fortunes of that fortress-town was to see further changes of hands yet again.

Around this time, one Haji Khan, a Pathan commander who had once been a slave of Sher Shah Suri, successfully established his hold over Ajmer and Nagaur. In 1556, Maldeo sent troops led by Devidas Jaitawat, the *thakur* of Bagri, against Haji Khan Pathan. The Jodhpur forces were outnumbered and forced to withdraw, however, as the cause of Haji Khan was openly supported by Mewar's Rana Udai Singh, as well as by Bikaner's Rao Kalyanmal. (The Mughal emperor had his hands full with other problems). Soon afterwards, serious differences arose between Udai Singh and Haji Khan. (Tradition ascribes the moot cause as rivalry over a dancer). This led Haji Khan to approach his erstwhile adversary, Rao Maldeo, for help against Rana Udai Singh of Mewar.

Maldeo's assessing eye had already judged the benefits of rendering help to Haji Khan at this juncture. Consequently, on 24 January 1557, the combined forces of Maldeo and Haji Khan met the army of Udai Singh of Mewar, who was assisted by Jaimal of Merta and his troops, at the battle of Harmoda. The Mewar-Merta combine was defeated, and on 27 January 1557, the well-fortified Merta found itself once more part of Maldeo's domain.

Even though Maldeo recovered much of his erstwhile dominion, he was never able to re-establish his former position. The long years of continuous warfare had debilitated his own strength, and exhausted his resources as well as troops. He was also not fully trusted by his neighbouring brother-princes, and thus relatively isolated. Further-more, following the accession of Akbar, son of the Mughal emperor, Humayun (who had returned from exile to re-occupy the throne of Delhi and Agra for a short while before his death), in 1556, a new dimension had been added to the political conditions of the subcontinent.

By 1557 Nagaur and Ajmer were in the hands of the Mughals. Not long afterwards, taking advantage of the frequent internecine battles between the rulers and chiefs of Rajasthan, Muhammad Kasim Khan, Emperor Akbar's *subedar* at Ajmer, despatched a force commanded by Sayyid Mahmud Baraha and Shah Quli Khan to attack Jaitaran. The chief of Jaitaran, Ratansi Udawat, appealed for help from Maldeo (his nominal overlord). This time Maldeo showed less prudence and perception in his

response and, recalling old grudges, opted not to help Ratansi. As a result, on 12 May 1558, Jaitaran was occupied by Mughal troops. Maldeo would soon rue this *fait accompli*.

In 1562, while Emperor Akbar halted at Sambhar (on his way to Ajmer), Jaimal of Merta sought an audience with Akbar and sought help in retaking Merta. Akbar — prompted in part perhaps, by a desire to ‘avenge’ the less-than-royal treatment accorded, in his hour of distress, to his father Humayun by Maldeo about a decade earlier — commanded Mirza Sharf-ud-din Hussain, the governor of Ajmer and Nagaur, to provide assistance to Jaimal. Mirza Sharf-ud-din Hussain led a suitably strong Mughal contingent against Merta. Though staunchly defended for Maldeo by a small Rathore force commanded by Jagmal and Devidas, Merta eventually fell to the Mughals. (Abul Fazl has compared the battle to ‘the story of Rustam’). Shortly afterwards, the area of Parbatsar (near Nagaur) was also annexed by Akbar.

The acquisition of Merta, Jaitaran and Parbatsar by Akbar’s forces marked a change in policy as far as Delhi/Agra and Rajasthan relations were concerned. (Ajmer was to remain an important centre, with a Mughal governor based there, and the surrounding areas would henceforth remain under direct Mughal control, as part of Ajmer *suba*). As part of what later historians have called Akbar’s ‘Rajput Policy’ — the choice of either accepting Mughal suzerainty as ‘allies’, or facing the might of the Imperial armies, was soon before the bulk of the kingdoms and chiefdoms that made up Rajasthan at the time. Marwar too faced this option. Some versions state that in 1562 Maldeo sent his son, Prince Chandrasen to Ajmer to have an interview with Akbar for entering into a treaty, but apparently the negotiations failed because the emperor, annoyed at the ‘disdainful bearing of the desert king’, insisted on the personal submission of Maldeo.

Around the same time, following his victories over Merta, Ajmer etc., Akbar’s commander Mirza Sharf-ud-din had raised the banner of rebellion. The emperor sent Hussain Quli Khan to deal with his seditious subordinate and to secure the recently acquired territories of Rajasthan for the Mughal Empire. Hussain Quli Khan occupied the fief of Mirza Sharf-ud-din and captured the forts of Ajmer and Merta. With the area thus secured, and the

Mughal conquest of areas like Jaitaran and Parbatsar complete, Akbar could contemplate sending troops to subjugate Maldeo and occupy Marwar. However, before the Mughal emperor put such a plan into practice, Marwar's doughty warrior-king died at Jodhpur on 7 November 1562.

Maldeo has been classed amongst the ablest of the Rathores to rule Marwar. In fact, local bardic traditions have eulogised him as the hero of fifty-two battles, master of fifty-eight *parganas* (districts), and builder and/or renovator, of numerous forts, palaces, temples and fortifications around *qasbas* and towns within his territory. For instance, Nagaur fort was repaired, as were the protective walls and ramparts at places like Jodhpur city, Nadol, Siwana, Bhadrajun, Satalmer, etc. Similarly, forts were improved, or in some cases built, at Pokhran, Malkot (Merta), Sojat, Raipur, Goondoch, Rian, Pipad, Kundal, Phalodi, Bitli (Ajmer), and Dunada. Additions and alterations were carried out within the forts of Jodhpur, Ajmer etc., and improvements made to the water-supply system at Ajmer's Taragarh fort. (One of Maldeo's wives, Rani Swaroop-Dey of the Jhala clan, built the Swaroop Sagar reservoir near Mandore — which is better known today as 'Bahu-ji ro Talab'). Art too had due patronage, and it was during the reign of Rao Maldeo that works like the Jain *Uttaradhyan-Sutta* and the Chokhala Mahal murals were executed.

Maldeo's contemporary chroniclers writing in Persian — like Nizamuddin in his *Tabaqat-i-Akbari* and Ferishta in his *Tarikh-i-Ferishta*, referred to him as 'the most powerful potentate in Hindustan'. At the height of his power, his sway extended almost up to Delhi and Agra, with his eastern frontiers touching Hindaun, Bayana, Fatehpur Sikri and Mewat, while in the other direction his territories extended well into the Sindh part of the Thar desert in the west and north-west, and up to Gujarat in the south-west. Maldeo is undoubtedly responsible for the vast territorial expansion of Marwar that took place during his reign, accompanied by the boost this gave the prestige of the kingdom. His qualities as a warrior and a diplomat were well recognised.

Among the less amiable aspects of his personality, though, was the suspicious nature — which Sher Shah was able to exploit fully at Samel! Maldeo was also overly ambitious (which has led to his being accused of

patricide). His attempt to centralise authority into his own hands created uncertainty amongst his fief-holders and nobles, besides leading to more than one breach with junior and collateral branches of the clan. The relations with Biram Deo and Jaimal of Merta, and with Jaitsi and Kalyanmal of Bikaner are cases in point.

After Maldeo's death, the succession to the throne of Marwar was not a peaceful one, as his sons competed against each other. Maldeo himself was partly responsible, in that he had designated his third son, Prince Chandrasen, as his heir, overlooking the claims of Prince Ram¹²¹, his first-born, as well as Prince Udai, the second eldest of his sons. Thus, when Chandrasen (r. 1562-1581 AD) became the next ruler of Marwar, his disgruntled brothers challenged and opposed his accession. Ram Singh, Udai Singh, and another brother, Raimal, encouraged unrest in various parts of Marwar. In 1562 Chandrasen defeated his brother Udai Singh at Lohawat, and followed this up by defeating his eldest brother, Ram Singh, at Nadol in 1563.

Rao Chandrasen's attempts to quell his brothers soon drove them into seeking favour with the Mughal emperor, Akbar. By this time, Akbar's 'Rajput Policy' was becoming increasingly operational, but Chandrasen was disinclined to acknowledge Mughal supremacy. However, in 1563 he did pay four lakh 'Pirojiya'¹²² as *peshkash* ('offering') in token acknowledgement of the Mughal emperor, but later retracted his 'submission'. Meanwhile, Prince Ram Singh had sought Imperial help through Hussain Quli Beg, the Imperial *hakim* of Nagaur. Thus, in 1563-64 Mughal forces occupied the fort and adjacent city of Jodhpur. (For a while, Jodhpur was handed over into the administrative charge of Raja Rai Singh of Bikaner. Thereafter too, for the next decade and more, Jodhpur city and fort was to remain under Imperial administrators. It was only in 1583 that it was restored by Emperor Akbar to Chandrasen's rival and brother, Prince Udai Singh — by that time better known as 'Mota Raja' Udai Singh).

Meanwhile, the beleaguered Rao Chandrasen quit Jodhpur and shifted the centre of his activities to Bhadrajun, from where he kept up his resistance against the Imperial forces. In November 1570 Chandrasen went from Bhadrajun to Nagaur, where the Mughal Emperor Akbar was holding

court. On November 15, the Rao attended Court at Nagaur (as did his estranged brothers, Ram and Udai Singh), in an attempt to patch up his differences with the Mughal Emperor. However, partially due to the efforts of his erstwhile rivals in the fraternal struggle for the throne of Marwar and others, and partly because Chandrasen himself was unwilling to accept Akbar's sovereignty, no lasting solution came out of the visit. Chandrasen's resistance to Mughal domination redoubled.

Soon afterwards, on 14 February 1571, a Mughal contingent led by Khan Kalan forced Chandrasen to evacuate Bhadrajun. Over the next few years, while Chandrasen continued to fight a losing battle, events in the neighbouring kingdom of Mewar resulted in the battle of Haldighati in June 1576 and ended with the defeat of Rana Pratap of Mewar. Partly to check Pratap's attempts at finding support from like-minded neighbours, the Imperial armies subsequently redoubled their activities against the rulers of Marwar, as well as Sirohi and Jalore too.

In the interim, in 1575 Rawal Har Raj Bhati of Jaisalmer besieged the fortress of Pokhran — which was one of the few defensive strongholds still left to Chandrasen. Peace terms were negotiated, and Chandrasen agreed to give possession of Pokhran to the Bhatias in return for a sum of money (four lakh '*phadiya*').

In 1576 the Mughal emperor deputed a powerful army consisting of the contingents of Shah Quli Mahram, Bikaner's Rai Singh, Keshav Das etc., under the command of Shahbaz Khan to chastise Chandrasen, who had made Siwana his base and strengthened its fortification. (Earlier that year, in March-April 1576, the rulers of Dungarpur and Banswara had shown themselves unwilling to assist Rao Chandrasen of Marwar against Akbar). Kalla, a grandson of Maldeo, who was at Sojat, was dislodged and pursued by the Mughal forces, till he eventually accepted Mughal authority. Though this reduced the strength of Chandrasen, the Marwar chief despatched his forces, under the command of Rawal Sukh Rai, assisted by Suja Devidas, against the Imperial contingents. Chandrasen's forces were defeated by the contingents of Bikaner's chief Rai Singh, under the command of Gopaldas.

After losing Siwana, Chandrasen passed the remaining five years of his life as a wanderer without a capital city and a throne, but with his indomitable courage undimmed by adversities. He sought assistance in vain from other fellow-rulers, and for a while spent time in Sirohi¹²³, Dungarpur, Banswara and Mewar, trying to garner strength. His armed resistance a thing of the past with the consecutive losses of Jodhpur¹²⁴, Bhadrachal and Siwana, Chandrasen resorted to pillaging activities in the areas acquired by the Imperial armies. This, both, spread disorder, and also helped to make up his economic losses. Among these were his raids against Asarlai and Bhinai in 1576. He even threatened the vicinity of Jodhpur. He is reputed to have created 'terror' in the Sojat area during the monsoon season of 1580, and was nearly successful in his attempt at wresting it back from Mughal control. Recovering Marwar was, however, an impossible dream for the Rao by this stage, and in early January 1581, Chandrasen, having crossed the Saran hills area, died near the Sachiyayi pass in the Piploda hills, far from the capital city of Jodhpur founded by his ancestor, Jodha.

The strength and successes of the Mughal army, and the lack of coordination between various anti-Imperial Rajput kingdoms during and after 1576 were important features in determining the fate of Chandrasen's resistance against Emperor Akbar. In addition, another of the main reasons for Chandrasen's eventual lack of success was his failure to woo back his recalcitrant brothers and other clansmen, and their supporters, from the Imperial camp, where they held positions of influence and power. Furthermore, his pillaging activities in Mughal-occupied Marwar after 1576 caused hardship to his own people of Marwar and detracted from the popular support available to him until that period.

Mughal-administered governance remained in place for another couple of years following the death of Chandrasen. (Of Chandrasen's sons, Ugrasen and Ashkaran had died fighting each other. Another son, Rai Singh had accepted service with the Imperial army. He was amongst those killed in combat in 1583 at the battle of Datani in the territory of Sirohi). In 1583, the emperor formally recognised Maldeo's son and one of Chandrasen's surviving brothers, Udai Singh (also known as 'Mota Raja') as the ruler of Marwar (r. 1583-1595), and granted him a portion of the *pargana* of Jodhpur as *jagir*.

The accession of Udai Singh marked a new turn in the political history of Jodhpur, since the new Rao openly acknowledged the supremacy of the Mughal emperor. Rao Udai Singh had been in Emperor Akbar's service since 1570, and as a *mansabdar* (holder of a *mansab* rank) of 1,000 *zat* at the Imperial court, Udai Singh had already served on campaigns in the Deccan and elsewhere prior to his gaining the *gaddi* of Marwar. This state of affairs — common to most other kingdoms that had accepted Mughal overlordship — continued afterwards too.

With his acceptance of Mughal suzerainty, 'Mota Raja' Udai Singh also became part of the evolving pattern of the special relationship between the Mughal emperor and the Rajput rulers. Bhadani¹²⁵ notes that the rulers of Marwar, called *zamindars* at the Mughal court, were confirmed in possession of their ancestral domains, though the Mughal emperors reserved the right to control succession; and that, in addition, an 'offering' (*peshkash*) was paid by the rajas of Jodhpur on certain occasions. (Rao Chandrasen, the first ruler to accept Mughal suzerainty in 1563, had paid four lakh *pirojiya* as *peshkash*. Later, Raja Jaswant Singh, upon his accession, made Emperor Shah Jahan a similar *peshkash*). With Marwar's submission to the Mughals, the ancestral territory held by the ruler was treated as a special kind of land-holding known as *watan jagir*.

The estimated revenue (*jama*) of the area (more or less arbitrarily fixed) was adjusted against the salary of the ruler's *mansab* as a noble of the Mughal Empire. As *watan jagir* (or '*des-ra-pargana*' — as the *watan jagir* was also called), Marwar was generally immune from transfer. Other *jagirs* granted to Udai Singh — and other Rajput rulers — in lieu of the balance of their salary were designated as *tankhwa jagir*. Over time, the revenue from such *jagirs* (depending on the *mansab* held by the concerned ruler) could sometimes be more than that from the ancestral domain or the *des-ra-pargana*¹²⁶

As ruler of Marwar, Udai Singh joined Imperial forces in various expeditions. These included military campaigns against Rao Surtan of Sirohi and other chiefs of Rajasthan, in expeditions against Gujarat, and against the groups that challenged the Imperial might along the frontiers of the Mughal Empire. Around 1589, Marwar's 'Mota Raja' occupied the fort

of Siwana, defeating a nephew called Kalyandas. At the end of July 1592 the emperor deputed 'Mota Raja' Udai Singh to look after the administration and affairs at Lahore, while he himself proceeded to Kashmir. The following year the 'Mota Raja' took possession of Jasol (Mallani), and also assisted Prince Daniyal in the Deccan. In 1595 Udai Singh died at Lahore.

In the interim, in keeping with Akbar's attempts at closer ties with the Rajput rulers, a matrimonial alliance was arranged linking the Marwar Rathores with the Imperial family in 1586. This was the marriage of Rao Udai Singh's daughter, Princess Mani Bai — better known later as 'Jodha Bai', with the Mughal royal prince, Salim (later to become Emperor Jahangir)¹²⁷. The emperor gave this princess, also referred to as Jagat Gosain, the title of 'Taj-Bibi'. The area known as Taj Ganj in Agra was apparently named in her honour. 'Jodha Bai' became the mother of the future emperor, Shah Jahan¹²⁸.

The alliance enabled 'Mota Raja' Udai Singh in recovering almost all the tracts formerly held by his father, Maldeo. A notable exception, though, was Ajmer, which was by now firmly established as a favoured Imperial base. Over the years, Udai Singh also obtained several rich districts in Malwa, and a *mansab* of 1,500 *zat* and 1,500 *sawar*. (And, at the time of his death, he held the *parganas* of Jodhpur (with nineteen *tappas*), Siwana, Phalodi, Sojat, Satalmer and part of Jaitaran.

Meanwhile, the occupation of Marwar during Chandrasen's period, and the temporary Imperial control over its administration, had already influenced the administrative system of that state (as it had in many of the other contemporary kingdoms and chiefdoms of Rajasthan). The Mughal *faujdar*, for instance, had introduced changes in the revenue system in some of the districts of Marwar. These were along the lines of the Mughal pattern. Further administrative reforms followed during 'Mota' Raja Udai Singh's reign, under his chief advisor, Govind Das Bhati, who was fully conversant with Akbar's administrative system. The task was continued by Govind Das Bhati into the reign of Udai Singh's successor, Sur Singh (r. 1595-1619).

Under this reformed set-up, the highest administrative functionary of the kingdom was the *pradhan* (premier), who acted as the principal adviser to the ruler. The *pradhan* was, theoretically, entrusted with the entire civil and military administration. In time, the office acquired a hereditary nature and, for a while, the position was held by successive chiefs of Pokhran and frequently thereafter by the chiefs of Ahuwa. As these men held fief-lands and were *jagirdars*, they did not receive any additional salary.

The official next in importance was the *dewan* or chief minister. The post of *Dewan* was not hereditary, but even so, in time, the *dewan* came to be from what constituted Marwar's rather elite *Mutsaddie* group, who were mainly drawn from the Oswal Jain business community. As there was always a rivalry between the ruler and the *pradhan*, the ruler relied more on his non-Rajput *dewan* than on the *pradhan*. The *dewan* therefore, gradually assumed all the powers of the *pradhan*. Other important officials included the *bakshi* — or military commander-in-chief, who was the chief treasury officer, besides arranging for the care of wounded soldiers etc.; and the *kotwal*, who was responsible for general policing and the maintenance of law and order. There was also a *vakil*, who was a state's representative-cum-agent at the Imperial Mughal court (and later on at Ajmer and Abu, when 'paramountcy' lay with the British). All negotiations between a Rajput state and the main central authority of the time were conducted through a state's *vakil*. In addition, fort-commanders — known as *qiledars* by this time, remained important in the administrative hierarchy. Also important was the official looking after the Department of Customs (*sayar*), who was known as the *daroga sayar*. Besides these, there were officials and clerks looking after the thirty-six *karkhanas* that dealt with different aspects of Marwar's administration. (The pattern was fairly similar — with perhaps marginal differences — in almost all the contemporary kingdoms of Rajasthan during this period).

One of the important measures introduced by Govind Das Bhati was the reorganisation of the Marwar court, and the establishment of the supremacy of the ruler over the *jagirdars*. The appointments made to important posts from amongst the Mutsaddies further eroded the authority of *jagirdars*. In common with most of the kingdoms of Rajasthan, over time large tracts of Marwar too had come to be held by the fief-holders, or

*jagirdars*¹²⁹. Since mostly fellow-kinsmen/ clansmen claiming direct kinship with the ruling family held the *jagirs*, the *jagirdars* traditionally looked upon the ruler as their equal in descent from a common ancestor, and as the first among equals by virtue of his position, during the pre-Mughal period. Traditionally, it was the *jagirdars* who decided all questions of war and peace and even gave opinions on matters of succession to the throne. They exercised a predominant influence in the state as generals and administrators. In their own *jagirs*, though technically holding merely the right to collect land-revenues, the *jagirdars* enjoyed unfettered administrative and judicial powers, including that of imposing and collecting taxes.

Under Mughal influence, the situation changed to some extent. The ruler could now look forward to the Mughals for help whenever the *jagirdars* defied him. Thus, following the Mughal pattern Udai Singh introduced the system of asking the nobles of the state to pay *peshkash* or tribute. Henceforth, on the death of a *jagirdar* his *jagir* was deemed lapsed to the state. This would be restored to the dead fief-holder's successor only after the latter had had the *patta* (or land-deed) of the *jagir* renewed on payment of a prescribed fee called *peshkash*. The levy was later on termed as *Hukum-nama*. The *jagirdars* were also required to pay the state some sort of annual tax on the basis of *rekh* (or revenues of a *jagir*, as calculated by the state). They were also required to be present in the capital along with their *jamiats*, or irregular force, as directed by the ruler from time to time.

As far as district-level administration was concerned, Marwar was divided into twenty-three *parganas* each in charge of a *hakim*. The *hakim* headed the local revenue, civil and military administration of the district entrusted to his charge. In keeping with the last-named, these *hakims* were generally expected to lead military expeditions, when called upon to do so. Each *hakim* was assisted by a *naib* (deputy) *Hakim*, as well as subordinate functionaries like *qanungos* (kanungos), *patwaris*, *tappedars* (who were in charge of the land sub-units known as *Tappa*) and *sabanas* etc. While local Panchayats disposed of petty crimes and other cases, more serious cases were decided by the *hakim*. An appeal against his decision was heard by the *daroga adalat*. The second appeal was heard by the *dewan*. The final court of appeal — and, indeed, the supreme judicial authority — vested with the ruler of the kingdom, who could hear any case and decide the matter in any manner he liked.

One of the innovations introduced at this time was the establishment of a communication network that linked Marwar with the Imperial system. This was achieved through the setting up of messenger-points or *dak chowkis* at several places across Marwar. Elsewhere too the Mughal Empire had seen to the establishment of a system of *dak chowkis* or post stations along the major routes connecting important towns and cities, which ensured a quick transmission of news, official papers, commands and queries transmitted¹³⁰. The routes coincided often with important trade routes as well, and were flanked by travellers' rest-houses or serais, wells and avenues of trees.

The *dak chowkis* were set-up at distances of between three to seven *kos*, with the average distance between the *dak chowkis* working out to be about four and a quarter *kos* (just over ten miles). Mughal and Marwar documents list various *dak chowkis* along the Agra-Ahmedabad route that came within the purview of Marwar's responsibility. The *Pancholi Bahi* of 1646-47 and the *Miral-i-Ahmadi* indicate that the first post of Marwar from Ahmedabad was Bargaon in the Jalore area, while travelling from the Ajmer and Agra direction it was Alaniawas in *pargana* Merta that was the first. The route passed through Bargaon, Bhinmal, Jalore, Dundara, Pipar

and Merta. Some villages are recorded as lying on the *Patshahi Marg* (Imperial Route) according to sources like the *Jalore Vigat*¹³¹

Records show that there were a large number of wells along the route for the travellers and officials; and, as grazing grounds were a necessity in the days of horses and camels, grazing grounds, or *jor* were found in almost all the villages enroute¹³². (In 1633 Peter Mundy noticed hunting grounds too near Pipar). Safety and protection along the imperial route vested with Imperial officers and local *zamindars/ jagirdars*. The latter were expected to provide watch-and-ward escort and protection along the imperial highways, and in case of theft, ensure the recovery of the stolen goods.

Nainsi's writings make clear that the Rathore rulers were strict about maintaining law and order along the imperial highway running through their territory, and had adopted the Mughal style of handing over responsibility of safety and escort to the local officials and *bhomiyas*¹³³. Recovery of stolen property or payment of compensation in lieu thereof was the obligation of those officials in whose jurisdiction the theft had occurred. Nainsi records how an attempt of a small Mewari contingent to rob a *qatar* (camel caravan) enroute from Ahmedabad to Agra, as it traversed Marwar, was foiled by an alert Marwari contingent in 1612 ¹³⁴.

In 1595, 'Mota Raja' Udai Singh was succeeded by his son, Sur Singh (r. 1595-1619). By dint of his military talents and service, Sur Singh had previously already earned for himself the title of 'Sawai Raja' during the lifetime of his father, and held a *mansab* of 2,000 *zat* and *sawar*. This was subsequently raised to 5,000 *zat* and 3,300 *sawar*, and still later to 5,000 *zat* and 5,000 *sawar*. Sur Singh distinguished himself in warfare on behalf of the empire. Among other things, he campaigned against Rao Surtan of Sirohi, and served for many years in the Deccan and Gujarat under the Mughal princes Murad and Daniyal¹³⁵.

For these services he was granted five fiefs in the Deccan, and one in the province of Gujarat. In addition, the *parganas* assigned to him as *watan jagir*, and in lieu of his salary, were Jodhpur, Siwana, Sojat, Sanchore, Jalore, Phalodi, Jaitaran and half of the *pargana* of Merta. In 1596 the

emperor gave the charge of Gujarat to Sur Singh. Part of the period that Sur Singh occupied the *gaddi* of Marwar/Jodhpur extended into the reign of Emperor Jahangir (r. 1605-1628) and shall be taken up later.

THE STATE OF BIKANER

Rao Bika, the founder of Bikaner, was followed by his short-reigning eldest son, Nara (r. 1504-1505), who died within a year of his accession. The younger brother, Lunkaran (r. 1505-1526), succeeded him. The earlier part of the reign of Rao Lunkaran — especially the years between 1509 and 1513 — was spent in fighting against various neighbours. His adversaries included the Chauhans of Dadreva, whose territory was annexed after a prolonged seven months of fighting; the Kyam-Khanis of Fatehpur, from whom Lunkaran wrested one hundred and twenty villages; and the Chayals of Chayalwara, who lost four hundred and forty villages to Bikaner. (The Chauhan hero Goga-ji, who came to be regarded as semi-divine by local Hindus and Muslims alike within his lifetime and is still highly venerated by all sections of society, with an annual fair being held in his memory at Gogamedi, belonged to the Dadreva Chauhan family of northern Rajasthan). Lunkaran was also successful in seizing Didwana, Baggar and Singhana, besides repulsing an attack against Bikaner by the chief of Nagaur, Mohammad Khan, in 1513. These battles and skirmishes enabled Lunkaran to add several towns, tracts and villages to the kingdom of Bikaner.

Lunkaran also led a successful expedition against the kingdom of Jaisalmer. Jaitsi Gait Singh II) of Jaisalmer was defeated and forced to sue for peace. Lunkaran exacted a heavy indemnity from Jaitsi II, before the fort of Jaisalmer was returned to the Bhati ruler. In addition, a matrimonial alliance between the two kingdoms was entered into, with Jaitsi's daughter marrying Lunkaran's son.

Lunkaran became renowned not merely for his military exploits, but also his patronage of scholars, grant of aid to the needy and encouragement to charitable works. Bithu Sujo, who composed *Rao-Jaitsi-ro-Chhanda* around c. 1533-34 at the court of Lunkaran's successor, jaitsi (Jait Singh),

and Jayasoma, in his *Karamchandra-vanshot-kirtanakam-kavyam* datable to c. AD 1650, have both showered praise on Lunkaran for his abilities, good governance and patronage to art and literature. They also applaud him as a charitable and caring sovereign, and as a man of culture. During Lunkaran's reign the capital city of Bikaner was acknowledged for its civilised court, to which many chiefs came to pledge their loyalty.

The *khyat* of Dayaldas tells us that in order to guard the frontiers of Bikaner against enemies, Rao Lunkaran maintained outposts of garrisons along the borders of the kingdom. Constantly striving to extend the frontiers of his kingdom, Lunkaran met his end in March 1526 on the battlefield of Dhosi, three miles from walls of Narnaul, fighting the forces of the Nawab of Narnaul and his allies. With Lunkaran perished three of his sons, including Pratap-Si and Bair-Si, and many clansmen — among them Karam-Si, one of the sons of Rao Jodha of Marwar.

Lunkaran's heroism is immortalised in folklore. Four centuries later, Luigi Pio Tessitori (1887-1919), an Italian-born Indologist and historian based at Bikaner between 1915-1919, consulted the traditional annals and described Lunkaran's final moments dramatically, noting how: "...like a wounded boar, he [Rao Lunkaran] throws himself into the middle of the enemy army and falls transfixed by a hundred spears".

Rao Lunkaran's son and successor, Jaitsi — as the then prevalent form of Jait Singh was commonly rendered, was crowned in the spring of 1526, shortly before north India witnessed the momentous First Battle of Panipat in which the forces of the Delhi Sultanate's Ibrahim Lodi were beaten by Babur. Jaitsi (r. 1526-1542), was successful in suppressing the chiefs of Dronpur and the Johiyas. In 1527 he occupied the strong fortress of Bhatner. When called upon, he willingly provided help to the Amber Kachchwaha Prince Sanga (the founder of the township of Sanganer), and to his cousin, Rao Ganga of Marwar¹³⁶. His generosity did not extend to allowing Rao Ganga to occupy Bhatner, though, which is what the Marwar ruler attempted unsuccessfully in 1534!

While Jaitsi had been consolidating the might of Bikaner, the Mughal dynasty established itself as master of much of northern India. Soon it was

Bikaner's turn to face the escalating might of the Mughals. In 1538, Prince Kamran, a brother of the Mughal emperor Humayun, took Bhatner¹³⁷ and personally led the siege of Bikaner. Jaitsi and his forces put up a strong defence, which forced back the Mughal armies from the very walls of Bikaner. Bikaner's legends assert that the victory was ensured through the divine intervention of their patron-deity, Karni-ji. The traditional balladeers sing of how it seemed to the Mughal army as if the battlefield was occupied not by Bikaneri soldiers but thousands of Charan women.

The besieging Mughal army retreated in a hurry, fleeing in the direction of Lahore to the north-west. So demoralised was the Mughal force, and so urgent was its desire to quit the region, that when Prince Kamran's royal umbrella fell on the ground, near the village of Chotriya, no one stopped to pick it up and return it to the Mughal prince. In thanksgiving, Rao Jaitsi bestowed the village of Chotriya upon the Charans from whose family Karni-ji hailed. (The regal Mughal umbrella, a memento of a long-ago Bikaner victory, is reputedly still preserved at Chotriya).

Jaitsi's reign saw a period of prosperity for Bikaner. Contemporary records tell us that Jaitsi provided protection and prosperity to the people of his state, and that during times of famine ensured food etc. and extended charitable aid to the affected populace. Simultaneously, long-distance trade flourished and, since various trade routes between Kabul and northern India passed through this area, it had its inevitable effect on the prosperity of Bikaner. A translation of the old records led Tessitori to provide a graphic description of Bikaner at this time. Here one apparently saw "...so much silk that you really wonder if this is Jangal country or not rather Kashmir. Everywhere beautiful women full of grace and modesty, everywhere fierce looking warriors used to handling the sword, everywhere stables of horses, everywhere gold and all kinds of wealth. And how beautiful the city with its rich bazaar crowded by merchants, lords of lakhs, its neat balconies, its unconquerable ramparts, its impassable moat, its tanks brimming with water."

Meanwhile, relations between Bikaner and its old parent-state of Marwar had deteriorated. Early in 1542, Rao Ganga's successor, the famous warrior-king Maldeo, besieged Bikaner. Jaitsi was killed at Suwa, near

Bikaner, after a gallant resistance, and Maldeo annexed his capital, along with a sizeable part of the kingdom of Bikaner. Jaitsi's sons, Kalyanmal (r. 1542-1574) and Bhim, and various other surviving family members quit Bikaner for the safety of Sirsa. From here they unsuccessfully attempted to dislodge Maldeo's troops from Bikaner. They later sought refuge at Sher Shah's court, where, as sworn enemies of Maldeo, Kalyanmal and his entourage encouraged Sher Shah in his plans against the powerful Rao Maldeo of Marwar.

In 1544, following the battle of Samel (already discussed earlier), Sher Shah assisted the return of Kalyanmal to the *gaddi* of Bikaner. A few years later, Rao Kalyanmal made his peace with the Mughal empire too, when, following the death of Sher Shah in 1545, Humayun returned to his crown and empire briefly in 1555, before his own early death, after which Akbar became the next Mughal emperor in 1556. On 3 November 1570, Kalyanmal attended the Mughal emperor Akbar's court at Nagaur, accompanied by an entourage that included his heir, Prince Rai Singh, and accepted Mughal suzerainty. Like many of his Rajput fellow-rulers, the Bikaner ruler later cemented his association with the marriage of his daughter to the Mughal emperor.

This was not the only matrimonial alliance with the Imperial family. The *Dalpat-Vilas* corroborates that two nieces of Rao Kalyanmal (whose names are given as Bhanumati, daughter of Kalyanmal's brother Bhimraj, and Raj Kanwar, daughter of another brother, Kanha), were also married to Akbar. In the next generation, Kalyanmal's grand-daughter, the daughter of Raja Rai Singh of Bikaner, married Prince Salim, later known as Emperor Jahangir.

Both Kalyanmal, and subsequently his son and successor, Rai Singh — who was the first ruler of Bikaner to bear the title of 'Maharaja', accepted Akbar's policy of friendship and co-operation. This stood the kingdom in good stead over the next two centuries. Among other things, it ensured a degree of external protection, association with the economic prosperity etc. of the Mughal Empire, and augmentation of the state treasury through wealth gained from participation in Mughal military campaigns and expeditions. It also saw the awarding of high ranks and

honours, including *mansabdaris*, to various Bikaner rulers and their kinsmen by the Mughal court.

Besides the capital city of Bikaner — already a flourishing city along a major trade-route, a major commercial market eventually thrived at Rajgarh, situated as it was, at the junction of several major caravan trade-routes. The trade routes helped in the prosperity of the urban settlements that lay along the route; while in turn, the markets that sprang up along the route encouraged further economic transactions through those market-centres. One of the major routes that deeply influenced the Bikaner area was the Delhi to Kabul route. This passed through Hissar etc. and then ran through Rajgarh in Bikaner, where it forked into two, one leading to Bikaner via Rini and the other to Pali via Churu, Ratangarh and Sujangarh. One route carried on to link Nagaur, Phalodi, and Jodhpur. Yet another trade-route, according to the *Bahi Talab Tayari* text, went from Bikaner via Pugal and Maujgarh to Bahawalpur and beyond, while the Delhi to Multan route too went via Bikaner and Derawar — the much-contested fortress-town built by the Bhatias.

The kingdom of Bikaner was also connected with places in the south and southeast of Rajasthan, for archival records tell us that horse traders from Kabul and Qandhar passed through Bikaner and Marwar territories while going to Kota. Records also state that the Bikaner to Mewar route went via Pushkar and Nathdwara. Amber (and subsequently Jaipur) was also connected with Bikaner via Maroth and Nagaur (and beyond with Amarkot in Sindh). More precise details are often available from *khyats* etc. for certain routes in which lesser known local places are also mentioned. For example, the route a later ruler of Bikaner (Gaj Singh) took from Bikaner, when travelling for his marriage to a Jaisalmer princess, passed through Devayat, Nakheda, Sirod, Bap, Khera, Ramdevra, Odhani, Chanan and Bhatdara-talab according to the *khyat* of Banki Das. The travellers returned by a different route, which passed through Lathi, Pokhran, Phalodi, Jambha, Chaknand and Bidasar. The *Sanad Parwana Bahi* of Marwar mentions a route connecting Bikaner to Kishangarh. We also read of intra-kingdom routes, including those linking Bikaner to Rajgarh via Rini and Churu; Bikaner to Anupgarh and Deshnoke; and Bikaner with Nohar.

Trade, trade routes and rich market centres were important not just in the case of Bikaner, but for Rajasthan as a whole¹³⁸. Among the goods transported through the region were caravan-loads of ivory, copper, dates, gum-arabic, borax, coconuts, silk, chintzes, muslin, shawls, sandalwood, camphor, dyes, drugs, spices, dried fruits, cumin seeds, dyed blankets, potash and salt. In western Rajasthan it was becoming customary for the merchandise to be placed under the escort or ‘guardianship’ of the Charans (besides the presence of Rajputs etc). The Charans held the reputation of defending the merchandise entrusted to their charge through sword and shield if necessary; or else, if outnumbered, by threatening to take, or even taking, their own life. This act of suicide was known as performing *chandi*. Given the position of Charans in the socio-cultural system of the time, the wilful killing of a Charan was equated with the equally heinous and unforgivable crime of killing a Brahmin. As such, if a Charan did commit suicide over any violation of the caravans under his custody, the marauder-robbers responsible for the suicide were deemed to have earned the sin of a Charan’s death, with all its post-life connotations of hell-fire and damnation.

Kalyanmal’s successor, Rai Singh (r. 1574-1612), born on *Sawan badi* 12, VS 1551 (20 July 1541), was to see service with two Mughal emperors — namely, Akbar and Jahangir. Possessing his share of ability and leadership qualities, Rai Singh eventually came to be styled as *Maharajadhiraj*. He was counted amongst the ablest of Emperor Akbar’s military generals, and participated in, as well as led, several campaigns. Besides distinguishing himself on the battlefield, Rai Singh is equally well-remembered in local and regional tales for his munificence, wisdom and bravery¹³⁹.

During the lifetime of his father, Rai Singh had distinguished himself in several Imperial campaigns, including against the Pathan chief Haji Khan, who had occupied Nagaur after being dislodged from Narnaul. In 1572-73, the emperor decided to assign the administration of Jodhpur to Rai Singh. The assignment was an act of tactical strategy by the emperor. One of the motivating factors for this step, as far as Emperor Akbar was concerned, was to counter the continued opposition of Mughal authority by Marwar’s Rao Chandrasen and Mewar’s Rana Pratap, and the attitude of

Rao Surtan of Sirohi, and Taj Khan of Jalore. Another was undoubtedly the deteriorating situation in Malwa, where the Mirza brothers were challenging Akbar's writ. Gujarat too seemed to be heading the same way, and Akbar may have felt that placing Jodhpur in hands loyal to the empire would ensure the safety of supply-routes, additional lines of supplies, and help — if need be, for any Imperial expeditions bound for Gujarat. (*Khyats* indicate that Jodhpur remained under Rai Singh's administration for three years, during which time various villages were endowed to Brahmans, Charans and Bhats. Grant records suggest that Nagaur remained under Rai Singh till 1588).

Meanwhile, Rai Singh also participated in the Gujarat expeditions of 1573. At that time, 'rebels' headed by Ikhtiyar-ul-Mulk and supported by Raja Narayan Das of Idar (father-in-law of Rana Pratap), besieged the 'Khan-i-Azam' in the fort of Ahmedabad. Resolving to take the field personally, Akbar sent ahead a strong advance guard, which included Sujaat Khan, Bhagwant Das of Amber and Prince Rai Singh of Bikaner. Rai Singh distinguished himself in the resultant battle. Thereafter, the Mughal forces turned their attention towards the Mirza brothers. Defeated at the battle of Sarnal, and hounded from their erstwhile bases, Ibrahim Mirza and his younger brother, Masud, reached Nagaur and besieged the fort there. The fort was on the verge of capitulation when Prince Rai Singh, Marwar's Ram Singh and Mirak Kolabi reached Nagaur. Ibrahim Mirza was surrounded near Khatauli but managed to escape, eventually finding his way to the hills of the Punjab. The same year (1573), Akbar went to Gujarat to suppress the rebellious activities of the governor of Ahmedabad, Mirza Mohammad Hussain. Bikaner's Prince Rai Singh also accompanied him. Hussain Mirza was taken prisoner, delivered over the charge of Rai Singh, and later executed.

Some of the other campaigns in which Rai Singh participated were against fellow-Rajput rulers — including Rao Chandrasen of Marwar (1574, 1576), and Rao Surtan of Sirohi (1576-1581). The Bikaneri forces were sent on many other Imperial expeditions, including against Kabul (1581), and Bengal (1584). In 1585, when the Baluchis revolted against the Mughal emperor, Ismail Quli Khan and Raja Rai Singh of Bikaner were deputed to crush the revolt, and Rai Singh played a prominent role in

making the Baluch chieftains accept Mughal supremacy. In 1592, Mirza Abdur Rahim 'Khan-i-Khana' was deputed, along with Bikaner's Prince Dalpat Singh and Rawal Bhim Singh (r. 1577-1613) of Jaisalmer, against Jani Beg of Thatta. When reinforcements became necessary, the Mughal emperor deputed Bikaner's Raja Rai Singh to assist the forces under the command of the Khan-i-Khana. Rai Singh saw further Imperial service in the Deccan, and in 1593 he was among the Imperial generals deputed to that region under the command of the Mughal royal princes Daniyal and Murad. Rai Singh along with Khan-i-Khana assisted Prince Murad in the expedition. (Subsequently, it seems that Rai Singh did not attend the Mughal court for three to four years, despite repeated summons from the emperor.)

In September 1605, while Akbar was on his deathbed, and the claims of Prince Salim and his son, Khusrau, were being upheld by rival groups of supporters at Court, Salim sent Rai Singh a *nishan* (written message), asking the Bikaner ruler to come to the court. Rai Singh did so, and thereafter remained firm in his commitment to Prince Salim. The decision proved beneficial since the latter soon succeeded to the Mughal throne as Emperor Jahangir.

(At the time of Prince Khusrau's revolt Jahangir assigned Rai Singh the duty of escorting the Mughal harem, but Rai Singh left his royal charges at Mathura and went to Bikaner without the permission of Emperor Jahangir. He later obtained a pardon for this action through the intervention of Amir-ul-Umra and Sharif Khan).

Contemporaneous records suggest that Rai Singh of Bikaner enjoyed a very high position at the Imperial Mughal court due to his valour and personal qualities¹⁴⁰. There are suggestions that he was perhaps second only to Man Singh of Amber. He was also connected by marriage with the Mughal emperors. His sister and two cousins had married the Mughal Emperor Akbar during the lifetime of Kalyanmal, and in 1586 Rai Singh's own daughter was married to Prince Salim (later to reign as Emperor Jahangir).

It was said of Bikaner's Raja Rai Singh that 'his saddle is his throne' — a reflection of the fact that this ruler spent much of his life far from the land of his birth, taking part in innumerable military campaigns. As a result of all his successes on the battlefield, the doughty warrior received various honours and gifts, including *parganas* (districts) like Nagaur, besides being eventually elevated to a *mansab* of 5,000 *zat* and *sawar* during the reign of Jahangir. Despite the fact that the Raja spent most of his life away on Imperial service he was not negligent of the administration of his own state. In this Karam Chand Bachhawat, his trusted Jain *pradhan*, aided him. He asserted control over his nobles and local feudatories to ensure overall peace in the kingdom. The incursive activities of neighbours like Bhatias, Johiyas, Baluchis were also kept in check.

The Bikaner Inscription of c. AD 1593, composed by the Jain *Muni* Jayta, provides a valuable record in eulogy (*prashasti*) form of Rai Singh's reign. It also lists the exploits of Rai Singh's ancestors. A patron of poets, Charans, *kyat* writers, and intellectuals, Rai Singh's court attracted scores of writers who produced works of high repute. Some of them wrote commentaries on earlier Sanskrit texts. The Maharaja was himself a poet, writer and a scholar of Sanskrit, who is known to have authored the *Ratnamala*. He also wrote the *Rai-Singh-Mabotsao* (concerning the treatment of diseases) in Sanskrit, and translated a Sanskrit text on astrology and astronomy called the *Jyotish Ratnakar* into Hindi under the title of *Bal Bodhini*.

In addition, Rai Singh has been praised by the writer Jayasoma, in his *Karamchandra-Vanshotkirtanakam-Kavyam*, datable to c. AD 1650, for his innumerable acts of charity to help the poor and needy, as also his magnanimity towards his enemies. He was also upheld for his tolerance and respect for followers of faiths other than his own. (For instance, not only were new Jain temples constructed and old ones repaired during Rai Singh's reign, but tradition holds that upon learning that many Jain metal statues, garnered from Sirohi by Tursam Khan, were being melted down by the Khan, the Bikaner ruler intervened. He is said to have brought the statues away. According to popular belief, these are still lying in underground chambers underneath Bikaner's Chintamani temple).

Rai Singh's substantial income from his Mughal *jagirs* was utilised in part in providing relief works for his kingdom's drought and famine affected areas. He launched public works during non-calamitous times too, but due to his being absent from his state much of the time, works in this direction were fewer. Contributions in the field of architecture during Rai Singh's reign include the famed Junagarh Fort of Bikaner. This fort was constructed outside the city at a distance of 300 yards from the *Kot Darwaza* ('Kot Gate'). The entrance consists of two main gates. The main entrance is called 'Karanpole'. Built basically on indigenous lines, the fort also reflects the influence of the Mughal style.

In the tradition of their clan (and most battle-loving Rajputs), Rai Singh's brother, Prince Prithviraj, popularly known as Peethal, also actively sought and achieved recognition as a great warrior. He was awarded the fiefdom of Gagron in recognition of his feats in the Imperial campaign against Kabul and the north-western territories. In addition to his skills as a warrior, Peethal is regarded as one of the most renowned poets and scholars of his era too. Peethal's epic poem, *Veli Krishna Rukmini ri*, composed in the Dingal language, remains an acknowledged masterpiece of Rajasthani literature. Another of Peethal's compositions is the *Bhagvat-ra-Duha*.

Equally at home on the battlefield and in the council chamber, Peethal is said to have been one of the famous 'nine gems', or *nav-ratnas*, who graced Emperor Akbar's court. Rajasthan's tradition holds that mourning the loss of three of his closest associates — the minister Birbal, the court-musician Tansen and Prince Peethal — Akbar composed the following couplet:

*Peethal so majlis gayee, Tansen so raga
Hansibo-ramibo-bolibo, gayo Birbal saath*

(which may be loosely translated as:

“With the death of Peethal have gone the pleasures of the '*majlis*' [gathering], with Tansen have departed melody and music and '*ragas*'; and with the passing of Birbal have gone laughter, good company and conversation.”

Ram Singh, another brother of Rai Singh and Peethal, also distinguished himself and was granted a *mansab* rank by Akbar. Rai Singh continued to serve under Akbar's successor, Jahangir. On the first anniversary of Jahangir's accession, Rai Singh's *mansab* was raised from 4000 to 5000. In 1605 the Bikaner ruler was posted to Burhanpur as governor for the second time (the first having been in 1586). It was here that he died on 22 January 1612.

THE STATE OF JAISALMER

The reign of Rawal 'Jaitsi', or Jait Singh II (r. 1497-1527), saw the desert-state of Jaisalmer being attacked and plundered by Bikaneri forces led by Rao Lunkaran of Bikaner (r. 1505-1526). The capital was invested and Lunkaran collected a considerable tribute. With his victory complete, Lunkaran restored the vanquished Jait Singh II to his titles and kingdom. A matrimonial alliance was also forged between the two kingdoms through Rawal Jaitsi's daughter marrying Rao Lunkaran's son.

During the reign of Rawal Lunkaran of Jaisalmer (r. 1528-1550), portions of the kingdom of Jaisalmer were sequestered by the powerful Rao Maldeo of Marwar (r. 1531-1562). Like most of Marwar's neighbours, Jaisalmer too was unable to withstand the might of Maldeo, and was driven to sue for peace. Rawal Lunkaran further proposed a matrimonial alliance between the Rao of Marwar and his daughter, Uma-Dey. (She is known to the bards and the populace at large as Maldeo's '*Roothi Rani*' — the Queen-who-Sulked). Over the next few years, the Jaisalmeri forces assisted Maldeo on several occasions.

Later, when the dispossessed Mughal emperor, Humayun, approached the area, following his defeat at the battle of Bilgram of 1540, and subsequent flight from Sher Shah Suri's forces, and sought assistance from the Bhatias, Lunkaran held back. Faced with the Jaisalmer ruler's hostile attitude, Humayun and his small party soon moved further westward, towards the security of Amarkot.

A warrior-prince, in the tradition of his times (and his clan), he is said to have met a heroic death in a conflict against the dispossessed Amir Ali Khan of Qandhar in AD 1550. It seems that though Lunkaran had provided shelter to the deposed Amir Ali Khan and his retinue, the ungrateful Amir made a bid to occupy the fort of Jaisalmer. Amir Ali Khan and his men died in the fierce fighting that followed, as did Rawal Lunkaran and many of his warriors. Rawal Lunkaran is lauded in local annals for having performed Vedic rituals for the ritual purification of those Bhatias who had accepted Islam.

The reign of Lunkaran's son, Rawal Maldev (r. 1550-1561), saw Jaisalmer threatened once again by the resurgent Rao Maldeo of Marwar, who sent a large force large headed by Pancholi Netsi, his *dewan*, against Jaisalmer in 1552. Once again, Marwar exacted a sizeable indemnity from Jaisalmer.

Har Raj (r. 1561-1577) followed Maldev. In 1570 Har Raj acknowledged Akbar's suzerainty, and attended the emperor's court at Nagaur. Har Raj's eldest son, Prince Sultan Singh was sent to the Mughal court. In keeping with Akbar's practice of establishing, where possible, matrimonial alliances with the Rajput kingdoms, Rawal Har Raj agreed to the marriage of his daughter, Princess Nathi Bai, with Emperor Akbar. (Another daughter of the Rawal, Princess Champa-Dey, became the wife of Bikaner's flamboyant warrior-hero and poet, Prince Prithviraj — also called Peethal, who was the brother of Raja Rai Singh of Bikaner).

Rawal Har Raj attempted to strengthen his position vis-à-vis his westerly neighbours also. With that in mind he established and maintained friendly relations with Mirza Jan Beg of Sindh. (According to the *Beg-lar-namah*, Mirza Jan Beg's emissary bearing a robe-of-honour for the Rawal was Khan-i-Zaman, a distinguished general of the Sindh area¹⁴¹. This famous Khan-i-Zaman was the son of Turkoman, governor of Amarkot under the Arghun dynasty, and a Bhati princess).

Har Raj is credited with humbling the Sodhas of Amarkot too. In 1576, Har Raj obtained Pokhran from Marwar's Rao Chandrasen on payment. Like his contemporaries, the Rawal appears to have been fond of

art and music, and is known to have extended patronage to the Jain scholar, Kushal Chandra (or Kushalabh), who composed one of Rajasthan's most famous poems, the *Dhola-Maru-ra-Duha* based on the romance of Prince Dhola and Princess Maruvani (Maru). He ordered the construction of gates, palaces and other structures at his capital of Jaisalmer, as well as at the town of Bikampur.

The *Akbar-Nama* and Nainsi's *Khyat* corroborate the death of Har Raj as having occurred in 1577. Rawal Bhim Singh (r. 1577-1613) succeeded Har Raj on the *gaddi* of Jaisalmer. Like many of his fellow-Rajput rulers, Bhim Singh held a *mansab* in the Imperial court. He joined in Imperial campaigns when called upon to do so, besides ensuring the safety and defence of his kingdom locally from hostile neighbours and subordinate fief-holders. During his reign Jaisalmer too partook of the overall stability that came in the wake of imperial consolidation by Akbar and Jahangir. The Emperor Jahangir described Rawal Bhim Singh as a man of 'rank and influence'.

THE STATE OF KARAULI

In a different, much more south-easterly, part of Rajasthan, the kingdom of Karauli began to gain some strength. Having subdued local Meenas and the Afghans dominating the region, Gopaldas (r. 1549-1589), a descendant of Chandrasen (Chandrapal) of Karauli's dispossessed Yaduvamshi line, gained the attention of the Mughal emperor, Akbar, through his gallantry in Akbar's campaigns in southern India. In recognition of his valour at the siege of Daulatabad, Akbar rewarded Gopaldas. Not only were the erstwhile Karauli ancestral lands of the Yaduvamshis, which had previously passed into the possession of the Mughal Empire, conferred upon Gopaldas, along with a flag, but a *mansab* of 2,000 was granted to him too. Gopaldas was also given the right to own and display the ancient, long accepted, symbol of kingship — the *nakkara* or kettle-drum.

According to the Karauli *khyats*, Gopaldas laid the foundation-stone of the new fort of Akbarabad at Agra in 1566, at the special request of Emperor Akbar. Besides other achievements, Gopaldas strengthened the

defences of his territory through constructing forts at Masalpur and Jhiri, as well as at Bahadurpur. He also built palaces there too. Gopaldas also constructed numerous buildings, temples and gardens in his capital, Karauli, in a manner reminiscent of his ancestor, Arjunpal. Gopaldas was successful in subduing the local Yadavas of Masalpur as well as the Meenas of Bahadurpur. As a result of his vigorous endeavours, the fort of Tawangarh (also called Tahangarh or Timangarh; an erstwhile capital of the Yaduvamshis) reverted to Yaduvamshi control. (Though succeeding centuries again saw Tawangarh change hands). Gopaldas died in 1589.

His immediate successor was Dwarka Das, after whom came Mukund Das. However, neither these two rulers of Karauli, nor their subsequent successors could match the position achieved by Gopaldas. In fact, the death of Gopaldas marked an eclipsing of the status of Karauli, once again. This situation would last for nearly a century and a half to come.

DHOLPUR

The Tanwars of Dholpur had been vulnerable to attacks from several directions during the previous few centuries. This situation continued into the sixteenth century too. In 1502, just over a decade after Sikandar Lodi assumed power as sultan of Delhi, forces led by Alam Khan Mewati, Khan-i-Khan Luhani and Khawas Khan were despatched by the Sultan to invest Dholpur. Dholpur's Tanwar ruler, Vinayak Dev (Vikram Dev), was unwillingly to surrender his inheritance lightly. Inspired by his lead, his army put up a stiff resistance. The resultant losses sustained by the Lodi forces finally made Sikandar take to the field personally in 1504. This time Vinayak Dev was beaten back from Dholpur to the fort of Gwalior. Dholpur fell to the sultan's armies and was plundered, before being placed in the charge of Adam Khan.

Sometime afterwards, Vinayak Dev obtained possession of the fort of Dholpur again for a short period, but later one Qamaruddin was given charge of the fort. Citing Persian sources, Gopinath Sharma believes that during the closing years of the Delhi Sultanate period "...the Tanwar chiefs

of Dholpur survived as petty Zamindars”¹⁴². The pressure of the Delhi Sultanate, and later Babur, to assert suzerainty over the area may be better understood when we not only take its geographically strategic location into account — as has already been mentioned in an earlier chapter, but also of another factor. Namely, that as the newly fortified Agra, located roughly north of the Dholpur-Gwalior area grew in political, military and administrative importance, the control of the Dholpur-Gwalior area was to become, and remain, more crucial to whoever held mastery of Delhi and Agra — or attempted to challenge that mastery.

Following Babur’s success at the Battle of Khanua, some twenty years after the investment of Dholpur fort by Sikandar Lodi, the Tanwars were obliged to accept his supremacy, and under the Mughal Emperor Akbar and his successors, Dholpur formed part of the *suba* of Agra. A fortified *serai*, containing within it the tomb of one of Akbar’s commanders, Sadik Mohammed Khan (d. 1595), bears witness to Mughal overlordship. However, as had been the case during preceding centuries, local administration continued in the hands of the Tanwar chiefs of Dholpur.

INTER-RELIGIOUS INTERACTIONS AND MATRIMONIAL ALLIANCES

By the sixteenth century, some of the Rajput clans, among them groups from the Mohilas, Johiyas, Bhatias, Kyam-Khani Chauhans etc. had already accepted Islam. However, for quite a long time afterwards, their pre-conversion system of matrimonial alliances continued as before with other Rajput clans — whether Hindu or Muslim.

In fact, one should bear in mind that the interaction between the Rajput and Muslim political elite was not invariably always one of confrontation, despite an image of Muslims as aggressors and invaders of Rajasthan forming part of the later popular psyche. That there were battles and invasions is not disputed, but one must also keep in mind the fact that relations *did* develop beyond a simplistic ‘perpetual enemies’ level between Rajputs and Muslims.

In fact, Rajputs also fought each other, and there is no dearth of examples of Rajput father and son, or father-in-law and son-in-law, or brothers, taking up arms against each other. Not only did Rajput rulers invade the territories of other Rajputs, there were also occasions when Rajput kingdoms were sacked by Rajputs, resulting in the male defenders taking to the path of *shaka* and the women immolating themselves in the act of *jauhar*.

One such example occurred at Tanot, an early capital of the Bhati Rajputs, in western Rajasthan. The invaders were the Panwar Rajputs ruling over Bhatinda and their associated Varah Rajput clans. The ruler of Tanot fell fighting in the *shaka*, while the women of the royal family (along with other women and children residing within the fort), committed *jauhar*. Among these royal ladies were women from the Panwar and Varah Rajput clans who had been married to Bhati men.

It is important to bear in mind that it was as much political expediency, or economic and/or military factors that led to warfare between Rajputs and Muslims — just as it did between Rajputs and Rajputs — rather than mere religious bigotry or zeal on the part of Muslim sultans. Thus, just as there was occasional enmity between Rajput clans, over time there was enmity between certain Muslim and Rajput kingdoms.

As such, it was the notion of marriage between equals, along with aspects like political realities and so forth that seem to have been at play when it came to the marriage-alliances made by Akbar, whether in his own case, or those arranged between daughters of the Rajput ruling houses and the male members of his immediate family¹⁴³.

Local customs were followed for such inter-community matrimonial alliances. For instance, when Bhaga Bai, the sister of Rathore Karam-Si (from whom the Karamsot branch of Rathores takes its name) married the Khan of Nagaur, the bridegroom, as per the Rajput custom, presented his new brother-in-law Karam-Si with a ceremonial *sala katari* dagger and two villages. These were the villages of Asop and Khinvsar.

When it comes to Rajput-Mughal marriages, however, some people argue that as there was no tradition of inter-religion marriages, these were marriages of coercion, in which the Rajput rulers were forced to give daughters to the Imperial authority. Furthermore, they believe that in actuality the so-called 'princesses' married off to Mughal princes were daughters of servants, and not real Rajput princesses.

We have already noted the occurrence of Rajput-Muslim marriages during the pre-Mughal period. Let us now look at examples of the Rajput-Mughal matrimonial alliances.

It is commonly known that Emperor Akbar married Rajput princesses from Amber, Jaisalmer, and Bikaner etc. The name of the Amber princess, daughter of Bharmal, is given as Jiyarani by one source, and Harika in other sources. Akbar's Jaisalmer wife was Princess Nathi Bai, daughter of Har Raj Bhati, the Rawal of Jaisalmer. Another daughter of the Rawal, Champa-Dey, was married to Prince Prithviraj Rathore of Bikaner, a great warrior, poet and personal friend of Akbar. Two nieces of the ruler of Bikaner, Rao Kalyanmal (1542-1571 AD), were married to Akbar according to the *Dalpat-Vilas*. Their names are given as Bhanumati, daughter of Kalyanmal's brother Bhimraj, and Raj Kanwar, daughter of another brother, Kanha.

In the next generation, the daughter of Rao Kalyanmal's son, Raja Rai Singh was married to Prince Salim (later Emperor Jahangir). According to the *khyat* of Bankidas, the rulers of Jodhpur married their daughters and nieces to Mughals and other Muslim rulers for five to six generations consecutively. Reference has already been made to the marriage of Princess Mani Bai Godha Bai), daughter of Mota Raja Udai Singh of Marwar, with Prince Salim (Jahangir). On the basis of various records, it would appear that there were over two dozen marriages between Rajput princesses and members of the Mughal Imperial family¹⁴⁴.

Following his campaign against Rao Maldeo of Jodhpur, Sher Shah Suri reportedly bewailed that for a fistful of millet he had jeopardised the throne of Delhi. The very same Rao Maldeo is said, according to traditional belief, to have arranged the marriages of five of his daughters to Muslims

and the others to Rajputs. Of the five married to Muslims, Kanka was the queen of Sultan Mahmud of Gujarat. Another daughter, Ratnawali married Haji Khan of Mewat. She died at Nagaur in VS 1649, where a memorial built for her still stands. A third, Lal Bai, married Sur Fateh Shah (though some sources hold she married Sher Shah himself), a fourth, Jasoda Bai married the Khan of Nagaur, and a fifth daughter, Rukmavati, married the Mughal emperor Akbar. Other daughters of Maldeo were married into the Rajput ruling families of Bundi, Dungarpur, Jaisalmer, Gwalior, Amarsar, and Amarkot.

It is significant to note here that according to some traditions, Rukmavati, the daughter of Rao Maldeo who was married to Akbar, was not born from a queen but a concubine or *patar* of Maldeo. One could, perhaps, argue, therefore, that the Rathore clan had saved 'face' and the honour of their ancestors by marrying off not a royal princess, but merely Maldeo's concubine's daughter to the Mughal emperor; and that this is further proof that Rajput-Mughal marriages were forced on the Rajputs by the might of the Mughal empire. Such an argument, however, cannot explain the marriage of four other daughters, all of them 'real' princesses, to other Muslim rulers. Muslim rulers, moreover who were less powerful than Akbar was. Perhaps what is equally worthy of note here is that the daughter of a *pardayat* was given status equal to her fully Rajput half-sisters!

Local *khyats*, *bahis* and *baats* etc. make it clear that Rajput (Hindu) customs were an essential element in such Rajput-Mughal marriages. On the marriage of Prince Salim with the daughter of Raja Bhagwant Das of Amber, both Muslim and Rajput customs were observed, and Emperor Akbar himself came to Amber in the groom's wedding party, and later was one of the palanquin-bearers of the bridal procession. This princess was given the name of Sultan-un-Nisa. Her son was Prince Khusrau.

The above accounts pertain to matrimonial alliances between Rajput and Muslim elite. At the level of ordinary citizens too, however, it seems that the practice of Rajputs (Hindu) marrying Muslim Rajputs was not uncommon. In western Rajasthan and Sindh area, it was apparently

common for Bhati and Sodha Rajputs to marry into Muslim families as recently as the nineteenth century!

In VS 1908, apparently, the Bhaties called a 'panchayat', saying they would no longer marry Muslims and asking Sodha Rajputs to do the same. There was, it seems, a decree (dating to VS 1908), according to oral tradition, from a Bhati *thakur* of Jaisalmer called Kesari Singh, by which Sodha Rajputs were told to stop giving daughters in marriage to Muslims. The *thakur* declared that any Sodha marrying a Muslim should be socially ostracised by other Sodhas, and if despite this the Sodhas did not discontinue the practice of marrying Muslims, no Bhati should have further matrimonial relations with them. This seems to imply that there was an occurrence of such marriages as recently as a century and a quarter ago, and that formal attempts were made to stop such practices.

SOME ASPECTS OF ADMINISTRATION, SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, ART AND ARCHITECTURE, LITERATURE, AND RELIGIOUS BELIEFS, ETC. IN RAJASTHAN IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

By the sixteenth century, the practice of kings and chiefs granting lands and rights of collecting land-revenue to powerful subordinates, kinsmen, army officers and state functionaries, in return for military service and some part of annual revenue etc., was well established in Rajasthan. Lands were also granted to Brahmins, Charans, religious institutions etc., but in the case of such *muafi* or *sasan* categories of charitable land-grants, military service etc. was not expected in return. Another category of land-holders was known as *bhumia* or *bhomiya*. As already noted in an earlier chapter, this was a category of land-holder who held a land-grant ('*bhom*' or '*bhum*') in return for past protection rendered. They often carried out local watch-and-ward duties in specific villages, and provided military service to the state when called upon to do so. Sometimes, *bhomiya*s paid a small tax called *bhombard* to their ruler. One of the most important forms of land-grants was the *jagir* system. A *jagir* — which gave its holder the right to revenues from the allocated tract of land — was usually inalienable and subject to the holder (*jagirdar*) rendering the stipulated military etc. service to the state as

and when called upon to do so. A *jagir* could become forfeit if the ruler so decided. The local land-revenue of a *jagir* went to its *jagirdar*, who also enjoyed general administrative and law-dispensing powers within that area — subject, of course, to the overall laws of the greater state authority. *Jagirdars* could impose taxes in their area. (In later times, some of them held judicial authority too).

The Mughal Emperor Akbar used the system to good effect. Rajput rulers etc. serving the empire were invariably rewarded with *jagir*-lands in different parts of the empire. Individual succession to their own respective kingdoms and chiefdoms were usually ‘confirmed’ by the supreme authority (emperor) confirming them in their concerned *watan jagir*. The system was replicated within the different states of Rajasthan.

In a sense, the ‘feudal’ system in Rajasthan was a variant of the process already common in earlier periods of South Asian history. However, because an important part of the Rajput state was the clan system, and because the genealogical blood-ties made the richest and poorest clan member theoretically equal, the relationship of ruler and clan-member (and thence even the ruler and non-Rajput subject), embodied the notion of a paternalistic family-relationship, rather than that of a distant absolute monarch. (This was the ‘feudalistic’ ‘*maibaap*’ relationship that nineteenth century British writers would comment on).

In addition to their own clans, the clans with whom matrimonial links were established — the *saga* or *ganayat* — played an important role too. It must be stressed here that, generally speaking, a matrimonial alliance did not merely link only the immediate families of the bride and groom. Rather, this established a tie between the clans thus linked as mutual *sagas*. The thus linked as mutual *sagas*. The relationship had political significance too, since over time, it had become the custom for rulers and chiefs to allocate *jagirs* and occasionally administrative posts to *sagas*, and/or other members of a *saga*’s clan. This served as a partial counter-check to internal dissidence within a state — since (with exceptions) the *sagas* who had acquired *jagirs* etc. within a different clan’s territories usually supported their relative-by-marriage in times of travail. It also enabled the rulers and chiefs to call upon

a large extended support system of *saga* relatives allied by marriage-ties during times of invasions, battles, strife etc.

In fact, a Rajput woman did not lose her ties with her natal clan after her marriage. Regional songs, stories and occasional archival records reflect the pride a Rajput woman felt concerning her natal clan, and we learn how a slur or derogatory comment or joke concerning the valour or actions of her clan often led to a right-royal quarrel between a Rajput wife and her husband¹⁴⁵! A married Rajput woman was addressed in her husband's home by her natal clan's name, and it was the custom for official genealogies (*vamshavali* and *pidhivali*) to note her name, as well as that of her father and her clan in their records. Furthermore, in times of need, a Rajput woman could — and did — call upon her natal clan for assistance. As far as children of the next generation were concerned, the close ties with their mother and grandmothers' natal clans meant that their relationship as nephew (*bhanej*) or niece (*bhanej-bai*), or grandson (*duhit*) and granddaughter (*duhiti*) — as the case may be, of the concerned clans continued to be openly acknowledged on all sides.

One may note here the example of the 'prince of Bundi' who died along with five hundred of his clansmen at the siege of Chittor in 1535, to whom reference has been made earlier in this chapter. This occurred even though the mutual relations between the Sisodias and Hadas had (perhaps for the hundredth time), taken a down-turn when Mewar's Rana Ratan Singh and Bundi's Rao Surajmal died at each others' hands in 1531. The reason the Hadas fought to defend Chittor even *after* this, was because the incumbent Rana's mother, Queen-Mother Karnawati was a Bundi Hada princess — and thus, the 'honour' of one clan was that of the other, and needed to be fought for.

Scholars have pointed out that the polygamous marriages of most Rajput (male) rulers and chiefs were one way of maintaining a political network of *sagas*, which could always be called upon in an emergency. In a previous chapter we noted how the Rathore chief Ranmal helped administer Mewar by virtue of this connection. There are numerous other examples. It is significant to also note, though, that poorer Rajputs did not usually have several wives, in contrast to their richer kin.

The nature of clan-based polity, and the importance of an extensive networking of kin and *sagas*, became a self-perpetuating cycle that encouraged rulers and chiefs in their polygamous marriages. Among the obvious consequences of polygamy were the prevalence of features like the frequent self-immolation (*sati*) by the numerous widowed wives, concubines and servitors of the Rajput elite. (Rajasthani oral and written traditions often use the term *bali* ('to burn'), when describing such immolations, instead of only using the term *sati*. Usually, one finds references to a smaller number of specific deified *satis* or *Sati-Matas*, in which miracles are associated with the concerned women, in contrast to the large number of women who are described as having become *sati* or *bali* at the death of their 'lord'. Memorials and memorial-stones, usually described in present-day literature as '*sati*-stones', commemorate the women who immolated themselves after the death of their husband¹⁴⁶. In contrast, shrines or 'holy sites' at which worship was offered until recently, often mark the places deemed to have witnessed the passage of a deified *sati*! The matter is complex, and needs more space to do it justice¹⁴⁷).

There were also *zenana*-related power politics; and the frequent role of 'co-wives' in deciding the line of succession on numerous occasions¹⁴⁸. (The last in spite of a notional adherence to primogeniture as the determining factor — which history shows to have been occasionally more theory than reality). All of these above proved crucial in determining matters of political, internal, and inter-state importance on numerous occasions.

Rajasthan's clan-based system also meant that the nobles and *jagirdars* of a kingdom were always a powerful voice. In part this was because of the nature of polity, which was acknowledgedly influenced by the clan and sub-clan kinship, relationships established through matrimonial ties with other clans and families, and service-loyalty and close association over more than one generation with other caste groups.

Such clan dependence and extant system as a whole, remained intact even after sustained interaction with the Mughal court became a way of life for the ruling elite and the officials of various Rajasthan-based states.

However, other aspects of life — socio-economic, trade related, art and architecture, court etiquette, clothing, food habits etc., were more open to influence. And, travel certainly broadened the horizons of the Rajputs posted to distant parts of the expanding Mughal Empire, from where they brought back a fair share of ideas, design features, foods, plants and animals, and even peoples to inhabit certain parts of their respective kingdoms. For instance, modern Jaipur has communities of Afghans' and 'Pathans', who have documents linking their ancestors coming to Jaipur in the sixteenth century at the invitation and encouragement of Raja Man Singh of Amber. The same Man Singh adapted Bengali architectural features in his later constructions at Amber and elsewhere. Similarly, the Bikaner rulers encouraged the blending of the 'Deccan' School of art with the painting tradition prevalent at their own court, following their sustained campaigning and postings in that part of South Asia under Mughal rule.



Terracotta plaque showing 'Dana-Lila' scene. Rang Mahal
(Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt. of Rajasthan).



Terracotta plaque, Bikaner Museum.



Terracotta, Bikaner Museum.



A sculpted frieze at Menal.
(photo courtesy B.M. Agrawal).



Varah image, Menal.
(Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt. of Rajasthan).



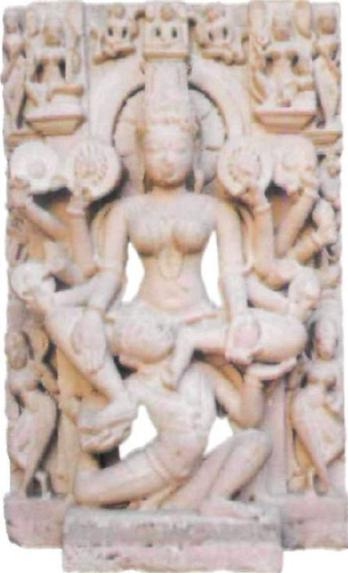
One of the temples at Menal.



Twelfth century AD sculpted panel of the constellations (nakshatras), now at Ajmer Govt. Museum (Courtesy DPR, Govt of Rajasthan).



Ninth century AD metal idol of Jivanta Swami from Balvana, near Pali (Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt. of Rajasthan).



Tenth-eleventh century idol of Chakreshwari found at Weir, now at Bharatpur Govt. Museum (Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Rajasthan).



A tenth century AD idol of Vishnu from the Shahbad area, now at Kota Govt. Museum (Courtesy Sujas, DPR, Govt. of Rajasthan)



Vishnu reclining on Sheshnag, Govt. Museum, Kota (Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt. of Rajasthan).



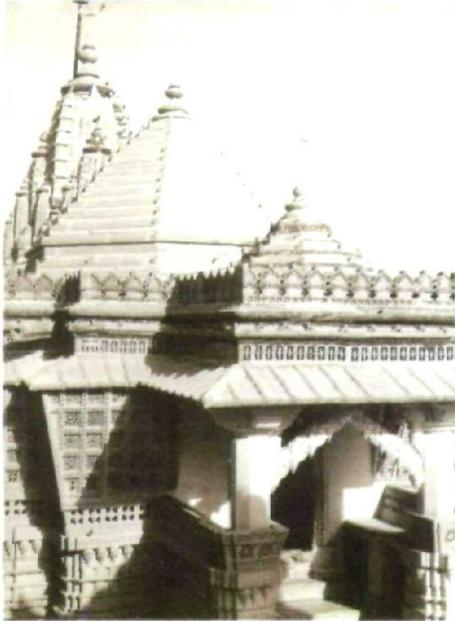
A statue of Vishnu's Varah incarnation (Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt. of Rajasthan).



One of the Bijoliya temples.



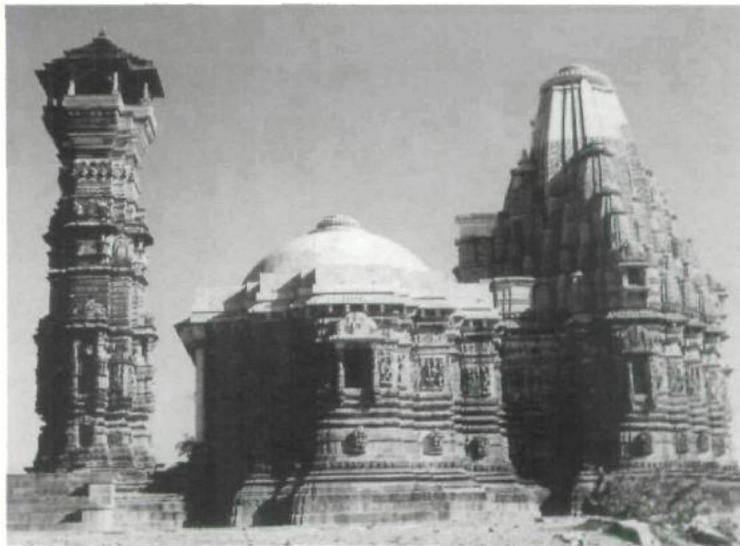
Siva temple, adjacent to the Gangodbheda kund, Ahar. (In the background are some of the royal cenotaphs of Mewar).



One of the temples at Osian.



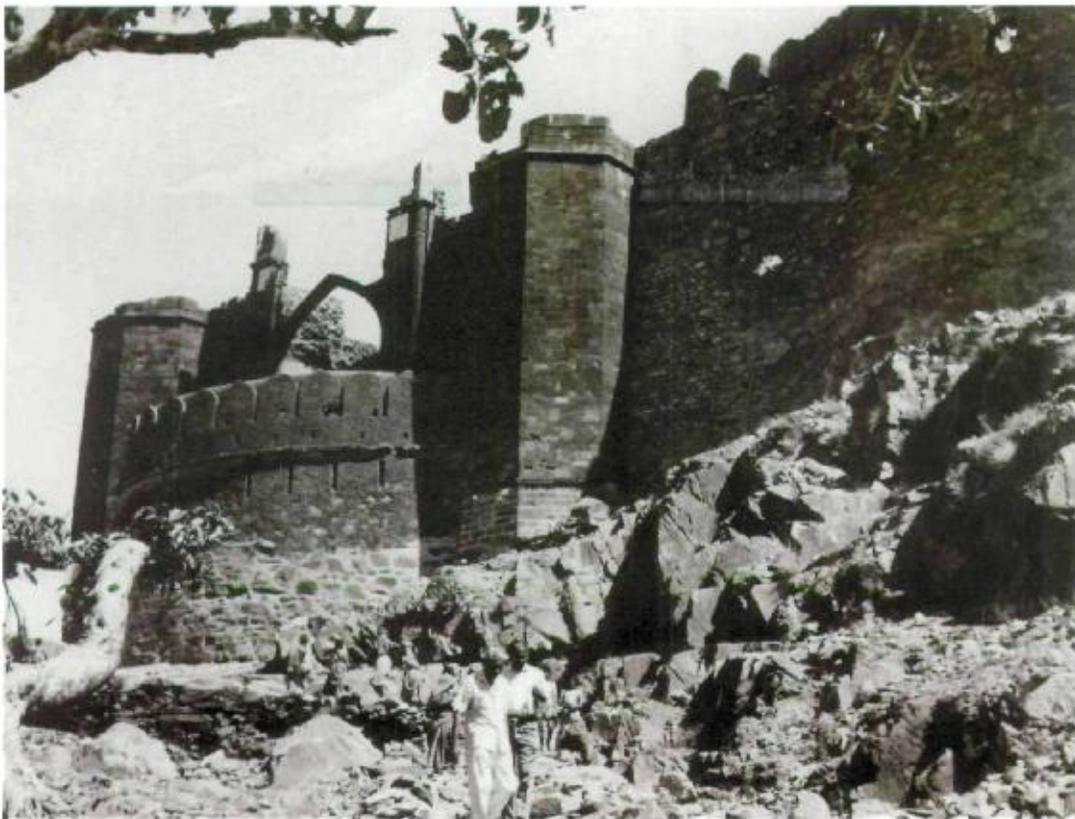
The Gangodbheda kund temple-tank at Ahar, old Aghatpura, against a backdrop of the royal cenotaphs.



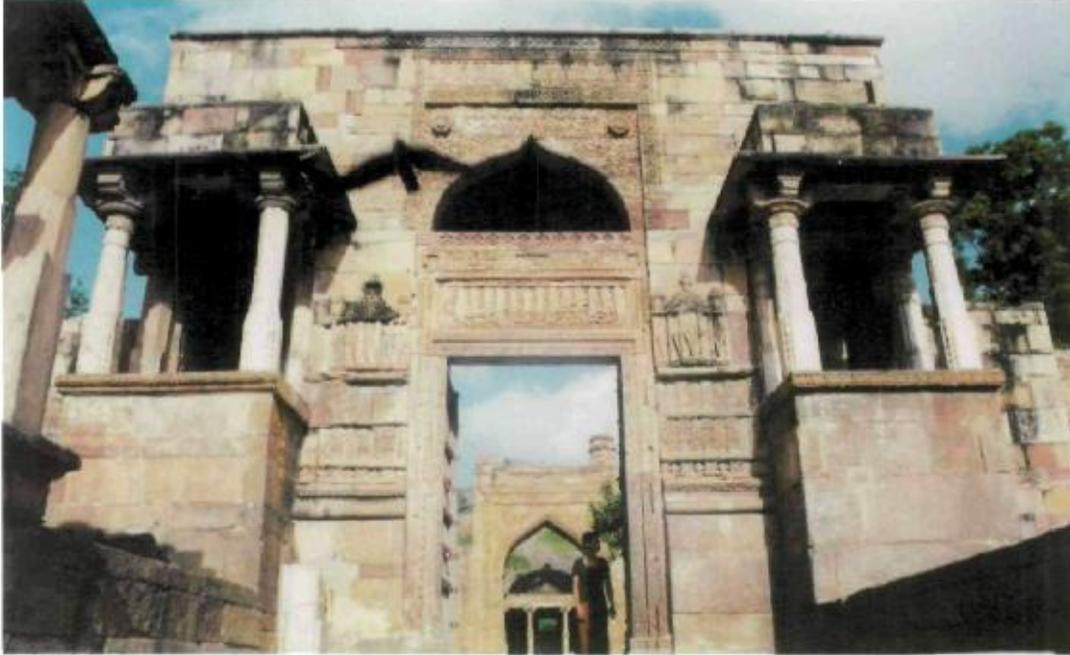
Kirti-Stambha and Jain temple in Chittor fort.



An interior view of Delwara.



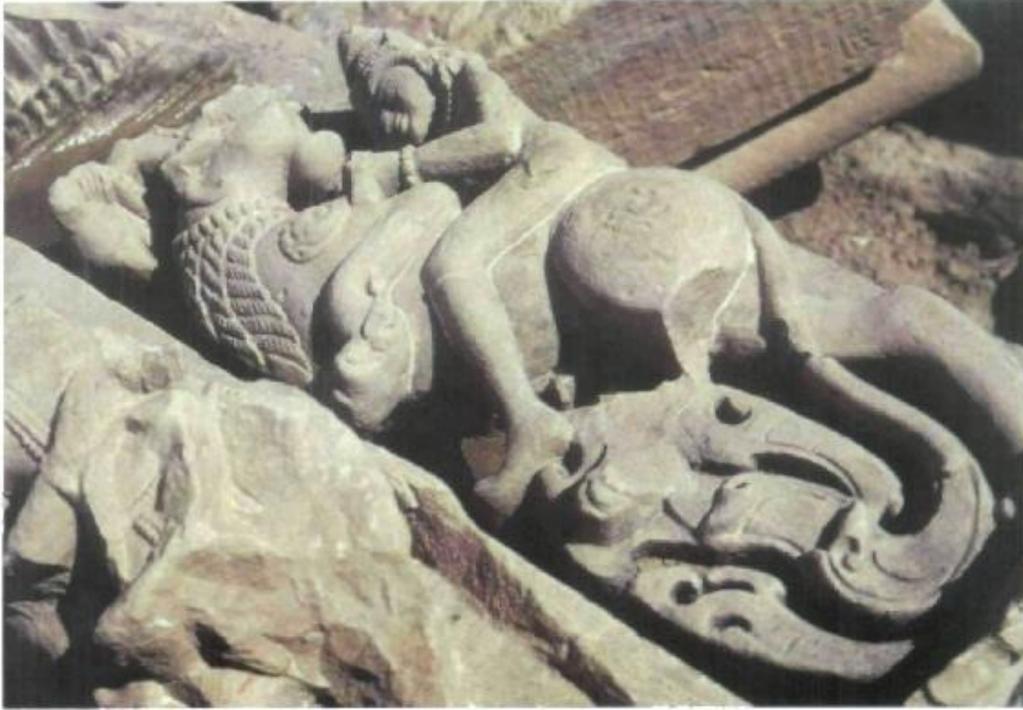
The ruins of Taragarh fort (Ajmer).



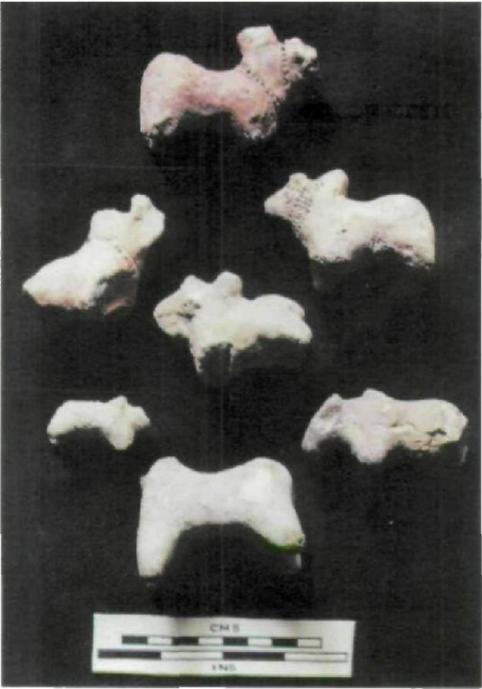
Entrance to 'Adhai-din-ka Jhopra'. Ajmer.
(Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt. of Rajasthan).



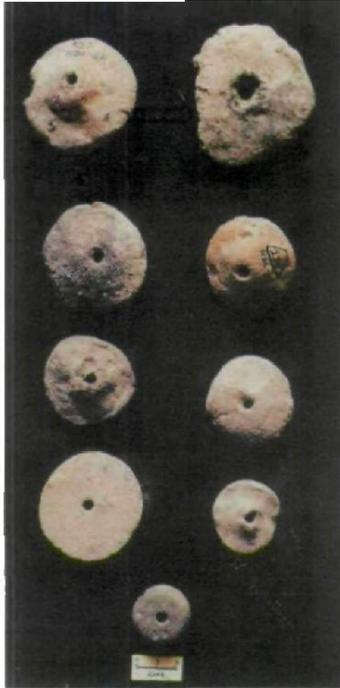
Excavations at Nadol (district Pali). (Courtesy V.N. Bahadur),



Sculptures at Nadol (district Pali). (Courtesy V.N. Bahadur).



Terracotta bull-figurines from Nadol excavations (Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt. of Rajasthan).



Terracotta spindle-whorls from Nadol (Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt. of Rajasthan).



Small sculptures from Nadol excavations (Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt. of Rajasthan).



Metal objects found in the Nadol excavations (Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt. of Rajasthan).



Coin from the Nadol excavations (Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt. of Rajasthan).



Sealing from Nadol, bearing the name of 'Maharaja-adhiraja Lakhan' (Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt. of Rajasthan).



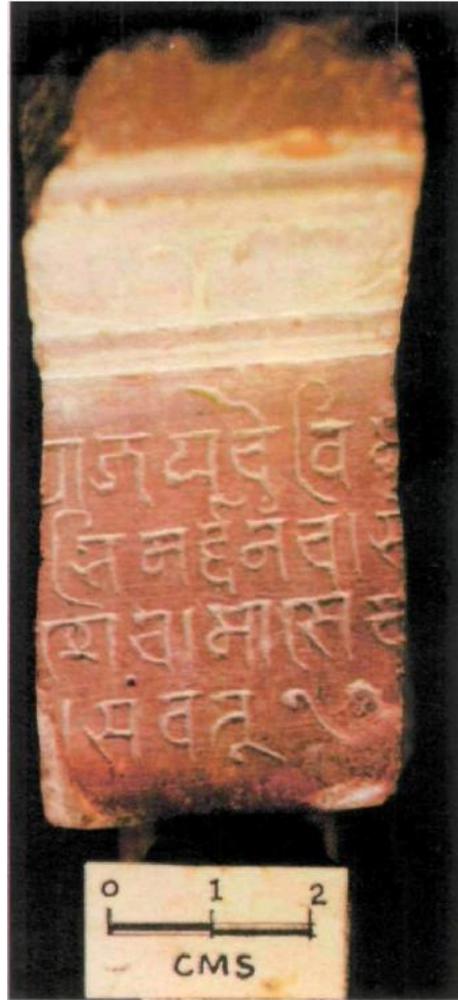
Ornaments from Nadol excavations (Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt. of Rajasthan).



Ruins at Nadol.



Beads found in the Nadol excavations. (Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt. of Rajasthan).



Inscription from Nadol. (Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt. of Rajasthan).



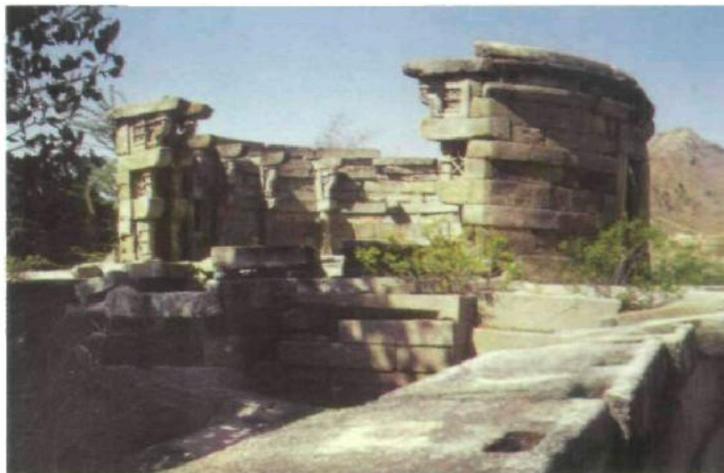
Statues from Nadol. (Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt. of Rajasthan).



Saraswati idol from Nadol, (Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt. of Rajasthan).



Nadol's 'Moong Baori'.
(Courtesy V.N. Bahadur)



Nadol's Rani Vav step-well
(Courtesy V.N. Bahadur).



Structures at Chandrabhaga.



Sculpture of Kali. Jhalawar Govt. Museum.
(Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt. of Rajasthan).



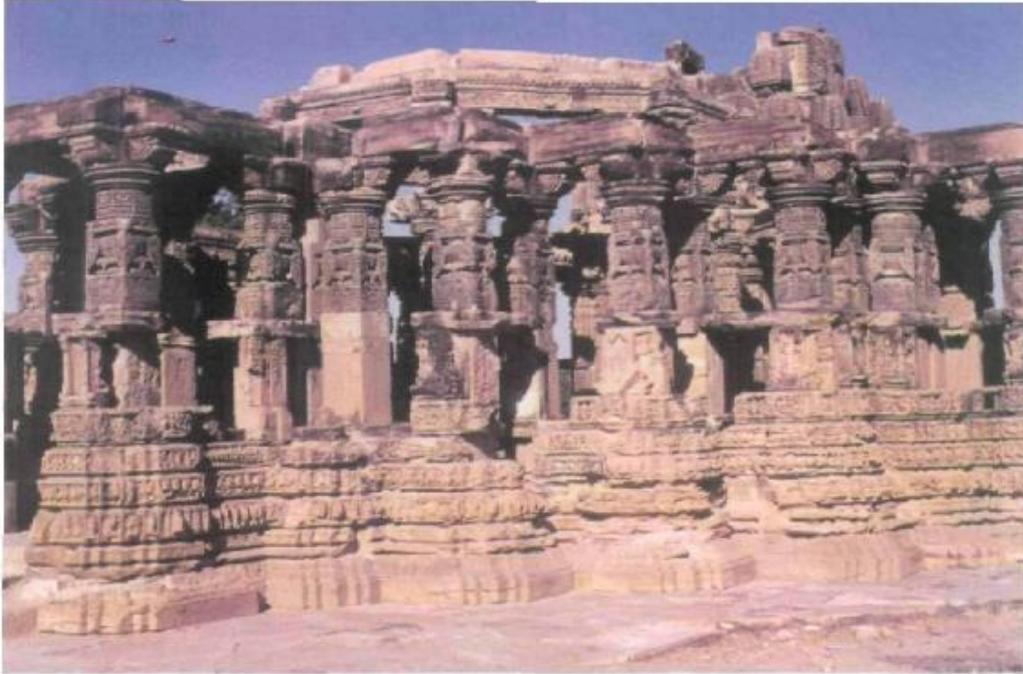
Statue of Kali, Chandrabhaga.



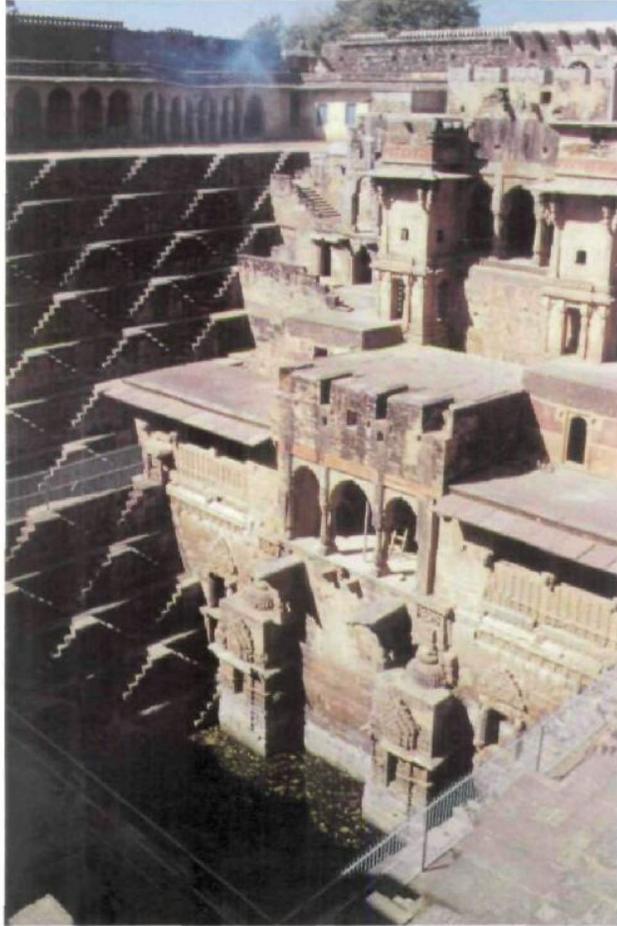
Eighth century Mahishasura-Mardini from Abaneri.
(Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Rajasthan).



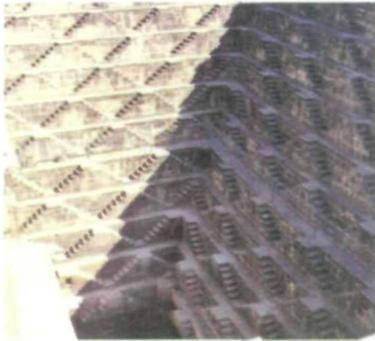
The site of Abaneri.



Kiradu temple
(now in district Barmer).
(Photo courtesy Subhash Bhargava).



Abaneri's famous Baori.



Detail.
(Courtesy V.N. Bahadur).



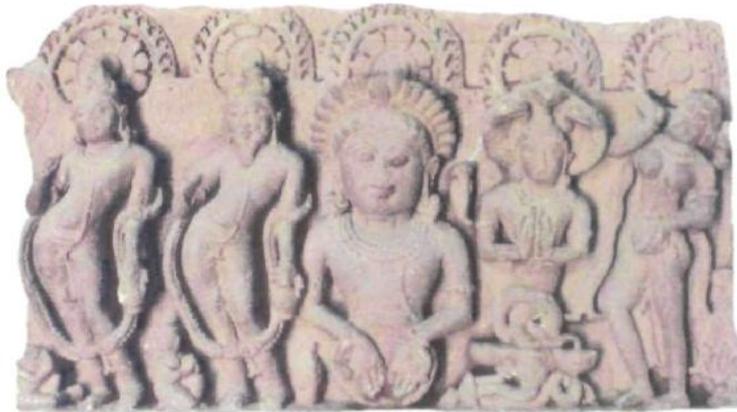
Harshad Mata temple, Abaneri. (Courtesy V.N. Bahadur).



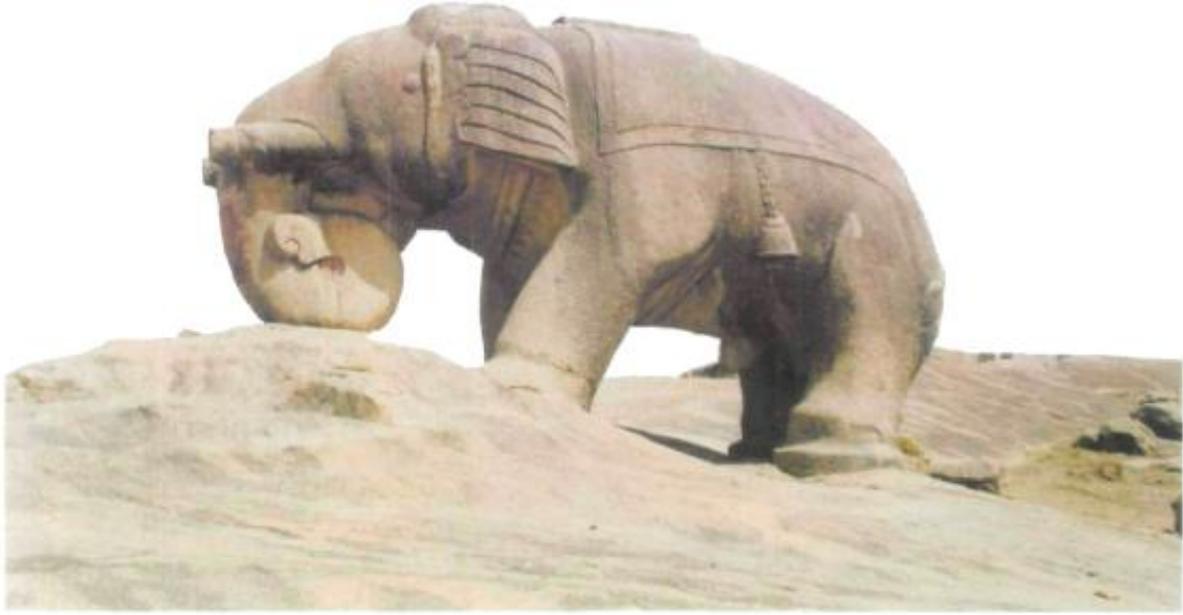
The Sun temple at Jhalara Patan.
(Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt. of Rajasthan).



Kuber, with a Jain Tirthankar in his crown, and another above the head (Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt. of Rajasthan).



Part of a tenth-eleventh century 'Navagrahas' panel, now in the Ajmer Govt. Museum (Courtesy DPR, Govt. of Rajasthan)



'Hathi-Bhata' – statue of an elephant at Khera, near Toda.



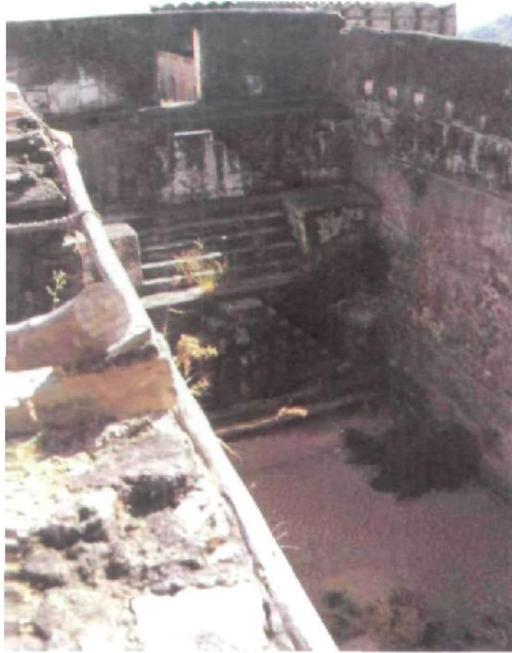
Mahishasura Mardini, now in the Dungarpur Govt. Museum.



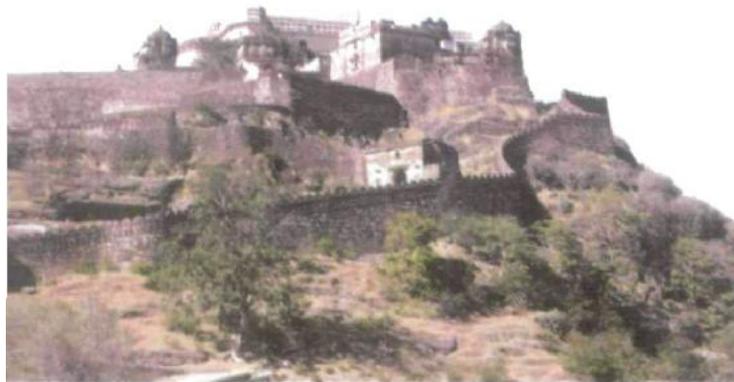
Idol of Harihara-Pitamaha, Kota Govt. Museum.



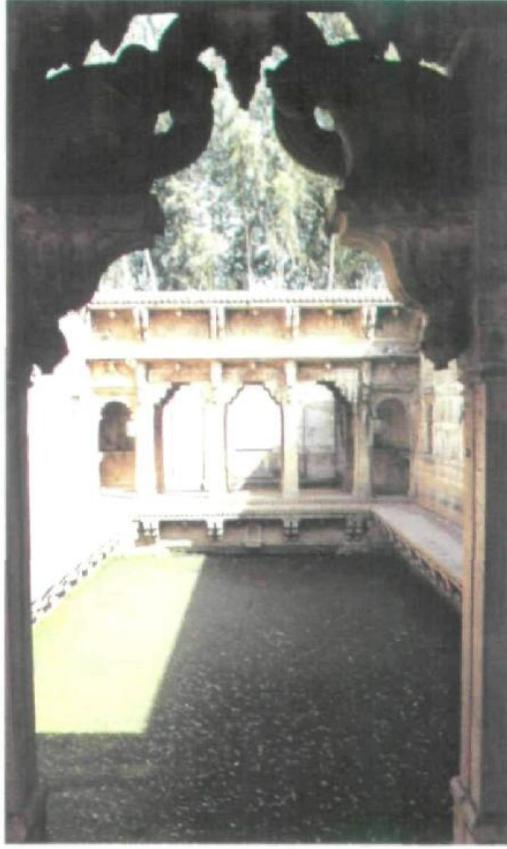
Bhandarej, near Dausa.



Water-structure (kund) at Kumbhalgarh.



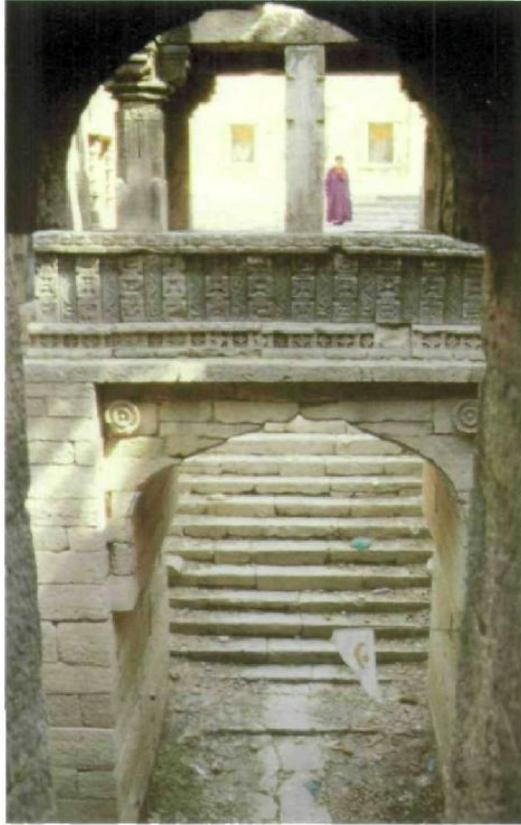
View of Kumbhalgarh fort
(Courtesy V.N. Bahadur).



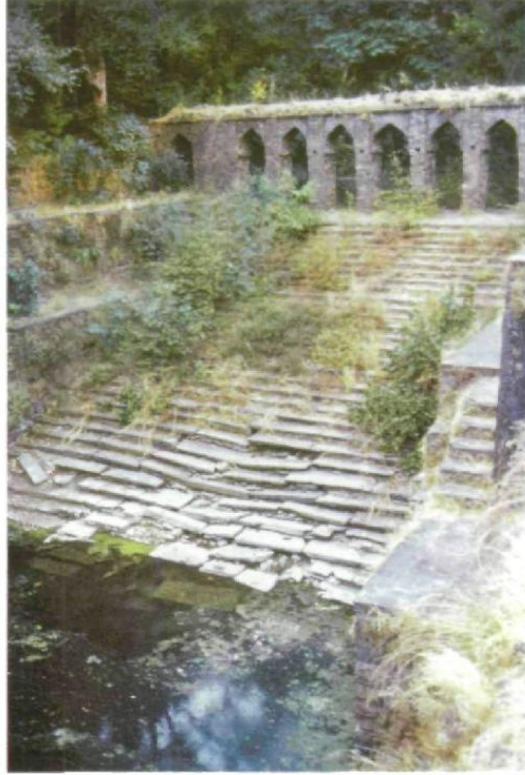
Step-well at Goverdhanpur, Bundi.
(Courtesy V.N. Bahadur).



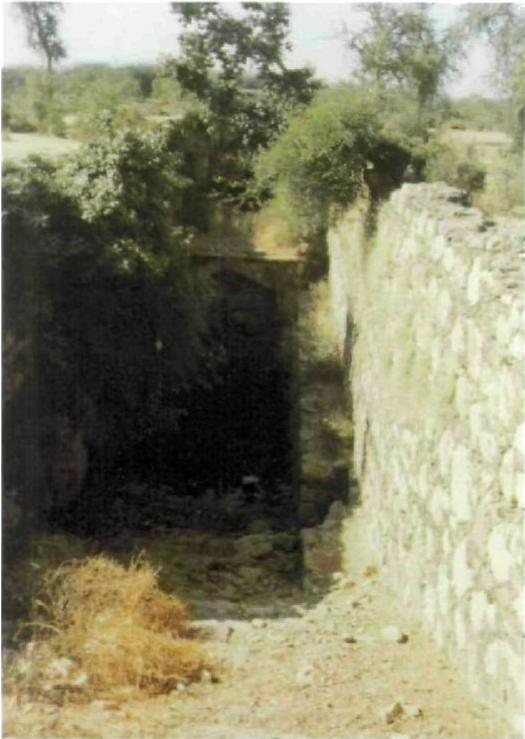
Siva temple, Kumbhalgarh fort.



An old step-well and pavilion at Soop village, district Tonk.
(Courtesy V.N. Bahadur)



Khemcho ki Baori, near the base of Ranthambore fort.



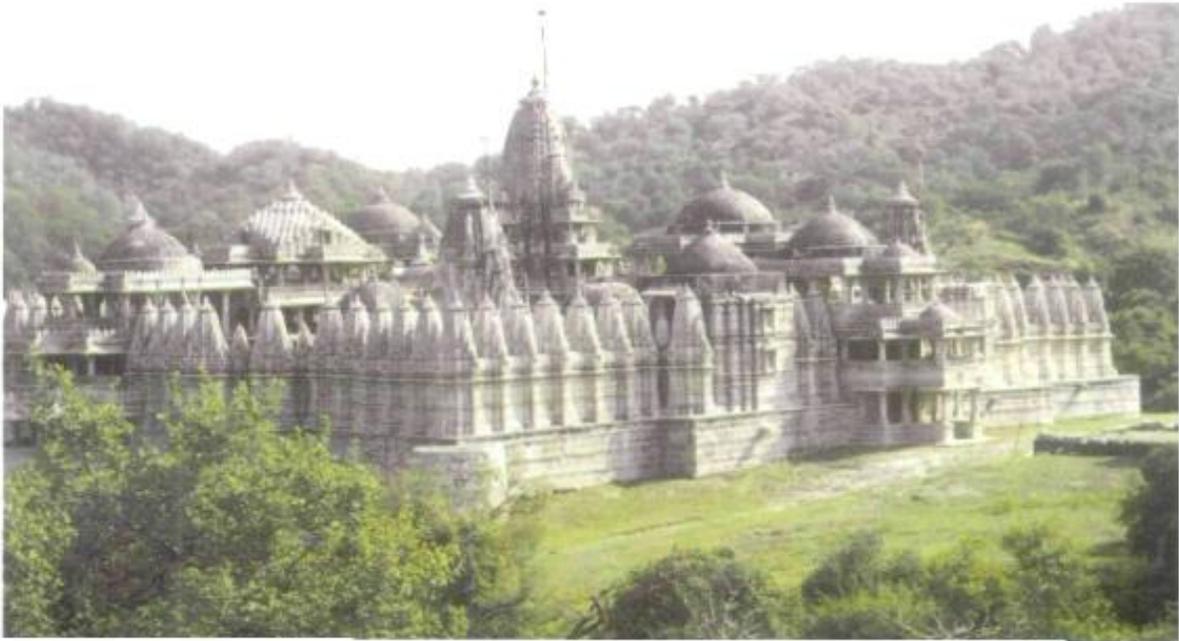
Jhoomar Baori,
near Ranthambore,
Sawai Madhopur.



Statue of Vishnu at the Govt. Museum, Kota.



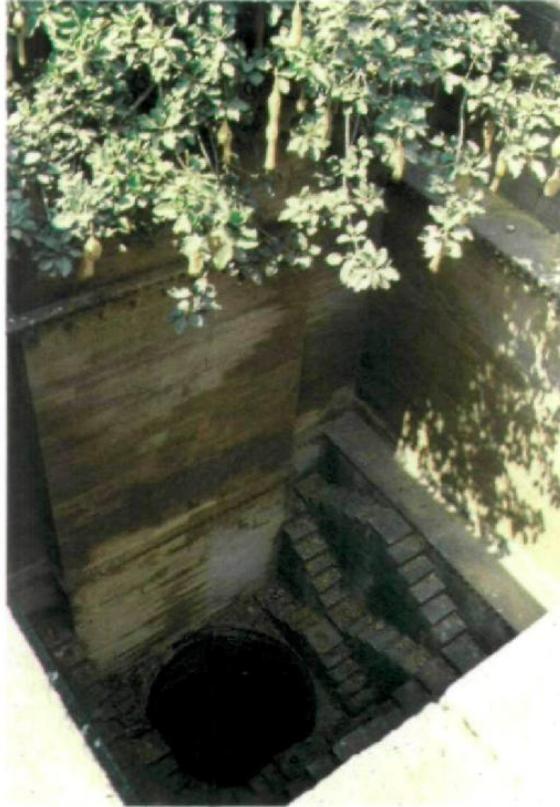
Ruins of Ajabgarh, near Alwar.
(Courtesy V.N. Bahadur).



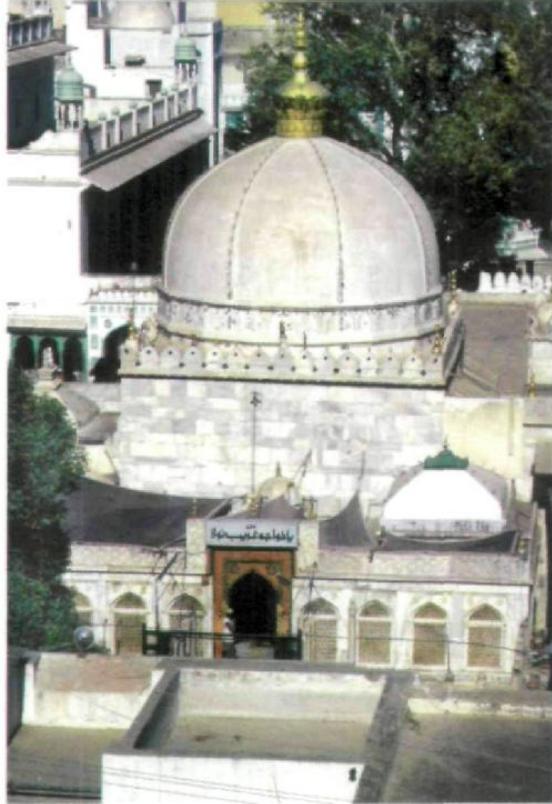
Ranakpur temple complex
(Courtesy V.N. Bahadur).



Hadi Rani ki Baori, Toda Rai Singh.



Old water-structure at Sahada, Toda Rai Singh.
(Courtesy V.N. Bahadur).



Dargah of Khwaja Sahib Shaikh Moin-ud-din Chishti 'Garib Nawaz' at Ajmer (Courtesy Subhash Bhargava).



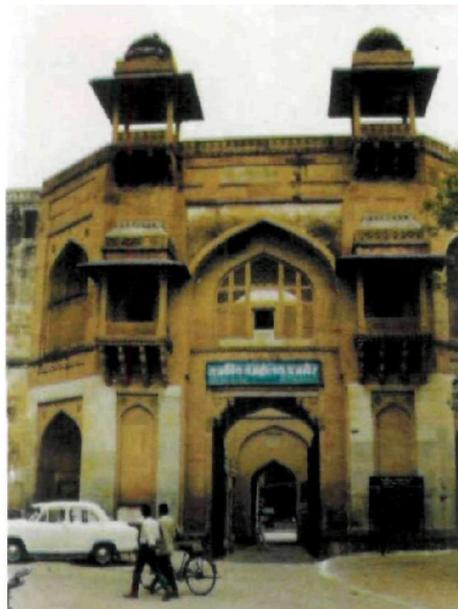
Ajmer's famous 'Adhai-din-ka Jhonpra' (Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt. of Rajasthan).



The famous fort at Nagaur.



Gagraon's renowned fort. (Courtesy Subhash Bhargava).



The Jahangiri Gate portion of the sixteenth century Mughal palace at Ajmer. Emperor Akbar's treasury building within the palace-complex later became a British India armoury or 'Magazine'.



A mid twentieth century view of Amber.



Jagat Shiromani temple at Amber.



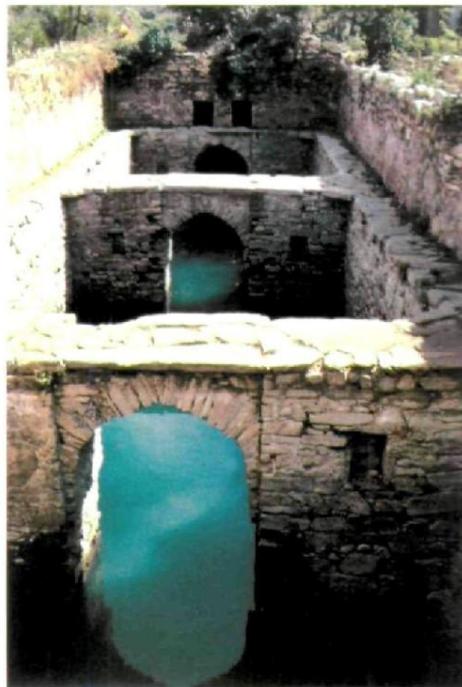
Interior (including palanquin), Jagat Shiromani temple, Amber. (Courtesy V.N. Bahadur).



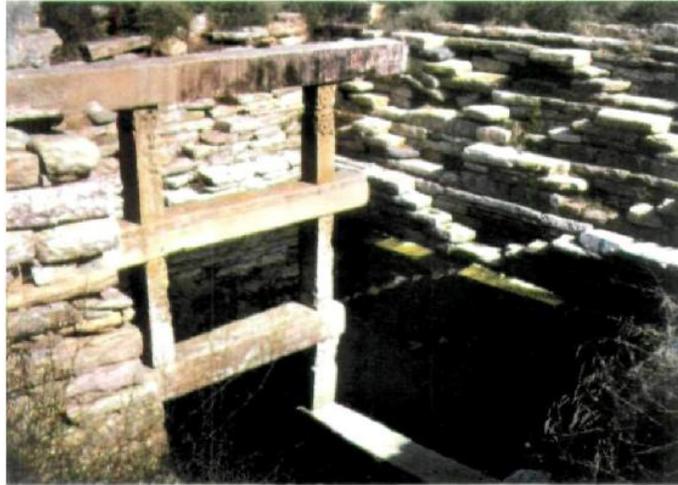
Lakshmi-Narayan temple, Amber.



Behari temple, Amber.
(Courtesy V.N. Bahadur).



The Nakki water structure. Amber.
(Courtesy V.N. Bahadur).



Bhooton ki Baori – An old step-well at Dudu (near Ajmer).

Such contact with the Mughal court was to prove a two-way road in the realm of architecture and art, with Rajput palaces and forts adapting certain features patronised by the Mughals¹⁴⁹, just as the latter intermixed Rajput and other Indian elements into their own style. In addition, the Mughal love for gardens led to the addition of water-channels and the *char-bagh* style of raised beds, terraces, fountains and walk-ways to the pre-existing style of gardens in Rajasthan. (The pre-Mughal traditions may be estimated in part from Mandan's fifteenth century texts and various literary works of that era). The blend developing from this admixture to the indigenous style can be seen in several sixteenth century and later Rajput palace-gardens. Among them are the gardens at Amber, the Amar Bagh of Jaisalmer, the Mandore gardens near Jodhpur, the *Saheliyon-ki-Bari* and Jagmandir at Udaipur, and the now obscured *char-bagh* style garden at Bairat's 'Mughal Gateway'.

The Dholpur-Karauli belt red sandstone and various other types of local sandstone found across different parts of Rajasthan were used in building palaces, forts and houses. The use of Rajasthan's red sandstone at Agra, Sikandra, Fatehpur Sikri, Lahore, Delhi, etc. is well-recognised, and probably encouraged interaction between the concerned artisans, besides affecting regional economy. The marble industry of Makrana too flourished, though it would gain a further boost during the subsequent reign of the

Mughal emperor Shah Jahan. (Shah Jahan used Rajasthan's Makrana marble for many structures, including the famous Taj Mahal at Agra).

Another sphere in which Mughal influence was to play a lasting role was that of paintings. Mention has previously been made of the earlier tradition of illustrated manuscripts that developed and flourished in western India — including Rajasthan — especially once the use of paper in place of palm-leaf became common. During the late fifteenth to early sixteenth centuries these illustrations became even more resplendent in western India, with texts often written using gold or silver leaf on a red or blue background. The pre-Mughal court traditions of Malwa, Gujarat, Delhi, and Multan had also had played their part in enriching the art in various parts of Rajasthan. The practice of depicting scenes relating to the life of Krishna and Ram had also developed by mid-sixteenth century. Such paintings bore a descriptive heading in Apabrahmsa painted in black or red on a yellow base, with the painted theme occupying the remaining space. This style is said to have flourished in Rajasthan during c. 1550-1650. Works like the *Chaura-panchashika*, which illustrates the story of Bilhan and Champavati, belongs to this tradition of painting. One feature of this style was the depiction of Krishna's headgear with a *kulha* in it.

To this general tradition, gradually percolated the influence of the 'Mughal School of Art', popularised by the Imperial court, which had, in turn, been influenced by Persian art traditions. Mughal miniatures were strong in their portraiture, court-related themes, and the depiction of hunting and animal-fight scenes, while the ateliers that developed at Rajasthani courts also drew upon the Krishna-Radha and other devotional and Puranic imagery. Thus, the 'Rajput' or 'Rajasthani' (and its related 'Pahari') School depicted scenes from the life of Krishna, the *Mahabharata*, Rama and the *Ramayana*, the story of Nala and Damayanti, the goddess Durga and Siva etc.; as well as the seasonal calendar or *Bara-masa* and the *Raga-Ragini* or musical modes (personified in human form along with their related emotions and moods); love stories from literature and oral traditions; besides court-related themes. The backdrop of these paintings ranged from sylvan idylls to Rajput palaces.

In the case of the 'Marwar School' of paintings, the impact of Mughal art truly began to be felt during the reign of 'Mota Raja' Udai Singh. Thereafter, the process of indigenous development and Mughal influence continued under Udai Singh's successors. The same may be said for the Bikaner and Bundi ateliers too. It is held that the early paintings of the Bikaner court atelier were influenced by Jain illustrated manuscripts, and the tradition exemplified by Jain preachers and *yatis* of Matheran. Thereafter, contact with the Mughal court influenced various aspects of the arts at the Bikaner court. It was also during this later period of contact that the now-famed 'usta' (a term apparently derived from the word *ustad* meaning 'maestro') artists made Bikaner their home, and the Bikaner court their area of work. In common with many of the Rajput courts, painters based many of their works on literary works like Keshav Das's *Rasika-Priya* and *Kavi-Priya*, the *Geet-Govind*, and so forth at Bikaner, just as they did at Bundi. *Raga-Ragini* and *Bara-masa* were favourite themes for the painters of the kingdom of Bundi's School of art. Art historians consider a set now called the 'Chunar Raga-mala' dating to c. 1591 as a particularly fine example of the Bundi School.

However, it was not as if the Mughal influence overwhelmed the indigenous developments. And, in some areas, Mughal influence was slower to make its impact felt. In the case of Mewar, the older close affinities with Central India's Mandu or Malwa School, which in turn drew heavily on the traditional illustrated manuscript western Indian School of Gujarat, continued during the sixteenth century also. The Mewar School, as it developed during the reign of rulers like Rana Sanga, Udai Singh, Pratap and Amar Singh, thus showed lesser Mughal influence during this period, than did the Bundi and Bikaner Schools, which showed comparatively more Mughal impact. One may emphasise that though Rana Pratap had his hands full with fighting Akbar's Imperial armies, he gave refuge and patronage to artists and artisans. The reign of his son, Amar Singh, saw a renewed interest in paintings, and various well-described *Raga-Mala* sets were painted during this period. Art historians consider the sharp pointed nose, large eyes and angular features of the figures, along with the wavy skyline, and the general arrangement of browns and reds of Mewari miniatures as reflecting, both, the influence of Gujarati/Jain manuscripts, and the earlier Rajasthani School, of which the *Chaura-panchashika* is representative.

Another area in which the local traditions continued, and developed further, was that of literature. Almost all rulers, chiefs, and ordinary men and women, had a fondness for poetry and oral renditions by bards. In addition, courts provided patronage to writers, poets, artists etc., which ensured continuity with the older tradition of Sanskrit and Rajasthani literature and philosophical or other compositions. Various *vartas* (commentary on one ruler), and *champus* (literature written partly in prose and partly in poetry), etc. were also composed during this period.

Among the famed writers of sixteenth century, Marwar had poets like Gadan Pasayat, author of *Rao Ranmal-ro-Roopak*, Ashanand Charan of village Bhadres, who wrote the *Lakshmanyana*, *Niranjanaprana*, *Gogaji-ri-Pidi*, *Uma-Dey-Bhattiyani-ra-Kavit* and several other songs, and Isardas, also from the village of Bhadres, who wrote the *Hala-Jahla-ri-Kundaliyan*. One of the most highly regarded poets of the time, who was known and valued at the Mughal court too, was Dursa Adha from the village of Dhundhla in Marwar. Dursa Adha, who is said to have been born in 1538 at Jaitaran, lived to the ripe old age of 111. In the course of his long life, Dursa Adha received patronage and recognition at Emperor Akbar's court, where he persisted in composing verses in Dingal eulogising men like Marwar's Rao Chandrasen, Mewar's Rana Pratap, and Sirohi's Rao Surtan — all of whom were opponents of his patron! Dursa Adha's works include *Jhulna Rao Amar Singhji Gajsinghot-ra*, *Rao Shri Surtan ra kavitt*, and *Kirtan-Bhawani*.

One may take special note of Bikaner's Bithu Suja, who composed the *Rao Jaitsi-ro Chhand* in Rajasthani Dingal around AD 1534, to commemorate Jaitsi's victory over the Mughal prince Kamran. Among other litterateurs of the age, were Kushalabh, whose *Dhola-Maru-ri-Chopai* composed in c. AD 1560 remains one of the best-known examples of Dingal poetry. Kushalabh also wrote the *Madhavanal Kamkundal*. Among those still remembered in the Dhoondhar area for the devotional literature they composed are Krishnadas of Galta (the spiritual preceptor of Amber's Prithviraj and Queen Bala Bai), and his disciple Agardas. Krishnadas wrote the *Jugalmanacharitra*, *Brahma Gita* and *Premtatvanirukta* in Brij-Bhasha, while his disciple, Agardas, wrote the *Ram Bhajan Manjari*, *Padavali*, *Dhyan Manjari* and *Rahasya-trya*.

One of the most famous *bhakti*, or devotional, mystic poets of all time from Rajasthan, Princess Mira Bai, also lived during the sixteenth century: The most popularly accepted version about her life is given here. It is believed that Mira Bai was born in VS 1555 (AD 1498) at the village of Kurdki (about thirty-five miles from Jodhpur). She was the only child of the Rathore prince, Ratan Singh, a younger son of Rao Dudha (the son of Marwar's ruler, Rao Jodha). Dudha had founded the estate of Merta and later given twelve villages within its boundaries to his son, Ratan Singh. As the father spent much of his time in wars and campaigns far from home, Mira was brought up at Merta under the guardianship of her grandfather, Dudha. (Some versions make her Dudha's daughter). After Dudha's death, she was brought up by her paternal uncle Biram Deo (her own father also being dead by then). In keeping with her royal background, Mira's education included instruction in politics, governance and religion. The family was probably influenced by the religious ferment of the times, and were followers of the Nimbark sect of Vaishnavism, besides paying reverence to other saints and preachers¹⁵⁰.

Mira herself turned to Krishna-worship at a young age, and it is her absolute devotion to Krishna, and the *bhakti* poetry she composed, that gave her a place in popular perception as a saint and a figure of reverence. Mira was married to Prince Bhojraj, the eldest son of Rana Sanga of Mewar (possibly in c. AD 1516), but was widowed early when Bhojraj was killed in battle around c.1521. Thereafter, Mira Bai's devotion to Krishna increased. Her husband's family (including her brother-in-law, Ratan Singh, when he ascended the throne after Rana Sanga's death, and then his half-brother and successor, Vikram), looked askance at her unorthodox behaviour. This included publicly singing and dancing before the idol of her beloved Lord Krishna, and keeping company with mendicants and wandering holy men. Mira's songs speak of her single-minded quest for Oneness with Krishna. They also provide a window to her innermost sentiments: Her belief that her beloved Krishna nurtured and sustained her through every danger and sorrow; her wish to serve Krishna, even as a slave; her feelings of being persecuted by the relatives of her dead husband; and so forth. Mira's songs mention two attempts on her life by the 'Rana-ji' (probably one or both of her brothers-in-law), who sent her, while she sang, a cup of poison, and a basket containing a snake. Such attempts, Mira's

songs declare, were rendered harmless by the benediction of Krishna who, she stated in her songs, transformed poison into a cup of ambrosia, and the snake into a garland.

Later, Mira left Chittor and went away to Merta, from where she went to Vrindaban (possibly because her unconventional behaviour was looked askance at Merta too). According to some versions, she spent the last fifteen years of her life at Dwarka. One tradition holds that in c. 1546-47 Rana Udai Singh, the youngest of Rana Sanga's sons, who had succeeded to the Mewar throne, sent a delegation of Brahmans to bring her back to Mewar. The reluctant Mira declared she wished to spend that night in worship at the temple of Ranchod-ji¹⁵¹ dedicated to her beloved Krishna, and the next morning was found to have disappeared. Popular belief holds that she 'merged' into the idol of Krishna, within the premises of the Ranchod-ji temple.

Mira Bai was part of the strong tradition of India's *bhakti* or devotional poets of the c. fourteenth-seventeenth centuries, who expressed their love of God through the analogy of human relations. In Mira's case, Krishna was her beloved, and she his devoted slave. Her compositions drew on everyday images and emotions of devotion, blended with a simplicity of language that was — and remains — easily understood and shared by rural and urban populations alike.

Other Bhakti saints and Sufi saints of this general period also left their mark in the field of devotional poetry, humanitarian and inter-faith religious tolerance and understanding too. Previously founded faiths and sects continued to thrive too. As such, the Rajasthan of the c. fourteenth-seventeenth century period was to be no stranger to the preaching of numerous established and well as relatively newer and near-contemporary groups. Among these were the Nimbark, Nath, Bishnoi, Jasnathi, Ram-Snehis of Rian, Ram-Snehis of Shahpura, Ram-Snehis of Seenthal, Dadu, Niranjani, Aai, Rasik, Lal-panthi, Alakhiya, Gudhad-panth, Vallabhacharya or Pushti-marg, and the Charandas or Shuk sects; various Sufi sects, and the Ismailis etc.; and the veneration of deified local warrior-saints.

The age saw shrines, temples, mosques built cheek-by-jowl at more than one town. The fact that so many of the rural holy men and women were swept along the fervour of the Bhakti and Sufi movement — and the teachings of the Nath, Bishnoi and other sects; and that so many saints or near-saints were revered in towns and villages, resulted in a blurring of hard religious boundaries at the level of daily life. Perhaps this occurred far more easily at the rural level in Rajasthan than it did at Akbar’s court during this period, despite the latter’s whole-hearted efforts to propagate his multi-faith Din-i-Ilahi!

RAJASTHAN AT THE CLOSE OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

The closing years of the sixteenth century saw a Rajasthan markedly different to what it had been even half a century earlier. For this, the expanding Mughal Empire under Akbar was largely responsible. The rise of the Mughal Empire had momentous consequences for most of the kingdoms and chiefdoms of the region. It also served to provide the male inhabitants of Rajasthan with employment, distant fields to try out their battle skills and administrative acumen, and more trade opportunities, besides the overall security of life and limb that accompanies most all-encompassing empires.

The subordinate but special position held in the Mughal Empire by the Rajput princes and their entourages was to continue over the ensuing century and more. It was also to see an enhancement of the material wealth of the local kingdoms, as the rulers and soldiers garnered fame and fortune in other areas and carried home their booty, or died in alien lands, far from their homes and hearths.

¹ “Not for us the poverty of Kabul again”, declared Babur in his autobiography.

² S.A.A. Rizvi, in Basham (Ed.) *A Cultural History of India*, 1997, pp.259.

³ See also, A.L. Srivastava’s *Akbar the Great*, Vol.1, pp.24-31.

⁴ V.A. Smith, *Akbar the Great Mogul*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1917, pp.28-29.

- ⁵ In 1561 Akbar took Rajasthan's strategic fort of Gagron from Malwa's control. Under the Khinchi Rajputs, Gagron was often attacked by numerous rivals, and had witnessed two 'jauhars' and 'shakas'. The first was in 1423, when Chief Achaldas Khinchi (immortalised in *Achaldas Khinchi ri Vachamka*) and his compatriots died fighting Malwa's Hushang Shah. The second occurred in 1444, in which Achaldas's son Palhan-Si (sent away to safety before the 1423 shaka) and Mewar's warrior Dheera fought Malwa's Mahmud Khalji. The fort contains the dargah of Hazrat Hamiduddin Chishti-or 'Mitthe Saheb'. An epigraph ascribes the main gate of the dargah to AH 987 (AD 1580).
- ⁶ For a perspective on this, see Frances H. Taft's *Honour and Alliance: Reconsidering Mughal-Rajput Marriages*, In K Schomer, J.L. Erdman, D.O. Lodrick & L.I. Rudolph (Eds.) *The Idea of Rajasthan*, Vol.II, 1994, pp.217-241.
- ⁷ Rizvi (1997, p.260), notes "He believed that tension between ruler and subjects was not a sign of healthy government. Akbar's administrative institutions...drew heavily upon the successful experiments of ancient India and the Delhi sultanate, and were immediately adapted from Sher Shah's practices".
- ⁸ Rizvi, S.A.A. 1977. 'The Muslim Ruling Dynasties', in A.L. Basham (Ed.) *A Cultural History of India*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1975, reprinted in Oxford India Paperbacks series, Delhi, 1997, pp.260.
- ⁹ Ibid, pp.260.
- ¹⁰ Tod, op.cit., Vol.I [1957 reprint], pp.235.
- ¹¹ Tod, Vol.I, pp.240.
- ¹² A copper-plate inscription of AD 1519 refers to Mahmud II's capture at the hands of a noble belonging to the royal Chundawat sub-clan of Mewar.
- ¹³ A later work called the *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* written by Ali Muhammad Khan provides an account of Sanga's battles and fights with Sultan Muzaffar Shah II of Gujarat.
- ¹⁴ G.N. Sharma, 'Achievements of Maharana Sanga (1508-1528)', in Ratnawat and Sharma (Eds.) *History and Culture of Rajasthan*, 1999, p. 157.
- ¹⁵ See G.N. Sharma, *Mewar and the Mughal Emperors*, Shiva Lal Agrawala & Co., Agra, 1962, pp.179.
- ¹⁶ Tod, Vol.I, pp. 241.
- ¹⁷ Tod, Vol.I, pp. 240.
- ¹⁸ Tod, Vol.I, pp.241.
- ¹⁹ S.A.A. Rizvi, *The Wonder That Was India*, Vol.II, Rupa & Co., New Delhi, 1993, pp.61.
- ²⁰ Gulbadan Begum's *Humayun-Nama* also refers to the mood in Babur's camp prior to the battle.

- [21](#) G.N. Sharma holds that it was 17 March, while Abul Fazl's *Akbarnama* states it was the 16th.
- [22](#) Tod, Vol.I, pp.245.
- [23](#) Tod, Vol.I, pp.246.
- [24](#) G.N. Sharma, op.cit., 1962, pp.36-37. See also his 'The House of Mewar ', in Habib and Nizami (Eds.) *A Comprehensive History of India*, Vol.V Pt.2, 1970, pp.798-803, for details about Sanga's life and campaigns.
- [25](#) G.N. Sharma, *Mewar and the Mughal Emperors*, 1962, pp.36-37.
- [26](#) Ibid, pp.37.
- [27](#) There are suggestions that Sanga used Ranthambore as a temporary base.
- [28](#) G.N. Sharma, *Mewar and the Mughal Emprors*, 1962, pp.39.
- [29](#) Ibid, pp. 39.
- [30](#) G.N. Sharma, in *A Comprehensive History of India* Vol. V 1970, pp. 797-802; See also *Mewar and the Mughal Emperors*, 1962, chapter II.
- [31](#) Tod, Vol.I, pp.246-47.
- [32](#) Tod, Vol.I, pp.248.
- [33](#) Ibid, pp.249.
- [34](#) Tod, Vol.I, pp.249.
- [35](#) Tod, Vol.I, pp.249.
- [36](#) Thirteen thousand, according to traditional accounts.
- [37](#) Ibid, pp.251.
- [38](#) G.N. Sharma, *Mewar and the Mughal Emperors*, 1962, pp.51.
- [39](#) Tod, Vol.I, pp.253.
- [40](#) See also, G.N. Sharma, op.cit., 1962, pp.58-61.
- [41](#) See ibid, pp.62-70.
- [42](#) Ibid, pp.71-72.
- [43](#) Tod, 1829, Vol.1 (reprinted, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London], pp.264.
- [44](#) See G.N. Sharma, *Mewar and the Mughal Emperors*, 1962, various pages, including pp.112.

- ⁴⁵ Badauni was appointed to a religious post at the Mughal court by Akbar in 1574. Among his writings was the *Kitab al-Hadith*, which apparently no longer exists. His most important work, the *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh* ('Selection from History'), sometimes called *Tarikh-e-Badauni* ('Badauni's History'), is a contemporaneous, critical, account. He also translated Sanskrit tales and the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* into the Persian language.
- ⁴⁶ G.N. Sharma, *Mewar and the Mughal Emperors*, 1962, pp.84.
- ⁴⁷ G.N. Sharma, *Mewar and the Mughal Emperors*, 1962, pp.84-88.
- ⁴⁸ During Raimal's reign, Ajja and Sajja, sons of Raja Rai Singh Jhala of Halwad (Gujarat) obtained shelter in Mewar. Their Jhala descendants played important and loyal roles in Mewar's subsequent history.
- ⁴⁹ Sharma, *Mewar and the Mughal Emperors*, 1962, pp.85.
- ⁵⁰ G.N. Sharma has given a detailed account of the battle in his *Mewar and the Mughal Emperors*, pp.86-92.
- ⁵¹ G.N. Sharma, *Mewar and the Mughal Emperors*, 1962, pp.91.
- ⁵² *Vir Vinod*, Vol.II, pp.157.
- ⁵³ G.N. Sharma, *Rajasthan Through the Ages*, Vol.II, 1990, pp. 65.
- ⁵⁴ The Dungarpur Inscription of AD 1586 notes that two of Askaran's nephews, Bagha and Durga, met a hero's death in this encounter.
- ⁵⁵ G.H. Ojha, *History of Rajputana: History of the Banswara State*, Vol.III, Pt.II, Ajmer, 1937.
- ⁵⁶ Tod, Vol. I, pp.239.
- ⁵⁷ In the context of Rajasthan and the Naths, see among others, Daniel Gold's 'Yogis' Earrings, Householder's Birth: Split Ears and Religious Identity among Householder Naths in Rajasthan', in N.K. Singhi and Rajendra Joshi (Eds). *Religion, Ritual and Royalty*, Rawat, Jaipur, 1999, pp.35-53.
- ⁵⁸ For more on the Ramanandis of Galta, among others see, A.K. Roy's *History of the Jaipur City*, 1978, pp.24, and Madhukanta Sharma and Govind Sharma's 'Ramananda Sampradaya evam Rajasthan', in S.N. Dube (Ed.) *Religious Movements in Rajasthan — Ideas and Antiquities*, Centre for Rajasthan Studies, Univ. of Rajasthan, Jaipur, 1996, pp.229-235.
- ⁵⁹ G.N. Sharma, *Rajasthan Through the Ages* (Vol. II), Bikaner, 1990, pp.104.
- ⁶⁰ See Ranbir Sinh, 2001.
- ⁶¹ Sher Shah's coins with his name in Persian and Devnagari script ('Sri Ser Sahi') have been found in Rajasthan.

- [62](#) Haji Khan seized Ajmer and Nagaur from Maldeo of Marwar, as is described elsewhere in this text.
- [63](#) Nainsi's famous *Khyat* details Rupsi's descendants and their holdings. As Rupsi 'Bairagi' held the jagir of Parbatsar, Dausa was later granted to Prince Sur Singh, one of Raja Bharmal's sons. Sur Singh was also given the pargana of Hindaun, according to Fateh Singh Champawat's *Brief History of Jaipur*.
- [64](#) She is called Jiya Rani, Maanmati, Harika, and 'Shahi-Bai' in different sources, but is popularly known today as 'Jodha Bai'. Abul Fazl and Nizam-ud-din Ahmad's texts note that she was princess Harika, Bharmal's eldest daughter, and that her mother was Bharmal's Solanki clan wife, Rani Chandravati. (See also VS. Bhargava, op.cit., 1979, pp.13, f.n.2).
- [65](#) Sambhar was part of the *sarkar* of Ajmer under Akbar and his successors. Akbar built a mosque and tank here (1562), Jahangir a reservoir (1627), Shah Jahan repaired a serai (1634), and Aurangzeb repaired the old fort (1695). Buland Nizam Khan, Muraridas, Benidas, Bijairaja, Mirza Julikarana, were among the officials posted at Sambhar.
- [66](#) R.N. Prasad, *Raja Man Singh of Amber*, World Press, Calcutta, 1966.
- [67](#) A branch of the Sur Afghans had established their independence in Bengal during the short reign of Adil Shah Suri (r. 1554-1556), a nephew of Emperor Sher Shah.
- [68](#) "The disgruntled Mughal mansabdars, mainly Turanis, rebelled, putting Muzaffar Khan to death on April 19, 1580. They formed their own government and declared Akbar's half-brother, Mirza Hakim, their ruler. Between 1580 and 1582 the rebellion spread from Bihar and Bengal to Avadh and Katihar.." (S A A. Rizvi, 1993, pp.109).
- [69](#) Birbal was Akbar's minister, counsellor and friend, as well as one of the famed 'Nine Jewels' at his court.
- [70](#) Cited by Prasad, in *Raja Man Singh of Amber*.
- [71](#) Rizvi, op.cit., 1997, pp. 260.
- [72](#) R.N. Prasad, 'Raja Man Singh of Amber', In Ratnawat and Sharma (eds.) *History and Culture of Rajasthan*, Jaipur, 1999, pp.196.
- [73](#) Ibid.
- [74](#) Ibid.
- [75](#) Ibid, pp.197.
- [76](#) Ibid, pp.198.
- [77](#) By 1715 the pargana of Amber consisted of about 700 villages, which had grown to 998 by 1737.
- [78](#) See Zahoor Khan Mehar, *Rajasthan ke Itihas ka Sarvekshan*, pp.30.

- [79](#) One of Raimal's wives was the daughter of Ridmal Gaur.
- [80](#) For Shekhawat sources, see Sinh, 2001.
- [81](#) Lunkaran, Raysal, Gopal, Chanda, Bhairon and Ram Singh.
- [82](#) Tod, op.cit., Vol. II, pp.316-317.
- [83](#) Jhabarmal Sharma, op.cit., 1922, pp.19-20.
- [84](#) Raysal's nephew, Manohar, son of Rao Lunkaran of Amarsar, built the Manohar-Pol within Bhatner fort.
- [85](#) This is the Udaipur situated in Udaipurwati, not Mewar.
- [86](#) K.C.Jain, 1972, pp.262.
- [87](#) Jhabarmal Sharma, 1922, pp.21-22.
- [88](#) This included the pargana of Maroth, with 112 villages.
- [89](#) In his *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, Jahangir records presenting banners in the first year of his reign to the 'loyal Raysal who held a mansab of 3,000'.
- [90](#) Raysal's twelve sons were Lad Khan (Lal Singh), Virbhan (died at Swat during father's lifetime), Tirmal, Bhojraj, Parasram, Hariram, Taj Khan (Tej Singh), Girdhar, Babu, Bihari, Kushal, and Dayal Das.
- [91](#) P.W. Powlett, *Gazetteer of Ulwur*, pp.9.
- [92](#) See Powlett's *Gazetteer of Ulwar*, pp. 55.
- [93](#) Ojha, 1911 [rep. 1999], pp.204.
- [94](#) Ojha, 1911 [rep. 1999], pp.207.
- [95](#) Ibid, pp.209-214.
- [96](#) The plots, counter-plots and subsequent events of Rao Surtan's thrilling career are described in detail in Ojha's *Sirohi Rajya ka Itihas*, 1911 [rep. 1999], pp.218-244.
- [97](#) Ojha, 1911 [rep. 1999], pp. 225-226.
- [98](#) Ibid pp.225-226.
- [99](#) Ibid, pp.229-230.
- [100](#) She is sometimes referred to as Karmawati.
- [101](#) Tod, op.cit., Vol.II, pp.384.

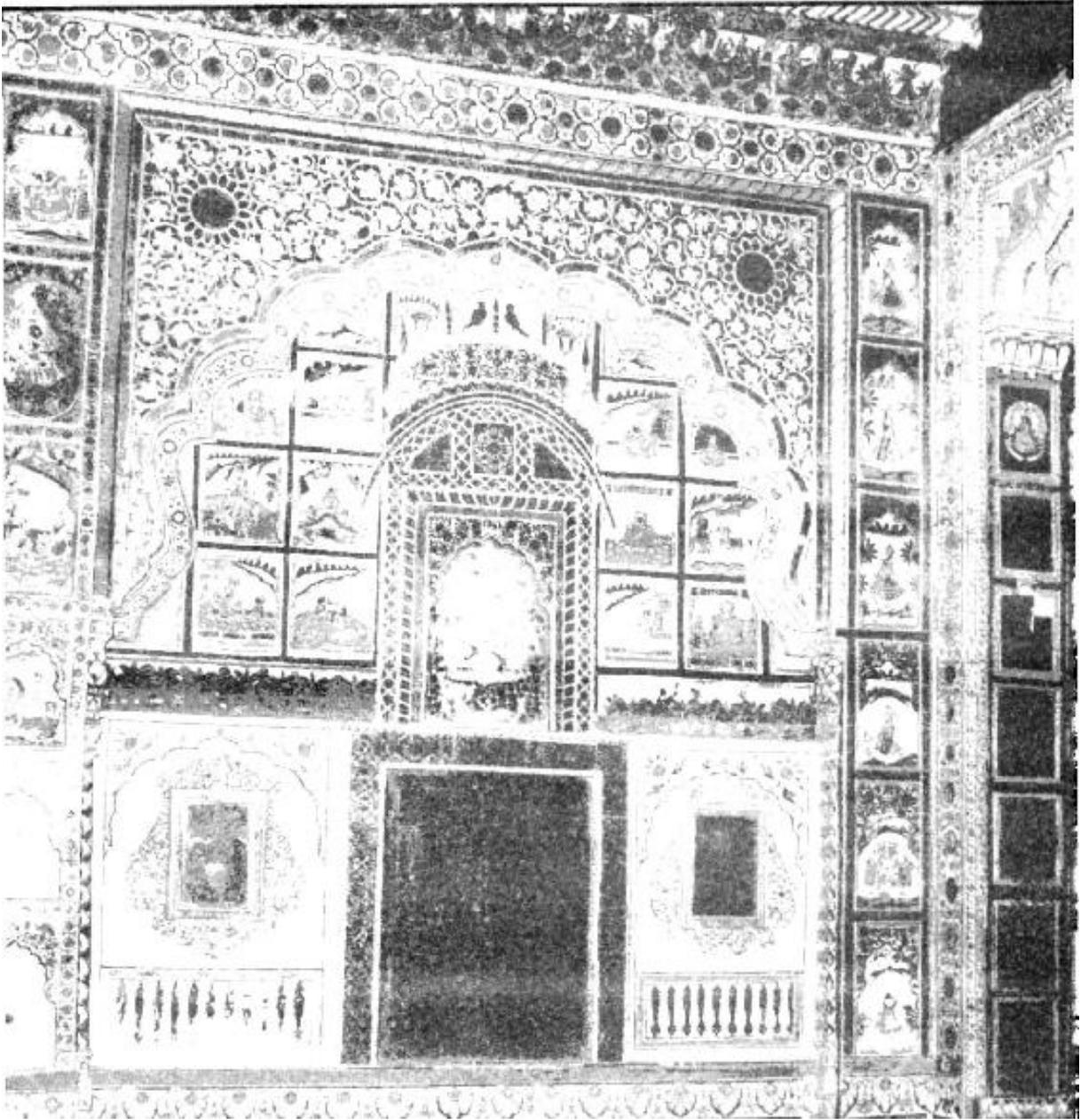
- [102](#) Another version holds that Biram Deo and Ganga were brothers, being sons of Bagha, who had predeceased his father, Rao Suja.
- [103](#) Nainsi, Vol.II, pp.154.
- [104](#) See, VN. Reu's *Marwar ka Itihas*, Vol.1, Jodhpur, 1938/1943.
- [105](#) Ibid.
- [106](#) R.P. Vyas (citing K.R. Qanungo's *Sher Shah and his Times* (1965), pp.352), in Ratnawat & Sharma (Eds.) *History and Culture of Rajasthan*, 1999, pp.164.
- [107](#) See R.P. Vyas, in Ratnawat and Sharma (Eds.) *History and Culture of Rajasthan*, Jaipur, 1999, pp. 165-166.
- [108](#) In 1542, following Maldeo's action against the kingdom of Bikaner, two of Bikaner's princes would also find their way to Sher Shah's court, seeking aid in regaining their land.
- [109](#) R.P. Vyas, in Ratnawat & Sharma (Eds.) *History and Culture of Rajasthan*, Jaipur, 1999, pp.166.
- [110](#) Vyas, 1999, pp.166.
- [111](#) See, for instance, Ishwari Prasad's *The Life and Times of Humayun*, 1956, pp.208.
- [112](#) R.P. Vyas, in Ratnawat & Sharma (Eds.). *History and Culture of Rajasthan*, Jaipur, 1999, pp.167.
- [113](#) Vyas, 1999, pp.167-68.
- [114](#) Vyas, 1999, pp. 168.
- [115](#) Raisen fell in June 1543, and Sher Shah garrisoned a strong force led by Shahbaz Khan there.
- [116](#) Bar Singh Rathore laid the foundations of Merta fort in 1461.
- [117](#) As one of Maldeo's best commanders, Kumpa by then held the *jagir* of Didwana, Fatehpur and Jhunjhunu.
- [118](#) Abbas Khan Sherwani's *Tarikh-i-Sher Shahi* and Ferishta's *Tarikh-i-Ferishta* refer to such a remark by Sher Shah.
- [119](#) Shergarh, an old site mentioned previously, was re-inhabited and named Shergarh after Sher Shah.
- [130](#) K.R. Qanungo (1965) *Sher Shah and his Times*, pp.333.
- [121](#) Some records suggest that Prince Ram Singh was exiled by his father in 1547. He found refuge with Rana Udai Singh of Mewar, who was his father-in-law. The Rana conferred the *jagir* of Kelwa on Ram Singh.
- [122](#) 'Pirojiya' seems to have been a copper coin used in Marwar. Seven *pirojiyas* made one *rupee*.

- [123](#) Here, Chandrasen left his zenana in Rao Surtan's protection, while he visited other states in search of assistance.
- [124](#) In 1572 Akbar entrusted the administration of Jodhpur to Rai Singh of Bikaner.
- [125](#) B.L. Bhadani, *Peasants, Artisans and Entrepreneurs*, Rawat, Jaipur and New Delhi, 1999, pp.2.
- [126](#) Ibid.
- [127](#) Khyats compiled during the reign of Jodhpur's Maharaja Man Singh in VS 1882, refer to the marriage of Mani Bai with Prince Salim (the future Emperor Jahangir).
- [128](#) According to Laxmi Kumari Chundawat, the horoscope of this princess formed part of a hand written collection of the Jodhpur 'Astrologer-Royal' (*Raj-jyotshi*) Purohit Sivaram, a Pushkarna Brahmin. The collection later became the property of a Pali Pushkarna, Vyas Meetha Lal.
- [120](#) By 1830 this meant that 83% of the land and 3726 out of Marwar's 4376 villages were *jagir*-held lands!
- [130](#) Sec B.L. Bhadani, *op.cit.*, 1999, pp.327-329.
- [131](#) 'Big' villages like Majal, Palawasni, Sultana, Jharau and Alaniawas, listed as yielding high revenues, were sited along the route, which may be indicative of the marketing advantages available to villages along this route (*Ibid*).
- [132](#) Bhadani, *Ibid*, pp. 327-329.
- [133](#) *Ibid*, pp.331-332.
- [134](#) *Ibid*.
- [135](#) When Sur Singh returned to Jodhpur after nine years in the Deccan, he performed a sacrificial *yagna*.
- [136](#) In both cases, there was also a family connection. Rao Jaitsi's sister, the Bikaner princess, Bala Bai, was the favourite queen of Sanga's father, Amber's ruler Prithviraj (r. 1503-1527). While with Ganga of Marwar, Jaitsi shared a common paternal great-grandfather in Rao Jodha of Marwar.
- [137](#) Bhatner subsequently came into the hands of the Chayals, before being re-taken in 1560 by Bikaner. Some twenty years later, Emperor Akbar ordered the *subedar* of Hissar to occupy Bhatner, as reprisal against the looting of imperial treasure in its vicinity. Bhatner continued to change masters in the ensuing centuries. In 1805 it was taken from Bhatti chief Zabita Khan by Bikaner's forces after a five month siege.
- [138](#) Besides boosting local and regional economy, various transit taxes and cesses like *rahdari*, *dalali*, *mapa*, *chungi*, *tulai* etc. swelled the coffers of different kingdoms along the trade routes too.

- [139](#) See, among others, Rani Laxmi Kumari Chundawat's *Gir Ucha, Uncha Garha* (1994), *Manjhal Raat* (2000), etc. *Khyat* literature and the oral traditions shower praises, alike, for the philanthropy of Raja Rai Singh. At the time of his marriages with the princesses of Mewar and Jaisalmer, respectively, he gratified the local Charans of those places with lavish rewards.
- [140](#) One example that shows the respect Rai Singh commanded at the Mughal court concerns the death of the Baghela prince Virabhadra, son of Raja Ram Chandra Baghela, and husband of one of Rai Singh's daughters. When the news reached the Imperial court, the emperor went in person to the residence of the Bikaner ruler to condole with him. Such visits of condolences were rare on the part of the emperor, and indicate the esteem in which Rai Singh was held. Akbar thereafter tried to persuade Rai Singh's widowed daughter not to become a sati.
- [141](#) Cited in Jain, 1972, pp.373.
- [142](#) Sharma, 1990, *Rajasthan Through the Ages*, Vol.II, pp.119.
- [143](#) For more on this, see Frances H. Taft's 'Honour and Alliance: Reconsidering Mughal-Rajput Marriages', in Schomer et.al. (Eds.) *The Idea of Rajasthan*, Vol.II, 1994, pp.217-241.
- [144](#) Taft (Ibid, pp.218-220), provides a table listing twenty-seven Mughal-Rajput marriage alliances.
- [145](#) Among others, see Varsha Joshi's *Polygamy and Purdah*, Rawat, Jaipur and New Delhi, 1995, pp.19, 23, 93-94.
- [146](#) See William A. Noble and Ram Sankhyan's 'Signs of the Divine: Sati Memorials and Sati Worship in Rajasthan', in K. Schomer et al (Eds) *The Idea of Rajasthan*, Vol.1, American Institute of Indian Studies, Manohar, Delhi, 1994, pp.343-389.
- [147](#) See, for example, Varsha Joshi's *Polygamy and Purdah*, 1995, pp.139-153.
- [148](#) For more on this and the position of women in general in Rajasthan's history, see, Varsha Joshi's *Polygamy and Purdah*, 1995; Lindsey Harlan's *Religion and Rajput Women*, Univ. of California Press, Berkeley, 1992; Shashi Arora's *Rajasthan mein Nari ki Stithi*, Tarun Prakashan, Bikaner, 1981; Rani Laxmi Kumari Chundawat's 'Rajasthan ki Rajniti mein Mahilayein', *Maru Bharati*, Vol. 27, 1969, pp.8-11, and her 'Ram Pyari ka Risala', in *Bhanwarlal Nahata Abhinandan Granth* among others.
- [149](#) For more on architecture, among others, see G.H.R. Tillotson *The Rajput Palaces: The Development of an Architectural Style, 1450-1750*, Yale Univ. Press, New Haven, 1987.
- [150](#) Reference has been made to Prithviraj of Amber's wife, Bala Bai, who was a follower of Vaishnavism. She is popularly believed to have brought Krishna-worship to the Amber court following her marriage to Prithviraj. Both later accepted Krishnadas of the Ramanandi sect as their spiritual preceptor. It is quite possible that western Rajasthan saw a greater degree of religious interaction at this time, and that Bhakti movement inspired Krishna-worshipping sects attracted a larger popular following as compared to established Saivism. Of course, western Rajasthan also saw a multiplicity of deified hero-saints and other preachers during this general period.
- [151](#) One of the names used for Krishna.

8

RAJASTHAN
FROM C. AD 1600 UP TO
THE DEATH OF AURANGZEB (AD 1707)



INTRODUCTION



WITH THE MAJORITY OF RAJASTHAN'S KINGDOMS AND CHIEFDOMS reaching an understanding with the Mughal emperor, Akbar and his successor, Jahangir, and accepting the reality and status quo of the expanding Mughal empire, a different phase of mutual inter-relationships began.

The Mughal Empire was, by now, the acknowledged central authority over much of India, and gradually the bulk of the states of the Rajasthan region settled into a stage of accepting Mughal sovereignty, and establishing cordial relations. Significantly, from the time of the Mughal emperor Akbar onwards, most of the rulers of the various Rajasthani kingdoms and chiefdoms that acknowledged Mughal suzerainty were to see active military and administrative service in the cause of the empire, along with their respective entourages, in different areas of South Asia.

Obviously, participation in military expeditions and acts of bravado were not confined only to the rulers or their kin. In the broader context of the Rajasthan of that period, warriors, princes and common soldiers alike sought glory on the field of battle with equal zest, irrespective of whether they belonged to a ruling elite or otherwise. This mindset was actively encouraged as a part of the perceived culture and Kshatriya code of conduct and honour. The traditional bards played their role in fuelling and reminding the Rajputs of their warrior heritage, through telling and re-telling ancient and new episodes of valour at religious functions, court and village-level gatherings, open-air recitals marking local feasts and festivities, and at any other occasion that presented itself.

Many Rajput rulers and their retainers also held important posts as viceroys, governors and imperial representatives for tricky diplomatic negotiations during the reign of different Mughal emperors. Several younger scions of various ruling clans and sub-clans also attained high esteem at the Mughal court. In the case of Bikaner, for example, besides Prince Peethal, the brother of Raja Rai Singh (referred to previously), the four sons of a later Bikaner ruler, Raja Karan Singh (r. 1631-1669), were among those who rapidly won individual honours at the Mughal court. These honours were quite independent of the *mansabs* granted to the rulers themselves.

The exploits and achievements of many large and small fief-holders, who, with their own troops and servitors, accompanied their rulers and chiefs in Imperial postings and commands, are known too through eulogies and genealogical records maintained by various Charans, Barhats, Jaggas etc. who preserved traditional family-trees (*vamshavali* and *pidhivali*). Such exploits and other events were also recorded in the *raso*, *vachanika*, *baat*, *kavya*, *khyat*, etc. type of writings. Many of these also detailed local heroes and achievements, rather than only of those in Imperial service. Such writings, in passing, throw valuable light on many aspects other than battle and death-with-glory, like local governance and polity, customs, inter-group relations, the *zenana*, position of women, town and village life, horses, trade and the life of ordinary people. These *rasos*, *vachanikas*, *baats*, etc. include the *Achaldas-Khinchi ri Vachanika*, the *Ratan-Raso* - about Rao Ratan Singh of Ratlam, Jaswant Singh of Marwar, Aurangzeb etc., and the battle of Dharmatpur in which Ratan died; *Baat-Johiya-ri*, *Sada Bhati Baat*, *Jagdev-Puvar-ri Baat*, etc. Besides such texts, the daily and weekly local court-records, correspondence and *Roznamchas* etc., and state administrative records, maintained in *bahis*, *baqicqats*, *bastas*, etc. provided information about the role of the minor bureaucrats, ordinary soldiers, servitors and retainers (*naukar*, *chakar*, etc.) too.

With the rulers and chiefs spending more and more time away at the Imperial court and on military campaigns and expeditions in different parts of the Mughal Empire and its frontiers, the day-to-day administration of different kingdoms and estates was often entrusted to reliable ministers or officials. These officials were variously known as *dewan*, *pradhan*, *mantri*

and so forth. In the case of chiefdoms and smaller estates, work was generally carried out by estate-managers like *kamdar*, *amil*, etc. Daily reports would be despatched from the home-kingdoms to the Rajput rulers while they were at the Mughal court, or away on campaigns, so that they could stay abreast of local issues and problems. In return, instructions and court-related news — and gossip — would be sent back. In this manner, physical distance did not prevent the smooth functioning of local administration.

(We get a glimpse of the system connecting the Mughal Court with Amber-Jaipur during the Mughal period from records surviving in erstwhile Jaipur state's archives¹. A detailed daily report of each day's activities at the Mughal court used to be prepared and despatched to Amber very late each night by special messenger. Amber had arrangements for changing horses enroute at every six *kos* (*kos* being a unit for measuring distance). The responsibility of the messenger's safety rested on the local subedar or other local official through whose territory the route lay. The report despatched from the Mughal court — whether at Delhi or Agra — an hour or so before midnight of one day used to normally arrive at Amber by the morning of the third day; which given the fact that a distance of some two hundred miles was involved was an extremely fast pace. The messenger carried a long spear (called *ballum*) with copper bells at one end that let people know that a messenger was passing, and a long blade for protection against animal attack at the other. Other states had similar information systems to keep them abreast of news at the Mughal court and at other places.)

In fact, Rajput rulers and chiefs had long valued able ministers and administrators, who could run the routine administration of their kingdoms while they were campaigning, or otherwise away from their respective capitals. This became more so from the time of Emperor Akbar onwards, following the agreements between various individual states/ rulers and the Mughal emperor. The situation continued over the next two centuries or so, as several rulers and chiefs of Rajasthan fought campaigns, or governed provinces, or remained otherwise involved in Imperial service through most of their adult lives — far from their own kingdoms, except for short intermittent periods of visiting 'home'. Several of the administrators who looked after state administrations in the absence of the anointed rulers and

chiefs were Jains or Brahmins². (Jain, Brahmin and Vaisya ministers were often preferred, as Rajput rulers realised the pitfalls of leaving the governance of their kingdoms in the hands of close male relatives during their own absence).

Queens, — generally the senior-most (*Pat-Rani*), though not necessarily so, usually had a say in the governance of the kingdom or estate in the absence of her husband unless, of course, she and her retinue had accompanied him out of the state³. Two such contemporaneous queens who wielded full authority were Raja Man Singh of Dhoondhar's Bhati clan wife (referred to respectfully as the 'Bhatiyani Rani'), and Maharaja Rai Singh of Bikaner's wife, Rani Ganga Bai⁴.

It may be also noted here that it was already an established practice by this time for women from the ruling class to possess property in their own names. There were a fairly substantial number of such women — usually Rajputs — to whom their natal families, and the families they married into, granted lands for their upkeep. And, it was the standard accepted practice for these women to individually administer the lands and villages they held as personal *jagirs* and *haath-kharch ki jagir*⁵ through carefully chosen administrative agents like *kamdars*, *amils*, *dewans*, etc. Though these women lived within *zenanas*, they were normally kept fully informed about matters concerning their individual jagirs, — the state of agriculture, famine, law and order, or social-problems etc. related appeals from the peasantry working the lands, etc. by their administrative agents⁶. Such *kamdars*, *amils*, *dewans*, etc. took instructions directly from these land-owning women and were answerable only to them. Furthermore, the concerned owner used the revenues from these jagir lands solely as *she* wished⁷!

THE MUGHAL EMPIRE DURING THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY AND RAJPUT PARTICIPATION IN ITS GOVERNANCE AND CAMPAIGNS

Upon Akbar's death in 1605, his domains extended from the region of Afghanistan in the northwest to the Bay of Bengal in the east, and included Gujarat and the northern Deccan. His eldest son, Prince Salim, ascended the throne as Emperor Jahangir (r. 1605-28). Jahangir's reign saw a continuation of Akbar's administrative, revenue, and other policies — including the 'Rajput Policy' that had gone a long way in helping the consolidation and expansion of the Mughal Empire.

The continuity of policies was to prove beneficial during the reign of Jahangir's successor, his son Prince Khurram, who took the name of Emperor Shah Jahan (r. 1628-1658, d.1666), upon his accession. Shah Jahan's reign witnessed military campaigns to the northwest and the Deccan. It also saw the zenith of cultural and architectural achievements of the Mughal Empire. However, both the military and the architectural etc. activities would prove a long-term strain on the financial condition of the Mughal Empire — even if the cracks would not be realised for a couple of generations more!

The near-fatal illness of Emperor Shah Jahan in September 1657 unleashed a power-struggle between his sons. (Most of the rulers, chiefs and fief-holders of Rajasthan, with their troops, became involved in this war on one side or the other, as we shall note further in this section). Thinking his end was near; Shah Jahan nominated his eldest son, Prince Dara Shikoh, to be his successor, and instructed him to conduct the administration of the Mughal Empire. Meanwhile, in the wake of rumours that the emperor was already dead and Dara was intentionally keeping the news secret while he consolidated his own position, the emperor's other sons — Shuja, Aurangzeb and Murad — made their bid for the Mughal throne. The three royal princes were, at the time, posted as governors of the provinces of Bengal, Deccan and Gujarat, respectively. Dara Shikoh alone remained on their father's side. This sanguine war-of-succession for the Mughal throne was to prove particularly poignant, in that Shah Jahan survived his illness, only to be deprived of his crown and throne. He would live out the remaining years of his life as a prisoner of his son, Aurangzeb, who was soon to emerge victorious from the internecine war, to don the mantle of emperor of Hindustan.

That lay in the future, though, when Shuja, having proclaimed his independence, marched with his army from the province of Bengal towards the Imperial capital to secure his position on throne. From the province of Gujarat, Murad did the same. Aurangzeb proceeded in a canny manner. He wrote to his youngest brother, Murad, promising support if Murad made a bid for the Imperial crown, and indicating that afterwards he (Aurangzeb) himself intended to retire from public life. Simultaneously, he mobilised the contingents he could muster.

As news of the revolt of his sons was reported to the ailing Shah Jahan, he proceeded from Delhi to Agra by boat, where he summoned a council of his advisors and trusted nobles. Among those asked to rush to Agra with all speed were Rajput rulers and chiefs. Jaswant Singh of Marwar and Mirza Raja Jai Singh of Amber were among those who responded to the emperor's call. Shah Jahan and his Council decided to despatch armies against the rebellious Mughal princes. Part of the Imperial forces, under the command of Sulaiman Shikoh and assisted by Mirza Raja Jai Singh of Amber, was sent to check the advance of Prince Shuja from Bengal. Another army, under the joint command of Jaswant Singh of Marwar and Qasim Khan was despatched against the princes Aurangzeb and Murad, who had purportedly joined hands. After Shuja had taken Patna, Jai Singh was ordered to proceed towards Patna, and join forces with Imperial contingents, under the command of Qasim Khan and Mahabat Khan, which had been sent to re-inforce him. Thereafter, on February 4, 1658, a battle took place at Bahadurpur, five miles northeast of Benares. Shuja was defeated and retreated towards Monghyr.

Meanwhile, Qasim Khan and Jaswant Singh, with the troops at their command had marched from Agra to meet the forces of the rebellious Mughal princes, Aurangzeb and Murad. Proceeding via Bayana, Ranthambore, Chaumalla, Chandrawati, Gunj Fatehabad, etc. the Imperial force came upon the joint forces of Aurangzeb and Murad at Dharmat, some twenty-five kilometres from Ujjain. Aurangzeb and Murad's forces were already well-ensconced there at the time. The battle fought at Dharmat on April 16, 1658, ended in a victory for Aurangzeb's side.

Thereafter, the joint armies of Aurangzeb and Murad continued their march towards Agra. Dara came out to meet him. Their forces clashed at Samugarh, south of the river Yamuna River and about sixteen kilometres east of Agra, on May 29, 1658. Dara Shikoh's army of about 60,000 was the larger, but Aurangzeb emerged a superior general. Possibly, the battle took its most crucial turn when Dara's descent from his elephant was misunderstood by his forces as indicative of his death. The crucial battle of Samugarh saw another victory for Aurangzeb. On June 8, 1658, Aurangzeb occupied Agra, imprisoned his royal father, Emperor Shah Jahan, and took firm control of the empire. Within a short time after this, Aurangzeb succeeded in doing away with actual and potential rivals. Aurangzeb's partner-in-enterprise, Murad, who had joined him at Dharmat, was arrested and despatched to the fort of Gwalior, where he was to live out the rest of his life. Dara was chased to, and then hounded out of, Delhi towards the Punjab.

Meanwhile, July 21, 1658, marked Aurangzeb's formal coronation as the next emperor of the Mughal line to occupy the throne. Aurangzeb now set about consolidating his position. Part of this included his nominally accepting the submission of several of the prominent chiefs and subordinates who had sided with his rivals. In September 1658, Shuja launched a fresh campaign against Aurangzeb, in another bid for the Mughal Empire. He reached Banaras, took Allahabad and advanced further, making camp at Khajua (near Etawah, UP), at the end of December. Aurangzeb, who had marched forward to meet his brother's challenge, arrived at Koda, some twelve kilometres from Khajua, within a few days of this. The clash at Khajua on January 5, 1659 ended with Shuja's defeat.

March 1659 saw a more or less isolated Dara, unable to secure the assistance of many Imperial commanders and Rajput rulers like Marwar's Jaswant Singh (who failed to keep his rendezvous with Dara at Ajmer, at the persuasion of Amber's Mirza Raja Jai Singh). He was now defeated by Aurangzeb at Deorai, near Ajmer. It was an irony of fate, in that Dara had been born at Ajmer, while his grand-father, Emperor Jahangir, was residing there. Aurangzeb also took the fort of Taragarh at Ajmer. Imperial contingents commanded by Mirza Raja Jai Singh of Amber followed hard on the heels of Dara, who moved through Gujarat and Kutch towards the

border with Iran. Dara was captured and eventually executed in 1659. Other potential rivals were also cleared from the path by Aurangzeb.

Meanwhile, taking advantage of the situation resulting from the internecine struggle for the Imperial throne among the Mughal princes, the Maratha leader, Chhatrapati Shivaji (1627-1680), son of Shahji Bhonsle, had enhanced his sphere of influence in the Deccan area. Prior to this, Shivaji's successes had included the capture of numerous hill-forts at an early age, the mastery of the whole of north Konkan, and several skirmishes with the Imperial forces. This rise of the Marathas in the latter part of the seventeenth century, under the leadership of Shivaji, had already become a challenge to Mughal suzerainty in many parts of the Deccan, and initiated a new phase in the Deccan policy of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan and his successors. The 1657-59 period saw further concentrated action by the Marathas against the Mughals, and the killing of the Imperial commander, Afzal Khan, besides the rout of the forces of the Adil Shahi kingdom of Bijapur in 1659.

Thus, once secure in his position, and following his second coronation at Delhi, Emperor Aurangzeb deemed it necessary to turn his attention towards the Deccan. He appointed his maternal uncle, Shaista Khan, to recover lost Imperial forts and holdings from Shivaji's control. Mirza Raja Jai Singh of Amber and Maharaja Jaswant Singh of Marwar were among the various Rajput rulers and chiefs deputed to serve along with Shaista Khan's large Imperial contingent in the Deccan. Though subsequent Mughal campaigning deprived Shivaji of many of his strongholds, Shaista Khan's campaigns failed to check Shivaji. Later, as is detailed further in this chapter, Amber's Mirza Raja Jai Singh convinced Shivaji to attend Aurangzeb's court, but the attempt at mending fences proved abortive. Shivaji managed to escape from the Imperial capital, and returned to the Deccan, where he took up arms afresh against the might of the Mughal Empire.

Between the period following Shivaji's coronation at Raigarh in 1674, and 1680, Shivaji carried out successful warfare against the Imperial forces, capturing forts like Gingee and Vellore, extending the areas under his control and levying *chauth* tax even on tracts held by the Mughals. (*Chauth*

literally means a quarter, which is what Shivaji took to demanding from the revenues of a raided area). At the time of Shivaji's death, his 'empire' included much of the area now comprising the state of Maharashtra, the regions that had comprised the kingdoms of Bijapur and Ahmadnagar, and isolated pockets like Tanjore, Bangalore, and Goa. The Maratha-Mughal struggle for domination continued after Shivaji's death too, as we shall note further in this chapter, initially under the leadership of his son, Sambhaji, and then under various capable Maratha prime ministers and commanders. During this entire period, several of the rulers from the Rajasthan area, along with their forces, served with the Imperial armies in the Deccan.

Meanwhile, in the course of his long reign, Aurangzeb's relations with the area comprising Rajasthan, and its several states and estates, were not often smooth and Aurangzeb's policies and action were often challenged through unsheathed swords, as is noted further in this chapter. However, the emperor's firm control over the Mughal empire, and the by now well-established tradition of Imperial service on the part of Rajasthan's princely houses and nobility, as well as ordinary soldiers, *munshis* and administrative aides (clerks etc.), ensured a continuity of social, cultural, political and economic mutual inter-relationship. The overall stability enabled trade and commerce to thrive too, and many of Rajasthan's older established towns and market centres had seen further growth during the first half of the century as trading caravans passed through the region.

However, while Aurangzeb was successful in adding the Deccan based Sultanates of Bijapur and Golconda to the Mughal Empire, and extending his domains to their greatest extent, his reign also started an unperceived countdown of the empire's decline. Aurangzeb's religious bigotry, his persecution of the Sikhs of the Punjab, and his policies towards the Marathas, Jats, Sikhs, and Rajputs resulted in rebellions. Meanwhile, problems within the Mughal administrative system, which had existed but not become apparent earlier, began to become more overtly manifest during the latter part of Aurangzeb's reign. These included the heavy taxes levied, which was leading to an impoverishment of the agrarian population, along with an overall economic decline.

With the death of the aged Emperor Aurangzeb in March 1707, a war-of-succession for the Mughal crown ensued between three of his sons, Azam, Muazzam and Kambaksh. In the fighting between the rival brothers — including the decisive battle of Jajau (some twenty miles south of Agra), on June 8, 1707, in which both Azam Shah and his son, Bidar Bakht, were killed — Rajasthan's various rulers and estate-holders chose sides in accordance with their own interests yet again. Predictably, some of them gained from supporting the side that was eventually victorious — namely Prince Muazzam, erstwhile Imperial governor of Kabul, who ascended the throne as Emperor Bahadur Shah I (r. 1707-1712), while others had to struggle to regain favour after supporting the loser. This we shall see in the ensuing chapter.

THE VARIOUS PROMINENT STATES OF RAJASTHAN IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Let us turn now to the states within the Rajasthan area during the seventeenth century period, including the Rajput-Mughal relations under Akbar's successors during this time. Among other things, we shall also take note of the life and 'achievements' of various Rajput rulers like Amber's Mirza Raja Jai Singh and Sawai Jai Singh II, Bikaner's Karan Singh and Anoop Singh, and Jodhpur's Jaswant Singh, etc.

THE KACHCHWAHAS OF DHOONDHAR

The Kachchwaha ruler Man Singh (r. 1589-1614), who held high offices under both Akbar and Jahangir, was succeeded on the *gaddi* of the Dhoondhar state⁸ by his son Bhao Singh (r. 1614-1621). Bhao Singh seems to have been probably Man Singh's sole surviving son at this point, for though Man Singh had had several sons, the others had died in their father's lifetime, either on different battlefields or due to excessive consumption of alcohol. Bhao Singh's accession was formally approved by Emperor Jahangir.

Jahangir seems to have deliberately overlooked the claims of Man Singh's eldest grandson, Maha Singh, already holding the *mansab* rank of 3,000 *zat* and 2,000 *sawar*. Maha Singh was a grandson of late Raja Man Singh, being the son of Man Singh's eldest and most favourite son, Prince Jagat Singh, who had, unfortunately, predeceased his parents. Maha Singh had previously seen service with the Imperial troops. Maha Singh was also, by this time, the brother-in-law of Jahangir, for his sister had married the emperor in 1608. Evidence also suggests that Maha Singh had been groomed to ascend the Amber *gaddi* by Akbar and Man Singh⁹. He was also close to his Imperial brother-in-law. Despite these factors, Jahangir exercised his prerogative as emperor, placating Maha Singh by granting him the tract of Garha as '*inam*' (gift), and later raising his *mansab*.

In the course of his short reign, Bhao Singh's *mansab* rank was raised to 4,000 *zat* and 3,000 *sawar*, and eventually to the rank of a '*Panch Hazari Mansabdar*': of the rank of 5,000. Sent to campaign against Malik Ambar, Bhao Singh's expedition was not particularly successful against the efficient military tactics of Malik Ambar. This was partially because the formal command had been placed in the hands of the inexperienced Mughal royal prince, Parvez. Bhao Singh died of a brief illness at Burhanpur, then capital of Khandesh, in the winter of 1621.

As Bhao Singh had died without a direct male heir (his son, Badri Singh, having predeceased him), and as Maha Singh too had already died at Berar (apparently from excessive drinking), the throne of Amber now came to Maha Singh's son, Jai Singh I (r. 1622-1667). The new raja was later to be more famous as the '*Mirza*' Raja Jai Singh. Jai Singh I was a great grandson of Amber's Man Singh, and the grandson of Prince Jagat Singh. Born on May 29, 1612, the young Jai Singh's formative years had apparently been spent at Dausa, an erstwhile Kachchwaha capital.

According to a local *khyat*¹⁰, during the period that Bhao Singh had occupied the throne of Amber, Maha Singh's wife, a Sisodia princess named Damayanti, remained apprehensive about the safety of her son. It was apparently common knowledge that Bhao Singh viewed the boy as a potential rival to the future claims of his own son, Badri Singh, for the *gaddi* of Amber. Since Maha Singh possessed the *jagir* of Dausa, which his

royal grandfather, Raja Man Singh of Amber, had bestowed on him, Maha Singh's wife preferred to live at the fort of Dausa with her young son, Jai Singh, for several years until circumstances altered. (Here, she also ordered the construction of the grand 'Bansidhar-ji temple' at the *qasba* (township) of Bassi, near Dausa). While at Dausa, Jai Singh's mother had sought, through the mediation of Empress Noor Jahan and Asaf Khan, Imperial favour for her young son. Consequently, Jahangir had granted a *mansab* of 1,000 to Jai Singh.

The new Raja of Amber was to see service with three Mughal emperors, namely Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb, and obtain innumerable jagirs and other honours. In time, his overall brilliance and meritorious services would see his *mansab* increased from a mere 1,000 to the rank of 7,000 — a privilege usually reserved for the royal Mughal princes!

The rebellion of Prince Khurram (the future Emperor Shah Jahan), one of Emperor Jahangir's sons, occurred within a year of Jai Singh succeeding to the *gaddi*. The Amber raja was instructed to guard his territory against Khurram, and raise a force of 9,000 *sawars* to repulse the rebel. In February 1623, Jahangir sent a *farman* from Ludhiana, enroute from Lahore to Agra, commanding Jai Singh to march with his contingents to Delhi. Jai Singh complied, saw his *mansab* rank increased to 3,000 *zat* and 1,500 *sawars*, and in April 1623 marched with the 40,000 strong Imperial army, under the command of Mahabat Khan and Prince Parvez, to subdue Khurram.

Enroute to Mandu, where Khurram was encamped following a setback at Bilochpur, Jai Singh received a message asking him to join hands with the Mughal prince. Jai Singh did not respond to this overture. Consequently Khurram entered Dhoondhari territory and looted Amber on April 21, 1623. Jahangir placated Jai Singh, sent him a special *khillat* (robe of honour) and asked him to continue co-operating with Prince Parvez in overpowering Khurram. When Khurram, having ransacked Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, made a dash to Allahabad, Jai Singh and his troops accompanied Mahabat Khan and inflicted a crushing defeat on him in the battle of Hazipur on

October 24, 1624. Khurram retreated to the Deccan, sought refuge with Malik Ambar, the Dewan of Bijapur, and subsequently surrendered.

Thereafter, Jahangir deputed Jai Singh to join the Imperial expedition, which was sent to subjugate Malik Ambar under the command of Jahangir's highly regarded Afghan commander Peer Khan, on whom the title of 'Khan-i-Jahan Lodi' had been bestowed. Later, when Khan-i-Jahan Lodi unfurled the banner of rebellion, following the death of Jahangir, Jai Singh refused to join him. He also did not respond to Empress Noor Jahan's call for support to Prince Shahriyar and Dawar Baksh. Instead, he slipped away with his retinue from the camp of Khan-i-Jahan, and headed for northern India. On his arrival in Ajmer, he obtained an audience on January 14, 1628, with Khurram. In appreciation of the Amber Raja's loyalty, Khurram, on his accession as Emperor Shah Jahan, bestowed *nakkara* kettledrums on Jai Singh, and raised his *mansab* rank to that of 4,000 *zat* and 3,000 *sawars*.

That April, Jai Singh accompanied Qasim Khan to suppress rebellion in Mahaban, near Mathura. Returning successful to the Imperial court on June 25, 1628, the sixteen-year-old raja was soon sent to Kabul with Mahabat Khan to fight Nazr Muhammad. After the enemy had been subdued, Jai Singh was recalled to court in September 1628.

A month later, after Khan-i-Jahan's flight from Agra, Jai Singh was commanded to join the Imperial forces in dealing with the rebel. For his role in the siege of the Ghatpur fort Jai Singh received congratulations from the emperor in January 1630. When Shah Jahan marched in person, Jai Singh commanded the vanguard, winning laurels for feats of valour during the course of Khan-i-Jahan's surprising attack in Machhili Shahar. Later that year, he served with distinction in the operations against Ahmadnagar.

Mirza Raja Jai Singh of Amber was soon recognised as an able warrior, tactical commander, and diplomat, who was far superior to many of the Mughal dignitaries at the Imperial court. During the course of his long life, this Amber ruler apparently took part in every major Imperial campaign of his era. The expeditions took him from Qandhar and Balkh in the northwest to Monghyr (Bihar) in the east, as well as to Maharashtra on

the western coast of the Indian peninsula, and further south into the Deccan region.

During December 1631, Jai Singh commanded the left wing of the Imperial forces against Bijapur. He was constantly applauded for his meritorious service. While serving under Prince Shuja and Mahabat Khan, he distinguished himself during the siege of Parenda in February 1634, as well as that of Daulatabad in September 1635. After Aurangzeb had been given command of the Deccan, Jai Singh marched into the Adil Shahi territory with a 12,000 strong contingent, and began the siege of Udai Gir fort. The siege lasted from June 19, 1636 and ended with the fall of the fort on October 19, 1636. In January 1637, Jai Singh captured the fort of Nagpur, and then won laurels at Devgarh fort in March 1637, forcing Kukia Raja of Devgarh to surrender. In acknowledgement of Jai Singh's services, Emperor Shah Jahan raised his *mansab*, and granted him the *jagir* of Chatsu (present-day Chaksu).

For many years, the Amber ruler also served with distinction on the northwestern frontier of the empire, including at Kabul and Qandhar, under the command of the Mughal princes, Shuja (1638), Murad (1641), Dara Shikoh (1642) and Aurangzeb (1648). In appreciation of Jai Singh's feats of valour and merit as a commander, in 1639 the title of 'Mirza Raja' was granted to him by Emperor Shah Jahan, and his *mansab* raised to 5,000 *zat* and 5,000 *sawar*. (In his writings, the traveller Manucci was to note that by virtue of his merit, Jai Singh had become a man of "great power and riches renowned throughout Hindustan, of whom there was not his like in the kingdom").

In September 1654, after his recall from Kabul due to differences with Prince Dara Shikoh, Jai Singh served under Sadullah Khan in the Imperial operations against Maharana Raj Singh of Mewar who, in contravention of the treaty of February 1615, had begun repair-work at the fort of Chittor. Once hostilities ended, Jai Singh was given charge of the outposts of Mandal, Banera and Phulia.

When the war-of-succession for their father's throne began between the royal Mughal princes, Jai Singh was deputed, along with Prince

Sulaiman Shikoh (son of Prince Dara Shikoh), to convince Prince Shuja (then posted as *subedar* of Bengal), to end his rebellion. Instead, Shuja overran Patna with a force of 14,000. Following the emperor's instructions, Jai Singh proceeded towards Benares, to rendezvous with a force of Imperial reinforcements, which was despatched forth under the command of Qarim Khan and Mahabat Khan. In the ensuing conflict at Bahadurpur, five miles northeast of Benares, on February 4, 1658, Shuja was defeated decisively by the Imperial side. He fled towards Patna and then on to Monghyr. Shah Jahan charged Jai Singh with pursuing the enemy and conquering Patna. The Amber ruler's *mansab* was raised to 7,000 *zat* and 7,000 *sawar*, including 5,000 *sawar* 'do-aspa sih-aspa'.

Meanwhile, Shuja made overtures to Dara for peace, asking that he be allowed to retain Monghyr. After the battle of Dharmat in mid-April 1658, as the victorious forces of Aurangzeb and Murad made headway towards Agra, Dara Shikoh wrote to Jai Singh, stating that Shuja could be allowed to remain undisturbed in Bengal provided he vacated Monghyr, while Jai Singh himself was to make arrangements for the administration at Monghyr and return soon with Sulaiman Shikoh to the Imperial court. Shah Jahan too wrote to Jai Singh stating that if Shuja sought Imperial pardon, he could be permitted to retain the charge of Bengal and Orissa; and also that Shuja be commanded to attend the Imperial court.

Aware of the critical situation, Jai Singh sent messages to his heir, Ram Singh, telling him to join Prince Dara Shikoh, for what appeared to be a decisive forthcoming encounter with Aurangzeb. Meanwhile, the Amber raja himself attempted to make haste (as his despatches to Ram Singh record), to reach Agra. However, because of the tardiness of Sulaiman Shikoh, Jai Singh was held up in Allahabad, while the forces of Dara and Aurangzeb clashed at Samugarh late in May 1658. On June 8, 1658 Jai Singh received a letter from the hapless emperor, detailing the disasters that had befallen him and Prince Dara Shikoh, and exhorting Jai Singh to rush to the rescue.

Meanwhile, two days after the decisive battle fought at Samugarh on May 29, Aurangzeb had informed Jai Singh that the latter's safety and future well-being were dependant on Aurangzeb, and that it would be

prudent for Jai Singh to arrest Sulaiman Shikoh and send him to Aurangzeb's camp. (Instead, Jai Singh advised Sulaiman Shikoh to make haste and either join Dara through forced marches via Saharanpur, or, alternately to seek shelter in the hilly terrain of Garhwal).

Jai Singh presented himself before Aurangzeb at an Imperial audience in Mathura on June 25, 1658. The Mirza Raja was a shrewd politician, fully alive of the reality and needs of generalship. The territory of Amber fell within the easy access of Aurangzeb and the Imperial forces, and sheer geography was probably a motivating factor that led him to pledge loyalty to the new emperor. He was well-received, and assigned the *subedari* of Delhi and the *qasba* of Sambhar in *jagir*.

Later, Aurangzeb used the services of the Mirza Raja to dissuade Jaswant Singh of Marwar from helping Dara Shikoh in the battle of Deorai (March 12-14, 1659). Jai Singh wrote to Jaswant Singh, pointing out that by joining Prince Dara after leaving the field on the eve of the battle fought at Khajua on January 5, 1659, the Marwar ruler had skimmed the brink of disaster. Thus, the letter advised that it would be prudent to return and seek pardon from Emperor Aurangzeb, if Jaswant Singh wished to maintain his kingdom and status.

Once having sworn fealty to the new emperor, Jai Singh fought against Dara Shikoh in the battle of Deorai. He subsequently pursued Dara Shikoh into the Rann of Kutch area. The capture of Sulaiman Shikoh too was facilitated following Jai Singh's advice to Raja Prithvi Singh of Srinagar-Garhwal, in December 1660, to hand over the fugitive prince to the army under the command of Kunwar Ram Singh, since the hill-kingdom lacked resources to oppose the Mughal might.

In June 1664, Mirza Raja Jai Singh and the Mughal general Diler Khan were entrusted command of the Imperial campaign against Shivaji by Emperor Aurangzeb ¹¹. Possibly taking heed from the calamitous results of the encounters between Shivaji and two important Imperial commanders — namely, Afzal Khan (November 2, 1659), and Shaista Khan (April 5, 1663), Jai Singh opted to avoid open combat with Shivaji as much as possible after reaching Poona on March 3, 1665. Instead, he took recourse to the path of

diplomacy, albeit against the counsel of Diler Khan. His aim was to procure Shivaji's services against the rulers of Bijapur and Golconda. (Jai Singh had long held that the subjugation of these two kingdoms was a necessary precursor for the conquest of the Deccan).

Shivaji reportedly responded by sending a letter through a trusted officer named Karmaji. The letter suggested that the Mughal army turn towards dealing with Bijapur, rather than undergo the hardships of campaigning in the hilly region of the Marathas. To this, Jai Singh reiterated that the vast Imperial force under his command had been appointed against Shivaji, and suggested that Shivaji accept Mughal supremacy. In the interim, the Imperial forces captured the fort of Rudramal, and plundered several tracts under Shivaji's control.

Towards the latter part of May 1665, Pandit Raghunath Rao, Shivaji's guru, attempted to open negotiations with Jai Singh. However, the Mirza Raja held that he was not authorised by the emperor to negotiate with Shivaji, and insisted that first Shivaji should come before him, unarmed, and then a compromise could be considered. Having received an assurance for his safety, Shivaji, accompanied by a small entourage came to Jai Singh's camp on June 11, 1665, where, following negotiations, Shivaji signed a treaty, known as the Treaty of Purandhar on June 13, 1665. As per the terms of the treaty, Shivaji agreed to yield twenty-three forts to the Imperial forces. He also sent his eight year old son, Sambhaji, to the Mughal court, and agreed to enter into Mughal service. The Treaty of Purandhar was a considered a landmark achievement for Jai Singh.

Thereafter, Shivaji assisted the Mirza Raja in his campaigns against Bijapur (January 1666). Jai Singh subsequently emphasised in writing to Emperor Aurangzeb that as Adil Shah and Qutb Shah had united, winning Shivaji's heart and support was necessary, and suggested that the latter be granted an audience by the emperor. Aurangzeb accepted Jai Singh's suggestion, and commanded Shivaji to present himself at court, promising that he would be permitted to return home in safety afterwards. Following persuasion and a personal assurance for his security and safety by Mirza Raja Jai Singh, Shivaji agreed to attend Aurangzeb's court. Mirza Raja Jai Singh's role in the treaty of Purandhar, and his persuasion of the famous

Maratha leader, Shivaji, to visit Agra¹² enhanced the Amber ruler's reputation. (Jai Singh's military leadership of the Mughal armies, in the Deccan between 1627-1665, in Afghanistan from 1629-1653, against the Khan-i-Jahan, and at the siege of Parenda of 1634 etc. had already established his reputation as a distinguished general. To this, the crowning achievement, according to Rajasthan's historians, was his successful dealings with Shivaji¹³).

Shivaji's journey north to Agra began in early March 1666, and concluded when he and his entourage reached Maluk Chand's serai on May 11. The next day, Mirza Raja Jai Singh's son, Ram Singh, met Shivaji in the Noorganj garden and escorted him to the emperor's audience hall. However, not only did Shivaji find the emperor's attitude unpalatable, he felt himself to have been further insulted at being given a place to stand among the *mansabdars* of the rank of '*Panj-Hazaari*' (or 'Five Thousand'). (One version states that Marwar's ruler Jaswant Singh was among those standing there, on seeing which Shivaji declared that he could not stand behind Jaswant Singh because his soldiers had seen the Marwar raja's back many times!). An angry Shivaji left the audience hall midway, rejecting all attempts and pleas (including by Ram Singh), to make him return to Aurangzeb's presence.

The emperor wrote to Jai Singh to inquire about any secret assurances given to Shivaji by the Amber ruler. In his turn, Jai Singh requested the emperor to attempt winning over Shivaji through affection, and suggested that Shivaji be allowed to return to the Deccan and his services used in Imperial campaigns against Bijapur and Golconda. Meanwhile, the emperor was advised by some of his advisors, among them Jafar Khan and Jahanara Begum (and, according to one version, even Marwar's Raja Jaswant Singh), that it was dangerous to let Shivaji live. As a security measure, the emperor commanded that Shivaji be housed in the dwelling of a courtier called Radandaz Khan. However, Mirza Raja Jai Singh's son, Ram Singh, suspecting that the emperor had taken the step on the advice of Jafar Khan, and fearing for the life of Shivaji, pleaded with Aurangzeb. Ram Singh reminded the emperor that Shivaji had come to court on the strength of Jai Singh's solemn personal pledge assuring his safety. At this, the emperor entrusted Ram Singh with the responsibility of looking after Shivaji.

Following a dramatic escape from Agra on August 18, 1665, (which is well-recorded), Shivaji made his way southward to safety. Convinced that Jai Singh's son, Ram Singh, was responsible for Shivaji's escape, Aurangzeb made his annoyance against Jai Singh's son obvious, and Ram Singh temporarily became *persona non grata* at the Imperial court. The emperor ordered a reduction in Ram Singh's rank, and *parganas* assigned to him in *jagir* were taken away, even though Ram Singh's alleged collusion remained unproven¹⁴.

Unfortunately for Jai Singh I of Amber, in the final years of his eventful life, his loyalty became suspect in the eyes of Emperor Aurangzeb, who believed that the Mirza Raja had a hand in the escape of Shivaji from Mughal captivity within Agra fort. The Mirza Raja was also held responsible for the failure of the Imperial bid to annex the kingdom of Bijapur in the Deccan. Jai Singh's retreat, after more than half a dozen battles fought over a one-month period (December 25 to January 22), earned him the emperor's censure. Jai Singh's subsequent campaign against Bijapur was equally unsuccessful. Finally, after he retired to Bir in October 1666, the emperor decided enough was enough. Aurangzeb went so far as to ensure that the Amber ruler was not re-imbursed from the Imperial Treasury for expenses incurred against Bijapur — money that had been spent by Mirza Raja Jai Singh I from his personal coffers! On March 23, 1667, the Mirza Raja was superseded and told to return to Agra.

Such treatment seems poor recompense for a man who had ably served the Mughal Empire in good faith for around forty-five years, and the Mirza Raja felt his disgrace most keenly. Already near bankrupt and sorely disappointed because of Aurangzeb's attitude, Jai Singh I was further fated, like many of his predecessors, to die far from his own home territory. He breathed his last while still at Burhanpur in the Deccan in September 1667. (Though another version holds that this occurred on July 22, 1667).

He seems to have died as a result of injuries from an accidental fall from an elephant, which proved fatal. However, there is some controversy over the cause of Jai Singh's death. Tod notes that Kirat Singh, the Raja's nephew, engineered the poisoning of his uncle at the instigation of Emperor Aurangzeb, who had promised to confer Amber on Kirat in exchange. Kirat

employed a servitor called Teja to administer the poison to Jai Singh. Another version holds that Udai Raj, Jai Singh's secretary, administered the poison. On the other hand, the court newsletter (*Akbaar*) of October 30 1667, records that Jai Singh died of injuries following an accidental fall from an elephant, while Aqil Khan's text, *Fatuhah-i-Alamgiri*, records that the Mirza Raja fell from his horse, injured his leg and died on his way to Burhanpur.

Like many of his generation, Mirza Raja Jai Singh I of Amber was more than just a sword-wielding warrior-prince. A statesman, administrator, diplomat and general, Jai Singh I was well-versed in Sanskrit, Turkish, Arabic and Persian. Keenly interested in scholarship, literature and the arts, he was himself a highly cultured and learned man, and a patron of poets, artists, and scholars. Among those who flourished at his Amber court were eminent writers like the poet Bihari, the author of the *Bihari Satsai*, and Kulpati Misra¹⁵. Kulpati Misra's compositions include the *Ras-rahasya*, *Durga-bhakti-chandrika*, and *Sangram-Saar*, besides Hindi translations of older classical works like Kalidasa's *Abhigyan-Shakuntalam* and King Harsh Vardhan of Thaneshwar-Kanauj's *Ratnavali*. Other works by Kulpati Misra included the *Nakha Sikha*. He was also a notable poet in the Braj Bhasha language.

Ram Singh I (r. 1667-1689), who succeeded Mirza Raja Jai Singh I, continued to serve the Mughal Empire after his accession, just as he had in the years prior to that. He saw considerable service in the northeast, particularly against the Assamese¹⁶. Like his forebears, and many a contemporary, the court of this ruler too provided patronage to numerous people of talent. For instance, a text on dance called *Hastak Ratnavali* was penned at Ram Singh I's court in 1673. Himself a writer, with critically acclaimed works like *Roop-Manjari*, *Dhatu-Manjari* and *Chhavi-Tarang* to his credit, Maharaja Ram Singh is responsible for setting up the nucleus of a book-collection, the famous *pothikhana* or 'great library', to which later rulers of Dhoondhar continued to add (and which still exists at Jaipur).

Ram Singh I was succeeded by Bishan Singh (r. 1689-1700), who campaigned on behalf of the Mughal emperor against the Jats and on the north-western frontier of the subcontinent. He died at Kohat (Kabul,

according to some) in 1700 and was succeeded by his young son, Jai Singh II, soon to gain fame as Maharaja 'Sawai' Jai Singh.

In the course of his long reign, which coincided with a tumultuous phase of Indian history, Amber's Jai Singh II (r. AD 1700-1743) became and remained an important figure in practically all the major contemporary happenings¹⁷. Born on *Margashirsha Vadi* 6, Vikram Samvat 1742 (November 3, 1688), Jai Singh II formally ascended the *gaddi* of Dhoondhar state in January 1700. The eleven-year-old Raja went on to earn fame, in the years that followed, not just as a soldier-prince, statesman, and diplomat, but also as an astronomer, mathematician and man of science, town-planner and patron of scholars. He is still acknowledged for planning and founding the now internationally famous city of Jaipur (which became the capital of independent India's new state of Rajasthan nearly two centuries later in 1949).

Soon after his accession, the young Jai Singh II was called upon to render military service to the Mughal Empire. This practice was by now customary for most of the ruling families and chiefships that had accepted Mughal dominance over the years. Prior to his inheriting the throne of Amber, Jai Singh had served in the Deccan for about eight months as a ten-year-old. As the ruler of Amber, Jai Singh was once again sent to the Deccan. This time (following procrastination, before complying with the emperor's command), he was posted under Prince Bidar Bakht. During the next few years, the young Raja and his Amber contingent demonstrated their military prowess on many occasions, particularly against the Marathas at Khelna, Khandesh, Malwa and Burhanpur. Emperor Aurangzeb was a witness to Jai Singh's valour at Khelna, and over time his *zat* and *jagir* were gradually increased by the emperor.

The Deccan experience, interspersed with attending diplomatic parleys and negotiations between the Marathas and Mughal forces, was to serve Jai Singh well in the future. His appointment in 1705 as deputy governor (*naib-subedar*) of Malwa, similarly helped refine skills relating to administration, law and order, revenue collection, and statesmanship. He was also charged with ensuring the safe transit of treasures intended for the Imperial treasury, and of arms and ammunition to the Deccan.

During the Mughal war-of-succession that followed the death of the aged Emperor Aurangzeb in AD 1707, the eighteen-year-old Jai Singh initially supported Prince Azam's cause. Azam made Jai Singh the governor of Malwa and increased his *mansab* honours. (Marwar's Ajit Singh, whose right to his patrimony had never been granted by Emperor Aurangzeb, who had ensured that the capital of Jodhpur remained under Mughal-dominated administration after the death of Maharaja Jaswant Singh of Marwar, was similarly made governor of Gujarat, and his *mansab* honours were increased too). Later, in the final decisive battle for the crown between the Mughal royal princes Azam and his brother Muazzam (afterwards Emperor Bahadur Shah I) at Jajau, near Agra, on June 8, 1707, Jai Singh opportunely opted to change sides. However, though he eventually did go over to Prince Muazzam's winning side, Muazzam never forgot, nor forgave, Jai Singh's initial opposition.

As such, Muazzam's ascension as Emperor Bahadur Shah I marked a period of disfavour for the eighteen-year-old Jai Singh of Amber. The emperor decided to oust Jai Singh, and Amber was sequestered and handed over to Bijai Singh, Jai Singh's younger brother, who had proved a loyal supporter of Prince Muazzam (Emperor Bahadur Shah) in the war-of-succession. At the same time, an imperial garrison was established at Amber. (A similar policy was adopted by the new emperor towards Ajit Singh of Marwar). The rest of Jai Singh II's career will be taken up in the ensuing chapter.

THE SHEKHAWATI AREA

The Shekhawats remained a strong sword-arm for the Mughal Empire during the reigns of Emperors Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan, and Shekhawat chiefs and their retinues joined in numerous Imperial expeditions and campaigns. Other members of the Shekhawat sub-clan served in various Imperial campaigns too, as well as in administrative capacities through the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries.

Following the death of Rao Manohar of Amarsar in the Deccan in 1616, Jahangir bestowed Manohar's *jagirs* and estate to the Rao's next

eldest surviving son, Prithvi Chand. (The elder son, Rai Chand, had died in action at the battle of Bangash in AD 1615). The short-lived Prithvi Chand (r. 1616-1620) was given the title of 'Rao' by the emperor, along with a *mansab* rank that was eventually raised to 700 *zat* and 500 *sawar*. Like others of his clan, Prithvi Chand saw action with the Imperial armies. He died at the siege of Kangra in 1620. Concurrently, various other scions of the sub-clan pursued military and administrative careers, including in the Imperial services. After Prithvi Chand's death, the rights of Tilok Chand (r. 1620-1655), son of Rai Chand and nephew of Prithvi Chand, were acknowledged by the emperor, who granted to him the estate of Manoharpur, with a *mansab* of 1,000 *zat* and 600 *sawar*. Among other Shekhawat chiefs connected with Manoharpur, were Anand Chand¹⁸ (r. ? 1656-? 1686), and his grandson Jagat Singh (r. ?1686-?1702)¹⁹. His son, Sagat Singh, succeeded the latter.

One of the Shekhawat nobles who won particular fame during the reign of Aurangzeb was Muluk Chand. He is the 'Rai Muluk Chand' who finds reference in contemporaneous Persian writings as having been granted the title of '*Rai-i-Rayan*' — the highest bestowed on any Raja other than a prince of the Mughal blood — and the rank of 'Five Hundred' by Emperor Aurangzeb. Muluk Chand achieved this recognition for suppressing Pahar Singh Gaur, the zamindar of Inrakhi who had been declared 'rebellious' by the Mughal administration in 1685 and taken to plundering tracts of Malwa and southern Rajasthan. Deputed to deal with the 'rebel', Muluk Chand marched against Pahar Singh and slew him near Sironj. Within a year, Muluk Chand had killed Pahar Singh Gaur's son, Bhagwant. Muluk Chand himself seems to have died soon afterwards.

Meanwhile, the line of the famed Raysal 'Darbari' had also earned kudos in Imperial service. Following Raysal's death, his seventh son Girdhar succeeded to the main portion of Raysal's estates (with Khandela as the seat), and was formally confirmed as the new *jagir*-holder of Khandela by the Mughal emperor, Jahangir in c. 1615. The rest of Raysal's lands were divided between his surviving sons. The eldest of Raysal's sons, Lal Singh, better known as 'Lad²⁰ Khan', the name by which Emperor Akbar affectionately addressed him, received Rewasa. Tirmal, whose descendants

went on to establish the state of Sikar²¹, already held the Nagaur-Kasli tracts during his father's lifetime, having been granted the lands by Emperor Akbar in acknowledgment of his valour during the Gujarat campaign. Akbar also gave Tirmal the title of 'Rao'²². Bhojraj, who had participated in Imperial campaigns, including against Nagarkot²³ and the Tanwars of Patan, during his father's lifetime, obtained Kosambi in the Jhunjhunu area. Bhojraj later re-named Kosambi as 'Udaipur' and made it his capital²⁴. The tract soon became known as 'Udaipurwati'. Meanwhile Tej Singh, on whom Akbar had, out of fondness, bestowed the name 'Taj Khan' (as he had the name 'Lad Khan' for Raysal's eldest son), got Chavadaya, Parasram got the Babai area where he established the township of Parasrampura, and Hariram got Mundri and Ranoli.

'Lad Khan' had already conquered the Danta Ramgarh area (in present-day Sikar district), prior to this, and the Imperial authority had confirmed his possession. Lad Khan's eldest son, Kalyan Singh, died around c. AD 1596 in an intra-family squabble with his uncle, Bhojraj. This came about during a famine. Bhojraj began construction of a water-tank to provide employment to the populace, and as a measure for future collection of water. The workers were given free grain. Kalyan Singh objected to this. The quarrel ended in violence and Kalyan's death. The remaining ten sons, led by the next eldest, Madho Singh, quickly acquired a reputation for macho rough-and-ready behaviour. (They forcibly took possession of certain villages from the Khandar estates of their grandfather, Raja Raysal, while he was away campaigning in the Deccan. Raysal's Bengali minister, Mathura Das, dealt with the matter tactfully and the unruly grandsons returned the villages).

While Lad Khan himself mostly lived out the latter part of his life quietly and piously at Lohargal, where he built a temple to Varah, before going to Vrindaban (Brindaban) where he died around AD 1621, the tag of courageous unruliness and devil-may-care behaviour stuck with his descendants. They came to be known, after Lad Khan's name, as the Lad-Khani Shekhawats. Lad Khan's successor, Madho Singh (chief: 1621-1641) served in Imperial campaigns in the Deccan and Bundelkhand. He defeated the Gaurs, established his rule over the traditional 'Gaurawati' area²⁵, and

lent his name to the ‘Madho Mandal’ area around Danta Ramgarh, before meeting his end in a skirmish near Maroth. He was succeeded by Sur Singh (chief: 1641-1670), Ajab Singh (chief: 1670-1671), and Fateh Singh (chief: 1671-1705). All of them, with their brethren and retinues, served the rulers of Marwar and joined in various Imperial and Marwar-related campaigns in that capacity. Concurrently, as was the case with other sub-branches of Shekha’s descendants, so did the other Lad-Khanis. We shall return to this sub-group further in the book.

Turning now to the fortunes of the Khandela sub-group: Khandela’s new ruler, Girdhar (r. ? 1614-1623), had already seen service with the Imperial forces (including against Malik Ambar in AD 1602). He was soon charged with dealing with the Mewatis of the Mewat area²⁶. Twice deputed to the Deccan, Girdhar’s *mansab* rank rose to 2,000 *zat* and 1,500 *sawar* and the emperor bestowed the title of ‘Raja’ upon him. He met his end in an unfortunate fracas in the Deccan in 1623, while serving under Prince Parvez and his general, Mahabat Khan, against the rebellious prince Khurram. Girdhar was succeeded by his son, Dwarka Das, (r. ?1623-?1630/33?). Tod has recorded how the Mughal emperor, instigated by Dwarka Das’s rivals, once asked Dwarka Das to fight a newly captured wild tiger barehanded. The courageous Shekhawat, being a votary of Vishnu’s ‘Narasimha’ incarnation, entered the arena unarmed, carrying articles of worship, and offered reverence to the wild animal as if he actually was Narasimha. Apparently the tiger reciprocated by licking him, as if bestowing blessings²⁷!

Dwarka Das was close to Emperor Shah Jahan, and held a *mansab* of 2,500 *zat* and 1,000 *sawar*. Dwarka Das is said to have been killed in a fight with Khan-i-Jahan Lodi in 1630. Dwarka Das’s son and successor, Bir Singh Dev (r. 1630-1663), served as *qiledar* (fort-holder) of Kabul and Berar, and in various other Imperial campaigns, and became governor of Pernalla. On his death, his son Bahadur Singh (r. 1663-1683) succeeded to Bir Singh Dev’s title. Like his forebears and contemporaneous relatives, Bahadur Singh too had already served with the Mughal army. On his father’s death, Bahadur Singh took up the task which Bir Singh Dev had been charged with just before his death, namely, subduing Murtaza Ali Khan, the *subedar* of Kashmir.

Successful in this, Bahadur Singh joined Imperial campaigns in southern India. He later left for Khandela without permission, unwilling to stomach an insult at the hands of one Bahadur Khan who was one of Aurangzeb's generals. Quitting the emperor's service in this manner resulted in his name being removed from the list of *mansabdars*, and other stern rebukes and actions. In 1679, Bahadur Singh refused to pay tribute to the Mughal court. This invited Aurangzeb's ire afresh. A force was sent against Khandela by Aurangzeb under the command of Darab Khan to subdue the recalcitrant 'rebellious' chief, and collect the arrears of tribute.

On the approach of the Mughal army near Khandela, in March 1679, Bahadur Singh abandoned his capital. Meanwhile, on hearing of the advance of Darab Khan and his forces, one of Bahadur Singh's relatives, Sujjan Singh of Chaupoli (a descendant of Raysal), took a stand against the Imperial army, resolving to protect the honour of his ancestors and the temples raised by them. Sujjan Singh and his small band of some sixty followers died protecting Khandela. Thereafter, the victorious Imperial army occupied the town.

As punishment for Bahadur Singh's 'rebellious' attitude, Khandela's main temple was dismantled and replaced later by a mosque²⁸. For some time, Bahadur Singh remained displaced. He was later restored to his estates, but an Imperial contingent remained posted at Khandela, with Bahadur Singh bearing the expense. Bahadur Singh, who was responsible for the murder of his unsuspecting guest and kinsman, Jaswant Singh of Tirmal's 'Rao-ji' line, died in 1683, fighting the raja of Tulsipur in Bihar, and was succeeded by the eldest of his three sons, Kesri Singh (r. 1683-1697).

Kesri Singh and his brother, Fateh Singh, followed the predictable road to Imperial service. Meanwhile, personal ambition and outside interference (in which latter Sagat Singh of the Manoharpur branch played a part), caused a rift between the brothers. The Khandela *dewan* (minister) recommended a division of the estate. Kesri Singh retained three parts, while Fateh Singh got two parts. (Nothing was set aside for the youngest brother, Udai, who seems to have remained on Kesri Singh's side). Soon afterwards, the *dewan* instigated the murder of Fateh Singh²⁹.

With the death of Fateh Singh, the entire estate reverted into Kesri Singh's hands. It was now Kesri's turn to refuse payment of tribute to the Mughal emperor. The emperor's response was predictably the same as it had been when the previous chief of Khandela had adopted just such a course. An army led by Sayyid Abdullah was despatched against Khandela in 1697. This time, a combined force of Shekhawats met the Imperial contingent at Haripura. However, the Manoharpur troops left the field in mid-battle. So did the Lad-Khanis. Bereft of two strong allies, the Khandela forces fought a losing battle. Many of the chiefs of the Udaipurwati sub-branch of Shekhawats fell fighting on behalf of Khandela. So did other subbranches. Jagat Singh of Kasli and Fateh Singh of Dujodh were among those slain. Seeing the course the battle was taking, Kesri Singh commanded his youngest brother, Udai Singh, to withdraw to safety, while he himself, along with his remaining forces continued to fight to the bitter end. Thereafter, Udai Singh (r. ?1697-1720) succeeded his eldest brother as ruler of Khandela³⁰. (We shall leave the Khandela Shekhawats at this point, and return to them later in this book).

In another of the Shekhawat sub-lines, Raysal's third son, Rao Tirmal, had made Kasli his base. His eldest son, Ganga Ram, succeeded him. As Rao Ganga Ram showed no inclination to present himself at the Imperial Court, Jahangir ordered the Imperial *subedar* (governor) at Ajmer to take over Kasli and declare it as *khalsa* (state's property). Ganga Ram vacated Kasli³¹, but continued to hold the estates of Renwal, Nagwa and Sewadh. Ganga Ram was succeeded by his son Shyam Ram. During his lifetime, Shyam Ram passed over most of his administrative duties into the hands of his eldest son, *Kunwar* Jaswant Singh.

The last-named, known for his hot-temper and courageous bravado, perpetually sought to avenge slights, insulting words, and past wrongs committed against his family. Towards this end, he killed fourteen members of the family of Gopal Singh of Karad and occupied Sewadh; and forcibly seized Dujodh (usurped by the Khandela line) from Bahadur Singh of Khandela. He also boldly avenged the death of Sur Singh of the Lad-Khani line and the theft of his mare, Lachchi, by Inder Singh Rathore (who had tauntingly re-named the mare 'Shekhawati' and issued a challenge to the Shekhawats to fight him), by defeating and killing Inder Singh Rathore and

returning the mare to the Lad-Khanis³². Jaswant Singh met his end when he was invited to Khandela. Here, in accordance with a pre-arranged plan by Bahadur Singh, he was cornered and killed within Sheogarh fort.

Following Jaswant Singh's death, the *gaddi* went to his fourteen-year-old son, Daulat Singh. Bahadur Singh of Khandela attempted to make amends for Jaswant Singh's death through visiting Dujodh and taking its new Rao to visit Khandela. He also gave Daulat Singh the area called 'Virbhan Ka Bas', which was also known as 'Sikar'³³. It was here that Daulat Singh laid the foundation of a fort in 1687. The fort was built, along with a temple to Mohan (Vishnu). Daulat Singh, among the close confidantes of Sawai Jai Singh II of Dhoondhar, died at Sikar in 1721. He was succeeded by his son, Shiv Singh (r. 1721-1748) of Sikar. We shall take up the ensuing tale of Sikar in the next chapter.

THE STATE OF MARWAR/JODHPUR

The close links between the kingdom of Marwar and the Imperial Mughal court continued through much of the seventeenth century too. The Rathore ruler, Sur Singh of Marwar (r. 1595-1619), distinguished himself in warfare during his service to the empire, particularly in expeditions against Bahadur and Saadat Khan etc., and in various other campaigns in southern India. In 1605, Emperor Akbar conferred the parganas of Jaitaran and Merta upon him for his services to the empire. During the reign of Jahangir, Sur Singh was deputed with the Imperial Prince Khurram to undertake an expedition against Mewar. In the face of the Imperial might, Rana Amar Singh, the son and successor of Rana Pratap, deemed it better to accept peace-terms. The success of this mission led the emperor to confer the *pargana* of Phalodi on Sur Singh for his role.

He also took a keen interest in the finer aspects of life. Among the scholars offered patronage at his court was Dadhavadia Madho Das, who wrote the *Bhasha-Dasham-Sukund* and *Rama-Raso*. Sur Singh also encouraged the construction of palaces and the laying-out of gardens. These were traits shared in common with many of his fellow Rajput princes and

chiefs — both contemporary and others! In 1613, Sur Singh ordered the construction of a water-reservoir, known after the Maharaja as the Sur-Sagar. Some of the water collected within the Sur-Sagar was used for watering gardens that were established along its margins.

Maharaja Sur Singh, with the help of his premier, or *pradhan*, Bhati Govind Das (who had previously served Sur Singh's predecessor, 'Mota' Raja Udai Singh), saw to the further re-organisation of the administration of Marwar on the pattern of the Mughal system. Posts such as that of the *dewan*, *bakshi*, *hakim*, *daftri*, *daroga*, *potedar*, *waqiya-navees*, *khansama*, etc. became firmly established as part and parcel of the Marwar administrative system. The structure and protocol of the Marwar court too was revised, through re-modelling along the lines of the Mughal court. The seats of the various nobles became hierarchically fixed for formal darbars, with the direct descendants of Rao Jodha taking their place at the left side of the throne in formal court, while those descended from one generation up the line — i.e. Rao Ranmal, took their place to the right. Up till this time, the darbar had been based mainly on the concept of kin-relationship and brotherhood. Now further classifications were undertaken, which also led to a change in the status of the nobles vis-à-vis the ruler.

One group of nobles were referred to as *rajvi*. They were related to the ruler by ties of blood, being the younger brothers or younger sons of a ruler, who were given certain fiefs as their portion, or else the descendants of such younger scions of the royal house. Thus, for three generations from the original royal blood relationship, this category was not required to pay traditional *rekh*, *chakari*, etc. dues to the ruler. After three generations, their standing became that of a normal noble and *jagirdar* of Marwar state. Besides the *rajvis*, there were nobles generally referred to as *sardar* — meaning chieftain, who held estates and honours. Equally respected were the *ganayats* who were nobles-belonging either to clans with whom the Rathore ruling family had inter-married, and who had been allocated fiefs in their capacity of being *sagas* or in-laws of the ruling house; or else represented groups that had held mastery of certain lands locally, prior to the Rathore ascendance over all of Marwar.

Amongst the senior-most of Marwar's nobles were eight *sardars* who were known as *sirayat*. Later their number was increased to eleven. The presence in court of *sardars* holding the highest category of honours — or *tazim* — was acknowledged by the ruler standing up to receive them as they entered, and doing the same when they withdrew. Such nobles were called *sardars* of double *tazim*. *Sardars* holding single *tazim* rights and honours were acknowledged by the ruler standing up to receive them, but not getting up again when they took leave³⁴.

The non-Rajput *mutsaddies* too held estates in *jagir*. In yet another category were the *inamdars*, who had been awarded *jagirs* on account of their personal achievements. There was also a category of small landholders known as *bhomiya*, who had also been granted land for particular achievements or tasks. They policed certain tracts, particularly in the rural area, and could also be drafted in the army in the event of war. Various Mughal emperors sometimes granted *jagirs* and *mansabs* directly to the chiefs, over the head of the ruler.

Sur Singh, remembered in Jodhpur's annals as a charitable ruler, died in 1619 at Makher in the Deccan, where he had been despatched by the emperor to deal with local unrest. At that time, his sway extended over sixteen *parganas* or districts, within and outside Marwar; he was held in high esteem by the Mughal emperor; and was, apparently, favourably regarded by his contemporaries and the people of Marwar at large.

Sur Singh was succeeded by his eldest son, Gaj Singh (r. 1619-1638), who was at the time on Imperial duty at Burhanpur. Confirming the succession, Emperor Jahangir issued a *farman* renewing and ratifying the rights of the new maharaja of Marwar to the *parganas* of Jodhpur, Jaitaran, Sojat, Siwana as *jagir*, and the tracts of Tekhada, Merwara, Satalmer and Pokhran. These had previously been granted to his predecessor. Satalmer and Pokhran may have been granted to Gaj Singh, but he was unable to take control of these two tracts, since the Bhatias of Jaisalmer, who already held those lands, were unwilling to yield possession, and used their swords to emphasise that view. In addition, during his father's lifetime, Gaj Singh had acquired Jalore from Emperor Jahangir, for his role in defeating the Pathans who held Jalore at the time.

Gaj Singh saw service — both as prince and as Maharaja of Marwar — with the Imperial army in various campaigns. (As a prince he had already impressed the emperor with his military skill and administrative acumen, including in the expedition against Mewar and at Jalore). Following his accession, other expeditions and battles in which Gaj Singh took part included those undertaken to the Deccan to subdue Malik Ambar in 1621, and much later, the Nizam-ul-Mulk and Khan-i-Jahan Lodi in 1630. In compliment to Gaj Singh's victories over southern Indian chiefs, Emperor Jahangir bestowed on him the title of *Dal Thambhan* in 1622.

In 1622-1623, Gaj Singh was deputed to assist the Mughal prince Parvez in suppressing the rebellion of another of the royal princes, Jahangir's son, Prince Khurram (later to become Emperor Shah Jahan). Khurram was defeated in the battle that followed, and Emperor Jahangir rewarded Gaj Singh with the *parganas* of Phalodi and Merta. In 1624, Gaj Singh and Jai Singh of Amber gained a decisive victory at Hazipur against the rebellious prince. Later, when Prince Khurram succeeded the throne as Emperor Shah Jahan, he did not penalise Gaj Singh for the Marwar ruler's part in the defeat inflicted on him in 1623. Rather, the new Mughal emperor, whose mother was a Marwar princess, made efficient use of the Rathore sword arm in his campaigns, just as his father and grandfather had done.

Gaj Singh held a *mansab* rank of 3,000 *zat* and 2,000 *sawar*, which was raised to 5,000 *zat* and 5,000 *sawar* in the reign of Shah Jahan. He fought against Bijapur during 1631-1636. In recognition of his services, the emperor conferred the title of 'Maharaja' upon Gaj Singh and granted the *pargana* of Maroth to him. Furthermore, as a special mark of favour, the Marwar ruler's horses were declared exempted from being branded with the Imperial mark. Over time, the tracts of Jalore, Sanchoe and Nagaur too were allocated to him by the Mughal emperor. Gaj Singh not only served with two successive emperors, namely Jahangir (r. 1605-1628) and Shah Jahan (r. 1628-1658, d. 1666), he was also publicly commended and rewarded for his valour by both on several occasions.

Like his father, Gaj Singh too features in local chronicles as a charitable ruler, who combined a love of learning with an aesthetic taste for

public-scale construction. Public works is something other members of his family were concerned about too. Thus, Gaj Singh's Baghela clan wife had Bikaner's Kagdi Talab reservoir repaired in 1658, and the maharaja's daughter, Princess Chandramati, contributed money towards the construction of a *baori* (step-well).

Kavi Keshav Das, the author of *Guna-Roopak*, a Rajasthani *dingal* poem of some 1,000 verses dating to VS 1681 (AD 1624), tells us that Maharaja Gaj Singh held sway over 5,004 villages and nine forts. The *Guna-Roopak* also details the grandeur of the court during Gaj Singh's reign, along with the pilgrimages and wars that he took part in. Poets and scholars to whom he extended patronage included Hem Kavi who authored the *Gun Bhasha Chitra*, Gadan Keshav Das, and Haridas Banawat. Gaj Singh died at Agra in 1638, and was cremated on the banks of the river Yamuna (also called Jamuna).

During the lifetime of Gaj Singh, tales of the daredevil valour, hot-headedness and turbulent conduct of his eldest son, Prince Amar Singh (b. December 12, 1613), had already spread far and wide. (The most famous of Amar Singh's adventures have been immortalised not just by the bards, and in folk-lore and songs like the '*Amar-Singhji-ra-jas*' etc., but have also found pride of place and prominence in the public performance of the traditional puppeteers (*kathputli-waley*) of Rajasthan. One of the main themes performed even today tells the tale of Amar Singh Rathore, complete with a depiction of the Mughal court, and the emperor's wicked brother-in-law!). In keeping with the declared wishes of Gaj Singh, which are said to have been influenced by his concubine, Anara Begum, after his death the succession of Marwar passed over his elder son, Prince Amar Singh, in favour of Gaj Singh's younger son and apparently his preferred nominee, Prince Jaswant Singh (r. 1638-1678). Amar Singh received the *jagir* of Nagaur as his independent patrimony, and went on to have several adventures before meeting an early death.

On his part, when Jaswant Singh, who was at Bundi at the time, learned of Gaj Singh's death, he proceeded immediately to Agra, where Shah Jahan personally confirmed his succession to the throne of Marwar on May 25, 1638 (by giving him the traditional *teeka*). Shah Jahan (who was

related to the ruling family of Marwar), also granted six *parganas*, or districts, namely, Jodhpur, Phalodi, Sojat, Siwana, Merta, and Satalmer; and a *mansab* of 4,000 *zat* and 4,000 *sawar* to the new raja. (Of these, Jodhpur, Sojat, Phalodi, Merta and Siwana had previously been held by Gaj Singh, and were treated as Jaswant Singh's *watan-jagir*). The emperor appointed Thakur Raj Singh Kumpawat of Asop as the *dewan* of Marwar. There appears to have been no opposition to this by Jaswant Singh, possibly because his position was insecure in Marwar vis-à-vis his elder brother, Amar Singh.

Jaswant Singh, like his immediate predecessors, as well as like most of his contemporary fellow-rulers and their fighting contingents, spent the greater part of his adult life in imperial campaigns, usually far from home. Immediately after his accession, Jaswant Singh was asked to accompany the emperor from Agra to Peshawar. During this tenure with the Imperial entourage he was thrice honoured by the award of a *khillat* robe of honour, and his *mansab* was increased from 4,000 to 5,000. In April 1639, Jaswant Singh was with the emperor at Jamrud. It was only upon his return to Marwar the following year that Jaswant Singh formally took his place on the throne of his ancestors at Jodhpur in March 1640. By then Jaswant Singh had attained the age of fourteen.

Soon thereafter, the Mughal emperor appointed Mahesh Das Rathore as *dewan* of Marwar after the death of Raj Singh Kumpawat in March 1641. Jaswant Singh seems to have, once again, had no objections to the emperor making such an appointment, possibly because the young Rathore ruler was wholly under the influence of Emperor Shah Jahan. They were also related, for Jaswant Singh's great-aunt, a daughter of Marwar's 'Mota Raja' Udai Singh, was Shah Jahan's mother.

Jaswant Singh was deputed by Shah Jahan to accompany Prince Dara Shikoh in an Imperial expedition against Qandhar, which left the capital in September 1641. Following the recall of the expedition, Jaswant Singh was given leave to return to Marwar. On his return to Jodhpur in 1643, he appointed Mertia Gopal Das as *dewan* of Jodhpur in place of Mahesh Das Rathore, allegedly because, as a *mansabdar*, Mahesh Das spent most his

time at the Mughal capital. The action led to some internal problems in Marwar, as Mahesh Das rebelled against Jaswant Singh.

Meanwhile, in 1642, Jaswant's *mansab* had been enhanced, and six *des-ra-pargana* (*parganas* of the *des* or *watan* — i.e. own homeland category) were assigned to him against his *mansab*. It seems that Jaswant Singh wanted to get all the *parganas* adjoining his ancestral principality, and ultimately, had nine *des parganas* in *jagir*, besides being favoured with title of 'maharaja'³⁵. (The *parganas* assigned by the Mughal emperors as *watan* to the Marwar rulers underwent some changes over the course of the seventeenth century. Raja Sur Singh had obtained seven *parganas* out of nine *des-ra-parganas*, namely, Jodhpur, Sojat, Phalodi, Jaitaran, Siwana, Sanchore and Jalore, and got Gajsinghpura on *muqata ijara* or revenue farm. Pokhran too was assigned to Suraj Singh, though he was unable to occupy it. The same *parganas*, except for Gajsinghpura, had been awarded to Raja Gaj Singh. Satalmer-Pokhran had been assigned to him but its actual possession was possible only in 1648 through action by Jaswant Singh. Jaswant Singh held all territory that had come into the possession of his ancestors as *watan jagir* and the *pargana* of Gajsinghpura too was recovered. The *parganas* were contiguous and formed a single block).

In January 1645, meanwhile, Jaswant Singh was appointed the acting *subedar* of Agra during the absence of Shah Jahan. In August 1645, Jaswant Singh and his Marwar forces accompanied the emperor in the campaign against Kabul. By the end of the year 1647, Jaswant Singh's rank of 3,000 *sawar* was raised to 'Do-*aspa Sih-aspa*' by the emperor. He was also granted the *pargana* of Hindaun. By January 1649, when Jaswant Singh was appointed to serve with Prince Aurangzeb in the expedition to Qandhar his *mansab* had increased to 5,000 *zat* and 5,000 *sawar* 'Do-*aspa Sih-aspa*'. Jaswant Singh was left in charge of Kabul while the Mughal forces proceeded towards Central Asia. After joining the emperor at Kabul on January 14, 1650, he was given leave to return to Jodhpur. That March (1650), Jaswant Singh received a special *khillat* from the emperor during the 'Nauroz' (New Year) festival.

Having obtained the grant of Pokhran in 1650 from the Mughal emperor, Jaswant Singh beat off the Bhatias of Jaisalmer to occupy it. The

pargana of Jaisalmer was also given to him after the death of Jaisalmer's ruler, Rawal Manohar Das, on the condition that he would help Sabal Singh (the Mughal nominee) obtain the *gaddi* of Jaisalmer. On his part, Sabal Singh promised the *pargana* of Phalodi to the Rathore ruler if he was successful against Ram Chandra, the usurper of the throne of Jaisalmer. Jaswant Singh sent an army under the command of his trusted nobles to help Sabal Singh. Ram Chandra fled away and Sabal Singh ascended the *gaddi* of Jaisalmer.

In May 1652, Shah Jahan deputed Jaswant Singh, along with Mirza Raja Jai Singh of Amber, and their respective contingents, to join the Mughal expedition, sent under the command of Prince Aurangzeb, against Qandhar. In recognition of his services, Shah Jahan granted Jaswant Singh the title of 'Maharaja' in December 1653. His *mansab* rank too was raised to 6,000 *zat* and 5,000 *sawar*, of which 5,000 were of the 'Do-*aspa* Sih-*aspa*' category. The title of maharaja was formally conferred upon him on January 6, 1654. In 1655, the Mughal emperor granted the *pargana* of Jalore to him. Meanwhile, on a personal level, ties between Marwar's ruling house and the Imperial Mughals were further strengthened with the marriage of Jaswant Singh's niece, Anoop Kanwar, to Prince Sulaiman Shikoh, the grandson of Emperor Shah Jahan, and the eldest son of Prince Dara — himself the emperor's eldest son.

(The historian VS. Bhargava, in his *Marwar and the Mughal Emperors*, holds that during the first twenty years of Jaswant Singh's reign, Marwar was, for all practical purposes, almost a vassal state of the Mughal empire. He further believes that the material conditions of the people of Marwar improved owing to the booty obtained through the many Imperial campaigns and expeditions across the subcontinent in which the Marwar forces participated³⁶).

When a war-of-succession broke out between the Mughal princes, following Shah Jahan's illness in September 1657, Jaswant Singh was among those who promptly responded to the ailing emperor's call to important nobles (*amirs*) and loyal courtiers to hasten to Agra to join in the council called by the emperor. In his contemporaneous account, the *Fatubat-i-Alamgiri*, Isar Das Nagar noted that the *amirs* of the court, Hindu

and Muslim alike, were most unwilling to accept command of the Imperial army, which was to be sent against Aurangzeb and Murad. At that critical time, Marwar's Maharaja Jaswant Singh volunteered his services. Thus, an army under the joint command of Jaswant Singh and Qasim Khan was despatched from Agra to quell the advance of Aurangzeb and Murad. (On the eve of his departure, Shah Jahan raised Jaswant Singh's *mansab* to 7,000 *zat* and 7,000 *sawar*, of which 5,000 were *do-aspa* and *sih-aspa*).

Jaswant Singh left Agra, marching via Bayana, Ranthambore, and Mukundarra pass, till he reached Chaumalla. Here, upon learning that Aurangzeb and Murad had joined forces, he veered towards present Chandrawati Gunj Fatehabad, and came upon the joint army of Aurangzeb and Murad at Dharmat. Marwari sources hold that at the instruction of Emperor Shah Jahan, Jaswant Singh apparently first tried to persuade the rebellious Mughal princes to return to the provinces allocated to them as *subedars*. However, Aurangzeb insisted on proceeding towards Agra — ostensibly to meet his ailing father.

The rival armies met on the battlefield of Dharmat on April 16, 1658. The Imperial army's co-commander, Qasim Khan, betrayed his side and deserted to the enemy, as a result of which many Rajputs lost their lives. Jaswant Singh is reputed to have displayed great valour in the battle, despite being wounded. Khadiya Jagga, the author of *Vachanika Rathora Ratan Singh*, notes that when it became obvious that the cause was lost, the nobles of Marwar compelled the wounded Jaswant Singh to leave the battlefield on the afternoon of April 16. Jaswant Singh and his Marwar contingent thereafter made their way to Jodhpur.

Traditional accounts say that when the tattered forces of Marwar led by Jaswant Singh finally reached Jodhpur, his queen — who was a princess of Bundi's ruling Hada Chauhan family — ordered the main gates of the Jodhpur fort to be shut against him and the remnants of his army. She scornfully declared that there was obviously an impostor at the gates of Jodhpur whose entry had to be barred, because her husband was a true Rajput warrior who could not possibly have fled from a battlefield like a coward!³⁷ Faced with the rani's wrath and aspersions on his conduct, Jaswant Singh was forced to explain that he had not disgraced his lineage in

battle and that he had returned to Marwar only in order to collect another force to continue the fight.

The queen permitted Jaswant Singh entry to his own city only after his explanations had satisfied her. And even then, according to one popular tale, the Hadi queen served her royal husband food in terracotta and *pattal* (shaped dried-leaf) bowls and vessels, stating that since he had disliked the clamour of battle — so natural to a Rajput, she feared to startle him with the jingling of metal dishes within his own apartment! The fact that he was already recognised as a warrior, and that he *did* fight other battles after Dharmat, along with the fact that his queen was not censured for her action despite the patriarchal society she lived in, carries several connotations. That the story — whether true or not — came into circulation at all is telling in itself!

In fact, like the Charans, the wives and mothers of Rajput kings and chiefs invariably took upon themselves the role of counselling, guidance, exhortation, etc. at proceedings that were perceived as transgressing warrior/Rajput codes of behaviour and action. The story of another of Bundi's Hada princesses (a niece to Jaswant's queen, as it happens), the 'Hadi Rani' of Rawat Ratan Singh Chundawat of Salumber (an estate in Mewar), is an example of this.

This true story runs as follows: — A contemporary of Maharana Raj Singh of Mewar and the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, the beautiful Hadi princess — well-versed in fencing, riding, archery, administration, reading and writing — was the newly-married bride of a handsome warrior-hero, Salumber's Rawat Ratan Singh, the Chundawat sub-clan chief. The Rawat was a direct descendant of Mewar's fifteenth century crown-prince Chunda, son of Rana Lakha, who had voluntarily foresworn his right to the throne of Mewar (as already noted). Chunda's descendants, known as 'Chundawats', enjoyed certain privileges. One of these was the Salumber chief having the honour of leading the van (*harawal*) of the Mewar army into battle.

One such summons for leading the army arrived at Salumber shortly after the Rawat brought his bride to her new home. Mewar's Maharana Raj Singh was proceeding to Kishangarh in response to the call for help by

princess Charumati, and Rawat Ratan Singh was charged with preventing the Imperial troops from hindering the passage or launching a retaliatory invasion of Mewar. The Rawat was pulled between the call of duty and his beautiful bride, but his Hadi clan queen, though very much in love with her hero-husband, knew no such dichotomy. “I have heard much of the courage of the Chundawats”, she told him roundly, “and how all of your line have invariably used only the battle-field as a pillow for your heads. Yet you hesitate to follow suit! Can it be that I have married a coward? Or is your infatuation for me of greater worth than your duty to your land, your king and your people; greater than the name you carry; greater than your honour and the glory of your clan?”

Thus challenged, Rawat Ratan Singh girt himself for battle, called his troops to arms, and marched forth. However, he could not refrain from pausing at the gates of his fortress to send an attendant back to the *raola* (palace), requesting his bride for a token to carry into battle with him. The Hadi rani felt that as long as her husband continued to dream of her, he would be unable to fight and command in the manner for which he was famed. She saw her duty as a Rajputani. She commanded the waiting attendant to give the Rawat the memento she was presenting, and to say to him that, “Your bride is preceding you, do not delay too long in following”. Then the Hadi Rani picked up a sword in her bejewelled hand and, before anyone present realised her intent, severed her own head with a swift action.

The stunned messenger carried the Hadi rani’s last token out to the eagerly waiting Rawat, who froze when he uncovered the salver and found the head of his beloved wife. Her last message was repeated to him. Rawat Ratan Singh tied the Hadi rani’s head around his neck; using her own long black tresses that were now coloured as deeply red as the bridal *mehndi* (henna) on her palms had been. Then he grimly charged into battle. Enemy soldiers were swept before the force of his tremendous valour and terrible grief. The Rawat continued to wreak havoc on Mewar’s foes until he was himself finally cut down. The Hadi rani’s tale, which is part of popular lore in Rajasthan, exemplifies the world-view inculcated amongst the Rajputs from their childhood. It also helps understand the mindset that viewed death on the battlefield as the only worthwhile goal for a warrior.

To return back, meanwhile, to Jaswant Singh's time, Aurangzeb and Murad's victory at Dharmat had been followed by the defeat of their elder brother, Dara and the Imperial forces under his command at Samugarh, on May 29, 1658. The occupation of the city of Agra by Aurangzeb followed. With Emperor Shah jahan imprisoned within the Agra fort, Aurangzeb marched in the direction of Delhi to capture Dara. Soon thereafter, Aurangzeb assumed the Imperial title and throne.

After Aurangzeb had formally taken his place as the new emperor, Jaswant Singh presented himself before Aurangzeb at Rugar in August 1658, where he was pardoned for having sided with Dara Shikoh. Later that year, Jaswant Singh and his troops were commanded to march with Aurangzeb's Imperial force against Shuja. However, Jaswant Singh and his troops were not among those who fought for Aurangzeb in the battle against Shuja at Khajua, near Etawah (in present-day U.P.), on January 5, 1659. While the rival sides were still engaged in preliminary skirmishes at Khajua, Jaswant Singh and his retinue looted the camp of Prince Sultan Muhammad in the early hours of the morning of January 5, prior to the start of the battle. Then, the Marwar ruler and his men marched in the direction of Agra — apparently with the notion of rescuing the imprisoned ex-emperor, Shah Jahan. Unable to achieve this, however, they made their way back to Jodhpur³⁸.

In the interim, having defeated Shuja at Khajua, Aurangzeb sent a force against Marwar to punish Jaswant Singh, who was forced to flee to Siwana. Meanwhile, Dara, who had taken Ahmedabad, made contact with Jaswant Singh, who urged him to rendezvous at Merta. Dara reached Merta, only to find Jaswant Singh absent. It was then decided that the two would meet at Ajmer, with their forces, for another trial of strength with Aurangzeb. However, Jaswant Singh did not keep his rendezvous here either, having been dissuaded from rendering help to Dara by Mirza Raja Jai Singh of Amber. (The letter sent by Mirza Raja Jai Singh has been quoted by Dr. K.R. Kanungo in his monograph entitled *Dara Shikoh*).

Assured that Aurangzeb would not only pardon him, but also appoint him *sabedar* of Gujarat, Jaswant Singh did not proceed beyond Pipar to help Dara, already waiting at Ajmer, in what was to be a decisive and final

clash. In March 1659, the isolated Dara was defeated by Aurangzeb's forces at Deorai. Dara fled towards Gujarat, and was later captured and eventually put to death, while Jaswant Singh, with an enhanced *mansab* of 7,000 *zat* and 7,000 *sawar* and the *subedari* of Gujarat proceeded towards Ahmedabad, where he spent the next three years as the *subedar* of Gujarat. His administration of Gujarat was, however, apparently not too successful.

In 1661 (My 1662 according to some sources), Jaswant Singh was posted in the Deccan to join the emperor's maternal uncle Shaista Khan in the Imperial campaign against the Maratha leader, Shivaji. Jaswant Singh led his detachment and captured the fort of Kondana in 1663 and weakened the defences of Shivaji. Thereafter, the Marwar contingent saw other action in the Deccan.

The following April, Jaswant Singh's camp was pitched near the main entrance of the headquarters of the Imperial commander, Shaista Khan, and his forces, who were encamped at Poona's Rangmahal, when the Imperial camp was attacked by Shivaji on the night of April 4, 1664. It is held that Shivaji had spent his early childhood there, and was fully acquainted with Rangmahal's layout. Descending from the fort of Singh Garh on the evening of April 4, 1664, Shivaji and his soldiers entered Poona in the guise of a marriage party. Once within, they remained hidden until the middle of the night, when they attacked the unsuspecting Mughal forces. Shaista Khan was injured, but managed to escape, while his son was killed in the fighting. Shivaji and his successful soldiers managed to retreat unchecked.

Jadunath Sarkar has accused Jaswant Singh of connivance with Shivaji, or else pure and simple slothfulness, in this matter. Sarkar cites Kafi Khan's comment that at seeing Jaswant Singh the next morning, Shaista Khan told him wryly what a surprise it had been to have had Shivaji pounce upon him in his own room. Sarkar also holds that if Jaswant Singh had taken proper action against Shivaji, he could have prevented Shivaji and his men from escaping from Rangmahal. However, in his doctoral thesis entitled *Marwar and the Mughal Emperors*, VS. Bhargava has exonerated Jaswant Singh of this charge. Bhargava points out that there is no mention of Jaswant Singh's alleged connivance in the *Alamgir-Nama*, the official history of the first decade of Aurangzeb reign, which was

written under the direct supervision of Emperor Aurangzeb. Furthermore, there is no evidence to indicate Jaswant Singh's association with Shivaji, or that Aurangzeb suspected Jaswant Singh of treason. It is also significant that Aurangzeb did not transfer Jaswant Singh out of the Deccan, as he most certainly would have if blame had been apportioned on the Marwar ruler.

Following Shaista Khan's removal because of his injuries, Jaswant Singh continued to serve in the Deccan under Shaista Khan's successor, Prince Muazzam. His closeness to the prince was to rouse suspicions in the mind of the emperor. In 1671, he was appointed governor of Gujarat for a second time, but within five years he was deputed to serve on the north-western frontiers of the empire. The author of the *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* recorded that the emperor took away the *subedari* of Gujarat from Jaswant Singh, because the administration of Gujarat had become corrupt and bankrupt. Jaswant Singh served as *thanedar* at Jamrud, on the north-western frontier of the Mughal empire, where his task included suppressing the local rebellious Afghans and Pathans. Jaswant Singh never returned to Marwar, dying in November 1678 at Jamrud. Some traditional *khyats* state, though, that he died at Peshawar.

Like several of his contemporaries, Jaswant Singh combined his role as a military commander and part-time administrator of the Mughal Empire, with being the formal ruler of a kingdom — even if the ruler's authority was often exercised long-distance, and the day-to-day administration was carried out by competent and loyal ministers. While the case was more or less similar for most of his fellow Rajput-princes, Jaswant Singh's Marwar saw administrative control become consolidated in the hands of the non-Rajput 'Mutsaddies'.

Though the powers of the feudal chiefs — long the backbone of the Rajput administrative system — had been curbed to some extent during the reign of Mota Raja Udai Singh and his successor, Sur Singh, their special, almost monopolistic, position in the state had remained unchanged. In 1643, Maharaja Jaswant Singh dismissed his all-powerful *pradhan*, Mahesh Das Rathore of Jalore, and appointed Mehta Gopaldas in his place. The Maharaja followed this up with appointing other persons of his choice on

various high civil and military posts, ostensibly at the advice of his compliant *pradhan*. The same year, the Mers created trouble in Magara area. Jaswant Singh gave the task of quelling them to Muhnot Nainsi, an Oswal Jain, rather than to a Rajput fief-holder. Similarly, when Mahecha Mahesh Das started ravaging the Rad-dada area, the Marwar ruler sent Muhnot Jaimal, father of Nainsi, to crush the revolt. The father and son both accomplished their respective missions. The preeminence of 'Mutsaddies' like the Muhnots, Bhandaris, Singhvis, Lodhas, and Mehtas, all drawn from the Oswal Jain community, was thereafter to remain unchallenged for quite a while in the history of Marwar and its administration!

In 1645, Nainsi and his brother Sunder Das crushed the rebellion of Rawat Ramchandra in Sojat. In 1650, Muhnot Nainsi, Bhandari Jagannath, Singhvi Pratapmal and others captured Pokhran and defeated Bhati Ramchandra at Jaisalmer. They proved that they could equally lead the army in the battlefield successfully. Nainsi rose to the position of *pradhan* in 1658. He served in this capacity with distinction for nearly a decade. In 1667 he was imprisoned, along with his brother Sunder Das. The Maharaja demanded a lakh of rupees from each of the Muhnot brothers for their release, which they refused to comply with. They committed suicide while they were being taken from Aurangabad to Jodhpur in August 1670. It was a tragic, and unnecessary, end to the lives and careers of two men who had served their land and master for a long time.

One may note here that Nainsi is remembered today less as an able administrator, and more for the texts he penned. These are known as the *Muhnot-Nainsi-ri-Khyat* (completed 1665) and *Marwar-ra-Pargana-ri-Vigat*. They are valuable documents — rather like Britain's *Domesday Book* of William the Conqueror's time, of descriptions concerning Marwar in the seventeenth century and of the history of Marwar and many other near and far kingdoms and estates through the ages. The *khyat* contains more history and genealogy related material; while the *Marwar-ra-Pargana-ri-Vigat* details — almost like a modern census document — a range of other issues. These include facts like the number of villages in a specified tract, the geographical peculiarities of each area, revenue-related details, a catalogue of wells and water-tanks, crops raised, and many similar aspects of

everyday life. For instance, we learn from Nainsi's writings that among the revenues collected by the state apparatus were the taxes known as *ghasmari* and *pancharai*, which were taken from cattle owners who used grazing grounds. Nainsi lists such grazing rates, which we learn were formulated in the time of Maharaja Gaj Singh, and continued until Nainsi's own time (c.1665). The state also levied *bhog* (land revenue). As such, both of Nainsi's works have been used by numerous scholars in looking at, both, the history of the Rajasthan-Malwa-Gujarat etc. area at large, and the socio-economic details of seventeenth century Marwar.

As Nainsi's work also details his own time-period, we learn from him that Marwar's Jaswant Singh possessed great organisational ability and diplomatic skills, which were recognised and rewarded from time to time at the Imperial Mughal court; and that Emperor Aurangzeb granted the ruler eight *parganas* in *jagir*. This is known from other sources as well.

Jaswant Singh was also a patron of the arts and learning at his own *darbar* in Marwar. Himself a poet and scholar, with works like *Bhasha-Bhusban*, *Prabodh-Chandrodaya-Natak*, *Siddhanta-Saar*, *Geeta-Mahatmya*, *Aparoksha-Siddhanta* and *Anubhav-Prakash* (the latter two being Jaswant's manuals on philosophy), to his credit, Jaswant Singh gave patronage to numerous scholars and writers. Among them were Narhari Das Barhat, Dalpati Misra, Vrinda-Kavi, Navin, Nidhan, Banarasi Das, and his able and ill-fated chief minister, Nainsi Muhnot — writer of *Muhnot-Nainsi-ri-Khyat* and *Marwar-ra-Pargana-ri-Vigat*. Among other texts composed in Marwar during this period were the *Anandvilas*, *Anubhava-prakash*, *Siddhanta-Bodha*, and *Nayika Bhed*. Many literary works were acquired too by Jaswant Singh as part of his *Pustak Prakash* library. The collection was added to by subsequent Marwar rulers. Some of the architectural features added by Jaswant Singh to his capital were the Toran-Pol, Dewan-Khana and Sabha-Mandap within the Jodhpur fortress, and the laying out of the gardens known as Rai-ka-Bagh and Kaga Bagh. He also gave grants of land and money to Charans and Brahmins.

At the time of Jaswant Singh's death at Jamrud in the winter of November 1678, his sons had predeceased him, and there was no surviving male heir to succeed him at Jodhpur. Thus, with Jaswant Singh's death, the

succession issue became important to the Mughal Emperor and the people of Marwar alike. It rapidly developed into a cause of concern for the Rathores of Marwar, and resulted in the almost century-long cordial relationship between Marwar and the Mughal Empire suffering a temporary hiatus over the ensuing decades.

On learning of the death of the Rathore ruler, the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb took prompt action. Exercising his paramount power, Aurangzeb resumed the whole of Marwar into the empire's *khalsa* (crown) lands, and brought the city of Jodhpur under imperial administration, placing his own officers there as *faujdar*, *qiledar*, *amin*, *kotwal*, and so forth. (All this was achieved by February 7, 1679). Simultaneously, Jaswant Singh's family was asked to proceed to Delhi to take up residence there. Enroute to Delhi, two posthumous sons were born at Lahore in February 1679 to two of Jaswant Singh's widowed *ranis*. One of the new-born boys died soon afterwards, but the other — Ajit Singh, born on 19 February 1679, would live to stake claim to the *gaddi* of Jodhpur. The princes, along with the widowed *ranis* and other entourage, were brought to Delhi. They were initially accommodated at the *haveli* of Raja Roop Singh of Kishangarh.

Meanwhile, at the command of the emperor to present themselves at the Imperial court, the prominent nobles of Marwar proceeded towards Delhi. Here they met the emperor on April 14, 1679, and requested him to confer Marwar on the posthumous son of their late Maharaja. Aurangzeb was in no mood to accommodate their wishes, apparently stating that he had decided that the child would be brought up at court, and on reaching adulthood would be given due *mansab* and the throne of Marwar.

(Some accounts indicate that Aurangzeb had doubts about whether the infant was really a son of the late Jaswant Singh, or whether a clever conspiracy had been hatched between close supporters of the dead Marwar chief and his widowed queens of pushing the claim of a spurious 'son', so that the emperor could not permanently attach the territory of Marwar. The doubt was to linger in the Emperor's mind. However, a translation of the manuscript now referred to as the *Jodhpur Hiqumat-ri-bahi*³⁹, suggests that Aurangzeb initially had no doubts over the claim of the Jodhpur infant-

prince. This text suggests that the emperor was willing to grant some tracts and estates in the child's name, pending an eventual settlement once the boy was older, but the proposal was not accepted by the Marwar nobles. Later, Aurangzeb began to question Ajit Singh's legitimacy and insist that a fake prince was being palmed off by the Marwar nobles, to prevent the state going into the hands of someone they would not be able to manipulate).

The emperor's decision was deeply resented by the Rathores of Marwar, who pleaded in vain with the emperor for the formal recognition of the infant as the heir to Jaswant Singh's rights and titles at Jodhpur. Instead, in May 1679, the emperor chose to bestow the *gaddi* to one of Jaswant Singh's grand-nephews, Inder Singh Rathore, the chief of Nagaur, and a descendant of the late Jaswant Singh's elder brother, Amar Singh, whose superior rights to the Marwar *gaddi* had been overlooked by Emperor Shah Jahan. Inder Singh agreed to give a *peshkash* of thirty-six lakhs of rupees as succession fee. Inder Singh was, in reality, more a nominal ruler, for the administration remained in the hands of Mughal officers. Unable to establish control over Marwar in the long-run, Inder Singh Rathore was recalled to the Imperial court two years later.

Meanwhile, on July 15, 1679 AD (*Sawan vadi 2* of Vikram Samvat 1736), Aurangzeb ordered that the infant Ajit Singh and his entourage be shifted to Noorgarh, virtually as prisoners. At this, Durga Das Rathore (son of Maharaja Jaswant Singh's minister, Askaran, and a hereditary jagirdar of Marwar in his own right, who had been in attendance at Jamrud when his Maharaja died), and a select band of Marwar's warriors, including Ranchordas Jodha and Raghunath Bhati, took action. These Marwar loyalists contrived the daring rescue of the closely guarded infant Ajit Singh and the widowed rani of Jaswant Singh (along with Mohkam Singh's wife), from Imperial hands. Accompanied by Mukund Das Khinchi, they were safely taken from Delhi to Salawas, near Jodhpur, where they arrived in the third week of July 1679, and then on to Jaitaran and Balunda on July 23, 1679.

Aurangzeb commanded Tahir Beg Khan and Inder Singh Rathore, the new raja of Marwar, to capture the fugitive party, and bring the boy back to Delhi. Both men were unsuccessful in this. Thereafter, began a long

struggle against Emperor Aurangzeb by Durga Das and other supporters of the Marwar ruling family. (Ishar Das, later *amin* of Jodhpur, recorded in his contemporaneous *Fatuhah-i-Alamgiri* that all the Rajput households of Marwar had made preparations to challenge the Imperial writ).

The role of Durga Das did not end simply with this daring rescue of the infant-prince. With selfless devotion, the warrior took up as his life's duty the cause of restoring the young scion of the Marwar ruling house to his patrimony. He was personally present in many battles, which the Rathores fought against the Mughals. Durga Das has been described as possessing that rare combination of the dash and reckless valour of a Rajput soldier with the tact, diplomacy and organizing power of a Mughal minister of state. Even much later, when his clan-head and master had grown to manhood, and differences had cropped up between them, Durga Das did not flail in his loyalty. It was for this loyalty, as well as his personal valour and chivalrous deeds that Durga Das was to become part of popular lore during his lifetime, and remain so afterwards.

With the arrival of Maharaja Jaswant Singh's posthumous son in Marwar, the people began to rally around him. The boy was acknowledged as maharaja by the Marwar nobles on August 2, 1679. Concurrently, Marwar loyalists, headed by Sonig and Bhatti Ram dislodged Tahir Beg and Tahawar Khan from the fort of Jodhpur, Sujan Singh and his Marwar troops captured the fort of Siwana and Mertia Raj Singh confronted the Mughal garrison at Merta. On learning about the loss of Jodhpur, the emperor despatched a force commanded by Sarbuland Khan to capture Ajit Singh and his entourage, and to wrest Jodhpur from the Rathores.

(Jadunath Sarkar noted that all parts of Marwar, Jalore and Siwana in south, Didwana in the north and Sambhar in the northeast, were invaded by Ajit's partisans. The Rathore bands spread over the country and they appeared unexpectedly in different quarters and after having secured a success over a weak Mughal outpost, kept the land in perpetual turmoil. Even the trade routes were closed by them. The result was twenty-seven years of incessant warfare between the Mughals and the Rathores in which Durga Das Rathore played conspicuous role. V.S. Bhargava has described this as the 'Rathore War of Independence', while Dr. Athar Ali has called it

a 'Rathore Rebellion'. G.H. Ojha and Pandit B.N. Reu too have discussed Ajit Singh and Durga Das in their *History of Jodhpur State*, and *Marwar-Ka-Itihas* respectively).

Meanwhile, recognising the gravity of the situation, Durga Das and the others had already decided that it was unsafe to keep young Ajit Singh in Marwar. As such, since one of Jaswant Singh's wives was a princess from Sirohi, and the hilly fastness of the small kingdom was considered a safe refuge, which the Mughals would not suspect, the child had been taken secretly to Sirohi. Here, with the consent and support of the Sirohi ruler, Bairisal, the infant Ajit Singh was provided shelter for a while at Kalandri, apparently by a Pushkarna Brahmin named Jaideo. His whereabouts were kept secret from the emperor.

In the interim, the emperor decided to supervise the campaign in person, and reaching Ajmer by the third week of September 1679, despatched a strong force under the command of his third son, Prince Mohammad Akbar (better known simply as Akbar), to deal with the fugitive prince and his partisans. Jodhpur was invested. Simultaneously, Aurangzeb brought other parts of Marwar under direct Imperial administration; placing its several districts under different *faujdar*s. However, the emperor failed to trace Ajit Singh and to subdue the rebellions.

Worried about the continued safety of Ajit, it was decided to seek the help of Maharaja Raj Singh of Mewar, and Rathore Gpi Nath and Sadpal were despatched to him with a letter from Durga Das. The maharana agreed to provide Ajit Singh shelter in the hilly tract of Kelwa and granted the estate of Kelwa to him in *jagir*. Thereupon, Ajit Singh was brought away from the territory of Sirohi to Nandlai, three miles northwest of Desuri in Mewar. Raj Singh's action enraged Aurangzeb, who was already furious with the Mewar ruler over a number of issues!

Raj Singh did not alter his decision, despite repeated letters and warnings from the emperor. Aurangzeb marched against Mewar, and the combined forces of Mewar and Marwar were defeated by the Imperial forces in the battle of Debari on January 4, 1680. Udaipur, the capital of

Mewar, and its surrounding area was temporarily invested by Aurangzeb, before he returned to Ajmer in March 1680. The defeat did not dishearten the Rathores, though, and they created disturbances in jalore, Sojat, Siwana, Sambhar, Didwana and Jaitaran under the leadership of Durga Das, Sonig, and others. Efforts by Aurangzeb to totally crush the popular uprisings across Marwar remained unsuccessful. From his headquarters at Ajmer, the emperor now despatched his third son, Prince Akbar, against the Rathores of Marwar, with orders to cross into Mewar, if necessary, through the Desuri pass connecting Marwar and Mewar.

Meanwhile, Durga Das had taken on the dual mantle of a soldier and diplomat. While he willingly wielded the sword for his young master when necessary, he simultaneously sought other avenues for a settlement in Ajit Singh's favour. One of these attempts entailed trying to reach a closer understanding with the eldest of Aurangzeb's sons, the Mughal prince, Muazzam. Another involved successfully instigating Prince Akbar, who had, by that point in his expedition against the Rathores reached Nadol, to strike up the banner of revolt against his father, the emperor, and make a bid for the Imperial throne.

The rebellious Prince Akbar proclaimed himself as the 'Emperor of Hindustan' at Nadol in January, AD 1681. While the resultant consequences of this weakened the intensity of Mughal operations in Mewar and Marwar, Aurangzeb's clever stratagem of alienating the rebel prince's Rajput allies saved the situation. Aurangzeb incited suspicions about an Imperial conspiracy to which Prince Akbar was party, by ensuring that the Rajputs learned about letters, purportedly from Aurangzeb to Akbar, congratulating the latter into getting the Rajputs to believe that the prince's 'pretend-rebellion' was genuine, and stating that the emperor would take further action once the trap was duly sprung. Evidence shows that there never was any conspiracy between Aurangzeb and Prince Akbar, and that the wily emperor got his way by playing on the suspicions of his Rajput opponents!

Bereft of many of his supporters and Rajput allies, Akbar was forced to leave the field to his father, and seek the assistance of Durga Das and his Rathores. In time, the emperor's ploy was realised, but it was too late for Akbar's allies to aid him afresh. Instead, Prince Akbar was helped by Durga

Das when Mughal forces under the command of Prince Muazzam were sent by Aurangzeb to capture him. Thereafter, the Rajputs sheltered the unfortunate Akbar. (Meanwhile, though Prince Akbar's cause was lost, as 'emperor' he already had conferred the title and *gaddi* of Jodhpur to Ajit Singh, in the interim, along with a *mansab* of 7,000 *zat* and *sawar*).

Having failed to secure military assistance for Akbar in Rajasthan, Durga Das took him to Sambhaji's court at Konkan around June 11, 1681. Durga Das's object in escorting Prince Akbar from Marwar to Sambhaji's court may either have been to divert Imperial attention away from Marwar, or else, to forge some sort of a Rajput-Maratha alliance against the Mughal emperor.

In any event, Durga Das's gamble paid off. For, putting forward proposals for a treaty with Mewar, Emperor Aurangzeb himself left Rajasthan for the Deccan within three weeks of Prince Akbar's arrival at the court of Sambhaji. The absence of the emperor gave the Marwar loyalists ample opportunity to challenge Mughal authority within Marwar, and create disturbances over a wide expanse of Marwar's territory that was under Mughal occupation. (It also gave Mewar time to recoup). Thus, between 1681 and 1687 various local commanders and fief-holders led popular attacks on Imperial garrisons (*thanas*) and outputs stationed across different part of Marwar. These included the Mughal bases at the fortified strongholds of Pokhran, Jaitaran, Nadol, Didwana and Makrana, which were captured and re-captured over the course of the next six years.

Since the Imperial administration over Jodhpur continued to be harassed by Rathores loyal to Ajit Singh's cause, in 1687 Aurangzeb deputed Shujaat Khan, the *subedar* of Gujarat, to take command of military operations in Marwar. The Imperial forces succeeded in reestablishing their hold over parts of Marwar⁴⁰.

That March, Ajit Singh was brought out of concealment, and formally crowned as the Maharaja of Marwar by his supporters. Durga Das also returned from the Deccan. By now, all concerned were tired of the prolonged confrontation, and were not averse to finding an amicable settlement. After nearly two decades, prolonging the strife seemed more

and more to be a futile exercise to both sides. Thus, negotiations towards a truce were begun between the Mughals and the Rathores⁴¹, and Shujaat Khan adopted a reconciliatory attitude. The marriage of Ajit Singh with a niece of Maharana Jai Singh of Mewar at this point became a contributory factor in partially convincing Aurangzeb that Ajit Singh was truly a son of the late Jaswant Singh, and not an impostor foisted on the world to prevent the crown of Marwar from lapsing to Imperial appointees. For, it was held that proud Mewar would not have knowingly married one of its princesses to one they knew to be an impostor.

Meanwhile, following the defeat of Prince Akbar, Durga Das had ensured shelter and safety (in Marwar) for the Mughal prince's son, Buland Akhtar, and daughter, Saif-un-Nisa Begum from the possible retaliatory wrath of their royal grandfather. Convinced through prolonged negotiations that Aurangzeb would not harm his own grand-daughter (the rebellious Prince Akbar's daughter), Durga Das offered to return her to Aurangzeb's court. Accompanied by Ishar Das Nagar, Durga Das escorted Princess Saif-un-Nisa Begum to her grandfather on May 20, 1698. Later, Akbar's son, Prince Buland Akhtar, was also conducted to Aurangzeb's court in the Deccan. The emperor conferred a *mansab* of 3,000 *zat* and 2,500 *sawar* on the doughty old Durga Das, along with the *jagir* of Merta and Dhandhuka. Durga Das was also appointed the *faujdar* of Patan. The *Mirat-i-Alamgiri* tells us that when honours were being bestowed upon him by Aurangzeb, Durga Das pleaded the cause of his master, Ajit Singh, urging the restoration of Marwar and a pardon for him. The emperor agreed to grant the *jagirs* of Siwana, Jalore and Sanchore to Ajit Singh, but did not restore Jodhpur to him.

The mutual distrust between Ajit Singh and Aurangzeb remained, with Ajit putting off summons to the Imperial court. The period of truce between the Mughals and the Rathores of Marwar finally came to end with the death of Shujaat Khan. Prince Azam, the new *subedar* of Gujarat, decided to abandon the conciliatory policy of his predecessor, as a result of which hostilities broke out again in 1702. Meanwhile, Emperor Aurangzeb took maximum advantage of the economic exhaustion of Marwar, differences between Durga Das and Ajit Singh and alienation of Rathore

nobility from active warfare. The result was that Ajit Singh was unable to enter the capital-city of Marwar until after the death of Aurangzeb.

With Aurangzeb's death in 1707, the first phase of Rathore resistance against the Mughal emperor ended. Ajit Singh wrested the fort and city of Jodhpur from the Imperial *qiledar* (fort-commander) on March 12, 1707, after killing or dispersing the Imperial garrison. Thereafter, while the sons of Aurangzeb were involved in a struggle for the Imperial throne, Ajit Singh succeeded in extending his sway over Sojat, Pali and Merta. However, Ajit Singh was not fated to hold Jodhpur for long, as we shall note when we return to the history of this tract in a later chapter.

THE RATHORES OF BIKANER

Under Raja Rai Singh (r. 1574-1612), who died at Burhanpur serving Imperial interests in the Deccan in 1612, the kingdom of Bikaner had prospered. The general prosperity continued over the next few generations, despite occasional periods of internal dissension and rivalry over the throne of Bikaner.

We have already looked at much of Rai Singh's career in an earlier section. In 1606, after the eldest Mughal prince, Khusrau, revolted and fled to the Punjab, Emperor Jahangir left Rai Singh in charge of Agra, while he marched in person against his son. Jahangir also charged Rai Singh with the task of escorting the Imperial harem. In Mughal tradition, this duty was an honour only assigned to a trusted noble. However, Rai Singh deserted the Imperial harem at Mathura and left for his own state. Imperial troops were sent after him, and despite Raja Rai Singh's attempts at eluding these royal forces, he was captured, but later pardoned and restored to his dignities and estates. Towards the final years of Rai Singh's life, his eldest son, Dalpat rose up in rebellion. An Imperial *farman* dating to the month of Rajab 1015 AH, i.e. November 1607, indicates that Jahangir expressed his great concern at Prince Dalpat's revolt against Rai Singh, and was prepared to despatch a Mughal contingent if that had been thought necessary.

Following the death of Rai Singh, the succession of his eldest son Dalpat Singh (r. 1612-1613), was recognised by Emperor Jahangir. This was apparently contrary to the wishes of Rai Singh, who had wanted to see the *gaddi* of Bikaner go to a younger son, Sur Singh. In August 1612, Dalpat Singh was ordered to proceed to Thatta, in Sindh, with Mirza Rustam. The Bikaner ruler failed to comply with Jahangir's command, thereby earning Imperial disfavour. Taking advantage of the resultant situation, Prince Sur Singh was able to push his own claims, and obtained an Imperial *farman* (royal command or decree) permitting him to occupy Bikaner. Dalpat Singh was defeated, captured through treachery, and first imprisoned at Hissar and then moved to Ajmer. Thereafter, Dalpat Singh was unable to recover his right to the throne, and following an abortive rescue mission, he eventually met his end at Ajmer.

Sur Singh (r. 1612-1631), the son of Rai Singh, obtained the *gaddi* of Bikaner in place of Dalpat Singh in 1612. Among his early acts was ordering the heinous massacre of the 'joint' or 'extended' family of a former minister of Bikaner, the late Karamchand Bachhawat. (During his lifetime, Karamchand had been accused of being party to a conspiracy, hatched by Prince Dalpat Singh, to overthrow Maharaja Rai Singh). The sanguine start to his reign was not, however, a harbinger of sustained acts of vengeance. Emperor Jahangir frequently called upon Sur Singh to suppress various uprisings and rebellions, including those of the Bundelas, Bhatias, and Sher Khwaja of Thatta. His services were appreciated and duly rewarded. In 1622, Jahangir sent Sur Singh to the Deccan to take action against the rebellious Mughal royal prince, Khurram (later Emperor Shah Jahan). For his loyal services, the emperor granted the *pargana* of Nagaur to the Bikaner ruler in 1627.

The death of Jahangir and the accession of Khurram as Emperor Shah Jahan did not mark a fall in position for Sur Singh, despite the latter's role in suppressing the 1622 revolt by the then Prince Khurram. Sur Singh's *mansab* rank was raised to 4,000 by the new emperor. In 1628, Sur Singh was deputed to Kabul, where he took successful action against Nazar Muhammad Khan. Sur Singh died at the village of Bohari in the Burhanpur area of the Deccan in September 1631, and was succeeded by his eldest son, Karan Singh.

Karan Singh (r. 1631-1667, d. 1669), is counted amongst the noteworthy Bikaner rulers. A man of learning and a patron of art and literature, Karan Singh, like his immediate predecessors, also rendered service to the Mughal empire. The newly crowned Karan Singh, who had already held a *mansab* rank of 2,000 and seen active service during his father's lifetime, was soon deputed to other Imperial campaigns. Among these were the Imperial campaign against Bundela Vikramajit in 1629, and the Deccan expedition of 1632 led by Wazir Khan to suppress the rising of Fateh Khan (who surrendered). Karan Singh was also deputed to join Mughal generals in expeditions to Parenda (1634), Aurangabad, and many other places.

In the course of these campaigns, his military skills and head for strategy gained due recognition. In 1648, he was appointed *qiledar* (fort-commander or governor) of the Daulatabad fort. During the war-of-succession between Emperor Shah Jahan's sons, Karan Singh had remained neutral, and returned to Bikaner from the Deccan, though two of his sons took up the cause of Aurangzeb. In 1666, Karan Singh was sent against Jalal Khan of Chanda.

The heroism and exploits of Raja Karan Singh of Bikaner and his four sons, Padam Singh, Kesri Singh, Anoop Singh and Mohan Singh, became part of folklore, especially during the reign of Aurangzeb. The emperor himself constantly acknowledged their bravery on battlefields, and rewarded their gallantry at court. The Bikaner chronicles tell us that when Prince Kesri Singh and Prince Padam Singh returned from the battle of Khajua, Emperor Aurangzeb brushed off the dust from their battle-stained apparel with his own handkerchief!

In spite of that, as far as Aurangzeb's rather troubled relationship with the majority of the kingdoms and chiefdoms of Rajasthan was concerned, Bikaner was no exception. In part, this was caused by court politics and in part due to Aurangzeb's increasing religious single-mindedness. In time, Karan Singh of Bikaner too earned the emperor's ill-will.

According to Bikaner chronicles, on one famous occasion in 1667, the Imperial forces were encamped at Attock, in the far northwest (now part of

Pakistan), when the accompanying Hindu rulers learnt of a rumoured plot by Aurangzeb to forcibly convert them all to Islam. These rulers conferred together and it was agreed, as one reads in Maharaja Ganga Singh's *Golden Jubilee Volume*, that the Imperial Mughal force be "...induced to cross first, and when the boats returned to fetch the Hindu contingents, they should be destroyed. ...Just as the fleet containing the Muslim troops had crossed the river, news arrived that the mother of the Ruler of Amber (Jaipur) had died; and on this pretext all the Rajas delayed their crossing for twelve days. They had now the river between themselves and the Imperial Army, but it still remained to destroy the means by which the Imperial forces could return to set upon them. Accordingly, they asked for the boats to be sent back, saying they intended to cross".

"The Rajas then came in a body to Raja Karan Singhji of Bikaner. They pointed out that since his territories were the least susceptible to invasion, he could, without risking its ruin, save their religion and bear the brunt of the Imperial displeasure by destroying the boats. Raja Karan Singhji assented, but not without a condition, which was that he should be seated on an improvised Gaddi in the forest, for once to receive the homage of the assembled Rulers as 'Emperor of Hindustan'. To this condition the Rajput Chiefs agreed. A Throne was speedily constructed and all the Princes saluted the Ruler of Bikaner with the cry: 'Jai Jangaldhar Badshah'; 'Victory to the King of Jangal'. The Bikaneris thereupon set to work to destroy the boats in the presence of the Imperial messenger; the other Rajas helped in the work of destruction; and the Rajput forces set off securely on their way home"⁴².

Apparently Emperor Aurangzeb was furious at the Raja's action, but despite his wrath, a sense of fairness compelled him to invest Bikaner with the title of *Jangalpat Badshah*, with the remark that the Bikaner ruler had already been so recognised by his fellow princes!⁴³ Besides enraging Aurangzeb in this manner, Karan Singh had to contend with rivalries and intrigues at the Imperial court, and a group hostile to him ensured that Aurangzeb's favour was never fully won back by the Bikaner ruler. In July 1667, the emperor conferred Bikaner on Karan Singh's eldest son, Anoop Singh. Thereafter, Karan Singh's *mansab* ranks were taken back, and he was posted to the Deccan, where he founded the habitations of Karanpura,

Kesri Singhpura and Padampura. (These three, along with Kokanwari, remained the property of Bikaner over the next two and a half centuries. It was only in 1904 that these 'Bikaneri' settlements in the Deccan were transferred to the British-controlled Government of India, in exchange for two villages in Hissar district and a cash payment of Rs. 25,000). Karan Singh himself never returned to Bikaner, and he died at Aurangabad in 1669.

Karan Singh's successor, Anoop Singh⁴⁴ (r. 1669-1698), was the first ruler of Bikaner to be invested with the title of 'Maharaja', following the battle of Bijapur in 1673. In fact, in recognition of the impressive services rendered by Anoop Singh and his famous brothers, the Emperor Aurangzeb eventually conferred the highest honour of the Mughal court — *Mahi Maratib*, on the Bikaner ruler.

Counted among the veteran commanders of the Imperial army, Anoop Singh participated in the 1670 expedition against Shivaji, which marched to the Deccan under Mahabat Khan. Appointed the governor of Adoni in 1678, Anoop Singh, together with the Bikaner contingent took a prominent part in various other Imperial campaigns in the Deccan, including the storming of the independent states of Bijapur and Golconda (1687) by Aurangzeb's forces. In 1687, Aurangzeb raised Anoop Singh's *mansab* to 3,500 in recognition of his role in the battle at Golconda. He was also given the administrative charge of Bijapur and Golconda.

While Anoop Singh was away at Adoni, within Bikaner the Bhatias of Kharbara and Raimalwari raised the banner of revolt. They made the fort of Churaia, some ninety miles north of Bikaner city, their base. They were joined by local Johiyas. However, the uprising was quelled under the leadership of an efficient official named Mukund Rai, who was a Mahajan (of the merchant class) by caste. The Churaia fort was torn down, and in 1678 it was replaced by a larger and stronger one, which was named as Anoopgarh after the ruler of Bikaner.

In 1682 one of Anoop Singh's half-brothers, Banmali (whose mother was a concubine of Karan Singh), claimed half the kingdom — on the basis of a royal *farman* issued by the Mughal emperor. Anoop Singh is believed

to have engineered the long-distance murder of this half-brother, through having poison administered to Banmali by the slave-girl the latter had married, while simultaneously arranging to have the emperor believe that Banmali had died of natural causes. In time Anoop Singh's *mansab* rank was raised to 5,000. Besides this, the fortress of Adoni and surrounding lands in that area of Bellary (southern India) were conferred upon him in 1689, for his valiant services. It was at Adoni that Anoop Singh died in 1698.

Anoop Singh, like many a contemporary ruler from Rajasthan, spent the major part of his life absent from his own kingdom in the course of an unending series of campaigns, and at the Imperial court. Despite a life spent amidst battles and campaigning, he was himself an accomplished Sanskrit scholar, mathematician and an astronomer, and wholeheartedly encouraged the composition of many treatises on astronomy, literature etc., and various poetic and musical works at his Bikaner court. To Anoop Singh goes the credit of constructing, for purposes of defence, the fort, with its accompanying township, of Anoopgarh. Anoop Singh was a patron of music and the arts too. During his period the 'Usta' painters at the Bikaner court produced many miniature paintings based on locally popular stories and legends.

Besides authoring several treatises in Sanskrit and Rajasthani, Anoop Singh was responsible for collecting (or having copies prepared) for his own library, many hundreds of Sanskrit manuscripts, originating from different parts of India. Many of these were works that he came across in the course of military campaigns with the Imperial forces. Idols in different kinds of metals were also collected by him from different parts of the Mughal empire. The collection became, in time, a personal library of nearly ten thousand manuscripts and texts — many of them rare works. This 'Anoop Sanskrit library' at Bikaner has long been regarded as amongst Anoop Singh's lasting contributions to scholarship.

The nine-year-old Saroop Singh (r. 1698-1700), succeeded his father. Saroop's short reign came to an end when he caught smallpox and died of it at Adoni in 1700. In the interim, intrigues and *zenana* politics had gained an upper hand at the minor ruler's court, and the period had seen the

treacherous murder of one of the leading fief-holding nobles of Bikaner State at the instigation of a eunuch. Meanwhile, following the young Bikaner ruler's death in 1700, the *gaddi* of Bikaner devolved on Saroop Singh's younger brother, Sujan Singh (r. 1700-1735).

THE RATHORES OF KISHANGARH

Among other prominent branches of the powerful Rathore clan may be included the principality founded by Kishan Singh, the eighth son of 'Mota Raja' Udai Singh of Jodhpur. Lying roughly southeastward of the parent-state of Jodhpur, the principality took its name from that of its founder, as did the capital, which was built in AD 1609. Kishan Singh, who had been sent to the Mughal court at a young age, was confirmed in the possession of that territory by Emperor Akbar in 1594. He was later granted the *jagir* of Setholav by the Mughal emperor, Jahangir. The title of 'Maharaja' was conferred on Kishan Singh by Jahangir in 1612, who also granted him a *mansab* of 1,000 infantry and cavalry.

Now famous more for its fine tradition of miniature painting known as the Kishangarh School of Art, or atelier, in the course of its history the small state of Kishangarh too had its share of brave warriors, litterateurs, musicians and artists, besides ordinary citizens, who plied their respective trades, over its nearly two hundred and forty year existence as a distinct political entity.

In 1615, Kishan Singh was killed at Ajmer by the men of Jodhpur's *dewan* Govind Das. He was succeeded by his sons Sahasmal (r. 1615-1618) and Jagmal Singh (r. 1618-1629); both dying in warfare at Jafarabad in southern India while in the service of the emperor. Jagmal Singh was followed in turn, by his brother, Hari Singh (r. 1629-1643). Hari Singh's successor was a nephew named Roop Singh (r. 1643-1658), who like his predecessors, participated in Mughal campaigns on the northwest frontier and elsewhere. Around 1650, he was granted Mandalgarh as *jagir* by Emperor Shah Jahan. (Mandalgarh was retaken by Mewar's Raj Singh in 1660). He is also remembered as the founder of the town of Roopnagar, to which he shifted his capital.

Roop Singh was succeeded by his son, Man Singh (r. 1658-1706). A popular tale in Rajasthan centres around Man Singh's sister, Charumati, a princess of unparalleled beauty, whom the Emperor Aurangzeb wished to marry. Tradition holds that Charumati wrote a letter to Maharana Raj Singh of Mewar, informing him about the emperor's intention, and asking the Mewar hero to come to her rescue, at which Maharana Raj Singh rushed to Kishangarh with a small force, brought away Princess Charumati, and married her. (The story is retold in the Mewar section of this chapter). A younger sister of Charumati and Kishangarh's Maharaja Man Singh later married Aurangzeb's eldest son, Prince Muazzam.

THE MEWATIS

For much of the period that the Mughal empire thrived, the Meos, or Mewatis, of the Alwar-Gurgaon region remained subordinated. There were, however, times when uprisings or attempts at local independence occurred. Many of these risings probably had an economic or agrarian-related basis, intermingled with a hankering for local decision-taking and the aspirations of regional leaders and land-holders in the face of the Imperial system. On each such occasion, force was used to keep the Mewatis subdued.

For instance, during Aurangzeb's reign, a Khanzada named Ibrahim rose up against the empire. His attempt at independence was soon quelled though. For awhile, Alwar was placed under the administrative charge of Sawai Jai Singh II of Amber. Later, it was resumed by the emperor, and the fort was repaired and equipped with an Imperial garrison. In the earlier part of the succeeding century, the Jats would become a crucial factor in the affairs of the region as a whole. For instance, around c. 1720, the area was ravaged by the Jat leader, Churaman. The situation remained fraught over the next several years, even decades, as Jat mercenaries and so-called free-booters plundered Mewati territory between around 1724 and 1763.

THE RISE OF THE JATS — THE KINGDOM OF BHARATPUR

Without digressing here into a discussion about the origins of the Jats etc.⁴⁵, it may be noted that the rise of the Jats as a political and military force in the eighteenth century may perhaps be attributed to a combination of more than one factor. Prominent among these were not just Aurangzeb's narrow-mindedness and bigoted policy, but also the overall agrarian and economic policy that had burdened the farmers, the disturbed political conditions under Aurangzeb's successors, and changes in the socio-political equation, which affected the powerful Jat peasantry.

The Mughal agrarian policy and methods of land revenue collection played a crucial part in the shaping of events. As has been amply described by scholars, the extant land revenue system had been overhauled and made more efficient during the reigns of Sher Shah Sur and Akbar⁴⁶. During that time about one-third of the produce was taken from the peasant-farmers as land-revenue and other taxes. In time, under Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb, there was an increase in the total amount of revenue collected from the farmers — so that by c. 1700 the peasant-farmers had to part with nearly half of their produce in taxes and cesses. The payment was made in cash, rather than kind.

The cumulative effect of the Mughal agrarian policy and economic system, and the pressure on peasantry from the *mansabdars*, *jagirdars* and *zamindars* who levied additional cesses and taxes to meet their own obligations to the Imperial court (and other expenses), came into play by the latter part of Aurangzeb's reign. Many rural people began to abandon their villages, which had its inevitable results in terms of large-scale suffering, malnutrition, starvation and insecurity, a fall in agricultural production, etc. It is significant that there is general contemporaneity between the Satnami, Sikh, Jat, Maratha, Afghan Roshania, etc. unrests, rebellions and movements across South Asia. The same is also true for the attempts by many aggrieved Mughal, Rajput, Afghan and other Imperial subordinates to establish their own states. In the case of the latter — the 'grandees' of the Mughal Empire — the fact that there was little available land remaining to hand out in new *jagirs* was only one of the additional causes for resentment. In fact, to an extent, there seems a coalescing of causes and reasons for both the peasant/sectarian rebellions, and for many rebel nobles either providing the former leadership; or striving to carve out their own tract out of the vast

Mughal Empire. Matters would worsen over the coming century: in part due to the very splendour, pomp and wealth that had made the Mughal court one of the most talked-about ones of its time! It is ironic that at the death of Aurangzeb the Imperial Treasury was close to being empty due to the heavy military and other expenses — and also due to a fall in the Imperial share of revenues and other tax takings. Truly — to misquote the Bard, something had, indeed, begun to be “rotten in the State of Denmark”.

(To an extent, this pattern of over-taxed peasantry and aggrieved elite, who had problems with a greater paramount power, would be repeated — for nearly same reasons — during the nineteenth century, with the British East India Company taking the place of the Mughal empire. It would be one of the causes for the discontentment leading to the events of 1857; and for subsequent ‘peasant’, ‘tribal’, and other popular uprisings during the remainder of the nineteenth and early twentieth century!)

As such, the existing conditions in the latter part of the 1600s, saw many groups and communities like the Jats, Sikhs, Satnamis, Afghans, Marathas, etc. beginning to voice their discontent against the Mughal Empire. This occurred in the Mathura-Bayana-Panipat area too where, under the leadership of *zamindars* and local headmen like Gokul, Khan Chand, Rajaram, Bhajja and Churaman, the local agriculturalist Jats, along with some Gurjars (Gujars), Ahirs, etc. came together to defy Mughal authority. In time, they were to pillage the countryside around Delhi and Agra. The process gained further momentum in the final years of Emperor Aurangzeb’s reign, when the aged emperor himself was busy in the Deccan, and his forces were involved on more than one front.

Around c. 1660-70, Gokul, an influential Jat land-holder (*zamindar*) of Tilpat emerged as a leader of the Jats, Gurjars, and Ahirs of his region, to defy payment of land revenue to the Imperial coffers. The emperor dealt with their defiance firmly. Meanwhile, the atrocities committed by the *faujdar* of Mathura, Abdu-un-Nabi, further fuelled the resentment and anger of the local people, and ended with Gokul killing *Faujdar* Abdu-un-Nabi. Gokul organised an army of 20,000. The first round went in favour of Gokul and his companions, and two successive *faujgars* of Mathura failed to quell the uprising⁴⁷. As a result, in December 1669 Aurangzeb personally

marched towards the area. A determined attack saw the Imperial forces emerge victorious. Gokul and 7,000 of the peasant 'rebels' were captured, Gokul's son and daughter were converted to Islam, and in January 1670 Gokul himself, along with his uncle, Udai Singh, executed. A number of villages, including Gokul's native Sinsini (which gives its name to the Sinsiniwar Jats), were occupied by the Mughals.

However, the defeat did not stop the Jats, and in the years that followed, several men took the lead in carving out small little territorial units and holdings in the Gangetic Doab. Meanwhile, Khan Chand, a scion of Gokul's family, assumed the leadership of the Sinsiniwar Jats. His place was later taken by his grandson, Rajaram. By about 1683-84, Rajaram had organised the Jats into a fighting force, encouraged the building of small, scattered, fortified strongholds, protected with mud-walls and moats, and started plundering the neighbouring Mughal territory. Rajaram and his followers even raided Akbar's tomb at Sikandra, and took away jewels and the gold and silver casing on the portals of the tomb. Rajaram was later killed by a Mughal soldier at Baiji. On learning about the desecration of Akbar's tomb, Aurangzeb took punitive action.

In 1688, Amber's Raja Bishan Singh was posted as *faujdar* of Mathura. He led his troops against groups attempting to cut off the grain-convoys, or otherwise attacking Mughal posts. He next proceeded against a number of Jat strongholds, and successfully besieged and occupied Sinsini, despite a stiff resistance put up by its defenders. Though nearly 1,500 Jats are said to have been killed, Churaman, a younger member of Rajaram's family, managed to make his way to safety. The following year, the Jat stronghold of Soghar too was taken in a daring raid by Bishan Singh.

Churaman, meanwhile, had gathered a small force of horsemen. They took to exacting money along the Imperial highways connecting Delhi, Mathura, Agra and Dholpur. Gradually Churaman's force swelled into an army of 10,000 men, and the depredations of the Jats soon came to be dreaded. Aurangzeb and his successors responded by ordering select commanders, among them Sawai Jai Singh II, the ruler of Dhoondhar, to quell the situation, as we shall see in the ensuing chapter.

THE STATE OF MEWAR/UDAIPUR

In the Sisodia-ruled kingdom of Mewar, Rana Pratap's son, Amar Singh (r. 1597-1620), ascended the *gaddi* of Mewar in January 1597, following his father's death. Soon after succeeding to the throne, Amar Singh set about re-organising the various branches of administration, since governance and the structure of the state had borne the impact of the Imperial action against Rana Pratap.

In 1598, the Mughal emperor Akbar once more turned his attention towards Mewar, and charged his eldest son, Prince Salim (the future Emperor Jahangir), with the task of obtaining the subservience of Mewar. Salim does not appear to have been particularly active personally, and having occupied Udaipur temporarily, based himself at Ajmer, leaving his efficient commanders to carry out their task with great drive. Portions of Mewar were occupied by the Imperial troops. On their part, Mewar's forces used the guerrilla tactics amply tried and tested under Rana Pratap. Another expedition was sent by Akbar in 1603.

Following Akbar's death, his successor, Emperor Jahangir, sent several campaigns against Mewar. The Mughal prince, Parvez, led the first of these. Amar Singh continued to oppose Mughal domination, as his father had done. The Imperial forces clashed with the forces of Mewar on numerous occasions and at different battlefields — including Desuri, Badnor and Mandal. Mewar resumed its 'scorched earth' policy, while simultaneously launching guerrilla attacks against Imperial garrison-outposts. Though Mughal grip over portions of Mewari territory tightened, Parvez remained unable to subordinate the Maharana — much to the displeasure of Emperor Jahangir. Three further expeditions, under the command of Mahabat Khan, Abdullah Khan and Raja Basu, respectively, met the same resistance. Matters continued in this manner up till the middle of 1613, when the emperor decided to take matters into his own hands.

On September 7, 1613 Jahangir marched in person towards Ajmer, where he arrived on November 8. With Ajmer as his base over the 1613-1616 period⁴⁸, the emperor could ensure an unbroken line of supplies and ammunition to the Imperial forces campaigning against Mewar. Another of

the emperor's sons, Prince Khurram (the future Emperor Shah Jahan), was given the charge of leading this fresh campaign against Mewar. The advancing Mughal forces occupied more tracts of Mewar. The beleaguered Amar Singh found himself pushed towards the hilly territory of southern Mewar.

Short of supplies and assets, and aware of the toll extracted in terms of warriors and civilians during the long years of hostility, spanning two reigns on both warring sides, Amar Singh and his councillors eventually came to the conclusion that a cessation of hostilities was desirable. According to some versions, it was *Kunwar* Karan Singh, the Maharana's son and the designated heir-apparent of Mewar, rather than the Rana himself, who realised, as did most of the important chiefs of Mewar, the prudence of reaching some sort of an 'honourable' understanding with the Mughals. The kingdom's nobles and chiefs too did not wish to prolong a state of affairs that was damaging to the prosperity, human resource, and economic and political well-being of Mewar.

Thus, Prince Khurram was approached. Certain face-saving preconditions were placed before him as a preliminary. Among them, the points that the Rana of Mewar would not be called upon to attend the Mughal court in person; nor would any princess of the Sisodia family marry into the Mughal family — either then or in the future. Khurram responded favourably. Peace terms were then entered into. The clauses included the following main points:- (a) the Rana would get back all the Mewar territories occupied by the Imperial forces, including the important forts of Chittor and Mandalgarh, but he was not permitted to undertake any repairs to the fort of Chittor; (b) it was agreed that the ruler of Mewar would be excused from attending the Mughal court in person, but the heir-apparent of Mewar would be expected to do so on his father's behalf; and (c) as a mark of acknowledging Mughal supremacy, Mewar would provide a force of a thousand cavalry to the Mughal army.

The peace-terms were unhesitatingly approved by Emperor Jahangir, and an Imperial *farman* (or document recording the emperor's command or order), issued and handed over to Amar Singh at Gogunda by Prince Khurram on February 5, 1615. The Mewar Rana and Prince Khurram

exchanged ceremonial gifts, including jewels, elephants, horses and robes, as the formality of such occasions merits, in great cordiality before parting company. Mewar's prolonged confrontation with the Mughal Empire was finally over. Thereafter, Mewar's heir-apparent, Prince Karan Singh waited upon the emperor, who honoured him with presents and ratified the treaty. Later, Karan Singh was warmly received by Emperor Jahangir at the Mughal court, and granted a *mansab* honour of 5,000 and other gifts.

Resisting Mughal domination, and establishing 'friendly' terms with the 'enemy', should not, perhaps, be boiled down to a simplistic Rajput/Hindu versus Mughal /Muslim), or 'nationalist' versus 'outsider' opposition. The interplay of factors was much more complex! One also needs to bear in mind the range of interaction (battles as well as the acceptance of the suzerainty of more dominant kingdoms/ empires) that marks the history of most of the other periods too — including before and after the centuries that the Mughal Empire was premier across South Asia. Even the Chauhans of Shakambhari-Ajmer-Delhi were formerly subordinate to the Gurjara-Pratiharas, as we have already noted; just as smaller states (including from Rajasthan) were to the Imperial Guptas much earlier; and the Guhilas were to the Chauhans at a slightly different point in time. As such, without in any way detracting from the courage of all those who fought for their tract of land, or 'king and country', or to repel invasions etc., one must also acknowledge that notions about 'overlordship', 'total independence', 'subordination', feudatory relationships, concepts of patriotism and 'love of motherland' etc., should not only be perceived through the lens of the nineteenth-twentieth century nation-state concept. Rather, such labels and concepts need to be handled with prudence.

The remainder of Amar Singh's reign was occupied with measures to rebuild Mewar. By the time Amar Singh died in January 1620, steps to improve the administration had been taken. Simultaneously, programmes for the general rehabilitation of the displaced populace, affected by the all too frequent fighting between Mewar and the Imperial forces, were beginning to yield positive results. (Some traditions hold that Amar Singh had been kept in the dark about the peace negotiations. When finally presented with a *fait accompli*, he had no choice but to reluctantly accept it.

The ignominy of accepting peace at the cost of Mewar's sovereignty seemingly weighed heavy on the Rana, however, and one later tradition states that Amar Singh soon handed over Mewar's governance into the hands of his heir, and lived out the remaining years of his life at Ahar).

One may also note here one change in the land-holding structure that resulted from adapting one of Emperor Jahangir's initiatives. This was Jahangir's practice of moving jagir-holders from one jagir to another from time to time in order to prevent the jagirdars becoming too influential locally, and undermining the emperor's authority and planning sedition. Mewar's Maharana Amar Singh I adopted the system within Mewar. This led to a lot of resentment, particularly as the jagirdars of Mewar were usually kinsmen, who had held a particular jagir for several generations. It would not be until the reign of another Amar Singh, namely Maharana Amar Singh II (r. 1698-1710), that the practice was to be discontinued in Mewar! It was also during Amar Singh I's reign that Mewar's land-holders were also classified into categories known as the *solah* (sixteen)⁴⁹, *battisa* (thirty-two)⁵⁰ and *goval*⁵¹. Their places at court, including during ceremonies, became fixed, along with their respective stipulated periods of service (*chakri*), and the tribute-amount (*rekh* or *khiraj*) due from each jagir.

Rana Amar Singh's son and successor, Karan Singh (r. 1620-1628), maintained the friendly relations established, through the 1615 accord, with Emperor Jahangir and the Mughal Empire. He also encouraged further administrative and economic reforms in Mewar. Land units were reorganised into *parganas* etc. Village-related institutions too were reorganised; and revenue-collection officials ('*patwari*', etc.) appointed. So too were village-level functionaries, known as '*patel*', '*gram-balai*' and '*chowkidar*'. The return of peace provided a fresh impetus to construction-work, and saw the erection of several buildings, including palaces.

It was during Rana Karan Singh's time that the Mughal prince Khurram (soon to ascend the Mughal throne as Emperor Shah Jahan), having been declared 'rebellious', found himself compelled to flee the emperor's wrath. Khurram was provided asylum in Mewar for a time, where Karan Singh compounded the cordiality of his hospitality by an

exchange of turbans with Khurram. Such an exchange of headgear has long been a recognised token in India, proclaiming that henceforth the two shall remain bound by cords of friendship and fraternity. It seemed to establish a kind of 'honorary' kinship.

Khurram spent some months at Udaipur — for much of the time using an island pavilion-palace — now known as Jagmandir, situated on Udaipur's main lake, before leaving Mewar for the Deccan. It is held that when, upon learning about Jahangir's death, Khurram marched from the Deccan towards Delhi to stake his claim to the Imperial throne; he traversed through Gogunda and met his 'brother', Rana Karan Singh of Mewar. Karan Singh subsequently deputed his brother, Prince Arjun Singh, to join Khurram's escort-party cum entourage to Delhi.

Following his early death in March 1628, Karan Singh was succeeded by his son, Jagat Singh (r. 1628-1652). By now, the kingdom of Mewar had recouped sufficiently for the ambitious Rana to think of establishing, or re-emphasising, his hegemony over Mewar's neighbours and erstwhile subordinate land-holders. Over the past long decades of hardships and fighting, an embattled Mewar had already lost large tracts of her territory, and Mandalgarh, Banera, Shahpura, Dungarpur and Banswara held independent status as far as Mewar was concerned, since they were held by various chiefs as *jagir* lands from the Mughal emperor. Rana Jagat Singh now sought to remedy some of that!

Jagat Singh's quest for territorial expansion led him to send his forces against the neighbouring kingdoms and chiefdoms of Pratapgarh-Deoliya, Dungarpur, Sirohi, and Banswara (c. 1635). Deoliya's ruler, Jaswant Singh was killed and his successor driven to request the Mughal emperor's intervention! Jagat Singh also attempted to repair the fort of Chittor, in contravention of the 1615 Mewar-Mughal treaty. (An act to which the Mughal emperor initially turned a blind eye, according to popular belief, because of his long association, while still Prince Khurram, with Jagat Singh's father and clan!) Eventually, in 1643, Emperor Shah Jahan despatched an army, under the command of Sadullah Khan, against Mewar. Jagat Singh placated the emperor through the mediation of the emperor's

eldest son, Prince Dara, and sent valuable gifts and presents to the emperor, thereby managing to avert open conflict.

Jagat Singh is remembered as a patron of learning and the arts. His reign saw the construction of Udaipur's famous 'Jagdish', or 'Jagannath Rai' temple, as well as completion of work on the Jagmandir palace (where Shah Jahan had once stayed). One valuable source for this period is the Jagannath Rai Temple Inscription of AD 1652, composed by Lakshmi Nath, and affixed on both sides of a passage leading to Udaipur Jagannath Rai temple *sabha-mandap*. The text throws light on contemporaneous rituals as well as major events of Mewari history. It would appear that towards the latter part of Jagat Singh's reign, Mewar was well-set on the road to economic well-being. The condition of the state coffers may be gauged by the fact that Jagat Singh held a number of '*tula-daan*' ceremonies — in which he was weighed in gold and silver and the amount given away in charity to Brahmins and the needy. Until c.1647, it was apparently silver that was given away, and between 1648-52 it was gold that was distributed at these near-annual *tula-daan*.

On Jagat Singh's death in October 1652, he was succeeded by his son, Raj Singh (b.1629, r. 1652-1680). Raj Singh is popularly remembered as a romantic and dashing ruler, canny military commander, able administrator, patron of arts, architecture and literature, challenger of Aurangzeb's zealotry, and a man of letters⁵². As Mewar's heir-apparent, Raj Singh had made visits to the Imperial court, basking in Shah Jahan's generally favourable attitude towards Mewar, and striking up a close friendship with the emperor's eldest son, Prince Dara Shikoh. His accession as Mewar's next Rana was not, therefore, expected to materially affect the established relationship. The strain came within two years of the accession of the new Maharana, when Raj Singh commenced the task of refortifying Chittor fort. (Raj Singh was fortunate that at the time Mughal forces were busy in Qandhar — a circumstance the young Maharana took full advantage of). This work had been initiated by his predecessor. Repairing and fortifying Chittor ran contrary to the treaty with the Mughals, which Mewar had accepted in 1615.

Raj Singh's appointment of Garib Das as an advisor was also not liked by Emperor Shah Jahan, as Garib Das was a fugitive-elite from the Mughal court, after having fallen from Imperial favour. The emperor's annoyance

also extended to the fact that Raj Singh had not rendered sufficient assistance to the Qandhar campaign, and was not fulfilling in *toto* the terms of the 1615 treaty vis-à-vis the provision of a thousand soldiers to the Imperial army.

The Emperor, therefore, sent a strong army contingent under the command of Sadullah Khan to Chittor, with orders to demolish the new fortifications that had been erected. Shah Jahan himself decided to go to Ajmer to supervise the operation, and was in full readiness to send further reinforcements from Ajmer⁵³. Realising that Emperor Shah Jahan meant business, and that Mewar had insufficient forces, resources and preparedness to face the Imperial might, Raj Singh sent envoys to pacify Shah Jahan and dissuade him from attacking Chittor. Mewar's delegation had an audience with the emperor at Khalilpur on October 4, 1654. Shah Jahan remained firm on the point of demolishing the fresh construction at Chittor, but agreed to send an emissary to work out a settlement with Raj Singh.

With options running out, Raj Singh decided to prepare for a possible confrontation with the Imperial forces, and ordered his subjects to move from the plains to the safety of the Mewari hills. The order was given for the capital city of Udaipur to be vacated and military posts to be established at crucial points. (Tradition has preserved the tale of how Barhat Naru-ji, the man charged with the task of serving as the 'Pol-Pat' or 'Guardian of the Gate' to the Maharana's palace, refused to leave his post. He insisted that he could not give up his post at the main gate, as it was his honour that was at stake. He refused to budge from his stand, even at the urging of Maharana Raj Singh himself, who tried in vain to convince the Barhat that it was a strategic retreat and not an abandonment of Udaipur. Joined by a Gujar called Kangam, who belonged to his village, Naru-ji and twenty other companions stood guarding the gate, challenged the advance party of the invading force, and finally died fighting to the end).

Even as Sadullah Khan marched towards Chittor with a force of thirty thousand, the emperor despatched his envoy, Chandrabhan, to Udaipur for negotiations. The emperor's emissary, Munshi Chandrabhan arrived at Udaipur on October 23, 1654. In the interim, Sadullah Khan reached

Chittor, and the demolition of its new fortifications was duly carried out unhindered over the course of a fortnight. According to the *Raj-Prashasti*, Raj Singh had sent Madhusudan and Raj Singh Hada to Chittor to negotiate with Sadullah Khan, but those negotiations failed. Meanwhile, forces from Mandisor too had been despatched towards Chittor.

In the event, the negotiations between Maharana Raj Singh and the emperor's envoy, Chandra Bhan, proved successful. Raj Singh was constrained to hand over some fifteen *parganas* to the emperor. These included Mandalgarh, Banera and Phulia. The Maharana also handed over the area adjoining Ajmer *suba*. It was also decided that Raj Singh's young son, Sultan Singh, was to be sent to the Imperial court as soon as the Mughal forces withdrew from Mewar.

Raj Singh's pride was undoubtedly wounded by the terms imposed, and probably influenced his reasons for not rushing to the banner of the emperor, and his eldest son, Dara, during the war-of-succession that broke out in Shah Jahan's lifetime, between Shah Jahan's sons. While advancing northward, Aurangzeb wrote to the Maharana seeking the despatch of a Mewar force under the command of Udai Karan and Shankar. Apparently Raj Singh ignored this message. In March 1658 Aurangzeb sent a *nishan* to him, promising to return Mandal and other *parganas* to Mewar. Raj Singh still took no action! In April 1658, Aurangzeb sent another letter, seeking the urgent despatch of the desired troops. The Rana eventually agreed to aid Aurangzeb, but there was a pre-condition. Namely, that for Raj Singh the recovery of territories ceded to Shah Jahan in 1654 by Mewar was the priority, and only after achieving that would he assist Aurangzeb. Correspondence between Raj Singh and Prince Aurangzeb clarifies that the Mughal royal prince agreed to this, possibly secure in the knowledge that even if the Mewar forces did not take to the field under his banner in the immediate future, they wouldn't be doing so on the side of his rivals either!

Raj Singh ignored the repeated demands for assistance from Prince Aurangzeb, while blandly continuing to negotiate with him through his agent (*vakil*). Thereafter, using the pretence of a ceremonial '*tikadar*' hunting expedition, traditionally undertaken in 'enemy land', the Maharana swooped down on various Imperial outposts in May 1658. Starting with

Dariba, levies were imposed on outposts and tracts like Mandal, Banera, Shahpura, Sawar, Phulia, etc., which were then under Mughal control, and some areas annexed. Mandal yielded an indemnity of Rs. 22,000 while the expedition against Banera and Shahpura yielded Rs. 48,000.

After Mandalgarh, Pur, Dariba and Banera were occupied, Kharad, Jahazpur, Sawar and Phulia too fell to Raj Singh. Thereafter, having sent his minister Fateh Chand against Toda, Raj Singh levied an indemnity fine of Rs. 22,000 and Rs. 60,000, respectively, on the chiefs of Shahpura and Toda, to penalize them for having assisted Sadullah Khan's offensive against Chittor in 1654. Raj Singh next attacked the *pargana* of Malpura, which he looted for nine days. Tonk, Chatsu and Lalsot were also plundered. He also swooped on Sambhar. (It should be noted that Sambhar salt production had got a further boost during the reign of the Mughal emperor Akbar. At that time, the annual revenue from the Sambhar salt was about two and a half *lakh* of rupees, which increased to three *lakh* rupees during his successor, Jahangir's, reign and five *lakhs* in Shah Jahan's). Having plundered neighbouring tracts, the triumphant Rana returned with the spoils to Udaipur.

While Raj Singh was busy in his region, Prince Aurangzeb had scored two decisive victories, at Dharmat (April 1658) and Samugarh (May-June 1658), respectively, against his main rival, Prince Dara Shikoh. Realising the need for a more prudent policy vis-à-vis the Mughal Empire, the Maharana returned to his capital city, and sent his brother, Ari Singh, and son, Sultan Singh, to wait on Aurangzeb. This meeting took place at Salimpur on June 2, 1658. A sizeable contingent of Mewar's troops was also sent by Raj Singh to Aurangzeb. Thereafter, Raj Singh shrewdly refrained from responding to Dara's call for assistance, when that beleaguered Mughal prince prepared for a final confrontation with Aurangzeb in early 1659.

In response to Raj Singh's conciliatory moves, and fully aware of the need of winning over the Mewar ruler, Aurangzeb ordered that Badnor, Mandalgarh, and the *pargana* of Gyaspur be handed over to Mewar. (Raj Singh was among the Rajput rulers not in Aurangzeb's bad books following the fratricidal struggle between Shah Jahan's sons). The new Mughal

emperor also allowed the Rana a free hand against Mewar's southern neighbours for a while, by issuing a *farman* in his favour. Raj Singh used the opportunity to establish his hegemony over Dungarpur, Banswara and Pratapgarh-Deoliya.

He sent an army against Banswara and forced its ruler to acknowledge his suzerainty. Another army, under the command of Fateh Singh, defeated Hari Singh Deoliya and brought his son to the Rana's court. Rawat Hari Singh was similarly compelled to accept the Rana as his overlord. Thus, the 'neutrality' of Raj Singh in the war of succession resulted in vast territorial gains for Mewar. Raj Singh's relationship with Emperor Aurangzeb ran smoothly for a while, but the situation gradually changed, for a variety of reasons.

For one thing, Raj Singh earned the displeasure of Aurangzeb in 1660, when he married the beautiful princess Charumati of Kishangarh, without seeking the emperor's permission. In Raj Singh's view, he did not require the emperor's permission for dealing with personal matters. The matter seems to have been complicated by the fact that, according to popular belief and Rajasthani annals, Aurangzeb, had intended making the peerless princess from Kishangarh his bride.

The small state of Kishangarh was too vulnerable, geographically and militarily, to offend Aurangzeb by a direct refusal. However, according to the version recorded by the chroniclers of Rajasthan, Princess Charumati could not reconcile herself to the idea of marrying the non-Rajput Muslim emperor. She was, furthermore, already enamoured of Maharana Raj Singh of Mewar, whom she had never seen, but whose exploits were apparently exalted and sung by all the bards and troubadours of the time. She secretly sent a letter by a messenger to Raj Singh of Mewar to tell him of her predicament. Entreating the Rana to come to her aid, the letter stated that as Charumati already considered the Rana as her husband, she would take her life if she was forced into marriage with another.

The letter reached its destination. The heartfelt call from Charumati imploring her knight-elect to rescue her from her particular 'dragon', combined with the Rajput code of chivalry and the tales of valour to which

Raj Singh had been bred, stirred him to take immediate action. According to the *Raj Prashasti* and other sources, the Rana gallantly sped to the rescue, with a small band of warriors, brought Charumati back to Mewar, and married her with pomp and ceremony. The nineteenth century Shyamaldas tells us that the emperor deprived Mewar of Deoliya, thereafter, to signify his displeasure with the Rana. Aurangzeb also took back the *pargana* of Gyaspur from Mewar and conferred it on Rawat Hari Singh.

In 1669, Aurangzeb issued orders for the demolition of certain temples. Though the order was later rescinded, the destruction of temples of Vishwanath and Keshav Das prompted the priests of the temples of 'Dwarkanathji' and 'Shrinathji' to seek safety for the idols of their shrines.

The Shrinath idol had originally been installed in Mathura, which was an old established pilgrimage site, and a flourishing and recognised centre of Krishna worship, where Aurangzeb's growing anti-idolatry zeal caused obvious worry all around. Tradition holds that Goswami Damodar Das, who belonged to the *Pushti-marg* (also Vallabhi) sect established by Vallabhacharya, and was the priest serving the Shrinathji idol, left Mathura with the statue in search of a safe haven for the sacred image. While other kingdoms expressed their inability to help, for fear of the emperor's possible reaction, Mewar's Maharana Raj Singh, when approached, promptly offered to protect the idol, and ordered the construction of suitable shrines to house the Shrinathji and Dwarkanathji idols in perpetuity. The idol of Dwarkanath was installed at Kankroli, and that of Shrinath near the village of Sihab — which soon became better known as Nathdwara — in 1672. The Maharana's boldness in this matter was resented by the emperor.

(A romantic legend holds that when, following Raj Singh's assurance, the Shrinathji image was brought into Mewar, and was being taken carried through the land (towards the capital city of Udaipur), on a wooden carriage, which had brought the statue across considerable distances without any problem, the carriage suddenly stalled at one particular place, Sihab (modern Nathdwara). Despite all efforts, the carriage bearing the small idol could not be moved forward even by a fraction. This was taken as an augury, and the new temple was built at that very spot. In addition, the

surrounding area was placed in the service of the deity, and in due course the fruits, vegetables, milk, butter, wood and other locally grown produce came to be used in temple rituals and for the other needs of the growing temple-town. Over time, this led to creation of a Krishna-centred local landscape of sylvan idyll around Nathdwara. Control was exercised by each successive temple head-priest — the Goswami '*Tilkayat*' — rather than the state of Mewar).

The imposition of the *jaziya* tax on non-Muslims by Aurangzeb on April 2, 1679, further worsened relations between Raj Singh and Aurangzeb, with the Rana taking a vociferous and public stand against the Emperor's decision. According to the Mewar tradition, described by G.H. Ojha, Raj Singh also wrote a letter of protest to Aurangzeb over this matter. Historians are not unanimous about the actual authorship of this letter, though.

As if that were not enough, later in 1679 Raj Singh provided refuge to young Ajit Singh, the posthumous son of Jaswant Singh of Marwar, and his entourage. (This followed the daring rescue of the infant prince from the Imperial capital by loyal Marwar nobles, who had then taken Ajit first to Marwar and then to temporary shelter in Sirohi). This was a direct challenge to the Mughal emperor, as not only had the infant prince Ajit Singh's claim to the throne of Marwar been ignored by Aurangzeb, but the emperor had also ordered that the administration of Marwar be taken into Imperial hands.

Granting shelter was part of Rajput tradition, but such an act was bound to be considered hostile by Emperor Aurangzeb. However, for Raj Singh upholding Rajput tradition was more important than the fear of possible retaliatory action by the Mughal emperor (as the texts, *Raj Ratnakar* and *Raj Vilas*, note). Furthermore, Prince Ajit Singh was a close relative of Raj Singh. The Maharana was also aware that the contiguous borders between Mewar and Marwar — which had, over the centuries, often resulted in war between the kingdoms — meant that the establishment of the Mughal authority in Marwar could cause security problems for Mewar. In view of these considerations, Raj Singh agreed to host Ajit Singh

in Mewar, and conferred the *jagir* of Kelwa, with twelve villages for maintenance-costs, on the boy.

Aurangzeb attempted to settle the problem by negotiation. He sent letters to Raj Singh asking that Ajit be handed over to him. The Maharana ignored the messages. Confrontation seemed inevitable. Both sides started preparation for the coming struggle. Given the near certainty of imminent war with the Mughals, the Mewar ruler entered into a pact with Ajit's supporters led by Durga Das, according to which it was agreed that Raj Singh would help Ajit to regain his patrimony, and both parties would jointly fight the Mughals. This Rathore-Sisodia alliance had great political significance in their contemporary world (where Aurangzeb's policies were already causing resentment amongst Sikhs, Jats, Satnamis, and others, and unabated opposition from the Marathas and Deccan states).

As a result of these and other factors, including that of emphasising Imperial sovereignty, Aurangzeb launched an offensive against Raj Singh of Mewar in 1679. The Imperial forces included commanders like Tahawur Khan and Hasan Ali Khan, besides Aurangzeb's sons, the princes Akbar, Muhammad Azam, and Muazzam, with their respective contingents and camp-followers. Opting to follow the by now well-tested policy of avoiding pitched battles against the Mughal forces as far as possible, the Mewar administration shifted to the hilly safety of the Bhomat plateau, and encouraged the citizens to leave Udaipur, as well as the hamlets and villages that fell on the march-route of the Mughal army. (The non-combative members of the Mewar and Marwar royal families were sent to the village of Naenwara in the Bhomat hills for safety). The Mewar forces then launched guerrilla attacks against the Imperial army. Rathores like Durga Das, and many others loyal to the young posthumous son of the late Maharajjaswant Singh of Marwar, joined forces with Mewar during this period.

Aurangzeb's army occupied Pur, Mandal, Mandalgarh, Neemuch, Chittor, Udaipur, and Rajnagar, but was unable to follow up its advantage and penetrate the interior. Mewar's strike forces, meanwhile, continually harried the Mughal army. After several reverses, it was brought home to the Mughal emperor that there was no advantage to prolonging a war against

Mewar, particularly as there were other vulnerable fronts of the empire to be defended. Mewar too had greatly suffered because of the war. It had seen the loss of Mandalgarh, Chittor and even (for a time) the capital city of Udaipur, among other places, and was not averse to witnessing an end to hostilities too. Peace proposals were thereupon initiated. While negotiations were still continuing, Raj Singh breathed his last at Oda, near Kumbhalgarh, in the late autumn of 1680. (This occurred either on October 12 or November 1, 1680). Subsequently, his successor, Maharana Jai Singh signed a peace treaty with the Mughals in 1681, as we shall see further in this chapter.

Raj Singh's reign saw an increase in the overall prosperity of Mewar. An able administrator and military commander, Raj Singh is credited with strengthening, both, the administrative machinery and army of Mewar. Besides this, like those of his predecessors who had enjoyed the finances, ability, and leisure, for encouraging the arts etc. at their courts, Rana Raj Singh too is remembered as a great patron of scholars and artists. The Rana himself wrote poetry too, and a *chhapaya* (a six line verse form) composed by him is still extant. Literary works dating to his reign were mainly composed in Sanskrit, Dingal and Pingal. In addition, the tradition of scribes making copies of older bodies of Sanskrit, Prakrit and Apabrahmsha literature continued. Along with the Maharana himself, Garib Das, Ranchod Bhatt and Ram Raj were among those who encouraged the transcribing of older texts.

Ranchod Bhatt's *Raj Prashasti*, a Sanskrit eulogy ('*prashasti*') in twenty-four cantos situated along the embankment of Raj Singh's well-known creation — the Raj Samudra (Raj Samand), which is described below, is one of the best-known works dating to Raj Singh's reign. Two other Sanskrit eulogies by Ranchod Bhatt, which are in the form of inscriptions are on view, *in situ*, at the Indra Sarovar dam and at the Trimukhi Baori, respectively. Another of Bhatt's famous works is the Sanskrit text called *Amar Kavya*, which details the rulers of Mewar from early times up to the reign of Raj Singh. While smaller in size than the *Raj Prashasti*, it is considered to be superior to that work in terms of language and style. Other Sanskrit texts of note include the *Raj Ratnakar* by the poet Sada Shiva, Jagannath Paliwal's *Rajabhishek-Paddhati*, on the coronation

of Maharana Raj Singh (with a discussion on the traditional significance of coronations, citing material in the Vedas, Puranas, Valmiki's *Ramayana*, etc.), and Lal Bhatt's *Raj Singh Prabhao Varman*, eulogising Raj Singh's reign. Mukan Kshotari's *Raj Singhasan* also dates to this period.

Several literary works were also composed in Dingal and Pingal during Raj Singh's reign. One notable example is the *Raj Vilas* by Maan, a Jain Yati. This text describes, in eighteen cantos, the history of Mewar from the period from Bappa Rawal to the final years of Raj Singh's rule. Other texts include Girdhar Das's *Sagat-Raso*, Rao Kishore Das's *Raj-Prakash* and Rao Kalyan Das's *Gun-Govind*. Art and architecture also flourished during this period. The court art of the time included illustrations from episodes and incidents in Puranic stories as well as mythology. From what some perceive as a sort of sixteenth century rusticity, the art of Raj Singh's court reflects a maturity. The Nathdwara style originated at this time. Raj Singh patronised music also, and in the field of architecture, ordered the construction of many structures, ranging from palaces to lakes, water-reservoirs and water-side pavilions, dams and tanks. He also patronised the construction of temples (including the temple of Amba Mata), and gardens. Queen Charumati too had a *baori* (step-well) constructed at her own cost at Rajnagar in 1675; while another of Raj Singh's wives, Queen Panwar-Dey, built the Trimukhi *Baori*.

To Maharana Raj Singh goes the credit for the 'Ranga Sagar' lake, and the 'Nauchauki' pavilions, as well as the famous 'Raj Samudra' (now better known as the Raj Samand Lake). The latter is a large water-body of conserved fresh-water, some five kilometres by two kilometres in expanse. The Raj Samand was engineered in part through impounding the waters of the small Gomati River near Kankroli, through constructing a dam. This was further augmented by excavating a large tract in which rain water could be collected. Its foundation was laid on January 1, 1662 and it was completed in 1676. It is believed that this work was carried out by the Rana to combat a prolonged drought that affected the region during the 1661 to 1666 period.

Mewar apparently had its share of droughts and famines. The *Raj Prashasti* records that during the famine of 1661-63 Maharana Raj Singh

supported nearly 60,000 people by providing food and employment at Raj Samand. In Mewar, as in other states, it was generally the practice not to export foodgrains out of the kingdom. Usually, local merchants would purchase the surplus stock of their area and store this in a well-like silo called *khai*. Layers of neem leaves were placed in the *khais* to repel insects. Such *khais* were normally opened during droughts and famines, when the foodgrains were a welcome foodsource for thousands of people.

The damming and digging of the reservoir was done so as to provide some 60,000 of the famine-affected populace with employment — in exchange for which they were paid in cash or kind. Such a tradition of providing state employment on tasks of public benefit during times of famine etc. is an old one across the subcontinent. In any case, agriculture was the mainstay of Mewar's livelihood, and irrigation facilities had always been an important aspect of life. (Overall, the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries saw additional irrigation works, including tanks for irrigation at Kapasan, Mandal, etc. Wells too were dug at many places across Mewar, and water for irrigating fields was drawn by means of traditional devices like *charas*, *renth* and *dori*. Wells were dug along the river-banks too. Here the water-table was about twenty-five feet, while in 'akhara' terrain it was fifty feet or even more. At this time, expenditure on digging a well ranged between Rs.200 to Rs.1000).

The Raj Samand reservoir is also known for its 'Nauchauki', an architectural edifice along the water-front, comprising three large platforms, each with three-roofed marble pavilions (*mandap*). These pavilions are located along the embankment-bund, or *ghat*, of the Raj Samand. The number of these pavilions adds up to a total of nine ('*nau*') — hence the name. The pavilions were built using older techniques with some stylistic innovations, and became trend-setters in themselves. Later this style became popular, examples of which may be seen in the palaces at Lake Pichchola and Mohan Mandir. The pillars and ceilings have profuse carvings of birds, animals and human figures, as well as decorative designs. Among other edifices datable to this period, one may note that the Maharana's minister, Singhvi Dayal Das, constructed a marble Jain temple of Adi Nath on a hill near the Raj Samand in 1675. This became known as '*Dayaldas ka Devra*'.

Much light on Raj Singh and his achievements is thrown by the famous *Raj Prashasti*, dating to AD 1679, to which reference has already been made above. This eulogy, composed in Sanskrit by Ranchod Bhatt, at the bidding of Maharana Raj Singh, is in poetry form, extending to twenty-four cantos. This *prashasti* may be seen engraved on twenty-five large slabs of black marble, fixed in niches on the walls of the *Nauchauki* along the Raj Samudra (Raj Samand) embankment *ghat*. The slabs are three feet by twenty feet in dimension. Besides the political events of that period, the inscription vividly describes the geography of Mewar and southwest Rajasthan, the economic, social and religious condition of seventeenth century Mewar, and the wars and treaties between Mewar and the Mughals. It also covers the general history of Mewar. (Of course, like many such royal eulogies, which gloss over the negative aspects of the character and personality of their patron/ruler/master, this inscription does the same for Raj Singh. For instance, Raj Singh ordered the killing of one of his wives and of his son, Sultan Singh, for their suspected role in a conspiracy against him).

Raj Singh was succeeded by his son, Jai Singh (r. 1680-1698). Terms for an end to the Mughal-Mewar problem were awaiting finalisation at this time. Aurangzeb had attempted to hurry matters by despatching further reinforcements to Prince Akbar from Ajmer, but though the prince took some tracts, including Jhilwara, his progress was tardy. To an extent, this was due to Mewar's tactics of hit-and-run attacks that disrupted the Imperial supply-lines and harried the large Imperial contingent. Aurangzeb expressed his strong displeasure to Prince Akbar over the campaign's slow progress.

Resentful of his father's attitude, the Mughal prince gave flight to his hopes and ambitions to wrest the throne from his father by force. These ambitions were apparently being fuelled by the active encouragement and support of Rajputs like Durga Das and his Rathore troops, Rao Kesari Singh Chauhan and others, and, not surprisingly, Maharana Jai Singh of Mewar. Convinced that his supporters would back him against the emperor, Akbar rose in rebellion and proclaimed himself emperor in early January 1681. Thereafter, he marched against his father with an army of 70,000 troops — some 40,000 of whom are said to have been soldiers from Marwar and

Mewar. Aurangzeb, at the time, was encamped at Ajmer — long a base for successive Mughal emperors, while Akbar's forces camped at Deorai, a short distance from Ajmer. On hearing about the rebellion, one of Aurangzeb's other sons, Prince Muazzam, marched with his troops from Mewar to Ajmer to strengthen the emperor's position.

Meanwhile, Aurangzeb had used cunning and stratagem against the massed armies of his rebellious son, Prince Akbar, and his Mewar-Marwar allies. He neutralised them through resort to a clever scheme that made it appear as if Prince Akbar had all along been acting for his father, the Emperor, and had led his Rajput allies into a pre-planned trap! Outmanoeuvred militarily and strategically, Prince Akbar's uprising was thereafter quelled following a decisive battle near Ajmer. The hapless Mughal prince fled, first to Marwar, and then after a short sojourn in Mewar and the relative security provided by the hilly terrains of Sirohi and Dungarpur, towards the Deccan (and eventually Iran).

Realising that peace with Aurangzeb was even more imperative now, Jai Singh concluded an alliance with Emperor Aurangzeb, partially on the lines of the peace treaty that was already under negotiation at the time of Maharana Raj Singh's death. In lieu of paying the *jaziya* tax to the emperor, Jai Singh agreed to cede three districts (*parganas*) of Mewar, namely Pur, Mandal and Badnor, to Mughal control. Mewar also had to assure Aurangzeb that no further help would be provided to the cause of the young Ajit Singh of Marwar. On his part, Aurangzeb agreed to withdraw the Imperial forces from Mewar, return the land of the Rana's ancestors, accord formal recognition to the Rana's title and confer a *mansab* of 5,000 upon him.

One of the major achievements of Jai Singh's reign was the building of the 'Jai Samand' reservoir. This 1254 feet long and 105 feet wide reservoir, with a water-spread of twenty-three square miles, was constructed by damming the river Gomati with the Jhamari, Ruparel and Bagar streams, and incorporating part of a natural lake known as the Dhebar. Jai Samand, like the Rikhabdeo (Rishabh Dev) temple at Dhuleo and the temples at Zawar were made from a stone locally known as *mesh*, which is found in the Tidi and Baroda mines. Work began on Jai Singh's 'Jai Samand' in

1687 — on which occasion the ruler was weighed in gold from his personal coffers and the money given away in charity, as per the norms for such a ‘*Tuladan*’ ceremony. The construction was completed in 1691. Until the twentieth century, this was amongst the largest artificial lakes in the world. Towards the latter part of his life, Rana Jai Singh was forced to face a rebellion by his eldest son, Prince Amar. Upon Jai Singh’s death in 1698, that prince succeeded to the *gaddi* of Mewar as Maharana Amar Singh II (r. 1698-1710).

While we shall take up the events of the ensuing period further in this text, it may be relevant to take note of the opinion expressed by the historian G.N. Sharma⁵⁴. Sharma held that from the reign of Jai Singh onwards, successive rulers, lacking the military skill and organising genius of Raj Singh, and troubled by in-fighting, dissensions and factional squabbles, reigned over an eclipsed Mewar⁵⁵. To an extent, this analysis is true. There is another side to the picture too, however. It is undoubtedly true that these rulers were troubled by internal problems, and acts of valour were few. However, while they did not launch invasions on neighbours and invest enemy lands in the manner of ancestors like Kumbha, Sanga and Raj Singh, nor were they called upon to defend Mewar from Mughal occupation like Pratap, it is important to bear in mind that the reign of these rulers are marked by a relatively smooth running administrative system, the construction of several lakes, roads, inns, public buildings and temples, and court patronage to artists and scholars. For instance, Rana Jai Singh ordered the construction of the Jai Samand reservoir, through excavation-work and the building of check-dams and embankments at the naturally occurring Dhebar Lake.

Similarly, notwithstanding the volatile conditions through which Jagat Singh II sat on the *gaddi* of Mewar, his reign saw the construction of the ‘Jag Niwas’ palace on Udaipur’s Pichchola Lake, as well as the architecturally notable Jagdish temple. Scholars, poets and artisans thrived at the Mewar court during these long decades. Among them were people like Babu Bhatt, Vaikunth Vyas, Haridev Suri, and many others. All this would imply some general peace and prosperity for the average citizen — by no means a negligible achievement — and should not be totally scoffed away by simplistic comparison with eras of conquests, of hopeless but

courageous defences, and of premature valorous deaths on countless battlefields.

Actually, one should also bear in mind that, while eighteenth century Mewar was ruled, in succession, by Amar Singh II, Sangram Singh II and Jagat Singh II, their achievements would seem to pale (as is the case for many of their contemporary fellow-princes) before those of their contemporaneous Kachchwaha ruler, Amber's Sawai Jai Singh II (d. 1743), who occupied a prominent, almost Collosus-like, position in northern India for much of the first part of the eighteenth century, as we shall see further in this book.

OTHER GUHILA STATES AND PRINCIPALITIES

DUNGARPUR

In 1606 Rawal Sesmal of Dungarpur died, and was succeeded by his son. This was the short-reigning Rawal Karam Singh II of Dungarpur (r. 1606-1609), who has been praised in local inscriptions like the Deva Som Nath Inscription and the Surpur Inscription as being a pious ruler, like his father Sesmal before him. During his brief reign, Karam Singh and his forces clashed with Rawal Ugrasen and the Banswara forces on the banks of the river Mahi. An inscription of AD 1623 within Dungarpur's Goverdhan Nath temple states that Karam Singh proved victorious in this battle, though the Banswara *Khyat* records that its ruler, Ugrasen was the victor.

Karam Singh was succeeded by his son, Maharawal Punja Raj — or Punja (r. 1609-1657), who enjoyed a long reign. Like his immediate forebears, Punja Raj continued to acknowledge Mughal sovereignty, and saw service in the Deccan with the Imperial forces. He provided help to Emperor Jahangir's rebellious son, Khurram, when the Mughal prince defied his father, and attended on Khurram upon the latter's eventual ascension to the Mughal throne as Emperor Shah Jahan. Rawal Punja Ram was given a *mansab* of 1000 *zat* and 500 *sawar* at the time. He also

participated in the campaign to subjugate the rebellious Khan-i-Jahan Lodi. In recognition of this, Emperor Shah Jahan conferred the prized '*Mahi-Maratib*' insignia on Punja, along with raising his *mansab* rank to 1500 *zat* and 1500 *sawar*.

Despite Punja's honours, and Dungarpur state's services to the Mughal emperor, Karan Singh of Mewar successfully obtained an Imperial *farman* granting Mewar supremacy over its neighbouring kingdoms of Dungarpur, Banswara, etc. Later, Maharana Karan Singh's heir, Maharana Jagat Singh, sent an army against Dungarpur. The city was invested, and its ruler and his court forced to seek refuge in the hilly terrain of the kingdom, until the Mewar armies had withdrawn.

Records indicate that during Punja's reign, lands were measured and assessed, and rates fixed for every category of revenue receipt. This early 'land-revenue settlement' may, perhaps, have been inspired by the Mughal pattern. Unfortunately, this eventually became meaningless over the course of the ensuing eighteenth century, in part due to the ever-increasing monetary demands of the Marathas, and in part to a rise in unfair revenue exactions by local fief-holders and the state, which needed to find ways of meeting the excess demands that had, in turn, devolved on them!

Punja was a patron of the arts, as well as a builder. He ordered the excavation of lakes near his capital city, as well as the tank at Dungarpur. He also ordered the laying out of the famed Naulakha garden and construction of the temple of Goverdhan Nath at Dungarpur. During the brief reign of Punja's successor, Girdhar Das (r. 1657-1661), Mewar once again sent its army against Dungarpur. Realising the kingdom's vulnerability, the Rawal deemed it wise to conclude peace-terms with Mewar's powerful Maharana.

Dungarpur's subordination to the Mughal Empire and to Mewar continued during the reign of Girdhar Das's successor, Jaswant Singh (r. 1661-1691), and his successor, Khuman Singh (r. 1691-1702). Given Mewar's dominance over the area through most of the latter part of the seventeenth century, it is more than probable that Dungarpur supported Mewar's conflict with Emperor Aurangzeb. Jaswant was certainly present

at the consecration ceremonies at the Raj Samudra Lake, constructed by Maharana Raj Singh. Upon the occasion, the Dungarpur Rawal received an elephant, several horses with gold ornaments, and *siropa* robes of honour with jewels from the Maharana. In 1681, Jaswant Singh provided temporary refuge to Emperor Aurangzeb's rebellious son, Prince Akbar, as the unfortunate prince fled towards the Deccan.

Faced not just with Mewar's domination, but also frequent territorial incursions, Jaswant's successor, Khuman Singh made efforts to win support for Dungarpur at the Imperial Mughal court. Though Dungarpur was unsuccessful in gaining an Imperial *farman* in its favour — (something that had previously been granted to Mewar for the Vagar area as a whole), attacks by Mewar did ease off because of Imperial intervention.

Meanwhile, in spite of the general turbulence of walking a tight-rope between Mewar and the Mughals, the reigns of Girdhar Das, Jaswant Singh and Khuman Singh saw an extension of urban facilities and the establishment of village-settlements. Khuman was succeeded in 1702 by his son, Ram Singh. The further chronicles of Dungarpur are taken up in a later chapter.

BANSWARA

Rawal Samar Singh (r. 1615-1660), Banswara's seventh ruler in descent from Jagmal, was successful in considerably extending the boundaries of his kingdom. He was also regularly called upon to defend Banswara from the incursions of his several hostile neighbours — including Mewar as well as the parent-state of Dungarpur. While Samar Singh was successful in his campaigns against the Rawal of Pratapgarh-Deoliya, and the Bhils, he suffered a setback against the mighty forces of Mewar in c. 1635, when Rana Jagat Singh invaded Banswara, and again in 1659, this time at the hands of Mewar's Rana Raj Singh.

However, he and the majority of the rulers of Banswara, despite their pre-occupation with saving the kingdom against their several neighbours,

were patrons of learning and great builders. Several inscriptions and copper-plate grants bear witness to their charitable and philanthropic activities, as well as their patronage to the arts.

It is during the reign of Banswara's Rawal Kushal Singh that the area known as Kushalgarh came into Rajput hands. According to one version, Kushalgarh was founded around AD 1671 by Thakur Akhey Raj, who conquered the area from the local Bhil chieftain called Kushala. Akhey Raj thereafter named the wrested tract as 'Kushalgarh' ('Kushalpada') after the defeated Bhil chief. A variant of this version holds that Kushala and his Bhil compatriots were defeated by Rawal Kushal Singh of Banswara, who then handed over the conquered area to Akhey Raj as *jagir* lands.

Here, Akhey Raj built a fort on a hillock of a narrow valley of the Haran River, surrounded by a protective ring of hills, except for a narrow opening towards the north-west. A water-tank was built nearby. Thus protected by its natural and human-made defences, the new habitation of Kushalgarh was to slowly grow into a town over time. The strategic location of this site, with a perennial supply of water, and natural defences, was used to profit by its inhabitants. In fact, strategic locales and an eye to using naturally occurring defensive features has always been an important aspect of the fort, palace and habitational architecture of Rajasthan.

Meanwhile, Banswara walked a cautious path before the aspirations of its stronger neighbours, especially Mewar, and the all-powerful Mughal Empire. In the ensuing decades it would also face the incursions of the Marathas, particularly from the reign of Rawal Vishan (Vishnu) Singh onwards.

THE GUHILOTS OF PRATAPGARH-DEOLIYA

Like Tej Singh (r. 1564-1593), the next two occupants of the *gaddi* of Pratapgarh-Deoliya, Bhanu Singh and Singha, whose reigns spanned the period between 1593 and 1628, also perforce accepted the regional supremacy of Mewar. Singha is known to have provided shelter to the

famous Mughal commander, Mahabat Khan, when that doughty warrior rose up against his master, Emperor Jahangir.

Singha's successor, Jaswant Singh (1628-1633), attempted to re-assert the autonomy of Pratapgarh-Deoliya vis-à-vis its more powerful neighbour, Mewar. He may have been encouraged in this step by the Mughals. The result was not happy for Pratapgarh! According to one version, the Maharana of Mewar, Jagat Singh (r. 1628-1652) invited Jaswant Singh of Pratapgarh-Deoliya and a thousand of his supporters to Udaipur, where they were treacherously put to death in the Champa Bagh, at the order of the Maharana. (This murder took place in 1628 according to some versions, and 1633 according to others). After this, Deoliya was occupied by Mewar's armies.

Bent on avenging the wrong done to Pratapgarh, Jaswant Singh's son and successor, Hari Singh (r. 1633-1673), who had also lost his older brother, Maha Singh to the Mewar ruler's trickery, approached the Mughal emperor, Shah Jahan, for aid against Mewar. The request was granted and Hari Singh, with the support of the Mughal army regained possession of his estates from Mewar. Thereafter, Hari Singh prudently maintained cordial relations with the Mughals. In 1653, Hari Singh was appointed to service with the Mughal prince, Murad

The *Hari Bhushan Mahakavya* informs us that Hari Singh, who is classified as being sixth in descent from Bagh Singh, was an enlightened ruler. He invited merchants from outside to his small kingdom, and with their help, improved the financial condition of Pratapgarh-Deoliya. The *Pratapgarh Badva Khyat* records that Hari Singh introduced several fiscal reforms, which helped place the state on a sound economic footing. He was an able administrator, prolific builder, and a patron of art, literature and scholarship. As a result, his court attracted many scholars of repute.

The changing political scenario during the war of succession between Shah Jahan's sons eventually forced later rulers of Pratapgarh — Pratap Singh, Ram Singh, Ummed Singh, and other successors — to accept Mewar's suzerainty. In fact, for much of its history, Pratapgarh-Deoliya, like the kingdoms of Dungarpur and Banswara, did not quite break free

from the cycle of internal dissensions and regional interference in the affairs of each other — and of Mewar — and vice-versa. For a while it also oscillated between the sphere of influence of Mewar and the Mughal Empire.

SIROHI

Upon the death of the famed Deora Chauhan warrior-king, Rao Surtan of Sirohi, in 1610, his elder son, Raj Singh (r. 1610-1620), succeeded him. Raj Singh's short reign contained all the hallmarks of fraternal jealousy and palace intrigue that had regularly beset Sirohi — and many other Rajput kingdoms, over time. The Rao's younger brother, Sur Singh, who aspired to the throne, won over many courtiers, and even entered into an agreement with Marwar's ruler, Maharao Sur Singh (r. 1595-1619) in early 1611⁵⁶. However, a decisive battle between the two brothers ended in a victory for Rao Raj Singh, and his younger brother was forced to flee Sirohi. Despite the departure of one challenger, further danger was in store for the hapless Raj Singh, who is described in local annals as a good-hearted and guileless man.

Serious differences soon arose between the Rao and his Deora Chauhan minister, Prithviraj Sujawat. According to Ojha, at one point these differences became so severe that Mewar's heir-apparent, Prince Karan Singh (whose sister was the mother of Raj Singh of Sirohi), felt constrained to invite both parties to Udaipur to arrange a mutual settlement. From this the minister later reneged. Matters finally came to a head in 1620, as Prithviraj led a small group of supporters into the palace to assassinate Raj Singh. The outnumbered Rao killed two of his assailants and wounded several others, before being cut down. Prithviraj then sought to kill the Rao's two-and-a-half year old infant son, Prince Akheyraj, but the child's wet-nurse hid him securely, leaving Prithviraj Sujawat seeking in vain.

Local Sirohi folklore holds that having hidden the prince, his faithful nurse placed her own child as a decoy on the prince's bed and became a mute witness to the murder of this child by the angered Prithviraj⁵⁷. The

story has close similarities to the actions of Chittor's Panna Dhai, the wet-nurse who saved the life of young Prince Udai Singh of Mewar by sacrificing her own son. Meanwhile, the uproar had roused the palace. People loyal to the dead ruler surrounded the assassins, but Prithviraj, with a small number of his men, managed to escape. The courtiers and nobles of Sirohi now pledged their loyalty to the dead Rao's minor son and saw him enthroned him as Rao Akheyraj 11 (r. 1620-1673). Some of the loyal prominent chiefs led their troops against Prithviraj Sujawat and forced him out of Sirohi (He later found refuge at Bhinmal, where his wife's family lived). In due course, an older Akheyraj avenged the death of his father more fully. Akheyraj is known to have begun leading his forces personally by the time he was twelve years old. Following the death of Prithviraj Sujawat, one of his sons, Chanda — who had occupied Neembaj and its surrounding areas, could not be dislodged by Akheyraj's troops. This necessitated continuous skirmishes.

Like his predecessors, Akheyraj II also kept a weather-eye on his neighbours, including Mewar. During the reign of Maharana Karan Singh of Mewar, relations between Sirohi and Mewar remained cordial, but following the succession of Jagat Singh as Maharana in 1628, Mewar's troops began to attack and pillage Sirohi's territories. Relations with Mewar could improve only after Maharana Raj Singh ascended the throne of Mewar in 1652. Akheyraj II apparently maintained cordial links with the Mughal Imperial court. (G.H. Ojha has published some of the '*nishan*' category of correspondence sent by the Mughal royal princes, Dara Shikoh and Murad Baksh, respectively⁵⁸).

In 1663, Akheyraj II was imprisoned by his ambitious eldest son, Udaibhan, who usurped the throne of Sirohi with the support of his coterie of nobles. However, Maharana Raj Singh of Mewar came to the rescue of the overthrown Akheyraj, who was freed and restored to throne. The unfilial Udaibhan and one of his sons was put to death by Akheyraj. The remainder of Akheyraj's reign was peaceful, and witnessed the usual attention to acts of charity and piety that was traditionally enjoined for all 'good' kings. One of his eleven wives, Rani Ratan Kanwar, later had a step-well constructed at Sirohi in 1675, which became known as the '*Ratan Baori*' in her honour.

Upon the death of Akheyraj II in 1673, his younger son, Udai Singh II (r. 1673-1676) came to the throne. Following Udai Singh's early demise, the throne passed to Bairisal (r. 1676-1697), the son of Akheyraj's dead rebellious elder son, Udaibhan. During the reign of Bairisal, Ajit Singh, the posthumous son of Maharaja Jaswant Singh of Marwar, was concealed at Kalandri. Sirohi was used as a refuge, since one of Jaswant Singh's other queens (not Ajit Singh's mother) was a Sirohi princess called Anand Kanwar — known in Marwar as Rani Atsukh-Dey. She was Rao Akheyraj II's daughter, and had married Jaswant Singh of Marwar in 1659. Due to the connection, the clans were *sagas*, and as such, her kinsmen were willing — even honour-bound — to help the cause of beleaguered Marwar.

Sirohi also provided temporary refuge to Aurangzeb's rebellious son, Prince Akbar, following the Mughal prince's rebellion in 1681. Prince Akbar's rebellion was effectively put down after a decisive battle near Ajmer (as already noted elsewhere in this chapter), forcing Akbar to seek sanctuary with his Rajput allies. Akbar first found refuge in Marwar and subsequently availed of shelter in Mewar, Sirohi and Dungarpur. In this connection, Ojha has cited a *nishan* from Prince Muazzam dating to March 1681. This official document chides Sirohi's 'Maharao Vairishal' for failing to capture or kill the rebels when they passed through the Maharao's territory, and commands Bairisal to capture or kill the rebels if they re-entered his area⁵⁹.

Bairisal died in 1697, after nearly twenty-one years on the throne of Sirohi. Some accounts hold that he was succeeded by Surtan, and that Surtan was soon overthrown by his cousin, Chhatrasal, the second son of Rao Udai Singh II (d. 1676). In this, Chhatrasal obtained the help of Mewar in his endeavour. Disagreeing with these versions on various counts, Ojha asserts that Rao Bairisal was directly succeeded by Chhatrasal (r. 1697-1705)⁶⁰. Rao Chhatrasal, also known as Durjan Sal and Durjan Singh, had a short reign, and upon his death was succeeded by his son, Man Singh II. The next phase of Sirohi's history is taken up in further in this text.

THE STATE OF BUNDI

In earlier parts of this book, the history of the Hada Chauhan state of Bundi has been traced from the time of its establishment to the reign of Bhoj, the son of Rao Surjan, a contemporary of Akbar. Rao Ratan Singh (r. 1607-1631), who succeeded his father Bhoj, earned the favour of Emperor Jahangir through his bravery on the battle-field, especially against the emperor's rebellious son, Prince Khurram (who later ascended the throne as Emperor Shah Jahan). Subsequently, Ratan Singh's services in the Deccan campaigns resulted in his *mansab* being raised to 5,000, and the conferring of the title of 'Rao Rai'. Ratan Singh was also granted the titles of 'Sarbuland Rai' and 'Ram Raj'. During his stay at Burhanpur, Ratan Singh founded a settlement that was named 'Ratanpur'. Founding small townships and settlements of this type seem to have been an act common to many a contemporary Rajput chief on Imperial service, far from his own home-state.

(Ratan Singh is lauded in local lore across Hadauti for his high sense of justice. This recounts that when Ratan Singh's son, Gopinath, was killed by Brahmins, the Rao refrained from punishing the assailants, saying that it was his son who had been at fault, and had become wicked and exploitative, for which he had paid the price!)

At the time, the *jagir* of Kota was held by one of Rao Ratan's brothers, Hriday Narain. In 1623, Rao Ratan and Hriday Narain formed part of the Imperial force, sent by Emperor Jahangir under the command of Prince Parvez and Mahabat Khan, against the rebellious Mughal prince, Khurram. During the course of the battle of Allahabad, Hriday Narain left the field. For this act, the *jagir* of Kota was taken back from him by the emperor.

Meanwhile, defeated at Jhoonsi, Khurram moved south, only to be defeated at Burhanpur by the Imperial forces which prominently included Ratan Singh and his Bundi forces. As Madho Singh, the second son of Rao Ratan Singh of Bundi, displayed conspicuous gallantry at this battle, the emperor conferred the *jagir* of Kota — previously resumed from Hriday Narain, on Madho Singh. The repentant Khurram, whose apology had been accepted by Jahangir, was placed under the temporary protective custody of

the Hada prince, Madho Singh, who extended every courtesy to his royal prisoner.

As a result, when Khurram succeeded Jahangir as emperor in 1628, taking the name of Shah Jahan, Madho Singh was made the independent ruler of Kota, with some additional territory added to Kota at the cost of Bundi. This action had far-reaching consequences, for not only did it fuel intra-family ill-feeling, it also served to weaken Bundi internally. Henceforth, the existence of the two separate Hada Chauhan administered states of Bundi and Kota became a political reality that would last till their respective accessions to the newly independent nation-state of independent India in 1947. We shall take up the history of Kota following its separation from Bundi further in this book, and continue with that of Bundi here,

Ratan Singh died near Balaghat in 1631. He was succeeded by his grandson, Chhatrasal (r. 1631-1658), eldest son of Gopinath, as the Rao of Bundi. Chhatrasal's brothers and half-brothers — the remaining eleven other sons of *Kunwar* Gopinath, were assigned individual *jagir*-estates that became the principal '*kotris*' or princely 'households' of Bundi state. (As noted in the context of the Amber court, a *kotri* means, variously, a chamber, or branch, or section. Over time, the most important of these *kotris* were to be Indergarh (founded by Inder Singh), Balwan (founded by Berisal, who also held Karwad and Pipalda), Antardah (granted to Mokham Singh), and Thana (granted to Maha Singh). Over a century later, the chiefs of Indergarh, Balwan and Antardah would be convinced by Kota state's minister Zalim Singh Jhala, to separate themselves from Bundi — but that is a later story!)

Bundi's Rao Chhatrasal (also called Shatrushal), held high positions in the Mughal Empire, including that of governor of the Imperial Capital. He distinguished himself, alongside the imperial armies, by his bravery and ability at various battles, sieges and assaults. Among the campaigns he and his Bundi troops participated in were those at Daulatabad (1632), Parendia (1633), and Qandhar, Balkh and Badakshan (1641-1651). He also served in the Deccan and southern India under Aurangzeb, distinguishing himself—along with his Bundi troops — in the campaigns of Burhanpur, Khandesh, Bidar, Gulbarga and Damoni.

On account of his bravery and unswerving loyalty, Chhatrasal is said to have won the acclaim of Emperor Shah Jahan, and the friendship of Prince Dara Shikoh. Thus, when Emperor Shah Jahan fell ill, and on the eve of what would transpire to become a war-of-succession for his throne, Dara sent orders to Chhatrasal, who was in the Deccan, to march towards Agra. Chhatrasal was, at the time, serving under the command of Prince Aurangzeb. A contender himself for the Imperial crown, Aurangzeb refused the Bundi Rao permission to leave camp, despite being shown the Imperial *farman* desiring Chhatrasal's presence at Agra. Meanwhile, Chhatrasal had already despatched his baggage-train in advance. Thereafter, in defiance of Aurangzeb's orders, Chhatrasal and his troops, along with some other Rajput princes and chiefs, and their respective entourages, seized an opportunity and made towards the river Narmada. Aurangzeb's troops gave pursuit, but the Bundi Rao and his contingents managed to get to safety.

Chhatrasal joined Dara thereafter. The Mughal prince is reported to have declared that with the help of Chhatrasal and his Hada forces, he could harry Aurangzeb's forces as if the latter were mere hares! Clad in saffron — indicative of his vow of keeping to the battle ground till either victory or death resulted, Chhatrasal and his Bundi forces formed the van of Dara's army at the battlefield of Samugarh on 29 May 1658. And it was here that Chhatrasal, along with his youngest son Bharat, his brother Mokham, several other close relatives and numerous kinsmen, were among the many that fell in battle. One version holds that when Dara dismounted from his elephant in the midst of the battle, Chhatrasal took his place on Dara's elephant and directed the battle from there. Tod later recorded that in the two battles of Dharmat and Samugarh, twelve princes of blue-blood, together with the heads of all the Hada Chauhan clans 'sealed their fidelity with their lives'.

Long commemorated as a brave and fearless warrior — as was the reputation for all the Hadas in general, Chhatrasal was also a patron of art and learning. He is responsible for the construction of the famed Keshorai temple at Patan (a town generally referred to as Keshorai Patan subsequently), and the Chhatra Mahal palace within the Bundi fort. Rao Chhatrasal, like his grandfather Rao Ratan Singh before him, encouraged the further development of the Bundi atelier of painting. The 'Chitra-shala'

or painting atelier of Rao Ratan Singh, and the frescoes within the Chhatra Mahal palace built by Chhatrasal, provided the artists ample scope to evolve a distinct style. Further encouraged by subsequent Bundi rulers, over time the Bundi School became known for its typical green background, and vivid colours.

Chhatrasal was succeeded by Bhao Singh (r. 1658-1682), the eldest among his surviving sons. The Hada warrior initially incurred the displeasure of Emperor Aurangzeb — who had not forgotten the fact that Bhao Singh's father, Chhatrasal, had opposed Aurangzeb and sided with Dara during the struggle for the Imperial Mughal throne. Aurangzeb thus conferred the *parganas* of Baran and Mahu to Bhao Singh's younger brother, Bhagwati Singh (also referred to as Bhagwant Singh). The emperor also ordered Raja Atmaram Gaur of Sheopur, along with Bar Singh Bundela, to teach the turbulent Hadas a lesson and annex Bundi to the imperially administered government of Ranthambore⁶¹. Raja Atmaram Gaur laid siege to Khatauli, but was subsequently defeated at Gotarda, abandoning his baggage-train and Imperial ensigns. By this time, Emperor Aurangzeb probably deemed it wiser to pardon Bhao Singh (as was being done for some of the other Rajput rulers). As such, an Imperial *farman* was despatched to Bhao Singh, desiring his presence at the Imperial court at Agra. Here, Bhao Singh was conferred a *mansab* of 3,000 *zat* and 2,000 *sawar*, along with the *watan-jagir* of Bundi and thereafter posted under the command of Prince Muazzam (one of Aurangzeb's sons), to deal with Prince Shuja. As Bhagwati Singh had died, the *parganas* of Baran and Mahu once more became part of Bundi too.

Bhao Singh took part in Imperial campaigns, including the battle of Chakan in 1660, where he fought alongside Dhoondhar's Mirza Raja Jai Singh. Bhao Singh was also assigned the governance of Aurangabad as *its faujdar*. Here, Bhao Singh acquired fame for his valour, charity and piety. He also built several structures at Aurangabad, and was responsible for some new settlements in the vicinity of Aurangabad. Bhao Singh died at Aurangabad in 1682. Like many predecessors, Bhao Singh patronised writers and artists at his court. Among them was the well-known poet, Matiram, author of the *Lalila-Lalam*. Bhao Singh himself was considered a

writer of considerable merit, whose work, the *Nebataran*, is regarded as an excellent example of Braj Bhasha literature.

Bhao Singh was succeeded by the fifteen year old Aniruddha (r. 1682-1695), the grandson of his younger brother, Bhim. Bundi's annals hold that at the time of Aniruddha's accession, Emperor Aurangzeb sent his own elephant, Gaj-Cour, with the emblems of investiture, in acknowledgment of the services rendered by the Hadas to the Mughal dynasty! Like his immediate predecessors, Aniruddha took part in numerous Imperial campaigns. Almost immediately after his succession, he joined Aurangzeb's Deccan campaigns. For his part in rescuing the Imperial harem, after it had been surrounded by the Marathas, Aniruddha was asked to name his reward. The Bundi ruler asked for the honour of commanding the van of the army! The emperor's response was to also increase Aniruddha's *jagir* holdings, and to present him with a *khillat* and other honours.

In 1688, he was deputed to serve with Prince Bidar Bakht (one of the emperor's grandsons), who had been given the task of suppressing Rajaram, the Jat leader. Aniruddha and his troops won acclaim at the siege of Bijapur too. However, he had to rush back to Bundi later, to deal with one of Bundi's senior fief-holders, Durjan Sal Hada, who had occupied the capital of Bundi by force. At Aniruddha's approach, Durjan Sal vacated Bundi fort and went away to Marwar. (Durjan Sal Hada was to lead his Hada troops along with his Rathore *sagas* (relatives by marriage), during the period that Durga Das Rathore and others took up arms in support of the cause of the young Ajit Singh, posthumous son of the Marwar ruler, Jaswant Singh).

The Bundi ruler also saw service on the north-western frontiers of India, where he served with the Imperial prince, Muazzam, and with Dhoondhar's ruler, Bishan Singh. And like many of his ancestors and kinsmen — and, indeed, other contemporary Rajasthani warriors, he died while on active service, far from his native terrain, on the north-western reaches of South Asia, in 1695.

Budh Singh, who succeeded his father, Aniruddha, in 1695 at the age of ten, was to hold the throne of Bundi sporadically between 1695 and 1739, occupying and losing it as many as four times. His vicissitudes were

the result of intrigues and counter-intrigues in which the Mughal emperor Farukhsiyar, the ‘king-maker’ Sayyid brothers, Amber-Jaipur’s Sawai Jai Singh II, and Kota’s Bhim Singh, played key roles. The rivalry between Bundi and its collateral state of Kota, and the interest in Bundi’s internal affairs on the part of Jai Singh II, were among the causative factors for this, as we shall see in a subsequent chapter.

The close association with the Mughal Empire from the mid sixteenth century onwards, including periods when parts of Bundi state were temporarily sequestered by the Mughal emperor, influenced the administrative pattern of the Hadauti area, both in the case of the kingdom of Bundi as well as its off-shoot, Kota. The land revenue system was modified in accordance with the Mughal system, and the dues were fixed at one-third of the produce, with farmers having the option of paying in cash or kind. A method known as ‘*lata-kunta*’ was used for assessing crops and yields to fix the amount of land revenue owed by individual farmers.

The Mughals placed Imperial administrative officers called ‘*qanungo*’ (also ‘*kanungo*’) in every *pargana* (district). Their work was mostly related to the recovery of land revenues within the area of their jurisdiction. These *qanungos* also watched over the interests of the Mughal Empire in their allotted areas. They also exercised certain control over the local officials of the Bundi (and Kota) states, like the *hakims* and *amils*, and over the *jagirdars*. Appointed on a commission basis — two and a half per cent of the land revenue collected by them — the office of *qanungo* often became a hereditary one over time. The Mughal emperors also took to appointing a *kazi* (*qazi*) for managing the religious matters of Muslims living in the Hadauti area. M.L. Sharma’s *Kota-Rajya ka Itihas* notes that, during times that the Imperial administration took charge of part of either Bundi or Kota, all relevant Imperial *farmans* (decrees or proclamations) were issued through the *kazi* and not sent directly to the concerned rulers.

THE KINGDOM OF KOTA

The separate political entity of Kota in relation to the kingdom of Bundi was formalised during the reign of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan, when

Madho Singh, a son of Bundi's Rao Ratan Singh, was recognised as an independent ruler of Kota in 1631. However, his formal coronation ceremony took place only in 1632. To emphasise his independent status vis-à-vis the parent-state of Bundi, Madho Singh (r. 1631-1648), adopted the title of *Maharajadhiraj*.

The new kingdom of Kota (taking its name from its main town which also served as its new capital) was bounded by the fortress of Gagron and by Ghatoli to the south, by Mangrol and Nahargarh to the east, and extended up to Sultanpur in the north. At the time, Kota comprised eight *parganas*. The new kingdom is described as encompassing three hundred and sixty townships, which had increased by the end of Madho Singh's reign to include a vast tract stretching south of Bundi's frontiers up to Malwa, consisting of forty-three *parganas*. By the time of his death in 1648, the principality of Kota held about 2,000 villages, with its territory including the *parganas* of Baran and Mahu given to Kota by the emperor at the cost of Bundi.

Madho Singh, who had distinguished himself in earlier campaigns fought as a prince of Bundi (as we have noted in an earlier section), played a leading role in suppressing the revolt of Khan-i-Jahan Lodi, a *mansabdar* of the Mughal court. For this he was conferred a further *jagir* by the emperor, and the level of *mansab* held by him was increased. Madho Singh went on to participate in further Imperial campaigns, including against Jhujhar Singh Bundela in 1635, and expeditions against Qandhar in 1637 and 1646. In recognition, his *mansab* rank had increased, over time, from 2,000 to 5,000.

Described as a brave warrior, Madho Singh also possessed administrative skills. He is credited with introducing certain reforms in the army as well as the finance department of his new state. These measures probably derived from his earlier administrative experience at Bundi and at the Mughal court, and directly benefited the people of Kota. A patron of art and architecture, Madho Singh founded the town of Madhukargarh, complete with protective gates and a fore-wall, at a distance of some twelve miles from the capital. To him also goes the credit for the construction of

‘Bada Mahal’, ‘Nakkar-Khana’, ‘Kaithuni-Pol’, ‘Patan-Pol’ and Kishorpura gateway at the capital city, Kota.

As was by now the case for many Rajput rulers and chiefs, Madho Singh’s eldest son and successor, Mukund Singh (r. 1648-1658), saw service with the Mughal forces, both as heir to the throne of Kota, and as its occupant. The earlier years of his reign were spent in Imperial campaigns in Malwa, the Deccan and Qandhar, where his valour was recognised and rewarded. Within his own kingdom, Mukund Singh paid adequate attention to strengthening the defences of the state. He is responsible for strengthening the pass (‘*darra*’) since famous as ‘Mukundarra’ (‘the pass of Mukund’). The palace and fortifications at Anta are also among his contributions to the architectural and defence heritage of Kota.

During the succession struggles that broke out amongst Shah Jahan’s sons following the aging emperor’s illness, Mukund Singh supported the cause of Prince Dara (and Emperor Shah Jahan) against the aspirations of Aurangzeb. In the decisive battle of Dharmat, fought between the two Mughal princes and their forces in 1658, Mukund Singh gave final proof of his valour and his loyalty, before he fell in battle. This support to Dara was held against Kota by the new Mughal emperor, Aurangzeb. Mukund Singh’s successor, Jagat Singh (r. 1658-1684), met the emperor and sought his pardon for his father’s role in the war of succession. He also joined Aurangzeb’s campaign against the emperor’s brother and rival, Prince Shuja. In return, Jagat Singh was conferred a *mansab* of 2,000. He died during the course of the Imperial campaign against the Marathas in 1684.

Since Jagat Singh left no male heir, the Hada nobles of Kota chose Prem Singh, a grandson of Rao Madho Singh, as the next ruler of the kingdom, but later removed him and installed Kishore Singh, the youngest son of Madho Singh on *the gaddi*. Kishore Singh took part in several of the Imperial campaigns in southern India. In 1688 he participated in the Mughal expedition against the Jat leader, Rajaram of Bharatpur. In recognition of his role against Rajaram at the battle of Beejal, he was awarded the tract of Keshorai Patan, which was taken from Bundi and granted to Kota. Kishore Singh died fighting against the Marathas at the battle of Arkat in the Deccan in 1696.

The Rao's death was followed by a succession struggle for the *gaddi* of Kota, with Prem Singh too staking his claim. Kishore Singh had nominated his second son, Ram Singh as the heir-apparent, instead of his eldest son, Vishan Singh. As Ram Singh was at Arkat when their father died, Vishan Singh installed himself as the next Maharao of Kota. The accession was not recognised by Aurangzeb, who sent Ram Singh to occupy Kota, accompanied by an Imperial force. Vishan Singh was defeated at the battle of Anwa, and Kota came formally into the control of Ram Singh (r. 1696-1707).

Maharao Ram Singh's subsequent military achievements in the Imperial campaigns against the Marathas, including during 1704, were rewarded by the grant of further territories to Kota by Aurangzeb. Many of these were tracts previously under Bundi. Following the death of the aged emperor in 1707, Ram Singh took the side of Prince Azam in the war of succession between Aurangzeb's sons, and was killed in the battle of Jajau in June 1707. The decisive battle saw the defeat of Azam. Kota's fortunes took a further dip with the accession of Prince Muazzam as Emperor Bahadur Shah I, since Rao Budh Singh of Bundi had supported Muazzam during the Mughal war of succession, and now stood to gain from that association at the expense of Kota.

THE KINGDOM OF JAISALMER

During the first half of the seventeenth century, the state of Jaisalmer still found itself involved in local skirmishes and wars with neighbouring chiefs, as had been the case over the preceding many centuries. In addition, its position on one of the old established trade routes across the desert continued to contribute to its economic and cultural well-being.

In fact, contrary to a general misconception about deserts, habitations and human interactions, the geographically strategic position of the capital city of Jaisalmer (and most of the Greater Thar desert region's far-flung capitals, forts, and towns, including Bikaner etc.), prevented their existing as mere 'cultural back-waters' over the ages. The trade caravans and traffic that crossed the difficult terrain enabled a certain degree of cross-flow of

ideas, goods and people. The fact that these far-flung capitals and trading posts were often the objective of invasions too is significant in this respect!

Besides providing local security from neighbours and local marauders, the three Rawals who ruled Jaisalmer in succession after Har Raj — namely, Bhim Singh (r. 1577-1613), Kalyan Das (r. 1613-1627), and Manohar Das (r. 1627-1650), also played their part in Mughal campaigns. They and their troops and fief-holders joined Mughal generals in places as far distant from the Thar Desert as Bengal, Orissa and Kabul. The *Ain-i-Akbari* tells us that Kalyan Das became *subedar* of Orissa in 1610. Some six years later, he was raised to the rank of ‘Commander of 2000’, according to the *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*. Emperor Jahangir has recorded in 1626 that he called Kalyan Das to the Mughal court to bestow the title of ‘Rawal’ and the ‘*teeka*’, or insignia of coronation, of Jaisalmer upon him.

Under these rulers and their successors, the local golden-yellow stone of Jaisalmer became popular in the Mughal world and was exported to Delhi and Agra. One may take note at this point of one much admired structure at Jaisalmer, which does not owe its construction to either royal or a merchant’s patronage. The structure is the Tilo-ki-Prol’, and it was built as an ornate gateway structure (with a small shrine) by a court dancer called Tilo. This was added on to the entrance at Jaisalmer’s old Ghadsisar tank (built by the fourteenth century Rawal Ghadsi). The ‘prol’ takes the form of a carved and embellished grand entrance triple-arched gateway, flanked by canopied *chhatris* on both sides.

Ramchandra (r. 1650), the adopted son who succeeded Manohar Das as Rawal of Jaisalmer, proved to be a cruel and pleasure-loving man. The realization that he was unfit to govern led to his being dethroned. This time the throne went to Sabal Singh, a great-grandson of Rawal Maldev of Jaisalmer. Sabal Singh (r. 1650-1659), like his contemporaries, saw service with the Mughal armies. It is said that prior to his accession to the *gaddi* of Jaisalmer, he had held a distinguished post at Peshawar earlier, working with the famous Mirza Raja Jai Singh I of Amber. During this period, the feat of saving the Imperial treasure from certain capture by local mountain-dwelling Pathans earned Sabal Singh considerable acclaim. Folklore has it that it was this adventurous exploit that drew the attention of Emperor Shah

Jahan to Sabal Singh and ensured his succession to the throne of Jaisalmer, even though his claim was not the strongest. His further rise to eminence continued under the patronage provided by Emperor Shah Jahan.

Sabal Singh's reign saw Jaisalmer's territories expand to include much of the neighbouring region of Bahawalpur, as well as parts of the territories of Marwar and Bikaner. In 1659, Amar Singh, (r. 1659-1701) the second son of Sabal Singh, succeeded to the throne of the Jaisalmer, and the Bhatias adopted a vigorous policy of territorial expansion. He led his forces against neighbouring Rathores, Bilochs (Baluchis), and Chhanna Rajputs, as well as Afghans, over-powering them and forcing them to sue for peace. Barmer was occupied by him, and the area of Pugal wrested from the kingdom of Bikaner. He also wrested considerable other land, loot and indemnity from his various adversaries. The *parganas* of Pokhran, Phalodi and Mallani were conferred on him by the Mughal emperor for his services to the empire.

Thus, in the course of his adventurous career, Rawal Amar Singh was successful in extending the frontiers of Jaisalmer from the Sutlej in the north to the Indus in the west. However, as was the case with the fluid border expansions of the time, many of these wrested areas reverted to their former owners, or were incorporated into Marwar, Bikaner, etc. in subsequent years. Amar Singh paid attention to the requirements of his subjects too, and besides constructing several water-reservoirs and wells, had an artificial canal — known as the Amarkas' built. He is said to have introduced the 'Amar Shahi' measure in the state of Jaisalmer. Rawal Amar Singh was succeeded by his son, Jaswant Singh in 1701. The history of Jaisalmer during his reign and thereafter is dealt with further in this text.

KARAULI

Between AD 1589 and 1734, the small Rajput Yaduvamshi (or Yadavas) kingdom of Karauli was ruled in succession by Dwarka Das, Mukund Das, Jagman, Chhatraman, Dharmapal, Ratanpal and Kanwarpal II (r. 1691-1734.) The period was generally marked by an overall state of confusion and dissension. Internal palace squabbles and harem intrigues added to the

disorder. Taking advantage of the situation, rival groups of nobles quibbled over political pre-eminence at the court during this period. Meanwhile, Karauli appears to have taken part in Imperial campaigns. Archival records tell us that the ruler of Karauli helped Dhoondhar's maharajas Bishan Singh and Jai Singh II in their expeditions against the Jats during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. We shall take up the subsequent history of Karauli further in this work.

CONTEMPORANEOUS ARCHIVAL RECORDS

Before concluding this chapter, it may be well to bear in mind that from the period of Emperor Akbar onwards, archival source-materials relevant to the re-construction of Rajasthan's history abound in significant quantities. Since most are contemporaneous records, which were maintained regularly, such archival records have been perused and analysed by experts, though gaps and lacunae still remain in our knowledge.

The Persian records include Imperial Mughal *Parwanas*, *Farmans*, *Dastaks*, *Akhbarat*, etc. besides other Imperial court records and documents. The archives maintained in Rajasthani script by various Rajput kingdoms include *pattas* and letters etc. Additionally, the latter group includes papers relating to revenue, judiciary, law and order, taxation and day-to-day events in different states of the region. Various called *bahi*, *chopanya*, *haqiqat*, *dastur* etc., these were traditionally prepared date-wise and year-wise under the supervision of reliable officials.

For instance, among the important records from Bikaner state are revenue *patakas*, wage and construction *bahis* known as *Sahar Lekha Bahi* and *Kamthana bahis*, and *Modikhana*, *Mahat-Talka* and *Rokad bahis*. In a like manner, various Jodhpur *bahis*, like the *Byava*, *Haqiqat*, *Havala*, *Hat*, etc. *bahis* deal with marriage rites, Marwar's history, administration, household and promotions etc. respectively. The erstwhile state of Udaipur, similarly, maintained *Rojnamahs* and *Chopdas*, while Kota's records, which were kept in *Bastas* in numbered *Bhandars* (literally, 'stores'), provide information on aspects like festivals, alms-giving, and the like. The *Siyahah Hazurs* of the Amber-Jaipur state throw light on economic practices, while

the *Dastur Komwar* records deal with royal payrolls etc. Other important archival records of this state include the *Kharita*, *Vakil* reports, *Arzdasht*, *Waqiya* records, *Khatut Ahalkaran*, *Nishan*, *Iqrar-nama*, *Hasbul-Hukum*, *Mahzar-nama*, among others.

Broadly speaking, the *Pargana Bahis* of various states contain material like the amounts of the taxes collected, names of villages, and names of farmers along with the kind of land in their possessions. The *Kharita Bahis* list many taxes and cesses. The revenue records of the period reveal that the lands were divided into *khalsa*, *havala*, *jagir*, *bhom*, *sasan*, etc. The revenue collected from these lands varied from state to state. Other records, like *Nirakha Bazaar*, *Arhsattas*, *Yadashta*, *Siyaha Hazurs*, *Vakil* reports, *Roznama Potedar*, *Haqiqat Bahis*, *Dastural-Amal*, *Avarijas* etc., of different kingdoms of the Rajasthan region similarly throw light on different aspects of administration from about the seventeenth century onwards, till the end of the nineteenth century. Besides textual records, many sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth century copper-plate grants from Mewar, Bikaner etc. provide valuable information for historians, as they list land-types and taxes.

The records of the Marathas — among them the *Peshwa Daftar* material, diaries of the Peshwas and Satara rajas, *Shahu Roznishi*, *Balaji Baji Rao Roznishi* etc., have been invaluable for historians studying Rajasthan too. These are particularly useful in understanding Maratha-Rajput relations during the eighteenth-nineteenth centuries, since most of the states of Rajasthan had contacts with the Marathas.

SOME ASPECTS OF ART, ARCHITECTURE, LITERATURE, SOCIO-CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS CONDITIONS DURING THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Maratha contact was to have far lesser impact on the society, culture, art and architectural traditions, and administrative pattern of the different states and estates of Rajasthan than had been the case for the Mughal contact with the Rajasthan region.

One of the areas that continued to reflect and develop from the sustained Mughal-Rajasthan contact was that of art. Rajasthani paintings on paper ('gouache'), as illustrations within manuscripts, and as frescoes or murals on the walls of palaces etc., mainly flourished under the patronage of the various local courts of the rulers and chiefs of the region. The seventeenth century saw a broad continuity with earlier developments, but alongside that, a certain freshness and innovation was fostered as the different courts encouraged certain aspects, features and colour-schemes. In time, these would serve to distinguish the different ateliers or schools of painting patronised at these courts and estates.

Several themes were popular during this period. One was court related. This included portraits of rulers and chiefs, sitting in their *durbars*, or hunting or watching animal-fights, and sport, or enjoying scenes of natural beauty, etc. *Raga-Mala* and *Bara-masa* etc. scenes were another popular theme. Yet another group of paintings illustrated scenes from known literary works and religious texts, like the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *Bhagvat* and other *Puranas*, *Krishna Lila*, *Devi Mahatmya*. Besides these, paintings depicting scenes of everyday life and rituals were also popular. (Of course, one should also note here that the rural or folk tradition of paintings, usually murals to commemorate festivals and for rituals, continued to be made).

Stylistically, Rajasthani paintings from the seventeenth century onwards may be grouped under four main area groups, namely Mewar, Amber (and later Jaipur), Marwar and Bundi-Kotah. The principal centres of the Mewar School were Chittor, Udaipur, Nathdwara, and the Thikanas of Deogarh, Sawar etc. The paintings of the Deora Chauhan ruled state of Sirohi have generally been classed with the Mewar School by many art-historians, though they probably deserve a place of their own! The centres for the Amber-Jaipur school were Amber and Jaipur. In the eighteenth century, the state of Alwar was to borrow and develop its own atelier based on the Amber-Jaipur style. In the case of the court paintings classified as part of the Marwar School, art-historians have tended to place in this category work prepared at Jodhpur, Bikaner, Kishangarh, Jaisalmer, Ajmer and the Thikanas of Pali, Ghanerao, etc. However, once again, most of these deserve to be recognised for possessing individual characteristics, features

and stimuli! The Hadauti School of paintings relates to the courts of Bundi and Kota, with the later state of Jhalawar sharing the general tradition.

Several scholars have asserted that the ateliers of Bikaner, Jodhpur and Amber reveal a greater impact of Mughal painting than those of Mewar and Bundi because of the close cultural and political relationship between the former group of states with the Mughal court. Mughal influence on 'Rajput' paintings, as a whole, is more easily recognisable in aspects like dress, architectural details, art-motifs, landscape patterns and choice of subject matter. It was roughly from the first half of the seventeenth century that definite schools of Rajasthani painting started taking shape. Later, with the interflow of painters experienced in working in Mughal ateliers, Mughal technical advancement and motifs came to have a more obvious impact on Rajasthan's art. However, in time, the paintings produced in different regions, under the patronage of the Rajput courts came to exhibit regional features more than their earlier indebtedness to earlier traditions and Mughal styles.

The court of Mewar, particularly during the reign of rulers like Amar Singh, Karan Singh, Jagat Singh, Raj Singh, among others, patronised art and artists. The earlier *Raga-mala* paintings painted at Chavand (from c.1605 onwards) were square in format, with vivid colours, and figures having a close affinity with the *Chaura-Panchashika* group of paintings. The Chavand *Raga-malas* are regarded as starting a new era in Mewar's art tradition. The impact of Mughal style, though subdued, is apparently present. This Mughal court influence is more noticeable in the Mewar School from the reign of Maharana Karan Singh onwards. This is also reflected in the wall-paintings executed in the *Chhoti Chitarshala* built by Karan Singh.

Rana Karan Singh's successor, Jagat Singh provided immense patronage to art and architecture, and Mewar paintings reached a certain stylistic pinnacle during his reign. The main characteristics of the Mewar atelier from this period include a dazzling use of colours, against a blue or red or green background, stylised trees, Mughal-type hills, and the depiction of birds and flowers. Sahib-ud-din, Nisardi, and Manohar were among the painters of the Mewar atelier who painted scenes based on literary works

like the *Aarsh-Ramayana* (c.1657), and Keshav Das's *Rasika-Priya*. Mewar's Sahib-ud-din made a series of paintings based on the verses found in the *Sur-Sagar* by the mystic-poet Surdas. These paintings carry a depiction of Surdas on the corner of each frame. Among the other notable creations of this time that are on public display, or form part of the debate at art schools, is a set of nine *Raga-mala* paintings by Sahib-ud-din, dating to 1628 (now at the National Museum, New Delhi); a *Bhagvat Purana* of 1648 also illustrated by Sahib-ud-din, the *Honhar Ramayana* of c. 1646, and a *Ramayana* illustrated by Manohar in 1649. Many *Raga-mala* and *Nayak-Nayika* sets, and illustrated copies of *Ras Manjari*, *Geet-Govinda*, etc. were prepared afterwards too.

By the latter part of Rana Raj Singh's reign, the style of painting became highly stylised, and the brilliant enamel-like colours of the earlier period yielded place to a duller colour-scheme. However, the Mewar atelier remained highly productive at Udaipur and at various other centres of the state. Large number of devotional paintings concerning Shrinathji and his worship and legends were produced at Nathdwara. Neighbouring areas that were influenced by the Mewar atelier included Sirohi, Sawar, Deogarh, Pratapgarh-Deoliya, Dungarpur and Banswara. The Mewar School also includes miniatures based on Jayadev's *Geet-Govind* (including those painted at Zawar and Gogunda), and Keshavdas's *Kavi-Priya*.

In the case of the Bundi atelier, the reign of Ratan Singh who saw Imperial service in the Deccan and received honours from Jahangir, saw the introduction of Mughal influence at Bundi. As with Mewar, *Raga-malas*, *Bara-masas* and themes from literary texts were among those popular at the time. In time, his son Chhatrasal was to develop the Bundi atelier further. Rao Chattarsal had close links with Emperor Shah Jahan and had a long sojourn at the Imperial court, where he is believed to have provided patronage to deserving artists.

Bundi paintings of the seventeenth century are regarded as amongst the finest of their time. The colours are brilliant, and the depictions of human figures show tall women with narrow waists, wearing short *cholis*, colourful skirts and near-transparent veil partially covering the head. The figures have a pointed nose, receding chin, almond-shaped eyes and a

reddish brown flesh tint. The settings are generally against garden pavilions or open portions. The most prominent aspect of the Bundi atelier is its landscape, which forms the background to the paintings. This depicts hills, flowing rivers, thick vegetation and colourful flowers. The lush and well-laid gardens with mango and *pipal* trees, banana plants, flowering creepers and birds and animals, are as typical as is depicting water in swirls. In later periods, the Bundi School took to using a characteristic mixture of grey, blue, orange and vermilion to depict a dusky sky. The subject matter too slowly changed and along with illustrations of literary works, scenes of hunting, merry-making or formal court durbars were painted. Art historians hold that, in its choice of colouring and depiction of the landscape, the Bundi School reflects an affinity with Deccani paintings. This may even be the natural outcome of successive Bundi rulers serving in that area during the mid to late seventeenth century, when they may well have employed Deccani painters as also enabled accompanying Bundi painters to imbibe local Deccani school influences.

Coming now to the Amber School, which flourished under different successive rulers, the mural tradition was known, and a well-preserved painted chamber at Amber, commonly referred to as the 'Bhojan-Shala' or dining hall, has elaborately painted murals along all its walls. Interestingly, some scholars feel that while the famous Mirza Raja Jai Singh I of Dhoondhar was a well known builder, as well as a collector of Persian and Mughal carpets and paintings, his own court does not seem to have developed any outstanding feature during his reign.

In the case of the Marwar School, in time the atelier developed distinguishing features like the 'fish eye', an aquiline profile, extremely schematic use of architecture and bold blocks of colour. Early paintings from Marwar are less precise and more influenced by folk traditions, as compared to works post-dating the contact between the Jodhpur artists and the Mughal courts. Thereafter, the Marwar School reflects a more hybrid style [62](#). An illustrated *Bhagvat Purana* of AD 1611, previously in the Jodhpur *pothikhana*, and a set of *Raga-mala* miniatures painted in 1632 by an artist named Virji at Pali, are believed to be amongst the earliest known examples of Marwari miniature paintings following contact with the Mughal court. These paintings have a folk character, and only a very few

Mughal elements. Other miniature paintings from the time of Raja Sur Singh of Marwar, and the paintings of *Dhola-Maru* and the *Bhagvat* clearly reflect the influence of the Mughal art. The illustrated *Raga-mala* from Pali, dating to 1623, and the paintings based on *Sur-Sagar* and *Rasik-Priya* also reflect the impact of the Mughal art over the Marwar School during the period of Maharaja Gaj Singh.

Works belonging to the later half of the seventeenth century are relatively rare, with the exception of a number of portraits and *Raga-mala* miniatures. The figures are generally robust, with the male figures depicted with elaborate costumes and dashing moustaches. During the latter part of Aurangzeb's reign, when art and music were actively discouraged, a large number of families of artists that had previously enjoyed Imperial Mughal court patronage for several generations migrated to Rajput states. Marwar's Jaswant Singh provided patronage to some of them at Jodhpur. The portraits of Sur Singh, Gaj Singh and Jaswant Singh and the paintings based on stories of Dhola-Maru, Sohni-Mahiwal, and the poems of Keshav and Mati Ram were the outcome of this contact.

The style of painting developed in Bikaner in the seventeenth century also had its share of Mughal elements. This was due, both, to the close association of the Bikaner rulers with the Mughal court, and to the employment of Muslim painters from Delhi and Agra. Some fine examples of this atelier date from the reigns of Bikaner's Rai Singh, Karan Singh and Anoop Singh. The themes included portraiture, *Bara-Masas*, *Raga-malas*, illustrations from the *Bhagvat Purana*, and depictions of Krishna-Lila, etc. Maharaja Anoop Singh's Sisodia clan queen too was a keen patron of paintings, with her own atelier.

The Bikaner School of paintings is known for its sophistication, delicate lines and the tonal range normally encountered in Mughal paintings. Following Emperor Shah Jahan's turning towards architecture, and the consequent search by painters for new patrons who appreciated art, Maharaja Karan Singh became the focal point for Mughal court painters like Ali Raza. Ali Raza subsequently painted brilliant paintings of Lakshmi Narayan. Other important painters working in Bikaner whose signed and dated examples have been found include Rukh-ud-din, Shaha-ud-din,

Hamid Ahmed Shahib Dan, Rashid Kasim, Shah Muhammad, Hasham etc. Besides Mughal elements, Bikaner paintings exhibit close familiarity with Deccani paintings. The reason is Raja Anoop Singh's stay in the Deccan and his collection of some of the finest productions of Deccani schools from Adoni. The Bikaner School stresses human figures, even though landscapes are equally skilfully rendered.

The Kishangarh atelier is also worthy of note, with the depiction of its doe-eyed heroines, and finely chiselled features. This school would develop to its peak during the early eighteenth century when the famous 'Bani Thani' became the idealised depiction for women, even when the theme painted related to Krishna and Radha. We shall return to this subject in the next chapter.

Moving away now from paintings, one must emphasise that the area of architecture and sculpture saw its fair share of patronage too during the seventeenth century. Under various rulers, many of them richer with booty from Imperial campaigns, numerous palaces, temples, pavilions, step-wells etc. were built in different parts of Rajasthan. As in the case of sculpture, these drew on older traditions in which innovative architectural features — sometimes influenced by places where the local rulers and chiefs had been posted while in Imperial service, were often added. Many of the rulers also built temples and other buildings in the areas they were posted. There the finished building would reflect Rajasthan's regional style, as interpreted by local artisans and craftsmen.

Within Rajasthan, the work of local artisans and craftsmen probably found ample outlets through the thriving contemporary trade and commercial activity. Records tell us that large-scale production of cotton was carried out in and around the Uparmal, Hadauti and Dhoondhar areas, which helped places like Pali, Sanganer, Bagru, Chittor, Udaipur, Delwara, Sirohi, Sironj, Kota, Ajmer and Jodhpur etc., to develop and flourish as centres for cloth-weaving and /or dying or printing, as well as trade. (Manucci has recorded that Ajmer manufactured fine white cloth). Apparently Sirohi and Udaipur became known for their sword-making, and the manufacture of knives and daggers knives, just as Malpura and Jalore did for locally manufactured saddles and leather items. Paper too was being

made within Rajasthan, with Chosanda one of the known sites for paper-making. Some of this locally made paper was probably used to pen the poetry and literary works that were composed around this time.

Literature had its full share of court patronage during this period, as had been the case before as well. Many writers and their compositions have already been listed, but one may take note of some others as well. In Mewar, for example, the Sanskrit literary tradition flourished during the reign of Rana Amar Singh, with Pandit Jiwadhar, the author of the *Amarsar*, among those at the Mewar court. Another important text of this period was the *Amar Bhushan* — a treatise on astronomy. In the reign of Rana Jagat Singh, Pandit Mohan Bhatt wrote the *Jagat Simhastaka*, Raghunath the *Jagat Singh Kavya*, and Lakshmi Nath composed the famous *Jagannath Rai Temple Inscription*. Litterateurs at Maharana Raj Singh's court included not just Ranchod Bhatt, author of the *Amar Kavya Vamshavali* and *Raj Prashasti Mahakavya* etc, and Pandit Sada Shiva — who had come to Mewar from Kashi (Banaras), but also Dhundhi Raj, who wrote the *Raj Ratnakar* about gems. Man Kavi, who completed the *Raj-Vilas* in 1680, and Pandit Mukund who wrote the *Raj Simhastaka*, also flourished at Raj Singh's court. Kishordas's *Raj Prakash*, Shrilal Bhatt's *Raj Singh Varanam* and Mukund Das's *Raj Singhsatak* are other works written during the period of Raj Singh.

The situation was similar at more than one Rajput court of this period. Bikaner too was already known for providing court patronage to good poets, philosophers and other scholars, and during the reign of Maharaja Anoop Singh a unique personal collection of works on literature, poetry, philosophy, astronomy, mathematics, ethics, etc. was put together at Bikaner. The *Karmachandra-Vanshot-Kirtankam Kavya* is one of the famous works that covers the period from the life of Rao Bika through to Bikaner's Maharaja Rai Singh. As already noted, Prince Prithviraj of Bikaner, also called Peethal, was both a notable dignitary and recognised scholar and composer, who merited a place amongst the 'Nine Jewels' of Emperor Akbar's court. In VS 1700, or AD 1643, Chakrapani of Vagar composed the *Kirti-Kaumudi*, which was a treatise on astronomy and mathematical calculations. In AD 1670 Govind composed the *Sringara-Deepika*. The *Kavya Kusuma*, *Muhurta-Chinatamini* and *Hari-Sareswat* are

important works of the period from the Pratapgarh area. Around the same time, in AD 1664, Jogidas of Pratapgarh wrote the *Hari Pingal*, a treatise on poetics. Among the other writers of the c. sixteenth-eighteenth centuries were Maheshwar, the commentator of the *Shabad-Bodha*, Gajanand, who wrote the *Kama Bhusban*, and Mudgal, who wrote the *Vrata-Saravali*.

There were also many known scholars who wrote in Rajasthani. Works of note include the *Khumman Raso* of Dalpat, which describes the Mewar rulers from the time of Bappa Rawal through to Rana Raj Singh in eight cantos of Rajasthani verse, and the narrative poem *Raj Prakash*, composed in AD 1662 by Kishan Das, on Maharana Raj Singh. Other contemporaneous poets and writers at various different courts, were Shyam, Gopal Das Dudawat, Rama Ashiya, Jogidas, Achaldas, Jeta Mehiyaria, Sadumal, Man Singh Ashiya, Jeth Ram Dadhiwadiya and Keshu. There were also people like Hari Nabha of Khandela in Shekhawati, a poet of Rajasthan's Pingal style of literature, who wrote the *Kesar-Singh Samar* in c. AD 1683-1697, and Umed Ram of the same region, who composed the *Vani Bhasha*.

Devotional literature was also composed — and was obviously highly popular, during this period. Among others, Marwar's Keshav Das wrote the *Viveka-Varta*, and Madho Das the *Ram Raso* and *Bhasha-Dashmaskandha*. Other writers of this style included Marwar's Narhari Das, Kalyandas of Sameta in Mewar and the renouncer-prince Sawant Singh, alias Nagri Das of Kishangarh who made valuable contribution to religious literature of the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries. Numerous Jain *munis* like Tej, Mahesh, Padamvijaya, Kanakvijaya etc. were among those who lived and wrote religious texts during this period. Besides devotional and religious themes, the *khyat* form of chronicling past history gained an impetus under people like Marwar's Muhnot Nainsi. Nainsi — and others like him, prepared their texts on the basis of existing *bahi*, *patta*, and other records.

While the use of Sanskrit and Rajasthani continued for literary compositions, Persian was used for correspondence with the Mughal Court. As a result, people knowing Persian (usually, but not only, from the Kayastha community) were employed at practically every court and estate in the Rajasthan region. Their task included drafting letters and requests in

Persian for the Imperial court, and translating the contents of letters and *farmans*, *nishans*, etc. received at local courts and estate-offices from the Mughal court. The different local *bakshis*, *viziers*, *vakils*, and *qanungos* also were generally well-versed in Persian. The 'Persianization' extended further to influence the court language, etiquette, and clothing of the Rajasthan-based states; just as the Mughal influence was strong on the administrative pattern within these states by the end of the seventeenth century. (Having already taken note of this, we need not repeat the administrative divisions, titles of officers and related information afresh at this point)

The impact of the Mughal court culture on Rajasthan was, however, basically limited to the courts, nobles, officials and elite, or others who came into direct contact with the empire and its functionaries. As far as their religious and cultural life went though, the region's ruling classes and their subjects mainly continued to adhere to their set traditions, beliefs and customs. These religious and cultural traditions mainly drew from existing situations. As such Hinduism, Jainism, Islam etc. flourished. However, if the popularity of sects like the Dadu-panthis, Ramanandis, Pushti-Margis, the Jain Tera-panthis, etc. is anything to judge by, one must admit that the development of new sects and the preaching of new preceptors seemed to have got a fair and open-minded hearing in Rajasthan during this general period⁶³. One such preceptor of this period, who soon became deified as a saint, belonged to the Alwar region. This was Lal Das (1540-1648), who was greatly revered by local people, and attributed with miraculous powers. The Nimbark doctrine also spread further during this period. One of its proponents was Parashram, an accomplished poet of Pingal who flourished about the beginning of the seventeenth century, and wrote the *Raghunath Charitra*, *Sudama-Charitra*, *Prahlad-Charitra*, *Hari-Lila* and *Nand-Lila*.

One of the important religious sects of this time was established by Dadu Dayal (1544-1603)⁶⁴. Like many of his contemporaries, Dadu preached the equality of all humans, vegetarianism, and abstinence from intoxicants⁶⁵. The 'Dadu-panthis', or followers of Dadu Dayal also believed in celibacy. There were many centres for the Dadu-panth — one of the most important being the town of Naraina. Naraina was granted to Dadu Dayal by Bhojraj Khangarot, a descendant of the Kachchwaha king Prithviraj of Amber. (The Khangarots were descended through the line of Prithviraj's

son Jagmal, and his son, Rao Khangar, and held the Jobner and Naraina areas). Thereafter, Naraina became a major seat of the Dadu sect (also called Dadu *marg* — the words ‘*panth*’ and ‘*marg*’ both mean ‘path’). Ironically, in later centuries the Dadu-panthi warriors, or ‘*Nagas*’ bore weapons, and served the State of Jaipur as soldiers from c.1797 until they were disbanded by law in 1938⁶⁶.

We cannot do justice here, nor provide a full history of the Dadu-panthis, or indeed of most of the other religious sects and groups of this time due to constraints of space. However, it is important to underline that rich and poor alike were attracted to these newer sects and their preachers. For example, a prince of Bikaner, the battle-hero Bhim Singh, son of Rao Jaitsi and brother of Rao Kalyan Mai, is said to have become a disciple after a tumultuous career as a warrior. After Jodhpur’s king Maldeo occupied Bikaner, Bhim was sent to the Mughal court to gain support for his elder brother, the rightful successor to Bikaner — a task in which he proved successful. Later, in the course of a fiercely fought campaign, the news of his death was wrongly reported. At this his wife, a princess of the Sisodia lineage, immolated herself as a *sati*, while his estates became the property of his son and heir. When Bhim learnt of this, he decided never to return to Bikaner. Renouncing his life as a warrior and family man, he now turned towards the teachings of Dadu, where he was accepted as a disciple and given a new name and identity. He soon rose to occupy a place of honour, and is still famous as ‘Badey Sunder Das-ji’ or Sunder Das the Elder. The title of ‘Elder’ or ‘Badey’ distinguishes him from another Sunder Das of the Dadu *panth* of Rajasthan. Another royal prince who took to the Dadu *mart*) was a prince of Amber, and one of the sons of Raja Prithviraj of Amber.

Meanwhile, alongside the emergence of newer sects, many older established religious traditions previously in existence in the Rajasthan region — like Vaishnavism, Saivism, Shaktism, Jainism and Islam, continued to thrive. There was, though, a gradual decline in the building of new temples to the Sun, along with emphasis on syncreticism of Surya into the Vaishnav tradition. In time, the old solar cult was to be more or less subsumed within the latter, though rituals, penances and fasts connected with Surya continued to be practiced. Jainism too, despite the emergence of

newer sects, thrived in Rajasthan, with sites like Mahavirji, Ranakpur, Dhulev and Karera continuing to attract Jain pilgrims through this period.

RAJASTHAN AT THE BEGINNING OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

As we have seen above, the reign of Aurangzeb marked a watershed in Mughal-Rajput relations, just as that emperor's death marked another watershed — even if not immediately perceptible, in the fortunes of the Mughal Empire. In the subsequent years, several of the kingdoms of Rajasthan maintained their old links with the Delhi Court, but these were weaker than before. Of the many that had been driven to take up arms during the latter part of Aurangzeb's long reign, the stronger occupied themselves in reshaping the boundaries of their individual kingdoms even after coming to an understanding with Aurangzeb's successors. Others took equal advantage of the political scene, and while continuing to pay nominal homage to the frequently changing Mughal emperors, boldly attempted to expand their boundaries at the expense of neighbours and hereditary enemies.

In fact, it would seem as if the clan enmities and hereditary rivalries that had played such a major role in the inter-relationship of Rajput states — with each other, and with non-Rajput neighbours, in the pre-Akbar period, had only been capped and suppressed once they had individually accepted Mughal suzerainty. These had never been resolved and had never really died down! Over the next century and a half or so following the acceptance of Akbar's supremacy, the expanding Mughal Empire had provided the warriors of Rajasthan ample battlefields and situations to try their valour, win laurels, lose their lives in combat, and expend their energies. Once the Empire began to decline, however, 'new horizons' to conquer became denied to them, and the temptation of seizing territory from weaker neighbours too strong to be kept in check by the relatively powerless Mughal emperors. This, as may be noted in individual dynastic histories, almost became the 'leitmotif' of the Rajput states in the first half of the eighteenth century.

To this was added a new factor. The rise of Marathas power from the mid seventeenth century onwards was not only a challenge to the Mughal Empire, but also to the kingdoms within Rajasthan. By the middle of the eighteenth century, Maratha incursions into parts of Rajasthan began to form a much-dreaded and disruptive feature of ordinary life, and the taxes and tributes exacted became a heavy burden on the treasuries of the affected states.

¹ Pers. comm. from Dr. Gopi Chand Verma who worked in the Jaipur state's archives office in 1937-38, assisting Dr. Jadunath Sarkar.

² Among others, Sanghi Nanu Godha, a Khandelwal Jain, was a trusted minister of Dhoondhar's Man Singh. He spent time in Bengal, when Man Singh was governor of that *suba*, and had several Jain temples constructed there.

³ Joshi's *Polygamy and Purdah* (Jaipur & New Delhi, 1995), and Laxmi Kumari Chundawat's 'Rajasthan ki Rajniti mein Mahilayein', *Maru Bharati* (1969, pp.8-11), throw light on the role of chief queens (*pat-rani*), favourites, concubines, and queen-mothers in the administrative and decision-making processes, including succession-disputes in the kingdoms and chiefdoms of Rajasthan. Joshi also describes the within zenana lives of elite women and their staff and retainers. See also Shashi Arora's *Rajasthan Mein Nari ki Stithi* (Tarun Prakashan, Bikaner, 1981).

⁴ V. Joshi, 1995, pp.97; Chundawat, *op.cit*, 1969, pp.9; and G.S.L. Devra *Administrative System in Bikaner*, 1979, pp.83.

⁵ Literally, *jagirs* granted for personal expenses. For more information, see V Joshi, *Ibid*, 1995, pp.86.

⁶ For more on this and other related aspects, see Joshi, 1995.

⁷ Since many of the Rajput rulers and chiefs were polygamous, with several legally wedded Rajput wives, as well as non-Rajput concubines, the latter too generally got '*baath kharach ki jagirs*' for their overall maintenance and for their individual mini-retinues. These retinues replicated those of the actual queens of a Rajput ruler or chief within the *zenanas*. For more on the lives of queens, queen-mothers, concubines, their respective retinues, the position of a concubine's children etc., and other aspects of life within the different *zenanas*, see Joshi, 1995, pp.112-177.

⁸ Also known as the kingdom of Amber after the name of its capital.

⁹ VS Bhargava, *op.cit*, 1979, pp.42.

- ¹⁰ See, R.S. Manohar's *Rajasthan key Pramukh Durg*, Rajasthan Hindi Granth Akademi', Jaipur, 1997, pp.134.
- ¹¹ Manucci noted, 'Whenever there was some difficult or delicate task, Aurangzeb had only to turn to Jai Singh'.
- ¹² A popular local tale centres on the miraculous help given by Dausa's Surajmal Bhomiya when Jai Singh was given the task of presenting Shivaji at the Mughal court in Agra.
- ¹³ G.N. Sharma, 1990, pp.106.
- ¹⁴ H.C. Tikkiwal's 'Mirza Raja Jai Singh: His Role as a Diplomat', in Ratnawat & Sharma (Eds.) *op.cit*, 1999, pp.215, provides details, including subsequent action by both Jai Singh and Ram Singh to capture Shivaji.
- ¹⁵ Kulpati Misra lived through the ensuing reigns of Ram Singh and Bishan Singh as well.
- ¹⁶ In 1686, the Mughal court asked Ram Singh to mediate between Khandela's Kesari Singh and Narnaul's *faujdar*.
- ¹⁷ See, among others, VS. Bhatnagar's *Life and Times of Sawai Jai Singh*, Impex India, New Delhi, 1974; Cyan Prakash Pilonia's *Enlightened Government in Modern India — Heritage of Sawai Jai Singh*, Aalekh Publishers, Jaipur, 2002; and A.K. Roy's *History of the Jaipur City*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1978.
- ¹⁸ Anand Chand reputedly killed his son and heir, Amar Chand, following rumours that Amar intended to convert to Islam. Amar's daughter, Kalyan Kanwar, married the Mughal prince Kambaksh on the 24th of *Rajab*, of the *Hijri* year 1092 (August 10, 1681). She became known as Jamilat-un-Nisa. (Sinh, 2001).
- ¹⁹ He was apparently a close friend of Prince Kambaksh.
- ²⁰ The Urdu/Hindi terms '*ladla*' (masculine) and '*ladli*' (feminine), mean the adored or beloved one. Empress Noor Jahan's daughter was called Ladli Bano.
- ²¹ For more, including about the state of Sikar this line ruled over, see Pandit Jhabarmal Sharma's *Sikar ka Itihas* (Calcutta, 1922), in Hindi.
- ²² As Tirmal sided with Khusrau over the Mughal succession issue, Jahangir subsequently confiscated Nagaur. Rao Tirmal's descendants became known as the 'Rao-ji' line.
- ²³ Also Kot Kangra, now better known as Kangra.
- ²⁴ Possibly around AD 1627.
- ²⁵ These villages were later given away to his son-in-law, Raghunath Singh Mertia.
- ²⁶ The Mewatis are regularly accused in Sultanate and Mughal literature of plunder and loot, including in the vicinity of Delhi, which warranted, in the Sultanate/ Empire perspective, constant suppression by force of the Mewatis.

- ²⁷ Tod, *op.cit*, Vol.II, pp.318-19.
- ²⁸ Richard M. Eaton explains this as more a political-cum-punitive measure of re-enforcing the superior position of a sovereign vis-à-vis a refractory chief or an enemy, for which he has argued a longer history across South Asia, rather than just an act of religion-motivated iconoclasm on Aurangzeb's part. (See, Eaton, 'Temple Desecration and Indo-Muslim States' (Part II), *Frontline*, vol.17, no.26, pp.74, January 5, 2001).
- ²⁹ Ironically, a splinter from the sword that slew Fateh Singh pierced the *dewan's* neck and killed him too!
- ³⁰ Tod believed that Udai Singh was captured by Sayyid Abdullah Khan and taken to Ajmer, but Sinh (2001, pp.61) has found no evidence to sustain this belief and holds that Udai Singh's over-riding ambition prompted him to leave the battle ground and rush back to Khandela to proclaim himself raja.
- ³¹ The estate of Kasli was granted by Jahangir to Puranmal, Tirmal's son by a 'Khatrani' from Delhi (see Jhabarmal Sharma's *Sikar ka Itihas*, 1922, pp.32-34). After Puranmal, who was among the emperor's favourites, his son Balaram held the *jagir* of Kasli. Kasli was later forcibly wrested back by one of Ganga Ram's great-grandsons, Deep Singh, who made it his seat.
- ³² Jhabarmal Sharma, 1922, pp.35-45.
- ³³ Jhabarmal Sharma, 1922, pp.45.
- ³⁴ There was ritual for everything. For example, when a *tazimi sardar* of either category approached the ruler, he placed his sword near the ruler's feet and touched a corner of his upper garment. The ruler responded by putting his hand on the noble's shoulder (*bagalgiri*), upon which the noble raised the hand to his chest denoting fealty. When this act was performed once it was called *ikahari* and when it was repeated it was called *dohari* (double) *tazim*.
- ³⁵ See, B.L. Bhadani's *Peasants, Artisans and Entrepreneurs*, Rawat, Jaipur & New Delhi, 1999, pp.3.
- ³⁶ VS. Bhargava, *Marwar and the Mughal Emperors*, Munshiram Manoharlal New Delhi, 1966.
- ³⁷ G.H. Ojha in his *Jodhpur Rajya ka Itihas*, pp.435, is among those who have cited this episode.
- ³⁸ Jaswant Singh's actions at Dharmat and Khajua have been condemned by many. Some twentieth century historians suggest his acts were guided by loyalty to Shah Jahan, and belief that Aurangzeb was a usurper.
- ³⁹ Satish Chandra, Raghubir Singh and G.D.Sharma (Eds.) *Marwar Under Jaswant Singh [1658-1768]: Jodhpur Hukumat Ri Bohi*, Books Treasure, Jodhpur, 1993.
- ⁴⁰ Ishar Das Nagar, the author of *Fatubat-i-Alamgir*, was appointed the *amin* of Jodhpur.
- ⁴¹ Ishar Das Nagar, the *amin* of Jodhpur, played a role in this.
- ⁴² Maharaja Ganga Singh's *Golden Jubilee Volume*, pp.16-18.

- ⁴³ The words *Jai Jangaldhar Badshah* henceforth remained the motto of the Rathores of Bikaner. In 1877, upon the grant of a coat-of-arms to Bikaner by Queen Victoria, the words were emblazoned on that as well.
- ⁴⁴ Apparently the emperor did not immediately accord recognition to Anoop Singh as the new incumbent of the Bikaner throne, and favoured the case of a son of Karan Singh and his concubine.
- ⁴⁵ For this aspect, one may see works like Tod's *Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'han*; K.Natwar Singh's *Maharaja Suraj; Mal;*; and K.S. Singh (Ed.) *Peoples' of India* series.
- ⁴⁶ See, among others, Irfan Habib's *The Agrarian System of Mughal India*, 1963; Rev.ed. 2000, OUR
- ⁴⁷ Rizvi, *op.cit*, 1993, pp.134.
- ⁴⁸ Ajmer was a major centre of Imperial authority. It was here that Sir Thomas Roe presented his credentials on behalf of King James I of England to Emperor Jahangir in January 1616. In return, the East India Company obtained permission to carry out limited trade in India. Jahangir laid out the Daulat Bagh gardens near the Anasagar reservoir, and built the 'Chashm-e-Noor' palace at Ajmer,
- ⁴⁹ There were originally sixteen (i.e. *solah*) nobles in the first category which was quite literally known simply as 'the sixteen' — or '*solah*'. The category encompassed the premier *jagirdars* of the kingdom. Later the number increased to twenty-four, but the nomenclature remained as before.
- ⁵⁰ This category, as the name indicates, had thirty-two land-holders. Their status was below that of the premier category.
- ⁵¹ This category covered *jagirdars* other than those in the first two groups. When Mewar signed its treaty of perpetual friendship with the British in 1818, almost two-thirds of Mewar was held by the kingdom's *jagirdars*!
- ⁵² Kaviraj Shyamaldas Das's *Vir Vinod*, Ojha's *History of Udaipur*, Tod's *Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'han*, G.N. Sharma's *Mewar and the Mughal Emperors*, S.R. Sharma's *Maharana Raj Singh and his times*, and R.P. Vyas's *Maharana Raj Singh* (1974), are among the texts which provide details about Maharana Raj Singh.
- ⁵³ Ajmer's military and cultural importance was clearly established for the Mughals well before this time. Shah Jahan constructed a series of marble pavilions along the Anasagar Lake. He also added a gateway and dome to the Dargah complex, and in 1638 had a grand marble Jama Masjid built here.
- ⁵⁴ G.N. Sharma, *Rajasthan Through the Ages* (Vol.II), Bikaner, 1990, pp.60.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid.
- ⁵⁶ Ojha, 1911 [rep. 1999], pp.245-246.
- ⁵⁷ Ojha, 1911 [rep. 1999], pp.249.

[58](#) Ojha, 1911 [rep. 1999], pp.255-262.

[59](#) Ojha, 1911 [rep. 1999], pp. 266-267.

[60](#) Ojha, *Ibid*, pp.267-268.

[61](#) Jain, 1972, pp.335, states that Ranthambore was visited by Emperor Jahangir in 1619, who noted that the place took its name from two hills called Ran and Thambore. In 1631, Shah Jahan appointed Bitthaldas Gaur as *qiledar* of the fort. Aurangzeb resumed the fort into Imperial hands. It remained under direct Mughal control till the reign of Emperor Shah Alam, who gave it to Jaipur's Madho Singh II as a buttress against the Marathas.

[62](#) See also, Rosemary Crill's, *Marwar Painting: A History of Jodhpur*, IBH & Mehrangarh Publishers.

[63](#) Pilonia, *op.cit.* 2002, provides a picture of contemporaneous religion, religious sects, and diverse practices and rituals, including in the endnotes to chapters 2, 4, 5 and 6 of his book.

[64](#) For an account of Dadu and his teachings, see among others, Daniel Gold's 'The Dadu-Panth: A Religious Order in its Rajasthan Context', in Schomer *et al* (Eds.) *The Idea of Rajasthan*, Vol.II, Manohar, Delhi, 1994, pp. 242-264.

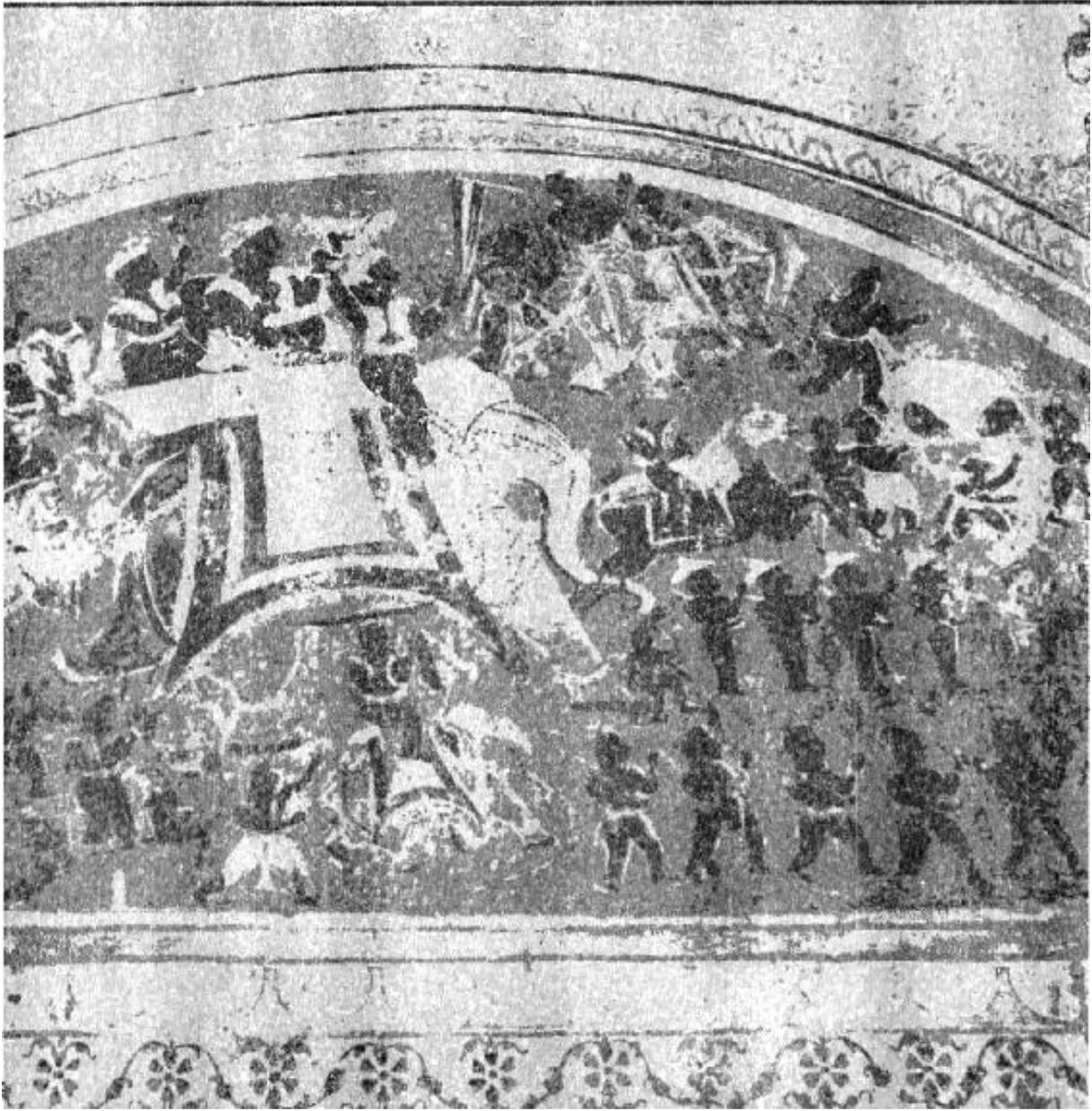
[65](#) Among others, see Savitri Chandra's 'Social Philosophy of Dadu Dayal, and his Concepts of *Sant*, *Sati* and *Shur*', in N.K. Singhi and Rajendra Joshi (Eds.) *Religion, Ritual and Royalty*, Rawat, Jaipur, 1999, pp.173-184.

[66](#) Gold, *op.cit.* 1994.

SECTION
FIVE



AN ERA OF DISQUIET AND THE
SEARCH FOR ALTERNATIVES:
RAJASTHAN IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY
C. AD 1700-1800



INTRODUCTION



THE DEATH OF EMPEROR AURANGZEB IN AD 1707 WAS FOLLOWED, AS already noted, by the gradual collapse of the grand Mughal Empire over the ensuing decades. Various factors were involved, including weak successors, sanguine quarrels over succession, complex Court intrigues, and the growing strength of the Marathas, Jats and Sikhs. Meanwhile, powerful governors and ambitious princes flung off the yoke of the decaying empire, while the Marathas, Jats and others made their bid for territorial consolidation and expansion.

The tumult of the times, and the fluid — often volatile — political situation also influenced events in Rajasthan. Some boundaries were re-defined, and some new political units were carved out of the established regional kingdoms. In time, the Marathas and the East India Company were among those who carved out their spheres of influence in Rajasthan. Within the various states, palace intrigues, squabbles over the *gaddi*, occasional minority rules with regency governments, attacks by marauding armies, and disaffection among local nobles became the main features in the century that followed Aurangzeb's death.

On another front, the decline of the Mughal empire influenced the overall law and order situation, including vis-à-vis the trading caravans that crossed through Bikaner, Jaisalmer, Marwar, etc., while traversing long distances. Combined with internal unrest on the part of some Bikaneri and jaisalmeri nobles, who may have encouraged local bandits to raid neighbouring tracts and leave their own lands alone, there emerged a strong risk of caravans being attacked and looted by bandits and disgruntled local

war-lords. Measures were rapidly evolved to counter this risk as far as possible. (One method entailed a system of insurance of goods-in-transit, which was practiced, among others, by certain private business houses of Bikaner state. The rates of premium were based on the cost of the goods and the distances for which the goods were insured. Some firms insured goods sent to China and other countries, with premium-rates settled mutually for each consignment¹).

THE MUGHAL EMPIRE DURING THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY AND ITS INTERACTION WITH RAJASTHAN

At the Imperial Mughal court, Aurangzeb's successor, Bahadur Shah I, ruled until his death in 1712. He was succeeded — though not unopposed by rival claimants — by his sons, Azim-ush-Shan (r. 1712), and then [Muiz-ud-din] Jahandar Shah (r. 1712-13). The latter's brief reign ended in December 1713 following defeat in the battle of Agra, at the hands of his rival [Muyi-ud-din] Farukhsiyar. Farukhsiyar (r. 1713-1719), now ascended the Imperial throne but his reign was troubled by his relations with his powerful courtiers, including the 'King-Maker' Sayyid brothers, the *Wazir* (Vizier) Sayyid Abdullah Khan and the *Bakshi* Sayyid Hussain Ali, and his father-in-law, Maharaja Ajit Singh of Marwar. In February 1719, Farukhsiyar was deposed and soon afterwards, put to death, following a palace conspiracy, and with rapidity the Imperial Crown passed, in turn, to Rafi-ud-Darajat (r. February-May 1719), Rafi-ud-Daulah Shah Jahan II (r. May-September 1719), and then to [Nasir-ud-din] Muhammad Shah (r. 1719-1748).

The relatively long reign of the indolent and pleasure-loving Muhammad Shah saw a further hastening in the break up of the Mughal Empire due to dynastic squabbles, factional rivalries, and the rise of many smaller powers. In 1720 the assassination of Sayyid Hussain Ali and the defeat of Sayyid Abdullah at the battle of Hasanpur, southwest of Delhi, freed both Mohammed Shah and the Mughal throne from its prolonged control by the Sayyid brothers. After the Mughal Empire's *wazir*, Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf Jah had left the Imperial court, several provinces began to slip out of Imperial control. For instance, Sadat Khan became practically

independent in Oudh; the Afghan Rohilla tribesmen made themselves masters of the Rohilkhand tract to the southeast of Delhi; and Bengal took to merely rendering an annual tribute to the Mughals. Meanwhile, the Marathas, led by the Peshwa Baji Rao, made themselves masters of the Gujarat, Malwa, and Bundelkhand areas, and in 1737 even raided Delhi.

Marwar's Ajit Singh and Amber's Sawai Jai Singh were among the powerful Rajput rulers of the Rajasthan area who wielded considerable authority at the Imperial Mughal Court during much of this time. This was, albeit, with setbacks, that depended on their intra-personal relations with the often changing incumbents of the Imperial 'Peacock' Mughal throne and the strong, entrenched, coterie that held sway over the Mughal court.

The year 1739 saw Nadir Shah of Persia (b.1699, d.1747) capture several cities of northern India. Having defeated the Mughal forces at Karnal, Nadir Shah victoriously entered Delhi, which was first invested — and then, following the killing of some Persian soldiers, sacked at his command. Nadir Shah turned back for Iran in May 1740, with an immense amount of plunder, including the Kohinoor diamond and the famous Imperial Mughal 'Peacock Throne' of Shah Jahan. (The Maratha Peshwa, Baji Rao, attempted enlisting the help of the rulers of Mewar and Dhoondhar against Nadir Shah. Simultaneously, some of the rulers from the Rajasthan area came together following the efforts of Kota's Maharao Durjansal). Nadir Shah's invasion of northern India was a further blow to the already tottering edifice that the once-powerful Mughal Empire had become.

Later, in March 1748, the Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah's forces saw some success with the defeat of the Afghan ruler Ahmad Shah Durrani and his 12,000 troops at Sirhind. Ahmad Shah Durrani was the second son of Mohammad Zaman Khan, a hereditary chief of the Abdali Afghan tribe. (Hence he is also referred to as Ahmad Shah Abdali in many accounts of that period. In this book the names Abdali and Durrani are being used interchangeably in reference to Ahmad Shah). Ahmad Shah was elected Shah of Afghanistan in 1747 by Afghan chiefs following Nadir Shah's assassination. By the time of his death in October 1772, Durrani's empire extended from the Amu Darya and Khorasan into the Kashmir, Punjab and

Sindh areas of South Asia. He was to invade India nine times between the time of his accession and 1769!

In the interim, following the death of Muhammad Shah in April 1748, the empire weakened even further. Maratha incursions into parts of northern India grew in intensity and frequency. So did those by Durrani. Meanwhile, smaller potentates and erstwhile court officials became all-powerful in different areas. Successive Mughal emperors were scarcely able to exercise their writ in the decades that followed.

For instance, by 1753, the young Emperor [Mujahid-ud-din] Ahmad Shah (r. 1748-1754), son of Emperor Muhammad Shah, felt so constrained by his powerful Prime Minister (*wazir*) Safdarjung, certain courtiers and the Jat leader Surajmal, that he called upon Dhoondhar's Maharaja Sawai Madho Singh I. Madho Singh did not fail the emperor, reaching Delhi in October 1753 to meet with Ahmad Shah. This was followed by prolonged negotiations with the main concerned parties, which ended with Surajmal retiring from the lists and the eventual departure of Safdarjung for his own estates in Awadh (Oudh). As reward for his help, Ahmad Shah granted Madho Singh the district of Ranthambore, along with the famed fortress. The grant carried the seeds of an imminent clash between Jaipur and the Hada kingdoms of Bundi and Kota, since the Ranthambore area's chiefs were junior sub-branches — and important *kotris* or sections — of these ruling clans. The end result was the battle of Bhatwara between Jaipur and Kota in the winter of 1761 (as we shall see further in this chapter).

In 1754 the Mughal *Mir Bakshi* Imad-ul-Mulk and Holkar contrived the murder of Emperor Ahmad Shah. Imad-ul-Mulk placed Aziz-ud-din on the Mughal throne as Emperor Alamgir II (r. 1754-1759), and himself became *wazir*. Meanwhile, in 1756-57, Ahmad Shah Durrani plundered Delhi, Agra, Mathura, and Vrindaban, following an unopposed advance into the Gangetic plain, and married Hazrat Begum, a daughter of the dead Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah. Though illness amongst his troops forced him to return to Afghanistan, Ahmad Shah Durrani left his son, Tinuir, behind to govern the Punjab region. Timur married the daughter of the almost token Mughal emperor Alamgir II. In 1758, Timur was driven from the Punjab by a combined force of Sikhs, Mughals, and Marathas.

However, the threat from Afghanistan's ruler was not at an end. In 1759 Ahmad Shah Durrani defeated the Marathas in Punjab, and in 1761 he won a crucial victory over the large Maratha army at Panipat. This battle is known in Indian history books as the Third Battle of Panipat. Subsequently, during the course of the 1760s Durrani attempted to crush the Sikhs at least four times, but his empire was restless with serious revolts nearer home, and he lost control of Punjab to the emerging Sikh might.

Around the same time, the growing power of the East India Company, following the battles of Plassey (1757) and Buxar (1764), added a new dimension and rival threat to the declining fortunes of the Mughal Empire. Meanwhile, Alamgir II was killed in 1759, while his son, Prince Ali Gauhar fled to Bihar. While Alamgir II's prime minister, Imad-ul-Mulk raised a puppet-emperor to the Mughal throne as Shah Jahan III (r. 1759), Ali Gauhar crowned himself and assumed the name of Emperor [Jalal-ud-din] Shah Alam II (r. 1759-1806). By now the title was a mere cipher, though, and over time, Mughal rule came to be reduced to only a small area around Delhi. This too passed into Maratha domination in 1785, and would eventually go into British control in 1803. The Marathas were by this time more than dominant in matters concerning Delhi and the Mughal emperor, and in 1784 Scindia had already assumed the charge of the '*Vakil-i-Mutlaq*' — or commander-in-chief cum vice-regent — of the disintegrating Mughal Empire.

As Mughal control slackened over different parts of South Asia during the course of the eighteenth century, there was a scramble for control over established power centres, and/or for the expansion of territories by individual dependent-states. In the case of the Rajasthan area, the major events in various local kingdoms are separately discussed below. However, it may be relevant to take note first of the manner in which the rise of Maratha power was to affect the states of Rajasthan over the course of the eighteenth century.

THE RAJPUT STATES AND THE MARATHAS

Along with the decline of Mughal supremacy, one of the major factors that influenced not just the politics, but the entire life of the people of the several kingdoms and chiefdoms within the area today comprising Rajasthan, was the growth of Maratha dominance during the eighteenth century². Among other things, the seemingly incessant territorial incursions and accompanying financial demands made upon Rajasthan by the Maratha chiefs would prove ruinous for the state treasuries of various kingdoms and chiefdoms and individuals alike. In a like manner, Maratha interference in dynastic succession disputes would lead to the weakening of the internal governance and political structures of the several affected kingdoms — as we shall note in the course of this chapter.

During the final twenty-five years of Aurangzeb's life, the vigorous Deccan policy of the Mughal Empire could only partially subdue the Marathas. The Marathas soon started to raid the rich provinces of Malwa and Gujarat. In 1699, the Marathas attacked Malwa — an important Mughal *suba* (province). Thereafter, they attacked it twice more during the final part of Aurangzeb's reign. In 1706 they also defeated the Mughal army in south Gujarat. The aim of the Marathas appears to have been to divert the emperor's attention from his activities in the Deccan.

In the early part of the eighteenth century, following Aurangzeb's death in 1707, the Marathas stepped up their activities under Shivaji's grandson Shahu and his administrative councillors known as the '*Ashta Pradhan*'. Shahu's Brahmin prime minister, the Peshwa, and his Council made sure the Marathas took full advantage of the various succession-squabbles, intrigues and other rivalries in the Mughal court and a fluid situation in various Imperial administered provinces. Malwa and Gujarat were already open to Maratha attacks. For instance, in 1710 the Maratha *Sardar* Ganga crossed the River Narmada and reached Ujjain, exacting twenty-five thousand rupees from the people enroute. Such activities on the part of the Marathas were alarming not only for the Mughals, since retaining control over Malwa and Gujarat was vital for the defence of the empire's heartland, but also for the kingdoms within Rajasthan, who realised the vulnerability of their individual tracts to Maratha attacks.

There were two main causes for worry for the rulers of Rajasthan at the beginning of the eighteenth century. One was that some of the more influential Rajasthan rulers themselves coveted Malwa and Gujarat, against the backdrop of a weakening Mughal control. Marwar wanted to occupy parts of Gujarat, and Dhoondhar had its eye over Malwa. As such, they considered the Marathas as potential rivals. The second reason was a very real apprehension that the powerful Marathas would attempt to take political control of various kingdoms and chiefdoms of Rajasthan. The danger was more acutely felt by states like Mewar, Dungarpur, Bundi, Kota and Marwar, etc., which were geographically contiguous to Malwa and/or Gujarat, and wholly vulnerable to a determined attacker. Conflicts with kingdoms based in Malwa and Gujarat had already happened innumerable times during earlier periods of history, as noted previously.

Sawai Jai Singh II of Amber's posting as governor of Malwa in 1713 was (as we shall see in further in this chapter), partially effective in checking the Marathas. But the situation altered when Jai Singh was summoned back to Court by the Mughal emperor and entrusted with the command of the campaign against the Jats. Thereafter, the strategy of systematic northward expansion by the Marathas gained impetus. This was particularly the case after Baji Rao became the Peshwa in 1720. In 1723 Baji Rao made incursions into Malwa, and collected '*chauth*', simultaneously dealing a blow to the prestige of the mighty Mughal Empire. ('*Chauth*', in the literal sense, means 'one-fourth' or a 'quarter', and this one-fourth was the share from state revenues that the Marathas took to demanding from the various kingdoms and chiefdoms of Rajasthan where they made incursions. Besides '*chauth*', the Marathas occasionally levied the additional tax of '*sardeshmukhi*', which was a further one-tenth portion in amount).

In 1724, the Marathas attacked the boundaries of Mewar. Maharana Sangram Singh II of Mewar sought the help of other rulers of Rajasthan to ward off Maratha attacks³. The Maharana wrote that the '*Dakhini*' (a term synonymous with the Marathas across eighteenth-nineteenth century Rajasthan), were causing disturbances in his territory and needed to be chastised. The appeal by the Maharana was ignored. The Marathas began raiding Rampura, Kota and Bundi too. The Maharana unsuccessfully sought

the help of the emperor against the Marathas. Along with Sawai Jai Singh II, he also tried to get assistance from the Nizam, but remained unsuccessful there as well. Jai Singh now tried to forge a common front with Kota and Marwar. The move alarmed the Marathas, and the Maratha ruler, Shahu-ji, sent Gopal Pant and Appa ji Pant, to Mewar to discuss the matter with the Maharana.

The talks remained inconclusive, and there followed no let in Maratha incursions. In 1726 Krishanaji Pant, Baji Pant and Ambaji Pant attacked Kota and Bundi. The Marathas attacked Jodhpur and Mewar too. Fresh efforts were then initiated towards forging a common front against the Marathas, by the Maharana writing to Jai Singh, and the latter persuading the ruler of Kota, Maharao Durjansal, to join hands in the proposed alliance.

However, in the absence of any immediate effective measure to check the Marathas, the Marathas continued their monetary exactions from Mewar and other areas of Rajasthan. In 1726 Baji Bhim visited Mewar and took *chauth* from Mewar districts. In 1728, Peshwa Baji Rao forced the rulers of Dungarpur and Banswara to pay *khiraj* to him. There is some correspondence indicating that when the attention of the Maratha king, Shahu, was drawn to such raids, he directed his chiefs (*sardars*) not to interfere in the territories of Mewar and Amber. However, it is apparent that the command was taken lightly, for the raids continued. Thereafter, the Marathas won victories over, and demanded tribute from, Imperial-held tracts in Malwa and Rajput-ruled territories in Rajasthan alike.

One may add here that during the latter part of Shahu's reign, the power of the Peshwas had increased tremendously, and the post of Peshwa was regarded as a hereditary one. Later, in 1749, following Shahu's death, the hereditary Peshwas were to become the effective rulers. Meanwhile, during Shahu's lifetime, the leading Maratha chieftain families too had gained in power and pelf. As such, as the Scindia, Holkar, Bhonsle, and Gaekwad *sardars* garnered victories, territories and tribute-moneys from different parts of northern and central India, they simultaneously also became more independent and difficult to control.

In 1732, Sawai Jai Singh was given his third and final stint as *subedar* of Malwa by the emperor. But, following his defeat at the hands of the joint forces of Malhar Rao Holkar and Ranoji Scindia at the battle of Mandsaur the same year, it became apparent that the Maratha power would prove difficult to contain. Maratha domination over Malwa also meant that Sawai Jai Singh II's plan of forming a separate state (with Rampura as its nucleus) in Malwa for his younger son, Madho Singh, in order to safeguard Dhoondhar from future sibling conflict over the Amber *gaddi*, was severely hampered. A similar situation existed over the ambitions of Abhay Singh of Marwar, who was keen to expand his state southwards into parts of Gujarat and Malwa — both areas of Maratha activities.

Around the same time, the intervention by the Maratha chiefs in the internal affairs of the kingdom of Bundi (discussed further in this chapter), marked a new phase and type of Maratha activity in the Rajasthan area, which, not unnaturally, alarmed the local rulers. Malwa had already become, for all practical purposes, a Maratha province and its proximity menaced the safety of Mewar, as Maharana Jagat Singh of Mewar was only too aware. Fully aware that the once-mighty Mughal Empire was as vulnerable against Maratha activities as were the states of Rajasthan, Jagat Singh of Mewar and Sawai Jai Singh II of Dhoondhar took the initiative in calling a conference of rulers from the Rajasthan area. Their objective was to devise a common strategy against Maratha incursions.

The conclave was held in July 1734 at Hurda, situated about thirty-six miles south by south-east of Ajmer, in the northern part of the kingdom of Mewar. The gathering involved prolonged deliberations and hectic diplomatic activities. It also involved face-to-face discussions amongst the key rulers and chiefs of the region: many of them otherwise mutually antagonistic. The rulers at the conclave included Jagat Singh of Mewar, Jai Singh II of Dhoondhar, Abhay Singh of Marwar, Durjansal of Kota, Zorawar Singh of Bikaner, Dalel Singh of Bundi, Gopal Singh of Karauli, Bakhat Singh of Nagaur, and Raj Singh of Kishangarh, among others. The main points discussed at this conference included measures for security in the face of the Maratha threat, as also means through which the local kingdoms could co-operate with each other and with the Imperial Mughal authorities for offensive and defensive action against the Marathas. The

deliberations facilitated the signing of an agreement known to historians as the 'Hurda Pact'.

As per the terms of the pact, all the signatories (i) pledged their unity, and intention to act for the common good of all; (ii) declared that none of them would countenance treachery against each other; and (iii) stated their intention of meeting again, in person, at Rampura at the head of their nobles and forces, once the monsoon season had passed, for commencing joint action against the Marathas. It was agreed that in case a ruler/ chief was unable to be present due to an unforeseen reason, he would send his heir-apparent (*kunwar*), or close relative of stature, in his own place, (iv) In such an event, if the *kunwar*/substitute made an error, through lack of experience, the concerned ruler alone would interfere to correct it.

In the event, all the signatories of the Hurda Pact did not finally re-assemble at Rampura, as previously arranged, after the monsoons were over. Nor did they jointly take to the field to stop future Maratha incursions. The Hurda Pact basically remained a paper-resolution, and was never enforced with adequate vigour by all contracting signatories. This was due to a combination of inter-state hostilities — particularly against the perceived ambitions of Sawai Jai Singh II, counter poised with the individual aspirations of the other concerned rulers to make themselves premier in the region. Sparse resources and lack of co-ordination played their part too.

(Rajasthan's historians have lamented the lack of acumen on the part of the Rajput rulers that prevented them from maintaining a united military front against their common foe of the time — namely, the Marathas. With the benefit of hindsight, these nineteenth and twentieth century AD historians accuse the Rajput signatories of the Hurda Pact of remaining engrossed in their own petty quarrels, and unable to rise above individualism and personal ambitions and animosities alike, despite possessing common customs, tradition, language, and way of life).

Subsequent Maratha incursions into Malwa and Rajasthan later the same year (1734) resulted in an Imperial Mughal expedition against the Marathas that November. Suryamal Mishran's *Vamsha Bhaskar* records that

the Rajasthani rulers requested the Mughal emperor for help in driving out the Marathas. Some of the Imperial forces marched towards Malwa under the command of Wazir Qamaruddin, while others, led by the Mughal *Mir-Bakshi* (commander-in-chief) Khan-i-Daurai left Delhi on November 10, 1734, and marched through Rajasthan.

Dhoondhar's Sawai Jai Singh II, Marwar's Abhay Singh, and Kota's Durjansal joined the Khan-i-Daurai. The Marathas harassed this huge army, and after it had crossed the Mukundarra Pass, leading from Kota to Malwa, cut off their supply line. The Imperial army clashed with the Marathas at Rampura (believed to have been the Rampura near Tonk, which was later re-named Aligarh). Here, Holkar and Scindia's light Maratha cavalry cut through the slower moving Imperial forces, and the Marathas rampaged through the Hadauti area towards Jaipur. The Marathas also plundered Sambhar. In view of the situation, the *Mir-Bakshi* Khan-i-Daurai thought it prudent to take the advice of Sawai Jai Singh and pay the Marathas rupees twenty-two lakh as indemnity or *chauth* for Malwa, as per the terms of a treaty signed at Kota on March 24, 1735. The emperor was furious at this step, and made his displeasure known to Jai Singh and the Imperial Mughal army's *Mir-Bakshi*.

Shortly afterwards, an opportunity to improve Rajput-Maratha relations became possible when Radha Bai, the Peshwa's mother, came north on a pilgrimage. Travelling through on a route that would take her on to Mathura, Kurukshetra, Allahabad (Prayag), Banaras (Kashi), and Gaya, she stayed at Udaipur for thirty days. Here, she offered reverence at the temple of Shrinathji at Nathdwara, before proceeding to Jaipur. Taking advantage of her ten-day visit to his kingdom, Sawai Jai Singh ensured the continued grant of Bundi to his nominee, Dalel Singh, and obtained an assurance of help from the Marathas. In the face of opposition from the *Wazir* and Abhay Singh of Marwar, however, Jai Singh could not press home the advantage further.

Sawai Jai Singh also suggested that the Peshwa, Baji Rao, make a visit to northern India, and offered to bear the day-to-day expenses of the army accompanying the Peshwa. Baji Rao agreed to this, probably realising that the visit would give him the opportunity for a firsthand study of the

political and geographical ground realities then existing. He started north in the month of October 1735 from Poona. The people of Rajasthan had already had long experience of the incursions and monetary demands made by the Marathas, and Holkar's ravages during 1734-35 were fresh in the minds of the general populace. There was, consequently, wariness and fear over the Peshwa's proposed visit to Rajasthan.

The Peshwa reached Udaipur after visiting Dungarpur and Loniwara. Maharana Jagat Singh received him with due courtesy, arranged for his stay in Champa Bagh, and held a *darbar* in his honour. After preliminaries, talks started regarding the *chauth* collected by the Marathas. Sada Shiv, a Maratha agent sent by the Poona ruler, tried to obtain land in lieu of *chauth* from Mewar. The Maharana held out, but ultimately agreed to set apart the revenue of the *pargana* of Banera.

After Udaipur, Peshwa Baji Rao proceeded, via Nathdwara, for a meeting with Jai Singh. He reached Bhambhola, near Kishangarh, by way of Jahazpur, where he met Sawai Jai Singh II of Jaipur-Amber on March 8, 1736. The Peshwa's visit emphasised Maratha tactical military superiority vis-à-vis the states of Rajasthan and the once-mighty Mughals. The Jaipur ruler tried to secure an agreement between the Mughal emperor Mohammed Shah and Peshwa Baji Rao. Central to it was the notion of sustaining the empire with the Mughal emperor as its nominal head, and adequate scope for the Marathas to take part in administration. The notion appealed to the Peshwa, but in the absence of a final agreement, he deemed it more prudent to return to the Deccan. On his return journey, Peshwa Baji Rao took the opportunity and occupied most of Malwa.

In the interim, while the Peshwa was carrying on discussions with Mewar and with Jaipur's Sawai Jai Singh, Malhar Rao Holkar and Ranoji Scindia reached Merta via Shahpura. The Marwar ruler, Abhay Singh, who was then at Delhi, commanded one of his generals, Vijay Raj Bhandari, to deal with the Marathas. Shahpura's Umaid Singh reached Merta with four thousand soldiers to help the Marwar forces there. Holkar surrounded Merta, and lifted the siege after two months on receiving the promise of money.

Over the next couple of decades, various states of Rajasthan faced the irregular, but frequent financial demands and physical presence of the Marathas in their respective territories. Even the Mughal Imperial capital was not fully secure from their attention, for Peshwa Baji Rao led his forces to the gates of Delhi, and clashed with the Mughal troops at Delhi's Talkatora in April 1737. Efforts were again made by the rulers of Jaipur, Mewar and Kota to form a common front against the Marathas. However, while discussions on a possible anti-Maratha coalition were continuing, Maharana Jagat Singh of Mewar died on June 8, 1751.

His death was a blow to the plans for a coalition. The other rulers tried to persuade Jagat Singh's successor, Pratap Singh II, to join them, but their plans came to nought since the internal situation within Mewar took all the immediate attention of the new Maharana during the course of his short reign (1751-54). Individually unable to stop the Maratha attacks permanently, the states paid *chauth* and tribute-moneys as and when situations arose. It was not until c. 1759-60, and the threat posed by the Abdali ruler, Ahmad Shah Durrani, followed by the battle fought at Panipat in 1761 (known as the Third Battle of Panipat), that Rajasthan was to have temporary respite from the never-ceasing financial demands of the Marathas.

Given such an antipathic relationship, it is not surprising that the Marathas were unsuccessful in enlisting the help of the rulers of Rajasthan against the invasion of Ahmad Shah Durrani. There was even an exchange of letters between Maharaja Bijay Singh of Marwar and Maharaja Madho Singh I of Jaipur on opposing the Marathas. Not only this, Madho Singh tried to organise a group against the Marathas and invited representatives of his major contemporary Rajput rulers to Jaipur. In such a scenario, the call by the 'Bhau Sahib', uncle of the Peshwa Balaji Baji Rao, to the Rajput rulers to send their contingents to assist the Marathas against Ahmad Shah was not heeded.

The battle fought at Panipat on January 14, 1761 ended the Maratha attempt to succeed the Mughals as the supreme authority over the Indian subcontinent. It also effectively hastened the on-going process of the collapse of the Mughal Empire. The Maratha army, commanded by Bhau

Sahib, was trapped and defeated by the forces of Ahmad Shah Durrani. The result of the battle sent shock-waves across South Asia. It also marked the beginning of several decades of chaos and anarchy for northern India, and helped clear the path for the eventual assertion of British supremacy over India.

Archival material in the *Banera Papers* of the erstwhile Banera estate (or *thikana*), indicates that the defeat of the Marathas at the Third Battle of Panipat in 1761 sent a wave of relief through Jaipur. The reaction of Rajasthan's general populace and ruling elite, alike, was shaped by long years of facing and fearing the incessant Maratha raids and seemingly unending financial demands, which had completely alienated local sympathies. This determined the attitude of the rulers and feudal chiefs of Rajasthan when it came to possible alliances with, or against, the Marathas. Consequently, the chances of the Marathas resisting eventual British domination over India were reduced. Various Mughal emperors had taken advantage of Rajput support in expanding and consolidating the Mughal Empire. The Marathas failed to take any such advantage from the Rajputs.

Local records and popular memory suggest that the behaviour, opportunism and open interventions in regional affairs by the '*Dakhini*' (meaning 'southern', or from the Deccan) people — i.e. Marathas, had done nothing to enamour them to the local population or the ruling elite. On the contrary, the Marathas had taken every opportunity of 'fishing in troubled waters', so to speak, so that they could continue obtaining money in lieu of assistance, or as taxes and specific fees. Their demands had increased to such rapacious levels that it became impossible for the various states of Rajasthan to cope with them. As such, Maratha presence was viewed as a blight by the ordinary people and elite of Rajasthan, alike! Perhaps if the Marathas had developed a different political relationship with the rulers of Rajasthan, they may have garnered the military backing of various Rajasthani troops in the battle of Panipat, as also against the British.

The strong Maratha presence in the affairs of various kingdoms and principalities of Rajasthan continued even after the disaster the Marathas suffered at the Third Battle of Panipat against Ahmad Shah Abdali Durrani in 1761. Over the course of the next half-century or so, successive Peshwas,

and powerful chiefs belonging to the Scindia, Holkar, Gaekwad, Bhonsle, Puar (Pawar) and other Maratha families, continued to remain important political figures in the events of Rajasthan. (Despite the 'Maratha confederacy' having its share of internal squabbles, the Marathas came together when danger threatened — as happened during the First Anglo-Maratha war with the British, which stretched over the 1775-82 period⁴). While Maratha presence in Rajasthan proved advantageous for the Marathas, particularly on the economic front, it was not regarded in such a happy light by most of the rulers of the Rajasthan region. However, the latter were, by and large, unable to do much against Maratha power.

For this various factors were responsible. Among the major reasons that helped the Marathas create and then retain their hold in the region, the following stand out in particular. For a start, the existing rivalries — some of them traditional — between different Rajput kingdoms were an aspect the Marathas continued to use to their own advantage. These rivalries also meant that a combined front of several Rajput states, such as had been visualised at the Hurda conference of 1734, could never be put into practice, even on the rare occasions where more than one Rajput ruler and his forces joined hands together. On the contrary, individual Rajput states frequently went to war against their neighbours and/or enemy-states, and often actively sought the help of one or other of the Maratha chiefs. In return, the Marathas were promised money or territorial and other benefits.

These rivalries had not developed suddenly. If we look back at the history of the region we can note the role traditional inter-clan, intra-clan and inter-state enmities had played whenever there was no major or 'imperial' power imposing an enforced peace. It is apparent that for nearly one hundred and fifty years or so the Imperial 'control' — both subtle and overt — of the Mughal emperors had kept in check and discouraged the Rajput states of Rajasthan from fighting each other. There were, of course, the rare exceptions! The empire had also provided successive generations of Rajput warriors — chiefs, princes, and ordinary soldiers — with a more than viable alternative. That of serving with the Mughal Imperial forces on a range of battlefields across the subcontinent. This provided them with ample opportunities for upholding their propensity of rushing into combat at every chance offered to them, while at the same time showing their

mettle in the 'service' of the empire. The collapse of the empire released these energies, which then turned to affairs closer at home.

The Maratha problem never fully went away for the states of Rajasthan. Scindia's expeditions for collecting tribute became more thorough after he assumed the charge as *Vakil-i-Mutlaq* of the tottering Mughal Empire in 1784. This soon brought him into conflict with the combined armies of Jaipur (Dhoondhar) and Jodhpur (Marwar)⁵, after Mahadji Scindia demanded tribute arrears due to the Mughal emperor. The demand being only partially complied with, Scindia joined forces with a contingent of the Mughal Imperial army to launch a punitive strike against Jaipur and Jodhpur. Sawai Pratap Singh of Dhoondhar joined hands with Bijay Singh of Marwar to oppose this attack. The Mughal-Maratha armies clashed with the Jaipur-Jodhpur combined forces at Tunga, some fourteen miles from Lalsot, in the late summer of 1787. Scindia's French commander, General Benoit de Boigne, nearly gained a victory in the hard-fought and gory battle, but defections from the Imperial contingent and heavy losses on both sides left the issue unresolved.

The battle may have ended inconclusively, but Scindia's discomfiture at the battle of Tunga was quite obvious. Thus, following Tunga, Scindia opted to modernise his forces and took the help of French officers for this. In consequence of this foresighted move, Scindia subsequently defeated the forces of Jodhpur at Merta, and Jaipur at Patan, firmly establishing his supremacy.

In March 1791, Mahadji Scindia took Ajmer from the ruler of Marwar. Henceforth, as long as Ajmer remained in Maratha possession, it was to serve as their base in Rajasthan, from where the Maratha chiefs sent out their various tribute or *chauth* collecting expeditions into different states of the region. Eventually, it was to free themselves from the Marathas, after practically a century of incursions and tribute-exactions by the Marathas, that the Rajputs entered into individual agreements with the East India Company at the beginning of the nineteenth century. And, in 1818 Ajmer was handed over to Britain's East India Company, as per the terms of a treaty between the British and Daulat Rao Scindia.

We come now to the individual states of Rajasthan during this eighteenth century period.

THE STATE OF DHOONDHAR/AMBER-JAIPUR

With the death of Aurangzeb, the passing of the old order spelt changes across many parts of South Asia. Dhoondhar too did not remain untouched. Soon after his accession, the new Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah (r. 1707-1712), being unfavourably disposed towards Jai Singh II of Amber (particularly in light of Jai Singh's support of his rival, Azam, in the war-of-succession that had followed Aurangzeb's death), ordered the seizure of Amber. Its governance was handed over to Jai Singh's brother, Bijai Singh.

Jai Singh II now had to resort to all his skills of diplomacy as well as his sword in dealing with the situation. On the one hand, he initiated cautious overtures towards Emperor Bahadur Shah. Simultaneously, he forged a firm working alliance with the ruling houses of Mewar and Marwar. Matters were arranged enabling Jai Singh to wait on the new emperor at Ajmer for urging the return of his sequestered *watan jagir*. At Bahadur Shah's command, Jai Singh (and Marwar's Ajit Singh and the faithful Rathore Durga Das) joined the Imperial camp which was bound for the south to deal with the Mughal prince, Kambaksh. Despite conciliatory attempts, Jai Singh soon realised that Bahadur Shah was in no hurry to return Amber. Thereupon, he joined Marwar's Ajit Singh in leaving the emperor's camp surreptitiously on April 30, 1708, and accepting the hospitality of Rana Amar Singh II of Mewar, in early May 1708, at Udaipur.

While planning future actions, the shrewd Jai Singh convinced his allies that the three states ought to strengthen their ties through matrimonial alliances. As a consequence, Jai Singh married Maharana Amar Singh H's daughter, Princess Chandra Kanwar. The marriage was accompanied by the condition that any son born to her would succeed to the throne of Amber, regardless of the natural rights of primogeniture favouring any older son of Jai Singh born from a different queen. After the death of Jai Singh, this condition was to lead to serious succession problems between the eldest of

Jai Singh's surviving sons, Ishwari Singh, and the younger son, Madho Singh, born to the queen from Mewar. A matrimonial alliance with Marwar was also agreed upon, with the engagement (and almost a decade later, marriage), of Jai Singh with Princess Suraj Kanwar, the daughter of Ajit Singh of Marwar.

Thereafter, the forces at the command of Mewar marched alongside the contingents of Ajit Singh and Jai Singh towards Jodhpur. Their joint action saw the retaking of Marwar's capital from Imperial hands. The early part of July 1708 saw Ajit Singh restored on his ancestral throne, before the three armies of Mewar, Marwar and Dhoondhar jointly ensured the return of Jai Singh II to the throne of Amber⁶.

Almost simultaneously, the 'triple alliance' forces defeated the Imperial army near the famous salt-lake town of Sambhar. Sambhar was occupied in October 1708. For several years thereafter, Marwar and Dhoondhar jointly ruled Sambhar. Around the same time, widespread resentment and rebellion across many parts of Rajasthan against the Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah went a long way in forcing him to change his policy towards Jai Singh and Ajit Singh. Individual Imperial *farmans*, confirming them as rulers of their lands were issued in the early summer (May-June) of 1710. Some time afterwards, Emperor Bahadur Shah was prevailed upon to accept Jai Singh back at the court.

Jai Singh's return to power and to Imperial grace meant an effective end to the aspirations of his brother, Bijai Singh, to whom Emperor Bahadur Shah had granted the administration of Amber, after Imperial troops had sequestered Jai Singh's lands in 1707. Bijai Singh left the Imperial camp for Hindaun, from where he wrote to Jai Singh, seeking reconciliation and permission to return to Amber. Jai Singh wrote back, inviting his younger brother back, but when the two met at Sanganer in May 1713, Bijai Singh was arrested and incarcerated at Jaigarh fort. The unfortunate man was to spend the remaining years of his life in imprisonment. However, he apparently remained in communication with the outside world. In 1729, when it was reported to Jai Singh II that Bijai Singh was conspiring with Bundi's Rao Raja Budh Singh to wrest the *gaddi* of Amber, Jai Singh II had Bijai Singh put to death.

Meanwhile, after the death of Emperor Bahadur Shah I in 1712, Jai Singh's standing at the Mughal court increased. Bahadur Shah I was succeeded by his son, Jahandar Shah (r. 1712-13). His brief reign ended in December 1713 with his defeat, at the hands of Farukhsiyar, in the battle of Agra. During the subsequent reign of Farukhsiyar (r. 1713-1719), Amber's Jai Singh continued to hold a high position at Court. However, as long as the 'King-makers' — as the Sayyid brothers, the *wazir* Sayyid Abdullah Khan and the *bakshi* Sayyid Hussain Ali have been called — were powerful at the Imperial court, Jai Singh's contributions were somewhat marginalised by their influence⁷. Despite this, in October 1713 the emperor conferred the *subedari* of Malwa on Jai Singh.

By this time, the Marathas were proving a threat to Mughal supremacy not only in the Deccan, but also in Malwa and Gujarat. As governor of Malwa, Sawai Jai Singh not only checked the activities of the local Afghans, Ahirs and other groups living in the Malwa area, he also followed a vigorous policy against the Marathas. In May 1715, Jai Singh successfully repulsed the advance of a Maratha contingent, under the command of Kanhoji Bhonsle and Khande Rao Dhabare that was marching towards Malwa.

Subsequently, in September 1715, Jai Singh was summoned to the Imperial court and entrusted with the task of leading an Imperial expedition against the Jat chief, Churaman. Over the next two years, Jai Singh — still technically the *subedar* of Malwa, captured Kaman and besieged Thun fort. Churaman used the offices of Sayyid Abdullah to negotiate peace terms with the empire, bypassing Jai Singh — much to the discomfiture of the Amber ruler.

Meanwhile, the prolonged absence from Malwa of the Amber ruler resulted in the Marathas resuming their raids into that province. In October 1717, at the advice of Sayyid Abdullah, the emperor replaced Jai Singh II as *subedar* of Malwa. Emperor Farukhsiyar was also coerced by the all-powerful coterie of the 'King-maker' Sayyids into sending Jai Singh away from the Imperial court.

Not long afterwards, Emperor Farukhsiyar was deposed in a palace intrigue in February 1719, and soon thereafter murdered. After Farukhsiyar, the Imperial Mughal throne briefly went to Rafi-ud-Darajat (r. February-May 1719) and then the latter's elder brother, Rafi-ud-Daulah (r. May-September 1719), before Prince Roshan Akhtar became the next Mughal Emperor, taking the name of Emperor Muhammad Shah (r. 1719-1748). The intercession of Marwar's Ajit Singh at this point helped Jai Singh in regaining Imperial favour, in part, and Jai Singh was posted as *the faujdar* of Sorath. Fortuitously for Jai Singh, the downfall and death of the Sayyids towards the close of 1720 saw his own re-ascendance at the Mughal court.

In fact, Jai Singh's relations with the frequently changing emperors who occupied the Mughal throne in succession following Bahadur Shah's death are an object lesson in statesmanship, delicate diplomacy, covert and overt negotiations, and stratagems and planning. The same may be said for the Amber ruler's relations with various Rajput states. Alongside this, Jai Singh further strengthened his position by establishing cordial relations with the Marathas and the Bundelas.

Called upon afresh by Emperor Muhammad Shah to deal with Churaman and the rising Jat power in 1721, Jai Singh had achieved this by 1722 through the use of both the sword and diplomacy. Churaman's nephew, Badan Singh, was won over by Sawai Jai Singh, and in the face of a family feud, Churaman took his own life even as Jai Singh's forces reached Thun and encircled it. The stronghold of Thun was staunchly defended for a couple of months by Churaman's son, Mokham Singh, but was finally wrested by Jai Singh's forces. The fort was systematically torn down and the ruins ploughed over by asses, so that the place would never again be considered worthy of a chief's abode.

Mokham sought shelter in Marwar with Maharaja Ajit Singh, while Badan Singh — granted formal recognition as the chief of the Jats and the title of '*Braj-Raj*', acknowledged Mughal suzerainty. In recognition of Jai Singh's role in securing the subordination of the Jats, Emperor Muhammad Shah added the title of '*Raj Rajeshwar*' to those of '*Shri Rajadhiraj Maharaj Maharaja*' and '*Sawai*' already held by Jai Singh.

The grant of the unusual title of '*Sawai*' has a popular story attached to it. Dhoondhar/Jaipur tradition holds that upon Jai Singh's first attendance at the Mughal court as raja of Amber, his audacious courage and quick-witted repartee appeased the anger of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, and earned him that appellation. The story runs that Emperor Aurangzeb was annoyed with the Amber family because of the actions of Jai Singh's immediate predecessors, particularly as the Kachchwahas of Amber had long had close and loyal ties with the empire. On seeing Jai Singh II at his Imperial Court for the first time, Emperor Aurangzeb is said to have taken a tight hold on the hands of the young boy and asked wrathfully, "Your grandfather and father's actions have harmed the empire. They were traitors to me. What sort of treatment do you expect from me?"

To this Jai Singh replied, apparently unperturbed, "At the time of marriage, among my people, a man takes hold of one hand of his bride and promises to look after her for the rest of his life. Your Majesty has taken hold of me with both his hands! Why should I worry now about the treatment Your Majesty intends for me?" The bold answer amused the aged emperor, who promptly conferred the title of '*Sawai*' — meaning, in the literal sense, "one-and-a-quarter" — upon the young boy-king, thereby implying that Jai Singh II of Amber was one-and-a-quarter times a better man than his peers!

Several historians have questioned this belief and have suggested that Aurangzeb had nothing to do with the title of '*Sawai*'. They hold that it was not until the reign of Emperor Farukhsiyar that the title of *Sawai* was conferred upon Jai Singh II in July 1713. Whatever be the truth, by 1713 the twenty-five year old Jai Singh II was being referred to in official Mughal records not just by the title of 'Mirza Raja' — which had been conferred by an earlier Mughal emperor on an earlier ruler of Amber (the seventeenth century Mirza Raja Jai Singh I), but as 'Mirza Raja *Sawai* Jai Singh'⁸. By the middle of the second decade of the eighteenth century Jai Singh II was amongst the most influential figures in India. His views carried weight not just at the Mughal court in Delhi, but also at Hyderabad, as well as with the Peshwa and other Maratha chiefs at Poona [Pune] and Satara. His fellow Rajput rulers in Rajasthan similarly valued his opinion and advice.

In October 1729 Jai Singh was appointed *subedar* of Malwa for the second time, and held the office for about ten months. In September 1732, he was designated *subedar* of Malwa for the third and final time in his career. The appointment was important as the incessant Maratha raids into Malwa — a crucial geographical zone — were now of greater danger to the Mughal empire than had been the case before. Shortly after reaching Ujjain to take up office that December, Jai Singh (who had obtained military help from Mewar), engaged with the attacking forces of Malhar Rao Holkar, Ranoji Scindia and other Maratha troops in a battle fought near Mandsaur. The Marathas proved stronger and obtained an indemnity of rupees six lakh, along with the promise that twenty-eight *parganas* would be ceded to them in lieu of *chauth*. The Maratha victory dealt a blow to the prestige of the Mughal empire and the Rajasthani rulers alike.

It now began to seem that stronger measures were needed to check the Marathas. Following the discomfiture of Mughal authority in Malwa and Gujarat, and Maratha intervention in the internal affairs of the kingdom of Bundi (to which reference is made elsewhere in this chapter), the vulnerability of individual states of the Rajasthan region had already been increasingly realised by the Rajput rulers. Thus, as Jai Singh enjoyed unparalleled influence amongst his fellow-princes of the Rajasthan region, he took a prominent role, along with the Maharana of Mewar, in the convening of a conference of Rajput rulers and chiefs in July 1734. This was to culminate in the signing, on 17 July 1734, of the 'Hurda Pact' (as already noted). Though the pact signed at Hurda was eventually not enforced with adequate vigour by all concerned parties, in part due to mutual differences and hostilities, sparse resources, and lack of co-ordination, the Hurda conference and pact re-confirmed Sawai Jai Singh's position of eminence in the affairs of the region.

The threat from the Marathas remained real, and that November the Mughal *Mir-Bakshi* Khan-e-Daurai was sent into Rajasthan to deal with the Marathas. Sawai Jai Singh II, Marwar's Abhay Singh, and Kota's Durjansal joined him. The Imperial army clashed with the Marathas at Rampura, but was defeated, and the Marathas moved through the Hadauti area towards Jaipur. In view of the situation, the *Mir-Bakshi* thought it prudent to take the advice of Jai Singh and pay the Marathas rupees twenty-two lakh as *chauth*

for Malwa. The emperor was censorious of the action, and made his displeasure known to Jai Singh and the *Mir-Bakshi*.

In the early part of 1736, Jai Singh met the Maratha Peshwa, Baji Rao, and his entourage very cordially at Bhambhola (near Kishangarh). Jai Singh attempted to secure an agreement between the Mughal emperor Mohammed Shah and the Maratha Peshwa, Baji Rao. Central to it was the notion of sustaining the empire with the Mughal emperor as its nominal head, and adequate scope for the Marathas to take part in administration. This was an idea that had appealed somewhat to the Maratha Peshwa, Baji Rao. It was also an idea that might have changed the entire future history of South Asia, but after the defeat inflicted in AD 1740 on the Mughal emperor by Nadir Shah of Persia, it became a Utopian dream! When peace terms finally remained unresolved as far as the Mughal-Maratha relations were concerned, Jai Singh convinced Baji Rao to return back to the Deccan. Enroute, the Peshwa occupied most of Malwa.

Not long afterwards, in further testimony to Jai Singh's position as an important 'grandee' of the Mughal Empire, he was entrusted with the *subedari* of Agra. Besides having clout at the Imperial court, and to some extent, influence with the Marathas, by this time Jai Singh's involvement in numerous affairs of neighbours like the kingdoms of Bundi, Bikaner, Marwar, Kota, had made his position unchallengeable. So too had the military defeats he inflicted on many of the above, including Prince Bakhat Singh, holder of Nagaur and brother of the Marwar Maharaja, Abhay Singh — who was beaten in the battle of Gagrana. Mewar too respected his advice.

The powerful ruler of Dhoondhar manipulated affairs in the Kota-Bundi area too, and was a prime mover in the ouster of Bundi's ruler, Rao Budh Singh. It was Sawai Jai Singh II who ensured that Dalel Singh became the next ruler of Bundi in Budh Singh's place. In 1740, Jai Singh played a part in helping Zorawar Singh, ruler of Bikaner, retain his kingdom, following yet another armed attempt to occupy it through force by Abhay Singh of Marwar. This earned him the gratitude of Bikaner. It was Jai Singh II who pressurised Maharaja Abhay Singh to sign a treaty (as will be seen further in this chapter).

During this phase of Jai Singh's life, the affairs of Bundi and Kota too remained bound to him. While Bundi was ruled by Jai Singh's protégé cum son-in-law, Dalel Singh, Kota's Durjansal too fought in several campaigns under Sawai Jai Singh II of Amber. Similarly, Badan Singh, nephew of Churaman and an important Jat leader who became the chief of the Bharatpur area, acknowledged the overlordship of Jai Singh II. He is known to have made regular obligatory attendance at the Kachchwaha ruler's formal *darbar* and other ceremonials of Teej and Dasherā etc., as did Bundi's Dalel Singh.

Jai Singh II was more than just a shrewd statesman and soldier, who could "run with the hares and hunt with the hounds" when necessary. He was also a scholar par excellence, a scientist and planner, and a patron of art, architecture, literature, with the traditionally admired penchant for acts of charity and public welfare. Well acquainted with Indian and Greek mathematics, Jai Singh was aware of contemporary developments in Europe in the field of mathematics. He had various Greek and Arabic works, as well as other European texts dealing with plane and spherical trigonometry, and the use of logarithms etc., translated into Sanskrit. His library included translations and commentaries of the works of astronomers like Aryabhata, Brahmagupta, Bhaskaracharya, Ptolemy, Mirza Ulugh Beg, Nasir-ul-Din al Tusi, and many others.

Having heard through Portuguese missionaries about the progress in the field of astronomy in Portugal, Jai Singh sent his own men, accompanied by one of the missionaries, to the court of the Portuguese king Emmanuel in 1727-30. Emmanuel, in turn, sent his envoy, Xavier de Silva, with De la Hire's tables to Jai Singh. When he compared the tables with his own, Jai Singh was able to point out that the Portuguese tables were less exact and had certain errors, which he attributed to the inferior diameters of the instruments used. Jai Singh's own almanac compilation is known as the *Jiz-i-Muhammad-Shahi*, taking its name from the Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah.

Jai Singh's keen interest in astronomy and mathematics had already found expression, well before this period, in personal observations of the skies using instruments of brass constructed according to the Persian-Arabic

school of astronomy. When he found that axes of these brass instruments rapidly wore down, displacing the centre and shifting the planes of reference, the Maharaja took to personally designing model-instruments of stone and masonry. Apparently, Jai Singh constructed at least thirteen different types of instruments, ranging in height from a few centimetres to twenty-four metres! These were used for his calculations, particularly at the observatories that were built by him at Delhi, Jaipur, Varanasi (Banaras), Ujjain and Mathura.

These observatories became popularly known over time as ‘Jantar Mantars’ — a phrase derived from the words *yantra* (instrument or device; i.e. the observation-stations), and *mantra* (formulae). In fact, the structures are gigantic specialised instruments in themselves. Built mainly with stone masonry and lime-and-mortar, with a limited use of brick, parts of the structures in these observatories are lined and overlain with *araish* and marble, not for mere decoration, but to provide a level, smooth surface for accuracy of taking astronomical readings. The choice of brass and other metallic sighting discs, rods and measuring devices etc. was similarly motivated.

Two of the observatories built by Jai Singh may still be seen in a usable condition at Jaipur and Delhi. The other three observatories, constructed at Ujjain, Varanasi (Banaras) and Mathura, during Jai Singh’s terms as *subedar* of the respective provinces of Malwa and of Agra, have not survived the vagaries of time and human action so well.

Out of all these, the Jantar Mantar at Delhi was the first to be built; coming up during the 1724-27 period. The Jantar Mantar at Sawai Jai Singh’s new capital, Jaipur, was constructed next. This came up between 1728 and 1734. It is the largest of the observatories built by Jai Singh, and was intended to serve for regular, daily, observations, even when the Maharaja himself was away from Jaipur. As such, Pandit Jagannath, Kewal Ram and others constantly used it. Jaipur state’s records tell us that in 1734, Jai Singh gave regular wages to twenty astronomers at the Jaipur observatory alone! The third of Jai Singh’s five observatories was built at Mathura, on top of the old Mathura fort. Unfortunately, nothing survives of this Jantar Mantar at all. Growse, writing in 1882, noted that: “A little

before the Mutiny, the buildings were sold to the great Government contractor, Joti Prasad, who destroyed them for the sake of the materials". The observatory at Varanasi was the fourth to be built, while that at Ujjain was the fifth and last of Sawai Jai Singh's observatories.

The Jaipur Jantar Mantar remains the biggest, most complex and best preserved of the observatories built by Sawai Jai Singh II. A total number of eighteenth *yantras* were built here. These include the *Samrat Yantra*, which still serves as an accurate measure of solar time, the *Ram Yantra* built to calculate altitudes and azimuths (or distances in the sky), and the smaller *Rashi-Vilayas* constructed to calculate celestial latitudes and longitudes. Other yantras include the *Jai Prakash*, *Sasthamsa*, *Nari Valaya Yantra*, *Kapali Yantra*, *Misra Yantra*, *Chakra Yantra*, *Kranti Vritti Yantra*, *Digansha Yantra*, and the *Yantra Raj*. The various instruments served to measure aspects like the sun's declination, the declinations of stars and of planets, the local time, and to determine eclipses etc.

The same thoroughness can be noted in the planning of Jaipur. Sawai Jai Singh not only collected plans of many contemporaneous European cities; he examined Indian traditions of architecture, and took note of extant cities and towns before the plans of Jaipur were finalised. Known also as Jai-Nagar in its earliest years, Jaipur was founded in 1727 by Jai Singh II, and built to plans under the supervision of a Bengali Brahmin called Vidyadhar Bhattacharya. Born in the family of Amber-based Bengali Brahmin priests, Vidyadhar was given the title of '*Desh Dewan*' (State Minister) by Jai Singh. Interestingly, Jaipur's state records do not specifically mention Vidyadhar's role in the planning of Jaipur. But, as the late Dr. A.K. Roy pointed out, Vidyadhar was rewarded more than ten times in his career, and raised in honour and position, and popular perception has consistently regarded him as having carried out the building of the city as per Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II's plans.

Jai Singh's dream city was designed with streets and lanes that intersect each other at right angles, in a latticework of main streets, lanes and by-lanes. Numerous *havelis*, temples, gardens, civic buildings were built at pre-planned places. Certain areas were devoted to specific activities and trades. The city was ringed within a protective wall. Much of the city

had taken its visualised form by 1733. In addition to Jaipur, Sawai Jai Singh was also responsible for the building of numerous temples, forts and caravan serais. Among these were the Jaigarh fort, Raghunathgarh, Ambagarh, and a Sun temple at the pilgrimage-site of Calta near Jaipur. (The caravan serais for travellers were built not just in his kingdom of Dhoondhar, but also in other provinces, as an act of charity).

Despite his prolonged absences from Amber, and later Jaipur, because of duties connected with the Mughal Empire, Jai Singh consistently patronised scholarship and literary activities at his court. (As had been done by his predecessors and by rulers of other kingdoms). Scholars, artists, and experts in various fields thronged to his court. For instance, Sivanand Goswami and his sons were among those acclaimed for their learning relating to the *Dharmashastras*, grammar, astronomy, and various related sub-branches. Similarly, Ratnakar Pundarik was well-versed in ritual activities. Litterateurs like Krishna Bhatt and Har Krishna, who wrote in Sanskrit, were among the numerous writers who were attracted to his court. Works in local Dingal and Pingal languages were also written. Qualified and talented people were always valued at his court⁹. Jai Singh himself is known to have composed a commentary on the *Sutras*, entitled the *Brahma-Bodhini*,

A devout believer of Vishnu, Jai Singh was keenly interested in learning about other belief-systems. Vedic practices interested him too. In this context, it is interesting to note that Jai Singh organised the '*Ashvamedha Yagna*' — one of the sacrifices performed by a small number of powerful monarchs of the early historical period, which had fallen into disuse over time. In order to conduct this, Jai Singh II carried out consultations with the learned Brahmins of his age, including traditionalists from Kashi (Varanasi). Only after there was agreement regarding Jai Singh's suitability to perform the sacrifice, did the Jaipur ruler perform the '*Ashvamedha Yagna*'.

Jai Singh was no blind adherent of tradition, though. Without being a professed reformer and harbinger of societal change, he discouraged mutual discrimination between different sub-sections of Brahmins. The prevalent orthodoxy had, over the years, laid down norms about social distance even

within sub-groups of the Brahmin caste, and by Jai Singh's period different sub-sections of Brahmins did not co-dine. One of the methods the indomitable Maharaja adopted to bring mutually exclusive segments together was through organising and hosting group dining festivities (*gote*)¹⁰, across the city of Jaipur on numerous occasions, where groups belonging to different sub-groups (within the same caste) ate together.

(One may add here that by about this period it was the practice in most of Rajasthan's kingdoms and chiefdoms to mark certain occasions by a public feast. This was paid for by the state, though not prepared for the entire populace of the land within the confines of the royal kitchens. The tradition probably had older antecedents. In Sawai Jai Singh IP's time, officials and local heads of city-wards or villages ensured that a share of uncooked cereals, salt, oil, clarified butter etc. was collected from the state stores and handed over for cooking to the temporary common kitchens of diverse communities, castes and sub-castes. It was the norm to use community-owned cooking vessels for such occasions. The food-preparation and serving was either carried out by members of the concerned communities themselves, or by professional cooks — if that was permissible within the existing social system. Then, at a given time, seating mats would be unrolled on freshly swept and mopped public areas of each ward and quarter of the city for the men and boys, and within secluded areas for the women and girls. In accordance with societal norms, people belonging to communities permitted by custom to inter-dine with each other, or else to one single community and caste — as the case may be — would then sit down alongside each other and be served on individual platters or on *pattal* leaf-plates. This took place across the city — or even kingdom — at the same time, and local Jaipuri lore tells us that at times even some of the smaller by-lanes of Jaipur city became impromptu dining areas because of the number of people sharing simultaneously in the Maharaja's public feasts!)

What makes Sawai Jai Singh remarkable is that his quest for learning; his interest in mathematics, astronomy, town-planning; his construction of astronomical observatories, and the founding of the planned city of Jaipur; were carried on in the midst of constant strife, political machinations, court intrigues. The period coincided with the rise of Maratha power, and the

slow disintegration of the once-mighty Mughal Empire. Despite heavy odds as far as peace and stability were concerned, imposed by a rather traumatic period of transition after Aurangzeb's death, Jai Singh II persisted with his efforts in that direction. He also made the kingdom of Dhoondhar one of the largest tributary states, with an area exceeding 20,000 square miles (some of it was land acquired as '*ijara*' or Mughal State-granted sub-lease holdings). This was a far cry from the 3,000 square miles that he had inherited when he came to the *gaddi*. (At that time, the three *parganas* of Amber, Dausa and Baswa were all that had comprised the *watan jagir* of the Amber ruler). By and large, the state enjoyed peace and prosperity, and its administration was well-organised and functioned efficiently.

Of course, it cannot be denied that there existed flaws, that tempered Jai Singh II's personality. The consummate diplomat, administrator, statesman, man of learning, and patron of the arts, could be thoroughly unscrupulous in his actions, if the need arose. He had a hand in the deposition of Budh Singh of Bundi, as well as the death in 1729 of his own imprisoned brother and erstwhile rival for the Amber *gaddi*, Bijai Singh, as well as a nephew. Historians feel that he had a role in the murder of Ajit Singh of Marwar in June 1724¹¹, and certain other intrigues. His role in the death of his son Shiv Singh and one of his queens (Shiv Singh's mother), at Mathura in 1724 too remains suspect! On another plane, Jai Singh was a far better statesman and administrator than a general. Tod holds that "...his courage had none of the fire which is requisite to make a Rajpoot hero; though his talents for civil government and court intrigue, in which he was the Machiavelli of his day, were at that period far more notable auxiliaries"¹². In fact, Tod concedes that when one considers the age in which Jai Singh lived, and how "...amidst revolution, the destruction of the empire, and the meteoric rise of the Mahrattas [sic], he not only steered through the dangers, but elevated Amber above all the principalities around, we must admit that he was an extraordinary man"¹³.

Jai Singh II lived through a period that initially saw the final years of Emperor Aurangzeb on the throne. This was followed by the 1707 war-of-succession, and a series of short-reigning and/or weak Mughal emperors, counter-balanced by ambitious and manipulative courtiers and 'king-makers' at the Mughal court, on the one hand, and the expansion of

Maratha and other regional powers, on the other. Through that turbulent age, Jai Singh held various high offices, including the *subedari* of Agra once and that of Malwa thrice between 1713-1735. Jai Singh II led Imperial campaigns against the Marathas, Jats and others, and in an age marked by secret pacts, battles and Mughal-Maratha-Rajput problems, managed to hold his own diplomatically and politically.

Although Jai Singh did not aid the Mughal emperor at the time of Nadir Shah of Iran's invasion, he retained his high position at the Mughal court, and continued to influence Mughal governance and policies until his death¹⁴. At the time of his death in September 1743 Jai Singh enjoyed individual recognition across India, not only as a statesman and diplomat, but also as a scholar, builder, and patron of the sciences, arts, and literature.

Sawai Jai Singh II of Amber/Jaipur died on September 21, 1743, leaving behind a strong state and a reputation that had carried to distant corners of the subcontinent. He also bequeathed his sons — Ishwari Singh (r. 1743-1750) and Madho Singh (r. 1750-1768) — a succession-quarrel, which was fuelled by much more than personal ambition. Jai Singh H's eldest surviving son, Ishwari Singh (r. 1743-1750), who was at Jaipur at the time of his father's death, asserted the right of primogeniture, and promptly ascended the throne of Dhoondhar, to the approval of the majority of his courtiers and subjects. His succession was recognised by the Mughal emperor, and various neighbouring Rajput rulers. Even the Maratha Peshwa sent a 'succession present' to Ishwari Singh, on learning of the event.

Ishwari Singh soon had to contend with his younger brother's counter-claim, however, for the right of inheriting the *gaddi* of Amber-Jaipur was deemed by many to have devolved on Madho Singh, another of Jai Singh's sons, by virtue of a promise. This superseded the right of all other sons of Jai Singh II. The condition had been laid down years earlier, upon the marriage in 1708 of Jai Singh with the Sisodia princess, Chandra Kanwar of Mewar, daughter of Maharana Amar Singh II. The clear understanding at the time had been that a son born to her would be the future successor to the throne of the Kachchwahas, irrespective of the rights that primogeniture may give Jai Singh II's other sons.

An inevitable conflict, fuelled by additional causes, resulted between the rival half-brothers, Ishwari Singh and Madho Singh I (r. 1750-1768). The prevalence of polygamy amongst the rulers, chiefs and nobles had created similar situations of discord in the past too, with legitimate sons from different wives staking their claim to the titles and estates of their father on more than one occasion¹⁵! On his part, Sawai Jai Singh appears to have made an (abortive) attempt at carving out a separate state in Malwa that Madho Singh could have ruled over. (The young prince's maternal uncle, Maharana Sangram Singh II of Mewar had granted the *pargana* of Rampura to Madho Singh). However, Madho Singh could not be satisfied with a mere *pargana*, while his well-wishers urged him to stake his claim to Jaipur!

The reigning Maharana of Mewar, Jagat Singh II, was already out in open support of Madho Singh. The Maharana invited Kota's Rao Durjansal, who had taken up the cause of Umaid Singh of Bundi against Ishwari Singh, to join hands with Mewar and rally to the support of Madho Singh. The joint forces of Mewar and Kota marched forward and camped at Jamoli. On his part, Madho Singh's half-brother and rival, Ishwari Singh¹⁶, also marched forth simultaneously with a large force and set up camp at Pander. For forty days, both armies stood facing each other. During this time Ishwari Singh managed to drive a wedge between the Maharana and Durjansal. Thereafter, a compromise was patched up and Ishwari Singh agreed to grant Madho Singh the tracts of Toda and Tonk, worth rupees five lakhs in revenue, along with three other *parganas*. The disgruntled Madho Singh reluctantly accepted the situation. However, the problem continued to simmer.

Early in 1744, when Ishwari Singh was at Delhi, the Maharana accompanied by Madho Singh, marched against Jaipur with a large force. To buy time, the nobles of Dhoondhar made false promises to the Maharana, while simultaneously sending off urgent messages to Ishwari Singh to hurry back. On returning, Ishwari Singh sought the support of the Marathas, in return for money. As a consequence of this, Maharana Jagat Singh found himself in the unenviable position of being forced to buy off the Marathas to save his troops from destruction. Thereafter, Ishwari Singh repudiated the previous Jamoli agreement.

It was now the turn of the Maharana to enlist Maratha support, by sending his confidential *vakil* (legal agent) to Malhar Rao Holkar. Despite opposition by other Maratha *sardars*, Holkar agreed to provide military support to Mewar and its candidate, in return for rupees two lakhs. Thus, both contenders for Jai Singh II's legacy resorted to seeking help from the Marathas. In return for military assistance, both promised to pay the Maratha mercenaries substantial amounts of money. Confident of Holkar's support, the Maharana ordered his forces to march against Ishwari Singh. The forces of Kota and Shahpura joined them. Malhar Rao Holkar sent his son, Khande Rao, at the head of twelve thousand horses to join the Mewar coalition. Simultaneously, he wrote to his agent at Jaipur to convince Ishwari Singh to yield the agreed tracts and *parganas* to Madho Singh, but this mission was unsuccessful. On learning of the joint armies marching against Jaipur, Ishwari Singh immediately marched out of his capital with a large army to meet the attack.

Taking the initiative, Ishwari Singh opted to strike the first blow, and found himself the victor of a sanguine battle fought at Rajmahal, on the banks of the Banas River fifteen kilometres north of Deoli, in March 1747. According to Shyamaldas Das and Ojha, Khande Rao stood aside during the battle, waiting for a chance to plunder, which he indulged in eventually! The result of the battle of Rajmahal, made clear to Maharana Jagat Singh that despite Holkar's support, without the backing of other Maratha *sardars*, including Scindia and Ram Chandra Baba, who were opposed to him, it would be an uphill task to place Madho Singh on the Jaipur *gaddi*.

Jagat Singh thus sent his *vakil*, Kaniram, to gain the support of the Peshwa for the cause of Madho Singh. Kaniram informed the Peshwa that Ishwari Singh had previously agreed to give Madho Singh territory worth an annual income of twenty-four lakhs but the role of the Maratha *sardars* had upset the whole matter. The *vakil* now offered an amount of fifteen lakhs to the Peshwa in return for military help to obtain the throne of Dhoondhar for Madho Singh. The Peshwa sought the views of Ramchandra Baba on the matter, but the latter wrote back saying that the Peshwa should desist from the proposed action, as it would lower the prestige of the Marathas.

However, Malhar Rao Holkar continued to press Madho Singh's cause before the Peshwa. Meanwhile, the combined forces of Mewar, Kota and Malhar Rao Holkar moved towards Jaipur. Skirmishes took place enroute, along the banks of the Khari River, in which the Jaipur troops were worsted. Meanwhile, the Mughal emperor, faced by the threat of Ahmad Shah Abdali's imminent attack, appealed to Shahu for help. Shahu ordered the Peshwa to proceed to Delhi, but before the Maratha re-inforcements reached Delhi, Abdali had left India. As the dispute between Madho Singh and Ishwari Singh had once again reached a peak by this time, and as Delhi was geographically close to Jaipur, the Peshwa Balaji Rao entered Dhoondhar's territory, ostensibly to get the rival claimants to come to a reasonable agreement. Madho Singh visited the Peshwa's camp at Newai in person, while Ishwari Singh sent his agent. An agreement was arrived at, but Ishwari Singh repudiated the terms of the proposed treaty.

With matters reaching yet another impasse, a battle was fought at Bagru, thirty-five kilometres east of Sambhar, on August 14, 1748, between the group allied to Madho Singh and the forces supporting Ishwari Singh. Ishwari Singh was defeated, but managed to salvage the situation somewhat by making a financial arrangement with the Maratha *sardar*, Gangadhar Tantia. The peace terms settled included yielding four more districts to Madho Singh, giving a large sum of money to the Marathas, and returning Bundi to Umaid Singh. Shortly afterwards, dissatisfied with the way his minister, Keshav Das, had handled matters and suspecting him of being pro-Maratha, Ishwari Singh had him put to death.

At this point of time, Malhar Rao Holkar, insisting that the promised sum be handed over in advance by Ishwari Singh, brought his troops near the city of Jaipur (having already besieged and occupied Nainwa in November 1750, enroute). Ishwari Singh's treasury was unable to furnish the amount, for continuous civil war had adversely affected the economic condition of the state, and even the troops had not been paid. Subsequent chroniclers — writing in the reign of his successor, Madho Singh, and the latter's descendants — have, not surprisingly, portrayed Ishwari Singh as a weak and vacillating ruler, who was dependent on a number of inferior advisors. Whatever the veracity of this negative portrayal, there seems no doubt about the fact that several of Ishwari Singh's courtiers were loathe to

help him. The mercantile-bankers and richest men of the city of Jaipur too refused to come to the rescue of the beleaguered Maharaja. Maratha soldiers surrounded Jaipur.

Without a strong enough force to face the Marathas, and lacking the means to buy them off, Ishwari Singh took recourse in 1750 to the only way left to him which could prevent the sack of the city of Jaipur, and its despoliation at the hands of the encircling Marathas. He consumed poison. Three queens and a favourite concubine also took poison to join Ishwari Singh in death. Madho Singh's path to the throne was now unencumbered.

Ishwari Singh's short reign was not entirely preoccupied with sibling rivalry, battle and gore, though. He encouraged the literary and artistic traditions established by his predecessors. He also authored the *Bhakt-Mala*, and built the '*Isar-Laot*' — commonly referred to as the '*Sarga-Sooli*' today. This is a slender tower that overlooks much of the old walled city of Jaipur, and is held to have served as the Maharaja's personal observation-post to assure himself about the well-being of Jaipur's citizens. In 1743, Maharaja Sawai Ishwari Singh issued coins too.

Following suicide by Ishwari Singh, Malhar Rao Holkar took a prominent role in offering the crown of Jaipur to Madho Singh. In return, he demanded a large sum of money. Meanwhile, Jayappa Scindia reached Jaipur and put in a claim for his share for having assisted Madho Singh. The weak treasury — which had been unable to support Ishwari Singh's demand — was totally unable to repay the two Maratha chiefs. Madho Singh's other resources were similarly unequal to the task. Relations between Madho Singh and his erstwhile Maratha allies began to plummet, with Madho Singh convinced that the Marathas intended seizing one-third of Jaipur State's territories, and the '*Peshwa Daftar*' records asserting that Madho Singh had conspired to have the Maratha *sardars* killed. Both accusations appear to have had some basis, and according to Jadunath Sarkar, even the drinking water of the Marathas was poisoned at Madho Singh's orders.

While the financial impasse still remained, some four thousand Maratha mercenaries entered the city of Jaipur in January 1751, ostensibly to make purchases from the city's already well-recognised markets. Once

within, the Marathas went on a rampage, exacting their dues in cash and loot from a shocked and bewildered city. However, feelings against the Marathas already ran high amongst the local inhabitants. As word spread, they retaliated with equal ferocity. It is said that about 1,500 Marathas soldiers were wounded or killed in the course of eight hours. The citizens of Jaipur had not remained unscathed either. It was a bitter hour for the young city.

With the intercession of Madho Singh and the Maratha chiefs, the killing and looting was eventually brought to an end. Madho Singh came to a settlement with the Marathas. Over the course of the remainder of Madho Singh's reign, each time the Marathas raided Dhoondhar, they had to be offered *chauth* as ransom-money to prevent any depredations. On occasions Madho Singh resorted to diplomacy, and when that failed, to extravagant promises.

For instance, in 1756 the Maratha chief Raghunath Rao collected one lakh of rupees from Javad, before reaching Jaipur to demand rupees eleven lakh from Maharaja Madho Singh, with the insistence that seven lakh rupees be paid immediately. A year later, Jankoji Scindia demanded rupees thirty-six lakh from Jaipur. In 1759, Holkar returned to Jaipur with fresh demands, until preoccupation with the threat of Ahmad Shah Abdali Durrani diverted Maratha attention for some time.

Around this time, communal amity in Dhoondhar was, apparently, temporarily affected when the Maharaja's preceptor, Shyam Tiwari, encouraged action against the Jains¹⁷. The situation altered after Balchand Chhabra became a minister in 1761. Soon afterwards, Tiwari was externed from the kingdom.

In the winter of 1761, Madho Singh sent forces against Kota. The kingdom of Kota had occupied eight *jagirs* held by Hada chiefs in the Ranthambore *sarkar* area, an enterprise encouraged and asked for by the chiefs. (As shall be detailed below in the Kota-related subsection of this chapter). Technically, however, the Ranthambore area had been granted in *jagir* to Madho Singh by the Mughal emperor Ahmad Shah in 1753, and was a part of the territories of Jaipur. Madho Singh, thus, opted for action

against Maharao Chhatrasal of Kota. Madho Singh's forces suffered a severe check at the battle of Bhatwara, fought over 29 November to 1 December 1761. Kota's forces, ably commanded by the young Zalim Singh Jhala, were further encouraged by the presence, though not active participation, of Malhar Rao Holkar and his Marathas. Holkar and his troops lent tacit support to the Kota side, and remained encamped at Madhkargarh in the Mukundarra Pass, which led the Jaipur forces to remain cautious about their intentions.

Within a few years of this, the cordial relations established with Bharatpur during the reign of Madho Singh's father, Sawai Jai Singh II, suffered a minor check in December 1767. Madho Singh's troops attacked the military entourage accompanying Jawahar Singh of Bharatpur, as he passed through the eastern part of Jaipur state's territory on a pilgrimage to Pushkar. The Jaipur version was that the Bharatpur soldiers had indulged in plunder within Jaipur's territory. The result was a fierce battle between the forces of Jaipur and Bharatpur at Mawade (also spelt and pronounced as Maonda), some thirty kilometres southwest of Narnaul. As in every battle, there were human losses on both sides. In addition, Jawahar Singh lost his entire artillery corps, tents, and even his royal umbrella, in the hasty retreat made by the Bharatpur side. In February 1768, Jawahar Singh was again defeated by the Jaipur forces near Kaman. It was Madho Singh's final campaign, for he died shortly afterwards.

In the course of his reign, Madho Singh I maintained the well-established tradition of kings patronising artists, scholars and writers at their courts. Jaipur's literary and cultural traditions got a boost, as attested by various works written, composed and built during this time. Among the scholars at his court were men like Dwarkanath Bhatt, author of the *Madhva-Vijaya-Kavyam*, Brijnath Bhatt, who wrote the *Padya-Tarangini*, and Shyam Sunder, who composed the *Madhva-Vilas*. Madho Singh's own contributions to the literary world were texts entitled *Subodh-Kaumudi*, *Padyavali* and *Madhava-Nandini*. Madho Singh was also responsible for the construction of a number of buildings, including Jaipur's Madho-Vilas and Moti Doongri. Sawai Madhopur, near the old fort of Ranthambore is one of the towns founded by him in January 1763.

(This Sawai Madhopur, along with ‘Sawai Jaipur’, served as the two mint towns of the state. At first these coins carried the names of the Mughal emperors, and Persian inscriptions. Later, the name of the British monarch replaced that of the Mughal emperor. As Jaipur’s mint-mark was a *jhar* (sprig or shrub) of six leaves, the coins became known as ‘*jhar-shahi*’. Jaipur’s gold, silver and copper coins weighed 168, 175 and 262 grains respectively).

Maharaja Sawai Madho Singh I of Jaipur died in 1768, to be succeeded by his five-year-old minor son, Prithvi Singh (r. 1768-1778). As Madho Singh’s Chundawat clan wife was the senior queen, it was she who came to head the regency council. The council soon came to be disliked by the nobles, who also objected to the presence of the regent queen-mother’s alleged paramour, Firoz, a former elephant-handler, on the regency council. Following Firoz’s death, and the temporary ouster of the queen-mother as regent, the position of regent was taken over by Pratap Singh Naruka — who was soon to found his own state in Alwar.

(Pratap Singh, the Naruka chief of Macheri, and a descendant of King Udaikaran of Amber (r. 1367-1389), through the ‘Naruka’ sub-branch, had established his fame and standing at the Jaipur court well before this time. In 1759 he had led the contingent that relieved Ranthambore fort, which had been besieged by Gangadhar Tantia and his Marathas. The Marathas were defeated at Kankod village. Around 1765, Pratap had fallen into disfavour with Sawai Madho Singh I, and been expelled from court. He made his way to Bharatpur, but when there was a conflict between Jaipur and Bharatpur a couple of years later, he had returned to fight on the side of Dhoondhar. Madho Singh had, thereafter, reinstated Pratap Singh Naruka to his estates and dignities).

Upon the early death of Sawai Prithvi Singh, following a fall from his horse in April 1778, the young Maharaja’s thirteen-year-old half brother, Sawai Pratap Singh (r. 1778-1803) succeeded to the throne. During the minority of the boy-king, his mother resumed the role of regent of the state. By this time, the Kachchwaha kingdom was already facing persistent Maratha attacks. Meanwhile, the former regent of Jaipur, Alwar’s Pratap Singh Naruka, had lent his support to the rival claim of Man Singh,

supposedly a posthumous son of the late Maharaja Prithvi Singh and his Rathore wife from the Kishangarh ruling house. The Naruka chief also encouraged Mahadji Scindia — who had become the *Vakil-i-Mutlaq* (commander-in-chief cum vice-regent), of the Mughal empire in 1784 — and his Maratha forces to move against Jaipur. As the state of Jaipur had fallen behind with its *khiraj* dues owed to the Mughal emperor, Scindia marched towards Jaipur to wrest the amount in person. To check his advance, Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh formed a defensive alliance with Marwar's Maharaja Bijay Singh against the Marathas. In July 1787 the army of Jaipur clashed with that of Mahadji Scindia's Marathas and the Mughal emperor, at the battle of Tunga.

In a sense, neither side emerged an absolute victor at Tunga, but the upper hand was most definitely with the Jaipur-Jodhpur alliance. The discomfiture was obviously felt keenly by Mahadji Scindia. Following Tunga, Scindia succeeded in snatching a victory a few years later at Merta and Patan over the Marwar army and its allied groups. Mahadji Scindia followed this up by a victory over the Jaipur army too. He then plundered the enemy camp. Jaipur was forced to pay rupees seventeen lakh to Scindia, and also to yield up the *pargana* of Rampur to Holkar.

Around the same period, another Maratha commander, Lakhwa Dada, too exacted tribute from the kingdom of Dhoondhar. In January AD 1792, an agreement was reached at Dausa between the Maratha commander Tukoji Holkar and Pratap Singh, by which Holkar agreed to help the ruler of Jaipur in recovering territories occupied by defiant feudal lords. In return, half the recovered areas were to be handed over to Holkar. Meanwhile, in 1792 Mahadji Scindia moved through Shekhawati, extracting tributes from various chieftains.

The situation continued to remain far from comfortable over the next few years. Later, Vaman Rao was deputed by the commander of the Maratha forces to collect *chauth* arrears from Jaipur, using force if necessary, with a set percentage as his share. Vaman Rao sought the help of an adventurous Irish soldier-of-fortune called George Thomas, who had created an estate for himself in the Hissar area of present-day Haryana. (He was apparently called '*Jahaz*' (ship) — probably a derivation of his first

name, in Shekhawati). Faced with an exchequer that needed replenishment, and carrying dreams of “planting the British standard on the banks of the Attock River”, he agreed, despite misgivings, to join Vaman Rao upon the offer of a substantial amount of money. The respective forces of George Thomas and the Marathas had their tryst at Kanod (now called Mahendragarh), and marched against the Jaipur ruler in 1799. The joint forces reportedly numbered four thousand strong and included infantry, cavalry and artillery.

While the attackers made towards Fatehpur in Shekhawati, Sawai Pratap Singh of Jaipur called together his vassals, feudatories and forces. Fatehpur was surrounded by the Maratha-Thomas alliance, but continued to hold out until the approach of the Dhoondhar forces under the command of *Khawas* Roda Ram. Sikar’s Lakshman Singh (r. 1795-1833), was among those who accompanied the Jaipur army.

The battle of Fatehpur was fierce. After Roda Ram withdrew, following an initial rout, the intrepid Ranjit Singh of Chomu took command of the Dhoondhar forces, and led a valiant charge, which forced the Marathas from the field. George Thomas rallied his troops, using his artillery and ingenious tactics to devastating effect. While the affair was delicately poised, George Thomas received word from Daulat Rao Scindia and General Perron, the commander of the Marathas, to withdraw from the field. Thomas was reluctant to do so, but the Marathas were not. Sawai Pratap Singh too was keen on a peaceful solution. This was achieved following the cessation of fighting and the withdrawal of Thomas and Vaman Rao’s forces. (Pratap realised his vulnerable position vis-à-vis the Marathas at a time that external enemies were more numerous than allies. Furthermore, his forces had clashed with Shekhawati chiefs — notionally his subordinates — on occasions, especially over collecting tribute. A night attack on Jaipur’s forces at Rewasa and Khandela by some Shekhawat chiefs in early 1799, and Jaipur’s retaliatory siege of Nawalgarh, was just one such example!)

Despite the turbulence of the times, art and literature flourished at the Jaipur court during Sawai Pratap Singh’s reign. The Jaipur art atelier and its collection — the ‘*Surat-khana*’, gained a fresh impetus. Sahib Ram, Lala,

Triloka, Salig Ram, Govinda and Faizullah were among the highly talented artists at his court. Miniature paintings, illustrated manuscripts, murals, and portraiture thrived under Sawai Pratap Singh's patronage. Many illustrated versions of the *Geet-Govind*, *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, etc. were prepared during this time. The Maharaja also encouraged the continued development of the '*Gunijan-khana*', placing it in the hands of his music teacher, Chand Khan. The '*Gunijan-khana*' was the state division concerned with music and the performing arts, with its highly valued teachers and performers, and its tradition of talent-spotting, as well as providing training and life-long employment. Texts related to the performing arts, like *Swara-Sagar*, *Raga-Sagar*, *Sangeet-Sagar*, etc. were prepared during Pratap Singh's reign, at the express wishes of the ruler.

Scholars and poets, among them Padmakar, who composed the *Pratap-Prashasti*, were given court patronage. The maharaja also composed several volumes of poetry. He was also a builder, who added much to the architecture of Jaipur. Pratap Singh is today remembered mainly for commissioning the building of the famous Hawa Mahal of Jaipur. He died in August 1803 at the age of thirty-nine and was succeeded by Jagat Singh (r. 1803-1818).

THE SHEKHAWATI AREA

The Kyam-Khanis had retained political dominance over certain parts of the area now better known as Shekhawati. Fatehpur, in the present-day Sikar district, had remained the seat of a prominent branch of the Kyam-Khanis for nearly two hundred and eighty-two years, following its initial establishment in AD 1449 by Fateh Khan, grandson of Kyam Khan and son of Taj Khan, who had carved out an independent state for himself.

Around 1725, Fatehpur, then under the rather weak Kyam-Khani Nawab, Sardar Khan, was attacked by the joint forces of the Shekhawat Rao of Sikar, Shiv Singh (r. 1721-1748), and one of his relatives from the Udaipurwati-Jhunjhunu area, Sardul Singh (who was another of Raysal Darbari's descendants). This was in retaliation for the killing of two of their

cousins¹⁸. The Shekhawats also rounded up the Nawab's camels from their grazing ground (*beerh*).

Soon thereafter, alarmed that the weak Nawab Sardar Khan, who was totally dominated by his concubine (who allegedly belonged to an oil-extractor [*teli*] family), and was bent on making their son, Mehboob Khan, his successor, several Kyam-Khanis, who supported the rights of Sardar Khan's nephew Kamyab (also Mayamb) Khan¹⁹ approached Shiv Singh for help. The Shekhawats insisted that the Kyam-Khanis of Choori-Beswa promise to give Shiv Singh twenty-five villages, in addition to the administration of Fatehpur. In 1729 Shiv Singh led his forces, along with those of Ram Singh (heir to the Kasli estate), the Kyam-Khanis of Choori-Beswa, and the Jhunjhunu-based Sardul Singh, against Nawab Sardar Khan of Fatehpur. Sardar Khan was defeated and pensioned off, and Kamyab Khan (r. 1729-1731) was declared the new Nawab. He would be the last Kyam-Khani Nawab to rule over Fatehpur.

Shiv Singh installed his own father-in-law, Bhao Singh Bidawat of Dantru as the new Nawab's minister. However, Nawab Kamyab Khan, soon took administrative powers into his own hands, and dismissed Bhao Singh. He also expelled the Choori-Beswa Kyam-Khanis from Fatehpur, and repudiated any commitment of giving villages to Sikar. Shiv Singh rallied several of his relatives: among them Sardul Singh from Jhunjhunu, Guman Singh Lad-Khani from Ramgarh, and Ram Singh from Kasli. Joined by the Kyam-Khanis of Choori-Beswa, the joint forces attacked Fatehpur in 1731. A fierce battle was fought at Mandila, two miles from Fatehpur. Despite the brave defence put up by the Kyam-Khanis, the Fatehpur force was defeated, and the Kyam-Khani kingdom of Fatehpur passed into the hands of Shiv Singh.

Around the same period, another of the old-established Kyam-Khani chiefdoms of the region changed hands too. This was the state established in AD 1450 at Jhunjhunu by Muhammad Khan Kyam-Khani. This had continued to be held by his descendants for about two hundred and eighty years. The last of the Jhunjhunu Kyam-Khani line was Nawab Ruhela Khan, who died without an heir in 1730. Thereafter, Sardul Singh, a Shekhawat who had been the chief administrative aide of Nawab Ruhela

Khan from about 1721, and was the nephew-in-law of Ruhela Khan's Begum (queen), took the *gaddi* of Jhunjhunu.

The connection was through Sardul Singh's senior-most wife, Sahaj Kanwar, daughter of Manroop Singh Bika of Nathasar, who was a niece of the Begum. The relationship underlines a point made earlier that marriage ties between Rajput clans that had accepted Islam and those that had not were not unknown at this point of time

Sardul Singh (b. circa AD 1681), also referred to as 'Sada-ji', was descended from the Udaipurwati line of Shekha's descendants, through Raysal Darbari's son Bhojraj. (The line was thus called 'Bhojani'). Like many Shekhawats, Bhojraj's eldest son and successor, Todarmal, had served with the Imperial forces. His reputation for generosity has lingered in folk tradition. A stirring tale records how Todarmal nominated the fifth out of his six sons, Jhujhar Singh (r. ?1658-1687), as his successor. Jhujhar had left Udaipur, founded by Bhojraj and distinct from the Udaipur in Mewar, to make his own fortunes during his father's lifetime. Having taken possession of a nearby tract, Jhujhar Singh founded the town of Gudha there around c. AD 1652. On learning that Todarmal was on his death-bed, Jhujhar Singh hastened to Udaipur to meet him. His father told him that he had long held the desire of conquering Khed from the Kyam-Khani Nawabs, and regretted that he was dying without seeing that done. Jhujhar Singh immediately took an oath to fulfil his father's wish, and promptly marched off to invest Khed.

When the news of Jhujhar Singh's success reached the dying Todarmal, he commanded that his sword be passed on to Jhujhar Singh, and declared his son as his successor. The proclamation was displeasing to Todarmal's other sons, who opposed Jhujhar. (Matters were eventually settled between the brothers, and suitable estates parcelled out to the others). The loss of Khed was not taken lightly by Nawab Qutb Khan, and the Kyam-Khanis tried to recapture Khed, but remained unsuccessful²⁰. Much later, after the accession of Jhujhar Singh's son Jagram Singh, the latter amalgamated the Khed and Gudha tracts to form what subsequently became known as the 'Udaipurwati' area.

Sardul Singh, the progenitor of the *Panch-pana thikanas* of Shekhawati over which his sons were to rule, was one of Jagram's five sons. Of these, the eldest, Gopal Singh, succeeded to Jagram's major estates, with Sardul's patrimony consisting of portions of Udaipur, Khed and Gudha. To this Sardul Singh went on to add other territories, and to carve out his own estate through a mixture of good fortune, personal competence and sheer bravado²¹.

Sardul Singh had spent part of his growing years at Taunk, some eight miles from Lohargal. This was near the town of Parasrampura, founded by Raysal's son, Parasram, and held since by Parasram's descendants. The town and estates of Parasrampura, at the time, were under two aged brothers, Bishan Singh and Sheo Singh, whose mutual rivalries finally led them to seek the arbitration of the Mughal Imperial court. Opting to proceed to Delhi in person, the brothers jointly called in Sardul Singh to manage affairs in their absence. Sardul administered the land so well that later the two brothers, lacking a male heir, nominated him as their successor. By c. AD 1715 Sardul Singh had succeeded them as the legitimate master of Parasrampura²².

Another stroke of fortune, which would bring a throne within Sardul's grasp in the years that followed, had already occurred in 1698, with his marriage to Sahaj Kanwar, the daughter of Manroop Singh Bika of Nathasar. For, as already noted, the lady was a niece of the Begum of Jhunjhunu. Nawab Ruhela Khan Kyam-Khani ruled Jhunjhunu, and the marriage brought Sardul Singh into frequent contact with the Nawab.

In 1721, Sardul Singh was summoned to Jhunjhunu by Ruhela Khan and entrusted with administrative work²³. His successes led to his gaining a position of trust and influence at the Jhunjhunu court, and to rivalry with another prominent courtier serving Ruhela Khan — Amanullah Khan, chief of Badwasi²⁴. Amanullah Khan managed to have Sardul Singh externed from Jhunjhunu for a while, but faced with mismanaged administration and an empty treasury, and with the Delhi court demanding its arrears of tribute, Sardul Singh was recalled in 1723 at the advice of the Begum of Jhunjhunu, and entrusted with the administration. After this his influence grew

rapidly²⁵. In 1729, he helped in the defeat of Fatehpur's Sardar Khan, and the accession of Kamyab Khan (to which reference has been made above).

A year later, the aged Ruhela Khan died at Singhana. (Singhana was an old town, where a Mughal mint had once been situated). As the Nawab had no son, nor a designated heir²⁶, many Kyam-Khani relatives of Ruhela Khan put forward their claims to the *gaddi* of Jhunjhunu, and it was collectively agreed that they would all abide by the decision of the Begum of the late Ruhela Khan. However, matters were taken out of the hands of the Kyam-Khanis when Sardul Singh, backed by the Shekhawats, seated himself on Jhunjhunu's vacant throne in October 1730, and announced that the Begum of the late Nawab had chosen him as the successor. It was a bloodless take-over. With Sardul's accession to the *gaddi* of Jhunjhunu ended the long local domination of the Kyam-Khanis.

Some smaller estates of that part of Rajasthan, which comprised the local tract called 'Narharwati', fell to Sardul Singh and his eldest son, Zorawar, over the next couple of years. By 1732 the two had conquered Narhar from its chief, Nawab Abdullah Karim Khan, Khundana from Sikandar Khan, Nari-Sari from Adam Khan, and Sultana from Nawab Khaju Khan. These nawabs of Narhar, Baggar, Sultana, etc. were 'Nagad' Pathans. They traced their presence in the area back to the mid fifteenth century, when Sultan Bahlol Lodi of Delhi had deputed his son-in-law, Yunus Khan to Narharwati around c. AD 1456. Yunus Khan had fought and defeated the Jod Rajput ruler of Narhar at Darol, and established his own mastery over the area as its new nawab. His son, Dilawar Khan, had succeeded Nawab Yunus Khan of Narhar.

Subsequently, Alauddin Khan, Qasim Khan, Hussain Khan, Ballan Khan, Dewan Qutb Khan and Abdullah Karim Khan ruled as successive nawabs of Narhar. It was the last-named, Abdullah Karim Khan, whom Sardul Singh vanquished²⁷.

Meanwhile, in 1731 Sardul again joined forces with Shiv Singh of Sikar to take part in the investment of Fatehpur (to which reference has been made above). Taking advantage of Sardul's frequent absences from

Jhunjhunu, the local Pathans attacked the town. They were conclusively beaten back by Sardul's son, the twenty-year-old Bahadur Singh, who commanded Jhunjhunu's troops in the battle of Bhudana, before falling in action.

In September 1732, Sardul Singh, along with his Sikar counterpart, Shiv Singh, opted to accept the overlordship of the head of their clan — the Kachchwaha ruler, Sawai Jai Singh II, through an agreement sealed at Mauzamabad. This decision seems to have been made in the knowledge that Jai Singh was held in high regard at the Imperial court, and would prove a powerful ally, intercessory, and protector. Thereafter, Sardul Singh, like Sikar's Shiv Singh, accompanied Jaipur forces on various expeditions against Marwar and other neighbouring kingdoms, as the occasion arose.

Sardul Singh died at Parasrampura in AD 1742. Upon his death, his estate was shared out between his five surviving sons — Zorawar Singh, Kishan Singh, Nawal Singh, Kesri Singh and Akhey Singh. Zorawar Singh became master of Malsisar, Mandrela, Dabri, Gangiyasar, Sultana etc. Kishan Singh's inheritance was the area of Parasrampura, Khetri, Alsisar, etc. Nawal Singh, founder of Nawalgarh, also held the tracts of Mandawa, Mukundgarh and Dorasar. Kesri Singh got Bissau, Surajgarh and Dundlod; and Akhey Singh got Pacheri, Jakhora and Ismailpur. On Akhey's death in c. 1744, his portion was divided amongst Kishan Singh, Nawal Singh and Kesri Singh. The estates they inherited were jointly known as the '*Panch-pana*',

Apparently, Marwar's Maharaja Abhay Singh, fearing that a division of lands would lead to a chaotic balkanization of the area, sent Barhat Karni Dan of Mundiyyar to exhort Sardul's sons to avoid this. As Karni Dan could not prevail over the five brothers — all equally ambitious and strong, he supervised an equal division between them in a rather unusual manner. The villages were allocated in a way that provided equal revenue to each of the five brothers, without any of the portions forming geographical units with well-defined boundaries! Thus, each of the five got villages that were dispersed and not territorially contiguous. As the brothers could not convert their scattered holdings into an easy territorial unit, Karni Dan's division curbed individual expansionism to an extent. It also ensured that the

brothers tried to cooperate and protect each other's holdings in order to take benefit of their own inheritances! This led to a kind of 'federation'.

Such a dividing up of estates on the principle of equal shares to all the male heirs is known as '*bhai-baant*' in Rajasthan. In this, the '*Panch-pana*' Shekhawats shifted away from the more common practice followed by a majority of Rajasthan's rulers, chiefs and land-holders, where the largest share of an inheritance went — through primogeniture, or occasionally through the more prosaic act of 'might-is-right' — to one heir. That inheritor would then dole out smaller estates to other siblings at will. (If that share had not been laid down previously by the parent).

The '*bhai-baant*' system has some parallels in early territory-sharing practices, predating the more complex polity and administrative systems that usually come into play as kingdoms grow in size as monoliths. This '*bhai-baant*' seems to have an efficacy of its own. Politically, however, it led to the existence of a number of small and much-divided estates in the Shekhawati region, of which powerful neighbouring states tried to take advantage, as the system continued into successive generations.

The different offshoots of Sardul Singh's family remained active over the ensuing decades. Several descendants from the various sub-branches fought in various battles and campaigns. These included the 1767 battle at Mawade against the Bharatpur forces; the Imperial expedition commanded by Rao Mitra Sen of Rewari and Baluchi chiefs Kale Khan and Peero Khan (which culminated at the battle of Mandan in June 1775); and the 1780 battle of Khatu-Shyamji. This last occurred when Murtaza Khan Bhadech was sent into Shekhawati to collect revenue arrears. His subsequent march towards Jaipur was blocked at Khatu-Shyamji, where the Shekhawats led by Devi Singh of Sikar defeated the intruder²⁸. In time, many of these younger Shekhawat off-shoots too held positions at the Imperial Mughal court. For example, Khetri's Bhopal Singh got a *mansab* in 1756 and Nawalgarh's Nawal Singh the title of 'Bahadur' and a *mansab* from Emperor Shah Alam II in 1775. Many also had positions and honours at the Jaipur court.

Descendants of Sardul Singh's son, the Jhunjhunu-based Kishan Singh, came to rule over Khetri. Here Kishan's eldest son, Bhopal Singh (r. 1745-1771) built Bhopalgarh fort in 1755 near a small habitation, which expanded to become his new capital of Khetri in 1757. Bhopal Singh of Khetri, jointly with his cousin Bakhat Singh of Chowkri, took the *pargana* of Singhana on *ijara* sub-lease from the Jaipur ruler during c. 1750-1754. Afterwards, there was a redistribution around c. 1762, in which the Chowkri family ceased to have any part of Singhana. Bagh Singh (r. 1771-1800), succeeded his brother Bhopal²⁹. In common with many contemporaries, Bagh Singh played a prominent role in various battles and negotiations, including the battle of Khatu-Shyamji. On behalf of the Mughal emperor Shah Alam II, Mahadji Scindia conferred the *pargana* of Babai, along with the title of 'Raja' on Bagh Singh in 1781.

Meanwhile, in the main Amarsar-Manoharpur line, the estates had passed from Jagat Singh (r. 1686-1702), to his elder son Sagat Singh (r. 1702-?1727/ ?1738?)³⁰. Sagat Singh supported the camp of Ajit Singh of Marwar and the Sayyid brothers, and may have been involved in Farukhsiyar's murder in April 1719. Afterwards, Ajit Singh stopped at Manoharpur, enroute to Jodhpur, and married Sagat Singh's daughter. Their daughter, Sobhag Kanwar, married Mewar's prince (the future Maharana), Pratap Singh, son of Jagat Singh II of Mewar.

It was during Sagat Singh's time that Manoharpur was attacked by Udai Singh of Khandela³¹, who was helped by kinsmen like Deep Singh of Kasli. Besieged within Manoharpur fort, Sagat Singh adopted a clever ploy to end the siege. He sent word to Deep Singh in secret, cautioning him against the long-term intentions of Khandela's ambitious Udai Singh, warning that Udai Singh intended capturing Kasli after dealing with Manoharpur. Convinced that foul play was underway, Deep Singh withdrew his troops. Bereft of a strong ally, Udai Singh perforce decided to lift his siege of Manoharpur and also withdraw.

Sagat Singh was succeeded by his son, Jaswant Singh. The latter was not able to hold his estates for long, as Sawai Jai Singh II of Dhoondhar obtained the *pargana* of Manoharpur from the Mughal emperor Mohammed

Shah after presenting a *nazarana* (ceremonial court offering) of two lakh of rupees for that honour. Subsequently, Jai Singh's forces were despatched against Manoharpur, while the Dhoondhar ruler himself proceeded towards it from Mathura. Manoharpur was attacked and seized, Jaswant Singh slain, and the estate declared as '*Khalsa*' (crown property — in this case, being land regarded as having lapsed to the Imperial authority).

Thereafter, the Manoharpur area came under Jai Singh's governance, and despite the efforts of Jaswant Singh's heirs, Nathu Singh and his three sons, Manoharpur could not come back into Shekhawat hands. At the urging of other Shekhawat chiefs (and their retainers), the Dhoondhar ruler allowed Nathu Singh the possession of the Shekhawat ancestral township of Amarsar, along with twelve villages, but throughout the ensuing reigns of Sawai Madho Singh I through to Sawai Pratap Singh, Manoharpur was not handed back to Jaswant Singh's descendants. Upon Nathu Singh's death at Ajitgarh in AD 1793, his truncated estate went to his son, Bishan Singh (r. 1798-1810). (The younger two sons, Prithvi Singh and Bersal got Garh and Palri, respectively). Bishan Singh, also unsuccessful in his efforts to regain Manoharpur (though Sawai Pratap Singh of Jaipur did allocate further villages to him), shifted his base to Shahpura. Henceforth, Shahpura became the capital of the old Amarsar-Manoharpur line of Shekhawats.

While the fortunes of the main Amarsar-Manoharpur line saw them eventually re-locate their capital at Shahpura, the turn of the century saw the Khandela estates held by Raysal Darbari's descendants in the hands of Udai Singh (r. ?1697-1720)³². Among Udai Singh's major moves was rallying Raysalot kin and launching an attack against Sagat Singh of Manoharpur, as described elsewhere. Manoharpur's siege was lifted through Sagat's move of sowing suspicion in the minds of one of the besiegers, Deep Singh of Kasli, concerning Udai Singh's intentions. Deep Singh consequently retired from the siege.

Furious at Deep Singh's desertion, Udai Singh occupied Kasli. In the interim, Deep Singh approached Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II, swore allegiance to him, and agreed to pay an annual tribute of a thousand rupees to Dhoondhar State. With the help of Jai Singh II, Deep Singh re-obtained Kasli. Deep Singh then took up the cause of Dhiraj Singh, the son of Fateh

Singh (Udai Singh's dead middle brother). Reminding Sawai Jai Singh II of the division of the Khandela estates previously effected between the then chief of Khandela, Kesri Singh (Udai Singh's eldest brother), and the middle brother, Fateh Singh, Deep Singh pleaded that Fateh Singh's son be granted his share of the Khandela estates. The matter was taken up in the Imperial court as well. Jai Singh II then ensured that Dhiraj Singh got two parts of Khandela, while three parts remained with Udai Singh in 1709. In 1712 the emperor granted a *mansab* of 1000 *zat* and 700 horses to Udai Singh, along with the *parganas* of Khandela and Rewasa in *jagir*.

In 1718, the forces of Sawai Jai Singh II, under the command of Bazeed Khan, besieged Udai Singh's stronghold, Udaigarh (built and named after himself by Udai Singh). Udai Singh eventually sought refuge in Marwar, while his son, Sawai Singh, agreed to Jai Singh II's terms. These included becoming a tributary of Dhoondhar and the payment of '*kher kharch*' or military expenses, to be given in instalments. Sawai Singh (chief: 1720-1731) was now admitted to court, on par with his cousin, Dhiraj Singh (chief: 1709-1726), who held two parts of Khandela, and enjoyed a *mansab* rank granted from the Imperial court in AD 1717. The presence of two formally recognised 'rajās' of Khandela was tricky! In time Sawai Singh's portion of Khandela began to be referred to as the 'Greater' or '*Bada-pana*', while Dhiraj Singh's portion became the 'Lesser' or '*Chhota-pana*'. In the interim, Udai Singh made a futile effort to regain his estate, and re-occupied Khandela, but was expelled by his son, aided by Dhoondhar's forces. Udai Singh lived out his remaining life as his son's pensioner in Marwar. In AD 1725 Sawai Jai Singh II was granted the *ijara* for Khandela and Rewasa from the Mughal emperor.

Sawai Singh was followed by his eldest son, Brindaban Das (chief: 1731-1777), while Dhiraj Singh had been succeeded by his son, Gaj Singh (chief: 1726-1747). Being close to Madho Singh I of Jaipur, Brindaban Das managed to get the partitioning of Khandela revoked. However, consequent to three fierce battles — at Khandela, Kuchore and Udaigarh — and several wise moves, Inder Singh of Khandela *Chhota-pana* (chief: 1747-1791), obtained the land-grant of Khandela and his share of the estates. (Inder Singh had gained the favour of Jaipur's Madho Singh by helping to expel Rao Pratap Singh of Macheri, soon to be the independent ruler of Alwar).

Brindaban Das was followed by his son, Govind Singh (chief: 1777-1788), and the latter by his son, Narsingh Das (chief: 1788-1806).

It was during Narsingh Das's time that the Maratha depredations devastated vast tracts of Shekhawati, including Babai, Jhunjhunu, Singhana and Khetri. Inder Singh of the *Chhota-pana* lost his life protecting Khandela against the Marathas during this period of instability. He was followed by his son, Pratap Singh (chief: 1791 -1816). Over the next few years, both the chiefs of the two '*panas*' of Khandela manoeuvred and counter-manoevred, and fought to obtain mastery over the entire estate. Simultaneously, Narsingh Das resolutely refused to pay tribute to Jaipur, and as the arrears accumulated, so did the Jaipur ruler's ire against him³³. We shall pick up the ensuing tale of Khandela in a later section.

Let us return now to the Lad-Khani sub-line. During this period, the descendants of Raysal's son, 'Lad Khan', also called Lal Singh, had juggled a fine line between service with the Mughals and the Marwar rulers. The rise of Jai Singh II of Jaipur obviously altered the local power balance to some extent, for we know that Fateh Singh's grandson, Guman Singh (chief: 1705-1755) also had dealings with Sawai Jai Singh II of Dhoondhar. In 1733 Jai Singh II gave him permission to construct a fort at Bhoriya. The same year, the Jaipur ruler granted Guman Singh the *khalsa* land and half the share of salt from Didwana³⁴, and in 1734, granted Khachariawas and ten other villages. Guman Singh joined campaigns against the Kyam-Khanis of Fatehpur and Jhunjhunu, supported Bakhat Singh of Nagaur take the throne of Marwar from Ram Singh, and was later deputed by Bakhat Singh's successor, Maharaja Bijay Singh, to repel a Kyam-Khani attack on Didwana. Guman Singh met his end in the course of a punitive expedition sent against him in 1755 by Madho Singh I of Jaipur, when a mysterious gun-powder store explosion within the besieged Danta Ramgarh fort brought down one of the towers of the fortress, killing Guman Singh and three of his four surviving sons.

Jaipur resumed the estate, thereafter. Later, Guman Singh's sole surviving son, Duleha Singh (chief: 1755-1801), was granted Khachariawas afresh by Madho Singh I of Jaipur³⁵. Duleha Singh maintained the

traditional ties with the court of Jodhpur, fighting alongside the combined Jaipur-Jodhpur armies at the battle of Tunga (28 July 1787), against Mahadji Scindia's forces, and with the Jodhpur forces at Patan (20 June 1789) and at Merta (10 September 1790), again against Mahadji Scindia. Sent against the Kyam-Khanis, who had taken possession of Daulatpura, by Marwar's Bijay Singh, Duleha Singh and his eldest son, Shivdan Singh, defeated the Kyam-Khanis and recovered Daulatpura³⁶.

Duleha Singh also took part in the battle of Fatehpur in 1799 against the combined armies of Vaman Rao and George Thomas. For his links and services with Dhoondhar and Khandela, Duleha Singh was granted two villages by Sawai Pratap Singh of Jaipur, and the village of Bhagwanpura by Raja Brindaban Das of Khandela. On Duleha's death, his eldest son, Shivdan Singh (chief: 1801-1815), inherited his mantle as head of the Lad-Khanis.

Meanwhile, as previously noted, members of another of the Shekhawat sub-branches, Tirmal's 'Rao-ji' line, held the Dujodh-Sikar tract. To this, Rao Daulat Singh annexed further holdings like Jagmalpura, Chainpura, Dadli etc. in the early part of the eighteenth century, while in 1731 his son and successor, Rao Shiv Singh (r. 1721-1748), added the kingdom of Fatehpur, which he seized from the Kyam-Khanis (as already described elsewhere).

Shiv Singh's reign saw substantial additions to the recently established Sikar. The fort and palaces were completed in 1724. Shiv Singh also fortified the growing town, had a defensive wall called 'Shahar-Panah' constructed, and built a temple to Shri Gopinath-ji. Soon after, Shiv Singh was asked to dismantle the fort and city walls by Imperial command. This followed accusations of involvement in the robbery of a wealthy Agra merchant and using the ill-gotten proceeds on his construction works. Shiv Singh sought Sawai Jai Singh's diplomatic intervention. Simultaneously, he rallied various Shekhawat kinsmen for the defence of Sikar against the Imperial army. Sawai Jai Singh helped defuse the situation, and a fight was averted³⁷.

In 1729 Shiv Singh, along with his Udaipurwati-Jhunjhunu relative, Sardul Singh, came to an agreement with Sawai Jai Singh II at Mauzamabad, by which the two Shekhawat chiefs acknowledged their tributary status to the Dhoondhar ruler. Thereafter, Shiv Singh took to spending more time at the Jaipur court, leaving the management of the Sikar and Fatehpur territories to the eldest of his five sons, Samrath Singh. Later, Samrath Singh killed two of his half-brothers, Kirat Singh and Medh Singh at Fatehpur³⁸. The heart-broken Rao Shiv Singh never returned from Jaipur to Sikar or Fatehpur afterwards.

During the succession squabble that broke out after the death of Sawai Jai Singh II, Shiv Singh fought alongside Maharaja Ishwari Singh in the battle of Bagru in August 1748. He was badly wounded and died soon afterwards, after nominating his son Chand Singh as his successor, and disowning the fratricidal Samrath Singh, in the presence of Maharaja Ishwari Singh. Chand Singh was formally recognised as the new Rao of Sikar by Ishwari Singh at Jaipur. Meanwhile, at Sikar Samrath Singh (r. 1748-1754) proclaimed his own accession to his father's *gaddi*. Undismayed, Chand Singh made his way to Sikar and proceeded to live there, apparently amicably, with his brother.

Soon afterwards, both Samrath and Chand, with their respective forces and other Shekhawat chiefs and warriors, joined Sawai Ishwari Singh's expedition to Merta to help Ram Singh of Jodhpur (r. 1749-1751). In their absence, under the leadership of Darab Khan, the Kyam-Khanis, aided by Sindhi and Baluchi soldiers, occupied Fatehpur. They then marched towards Jhunjhunu to invest that too. Chand Singh rushed back to recover Fatehpur. A crucial battle, fought at Loomas (twenty miles from Jhunjhunu and fifteen from Fatehpur), gave the Sikar side victory. The Lad-Khanis and Mertia Rathores of Loonwa assisted Chand's Sikar troops³⁹. Chand Singh later lived at Bala, where he had built a small fort in 1751.

Samrath Singh died in 1754. He was succeeded by his son, Nahar Singh (r. 1754-1756), whose period of misrule ended when Chand Singh and Budh Singh managed to occupy Sikar in 1756. A compromise gave Samrath Singh's sons certain estates in perpetuity, while Chand Singh (r. 1756-1763), occupied the *gaddi* to become the undisputed Rao of Sikar and

Fatehpur. On the death of Chand Singh, his ten-year old son Devi Singh (r. 1763-1795) succeeded him. Chand Singh's brother Budh Singh became Regent. He died fighting for Madho Singh I against Jawahar Singh of Bharatpur, at the battle of Mawade in 1767.

Devi Singh joined other Shekhawati chiefs in successfully beating back various attacks and invasions on Shekhawati. Among these were the 1774-1775 Imperial campaign sent by Emperor Shah Alam II under his *wazir*, Najaf Quli Khan, to recover arrears from Shekhawati. Intervention by Maharaja Gaj Singh of Bikaner, who used his influence over Najaf Khan, averted a conflict, but Najaf entrapped and arrested Nawal Singh of Nawalgarh, Bagh Singh of Khetri, Surajmal of Bissau and Hanuwant Singh of Dundlod. They were released after they agreed to pay their share of tribute-arrears. Accompanying Najaf Khan was Walter Reinhard, nicknamed 'the Sombre' and popularly called 'Sumroo' or 'Samru'. (His Indian wife, Begum Sumroo holds her own place in the popular memory and history of the area around Delhi).

Devi Singh also fought, under the command of Nawal Singh of Nawalgarh, in the subsequent battle of Mandan later in 1775 to repel the invasion of Rao Mitra Sen Ahir of Rewari. Shekhawati chiefs had not honoured their agreement to pay tribute-arrears to the Mughal emperor. Both sides were building up for a fight. The Shekhawats planned wresting Narnaul. Pre-empting them, Mitra Sen, Kale Khan and Peero Khan etc. invaded Shekhawati in the summer of 1775. In a pitched battle at Mandan, both sides suffered heavily. Peero Khan died and Mitra Sen fled the field, leaving the Shekhawat chiefs victorious.

The Shekhawati chiefs faced yet another Imperial expedition in 1780. Once more, this had been sent to collect arrears from the Shekhawati area. The Imperial force was under the command of Murtaza Khan Bhadech. The two sides clashed in a fierce battle at Khatu-Shyamji in July 1780, resulting in grievous losses on both sides, and discomfiture for Murtaza Khan. This time Devi Singh commanded the Shekhawati forces.

In 1784 Devi Singh ordered the commencement of work on a hill-fort near the old established site of Lohargal (some thirty *kos* distant from

Sikar). This was completed, despite physical resistance by the forces of the chief of Khandela, in 1787 and named Devgarh. From about c. 1788 Devi Singh began expanding his holdings by occupying those belonging to various neighbours — including Shekhawat kinsmen. Tracts occupied included Kasli, along with its eighty-four villages⁴⁰. Devi Singh's actions along the tracts bordering Marwar resulted in Maharaja Bijay Singh of Marwar sending a force to help the aggrieved against Devi Singh.

Alongside attempts at extending his territorial sway, Devi Singh founded the town of Ramgarh in AD 1791 atop a small hamlet, then called Nasa. This began to be called Sethon-ka-Ramgarh — 'Ramgarh-of-the-merchants', after Devi Singh invited prominent merchants and traders — among them the Poddar family — to take up residence here! The same year saw the construction of the fort of Raghunathgarh, on the Bhimli hills near Khoh, by Devi Singh. Following the death of Devi Singh in 1795, Lakshman Singh (r. 1795-1833) succeeded to the *gaddi* of Sikar-Fatehpur.

Both Col. James Tod as well as Col. Lockett (to whom was given the task of enforcing 'law and order' in the Shekhawati area, as is noted elsewhere), state that Lakshman Singh, born in 1787, was Devi Singh's adopted son, being the son of the Thakur of Shahpura. Others, including Jhabarmal Sharma and Bakshi Jhuntha Lal, believed that he was Devi Singh's real son and his mother was Devi Singh's wife from the Kanhalot sub-clan. Be that as it may, it is definitely known that since Lakshman Singh was a minor at the time of his assumption of the title, his mother, 'Ma-ji Kanhalot', the queen-mother of Sikar, became the regent.

At this point, the chiefs of Khandela, Balara, Bhojasar, Magloona, Khoh, Piralli, and other places in the Jhunjhunu-Sikar area, who had either suffered at the hands of Sikar's Devi Singh, or else bore grudges and had other axes to grind, raised their collective voices at the Jaipur court. A representation was sent to Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh of Jaipur. This stated that Lakshman Singh was an adopted child from a minor branch of the family, whose claims to the *gaddi* were too far removed to be upheld over those of Shyam Singh, the descendant of Rao Samrath Singh (r. 1748-1754) of Sikar. Thus appealed to, Sawai Pratap Singh despatched a force under the command of Nand Ram Haldiya (brother of Jaipur's prime

minister, Daulat Ram Haldiya), to sort out the matter, and remove Lakshman Singh from Sikar.

Sikar rallied its own forces to face Jaipur's army. At the same time, the wise and diplomatic intervention of Sikar's regent, the queen-mother, 'Ma-ji Kanhalot', and her close supporters defused the situation. Reminding Nand Ram Haldiya about the close friendship enjoyed by Devi Singh and Nand Ram's elder brother, Daulat Ram Haldiya (Jaipur's prime minister and one of its military commanders), Ma-ji Kanhalot urged a solution through negotiations rather than bloodshed. Sikar paid a *nazarana* of two lakhs of rupees to Jaipur. Certain other indemnities or fines too were extracted. While Samrath Singh's descendants were given some lands later, which became part of the estate of Shyamgarh, Lakshman Singh's position became assured. Lakshman Singh later participated in local as well as Jaipur state's campaigns and battles. These included the battle of Fatehpur in 1799; and the relief of Shahpura, when the army of Maharaja Man Singh of Jodhpur besieged it. We shall take up Sikar in the nineteenth century in a later section.

One may make a passing note here about the famous 'Marwari' merchants and traders, known across much of northern India. Most of the so-called 'Marwari' traders who became known in the late eighteenth-nineteenth centuries for their long-distance trade-links, and who went on to settle in the British-developed cities like Calcutta (now Kolkata) and Bombay (now Mumbai) have their links not so much with the area of Marwar, as with the tract of Shekhawati.

Perhaps one reason for the adventurousness to explore newer markets on the part of the Shekhawati-based mercantile community was the recent history of that area. It is significant that Shekhawati remained divided into small holdings at a time when many other regions were being swallowed up into larger kingdoms like Mewar, Marwar, and Dhoondhar etc. The continued existence of numerous individual chiefs, with their small and large estates, meant individual, fortified seats. Such mini-capital small towns and forts also served, as economy demanded, as market-centres, where internal and inter-regional trade activity became based. While such small trade-centres proliferated and thrived in Shekhawati, in larger

neighbouring kingdoms it was the cities and larger towns that gained prominence from around eighteenth century onwards.

In addition, the multiplicity of small estates with individual seats of administration meant the establishment of numerous new towns and forts. And, as historians and sociologists have noted, the founding of new towns, and invitations to rich merchants to settle there, and serve as bankers to the local landed groups and chiefs, invariably helps in the growth of local economy. Such steps encourage the development of local as well as long-distance trade too. The case for Shekhawati was no different, and there are numerous records which describe the founding of a number of large and small towns or townships, accompanied by special invitations from the local chiefs to merchants to come and settle in these new places through the eighteenth century. Examples include Sikar, Malsisar, Ramgarh, Lakshmangarh, Nawalgarh (founded over the ruins of ancient Rohilli), etc.

Once settled, the Shekhawati-based local merchants indulged in local, regional and long-distance trade across South Asia. Old pre-existing trade-routes that had long run through here continued to be developed. Thus, the continued existence of small states and estates in areas like Shekhawati may be directly linked with the thriving mercantile activity centred around this area. Over time, these 'Marwari' merchants — as they came to be called, spread their trade networks across many parts of South Asia.

Later, as the Mughal Empire's hold weakened, and Rajasthan — and the Shekhawati area — became more susceptible to frequent monetary demands by the Marathas, Pindaris, and various neighbouring states and chiefdoms, the local conditions may have induced the mercantile community to strengthen its non-Shekhawati bases as and where possible. This, in fact, may have been one reason that members of an already well-networked community, expanded activities in areas far afield from Shekhawati. Here it may be noted that many traders may have followed their local rulers and their respective states' entourage to different parts of South Asia, when the maharajas and chiefs in Imperial service traversed the Mughal empire.

Thereafter, as ‘peaceful conditions’ were established across parts of northern India, following the expansion of the British in that region, and a similar situation in Rajasthan, following the signing of individual treaties between the British and the princely states, the ‘Marwari’ traders were able to recoup and restructure their activities. With the coming of a railway and road network under the British in the latter half of the nineteenth century, many of these merchant-houses expanded their activity-area across to Calcutta — the capital of British India.

MEWAR/UDAIPUR

When the reign of Amar Singh II (r. 1698-1710) commenced, the nobles were a divided force, and Mewar’s recent preoccupations had enabled Dungarpur, Banswara and Pratapgarh-Deoliya to shake off Mewar’s hegemony, in full acceptance of Mughal suzerainty. Amar Singh despatched his forces against these states and enforced the re-establishment of Mewar’s dominance over their affairs. On the architecture front, the Bari Mahal was built at Udaipur during Amar Singh’s time. His reign saw certain reforms in the existing land-holding system too. The administrative units were reorganised, and the practice of transferring *jagir* holders from one *jagir* to another was stopped.

Meanwhile, the death of Emperor Aurangzeb in 1707 saw yet another Mughal war-of-succession amongst his sons. Amar Singh took the side of Prince Muazzam, including during the crucial battle between Azam and Muazzam at Jajau in June 1707. The victory of Muazzam, who went on to ascend the Imperial throne as Emperor Bahadur Shah, ensured Amar Singh had the new emperor’s favour. In this, the Mewar Rana was more fortunate than Dhoondhar’s Sawai Jai Singh II and Marwar’s Ajit Singh — both of whom had joined the cause of Azam and would now face retribution!

To drive home his displeasure, Bahadur Shah sent his forces against Sawai Jai Singh II and Ajit Singh. The Imperial forces sequestered Dhoondhar’s capital, Amber, and Marwar’s capital, Jodhpur, as well as the town of Merta. Jai Singh and Ajit Singh made conciliatory moves, but failing to meet with success made contact with Amar Singh of Mewar. They

then secretly left the emperor's camp at Mandleshwar, on the banks of the river Narmada, and reached Udaipur in early May 1708.

In his *Vir-Vinod*, Shyamaldas notes that on hearing that the Amber and Jodhpur rulers had quit the Imperial camp without permission, Bahadur Shah's son, Prince Jahandar Shah, wrote to the Maharana of Mewar. He asked the Maharana not to provide refuge to the fugitive's, but to ask them to proffer their apologies to the Emperor. Provided this was done, the Mughal prince offered to intercede with his royal father on behalf of Jai Singh and Ajit Singh for the return of their respective sequestered lands. Shyamaldas states that apologies were duly submitted, but there was no response from the emperor.

Mewar, Marwar and Dhoondhar, meanwhile, had come to an agreement and joined hands to secure the return of Jodhpur to Ajit Singh and Amber to Jai Singh through joint military action. Amar Singh II also entered into a matrimonial alliance with Amber's Jai Singh II, through arranging the marriage of his daughter with the Kachchwaha ruler (as already noted). With their mutual agreements in place, Maharana Amar Singh's forces joined with the troops available to Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II and Maharaja Ajit Singh. Following a short campaign, these armies saw Ajit Singh of Marwar/ Jodhpur and Sawai Jai Singh II of Dhoondhar/ Amber secure on their respective thrones. In the interim, the Mewar ruler occupied the tracts of Pur, Mandal and Mandalgarh, which had gone into Imperial possession during the reign of his predecessor.

Sangram Singh II (r. 1710-1734) followed Amar Singh II on the *gaddi* of Mewar. A confrontation with the Imperial forces marked the early years of his reign. The Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah handed over the districts of Pur and Mandal to Rajab Khan Mewati, and those of Mandalgarh to Rao Inder Singh Rathore of Nagaur. Inder Singh declined Mandalgarh, but Rajab Khan set out with Mughal troops to take control of the tracts allocated to him. Sangram Singh's forces marched to oppose him. The two forces clashed on the banks of the river Khari near Hurda, resulting in the defeat of Rajab Khan. During the reigns of Bahadur Shah's successors, Jahandar Shah (r. 1712-1713), Farukhsiyar (r. 1713-1719), Rafi-ud-Darajat (r. 1719), Rafi-ud-Daulah (r. 1719), and Muhammad Shah (r. 1719-1748),

the young Maharana profitted by the alliances forged during his father's reign with Ajit Singh of Marwar and Jai Singh II of Dhoondhar. Both of these men were, despite occasional setbacks, influential at the Mughal court for much of the early part of the eighteenth century. Having Sawai Jai Singh as a brother-in-law proved particularly advantageous to Sangram Singh in obtaining Imperial *farmans* for holding Rampura, Dungarpur, Banswara, and Pratapgarh-Deoliya. The Rana added part of Idar's territory to his own too.

Emperor Farukhsiyar also granted to Maharana Sangram Singh II the right to strike his own coinage in Mewar in AD 1713. In the past, some of the early Guhila rulers of Mewar are believed to have issued coins on the pattern of Indo-Sassanian coins. Subsequently, rulers like the rawals Vairisimha (Vairi Singh), Jaitra Singh, Tej Singh etc., and still later, Kumbha and Sanga are known to have issued coins. However, in the period following Rana Sanga's death, there is apparently little evidence to suggest that subsequent Mewar rulers regularly issued coinage of their own. While the matter requires more scrutiny, it is known that in 1713 Mewar's prime minister, Pancholi Behari Lal, was sent to obtain the formal permission of Emperor Farukhsiyar for Maharana Sangram Singh II to strike coins at Udaipur.

After Sangram Singh II came Jagat Singh II (r. 1734-1751). Unfortunately, from c. 1731 onwards, Mewar had been faced with regular Maratha inroads and interference. Maratha troops took to swooping down upon Mewar and exacting sizeable indemnities from the rulers and the ruled alike. They also began to interfere in the internal court politics of more than one contemporary kingdom, in particular through offering or withholding assistance to particular members of the ruling clan.

Given this scenario, it is scarcely surprising that the 'Maratha situation' convinced successive rulers of Mewar to collaborate with other states in search of a solution. As noted already, the decline of Mughal authority in Malwa and Gujarat, and Maratha intervention in the internal affairs of Bundi, had emphasised the relative vulnerability of individual states. Aware of the situation, Sawai Jai Singh II of Dhoondhar played a

crucial role, along with the Maharana of Mewar, in calling together various fellow-rulers and chiefs for a race-to-face discussion.

Thus, the opening phase of Jagat Singh's reign saw a gathering of various rulers and chiefs of the Rajasthan region at Hurda, about thirty-six miles south by south-east of Ajmer, in northern Mewar, in July 1734. The deliberations encompassed matters regarding security in the face of the Maratha threat, and included measures for co-operation between the different local kingdoms, and with the Mughal authorities. Jagat Singh played a prominent part in these discussions. The rulers present agreed that at the end of the rainy season, their respective state forces would collect at Rampura and take joint action against the Marathas. This 'Hurda Conference' culminated, as already noted, in the signing of the 'Hurda Pact' on 17 July 1734. Rajasthani historians have stressed the fact that the Hurda Pact was the first time since the battle of Khanua in 1527 that a calculated formation of a Rajput confederacy came into being under the leadership of a Maharana of Mewar.

However, the confederacy remained a token one, and the Hurda Pact a paper tiger. Practically all the Rajput rulers involved in the signing of the Hurda Pact had individual perspectives and personal ambitions, as well as state policies that were basically at variance with that of their neighbours. This made the forging of a joint common action-plan almost impossible! Maharana Jagat Singh himself was temperamentally unable to provide absolute leadership in the fashion of his forebears like Rana Sanga. Nor, perhaps would his fellow-rulers have accepted it! He was also faced with internal dissension within his own court and state. In any case, the signatories did not assemble later at Rampura, as had been pre-planned, to take joint action against the Marathas, though some of them did join a subsequent Imperial expedition that winter, and were worsted in the encounter.

In 1736, the Maratha Peshwa, Baji Rao, visited Mewar (in the course of his journey through Rajasthan) and met with Jagat Singh II. The Rana was constrained to promise the Maratha leader an annual tribute of one lakh and sixty thousand rupees, besides an indemnity of seven lakhs. Maratha demands did not end with this, though, and from this time onwards they

were to prove a major drain on the treasury of Mewar. In fact, the Marathas took full advantage of the generally fraught internal situation within Mewar, including the strained relations between the ruler and his heir, *Kunwar Pratap Singh* (who would eventually succeed his father as the next maharana). The Marathas eventually suffered a check at the hands of Mewari forces under Rawat Prithvi Singh of Kanore. The animosity between Mewar and the Marathas did not last long because the Maharana soon felt the need of Maratha support over the succession dispute between the sons of Jaipur's Sawai Jai Singh II.

As noted in a previous section, Mewar had, predictably, taken up the cause of Madho Singh, the son of Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II of Amber/Jaipur and the Sisodia princess, Chandra Kumari, daughter of Maharana Amar Singh II, against Ishwari Singh, the eldest surviving son of Jai Singh by another queen. In 1748, Mewar's Jagat Singh II obtained assistance from Holkar for Madho Singh's cause, at the same time joining hands with the ruler of Kota, who wished to see Bundi restored to Umaid Singh. The matter was murky enough, with Scindia playing a part in the Kota-Bundi-Jaipur affair. Ishwari Singh of Jaipur was defeated by the combined forces at the battle of Bagru in August 1748, and agreed to give his half-brother Madho Singh four districts, pay an indemnity to the Marathas, and return Bundi to Umaid Singh.

The participation of Holkar and Scindia, who were already exacting their dues from Mewar, in the Kachchwaha succession struggle between Madho Singh and Ishwari Singh became a further financial burden on Mewar, for they had to be paid for their part. By the end of 1750, Ishwari Singh had committed suicide, unable to meet the financial demands of Marathas who wanted their promised sum of money without further delay, and the *gaddi* of Jaipur was occupied by Madho Singh. However, even after Jagat Singh II of Mewar and Madho Singh of Jaipur's gratitude for the assistance provided by Holkar and Scindia had been suitably expressed, the intermittent appearance of the Marathas, and the necessity to give them dues from time to time, remained an aspect of life for Mewar and Dhoondhar alike.

A different problem had cropped up for Jagat Singh during this period. His relations with his eldest son, Pratap Singh, had deteriorated so drastically that from 1743, the Maharana had imprisoned the prince. This incarceration was to continue till Jagat Singh's death in June 1751. Concurrently, during much of Jagat Singh II's reign many of his nobles and courtiers indulged in intrigues to gain position and influence at court. The resultant murders and dissension had their obvious adverse affects on the kingdom, and encouraged further factionalism and disorder.

On the death of Jagat Singh II in 1751, his estranged son, Pratap Singh II (r. 1751-1754), succeeded him. Pratap's short reign was mostly occupied in dealing with Maratha incursions and factional infighting at the Mewar court, alike, during this period. He died on 10 January 1754 and was succeeded by his ten year old son Raj Singh II (r. 1754-1761). Court intrigues and the demands of the Marathas continued unabated during Raj Singh II's occupancy of the Mewar *gaddi*. In 1755, the Maratha chiefs Raghunath Rao and Holkar came to Mewar. The same year Sadashiv Rao, Govind Rao and Kanhoji Jadhava demanded and received tribute-money from Mewar. It is said that during Raj Singh's short reign the Marathas overran Mewar no less than seven times, reducing the state treasury to near complete financial helplessness. The young ruler died without an heir, and the Mewar *gaddi* passed to his uncle Ari Singh (r. 1761-1773).

General internal disorder and factionalism at court, which had gained ground in the preceding decades, came to a head during the reign of Ari Singh. For one thing, Holkar and Scindia attacked Mewar on many occasions between 1761 and 1773 for collecting tribute-arrears that had accrued to them. In 1763, the forces of Holkar advanced almost up to Udaipur-city and withdrew only after Mewar handed over fifty-one lakh of rupees as *khiraj* arrears. Holkar, who already held the Rampura tract of Mewar's territories, later seized Joth, Bichore, Nadwai and Nimbahera. Nimbahera was soon afterwards bestowed on Holkar's Pindari lieutenant, Amir Khan, later Nawab of Tonk.

In 1764 a severe famine hit Mewar, and it was soon lamented that the price of basic foodgrains was the same as the price of tamarind! Meanwhile, the Mewar nobles had become even more alienated from Ari Singh. In part,

this was due to his ungovernable temper. They also held the maharana responsible for engineering the murder of his uncle, Nathu Singh, and the poisoning of Rawat Jodh Singh of Salumber. Thus, when Jaswant Singh Jhala of Gogunda put forward the claims of one Ratan Singh, allegedly the posthumous son of the late Maharana Raj Singh II, many of the chiefs supported Ratan Singh's cause. Ratan Singh occupied Kumbhalgarh and set up a rival *darbar*. Maharana Ari Singh used Sindhi Muslims, recruited into Mewar's army, to deal with Ratan Singh. In turn, the 'pretender' or rival claimant Ratan Singh obtained the help of Mahadji Scindia for taking the throne, promising a large sum of money (one and a quarter crore rupees, according to one version) in exchange.

Several of Mewar's recalcitrant nobles combined forces with Mahadji Scindia in support of Ratan Singh's cause. Their joint forces met the army of Maharana Ari Singh — which included the Rawat of Salumber, the rajas of Shahpura and Banera, and Raj Rana Zalim Singh Jhala, on the banks of the river Sipra (Kshipra), near Ujjain, in January 1769. Initial success came to the maharana's side, but with the arrival of re-inforcements, the Marathas rallied afresh and succeeded in defeating the maharana's forces. The chiefs of Salumber, Shahpura and Banera were among those killed on the battlefield from Ari Singh's side, and Zalim Singh severely wounded.

Flushed with their victory, Scindia's forces now marched towards Udaipur and besieged it for nearly six months. Finally, Ari Singh's minister, Amar Chand, managed to get Mahadji Scindia to settle terms. It is said that Scindia initially agreed to leave Mewar, and Ratan Singh's cause, on payment of seventy lakhs, but as soon as the treaty was signed, he demanded an additional twenty lakhs. A furious Amar Chand tore up the treaty and defiantly sent the torn fragments to the Maratha camp. Alarmed at this resolute and rather insane display of courage, Scindia reopened negotiations and finally settled on a sum of sixty-three lakhs. Scindia was given twenty-five lakh rupees in cash, besides jewellery, and assigned the districts of Jawad, Neemuch, Jiran and Morwan, pending the payment of the balance amount due to him from the maharana. These areas were not destined to return to Mewar. Scindia also held the Ratangarh, Kheri and Singauli tracts of Mewar.

Thereafter, Ari Singh took Chittor from Ratan Singh's supporters, and struck a deal with Maharaja Bijay Singh of Marwar in 1771 by which Mewar temporarily gave the fertile tract of Godwar to Marwar to prevent it falling into the hands of Ratan Singh. (Godwar had been captured by Mewar from the Parihars who held Mandore prior to the construction of the city of Jodhpur. It had since remained under Mewar's control). In return for their temporary occupation of Godwar, it was agreed that Marwar's forces would drive out Ratan Singh from Kumbhalgarh. Marwar took possession of Godwar, but failed to capture Kumbhalgarh. Bijay Singh then failed to return Godwar, which meant that Ari Singh remained the loser on all fronts in this deal! The unsettled conditions, civil war, and Maratha interventions placed a severe burden on Mewar's financial condition. The economic condition of Mewar was only to become worse in the ensuing decades. Meanwhile, the rivalry between the Chundawats and Shaktawats of Mewar, both of whom were closely related to the ruling house, did not make the task of holding together the administration any easier for the ruler and his ministers.

In 1773 Ari Singh was killed by Bundi's ruler, Maharao Ajit Singh, while on a hunting expedition. Ari Singh's eldest son, the young Hamir Singh (r. 1773-1778) succeeded him. As the new maharana was under-age, powers were exercised on his behalf by his mother, the Queen-Mother Sardar Kanwar of the Jhala clan, better known as 'Bai-ji Raj', who took on the mantle of regent. As per the decision of the senior chiefs of Mewar, 'Bai-ji Raj' was helped in her task by Bagh Singh of Kejrli and Arjun Singh Chundawat of Kiradu. She was also assisted by her loyal *davri*, or personal palace attendant, a highly intelligent and capable woman named Ram Pyari, whom the 'Bai-ji Raj' had raised to the position of '*Badaran*' (or senior-most among the women staff of the *zenana*).

Ram Pyari is alleged to have soon become the *de facto* authority in the kingdom. She is also accused of having Amar Chand, the chief minister of Mewar, killed. She had her own army unit, known as '*Ram Pyari ka Risala*' — or Ram Pyari's Cavalry Guards. To check Ratan Singh's activities, the redoubtable Ram Pyari called on assistance from Scindia to get some of the tracts in the possession of one of Ratan Singh's supporters, Megh Singh of Begun.

Meanwhile, conditions in Mewar had continued to deteriorate. Agitated Sindhi soldiers who had been employed as mercenaries in the state forces, but had not received their wages, surrounded the palace and remained there for forty days, demanding their payment. Following negotiations, it was agreed that the Maharana's younger brother, the six year old Bhim, and Arjun Singh of Kiradu would remain temporary hostages (or 'oal') with the Marathas and Sindhis until the money could be arranged. This was done! Other troubles loomed over Mewar too. For, not only was the state treasury practically bankrupt, with large payments made out to the Marathas, but the years since Jagat Singh II's death had seen the loss of considerable territory to the Marathas too. The latter meant a loss of over twenty lakh of rupees in annual revenue to the exchequer. During Hamir Singh's short reign, Scindia dismissed the Maharana's officers from districts that had been temporarily assigned to the Marathas, and seized the *parganas* of Ratangarh and Singoli. More or less simultaneously, Holkar took control of Irnia, Bichore, Nadwai and Nimbahera. Some estimates suggest that by the time of Hamir's death in 1778, the Marathas had exacted about one hundred and eighty-one lakhs of rupees, besides territory of the annual rental value of about twenty-eight and a half thousand rupees from Mewar!

At the same time, rivalry between two of the most important and politically powerful sub-clans of the Mewar house and court, namely the Chundawats and the Shaktawats, had reached epic proportions. Matters were not improved when the young Rana Hamir died under mysterious circumstances in 1778. His younger brother, Bhim Singh (r. 1778-1828), succeeded him. During the period of his minority, the Queen-Mother Sardar Kanwar remained regent, with Ram Pyari continuing to serve her mistress faithfully. Feuds between Mewar's aristocracy and Maratha support to various rival groups intensified almost from the start of his reign. Faced with a multitude of problems, the new Maharana and his advisors decided to call on Scindia for help. With Scindia's help, Mewar saw Chittor recovered from the Chundawats, and Ratan Singh dislodged from Kumbhalgarh. In exchange for this military assistance, Bhim Singh was obliged to pay a substantial amount of money to the Maratha chief.

Meanwhile, the diplomacy of the indefatigable Ram Pyari helped in partially resolving the long-standing impasse that had arisen in Mewar due to the Chundawat-Shaktawat feud. Ram Pyari undertook personal visits bearing messages from the regent to various premier nobles of Mewar (including Rawat Bhim Singh Chundawat of Salumber and the chiefs of Amet, Hamirgarh etc.), and convinced them to attend court. Thereafter, she also quelled attempts at sabotaging this 'unification' by travelling once again to strategic camps for continued negotiations with the concerned chiefs. Once the premier chiefs of the two sub-clans had placed their swords at the service of their ruler, Mewar's contingents took Nimbahera, Nikump and Veeran and advanced and took Jawad too, despite the resistance put up by a Maratha force commanded by Nana Sadashiv Rao. Learning about the events, Mahadji Scindia and Ahalya Bai Holkar despatched a combined force that managed to check and defeat the Mewar army in 1788 at Harkaya Bala.

Over the next few decades, the Marathas, though hard-pressed by the increasing strength of the East India Company, both around the Maratha 'homelands' and across northern India, continued to raid and plunder Mewar and adjoining kingdoms of Rajasthan. They exacted large dues and indemnities in exchange for military help. Mewar also faced numerous incursions by the Pindaris. At the same time, several of the nobles seized the opportunity to take over crown lands in the vicinity of their own respective strongholds. Not surprisingly, many towns began to be deserted, the state's economy faltered, and many parts of the countryside became a waste-land since cultivators feared working their fields. Meanwhile, the rise of the East India Company soon introduced another factor that Mewar would need to reckon with, as we shall see in the next chapter.

MARWAR/JODHPUR

In the state of Marwar, despite a partial reconciliation with the Mughal emperor in 1698, Ajit Singh had not been given Jodhpur as his *watan-jagir* by Aurangzeb. Relations declined again, particularly when Ajit Singh began putting off summons in 1701 to attend the imperial court. Obviously, he was still wary of Aurangzeb's intentions. In this he was probably guided by the

loyal Durga Das, then posted at Patan, in Gujarat. To end this influence, Aurangzeb's son, Prince Azam, who was in Ahmedabad as the *subedar* of Gujarat, engineered an unsuccessful bid on the life of the faithful Durga Das. Fore-warned, Durga Das, with his retinue and family managed to make for Marwar, though his grandson Anoop Singh fell in action, covering the rear. Ajit Singh and Durga Das joined to attack the occupying Imperial *thanas* (garrisons) which the emperor had not removed from Marwar. Such actions continued sporadically over the next couple of years. Imperial presence, however, prevented Ajit Singh from occupying Jodhpur during the lifetime of the Mughal emperor.

During the course of the war-of-succession that followed Aurangzeb's death in early 1707 (and ended with the accession of Prince Muazzam as emperor, under the name of Bahadur Shah I), Prince Azam granted the title of 'Maharaja' and a *mansab* rank of 7,000 *zat* and *sawar* to Ajit Singh. However, Ajit Singh did not fight in the battle of Jajau, which took place on June 8, 1707, between the royal rivals, Muazzam and Azam. Instead, he concentrated on strengthening his own internal position within Marwar, taking the fort of Jodhpur from the Mughal-appointed fort-commander (*qiledar*) Zafar Beg on March 12, 1707, and deputing subordinates to recover the neighbouring territories. As a result, Ajit Singh wrested possession of Jodhpur, Sojat, Pali and Merta from the Mughals by the time Prince Muazzam ascended the Mughal throne as emperor. The recalcitrant attitude of Ajit Singh compelled the new emperor to take action against Marwar, particularly as the emperor was not favourably disposed towards the supporters of his brother and rival.

While Bahadur Shah marched towards Ajmer, Imperial forces were sent against Jodhpur under the command of Mehrab Khan, who was appointed *faujdar*. The Marwar forces were defeated in the battle of Merta on February 12 1708, and the Mughal army took possession of the fort of Merta. The Mughal army under the command of *Bakshi-ul-Mulk* Shah Nawaz Khan advanced in the direction of Jodhpur, and Jodhpur was once again taken into Imperial control. Meanwhile, Emperor Bahadur Shah reached Merta. Under the circumstance Ajit Singh found it prudent to sue for peace, and on February 25 1708, Ajit Singh and Durga Das waited on the emperor at the village of Anandpur, near Merta.

Ajit Singh asked pardon for his previous lapses and requested that Marwar be restored to him. Bahadur Shah confirmed him in a *mansab* of 3,500 *zat* and 3,000 *sawar* along with the title of ‘Maharaja’, and the grant of three parganas — Sojat, Siwana and Phalodi as his *watan jagir*, but kept the issue of the return of the Jodhpur *watan jagir* in abeyance.

Around that time, the emperor found it necessary to march southward, in person, to suppress the revolt of his younger brother, Prince Kambaksh in the Deccan. As the Marwar and Dhoondhar situation were still volatile, Emperor Bahadur Shah ensured that Ajit Singh and Durga Das, and Dhoondhar’s Jai Singh II, with their respective entourages, travelled towards the Deccan with the Imperial cavalcade. This way, the emperor wished to keep an eye on their activities.

Both Ajit Singh and Jai Singh persisted, enroute, in efforts to have their inheritances returned to them. Secretly, they also opened lines of communication with Mewar’s Rana Amar Singh II. When it was felt that further approaches to Bahadur Shah would be ineffective, Ajit Singh and Jai Singh II of Amber, allying together, quit the Imperial camp (which was lying at Mandleshwar, near Ujjain, at the time), on 30 April 1708 and made for Mewar, reaching Udaipur in early May.

Negotiations followed between Marwar, Mewar and Dhoondhar, and (as mentioned), a series of mutual agreements (the Debari pact of 1708), and matrimonial alliances were agreed upon. After this, their joint forces advanced upon Jodhpur. The fort of Jodhpur was taken from its Mughal *faujdar*, Mehrab Khan in July 1708, and Ajit Singh formally took his place on the ancestral *gaddi* of Marwar at Jodhpur. It was the culmination of a long struggle on the part of Durga Das and numerous other loyalists, who had stayed with the cause of Ajit Singh throughout the arduous effort!

However, not long afterwards, Ajit Singh was to exile the faithful aged Durga Das from Marwar. Durga Das was never recalled to Marwar. He was sheltered by Maharana Amar Singh of Mewar, who gave him the post of *hakim* (master) of Rampura, and the *jagir* of Vijayapur. Following Durga Das’s death in November 1718, a cenotaph was raised in his memory on the banks of the river Kshipra, near Ujjain.

Following the restitution of Ajit Singh, the allied forces marched towards Amber, via Ajmer, to recover Amber for Sawai Jai Singh II. Emperor Bahadur Shah I despatched a force under Sayyid Hussain Khan Barha, but the Marwar-Mewar-Dhoondhar combine went on to defeat the Imperial army near the famous salt-lake town of Sambhar in the early autumn of 1708. Sambhar, for some considerable time afterwards, continued to be jointly administered by Marwar and Dhoondhar. Such joint administration was known as '*Shamlat*'. Ajit Singh also seized Didwana, after the battle of Sambhar, besides chastising Rao Inder Singh of Nagaur. Meanwhile, further joint action by Mewar, Marwar and Dhoondhar ensured the return of Jai Singh II to his sequestered throne in October 1708.

In view of the fait accompli at Jodhpur and Amber, and his own somewhat precarious position, pending full consolidation of the empire he had taken, the Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah eventually opted to change his policy towards Ajit Singh (and Jai Singh II). In this the emperor accepted the advice of councillors like his *Vakil* Asad Khan and Prince Azim-ush-Shan, who urged granting the title of Raja to Ajit Singh, along with the *watan jagir* of Jodhpur and a suitable *mansab*. By May 1710, official Imperial *farmans*, had been issued by the emperor, confirming Ajit Singh and Jai Singh as rulers of their respective lands.

Ajit Singh's immediate task seem to have been to consolidate his position, both vis-à-vis the internal situation within Marwar and in the defence of its borders, as well with regard to improving relations with the Mughals. In 1708 Ajit Singh annexed the Maroth territory, and established his own administrator, Mayaram, there. Over the next few years, Inder Singh of Nagaur was subjugated, and later his son Mohan Singh and grandson Mokam Singh murdered at Ajit's order. The Rathore collateral branch's Raj Singh, the ruler of Kishangarh too was defeated. Ajit Singh also participated in Imperial action against the Sikhs of Sadhauras and later served as the *faujdar* of Sorath, until the death of the emperor on February 19, 1712.

Ajit Singh's position at the Mughal court was further consolidated during the reign of Bahadur Shah's son and successor, Jahandar Shah. The new emperor not only raised Ajit Singh's *mansab* rank to 7,000 *zat* and

sawar, he also appointed the Marwar ruler as the *subedar* of Gujarat. Meanwhile, Ajit Singh also developed friendly relations with Churaman, the Jat chief of the Bharatpur-Alwar area.

Subsequently, following the death of Emperor Jahandar Shah, Ajit Singh took the opportunity of occupying Ajmer. Meanwhile, as he kept procrastinating over attending the Imperial court, in spite of summons from Emperor Farukhsiyar, and did not comply with orders to report at Thatta in Sindh, as the *subedar*-designate, an Imperial force, under the command of Sayyid Hussain Ali Khan, was sent against Marwar. Ajmer and Merta were both wrested from Ajit Singh's control.

The Marwar ruler deputed his *pradhan*, Champawat Bhagwan Das, along with Bhandari Raghunath and Khimsi to negotiate peace-terms with Sayyid Hussain Ali. According to the terms of the settlement, which was ratified by Ajit Singh on 19 March 1714, Ajit Singh was to send his heir, Prince Abhay Singh, to the Imperial court; to personally attend court himself whenever summoned, and to pay a '*peshkash*' or tribute to the emperor.

It was also agreed that Princess Inder Kanwar, the daughter of Ajit Singh, would be married to Emperor Farukhsiyar. This marriage took place on December 11, 1715, and was solemnized at Delhi, with Rajput customs given due place in the ceremony. Following Farukhsiyar's assassination, Ajit Singh brought Inder Kanwar back to Jodhpur, where she lived out the rest of her life. One of her sisters married Jai Singh II of Dhoondhar, and another *Kunwar* Pratap Singh of Mewar.

Following this settlement, relations improved between Marwar and the Mughal court. The treaty with the Mughal emperor brought about personal contact between Ajit Singh and the Sayyid brothers. During the rest of the reign of Emperor Farukhsiyar, Ajit Singh of Marwar became one of the prominent figures at court, as well as a close associate of the 'king-maker' Sayyid brothers. In November 1714, the emperor granted Ajit Singh the *parganas* of Jodhpur, Merta and Sojat, and by April 1715 Ajit's *mansab* had been raised to 6,000.

Farukhsiyar thereafter appointed Ajit *subedar* (governor) of Gujarat. In 1716 the emperor granted the *jagir* of Nagaur to Ajit Singh. Ajit needed to defeat his kinsman Inder Singh, grandson of Amar Singh, and the great-grandson of Maharaja Gaj Singh of Marwar, to occupy his new holding. A year later, the governorship of Gujarat was taken away from Ajit Singh in the face of popular discontent there against him. Ajit Singh apparently smarted at this move. When Farukhsiyar, beleaguered at his own court by the power of the Sayyid brothers and the overwhelming support they had garnered, urged him for assistance, Ajit Singh made his annoyance obvious. Displaying initial reluctance, he took several months before proceeding to Delhi. To woo him back, Farukhsiyar raised his *mansab*, granted him the title of ‘*Raj Rajeshwar*’, and in December 1718 appointed him to the *subedari* of Gujarat for a second time. However, the sands were running out for the unfortunate Farukhsiyar, and Ajit Singh was to have a prominent role in the murder of his own son-in-law.

Early in February 1719, Sayyid Hussain Ali returned from the south with his large army. His brother, Sayyid Abdullah Khan, Ajit Singh and Maharao Bhim Singh of Kota, met him and conferred. Still attempting appeasement, Farukhsiyar agreed to their demands, placing the *Dewan-e-Khas* and *Top Khana* under the Sayyids, and ordering Dhoondhar’s Jai Singh II, who had remained faithful to him, back to Amber. The emperor was now virtually isolated within his own palace, with the fort and court under the control of his opponents. Meetings between the Sayyid brothers and the emperor failed to resolve mutual differences, and on February 18, 1719, Farukhsiyar was arrested and imprisoned and Prince Rafi-ud-Darajat raised to the throne.

While the new emperor confirmed Ajit Singh as the governor of Gujarat, the imprisoned Farukhsiyar was murdered in April 1719. (After this, Ajit Singh’s widowed daughter went back to Jodhpur. She was granted a regular allowance by succeeding Mughal emperors). Ajit’s conspiratorial role in the deposition and death of his son-in-law was to remain a blot that was never washed away! The Marwar ruler remained one of the key figures at the Mughal court during the brief reigns of Rafi-ud-Darajat and, on his abdication a few months later, of his brother Rafi-ud-Daulah. Emperor Muhammad Shah, who ascended the throne after Rafi-ud-Daulah’s

premature death in the early autumn of 1719, made Ajit Singh the *subedar* of Ajmer, along with confirming him in the governorship of Gujarat.

The death of one of the ‘king-makers’, Sayyid Hussain Ali Khan in September 1720, and the subsequent arrest of his brother Sayyid Abdullah that November, marked a change in fortunes for Ajit Singh. However, he still remained influential both at the Imperial court as well as amongst his fellow-rulers and chiefs for a while longer. In May 1721 the emperor took away the *subedari* of Gujarat from Ajit Singh, and later that August, removed Ajit Singh from the governorship of Ajmer as well. Ajit Singh rallied his forces against this and soon raised his banner in rebellion, but was eventually subdued by Imperial forces under the command of Hyder Quli Khan. As punishment, he was made to surrender more than a dozen *parganas* to the emperor, including Sambhar, Parbatsar, Nagaur, Didwana and Bhinai. He was also asked to send his eldest son, Abhay Singh, to the Imperial court. This was complied with. By November 1723, the sorely disappointed Ajit was able to return to Jodhpur.

Meanwhile, at the Mughal court, Abhay Singh became more and more influenced by his friendship with his brother-in-law (and later father-in-law), Sawai Jai Singh II. The latter was one of the prominent figures at the court, and gained in prestige, influence and stature following the decline of the Sayyids and Ajit Singh, and that group of courtiers. It is held that Sawai Jai Singh was among those who advised and instigated Abhay Singh to rid Marwar of his father. Abhay Singh is believed to have given the task to his younger brother, Bakhat Singh. On the night of June 23, 1724, Bakhat Singh entered his father’s palace and murdered him. Bakhat Singh was saved from the subsequent wrath of Marwar’s nobles and other Rathore kinsmen when it became clear that he had acted at the written command (penned in a letter) from Prince Abhay Singh.

Sixty-seven individuals — wives, concubines, mistresses, and servants — immolated themselves on Ajit Singh’s funeral pyre. Some of his queens, worried about the safety of their minor sons, who were half-brothers of Abhay Singh, the new Maharaja, entrusted their sons to the nobles before they committed *sati*⁴¹. (Ajit Singh had eighteen sons and seventeen wives). Of these young boys, Kishore Singh was sent away to the

safe hands of his royal maternal grandfather at Jaisalmer, and Anand Singh and Rai Singh were taken into the safety of the hills by their Chauhan relatives. Later, Abhay's half-brothers, Anand and Rai, did raise the banner of revolt against him, but eventually fled to Gujarat. Still later, they succeeded in wresting Idar, where they established an independent Rathore principality. Idar would survive as a separate kingdom till the mid twentieth century, when the princely states merged into the modern nation-state of India.

Despite the turbulent era in which Ajit Singh lived, the Marwar court remained a seat for various scholars and poets. Among them was Jagjivanram Bhatt, who, besides poetry, wrote the *Ajitodaya* in Sanskrit on the life and times of Maharaja Ajit Singh. Other writers of note included Balkrishna Dikshit, who wrote the Sanskrit text *Ajit-Charitra*, as well as Dwarka Das and Hari Ram. The Maharaja himself, in the tradition of various ancestors, composed several works, including the *Guna-sar*, *Gaja-uddhar-granth* and *Bhav-Virhi*.

Taking into account his many qualities — both positive and negative, Ajit Singh is regarded by several twentieth century historians as someone who was jealous, impatient of advice, imperious in temper, and not a born leader of men. He failed to retain his popularity among his subjects, which he had held from his infancy as a result of the popularity of his dead father, and over the years he succeeded in alienating many of his clansmen and close associates.

In particular, Ajit Singh's attitude towards people who had supported his cause throughout his infancy and youth was a source of disapproval to many. The loyal Durga Das was rewarded with exile once Ajit Singh had gained Jodhpur and his ancestral throne in 1708, while murder and the occupation of his estates was the reward of Mukund Das Champawat of Pali, another noble who had been faithful to Ajit's cause. The name of Durga Das features in the official records of the Mughal court till c. AD 1716. *Khillats* were sometimes conferred on him, and his *mansab* rose occasionally. Emperor Jahandar Shah gave him the title of 'Rao', and a *mansab* of 4,000 *zat* and 3,000 *sawar*. Marwar chronicles, though, do not mention Durga Das after the Rathore victory at Sambhar. This may reflect

his relations with Marwar's Maharaja Ajit Singh, which had become wholly ruptured by 1702.

As far as the fortunes of the 'Mutsaddie' group of Marwar administrators was concerned, the reign of Ajit Singh had seen the Bhandaris regain dominance in administrative matters. Bithaldas Bhandari and Raghunath Singh Bhandari were among Ajit Singh's *dewans*, while Bhandari Khinv Singh was a close advisor, who served as the Maharaja's *vakil* at the Imperial court at Delhi. Khinv Singh's contribution to the ascendancy of the Maharaja in the Mughal court was significant. During the two terms that Maharaja Ajit Singh was governor of Gujarat, he used Bhandari Vijay Singh and Bhandari Anoop Singh as his deputies. As a number of Bhandaris held the posts of *hakims* in the *parganas* too, it has often been remarked that Marwar virtually had a 'Bhandari Raj' during the reign of Ajit Singh. Ironically, it was Ajit Singh's long-time subordinate and *dewan*, Raghunath Singh Bhandari who joined the conspiracy leading to Ajit Singh's murder. Thereafter, the Bhandaris received a set back, and even Ajit Singh's successor, Abhay Singh, could not save them from the wrath of the Rathore chieftains. The new Maharaja had to arrest Raghunath Singh and Khinv Singh. It was only after Maharaja Abhay Singh was fully in saddle that he could release them.

Ajit Singh was succeeded by his eldest son, Abhay Singh (r. 1724-1749). The Mughal emperor recognised the succession and paid Abhay Singh a personal visit at his residence in Delhi. Here, he presented Abhay Singh with a ceremonial robe of honour (*khillat*), conferred *mansabs*, and granted to him the *watan jagir* of Marwar. By a royal *sanad* (land-deed), Abhay Singh also obtained Nagaur, as well as some of Marwar's tracts confiscated in 1723 from Ajit Singh. In 1725, Abhay Singh granted Nagaur and the title of 'Rajadhiraj' to his brother, the parricide Bakhat Singh. The same year, Abhay Singh was deputed to Gujarat to suppress the rising of Hamid Khan.

In 1730, Emperor Mohammed Shah appointed him *subedar* of Gujarat. When the previous *subedar*, Sarbaland Khan, refused to hand over the *subedari*, Abhay Singh marched against him with a contingent of the Imperial forces, by way of Sirohi. Supporting Abhay Singh, Sirohi's ruler,

Man Singh II, sent along some of his troops under the command of a Deora chief called Thakur Narayan Das. Abhay Singh was victorious against Sarbaland Khan in a battle fought near Ahmedabad and the banks of the Sabarmati River.

For about seven years, Abhay Singh managed the affairs of Gujarat, besides defending the borders of Delhi and his own state of Marwar/Jodhpur against the incursions of the Marathas. It was not a trouble-free assignment. For one thing, the Marathas were in ascendance, while men and money from the Imperial Mughal court were in short supply (despite repeated requests). Abhay Singh took the advantage of the strife between Baji Rao Peshwa and Trimbak Rao Dabhare Senapati. With the support of the Peshwa, Abhay Singh managed the capture of the forts of Baroda and Jambusar in 1732. Pilaji Gaekwad, the Maratha *hakim* of Baroda was murdered through trickery. Abhay Singh's ties with the Peshwa were regarded with suspicion at the Imperial court, however. His detractors also held him responsible for harassing Gujarati traders and destroying the textile trade.

For a while, Abhay Singh returned to Jodhpur, leaving behind a garrison of 17,000 men and deputising Ratan Singh Bhandari to look after the province of Gujarat. He is said to have also carried back numerous guns and military equipment from Gujarat to Marwar, which he used for strengthening the forts and garrisons of his own state. It seems that between Abhay Singh's monetary extortions and those of his lieutenants like Amar Singh Bhandari and Ratan Singh Bhandari, who held the tract during his master's absences from Ahmedabad, Abhay Singh's governorship apparently marked a low point for the people of Gujarat. Eventually, in 1737 the emperor replaced Abhay Singh by Moin Khan as *subedar* of Gujarat.

In the interim, Abhay Singh had been one of the key participants at the conference held at Hurda in 1734 to check Maratha inroads into Rajasthan. He later joined the Mughal general, Khan-i-Daurai, and some of the signatories of the Hurda Pact in taking the field against the Marathas that winter. The Marathas prevailed, and demanded and obtained an

indemnity of twenty-two lakhs along with the right to collect *chauth* revenue from the Mughal-administered province of Malwa.

The same year, Abhay Singh and his brother Bakhat Singh's attempts to overrun Bikaner suffered a check. Trouble had arisen in 1733 following a dispute between Maharaja Sujan Singh of Bikaner and Bakhat Singh of Nagaur. Abhay Singh invaded Bikaner in support of his brother. Eventually, peace was restored between them. The Mewar ruler, Maharana Sangram Singh II, later initiated peace between the two Rathore kingdoms. Meanwhile, since Abhay Singh did not approve of Sawai Jai Singh II of Jaipur's policy of 'appeasing' the Marathas, he went to Delhi. Here, he actively supported the Mughal emperor towards steps for curbing Maratha power in Malwa and other parts of the Mughal Empire. In retaliation the Marathas invaded Marwar in 1736.

By 1739, differences had arisen between Abhay Singh and Bakhat Singh. Abhay Singh once again attacked Bikaner, but Bakhat supported Bikaner's Maharaja Zorawar Singh and seized Merta from Marwar. As a result, Abhay Singh temporarily abandoned his moves against Bikaner. In 1740, taking the help of Bikaneri nobles hostile to their own Maharaja, Abhay Singh launched a victorious campaign against Zorawar Singh of Bikaner. The latter asked Dhoondhar's Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II for help. This was given, despite Abhay Singh being a son-in-law of the Dhoondhar ruler, as Jai Singh realised the potential threat to his own lands from Marwar's expansionist tendencies. A large Jaipur army marched against Jodhpur. The Maharana of Mewar once again interceded, and Marwar's forces halted their campaign against Bikaner. A memorandum was presented by five chiefs of Marwar to Sawai Jai Singh in July 1740, followed by a treaty, which included a clause of payment of an indemnity by Marwar, before the siege of Jodhpur was lifted.

The defeat at Kachchwaha hands led Bakhat Singh to close ranks with his erstwhile estranged brother, Abhay. Bakhat Singh attacked Ajmer. At this Sawai Jai Singh marched against him. The armies of Marwar and Dhoondhar clashed at Gangwana in June 1741. Bakhat Singh's force of 5,000 Rathore warriors inflicted severe casualties on the Jaipur army. According to Tod, Sawai Jai Singh himself was forced to flee towards

Khandela. However, the vagaries of battle resulted in Bakhat Singh finding himself forced to retreat from the field. He made for Rian, where his brother Abhay Singh was encamped with his army. A truce eventually marked an end to hostilities between Dhoondhar and Marwar. Later, following Sawai Jai Singh's death in 1743, Abhay Singh occupied Ajmer and took the fort of Garh Bitli from the troops of Jaipur. However, mediation prevented an all-out battle between Jai Singh's successor, Ishwari Singh, and Abhay Singh.

Meanwhile, in 1742-43, Marwar and Jaipur states seized the administration of the salt-producing town of Sambhar from Raja Udai Singh (d. 1776), a capable and ambitious son of Sahib Ram, one of Sambhar's former administrators. In 1739 Udai Singh had been ordered to take over the governance of that town from its Sayyid governors by the Mughal emperor Mohammed Shah. As he went on to subdue the nearby areas of Jobner, Khandela, Khakhardi, Nagaur, etc. he was raised from the title and dignity of '*Rai*' to that of '*Raja*' by the emperor. Given the strategic position of Sambhar along the borders of Marwar and Amber/Jaipur states, Raja Udai Singh's growing power and status was worrying to the rulers of those two kingdoms. Induced by the false promise of a treaty, Udai Singh was manoeuvred into a vulnerable position, arrested and taken to Jaipur as a state prisoner. He was coerced to accept the suzerainty of Jodhpur and Jaipur and rule as their subordinate, but Udai Singh refused to do this. Sambhar came into the joint rule of Jaipur and Jodhpur in 1743, with both states establishing their own *hakims* or officers to conduct the dual administration. Simultaneously, forty of Sambhar territory's villages were also attached. Of these, twenty-eight were absorbed into Jodhpur and Jaipur states, and twelve were left with the local Sambhar administration, under the jurisdiction of the '*Shamlat*' or joint administration.

In the interim, Abhay Singh still had his eyes turned towards Bikaner. Following the death of Bikaner's Zorawar Singh, the nobles of Bikaner raised his cousin, Gaj Singh to the *gaddi* of Bikaner, leaving the rival claimant, Amar Singh, to seek help from Marwar's ruler. Abhay Singh promptly despatched a large force against Gaj Singh, but the Marwar army suffered severe setbacks at the hands of Bikaneri troops, much to the dismay of the Marwar ruler. In 1748, a year before his death, Abhay Singh

entered into an alliance with Holkar, by which Marwar and Holkar agreed to maintain cordial relations.

In keeping with the tradition of a ‘cultured warrior-prince’, commonly upheld as the ideal for almost all the princely and noble families of the period (and through most centuries), Abhay Singh too was a patron of literature and the arts. Several notable literary works — among them *Suraj-Prakash* and *Virad-Shringar* by Karnidan, *Abhayodaya* by Jagjiwan, and *Raj-Roopak* by Vir Bhan — were composed at the Marwar court during this time under Abhay Singh’s patronage. He is also credited with the construction of several temples and palaces at Jodhpur.

Following the death of Marwar’s Maharaja Abhay Singh in 1749, his nineteen year old son, Ram Singh (r. 1749-1751), ascended the *gaddi* of that kingdom on 13th July 1749. He soon became involved in a quarrel with his uncle, Bakhat Singh of Nagaur⁴². The uncle-nephew squabble escalated into a struggle over the possession of Marwar, which continued unabated over the next few years. Both sides sought external assistance on occasion, with the forces of Bikaner’s Maharaja Gaj Singh taking the part of Bakhat Singh and those of Dhoondhar’s Maharaja Sawai Ishwari Singh that of Ram Singh, for the latter was also Ishwari’s son-in-law. The Marathas were also approached, and Holkar and Scindia soon entered the field. The prolonged internal strife affected the well-being and financial condition of the kingdom.

Meanwhile, soon after ascending the Marwar *gaddi*, the young Ram Singh had managed to alienate and humiliate many of his courtiers and fief-holders by his behaviour. His arrogance and impetuous nature may yet have been tolerated, if his nobles had not felt themselves additionally humiliated when, with a view to undermining their prestige and status, Ram Singh conferred *jagirs* and honours on men of dubious repute. These latter were raised to the position of the young Maharaja’s confidantes. Upset at the state of affairs, men like Khusal Singh of Ahuwa, Kani Ram of Asop, and others left Jodhpur for Nagaur, where they offered their services to Bakhat Singh.

The death of Ishwari Singh of Jaipur in 1750 robbed Ram Singh of a crucial ally. Within a year, in July 1751, Bakhat Singh (r. 1751-1752) finally attained the throne of Marwar, after capturing Jodhpur⁴³. The displaced Ram Singh moved to Maroth, and sought and received the help of the Marathas and Madho Singh of Jaipur. Phalodi was captured, and Jayappa Scindia with a contingent of 5,000 horses attacked and occupied Ajmer. Scindia left Ajmer soon afterwards, leaving part of his Maratha forces under the command Sahiba Patel to help Ram Singh. On hearing that Bakhat Singh had marched purposefully against Ajmer, Ram Singh and the Marathas quit it without waiting for the arrival of enemy forces and Bakhat Singh regained control of Ajmer. Bakhat Singh tried to forge a loose alliance to keep the Marathas out of Rajasthan. With that end in mind, he met Sawai Madho Singh of Jaipur at Soneli. However, Bakhat Singh died in September 1752, before any tangible result could be achieved. The parricide Bakhat Singh was also an intrepid soldier and a liberal man, with a majestic bearing and a love of literature. He was himself a poet. To Bakhat Singh goes the credit for completing the fortifications of Jodhpur city, and adding to the royal palaces situated within the fort.

Bijay Singh (r. 1752-1793), the son of Bakhat Singh, succeeded his father, and Ram Singh launched a fresh bid to regain his lost inheritance. Several of Marwar's nobles, including the Mertia Rathores, and Sher Singh of Rian, had remained loyal to Ram Singh. With their help, and that of the Marathas, Ram Singh was able to defeat Bijay Singh's forces at Gangarda in September 1754. Jayappa Scindia and Ram Singh entered the city of Merta in triumph, while Bijay Singh sought refuge in the fort of Nagaur. Nagaur was subjected to a long siege.

The Marathas suffered a setback when Jayappa Scindia was murdered on 24 July 1755. Since the Marathas were not averse to changing sides and lending support, in return for monetary compensation, there was a build-up in popular hatred against them, culminating in the murder of Jayappa Scindia. Jayappa's son, Jankoji, took over his father's role, and his uncle Dattaji infused fresh courage to the Maratha soldiers. Faced by the formidable Maratha pressure, and finding himself bereft of additional inner resources and external help, Bijay Singh agreed to come to an agreement with his rival. By a settlement reached in February 1756, Bijay Singh kept

the territories of Jodhpur, Nagaur, Merta, etc.; and Ram Singh's rights to half of the territory of Marwar including the tracts of Jalore, Maroth, Sambhar, Parbatsar and Sojat were formalised. The Marathas obtained fifty-one lakh rupees and the possession of Ajmer.

Meanwhile, the prolonged squabble over the Marwar *gaddi* had provided various fief-holders of the state with an opportunity of strengthening their own positions. For instance, Devi Singh of Pokhran, who was one of the most hierarchically senior and actively powerful nobles of Marwar, joined hands with the Thakur of Ahuwa and other sections of the Champawat sub-clan of Rathores, to establish their hold over the state and its rulers. They also attempted to influence day-to-day affairs of the state. In fact, Devi Singh of Pokhran is said to have haughtily claimed that Marwar lay in the sheath of his dagger!

Some of the other nobles established secret correspondence with Ram Singh, the rival of Bijay Singh. The old relationship of mutual understanding, fidelity and bonds of unity between ruler and his kinsmen-nobles had become permeated, over time, by an atmosphere of fear, distrust, intrigue and jealousy. Or perhaps the latter too had always been part of court life! It seems to have been a feature that was more obviously noticeable whenever the ruler was either weak, or embattled, or circumstances enabled strong alliances of like-minded courtiers and nobles to come together and challenge the authority wielded by their kinsman-rulers!

Bijay Singh took the counsel of his foster-brother (*dhabhai*) Jaggu, a shrewd and experienced man, as well as of his own spiritual preceptor, or guru, Atmaram. One of the measures he adopted was to raise a standing army of paid mercenary soldiers that was to be independent of baronial levies. This lessened the dependence of the ruler on the troops brought to the mustering-ground by his fief-holders. At the same time, it gave the ruler a strong new force that could be used to keep the kingdom's turbulent nobles under control. Not unnaturally, the nobles opposed such a move by the Maharaja. Bijay Singh made every possible effort to appease the nobles, who were backed and accompanied by their powerful retainers. On their part, the recalcitrant nobles resisted any steps that they considered to be

against their own interests. This was, not unnaturally, a matter of worry for Bijay Singh.

The semblance of mild reconciliation between the nobles and their Maharaja continued for a while. Matters came to a head following the death of the Maharaja's guru, Atmaram. In keeping with custom, the nobles were invited to the fort to attend the guru's funeral-related rituals. Given the solemnity of the occasion, no one suspected treachery. However, *Dhabhai Jaggu*, the principal adviser of the ruler, considered this an apt moment to deal with the most outspoken of the senior Marwar nobles. Thus, Devi Singh Champawat of Pokhran, Kesari Singh Udawat of Ras and Chhatar Singh Kumpawat of Asop — three men who were regarded as being among the 'pillars of Marwar' — were overpowered by royal troops. They were imprisoned in Jodhpur fort's dungeons, where they died. Retaliation was quick to follow. Sabhal Singh, the son of Pokhran's Thakur Devi Singh rushed forth with a powerful band of supporters to wreak vengeance against the Maharaja. They plundered and devastated several of the state's villages. The death of Sabhal Singh in an encounter at Bilara relieved the Maharaja of a formidable enemy.

Marwar remained neutral during the Maratha-Abdali contest, which culminated in the Third Battle of Panipat in 1761. While the Marathas were involved in opposing Ahmed Shah Abdali in the Punjab, Bijay Singh began to annex some of the tracts that had been previously handed over to Ram Singh under the terms of the agreement of 1756. Bijay Singh used the pretext that Ram Singh's officials had interfered in the affairs of his territory. Ram Singh sought help from Madho Singh of Jaipur. The Jaipur ruler sent a force towards Marwar, but before any tangible result was forthcoming, Madho Singh himself was routed in the battle of Bhatwara (four miles from Mangrol), by the army of Kota. Ram Singh was unable to make a further bid for the throne of Marwar. He spent his final days in Jaipur, where, much to the relief of Bijay Singh, he died in 1772.

Following the fall of the powerful coterie of feudal chiefs and, later, the death of Ram Singh, Marwar was able to have a period of internal peace, and Bijay Singh could turn his attention towards other aspects of governance. Commerce revived too, and general prosperity resulted. In AD

1780 Bijay Singh introduced the silver '*Bijay-shahi*' coin, with the permission of the Mughal emperor, Shah Alam II. The *Bijay-shahi* coins carried, in Persian script, the reigning Mughal emperor's name, regnal year and mint's name (*Zarah Darul Mansur Jodhpur*) on the reverse, and the name of the Marwar Maharaja, a *khejri* tree and mint mark of a sword (*khanda*) on the obverse. These silver coins weighed 176 grains. The mint master's initials in Nagari may be noted on them. In time, Sojat, Pali, Merta, Nagaur, Jodhpur and Kuchaman became the mint towns of Marwar state (In 1859 Queen Victoria's name replaced that of the Mughal emperor).

Bijay Singh found occupation for the minds and swords of his restless kinsmen and chiefs by leading them against the free-booters of the desert region who lived by plunder, and also against various neighbours. Bijay Singh went on to occupy Sambhar in 1777, and expanded the boundaries of Marwar temporarily by occupying Amarkot (Umarkot) in Sindh. He also seized some portions of Jaisalmer.

Bijay Singh also found success by a different route when he obtained the rich tract of Godwar from Mewar's Maharana Ari Singh. Godwar was given to Marwar in exchange for the promise that Bijay Singh would dispossess Ratan Singh, a rival claimant to the Mewar throne, from Kumbhalgarh fort. Though Bijay Singh failed to keep his end of the bargain, he refused to return the area of Godwar to Maharana Ari Singh, despite the latter's pleas.

As far as the *mutsaddies* were concerned, with the near eclipse of the Bhandaris, other Oswal Jain families like the Singhvis, Lodhas and Mehtas took their place. Some Bhandaris continued to hold important offices, but the dominant position vested with the Singhvis. Thus, during the tenure of Maharaja Bijay Singh, Singhvi Akheyraj served as his *dewan* and Singhvi Bhim Raj as *fauj-musahib* (chief of army). Meanwhile, Lodha Shahmal, who joined the court of Bijay Singh in 1783, soon won the confidence of the Maharaja and was conferred the hereditary title of 'Rao Raja Shamsheer Bahadur' for his role in the 'Godwar affair'. Later on the Maharaja sent Shahmal to Jalore to serve as a *fauj-musahib* with the ruler's grandson, Man Singh. (Shahmal later fought many a battle against the forces of Bhim

Singh, who succeeded Bijay Singh in 1793. Shahmal's brother Mehkaran died in one of the battles at Bilara).

After the death of Ram Singh in 1772, Bijay Singh succeeded in improving relations with Jaipur. In 1787 Jaipur was threatened with the formidable army of the Marathas under Mahadji Scindia, who was also *vakil-i-mutlaq* of the Mughal emperor. Pratap Singh of Jaipur and Bijay Singh of Jodhpur were in close correspondence and formed a league against the common foe. Bijay Singh sent his forces to assist Jaipur's Sawai Pratap Singh against the attack of Mahadji Scindia. The battle was fought at Tunga (1787) in which the Rathores showed their valour. They charged though the battalions of Scindia's French commander, De Boigne, cutting down his artillery-men at their guns, and compelling Scindia to abandon the field. Following the battle of Tunga (discussed at greater length elsewhere), Marwar's troops captured part of the Maratha artillery and other possessions as their enemy withdrew from the area. Thereafter, Bijay Singh regained Ajmer, which had been occupied by the Marathas in 1756, from its Maratha-appointed *subedar*, Anwar Beg, and repudiated his treaty with the Marathas.

The genius of Mahadji Scindia and the talents of De Boigne helped the Marathas recover their position swiftly. The Maratha forces under De Boigne marched into Rajasthan to redeem the disgrace of Tunga. Sanguine battles were fought at Patan (1790) and at Merta (1790). The courage of the Rajputs could not withstand De Boigne's European tactics and the unlimited resources of the Marathas, and Bijay Singh was forced to agree to Marathas terms. He paid over an indemnity of sixty lakh rupees, and returned Ajmer to the Marathas in 1791, along with Sambhar and its productive salt-lake area, Khairwa, Masuda and twenty-nine villages of Bhinai.

Bijay Singh's eldest son, Bhom Singh, had died during his father's long reign. Meanwhile, the Maharaja was apparently under the influence of his favourite *paswan* (concubine), a famed Jat beauty called Gulab Rai, who had risen from being a singer attached to the Marwar court to the position of '*khawas*' (companion to the ruler), before attaining the formal status of '*paswan*' in 1766⁴⁴. She is said to have wielded enormous power over

Marwar, and made her presence felt over matters of administration. She also built the Gulab Sagar tank at Jodhpur. (Her arrogance eventually led her to undertake a pilgrimage-journey through the Jat kingdom of Bharatpur in which she flaunted her status and wealth in a manner that angered Jawahar Singh, the Jat ruler of Bharatpur, so much that he asked his courtiers to capture Gulab Rai. Gulab Rai was saved by the action of the younger son of the murdered Devi Singh of Pokhran, who, despite having quit Marwar and repudiated allegiance to its ruler after the death of his father and older brother, defended her with his small troop of soldiers, since the matter involved the 'honour' of the Marwar ruler⁴⁵).

At the prompting of Gulab Rai, Bijay Singh nominated his fifth son, Sher Singh, as his heir, in preference to the claim of his eldest grandson, Bhim Singh, (son of Bhom Singh). Since two other sons of Bijay Singh were still living, as were several grandsons, they did not consider the succession issue a settled matter in their own minds! In April 1792, Gulab Rai was murdered at the instigation of some of the Rathore courtiers, who resented and feared the enormous control she wielded over Marwar. Shortly afterwards, taking advantage of Bijay Singh's absence from Jodhpur (he was at Bal Samand), his grandson, Bhim Singh, along with his armed supporters occupied the capital. Bhim Singh held the town of Jodhpur for the next ten months, until he was finally persuaded to vacate it, after getting the *jagir* of Siwana.

Not long after this, on Bijay Singh's death in July 1793, Bhim Singh (r. 1793-1803) was successful in ascending the *gaddi* of Marwar, with the assistance of the powerful Thakur of Pokhran, Sawai Singh. Some of the rival contenders for the throne left Jodhpur, while others met untimely deaths, purportedly arranged by the new Maharaja. One of Bhim Singh's uncles, Zalim Singh, was defeated and forced to seek shelter in Mewar, where he died. Of Bijay Singh's other surviving sons, Sardar Singh was put to death and Sher Singh blinded. Sur Singh, one of Bijay Singh's many grandsons also met a similar fate. The sole major claimant who remained to effectively challenge Bhim Singh was his cousin, Man Singh (son of Guman Singh), who was beyond Bhim Singh's reach in the strong fort of Jalore.

After an initial consolidation of his position, in 1797 Bhim Singh despatched a force commanded by Singhvi Akheyraj against his cousin and rival, Man Singh. Man Singh, whose allocated holdings included the *jagir* of Jalore, successfully prevented Marwar state's forces from taking the town and fort of Jalore. Singhvi Akheyraj managed to capture practically all of Jalore *pargana* barring the town and fortress of Jalore, but Maharaja Bhim Singh recalled him and had him confined on the basis of rumours that Prince Man Singh had won Akheyraj over to his side. In 1801, Bhim Singh sent another expedition against Man Singh; this time under the command of Singhvi Banraj. He sent further reinforcements in 1802 under Singhvi Indarraaj, his brother Gulraj and Bhandari Gangaram. This met with more success, with the town of Jalore falling into the hands of Marwar's troops, though the besieged fort at Jalore continued to hold out. Banraj Singhvi was among those killed in action.

In the interim, Maharaja Bhim Singh died in 1803, leaving no heir to succeed him. Since his cousin, Man Singh — also a grandson of the late Maharaja Bijay Singh — was held to be the next in line to the Marwar *gaddi*, the siege of Jalore fort was lifted, and the senior courtiers amongst his erstwhile besiegers acknowledged him as their ruler and invited him to accept their escort to Jodhpur. Man Singh reached Jodhpur on 5 November 1803, and the formal coronation ceremony was held in the Marwar capital on 17 January 1804.

Maharaja Man Singh was, almost immediately, faced with the hostility of his late cousin's close supporter — Thakur Sawai Singh of Pokhran — and his allies; with Sawai Singh cautioning that only a ruler raised by the Rathore clansmen (rather than the *mutsaddies*) could rule over Marwar! Meanwhile, the new Maharaja appointed Singhvi Indarraaj and Bhandari Gangaram as his *fauj-musahib* and *dewan* respectively. The subsequent history of Marwar will be taken up further in this book.

BIKANER

Coming now to matters in another of the Rathore-ruled kingdoms during the eighteenth century — namely, Bikaner. With the death of the minor

Saroop Singh at Adoni in 1700, his younger brother, Sujan Singh (r. 1700-1735), came to the *gaddi*. Commanded to serve in the Deccan by Emperor Aurangzeb, Sujan Singh spent the initial years of his reign in the Deccan and southern India. He was to serve in the Deccan, off and on, till 1719.

The major part of Sujan Singh's reign coincided with the slow, almost imperceptible at first, decline of the Mughal Empire following the death of Aurangzeb. In 1707 Ajit Singh of Marwar made an unsuccessful attempt to take Bikaner. Attention was paid, thereafter, to further strengthening the defences of the Bikaner state. In 1716, Ajit Singh tried to capture Sujan Singh, but this endeavour too ended in failure for the Marwar ruler. In 1733 the forces of Marwar attacked Bikaner, but were defeated by the generalship of Sujan Singh's eldest son, Prince Zorawar Singh. By early 1734, the attempts of Maharaja Abhay Singh of Marwar and his brother Bakhat Singh to overrun Bikaner had ended unsuccessfully. Meanwhile, in 1730 Sujan Singh successfully quelled locally rebellious Bhati and Johiya groups, and took the fort of Bhatner (now Hanumangarh) from the Johiyas.

Sujan died at Raisingh pura, where he had proceeded in order to settle a quarrel between the Thakurs of Bhadra and Bhukarka. Following Sujan Singh's death in 1735 at Raisinghpura, his son Zorawar Singh (r. 1735-1745) occupied the Bikaner throne. He included some neighbouring areas into the kingdom, and tried to pacify certain of Bikaner's nobles — who were by now bent on going their own way. These included Lal Singh of Bhadrajun, Sangram Singh of Churu⁴⁶ and Bhim Singh of Mahajan, who had joined hands with Abhay Singh of Marwar.

In 1739-40 Marwar's Maharaja Abhay Singh, assured of the support of some of the Bikaner ruler's own nobles, once again attacked Bikaner. Zorawar Singh turned towards Sawai Jai Singh II of Dhoondhar for resolving the situation. The latter despatched his forces against Abhay Singh of Marwar. Faced with the siege of Jodhpur and with intercession by Mewar, Abhay Singh was driven to end his campaign against Bikaner, but not before the capital of Bikaner had been plundered. In the final year of his reign, Zorawar Singh moved against the Bhatias and Johiyas of the Hissar area. He died at Anoopura in 1745, while returning from his campaign against them, and there remain suspicions that he may have been poisoned.

As Zorawar Singh left no son, the nobles of Bikaner recognised his cousin, Gaj Singh (r. 1745-1788), as the next ruler of Bikaner. A rival claimant, Prince Amar Singh (younger brother of Gaj Singh), sought the assistance of Marwar's Abhay Singh — who had long cast covetous eyes on the kingdom of Bikaner, to further his cause. The Marwar ruler sent his forces against Gaj Singh, but the Marwar troops met with reverses, and the attempt ended in failure. So did an attempt by the Jodhpur ruler to negotiate a compromise in 1747, by suggesting a division of territory between Gaj Singh and Amar Singh.

In the course of his long reign, Gaj Singh repelled the territorial aspirations of his various neighbours, especially the Bhattis and Johiyas, as well as the 'Daudpotras' of the Bahawalpur area, through a series of border skirmishes and clashes. In 1748 Gaj Singh attacked the Bhattis of Bikampur, slaying their chief, and seizing the tract. Bikampur was later recovered by the ruler of Jaisalmer. In 1750-51, Gaj Singh joined Bakhat Singh in defeating Maharaja Ram Singh of Marwar, son of Maharaja Abhay Singh, near Merta. The acquisition of the *gaddi* of Marwar by Bakhat Singh thereafter secured Bikaner — at least temporarily — from further attacks by Marwar.

Besides protecting Bikaner against her enemies, Gaj Singh served the cause of the waning Mughal Empire. He sent Bikaner forces to assist the Mughal emperor against the Imperial vizier, *Wazir* Mansoor Ali Khan Safdarjung. In 1752, the Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah assigned the *pargana* of Hissar to Gaj Singh, as it was too unmanageable from Delhi. In addition to the renown he gained amongst his contemporary fellow-rulers, Gaj Singh also received the hereditary titles of ‘*Sri Raj Rajeshwar Maharajadhiraj Maharaja Shiromani*’ from the Mughal emperor, Muhammad Shah Alam, in recognition of his valiant services, along with a ‘*khillat*’ robe of honour. Gaj Singh was granted the *mansab* rank of 7,000 *zat* and 5,000 *sawar*. Subsequently, in July 1762 the emperor issued a royal edict conferring the permanent *faujdari* (military-cum-civil administratorship, or governorship) of the Chakla of Hissar-e-Feroza region on the Bikaner ruler.

Meanwhile, when the Marwar throne was being contested between Ram Singh and Bijay Singh, Bikaner’s Gaj Singh lent his support to the cause of Bijay Singh, and fought in the battle of Merta (in which Ram Singh, supported by Jayappa Scindia and the Marathas, was victorious). 1755-56 found Bikaner coping with a severe famine. Maharaja Gaj Singh made arrangements for the daily distribution of food to the needy. Many were provided employment through famine-relief related works, including the work of building the city walls of Bikaner city.

When the Bhatias and Johiyas again became restless in the northern part of Bikaner state some years later, Gaj Singh took action against them. Daud Khan, an Afghan chieftain from Shikarpur, who had taken Anoopgarh, was also beaten back, and the fort of Anoopgarh recovered. In 1768, Gaj Singh launched a successful expedition against Sirsa and Fatehbad. Later, he was able to undertake a pilgrimage to Nathdwara in Mewar.

In the turbulent times accompanying the declining power of the Mughal Empire, the reign of Gaj Singh saw the return of stability and prosperity for Bikaner. Interested in learning, Gaj Singh patronised art, literature and scholarship at his court. His reign also saw the introduction of

administrative reforms in the state administration. The massive protective walls at his capital owe their existence to his efforts. He executed various other construction-works as part of state-supported famine relief work during the drought of c. AD 1755 (VS 1812). Among these were gateways at Bikaner like 'Kot Gate', 'Jassusar Gate', 'Nathusar Gate', 'Shitala Gate'. Bikaner state was given the right to issue its own coins too in 1753 by the Mughal emperor. The coins weighed 174 grains and had the reigning Mughal emperor's name in Persian on the reverse. The obverse bore the Bikaner ruler's insignia — which in the case of Gaj Singh was a flag or banner (*pataka*). (Subsequent Bikaner rulers used their own respective marks, for example, a trident [*trishula*], royal umbrella [*chhatra*] etc.). One may also note here that around 1752 a 'copper mine' was reportedly discovered near Bidasar — and it would seem that the metal from that was fully utilised by Bikaner state.

During this general period, the might of the Marathas had begun bending many of the states and estates of Rajasthan to their will. However, luck and the geographical position of Bikaner ensured that Bikaner did not majorly face depredations at the hands of the Marathas, nor pay *chauth* or other tribute to them. However, on the internal front, Gaj Singh did face a far more traumatic situation, when he witnessed the rebellion of his heir-apparent.

Gaj Singh died in 1788, after a long and eventful rule. He was succeeded by Raj Singh, who held the throne for little more than a month before dying. He was allegedly poisoned at the instigation of one of his step-mothers and her son, his half-brother, Surat Singh. Apparently Surat Singh also contrived the murder of Raj Singh's minor son and successor, the six year old Pratap Singh. The throne now devolved on Surat Singh (r. 1788-1828), who was the fifth eldest among Gaj Singh's eighteen sons from six queens.

Soon afterwards, some of the nobles of Bikaner rose in rebellion. Surat Singh dealt with his rebellious chieftains with a heavy hand. However, on the diplomatic front, Surat Singh was able to witness reconciliation with Marwar. In 1799, the Bikaner ruler founded Suratgarh. Around the same time, he led an expedition of some 2,000 troops against

the Bhattis of Bhatner, but in the face of strong resistance by Zabita Khan of Bhatner, Surat Singh was forced to fall back temporarily. Later, with adequate re-inforcements and supplies, battle was joined again. This time, Surat Singh saw victory over the Bhattis near Dabli. The Bikaner ruler built a fort here, which he named Fatehgarh.

The same year (1799), George Thomas (the soldier-of-fortune already referred to above), marched against Bikaner. Surat Singh sought external assistance from the Punjab to deal with the attackers. George Thomas took Fatehgarh from Bikaner, but the fort was eventually recovered by Bikaner's army. In 1801, Bikaner's forces joined hands with Khudabaksh Daudputra (who had been deprived of his estate of Mojgarh by chief Bahawal Khan), and took many of the forts that lay along the crucial Multan-Delhi route, including Walar, Balar, Phulro, Mirgarh and Marod. Thereafter, the Bikaneri forces marched upon Bahawalpur itself. However, reconciliation between Khudabaksh and his chief resulted in the Bikaner army being paid off with a sum of two lakhs of rupees, along with the termination of the temporary Khudabaksh-Surat Singh 'alliance'!

In 1804 Surat Singh's forces besieged the ancient and much-contested fort at Bhatner, and took it from Zabita Khan and his Bhattis after a four months long siege in 1805. Bhatner was renamed 'Hanumangarh', as the Bikaneri troops saw victory on a day sacred to Hanuman. In 1807, the Bikaneri forces wrested Phalodi from Marwar's possession. Bikaner was soon involved in the succession-claims of Dhonkal Singh vis-à-vis Man Singh of Marwar, as we shall note another chapter.

JAISALMER

Jaisalmer's Rawal Amar Singh died in 1701. He was succeeded by his son, Jaswant Singh (r. 1701-1707). The new Rawal and the other, often short-reigning, successors of Amar Singh, namely, Budh Singh (r. 1707-1721), Tej Singh (r. 1721-1722), Sawai Singh (r. 1722), and Akhey Singh (r. 1722-1761), were unable to match the achievements of Amar Singh. Nor could they retain the prestige gained by Jaisalmer during his reign. Some of these rulers became victims of conspiracies hatched by their close kinsmen, as

was the case of the hapless Tej Singh and Sawai Singh, while the unfortunate Budh Singh was poisoned by a slave-girl. Thus, the period of these weak reigns saw the ordinary people of Jaisalmer suffer, while anarchy and crime thrived.

In addition, sizeable portions of the kingdom, including Pokhran, were whittled away by more ambitious and dynamic neighbours during this period. The Afghan chieftain Daud Khan of Shikarpur (whose descendants went on to establish, around 1730, the Daudputra-held kingdom of Bahawalpur flanking north-western Rajasthan to its west), wrested the territory bordering the Sutlej. Around the same time, innumerable forts, towns, and Bhati strongholds, among them Pugal, Khadal, Barmer, Derawar, and Phalodi, were seized by the Rathores. Jaisalmer witnessed many sanguine border feuds with Bikaner too during this period.

One of the few achievements of note, was the setting up of a mint in 1756, during the reign of Maharawal Akhey Singh. The local coin took its name from this ruler and became known as the '*Akheyshabi*' rupee. Jaisalmer state's silver coins weighed about 162 grains, and on its obverse carried the words '*Mohammad Shah Badshah Ghazi Sahib Kiran Sam Sikka Mubarak*' in Persian. The reverse bore the words '*Maimnat-Manus Sanah Jalus Darul-Riyasat Jaisalmer*'. Jaisalmer's mint took to using the mark of a bird on its coinage.

The general state of affairs did not improve with the accession of Maharawal Moolraj II (r. 1761-1820), who occupied the *gaddi* of Jaisalmer for over fifty-eight long years. He soon became a nominal ruler, leaving the affairs of administration in the hands of his prime minister, *Dewan* Swaroop Singh, who was a Jain. In the interim, various local fief-holders and chiefs had taken advantage of the weak administration of the Rawal, and increased their depredations and dacoities across Jaisalmer state. The *dewan* came down heavily on the recalcitrant and/or rapacious chiefs and nobles, thereby earning their ire. He also seems to have interfered in scores of other matters. His fate was sealed when the nobles rallied around the heir-apparent, Prince Rai Singh, who was smarting under many wrongs — personal and related to his kin, besides the ignominy of having had his allowance curtailed by the

dewan. Rai Singh killed Swaroop Singh, and with the connivance of his group of supporters, interned the Rawal in his palace.

Jorawar Singh, a Bhati noble, who rallied with his followers, to the aid of the Rawal, freed the ruler. It was now the turn of Prince Rai Singh to face arrest and temporary externment. Salim Singh, the eleven year old son of the murdered *Dewan* Swaroop Singh, was appointed to the office of prime minister. Soon thereafter, when Prince Rai Singh returned to Jaisalmer, he was imprisoned, on his father's orders, along with his family.

As the young Salim Singh grew up, he became more and more powerful. He had the heir-apparent, Prince Rai Singh, his wife and two sons murdered. He also manipulated the deaths and elimination of several other members of the ruling family and of nobles hostile to him, and established his autocratic hold over the state. Salim Singh's 'reign of terror', as it was perceived led to the migration of many sections of society from the kingdom. It also resulted in several of the exiled, dispossessed or fugitive nobles and landowners taking to looting and lawlessness.

Among those who left Jaisalmer at this time were a large number of Paliwal families. These Paliwals were descendants of the inhabitants of Pali who had come to Jaisalmer following the sack of their town in AD 1273. The Paliwals had, as a community, engaged in agriculture, trade and commerce, besides taking up service at Jaisalmer's court, and had done their share for local development. The exactions of *Dewan* Swaroop Singh and after that his son, *Dewan* Salim Singh, led a vast number of Paliwals to leave Jaisalmer state for good, leaving as many as eighty-four Paliwal villages permanently abandoned!

The general state of affairs played havoc with the administration, economy and well-being of the kingdom. For example, traders with caravans felt insecure crossing through the region, fearing plunder and the loss of their goods. This led to a predictable decline in trade and commerce, which obviously affected many other aspects of the economy of the desert-bound Jaisalmer! As a result of the sorry condition of things, therefore, by the second decade of the nineteenth century Jaisalmer state was more than

willing, when the opportunity arose, to tie its fate with the East India Company. We shall come to this in the next chapter.

KARAULI

Kanwarpal II, who had occupied the *gaddi* of Karauli from 1691 to 1734, witnessed the declining hold of the Mughal Empire and the growing might of alternate powers. The year 1734 saw the accession of his son, Copal Singh II (r. 1734-1757). It was with the accession of Gopal Singh II that the internal fortunes of the kingdom of Karauli entered a newer, more vigorous, phase in contrast to the internal dissension and weak administration that the kingdom had suffered in the preceding century and more.

Maharaja Gopal Singh seems to have inherited many of the qualities of his famed ancestor (and near namesake) Gopaldas. Not only was Gopal Singh successful in bringing the Yadavas of Muktawat and Sar-Mathura under his control, he also expanded the territories held by Karauli, and dealt successfully with various internal and external dangers facing his kingdom. Besides over-powering hostile neighbours and arrogant courtiers alike, Gopal Singh secured his kingdom from Maratha incursions, which, under his predecessors, had assumed alarming proportions, by agreeing to pay them a tribute.

Famed as a great builder, he was responsible for a defensive boundary-wall, made from the famous local red stone, around the city of Karauli, as well as buildings like the '*Dewan-e-Aam*', '*Dewan-e-Khas*', '*Tripolia*', and '*Nakkar-khana*' inspired by the Mughal style. The '*Copal*' and '*Madanmohan*' temples, dedicated to Vishnu, were also among the several temples built by him at various places. Copal Singh was conferred the title of '*Mahi Maratib*' by the Mughal emperor in 1753.

Gopal Singh died in 1757, and was succeeded by his nephew, Tarsampal (r. 1757-1772). The new ruler had to face the rebellion of Shikarwar Rajputs. The latter managed to occupy Karauli, the capital-city of the kingdom, but Tarsampal, rallying his forces, successfully crushed the

revolt and recaptured the capital. Tarsampal died in 1772. He was succeeded by his son, Manakpal (r. 1772-1804). By this period, the Maratha inroads into Rajasthan were becoming more frequent than before, despite the setback received in 1761 at the field of Panipat. In 1784 Mahadji Scindia succeeded in investing the small principality of Gohad, near Gwalior. Gohad's ruler, Rana Chhatar Singh Lokendra Bahadur managed to escape and sought refuge with Manakpal. Mahadji Scindia now sent a message asking Manakpal to deliver the Gohad chief into Maratha hands. Manakpal pretended ignorance about the whereabouts of Rana Chhatar Singh; at which Mahadji decided to attack Karauli.

The Maratha forces advanced up to Rampur, near Karauli. In the pitched battle that ensued, Manakpal was hard-pressed, but managed to hold his own, and the Maratha leader, Rodji Scindia, was killed. However, under persistent pressure from Mahadji, Manakpal was later forced to hand Rana Chhatar Singh to the Marathas. In 1795 Mahadji Scindia occupied the Sabalgarh part of Karauli's territories, along with the adjoining tract long known as Jadaonwati. Manakpal was also compelled to pay tribute to the Marathas. This was later commuted in favour of the grant of Masalpur and its surrounding area. While all this was going on, Manakpal was drawn into family feuds. This proved to be a necessary preoccupation, and the state of affairs continued till the ruler's death in AD 1804.

THE NARUKAS OF ALWAR

We have already noted that the region around modern Alwar has a long history, with the Matsya kingdom, followed chronologically by the chiefships of the Badgujars and Yaduvamshi Rajputs, as well as those of the Mewati Khanzadas, being among the political units that once flourished in the area. Other fief-holders, owing allegiance to Amber, or to the Delhi Sultanate, held portions of the Alwar-Mewat area too.

During the Mughal period, it was the Kachchwahas and Mughals who were dominant over different parts of the region. In 1671 the ruler of Dhoondhar, Mirza Raja Jai Singh I, who had earlier resumed Bhangarh from its chief, granted Macheri to a Kachchwaha noble, Kalyan Singh

Naruka of Mauzamabad, in acknowledgement of his role in putting down the Meos. Kalyan Singh traced his descent from a fourteenth century ruler of Dhoondhar, King Udaikaran, through the line from Udaikaran's son Prince Bar Singh. The overall region continued, of course, to be part of the Kachchwaha domain.

(Some claim that Bar Singh, Udaikaran's eldest son, gave up his rights to the throne in favour of his half-brother Nar Singh. Bar Singh received the estate of Jhak and Mauzabad, a few miles south-west of Jaipur. His grandson Naru founded the Naru sub-clan, and the descendants became known as the 'Narukas'. After Bar Singh came Maharaj Singh, then Naru-ji — after whom the sub-group came to be called 'Naruka'. Naru was followed by his eldest son, Lal Singh. Lal Singh, the ancestor of the Lalwas sub-group, served Raja Bharmal of Amber, and was granted a banner and the title of Rao by him. His son, Udai Singh, held the honour of leading the *harawal* or vanguard of Amber into battle. Udai Singh's son, Lad Singh got the title of 'Khan' from Emperor Akbar, while serving under Amber's Raja Man Singh. Lad's son was Fateh Singh. Fateh Singh had four sons — Kalyan, Karan, Akhay and Ranchhoddas. Kalyan Singh was the eldest, and inherited the title of Rao).

About c. 1720, during the reign of the Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah, Churaman Jat, son of Bhajja of Sinsini, ravaged the Alwar-Mewat area. Churaman's activities extended up to the old Mewat stronghold of Tijara. The situation remained fraught over the next several years — even decades, as the Jats, regarded by the Mughal Empire as 'mercenaries' and 'free-booters' plundered and pillaged across Mewati territory between around 1724 and 1763. During the latter part of this period, Churaman's great-nephew, Suraj Mai, ravaged Mewat and occupied Tijara and Bahadurpur, resulting in an Imperial contingent, commanded by Najaf Khan, being sent against Suraj Mai.

It may be noted here that it was under the Mughals that regular settlements and cash rent — part of the land revenue system evolved by Raja Todar Mai in Emperor Akbar's reign — came to be applied to the Alwar-Mewat area. During Mughal times this area, together with parts of the present-day districts of Rohtak, Gurgaon and Bharatpur, was known as

Mewat. The area formed part of the *sarkars* of Alwar, Tijara and Narnaul of the Agra *suba*, and included a small portion of Rewari *sarkar* which fell under Delhi *suba*. In Akbar's time this area yielded an annual land revenue of about twelve to fourteen lakh rupees. Certain privileged classes, including Rajputs of certain clans, Brahmins, *qanungos* and *qiledars* were given a remission of one-fourth on the ordinary rates.

However, in the Thana Ghazi⁴⁷ of the Mewat region, Rajputs, *qanungos* and *qiledars* usually paid between one-third and one-fourth of the produce, while the rest of the farming groups paid revenue valued at half of their produce. During the declining years of the Mughal Empire things continued on the old lines for a while, but eventually there was a reversion to the old system of collecting revenue, so that around the time the territory came under the rule of the Naruka clan, there was a mixed system of cash and kind rent-collections. The cultivators in Alwar had long been recognised as the 'masters' of the land, although the ruler was the owner or the overlord entitled to receive rent. The state asserted its own sovereign rights as a superior owner but always conceded subordinate proprietary rights of *biswedari* to the village community and its component members. Each member or unit of the community was entitled to occupy land in its possession as long as it cultivated and paid the state demand.

Around 1765, there appear to have been court intrigues that resulted in Pratap Singh Naruka of Macheri being banished by Sawai Madho Singh I from the Dhoondhar court. Pratap Singh Naruka went to his estate, then on to nearby Rajgarh, and later sought employment with Jawahar Singh of Bharatpur. The Bharatpur chief granted the *jagir* of Dehra village to Pratap. For a while, the exiled Pratap Singh Naruka remained based at Bharatpur, as a close associate of Bharatpur's chief Jawahar Singh. However, when relations between Jaipur and Bharatpur deteriorated and an imminent Bharatpur-Jodhpur alliance spelt a threat to the Kachchwaha kingdom, Pratap Singh quickly returned to serve it, and led the Jaipur forces to victory against Jawahar Singh of Bharatpur in the battle of Mawade in 1767. The battlefield is also called Maonda-Mandholi, and is located in the Torawati hills, sixty miles north of Jaipur.

The immediate cause of the battle followed from Jawahar Singh of Bharatpur's unexpected march through Dhoondhar's territory, enroute to Pushkar lake, and the 'bad behaviour' of his soldiers, which resulted in his being attacked on the return-journey by Dhoondhar's troops. Tod noted that, "whether the chief saw in this juncture an opening for reconciliation with his liege lord, or that a pure spirit of patriotism alone influenced him, he abandoned the place of refuge and ranged himself at his old post, under the standard of Amber, on the eve of the battle, to the gaining of which he contributed not a little"⁴⁸. In acknowledgement of his efforts, Pratap was given permission to fortify/construct forts at Macheri and Rajgarh. He also returned to an active role at the Jaipur court.

Pratap Singh Naruka (b. 1740) traced his descent from Amber's Kachchwaha ruler Udaikaran, through the Naruka line referred to above in the context of Kalyan Singh of Macheri⁴⁹. Kalyan Singh's Macheri estates were inherited by his son Anand Singh (mentioned by the name of Agar Singh in some records). Anand Singh was followed by Hathi Singh, Mokund Singh, Tej Singh, Zorawar Singh⁵⁰ and Mohabbat Singh, the last-named being the father of Pratap Singh of Macheri.

We have already noted how, in various kingdoms and chiefships across Rajasthan, junior members of ruling houses and their descendants either attempted to establish kingdoms and estates of their own through the strength of their sword-arm, and succeeded; or else took service — administrative or military, or both — within larger states. The latter could be in the state governed by their main branch, or it could be with some other neighbouring kingdom or kingdoms. If serving in a kingdom, these junior scions simultaneously held some lands and fief-ships of their own. Pratap Singh was no exception. He was also ambitious enough and capable enough to try for establishing his own kingdom, and fortunate enough that circumstances enabled him to have his way, as we shall note below!

After Madho Singh of Jaipur died in 1768 and was succeeded by his five year old son, Prithvi Singh, Pratap Singh Naruka was able to eventually achieve control as the regent of the state. As regent, Pratap Singh provided assistance to the Imperial commander, Najaf Khan, in the empire's

campaign, jointly with the Marathas, against the Jats of the Agra-Bharatpur area. In return, Pratap was awarded the title of '*Rao Raja*' and the *sanad* (land-grant) of Macheri, and in due course a *mansab*, from the Mughal emperor, Shah Alam II.

His position as an independent 'sovereign' may be said to date from this period, for Pratap Singh (r. circa 1774-1791) now made himself independent from Dhoondhar and set up his own kingdom. In November 1775 he took Alwar from the Jats and made it his capital⁵¹. Between that date and 1782, Pratap Singh added Bahadurpur and other areas to his territory. Around this time Pratap Singh also attacked and plundered the town of Baswa, which lay in Dhoondhari territory. The Maharaja of Jaipur sent a retaliatory force against Pratap Singh, as a result of which the two sides clashed first at Baswa and then at Rajgarh.

Events were taking their own turn in Jaipur, in the meantime. In 1778 the Maharaja, Sawai Prithvi Singh had died. His successor was his younger brother, Pratap Singh. Not long after, the former regent, Pratap Singh Naruka, pushed the claim of Man Singh for the throne of the Kachchwahas, saying that Man Singh was a posthumous son of Sawai Prithvi Singh. He also instigated the Marathas, led by Mahadji Scindia, to move against Jaipur.

We have already noted that when Mahadji Scindia demanded tribute-arrears from the kingdoms of Rajasthan, and along with forces of the Imperial army attacked Dhoondhar, Sawai Pratap Singh joined hands with Bijay Singh of Marwar to oppose him. The opponents met at Tunga in July 1787. Taking advantage of the situation, Pratap Singh Naruka occupied some of the territories of Dhoondhar. Pratap Singh Naruka did not live long after this, dying on September 26, 1791. In the absence of a son, he had nominated Bakhtawar Singh, the younger son of Dhir Singh of Thana, and a descendant of Rao Kalyan Singh's son, Shyam Singh of Para, to be his successor.

Pratap was obviously cast in the mould of his times. He showed ruthlessness and self-seeking in certain dealings; firmness and resolution in others (particularly as regent of Jaipur). He was able to further his own

interests amidst the chaotic scenario of his times; and he could change masters on occasion, if that served immediate interests, as we have already noted above. He also knew how to add to his territory and treasury! When one of his relatives, Sarup Singh of Ramgarh and Lachhmangarh, was brought to Alwar as a prisoner over an intra-clan quarrel, and refused to swear allegiance to Pratap Singh, he was executed and his estates confiscated. Lands were also snatched from the local Jats. Pratap Singh Naruka also added to his wealth by helping himself to some of the possessions of a rich citizen from Ghazi-ka-Thana (i.e. Thana Ghazi), and by plundering Baswa, a town belonging to Jaipur state. This act resulted in a raid by the Jaipur ruler in person, upon Rajgarh fort. The Maharaja failed to take Rajgarh and to defeat his former vassal, on account of the alliance Pratap had formed with the Marathas.

In keeping with his contemporaries, Pratap Singh was a patron of the arts. In particular, he encouraged the development of fine arts in his new kingdom of Alwar along the lines of the established 'Jaipur School'. This got further impetus in the reign of his successor, and led to the development of a distinct Alwar School' of painting.

Bakhtawar Singh was a minor when he succeeded Pratap Singh. The early years of the young Bakhtawar Singh's reign (r. 1791-1815) were turbulent⁵², entailing hostilities with the parent-state of Jaipur as well the Marathas. Mahadji Scindia defeated Bakhtawar Singh's forces at the battle of Kathumar, while Jaipur occupied some parts of Alwar with the help of the Marathas. Ringed by antagonistic forces, Bakhtawar Singh turned to the East India Company for aid.

In response, General Lake moved against the Marathas, taking Aligarh on September 4 1803, before marching towards Delhi. The East India Company's forces then took Agra. Towards the end of October, General Lake marched westward from Agra, to meet the strong Maratha force, which was known to be near Kathumar (twenty-seven miles, or forty-three kilometres north-west of Bharatpur). On 29 October Lake was joined by Ahmed Baksh Khan, the Alwar *vakil*, with a body of Alwar state's troops and a contingent of Meos. The latter were particularly useful in providing supplies and information about Maratha troop movements. Lake's forces

reached Kathumar on the evening of 31 October, only to find that the Marathas, having attacked Kathumar on the 29th, had left that very morning and retreated northwards. The Marathas intended to entrench themselves in the strong fort of Kishangarh, but were overtaken by Lake's forces on 1 November 1803, at Laswari (sometimes spelt as Laswadi), a small village eighty miles south-east of Ramgarh and twenty miles, or thirty-two kilometres east of Alwar on the banks of Ruparel. Lake's able command and presence of mind saw the defeat of the Marathas on that day. Maratha casualties were high, with 700 dead and 2,000 taken prisoner.

This battle of Laswari effectively marked an end to Maratha hegemony over this region. The East India Company granted a part of Mewat and its surrounding area (some of which now forms part of Haryana), to Bakhtawar Singh. In turn, he entered into a treaty, promising mutual co-operation, with the Company in November AD 1803.

While we shall continue the history of this area in the next chapter, it may be relevant to take note at this point that in the treaty with Lord Lake, Bakhtawar Singh is styled as Maharaja Sawai Bakhtawar Singh. As there is no indication of this title of 'Sawai' being a direct grant by the Mughal emperor upon the ruling house of Alwar, it appears that Pratap Singh Naruka adopted this title of 'Sawai' in imitation of Jaipur, or perhaps in direct rivalry with it, soon after establishing his own state of Alwar. Given his Kachchwaha clan ancestry — of which the Narukas are an off-shoot — and his personality, the step was probably predictable!

THE 'JATWARA' KINGDOMS OF BHARATPUR AND DHOLPUR

Agrarian communities had long had to bear the brunt of increased land-revenues and a range of assessment methods that prevailed in different parts of Rajasthan and areas under direct Mughal control, and we have already mentioned the land-related unrest in many parts of India during the latter part of Aurangzeb's reign, which saw the rise of the Jats (among other groups). Some other parts of Rajasthan were to see agrarian movements at a later point in time, when nineteenth-twentieth century land settlement

activities and concomitant factors came together to push the farmers to the brink.

In the interim, in the Mathura-Bharatpur tracts, Churaman, the son of Bhajja of Sinsini, soon became recognised as a natural leader among the Jats. His organisational abilities came into play with the erection of fortifications at Thun, Sinsini etc. In 1705, Churaman made Thun his headquarters. Subsequently, during the war of succession between the Mughal princes Muazzam and Azam, in July 1707 at Jajau, Churaman plundered the camps of both armies with absolute impartiality. Muazzam, who succeeded to the throne as Emperor Bahadur Shah I, gave Churaman a *mansab* of 1,500 *zat* and 500 *sawar*. On Bahadur Shah's death, another bloody war of succession for the Mughal throne took place between his surviving sons. Jahandar Shah emerged the winner.

Taking advantage of the internal power struggles at the Imperial court, Churaman took to leading raiding parties around the Agra-Delhi areas. In January 1713 Farukhsiyar challenged Emperor Jahandar Shah. As Churaman had a powerful following, both Jahandar Shah and his challenger sought his aid. However, in the battle between the two, Churaman repeated what he had done at earlier at Jajau — namely, waited his opportunity, and then plundered the camps of both the rival armies with equal impartiality! Churaman even plundered the baggage-carts of the defeated Imperial army of Emperor Jahandar Shah.

Unable to check him, the new emperor, Farukhsiyar, (r. 1713-1719), gave Churaman the charge of watching over and patrolling the Imperial highway from Delhi towards the Chambal river-crossing to the south-west, possibly hoping that by letting Churaman collect toll in a legitimate manner, indiscriminate plunder of travellers could be curbed.

Later, Farukhsiyar became disturbed with the activities of Churaman, but found his forces unable to quell the Jats. Having initially met with reverses, the fortune of the Imperial Mughal forces changed when Sawai Jai Singh II of Amber/Jaipur was entrusted with the task of taking appropriate action against the Jats. Jai Singh besieged Churaman at Thun for twenty long months. Churaman managed to negotiate with the Imperial *wazir*,

Qutb-ul-Mulk Sayyid Abdullah Khan, and by offering a large amount of money as 'tribute' to the Mughal emperor, effected the raising of the siege and his freedom, much to the chagrin of Jai Singh, who was not even consulted in the matter. (Churaman negotiated with the powerful Sayyid brothers through Khan Jahan. Shekhawati chiefs like Sagat Singh of Manoharpur acted on Churaman's behalf. Khandela's Udai Singh too was involved, and was subsequently punished by Sawai Jai Singh II).

Following the assassination of Farukhsiyar in 1719, a battle took place at Hodel in 1720 between the two rival Mughal claimants to the Mughal throne, namely Mohammad Shah and Nekusiyar. Churaman again looted the camps of the rivals and collected cash and articles worth rupees sixty lakh. In the interim, he had also established friendly relations with Marwar's Maharaja Ajit Singh — powerful both at the Imperial Mughal court and amongst his fellow-Rajput ruling fraternity — to counter any threat from the equally powerful Sawai Jai Singh II of Amber.

Around this time, mutual friction led to a split amongst the Jats. One group came to be headed by Churaman and his son Mokham Singh, and another by Churaman's nephew, Badan Singh. The latter lived at Sinsini and had close contacts with Sawai Jai Singh. Churaman arrested Badan Singh and his supporter, Roop Singh, and brought them to Thun. However, both were released after fellow-Jats threatened to socially boycott the marriage of Churaman's son, Mokham Singh.

In November 1721 Jai Singh of Amber's forces marched against Churaman's fortified headquarters at Thun. Dismayed and weakened by the turn of events, Churaman took his own life. Meanwhile, Jai Singh II (who had been appointed the *subedar* of Agra), met with further success, when he won over Badan Singh, the nephew of Churaman, to his side. Following strong but futile resistance by Churaman's son, Mokham, Jai Singh was successful in enforcing mastery over Thun and the surrounding area in 1722. Jadunath Sarkar informs us that the city of Thun was ploughed by asses to make it an accursed soil, unfit to serve as a seat of royalty. Churaman's son, Mokham Singh fled to Jodhpur where Maharaja Ajit Singh gave him shelter.

Badan Singh was accorded formal recognition as chief (r. 1723-1756), and granted the title of '*Braj Raj*', along with the insignia of chiefship (like the *nakkara* kettle-drum, banner, etc.), and the *jagir* of Deeg. In return, Badan Singh accepted the supremacy of the emperor and agreed to pay tribute to Delhi. The turn of events enabled Badan Singh to make the transition from a prominent land-holder to a chief. Badan Singh acknowledged his obligation to Sawai Jai Singh in this, and undertook to pay '*khiraj*' to Dhoondhar. Also, accepting the overlordship of Jai Singh, Badan Singh took to attending the Dhoondhar court on all occasions that such a relationship called for.

Jai Singh II entrusted the charge of patrolling and maintaining the safety of the highways connecting Delhi, Agra and Jaipur etc. to Badan Singh. The duty carried with it the task of collecting transit duties and taxes from travellers. In 1730, Jai Singh asked Badan Singh to suppress the Meos of Mewat. Badan Singh sent his forces under the command of Suraj Mal (b. ? 1707), who was successful in his allocated task. Jai Singh placed Mewat under Badan Singh. The territory brought him an annual income of about eighteen lakh rupees.

With his status as an independent chief of the Bharatpur area legitimised, Badan Singh soon established his authority over other Jat groups. To strengthen his position, Badan Singh also used the age-old device of entering into matrimonial alliances with the most powerful of the Jat families of the region. Tradition ascribes to him as many as a hundred and fifty wives and numerous children.

Consolidating his hold, and acquiring more and more lands, Badan Singh came to occupy much of the present-day Bharatpur district as well as its neighbouring areas. To finance his activities, and to fulfil other treasury needs, he took to extracting regular tribute from surrounding tracts. The bounty thus collected went towards both consolidation, and further expansionist, activities. Much of the excess money led to the eventual construction of the various forts and palaces at Deeg, Kumher, Bharatpur and Weir, and the laying-out of gardens and new towns. The fort and palace architecture of these places reflects a combination of Mughal, Rajput and pan-north Indian architecture of the eighteenth century. This is hardly

surprising when one considers that among the work force that created these structures were scores of masons and artisans brought in from Agra and Delhi by Badan Singh and Surajmal.

Badan Singh, like his successor, Suraj, seems to have had a fondness for building. He ordered the start of work on his palace complex at Deeg in 1725. Jeevanram Banchari, his minister for public works, supervised the initial construction here and at various other buildings at Deeg, Bharatpur, Kumher and Weir. Tradition holds that 1,000 bullock carts, 200 horse carriages, 1,500 camel carts and 500 mules carried marble from Bansi Paharpur and stone from Baratha to Deeg etc., and that 20,000 workers laboured for over twenty-five years on the structures. Deeg's Gopal Bhawan palace, with its sandstone *Dewan-e-Aam*, was finished in 1745. Suraj Mal contributed the ornate marble swing at the front of this palace. This, like other pieces in Surajmal's possession had originally belonged to the palaces of the Imperial Mughals, and had been brought away by him from Delhi and Agra.

Meanwhile, in 1732, Badan Singh deputed his adopted son, Suraj Mal, to wrest the *zamindari* of Soghar. After acquiring Soghar in 1733 from Khem Karan, a Jat of the Sogariya clan, Suraj Mal started the construction on a fort near Soghar, which later came to be known as Bharatpur. According to some versions, there existed a small local fort here that had been built by Rustam, Khem Karan's ancestor, and this became the core of Surajmal's new Bharatpur fort. In time, Bharatpur would serve as the capital of the Jat-ruled state of the same name — and would continue to remain the headquarters of the district of Bharatpur once independent India's state of Rajasthan came into being in April 1949.

Additions to the Bharatpur fort went on over the ensuing century. In time, Bharatpur fort was to win acclaim as one of India's formidable forts. The outer moat of this fort was some two hundred and fifty feet wide and five hundred feet deep. In addition, a twenty-five feet high and thirty feet broad protective-wall of thick mud encircled the city. Guarded gates controlled entry within this outer wall. An inner moat, a hundred and seventy feet wide and forty feet deep, ringed the fort. Two bridges on either side spanned this moat, leading to the gates of the main fort. The fort-walls

were of reinforced mud, and were well able to withstand and absorb the shock of artillery fire. Within, the fort had eight bastions, with cannons for defence placed upon them.

By now Badan Singh's eyesight had begun to fail. Suraj Mal⁵³ thus became the de-facto ruler of the Jat territory, even though Badan Singh remained the formal chief. In 1745, Suraj Mal received the gratitude and approval of the Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah for helping the declining empire against Ali Mohammed Ruhela. Suraj Mal also played a prominent part in checking the alliance of Mewar, the Marathas, and other supporters of the claim of Madho Singh to the Jaipur throne, at the battle of Bagru in 1748. He fought in this on the side of Sawai Ishwari Singh of Jaipur. His skills as military commander and strategist continued to be in evidence. In 1749-50, the Mughal army under *Mir Bakshi* Salabat Jung Khan ravaged Mewar and captured the fort of Neemrana. The Jats clashed with the Mughal army at Saraj Sobhachand, inflicting losses on it.

In 1751, the emperor formally recognised Badan Singh as ruler of Bharatpur and conferred a suitable *mansab*, along with the hereditary title of Raja on him. At the advice of the Imperial *wazir* (*vizier*) Safdarjung, Suraj Mal was appointed *faujdar* of Mathura and Rohilkhand in 1751-1752. The emperor dismissed Safdarjung in 1753 and confiscated his estates. Safdarjung responded by besieging Delhi. Suraj Mal too reached the city with his large army, and plundered vulnerable portions of it. (The event remained immortalised in the memories of successive generations of Delhi-dwellers by the term '*Jat gardi*'). Meanwhile, the Rohilla warriors rushed to the aid of the emperor, compelling Safdarjung to sue for peace. Safdarjung got back his *jagir* but not the office of *wazir*. Suraj Mal emerged a gainer, nonetheless, having garnered a vast booty from the citizens of Delhi!

In 1754, the Bharatpur-Deeg-Mathura area faced an incursion by the Marathas led by Peshwa Raghunath Rao. Entrusting the defence of Deeg to his son Jawahar Singh (also called Jawaharmal in Rajasthan's oral traditions), Suraj Mal shifted to the better-equipped and better-provisioned fort of Kumher. The Marathas besieged Kumher, but Suraj Mal continued to hold out. Soon afterwards, a Mughal contingent under its *Mir Bakshi* Imad-ul-Mulk, along with Khanda Rao Holkar and the Jaipur forces, arrived at

Kumher. Suraj Mal, feeling the effects of a four month long siege, opted to make peace with the Marathas, paying them rupees thirty lakh.

Not long after this, Imad-ul-Mulk and Holkar arranged the assassination of the Mughal emperor Ahmad Shah. Imad-ul-Mulk raised Prince Aziz-ud-din to the Imperial throne as Emperor Alamgir II, and had himself appointed the *wazir*. Taking advantage of the unsettled conditions at the Mughal court, Suraj Mal occupied a large part of the province of Agra. He also annexed Palwal, Ballabgarh and Alwar. The new Imperial *wazir* despatched an expedition against Suraj Mal. The Mughal commander Najib Khan reached a settlement with Suraj Mal, by which the Jat chief was allowed to retain the land in Aligarh district but had to vacate Sikandarabad.

In 1756, Ahmad Shah Abdali Durrani who had succeeded Nadir Shah as ruler of Afghanistan, conquered the Punjab area and entered the Imperial province of Delhi. In January 1757, having humbled the Mughal emperor, Ahmad Shah Abdali proceeded towards Bharatpur to seize the wealth collected by the Jats. He defeated Jawahar Singh, captured Ballabgarh, and massacred most of its population. The Afghans forces devastated Mathura and Agra too. While they were massed and preparing to attack Bharatpur, cholera broke out in the camp of the invaders. It is said that nearly a hundred of Abdali's men began to die each day, and the worried Afghan wound up his campaign and turned away for Delhi and then Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, Badan Singh had died on 7 June 1756, and was succeeded by his adopted son, Suraj Mal (r. 1756-1763). Suraj Mal continued the task he had already taken well in hand — namely, of continuously expanding the borders of Bharatpur further. Under Suraj Mal, the authority of Bharatpur, would in time, encompass the Gangetic Doab districts of Agra, Dholpur, Mainpuri, Hathras, Aligarh, Etawah, Meerut, Rohtak, Farrukhnagar, Mewat, Rewari, Gurgaon and Mathura.

Suraj Mal, described as 'the Plato of the Jat tribe' and as the 'Jat Ulysses', because of his political sagacity, steady intellect and clear vision, in some twentieth century history textbooks, was by this time a seasoned warrior. As such, he was successful in expanding his territorial hold across much of the Ganga-Yamuna Doab, Mewat, and Dholpur. Suraj Mal

successfully occupied many parts of the *suba* of Agra too, with the cognisance of Raghunath Rao. Later, the emperor conferred the title of 'Kumar Bahadur' on Suraj Mal.

The period between c. 1757 and 1761 marks the zenith of Suraj Mal's diplomacy and statesmanship as far as coping with the situation around the invasion of the Afghan Ahmad Shah Abdali Durrani, more commonly called Ahmad Shah Abdali. The shrewd Suraj Mal adopted the policy of partial help and occasional withdrawal of the offer, which gave him a chance of extracting maximum gain, and the time to study the changing scenario and act accordingly! His policy towards the Maratha Bhao Saheb, Sadashiv Rao, in 1760 should be viewed in the same light.

In January 1760, Abdali set his face towards India once again. The Mughal *wazir*, Imad-ul-Mulk, took shelter in Bharatpur. Abdali warned Suraj Mal that he would destroy Deeg unless he was paid rupees two crore. Suraj Mal agreed to pay rupees forty lakh to the Afghan king, and managed to divert Abdali from his intention. Meanwhile, the Marathas under Sadashiv Rao Bhao Saheb joined hands with Suraj Mal. The Marathas and Jats, along with Imad-ul-Mulk, occupied Delhi in August 1760, and placed Aurangzeb's great grandson, Mohi-ul-Millat, on the throne as Emperor Shah Jahan II. Imad-ul-Mulk became his *wazir*. Differences soon arose between Bhao and Suraj Mal, with Suraj Mal trying to retain control over Delhi, and Bhao Saheb objecting to this. The disappointed Suraj Mal soon returned to Bharatpur.

Prior to the Battle of Panipat in 1761, where the battle-lines were drawn between the Maratha confederacy and Ahmad Shah Abdali, Suraj Mal joined the forces of the Maratha leader Sadashiv Rao as an ally. He quit the side, though, when his counsel regarding leaving Bhao's baggage and artillery at Bharatpur was rejected.

Ahmad Shah Abdali took the advantage of the differences between the Marathas and the Jats, and on 14 January 1761, defeated the Marathas at a battle fought on the field of Panipat. This is known in South Asian history as the Third Battle of Panipat. Sadashiv Bhao himself, along with many commanders and soldiers, was killed in this conflict, and the fate of the

Marathas sealed. The remnants of the Maratha army managed to reach Bharatpur, from where Suraj Mal helped them towards safety in Gwalior and the Deccan. Abdali was annoyed with Suraj Mal and threatened to attack Bharatpur. Suraj Mal managed the situation by paying one lakh rupees to Abdali. The Afghan king returned to his country in May 1761.

Abdali's successes in 1760-61 had shaken most of northern India, leaving the Marathas defeated at Panipat, the Rohillas exhausted, the Mughal scion, Shah Alam II emperor merely in name, and Bengal's Nawab Siraj-ud-Daulah faced with an encroaching East India Company. However, despite the uncertain conditions and warfare, or perhaps *because* of them, Suraj Mal emerged from the after-effects of the Third Battle of Panipat as one of the strongest rulers of the subcontinent.

In June 1761, Suraj Mal occupied the fort of Agra — a monetary gift of rupees one lakh apparently ensuring unhindered entry. His loyal troops ransacked the Mughal city, and carried away much booty. The bounty included fifty lakh, besides a stockpile of arms and ammunition, gold and silver *howdahs*, and vast quantities of precious jewels. Besides this, certain carvings and other accoutrements from royal palaces within the fort at Agra were carried away. Some of these may still be seen in the palaces at Deeg.

While Suraj Mal incorporated Haryana to his territory, his sons, Jawahar Singh and Nahar Singh, captured Rewari, Jajjhar, Rohtak and Farrukhnagar. In December 1763, the Rohilla chief Najib Khan clashed with Suraj Mal's forces on the banks of the river Hindaun (a tributary of the river Yamuna). Thereafter, Suraj Mal appears to have been killed in a skirmish with Sayyid Mohammed Khan Baluch (Sayido) — though the exact details are unclear, and his body was never recovered⁵⁴. He is believed to have been fifty-six years old at the time. Upon his death on 25 December 1763, Suraj Mal left behind a large and wealthy kingdom. Bharatpur's treasury at the time, held about six crores of rupees, and the kingdom's strong army comprised 25,000 infantry, 15,000 cavalry, 5,000 spare horses, 60 elephants, 300 guns and other arsenal.

Suraj Mal's contribution to the rise of Jat power, and the forging of an independent principality has formed the subject of several books and

academic researches⁵⁵. Ruthless and calculative, as far as that aspect of his character was concerned, when Suraj Mal took charge of the affairs of the state in the lifetime of Badan Singh, he had only Sinsini and Thun under his control. By the time of his death, his possessions encompassed Agra, Aligarh, Meerut, Mathura, Farrukhnagar, Mewat, Rewari etc. His amassed wealth has been estimated at rupees nine crore by some. Surajmal's greatest achievement, perhaps, was his success in welding together the warring Jat factions into a powerful conglomerate, and creating a large and dominant Jat kingdom, with borders extending from Delhi to Agra, to Mathura and Rajasthan, and towards Gwalior and Dholpur.

Out of his five sons (namely, Jawahar Singh, Ratan Singh, Nahar Singh, Nawal Singh and Ranjeet Singh), Suraj Mal had nominated Nahar Singh as his heir apparent during his lifetime. However, following the death of Suraj Mal, Jawahar Singh, who was at Farrukhnagar, rushed to Deeg and declared himself as the ruler of Bharatpur (r. 1764-1768), oversetting the ambitions of Nahar Singh. Jawahar Singh's main supporter within the ruling family was his stepmother, Rani Kishori, who regarded him as her son. Nahar Singh, meanwhile, fled the territory and waited for an opportunity to take appropriate action.

Jawahar Singh's first priority was to take revenge against Najib Khan. While Jawahar Singh may have intended this as a tactical move to win the confidence of the Jats, Jat leaders did not rally to his support. In fact, Prime Minister Balram closed the gates of Bharatpur fort to prevent Jawahar Singh gaining access to the state treasury. Lacking forces and finances to fight his powerful enemy, Jawahar Singh turned to Rani Kishori for support. The dowager-queen promptly arranged the necessary funds. In his turn, Jawahar Singh reduced his reliance on his fellow-Jat warriors (who were excellent horsemen) and began recruiting professional mercenary soldiers under the command of 'Sumru' (as the European commander Walter Reinhard the 'Sombre' was known) and Renu Mad. He also enlisted the support of the Marathas and Sikhs.

In 1764, Jawahar Singh campaigned against Najib Khan and defeated him at Faridabad, near Delhi. He then plundered Delhi. Meanwhile, Najib Khan contrived the defection of the Maratha leader, Malhar Rao Holkar.

Jawahar Singh was forced to leave Delhi, but not before he succeeded in taking with him cash, valuables, metal gates and a marble throne. The gates were erected at the northern entrance to Bharatpur and the throne at Deeg, in commemoration of the victory over Delhi.

Meanwhile, Nahar Singh had sought the aid of Malhar Rao Holkar for taking his inheritance from his brother's hands. The two led their forces against Bharatpur, but Jawahar Singh defeated them. Both Holkar and Nahar Singh died not long afterwards, and with that ended the challenge from Nahar Singh. In 1767 Jawahar Singh started making inroads into Maratha territory. He captured Bhador, Kachwardhar, Sikarwar, Khatauli etc. The Peshwa sued for peace. Jawahar Singh returned to Bharatpur but retained control of the seized territory.

With the confidence engendered by victories against Najib and the Marathas, Jawahar Singh next turned his attention towards Jaipur, which had given shelter and material help to his erstwhile rival, Nahar Singh. Jawahar Singh looted several villages of Jaipur while on his way to Pushkar. Maharaja Madho Singh's Jaipur army attacked Jawahar Singh when he was returning from Pushkar, as the Bharatpur ruler and his troops transitted through the Shekhawati area. At the battle of Mawade on December 14, 1767 the Kachchwaha state forces humiliated Jawahar Singh's army. Thereafter, Jawahar Singh reorganised his forces. He recruited some Sikhs in his army and turned his attention against the Marathas and territories held by them. Returning from Bhind, where he had left his army to continue their tasks, Jawahar Singh was murdered at Agra in August 1768.

His brother Ratan Singh (r. 1768-1769) succeeded Jawahar Singh. However, within a mere thirteen months of assuming the title, Ratan Singh met his end at Vrindaban, allegedly because he had tried to abduct the daughter of Goswami Roopanand. Kehri (Kesari) Singh (r. 1769-1776), the one and half year old son of Ratan Singh, was now declared as ruler of Bharatpur, with Dhanshah, the commander of the Jat forces, as the regent.

The two surviving sons of Suraj Mal, Nawal Singh and Ranjit Singh, uncles to young Kehri Singh, resented the appointment of Dhanshah and

removed him. They followed this up by each staking his own claim to be appointed the regent. Nawal Singh managed to win over the Jat leaders and was declared the regent, while Ranjit Singh went away to Jaipur, from where he invited the Marathas to attack Bharatpur. The Marathas led an expedition against Nawal Singh, who opted to give rupees sixty-five lakh to the Marathas, and a *jagir* worth rupees twenty lakh to Ranjit Singh, as a solution to the imbroglio.

In 1772 the Mughal emperor, Shah Alam II (r. 1759-1806), commanded his *wazir*, Najaf Quli Khan, to move against Bharatpur. Najaf Khan attacked Bharatpur, defeated the regent, Nawal Singh, and captured several *parganas*. Nawal Singh fled to Barsana. Najaf Khan captured the Barsana fort and later Agra as well. Nawal Singh then took shelter at the Deeg fort. Meanwhile, taking advantage of the situation Rao Pratap Singh Naruka of Macheri occupied Mewat. (He followed that up in 1775 by capturing Alwar and establishing the kingdom of Alwar). Through 1775, the Imperial campaign led by Najaf Khan against the Jats of Kaman continued. Nawal Singh regrouped his forces and attacked Najaf Khan, only to be defeated once again. Nawal Singh fell back to the fort of Sokher, only to find Najaf Khan following him there. Nawal Singh then marched back to Deeg, where he died on August 11, 1775.

Following Nawal Singh's death, Rahimdad Khan, a supporter of Najaf Khan, occupied Deeg, placed the minor Kehri Singh back on the throne and declared himself as Regent. At this, Suraj Mal's sole surviving son, Ranjit Singh, who was in Kumher, collected an army of Jats, Marathas and Nagas and entered the fort of Deeg, compelling Rahimdad Khan and his Rohilla supporters to leave. A power struggle now commenced between the supporters of Ranjit Singh and Kehri Singh, which ended with Ranjit Singh being recognised as the ruler of Bharatpur (r. 1776-1805). Kehri Singh later died of small pox.

As Maharaja of Bharatpur, Ranjit Singh began recovering territories lost to the Mughals as well as plundering the region around Agra and Mathura. Najaf Khan responded by besieging the fort of Deeg, which he captured in April 1776. Ranjit Singh and his supporters took shelter in Kumher, and reverted to action in the Agra region. Najaf Khan rushed to

Bharatpur and captured Kumher. When Ranjit Singh and Queen-Mother Rani Kishori fell back on Bharatpur, Najaf Khan besieged them there. The Jats were driven to sue for peace. At the request of Rani Kishori, Najaf Khan allowed Ranjit Singh to retain Bharatpur fort, along with a *jagir* of rupees eight lakhs.

In April 1782 Najaf Khan died. Taking advantage of the situation, Ranjit Singh promptly expanded the boundaries of Bharatpur state to encompass some more territory. In 1784, Mahadji Scindia occupied the kingdom. However, due to the intervention of Queen-Mother Rani Kishori, who met with Scindia at Tarsi in January 1785, a mutually acceptable settlement was arrived at between the Marathas and the Jats. Scindia returned a *jagir* worth rupees ten lakhs to Ranjit Singh, and the latter responded by joining Scindia in his campaign against Mohammad Beg Hamdani, Ismail Beg and the ruler of Jaipur. In acknowledgement of the services rendered by Ranjit Singh, Scindia returned to the fort of Deeg to him. However, in the opening part of the nineteenth century, Ranjit Singh tried to lessen his links with the Marathas, as we shall note in the next chapter.

DHOLPUR

Meanwhile, in the wake of Emperor Aurangzeb's death, the Dholpur area had come under the control of Raja Kalyan Singh Bhadauria. His family continued to hold it till 1761. Following that, Dholpur changed hands frequently — passing into the mastery of Suraj Mal of Bharatpur in 1761, then into Imperial Mughal hands through the campaigns of Mirza Najaf Khan in 1775, before going into the possession of the Maratha chief, Scindia, in 1782.

The East India Company was rallying to oppose Maratha expansion in the region, making use of local chiefs and rulers where possible. During 1779 the East India Company moved against Scindia and obtained the assistance of the local Rana of Gohad, near Gwalior. The Rana, Lakhinder Chhatar Singh, was a Bamraolia Jat: the family taking its name from Bamraoli, near Agra. He was descended from a sixteenth century warrior

named Singhan Deo, who had distinguished himself in a campaign against freebooters in the Deccan, and as reward been granted the small estate of Gohad, along with the title of 'Rana' in c. 1505. The East India Company promised the Rana of Gohad, through the 1779 treaty, that at the conclusion of peace between the British and the Marathas all the territories then in his possessions would be guaranteed to him, and protected from invasion by Scindia. On account of what was deemed by the British to be the Rana's subsequent 'treachery', however, the guarantee and protection were subsequently withdrawn.

As a result, Scindia, who already held Dholpur by 1782, was able to crush the chief of Gohad in 1783-74 and seize the entire area. The Gohad chief sought refuge in Karauli, but this proved of little avail, as by 1795 Mahadji Scindia extended his domination over the Sabalgarh and Jadaonwati parts of Karauli too (as mentioned elsewhere in this chapter). Scindia now held much of the Gwalior-Dholpur tracts.

In September 1803, after General Lake had defeated Daulatram Scindia at the battle of Laswari, the East India Company forces occupied the area of Dholpur, Bari and Rajakhera. The tract was briefly restored into Scindia control by the treaty of Sarji Arjangaon (30 December 1803), before being re-occupied by the British. Meanwhile, Rana Kirat Singh, a scion of the Bamraolia clan of Jats, recovered Gohad. In 1804, the East India Company formally restored Gohad to its Bamraolia Jat ruling family. However, Scindia opposed this strongly.

As a result, in 1805 Rana Kirat Singh agreed to exchange Gohad for Dholpur, which was at the time in the possession of the East India Company. Dholpur thus passed into the hands of the Jat ruling family of Gohad, with Maharaj Rana Kirat Singh as ruler of Dholpur (r. 1805-1836). In 1806, Dholpur — already under British protection — signed a treaty with the East India Company, as we shall see in the next chapter.

BUNDI

The Mughal war of succession, following Aurangzeb's death in AD 1707, also played its part in the fortunes of Bundi. In 1707 Rao Budh Singh of Bundi supported the cause of Prince Muazzam, and fought on his side at the battle of Jajau. Muazzam emerged victorious to ascend the Mughal throne as Emperor Bahadur Shah I. In appreciation of Budh Singh's services, the new emperor conferred the title of 'Maharao' on him and granted him additional lands in *jagir*.

Bundi was further encouraged to take possession of the kingdom of Kota, since the Kota ruler had fought against Muazzam during the Mughal war-of-succession. However, two attempts made by Budh Singh during 1707-1708 to annex Kota proved futile, because of the adamant resistance put up by the warriors of that kingdom, and the Mughal emperor eventually formally recognised Bhim Singh (heir and successor to Kota's dead Ram Singh), as the new ruler of Kota. Meanwhile, Budh Singh was deputed, along with the Mughal *Bakshi-ul-Mulk* and Chhatrasal Bundela, to negotiate with Amber's Jai Singh II and Jodhpur's Ajit Singh — both of whom had risen in defiance of the emperor's actions concerning their respective kingdoms.

The death of Bahadur Shah in 1712 affected the fortunes of Bundi, and of its chief. For, after Farukhsiyar became emperor in December 1712, he ordered the sequestration of the *pargana* of Mhau Medana on grounds that Budh Singh had failed to obey an Imperial order to attend court. The sequestered tract was allocated to Kota, instead. (Budh Singh was also accused of having come under the influence of a Tantric sect known as the '*vaam marg*', and apparently neglected his duties). Budh Singh, in turn, attacked Kota and paid no heed to an Imperial *farman* commanding him to desist from his action. On 12 December 1713, the Mughal emperor stripped Budh Singh of his *mansab* rank and honours, and Kota's Maharao Bhim Singh was given permission to take action against Bundi.

On his part, Kota's Bhim Singh led his troops against Bundi and occupied it soon afterwards. Farukhsiyar renamed Bundi as 'Farukhabad' (after his own name), and formally conferred it on Bhim Singh. The collateral line of Kota thus gained possession of not just the treasury and jewels of Bundi, but also various insignia and honours accumulated by its

main Bundi line over the past generations. Various attempts were made by Budh Singh and Bundi loyalists to repossess these, and to take back Bundi, but these were not immediately successful. Thereafter, holding and repossessing Bundi — and the insignia of their common Hada Chauhan heritage — became the major pre-occupation of the two Hada branches of Kota and Bundi over the next few years.

Meanwhile, Budh Singh attempted to mend matters, participating unofficially in the 1714 Imperial campaigns in Malwa against the Afghans and Marathas. Due to this, and the intercession on his behalf by Dhoondhar's Sawai Jai Singh II, the emperor eventually restored formal mastery of Bundi again to Budh Singh. (One of Budh Singh's wives was Amar Kanwar, a sister of Sawai Jai Singh II of Amber-Jaipur, and she used the offices of Jai Singh and her Kachchwaha relatives to get Emperor Farukhsiyar to agree to the return of Bundi to Budh Singh).

Budh Singh and his Bundi contingent now joined Sawai Jai Singh in the campaign against Churaman Jat and the Jat stronghold of Thun. Thereafter, during the intrigues and conspiracies that wracked the Imperial court as the Sayyid brothers increased their power vis-à-vis Emperor Farukhsiyar, Budh Singh remained firm to the emperor's cause. Consequently, he too had to leave the court (as did Sawai Jai Singh), when the Sayyid brothers gained an upper hand. Kota's Bhim Singh, however, was in favour of the 'king-maker' Sayyid brothers. Thus, in February 1720, following the deposition of Farukhsiyar and accession of the nominee of the Sayyids, Bhim Singh took the opportunity of annexing Bundi yet again.

Budh Singh was once again forced to make shift as best he could. He joined an abortive attempt made against the Sayyids by Chhabela Ram and Girdhar Bahadur at Allahabad. However, after Girdhar Bahadur accepted the grant of the *suba* of Awadh, Budh Singh was again forced to look to his own interests. Meanwhile, the death of Sayyid Hussain Ali in September 1720, and the defeat of Sayyid Abdullah Khan once again altered the fortunes of Budh Singh, and he was again able to re-take Bundi in late 1720. His troubles, however, were by no means over! Within a few years, relations between Budh Singh and his Kachchwaha clan Rani became estranged following the birth of a son, whom Budh Singh refused to

acknowledge as his son! As a result, Sawai Jai Singh who had supported Budh Singh till 1726, now turned against him. In this, Jai Singh seems to have had other, more ulterior, motives as well — including wishing to have Bundi as a kind of vassal-state to Jaipur-Amber!

Relations between Sawai Jai Singh II and Budh Singh continued to worsen, and the Jaipur ruler now became a keen supporter of Budh Singh's rival — Dalel Singh, son of Salim Singh of Karwar, a fief-holder of Bundi state. This culminated in a sudden attack on Bundi in 1729 by Sawai Jai Singh and his forces, after which Jai Singh recognised Dalel Singh as ruler of Bundi.

Once more, Budh Singh found himself bereft of his ancestral capital and inheritance! He made an attempt to retake Bundi towards the end of 1729, when Sawai Jai Singh left for Malwa. However, the arrival of reinforcements from Jaipur strengthened the position of his rival, and of Salim Singh who was holding the fort of Bundi on behalf of his son, Dalel. Budh Singh's forces were worsted at the battle of Kusalath in April 1730, and May 1730 witnessed Dalel Singh firmly ensconced on the *gaddi* of Bundi.

Help now came to Budh Singh from an unexpected quarter — Kota's Maharao Durjansal joined hands temporarily with the senior Hada branch to challenge Sawai Jai Singh. Defeated by Jaipur's Kachchwaha forces in a fiercely fought battle at Pancholas in July 1730, Budh Singh sought shelter in Mewar and began to cast around in search of the support of an external power that was stronger than Jai Singh. In the interim, Jai Singh strengthened his ties with his Bundi protégé, Dalel Singh, when his daughter was married to the Bundi usurper in November 1732. There was a precondition to the marriage — namely that a son born to the Kachchwaha clan queen would be deemed the heir-apparent of Bundi.

The deposed Budh Singh now received an assurance of continued loyalty from Pratap Singh, the elder brother of Dalel Singh, who was perhaps more than a little worried at his younger brother's pre-eminence and power. Urged by Budh Singh's Kachchwaha clan wife (Sawai Jai Singh II's sister — whom Budh Singh had once accused of infidelity), Pratap

Singh set forth to negotiate terms for support to Budh Singh from the Marathas in 1734. Suryamal Mishran's *Vamsha Bhaskar* also notes that Pratap Singh Hada, the elder brother of Dalel Singh, went to Poona in person to meet the Peshwa and prominent Maratha *sardars* like Malhar Rao Holkar, Ranoji Scindia etc., to obtain military support for Budh Singh's cause. Maratha assistance was promised in exchange for a payment of rupees six lakhs (*lac*). In April 1734, a large Maratha military force of around 20,000, which included Malhar Rao Holkar, Ranoji Scindia and Anand Rao Pawar with their respective contingents, reached Bundi. Their might carried the day, and 22 April 1734 saw the proclamation restoring Budh Singh on the throne of Bundi — in his absence.

However, the measure brought only short-lived relief for the beleaguered Hada chief, for Budh Singh was unable to hold his *gaddi* for long. Almost immediately after the Maratha forces left the area, Sawai Jai Singh II again manoeuvred the removal of Budh Singh and placed Dalel Singh back on the Bundi throne — with the approval of the Mughal court. Forced out of Bundi for the fourth time, Budh Singh later died under the roof of another father-in-law at Begun in Mewar in 1739.

In retrospect, the Maratha participation in the Bundi-Jaipur squabble has been recognised as the start of an era of long-term and fairly regular interventions by the Marathas into matters concerning the states of Rajasthan — most of whom still acknowledged the authority — albeit token — of the Mughal Empire. In the interim, Bundi, nominally headed by Dalel Singh during much of the c. 1730-1744 period, became virtually a dependency of Sawai Jai Singh II, and thereafter, of Jai Singh's successor. Dalel Singh is said to have regularly attended the Dashera darbars of Jai Singh II at the Jaipur court, and expressed his fealty in every way.

The internal squabbles in the Hada Chauhan ruled state of Bundi and external political interference during the early part of the eighteenth century resulted in a kingdom that was financially and militarily weakened. The populace at large suffered under the all-too-frequent military expeditions and battles that criss-crossed the land; the nobles were torn between issues of loyalty and self-preservation; and traders took detours where it seemed loss rather than profit would be the order of the day. The existing conditions

also encouraged feudal intrigues, intra-family squabbles, and the erosion of the ruler's powers.

Meanwhile, Umaid Singh, who was the son and thus the formal successor to Budh Singh's estates after the latter's death in 1739, found himself, at the age of thirteen, heir to lost honours and the inheritor of the hostility of Sawai Jai Singh II and Dalel Singh. For a while he bided his time, but in 1743, when the young Umaid Singh learned of the death of Jaipur-Amber's Sawai Jai Singh, he seized the opportunity and attacked and captured the towns of Patan and Gondoli (ten miles east of Patan), both within Bundi state. Maharao Durjansal of Kota supported the claim of Umaid Singh, and asked Jai Singh II's successor, Sawai Ishwari Singh of Jaipur to return Bundi to Umaid Singh, but this request was disregarded. Kota sent a force to attack Bundi, still held by Dalel Singh, but this was beaten back. Meanwhile, Umaid Singh had made a base at Burh Lohari. The forces of Jaipur's Ishwari Singh attacked this, but the attackers were repelled, and their standards and kettledrums were captured by Umaid's troops.

Thereupon, Ishwari Singh despatched a larger force of some 18,000 men, under the command of Narain Das Khatri, against Umaid Singh. Despite a valiant fight, Umaid Singh's side lost the battle, but not before their courageous bravery and Umaid's personal spirited leadership, as he cut a swathe against the enemy host, earned them a place in Rajasthani folklore. Umaid Singh's horse, Hanja, faithfully carried his master on the battlefield and subsequently, despite its own fearful wounds, bore Umaid to the safety of the Siwali Pass before falling dead. Tod has recorded that when Umaid Singh later gained his ancestral throne at Bundi, the Maharao had a statue to the faithful steed erected at Bundi. (There are many similar tales of horses like Umaid's Hanja and Rana Pratap's Chetak in Rajasthani lore, and of masters who valued the bravery and service of their loyal steeds⁵⁶).

Support now came to Umaid Singh from a different quarter. The Jaipur throne occupied by Ishwari Singh had a rival claimant in the form of Ishwari's half-brother; Sawai Jai Singh's younger son, Madho Singh. As already noted in a previous section, Madho Singh's mother was a princess of Mewar, and Maharana Jagat Singh of Mewar had already taken up the

cause of Madho Singh. In view of Ishwari Singh's support of Dalel Singh of Bundi, Maharana Jagat Singh now came forward to support Umaid Singh's claim to the throne of Bundi. The armies of Mewar and Kota marched and reached Jamoli in 1744. However, Ishwari Singh of Jaipur came to an understanding regarding his half-brother Madho's claims, by agreeing to give him mastery over Tonk, Toda and three other *parganas*. For a while, this meant that Umaid could expect no further help from Maharana Jagat Singh of Mewar.

Kota's ruler, Durjansal, now took matters into his own hands, and (as noted in the Kota related sub-section of this chapter), he obtained the help of the governor of Gujarat and of the chieftain of Shahpura, and launched an attack on Bundi on 28 July 1744. Bundi was invested, and Dalel forced to flee. While Dalel took refuge at Nainwa, Kota's Durjansal offered Umaid Singh the tract of Lohitpur, but the latter refused the offer.

Since Ishwari Singh of Jaipur could not let matters rest thus, he sought help from Ranoji Scindia's son, Jayappa-ji (Jiyaji), offering money in exchange for regaining Bundi for Dalel Singh. The Maratha chief achieved this, and Dalel Singh was restituted. Dalel Singh now marched with his Maratha allies against Kota. Kota was attacked and besieged. (In the course of which Scindia lost an arm to a cannon-ball). The issue was resolved following a treaty signed in May 1748, by which Kota's Durjansal agreed to give Scindia an indemnity of rupees two lakhs. On his part, Dalel Singh of Bundi acknowledged the help received from the Marathas by ceding Patan to them.

In the interim, Umaid Singh had briefly occupied Bundi, but had been ousted with the help of Jaipur's troops within a short period. As he continued to try and seek assistance from Mewar and Marwar, he was successful in obtaining the support of his step-mother, Budh Singh's Kachchwaha clan widow, at Banodia. She is reputed to have requested Malhar Rao Holkar (whom she had made her '*rakhi*-brother' in 1734), to redeem Bundi for Umaid Singh. Since Mewar was already supporting the claims of Madho Singh against his older half-brother, Ishwari, for the throne of Jaipur, it readily joined the venture, as did the forces of Marwar and Kota (for reasons of their own). Their joint enterprise resulted in the

defeat of Ishwari Singh at the battle of Bagru in August 1748. The resultant treaty — which yielded certain rights to Madho Singh — also abrogated Jaipur's claims over Bundi, and recognised Umaid Singh's rights to the Bundi throne. A Kota contingent promptly marched to Bundi to see the back of all the pro-Jaipur supporters, and 23 October 1748 saw the formal installation of Umaid Singh as the Maharao of Bundi.

While Umaid Singh set about the task of administering a kingdom long wracked by war and the passage of armies, Holkar received the town of Patan and its surrounding district in return for his assistance. It was decided that the revenues collected from the area would be equally divided between the Peshwa, Holkar and Scindia. In practice, Holkar also received the Peshwa's one-third share, in lieu of Holkar's services for the Peshwa's government.

Later, relations between Bundi and Kota deteriorated. Matters took a further nose-dive in the winter of 1761, when the Bundi army sent to fight alongside the Kota forces against the invading army of Jaipur's Sawai Madho Singh, did not take part in the crucial battle of Bhatwara. Meanwhile, Umaid Singh had also earned the displeasure of the Marathas for various reasons, including his support to Bijay Singh of Marwar and Madho Singh of Jaipur. As a result, the Kota forces of Maharao Chhatrasal attacked Bundi, with the help of Mahadji Scindia and Kedarji. The matter ended in a defeat for Bundi, as a result of which Umaid Singh paid out a huge war indemnity to Kota. In 1770 Umaid Singh abdicated the throne in favour of his son, Ajit Singh, and became a *sanyasi* — one who has renounced worldly connections and wealth. He became known as '*Shri ji*', and is respectfully remembered in Bundi even today by that term. Umaid Singh's reign — despite its turbulence — saw a further development to the Bundi atelier or 'School' of art.

Ajit Singh (r. 1770-1773) had a short reign, a high-point of it being the construction of a fort at Bileta, close to Bundi's common border with Mewar. This strategically placed construction was deeply resented by Maharana Ari Singh of Mewar, who invited Ajit Singh to Amargarh to join him in a hunting expedition. Sceptical about the Maharana's intentions, and aware of the events of an earlier joint *shikar* (hunting expedition) by their

respective predecessors, Ajit Singh came prepared for all eventualities! In the course of the *shikar*, Ajit Singh attacked the Mewar ruler and killed him. Retaliatory action by Maharana Ari Singh's bodyguard left the Bundi Maharao seriously wounded, and resulted in his death a couple of months later in May 1773.

Ajit Singh was succeeded by his infant son, Bishen (Vishnu) Singh (r. 1773-1821). The call of duty drew Umaid Singh out of his *sanyas* (state of renunciation), and he returned to Bundi to appoint a suitable regent to run the administration. Umaid also took on the role of long-distant guardian till such time as his young grandson came of age. However, matters were moving along a different path at Bundi. From 1774, Kota's vigorous and able *faujdar*, Zalim Singh Jhala, made every effort to woo and placate the kingdom of Bundi. It has been suggested that his intentions may have been to bring and keep Bundi under the dominance of Kota. In 1774, Zalim Singh Jhala received Sukh Ram, the *dewan* of Bundi, at Keshorai Patan with full honours, and taking the Bundi minister into the temple of Keshorai, publicly pledged brotherhood with Sukh Ram, using the main temple idol as his witness. Sukh Ram was invited to the Kota court, where he was duly received — as befitted his station — by the ruler of Kota, who charged him with messages and gifts for his Bundi master, in commemoration of Bishen Singh's accession to the Bundi throne.

For a while Sukh Ram and Hamir Singh Nathawat acted as the chief advisors of the infant Bishen Singh's administration. In time, though, the counsel of Krishna Singh Nathawat and Chhou Lal Nagar (who appear to have been influenced by Kota's Zalim Singh Jhala), began to prevail over the Bundi court. So much so that it is alleged that a message was sent from Bishen Singh to his paternal grandfather, Umaid Singh (or 'Shri ji', as he was called by this time), suggesting that 'Shri ji' should tell his beads in peace at the holy site of Banaras and not bother about re-entering the boundaries of Bundi. Tod relates that this action led Jaipur's Sawai Pratap Singh to extend an invitation to 'Shri ji' to come to Jaipur instead, and to offer to capture Kota and Bundi and place the two kingdoms at the feet of the elderly former ruler. 'Shri ji' is said to have politely declined, and to have observed that the two states were already his, as one was ruled by his nephew (Kota's Maharaja, Maharao Ummed Singh), and the other by his

grandson (Bundi's Maharaja, Maharao Bishen Singh) — and that was satisfactory enough for him!

Meanwhile, Zalim Singh Jhala's manipulations led to an estrangement between Bishen Singh and Sukh Ram, and the latter was dismissed from office, and subjected to a heavy fine. Gradually, all the key positions in the Bundi administration came into the hands of men sympathetic and friendly with Zalim Singh Jhala. On his part, Bishen Singh openly permitted the influence of his mentor — and by this time father-in-law — Zalim Singh Jhala, Kota's all-powerful minister and administrator, to pervade over the administration of Bundi too. (Zalim Singh Jhala had arranged the marriage of his daughter, Ajab Kanwar, with Maharao Bishen Singh in 1792. The *Ajab Kanwar Bai ka Kagad* manuscript of Samvat 1849 mentions that leading Maratha and Pindari chieftains, as well as French commanders in the Maratha armies, attended the wedding⁵⁷).

'Raj Rana' Zalim Singh Jhala was at the time *dewan* as well as commander-in-chief, and practically the *de facto* ruler, of Kotah (as the British had by now begun to spell it, and as it would continue to be spelt till several years after integration and merger with independent India in the twentieth century). In several cases Zalim Singh Jhala's men replaced previous incumbents in Bundi's administrative machinery. In despair, Bundi loyalists sought out and informed the Bundi ruler's grandfather 'Shri ji' (Umaid Singh), who had proceeded on a pilgrimage in 1798, about the deteriorating state of affairs in Bundi, accompanied by a high level of discontent amongst local feudal chiefs and officials. Umaid Singh decided to return to Bundi, where he was cordially received by his grandson. (The welcoming ceremony was organised by Zalim Singh Jhala!) In time, 'Shri ji' prevailed upon his grandson to end Jhala's predominance over state matters. This was achieved, and men loyal to the Kota *faujdar* were replaced in the Bundi administration by those loyal to Bundi's interests.

However, Bundi's travails were not over. The kingdom was not yet free from the threat of the Marathas and the Pindaris, and Bishen Singh had to tread a fine line so as to not antagonize his father-in-law (Zalim) who was on easy terms with the Marathas and Pindaris. Even so, the beginning of the nineteenth century saw the kingdom assailed afresh by the Marathas

as well as the Pindaris. There was also a concomitant growth in the influence of the East India Company, with whom the kingdom eventually entered into a treaty in February 1818, as we shall see in a further section of this book.

KOTA

Kota's Rao Ram Singh was among those killed in the battle of Jajau in 1707, supporting the cause of the Mughal contender, Prince Azam. His son and successor Bhim Singh (r. 1707-1720), out of favour with the new Mughal emperor like many a Rajput ruler or chief whose families had chosen sides in the Imperial struggle for succession, went on to add the territories of Mangrol, Manohar-Thana and Shergarh to his domain. Emperor Bahadur Shah I, who had not forgotten the fact that Kota had supported his rival in the struggle for the imperial sceptre, now permitted Budh Singh of Bundi to march against Kota. On two separate occasions, Budh Singh led Bundi's forces against Kota, but both times met with defeat. The balance of fate turned in Kota's favour with the death of Bahadur Shah I in 1712, and of his successor, Jahandar Shah a year later.

The next Mughal ruler, Farukhsiyar, was displeased with Budh Singh of Bundi. One of the results of this was that he permitted Bhim Singh of Kota to occupy Bundi in 1713. Bundi was later returned to Budh Singh (through the efforts of his Kachchwahi queen, sister of Amber's Sawai Jai Singh). However, even the eventual murder of Emperor Farukhsiyar did not prove advantageous for Budh Singh of Bundi, since the powerful Sayyid brothers, whose writ counted for much in the rapidly disintegrating Mughal Empire, had never forgiven him for supporting their enemy, Chhabela Ram, the *subedar* of Allahabad. The Sayyids sent an Imperial army — which included Bhim Singh of Kota — against Bundi. Budh Singh of Bundi was defeated and Bundi once again came under the dominion of Bhim Singh of Kota. We are informed that Bhim Singh appropriated the royal insignia of Bundi, including its *nakkara* or kettledrums, war-conch shell (*rann-shankh*), and traditional orange banner, for the collateral Hada kingdom of Kota.

By this time, Bhim Singh had succeeded, through a mix of diplomatic alliances and military exploits in extending the frontiers of Kota and raising the status of Kota at the Imperial Court⁵⁸. Over time his *mansab* rank was raised to 5,000. He was also awarded the *sanad* (grant) for the region stretching between Pathari in the west to Ahirwada in the east, which included Gagron, Shergarh, Baran, Mangrol and Baroch. The chiefs of these areas had already accepted the supremacy of Bhim Singh, who was the first of his line to use the title of 'Maharao'. Though the major part of his life kept him involved in wars, territorial expansion, and Imperial affairs and campaigns, Bhim Singh not only provided an efficient administrative system for Kota, he attempted to fulfil the role of a just and pious ruler — in keeping with the expectations of the time.

He is described as having become an honorary brother of the famous Nizam-ul-Mulk through the time-honoured custom of exchanging turbans. Later, upon the Nizam-ul-Mulk raising the standard of revolt against the Mughal emperor, Bhim Singh was charged with task of dealing with the rebel. He matched his troops against the Nizam-ul-Mulk's forces at Kurwai Barasa, situated on the Betwa river. The victory lay with the Nizam, but Bhim Singh's loyalty procured him additional favour both at the Imperial court, as well in the eyes of Sawai Jai Singh of Amber. Not long after, he lost his life in June 1720, fighting against the Nizam at Burhanpur, and was succeeded by his son, Arjun Singh (r. 1720-1723).

It may be relevant to take note of one of Maharao Bhim Singh's commanders, at this point. This was Madho Singh Jhala (originally from the Halwad Jhalas to whom reference has been made earlier). And, the future of Kota and this family would remain prominently bound together for well nigh a century and more to follow, and even beyond! Madho Singh Jhala who had joined the service of the kingdom of Kota in 1696, later became the *faujdar* of the Kota forces during Bhim Singh's reign. His merit and loyalty was acknowledged not just through the grant of the *jagir* of Nanta by Bhim Singh, but also through the marriage of the Kota king's son with a sister of Madho Singh Jhala. The influence of the Jhala family increased over time, particularly following the death of Maharao Bhim Singh of Kota in 1720. *Faujdar* Madho Singh himself lived on till 1740. His post then passed to his son, Madan Singh Jhala, who loyally served as the next

faujdar of Kota till his own death in 1753. The post was by now regarded as hereditary, and went to Madan Singh's son, Himmat Singh Jhala, who *remained faujdar* of Kota from 1753 till his death five years later in 1758, when the well-respected title and post descended to Himmat Singh's nephew, who was also his adopted son. This was the nineteen year old Zalim Singh Jhala (b. 1739)⁵⁹, whose contribution to Kota will be taken up in due course further in this text.

The boundaries of Kota had seen rapid expansion under the reign of Bhim Singh, particularly with the legitimised annexation of Bundi. However, Arjun Singh's short reign witnessed the loss of Bundi to Budh Singh. Though sorely tried, Budh Singh once again obtained his *gaddi* through external interventions. However, he was soon to lose it again some years later. Consequently, Kota's garrison outposts placed in the territory of Bundi were also withdrawn.

Kota's Maharao Arjun Singh, died without an heir in 1723, and was succeeded by his brother, Durjansal (r. 1723-1756). The choice was made by the Hada nobles of Kota, and acknowledged by the Mughal emperor, Muhammad Shah. The rival contender, a brother named Shyam Singh, attacked Kota with the help of Sawai Jai Singh II of Amber-Jaipur, but was defeated and killed in his attempt. Though Durjansal was now free to consolidate the position of Kota, the subsequent years of his reign continued to have their share of drama.

Durjansal remained involved not just in the affairs to neighbouring Bundi, but also fought in several campaigns under Sawai Jai Singh II of Amber, and later had to face the growing might of the Marathas. Along with his contemporaries, he was a prominent signatory of the 'Hurda Pact' signed at Hurda in northern Mewar in 1734. The Hurda accord remained largely inoperative, though, and in time Durjansal had to come to terms with the Marathas, and give them tribute-money, in order to secure the safety of the ordinary citizens of his state.

In 1738 the Maratha Peshwa, Baji Rao, took Kota, and ensured the token allegiance of that state. Technically, of course, Kota still acknowledged the notional — and nominal — suzerainty of the Mughals.

Baji Rao gave the fort of Nahargarh, seized from its Muslim chief, to Durjansal of Kota. In return, Kota provided supplies and ammunition to the Marathas. The Maratha force then marched against Delhi, looting the area now better known as the Kalkadevi part of modern New Delhi enroute. The Peshwa was checked near Talkatora, and returned without taking Delhi. Later, the Peshwa again laid siege to Kota, and Rao Durjansal had to pay ten lakhs before the siege was lifted. He also agreed to pay *chauth* and *khandni* or a fixed indemnity to the Marathas.

Meanwhile, the affairs of Bundi had never ceased to be of interest to Sawai Jai Singh II of Amber/ Jaipur and his son and successor, Sawai Ishwari Singh, just as they were of primary importance to Durjansal. Durjansal had often asked Ishwari Singh to recognise Umaid Singh's claim to the Bundi throne, but this had proved to be of no avail so far. Now Durjansal decided to send an envoy named Govind Ram to Marwar, in an attempt to enlist the assistance of Maharaja Abhay Singh. While nothing came of that mission, Govind Ram was able to garner the support of the governor of Gujarat, Fakhruddaula, in return for a lakh of rupees. Govind Ram also got help from the chief of Shahpura. Thus reinforced, the Kota army attacked Bundi on 28 July 1744 and took the capital, while Dalel Singh fled to Nainwa. Durjansal offered Umaid Singh the *pargana* of Lohitpur, but the latter turned down the offer.

Kota's move against Dalel Singh drew the attention of Jaipur's Ishwari Singh, and through him, of the Marathas, afresh on Kota. Having first ensured the return of Dalel Singh on the Bundi *gaddi* by armed might at the request of the Jaipur ruler, three of the Maratha chiefs and Surajmal Jat attacked Kota next, along with Dalel Singh. (The campaign cost the Maratha leader Jayappa Scindia an arm to a cannon-shot). The fierce siege ended following a battle at Kotri and a treaty-compromise thereafter, which was signed in May 1748. Its terms included Kota paying the Marathas a heavy monetary indemnity of rupees two lakhs.

Durjansal's earlier appeals to Ishwari Singh of Jaipur for the return Bundi to the heir of Budh Singh having failed, in 1748, the forces of Kota joined those of Mewar, to compel Ishwari Singh to do justice to Budh Singh's successor. The joint armies defeated Jaipur's Ishwari Singh at

Bagru in August 1748, as a result of which Umaid Singh was finally able to take charge of the kingdom of Bundi.

Despite his numerous pre-occupations, Durjansal managed to add several tracts to his inheritance, besides defending the fortress of Gujor against the Khinchis. He is described as a brave and valiant fighter, and a generous man. He seems to have had a particular interest in tiger-hunts, for which game reserves were established and maintained. Several hunting-platforms and towers around Kota date from his reign, as do many wall-murals and frescoes and miniature paintings in the Kota atelier — including those depicting scenes of the hunt⁶⁰. The valiant warrior and keen hunter was a devotee of Krishna and the Vallabha sect too, like his rather before him. The idol of Krishna as ‘*Mathura-Dheesh*’ (also ‘*Mathura-Nath*’) was installed at Kota during his reign. Durjansal is credited with taking the initiative of organising a congregation of the seven recognised seats of the Vallabha sect of Vaishnavism at Nathdwara in 1741. Many of the prominent chiefs, princes and rulers of Rajasthan attended the gathering.

Durjansal died in 1756, leaving no immediate heirs. Thus, the right of Ajeet Singh, *jagirdar* of Anta, was recognised as being the closest to the Kota ruling family, with the powerful *faujdar* of Kota, Himmat Singh Jhala (to whom reference has been made earlier), supporting the claim. The accession of Ajeet Singh (r. 1756-1759) as the new Maharao of Kota, led to Ranoji Scindia coming to Kota to take a ‘succession tax’ of rupees four lakhs as *nazarana*. The same year Holkar and Raghunath Rao reached Kota and took rupees seven thousand as *chauth*.

Ajeet Singh was succeeded by his son, Chhatrasal (r. 1759-1764). Chhatrasal (also occasionally written and pronounced as Shatrushal) had to pay *nazarana* of rupees two lakh to the Marathas, in return for their acknowledging his accession to the *gaddi* of Kota. Within a couple of years of Chhatrasal’s accession, Kota was attacked in 1761 by the forces of Sawai Madho Singh of Jaipur. The overt cause was the fact that Kota had taken over eight *jagirs* held by Hada chiefs in the Ranthambore *sarkar* area (at the request of the chiefs), even though the Ranthambore area was under Maharaja Sawai Madho Singh I of Jaipur as a grant from the Mughal emperor.

The matter was a little more complex than the above statement would indicate. The eight *jagirs* in question were Pipalda, Gainta, Karwar, Pusod, Indergarh, Khatoli, Balwan and Antardah. They were originally among the *kotris* (or '*kotriyat*', as the plural of term was in the Bundi-Kota area) of the undivided kingdom of Bundi — before Kota was created — and occupied a compact area at the junction of one of the common borders of the kingdoms of Dhoondhar (Jaipur), Bundi and Kota. (A *kotri*, in the literal sense, means a chamber, or branch, and in usage stands for sub-branches of Rajput ruling families, to whom certain recognition, rights and privileges had been given by virtue of their being descendants of a royal ancestor).

All the *kolris* were held by descendants of Bundi's Rao Bhoj (the father of Rao Ratan and Hriday Narain): with Pipalda, Gainta, Karwar and Pusod under descendants of Prince Hriday Narain, the younger brother of Rao Ratan Singh of Bundi, and the rest under descendants of Rao Ratan Singh. Hriday Narain, as noted previously, had held the tract of Kota in *jagir* grant from the Mughal emperor for nearly twenty years, but had finally had the tract taken away the emperor after he left the battle of Allahabad in haste. The emperor had subsequently assigned Kota (which became a separate kingdom) to Ratan's second son, Prince Madho Singh, while Pipalda, Gainta, Karwar and Pusod, still held by scions of the Hada ruling house, became part of the area under the *sarkar* of Ranthambore. Meanwhile Rao Ratan Singh's eldest son, Gopinath, who had held a large estate within the *sarkar* of Ranthambore, besides a *mansab* rank, lost his right to the Bundi succession because of his misconduct (and later also lost his life, within his father's lifetime). Afterwards, when Rao Chhatrasal of Bundi, son of Gopinath, eventually succeeded his grandfather, Bundi's Rao Ratan Singh, the new Rao's younger brothers were granted estates out of their father, Gopinath's, previous holding within Ranthambore *sarkar* as their individual *jagirs*. Among these were Indergarh, Khatoli, Balwan, and Antardah.

As such, though these eight estates of Pipalda, Gainta, Karwar, Pusod, Indergarh, Khatoli, Balwan and Antardah were held by Hada chiefs, these remained technically part of the *sarkar* of Ranthambore. In 1753, the Mughal emperor granted Ranthambore to Maharaja Sawai Madho Singh of Jaipur, in gratitude for the Jaipur ruler's help. The issue of the allegiance of

the Hada-held estates within the area now became a live one. Since Kota was more powerful, as compared to Bundi, at the time, the *faujdar* of Kota, Himmat Singh Jhala convinced the chiefs of these eight large estates to transfer their allegiance to Kota and repudiate the authority that Jaipur's Madho Singh was attempting to impose on them. While negotiations were still continuing between the concerned chiefs and the Kota *faujdar*, Himmat Singh Jhala died. However, fortunately for Kota, the adopted son, Zalim Singh, who succeeded Himmat, was even more gifted as far as diplomacy and statesmanship was concerned. Zalim Singh Jhala invited the chiefs to Kota and ensured that they met with the ruler of Kota and received an assurance of protection and support in return for transferring their allegiance to the kingdom of Kota. This was done, and the agreement formalised. (The matter was to cause friction with Bundi in the long run, as that state felt that it had greater rights than Kota over the eight *kotris*).

On learning the news, Jaipur's Sawai Madho Singh mobilised his forces and marched against Kota, to punish that kingdom for its temerity and interference. The Jaipur forces forded the river Chambal and advanced towards the city of Kota, towards the end of November 1761. The chiefs of the eight concerned *kotris* rallied to support Kota. Sanman Singh of Pipalda, Hamir Singh and Khuman Singh of Karwar, and Kushal Singh of Gainta took the field in person, along with troops from the different *kotris*. In the fierce battle that followed, the Dhoondhar forces were checked and defeated at Bhatwara (29 November to 1 December 1761), by the Kota army led by Himmat Singh Jhala's nephew and adopted son, Zalim Singh Jhala. The victory brought its commander unprecedented fame. In time, Zalim Singh's sway was to extend to kingdoms and territories far beyond the boundaries of Hadauti.

Zalim Singh, the victorious commander of the Hada forces, was later elevated, by the next ruler of Kota, to further honours as a minister and the *faujdar* of Kota. Soon jealous courtiers and jagirdars intrigued against Zalim Singh Jhala, though, and around 1765 the Kota ruler was constrained to extern him from Kota. Zalim Singh found his way to Udaipur, where Maharana Ari Singh appointed him among his advisors. Zalim Singh made Mewar his home for the next few years. The Maharana gave him the jagirs of Chitkheela and Kirpapur, as well as the honorific of '*Raj Rana*'. Fighting

in the battle of Kshipra, near Ujjain, in January 1769, Zalim Singh was captured by Scindia, and was ransomed out by Raja Ambaji Rao Inglija on the payment of rupees sixty thousand.

At Kota, meanwhile, Maharao Chhatrasal was succeeded by his younger brother Guman Singh (r. 1764-1771). By this period the Marathas had become an important factor in the polity and economy of Rajasthan, and many of the states paid out varying amounts of money to them on various occasions. This was the case with Kota too. On one occasion, the Marathas were given rupees six lakhs to leave Kota during Guman Singh's rule. Finding himself unable to deal with the persistent attacks of the Marathas, Maharao Guman Singh was finally driven to send for his former *faujdar*, Zalim Singh Jhala, who was then in exile in Mewar. Zalim Singh was more than equal to task. He successfully negotiated with the Marathas and came to an understanding with them.

In turn, the ruler of Kota re-appointed Zalim Singh to his former post as *faujdar* of Kota state, and returned the estate of Nanta, which had been confiscated when the Jhala noble had been exiled. Not just that, shortly before his death, Maharao Guman Singh handed over the guardianship of his minor son and heir, Prince Umaid Singh, into the care of Zalim Singh Jhala, along with the task of administering Kota till the new Maharao was in a position to do so for himself.

With the accession of Umaid Singh (r. 1771-1819), Zalim Singh Jhala became even more powerful in Hadauti. He eliminated the ten year old ruler's uncle, Maharaj Swaroop Singh; externed Jashkaran Dhabai; and appointed Dalel Khan as the commander-in-chief of the Kota forces, rather than give the post to a Rajput. He also set about re-organising the kingdom's army on the pattern of the East India Company's forces. Along with all this, he crushed the powerful Hada chief, Devi Singh of Atoon, with the help of the Marathas, and seized his estate. Zalim Singh also took possession of the area of Shahbad, which was under Megh Singh. Many other *jagirdars* and fief-holders were either dispossessed or killed. To further curtail the power of the Hada nobles, he bestowed estates (*jagirs*) on Marathas settled within Kota state. This won him the goodwill of the Marathas — including Scindia and Holkar, with whom he had established

cordial personal relations (and to whom an annual tribute, totalling about rupees seven lakhs in all, was given), but could scarcely please the Hada Rajputs. Annoyed and fearful for their safety, a number of Hada chiefs from Kota found shelter at neighbouring courts.

Towards the beginning of the nineteenth century, Zalim Singh also had a land-revenue settlement conducted. Previous to that time, the tenants in the state-owned *khalsa* lands paid two-fifth of their produce to the state as land revenue. Following Zalim Singh Jhala's land settlement work, this revenue began to be taken in cash at fixed rates per unit of land. Hereditary tenures were stopped, and the whole of the *khalsa* category of land taken under Kota state's management, making the cultivators 'tenants-at-will'. Normally, though, no cultivator was disturbed from the land he tilled, provided he gave his revenue dues to the state in time.

Meanwhile, Zalim Singh Jhala had also tried to protect Kota from the gradually increasing ravages of the Pindaris, through understandings with their chiefs. He established friendly relations with Pindari leaders like Karim Khan and Mir Khan, and even gave over the fort of Shergarh to the latter. Over the next few years, a large number of Pindaris settled — at Zalim's encouragement — at places like Belandi, 'Pindaron-ki-Chhaoni' (literally, 'Cantonment of Pindaris') and Shergarh, and more than forty minor Pindari chiefs held *jagirs* in grant from Kota state! By this time, the East India Company, already well-entrenched in Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, and southern India etc., had begun to make its presence felt in the Mughal capital of Delhi as well as across many parts of northern India. Zalim Singh, thus, deemed it prudent to reach a cordial understanding with the British as well — as we shall note further in this book.

KISHANGARH

At the death of Maharaja Man Singh, his son, Raj Singh (r. 1706-1748) ascended the *gaddi* of Kishangarh. The opening years of Raj Singh's reign saw the Mughal war of succession, which broke out following Aurangzeb's death. Raj Singh fought on the side of his brother-in-law, the royal Mughal prince Muazzam, who, as we have noted elsewhere, eventually emerged

victorious to ascend the throne as Emperor Bahadur Shah I. The new emperor granted Raj Singh the *jagir* of Sarwar and Malpura, along with a *mansab* of 7,000.

In 1748, following the death of Raj Singh, his eldest son Sawant Singh (r. 1748-1757 [abdicated]) — later renowned by the name of ‘Nagari Das’, ascended the throne of Kishangarh. Some time later, taking advantage of Sawant Singh’s absence to Delhi, his younger brother, Bahadur Singh (r. 1757-1781), usurped the throne of Kishangarh. Sawant Singh, a follower of Vaishnavism, opted to withdraw to the holy town of Vrindaban — which is steeped in Krishna lore, where he took to Krishna-bhakti.

Sawant Singh is popularly credited with possessing all the merits of an ideal Rajput ruler. Well-versed in languages like Sanskrit, Persian and Marwari, as well as in music and painting, besides being skilled in warfare and the arts of the hunt and chase, he is credited with composing over seventy-five poems in the ‘Braj Bhasha’ language. His composition — *Nagar-Samuchya*, is regarded as a masterpiece. He is considered to have been one of the motivating spirits patronising the distinctive Kishangarh School of painting too. Nihalchand, one of the best known artists of the Kishangarh School, flourished during this period. Nihalchand’s paintings have immortalised the features of Sawant Singh’s beloved, a beautiful singer on whom the name of ‘Bani Thani’ was bestowed, through paintings depicting ‘Bani Thani’ as Lord Krishna’s beloved Radha. The highly accomplished ‘Bani Thani’ is said to have accompanied Sawant Singh in his exile at Vrindaban. She is credited with composing about one hundred verses extolling Lord Krishna.

Interestingly, during this general period, various other members of the Kishangarh ruling house seem to have written significant texts connected with aspects of Krishna worship too. Maharaja Raj Singh’s Kachchwaha clan wife, Braj Kumari, the daughter of Raja Anandram Kachchwaha of Lawa, used the *nom-de-plume* or pen-name of Brajdasi, and translated the *Shrimad Bhagvat-Geeta* into a Braj-Bhasha text entitled the *Brajdasi Bhagvat*. Raj Singh’s daughter and Sawant Singh’s sister, Princess Sunder Kunwar, appears to have been no mean writer either. Married to *Kunwar Balwant Singh* of Raghogarh, Sunder Kunwar is described as a follower of

the Radha-Vallabha sect, and the author of eleven texts connected with spiritualism.

By now the Mughal Empire was a dwindling force⁶¹ in the face of internal dissension, external threats and invasions, and the rising might of the Marathas. Thus, in 1765, some years after the usurpation of the throne of Kishangarh, the dethroned Sawant Singh's son, Sardar Singh, took up arms against his uncle, Bahadur Singh. Aided by the Marathas, Sardar Singh invaded Kishangarh and forced Bahadur Singh to sue for peace-terms. Following a settlement reached between the two parties, Bahadur Singh yielded the town and fort of Roopnagar and its surrounding area to Sardar Singh, retaining Kishangarh for himself.

In 1767 Sardar Singh died without an heir and was succeeded as ruler of Roopnagar by his cousin Birad Singh, a son of Bahadur Singh. Upon the death of Bahadur Singh in 1781, the throne of Kishangarh also came to Birad Singh (r. 1781-1788), thus enabling the reunification of Roopnagar and Kishangarh principalities into a single state once more.

In 1788 Birad Singh died at Vrindaban, where he had been a frequent pilgrim. His son, Pratap Singh (r. 1788-1797), succeeded him. On Pratap Singh's death some nine years later, his minor son, Kalyan Singh (r. 1797-1838), was enthroned as the new Maharaja. Twenty years later, in 1817, Kalyan Singh signed a treaty with the East India Company, accepting, like many of his contemporary rulers of Rajasthan, British paramountcy over his state.

SIROHI

After Rao Chhatrasal, Man Singh II (r. 1705-1749) ascended the *gaddi* of Sirohi. Also known by the name of Ummad Singh, Man Singh II encouraged the development of Sirohi as a centre for the manufacture of high-quality swords of damascened steel⁶². Himself a keen swordsman, Man Singh lent his name to a type of sword known as '*Man-Sahī*'. The '*Man-Sahī*' sword rapidly became a coveted item amongst sword-wielders

of neighbouring regions too. Soon, the reputation of Sirohi spread across the subcontinent as a land famed for sword-making. Even in later centuries, phrases like ‘swords from Sirohi and daggers from Lahore’ remained in currency, testifying to the value attributed to Sirohi’s sword-manufacturing capabilities!

Relations with neighbouring states — in particular Marwar, remained cordial during Man Singh’s reign. When Marwar’s Maharaja Ajit Singh, who had spent part of his childhood in the security of the Sirohi hills, travelled through Sirohi, enroute to his posting as *subedar* of Gujarat in 1715, Man Singh II accorded him warm hospitality. Sirohi’s ruler cemented their ties further on this occasion with the marriage of his daughter to Ajit Singh.

Later, in 1730 Ajit Singh’s successor, Abhay Singh was given the same post of *subedar* of Gujarat. It was now his turn to traverse through Sirohi on his way to Ahmedabad. Though Abhay Singh had previously raided some parts of Sirohi on a punitive mission against the chief of Ranwade (who was pillaging the Jalore *pargana* of Marwar), Man Singh II of Sirohi made peace with him. He married one of the Sirohi princesses to Abhay Singh, and deputed part of his army to accompany Abhay Singh to Gujarat.

This Sirohi contingent played a valiant part in Gujarat, particularly during a decisive battle fought near Ahmedabad between the Imperial forces led by the new *subedar*, Abhay Singh, and the previous incumbent of the *subedari*, Sarbaland Khan, who had turned rebellious. Col. Tod, in his *Travels in Western India*, has noted that “In the wars of Gujarat...the Deora sword was second to none”.

Man Singh II was succeeded by the eldest of his three sons, Prithviraj (r. 1749-1772). The period coincided with the decline of the Mughal Empire and the rise of Maratha power. His son Takhat Singh (r. 1772-1782) followed him. Since Takhat Singh had no male heir, his uncle, Jagat Singh (r. 1782), who was the third of Man Singh II’s sons, followed him. Jagat Singh occupied the throne for barely six months, and on his death was followed by Bairisal II (r. 1782-1807), who was the eldest of Jagat Singh’s

four sons. Bairisal was about twenty-two years of age when he inherited the throne, and he soon discovered that it was no sinecure!

In the years following the reign of Man Singh II, the internal situation of Sirohi had seen the gradual erosion of the ruler's authority. As had happened on previous occasions, various headstrong chiefs and nobles of Sirohi had strengthened their own positions at the expense of the Crown. The more powerful of these led loose coalitions of like-minded warrior-kinsmen. In addition, the depredations of local Bhils and Meenas, particularly in the eastern part of Sirohi, had gradually become a serious problem during the reigns of Bairisal's immediate predecessors. Simultaneously, taking advantage of the situation, the neighbouring state of Palanpur had slowly but insidiously whittled away at Sirohi's borders, and taken over many of Sirohi's villages. (The ancestors of the Palanpur nawabs held Jalore *pargana* in grant from Aurangzeb between 1682-1689).

Ojha informs us that at the time Bairisal II ascended the *gaddi* of Sirohi, only about forty to fifty villages remained under the direct control of the state, and provided limited revenues to the state treasury⁶³. (One should bear in mind that all over Rajasthan the revenue of certain villages went to the *thakurs* and *jagirdars* to whom such privileges had been allotted).

The young Rao tried to deal with the problems in various ways. Himself adept in fighting skills and horsemanship, during the first six years of his reign, he raised a new fighting force drawn from Muslims from Sindh and the Makran area, as well as from the Nagas who enjoyed a reputation as a great fighting group. This new force was intended to counter Sirohi's traditional kin-based fighting force. (As noted elsewhere, a large part of the traditional Rajput armies were drawn from the estates of fief-holding *thakurs* and *jagirdars*, and as such the first loyalty of these troops was invariably to their own *thakur* or *jagirdar* or clan sub-head, and latterly to the monarch). Though Bairisal eventually led his force of Makranis, Sindhis and Nagas against Palanpur, the continued intrigues and counter-intrigues of his chiefs and nobles served to strengthen the hands of Palanpur. Many chiefs even joined the Palanpur camp. As such, Bairisal II could not achieve much success.

Bairisal finally resorted to intrigue himself, and in 1798 ensured the assassination of the powerful Thakur Amar Singh of Padeev, who was the clan-head of the Dungarot branch of the ruler's kinsmen. In the long run, however, the combination of recalcitrant nobles, border problems with Palanpur, and looting of villages by Bhils and Meenas could not be fully handled by Bairisal II.

The situation was further compounded after Bhim Singh succeeded to the throne of Marwar, since by maintaining friendship with Bhim Singh, the Sirohi Rao earned the ire of a powerful member of the Marwar ruling family, namely, Bhim Singh's cousin and rival, Man Singh. (In part caused by Bairisal refusing refuge to Man Singh's *zenana* and infant child, Chhatar Singh). As a result, Sirohi had to face regular raids from Man Singh and his troops. Ironically, with the death of Marwar's Bhim Singh in 1803, Man Singh ascended the throne of the Rathores of Marwar, and intensified his attacks on Sirohi. Thus, by the end of the eighteenth century Sirohi was in an unenviable position, like many of her contemporary Rajput kingdoms.

DUNGARPUR

In 1702 Dungarpur's Rawal Khuman Singh was succeeded by Ram Singh (r. 1702-1730). Almost immediately after his accession, the new Rawal attended upon Emperor Aurangzeb and succeeded in obtaining a *farman* in Dungarpur's favour. Ram Singh himself was made a *mansabdar* of the rank of 1,000 *zat* and 1,000 *sawar*.

Unfortunately, the earlier period of intermittent peace for Dungarpur was soon superseded, particularly after Aurangzeb's death. For one thing, Mewar managed to obtain an Imperial *farman* from the Mughal court for managing matters in Dungarpur and Banswara. Thereafter, the Maharana sent in his troops, under the command of his minister, Bihari Das Pancholi, to subjugate the Vagar principalities. Simultaneously, this segment of the eighteenth century saw a spate of Maratha raids and the exaction of enforced tributes from Dungarpur by the Marathas. These proved a major financial burden on the treasury.

In 1728 Rawal Ram Singh concluded a treaty with Peshwa Baji Rao. According to the treaty-terms, Dungarpur was assured protection against external enemies, in return for that principality agreeing to pay regular tribute to the Peshwa. It was settled that the tribute would be handed over to the Raja of Dhar. In spite of the Peshwa's guarantee, however, Raghuji Kadam Rao and Sawai Katsingh Kadam Rao plundered parts of Dungarpur state and exacted Rs. 1,13,000. When a complaint was made to the Peshwa, he ordered that the entire looted amount be sent across to him. Either way, Dungarpur was left the poorer!

Despite juggling the external demands of Mewar and the Marathas, Ram Singh attempted to give due attention to enforcing law and order across his dominion. He also set about subjugating many Bhil *pals* (settlement groupings), besides conducting territorial expansion towards the Kadana and Lunawada area. Rawal Ram Singh's fourth son, Shiv Singh (r. 1730-1785), succeeded him. The new Rawal was also driven to safe-guard his state from Maratha attacks by paying regular tribute. During this period Dungarpur, like Banswara and Pratapgarh, had occasional clashes with the kingdom of Mewar too.

In 1746, Dungarpur had to pay a substantial sum to Malhar Rao Holkar. The very next year, Shiv Singh sent his agent to Pune (Poona) to negotiate with the Peshwa. It was agreed that Dungarpur would pay 35,000 '*Salim Shahi*' rupees annually, in exchange of which there would be no Maratha attack on Dungarpur's territory. (The *Salim Shahi* was a coin of the Pratapgarh-Deoliya state that was fully accepted and used in Dungarpur). It was further settled that the Rs. 35,000 *Salim Shahi* annual tribute was to be collected from Dungarpur by the three Maratha chiefs Scindia, Holkar and the Puar Raja of Dhar. This tribute amount would be shared out between the three, with the Raja of Dhar getting half the total amount, and Scindia and Holkar a quarter each.

Despite the financial hardships and external threats and incursion, however, internal peace mainly prevailed during Shiv Singh reign. Personally well-versed in Sanskrit, Shiv Singh — like Ram Singh before him, is credited with being a patron of scholarship, art and literature, and a benevolent man, whose works of public utility benefited the people. His

reign saw the introduction of standard weights and measures. His administration also followed the policy of providing impetus and encouragement to trade.

It was in Shiv Singh's reign that a particular style of stone *jharokha*, or ornate balcony, which came to be known as the '*Shiv-Shahi Gokha*' became popular. From that time onwards, the palaces of the ruling family, and the mansions of the nobles and rich merchants, were embellished by such *jharokha* windows. However, the fact that Shiv Singh ordered repairs to the city walls, and the construction of a new fort, on the hill overlooking Dungarpur town, gives an indication that the state was not oblivious to the overall disturbed conditions endemic to those decades across many parts of South Asia.

It is possible that such conditions gave an added impetus and popularity to the local cult following of Lord Mav-ji, which began to flourish from the eighteenth century. Mav-ji is believed to be a fore-runner, or pre-incarnation, of Kalki (the tenth and final Vishnu incarnation of the present Universe according to Hindu belief). Born in a Brahmin home in the village of Sabla (Dungarpur State) in *circa* AD 1714, Mav-ji used to travel on horseback (as it is prophesised Kalki shall do), between Poonjpur, Sabla, and the Sejpur-Salumber area of the then kingdom of Mewar, where he would preach to the local people. Mav-ji's followers worship him in the form of a rider on horse-back. He is credited with the composition of five texts, locally known as '*Chopara*'. A temple built by him at Sabla later became the seat of his spiritual successors. (Each, in turn, has since been referred to as 'Goswami-ji').

Shiv Singh's fifty-five year long occupation of the Dungarpur *gaddi* ended with his death in 1785. The short reign of his son and successor, Vairisal (r. 1785-1790), was troubled with Maratha incursions. Matters took a turn for the worse following the accession of Vairisal's son, Fateh Singh (r. 1790-1808). For one thing, the weak and ineffectual Fateh Singh was unable to cope with the gradually increasing state of disorder in the kingdom, and, for another, he was addicted to drink. Meanwhile, relations with the Marathas were becoming more fraught with pitfalls.

Until 1796, Maratha agents, deputed to receive the annual tribute fixed by the Pune agreement of 1747, lived at Dungarpur's capital. They were maintained by the Maharawal at an expense of between rupees two thousand to five thousand annually. However, as the payment of tribute was often irregular, and as Maratha raids had not wholly ceased, the agreement was considered terminated by the end of the eighteenth century. This opened the land to even more determined *chauth* collecting incursions by the Marathas. Finally Maharawal Fateh Singh's mother, the Queen-Mother (*Rajmata*; or *Ma-ji*) Shubh Kumari, who is described as being highly intelligent and exceedingly competent, acted to save Dungarpur. She placed her son in confinement, and with the help of a minister named Pema, took the kingdom's administration into her own capable hands.

It was not unusual for queen-mothers (or even queens) to serve as regents. However, many of Dungarpur's nobles, courtiers and officials (*kamdars* etc.), resented the Rajmata's control over the state's governance — possibly because it curtailed their own attempts at gaining predominance and even control over the weak Maharawal. As such, conspiracies were hatched, the Rajmata murdered, and Maharawal Fateh Singh restored to his position. The remainder of Fateh Singh's reign passed in increasing disorder and court intrigues, with the depredations of the Marathas adding to an ever-worsening situation.

BANSWARA

As in the case of Dungarpur, Banswara too was forced to deal with Maratha incursions and demands of tribute during the eighteenth century. During the reign of Vishan [Vishnu] Singh (r. 1712-1737), Banswara agreed to pay tribute to the Marathas. Maratha raids soon became a regular aspect of local life, and the frequent ransoms paid by the state became a burden on the treasury. In 1728 Vishan Singh paid a tribute to Baji Rao to secure Banswara from Maratha incursions.

However, inscriptions like the Mota Gada Inscription of AD 1701, the Ador Caon Inscription of AD 1728, the Narwaligaon Inscription of AD 1731, and the Mota Gaon Inscription of AD 1747 indicate that, in spite of

the frequent raids, the rulers of Banswara gave due attention to works of public welfare and to religious duties. Maharawal Prithvi Singh (r.1747-1786) was successful in wresting the tract of Shergarh (Chilkari) to the south-west of Banswara, from his southern neighbouring state of Sunth (also spelt Sant). The seized area was later given in *jagir* to the fief-holding Rao of Garhi.

PRATAPGARH-DEOLIYA

Following rulers like Pratap Singh, Ram Singh, Ummed Singh, and Sangram Singh, Gopal Singh ascended the throne of Pratapgarh in 1722. These rulers and their immediate successors encouraged building-work and improvements in the capital. Later, as the Marathas began to expand into Rajasthan, the rulers of Deoliya tried to protect their principality and their subjects from Maratha attacks.

The reigns of Sangram Singh, Gopal Singh, and Salam/Salim Singh, who died in AD 1761, ran concurrent with the rise of Maratha power in the region. Between 1734-1761 the Pratapgarh rulers kept the Marathas placated either through assisting them in their expeditions, or through the payment of substantial tribute-money. Salam Singh had to withstand three raids by Maratha armies, while during the reign of his successor, Sawant Singh (r.1761-1844), Deoliya was forced to promise the payment of an annual *khiraj* of Rs.72,700 to the Peshwa. Sawant Singh now turned to the East India Company for aid, and in October 1818 entered into a subsidiary alliance with the Company, which brought the principality of Pratapgarh-Deoliya relief from the depredations of the Marathas.

ASPECTS OF THE ART, ARCHITECTURE, LITERATURE, SOCIETY, ECONOMY AND RELIGIOUS TRENDS ETC. IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The eighteenth century saw a general continuation of the painting styles that had developed in the previous centuries through a blending of the Mughal

with indigenous court ateliers in the Rajasthan area. For example, in the case of the Jodhpur or Marwar School of Art, while the local tradition of vivid colours and themes continued unabated, during much of this period — including in Maharaja Ajit Singh's reign, the influence of the Mughal court style remained an obvious factor. The various local ateliers gained a further 'touch' of influence from the Mughal schools when, in the wake of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's increasing dislike of 'frivolous' things like music and art, many artists of the Imperial Mughal court sought the patronage of various Rajput rulers.

Among them, Fazil Muhammad and Sadiq Muhammad were given a place at Sawai Jai Singh's court, and thereafter made their contribution to the further flowering of the Amber-Jaipur School. The Amber-Jaipur School continued to flourish during the reign of Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II, and Shiv Das Rai, who worked at Jai Singh's court, is remembered for his work on an illustrated manuscript called the *Saras-rass-granth*, which has thirty-nine full-page paintings on the life of Krishna. Among the other painters known to have been patronised by Jai Singh were Muhammad Shah and Sahib Ram. The latter was active for nearly sixty years and is known to have painted many large-sized portraits.

As already noted, portraiture was popular at various Rajput courts by this period. One of the well-known portrait painters of eighteenth century Jaipur was Sahib Ram, who started his career towards the final part of Sawai Jai Singh's reign and served the Jaipur court for nearly sixty years. His portraits of Sawai Jai Singh, Ishwari Singh, Madho Singh I, Prithvi Singh, Pratap Singh and Jagat Singh reflect attention to physical details, dress, and other embellishments. Another contemporary artist, Lala, who served the maharajas Ishwari Singh and Madho Singh I, painted large scenes of the hunt and animal fights. Both Ishwari Singh and Madho Singh I were keen patrons of art, with painters like Ramji Das, Govinda, Hiranand and Triloka among those who worked at the Jaipur-Amber court during this part of the eighteenth century. Frescoes too had their place, and during Madho Singh I's reign, the walls of Madho Vilas, within the Chandra Mahal palace, were decorated with murals of musicians and dancers by court artisans. Themes from Jayadev's *Geet-Govind*, and *Raga-Ragini* and *Bara-masa* too were popular with the painters of the Jaipur-Amber atelier.

The Jaipur School's keenest patron and connoisseur or aesthete was Sawai Pratap Singh. Pratap is regarded in Jaipur's annals as a great patron of art, music and literature, and a man who was an accomplished composer and musician himself. He apparently patronised a large personal atelier, that held over fifty painters working on exquisite miniature paintings of *Raga-Ragini*, Court-scenes, festivals, portraits, and illustrated manuscripts of *Durga-Path*, *Ramayana*, *Bhagvat Purana*, *Krishna-Lila* etc. Artists patronised by him included Gopal, Udai, Hukma, Jiwan, Saligram, Ramasevak, and Lakshman. The works dating from this latter part of the eighteenth century are well executed, and show a preference for a bright palette of greens, yellows, pinks and brownish-red, with a lavish use of gold.

In the case of the Marwar School, besides a general continuity of existing styles and traditions, the local atelier got a new impetus during the reigns of Ajit Singh, Abhay Singh and Ram Singh. The paintings popular in the Marwar area during the eighteenth century included those based on folklore and local tales like those of Dhola-Maru, Moomal, Nihal-Dey, Pabu-ji, themes from the *Geet-Govinda*, and season-related *Shatt-ritu*, *Bara-masa*, etc. and *Raga-Ragini* (also called *Raga-mala*) depictions. There was a marginal decrease of scenes from the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, Puranic themes etc., as paintings of court life became more popular, as did portraiture of the ruling elite. Murals too were painted, as exemplified by the surviving wall-paintings in the palace within Nagaur fort, which were made during the time of Bakhat Singh. Sub-schools of the Jodhpur atelier continued to flourish at Pali, Ghanerao and Pokhran, etc.

Meanwhile, the neighbouring Bikaner School also remained active during the reigns of Surjan Singh and Gaj Singh. It was also around this time that Mughal influence began to be replaced in the Bikaner School by local and Marwar-inspired touches.

Continuity, with a modicum of innovation, was the scene at Bundi too in the eighteenth century. On the one hand, numerous portraits, scenes of elephant-fight, hunting, and equestrian studies were made, and on the other many *Raga-Ragini*, *Bara-masa*, *Bhagvat Purana* and *Rasika-Priya* miniatures too were painted. In terms of sheer quantity, the first half of the

eighteenth century saw a very productive period, but some art-critics feel that by the mid eighteenth century, the Bundi School began to lose its distinctive quality and freshness, and became somewhat repetitive and dull. The period also saw the use of black and silver coloured borders as 'frames' to the main subject matter of the painting. Contemporaneous wall-paintings within the palaces at Bundi and at other places, however, continued to be noteworthy for their excellent artistic quality.

Meanwhile, the part-related Kota School developed its own distinct style, somewhat different to the Bundi School, during this period. This was partly influenced by the choices of its patrons. The Kota School of the eighteenth century abounds in scenes of hunting, elephant fights and royal portraiture, besides the *Raga-mala*, *Bara-masa* etc. and scenes illustrating episodes from the *Ramayana*, *Bhagvat Purana* etc., so ubiquitous to Rajasthani paintings of the period as a whole.

The Mewar School too continued to thrive, Maharana Sangram Singh's court was the base for a well-known artist named Jagnath, who illustrated numerous texts of *Geet-Govind* and *Sunder-Shringar*, etc with miniature paintings. The wall-paintings in the *Badi Chitrashala* built by Sangram Singh II are also noteworthy. Practically all of Mewar's rulers during this period provided their patronage to artists at their respective courts, with the themes including portraiture, scenes of pomp and pageantry, festivities centred around the rulers, etc. as well as illustrations of *Raga-mala* and so forth.

The eighteenth century marked a high-water point for the Kishangarh School of painting, particularly under the patronage of Maharaja Sawant Singh. The poet-king, who turned to devotion and renunciation in the later part of his life (when he composed devotional poetry honouring Radha and Krishna, under the name of Nagari Das), ensured the immortalisation of his companion, a beautiful lady known as the 'Bani-Thani'. She remained Sawant Singh, alias Nagari Das's inspiration while he was ruler of Kishangarh, as well as after he had renounced the throne. (Sawant Singh ascended the throne in 1748 at the age of forty-nine, but abdicated in 1757 to live in Vrindaban and worship Radha Krishna. He died there in 1764. Bani-Thani accompanied him and composed devotional songs, until her

own death in 1765). She also served as the subject or model for the Kishangarh Court paintings of the time depicting Radha and Krishna. Many of these paintings were the work of the highly talented Nihal Chand and his assistants.

The paintings by Nihal Chand and his numerous contemporaries specialised in depicting Radha and Krishna in a variety of settings. For example, seated or standing in a pavilion or a grove, or celebrating different festivals. The paintings attempted to visualise and picturise the expressions of 'divine love' that already formed part of the literary and mystico-religious tradition of Krishna-Radha worship, and have been described as characterising the dreams and aspirations of Sawant Singh (Nagari Das) as a lover and devotee. Nihal Chand's success appears to have been in being able to create a perfect visual image of his master's lyrical passion. The portrayal of Radha as tall, slender and beautiful, with exceedingly sensuous 'lotus-petal' eyes, a finely chiselled nose, thin lips and sharp chin, and draped in Rajasthani court clothing, is considered to be amongst the finest examples of the Kishangarh school of painting. The style popularised by Nihal Chand and his colleagues, under the guidance of Sawant Singh, continued to remain popular over subsequent decades. To an extent, it also served to curb further stylistic experiments and evolution.

In the realm of architecture, many fine buildings were raised in different states of what today comprises Rajasthan — as has been noted already in various sub-sections. In the case of Dhoondhar state, for example, the new city of Jaipur came up, and subsequently had many finer new structures added to it. The building work extended to the outer limits and general vicinity of Sawai Jai Singh's new capital. The Sisodia-Rani's garden-palace, embellished by frescoes, at a short distance from the walled-city of Jaipur, is among the other examples of mid eighteenth century Jaipuri architecture. Nathdwara, which had become established as an important religious centre for the Vallabhacharya sect of Krishna followers during Maharana Raj Singh's reign, as noted above, is representative of the 'haveli' form of temple-architecture that thrived there. So too are the eighteenth-nineteenth century temples built within the newly established city of Jaipur.

In the field of literature, the existing tradition of compositions in Sanskrit continued. Alongside this, a number of creative works in Rajasthani were also penned at various contemporary courts. In the case of Marwar, one may take especial note of the *Ajitodaya* of Maharaja Ajit Singh's reign and the *Abhay-Vilas* datable to the reign of Maharaja Abhay Singh. Both these were written in Sanskrit. In a like manner, the *Raj Roopak* by Vir Bhan and the *Suraj Prakash* by Karnidan are notable eighteenth century works in Rajasthani, that were written at the court of Marwar's Abhay Singh. These works also provide historical information.

Among the *Kavya* form of literature of this period, one must take especial note of the *Suraj Prakash* and *Virad-Shringar* by the Marwar-based Karnidan, who wrote these *Dingal* compositions. Also important are the *Jag-Vilas* of Nand Ram, which describes the life and court of Jagat Singh II of Mewar, and the *Surjan Charitra*, datable to AD 1745, which deals with the life and times of Bharatpur's chief, Raja Surajmal. The penning of genealogies or *vamshavalis*, and of *khyat* and *vat* literature was another noteworthy feature of this period. This followed, in part, the pioneering work of Nainsi in the late seventeenth century. Works of a different nature included those connected with medicine and sciences, like the *Asbva-Ayurveda* and the *Rasa-Prakash*. Astronomy and mathematics were represented by texts like the *Bhasha Lilavati* and the *Sarala Jyotish*.

Besides the numerous literary luminaries at the Mewar court — some of whom have been mentioned by name in an earlier sub-section, a celebrated family of Kanthodi Brahmins were provided state patronage at court. The scions of this southern Indian family that settled at Udaipur included the well-acclaimed litterateurs Ranchhod Bhatt, Ram Chandra and Babu Bhatt. Jaipur's archives too tell us about various scholars who received a welcome at the courts of different rulers of Jaipur-Amber. For example, Ambapati, Harihar, Paras Ram, Mahesh, Kashi Deo Bhattacharya, Kashinath and Vasu Deo were among the scholars and poets from Bengal who got patronage and honour at Jaipur during the eighteenth century. In the later half of the eighteenth century Akhe Ram Vyas, a learned Brahmin of Ratlam, held a respected place at the Jaipur court, as did Pran Nath, a physician from Allahabad, and Ramji Das from Nepal. Kotah state's records too mention the names of many such scholars from southern India

and Malwa. There was a similar situation in practically all the states of Rajasthan.

In keeping with established custom, good scholars and writers (like other artists) were publicly honoured and given grants of land and money by the rulers and chiefs. Besides patronising and rewarding poets, scholars, artists and musicians etc. who had come to their courts, the rulers and chiefs of Rajasthan often provided stipends and land-grants to deserving youth and established scholars who wished to go to the traditional knowledge centres of Banaras and Ujjain for further tutelage. According to the *Dastur Komwar* manuscripts of Jaipur state, one Ranganath, son of Raghunath, was granted land in Jaipur state in the Vikram year 1807 (i.e. AD 1750) for study at Banaras.

As far as the literary attainments of the patrons themselves was concerned, it may be useful to take note here of James Tod's observations about the width of knowledge of the rulers and chiefs that he interacted with at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Tod noted that, "...there is none without sufficient clerkship to read his grant of agreement...; and none either so ignorant, or so proud, as the boasted ancestral wisdom of England, whose barons could not even sign their names to the great charter of their liberties. The Rana of Udaipur has unlimited command of his pen, and his letters are admirable.... The familiar epistolary correspondence of the princes and nobles of Rajas' than would exhibit abundant testimony of their powers of mind: they are sprinkled with classical allusions, and evince that knowledge of mankind which constant collision in society must produce. A collection of these letters, which exist in the archives of every principality, would prove that the princes of this country are upon a par with the rest of the mankind, not only in natural understanding, but, taking their opportunities into account, even in its cultivation. The prince who in Europe could quote Hesiod and Homer with the freedom that the Rana does on all occasions, Vyasa and Valmika[sic], would be accounted a prodigy; and there is not a divine who could make application of the ordinances of Moses with more facility than the Rana of those of their great lawgiver Menu[sic]. When they talk the wisdom of their ancestors, it is not a mere figure of speech. The instructions of their princes is laid down in rules held sacred, and must have been for more onerous than any system of European

university education, for scarcely a branch of human knowledge is omitted.... We cannot march over fifty miles of country without observing traces of the genius, talent and wealth of past days.”⁶⁴

It was not just the men. In the early part of the nineteenth century James Tod recorded that “...there are few of the lowest chieftains whose daughters are not instructed both to read and write...Though excluded by the Salic law of India from governing, they are declared to be fit regents during minority; and the history of India is filled with anecdotes of able and valiant females in this capacity”⁶⁵ He went on to add in a footnote, “I have conversed for hours with the Boondi queen-mother on the affairs of her government and welfare of her infant son, to whom I was left guardian by his dying father. She had adopted me as her brother; but the conversation was always in the presence of a third person in her confidence, and a curtain separated us. Her sentiments showed invariably a correct and extensive knowledge, which was equally apparent in her letters, of which I had many. I could give many similar instances”⁶⁶.

While traditional bardic literature provided genealogies, and tales of valour, sacrifice, bravado, vengeance etc., the concurrent tradition of compiling local sayings, and composing ‘*soratha*’, ‘*doha*’ etc. verses and couplets by both Rajasthan’s ‘elite’ and ‘non-elite’ alike, remained a well-accepted part of the area’s cultural tradition. The Rajasthani poems of ‘*Kavi*’ Bhairu, a blacksmith by profession, are an example. Such compositions were popularly recited, including by bards and princes!

Among other non-elite writers, Mangal Rama of Jaipur, who wrote on Dadu, was among those who won popular acclaim during the eighteenth century. One may note here that an important saint from the Mewar area of the Alwar region was Charan Das (1703-1782). He was greatly revered by local people, and attributed with miraculous powers. He composed numerous devotional verses too. One of the women writers of the period was Gurvi Bai of Dungarpur (1758-1808), who wrote devotional poetry and philosophical verses. Daya Bai of Mewar who wrote the *Dayabodha*, and Sahajo Bai of Mewar who wrote verses dedicated to her *guru*, Chandandas, were also among the women poets of this time.

The performing arts seem to have thrived during this period — as they did in previous centuries. Records and oral traditions tell us about a range of public performances of different types given at courts, temples, and in rural areas. Records maintained by various states (like the *Dastur Komwar*, and similar files), tell us that groups of performers were often invited to perform at the courts of the Rajput rulers, chiefs and estate-holders. Different performing groups moved about the country and amused the populace at large and the ruling classes too. Among these were sub-castes like the ‘Rawals’ mentioned in Shyamaldas’s *Vir-Vinod*, who moved across the countryside during the winter season staging performances called ‘*rammat*’. The themes often attempted to arouse the conscience of the ruler and his courtiers on topical problems. Religious dramas and performances were popular.

On the revenue-assessment and administrative front, various inscriptions (including the Hatundi Inscription), land-grants and archival records of the seventeenth and eighteenth (and even nineteenth) centuries throw light on prevalent systems of assessment and mode of collection of land-revenues from the farmers. These varied from area to area and *jagir* to *jagir*. The main systems used varied between the *batai* (crop-sharing), *kunta* (conjectural estimate based on standing crop), *latai* (based on actual measuring and weighing of grains after reaping and threshing), *zabti* (measurement and assessment), *mukta* (revenue charged at a fixed rate, in either cash or kind) and *raiyyati*, or ryoti (share of the peasant) forms of land revenue calculation. Often *bighori* (levy on assessment), was collected too. There were also lands on which a fixed rate was charged. One such category was *ijara* land-holdings, which were given on a fixed rate and renewable tenure to an *ijaradar*. In addition to land-revenues, different types of other taxes and cesses were taken by the various states. Some of these were the *chalubarar* or *kawari* taxes on houses, *angah* (tax of adults), *ghasmari* (tax on pasture land), *sawar-kharch* (tax towards maintenance of cavalry), and *Faujbai* (defence tax). A *dakhala* tax was levied for validating the name of a peasant-farmer’s successor in the records.

The overall administrative structure and systems of most states entailed functionaries like the *dewan desh*, who supervised the administration of *parganas*, and *dewan hazur*, who looked after matters of

the royal household. An official known as *khan-e-saman* supervised the purchases and storage of articles needed for the state. His duties were akin to those of the 'mir-saman' known to the Mughal court. Official *karkhanas* (work divisions or departments handling specific manufactures etc.) that were headed by officers called *daroga*, were supervised by the *khan-e-saman* too. In Mewar the term *kothari* was used for an official who carried out similar duties. By this time, a state's treasurer was called *khazanchi*, though in Mewar the older term of *koshapati* was also used. As far as public security was concerned, the *kotwal* of a capital-city ensured law and order within the state, arrested criminals, ensured that prices and weights and measures met local norms, and so forth. He also supervised *kotwals* posted at *pargana* levels and village *chowkidars*. Among various other officials were the *daroga-e-sayar* (in-charge customs and taxes), *mushriff* (revenue secretary), *waqiya-navees* (court news-reporter), *daroga-e-abdar-khana* (or *paneri*, i.e. in-charge for water collection, storage and distribution), *daroga-e-farashkhana* (in-charge of furnishings, royal tents, furniture, etc.), *daroga-e-nakkara-khana* (in-charge music gallery and drums etc.), *khawas* (in-charge personal household staff), *daroga-e-tambul-khana* (in-charge betel use and etiquette), etc.

The *amil* was the highest officer at the *pargana* level in Jaipur state. One of his main functions was collecting revenue and maintaining revenue-records, with the assistance of subordinates like *amin*, *qatungo*, *patel*, *patwari*, etc., and hearing local revenue-related and criminal cases. At the village level, the *patwari* (literally, one connected with the *patta* or land-deeds and papers concerning assessment and collection of revenue), handled land revenue matters. The *patwari* was aided by a *kanwari* (guard of the field), *tafedar* (keeper of accounts), *talvati* (who measured and weighed the produce), *sahana* (in charge of collecting and controlling duties, and marking the state's share), and *chowkidars* (watchmen). Village assemblies or *panchayats*, presided over by a council of village headmen and elders, decided disputes, arranged local watch-and-ward, regulated upkeep of wells and sharing of irrigation sources etc. There was often a co-existence between village-level or *gram*, and *jati* (caste or community-related) *panchayats*. The decisions of *panchayats* were usually acceptable to the official machinery and the rulers of the states.

RAJASTHAN AT THE END OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Conditions within Rajasthan were far from enviable by the close of the eighteenth century. Most of the kingdoms and chiefdoms of the region were continuing to face constant incursions into their territories to some degree or other. To the very real scenario involving the expansionist policies of the Marathas and the East India Company, had been added the factor of the Pindaris — as we shall see in the next chapter. Furthermore, in most areas, the local fief-holders flew in the face of the authority of their respective rulers; economic conditions were strained and unfavourable; and trade was affected in some areas due to, both, acts of brigandry, and the generally difficult political conditions across northern India. Efforts to replenish the near-depleted treasuries of different states imposed burdens on local farmers, merchants, craft-workers etc. and fief-holders alike, and there was a sullen sense of resentment against the overall situation on the part of the ordinary citizens and elite. It was a combination of these causes that encouraged the various rulers of the region to accept the overtures of the East India Company at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

¹ See, Govind Agrawal's *Unnessvi Shati Purvardh mey: Samridh Bharatiya Bima Padhati*, 1987.

² The rise, expansion and decline of Maratha power over a substantial portion of the Deccan and some parts of northern India cannot be fully covered in this book. Readers may like to refer to works like Stewart Gordon's *The Marathas: 1600-1815*, Cambridge, 1993; R.C. Majumdar (Ed.) *The Maratha Supremacy*, Vol. VIII, Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, Bombay, 1977; and Surjit Mansingh's *Historical Dictionary of India*, New Delhi, 1998; among others.

³ He sent a 'kharita' on November 25 1724 to Sawai Jai Singh.

⁴ The British supported Raghunath Rao in his bid to become Peshwa. Defeated at Wadgaon (January 1779), the British fought on until the Treaty of Salbai was signed in May 1782. The British obtained the island of Salsette.

⁵ The names of a state and its capital have conventionally been used interchangeably. This book follows suit.

⁶ Ram Chandra Chhabra, Jai Singh's Khandelwal minister and general, known as the 'Dhal' (shield) of Dhoondhar, played a vital role. Jai Singh's Khandelwal ministers included Sanghi Mohandas Barjatya and Vijay Ram Chhabra.

- ⁷ Jai Singh was prominent in the group loyal to the emperor. The anti-Farukhsiyar group rallied to the Sayyid brothers. An important member of the latter was Ajit Singh of Marwar, Emperor Farukhsiyar's father-in-law.
- ⁸ This title is used in a letter of July AD 1713 sent to Jai Singh I! by Jagjiwan Das, the *vakil* of Amber.
- ⁹ Among Sawai Jai Singh II's ministers was Rao Kripa Ram Pandya, who held a Mughal *mansab* rank. He is credited with contributing a large sum of money towards the building of Sawai Jai Singh's new city of Jaipur.
- ¹⁰ The word seems derived from the Sanskrit '*goshti*' meaning a gathering or discussion-group.
- ¹¹ As a fellow-conspirator with Abhay Singh of Marwar, Marwar's minister Raghunath Bhandari, and the Mughal emperor.
- ¹² Tod, *op.cit.*, Vol. II, pp.288.
- ¹³ Tod, *op.cit.* Vol. II, pp.291.
- ¹⁴ VS. Bhatnagar, author of *Life and Times of Sawai Jai Singh*, *op.cit.*, holds that had Jai Singh had lived longer, he may have assessed the danger of the growing power of the East India Company and taken measures to counter this threat.
- ¹⁵ See also, Varsha Joshi's *Polygamy and Purdah*, 1995, especially pp.46, 62-84.
- ¹⁶ One of Ishwari Singh's queens was the daughter of the Rawat of Salumber — traditionally the most senior noble in Mewar. Sawai Jai Singh probably arranged this alliance to provide his older son a support-base in Mewar to counter-balance the natural advantage his younger son enjoyed by virtue of being the son of a Mewar royal princess!
- ¹⁷ Pandit Todarmal, a Jain scholar of repute and a reformist, lost his life as a result of this.
- ¹⁸ For details, see Jhabarmal Sharma, 1922, pp.62-63.
- ¹⁹ Son of Nawab Sardar Khan's brother, Meer Khan.
- ²⁰ Of Jhujhar Singh's eighteen sons, ten lost their right to succession as they did not fight when Nawab Qutb Khan tried to re-take Khed. Later, three of Jhujhar's sons joined the battle of Haripura, fought between the imperial forces and Kesri Singh of Khandela. Of them, Deep Singh, died in battle, while Jagram left the field.
- ²¹ The late Devi Singh Mandawa's text, *Sardul Singh Shekhawat*, focuses on his life. See also, Sinh, 2001.
- ²² In the interim, Sardul fought and killed the Kyam-Khani chief of Nawalri, followed by another sanguine battle against the Kyam-Khanis at Narsinghani around c. 1711 or 1712.
- ²³ In 1719 Sardul and his younger brother, Salehdi, took the lead in avenging the murder of twenty-four immediate kinsmen at Baghora (three miles from Udaipur), and a murderous attack at

Khandela on their eldest brother, Gopal, followed by the sack of Udaipur. These had been planned by Udai Singh of Khandela.

[24](#) Mutual distrust grew when, at the behest of Fatehpur's Nawab Sardar Khan, Amanullah Khan killed Meer Khan, younger brother of Sardar Khan, while Meer Khan was sheltered by Jhunjhunu's Nawab Ruhela Khan.

[25](#) Amanullah Khan left Jhunjhunu for his estates, and later refused to pay tribute to the Nawab. Sardul Singh and his eldest son, Zorawar, marched against Badwasi. Amanullah Khan died in the battle of Doomra (1728).

[26](#) His Begum persuaded him to designate Sardul Singh's eldest son and her great-nephew, Zorawar Singh, as his heir but Ruhela died before completing necessary formalities and obtaining the consent of the Mughal emperor.

[27](#) See, Sinh, 2001. Nagad Pathans still reside in the Baggar, Jai-Pahari, Islampur and other parts of Narharwati.

[28](#) See also, Sharma, 1922, pp.91-96.

[29](#) Bagh Singh killed his own son and Bhopal's nominated heir, Hari Singh, to take over the governance of Khetri. He killed his remaining brother, Pahar Singh, too.

[30](#) The younger, Sardar Singh, got Deobandh-Bakri.

[31](#) This was to avenge Sagat Singh's conspiratorial role in Khandela's fraternal rivalry leading to the death of Udai Singh's middle brother, Fateh Singh, as also the later mid-battle withdrawal of Manoharpur's forces at Haripura, which left the Khandela chief, Kesri Singh, and many Shekhawat kinsmen vulnerable (Sinh 2001).

[32](#) In AD 1704 he received a *khillat* (presentation of a robe of honour), from the Imperial court.

[33](#) See Sinh, 2001.

[34](#) A holding confirmed by Jaipur's Ishwari Singh in 1745.

[35](#) Duleha Singh had a fort built here in A D 1795.

[36](#) Acknowledging his services, Maharaja Bijay Singh of Marwar granted him two villages in 1792.

[37](#) See, Jhabarmal Sharma, 1922, pp.59-61.

[38](#) Jhabarmal Sharma, 1922, pp.75-79.

[39](#) Chand Singh and his younger brother Budh Singh then helped Sardul Singh against the Kyam-Khanis of Loomas.

[40](#) Sharma, 1922, pp.94-96.

[41](#) See also, V Joshi, *op.cit.*, 1995, pp.70-71.

- ⁴² Bakhat was appointed Gujarat's *subedar* for helping the Mughal Empire against Ahmed Shah Durrani in 1748.
- ⁴³ The fortunes of one of the components of the elite *Mutsaddi* group — the Bhandaris — suffered during Bakhat Singh's short reign. Many Bhandaris in important positions were dismissed or imprisoned by him.
- ⁴⁴ See, *Bankidas ri Khyat*, Shyamaldas' *Vir Vinod* Vol.II; and Joshi, 1995, p.99, among others.
- ⁴⁵ Laxmi Kumari Chundawat's *Gir Uncha. Uncha Garha*, Rajasthani Granthagaar, Jodhpur, 1994, pp.47-50.
- ⁴⁶ Churu was not always under Bikaner. For its earlier history, including under Kyam-Khanis, Mohilas etc and the Jat-dominated areas, see Govind Agrawal's *Churu Mandal ka Shodhpurna Itihas*, 1974, pp.51-140.
- ⁴⁷ At the time known as 'Ghazi-ka-Thana'.
- ⁴⁸ Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajas'than*, Vol.II, pp.301.
- ⁴⁹ Kalyan Singh had five sons. Agar or Anand Singh, the eldest, succeeded to the main estates, Amar Singh founded the Khara line, Shyam Singh got the *jagir* of Para, Isri Singh that of Palwa and Jodh Singh of Pali.
- ⁵⁰ The descendants of Zorawar Singh's younger brother, Zalim Singh, became the Thakurs of Bijwar.
- ⁵¹ Pratap Singh acquired Alwar fort on Margashirsh shukla 2, Samvat 1832, i.e. AD 1775.
- ⁵² In AD 1793, Bakhtawar Singh married the daughter of Thakur Suryamal of Kuchaman (Marwar). Puran Singh, the fief-holder of Kansli, opposed the alliance. Bakhtawar attacked Kansli on his return from Kuchaman, defeated Puran Singh and gave his Kansli estate to Rao Raja Laxman Singh of Sikar.
- ⁵³ See, K. Natwar Singh's *Maharaja Suraj Mal, 1707-1763*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1981.
- ⁵⁴ K. Natwar Singh's *Maharaja Suraj Mal, 1707-1763*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1981, pp.100-105.
- ⁵⁵ Among them, K. Natwar Singh, *Ibid*, 1981; Satish Chandra's *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court 1707-1710*, Peoples Pub. House, New Delhi, 1979; Ram Pande *Bharatpur upto (826)*, Jaipur, 1970.
- ⁵⁶ For a valuable perspective on the military and cultural importance of horses in one part of Rajasthan, see Norman P. Ziegler's 'Evolution of the Rathor State of Marwar: Horses, Structural Change and Warfare', in K. Schomer et al (Eds.) *The Idea of Rajasthan*, Vol.II, American Inst, of Indian Studies, Manohar, Delhi, 1994, pp.192-216.
- ⁵⁷ *Rajasthan District Gazetteer — Bundi* (Ed. B.N. Dhoundiyal), Govt. of Rajasthan, Jaipur, 1964, pp.53.

[58](#) Feudatories living within Kota were called *deshath*, and those at the Mughal court were called *hazurathi*.

[59](#) Zalim Singh Jhala was the son of Himmat Singh's brother Prithvi Singh Jhala, and a great-grandson of *Faujdar* Madho Singh Jhala.

[60](#) It was in the course of the eighteenth century that Kota began to issue silver coins bearing Persian inscriptions and the symbols of a three-petalled flower and sunrays. The silver coins of Kota state weighed 172 grains.

[61](#) Despite the declining prestige of the Mughal Empire, it was with Emperor Shah Alam II's permission that Kishangarh state issued coins in gold and silver. These bore the emperor's name etc. in Persian on the reverse, and a crudely executed *jhar* on the obverse.

[62](#) He ordered that no poor quality swords of 'raw' or untempered pig iron could be made in Sirohi.

[63](#) Ojha, 1911 [rep. 1999], pp.272.

[64](#) Tod, *op.cit*, (1829) Vol. I, pp.515-16.

[65](#) Tod, *Ibid*, pp.509.

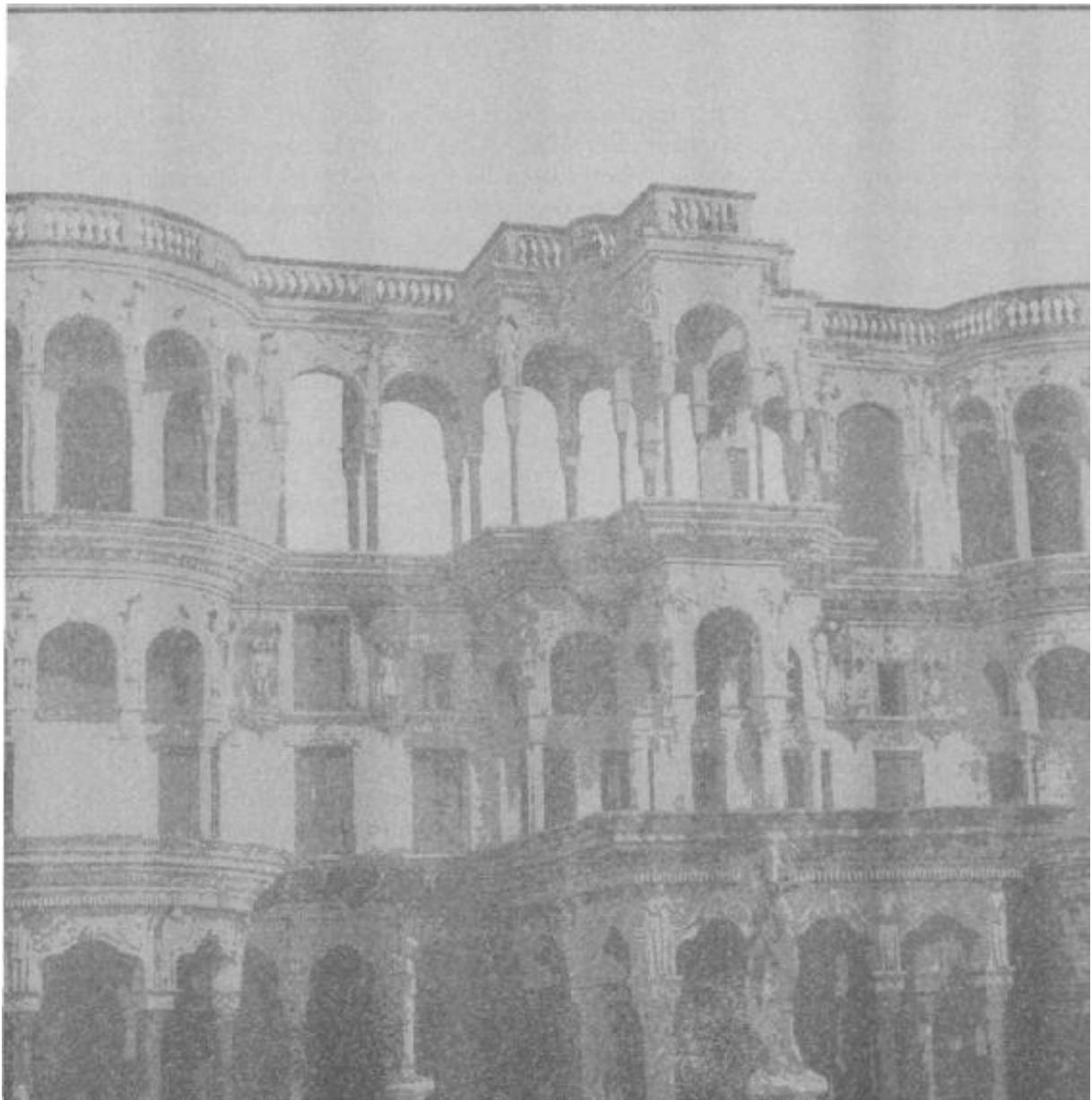
[66](#) *Ibid*, f.n. pp.509.

SECTION
SIX



10

DIPLOMACY, TRANSFORMATIONS
AND BRITISH PARAMOUNTCY
RAJPUTANA DURING THE NINETEENTH
CENTURY



INTRODUCTION



CONCURRENT WITH THE DECLINE OF MUGHAL SUPREMACY DURING the greater part of the eighteenth century, various regions had asserted, or, in some cases, re-asserted, their autonomy or independence. For Rajasthan, the rise of Maratha power¹ and its expansion northwards and north-westward into Rajasthan proved a serious challenge, which many of the local kingdoms (and chiefdoms) found themselves unable to meet²

Even after the Marathas suffered a severe defeat at the Third Battle of Panipat in 1761, the Rajasthani kingdoms were unable to fully shake off the domination enjoyed by the Maratha Peshwa or by his more notable Maratha chiefs over the region comprising present-day Rajasthan. In part, this was due to the internal problems practically all the states found themselves facing within their kingdoms, and, in part, it was due to the strength of the Maratha military. While offering a regular ‘tribute’ to the Marathas staved off greater problems, raising tribute-money severely taxed the economic resources of the concerned states. To this was added the ever-willingness of the Marathas to take up calls seeking assistance from various rival Rajput contenders for thrones in different Rajasthani kingdoms. In fact, by the beginning of the nineteenth century the Marathas were regarded as the natural ‘referees’ in the frequent disputes — external and internal — of most of the Rajput states.

Internal dissension and power-seeking, or recalcitrant and rebellious, nobles and *jagirdars* additionally plagued the individual states themselves.

This was a serious problem since the nobles and local land-holders were an integral part of the administrative systems of the different kingdoms and chiefdoms of the Rajasthan region. Not only were they invariably linked to the ruler through either the clan structure, or by marriage, or a blood-brotherhood, or long-established oaths of loyalty; they were also an important intermediary link in the revenue-collection etc., military and militia-raising, and civil administrative patterns of Rajput states. (An aspect common to practically all pre-modern monarchical systems, no doubt!)

We have already mentioned how the traditional administrative system of the Rajput rulers and their nobles had formerly been based around the clan, with the ruler being 'first-among-equals'. Over time, this had been partially modified, in keeping with the requirements of the passing centuries and the expanding boundaries of individual kingdoms. But, as far as the relationship between the nobles and the king was concerned, the notion of ruler as both clan-head and as *pater familias* of the state as a whole, had persisted. As such (as was often the case elsewhere too), disobedience, or rebelliousness, on the part of the nobles and *jagirdars* affected the entire administrative, political, economic — and even social — edifice of the traditional state.

The situation was particularly accentuated when relatively weak rulers occupied the *gaddis* of various different Rajput kingdoms in the latter half of the eighteenth century, and the whole coincided with external threat from more powerful neighbours or the depredations of the Marathas etc. In fact, groups of courtiers and *jagirdars* occasionally joined hands with the Marathas to put up a joint front against the rulers of their respective kingdoms. Sometimes, as was the case in parts of Mewar and Jaipur during the latter part of the eighteenth century, the nobles encroached on state or *khalsa* (crown) lands, and usurped the proceeds from such lands. This not only diminished the revenues of the concerned kingdoms, it also meant that the state treasuries were unable to use such of its legitimate sums and revenue for paying the tribute regularly demanded by the Marathas.

On a different front, the nobles and *sardars* also squabbled amongst themselves for dominance at their respective courts. Such was the case, for example, with the *sardars* of the rival Chundawat and Shaktawat sub-clans

of Mewar, as well as with the Rajawat and Nathawat *jagirdars* of Jaipur. These types of rivalries accentuated the internal problems of the concerned kingdoms, and were often exploited by the Marathas or neighbouring kings, and later also by the Pindaris and the British. Furthermore, some chiefs or *jagirdars* in Mewar, the Shekhawati area, and the Churu area of Bikaner personally encouraged the plunder and depredation of surrounding areas. This, not unnaturally, served as a major check to trade and commerce, agrarian activities, and the general well-being of the region as a whole.

In addition, the emergence of the Pindaris and the Jats, with their strong individual military organisations and obvious political ambitions — which were soon given tactile shape, proved a further challenge to the late eighteenth-early nineteenth century rulers of the different, mainly Rajput, kingdoms of Rajasthan. The overall situation was further compounded by the economic strain all this imposed on the treasuries of the various concerned states.

RAJASTHAN AND THE MARATHAS, PINDARIS AND EAST INDIA COMPANY IN THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY

The same period witnessed the rise to prominence of another power in India — the British East India Company. It was to this perceived stronger power that the various states of Rajasthan — or ‘Rajputana’ as the region was soon being referred to in British documents — gradually began to turn. The local states looked to the East India Company for assistance and a solution to the problems besetting them, particularly, though not solely, from the depredations of the Pindaris and Marathas. While the earlier British policy of non-interference in the affairs of the Rajputana states during the 1786-1802 period had allowed the Marathas to dominate and dictate affairs in Rajasthan, the situation — and British policy — began to change during the first decade of the nineteenth century.

Already holding revenue-rights and effective control over large tracts of land that made up the Bengal, Bombay and Madras ‘Presidencies’, in 1801 the British forced the Nawab of Oudh to give them half his dominions. The step placed Rohilkhand and various other districts of the

Ganga-Yamuna *doab* area under the control of the Company. An equally significant connected event was the Second Anglo-Maratha War (1803-1805). This came about following the defeat of Peshwa Baji Rao II by the Holkar faction, after which the Peshwa accepted British protection and signed the Treaty of Bassein in December 1802. (In effect, the Treaty of Bassein gave the British East India Company a foothold in the, Maratha heartland, and ensured the stationing of a British military envoy at the Peshwa's court. Not surprisingly, the important Scindia and Bhonsle Maratha chiefs contested this, and the situation culminated with hostilities, now known as the Second Anglo-Maratha War).

In the interim, following the signing of the Treaty of Bassein, Lord Wellesley, the Governor General, attempted to extend British territory up to the river Jamuna (also Yamuna), in the north, and British influence to the 'borders of the Deccan'. He held that the British ought to overtly intervene in the affairs of what is now the Rajasthan region, and in a letter to Lord Lake dated 18 July 1803, expressed the belief these Rajput states would 'cooperate with the British, once they were relieved from the terror of Maratha reprisal', and join a scheme of defensive mutual alliances. The East India Company was also fully conscious that vital routes that connected Delhi to Mhow, Agra to Ajmer, and Agra to Neemuch etc., passed through Rajasthan. Accordingly, possibilities of treaties with some of the princely states of the region — like Jaipur, Jodhpur etc. were discussed.

While the Company was exploring possibilities, the first stage of fresh hostilities with the Marathas commenced, and the Company's forces moved against some of the Maratha chiefs. Lord Lake's campaign against the Marathas in northern India, in what was to be the first phase of the Second Anglo-Maratha war (1803-1805), led to his capturing Aligarh on 4 September 1803. General Lake then advanced towards Delhi where the Marathas, under Perron and Bourquien, were defeated once more. At the end of September, Lake left Delhi, marched on Agra and invested the fort there. (Meanwhile, representatives sent by Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Bharatpur met Lake at Ballabgarh, and concluded a mutual offensive-defensive alliance on 29 September 1803). The Marathas still possessed between thirteen to fifteen regular battalions out of the original brigades

trained by General De Boigne. These had been sent north from the Deccan, under the command of Chevalier Dudrenec, by Daulat Rao Scindia to maintain Maratha supremacy in that region. Even after Dudrenec's surrender at Mathura, his battalions had remained intact and been augmented by two others that had come out from Delhi. This powerful force made no attempt to prevent the capture of Agra by Lord Lake, as its object was apparently to recapture Delhi and thus re-establish Maratha prestige.

Lake next marched from Agra, to face a strong Maratha force that was encamped near Kathumar, north-west of Bharatpur. Enroute, on 29 October, a body of the Alwar state forces led by Ahmed Baksh Khan, the Alwar *vakil*, along with a contingent of Meos, joined the Company's forces. The Meos proved invaluable in procuring supplies and furnishing information about the movement of the Marathas. The forces commanded by General Lake clashed with the Marathas at Laswari, thirty-two kilometres east of Alwar, on 1 November 1803. The engagement ended with a decisive defeat of the Marathas. Laswari marked the end of Maratha supremacy over the Alwar-Bharatpur-Agra-Mathura region, and the British gaining the upper hand over Daulat Rao Scindia and his Maratha forces in northern India. This was closely followed by other British victories over Scindia as well as the Maratha Peshwa, Baji Rao II, and their armies, during the remaining course of the Second Anglo-Maratha War, including at Assaye and Argaon, where the East India Company's forces were commanded by Sir Arthur Wellesley (later the Duke of Wellington).

By the treaty of Sarji Arjangaon, a settlement was formalised between Daulat Rao Scindia and the British on December 30 1803. The Yamuna-Ganga *doab* area (the fertile tract between the rivers), Agra, and Scindia's territories in Gohad and Gujarat were entrusted to the British East India Company; and Scindia's control over Rajasthan was relaxed. Scindia further signed a defensive treaty, and agreed to the presence of a British Resident. (Subsequently, in November 1805, Acting Governor-General Sir George Barlowe revised the treaty, in accordance with London's policy of withdrawal. By the revision, Gwalior and Gohad were restored to Scindia, the defensive treaty abrogated, and the East India Company's 'protectorate' over Rajasthan withdrawn).

Matters were not fully settled though, and in the latter half of 1804 Jaswant Rao Holkar and his troops took Mathura and advanced upon Delhi. The Bharatpur ruler sided with Holkar, and gained an assurance of gaining some tracts of territory in exchange for his help. The British forces, under Lord Lake successfully quelled Holkar's attempt against Delhi, and in November 1804 pursued the Marathas as Holkar and his men sought shelter at the fort of Deeg, near Bharatpur. Deeg was besieged by Lake and taken over the Christmas of 1804. The Marathas and Ranjit Singh's Bharatpur forces took refuge in the Bharatpur fort. It was now Bharatpur's turn to face a siege, which lasted over the 3 January to 22 February 1805 period. The strength of Bharatpur's defenders stood at around 8,000 Bharatpur state troops and nearly that many able-bodied inhabitants of the surrounding country-side, besides Maratha troops. Lake's attacking force included 800 European and 1,600 'native' cavalry, 1,000 European infantry-men, 4,400 Indian sepoys, 65 field-artillery pieces, a siege-train consisting of six 18-pounders and eight mortars, three Companies of 'Pioneers' and three engineers. (In the interim, the Pindari Amir Khan attempted to help Holkar, through a diversionary tactic in the *doab* area, but was defeated by the British).

Along with sustained artillery-fire, the British side also made four successive assaults on the 'mud-fort' of Bharatpur. These took place on 9 January, 21 January, 20 February and 21 February, 1805, but the fort withstood all the attacks. However, both sides were in need of a respite, and the siege was temporarily raised. In the duration, while the bulk of the Maratha troops were defeated elsewhere and forced to move south across the Chambal, a treaty was concluded on 17 April 1805 between the British and Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Bharatpur. The defeat of the Marathas by the East India Company resulted in the acquisition of Delhi and Agra, besides the *doab* area — all of which became part of the 'North-Western Provinces' of the Company's 'Bengal Presidency'. (Other concurrent and subsequent acquisitions enabled the presidencies of Bengal and Madras to become linked by further acquisitions, so that in time the eastern coast became British).

The victory also enhanced the prestige of the British in the eyes of the rulers of Rajasthan, while at the same time, checking the power of the

Marathas. The East India Company, though juridically holding merely revenue-collection rights from the Mughals, had also extended ‘protection’ to the Mughal emperor, Shah Alam II (r. 1759-1806), and would thereafter do the same for his successor, Akbar Shah II (r. 1806-1837). This further altered the power equations — since even the nominal suzerainty owed to the Mughals by the Rajput kingdoms and chiefships of Rajasthan now became a notional one where it continued, or a lapsed relationship in other cases. (In his turn, Akbar Shah II’s son and successor, Bahadur Shah ‘Zafar’ II (r. 1837-58; dethroned and forced into exile) too was to remain under the ‘protection’ of the British).

Meanwhile, the East India Company, having already made an alliance with Bharatpur in September 1803, and entered into a treaty with Alwar in November 1803, followed this up with a fresh treaty with Bharatpur (1805) and a treaty with Dholpur (1806). The Pindaris, however, had remained a major problem — if not an affliction — for many of the kingdoms of Rajasthan with whom the East India Company had not entered into subsidiary alliances by that point. Thus, the rulers of kingdoms like Mewar, Jaipur and Kota looked to the British for protection several times during the 1807-1816 period. The various Rajput kingdoms of Rajasthan pointed out that as the Company had taken the place of the Mughal emperor, it behoved it to also take on the protection and support offered by that erstwhile suzerain power too! As such, over the next few years, individual treaties of ‘perpetual friendship’ and ‘subsidiary alliance’ began to be separately negotiated and concluded with various states of Rajasthan — or as they were being termed in British documents — the ‘Princely States of Rajputana’: ‘land of the Rajputs’.

About the same time, in late 1817 the British launched campaigns against the Pindaris as well as the Marathas. On 5 November 1817, the treaty between the British and Scindia was again revised under pressure from the British, on the eve of what was to be the Third Anglo-Maratha war (1817-1818). Scindia promised to help the British against the Pindari marauders and surrendered his rights in Rajasthan. Meanwhile, in the course of the British campaign against the Pindaris, Governor General Lord Hastings took troops into Maratha-held territory. In November 1817, the Peshwa’s forces, along with those led by Bhonsle and Holkar rose against

the British, though Scindia remained neutral. The Marathas were defeated, the Peshwa pensioned off, and his territories occupied by the British³. By this time, a large part of India had come under some degree of British control, and a broad stretch of British-held land connected the western parts of its Bengal Presidency holdings with the Bombay Presidency.

More or less simultaneously, the loose-knit Pindari confederacy was dealt with through a combination of battles and *real politick*, and one of the Pindari chiefs, Amir Khan, was made ruler of the newly created state of Tonk. A treaty with the Maratha chief, Scindia, also saw the handing over of Ajmer into British hands in 1818. The same year, further individual treaties were concluded with the remaining states of the Rajasthan region, barring Sirohi.

THE PINDARIS

The emergence of the Pindaris as a strong fighting and raiding group, which the British were not slow in dubbing 'predatory', had, by the turn of the century, affected the already delicate status of the Rajput states of Rajasthan. For, besides lending their sword-arm to various causes, the Pindaris were not slow in garnering hefty amounts of money as tribute from different states of Rajasthan. The 'Pindaris' appear to have originated from one of the Muslim groups of irregular cavalymen who loaned their services when required. The term 'Pindari' itself has been described as being of Marathi origin, apparently derived from terms that translate as 'bundle of grass'; and 'who takes'. The Pindaris were among the groups that took advantage of the waning power of the Mughal Empire, with some becoming initially attached to the Maratha chiefs and their activities in northern India. In time, the Pindari chiefs became powerful enough to exercise their own writ over parts of northern and central India.

One of the more prominent among the Pindaris was a group headed by a soldier of fortune of Afghan ancestry, Amir Khan (b.1765, d. 1834), son of Hyat Khan. Amir Khan's Salarzai ancestors had come to India in the reign of Mohammed Shah Ghazi, and after invading Rohilkhand had finally

settled at Siwai Turin near Sambul in Moradabad⁴. Amir Khan's grandfather, Taleh Khan of the Buner tribe, had succeeded in winning a following and some land, to which his son, Hyat Khat, added. It was on Hyat Khan's estate near Moradabad that Amir Khan was born.

The earlier course of Amir Khan's eventful career included a bid — unsuccessful due to his young age — for recruitment into Scindia's army, which the French adventurer De Boigne was raising. This was followed by perambulations to the Mughal court at Delhi, a brief service in the retinue of Bijay Singh of Jodhpur, and a spell at Baroda with Holkar, whom he joined with his band of about three to four hundred warriors. The Baroda connection did not endure for long, and Amir Khan later led his men into joining the service of Dulip Singh, zamindar of Ranode, in Ahirwada, on the north-west boundary of Malwa⁵.

During the 1794-96 period Amir Khan was much sought after by various rival factions fighting for the control of Bhopal, following the death of the Nawab Mohad Yasin (also known as Chatta Khan). Amir Khan enjoyed mixed luck, and was often driven to seek refuge at Sironj — an area with which he would have a life-long association, and which would later form part of his estates. In 1796, Amir Khan, with his followers, joined the forces of Durjan Lal and Jai Singh of Radhogarh, then deposed and exiled from their territory by Daulat Rao Scindia. Though this association did not last beyond a year, it served to further enhance Amir Khan's standing, and saw him in command of five hundred troops. The fearless adventurer next found a place in the service of the Maratha chief, Balarao Ingliya, military commander in the state of Bhopal. Here, Amir Khan held the command of a garrison of 1,500 soldiers and the charge of the fort of Fatehgarh, overlooking Bhopal⁶.

In 1798 Jaswant Rao Holkar approached Amir Khan, offering favourable terms, including the *equal* sharing of their conquests and plunders. Sironj was assigned to Amir Khan the same year. On his part, Amir Khan undertook never to desert Holkar. The association remained in force until Holkar's defeat at the hands of the East India Company forces at Deeg and Farukkhabad in 1804. (In the interim, when there was a rebellion

in Holkar's army, and Amir Khan was called upon to pacify the troops, he had to remind Holkar about his earlier commitment, and was granted the districts of Pirawa and Tonk, in addition to Sironj which he already held).

As a trusted aide and lieutenant of Holkar, Amir Khan was assigned the task of collecting tribute from Kota state, and other tracts. With the Pindaris settling into a pattern of wresting substantial 'contributions' from many of the kingdoms of Rajputana, Zalim Singh Jhala, the 'Raj Rana' and *Faujdar* of Kota state, attempted to secure that kingdom from Pindari depredations by extending protection to them. He gave them lands at 'Chhaoni' (the word means a cantonment or military camp), and at Jhalarapatan. He also provided shelter at Shergarh to the family of Amir Khan, when the Pindaris and Marathas were facing setbacks and defeat at the hands of the East India Company forces.

By 1806, Amir Khan had 35,000 soldiers under his command, along with 115 guns. His power and position enabled him to interfere fully in the affairs of several of the states of Rajasthan, particularly during c. 1806-1817. He took substantial monetary tribute and indemnities from various kingdoms, and resorted to plunder, and even intrigue and assassinations, where thwarted in his demands. (Taking advantage of this, Maharaja Man Singh of Marwar used Amir Khan — upon whom he had conferred the title of 'Nawab', to effect the assassination of Thakur Sawai Singh of Pokhran and his associates in 1808).

Amir Khan fully exploited the differences amongst the Rajput rulers. The best-known instance of this was during the long, seemingly irresolvable, squabble between Jodhpur (Marwar), Jaipur (Dhoondhar) and Udaipur (Mewar) over the issue of the marriage of Mewar's Princess Krishna Kumari. (The rulers of, both, Jaipur and Jodhpur sought the hand of the princess, as is discussed further in this chapter). In turn, and sometimes simultaneously, Amir Khan took up the roles of an arbitrator, mercenary, and financial exploiter of the situation; and ended by obtaining substantial sums of money from all the three concerned rulers. In the course of the convoluted politics and the related battles between Jaipur and Jodhpur over the issue, Amir Khan opportunistically changed sides — and yet skilfully emerged the gainer! Amir Khan initially sided with Maharaja Jagat Singh of

Jaipur in 1806-1807, and assisted in the defeat of Maharaja Man Singh of Marwar by Jaipur and its allies, and a siege of Jodhpur fort. However, when the Pindari chief realised that the resources of Jaipur state were depleted, he allowed his troops to rout Maharaja Jagat Singh's forces at Phagi in 1807, and joined the cause of Marwar's Man Singh.

On another occasion, in 1813, on the failure of the state of Jaipur to pay dues to his agent, Mohammad Shah Khan, Amir Khan compelled Maharaja Jagat Singh (r. 1803-1818) to dismiss the state's minister-cum-commander, Rao Chand Singh, the *jagirdar* of Dooni. It was with Amir Khan's backing that Indra Raj Singhvi, a minister of Marwar, and Dev Nath, Maharaja Man Singh of Marwar's spiritual *guru*, were assassinated in Jodhpur fort in October 1815. (The distressed Maharaja handed over the administration of Marwar to his heir-apparent, Chhatar Singh). Amir Khan met occasional reverses too, as happened when he marched through Shekhawati in 1815 on a tribute-hunting mission. The Pindari chief was thwarted after the *panch-pana* chiefs of Shekhawati rallied together and defeated Amir Khan at a battle fought at Bhojgarh.

Meanwhile, in 1809 Nimbahera had become part of Amir Khan's growing territories; by 1812 there would be nearly 6,00,000 so-called 'Pindaris' under his command, and by 1816 Chhabra would be added to the lands held by this Pindari 'freebooter'. In 1810, East India Company troops marched into Amir Khan's stronghold of Sironj, while the Pindari chief was away campaigning against Nagpur. (Around this time, as Jaswant Rao Holkar was suffering from a brain ailment, which had resulted in insanity, Amir Khan found himself looking after the affairs of his long-time ally and Maratha mentor too). Though Amir Khan's forces were mobilised against the British, no major engagements took place, and a rather uneasy truce prevailed.

Simultaneously, other Pindari chiefs and their troops were active across parts of western and central India — just as had been the case with the Gangetic plain. Once the British had secured an upper-hand over the Maratha forces during the East India Company's campaigns of 1803-1804, some of the Pindaris had made their headquarters in the Malwa region, where they had the tacit protection of the rulers of Gwalior and Indore.

From here, the Pindaris generally set out around October-November to seek plunder from neighbouring Gujarat and Rajasthan etc., as well as neighbouring British-held territory. For example, the Pindaris plundered Gujarat in 1808-1809 and Mirzapur in 1812.

Among such other Pindaris were leaders like Khuddad Khan — who may have been an associate of Amir Khan. He is known to have plundered Dungarpur in 1812 and maintained his hold over it for about four years, till his death in 1815. Maharana Bhim Singh of Mewar was apparently so weakened by internal civil strife, as well as the raids of the Marathas and Pindaris, that in 1816 he was unable to repel the Pindaris from his own capital city. As a result, the Pindaris under a leader called Jamshed Khan plundered the *zenana* apartments of the Maharana's palace with burning torches in their hands! In April 1817, yet another Pindari chief, Nawab Karim Khan, led his men against Banswara and plundered it.

By this general period, the East India Company forces had succeeded in asserting British authority over practically all other major contenders for power across northern India, and the British had already entered into subsidiary alliance treaties with some of the states of Rajasthan (or Rajputana). The Company now deemed it prudent and expedient to suppress or pacify the so-called Pindari hordes, which they had already categorised as marauders and free-booters.

As such, the British launched a campaign, now referred to as the Pindari War (1817-1818), to check the Pindaris. The Pindaris were surrounded by an army of about 120,000 men, which converged upon them from Bengal, the Deccan, and Gujarat under the supreme command of the then Governor General, Lord Hastings. In 1817, some of the Maratha chiefs, who were viewed as the protectors of the Pindaris in Gwalior and Malwa, signed a treaty against them. Yet others fought the British, but were defeated. Eventually, most of the leaders of the Pindaris had either surrendered or been suppressed, and their numerous followers dispersed.

In the case of Amir Khan, even as the East India Company exerted pressure against him, it was equally eager to reach some amicable settlement with him. Amir Khan rushed back from his siege of the fortress

of Madhavarajpura in Jaipur to protect his territories, but before skirmishes could commence, the Company offered an arrangement to the Pindari chief. Amir Khan was to be recognised as a Nawab by the British, allowed to retain his forces and control over the territories given to him in *jagir* by Holkar, and given the *pargana* of Rampura (Aligarh). However, he was expected to disband his Pindari brigades, keeping only such a portion of his army as needed for the internal management of his possessions (as per Article II). He was also told to surrender his artillery and military equipment to the East India Company — with the exception of those required for the internal management of his State (Article IV); and restore to the original owners all other lands, which he had forcibly occupied during his successful career. Amir Khan was further restricted against aggression on another state and asked to sever his connection with Pindaris and other plunderers. On their part, the British agreed to pay Amir Khan the sum of rupees three lakhs to settle the accounts of his disbanded Pindari soldiers.

For a while, Amir Khan delayed the initial signing of the agreement, while he watched the ongoing power-struggle between the British and the Marathas. Following the defeat of Nagpur's Bhonsle at the hands of the East India Company forces at the battle of Sita Buldi, however, the wily chief deemed it sensible to sign the document with the British. Thus, in November 1817 Amir Khan was recognised as the ruler and first Nawab of the newly carved out principality of Tonk.

There were undoubtedly several motives in the British making an offer to Amir Khan. One of them being to use the most powerful of the Pindari chiefs as a shield, through establishing friendly relations with him, while simultaneously creating dissension among the various other Pindari war-lords and minor chiefs. By the end of 1818, the Pindaris were no longer a rival force to the British — with many of them destroyed, or scattered.

BRITISH ASCENDANCE IN RAJASTHAN: THE RAJPUT STATES AND BRITISH PARAMOUNTCY

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the East India Company was sufficiently well entrenched in parts of South Asia and had begun to review and rethink its existing policies. During the governor generalship of Lord Wellesley the guiding principles of British paramountcy were further elucidated through the policy of 'Subsidiary Alliances'. It was clearly understood by the Company that Britain was to be recognised as the 'paramount power' by the Indian rulers — who were designated as 'native princes' in British documents and correspondence. The princes could retain their personal insignia of sovereignty, but had to accept their position of 'subordinate co-operation' in the face of British overlordship. They also had to hand over certain privileges and rights to the Company through treaties signed between the East India Company and individual Indian states.

In the case of Rajasthan, individual treaties were entered into between the states and the British East India Company between 1803 and 1823. In 1803 treaties were signed with Bharatpur (29 September 1803), and Alwar (14 November 1803), followed by Dholpur in 1806. For a while, the East India Company reversed Wellesley's policy, but when this altered policy of 'non-intervention' failed to fully serve the ends of the Company it was reversed again in 1811, and the British Resident at Delhi, Charles Metcalfe, sent out feelers to the princely states of the Rajasthan area suggesting a confederation of Rajput states under the protection of the British government. Such a step hoped to secure the political attachment and dependence of the princely states and, thus, extend British supremacy. Lord Hastings⁷, who became Governor General of India in 1813, brought Wellesley's 'Subsidiary System' into ample play, and the bulk of the treaties with the states of Rajputana were concluded during Hastings's governor generalship.

Kishangarh, Karauli and Kotah (as it was being spelt) signed treaties of 'Subsidiary Alliance' in 1817. Mewar and Marwar signed in January 1818, Bundi on 10 February 1818, Bikaner in March, and Jaipur in April 1818. Thereafter, treaties with Banswara, Pratapgarh-Deoliya (referred to as 'Pertabgarh' or 'Partabgarh' from the nineteenth century) and Dungarpur (11 December) were finalised towards the end of 1818. Thus, by the end of 1818 practically all the states of the present-day Rajasthan region (with the

exception of Sirohi, which signed the treaty in 1823) were in treaty relationship with the British.

The treaties⁸ basically bound the ruler of each signatory state to acknowledge British supremacy or 'paramountcy', leave their external relations as well as disputes to be settled by the British, and not indulge in aggressive acts against other states. (In other words, once these states came under British protection, they were expressly forbidden from interfering in the inter-state rivalries of the region). In return, the British were committed to protect each signatory state against external attacks and internal revolts (by 'recalcitrant' nobles and royal relatives, as had become common in the period immediately preceding). The British were also committed towards protecting the interests of the rulers and their heirs and successors, and to non-interference in the internal affairs of the signatory states.

The basic terms of these treaties can be summarised as follows⁹:

1. The respective contracting parties — i.e. the East India Company and the concerned state — agreed to perpetual friendship, alliance and unity of interests between them. The friends and enemies of one party were to be considered as the friends and enemies of the other as well (except in the case of contracts with Bundi, Karauli, Jaisalmer and Tonk states).
2. The British promised to protect the state that was a signatory to the treaty. In its turn, the concerned state agreed to always act in 'subordinate co-operation' to the British, and to acknowledge the supremacy of the latter.
3. The contracting Indian states renounced their individual right to enter into negotiations with any other chief or state without the knowledge and sanction of the British. (General correspondence regarding family matters was not barred through this clause, though).
4. The concerned Indian states signing the treaty agreed not to indulge in aggressive acts against each other, and to submit their mutual disputes

to “the arbitration and award” of the British.

5. Each contracting princely state was committed to providing troops to the British, according to its means and abilities, whenever these were so requisitioned. (There were fine points in each individual case. For example, the states of Dungarpur and Banswara were to furnish their entire military force, if called upon to do so by the British, and Dungarpur and ‘Pertabgurh’ [Pratapgarh-Deoliya] were also required to discharge all Arabs, Makranis and Sindhis from their armed forces. Jodhpur State was required to furnish 1,500 cavalry troops for helping the British whenever required. In addition, Jodhpur’s forces were expected to join the British forces when necessary. In 1835 Jodhpur’s obligation to furnish a contingent was commuted to an annual payment of Rs. 1,15,000 (in *Kaldar* rupees), with which the Jodhpur Legion was raised).
6. The states of Jaipur, Mewar, Marwar, Kotah, Bundi, Dungarpur, Banswara and ‘Pertabgurh’ were each required to pay tribute to the British. (This tribute took the shape of varying amounts of money, which was settled on an individual basis. The tribute payable by Jaipur State was to rise from four lakhs in the second year to eight lakhs in the sixth year and thereafter. Mewar was required to give a quarter of its revenue for the first five years, and three-eighths after that, in perpetuity. Kotah was to pay the amount it had previously been giving to the Marathas. Similarly, Bundi was committed to giving the amount it had earlier given to Scindia. Banswara and Dungarpur were contracted to pay arrears as well as the annual tribute payable to the State of Dhar, with the amount rising over time as the economic condition of the states increased, subject to a limit of three-eighths of their respective revenues. Pratapgarh was to give the British the tribute amount previously payable to Holkar).

In addition, there were certain provisions in individual treaties, which were specific for particular states. Clause 7 in the treaty with Mewar related to the British encouraging the prosperity of Mewar by evaluating its claims for the restoration of its territories, which had been appropriated by others. Similarly, according to Clause 9 in the treaty with Jaipur, that state’s

prosperity was to be viewed favourably as long as the Maharaja was faithfully attached to the British. In the case of Kotah, a supplementary article favouring Zalim Singh Jhala, the Raj Rana of Kota, was added to the treaty by Sir Charles Metcalfe, and accepted by the British authorities. According to this supplementary article, the entire administration of Kotah was vested in Raj Rana Zalim Singh and after him in his heirs, 'in regular succession and perpetuity'. This was done at the desire of Zalim Singh Jhala, and in acknowledgement of the important role and 'loyal services' of Zalim Singh to the British in dealing successfully with the Pindari 'menace'.

In the case of the treaty with Bikaner, the British insisted on having protection and safety on certain trade routes passing through Bikaner State; while the treaty concluded with the State of Sirohi in 1823 gave the British the power to impose transit duties and customs within Sirohi's territory. The treaty with Sirohi also stipulated that if it was found necessary to raise a military corps for Sirohi State under European officers, the ruler would take the necessary action and such a militia, in the employment of Sirohi State, would always be ready to act in subordinate cooperation of the East India Company's officers.

The various treaties led to prolonged contact between the British and the ruling/administrative sections of the various kingdoms and *thikanas* that comprised the Rajasthan/Rajputana region. By the end of 1818 the might of the powerful Pindari fighters had been broken, as already noted above. The Maratha chiefs too had been conclusively ousted from their previous position of influence over Rajasthan, and with their acceptance of British paramountcy, the states of the Rajputana found themselves secure from external dangers.

The years that followed saw British paramountcy acknowledged across the region. The establishment of a '*Pax Britannica*' and interaction with the British, in turn, encouraged a process of transformation of the traditional administrative, legal, revenue-related etc. structures and machinery within the different states. Along with this occurred the 'modernisation' and 'westernisation' of certain socio-economic practices, education, medical and health care, communication networks, and the

personal lives of the elite of Rajputana in the different states of Rajputana. Other changes included the coming of railways, postal facilities etc., and the establishment of judicial and other institutions patterned on 'Western' and British India models.

Aspects of the 'living culture' too were affected. Among other things, the clan structure lost its *raison d'être* to some extent; modern standing state armies lessened the traditional interdependence on the fighting forces or *jamiats* of the various *thikanedars* and *jagirdars*; and matrimonial alliances by the rulers and chiefs became subject to British approval. In the majority of these states, British-inspired policies came to bear their influence on matters concerning tariffs, fiscal policies, forests, irrigation, health care, social reforms, etc. too. As far as social reforms went, the practice of *sati*, slavery, infanticide, etc. were among the 'customs' that came to be stopped during the course of the nineteenth century. In the long term, by the century that followed, the altered scenario would also give rise to popular expressions for 'representative government' (within the states' structures). However, as the nineteenth century dawned, that still lay in the future.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE RAJPUTANA AGENCY

The East India Company went on to innovate and develop its mechanisms for governance as per requirements. Initially, British officers and 'Political Agents' were posted at the capitals of several of the Rajputana states. By the beginning of the 1830s, the need for establishing a separate administrative unit to deal with matters relating to the Rajputana states was being clearly realised. At the time, the East India Company's system of supervising its relations with the various states of Rajputana entailed using the British 'Residents' based at Delhi and Malwa, and the 'Superintendent and Political Agent' based at Ajmer¹⁰. The flaws in this system were rectified from time to time, and military cantonments established over time at Ajmer, Nasirabad, and later Erinpura, Kherwara etc.

In 1832, a 'Durbar' was held at Ajmer for the various rulers of the Rajputana area (which Jodhpur's Maharaja Man Singh did not attend). The Rajputana princes re-iterated their reliance on the friendship of the East India Company for the maintenance of law and order in their respective states. At this Ajmer Durbar, following consultations with the rulers of the region, the Governor General of India, Lord William Bentinck, made an announcement. He declared that all the states of Rajputana had been placed under the charge of a single political authority, to be known as the 'Agent to the Governor-General for the states of Rajputana and Commissioner for Ajmer'. (The term was soon abbreviated to 'A.G.G.' in British and Rajputana states' documents and popular usage). This British official was headquartered at Ajmer, which was also the administrative centre of the British-administered territory or 'province' of Ajmer-Merwara. Under him were the various Residents and Political Agents who were accredited to diverse states, or groups of states.

The 1832 Ajmer Durbar and the announcement of the formation of a separate Rajputana Agency were perhaps motivated by two inter-linked factors. The first was emphasising the paramountcy and absolute control of the British East India Company over the region. The other was to simultaneously lower the prestige and importance of the Mughal emperor vis-à-vis the British. After all, it was the suzerainty of the Mughals that had previously been acknowledged by the rulers of Rajputana, over the course of several generations!

The decision to set up a separate agency for the states of Rajputana undoubtedly resulted in a more efficient administrative system for the British. The states that came under the Agency in 1832 were linked by many commonalities of history and socio-cultural customs etc. So much so that, barring certain minor changes due to boundary adjustment and externally motivated factors, most of the states covered by the Rajputana Agency unit in 1832 went on to constitute the modern state of Rajasthan formed after Indian Independence through the merger of states in 1949.

The Rajputana Agency eventually dealt with twenty-two 'native' princely states and chiefships. These were classified into four groups — or 'Agencies', broadly on a geographical basis. Each 'Agency' was under a

British Resident, and all four Residents were responsible to the Agent to the Governor General, who, in turn, reported to the Governor General of India.

Of the four 'Agencies', the Eastern Rajputana States Agency was, at the beginning, made up of Bharatpur, Dholpur, Karauli, Kotah, Bundi and Jhalawar. Its Resident was based at Dholpur initially. In 1897, the headquarters of the Eastern Rajputana States Agency (which at the time covered the states of Bharatpur, Dholpur and Karauli) was transferred from Dholpur to Bharatpur. Another grouping, the Jaipur Agency, comprised Jaipur, Alwar, Kishangarh, Shahpura, and Tonk, and the chiefship of Lawa. The Resident for this group was based, predictably, at Jaipur. The third was known as the Mewar and Southern Rajputana Agency. The Resident of this Agency was based at Udaipur, and the Agency itself included Mewar (more usually referred to as Udaipur by this time), Dungarpur, Banswara, Pratapgarh, Idar and Vijaynagar, along with the chiefship of Kushalgarh. The fourth group comprised the states of Marwar (once again, generally referred to as Jodhpur, after the name of its capital), Bikaner, Jaisalmer, Sirohi, Palanpur and Danta. British Political Agents supervised each of these four groups. These Political Agents were, in their turn, answerable to the AGG, and functioned in accordance with guidance and policies transmitted down to them through the AGG.

Some two decades later, in April 1856 the headquarters of the AGG was changed from Ajmer to Mt. Abu. This was a new hill-station town that came to be established in the old Abu (Arbud) region, about five miles from the ancient fort of Achalgarh. (Near the once flourishing old capital of Chandrawati of the Abu Parmars of c. tenth century AD, and at a distance of some seventy miles from the capital of the state of Sirohi).

In the interim, the British had established control over the Mewar Hill Tracts as early as 1828, and placed it under a Political Superintendent based at Kherwara, so that due control could be exercised over the Bhils of the Mewar and Southern Rajputana Agency. It was in these Mewar Hill Tracts that the Mewar Bhil Corps was raised in 1840, under the command of a British officer, with Kherwara and Kotra as army cantonments. The Mewar Bhil Corps (like the Merwara Battalion, Malwa Bhil Corps and Mahikantha Police Foot), proved a reliable source of military assistance to the British —

including against other Bhils — while simultaneously providing occupation and employment to the local Bhils of that part of southern Rajputana.

Over time, the British Agent to the Governor General for Rajputana included Henry Lawrence, Lt. Col. Sutherland (around 1839), General Lawrence (1863-64), Col. Elliot (mid 1860's), Lt. Col. WF. Eden (around 1867), Lt. Col. Keating (1860's-70's), Col. Brooke (early 1870's), Edward Bredford, Colonel C.K.M. Walter (from October 1887), Col. Trevor, Sir Robert Crossthwaite, Col. Sir Arthur H.T. Martindale (around 1900), Colvin (around 1910-11), Sir Robert Holland, etc. Several of these men had previously served as Political Agents and/or Residents etc. in various Rajputana states, or groups of states, earlier in their careers.

There were, obviously, numerous Political Agents at different states over the course of the nineteenth and earlier part of the twentieth centuries. Among them were Captain (later Col.) James Tod, Captain Cobbe, Capt. (later Lt. Col.) H.L. Showers, Capt. (later Col.) Nixon, Captain James Blaire, Major Benyon, Major Taylor, Major C.E. Burton, Major Hutchinson, Capt. (later Lt. Col) E.C. Impey, Major Bradford, Lt. Col. Wright, Col. C. Herbert, Major C.G. Gunning, Major K.D. Erskine, Col. Walter, Major T Cadell, Major A.F. Pinney, Col. Miles, Lt. Col. Martelli, Col. W.H.C. Wyllie, Col. Ravenshaw. Lt. Col. T.C. Pears, Capt. (later Col.) Percy W.Powlett, Sir Claude H. Hill, W.H. Wilkinson (1920 Mewar), AC. Lothian, and Col. W. Garnell. (Some of them attained other senior military ranks after serving as Agents).

THE DOCTRINE OF LAPSE, THE EVENTS OF 1857, AND THE STATES OF RAJPUTANA

Meanwhile, by this time the enunciation of Governor-General Lord Dalhousie's Doctrine of Lapse in 1848 enabled the British to take over a number of 'native' princely states, like Satara and Jhansi, in different parts of South Asia, where the rulers had died without a male heir¹¹. Despite acute resentment, the princes of Rajputana found themselves unable to do much about this. In fact, most of them supported the British during the

tumultuous days of 1857-58, following the uprisings at Meerut on 10 May 1857, and Delhi and other places thereafter. These events the British termed, at the time, as the 'Great Indian Mutiny'. Later Indian historians have designated it as the 'First War of Indian Independence'.

In the interim, in 1837 Bahadur Shah II (b.1775; r. 1837-1858), had succeeded his father, Akbar Shah II as the next Mughal emperor. His territorial sway was as nominal as his real powers, and Bahadur Shah II 'Zafar' was to be better known as a poet and musician (writing under the name of 'Zafar'). For the bulk of his reign he was without real authority, but during the events of 1857-58, Emperor Bahadur Shah 'Zafar' II became a rallying point, as Indian troops rising up against the British made for Delhi and hailed the eighty-two year old Bahadur Shah II as their leader.

Indian troops in Company service who mutinied included some of those serving at the cantonments of Nasirabad¹² (28 May), Neemuch (3 June), and Erinpura (as is also noted below, in the sections dealing with the individual states of the Rajputana area). They attempted to take control of the cantonment treasuries, burnt down buildings and killed several Europeans.

A detachment of the Jodhpur Legion (raised in 1835), which was headquartered at Erinpura Cantonment, was sent to Mount Abu to protect convalescing British soldiers, where it revolted. Meanwhile, other Erinpura-based troops marched against Abu too, but were unable to take it, and all of them were forced back in the face of the support given to the British by Sirohi's ruler and his state forces. The remaining soldiers of the Jodhpur Legion at Erinpura also rose up in arms, and joining with soldiers from Deesa and the troops of various *jagirdars* of Mewar and Marwar, moved towards Narnaul, enroute for Delhi. They were beaten near Narnaul by British troops led by Colonel Gerard. Subsequently, the Jodhpur Legion was disbanded, to be replaced by the Erinpura Irregular Force (which later became the 43rd Erinpura Regiment).

Soldiers of Kotah based at Neemuch had not remained indifferent to the anti-British uprising, either. Some were involved in incidents at Neemuch's Sadar Bazaar with European troops from Deesa, in Bombay

Presidency. On its return to Kotah, the Kotah contingent willingly followed the lead of a *Risaladar* of the Kotah State troops, Pathan Mehrab Khan of Karauli, and of Lala Jai Dayal, who was in the service of Kotah state. The soldiers attacked the Residency at Kotah, killed the British Political Agent Major C.E. Burton, and took over the capital city of their state. For a while the ruler, Maharao Ram Singh, was forced to keep to his palace because his pro-British sympathies. It was only by the end of March 1858 (30 March, to be precise), that British forces finally suppressed the Kotah uprising. Dholpur too, had seen the ruler's authority set aside between October and December 1857, after some 4,000 to 5,000 anti-British troops from Gwalior and Indore took control, attracting many in the Dholpur State's army and court to their cause, and constraining the ruler to agree to their demands. The Dholpur ruler's authority was finally re-asserted in December 1857, with the help of military assistance from the ruler of Patiala.

Meanwhile (as mentioned elsewhere), troops serving under the Nawab of Tonk marched to Delhi to join hands with the forces of the Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah II (r. 1837-58). In the Bharatpur and Dholpur areas too there was action against the British. Ajmer saw resistance to the British too, and in the state of Marwar, the Thakur of Ahuwa, Rao Raja Khushaal Singh, became a rallying point for numerous opponents of the *Company Bahadur's Raj*. Thus augmented in strength, on 18 September 1857, Khushaal Singh and his companions were able to defeat British troops at Ahuwa. It was not till 24 January 1858, that Lawrence, the AGG in Rajputana, was able to quell the movement at Ahuwa.

Besides Thakur Rao Raja Khushaal Singh of Ahuwa, several other *jagirdars* and nobles too came out against the Company Raj, and/or in favour of the Mughal emperor, or against their state's ruler for following pro-British and pro-modernisation policies. Among them were the thakurs of Asop, Gular, Alaniawas, Lambiya, Bata, Bhivaliya, Radawas, Bajawas, Kherla, Roopnagar, Lasani and Asind, to mention but a few. There were others too. For instance, upon learning of the anti-Company uprising, Rawal Shiv Singh of Samode (in Jaipur state) offered the traditional symbol of allegiance and homage known as *nazar* to the Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah II 'Zafar' at Delhi. On his way back to Jaipur, he came across the state forces of Jaipur near Kotputli and stirred up the troops. Swayed by his

words, a number of sepoy and artillerymen deserted the camp of the Political Agent of Jaipur, Lt. Col. WF. Eden, at Palwal (now in Haryana). As a result, Eden, Nawab Mohammed Khan and the remaining Jaipur forces had to return to Jaipur in July 1857.

Simultaneously, the mother of the under-age chief Fateh Singh of Khetri (r. 1843-1870), the Regent *Ma-ji* [Queen Mother] Ranawat, denied a detachment of Khetri troops to Col. Eden in June 1857. In addition, in clear defiance of the orders of the Jaipur state, which stood for the prompt apprehension of all rebellious soldiers, she ensured refuge at Singhana, Khetri, and other parts of the Khetri Estate, to soldiers and dissenters who had joined the mutiny. In an adjoining part of Shekhawati, the chief of Malsisar sheltered Tula Ram Ahir — who had escaped from Rewari and was wanted by the British.

Another of the Jaipur State's *jagirdars*, Rao Raja Fateh Singh of Uniara, initially refused British forces pursuing Tantia Tope's soldiers, supplies and permission to enter the town of Uniara in January 1859. Finally, under duress from the British, he agreed to their main demands, but refused to surrender the local men who had fired upon Lieutenant M. Burd and Lieutenant Anderson of the 10th Bombay Native Infantry, near the water-tank of the town. In other areas too, several estate-holders provided supplies and shelter to rebellious Company soldiers and to the Indian leader, Tantia Tope (b. 1819; d. April 18, 1859), and his troops, during the latter's march across parts of Rajasthan between June 1858 and January 1859.

(Tantia Tope, originally called Ramchandra Panduranga, was a Maratha Brahmin who had been in the service of Peshwa Baji Rao and the Peshwa's adopted son, Nana Sahib — also a prominent figure in the events of 1857-58. Though lacking formal military training, Tantia Tope was to prove one of the most effective of the nationalist commanders of 1857-58. Tope continued resistance as a guerrilla fighter in the jungle until he was betrayed and executed in 1859).

Among other Rajputana-based fief-holders who helped Tantia Tope were Rawat Kesri Singh of Salumber and the Rao of Kotharia (both from Mewar state). They probably felt compelled to defy the British because of

the 'doctrine of lapse' policy of the British, and the protection given to the Maharana, along with other grievances. Tantia Tope and his troops were provided free provisions at Salumber on 14 December 1858. Similarly, the Bhil *jagirdars* Onkar Rawat of Mowri Khera and Dalla Rawat of Sodulpur (in Banswara) had previously supplied Tantia Tope with food etc. in March 1858, during the course of Tantia Tope's march through Banswara's territory. They later joined Tantia Tope, along with 4,000 Bhils, when he took the field against British forces near Pratapgarh on 24 December 1858. The British eventually forced Tantia Tope out of Rajputana in January 1859. (He was later arrested by a British force at Paron and executed at Sipri on 18 April 1859).

In Sirohi, the Thakur of Rohwa revolted against the ruler of Sirohi state. In Jaipur state the local administrator or *amil* (also *ziledar*) of Hindaun, Isur Das, in defiance of state orders, told his subordinates to supply the self-willed troops of Tonk state marching to join the Mughal emperor at Delhi, and was subsequently dismissed from service by the Maharaja of Jaipur. Ordinary villagers of parts of Jaipur state offered provisions and cattle to soldiers from Nasirabad cantonment as the latter passed through the areas of Dudu, near Ajmer, on 1 June 1857, and Bagru, further along the route, on 2 June 1857. In addition, many of the Purbia and Muslim troops, particularly those serving in the state forces of Tonk, Kotah, Jaipur, Jhalawar, actively helped the rebels and Tantia Tope's troops. In contrast, a number of other soldiers from different states of Rajputana provided half-hearted assistance to British officers in seeking out mutineers and rebels.

In the 'Mewar Hill Tracts' area, local Bhils united under the Bhil chief of Pahara in an attempt to destroy the cantonment of Kherwara (headquarters of the Mewar Bhil Corps), which was used by the British to keep the Bhils in check¹³. Taking equal advantage of the situation, the Meenas of Kherar looted British troops and stores, and traders and surrounding villages in Ajmer-Merwara, Bundi, Mewar, Tonk and Jaipur during 1857-1859. (This was more particularly the case after the departure of the Kotah contingent from its headquarters at Deoli, and its joining the 'mutiny' at Agra in May 1857). Meanwhile, in the Dholpur area, a Gurjar leader called Deo Hans mustered together some 3,000 of his kinsmen and

community, and sacked the treasury and *tehsils* of Iradatnagar on 9 July 1857, carrying away some two lakh rupees worth of money and goods. One Bhawani Shankar, too, collected and led men against British authority in the Dholpur-Bharatpur and neighbouring British India areas.

POST-1858 RAJPUTANA, SANADS (GRANTS) OF ADOPTION OF HEIRS, AND RELATIONS WITH THE BRITISH

As a direct consequence of the events of 1857, the British government had been compelled to re-examine the role of the East India Company in administering vast tracts of India. In 1858, the British government took over direct control of the governance of India from the East India Company. This was announced, in the name of Queen Victoria, sovereign of Great Britain, by Lord Canning, the Governor General, at a durbar held at Allahabad on 1 November 1858. The proclamation confirmed the 'treaties and engagements' of the East India Company with the Indian princes, and promised to respect the 'rights, dignity and honour of the native princes, and to pay due regard to the ancient rights, usages and customs of India'. The proclamation disclaimed any desire to extend British territorial possessions in India through 'encroachment on those of others', and announced that irrespective of race or creed, all could be freely and impartially admitted to 'offices in our service'.

In contrast to the anti-British fervour and activities of several nobles, local administrators, state soldiers and ordinary people¹⁴, the rulers of the different states of Rajputana had continued to render support and military assistance to the beleaguered British during the crucial 1857-58 period. Furthermore, honouring their treaties with the British, the rulers of Rajputana did not go over to the side of the Mughal emperor, even after the aged Bahadur Shah II became the declared rallying point of the Indian movement. (Later, after the British had gained control of the situation, and Bahadur Shah's sons and grandsons executed, the aged Emperor Bahadur Shah II was exiled to Burma (now Myanmar). He was accompanied into exile by his wife, and died at Rangoon (now Yangon) on November 7 1862, pining for the sights and sounds of his beloved homeland).

In acknowledgement of the role of the majority of the rulers of the Rajputana area, various gestures of acknowledgement and enhanced goodwill were made towards the different Rajputana states once British hold was re-consolidated. These included part or full remission of debts, commutations of previously stipulated tributes, the grant of lands and honours (*khillat*), and increases in the number of gun-salutes. Equally importantly, in 1862 the British government granted the Rajputana rulers and chiefs *sanads* of adoption that acknowledged the right of a ruler to adopt an heir. This was significant, as it altered previous stipulations regarding adoption of heirs.

However, the proclamation and events thereafter effectively reduced the princely states to the position of subordinate entities or protected feudatories. The Governor General, Lord Canning, admitted as much at a *darbar* held in 1862, where he declared that the Crown of England ‘stood forward as the unquestioned ruler and Paramount power in all India and was for the first time face to face with feudatories...’ (Thereafter, the British followed a policy of ‘subordinate union’ till about 1906. This entailed British intervention in the socio-economic and administrative aspects of the princely states, without overt territorial encroachment. In 1877 the Crown’s supremacy was to be further emphasised with the assumption of the title of ‘Empress of India’ and ‘*Kaiser-e-Hind*’ by Queen Victoria). The assertion of political dominance influenced the socio-economic-cultural spheres of life in various princely states too.

Thus, over the course of the post-1858 decades, while the relationship of the British vis-à-vis the ruling and administrative elite of the Rajputana states remained, by and large, cordial, the impact of things and thought that came from Britain and Europe began to influence the public sphere and the ordinary citizens of the different states of Rajputana to some degree or other. The same was true — again to varying degrees, as far as life within the palaces and forts and mansions of the ruling elite of the different states of Rajputana were concerned. Young princes and the sons of nobles were often educated in the ‘western’ or British educational pattern. This, obviously, influenced their way of thinking and behaving¹⁵. (Of course, the *nature* of the influence — whether positive or negative, and the subsequent activities of individual princes and nobles as adults, varied).

British Residents (and British tutors to young princes) encouraged the rulers and nobles in the ideas common to the Victorians vis-à-vis ‘modernising’, and ‘westernising’ the administrative, legal and judiciary, land revenue and economic structures of their respective areas. Due stress was also given to the establishment of hospitals, medical dispensaries, schools, post-offices, and building of modern roads and railway lines, etc. Customs and social practices like widow-immolation, slavery, etc., which were intolerable and archaic from the perspective of a humanistic and humane ‘modern’ society, were discouraged in the different Rajputana states. So too was female infanticide, which was banned and made punishable by law in all the Rajputana states between 1831 and 1844.

At the Ajmer Durbar held in 1870, the Governor General, Lord Mayo called upon the rulers and chiefs attending to ensure that “.. everywhere throughout the length and breadth of Rajputana, justice and order should prevail, that you should make roads and undertake construction works of irrigation and encourage education and provide relief for the sick..”. Thereafter, from 1870, further measures were adopted to improve administration and the judicial system etc. State Councils were set up in various states to advise the concerned rulers in matters of administration. (The rulers were not bound to accept the advice). Law codes based on the Indian Penal Code were introduced in some states, and land-revenue settlements etc. conducted. Various formal agreements — including on salt, railways, coinage and post, and treaties — like those on extradition etc. were signed between the British government and the princely states of Rajputana too.

Of these, we shall discuss the Salt Agreements and treaties further in this chapter, but it may be relevant to note here that one of the many actions of the British government in India that affected the states of the Rajputana Agency was linked to the promulgation of the ‘Native Coinage Act (IX of 1876)’. This empowered the Governor General of India in Council to declare certain coins of the Indian States that had the weight etc. similar to British coins, as legal tender in British India (i.e., the portion of India under direct British administrative control), subject to certain conditions. The Act enabled the Indian States to enter into individual agreements to send metal

to the Government of India's mints for the minting of their own respective coinage.

Some states entered into this agreement, but others — like Bharatpur and Dholpur, to name just two, did not. In 1893, the British decided to disallow the practice of minting Indian states' coinage at the British Indian mints. However, the Government of India agreed to purchase the existing rupees of 'Native' states at their average market value and to supply British rupees in their place. Thus, many of the princely states gradually switched to using British Indian coinage — sometimes alongside with, but more often in lieu of, their traditional coins. For example, in the opening years of the twentieth century, the 'Imperial', i.e. British India, currency was the legal tender in Bharatpur state, and the old local rupee known as the *hali*, which had previously been almost the same value as the British India rupee fetched only ten Imperial *annas*.

The local British Residents and the AGG also took up the self-appointed role of a sort of 'watch-dog' over the rulers of Rajputana. Rulers accused of poor administration were liable to be held accountable and sent off into temporary — or in extreme cases — permanent exile by the British for their lapses, or induced to abdicate in favour of sons, brothers, cousins, or kinsmen. Upon the succession of a minor as the Maharaja of some state, the Regency Council usually included — and was sometimes presided over by — the local British official in-charge of that area. By the twentieth century, it was not uncommon to have the occasional Britisher as prime minister or chief minister, and various other British or European administrative officers, doctors, and engineers, etc. in one or another of the Rajputana states.

Occasions like the several durbars held by successive Governors General cum Viceroys, or visits by dignitaries (and, later, shooting parties and viceregal visits) also provided occasions for further interaction between the British and Rajputana elite. The occasions often also became fraught with issues of inter-state hierarchies, order of precedence amongst different rulers, attempts to influence or seek favours, or sheer politicking! Such durbars and gatherings were used, by both the Indian rulers and the British,

as a vast live-theatre of public pomp and show, which served to emphasise their respective prestige, status and power.

Among such occasions were the durbar of 1862; the Imperial Durbar held at Agra in November 1866 by Sir John Lawrence, the then Viceroy and Governor General of India; Viceroy Lord Mayo's Ajmer durbar of October 22 1870; durbar of Lord Northbrooke (1875); the visit of the Prince of Wales (1875-76); and the 'Royal Assemblage' or 'Delhi Durbar' held by Viceroy and Governor General Lord Lytton at Delhi on 1 January 1877, to proclaim the assumption of the title of 'Empress of India' by Queen Victoria, etc.

The ruling elite of Rajputana found a common denominator with the British on yet a different front too — and that was the armed forces. Thus, in order to seek more cooperation from the Indian rulers, a scheme was conceived towards raising 'Imperial Service Troops' within different states. Viceroy and Governor General, the Marquess of Dufferin, in his speech at Patiala on November 17 1888, called upon "...those Chiefs who have specially good fighting material in their armies to raise a portion of those armies to such a pitch or general efficiency as will make them fit to go into action side by side with the Imperial Troops...in this way while each force will remain a purely State force recruited in the territories of its chief, and serving within them, the troops composing it will gradually be made so efficient as to enable the Imperial Government to use them as part of its available resources to meet any external danger".

In response, Bikaner raised the Imperial Service Camel Corps, (known as Ganga Risala after the name of the Maharaja) between 1889 and 1893. Jodhpur too raised its Imperial Service Troops known as Sardar Risala (taking its name from Maharaja Sardar Singh) around the same time. Thereafter, towards the close of 1898, 800 sepoy were selected from Bharatpur's state force, the Maharaj Paltan, and other state regiments, and shaped into Bharatpur's Imperial Service Infantry Regiment. In a like manner, Alwar state raised its Imperial Service Troops in the form of a regiment of cavalry and a battalion of infantry, and Jaipur its Transport Corps for Imperial Service between 1889-1891. Some of these forces were

despatched to Chitral, China, Tirah, Somaliland and other places outside India.

In 1899, agreements were signed between rulers of states who maintained Imperial Service Troops, and the Governor General of India, for effective control, discipline and efficiency of the Imperial Service Troops when serving beyond the frontiers of their state. Similarly, when they were deployed on active service either within or outside British India, the provisions of Indian Articles of War became applicable to them.

THE STATES OF RAJPUTANA DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

As a consequence of many inter-related factors and sequence of events, by the end of the nineteenth century, the Rajputana states were miniature reflections of many facets introduced by the British into British India. At the same time, however, these states continued to adhere to various traditional systems and practices that were a continuation of the older established indigenous 'feudal' order. Let us now look at the individual local histories of the various states of Rajputana during the nineteenth century in greater detail.

THE STATE OF TONK

In 1817, Amir Khan, whose earlier career we have briefly dealt with above, was acknowledged as the first Nawab of Tonk (r. 1817-34)¹⁶. This followed an agreement with the East India Company. According to the terms of this agreement with the British, the fortress of Tonk Rampura, with subordinate territories was given to Amir Khan, and the districts of Sironj, Pirawa and Gogala Nimbahera — which he already held — confirmed in his possession (and that of his descendants). In addition, Amir Khan was granted a sum of rupees three lakhs in cash, and his son an estate-for-life extending up to Palwal, near Delhi, to cover maintenance-expenses. (Palwal remained under the East India Company's possession, but it was decided that a sum of Rs.

1,50,000 out of its annual revenues was to be disbursed in monthly instalments of Rs. 12,500 each to the Nawab).

In preference to other areas, like Sironj, with which he had a long association, Amir Khan decided to make Tonk his seat of governance. From here, he set about consolidating and administering his territories, and upon his death in 1834, was able to bequeath a peaceful state to his eldest son, Wazir Mohammad Khan (r. 1834-1864).

During the events of 1857, Tonk's Nawab Wazir Mohammad Khan remained sympathetic towards the East India Company. However, Tonk state's senior-most official at Nimbahera, the *Hakim* Bakshi Ghulam Mohiuddin, sheltered soldier-mutineers from the nearby cantonment at Neemuch. The Maharana of Udaipur dispatched his army under the British Political Agent to deal with the matter. They defeated the anti-British forces and Neemuch mutineers, and occupied Nimbahera. (It was later returned to the Nawab). On being routed by the Company's forces, Bakshi Ghulam Mohiuddin escaped to Agra to join the anti-Company Indian forces that had collected there.

Meanwhile, the Nawab's troops invited the mutineers to visit Tonk enroute to Agra. This placed the Nawab in a rather delicate situation. His dilemma was accentuated when a substantial number of his disaffected troops deserted on grounds of their pay arrears, and went over to Delhi. The predicament increased in early 1858 when Tantia Tope, who had crossed the Chambal River, and was heading in the direction of Jaipur, and beyond that to Agra and Delhi, was intercepted enroute. Tantia Tope diverted his march, defeated some of the Tonk Nawab's loyal troops in a skirmish on the banks of the river Banas, arrested Tonk's minister Faizullah Khan and occupied the capital-town of Tonk. Tonk's troops rallied to Tantia Tope's banner in large numbers, while the Nawab found it prudent to shut himself up in his citadel, along with his faithful adherents¹⁷. The East India Company's Major Eden led a large force from Delhi to relieve Tonk. However, after looting the town, Tantia Tope and his army left for Nathdwara before Eden reached Tonk. For the loyalty shown by Wazir Khan to the British Company, the Tonk Nawab's gun-salute was raised from fifteen to seventeen.

Tonk's second nawab died in June 1864. He was succeeded by his son, Mohammad Ali Khan (r. 1864-67 [deposed], d. 1895). Nawab Mohammad Ali Khan enjoyed but a brief reign, before the British deposed him in 1867. This came about as a result of an unsavoury dispute with one of his feudatories, namely, the chief of Lawa. Lawa was admittedly a tributary estate of the state of Tonk, but it was also an old fiefdom, dating back to early Mughal times, that had once formed a part of Dhoondhar state. It had been placed under the new state of Tonk when Amir Khan was installed as ruler of the Tonk-Sironj-Pirawa-Nimbahera area in 1817.

In 1865, Nawab Mohammad Ali Khan of Tonk attacked Lawa, against the advice of the Agent to the Governor General. The forces of Dhirta Singh, the chief of Lawa, repulsed the Nawab and his men. The Nawab later resorted to an ignominious stratagem. He invited Dhirta Singh and his uncle, Rawat Singh to Tonk, where, by a prior conspiracy, Rawat Singh was murdered on 1 August 1867, along with his retainers. At the same time, the Tonk nawab despatched a force to capture Lawa. The British took a dim view of this action. The nawab was deposed by the (British) Government of India and exiled to Benares (Banaras), where he died in 1895, while Lawa was granted recognition as a separate Chiefship, under direct British protection. As further punishment, the British reduced the 'status' of Tonk, and the seventeen guns salute previously enjoyed by the nawab of Tonk was reduced to an eleven gun salute.

The eldest son of the deposed Nawab Mohammad Ali Khan was raised to the *gaddi* of Tonk in 1867. This was Nawab Hafiz Mohammad Ibrahim Ali Khan (r. 1867-1930). During the period of his minority, a five member Regency Council was appointed to manage the affairs of Tonk state. The Regency Council included the young nawab's uncle, as well as the British Assistant to the AGG. The process of 'modernising' Tonk commenced during the Regency Council period, and continued over the course of the long reign of this fourth nawab of Tonk.

Courts were reorganised, revenue and police codes enforced, and attempts made to reduce indebtedness of *jagirdars*, particularly in Sironj, with limits prescribed for loans etc. so that no *mahajan* or merchant/money-lender, could lend to a *jagirdar* more than his monthly income¹⁸. The

process of modernisation continued unabated after the young Nawab attained his majority, and by 1886 Tonk had its first Municipal Board, which, among other things supervised street lighting and other arrangements in the capital.

Mohammad Ibrahim Ali Khan was invested with full ruling powers on 1 January, 1870. Five years later, he was among those who attended on the visiting Prince of Wales at Agra (1875). The nawab also attended the Delhi Durbar of 1877, where the salute of seventeen guns was restored to Tonk (initially for his lifetime, and later for good, thereby rehabilitating the 'status' of Tonk state¹⁹).

Traditionally, about sixty-nine percent of the state's area was classed as *khalsa* (i.e. belonging to the state), while the rest was parcelled out as *jagir*, *istmirardari* and *muafi* lands. In the case of *khalsa* lands, the tenant paid land revenue to the state, and could not be ejected from the land as long as the land revenue had been paid-up. The tenant had the right to alienate the land by sale, mortgage or otherwise. Tonk's *jagirdars* or fief-holders paid a fifth of their income from land revenue to the state, and kept the rest²⁰. *Istmirardars* held land on payment of a fixed 'quit rent', and provided military help to the state when so required. On succession they paid *nazarana* or tribute. *Muafi* land meant tracts (or villages) granted by a ruler as a reward, or in charity. The *muafi* holders paid a fixed annual sum called '*salana*'. Occasionally, villages were given out as '*mukta*' to holders called '*muktedars*', who frequently exploited the tenants.

The first regular land settlement of all the *parganas* of Tonk state was conducted during 1887-1891. The operations covered nine hundred and fifty-one and a half *khalsa* category of villages, and three hundred and seventy-four and a half villages under *jagir*, *istmirar*, and *muafi* tenures. "In the process, forest areas were demarcated, and if large enough, these were also mapped. Records regarding proprietary etc. rights, villages, maps, lists of wells and tanks, irrigated lands (with source) and nature or class of soils etc. were duly noted, besides human inhabitants and cattle population etc. The history and customs etc. of each (*halat-deh*) were also recorded"²¹.

Owing to the manner in which Amir Khan's Pindari and other camp-followers had come to settle in portions of what had later become Tonk state, different pockets of the state had different types of land-management and revenue systems. These were given a common shape and system during the 1887-91 'Land Settlement' operations. Survey was carried out for all the villages, though the assessment of land revenue was restricted only to the *khalsa* lands. Prior to 'Settlement' activities, land revenue was collected in cash as well as in kind. However, after the 1887 survey and settlement operations, cash rates were introduced. These were different for irrigated and non-irrigated lands, and were revised from time to time. (It may be pertinent to note here that when the first census operations were conducted in 1881, the population of Tonk state was found to be 3.38 lakhs. This rose to 3.80 lakhs by 1891. However, as a result of the severe famine of 1899-1900, the 1901 census recorded a population of only 2.73 lakhs — a decrease of twenty percent).

The modernisation of education along the 'western' model also began during the period of Nawab Mohammad Ibrahim Ali Khan. Like most other states, traditional forms of education in *maktabs* and *pathshalas* were available in the area during the earlier part of the nineteenth century. Maulana Khaliq-ul Rehman ran the oldest of these schools, near Moti Bagh, during the reign of the founder Nawab, Amir Khan. Further impetus to education came during the brief rule of Nawab Mohammed Ali Khan. Twelve traditional schools were opened in different parts of Tonk city. Two private schools for advanced education in Persian and Arabic were also opened. Teachers of the *maktabs* were awarded *jagirs* by way of encouragement. There were similar parallel advanced studies institutions — the Sanskrit Pathshalas — for Hindu boys. Through these varied efforts, the study of Urdu, Persian, Arabic, Hindi and Sanskrit was available for boys and young men in Tonk, but there were no formal schools for girls.

Education on 'western lines' was introduced with the opening of the first state-run primary school in 1870. On 1 January 1884, two schools were opened — the Central High School and the Noble's School, the latter for the sons of the rich. February 1884 saw the opening of two smaller schools, the Tonk School and the Amirganj Branch School, both at the capital itself. Meanwhile, since the scions of the nawab's family were being sent to study

at Ajmer's Mayo College, the Tonk (Boarding) House was built at that school in 1878.

A new chapter in education began in the state in 1885 when four girls' schools were started in different parts of Tonk — namely Qafila, Old Tonk, Gher Mian Masud and Shagird Pasha, with an overall enrolment of 100 girls. Two more such schools were opened seven years later in 1892 at Mohalla Batwala and Khirki Darwaza, respectively. Meanwhile, during 1891-92, female education received an impetus when a girl student was sent to Agra for obtaining a medical education at the state's expense. By 1892, Tonk city could boast of about 898 students at school — 762 boys and 136 girls.

BRITISH RECOGNITION TO THE CHIEFSHIPS OF LAWA AND KUSHALGARH

In 1867, Lawa, which at the time was a tributary estate of the state of Tonk, was recognised by the British as a separate chiefship, under the protection of the British government. A year later, Kushalgarh, at the time tributary to Banswara, was accorded recognition as a separate chiefship.

MEWAR/UDAIPUR

In the state of Mewar, internal dissension and civil strife was a marked feature during the reign of Maharana Bhim Singh (r. 1778-1828), as we have already noted in an earlier chapter. So too, were the all-too-frequent incursions of the Marathas and Pindaris. In fact, the Pindaris grew so bold that in 1816, led by Jamshed Khan, they plundered the apartments of the Maharana's palace.

Many *jagirdars* were involved in looting and plundering too, and this also proved negative for the trade and well-being of Mewar. Many members of the business community migrated to safer areas, and traders and '*banjaras*' hesitated to travel through Mewar. It is alleged that the *jagirdars*

of Mewar had become so notorious that some even stole the elephant of the Maharana just outside the city of Udaipur. Apparently the situation eventually deteriorated to such an extreme extent that the Maharana became dependent on the bounty of Zalim Singh, the Regent of Kotah, who provided the distressed Maharana with an allowance of one thousand rupees a month²².

Matters were not helped by the 'Ten Year's War' between the rulers of Jaipur (Dhoondhar), Jodhpur (Marwar) and Udaipur (Mewar), that was partly centred on the proposed marriage of the Udaipur princess, Krishna Kumari. The princess had been betrothed to Maharaja Bhim Singh of Marwar, but the death of the Rathore ruler and the succession of his relative, Man Singh, to the Marwar *gaddi* altered arrangements. In the interim, a Jaipur princess, Chand Kanwar, who was married to the Mewar Maharana, suggested that Krishna Kumari be married to Jaipur's Maharaja Sawai Jagat Singh. Jaipur accepted the proposal, but Man Singh of Jodhpur insisted that the marriage-alliance previously arranged between Mewar and Marwar should stand and Krishna Kumari be married to him.

The issue of marriage with Princess Krishna Kumari of Mewar thus became a matter of clan-honour and prestige between the rulers of the states of Dhoondhar and Marwar. It resulted in prolonged rivalry and warfare between the three kingdoms. The Marathas and the Pindaris gravitated to the problem, taking sides and receiving promises of substantial amounts of money for their help from the concerned states. The Pindari chief, Amir Khan, sided in 1806-1807 with Maharaja Sawai Jagat Singh of Jaipur. Jaipur and its allies defeated Maharaja Man Singh of Marwar, and Jodhpur was besieged. Amir Khan later switched sides, and rallied to the support of Maharaja Man Singh of Marwar.

A couple of years later, Man Singh despatched Amir Khan, with a large force, against Udaipur, to coerce the Maharana into agreeing to the marriage of Princess Krishna Kumari with the Maharaja of Marwar. In July 1810 the Maharana was convinced (according to some versions by Amir Khan, according to others by the innermost circle of advisors of the Mewar court), that the death of the unfortunate princess was the only way out of an impossible situation. It was decided to administer poison to her.

According to one version, an uncle offered the young princess a chalice full of poison, which she quaffed willingly to save her land and kinsmen from devastation at the hands of rival armies. Several stories sprang up about this. It is popularly held that the first cup of poison had no effect: nor did a second dose; but amidst the awed hopes of a miracle-in-the-happening by onlookers, the third cup of poison drunk by Krishna Kumari finally brought her young life to a close.

To Mewar's political travails, and its continuing economic exploitation by the Pindaris and Marathas, was added the grim shadow of the famine of 1812-13. This affected the land severely, and stories abound of how, despite the usual state efforts at famine-alleviation works, even the Maharana was hard put to feed the inmates of his own palaces. It is claimed that he had to sell his own jewellery and that of the inmates of the royal *zenana* in order to raise money to maintain his staff. The famine took a heavy toll of life. Writing about it in his *Vir-Vinod*, Mewar's 'Kaviraj' Shyamaldas noted that the impact of the famine was so severe that the state was completely devastated and the suffering of its people was hard to imagine. In fact, the now well-known Zawar mines (to which reference has been made in earlier chapters), which had been intermittently worked since Rana Lakha's reign, were totally abandoned during the great famine of 1812-13.

Meanwhile, Zalim Singh Jhala, by then Regent and 'Raj Rana' of Kotah, was manoeuvring matters to take over the tract of Kherad and the fort of Mandalgarh. Driven to dire financial straits and facing internal troubles, the Maharana and his councillors began to look towards the option of entering into a 'Subsidiary Alliance Treaty' with the East India Company. Following negotiations, a treaty was signed on 13 January 1818. By it, the Mewar ruler agreed to act in subordinate cooperation to the East India Company and acknowledge its supremacy. He further agreed to abstain from political correspondence with other rulers, chiefs and states, submit disputes to the arbitration of the British, and pay a quarter of the state's revenue as tribute or '*khiraj*' for the next five years, and three-eighths in perpetuity thereafter, to the British. (In 1826 the tribute was fixed at rupees three lakhs in local currency, and in 1846 this was reduced to rupees two lakhs in Imperial currency). On their part, the British promised to

protect Mewar from external aggressors and internal malcontents, and to make efforts for the restoration of tracts Mewar had lost, wherever this could be undertaken ‘with propriety’.

Captain (later Lt. Colonel) James Tod, who had been First Assistant to the Resident at Gwalior, and is more famous now for his monumental *Annals and Antiquities of Rajast’han* — was appointed the first Political Agent for Udaipur²³. In view of the chaotic state of affairs in Mewar, the East India Company directed Tod to take control of state affairs into his own hands. One of the immediate steps taken by Tod, following protracted negotiations with important nobles and court officials, was to bring about an ‘understanding’ between the nobles and Maharana Bhim Singh. This was sealed through a *kaul-nama* (agreement), which was drafted by Tod, and by which the nobles re-swore allegiance and fealty to the Maharana and accepted his suzerainty.

The terms of the *kaul-nama* were read out in Udaipur’s *Durbar* on 5 May 1818, which had been called to sanction and ratify its terms. Some of the contracting nobles wanted time to study the terms, but when the chief of Begun took the lead and affixed his signature to the *kaul-nama*, others were rushed into following his lead. The *kaul-nama* made it imperative for the nobles or chiefs to restore to the state all lands that they had possessed either by usurpation or gift over the past fifty years. They were to render personal services to the Maharana at Udaipur, along with their fixed quota of troops for half the stipulated term. They were also to surrender the rights to collect customs and transit duties, and cesses (*laag-baag*). In addition, the nobles had to give an assurance that they would not harbour robbers and dacoits. On his part, the Maharana would continue to recognise the ancient hereditary privileges that had been long-held by the chiefs.

In effect, it was Tod’s 1818 *kaul-nama* that helped establish the notion of the absolute supremacy of the Maharana vis-à-vis his chiefs and kinsmen, in place of the long-established custom of regarding the ruler as ‘first among equals’. Neither of the contracting sides was fully satisfied with the terms of the *kaul-nama*. They would remain dissatisfied, too, with its enforcement. The nobles had no desire to restore lands that they had unjustly grabbed or ‘acquired’ from the state. Nor did they want to give up

the chance of collecting transit and other taxes, which were so lucrative for their coffers. On his part, the ruler wished to obtain some cash-tribute as *chhatoond chakri* tax from his fief-holders, so that he could meet his tribute obligations to the East India Company. As such, in 1827, a fresh *kaul-nama* was to be attempted between the contracting parties.

In the interim, under Tod's administrative control, internal peace was soon established, the state's administrative machinery tightened, and the economy began to slowly revive. Mewar's net revenue increased from about Rs. 4,41,000 in 1819 to nearly Rs. 8,81,000 in 1821²⁴. At the urging of the British authorities, Kotah restored the area of Jahazpur back to Mewar. However, the administrative unit of Nimbahera, which had been guaranteed by the British to the Pindari chief, Amir Khan, could not be restored to Mewar, and instead became part of the state of Tonk. (In 1857, Mewar was to forcibly occupy Nimbahera, but would be subsequently prevailed upon by the British to hand it back to Tonk).

Once the Political Agent's control was withdrawn, Mewar again gradually became involved in debt. The tribute due to the Company remained unpaid as arrears mounted to nearly rupees eighty lakhs. As such, the British again deemed it necessary to place the administration back in the hands of its Political Agent at Udaipur, Captain Cobbe.

Mewar's Udaipur and Chittor mints were already striking silver rupees and other coins by this time, along with eight *anna*, four *anna* and one *anna* pieces, but it was during Bhim Singh's reign that the *Chandauri* coins were issued. Taking their name from Princess Chand Kanwar Bai, sister of Bhim Singh, the *Chandauri* were apparently issued to reduce cost. They were minted solely at the Udaipur mint, and were of less weight and value than the already prevalent *Chittori* and *Udaipuri* silver coins.

Maharana Bhim Singh died on 30 March 1828, and was succeeded by his son, Jawan Singh (r. 1828-1838). Jawan Singh's inheritance included a bankrupt treasury²⁵. As the new Maharana's own preferred occupation was drinking over anything else, the financial condition of Mewar worsened once again. Within a few years, the state was heavily in debt, there was an

annual deficit of rupees two lakhs, and the tribute due to the British had fallen into arrears. Meanwhile, in January 1832, Jawan Singh, with a large retinue, attended the Durbar called by the Governor General, William Bentinck, at Ajmer. (Several Mewari courtiers and nobles were not in favour of the Maharana putting in an appearance at the Ajmer durbar. They apparently reminded Jawan Singh that none of his predecessors had attended the durbars of the great Mughal emperors, while he was responding to the call of a Governor General, who was merely the representative of the British East India Company).

The indebtedness that the state of Mewar had got into showed no signs of improving over the next few years. State revenues fell, while tribute arrears due to the British continued to mount. By this time, even income from custom-duties was negligible, as the activities of the Marathas and Pindaris had affected traditional trade and commerce! In 1838, the Board of Directors of the East India Company directed that if the Maharana continued to fail to honour his commitments and did not liquidate the arrears due, some territorial or other security may be sought from him. That same year, while matters stood thus unresolved, the Maharana died.

Maharana Jawan Singh left no direct heir upon his death in 1838. The possible succession of either Sardar Singh or Sardul Singh — both from the Bagor line of the Sisodia clan — was debated at length by senior nobles, court-officials and various interested parties. Sardar Singh was the son, and Sardul Singh a cousin, of Maharaj Shivadan Singh of Bagor. Finally, after prolonged discussions, the Mewar *gaddi* was offered to Sardar Singh (r. 1838-1842). The East India Company, involved because of their treaty, approved the succession. The new Maharana inherited a debt of over nine and a half lakhs of rupees, of which about rupees eight lakhs was tribute-arrears.

Maharana Sardar Singh took a stern stance against all those prominent in supporting or favouring the candidature of Sardul Singh. He confiscated the *jagir* of Gogunda, and put the Mewar *Pradhan* (chief minister), Mehta Sher Singh²⁶, behind bars. He then appointed Mehta Ram Singh as *pradhan* in place of Sher Singh. (Sher Singh was a descendant of Mehta Agarchand, who had fled Bikaner and taken shelter in Mewar in 1613, and thereafter

served as *qiledar* of Mandalgarh. Mehta Agarchand's successor, Devichand, had served as *pradhan* of Mewar. Sher Singh had succeeded him. In turn, other family-members like Gokulchand and Pannalal would later become *pradhans* of Mewar, against a scenario of the Mehta family winning and losing the ruler's favour, as would their 'rival' Mehta group). Sher Singh later went away to Marwar, while his cousin Motiram committed suicide in prison. Among the Maharana's other victims were Purohit Shyamnath, Kayastha Kishan Nath and Mehta Ganesh Das. They, and some others, were imprisoned and eventually released only after they had paid a large sum of money as penalty to the Maharana.

In 1839, the Bhils and Garasias of the Bhomat area rose in revolt and killed a large number of Mewar's soldiers (150 according to some accounts). Probably as a direct response, in 1840, the Maharana established a garrison at Kherwara to keep the Bhils under control. This was the 'Mewar Bhil Corps'. The same year, an agreement was signed between the Maharana and his nobles regarding the powers and obligations of the latter vis-à-vis their Maharana. In 1841, the Maharana tried to subsidise an infantry regiment to be stationed at the capital-city of Udaipur, but the proposal was not accepted.

As the Maharana had no son, he formally adopted his younger brother, Sarup [Swaroop] Singh, to be his successor. Upon Sardar Singh's death on July 14 1842, Sarup Singh (r.1842-1861) ascended the *gaddi* of Mewar. His reign saw the start of several administrative reforms. Partly due to that, the financial condition of Mewar too improved gradually. The Maharana appointed trusted men as *hakim* to head the districts, and dealt sternly with dishonest officers. A bank known as *Rawali Dukan* was established, and a merchant-banker named *Seth Zorawarmal Bapna* was given the contract for collecting the customs-duty and land revenue of some of the *parganas*. As the law and order situation improved, so did the economic condition of the people and of the state. (This improvement in state finances allowed Sarup Singh to spend on charity and in the construction of lakes and palaces, and still have a treasury-balance of around rupees thirty lakhs in the State's coffers at the time of his death²⁷)

Ram Singh Mehta continued to serve as the *pradhan* of the state, with Rawat Dule Singh of Asind as the *musahib* or prime minister. Maharana Sarup Singh appointed *Kunwar* Kesari Singh of Salumber as his advisor. The existence of three parallel centres of power encouraged intrigues in a court that had already known plenty of such activities over the past couple of decades. Ultimately, Mehta Ram Singh succeeded in establishing his predominance, along with the ouster of both Dule Singh and Kesari Singh. The non-Rajput *pradhan* became so powerful that the Maharana apparently took to addressing him as ‘Kakaji’ (uncle). Ram Singh Mehta even managed to avoid rendering accounts of the state revenue to the Maharana. When he did not provide the necessary information, in spite of specific instructions to comply, the irate Maharana Sarup Singh finally ordered the arrest and imprisonment of Ram Singh. The once-disgraced *ex-pradhan*, Mehta Sher Singh, was recalled to court and appointed in Ram Singh’s place.

The Maharana eventually released Mehta Ram Singh, and appointed him as advisor. The effects of having both the rival Mehtas in positions of eminence at the Mewar court was predictable! Once again, the court was riven with factionalism and intrigues, as the two groups, led by Mehta Sher Singh and Mehta Ram Singh, respectively, vied for dominance. In 1847, a rumour gained currency at court. It was whispered that Sardul Singh, a claimant to the Mewar throne, was conspiring to poison the Maharana, and that Sardul Singh was in league with Mehta Ram Singh and several others. The rumour led to a predictable response from the Maharana. Amidst the witch-hunt, Ram Singh Mehta quit Mewar and made his way to the British cantonment at Beawar, where he died sometime afterwards. Meanwhile, members of his family were externed from Mewar by the Maharana, and all their property confiscated²⁸.

In 1854, the AGG, Sir Henry Lawrence, complained to the Maharana that the Meenas of Jahazpur²⁹ had taken to looting and plundering adjoining parts of the Ajmer-Merwara area. (As already noted, Ajmer-Merwara was under British control). The Maharana entrusted the task of dealing with the Meenas to Mehta Ajit Singh. The latter captured many of the Meena strongholds, destroyed their shelters and hamlets, and executed some of them. About 4,000 Meenas regrouped themselves in the hills of

Manohargarh and Deo-ka-Khera. The Mewar forces killed some of them. By this time, a large number of Meenas (5,000, according to some accounts), from the neighbouring states of Jaipur, Tonk and Bundi rallied to join the beleaguered Meenas of Jahazpur. Thus reinforced, the Meenas surrounded the Mewar army and began shooting their arrows at them. Several of the Mewar troops and their officers were killed or wounded. The Mewar force defended itself forcefully. Eventually, a *jagirdar* persuaded the Meenas to accept a ceasefire. Upon learning of the events, the Maharana was upset and angered. He ordered the despatch of additional forces against the Meenas. At the instance of the AGG the rulers of Jaipur, Tonk and Bundi also sent their forces to aid the Mewar army. The Meenas surrendered. The following year (1855), an army cantonment was established at Deoli. One of the main objectives of the new cantonment was to keep an eye on the activities of the Meenas.

It seems that there was some unredressed reason for general ill-feeling amongst the forest-dwellers or other marginalised communities of Mewar in the mid nineteenth century. For, soon after the Meenas had stopped defying the state's authority, the Bhils of Udaipur district rose up in revolt in 1855. The Mewar army suppressed this revolt too with a firm hand. Several Bhils were executed, many of their habitations were burnt down, and hundreds of Bhils arrested by the Mewar forces. Sustained peace was still not on the cards for Mewar, as the unrest of 1857-58 was soon to follow.

During 1857, Maharana Sarup Singh extended help to the beleaguered East India Company, and ensured full protection and shelter to a number of distressed European families who had escaped from the violence at Neemuch and elsewhere. Mewar's soldiers were despatched by the Maharana to Neemuch and to Nimbahera to put down the mutineers, and the Mewar army captured Nimbahera, which was part of the territory of the Nawab of Tonk.

Meanwhile, as noted previously, Tantia Tope, one of the prominent leaders of the movement against the British 'Company Bahadur', entered the territory of Mewar with his forces, during his march through parts of Rajasthan between June 1858 and January 1859. Though Tantia Tope got no help from the Maharana of Mewar, others came forward and provided help,

shelter and food. Among them were two of Mewar State's premier nobles, Kesri Singh of Salumber and the Rao of Kotharia, who were angry with the British over the 'Doctrine of Lapse' policy, the protection given to the Maharana, etc. Free provisions were, therefore, made available at Salumber to Tantia Tope on 14 December 1858. Similarly, local Bhils living in the hilly terrain (the 'Mewar Hill Tracts') of Mewar came together under the Bhil chief of Pahara, and tried to destroy the Kherwara cantonment, which was used by the British to monitor the Bhils and keep them in check. The Meenas of Kherar looted British troops and stores, and villages in neighbouring parts of Ajmer-Merwara, Bundi, Mewar, Tonk and Jaipur during 1857-1859. The Mewar state forces joined the British in putting down these and similar activities within Mewar and in adjoining tracts.

Following the re-establishment of British authority, the Maharana hoped that he would be allowed to retain Nimbahera, as this tract had originally belonged to Mewar. To his chagrin, however, in February 1860, Nimbahera was given back to the Nawab of Tonk. The Maharana had to be content, instead with a *khillat* honour as his reward for services to the British during the 1857-59 period.

The relations between the Maharana and his nobles remained strained throughout his reign. By this time, Mewar had a well-established tradition of classifying the nobles into three grades or classes. Nobles of grade one were known *Umrao* and were numbered as being the *solah* (sixteen) — after the number decided upon in a previous century by Maharana Amar Singh II. Later their numbers had been increased to twenty-one, but the old term of *solah* had persisted in usage. Their seating arrangement at the Mewar court was fixed according to previously established protocol. The nobles of the second grade were referred to as the *Battisa* (thirty-two), and were addressed as *Sardars*, while the nobles of the third grade were called the *Gola Sardars*. The nobles of first and second classes were *Tazimi Sardars*, which made them entitled to certain *tazim* privileges while being received by the Maharaja. Some, though not all, of the nobles of the third grade also held *tazim* status, and all of them had the right of attending the full meeting of the nobles. Besides these gradations of the nobility, there were also close relatives of the ruler, who held special honours. Honours,

position, land and titles could also be bestowed by the Maharanas on anyone else if they wished it so.

By the mid nineteenth century, a major area of contention between the Maharana and his nobles was over *chhatoond chakri* — an additional tax, levied at one-sixth of the land revenues collected by the fief-holders. It may be relevant to re-iterate here that the main source of revenue for Mewar state came from land. By this period, as a consequence of certain historical processes, two-thirds of the land-tenures in Mewar were held by *jagirdars*, *muafidars* and *bhomiyas*³⁰. The last two categories of land holders paid virtually no tax, as their grants carried the connotation of either gifts, or rewards for services rendered, at the time of the original grant. The *jagirdars*, though, paid an annual *rekh* amount to the Maharana, besides a levy called *talwar-bandi* (literally, girding on a sword — here signifying a succession), which was paid whenever an heir of a *jagirdar* or *thakur* succeeded to a predecessor's estates.

Over time, the *jagirdars* were also required to pay another cess that came to be known as *chhatoond chakri*. This was a tax equivalent to one-sixth of the land revenue collected by them. (This land revenue, taken from the tenants by the *jagirdars*, was at the rate of one half of the produce and some times even more. In addition, inhabitants of areas held as *jagirs* had to pay the *jagirdars* further cesses — *laag-baag*. In contrast, in the state-held or *khalsa* lands, the tenants gave between a third to half of their produce as land revenue, besides a small number of extra cesses to certain rural-level state functionaries like the *patwaris*, *sahanas* and *gram-balais*. The last-named being the lowest village functionary).

The dispute concerning the additional taxes stemmed from the Maharana's administration insisting that the fief-holding nobles pay one-third of the produce as the land revenue and *khiraj*, of which latter half of the *khiraj* was to be paid in cash, and the rest in the shape of personal services to the Maharana. Prolonged negotiations between the Maharana and the nobles, including through the mediation and personal presence of the AGG, were unable to resolve the issue, and the matter remained a bone of contention.

However, if there were differences over certain matters, some changes or innovations proved more acceptable. In addition of the Imperial postal service, a local postal system called *Brahmini dak* was established in 1850. It was managed by a Brahmin family and was financially supported by the Mewar state government. The state government paid an annual sum of Rs. 1,200 towards this initially. (It was Rs. 12,000 per annum in 1932). The state's own official letters or packages were carried free of charge. A set postal fee per letter was collected from the addressee at the time of delivery of the letter. The *Brahmini dak* carried ordinary letters as well as registered letters, money orders and parcels on payment of nominal fee.

Maharana Sarup Singh had also issued some new forms of coins in the course of his reign. Gold *Chandauri Mohar* coins were minted at Udaipur by command of Maharana Sarup Singh between 1842 and 1861. The pieces had the same symbols as the previous silver *Chandauri* coins. Each golden *mohar* weighed seven *masha*, or about 116 grains. This was made up of $3\frac{1}{2}$ *masha* and one *ratti* of pure gold, $2\frac{3}{4}$ *masha* and one *ratti* of silver, and $\frac{1}{2}$ *masha* of copper. Another type of coinage was the *Sarup Shahi Mohar*, first struck in AD 1851-52 (Samvat 1908). For a while, this was issued from both the Chittor and the Udaipur mints, but later it was struck only at Udaipur. The *Sarup Shahi* bore the inscription of *Chitrakuta Udaipur* on its obverse, with a line between the words and another below the inscription, the latter separating it from some symbols said to represent the hills of Mewar. The reverse carried the legend, *Dosti London* (friendship with London), with a border of eight scallops, outside which were two circles each formed by seven broken segments. This coin weighed 162 grains of pure gold. Sarup Singh also issued silver coins. His silver *Chandauri* coins were struck between the years 1842 and 1861 at the Udaipur mint, and were for the value of a rupee, eight-anna, four-anna, two-anna and one-anna respectively; all stamped from the same die, the smaller bits receiving a very small portion of the pattern³¹.

It was during Sarup Singh's time that the practice of sati was officially abolished in Mewar in 1861, at the instance of the British Government. Initially the Maharana vacillated, saying that custom had a long tradition in the area. Apparently intervention by Queen Victoria and the Secretary of State for India helped him decide. They wrote to the Maharana in February

1861 that Mewar was the only state in India where sati was still in vogue and that the barbaric system should be discontinued.

(According to Shyamaldas's *Vir Vinod*, the earliest mention of an incidence of sati in Mewar is the immolation of Maharana Kheta's Hadi clan queen following Kheta's death in c. AD 1382. In c.1500, sixteen women of the *zenana* became sati on the pyre of Prince Prithviraj at Kumbhalgarh fort, and on the death of Maharana Amar Singh in October 1620, ten ranis, nine concubines (*khawas* and *paswans*) and eight attendants (*sahelis*) committed sati. In 1773, a *khawas* immolated herself on the pyre of Maharana Ari Singh at his death at Amargarh. When the news of his death later reached Udaipur, two of his Ranis and five *paswans* committed sati with the late Maharana's turban. Apparently, there were sporadic incidents of sati in various communities over time, but the practice was prevalent mainly amongst the aristocracy and the ruling family of Mewar. Even so, sati was never the invariable custom. Some historians have stated that no woman became a sati on the pyre of maharanas Kumbha and Sanga).

Following the communication from the Secretary of State, Maharana Sarup Singh went on to issue a notification prohibiting sati throughout the state. (Ironically, when Sarup Singh died in 1861 his concubine Aizanbai immolated herself contrary to the instructions of the British! The regency council of his successor was quick to punish those responsible in the committing of the sati. Mehta Gopaldas was exiled from Mewar and his *jagir* confiscated. Thakur Khuman Singh of Asind was externed from Udaipur. Kothari Kesari Singh was demoted from the post of *pradhan* to only membership of the regency council. Later on he was externed from the State on charge of embezzlement).

Maharana Sarup Singh died on 16 November 1861, and was succeeded by his nephew, Shambhu Singh (r. 1861-1874). The young Shambhu Singh was a minor at the time, and a regency council was appointed, in which the advice of the British Political Agent carried weight. Despite the Agent, the intra-personal rivalries within the regency council prevented it from functioning smoothly, and the administrative machinery became lax. Thus, on 19 August 1863, Lt. Col. Eden issued a public

notification, taking over the whole administration until further arrangements — involving either a new council of several chiefs, or a regent — could be finalised. Almost immediately, various administrative and social reforms were introduced. For instance, in September 1863, Col. Eden banned practices like compulsory labour (*begaar*), buying and selling of women and children, etc.

For a while, a committee known as *Ahliyan Shri Darbar* replaced the Council. The committee, under the guidance of the Political Agent, Col. Eden, attempted to introduce further administrative reforms. These were resented, and rival factions ensured a strike in Udaipur city on 30 March 1864. Led by the *Nagar Seth* (the city's largest financier, merchant and business-head), Champalal Bapna, the protesters gathered at the British Residency shouting slogans against the committee and the Political Agent. They next went to the *Saheliyon-ki-Bari* garden of Udaipur. The Maharana and the Political Agent met with them in the garden and brought the people back to the city. The proposed reforms package was withdrawn.

Eventually however, under a fresh Council, in which too the British Political Agent exercised considerable powers, several reforms were introduced. These were to prove beneficial for Mewar. The civil and criminal courts were reviewed and improved along the lines of the Western legal system. Public works and the law and order system received more attention. Some initiatives were also taken towards improving health and sanitation. Besides this, roads were constructed, linking Udaipur city with Neemuch and Desuri. During 1866-1875, a road was built between Nasirabad and Neemuch, at a cost of about rupees 2.8 lakhs. (The British contributed a third of the amount). By a notification the traditional practice of *An* — entailing an oath of allegiance to the Maharana — was declared contrary to law, and punishment laid down for anyone practising it. The revenue collection was supervised, and various measures taken to improve the financial condition of the state. As such, in November 1865 when the Maharana was given his full powers (on attaining his majority), the state treasury had over thirty lakhs of rupees in cash.

The Maharana continued with the path taken during his minority by the state's successive regency councils. In December 1867 the Maharana

appointed Kothari Kesari Singh as *pradhan*. Over the remainder of his reign, Maharana Shambhu Singh supported the introduction of further reforms in Mewar. The office of *Mahakma Khas*, to assist the ruler in administrative work, was established in 1869, with two ministerial officers and a staff of clerks. A hospital was opened and judicial courts were organised. Construction of roads continued. Udaipur and Kherwara (where the Mewar Bhil Corp was based since 1840), were linked by a hundred and twenty mile road in 1870. The road also served to facilitate the transportation of cotton to Bombay.

A department to manage and administer temples, and the income and expenditure of sacred places, was established. The department was also charged with supervising expenditure at the time of natural calamities like famine, droughts, etc. It was soon called into action, as deficient rainfall and poor autumn crops, except in the southern part of the state, led to drought-like conditions in Mewar state in 1868. In the absence of adequate stores of grain, the crop-failure proved disastrous. Arrangements were made for import of food-grains, and the state government advanced rupees one lakh to the traders for this. A number of public works were started to provide employment, the state granaries opened up, and food-relief provided to the people. However, prices remained high, with wheat selling at eight seers per rupee. The situation was worsened by the poor spring harvest because of unseasonable rain in February and March 1869, which spoilt the crops. The price of wheat rose to six seers per rupee. Free ration was now distributed to hundreds of people at various places. The state spent about Rs. two lakhs on relief works and gave Rs. 25,000 to a charitable grain club formed at Udaipur. However, rainfall was once again erratic in 1869, which meant another season of scarcity.

Equally dire straits in the neighbouring territories and inter-state migration brought many afflicted people into Mewar. The capital, Udaipur, was overrun with thousands of people whom circumstances had left enfeebled, sick and starving. Relief was provided in the form of cooked food to 15,42,087 persons at a cost of Rs. 80,000. (This was in addition to the amount normally being spent in providing food-charity (*saddabrat*) to the poor). Relief works at the cost of some Rs. 1.80 lakhs provided employment to more than 4.2 lakh persons. Unfortunately, a cholera

epidemic followed next, which led to hundreds of deaths. Cattle too perished in great numbers. In the face of all this, the Mewar government made every effort for alleviating public suffering³².

However, the same cannot be said for the state's response, in that same period, when there was unrest among the Bhils of the Korwar *pal*, in the hilly tracts of Mewar, in 1868. On the basis of a letter dated 20 November 1868 from the Political Agent, Major Mackeson, to Maharana Shambhu Singh, it appears that the state authorities in that area were corrupt and inefficient, on top of which the poor had to bear the additional burden of a double levy of taxes and heavy fines³³. In spite of the Agent's remonstrations though, it seems that since Mewar state felt that the Bhils had indulged in 'lawless activities' a state force of two hundred infantry and one hundred and fifty cavalry were despatched to suppress the Bhils by force. Considering the famine-conditions that prevailed, it is more than probable that the Bhil 'unrest' was linked with their general unfortunate economic condition in the wake of a poor monsoon in 1868, accompanied by heavy taxes and the exploitation by corrupt officials.

In 1870, Maharana Shambhu Singh was required to attend the Viceroy's durbar at Ajmer. It was also in 1870 that a new legal code was introduced for Mewar. This advocated fiscal fines and imprisonment in place of physical torture, among other things. Jail reforms were also undertaken, the military re-organised, and construction started on a railway line. In time, Mewar would have the Rajputana-Malwa railway traversing its territory for a length of eighty-two miles. For modern administrative purposes, the state of Mewar was divided into new districts. In addition, Captain Charles G. Strachen and Lt. Holdich conducted a topographical survey of the kingdom.

In the field of education, a government-run school, the 'Shambhoo Ratna-Pathsala' was started. The first government school was established at Udaipur in 1863. Until then, education had been carried out by maulvis and pandits who ran irregular *maktabs* and *pathshalas* etc. In 1866, there were 513 students in the government school. In 1885 the boys' school was raised to a high school. In his *Mewar Agency Report (1865-1867)*, the Political Agent, Major Nixon, noted the establishment of a girls' school at Udaipur

in 1866 with fifty-one girls as students and two women teachers. This school was considered a branch school of the existing boys' school, and was located in the premises of the boys' school. In 1876, Mrs. Lonorgan, an English woman, was appointed as headmistress of the girls' school. After her resignation in 1879-80, no competent woman was available to take her place for a long time. Later, under the headmastership of Hazari Lal, who was also in-charge of girls' education, the number of girls in the school rose to 151 by 1885-86³⁴. The state maintained only this one girls' school at Udaipur up until 1909. Meanwhile, in 1883 the state of Mewar started a school for Bhil boys at Jawar.

Maharana Shambhu Singh died young in October 1874. He left no heir, and was succeeded by a cousin, Sajjan Singh (r. 1874-1884), who was also a scion of the Bagor family. Sajjan Singh was a minor at the time. The succession was disputed by his uncle, Sohan Singh, who refused to render an oath of allegiance, and persisted, despite warnings, in defying his authority. Eventually, a small detachment of Mewar's force, aided by a detachment of the Mewar Bhil Corps, was despatched to subdue Sohan Singh, and if necessary, to reduce the fort of Bagor. Sohan Singh surrendered without letting that happen, and was arrested and sent as a state prisoner to the city of Benares. In 1880, Sohan Singh was allowed to return to Mewar, subject to certain pre-conditions and guarantees on his part.

During Sajjan Singh's minority, a Council conducted the work of administration, with the assistance of the British Political Agent. This arrangement continued for about two years. It was during this regency council period that one of the worst floods in Mewar occurred. Pichchola Lake gushed over Sarup Sagar embankment, threatening its destruction. The embankment held, but a three-arched bridge across the Ahar river was swept away.

In March 1876, some six months before the Maharana attained his majority, the main priest or *Tilkayat* of the Nathdwara temple, *Mahant* Girdharilal Goswami-ji, who had previously had differences with Mewar state, raised the banner of revolt. Trouble had been brewing on that front since 1874. The Nathdwara temple-complex owned substantive property, including considerable land around the already thriving town of Nathdwara,

and its spiritual head, the *Tilkayat* or *Mahant*, enjoyed near-unfettered powers vis-à-vis the Mewar state. In December 1874, Major Bradford, the Political Agent had sent a detailed report about the Goswami-ji to his superiors, noting that the Goswami had arbitrarily reduced the offerings to the deity and forcibly detained some people. A year later, in December 1875, the Political Agent reported that there had been no change in the Goswami's behaviour, and recommended that troops be sent against him. However, the Goswami had, at that point, given a written undertaking, acknowledging his subordination to the Maharana, promising to refrain from exacting money and stating that all detained persons would be released. He also promised to dismiss all 'foreign' soldiers from his service. In spite of this written assurance, there was no compliance. The Agent had referred the matter again to the AGG, but the latter had not wished to stir matters further through interference with the Nathdwara *tilkayat*. However, in the face of the 1876 situation, the Mewar Regency Council acted.

The members of the regency council, along with Mewar state troops and a detachment of the Mewar Bhil Corps, reached Nathdwara on 5 May 1876. Lal Bagh, the residence of the *Tilkayat* Girdharilal Goswami was surrounded by troops, and when negotiations failed, the Goswami was forcibly constrained to come out, placed in a palanquin (*palki*), and taken to Udaipur. Simultaneously, the Pathan guard and other mercenaries employed by the Goswami to protect the temple, agreed to surrender to the Mewar state forces. Girdharilal Goswami was deported to the holy city of Mathura later that month, 21 May 1876, on a monthly allowance of rupees one thousand. (He later went to Vrindaban). In his place, his son Goverdhan Lal was installed as the new *tilkayat* of the temple. The new *tilkayat* agreed to obey the Mewar ruler, and to make neither reduction in offerings nor changes in established worship traditions and temple-services. He also promised not to recruit any 'foreign' soldier. Other administrative arrangements for the management of the temple and its vast property were also agreed upon by the Mewar state and the new *tilkayat*.

The 'revolt' by *Tilkayat* Girdharilal Goswami requires further analysis. It seems to have had deeper implications since even at Mathura and Vrindaban he continued with what Mewar viewed as 'hostile' activities. His allowance was stopped, consequently. Thereafter, it was reported in

Mewar in 1877 that the exiled Goswami-ji had begun travelling across India, calling upon followers and other Pushti Margis to protest the actions of the Mewar administration. Intriguingly, in 1878, the Nathdwara temple's property at Bombay (now Mumbai) was confiscated by Mewar state, as the exiled Goswami had made use of it!

While this was going on, Maharana Sajjan Singh attained his majority at Udaipur. The Maharana was invested with ruling powers on 18 September 1876. In January 1877 he established the *Ijlas-e-Khas*, which was the highest court of appeal in judicial matters for the state of Mewar. It consisted of a number of nobles and officials, who served on the body in an honorary capacity. Sajjan Singh attempted to give due attention to a range of issues and problems. He took action to check corruption in the state, dismissing some seniors and juniors found guilty of bribery and misappropriation of funds, and arresting others. Measures were also taken against the Pathans and others engaged in lending money at high rates of interest in the Bhil and Garasia dominated areas. A number of money-lenders were arrested and externed.

To check the lawlessness and burglaries rampant in the capital, the Maharana appointed Maulvi Abdul Rahman Khan as Superintendent of Police. One of the first steps of the Maulvi was to impound the stray animals that wandered about the streets and lanes of the capital-city. The citizens protested, and declared a strike in the city. When they failed to listen to reason, the Maharana had the leaders jailed. At that, normalcy was quickly restored.

In 1878, the administration was overhauled. The *Mahakma Khas* headed by the state's *pradhan*, and answerable to the ruler, was at the top of the system that came into force. There were a number of departments under the *Mahakma Khas*, each presided over by an officer. (Over the coming years these were to include a revenue department headed by a *hakim mal*; the Treasury under a *daroga*, customs department headed by a superintendent, the regular army under a Rajput *sardar*, and a public works department under the state engineer). Mewar state was divided into ten administrative units (*zila*), each headed by a *hakim*. These districts were Magra, Girwa, Kumbhalgarh, Sahada, Rashmi, Chhoti Sadri, Chittorgarh,

Mandalgarh, Jahazpur, and Bhilwara. Each of these units was made up of two or more *parganas*. (At one stage Mewar had twenty *parganas*). Each *pargana* was headed by a *naib hakim*. The *hakim* had administrative as well as judicial powers, and on the legal front was guided either by the laws of British India or the circulars of *Mahakma Khas* for passing judgements. Appeals against the judgement of the *hakims* went before either the *Hakim Sadar-e-Diwani* (or civil court) for civil and revenue cases, or the *Hakim Faujdari* (criminal court) for criminal cases. Both these courts were at the capital city. The highest court in the state was the *Mahendraraj Sahha*, or judicial council.

This *Mahendraraj Sabha* heard civil and criminal appeals. For a long time after its inception, this body had eight members, with the Maharana as its president. When the ruler was not present, and only the members heard cases, it was referred to as the *Ijlas Mamuli*, but when the Maharana presided in person, the sitting was known as the *Ijlas Kamil*. *Ijlas Mamuli* sittings dealt with appeals against the orders of the civil court (*Hakim Sadar-e-Diwani*) and criminal court (*Hakim Faujdari*), both situated at Udaipur. It had original jurisdiction over suits not exceeding Rs. 15,000 and could pass a sentence of seven years' imprisonment in criminal cases. All its decisions were, however, subject to confirmation by the Maharana. The *Ijlas Kamil* sessions dealt with important and serious cases.

By this period, there were three categories of *jagirdars* in Mewar state, known as *jagirdars* 'first class', 'second class' and 'third class'. In 1878-79, *jagirdars* of first two categories were granted limited judicial and revenue powers. They could hear and decide all cases in which both parties were their subjects, but the proceeding of cases dealt with by any *jagirdar* had to be submitted to the ruler for approval. However, in the majority of *jagir* areas, the *jagirdars* held revenue-collection and related powers only. Other judicial powers in these *thikanas* and *jagirs* were exercised by the *hakims* of the districts. (Such a practice was more or less common to most other states of Rajputana).

It was also during Sajjan Singh's reign that several irrigation works were constructed. One may note here, that while Mewar has more rainfall than the region to the west and northwest of the Aravallis and more rivers

and streams, water-collection (including through the building of reservoirs etc.) has all along been an important aspect of life. The state and individuals had played their part from time to time too, as noted already. By the mid nineteenth century, nearly a quarter of the cultivable area of Mewar was irrigated. Irrigation was mainly done from wells, which numbered more than a lakh by Maharana Sajjan Singh's reign.

Revenue settlement work in some of the *khalsa* villages was started in 1878-79. By this period, the custom of classifying land into the categories of *jagir* and *khalsa* was well-established in Mewar too. The tenure-holdings for *khalsa* land were somewhat like *ryotwari* in that the tenant was usually left undisturbed vis-à-vis his possession provided the due land revenues — *bhog* or *hansil* — were paid regularly. There were two classes of holdings in the case of *khalsa* lands — namely, *pukka* or *bapoti*, and *kutchi*. In the case of the former, the occupier had the right to sell, mortgage and inherit land, as long as he paid the revenue-dues, and even if ejected for non-payment, or driven away by calamities, famine or misfortune, he could return to the land in due course and resume his holdings and rights (including of inheritance) upon paying any revenue-arrears due to the state.

A holder of the *kutchi* tenure, in contrast, was like a tenant-at-will. The land was basically leased out to a cultivator and could be resumed at any time. (This category would now be considered sub-tenants under the mid twentieth century land-reforms of modern Rajasthan). Jats (including Dhakars) and Gujars were among the major agriculture-based communities, and often they cultivated lands owned by Rajputs and Brahmins etc. on a *sizara* partnership basis. (Gujars also carried the reputation of being good cattle breeders). Crop-share cultivators and sub-tenants from other castes and sub-castes also farmed, but the poorest and socially down-trodden communities rarely owned land.

Until well into the nineteenth century, land revenue was usually collected in kind. Mewar state's share was between a quarter to half of the produce. This was realised either by *batai* (an actual division of the produce) or by the method of *kankut kanta* — which entailed a division based on a conjectural rough estimate of the possible yield. Besides this, an impost called *serana* and a money cess called *barar* were also exacted.

Later, cash rents were charged on commercial crops such as sugarcane, cotton, hemp and vegetables in the *kharif* season, and poppy and tobacco in the *rabi* season.

In the case of *jagir*-held lands (often acquired in acknowledgement of past military service, or for service of a civil or political nature, or granted at the will and favour of a chief), the concerned *jagirdar* had the traditional right to collect land revenue. This was generally taken in kind, rather than cash, with the maximum being half of the produce, in addition, in order to meet administration-related charges and fulfil their own obligations to the state (including raising militia and offering *nazarana* etc., and other obligatory fees at court), the *jagirdars* imposed a number of other taxes and cesses, known as *laag-baag*. They also followed the long-set custom of calling upon their tenants and other villagers residing within their *jagirs* to provide irregular forced labour, known as *begaar*, whenever it was required. (In previous centuries, labour of this kind had created the local village ponds, dams and embankments etc. not just in Mewar, but across most of the area now called Rajasthan). While a majority of the *jagirdars* were Rajputs, it should be noted that Brahmins, Vaisyas, Kayasthas and members of various other communities also held lands granted to them in *jagir* in acknowledgement of services rendered.

Most Rajput *jagirdars* paid a fixed annual tribute known as *chhatoond* — set at one-sixth of the annual revenue from their *jagir*-holdings, to the state. They also rendered service for a certain period in a year with their contingents, and made the *nazarana* offering on the succession of a ruler to the throne and on certain other occasions. Most of them also paid a fee called *kaid* when they succeeded to their own respective estates. In theory, a *jagir* was granted only for the lifetime of the holder, at whose death the land technically became *khalsa*, i.e. reverted to the state, and remained so until it was re-conferred by the ruler to the successor of the previous holder, with a fresh *patta* or lease being handed over. *Jagirs* were not generally confiscated, except in extraordinary circumstances, like the holder being charged with serious offences. Non-Rajput *jagirdars* were not called upon to pay *chhatoond*, though they too had to serve the ruler when called upon to do so, and to pay *nazarana* etc. Adoption by both Rajput and non-Rajput *jagirdars* was permitted only with the approval of the ruler.

The *bhum* (*bhom*) category of land-tenure was mainly in the hands of two groups of holders. One were small chieftains, or *Bhumats*, of the Kherwara and Kotra area, who paid a small tribute to the ruler and rendered local service. The second were the *Bhomiyas* of other parts of Mewar, who paid a nominal quit-rent known as *Bhum-barar*, and rendered services such as watch-and-ward of the villages, guarding roads, escorting treasures etc. Besides the above, some lands were granted on *sasan* or *muafi* tenure to Brahmins, Gosains and other priests, and to Charans and Bhats. The holders neither paid tribute nor rendered service, except when someone held *chakranan* lands. Miscellaneous taxes were sometimes charged from holders of *sasan* or *muafi* lands. Land held on *jagir*, *bhom* and *sasan* tenures could not be sold, but mortgaging these was permitted and was not uncommon.

The absence of 'regular' land-revenue related assessment settlements led to some trial-attempts at 'Summary Settlements' during 1871 -72, but the lack of success of these led to a return to the older system. Thereafter, during 1878-79 land revenue settlement work was taken up in *khalsa* lands under the supervision of one Mr. Wingate (on loan from the Bombay Civil Service). The assessment took into account the classification of soil etc. Initial work was completed in 1884 and the settlement was introduced between 1885 and 1893 in the *zila* (districts) of Bhilwara, Chittor, Chhoti Sadri, Jahazpur, Kapasan, Mandalgarh, Rashmi and Sahran, the *parganas* of Hurda and Rajnagar, and two *tehsils* of Girwa. (At that time the amount was set at between half an *anna* and rupees fifteen per acre). In the case of areas where the new settlement had not been carried out, land-revenues continued to be collected in accordance with the traditional crop-sharing or *batai* system. At places, the *bighori* system was also in vogue for crops like poppy, cotton and sugarcane. Under this system a cash amount (in British currency) per *bigha* was charged that varied according to the type of crop grown.

Meanwhile, on 2 July 1877, another change followed when Maharana Sajjan Singh established an organisation called *Shri Desh Hitaishini Sabha* at Udaipur, at a meeting attended by the British Political Agent, as well as representatives of Rajput *jagirdars* and various state officials. The formation of this social-reforms oriented organisation appears to have been

inspired, in part, by Sajjan Singh's attempts to emulate British attempts at 'modernising' Rajputana and British India, and to live up to the notions of 'an enlightened Prince'. To this were probably added Sajjan Singh's own views concerning the Indian tradition of a righteous, welfare-minded, educated 'Raja'; and the example of the '*Talukdar Association (British Indian Association)*' of Oudh, which had made attempts at curbing wasteful expenditure.

Sajjan Singh became president of his new *Shri Desh Hitaishini Sabha*, which was not restricted to the boundaries of Mewar, but was intended as a pan-Rajputana body. The organisation prescribed and enforced regulations concerning marriage expenditures permissible at the weddings of daughters of Rajput nobles, Brahmins, Charans, Kayasthas and others of the 'twice-born' (*dvija*) — or 'upper castes', in accordance with their respective annual incomes. Rajputs were 'permitted' to have two wives, but the others were told to be monogamous, except in cases where the wife was ill or had no children. The *Shri Desh Hitaishini Sabha* also fixed the *tyaga* gift — or amount to be paid by a bridegroom's party to Charans and other traditional 'claimants' at the time of weddings — at being ten per cent of an annual income. Subsequently, following an appeal by the *Charan Sabha* of Mewar in 1879, the *Shri Desh Hitaishini Sabha* earmarked five per cent of this *tyaga* money for a fund towards Charan schools, three per cent for the Bhats, and two per cent for the Dholis and other communities on whom *tyaga* had traditionally been bestowed. Other rules were prescribed and enforced too³⁵.

(The *Shri Desh Hitaishini Sabha* was to lose its impetus somewhat, following Maharana Sajjan Singh's death in 1884, with some of the nobles violating the prescribed rules. However, Mewar's smaller fief-holders and Charans continued to abide by the social regulations laid down. In time, similar regulations were adapted (with some modifications) and enforced in the states of Dungarpur, Banswara, Pratapgarh-Deoliya, Sirohi, Kotah, Bundi, Jhalawar and Marwar, under the approving eye of various local British political agents and the AGG for Rajputana).

Besides his *Shri Desh Hitaishini Sabha*, on the literary and scholastic front, Maharana Sajjan Singh also established the 'Sajjan Vani Vilas'

library. *Kaviraj* Shyamaldas, later author of the well-known history of Mewar called the *Vir Vinod*, was appointed to look after this library. It was during Maharana Sajjan Singh's reign that Shyamaldas wrote the major part of his now-renowned history of Mewar. The title of 'Kaviraj', or 'King of Poets', was bestowed on Shyamaldas for his skills. Maharana Sajjan Singh provided hospitality to a number of other writers and scholars too from different provinces and areas, including Bhartendu Harishchandra.

The Maharana also played host at his capital-city to Swami Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj, for several months in 1882, and the Swami put the final touches to his notable text, *Satyarth Prakash*, at Udaipur. In 1881 Sajjan Singh was conferred with the GCSI³⁶. Sajjan Singh died on 23 December 1884. Once again, the reigning Maharana left no son to succeed him³⁷. The family and senior courtiers and officials settled on the succession of Fateh Singh³⁸, the third son of Maharaj Dal Singh of Shivarati, and a descendant of the fourth son of Maharana Sangram Singh II. The new Maharana was installed on the Mewar *gaddi* on 4 March 1885, and was invested with full powers on 22 August 1885.

Maharana Fateh Singh (r. 1885-1930) held the *gaddi* of Mewar for nearly half-a-century. The period was to witness change at a far greater pace than had been the case for most of his predecessors. His reign was to see the further modernisation of the administration, and the opening of new educational institutions, medical facilities, roads, irrigation works etc. Further land revenue settlement was carried out during this time too. So was the first modern census of 1881. The census related activities led to agitations, unrest and even uprisings among the Bhils, which were suppressed by the state forces. There were additional reasons for the Bhil discontent and uprisings, including the suppression of Bhil socio-cultural practices by the state of Mewar, prohibition on local manufacture of liquor, prohibition on local salt-manufacture, along with a rise in the price of British-supplied salt, etc. The census operations seemed to merely have been the proverbial last straw! When news of disturbances in Baropal, Paduna, Asirgarh, Kotra, Payee, etc. areas reached Udaipur in March 1881, the state authorities despatched five hundred infantry, one hundred and fifty cavalry and two guns to put down the Bhils.

The writer Shyamaldas accompanied the troops, and eventually negotiated with the Bhil leaders at Rikhabdeo. Twenty-four demands were placed before the state authorities by the Bhil leaders. Meanwhile, Lt. Col. Blair and the Mewar Settlement Officer, Wingate, began negotiations with the Bhils as well. After some further misunderstandings and justified misapprehensions all around, an agreement of mutual satisfaction was concluded in April 1881. There was trouble in a different Bhil-dominated area in early 1882. The Maharana responded by building a fort at Bhorai and posting a garrison of some 300 Mewar troops there. However, matters had only been partially dealt with, and the famine of 1899-1900 was to affect the tribal areas of Mewar more severely — and with lesser availability of relief-measures — than the rest of Mewar. This general continuing dissatisfaction was to find voice later in Govindgiri's Bhagat movement during the early part of the twentieth century.

Railways came to Mewar during this time. To begin with, a metre gauge line was constructed from Chittorgarh to Debari, near Udaipur city, under the supervision of Campbell Thompson. This was opened to traffic in 1895. The railway track was extended all the way to Udaipur city between 1898 and 1899. It was the property of the state and was known as the Udaipur-Chittorgarh Railway. It was worked by the 'Bombay, Baroda and Central India Railway' (B.B. & C.I) till the end of 1897, when the State of Mewar took over its management. The capital expenditure on the line up till the end of 1905 was Rs. 20.67 lakhs.

(However, 'modern' institutions often tolled the death-bell for several 'traditional' ones. For example, the extraction and processing of various metallic ores, like copper, iron and zinc, had a long tradition in Mewar, and the *parganas* of Mandalgarh, Jahazpur, Gangrar and Bari Sadri were known for iron-ore extraction. However, iron mining here became uneconomical and fell into disuse by the end of the nineteenth century in the face of large scale production of pig-iron in Bihar and Bengal).

Maharana Fateh Singh was created a GCSI in 1887. The same year, in commemoration of Queen Victoria's jubilee, Fateh Singh abolished transit duties on all articles except opium. The next year, the British tried in vain to persuade the Maharana to raise a special force for Imperial defence, but it

was not until the visit of the Governor General, Lord Curzon, to Udaipur, that the Maharana agreed to maintain a token force of 150 cavalry for the purpose. This became effective only in 1911.

On a different front, the Maharana dealt firmly with his fief-holders and nobles, who had been agitating against the state authorities over the question of being made to pay *Chhatoond Chakri* and *Kalambandi* to the state since the days of Maharana Sarup Singh. Maharana Fateh Singh ordered the confiscation of the *jagir* of Kachola in 1894, as Nahar Singh, the Rajadhiraj of Shahpura, refused to perform *chakri* and had failed to attend Maharana's court. The *jagir* was returned to Nahar Singh only after he agreed to attend the Maharana's court for a period of two months every alternate year. Nahar Singh also agreed to send his *jamiat* (army) to Udaipur for a period of three months in a year. The Maharana also resumed the *jagir* of Asind on the death of its chief, Ranjeet Singh, in the absence of a direct descendent of the original grant-holder.

The Maharana was equally firm over other matters, including his dealings with Seth Zorawarmal Bapna. The state of Mewar had advanced money to Seth Zorawarmal Bapna for running a mail service in the state. When he failed to render accounts, despite warnings, Bapna's *jagir* was attached, and his opium chests confiscated at the Maharana's orders. The Resident, Col. Miles, and the AGG requested the Maharana to reconsider his decision, but their pleas proved ineffective. Instead, the state authorities were commanded to take possession of all the other property of the Seth, and the opium and other moveable properties were auctioned. The Seth was humbled. Two English officers and the state's *dewan*, Mehta Pannalal, who had sided with the Seth, were removed from their posts, and given the strained relations between the Maharana and the Resident, Col. Miles, the British removed the latter too.

Following the dismissal of Mehta Pannalal, the British authorities insisted that only its nominee should be appointed as *dewan*. The Maharana decided not to have any *dewan*. Instead, in 1893 he appointed the barrister Shyamji Krishnavarma³⁹ as advisor and private secretary, with virtual powers of *dewan*.

Meanwhile, a poor monsoon in 1888 led to hardships, particularly for the Bhils of Mewar's hilly tracts. The state responded with relief works that gave employment to many. In 1899 Mewar faced a far more severe famine. The State administration launched some relief-works but despite that, nearly seven lakh people out of a population of seventeen lakhs perished, as did more than half the cattle-wealth.

Famine-years added to the economic problems of Mewar and its general populace. The state's financial condition had previously remained strained during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This was due to factors like external incursions by the Marathas and Pindaris and payment of indemnities to them, and internal mismanagement, corruption, and problems associated with the reign of under-age rulers through various regency councils, etc. However, because of the state's poor economic condition, the pressure on Mewar's *jagirdars* to provide more revenues to the state had increased. The *jagirdars*, in turn, had levied extra taxes and cesses — *laag-baag* — in their fief-holdings. The practice soon proved an unwieldy burden all around. In addition, many tracts had been temporarily abandoned or left fallow during the worst of the Maratha and Pindari depredations. This had left the land in poor condition, and the farmers often unable to pay increased land-revenues — particularly after nineteenth century land settlement work set new revenue rates.

Towards the early part of the twentieth century, the situation was to eventually lead to popular agrarian movements in the *jagirs* of Bijolia, Begun, and Parsoli etc. The protracted movement for peasant rights begun in the Bijolia *thikana* of Mewar in 1897 — and now famous in history as the Bijolia Movement — became the fore-runner of several subsequent popular agrarian movements of the Rajputana region. Over the ensuing period, hundreds of farmers in Bijolia (and many other *jagir* lands of Mewar, and later other states of Rajputana), faced periods of imprisonment and punishment as they raised a demand for a reduction in land-revenue demands and the abolition of *laag-baag* and *begaar*.

Situated on the south eastern tip of Mewar, and part of the fertile plateau traditionally known as *Uparmal*, Bijolia was a fief held by the Parmar clan of Rajputs owing allegiance to the state of Mewar. The founder

of the *thikana* of Bijolia had served under Rana Sanga of Mewar at the battles of Bayana and Khanua in 1527, and received Bijolia as a *jagir* in commemoration of his valour. Holding the title of 'Rao' and the rank of a noble of Mewar's highest category, successive *jagirdars* of Bijolia had long enjoyed near-unfettered powers of collecting land revenue and imposing taxes, in common with others of their rank and class.

The *thikana*'s population included a large proportion of the Dhakar group of the Jat community, who were 'peasant-farmers'. The Bijolia region had long been recognised as a major granary for Mewar, but the local *kisans* (peasants) practicing agriculture in this area towards the end of the nineteenth century faced a hard life. They rendered up almost half their produce as land revenue to the Bijolia chief, in addition to paying numerous other taxes and cesses (*laag-baag*). These latter, at one point, numbered eighty-four! They were also expected to provide *begaar* — or forced labour, as and when required by the *thikana* or its officials, without any payment. In 1897 — at which point the Bijolia *thikana* held rights over eighty-three villages of the region, a gathering at a death-feast (*mausar*) at Girdharpura, became the catalyst for the farmers present deciding to send a two-man deputation of Nanji Patel and Thakari Patel to Udaipur to submit their grievances against the Bijolia *thikana* to the Maharana. The two men had to wait nearly six months at the capital before they could gain an audience with Maharana Fateh Singh. The Maharana made some enquiries, but took no action against the Bijolia fief-holder. On his part, the Bijolia chief, Rao Krishan Singh, exonerated Nanji Patel and Thakari Patel from the tract of Bijolia. However, the problems continued to simmer — with Sadhu Sitaram Das later providing leadership to the movement (as will be seen further in this book).

One may add here that the 1901 census (which listed the Bhils as comprising eleven per cent of Mewar's total population) mentions the nature of the land and its produce at time. The *sialu*, or *kharif* crop, included maize, millet (*jowar*), sesame, cotton and sugarcane, and was harvested in autumn. The winter-sown *rabi* crop, known as *unalu*, which was harvested in spring, consisted of wheat, barley, gram (*Cicer arietinum*), and poppy. Forests occupied about 4600 sq miles of Mewar's territory, of which 72 sq miles of area was reserved for hunting. Forest-

dwellers held traditional rights to use, nurture and cull the forest as far as hunting, chopping wood, using forest-produce, or practising shifting ‘slash-and-burn’ agriculture (*walar*), etc. activities were concerned⁴⁰.

Trees like mango, *ber* (*Zizyphus jujuba*), tamarind, *jamun* (*Eugenia jambolana*), banyan, *gular* (*Ficus glomerata*), *pipal* (*Ficus religiosa*) and *neem* (*Melia azadirachta* and *Azadirachta indica*), were plentiful. *Babool* or *kikar* (*Acacia arabica*), wild date palm or *Khajur* (*Phoenix sylvestris*) and *dhak* (*Butea frondosa*) thrived in the valleys. The *Dhak* tree, also called *Palas* and *Kankra*, was a principal florae of the region south of Udaipur, while in more hilly parts *Mahua* (*Bassia latifolia*) and forests of *Salar* (*Boswellia serrata*, *Boswellia thurifera*), *Karai* (*Sterculia urens*), *Khadira* (*A. catechu*) and other varieties flourished. The flowers of the *Mahua* tree served as cattle-fodder, besides being used for making liquor, and for various medicinal, fuel etc. requirements of the local Bhils and other groups of the Mewar and Vagar areas. Custard-apple (*Anona squamosa*) was common on the plateaux at height above 930m. In the drier parts of Mewar, *Khejra* (*Prosopis spicigera*), another type of *Ber* (*Z. remmulasia*), *Dhao* (*Anogeissus pendula*), *Jhal* or *Pilu* (*Salvadora persica*) and *Karel* (*Capparis asphylla*) were found, as were many varieties of acacias. *Anwala* (*Cassia auriculata*) and *Thor* (*Euphorbia royaleana*) were common too.

Before ending this sub-section, it may be relevant to note that by the last decade of the nineteenth century, three types of copper coins were in legal circulation in Mewar. These were the *Trisulia*, *Dhingla* and *Bhilwara* (also *Bhilada* and *Bhiladi*). The standard weight of these Mewari coins was 34 grains, but specimens between 43 to 100 grains also seem to have been minted. It is unclear when the *Dhingla* coin was first introduced, but scholars feel it is linked with the ancient Indo-Sassanian type of coins that had a fire altar on its reverse. The *Dhingla* coins were of two sizes — large and small. Interestingly enough, while these are said to have previously been struck at the Udaipur mint, by the end of the nineteenth century these were not made at the Mewar state’s official mints. Instead, the *Dhingla* coins were fabricated by the local goldsmiths (*sunar*) of the Umda village, which lay at a short distance from Udaipur city. The Umda goldsmiths held a monopoly over this *Dhingla* coinage, and paid an annual sum to the Mewar ruler for this traditional right.

In a like manner, the *Trisulia* (also called the '*Mewari paisa*'), which was regarded as having equal or greater antiquity than the *Dhingla* coin, was made by the goldsmiths of Chittorgarh. The *Bhilwara* copper coins, in contrast, were of nineteenth century origin, and shared a common inscription with their silver counterparts.

Three of the big feudatories of Mewar state, namely Salumber, Bhinder and Shahpura, held the right to strike their own coinage. Salumber's '*Padam-Shahi*' coins, first struck by Padam Singh, chief of Salumber from 1804 to 1848, were also called the *Salumba Dhingla*. The coin was issued until 1870, when the British Government ordered the closure of the mint. Bhinder coins — or *Bhindriya paisa* — were first issued by Zorawar Singh, chief of Bhinder between 1790 and 1827. These weighed 132 grains and had a value equivalent to 4 *pie*. We shall return to the history of Udaipur in the next chapter.

DUNGARPUR

It has already been noted that the ruling elite as well as ordinary populace of Dungarpur suffered from the frequent raids and tribute-exaction missions of Marathas, particularly during the final decades of the eighteenth century. The situation worsened during the reign of Maharawal Jaswant Singh II (r. 1808-1825, removed from office 1825), who had succeeded his reputedly incompetent father, Fateh Singh in 1808. By this time, besides Maratha incursions, raiding by the Pindaris also became a frequent and equally dreaded feature over the early part of the nineteenth century.

In 1812, Pindaris led by one Khuddad Khan, who may have been an associate of Amir Khan, plundered Dungarpur. Khuddad Khan maintained his hold over the state for about four years, till his death in 1815. Meanwhile, a large band of unemployed Sindhi mercenaries, formerly recruited into Mewar's service by Maharana Bhim Singh to control his recalcitrant nobles, who had eventually rebelled against the Maharana when their salary fell into arrears, made their way into Dungarpur's territory. They indulged in plunder, before laying siege to the capital of the kingdom of Dungarpur, and occupying it. Maharawal Jaswant Singh escaped and

took shelter in the Bhil *pal* of Sarana. For some time, the Sindhi mercenaries remained in undisturbed possession of the town of Dungarpur, before they were eventually expelled, and defeated at Galiakot with the help of Holkar⁴¹.

Though the nominal authority of the Maharawal was restored, his advisors realised the precarious nature of the situation, and the problems of coping with future demands by the Marathas, Pindaris, and possible all-comers! Thus, Maharawal Jaswant Singh II finally opted, like many brother-princes were doing, to approach the East India Company in order to seek a way out of the grim situation and ensure stability. On 11 December 1818, a treaty of 'perpetual friendship', alliance and unity of interests was concluded with the British. This Subsidiary Alliance treaty had thirteen articles, many of which were common to the treaties signed by the other states of 'Rajputana'.

In return for British protection, guarantee against external aggressions, and the promise of assistance in putting down internal dissent when necessary, the Maharawal of Dungarpur agreed to pay the British an annual sum, to be fixed by the British, which was not to exceed three-eighths of the state's actual revenues. In addition, Dungarpur was to hand over to the British all arrears of tribute due to Dhar, or any other state. Besides this, the ruler agreed to discharge all the Arabs, Sindhis and Makranis serving in the state's army.

Through a separate agreement in 1820, a sum of Rs. 35,000 *Salim Shahi* currency, to be paid within six years, was decided upon in lieu of all arrears, while the annual tribute for 1819, 1820 and 1821 was fixed at Rs. 17,000, Rs. 20,000 and Rs. 25,000 respectively. Dungarpur's annual tribute was subsequently raised to Rs. 35,000 *Salim Shahi*, to be paid in British coinage at current rates of exchange each year. The practice continued till 1904, when the local *Salim Shahi* currency was abolished, and the state's annual tribute settled at Rs. 17,500 of the Imperial currency.

As Jaswant Singh remained ineffective in the face of revolts by some of his nobles and fief-holders, as well as by the Bhils, the British intervened in 1825. This not only meant the putting down of the local movements, but

also the pensioning off of the Maharawal. Since Jaswant Singh had no son, the East India Company convinced him to adopt Dalpat Singh, a grandson of Maharawal Sawant Singh of the Pratapgarh ruling family. Despite much resentment and objections by the local nobles of Dungarpur, Dalpat Singh was declared regent of Dungarpur in 1825. Soon afterwards, Dalpat Singh (regent 1825-1852), managed to obtain the remission of a sum of Rs. 45,150, which the British had demanded as being Dungarpur's share of expenses in maintaining a police corps to patrol the Malwa-Gujarat route, and which Dungarpur pointed out provided negligible advantage to it. In 1830, the Assistant Political Agent from Gujarat and a detachment of British troops assisted the Regent of Dungarpur in quelling local Bhils and other so-called 'plunderers'.

In 1844, the Dungarpur regent found himself successor-designate of the *gaddi* of Pratapgarh too, following the death of his grandfather, Maharawal Sawant Singh of Pratapgarh-Deoliya. The possibility of amalgamating Pratapgarh and Dungarpur was considered, as was the question of whether Dungarpur's dismissed Maharawal Jaswant Singh II — still the *de jure* ruler of the state, should make a fresh adoption in place of Dalpat Singh. The issue of Pratapgarh-Deoliya escheating to the British was seriously contemplated, but fortunately for the state, Dalhousie's Doctrine of Lapse was not invoked.

Public feeling was against amalgamation. The nobles too objected against that vociferously. Meanwhile, Maharawal Jaswant Singh II, possibly hoping to regain his authority, attempted to make a fresh adoption. Mokham Singh, son of Thakur Himmat Singh of Nandli, was his choice, but the intrigues of his nobles and other fief-holders scuttled the attempted adoption. Afterwards, the British ensured that Maharawal Jaswant Singh II left Dungarpur. He was to spend the rest of his life at Vrindaban and Mathura.

Meanwhile, Dalpat Singh, who had taken his place as the next Maharawal of Pratapgarh-Deoliya, adopted Udai Singh, the infant son of the Thakur of Sabli, as his future successor on the Dungarpur *gaddi*. The choice was made in accordance with the wishes of the chiefs and nobles of Dungarpur. It was decided that Dalpat Singh would remain regent of

Dungarpur during Udai Singh's minority. Dalpat Singh now became long-distance administrator for Dungarpur, since he was living in Pratapgarh. The arrangement had predictable problems. Thus, in 1852, the British decided to remove Dalpat Singh from the post of regent of Dungarpur (leaving him ruler of Pratapgarh-Deoliya only). Dungarpur was given into the charge of an Agent of the East India Company until young Udai Singh became a major.

Maharawal Udai Singh II (r. 1844-1898), was conferred full reigning powers by the British on attaining his majority in 1858. In the interim, his regency administration had remained loyal to the British during the 1857-58 period and Dungarpur state's troops helped Captain Brooke and the East India Company's forces in preventing the Bhils of the Kherwara cantonment from joining the 1857 movement. In the course of Udai Singh II's minority and then reign⁴² many social, institutional, and educational reforms were introduced. During the 1869-70 famine, various relief measures were taken to alleviate the suffering of the general populace. However, the older pattern of administration, and traditional way of life, was still largely in place when Udai Singh died in 1898.

For example, progress towards 'modernising' education, along the British pattern, remained slow. The traditional practice had been for Brahmin and Jain pandits and *yatis*, or for Muslim maulvis, to teach a limited number of students — almost invariably boys — from their respective communities, plus a few others. The curriculum, as in other parts of Rajputana, was related more to the future requirements of the students. While knowledge of Sanskrit or Arabic etc. was a basic prerequisite for reading and understanding religious texts, a smattering of Hindi/Persian/Urdu was also taught. So was some arithmetic. Instruction in this subject, however, was emphasised more for boys from merchant families, so that they could apply it in their daily work in later life.

At this time, Dungarpur state was following a previously established administrative pattern, with three districts, each under a *ziledar*. The *ziledar* held the powers of a 'Magistrate Third Class' and could try civil cases up to a certain level. Above them was a *faujdar*, with powers of a 'Magistrate First Class', who was entitled, besides other duties, to hear appeals against

the decisions of the three *ziledars*. Appeals against the *faujdar*'s judgement went to Dungarpur's Council of Ministers. (During much of the nineteenth century, the overall decisions of this council of ministers had been subject to confirmation by the British Resident based in Mewar, and sentences of capital punishment needed ratification by the AGG). The first modern census enumeration of the population of the area also took place in Udai Singh's reign. In this 1881 census, the total number of inhabitants of the state stood at 1,53,381.

Udai Singh II was succeeded in 1898 by his eleven-year-old grandson, Bijay Singh (r. 1898-1918), son of Udai Singh II's dead son, Khuman Singh. This meant another period of regency administration, while the young Maharawal completed his schooling at Mayo College and waited to attain full ruling powers. A Regency Council functioned under the supervision of a British Political Officer during the entire period of Bijay Singh's minority.

Soon after Bijay Singh's accession, Dungarpur, in common with much of Rajputana, suffered the Great Famine of 1899-1900, caused by a failure of rains. (The region's thick forest-cover at the time is indicated in the *Famine Report, Dungarpur, 1899-1900*, p.1, which noted that "a very large portion of the district consists of undulating hills and densely wooded valleys which afford a wonderful variety of edible products on which the Bhil population can and do to a large extent subsist"). The severity of the famine was felt across the region, and despite relief-measures undertaken by the State's Regency Council, about twenty-five per cent of the Bhil population died due to starvation and cholera⁴³. The region had hardly recovered, when it suffered yet another year of poor monsoon in 1901.

BANSWARA

The state of Banswara too had not escaped the fate of its close neighbours, as far as internal dissensions and external threats from the Marathas and Pindaris — and even Mewar — were concerned during the turn of the eighteenth century-early years of the nineteenth century. In 1817, Pindaris

under a chief called Nawab Karim Khan are known to have plundered Banswara. Given this backdrop, by 16 September 1818, Banswara too had entered into a Subsidiary Alliance treaty with British. The state's ruler, Maharawal Ummed Singh, died soon after the treaty with the East India Company had been concluded. Bhawani Singh (r. 1818-1838) succeeded him. In view of his perceived 'mismanagement' of state affairs, the British encouraged the appointment of Captain Speirs as the *dewan* of Banswara. Speirs was later poisoned.

Bhawani Singh left no heir to succeed him, and therefore, upon his death in November 1838, Bahadur Singh of Khandu was raised to the *gaddi* of Banswara (r. 1838-1844). His five year old minor son, Lakshman Singh (r. 1844-1902, d. 1905), followed him. During the period of the young Maharawal's minority, Shamat Ali Khan was nominated by the British to supervise the state's administration. Lakshman Singh gained full ruling powers in 1856. The very next year, the momentous events of 1857 affected the fortunes of Banswara too. Some prominent Bhils of the Banswara area supplied Tantia Tope and his force with food etc. during the course of the latter's transit through Banswara's territory in March 1858. In the course of this, Banswara was surrounded and Lakshman Singh fled to the forest, returning to his capital only after the movement had been suppressed.

Further problems lay in store for the Maharawal. From about 1866, dispute between the ruler and the Rao of Kushalgarh intensified. In 1868, the area of Kushalgarh, previously subservient to Banswara, gained British recognition as an independent chiefship. Lakshman Singh was asked to refrain from all future interference in the administration of the Kushalgarh estate, while the Rao of Kushalgarh was asked to pay an annual tribute of rupees eleven hundred to Banswara and continue to render it customary services.

Matching pace with other contemporary states, some changes came to Banswara during the latter part of the nineteenth century. In 1869-70 a hospital was established. A post-office, etc. and other institutions followed. Around this time, much of the state's revenue came from land, custom-duties and tributes from fief-holders. Land revenue collections were a fixed amount in some cases, and on the basis of crop-assessment in others.

Jagirdars paid tribute to the state, and were bounded to fulfil certain traditional obligations.

In 1881, when the first census operations were conducted, the population of Banswara State was 1.52 lakhs, of whom nearly two-thirds are described as being Bhils and associated 'tribal' groups. The severe conditions during the 1899-1900 famine affected the population of this area too, and the 1901 census recorded a population of 1.49 lakhs, of whom only 2% were formally literate. The figure is scarcely surprising considering that there were only four primary-level schools on the 'modern' pattern, with a total enrolment of 250 boys.

Meanwhile, the financial situation of Banswara deteriorated under Lakshman Singh, and the state treasury was practically emptied because of his extravagant habits. In 1902 the British intervened and the charge of the state's administration was given into the hands of the British Assistant Resident based at Mewar.

KUSHALGARH

In 1868 Kushalgarh, a feudatory estate of the state of Banswara, was recognised as an independent chiefship, headed by its Rao. Though the Rao of Kushalgarh continued to offer certain prescribed rituals of homage and allegiance to Banswara, as well as pay annual tribute to that State, the ruler of Banswara was told to refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of the Kushalgarh chiefship. Further material change to the lives of the people of Kushalgarh would, however, come only some half a century later, when a primary school was established in 1905, a municipal board in 1913, and a post office and police station in 1914. The setting up of law courts, a medical dispensary, the upgrading of the primary school to middle school level, etc. were to follow thereafter.

PRATAPGARH-DEOLIYA (PERTABGARH)

The small kingdom of Pratapgarh-Deoliya, flanked by Mewar to its north and north-west, Banswara to its south and south-west, the Rathore-ruled Central Indian state of Ratlam to its south, and Jawar to its east, signed the Subsidiary Alliance with the East India Company in 1818, during the long reign of Maharawal Sawant Singh of Pratapgarh.

In October 1818, not long after Sawant Singh had signed the subsidiary alliance pact with the British, the on-going feud between the Maharawal and his son, Deep Singh, came to a head and the latter usurped his father's ruling powers. Deep Singh was reportedly cruel and was responsible for the death of many people. As a result, the British had Deep Singh arrested and imprisoned. He died in 1826. Meanwhile, Sawant Singh had once again taken the administration of the state into his own hands.

Sawant Singh died in 1844 and was succeeded by his grandson, Dalpat Singh (r. 1844-1863). Dalpat had been designated regent of Dungarpur in 1825 by the British East India Company, despite the objections of the fief-holders and chiefs of that kingdom. On ascending the *gaddi* of Pratapgarh-Deoliya, he relinquished his rights over Dungarpur. During the course of the 1857 uprising, Dalpat Singh dispatched his state forces to Neemuch to assist the beleaguered British troops. Later, Tantia Tope led his contingent into the territory of Pratapgarh State, where between 3,000-4,000 Bhils are said to have rallied to him. However, Tantia Tope's forces were defeated by the British near Pratapgarh on 24 December 1858.

On Dalpat Singh's death, his seventeen-year-old son Udai Singh succeeded him (r. 1863-1890), receiving full ruling powers in December 1865. As Udai Singh died without an heir in February 1890, his widowed queen, Maharani Swaroop Kanwar, adopted Raghunath Singh (r. 1890-1929), from the Arnod family, as the late Maharawal's heir and successor.

The 'Great Famine' of 1899-1900 (corresponding with Vikram Samvat 1956 — hence commonly called the *Chhapaniya-akaal*, or the famine of '56) which affected much of Rajasthan, did not leave this region untouched. Census figures reveal that the state's population, which was 88,000 in 1891, fell to 52,000 by the 1901 census. (Following the collation

of census figures, it became possible to estimate that Bhils constituted approximately twenty-two per cent of Pratapgarh-Deoliya State's population from the late nineteenth century onwards).

MARWAR

We have already noted that upon the death of Marwar's ruler Bhim Singh in 1803, his cousin Man Singh (r. 1803-1817, and 1818-1843), succeeded him. In common with Bhim Singh before him, the new Maharaja was faced with managing *jagirdars* and nobles who had become very powerful and assertive. His initial actions, therefore, entailed consolidating his position, in part through strengthening the non-Rajput *mutsaddie* elite. Maharaja Man Singh also meted out punishment to those connected with the deaths of several close relatives during the period that Bhim Singh had occupied the Marwar throne. A southern neighbouring kingdom, Sirohi, was subjected to a series of raids by Man Singh's forces. This, in part, was because while Man Singh had been besieged during Bhim Singh's reign, Sirohi's ruler, Bairisal, had refused to shelter Man Singh's family in their hour of desperation and need.

Meanwhile, in the days prior to his accession, while Man Singh was hard-pressed by Bhim Singh's troops and in real danger of his life, he had come under the influence of Dev Nath of the Nath sect. Impressed by the man, and by what transpired to be accurate prophecy, upon his accession Man Singh invited Dev Nath to Jodhpur and made the Nath sect teacher his own preceptor (*guru*). Thereafter, Guru Dev Nath, and afterwards his brother, Bhim Nath and son, Ladoo Nath, were to be influential in Marwar's administration. (Several texts were subsequently penned at Maharaja Man Singh's court about the Nath sect and its teachers. Among them Sewak Daulatram's *Jalatihar-Nathji-ro-Gun*, Uttam Chand's *Nath-Chandrika*, and Banki Das's *Nath-Stuti*).

In the initial year of Man Singh's reign, there were some negotiations with the East India Company concerning means to deal with Maratha attacks. A draft treaty sent by General Lake did not prove wholly satisfactory to Man Singh, however. Meanwhile, a mutual settlement

arrived at between Man Singh and Jaswant Rao Holkar ended the need for any immediate separate arrangement with the East India Company.

An issue less easy to settle centred on the issue of the marriage of Princess Krishna Kumari of Mewar. In 1802, Krishna Kumari had been betrothed to Marwar's then ruler, Maharaja Bhim Singh. His death in 1803 technically brought that engagement to an end. Some time after this, Mewar arranged a match for her with Dhoondhar's Maharaja Sawai Jagat Singh. On learning about this, Marwar's Maharaja Man Singh took umbrage at the cancellation of a formal proposed marriage-alliance between the two kingdoms. Viewing the affair in the light of the breaking of a betrothal, and as such, as a slight on his kingdom, clan and his personal honour, he insisted that the previous arrangement between Mewar and Marwar should stand and Krishna Kumari be married to him.

Shortly afterwards, in January 1806, Mewar's Bhim Singh despatched the formal *teeka*, the traditional method of sealing the engagement, to Dhoondhar's Jagat Singh. A large Dhoondhar escort joined Mewar's couriers. Near Shahpura, they found their path barred by a strong contingent of Marwar's troops, under the command of their minister, Indra Raj Singhvi. The chief of Shahpura interceded to prevent a clash. The betrothal *teeka* could not be taken up to Jaipur, and was carried back to Udaipur, while the rival armies returned to their respective stations.

That June, Indra Raj Singhvi and *Dewan* Ramchandra Chhabra, ministers of Marwar and Dhoondhar respectively, negotiated an understanding by which it was decided — reluctantly on the part of both the Maharajas — that neither Man Singh nor Jagat Singh would marry the Mewar princess.

Man Singh, displeased with the advice and actions of Indra Raj Singhvi, had him imprisoned along with the faithful Bhandari Gangaram. In the long term, the Maharaja had cause to regret this. Ironically, the Dhoondhar minister Ramchandra also fell from royal favour at Jaipur soon afterwards. He was arrested, apparently at the behest of the notorious Ras Kapur, the concubine of Maharaja Jagat Singh of Dhoondhar, imprisoned within Jaigarh fort, and in 1807 put to death.

In the interim, the old enmity between Maharaja Man Singh and the Thakur of Pokhran, Sawai Singh, had reached new heights. Sawai Singh had previously announced that a posthumous son had been born to one of Bhim Singh's widowed queens, Maharani Derawal (in May 1804). The Pokhran chief had then begun to garner the support of several Rathore chiefs of Marwar, as well as the ruler of Bikaner, Surat Singh, for placing the child on the Marwar throne in place of Man Singh. Under the supervision of Sawai Singh, the child, Dhonkal Singh, was shifted secretly to his maternal uncle's place at Khetri, in Shekhawati. (Dhonkal Singh lived for a while at Khetri, then ruled by Abhay Singh, the son-in-law of Sawai Singh of Pokhran).

In turn, Man Singh started consolidating his position. He despatched armies to Sirohi and Ghanerao under the command of Mehta Gyanmal and Mehta Sahib Chandra respectively and occupied both the places. Not long afterwards, the Shekhawats of Khetri, Nawalgarh and Sikar attacked Didwana under the banner of Dhonkal Singh. The attack was repulsed.

By 1806, Sawai Singh began to vociferously press the claims of this purported infant-son of the late Bhim Singh as the real claimant to the Marwar throne. While Sawai Singh of Pokhran rallied support for Dhonkal's cause (including from Lakshman Singh of Sikar and many Shekhawats), Maharaja Jagat Singh of Dhoondhar, already at odds with Man Singh over the issue of marriage with Princess Krishna Kumari of Mewar, came forward to openly support Dhonkal Singh. Maharaja Surat Singh of Bikaner, and several Rathore Sardars of Marwar and adjoining tracts also gave support for Dhonkal Singh. Amir Khan and his Pindaris too joined the anti-Man Singh alliance. The joint forces of this group occupied several *parganas* and tracts held by Marwar. Various chiefs of the Shekhawati area, among them Raja Abhay Singh of Khetri (a son-in-law of Thakur Sawai Singh of Pokhran), Thakur Shyam Singh of Bissau and Rao Lakshman Singh of Sikar fought against Marwar too.

Man Singh met the enemies at Gingoli, a village near Parbatsar (now in Nagaur district). However, he had to cope with treachery, confusion in the ranks of his troops, and the abandonment of his cause by several of the nobles of Marwar, who rallied to Sawai Singh's call for supporting the

young Dhonkal Singh. Man Singh retreated to Merta, and then made his way to Jodhpur.

The anti-Man Singh forces surrounded and occupied the city of Jodhpur. Man Singh took shelter in the Jodhpur fort. Faced with a critical situation, with enemy forces besieging the fort of Jodhpur for nearly five months, Maharaja Man Singh sought the services of his incarcerated former aides, Indra Raj Singhvi and Bhandari Gangaram, and authorised them to negotiate peace.

The seasoned *mutsaddies* began negotiations with Sawai Singh, the Thakur of Pokhran, who demanded that Dhonkal Singh should be made the ruler of Marwar, while Man Singh should return to his former *jagir* of Jalore and pay twenty-two lakh rupees as war indemnity. The terms were unacceptable to Indra Raj. Maintaining the pretext of needing time for considering them, he secretly sent Lodha Shahmal to the Maratha leader, Daulat Ram Scindia to seek assistance. While Scindia did not make any commitments directly, he nevertheless pressurised Maharaja Jagat Singh of Jaipur to discontinue payment of a huge daily allowance to the Pindari chief, Amir Khan, and his army. The move proved useful for Marwar, and Indra Raj Singhvi successfully manoeuvred Amir Khan into crossing over to Man Singh's side.

Indra Raj persuaded Amir Khan, who had been given a lakh of rupees as the first instalment of his dues on behalf of Maharaja Man Singh of Marwar, to attack Dhoondhar. Meanwhile, Indra Raj sent a body of Marwar troops to join Amir Khan at Sambhar. Jagat Singh dispatched an army of 50,000 to prevent Amir Khan from proceeding further into the Jaipur territory. Amir Khan routed the troops of Dhoondhar, which were commanded by Sheo Lal, at Phagi in August 1807. This swayed the fortunes of war to Marwar's advantage.

On hearing of the setback, Maharaja Jagat Singh opted to return to Jaipur in September 1807, to protect his state and interests. His allies too soon left Jodhpur for their respective destinations, with Surat Singh returning to Bikaner, and Sawai Singh and Dhonkal Singh to Nagaur. Upon the arrival of the Jaipur forces at Danta, about twenty miles east of Merta,

there was a short but furious encounter, in which the Jaipur army was worsted. Marwar snatched back much of the spoils of Gingoli, including forty cannons, while Maharaja Jagat Singh of Jaipur purchased safety by paying one lakh rupees to Amir Khan. Jagat Singh reached Jaipur in October 1807.

Thus, the fortunes of war and the diplomatic machinations of Indra Raj Singhvi combined to allow Man Singh of Marwar a creditable way out of the imbroglio in which he had found himself. Not surprisingly, Maharaja Man Singh accorded Indra Raj and Amir Khan a grand welcome on their return to Jodhpur. Indra Raj was made the *Fauj-Musahib*⁴⁴, while Amir Khan was conferred the title of 'Nawab'.

Thereafter, the Maharaja frequently used Amir Khan's services, including in quelling the recalcitrant element among his courtiers and kinsmen. The most notable instance of this was the assassination of the powerful Thakur Sawai Singh of Pokhran and several of his supporters by the Pindari chief in March 1808. Pretending to be aggrieved with the Marwar Maharaja over non-payment of his dues, Amir Khan sent out feelers to Sawai Singh offering to help the cause of Dhonkal Singh. Following a preliminary meeting, the unsuspecting Sawai Singh, along with his supporters, accepted an invitation to Amir Khan's camp. The meeting was fixed for the end of March 1808. Here Sawai Singh and his associates were murdered within a massive tent that had been erected for their reception⁴⁵. The killing rid Man Singh of one of his main opponents, but Sawai Singh's son, Salam Singh took up arms and attempted to avenge the murder of his father. He challenged Marwar's authority, and plundered villages, but was eventually suppressed. However, the predictably resultant hostility of the Pokhran branch of the clan and its supporters proved detrimental, in the long run, for the Maharaja and the state of Marwar!

Following his victory over Jaipur State, and the elimination of Sawai Singh of Pokhran in March 1808, Man Singh despatched an army, under the command of the faithful minister, Indra Raj Singhvi, against the neighbouring kingdom of Bikaner. This was retaliatory action against Bikaner's Maharaja Surat Singh, for having joined the confederacy against Marwar. Man Singh's forces defeated the Bikaner army near Udasar, and

pursed them towards the capital-city, setting up camp at Gajner. However, the Marwar army faced difficulties in taking the fort of Bikaner, despite a prolonged campaign. Suspecting the intentions of Indra Raj, the Marwar ruler eventually despatched another force against Bikaner. This contingent was led by Kalyanmal Lodha, the younger son of yet another of Marwar's non-Rajput administrative officials, Shahmal Lodha. Faced by a lack of co-operation from Indra Raj Singhvi, Kalyanmal Lodha's contingent was defeated, and Kalyanmal himself was taken prisoner. He was later released, upon which he returned to Jodhpur.

Indra Raj now bestirred himself, and commanded the troops under his charge to lay siege to the fortress of Bikaner. The prolonged hostilities between Bikaner and Marwar had taken their toll on the resources of Bikaner, and in November 1808, Maharaja Surat Singh of Bikaner accepted a settlement. Under the terms agreed upon, Bikaner agreed to pay a war indemnity of three lakhs and sixty thousand rupees, and surrender the town of Phalodi which had been assigned to the ruler of Bikaner as a price of joining the coalition against Man Singh. The Bikaner ruler was also compelled to return the spoils captured from the Marwar forces at the battle of Gingoli.

Meanwhile, taking advantage of the unresolved rivalry between the neighbouring states of Marwar and Dhoondhar, Amir Khan had taken to plundering Dhoondhar's territories — probably with the full cognisance of Marwar's Maharaja Man Singh. By this time, the Jaipur ruler, Maharaja Jagat Singh, was not interested in unnecessarily prolonging hostilities, and encouraged a negotiated settlement. Representatives of both kingdoms met and agreed, among other terms, that Jagat Singh would cease to support the cause of Dhonkal Singh, and that neither ruler would marry the Udaipur princess. It was further settled that Maharaja Jagat Singh of Jaipur's sister would marry Maharaja Man Singh of Jodhpur, and Maharaja Man Singh's daughter would marry Maharaja Jagat Singh.

However, within a couple of years, Man Singh despatched a contingent under the command of his Pindari ally, Amir Khan, against Udaipur. The hapless Maharana was asked to arrange the marriage of Krishna Kumari to the Marwar king, or face the consequences. The long-

drawn struggle for the hand of the Mewar princess, which had involved not just the concerned royal suitors and their kingdoms, but numerous other estate-holders as well as the Pindaris and Marathas, had a tragic conclusion when Krishna Kumari was administered poison in July 1810.

By this time, Amir Khan had become an influential factor in the politics of this region. In return for the Pindari chief's role in having helped Man Singh on many occasions, the Marwar ruler found himself faced with frequent demands for 'recompense' by Amir Khan. It is held that by 1814, the year that Amir Khan looted the Marwari countryside to collect additional booty, the powerful Pindari chief had, despite the weakened financial position of Marwar, obtained some eighteen lakhs of rupees from Maharaja Man Singh!

Meanwhile, Man Singh, besides relying heavily on the advice of his spiritual guru, Ayash Dev Nath (to whom reference has already been made), had delegated finance-related administrative matters into the capable hands of his long-serving and trusted minister, Indra Raj Singhvi. Indra Raj's measures at improving the financial position of the kingdom proved successful, but earned him the ire and open enmity of several Rajput chieftains and estate-holders, as well as many *mutsaddies*. These latter were Marwar's all-powerful group of administrators, drawn mainly from the Oswal Jain non-Rajput class. Indra Raj's enemies and rivals got their chance in August 1815, when Amir Khan arrived in Jodhpur to collect dues amounting to five lakhs of rupees from Maharaja Man Singh. Amir Khan asked that the districts of Nagaur and Merta be given to him in lieu of the amount owing. The proposal was vehemently opposed by Indra Raj.

At this point, many aggrieved courtiers and *mutsaddies*, among them Kesari Singh of Asop, Bakhtawar Singh of Ahuwa, Mehta Akhey Chand and Ayash Sur Nath, convinced the Pindari chief that Indra Raj Singhvi and the Maharaja's guru, Dev Nath, were responsible for the non-payment of the dues owing to him. They told Amir Khan that if the king's minister and guru were out of the picture, they would be in a position to give Amir Khan seven lakhs of rupees. Maharaja Man Singh's son, Chhatar Singh, and Chhatar Singh's mother joined the conspirators. Five lakhs were paid over as an advance amount to the Pindari leader. Subsequently, the Marwar

ruler's spiritual guru, Dev Nath, and the state's loyal minister, Indra Raj Singhvi, were both assassinated within the Jodhpur fort on October 10, 1815 by Amir Khan's men.

Upon learning of the killings, Maharaja Man Singh ordered retribution. However, Amir Khan warned him off, threatening to sack the Marwar capital if his men were touched. The assassins succeeded in quitting the city unhindered, much to the distress of the Maharaja, who lost all interest in administration and went into temporary seclusion. He was rumoured to have lost his senses.

At the instance of Amir Khan, Indra Raj's opponents Mehta Akhey Chand and Bhandari Chaturbhuj were appointed as *musahib* and *fauj-bakshi* respectively. Amir Khan extracted twenty lakhs from them within two months and left Marwar in December 1815. Meanwhile Singhvi Gul Raj, brother of the slain Indra Raj, who had been in Sojat at the time of these events, recruited an army of 2,000 with the help of Prithviraj Bhandari and Mannilal Bhandari and reached Jodhpur in February 1816 to avenge the murder of his brother. Most of the group supporting Mehta Akhey Chand ran away, while the rest were arrested. The Maharaja formally gave over the charge of routine administration to Gul Raj and Fateh Raj Singhvi (son of Indra Raj).

Around this time Scindia and Amir Khan began depredations against Marwar. Gul Raj failed to curb their activities. This gave an opportunity to Mehta Akhey Chand and his group to organise a front against Gul Raj. Gul Raj was arrested and killed in April 1817. Meanwhile, Fateh Raj too was caught at Merta by Amir Khan's men but released on a payment of fifty thousand rupees. Fateh Raj took shelter in Kuchaman. Shortly afterwards, Maharaja Man Singh was urged by Mehta Akhey Chand and Ayash Bhim Nath, brother of the slain Ayash Dev Nath, to hand over the administration of Marwar to his heir-apparent, Chhatar Singh. Acceding to their demand, Man Singh signed a proclamation vesting Chhatar Singh with regency powers. It was a sad chapter in a vigorous reign, during which art, literature and scholarship had been provided as much patronage as had attention to neighbours, borders and warfare!

On attaining authority to rule Marwar as Regent, the crown-prince Chhatar Singh appointed Mehta Akhey Chand as the chief minister (*dewan*), and Salam Singh, the Thakur of Pokhran, as the *pradhan* (premier). Meanwhile, there had been an initial abortive attempt by Maharaja Man Singh, soon after his accession, to come to a mutual understanding with the British East India Company in order to curtail the threat posed by the Marathas. Though nothing concrete had come out of that attempt, by 1816 the Marwar Maharaja had felt pressurised by the might of both Scindia and Amir Khan. As such, Man Singh had once again sent out feelers to the Company, and later despatched Bishan Ram Asopa to carry out negotiations with Charles Metcalfe, the Resident for the East India Company at Delhi.

In the interim, Chhatar Singh took the reigns of administration as Regent. Soon afterwards, Amir Khan returned to Marwar, but was bought off by Chhatar Singh, who gave the Pindari chief one and a half lakh rupees on condition that he left Marwar for good. Chhatar Singh now deemed it best to renew Marwar's negotiations with the British. As a result, a 'treaty of perpetual friendship' was concluded between Marwar and the East India Company on 16 January 1818. By it, Marwar agreed to pay *khiraj-tribute* of Rs. 1,08.00 per annum, as was being given to Scindia. It also accepted the Company as the paramount power; and agreed not to enter into relationship with any state without the previous approval of the Company. Marwar also promised to provide, as and when required, a contingent of 1,500 horses to the British. In its turn, the Company became responsible for the external defence of Marwar. Marwar's *muttsaddies* continued to occupy important posts even after the alliance with the Company, but their absolute hold over the state's administration soon became a thing of the past.

The untimely death of *Kunwar* Chhatar Singh in March 1818 created a vacuum in the political set up of Jodhpur. The ruling clique led by Mehta Akhey Chand made various unsuccessful attempts at retaining supremacy, including declaring that one of Chhatar Singh's widows was pregnant. They then tried to install a member of the Rathore ruling family of Idar (a collateral branch of the Marwar Rathores), to succeed Chhatar Singh. Meanwhile, the East India Company deputed Munshi Barkat Ali to sort out matters at Jodhpur. The Munshi persuaded the recluse Maharaja Man Singh to come out of seclusion and take over the administration of Marwar afresh.

Following assurances by the British, Man Singh resumed the reins of the state of Marwar on November 4 1818. Man Singh gradually consolidated his position vis-à-vis the Akhey Chand group, and ordered retribution against those he held responsible for the murders of his guru Ayash Dev Nath and Singhvi Indra Raj. By May 1820 many of the *mitsaddies*, including Mehta Akhey Chand, Kilendar Nath Karan, Vyas Vinod Ram, had been executed or murdered. Rathore nobles had not escaped unscathed either, with Akhey Singh of Neemaj leading the list of the nobles killed at the Maharaja's command. Other nobles, among them the fief-holders of Chandawal, Rohat, Khejadla, Nimbaj and Asop, had their *jagirs* confiscated. More killings followed that September.

In fear of their lives, or the sequestration of their fiefs, many nobles and *mitsaddies* left Marwar. The nobles appealed to the British for help. In 1823, at the advice of the British Political Agent, some of the dispossessed nobles sent their representatives to the Maharaja to plead for the return of their respective *jagirs*. Man Singh arrested them, but at the intervention of the British agreed to their release, as well as to the return, in 1824, of many of the confiscated *jagirs*. Meanwhile, the distance between Man Singh and the East India Company had increased over other matters as well. The Marwar ruler took severe umbrage and protested when the East India Company entered into a 'Subsidiary Alliance' treaty with Sirohi State in 1823. Man Singh's objection was that Sirohi paid *khiraj* to Marwar and, as such, it could not enter into an individual treaty with the British without consulting Marwar. Man Singh's protest was ignored.

In 1827 some of the nobles again rebelled and formed a powerful coalition against the ruler. They invited Dhonkal Singh. Being tempted by the promise of the throne of Jodhpur, and supported by Bakhtawar Singh of Ahuwa and other nobles of Marwar, he occupied some portions of Marwar. Man Singh sought and obtained help from the British in dealing with the situation.

Man Singh's relations with the British were never easy, however. In 1829 Man Singh gave shelter to Appa Saheb Bhonsle, the dethroned ruler of Nagpur, at Maha Mandir, and refused to hand him over to the British in spite of persistent demands by Governor General Lord William Bentinck. The Marwar ruler also chose not to attend Governor General Bentinck's 1832 durbar at Ajmer. Furthermore, in contravention of the treaty of 1818, he sent troops against neighbouring states like Jaisalmer, Kishangarh and Sirohi, and paid little heed to the letters of the Governor General.

While Man Singh had problems with the East India Company and with the nobles of his state, his court and populace suffered under the supremacy enjoyed over the state's administration by Guru Ayash Bhim Nath and the Nath sect. Man Singh patronised the Nath sect wholeheartedly. He had forty-eight temples constructed for the Naths within Marwar. The main centres (and abodes) of the Naths at Jodhpur were the Maha Mandir and Udai Mandir complexes, which had been founded by Man Singh. The Maharaja was so devoted to them that he would not pay heed to any complaints against them, even if the accusations were of crime, looting or killings by the Naths. Sutherland, the Agent to the Governor General, advised Man Singh to discipline the Naths. But the Marwar ruler ignored the advice.

The British had had enough. Responding to the situation, Sutherland marched on Jodhpur with a big force in 1839. Maharaja Man Singh surrendered and handed over the Jodhpur fort to Sutherland. The AGG confiscated the *jagirs* of the leading Naths of Maha Mandir and Udai Mandir. He also set-up a council made up of senior nobles and *mutsaddies* to run the administration. The disaffected nobles of Marwar gave full cooperation to the British. Later, the nobles also co-operated with Man Singh, when the latter — a shrewd judge of matters — decided to make the best of

a bad situation by improving relations with his nobles. The Marwar nobles were restored to all the privileges and rights traditionally due to them, and their sequestered fiefs and properties were returned to them across the state. With mutual understanding and co-operation all around over matters of governance and rights, law and order was soon restored, and after five months of occupation, the British eventually handed the Jodhpur fort back to Man Singh.

Though the AGG had confiscated the *jagirs* of the Maha Mandir and Udai Mandir, the Maharaja had continued to pass on the income of the *jagirs* to the Naths. His continued patronage encouraged the Naths. Accusations against the perceived ‘anti-social activities’ of the Naths began to fly again. The Naths were accused of forcibly converting people to their creed. In 1843 there was an incident involving the abduction of a Brahmin girl by two young Naths. The Political Agent, Captain Ludlow, arrested both the culprits and despatched them to Ajmer. The aggrieved Maharaja left his palace and retired to Mandore, where he lived like a hermit. He died at Mandore on 8 September 1843.

Man Singh’s long reign had seen a period of turbulence in Marwar. But despite the battles, intrigues, violence, state-sponsored killings, and open discontent amongst many nobles, the period had also seen its share of cultural creativity! Man Singh himself was recognised as a brave warrior who was also well-versed in the arts. His patronage of learning gathered around him a galaxy of literary talents. One of the most noted and revered figures at Man Singh’s court was the scholar-poet Bankidas, who composed in Dingal and Sanskrit, and is also remembered for writing a history of the region — the *Itihas-Varata*. He also authored the *Bankidas ri Khyat*. Prominent among the others were Shambhu Dutt, who wrote the *Rajkumar-Prabodh*, Bhishma Bhatt, author of *Vivek-Martand*, Visvaroop, who composed the *Avadhoot-Gita*, and Manohar Das, who penned the *Jasbhishan-Chandrika*.

One of the prolific writers of the period was Man Singh’s third wife, Rani Pratap Kumari. She was well-versed in the Braj Bhasha language, besides local variants, and wrote treatises centred on religion. Her works include the *Gyan-Sagar*, *Rama-Guna-Sagar*, *Raghuvir-Sneha-Lila*,

Ramachandra-naam-Mahima, *Raghunath-ri-Kavitt*, *Bhajan-pada-rasa*, *Rama-Sujas-Pashipi*, and *Rama-Prem-Sukb-Sagar*. Maharaja Man Singh himself was no mean poet and scholar. He had authored texts like the *Nath-Purana*, *Nath-Sharot*, *Nath-Shatak*, and *Siddha-Gyan*; invited scholars from afar to his court; and organised open debates and discussions on current religious and social issues. He was also a music-lover, who enjoyed composing songs in different *Ragas*, with *Maud ragini* as his personal favourite. His liberal patronage of, and keen interest in, music attracted to his court a large number of musicians. He had mastered some of the *yogic kriyas* also. Man Singh was also a collector of books, manuscripts and paintings, some of which were housed in the Jodhpur fort's 'Pustak Prakash' library. His reign also saw its share of building works, including the construction of a public *baori* (step-well) and connected garden built at the command of Man Singh's *pardayat* (royal concubine) Panna Rai, and paid for by her.

Man Singh's sons (including Chhatar Singh) having predeceased him, the British Political Agent, in consultation with the widows of Man Singh and the senior nobles, put Takhat Singh of Idar on the throne on 1 December 1843. (Idar had come into the hands of a scion of the Rathore ruling house of Marwar in 1728, and that cadet line had continued to hold it thereafter). Takhat Singh's reign (r. 1843-1872, d. 1873) began well enough. The nobles were co-operative, and the British eager to assist. Certain reforms and attempts at modernisation were taken up. The *diwani* and *faujdari* courts were separated and civil and criminal rules, similar to those in force in Jaipur state, were introduced. An experienced judicial officer from Jaipur, Wazir Singh, was appointed to look at matters related to giving of sanctuary (*sharan*).

As far as traditions and customs were concerned, aspects like the amount of gift-money to be paid to the Charan community on the occasion of Rajput weddings were prescribed. (One may note here that the Charans, who were the traditional bards and chroniclers of the Rajputs, as well as skilled poets and composers, had various privileges and proximity with the ruling elite. In a sense, they were also upholders and transmitters of the ideals, norms and standards for Kshatriya men, women and children — using their stirring verses to inspire their listeners to seek a glorious death

against a worthy opponent in battle. In return, the privileges granted to Charans included receiving gifts of land, money and certain 'tithes' on auspicious occasions like the weddings of Rajput girls).

Infanticide was prohibited too, and buying and selling of children made a criminal offence. Among other measures affecting public welfare, water-tanks were repaired at Jodhpur and other parts of the state, roads constructed in and around the capital city, and trees planted along the roads. An astronomical observatory was established, and finances set aside for the purchase of astronomical instruments, globes, etc.

In addition to taxes taken as land revenue, octroi, salt taxes etc., it had been traditional for the state and its *jagirdars* to impose *hag* — or additional cess, as the occasion arose. These *hags* differed from area to area and from community to community. The main *hags* were *bara-barad*, *faujwal*, *ghar-bab*, *khandi*, *vasola*, *dawat puja*, *tibari*, *chanwari* etc. The most common *laag* was '*ghar-bah*' or house tax. Its rates ranged from Rs. 2 to Rs. 20 per house. (The annual income from these *laags*, according to the *Kachahari se laag Rakam* record, in 1821 was Rs. 5.07 lakhs, which fell to Rs. 2.12 lakhs in 1838).

However, problems soon cropped up between the ruler and the nobles when the Maharaja began confiscating villages held as fiefs by his nobles on frivolous pretexts, and enforced excessive payment of certain cesses known as *rekh*, *hukum-nama*, and *neota* etc. Though the dispute regarding *rekh* was mutually settled in 1849, relations between the ruler and his nobles remained strained as exactions pertaining to *hukum-nama* and *neota* and sequestration of hereditary *jagir* lands continued unabated. The Thakurs of Ahuwa, Asop, Pokhran etc., were among those who took a lead in voicing the popular dissent and resentment common amongst the nobles on this front. Since the traditional rights of the parties concerned were customary and somewhat undefined, it was not an easy task for the British Residents to assist in finding any quick resolution to the problems between the Marwari nobles and the Maharaja. In addition, Maharaja Takhat Singh had appointed Gujaratis, whom he had brought with him, on all posts of public importance, depriving the nobles of Marwar from a role in state administration. The old nobility of Marwar felt that their counsel and

services were unimportant to their Maharaja, and by early 1857 the disaffected nobles were seriously contemplating armed resistance.

It was at this juncture that the uprising of 1857 occurred. Maharaja Takhat Singh stood by the British. The Jodhpur state despatched troops to Ajmer, under the command of Lt. Walter, to deal with the soldiers who had mutinied at the cantonment of Nasirabad. They also traversed Jaipur territory in pursuit of the rebellious sepoys from Neemuch.

Though Takhat Singh kept a pro-British policy, some of his aggrieved nobles were quick to raise the banner of protest. In August 1857, the Jodhpur Legion at Erinpura rose in revolt. They reached Ahuwa on their way to Delhi. Thakur Khushaal Singh Champawat of Ahuwa admitted the rebellious men of the legion into his fort at Ahuwa, where they were joined by a number of people. The Thakurs of Asop, Alaniawas, Gular and Bajawas too arrived at Ahuwa with their troops. At the AGG's request, the Maharaja sent a contingent to deal with the rebels collected at Ahuwa, but the Maharaja's force was defeated in September at Bithora, about three miles from Ahuwa, and its arms and ammunition captured. On getting the news, the Agent to the Governor General in Rajputana, General Lawrence, personally marched to Ahuwa along with the British army. The fort withstood his attack. Meanwhile, the Political Agent at Jodhpur, Capt. Monck Mason, reached Ahuwa with a small force, but was killed in action. In October 1857, the men of the Jodhpur Legion left for Delhi according to their original plan (leaving Champawat and his followers behind). At Narnaul, British forces were successful in defeating the mutineers.

In January 1858 the Governor General, Lord Canning, sent additional British forces to Rajputana. A contingent of British troops under Brigadier Holmes attacked Ahuwa on 20 January 1858. Khushaal Singh himself escaped to Mewar on 23 January and took shelter in Kotharia, in neighbouring Mewar. (There, the Maharana of Mewar provided him a monthly allowance of rupees 1000. Khushaal Singh died in Mewar). Meanwhile, the fort of Ahuwa was occupied on 24 January 1858 by British troops. The town was plundered, and the fort and Thakur's palace destroyed. About two dozens of Khushaal Singh's allies and followers were executed, and others severely dealt with. The Jodhpur government

confiscated, wholly or partly, the *jagirs* of the Ahuwa Thakur and of various other aristocrats who had taken part in the rising.

The end of the 1857-58 rising, which left Takhat Singh in a stronger position against recalcitrant nobles, as far as getting help from the British was concerned, saw the British Government take over the rights previously vested in the East India Company. The Queen's proclamation of 1858 assured the rulers their territories, rights and dignity⁴⁶. For a while, therefore, Takhat Singh gained a respite from problems with his outspoken nobles.

In the next few years, some slow progress was also made on the education front. In a report on Jodhpur dating 1864, the then Political Agent, Major Nixon, found that "...nearly all the children of the priestly and trading classes are instructed in the roots of learning, viz., reading, writing and arithmetic... The children of the Thakoors [sic] or petty Chiefs are nearly all taught to read and cypher in their youth'. The children of the poorer classes of the population such as 'Koowars (Koonbhars?), Mallies (Malis), Koonhees (Kunbis?)' were also taught. But the children of outcast classes such as 'Dhers, Mehturs etc. were strictly excluded from participation in the benefits of education'"⁴⁷. The first modern vernacular school for boys was started at Jalore in 1868. Gradually, more Anglo-Vernacular schools were set up.

Meanwhile, the barrier of mistrust and bitterness between the Maharaja and his nobles had remained. The outlawed Thakurs made predatory raids on *khalsa* (i.e. belonging to the crown or state) villages of Marwar causing considerable damage and loss of property. In 1868 many of the disaffected nobles occupied their confiscated villages without much resistance from the State's troops. The British decided to take a hand in matters. An agreement between Maharaja Takhat Singh and Col. Keating, the Agent to the Governor General (AGG), was finalised on 29 December 1868.

Under its terms, a 'ministry' was established at Jodhpur in January 1869. This ministry was authorised rupees fifteen lakhs annually for public

expenditure. The ministry had civil and criminal jurisdiction over the *khalsa* category of land, but not over either the *jagir* lands, or the palace. State accounts were to be subject to inspection by a representative of the AGG. The Maharaja agreed to restrict his private expenditure, and assign suitable allowances for his sons. He also agreed not to interfere in the established jurisdiction of his nobles; and abide by the decision of the British with regard to the *hukum-nama* to be levied on the Thakurs, and regarding any disputes between him and the outlawed fief-holding nobles of Asop, Alaniawas, and Bijawas etc. As a result of British intervention, the rules for *hukum-nama* and other needs of the administration vis-à-vis the nobles were settled amicably. Marwar also entered into an agreement with the British, allowing the construction of an Imperial road through the state, and, like many of the other states of Rajputana, accepted the 'Extradition Treaty of 1868' with the British. (The treaty was modified in 1887).

An important decision concerning salt production also dates from this period. Marwar's territory included several natural salt lakes (*dariba*) such as Sambhar, Phalodi, Didwana, Pachpadra, Nawa etc. which were exploited for salt over the centuries, and which provided state-regulated employment to hundreds of people. The state exported salt to various parts of the country, and Sambhar and other salt-producing lakes and deposits of Rajasthan had always been an important source of revenue to which ever group had held political mastery over that area. This was as true for the Chauhans of Shakambhari, as it was for the Mughal Empire. Following the demise of Aurangzeb in 1707, and the subsequent decline of the Mughal Empire (during which period the Imperial administration continued to control the salt till c. 1754), Sambhar came under the joint ownership and joint administration (known as *shamlat*) of the states of Marwar and Dhoondhar⁴⁸. From 1835 to 1844, the British East India Company had seized control of Sambhar, but in 1844 Sambhar again reverted to the joint charge of Jodhpur and Jaipur.

In 1870 a Salt treaty with Jodhpur state was negotiated. It secured the British the lease of Jodhpur's share of the joint jurisdiction of Sambhar Lake. (A similar agreement with Jaipur secured the British the lease of that state's share as well, as described elsewhere). The terms with Jodhpur settled an annual payment of Rs. 1.25 lakh by the British to the state of

Jodhpur, along with a 20% royalty on sales in excess of 8.25 lakh *maunds* of salt per annum. It was agreed that the ruler of Jodhpur would receive 7000 *maunds* of salt free of all charges annually for his use. Jodhpur state agreed to abolish transit duty on salt manufactured by the British. In April 1870, a second treaty was signed by which Jodhpur agreed to lease Nawa and Gudha salt fields to the British at an annual rent of rupees three lakhs, and a forty per cent royalty on sales in excess of nine lakh *maunds* of salt per annum.

Meanwhile, Takhat Singh's second son, Zorawar Singh, had risen up against his father and occupied Nagaur. Takhat Singh needed the help of the British Political Agent for retaking Nagaur and dealing with his rebellious son. In 1872 the British decided to place the administration of Marwar in the hands of the Maharaja's eldest son, Jaswant Singh. The Maharaj-Kumar (later Maharaja) Jaswant Singh attempted to introduce some reforms to modernise the administration etc. Takhat Singh died a few months later in 1873.

(One may note here that Takhat Singh's Jadecha (Jadeja) clan queen composed verses and couplets using the pen-name of 'Jam-suta Jadechi'. Her collection was entitled *Ratnawali-Samgraha*. It seems that her verses rapidly gained popularity among the women of Marwar, and went on to become part of the popular repertoire of women's songs).

The reform and modernisation of administration gained added impetus following the formal accession of Jaswant Singh II (r. 1873-1895) to the Jodhpur *gaddi*. When Jaswant Singh became Maharaja of Marwar, there existed a number of issues that needed attention. For a start, the state was heavily in debt; roads were unsafe for travellers; and troops had long remained unpaid! Jaswant Singh II tried to change all this and to introduce an efficient and just administration. The period was to see the adoption of codified laws, a re-organisation of the judicial system along British Indian lines, the constitution of a department of forests, the remodelling of the financial administrative system, and various reforms to improve the administrative and land revenue system. Progress was also made towards providing modern medical facilities to the people, improving the lot of

prisoners, and various social reforms during the course of Jaswant Singh II's twenty-two years on the *gaddi* of Marwar.

Soon after ascending the throne in 1873, Jaswant Singh appointed Faizullah Khan as his prime minister at the advice of the British Political Department. One of the earliest reform-measures initiated was the establishment of an office designated as the *Mahakma Khas*. This was meant to deal with the general administration of the state. On another front, Jaswant Singh dealt with a range of issues like settling pending cases pertaining to disputed villages with the aid of the Political Agent and committees of nobles and officials, and making provisions for the large family of the late Maharaja and other members of his own family.

In the interim, as Prime Minister Faizullah Khan had created misunderstandings between the Maharaja and his youngest brother, Pratap Singh (b. 1845), the third son of Maharaja Takhat Singh, Pratap had previously left Jodhpur for Jaipur. Jaswant Singh now recalled his brother to Jodhpur, and appointed him prime minister in August 1878. Pratap held this post till 1881, and then from 1882-1895 the position of *musahib ala* (first minister). Pratap Singh was successful on several fronts, including suppressing gangs of dacoits who were active along the Marwar-Mewar border. He ensured that the state reduced its expenditure and cleared debts. He also reformed and reorganised the judiciary and the police. The powers of *jagirdars* within their own estates were defined and regulated.

To digress briefly: by the middle of the nineteenth century, the *jagirdars* were an important part of the state system⁴⁹. Their holdings were commonly known as a '*thikana*', and the holder was, hence, a *Thakur* (i.e. holder of a *Thikana*). The *jagirdars* were of three types. One category comprised the twelve *Rajvi* aristocrats, who had blood-ties with the ruling house. Amongst them was the Thakur of Bagri, descended from the line of Rao Jodha's elder brother, the Champawats of Pokhran and Ahuwa, and the Kumpawats of Asop. They were entitled to double *tazim* honours. Among the next category of nobles and *sardars* (chiefs), the Rathores were known as *Sirayats*, while those belonging to other clans were called *Ganayats*. Both *Sirayats* and *Ganayats* usually held single *tazim* honours, along with the right of *Hath Ka Kurab*. The third group of land-holders was from the

Mutsaddie group, and was known as ‘*Bavpasav*’. They enjoyed single *tazim* rights. The ruler stood up to accept the traditional *nazar* and *nicharawal* from *tazimi sardars*, but remained seated to receive these from others.

Tazimi Sardars were exempted from judicial court fee and appearances in legal courts as witnesses, and a *tazimi sardar* charged with a criminal offence was offered a chair to sit in court. Another privilege enjoyed by these sardars was to receive the *Khas rukka* invitation of the ruler on occasions like royal ceremonies or durbars. The sardars enjoyed autonomy within their *jagirs*. Their basic obligation to the state was to make available their militia and pay annual *rekh*, besides the *hukum-nama* or *peshkash* at the time of each succession to the *jagir*. They were responsible for maintaining law and order in their respective *jagirs*. In fiscal matters they had extensive authority. The *jagir* holders also fixed land-revenue — which was much higher as compared to the *khalsa* area, and imposed *laag-baag* cesses of various types. Among these were *hal*, *kansa*, *ghooghari*, *chanwari*, *kharkhar*, *sukharana*, and *kharda*. A cess called *mapa* was often imposed on the movement and sale of various commodities within their respective *jagirs*. *Jagirdars* also took unpaid labour (*begaar*) from their subjects as a matter of right. *Jagirdars* traditionally enjoyed wide civil and criminal powers and it was not until 1882 that their powers were defined.

The size of the holdings varied from *jagir* to *jagir*. While the annual income of some of the *jagirdars* exceeded rupees one lakh, others had only one or two villages. In 1884, small *jagirs* were taken into state ownership and their holders were given fixed pensions. The law of primogeniture was applicable amongst the *jagirdars*, and the permission of the ruler was necessary in cases requiring the adoption of an heir. However, on the failure of the line of the original grantee a *jagir* normally lapsed to the state according to the doctrine of ‘*Morushala*’. This doctrine was to be formally incorporated in the Adoption Rules of 1895.

‘Religious’ *jagirs* too were known. These were usually lands given in the name of a deity, and were managed by the priests. However, in the nineteenth century, many such *jagirs* were given to the Nath sect, often in the names of the heads of the sect. No tax or levy was imposed on such

religious *jagirs*. (Later, after Jaswant Singh's death, when Pratap Singh — by then 'Sir Pratap', served as Regent of Marwar during the minorities of his nephews and great-nephews, a levy was imposed on the *jagirs* held by the Nath). Many Brahmins too held lands in lieu of their (or an ancestor) conducting rituals and religious services. (Originally they too were not asked to pay any *rekh* or tax to the state, until this was demanded under Sir Pratap's administration).

It may be relevant to note here that Brahmins formed around ten per cent of the total population of Marwar state around this time, and besides dealing with rituals and worship etc., many Brahmins had, over the years, held administrative posts too. The Brahmins were both urban and rural-based, unlike the mainly, though not exclusively, urban-based Oswals. Oswals were mainly Jain by conviction, and made up nine per cent of Marwar's population. Many of them were traders and merchants, as well as being involved in administration as *mitsaddies*. As already noted, the *mitsaddies* had effectively dominated Marwar's administration, holding positions like ministers, provincial heads and military commanders for almost two centuries. The Kayastha community too were important in the administrative machinery. In contrast, Jats were one of the most important of the rural agriculturist groups. They constituted about eleven per cent of Marwar's population — mainly in and around the Jodhpur-Nagaur belt. However, barring basically the *jagirdars*, *mitsaddies*, merchants and traders, some Charans, and gifted artists, scholars, musicians etc. given state patronage, the ordinary people — farmers, pastoralists, craftspersons — generally led frugal lives. So did the bulk of the Rajput warrior families.

Despite Jaswant Singh's reforms, Marwar's finances had remained a constraining factor. The state obtained a large loan of Rs. 24,00,000 from the British, but in lieu of that Marwar had to come to an understanding with the British concerning salt-production. In 1879, therefore, a 'Salt Agreement' was signed. Under its terms, the British leased the four main sources of salt-production in Marwar— namely, Didwana, Pachpadra, Phalodi and the Luni tract, along with the sole rights of manufacture and sale of salt from these sources. All other salt-production within Jodhpur was to be stopped as per the terms of this agreement.

Jodhpur also agreed not to impose levies, taxes or duties on the export and transit of salt, nor permit the import-export of any salt other than that on which British duty had been levied. In lieu of this, the British agreed to pay an annual rent of Rs. 3.92 lakhs to the state of Jodhpur, Rs. 19,600 annually to various *jagirdars* etc., and rupees three lakh to proprietors and others as compensation. A further sum of Rs. 1.25 lakh annually, and 50% of net profits accruing to the British government from the sale of salt of the leased salt-workings, was to be paid to the Jodhpur Maharaja in exchange for adhering to the terms of the agreement. It was also agreed that the British would supply 2.25 lakh *maunds* of good edible salt annually. This would be at a price not exceeding 8 *annas* per *maund*, free of duty, for the use of the general populace of Jodhpur state; and 10,000 *maunds* annually, free of all charges, for the use of the ruler.

The ‘Salt Agreement’ was to drastically affect ordinary life — as is noted in a separate sub-section. Indigenous as well as state-controlled salt-production had long been an important feature of not just Marwar’s rural life, cultural habits and economy, but that of the other kingdoms of Rajputana/Rajasthan too. (Nainsi’s seventeenth century *Vigat* provides many details about salt-extraction etc. in Marwar, including a detailed village-wise record of salt-pits from which salt was extracted by a specialised community called *Kharwal*⁵⁰. Among other information, Nainsi’s work also recorded that in the seventeenth century the major centre of salt production in Marwar was Pachpadra. According to Nainsi, the circumference of the Pachpadra basin was about thirty miles (twelve *kos*) and it had between 300-325 salt-pits. It seems that in the seventeenth century Marwar state’s customs revenue (*sayar*) from the salt of Pachpadra yielded about thirty-five per cent of the total *sayar* collection of the *pargana* of Siwana. While we do not have any means of knowing the quantity of salt produced at Pachpadra in Nainsi’s time, it is known that in 1890 the Pachpadra salt-production was 16.03% of that of Sambhar lake⁵¹).

Salt, in fact, had been one of Marwar’s significant exports, along with wool⁵², animal hide⁵³ and bones, *ghee*, local cloth⁵⁴, oilseeds, and livestock like cattle⁵⁵, horses, and camels. Marwar’s imports, by this period, included

sugar, unrefined jaggery sugar or *gur*, opium, tobacco, food-grains, Indian and foreign-made cloth, spices, dyes, preserved fruits and nuts.

Meanwhile, a network of railways was put in by the state between 1882 to 1886, beginning with a railway line between Marwar Junction and Pali in 1882. Concurrent expansion during the period linked Sambhar to other parts of the country. As a result, by 1890 there was efficient commercial utilisation, under British control, of Marwar's (and Rajputana's) salt sources. (By the early twentieth century, forty-six per cent of the salt produced at Pachpadra was exported to the United Provinces, twenty-eight per cent to the Central Provinces, and the remaining consumed within Rajputana. From Didwana, about eighty per cent of the salt produced was exported to the Punjab and the rest used within Rajputana). By 1904, about eight) per cent of the salt that passed through Marwar was carried by the railways.

(Major K.D. Erskine (Resident at Jodhpur 1901-02, 1909-11) recorded in *The Imperial Gazetteer of India — Indian Empire*⁵⁶, that there were 'three railway stations on the [Sambhar] lake — at Sambhar, Gudha and Kuchaman Road or Nawa — and the line runs into all the principle manufacturing works or walled enclosures; the salt is stored close to the line and loaded direct into the railway wagons; it is largely consumed in the United Provinces, Rajputana, Central India and Punjab south of Karnal, and it also finds its way into the Central Provinces, Bihar and Nepal'. He added that, formerly 'the carrying trade was in the hands of the Banjaras but with the extension of the Jodhpur-Bikaner Railway to Balotra and the continuation of the branch line to the works, very few of these wanderers visit the place and practically all the salt is removed by rail').

In 1882, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of Arya Samaj, visited Jodhpur, and left a strong impression on the Maharaja and his brother, Pratap Singh. Thus, in due course, a branch of the Arya Samaj was established at Jodhpur, as were a Vedic *pathshala* (school), *kanya pathshala* (girl's school) and an Arya Samaj managed orphanage. Hindi replaced Urdu as the official court language.

It was also in 1882 that customs duties, except those levied as 'frontier-duties' on import and transit, were abolished, and the customs department reorganised. It should be noted here that traditionally customs duty (*sayar*) had remained an important source of revenue. It was imposed on the import and export of many commodities, and buying and selling of animals, carts, chariots etc. The rates varied according to the item concerned. Brahmins, Charans, Bhats, *jagirdars* and administrative officials were traditionally exempt from paying *sayar*. Income from *sayar* fluctuated depending on the monsoon, and the state's law and order situation, etc. (In 1890 the collection of customs duties was extended to *jagir* areas in lieu of which the *jagirdars* were given a fixed amount annually).

In 1887, the collection of excise revenue too was reorganised. The state was divided into five circles, each under an inspector, with a small staff. A board of directors supervised the overall functioning of the department. In 1890 custom duties on transit were abolished, and in 1894-95 the scope of the excise department was expanded to cover narcotics like *ganja*, *bhang* etc.

Land revenue was another major source of state-income⁵⁷. The assessment of land revenue varied from *pargana* to *pargana*. As far as *khalsa* or crown lands were concerned, this normally ranged between one-fifth to one-third of the actual produce, though in times of war etc. the state could sometimes demand more. The different methods of assessment of land revenue were known as *lata*, *ankbandi*, *yara* etc. and the revenue was mostly collected in kind. In addition to the land revenue, farmers often paid a levy on the produce to various village-level state functionaries like *patwari*, *sahana*, *choudhary*, *kanawari* etc. This levy was known as *malwa*. *Jagirdars* paid *rekh* at eight per cent of the gross rental value of the land held by them. No land revenue was charged on 'sasan' land granted for charitable purposes. The land given to Rajputs in lieu of their military and security services was called *bhom*. The land revenue of the state in 1885 was about Rs. 7 lakhs. (It would stand at Rs.24 lakhs in 1941). In addition to land revenue some other taxes were levied in cash and kind.

In 1883 a village boundary survey of the whole of Marwar State, and a survey of *khalsa* villages was begun, under the supervision of Col. W.

Loch. Pandit Badhawa Ram, a revenue officer from the Punjab, assisted in this work, which was completed in 1893. (The actual assessment on cash rent basis (*bighori*), rather than on the *batai* system was carried out under Sir Sukh Deo Prasad in 1895). Thus, in the view of Col. Erskine, the period of internal disorder was over by 1884, and an epoch of political regeneration had commenced. (Not surprisingly, Jaswant Singh was created a GCSI in 1875. The visiting Prince of Wales invested him in 1876⁵⁸. In time, his gun-salute status was raised from seventeen to nineteen, and then twenty-one guns).

In 1885, a regular system of budgeting of income and expenditure was introduced for the state treasury. On the education front, the first school for girls in the state was established at Jodhpur in 1886. This was named the Hewson Girls' School, after FT. Hewson, Maharaj-Kumar Sardar Singh's guardian. For the next few decades, this remained the only state-maintained girls' school throughout the State. In 1893 education advanced with the establishment of the Jaswant College at Jodhpur. (No women enrolled here at the time). Affiliated to Allahabad University, this institution was raised to the level of B.A. in 1898. Meanwhile, Jaswant Singh II raised two regiments of Imperial Service Cavalry between 1889 and 1893.

Jaswant Singh II died in October 1895 and was succeeded by his only son, the fifteen-year-old Sardar Singh (r. 1895-1911). During the minority of the new Maharaja, his uncle, the *Musahib Ala* Sir Pratap Singh, was designated as the Regent. As Regent and *Musahib Ala*, Sir Pratap continued to preside over the state's council, which was known as the 'Regency Council' during Sardar Singh's minority. The Council and *Musahib Ala* consulted the Resident on important issues.

By this time, Jodhpur state had some twenty-two *parganas*, each under an official called *hakim*. These *hakims* also discharged judiciary-related duties. Appeals against their judicial decisions were placed before Judicial Superintendents, who held the powers of a District and Sessions Judge. Appeals against the judgement of the latter went before the Chief Court at Jodhpur. In special cases, the state council itself (as *Ijlas-e-Khas*) heard appeals against the decisions of the Chief Court.

We shall take up the further history of this area in the next section of this book, but it is important to note here that one of the main challenges that Sir Pratap and his Council also had to deal with was the severe famine of 1899. Previous droughts, especially during 1792, 1804 and 1812-13 had been particularly devastating too, but the 1899-1900 famine was to stay in subsequent memory as the 'Great Famine' for almost all parts of Rajasthan and adjoining areas.

BIKANER

As noted previously, Maharaja Surat Singh of Bikaner (r. 1788-1828) was among those who lent support to the cause of Marwar's Dhonkal Singh, which was being promoted by Thakur Sawai Singh of Pokhran. Dhonkal, as noted elsewhere, was alleged to be the rightful heir of the late Maharaja Bhim Singh, and therefore to the *gaddi* of Marwar, which was occupied by Maharaja Man Singh of Marwar. Angered at Bikaner's support to the 'pretender' Dhonkal, Man Singh sent an army against Bikaner in 1807. To hold off Marwar's troops, Surat Singh obtained the help of a contingent of a thousand cavalry from one of his *sagas* (person or clan related through marriage ties between families). This was Ranjit Singh of Dundlod — the Shekhawat clan father-in-law of Bikaner's crown-prince Ratan Singh. With Ranjit Singh came several of the other Shekhawats of the Jhunjhunu area and their troops or *jamiat*. Man Singh's forces were defeated in the battle of Gingoli, and the Marwar ruler himself was later besieged at Jodhpur and forced to pay an indemnity to the coalition-front against him.

In 1808, Man Singh sent his forces against Bikaner again, in retaliation for Bikaner having joined the pro-Dhonkal front. Commanded by Indra Raj Singhvi, Marwar's troops defeated the Bikaner forces near Gajner, but remained unable to take the fortress-capital of Bikaner. Man Singh of Marwar sent another wing of his army against Bikaner. This contingent was defeated, and its commander, Kalyanmal Lodha, imprisoned. Subsequently, the Marwar contingent under the command of Indra Raj Singhvi besieged the fort of Bikaner. In November 1808, Maharaja Surat Singh of Bikaner accepted terms, by which the tract of Phalodi — which Surat Singh had wrested from Marwar some time

previously — was returned to Marwar. A large indemnity was paid to Marwar too. In 1814 the Bikaner ruler sent his army, under the command of the *Fauj-Bakshi* Amarchand Surana, against the chief of Churu. Churu was captured. In recognition of Surana's role, Maharaja Surat Singh conferred the title of 'Rao' (meaning chief) upon him. The action annoyed some of the Bikaneri nobles, who contrived the assassination of Surana.

Meanwhile, though the Bikaner Maharaja had previously put down rebellion by some of his nobles, matters had continued to simmer. These, in fact, became more fraught with the passage of time. The year 1815 saw a situation of near general rebellion, as the nobles and common people opposed the exactions and extortions of the ruler and his government; and the ruler fined, plundered, imprisoned and executed transgressors — including his fief-holding chiefs. The chiefs remained encouraged by the support of the Pindaris, who had begun to wreak devastation across a wide area in their quest for power, position and wealth, as we have seen elsewhere. Additional complications arose in 1816 when Jamir Khan and his Pindaris plundered Bikaner. Meanwhile, the neighbouring Bhattis and Johiyas were re-challenging the authority of Bikaner state.

Thus, by the second decade of the nineteenth century Surat Singh, harried by his 'refractory nobles' as well as external threats, was not indifferent to possibilities inherent in the British protection being proffered by Lord Hastings to the various states of Rajputana. Previously, while Bikaner was under semi-siege from the Jodhpur forces, and Surat Singh had played host to Lord Elphinstone, as the latter proceeded towards Kabul, the Bikaner ruler had tried to obtain help from the East India Company. However, as this had not fitted in with the British policy at the time, nothing had come of it. A decade later, the situation was somewhat different. Thus, Surat Singh despatched an emissary to Charles Metcalfe to negotiate a bond of friendship between Bikaner and the East India Company. In a document containing eleven articles, which was concluded on 9 March 1818, both sides pledged "...perpetual friendship, alliance and a unity of interests".

Once ratified by the British Governor General, Lord Hastings, the treaty bound Bikaner to 'subordinate co-operation' with the British, who, in turn promised 'to protect the territories of Bikaner and to reduce the

rebellious nobles and others to obedience'. Bikaner, unlike several other of Rajasthan's princely states, was not required to pay any tribute to the East India Company, as it had not previously been giving regular tribute to the Marathas. The treaty guaranteed internal autonomy to the state, but in view of the British government's eventual doctrine of paramountcy this 'autonomy' became a redundant issue.

Soon after the signing of the treaty, the Maharaja asked for British assistance in quelling some of his defiant fief-holders. In accordance with the provisions of the treaty, British troops temporarily entered Bikaner to assist Surat Singh's forces in dealing with the nobles. They captured twelve forts, including Fatehabad, Hissar, Siddhmukh, Jassana, Birkali, Churu, Surkhania, Niniba, Bhadra and Sujangarh, and handed them over to the Maharaja.

In April 1828, Surat Singh's eldest son, Ratan Singh (r. 1828-1851), succeeded to the *gaddi* of Bikaner. He was soon warned by the British to steer clear of relations with Dhonkal Singh, 'pretender' to the Marwar throne. However, Ratan Singh did turn his attention against another neighbouring state — namely Jaisalmer. Apparently, the Bhatias of Jaisalmer took away some camels from Bikaner's territory. Bikaner state responded by sending a military force against Jaisalmer in 1829. This was in violation of the terms and conditions of Bikaner's treaty with the East India Company. As such, though both Bikaner and Jaisalmer had also tried to garner support from various neighbours, the British intervened, and the dispute was settled through the arbitration of Maharana Jawan Singh, the ruler of Mewar.

Meanwhile, relations remained strained between the Bikaner ruler and some of his prominent chiefs⁵⁹, and while the recalcitrant nobles and their supporters were eventually suppressed with British assistance, the problem never fully died away. From 1832 to 1857 much of the kingdom of Bikaner faced the repercussions of a disgruntled nobility, some of whom actively gave shelter to small local 'raiders' and 'dacoits'. Many of these latter operated across Shekhawati as well as parts of Bikaner state, the Delhi-Agra area, and Ajmer etc. For instance, Doongar Singh and Jawahar Singh soon gained notoriety as 'dacoits', particularly after they were daring

enough to rob the treasuries at Agra and Nasirabad. The British raised the 'Shekhawati Brigade' in 1835 to deal with the problem (as mentioned elsewhere too). The Brigade's strength included one troop composed solely of the Bidawats — descendants of Rao Bika's brother, Rao Bida, and for seven years Bikaner State paid Rs. 22,000 annually to the British towards the cost of this Shekhawati Brigade. The Brigade proved effective, but the problem of a 'recalcitrant' nobility was to raise its head again during the reign of Maharaja Sardar Singh (r. 1851-1872), as we shall see below.

Social changes also marked this period, and at the prompting of the East India Company the Maharaja outlawed the practice of female infanticide and discouraged extravagant expenditures on Rajput marriages, urging Rajputs to keep expenses proportionate to their respective incomes. Maharaja Ratan Singh also restricted the amount of '*tyaag*' gift demanded by the Charans on the occasion of marriage of Rajput girls. In 1844, Bikaner reduced the rate of duty charged on the transit of goods through the state.

The pact of 1818, which marked a historical turning point in the saga of the desert citadel of Bikaner (just as similar treaties had done for the other kingdoms of Rajputana), also bound the kingdom to aid the British during times of need. As a consequence, Maharaja Ratan Singh supplied two hundred camels to the British for their Kabul expedition of 1841-42. Later, a body of horse and artillery was provided by Bikaner, to fight on the side of the British during the Second Anglo-Sikh war of 1848.

In August 1851, Sardar Singh (r. 1851-1872), succeeded his father, Ratan Singh. He also inherited a large debt, due in part to the obligations towards the British, and to the need for maintaining a large force for keeping in check fief-holding nobles and robbers and dacoits, as well as for protecting the borders with Bahawalpur, Jaisalmer, Marwar and Shekhawati. As such, the Bikaner court was to witness several changes in its administration, as successive ministers tried to cope simultaneously with the near bankrupt financial situation, the needs of the state administration, and the financial demands of the Bikaner ruler. From 1856-63, and again for a short while in 1865, the administration was headed by a capable minister called Ram Lal Dwarkani, but intrigues and conspiracies

eventually led to his downfall, and the situation rapidly deteriorated thereafter. However, in spite of the problems on the administrative front, the growing state debt, and the Bikaner ruler's financial exaction to swell revenues, Sardar Singh's reign also saw the introduction of several reforms. Bikaner state imposed certain restrictions on marriage-feasts and death-feasts, and banned the practice of sati and *samadhi* at the instance of India's Governor General, Lord William Bentinck.

During the events of 1857, when anti-British groups overran Sirsa, Hissar and Hansi, Maharaja Sardar Singh personally led a strong force to the help of the British. The Bikaner forces relieved and occupied the strategic stronghold of Hissar, which commanded old established routes to Delhi, and also relieved and occupied Hansi, holding it till the arrival of British troops. Similarly, the Bikaner cavalry was a determining factor in the action against Jamalpur, which had become an anti-British stronghold. In gratitude for help rendered at these and other places the British later presented Maharaja Sardar Singh with forty-one villages in the Tibi area in 1861.

In 1868 Captain Powlett was appointed as Assistant to the AGG, with his head-quarters at Sujangarh, against the wishes of the Maharaja. In 1870, Powlett was successful in bringing about a settlement between various Thakurs — who had several just grievances against the Bikaner state, including the seizure of their villages, financial exactions etc., and the Maharaja. As a result, villages confiscated by the Maharaja were restored to the Thakurs. One may note here that Bikaner state had three main categories of *jagirdars*. One was the *Tazimi Rajvi* group of near-relatives (and their descendants) of the ruling house. The other Rajput chiefs (*thakurs* and *sirdars/sardars*) made up the second group. The third category of *jagir*-holders were *Khawaswals*, who had been granted lands in lieu of, or as reward for, their services to the state. All the groups were expected to pay certain financial dues to the state.

At the time, the Bikaner area knew two main types of land-tenures. One was state-owned or *khalsa* lands, and the other was land held by grantees. These grantees were mainly *jagirdars* and *pattedars*, with a far smaller proportion being *muafidars*. *Jagirdars* and *pattedars* were expected

to serve the state with their troops in times of war, or when called upon to do so. In 1868 this obligation was commuted to a cash-tribute, which worked out to about one-third of land revenue dues. The *pattedars* held their *jagirs* generally on hereditary basis but at each succession a *pattedar* gave the ruler a *nazarana* offering, equivalent to one year's land revenue from his *jagir*. *Jagirs* were normally resumed by the state only in the case of serious offences committed by the holders. In the case of *muafi* or *sasan* land-grants, made as acts of piety or donation etc. to individuals or to temples and mosques etc., no land revenues were normally demanded. In the case of *khalsa* land, while ownership of the land vested with the state, the tenant-farmers had rights of transfer, inheritance and mortgage, and were not ejected except for non-payment of revenue-dues. The system of assessment for *khalsa* lands varied. One method — the most commonly used — was assessing the dues at a cash rate per unit of land (usually a *bigha*). Sometimes, crop-sharing was resorted to. In some parts of Bikaner state the *ijara* system was also in force. Under this system a lump sum assessment was fixed annually for a village.

In 1869 an extradition treaty had been concluded between the British Government and Bikaner. This was modified in 1887. In 1870 Bikaner abolished the practice of giving 'sanctuary' for a crime. The following year saw the establishment of a council, as well as regular civil, criminal and revenue courts at the capital-city of Bikaner.

In the meantime, the years of internal problems as well as financial and military liabilities towards the British, as per the treaty, had proved an enormous burden on the treasury of Bikaner. (The state had also experienced the trauma of famine in 1836, and again in 1849, during Ratan Singh's reign). When Maharaja Sardar Singh died in May 1872, the treasury was in debt, there were no schools, roads or hospitals, and only a partially reformed administration; and the large standing state army, maintained for the sake of tradition, was a huge burden on the kingdom's revenues. In addition, with time Maharaja Sardar Singh's already precarious hold over his nobles had become further tenuous.

As Sardar Singh left no son or grandson to succeed him, the traditional practice of adopting a close kin as 'son' was followed. Sardar

Singh's senior Maharani, Bhatiyani-ji, favoured the adoption of a great-nephew called Dungar Singh, who was a descendant of Chatar Singh, second son of Bikaner's well-known Maharaja Gaj Singh, while the junior one, Maharani Pugaliyani-ji, preferred Jaswant Singh, another descendant of Chatar Singh. At the advice of Maharana Shambhu Singh of Mewar, the British government approved the adoption of Dungar Singh. During Dungar Singh's short minority period, a British officer, who was assisted by a Council, looked after the state administration.

The transition and 'modernization' of Bikaner was initiated during the reign of the young Maharaja Dungar Singh (r. 1872-1887), once he had been invested with full ruling powers on 22 January 1873 (following his eighteenth birthday in September 1872). For a while, administration was carried on with the assistance of the *dewan*, Pandit Manphool, but following complaints about maladministration, the Governor General called for necessary reforms in the State. In December 1873 the young Maharaja appointed his father, Lal Singh as president of the council in place of Jaswant Singh Baid, on Pandit Manphool's advice.

In the course of Dungar Singh's reign many changes were set in motion in Bikaner. The state of Bikaner was divided into regular districts, with sub-divisions (or *tehsil*), under the charge of trained officers. In 1884, a 'Summary Land Settlement' was undertaken, which was completed by 1886. The old system of the collection of land revenue — centred around the *pattedari* system, was abolished. It was replaced by a fixed assessment to be paid to the state directly. A regular excise department was set up. Hospitals, dispensaries etc. were established, and Bikaner's first state-run school opened in 1872 with Hindi, Persian and Mathematics in the curriculum. In addition, civil and criminal laws were codified, regular courts of law were organised, and a new police force was raised. The period 1875-1880 saw the undertaking of a topographical survey of Bikaner state, and in 1881 the first census of population was carried out. By 1886 electricity had been installed in the capital city.

In the interim, through a significant Salt Agreement signed with the British in 1879, it was decided that local salt manufacture within Bikaner state would no longer be permitted, except at two places — the salt-works

of Lunkaransar and Chhapar in the Churu area⁶⁰. All other sources of salt would no longer be worked. The Salt Agreement further stipulated that the total salt-production at the two works of Lunkaransar and Chhapar would never exceed 30,000 *maunds* annually. Bikaner state could purchase 20,000 *maunds* of salt annually from the Phalodi and Didwana salt-works, for consumption by its citizens at a price not exceeding 8 annas per *maund*. It was also decided that the British government would pay a sum of Rs. 6,000 per annum to Bikaner state in lieu of expenses incurred in preventing local manufacture of salt. Simultaneously, Bikaner was to prevent the import and export of any salt other than that on which British duty had been paid. The agreement further provided that no duty would be levied within Bikaner state on salt upon which duty was already levied by the British government. Furthermore, while transit duty on British salt was abolished, the quantity of salt to be exported from Bikaner was fixed and made subject to the payment of duty. The export from Bikaner of intoxicating substances like *bhang*, *ganja*, opium⁶¹ etc. was prohibited too.

In 1882 the amount of *rekh* demanded from each *jagirdar* was fixed for twenty-one years. Many of the Thakurs and fief-holders resented and challenged the decision, and several rose up in open rebellion in 1883. A British officer was deputed to look into their grievances and attempt an amicable settlement, but this could not be achieved. Eventually, a small British force marched from Nasirabad towards Bikaner. At the approaching threat, the majority of the fief-holders surrendered unconditionally to the Political Agent. However, the Bidawats still held out. Bikaner's forces were sent against them, following which the Thakurs of Bidasar and Sandwa eventually gave in as well. Bidasar fort was razed to the ground and some of the antagonistic fief-holders were arrested at the command of the ruler. Lord Ripon, the Viceroy and Governor General, now appointed Captain Talbot as Political Agent to Bikaner. From this period onwards, a Political Agent was to be permanently located at Bikaner. With the aid of the British Political Agent, differences between the fief-holder and the ruler of Bikaner were gradually adjusted thereafter.

The Maharaja appointed Amil Mohammad as *dewan* at the advice of Talbot. He also appointed some non-local officers to assist in the modernisation and implementation of administration. A council under the

direct guidance of the Maharaja conducted the administration. However, differences eventually emerged between the Maharaja and the Political Agent. In 1887, Viceroy Lord Dufferin wrote to the Maharaja and warned him about acting contrary to the advice of the Political Agent. By the time of Dungar Singh's premature death on 19 August 1887, the foundations for a modern Bikaner had been laid. During the fifteen years of Dungar Singh's reign, the revenues of the state had more than trebled; the state treasury's debt wiped off; and many important reforms initiated.

It was left to Ganga Singh (b.1880), the seven year old brother and adopted-heir who succeeded Dungar Singh as Maharaja of Bikaner, to build upon the foundations bequeathed by his brother, and to lead Bikaner into the twentieth century. As Maharaja of Bikaner, Ganga Singh (r. 1887-1943), was to transform Bikaner into one of the premier modern states of the Indian subcontinent. During the eleven years of his minority, Bikaner was governed by a Regency Council, presided over first by Colonel Thornton, and then Sir Charles Bayley, who were the British political agents to Bikaner during that period. Under the regency administration, a revised land revenue settlement was carried out during 1892-95, and various reforms initiated by Dungar Singh were carried forward further.

In 1889, following an agreement involving Marwar, Bikaner and the British, Bikaner got its first railway track, with the construction of ninety miles of track, and an understanding with Marwar concerning its initial operationalisation. The period between 1889-1893 saw the raising of the 'Bikaner Camel Corps', while 1891 saw the establishment of a regular public works department. Thereafter, under the 'Native Coinage Act, 1876', Bikaner and the British government agreed in 1893 that the British mint would supply all future silver coinage, bearing the name of the Bikaner Maharaja on one side, to Bikaner. Bikaner also gained from the discovery of coal reserves at Palana in 1896. The construction of two Ghaggar canals was undertaken during 1896-97. The Ghaggar canals were built at a cost of Rs. 4.7 lakhs, and were 51 miles in length. The re-organisation of the judicial machinery on modern lines and start of construction work of a new palace — the Lallgarh Palace, which thereafter became the Bikaner ruler's official residence — was also begun by the Regency Council.

‘Modern’ education was given due weightage. The Walter Nobles’ High School (later re-named the Sadul Public School), which was started in 1893, imparted education to the sons of the chiefs and nobles of Bikaner state. As far as schools for girls were concerned, in his *Western Rajputana Residency Report (1886-87)*, Captain Thornton, the Political Agent, noted that Maharaja Dungar Singh had intended to establish a girls’ school at Bikaner in honour of Queen Victoria’s Jubilee. The intention was realised in 1889, with the opening of the first girls’ school with an attendance of more than thirty-five girls. November 1896 saw the establishment of the Lady Elgin Girls’ School, in commemoration of the visit to Bikaner of Lord and Lady Elgin. The school began formal teaching on 31 March 1898 with sixty girls on the rolls⁶². (Soon after, two existing girls’ schools in Bikaner City closed down, so that a 1904-05 report found only one girls’ school in Bikaner, with an average daily attendance of eighty-five girls).

Upon receiving full ‘Ruling Powers’ in the autumn of 1898, Ganga Singh carried on the task begun by his predecessor, and continued by his Regency Council, which would see Bikaner take shape as a progressive, well-administered, modern organism. The Regency Council became a State Council (also known as *Mahakma Khas*). Departments such as army, medical and health, and public works were kept by the Maharaja himself, while others were distributed amongst the members of the State Council. Within a year of Ganga Singh attaining full powers, the region suffered from the infamous *Chhapaniya-Akaal* (or ‘Famine of Samvat 1956’) of 1899-1900⁶³. The young Maharaja Ganga Singh took an active personal role in organising relief-measures across the width and breadth of the generally inaccessible terrain of the state. His initiative was applauded and the British honoured him with the ‘Kaiser-i-Hind’ medal.

Meanwhile, the subtle — and not so subtle — control of the British Political Agent over the administrative system continued. The British tried to channelize the powers of the Maharaja through urging the approval of the Political Agent for any change in the administration, and taking the advice of the political agent for all important matters. Matters came to a head in 1904 when Maharaja Ganga Singh charged the *jagirdars* of Bidasar, Ajitpura and Gopalpura with conspiracy against the State. Ganga Singh took drastic action against all three senior nobles. He ordered the

resumption of the entire *jagir*-estate of Thakur Hukum Singh of Bidasar for three years, along with the confiscation of one village. Thakur Bhairon Singh of Ajitpura was deposed and placed under surveillance, and half the *jagir* of Ajitpura was seized. The Maharaja also ordered the confiscation of a village of Thakur Ram Singh of Gopalpura and placed the *jagir* under 'Court of Wards' till further orders.

The three *jagirdars* made a representation to the Governor General, Lord Curzon, who advised the Maharaja to reduce the punishment. The Maharaja asked for the matter to be reconsidered. The Governor General ultimately agreed that the Maharaja's original orders would stay. (The overall situation convinced Ganga Singh of the necessity of establishing personal rapport with the highest functionaries of the British government. In the years to come, he was to be successful in that, as well as see in the next chapter).

KISHANGARH

The first three decades of the nineteenth century saw Kishangarh continue to be ruled by Maharaja Kalyan Singh (r. 1797-1838). During this time, the Kishangarh School of painting, which had continued to flourish during the preceding period, got a further impetus too. Paintings depicting Krishna-related themes like the *Geet-Govind* are a special feature of the eighteenth to early nineteenth century Kishangarh atelier.

On 26 March 1817, Kishangarh's ruler, Kalyan Singh, signed a treaty with the East India Company, accepting, like many of his contemporary rulers and chiefs, British paramountcy over his state. Interestingly, Kalyan Singh's long sojourns in Delhi, and close links with the court and courtiers of the by now practically defunct Mughal empire, earned the ire of the East India Company. Warned that a speedy return to Kishangarh would be in his best interests, Kalyan Singh made a hasty return to his capital. However, in the interim, a group amongst his own courtiers and nobles, conniving with British officials, succeeded in taking control of the capital-town and proclaiming Kalyan Singh's son, Mokham Singh as the ruler of Kishangarh.

Kalyan Singh was made to abdicate in favour of his son. He thereafter left Kishangarh for Delhi.

Mokham Singh (r. 1838-1841), died without an heir. In keeping with usual practice for such eventualities, his widow formally adopted a 'son' and successor to Mokham Singh from one of the junior lines of the Kishangarh family. Her choice was the young Prithvi Singh from Kachola. Following the long reign of Prithvi Singh (r. 1841-1879), his eldest son, Shardul Singh (r. 1879-1900) became ruler of Kishangarh.

It was during Shardul Singh's period that several changes came to the Rathore kingdom of Kishangarh. The Somyagya Cotton Mills, a cotton press and several small-scale industries were established during this time. Reforms in administration took place too. A new market-centre (*mandi*), named Madanganj, was built. This soon grew into a self-sufficient market-town. The little state's first girls' school was opened in 1897 in the capital-town of Kishangarh. For the next half-a-century, this remained the only state-run girls' school in the town. During the serious famine of 1899, Shardul Singh ensured steps to alleviate the suffering of the populace through the opening of grain stores, provision of food at subsidised rates, and a small number of centres where the very poor could get meals. Maharaja Shardul Singh died in 1900, and was succeeded by his son, Madan Singh (r. 1900-1926).

KARAULI

As mentioned previously, Maratha incursions and intra-family rivalries had weakened many of the ruling states during the period that the Mughal Empire was dwindling across northern India. In 1804, Karauli's Manakpal (r. 1772-1804), was succeeded by Harbaksh Pal.

Faced by yet another Maratha attack, Harbaksh Pal of Karauli was forced to agree to an annual payment of Rs. 25,000 annually as *khiraj* to the Maratha Peshwa. Finally, in November 1817, Karauli deemed it prudent to enter into a treaty with the East India Company. In lieu of the payment of

tribute, under Article 5 of the treaty, Karauli state was bound to provide troops according to its means, whenever requisitioned by the British East India Company.

Meanwhile, prior to that, during the reign of Harbaksh Pal's predecessor, Manakpal, Karauli had yielded the tract of Masalpur to the Marathas in lieu of tribute. In 1817, under Article 14 of the Treaty of Poona, formalised between the Peshwa and the East India Company, 'Machalpur' (Masalpur), and its 'dependencies' were ceded to the British. Since the Company found it inconvenient to take possession of the isolated villages, the tribute was relinquished in November 1817, when the above mentioned treaty was signed between Karauli and the British.

While the treaty-terms were still being finalised, Harbaksh Pal asked for a guarantee that some of Karauli's lands south of the Chambal river, which had been previously ceded to the Marathas, could revert to Karauli, on payment of annual tribute, if the British gained control of them. However, this was not to be.

In 1825, the ruler of Karauli involved himself in the matters of Bharatpur state. There, Durjansal had rebelled against his cousin, Balwant Singh, who was deemed the legitimate heir to the Bharatpur throne. Maharaja Harbaksh Pal of Karauli opted to support the cause of Durjansal, and despatched a large number of men from Karauli and neighbouring villages to Bharatpur. The British East India Company Agent at Karauli sent word of this to the Resident at Delhi. Once the British had successfully put down Durjansal, and consolidated the position of the minor Balwant Singh on the *gaddi* of Bharatpur, Maharaja Harbaksh Pal of Karauli had to apologise for his actions and placate the East India Company.

Following the death of Harbaksh Pal, the East India Company raised Pratap Pal (r. 1838-1848) of the *thikana* (estate) of Hadoti to the *gaddi* of Karauli. As the choice was made against the wishes of the mother and the widow of the late Maharaja, both the women left Karauli in protest and took up residence in Bharatpur. When Pratap Pal died without an heir in 1848, the minor Narsingh Pal, also a scion of the Hadoti *thikana*, was raised to the throne. Since Karauli was in debt to the British at the time, the British

declared they would withhold recognition of the succession until the first instalment of the due amount was paid. However, in view of internal politics and factionalism at the Karauli court, the British realised that it would be more prudent to acknowledge the accession of the minor Narsingh Pal without more delay. However, it was stressed that the payment due would need to be made as soon as feasible.

(Karauli's debt to Bharatpur state was adjusted against amounts owed by Bharatpur to the British. In 1844, Karauli's debt totalled Rs. 1,54,312. The British gave relatively 'easy' terms to Karauli for paying off this amount. The state had a period of twelve years to repay the amount in instalments, with no interest to be charged, except on any instalment remaining unpaid. However, up to 1847 nothing had been repaid, and the British agreed to wait another one-and-a-half years for the first instalment of Karauli's debt).

Soon afterwards, in view of the Maharaja's minority, and in view of a lack of consensus and attitude of co-operation between the factions active at the Karauli court, the East India Company appointed a British officer to look after the administration of Karauli state. In the next few years, boundary disputes between Karauli and Jaipur too were resolved through British intervention.

Upon the premature death of the still under-age Narsingh Pal (r. 1848-1852), the East India Company decided to apply Governor General Lord Dalhousie's infamous 'Doctrine of Lapse' to Karauli. However, a bare day or two before his death, Narsingh Pal had allegedly adopted a distant kinsman called Bharat Pal. As such, the Governor General's decision to take over Karauli was over-ruled by London. In the interim, a strong party at the Karauli court, pointed out that Madan Pal was a closer relative to the late Narsingh Pal, than was Bharat Pal, and that the throne should go to him. Madan Pal's claim was supported by the rulers of Jaipur, Bharatpur, Alwar and Dholpur as well. An inquiry was ordered by the British, in which it was ascertained that due to the minority of Narsingh Pal, and the omission of certain necessary ceremonies, the adoption of Bharat Pal was not fully valid.

Madan Pal was a close kin to the last ruler. And, since he was acceptable to the various queen-mothers and widowed ranis, as well as to nine of Karauli's most influential Thakurs and three-fourths of the lesser feudal lords, besides the populace, in 1854 Madan Pal (r. 1854-1869) was formally recognised as Maharaja of Karauli by the British. Direct intervention in the internal administration of Karauli by the British Political Agent was withdrawn by the East India Company. In 1855 the Agency was moved from Karauli. However, Madan Pal was warned that failure to pay off the arrears of the State's debt (by then reduced to Rs. 93,312), as per agreed instalments, would result in the British sequestering one or two of Karauli's districts, until such time as the debt was liquidated.

Maharaja Madan Pal sided with the East India Company during the uprising of 1857. He sent across his troops into Kotah State for the assistance of Maharao Ram Singh of Kotah, when the latter was beleaguered and forced to remain within his palace by mutinous soldiers of the Kotah forces and other rebels following the killing of the Resident, Captain Burton, at Kotah. Karauli's forces also helped the British in quelling unrest in the nearby *pargana* of Hindaun. In acknowledgement of the help given by Madan Pal, the British wrote off Karauli's remaining debt (which at the time amounted to Rs. 1,17,000), and granted him a *khillat* honour, among other things.

Despite the writing-off of the debt, by 1859 Karauli was again facing financial problems. A British political agent was, therefore, temporarily deputed to Karauli to help and advise the Maharaja. The Political Agent was withdrawn in 1861, but not before he had helped in settling a dispute concerning water-sharing between Karauli and Jaipur states⁶⁴. In 1862, Madan Pal, like several of his brother-princes, was granted a *sanad* authorising the right of adopting an heir, and in 1867 the British raised the gun-salute of the ruler from fifteen to seventeen.

One may add here that Karauli's first school along the 'western' model of education, was established in 1864, during Madan Pal's reign. This became a high school in 1904. In 1868 an extradition treaty was concluded with the British, concerning criminals accused of certain

offences. This was modified in 1887 by an agreement that provided for the extradition of an offender from British India to Karauli.

Upon Madan Pal's death in 1869, his nephew, Rao Lakshman Pal of Hadoti *thikana*, was recognised as his successor. However, within a short while of gaining the *gaddi* of Karauli, and before his formal installation, Lakshman Pal too died. Following deliberations amongst the senior nobles, queen-mother, etc. it was decided to offer the *gaddi* of Karauli to Jai Singh Pal of Hadoti (r. 1869-1875). The succession was formally recognised by the British.

Jai Singh Pal had a short reign. He left no heir, and on his death in 1875, he was succeeded by Arjunpal Singh (r. 1875-1886), who, like his predecessor, also came from the *thikana* of Hadoti. Another relative, Sujan Pal staked his claim to the title, and to the headship of the Hadoti estates, on the basis of his kinship to the previous ruler. The issue was resolved by the ruling of the senior nobles of the state, who upheld the claim of Arjunpal. A couple of years later, at the 1877 Delhi Assemblage, the Government of India remitted the interest due upon the dues owed by Karauli state. However, by 1881 Karauli was faced with financial difficulties. Arjunpal Singh was accused of mismanagement by the British, and was divested of his ruling powers (though not deposed). The administration was entrusted to a Council, under the control of the British political agent.

A year later, in 1882, Karauli concluded a Salt Agreement with the British. Under the terms of this, local salt manufacturing within the state was suppressed and no salt was to be imported or consumed within Karauli state except that on which British duty had been levied. Karauli's own duties on this trade were abolished. In exchange, the British agreed to give the ruler Rs. 5,000 annually, and to deliver fifty *maunds* of salt free of cost and duty annually at Sambhar for the personal use of the Karauli Maharaja. Later the British agreed to pay a sum of money to certain *jagirdars* of Karauli as compensation for their losses from the suppression of the local salt manufacture and trade. In 1884, Karauli abolished all transit duties on goods, throughout the state, with the exception of those applicable to opium and other intoxicants.

Like his three immediate predecessors, Arjunpal left no heir to succeed him on his death in December 1886. The title thus passed to his nephew from the Hadoti fief-hold, Bhanwar Pal Singh (r. 1886-1927). However, the administration remained in the hands of the State Council, under the supervision of the Political Agent. In June 1887, the new Maharaja was given some of the ruler's powers, subject to some conditions. By June 1889, Karauli state was finally free of its debts, and Bhanwar Pal was invested with full ruling powers. Since the state of Karauli incurred heavy debts during his reign, Bhanwar Pal was fated to witness the British Political Agent for the Eastern Rajputana states temporarily taking over the administration of the state from him in 1906. The Maharaja would not have his powers back for another eleven years, as we shall note further on.

DHOLPUR

It was in 1805, as we have noted previously, that Maharaj Rana Kirat Singh (r. 1805-1836), became the ruler of the state of Dholpur. In 1806 Dholpur entered into a treaty with the British. From this period, the British influenced the affairs of Dholpur. The *parganas* of Dholpur, Bari and Rajakhera were transferred to the Maharaj Rana, and were united with the *taluka* (or administrative unit) of Sar-Mathura. For a while, the area of Dholpur state fluctuated as boundaries were adjusted. In time, the state's area became fixed at around 1773 square miles of territory, with the river Chambal serving as the boundary between Dholpur and Gwalior for an approximately sixty mile stretch. A mint was established at Dholpur, and coins struck during Kirat Singh's reign carried the name of the Mughal emperor Akbar II. Dholpur's coins were called *Tamancha* (meaning a pistol — which was then the state emblem), at this time, and for several decades more. (By the end of the century, though, Dholpur state would switch to British India coins).

On Kirat Singh's death in 1836, his son Bhagwant Singh (r. 1836-1873) succeeded him. Bhagwant Singh remained pro-British during the 1857-58 period, but Dholpur became a centre of anti-British activity. In early October 1857, between some 4,000 to 5,000 anti-British soldiers from Gwalior and Indore entered the territory of Dholpur state. The commander

and a majority of the soldiers of the Dholpur army rallied to their cause. The 'rebel' forces from Gwalior and Indore managed to exercise control over the State, setting aside the Maharaj Rana's authority, plundering his property, and exacting money from the area over the October to December 1857 period. The Dholpur ruler was surrounded, threatened and apparently coerced into agreeing to the demands of the anti-British side. Subsequently, Dholpur's guns were used in the attack on Agra. The situation continued till December 1857, when an army of 2,000 Sikh troops and four guns was sent to help Dholpur by the ruler of Patiala. The Patiala forces defeated the 'rebels' and restored Bhagwant Singh to his position in Dholpur

On 11 March 1862, the British government gave Dholpur's ruler the *sanad* grant, recognising the ruler's right to adopt a successor in the absence of a natural heir. A few years later, on 14 January 1868, Dholpur and the British concluded an extradition treaty. Bhagwant Singh died in 1873, and was succeeded by his grandson, Nehal Singh (r. 1873-1901).

The first regular land-revenue settlement for Dholpur state was carried out between 1875 and 1878, under the supervision of W.H. Smith. According to the near contemporaneous account in the *Rajputana Gazetteer*⁶⁵, Dholpur's land-tenures at the time were known as *pattedari* or *phatwar*, of which there were 384 villages, and *zamindari*, of which there were 146 villages. Later on, the two main classes of land-tenure began to be termed as *khalsa* — or land under the ruler's direct authority, paying revenue to the state, and non-*khalsa* — or land granted by the chief under certain conditions to individuals or temples as *tankedari*, *jagir* and *muafi*.

Dholpur entered into a Salt Agreement with the British on 14 January 1879, which banned local manufacture of salt within the state. This marked the end of indigenous salt-production and traditional salt-trade in the region, gave the British the monopoly over the supply of salt, and raised the price of the commodity — much to the hardship of the ordinary populace and elite, alike. Meanwhile, in 1887, the Extradition Treaty of 1868 was supplemented by an agreement.

By this time, the administrative pattern of the state was well-set. The Maharaja headed the administration, assisted by a *dewan*. The State was

divided into six *tehsils*, each in charge of a *tehsildar*, who was responsible for the collection of land revenue. These *tehsildars* held certain petty judicial powers. There was a *Hakim* who functioned like a ‘munsif magistrate’ for the whole state. There were *panchayats* that usually dealt with most disputes in the villages. Of these villages, 380 were *khalsa* (state-held), 61 were in *jagir* holdings, and 41 had been granted as *muafi* lands. A number of tanks served to irrigate more than 2,000 acres of fertile land.

The Maharaj Rana Nehal Singh and his Dholpur forces saw military action alongside the British in the Tirah campaign. Nehal Singh was an honorary major in the famous Central India Horse regiment too. He died in 1901, and was succeeded by his eldest son, Ram Singh. We shall look at the ensuing history of the state of Dholpur in the next chapter.

BRITISH POSSESSION OF AJMER-MERWARA

Ajmer and its surrounding terrain, which had been brought under Maratha suzerainty by Scindia in 1756, came into British East India Company’s control in 1818, when, following a treaty with Daulat Rao Scindia, General David Ochterlony of the East India Company took possession of Ajmer on 28 July 1818. P. Wilder was appointed as Superintendent of Ajmer district. Later, following action against the ‘Mairs’ (or Mers) of the ‘Mairwara’ area around Ajmer, the tract later began to be referred to in administrative documents as the Ajmer-Mairwara region. (The spelling of ‘Mairwara’ later changed to read as ‘Merwara’.)

Ajmer had long held an important position in the history of Rajasthan, as we have already noted. Now, under the British, it would serve as an important ‘enclave’ of British administrative structures, educational etc. institutions, and cultural influence⁶⁶. It also became the headquarters of early British administration vis-à-vis the Rajputana states: a situation later shared with Mt. Abu, once that site had developed as the part-time seat for the Agent to the Governor General. (As E.H. Kealy’s *Report on the Census of Rajputana and Ajmer-Merwara 1911- Part 1*, phrased it, “The history of Ajmer-Merwara is, to a great extent, that of Rajputana, though ever since its

cession in 1818 by the Marathas it has remained a British Province. It has been well said that the power that would hold India must hold Ajmer owing to its central and commanding strategic position. The fact seems to have been recognised by all the great ruling dynasties... contending for the possession of the fort of Taragarh and the city of Ajmer...and it was here that the first English ambassador to India from the Court of James I, Sir Thomas Roe, had his first audience of the Emperor Jahangir. The city now forms the winter capital of the Rajputana Local Administration”⁶⁷).

Coming now to the Merwara part of the Ajmer-Mairwara’ area; when the British gained possession of Ajmer, the Mer community living in neighbouring Merwara were regarded as a source of trouble for Ajmer. This was a perception long shared by the kingdoms of Mewar and Marwar too! Ajmer’s first Superintendent, Wilder, attempted agreements with the ‘Mair’ chiefs of Jhak, Shamgarh, Loolua and other places, but his efforts having proved to be of no avail, military action was resorted to. James Tod, Political Agent at Udaipur, despatched a detachment of troops under Salim Singh of Bhagwanpura in October 1818, which based itself at Rampura and successfully captured some of the ‘Mairwara’ settlements. In March 1819, British forces from Nasirabad also took the field, and in the wake of subsequent British-led action, the Mers entered into an agreement with the Company. By this, they agreed to abstain from any raids and plundering activity. The Company and Mewar established their outposts in their respective portions of ‘Mairwara’. Such outposts included Borawa, Jhak and Loolua. The towns of Bhim and Todgarh (‘Tadgarh’) were founded around this-time in the Mewar-owned portion of the Merwara tract. The two settlements took their names from that of Maharana Bhim Singh and James Tod, respectively.

In November 1820 some Mers rose up against the Ajmer administration and targeted a few police posts. The British officer in-charge of the police-post at Jhak was among those killed. Ajmer’s British Superintendent, with the co-operation of the states of Mewar and Marwar, successfully suppressed the movement through the despatch of a British force from Nasirabad, and a Mewar force led by Salim Singh. The Mers were forced to yield-up Borawa, Rampura, Sapula, Hathur, Barar, Chang, Kookada, Jhak, Saroth, Jawaja and other territory.

In 1821-22, at the recommendation of Ochterlony, a Corps of 'Mairs' was raised by the East India Company, which recruited from the 'Mairs'. This later became the Merwara Battalion. Its nucleus was apparently composed of recruits from the local Rampura forces, which in turn was formed from remnants of the army of Amir Khan, the Pindari chief who had become the first Nawab of Tonk. Mers of Merwara too were inducted into this, and it was based at Beawar. At one stage Mewar state contributed Rs. 12,000 annually towards its cost. Changes in its composition and strength were made over time, and in 1870 its headquarters were shifted to Ajmer. In 1897, it was placed under the Commander-in-Chief of the British Indian Army, and by 1903 formed part of the 44th Merwara Infantry.

Thereafter, the Company officials resolved that the traditional Merwara area, portions of which were at that time held by the East India Company, Mewar and Marwar administrations, needed a single common governance. Mewar and Marwar consented to contributing a sum of Rs. 15,000/ each per annum, but flatly refused to yield their portions of Merwara, or their sovereignty over it. Despite their opposition, Ochterlony (the British Resident for Rajputana and Malwa), managed to force the Mewar ruler to withdraw his troops, and both Mewar and Marwar to yield the desired tracts. As such, in 1823 a new administrative unit of Merwara was 'created' by the British, with the 'co-operation' of Mewar and Marwar. This was placed under a British Superintendent, Captain Hall. (The mode of acquiring Mewar's land led to complaints by Mewar to the Governor General, and a show of 'concern' at the Governor General's level, as communicated in Metcalfe's letter of July 19 1826 to the Political Agent at Udaipur⁶⁸).

Later, in 1842 the districts of Ajmer and Merwara were placed under a common superintendent, Colonel Dixon. In 1853 Dixon was redesignated as Commissioner for Ajmer-Merwara. (Over time, the British-administered area of Ajmer-Merwara incorporated some 2,711 square miles). During his administration, Dixon (d.1857) constructed a large number of tanks for irrigation. This was needed in an area long dependent on irrigation from wells and tanks for agricultural purposes. There were concerted efforts to engage the Mers in agriculture. Trade and industry in the Ajmer-Merwara area too got an impetus, after Dixon had established the town of Beawar or

‘Naya Shahar’ as it was called by the people for a long time. In 1857, Captain B.T. Lloyd was appointed as the first Deputy Commissioner of Ajmer-Merwara, and was placed under the Agent to the Governor General, Rajputana (who was accountable to the then North Western Provinces & Oudh government).

During the events of 1857-58, Ajmer was in the thick of action for a variety of reasons. For one thing, Ajmer was an East India Company administered area. For another, the British had a military cantonment at Nasirabad, near Ajmer. On 28 May 1857, two ‘native’ regiments of infantry refused to obey orders. They seized some artillery-guns, burnt some government bungalows and public buildings, killed two British officers and wounded three others, and then proceed to march towards Delhi to join other like-minded soldiers and supporters. The British took immediate action, but in common with much of Rajputana, it took time before everything finally normalised across the British-held Ajmer-Merwara area.

Over the years, Ajmer became, and would continue to remain, somewhat of a mirror-image of British India, and of the activities, reform-measures, administrative innovations, and modernisations of the judiciary and similar institutions, etc. of British India. Alongside that, Ajmer was a vital conduit, along with Abu — the summer headquarters of the AGG and the local British administration, in the relations between the various states of Rajputana and the British-run Government of India (including connections with the British Crown and Government). In 1871 the administration of Ajmer-Merwara was put directly under the Foreign and Political Department of the Government of India. The AGG for Rajputana, who oversaw the affairs of the princely states of the region, became ex-officio Chief Commissioner of Ajmer-Merwara. It was not just the British, though, who influenced life in the area. In time, the Arya Samaj was to become an important movement and rallying force in the Ajmer area for social reforms, stress on education and womens’ emancipation, and ‘national renaissance’. The Arya Samaj also set up a number of educational institutions in Ajmer. It was at Ajmer that the founder of the Arya Samaj, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, died in 1883.

Meanwhile, the first regular land revenue settlement exercise for Ajmer-Merwara took place in 1875. This was revised in 1886. (Afterwards, land settlement was carried out during 1906-10 to reduce the demand to Rs. 2.80 lakhs of which Rs. 52,000 was irrigation cess and the rest formed fixed revenue). It should be noted here that prior to coming into British control, lands in the erstwhile Ajmer *suba* had long been categorised as *khalsa* (crown land), *istmirari*, *jagir* and *bhom* lands. Out of 740 villages of erstwhile Ajmer *suba*, 470 were *khalsa* land and the rest under *istmirardars* (i.e. holders of *istmirari* lands). Tenants of the *khalsa* area had *biswedari* rights, while the *istmirardars* paid a quit rent for their holdings. *Jagir* lands had been granted out either as charitable endowments or as personal rewards to their holders. *Bhom* lands were held by *bhomyas*, who were generally expected to provide military etc. services in lieu of their grants. During the time the Marathas had held the area which they ceded in 1818 to the British, they had collected about Rs. 1.29 lakhs in revenue from the *khalsa* and Rs. 2.17 lakhs from *istmirardari* lands.

While *khalsa* areas were subjected to regular settlement operations, no systematic survey of *istmirari* villages was undertaken until well into the twentieth century. The *istmirardars* were charged rent only for the actual cultivated area from year to year. The *kharif crop* was assessed at fixed rate per *bigha* called *bighori*, while the *rabi* crop was assessed at a share of produce. The *istmirardar's* share was between half and a quarter of the produce. In the *khalsa* areas, while the state remained the actual proprietor, tenants had gradually acquired the rights of the proprietorship known as *biswedari*. As long as a tenant paid regular rent he could not be ejected from the land. He had the right to sell, mortgage or gift his land. In the *istmirardari* system, the *istmirardar* was considered as the owner of the land and the cultivators gradually acquired the right of continuing to hold the possession of their lands subject to payment of rent.

The first railway line came to Ajmer on August 1 1875, connecting the town with Khandwa. The line was a part of the Rajputana-Malwa Railways, which was handed over to the B.B.& C.I. (Bombay, Baroda and Central India) Railways in January 1885 on a 99 years lease. Ajmer became the headquarters of the meter gauge system of the B.B.& C.I. Railways, and the Railway Workshop soon became the largest employer in the region. The

coming of the railways and consequent improvement in trade and transport may have, in time, encouraged the setting up of the region's first cotton mill. This was the Krishna Mills, which was established at Beawar in 1889. By 1891, the total population of Ajmer-Merwara was 4.82 lakhs. It came down to 4.26 lakhs in the 1901 census, in the wake of the famine of 1899-1900. In 1941, it would stand at 5.84 lakhs.

Coming now to the educational front, between 1819-1831 the British made some unsuccessful attempts to establish 'modern' schools in Ajmer-Merwara, but it was not until 1836 that the first school along 'western' lines was opened at Ajmer. Prior to this, there was one missionary school which received grant-in-aid from the government and about fifty-six indigenous Hindi, Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian schools. The former was, however, closed in 1843 for want of students. In 1850 the government introduced a cess to defray the expenses on education and established seventy-five primary schools in Ajmer-Merwara province. The following year (1851) a Government school was opened at Ajmer again. It was raised to High school in 1857 and was affiliated to the Calcutta University in 1861. In 1857 the cess on education — introduced in 1850 — was abolished because of public opposition. As a result, most of the schools were closed. In 1860 the government restarted the schools.

The year 1861 saw the establishment of the Mission Girls' School at Nasirabad. In 1864 the 'Normal School for Men' was started at Ajmer. This was followed by the establishment of the 'Normal School for Women' at Pushkar in 1867. In 1875 Mayo College was established at Ajmer for the education of the sons of chiefs and nobles. (It was an autonomous institution, and until 1944 had its own diploma vetted by the Government of India's Political Department. In 1944, Mayo College introduced matriculation, intermediate and B.A. examinations of the Agra University and the Cambridge school certificate). By the end of the nineteenth century there were fifty Government run primary schools and seventy-one private ones in Ajmer-Merwara.

Besides these, a veterinary school had come up at Ajmer in 1894, and the first Middle School for girls was opened at Ajmer in 1896 by the French Congregation of St. Mary of the Angels. A degree college was established

too at Ajmer the same year (1896). This was raised to post-graduate standard in 1916. Besides the Government of India, other groups had also established educational institutions in the Ajmer-Merwara area. Following the events of 1857 and, subsequently, the establishment of the British Crown's control (in place of the East India Company), the United Presbyterian Mission⁶⁹ began work at Beawar in 1860. Over time, the United Presbyterian Mission provided education (including girls' education), established a printing press, organised famine relief work (particularly during the severe famine of 1872), started the first free medical dispensaries in Rajputana, and also set up industrial schools and teacher's training in 'normal' schools. The Presbyterian Mission rapidly established both 'vernacular' as well as 'Anglo-Vernacular' schools (including high schools) in Beawar, Nasirabad, Ajmer and other parts of its diocese.

Their pioneering work in education was followed by the Methodist Mission in 1874 and the Roman Catholic Church of India (RCI) in 1880. Meanwhile, the Arya Samaj soon emulated the work of the Christian missionaries, beginning with the Dayanand School at Ajmer. Thereafter, in 1883 the 'Paropkarini Sabha' established an ashram in memory of Swami Dayanand, which consisted of a college, a library, a printing press, an orphanage and a lecture hall.

JAIPUR/AMBER

In the state of Dhoondhar, the fifteen year rule of Sawai Jagat Singh (r. 1803-1818), was marked by its share of eventful happenings, including war with Marwar, Pindari and Maratha incursions and a treaty with the East India Company.

The Marwar-Mewar-Dhoondhar imbroglio stemmed from the issue of marriage with Princess Krishna Kumari of Mewar — to which reference has already been made. In January 1806, when Mewar sent the formal betrothal *teeka* for settling the engagement of their princess with Maharaja Jagat Singh of Jaipur, Marwar's soldiers stopped them near Shahpura. While a clash was avoided through the intervention of the chief of

Shahpura, the *teeka* had to be taken back to Udaipur. That June, the capable Marwar minister, Indra Raj Singhvi, and his equally capable Dhoondhar counter-part, *Dewan* Ramchandra Chhabra, managed a settlement by which it was decided that neither Man Singh nor Jagat Singh would marry the Mewar princess.

Soon afterwards, Jagat Singh rallied his forces against his Marwar foe Maharaja Man Singh. Calling upon the services and forces of various vassal chiefs and jagirdars, Jagat Singh marched against Marwar. The Pindari chief, Amir Khan, took the side of Jagat Singh of Jaipur. The critical battle took place in 1807 at Gingoli. Jaipur and its allies defeated Marwar. Jodhpur was besieged, and matter settled, albeit temporarily, through a peace-treaty. Soon thereafter, Amir Khan was wooed over to the Jodhpur side. Realising that the resources of Jaipur were depleted, Amir Khan took the field against Jaipur's forces at Phagi, and joined the cause of Marwar's Man Singh.

Pindari incursions against Jaipur now became a recurrent factor. Mention has already been made of the Pindari chief Amir Khan's interference in Jaipur's matters in 1813. The very next year, Amir Khan knocked at the gates of Jaipur on behalf of Jaswant Rao Holkar, demanding nine lakhs of rupees as tribute-money or *chauth*. While Amir Khan moved against Jaipur, other Pindaris ravaged adjoining tracts of Shekhawati. To raise money for Jaipur's near-empty treasury, Jaipur's prime minister, Misra Shiv Narain, approached Lakshman Singh of Sikar. The Sikar Rao, who had already occupied Khandela forcibly in 1812, agreed to provide the money in return for a *sanad*, or agreement, formally granting him possession of Khandela. This was agreed to; the amount due to Jaipur as *nazarana* or annual tribute from Khandela agreed upon; and Lakshman Singh's title formalised as 'Rao Raja' by Jagat Singh.

Later, the forces of Jaipur commanded by Bakshi Munnalal, together with those of the Rao Raja Lakshman Singh of Sikar, attempted to force the Shekhawati chiefs to render their tribute arrears. The *panch-pana* estates closed ranks, amassing their limited forces together in a manner that prevented an attack on Khetri and Nawalgarh, and ensured that the siege of

Mandawa by the Jaipur-Sikar combine was lifted within a short period, with the departure of the Jaipur-Sikar forces for Jhunjhunu⁷⁰.

During this time, the Jats of the eastern part of Jaipur state came together against the authority of Jaipur and established their dominion over Jhoon, Toomdi, Chara, Paparda and the one-time Kachchwaha capital of Dausa. Viewing the loss of the ancestral stronghold of Dausa as a matter of shame and dishonour, and faced with obvious danger to the state, in 1814 Maharaja Jagat Singh despatched a force commanded by Kushal Singh Bhalbhadrot, the Thakur of Achrol, to wrest back the lost territories.

The Jaipur troops took back Jhoon, Toomdi, Chara and Paparda from the 'rebels', but Kushal Singh, the commander, sustained severe wounds. (He also lost two members of his immediate family in the campaign). On recovering, he led his force against Dausa, which was the last remaining stronghold of the Jat rebels. For twenty days, the fort of Dausa, on Devgiri hill, withstood Kushal Singh and the Jaipur forces led by him. On the twentieth day the fort fell, though Kushal Singh was hit by a musket-ball and seriously injured. Upon hearing about the recovery of Dausa, the ruler of Jaipur gave it into the charge of Kushal Singh, simultaneously announcing rewards to be conferred on the victorious Thakur of Achrol on his eventual return to the court at Jaipur. Unfortunately, Kushal Singh died of his wounds at Dausa in early 1815, and is commemorated popularly not only by a cenotaph *chhatri* at Dausa, but also in a verse written by the poet Chand in his *Kurma Vilas*.

It was during Jagat Singh's reign that Dhoondhar entered into a treaty with the East India Company on 2 April 1818. An initial agreement arrived at in 1803 (during the Marquess of Wellesley's time) did not last long, but in 1818 fresh negotiations, through the efforts of Metcalfe, led to a treaty. By the terms of the treaty, Jaipur state agreed to give rupees eight lakhs as *khiraj* annually to the East India Company, in return for British protection and support. Meanwhile, Abhay Singh of Khetri had already entered into a special relationship of friendship with the British for Khetri's part in assisting Lord Lake's and other campaigns. In January 1818, Charles Metcalfe gave him a *Tusulee Nama* or 'Letter of Assurance' to this effect, assuring British protection irrespective of what the future held by the way

of an alliance between the Company and Jaipur. At the same time, Khetri's subordinate position vis-à-vis the state of Jaipur was clearly recognised by the British.

Jagat Singh's reign is popularly remembered for the role played by Ras Kapur, his strong-minded *paswan* (concubine), who acquired immense power over the Jaipur court, and equally immense public hatred and notoriety. Ras Kapur's beauty, charm and shrewd intelligence combined to allow her great influence over the Maharaja and, consequently, over the state's administration, so that she is popularly described as having become the owner of half the Maharaja's dominions! Coins were struck in her name, and, in absolute breach of convention and protocol, Ras Kapur also sat beside the Maharaja on his State elephant during State-related and religious processions. The Maharaja's involvement in the quarrel with Jodhpur coincided with Ras Kapur's own eventual decline and banishment to Nahargarh, where she subsequently met her end under mysterious circumstances!

As Jagat Singh left no heir at the time of his death in the winter of 1818, one group of his courtiers — among whom was *Nazir* Mohan Ram (a eunuch), placed Mohan Singh, a son of Narwar's former chief, on the Jaipur *gaddi*. Mohan Ram and his coterie insisted that Jagat Singh had adopted the young Narwar prince before his demise, and they ignored the protests and time-honoured claims of the collateral Jhilay, Isarda, Kaman, Siwad and Barwara estates. Some months later, one of Jagat Singh's widows, who belonged to the Bhati clan and was therefore addressed, in keeping with Rajput custom, as the 'Bhattiyani Rani', announced that she was in the eighth month of her pregnancy. As the announcement was made some months after the death of Jagat Singh, and since palace intrigues, false announcements and substitution of infants was not a wholly unknown phenomena, the principal nobles of the state, led by Rawal Bairisal Singh of Samode, assembled, and asked for verification from the senior women of the Palace. The latter confirmed that the Bhattiyani Rani was pregnant.

On 23 April 1819, it was announced that the Bhattiyani Rani had given birth to a son, who was thus the heir to the titles and territories of the late Maharaja Jagat Singh. There were whispers and misgivings over the

fortuitous birth of an heir — and the possibility of *zenana-based* intrigues was mentioned in the reports of the British officials. However, as the British Political Resident for the Rajputana states, David Ochterlony, accepted the claim presented on behalf of the new-born child, in due course the Governor General officially sent a *Kharita* letter acknowledging the infant as the posthumous son of the late Maharaja. Thus, the infant was duly enthroned, in place of Mohan Singh, as Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh III (r. 1819-1835).

The Political Agent set up a Regency Council under the Bhattiyani queen-mother. *Nazir* Mohan Ram was dismissed by the queen-mother, despite opposition by the British Resident. Instead, Rawal Bairisal Singh of Samode became the prime minister or *dewan*. He quickly earned the ire of many. In part, this stemmed from his attempts at recovering crown or *khalsa* lands, which had been taken over by various opportunistic nobles. The Rawal's efforts were countered by the nobles, with the connivance of Jhutaram and Roopa *Badaran*, both close confidantes of the queen-mother, and both exercising immense influence over the land. (Jhutaram's friends included powerful chiefs like Thakur Megh Singh of Diggi, and Shekhawats like Shyam Singh of Bissau and Hanuwant Singh of Shahpura and Manoharpur).

Court intrigues prevented the *dewan* from functioning effectively. In January 1823 Ochterlony intervened, exiling Jhutaram from Jaipur state. Jhutaram went away to Bundelkhand, ostensibly on a pilgrimage, but members of his group continued to thwart the *dewan*'s efforts. The state's revenues fell drastically. As a result, not only did non-payment of salary become a major source of disaffection among soldiers, but Jaipur state also found itself unable to pay its stipulated annual '*khiraj*' or tribute, due to the East India Company, as per the terms of the treaty of 1818. The queen-mother's group manoeuvred matters so that in October 1824 many of the state's army contingents reached the capital city asking for a speedy payment of their pay-arrears. After a prolonged impasse, the Political Agent sent for troops from Nasirabad to deal with any eventualities, while Rawal Bairisal of Samode resigned his post and left the Jaipur court.

In an attempt to improve the situation, the Bhattiyani queen-mother was allowed to recall Jhutaram and appoint him as *dewan* of Jaipur state. However, matters went from bad to worse. Meanwhile, against a backdrop of deteriorating relations between the East India Company and Jaipur state, in 1825 the Political Agent at Jaipur, Major Raper, communicated to the Resident that he suspected secret correspondence between the court of the minor ruler of Jaipur and Bharatpur's rival contender for its throne, Durjansal. (Durjansal's cousin, the minor Balwant Singh was the actual heir to the *Bharatpur gaddi*). Even as David Ochterlony furthered preparations to suppress Durjansal's rebellion in Bharatpur, Jaipur's Bhattiyani queen-mother despatched a detachment of Jaipur state's cavalry, led by Kundanlal, to Mathura. This was purportedly meant to assist Ochterlony. However, in view of the suspicions aroused over the true intentions of the queen-mother, whom the British believed to be secretly helping Durjansal, the British turned down the offer of help from the Jaipur detachment. The matter was allowed to rest, following the fall of Bharatpur and exile of Durjansal at British hands.

However, other aspects of Dhoondhar's administration and Court-related politics were contributing to further complexities at the Jaipur court. When the garrisons posted at State-held (i.e. *khalsa*, or Jaipur crown) forts were reduced at the orders of Jhutaram, there was a revolt at the Ranthambore fort. This is because Ranthambore had a mixed garrison that included not just state troops but also a number of contingents supplied by fief-holding chieftains. In addition, certain reforms initiated by Jhutaram and the Bhattiyani queen-mother were disliked by many of the nobles of the state, who came together as a group. In 1828, Ranjit Singh, the Thakur of Deolah, was removed from his position of joint command of the fort, allegedly as an economic measure. His appeal to the Governor General proved to be of no avail, since his removal was regarded as part of Jaipur state's economic reforms package.

Over the next year or so, Jhutaram attempted to increase the number of state forces posted at the fort in order to oust some of the fief-holding chiefs. The chiefs protested. Jhutaram tried to break their resistance through a show of force. At this, the chiefs rallied their fellow-nobles. Meanwhile, since Jhutaram had been exacting taxes, cesses and other money from the

nobles to balance the budget, others too rose up in revolt. The demand for Jhutaram's expulsion grew, but in view of the fact that both sides in the quarrel had the backing of an equally strong military force, there was an impasse! The situation was controlled only with the threat of an armed intervention by the British. The 'rebel chiefs' were persuaded to obey the orders of their minor Maharaja's regent, the queen-mother, and her Regency Council.

Meanwhile, the queen-mother had previously conferred the title of *Raj Badaran* along with *khillat* honours on her astute *zenana* aide-cum-confidante Roopa *Badaran*. Roopa *Badaran*'s powers had long become practically untrammelled, and she ruled the roost within the palace, and outside it. There are allegations that she ordered the deaths of those who crossed her path. She is also accused of amassing great personal wealth, squandering money from the state treasury and sending out jewels and money from the *zenana* to her associates outside the confines of the palace. Her garden and accompanying mansion — known as the 'Roop Niwas' — is described as being the finest garden-complex of its time in Jaipur⁷¹. It may have been this unlimited power — and a wish to see its continuance for as long as possible, that led the faction of the Bhattiyani queen-mother, Jhutaram and Roopa *Raj Badaran* to maintain a close watch over the under-age Maharaja. For, it is alleged that they did not permit even the senior nobles of Jaipur state access to the young Maharaja.

The queen-mother died in 1833. Just over a year later, by February 1835, Sawai Jai Singh III too was dead. His infant son, Ram Singh II (r. 1835-1880), succeeded him. Meanwhile, rumour spread rapidly that the young Jai Singh III — who would otherwise soon have assumed full ruling powers upon attaining his majority, had been poisoned at the behest of Jhutaram and Roopa, who wished to see another spell of regency rule, in which they could exercise control yet again. Rumours had also spread previously at the opportune birth of Ram Singh — including allegations that that the Queen Chandrawat-ji had given birth to a daughter, who was secretly substituted with a new-born Brahmin boy. Once again, the matter had found mention in the correspondence of the concerned British officials.

Jhutaram was forced to resign and the British took charge of the administration, convening a Regency Council, and making Major (later Colonel) Nathaniel Alves, the Political Agent, the 'guardian' of the infant ruler, Sawai Ram Singh. The Agent confined Jhutaram in Dausa fort. However, Roopa was a strong force still, for she had already gained the confidence of the mother of the infant Maharaja, 'Rani Chandrawat-ji', the new queen-mother of the state. Meanwhile, resentment against the British interference in Jaipur state's affairs had grown to dangerous proportions.

In June 1835, when the Agent and his party went to meet the mother of the infant Maharaja, a large crowd accumulated outside the palace. As Alves emerged from the palace, someone from the crowd attacked him with a sword and wounded him seriously. Acting quickly, Blake, Assistant to the Political Agent, snatched the sword from the assailant, thereby saving the life of Alves and others of his party. Unfortunately for Blake, however, the crowd misunderstood the matter, and the sight of a blood-stained sword in his hand gave credence to a conveniently started rumour that he had assassinated the infant ruler of Jaipur in a British attempt to annex the state. Blake was followed as he left the palace compound on his elephant. To save himself, Blake dismounted from his elephant and sought shelter, along with his attendant, in a temple, but both the men were killed by the mob.

The furious British Political Agent took quick reprisal. A judicial enquiry was ordered and a committee heard the case, following which *Dewan Amar Chand* and *Hidayatullah* were hanged, and a death sentence, later commuted to life imprisonment, passed over Jhutaram and his brother, *Hukum Chand*. The two died in prison later. Others connected with the incident were sentenced to varying lengths of imprisonment. *Roopa Raj Badaran*, however, managed to remain free, in spite of a couple of attempts to arrest her, until she was eventually taken away from the palace *zenana* in 1836 and placed under house-arrest outside the city of Jaipur. (In 1844 this former servant was allowed to proceed to the pilgrimage site of Pushkar, where she died in May 1849). Meanwhile, the Rawal of Samode had been appointed regent, since the young Maharaja was a minor.

Upon the regent's death in 1838, the work of administration was carried out by the Regency Council, under the direct supervision of

successive British political agents (like Major Ross, Major Thoresby and Major John Ludlow). This council was referred to as *Panch Sadaran*, or alternately, *Panch Musahibat*. This body became the highest administrative and judicial authority in the state. Various laws were framed. In 1839, regular revenue-related civil courts, or *Adalat Diwani*, as well as criminal courts, or *Adalat Faujdari*, were established for Jaipur state. In 1840, the state was divided into fresh administrative zones, districts, and *parganas*. Other administrative, judicial and social reforms were introduced. Infanticide was outlawed, and slavery abolished. In addition, certain other administrative institutions were streamlined.

In the interim, taking advantage of the general misrule and breakdown of the administrative structure under the regency of the Bhattiyani queen-mother, and the weakened control of Jaipur, to whom parts of Shekhawati owed allegiance by this point in time, many local groups had taken to plundering and robbing. Their activities ranged across large parts of Shekhawati and into the tracts held by Bikaner and Dhoondhar states. (Among such men were Doong-ji (Doongar Singh) and Jawahar-ji (Jawahar Singh): two brothers who gained a rather ‘Robin Hood’ kind of status in Shekhawati, with many songs and couplets about their exploits gaining currency. They robbed the Nasirabad treasury, but later returned the amount).

Since there were treaties with the East India Company in place by this time, in early 1831 the British deemed it necessary to send in Lieutenant-Colonel Lockett as Officer-on-Special Duty, to study the situation and report back. Lockett toured the area during the summer of 1831, accompanied by Lt. Boileau, and made his report. (The ‘Lockett Report’ provides an interesting picture of mid nineteenth century Shekhawati). Consequent to Lockett’s findings, a brigade of British troops, with artillery and cavalry, was despatched from Nasirabad, the army cantonment near Ajmer, to dismantle the many forts and fortified enclosures of the numerous local Shekhawat ‘brigand’ chieftains⁷². Along with this, in 1835 a ‘Shekhawati Brigade’ was constituted to enforce law and order locally. The East India Company charged the chiefs and princes of the concerned tracts towards the maintenance of this cavalry corps. (Subsequently, the strength of the Shekhawati Brigade was reduced in number, and still later it was

amalgamated with 13th Native Infantry in 1843 and its cost was taken over by the Company).

All these various happenings had pushed the already impoverished Jaipur state into further debt. The arrears in the stipulated tribute (*khiraj*) due to the East India Company alone were thirty-nine lakhs of rupees. The AGG, Lt. Col. Sutherland, pushed the East India Company towards agreeing to a reduction in the annual tribute from eight to four lakhs, and the writing off of existing arrears. It was also during the minority of Sawai Ram Singh II that the state of Jaipur banned the practice of sati by law in 1846. Under British guidance, a similar step was taken around the same time by other states across Rajasthan. (In 1853, when the wife of Ratan Singh, a Shekhawat from Mandrela, committed sati immediately upon his death, Jaipur state declared the entire estate to have become *khalsa* (crown property). This was to prevent others from emulating the outlawed practice. The Mandrela estate was restored much later).

Maharaja Ram Singh obtained full ruling powers upon reaching his majority in 1851. Over the next three years, Rawal Shiv Singh of Samode, son of the former regent, Bairisal, looked after the administration, but the Maharaja replaced him in 1854 with Lakshman Singh of Chomu. The Maharaja's former tutor, Pandit Sheodin, was made the *dewan*, with charge of the revenue department, and Faiz Ali Khan became the 'State *Bakshi*' — or commander of Jaipur state's military forces. (Nawab Sir Faiz Ali Khan rose to serve as prime minister later). Within a few short years of this, the 1857 events saw Jaipur state offer assistance to the British. Jaipur's forces held the road between Agra and Delhi, and joined the British action against Tantia Tope at Dausa. In recognition of these services, Sawai Ram Singh II was granted, in perpetuity, the territory of Kot Qasim.

During the reign of Maharaja Sawai Ram Singh II various reforms along the British India pattern were introduced in Jaipur state. During the 1854-55 period, four new departments of police, medical, education, and survey & settlement were set-up, each under a separate administrator. The administrative machinery was re-modelled. The state's administrative units were re-organised into five districts or sub-areas, each placed under a *nazim*. (The number of districts was increased to ten in 1867). In the initial

stages, these *nazims* combined the role of the Revenue Collector, District Magistrate, Judge and police. In 1860 a code for the police was framed, which was later revised in 1873. Jaipur's State Council was reconstituted in August 1867. It was headed by the Maharaja and included eight members in-charge of various departments. In 1870, a *Shahar Kazi* and *Dharma Sabha* were also instituted to provide opinions to judicial and court officers.

Ram Singh placed due importance on education too, which was remodelled on 'modern' lines. Jaipur became among the foremost states of Rajputana in the field of 'modern' educational endeavours. Maharaja's College was established in 1844. By 1867 its first batch had taken the matriculation examination from Calcutta University, by 1873 it had been raised to the 'Intermediate' level, and by 1875 its original forty students had grown to eight hundred. The Maharaja established a Sanskrit College too, and in 1861 a school for Rajput boys. Another noteworthy first was the opening of a medical college, albeit a short-lived effort, at Jaipur in September 1861. In 1866-67 an art and craft centre, first set-up in 1857 as the *Madarasa-e-Humiri*, was re-structured as the 'Maharaja's School of Art and Crafts' and established at Jaipur city. (Now the 'Rajasthan School of Art', this continues to function from its original building. However, there are plans to rehouse this in a new complex in the near future).

Until this time, education had been carried out in the region through a variety of traditional local *pathshalas*, *chatshalas*, *maktabs*, *sals*, *upasaras*, and so forth. According to a comprehensive report of 1864, compiled by Lawrence, the AGG, from reports sent by various British political agents at different states of Rajputana, Jaipur's Political Agent, Lt, Col. J.C. Brooke noted that in Jaipur city itself there were 110 indigenous schools with 2,598 pupils on roll. In his report, Brooke wrote that traditional privately run schools existed in almost every village. In fact, the post of a special official to superintend schools within the kingdom, which had been created by Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II in the eighteenth century, had continued in existence till about 1813.

(The continuity of such traditions ensured that more than 500 indigenous schools existed all over Rajputana in 1864 side by side with modern schools. Adam, Munro, Elphinstone, Wood and Hunter strongly

advocated the retention and improvement of the indigenous education. Their proposals were not heeded and in the British administered provinces the officials of the Education Department allowed the indigenous system to die and replaced it with a new system of education. The situation was mirrored in the various Rajputana states too⁷³!)

The first state-run girls' school of Jaipur was established in 1866. Thus, we learn that on 7 May 1866, Babu Kanti Chandra Mukerji, head master of the Maharaja's College and Superintendent of Education, Jaipur state, informed the *Mahakma Aliya* (State Council) of Jaipur, that a girls' school had been established at Jaipur in accordance with the wishes of Maharaja Sawai Ram Singh on Jyestha Sudi 5, Samvat 1922 (5th May 1866). In 1875 the original 'Female School' was divided into three schools — the Central School for Girls, the Female Normal School and the Female Industrial School. By 1879, the number of girls' schools maintained by the state in the Jaipur area rose to ten. Over time, girls' education along modern patterns was gradually established in the state.

The Presbyterian Church Mission first started girls' schools under private management in Jaipur state in 1872 at Jaipur city. Later, a Mission Girls' School was started at Sambhar. In 1898 the Jain community began the Jain Saraswati Pathshala for girls. Another small girls' school was established by one Pandit Shiv Nand Sharma, who ran the school from his personal resources until the state gave him a grant of ten rupees per month in March 1918.

Among other transformations and innovations, the Maharaja encouraged the completion of the Agra-Ajmer railway line. In 1864 a modern postal system and telegraph was introduced. By 1868 a municipal committee for the city of Jaipur had been established. Separate departments were created for education, police, and health. In 1870 a modern hospital, along western lines was opened, and by the end of Sawai Ram Singh's reign, Jaipur state had twenty-four medical dispensaries. Due attention was paid to the building of modern roads and irrigation works too. Among other things, the 'Ramniwas Garden' was laid out for public use, a theatre called 'Ram Prakash' built, gas-lighting for the streets introduced, and a piped water-supply system installed in the capital-city. These various reforms and

modernised institutions went a long way towards bettering the administration of the state.

Traditional ateliers were not neglected, though. The Maharaja provided court patronage to writers, artists and musicians of note. Among them were the famous *veena* player, Ustad Rajab Ali Khan, and the great exponent of the *dhrupad* form of singing, Ustad Bairam Khan Dagar. In addition, about 160 other performing artists were employed in the *Gunijan-khana* of the Jaipur state.

One of the momentous decisions taken during Ram Singh's reign related to the Salt Treaty concluded with the British during 1869-70. As per the terms of this, from its share of the joint jurisdiction over the Sambhar salt-lake, the Jaipur state leased its right of manufacture and sale of salt to the British for Rs. 2.75 lakh annually. The terms of their agreement stated that the lease would legitimately remain in force as long as the British wished, but that they would give a two years' notice to Jaipur state before ending the lease. In return for leasing its rights, Jaipur was entitled to receive a maximum of 1.72 lakh *maunds* of salt annually from the British government (at the rate of nine *annas* per *maund*), and a twenty per cent royalty on the price per *maund* in excess of 8.25 lakh *maunds* of salt sold. The state would also receive 7,000 *maunds* of good salt free of all charges annually for the use of the ruler. However, Jaipur was not permitted to levy any duty on British salt.

In 1879, a further Salt Agreement was concluded between Jaipur state and the British⁷⁴. This stipulated the following: (i) the suppression of indigenous salt-manufacture in Jaipur state; (ii) that no tax, toll, transit duty or due would be levied on salt, whether imported-exported, or in transit through the state of Jaipur, and (iii) that there would be no import or export of any salt other than salt on which British duty had been paid. Jaipur state also gave up its right to 1.72 lakh *maunds* of salt annually (*vide* the earlier treaty of 1869) in lieu of an annual payment of rupees four lakh by the British government. Besides this, the management of the Kuchor Rewasa salt-works was granted to the British government. In exchange for this, it was stipulated that the chief of Khandela would receive Rs. 8,000 annually

and the Thakur of Kuchor Rs. 3,000 annually, through Jaipur state. Certain landholders would also be paid Rs. 2,309 annually for loss of salt works.

Ram Singh's reign saw an increased interaction with the highest in the British administration. For example, in 1876, Ram Singh II attended the 'Royal Assemblage' held by Lord Lytton (at the time Viceroy and Governor General of India) in Delhi⁷⁵, and later Lord Mayo (the then Viceroy), visited Jaipur in 1870. Since Ram Singh II had no male heir, he was succeeded by Kayam Singh of Isarda, who ascended to the *gaddi* as Maharaja Sawai Madho Singh II (r. 1880-1922). Madho Singh II continued with the task of modernisation of institutions and development works, as already initiated in the reign of his predecessor⁷⁶.

In 1888 the Maharaja's College was raised to the B.A. level, with M.A. following two years later. By 1905 that institution was offering B.Sc courses too. Meanwhile, railway lines linking the capital city of Jaipur with Sawai Madhopur (a distance of seventy-three miles), and with Palsana via Reengus (sixty-one miles), were laid. Reengus and jhunjhunu (fifty-seven miles) were similarly connected by rail. The Sawai Madhopur to Hindaun rail-track was purchased from the Bombay-Baroda & Central India (B.B. & C.I) Railway. Several roads and irrigation works were built too. Among other attempts at industrialisation, a cotton press was established at Jaipur in 1882. Later, another cotton press came up at Manda.

One of Madho Singh's administrative measures was disallowing local collection of transit and customs duty (known as *raahgiri*), in the Shekhawati area and moving this and other rights, and some local courts, to Jaipur. Traditionally, the chiefs of Shekhawati had long enjoyed complete authority to independently collect transit and custom duty for goods traversing their territories. (In fact, many of the chieftains of the Shekhawati area were *jagirdars* at the court of more than one neighbouring state!) They now rallied against the abolition of this right. The rulers of Khetri and Sikar, along with the *panch-pana* and other Shekhawat chiefs, jointly submitted their case before the Jaipur Law Court, and presented a memorandum to the Political Agent. The Government of India ruled in the favour of the Shekhawati chiefs, stating that the Jaipur state ought not to

interfere in the long established tradition and rights of the chiefs of Shekhawati.

However, many long established rights, traditions and practices common to the Dhoondhar area had seen change already, during the course of the nineteenth century, as a result of the long contact with the British and their ideas. For example, the British Resident played a significant role in the state's administration, often guiding and controlling a Regency Council during the all-too-frequent spells when the ruler was a legal minor. (Considering Rajputs traditionally accorded adult status to a fourteenth year old — even the 'western' concept of 'attaining majority' at eighteenth was a change in tradition!)

Traditionally, by the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries, the important state functionaries had included the *pradhan*, *desh dewan*, *dewan hazuri*, *bakshi*, and so forth. The *pradhan* controlled the budget and supervised certain departments; the *desh dewan* looked after general administration and the collection of taxes; the *dewan hazuri* looked after *jagirs* and *karkhanas* (divisions of manufacture, guilds, workshops, and the state-patronised divisions of art, music, books, etc.), and the *bakshi* was the commander-in-chief and pay-master of the state armies. Some of these offices were retained through the nineteenth to twentieth centuries, but with modifications. Similarly, following Mughal influence, the state had been divided into administrative units called *pargana*, each in the charge of an *amil*, who held administrative as well as judicial powers. Officers like the *faujdar*, *kotwal*, *bavaldar*, and *daroga*, besides revenue-collecting and other staff, assisted each *amil*. Significant law and order problems came before the *amil* or the *faujdar*, while local village councils (*panchayat*) settled petty matters.

As far as land-holdings and land-revenues were concerned, the main traditional tenures on which lands were held in the region were *jagir*, *muamla-suba* or *istmirar*, *inam*, *tankhwa jagir*, *udak* and *bhog*. More than half of Jaipur state's area was lands granted in *jagir*. The local *jagirdars* of each tract were fairly autonomous, and paid nominal cess to the state, despite the less than nominal amount they collected from the people of their *jagir* areas. Some lands were also given out on *ijara* sub-lease to *ijaradars*.

Land-revenue, realised both in cash and kind, was as important a source of revenue for pre-modern Dhoondhar, as it was during the nineteenth century. The state was entitled to half the gross produce, though in actual practice its demand varied from one-fourth to half of the produce. This was called the '*latai*' system. Certain revenue-demands were traditionally assessed through methods like *jabti*, *batai* and *kunta*. As was the case with other neighbouring states, a number of other cesses or *laag-baag*, were also collected. These varied according to the communities involved. Duty known as *chungi* or *rahadari* was traditionally levied on the sale, import and export of different commodities.

ALWAR

Following the victory of the East India Company and its Alwar-Bharatpur allies over the Marathas in the closing part of 1803, Maharao Raja Bakhtawar Singh of Alwar (r. 1791 -1815), concluded a treaty with the British on 14 November 1803. The treaty terms stipulated that the foreign relations of Alwar were to be regulated by the British government, though the British would not 'interfere with the country of the Maharao Raja'. The British demanded no tribute⁷⁷.

Afterwards, by a *sanad* dated 28 November 1803, Bakhtawar Singh of Alwar was granted the *parganas* of Ismailpur and Mandawar by the British. The *sanad* also gave him the *taluka* (a smaller unit of land) of Darbarpura, Ratai (Karnikot), Mandhan, Gilor, Sarai, Bijwad, Neemrana (then spelt 'Nimrana')⁷⁸, Dadri, Loharu and Budwana. Alwar's *vakil*, Ahmad Baksh Khan received the districts of Ferozpur from the British, and Loharu (258 sq miles) from Bakhtawar Singh of Alwar, along with the title of Nawab, for his part in the campaign.

Bakhtawar Singh was stern when it came to consolidating Naruka control over the Meos of the region. In 1811 the Meos of Tijara rose in revolt against him, but the Alwar ruler subdued the revolt with the assistance of the East India Company. Soon after this, he sent his army against the neighbouring Jaipur state in a bid to install a supporter, Kushali

Ram Bohra, as the *dewan* of Jaipur. This proved to be an erroneous move, and under pressure from the Company, Alwar had to withdraw its forces and pay an indemnity to Jaipur. Thereafter, in July 1811, Alwar entered into a fresh treaty with the East India Company. According to the terms of this, Alwar could not interfere with, or have connections with any other state without the approval of the Company.

Bakhtawar Singh is believed to have become deranged towards the end of his reign. He indulged in acts of cruelty against his Muslim subjects. It is reported that mosques were razed to the ground; the tombs of Ghalib Shahid at Alwar and Sayyad Jalaluddin at Bahadurpur were dug up, and the dwelling of Kamal Chishti (a nephew of Fatehpur Sikri's famed Sufi saint, Shaikh Salim Chishti) at Alwar was destroyed. Major Powlett has cited instances of Bakhtawar Singh's insane cruelty in his near-contemporaneous *Gazetteer of Ulwar State*. The Alwar ruler's actions upset the Muslims at Delhi, and it was with difficulty that the British Resident — who was trying to restrain Bakhtawar Singh — managed to dissuade them from invading Alwar. It is said that British forces marched into Alwar state at the request of the Emperor at Delhi, but upon the forces reaching Bahadurpur, the country was saved from destruction following an offering of several lakhs rupees by Nawab Ahmed Baksh Khan. Another version asserts that the British forces were not sent as retaliatory action at the request of the Mughal emperor, but because Bakhtawar Singh had contravened the terms of the treaty with the British through acquiring Dubbi and Sikrai.

Maharao Raja Sawai Bakhtawar Singh died in February 1815. (His non-Rajput wife, known as 'Musi Rani' (also spelt as 'Moosi Rani'), immolated herself as a sati on his funeral pyre. Her memorial *chhatri* was erected besides a tank to the rear of the Alwar Palace). At the time of his death, Bakhtawar Singh was allegedly intending to adopt his nephew, the young Viney Singh (son of his brother, Salah Singh of Thana), as his heir. However, since he died before the formalities could be completed, one faction of the Alwar nobles put forward the claim of Bakhtawar Singh's illegitimate son, Balwant Singh instead. Among the supporters of Balwant's claim was Nawab Ahmed Baksh Khan of Loharu.

The East India Company recognised the validity of the claims of both Viney (also 'Baney') and Balwant to a degree. It was suggested that both serve jointly as rulers with the stipulation that Viney Singh (r. 1815-1857), could have the title of ruler, and Balwant Singh exercise some of the powers. As both the claimants were minors at this time, a Regency Council consisting of Nawab Ahmed Baksh Khan of Loharu, Thakur Akshya Singh and Ramu Khawas, was asked to carry out the work of the administration of the state. This continued until 1824.

Upon the two rival contenders achieving majority, each of them started asserting their authority in their own way. The Court was already divided into two rival groups. One, led by Nawab Ahmed Baksh Khan, supported Balwant Singh, and the other supported Viney Singh. Several supporters of the Viney Singh camp were arrested on the charge of attempt to murder Ahmed Baksh Khan. Viney Singh's group retaliated by killing some of the supporters of Balwant Singh. Soon, Viney Singh's party gained an upper hand over Balwant Singh's party. The unfortunate Balwant Singh was imprisoned. The East India Company deemed it time to intervene. In 1826, a British force advanced against Viney Singh, who quickly agreed to reach a compromise with Balwant Singh. It was settled that Balwant Singh would receive the *jagir* of Tijara (valued at rupees two lakhs), and rupees two lakhs per annum in cash. Balwant Singh spent the rest of his life at Tijara where he died in 1845. In the absence of any children, his estates reverted to the state of Alwar after his death.

Viney Singh now turned his attention towards governance. Powlett's *Gazetteer* noted that with the assistance of Munshi Aminuddin Khan (better known as Ammu Jan), an able Muslim from Delhi whom Viney Singh took into his service and made *dewan* about 1838, and Ammu Jan's two brothers, great changes were made in the administrative system of Alwar state⁷⁹. The land revenue had, prior to 1838, been levied in kind, the state often claiming half of the gross produce, plus a thirteenth of the remainder on account of the expenses of collection. In 1838 cash assessment was introduced, as was the 'contract system' of land-revenue collection — apparently at the initiative of Ammu Jan. Contracts were usually entered into by the state for a fixed number of years, either with fief-holders or with others. These 'contractors' would make collections either in accordance

with the *pargana* crop rates or by other methods. Civil and criminal court; were established too. However, the various changes and reforms brought more into the pockets of the *dewan* rather than to the state exchequer.

A word here about the land-tenures prevalent in Alwar state in the nineteenth century. About eighty-six per cent area was *khalsa* or crown lands, and the rest was held by *istmirardars*, *jagirdars* and *muafidars*. Cultivators in *khalsa* areas were inalienable as long as they cultivated and duly paid rent to the state. The larger cultivators were known as *zamindars*. *Istmirardars* paid a set amount annually to the State, in accordance with their holdings. They were also required to pay an additional three per cent of the amount for dispensaries, schools, and roads. As far as *jagirs* were concerned, Alwar state had two categories of *jagirdars*. One category bore the obligation of supplying horses and troops to the state when needed, while the other carried no such obligation. Both categories of *jagirdars* were expected to render to the state a cess called *adwah*. *Muafi* lands were usually lands that had been given to Rajputs and ex-soldiers for their maintenance, or *qanungos* and *chowkidars* as remuneration for their services, or to Brahmins, Charans, temple-trusts etc. as acts of piety. The holders of *muafi* lands generally paid no cesses.

About AD 1851, major financial irregularities involving Ammu Jan came to light. Viney Singh had Ammu Jan and his brothers arrested, but released them upon payment of rupees seven lakhs as fine, and it was not long before they had regained their former power⁸⁰. Viney Singh's reign was marked by high fines and exactions from peasants and nobles alike. But Powlett found that much as the *ryots* were oppressed during Viney Singh's reign of forty-two years, the ruler's name was cherished reverentially by his subjects. As such, Powlett commented: "Even now when they have any occasion for rejoicing, they exclaim, 'The days of Banni [sic] Singh have returned'"⁸¹.

Powlett regarded Viney Singh as a 'good native chief', even while unhesitatingly listing the Maharaja's short-comings and hasty temper. According to Powlett's assessment, though Viney Singh was not "... a well-educated man himself, he was a great patron of arts and letters, and attracted painters and skilled artisans from various parts of India to his

service. He expended large sums of money on the collection of a fine library. For one book alone, a beautifully illuminated copy of the *Gulistan*, he paid Rs. 50,000⁸². (Viney Singh's chief queen (*pat-rani*), Rani Anand Kumari, is known to have authored a religious text called the *Anand-Sagar*)

In 1842 a small school was started in the capital by the Maharaja. Viney was responsible also for the construction of a palace at Alwar city, and a smaller but more beautiful 'Moti Doongri' or 'Viney-Vilas' (often called 'Banni Bilas') palace. (This was subsequently demolished by Jey Singh, apparently in search of treasure. Later, a smaller structure was later built here). However, Viney Singh's greatest achievement, in Powlett view, was the large *bund* or dam, built at Siliserh, ten miles from Alwar, where the collected water formed a fine lake. The waters of this Siliserh dam were brought into Alwar city by a masonry aqueduct, and Powlett observed that this had "changed the barren lands which previously surrounded the town into a mass of luxuriant gardens"⁸³.

During the last five years of his life, Viney Singh was paralysed and, as such, unable to exert much control over administration. As a result, *Dewan Ammu Jan* exercised practically unbridled power over Alwar. Just before his death, Viney Singh displayed his loyal friendship towards the British during the so-called '1857 mutiny', when he ordered the despatch of a force of about 800 infantry, 400 cavalry and four guns to the assistance of the beleaguered garrison at Agra. The cavalry included the *Khas Chauki* (ruler's personal guard) comprising Rajputs, while the bulk of the cavalry were Muslims.

Powlett informs us that the Neemuch and Nasirabad Brigade of 'mutineers' came upon the Alwar force on the road between Bharatpur and Agra. Deserted by their leader and the Muslim portion of the force, including the artillery, who went over to the side of the Indian 'mutineers', the remainder of the pro-British Alwar troops suffered a severe defeat. (Raja Bahadur Chimman Singh, grandson of Samrat Singh Kalianot, deserted and joined the Indian nationalists). They left fifty-five men dead on the field. Of these, ten were nobles of standing, whose heirs subsequently received *khillats* from the Government. Viney Singh was on the point of death when the news of this disaster reached Alwar, and he was

spared the worst of it. The last order he issued — in writing, as he had already lost the use of his tongue — was that a lakh of rupees should be sent from his fort for the succour of his small fighting force⁸⁴.

Viney Singh died in August 1857, after a rule of forty-two years. He was succeeded by his only surviving son, Sheodan Singh (r. 1857-74), a twelve year old minor at the time. The actual administration passed on to *Dewan* Aminuddin Khan, better known as Ammu Jan, whose writ now ran large across the state. Ammu Jan recruited even more of his relatives to important posts in the state. He also succeeded in exercising a domineering influence over the young ruler, so much so that the latter adopted Ammu Jan's style of dress and speech. There were rumours in Alwar that Ammu Jan planned to marry one the daughters of his family to the young Sheodan Singh and convert him to Islam.

Meanwhile, the *dewan* began using his unchallengeable position to settle old scores with his long-standing enemy, Mirza Asfand Yar Beg. He imprisoned the Mirza's followers, Ram Lal Kayastha, Bhudhar Kalal and Goverdhan Singh Sahalwal, on the charge of attempting to incite the troops, and ordered the Mirza to immediately vacate the house in which he was residing. This belonged to Thakur Akhshya Singh Bankawat. Mirza Asfand Yar Beg approached the influential Rajputs of the state, who were already chafing at the influence of Ammu Jan over their ruler.

Under the leadership of Lakhdhir Singh, the Thakur of Bijwad, the Rajputs rose up in revolt against Ammu Jan and raided his dwelling. Ammu Jan managed to escape, along with his brothers Faizullah Khan and Inamullah Khan, but some of their relatives were apprehended. Maharaja Sheodan Singh was enraged at the action of his kinsmen-Rajputs. Khet Singh, the Thakur of Lawa, acted as mediator. Meanwhile, upon learning of the incident, Captain Nixon, the Political Agent at Bharatpur, reached Alwar. A Regency Council of local nobles (*sardars*), under the presidentship of Thakur Lakhdhir Singh, was appointed to run the administration. A little later the British established a new Agency' for Alwar, and Captain Impey was appointed as the first Political Agent of 'Ulwur' (Alwar) in November 1858.

Despite his reputation as an able administrator, towards the latter part of his tenure (prior to his hasty departure from the affairs of state), Ammu Jan had failed to maintain order and keep administrative matters in order. As such, Captain Impey found several administrative departments needing his immediate attention. He had numerous difficulties to encounter in accomplishing this task, including the fact that the young Sheodan Singh attempted to thwart him over most issues. Meanwhile, the Regency Council, formed by Captain Nixon immediately after the expulsion of Ammu Jan, did not work well. In 1859, the young ruler, Sheodan Singh, in collusion with the *ex-dewan* (by then at Delhi), conspired to kill Thakur Lakhdhir Singh. However, the plans proved abortive and were foiled in time. Thereafter, the Regency Council was abolished by Captain Impey, who took affairs into his own hands.

Later, another council consisting of five thakurs was constituted; but in 1860 this was dismissed as Impey found that "...corruption had reached such a pitch as to frustrate every hope for even a decent administration". Another council was formed, with Thakur Lakhdhir Singh as president and Thakur Nandji and Pandit Rup Narain as members. This council carried on its duties until Sheodan Singh became an adult and was invested with (limited) ruling powers on 14 September 1863.

However, Alwar's Maharao Raja was not entrusted with sole administration till 1866, since the British had apprehensions over the 'turbulence' of his character, which had given rise to 'serious disputes and grave disturbances' in the state. (Among other things, upon Sheodan Singh obtaining ruling powers, he had promptly seized one of Thakur Lakhdhir Singh of Bijwad's villages. The Thakur left Alwar state and took refuge at Jaipur and then Ajmer. In 1866, Thakur Lakhdhir Singh invaded Alwar, with little success. The Government of India took strong note of his conduct, but in view of the provocation he had faced and because of his previous services to Alwar state, an income was secured to him).

In the interim, on the land revenue front, a 'Summary Settlement' for three years — 1859-60, 1860-61 and 1861-62 — was begun in February 1859 by Captain Impey (aided by T. Heatherley), on lines similar to those adopted by Sir Henry Lawrence in Bharatpur in 1855. The method for

deciding assessments entailed, firstly, collecting the tenant-farmers at 'district' headquarters, and then selecting about five of them from different castes and villages. They were then consulted while rents for each village were considered openly in the presence of all assembled. Collections made for the last ten years were read out. Villagers themselves stated a sum for their revenue-assessment; though ultimately it was the *tehsildars* and *qanungos* who went on to fix rents and assessments. Agreements to pay the agreed amounts were generally signed by *zamindars* at the conclusion of the assembly. In this manner, about 1,500 *khalsa* villages (but none of the *jagir* and *muafi* etc. villages) were assessed. The measure allowed some desolate villages to be re-inhabited and about 17,000 *bighas* of land that had fallen out of cultivation to be tilled again.

The Alwar State Council accepted the 'Settlement', noting that this would save the peasantry from exploitation and oppression at the hands of revenue-collectors, *tehsildars* and petty state functionaries. The State Council further decided that the settlement could be extended for another ten years, but the rights of the peasants and the State should be clearly determined. Thus, in December 1861, in accordance with the directions of State Council, Impey proposed an increase of one lakh of rupees per annum in land revenue. This was approved by the Government of India in August 1862, and the 'Ten Years Settlement' completed accordingly. Previous records, village documents, and existing conditions of the concerned villages were taken into account, and the assessment made known to the headman of each of the villages assessed. These headmen signed agreements assuring payment of land-revenues at the annual rate decided upon. Impey also recommended that unjust outstanding arrears should be remitted, but added that this be deferred till Maharaja Sheodan Singh came of age.

The regulation of land-revenue demands on the basis of fixed cash assessment by Captain Impey in the 'Three Years' and 'Ten Years' Summary Settlements referred to above, was an important step in land-related reforms at the time. Captain Impey noted that, prior to his work, the commonly used methods of fixing land revenue in Alwar state involved *kankut* (appraisal of the standing crop), *batai* (crop-sharing by weighing the harvested grain), *chakota* (rough money assessment, done by the villagers),

and *bighori* (assessment according to the *pargana* crop rate per *bigha*, fixed almost permanently by the state authority for each kind of crop). The contract system (referred to above), was common throughout the state prior to Impey's settlements. The method of collection was oppressive and allowed the revenue-collecting agencies to exploit the farmers. Impey had commented on this in 1860, noting that a system of plunder and oppression was practised on the 'unfortunate ryots' under the mismanaged *kham* (contract) system, which added to torture and ill-treatment of the worst nature, caused many to abandon their homes, and lands to fall out of cultivation.

After Captain Impey left Alwar, the Political Agency was removed from Alwar state. Thereafter (until 1869), the Agent to the Governor General (AGG) for Rajputana conducted all political business between the British with the Alwar *darbar*. Once Sheodan Singh had the reins of government wholly in his hands, he renewed contacts with the expelled *ex-dewan* Ammu Jan, who had been permitted to reside at Delhi by the Government of India, on condition he refrained from interference in the administration of Alwar state. Ammu Jan now exercised his influence through his agent at Alwar, and the Alwar ruler conducted his administration in accordance with Ammu Jan's advice.

Several officials appointed by Captain Impey were dismissed, and Rajputs replaced by Muslims in the state administration and armed forces. Between Ammu Jan's dominance, the Maharaja's extravagances, the state's heavy debts, serious dissatisfaction amongst the nobles, and a near-empty treasury, matters soon reached a critical state. To make bad worse, a number of *jagirs* and *muafi* lands — long-held by various different Charans, Brahmins and Rajputs — were confiscated. As Powlett observed (not long afterwards), "Captain Impey had left more than twenty lakhs in the treasury, but this sum was soon squandered [by the Alwar ruler]; and to raise money, salaries were greatly reduced, and grants of various kinds, long enjoyed by their holders, were resumed"⁸⁵.

Thereupon, the Rajput fief-holders of Thana, Toda, Binjari, Rajpur, Kachawa, Bhadkol, Palwa, Jamalpur, Pai, Garhi; the Chauhans of Nimhora and Krishnapur; the Kachchwahas of Kheri and Dhigawara, and the Gaur

Rajputs of Rajgarh, organised a faction (the *Ramdal*). Mahtab Singh of Kho-Hara, Hathi Singh Shekhawat and Hanumant Singh Naruka led this faction. The leaders conveyed the grievances of their group to the ruler, and requested that the orders of the land-confiscation be withdrawn. But as Sheodan Singh ignored their plea, Rajputs of the disgruntled faction assembled at Kho-Hara with their troops and resolved to expel Ammu Jan's supporters from the state.

Given the gravity of the situation, Captain James Blaire, Political Agent for Eastern Rajputana, was told to look into the episode by the Governor General at Calcutta. He heard the members of the faction individually and attempted convincing the ruler about the restoration of their estates. However, the ruler continued to be adamant and refused to yield. The *Ramdal* faction besieged Hamirpur. The Alwar ruler sent his troops, but these were routed. Meanwhile, following the death of Captain Blaire in March 1870, Dr. Harvey was sent to resolve matters in Alwar. The situation was soon afterwards referred to Major T. Cadell, the Political Agent at Bharatpur, who reached Alwar. Failing to bring about reconciliation, he obtained permission of the British government to interfere directly in the administration of Alwar state⁸⁶.

Cadell dismissed the unscrupulous and inefficient officers, punished the refractory nobles who had stopped paying the state its revenue-dues, appointed T. Heatherley as Deputy Collector, and tried to deal with the near financial bankruptcy of Alwar state. To deal with this, a loan of rupees ten lakhs was obtained from the Government of India. This was used, to clear the state debts and pay the salaries of the State employees etc. The land revenue was increased by seven and a half percent to augment the state's income.

In December 1870, the Government of India appointed a council under the presidency of the Political Agent⁸⁷. The council included four senior Naruka nobles, namely; Thakur Lakhdhir Singh of Bijwad, Thakur Mahtab Singh of Kho-Hara, Thakur Hardeo Singh of Thana and Thakur Mangal Singh of Garhi, along with Pandit Rup Narain. Maharaja Sheodan Singh of Alwar had a seat in the Council, but was divested of powers of

voting and of interfering with the executive. A fixed allowance of Rs. 3,000 a month, with an establishment, was granted to him.

Modernisation and administrative reforms followed in the ensuing years. The road system was upgraded and post and telegraph offices opened. A long-standing dispute between the Jaipur and Alwar States over twelve villages which were under the joint ownership of the two States was settled; and a systemic land survey embarked upon. In January 1872, Major Powlett, the Political Agent, was appointed Settlement Officer. Pending a proposed Sixteen Years' Regular Settlement, a 'Four Years' Summary Settlement was undertaken.

Meanwhile, a protracted tussle between the Naruka Alwar ruler and the Chauhan clan chief of Nimrana, whom the Alwar ruler considered a mere fief-holder of Alwar, while the Nimrana chief himself claimed an independent status, had been partially resolved by the British in 1868. Nimrana was declared a feudatory of Alwar, but simultaneously granted the right of adoption. Furthermore, the chief of Nimrana was allowed civil and criminal powers within his estate, subject to any rules promulgated by the British from time to time. It was ruled that Nimrana would pay an annual tribute to the Alwar state, equal to one-eighth of his land revenue (latter changed to a fixed sum), and Rs. 500/- as *nazarana* on the occasion of every succession of an Alwar ruler. On the occasion of succession to Nimrana, the rules as applicable to British feudatories would stand. Nimrana would maintain a *vakil* at Alwar and another at the office of the Agent to the Governor General. Trade in Nimrana would be entirely free and the ruler of Alwar would have no special customs tariff for goods going to or leaving Nimrana.

In the field of education, two girls' schools were opened in the state of Alwar in September 1872 by Pandit Rup Narain, a member of the State Council, and a former headmaster of the State High School. By 1873 twelve more schools for girls were started in the principal towns of Alwar state, as a result of Pandit Rup Narain's efforts. According to the *Ulwur Agency Report* (1886-87)⁸⁸, three girls from Alwar were sent to study medicine at Agra in June 1886 on state scholarships.

Meanwhile, already divested of his powers, Sheodan Singh also suffered the trauma of three of his four queens dying in relatively rapid succession. His own health suffered — it was even said that he was mentally unsound — and despite treatment, he died in 1874 at the age of twenty-nine, leaving behind no heir to succeed him.

As is often the case over the issue of succession, there was an absence of unanimity amongst the senior-most nobles. Some wished to follow the precedent established by Alwar's first ruler, Pratap Singh, and select the 'best' candidate, others advocated a candidate from the estate of Thana, and yet a third group wanted nearness of kin to form the basis of selection. Of the late Sheodan Singh's immediate family within the *zenana*, or *raola* — often the deciding authority in matters of 'adoption' — his sole surviving widow was a minor and his mother remained indecisive!

The Government of India now took a hand, and placed the names of two candidates before the senior nobles. One was the administratively experienced fifty-five year old Lakhdhir Singh of Bijwad, and the other was a young fifteen year old, Mangal Singh of Thana. Mangal Singh's name was supported by a majority — who could probably see greater advantages in having a minor on the *gaddi*! (It seems Sir Alfred Lyall, the AGG for Rajputana expressed a preference for the administratively experienced Lakhdhir Singh, though he realised that a minority administration was more conducive for British interference. In fact, he cautioned his superiors that the British had to be careful to avoid 'even the suspicion of being actuated by desire to interfere in the internal affairs of the state for a day longer than might be necessary, in the interest of the people'⁸⁹).

The Viceroy confirmed the majority's selection, and thus, Maharaja Sawai Mangal Singh (r. 1874-1892) ascended the throne of Alwar on December 14, 1874. Thakur Lakhdhir Singh of Bijwad, a rival claimant to the throne and his supporters of the *Bara Kotri*, together with some nobles of position, refused to offer their allegiance to the new ruler as a protest. Their *jagirs* were sequestrated on 25 February 1875. Lakhdhir Singh was externed from Alwar and ordered to proceed to Ajmer and reside there⁹⁰. Lakhdhir Singh died at Jaipur in September 1875. His *jagir* was subsequently restored to his heir, Madho Singh.

Since Mangal Singh was a minor, the Political Agent, assisted by a Regency Council ran the state, while the young Mangal Singh was sent away for schooling to the Mayo College at Ajmer on 22 October 1875. He was the first Rajput prince from Rajputana to be admitted to this institution; marking a step towards 'modern', i.e. 'western-style', education for the prince and ruling elite.

The same year (1875), Alwar was connected with Delhi by rail. In due course, several extradition treaties were concluded between Alwar and its neighbouring states of Jaipur, Bharatpur, Patiala and Nabha. The state's first 'Regular Settlement' began in 1876. Even while assessment-work was on-going, there was a forty per cent increase in cultivated areas, fourteen per cent in masonry wells and fifty-five per cent in the number of ploughs. The state share was generally assumed to be two-third of the net assets (i.e. of what the landlord could get from a tenant), which was the share formerly taken in the 'North-Western Provinces' (later U.P.). This relatively high assessment was justified by Major Powlett on several grounds. The first Regular Settlement, though originally sanctioned for sixteen years, eventually went on for twenty-four years in view of problems caused in the state by the famine of 1877-78 and a succession of lean years.

In 1879, Alwar concluded an agreement with the British government for the suppression of local salt manufacture and the abolition of all transit duties except upon opium, spirits and other intoxicating drugs. A women's hospital was founded at Alwar too, and in 1884 a cotton press was established in the state. Meanwhile, Mangal Singh received full ruling powers in 1877. That was also the year that he attended the Imperial Assemblage of Delhi. (In 1885 he was created an honorary lieutenant colonel in the British Indian army, and in 1886 a Knight Grand Commander of the Most Exalted Order of the Star of India (KGCSI). He got the title of Maharaja as a hereditary distinction in 1889).

In May 1892 Kunj Bihari Lal, a member of the Alwar ruler's council, was murdered allegedly at the instance of the Maharaja. On May 22, the Maharaja himself died at Nainital, at the age of thirty-four years, apparently due to over-indulgence of liquor. His body was brought to Alwar by a special train for cremation and final rites. Maharaja Sawai Mangal Singh

was succeeded by his ten year old minor son, Jey Singh (r. 1892-1933, d.1937). (A remission of about ten lakhs of rupees had been given to the cultivators and jagirdars on his birth on 14 June 1882).

The new ruler was sent for his schooling to the Mayo College Ajmer, where he distinguished himself as a student and received a gold medal for establishing an all time record in the diploma examination! During his minority, the Regency Council set up by the British government looked after the task of administration till the Maharaja became an adult. It was on 10 December 1903, that Jey Singh was invested with full ruling powers by Lord Curzon, the Governor General and Viceroy of India.

In the interim, a cotton-ginning factory was established in the state in 1894, and by the end of the nineteenth century, there was also a small indigo factory, which exported its products to Calcutta. There were also a number of cottage industries, including those making glass bangles, bottles and thick paper, and weaving and dyeing. Around this time, the chief exports from Alwar were cotton, oilseeds, millet, dyed turbans and shoes, while sugar, salt, wheat, piece-goods and iron and steel were imported.

Alwar state's second Regular Settlement was carried out by Colonel Michael O' Dwyer during 1898-1900. It was meant to be applicable for twenty years. The average assessment per acre on irrigated lands varied from Rs. 6-3-0 (i.e. Rs. 6 and 3 *annas* and zero *pie*), to Rs.7-4-6 (i.e. Rs. 7, 4 *annas* and 6 *pie*) while on unirrigated land, it was Rs. 1-12-0 (Rs. 1,12 *annas* and zero *pie*). In re-assessing the rates, the Punjab system was followed, with the difference that the state's share of rent was based on a fourth of gross produce or two-third of the net assets. This 'Settlement' raised the assessment for the whole state by nine per cent. It was introduced from the *kharif* crop of 1898 in Tijara, Behror, Mandawar, Kathumar and Rajgarh and from that of 1900 in Alwar, Bansur and Thana Ghazi. Rajputs and some other privileged classes were assessed at favourable rates.

In his report, O' Dwyer observed that Alwar's agricultural population had been settled on the land 'from time immemorial long before the Alwar state was founded', and that their 'rights in the soil are not the creation of a formal grant by any ruler but the growth of long centuries of uninterrupted

occupation sanctioned by prescription and immemorial usage'. This status of the *zamindars* was traditionally recognised by Alwar state, which, even while asserting its own sovereign right, admitted a subordinate proprietary or *biswedari* right in the village community and its component members. This meant each farmer or unit was entitled to occupy, and be protected in the occupation of the land in his possession, as long as he cultivated it and paid revenue-dues to the state demand. This right was inheritable, and could be alienated by sale, gift or mortgage within certain limits and subject to the sanction of the state. *Jagir* holdings were an exception, though, to this general rule in Alwar state, and *jagirdars* had a tendency '...to become virtual proprietors, especially where their original settlement was in part due to their own sword or where they have by their own exertions protected their estates from danger'.

While the 'Land Settlements' and assessments ran smoothly during the latter part of the nineteenth century, when the next revised 'Settlement' took place in Alwar state some two decades later, and imposed higher revenue dues on the cultivators, widespread resentment, unrest and 'incidents' were to occur. These would influence the shape of Alwar's internal policies and politics — as we shall see in the next chapter.

THE SHEKHAWATI AREA

The Shekhawati chiefs gradually accepted the nominal supremacy of their nearest powerful neighbour — be it Dhoondhar, Bikaner, or Marwar, but continued to maintain a strongly unrestrainable streak over many matters, and enjoying special rights and dispensations (for instance in Jaipur). Some of them were *jagirdars* in more than one state; and occasionally held the high position of being a *Tazimi Sardar* in more than one state as well during the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries⁹¹.

In the case of the old Amarsar-Manoharpur line which had made Shahpura its capital during Bishan Singh's period, since Bishan Singh of Shahpura had no heir, he adopted his brother Prithvi Singh's son, Hanuwant, to succeed him. Hanuwant Singh (r. 1810-1855), is counted

among the powerful chiefs of his time, and was a friend of Jhutaram. He played a role in the murky Jaipur court politics of the period, and was a close associate in the manoeuvrings of Jhutaram and that camp. The eldest son, Lakshman, having predeceased his father, Hanuvant Singh was succeeded by his second son, Baldeo Singh (r. 1855-1858).

As Baldeo had no heir, on his death the estates passed to Hanuwant Singh's third and youngest son, Shivnath Singh (r. 1858-1881), Baldeo's designated successor by adoption. Shivnath Singh too had no heir, and once again adoption from within the family-branch came into play. This time the Shahpura title and estates went to Pratap Singh, son of Balwant Singh of Garh. Acknowledged as one of the leading chiefs of Shekhawati, Rao Pratap Singh (r. 1881-1942) was part of the generation that witnessed tremendous change in the old way of life⁹².

Among the Ramgarh-Khachariawas holding line of the Lad-Khani Shekhawats, in 1801 Shivdan Singh (r. 1801-1815), succeeded to the estates of his father, Duleha Singh. Along with maintaining the old links with the Jodhpur and Jaipur courts, Shivdan Singh apparently had cordial relations with Bikaner's Maharaja Surat Singh. Displaying the devil-may-care recklessness associated with the Lad-Khanis, Shivdan Singh is known to have taken revenge for the killing of two Lad-Khanis by Rao Raja Lakshman Singh of Sikar by rushing into Sikar and killing nine members of the Sikar family!

Shivdan Singh was succeeded by the youngest of his three sons, Ram Singh (r. 1815-1827), as the eldest, Bakhtawar, was mentally ill, and the second son, Chatarsal, already adopted by Than Singh of Lalasari. When Ram Singh died childless, the kinsmen decided that Chatarsal should be recalled from Lalasari, since Bakhtawar's infant son, Sardul Singh, was too young to manage the estate. Chatarsal (r. 1827-1874) proved to be efficient, and continued the fine balancing act between loyalty to Marwar and Dhoondhar. He opted to assist the British, led by Lt. Col. Lockett, Major Thoresby (the British Political Agent at Jaipur), and Major Forester, in their vigorous campaign against Shekhawati-based groups of free-booters, especially during the c. 1838-1851 period. Such groups were notorious for plundering and dacoities, and were often led by local Shekhawat headmen

and chiefs. In 1857, the Marwar ruler deputed him to help Captain A. Hardcastle recruit cavalry-men in response to the 1857 events, and then to maintain peace at Didwana. Chatarsal also served the state of Jaipur on numerous occasions⁹³. His successors were Bijay Singh (r. 1874-1886), Gobind Singh (r. 1886-1900), Kalyan Singh (r. 1900-1937)⁹⁴ and Surendra Singh (d. 1996).

In the Khandela line, Narsingh Das and Pratap Singh held their respective *bada-pana* and the *chhota-pana* portions amidst a confused scenario. This included aspects like a stubborn refusal to pay tribute on the part of Narsingh, court intrigues, the issue of a grant for all of Khandela to Pratap Singh of the *chhota-pana*, and frequent skirmishes and sieges, often also involving other Shekhawat kin. Finally, Maharaja Jagat Singh of Jaipur commanded the arrest of Narsingh Das and the occupation of Khandela as *khalsa* or State land. Jaipur's Asharam complied by arresting not just Narsingh Das, but Pratap Singh as well!

Both remained imprisoned at Amber, until Jaipur state began rallying its forces against Man Singh of Marwar (in connection with Jagat Singh's rival bid to marry the Mewar princess, Krishna Kumari). At this point, the Shekhawat chiefs of Khetri, Bissau etc. insisted that they would fight only after their clan's joint chiefs were released. The demand was acceded to, and the rival Khandela chiefs took their place with the Jaipur forces. Narsingh Das's grandfather, the expelled erstwhile Raja of Khandela, Brindaban Das, also rallied to the Dhoondhar cause. Both grandfather and grandson lost their lives in battle and were cremated near Mandore.

Jaipur's control over Khandela continued to increase over the coming years. Neither Narsingh Das's successor, Abhey Singh (r. 1806-1838), nor Pratap Singh (r. 1791-1816) of the *chhota-pana* were given possession of Khandela⁹⁵. Later, the gallant military intervention of Hanut Singh of Raipura, a Shekhawat kinsman of the Khandela chiefs, ensured the restoration of Khandela to its dual chiefs in 1809. The tribulations of all three were not fully over though, for Lakshman Singh of Sikar joined with the Pindari commanders Meer Mannu Khan, Jamshed Khan and Mahtab Khan and attacked parts of Shekhawati, including Khandela. After a fierce

resistance, the brave Hanut Singh of Raipura was killed, and Khandela fort occupied by Lakshman Singh of Sikar. The two rival rajas of Khandela, refusing Lakshman Singh's compensatory offer of ten villages each, took temporary shelter with the *panch-pana* chief of Jhunjhunu.

In 1814, Lakshman Singh of Sikar obtained the title-deeds of the whole of the Khandela and Rewasa *parganas* from Jaipur in return for paying Jaipur State's arrears to Amir Khan for Jaswant Rao Holkar. However, during the minority of Sawai Jey Singh III, when the Bhatiyani-Rani was regent, Lakshman Singh had to yield up Khandela to her in 1821. Khandela now came under Jaipur State's direct rule. In 1836, during the minority of Sawai Pratap Singh, the prime minister, Rawal Shiv Singh of Samode, had Khandela restored to its dual rajas, Abhey Singh and Pratap Singh's heir, Laxman Singh.

However, with the passage of time, Khandela's subservience to Dhoondhar (which, in turn, was party to a treaty acknowledging the paramountcy of the East India Company), had become established. Thus, Abhey Singh's successors in the *bada-pana* line, Krishan Singh (r. 1838-1852), Kushal Singh (r. 1852-1865), Fateh Singh (r. 1865-1880), Anand Singh (r. 1880-1884), Sawant Singh (r. 1884-1889), Hamir Singh (r. 1889-1935), Pratap Singh (r. 1935-43), and Ram Singh, remained linked with the activities of Jaipur State⁹⁶. So did the Khandela *chhota-pana* rajas. Of them, Pratap Singh's immediate successor in the *chhota-pana* line, Laxman Singh (r. 1816-1850), had no estate to return to until Khandela was eventually retaken from Sikar, and later restored to its joint holders by Jaipur state. Subsequent successors, Akhey Singh (r. 1850-1861), Jaswant Singh (r. 1861-1878)⁹⁷, Padam Singh (r. 1878-1883), Ranjit Singh (r. 1883-1885), and Sajjan Singh (r. 1885-1952)⁹⁸, remained associated with Jaipur state.

In the Sikar line, Rao Lakshman Singh (r. 1795-1833), started work on a hill-fort near the village of Beydd in 1805, beneath which he founded a town a couple of years later that was named Lakshmangarh. The Rao not only joined expeditions connected with Jaipur — like the battle of Parbatsar, but also participated rather wholeheartedly in local affairs as well. This included attacking Shahpura in c. 1800, confronting the Lad-

Khanis on several occasions, and supporting Sawai Singh of Pokhran in his efforts to raise Dhonkal Singh (allegedly the posthumous son of Maharaja Bhim Singh of Marwar), to the Jodhpur *gaddi*. It also included joining the Pindari commanders Meer Mannu Khan, Jamshed Khan and Mahtab Khan, in attacking parts of Shekhawati in 1812, during which the Sikar forces occupied Khandela!

In 1814, Lakshman Singh received the whole of Khandela and Rewasa *parganas* from Jaipur in return for paying Jaipur's arrears due to Jaswant Rao Holkar. Along with the *sanad* or agreement (also treaty), he obtained the title of 'Rao Raja' from Maharaja Sawai Jagat Singh. (When the Bhatiyani-Rani was regent of Jaipur during the minority of Sawai Jey Singh III, Khandela was taken back by Jaipur in 1821).

Upon Lakshman Singh's death in 1833, his four year old son, Ram Pratap (r. 1833-1850), succeeded him. Taking advantage of the minority rule, both at the Jaipur court and in Sikar, and consequent muddled state of administration, the illegitimate sons of Lakshman Singh became dominant. They even took possession of the forts at Fatehpur, Lakshmangarh and Ramgarh, until Sikar's regent queen-mother managed to convince them to take certain lands and village-revenues in exchange for the forts!

It was during this period that Lt. Col. Lockett's toured Shekhawati in 1831, following which troops were deployed to pull down various fortifications of the Shekhawat chiefs (as already mentioned above). To enforce law and order across that area, a 'Shekhawati Brigade' was also raised. The cost of the Jhunjhunu-based Brigade came from taxes levied on the chiefs of Shekhawati, who, in turn, collected the money from the people. As such, though the Brigade proved effective in checking brigandry, it became an additional financial burden on the chiefs and ordinary citizens of Shekhawati.

In 1837, the Brigade was placed under Jaipur state, which added additional layers of administrative control by both the Jaipur Regency Council and the British. This is because during 1834 the East India Company had decided to bring Shekhawati, with its several small and big estates, under its direct rule. The AGG (Col. Alves) had, thus, informed the

chiefs of Shekhawati that the tribute previously rendered by them to Jaipur was to be given to directly to the East India Company, and Major (later Colonel) PA. Thoresby was appointed the Political Agent in Shekhawati.

The confused state of affairs arising from dual control over Shekhawati ended with the chiefs reverting to the older system of giving tribute to Jaipur state in 1836-37, and by the abolition, in 1843, of taxes for the maintenance of the Brigade. (The Brigade itself was disbanded in 1842). Meanwhile, despite the vigorous Company actions across Shekhawati, incidents of looting were not entirely controlled. In the Sikar area, the now grown-up Ram Pratap (after being assisted by the British Political Agent and Jaipur Regency Council to recover the disproportionately large estate granted to four of his illegitimate half-brothers), marched against Batote and Patoda in 1846 to oust the so-called robber-barons Doongar Singh (Doong-ji), Jawahar Singh (Jawahar-ji), and Bhopal Singh.

Following the premature death of Ram Pratap Singh, who left no heir, there was a squabble over succession. The matter was finally decided in the Jaipur legal court, after a whole year, in favour of Ram Pratap's half-brother, Bhairon Singh (r. 1851-1865). One of his early acts was to appoint Mukand-ji Singh — one of the illegitimate sons of Lakshman Singh — as chief minister, and reach congenial settlements with the others. Mukand proved an able administrator.

Meanwhile, as robbery and plunder was still rampant across parts of Shekhawati, the British appointed Captain Hardcastle to deal with the matter. In 1857, Bhairon Singh of Sikar sent a force to augment those at the service of Col. Eden, the Political Agent at Jaipur — an action that won rewards from the British. As Bhairon Singh's only son had died young, the Rao Raja adopted Madho Singh (the second son of his relative Birad Singh of Deepura, and a descendant of Rao Shiv Singh), within his lifetime, as his son and heir.

On Bhairon Singh's death in 1865, Madho Singh (r. 1865-1922), became the new Rao Raja of Sikar. During his minority, the responsibility of administration was given, yet again, to the proven Mukund-ji. Mukund dealt efficiently and vigorously with plots and counter-plots by Zorawar

Singh Lad-Khani and others. Once Madho Singh reached adulthood, Mukund — by then in disfavour with the Rao Raja, was replaced. Sikar's Madho Singh had a long association with the Jaipur ruler, Sawai Ram Singh and later his successor, Sawai Madho Singh II, and attended some of the special durbars at Delhi and Jaipur. He was part of Maharaja Sawai Madho Singh II's retinue that accompanied the Jaipur ruler to Great Britain for the coronation of King Edward VII. As he had no son, he adopted Kalyan Singh (r. 1922-1937), the son of his elder brother, as his successor.

In the interim, the nineteenth century had witnessed the rise in status of the Khetri estate. In part, the roots of this lay in the fact that Abhay Singh of Khetri (r. 1800-1826), besides joining Jaipur's military actions against Jodhpur, also assisted the East India Company's efforts. In 1803 his forces joined Lord Lake in the capture of Agra and the battle of Laswari. The same year, Abhay Singh led the Khetri forces to join Col. Ball's expeditions against the fort of Kanod (now Mahendragarh), and in 1804 Khetri's contingents joined British campaigns under the command of Col. Monson. The following year, Khetri's troops marched to the rescue of the East India Company when Narain Rao and his Marathas besieged Kanod. The ensuing battle, fought some six miles from Narnaul, saw the defeat of the Marathas. For these services, Abhay Singh of Khetri was granted the *pargana* of Kotputli by the British, through a *sanad* issued in 1806. Later, Khetri's special friendship with the Company was acknowledged in writing, with a 'Letter of Assurance' issued in January 1818 to that effect.

Following the death of Abhay Singh and his successor, the vigorously active Bakhtawar Singh (r. 1826-1829) [99](#), the minor Shivnath Singh (r. 1829-1843) became raja of Khetri, with his mother as the regent. At this stage, Jaipur's powerful minister Jhutaram and his ally Thakur Shyam Singh of Bissau attempted to take advantage of the minority rules in both Jaipur and Khetri, and conspired to take Khetri under their control. Their effort was scuttled, in part by the Khetri regent queen-mother, a sister of Jaipur's regent, the Bhattiyani-Rani.

A second period of regency followed the demise of Shivnath Singh, with the accession of his posthumous son, Fateh Singh (r. 1843-1870). During Fateh Singh's minority the Ranawat *Ma-ji* wielded authority,

assisted by a council of ministers, and occasionally heeding the advice of Jaipur's British Resident. Khetri's former queen-mother, Shivnath's mother, the Dowager *Ma-ji* Bhattiyani, was considered a hindrance to Khetri's governance and exiled from the estate. (She took up residence at Khetri House in Jaipur). Mismanagement and inefficient administration during Fateh Singh's period of minority¹⁰⁰ led to several changes of administrative officers and a degree of British interference. It also resulted in a squandered coffer, as a result of Ranawat Queen-Mother's actions. In 1858 the state of Dhoondhar sent its forces under the command of Mir Muhammad Ali Khan to recover Khetri's tribute-arrears¹⁰¹.

Matters altered after Fateh Singh attained his majority and was confirmed as having full powers at a *darbar* in Jaipur by Maharaja Sawai Ram Singh II in August 1861. Thereafter, Fateh Singh set about putting his house in order with all seriousness. (Soon, it was the turn of his mother, the Ranawat *Ma-ji*, to be exiled and sent to live at Jaipur). The '*Report on the Political Administration of Rajputana for 1865-67*', noting approvingly the "...enlightened policy and reform of the young Chief of Khetri Futeh Singh". It then went on to record how, "...In the five years which have elapsed since the conduct of affairs was made over to him, he has instituted Courts of Justice modelled after our own, introduced a code of rules and regulations based on ours, inaugurated a Land Settlement, established schools, a dispensary and hospital; constructed an excellent road and liquidated 4.5 lakhs of the State debts"¹⁰². Fateh Singh won public words of praise from Sir John Lawrence, Viceroy and Governor General of India, at the Imperial *darbar* held at Agra in November 1866, for 'the wise arrangements he has made in his lands'.

Fateh Singh, who had rather strained relations with Jaipur's ruler, Ram Singh II, was succeeded by his adopted heir, the nine year old Ajit Singh (r. 1870-1901). Ajit was the son of Thakur Chattu Singh of Alsisar. The Jaipur state appointed a Regency Council to handle Khetri's administration during the boy's minority, but this was a short-lived attempt. In the wake of this, the Maharaja of Jaipur, Sawai Ram Singh, took the young Ajit Singh under his personal guardianship, and ensured a sound education for the young Khetri Raja, blending 'western' and traditional knowledge.

Ajit Singh attained full powers to administer Khetri in 1880, and thereafter gave due attention towards further modernising the different administrative wings of Khetri and improving its economic condition. The young Raja of Khetri emulated senior contemporaries like Ram Singh of Jaipur etc., by ordering the construction of the Ajit Sagar water-reservoir, and dams at Beri and Renwa, besides adding new public amenities like wells, gardens, a high school, a hospital, and a road connecting Khetri and Babai. Himself a poet, as well as a patron of litterateurs and artists, Ajit Singh established the town of Ajitgarh, repaired several old forts and palaces, and built the Sukh Niwas palace at Khetri. He also contributed a large sum of money towards public famine-relief measures during the severe famine of 1899.

Ajit Singh of Khetri is perhaps best remembered today for his close association with Swami Vivekananda, which began in the summer of 1891 and continued till the premature deaths of both men. The Swami stayed at Khetri for long stretches at a time, and there are several oft-told stories concerning the Swami's days at Khetri. Ajit Singh made many arrangements — including financial — when it came to Swami Vivekananda attending the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in September 1893. The *safa* (turban) and distinctive garments worn by Swami Vivekananda at Chicago were gifted by the Khetri chief too.

Ajit Singh had enjoyed a high and privileged position at Jaipur's court during the reign of Sawai Ram Singh II. This was not replicated under Ram Singh's successor. Furthermore, Sawai Madho Singh II's government began to over-set the existing special rights and privileges of the chiefs of Shekhawati, Khetri and Sikar¹⁰³. Ajit Singh, while joining the others in appealing against this invasion of the rights of the Shekhawati chiefs, was doubly hurt. His political travails were enhanced by misunderstandings. A long meeting at Agra with Jaipur's prime minister, Kanti Chandra Mukerji, on 15 December 1900, promised a glimmer of hope towards a solution, but the sudden death of the Jaipur prime minister on 4 January 1901, put an end to this. Despondent, the Khetri chief died after a fall at Sikandra on 18 January 1901.

SIROHI

The final years of the Sirohi ruler Bairisal II's reign remained as troubled as the earlier ones had been. If anything, his problems increased once Marwar's new ruler, Man Singh, launched his sporadic, but frequent, attacks and depredations against Sirohi. Udaibhan, who succeeded his father, Bairisal, in 1807, was a pleasure-loving man. Like Bairisal, he found himself unable to tackle the situation he had inherited, but unlike Bairisal, Udaibhan (r. 1807-1817, then forced to hand over administration to his brother, d. 1847) made scarcely an effort to even attempt it. For instance, Udaibhan was unable to take effective measures against the persistent incursions by Palanpur's forces, with the result that, over time, many of his *jagirdars* and thakurs, particularly those of Bhatana, Garwal, Momal, Madar, Patwura and Jilwara, transferred their allegiance to Palanpur state.

In 1812, the forces of Marwar's Man Singh once again attacked the kingdom of Sirohi. This time, besides adjacent areas, the capital-city was thoroughly plundered too. Not long afterwards, Udaibhan, accompanied by his brother, Shiv Singh, and several important courtiers, made a pilgrimage to the sacred river Ganga, and on their return journey halted at the town of Pali, which lay within the territory of Marwar. Seizing the opportunity offered by fate, Marwar's Maharaja Man Singh had Udaibhan and his entourage arrested at Pali and brought to Jodhpur, where they were kept for the next three months.

Terms were agreed upon before the Sirohi ruler was released, and he was pressurised into accepting the token suzerainty of Marwar. He also agreed to pay Rs. 1.25 lakhs to that kingdom. When that amount remained unpaid over the next few years, Man Singh of Marwar sent a force against Sirohi in 1816, which plundered the Bhitrat *pargana* and other villages of Sirohi. Udaibhan's advisors encouraged him to reciprocate by sending Sirohi's troops against the adjoining Jalore and Godwar *parganas* of Marwar. This ill-advised venture had predictable results. Man Singh of Marwar sent a large punitive force, which seized the capital-city of Sirohi in 1817. Udaibhan and his court sought refuge in the surrounding hills, while Marwar's troops plundered the city of Sirohi for ten long days. The value of the plunder carried back to Marwar exceeded two and a half lakhs of

rupees¹⁰⁴. Some troops set fire to Sirohi's State Office and razed it to the ground. Along with the building went the kingdom's official records, invaluable archives, and a range of other ancient documents.

Udaibhan of Sirohi now sued for an end to hostilities, promising to make good his previous commitment of paying Marwar Rs. 1.25 lakhs. To raise this amount, pressure was exerted on the merchants and traders. As a result, many merchants, traders and mercantile bankers migrated towards Malwa and Gujarat. Simultaneously, various other taxes had been imposed on the general populace. This too led to widespread public discontent. In 1817 the prominent nobles of the kingdom finally took matters into their own hands. Udaibhan's brother, *Raj-Saheb*¹⁰⁵ Shiv Singh, was urged by them to take over the administration of the land, while the unfortunate Udaibhan was imprisoned for the remainder of his life.

Shiv Singh, who remained regent of Sirohi between 1817 and 1847, found the situation complicated and difficult¹⁰⁶. Lawlessness was rampant, certain groups of local Bhils and Meenas were accused of plundering village-settlements, trade and commerce had declined with the migration of prominent merchants to neighbouring lands, and various nobles had transferred their allegiance to the Nawab of Palanpur. In addition to everything else, Jodhpur's Man Singh was actively involved in ensuring the imprisoned Udai Bhan's return to the throne, and even sent his army to Sirohi in an unsuccessful attempt towards that end.

Under pressure from all sides, Shiv Singh decided to approach the East India Company for assistance. The process began late in 1817 itself, but because of the stubborn attitude of Marwar, which claimed Sirohi had accepted Marwar's suzerainty, and the resultant long-drawn out process of examination of that claim (which was entrusted by the Company to Col. James Tod)¹⁰⁷ it was not until 11 September 1823, that Sirohi finally entered into a treaty with the East India Company. Under the agreement, ratified by the Governor General in October 1823, Sirohi accepted the paramountcy of the East India Company. It further accepted nine other clauses¹⁰⁸, more or less akin to those made between the Company and other princely Indian states.

Strengthened by the help of the Company, which posted a Political Agent¹⁰⁹ at Sirohi, Shiv Singh put down the ‘rebellious’ local Bhils and Meenas, brought various recalcitrant nobles back to the fold of Sirohi, and recovered some of Sirohi’s villages which had previously come to be occupied by the neighbouring state of Palanpur. In 1824, Shiv Singh was also able to suppress the dissent voiced by the powerful Thakur of Neembaj.

It was during Shiv Singh’s period as regent that two important habitations, that would remain important to the British over the coming century and more, became established. In 1836 Shiv Singh granted land at Erinpura for the British to set up a cantonment, and by 1837 the cantonment had been established there. (It played a part during the events of 1857).

The second was the establishment of a sanatorium for British soldiers (particularly from the army base of Deesa in Bombay Presidency) near Abu, on the salubrious heights of the local Aravalli range, in 1845¹¹⁰. This general area eventually developed into the town of Mount Abu — summer capital of the British Agent to the Governor General of India and summer haunt of many Indian princes, British officials and military personnel and their families.

The long regency of Shiv Singh ended with Udaibhan’s death in 1847. Udaibhan left no heirs, and as Shiv Singh had served as regent during the previous three decades or so, there was no opposition (including from the British), to his ascension to the *gaddi* of Sirohi. Matters requiring Shiv Singh’s attention as ruler (r. 1847-1862), included dealing with certain still recalcitrant nobles, law and order problems vis-à-vis certain groups of Bhils and Meenas, and border disputes with neighbouring kingdoms — some necessitating the intervention of the East India Company¹¹¹. As such, they were rather close mirror-images of his years as regent!

By this time treaties with the East India Company had devolved real power from practically all the rulers of Rajputana into British hands. That was the case with Sirohi too (placed under the Political Agent based at Neemuch). Thus, as in the case with several of the other states of

Rajputana, British administrators and officers were invited to Sirohi to spruce up the local administration, revenue system, army, etc. In 1853 Shiv Singh established the *qasba* (township) of Shivganj (which soon became a *tehsil* headquarter), near the cantonment town of Erinpura.

In 1857, with the exception of the Bhil Company, many other Indian soldiers based at Erinpura cantonment rose in support of the 1857 movement. In their case, it would be accurate to state that they actually mutinied, for they were in the employ of the East India Company. After that, some of the mutineers marched from Erinpura to Abu, but met with stiff resistance and were soon suppressed. Simultaneously, Maharao Shiv Singh ordered his *munshi*, Niyamat Ali Khan, to rush with the Sirohi army to Erinpura to quell the mutineers, aid the British, and ensure the release of a captured British officer. This was done. Also, a small group of three European men, two women and five children, who had fled Erinpura and sought temporary refuge elsewhere, were brought to Sirohi in safety. With Sirohi state coming out firmly in favour of the British, some of the mutineers rode towards Delhi, while others joined the Thakur of Ahuwa, who had rallied the populace against the East India Company, in neighbouring Marwar.

In acknowledgement of the help rendered to the British by Shiv Singh at this time, the British wrote off the arrears of *khiraj* tribute due from Sirohi state. Furthermore, the British halved the amount of previously agreed annual tribute due from Sirohi state to the Company to 7500 *Bhiladi* rupees — the *Bhiladi* rupee being Sirohi's established coinage. Meanwhile, the long years had taken their toll on Shiv Singh. Over the next few years, occasional lawlessness and recalcitrant nobles continued to plague his governance. In 1860 Shiv Singh was further shattered by the suicide of his eldest son, Guman Singh. Within a year of that, in 1861 Shiv Singh handed over routine administration and governance into the hands of the eldest of his surviving sons, Ummed Singh, and immersed himself in religious activities. He died in December 1862¹¹². The same year, the practice of sati was banned in the state

In keeping with the new political relationship with the British, the succession of Ummed Singh (r. 1862-1875), necessitated formal recognition

by the British. The coronation took place in early 1863. Ummed Singh was soon faced by the rebellious behaviour of his brothers. The most outspoken among them, Hamir Singh, had come out against Ummed Singh during the final year of their father's life-time. Having left the palace, Hamir had established himself in a less accessible part of the state from where he had led anti-Ummed Singh activities, and encouraged a local Garasia leader called Kaniya to lead dacoities and looting against neighbouring areas. Following Ummed Singh's accession, the other brothers briefly joined Hamir Singh, until Major Hall, the British Political Superintendent, convinced them to return to the capital and seek Ummed Singh's pardon, and accept certain *jagir* lands in perpetuity.

In 1865, eleven years of British supervision at the hands of a Political Superintendent ended. Over the ensuing years, Ummed Singh continued to face problems caused by certain nobles, who encouraged dacoit activities outside their own fiefdoms by giving the dacoits tacit support to operate, and sometimes by taking a part of the loot as their share. In time, the Bhils, Meenas and Garasias too began to plunder afresh. Though Ummed Singh sent a force into the Bhakhar area in 1867 to deal with the problem, general lawlessness across the land continued. Rebellious nobles too remained a frequent problem. Finally, the British garrison at Erinpura intervened to ensure order and peace. Meanwhile, Sirohi faced a serious famine in 1868. Though the state organised famine-works, dug water-reservoirs, and gave free grain to the poor, the severity of the famine, compounded by immigration of humans and life-stock from a worse-affected Marwar, resulted in the death of thousands of live-stock and humans, and added to Sirohi's burdens.

During the troubled years of rebellions and dacoities etc., the financial debts of Sirohi (towards the British) had been increasing. The British warned Ummed Singh that unless matters improved they would be compelled to interfere. Ummed Singh introduced a number of administrative and other reforms. In 1866 separate *faujdari* (criminal) and *diwani* (revenue) courts were established. Eventually, as a result of various measures, the state's debt was considerably reduced. In 1867, an attempt was made at modernising the prevalent educational pattern along 'western' lines, with the opening of a school in the capital. Here Hindi, Urdu and

English formed part of the curriculum. Later, the State started schools along similar lines at Pindwara, Rohida, Mandar and Kalandri too. A beginning was made regarding the modernisation of Sirohi's State Forces in 1867, and a full company of troops was trained. The same year, Sirohi signed an eight-point agreement with the British regarding the arrest and extradition of wanted persons. A hospital too was opened.

Ummed Singh died on 16 September 1875, and was succeeded by his son Kesari Singh (r. 1875-1920, d.1925). Kesari Singh introduced a series of administrative and land reforms, and within five years the state was free of its outstanding debts. Forced labour (*begaar*) was abolished, and hospitals, dispensaries, post offices, and even a telegraph office etc. were opened during his reign. New roads were built, as were numerous buildings, water-reservoirs, clock towers etc.

Much of the 'modernisation' of Sirohi — including of traditional laws — was carried out during Kesari Singh's reign. Among other things, a separate department for forests was created, and in 1892 gambling was outlawed throughout the state. Social customs too were tackled, and among other things, the Bhils, Garasias etc. were warned that the practice of declaring a woman to be a witch and punishing her would not be tolerated by the state¹¹³. On the internal political front, Kesari Singh dealt firmly with recalcitrant nobles and fief-holders. For instance, the jagirdar of Rewarda was shot and his estates confiscated.

On 14 April 1879, Kesari Singh affixed his signature to an agreement with the British, by which the preparation and transit of local or indigenous salt was banned throughout the state. Henceforth, only salt prepared and taxed (and transported into the state) in accordance with British approval was to be allowed. In lieu of this agreement Sirohi got an annual sum of Rs. 1,800 in cash and a certain amount of salt at special rates (both amounts were reviewed and altered in 1882 and then again 1884). Another change that occurred under Kesari Singh pertained to coinage. Sirohi's traditional coinage was based on silver, and was known as the *Bhiladi* rupee. Since it was affected by fluctuations in the price of silver, in 1904 a new currency — the *Kaldar* rupee, was introduced under British influence.

The 30th of December 1880, saw the opening of the Rajputana-Malwa railway line, which crossed through about forty miles of Sirohi's territory. Believing that the availability of railways would mean a loss of transit-revenue or *daan*, traditionally levied on trade goods that were carried through the kingdom, the British agreed to give Sirohi an indemnity of Rs. 10,000 annually, but this was brought to an end when it was realised that the railway was proving beneficial to the state! In 1881, Sirohi was shifted from Erinpura's Political Agency into the control of the Resident of the 'Western Rajputana States' (based at Jodhpur). In 1897 severe measures were taken to quarantine plague-infected people (fleeing from other states), from bringing the illness into Sirohi, but when that happened all the same, the state was prompt in dealing with the outbreak and providing medical care.

In 1899 boundary questions between Sirohi and Mewar were sorted out, with the help of Boundary Commissioners Col. Percy Smith and E.R. Penrose and Boundary Settlement Officer Captain Bruce. The same year, the effects of the infamous *Chhapana-akal* — also called *Chhapaniya-Akaal* — or 'Famine of the year [Vikram Samvat] 1956', which wreaked devastation in western Rajasthan, were felt in Sirohi too. Over 1899-1900, Sirohi state adopted vigorous measures to cope with the lack of fodder and food. Granaries and fodder-depots were made available free of charge to the needy, and famine-relief works, including construction activities, digging or deepening of wells, water-reservoirs, tanks and lakes, were initiated.

By this time, a railway head had been established at the village of Kharadi, and was known as 'Abu Road'. The changed times, and the availability of railways and steamers etc., led Kesari Singh — like several of his contemporary Indian princes — to undertake several long journeys away from Sirohi. Among these were visits to Bombay, Nasik, Dwarka, Hardwar, Allahabad, Kashi (Benares, now spelt as Varanasi), Delhi (including for the Coronation Durbar in December 1902-January 1903), Agra, Alwar, Bharatpur, Jaipur, Sambhar Lake, Jodhpur, Simla, and finally, England (in 1909). He also entertained visitors and travellers transitting Sirohi. Among them were fellow-princes, British viceroys, governors, AGG's and others, and even Prince Albert Victor (1890). It was during the reign of Maharao Kesari Singh that Mt. Abu was leased to the British in 1917, enabling the office of the AGG to be established there.

BUNDI

In 1804, Indore's Jaswant Rao Holkar entered Kota's territory and crossed swords with the British East India Company. Bishen Singh (r. 1773-1821), the ruler of Bundi, assisted the Company forces with men and material assistance. However, the Company's troops, commanded by Col. Monson, suffered a defeat in the Mukundarra valley and were forced to retreat, leaving Col. Lucan and the cavalry loaned by the states of Bundi and Kotah to deal with Holkar. The valiant Hada forces and Lucan's troops managed to check Holkar's advance long enough for it to further earn the ire of the Maratha chieftain. Thereafter, the Marathas once again turned their attention towards Bundi (and Kotah), and over the next six years the Marathas and the Pindaris plundered and attacked Bundi with increasing frequency. The powerful Maratha leaders, Holkar and Scindia, almost parcelled out Bundi between themselves, practically side-lining the *de facto* Maharao of Bundi, Bishen Singh.

(It was not solely a period of sheer gloom, though. The already well-established Bundi school of painting flourished during the long period that Bishen Singh occupied the *gaddi* of Bundi. While many of the frescoes *in situ* within the Bundi fort and palaces date from the time of Maharao Umaid

Singh, an equally large number were produced during Bishen Singh's reign).

For much of this period, there was little aid forthcoming from the British — in part because the East India Company had its hands full with Nepal (till December 1815) and other pre-occupations. In 1817, a circular letter was sent to the chiefs of Rajputana, inviting their representatives to Delhi in connection with an offensive and defensive alliance with the British, in return for which the East India Company sought homage and a portion of the revenues of the states of the Rajputana in lieu of protection. Kotah's commander-administrator Zalim Singh Jhala was the first to accept the invitation. Thereafter, during the British campaign against the Pindaris, when three British army Divisions closed in on the Pindaris, Bundi and Kotah states helped the British.

By the end of 1817, the rapidly growing influence of the East India Company had already brought Kotah into a subsidiary alliance with the Company, accompanied by the promise of freedom from further Maratha depredations. On 10 February 1818, harassed by Maratha incursions and troubled by internal dissension, the state of Bundi too entered into a treaty with the British East India Company. The terms included the payment of Rs. 80,000 per annum as *khiraj* to the Company, in return for which, Bundi was ensured the return of certain territories occupied by the Marathas. (The amount was later reduced to Rs. 40,000 per annum). Bundi also regained possession of the Keshorai Patan area.

Bundi's Maharao Bishen Singh died within three years of the treaty of Subsidiary Alliance with the East India Company. He was succeeded by Ram Singh (r. 1821-1889), who was still a minor. The condition of Bundi was far from satisfactory at the time. The state treasury was empty, and the populace had not recovered from the taxes, exactions and burdens of frequent border skirmishes, incursions, fights, and pillaging that had marked the previous few decades. (In fact, Bundi state borrowed money to celebrate the marriage of Maharao Ram Singh with the daughter of Maharaja Man Singh of Marwar. Man Singh later helped clear this debt).

On his deathbed, Bishen Singh had nominated the East India Company's Political agent, James Tod, as guardian of his young successor, and it was Tod who witnessed the installation of the infant Ram Singh on the *gaddi* of Bundi on 3 August 1821. Bishen Singh's former minister, Bohra Sumbhoo Ram, continued to exercise office, and became the regent. However, soon there were allegations of embezzlement against Sumbhoo Ram. In addition, there were apprehensions about the ambitions and intentions of one of the senior nobles of Bundi, Balwant Rao of Gotra, who had previously stormed and occupied Nainwa during the lifetime of Bishen Singh. Taking his duties as guardian seriously, Tod now took steps to curb internal dangers and to reform the financial administration of Bundi.

He prohibited the utilisation of the state's revenues in the business concerns of the ministers and officials, and ensured that the revenues were duly deposited in the *Kishan Bhandar* or state treasury within the palace. A system of checks was introduced with respect to receipts and expenditure. Furthermore, the *qiledar* and other officers were made jointly responsible for the state's funds, and Sumbhoo Ram and other officials were ordered to inform the Resident about the annual surpluses that were to be set aside until the young Maharao of Bundi had become a major. As a consequence of Tod's measures, the fiscal revenues of Bundi rose from under rupees three lakhs per annum to more than rupees six lakhs annually. In the interim, for the remainder of the young Ram Singh's minority, a Regency Council that included four Hada *sardars*, under the supervision of the Resident, carried out the task of administering Bundi.

Upon Ram Singh obtaining his majority and, in consequence, his ruling powers, the Marwar Rathore faction at Bundi's court tried to establish their hold over Bundi's administration. They are alleged to have had a role in the murder of Dhabhai Kishan Ram, the *musahib* of Bundi, to clear the way for Rathore domination in administrative matters. This was resented by the Bundi Hadas, and the resulting hostility led to a skirmish between the Rathores and the Hadas¹¹⁴. Some people were killed. The British Resident intervened over the matter.

During the events of 1857 Bundi did not initially extend support to the East India Company. In ensuing years, the British Government (which had

taken over the powers of the East India Company in 1858), expressed its displeasure over this and other matters, and there was a prolonged correspondence, lasting over three years, between the British and the state of Bundi.

The long reign of Maharao Ram Singh witnessed the growth of Bundi as a centre of learning. There were over forty traditional Sanskrit schools in the state; and the court gave patronage to poets, writers and scholars. Among them was the well known Rajasthani poet and historian Suryamal (also written and pronounced as Surajmal) Mishran, whose *Vamsha Bhaskar* and *Veer Satsai* remain much quoted texts even today. Other contemporary scholars included Ashanand, Jeewan Lal and Hamir Khan. Nischal Das, a *Dadu-panthi* preceptor and preacher, who authored the *Vichar-Sagar*, flourished during this period too.

Maharao Ram Singh's reign saw a number of social reforms and other changes in the state. During the nineteenth century, two-thirds of the area of the state was *khalsa* — or state-owned. Tenants were not dispossessed provided the rents due were paid. *Bhomiya*s were entitled to hold lands allocated to them rent-free, in exchange for a range of traditionally determined miscellaneous services. There was also a category of landholders known as the *Chauth Battas*. They were expected to give a quarter of the produce of their holdings to the state as rent. These *Chauth Batta* holders were mostly Rajputs. So too were a majority of the *jagirdars*, many of who belonged to the Hada Chauhan sub-clan, and held their lands rent-free. In lieu of their *jagir*, they were expected to provide military and other services: both in person, and through supplying fighting contingents whenever the state needed these.

Jagir lands were liable to be resumed by the ruler for misconduct. In contrast, lands of the *khairat* (donated in 'charity') category, or the *muafi* lands granted to Brahmin or religious and charitable institutions, were deemed rent-free and the rights to these were inalienable. Land revenue had traditionally been collected partly in cash, and partly in kind. However, from 1881 it began to be taken entirely in cash. The revenue rates were fixed from time to time by the state, and varied according to irrigated and dry lands.

It was also during Ram Singh's reign that schools run on modern lines began to be established in Bundi. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Bundi had an 'English' school with one school master, and five indigenous *pathshalas* at the capital. In 1896 the Durbar Middle School at Bundi was raised to the status of a High school.

Meanwhile, on February 1 1869, Bundi signed an 'Extradition Treaty' with the British, which provided for the mutual surrender of persons charged with specific offences. This was modified by an Agreement' signed on 1 January 1888. Of much more significance for the ordinary citizen was the 'Salt Agreement' signed on 18 January 1882. This centred on the close supervision of any salt that was manufactured within Bundi, and the prevention of the import and export of any salt other than that on which the British had levied duty. In lieu of this, the Bundi ruler was entitled to receiving Rs. 8,000 per annum from the British.

Ram Singh died in 1889 aged seventy-eight, after a reign of sixty-eight years, and was succeeded by his adopted heir, Raghuvir Singh (r. 1889-1927). Raghuvir Singh was invested with full ruling powers in January 1890. It was during Raghuvir Singh's reign that the 'Great Famine' of 1899 left its imprint on Bundi state. This famine was followed by a severe epidemic, in common with Mewar. In the first ever modern-style census of 1881, the total population figures for Bundi state had stood at 2.55 lakhs, and in the 1891 enumeration at 2.96 lakhs. The numbers fell to 1.71 lakhs in 1901 because of the effects of the Great Famine and consequent epidemics of 1899-1900. (The population was 2.50 lakhs in 1941, just a few years prior to Bundi's merger into modern Rajasthan. Besides the politically dominant Rajputs, about thirteen per cent of the total population of the state, at the time, comprised Meenas — who were regarded as the earlier settlers of that land. Gujars and Brahmins each constituted ten per cent and groups like the Malis, Mahajan and leather-working people eight to nine per cent of the total population). We shall continue with Bundi in the next chapter.

KOTAH

By the end of the eighteenth century, the state of Kota, under its ruler Umaid Singh I (r. 1761 - 1819), was paying about seven lakhs of rupees annually to the Marathas. At the same time, attacks by the Pindaris were proving a serious problem for the kingdom. The flamboyant Zalim Singh Jhala achieved an understanding with the Pindari chiefs Kapur Khan and Mir Khan. The latter was given the fort of Shergarh. On their part, the Pindaris temporarily stopped their raids into Kota's territory. Realising the vulnerability of Kota to both Maratha interference and Pindari incursions, Zalim Singh was also closely observing the growing strength of the East India Company over northern India. He assisted the Company in crushing the Pindaris and, in return, obtained the territories of Deeg, Panch-Pahar, Ahor and Gangrar from the British.

On 26 December 1817, Kotah (as the British spelt it) entered into a treaty of subsidiary alliance with the East India Company, by which it accepted the paramountcy of the Company, and agreed to pay rupees two and a half lakhs annually as *khiraj* to the British. (Charles Metcalfe acted for the East India Company). In an amendment made to the treaty in 1818, Zalim Singh Jhala and his successors were declared the hereditary holders of the post of *dewan* of Kotah.

Maharao Umaid Singh I, who had signed the treaty of subsidiary alliance with the East India Company, died in 1819, after a long reign of forty-eight years, and was succeeded by his son, Kishore Singh II (r. 1819-28). During Umaid Singh I's reign, Kotah's *dewan and faujdar*, Zalim Singh Jhala, had virtually become the *de facto* ruler of the state. However, Kishore Singh II challenged the dominance enjoyed by Zalim Singh Jhala over the state's governance.

This led to a confrontation between him and Zalim Singh, and it needed the intervention of the Maharana of Mewar, before a compromise could be agreed upon between the Maharao and his *Dewan-cum-Faujdar*. It was agreed that, while on the one hand, Zalim Singh would not interfere in the private affairs of the Maharao; on his part the Maharao would permit Zalim Singh untrammelled authority to run the state in accordance with the provisions of the treaty of 1818. Zalim Singh died in 1824, and was followed as *dewan* by his son Madho Singh Jhala. Within four years, in

1828, Maharao Kishore Singh died too. He left no son, and was succeeded by a nephew named Ram Singh II (r. 1828-1886).

Upon the death of *Dewan* Madho Singh Jhala a few years later, his son Madan Singh became the *Musahib-Ala* of the state. However, Madan Singh's behaviour soon resulted in strained relations with Maharao Ram Singh II. The Political Agent intervened. The harassed Maharao agreed to grant seventeen *parganas* of Kotah to Madan Singh. Thus, in 1838, Madan Singh became the first ruler of a newly created principality that was given the name of Jhalawar. In exchange, Madan Singh renounced the hereditary rights of Dewanship of Kotah, granted to his family under the revised terms of the treaty with the British in 1818.

(It was also in 1838 that the 'Kotah Contingent' was raised, under Article V of the existing treaty between Kotah and the East India Company. This was an auxiliary force commanded by British officers, with its headquarters at Deoli. Since it rebelled in 1857, it was disbanded and the Deoli Irregular Force was raised in its place).

During the 1857 uprising some of Kotah state's Neemuch-based troops took the part of the army 'mutineers' and some participated in confrontations with European troops from Deesa (in Bombay Presidency) in the Sadar Bazaar of Neemuch. On return from Neemuch, the Kotah troops rallied to the anti-British call given, among others, by a Pathan *risaladar* in the Kotah state forces — Mehrab Khan of Karauli, and Lala Jai Dayal, who worked for the Kotah state. The soldiers attacked the Residency at Kotah, and killed Major C.E. Burton, who was the British Political Agent for Hadauti, along with his two sons, and an English doctor. The rebellious Kotah troops then occupied the rest of the capital, took possession of 127 artillery-guns belonging to the state, and temporarily interned their Maharao, Ram Singh II, within his palace.

The revolt gradually spread over other parts of Kotah state. Meanwhile, Maharao Ram Singh was freed after the Karauli ruler sent a contingent of his state forces to Kotah. However, it was towards the end of March 1858, after Col. Robert had led a battalion into Kotah, that the last embers of the 'Kotah Uprising' were put out. Several people were killed,

the leaders of the movement, including Jai Dayal and Mehrab Khan were arrested, tried and hung, and the Maharao's rule restored after about six months.

Following the events of 1857-58, and the eventual departure of British troops from Kotah, it was recognised that the administrative structure needed to be reformed and restructured, as the state's administrative machinery was outmoded, corruption was a general problem, and lawlessness — including dacoity, was proving a threat to the well-being of the general populace. The British Political Agent also encouraged the Maharao to initiate reforms, upholding the improvements brought about in some of the other states, and in British administered territories. Taking his advice, in 1862 the ruler of Kotah introduced a series of reform-measures. The state was divided into districts for administrative purposes, with each district placed under the charge of a *zildar*. Office hours were fixed. The police system was modernised, and law and order was placed under the *kotwal*. Bribery was declared a legal offence. In 1872 the state's first hospital was inaugurated.

In 1873 a three member council, holding the responsibility of administrative decisions and their efficient implementation, was constituted. A year later, in 1874, the Council appointed Nawab Faiz Ali Khan as *dewan* to look after Kotah state's administration. Over the next two years, Faiz Ali brought certain changes. The *Tappan Kachari* was abandoned — which resulted in financial savings for the state's exchequer. A modern postal system was introduced under the management of Patel Gajanand, and the use of postal stamps enforced. The institution of *Mukta* (land-grant by Maharao, akin to *zamindari* rights) was systematised. In 1876 the British placed the administration of the state in the hands of the Political Agent assisted by a Council.

Education had previously been along traditional lines. In his report for the year 1864, Captain Benyon, Political Agent for Hadauti (covering the kingdoms of Bundi, Kotah and Jhalawar), noted that the state had several schools of forty to fifty pupils, supported by private individuals. Such schools existed “in most towns and in many villages of Harowttee [sic]”, where the students were taught elementary reading, writing and arithmetic,

“sufficient for carrying on the common routine of a banking or commercial establishment or enough for a trader to be able to carry on his business and keep his accounts”. Against this background, the first state-run school for boys was established at Kotah in 1867. In 1875 a girls’ school was opened too. (The number of schools based on the western-pattern rose to 19 by 1891. In 1901 their number was 31, and by 1905 there were a total of 41 schools in the state).

Maharao Ram Singh II was succeeded by his adopted son Chhatrasal II (r. 1886-1889). Chhatrasal II had no son. As such, Apji Amar Singh of the Palaitha *thikana* tried to effect the adoption of his own son, Onkar Singh, as the Maharao’s nominated heir and ‘son’. However, Chhatrasal II and his queens opposed Apji Amar Singh’s move. Instead Udai Singh was adopted, and in 1889, on the death of Chhatrasal II, ascended the Kotah *gaddi*, as Maharao Umaid Singh II (r.1889-1940). As the new ruler was still a minor, a Regency Council was appointed by the AGG.

The young boy was soon sent away to Mayo College, Ajmer, for his education. This was much against the wishes of the widows of late Maharao, who were apprehensive about the life and safety of the young Maharao from the rival faction. Umaid Singh returned to Kota after two years. In the meanwhile, the Regency Council externed a number of supporters of the widowed queens of Chhatrasal II from the state and forfeited their properties, apparently at the instigation of Apji Amar Singh. The Council even resumed the *jagir* of Kunadi and externed the *jagirdar*, Dwarka Das, from Kotah. In 1896 the young Maharao was granted full ruling powers. The Regency Council was disbanded, and the Maharao pensioned off its members including Apji Amar Singh. Chaube Raghunath Das was appointed *dewan* of the state.

Various administrative and other reforms followed during the course of the long reign of Umaid Singh II that followed his assumption of ruling powers. An administrative organisation, known as the *Mahakma-Khas*, was established. This served as the highest judicial and executive authority in the state, and was headed by the ruler himself (as was the case in other states too). A separate office known as *Mahakma-Mal* was established to look after the work relating to land revenue, forest and famine.

Traditionally, the main land-tenure categories within Kotah State had been that of *khalsa*, *jagir* and *muafi* lands. About a quarter of the area of the state had been held as *jagir* estates and *muafi* lands. *Jagirdars* were usually not dispossessed, except in cases of disloyalty or severe misconduct. The *jagirdars* could not transfer their holdings, though they were traditionally entitled to set aside small portions of their *jagir* holdings to provide for younger sons and other relatives. However, no succession or adoption could take place in a *jagir* without the formal consent and approval of the Maharao. A payment — *nazarana* — was made to the ruler of the state by the fief-holder's successor at each succession, as a 'succession-fee'. Most *jagirdars* paid an annual tribute and supplied horsemen and foot soldiers for the service of the state; exceptions being where exemptions of a certain kind had been awarded to a fief-holder or his ancestor for service to the country, or gallantry, etc. By this time, thirty-six *jagirdars* were regarded as premier in the state — a majority of them being, like the ruling house, Hada Chauhans.. Those sharing a common descent with the ruler were part of the *Rajvi* grouping, while other senior nobles were addressed as *Umrao*.

In the case of lands held in *muafi* — i.e. lands granted to individuals in charity or as a reward for services, as also to temples and religious institutions, no land revenue was charged. As far as the *khalsa* — or state-held, lands were concerned, in the early nineteenth century the tenants paid two-fifths of the produce of land to the state as land revenue. Later, after Zalim Singh Jhala conducted a land settlement exercise, land revenue was taken in cash at fixed rates per *bigha* of land. Zalim Singh abolished all the hereditary tenures and brought the entire *khalsa* land under the management of the state. In other words, cultivators became 'tenants-at-will'. However, no cultivator was disturbed from the land in his possession as long as he paid the land-revenue when due.

Under Umaid Singh II's government, the state was divided into fifteen *nizamats*, each headed by an officer known as *nazim*. The *nizamats* were divided into *mozas*, each of which was under a *patwari*. The *patwaris*, assisted by *sehnas* (*sahanas*) were responsible for collecting land revenue. The salary of a *patwari* ranged between rupees six to twelve and that of a *sehna* from rupees three to rupees five. Other village functionaries included *lamberdars*, *gaon balais* etc. They were given *muafi* lands in lieu of the

duties performed by them. On the judiciary and legal side, the Maharao promulgated civil and criminal laws in the state on the lines of British India. The *nazims* enjoyed civil and criminal powers. Appeals against the decisions of the *nazims* could be placed before the *faujdar*s of the districts. The *faujdar*s had original jurisdiction in civil and criminal matters too.

The final years of the nineteenth century saw the return of a large tract of its erstwhile territories to Kotah state from Jhalawar. We have already noted that in 1838 Jhalawar was carved out of Kotah and given over to Madan Singh Jhala (grandson of Kotah's famous late eighteenth-early nineteenth century Faujdar, Zalim Singh Jhala), as his kingdom. In 1896 the then incumbent of the Jhalawar *gaddi*, Zalim Singh II of Jhalawar, was externed from his state for gross mismanagement. The externed Zalim Singh II had no son. Nor was there any other direct descendent of the late Jhala Zalim Singh I.

Meanwhile, Kotah had continuously represented to the British that it deemed the grant of a large tract of its land to Jhalawar by the British as unfair. Kotah state once again requested that the British ensure the return of its territory given away to Jhalawar, and this time the Government of India decided that fifteen out of the seventeen *parganas* (districts) that made up Jhalawar should be returned to Kotah. The transfer was effected in January 1899, and, quite obviously, the event was celebrated with much fanfare throughout Kotah state. Later that year, though, there was less cause for joy as the famine of 1899-1900 struck, affecting Kotah state too. The state's population, which was recorded in the 1891 census as 7.19 lakhs, fell to 5.45 lakhs by the time of the 1901 census, because of migrations and deaths due to famine conditions.

ESTABLISHMENT OF JHALAWAR

We have already noted that the Jhala family had served as able *faujdar*s and counsellors to various rulers of Kota from about c. 1700. Zalim Singh Jhala, who succeeded to his ancestral estates and honours at the young age of nineteen in 1758, was perhaps the most influential of the family. His talent, far-sightedness and statesmanship, which were in sharp contrast to the

relatively weak men then occupying the thrones of Kota and Bundi, saw his rapid rise to a position of supremacy in both kingdoms.

Twelve years after Zalim Singh Jhala's death, the Kota administration of Maharao Ram Singh found it prudent to give a third of its lands, comprising seventeen *parganas*, over to Zalim Singh Jhala's descendant, the *dewan* of Kota, Madan Singh, to enable the formation of the separate state of Jhalawar. In return, Madan Singh relinquished his (and his family's) hereditary right — as per one of the terms of the treaty between Kota and the East India Company — to be *dewan* of Kota state. Thereafter, the 'Maharaj Rana' Madan Singh (r. 1838-1845), became the first ruler of the newly created kingdom of Jhalawar. (The title of Maharaj Rana was given by the British). Madan Singh was succeeded by his son, Prithvi Singh.

Prithvi Singh was followed by his adopted son, Bakhala Singh, who was a minor at the time. The child was given the name of Zalim Singh II (exposed 1896). During his minority, the administration of Jhalawar state was carried out by a Regency Council, which was mainly guided by a British officer of the Political Department. Zalim Singh II obtained full ruling powers in due course, but was eventually deposed by the British, on grounds of misgovernment, in 1896. Zalim Singh II lived out the rest of his life on a pension at Banaras.

Zalim Singh left no male heir. At this point, the British decided to right the wrong done to Kotah (Kota) in 1838, when seventeen of its *parganas* had been given to the new state of Jhalawar. As Kotah (Kota) had long expressed its grievance over the matter, fifteen of the *parganas* were returned to Kotah (Kota). The result was a severely truncated Jhalawar — composed of only two *parganas*, with five *tehsils* (sub-divisions).

In 1899, the British raised another descendant of Madho Singh Jhala, the first Jhala clan *faujdar* of Kota, to the *gaddi* of Jhalawar. This was the Maharaj Rana Bhawani Singh (r. 1899-1929). He proved to be a great patron of the arts and music. The *Bhawani Natyashala*, a theatre for drama and musical performances was constructed during his reign. Musicians and artistes from different areas were given encouragement and patronage at Jhalawar during Bhawani Singh's reign.

Education along modern lines too got an impetus. Until almost the last part of the nineteenth century, education in the Jhalawar area was along traditional lines, imparted through *maktabs* and *chatshalas*, of which there were a sprinkling in all the towns and big villages. Primary schools were opened in rapid succession, especially in the rural areas, and by 1904-5 there were nine primary schools with a total attendance of 424. Meanwhile, in 1887 the Maharaja High School was established in the Chhaoni (cantonment area — now Jhalawar town). The first girls' school of Jhalawar state was started at the Chhaoni in 1883. By 1916 over half a dozen girls schools had been opened across the state, with 471 girls on the rolls. Education from the start was free, even at the high school level. The first public examination was held in 1904. The Raj Rana encouraged schooling by introducing a number of scholarships and other incentives. As part of this, a set of new clothes was presented annually to each girl (and woman) student for furthering motivation towards learning.

JAISALMER

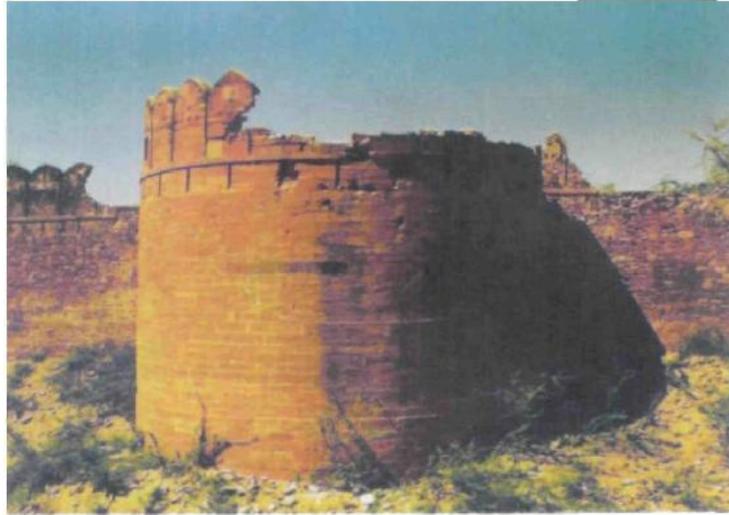
We have already noted the state of affairs in Jaisalmer at the close of the eighteenth century, where political uncertainty, internal troubles, and a general economic and law-and-order downslide, had combined to create a difficult situation. Added to that was the drawbacks of the natural environment and geographical position of Jaisalmer.

As Tod noted in his *Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'han*, the number of towns, villages, and hamlets of 'Jessulmer' state (extending between longitudes 70° 30' and 72° 30" East, and between the parallels of 26° 20' and 27° 50' North, with a small strip protruding as high as 28° 30' to the north-east¹¹⁵), did not exceed two hundred and fifty to three hundred at the time. Furthermore, the state's population, scattered over an area of some fifteen thousand square miles, worked out to an average of two to three people per each square mile of land¹¹⁶.

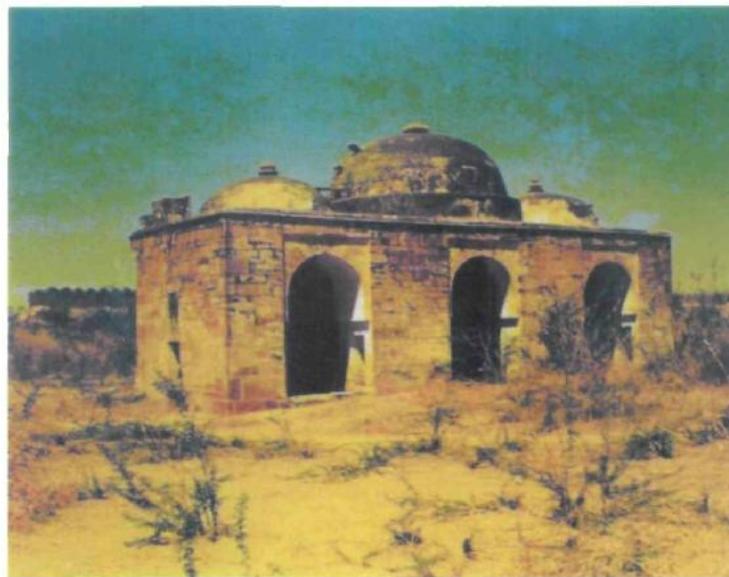
(Tod¹¹⁷ has described the greater part of the 'Jessulmer' State of his time as being *t'hul*, or *rooé*, both terms meaning 'a desert waste'. He

wrote¹¹⁸ that from Lowar, on the Jodhpur frontier, to Kharra, the remote angle touching Sind, the country may be described as a continuous tract of arid sand, frequently rising into lofty *teebas* (sand-hills), in some parts covered with low jungle. This line, which nearly bisects Jaisalmer state, is also the line of demarcation of sterile lands and comparative cultivation. To the north is one uniform and naked waste; to the south are ridges locally termed as '*muggro*' (*magra*) and '*rooe*', and light soil. The ridge of hills is a most important feature in the geology of this desert region. It is to be traced from Kutch-Bhuj, in the Gujarat region, strongly or faintly marked, according to the nature of the country. Sometimes it assumes, as at Chohtan, the character of a mountain; then dwindles into an insignificant ridge scarcely discernible, and often serves as a bulwark for the drifting sands, which cover and render it difficult to trace it at all. As it reaches the Jaisalmer country it is more developed; and at the capital-city of Jaisalmer, erected on a peak about two hundred and fifty feet high, its presence is more distinct, and its character defined. The capital of the Bhattis appears as the nucleus of a series of ridges, which diverge from it in all directions for the space of fifteen miles. One branch terminates at Ramgarh, thirty-five miles north-west of Jaisalmer; another branch extends easterly to Pokhran (formerly a part of the state of Marwar), and thence, in a north-east direction, to Phalodi; from whence, at intervals, it is traceable to Gurriala, nearly fifty miles due north. The ridge is composed mainly of yellow-coloured sandstone, in which ochre is abundantly found, with which the people daub their houses¹¹⁹).

(“These barren ridges, and the lofty undulating *tubas* of sand, are the only subjects which diversify the almost uniform sterility of these regions. No trees interpose their verdant foliage to relieve the eye, or shelter the exhausted frame of the traveller. It is nearly a boundless waste, varied only by a few stunted shrubs of the acacia or *mimosa* family, some succulent plants, or prickly grapes, as the *bhoorut* or burr, which clings to his garment and increases his miseries. Yet compared with the more northern portion, where “a sea of sand without a sign of vegetation” forms the prospect, the vicinity of the capital is a paradise”¹²⁰).



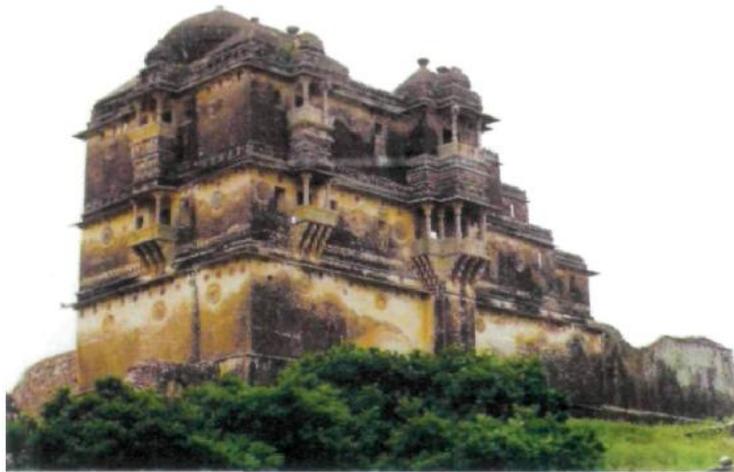
Merta's famous Malkot.



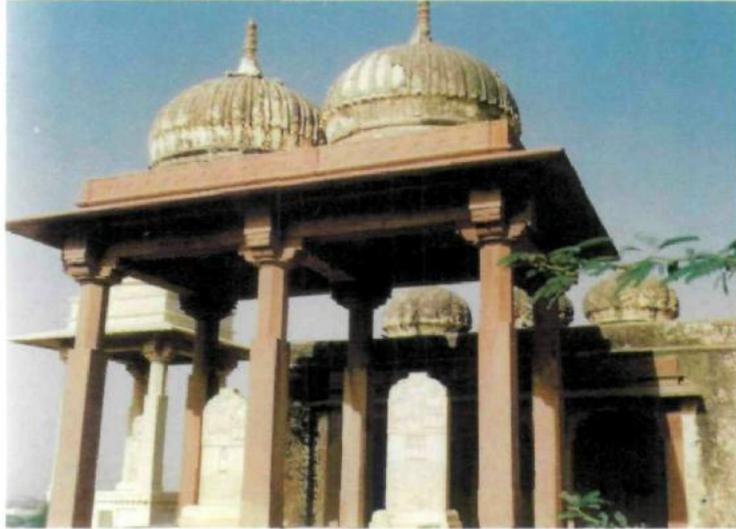
Structures within Malkot, Merta.



The fortifications of Gagraon.



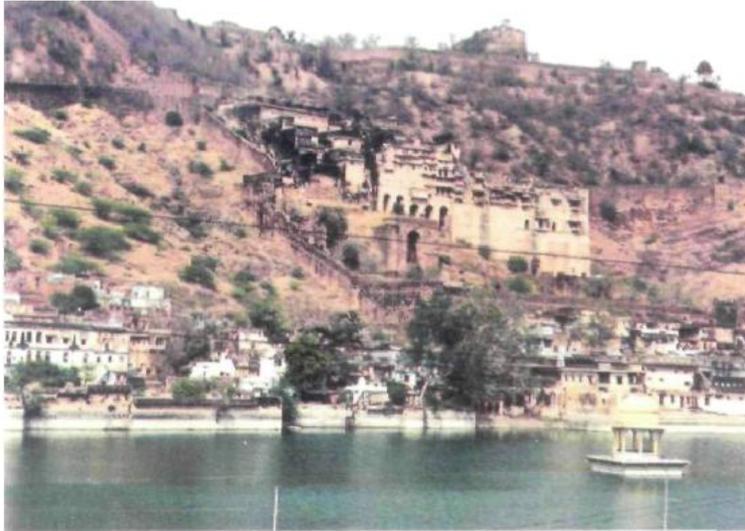
The building popularly known as Patta's palace, Chittor Fort.



The cenotaph of Rao Bika at Bikaji ki Tekri, Bikaner.



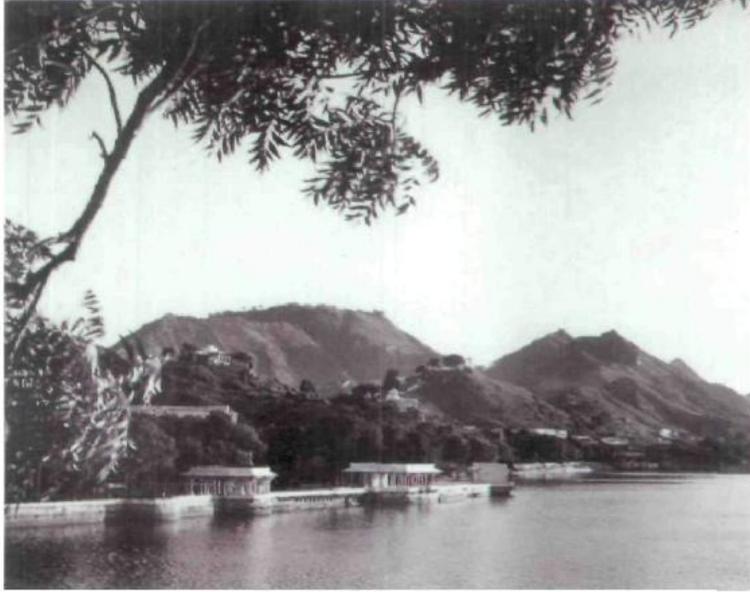
Water-tank adjoining the Ramnath temple at Zawar (near Udaipur).



A view of the Bundi fort and palaces, with the town and lake below.
(Courtesy Sujas, DPR, Govt, of Rajasthan).



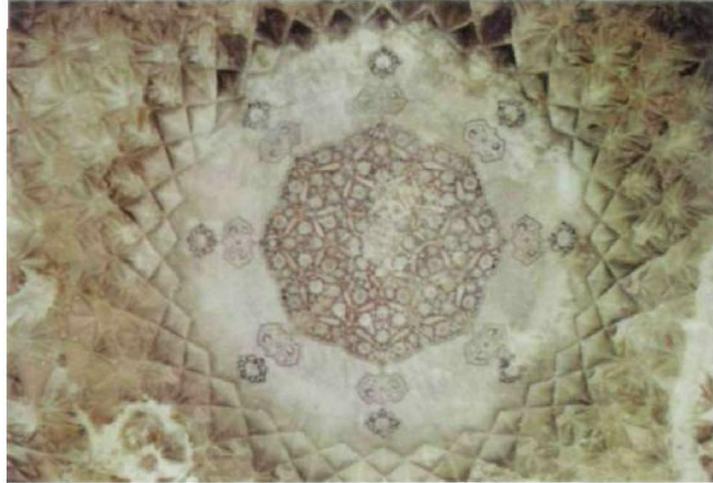
The fortifications at Bhatner
(Hanumangarh).



Mughal pavilions along the Ana Sagar lake. Ajmer.



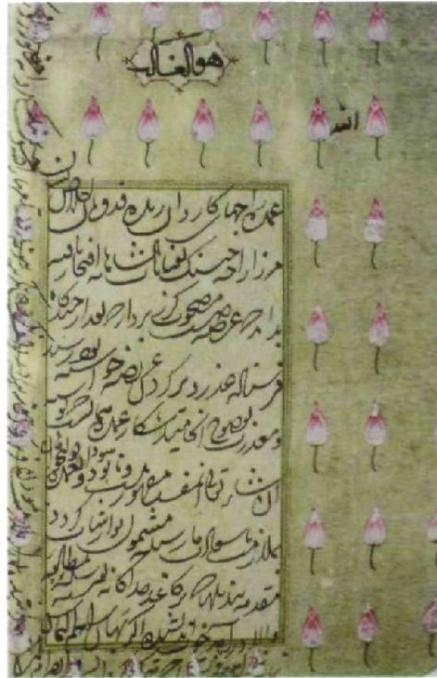
Bairat's famous 'Mughal Gateway'.



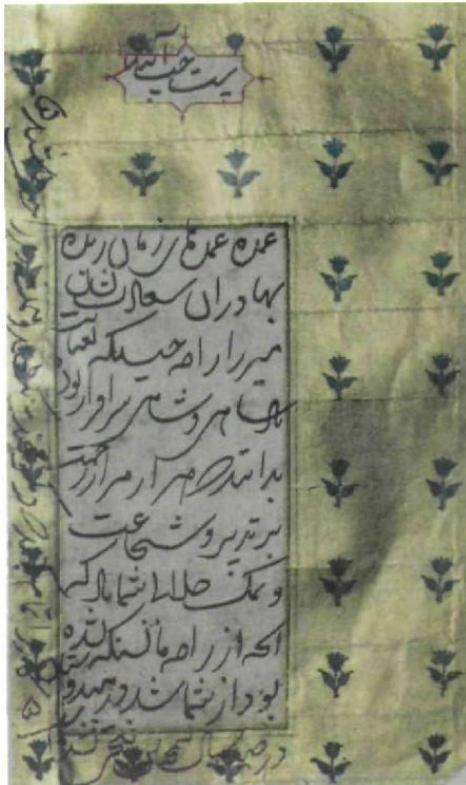
Painted ceiling within the 'Mughal Gateway' garden pavilion, Bairat.



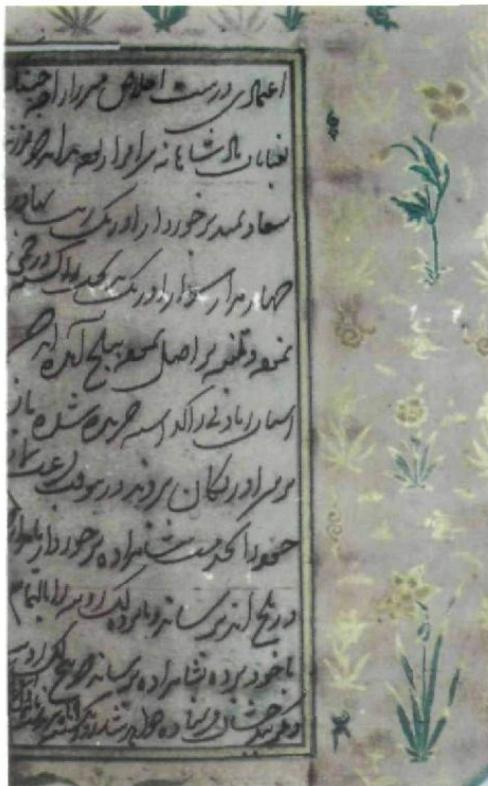
Impression of Aurangzeb's sent to Marwar's hand Ajit Singh to seal a verbal pact (Courtesy Sujas, DPR, Govt, of Rajasthan).



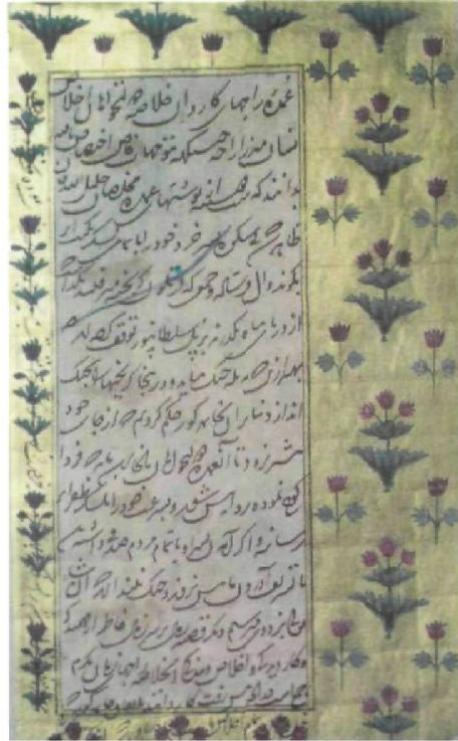
Aurangzeb's farman to Amber's Mirza Raja Jai Singh (Courtesy Sujas, DPR, Govt, of Rajasthan).



Shah Jahan's congratulations to Mirza Raja Jai Singh for the victory over Prince Shuja
(Courtesy Sujas, DPR, Govt, of Rajasthan).



Shah Jahan's farman ordering Mirza Raja Jai Singh to assist Aurangzeb in Balkh & Bokhara
(Courtesy Sujas, DPR, Govt, of Rajasthan).



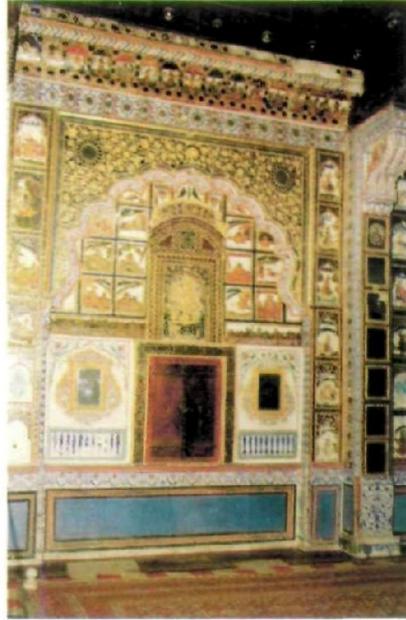
Shah Jahan's letter of 27 July 1658 to Amber's Mirza Raja Jai Singh about Prince Shuja raising forces
(Courtesy Sujas, DPR, Govt, of Rajasthan).



Shah Jahan's note enquiring about Mirza Raja Jai Singh's (Courtesy health Sujas, DPR, Govt, of Rajasthan).



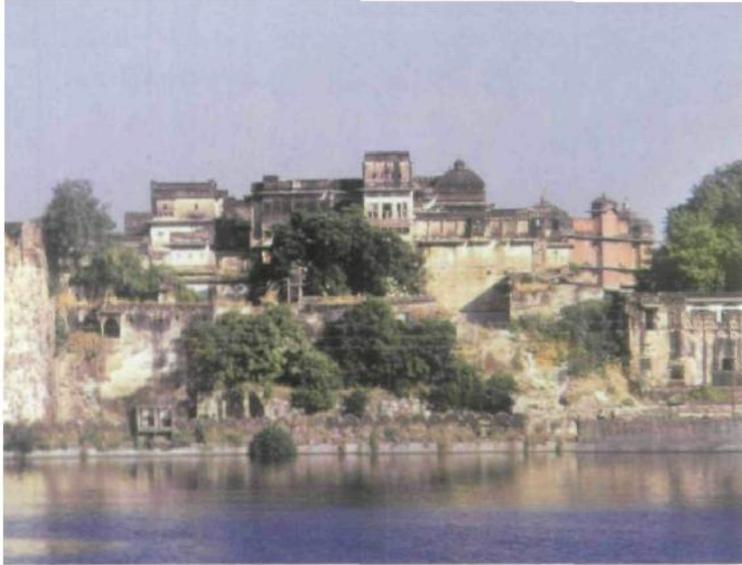
Within Jodhpur's grand Mehrangarh fort,



An elaborately decorated interior within Jodhpur's Mehrangarh fort,



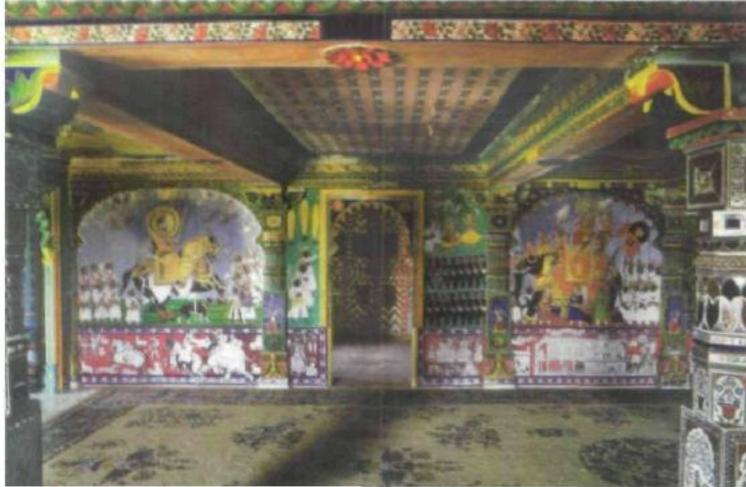
A view of Mehrangarh (Jodhpur).



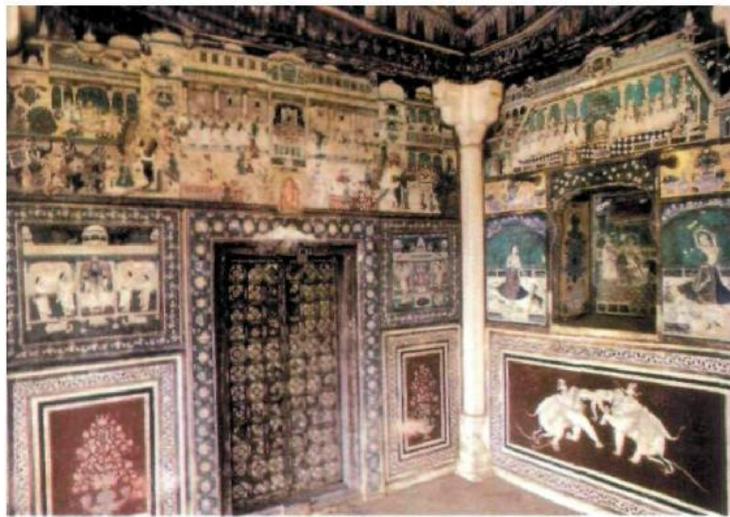
View of Kota palace.



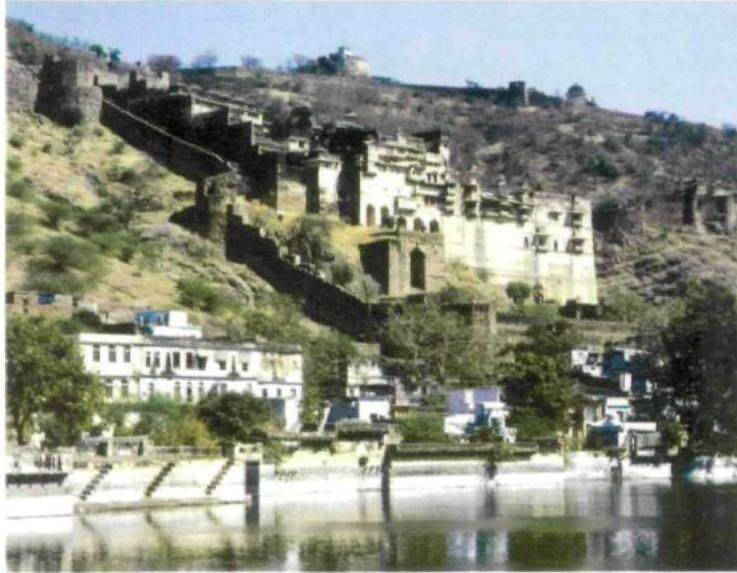
The Darra fort, near Mukundarra and Kota.
(Courtesy Subhash Bhargava).



A view of Dungarpur's palace interior.



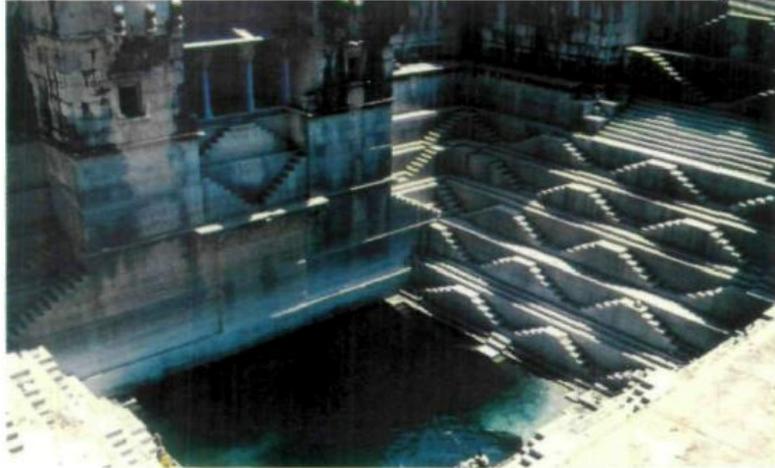
The painted 'Chitra-shala' inside Bundi palace. (Courtesy Subhash Bhargava).



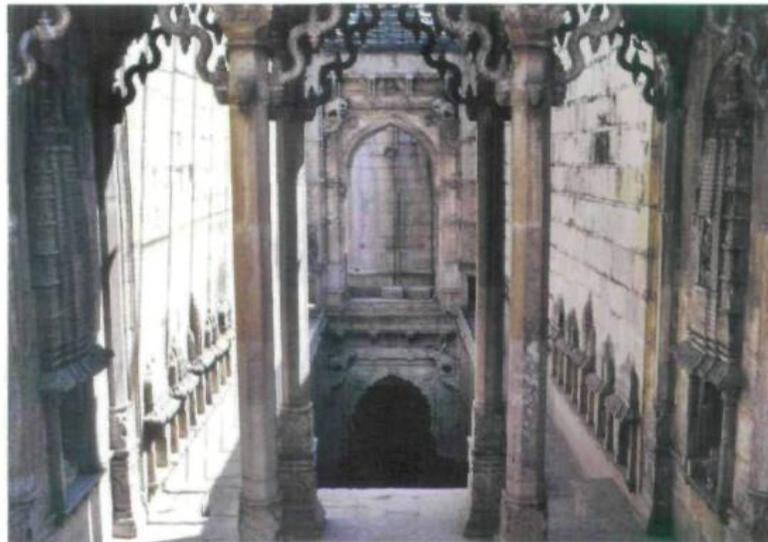
Bundi — view of the fort, palaces and old town (Courtesy V.N. Bahadur).



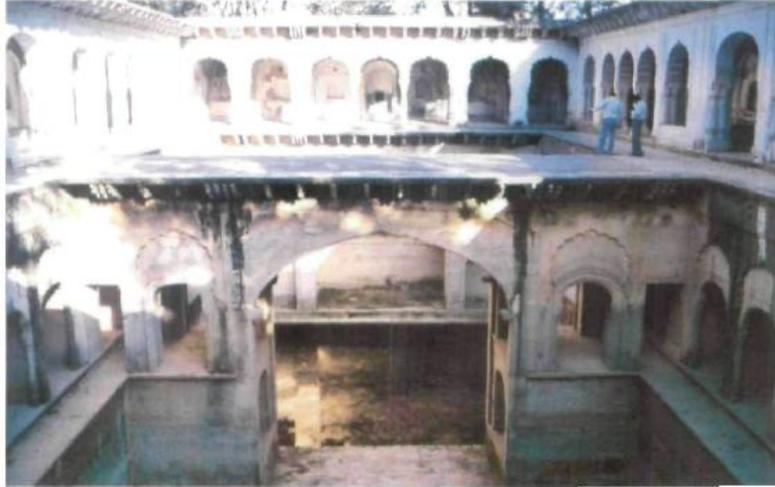
A mural painted within the 'Chitra-shala' inside Bundi palace.



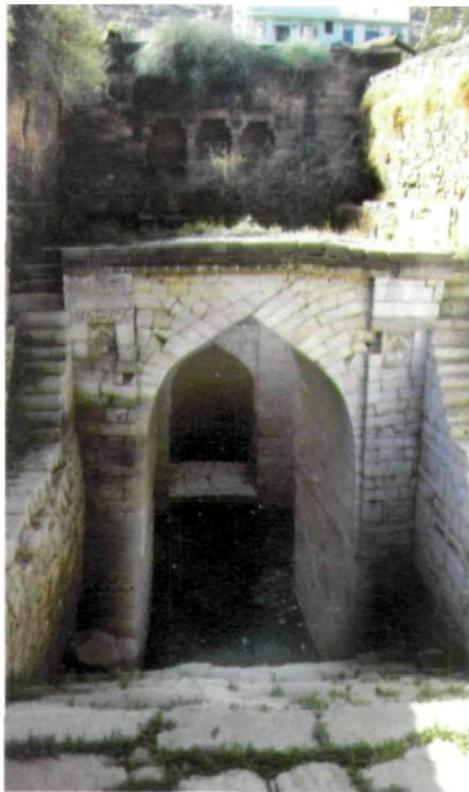
Dhai-ji ki Baori, Bundi.



Rani-ji ki Baori, Bundi has about fifty boori's and tanks (*kund*). The most well-known of these today is the Rani-ji ki Baori, built by the Nathawat sub-clan queen of Bundi's late seventeenth century Rao Raja Aniruddha Singh. Rani Nathawat-ji had twenty-one baoris constructed in her lifetime. Of these, the Rani-ji ki Baori was built by her during the troubled reign of her son (and Aniruddha's successor) Buddh Singh. (Courtesy V.N. Bahadur).



Mahant-ji ki Baori at Rajgarh, an old capital in the Alwar region.
(Courtesy V.N. Bahadur).



Ruins at Maccheri, with a step-well in the foreground.



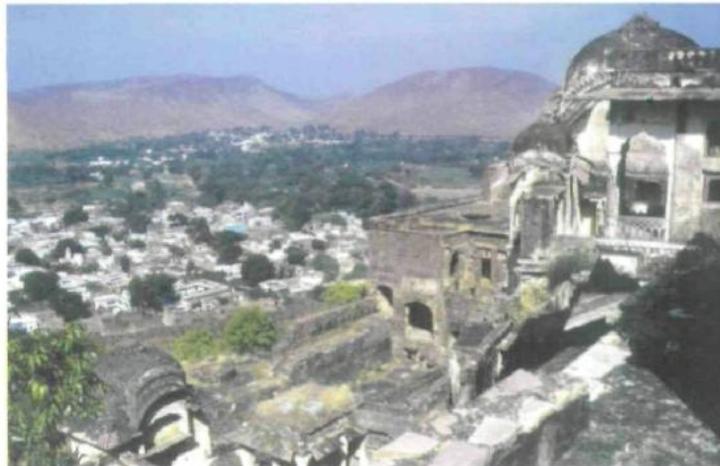
Baori at Nilkantha Mahadev, Alwar area.



Indergarh fort, Hadauti area.



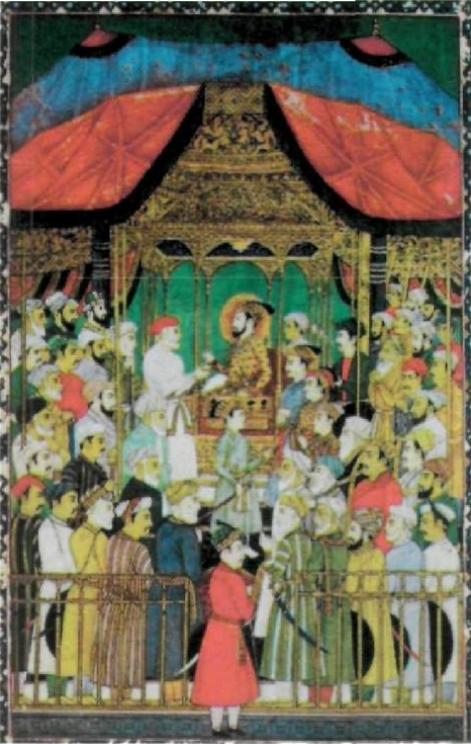
View of the river Indrani from Indergarh fort, Hadauti. (Courtesy V.N. Bahadur).



Structures within Indergarh fort (Courtesy V.N. Bahadur).



The royal palace at Udaipur (Courtesy B.M. Agrawal).



Emperor Shah Jahan and his court — from the collection of erstwhile Alwar state. (Courtesy Dept of Archaeology & Museums, Govt, of Rajasthan).



Cenotaph of Amber's Raja Man Singh
(Courtesy Sujas, DPR, Govt, of Rajasthan).



Amber fort and palaces.



Aerial view of Jaipur's City Palace area.



Aerial view of Nahargarh fort near Amber and Jaipur.
(Courtesy V.N. Bahadur).



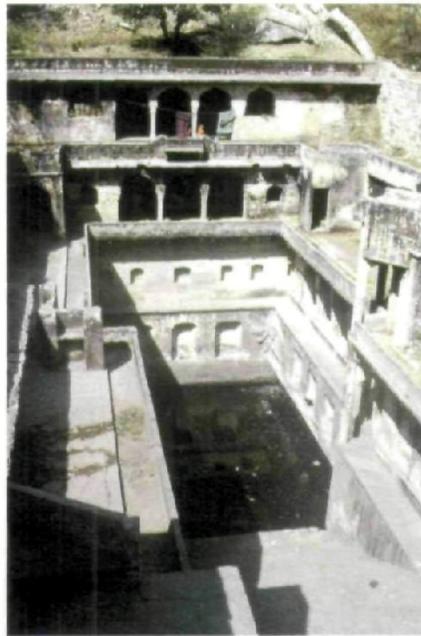
Jaipur's Tripolia Gate and Isar Lat.



Chandra Mahal, City Palace, Jaipur.



Panna-Miyan ki Baori, Amber.



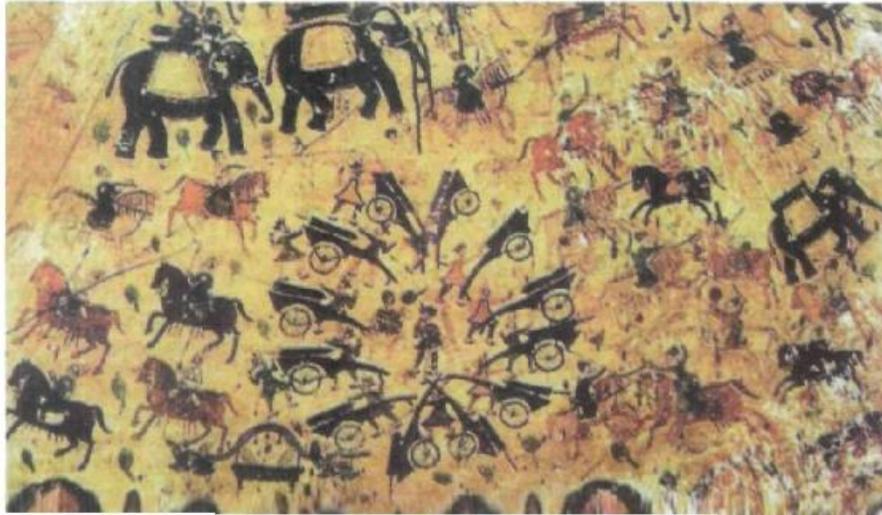
Baori and structures behind Jaipur's Sisodia Rani Palace.
(Courtesy V.N. Bahadur).



Bhagaton ki Haveli, Nawalgarh, Shekhawati.



Frescoes from the period of Zalim Singh Jhala, Indergarh.



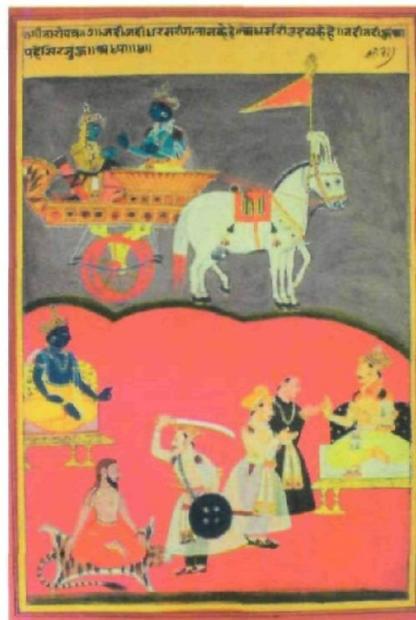
Eighteenth century Mural at Kotiya ka Bas, district Alwar.



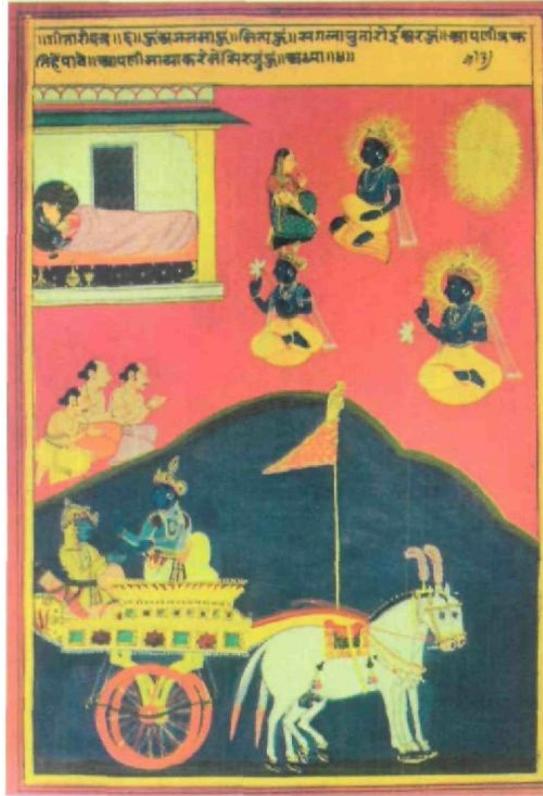
A portion of the illustrated 'Rasika-Priya', Mewar School (Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt, of Rajasthan).



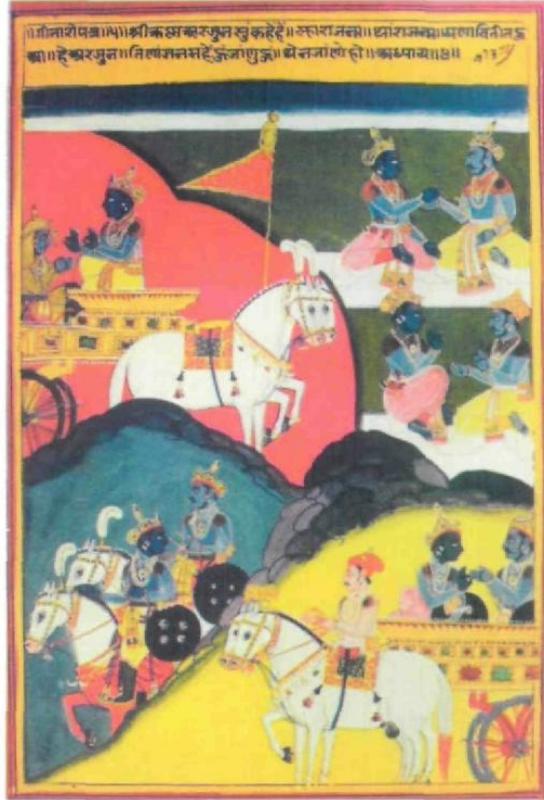
An illustrated manuscript portion of the *Rasika-Priya*, Mewar School (Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt, of Rajasthan).



Part of an illustrated *Bhagvad-Gita*, Mewar School (1) (Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt, of Rajasthan).



Part of an illustrated Bhagvad-Gita, Mewar School (2) (Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt, of Rajasthan).



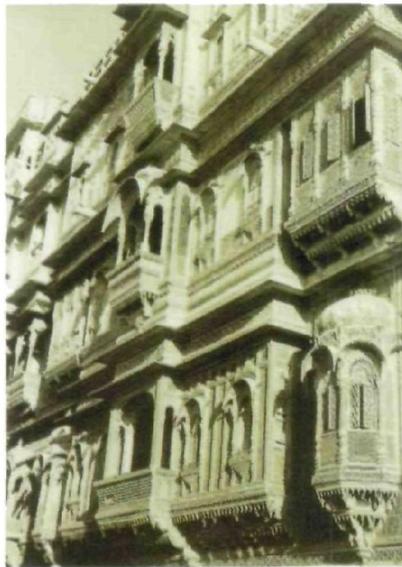
Part of an illustrated *Bhagvad-Gita*, Mewar School (3) (Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt, of Rajasthan).



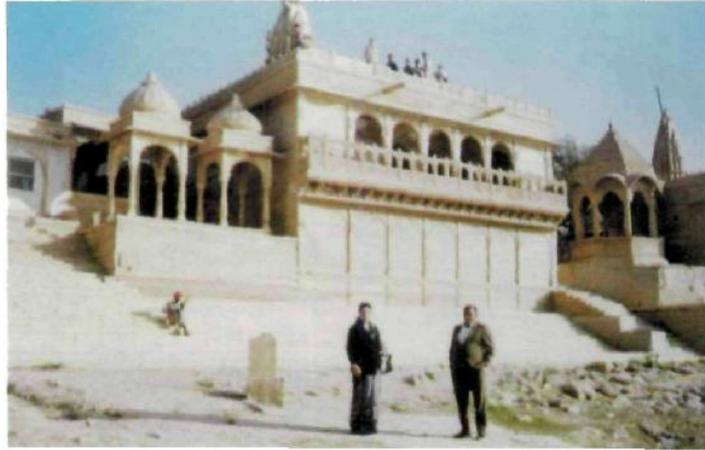
The Deeg fort, near Bharatpur.



A gate to Bharatpur fort.
(Courtesy Subhash Bhargava).



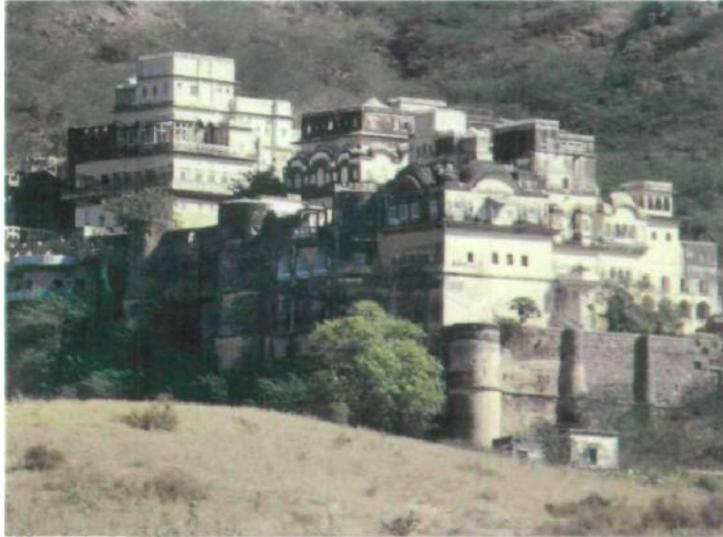
A view of Patwa haveli, Jaisalmer.



Pavilions and temples along Ghadsisar lake, Jaisalmer.



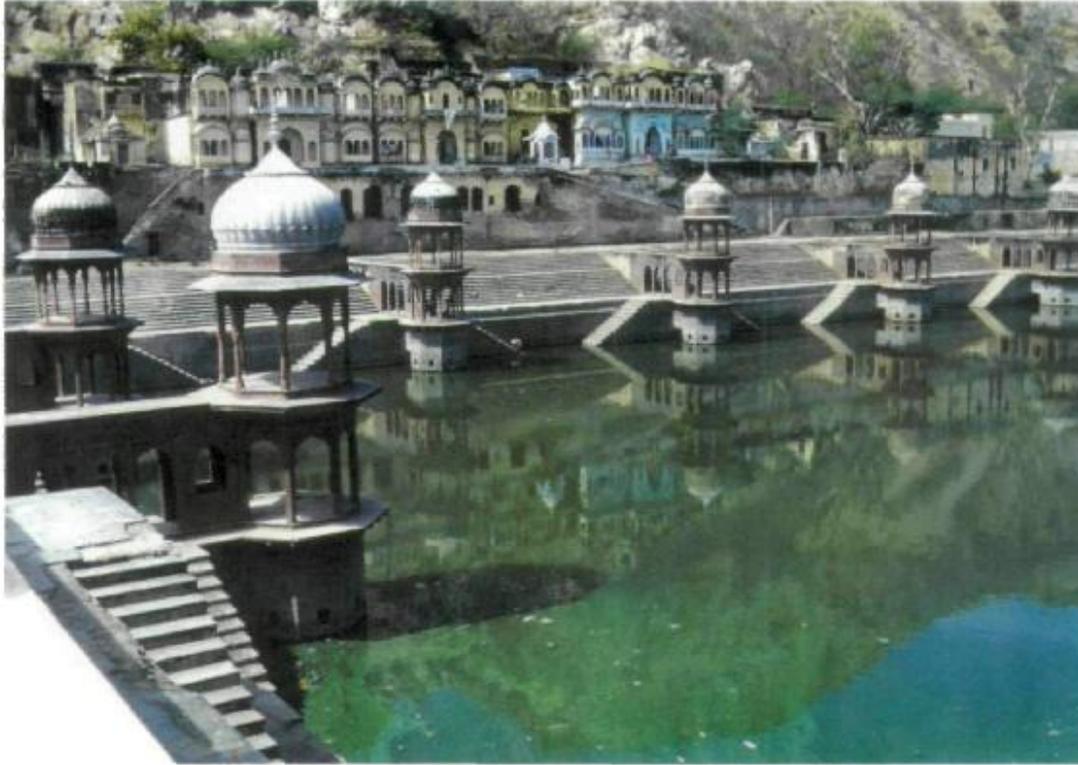
The entrance to the Devgarh palace in the former kingdom of Pratapgarh-Deoliya (Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology & Museums, Govt, of Rajasthan).



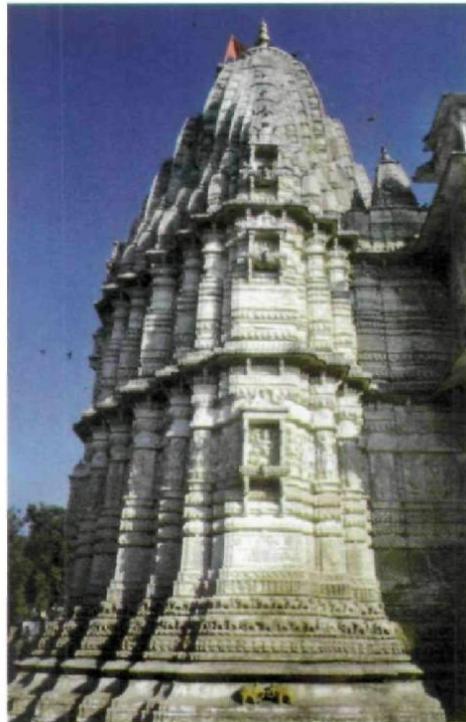
Neemrana fort, Alwar district
(Courtesy V.N. Bahadur).



Alwar — Palace and museum.



Alwar — view of tank and pavilions near the *chhatri* of Moosi Rani.
(Courtesy V.N. Bahadur).



The Keshorai-Patan temple at Keshorai Patan. in the Kota-Bundi area



Seal of the Maratha chief Baji Rao, son of Sadashiv Rao (Courtesy Sujas, DPR, Govt of Raiasthan).



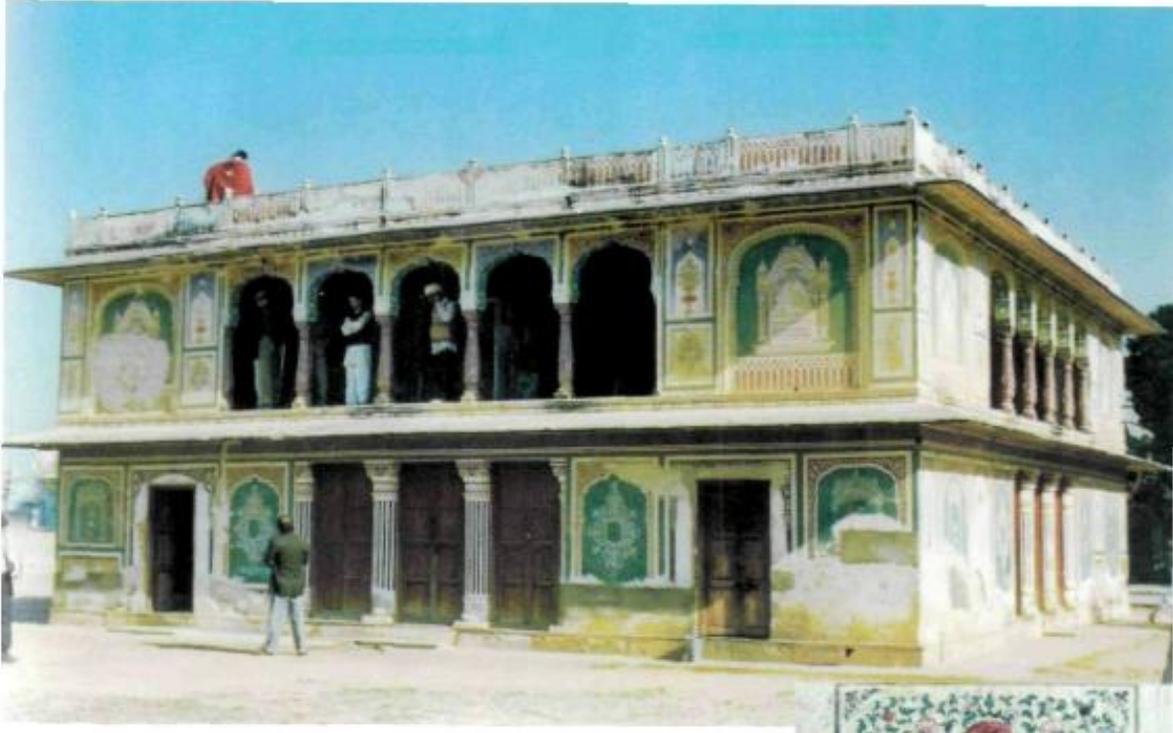
The fort at Pokhran, western Rajasthan
(Courtesy Subhash Bhargava).



Sambhar salt lake.



A view of the sulphur-spring pilgrimage site of Lohargal in Shekhawati.



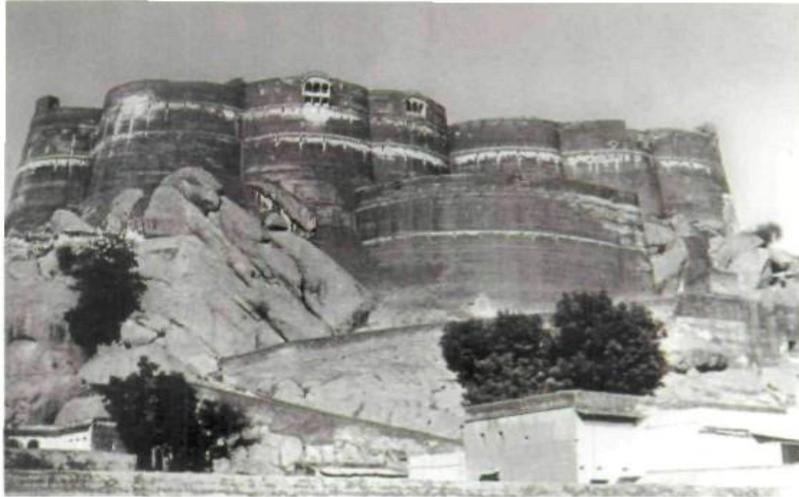
A former administrative building of the erstwhile state of Tonk.



An illustrated folio of Samvat 1931, with word 'Jaipur' and a seal on its left margin (Courtesy Sujas, DPR, Govt, of Rajasthan).



AD 1887 seal of Bikaner's Maharaja Ganga Singh, with its handwoven cloth and gilt bag for enclosing a message (Courtesy Sujas, DPR, Govt of Rajasthan).



Lacchmangarh in Shekhawati — one of the many forts of Rajasthan.



Late nineteenth century buildings in the Shekhawati area (Courtesy Catherine Wazenski).



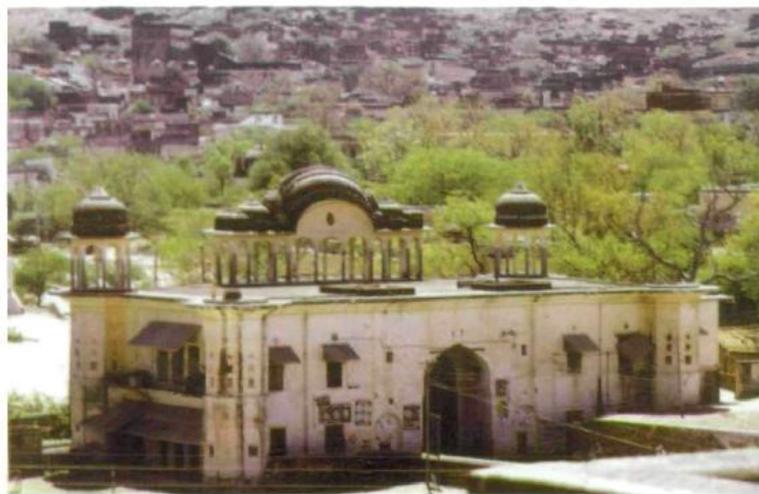
Mal-ji ki Kothi, Churu. The area's prosperity from trade is reflected in the buildings of its merchants.



Painted facade of a *haveli* at Taranagar, Churu.
(Courtesy Dr. M. Hasan).



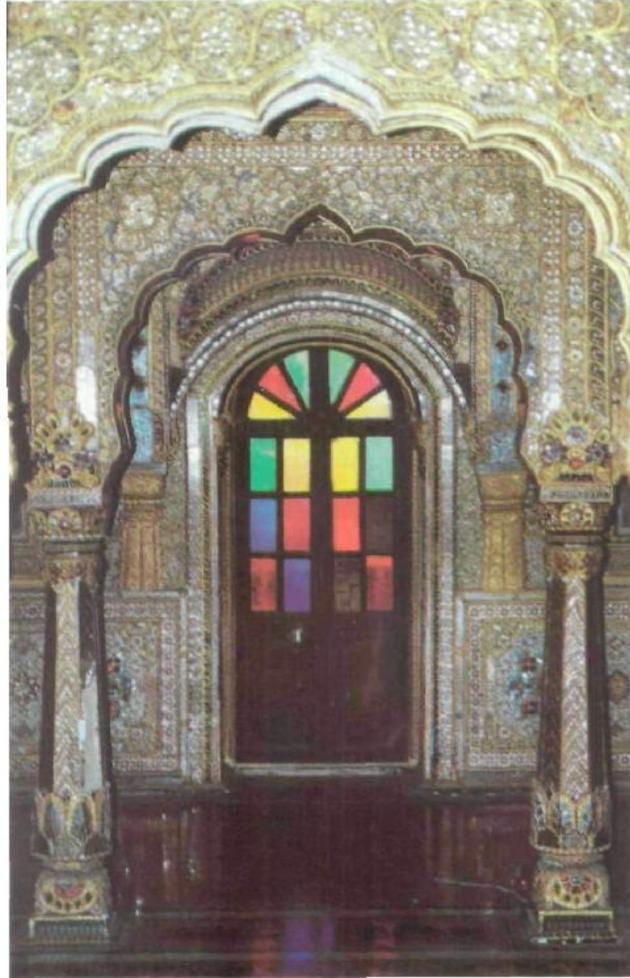
The 'Bhawani Natyashala' at Jhalawar.
(Courtesy Subhash Bhargava).



Palace and old structures at Khetri.
(Courtesy Dr. M. Hasan).



An Egyptian Mummy displayed inside Jaipur's Albert Hall Museum (Courtesy V.N. Bahadur)



Interior of the 'Sunehri Kothi', Tonk.



(from top to below):

Railway emblems of Bikaner,
Jaipur, Dholpur, and Mewar states.
(Courtesy Sujas, DPR, Govt, of Rajasthan).



Panaromic view of Rana
Pratap Sagar Dam under construction during the 1960s.



Himalayan water in the Rajasthan desert — a view of the Rajasthan Canal (now better known as IGNP).



Kota Barrage — upstream view.



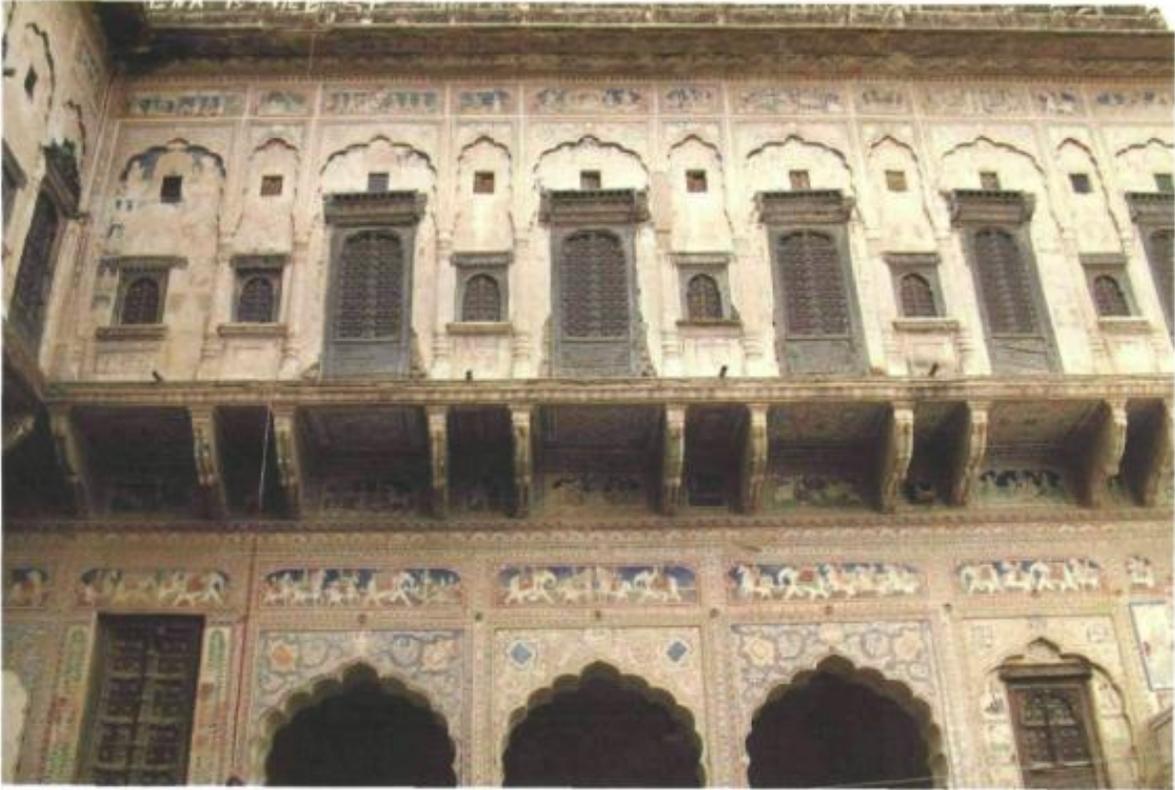
Jawai Dam (south Marwar).



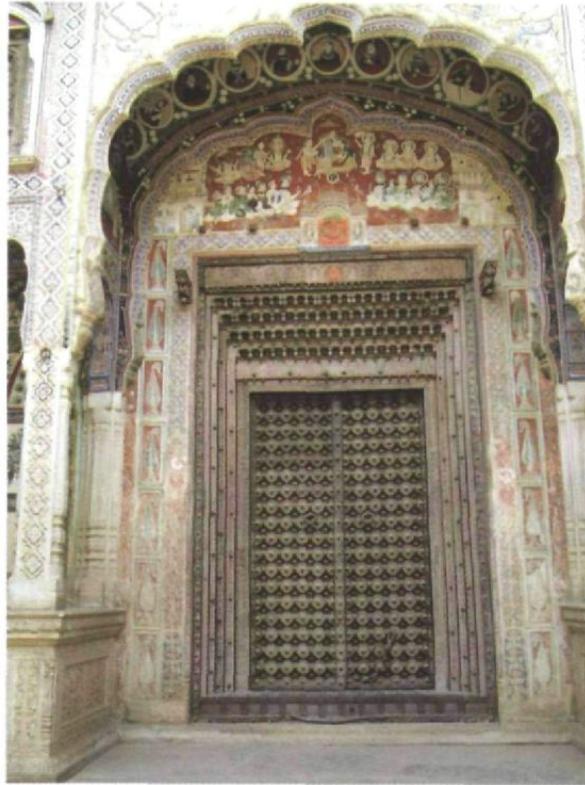
A 1960s view of the University of Rajasthan.



Mid-twentieth century view of Jaipur city.



Painted and decorated facade of a Nawalgarh merchant haveli.



The elaborate entrance to a Shekhawati merchant haveli (Courtesy Catherine Wazenski).



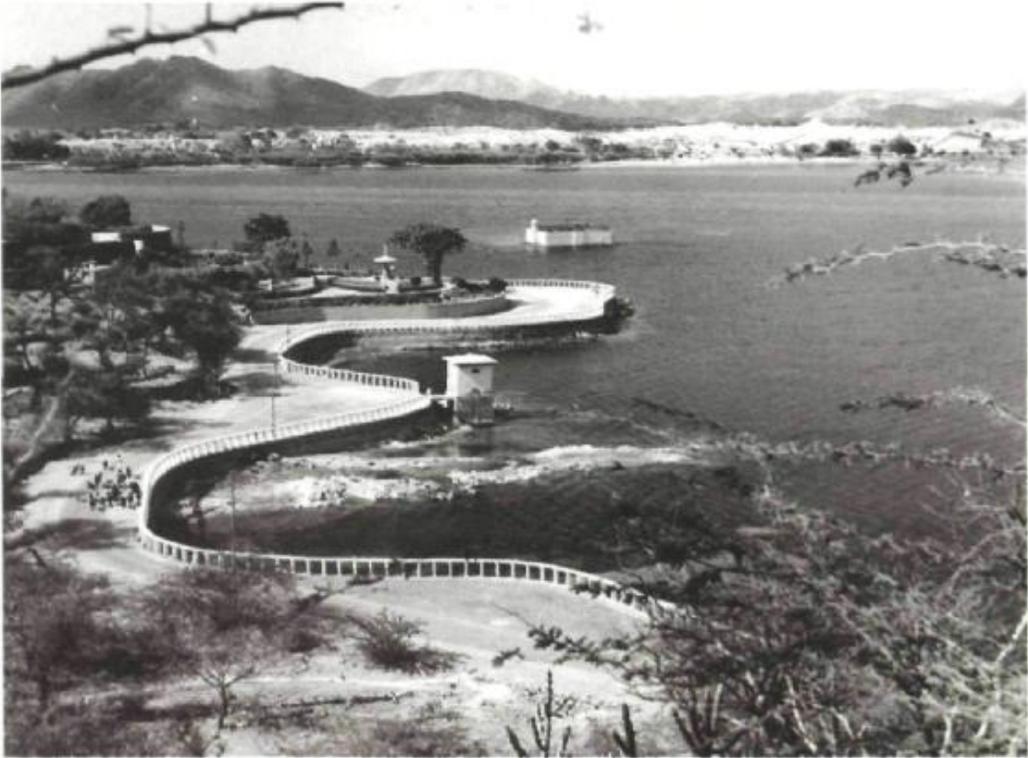
Jodhpur's Umaid Bhawan Palace.



A room within a Nawalgarh haveli (Courtesy Catherine Wazenski).



A distributary channel of Rajasthan's IGNP canal (Courtesy Sujas, DPR, Govt, of Rajasthan).



A mid twentieth century view of the serpentine embankment of the Fateh Sagar lake at Udaipur.



Hand block printing at Sanganer, near Jaipur.



Tie-and-dye (bandhej) craftsmen.



Making traditional footwear.



Gem-stones polishing by hand (c. mid-twentieth century).

Like the other states of the region, Jaisalmer opted to enter into alliance with the East India Company, and the subsidiary alliance treaty was formalised on 12 December 1818. Within a couple of years of this treaty and after occupying the *gaddi* of Jaisalmer for more than half a century, Maharawal Moolraj II died in 1820. Court intrigues ensured that Gaj Singh (r. 1820-1846), a minor was enthroned in his place.

The period of the young ruler's minority enabled Jaisalmer's domineering chief minister and *dewan*, Salim Singh, to assert his authority more arrogantly than before. He is said to have extorted considerable money from the kingdom's subjects and misappropriated jewellery from the state treasury. The ruler became convinced that Salim Singh had to be removed. A Bhati noble made an attempt on the life of Salim Singh. Despite being grievously wounded, Salim Singh survived the attack. However, he was shortly afterwards poisoned by his wife.

Salim Singh's supporters wished to place Salim Singh's son, Bishan Singh, as the new *dewan*, but this plan was not encouraged by the East India Company, which intervened to state that the ruler of the state had the prerogative to select his prime minister. In 1824 Gaj Singh assumed the reigns of government personally, and imprisoned Salim Singh's son, Bishan Singh, for the crime of having murdered his stepmother. In 1825, some *jagirdars* of Jaisalmer, who had been indulging in dacoities, including against Bikaner state, raided Bikaneri territory and stole some two hundred camels. Bikaner sent a punitive force into Jaisalmer, leading the ruler of Mewar and the East India Company to intervene and effect a settlement between Bikaner and Jaisalmer.

Later, when the East India Company moved against the Mirs of Sind in 1843, Maharawal Gaj Singh of Jaisalmer made available, as per the terms of the treaty of 1818, camels and military supplies to the Company's forces. In lieu of this assistance, the Company ensured that the Mir of Talpur returned back to Jaisalmer the three *parganas* of Shahgarh, Ghadsia and Ghotaru, which he had previously seized from Jaisalmer.

Gaj Singh is remembered for the construction of the Gajroop-Sagar water-reservoir, and the Gaj-Vilas Palace. Following his death in July 1846, Gaj Singh was succeeded by his four-year old nephew, Ranjit Singh (r. 1846-1864). During the minority of the ruler, Kesari Singh, the Thakur of Bagdor ran the administration. Kesari Singh constructed several water-tanks and ensured the maintenance of law and order in the state. Maharawal Ranjit Singh was succeeded by his younger brother, Bairisal (r. 1864-1891).

It was during his reign that a severe famine affected the region in 1868. By this period, the state of Jaisalmer was divided into sixteen *hukumats*, each headed by a *hakim*, who was entitled to try petty civil and criminal cases. The *sadar faujdari* and *sadar diwani* courts tried cases of greater magnitude, with the *dewan* being the highest court of appeal in both civil and criminal matters.

A picture about indigenous education around this time is provided by Walter, the British Political Agent to Jaisalmer (and author of the *Gazetteer of Jaisalmer State*)¹²¹. In 1877, Walter noted that in Jaisalmer state education was mainly imparted through religious institutions. Reading from sacred texts formed an important part of instruction. The rudiments of arithmetic and writing were also taught, and this was of particular importance for the boys coming from mercantile and trading families. Traditionally, the Jain priests (*yatis* or *jatis*), who held classes in their monasteries, had made Jaisalmer a seat of Jain learning. According to Walter, in 1877 there was only one such institution in the capital where elementary knowledge was imparted by the *jatis*. Commenting some thirty years later on education in Jaisalmer, Erskine wrote in his *Rajputana Gazetteer* that up to about 1890 the only educational institutions in that 'Princely state' were of the indigenous type. The teachers were mainly Jain priests or *jatis*. In 1890 three schools for boys, along the western model, were started by the State, However, there were no girls' schools.

Maharawal Bairisal died without an heir in 1891. The throne passed to the five-year-old Shyam Singh, son of the Thakur of Lathi. The young Shyam Singh ascended the *gaddi* by the name of Maharawal Shalivahan (r. 1891-1914). A Regency Council to carry out the administration of the state during the minority of the Maharawal was set up by the British, under the

supervision of the Resident of Jodhpur, with Mehta Jagjiwan as the prime minister.

At the time, the state was in debt. The local terrain did not help the situation, for as Major Erskine commented in his *Gazetteer*, "...Of the State, as a whole it may be said that no country could offer a more desolate appearance. The villages are few and far between, sparsely populated and consist, as a rule of some circular huts of brushwood collected round a well of brackish water. In many cases well water, which is drinkable in the cold season, becomes actually poisonous in the hot weather. The average depth of the wells is said to be about 250 feet, but one measured some years ago by an officer of the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India was found to be 490 feet deep". "...The worst of desolation", he continued, "is seen in the west where the dhrians impoverish the already sterile country. There are no crops here, and the people live almost entirely on milk in various forms, a little *bajra* [millet] and *moth* [lentil] being, however, imported from Sind in exchange for sheep".

Today, however, had noted at the beginning of the nineteenth century that notwithstanding the apparent poverty of its "desert soil, nature has not denied it the powers of productions; it is even favourable to some grains, especially the *bajra*, which prefers a light sand. In a favourable season, they grow sufficient for the consumption of two and even three years, and they import only wheat from Sindh [sic]. When those parts favourable for *bajra* have been saturated with two or three heavy showers, they commence sowing, and the crops spring up rapidly. The great danger is that of too much rain when the crops are advanced, for having little tenacity, they are often washed away. The *bajra* of the sandhills is deemed far superior to that of Hindusthan [sic] and prejudice gives it a preference even to wheat, which does not bear a higher price in times of scarcity. *Bajra*, in plentiful seasons, sells at one and a half maunds for a rupee: but this does not often occur, as they calculate five bad seasons for a good one. *Jooar* [*jowar*] is also grown, but only in the low flats. Cotton is produced in the same soil as the *bajra*... A variety of pulses are grown on the sheltered sides of the *teebas*, as *mong*, *moth*, etc.; also the oil-plant (*til*) and abundance of the *gowar*, a diminutive melon, not larger than a hen's egg, which is sent hundreds of miles, as a rarity. Around the capital, and between the ridges

where soil is deposited or formed, and where they dam-up the waters, are grown considerable quantities of wheat of very good quality, turmeric, and garden-stuffs. Barley and *gram* are, in good seasons, reared in small quantities, but rice is entirely an article of import from the valley of Sinde”
[122](#).

In fact, despite its climatic constraints, Jaisalmer had long been celebrated as a commercial centre in the middle of the desert. Jaisalmer lay on the old established trade-route between the Gangetic Doab to its east, the valley of the Indus to its west, and the Punjab and northwestern fringes of the Indian subcontinent to its north and north-west. Tod himself noted that the *kuttars* (or caravans of camels) passed through Jaisalmer, carrying goods to and from “...Hyderabad, Rory-Bekhar [Rohri-Bhakkar], Shikarpoor and Ootch [Uchchh], from the Gangetic provinces, and the Punjab”. He added that, “The indigo of the Doab, the opium of Kotah and Malwa, the famed sugar-candy of Bikaner, iron implements from Jeipoor, are exported to Shikarpoor and lower Sinde [sic]; whence elephants’ teeth (from Africa), dates, coco-nuts, drugs, and chundus [scented wood used for prayer-beads], are imported, with pistachios and dried fruits from Bhawulpoor [sic]”[123](#).

In the early years of the nineteenth century, Tod had also observed that coarse cotton cloth was locally manufactured, and wool from sheep pastured in the desert was made into *loots*, or blankets, and scarfs, petticoats, turbans, of every quality. Cups and platters were made from a mineral called *aboor*, a calcareous substance, of a dark chocolate ground, with light brown vermiculated stripes; female ornaments of elephants’ teeth, and arms of an interior quality[124](#)

As such, Tod’s writings seem to indicate that one should attribute part of the poor condition of Jaisalmer not simply to nature *per se*. Rather, it was the mismanagement and the rapacious nature of that state’s ministers, dacoits, rulers, chieftains, etc. during the late eighteenth and through much of the nineteenth centuries that had brought Jaisalmer to its pitiable condition during this period.

For instance, Tod informs us that the personal revenue of the ‘princes of Jessulmer’ was estimated at upwards of four lakhs of rupees in the early nineteenth century, of which more than one lakh was from the land¹²⁵. Transit duties were formerly the most certain and most lucrative aspect of the state’s fiscal income. However, Tod noted that; “.. .the bad faith of the Minister, the predatory habits of the Bhatti chiefs proceeding mainly from thence, and the general decrease of commerce have conspired nearly to annihilate this source of income, said at one time to reach three lakhs of rupees. These imposts are termed *clan*, and the collector *dannie*, who was stationed at convenient points of all the principle routes which diverge from the capital”¹²⁶. Land-revenues due to the Crown were set between one-fifth to one-seventh of the gross produce of the land. Tod observed that this was”.. .paid in kind, which is purchased on the spot by the Palliwal Brahmins, or Banias, and the value remitted to the treasury”¹²⁷. Another source of income to the state was the *dhooá* (literally smoke) tax, which was also termed as *t’hali* (eating-platter), and was like a cooking-hearth tax. We are informed that no house was exempt from paying this tax, and that it earned the state about Rs. 20,000 annually¹²⁸.

Tod also mentioned another kind of tax — universally known and detested by the name of *dind* across Jaisalmer state. This was an arbitrary tax that was first imposed in the kingdom during Rawal Moolraj’s reign in Samvat 1830 — i.e., AD 1774, under the heading of additional *dhooá* or *t’hali*, on the mercantile groups living in the capital. The Maheshwari community paid their share of this tax, but when the Oswals held back, they were punished and forced to yield up the due-amount. In retaliation, the Oswals collectively vowed not to look upon Rawal Moolraj’s face, and adhered to this for several years, until the Rawal entreated forgiveness, and gave an oath in writing never to impose this *dind* again, provided the Oswals agreed to *dhooá* becoming a permanent tax. Later, fresh negotiations were entered into time and again, with oaths made by the ruler and broken by his rapacious minister (father of Salim Singh). Thereafter, following the accession of Rawal Gaj Singh, the minister Salim Singh had increased his extortionary activities (as already noted).

Thus, in the final years of the nineteenth century, under the Regency Council and Prime Minister Jagjiwan Mehta, stern measures were taken to deal with the general situation. Jagjiwan ruled the state with an iron hand for the next decade, while the young Maharawal Shalivahan was a student at Mayo College, Ajmer.

In 1896 a tax known as the *lani* was imposed. The mercantile community objected to this and launched an agitation. Their agitation was put down with severity by the authorities, as a result of which several traders and business families emigrated from Jaisalmer. Their departure proved a set-back to the economic condition of the state. In 1899 the traditional state mint of Jaisalmer, established in 1756 during the reign of Maharawal Akhey Singh, was closed, and over the ensuing decades the local *Akhey-Shahi* rupee gradually came to be replaced by British Indian currency.

The eighteenth and nineteenth century architecture of Jaisalmer, using golden-yellow sandstone, is of particular note especially in the enclosed *haveli* town-houses of rich merchants and ministers of the kingdom. Among these is the group of 'Patwa' havelis built by Seth Guman Chand Bapna for the use of his extended joint-family and their servitors in the mid nineteenth century, and the havelis of Jaisalmer's *Dewan* Salim Singh (early nineteenth century), and *Dewan* Nathmal (late nineteenth century).

BHARATPUR

In the course of the Second Anglo-Maratha War (to which reference has already been made), General Lake led the East India Company forces against the Marathas, active in and around the Delhi-Mathura-Bharatpur-Alwar region, during September to November 1803. Judging the situation to a nicety in advance, Bharatpur's ruler, Ranjit Singh (r. 1776-1805), had previously ended his association with the Marathas and joined hands with General Lake. The move paid diplomatic dividends for Bharatpur state. On 29 September 1803, Bharatpur signed a treaty of friendship with the Company. Thereafter, Ranjit Singh actively assisted Lake in the capture of Agra fort. In return, Ranjit Singh obtained the *parganas* of Kathumar and

Kishangarh, together with Rewari (near Gurgaon) and Gokal and Sahar (near Mathura), in recognition of the assistance rendered to the British. The Bharatpur chief was also confirmed in the possession of Tijara and Tapukara.

However, the Anglo-Maratha issue was far from resolved. In the latter half of 1804, Jaswant Rao Holkar seized Mathura and advanced upon Delhi. Ranjit Singh opted to assist Holkar, and was promised territory in return for his help. As events turned out, though, Lord Lake was successful in defeating Holkar at Delhi. Holkar now took shelter at Deeg. Lake followed close at his heels, and captured Deeg on 24-25 December 1804, forcing Ranjit Singh and his Bharatpur soldiers, along with the Marathas to seek the safety of Bharatpur fort. The Pindari chief Amir Khan rushed to help his Maratha allies and Ranjit Singh, making a diversionary move, attacked the British in the Doab area, in order to divert attention from Bharatpur. His plan did not work and the Pindaris were defeated by the British. Meanwhile, Lake's forces had set up a prolonged siege of Bharatpur. During January and February 1805, the British side made four successive attacks on the 'mud-fort' of Bharatpur, but the fort withstood the attack. In the duration, the remaining bulk of the Maratha troops had been defeated by the British and forced across the Chambal, leaving Bharatpur's Ranjit Singh isolated.

Ranjit Singh now asked for an end to hostilities, and a fresh treaty was signed between Bharatpur state and the East India Company in the early summer of 1805. Ranjit Singh and Lake were the signatories for their respective sides. The five districts granted by the British to Ranjit Singh in 1803 were taken back, and Bharatpur was asked to pay rupees twenty lakhs in *Furrackabad Sicca* (Farukhabad coinage) to the British. Ranjit Singh further agreed to one of his sons becoming a temporary hostage to the British officer commanding the Company's forces in the *suba* of either Agra or Delhi. The arrangement would continue until such time as the British were satisfied about Ranjit Singh's 'fidelity', and could restore the fort of Deeg (which the British retained), and the boy to Bharatpur. (Deeg was later restored to Ranjit Singh towards the end of 1805). The treaty stipulated that any dispute between Bharatpur and any other state would be referred to the Company for settlement. In addition, the state of Bharatpur

would not employ any European without the sanction of the East India Company, nor the Company any relative or employee of the Bharatpur Maharaja, without the Maharaja's consent. On its part, the British took responsibility for the safety and security of Bharatpur state.

In December 1805 Bharatpur's Ranjit Singh died at Goverdhan. Of his four sons, namely Randhir Singh, Baldeo Singh, Prithvi Singh and Laxman Singh, Randhir Singh (r. 1805-1823), succeeded to the *gaddi* of Bharatpur. Laxman Singh, who had been handed over to the British as a hostage, returned to Bharatpur. Randhir's reign was to see no confrontation with the British.

Randhir Singh died in October 1823. Lacking a direct heir, he had previously adopted his cousin, Durjansal, but his brother Baldeo Singh staked a claim to the throne, and the British upheld his right to succession. Baldeo Singh (r. 1823-1825) died after a brief reign in 1825. His minor son, Balwant Singh, was placed on the Bharatpur *gaddi*, but Durjansal (r. 1825-1826) set him aside and declared himself the ruler of the state. The British Resident at Delhi acted, and moved a force to support Balwant Singh. However, the action was stopped by his superiors, who held that East India Company's recognition of the heir-apparent during the lifetime of his father did not impose any obligation on the Company to support him in opposition to the wishes of the chiefs and the people.

Durjansal, on his part, professed that he was willing to leave the decision regarding his claim to the British, but simultaneously began garnering support from neighbouring states as well as the Marathas. For a while, it seemed as if an armed conflict would be the next step. The British finally opted to oppose Durjansal and see Balwant Singh back on the *gaddi*. Thus, an army of 20,000 (besides artillery), led by Lord Combermere was sent against Durjansal in December 1825. Bharatpur was besieged and invested, after strong resistance, on 18 January 1826. Durjansal and the members of his family were arrested by the British, guns and money seized and the expenses of the war declared the liability of Bharatpur state. Durjansal was subsequently deported to Allahabad, while Balwant Singh (r. 1826-1853) was installed as the Maharaja by the British. The minor Maharaja's mother, Imarat Kanwar, was appointed regent, and her

administration placed under the general superintendence of the British Political Agent, Major Lockett. Later, in September 1826, she was removed as regent for allegedly fostering in intrigue, and a Regency Council headed by the Political Agent was constituted.

In 1830, while Balwant was still a minor, it was proposed that the salt assets of Bharatpur be handed over to the Company as settlement of the debts owed by the state to the British. Fortunately for Bharatpur, the proposal was not carried through. In 1835, Balwant Singh was conferred with ruling powers. Like other parts of Rajasthan, the Bharatpur area had its share of local traditional *chatshalas pathshalas, maktabas*, etc. at this time. In 1842, a small school was started at the capital by the Maharaja.

Balwant Singh died in 1853 leaving behind an infant son, Jaswant Singh (r. 1853-1893). The British once again established a Regency Council, headed by the Political Agent. In 1855, Sir Henry Lawrence, AGG for Rajputana, visited Bharatpur and confirmed the Political Agent, Major Morrison, with the right to exercise of full administrative powers. Under the Council, modern judicial and revenue departments were established, as were *tehsils* and *thanas*. The first 'Summary Land Revenue Settlement' was carried out too in 1855.

At this time, about 87.6% of the land in Bharatpur state was of the *khalsa* or state-owned category, with about 11.8% being *muafi* and 0.6% *istmirari* tenures. In *khalsa* lands, the tenancy was stable, and a farmer was only disturbed upon failure to pay revenue-dues with regularity. Tenancy rights were inheritable, but could not be alienated without the consent of the state. The tenancy could not be transferred for non-agricultural purposes. *Muafi* lands included those donated free in charity or as acts of piety to Brahmins, priests, temples etc., as well as those granted as reward (*inam*), or on *chauth* tenure. *Muafidars* were generally not required to pay land revenue. In the case of the *istmirari* tenures held by the *thakurs* (who were relatives of the ruler) and some nobles (i.e. *sardars*) of Bharatpur state, the *istmirardars* held land granted rent-free, often in lieu of the military services rendered by them.

Apparently there was no *jagirdari* system in Bharatpur State such as was known in many of the other Rajputana states, and even the Bharatpur ruler's relatives (known in the state merely as *Thakurs*), held only twenty-seven villages on rent-free tenure. However, the *Faujdar* of Ballabgarh did hold a *jagir* along with all the rights accruing. This 'exception' to the general situation was by virtue of the Ballabgarh noble having been a premier *jagirdar* of Dhoondhar state previously, whose status had been maintained as per a formal agreement, when Ballabgarh was transferred to Bharatpur.

In *khalsa* areas, land-revenue was one-third of the produce — levied either by actual division of the crop (*batai*), or by appraisal of the yield of standing crops (*kankut*), that was converted into a cash demand as per existing rates. Later, it took the shape of a contract system (*patia* or *theka*), by which the contracting landlord or middle man (*pattedar* or *thekedar*) contracted to pay the state a fixed annual amount. This changed partially in 1848, when a system of land measurement was introduced by Balwant Singh's government, entailing annual assessment by *pargana* officials and *amins*. Thereafter, in 1855 the first 'Summary Settlement' was made, at which time the land revenue for *khalsa* lands was fixed on the basis of the average collections in the previous ten years,

During the events of 1857, Bharatpur saw much tension as well as action — in part due to its proximity to Agra and Mathura. When troops mutinied at Mathura's cantonment, Bharatpur's troops were influenced too. Bharatpur's Political Agent, Major Morrison, carried on with his duties, but in July 1857 he received orders from his superiors to withdraw so as to not incite an attack against Bharatpur by army mutineers from the Neemuch cantonment, who were in the vicinity. In the interim, the Meos and Gujars of the area rose up against the East India Company, and joined hands with the anti-British troops. For a while, the, anti-Company nationalists established their writ over the area, until they were forcibly quelled in 1858. Meanwhile, the Political Agent at Bharatpur sent the state forces under Captain Nixon's command to intercept 'rebel' fugitives and maintain order, along with assistance from some 2,500 troops of Alwar State. However, two companies of the Bharatpur forces revolted at Mathura, and the Alwar troops in the main either chose to join the anti-British forces, or to take no

further part in the action. Subsequently though, as the picture changed in other regions, the British regained an upper hand in the Bharatpur area too, and troops marched with Captain Nixon to the Dausa area to take action against Tantia Tope.

It was also in 1858 that a State Council was created. The same year (1858) saw the opening of the first state-run western-style boys' school at Bharatpur. Thereafter, in 1866 the first girls' school of Bharatpur state was opened at the capital, with seven pupils on the rolls, as is described in the *Bhurtpore Agency Report ((865-67)* of Captain Walter, the Political Agent at Bharatpur. Another girls' school was opened in 1867. Despite this, girls' education made slow progress in Bharatpur state, and in 1906, forty years after the establishment of the first girls' school in the capital-town, there were only four girls' schools throughout the entire state of Bharatpur, with about 100 girls enrolled. Other aspects of the government structure were modernised too under the State Council's administration. Meanwhile, on 11 March 1862, Bharatpur's ruler gained the *sanad* grant from the British recognising adoption by a ruler not having a natural heir.

Maharaja Jaswant Singh was conferred with full ruling powers in March 1871. Within a couple of years of this, Bharatpur saw the arrival of the railways in 1873-74. However, 1877 found the state faced with a famine. By this time, the State was divided into two *nizamats*, namely Bharatpur and Deeg. Each *nizamats* had a *nazim* and a deputy collector who discharged judicial and executive function respectively.

The year 1878 saw the closure of the Deeg-based state mint, which had been started by Maharaja Suraj Mai in 1763. The state mint at the capital, Bharatpur, which had also been established by Suraj Mal in 1763, was closed in 1883. Both these mints had witnessed the striking of silver coins by various Bharatpur rulers. The coins were inscribed with the names of the successive Mughal emperors Akbar II and Shah Alam. However, the Bharatpur rulers had used individual symbols to distinguish their own individual issues¹²⁹. Such symbols included a dagger, stick, flower etc. Copper coins too had been minted.

In 1879, Bharatpur signed a Salt Agreement with the British. By the terms of this, Bharatpur surrendered its right to manufacture salt locally in the state, and to stop all private or state-run salt-production and trading. In lieu of this, the British government agreed to pay Rs. 1.5 lakhs annually as compensation. The British take-over of Bharatpur's thriving salt-trade had its inevitable effect on the state's economy. Dr. H.E. Drake Brokman, Agency Surgeon of 'Eastern Rajputana States' (1899-1900) noted that 'Bharatpur was once a thriving city but its population has much decreased of late years owing to the following causes — firstly, it was a mart for the purchase and sale of salt which was manufactured in large quantities in the *pergunnahs* of Bharatpur, Kumher and Dig. The annual production of salt amounted to about 1.5 lakh maunds yielding an income of about Rs. 3,00,000 to the state and gave employment to many thousands of people. The profits accruing from the manufacture of it were great...*Namak-kakatla* was a wealthy and flourishing part of the city, but since the suppression of this source of industry in 1879, the *katla* has become almost depopulated'.

In 1884 Bharatpur abolished all transit duties except on intoxicating drugs, opium and liquor. Meanwhile, over time, the judiciary too was modernised. The lowest courts were presided over by *naib tehsildars*, who were deemed Third Class Magistrates'. Above them were the *tehsildars*, who were 'Second Class Magistrates' and decided civil suits up to a certain value. Appeals against decisions of these courts lay before the *nazim*, who held the powers of a District Magistrate. A Civil and Sessions Judge heard appeals against the judgement of the *nazims* on civil matters. The judge also tried new sessions court cases. The highest court was the Council, which had the powers of meting out the death-penalty, with the approval of the AGG. The 1889-1890 period saw the raising of one infantry and one cavalry regiment, respectively, in the state.

Jaswant Singh died in 1893. He was succeeded by his son, Ram Singh (r. 1893-1900). Ram Singh was to have a short period on the throne, with the indignity of eventually being deposed. The new ruler did not gain full powers initially, and the administration work was conducted by a four-member Council. The Council was abolished in 1895, and a *dewan* was appointed to carry out administrative duties under the guidance of the

Political Agent. In 1897, the headquarters of the 'Eastern Rajputana states Agency' (which covered the states of Bharatpur, Dholpur and Karauli) was transferred from Dholpur to Bharatpur by the British authorities.

The following year, 1898, the departure of the Bharatpur *dewan* led to the re-constitution of the Council, under the presidency of the Political Agent. The Council's strength was later increased to five members. Meanwhile, there was overall British dissatisfaction over the persistent 'unsavoury' conduct of the Bharatpur ruler, and in 1900 Maharaja Ram Singh was deposed by the British, on the charge of murdering one of his servants at Abu. (The deposed Ram Singh would live for another twenty-nine years, dying on 29 August 1929!) Maharaja Ram Singh's place was taken on the Bharatpur *gaddi* by his minor son, Kishan (Krishna) Singh. We shall look at the subsequent history of Bharatpur, and the reign of Kishan Singh (b. October 1899, r. 1900-1929), in the next chapter.

AGRARIAN MOVEMENTS

Various agrarian movements that were launched in some of the Rajputana states towards the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century hold an important place in the history of not just the region, but South Asia as a whole. Notable was a pioneering non-violent agrarian struggle begun in the Bijolia *thikana* of the state of Mewar in 1897. This continued for about half-a-century. It not only chronologically preceded Mahatma Gandhi's Champaran movement of 1921 in Bihar, the Mahatma appears to have had knowledge of it, and may possibly even have drawn some inspiration from it. Over time, it spread to other parts of Mewar state, as well as to parts of the neighbouring states of Bundi, Sirohi, Idar, Banswara and Dungarpur. Later, from December 1916, it was led by non-local leaders like Vijay Singh Pathik. The Bijolia movement became the apparent inspiration for a number of other such movements. Notable among these were the movements at Begun *thikana*, and at Parsoli (both in Mewar state), besides some of the Bhil-related movements.

In the ensuing decades, various peoples' movements launched by organisations like praja mandals or praja parishads in different states of

Rajputana drew inspiration from the Bijolia movement and its methodology. In fact, the bulk of the twentieth century movements in Rajputana's different princely states, were basically agrarian at root. Interestingly, in the states, the call was not for the *removal* of the maharajas, but for 'representative government' under the auspices of their respective rulers!

BRITISH MONOPOLY OVER THE SALT TRADE OF RAJASTHAN

There was a considerable trade, both internal and external, in salt in Rajasthan at the time of conclusion of treaties in AD 1818 between the East India Company and various princely states of Rajasthan. Taxes and duties on this brought substantial revenues to the states traditionally connected with salt-production and trading.

As noted already, Sambhar lake — some thirty kilometres in length, and varying in width from 2.2 to 11.2 km, was one of the major sources for salt production in Rajasthan. Other important centres of salt production included several located within the state of Marwar. These were Pachpadra, situated about fifty-two kilometres south-west of Jodhpur; the salt lake near Didwana town, some ninety-eight kilometres north-west of Sambhar lake; the salt-marsh at Phalodi, in north-west of Marwar (near the Marwar-Jaisalmer boundary); the salt-marsh at Pokhran, eighteen kilometres west of Phalodi; other salt-marshes at Sargot and Kuchaman (Nawa), located north of Sambhar. In addition, besides the Luni River flowing through Marwar, which was capable of yielding salt in unlimited quantities during the hot season, there were, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, seventy-two villages within Marwar state, which traditionally produced salt.

Bikaner state possessed two main salt lakes — one at Chhapar as mentioned earlier, and the other at Lunkaransar, about seventy-five kilometres north-east of Bikaner city. In the case of the state of Dhoondhar/Jaipur, it has already been noted that from the eighteenth century, Dhoondhar had possessed and shared part of the Sambhar area and its production with Marwar. Dhoondhar also possessed another source of salt in the form of salt-works at Kuchor-Rewasa. Salt was produced in

several parts of Jaisalmer state, of which a major source was the salt marsh of Kanod, about thirty kilometres north-east of the capital of Jaisalmer. In a like manner, salt was manufactured in large quantities in the districts or *parganas* of Bharatpur, Kumher and Deeg of Bharatpur state, with the annual production being around 1.50 lakh *maunds*, yielding an income of about three lakhs of rupees annually. Besides the above, there were minor sources of salt-production located in the estates of some of the fief-holders/*jagirdars* of different states of Rajasthan.

Tod remarks that revenue from salt was a most certain branch of income, even when affected by political turmoil! He notes that the state of Marwar earned about Rs. 7.15 lakh annually, from its five major salt-producing centres. Thus, in the early years of the nineteenth century the revenues from Pachpadra and Sambhar were Rs. 2 lakh each, Didwana yielded Rs. 1.15 lakh, and Phalodi and Nawa (Kuchaman) Rs. one lakh each. The total came down to Rs. 4.25 lakhs in 1837 due to uncertain conditions prevailing in the state.

The British East India Company had shown interest in salt manufacture and trade in the areas under their domination from the mid eighteenth century. (In fact, Clive and his successors tried to stop private trade and the receipt of gifts by employees of the Company, in part through increasing salaries out of profits gained through the Company's monopoly over salt). In his book entitled *The Great Hedge of India*¹³⁰, Roy Moxham has provided a fascinating account of the British attempt to control revenues from the salt-trade. This included the creation of a thorny living hedge that acted as a natural barrier to movement; as well as subsequent salt agreements with various Indian princely states that ended local manufacture of salt within those states.

Moxham¹³¹ details the several decades of action against the salt smugglers by the East India Company. Customs houses, or *chowkies*, were established, by a law passed in 1803, in every administrative district of the Bengal Presidency to check the smuggling of salt, and collect customs duties accruing on sugar, tobacco and other minor items. Later, customs barriers were erected on every major road and river in the presidency. The officers in charge of the customs houses were given incentives to be vigilant

and were entitled, by law, to a reward of thirty-five per cent on the value of salt that was 'attached and confiscated'. The system was soon rife with corruption, and official powers were misused by the junior staff and officers to extort bribes and harass legitimate traders of salt.

In spite of all this, the East India Company managed to collect substantial money as part of the 'Salt Tax', since the Company controlled all the major salt works in Bengal. As a result of this control, though, the smuggling of salt thrived too. (The law and order situation in the Bengal Presidency had worsened, in the aftermath of the famine of 1770, which had, along with the East India Company's ruthless land-revenue collection, dispossessed many agriculturalists, who had taken to crime, including smuggling). Smuggling soon became a serious problem for the British, especially as the East India Company acquired new territories, and pushed its frontiers west to the borders of states rich in salt¹³². Among such 'salt-rich' areas were the princely states of the Rajputana Agency. While some of the contemporary princely states taxed salt, none of them had taxes as high as those imposed by the East India Company's authorities in the Bengal presidency.

In 1823 the Commissioner of Customs at Agra, George Saunders, proposed that, for increased vigilance, a secondary line of customs posts should be put on the trading routes running alongside the Yamuna River. Moxham notes that the "...original Customs Line ran from Mirzapur to Allahabad along the bank of the River Ganges, and then followed the Yamuna River to Agra. From there, it crossed open country, to end up just north-west of Delhi. This line controlled entry of salt into Bengal from the south and the west. There were, however, several complications and deficiencies. The tax on salt in Lower Bengal was half a rupee higher than that in North-Western Provinces. This necessitated customs barriers at Allahabad, and a line of customs posts running the few miles to the southern border and north all the way to Nepal. The Kingdom of Oudh formed an independent enclave within the Bengal Presidency. Until it was annexed in 1856, salt smuggling across its border was always a problem. Also, the north-western flank of the Bengal Presidency was unprotected. This was remedied, after the conquest of Sind and the Punjab in the 1840s, by extending the Customs Line north"¹³³.

In Rajasthan, meanwhile, in 1830, during the period that the ruler of Bharatpur was a minor, the salt resources of Bharatpur state had nearly been taken over by the East India Company in lieu of the state's debts. The proposal was not carried through, but around that time the East India Company's customs department increased the duty on salt entering their territory (which was twelve *annas* per *maund* at the time), by four *annas* per *maund* at Agra and twelve *annas* at Allahabad. The increased duty was so heavy that traders refused to purchase any salt. Bharatpur, which shared a common border with the British-administered area of Agra, found that its salt going to Agra was subject to heavy duty, and as a result, the salt locally produced at Kumher, Deeg and other places in Bharatpur state remained unsold. As salt accumulated and the trade came to a standstill in the state, the underage Bharatpur ruler's Regency Council (which was under the supervision of the British Political Agent), sent a *kharita* to the Governor General requesting that the salt-duty be brought down, but did not meet with any success. Instead, the Collector of Customs at Agra, Resident at Delhi and the Political Agent at Bharatpur together tried to procure the entire stock of Bharatpur salt at a 'fair valuation' by persons appointed by the regent minister of Bharatpur state and the Collector of Customs, Agra.

In 1834 G.H. Smith was appointed Commissioner of Customs. He eventually persuaded the British authorities to exempt tobacco, iron, shawls and various minor items from duty, and to concentrate on collecting the salt-tax. He also initiated the abolition of the double line customs posts. They were consolidated into a single line. "In twenty years, Smith transformed the Customs Line from a series of individual customs posts into an effective barrier...As the Customs Line was solidified, it became an obstacle for those who lived in its vicinity. Detours had to be made to go through one of its gateways, usually four miles apart...The Mirzapur section of the line, which was no longer on the border of the Company's land, was therefore abandoned...From a point a hundred miles down the Yamuna River from Agra, the Delhi-Agra section of the Customs Line was extended south for 350 miles, to encompass the newly conquered territories"¹³⁴. Meanwhile, the parts of British India controlled from the Bombay and Madras presidencies continued to tax salt at a much lower rate than did the Bengal Presidency.

In 1835, in lieu of Jaipur state's accumulated tribute-arrears to British, and the expenses incurred on the Shekhawati Brigade (raised to restore peace in the Shekhawati area), the British attached Jaipur's portion of the salt-producing Sambhar lake. The amount earned from the sale of salt was adjusted against the state's dues. In 1843 the lake was restored to the state. It is significant that Sambhar yielded twenty lakh *maunds* of salt in 1839 though its usual annual production was nine lakh *maunds*.

In 1856 the Commissioner of Customs, Vansittart, proposed that in order to enforce a regulated system of excise on salt, the British obtain control over the salt resources of the princely states through commerce-related treaties. Calculations suggested the prospects of doubling British revenues if such commercial treaties came into play. The events of 1857-58, which led to the British Crown taking over from the East India Company in 1858, had also proved a financial burden, increasing the Indian debt by about forty millions sterling. The ensuing military-related changes increased the annual expenditure by about ten million pounds sterling. Various measures were adopted by the British to deal with this deficit, particularly during the viceroyalty of Lord Mayo (1869-72). It was Mayo who laid the foundation for the reform of salt-related duties.

Over the 1869 to 1879 period, the British established a continuous 'inland Customs Line' that was 2,504 miles long, and stretched from the foothills of the Himalayas to Orissa, and almost to the sea on the Bay of Bengal¹³⁵. This was guarded by an elaborate system of patrolling. The primary reason for this great barrier was the difference in the salt duty levied in different parts of the county. However, the Customs Line, and its Customs Hedge, were expensive to maintain, and a major obstacle to travel and trade. The Viceroy, Lord Mayo, realised the difficulty of this system and arrangements were made for the imposition of a uniform rate of salt duty throughout India and for the acquisition, by agreement with the 'native states', of the working of the salt resources in Rajputana. The British already had control over salt production in their own territories; they needed to extend this over the princely states. (In addition to the salt tax, there was also an export tax on sugar going to the princely states). If the British could have control over all salt production in India the Customs Line would be redundant, and with a total monopoly the salt tax could be added on at the

point of manufacture. Between 1869 to 1879 the British entered into salt-related treaties and agreements with various princely states, including those of Rajputana.

The Sambhar salt lake in Rajputana was the main source of salt entering the Bengal Presidency from outside the Customs Line, and vast quantities from there entered British India, either legally or smuggled. The British therefore set about entering into treaties with the rulers of the princely states of Jodhpur and Jaipur, who — as already noted — jointly controlled Sambhar lake and its vicinity. The Salt Treaties with Jaipur state (in 1869-70) and Jodhpur State (in 1870) gave the British leased control over Sambhar and other salt works from 1 May 1871.

In 1878 the Government of British India reduced the salt tax in the Bengal Presidency slightly, but in the Madras and Bombay presidencies the salt tax was again increased. The same year, A.O. Hume, who had formerly served as Commissioner of Inland Customs, with responsibility for the Customs Line, was deputed to conclude salt agreements with various other princely states of the Rajputana area — including agreements modifying previous treaties, as in the case of Jaipur and Jodhpur. Thus, in 1879 followed Salt Agreements between the British and the states of Jaipur, Jodhpur and Bikaner, as already noted above. (In consequence of all these agreements, on 1 April 1879 the Customs Line became redundant, while the inland customs hedge lost its *raison d'être* and was gradually reduced in length and eventually abandoned¹³⁶). Subsequently, individual salt agreements, with slight variations in conditions, were entered into with the states of Jaisalmer, Sirohi, Bharatpur, Mewar, Dholpur, and Alwar that same year (1879). In 1881, an agreement was signed with Jhalawar. In the course of the ensuing year (1882), Shahpura, Bundi, Kota and Karauli etc. also entered into individual Agreements. So, eventually, did the Chiefship of Lawa. Apart from a few minor caveats, all these states basically agreed to surrender all salt-manufacturing rights to the British. The individual treaties and agreements effectively put an end to local salt-making by, both, the concerned states and their citizens, living within the respective territories of these states, and bound them to a future of expensive and taxed salt.

Besides a major loss of revenue from salt-production and transit and other duties, the most significant impact of the treaties that yielded monopoly over salt production and trade in the states of Rajputana (and elsewhere) to the British, was that, henceforth, they became completely dependent upon the British for their supplies of salt at a stipulated price. The Banjaras — itinerant traders — who, using pack animals, had traditionally carried on this trade for several generations (from the very beginning according to their beliefs), were also adversely affected, particularly as the railway network continued to expand across South Asia. Besides this, the British monopoly over the salt trade negatively affected the financial condition of the concerned Rajputana states, curtailing traditional revenue-sources and leading to the decline of some of the traditional salt-related markets, trade-routes and trade network. The salt-treaties were also viewed as demeaning by the concerned Rajputana states as they meant a loss of the state's prestige in the eyes of their people, besides undermining their individual sovereign status through mortifying treaty clauses.

Conversely, monopoly over the salt trade provided the expected economic gains to the British government. Salt rapidly became the third most important source of revenue for the British, after land revenue and opium. For instance, Sambhar lake, Didwana and Pachpadra, which were under the charge of the Northern India Salt Revenue Department, yielded an average output of about 1.64 lakh tons annually between 1898-1903, with a net annual revenue of about Rs. 111 lakh. In fact, without digressing further, it becomes necessary here to highlight the link between the British policy on salt and the continued British monopoly over its manufacture, trade and use, with the subsequent 'Salt Satyagraha', including Mahatma Gandhi's Dandi March, challenging British control over Indian salt in the 1930s.

OPIUM, THE BRITISH, AND THE STATES OF RAJPUTANA

Opium, like salt, was another item that attracted the attention of the English East India Company (initially in the areas adjoining Malwa). There was an old tradition of opium usage in Rajasthan, and there are many stories centred around the use of opium (*afeem*), and the 'drinking' of the opium

preparation called *amal*, during times of battle, or celebration, or merely for relaxing¹³⁷.

Opium was traditionally regarded as more than a narcotic. It was known to send a rush of adrenaline-type 'high' through its battle-bound Rajput warrior users, and to deaden somewhat, the capacity for feeling pain from wounds. Tradition held that consuming *amal* prior to a battle 'thickened' blood and increased its clotting capacities, thereby reducing the chances of bleeding to death from injuries while still on the battlefield.

(Laxmi Kumari Chundawat's *Samandar poochey saffraan*¹³⁸ which encapsulates several aspects of Rajput society, polity and even etiquette, describes the death of the charismatic and hot-tempered Raja Umaid Singh of Shahpura (Mewar). In January 1769, the aged Umaid Singh was fatally wounded in a battle fought at Sipra near Ujjain, while commanding Maharana Ari Singh's (r. 1761-1773) Mewar army against Mahadji Rao Scindia's Marathas and allied Mewari nobles. The latter group supported the cause of Ratan Singh (alleged to be posthumous son of Maharana Raj Singh II). As Umaid Singh lay dying on the field, he was approached by Rawat Raghodas of Devgarh, a kinsman-nephew who had opted to fight in support of Ratan Singh alongside the Marathas. The Rawat offered water and *amal* to his uncle (despite Umaid being the enemy commander). Though the use of *amal* was common among Rajputs, Umaid Singh never had used it before. Upon tasting *amal* for the first and last time in his life, and as the effects coursed through his body, Umaid spontaneously composed a *doha* (couplet) in praise of *amal*, saying: *Amal kada, guna meethda, kaali kandal vais, Jo aita guna janto, to santo ball vais*. Finishing the couplet, Raja Umaid Singh of Shahpura fell back into the arms of his enemy-nephew, and breathed his last!)

Opium-poppies were cultivated in the south-eastern region, especially in parts of the states of Mewar¹³⁹, Pratapgarh, Dungarpur, Kotah, Bundi, Jhalawar, and parts of Tonk's Central India holdings¹⁴⁰. Udaipur, Chittor, Bhilwara¹⁴¹, Pali, Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, Merta, Nagaur, Bikaner, Churu, Jaipur, Malpura, Naya Shahr also called Naya Nagar (Beawar), Bundi, Kotah, Tonk, Baran, Nimbahera, Jhalarapatan, Gangadhar, Dag, Manohar

Thana, Pachpahar, Chhipa-Barod, Dungarpur, and Pratapgarh were among the main centres associated with the opium trade in Rajasthan. The quality of opium obtained from the Malwa and south-eastern Rajputana region was commonly known as 'Malwa opium' in the market¹⁴². It was considered superior to 'Bengal opium', over which the British East India Company had already established a monopoly. Besides its established demand by consumers in various parts of Rajasthan¹⁴³, Portuguese traders were exporting Malwa opium for the Chinese market.

From the Malwa area, opium produce was carried through Ajmer, Pali, and Jaisalmer to the port of Karachi, and from there over water to Daman. In 1828, some 24,000 to 25,000 *maunds* of opium passed through Jaisalmer to Sindh, from where it was exported through Karachi to Daman. The trade, internal as well as external, brought substantial gain to the concerned states by way of land revenue and transit duties, besides profit for the cultivators and traders.

The substantive demand of Malwa opium in the Chinese market attracted the attention of the English East India Company, particularly as Malwa opium was in direct competition with opium exported from Bengal. As a result, in 1819, the Territorial Department of the Government of India decided to prevent the export of Malwa opium. In 1821, with the concurrence of the Governor General, the British Resident for Rajputana and Malwa, David Ochterlony, was directed to impress upon the rulers of Jaisalmer and Jodhpur the importance of preventing the carriage of Malwa opium through their territories. In 1824, the Political Agent in Mewar was directed to pay special attention towards closing the route by which Malwa opium was carried through Mewar's territory to Pali and Jaisalmer. He was informed that the East India Company authorities were willing to sanction a sizeable compensation to Mewar State, or to the renter of the customs, for the loss which these measures would cause in state revenues from customs duties.

The Political Agent in Mewar, in consultation with the Opium Agent of Malwa concluded an agreement with Mewar state to seize contraband opium in Mewar territory. The Maharana had to reluctantly agree to the terms. Contraband opium valued at more than a lakh of rupees was seized

that year and within eighteen months of the signing of the agreement, opium valued at rupees three lakh was seized. Mewar state was entitled to half the value of the seized quantity while the other half was the share of those who had seized the contraband opium. The expenses involved in the exercise of seizures were shared jointly by the state and the Political Agency in equal proportion. These seizures caused fall in the price of the opium in Malwa.

Simultaneously, the Superintendent of Mairwara (as 'Merwara' was spelt at the time), had been told by the Political Agent in Mewar that the transit further westward of opium being carried from Malwa through Mewar had been deemed contraband. Anyone seizing such contraband opium would be entitled to half the value of the confiscated goods. As such, the Superintendent of Mairwara remained vigilant over the transit of opium. Meanwhile, the Opium Agent asked the British Political Agent at Ajmer to arrange, with the consent of the ruler of Kishangarh, the opening of a depot at Kishangarh where the retail sale of opium could be conducted. However, the ruler of Kishangarh refused to enter into any such agreement. The states of Jaipur and Jodhpur too withheld consent to the measures proposed by the British authorities.

Shortly thereafter, in 1825, the Political Agent at Hadauti was instructed by his Political Department to ensure the closure of the by then well-established opium route through Bundi state, in order to prevent the transit of opium bound for Daman in vast quantities. Following discussions with the British Opium Agent in Malwa, the Agent pushed through an agreement with the reluctant ruler of Bundi. This (i) stipulated that Malwa opium would not pass through Bundi state, (ii) prohibited the export of opium produced in Bundi territory, and (iii) promised payment of compensation by the East Company to Bundi state and its *jagirdars* in lieu of the loss of revenue by way of imposts on opium. British *harakaras* or sentinels were stationed to patrol the hill-passes and routes traditionally used for transportation of opium.

The same year (1825), an agreement was made between the British and Kotah state, which stipulated that (i) opium produced in Kotah's territory would not be exported, and (ii) that 4,000 *maunds* of opium would

be delivered to the East India Company at the rate of rupees thirty per five *seer* (a traditional unit of measure). A supplementary treaty of nine articles was also drawn up, with clauses that were restrictive and disadvantageous for Kotah state. This aspect was conveyed by the ruler through a representation to C.T Metcalfe, the Company's Resident in Delhi, when he visited Rajputana in 1826-27.

The representation pointed out that (i) as a consequence of the clauses of the first treaty banning export of opium from Kotah's territories, persons of all ranks — high and low — were being put to the indignity of being searched and this had created resentment and discontentment among the people; (ii) the new arrangements were contrary to the interest of the traders and the cultivators; (iii) the state was not happy over stipulations that were injurious to its subjects, and that such restrictions did not extend to Scindia's territories, nor to Jaipur state, and the cultivators of Kotah state were reproaching their government for wresting their produce forcibly at a cheaper rate than they could have obtained if they had sold it in Scindia's territory; (iv) it was feared that if the people were opposed on this or any other ground, they would migrate from Kotah and seek protection in other states; (v) it was also pointed out that it was impossible to limit the production of any commodity because the people could not be justly prevented from cultivating what they chose; (vi) it was impossible to forecast the quantity that would be produced in a given area because the production depended on the weather, which sometimes led to the failure of the entire crop, and thus, if the produce was more than what was stipulated in the treaty, the cultivator of the state would suffer as no sale was allowed of the surplus. However, if a lesser amount was produced, the British demand, as stipulated in the treaty, could not be met. Hence, in either case, the state could be charged of violating the treaty clauses¹⁴⁴.

Metcalfe conveyed these sentiments to his superiors, along with his own views on the Company's measures. His submission was as follows: "In 1817-18 and the subsequent years, we formed alliances with the States of Rajputana and Malwa. We professed to be their protectors against the injuries to which they were subjected from others and as long as we adhered with good faith to our professions, our position was exalted and worthy of admiration. We have now made use of our power and influence amongst

them in order to establish, solely for our own pecuniary benefits, a monopoly which brings disgrace on our reputation, and is probably more extensively injurious than any act of interference, ever before committed by any Government, in the internal affairs of foreign States... Our measures, in short, inflict a fatal blow, on the agriculture, commerce, general prosperity and independence of every State to which they extend, forming on the whole, such a mass of oppression as must cause our attempt at this monopoly; if it be not relinquished, to be recorded against us in History, as the most unwarrantable act of our whole Indian Government...I have great doubts as to the possibility of complete success in such an undertaking. We have been trying for six of seven years to prevent the exportation of Malwa opium to China and if the public papers are to be credited, its importation into that country is now more extensive than ever...Then, it may be asked, is the profit of our Bengal monopoly be sacrificed? I would answer yes, rather than we should commit so much oppression to secure it.” [145](#)

The letter from Metcalfe created a stir, and a serious view was taken of the whole affair. (Lt. Col. James Tod had expressed similar sentiments earlier, condemning the policy of the East India Company). Consequently, in 1828 the Residents and Political Agents were sent a questionnaire and told to give their candid opinions on the opium trade policy regarding the practical aspects in preventing the export of opium, restricting the area of poppy cultivation, establishing British monopoly over the Malwa opium by fixing arbitrary prices, and the commercial and political implications of the measures adopted.

The responses received from the different political officers reflected the views previously conveyed by Metcalfe. The Residents and Agents were of the view that restricting the cultivation of poppy was forcing cultivators towards unemployment, and that the capital of the merchants lay idle for want of investment. The revenues of various states of Rajputana had been substantially reduced too. It was further pointed out that the measures adopted to check contraband movement infringed upon the sovereign rights of the concerned states; and that the opium-related agreements with various states were not entered voluntarily by the concerned rulers.

Interestingly, and contrary to the original expectations of the British, the restrictive arrangement had resulted not in a decrease, but rather an increase in poppy cultivation! For example, at the time of the treaties with Kotah in 1825, the total produce of opium in that state was estimated at 4,320 Surat *maunds*. By 1828-29, the figure had increased to 4,971 Surat *maunds*. It was also found that contraband trafficking in opium had assumed alarming proportions and 4,000 *maunds* was being exported to China. Similarly, the Superintendent of Ajmer reported that 10,900 Surat *maunds* of Malwa opium, valued at Rs.35 lakh, was being carried through Kishangarh annually¹⁴⁶.

Reviewing the effects, in 1828 Colebrook, the Resident of Delhi and Rajputana, advised his Government that Daman appeared to be the only port on the whole Malabar Coast from which opium was shipped eastward. As such, he advised that it would be more practical to control the export at one single point rather than the entire tract of Central India and Rajputana. Instructions were consequently sent to the AGG, to discontinue the practice of deputy officers being sent out to inspect poppy cultivation in the territories of states that had entered into opium treaties with the company. Furthermore, the AGG was directed not to exercise any interference in the cultivation of poppy in districts not connected with the Company's dominions.

Meanwhile, in England, public opinion grew against the Company's monopoly over the opium trade in India, and there were voices in favour of trade between England and India being left in the hands of private traders without the unfair competition of the East India Company, with its territorial possessions in India. Thus, in 1831, the British Government revised its policy. The trade was thrown open to private merchants and duty was levied on opium carried through the British territories. (The opium-producing states were land-locked and had no direct access to sea-ports). At first, duty was fixed at the rate of Rs. 175 per chest of 140 pounds (lbs.) each. This was revised in later years; rising to Rs. 700 per chest of 140 lbs in 1861.

To keep a check on the export of opium and ensure that nothing left the Indian states and entered British territories without paying British duty,

weighing scales were set-up at Udaipur in June, 1869¹⁴⁷. In November 1883, the scales were transferred to Chittorgarh, and thereafter, all opium produced in Mewar that was intended for export to Bombay passed through Chittor¹⁴⁸. Weighing scales were also established in the British-administered area of Ajmer, which served as a supply centre for opium bound for the Bombay Presidency, via Indore. (A small amount of opium used to be produced in the Merwara (Mairwara) tract). Opium in substantial quantities was supplied to the Punjab too. Later, 1904 saw the establishment of a Government Opium Agency at Baran, in Kotah state.

Meanwhile, the closing two decades of the nineteenth century had seen a fall in the opium trade through Rajputana. This was due, in part, to the increased production in China; in part to the laying of railway lines, which enabled new transportation routes and a consequent diversion of opium to other centres; and in part to the establishment of opium weighing scales closer to the major opium producing areas.

In 1893, the British Government set up the 'Indian Opium Commission' to inquire into the extent and effects of the production and sale of opium. The commission's findings recommended that, both, the policy of unrestricted poppy cultivation, and the opium trade, be continued. The commission found that the opium weighed at Udaipur, and afterwards Chittorgarh, averaged some 5,000 chests annually, while the opium sent by various other states of Rajputana, like Jhalawar, Kotah, Tonk, etc. to the scales at Ujjain, Mandsaur and Indore too averaged about 5,000 chests annually. The contribution of the Rajputana region to India's foreign trade in opium was 10,000 chests out of the total production of 18,000 to 19,000 chests, which yielded some rupees sixty lakh as revenue annually to the British Government¹⁴⁹. British monopoly over the opium trade adversely affected the concerned Rajputana states, modifying their established sources of revenue, and practically coercing them into accepting treaty-terms that favoured the British.

ASPECTS OF THE ART, ARCHITECTURE, LITERATURE, SOCIETY,
ECONOMY, EDUCATION, ETC. IN RAJASTHAN DURING THE

NINETEENTH CENTURY

The nineteenth century would culminate with many new influences from the world of European art being felt on the traditional ateliers of the various courts of the Rajputana area. Some of this came from the various schools of art and crafts established in parts of British India (i.e. at Lahore, Madras, Calcutta, etc.), and in certain of the princely states of India (i.e. Baroda, Jaipur, etc.). Simultaneously, some new markets for Indian art and crafts emerged too, particularly in the wake of the ‘industrial’ exhibitions, and other displays — including at London — at which Indian products were shown. These were often specially commissioned articles, which in turn meant that suggested modifications were incorporated subsequently in local repertoires.

Alongside this, the nineteenth century also saw a final flourish of court-patronised traditional art in the Rajasthan area. The Marwar atelier, for example, turned out *Dhola-Maru* and *Panchatantra* paintings, among others. A new theme in the Marwar school during the early nineteenth century was illustrations pertaining to the Nath sect. This was particularly encouraged by Maharaja Man Singh, himself a follower of the Nath sect, and resulted in illustrated texts like the *Siddha-Siddhanta-Padhatti*. Portraits of Nath preceptors and saints were prepared too, as may be found in folio collections like the *Nath-Charita*.

Other areas too had their share of notable work. The Kotah atelier produced a number of fine miniatures, painted in strong colours, as well as murals, also executed in brilliant pigments, on the walls of the palaces and some temples. A number of miniatures painted at Kotah during the second half of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries were executed by émigré painters from Bundi, who had sought fresh patronage during the lean years of Bundi’s local history. The Kotah paintings reveal a strong empathy in depicting landscape, particularly in scenes of hunting, which show the king and his retainers amidst rocks, stylised trees and animals. The animals too were realistically executed. By contrast, the Bundi paintings of this time, depict landscape that is flatter, serving more like a decorative backdrop, rather than an integral part of the painting. The Bundi and Kotah traditions influenced nearby centres as well, including Uniara.

And it is known that at least one leading Bundi painter worked for the chief of Uniara and illustrated a *Bhagvat Purana* for Rao Raja Sardar Singh in 1857.

In the case of Jaipur, Maharaja Sawai Jagat Singh's reign marked the final flourish of the Jaipur school of art, before European influence began to make its presence felt on the form. However, by the middle of the nineteenth century the painting tradition lost its creativity and vigour. (Still later work has been criticised by some scholars as being poor copies of foreign idioms). The achievement of the Jaipur school influenced other local sub-ateliers, including the work turned out at the courts of Alwar, Tonk, Bharatpur and Karauli. The wall paintings of Jaipur's City Palace, Madho Niwas, Pundarik-ji Ki Haveli, etc., find their reverberations mostly in the Shekhawati area where innumerable striking wall-paintings executed between 1725 and 1875 may still be seen.

Portraiture was an important part of the art repertoire of this period, just as it had been during the previous couple of centuries¹⁵⁰. In fact, the term used at the Jaipur court for the royal '*Karkhana*' or division of art was '*Surat-khana*', which in the literal sense implied a department or division of 'faces' or 'appearance' (*Surat*), in other words - portraits! Besides portraiture, and in part adding a new dimension to it, was the new 'art' and 'science' of photography, which rapidly gained patronage at several of the courts of princely India in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Some rulers, like Ram Singh of Jaipur, took a keen personal interest in taking photographs themselves, besides welcoming exponents of the new technology to their courts. Others took the latter course. The end result was several pictorial records of this era. Many of these were embellished and added to by hand-painted features, executed by court painters.

It may be relevant to note here that besides the paintings commissioned or patronised by various rulers and their feudal chiefs, there existed many other traditions, including that of religious painted scrolls. The *phars* from Shahpura are one example of this. Such painted scrolls were extremely long in length and depicted the story of certain human-born divine heroes like Pabu-ji, Dev Narain-ji, and so forth. The artists painted the tale using an arrangement of boxes and panels which covered each

incident of the larger narrative in a pre-determined manner. (The modern-day comic strip, while not identical, does the same). Once these scrolls left the hands of their painters, they were used by traditional bards as portable religious narratives, to be rolled up and carried from village to village and area to area, for public renderings of the heroic tales. Here the scrolls would be unrolled, little by little, from one end to the other, as the bard expounded the story in verse. The telling took several evenings, with the bard's wife or other relative using a lamp to illuminate (and emphasize) the particular portion being sung about at any given point of time.

The local art traditions are also reflected on works like the portable painted votive shrines known as *kavad*, produced at Bassi (erstwhile Mewar). These are painted in vivid colours. Large painted religious backdrops — called *pichhwai*, showing scenes relating to the life of Krishna, also gained prominence following the spread of the Vallabh sect in Rajasthan. Many of these depict Krishna in the form of the idol at Nathdwara. (It is possible that there may have existed a previous tradition of similar painted cloth screens for temples earlier as well).

As far as devotional literature (and oral tradition) was concerned, the nineteenth century too saw its fair share of creativity in various local dialects, besides Braj Bhasha and Hindi etc. For example, among the followers of Dadu, Nischal Das, a *Dadu-panthi* preceptor and preacher, authored the *Vichar-Sagar*. Similarly, Ramcharan, Hariramdas, Dayaldas, Dariyavji, Balakrama and Haridas were some of the known writers of the Ram-Snehi sect. The *Ramcharan-ji-ki-Vaui* consisting of 8,000 verses, the *Guru-Mahima*, and the *Nama-Mala* are two of the religio-philosophical works of this time.

Other well-known writers, poets and scholars of the nineteenth century included Suryamal Mishran, Bankidas, Shyamaldas, Ashanand, Adha Jawan, Adha Jaduram, Barhat Durgadutt, Jeewan Lal, Hamir Khan, Lalas Nawal-ji, Tilok Dan, Budh-ji Asiya, Adha Chimam, Gopal Dan Dadhivadiya, and Shankar Dan Samour, among others. Some of the rulers and chiefs too — like Maharaja Man Singh of Marwar, were popularly acknowledged for their writings. Various *khyats* etc. came to be prepared during this general period too, including those by Bankidas and Dayaldas

etc. The *Bankidas-ki-Khyat* describes the events of the reigns of Bikaner's Rao Bika through to that of Maharaja Sardar Singh. Dayaldas wrote his *khyat* at the instance of Maharaja Ratan Singh, his patron. It provides a description of the house of Bikaner from the period of Rao Bika down to the accession of Maharaja Sardar Singh. The work is based on contemporary accounts, *farmans* and *bahis*, etc. Among similar works of the overall eighteenth-nineteenth centuries, the *Rathora-ri-Khyat* and the *Sisod-Vamshavali* are rather effusive in their praise of early rulers, but provide valuable information about more contemporaneous events. In a like manner, the *Kaviraj-ki-Khyat* contains a useful anecdotal history of the Rathores.

We have already mentioned Suryamal Mishran. Born at Bundi in AD 1815, Suryamal Mishran is considered to be amongst the greatest writers of Rajasthan. He wrote primarily in Dingal, though he also made occasional use of Girwan (Sanskrit), Pingal, Prakrit, Magadhi and other dialects. His most famous work is a four-volume history called *Vamsha Bhaskar*. This is a work he was forced to leave incomplete due to his stubborn adherence to stating unpalatable, but true facts! Other prominent compositions by Suryamal Mishran are *Ram Ranjat*, *Balwad Vilas*, *Veer Satsai*, *Chhand Mayukh*, *Sati Raso*, *Sati Sujas*, and *Dhatu Roopawali*.

Endowed with an unparalleled mastery over language, Suryamal Mishran's imagery and descriptions are vivid and powerful, even in reading. It is said that when the *Vamsha Bhaskar* was recited by the poet at the Mewar court, the poetry and sheer magic of the words stirred up such strong *veer rasa* (warrior-like) emotions amongst the listening courtiers that the Maharana had to stop the recitation to prevent the court from turning into a battlefield. And this despite the poet's precaution of humbly requesting the Maharana to command the locking-up of all the available swords beforehand! Suryamal Mishran is often referred to by local scholars as the 'Veda Vyas' of the recent modern period, in that his *Vamsha Bhaskar* is regarded as an epic on par with *Mahabharata*.

Having been educated by the leading scholars of his age, Suryamal Mishran was apparently well-versed in philosophy, astronomy, astrology, religion, culture and several languages, in addition to possessing

exceptional literary gifts. His deep love for music is reflected by the fact that he usually carried a *veena* with him. He also wrote stirring nationalist verses during the 1857-58 period and thereafter, which were anti-British in context. In these nationalist, anti-British, compositions, as well as in his re-telling of regional history in his *Vamsha Bhaskar*, Suryamal reflects the traditional Charan role of urging Rajput men, women and even babes-in-arms, to live up to the ideals of their ancestors.

Another famous writer-scholar-administrator of this age was Mewar's *Kaviraj* Shyamaldas (1836-1893). Shyamaldas is best-known for his five-volume history of Mewar — the *Vir Vinod*, published by Mewar state in 1886, then suppressed and finally released for public consumption in 1945. Shyamaldas, one of the four sons of Qaim Shah, belonged to an established 'Dadhivadiya' Charan family that held *sasan* land-grants for seven villages given to previous generations. Shyamaldas was apparently endowed with a keen intellect and an enormous capacity for assimilating knowledge of all kind. It may be relevant to take note here of *what* he was taught — as the subjects taught to both Bundi's Suryamal Mishran and Shyamaldas reflect the contemporaneous ideals for well-educated Charans. At the age of nine, the young Shyamaldas started with the study of *Saraswat* and *Amar-Kosha*, and went on to study logic, mathematics, astronomy, astrology, *kavya*, *tantra*, medicine, Persian chronicles, Puranas and the Indian epics. He became proficient in *Dingal* poetry and developed a taste for historical literature. Introduced to the court of Maharana Shambhu Singh at the age of eleven by his father, Shyamaldas remained in service at the Mewar court from 1847 to 1886. In 1871 he was given the charge of preparing a comprehensive history of Mewar, along with Purohit Padmanath. Maharana Shambhu Singh's death in 1874 saw the work interrupted for a time.

Maharana Sajjan Singh, recognising the ability of Shyamaldas, appointed him as an advisor. Shyamaldas handled matters related to survey and revenue assessment, establishment of courts, and the urban improvement of the capital-town. Rising to be the Maharana's chief counsellor on matters pertaining to the conferring of honours on scholars, Shyamaldas also took up military duties, as in 1881, when he was part of the force sent by the Maharana to suppress Bhil unrest in the Magra area of

Mewar. Earlier, Col. Impey, the then Political Agent, had urged the Maharana to utilise Shyamaldas for compiling a history of Mewar.

Thus, in 1875 Sajjan Singh placed his vast library and a sum of one lakh rupees at Shyamaldas's disposal and ordered him to resume his task of writing a history of the region. An '*Itihas Karyalaya*' (Department of History) was established, and a team of competent scholars, proficient in Sanskrit, English, Arabic, Persian, etc. appointed to assist Shyamaldas. The team included Gobind Gangadhar Pandey, Maulvi Abdul Gani Khan, Maulvi Abaidulla Farhati, Babu Ramprasad, Dashora Durlabh Ram, and Dr. Gaurishankar Hirachand Ojha — with the latter being the *munshi* or secretary of the *Itihas Karyalaya*. In 1879 Maharana Sajjan Singh conferred the title of '*Kaviraj*' ('King of Poets') on Shyamaldas. (Later, in 1888, the writer would be given the title of '*Mahamahopadhyaya*'). Maharana Sajjan Singh died before the publication of Shyamaldas's monumental five volume publication in 1886 — by which time Maharana Fateh Singh occupied Mewar's *gaddi*.

This original 1886 publication by Shyamaldas and his team covers 2,684 full-size pages. To summarise the contents: volume one provides geographical descriptions of Europe, Africa, America, certain Asian countries, and India — with a special emphasis on the Rajasthan area and Mewar. This volume also describes local customs, festivals, weights and measures etc., and the various communities and groups of the Mewar area, before focussing at considerable length on a genealogical description (and many inscriptions) of the early Guhilot rulers of Mewar. The second volume takes up the history of Mewar from the reign of Ratan Singh. It also includes brief histories of the sultanates of Delhi, Gujarat and Malwa; and states like Bundi etc. Volume three takes up Mewar's history from the reign of Karan Singh, besides providing a continuing history of the Mughal emperors, and the kingdoms of Bikaner, Kishangarh, Rewa, etc. This volume has several appendices carrying material like Mughal *farmans*, the full text of the *Raj-Prashasti*, and copies of various inscriptions. The fourth volume covers Mewar from the reign of Amar Singh II till the reign of Jagat Singh II, along with providing histories of states like Marwar, Idar, Banswara, Dungarpur, Pratapgarh, Sirohi, Jaipur, Alwar, Kotah, Karauli, as well as of the Marathas. The fifth and final volume takes up the history of

Mewar from the reign of Jawan Singh up to the reign of Shyamaldas's patron, Maharana Sajjan Singh, with, once again, a number of connected correspondence etc. as appendices.

For some reason — hidden behind a veil of late nineteenth century silence and whispers of alleged derogatory references to some rulers — the *Vir Vinod* did not long remain in general circulation. While a small body of scholars and historians did use the text for their own studies, the work was brought back into the public eye by the state of Mewar only in 1945. Of course, Shyamaldas had some other publications — including articles in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (of which he was a member), to his credit, but the *Vir Vinod* remains his best-known and most substantial contribution.

Other histories of all kinds were prepared by writers in different languages. For example, one Jwala Sahai, who had worked as the *Adawalti* and Superintendent of Bharatpur State's Public Works Department (PWD), wrote a three volume history of Rajasthan in Urdu, entitled the *Waqiya-i-Rajputana*, which was published by the Mufid-a-um Press of Agra in 1878 and 1879. All these works were, in part, a response to the times — with the British and Indian elite wanting more information about Rajputana's past, and, in part a continuation of the general *khyat* tradition — though the writers themselves would probably have quite rightly taken exception to being regarded as only *khyat* writers! The publication of Col. Tod's *Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'han* too seems to have played a major part — for not only were certain of Tod's statements refuted on factual grounds by Shyamaldas, but the style and structure used by Shyamaldas included descriptions about geography, manners and customs, dress, food habits, festivals, and communities etc., and attempts at scientifically analysing aspects like Mewar's prevalent *jagir* system, which seem inspired by Tod's previously published volumes. Interestingly, Shyamaldas has not acknowledged the works by Nainsi, Dayaldas and Bankidas etc., from whom he *did* borrow substantively, though he has cited several British (and European) writers!

As far as overall administration is concerned, reference has already been made to various changes and innovations, many of them in the wake

of contact with the British, in the administrative systems of various states of Rajputana during the nineteenth century. The numerous archival records pertaining to the late seventeenth through to early twentieth centuries provide valuable information about the administrative structures within Rajasthan. Thus, the *Pargana bahi* records from different kingdoms provide figures of land-revenues collected, names of farmers and the kind of land they worked; *Kharita bahis* list various taxes and cesses; and *Hawala* and *Rokad bahis* provide information pertaining to revenue, village governance and other administrative details. The *Ohda bahis* of Bikaner provide details about administrative officers etc. Similarly, Jaipur state's *Toji* records contain details about aspects of the civil, military and judicial administration. For example, these *Toji* records inform us that Jaipur state's *bakshi* was assisted by subordinates known as *bakshi jagir*, *bakshi desh*, *bakshi pargana*, as well as by *darogas* who headed the *topkhana* (cannons and artillery wing), *pilkhana* (elephant wing), *tabela* (stables and cavalry-related wing), *topkhana zakhira* (armoury) etc. The records also tell us that Jaipur State had twenty-two types of *jagirs*. Here, lands and villages granted to dowager queens (*ma-ji*'s) and maharanis were called *jagir aloofa*.

In the case of Jodhpur state, its *Hawala bahis* tell us that *hawala* (or maintenance) villages in the state were looked after by a *hawaldar*. Such villages were the private lands of the members of the royal household. The *Hawala bahis* also record that a *faujdar* looked after the defence of his allocated *pargana* with the help of local militia and army, besides helping functionaries like the *amalguzar*, *amin* and *amil* in revenue-collection if the cultivators were reluctant or slow to pay their dues. He was also in charge of various garrisons (*thanas*), which were under *thanedars*. Besides administrative matters, records like *Dastur Komwar*, *Hath bahis*, *Jamakharcha bahis* also throw light on aspects concerning contemporaneous society, customs and festivals, expenditure on certain festivities etc. during different centuries. For example, *Jamakharcha bahis* record that boxers and wrestlers were employed by princes on monthly or half-yearly remuneration.

Thus, there was a multitude of documentation and record-keeping during this period — as had been the case in previous centuries. This

documentation and record-keeping was generally replicated in a scaled-down manner in the large and small estates held by the nobles and fief-holders. Mention has previously been made of such records, which included *Arhsattas*, *Yadasht*, *Vakil* reports, *Roznamas*, *Haqiqat bahis*, *Dastur-al-Amal*, and *Awarijas* etc.

As far as general economy was concerned, trade and commerce improved during the latter half of the nineteenth century for a variety of reasons. These included safer conditions for travel, transit and carriage of goods, an end to the political uncertainties and attacks and incursions, the laying of railway tracks and an improvement in road and communication networks. However, the 'Salt treaties' referred to earlier, did impact negatively on the economy and life of the people.

Something else that had a strong impact was famine. There were a series of bad rainfall and drought years especially towards the last quarter of the century in practically all parts of Rajasthan, which were affected by varying degrees of severity¹⁵¹. The years 1901-1902 were again times of famine. During this time, states like Sirohi, Tonk, Bikaner, Jodhpur etc. tried to deal with the problem to the best of their abilities. The 1898-99 spell, in particular, is still recalled as the year of the 'Great Famine of the Year 1956 [Vikram Samvat]' — or *Chhapanaakal/Chhapamyā-Akaal* in western Rajasthan. The Famine Commissioner, Col. Sir James Dunlop Smith praised the initiative of various states and rulers in undertaking famine relief measures and efforts at ensuring that food, fodder, and other relief was made available to the public.

The AGG, Sir Arthur Martindale, and Denzil Ibbetson of the Governor General's Executive Council also commended the role of certain states and individual rulers. In March 1900, the personal leadership of Bikaner's young Maharaja Ganga Singh was particularly lauded by Martindale, who called the famine administration of Bikaner state as amongst the best in Rajputana. In May 1900 Ganga Singh of Bikaner (along with the Maharaja of Gwalior), was conferred the Gold 'Kaiser-i-Hind Medal for Public Service in India'. The personal role of many other rulers was also applauded.

Coming now to education in Rajputana during the nineteenth century. Prior to the advent of 'modern' western-style education, various traditional teaching institutions like *chatshala*, *pathshala*, *posal*, *maktab*, *madrasa* etc. existed in most of the princely states. *Chatshalas*, *posals* and *maktabs* usually dealt with the three 'R's, or what one may term 'elementary' education, while the Sanskrit language-based *pathshalas* and Arabic language-based *madrastas* catered for more advanced learning. Jain *upasaras* (monasteries), also existed, where basic as well as advanced teaching was imparted. Ajmer, Jaipur, Alwar, Bharatpur, Tonk, Kotah and Patan had numerous *maktabs*, where, in addition to Urdu, Persian and Arabic were also taught. Many of the teachers and students at *maktabs* were Muslims, but it was not uncommon to find Kayasthas, Brahmins, Banias, and even Rajputs, teaching or studying Persian at these institutions. The mid nineteenth century Sirohi Superintendency Report records that in the states of Sirohi, Jaisalmer and Bikaner indigenous teaching was mainly in the hands of Jain priests termed as *Jatis*. Bikaner state had *banika* schools too, where multiplication in fractions and other commerce-related 'training' considered necessary for boys of mercantile families formed part of the curriculum.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, indigenous education was mainly related to an individual's position in life. For instance, in the case of the ruling families, chiefs and aristocrats, knowledge of war tactics, arms training and governance was considered essential¹⁵². For others, it meant some knowledge of the Hindu scriptures or of the Quran. For many it was linked with occupation. For example, traders and merchants wanted their boys to gain proficiency in traditional account-keeping and rapid division and multiplication of fraction numbers, along with other occupational knowledge. In a like manner, some Brahmins attained proficiency in Sanskrit language, the scriptures, and other traditional texts, besides astrology, ayurveda etc., while other Brahmins picked up only a working knowledge of Sanskrit. However, reading and writing was not accessible to certain castes, and artisans and craftspersons generally learned their trade at home or as apprentices to master-artisans.

During the nineteenth century there were many attempts towards the spread of what may be termed 'modern' or British-inspired 'western'

education through the opening of a number of state schools in different parts of Rajputana. Prominent among these efforts were the opening of schools at Ajmer (1836), Jaipur (1844), Bharatpur (1858), Udaipur (1863), Kotah (1867), Jodhpur (1869), Bikaner (1885) for boys, as well as government and state girls' schools at Pushkar, Jaipur, Udaipur and Bharatpur (1866).

Other pioneering efforts included the Lawrence School at Mt. Abu founded by the AGG Sir Henry Lawrence for European and Anglo-Indian children (1854), Normal School for Men at Ajmer (1864); and Mission Girls' School at Nasirabad (1861). Another noteworthy first was the opening of a medical college, albeit a short-lived effort, at Jaipur in September 1861. Soon followed institutions like the Normal School for Women at Pushkar (1867); the School of Arts at Jaipur (1867); a Mewar State School for Bhil boys at Jawar (1883); and a veterinary school at Ajmer (1894). In 1875 the Mayo College was set up at Ajmer to tutor the princely and noble scions of Rajputana's ruling houses. Despite such efforts, at the beginning of the twentieth century F.L. Reid, the Inspector of Schools for Ajmer-Merwara, found that the condition of education throughout Rajputana was 'lamentably backward'.

Along with attempts to popularise education, various attempts at social reforms were also made during the closing years of the nineteenth century. These were, variously, urged by the British and/or initiated by various rulers of the Rajputana states; or attempted by individuals or groups from certain communities for the 'betterment' of their communities; or inspired by the teachings of Dayanand Saraswati and Swami Vivekananda etc.; or were part inspired by caste-linked social reform attempts in other parts of the Indian subcontinent. Thus, Mewar had seen the *Shri Desh Hitaishini Sabha* established by Maharana Sajjan Singh of Mewar in 1877, as a body to bring about certain reforms amongst the Rajputs and Charans etc. not just in Mewar, but in all the Rajputana states. The body was only successful in some measure. However, it did serve as a pioneer for future organisations of a somewhat similar nature in Rajputana.

Thereafter, the year 1888 saw the setting-up of a more broad-based organisation aimed at internal social reform (mainly amongst the Rajputs

and Charans). Known as the *Walterkrit Rajputra Hitkarini Sabha*, this owed its inception to Colonel C.K.M. Walter. It was meant to promote social awareness, particularly among the Rajputs and Charans. Walter's duties had seen him hold offices like Resident at Jodhpur 1873, Political Agent to Mewar 1877-81, and Resident at Mewar 1881 -87, before he became the AGG for Rajputana States on 31 October 1887. As AGG, he called a meeting of a Committee of Rajput and Charan representatives of the Rajputana states, and of the *istmirardars* of Ajmer-Merwara over 5 to 10 March 1888 at Ajmer¹⁵³. This committee put together a listing of social regulations (based on the pattern established its fore-runner, the *Shri Desh Hitaishini Sabha*), which were to be observed by all Rajputs and Charans of Rajputana¹⁵⁴.

In acknowledgement of Walter's efforts, this committee decided at its next major meeting at Ajmer on 5 March 1889, that it would henceforth be known as the *Walterkrit Rajputra Hitkarini Sabha* — the organisation created by Walter for the well-being of the 'Rajputras'. Very soon, practically all the states of Rajputana had established a branch of the *Walterkrit Rajputra Hitkarini Sabha* within their boundaries. Successive AGGs for Rajputana remained the overall president and successive Commissioners of Ajmer-Merwara the vice-president of this organisation till 1941, when the Rajput rulers of Rajputana took the *sabha* into their own hands.

In the interim, many other groups, castes and communities followed the lead set by the *Walterkrit Sabha* and established social reform-oriented bodies of their own. Thus, the city of Bikaner saw a *Brahmin Sabha* set up in 1890, and a *Maheshwari Sabha* in 1893, which, among other things, curbed excessive spending on weddings and funerals amongst their respective community-members. In Jodhpur, the *Jodhpur Walterkrit Hitkarini Sabha* inspired the horticulture-based Malis of rural Marwar to frame rules for limiting expenses on weddings, and organise a caste-panchayat to fine transgressors¹⁵⁵. In British-administered Ajmer-Merwara, at the urging of that area's merchant community, Col. G.M. Trevor, Ajmer's Commissioner and the vice-president of the Central *Walterkrit Rajputra Hitkarim Sabha*, called a meeting of the mercantile community's representatives from all the Rajputana states at Ajmer in 1888. This led to

the formation of Jain and Mahajan caste reform *sabhas* at Ajmer, Alwar, Jaipur, Jhalawar, jodhpur, Kekri, and Pirawa between 1888 and 1893. These *sabhas* sought to guide social, religious and educational reforms in their communities.

Some community-based reform organisations drew their inspiration from associations established in various parts of British India. Thus, by 1891, the *Kayastha Provincial Conference, Rajputana*, which was an extension of the *All India Kayastha Conference*, had six branches in Rajputana, which worked for social and material progress, and stressed higher education. In a like manner, the *All India Vaish Mahasabha* established local branches at Jaipur, Kotah and Ajmer. So did the *Gaud Mahasabha*, established in 1896 to foster reforms among the Gaur Brahmins, which by 1932 had its *Rajasthaniya Gaur Brahmin Sabha* based in Beawar.

Over the next few decades, the various caste or community social reform organisations would serve to push social reforms — or sometimes a conservative outlook — from within; rally the masses to a particular cause or causes; and provide a ready platform for raising political and nationalist issues. That they would also fuel twentieth century ‘caste-ism’ that would be carried over into the opening decade of the twenty-first century was a yet unforeseen angle, however!

RAJASTHAN AT THE END OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The closing years of the nineteenth century saw a Rajasthan that was far removed from the external incursions, political turbulence and economic troubles that had plagued the beginning part of the century. There was also a degree of political stability, economic recovery, and overall complacency with the ‘new’ world — with its elements of ‘modernisation’ and ‘Western-inspired’ institutions — that was growing around the general populace. However, the appearance of placidity was deceptive. Various issues — including those related to land, land-revenues, forced labour, and citizens’ rights, were being voiced; and a combination of factors would result in a dramatic change within half-a-century that would affect the entire region.

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- ¹ For more on the Marathas, see, among others, Surjit Mansingh's *Historical Dictionary of India*, New Delhi, 1998, pp.57, 250-52; Stewart Gordon's *The Marathas: 1600-1815*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993.
- ² For eighteenth-nineteenth century Rajasthan, see M.S. Jain's (1993) *Concise History of Modern Rajasthan*, Wishwa, New Delhi.
- ³ For a summarised account of the three 'Anglo-Maratha Wars', see Parshotam Mehra's *Dictionary of Modern Indian History, 1707-1947*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1985, pp.431-34, 462-66.
- ⁴ B. Hooja 'Between Old and New: Modernization or Marginalization of the Princely State of Tonk — 1765-1947', in P.C. Mathur (ed.) *Social and Economic Dynamics of Rajasthan Politics*, Aalekh Publishers, Jaipur, 1996, pp.48.
- ⁵ B. Hooja, *Ibid*,
- ⁶ B. Hooja, *Ibid*, pp.48-49.
- ⁷ The Marquess of Hastings, and later Earl of Moira.
- ⁸ Detailed in C.U. Aitchison's *A Collation of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads*. Vol.III, Calcutta, 1909 (Rep.1932).
- ⁹ See also, M.S. Jain (1993) *Concise History of Modern Rajasthan*, Wishwa Prakashan, New Delhi, pp.21-22.
- ¹⁰ The British had gained possession of Ajmer from the Marathas in 1818, following a treaty with Scindia.
- ¹¹ In 1848 the Raja of Satara died leaving an adopted son as his nominated successor. Lord Dalhousie, the Governor General, declared that the Satara state had 'lapsed' to the Company, and seized it. Over the next few years the 'Doctrine of Lapse' was used to take control of many states in different parts of India, often through military force.
- ¹² The army cantonment at Nasirabad had been founded by David Ochterlony in 1818.
- ¹³ By this time, Mewar's Bhils were mostly concentrated in the Sarada (Magara), Girwa, Dhariawad Kherwara and Kotra (Bhomat) tracts. Their lifestyle and settlement pattern etc. has been described in Hooja, 1988.
- ¹⁴ Appendix I of the *Rajasthan State Gazetteer: Vol. 2, History & Culture*, 1995, pp.90-106, lists many who took up arms against the British during 1857-58 and were either killed in action, or arrested, tried and executed.
- ¹⁵ In this context, *Reversing the Gaze: Amar Singh's Diary, A Colonial Subject's Narrative of Imperial India*, edited by Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and Lloyd I. Rudolph with Mohan Singh Kanota, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, (2000), provides a late nineteenth mid twentieth century 'insider's' insight!

- [16](#) The 1911 Census Report traces the Tonk ruling family's descent from Pathans of the Buner tribe who formerly lived near Swat on the north-west frontier of the Indian subcontinent.
- [17](#) B. Hooja, 1996, pp.52.
- [18](#) B. Hooja, 1996, pp.53.
- [19](#) B. Hooja, 1996, pp.53.
- [20](#) Many of them were connected with Tonk's ruling family. Adoption by fief-holders needed the nawab's approval.
- [21](#) B. Hooja, 1996, pp.57.
- [22](#) C.U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties. Engagements and Sanads*, Vol. III, pp.9-10, (1909, reprinted 1932).
- [23](#) As per an order dated 29 January 1818.
- [24](#) B.D. Agrawal *Rajasthan District Gazetteers — Udaipur*, Government of Rajasthan, Jaipur, 1979, pp.56.
- [25](#) The economy was so bad that Maharana Jawan Singh allegedly borrowed ten thousand rupees for the funeral of his father, Maharana Bhim Singh!
- [26](#) It was customary amongst the peoples and states of Rajasthan to *prefix* the personal names of individuals with the name of his or her respective clan or sub-clan, or lineage-appellation, or *gotra*, or family name, or occupation; rather than use surnames as *suffixes* — as is the post 1950s modern trend. In this book, I have generally tended to follow the contemporary practice of using the clan, lineage, *gotra*, or family names as suffixes — but at places the reference is made in the manner it would have appeared in the court records etc. of those times.
- [17](#) In 1865-66 Mewar's revenue was Rs. 27 lakhs, of which Rs. 17.32 lakhs was from land and Rs. 4.03 lakhs from customs; while its total expenditure was Rs 26.85 lakhs, of which Rs. 18.12 lakhs was spent on public works.
- [18](#) Several people claim to having seen an inscription on a stone pillar at Kumbhalgarh which recorded that Mehta Ram Singh had been declared unfaithful and his descendants should never again be given a high post in Mewar!
- [29](#) The Jahazpur and Mandalgarh *parganas* or tracts of Mewar had a high concentration of Meena population.
- [30](#) Half a century later. Major Erskine noted in his 1908 *Gazetteer* that if Mewar was divided into 131/2 parts, *jagir* or *bhum* categories of tenures formed 7 parts, *sasan* tenures 3 parts, and only the remaining 3½ or so *khalsa* lands.
- [31](#) Rupee coins weighed 168 grains, with the smaller coins decreasingly less. The value of the rupee was 9 *pies* and 2 *pice* Imperial, 3/4th of the value of Udaipur coin (12½ annas Udaipur). It was 6 parts silver and 2 parts copper.

- ³² Mewar's management of the 1868-69 famine and the ruler's liberality was lauded by the British. In 1871, the British conferred the GCSI honour on the Maharana (ignoring his objection that it would be 'derogatory' for him to accept the title of a mere 'Star', as Mewar's Maharana was traditionally regarded as *Hindua-Suraj* — 'Sun among Hindus').
- ³³ Cited in Ram Pande's *Agrarian Movement in Rajasthan*, Shodhak, Jaipur, 1974 [Reprinted 1988], pp.43.
- ³⁴ See G. C. Verma *History of Education in Rajasthan* (2 vols.), Sabd Mahima, Jaipur, 1984, pp.46.
- ³⁵ For a useful summary of this and similar *sabhas* of Rajputana, see V.K. Vashishtha's 'Caste Reform Associations (*Sabhas*) and their Social and Political Mobilization in the Princely States of Rajputana, 1877-1949', in P.C. Mathur (Ed.) *Social and Economic Dynamics of Rajasthan Politics*, Aalekh Publishers, Jaipur, 1996, pp.83-115.
- ³⁶ Apparently the Governor General, Lord Ripon, invited Sajjan Singh to Calcutta to receive the honour. On the Maharana declining, Ripon came to Mewar and on 22 November 1882 conferred the GCSI on the Maharana at Chittor in the presence of some 50,000 people.
- ³⁷ In a muted voice, many old-timers of the erstwhile states of Udaipur, Jaipur and Jodhpur link the absence of a legitimate heir to any ruling monarch of all these states for seven generations with an alleged curse. This was apparently pronounced in 1810, when the unfortunate Princess Krishna Kumari took poison and died.
- ³⁸ Mehta Pannalal, Mewar's powerful minister, allegedly used his influence with the British Political Agent and with the AGG to ensure the succession of Fateh Singh, by-passing the claim of the Bagor and Karjali lines.
- ³⁹ Invited to Oxford by Prof. Monier Williams in 1879 to assist in teaching Sanskrit, Shyamji Krishnavarma (1857-1930), obtained a B.A at Oxford, studied law and was called to the Bar. Returning to India in 1885, he was an advocate of the Bombay High Court, *Dewan* of Ratlam, and worked at the Ajmer Court, before joining his assignment in the Mewar State Council. Later *dewan* of Junagarh, etc., his contact with *Lokmanya* B.G. Tilak led him to revolutionary politics. He went to England, co-founded India House, became founder-President 'India Home Rule Society', started the journal *Indian Sociologist*, and set up six lecturerships for Indians to travel and widen their horizons to serve India better.
- ⁴⁰ For more on the Mewar's Bhils and Garasias (and on Rajasthan's other 'tribal' groups like Meenas, Sahariyas and Kathodis), see Hooja 1988; and Vyas et al 1978, among others.
- ⁴¹ Ojha, 1936, pp. 140-142.
- ⁴² In 1862 he got a *sanad* guaranteeing the right to adopt.
- ⁴³ *Rajasthan District Gazetteers — Dungarpur*, 1974, pp.108-109; & Dungarpur state's annual reports.
- ⁴⁴ Maharaja Man Singh recorded his gratitude to Indra Raj Singhvi in a *Khas-Rukka* ('special notification').

- ⁴⁵ Afterwards, the heads of Sawai Singh and three other Rathore chieftains were sent to Man Singh by Amir Khan.
- ⁴⁶ By the 1862 *sanad* the right of adoption by a ruler of Jodhpur was granted by the Government of India.
- ⁴⁷ Cited in Verma 1984, pp.23
- ⁴⁸ The western part of Sambhar district was held by Marwar, and the eastern, including Sambhar town itself, was held jointly (i.e. in ‘*Shamlat*’ administration) by the two states.
- ⁴⁹ In 1830 nearly 83% of Marwar, and 3726 out of that state’s 4376 villages, were *jagir*-held lands.
- ⁵⁰ B.L. Bhadani, *Peasants, Artisans and Entrepreneurs*, Rawat, Jaipur & New Delhi, 1999, pp. 101-104.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid*, pp. 103.
- ⁵² Wool and its products were an important trade item for Marwar. Over time, Marwar’s wool was exported to manufacturing centres in Britain. Carpets, blankets, felts, etc. were locally manufactured.
- ⁵³ Besides other local industries, the indigenous methods of preparing, curing and tanning hides in the villages and towns (like Jodhpur and Bali) by certain sub-castes enabled Marwar to be known for its locally produced leather articles like footwear, saddles, and the water-lifting bucket-like leather container called *charas* etc.
- ⁵⁴ Weaving, hand printing and ‘tie-and-dye’ (*bandhez* or *bandhani*) work on cloth flourished across Marwar (in common with other parts of contemporary Rajputana), with Pali, Jodhpur, Barmer and Balotra among the renowned centres.
- ⁵⁵ Indigenous breeds of cattle included Gir, Rathi, Thar Parkar, Nagauri and Malwi. Pastoral groups like the Gujars and nomadic Raikas / Rebaris, sold home-produced *ghee* too, besides cattle.
- ⁵⁶ See Erskine, *The Imperial Gazetteer of India — Indian Empire* (Oxford Press, vols. III & IV 1908).
- ⁵⁷ However, local geographical conditions and basic aridity meant that despite having the largest territorial area amongst the states of Rajputana, Marwar’s crop-yields — and hence land-revenues — were governed by those constraints.
- ⁵⁸ In 1875 Viceroy Lord Northbrooke came to Jodhpur. In turn, Jaswant Singh visited Calcutta for his investiture by the Prince of Wales. He also participated in the January 1877 Delhi Durbar.
- ⁵⁹ Shekhawati chiefs, some of them *jagirdars* of Bikaner, were among those who urged Maharaja Ratan Singh to pardon the senior Bikaneri chiefs of Mahajan, Bidasar and Chadwas in 1831. This was granted. Again, in 1845, the Shekhawat chief of Mandawa asked Bikaner’s Maharaja Sardar Singh to pardon the Thakur of Harasar.

- [60](#) By a later agreement in 1913 salt production within Bikaner was stopped completely. Extraction was not to start again till after Indian Independence.
- [61](#) Opium was exported from Bikaner state. Govind Agrawal's *Samridh Bharatiya Bima Padhati* (1988, pp.76) records local insurance of opium sent to China by a Churu-based firm, with premium set at 2.5% of the cost of the opium.
- [62](#) It became a high school in July 1940 and the 'Maharani Sudarshan Intermediate College' in August 1946.
- [63](#) 1891-92 and 1896-87 had also been famine years. As such, the cumulative effect was greater during 1899-1900.
- [64](#) See Pande, 2002, pp.287-288.
- [65](#) Vol.1, Calcutta, 1879, pp.259, cited in *Rajasthan District Gazetteers — Bharatpur*, Jaipur, 1971, pp.308.
- [66](#) For a comprehensive history of Ajmer, see Har Bilas Sarda's *Ajmer. Historical and Descriptive*, 1911, Ajmer.
- [67](#) Kealy, *Report on the Census of Rajputana and Ajmer-Merwara 1911* -Part 1, 1913, pp.2.
- [68](#) See, R.V. Somani's *Later Mewar*, Mahesh Prakashan, Gangapur & Popular Printers, Jaipur, 1985, pp.168-169.
- [69](#) This became the Scotch United Free Church Mission, after amalgamation with the Free Church of Scotland.
- [70](#) For details about the various Shekhawati estates during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Sinh 2001.
- [71](#) See also, Varsha Joshi, 1995, pp.170.
- [72](#) Jhabarmal Sharma, 1922, pp. 118-120.
- [73](#) See Verma 1984.
- [74](#) Major W.H. Benyon was Political Agent to Jaipur during 1877-81.
- [75](#) Khetri's young Raja Ajit Singh was part of the Jaipur retinue. He accompanied Ram Singh II of Jaipur on the 1876 visit to Jodhpur too, coming into close contact with Maharaja Jaswant Singh of Marwar, and the latter's younger brother, Sir Pratap.
- [76](#) Nawab Sir Fayyaz Ali Khan, son of a former premier, Nawab Sir Faiz Ali, was among Jaipur's prime ministers under Madho Singh II. Fayyaz Ali ensured completion of the Ramgarh reservoir, Albert Hall, etc.
- [77](#) A.C.Banerjee, *The Rajput States and the East India Company*, pp.411.

- [78](#) This was subsequently restored to the Nimrana chief as a feudatory of Alwar.
- [79](#) P.W. Powlett, *Gazetteer of Ulwar*, Trubner & Co., London, 1878, pp.22-23.
- [80](#) Powlett, *Gazetteer of Ulwar*, pp.22-23.
- [81](#) Powlett, *Ibid*, pp.22-23.
- [82](#) *Ibid*.
- [83](#) *Ibid*.
- [84](#) *Ibid*.
- [85](#) P.W. Powlett, *Guzetteer of Ulwur*, pp.25.
- [86](#) Meanwhile, an alleged plot to kill Cadell, apparently planned with Sheodan Singh's connivance, was unearthed.
- [87](#) On 3 April 1870, Major Cadell went on leave. Major Powlett took his place until December 1875.
- [88](#) Cited in Verma 1984, pp.248.
- [89](#) See Lyall's 'Administrative ideas regarding the Alwar State', in *Indian Historical Records Commission*, Vol. XXXV part II, February 1960, pp. 89-90.
- [90](#) "The other recusant Thakurs accompanied him contrary to orders, but were not permitted to remain at Ajmir". noted Powlett (*Gazetteer of Ulwur* pp.26).
- [91](#) Dundlod, for example, paid homage to both Jaipur and Bikaner, and Harnath Singh of Dundlod was both a *jagirdar* and a *Tazimi Sardar* of Bikaner state as well as Jaipur.
- [92](#) The generation of his grandson and successor, Dhir Singh, a minister to the Government of Rajasthan, saw more, including the abolition of *jagirdari* and *zamindari*.
- [93](#) Consequently, in January 1861, when Chhatrasal's nephew, Sardul Singh (d. 1898), son of Bakhtawar Singh, filed a petition in Jaipur state's Law Court, staking his claim to the title and estates of Khachariawas, it was not surprising that the eventual ruling went in Chhatrasal's favour. Maharaja Ram Singh endorsed the judgement in November 1883.
- [94](#) Judge of Jaipur state's High Court from 1925-1932, and a well-known writer, Kalyan Singh apparently left an unpublished history of Khachariawas. (See Ranbir Sinh, 2001).
- [95](#) Abhey Singh, receiving a poor welcome from the Naruka ruler of Alwar, wandered in search of temporary refuge, while Pratap Singh joined Bapuji Scindia's service for a while.
- [96](#) Among them, Hamir Singh served for twelve years as Member of Jaipur's State Council. He also constructed dams at Kot, Kerpura, Bersingpura, Balwana and Chajana.
- [97](#) He was close to Maharaja Sawai Ram Singh and held various important positions.

[98](#) Sajjan Singh, brother-in-law of the revolutionary Rao Gopal Singh of Kharwa, joined him and Thakur Bhur Singh of Malsisar, Thakur Hari Singh of Khatu and Thakur Karan Singh Jobner, in presenting couplets by revolutionary poet Kesri Singh Barhat to Maharana Fateh Singh of Mewar to dissuade him from attending the 1911 Delhi durbar.

[99](#) He founded Bakhtawarpura (in Chirawa *tebsil*).

[100](#) In 1860, the young Fateh Singh complained to the British Resident at Jaipur, Col. J.C.Brooke, about Khetri's administrative mismanagement and the intrigues of his own mother and her maid-cum-confidante, Ratanroop, which made him fear for his personal safety. Later, Fateh met the AGG, Sir George Lawrence, at Deoli.

[101](#) Kotputli was occupied by Jaipur's forces. It was returned to Khetri in 1859 after an appeal to the Governor General, Lord Canning.

[102](#) Report on *the Political Administration of Rajputana for* (865-67, pp. 41.

[103](#) These were different and additional to those enjoyed by most other *jagirdars* owing allegiance to Jaipur state.

[104](#) Ojha, 1911 [rep. 1999], pp.281.

[105](#) The title used in Sirohi state for the ruler's brother/s.

[106](#) See Ojha 1911 [rep. 1999], pp.283-285.

[107](#) Ibid, pp.285-287.

[108](#) Ibid, pp.287-290.

[109](#) Later, there was a temporary change in the situation. Sirohi was placed under the Neemuch Agency, and ceased to have a separate political agent. In 1837 a political agent was again sent to Sirohi by the British.

[110](#) See Ojha, 1911 [rep. 1999], pp.301-303 for terms.

[111](#) Ojha 1911 [rep. 1999], pp.304-308, provides details.

[112](#) In keeping with traditional expectations from kings, queens, chiefs, rich merchants etc., throughout his reign Shiv Singh donated lands and money in charity; constructed water-reservoirs, *rahat* (water-wheel, also called Persian wheel), wells etc; and encouraged the repair of some temples and travellers' *serais* etc. The donor aspect of life has generally been eulogised and practiced over the centuries, as befitting all well-off men and women.

[113](#) Ojha, 1911 [rep. 1999], pp.360-361.

[114](#) When deteriorating relations made Marwar's Man Singh despatch an armed force against Bundi, Bundi's dowager queen-mother (Maharao Ram Singh's mother) ordered state troops to encircle the palace of her Marwar daughter-in-law. Fearing for the life of their Rathore clan

queen, her personal maids (*davris*) took up arms and kept guard till the Marwar force could breach the cordon and affect a rescue.

[115](#) Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'han*, Vol. II, chapter VII, (Annals of Jesssulmer), pp.223.

[116](#) Ibid, pp.223-224.

[117](#) Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajas'than*, Vol. II, chapter VII, (Annals of Jesssulmer), pp.224.

[118](#) Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajas'than*, Vol. II, chapter VII, (Annals of Jesssulmer), pp.224.

[119](#) Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajas'than*, Vol. II, chapter VII, (Annals of Jesssulmer), pp.224.

[120](#) Ibid.

[121](#) In 1877, Major C.K.M. Walter, Political Agent in Marwar, wrote a gazetteer of *Marwar, Mallani it Jeysulmere*.

[122](#) Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajas'than*, Vol. II, chapter VII, (Annals of Jesssulmer), pp.224-225

[123](#) Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajas'than*, Vol. II, chapter VII, (Annals of Jesssulmer), pp.226.

[124](#) Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajas'than*, Vol. II, chapter VII, (Annals of Jesssulmer), pp.225.

[125](#) Ibid, pp.226.

[126](#) Ibid, pp.226.

[127](#) Ibid.

[128](#) Ibid.

[129](#) W.W. Webb's *The Currencies of the Hindu States of Rajputana* (1893) carries details.

[130](#) Roy Moxham *The Great Hedge of India*, HarperCollins India, 2001.

[131](#) Ibid, pp.61-64.

[132](#) Ibid, pp.65-66.

[133](#) Ibid, pp.66-67.

[134](#) Ibid, pp.67-69

[135](#) For more, see Roy Moxham's *The Gnat Hedge of India*, HarperCollins India, New Delhi, 2001, pp.61-74.

[136](#) Set, among others, M.S. Jain's *Concise History of Modern Rajasthan*, Wishwa Publications, New Delhi. 1903

- [137](#) Laxmi Kumari Chundawat's anthologies of traditional tales, like *Gir Uncha*, *Uncha Garba* (1994) & *Manjhal Raat* (2000), convey an idea of the war-related and social uses of opium in Rajasthan in c. sixteenth to nineteenth centuries.
- [138](#) In *op.cit.*, 1994, pp. 19-22.
- [139](#) Opium was a major commodity going from Mewar to Marwar and Gujarat, it went on to China via Pali.
- [140](#) Portions of Tonk state within Central India were adjusted in the post-Independence re-organisation of States.
- [141](#) Bhilwara was also the single largest grain market of Mewar. Produce from the fertile Begun, Bijolia, Kherad, Hurda and Mandal tracts came to the Bhilwara market.
- [142](#) A slightly inferior variety of opium known as *tijjarn* was obtained from the Godwar portion of eastern Marwar.
- [143](#) There was heavy consumption of opium in Rajasthan. In 1825 the city of Ajmer utilised 170 *maunds* of opium valued at Rs. 10,650, while in 1826, Bundi state was supplied about 365 *maunds* valued at Rs. 51,771. About an equal quantity was estimated for Jaisalmer and Bikaner states respectively, while Kotah took 700 *maunds* for local consumption.
- [144](#) Cited by H.S. Sharma, 'British Monopoly on Salt and Opium Trade in Rajasthan', in Ratnawat and Sharma (Eds.) *History and Culture of Rajasthan*, 1999, pp.343.
- [145](#) Cited in *Ibid*, 1999, pp.343-344.
- [146](#) In 1829, the Ajmer Superintendent told the Resident at Delhi that opium valued at Rs. 40 lakh, of which 22 lakh worth belonged to the Ajmer merchants alone, had been stopped at Karachi port by some plunderers until troops intervened and drove the group off. The Superintendent had "...mentioned the value of one consignment of opium to enable you [the Resident] to form some estimate of the quantity of export from Malwa via Palee..."
- [147](#) In 1869-70, 444 chests (each 140 lbs.), passed through the scales at Udaipur. In 1875-76, this had grown to 9,873 chests. However, by 1880-81 the number of chests was down to 6,534, and by 1882-83, it fell further to 2,809 chests.
- [148](#) In 1895-96, 4,492 chests were weighed at Chittor. 4,248 and a half of these chests were exported to China and the rest to British India for internal consumption. The duty realised by the British authorities was Rs. 28.86 lakh.
- [149](#) Cited from 'Indian Opium Commission Report, 1894', by H.S. Sharma in Ratnawat & Sharma, 1999, pp.346.
- [150](#) Among others, see Vishakha N. Desai's 'Timeless Symbols: Royal Portraits from Rajasthan 17th-19th centuries', in K. Schomer et al (Eds.) *The Idea of Rajasthan Vol.I*, Delhi, 1994, pp.313-342.
- [151](#) A small area of Karauli state was affected, for example.

[152](#) Tod found the letters of Rajput rulers and nobles “sprinkled with classical allusions” (Tod 1829, pp.515).

[153](#) V.K. Vashishtha, *op.cit.* 1996, pp.88.

[154](#) For details regarding social regulations agreed upon, among others, see Vashishtha, 1996, pp.89-90.

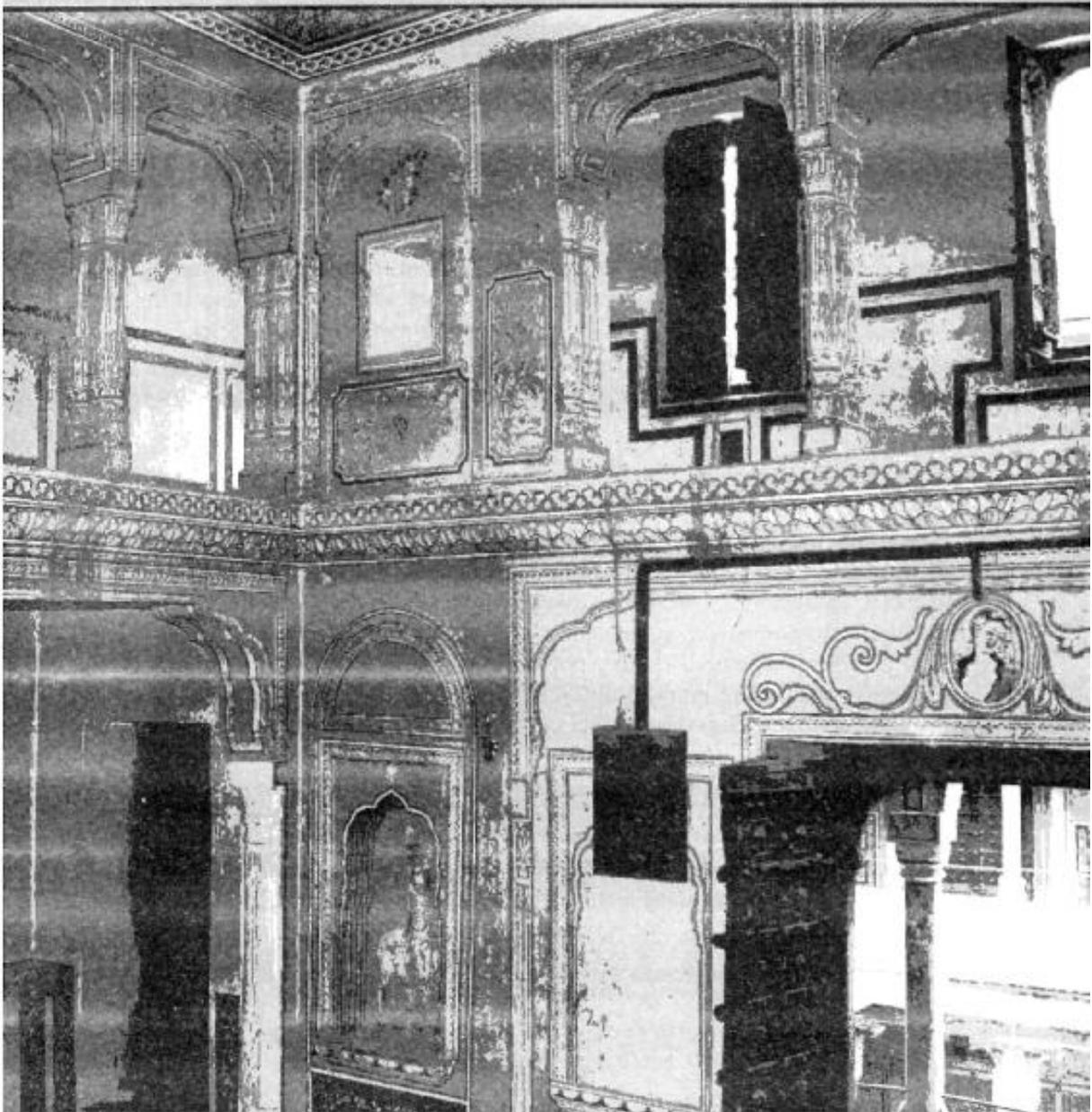
[155](#) *Ibid*, pp.94.

SECTION
SEVEN



11

RAJPUTANA
1900-1947



INTRODUCTION



THE TWENTIETH CENTURY DAWNED ON A REGION (RAJPUTANA/Rajasthan) that was substantially different to the one that had seen the ushering in of the nineteenth century. For one thing, during the course of the later half of the nineteenth century, administrative and social reforms had been attempted in practically all the various states of Rajasthan, or Rajputana, as the area was formally designated. (For instance, practices like sati and slavery had been outlawed in all the different princely states of Rajputana). These reforms and changes were, in part, encouraged by the changes in British India, or at the hands of British Residents and administrators. Thus, aspects like modern hospitals, schools, postal services, and railways, were among the features introduced over the latter half of the nineteenth century, as various states ‘modernised’ their administration and long-established socio-economic characteristics.

Some land-revenue systems had been modernised too, and revenue-collection related ‘Land-Settlement’ activities carried out at different times in various parts of the Rajputana states. While this had served to overhaul and modernise an archaic system, at least some of the agrarian problems that arose in parts of Rajputana during the twentieth century came about following an increase, by local fief-holding *jagirdars*, or the concerned states’ authorities, to these nineteenth century land-settlement linked land-revenue liabilities. In fact, a majority of the late nineteenth-twentieth century popular movements of the Rajputana region were basically agrarian rather than purely political in nature, with stress on aspects like abolition of excessive cesses (*laag-baag*), forced labour (*begaar*), and the exploitative nature of the *jagirdari* system — which basically enabled the will and writ

of local fief-holders to prevail over the fiefs and lands they held tenures for, without interference from the concerned states.

The twentieth century was to see further rapid change — the most striking of which would be the accession of the established dynastically governed princely states of the Rajasthan area to independent India in 1947. With Indian independence ¹ and the accession of the ‘princely states’ of Rajputana to the new Dominion of India in 1947 would occur the most important transformation in the traditional political, administrative, government — and even socio-economic — structure of this part of South Asia. As such, this chapter looks at Rajasthan in the half-century leading up to Indian independence and the accession of the various states of Rajputana to the new nation-state of India.

BACKGROUND TO MOVEMENTS FOR AGRARIAN, POLITICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC REFORMS IN RAJPUTANA AND THEIR CONCOMITANT ROLE IN THE FORMATION OF MODERN RAJASTHAN

The *fin de siecle* of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century saw a conscious effort on the part of some to raise public consciousness against the oppression of the feudal system, social customs and practices that were considered outmoded and deplorable, and against the policies and hold of the British over parts of the subcontinent. There were numerous factors that encouraged various movements for the growth of popular consciousness. These included the feudal structure and taxation systems; agrarian-related grievances that found expression — as described below — in the Bijolia and similar unrests; movements like the Arya Samaj, Govindgiri’s Bhagat movement amongst mainly the Bhils, and other socio-religious reform efforts.

The factors also included the spread of ‘liberal ideas’ through modern education, and so forth. We have already noted how almost all the states of the then Rajputana had introduced some schools and other educational institutions on the ‘western’ pattern during the latter half of the nineteenth

century. This new generation, educated in the ‘western’ or ‘modern’ education mode (where the ideals of liberalism, democracy, etc. were upheld), both within the local princely states, and in British India, began to turn to employment in the British India governmental offices, or those of various state governments. In the latter, high offices had previously remained in the hands of courtiers, nobles, or specialised ‘administrative groups’ (like the *mitsaddies* of Marwar). Members of this new ‘western-pattern’ educated class soon took the lead, across the subcontinent as a whole, in questioning the existing socio-political systems; the economic exploitation of the masses (whether by the British colonial power, in the case of British India; or that of the feudal system in the states ruled by the ‘Native Indian Princes’); and the legitimacy of British rule over much of South Asia. As such, they also joined various movements for social and economic change, as well as for challenging the then absolute authority of a colonial power in British India, and autocratic rule — without popular representation — in the princely states.

As a corollary to the spread of ‘western’ or ‘modern’ education, was the printing and publishing of newspapers and journals in different languages. (One may note here that in most princely states, it was illegal to own a typewriter without permission!) This also became a powerful tool in the moulding of public opinion and shaping of various movements. Among the early ventures in Rajputana were the *Rajputana Gazzette* (est. 1885) and *Rajasthan Samachar* (est. 1889), though these had a brief life. Later came journals and papers like Vijay Singh Pathik’s *Rajasthan Kesri* (est. 1920) and *Rajasthan Seva Singh’s Naveen Rajasthan* (est. 1922), which were able to gain a somewhat wider circulation in parts of Rajputana. The 1930’s saw a proliferation of newspapers like *Nav Jeevan*, *Jaipur Samachar*, *Navjyoti*, *Prabhat*, *Tyaag Bhumi*. Such papers gave due coverage to popular movements, social issues, and the need for reforms.

The *Arya Martand*, brought out by the Arya Samaj, also played a major role in rousing public social consciousness and feelings of nationalism. In fact, the Arya Samaj movement, while basically a socio-religious reform movement, contributed significantly to the growth of public consciousness in Rajasthan. In 1865, Swami Dayanand was invited by the ruler of Karauli to visit that state. Subsequently he visited Bharatpur,

Churu and Udaipur too, where he was well received by the rulers and the masses alike, as were his propagation of the ideas of *Swadharma*, *Swarajya*, *Swadeshi*, and *Swabhiman*. During the 1880-1910 period many branches of the Arya Samaj were established in Rajasthan. A printing press, called the 'Vedic Yantralya' was set up at Ajmer and a social institution, known as the *Paropkarini Sabha* was established at Udaipur in 1883. The Arya Samaj advocated education and social reforms, along with the teachings incorporated in the Vedas and the fine points of Vedic culture and society. Swami Vivekananda too had an important role in arousing popular sentiments and associating many of the rulers and chiefs of Rajputana in welfare-oriented schemes.

Various reform-related caste or community organisations, or *sabhas*, also came to be established across Rajputana, which played their part in the shaping of history and the making of modern Rajasthan. These were sometimes established due to the efforts of individuals, or groups of like-minded associates. However, in the initial stages the pioneering bodies had the active encouragement of the British Political Agents or Residents, and the local Maharajas etc. Mainly, caste reform associations were aimed at bringing about social reforms within the concerned castes and communities. These got an impetus after the Rajputana states' authorities began to dissociate themselves from caste panchayats around 1924, and accord recognition to the caste/communities reform associations, societies and *sabhas* under the respective Societies Registration Act of individual Rajputana states.

One of the earliest attempts at community-reform came about with the establishment in 1877 of the *Shri Desh Hitaishini Sabha* at Udaipur. This body was active during 1877-87, and worked towards social reforms amongst the Rajputs and Charans of all the states of Rajputana. In 1888 this merged and became part of the *Walterkrit Rajputra Hitkarini Sabha*, as was noted in the preceding section of this book. This latter body had been encouraged by C.K.M Walter, a British Political Service officer, who was later AGG for the Rajputana states in 1887, and the very term '*Walter-krit*' means 'created by Walter'.

Inspired partly by these late nineteenth century Rajputana organisations, and partly by various All-India caste-specific reform associations, the ensuing decades of the twentieth century were to see the establishment of many similar bodies in Rajputana, or having branches within Rajputana². Many of these caste-based social reform associations urged the rulers of various states to further broad-based social reforms and legislations — much to the approval of the British Residents, AGGs and other concerned officers. In 1920, the community known as *daroga*, which was traditionally associated with service in royal households, met at Pushkar and established the *All India Raona Rajput Mahasabha*, as an umbrella-body of all the daroga groups of Rajputana, Sindh, Malwa, and Gujarat. Kishangarh became the headquarters of this association, and its objectives included, among other things, to better the lot of their community and to ensure education for all.

In 1921 the *Rajasthan Kshatriya Mahasabha, Ajmer* (linked to the *All India Kshatriya Mahasabha* founded in 1910), was established as a caste association to bring about social reforms and spread education amongst the widespread community of Rajputs in some two dozen princely states and chiefships of Rajputana. It drew heavily upon, and remained linked with, the *Walterkrit Rajputra Hitkarini Sabha* which had come into being in 1888 (and the latter's branches). These bodies developed in the wake of several administrative and educational reforms like the introduction of western education and health facilities etc, initiated at the instance of the British government in India and its Political Agents or Residents in the princely states. (It was no coincidence or accident that in several states of Rajputana, such reforms were introduced during the minority periods of the rulers or when the local Residents or Political Agents had a greater and effective say in state affairs).

The *Kshatriya Mahasabha* was, however, more concerned with the safeguarding of Rajput interests against the new winds of change that had appeared on the local horizons. It took on a more political outlook in the 1930s, particularly in the wake of the agrarian-related protests of the Jat farmers of Shekhawati (detailed elsewhere) of the 1920s and 1930s; and the formation in 1934 of the *Jaipur Rajput Prantiya Sabha* by Rajput *jagirdars* reacting to the local *kisan* movement. It was to again take on a more

political outlook at the time of the merger of the princely states of Rajputana into modern Rajasthan, and afterwards when the *jagirdari* and *zamindari* systems were abolished by law in Rajasthan.

Associations for Jats also came into being, particularly in rural Shekhawati and Marwar, and in 1925 Pushkar was the venue of an annual session of the *All India Jat Kshatriya Mahasabha* (established 1911). 1925 also saw the formation of the *Khandela Jat Panchayat* to bring about social reforms as well as better economic conditions for the Jat agriculturalists of the Shekhawati area. The *Rajasthan Jat Kshatriya Sabha, Ajmer* (established 1930), gathered additional momentum following the February 1932 *All India Jat Kshatriya Mahasabha* session at Jhunjhunu. Traditional norms on social distance and permissible activities continued to be further challenged by these meets and sessions. For example, during the course of the January 1935 '*Jat Prajapati Mahayagna*' at Sikar, Jats rode on elephant-back, defying the orders of the Sikar state. The same year, various local Jat-dominated farmers' bodies, or *Kisan Sabhas* and *Kisan Panchayats*, of the Shekhawati region united to form the '*Shekhawati Kisan Sabha*'.

The various Jat associations and gatherings quickly became forums for, both, effecting reforms and changes within the community, and raising issues related to land revenue demands, excessive taxation, forced labour and the overall economic condition of the Jats vis-à-vis the politically dominant Rajputs of Shekhawati. Subsequently, the *Marwar Kisan Sabha* formed at Jodhpur in 1940, also proved an effective forum for initiating internal social reforms, as well as voicing land-revenue, forced labour, and agrarian-related issues across western Rajputana. The Jat associations also joined hands with a quite different category of association — namely, several of the Praja Mandals (notably, the Jaipur Praja Mandal, Marwar's Lok Parishad, and bodies like the Marwar Gram Utthan Mandal of Beawar) — in pursuing a common agenda for the abolition of the *jagirdari* system and forced *bejaar* labour and the introduction of land reforms and popular representation in governance³.

In the interim, in 1931 the *Mina Rajputa Mahasabha, Rajputana* was established, with its headquarters at Jaipur. This had branches at Bundi,

Kotah, Jhalawar, Shekhawati, Bharatpur, Alwar, Karauli, Mewar, Marwar, Bikaner and Indore. This organisation also dealt with social issues, including raising the minimum age for marriage for girls to thirteen years, and curbing expenses related to weddings and funeral-related ceremonies. Organisations were also set up in areas with a majority population of Bhils and Garasias. Among such organisations was the *Vanvasi Seva Sangh*, which stressed social reforms and political awakening. Its members took pledges of abstaining from liquor and the use of opium, etc. The *Vanvasi Seva Sangh* of Dungarpur took a leading role in providing education to Bhil children, and opening schools and hostels in rural areas of that state.

Meanwhile, in 1924 the *Agrawal Hitkarini Sabha* was formed at Jaipur, with objectives stressing social reform and education. Prior to this, Charans from Rajputana, Malwa, Gujarat and Kutch formed their separate *All India Charan Conference* at Pushkar in 1921, and established various sub-branches and off-shoots of this. However, Charans were not dropped from the *Walterkrit Rajputra Hitkarini Sabha*, of which they had been founder-members (as was the case with their membership of the earlier *Shri Desh Hitaishini Sabha*), until January 1 1941. In that year the Rajput Princes took over the running of the *Walterkrit Rajputra Hitkarini Sabha*, as was noted in the preceding section of this book. This latter body had been encouraged by C.K.M Walter, a British Political Service officer, who was later AGG for the Rajputana states in 1887, and the very term '*Walter-krit*' means 'created by Walter'.

Previously, the branches of the *Walterkrit Sabha* had not always stressed Rajput exclusivity. In fact, in 1902, Dholpur state's *Dholpur Walterkrit Rajputra Hitkarini Sabha* had a ten-member Central Working Committee that covered representatives who were Jat, Rajput, Brahmin, Kayastha, Mahajan, Muslim and Sikh, and the local caste panchayats of Dholpur worked alongside this *sabha*. In the Jat-ruled state of Bharatpur, the Bharatpur wing of the *Walterkrit Rajputra Hitkarini Sabha* had encouraged the formation of social reform oriented caste associations. Most of these associations in Bharatpur were established between 1916 and 1922, and included *sabhas* and organisations of groups like the Brahmins, Jats, Khatis, Kumawat Rajputs, Kahars, etc.

Work begun to end social discrimination in British and Princely India, especially under the leadership of Dr. Ambedkar, Mahatma Gandhi and others, led to the setting up of a branch of the *All India States Peoples' Bairwa Mahasabha* in Jaipur in July 1944. This became an important forum in the states of Rajputana, particularly Jaipur state, thereafter⁴. The *Jaipur Rajya Praja Mandal* and the *Dalit Uddhar Sabha* also took up the cause of other Dalit and marginalised groups from 1946 onwards. Furthermore, as a result of previous opinion-building and the constant urging of reform-minded individuals and associations, on 27 August 1947, Jaipur state's Legislative Assembly passed the 'Jaipur Harijan (Removal of Disabilities) Bill, 1947'.

While the numerous special interest caste or community-based associations in Rajputana did bring about various internal and cross-community social reforms; pursue agendas that stressed acquiring education, and curbing unnecessary expenses enjoined by warped notions of 'tradition'; and, in several cases, mobilise people towards the national movement, they also played a divisive role. Community exclusiveness was one of the outcomes of such organisations. They were also to play a role in the long-term electoral politics of the region too, particularly after Independence. Vashishtha has noted that "...several prominent Caste Reform Associations such as the Jats, *Dalits* and Minas joined hands with the Rajputana Provincial Congress, the Bhils supported [the] Socialist Party, while the Rajputs strengthened the Ramrajya Parishad or the *Jan Sangh* for the fulfilment of their objectives and maintaining their interests. This transformation had begun to take place from 1938 after the formation of the *Praja Mandals* in Rajputana states, but it was crystallized on the eve of the integration of the Princely Rajputana into Rajasthan State...between 1948 and 1949"⁵.

Let us look now at the major events of the 1900-1947 period across India, before we focus attention on the diverse individual states of Rajputana.

THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT, BRITISH INDIA, AND THE PRINCELY STATES OF RAJPUTANA (1900-1947)

The perspective on nationalism and call for self-governance, as it developed within British India during the early part of the twentieth century⁶, was to have some impact in the states comprising what was designated as ‘Princely India’, and the ‘Indian States’. However, this came slowly. Thus, the October 1905 partition of Bengal and its aftermath did not have much popular reaction in Rajputana’s Princely States. Nor did the rise — under B.G. Tilak, of the Extremist element in the Indian National Congress (founded at Bombay in 1885); the Aga Khan led Muslim deputation on 1 October 1906 to Viceroy Minto⁷; or the formation of the All-India Muslim League at Dacca on December 30 1906. The same was the case with regard to the split between the ‘Moderate’ and ‘Extremist’ elements within Congress at the December 1907 Surat session (which lasted till 1916⁸). Even so, the cumulative impact of the early years of the Indian national movement in British India was, in time, felt in these states too.

For one thing, some of the revolutionaries and members of ‘*Anushilan* Committees’ and other activist-groups that had come up in Bengal, and elsewhere, in response to the division of that province, eventually used British-administered Ajmer for planning activities, or for fostering new cells and gaining recruits to the nationalist cause. Their activities spread to neighbouring parts of Rajputana. The Princely States of Rajputana were also used by these young activists as temporary shelter from the reaches of British India’s Intelligence and Police forces.

Other subsequent events were like additional bricks or stone slabs of an edifice, since these, too, were to have a long-term effect on British India and the princely states of Rajputana — and the people living under both systems. In May 1909 the ‘Indian Councils Act’ — better known as the ‘Minto-Morley Reforms’ was passed. It provided for expansion of the Imperial Legislative Council to sixty members, doubling of the Provincial Legislative Council membership, and of the membership of the Executive Councils of Madras and Bombay. The Act also conceded separate electorates for Muslims. The Legislative Councils which subsequently came

up in some of the more ‘progressive’ princely states, albeit giving limited ‘popular’ representation, were influenced by such events and constitutional advances.

Among other things, in 1910 the ‘Hindu Sabha’ (later known as the Hindu Mahasabha), was set-up. This and other organisations, aimed at furthering socio-religious nationalist consciousness among special interest groups, went on to gain considerable support not just in British India, but some of the princely states as well. (Rulers like Jey Singh of Alwar and Kishan Singh of Bharatpur openly supported what was subsequently called ‘Hindu nationalism’ in their respective states).

In the interim, in 1903 an Imperial Durbar had been organized at Delhi by Lord Curzon, Viceroy and Governor General of India, to celebrate the coronation of Edward VII. The rulers of various princely states, including those from Rajputana attended this, with the exception of the Maharana of Mewar. (One of the reasons for the Mewar ruler not attending being that the British Government had not agreed to his demand of a higher position than that accorded to Hyderabad and Baroda). Another Imperial Delhi Durbar was held a few years later, in December 1911, to mark the visit of the King-Emperor George V and Queen Mary to India. It was at this durbar that the announcement cancelling the previous partition of Bengal was made. So was the announcement concerning the transfer of British India’s capital from Calcutta to Delhi. Once again, the Maharana of Mewar did not attend the durbar (despite travelling up to Delhi, and actually meeting the Viceroy at Salimgarh station), though the other rulers of Rajputana attended this.

Even as the Indian princes were involved in Imperial pageantry and matters, and the governance of their own areas — often with a British administrator influencing decisions, nationalist politics of many hues, and several revolutionary movements, also gathered strength and support. The networks and affiliations of the revolutionary movements, in particular, cut across the boundaries of British-administered and princes-administered India⁹. Rajputana’s well-known poet, Thakur Kesari Singh Barhat (who had been born in a Charan family of Shahpura, Mewar)¹⁰, his brother Zorawar Singh and son Pratap Singh, were in close touch with revolutionaries like

Ras Behari Bose. Zorawar Singh and Pratap Singh were party to the conspiracy to assassinate the Governor General Lord Hardinge, as he rode on elephant-back in a ceremonial procession in Delhi in December 1912 to celebrate the shifting of the capital of India from Calcutta to Delhi. The revolutionaries hurled a bomb at Hardinge, who survived the attack though his bodyguard was killed. Pratap Singh and his brother-in-law, Ishar Dan Asa, were arrested but were let off later due to lack of evidence. Subsequently, Pratap Singh and Zorawar Singh, who were wanted by the police in some other cases, absconded. (The latter was not arrested till he returned to Kota).

(In 1914 Kesari Singh Barhat was arrested, with Somdutt Lahiri, Ramkaran and two others on charges of the murder of Mahant Pyarelal of Jodhpur. They were sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment. Kesri Singh Barhat was transferred from Kota jail to Hazari Bagh jail in Bihar, but was released by the British after about five years of imprisonment. Upon returning to Kota after his release, he learnt that his son, Pratap Singh, who had had been betrayed by a railway station-master, arrested at Ashanada railway station in Marwar, and sentenced to five years' rigorous imprisonment in the Banaras Conspiracy Case, had met an untimely death in Bareilly jail after refusing to provide information about the whereabouts of various revolutionaries. Kesri Singh Barhat died in 1939).

In 1914, upon the outbreak of the 'Great War', as the First World War of 1914-1918 was called at the time, many of the rulers of the princely states — including those from Rajputana — provided troops, war-material, money and often their personal presence, at the service of the 'King-Emperor'. Rajasthan's troops had already seen service on non-Indian soil prior to the First World War. For example, Sirohi's troops had served in Transvaal, and the Jodhpur Imperial Lancers and 'Bikaner Imperial Service Camel Corps' (or *Ganga Risala*) in China during the Boxer Rebellion of 1900. (The last two were led, respectively by Sir Pratap, Regent of Jodhpur, and Maharaja Ganga Singh of Bikaner).

Now they were to see action again during the First World War. For example, the Jodhpur Imperial Service Lancers served in France and Palestine, and Jodhpur's Maharaja Sumer Singh, accompanied by the

Regent Maharaj Sir Pratap Singh, served with the Jodhpur forces in person for nearly two years on the French front. Bikaner's Maharaja Ganga Singh also saw active service with the Bikaner state's forces (including the Camel Corps), that served in France, Egypt and Palestine. Other rulers, including the Maharaja of Kishangarh and Nawab of Loharu, served personally in the war too. Alwar sent its Imperial Service Troops, Jaipur its Transport Corps and Bharatpur its Imperial Service Infantry and Transport Corps to the battle-front, while the rulers of Jaisalmer, Bundi, Jhalawar, Kota, Dungarpur, Partabgarh and Banswara offered their personal services as well as the resources of their respective states. Udaipur, Tonk and Dholpur also offered their resources for the war-effort.

Even as the various Indian States' forces were winning laurels, and the various rulers or their representatives high honours, the challenge to British rule over India was gaining further momentum in British India, and beginning to touch at least the major towns or capitals of the Rajputana states [11](#). In this, newspapers and the printing-press began to play a role. Over the ensuing period, newspapers and journals published from Ajmer or the capitals of different states of Rajputana were sometimes proscribed or closed down, often to re-appear under a different name! Simultaneously, Indian members of British India's 'Imperial Legislative Council' and of the provincial Legislative Councils were vociferous in calls for constitutional reforms. (For example, nineteen non-official members of the Imperial Legislative Council gave a 'Memorandum of 19', seeking representative government, dominion status and constitutional reforms, to the Viceroy in October 1916).

During August-September 1916, Annie Besant and Bal Gangadhar Tilak founded their respective Home Rule Leagues. Soon after, came one more significant milestone for the national movement. This followed the Lucknow Congress held in December 1916 (which saw the 'Extremist' group taken back), and entailed a pact between the Congress and the Muslim League regarding a future constitution for India. This agreement at Lucknow is better known as the Congress-League Lucknow Pact of 1916^{[12](#)}.

The early part of 1917 was marked by the arrest of Annie Besant (among others). Pt. Motilal Nehru and Tej Bahadur Sapru were among

those who protested against her arrest to the authorities of British India, and joined the Home Rule Movement. Meanwhile, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (also called 'Bapu', 'Mahatma Gandhi', and 'Gandhi-ji'), had returned to India in January 1915, after nearly twenty-two years (1893-1914) in South Africa. Having travelled across India to acquaint himself first-hand with ground-realities, he launched his now famous satyagraha in the Champaran area of Bihar in April 1917. This movement was to prove inspirational for subsequent activities by the Mahatma and like-minded supporters. Interestingly, the Champaran movement is believed to have drawn some inspiration from the long-drawn out Bijolia movement (described at some length further in this chapter) of the *Uparmal* area of Mewar, in Rajputana.

During February-March 1918, the Champaran experience was re-lived in the Ahmedabad and Kheda satyagrahas. Post Champaran and the other satyagrahas, many 'Gandhians' moved into the rural areas of different regions of India, where they encouraged education and socio-economic reforms etc. In the context of Rajputana, this was marked by the gradual establishment of many small and medium sized organisations and institutions that stressed Gandhian ideals, and worked for socio-economic transformations within society.

In the interim, on 20 August 1917, a formal announcement of British policy towards India was made in the House of Commons by the Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu. The 'Montagu Declaration' stated that the goal of British policy was "the gradual development of self-governing institutions" in India. The Montagu-Chelmsford Report¹³ proposal for constitutional reforms was published in July 1918. The report broadly proposed complete popular control, as far as possible, of local bodies; introduction of responsible government in some measure in the provinces; enlargement of the Imperial Legislative Council; and the gradual relaxation of control of the 'Home' (i.e. British) Government over the Government of India. This 'report became the basis of the Government of India Act of 1919.

The Montagu-Chelmsford Report proposals resulted in divided opinion amongst Indian leaders. The differences between the 'Moderate'

and ‘Extremist’ wings of the Congress came to a head. The Congress vociferously criticised the Montagu-Chelmsford Report in September, but its Moderate section was willing to try out the reforms, and hence accepted the Montagu-Chelmsford Report. (Faced with resistance within the Congress party over the Montagu-Chelmsford Report proposals, the Moderate section opted to separate from the parent-body and in November 1918 formed the All-India Moderate Party — renamed the National Liberal Federation in 1920)¹⁴.

During this period there was a sort of ‘trickle-down effect’ into princely India, not only of issues of self-governance and aspects of the national movement, but also of some of the reforms, changes and innovations that were being introduced in British India’s Imperial Legislative Council, and various Provincial Legislatures¹⁵. Raising issues like education for all etc. gave an impetus to educational initiatives by nationalist political parties within British India and the princely states, and also further urged the opening of more state-run institutions within various ‘progressive-minded’ princely states like Bikaner, Baroda, etc.

Other aspects, similarly, influenced the decision-makers within the various princely states. Simultaneously, ideas of democracy, equality between all humans, representation in decision-making bodies, etc., which were influenced by the West, and had already become established within the more urban areas of British India, began to percolate through to the Indian princely states. These ideas of democracy etc., very obviously, questioned and challenged the existing socio-economic-political feudal order within the states, as is already well-known. Meanwhile, on 17 October 1917 the Indian Communist Party had been formed at Tashkent, USSR.

The Rowlatt Committee on Sedition, set up under Sir Sidney Rowlatt on 10 December 1917 to devise means of dealing with ‘seditious’ and ‘terrorist’ crimes, had submitted its report in April 1918. In February 1919, the infamous Rowlatt Bills — anger and anguish against which led to protests all across India — came up for debate in the Imperial Legislative Council, and were vociferously opposed within the Council, and the nation at large outside it. The ‘Rowlatt Act’ was passed that March.

On 6 April 1919, Gandhi launched an All-India Civil Disobedience Movement in protest against the Rowlatt Act. As the protests gained strength, the counter-action took the form of repression. This culminated in the Punjab in the infamous Jallianwala Bagh Massacre of 13 April at Amritsar, and a grim situation in the rest of the province, under a martial law regime. There was a national outcry. On 18 April, Gandhi suspended his Civil Disobedience Movement, but the massacre and its aftermath had clinched the issue for the Congress, which, under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership, became committed to the path of non-cooperation and boycott of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, unlike the Moderates, who still attempted to work them. That September, an All-India Khilafat Conference was held at Lucknow. Supporting the Khilafat Movement, Gandhi gave a call to observe 17 October 1919 as 'Khilafat Day'.

(One should emphasise here that movements like the Khilafat and those calling for 'Home Rule' etc., as well as the activities of the revolutionaries — which were running more or less parallel with the more 'constitutional-based' ones, had their share of impact on the Indian national movement — drawing popular attention to the need for self-governance by Indians, and underlining principles like democracy etc).

On 20 December 1919, the Government of India Act of 1919 (incorporating the Montagu-Chelmsford Report) was passed by Parliament, introducing dyarchy in the provinces of British India, and a bi-cameral legislature at the centre. This legislature was visualised as consisting of a 140 member Lower House, or the Central Legislative Assembly, and a 60 member Upper House, or the the Council of States. The Indian National Congress accepted this Act at its Amritsar session.

Other kinds of reforms, including concerning the armed forces, were on the anvil. In 1920, a 'Select Committee of the Rulers and Representatives of the States' discussed with the Government of India proposals for the 'Indian States' Forces Scheme 1920'. As part of this, the 'Imperial Service Troops' became the 'Indian State Forces'. Under the new scheme, the strength of forces from each of the states was fixed. (Five of the Rajputana States, namely Alwar, Bharatpur, Jodhpur, Bikaner and Jaipur

had raised Imperial Service Troops. Udaipur had raised a squadron of cavalry in 1911 for the Imperial Service Troops).

In August 1920, Mahatma Gandhi launched a Non-Cooperation Movement, which gained wide-scale support¹⁶. At a special session at Calcutta in September, the Congress endorsed the Non-Cooperation plan by a narrow majority. The reactionary backlash to the movement came in the shape of large-scale arrests, and the die-hardism of the provincial governors and various British Members of Parliament. That November, the first election under the 1919 Act was held for provincial and central legislatures. The Congress boycotted the election, and followed that up by re-endorsing Gandhi's non-cooperation movement at its annual session held at Nagpur. The new Central Legislature was inaugurated in February 1921.

So too, the very same month, was a 'Chamber of Princes' (also called the *Narendra Mandal*), which was established by 'Royal Assent'. This Chamber of Princes, set up in the wake of the reforms accompanying the 'Government of India Act 1919', and the prevailing political upsurge of nationalist forces, was meant to give a sense of common purpose to the six hundred or so 'rulers' or 'chiefs' of 'princely India'. The body was also regarded as a counterpoise to the growing challenge of mass political activities by the various political parties.

Over the next couple of decades and until the fateful years 1946-47, several of the rulers of the Rajputana states (including high-profile ones like Ganga Singh of Bikaner, Jey Singh of Alwar, as well the rulers of Jhalawar and Dholpur, etc.) took a decisive part in the Chamber's political activities and negotiations. This was true from its inception and right through the eventful period up to the adoption of the 1935 Act, and then again during the years after the Second World War, when plans for the subcontinent were in the making¹⁷.

Ultimately, the Chamber lost its voice. In part, because of the serious differences and internal dissensions (and clashes of personalities); in part because of changes in British policy towards the Princes; and in part because of the rapidly changing world within British India — and the rest

of the world. However, if the Chamber of Princes eventually became a divided house, it long remained an active and effective institution in the regional affairs of princely India.

Maharaja Ganga Singh of Bikaner became the first Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes (1921-26). This was rather appropriate considering that Maharaja Ganga Singh and Alwar's Jey Singh, had had a role in the formation of this body. In the case of Ganga Singh, following his participation and active contributions to the Imperial War Conference and the War Cabinet meetings in London, Austen Chamberlain, the then Secretary of State for India, had asked him to write a 'Minute' on Indian issues in 1917, which the Maharaja did during his stop-over at Rome enroute to India. This 'Rome Note' was forwarded to Chamberlain by the Bikaner ruler on 15 May 1917. In it, Ganga Singh stressed a four-point programme in the context of the then prevailing situation, with the fourth and final point being a recommendation for the establishment of a Council of Princes to deal with matters concerning the British Government and the Indian States.

Meanwhile, even as the visit of the Prince of Wales, scheduled for the winter of 1921 drew near, the Non-Cooperation Movement showed no sign of subsiding. A general boycott of the visit was threatened by Congress and the Khilafat Party. Arrests were commonplace now. The situation was further complicated by the prosecution of certain Khilafat leaders, even as the Viceroy considered possible solutions to the impasse. In November 1921, Lord Reading received the Prince of Wales at Bombay, against a backdrop of protests and disturbances. Then followed a period that saw a trial of strength between the government and the Congress, as more leaders were arrested. At this stage a round table conference between the Viceroy and Mahatma Gandhi was mooted by the Law Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, Tej Bahadur Sapru, but despite Sapru's frenetic efforts, this could not be held in time¹⁸. Soon afterwards, at its annual session held at Ahmedabad in December 1921, the Congress rejected the Reading offer of a round table conference and gave Mahatma Gandhi a *carte blanc* for starting civil disobedience in Bardoli.

The Bardoli civil disobedience and the Non-Cooperation Movement in other areas continued till early 1922, when February's Chauri Chaura incident led to Gandhi suspending the movement. By now the Viceroy was facing intense pressure from the British members of his Executive Council as well as his provincial governors for the arrest of the Mahatma. Mahatma Gandhi was arrested by the Bombay Government on March 10 1922, prosecuted for sedition, and sentenced to six years' imprisonment.

On a different front, the Chamber of Princes secured the passage of the Indian States Act, 1922, which prevented their subjects from publishing 'seditious' material in British Indian newspapers. That December, there was a split in the Congress at its annual session at Gaya over the question of Council entry. One section, led by C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru, supported the notion of contesting the triennial elections due in November 1923 and entering the legislature with the aim of illustrating the flaws of the existing constitution through constantly opposing the Government from inside the councils. However, they were opposed within their party by another section led by 'Gandhi-ites' Vallabhbhai Patel, C.R. Rajagopalachari, Rajendra Prasad, etc. The latter group opposed Congress entry into the councils. Thus, C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru's group opted to form a separate body which was called the 'Congress Swaraj Party'.

Around this time, at a National Conference sponsored by Annie Besant in February 1923, a Convening Committee was set up. Later, having resolved its differences with the other Congress group in September 1923, the 'Swaraj Party' contested elections to the central and provincial legislatures held that November. Meanwhile, in England the 'Die-hards' (as they were called at the time), were becoming more vociferous; and Secretary of State for India, Montagu, had resigned and been replaced by Lord Peel. As such, the Indian members of the Viceroy's Executive Council were finding themselves unable to influence government policies in the wake of the attitude of a majority of the British Governors and other administrators. (1923 was also the year of the Imperial Conference held at London, where India was represented by Lord Peel, who was then Secretary of State for India, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, and Maharaja Jey Singh of Alwar).

In January 1924 the Central Legislative Assembly was inaugurated. Over the ensuing period, bills and matters were raised on its floor, or were obstructed by the Swaraj Party's elected representatives. By the third quarter of 1925, there was a split in the Swaraj Party. Political activities were in full-swing across urban India around this period¹⁹, and in December 1925 the Communist Party of India was formally inaugurated at the Kanpur conference, while the Hindu Mahasabha (previously Hindu Sabha) was revived.

By March 1926, the Swarajists had felt constrained to walk out of the Central Legislature. However, that April, the Third General Elections to the Central Legislature were held. On 20 March 1927, Muslim leaders met at Delhi. They offered to forsake their right to a separate electorate on certain conditions. Meanwhile, Lord Birkenhead, then Secretary of State for India, decided that the time was right for a review of the working of the 1919 Act. For this an 'Indian Statutory Commission' was appointed in November 1927, under the chairmanship of Sir John Simon. (Hence the name 'Simon Commission', by which it became better known). The Simon Commission was required, both, to review the workings of the 1919 Act, and to recommend further constitutional reforms for India. The review pre-empted by four years the originally envisaged schedule, which had been to look at the results of the Montford' Reforms after ten years of their becoming operational. Not only that, the Government decided that it should be carried out by an all-British Statutory Commission.

The composition of the Commission, with no Indian representation, was strongly condemned across India and rejected by all the major parties of India, who also declared that they would boycott it when it arrived in India. (Presiding over the National Liberal Federation's Bombay session, Sapru, the former Law Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, called for a national boycott of the all-white Commission. The first Indian leader to do so; he urged Indians to close ranks, and accept Lord Birkenhead's challenge regarding Indians being incapable of framing a constitution for themselves by actually producing one. Around the same time, at its Madras session in December 1927, the Congress party adopted the attainment of complete independence for India as its objective. Furthermore, in protest against the non-inclusion of any Indian in the Simon Commission, and in

response to Birkenhead's challenge, the Congress declared its intention of drafting a constitution for India in association with all other parties).

It was also in 1927 that the Indian States' Peoples Conference (henceforth AISPC) was founded to foster movements for democracy in the Princely Indian States. Meanwhile, the Indian States Committee was set up under Harcourt Butler to examine the relationship of the States with the British in the latter's capacity as the 'Paramount Power'. Both these were of significance for the princely states of India — including Rajputana.

By this time, several associations and organisations had either become established in different parts of Rajputana, or were beginning to be set in place. Among these was Swami Gopal Das's *Hitkarini Sabha* at Churu, founded in 1907 to work for socio-economic upliftment, the *Marwar Hitkarini Sabha* set up during 1917-1919, a *Mitra Mandal* set up by Babu Mukta Prasad in Bikaner, and the *Tilak Samiti* established in the Shekhawati area during 1924-25.

The all-white Simon Commission arrived in India in February 1928, and was met across the land by protests, black-flags, sustained boycott, and calls of 'Simon Go Back'. This situation continued as the Commission made its 'blood-red progress' (as Gandhi termed it), across India. The death of Lala Lajpat Rai, following injuries received in a police *lathi*-charge at Lahore, motivated many younger Indians to follow the path of the revolutionaries, rather than that of non-cooperation being preached by the Congress leadership under Gandhi. The role of revolutionaries like Chandrashekar Azad, Bhagat Singh and hundreds of like-minded, dedicated, young men and women is well-known, and need not be detailed further here. The actions of the revolutionaries and activists continued to inspire small groups within the Rajputana states too, even though the cult of the bomb and the gun never became the predominant force in the princely states.

Meanwhile, at an All-Parties Conference in May 1928, a committee chaired by Motilal Nehru was appointed to set out the principles of a constitution for India. This 'Nehru Committee' completed its work in August²⁰. The Nehru Report visualised a fully responsible unitary form of

government for India, with residuary power vested in the Central Government, rather than the provincial governments. It also recognised that a place would have to be found for the princely Indian states. This draft constitution stood for adult franchise, a bicameral legislature, an independent judiciary with a Supreme Court as its apex, and a joint electorate for all the communities, with reservation of seats for Muslims in the Muslim minority provinces, but no such reservation in Muslim majority provinces. Other recommendations included the constitution of Sindh ('Sind' as it was spelt) as a separate province.

In December 1928, representatives of eighty-seven parties met at Calcutta in an All-Parties All-India Conference to consider, and approve, the Nehru Report. However, Jinnah demanded certain weightage for the Muslims, and led a section that had objections to the report. Jinnah's opposition was out-voted by the majority view. This was a turning point in Indian history, since Jinnah now conclusively parted company with the Congress.

The report also came under fire from some of the younger Congress leaders, including Subhas Chandra Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru, but at the Calcutta Congress session of December 1928 mediation by Gandhi enabled a compromise acceptable to both sides within the Congress. Consequently, it was agreed that the Congress would accept "the whole of the Nehru Report, including the Dominion Status formula, but if it was not accepted by the British Government within a year, the Congress would opt for complete independence, and fight for it, if necessary, by invoking civil disobedience"²¹.

Following the Congress' ultimatum to the British Government, the first quarter of 1929 saw efforts at finding a way forward on the part of people like Sapru²². The views of Indian leaders like Sir Ali Imam, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Pandit Motilal Nehru and others were ascertained regarding a 'round table' conference to be called by the Government in London, which could also discuss the issue of dominion status for India. Following further developments, Sapru met with Irwin and Simon informally in the first week of April, and discussed the possibility of calling

a Round Table Conference between Indians and representatives of British political parties.

In the interim, during February 1929, the Indian States Committee Report (Butler Report) has been published. A significant recommendation of the Butler Committee Report was that; without the agreement of the Princes, the Princely States should not be transferred to a future government in British India that was wholly responsible to an Indian legislature.

On 31 October, returning to India after four months in England, Viceroy Irwin's announced that he was authorized "on behalf of His Majesty's Government to state clearly that in their judgement...the natural issue of India's constitutional progress...is the attainment of Dominion Status". Irwin announced the Government's intention of inviting representatives of different parties and interests to participate in a Round Table Conference with British politicians in London to formulate new constitutional proposals for India.

A conference of major national leaders regarding participation in the Round Table Conference was convened at Delhi a couple of days later. The deliberations led to the 'Delhi Manifesto', which held that it should be made clear that the purpose of the forthcoming Round Table Conference was not merely to discuss when dominion status should be granted, but to formulate a scheme for its implementation, and the framing of a constitution.

The Delhi Manifesto of November 1929, signed by Mahatma Gandhi, Motilal Nehru and Jawaharlal Nehru, among others, was a compromise between several points of view²³. Despite the fact that it was eventually endorsed at a meeting of non-Congress and Congress leaders at Allahabad on November 18 1929, the Delhi Manifesto was considered a set-back by Jawaharlal Nehru (who had been elected Congress president earlier that September) and some others. Jawaharlal Nehru expressed his reservations and anguish to the Mahatma and to his father, Motilal, about the Irwin declaration and the hostility shown to it in debates in the British Parliament,

and offered to resign his general secretaryship of the Party immediately, along with the presidency of the forthcoming Congress²⁴.

With the Congress insisting on the terms of the manifesto being fulfilled as a precondition to its participation in the proposed Round Table Conference, Sapru tried to bring about an understanding between the Congress and the Government, but the gulf continued to widen. Convinced by Jawaharlal Nehru and the 'radicals', the Congress repudiated its initial support of the Irwin announcement, and decided to stand by its previously issued ultimatum that if India had not been granted dominion status by the end of December 1929, the Indian National Congress would work for complete independence.

The break with Government became overt finally at a meeting of five Indian leaders — M.K. Gandhi, Moti Lal Nehru, Vithalbai Patel²⁵, Mohammed Alijinnah and T.B. Sapru, with the Viceroy on 23 December 1929. Receiving no assurance from the Government regarding full dominion status for India, the Indian National Congress declared on 31 December 1929, at its Lahore session, that henceforth its objective would not be Dominion Status within the British Commonwealth, but *purna swaraj* — i.e. complete independence. The Congress also authorized the All-India Congress Committee to launch the Civil Disobedience movement afresh on a large scale. On 26 January 1930, the Congress, and all others who wished to do so, took the Independence pledge²⁶.

Even as the Congress headed towards the start of its civil disobedience movement, an All-Parties Conference was convened under Sapru's chairmanship at the end of February 1930. At the conference, the Hindu-Muslim controversy took a new turn as M.A. Jinnah pressed for the acceptance of his 'Fourteen Points' formula, which he had first formulated in March 1929. This was unacceptable to the other parties. Meanwhile, events were moving fast, and on 12 March 1930 Mahatma Gandhi began his 241 mile Salt March from Sabarmati Ashram to the seashore at Dandi. Reaching Dandi, he launched 'Civil Disobedience' on 6 April by publicly picking up a lump of natural salt from the sea-shore, thus breaking the salt law. Thereafter, for weeks on end, thousands of men and women engaged in

the most sustained defiance which the British had encountered in India since 1857.

Gandhi was arrested on May 5 1930, and the Congress was outlawed that June. However, this merely stimulated the civil disobedience movement across the subcontinent²⁷. The effects of this were felt in several towns and capital-cities of the princely states of Rajputana too (as is noted further in this chapter). In the face of the Civil Disobedience in India and an adverse campaign in England, Viceroy Irwin regretted the ‘very grave lack of imagination’ betrayed by its total silence on Dominion Status²⁸ in the advance copy of the Simon Commission Report that he saw that June. On 9 July Irwin reiterated his ‘Dominion Status’ statement in the Imperial Legislative Assembly, and announced that the forthcoming conference would be free to approach its task unimpaired by the Indian Statutory (Simon) Commission Report. Meanwhile, T.B. Sapru and M.R. Jayakar were striving for a ‘truce’ between the Congress and the Government of India. Through July and August 1930, they met and conferred with the Viceroy and the Congress leaders, including Mahatma Gandhi (jailed at Yervada), and Motilal and Jawaharlal Nehru (both imprisoned at Naini). However, the deadlock could not be resolved.

That November, in the face of vehement Congress opposition, fifty-eight delegates from British India, representing various political parties, with the exception of the Indian National Congress, and sixteen from the Indian States met at London to attend the Round Table Conference convened by the British Government. Commencing, as it did, in an uncertain climate tempered by Congress rejection, civil disobedience and an unresolved communal question, the conference ended as a surprisingly successful one, primarily due to the efforts of Sapru²⁹.

Presenting India’s case on 17 November 1930, Sapru mooted the idea of a self-governing federal India, with a responsible government at the Centre, qualified by reservation and safeguards for the period of transition, and with provinces that enjoyed full autonomy. He called upon the Indian Princes to support the nationalist movement in British India, and to join the proposed federation in order to enable the creation of a united all-India

Federation. Sapru asked the British to take a statesmanlike view of the Indian problem. His eloquence showed immediate results, when Maharaja Ganga Singh of Bikaner, speaking next on behalf of his brother-princes, unhesitatingly recorded his support for Sapru's suggestion. So did Maharaja Sayaji Rao Gaekwad of Baroda, Maharaja Hari Singh of Kashmir, and representatives for the states of Hyderabad, Mysore, etc.

In his turn, Lord Reading, the British Liberal Party delegate to the conference, converted by Sapru's influence, lent his support too. On its part, the Labour Party British Government agreed to concede full provincial autonomy and the gradual introduction of a responsible government at the Centre. Several committees were set-up to work out further details. The delegates from India nearly reached an agreement on the communal problem too. (With the Muslims accepting joint electorates provided one-third of the seats were reserved for them in the Central legislature, and Sind was made a separate province). However, the agreement fell through.

The Round Table Conference, which adjourned on 19 January 1931, appeared to promise a constitution that would lead to dominion status, and it was generally felt that the British Government would transfer full power to Indian hands in less than a decade. Upon their return from the conference, Sapru and Jayakar, tried to convince Gandhi and key Congress leaders, many of them recently released from imprisonment, to talk afresh with the Government of India. The two men also became key mediators in the Gandhi-Irwin negotiations. These negotiations began on 17 February, and culminated in the signing of an agreement — the 'Gandhi-Irwin Pact', on 5 March 1931. "Gandhi agreed to discontinue the civil disobedience movement and to support Congress participation in the second Round Table Conference. The Viceroy agreed to release the Civil disobedience prisoners, to allow people living on the coast to manufacture salt and to recognise the picketing of foreign cloth shops... The agreement did not touch the 'vital question' of India's independence. It did not even provide for the grant of Dominion status in the immediate future"³⁰.

But other changes were occurring. In England a Conservative-dominated National Government took office, replacing the Labour administration. Sir Samuel Hoare became the new Secretary of State for

India, and Lord Willingdon took the place of Lord Irwin as the Viceroy of India. Over the next few months, the situation remained fraught, with obvious die-hardism regarding the Indian issue in the attitude of the British Government; an unresolved communal issue in India, despite Congress' attempt at communal settlement through its July 1931 scheme; and an agreed basis for dominion status remaining a dream. It seemed as if Mahatma Gandhi would decide against attending the Second Round Table Conference. On their part, a section of the princes led by Maharaja Bhupinder Singh of Patiala, with Dholpur's Maharaja Udaibhan Singh in the forefront, were beginning to come together to oppose the federation scheme as it was taking shape.

The Second Round Table Conference began in London on 7 September 1931, with Mahatma Gandhi attending it as the sole representative of the Congress. The atmosphere had drastically changed in the interim between the First and the Second Round Table Conferences. The official attitude was sterner and not inclined to concede anything beyond what the Simon Commission Report had indicated; the communal issue simmered on; the princes queried their exact place in a future federal India; and the depressed classes representatives put in their demand for separate electorates.

The Second Round Table Conference adjourned in December 1931, with a statement on government policy by the Prime Minister. Three committees were set up to look into questions relating to federation, finance and franchise, and another one to function in India as a Consultative Committee of the Conference. The conference also adjourned with a general feeling of disappointment and disenchantment. Besides other sticking points, it was the lack of agreement between the different delegates from India over the communal question that proved a major stumbling block. The conflicting demands and aspirations for separate electorates, and so forth, resulted eventually in such an impossible situation, that it was finally agreed that the solution to the communal problem should be left to the discretion of Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald. The decision, known as the 'Communal Award' was announced by the British prime minister the following August.

Meanwhile, Gandhi returned to India sorely disappointed with the outcome of the Conference, and the manner in which he believed he had been marginalised. In the duration, the situation in India had not improved. Upon his return to India in December 1931, Gandhi spoke of the resumption of civil disobedience by the Congress from 3 January 1932. The Viceroy took stern measures. On January 4 1932, the Government of India issued an Extraordinary *Gazette of India*, promulgating its first comprehensive Emergency Powers Ordinance. Under the Unlawful Association Ordinance (which, along with a Prevention of Molestation and Boycotting Ordinance and an Unlawful Instigation Ordinance, was reissued at the same time), the Congress Working Committee as well as the All India Congress Committee, were declared unlawful associations. The Mahatma and most prominent Congress leaders were promptly arrested; various buildings and bank accounts of individuals and organisations participating in the movement were seized; public gatherings and processions were forbidden; and newspapers were fully controlled.

On 16 August 1932 came the announcement, by the Prime Minister, of the Communal Award — the much-awaited ‘solution’ to the communal problem left undecided by the delegates at the Second Round Table Conference. The ‘Communal Award’ allocated seats in legislatures to different communities, under the forthcoming constitutional reforms discussed in the Round Table Conferences. The Award provided for the continuance of separate electorates for the Muslims, in addition to ensuring that Muslims would have a certain percentage of seats reserved for them in the central and provincial legislatures. The Award also conceded, for the first time, separate electorates for the ‘depressed classes’ (as demanded at the Second Round Table Conference by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar), though it was laid down that they should vote in the ‘general constituencies’.

The effects of the Prime Minister’s Communal Award were more volatile than foreseen by the British Government. In addition, Gandhi had already told the British that if the Award provided separate electorates for the untouchables, he would fast to have the distinction removed. On 20 September Gandhi began a fast-unto-death in Yervada jail in protest against the Communal Award³¹. “The British had provided, however, for the Award’s amendment if the interested Indian communities agreed; and when

the news of Gandhi's fast became public, Haig [then Home Member] astutely announced that he would be released for its duration. This Gandhi rejected. The Government nevertheless provided full facilities to those who then negotiated the so-called Poona Pact with him, by which *joint* electorates for Harijans were agreed"³²

Pressure was brought to bear on Ambedkar to withdraw his claim for separate electorates. He finally agreed to this on 26 September, in return for securing doubled representation for the depressed classes in the provincial legislatures. The agreement, signed at Poona, became known as the 'Poona Pact' (also 'Poona Agreement'). Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald's Communal Award had given the depressed classes a total of seventy-one seats, the Poona Pact assured them one hundred and forty-eight. The Prime Minister accepted the pact and amended his 'Award' accordingly. With this successful resolution, Gandhi was persuaded to break his fast.

The Civil Disobedience movement continued during the ensuing months, with an adamant Government of India not even willing to accept the Prime Minister's suggestion that Gandhi be released forthwith, so as to obviate the need of negotiations with him. Meanwhile, that September the Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, had announced the convening of the Third Round Table Conference in November.

The conference began on 17 November 1932. It dealt mainly with the reports of various sub-committees, and discussed topics like the size of the federal legislature, relations between the Centre and its units, method of election, special powers and responsibilities of the Governor General and Governors, and so forth. However, the Third Round Table Conference, like the one before it, merely accentuated the differences in the perspectives of Whitehall and the Government of India, on the one hand, and the Indian delegates on the other. The conference concluded on 24 December 1932, and fell far short of Indian expectations³³. (That winter, Jinnah quit politics for a while and carried out legal practice in London. He returned to India in the winter of 1933). Meanwhile, on 17 March 1933 the much-awaited White Paper was issued by the Government, formulating proposals for India's constitution. The document proved a severe disappointment for all

political parties and thinkers in India, and was an issue of vital debate at the March 1933 session of the Chamber of Princes.

On 8 May 1933, Gandhi — still imprisoned in Yervada gaol, started his fast (which continued for twenty-one days), to underline his dissatisfaction with the progress of his anti-untouchability work, and as a 'heart prayer for purification of self and associates, for greater vigilance and watchfulness' in connection with the 'Harijan'/ 'depressed classes' cause. He was released from prison by the authorities. However, he continued with his fast over the period that he had already declared he would be fasting, but announced the suspension of the Civil Disobedience movement for six weeks. (It was later again postponed for a further six weeks' spell).

In August, Gandhi was arrested again, released within a few days, re-arrested for failure to stay out of proscribed boundaries, and sentenced to a further spell of imprisonment. The Civil Disobedience movement continued through 1933 and up to May 1934, when the Congress suspended the movement. It was also in 1934 that the Congress Socialist Party was founded. Meanwhile, the Princes continued to be split, in spite of various efforts to find a cordial solution, over the issue of supporting and opposing the proposed federation of British India and Princely India.

In August 1935, the Government of India Act of 1935 received royal assent. Among other things, the Act provided for a dyarchic federal centre with power over British India as well as the Indian Princely States. There was an important proviso that while the joining of the British India provinces to the federation would be automatic, in the case of the Indian states this would be on a voluntary basis, and each Instrument of Accession would need to be accepted by the British Crown. The act also provided for self-government to the provinces through elected responsible representatives. There were many shortcomings in the 1935 Act, but between the powerful lobby of the 'die-hards' in Britain, who had fought to withhold the liberalization of safe-guards, and post-conference wariness amongst various political leaders in British India and decision-takers in princely India, it was all that was offered at the time.

Jinnah was the first to reject the federal part of the new constitution in the Government of India Act of 1935. The princes too voiced their objections over the process and longterm implications of Indian States federating with British India. The issue of safeguards for the princely states also proved a sticking point, especially in the course of detailed negotiations in 1936 — which were eventually suspended by the Marquess of Zetland in August 1936, when it appeared as if matters were going to take a long time in attempting to resolve. Later, though the February 1937 report by the Chamber of Princes' Sub-Committee on Constitutional Issues found that the Act had substantially met the *sine qua nons* of the princes, the anti-federation group of princes (led by Dholpur's Maharaja Udaibhan Singh among others), continued to have strong adherents.

In 1938, the Indian princes met at Bombay and made declarations in favour of the concept of an All-India Federation, but at the same time, they also asked to have specific and effective safeguards for the future. This was something which the British Government was unwilling to become committed to, and the Congress was not willing to accept. And what the Viceroy did offer in early 1939 most princes were not willing to accept. Eventually, due to opposition (albeit over different facets of the federation issue) by the princes, the Muslim League, and the Congress, the federal provisions of the 1935 Act could not be adequately implemented before time ran out!

In the interim, April 1936 saw the inauguration of the new provinces of Sind and Orissa. Soon afterwards, the Congress decided that it would contest elections under the new constitution. The decision was re-iterated at the annual session of the Congress in December 1936. During January-February 1937, elections were held for the provincial legislatures, under the provisions of the 1935 Act. The Congress contested the elections after serious intra-party debate on the issue during 1936. It won an absolute majority in five provinces, becoming the largest group in the NWFP (as the North West Frontier Province was called), and holding an impressive number of seats in Bombay too. The Muslim League, in contrast, had a relatively poorer showing.

However, within the Congress there was a strong difference of opinion (rather reminiscent of the discussion of the Swarajists and Council entry in the 1920s), regarding acceptance of office and working with Britain's imperialist machinery. That March, the Congress put forward its condition for accepting office, demanding an assurance that governors would not use their special discretionary powers, nor set aside ministerial advice or interfere with their work. The governors felt unable to give such an assurance. A politico-constitutional deadlock ensued. As a result of Congress non-participation, interim ministries were formed in the concerned provinces, which were in a vulnerable position as they lacked adequate legislative support.

The debate over the issue raged in the British Parliament too. Finally, on 22 June 1937, the Viceroy made a statement, defining the relations between governors and ministers, and the scope of the powers of provincial governors. The assurance partly helped resolve the deadlock, and on 7 July 1937, the Congress assumed office. Congress ministries were initially formed in the United Provinces (UP³⁴), Central Provinces (CP), Bihar, Bombay, Madras and Orissa. Later, following the fall of Abdul Qaiyum's coalition government in the North West Frontier Province, a Congress ministry was formed in the NWFP in September 1937, and one in Assam in March 1938. (There were also unsuccessful negotiations concerning Congress-Muslim League coalition ministries in Congress provinces). The part of the constitution relating to provinces may have become feasible, but the federal part of it was destined, as mentioned above, to remain unfulfilled.

In January 1938, the National Liberal Federation of India and Hindu Mahasabha voiced their support for the federal scheme of the 1935 Constitution. Meanwhile, Subhas Chandra Bose was elected Congress president, and between February and July 1938 there were negotiations between Gandhi and Jinnah to settle the communal problem. However, these proved abortive, and ended in failure that July. January 1939 saw Bose re-elected as Congress president, defeating Mahatma Gandhi's candidate, Pattabhi Sitarammaya. In the wake of an internal crisis in the Congress though, Bose later resigned the presidentship and Rajendra Prasad took over as the new president of the Congress in March.

By this time, drawing inspiration from the Indian National Congress and its leadership, several bodies known variously as Praja Mandals, Praja Parishads and Lok Parishads etc. were being formed in different states of Rajputana. The call for overt support to the people of the Indian states had been made before the Congress leadership as early as the 1919 Amritsar and 1920 Nagpur sessions of the Indian National Congress. However, the counter-argument had been that the problems of the princely states were different from that of British India. It was only with the Haripura session in February 1938 that the Congress declared that it would henceforth support organisations (like the AISPC) working towards political, social and economic freedom of the people of the princely states of India, and support calls for 'responsible governments' in the Indian States. It was also announced that Congress workers were free to help popular movements in the Indian states in their individual capacities too, if they so desired. However, the Congress leadership also advised the people to manage their own movements and not to depend solely on external intervention by the Congress. The 1939 Tripuri session further committed the Congress towards supporting peoples' movements in the princely states.

The Haripura and Tripuri Congress sessions gave an impetus to political movements in various princely states. For Rajputana, this led to abortive as well as successful attempts at establishing popular organisations over the next few years. These included the Mewar Praja Mandal established at Udaipur (April 1938), Marwar Praja Mandal (1934), Marwar Lok Parishad (1938), the Alwar and Jaipur Rajya Praja Mandals, and Bundi's Praja Mandal (1938), the Sirohi Praja Mandal (1939), the Kota Rajya Praja Mandal, Bharatpur's Praja Mandal and Rajya Praja Parishad, Jaisalmer's Rajya Praja Mandal (1945), and the other Praja Mandals at Dungarpur, Banswara, Shahpura. Some of these were short-lived, or not given recognition, or were actively suppressed, only to re-emerge subsequently with modified names and objectives³⁵.

The various Praja Mandal organisations functioned as individual entities, albeit with a common goal, in their respective Rajputana states. They carried out works of social upliftment along with political activities in the face of considerable repression by the various state administrations of princely Rajputana, and were occasionally banned, or found their leaders

exiled. The Praja Mandals took their lead from Congress activities in British India, with the AISPC providing general guidance³⁶.

Around the same time, the Viceroy and Governor General, Lord Linlithgow, made it clear to the princely states that reforms in most of the states were overdue, and indicated a possible limitation on the size of privy purses if the situation was not remedied. On the international front, in the interim, war-clouds had been gathering through the late 1930's over Europe. On 1 September 1939, Nazi Germany, already 'united' with Austria and parts of Czechoslovakia, invaded Poland. Two days later, on 3 September, Britain declared war on Germany. In India, Viceroy Linlithgow announced that India too was now at war with Germany. And, as the Second World War went on to involve more and more countries, Viceroy Linlithgow suspended the move towards the establishment of a federation in India, stating that there was 'no choice' but to suspend the work concerning federation for the time-being.

Indian rulers, by and large, joined the war-effort whole-heartedly. In keeping with the spirit (and terms) of their treaties with the British, assistance in the form of troops, material and co-operation was extended to the Allies against the Axis powers. Several states joined the scheme known as the 'Indian States' Forces Scheme' that came into being in 1939. This was voluntary in character and was based on the understanding that the rulers would place a part of their armed forces at the disposal of the British Indian government in times of emergency. In January 1940, the princes offered 'all possible assistance in the prosecution of the war effort'. On his part, the Viceroy assured the princes that in dealing with the people of British India, the British Government would make no commitments on behalf of the Indian states without consulting the princes, and that all the existing treaty rights and obligations of the Indian states would be honoured.

Rajputana's soldiers were to play a significant part in the War, which would continue till 1945, just as had been the case previously, during the 'Great War' (the First World War) of 1914-1919. The 1st Battalion of the Jaipur Infantry and the Jaipur Pony Company, which were part of the Field Service Units of Jaipur State, were deployed outside the state. In 1940-41,

the Sawai Man Guards of General Service Units of Jaipur state proceeded to Quetta for training and in May 1941 went overseas. Meanwhile, the Jaipur Training Battalion was raised in 1940 to provide trained personnel and reinforcements to the 1st Battalion of Jaipur Infantry and Sawai Man Guards serving overseas. In a like manner, Bikaner state offered troops and raised fresh units. The 49th Bikaner General Purposes Transport Company and the Royal Indian Army Service Corps were raised in August 1940 and were deployed on active service, while a training battalion was raised as a maintenance unit for the famed Ganga Risala and Sadul Light Infantry. Both the latter saw active service.

However, despite overall sympathy in India, including within the Congress, for the fight against fascism, the Congress reacted strongly to the way Linlithgow had arbitrarily committed India to the war without consulting the Indian people. The Congress Working Committee's War Resolution of 14 September, while strongly condemning Nazi atrocities, declined to commit India to an imperialist war. It called upon the British government to declare its war aims, and urged immediate arrangements for the transfer of the rights of popular self-determinism and democracy to India. On 10 October the AICC asked for the declaration of India as an independent nation.

Instead, the Viceroy, having consulted representatives of various groups, made a statement on 18 October that the Government continued to aim at dominion status for India, adding that while it was not possible to transfer any substantial power to Indians immediately, the Government would consult all sections of Indian opinion for a modification of the Act of 1935 once the war had ended. Finding the Viceroy's statement unsatisfactory, on 22 October the Congress Working Committee called upon Congress ministries in the provinces to resign from office. Soon after, the Congress ministries resigned. On its part, the Government of India promulgated Section 93 of the Act empowering the Governor to assume all powers exercisable by any provincial body (with the exception of the High Courts), in the provinces where the ministries had resigned.

Meanwhile, the Standing Committee of the Chamber of Princes met with Linlithgow to discuss the implication of his announcement of 18

October. The princes demanded a categorical assurance from the British Government that no commitment affecting their rights, interests and privileges would be made without their consent. Lord Linlithgow assured the Committee that the British Government would honour all its treaty obligations.

Over the ensuing months, while the war-situation grew bleaker, on the one hand, the political crisis in India seemed to deepen. On 22 December 1939, the Muslim League observed a 'Deliverance Day', to mark 'deliverance' from Congress governance. This did nothing to ease the tension. Jinnah had already been propagating the 'two-nation theory', and with the widening of the inter-community cleavage, the possibilities of a communal settlement receded still further. Early in 1940, the Congress, at its annual session, re-iterated the demand for complete independence and a Constituent Assembly. Meanwhile, at Lahore, the Muslim League voiced its demand for a separate state for the Muslims of India through its 'Pakistan Resolution' on 23 March 1940³⁷. The Hindu Mahasabha condemned the 'Pakistan' scheme in May.

Some months later, responding to the general situation, including the fall of France, in July 1940 the Congress offered co-operation in defence, on condition that the British Government acknowledged India's independence to be its goal, and set up a Provisional National Government at the Centre. The Government's reply came through the Viceroy's August 8 offer, which fell far short of the expectations of both the Congress and the Muslim League. The Congress and League, separately, rejected the August Offer on the 15 and 28 of September, respectively. The Congress' rejection of the August Offer was followed, that October, by the decision to begin 'individual Satyagraha'. From October 1940, the Congress began its individual-based Civil Disobedience movement. (The individual satyagrahas had some impact in the states of Rajputana too). In British India, the government apparatus swung into action; arresting leaders and followers by the scores, including Jawaharlal Nehru.

As the war continued, so did the political stalemate in British India. Many tried to seek a way out of the impasse³⁸. Having failed to bring Gandhi and Jinnah together, Sapru convened and presided over a 'Non-

Party' Conference (the first of several such conferences that were to be held over the next four years) at Bombay on 13 and 14 March 1941. There were immediate as well as long-term results of the Bombay conference and its proposals attracted much attention, and some degree of individual support, in the British House of Commons too. In India, Gandhi, by *not* speaking out against it, seemed to lend his tacit approval to the proposals. Meanwhile, some of the Muslim leaders (among them Liaquat Ali Khan of U.P.), especially from the Muslim-majority provinces of Bengal and the Punjab, indicated that they were not wholly sympathetic with certain of Jinnah's more uncompromising demands. Newspapers discussed the proposals too.

On 2 April 1941, Sapru was invited to meet with the Viceroy of India, and thereafter a lengthy meeting took place between Linlithgow and Sapru on 7 April at Delhi. Sapru pressed the Viceroy to make an unequivocal declaration ruling out Pakistan and asked him to form a National Government, which would remain responsible to the Crown for the duration of the war. However, within a fortnight of Sapru's meeting with Linlithgow, he was informed that Amery, the Secretary of State for India, saw difficulties 'in the degree of advance represented by the changes advocated by you'. On 22 April, Amery clarified his government's position on the Bombay proposals to Parliament, stating that the scheme was not practicable during the war.

Amery's April 1941 speech not only widened the breach between the Congress and the League: it also enabled Jinnah to consolidate his position in India, and though Sikandar Hyat Khan and Fuzlul Huq, the premiers of the Muslim majority provinces of Bengal and the Punjab, were unhappy with Jinnah, both were ignored in London and by the Viceroy. Later in 1941, joint consultations between President Roosevelt of the U.S.A. and Prime Minister Churchill of Great Britain led to the signing by them of the 'Atlantic Charter'³⁹. The Declaration and its implications raised hopes in India. However, on 9 September 1941, Churchill told Parliament that the Joint Atlantic Declaration did not affect various statements of policy about the constitutional developments in India. Furthermore, the Prime Minister harked back to the 1940 August offer made to India by the Viceroy — an offer which had already been rejected by both the major political organisations of India.

The Standing Committee of the Non-Party Conference reacted sharply against Churchill's statement excluding India from the scope of the Atlantic Charter, and at its Allahabad meeting of 1 and 2 November Sapru issued a strong statement. The Allahabad meeting called for a position of perfect equality for India after the war, while for the duration of the war India's government should approximate that of the other dominions as far as possible. While the Government was asked to release political prisoners, the Allahabad meeting also urged the Congress to withdraw its policy of individual satyagraha and boycott of parliamentary institutions. Soon afterwards, some Congress prisoners, including Nehru and Maulana Azad, were released. (The British prime minister later telegraphed his disapproval over the step to Viceroy Linlithgow). There was also some talk by now of the Congress going back into office again.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941, followed by their rapid expanse through much of Southeast Asia, galvanized Sapru into further action. In the face of obvious danger to India, while the Congress and Muslim League hesitated in making any positive move, Sapru took the initiative. Following discussions with Sultan Ahmed and Raghavendra Rao (then members of the Viceroy's Executive Council), Sapru drafted a telegram to the British prime minister, obtained the signatures of his Bombay Non-Party Conference colleagues and other associates, and sent off a long telegram to Churchill (then in the USA) on January 2 1942.

Prime Minister Churchill was unmoved by what he termed as 'untimely proposals about Indian self-government'⁴⁰, and there was no immediate reply to the telegram. However, as Sapru had sent copies of the text to the press, it was widely reported in British and Indian newspapers. "Soon, in *The Times*, the *Manchester Guardian*, and elsewhere leader writers were making it plain that in their view Sapru should be listened to by the Government"⁴¹. President Roosevelt of the USA also raised the issue with Churchill at one of their meetings. Though at the time Churchill "rounded on him with all the vehemence of an unrepentant die-hard"⁴¹, the issue was never fully allowed to die down. There was considerable activity in the British Parliament, between the Government of India and London, and at Whitehall, as well as in the trans-Atlantic context, as Churchill

explained his Cabinet's view-point to President Roosevelt of the USA⁴³. He was also constrained to telegraph extracts from various representations and notes received from the Government of India, as well as from Jinnah as president of the Muslim league, from Feroz Khan Noon (then a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council), and others, to the American President in this regard.

Churchill soon decided that British Government representatives should go out to India and negotiate a settlement. On 6 March, the *Manchester Guardian* reported that the Prime Minister's statement 'in reply to the Sapru overtures' would be made shortly. On March 7 Rangoon fell to Japanese hands, and the external threat to India became more acute. And on 11 March Churchill informed the House of Commons that the Government stood by its August 1940 promise of dominion status for India after the War, and that Sir Stafford Cripps, the leader of the House of Commons, had agreed to lead a Mission to India.

The Cripps Mission arrived soon afterwards, and after holding talks with various Indian leaders regarding the future of the country, published its proposals on 30 March 1942. The proposals marked an advance upon the August offer, but were eventually rejected by both the Congress and Muslim League. The League rejection was based on the grounds that though its demand for Pakistan had been conceded in principle, it had not been met in the manner the League had wanted. For the Congress, the reasons included the fact that the draft declaration conceded in principle the League's demand for the creation of more than one union, as also the right of non-accession to reluctant provinces and states. Yet another grey area for the Congress concerned the character of the Interim Government, and the powers of an Indian Defence Minister. Soon options ran out and no solution was in the offing. On 11 April 1942, in the face of continued rejection, the 'Cripps Offer' was withdrawn!

Following the departure of the Cripps Mission, the All India Congress Committee met at Allahabad (29 April to 2 May) and passed a significant resolution. This called for the withdrawal of British rule from India. The committee further decided on a campaign of mass civil disobedience if the demand was not conceded. Meanwhile, C. Rajagopalachari's attempt to

solve the impasse through his 'Rajagopalachari Formula' (which conceded Pakistan to the Muslim League in principle), had gained the endorsement of the Madras legislature on 23 April 1942, but the Congress rejected Rajagopalachari's Madras Resolution in May. On 10 May, Mahatma Gandhi urged Britain to 'leave India to God'.

The Muslim League, Hindu Mahasabha, Communists and Liberals dissented from the Congress appeal for mass civil disobedience. However, when the Congress Working Committee met subsequently at Wardha on 6 July, a resolution was passed regarding the launch of civil disobedience. The Wardha Resolution was endorsed and confirmed by the All-India Congress Committee at a significant meeting at Bombay on 7 August 1942. The die had been cast for the 'Quit India' movement.

The resolution to commence the Quit India movement was followed by the arrests of Mahatma Gandhi, the Congress Working Committee members, and many other Congress leaders and workers on 9 August. Though the Indian National Congress was declared an unlawful organisation by the Government of India, the ensuing days and months saw the spread of the Quit India movement on a popular basis across much of the country.

The impact of the Quit India movement was felt to some degree even in the states of Rajputana — with meetings, processions and other activities organised by local groups, in particular by the various praja mandals and parishads etc. in existence in Rajputana by that date. These organisations lent their full support to the Quit India movement in their respective states, launched Civil Disobedience and individual satyagraha movements, pressurised the rulers of their states to break ties with the British Government, and enhanced their demand for responsible government (as is noted further in this chapter).

The year 1943 found most of the Congress leadership and thousands of followers in prison. On 10 February, the Mahatma began another of his historic fasts. The fast would continue for twenty-one days until 3 March. Three of the Indian members of the Viceroy's Executive Council resigned because of differences with the Government over the action to be taken

regarding Gandhi's fast. Meanwhile, on 19 February an All-Parties Conference — attended by around three hundred representatives from different organisations and communities, with the marked absence of the Muslim League, was inaugurated at Delhi by Rajaji (C. Rajagopalachari). It called upon the Government of India to release Gandhi immediately, and a communiqué was cabled to Churchill.

That March, C. Rajagopalachari's 'Formula' was approved by Gandhi. Meanwhile, the Muslim League gained ascendancy in Muslim-majority provinces during March-April. By now, the 'Non-Party Conference' (of which Sapru was the convenor) had become a powerful forum that regularly approached the Government, issued statements and expounded opinions to the press and public time and time again. However, the hoped for results did not materialise.

The situation appeared gloomy on practically all fronts, including the seemingly unending World War, and the severe famine that devastated Bengal — particularly between August and November 1943. Meanwhile, in October, Lord Wavell replaced Linlithgow as Viceroy of India. The same month, from his base at Singapore, Subhas Chandra Bose announced the formation of a Provisional Government of Free India and the raising of the *Azad Hind Fauj*, or the Indian National Army.

The year 1944 opened to a continuation of the political stalemate, with Gandhi and the majority of Congress leadership still in jail, the Government determined to yield nothing beyond what had been offered in the Cripps proposals of 1942, and the League's increasingly vociferous demand for a separate nation. A solution still seemed far from sight. In the case of the Indian states, there was a protest in the Chamber of Princes when the Viceroy refused to entertain a resolution seeking a fresh assurance that the Indian states would not be transferred to a third party or other authority without the consent of the states concerned. Finally, Wavell yielded and provided the assurance. On another front, the Lucknow Non-party Conference called for the release of Gandhi and other Congress leaders in April 1944, and suggested the convening of a National Conference.

Mahatma Gandhi's release from prison came on 6 May 1944. Thereafter, he initiated fresh efforts towards a settlement⁴⁴. Gandhi also approached Jinnah for a joint resolution of the communal issue. Earlier that year, on 8 April, the 'Rajagopalachari Formula' (or 'C.R. Formula') had been communicated to the *Quaid-i-Azam*⁴⁵ Jinnah. The formula centred on the idea of a plebiscite in the Muslim majority districts in the north-western and eastern parts of India to discover whether they wished to be part of Hindustan or to become part of a separate sovereign Muslim state. It was seen as a possible basis from which to start the Gandhi-Jinnah talks. The Gandhi-Jinnah talks began on 9 September and lasted until 27 September 1944. In the end, the talks ended in failure, with Jinnah rejecting the C.R. Formula and insisting on adhering to the 'two-nation theory'. The failure of the talks resulted in a continuation of the political stalemate in the country on the one hand, and a concentrated campaign by the Muslim League towards achieving Pakistan on the other.

The Standing Committee of the Non-Party Conference again tried to take a hand in matters, and under Sapru's leadership met at Delhi on 18-19 November 1944, to form a Committee for Constitution Formulations ('Sapru Committee')⁴⁶. While this 'Sapru Committee' worked on its Constitutional Proposals Report, the war had begun to turn in favour of the Allies. By the first quarter of 1945, the question of Britain's post-war relationship with India became urgent once more for the British Government and Parliament, given that the majority of Congress leaders were still in jail, and the Muslim League had become increasingly intransigent over the question of Pakistan. In March 1945, the Viceroy went to England for consultations, where the Sapru Committee's interim recommendations⁴⁷ were telegraphed out to him. (The recommendations were issued to the press in April). However, subsequent proposals and schemes introduced by Britain's Coalition Government (and later Labour Government), took only partial note of the Sapru Committee Report.

In June a White Paper was presented to Parliament by the British Government. On June 14 1945, the Viceroy announced the government's proposals for advancing India towards self-government, and the holding of

a conference at Simla with leaders from the main political parties. The very next day saw the release of imprisoned Congress leaders.

The Simla Conference met from 25 June to 14 July. Great hopes were pinned on the success of this conference, which provided the first opportunity of face-to-face talks in a long while between the Viceroy, and Congress and Muslim League representatives. Wavell and the Government of India seemed earnest to achieve an understanding. The Congress was suspicious of British intentions, though willing to be convinced to the contrary, and was mainly responsive to the Viceroy's scheme. However, the conference ended finally in failure over the question of the composition of the Viceroy's new Executive Council, with Jinnah insisting that only the Muslim League — being the sole representative body of the Muslims — should select all the Muslim members of the new proposed Executive Council. Though the conference failed to break the political deadlock, two significant events followed close upon its heels, which enabled a fresh initiative to be made by the British Government. One was the change of government in England, with the Labour Party replacing the Conservatives on July 26 1945, and the other was the end of the long-drawn out Second World War, following the surrender of Japan on 15 August 1945.

Labour's assumption of power in Whitehall raised hopes of an early transfer of power in India from British to Indian hands. The Viceroy was called to England for consultations with the new Government. On his return to India, Wavell announced on 19 September that the British Government was still working in the spirit of the Cripps offer and intended to call together a constitution-making body. He also announced that the long overdue elections to the Central and Provincial Legislatures would be held that winter, after which the elected representatives would be consulted by him regarding the acceptability or otherwise of the Cripps proposals. He would take steps for the formation of a Constituent Assembly too, as well as a new Executive Council. Prime Minister Attlee made a simultaneous broadcast from London. Thereafter, the Indian National Army (INA) trial, which began at the Delhi Red Fort in November, and the Central Legislative Assembly election results, that came in December 1945, also remained centrestage for most people in India.

While events were moving fast in British India and Britain, within Rajputana too the various Praja Mandals and Praja Parishads were leading the call for 'responsible' governments under the 'aegis' of their respective rulers. Several of the local chiefs of various states of the Rajputana Agency too had a role in the changing political scenario, and the move towards representative government⁴⁸. As such, by the 1940s, states like Jaipur, Marwar, Kishangarh etc. set up advisory boards for constitutional reforms, while others like Bikaner, Jaipur, Mewar etc. also already had legislative assemblies, albeit with limited powers given to the members.

The various constitutional reforms introduced by the different states of Rajputana were, however, somewhat short of the expectations of the political organisations working in these states, and the legislative bodies (where established) were more in the nature of advisory bodies, without real power. Simultaneously, the Indian National Congress was supporting demand for 'responsible government' in Rajputana and other Indian states, and its leaders were, in their speeches, urging the rulers of the princely states to agree to the popular demands for more representation.

Thus, the seventh session of the All-India States' People's Conference, held at Udaipur during December 1945 to January 1946 under the presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru, reiterated its long-held demand for the establishment of 'responsible government' based on representative institutions in the states — including the states of Rajputana. Nehru's speech at Udaipur also indicated his party's perspective on "...the vast majority of Princely States (numbering over 550) which cannot possibly form economic units". These, he held, ought to unite with their neighbouring provinces of British India (controlled directly by the Government of India) and not with other existing Indian Princely States, as had recently been done in Western India.

Nehru did not deem it desirable that a number of small states became grouped together to form a larger state unit, for without "...a history or tradition or unity about this", it would prove an artificial joining together "...of backward areas with no leaven to pull them up". In this context, the 1946 'Udaipur Resolution' of the AISPC stated that for efficient administration and economic welfare, only states or groups of states with a

minimum population of fifty lakh and revenue of rupees three crore and more, should be given the status of an independent unit in an independent and federal India

Meanwhile, in January 1946, the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes announced, on behalf of all the Indian states, that appropriate constitutions, in which the sovereign powers of the ruler could be exercised through regular constitutional channels, without affecting the continuance of the reigning dynasty and the integrity of each state would soon be established. These constitutions would provide for popular institutions with elected majorities to ensure close and effective association of the people with the governance of the states. The same month a British Parliamentary delegation visited India.

Not long afterwards, as a result of other simultaneous pressures and causes⁴⁹, on 19 February the British Government announced the forthcoming visit to India of a 'Cabinet Mission'. The Cabinet Mission, made up of Lord Pethick-Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps and A.V. Alexander, arrived in India on 24 March 1946, to hold discussions and break the deadlock between the British and the Indians on the one hand, and the Congress and the Muslim League on the other. The Princes too made their opinions known⁵⁰. Later, a conference was held at Simla between the Cabinet Mission and several Indian leaders (representing certain parties and special interest groups), from 5 to 12 May. On 16 May, the Cabinet Mission presented its constitutional plan. The Cabinet Mission Plan aimed at preserving the basic unity of India in a general sense, while ruling out the creation of a separate Pakistan as conceived by Jinnah, though partially conceding the Muslim League's demand for a separate state through a 'grouping system'.

Meanwhile, negotiations were also on with the Chamber of Princes. Karni Singh of Bikaner (who attended or was fully briefed about various meetings) noted: "After discussion and correspondence with the Chamber of Princes and its representatives, the Cabinet Mission issued a memorandum dated 12 May 1946 wherein it said that the Chamber of Princes had confirmed that the Indian States fully shared the country's desire for the immediate attainment by India of her full stature... And in the

Cabinet Mission's plan announced on 16 May 1946 the proposals, so far as they concerned the Indian States, were that there should be a Union of India comprising both British India and the Indian states which should deal with foreign affairs, defence and communications and that the states should retain all subjects and powers other than those ceded to the Union... The States unanimously accepted the plan but not without internal difficulties"⁵¹.

On 22 May 1946, the Cabinet Mission published a 'Memorandum on States' Treaties and Paramountcy', which stated that "when a new fully self-governing or independent government or governments come into being in British India, His Majesty's influence with these governments would not be such as to enable them to carry out the obligations of paramountcy; nor did they contemplate the retention of British troops in India for that purpose. Thus, as a logical sequence and in view of the desire expressed to them on behalf of the States, His Majesty's Government would cease to exercise the powers of paramountcy". Furthermore, the Memorandum held that the 'void would have to be filled, either by the state entering into a federal relationship with the successor government or governments in British India or failing this, entering into particular political arrangements with it or them' (i.e. successor government, or governments).

In effect, this meant that the relationship between the British Crown and the princely states would no longer be in force, and, as paramountcy could neither be retained by the British nor transferred to the new government, the rights and powers surrendered by the individual Indian states to the 'paramount power' as per the nineteenth century treaties, would return to the states. Since, with the transfer of power in British India, political arrangements between the states and the Crown would be brought to an end (just as would be the case between British India and the Crown), the states would need to enter into fresh relationships with the 'successor government or governments' that took office in British India. The rulers of the Indian states were urged to send their representatives to the constitution-making body (the Constituent Assembly) that was to be set up.

The Chamber of Princes continued to meet to take decisions and made its position known. Through a statement issued on 10 June 1946, the

Standing Committee of the Chamber of Princes agreed that the Cabinet plan offered a fair basis for negotiations both as to the representation of the states in the Constituent Assembly and as to their ultimate position in the union. It also announced the setting-up of a States Negotiation Committee for the purpose.

On its part, at its Delhi session of June 1946, the All India States' Peoples' Conference called upon its 'Regional Councils' to recommend schemes for suitable future units formed by unions of various princely Indian states, keeping in view their respective regional and cultural aspects, and issues like geographical contiguity. (The same year — 1946, Rajputana's various state peoples' movements and committees were merged together into the 'Rajputana Prantiya Sabha'. This functioned as a provincial unit of the AISPC, and provided organisational support for the continuation of 'popular movements' towards 'responsible government' in the different states of Rajputana. In 1948 the AISPC itself was to merge with the Indian National Congress).

Meanwhile, the announcement of the Cabinet Mission Plan was followed by protracted discussions. It was eventually accepted (albeit with some reservations) by the Muslim League on 6 June. Shortly afterwards, on 16 June, the Cabinet Mission and the Viceroy presented plans for an 'Interim Government'⁵². The composition of the fourteen member Interim Government became the next vital issue. Even though the Congress was opposed, in principle, to the Muslim League getting near parity with the Congress, it was willing to accept the offer provided it could nominate a Congress Muslim on its quota. This Jinnah would not agree to, on the basis that the League alone represented all the Muslims! The Congress seemed set to reject both the long-term Cabinet Mission constitutional plan and the interim government one.

On 25 June the Congress accepted the Cabinet Mission's constitutional plan, while rejecting its interim government plan. The Mission now announced that the 16 June scheme with its specific composition of the interim government was being dropped, but a fresh start would be made to form a coalition government with members of both the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League. Since both these major

parties had accepted the Mission's constitutional plan, it was hoped that they would go ahead with their preparations for elections to the Constituent Assembly. However, in July the Muslim League retracted its acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Plan, and on 28 July Jinnah gave a call for a 'Direct Action Day' against the Government and the Congress on August 16.

The formation of an Interim Government now appeared more necessary than before. On 6 August, the Viceroy invited the Congress to form the government. Two days later, the Congress Working Committee accepted the offer. Meanwhile, the Muslim League had adhered to its plan of Direct Action on 16 August. The result was serious rioting and communal killings. Retaliation came swiftly. Several parts of India, notably Calcutta and much of Bengal, Bihar, and parts of Punjab, erupted into unprecedented communal violence. Following the orgy of madness, on 24 August the Viceroy announced the names of the Congress nominees for the 'Interim Government', and on 2 September the new Interim Government took office, without Muslim League participation.

On 16 September, Wavell approached Jinnah to convince him towards the League joining the Interim Government. On 25 October nominees of the Muslim League joined the Interim Government. However, they seem to have joined the Interim Government "with a determination to wreck the Interim Government from within, destroy the Cabinet Mission plan, and make the partition of India inevitable"⁵³. Jinnah was now determined on obtaining Pakistan. In a fresh attempt at an agreement between the Muslim League and the Congress, the British prime minister, Clement Attlee, summoned party leaders, including Nehru and Jinnah, to London for a conference in early December 1946, but an agreement could not be reached.

On 9 December, the Constituent Assembly of India met for the first time. The League did not participate, but some of the princely Indian states had decided to send their representatives to the Constituent Assembly. Among the first to opt in favour of joining the Constituent Assembly had been Baroda, followed by Bikaner. Soon Udaipur, Gwalior, Patiala, Jodhpur, and Jaipur followed their lead. (In the interim, a meeting of the ruling princes of several states of Rajputana, and some from the Central India area, presided over by the Maharana of Udaipur, had been convened

in November 1946. They set up a committee of their prime ministers/senior ministers to examine the modalities and possibilities of these states joining proposed future unions — like a ‘Rajasthan Union’, and other connected matters)⁵⁴.

The countdown towards freedom gained further momentum in February 1947, when Prime Minister Clement Attlee announced, to Parliament, Britain’s intention of quitting India by June 1948, and transferring power to a responsible Indian government. That March, Lord Mountbatten replaced Wavell as the new Governor General and Viceroy of India.

With regard to the future status of the princely Indian states, Mountbatten’s instructions from Prime Minister Attlee centred on helping the Princes in reaching a ‘fair and just arrangement’ with the leaders of British India for possible merger. This seemed to suggest that other options like independence or a separate union of princely states as proposed by some of the rulers, or even indicated as a possibility under the 1946 Cabinet Mission plan, were no longer in serious favour by the British Government for official consideration.

The perspective of the British Government with regard to the future of the princely states was one shared by the leaders of British India. For the time being, however, it was not the issue of a possible merger, but rather efforts to ensure a wider participation of the states’ representatives in the new Constituent Assembly of India, that took precedence. However, despite a general ‘wait-and-watch’ atmosphere as far as all manners of issue were concerned, neither the political parties of British India, nor the Chamber of Princes (or indeed, individual rulers of that body), were sitting idle, and all manners of negotiations on diverse fronts became the order of the day.

As far as the Indian states were concerned, the possibilities of various types of mutual mergers and groupings that could come into play in the near-future were already being discussed. For example, the Jam Sahib of Nawanagar proposed a large separate ‘Federation’, to be formed by combining several states from the Rajputana, Malwa, Gujarat-Kathiawar etc. areas. Many brother-princes, including the Udaipur and Jodhpur rulers

were approached for joining this, but the plan fell through. In the case of Rajputana's princely states, a range of possible union options — some entailing states from Central India and the Gujarat etc. areas as well, were seriously debated from about October 1946 right up to the period of the eventual formation of existing Rajasthan in 1949⁵⁵.

It was not just the princes who were considering possible permutations and combinations. Thus, the All India Marwar Federation initially visualized a confederation of the whole of Rajasthan, Malwa, Gwalior, Hissar, Loharu, Rohtak, Nabha, Patiala, Gurgaon, certain districts of Punjab, and Delhi⁵⁶. This demand was re-iterated later at the All India Marwari Federation's sixth session, held at Bombay on 6 April 1947. On its part, the All India States' People's Rajputana Provincial Working Committee session of May 1947 took up issues like the formation of a Rajputana Union and possible participation of Rajputana states in the Constituent Assembly, along with expressing in strong terms its absolute opposition to the Nawab of Bhopal's scheme of a proposed 'Confederation' of the princely states.

Following a prolonged series of discussions and talks, in April 1947, the Congress reluctantly accepted, in principle, that the partitioning of India would take place. However, the Mountbatten Plan was rejected at Simla by Nehru on 10 May. Mountbatten's plan was immediately amended by V.P. Menon of the ICS, and subsequently accepted by Nehru on 11 May 1947. The Viceroy soon left for England for discussions (including of the amended plan), with the British Government in London. He returned on 31 May 1947 with the British Cabinet's approval for the 'Mountbatten-Menon' plan. Following his return, further talks and meetings and discussions between the Government and representatives of various political parties of British India, as well as with the princes, took place. On 2 June, the Viceroy presented the 'Mountbatten-Menon Plan' at Delhi. The plan was formally accepted by the Sikhs, Congress and Muslim League the next day. Meanwhile, in London, the Prime Minister as previously arranged, also announced the plan in the House of Commons.

In July, the Indian Independence Act received Royal Assent. The countdown to Independence now accelerated. Legalities accompanied the

various steps towards independence and partition. For instance, the legislative assemblies of Bengal, the Punjab and Sind formally opted for partition.

Meanwhile, earlier that year, soon after Mountbatten had taken over as the new Governor General and Viceroy of India, the Chamber of Princes had held a series of crucial meetings regarding the future relationship of the Indian states vis-à-vis an independent British India. Karni Singh, later Maharaja of Bikaner, and still later a member of the Indian Parliament from 1952-1977, noted that: — “During the meetings of the Princes Standing Committee held in Bombay in April 1947, the agreements arrived at by the two negotiating committees (the States Negotiating Committee and its counterpart set up by the Constituent Assembly) were taken up for ratification and approved. However, a difference of opinion arose between the Chancellor⁵⁷ and the Maharaja [Sadul Singh of Bikaner] over the time when the States should join the Constituent Assembly. The Chancellor and the majority of the princes were in favour of the States entering the Constituent Assembly at a stage when the Union Constitution was being framed, whereas Maharaja Sadul Singh and his group were in favour of joining immediately. Finding that it was not possible for him to make the princes realise the gravity of the problem, the Maharaja staged his historic walk-out leaving a note for the Chancellor wherein...he stated that his views on the problems then facing the rulers and the country at large were totally different from those of the Chancellor and the majority of the Standing Committee, and neither could he remain silent nor did he wish to speak anymore on his point of view which he had stressed many a time before Their Highnesses”⁵⁸.

“The Maharaja issued an appeal to his brother princes the same day stressing that the only safe policy for the States was to work for the creation of as large a section of India as possible which would safeguard both the States and British India in the vacuum that would be created on the withdrawal of the British and which would maintain peace, order and good government and prevent civil strife...He, therefore, urged that the Princes should rise to the occasion and be hailed as co-architects of India’s Independence and greatness...This historic walk-out by the Maharaja broke ‘Bhopal’s game’ of evolving a third force and the action was not only

acclaimed by all sections of the press but was also eulogized by eminent British Indian leaders⁵⁹.”

Admittedly, with the prospect of the partition of India looming large, if “the States chose to adopt any path other than that of cooperation following Attlee’s announcement of 20 February, 1947 regarding the lapse of paramountcy the dangerous possibility of Balkanisation indeed existed⁶⁰.” Technically, it had been stated by the Crown that the suzerainty of His Majesty the King-Emperor over the Indian States would be deemed lapsed once British India gained independence, and with it all treaties and agreements in force between the Crown and the rulers of the Indian States. As such, ‘all powers, rights authority or jurisdiction exercisable by His Majesty at that date, in or in relation to Indian States, by treaty, grant, usage, sufferance, or otherwise’ would be at an end.

This, in effect, meant that the individual princely states had the option to assert their independent status and entity, rather than join either of the two new proposed dominions of India and Pakistan, which would come into being with the independence of British India. An earlier resolution, passed on 29 January 1947, by the Chamber of Princes had insisted that the states were untrammelled in deciding their own future, but it had long become clear that if a majority of Indian rulers held to that view an impossible situation would be created. And, with the passage of the next few months, it became clear that accession to one or other of the future dominions was the only viable option available to the Indian princes.

In the Rajputana area, a ‘Council of Action’ was formed at a Princes’ Conference held at Udaipur on 25 and 26 June 1947. The conference was called to explore the issue of uniting the Rajputana states into a Rajasthan Union and other related matters. The States considered for such a contemplated Union were Mewar, Bundi, Kotah, Dungarpur, Vijaynagar, Karauli, Kishangarh, Partabgarh (Pratapgarh), Ratlam, Jhalawar, Shahpura, Sitamau, Palanpur, Idar, Banswara, Jaisalmer, Sailana and Danta. (The Praja Parishad’s Jai Narain Vyas objected to this as Sailana and Ratlam etc. were not from the Rajputana Agency area!) The co-ordination of the existing police forces and armies of the different states was also discussed in the context of internal security (and possible riots). So too was the issue of

getting the services of the Crown's police force for the internal security of the contemplated Rajasthan Union. In the context of the last-mentioned matter, the Resident for Rajputana, Lt. Col Burnett, was requested to provide information about the possible strength of such a force. However, the idea of the proposed Rajasthan Union did not develop further at this stage.

Within a short time of this, following the Indian Independence Act receiving royal assent that July, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the minister in charge of the newly created States Department⁶¹ appealed to the Indian rulers on 5 July 1947, to hand over matters regarding defence, foreign affairs and communications to the 'Interim Government', retaining other departments themselves. (Maharaja Sadul Singh of Bikaner was among the Indian rulers who welcomed the motion and urged his brother-princes to support the step. Not just that, when it came to the eventual signing of the Instrument of Accession, Maharaja Sadul Singh of Bikaner took the lead again, and was amongst the first to sign the Instrument).

On 25 July 1947, the Viceroy summoned a full meeting of the Chamber of Princes. He made out a strong case for the States acceding to either of the two dominions — India or Pakistan — in regard to the three subjects of defence, foreign affairs and communications. He assured the princes that this would neither involve financial liability, nor would there be further encroachment on their internal sovereignty. The efforts on the part of some of the princes, led by the Nawab of Bhopal, in forging a 'Third Force' remained unsuccessful, and the princely states soon began to exercise their respective options by signing 'Instruments of Accession'⁶². A 'Standstill Agreement' providing for the continuance, for the time being, of all subsisting agreements and administrative agreements in matters of common concern to the State and the Dominion of India was signed too.

With Independence in sight, the majority of India's princes (with a few exceptions) acceded their states to either the dominion of India or to the new dominion of Pakistan. The decision regarding accession rested entirely with the rulers of the States concerned. It was a decision of consequence for all the princes — and for the people of the states they ruled, even though theoretically the wishes of the 'subjects' were not the deciding factor. The

individual 'Instruments of Accession' signed by the rulers expressly reserved and retained for them sovereignty and continuity of their state governments, as well as control over their internal affairs, while at the same time binding them either to independent India or the newly created Pakistan with respect to the issues of defence, foreign relations and communications. Clause 7 of the standard Instruments of Accession made it clear that the acceding states were not bound to the future constitution of India 'in any way'.

Defence, external affairs and communications were specifically mentioned in the Instrument of Accession as being subjects over which the Dominion legislature could make laws. The subject of defence included the naval, military and air forces of the dominion and any other armed forces raised or maintained by the dominion; and armed forces raised or maintained by an 'Acceding State', which were attached to, or operating with, any of the armed forces of the Dominion. Other ceremonial etc. forces of the Indian States which were not part of the Indian States' Forces Scheme were not included in the scope of 'Defence'. As such, authority over them continued to remain with the concerned state governments, except in case where they were specifically attached to, or operating with, any of the armed forces of the dominion.

By August the Radcliffe Award had demarcated the new boundaries, and August 15 saw British India's independence and partition into the two separate states of India and Pakistan. In India, a Cabinet headed by Jawaharlal Nehru was sworn in, with Lord Mountbatten as the Governor General, while in the newly created state of Pakistan, a Cabinet headed by Liaquat Ali Khan took office, with M.A. Jinnah as Pakistan's first Governor General.

Accompanying Independence came partition-related violence across many parts of South Asia. In the case of the princely states of Rajputana, most areas remained trouble-free, but Bharatpur and Alwar states witnessed wide-scale violence, including mass displacement and killings of Meos⁶³,

The division of India's army between the two new dominions of India and Pakistan also created a problem on both sides of the new international

border. Among the Indian princely states, forty-four states in total maintained forces under the 'Indian Forces Scheme', besides having other armed forces for purposes of internal policing as well as ceremonials. Thus, immediately after Partition, the Government of India requested the various states to place their forces at the new government's disposal, as some units of the Indian Army were either not available for active service, or had been unable to reach their allotted stations for some reason or other.

The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi on 30 January 1948 (for which there were allegations of possible complicity of the ruler of Alwar and his prime minister), was a blow at a time the new nation was making wholehearted efforts to create a new, fair and just society and polity. The princely states of erstwhile Rajputana were drawn into the schemes of the new, independent, India almost immediately. Within a very short time, these states were merged and 'integrated' together, to create the modern-day state of Rajasthan (as is detailed in the next chapter).

POLITICAL AWARENESS IN RAJPUTANA

In the early years of the twentieth century, activists like Bhoop Singh (alias Vijay Singh 'Pathik'), Arjun Lal Sethi, Kesri Singh Barhat, etc. in the Rajputana area carried out activities that challenged the British and their administration. They took their inspiration from revolutionaries like Ras Behari Bose, Sachindra Sanyal, Amir Chand and Awadh Behari. Later, people also came to be drawn to Mahatma Gandhi, and his path of satyagraha — non-violent civil disobedience.

As already noted, Ajmer had become an important centre of political awakening and socio-economic activity towards the final years of the nineteenth century. (In 1888 a delegate from Ajmer-Merwara had participated in the 1888 Allahabad session of the Indian National Congress). In the period leading up to India's independence, the activities based at Ajmer increased on par with those in British India. Not only did the various political workers at Ajmer remain in touch with nationalist programmes and leaders, Ajmer became one of the centres where political exiles and deportees from the Rajputana states converged to carry out their

activities. Since political activities were discouraged in the various princely states of Rajputana, journals, books, newspapers, and pamphlets (occasionally proscribed material) were published at Ajmer, or distributed from here into other parts of Rajputana.

Institutions like 'Sewa Samitis', 'Hitkarini Sabhas', and night schools played their part in rousing public awareness against an exploitative socio-economic system. The main target of the early social movements was mal-administration in *jagir*-held lands. Most rulers and their feudal fief-holders were, however, not open to reforms. They were also slow to realise that socio-political awareness growing in, and reforms introduced into, British India administered areas like Ajmer and the United Provinces (U.P.), would slowly begin to influence portions of 'Princely India' too. Similarly, the appeal of political associations like Calcutta's Land Holder's Society (established in 1837), the British India Association (established in 1851), Bombay Association, Madras Association, etc. transcended geographical boundaries and gradually influenced different parts of the subcontinent.

In 1918, some individuals from Rajputana attended the Delhi session of the Indian National Congress and tried to persuade the Congress to extend its activities to Indian states. However, the Congress was following a some-what "hands-off" policy of 'neutrality' as far as the political grievances of people in the Indian states were concerned.⁶⁴ Thus, the political workers of British-administered Ajmer-Merwara combined with those working in the Indian states of Rajputana and parts of Central India to establish an organisation that could focus on the common needs of the people of various states. Representatives from Jaipur, Udaipur, Bharatpur, Alwar, Rewa, Indore, Narsingharh and Gwalior regions were present at the meeting. The result was the establishment of the Rajputana-Madhya Bharat Sabha in 1918. The main aims of this body were spreading literacy and promoting primary education, bringing the grievances of the people before the rulers, and preventing British intervention in the affairs of the Indian princely states.

The founder-members included Jamnalal Bajaj, Ganesh Shankar 'Vidyarthi' and Govind Das, among others. Bajaj became the president and Vidyarthi the secretary of the organisation. The Rajputana-Madhya Bharat

Sabha took up issues of public interest and supported mass movements all over Rajputana. When the Indian National Congress met at Amritsar for its annual session, the Rajputana-Madhya Bharat Sabha also held its annual meeting there at the same time. A decision was taken to publish a weekly newspaper, named the *Rajasthan Kesari*. The Rajputana-Madhya Bharat Sabha had its third annual meeting at Ajmer, with Bajaj presiding, and its fourth annual meeting in December 1920 at Nagpur, once again co-inciding with the Congress party's annual session, which was being held at Nagpur that year. The Sabha was weakened somewhat in 1920, when various princely states prohibited the Sabha's units from maintaining contacts with linked units outside the states. Also, some of its leaders made British India their field of action.

Following the setting up of the Rajputana-Madhya Bharat Sabha, and in co-operation with it, the Rajputana Seva Sangh was set-up in 1919 at Wardha (Central India), with the stated objectives of alleviating the social and political problems of the subjects of the states of Rajputana, along with the propagation of khadi or home-spun. In 1920 the headquarters of this organisation was shifted from Wardha to Ajmer, and over time branches of this Seva Sangh were established at places like Bundi, Jaipur, Jodhpur, and Kota. Members of this association — among them Vijay Singh Pathik, Ram Narain Chowdhry, Manikya Lal Verma, Shobhalal Gupta, Kunwar Madan Singh, Haribhai Kinkar, Pandit Nathuram and Ladu Ram Joshi, played an important role in providing guidance to the various popular movements in Bijolia, Begun, Bundi and Sirohi. The Rajputana Seva Sangh's weekly newspaper from Ajmer, the *Navin Rajasthan* (launched in 1921), soon became a major political voice for political activities in Rajputana. The name of this newspaper was subsequently altered to *Tarun Rajasthan*, after the Government of Mewar banned the *Navin Rajasthan* in its territory. The *Pratap* newspaper too played a vital role around this time.

In 1928 the Seva Sangh was dissolved in Rajputana, in part due to internal dissensions and, in part, because an All-India organisation had been established at Bombay in December 1927⁶⁵. This organisation was the All-India State People's Conference (popularly abbreviated to AISPC). It stood for advancing the movement towards democracy in the princely Indian

states, ensuring civil liberties for states' subjects, and the establishment of 'responsible governments' in the different states of princely India.

The first meeting of All-India State People's Conference was held in Bombay on 17-18 December 1927, under the presidentship of *Dewan Bahadur* M.Ramchandra Rao. However, in the face of various Acts and Ordinances concerning 'seditious behaviour' in various Rajputana states, the AISPC could not become a strong political force in Rajputana during the first decade of its existence.

The AISPC had an uneasy relationship with the Indian National Congress, despite many leaders of the Congress being actively associated with the AISPC and even its office bearers. In fact, up until about 1920 the attention of the Congress was mainly focussed on activities concerning the British India provinces, rather than in the princely Indian states. After 1920 the Congress displayed some interest over the rights of the people in Indian states, but held it would not unduly interfere in the internal matters of these states, but would support movements that arose locally. Eventually, Gandhi's policy of non-intervention in the internal matters of the Indian states began to be increasingly challenged by men like Subhas Chandra Bose, Acharya Narendra Dev, Yusuf Mehrali, etc. who argued for an active interest in the affairs of the Princely Indian States. This view triumphed following the Haripura session of the Indian National Congress in 1938. Thereafter, workers within the princely states were encouraged to form political organisations in their respective states with the object of establishing 'responsible government' under the aegis of the rulers.

The AISPC was active in Rajputana states but functioned through local units which were named as praja mandals, or lok parishads. Such praja mandals and parishads, etc. were founded in Rajputana in different years. In some cases, like Sirohi and Bikaner, the organisations were set up outside the territorial jurisdiction of the concerned states, in these two instances, at Bombay and Calcutta respectively.

Meanwhile, over time, the activities based at Ajmer, together with various movements in British India towards 'responsible government', inspired the politically aware people in the various states of Rajputana to

seek certain reforms within the states, though these had relatively limited influence on the general populace initially. (One may emphasise here that in the various states, the movements stressed reforms within their existing system, and governance under the aegis of the local rulers, and right up to 15 August 1947 there were no calls for an end to the rule of the Maharajas or Nawabs, or for the replacement of the different rulers of the various states of Rajputana by elected peoples' representatives!)

On their part, the administration and governments of practically every one of Rajputana's princely states frowned on 'seditious' behaviour, including literature pertaining to the national movement in British India, political associations, and other activities regarded as 'disloyal' or treasonable, and indulged in active measures to put down such activities. (Examples of this include the ban imposed by the state of Sirohi on the Union Club at Sirohi town in 1908, which had been set-up by local students inspired by the Swadeshi movement. In a like manner, the state of Marwar banned the popularly established Marwar Hitkarini Sabha during 1917-1919, the Marwar Youth League in 1931, and the Marwar Praja Mandal and Association for Protection of Civil Liberties, both in 1934, since their activities were regarded as seditious).

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, the British too assisted the princely states in putting down 'rebellious' behaviour on occasions. For example, the famous Govindgiri movement, led by Govindgiri Gobpalia⁶⁶ and his Bhil disciple, Punja Dhirji, for the restoration of Bhil Raj in the Banswara area was suppressed at Mangarh in 1913 with the help of a British military force (as noted elsewhere). Subsequently, the British encouraged the princely states of Rajputana to establish certain institutions like representative assemblies in their areas.

PEASANT AND POPULAR MOVEMENTS AND UPRISINGS

Besides socio-political movements that called for representative government in various princely states along with social reforms etc., and which drew considerable inspiration from nationalist movements in British

India, the first half of the twentieth century also witnessed agrarian-related movements in the states of Rajputana⁶⁷. Many of the latter centred on respite from high revenue taxation by certain states, and/or exploitation by large land-holders (*jagirdars*, *thakurs*, and *zamindars*). The diverse range of interactions between state and cultivators (*kisans*); or land-holders and cultivators; or state, land-holders and cultivators, in various states influenced the nature (and need) of the agro-economic movements in different parts of Rajputana.

Amongst the varied factors that contributed to the growth of people's movement in Rajasthan, could be listed the growing agrarian unrest, for which several things were responsible. The hierarchic social structure was beginning to be challenged. Though the actual ruler (Maharaja, Maharana, Maharao or Maharawal), the *annadata* of the masses, continued to be held in high esteem in the various princely states, the local feudal land-lords and fief-holders (*jagirdars* and *zamindars*), hierarchically a rung below the rulers, were disliked for imposing heavy cesses and taxes. There was concomitant resentment, as political consciousness was roused in the rural areas at the traditional, exploitative, feudal economic system, under which the *jagirdars* and *zamindars* exploited the agricultural classes, especially the peasants.

In this context, it may also be relevant to point out that the local landlords themselves were often under pressure from their respective state authorities to yield up higher revenues, in order to help relieve near-empty state treasuries! Though the incessant demands of the Marathas and Pindaris in the late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries, which had been a burden on states, fief-holders and peasants alike, was a thing of the past in the wake of treaties with the East India Company, financial recovery had taken time. In addition, various state treasuries were often emptied faster than the influx of legitimate revenues, generally due to mismanagement by corrupt courtiers and officials. Official payments made to the British, or in carrying out schemes for modernisation, also strained the treasuries of the various Rajputana states.

As far as the landlords were concerned, the amount due to the state depended on the category of land-holding held and the traditional rights

allotted to different *jagirdars* and *thakurs* in the various Rajputana states. Some landholders had the right to raise and collect taxes and cesses in their fief-holdings; others carried out the task on behalf of their ruler. To meet their own revenue-related obligations to the state, these landholders, in turn, placed the pressure of extra cesses and taxes on their local farmers, tenant-tillers, and peasants.

Besides a range of traditional taxes, a number of local levies were also collected, for which the 'sanction' often stemmed from 'customary practice'. The taking of *begaar* (forced labour) and the collection of *laag-baag* (forced exactions) had been resented by the peasantry during earlier periods too, but the spread of socio-political awareness served as an extra impetus for challenging these institutions. The British tended to ignore the growing unrest against such cesses. Meanwhile, they also enhanced their hold over various state administrations, through acting as arbitrators of disputes between the rulers and the feudal fief-holders.

Another factor that undoubtedly contributed to the increasing poverty of the ordinary populace in latter part of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century was the slow recovery from a series of famines and drought-years that had affected many areas of Rajputana. The spell of droughts and famines had culminated in the Great Famine of 1899-1900, which had plagued practically all of Rajputana (besides parts of northern India). These prolonged droughts and famine-conditions had also meant that the various state authorities and *jagirdars* etc. had less financial reserves than would have been the case in periods of bounty!

Agrarian unrest often became manifest through a series of uprisings in different parts of what now comprises the state of Rajasthan⁶⁸. In some cases, the movements centred around specific groups and communities dependent on agriculture, or around certain marginalised groups and communities — often for historical, geographical or socio-economic reasons. In others, the movements took on a more encompassing role as far as the participation of local communities was concerned.

One of the most significant of these agrarian popular movements began at the close of the nineteenth century in Bijolia *jagir* estate of the

state of Mewar. The peasants here (mostly Jats of the 'Dhakar' sept) had traditional connections with many other areas, including far-off places like Gwalior⁶⁹. This Bijolia Kisan Movement continued for nearly half-a-century as a non-violent agrarian movement. It was to prove one of the longest agrarian movements of modern India.

The origins of the Bijolia Kisan movement in 1897 have been mentioned in the preceding chapter. During the Great Famine of 1899-1900 the Rao of the Bijolia *jagir* (feudal estate) came forward for the construction of a dam, and provided food to affected farmers, which served to quieten matters to a considerable degree. Let us take up the story thereafter. In 1903, the Bijolia chief, Rao Krishan Singh, imposed a new levy called *chanwari* across his *jagir* holdings, which everyone was expected to pay at the marriage of their daughters. The *kisans* decided to suspend the marriage of their daughters until this tax was abolished.

Subsequently, a large delegation of *kisans* (with two hundred girls of marriageable age), met the Rao and beseeched him to withdraw the *chanwari* levy and also reduce the excessively high rates of local land revenue. The Rao turned down their requests. At this, the peasants decided *en masse* that they would not cultivate lands within the Bijolia estate (which would mean no land-revenue from crops to the Bijolia chief). This decision was carried through, with the result that not a single field was ploughed across the entire *Uparmal* tract. The Rao had to give in to the demands of the *kisans*. The *chanwari* tax was abolished and the land revenue demand reduced from being one-half of the produce to two-fifth of the produce in 1904. However, the triumph of the *kisans* was to prove short-lived.

Upon the death of Rao Krishna Singh, his relative Prithvi Singh, who became the new Rao of Bijolia in 1906, withdrew the relaxations provided by his predecessor. Furthermore, as per Mewar's traditions, Prithvi Singh had to present the Maharana of Mewar with a large amount of money for the succession-related ritual of '*talwar-bandi*' (to which reference has been already). To meet the expenses of paying his own succession-tax to Mewar, the new Rao, in his turn, increased his demands on the people living on his *jagir*. He thus levied an impost for the *talwar-bandi* on the peasants, and

increased land revenue demands afresh. The farmers protested, but their representations brought them little relief.

In 1913, nearly 15,000 farmers decided to launch a 'no tax' campaign under the leadership of Fatehkaran Charan, Brahmadeo and Sadhu Sitaram Das. Simultaneously, they decided not to put their hands to their ploughshares across all of the *Uparmal* area. Instead it was decided to farm rented plots of *khalsa* lands in the neighbouring areas of Gwalior, Bundi and Mewar States. In consequence, fields remained untilled across Bijolia, which seriously affected the food availability and the estate's revenues.

(Such mass migrations in protest against local oppression are mentioned in some seventeenth and eighteenth century archival records from different areas of Rajasthan⁷⁰. In this context, M.S. Jain⁷¹ has shown (statistically) that after c. AD 1900 there was a spurt in the percentage of people dependent on agriculture, and a large population turned from other tasks and vocations to become agricultural labourers. As such, a large number of agricultural labourers, willing to work as cheap labour, were available to the land-owning classes to fill any vacuum caused by the migration of their own local peasants!)

In the interim, Rao Prithvi Singh of Bijolia had also died. Since his son and successor, Kesari Singh, was a minor, Mewar State appointed a 'Court of Wards', under an officer called '*Munsrim*', to manage the affairs of the *thikana* of Bijolia. The Maharana now intervened, and land revenue demands on the farmers were reduced and many *laag-baags* either abolished or reduced in amount. However, though the minor Bijolia Rao's mother agreed to the concessions granted by the Maharana of Mewar to the peasants, the Thikana's authorities carried out these decisions more in the breach than in actual practice!

As the Bijolia protests continued, Fatehkaran Charan and Brahmadeo were exiled, and many cultivators were arrested. At this point, the Bijolia farmers gained an additional leader in Vijay Singh 'Pathik'. Pathik, whose original name was Bhoop Singh, was born in a Gujar family of Akhtyarpur-Guthawali village of Bulandshahar district (U.P)⁷². In 1909 Bhoop Singh

spent time at Kishangarh with his brother-in-law (Amar Singh), before moving to Ajmer where he took up a clerical post in the railways — and also learned to make firearms. Then, joining the service of Rao Gopal Singh of Kharwa, as his secretary, Bhoop Singh came into contact with Indian revolutionaries like Rash Behari Ghosh and others.

In 1914 Bhoop Singh, along with the Rao of Kharwa, became implicated in a revolutionary attempt to overthrow British rule. Plans had been laid for a revolutionary movement scheduled to commence on 19 February 1915, but the British authorities learnt of the plans and swooped down in advance upon numerous revolutionaries. Bhoop Singh and Rao Gopal Singh of Kharwa were among those arrested in the Ajmer-Merwara area, and were kept in isolation at Todgarh, from where they eventually escaped. It was at this stage that Bhoop Singh changed his name to Vijay Singh Pathik, in effect, taking on a fresh identity. As ‘Vijay Singh Pathik’, Bhoop Singh reached Mohi via Gurla and stayed with a small fief-holder, Durjan Singh Bhati, who was a sympathiser of the national movement. He next proceeded to Chittor and joined the Vidya Pracharini Sabha at the instance of Rao Pratap Singh of Putholi, a follower of the activist Raja Mahendra Pratap. From here it was but a short step to participation in the Bijolia movement.

In December 1915, Sadhu Sitaram Das and Magan Lal met Pathik at Ochri during the annual session of the Vidya Pracharini Sabha organised at Chittor, and requested him to provide a direction to the Bijolia movement. Pathik accepted the invitation and subsequently went on to successfully take over the leadership of the movement of the farmers of Bijolia and the neighbouring *thikana* of Begun (also in Mewar state). His leadership heralded a new era in the struggle of Mewar’s peasants against the feudal order.

When Vijay Singh Pathik, alias Bhoop Singh, reached Bijolia there was a warrant for his arrest in the Ferozepore Conspiracy case. The Ajmer-Merwara police was also after him as he had escaped from Todgarh. He started a school, organised a ‘Sewa Samiti’, and travelled from village to village at night, holding meetings with Bijolia’s peasantry. He was aided,

among others, by Sadhu Sitaram Das, Jai Singh Dhankar, Prem Chand Bhil, Bhanwarlal Swarnakar, Ghanshyam Joshi, and Manikya Lal Verma.

(Manikya Lal Verma [1897-1969], born in the Bijolia region in a Kayastha family, joined Mewar's State Service at the age of eighteen, but affected by the exploitation of the populace by the feudal system, left his job soon afterwards, to start a small local school at Umaji-ka-Kheda, Shyampura. Coming into contact with Sitaram Das and Vijay Singh Pathik, Verma worked for the Bijolia Movement as well as towards the spread of education amongst the tribals of Dungarpur and other deprived groups).

In 1916, despite a failed monsoon and poor crop-yields, the Bijolia *thikana* authorities demanded the usual revenue, along with money for the 'War Fund'. Under Pathik's guidance, the Uparmal *kisans* refused to pay either, and simultaneously sent innumerable petitions against the revenue demands and cess to Mewar state's *Mahakma Khas*. The matter was brought to the Mewar ruler's notice, but while he was prepared to agree to some of the demands of the farmers, he was discouraged on grounds that it would encourage further demands and set a bad precedent for other areas of Rajputana. The British Resident at Udaipur asked the Bijolia *thikana* authorities to arrest Pathik (still wanted for offences in British India), but the sympathetic *munsrim* official allowed Pathik to make his escape. Pathik went 'underground' and conducted the movement from secret hide-outs and locations, including Umaji-ka-Kheda.

Around this 1916-17 period, Pathik helped establish an Uparmal Panchayat Board popularly known as Kisan Panchayat, with a thirteen member executive, and Manna Patel as *sarpanch*, or head, of the panchayat. This became the main body for the farmers of the Uparmal area. The Board renewed the popular demand for the abolishing of *laag-baag* and *begaar*. It also demanded that the authorities stop collecting 'contributions' towards the War Fund. However, despite several representations, neither the Thikana nor the Maharana responded favourably. The 'Kisan Panchayat' therefore called upon *kisans* to withhold payment of land revenues, *laag-baag* and contribution to the War Fund, and suspend sowing grain and other agricultural tasks across the Uparmal region.

The Thikana authorities took action. In September 1918, Narayan Patel, a farmer of Govindpura, was arrested for his refusal to render *begaar*. The news spread rapidly, and by the following morning two thousand *kisans* collected on the streets of Bijolia demanding his release. This was done, but the authorities next started prosecutions against Verma, Sadhu Sitaram Das and Prem Chand for inciting the farmers against subscribing to the War Fund. Since no witnesses came forward to testify against the accused, the case was dropped. However, fifty-one farmers were arrested for refusing their services in *begaar*, Verma and Sitaram Das were interned, farmers' crops destroyed, and the peasants themselves harassed, assaulted and punished in many ways. The oppression and insecurity that prevailed in the Bijolia *thikana* gained publicity across India, particularly through the pages of the newspaper *Pratap*, published from Kanpur by Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi.

Finally, the Maharana appointed a Commission under Bindulal Bhattacharya. The Commission released Verma and Sadhu as a gesture of goodwill, and recommended relief in land revenue, *laag-baag* etc. to the peasants. Pressure from the Bijolia *thikana* and other *jagirdars*, however, led the Mewar administration to put the Commission's report in cold storage, even though arrested farmers were released. In the face of near-inaction by Mewar state on pleas by the *kisans*, the Thikana felt emboldened about increasing land revenue demands on irrigated land. Greater cess was charged on sugarcane cultivation, and standing crops assessed at high rates.

All this brought Bhils, Kahars and other communities too into the fold of the Kisan Panchayat. The Thikana responded with further repression, including arresting two hundred leading *kisans* of the area. The farmers decided not to cultivate irrigated lands. The Thikana insisted that the *kisans* would be charged land revenue even if they did not plough their fields. The kisan panchayat took up the matter with Mewar state's government. The Mewar State Government ruled that no land revenue could be charged on lands not actually cultivated. While this was a significant victory for the Kisan Panchayat, the other problems remained unresolved.

In 1919 Pathik attended the Congress session of 1919 at Amritsar, where he brought the problems of the *kisans* of Bijolia to the notice of leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Madan Mohan Malaviya and Tilak. Even though the matter was not taken up formally at the session, owing to Congress's policy of non-intervention in the affairs of the princely states, Malaviya brought his influence to bear on the Maharana of Mewar. The Maharana, in turn, appointed a Commission headed by Pandit Ramakant Malaviya, a judge of Mewar's Mahendraraj Sabha, to enquire into the grievances of the Bijolia farmers. On his part, Mahatma Gandhi deputed his secretary, Mahadev Desai, to study the situation at Bijolia. Desai's findings corroborated the reports of injustice being faced by the peasant-farmers. So did the Malaviya Commission's findings, which upheld the cause of the *kisans* and made recommendations that proved unacceptable to the Mewar Government.

The Kisan Panchayat decided to launch a satyagraha. A delegation from the Kisan Panchayat met Mahatma Gandhi at the 1920 Congress session at Nagpur, and obtained his blessings for starting their Satyagraha. While Pathik devoted his energies to working for peoples' movements in Rajputana through the recently established Rajasthan Seva Sangh at Wardha, Manikya Lal Verma took charge of the Bijolia movement, under the guidance of the Rajasthan Seva Sangh. This organisation's headquarters later shifted to Ajmer.

(One may briefly digress here to note that on the advice of Mahatma Gandhi, Pathik, along with Arjun Lal Sethi, Thakur Kesri Singh Barhat and others, established the Rajasthan Seva Sangh in 1919, to instil nationalistic feelings among the people. Under Pathik's editorship, the Rajasthan Seva Sangh's newspaper, the *Rajasthan Kesri*, became a powerful medium. Pathik later set-up and edited the *Navin Rajasthan*, with the objective of raising awareness amongst the people of the princely states of Rajputana. He was also active in the Indian National Congress. His songs and poetry were popularly used during the Bijolia and other movements⁷³).

The Kisan Panchayat launched its civil disobedience movement, encouraging farmers not to pay land revenue and *laag-baag*, nor to provide *begaar* labour to the Bijolia *thikana*. The Panchayat practically became a

parallel government. During 1921 the farmers cultivated their land and then carried off the produce to their homes before the usual crop-sharing *lata-kunta* in defiance of the standing orders of the *thikana*. With income from local land revenues and taxes denied to it, the Bijolia *thikana* faced its own economic problems.

By this time, the Bijolia movement had found an echo amongst the *kisans* of neighbouring areas, particularly in the *thikanas* of Begun, Parsoli, Bhainsarogarh and Amargarh, and the states of Bundi and Sirohi. Active participation in the agrarian movement launched in Begun, resulted in Pathik being arrested and sentenced to five years imprisonment. It seemed to all concerned that it was high time that a solution was found.

On 4 February 1921, the AGG for the Rajputana Agency, Robert Holland, reached Bijolia along with Wilkinson, the Resident for Mewar, and Mewar's *dewan*, Prabhat Chandra Chatterji, and others. Representatives of the Rajasthan Seva Sangh and Kisan Panchayat, as well as those from the Bijolia *thikana* presented their side of the picture before this delegation. Prolonged discussions and deliberations ensued at Bijolia and Ajmer, and finally an agreement was reached on 11 June 1922.

As many as seventy-four *laag-baag* cesses were abolished, as was the practice of *begaar* and, pending fresh land-settlement work, land revenues were reduced by twenty-five per cent. The procedure regarding the mode of paying land revenue too was rationalised, animal grazing problem sorted out, and arrested *kisans* released, with all cases against them dropped. *Thikana* officials involved in perpetrating atrocities against the peasants were dismissed, and medical and educational facilities, on a limited scale, were promised. Besides all this, the right of the Kisan Panchayat to settle civil and criminal disputes was recognised. It was a moment of elation and triumph for the *kisans* of Bijolia. But this proved short-lived.

Pressure from other feudal chiefs and *jagirdars* led the Rao of Bijolia to rescind on the agreement, with his staff proceeding to re-interpret each clause of the agreement in a manner that made a mockery of the settlement reached after so much hard work and effort on all sides. In February 1927, the revised rates of land revenue following land-settlement work were

announced. These were higher on the 'mal' category of land than they had been before. Representations by the Kisan Panchayat led Trench, the Settlement Officer, to visit Bijolia and hear both sides of the story. Some concessions were made by Trench, but the rates of land revenue were not reduced.

As a result, at a meeting of the Kisan Panchayat held in March 1927 (at which Verma and Ram Narain Chowdhry were also present), the *kisans* debated surrendering their fertile *mal* lands to the *Thikana* in protest against the revised rates of land revenue. However, the farmers were advised not to take such a step without consulting Pathik, who was due for release after three and a half years of imprisonment. Pathik was released in April 1927, but he was soon externed from Mewar. Ram Narain Chowdhry was also banned from entering Mewar. Both reached Phusariya, a village in Gwalior state that bordered Mewar, and met with *kisan* representatives here on 18 May 1927. The consensus was for *kisans* to give back their *mal* lands. A collective resignation of the lands in question was given by the *kisans* to the *Thikana* on 20 May, but when the authorities insisted that the resignations had to be individual and not collective, the farmers of forty out of ninety-six villages in Uparmal sent in their individual resignations, surrendering a total of 8,000 *bighas of mal* lands to the Bijolia *thikana*. The *thikana* was unperturbed for it was able to re-allot most of the surrendered lands to other tenants fairly quickly.

The *kisans* had been confident that there would be no takers for the surrendered land and that the *thikana* would have been compelled to come to terms with them on the land revenue issue, but they soon saw that this was not the case. Furthermore, the decision had also divided the *kisans*, with less than half of the *kisans* surrendering land. Meanwhile, the Mewar State Government outlawed the Kisan Panchayat, while the Bijolia *thikana* authorities continued to arrest or punish *kisans* offering satyagraha, and there were incidents of the Settlement Officer ordering firing against agitating villagers at Raita and Tilasman. With the Rajasthan Seva Sangh practically ineffective, Pathik and Chowdhry banned from entering Mewar, and Verma arrested at this point, the farmers were in a quandary.

Verma was released after seven months, and the Kisan Panchayat asked him to take over the local leadership of the movement, as the farmers were now keen on having the surrendered lands restored back to them. Verma's attempts at persuading the *thikana* and Mewar's Government to allow the surrendered lands back to the *kisans* who had originally held them were unsuccessful. Jamnalal Bajaj now intervened. At his suggestion, Pathik — with whom Verma and Chowdhry differed over the role of the Rajasthan Seva Sangh — withdrew from the movement and resigned from the Kisan Panchayat in 1927. Bajaj entrusted Pathik's work to Haribhau Upadhyaya. The Kisan Panchayat ratified the decision and accepted Bajaj and Upadhyaya as advisors and Verma as their local leader.

In April 1929, Upadhyaya met Trench and other Mewar officials, and an agreement was reached regarding the abolition of *laag-baag*, along with the assurance that the Mewar Government would ensure that the *thikana* implemented the agreement of 1922. As regards the surrendered land, it was agreed that land which had not been re-allocated would be returned to the original farmer holders, but where the lands had already been allotted to new tenants, this would not be done. Significantly, the demand for a reduction in the land revenue, which had been the original cause of the agitation, was turned down. As this agreement was not very satisfying for the *kisans* of Bijolia, Upadhyaya raised it again with the authorities, but gained no additional concessions.

In 1930, Upadhyaya was arrested at Ajmer during the course of the 1930 Civil Disobedience movement. On release from prison in early 1931 Upadhyaya resumed his correspondence with the Maharana and Mewar officials concerning the Bijolia movement, but this was unproductive. Thus, the Kisan Panchayat decided to start a satyagraha under Verma's leadership. On 19 April 1931 the Kisan Panchayat warned the Mewar Government and the Bijolia *thikana* that the *kisans* would start 'resuming', or taking over and ploughing, their surrendered lands on the morning of the auspicious day of 'Akshya Tritiya' (which that year corresponded to 21 April of the Gregorian calendar). Mewar State sent a contingent of its forces to the area. About four hundred farmers came forward to plough their surrendered fields. They were forcibly evicted by the State Forces and men from the *thikana* administration. Verma was arrested. The next day several other

farmers were arrested as they resumed ploughing. Intense repression followed.

In May 1931 the kisans decided to postpone their satyagraha, while the authorities considered their demands afresh. The Government of Mewar responded by arresting Shobhalal Gupta, Durga Prasad Choudhary Ladu Ram Joshi, Pyar Chand Bishnoi and Achaleshwar Prasad Sharma, who had come to Bijolia to lend support to the farmers. These men were externed from Bijolia, and Verma and fifteen of the local kisan satyagrahis were fined and sentenced to imprisonment. Mewar further banned the entry of the Bijolia Enquiry Committee, which had been set up by the All-India States People's Conference, into the state.

Accepting the advice of the Maharana Gandhi and Bajaj, the Kisan Panchayat decided to suspend the satyagraha to enable Bajaj to discuss the problems with the Maharana and his ministers. Bajaj's meeting with the Maharana and other officials of the Mewar Government led to the release of Verma and the arrested Kisans, and the establishment of a Court-of-Wards for the *thikana*. The entire situation, however, was far from fully resolved. In June 1932, Verma met Sir Sukh Deo Prasad, Mewar's *musahib ala*, at Udaipur and tried to convince him for an early return of the land to the original tenant-farmers or *khatedars*. However, soon after, Verma was interned in the fort of Kumbhalgarh, and upon his release in November 1933, externed from Mewar.

With Verma's externment the Kisan Panchayat's activities slowed down, while Verma himself put in his energies in the Ajmer-Merwara and Dungarpur regions over the next four years or so in the service of the downtrodden⁷⁴. Returning to Mewar in 1937, Verma travelled through Mewar mobilising support towards establishing a peoples' organisation. As a result, the Mewar Praja Mandal came to be set up in April 1938, but was soon declared unlawful. Verma was again externed, and in an ensuing satyagraha, he was arrested. He was released in January 1940.

In 1941 Verma asked the Mewar prime minister, Sir T. Vijairaghavacharya, to look into the revenue-related problems long-afflicting the peasants of the Bijolia *jagir* area. The prime minister deputed

Mohan Singh Mehta, the revenue minister, to scrutinise matters. Having re-examined the issue thoroughly, and met farmers, *jagir* representatives and others, Mehta ensured that disputed land was restored to its original tenants. Thus, the final stage in the resolution of the long-running movement at Bijolia was completed.

The Bijolia movement provided the impetus to many later agitations (including urban-based ones that stressed the need for constitutional reforms). In April 1921, the farmers of the *pargana* of Rashmi, along with a delegation of farmers from the *thikanas* of Begun, Parsoli (an estate of forty *jagir* villages), Mandesra, and some smaller estates, had met at Matrikundia and collectively called upon the ruler of Mewar to resolve their land-revenue and taxation related pleas. Angry over this temerity on the part of the farmers, the *thikana* officials of Begun, an estate that contained 128 *jagir* villages, took stern measures against the local *kisans* during May-June 1921. The *kisans* were not cowed down, and in October 1921 they collectively refused to pay land-revenue (*lagaan*) and cesses (*laagat*). By the end of the year, the farmers' agitation had spread to the estate of Bhinder.

Holland, the AGG for Rajputana intervened and in 1922 helped bring about an agreement relating to the Begun and other *thikanas* and neighbouring areas⁷⁵. This was the Parsoli Agreement. The agreement saw a reduction in land revenue demands and *laagat* cesses. For instance, land revenue dues in Begun were lowered from two-thirds to half. Other concessions related to grazing areas, standardization of measuring-chains used for land revenue assessment work, and the promise of an imminent land settlement exercise. However, matters were not really resolved as far as the Begun authorities were concerned, and during 1922-23 there was confrontation between the *thikana* authorities and *kisans*, the latter led and encouraged by workers of the Rajasthan Seva Sangh. Pathik sent Ram Narain Chowdhry to Begun in 1923 for an inquiry into reports of atrocities by the *thikana* authorities. Chowdhry addressed a well-attended public meeting. Immediately after his departure, the local police allegedly fired shots at the assembled farmers.

In July 1923, about five hundred farmers collected at Govindpura village. When Trench, Mewar's Revenue Commissioner, marched to the place, the farmers tried to get him to meet their delegation, which was led by Roop-ji Dhakar and Kirpa-ji Dhakar (both Jats). Instead, there was shooting; resulting in two deaths, and many farmers were hurt, or beaten, and many more arrested. Pathik and his associate, Hari-ji, reached Begun secretly and provided leadership and helped raise the morale of the farmers, until their arrest. In 1924 Mewar state's Special Bench Tribunal at Udaipur sentenced Pathik to five years' imprisonment, but he was released in 1928 and exiled from Mewar state. Meanwhile, the Begun and other *kisan* movements in Rajputana, and state repression of it, became subjects of discussion even in the British Parliament.

During the same decade, the Jat farmers in the Shekhawati area spoke up against paying the Rajput *jagirdars* high land-revenues and cesses, and carried forward a strong peoples' movement from 1922 to 1935, and then again during 1939, and then 1942-44⁷⁶. The Arya Samaj movement in the Shekhawati area also played a role in the initial social 'awakening' of the peasants in this region, with Devi Baksh Saraf setting up a branch of the Arya Samaj at Mandawa in the early part of the twentieth century, and Ghasiram Choudhary (who had joined the Congress at Hissar, in neighbouring British India), returning to Shekhawati and joining the Arya Samaj in 1919, to work towards arousing popular fervour against the exploitation of the peasants by the *thikanedars* and *jagirdars*⁷⁷. Harlal Singh, inspired by Mahatma Gandhi, and Bijolia's Vijay Singh Pathik and Sadhu Sitaram Das, organised a Kisan Panchayat. He was aided by Net Ram Singh Gaurir, Hardeo Singh Patsari, Bhairon Singh Togra, Begraj Singh Mandori, and others.

Agrarian movements in the Mewar *thikanas* of Bijolia, Begun, Parsoli etc., and various other regions like Bundi and Alwar states, Shekhawati, Marwar, etc. and even *istmirari*-held lands like Pisangan in British-administered Ajmer-Merwara, attracted many people from the middle class and the professional classes. Some of them were lawyers, teachers, and journalists. Among such leaders, who came to be viewed as the visionaries of a new age, were Vijay Singh Pathik, Manikya Lal Verma, Ram Narain Chowdhry, Hari Bhau Upadhyaya, Jai Narain Vyas, Master Bhola Nath etc.

It may be relevant to cast an eye on the composition of the leadership of these various movements⁷⁸. As with several notable ‘peasant’ uprisings of the c. eighteenth-twentieth centuries across the globe, in Rajasthan too the locally simmering problems were often given a voice, direction and long-term leadership by people not so much from the local ranks of farmers or cultivators (*kisan*), nor agricultural workers, as by ‘outsiders’, or people dedicated to a ‘Cause’. This seems as true in the case of the Bijolia movement begun at the end of the nineteenth century, as it does for the subsequent ones in the Begun, Sirohi, Dabra⁷⁹, and Dudhwa Khara, etc. areas.

For example, Vijay Singh Pathik, who took over the leadership of the Bijolia movement was an educated non-farmer, born and brought up in the British administered area of United Provinces. Similarly, most of those who prominently took the lead in various local movements, like Manikya Lal Verma, Jai Narain Vyas, Dwarka Prasad Purohit, Ram Narain Chowdhry, Nainuram Sharma, Magharam Vaid, Kishan Lal Joshi, Mathuradas Mathur, Prof. Kedar, Ladu Ram Joshi, Tarkeshwar Sharma, were not *kisans* by occupation.

(Interestingly, the same pattern seems to apply to two agrarian movements that took place in Rajasthan in the post-Independence era. Both of these were also led by non-farmers. Of these, the movement in the Ganganagar area, was led by Y.N. Handa, a Communist leader, while the other, in the Bharatpur area, was led by Pandit Ram Kishan, a Socialist leader). Indeed, various early revolutionaries, and many of the ‘pioneers’ working for ‘social upliftment’ of the ‘masses’ in Rajputana, too were often people with some level of formal schooling, and non-farming occupations. Of course, ‘grass-roots’ workers also emerged, but often the decisive initial leadership was non-local and external in origin.

In fact, modern and egalitarian ideas from British India educated nationalists played a crucial role in the furtherance of various socio-political-economic movements in the first half of the twentieth century in the Rajputana area, and Ajmer-Merwara played its own role in all this as a vital nerve-centre. Some of these ideas were also brought into play when organisations or individuals worked for the ‘social upliftment’ and

‘advancement’ of Bhils and Garasias living in the southern and south-eastern parts of Rajputana. For example, giving up alcohol — something *not* previously viewed as offensive in Bhil culture — became a major issue taken up by well-meaning non-tribal ‘social reformers’ in Rajasthan⁸⁰. Let us look at some of the main tribal related movements next.

TRIBAL-RELATED MOVEMENTS

The beginning of the twentieth century saw some movements for arousing social and political consciousness among the Bhil and Garasia tribals of the ‘Vagar’, Mewar, Sirohi, northern Gujarat etc., area. One of the best-known early movements was guided by a local leader called Guru Govindgiri (b. 1863, d. 1931). This emphasised a ‘Bhagat’ way of life among the Bhils (stressing abstaining from liquor and meat-eating, and following prescribed forms of worship, mode of dressing and everyday behaviour, including a daily bath)⁸¹. It also tried to draw the Bhils and Garasias away from superstitious beliefs, harassment of women regarded as witches, and alcoholism etc. and to open their minds to mainstream Hindu religious and every-day practices.

By this time, not all tribals were wholly isolated from external influence. There were Bhils and Garasias who lived in areas like the Mewar Hill Tracts and had experience of missionary activities. There also existed the Mewar Bhil Corps at the cantonments of Kherwara and Kotra etc. Other contacts included British-inspired attempts at vaccination against smallpox in 1855-56. Some Bhils and Garasias had rejected and reacted to the 1881 and 1891 census operations while there were also others, who had less exposure to the British and to ‘modern’ perspectives. There were also Bhils who had heard about some earlier indigenous reformers in the Gujarat etc. neighbouring areas, like the nineteenth century Joria Bhagat who had preached in the Panchmahal area of Gujarat, and Kheradi Surmal, another Bhagat spiritual preceptor who had worked in the Mahikantha area, and established several of the sacred ‘*dhunis*’ or fire-altars that are an essential feature of the Bhagat way of life.

Meanwhile, the general attitude on the part of the dominant non-tribal settled agriculture-based communities towards the Bhils and Garasias (and Kotah's Sahariyas etc.), who mainly lived by shifting-cultivation, hunting and forest-produce, was by and large derogatory⁸². The Bhils of southern Rajasthan (and neighbouring parts of Central India, Gujarat Agency and Bombay Presidency states) faced exploitation not just from local landed fief-holders, but also from money-lenders and traders, and other sections of so-called 'civilised' society. (The category of money-lenders and traders included descendants of erstwhile irregular troopers and mercenaries of Baluchi, Arab, Sindhi and Makrani origin, who previously formed part of either the armies of different states, or of the Marathas, and had been subsequently disbanded following agreements between the states and the British).

Already socially looked down upon in many areas, the early twentieth century land revenue settlement work in the states of Mewar, Dungarpur, Sirohi, Banswara, Pratapgarh etc., saw the further curbing of the previous traditional rights of the tribals of southern and south-eastern Rajasthan. Most Bhil cultivators were tenants-at-will, and the demands on them to render forced labour or *beth-begaar*, and pay high land revenues and extra cesses or *laagat* also remained a burden. Added to this were the new agrarian, excise and forest policies of the states of Banswara, Dungarpur, and neighbouring Sunth at the beginning of the twentieth century. These deprived the Bhils, among other things, of their traditional rights, forbade the 'destructive' practice (as it was long perceived) of shifting-cultivation (or *walar*), and prevented their former easy access to forest honey, bamboo and other 'minor forest produce' etc. Thus, the rapidly modernising world around them was not particularly kind to the Bhils in the early years of the twentieth century.

Let us take up the movement of Guru Govindgiri. Originally a resident of Bersa in Dungarpur, and known simply as Govinda Gobpalia, he lost his wife and children in the Great Famine of Samvat 1956 (AD 1898-99). He then migrated to the adjoining area of Gujarat, where he remarried. While in Gujarat he came into contact with Raj Giri (Ragugar-ji) Gosain, under whose tutelage he became Govindgiri⁸³. Some years later, Govindgiri and his wife returned to Dungarpur state⁸⁴. Here he began to work towards

improving the condition of the local Bhils (and Garasias), who were forced to render unpaid labour (*beth-begaar*), and pay numerous taxes or *laag-baags*, besides high rates of land-revenue. The situation was more exploitative in lands held by *jagirdars*, as distinct from state-owned *khalsa* lands.

Govindgiri established his own *dhuni* on a hill known as Chhani Doongri, near Bersa, where he also planted his flag (*neji*). He soon organised the local Bhils, and began to urge them towards internal reform. (The reform was along the lines of ‘Sanskritization’ — a term and ‘process’ well-known and discussed by India’s sociologists, historians, political scientists). His followers pledged that they would settle disputes through the forum of their group panchayats, and that they would henceforth not consume liquor (till then an important part of the social and cultural life of the tribals). Govindgiri urged the Bhils and Garasias to dig wells. He also told them not to carry out *begaar* (forced labour), nor pay undue *laag-baag* cess and taxes.

By around 1905, an organisation drawing inspiration from Govindgiri, and known as the Samp Sabha⁸⁵, was flourishing within Sirohi State⁸⁶. Similar Samp Sabha branches came up in parts of Dungarpur, Banswara, Mewar, and Sunth-Rampur⁸⁷. The Samp Sabha urged the growth of indigenous crafts and industries, a boycott of foreign goods, local-level administrative reforms, and the revival of the ‘panchayat’ system of local decision-making and governance in the Bhil areas. As the movement challenged the powers of the feudal *jagirdars* and rulers, the affected states took a stand against the Samp Sabha, and in 1908 action was taken against the Samp Sabha. The organisation was not fully stamped out though, and continued to be active till 1913⁸⁸, when it was suppressed by joint British and States’ Forces action, as they put down an attempt at forming a ‘Bhil Raj’.

(Most writers have tended to regard the *sanyasi* Guru Govind who inspired and led the Samp Sabha as identical with Guru Govindgiri, and view the Samp Sabha work as a stage in Govindgiri’s working-life. However, V.K. Vashishtha⁸⁹ asserts that Sirohi was not an area of

Govindgiri's activities and that Govindgiri was not influenced by the swadeshi movement in initiating his socio-religious movement among the Bhils of Dungarpur, Banswara, Idar and Sunth states).

Govindgiri's work seems to have brought him into confrontation with Dungarpur state in 1912-13, and he was arrested for a while. In April 1913, wary of the hold Govindgiri had over the Bhils, the Dungarpur authorities exiled him from the state. Govindgiri moved his base to Bela Rojda in Idar state, from where he shifted to Mangarh, in Banswara state, in October 1913 with his followers. By this time, either Guru Govindgiri himself, or his disciple, Punja Dhirji, had visions of a grand restoration of the Bhil people to their once-famed indigenous kingdoms or governance — a 'Bhil Raj'.

Thus, in consultation with other Bhil leaders from Garhi, Bhukia, Dungarpur, Sunth, Limdi, Sanjeli, etc., and after correspondence with non-Bhil Patels and merchants from Idar, Kadana etc., it was decided to take some definite steps towards attaining a Bhil Raj. Messages were sent out to Govindgiri's followers to congregate for a religious fair at Mangarh Hill on the fifteenth day of the waning moon of the month of *Kartik*, corresponding to 13 November. Bhils from many parts of Dungarpur, Banswara, Kushalgarh, Kherwara, Sunth, etc. reached Mangarh.

The charisma of Govindgiri and the large gathering of some 3,000 Bhils at Mangarh worried the British and the state authorities of Dungarpur, Banswara, Kushalgarh and Sunth. While Govindgiri kept to his spiritual practices and preaching, on 31 October, Punja Dhirji captured two policemen from Sunth, as they approached Mangarh Hill. One was killed and the other taken captive. Punja was actively involved in other incidents involving raids to reclaim religious paraphernalia previously seized by the authorities of Sunth state, and an attack on a village in Banswara state. Negotiations were opened between the British political officers posted at Rewaskantha and Mewar, and Govindgiri on 9 November. The latter's representatives submitted a charter of demands and a list of thirty-three grievances against the Rajput states. The British called upon the Bhils to leave Mangarh Hill before 15 November. While the British did not act on that day, Bhil uprisings in support of Govindgiri in the neighbouring tracts

of Banswara, Kushalgarh, Dungarpur and Bombay Presidency gave a stiff warning that the Bhils believed it was their guru's miraculous powers that had forced the British to hold their hand!

On the morning of 17 November, the Mewar Bhil Corps and forces of the Dungarpur, Banswara and Sunth states attacked Mangarh Hill. The Bhil oral traditions and later accounts hold that more than 1,500 men, women and children were killed, and many wounded in the indiscriminate firing on the tribals. In contrast, a letter of 11 February 1914, forwarded on 7 March 1914 by R.P. Barrow (ICS), Commissioner, Northern Division, to the Secretary to Government, Political Department, Bombay, records that the "...orders given to the [British] Military Officer in command were, to clear the hill, with as little bloodshed as possible..."; and that "...One of the sepoys of the 104th was severely wounded, and several Bhils were killed and wounded, while about 900 were captured, including Govindgiri and Punja"⁹⁰. Govindgiri was arrested and put on trial, as were Punja Dhirji and some twenty-eight other Bhil leaders. They were tried at Sunth-Rampur.

Punja Dhirji was found guilty of the murder of a constable, and of waging war against the states of Banswara and Sunth-Rampur, and transported for life. Five Bhils were acquitted; and twenty-three others charged with rioting and possession of deadly weapons, and sentenced to six months rigorous imprisonment. Govindgiri, who had taken the entire blame on himself, was found guilty of being the 'actual and titular head' of the rebellion, and awarded the death penalty, but his sentence was subsequently commuted to imprisonment, partly to avoid provoking a reaction from the tribals. He was released from Hyderabad jail on 27 July 1919, after serving some years of his sentence, and banned from entering Sunth, Banswara, Dungarpur and Kushalgarh. As he entered Dungarpur in defiance of this, he was expelled by Donald Field, Political Agent to the Southern Rajputana states. He made the Panchmahal his area of work thereafter, and died at Limdi on 30 October 1931⁹¹.

Mangarh ended in a defeat for the Bhils, but nevertheless, it did lead to the concerned states introspecting and reviewing some of their policies and taking certain corrective measures vis-à-vis the Bhils. (For many years afterwards, the site of Mangarh itself remained off-limits to the Bhils, and an area territorially claimed and disputed over by both Banswara and Sunth. In 1952 an annual fair was instituted here in memory of Guru Govindgiri and his disciples).

Even after Govindgiri's imprisonment, and later his settling down outside Rajputana, which prevented his physical presence in guiding the Bhils, the Bhagat movement of socio-cultural reform continued. It was to face opposition from the authorities of Banswara, Dungarpur and Sunth etc. states, but still hold its own. However, the Bhagat movement would later also see schisms develop amongst Bhils who had become 'Bhagats' and other non-Bhagat Bhils.

Simultaneously, on the political and economic front, even though Govindgiri's Samp Sabha work was suppressed, the root causes for Bhil unrest remained, and proved fertile ground for subsequent efforts at their socio-religious, economic and political mobilisation. Thus, in less than a decade another movement gathered strength in tracts with a majority

population of Bhils and Garasias, under the leadership of Motilal Tejawat during the 1920s. This spread to adjoining areas too.

The movement or drive led by Motilal Tejawat was aimed at the removal of agriculture-related and other problems faced by the Bhils⁹² and Garasias. This movement soon encompassed the Bhil-dominated parts of the princely states of Mewar, Sirohi, Dungarpur, Banswara, Danta and Idar during the 1920-22 period. This 'Akki' movement, as it became known as, was eventually suppressed by military force. In Sirohi, the repression of the local Bhils led Mahatma Gandhi to send Manilal Kothari to investigate matters first-hand. Kothari persuaded Motilal Tejawat and the AGG, Holland, to meet each other. Before that could happen, the villages of Bhula and Balodiya were set ablaze and a gathering of Bhils in the Rohera *tehsil* fired upon by the authorities on 8 May 1922. The information reached the Rajasthan Seva Sangh at Ajmer, which led Satya Bhakt and Ram Narain Chowdhry to reach the area within a week of the incident. They conducted a detailed enquiry, and made public the numerous atrocities practiced against the tribals by the authorities of various Rajputana states.

It was also in 1922 that the armed forces of some of the concerned states, jointly with British forces, fired upon a large congregation of Bhils that had gathered at Neemdi in Vijaynagar state under the leadership of Tejawat. It is believed that between 1,200-1,500 Bhils and Garasias were killed and scores injured as a result of the shooting. Tejawat was among the injured, but was carried away to safety by his followers. In 1923 Tejawat organised the Bhils of Poshima and Sirohi, and directed the agitation from Chhocho, near Delwara.

The Bombay authorities, as well as those of the states of Mewar and Idar, became keen over apprehending Tejawat, but it was not until 1929 that he was arrested by the Idar state police. In July 1929, he was handed over to the Mewar authorities, and imprisoned at Udaipur without trial until 1936, when his release was effected at the intervention of Kothari, acting on behalf of Mahatma Gandhi. Motilal Tejawat had to give an undertaking that he would not leave Mewar without permission. Significantly, despite the fact that the movement among the Bhils and Garasias was suppressed by force, the various rulers of the concerned states and their *jagirdars* were

simultaneously also forced to abolish several *laag-baag* and reduce the land revenue demands to resolve the situation.

Thereafter, during the 1930s various organisations drawing inspiration from the Gandhian way of life, and/or driven by an urge to ‘uplift’ the lot of the marginalised tribals, became active in areas of the states of Dungarpur, Mewar, Banswara, Sirohi and neighbouring portions of Idar, Sunth and various other Central Indian, Gujarat Agency and Bombay etc. administered tracts. This led to the establishment of bodies like the ‘Vanvasi Seva Sangh’ etc. A little later, with the setting up of local Praja Mandals within some of these states, issues like forced labour and excessive taxation etc. of the Bhils and other tribals began to be taken up by these organisations too — with varying success. All in all, though, the efforts put in by individuals, groups, service-oriented organisations and political bodies during the first half of the twentieth century did make some significant, albeit slow, difference to the lives of the ‘tribal’ marginalised people living in the most isolated portions of the Rajputana states. The rest had to wait till after Indian Independence and the formation of the modern state of Rajasthan.

Let us look now at the individual histories of the various states of Rajputana during 1900 and 1947-48.

MEWAR

In the state of Mewar, the first three decades of the twentieth century saw a continuation of Maharana Fateh Singh’s reign (r. 1885-1930). It also saw a continuation of his free-spiritedness in his relations with the British ‘paramount power’ when it came to his attending the Delhi Durbar of 1903, commemorating the coronation of the King-Emperor Edward VII, following Queen Victoria’s death. For one thing, Maharana Fateh Singh felt unable to compromise his claim to precedence over other Indian princes. Thus, upon discovering that his assigned place in the Coronation Durbar procession and assemblage was below that of some other fellow-princes, Fateh Singh drew back from participating in this. Given the position of Udaipur amongst India’s ‘Princely States’, Governor General Lord Curzon, rushed to Udaipur and convinced the Maharana to attend the durbar. The

reluctant Maharana embarked for Delhi but changed his mind enroute, and returned from Delhi without even calling on the viceroy, declaring that he was ill.

In December 1911, the Maharana did proceed to Delhi on the occasion of the Delhi Durbar of 1911 to mark the visit of King George V and Queen Mary. This time around the British had spared no effort to attain his participation. The Maharana had been appointed one of the five ‘Ruling Chiefs-in-Waiting’ to the King-Emperor, and he had been exempted from the ritual of offering *nazar*, and given precedence among Indian rulers at the time of their presentation to the King-Emperor. However, on the train-journey to Delhi, the well-known freedom fighter and poet of Mewar, Kesari Singh Barhat read out stanzas from a long poem, specially composed for the occasion, called *Chetawani-ki-Chungatia* to the Maharana⁹³.

In the tradition of his Charan ancestors, Kesari Singh had composed stirring verses that evoked the glorious past of the ruling house of Mewar, and of the numerous ancestors of the Guhila-Sisodia clan who had, over the centuries, refused to bow to others. His verses called the Maharana’s attention to the fact that his predecessors had refused to attend the durbars of the mighty Mughal emperors, even at the cost of prolonged warfare, while he (Maharana Fateh Singh) would provide “the conceited fort of Delhi an opportunity to exclaim in surprise and celebrate at the sight of the Sisodia [ruler] bow his head as a subordinate”. The moving poetry played its part, and when the Maharana arrived at Delhi, he merely met the King-Emperor at Salimgarh railway station and returned to Udaipur without either joining the royal procession or attending the durbar. However, British predominance over matters was a reality that could not fade by merely ignoring it — as Fateh Singh continued to face over the coming decades!

Fateh Singh’s personal attitude ensured that in the First World War, Mewar’s troops in Imperial Service were few in number. In 1918 the Maharana refused to raise a battalion of troops for the war effort, though he was generous with monetary help to the war effort. Fateh Singh also consistently took on the pro-British political faction in Mewar, and resisted attempts at modernising⁹⁴ and the appointment of pro-British administrators and ministers.

In 1905, the literary-rate in Mewar stood at four per cent (17.4% for males and 0.2% for females). There were forty-two government schools including one High School at Udaipur, ten missionary schools and two run by the Mewar Bhil Corps. The total expenditure incurred by the government on education was Rs. 24,000. The expenditure on education was made up partly by a special surcharge on land revenue. A fee of one anna per student was also levied as tuition fee. In 1923 the High school at Udaipur was raised to the standard of an Intermediate college. The same year the Bhupal Nobles School was opened for the children of the aristocracy, and elite and middle schools were opened at Chittorgarh, Kherwara and Bhilwara.

Meanwhile, the British Government felt that the Maharana was not serious over issues like controlling political dissent, and arresting activists like Pathik, who were known to be in Mewar, nor in suppressing the *kisan* agitations at Bijolia, Begun, and Parsoli etc. (to which reference has been made above). In July 1921, the AGG, Robert Holland, informed Maharana Fateh Singh, in writing, that the farmers' unrests in different parts of Mewar state had assumed serious proportions, and could have momentous consequences, not only for Mewar and other Indian states but also for British India. It was indicated that the Maharana would be well-advised to abdicate in favour of his nominated heir, Bhupal Singh (nowdays also spelt as Bhopal Singh). The Maharana refused to oblige. When the contents of the letter came to light, there was strong reaction among the people and the press of the country against the views of the Viceroy. The British Government could not, therefore, dethrone him but saw to it that the Maharana surrendered most of his administrative or 'ruling' powers to his designated successor. However, Maharana Fateh Singh's titles, honours, and ceremonial position as head of state were not affected. The Maharana died almost nine years later on 20 May 1930, aged eighty.

Though Maharana Bhupal Singh (r. 1930-55) formally ascended the Mewar *gaddi* in 1930, he had been exercising ruling powers since 1921 as result of British intervention. However, these were naturally somewhat restricted during the life-time of the popular Maharana Fateh Singh.

In 1931 the Maharana limited the judicial powers of the first class *thikanas* of the state. As far as the judicial courts of the various *thikanas* were concerned, they were permitted to entertain civil suits to the extent of Rs 10,000 only. In criminal cases too their powers were severely restricted from what they had been in the past. A few years later, the Mahendraraj Sabha was replaced in 1937 by a Chief Court.

During this period, due attention was given to irrigation works, and the Bhupal Sagar Dam was constructed. The new irrigation facilities enabled the cultivation of additional areas, where sugarcane was grown. To utilise the sugarcane produced, a sugar factory was established at Bhopalsagar in 1935-36, to manufacture 500 tons of sugar per day. Six hundred and seventy labourers, skilled and unskilled, were initially employed in this industry.

Mewar had long been known for its homespun *reza* and various cotton products, including hand-woven and printed materials like *jâjam*, painted *Pichhwai* religious backdrops, etc., and in 1905 a cotton-ginning and pressing factory had been set up at Bhilwara. Subsequently, between c. 1920-25, similar factories were established at Kapasan, Gulabpura, Chhoti Sadri and Chittor. These further encouraged 'modern' cotton production and trade, and also led to the establishment of a cotton-ginning factory at Fatehnagar in 1930-31. This was followed by another cotton-ginning and pressing factory of 44 spindles at Charbhujia in 1936, with a capital investment of Rs. 4.62 lakhs.

Ayurveda Sevashram, a foremost chemical concern was established in 1933. A match factory was established at Fatehnagar in 1940 but was closed down soon afterwards due to problems of finance and raw material, and in 1943 the Mewar Oil Mills was established at Bhopalsagar with fifty labourers on its pay roll. The same year, the Government of Mewar started a Department of Industries to further the industrialisation of the state and develop the necessary infrastructure. However, problems with transport and communications and inadequate power resources were among the obstacles to industrial growth. Despite these drawbacks, prior to Mewar's merger into Rajasthan, a respectable number of industries existed in various parts of the

state, including the Mewar Sugar Mills Ltd. at Bhopalsagar, the Metal Cooperation at Zawar, and the Mewar Oil Mills at Udaipur

By 1935, there were fifteen dispensaries in various towns in the state. The capital had one general hospital, a womens' hospital and a mental hospital. In 1939 a new well-equipped hospital was established at Udaipur. In addition there were two army hospitals at Kherwara and Kotara. Bhupal Singh also took an interest in promoting education across the state, and was responsible for the establishment of the Maharana Bhupal College and the Nobles College. In 1940 the Intermediate College at Udaipur was raised to the post-graduate level. The same year new high schools were established at Udaipur, Bhilwara and Chittorgarh.

Reforms touched local coinage too. During the early years of the twentieth century, five different kinds of local silver coins were in use across Mewar. These were the *Chittori*, *Udaipuri*, *Bhiladi (Bhilwari)*, *Sarup Shahi* and *Chandauri*. The minting of the first three types had stopped by 1910. In 1930 Maharana Bhupal Singh introduced a new one rupee-coin, popularly known as *Bhunia*. This was worth ten *annas* of the Imperial British rupee. Mewar state also had eight and four *anna* coins, besides local copper currency called *Bhiladi (Bhilwari) paisa* and *Dhingla*. In 1941, the Government of Mewar passed the Copper Coinage Act to stop the circulation of a bewilderingly large variety of copper coins and made the standard *Chittori* coins and *Kaldar*, or the Imperial copper coins, the legal coinage for Mewar state. The *Chittori* coins were similar in shape to the Imperial coins and bore the words '*Chitrakuta-Udaipur*' and '*Dosti London*', along with a replica of Chittor fort. The exchange value of the local coins in relation to the British Indian was fixed in 1942.

In other fields too there were changes and innovations. Mewar had good deposits of mica, and in 1935 the state granted monopoly of this mineral to two private companies. One of them operated in the entire *khalsa* area and the other in the *jagir* area. These companies exploited mica in their respective areas till Mewar was merged in Rajasthan. More than eighty per cent of the mica production was from Bhilwara district. Soapstone mines too were situated in the districts of Bhilwara and Udaipur. A private company held monopoly rights of these mines, which produced roughly

fifty per cent of the total production of soapstone in India! Emerald was discovered in 1943 in village Kala-Guman in Udaipur district, and for a while private companies were permitted to exploit this mineral, but the production was uneconomical and the mines were soon abandoned.

The modern exploitation of the long-known and famed Zawar mines, with their rich zinc, silver and lead content, began during Bhupal Singh's reign too. Until 1872, the lead and zinc mines at Zawar had yielded a net annual revenue of rupees two lakhs. However, over time, the level of water in the mines had increased in a manner that made manual pumping of it from the mines in an adequate way difficult. Nor could the state provide machinery for the purpose. However, the situation changed in 1945, when Mewar state leased out these mines to a private company known as the Metal Corporation of India. (The company worked the mines till 1966, when they were taken over by the Hindustan Zinc Ltd., a public sector company of the Government of India. The production from the mines in 1948 was about 700 tonnes of lead concentrate and 1,600 tonnes of zinc concentrate).

In 1928, the work of connecting Mauli with Phulad by railway was taken up by the state, and the line was opened in 1932. By 1936, a 66 mile long railway line, linking Mauli and Marwar Junction (in Jodhpur state), was ready. The net revenue from the railways to the state of Mewar in that year (1936) was Rs 2.25 lakhs. In 1940 the Mauli-Phulad line was connected with Bari Sadri.

Meanwhile, in 1933 Mewar joined the Indian States Forces scheme for the protection of the 'Empire'. In time, the Maharana held the honorary rank of a Lieutenant-Colonel, but unlike several of his contemporary Indian rulers, Bhupal Singh was not made an honorary Colonel of any Indian Army regiment. Subsequently, Mewar's participation was greater in the Second World War than it had been in the First World War, when Fateh Singh had been on the *gaddi*.

In 1938, Mewar state passed the Mewar Raj Gram Panchayat Act. The Act provided for the establishment of a panchayat consisting of five to nine nominated members for a village having a population of 1,000 or more. The

panchayats were to perform administrative and judicial functions. In the judicial sphere they were empowered to take cognizance of petty criminal cases and try civil suits up to the value of twenty-five rupees. Fifty village panchayats were established, but had the drawbacks of finances and lack of literate workers in functioning.

In 1939, Sir T. Vijairaghavacharya, was appointed prime minister by the Maharana, in place of Dharam Narayan Kak. Under the new prime minister, Mewar's administrative structure was modernised and overhauled. A council of ministers, consisting of five ministers headed by a prime minister, became Mewar's highest executive and legislative body. Each minister headed one or more departments, but remained collectively responsible to the Maharana. Commissioners, responsible to their respective ministers, headed the revenue, settlement and customs departments.

For administrative purposes the state was divided into two divisions — namely Udaipur and Bhilwara, each headed by an official known as Collector. The Collector, in addition to the revenue and executive powers, held the powers of a district magistrate. Each division was further divided into districts, which were administered by a deputy collector. Udaipur Division was made up of the districts of Udaipur, Kherwara, Magra, Rajsamand and Kapasan, while the Bhilwara division comprised the Bhilwara, Chittor and Jahazpur districts. (In 1942 another division was created, and the number of districts raised to nine). The deputy collectors were also empowered as additional district magistrates. Every district was, in turn, sub-divided into twenty-nine sub-districts, or *tehsils*, which were under sub-deputy collectors, who also held the powers of a magistrate 'second class'.

The civil judiciary was separated from the executive. Civil and criminal laws were promulgated along British Indian lines, and a High Court was established (under 'Letters Patent'). This replaced the Chief Court established in 1937 in place of the older Mahendraraj Sabha. The high court had a Chief Justice, along with two judges. 'District & sessions' judges were posted at the headquarters of both divisions to redress appeals against the judgements of the district magistrate and lower-level munsif magistrates. (The latter heard appeals up to a set financial level). The police

department, which had been first created in 1930, was also reorganised in 1940. A Superintendent of police was posted at each divisional headquarters, and a deputy superintendent of police in each district.

Meanwhile, the long-drawn out agrarian movement in the Bijolia *thikana* of Mewar state (detailed earlier in this chapter), was having a significant impact on Mewar. So too were similar movements in Begun, Parsoli, etc., and the Motilal Tejawat-led Bhil and Garasia movement that affected parts of Mewar (besides Sirohi, Dungarpur, Idar, etc.).

On 8 July 1932, a delegation protesting taxes was barred access to the Maharana. Instead, troops were called out and the protestors were fired upon. The matter was reconciled after the Maharana personally met a deputation of citizens and assured them that the grievances of the people would be looked into. By 1934 Mewar state too saw some calls for civil rights, but the Government of Mewar, like most of its contemporaries, forbade the right to form political associations etc., and organised movements, therefore, took time to take off.

During 1937-38 the satyagraha movement gained strength in Udaipur. Manikya Lal Verma was among its leaders. On 24 April 1938 the Mewar Praja Mandal was formed, with Balwant Singh Mehta as its president, Bhure Lal Baya the vice-president and Manikya Lal Verma the party chief secretary. Among the other founder-members were men like Vaidya Bhawani Shankar. The immediate agenda of the Mewar Praja Mandal stressed the following broad points, towards which the members wished to work. The first was to secure the effective enforcement of the provisions of a State Circular prohibiting forced labour. (This circular had already been issued by the Mewar State Government). Another was to ensure the principle of popular representation and an election-process for municipalities and local institutions of Mewar. The third was to work towards bettering the socio-economic conditions of the people by starting constructive activities like removal of untouchability, spreading education, propagating the use of of khadi, advocating abstinence from alcohol and narcotics etc. The Mewar Praja Mandal was declared illegal by the state administration, and a proposed satyagraha was banned.

In October 1938 the Mewar Praja Mandal began a Civil Disobedience movement, which soon spread across different parts of Mewar. The situation became serious in Nathdwara, and was brought under control with difficulty there by the administration. The State banned political activities, and over the ensuing months, made nearly 250 arrests. (Baya was interred in the Sarara fort, while Manikya Lal Verma and Ramesh Chandra Vyas were externed and forbidden to re-enter Mewar's territory. Manikya Lal Verma moved his activities to Ajmer). The satyagrahis continued their protest. On 2 February 1939, Verma and others entered Mewar territory, defying bans against them, and were arrested. At the advice of Mahatma Gandhi, the movement was suspended a few months later by the Praja Mandal.

Meanwhile, in November 1940 a resolution was passed at a meeting of the Rajputana and Central India States' Peoples Conference, held at Pushkar (near Ajmer), which called upon the state of Mewar to remove the ban on the Mewar Praja Mandal. The Mewar government responded favourably, and the ban was lifted early in 1941. Thereafter, the Mewar Praja Mandal was formally registered under the Mewar Societies Registration Act of 1941.

Around the same time, Manikya Lal Verma called the attention of the prime minister, Sir T. Vijairaghavacharya, to the long-unresolved popular movement in the Bijolia area. The prime minister deputed his revenue minister, Mohan Singh Mehta, to Bijolia to re-examine the matter. Mehta ensured that the land was restored to its original tenants. Thus ended the epic Bijolia movement, which had lasted almost half a century. The movement undoubtedly influenced the eventual abolition of the institution of *jagirs* in Rajasthan.

In February 1941, the Government of Mewar announced the constitution of a Legislative Assembly for the state, which was to have a majority of elected members. The Praja Mandal's demand, however, was for 'responsible government' with greater rights for the people, and the organisation expressed its dis-satisfaction with the nature of the proposed assembly. This dis-satisfaction was re-iterated that November, when the Mewar Praja Mandal held its first session at Udaipur, under the

presidentship of Manikya Lal Verma. Various amendments were suggested concerning the proposed Legislative Assembly, and the demand for civil and political rights along with an early establishment of 'responsible government' under the 'aegis of the ruler', was repeated at this gathering. Some Congress leaders from British India, including Acharya Kripalani and Smt. Vijayalakshmi Pandit came to Udaipur and addressed the session⁹⁵.

Concurrently with the Praja Mandal session, Vijayalakshmi Pandit was called upon to inaugurate an exhibition that propagated the idea of self-sufficiency, swadeshi, the use of khadi, and cottage industries. For a while, thereafter, the Praja Mandal gave its attention to constructive works of social reform and upliftment, literacy drives, the removal of untouchability, and propagation of homespun khadi cloth. It criticised the Mewar government for supporting the British war effort, etc. too. Alongside all this, as and when disputes arose, they continued to take up the cause of tenant-farmers and Bhils etc. against the fief-holding *jagirdars* and *thikanedars* over matters of forced labour, unjust taxes, and so forth. The Mewar Harijan Sewa Sangh also increased its activities.

In August 1942, following the launch of the Quit India movement in British India under the leadership of the Indian National Congress, the Praja Mandal came out in full support of this, and called upon the citizens of Mewar to do the same. A satyagraha movement was re-started too. Once again, the Praja Mandal called for the establishment of 'responsible government' in Mewar, and also called for the severance of all relations between the state and the British Government. Meetings and processions were organised at Udaipur, Nathdwara, Chittorgarh, Rikhabdeo, Rajnagar, Kapasan, Deogarh and Banera, and students urged to give up their studies and join the movement. The police resorted to a *lathi-charge* (use of batons) to disperse one of the larger processions that marched through the capital-city, but the processions and meetings and speeches did not stop. Political workers spread out to further activate people in places like Bhilwara, Bhinder, Bijolia, Chittor, Chhoti Sadri, Hamirgarh, Jahazpur, Kanod, Kapasan, Magra, Nathdwara, Panchmata *thikana*, Rajnagar, Rikhabdeo, and Salumber.

The Government of Mewar responded by banning all processions and public meetings in August, and ordering the arrest of prominent Praja Mandal leaders and workers, including Manikya Lal Verma, Balwant Singh Mehta, Mohan Lal Sukhadia, and others. Many of them were interned for a long period thereafter at Iswal. The Praja Mandal was banned. Schools and colleges in the state were closed for many days. Hundreds of people were arrested up until the middle of October 1942, and later released in small batches. The movement continued sporadically till January 1944. Several of the most active Praja Mandal workers were incarcerated for a long time, and many of them were finally released in 1943, when the Khari River was in spate and had flooded large tracts of surrounding lands. Undeterred, the Praja Mandal workers promptly launched relief-measures, and joined hands with the Mewar government's flood-relief efforts.

One may note here that while floods during 1917 and 1926 had led to some loss of crops⁹⁶, erstwhile Mewar's most serious floods occurred in 1943, following a heavy downpour of rain in Bhim and Deogarh areas on 28 and 29 July 1943. This raised the level of rivers, streams and tanks in the region. The rivers Khari, Kothari, Mansi and to some extent the Berach rose several feet above their embankment. The Banas (into which the Kothari flows), and the Berach carried away crops and houses in many parts of Jahazpur district. Parts of Deogarh, Bhim and other areas suffered damage, with Asind and Hurda sub-districts being among the worst affected.

In April 1944 workers of the Rajputana-Madhya Bharat Sabha met in Udaipur to chalk out future programmes of social reforms. The state authorities removed the ban on public meetings, which it had imposed in August 1942, but the tenor of the anti-British speeches delivered at this conference led to the re-imposition of the ban. The Praja Mandal members now concentrated their activities on social, educational and constructive activities. The Mewar Harijan Sewak Sangh was re-organised, and took up the work of socio-economic reforms with renewed vigour. Gandhi's release from imprisonment in 1945 was celebrated and pledges were taken to work for social reforms. On 6 September 1945, the Mewar government lifted its ban on the Mewar Praja Mandal, and gave an assurance that public grievances would be looked into.

Towards the end of that year, the Mewar Praja Mandal hosted an important annual session of the All-India States' Peoples Conference at Udaipur. This was held from 31 December 1945 to 2 January 1946, and attended by 435 delegates from all over India. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru presided over the session. The conference gave a big fillip to the political movement in Mewar state. Thereafter, the Mewar Praja Mandal took up a range of issues including employment to local people, food-shortages, the postponement of municipal elections, and labour-related issues⁹⁷, etc.

Meanwhile, in the fast changing political scenario the demand for constitutional reforms grew in Mewar. The state announced the introduction of some constitutional reforms. (For instance, in response to the Mewar Praja Mandal's reminder about the Government enacting a municipal act for the city of Udaipur, in 1945 the Maharana promulgated the Udaipur City Municipal Act, 1945. It was brought into force on 16 August 1945. On a different front, in April 1945, the 'Mewar State Post-War Development Committee' was constituted by the state authorities, for reviewing the state's development-related potential over the coming years).

As events moved towards Indian independence, several schemes for possible future unions of princely states were raised and discussed among the princely states, and on more than one occasion the Maharana was urged to accept the leadership of Indian princes in plans that entailed a union of states that would be separate from the Indian one. The Maharaja refused these. At the urging of the Bikaner ruler, he also agreed to send a representative to the Constituent Assembly⁹⁸. (Later, Udaipur decided to join the Rajasthan Union after some initial reservations).

Meanwhile, T. Vijairaghavacharya had been replaced as Mewar's prime minister by Sir S.V. Ramamurthy. The Maharana appointed K.M. Munshi as his advisor, and on 22 May 1947 promulgated a constitution for the state, drafted by K.M. Munshi. The constitution provided for the formation of an assembly and the setting up of a cabinet responsible to the legislature. While the constitution apparently fell short of the expectations of the Praja Mandal and was criticised by some of the organisation's leading members, the Praja Mandal participated in the elections to Mewar's Legislative Assembly. Several of its candidates won seats. As such. two

representatives of the Mewar Praja Mandal — Mohan Lal Sukhadia and Heeralal Kothari, were inducted into the new Mewar Cabinet. So too was Raghuveer Singh Ochri, a representative of the Kshatriya Parishad, an organisation of fief-holders and *jagirdars*.

While constitutional change was being introduced in Mewar, greater change had come to India. On 3 June 1947 the British Government announced that it would transfer power to representatives of India and Pakistan on 15 August 1947. The Indian states had the option of acceding to either India or Pakistan, or of remaining independent. The Maharana of Mewar opted to sign the 'Instrument of Accession' to India.

Further change was slated for the long-established State of Mewar. India's Ministry of States decided that only the 'viable' erstwhile princely states would be allowed to maintain their identity. One thumb-rule for 'viability' was that the population should exceed one million and revenue rupees ten million respectively. Mewar fulfilled the criteria of viability. In February 1948 the process of elections to the State Legislative Assembly began. On 17 March 1948, Maharana Bhupal Singh announced that a Council of Ministers would be formed that June.

The elections in the city of Udaipur were slated for 4 April 1948. The contest was between the Praja Mandal and the Kshatriya Parishad. While the voting was on, the Parishad workers allegedly dishonoured the Indian national flag by taking it down from a building housing a polling booth and throwing it into a well. The incident led to demonstrations all over the city. The next day two young boys, Shanti and Anandi, were killed and several people injured in police firing in the main market of the city. The Praja Mandal boycotted the elections and demanded the immediate setting up of an interim popular government.

In the meanwhile, the Government of India decided to form a United State of Rajasthan with the merger of nine non-viable princely states, with Kota as the capital. Though Mewar was deemed viable, the Maharana also opted to merge Mewar in the new state. The Government of India welcomed the proposal. In April 1948, Mewar state joined the newly formed Union of Rajasthan. And thus, the entity of a kingdom that had held

sway over the tract known as Medpat and Mewar for more than a thousand years was merged into the larger territorial region of modern Rajasthan.

DUNGARPUR

In the adjoining area of Dungarpur, Bijay Singh (r. 1898-1918), gained full powers in February 1909. Various British political agents had previously assisted other regency councils in administration during the minority of earlier Maharawals and a similar system was followed for Bijai Singh's minority period.

The Regency Council of Dungarpur made some move towards 'modernizing' aspects of administration and public facilities. Up to 1904, the coinage current in Dungarpur was a mixture of the *Chittori* coinage of Mewar, the *Salim Shahi of Pratapgarh*, and British coins. In 1904 only the Imperial — or British Indian, coinage was retained as legal tender, and the use of the *Chittori* and *Salim Shahi* discouraged. In 1907 a public library was established within the Udai Vihar Garden of the capital. The policing system too was somewhat modernised.

Meanwhile, the 'western' model of education was slow to effect Dungarpur. The *Report on the Administration of Dungarpur State* for 1901-02 acknowledged that, at that date, education was "...at a very low ebb. Except a small elementary school at Dungarpur and occasional private instruction, there is no teaching at all...The number of students reading in the Dungarpur School was only 15 and, because of financial difficulties, three elementary schools proposed to be opened during the year could not be opened"⁹⁹. By the end of 1904 the number of schools had risen to eight, and students to 658; the state's Education Department placed under the administrative control of the *faujdar*; and the educational system became based on that followed in the United Provinces and Ajmer. In 1905-06 the primary school at Dungarpur became a secondary school, and in 1907-08 the Devendra Girls' School was established. Within two years the number of girls studying at the Devendra Girls' School was forty.

In the same general period, several other schools were established across different parts of the state. Among them was a Boarding House for the education of Rajput boys, which was established at Dungarpur during 1908-09. Some of the schools were later closed because of dwindling numbers. Among the latter were the Dharma Updeshni Shri Bijai Lakshman Sanskrit Pathshala and Madarsah Islamiya. Both had been established during 1909-10, and both were closed in 1912-13 as they had not become popular.

At this time, cultivated lands in Dungarpur (and Banswara) were mainly held under the *biswedari*, *zamindari* and *malik* system. (All these were abolished after the 'Rajasthan Land Tenancy Act, 1955' and other acts came into force, leaving only *khudkasht* and *khatedar* tenants after that date). Land was classified broadly into *khalsa*, *jagir* and *khairat* (or *muafi*). *Khalsa*, or Crown lands were under the management of the state, while *jagir* lands, which had been given either as reward for services rendered, or as a mark of favour by the ruler, were held mainly, though not solely, by Rajput fief-holders, landlords and nobles. (Sometime, as was the case in other parts of Rajasthan too, lands were granted in *jagir* to members of other communities).

The *jagir* lands were of two categories. One type was known as *Thakur-ki-reeth*. In this the revenues were either shared by the *jagirdar* and ruler, or a portion of revenue collections was reserved for the use of the state and the rest stayed with the *jagirdar*. The second system was called *Areenkhur*. In this, the right to charge and collect revenue vested solely with the concerned *jagirdars*, and no part of it was given to the state. The *jagirdars* themselves were of the *Bhyat* (special privilege), *Solah* (nobles of the 'group of sixteen'), *Battisa* (nobles of the 'group of thirty-two'), and *Jivika* (literally, 'livelihood') category. The *khairat* (or *muafi*) lands were revenue-free grants, given to Rajputs as well as non-Rajputs for exceptional services, or donated to religious orders or temples etc. as acts of piety. Such lands were gifted in perpetuity to the holder and his descendants.

Lands were further sub-classified for 'Land Revenue Settlement' purposes on the basis of soil types, crops taken and methods of irrigation. This settlement classification was mainly under the following categories:

chahi (land irrigated by wells), *digar* (land irrigated from rivers and *nullahs* using *dhenklis*); *talabi* (tank irrigated land); *rahan* (land in tank-beds); *shirma* (land yielding two crops without rotation); *sukhi* (land yielding only one crop); and *rankhand* or *rankar* (land suitable for millets). In the case of *khalsa* land, the assessment of ‘*barar*’ or ground-rent, was usually prescribed for a fixed period, but often it was determined after examining the crop yields of the season. Land revenue was traditionally collected in cash or kind.

Against this background, the first round of modern-day Land Revenue Settlement work was carried out during 1905-1906 for the majority of habitations. The rates per *bigha* varied from rupees seven for the *chahi*, to eight *annas* for the *rankar* category. The hilly terrain and traditional preferences meant that shifting-cultivation (*walar*), was carried out on the hill-slopes, while settled agriculture was restricted to lower grounds. About one-fifth of this latter was based on tank-fed irrigation. As such, in continuation of the time-honoured practice of building tanks and reservoirs, after attaining full ruling powers Bijay Singh constructed the Edward Samand lake.

The period also saw the establishment of regular courts of law, and the constitution of a Legislative Council — which provided a modicum of popular voice, and an Executive Council. During the First World War, or the ‘Great War’ as it was then called, Dungarpur contributed men, materials and money for the war effort. Due attention was paid to improving the State’s financial situation too. However, transport facilities were not to see modernisation till the 1930s, when a metalled road linking Dungarpur with Kherwara and Modasa was constructed! The uncertain conditions of travel and transportation may be judged by the fact that the older system of *Rasta Chowkidari* (route patrol), continued into the twentieth century. This entailed appointing people as *Rasta Chowkidars* to provide travellers and goods day-time safe passage through the undulating terrain.

The thirty-one year old Bijay Singh died in 1918 and was succeeded by his minor eldest son, Lakshman Singh. The new Maharawal ascended the *gaddi* of Dungarpur in November 1918, but was to wait until early 1928 before he could obtain full ruling powers. During this time, the young ruler

attended school at Mayo College, followed by training in England. (In later years, the adult Lakshman Singh was to be a prominent member of the Chamber of Princes, or *Narendra Mandal*, and for nearly twenty years a member of the Chamber's Standing Committee). In the interim, a Regency Council carried out the work of governance, under the supervision of British political agents, with constant inputs from Bijay Singh's widowed Maharani, the Rajmata Devendra Kanwar.

One of the measures undertaken pertained to poppy cultivation. During 1905-06 the area under poppy cultivation in Dungarpur state was 230 acres (93 hectares). Meanwhile, as part of British efforts to curb indigenous opium trade, restrictions had already been imposed on growing poppy in many adjoining princely states. By 1911, poppy-cultivation had been legally licensed and regulated to serve only local demands, and monopoly for opium production given to the Dungarpur State Bank. (Established in 1909-10, the formal name of this was the Ram Chandra Laxman Bank). Finally, in 1927, poppy cultivation was fully banned, "as a measure of co-operation with the Government of India", and farmers asked to switch over to growing cotton and tobacco instead.

Around the same time, various popular efforts towards the religious and /or social 'upliftment' of the Bhils and 'modernisation' of what was perceived as their 'old-fashioned' and 'negative' aspects of lifestyle had gathered strength. Amongst the earliest such movements was one started by Surmal Das, who is believed to have been a Bhil from Lusaria in Gujarat. Surmal's preaching led the Bhils towards what sociologists call 'Sanskritization', in that he asked them to wear the sacred thread (*janeyu*) of the twice-born, eat food only after bathing, observe non-violence, greet each other by saying '*Sita-Ram*' and offer prayers. His disciples began to use only white clothing and white turbans.

The teachings of Govindgiri (to whom reference has already been made), also included stress on giving up meat-eating and alcohol (till then not taboo items amongst Bhils and Garasias), as well as of the traditional practice of offering bride-price (*dapa*). He advocated his followers to conduct daily prayers, and practice ritual cleanliness and fasting. In

addition, Govindgiri spoke against the Bhils having to render unpaid forced labour and cesses to landowners.

Among other movements centred around education and the ‘upliftment’ of the Bhils, the pan Dungarpur-Banswara-Mewar-Sirohi Bhil movement of 1921-22, organised by Motilal Tejawat, had its inevitable effect on the Bhils of Dungarpur too. Through such attempts at raising levels of education and social awareness, the lives and life-styles of the Bhils were considerably transformed. Shortly afterwards came what one may call the ‘second wave’ of socio-economic reformist and ‘upliftment’ movements amongst the tribals. Among those who played a prominent role in these were people like Bhogi Lal Pandya, Bhure Lal Baya, Gauri Shankar Upadhyaya, Manikya Lal Verma, Balwant Singh Mehta, etc.

Inspired by Thakkar Bappa, Bhogi Lal Pandya established a ‘Harijan Sewa Samiti’ in Dungarpur in 1935. Around this time, Manikya Lal Verma, who had formerly worked for the Bijolia Movement as well as for educating tribals and other deprived groups, shifted the area of his social work to the state of Dungarpur, where he took up cudgels against untouchability, superstition, drinking alcohol by the Bhils, lack of educational opportunities, social evils, and so forth. Associated with Baba Lakshmandas and Shobhalal Gupta in the Sagwara area, in August 1934 Manikya Lal Verma persuaded local Bhil boys to attend school at Sagwara’s Harijan Ashram. Sagwara was the second largest town, after the capital-city of Dungarpur, in erstwhile Dungarpur state. (Its famed brass water-pots, the *Vagaria lota*, is still used across erstwhile Mewar and Vagar).

Later Verma established the ‘Vagad Seva Mandir’ to spread education and social awareness amongst the Bhils, and an ashram for Bhil students at Khadlai village near Sagwara. Verma left Dungarpur in 1937, leaving the running of the ‘Vagad Seva Mandir’ in the hands of Bhogi Lal Pandya. Pandya eventually wound-up the Vagad Seva Mandir, and set-up the ‘Seva Sangh’ in its place. Several hostels for Bhil students were also started by Pandya and his colleagues.

The modern Government of Rajasthan’s *Rajasthan District Gazetteers* — *Dungarpur* acknowledges that “State aid was given by the then

Dungarpur Government for the opening of schools in Bhil *pals*”¹⁰⁰. “As a result of the efforts of the State, the number of schools rose to 41 in the year 1938-39 which included a high school, a middle school each at Dungarpur and Sagwara, one girls’ school each at Dungarpur and Sagwara, 9 schools run by the Bagar Seva Sangh, Dungarpur, 5 private schools, seven schools run by Jagirdars and the rest run by the Government. All these schools were, however, under the supervision and control of the Education Department. The Durbar granted Rs. 300 annually to the Bagar Seva Sangh, Dungarpur to run the schools”¹⁰¹.

On the outbreak of the Second World War, towards which Dungarpur state sent troops and money, the Seva Sangh handed over its work to the Dungarpur Seva Sangh. Around the same time, the Dungarpur Government passed its *Rok and Intjam Begaar Act* of 1939, which enabled the state to take forced labour (*begaar*) from all castes — including Brahmins and Rajputs. Besides being an anachronism that was being queried in most of the other states of Rajputana by this time, the system was also open to misuse and abuse. And so it proved.

Thus, by August 1944, some of the Seva Sangh members, including Bhogi Lal Pandya, Gauri Shankar Upadhyaya, Shiv Lal Kotadia and Hari Deo Joshi, began considering the establishment of a Praja Mandal in Dungarpur, to work for ‘responsible government’ under the aegis of the ruler. The Dungarpur Rajya Praja Mandal was formally established on January 26 1945, with Bhogi Lal Pandya as its president, Gauri Shankar Upadhyaya as its vice-president, and Shiv Lal Kotadia as its general secretary. As was the case in other states, in 1946 the Dungarpur Praja Mandal demanded representative government and the separation of the judiciary from the executive.

As the call for ‘responsible government’ began to gain ground, April 1946 witnessed the first session of the Dungarpur Praja Mandal. Among those who attended this session were Manikya Lal Verma, Hira Lal Shastri, Gokul Bhai Bhatt and Jugal Kishore Chaturvedi, among others. Resolutions calling for the establishment of responsible government were passed, along with a call for the withdrawal of the state’s strict rules regulating private schools and hostels. The Maharawal expanded the ‘Raj Prabandh Karini

Sabha', or State Executive Council, to include two representatives from the Praja Mandal. This council, until that time, had been composed of state appointed officials, *jagirdars* and a few non-officials.

Later that same year, agitated over the procurement of food-grains by the state, including from areas affected by drought, Devram Sharma of Sanwla took the lead in launching a farmers' satyagraha in protest. Following Devram Sharma's arrest, the Dungarpur Praja Mandal took charge of the movement. In response, the state arrested Bhogi Lal Pandya and twenty-eight other *satyagrahis*. Gauri Shankar Upadhyaya and Harideo Joshi were externed. Demanding that the forcible procurement from drought-affected tracts be ended, and that arrested protesters be classed as political prisoners, Pandya went on a prolonged hunger-strike. In support of his cause, many public demonstrations and *hartals* were held in different parts of the State. Bhatt, Verma and Shastri now reached Dungarpur and met with the Maharawal. In consequence of all this, the forcible procurement of food-grains from drought-affected parts of Dungarpur state was stopped, and the arrested protestors released. Meanwhile, an elected municipality had been established in Dungarpur by the Maharawal.

The state administration's repressive measures over schools run by the Seva Sangh increased in 1947. In May 1947, Shiv Ram, the teacher of a school run by the Seva Sangh at Poonawara was severely beaten and held by administrative officials. Harsh treatment — including beating, arrest and custodial abuse, was meted out by the police to Pandya, Upadhyaya and Kotadia when they reached Poonawara to look into the matter. Matters became worse that June. On 1 June 1947 the village school at Runawala was torn down by state officials, people were beaten, and the school teacher, Shivram, forcibly taken away by the officials. Local Bhils converged at Runawala, where Pandya had also reached. Demanding the return of Shivram, Pandya and the Bhils walked towards Jhutha. Four shots were fired upon Pandya and the people accompanying him by the state police, but there were no fatalities. A settlement was reached and Shivram allowed to return to his village, but before Pandya and his associates left the area, they were accosted by some feudal landlords and state officials, who beat up everyone in sight, before carting away the unconscious Pandya and his associates to the Dhambola police station in a truck. More ill-treatment

followed, including in the presence of the magistrate before whom they were produced the following day. False charges of arson, theft, drunken behaviour, etc. were levelled against the arrested men.

Meanwhile, the state police tried to close down another school run by the Seva Sangh at Rastapal. Nanabhai Khant, the owner of the building in which the school functioned, was badly beaten by the police and died as a result of his injuries, while the school's teacher, Sangabhai, was tied and dragged behind a vehicle. His torture ended when Kalibai, a twelve-year-old local Bhil girl, cut the rope binding him to the vehicle with her sickle. The police resorted to firing, hitting Kalibai and six other women. The injured were taken to hospital in the capital-town of Dungarpur, but Kalibai died enroute.

As the news spread, Bhil drums began summoning others from adjoining tracts to gather at Rastapal. A large crowd of angry Bhils, armed with their traditional bows and arrows, marched towards the capital, while the police was forced to back away before their numbers. The Maharawal intervened, releasing Pandya and his colleagues, and ensuring an end to the confrontation. Public memorials to Nanabhai Khant and Kalibai were raised in Dungarpur.

As events moved fast towards the eventual independence of British-held India, Dungarpur's ruler, Maharawal Lakshman Singh (created KCSI 1935, GCIE 1947), already an active member of the Standing Committee of the Chamber of Princes, was called upon to serve as a member of the Negotiating Committee of the Princes. This committee met prominent Indian leaders and members of the Constituent Assembly just before Independence.

Within a short time after this, Dungarpur signed the Instrument of Accession to India in 1947. Thereafter, Gauri Shankar Upadhyaya and Bhikabhai Bhil were appointed as ministers, with the former raised to the position of prime minister in early 1948. In March 1948, the Maharawal announced the beginning of 'responsible government'. The ministry consisted of a chief minister and three ministers who were members of the Praja Mandal and one minister nominated by the ruler from the *jagirdar*

category to represent the interests of the traditional landed classes or aristocracy. Soon afterwards, the merger of the state first into the Rajasthan Union on 25 March, and then, in April 1948, the new United State of Rajasthan soon brought to a close several centuries of monarchical governance in the state of Dungarpur.

Dungarpur's Maharawal took a leading part in the formation of the United State of Rajasthan, of which Maharana Bhupal Singh of Udaipur became the Rajpramukh, and the Maharawal himself became one of the Upa-rajpramukhs. Soon thereafter, Dungarpur became a district within the new Rajasthan. (Maharawal Lakshman Singh was later an elected Member of Rajasthan's Legislative Assembly and had a long spell as an MLA. He also became the speaker of the Legislative Assembly).

BANSWARA

Upon the death of the sixty-seven-year-old Maharawal Lakshman Singh of Banswara in April 1905, his son, Shambhu Singh (r. 1905-1908 [abdicated], d.1913) became the new ruler of Banswara. Conferred ruling powers in 1906, Shambhu Singh was urged to abdicate the *gaddi* by the British in 1908. Administration was carried out by the Political Agent after that.

It was during the 1908-1911 period that land revenue settlement work was carried out in the *khalsa* lands of the state, but this was not done for *jagir*-held lands. It may be emphasised here that in Banswara, in contrast to the amount of land held as *khalsa* or state-owned tracts, the chiefship of Kushalgarh and the *jagir* estates of Garhi and Khandu etc. covered considerably more territory. As such, the power of the *jagirdars* and their officials and armed police was supreme over their respective *jagir* holdings, and especially over the Bhils who lived on their lands. In 1908 Banswara (like neighbouring Dungarpur state) introduced a new '*abkari*' — or excise and alcohol-related policy (based on the Madras Presidency pattern). This gave contracts to liquor contractors in the *jagir* and *khalsa* areas of these states, prohibited the export of the *Mahua* tree blossoms (used for making alcohol) so that the *Mahua* flowers could be used in the officially permitted

state distilleries, and disallowed the Bhils to brew their own liquor in their traditional time-honoured way.

It was also during this first half of the twentieth century that other influences of 'modernization' began to be felt in Banswara, particularly during the years that the Political Agent ran the state. In the sphere of education, an Anglo-Vernacular school was set-up, as was a girls' school, and by 1908 Banswara state had a total of fourteen schools (of varying levels).

Following the death of Shambhu Singh in December 1913, his son Prithvi Singh (r. 1913-1944) was recognised as the next ruler of Banswara. Various modern institutions were established during his long reign. These included a district court, municipal office, Hamilton Public Library, an orphanage etc. In 1919, the construction of a bridge across the local Kagdi River opened the capital of Banswara up for further trade and growth. The construction of a metalled road some twenty years later, in 1938, linking Banswara's capital with Udaipur and Jhadol, served to connect the rather inaccessible kingdom with the greater world beyond its immediate vicinity.

Meanwhile, a movement for social and political consciousness among the Bhil tribals had been gaining ground in the Banswara-Dungarpur-Vagar area under a teacher called Guru Govindgiri. It was during Prithvi Singh's reign that Govindgiri and his disciple, Punja Dhirji, launched an attempt for the 'restoration' of Bhil Raj in the Banswara area during October and November 1913. Reference has been made already to this and the manner in which this was suppressed at Mangarh with the help of a British military force in November 1913.

Concessions of sorts were made to the Bhils after Mangarh. In the years that followed, the Bhagats became a strong group across many parts of southern Rajasthan and northern Gujarat. By 1927 the Bhil Bhagat movement had assumed political overtones, besides becoming somewhat confrontational towards the non-Bhagat Bhils¹⁰². The latter were beginning to send representations to the state authorities, and the then *dewan* of Banswara, N. Bhattacharya, decided to take action in order to prevent a 'Second Mangarh' in Banswara. Thus, the Bhagat movement in the st. was

suppressed during 1927-1931, although it quietly flourished in adjacent Dungarpur -Rampur and the Panchmahal district¹⁰³.

Prithvi Singh was succeeded by his eldest son, Chandraveer Singh in 1944. Considerable modernisation took place during Chandraveer Singh's reign, particularly after Mohan Singh Mehta, a scion of an Udaipur-based administrative family, was appointed *dewan* of Banswara. Mohan Singh Mehta ensured the improvement and modernisation of the state's administration and financial machinery. (Dr. Mohan Singh Mehta was to be a future vice-chancellor of the University of Rajasthan. He later became a founder-member of an Udaipur-based organisation aimed at rural development along with socio-economic, development-related, education-related, etc. aspects.)

The winds of political awareness touched Banswara anew with the establishment of the 'Banswara Rajya Praja Mandal' in the state in April 1945. The movement towards political consciousness was guided by leaders like Bhupendra Nath Trivedi and Dhuljibhai Bhavsar. The Bhagat Bhils participated in the activities of the Praja Mandal, with Deepa Bhagat and Deva Bhagat representing the Bhils in the central organisation, and Lunja Bhagat, Dola Bhai Bhagat, Hemta Bhagat, Kubla Bhagat, Kering Bhagat, and others working towards mobilising Bhil support for the Praja Mandal in the other towns and villages of Banswara state.

In November 1945, the Banswara Praja Mandal protested the existence of *begaar*, and called for reforms in the state's forest policy. In March 1946, the Praja Mandal launched its 'Grain Agitation' in the capital, in protest at the faulty distribution system. Both Bhupendra Nath Trivedi and Dhuljibhai Bhavsar were subsequently arrested following a ban on the activities of the Praja Mandal in Banswara. The strikes and popular demonstrations which followed as a protest against the arrests led the state authorities to release the leaders within three days. In 1946-47, a Praja Mandal-led campaign against imposing levy on grain, gathered immense support amongst the Bhils — who were the worst affected by the levy and related search-and-seize measures of the officials.

Later, Trivedi called upon the villagers not to render forced *begaar* labour. This led to goods normally transported through *begaar* remaining uncleared for weeks on end. When the police forced a local *kisan* of Kelamela village to render *begaar*, the whole village rose up in his defence. The police left the village, but apprehending trouble, the villagers summoned people from neighbouring settlements and villages, and cut down trees to block roads and paths leading to the village. Even as the local people, armed with bows and arrows, waited for a move from the authorities, Dola Bhagat had been despatched to Banswara by them, to carry word about the incident to Trivedi.

While Trivedi covered the distance on foot and reached the Kelamela village, state authorities under the command of Thakur Madan Singh of the Garnavat estate, and Ghanshyam Gupta, the state's revenue minister, established base at the village of Mungra, on the opposite bank of the river Mahi. Trivedi initiated negotiations. The state representatives present agreed that the police had not acted correctly, assured the assembled Bhils that no retribution would be exacted from them, and arranged for five Bhil representatives to meet the *dewan* of Banswara, Mohan Singh Mehta. Mehta resolved the issue thereafter. A similar grain-levy related incident involving the Mahudo Kheda village was mutually resolved in April 1947, before matters got out of hand.

While change was touching Banswara, its semi-autonomous and semi-dependent chiefship of Kushalgarh also saw some transformations, albeit of a lesser magnitude. One of these was the establishment of a 'Gandhi Ashram' by Dadam Chand Doshi and Panna Lal Trivedi. The ashram and its founders worked towards educating local Bhils.

Banswara acceded to independent India in 1947. Meanwhile, the ruler, Chandraveer Singh, ordered elections for the Banswara Legislative Assembly. The Praja Mandal took thirty-five out of the total forty-five seats that were available, leading to the investiture of a popular government by the ruler of Banswara, with Bhupendra Nath Trivedi as the chief minister. The elected government worked out plans for future development within Banswara state, but before these could become fully operational, the state of

Banswara, along with the smaller chiefship of Kushalgarh, was merged into the United State of Rajasthan in March 1948.

PRATAPGARH-DEOLIYA

The process of modernisation began in the state of Pratapgarh-Deoliya during the late nineteenth-early twentieth centuries. In common with other princely states of Rajputana, modern institutions like a hospital, dispensaries, and so forth came to be established in the tiny state during this period. Administrative re-organisations too were carried out from time to time.

The kingdom saw its first regular land-settlement operation during 1905-06. Basically, there had existed three types of land tenures in the kingdom, known as *khalsa*, *chakarana* and *dharmada*. The first category, in common with *khalsa* lands elsewhere, signified land that was the state's property, and was leased out on *ryotwari* system. *Chakarana* constituted lands given in grant to officials (and Rajputs) in recognition of duties performed, while *dharmada* category comprised land granted to Brahmins, Charans, and Bhats and to temples. While no land-revenue was levied on both *chakarana* and *dharmada* lands, these could not be mortgaged or sold.

Prince Man Singh, the eldest son of Maharawal Raghunath Singh (r. 1890-1929), had died during his father's lifetime. Thus, upon the death of Maharawal Raghunath Singh, his grandson, Ram Singh (r. 1929-1948), ascended the *gaddi* of Pratapgarh in 1929. During Ram Singh's reign, Pratapgarh State had three administrative districts. These were the districts of Magara, Pratapgarh and Sagthali. Each was under a *hakim*, who held a degree of judicial authority, besides basic executive and revenue powers. Appeals were heard by a *Sadar-Adalat* Court, and the highest court of appeal was the *Raj-Sabha*, which consisted of eleven members nominated by the Maharawal.

In 1936 Thakkar Bappa visited Pratapgarh. Inspired by his teachings, Amrit Lal Payak, a local social worker, established the Harijan Sewa Samiti

in 1938. In 1946, Amrit Lal Payak helped set-up the state's Praja Mandal (Following Indian independence, Payak served as a minister in Rajasthan's Cabinet). Pratapgarh too went on to sign the Instrument of Accession in 1947. In March 1948, the 886 square miles of territory constituting Pratapgarh-Deoliya state merged with the United State of Rajasthan.

SHAHPURA — FROM CHIEFSHIP TO STATE TO MERGER

As has been noted already, numerous smaller chiefships and principalities had marked the political order of Rajasthan over the centuries. Not all of these had, however, survived the threat of stronger neighbours, rival expansionist tendencies, and the vagaries of time and fortune, to retain their individual entities. Among the few that entered the twentieth century as a formally recognised 'chiefship', one was Shahpura in southern Rajasthan.

This had been established by Sujan Singh, a grandson of Mewar's Maharana Amar Singh I, following the conferring of the Phoolia *pargana* in southern Rajasthan upon him by the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan in December AD 1631. It remained suzerain to Mewar, and nominally, to the Mughals. To this *pargana*, which later became known as Shahpura, the area of Kachola *pargana* was added as a grant from Maharana Sangram Singh II of Mewar in 1718. At the time, Sujan Singh's descendant, Raja Bharat Singh, held the fiefdom. Shahpura's chief, Umaid Singh, was among those who fought on the side of Maharana Ari Singh in the battle against Scindia near Ujjain in January 1769.

Later, Maharana Bhim Singh of Mewar conferred the title of '*Raj-adhiraj*' on Shahpura's then fief-holder, Raja Amar Singh (r. 1796-1827). This was in recognition of Amar Singh's role in suppressing gangs of dacoits that had long plagued the kingdom of Mewar. Later, in the nineteenth century, while continuing to acknowledge the paramountcy of Mewar and paying *khiraj* to that state, Shahpura became a protectorate of the British too.

Meanwhile, from c. 1751 onwards, Shahpura had developed as a centre of the cult known as 'Ram-Snehi', of which there were branches in different parts of northern India. This was founded by Mahatma Ramachandradas, who established a 'Ram-dvara' in Shahpura in 1751. Ram-Snehis have strong faith in Lord Ram, but do not believe in idol-worship. Ram-Snehi sadhus practice life-long celibacy.

In 1827, Amar Singh's son, Madho Singh (r. 1827-45), succeeded to his father's estates and titles, but as he failed to pay the stipulated tribute accruing to the East India Company, the British forfeited the *pargana* of Phoolia in 1829. The lands were subsequently returned four years later, following the intercession of Maharana Jawan Singh of Mewar. Madho Singh died in 1845, to be succeeded by his eight year old son, Jagat Singh, and when the latter died in 1853, without leaving any heir, the succession passed to Laxman Singh of the Kanechan family. Laxman Singh's mismanagement eventually compelled the British Political Agent at Hadauti to march towards Shahpura in November 1869. Fortuitously for Shahpura, the death of Laxman Singh prevented the necessity of any major action.

As Laxman Singh too left no heir, the *jagirdars* of Shahpura estate, with the approval of the British, raised the fifteen-year-old Nahar Singh of Dhanop to the position of their chief and *Raj-adhiraj* in June 1870. Nahar Singh (r. 1870-1932), who received full ruling powers on reaching his majority in 1876, played a major role in the transformation and prosperity of Shahpura. He was responsible for the construction of two large irrigation reservoirs, known as Nahar-Sagar and Ummed-Sagar, respectively, and for increasing the income of the estate to rupees five lakhs.

It was during Nahar Singh's reign that Swami Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj, received an invitation to visit Shahpura. The swami spent about three months as Nahar Singh's guest. Swami Dayanand proved a major influence on Nahar Singh, who became one of his disciples.

As far as relations with Mewar were concerned, in 1910 Nahar Singh declared his autonomy and 'independence' from that parent-state. As such, he stopped the traditional practice of going to the court or *darbar* at Udaipur, to render the obligatory homage due to the rulers of Mewar. This

crisis of state — and indeed of traditional obligations and etiquette — resulted in referral to the British, who ruled that the Shahpura *Raj-adhiraj* was to attend the court of the Maharana of Mewar for a period of one month every two years. Furthermore, Nahar Singh was asked to pay an indemnity of rupees one lakh to the Maharana of Mewar for defying the traditional writ of the latter.

In November 1925 the Chiefship of Shahpura was raised to that of a state by the British, and its ruler became entitled to a nine-gun salute. In June 1932 the seventy-eight-year-old Nahar Singh died, after a long period at the helm of the affairs of Shahpura. He was succeeded by his fifty-six-year-old son, Ummed Singh (r. 1932-1947). Through a mutual arrangement of 1938, the Mayo College-educated Ummed Singh handed over the *pargana* of Kachola to Mewar, and, in turn, Shahpura was deemed free from the traditional obligations previously due to the state of Mewar.

Ummed Singh is regarded as a progressive man, whose achievements included the setting-up of a High School and a Municipal Board at Shahpura. Towards the latter part of his reign, as the national movement gathered momentum across British India, the Shahpura Praja Mandal was established under the leadership of men like Ramesh Chandra Ojha, Laxmi Narain Kantiya and Ladu Ram Vyas. The three were arrested by Shahpura's administration during the course of the Congress-led anti-British Quit India movement of 1942. During the same period, Gokul Lal Asawa, who belonged to Shahpura, was among those arrested and imprisoned at Ajmer by the British authorities. Later, following Asawa's release, Ummed Singh appointed a committee, chaired by Gokul Lal Asawa, for framing the constitution of Shahpura.

In January 1947, before the constitution-framing committee had presented its final recommendations, Ummed Singh opted to abdicate in favour of his son, Sudarshan Deo (r. 1947-48). Sudarshan Deo accepted the recommendations of the Asawa constitution-framing committee, and promulgated the state's new constitution on 14 August 1947. In accordance with the clauses of the constitution, which was acknowledged to be wholly democratic in character, a two member Interim Government was sworn-in, with Gokul Lal Asawa as Shahpura's chief minister.

Soon thereafter, further change seemed to be in the offing for Shahpura, as independent India's new government fixed upon the merger of smaller (non-viable) states, and, in the context of Rajputana, decided to merge Kishangarh and Shahpura into their neighbouring contiguous, centrally administered, territory of Ajmer-Merwara. Kishangarh's Maharaja Sumer Singh signed an Instrument of Merger on 26 September 1947 at Delhi at the urging of the Government of India's Ministry of States. The Rajadhiraj of Shahpura insisted, though, that as he was only the constitutional head by that point, and there was a popular government in Shahpura, he would need to first consult with his chief minister, Asawa. The Ministry of States apparently pressurised the Shahpura Chief quite strongly over his stand. However, Gokul Lal Asawa and the Mewar Praja Mandal leader Manikya Lal Verma, who were both in Delhi at the time for Constituent Assembly related matters, met with Sardar Patel (Minister for States), suggesting that until a larger united state could be created, the merger of Kishangarh and Shahpura need not be rushed. Patel accepted their reasoning and temporarily stayed the merger of Shahpura and Kishangarh. Later, Shahpura merged with the United State of Rajasthan in March 1948, as did Kishangarh.

ALWAR

In the relatively young state of Alwar, its Naruka Rajput Maharaja, Mangal Singh, had been succeeded, in the last decade of the nineteenth century, by his son, Jey Singh (r.1892-1933; exiled by the British 1933; d.1937). At the time, the established administrative pattern was for the ruler to be assisted by a Council — usually of three members.

Upon attaining full ruling powers in 1903, Maharaja Jey Singh initiated various administrative reforms. The services of an experienced officer from Punjab were borrowed; the police department of the state was organised and expanded; a separate Secretariat was established; and a Council of Ministers was constituted along 'modern' lines. The state's army was also overhauled and modernised.

By this time, Alwar State was divided into two revenue Districts, each in charge of a deputy collector. Each district was further divided into six tehsils. The *tehsildars* enjoyed civil as well as criminal powers. Over them were a *faujdar* and a civil judge who not only heard appeals against the judgments of the *tehsildars* but also had original civil and criminal jurisdiction. The District and Session Judge heard appeals against the decisions of the *faujdar* and the civil judge and tried cases beyond their powers. The judiciary was separated from the executive, and village panchayats established throughout the state. These were vested with civil and criminal powers. The highest court was the Council, which was often presided over by the Maharaja in person.

Maharaja Jey Singh started a number of primary and secondary schools in the rural areas, and later a Post-graduate College at Alwar. He upgraded the hospital in the capital and opened dispensaries in the districts, had a number of roads built, and installed a telephone system. He also had irrigation works like Jai Samand, Vijaysagar and Mansarovar built; set in place a network of bunds and canals; took afforestation measures on a large scale and took steps to preserve wild life in the state. Over the ensuing decades, Jey Singh's government also saw the enactment of many acts, rules and ordinances. These included the Forest Regulation Act, 1921; Forest Grazing Rules, 1922; Nazul Property Rules, 1924; Toll Gate Rules, 1932; Marriage and Funeral Ceremonies of the Alwar State, 1933; etc.

Not all of these acts and rules complemented customary law and local traditions — but such 'reforms', partly in keeping with the work on-going in British India, were considered 'progressive' and 'modern' at the time! In fact, the then Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, praised Jey Singh for relieving the people of the state from the spectre of famine¹⁰⁴. Ironically, some of the changed and 'modernised' revenue and forest-related measures often served to worsen the lot of the peasants who were traditionally dependent on local fuel and fodder sources etc. and customary grazing-rights.

“Revenue rationality reclassified the commons, comprising open woods or grasslands, as state land. In Alwar the enclosed areas, called *runds* (grass farms) and *banis* (from *vana* or forest), were primarily to fulfil the grazing and fuel needs of the state. In 1878, 55 expanses had been classified

as runds and banis that covered 72,239 hectares, or approximately half the land classified as under grass and shrubs. ...Not surprisingly, there was intense jagirdari and peasant opposition to this expansion of state rights and colonization *vis-à-vis* the local community. The altered cartography and demarcation of village boundaries by the Rund Department was contested, [but]...State lands, previously restricted to hill summits, began to claim the slopes and the Rund Department restricted the village land to the valley. The state-zamindar dispute was inevitably resolved in favour of the state. The Demarcation Committee of 1899 proposed the formalization of the state's encroachment, allegedly to prevent trespass by village cattle"¹⁰⁵.

The "...commodification of natural resources was witnessed in the exploitation of forests for profit...The State claimed a monopoly over all *kîkar* trees (*Acacia arabica*), irrespective of whether they were found on cultivated or uncultivated land. ...A 'working plan for the Conservator of Forests of the 'Ulwar State' organized [tree] felling 'scientifically' so that the forests of the Ajabgarh valley and Bandikui were cleared. The commercial export of bamboo, fuel and charcoal to markets such as Delhi and Agra was worked out following a review of prices in different cities and towns. 'Minor' forest produce, such as lime, the minerals from copper and iron mines, and elephants, were also marketed. Nearly 12,000 quintals of grass were cut every year and supplied to the State and other areas in Rajasthan. Only subsequently were villagers allowed access. Grazing fees had to be paid to admit cattle to Runds"¹⁰⁶. "...Runds such as Kerwa and Nagla Herou appropriated the entire khalsa and jagir villages of Ghekali, Hemala, and Dewakri, and State income derived from the forest department nearly quadrupled. The State's unrestricted access and the proliferation of carnivores in wooded areas caused great damage to crops. ...The later British castigation of Jey Singh for his anti-agriculturalist policy was in effect an erasure of colonial agency in fostering the restructuring of forest and revenue policies"¹⁰⁷.

In 1907, Alwar was the first princely state to change its official state language from Urdu to Hindi, and the script from the Perso-Arabic to Devnagari. In 1910, Urdu and Persian were banned from all state schools. In 1914 it was ordered that pure Devnagari be used. Jey Singh personally ensured that Alwar's government departments, roads, parks, public

buildings and palaces were given names in chaste Hindi. The title of 'nazim' was changed to 'tehsildar'; his Private Secretary was renamed '*Antarang*', and the Chief Justice '*Dharmraj*'. Jey Singh's contribution towards the propagation of Hindi apparently included giving rupees three lakhs for the publication of a monumental compendium or dictionary called the *Vallabhi (Treyi) Bhasha-Kosha*. Later, he was to give the Chamber of Princes (of which was he among the co-founders), the Hindi name of '*Narendra Mandal*'.

During the First World War, Alwar state supported the war effort of the British Government. The state's Mangal Lancers and Jey Paltan¹⁰⁸ fought on various fronts, including Egypt, Sinai and Gaza. The Maharaja was appointed an honorary Lieutenant Colonel in the British army on 1 January 1915 and an honorary Colonel on 1 January 1921. Very much acceptable to the British at this stage (though they were soon to be alienated by him), Jey Singh became a member of the Indian delegation to the League of Nations in 1922, and the next year attended the Imperial Conference held in London as a representative of India. A prominent figure in the Chamber of Princes, he subsequently participated in the First Round Table Conference convened by the British government in London November 1930.

One of the most colourful personalities amongst the Indian princes of the twentieth century, Jey Singh figures in many British accounts, particularly from the mid-1920s onwards, as the epitome of all the negative aspects of a wicked oriental potentate, while to the majority of his subjects, he personified a 'good' Hindu king¹⁰⁹. (Among other things, Jey Singh banned child-marriage and death feasts). Jey Singh seems to have viewed himself in the light of an ideal Indian monarch as eulogized in traditional literature, and also as a nationalist, who objected to assertions of supremacy by the British. He has been described as consciously forging networks, as did Bharatpur's Maharaja Kishan Singh, with pan-Indian Hindu organizations, working for cow protection, Hindi, and social reform¹¹⁰.

Jey Singh was a participant in the activities of both the Sanatan Dharma Sabha — of which he also served as president, and of the Arya

Samaj¹¹¹. He was also actively involved with the Harikirtan Samaj, established in 1916, which later developed into the Rajrishi Abhay Samaj. The Maharaja presided over this samaj's gatherings, concluding each meeting where he was present with his comments!

(Meanwhile, as in the case of Bharatpur State, the *Shuddhi* Movement¹¹² was actively pursued in Alwar state, particularly after the Muslim League's demand for separate electorates came to the fore. The Sanatan Dharma Sabha's Bharat Dharma Mahamandal and the Arya Samaj workers collaborated in this. "Attempts were made to reconvert Muslim Rajputs and Gujars, and the Meos and Malkanas of Alwar, Bharatpur and the United Provinces. Etah, Mainpuri, Agra and Mathura [all in British Indian United Provinces] became major sites of shuddhi"¹¹³. "...At the state capitals [of Alwar and neighbouring Bharatpur] shuddhi was organized at Arya Samaj temples where Arya Samaj Sabhas and Arya Kumar Sabhas (of young people) were held. The Alwar and Bharatpur state apparatus played a significant role in organizing shuddhi"¹¹⁴. By 1923 *shuddhi* work was endorsed by the Hindu Mahasabha¹¹⁵).

The works of Shail Mayaram and Ian Copland¹¹⁶ are among those that have tried to analyse the multi-faceted Jey Singh, whose intellect was so admired by Montagu in the early part of the twentieth century, and who played a decisive role in the setting up of the 'Chamber of Princes' etc. before falling from grace in British eyes¹¹⁷. Mayaram has looked at many aspects of Jey Singh's life. Among these were his turning from the Shaktism practiced by his ancestors to Vaishnavism; emphasising his descent from Ram; becoming vegetarian; projecting himself as an 'model Hindu ruler'; forbidding the construction of new mosques; and taking a leading role in the affairs of the Sanatan Dharma Sabha, etc.

For, it was not simply that Jey Singh was turning anti-Muslim: Jey Singh is also known to have given donations to the Aligarh Muslim University and sent K.M. Ashraf to England for higher studies. And, Jey Singh's personal behaviour, allegations of being a 'pervert' and sadist; his fiery temper, drinking and womanising, his extravagance and whimsical behaviour etc. did not exactly make him an example of a 'good' Hindu to

be emulated by others. Mayaram and Copland have also looked at the pageantry and imagery projected and cultivated by Jey Singh — including his frequent pilgrimages to Kashi (Varanasi, or Benares, sometimes spelt as Banaras). Upon his arrival back from what was to be his last visit to that site in 1933, Jey Singh disembarked at Alwar railway station wearing the ochre robes of a *sadhu*, and carrying a vessel full of holy water from the Ganga, and scorning the carriages awaiting him, walked to his palace, followed by an adulating and reverential public.

It seems Jey Singh's growing nationalism shaped his mannerisms and language, and his transition to vegetarianism, etc. The once-Westernised Jey Singh apparently underwent a major transformation under the influence of Guru Hansa Swarup (d. 1928), who came to Alwar around 1918, and gave Jey Singh religious initiation. Jey Singh replaced western dress with Indian clothing, burnt western cloth, prohibited imports, and gave up wearing and using leather as footwear, upholstery, etc. (His horses' saddles were thereafter made from silk or cotton fibre). He dismissed the priest of the Raghunath temple at the palace, and taking the title of 'Raj Rishi', possibly in a harking back to the Vedic and Puranic king-sages, took over the Brahmin's role.

However, Jey Singh's piety did not, apparently, mean an end to hedonism and self-indulgence. The Maharaja continued to spend recklessly and put the state into further debt. He also annoyed and irritated the British with his defiant behaviour, and failure to follow 'proper', i.e. submissive, etiquette towards the British Crown and, more importantly for British officers in India, the Crown's representatives. He stopped observing the 'rules of the Game' regarding British paramountcy, and adopted quirky fads and much-publicised eccentricities. These included wearing gloves, to avoid 'pollution', when shaking hands with the British; and importing a Rolls Royce car from Britain and running it on the streets of Alwar as a garbage-collection van. Not surprisingly, Jey Singh's 'nationalism', his patronage of scholars and Indian institutions, his making Lord Ram the state deity, his attempt to replicate a halcyon age of 'traditional India' at his court and capital, and his defiance of the British, earned him the adulation of a large majority of his state's population.

Let us turn now to a different facet of Jey Singh's Alwar, namely, the rights of the ordinary citizens and the effect on Alwar of the nationalist movement in adjacent British Indian territory. While there was a modicum of political consciousness by the 1920s, at least among a small fraction of the educated urban population, but in a scenario where the Maharaja's absolute writ continued to run, and in common with many other states of Rajputana, there was no representative assembly, and popular movements were apt to face trouble from the state. For instance, in 1921, when the Khilafat movement and Gandhi-led swadeshi non-co-operation and boycott of foreign goods were at their peak in parts of British India, an Alwar school-teacher named Brij Narain Acharya encouraged the students of his school to burn their foreign caps, and instead, wear *khadi* (or homespun cotton, also called *khaddar*) caps — which were being called 'Gandhi caps'. Maharaja Jey Singh banned the use of these caps and introduced *pagris* (turbans) as a compulsory headgear for all the students throughout the state.

Alwar state was to see several agrarian-related as well as political agitations during the 1920s. It was also to see some communal tension and incidents that would eventually become the harbinger of serious disturbances around the time of India's partition in 1947. Several developments fostered such a situation. One of these was the slow emergence of a new awareness of self-identity among the Meos. The activities of Hindu and Muslim proselytising groups did not help matters either. We have already taken note of the *shuddhi* movement. Such Hindu attempts saw parallel Muslim polarisations, and vice-versa, until people began to assert their religious identities vociferously and with a growing virulence.

This did not leave the local, indigenous Meos, who had previously been relatively tolerant of inter-faith matters in their day-to-day interactions, wholly untouched either. The 'Mewatis' or Meos¹¹⁸ were proud of their lineage and connection with either Lord Krishna and his Yadu-line, or with Lord Rama, as also, in the case of some genealogical-lines, with the Tomars. They followed their own 'mixed' Hindu and Muslim way of life and religious practices; recited the *Panduvani* — re-telling of the tale of the Mahabharata heroes, at marriages; and celebrated 'traditional

Hindu' festivals like Holi, etc. even if they were descendants of Meos who had converted to Islam during the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries AD, and thereafter.

In 1923 an organisation known as Anjuman-i-Khadim-ul-Islam, was set up in Alwar state by some local Muslims. Aimed at promoting children's education, it also sought to instil the basic tenets of Islam among youngsters. (In 1910, Urdu and Persian had been banned from all state schools, and laws later came to be enacted against private schools. After February 1927, most Muslim private schools were closed down). In time, the organisation began to engage itself in political activities and came in touch with the Anjuman-i-Ahrar of Bombay and Delhi, Jamait-ul-Ulema Tabligh-ul-Islam of Ambala, Jamait-ul-Ulema Islam of Badaun, Rajputana Muslim League (Ajmer), the All India Muslim Conference and other Islamic organisations in British India. Subsequently when communal incidents occurred, it was some of the followers of the Anjuman-i-Khadim-ul-Islam who were blamed. (It also protested the closing of Muslim schools, the law requiring beards to be shaved, and the order that dissolved the Anjuman itself).

By this time, the Maharaja had spent a lot of money on public works, education and health, as well as on himself. All of this had proved a burden on Alwar's state treasury. Raising the rates of land revenue was one way to meet the growing deficit in the state budget. This was to lead to the event known as the 'Neemuchana Tragedy'. The immediate causes of discontent among the peasants in Alwar, was the revised land revenue settlement of 1923-24.

Immediately prior to this, the third Regular Settlement of Alwar state had been started from 31 May 1920 under the supervision of Rai Bahadur Hoti Singh, a retired deputy commissioner of the Punjab administration. Assessment work was completed in the Kishangarh *tehsil* in 1921 and in Ramgarh, Lachhmangarh and Mandawar in 1922. Work in the remaining *tehsils* was taken up thereafter. In the interim, the announcement of new rates of land revenue applicable in Kishangarh and Ramgarh sparked off anti-assessment demonstrations by the land-holders and tenant-farmers. The unrest led the Government to appoint E.R. Abbott, Financial Commissioner

of the Punjab, to revise the settlement, especially with reference to certain rates and the demands placed on certain *tehsils*. However, the result was that the revenue demands for many poorer villages was far higher than for the richer ones, even though a reduction of Rs. 21,000 in the assessment of Kishangarh *tehsil* and of Rs. 10,000 each in that of Ramgarh and Mandawar *tehsils* was recommended.

In October 1922, Hoti Singh resigned. Rai Sahib Pandit Nand Lal Tikku now became Alwar's Settlement Commissioner. His tasks included assessment of the Behror *tehsil*, so that the state government could introduce new rates there for the *kharif* crop straightaway, and to revise revenue demands for the Ramgarh, Kishangarh and Mandawar *tehsils* in view of Abbott's recommendations. Over the course of the next year or so, Tikku revised the assessment of the suggested areas, inspected 887 villages, and completed assessment of the remaining six *tehsils* of Behror, Thana Ghazi, Rajgarh, Tijara, Alwar and Bansur. The basis of assessment was cash rent in accordance with the class of soils etc., with the state's share placed at two-thirds of the total net assets.

This land revenue settlement enhanced the revenue demand on *khalsa* lands from the Rs. 20.73 lakhs that it was in the year 1900, to Rs. 29.39 lacs in 1923-24. While the state demand doubled from the time of Impey's first Summary Settlement in 1859, it was accompanied by a withdrawal of privileges vis-à-vis rates of revenue — or even exemption from revenue-demands, enjoyed by the Rajput cultivators. The abolition of the privileged status previously enjoyed by the Rajputs caused further major discontent.

Alwar state also had some non-*khalsa* lands, i.e. the *jagir*, *istmirari* and *muafi* lands, which covered about fifteen per cent of the total area of Alwar state, and had previously not been covered by regular land-revenue settlement. During 1923-24, Maharaja Jey Singh ordered for the first time that these lands also be surveyed and their revenues settled. Thus, in the third Regular Settlement, the *muafi* villages were also surveyed along with *khalsa* villages. However, in *jagir* villages, settlement operations were opposed and obstructed by the *jagirdars* and it was with great difficulty (and personal persuasion by the Maharaja himself), that the work was completed, though the Settlement Officer's report was never made public.

Despite protests, various *jagir* and *muafi* rules were revised. (These were further amended in 1926). In the case of the land-holding main and cadet-lines of the Rajput *jagirdars*, a rationalization and codification of land grants was undertaken. The rights of the cadet-lines and younger scions of the nobility were curbed too, in favour of the eldest — or '*tikai*'. *Jagirdars* became liable to the resumption of their *jagirs*, without compensation, if found guilty of waging war, spreading sedition or disaffection against the ruler, or if there was no lineal descendant, or for public purposes, if deemed necessary by the state.

All in all, the enhanced revenue demands by the state, following a fresh land settlement in Alwar, led to an agitation by the agrarian groups, since it affected peasants and fief-holders alike. The aggrieved farmers first made representations to the Alwar state, but when they failed to get any positive response, they decide not to pay any revenue to the state and, at some places they even took away their produce by force. In the case of the local Meo peasantry, the Meo panchayat demanded the restoration of certain traditional revenue rights and the abolition of *laag* etc. in *jagir* areas, along with protesting against the arrest of zamindars and the seizure of lands. Meanwhile, representations to the state government stressed the need to reduce the revenue demand. Subsequent disquieting incidents and continued protests eventually led Alwar state's authorities to appoint a Commission of Enquiry to look into growing discontentment among the peasantry.

Shortly afterwards on 14 May 1925, occurred the tragic 'Neemuchana Incident'. This occurred in the wake of land measurements in the *tehsils* of Bansur and Ghazi-ka-Thana (now known as Thana Ghazi) and imposition of new revenue rates. Even the Shekhawat clan Rajput Thakur of Neemuchana openly defied the decision of the Government. Alwar state's Neemuchana *Thikana* had *biswedari* rights. In 1925 the state increased the tax on agricultural lands. Land revenue demand was increased by fifty per cent and several other taxes imposed. Agriculturalists of all communities were hard-hit, and even some of the Rajput fief-holders co-operated with the farmers (*kisans*). The Rajput farmers gave a representation to the Maharaja, and when their representation won no response, they approached the AGG. For this they earned the Maharaja's ire.

On 14 May 1925, about a thousand Rajput landholders and *kisans* began assembling at village of Neemuchana, in the Bansur *nizamat*, to discuss a common plan of future action. Even as it was decided that they wait upon the Maharaja and seek justice, armed state police and army men reached the village. (Some subsequent reports gave their strength as five hundred infantrymen and State Lancers, and a hundred artillerymen with machine-guns). The official version of Alwar state was that after some shots were fired from the village, the Inspector General of Police ordered his men to return fire, as a result of which thirteen were killed. However, the account culled together by journalists and later enquiries indicates that the Inspector General of Police told the assembled people to repent their act of approaching the British AGG, and then ordered his forces to open fire. The state forces also took control of the village wells, entered houses and thrashed children and women, and set fire to the village. A subsequent enquiry committee found that 156 people had died on the spot and over 600 seriously wounded, many of them dying later from their injuries. Several of the wounded were taken as prisoners to Alwar, where they were sentenced to twenty years' hard labour. Neighbouring villagers were also punished, and the *biswedari* rights of the Neemuchana Thakur confiscated.

Strict censorship initially kept news of this outrage from spreading out, but newspapers like *Tarun Rajasthan* managed to publish the facts surrounding the atrocities by the state, following which the national newspapers publicised the matter. While Alwar's Maharaja Jey Singh professed ignorance about the firing, and Mahatma Gandhi referred to the Neemuchana tragedy as 'Rajputana's Jallianwala Bagh', and as 'Dyerism double distilled', the British interceded in the matter. Jey Singh ordered an enquiry into the events. The subsequent report shook public opinion all over India. In November 1925 Alwar state withdrew the new rates of revenue demand, bringing the agitation to an end. Meanwhile, strong protests by all the 133 *jagirdars* and fief-holders led to a repeal of the recently introduced 'Jagir' rules as well.

The year 1925 saw some trouble on a different front as well. On 29 August 1925, on the occasion of *Jaljhulni Ekadashi*, as a religious *dola* procession of the deity Shri Thakurji Maharaj was carried in a procession at Tijara, the beating of drums and music were stopped by the Muslims near

the Jama Masjid on the plea that it was their prayer time. After the prayers were over, the procession resumed but when it reached the front of the mosque, brickbats and stones were hurled at the procession. A police official was knocked down, people injured, and the drums and conches etc. seized. The *dola* paraphernalia etc. remained at one of the nearby temples till the passage was cleared by the Munsif Magistrate next day. The matter was resolved, but communal embers were apparently beginning to be fanned.

As far as other political movements went, Alwar's Sedition Law, patterned on the Government of India's law, held that no public meetings could be held for discussing any political subject, or for the exhibition and distribution of related written and printed materials. Proximity to Delhi, however, eased the spread of nationalist ideas common with British India. Around 1928, a Praja Mandal was created in Alwar. This stood for reforms in the state administration, popular rights for the people; the restoration of *biswedari* rights in *jagir* and *muafi* villages; and a reduction in the rates of assessment. The organisation attracted few followers until about 1931. (By this time, Bhawani Sahai Sharma of Alwar was a known active member of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army. Arrested in 1932, under the 1818 Regulations, and sentenced to seven years in prison; he was released in 1939).

Meanwhile, communal harmony was again disturbed in 1929. The dispute arose in the village of Harsana in Lachhmangarh *tehsil* and centred on a *neem* tree belonging to a *mali* community man who had dedicated it to Lord *Bhairon* and placed an idol of that deity at the base of the tree. The tree was situated on the route through which the annual procession of *tazias* used to pass during the observance of Moharrum. Up to 1927 the height of the *tazias* was such that they could pass beneath the tree without any problem, but in 1928 the height of the *tazias* was suddenly raised, so that a branch of the tree proved obstructive. The problem was averted by inducing the Muslims to detach the upper portion of the *tazias* and then pass beneath the tree. The Muslims asked that the obstructive branch be cut before the next (i.e. 1929) *tazia* procession. The Inspector General of Police and other officers visited the village and decided in favour of the owner of the tree. The Muslims were given three alternatives. One was to construct *tazias* of a

size that could pass under the tree without obstruction. The second was to detach the upper portion of the *tazias* when passing under the tree, as had been done in 1928. The third was to reduce the heights of the *tazias*, as had been the case in the past. Ignoring these suggestions, large *tazias* were prepared. On 17 June 1929, a panchayat of Meos demanded the obstructing branch be cut, but this demand was turned down. Thousands of Meos from other villages entered Harsana village and the offending branch was cut; and the idol removed from the place. The Nazim and Munsif reached the spot and the crowd melted away. A senior Inspector was deputed to investigate the case, which was heard by the Sessions Judge. Some people were convicted.

By 1930, the raised rates of revenue, extra taxes, curtailing of traditional grazing and forestry rights, work of different organisations in the area of religion, and growing proselitization, had added to the worsening economic conditions of the rural peasants. This was particularly so in the case of the Meos, who formed a sizable proportion of the population of Alwar state. From about the winter of 1931 onwards, protests and calls for reforms or relief-measures began to gather voice among Meos. Early in 1932, a no-rent campaign, which had started from the Kishangarh *nizamat*, spread as the Meos of other *nizamats* refused to pay the revenue for the season as their crops had been damaged by floods. Panchayat gatherings heard the problems of the farmers, even as the police were driven away from the hills. About this time, even as a sizeable population of the Meos under the leadership of Yasin Khan protested against high taxation, the neighbouring state of Bharatpur sought British help in quelling the movement before it spread and affected larger parts of Meo-populated tracts in that state and became a movement for against feudalism.

Summarising the socio-economic conditions of the time, the British Indian Political Department records noted that excessive taxation was levied on the cultivators at a time of severe agricultural depression, when they were already bearing the burden of land revenue, customs and octroi demands that were between forty and fifty per cent more than the already high assessment fixed by Michael O'Dwyer in his 1899-1900 settlement¹¹⁹. It seems that one of the reasons Alwar was levying high rates of taxes and cess was due to Jey Singh's personal ambitions. As the ruler of a

comparatively small state (it measured 3,141 sq miles), Jey Singh could not hope to compete financially with the rulers of the larger states like Bikaner, Gwalior, Kashmir and Patiala, whom he considered his main rivals in the Chamber of Princes and in the eyes of the British. One way of enhancing Alwar's position was by increasing the state's revenue intakes.

Almost all available accounts, written and oral, indicate that agrarian problems or grievances lay at the root of one kind of unrest and tension which became manifest through incidents at Neemuchana and later Govindgarh etc. These did not have any communal tinge until some still later developments which allowed rival contending groups to incorporate such agrarian and economic conflicts of interest into their communal collective psyche. Even at the all India level, though the Muslim League had appeared on the scene in the first decade of the twentieth century, it had been a rather marginal body. The Khilafat movement and the Jamaat-ul-Ulema etc. who worked for the intellectual and spiritual awakening among the Muslims, were centre-stage. On the other hand, while the Arya Samaj had been active in the area of education and social reform for some decades, the political wing of the Hindu Mahasabha had emerged in the wake of the failure of the Congress and Khilafat non-cooperation movements.

Soon, Alwar state became fertile ground for 'rival' activities: with the Arya Samaj pursuing the *shuddhi* movement, and the Ulema its counter-strategy of '*Tabligh*'. To an extent, these were largely limited to the urban areas and to the emerging middle class of professionals, and merchants and shop-keepers, except that the Arya Samaj also sought to include the Khanzadas and the Meos of the region.

Meanwhile, 'community-related' but not necessarily 'communal' issues were also coming to the fore — mainly in the urban areas. These were not necessarily linked with the agrarian issue, but were not averse, either, from giving support to the agrarian and economic problems of the peasants. In March and April 1932, the Anjuman-i-Khadim-ul-Islam organised some meetings and demonstrations, and at its meeting in Alwar's Jama Masjid at Alwar on 22 April, eighteen demands were put forward. That the agrarian and economic problems of the Meo *kisans* needed to be

addressed was something that became centre-stage in due course over the ensuing period. At a meeting of Meo '*lamberdars*' called at Kishangarh, it was resolved that they would not furnish security bonds if and when called upon to do so. At a meeting held at Ramgarh, a prominent supporter of the Anjuman called for a satyagraha against paying customs duty. Another gathering of Meos at Nuh was advised to pay no interest on loans to the money-lenders (who were traditionally Hindu *banias*).

On 17 May 1932 there was an incident that took communal overtones at Bahadurpur, where about 40,000 Meos had assembled for the Moharram procession. On this occasion, an iron sheet of a shop's verandah was forcibly pulled down and the residence of the shop owner was stoned. About twenty-four other thatched buildings were damaged and a riot broke out, which seems to have affected nearby areas too. Accounts appeared in the Muslim papers of British India, leading to the All India States' Information Bureau sending its secretary to Alwar for making enquiries. Subsequently, the Bureau issued a communiqué advising the Anjum's activists within Alwar state to desist from mischievous propaganda.

Shortly afterwards, trouble broke out at Alwar¹²⁰. On 28 May 1932, a Gangaji procession was organised by the Rajput leadership for installing an idol in a new temple. That evening, a procession was organised by the Muslims for carrying a '*chadar*' (covering for the tomb of a holy person) to the mosque of Hazrat Mubarak Ali. The next morning, saw a large procession in honour of Lord Shiva on the streets of Alwar, while that evening there was another *chadar* procession. This was allegedly taken out without the prior permission of the authorities. (However, the Kotwal's testimony at the subsequent Commission of Enquiry was that this procession and rituals at the tomb of the Muslim saint was an annual affair in which persons of both religions had traditionally taken part). It was during this evening procession of 29 May that either an initial misunderstanding, or else a deliberate act to cause mischief, flared up into a heated exchange of words and then turned into a riot. The state's 'Jey Paltan' was summoned and it controlled the situation by resorting to firing, which dispersed the mob. However, the Anjuman's version insisted that the procession was deliberately attacked by the Hindu Sangh's Thakur Bhawani Singh of Kesroli and Sultan Singh of Naharpur and some supporters at

Tripolia Gate, and thereafter, as the procession reached the Malakhera Gate, the state's Jey Paltan fired without provocation upon the Muslim crowd in the procession. Curfew and prohibitory orders were imposed.

The report of the Commission of Enquiry that was convened to look into the matter accepted the version of the Jey Paltan, which held that the responsibility for the trouble was solely that of the Anjuman, and that the Paltan had shot after 'grave provocation' and in 'self defence'. Muslim organizations charged the state with partiality to Hindus in the investigations. The 'Khudamul Muslemeen' organization was banned and its leaders arrested. Many Muslims, alleging repression, left Alwar and found refuge at Delhi, Jaipur, Rewari, Gurgaon, Hissar, Agra and Bharatpur.

When Maharaja Jey Singh, at the time at Mt. Abu, heard about what had happened, he immediately appealed to the people of Alwar state through a *Shahi Farman* (royal command) that they ought to revive their traditional cordial relationship between the two communities. The appeal gained a positive response, and a joint inter-faith committee presented an "address" to the Maharaja on his return to Alwar from Mt. Abu on Raksha-bandhan day. The Maharaja tied *rakhis* (ritual protective threads) around the wrist of representatives of the Hindu and Muslim communities, and reassured all his subjects of his protection to all of them.

By this time, the on-going unrest among the agrarian population — of whom Meos formed a significant part, was gaining a momentum of its own. Land-revenue collection was being ruthlessly carried forward, with beatings, punishment, torture and dispossession from land and property part of the coercive mechanisms being used by the state's officials. As such, incidents at the villages of Thos and Dhamukar in Kishangarh *nizamat* in November 1932, became rallying points for the Meo peasants¹²¹.

In retaliation for Meo resistance, Dhamukar was set on fire on 17 November 1932 by the local *nazim* and picketed by troops, cutting it off from communication with the outside world. The Meos posted armed peasants along the hillside to keep watch, and took other actions that were interpreted by the state authorities as constituting organised rebellion. Messages were sent by the Dhamukar villagers to other Meo villages stating

that, in view of the government attack on Dhamukar, all Hindus and Muslims of the forty-four Meo villages of the *tehsil* should be ready with arms to come and help upon receiving intimation. On its part, Alwar state's authorities were informing everyone that the people of Dhamukar had collected arms, ammunition and men, to wage war against the government of Alwar. However, the Meo leadership constantly denied the state's claim that the movement was either communal, or a sudden outburst, and insisted agrarian distress to be the real issue, to which newspapers were giving a communal tinge. The early phase of the movement saw the participation of Gujars, Ahirs, Jats and Meenas in a meeting of the people of Tijara, Ramgarh and Kishangarh held on 22 November.

However, it is said that there was intimidation of both Hindus and Muslims by the Meos to stop them giving land revenue, and to take 'subscriptions' from them for the 'cause'. Defaulting resulted in acts of violence, such as when an Ahir village was burnt. Meanwhile, the leadership of Hindu organisations alleged that movement's anti-Hindu implications, even as arms and ammunition were reported to have been collected in large quantities within the state and outside it, allegedly from Muslim organisations. However, the British later found that the arms were few and technologically outdated, and appear to have come mainly through the large numbers of retired Meo military personnel. The counter-mobilization of the local rural Hindu castes by Thakur Bhawani Singh's Hindu Sangh is said to have created a Muslim bogey that was held responsible for all ills; prevented the collaboration of the Ahir and Meena peasantry with the Meos; and split the peasant mobilization in Alwar along both caste and religious lines¹²².

Almost immediately afterwards, the Meo peasant uprising of 1932-33 came to be viewed by the Alwar state as 'communal' in nature, for which 'external instigation' of Muslims from outside the state (i.e. Gurgaon and other parts of British India), was largely to blame. However, contemporary British reports, several depositions before subsequent enquiry committees and the 'Alwar State Agrarian Grievances Commission', and the oral narrative tradition of the Meos¹²³, would suggest something else. Namely, that the 'Meo Uprising' was basically an issue linked with the agrarian and economic plight of the peasants in the face of high revenue and tax

demands, seizure of lands for failure to pay dues, poor monsoons, world-wide economic depression and administrative misrule¹²⁴.

(Later, A.C. Lothian commented on the burden of forty-eight per cent revenue demand from the peasants, and on the fact that no other state took both customs and octroi taxes from its people. Municipalities, established in all villages with a population exceeding 2000, collected octroi. There were many other taxes, as a later official report by Wylie emphasised. These included house, shop, marriage, chowkidari, cattle, and grazing taxes. The state even auctioned cattle dung, though this was collected by individual cultivators).

Maharaja Jey Singh appointed a commission comprising Rao Bahadur Raja Durjan Singh, *jagirdar* of Jaoli (and, hierarchically, one of the senior-most nobles of Alwar state), Alwar's revenue minister, Raja Ghaznafar Ali, and Lala Ganeshi Lal, retired tehsildar, as its members, to look into the peoples' grievances. The Commission was told to cover all the ten *nizamats* — or administrative divisions, of Alwar state, and not restrict itself to only the three *nizamats* where the Meos formed the largest part of the local population. The Meos objected vehemently to Ghaznafar Ali's appointment, stating that he lacked revenue-related experience and, instead, asked for F.L. Brayne or any other British Political Officer. When the Maharaja refused their request, the Meo leadership declared they had lost faith in the commission.

The commission toured eight out of the ten *nizamats* and learned the views of the people who collected at the headquarters of each *nizamat*. A few days before the commission was due to visit Tijara, a panchayat of Meos was convened at Phula Bas, where sharp differences of opinion emerged over the issue of appearing before the commission. It was finally settled that the president of the panchayat (a pensioner from the British Indian army), should go to Gurgaon and consult the leaders there about the matter. Eventually, the Meos of Kishangarh and Tijara did not appear before the commission as they were advised not to do so, in accordance with a resolution of no-confidence against the commission, passed at a conference of the Anjuman held at Firozpur Jhirka.

The report of the commission noted that the agitation in the Mewat *nizamats* of Alwar State was mainly the result of the activities of outside elements and agitators, and was carried out by the members of the (defunct) Anjuman-i-Khadim-ul-Islam of Alwar. The commission also reported that a number of retired British Indian Army soldiers had taken a leading role in organising the Meos in a military fashion with the aim of provoking the state authorities. On the agrarian issue, the commission recommended that the cultivators of Alwar state and the British Indian Gurgaon area (which was outside Alwar's territories) needed to work in cooperation, and felt that if the situation got out of control the British territory could be used by those escaping justice in Alwar. In view of the commission's findings, Alwar's ruler asked the Government of India to curb the infiltration of trouble-makers into Alwar, though nothing effective was attempted on the agrarian reforms front.

On 12 December 1932, Jey Singh held a public durbar, which was attended by the AGG in Rajputana. At the durbar, Jey Singh called upon Muslims who had left the State to return back without any fear whatsoever (unless someone was involved in a criminal offence and warrants had been issued, in which case the offenders needed to submit written apologies within ten days). He informed the gathering that all Shias imprisoned following the riot at Bahadurpur on the previous Moharrum had already been released, and announced a remission of fifty percent in the land revenue demand on the current harvest for the people living in Bahadurpur. Refuting charges of being anti-Muslim, Jey Singh declared that he had never "...prevented any religious education being given to any one my people".

Clarifying the position regarding the State's allegedly high land revenue and customs duties, Maharaja Jey Singh pointed out that all the land revenue settlements in the state had been conducted by officers from British India. These were the '16 years' Settlement' done by Colonel P.W. Powlett, the 'Second Settlement' by Sir Michael O'Dwyer and the Third Settlement' by Rai Bahadur Pt. Nand Lal Tikku, whose services had been borrowed from the Government of Punjab. The assessment of land revenue had been done by these settlement officials of the British Indian government, and Alwar state had not raised the revenue demands by so

much as a single *pie*, but rather often granted remissions and suspensions when the need arose. On the subject of customs revenue, Jey Singh pointed out that the right of imposing customs duty was restored to the state after a lapse of fifty years as a result of a modification in the nineteenth century Salt Treaty with the British Government, and the existing rates of duties had been decided after comparison with customs duties applicable in the adjoining territories of Bharatpur and Jaipur. Jey Singh further emphasised that, while the agrarian situation was affected almost similarly across the world due to the global depression, he was announcing a remission of rupees three lakh and ten thousand to help Alwar's cultivators.

However, the ruler's announcements and concessions did not satisfy the Meo cultivators of Alwar state, and soon the movement of refusing to pay land revenues, and of forcing people to give 'subscriptions' to their cause, assumed serious proportions. The Meos disrupted communications between Tijara and Kishangarh; consciously broke the hunting laws, shooting deer, pigs and blue bulls at the *runds* of Jugrawar and Fatehbad; set fire to state-owned forests and grass lands; and attacked octroi posts. Some villages were looted. The defiant mood of the Meos, and a belief that they were making preparations to fight, led the Alwar government to invite the AGG, who was the Political Advisor to Alwar, to visit the state. The Military Advisor in Rajputana accompanied the AGG.

In January 1933 a communal riot at Tijara led to many deaths. Jey Singh telegraphed for British troops several times early in January 1933, which, he stated, would be used only for a military demonstration on the Mewat frontier. Jey Singh also said he would pay for the troops deployed. Oglivie, the AGG for Rajputana, supported his request. In due course, however, rather than just a 'demonstration', cavalry squadrons were sent to Tijara and Kishangarh, and infantry to Ramgarh.

Govindgarh, in Alwar state's Ramgarh *nizamat*, became the site of violence almost immediately. On 5 January 1933, Column B of the Jey Paltan from Ramgarh, accompanied by a Munsif Magistrate, found a meeting of the Meos in progress, and taking forcible 'subscriptions' from the Banias. The troops arrested about twenty-five Meos, but road-blocks prevented the army trucks from taking the arrested men to Alwar. The

troops apparently returned to Govindgarh, where Meos from all over the area (estimated to be about 30,000 according to some reports) had collected.

The Munsif Magistrate alleged that the Meos then surrounded the *nizamat* building where the troops were lodged and threatened a pitched battle unless those arrested were released. Thereafter, successive Meo advances were repulsed, until about 8,000 Meos advanced on the troops camping in the Nizamat building and surrounded it, but (according to the Munsif), even though some soldiers were wounded by the Meos, the troops themselves did not fire a shot except from the roof of the police *thana* or station and the *nizamat* building. The following morning (6 January), when the troops left Govindgarh, it was claimed that they were followed for three miles by a hostile Meo mob, which fired ‘hundreds of shots’, until the troops were ordered to shoot back ‘in self defence’.

(Ibbotson’s subsequent ‘Govindgarh Enquiry Report’, called the official version a ‘fabrication’, though he also questioned the Meo version which held that no meeting was going on and they were only offering prayers at a mosque. Noting that, following the Munsif Magistrate’s warning, 534 rounds of ammunition were fired, Ibbotson found that ‘force far beyond what was necessary was used’, and that the Magistrate and Captain, on arrival, had met local (non-Meo) merchants, who had pointed out persons to be arrested. Ibbotson also noted that the troops could have taken their prisoners back to Alwar on the evening of 5 January without recourse to firing, and that it was only by the following morning that the roads were blocked. However, it was Alwar state’s version of the Govindgarh events that came to be propagated. Ibbotson’s report came much later (when its purpose was more towards explaining Jey Singh’s deposition from the Alwar *gaddi*), by which time the Meo version or voice had been drowned by the more dominant official perspective of the events, as seen from the eyes of the state. It was Alwar state’s version that got wide circulation — and this emphasised the ‘threatening attitude’ of the Meos, who had taken to communal violence, and how the agitation was ‘engineered by an outside agency’).

On 10 January 1933, British troops were sent in to control the situation, and administer the ‘disturbed area’. Martial law was declared, and

the four predominantly Meo *nizamats* of Ramgarh, Lachhmangarh, Tijara and Kishangarh were placed under Colonel A.W. Ibbotson, who was given the powers of a Special Commissioner for carrying out 'pacification'. British troops remained in the 'disturbed areas' till 15 August 1933.

The British urged Jey Singh for an assurance that his government would examine and resolve the peoples' grievances, and also urged the need for wholesale reforms in the revenue, taxation and financial system of the state. It was suggested that some temporary concessions (like suspending octroi and customs duties, ending grazing taxes, and allowing the right to religious education), be announced from 15 January. In February 1933 there was an uprising by cultivators, which was put down by armed might, even as many farmers in neighbouring Bharatpur showed willingness to join in the Meo no-tax movement.

Alwar's Maharaja was now 'loaned' the services of British India's Francis Vernon Wylie¹²⁵ of the ICS to carry out the administration of Alwar as its new Prime Minister (1933 - December 1934). For the next four years and a bit, four British civilians and one army officer would hold the charge of Prime Minister of Alwar between February 1933 and June 1937. A post of Advisory Minister was created. Thakur Durjan Singh of Jaoli was appointed to this, with charge of the departments of police, and '*Punnya and Muafiyat*' (Charities and Religious Land-Grants). Meanwhile, upon handing over his charge of the 'disturbed areas', Ibbotson took over the post of Alwar's Revenue Minister. Ibbotson found that it was not just only the amount, but also the mode of revenue collection, and the associated coercion and torture to extract payments by the state officials, that was a major issue for the poor peasants. Petitioners protested the state's seizure of so-called wastelands; the sale of submerged land by auction, thereby destroying many a prosperous village; increased cesses; the use of forced *begaar* labour for building tanks and roads, and so on.

Gradually the conflict between Jey Singh and his British administrators intensified. The Maharaja insisted that petitions should not be accepted in Urdu, but only in Hindi. He refused Ibbotson's suggestion to bring in special magistrates to try the cases and insisted that his own munsifs would do the job. Eventually, in May 1933, the British asked

Maharaja Jey Singh to hand over the administration completely, and exiled him from Rajputana. Later, he was asked to expedite his departure to Europe on ground of 'maladministration', failure to co-operate with the Government, and in particular his refusal to agree with Ibbotson's and Wylie's proposals regarding remissions. (In 1935, Wylie's revised assessment of the previous settlement reduced the state demand to Rs. 21.6 lakhs, thus bringing it generally to the level of, and at places even below, the assessment fixed by O' Dwyer. Wylie did no field work, but only revised the assessment in consultation with local officers).

Major W.F Campbell succeeded Wylie as Prime Minister of Alwar in December 1934. In May 1935 the AGG announced that Jey Singh's period of exile, which was due to end that month, had been extended by the Viceroy, Lord Willingdon. On 24 September 1935, the Resident held a *darbar*, where the people were asked to remain loyal to the existing administration and informed that the Government of India, wishing to repair the damages of past misrule and ensure a good administration, had undertaken full responsibility for administration until the finances of Alwar were rehabilitated, the administrative machinery re-organised and the population restored to a measure of prosperity. It was further announced that the scheme for relieving the state of its indebtedness necessitated the continuance of the Government of India's control for at least fifteen years and there were no prospects of Maharaja Jey Singh's return during that period.

While Jey Singh remained in Europe, and the British continued to administer the state of Alwar, Meo linkages with the Alwar Praja Parishad (set up in 1934), and with the Congress in British Indian Mewat, began to be established¹²⁶. The Praja Parishad sought to get Alwar's Meos to join their activities, and followed up on the demands raised by peasants, including restoration of rights in the *jagir* and *muafi* villages, and return of areas taken over by the Forests Department. Even so, it was the Alwar State Meo Panchayat, set up on 30 June 1935¹²⁷, which remained the main voice of the Meos, rather than any one of the political parties or organisations, whether Praja Parishad/ Mandal, or a Muslim body.

Jey Singh died on 19 May 1937 in Paris. His body was brought to Alwar where his final rites took place amidst an outpouring of public grief. As Jey Singh had no son, and had not formally adopted an heir, the British Government had designated Tej Singh of Thana as successor to Jey Singh. Thus, Maharaja Sawai Tej Singh (r. 1937-48) ascended the Alwar *gaddi* in July 1937. A public meeting was organised by Kunj Bihari Lal Modi, Hari Narain Sharma and others, to protest Tej Singh's accession. The organisers were prosecuted for sedition and imprisoned, and the agitation ended almost as soon as it had started.

In 1938, the year of the Haripura session of the Congress, an Alwar Rajya Praja Mandal was formed, with Hari Narayan Sharma and Kunj Behari Lal Modi amongst its founder-members. The Alwar government refused to register the Praja Mandal because the organisation's proclaimed objectives failed to satisfy the Maharaja. Around the same time, the Alwar government increased tuition fees in schools. The Praja Mandal launched an agitation, as a result of which several workers including Kunj Behari Lal Modi, Hari Narayan Sharma and Nathu Ram Modi were arrested and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. Master Bhola Nath, who later on played an important part in the struggle for 'responsible government' in Alwar State, was among the participants in this movement. Over the next few years, the Alwar Praja Mandal led the call for responsible government, an overhaul of the price control department, and measures to check official corruption. It organised public meetings at various venues.

Following the outbreak of the Second World War, Alwar State agreed to accord formal recognition to the state's Praja Mandal in 1940, but soon differences arose between the state and the Praja Mandal over issues connected with land and peasant rights in the *jagirdari* areas. An agitation was launched for the abolition of different types of taxes and cess — *laag-bhaagbheynt*, and against atrocities committed by the landed *zamindars*. The Praja Mandal also started an agitation against the state government's attempts at raising a war fund. The state adopted repressive measures, and arrested office-bearers of the Praja Mandal and many other people. Some of the sentences meted out provided for two years rigorous imprisonment. The Congress president was requested to intervene with state authorities.

In August 1942, consequent to Mahatma Gandhi's call to the British to Quit India, Alwar's Praja Mandal launched a satyagraha for obtaining 'responsible government' in the state, and Praja Mandal leaders Shobha Ram and Kripa Dayal Mathur successfully organized a large scale demonstration in Alwar. Matters cooled somewhat during 1943-45, possibly because British India's Congress party leadership were imprisoned. It was also in 1942 that Maulvi Abdul Qaddus organized the Kishangarh Meos against payment of land revenue. When Tijara, Govindgarh and other areas also revolted, the Maharaja sent the army against the Meos¹²⁸. In 1944 the first session of the Alwar Praja Mandal was held. The same year, the Rajputana States Political Worker's Association also held its first session in Alwar. The meetings repeated demands for responsible government in Alwar.

Early in 1946, Alwar's Rajya Praja Mandal again launched an agitation demanding responsible government. Meetings were organised to advocate the cause of the peasant-farmers. One of the main demands of the Praja Mandal was for a regular settlement and assessment of *jagir* and *muafi* lands, in order to curb tyranny and extortion by *jagirdars* who held proprietary rights over land in *jagir* and *muafi* villages, and often extracted their revenue dues and cesses by force. The Praja Mandal also wanted an end to the forced ejection of tenants from lands in their possession; the conferment of proprietary rights on the villagers of the zamindari forest area along with suitable compensation for the zamindari forest area that had been sold by the state; and the opening of fair price grain shops and sale of sugar, kerosene, etc. to the public. The Praja Mandal also demanded an end to corruption in the state's administration.

On 2 February 1946, Master Bhola Nath and others of the Praja Mandal organised a protest meeting of *kisans* in the *jagir* village of Khera Mangal Singh to condemn the oppression of local *jagirdars*. Taking pre-emptive action, the state authorities arrested Master Bhola Nath, Shobha Ram, Bhawani Sahai Sharma, Kais Ram Gupta and Shanti Swaroop Datta, and several others on the night before the scheduled meeting. In protest the schools and the only college in Alwar were closed. The meeting went ahead as scheduled, and was attended by about 7,000 persons. Protest-processions were organised at Alwar and other towns on 2 and 3 February, with the

capital-city observing a *hartal* (strike) for about a week. Prominent citizens who showed support for the Praja Mandal's demand for 'responsible government' were arrested. The Alwar Bar Association passed a resolution calling on the authorities to release the arrested leaders.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru condemned the action of the Alwar Government as going against the declaration guaranteeing civil liberties and administrative reforms, which had been made in the Chamber of Princes on 19 January 1946. While Nehru asked Jai Narain Vyas, the general secretary of States' Peoples Conference, to report in the situation, the Chamber of Princes too sought information on the matter.

The 8th of February was marked as an 'Anti Repression Day' across the state. Educational institutions and factories remained closed, even as scores of people from diverse areas of Alwar State assembled at the capital. A procession, in which women were in the front, followed by college and school students, marched from Alwar's 'Purana Katra' area to meet Hira Lal Shastri as he arrived by train to discuss the situation with Alwar's Prime Minister, Sir S.M. Bapna. On reaching the prime minister's residence, the procession held a demonstration there.

The Alwar Rajya Praja Mandal was charged with inciting trouble, and for having been responsible for a strike previously held on 25 and 26 January by Alwar government's low-paid clerical staff for better wages. The Alwar prime minister further maintained that as the Praja Mandal had been engaged in furthering a 'no-rent' campaign, and other subversive activities, the state had been forced to take action against them. The discussions between Shri Hira Lal Shastri and the prime minister of Alwar resulted in the release of the arrested people on 10 February. The released leaders were taken in a triumphant procession to the 'Purana Katra', where a public meeting was held. Afterwards, the Rajya Praja Mandal leaders met Alwar's prime minister on three occasions during March to June 1946, in connection with the establishment of a responsible government.

On 26 March 1946, a Meo Panchayat was held at Govindgarh where members of the Muslim League showed support to them. On 31 March 1946, a *maulvi* (religious preacher) from Poonch (Kashmir), who had asked

villagers of the Kishangarh *nizamat* not to pay arrears on tobacco excise duty, was arrested (as were five local residents), by armed state troops led by a District Magistrate. Angry Meos marched from Rata Khurd, Basi Kalan and other adjoining villages and assembled on a hillock near Rata Kalan. By 2 April, about 300 armed Meos were north-east of the District Magistrate's camp. In the face of threatening behaviour by the Meos and their refusal to disperse, the military opened fire.

One man was killed and six were injured. Eight persons, including the injured, were arrested and some country-made guns, ammunition and sharp weapons were seized. On 3 April, the arrears of tobacco excise duty were paid up by the defaulters and the state forces left the area. The *maulvi* was tried and sentenced to three years rigorous imprisonment. A deputation of Meo ex-military men, along with other Meos, submitted an application to the prime minister from the accused, in which the latter confessed their guilt on all counts and prayed for pardon. Barring the *maulvi*, all the other convicted men were released and prosecution against them withdrawn.

In urban Alwar, meanwhile, in July 1946, dissatisfied with the prime minister's assurances, the president of the Alwar Rajya Praja Mandal, Shobha Ram, requested an audience with the Maharaja in order to present the view point of the Praja Mandal. The request was turned down. In the interim, the Alwar ruler had issued a proclamation, or '*Farman-i-Shahi*', appointing a committee to look into the issue of constitutional reforms. This committee did not satisfy the Praja Mandal leaders, however, and they boycotted it. The Maharaja agreed to set up a popular ministry in the state, but as the Maharaja wanted to also include a representative of the Hindu Mahasabha in the Ministry, the Praja Mandal refused the Maharaja's offer. The Praja Mandal now called upon the people to support a movement it planned to launch on 9 August. It was decided that students would join the procession.

Matters did not remain incident-free. At Rajgarh, the headmaster of the Rajgarh High School alleged that some members of Praja Mandal entered the school premises and forced the boys out to join the procession. It was also alleged that the Alwar State flag atop the Rajgarh *nizamat* building was pulled down and burnt. The District Magistrate reached the

spot with reinforcements. Arrests were made. The Praja Mandal leaders reached Rajgarh on the 17th and held a public meeting. They had previously decided to launch a satyagraha from 22 August, but the Rajgarh episode pushed matters forward.

By this time, Alwar state had seen some of the mobilised and motivated Muslim citizens observe the All India Muslim League Election Victory Day on 11 January 1946, as well as 'Punjab Day' and 'Pakistan Day' during March and April, respectively. In Kathumar, Hindu crowds forced Muslim shopkeepers to surrender their *lathis* and then attacked the police. Now, following the 'Direct Action Day' call for 16 August 1946, processions were taken out. On their part, Hindu Sabha leaders formed ward-wise defence committees and organised a strike and procession of an estimated 120,000 people in an 'anti-Pakistan Day' on 18 August 1946.

On 19 August 1946, the Alwar Rajya Praja Mandal declared that 21 August would be observed as 'Rajgarh Day', when students and state employees should strike work. Everyone was also asked to join a procession and march to welcome the revolutionary Raja Mahendra Pratap at the Alwar railway station on the 22nd, and join a proposed public meeting the same evening. Thus, on 22 August, students bearing the tricolour flag led a procession from the Raj Rishi College to Purana Katra, while Raja Mahendra Pratap was received at the railway station and brought in procession by a huge crowd. He later also addressed that evening's public meeting.

At this, several future steps were announced, including a declaration for a general strike throughout Alwar state on 24 August; and the launch of satyagraha from the 26. The latter would also entail groups of protesters going to government offices to ask ministers to quit office, and obstructing ministers and officers from attending to their work. The same would be done at *nizamat* headquarters. A 'Do or Die' call was given, and many prominent local citizens joined the movement.

Alwar State took firm steps to deal with the situation, and Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code banning large congregations was

promulgated. On 24 August the students of Alwar went on strike and took out processions in defiance of Section 144. Several students were arrested after a 'lathi charge' (baton-charge) by the police at the city Kotwali. Strikes were also observed at Yashwantgarh (Malakhera), Ramgarh, Kishangarh, Mandhan and other parts of the state. On 26 August, as pre-arranged, satyagraha to arouse the conscience of the ministers and government workers was started at the Secretariat. As soon as one group of satyagrahis was dispersed, or arrested, by the state forces, another would rally to take its place. This continued till 31 August. Many satyagrahis were arrested and jailed, while others — women and men — were forcibly taken away in lorries to distant places, and left in some remote area to find their own way back as best they could!

Meanwhile, clerical and other state employees had previously gone on strike in January 1946 asking for better emoluments. That strike had been called off, following the Alwar Maharaja's assurances of redressal, but when further representations and delegations to the authorities met with poor response, the Alwar State Association of non-gazetted employees had decided to launch an indefinite strike. Accordingly, the clerks went on strike from 27 August, and *patwaris*, teachers, *nakedars*, etc. soon joined the strike across Alwar state.

There was a public outcry at the ill-treatment being meted out to the satyagrahis and striking employees. Several representations were made to the Maharaja and the Political Agent by different associations; Jai Narain Vyas (general secretary of AISPC) sought interviews with Alwar's ruler and prime minister to ascertain the truth behind the many allegations of torture and ill-treatment of some satyagrahis; and Hira Lal Shastri complained to the Alwar prime minister against the brutal repression and asked for his personal intervention into matters. On 1 September, Hira Lal Shastri (a leader of the Jaipur Rajya Praja Mandal) reached Alwar and met many arrested satyagrahis, before holding discussions with Alwar's prime minister.

In consequence of this, an agreement was reached between the Maharaja of Alwar and the Praja Mandal, and on 2 September 1946 the arrested workers were released. Maharaja Tej Singh agreed to have three

elected members to the State Administrative Council. This did not satisfy the Praja Mandal, which wanted a fully elected state government. Eventually, certain constitutional reforms were announced by the Alwar government.

In the interim, in the period following the Second World War, Communist activity in Mewat had gained momentum under the leadership of the activist-historian Kunwar Mohammad Ashraf (a Malkana Rajput from the Mathura area). Dr Ashraf, Syed Ahmed Bareilvi, Dr Kachru, Syed Mutalabi Faridabadi, etc. worked towards organising the peasant movement in Mewat. Ashraf and his colleagues also tried to combat Jinnah and the Muslim League, and supported the nationalist struggle for responsible government¹²⁹.

The communist-led movement in Mewat visualised a system of regional self-governance for Mewat, grounded in the inherently 'democratic' Meo *pal* system. As the peasant movement increased in strength, the communist leadership formulated a proposal for a 'Pal Pradesh'. The scheme was described in pamphlets as 'a local provincial government to be set up in Mewat (and adjoining areas)... which would form a unit within independent India'. At the first panchayat held at Naugaon (Ferozpur Jhirka tehsil in Gurgaon), Jats and Meos from Mewat, and people from Mathura, Alwar and Bharatpur participated. When Section 144 of the Indian Penal Code was enacted (forbidding public gathering), the panchayat was held at Teengaon (on the Naugaon and Bharatpur border, just within the Bharatpur State). For Alwar (and adjoining Bharatpur), for whom Meo and Muslim politics were identical, Ashraf's radical notion was both a territorial and political challenge. The Alwar state condemned the attempt to establish a local 'Mevistan' or another Pakistan.

By this time, the imminent partition of the country in August 1947 was preceded by communal riots all over the country, with Alwar being among the worst affected states. Dr. N.B. Khare, formerly a leading member of the Indian National Congress who had been dismissed as Premier of the Central Provinces & Berar (later Madhya Pradesh) in 1938 at the instance of the Congress Parliamentary Board, and become a staunch supporter of the Hindu Mahasabha, was the prime minister of Alwar. The

Government of India took a strong view of the state government's attitude towards its Muslim subjects.

On 14 April 1947, there was trouble at the annual Mata Fair at Dholagarh, when some Meenas, Gujars and Jats snatched the wooden *lathis* (staves) being sold by Muslim shopkeepers — who had traditionally attended the fair and sold good here. The Muslim shopkeepers were forced to seek shelter with the police, even as an unruly mob chased them and pelted them and the police with stones. The police tried to persuade the mob to disperse, and then fired in the air. When this proved ineffective, the police opened fire at the rioters, killing three men.

By May 1947, reports of a proposed Meo 'State' were gaining ground. Accompanying this were reports that Meos under the leadership of Mohammed Yasin Khan of Gurgaon were collecting subscriptions from Meos and local non-Meos for buying arms and ammunition. There were already allegations that Meos, in small armed groups, were raiding and looting non-Meos. The initial disturbances were mainly centred in Gurgaon district, where some Meos clashed with Jats, Ahirs and Gujars, leading to a burning and plundering of each other's settlements and villages. The canker began to spread though, and soon 106 villages involving a population of over 200,000 were affected around Nuh, Taoru, and Mathura.

Alwar's rural areas too faced were affected by violent incidents. Alwar's Executive Council met and reviewed the situation. The Inspector General of Police and District Collector also attended, and the Maharaja sanctioned firm measures. These included promulgating the 'Public Safety Act, 1947'; arranging meetings of the Meo leaders and army pensioners, and others, to gain their cooperation; posting troops in the disturbed areas of Tijara and Tapukara and police in other disturbed areas. Patrolling of 'disturbed areas' was intensified. A 'Samant Infantry' raised. This was made up solely of *jagirdars* and Rajputs, and intended to deal with emergencies.

On 1 July 1947, the State of Alwar decided to join the Constituent Assembly of the Indian Union. Dr. Khare, Alwar's prime minister, became the state's representative in the Constituent Assembly. The Praja Mandal

resented this decision on grounds that the representative should have been a person elected by the public.

Meanwhile, even as the time approached for Maharaja Tej Singh of Alwar to sign the 'Instrument of Accession', both Alwar (and neighbouring Bharatpur), were witnessing partition-related violence, including mass displacement and killing of Meos¹³⁰. As the situation grew worse in British India's adjoining Gurgaon district, it caused panic in villages of Alwar State bordering the Gurgaon district. The residents of Harchandpur, Laheri, Mundasa and Sarrod evacuated their villages, while Banbirpur, Shahpur, Singhpur and Kalcka were set on fire. The Prime Minister visited the area and met the Governor of the Punjab who was touring Gurgaon *nizamat*. (Mahatma Gandhi also visited Mewat). At Tijara, the 'Khanzadas' killed some Hindus and looted property. Prithipura was also affected.

On 11 August 1947, rioters burnt and looted Jindoli (*Nizamat* Mandawar), Mubarakpur (*Nizamat* Ramgarh) and Nimi (*Nizamat* Kishangarh). Bahadurpur (*Alwar Nizamat*) was attacked and looted on 13 August 1947. Meanwhile, Khanzadas who had fled Tijara, were beaten back at Hasanpur in an encounter with the state forces. Nowgaon, bordering Gurgaon district, was attacked by a mob, but the attack was repulsed by the state forces.

The situation deteriorated further. Meos of village Dhongra looted Bhambora village on 17 August 1947. The Alwar-Kishangarh Road near Bhambora was blocked and the Meos took position on the hilly surface of the locality. The military had an encounter with the mob in village Dhongra where the rioters opened fire on the patrolling party. The military retaliated, resulting in many casualties. That evening another military patrol proceeding towards Khairthal, had an encounter with an armed gang near village Jindoli and Siwana.

The Hindus, particularly the Jats of Alwar and Bharatpur, joined by Gujars and Ahirs, etc., organized groups known as a 'Dhar'. Different 'dhars' targeted Meo villages, plundering and setting them on fire and causing casualties. Meos and other rural and urban-based Muslims migrated from Alwar (and Bharatpur). Some survivors went to Delhi's refugee

camps. Some later migrated to Pakistan. A Board of Custodians under the Unprotected Properties Ordinance 1947 was formed to manage the properties left by the Muslim evacuees. The villages deserted by the Meo, were inhabited by the population migrating from Pakistan.

At a *darbar* held on 22 October 1947, the Alwar ruler announced the inclusion of three ‘popular’ ministers (a term common to British India’s nationalist popular movements) in the Executive Council. Of these, one would represent the *jagirdars*. On 17 December 1947 Maharaja Tej Singh announced that Alwar state would have a ‘Responsible Government’ within two years and ordered the preparation of voters-lists on the basis of adult franchise. It was clarified that there would be territorial constituencies in the state, and every 20,000 people would elect one member to the Constituent Assembly. This Constituent Assembly would frame the future constitution of the state of Alwar. Until such time as the constitution was framed and promulgated, the Constituent Assembly would function as the Legislative Assembly. During this time, governance would be carried out by an Interim Ministry — of which at least half the members were to be ‘popular ministers’. A month later, on 17 January 1948, the Maharaja established a Consultative Council of twenty-five members, excluding the members of the Executive Council. However, events in Alwar soon took a different turn.

The communal situation in Alwar state had already led to allegations about the role of the Maharaja and part of his senior administration — including the Prime Minister, Dr. Khare, and *Kunwar* Raghubir Singh of Jaoli, Alwar’s Home Minister, in the violence against the Meos and Muslims of Alwar state. It was alleged that the state authorities in Alwar and Bharatpur had shown that they were not averse to Muslims — particularly Meos — being cleared out of their states, and had encouraged avengement for the killings of Hindus in Bengal and Punjab. It was also alleged that Alwar had been a training and propaganda centre for the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (as it was spelt at the time).

Even as these allegations were being repeated, leading to demands of action on the part of the National Government at Delhi, Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated at Delhi on 30 January 1948. The complicity of the Alwar

Maharaja and Dr. N.B. Khare, including providing shelter to the some of the conspirators in the assassination, was alleged. Indian Army troops took charge of the Alwar government offices on 6 February 1948. Dr. N.B. Khare's services were terminated by the Government of India and he was asked to stay at Delhi, pending an inquiry, while the Government of India took over the administration of Alwar on 7 February 1948, from its Maharaja.

K.B.L. Seth (ICS) was appointed Administrator of Alwar State by the Government of India. He was also deputed to make investigations into the allegations. Seth's Inquiry Report exonerated both, the Alwar Maharaja and Dr. Khare, of complicity in partition-violence and in the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. The report blamed the Meos for playing an aggressive and militant role and fomenting serious communal disturbances in the latter part of 1946 and 1947 and attributed the partition-related violence to the retaliation that followed.

Seth was followed as Administrator by K.B. Lall on 16 February 1948. The Executive Council was dissolved, and three advisors appointed with effect from 25 February 1948, besides two other officials, one of whom was given the powers of Minister for *Jagir* and *Muafi* cases. The following month, on 17 March 1948, Alwar was merged, along with Bharatpur, Dholpur and Karauli, into the Matsya Union. Shobha Ram, a Praja Mandal leader of Alwar, was made the Premier, and the Maharaja of Dholpur the Raj-Pramukh of the Union, with Alwar as the capital. Matsya Union later merged into the Greater Union of Rajasthan on 15 May 1949.

BHARATPUR

In the state of Bharatpur, its ruler, Maharaja Ram Singh was removed from the *gaddi* in 1900, following allegations that he had murdered one of his staff. As the Maharaja's heir and successor, Kishan Singh (r. 1900-1929) was a minor at the time, the administration of the state of Bharatpur was supervised by its Political Agent. This state of affairs continued till 1918, when Maharaja Kishan Singh became a major.

In the interim, there were rapid transformations in many spheres — including the socio-economic sphere. Bharatpur state had already abolished ‘*laag-baag*’ (cesses) on certain trade-goods and professions in 1897-98. Thereafter, the first ‘Regular Land-revenue Settlement’ for the state, based on the Punjab pattern, was conducted under the supervision of Michael F. O’Dwyer during 1900-1901. At the time, most farmers worked land-holdings that were generally between four to five *bighas*, while the wealthy land-owning thakurs and other elite held around 300-400 *bighas* of land. Such land-holders engaged labour for cultivating their fields. In 1912 the state made efforts to improve agriculture. The steps included establishing a depot for the supply of improved quality of seeds, and the holding of a conference to educate farmers and *zamindars* in the use of modernised agricultural appliances and systems of agriculture. (The ‘Report on the Administration of Bharatpur State’ for 1911-12 records that agricultural machines were displayed at this conference as an attraction for the farming community). Credit cooperative societies were introduced in the state in 1915, mainly to free farmers from an exploitative dependence on money-lenders.

Educational facilities expanded too, and municipalities and village panchayats were established. Electricity also came to Bharatpur during the period of Kishan Singh’s minority. In 1914, at the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, Bharatpur state co-operated and encouraged recruitment to the Imperial Service Troops. (The troops served in France, Egypt, Mesopotamia, East Africa, the Dardenelles and Salonika). The Bharatpur ruler’s own offer of military service was not accepted though, as he was still under-age.

Upon attaining his full ruling powers, Kishan Singh soon found himself at odds with the British authorities, even as he came to be perceived as a ‘fountainhead of nationalism in his state’¹³¹. Besides initiating social reforms, Hindi was declared the official language of the state in 1919. (Previously, in 1912, a Hindi Sahitya Samiti had been formed in Bharatpur). The Maharaja also lent his full support to the ‘*Shuddhi* Movement’ launched by Swami Shraddhanand, one of the best-known followers of Swami Dayanand, the founder of the Arya Samaj movement.

The Arya Samaj had been active in Bharatpur since before 1905, and a branch had been established in Bharatpur in 1910. By 1920 the Arya Samaj was active in the field of education and social reforms in many parts of Bharatpur state, with active branches at Deeg, Nagar, Juhera, Bhusawar, etc. At one level, the ‘*Shuddhi* Movement’ entailed a ritual purification or re-conversion, or ‘return’ ceremony, to bring into the Hindu fold certain communities and groups perceived as having been ‘converted’ over time to other faiths¹³², and we learn that Arya Samajists were organized into groups and dispersed to Meo and Dalit Jatav-dominated *qashas*, such as Nagar, Kaman and Kumher of Bharatpur state in order to perform *shuddhi*¹³³. Christian missionary efforts to convert the Jatavs were similarly met by Hindu attempts at social reform and ‘upliftment’ of untouchables through education and ensuring access to temples and wells. Meanwhile, the ‘Anjuman-i-Islam’, established in 1869, was revived in Bharatpur in 1910.

In 1924 serious flooding caused great hardships to the populace. The Maharaja participated in the relief operations personally. By this time, the All India Jat Mahasabha was active in many parts of Rajputana, and besides lending tacit support to the Shekhawati agrarian cum-reform Jat-led movement that began in 1922 and continued for many years afterwards, Maharaja Kishan Singh also presided over an All-India Jat Conference held at Pushkar in 1925. However, by this time there was also general discontent amongst the peasants of Bharatpur state as well — mainly because of the land revenue policy of the state. Matters became more difficult for the agrarian poor following certain land ‘reforms’ that came after the ‘Land Settlement’ of 1925, and a consequent increase in taxes and revenue-demands. In the long-term, this increase in land taxes and an agrarian protest movement in April 1927 would lead to the Maharaja’s downfall

In March 1927 the seventeenth annual session of the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan was held at Bharatpur, and counted Rabindranath Tagore, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Jannalal Bajaj and Purshottamdas Tandon among its participants. They were hosted as personal guests of the Maharaja. Meanwhile, the financial condition of Bharatpur became more serious.

As Maharaja Kishan Singh became even more vociferous in protesting against British interference in the internal affairs of the state, and

his differences with the British continued to deteriorate with rapidity, the agrarian issue became a significant problem. In 1928, the popular Kishan Singh was not allowed to return to Bharatpur from a visit outside the state by the British. He was charged with financial mismanagement by the British and asked to remain outside the state, while the Government of India appointed Duncan G. Mackenzie of the Indian Civil Service as 'administrator'.

Interestingly, while Bharatpur's Kishan Singh (like his Alwar counterpart, Jey Singh) was held responsible for financial mismanagement, it was British policy that had, in the nineteenth century, initiated the process of centralised control over land, agrarian surplus and forest produce; and British officers who had conducted the early revenue and forest settlements¹³⁴. "The Bharatpur and Alwar Settlement at the turn of the century were based on the Punjab system of fixed assessment in which demand was not elastic... in Punjab and in British India, after a period of experimentation, the principle that land revenue should not exceed 25 per cent of a landholder's assets, calculated after deducting the costs of cultivation, had been accepted. In Bharatpur, however, the corresponding figure of the Settlement of 1899-1900 was 66 per cent of net assets standards."¹³⁵.

"Although irrigation by embankment and wells was well developed, the water level in the wells had been sinking since O'Dwyer's time and there was also much saline water. There was also a phenomenal decrease in the waters of the Ruparel that fell into the Sikri bund, and which irrigated much of Nagar and Pahari. The Bharatpur Financial Commissioner's Report brought out that, apart from the small increase in sown area, there was a decline in all other factors indicating agricultural prosperity. The new settlement operations of the 1920s, however, anticipated an increase of 24 per cent. No leniency was shown in effecting recoveries, although it was pointed out that 'the whole of the state was in a distinctly depressed condition'"¹³⁶.

Mackenzie, Bharatpur's newly appointed 'administrator', was greeted with a show of black flags when he reached Bharatpur to assume his charge.

Some short while after this, Maharaja Kishan Singh died in exile on 27 March 1929. The British recognized the accession of the minor Brijendra Singh (b.1918, r.1929-1948, d.1995). Meanwhile, Kishan Singh's dethroned father, Ram Singh, too died late in August 1929.

Mackenzie continued to serve as administrator during the minority of the under-age Brijendra Singh, while the boy himself was sent to England for his education — and possibly to get him away from Bharatpur. A Council of State, consisting of a president, five members and three secretaries, was constituted to administer Bharatpur. Meanwhile, Jagannath Das Adhikari, who had established the 'Hindi Sahitya Samiti' at Bharatpur's capital in 1912, was exiled from the state by Mackenzie. The people of Bharatpur expressed their feelings to this act by turning out in large numbers to give an emotional, popular, send-off to Adhikari. Mackenzie also arrested Thakur Deshraj, a prominent political and social worker of Bharatpur state.

In the opinion of Shail Mayaram, the "...fusion of the Congress with the Arya Samaj and the Jat Mahasabha rendered the Bharatpur nationalist movement among the most fierce in the region of Rajputana. The ruler's deposition was strongly opposed by the Arya Samaj, the Shuddhi Sabha and the Girraj Seva Dal...Endorsement of Jat rule and opposition to colonial power were structured into the early phase of satyagraha and symbolized in the Praja Parishad's celebration of a Suraj Mal Jayanti Samaroh (1929) and the Surajmal Centennial Shatabdi (1933). When the Jat leader, Deshraj, was exiled by the state administration, he was given refuge in Agra's Shuddhi Sabha. The Arya Samaj temple in Bharatpur city constituted the nodal organization for social reforms, protest against colonial 'police Raj' and celebratory as well as mobilisation spectacles such as *utsavs*, *sabhas*, and *samarohs*: for example the all-Rajputana Arya Kumar Sammelan of December 1928"¹³⁷.

Meanwhile, prominent nationalist Arya Samajists and Jat Mahasabha leaders formed the Bharatpur Peoples' Association (Praja Parishad) in 1929. There was also discontent due to the state's land revenue policy. The British administrator took stern action against dissent, and also banned demonstrations, processions and political speeches. Around this time, the

All-India Jat Maha Sabha passed a resolution demanding justice, clean administration and the inclusion of local people in state administration. A representation was presented to the Viceroy, and there was a threat of launching a civil disobedience movement if the Bharatpur government chose to ignore the just demands of the people.

When the Salt Satyagraha was launched by Mahatma Gandhi in 1930, a number of motivated citizens from the state went to Ajmer to participate in satyagraha activities. Around the same period, during 1930-31 some of the youth of Bharatpur came together under the leadership of Kishan Lal Joshi, and established a *Yuvak Dal* in the state. The *Yuvak Dal* took an active role in protesting the increased rate of taxes and land revenue that had been demanded after the 1925 Settlement. The members of the *Yuvak Dal* distributed pamphlets penned by the Jat leader, Thakur Deshraj, and entitled *Kisano se Appeal*, which appealed to farmers not to pay the increased land revenue demands.

Farmers congregated in large numbers to protest before Bharatpur's Council Bhawan. The scene was repeated across the state. Kishan Lal Joshi left for Ajmer afterwards, but his father Kaluram, a revenue-worker (*patwari*) in the State Service was dismissed after some of the 'offending' pamphlets were found in his possession. The appeals had an effect in the Bhusawar part of Bharatpur state too. At Bhusawar, Bhoji Bagri from Randhirgarh (some two miles southwest of Bhusawar) not only refused to pay land revenue, but apparently actually attempted to pull the Maharaja out of his car¹³⁸. Bhoji Bagri was arrested, but was released subsequently.

The movement in Bharatpur state against high rates of land revenue etc. involved Jats, Meos, Brahmins, Rajputs etc. Among the leading figures were people like Zahoor Baksh, Dhundhal Meo, Mauji, Bhola, Pandit Vishandutt and Ramswarup, Babu Dayachand, Captain Daulat Singh, Baburam Sinsinwar, and Thakur Ummad Singh. Even the Kisan Sabha, which was predominantly Jat in composition, was not an exclusive body and included other peasant groups and communities, including the Meos. The situation was somewhat different in Alwar state, where the unrest among the agriculture-dependent Meos soon gained it the dubious label of being a Muslim Meo problem.¹³⁹

Not only did issues and problems affecting the Meos of the Alwar-Bharatpur area lead to protests and incidents in the neighbouring Alwar state, which frequently spilled over into Bharatpur, but the increased land-revenue demands also became a major rallying point for the Bharatpur Meos. In 1932-33, the Bharatpur Meos also refused to pay land revenue. It may be noted here that Govindgarh in Alwar state, which had been the scene of a particularly ugly and violent incident, was situated about eight miles from the border of Alwar with the British administered district of Gurgaon and about a mile from the border of Alwar with Bharatpur state. Kinship ties extended across these state boundaries, and tenant-farmers were often related to landowners and so were drawn into the protests.

Not surprisingly, therefore the movement made inroads into Bharatpur state and by March 1933 the predominantly Meo inhabited *tehsils* of Nagar and Pahari in Bharatpur state were affected. In their petitions the Meos complained that while Meos, Khanzadas and Gaddis owned half the area in the state, it was certain Jat and Gujar villages that were assessed leniently. The Meos also told the Bharatpur authorities that they had also been affected by a decrease in water in the Ruparel river. Bharatpur's Maharaja was not moved, and when the kisans went to plead further, they were dubbed trouble-makers and 'revolutionaries'. The Meo villages of Ladamka, Papra and Semla Kalan became major centres of agro-economic unrest in Bharatpur state. Drums were beaten to mobilize people, trees felled to block the road, and panchayats were held in village that swore a collective oath not to pay revenue¹⁴⁰. The issue was eventually resolved through what the then Political Agent, Arthur Cunningham Lothian, who was the president of the State Council at the time, refers to as 'administrative tact'¹⁴¹. Eventually only thirty per cent of the revenue was paid. The State Council ordered temporary reduction by fifty per cent of customs export duties, and granted liberal remissions.

Bharatpur was never far-removed, nor untouched, by events and movements in neighbouring British India, with which it shared a considerable length of its borders. Local leaders and workers were in touch with the nationalist political and social workers of British India and Ajmer, as well as other like-minded people in the various states of Rajputana. Thus, in due course, a decision was taken to set up a peoples' body, or Praja

Parishad in the State of Bharatpur. In this regard, Gouri Shanker Mittal led a deputation that met Jawaharlal Nehru at the Bharatpur railway station on 20 September 1937. Nothing immediate emerged from this, but the intention was soon afterwards to be translated into reality, and in 1938, following a meeting of political workers in Rewari, an organisation called the 'Bharatpur Praja Mandal' was established by Kishan Lal Joshi.

This newly established 'Bharatpur Praja Mandal' had Gopi Lal Yadav as its president, and Thakur Deshraj Singh and Rewti Saran Upadhyaya joint vice-presidents. Kishan Lal Joshi, Jugal Kishore Chaturvedi and Master Adityendra were the organisation's general secretary, publicity secretary and treasurer respectively. When Bharatpur's government refused to recognize and register this body, the Praja Mandal started a satyagraha campaign in April 1939, which lasted for eight months.

The Praja Mandal demanded 'responsible government under the aegis of the Maharaja'. As part of the satyagraha, farmers were asked not to pay land-revenue. Bharatpur state took action against the Praja Mandal. Arrests were made, and various people prosecuted. The Praja Mandal refused to be cowed down, and opened its offices on the borders of the State with British India. The agitation continued. Eventually, 473 persons, including 32 women, had been detained and either released, or prosecuted and convicted, by the state authorities up to the end of 1939.

The satyagraha ended on 23 December 1939, following an October settlement reached with the Bharatpur government. By the terms of this, the Bharatpur administration recognised the organisation under its modified name of 'Bharatpur Rajya Praja Parishad', with a revised constitution and stated objectives, and accorded the body recognition and formal registration. It initiated proceedings towards remitting sentences and releasing those arrested in the course of the satyagraha campaign. The aims and objectives of the Bharatpur Rajya Praja Parishad was to represent popular grievances to the ruler for redressal; the advocacy of administrative reforms; to inform public opinion and work for the betterment of the lives of the populace; and to work for communal harmony. Thereafter, the Bharatpur Rajya Praja Parishad attempted to advise the ruler on constitutional reforms and had a rather chequered relationship with the state

authorities. Two other bodies, the Praja Sahayak and the 'Anjuman Riyaya Sabha' later came into being too. In 1940 Master Fakir Chand founded an organisation known as the Kisan Sabha.

The Bharatpur Rajya Praja Parishad held a conference at the state's capital towards the end of 1940. The state authorities alleged that certain speakers had indulged in provocative propaganda. One of the speakers was convicted and sentenced. Meanwhile, unrest continued to intensify, particularly after the state declared the hoisting of the Indian tricolour, which had come to symbolise the national flag, as illegal, and the Praja Parishad accused the state administration of being unresponsive to the legitimate demands of the people.

With the launch of the Quit India movement in August 1942 in British India, the Praja Parishad heightened its agitation for a 'responsible government' under the aegis of the Maharaja. The state's response was to declare the agitation as unconstitutional. The Praja Parishad gave the state administration an ultimatum, and threatened to launch a satyagraha movement. Actions like public demonstrations and sabotage of public property followed. Women joined the movement and courted arrest in support of the Praja Mandal demands.

The government of Bharatpur state arrested the president and other office-bearers of the Praja Parishad Working Committee under the Defence of India Rules. Other leaders and workers of the movement were arrested too, and charged variously with uprooting forest boundary pillars, cutting telephone and telegraph wires, and indulging in anti-state activities. Kishan Lal Joshi, Jugal Kishore Chaturvedi, Raj Bahadur and Ramesh Swami were among the arrested Parishad leaders.

In September 1942, Bharatpur found itself faced with severe floods, caused by heavy rainfall across the state. The Praja Parishad suspended the satyagraha agitation and came forward to join in flood relief work. The state, on its part, appreciated the gesture and service of the Parishad and released all but two of the satyagrahis. In October 1942, Bharatpur state also agreed to set up a Representative Assembly, to be known as the 'Brij Jaya Pratinidhi Samiti'. Elections to this were subsequently organized and

held, and the 'Brij Jaya Pratinidhi Samiti', or State Assembly inaugurated on 4 October 1943. Thirty of its elected members were from the rural, and seven from urban areas. Besides these, there were six officials nominated by the state, seven nominated non-officials, and a president who was nominated by the ruler.

The Praja Parishad captured twenty-two of the thirty-seven elected seats, but finding that the Assembly lacked power, eventually decided to boycott it. The Jat leaders, Colonel Gharmandi Singh and Thakur Deshraj, became president and vice president of this Assembly. Meanwhile, at the Second Session of the Bharatpur Rajya Praja Parishad, Ali Mohammed was elected president. Under his leadership, the call for constitutional reforms was re-iterated. This led, once again, to the arrest of several leaders and workers of the movement within the state.

The issues of bonded labour and unpaid forced labour, or *begaar*, were brought centre-stage yet again by the Praja Parishad. Concurrently, Thakur Deshraj, who was the leader of the Jat Sabha, united that body with the Kisan Sabha, when he assumed leadership of the latter body as well in 1944. Kishan Lal Joshi and Jagannath Kakar started a newspaper called *Kisan*, which strongly supported the *kisan* movements in other Rajputana states — including at Dudhwa Khara in Bikaner state. During 1945-46 the farmers declared they would not perform forced *begaar* labour. Subsequently, when called upon to transport goods in their carts for a traditional annual *mela* (fair), the residents of Maharajsar village refused to do so in the form of *begaar*.

Matters dragged on for some time. In an attempt to gain the co-operation of the Praja Parishad and other bodies, on 6 February 1946 the Bharatpur government made a significant announcement. It was stated that a popularly elected minister, to be elected on the basis of adult franchise for a period of three years, was to be appointed to the State Council. In May 1946, it was further decided that three out of the five ministers on the council would be elected.

The same month saw the formation of the Bharatpur Muslim League, allegedly with the knowledge of the Bharatpur ruler, who, some believe, was not averse to seeing a reduction in the Praja Parishad's hold over the people. Meanwhile, Communist Kisan Sabha leaders like Shafat Khan and the Meo Chaudhary Ismail tried to guide Muslim nationalist activity towards the efforts of the Kisan Sabha and Praja Parishad. In the interim, the Rajputana State Muslim League had been organized under the auspices of the All India Muslim League, with numerous branches. The Muslim Conference had joint meetings with the Praja Parishad and the Kisan Sabha on the occasion of Wavell's visit and held an anti-bonded labour protest. In August 1946 they observed a joint strike and boycotted the election of the ministers, and later jointly protested against the arrest of a Communist Meo leader, Shafat Khan. Shafat was organising the Bharatpur Meos in a 'no rent' campaign, like his father, Dundhal Meo, had done earlier.

The elections promised by the State were held in September 1946. The following month, the Bharatpur Maharaja announced the constitution of a committee to recommend constitutional reforms for the state. The committee consisted of eleven members, of whom three were state officials, and eight were non-officials drawn from recognized political parties. The Praja Parishad decided not to co-operate with Bharatpur state, and its representative resigned from the committee and commenced criticising the state's policy on distribution of controlled items, rising prices of goods and existing shortages.

That December (17 and 18 December 1946), the Praja Parishad's third session at Kaman was attended by a large number of people, including Meos. Within about a fortnight of this, in early January 1947, the issue of *begaar* took a new turn in Bharatpur.

During the reign of Kishan Singh, an expanse of land at Ghana (some five kilometres from the capital), that used to get flooded with the waters of the river Gambhir during the rainy season, was manipulated and partially drained to form a marshy shooting reserve cum 'Bird Sanctuary'. The sanctuary attracted migratory birds in particular, especially during the winter months. It was ready by 1902, and from then on it became customary

to invite British and Indian dignitaries to shooting parties here during the winter months. (Bikaner's Maharaja Ganga Singh did the same in his state, where the destination of the invitees was Gajner). In the case of Bharatpur, people from the Jatav and Koli communities of villages bordering the Ghana bird shooting reserve were used as 'beaters' and human retrievers of the game etc. The work entailed wading through the cold marshes and shallow lakelets, often in north India's freezing wintry conditions. For this they received a very small honorarium.

In January 1947 the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, and Maharaja Sadul Singh of Bikaner were invited by the Maharaja of Bharatpur to shoot at the Ghana sanctuary. The Lal Jhanda Kisan Sabha, Praja Parishad and Muslim Conference jointly decided to take up the issue of using the Jatavs and Kolis in *begaar*, and tried to dissuade members of those communities from reporting for work. The Praja Parishad, under the leadership of Master Adityendra, also organised a large demonstration, and greeted the invited guests by a show of black flags, slogans and protests at the railway station on the evening of 4 January 1947. Black flags were also shown by Thakur Pooran Singh and Sanwal Prasad Chaturvedi. In opposition to these steps, members of the Zamindar Kisan Sabha had also collected at the railway station, leading to heckling and jostling among members of the opposing camps. In the state's retaliatory action, Raj Bahadur (later a Union minister of India), Mukat Behari, and Sanwal Prasad Chaturvedi were injured.

The situation worsened over the next few days, and despite state reprisals, the Lal Jhanda Kisan Sabha, Praja Parishad and Muslim Conference continued with their protests. Shopkeepers observed a hartal; the Parishad's workers picketed government offices and began satyagraha. Matters came to a peak on 15 January 1947. A detachment of the state forces, led by Rao Raja Girraj Saran Singh (popularly known as Bachchu Singh), one of the two younger brothers of the Maharaja, who was also Bharatpur state's Military Secretary, attempted to disperse the picketers through the use of force, even though the assembly had not been declared to be an 'unlawful' one. In the process, many men and some women received serious injuries. The Bharatpur administration promulgated Section 144 (forbidding unauthorized gatherings of more than five people in public places) in the capital, and arrested a number of workers. In protest,

Bharatpur city saw a total boycott and hartal, even as attempts to bring about reconciliation between the state and the protestors proved to be of no avail.

It was decided to mark 5 February 1947 as an anti-*begaar* day. A protest-meeting was called at Bhusawar. (Bhusawar is among the older established urban settlements of the region, where nationalist educational institutes had come to be set up by this time). Amidst a confused scenario entailing either an attempt to take the protestors from Bhusawar on to the nearby settlement of Weir on a bus that was already full to capacity, or its forcible picketing, followed by an exchange of words between the driver and the protestors, a tragedy unfolded. Some of the protesting satyagrahis lay down in front of the bus. The bus owner, urged by the local Sub-Inspector of Bhusawar, asked the bus driver, Chandanlal Patwari to start the bus and drive away. The driver refused.

The bus owner attempted to start the bus. The vehicle ploughed into the protestors, badly injuring Ramesh Swami, Sitaram and Bhagwati Prasad Arya. They were rushed to the hospital at Bhusawar, but Ramesh Swami, a leading worker of the Praja Parishad, died on the way. The protest-meeting now turned uglier, with anti-state slogans being raised, and the pursuit of the local Sub-Inspector of police by the protestors. The Sub-Inspector declared the meeting unlawful, and ordered his forces to disperse the crowd by armed might. Meanwhile, Ramesh Swami's body was conveyed to the capital, and subsequent protests and meetings were called across the whole State.

By this time, the political scene within British India too was rapidly altering (as already noted). This had its consequent effects on the princely states. Concurrently, communal tension too had grown in Bharatpur state. (One may re-emphasise here that Bharatpur adjoined large tracts of British India, besides the states of Alwar, Dholpur and Jaipur). Bharatpur-based Meos reportedly plundered some of the villages of Alwar state, to which the Hindus of Alwar and Bharatpur retaliated. Meo and non-Meo villages were attacked and burnt, and cattle lifted by opposing groups¹⁴². Refugees from Bharatpur began crossing into Alwar state from 25 June 1947.

Meanwhile, the Bharatpur authorities also spared no effort to criticize the Praja Parishad and the Congress and to emphasise the concept of a 'Jatistan' — a Union of the Jats. At a rally in April 1947, there were calls for a 'Jatistan', and certain communities were mocked as being incapable of governing. The slogan of 'Jai Brijendra' was used to drive home the point that as the president of the Jat Mahasabha, and the leader of several million Jats, the Bharatpur Maharaja was a fitting successor to the British. By this time Bharatpur's army consisted of the Jaswant Household Infantry, Bharatpur Infantry Training Unit, Brijendra Lancers, Nabaligh Platoon and the Girraj Lancers, newly set up by Bachchu Singh. The 5,000-strong military was commanded by Colonel Ghasiram, and the jails were under Man Singh, the youngest of the Maharaja's two brothers. Non-Jats were being dismissed and substituted by Jats in the army, and in the revenue, police and district administration.

Shail Mayaram notes that as communal tension gained ground, the non-Muslims in Bharatpur saw the possibility of acquiring more land¹⁴³. One of the people she interviewed is quoted as saying that if the Meos were evicted, all the Meo land could be redistributed among the Jats; and that leaders like Thakur Deshraj, Tar Singh Ahir of Barsana, Lachi Jat of Kamar near Hathin, etc. collected Jats of Punjab and Delhi, Ahirs from Rewari and Yadavs from Mathura to form 'Hindu Dhars' or groups, which went to Meo villages, joined by local Jat leaders and even government officials, to 'clean up', chase away or do *shuddhi* of the Meos of the Alwar-Bharatpur Mewat area¹⁴⁴. ('Clean up' being a euphemism for pogrom). It is said that "Bharatpur's first conflict began on Janmashtami with the looting of the train to Agra...All trains were stopped and people killed"¹⁴⁵.

Alongside the horrific partition-violence, political activities and preparations for future governance was also continuing. By July 1947, Bharatpur state's government had released many Parishad's workers unconditionally, and begun the process of fresh discussions with various local organizations. All prisoners were released on 8 August 1947.

Even after the Bharatpur ruler signed the Instrument of Accession to India, communal violence did not die out in the states of Bharatpur and

neighbouring Alwar. A brother of the Bharatpur ruler allegedly played much more than an instigatory role¹⁴⁶ and the ruler himself made little overt effort to curb the wide-scale violence towards the Meos and Muslims. In view of the partition-related violence, the Government of India took a strong stand against Bharatpur state's handling of the sensitive situation.

In the meantime, in December 1947 a 'popular ministry' was inaugurated in Bharatpur. The Cabinet included Master Adityendra and Gopilal Yadav as representatives of the Bharatpur Rajya Praja Parishad, and Thakur Deshraj and Choudhary Haridatt representing the Zamindar Kisan Sabha. The new system was not to remain in place for long, though. Partition-related violence continued to plague the land, and the hand of certain members of the ruling family remained suspect. Matters also worsened for Bharatpur's Maharaja following the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi at Delhi on 30 January 1948, with the Bharatpur ruler's possible connection casting a long shadow. The Government of India had taken over the Alwar state on charges against the ruler and the prime minister of Alwar. Taking all matters into account, therefore, the Maharaja of Bharatpur was prevailed upon to 'voluntarily' hand over the administration of his state to the Government of India.

Not long afterwards, the process of integrating the princely states gathered pace. The placement of Bharatpur became a question of importance for many groups with particular interests. For instance, under the banner of the Kisan Sabha, the Jats held a number of protest meetings against the proposed merger of the Bharatpur state with U.P., or an alternative move towards the grouping together of the four states of Bharatpur, Alwar, Dholpur, and Karauli without a referendum. Their demand was that Bharatpur state's administration should continue under the aegis of the ruler of Bharatpur. The merger scheme also led to a revolt by the Maharaja's younger brother, who raised the issue of 'Jat Flag in Danger'.

Eventually, Bharatpur opted to become one of the founder-members of the new 'Matsya Union', comprising the erstwhile princely states of Alwar, Bharatpur, Dholpur and Karauli. This Union, with an area of 7,536 squares miles, was formalised on 17 March 1948. Later the Matsya Union merged

into the United State of Greater Rajasthan on 15 May 1949, to form part of the contemporary state of Rajasthan.

KOTAH

The long reign of Maharao Umed Singh II (r. 1889-1940) oversaw many reforms in the state of Kotah. Revenue settlement was conducted throughout the state. (In 1905, a fresh land revenue settlement was carried out). Several irrigation reservoirs, including the ones at Umaidsagar, Badipura, Sahrid and Bilasgarh were constructed, and 1920 saw the launch of a city water supply scheme in the capital. Besides this, improved seeds for agricultural use were introduced; nine veterinary dispensaries started, and cooperative societies were set up. In 1927 a co-operative bank was established. The period also saw the reorganisation of the state's executive and judicial administration. In 1927 Kotah state promulgated a law prohibiting the marriage of minor children. In the field of education, 1911 saw the establishment of the first High School in Kotah state. By the time Umed Singh died in December 1940, there was one intermediate college, two high schools and 109 schools in the state. The total state revenue when Umed Singh II succeeded to the throne in 1889 was Rs. 23 lakhs. By 1908, this had risen to Rs. 31 lakhs, and at the time of the Maharao's demise, after a reign of nearly fifty-two years, it was Rs. 43 lakhs annually. The main sources of revenues for the state were land revenue and customs.

Kotah state's first political organisation, the Kota Praja Pratinidhi Sabha, was established in 1918. Almost a decade later, in 1927, a Kotah Rajya Praja Mandal was established, though this remained somewhat peripheral in the public eye. In 1933 the effort was again repeated by Pandit Nainuram Sharma (who had previously been active in Bundi state), and Pandit Abhinahari. However, it was not till after the Haripura session of the Indian National Congress that the Kotah Rajya Praja Mandal became fully active from 1939 onwards. The organisation was registered, and Nathu Lal Jain and Vimal Kumar Kanjolia published a pamphlet on constitutional reform. In October 1939, Pandit Nainuram Sharma was killed by a citizen of Kotah, but the task of providing leadership to the Praja Mandal was taken over by Abhinahari. Thereafter, in Kotah, as in the other states of

Rajputana, the demand for a 'responsible government', under the aegis of the Maharao, gradually gained momentum.

Meanwhile, Maharao Umed Singh II died in December 1940, and was succeeded by Maharao Bhim Singh. While administrative changes and reforms continued to come, the Praja Mandal's demands became more vociferous. 26th July 1941, was marked as 'Responsible Government Day', and the Government of Kotah was urged to take heed of the popular demand for 'responsible government'.

In the wake of the declaration of the Quit India movement in British India, the Kotah Rajya Praja Mandal too launched a *satyagraha* movement, organised *hartals*, and heightened its efforts for the establishment of 'responsible government' in the state. *Hartals* and demonstrations led by the Praja Mandal workers invited the predictable administrative response, which included the arrest of several citizens, including Abhinnahari in August 1942.

The people took matters into their own hands. A young Praja Mandal worker, Nathulal Jain, led a procession in the capital and occupied the police headquarters. The gates of the capital were shut by the populace, the tricolour flag (regarded since January 26 1930 as the national flag), hoisted over the *kotwali*, and police forced to remain in their barracks, as the city slipped from Kotah state's administrative control into the hands of the people for three days. The prime minister (*dewan*) urged permission from the Maharao of Kotah to use the military to quell the situation, suggesting that the State Forces could break down the gates and re-take control of the walled city. However, the Maharao refused to permit this. (The *dewan* lost office later) The impasse was resolved on the third day and the gates were reopened, following the Maharao's assurance that he would look into the grievances of the people, and that the police would not take retaliatory action against the people who had held the capital to ransom for three days and nights. The city was returned into the hands of the state's administration only after the police and army had been urged to salute the tricolour flag, and had been seen to do so.

There had also been an assurance given that the administration would not take repressive measures, and previously arrested Kotah Rajya Praja Mandal leaders were set free. However, the State did eventually take action against further agitation. Protesting police atrocities, the people went on hunger strike in 1944. Their agitation came to an end after the Kotah ruler once again assured his people that steps would be taken for the establishment of 'responsible government' in Kotah state, and agreed to constitutional reforms. Meanwhile, events at the national level led to Indian Independence and partition. The Kotah ruler signed the Instrument of Accession to India. With that, the new state of independent India gained 5,687 square miles of Kotah's territory.

Soon afterwards, in early 1948, Maharao Bhim Singh announced that Kotah state would have an elected government under the leadership of Abhinahari. The decision, however, could not be given effect to as the state itself was merged in the United States of Rajasthan inaugurated on 25 March 1948, with Kotah as the new unit's capital. Maharao Bhim Singh was sworn in as Rajpramukh of the new state and Prof. Gokul Lal Asawa from the Shahpura area as prime minister. Even before the new state started functioning, Mewar joined this union of the United States of Rajasthan. The capital was now shifted from Kota to Udaipur, with Maharana Bhupal Singh of Mewar becoming Rajpramukh, and Kotah's Maharao Bhim Singh becoming the Up-Rajpramukh of the new union, and Manikya Lal Verma the premier. Soon afterwards, there was a further amalgamation of states, leading to a Greater Rajasthan in 1949.

BUNDI

The reign of Maharao Raghuvir Singh (r. 1889-1927) saw further steps towards the 'modernisation' of Bundi state. In 1908 the total revenue of the state was rupees six lakhs. This came mainly from land revenues, supplemented by custom duties and taxes¹⁴⁷. (The revenue would rise to rupees thirty-five lakhs by the time Bundi state merged into modern Rajasthan forty years later). The state was governed by the Maharao, assisted by a council of five members. Bundi was divided into twelve administrative units known as *tehsils*. The civil and revenue-related courts

were known as *Diwani Adalat*, while those dealing with criminal matters went before the *Faujdari Adalat*. The highest appellate body was the council, headed by the ruler.

Bundi had held the right to mint its own silver coinage from the reign of the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II. The coins were known as *Gyhar-Shahi* (rupee of the eleventh year of Akbar II), *Ram-Shahi* and *Katan-Shahi*. The coins bore the symbols of a three-petalled flower and sun-rays, and weighed 165 grains. Previously, Bundi's silver coins had carried inscriptions in Persian. In the twentieth century, though, Bundi's coins began to carry Devnagari and English inscriptions.

Meanwhile, in order to make full use of the large deposits of local limestone, a cement factory known as the Bundi Portland Cement Limited was established in 1913. (This was later taken over by the Associated Cement Company). It was one of the largest cement factories of its time in the country, employing about 3,500 persons and producing more than two lakh tonnes of cement. There were also iron-ore mines, situated in the north western part of the state, which had once been extensively worked, but were later abandoned.

Upon the outbreak of the First World War, the Bundi ruler offered his personal services and the resources of his state to the war effort. Around this time, political and social consciousness also began to grow in Bundi. Sharing as it did, a border with Mewar, Bundi could not remain untouched by the agrarian movements in Bijolia and Begun. This consciousness would continue to develop further in the wake of the numerous visits by people like Vijay Singh Pathik and Ram Narain Chowdhry during the course of the long drawn-out Bijolia movement. (Bundi and Kotah were to see the issue of better conditions for landless labourers [*halis* and *batholias*] added to the list of popular demands).

Bundi state's response was to ban public meetings and related activities, even as the agrarian movement of the farmers of Bundi state protesting against *laagat* — the term used for *laag-baag* cesses in this area, high rates of land-revenue, and *begaar* (forced labour) gathered momentum under the leadership of Pandit Nainuram Sharma, Haribhai Kinkar, and

others. Public protest meetings in the rural areas became the order of the day, and attracted farmers (*kisans*) in large number. A meeting organised on 30 May 1922 to voice popular grievances was forcibly dispersed by the Bundi state police and other officials, and men and women maltreated and humiliated. On 15 June 1922 several cultivators were again arrested and ill-treated. Two of them died. The Rajasthan Seva Sangh took up the matter. Ram Narain Chowdhry and Satya Bhagat were sent to conduct an on-the-spot non-official enquiry on behalf of the *Rajasthan Seva Sangh*. They reported that the *begaar* system was frequently in operation, civil liberties were non-existent, and — even though the First World War had ended in 1919 — ‘contributions’ to the War Fund were still being gathered. This was set at one *anna* per every rupee of revenue-tax paid, and was collected along with the land revenue collections, much against the will of the farmers.

In December 1922 Pandit Nainuram Sharma was arrested by the Bundi authorities. He was sentenced on 10 May 1923 to four years’ imprisonment, and his entry into the state was further banned on charges of his ‘seditious’ and ‘anti-state’ activities. The situation had been worsening through this period, and the same month (May 1923) saw the Bundi state police open fire upon a public meeting of cultivators and motivated satyagrahis. Of them, Nanakji Bhil died on the spot. Many men and women were severely beaten up by the state forces. The Rajasthan Seva Sangh once again took up the matter, and also gave wide publicity to the Bundi state’s police atrocities. In response, the state redressed some of the public grievances. However, a temporary ban was also imposed on the entry into Bundi state’s territory by members of the Rajasthan Seva Sangh. Thereafter, though the farmers’ agitation was put down, a Praja Mandal led by Gopal Sutania, Jai Lal Jhandel and Gopal Lal Kotia was eventually established in Bundi state. The Praja Mandal continued to gain a following.

In 1927 Maharao Raghuvir Singh was succeeded by his nephew, Ishwari Singh (r.1927-1945). The new ruler had the aid of his competent prime minister, A.V. Robertson, who served Bundi state for ten years, and helped increase the state’s revenues from rupees twelve lakhs to rupees thirty-six lakhs per annum. Due attention was paid to aspects like road construction and building-work during this period. (One may note that the

Nagda-Mathura railway passed through Bundi state by this time). There was already an Imperial Post Office in Bundi's capital, though the state had also known its own postal system. There was also a High School at Bundi and a vernacular school at Nainwa, besides over a dozen non-state run primary schools. There was also a hospital at the capital.

Following Maharao Ishwari Singh's ascension to the Bundi *gaddi* and soon afterwards his gaining full ruling powers in September 1927, the Praja Mandal made repeated calls to him for a representative government. By 1931 the 'Bundi Praja Mandal' had Kanti Lal as its president. Meanwhile, a Brahmin priest, Rajpurohit Ram Nath Kudal, was killed at the ruler's orders, because of the priest's refusal to perform the last rites and cremation of one of the Maharao's concubines. There was popular resentment and anger over the killing of the priest, and the city of Bundi observed a total strike for nine days in protest. Processions were taken out — and these were fired upon on occasions by the state police force.

Around this time, as a consequence of political awareness, in 1931 a former commander of the state forces, Nityanand Nagar, participated in the salt satyagraha at Ajmer. Bundi state responded by ordering the seizure of Nityanand Nagar's *jagir* and other property. In 1932 the Bundi Praja Mandal put forward demands for a 'responsible government', and for judicial reforms, as well as self-governing institutions. The Bundi state's administration reacted by banning entry to political activists. Newspapers too were banned. In 1937, the president of Bundi's Praja Mandal, Rishi Dutt Mehta, was temporarily exiled from the state. He made Ajmer his temporary base, where he began publishing a weekly journal in Hindi, covering the political activities in various Rajputana states.

Bundi witnessed much political activity during the Quit India movement of 1942 under the leadership of Rishi Dutt Mehta and Brij Sunder Sharma. The state administration responded by de-recognising the Bundi Praja Mandal. Meanwhile, Nityanand and Rishi Dutt Mehta were arrested. Nityanand spent four years in Bundi jail, while Rishi Dutt was sent to Ajmer jail, from where he was released in 1944. Thereupon, Rishi Dutt Mehta helped establish the Bundi Rajya Lok Parishad in July 1944, with Hari Mohan Mathur as its President and Brij Sunder Sharma¹⁴⁸ as secretary.

The stated aim of this organisation was to attain a ‘Responsible Government’.

Ishwari Singh died in May 1945, and was succeeded by his adopted heir, Bahadur Singh (r. 1945-1949). Bahadur Singh belonged to the Kapren branch of the ruling clan. He was also a direct descendant of Maharao Budh Singh — the star-crossed Bundi ruler who, as we have seen in an earlier chapter, had won and lost his throne and his kingdom several times between 1695 and 1739. Bahadur Singh had already seen military service during the Second World War, and was to receive the Military Cross for Gallantry for his part in the Burma campaign.

The new ruler was more responsive to the efforts of Rishi Dutt and his associates. Thus, on 24 October 1946, Maharao Bahadur Singh announced certain political reforms. These included the proclamation for the establishment of an elected Constituent Assembly for Bundi state. It was also announced that a popular ministry would be formed, which would also include some nominees of the ruler. The latter provision was deemed unacceptable to one group within the Lok Parishad, leading to the resignation of Rishi Dutt Mehta, and the election of Brij Sunder Sharma as president of the Lok Parishad.

Meanwhile, the fast-moving nation events saw Bundi’s ruler, Bahadur Singh, sign the ‘Instrument of Accession’ to India in August 1947, followed by its merger with the Union of Rajasthan on 25 March 1948.

JHALAWAR

The art-loving Maharaj Rana Bhawani Singh of Jhalawar was succeeded by his son, Rajendra Singh in 1929. He was succeeded, in due course, by Harish Chandra, who was to be the last of the Jhala family of Raj Ranas to rule over the state of Jhalawar, and who took part in the activities of the Chamber of Princes and Federation-related discussions among the princes.

During the twentieth century there was agrarian discontent in Jhalawar over the disparity in land revenue demands made on tilled and untilled lands. The state authorities asked the farmers to pay revenue on untilled land too, to which the farmers objected. A government schoolteacher named Mangi Lal Babya provided leadership to the farmers. About a year later, the movement also began to call for an end to the *jagirdari* system as well as to forced *begaar* labour. Mangi Lal was called before the state's prime minister, but matters could not be resolved. Mangi Lal tendered his resignation from his government job, and continued to work for the movement.

In 1947 a local Praja Mandal became active in Jhalawar state. The same year, the Maharaj Rana Harish Chandra installed a 'popular ministry'. This included Kanhaiya Lal Mittal and Mangi Lal Babya of the state's Praja Mandal as ministers, and was headed by Maharaj Rana Harish Chandra himself. By the end of 1947 the new Government of India had started the process of integrating together the smaller princely states, and indications were that this process would soon incorporate other, some what larger, states too.

As such, in a speech on 3 February 1948, Maharaj Rana Harish Chandra indicated his willingness to join the larger neighbouring state of Kotah, and said that if Kotah joined another Rajputana unit, his state would follow suit. He also suggested the formation of a Hadauti province that could be made up of the states of Kotah, Bundi, Jhalawar, Tonk, Narsingharh, Rajgarh, Khilchipur, Sailana and Sitamau. However, other formations were on the cards, and on 25 March 1948 the state of Jhalawar came to be merged into the United States of Rajasthan, and thereafter, it became part of Greater Rajasthan in April 1949.

JAISALMER

Change came slowly to the westernmost of the states of Rajputana, which was bounded on the north by the state of Bahawalpur, on the west and south by Sind (as it was then spelt), on the east by the state of Jodhpur, and on the north-east by that of Bikaner. Despite its long history, and former

importance on the trade-route across the desert, changing fortunes had seen a relatively weak and 'backward' Jaisalmer during the preceding century and a half. (Matters were not helped by the local terrain and the infamous shifting sands of this part of the Thar desert, locally termed *dhrians*, which moved their paths almost daily and made passage difficult, particularly in the western part of this Great Indian desert region).

The measures adopted by Mehta Jagjiwan, the prime minister of Maharawal Shalivahan (r. 1891-1914), had made him unpopular. He was attacked and badly hurt in an attack, and some months afterwards, he decided to leave Jaisalmer for good and returned to his home in Gujarat.

Maharawal Shalivahan died without an heir in April 1914. Tan Singh, the Thakur of Lathi, became the new Maharawal. However, the British replaced him with Jawahar Singh of Ata, who was chief of the anti-dacoity operations in the state: Jawahar Singh was a friend of the Pir of Pagaro and thus sheltered the Hoors of Sind, who were followers of the Pir. In 1944 the British pressurised him into surrendering the Hoors to the Government of Sind.

Meanwhile, though popular movements did not come to the fore in Jaisalmer till the 1930s due to the strong policy of the state in this regard, and the overall 'backwardness' of Jaisalmer in matters of modern education, communications, etc., in 1915 some young men (including Sagarmal Gopa) tried to set up a reading-room in Jaisalmer. Their attempt was foiled by the state's government. In November 1930 some social reformers published a pamphlet congratulating Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on his birthday. They were promptly arrested. In 1932 a 'Maheshwari Yuvak Mandal' was set-up by Raghunath Singh Mehta with the aim of improving the social condition of the people. However, the Maharawal's government was not prepared to allow even this, and Mehta was arrested and sentenced to two and a half years imprisonment.

During 1937-38, an attempt was made to establish a 'Lok Parishad'. Those involved faced state repression, with some of the political workers arrested and treated harshly. Many left Jaisalmer as a consequence. Much

later, on 15 December 1945, the Jaisalmer Praja Mandal was set-up in Jodhpur (Marwar) by Meetha Lal Vyas.

In the interim, in May 1941, Sagarmal Gopa, who was among those who had established a '*sarva-hitkari vachanalaya*' or reading-room in Jaisalmer as early as 1915, and later migrated to Nagpur in 1931, returned to Jaisalmer on the death of his father. Jaisalmer's authorities had little love for Sagarmal Gopa as he had written a booklet, entitled *Jaisalmer mein Goonda Raj*, criticising the state administration. He was arrested on the charge of sedition. He remained in jail without a trial for nearly five years, during which time he was subjected to severe torture.

A complaint was made about his long imprisonment without trial to the British Political Agent at Jodhpur by Jai Narain Vyas of the Marwar Lok Parishad. The Political Agent decided to visit Jaisalmer to look into the matter. However, before the Political Agent's arrival, which was scheduled for 6 April 1946, Sagarmal Gopa died in prison after he was set ablaze by prison staff. He died from his injuries and severe burns. This led to strong protests against Jaisalmer state's repressive policies, including in British India. As president of the All-India States' People's Conference, Jawaharlal Nehru condemned the murder of Sagarmal Gopa, and held the Government of Jaisalmer squarely responsible for it. The demand grew across the subcontinent for an open enquiry into Gopa's death.

On 26 May 1946, Marwar's Jai Narain Vyas and others entered Jaisalmer state's territory, and on 27 May hoisted the tricolour flag, demanding the setting up of 'responsible government'. Meanwhile, Jawahar Singh had died, and as his successor, Raghunath Singh was a minor, the task of administration was carried on by the young ruler's uncle and a Regency Council.

In 1947, Jaisalmer signed the 'Instrument of Accession' to India, having previously toyed, apparently under the influence of the Maharaja of Jodhpur, with the idea of joining Pakistan. Later, its young ruler, Maharawal Raghunath Singh stood for Parliament and won elections to become an MR

BIKANER

Maharaja Ganga Singh of Bikaner (r. 1887-1943), in the course of his long reign, left his mark on many spheres, both internationally and nationally. He not only represented the Indian princes at the Imperial War Cabinet (1917) and Conference, but was also a signatory on behalf of India to the Peace Treaty of Versailles, at the end of the First World War. Maharaja Ganga Singh was also a prominent member of the Chamber of Princes. Invited to attend the Round Table conferences in Britain during the 1930-32 period, he participated in many other important deliberations concerning eventual self-government for India.

Having personally led his troops to China in 1900, for which he was awarded the China Medal by King Edward VII in 1902, Ganga Singh sent his 'Ganga Risala' to the Somaliland campaign (1902). As a result of these services, and his famine-relief work, combined with his contacts with various viceroys and with the British ruling family, Maharaja Ganga Singh was successful in badgering the British into abolishing the post of a British Political Agent at the Bikaner court in 1910. This enabled the Bikaner state government to deal directly with the AGG. During the First World War Ganga Singh placed the services of his troops as well as his own services at the disposal of the British Government, and went with his troops to France and Egypt. (His personal salute was raised from seventeen to nineteen guns, in recognition of his services. Years later, as a much older man, Ganga Singh insisted on going to the Middle Eastern war front during the Second World War too).

Obsessed with what he perceived to be the greater good of his people and the upliftment of his State, Ganga Singh of Bikaner ruled his state in the manner of a patriarch — according to some, a rather benevolently despotic patriarch.

For example, he did not allow the Arya Samaj to spread in Bikaner state, though it did gain a foothold at Sujangarh. Much later, Swami Gopal Das (1882-1939), who had established a *Hitkarini Sabha* at Churu in 1907 to work for socio-economic upliftment, was among those who earned the ire of the state and was arrested. This followed the distribution of pamphlets

criticizing Bikaner state's administration, at the Second Round Table Conference in London, by a deputation of the All-India State People's Conference (AISPC). [Established in 1927 as the Indian States Peoples Conference (ISPC), this merged with the All-India States' Subjects Conference in June 1931 to form the AISPC]. The 'Bikaner Conspiracy Case' is another case in point. But those close to him insist that he tried to live according to his notion of a 'good' Indian king¹⁴⁹, combining the better aspects of traditional Indian kingship with a twentieth century outlook towards modernisation¹⁵⁰.

Ganga Singh was a gifted administrator with a committed outlook. Appalled by the spectre of recurring famine and the accompanying suffering it brought to the people of his state, Ganga Singh pursued an irrigation scheme to secure water from a north Indian river for Bikaner in the form of a perennial canal. He continually badgered the British administration and even the neighbouring state of Bahawalpur to gain their co-operation. His dream was eventually partially realised in 1927 when water from the Sutlej river first flowed through the Gang Canal — then the world's longest concrete-lined canal — into the dry sandy terrain of northern Bikaner. It may be pertinent to note here that the concrete used was manufactured within Bikaner State, and transported to the canal area by local rail! (The subsequent Rajasthan Canal, now known as Indira Gandhi Canal (or Indira Gandhi Nahar Project — IGNP), was part of the Maharaja's vision too).

Alongside this, 883 miles of railroad tracks were laid, connecting distant parts of the kingdom, and market towns established all over the state. The capital-city of Bikaner became the centre of a well-run modern administration, with hospitals, schools, colleges, and small industries. In 1902 the '*Mahakma-Khas*' was converted into a modern secretariat, directly responsible to the Maharaja. The post of *dewan* was abolished. Reforms relating to land revenue and taxation were undertaken too, and general land settlement and other revenue-related work carried out under the capable guidance of G.D. Rudkin (ICS), from 1912 to 1929.

After the opening of the Gang Canal in 1927, due attention was paid to colonization and planned settlements in the new canal-irrigated areas of

the state too. Cotton cultivation and intensive agricultural activities too were actively encouraged in the area watered by the Gang Canal — where non-Bikaneri settlers with expertise in irrigated farming (particularly from the neighbouring Punjab area) were encouraged to settle permanently by the Maharaja. In time, the ‘Sri Ganganagar’ area, as it was called, became the granary of Bikaner!

Alongside other reforms and attempts at modernising the administrative structure, the judicial system was overhauled, and in 1910 the judiciary and executive separated. Bikaner also became the first princely state in northern India to establish a Chief Court in 1910. This was upgraded to a High Court in 1922, with a Chief Justice and two puisne judges. A Legal Practitioners Act was passed too, the Indian Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code activated in the state, and a law examination prescribed.

On the administrative front, Hindi was introduced as the official language in place of Urdu, and in 1910 the departments of Customs and Excise amalgamated. The state was divided into four units, or districts, called *nizamat*, each headed by a *nazim*. *Nazims* were designated as Magistrate (first class) and decided suits up to a certain monetary value, along with appeals against the decisions of lower courts. Each district was sub-divided into *kehsils*, which were under *tehsildars*. All *tehsildars* held the powers of a magistrate (second class), while the *naib-tehsildars* were magistrates (third class). An Appellate Court heard appeals against the decisions of the *nazims*, tried civil suits that were beyond the jurisdiction of *nazims*, and could pass sentences of up to ten years of imprisonment. The State Council functioned as the highest court of appeal in judicial matters.

Bikaner made rapid strides in the field of education too. In November 1912, Bikaner state got its first Director of Education. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the literacy rate in the state in 1901 was 2.5 percent (male 4.7% and female 0.2%), with the number of educational institutions maintained by the state being thirty-eight, which included one High School and one girls’ school, both at the state capital. However, by 1935-36 Bikaner was to see 122 state-run schools, besides private and part-aided private schools, with a total number of 16,000 boys and girls enrolled; and

by 1943 there were 140 government schools, 191 private schools and a college in the State. In the interim, during the financial year 1928-29, a 'Compulsory Primary Education Act' had been added to the statute books. This was applied by the municipalities of Bikaner, Churu, Rajgarh, Sardarshahr, Sujangarh and Ratangarh. Considerable progress was also made in the field of primary education in the rural areas — with one innovative scheme employing local village women having some limited formal education. They were given training, and asked to encourage girls attending school. Special 'purdah' schools, for girls from families practicing the veiling and seclusion of women, was also started by the Maharaja.

Health services too got their due attention. In 1905 the State had thirteen hospitals and three dispensaries with accommodation for 191 in-patients. By 1943 the number of hospitals in Bikaner state was forty-one, of which the 'Prince Bijey Memorial Hospital' at the capital of Bikaner was acknowledged as one of the finest and best equipped hospitals of northern India. Meanwhile, in 1903 the separate postal system of Bikaner had been replaced by the Postal Unity system. A Police Training School that had also opened in 1903 took its time over attracting fit candidates though. In time, the police department too was re-organised and improved, particularly in 1914 and 1916, and then again in 1934, at which latter point a senior officer from the Indian Police Service (I.P.) was 'borrowed' from the Punjab administration.

Railways continued to have state patronage. Bikaner's portion of the rail network was separated from Jodhpur's management in 1924, and brought directly under Bikaner state's control. By 1937 Bikaner possessed 795.85 miles of rail track. The railroad served to connect Bikaner to distant cities of the subcontinent, and was used for the transportation of goods to ports like Karachi and Bombay (now Mumbai). This gave a major fillip to Bikaner state's trade and industry.

On the socio-economic and trade front, better sheep-husbandry was encouraged, particularly with a view to furthering the local wool trade, which soon became a valuable export commodity. (Sheep-rearing in Bikaner state was mainly concentrated in the hands of Rebaris, Gujars, and

Khatiks). Bikaner was soon recognised as an important sheep and wool producing area of India, with wool being exported mainly to the Punjab and Beawar markets. Within the state, the wool was used in cottage industries and other small-scale units that produced tweed, blankets, carpets and *namda* floor-coverings etc.

Improvements were also made by the state in the camel and horse breeding sector. Industries were also encouraged, and the local Palana lignite was used to run Bikaner state's power-house. The efforts of Ganga Singh turned Bikaner into one of the most prosperous states of the Indian subcontinent.

In November 1913, a thirty-five member 'Representative Assembly' (later restructured as a Legislative Assembly) was inaugurated in Bikaner. This was modelled on the Central Assembly of British India under the Morley-Minto Reforms. The body comprised the six members of the State Council, along with nineteen nominated and ten elected members. In 1937 the number of elected members was raised to twenty. In 1920 the Cooperative Societies Act was promulgated, and by 1930 the state had as many as eighty-nine societies. In 1928 the Village Panchayat Act was enforced. Village panchayats were invested with civil, criminal and executive powers. The motivations and catalysts for such changes were many, including advice by the British authorities¹⁵¹. The development of democratic institutions remained slow, however, and political activities were actively discouraged¹⁵².

However, it may be relevant to take note of what Ganga Singh himself defined as the "...essential preliminaries — the minima" of good government, in a speech delivered to the Bikaner Assembly in 1928, and which he attempted to provide for all the subjects of his state. These were: (i) A fixed and well-defined privy purse and a clear dividing line between state and [ruler's] personal expenditure; (ii) Security of life and property; (iii) An independent judiciary; (iv) the reign of law, including the certainty of law; (v) Stability of public services; (vi) Efficiency and continuity of administration; and (vii) Beneficent rule in the interests of the general well-being of the people.

Ganga Singh's statesmanship at the Imperial War Conference and the War Cabinet meetings in London in 1917, had led Austen Chamberlain, the then Secretary of State for India, to ask him to write a '*Minute*' on Indian issues. In response, during his stopover at Rome enroute to India, Ganga Singh prepared the note which was to become widely known as the 'Rome Note'. On 15 May 1917 this was forwarded to Chamberlain.

In it Ganga Singh stressed a four-point programme in the context of the then prevailing situation. This was: "[firstly]...the announcement at the earliest possible opportunity that the ultimate objective of British rule in India was the grant of self-government within the empire; secondly, further liberal reforms in the constitution and functioning of the provincial legislative councils as well as the Imperial Legislative Councils; thirdly, the grant of greater autonomy to the Government of India and the provincial councils and lastly, the establishment of a Council of Princes for dealing with matters concerning the British Government and the Indian States"¹⁵³

For Ganga Singh there was nothing incongruous in a ruling Indian prince, who offered allegiance to the British Empire, to also demand self-government for India! According to Karni Singh's analysis, three loyalties had constantly and simultaneously worked in his grandfather¹⁵⁴. One was his loyalty to the Crown which had almost acquired a religious sanctity with Ganga Singh because he held that the treaties which were entered into with the British Government during the early nineteenth century, due to the then existing circumstances, by the ancestors of the modern Indian princes, were plighted words which must be respected. Another was his loyalty to his mother country which sustained Ganga Singh's sincere belief in India attaining its full political stature. In keeping with this, Ganga Singh made it very clear that the Indian princes, while belonging to the princely order, were very much 'sons of the soil'¹⁵⁵. And the third was Ganga Singh's loyalty to his state and his subjects. This love of country, loyalty to one's land of birth and people, and belief in both doing one's duty and honouring a pledged word was a basic facet of Maharaja Ganga Singh's attitude towards kingship. In his lifetime, Maharaja Ganga Singh tried to live up to all these three loyalties; in fact, he tried to blend them together as a ruler of a state which did its best to help the British government/Empire in the two

World Wars, in his service to the people of Bikaner state, and as the leading voice in the Chamber of Princes as its first Chancellor (1921-26).

At the First Round Table Conference of 1930, the idea of a self-governing federal India (with a responsible government at the Centre and provincial autonomy) made up of British India and princely India, with legitimate safeguards, was mooted by Tej Bahadur Sapru. It was supported by Maharaja Ganga Singh¹⁵⁶. However, when a rather truncated federal scheme was eventually brought into being in 1938-39 under the Government of India Act 1935, Ganga Singh was one of the princes who refrained from joining the federation.

Meanwhile, democratic ideas had percolated into Bikaner from British India. The state responded by imposing press censorship, and the proscription of certain books, newspapers, pamphlets deemed to be seditious. The call for responsible government during the 1930s also met the state's authoritarian wall, and the booking of a number of cases. Ganga Singh was stern with regard to the national movement that had gained so many adherents in British India. Subjects of Bikaner state were not allowed to indulge in activities disapproved by the state. Even the wearing of a 'Gandhi cap' was not acceptable, and there was prohibition on the entry of Seth Jannalal Bajaj into Bikaner state. The Maharaja also suspended a member of a municipal body because he had hoisted the Congress-associated nationalist tricolour flag in Churu on January 26, 1930.

In 1931 the Maharaja imposed tax on foodgrains. Some public spirited workers like Swami Gopal Das, Chandanmal Bahad and Satya Narain, an advocate raised their voices against the imposition of the tax. This was followed by the release of a printed memorandum signed by many people, which listed the suppression of civil liberties in the state. These leaflets were also distributed in London, where the Maharaja was attending the Round Table Conference. Chandanmal Bahad, Satya Narain and several others were arrested on charges of sedition. Around the same time a 'Sarva Hitkarini Sabha' was established by Swami Gopal Das at Churu with the main aim of eradicating social evils. The popularity of the Sabha alarmed the Bikaner ruler. Many leaders were later implicated in what became famous as the 'Bikaner Conspiracy Case' of 1934.

From the early 1930s onwards, (Pandit) Vaidya Magha Ram had provided leadership to a small but growing movement of dissent. In 1936 Vaidya Magha Ram tried to establish a Bikaner Praja Mandal. The state responded by externing him from Bikaner for the next six years. Magha Ram went to Calcutta and established the Bikaner Praja Mandal there in 1936. Later, others like Raghuvar Dayal Goel, Mukta Prasad Saxena and Ganga Das Kaushik appeared on the scene. Kaushik was advised by Marwar's Jai Narain Vyas to go to Banasthali and learn from Hiralal Shastri.

Meanwhile, from about 1932 the cultivators around Dudhwa Khara began voicing issues and problems, under the leadership of Hanuman Singh from the village of Dudhwa Khara. The movement against the atrocities and revenue demands of the local *jagirdar* of Dudhwa Khara was to continue almost up to the period of Indian independence¹⁵⁷. Besides local leaders like Hanuman Singh, who faced severe repression and personal humiliation and imprisonment, the Lok Parishad leader Magharam Vaid and various other leaders like Kedar Nath, Kumbharam Arya, Sardar Harlal Singh, Ladu Ram Joshi, Raghuvar Dayal Goel, and Ghasiram Choudhary, provided support, leadership and voice to various popular demands over the next decade and more. It was during this period that Bikaner's Representative Assembly became a Legislative Assembly on 10 November 1933.

The outbreak of the Second World War saw Bikaner's forces — including the Ganga Risala and Sadul Light Infantry — join action on the side of the Allies. The aging Maharaja Ganga Singh also offered his own personal services and wished to join active duty. On account of Ganga Singh's age, this was tactfully turned down by the Viceroy, but the doughty old Maharaja managed to have his way in some measure and made a visit to the frontlines in Africa and West Asia, accompanied by his eldest grandson. Later, the Maharaja's heir and successor, Sadul Singh, also went to the battle-front. Around this time, efforts were made in Bikaner to establish some further modern industries too.¹⁵⁸

In the interim, efforts had continued to be made to convince the Bikaner government to set up a responsible government under the aegis of the ruler. This was in spite of Maharaja Ganga Singh's Government having

actively discouraged political activities. In July 1942 the Bikaner Rajya Praja Parishad was established by an advocate called Raghuvar Dayal Goel, and his associates. The stated objective of this organisation was to get a responsible government under the aegis of the Maharaja.

On 29 July 1942, the Bikaner Praja Parishad, under its president, Raghuvar Dayal Goel, started a movement for 'responsible government' in Bikaner state. Goel was externed from the state, but he re-entered the state in defiance of the ban a few weeks later. He was arrested and sentenced to a year's imprisonment. Nemichand Anchalia, who had written an article in a weekly journal published from Ajmer, criticising the Bikaner ruler for suppressing civil liberties in the state, was sentenced to seven years rigorous imprisonment. The Quit India movement did not have much impact in Bikaner despite the attempts of people like Goel and Pandit Magharam Vaid, and others, and the hoisting of the tricolour flag was regarded as a seditious act.

Maharaja Ganga Singh died in early 1943, and was succeeded by his son, Sadul Singh (r. 1943-1950). Just over four years later, Sadul Singh of Bikaner was to take a leading role in signing the Instrument of Accession to the new dominion of independent India on 7 August 1947. At a crucial stage in Indian history, when the wholehearted and willing cooperation of the princes, rather than their obstinate adherence to issues of their legal and ancestral rights and prerogatives, was the need of the hour, Sadul Singh played a part appropriate for Maharaja Ganga Singh's son in the Chamber of Princes (the *Narendra Mandal*). Besides his work in the Chamber of Princes, Sadul Singh also played a decisive role in various other negotiations between the Indian rulers and the British Government, which have been documented in full by his older son, Karni Singh¹⁵⁹.

While other events were taking their course and the nationalist leaders of British India were making efforts towards India's 'tryst with destiny', the Standing Committee of the Chamber of Princes appointed Maharaja Sadul Singh as the chairman of a Committee of Rulers in 1944 to formulate proposals and recommendations for more efficient administration in the princely Indian states. From c. 1943 onwards, the pace of constitutional reforms in different princely States was gradually increasing. The process

was to continue till 1947-48, but was often deemed too slow as far as the establishment of representative popular government in the princely states was concerned.

The early years of Sadul Singh's reign did not see a drastic change in the established state policy towards the Praja Parishad (though political prisoners were released from jail on Sadul Singh's accession). Meanwhile, as early as March 1943, within a month of his succession, Sadul Singh had announced the desire to associate the people with the administration to a greater degree. Certain changes were made in the functioning of the Legislative Assembly of Bikaner, though these were less than what the Praja Parishad and *kisan* (agriculturalist) leaders were looking for. Sadul Singh agreed to reconstitute the Legislative Assembly on a more popular basis, but this too did not find favour with the leadership of the Praja Parishad.

Thereafter, talks were held between the Maharaja and Raghuvar Dayal Goel for recognition of the Praja Parishad, but these failed. Some of the workers of the Parishad were imprisoned and Goel was externed from the state. In response, 26 October 1944 was marked as a protest day against the state's policy of suppressing dissent. The Praja Parishad later also celebrated 'Netaji Day' (23 January, 1946) and 'Independence Day' (26 January, 1946).

Aware of similar feelings and desires for responsible government in various states, the 'Bikaner Committee' headed by Sadul Singh made certain valuable recommendations. In September 1945, in a speech to the Informal Princes Standing Committee, Sadul Singh stressed that before very long the princes would be faced with the issue of how the states were going to fit into the future constitution of India. He also warned his brother-princes that unless the smaller states formed into groups which could provide necessary amenities to the people, and keep pace with the times, they were likely to be wiped out.

Karni Singh, a first-hand witness to several of the meetings and decisions that were to be crucial for India's future course, commented: "Soon after, the Maharaja reiterated his convictions in a confidential

circular to the princes wherein he said that the passing of time would convince them whether or not his views were sound, and emphasized that the policy of drift and delay would be suicidal to them. His foreboding soon came true”¹⁶⁰.

Meanwhile, there were a number of instances of *jagirdar* and/or official repression against Praja Parishad led and/or local agrarian movements and public meetings at places like Kangar¹⁶¹ and Dudhwa Khara¹⁶² during the 1945-47 period, as well as at Sadulshahr, Lallgarh etc. These had repercussions on political and constitutional developments within Bikaner state. The impact of the 1945 Dudhwa Khara incident — and the continued harassment and long spells of imprisonment of Hanuman Singh (a local resident), for refusing to yield to state demands, was felt across not only Bikaner state, but other parts of Rajputana and British India.

The seventh session of the All-India State People’s Conference held at Udaipur (the capital of the state of Mewar), during December 1945 to January 1946, under the presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru, had re-iterated its long-held demand for the establishment of ‘responsible government’ based on representative institutions in the states — including the states of Rajputana. (In 1948 the AISPC was to merge with the Indian National Congress). On 26 January 1946, Independence Day was celebrated for the first time in Bikaner state, and the demand for responsible government was once again voiced.

In May 1946, the Praja Parishad workers and *kisans* came out onto the streets, holding the tricolour (accepted since the 1930s as the Indian national flag), to demonstrate against the state, protest atrocities by *jagirdars* and demand land reforms. On 21 June 1946, Maharaja Sadul Singh announced that a responsible government would soon be set up. Around this time, the ex-tenured Raghuvar Dayal Goel re-entered Bikaner state, despite the ban placed on him, and was arrested. Prior to this, Choudhary Kumbharam had also been arrested.

The Praja Parishad decided to hold a political conference at Raisinghnagar. This was held on 30 June at Raisinghnagar, under the

chairmanship of Satya Narayan Saraf. There was a *lathi*-charge and firing by the police, and Birbal Singh, one of the Parishad workers, was killed. In the meanwhile political changes of far reaching importance were taking place in the country. In July 1946 Raghuvar Dayal Goel and Choudhary Kumbharam were released from jail, and an office of the Praja Parishad was formally established at Bikaner.

Soon after this, through his proclamation of 31 August 1946, Maharaja Sadul Singh announced the reconstitution of the Bikaner Legislative Assembly, on a more popular basis. To achieve that end, he appointed a 'Constitution Committee' and a 'Franchise and Constituency Committee'. (Some people have doubted Sadul Singh's intentions in this matter of democratisation¹⁶³, but Karni Singh's writings and cassette-recorded views suggest that the attempt was not a ploy or pretence¹⁶⁴)

According to Karni Singh, while the proclamation was generally well received by the people at large, the Bikaner Praja Parishad, the counterpart of the Indian National Congress, entertained doubts. Despite that, the Praja Parishad leaders announced in the press that they would not precipitate matters, and the Parishad's working committee and workers' convention opted to cooperate with the Bikaner Government in the Constitution and Franchise & Constituency committees¹⁶⁵. As a result of these efforts, as British India headed towards freedom, the work of both, Bikaner's Constitution Committee, as well as its Franchise & Constituency Committee, continued and led to the promulgation of the Bikaner Constitution Act in December 1947.

The 1947 Bikaner Act brought in a bicameral legislature for Bikaner; and the administration, with certain reservations, was entrusted to a Council responsible to the legislature. Through the proclamation of 4 December 1947, it was further announced that the Act also contemplated the introduction of full responsible government, under the aegis of the Maharaja, within a period of two years. The pace of change was not rapid enough for the Praja Parishad, though.

Meanwhile, Sadul Singh was amongst the foremost in signing the Instrument of Accession to India on 7 August 1947, a week before British India formally gained its independence. By the decisions reached previously, the princely Indian states were free to accede to either India or Pakistan, or to remain independent. At this point, some of the rulers — among them the Maharaja of Travancore, declared their intention of becoming independent, or forming a loose alternative coalition of states. Realising the gravity of the situation, Bikaner's Maharaja Sadul Singh took the lead and signed the Instrument of Accession in favour of India. The rulers of Udaipur and Jaipur did the same. The actions effectively ended the plans of those rulers who had thought of asserting their independence.

Later, in his speech, delivered at Bikaner's State Banquet on 15 August, 1947 to celebrate India's Independence, Sadul Singh explained how, "With the lapse of paramountcy, it was open to the States of India to stand aside and refuse to associate with the new Dominion. Legally we could all have been independent today, for the suzerainty which we had surrendered to the British Crown had reverted to us under the Indian Independence Act and we could have stood aside and not accede[d] to the Indian Dominion. A moment's consideration would show how disastrous the consequences would have been. It would have meant India breaking up into small fragments... From the beginning my mind was made up. With full knowledge of its implications, I decided without hesitation to cooperate with those elements in India which were working for the establishment of a stable central government and oppose with determination any forces that might come in the way of such consummation"¹⁶⁶.

Sadul Singh's role was publicly acclaimed by Lord Mountbatten, Governor General of independent India, in January 1948. Speaking at the Investiture *Durbar* at Bikaner's Lallgarh Palace on January 15 1948, Lord Mountbatten stated: "His Highness [Maharaja Sadul Singh] was the first ruler who realised the part which the princes could play in the future by sending representatives to the Constituent Assembly to help frame the new constitution of India. Likewise His Highness was the first ruler to support my proposals for obtaining the accession of States to their neighbouring Dominion. ...The statesmanship and patriotism displayed by the Maharaja of Bikaner in giving a lead in announcing his accession to the Dominion of

India without a moment of doubt or suspicion cannot, therefore, be praised too highly”.

Meanwhile, during July 1947, the imminent partition of the land into two separate countries brought a major threat for Bikaner. There were strong possibilities that the Ferozepore Headworks located in the Punjab, which controlled water supply to the Gang Canal, could be awarded to Pakistan. If this came to pass while Bikaner remained in India, there was every chance that the interests of Bikaner would be ‘prejudicially affected’. Put bluntly, the area could lapse into its pre-canal condition and revert to being a desert-land. At this stage Sadul Singh of Bikaner played a crucial role in ensuring that the Ferozepore headworks stayed in independent India, instead of going to Pakistan. The Maharaja even took recourse to his personal friendship with the Viceroy, which dated back to their childhood days.

Karni Singh has documented how, “when it became known through private sources that the Muslim League was likely to put forward claims for the control of regulation of waters from the Ferozepore Headworks, the Prime Minister of Bikaner addressed a letter to Sardar Patel...He also added that over one thousand square miles of Bikaner territory was irrigated by the Sutlej Valley Canals and if the Muslim League’s claims were accepted, the interests of the State would very much suffer. He, therefore, urged upon the Sardar both as the Minister in charge of the States Department as also Member of the High Council of Partition, to ensure that the Ferozepore Headworks were entirely controlled by India. The Maharaja also sent telegrams to the Viceroy, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and Sardar Patel on 7 July, 1947 requesting that in the arrangements that were being made, it might be ensured that the interests of Bikaner State were not interfered with”¹⁶⁷.

In his reply by telegram and letter dated the same day, Sardar Patel assured Sadul Singh that appropriate steps were being taken. Shortly afterwards, at the suggestion of the Viceroy, the Bikaner Maharaja sent a telegram to the president of the Punjab Boundary Commission at Lahore, asking for an opportunity for the Bikaner state to present its case. Lala Kanwar Sain, then Chief Engineer Irrigation of Bikaner State, and Bakshi

Tek Chand, a renowned Punjab-based lawyer and jurist (whose career highlights had included the position of Puisne Judge of the Lahore High Court from 1927-1943, and who was subsequently to serve as a member of India's Provisional Parliament of 1950-52, prior to first General Elections of 1952), were deputed to present the case. Additionally, on 25 July 1947, a memorandum was presented to the Punjab Boundary Commission.

Events were now moving rapidly. On 10 August 1947, upon "...news reaching the Maharaja that the Boundary Commission was likely to award Ferozepore Tehsil to Western Punjab [Pakistan], the Maharaja again telegraphed the Viceroy stressing the importance of retaining the Headworks at Ferozepore in India as the economic life of the State depended entirely upon it urging that his Prime Minister and Chief Engineer Irrigation, might be afforded an opportunity to place facts before the Viceroy. It must be said to the credit of Lord Mountbatten especially, and to others concerned as well, that the efforts of Bikaner were finally crowned with success and a just cause upheld. Ferozepore remained in India"¹⁶⁸.

Bikaner state's official celebrations to mark India's Independence on 15 August 1947 have been described in Karni Singh's book, *The Relations of the House of Bikaner with the Central Powers – 1465-1949*. With the euphoria of India's Independence also came the traumatic partition of the subcontinent, though. Bikaner, itself untainted by communal madness, became a transit-point for many who took that route to travel across the newly created national boundaries of India and Pakistan. Karni Singh has recorded how "...*kafilas* [caravans] of ten lakhs of people moved from India to Pakistan and vice-versa, and my father's orders were that not a single person should be harmed, and the moving humanity, irrespective of caste or religion, should be given total protection"¹⁶⁹.

Maharaja Sadul Singh appealed to the Bikaneris not to leave their homeland and cross the border into Bahawalpur. Guaranteeing safety to all his subjects, he urged those Muslims who had fled Bikaner to return back. He also ensured the return to such people of all the property they had abandoned when they had left their ancestral homes. Besides this, the Maharaja ordered that any Hindu or Muslim refugees transitting through Bikaner were to be given every feasible assistance. (A majority of the rulers

of Rajputana took similar steps to protect their subjects as well as refugees moving through those states. That was not the case in every princely state, however). As a result, there was no loss of life for any refugees — Hindu or Muslim — who crossed the newly created international border through Bikaner.

Meanwhile, the work of both, Bikaner's Constitution Committee, as well as its Franchise & Constituency Committee, had continued unabated. This led (as already noted) to the promulgation of the Bikaner Constitution Act in December 1947. The 1947 Bikaner Act brought in a bicameral legislature for Bikaner; and the administration, with certain reservations, was entrusted to a Council responsible to the legislature. By the proclamation of 4 December 1947, it was further announced that the Act also contemplated the introduction of full responsible government, under the aegis of the Maharaja, within a period of two years. The pace of change was not rapid enough for the Praja Parishad, though.

Maharaja Sadul Singh issued another proclamation on 2 February 1948, announcing his decision to establish responsible government in April 1948 and dispensing with the interim arrangements. A month later, on 18 March 1948, he announced the formation of an Interim Coalition Ministry with Jaswant Singh of Daudsar as the prime minister. The Coalition Ministry, made up of both Praja Mandal/Congress representatives and the Maharaja's nominees on a fifty-fifty basis, replaced the Maharaja's Executive Council. It was charged with carrying on routine administration during the period pending elections. These were fixed for 23 September 1948.

Karni Singh maintained that, "For some time the work went smoothly. But it was noticed after some time that the dissident group in the Congress i.e., the group which did not favour the formation of the coalition ministry began to agitate against the State. In order to refute the allegations of the agitators, a public meeting was called in the Sunaron-ki-Gawar at Bikaner and was addressed by K. Jaswant Singh, the Prime Minister, when other ministers including the Congress nominees were also present. The meeting, however, ended in rowdyism and the Congress ministers, instead of trying to quieten the mischievous elements and restore order, deserted the meeting.

“The agitation continued and the Congress dissidents now raised their voice for the merger of the State. The Maharaja brought these activities of the dissidents to the notice of Sardar Patel, and in view of the fact that the Bikaner State had been classified as a viable unit and also that the Maharaja was not only anxious to introduce more responsible government in the State but had actually taken steps for its implementation and the general elections were not far off, he asked the Sardar to see that the agitation was stopped forthwith and, in fact, the agitation d.d stop”¹⁷⁰.

In the summer of 1948 Sadul Singh went to England. He left his heir-apparent, Karni Singh, in charge, helped by Maharani Sudarshan Kumari. Meher Chand Mahajan was named as advisor. There were problems in the Coalition Ministry while Sadul Singh was away. In August 1948, while work was proceeding towards the elections scheduled for 23 September, the State Congress Committee abruptly demanded the postponement of the forthcoming elections. As Maharaja Sadul Singh had not yet returned from England, Karni Singh apprised him about the situation, and pending his father's return to Bikaner, held discussions with Congress leaders of Rajasthan like Hiralal Shastri (later to be the first Chief Minister of Greater Rajasthan — which post he would hold till January 1951), and Gokul Bhai Bhatt.

In Karni Singh's view, “Whatever explanation the Bikaner State Congress Committee might have given for the basis of their demand, and these were later duly refuted by Maharaja Sadul Singh on his return, in a press communiqué, the fact remained that the Bikaner State Congress Committee wanted to gain time as it was not sure of its hold on the people...The intention not to contest the elections and face a show-down was understandable particularly when the States Peoples Conference had tried to convince the world that they had complete control over public opinion in the States. Whether this claim was justified in the case of Bikaner and Jodhpur is a doubtful matter. ...As it is, the Bikaner State Congress Committee, by its resolution of 28 August, 1948, created an impasse by deciding not to participate in the general elections and also by calling upon its representatives in the coalition ministry to tender their resignations... This created an unfortunate situation; and the Maharaja, who was constantly being kept in touch by the heir-apparent, returned to Bikaner

on 31 August 1948. He immediately set himself to the task of resolving the tangle if he could”¹⁷¹.

Sadul Singh secured an appointment with Sardar Patel and went to Delhi to discuss the subject with him. The Maharaja was advised to discuss the matter further with V.P. Menon, Hiralal Shastri, Jai Narain Vyas and Gokul Bhai Bhatt, all of whom were in Delhi at the time. Eventually, the Bikaner Maharaja was advised to postpone the elections. The Maharaja returned to Bikaner on 6 September 1948. The Congress ministers had tendered their resignations and the Maharaja had “...no option but to accept them, dissolve the interim ministry and postpone the elections...At the same time, the Maharaja also announced his intention to appoint a Prime Minister from outside the State so that no one may have any genuine case for complaint and...C.S. Venkatachar, I.C.S., former Dewan of Jodhpur, took over in October, 1948”¹⁷². (Venkatachar continued as prime minister up to the Integration of Bikaner into present-day Rajasthan).

While these events were taking place in Bikaner, the Government of India had started to integrate some of the princely Indian states. The Government of India’s shift of stance left Sadul Singh feeling extremely let down, even betrayed. Carried away by the euphoria of Independence, Maharaja Sadul Singh had taken the lead in signing away his traditional inheritance for what he perceived to be the greater good of the people of both Bikaner and India. Additionally, he had also played a vital role in persuading many of his brother-princes to follow his example. This role had been acknowledged not only by all his contemporaries, it was to be publicly re-iterated, a few years after the death of Maharaja Sadul Singh, by the President of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad.

Speaking at the unveiling ceremony of a statue of the late Maharaja Sadul Singh at Bikaner on September 2 1954, the president of India stated that:

“When the British Government decided to leave India, they declared that after their departure all treaties and agreements between the British Crown and the Princes and States of India

would cease to operate. The result was that a large part of India, comprising about 600 States, scattered all over the country, became free after the departure of the British to remain either with India or seek to retain their separate entity. It was a crucial problem on which depended the unity and the very future of India... The great move for the unification of India could materialize primarily because of the good will and ready willingness of Princes like Maharaja Sadul Singhji to participate in Constitution making and to send their representatives to the Constituent Assembly of India. It was a difficult task, too difficult to be described in words because but for this kind of wilful cooperation, India might have remained split in several bits. It redounds to the credit of the late Maharaja of Bikaner that by his bold decision he gave a correct and timely lead to other Princes. This eventually resulted in the accession of not only Bikaner but also other Princely States to India. Therefore, India is, and will remain indebted to him. When the history of that period is written, it will be recorded therein that at a time when India was faced, on the one hand, with the calamity of partition and, on the other, with the dangerous possibility of Balkanisation, Maharaja Sadul Singhji prompted by farsightedness and the most patriotic of motives stood firm like a rock and averted that possibility. ...By placing the interests of the country before their own, the Princes played a memorable part in the process of India's unification. The help which the late Maharaja Sadul Singhji gave in this connection, has been thankfully acknowledged by the great Indian leader and Minister of States at that time, namely Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel”.

JAIPUR

The State of Jaipur continued to modernise¹⁷³, as noted in a previous section, during the reign of Madho Singh II (r. 1880-1922), particularly under the able *dewans* and ministers who served the state. The state's Royal Council was replaced by a four member *Mahakma Aliya Council*.

Direct interaction between the ruler of Jaipur and the British Crown increased too during the twentieth century, with Madho Singh's by now well discussed journey to London for the 1902 coronation of King Edward VII being a path-breaker of sorts for his state. (Among other things, the Maharaja's baggage included the idol of the family's deity, besides two massive silver jars holding drinking water drawn from the sacred river Ganga, for the Maharaja's use. The idol preceded the Maharaja everywhere he travelled, enabling Madho Singh to circumvent strictures over crossing the high seas and fears of pollution by stating later that he had merely followed wherever the deity led him! In a like manner, the enormous water-jars ensured that the Jaipur ruler had an ample supply of ritually pure water for the five months plus that it took for his journey and sojourn in alien land¹⁷⁴).

Courts of the district judge, subordinate judges, and revenue-related munsifs courts were set up on the civil side, and courts of the sessions judge, assistant judge, assistant sessions judge and magistrate on the criminal side. Final appeals went before the Council of State. There was also a police force headed by an Inspector General. On the industries-related front, a cotton ginning factory was established in 1912. When the First World War broke out, Jaipur State rendered assistance to the Imperial war effort. Jaipur state's Transport forces were among the forces that participated in the First World War.

By the second decade of the twentieth century, some political stirrings, on a nationalist basis, had also begun in the region. As a result, Arjun Lal Sethi, who was accused of providing training to 'revolutionaries' at his school, the Vardhman Vidyalaya, was arrested in 1914. In December 1914 he was sentenced and externed from Jaipur¹⁷⁵ for his involvement in planning a raid conducted by a group of revolutionaries against the Mahant of Nimaz in Bihar's Ara district. (The Mahant had been killed in the attack). He was later sent to Vellore jail in Madras Presidency, to be released in 1920. Disallowed from re-entering Jaipur state without prior permission, Sethi later made Ajmer his base, and carried out nationalist activities from there, and also emphasising communal harmony between different communities.

In 1921, towards the end of his reign, the ailing Madho Singh II appointed a *Mahakma Khas*, or Cabinet, to conduct state business, and deal with matters previously in the realm of the ruler personally, while the Council of State continued to discharge its usual duties. The dual arrangement was not to prove successful in the long run. Soon afterwards, on the death of Maharaja Madho Singh in 1922, he was succeeded by his adopted son, Man Singh II (r. 1922-1949; d.1970)¹⁷⁶. However, being a minor at the time, the new Maharaja did not obtain full ruling powers for almost another decade until he attained his majority on 14 March 1931, after which he completed his military training in England (returning in October 1931).

During the young Maharaja's minority, administrative work was carried out by a Regency Council¹⁷⁷. In 1924 a Chief Court was constituted for Jaipur state to exercise powers formerly discharged by the Council of State. However, the duplication of duties, and problems over rights, powers and jurisdiction soon necessitated administrative reforms at the highest levels of governance¹⁷⁸. The Regency Council encouraged further administrative reforms etc. Land Settlement work for the individual *parganas* of the state was taken up during 1925-28. (A second Land Settlement would be conducted in 1943, which continued for some years thereafter). The state also took stern measures to put down the various agrarian-related and other movements that took place in different parts of the state during the minority of Maharaja Man Singh, and the period immediately following his attaining full ruling powers.

Prominent among these was the agrarian-related movement protesting the rates of land revenue demand in Shekhawati which was launched by the farmers (mainly Jats) in 1922¹⁷⁹. To an extent, peasants' grievances were common across the board, and in common with many other areas, the Jats constituted a high proportion of the groups dependent on settled agriculture in Shekhawati too. However, there were certain pre-existing reasons that gave more of a 'Jat peasants' versus 'Rajput landlords' touch to the whole matter here. For one thing, because of the nature of local governance (and hereditary rights as *Tazimi Sardars*) that allowed the Shekhawati chieftains a greater freedom, till the 1933 C.U. Wills Report placed them firmly

subordinate to Jaipur State, these chieftains had raised land revenue demands and other taxes at will without check in the Shekhawati area. The Jats farmers spoke out against this, but the local redressal mechanism was the very authorities against whose whims and wills the farmers were protesting. As it happened, there was a certain amount of polarisation thereafter, with the other non-Rajput groups who were not dependent on agriculture for a living, continuing to lend support to the Rajput landowners, which simultaneously re-inforced the Jat character of the struggle against unfair revenue demands, forced labour and excess taxes¹⁸⁰.

An unexpectedly steep increase in land revenue, that was supposedly to have been reduced after a year, agitated the farmers, and when this was not subsequently decreased, in spite of a poor monsoon, the agitation became a rallying point. The large Sikar 'state' or 'estate' was affected, as were Khandela, Khetri, as well as estates like Nawalgarh, Mandawa, Dundlod, Bissau, Malsisar, etc.. Here, and in many other parts of Shekhawati, the local *kisans* refused to pay land revenue dues and various cesses (*laag*) to the estate-holders, and made a representation on the matter to the Jaipur court. In all these cases, the farmers had a difficult struggle to have their demands accepted. Farmers of several parts of Shekhawati, mainly Jats, were forced to pay revenue or face punishment, and many were severely beaten or saw their villages burnt by servitors of various Shekhawati *thikanas*.

Attempts were made to organise the farmers' movement. In Sikar, Ladu Ram Kesari provided leadership. The agitation continued under the leadership of people like Harlal Singh, Ladu Ram Kesari, Choudhary Netram Singh, Choudhary Ghasiram, Panne Singh Deorar, Thakur Deshraj Singl., Govind Ram, Sir Chhotu Ram, Hardeo Singh Patsari, Bhairon Singh Togra, Begraj Singh Mandori, etc. However, people from outside the area who tried to gather information about local atrocities were unwelcome. Ram Narain Chowdhry was detained at Sikar, by the orders of the Jaipur Regency Council, and exiled from the state.

Meanwhile, a 'Jat mobilisation' began to gain ground. The All-India Jat Mahasabha became active in Rajputana, United Provinces and the Punjab. Inspired by this, in 1925 a conference of *kisans* was organised at

Khandela in 1925, and by the 1930s a Shekhawati Jat Mahasabha (on the pattern of the All-India Jat Mahasabha), was established in the Shekhawati area. Organisations stressing education for Jat youth came into being. Among these were the Jat Shiksha Samiti and the Jat Vidyarthi Parishad. (Later, in 1938, an organisation called Jat Krishak Sudharak was formed that was meant to foster agriculture-related improvements)

In some of the Shekhawati *thikanas* the Kisan Sabhas or Panchayats were practically Jat Sabhas and Jat Panchayats! While the work of the Jat Mahasabha was being organised, Pandit Tarkeshwar Sharma from Pacheri joined it and declared that the issue at hand affected not just Jats but all *kisans*, and that the organisation was not only for Jats but all farmers. Thus, the body was renamed Kisan Sabha. In 1929 Sharma started a newspaper to arouse popular sentiments, and subsequently, influenced by the Salt Satyagraha of 1930, Sharma, Harlal Singh, Netram Singh and Choudhary Ghasiram stepped up their work of organising farmers.

In 1932 an All-India Jat Mahasabha was held at Jhunjhunu. Thakur Deshraj Singh, a Jat from Bharatpur state, played his part in organising the Jats and other farmers of Shekhawati, and invited all *kisans* to participate in a '*Jat Prajapati Mahayagna*' at Sikar in January 1935. Tarkeshwar Sharma presided over this. The *mahayagna* ritual was more a successful ploy for assembling large numbers of farmers in Sikar for plotting future courses of action, than a mere religious ceremony.

Simultaneously, all such gatherings served to foster a new sense of identity amongst the Jats of Shekhawati and those from other regions. Existing social taboos or restrictions placed by the wealthier, on socially 'superior', communities on the local Jat peasants were openly flouted, the suffixes of 'Singh' and 'Kaur' (Kanwar) added to male and female names, respectively, in exact copy of the local Rajputs, and a wholehearted effort made to rally the Jat farmers politically too.

During this period, some lands were resumed by the authorities of the estate of Khetri in 1929 because the local peasant-farmers had not paid their land revenue dues. Over the next few years, as the peasants' movement intensified so too did the repression by the authorities and officialdom of

various Shekhawati *thikanas*. The authorities retaliated by ordering the arrest of leaders like Jeevan Singh, Ganpat Singh, etc., and by forcibly collecting revenue dues even while suppressing the agitation.

A memorandum of demands was submitted by about two hundred *kisans* to the Prime Minister of Jaipur State¹⁸¹. Further memoranda were submitted. Finally, the farmers of fifteen villages of Shekhawati took a pledge for not paying land revenue, and declared that any Jat farmers paying revenue to the *thikanas* would be ostracised, while the non-Jat farmers would face social boycott! As a result of this decision, there were some clashes between the Jat farmers and *bhomiya* land-holders.

Meanwhile, C.U. Wills's 1933 '*Report on the Land Tenures and Special Powers of Certain Thikanedars of the Jaipur State*' had ruled that the *thikanedars* and *jagirdars* of Shekhawati were *ijaradars* (holders of '*Ijara*' lands on contract) of the State of Jaipur, just as Jaipur was an *ijaradar* of the British. This effectively meant that the Sikar chief, and the other *thikanedars* and *jagirdars* of Shekhawati were subject to the authority of the Jaipur state. Thus, the Jaipur State Council despatched Captain Webb to help resolve the dispute and an agreement was arrived at between the protesting farmers and the authorities in 1934. This agreement also recognised the legitimacy of the Kisan Panchayat.

However, the agreement was soon rescinded by the Sikar Raja and the other Shekhawati chieftains. Farmers' organisations were suppressed or banned. Leaders like Tarkeshwar Sharma, Tarachand Dhanod, Ghasiram Choudhary, Indraj and Ladu Ram were arrested, along with many ordinary *kisans*. Among other atrocities, in 1935 farmers' meetings at the villages of Khoori and Kudan were fired upon. Meanwhile, Jaipur state was bringing considerable pressure to bear on Sikar and other estates for introducing various land-related reforms. In March 1935, the intervention of Jat leaders from the Punjab, and from Bharatpur State, along with the stance taken by Jaipur State, helped bring about another agreement. For the time being, this was to see the end of a long peasants' movement that had begun in 1922. The agreement saw the revoking of *laag* and *baag*, and tax on movement of goods; a reduction in the 'buffalo tax'; abolition of *begaar* and certain other cesses and duties.

In 1939 the *kisans* of Shekhawati once again refused to pay land revenue, leading to the arrest and sentencing of leaders like Tarkeshwar Sharma, Ghasiram Choudhary, and Netram Singh under the Defence of India Rules. The issue flared up again during the 1942 Quit India movement, with the *kisans* of Shekhawati refusing to pay taxes etc. resulting in stern action by Jaipur state, followed by the subsequent merger of the Jat-dominated Kisan Sabha into the Jaipur Praja Mandal. In 1944, the Shekhawati farmers were once again mobilised against paying land revenue dues to the state: arrests and imprisonment followed for many, until the agitation was again quietened.

Agitation of a different type mobilised another section of Shekhawati. Sikar's Rao Raja Kalyan Singh (r. 1922-1954, exiled 1937-1941), had introduced various reforms. Land settlement and survey work was conducted, revenue-collection modernised, and various taxes, including the *ijara* system, abolished. The traditional administrative system was modernised, and officials — including from British India — recruited. An independent judicial department was established, and the police force was re-organised. A hospital on 'modern' lines, was opened, along with a High School in Sikar, and other schools in smaller towns.

However, all was not rosy, particularly in view of what Sikar, and several other Shekhawati *thikanas*, perceived to be Jaipur state's interference in their internal affairs. The issuing of C.U. Wills' '*Report on the Land Tenures and Special Powers of Certain Thikanedars of the Jaipur State*' (popularly known as the 'Wills Report') in 1933, which questioned the basis of the independent status, powers and authority of the chiefs, *thikanedars* and *bhomiya*s of Shekhawati, was viewed as part of this. In their turn, Shekhawati chiefs and *thikanedars* argued that their 'rule' was derived from conquests made by their ancestors, and that the lands in question were of the '*ilaqa gair*' category, and that the Jaipur state had no right to interfere in their administration. The chiefs of Shekhawati and the *Panch-pana* chiefs jointly engaged a lawyer to file a reply to the Wills Report, while Sikar filed its reply separately.

The gulf in the Jaipur-Sikar relationship widened further around 1937 over the issue of the proposed marriage and future movements of Rao Raja

Kalyan Singh's son, Crown-Prince Hardayal Singh. The Maharaja of Jaipur favoured a certain arrangement regarding the further education and matrimonial prospects of the prince, while Kalyan Singh remained adamant about not altering previous arrangements (part of which included the marriage of the prince with a princess of Dhrangadhra scheduled for the summer of 1938). The nobles and chiefs of the Shekhawati areas, as well as scores of ordinary people from not just Sikar, but other parts of Shekhawati, and even Bikaner and Marwar, rallied to the support of the Rao Raja.

The Sikar Agitation of 1938 threw the whole area in turmoil as it unfolded¹⁸². The chiefs of Shekhawati, livid at what they regarded as blatant interference in their suzerainty and administrative working, assembled at Sikar. Among them were the chiefs of Khood, Mukandgarh, Nawalgarh, Mandawa, Dundlod, etc. Other Rajputs too reached Sikar, and vowed to hold their positions until the Sikar ruler was restored his full authority. They declared that they were ready to oppose — by force if required — the army of Jaipur that was sent against Sikar. By 26 April 1938, 30,000 men had collected within the Sikar fort, in a show of support for the Sikar Rao Raja. A 'Sikar Public Committee' was established. Headed by Badri Narain Sodhani, this committee stayed in contact with the Jaipur Rajya Praja Mandal, as well as with the Congress Committee at Ajmer. Merchants and mercantile bankers of Rajasthani origin, who were living and working in different parts of India, also extended their support to the Sikar Rao Raja. Jamnalal Bajaj also expressed his support to the Sikar ruler, even while working for a compromise between Sikar and Jaipur. The 19th of June 1938, which was Rao Raja Kalyan Singh's birthday, was observed as All-India Sikar Day'. The previous polarisation between Jat farmers and Rajput land-holders still proved a diving wall, though, and the local Jats did not openly support the 'Sikar Agitation'.

Alarmed at the situation, the Resident decided to intervene. "The British very cleverly manipulated the incident to show that neither the State of Jaipur nor the Thikana of Sikar were efficiently governed. At the same time they succeeded in driving a wedge between the Chiefs of Shekhawati and the Maharaja of Jaipur. On the other hand the Indian National Congress capitalised on this badly handled situation by infiltrating into the politics of the state through Praja Mandal...and demanded popular government"¹⁸³.

Kalyan Singh of Sikar went into exile, first at Mt. Abu, and then at Delhi, returning only in 1941¹⁸⁴. Meanwhile, his son married, as desired by Jaipur, the daughter of Mussoorie Shamsheer Jung Bahadur, an exile from Nepal. (After her death, the Sikar Crown-Prince Hardayal Singh later married the daughter of King Tribhuvan Bir Bikram Shah Dev of Nepal). Following the early death of Hardayal Singh in 1958, Rao Raja Kalyan Singh adopted Vikram Deo Singh as his heir and successor¹⁸⁵.

At another of the Shekhawat-ruled estates, namely Khetri, Ajit Singh (r. 1870-1901), was succeeded by his short-lived minor son, Jai Singh (r. 1901-1910). After him, the succession of another minor, young Amar Singh (r. 1911-1927), a son of Yashwant Singh of Alsisar, was approved by both the British and the Jaipur ruler. Another minority rule followed with the accession of the seven year old Sardar Singh in 1927. (G.A. Carroll, who was appointed as Superintendent and Advisor to Raja Amar Singh in 1922, continued to serve Khetri till 1937). Sardar Singh, who was educated at Switzerland, Mayo College (Ajmer), Cambridge and Lincoln's Inn, obtained full powers in February 1942. By this time, the winds of change were heralding a close of an era. Thus, following India's Independence and later the resumption of *jagirs*, Sardar Singh left Khetri for Delhi. He later served as India's Ambassador to Laos¹⁸⁶.

Meanwhile, on 1 September 1927, there were demonstrations on the streets in Jaipur city against imposition of new taxes. Police firing killed one protester and left thirty-seven wounded — of whom five were policemen. Normalcy returned after the British Resident promised to look into the problem personally. By this time, certain organisations stressing 'social upliftment' and education-related work were beginning to be formed within and outside the Dhoondhar region. Thus, in 1926 the Rajasthan Charkha Sangh was established, under the inspiration of Jammalal Bajaj and Mahatma Gandhi¹⁸⁷, and the guidance of Madanlal Khaitan and Deshpande. Centres for production of homespun *khadi* were established at Amarsar, Dausa, Manoharpura and Govindgarh. A year later (1927), Hiralal Shastri resigned his job in the state's administration and established a centre for education and social change at Vanasthali. Named Jiwan Kutir, this was the

genesis of the still-famous present-day ‘Vanasthali Vidyapeeth’ (deemed University) and connected educational complex.

In 1931 a ‘Council of State’ replaced Maharaja Madho Singh II’s system of a *Mahakma Khas*, comprising six ministers, each holding charge of a department. This had been instituted in 1921, when it replaced the older State Council that had come into being during Ram Singh II’s reign. In the new ‘Council of State’, the Maharaja was the president and the Prime Minister the vice-president of the Council, with a number of ministers holding different charges. The Army department was held by the Maharaja, while the Prime Minister looked after the Political Department.

On 5 April, 1931, which was marked as ‘Motilal Day’, disturbances broke out in Jaipur. The state arrested and imprisoned many citizens. In face of severe repression, and with the encouragement of Jannalal Bajaj, it was decided to establish a body called the Jaipur Praja Mandal. Chiranjilal Misra was its president and Hiralal Shastri the general secretary. Its main objectives were the establishment of ‘responsible government’, to secure basic rights to citizens of the state, and to bring about an overall improvement in the state. The Jaipur administration refused to register the society and even banned the entry into Jaipur state of political leaders from outside the state (i.e. British India etc.). The Praja Mandal was re-organised and re-vitalised in 1936, with a crucial gathering of like-minded colleagues called by Shastri at Banasthali playing its part.

The rejuvenated Praja Mandal included people like Mal Chandra Sharma, Kapoor Chand Patni, Harlal Singh, Chiranjilal Agrawal, Hans de Roy, Harish Chandra Sharma, and many others, in addition to Hiralal Shastri and Chiranjilal Misra. It continued to draw inspiration from Mahatma Gandhi, along with inspiration and active advice and participation from Jannalal Bajaj. Branches of the organisation were set up in numerous towns and *tehsil* headquarters. The blatant presence of the Praja Mandal, and a general disapproval of its range of activities, led Jaipur state’s Inspector General of Police, F.S. Young, to inform Shastri — in writing — that political reforms were under consideration by the government and would be introduced in due course, and that the government would not tolerate any interference from the Praja Mandal.

Meanwhile, in 1938 the state promulgated the 'Village Panchayat Act'. The Jaipur Municipal Act was also enacted. This stipulated that half the posts were to be filled through election, as was the case for the district municipalities. However, 1938 was also a famine year.

It was also a year of significance for the Jaipur Praja Mandal, since the Working Committee of the Praja Mandal decided to hold its first session at Jaipur. The meeting was held over 8 and 9 May, with Jamnalal Bajaj presiding. The resolutions passed called for the establishment of 'responsible government'. The Praja Mandal also demanded the speedy establishment of a legislative assembly, freedom of speech and right to assemble without prior permission, abolition of *laag-baag*, setting up of an employment exchange, and postponement of land revenue collection in famine affected areas. The state's Prime Minister, H. Beauchamp St. John, responded by promulgating the 'Public Society Act', which made it illegal for any public body to function without being duly registered. Since the Praja Mandal had not been accorded official recognition and had been functioning as an unregistered body since its inception, it was technically an unlawful organisation.

The Praja Mandal was now re-organised as the Jaipur Rajya Praja Mandal. Over the next few months, its functionaries organised famine-relief along with political propaganda. Bajaj was asked to come to Jaipur and preside over a meeting scheduled for December 1938 in order to discuss the famine situation. The State banned his entry, and did not permit him to get off the train at Sawai Madhopur railway station. Shastri and Haribhau Upadhyaya met Bajaj at Delhi and Mahatma Gandhi at Bardoli, even as the Rajya Praja Mandal's protests became louder. The state responded with repressive measures.

The opening weeks of 1939 showed no change in the attitude of Jaipur's prime minister, Beauchamp St. John, who maintained that Jaipur state did not accept the right of the Rajya Praja Mandal or any other body to represent the people in the presentation of their grievances. The tense situation became even more fraught after Bajaj wrote and informed the Jaipur prime minister that if the ban on his entry into Jaipur State was not lifted by 1 February, he would violate the order and offer satyagraha. The

prime minister's response was to declare the Praja Mandal an unlawful organisation.

In February 1939 Jamnalal Bajaj entered Jaipur's territories and courted arrest. He was expelled, but he re-entered Jaipur state, only to be arrested and expelled again. When this was repeated for the third time, Bajaj was detained at Moran Sagar. Various Praja Mandal office-bearers and functionaries were placed under house-arrest in Mohanpura. The others responded by intensifying non-violent protests, and numerous satyagrahis came out onto the streets. Mahatma Gandhi issued a press statement in which he stated that if the Jaipur authorities did not retract, and if Bajaj and his co-workers were not freed from jail, the Congress would have no alternative except making Jaipur an all-India issue. Eventually, a settlement was reached and the civil disobedience movement in Jaipur state ended on 19 March 1939. The state authorities agreed to recognise the Praja Mandal as a legitimate organisation, and released those arrested in the course of the agitation. (The Praja Mandal had also demanded that an Indian Prime Minister replace Beauchamp St. John, but his term was not cut short. His successors were H.M. Todd, Raja Gyan Nath and Sir Mirza Ismail).

To further the process of establishing representative institutions in the state, the Maharaja constituted a Central Advisory Board in 1939, which was charged with ascertaining the views of the people. On 2 April 1940, the state accepted that the Praja Mandal's objective was the establishment of responsible government under the aegis of the Maharaja of Jaipur, and that the Praja Mandal had the right to educate popular opinion, express the aspirations and needs of the people and to represent their grievances to His Highness' Government in a constitutional manner. In 1941, Hiralal Shastri and Ladu Ram Joshi again led the call for 'responsible government' in the state. Meanwhile, differences among some members of the executive of the Jaipur state Praja Mandal resulted in the formation of a new party called Praja Mandal Progressive Party under the leadership of Chiranjilal Agrawal.

During the 1942 Quit India movement, the main Jaipur Praja Mandal opted not to participate in the movement, following an understanding reached with Sir Mirza Muhammad Ismail, Prime Minister of Jaipur (1941-

46). The state administration told the Praja Mandal that it would not interfere in the anti-British campaign of that organisation, and also promised to consider the issue of responsible government. In turn, the Praja Mandal was not to agitate against the Jaipur state. This settlement was signed on behalf of the Praja Mandal by Hiralal Shastri. However, a section of the organisation, led by Baba Harishchandra, who disagreed with the terms of the settlement and felt strongly about this, wanted to contribute their mite towards the national movement. Baba Harishchandra, therefore, founded an Azad Morcha party. Under the leadership of this organisation satyagraha was launched in Jaipur. Picketing, agitation, even sporadic sabotage marked the next year and a half.

The period was not marked solely by agitations for 'responsible government' and counter-repressions though. Various hospitals, schools, colleges, the airport and other modern facilities were established at Jaipur during Maharaja Man Singh II's reign. The Maharani Gayatri Devi Girls' Public School was started in 1943 at the behest of Jaipur's Maharani Gayatri Devi, who then, and subsequently, played a prominent role in bringing the women and girls of Jaipur state and Rajasthan out of purdah and into the mainstream life of twentieth century modern India¹⁸⁸. To encourage women's education yet further, the Maharani's College for women too was established in 1943.

Meanwhile, the Second World War saw the participation of Jaipur's forces on active war-front service. The period also saw further industrial development, and in November 1943 Jaipur state permitted the Poddar family (originally from Nawalgarh) to put up a textile factory at Jaipur. Known as the Jaipur Spinning and Weaving Mills Ltd., this went into production in 1946. Around the same time, the Kamanis established the Jaipur Metal Industries in 1945 with a refinery, a rolling mill and a drawing plant, which became a major suppliers of non-ferrous alloys to the railways and defence establishment. Towns like Jaipur, Sanganer, Bagru, Shahpura, Hindon, etc. were known for calico printing, while the handmade paper industry thrived at Sanganer and Sawai Madhopur, gaining a further boost during the Second World War.

In the interim, on 26 October 1942, a committee to examine the issue of constitutional reforms in Jaipur state was appointed by the Jaipur Government. On 1 January 1944, the ruler of Jaipur announced the decision of introducing constitutional reforms in the state, under the 'Government of Jaipur Act 1944'. Besides this, elections were held to the Jaipur Municipal Council in June 1944, and a new act, giving more powers to it became operative from 22 June 1944. In 1945, the state introduced major constitutional reforms. These centred around a bicameral system in which in 37 out of the 51 Upper House (Legislative Council) members were to be elected, while in the Lower House (Representative Assembly), 89 out of 125 members were to be elected from the territorial constituencies and 25 by *jagirdars*. This bicameral legislature of a Legislative Council and a Representative Assembly was inaugurated in September 1945. This had limited powers, and acted more like an advisory body. Nevertheless, it was a move towards 'responsible government' under the aegis of the Maharaja, as demanded by the leaders of the state's popular movements.

The Praja Mandal was fairly successful in the elections to the Assembly, and in 1946, Pt. Devi Shankar Tiwari, a nominee of the Praja Mandal, was inducted into Jaipur state's ministry. He was soon joined by another Praja Mandal nominee, Daulat Mal Bhandari. It was also in 1946 that the University of Rajputana (now University of Rajasthan) was set up in collaboration with other princely states of Rajputana. A year later came Jaipur's Medical College (now Sawai Man Singh Medical College).

By May 1947 nominees of the Praja Mandal and those representing the nobles formed part of the state's Cabinet. Later that year, like its neighbours, Jaipur state too signed the 'Instrument of Accession' to the new nation-state of India. A committee was constituted to frame a revised constitution for the state, and on 17 March 1948 a new cabinet — headed by Hiralal Shastri, assumed office at Jaipur. Thereafter, events moved fast and in April 1949, the kingdom long known as Dhoondhar as much as by the names of its two capitals, Amber and (after 1727) Jaipur, merged into the new administrative unit of Rajasthan. Jaipur's Maharaja Man Singh II was declared the Rajpramukh-for-life of the newly integrated contemporary State of Rajasthan¹⁸⁹. (The designation did not long remain so, though).

MARWAR

Jodhpur state's young Maharaja, the minor Sardar Singh (r. 1895-1911) was vested with full ruling powers when he became eighteen years old. His investiture ceremony saw the formal restoration of the district of Mallani to Marwar by the British. This area had remained under the British since 1836. The former regent and Sardar Singh's paternal uncle, Sir Pratap¹⁹⁰ remained the *musahib ala* of the state, but relations between the ruler and his uncle were to witness a gradual deterioration over the course of the next few years.

In 1899, Marwar, like the rest of Rajputana, reeled under a severe famine. Famine was no stranger to the region, and over the years, local mechanisms to counter the worst effects of famine and drought had been developed in the various different kingdoms and amongst the various communities, particularly in the western part of Rajasthan. These included state-funded construction activities (e.g. of water-reservoirs and large buildings etc.), that could give employment and food-grains to people — an aspect we have already noted in previous chapters.

Marwar had already suffered severely from a number of famines that had affected Rajasthan during the course of the nineteenth century. In particular, the famines of 1812-13, 1868-69, and 1877-78, which had resulted in the death or migration to other areas of a large number of people and cattle. The Great Famine of 1899-1900 was to prove even more severe. It was later calculated that around one and a half million cattle and over six lakhs humans died in Marwar because of this famine. The state rallied to the challenge and made various efforts towards organising famine-relief, and managing migration of human and animals. In fact, Jodhpur State's 'Famine Code' would later become a model for the post 1949 Government of Rajasthan.

While the famine was being dealt with to the best of Marwar's ability, Sir Pratap left Jodhpur in 1900¹⁹¹, with a regiment of the Jodhpur Imperial Service Lancers to join the British in their military campaign against China¹⁹². The charge of the state's administration was given into the hands

of a committee that included Pandit Sukh Deo Prasad and Kaviraj Muradidan. While the committee carried out its work, including pursuing a range of famine relief works, the young Maharaja Sardar Singh earned a reputation for immaturity, licentiousness and wild behaviour. He went to Europe for a while, and on his return was deputed to the Imperial Cadet Corps.

Meanwhile, in 1902, his uncle, Sir Pratap succeeded to the *gaddi* of Idar. (He would remain Maharaja of Idar till 1911, voluntarily giving up that position subsequently to return to Jodhpur as regent to another underage Maharaja). As a result, the post of *musahib ala*, which Sir Pratap had long held, was abolished. Instead, it was decided that Sukh Deo Prasad would serve as the senior member of the *Mahakma Khas*. The State Council was reconstituted as a Consultative Committee of four members. Sardar Singh, in the absence of his uncle's firm hand, later wished to remove Sukh Deo Prasad from his post, but the British disagreed with this, as was further underlined by the Viceroy, Curzon, when he visited Jodhpur. By this time, Sardar Singh's extravagances and indebtedness were not hidden from the British, and were being openly discussed¹⁹³.

Charges of maladministration were soon levelled against the Jodhpur ruler. In 1903, his powers were suspended by British India's Political Department, and he was sent to Panchmari, where he lived for the next eighteen months or so. During Sardar Singh's absence, the work of administration was carried out by the office of the *Mahakma Khas*, under the direct supervision of the Resident, and measures to restore the financial stability and credit of the State were adopted. In 1905, Sardar Singh's powers were partially restored, following his assurances to the British, and he was permitted to return to Jodhpur. Sardar Singh ranged himself with the British during the agitation that shook much of the subcontinent following Curzon's infamous 1905 partition of Bengal. The people of Marwar were warned against associating with "seditious" activities. Jodhpur state also proscribed newspapers perceived as spreading ill-feeling against the British. In February 1909, the British withdrew their restrictions on Maharaja Sardar Singh's powers as ruler of Jodhpur.

However, the Maharaja did not wield those powers for long, dying prematurely in March 1911. The *gaddi* of Jodhpur passed to Sumer Singh (r. 1911-1918), the young son and successor of Sardar Singh. As he was minor, a Regency Council was formed. Sir Pratap, the new Maharaja's great-uncle was recalled in May 1911 from Idar — of which state he had become Maharaja, to serve Marwar, yet again, as regent (1911-1914). Reforms were introduced in the judicial and police system of the state, and the Excise Department was further restructured and organised. Land settlement activities pertaining to land in *khalsa* villages were also taken up. By this time Marwar's own postal system, which used camels and human runners to carry the mail, had been replaced by the Imperial Postal Services, as had the state's telegraph service by the Imperial one.

Upon the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, Sir Pratap (as regent) placed the services of the Jodhpur Lancers and other forces at the disposal of the British. (He himself took an active part in the war too, proceeding to the battlefield in person). On attaining the age of eighteen in 1915, Sumer Singh was invested with full ruling powers as Maharaja of Jodhpur. However, in October 1918 Sumer Singh too died, and was succeeded by his younger brother Umaid Singh (r. 1918-1947). Since Umaid Singh was still a minor at the time, yet another Regency Council was set up, with Sir Pratap appointed regent of Marwar, and president of the Regency Council, once again. He was to serve in this capacity from 1918 to 1922 — the year of his death.

Meanwhile, political (and social) awakening was gaining an impetus all across British India. It was to have its impact on the Indian princely states too, over the course of the ensuing decades that led up to Indian Independence. In Marwar, an organisation known as the Marwar Seva Sangh had been formed in 1920 under the leadership of Bhanwarlal Saraf and Chand Mal Surana. It sought to articulate public grievances against the bureaucracy and create awareness among the people of the state. In 1920, the Marwar state government introduced British weights and measures in place of the traditionally used local ones. There was much resentment amongst the populace, in particular in the ranks of the traders. The 'Marwar Seva Sangh' took the initiative and launched an agitation against the step. Jodhpur-city faced a complete strike (*hartal*) for a few days. Realising the

intensity of public feeling, the state government found itself forced to withdraw the new weights and measures.

Around 1921, Surana founded the 'Marwar Hitkarini Sabha' at Jodhpur, to work for the political, social and economic welfare of the people of Marwar, while at the same time expressly remaining loyal to the ruler of Marwar. In 1922, the year that Jai Narain Vyas became the secretary of the organisation, the Marwar Hitkarini Sabha launched a prolonged agitation against the export of cows and goats from Marwar. The state government yielded after about two years, and imposed the desired ban on export.

While political activities were beginning to make an inroad in Marwar on the one hand, a range of administrative reforms and welfare schemes were visualised and acted upon by the Regency Council, under the guidance of Sir Pratap¹⁹⁴. In 1922, the indomitable and hardworking regent died. As the Maharaja had not attained his majority, the Regency Council continued to operate, with the presidentship of the Regency Council now devolving upon the British Resident at Jodhpur. It was in 1923 that the Viceroy, Lord Reading invested Umaid Singh with full ruling powers. The Regency Council was now replaced by a State Council, with almost the same constitution and personnel. The State Council consisted of six members designated as president (the ruler), Political and Judicial Member, Home Member, Public Works Member, Revenue Member and Finance Member.

Over the course of the next twenty-five or so years, the government of Maharaja Umaid Singh presided over a range of reforms and administrative measures. Measures were taken to widen the scope of local self-government institutions. District and Central Advisory Boards were set up. A Representative Advisory Assembly with an elected majority was also constituted. Welfare measures were adopted for government employees, including the provisions of provident fund, gratuity etc. A Public Service Commission was set up for overseeing selection to different departments of the State Services.

In 1927, the new post of a vice-president was created. In 1933, after a new constitution was adopted by the Government of Marwar, the State

Council was re-designated as the Council of Ministers. Its composition consisted of a president (the ruler) and five other members designated as Chief Minister, Finance Minister, Judicial Minister, Home Minister and Revenue Minister. The Council of Ministers could be enlarged or reduced as per requirements. The finance-related functions previously carried out by the State Accountant-General were transferred to the newly established Finance Department under the Finance Minister.

Modernisation of Marwar was an inherent theme during the course of Maharaja Umaid Singh's reign. Many notable buildings of Jodhpur date from Maharaja Umaid Singh's reign. These include the 'Chhitar Palace' (Umaid Bhawan Palace)¹⁹⁵, the High Court, a museum, library, stadium, cinema-hall, schools and hospital buildings, and the Jodhpur railway station. In the field of education, by the time Marwar merged with the present-day state of Rajasthan in 1949, it possessed a post-graduate college and a girl's college at Jodhpur. There were a number of high schools at Jodhpur, and a few high schools in the districts, as well as a network of middle and primary schools through out the state. Besides education, due attention was also paid to health, veterinary health care, roads and railways etc. Jodhpur state had a well-equipped and modern general hospital and an exclusive womens' hospital at Jodhpur, as well as medical dispensaries in all the major towns and at all district headquarters and major towns. By the early 1940s the state was spending about rupees twelve lakhs annually on education, and about the same on health care.

Meanwhile, the Marwar Hitkarini Sabha's activities were bringing it into confrontation with the state authorities. In 1925 the Hitkarini Sabha began a movement for 'responsible government' in Marwar state, and the removal of the *Musahib Ala*, Sukh Deo Prasad (Kak). The organisation's leaders sent an 'Open Letter' to the Viceroy explaining that there was no freedom of speech, nor of the press, in Marwar, and protesting against the administration of the state's prime minister, Sir Sukh Deo Prasad. The State's response was to clamp down further on dissenters. On 18 November 1925, public meetings were held at Jodhpur, Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta, demanding an enquiry into police excesses etc. by an impartial commission. Jai Narain Vyas brought out a booklet entitled *Marwar Main Jagriti aur Usai Rokne ka Udyog*, criticising the repressive policy of the state. In 1925,

he was prosecuted by the Jodhpur government for wilfully defying the authority of the state. Chand Mal Surana and two colleagues were temporarily externed from the state and a number of others, among them Jai Narain Vyas and Anand Raj Surana, kept under police surveillance. (Jai Narain Vyas had already understood the importance of organising mass movements under a common banner. Actively associated with the All India States Peoples Conference, once that organisation came into being in 1927, Vyas's newspaper, *Tarun Rajasthan* soon became a powerful instrument in mobilizing public support).

During 1928-29, the Marwar Hitkarini Sabha increased its activities and held political meetings in Jodhpur, asking for the constitution of a Legislative Assembly for Marwar, and for the separation of the judiciary from the executive. The Marwar Hitkarini Sabha also criticised the Press Act; raised the issue of scarcity of water and the water supply system; and condemned holding municipal elections on a communal basis, as it was feared that such a practice would create communal tension. It was decided to hold a session of the Marwar State People's Conference ('*Marwar Rajya Lok Parishad*') at Jodhpur in October 1929. The agenda for discussion encompassed a range of issues. These included the establishment of a Legislative Assembly; abolition of forced labour (*begaar*), and a ban on the export of food and fodder from Marwar. Other items on the agenda were the unemployment problem, development of agriculture and trade and industries, free and compulsory education, as well as issues like the freedom of the press. Yet other items proposed for discussion included abolishing the restrictions placed on legal practice between the different grades of *vakils* in Marwar, and the Nehru and Butler Committee reports, respectively. The state government banned the proposed session.

A movement was launched against the state's autocratic attitude. This spread even to the rural areas (particularly in Jaitaran and Sojat districts), where there was an attempt to awaken the masses against the practice of *begaar* (forced labour) and the atrocities of the local fief-holding *jagirdars*. The villagers were asked not to pay revenue or any tax to the jagirdars. Jai Narain Vyas in his booklet *Marwar ki Avastha* revealed the conditions prevalent in the state. Vyas, along with Anand Raj Surana and other colleagues called upon people not to pay taxes or give revenue to the

jagirdars, and addressed public meetings. Jai Narain Vyas, Anand Raj Surana and Bhanwar Lal Sharrat were arrested on the charge of sedition. A Special Tribunal tried them at Nagaur fort and sentenced Vyas to six years and the others to two to five years imprisonment. (All of them were released by March 1931). There were public demonstrations against the Tribunal's verdict, and the police arrested some workers and students.

The members of the *Marwar Hitkarini Sabha* formed another association named the 'Marwar Youth League' in 1931, to creating political awareness amongst the youth of Marwar. Inspired by the Civil Disobedience movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi in British India, the League's members organised public meetings propagating the use of homespun khadi cloth, and took out *prabhat pheris* (dawn processions). When its activities were banned in Jodhpur town, the organisation shifted its attention to the rural areas, and worked amongst the cultivators. The latter responded favourably and demanded remission of *bighori*. The agitation gained a new impetus in 1931, following the release of satyagrahis.

On 10 May 1931, the Youth League started a civil disobedience movement, demanding civil and political rights, abolition of the practice of *begaar* (compulsory labour) and *laag-baag*, and a 'responsible government' in the state. The state viewed the movement as destructive, and held that the goal of 'responsible government' could be obtained by peaceful means and co-operation¹⁹⁶. Achaleshwar Prasad was arrested and detained for six months.

In March 1932, the Government of Marwar issued a notification. This Act forbade people and associations from participating in activities that disturbed the law and order situation of the state, or brought into contempt the administration of Marwar, or any other Indian state, or the government established by law in British India. Punishment was prescribed for transgression. The same year, the *Marwar Hitkarini Sabha* and the Marwar Youth League were both declared unlawful by the State Council. In 1933, a session of the State People's Conference was proposed at Jodhpur. This was dis-allowed by the state authorities.

In 1934 the Marwar Public Society Ordinance was issued. This further curtailed civil liberties. Despite these efforts on the part of the state, or perhaps in direct response to them, the Marwar Praja Mandal was set-up the same year (1934), with the stated objectives of attaining 'responsible government' and safe-guarding civil liberty in the state. The Government of Marwar declared the Praja Mandal to be an unlawful organisation. Popular demonstrations were organised, and Manmal Jain and Chhagan Raj Chaupasaniwala were arrested. Meanwhile, a *Nagarik Adhikar Rakshak Sabha* (Civil Liberties Union) had also been established. This organisation was the outcome of a resolution passed by the All India Congress Committee at its Lucknow session, and was intended as a means for safeguarding the civil liberties of the people in the state¹⁹⁷. However, this body too was declared unlawful by the state authorities in 1937.

After successive attempts to form associations had failed, or the associations had proved short-lived or had been suppressed by the state, a *Marwar Lok Parishad* was established in May 1938. This followed the decision taken at the Haripura session of the Indian National Congress concerning the establishment of political organisations in the Indian Princely States. The Parishad wanted to establish a 'responsible government' in the state under 'the aegis of the Maharaja'. Jai Narain Vyas, whose entry into Marwar had been banned in July 1937, returned to Jodhpur and took over the leadership of the Parishad. The Parishad disapproved of the then constitution of the municipality, as well as the process of electing of its members on a communal basis. It advocated elections on the basis of wards. The Parishad marked a nationalist occasion by singing nationalist songs, making speeches, and propagating the use of *khadi* and the boycott of foreign goods. It resolved to help the peasants of Marwar and set up a committee for it. With the formation of the Marwar Lok Parishad, the number of members of the Jodhpur Nagar Congress Committee lessened as most of them joined the Parishad.

Meanwhile, in 1939, a Central Advisory Committee was established by the Government of Marwar, and District Advisory Boards were established at each of the *Hukumat* headquarters. Jai Narain Vyas was nominated a member of the Central Advisory Committee. The outbreak of the Second World War gave an opportunity to the Lok Parishad to press for

more rights in the governance, and for the establishment of a 'responsible government'. The Lok Parishad opposed the Jodhpur Government's support to British efforts in the Second World War. Jai Narain Vyas resigned from the Advisory Board.

By early 1940, political agitation demanding 'responsible government' again gained momentum under the leadership of Jai Narain Vyas and his associates¹⁹⁸. People living in *jagir*-held areas looked to the Marwar Lok Parishad for taking the lead in the movement. against *jagirdari* malpractice and excessive taxation. The Marwar government's famine-relief work was criticised. The Parishad also took up issues of unemployment, etc. Besides the Marwar Lok Parishad, which was in the van of the agitation, the Nagar Congress Committee too mobilised public opinion. The state authorities banned meetings and processions, and sternly enforced the 1932 Act. The Lok Parishad was declared unlawful, and Vyas and other prominent leaders of the movement were arrested and interned. In June 1940, though, the Government of Marwar and the Marwar Lok Parishad reached an agreement, by which the government accorded formal recognition to the Parishad and released political prisoners, and on his part, Vyas agreed not to disrupt adversely the war efforts. A formal session of the Marwar Lok Parishad was held at Jodhpur in July 1940. Jai Narain Vyas was elected president. The Parishad was registered in 1941 under the Jodhpur Public Societies Act of 1940.

However, the truce was predictably short-lived, since the process of arousing public political awareness, including in the *jagir*-held areas of the state, continued on the part of the Parishad workers. (For instance, the villagers of Raipur protested the excesses of their local *thikana* land-holder during 1941). In the Jodhpur Municipal elections held in June 1941 the Lok Parishad obtained a majority. Jai Narain Vyas became chairman of the Council. The relations between the Government and the Parishad soon deteriorated, and the parishad boycotted the elections to the State's Representative Advisory Assembly. In 1942 the Marwar Lok Parishad decided to start another satyagraha movement, under the leadership of Jai Narain Vyas, and again called for the dismissal of the prime minister, Sir Donald Field, and the immediate establishment of 'responsible government' under the aegis of the Maharaja. The Parishad also agitated against the

cesses being levied by *thikanedars* and *jagirdars*. This resulted in repression of the Parishad in *jagir*-held areas.

Vyas and others members of the Parishad resigned from the Council on 25 May 1942. Over the course of the next couple of days, Vyas and many of the other Parishad leaders were arrested, under the Marwar Sedition Act, on the charge of publishing and distributing seditious materials. Scores of Lok Parishad workers courted arrest. The agitation spread through-out the state. Some political workers were attacked by a gang armed with clubs and spears in the *jagir* of Chandawa. The Parishad demanded a judicial enquiry into the matter, but negotiations failed and more political workers were arrested. In the course of the agitation, and Marwar State's response, jailed political prisoners went on a hunger strike to pressurise the government. On 11 June 1942 the death occurred of a Lok Parishad worker named Bal Mukund Bissa. The protest-movement intensified. Soon afterwards, eleven women came out publicly to join the satyagraha at the clock-tower of Jodhpur city. On 17 July 1942, Mahima Devi Kinker publicly read aloud from a proscribed booklet and led a group of women in protest. The 26th of July was marked as the 'Marwar Satyagraha Day' by the supporters of the popular movement for responsible government. Mass meetings were held.

In the meanwhile, the Quit India movement in British India, launched in August 1942 by the Indian National Congress, accentuated the situation within Marwar. At meetings of the Marwar Lok Parishad, anti-British feeling were voiced, and 'Quit India' posters displayed. Students joined the agitation and local questions were tagged with national issues. There was sabotage of railway lines and telegraph poles. In October 1942, a bomb exploded in the Stadium Cinema Hall at Jodhpur causing injuries to some people, as well as damage to property. The state responded by making nearly 400 arrests. (Some remained imprisoned till May 1944). More bombs went off in different parts of Jodhpur during March and April 1943.

The political protests continued into the first quarter of 1944. Following negotiations, in May 1944, the Government of Marwar released Vyas and many of the prominent leaders of the Parishad. The same year the state's government enacted an Act providing for the creation of a Jodhpur

State Legislative. This was to have, both, elected members, as well as members nominated by the Maharaja. The Lok Parishad rejected the scheme, on the grounds that the proposed Legislative was not truly representative and was controlled totally by the state. The act was dropped, consequently. However, Maharaja Umaid Singh was keen to democratise the state's administration, and called for a report on constitutional reforms.

In 1945, the Sudhalkar Report on Constitutional Reforms was made public. The Marwar Government announced the setting up of a Legislative Council in which the majority of members would be elected directly. The Marwar Lok Parishad objected that the Council was visualised as being merely an advisory body with no real power. In October 1945 Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru visited Jodhpur. At his advice, Maharaja Umaid Singh replaced Sir Donald Field with C.S. Venkatachar (ICS) as Jodhpur's new prime minister. Relations between the Lok Parishad and the state government improved as a consequence.

Meanwhile, repression by the *jagirdars* in their *thikanas* continued. In October 1946, the Marwar Lok Parishad started a campaign in the rural areas against the jagirdars. Over the course of the next few months, there were clashes in some parts of the state, and on 13 March 1947, a rally of farmers was fired upon at Dabra.

The political scene regarding Indian Independence was, concurrently, changing very fast. Transfer of power and the resulting situation were being discussed at the highest level. Umaid Singh died in June 1947 and was succeeded by his son, Hanwant Singh (r. 1947-1949), around the same time as the British Government announced its plan to transfer power to India and Pakistan. As the princely states were offered the option of joining either India or Pakistan, Hanwant Singh wanted to fully explore the implications of either option before making a choice. As far as geography went, Marwar shared a common border with areas that were going to form part of the newly created Pakistan, and Hanwant Singh, possibly, found a certain logical sense in doing the same — irrespective of the fact that he and most of his subjects were not Muslims. (The inner workings of the mind of the Maharaja on the issue have remained a matter of much subsequent speculation!)

On the issue of accession to India or to Pakistan, the Maharaja met Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the Governor General-designate of Pakistan, and obtained assurance that if Jodhpur acceded to Pakistan, it would enjoy full autonomy. There were many rumours about the conditions being offered to the Jodhpur ruler by Jinnah, including an assurance that Jodhpur would be treated as an independent state. It is claimed that Jinnah offered the Jodhpur Maharaja the Thar-Parkar area and part of the Rajasthani-speaking tract of the Umarkot region, as well as 300 miles of Marwar-Sindh rail track. There are also statements that Jinnah gave Maharaja Hanwant Singh an absolute *carte blanc* as far as any demands and condition were concerned.

Many believe that the Jodhpur ruler wanted the rulers of Jaisalmer, Mewar, Indore, and Baroda also to consider the option of acceding to Pakistan. However, one by one all the other rulers signed Instruments of Accession in favour of India. Meanwhile, it appears that the Marwar Lok Parishad was working hard to ensure that Jodhpur did not accede to Pakistan. Ultimately, V.P. Menon, Secretary, Ministry of States, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the minister, and Governor-General Lord Mountbatten prevailed upon the Maharaja to accede to India. The Maharaja signed the Instrument of Accession on 11 August 1947.

Once India achieved independence, the demand for 'responsible government' was renewed. The *jagirdars* tried to organise a strong reactionary opposition. In October 1947 the Maharaja dismissed Venkatachar as prime minister and appointed his own uncle, Ajit Singh in his place. The Council of Ministers was packed with feudal elements. The Marwar Lok Parishad criticised the action of the Maharaja and threatened to launch agitation unless the government was democratised. Mass meetings were held to observe the Anti-Assembly Day under the auspices of the Marwar Lok Parishad. All parties, opposing this ministry demanded an elective body. Sardar Patel intervened and consequently in 1948 Jai Narain Vyas (who was also to serve as the state's nominated representative to the Constituent Assembly of India), was appointed prime minister in a Coalition Ministry that included representatives of the Lok Parishad and the *jagirdars*. It was this Ministry that led Jodhpur's integration on 30 March 1949, into what became the present-day state of Rajasthan¹⁹⁹. Meanwhile, by the end of 1948 the Jodhpur State Railway covered 1000 miles. The state

railway system was categorised as Class One in the country. The capital investment on the entire railway system in the state was Rs. 6.51 crore. The net earning from the railways was Rs. 1.14 crore. The income from the railways was thus the biggest single source of revenue to the state. Besides, the railway system gave a fillip to the trade throughout the state.

KISHANGARH

Upon the death of Maharaja Shardul Singh in 1900, his young son, Madan Singh (r. 1900-1926) was recognised as his successor. As Madan Singh was still a minor, a Regency Council was constituted under the supervision of the British Resident to deal with matters of governance until Madan Singh attained his majority, and thus full ruling powers. These were formally conferred on the young ruler in 1905.

Kishangarh's geographical location, and its proximity to British administered Ajmer-Merwara, ensured the little kingdom was soon well-connected by road and rail with the outside world. Madan Singh's reign saw the establishment of a hospital, a power house that provided electricity for the street-lights of the capital and the palace, and a High School. (And, in time, a soap factory and steam hydraulic cotton presses were also to come up in Kishangarh). By this time, the state had five administrative districts. Each district was headed by a *hakim*, who also held limited judicial powers.

Madan Singh died in 1926, and was succeeded by his cousin, Yagya Narain (r. 1926-1939). Both of Yagya Narain Singh's sons died in their father's lifetime. Thus, on the death of the Maharaja in 1939, his widow adopted the young Sumer Singh of Zorawarpura to succeed to the Kishangarh *gaddi*. As the boy was a minor at the time, the administration was carried out by the Political Agent.

The year 1939 was also when the Kishangarh Praja Mandal was established. Jamal Shah was its president, and Mahmood its secretary. During the Quit India Movement of 1942, the Kishangarh Praja Mandal organised demonstrations and processions. To its credit, the state

administration did not arrest anyone. However, subsequently, when the Praja Mandal launched a satyagraha against the export of foodgrain and *moong dal* (lentil) from the kingdom, the state authorities took stern measures. Kanti Chand Purohit was arrested, along with his son under the Defence of India Rules, and sentenced to one and a half years' in prison, plus a fine. Both were, however, released after six months of imprisonment.

Until 1940 there had been no regular land settlement for the state. Land revenues were collected according to the local *bapi* system. By this, the state publicly auctioned revenue-collection rights for a specific plot of land. The farmers' rights were akin to the occupancy rights of tenants in British India. The *jagirdari* system was also prevalent, but if the holders died without an heir, the estates were deemed to have reverted to the state, i.e. become *khalsa*. For example, in 1942-43, four *jagirs* of the 'horse jagir' category were declared *khalsa* following the deaths of their respective holders.

In June 1947, the young ruler of Kishangarh, Sumer Singh was conferred full ruling powers. Almost immediately afterwards, the Maharaja was called upon to affix his signature on the 'Instrument of Accession' to India. Sumer Singh established a State Assembly and held elections. The Kishangarh Praja Mandal secured a majority in this, but external events were moving towards a merger of the various states of Rajputana into a larger unit. Kishangarh was deemed among the 'non-viable' small states. Thus, the Government of India decided to merge Kishangarh and Shahpura into the centrally administered tract of Ajmer-Merwara.

On 26 September 1947, Maharaja Sumer Singh of Kishangarh was asked to sign an 'Instrument of Merger' at Delhi by the Ministry of States. Meantime, the Rajadhiraj of Shahpura insisted that as there was a popular, elected, government in Shahpura he would need to first consult with his chief minister. At the intervention of Shahpura's chief minister, Gokul Lal Asawa, as well as the Mewar Praja Mandal leader Manikya Lal Verma (both in Delhi for Constituent Assembly related matters); the merger of, both, Shahpura and Kishangarh was temporarily deferred. In March 1948 the State of Kishangarh — with its 837 square miles area — was formally merged into the United State of Rajasthan.

KARAULI

'Modernisation' brought changes to Karauli in the twentieth century, including a railway line etc. In 1904 Maharaja Bhanwar Pal (r. 1886-1927), gave land free of cost for the construction of the Nagda-Mathura Railway. In 1906, the local coinage was replaced by Imperial British currency. However, in view of Karauli's financial problems, which had come to a head under Maharaja Bhanwar Pal's rule, that same year the state came under the administrative control of the British Political Agent for the Eastern Rajputana States. This arrangement continued till 1917. Meanwhile, following the outbreak of the First World War, Maharaja Bhanwar Pal placed the resources of his state at the disposal of the British Crown.

In 1915 Karauli saw political meetings in favour of the Indian National Congress policies, but it would be a while before any local political movement was to take root in this area. In 1922, Karauli state enacted laws and regulations that rendered effective the provisions of the 1912 International Opium Convention. Meanwhile, by August 1923 the financial condition of Karauli had stabilised, and the state was free of all its debts. Maharaja Bhanwar Pal died on 3 August 1927. He too left no heir, and was succeeded by his younger brother, Bhim Pal.

It was around this period that the son of a former *dewan* of Karauli State, *Kunwar* Madan Singh, who had taken up the cause of the local peasants and the deprived, raised his voice against the practice of *begaar*, or forced labour, which was prevalent to a greater degree in Karauli state than in adjoining states. One may note here that Karauli state's main land-tenure categories were State-owned *khalsa* lands — which comprised three-fifths of the total area of the State, lands held as *bapoti* or as *jagir* by the elite, and *muafi* and *inam* lands granted rent-free for past services or as acts of piety. Tenant-farmers on *khalsa* lands were generally never ejected from their holdings as long as they paid their revenue-dues etc. to the state, and their descendants were, in turn, entitled to 'inherit' the land provided they continued to meet the demands of the state. All *bapotidars* and *jagirdars* were expected to pay a fixed amount of land-revenue, known as '*khandi*' (literally, 'portion') to the state. However, some of the *bapoti* grants had been sub-divided so many times over the years that they were counted as

‘*raza muafi*’ or stray revenue-free holdings. By the mid 1920s, many of the smaller *bapotidars* and *raza muafidars* of Karauli state were cultivating their own fields, while Meenas constituted a large section of the other cultivators.

As such, when along with calling for the abolition of *begaar*, Madan Singh demanded that the state repeal the prohibition against the killing of wild boars/pigs, and permit the peasants to kill the wild boars that ravaged their agricultural fields and caused great damage, it attracted the attention of a major section of the cultivators. *Kunwar* Madan Singh declared that he would not eat *chapatis*, wear footwear, or sleep on a bed until the state took notice of the plight of the poor peasants, and he launched an agitation. (A plea for the introduction of Hindi as the state’s official language in place of Urdu, among other things, was later added by others).

As the state authorities turned a deaf ear, Madan Singh and his wife went on a hunger-strike to press the demands, using the Gopal Singh Chhatri as their venue. As news of the hunger-strike spread, the rural people of the state began to collect at the Copal Singh Chhatri in a show of support. They raised slogans against the state authorities. The state yielded before this, and Madan Singh’s demands were conceded in 1927. Unfortunately, the ‘people’s hero’ Madan Singh died later that same year, while serving cholera-affected Harijans (as the ‘Dalits’ were termed at the time).

By the mid 1930s other winds of change were beginning to affect Karauli, including the activities of the Congress and other political parties within British India. In June 1938 *Munshi* Trilok Chand Mathur and his associates formed the Karauli Rajya Sewak Sangh. A few months later they also organised a *khadi* movement — named the ‘Madan Khadi Kutir’ in memory of the late *Kunwar* Madan Singh — to enable self-sufficiency and employment among the poor. Around the same time, Trilok Chand Mathur and his colleagues also began to organise activities akin to those taken up by the Indian National Congress. It seems the movement in Karauli state had closer links with Congress activists and activities in Agra at this time, rather than with Jaipur state²⁰⁰. By 1939 the Karauli Rajya Praja Mandal had been established, with *Munshi* Trilok Chand Mathur, Chiranji Lal

Sharma and Kalyan Das among its prominent members. The Praja Mandal also attracted members of the state's nobility like Thakur Puran Singh and Bhanwar Lal.

The movement in Karauli was not directed against its ruler, but rather, urged redressal of local grievances. The demands included the abolition of *begaar*, the establishment of local self-government, and asking for a five-member Commission for Administrative Reforms, of whom three were to be from the public, and only two representatives nominated by the state. The Praja Mandal also sought permission for the peasant-farmers to kill wild boar as vermin in other *tehsils* (including state or *Hazoor tehsils*), besides Karauli. In addition, they demanded relief in levy and matters relating to permanent rights to the peasants of Karauli along the lines of the Tenancy Act passed by the provincial elected Congress administration in U.P. A co-operative society was also formed for lending money to the *kisans*.

Following Mathur's death not long afterwards, the Praja Mandal work in Karauli was carried forward by people like Onkar Singh, Chiranji Lal Sharma, Kalyan Prasad Gupta, etc. During the Quit India movement of 1942, Kalyan Prasad Gupta was arrested under the Defence of India Act. He was released after a few months. In 1946, Chiranji Lal Sharma of the All-India Spinners Association returned to Karauli, which was his hometown, and became the president of the local Praja Mandal. It was also only in 1946 that the demand for 'responsible government' in the state was voiced.

Upon the death of Maharaja Bhim Pal, he was succeeded by his son, Ganesh Pal. Ganesh Pal ruled until the accession of Karauli to the new nation-state of India in 1947, and the subsequent merger of Karauli into the Matsya Union on 17 March 1948. Thereafter, on 15 May 1949 Matsya Union joined the United States of Greater Rajasthan, as described elsewhere.

SIROHI

During the long reign of Kesari Singh (r. 1875-1920, d.1925), the process of modernisation continued in Sirohi. Theoretically, the final authority in all executive and judicial matters was the ruler himself. The administrative system included, besides the ubiquitous *dewan* — who also functioned as *ex-officio* district and sessions judge, a *naib-dewan*, revenue commissioner, judicial officer, superintendent of police, and a superintendent of customs. The state was initially divided into nine districts, termed as *tehsils*, each under a *tehsildar*. (The number of ‘districts’ was later increased to fifteen). These *tehsildars* had judicial powers. The judicial officer too held the powers of a munsif magistrate. Between 1909 and 1917 the *dewan* was termed as the ‘*musahib-i-ala*’, and the position was held by the heir-apparent of the state of Sirohi.

Land tenure and revenue-collection systems and practices of Sirohi were basically common with other neighbouring states, with land divided into the categories of *khalsa* (or Crown), *jagir* (fief), and *sasan* (lands endowed to temples or Brahmins, Charans and Bhats). Land revenue collections varied from one-third to one-fourth of the produce, and was traditionally taken in kind. The *jagirdars* were expected to give the state between three-eighths to a half of the land-revenues collected by them. They also gave a traditional *nazarana* fee on accession. Cash rents were introduced in 1903-1904, and in due course reforms were also introduced in the fields of currency, as well as weights and measures etc.

By this time, the coming of the railways (the Rajputana-Malwa Railway ran through about forty miles of Sirohi’s territory), and roads (the Agra to Ahmedabad highway passed through some sixty-eight miles of the state), as well as improved means of communication meant the gradual opening up of the region to outside influences and ideas, and increased trade and traffic²⁰¹.

In the early years of the twentieth century, some Bhils and Garasias of Sirohi joined Govindgiri’s movement (to which reference has been made elsewhere), and rallied to his ‘*Samp-Sabha*’. In the case of Sirohi, there was unrest among the tribals as they refused forced labour etc. Their dissent was partially put down by the state authorities in 1908, and finally suppressed

following the Mangarh incident of November 1913, which led to the imprisonment of Govindgiri and many of his associates.

However, as the problems of the tribals had remained unresolved, in time their aspirations found a new focus under the leadership of Motilal Tejawat. Tejawat, an Oswal, resigned as *kamdar* of Jhadol for this, and during 1921-1922 (when the Non-Cooperation Movement was on in British India), Motilal Tejawat led a regional movement against exploitation by feudal lords and various agriculture-related problems faced by the Bhils and Garasias of Sirohi, as well as of Mewar, Danta, Idar, Dungarpur, Banswara, Palanpur and adjoining states.

The movement called for a reduction in land revenue demands, and an end to forced labour (*beth-begaar*), and *laag-baag*. This 'Akki' movement was eventually suppressed by military force through the overall region, with British troops assisting various state forces in this. In May 1922, British forces assisted the Sirohi state forces in quelling an alleged uprising of Bhils and Garasia from the Rohera *tehsil*, who were agitating under the leadership of Motilal Tejawat at Neemdi in Vijaynagar state. Some 1,200 tribals were killed and many were wounded. (Tejawat was carried away to safety, and remained underground, until his surrender before the Idar state police force in 1929, at the urging of Mahatma Gandhi. Tejawat was thereafter imprisoned at Udaipur until 1936).

In the interim, in April 1920, Maharao Kesari Singh of Sirohi had handed over his duties in favour of his heir, Sarup Ram Singh (r. 1920-1946). Kesari Singh died five years later. Meanwhile, the rights of the ruler of Sirohi State vis-à-vis his nobles were clearly set out and defined by the Macpherson Committee, which was appointed for this purpose in 1920-21.

In 1924-25 a 'Nau Pragana Mahajan Association' was established in Sirohi to protest against social ills as well as state repression. However, it was not until 1933 that a 'Praja Mandal' for Sirohi state was set-up with its base at Bombay, outside the territorial jurisdiction of the state. This was followed by abortive attempts to start a Praja Mandal within Sirohi in 1934 and 1936, but it was not till Gokul Bhai Bhatt (who belonged to Hathal in Sirohi state), returned from Bombay in January 1939, that a 'Sirohi Rajya

Praja Mandal' was established in Sirohi state. The organisation called for administrative improvements and a voice in policy-making. The state's authorities refused to register it initially, but did so on 1 May 1940.

The year 1940 also found changes being initiated in the state's administrative structure. A State Council was established, with the Maharao as its president, while the charge of vice-president lay with the state's chief minister. The State Council had two other members, who dealt with the departments of home, revenue and general affairs. The same year, the number of *tehsils* was reduced from fifteen to eight.

During 1941-1942 Gokul Bhai Bhatt led the demand for 'responsible government' in the state. Later, Rameshwar Dayal Agrawal and Dharamchand Surana were arrested and imprisoned for some months for taking part in the Praja Mandal's work. On 18 April 1942 an Advisory Committee, under the chairmanship of the Revenue Member of the State Council, was established to enable a degree of public participation in the state's government. This committee was made up of seventeen non-official and five official members. Of the seventeen non-official members, ten came from the non-official member category of the Tehsil Advisory Committees and Municipalities. Five others came from a panel put forward by *the jagirdars* and '*chhut-bhais*' (literally, 'younger brothers', i.e. descendants of junior or cadet lines of Rajput families) etc. The remaining two were nominated by the ruler from any special interest group that appeared to be under-represented. Non-official members were appointed to this Advisory Committee for a period of two years at a time.

While this Committee commenced proffering advice to the State Council, the events of the Quit India movement, launched in August 1942, saw the Sirohi Praja Mandal lead demonstrations against the British, and their own Government. However, no one was arrested. In March 1945 the Advisory Committee was expanded to include seven additional popular representatives.' Adult franchise was also introduced into the state. The elections held thereafter saw two women elected to the body. However, the Praja Mandal had opted not to participate in these elections.

Meanwhile, Sirohi's ruler died at Delhi on 23 January 1946, leaving no male heir. He had previously accepted Islam, and was given a burial in accordance with his wishes. A 'Council of Administration', with the chief minister as its president took charge of the administration of the state. The British acknowledged Tej Singh of Mandar as the new Maharao of Sirohi on 1 July. This decision was opposed by the Praja Mandal of the state, who requested the Resident for the appointment of a Regency Council to look after the administration, emphasising that the peoples had the right to choose the regent and members of the Regency Council as had been done in 1823. The Praja Mandal also demanded popular representation in the council.

During the minority of the new Maharao, the Political Agent supervised the state's administration initially, and then a Regency Council was established on 14 August 1947, with the Dowager Maharani of Sirohi as its president. On 5 August 1947, Abu — which had been in the hands of the British as per a nineteenth century agreement, was returned to Sirohi state.

Meanwhile, just before Independence, Sirohi State had set up a Constitutional Committee, with seven nominated members, to work towards a future constitution of Sirohi. Soon after Indian Independence, the new Government of India began considering the merger of smaller states. In November 1947 a suggestion was made that Sirohi be merged with Gujarat, as certain portions of Sirohi state had a Gujarati-speaking majority. On 1 February 1948 Sirohi was transferred to the Gujarat State Agency. That latter was, in turn, merged with Bombay on 19 March 1948. We shall take up the remainder of Sirohi's story until the period it eventually re-joined erstwhile Rajputana, in the latter's re-incarnation as modern Rajasthan, in the next chapter of this book.

Meanwhile, Abhay Singh and Lakhpatt Ram Singh had placed memoranda before the Government of India, setting forward their own respective claims to the Sirohi *gaddi*, as against the minor Tej Singh's claims. On 10 March 1949 a Committee was set up to look into the matter by the Government of India. Its members were the Maharajas of Jaipur and Kotah and H.V. Divatia of Saurashtra. The Committee accepted Abhay

Singh as the rightful successor to the late Maharao Sarup Ram Singh, and made its recommendations accordingly to the Government of India, and Abhay Singh was formally accorded recognition as Sirohi's Maharao.

TONK

The process of modernization (begun previously) continued in the State of Tonk during the long-reign of Nawab Mohammad Ibrahim Ali Khan (r. 1867-1930). Between 1911-1914 came the second regular Land Settlement related activity, which did not involve a fresh survey, but ensured due correction of village maps where necessary. *Jagir* villages, including resumed *jagirs*, were covered too. This settlement was completed by 1914, and came into force from 1922-23 — i.e. *Fasli* Year 1330. (Later, in the 1939-40 financial year, another round of settlement operations was initiated. This was completed in the Tonk and Aligarh areas of the state by the time Merger took place). In 1916, a British officer took over as the Inspector-General of Police for Tonk state, and supervised the re-organisation and modernisation of the state's police force.

The twentieth century also brought changes of a different sort. These pertained to political awareness and resulted in a degree of agitation and unrest, particularly during the Congress-led non-cooperation movements and the Khilafat movement centred in British India.

In 1920-21, the area around the town of Tonk saw unrest — to which even the low-paid armed forces added their voices — because of an abnormal rise in the prices of foodstuffs, and the consequent growth of ill-will against the merchants of Ratlam (in Central India), who not only supplied grain to the state, but were also the state financiers²⁰². “The role of the *Dewan* was also being questioned in these matters. There were other grievances too. For example, the Nawab had stopped the reading of *Waaz* (sermon) in the mosques. These were also the days of the pro-Khilafat and non-cooperation movements throughout the country, in particular the north and north-western Indian sub-continent. In such an agitated and surcharged atmosphere, the clemency shown by the Nawab to his jailed *Parchanavis*

(or confidential reporter) was resented, all the more because the Nawab had banned the entry of political agitators of the Khilafat Non-Cooperation movement from British India”²⁰³.

“The mob feelings in the State capital were on a high pitch of resentment and protest. On one or two occasions, the Nawab and his entourage were mobbed, as for example on January 14, 1921, when the Nawab came for prayers at the Jumma Masjid. On this occasion, high prices and the Dewan’s conduct were the rallying points. Things took a dramatic and violent turn on 16th, when a mass meeting was called despite the ban orders by the Nawab, and the State army and policemen disobeyed the orders. The attempt by the I.G.P. [Inspector-General of Police] to deal with the situation with a small band of police force, facing an angry crowd of 4,000 carrying flags of the Crescent and the Star, led to much confusion and mutual assaults. There was a second meeting the same day, with the mob more armed than before. An unnerved Nawab decided to meet a delegation of the agitators, who submitted their petition of grievances in the presence of the British Agent of Hadauti and Tonk. The Nawab yielded and accepted all the demands, except two *viz.*, about the removal of the Dewan, and the cancellation of the monopoly of Ratlam merchants in the supply/purchase of food grains. It was agreed to fix the price of *Jowar* @ 8 seers to a rupee and to remove State levy on import of grains. Dewan Moti Lal was, however, granted leave for six months”²⁰⁴

“Hardly had the Nawab escaped this tangle of mass unrest, when he was faced with another problem. On a visit to dinner with the Qafla Sayyads of Tonk (a few days after the first mass meeting) the Nawab was mobbed again, and threatened with abusive language, while the hosts remained silent witnesses to the ugly scenes. Naturally, the Nawab suspected their connivance in the incident; and since the Sayyads of Tonk were known to be in touch with their main branch in Rai Bareilly, then the centre of socio-religious protests, the Nawab had their local premises searched, when some objectionable material, incriminating letters and seditious newspapers etc. were found. The documents also established links of the agitators as far afield as Delhi and Kabul. The Tonk Sayyads were then expelled”²⁰⁵.

“The situation had by now taken a distinct religio-political complexion. Agitations continued and British help was sought by the Nawab while the Khilafat-Congress Committees of Ajmer took up cudgels on behalf of the agitators. Press and public opinion outside Tonk increasingly turned against the Nawab and he was advised by the Agent to the Governor General to set up a Committee of Enquiry. Also, at the suggestion of the Agent, thirty-three ‘political’ prisoners were released on bail”²⁰⁶.

“However, the main result of these episodes of unrest and agitation was the *Proclamation* issued and read out at a mass meeting on February 23, announcing the setting up of a *Consultative Committee* to go into the public grievances and seek advice and opinion of the concerned people for the future legislation. A *Rubkar* (order) was also issued which allowed: (i) meetings of more than five persons on political issues, (ii) preaching of sermons or reading of *Waaz* in the mosques, but restricted only to religious subjects or themes, (iii) entry of outsiders into the State that had been forbidden so far, on condition that these were not ‘seditionists’, and (iv) the re-opening of Arabic schools. No doubt, all this meant a considerable gain for local/civil and religious rights”²⁰⁷.

In the ensuing years, the atmosphere remained charged, both within Tonk, as well as outside that state’s boundaries. As such, in November 1928, when the Rajputana states’ Peoples’ Conference met at Ajmer a resolution was adopted condemning police and administrative repression in Tonk state, along with other named states like Mewar, Sirohi, Bundi and Jaipur, where too there had been political agitations which had earned the ire of the concerned states. Furthermore, a local leader from Tonk, Abdul Irfan Faizi, was elected to the executive of the Rajputana States’ Peoples’ Conference.

Following the death of Nawab Hafiz Mohammad Ibrahim Ali Khan in 1930, his second son, Hafiz Mohammad Saadat Ali Khan (r. 1930-1948), ascended the *gaddi* of Tonk. (The eldest son of the fourth Nawab had predeceased his aging father in 1927). A change in the state’s policy towards political agitation took place soon thereafter. In part it followed the intervention of the Viceroy of India, who had been on the receiving end of

numerous strong representations from the States Peoples' Conference concerning matters in Tonk state. The representations stressed that there was hardly any freedom of speech, press or association in the state, and that deportment and internments of dissenting voices and confiscations of properties had taken place.

As part of other wide-sweeping changes, Nawab Saadat Ali Khan announced the establishment of a 'State Administrative Council', which had powers to review administrative budgets²⁰⁸; the creation of Departments of Public Works, Forests, etc.; and the re-organisation of the Customs and Excise Department. The 1931-32 Reforms also led to the re-organisation of the judicial system. The changes included the creation of a separate District and Sessions Court, and the creation, in August 1932, of a Chief Court. This Chief Court became a High Court in the administrative year 1944-45.

Measures were also taken to constitute a *Majlis-e-Amma* [pronounced 'Aama'], or 'General Council of the People', along with municipalities and *panchayats*. The *Majlis-e-Amma* was set up by a *farman* (ruler's decree) on 23 November, 1939. It comprised a total of twenty-six official and non-official members. The former were made up of members of the State Council (as the 'State Administrative Council' was referred to in its abbreviated form), and other nominated members. In the case of the non-official members, twelve were to be elected by panchayats and the District Council, representing urban and rural areas in equal numbers, and five were to represent varied special interests, such as the *sahibzadas* (scions of nobles) and backward classes etc. It was so arranged that from each urban and rural constituency, one Muslim and one non-Muslim representative were elected by rotation²⁰⁹. The *Majlis-e-Amma* was meant to tender advice on all matters of legislation relating to taxation, health, education, commerce and industry. Non-official members could move amendments on bills related to these matters. The president of the *Majlis* was also the vice-president of the state (Administrative) Council²¹⁰.

Concomitantly, a 'Municipal Act' was passed in 1939, enabling the *parganas* (districts) of Tonk, Sironj, Nimbahera, Chhabra and Pirawa to

have municipalities, with certain members elected (on communal basis), while others were officially nominated. In December 1939, State Panchayat Rules pertaining to panchayats (five members for each village, or group of villages with population of 2,000 or above), were promulgated. These panchayats had certain civil and criminal jurisdiction; and the *sarpanchas* heading the panchayats formed the electorate for the elections of the *parganas* representative to the *Majlis-e-Amma*.

Thus, by the opening of the fourth decade of the twentieth century, Tonk, like many of its contemporary princely states, had some semblance of popular, representative, administrative institutions. The state's administrative machinery too, in common with several of the other states of Rajputana, had been overhauled and modernised over the decades, as already noted. For example, by 1939 Tonk had a veterinary hospital, and in 1943 the Tonk State Forest Act was implemented, with a State Forest Officer heading the Department. Similarly, during the latter years of Second World War, the state joined in the 'Grow More Food Campaign' launched across the country, with its Agriculture Department distributing improved varieties of wheat, potato and vegetable seeds²¹¹ and the Revenue Department remitting certain collections, disbursing loans and allotting disused government wells to cultivators.

In 1907 the annual revenue of Tonk state had been about rupees eleven lakhs. This rose to rupees twenty-one lakhs in 1945. The main sources of revenue came from land and from custom duties. The chief exports were cereals, cotton, opium, hides and hand-woven cloth, while imports included salt, sugar, rice, tobacco and iron and steel. The state had its own currency in some of areas, while in others the Imperial British coinage was used. Tonk State's population was 3.54 lakhs according to the 1941 census, of whom 82% were Hindus and 15% Muslims.

By this time, Tonk state was composed of five administrative districts or *parganas*, known as *nizamats*, and one *naib-nizamat* (akin to a 'sub-district'). These were Tonk, Aligarh, Nimbahera, Chhabra, Pirawa and Sironj, with Aligarh being the *naib-nizamat*. (Of these, the first three named formed part of Rajputana, while Chhabra, Pirawa and Sironj were part of the then Central India area). These, in turn, were divided into smaller units,

for revenue purposes, known as tehsils. Tonk and Nimbahera *nizamats* had two *tehsils* each; Sironj had three, while Pirawa and Chhabra were made up of one *tehsil* each. The total area of Tonk state at this time was around 2,556 square miles, of which some 110 sq. miles of territory lay within Rajputana, while the rest was in Central India.

The independence of British-held India was accompanied by Tonk State formally acceding to India in 1947. After Indian independence, the state of Tonk headed towards merger with nearby princely states, and on 25 March 1948, combined to constitute the first of the units that went on to form present-day Rajasthan.

DHOLPUR

In 1901, Dholpur's Maharaj Rana Nehal Singh died. His successor was his eldest son, Ram Singh (b.1883, r, 1901 -1911). The state was governed by a 'Superintendent', appointed by the Political Agent of the Eastern Rajputana Agency, during the young ruler's minority, and in 1905 when Ram Singh came 'of-age' he was conferred with full ruling powers.

Meanwhile, 'modernisation' continued to make a gradual impact on the state. Even though education was free in Dholpur and the state's Education Department had been established in 1863, there seems to have been something of an apathetic attitude on the part of the populace towards formal schooling. In 1900-1901 there were six schools in the state. One of these schools was at Dholpur, where English was taught in addition to Hindi, Persian and Urdu. The other five schools were at Bari, Baseri, Rajakhera, Kolari and Angai. The capital-town of Dholpur gained a high school — the 'Sadar Maharana High School' — in 1910. Several primary schools were opened in other parts of the state in the same year. By 1910-11 there were 31 educational institutes across the state, with about 1,173 students — including 60 girls on their rolls. On the medical and health front, at the start of the twentieth century there were five medical dispensaries in the state, one of which was exclusively for those in prison. Another closed down soon afterwards, but in 1903-04 the dispensary at the capital-city was upgraded to become the state's first hospital.

Ram Singh had a short reign. Upon his death in 1911, Nehal Singh's second son, Jai Singh Deo (r. 1911-1912), ascended the *gaddi* of Dholpur. His reign was even shorter than that of his brother and predecessor, and within a year he was succeeded by his younger brother. This was Udaibhan Singh Deo (b.1893, r.1912-1948, d.1954).

Despite the relatively small size, and not so prominent previous importance of Dholpur State, the Maharaj Rana Udaibhan Singh Deo of Dholpur was to play a fairly important and influential role in the affairs of

the Chamber of Princes. He also served as a member of the Indian States' delegations to the Round Table Conferences in England. Appointed Pro-Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes in 1933, Udaibhan Singh Deo was to be the Acting Chancellor Chamber of Princes during 1936-37. Through that period and subsequently, he remained an influential participant during the fateful years leading to the eventual transfer of power from Britain to the new dominions of India and Pakistan in August 1947.

On the internal administration front, during the earlier part of the century, the *Ijlas-Khas*, a council presided over by the ruler, had been the highest court of appeal. The state was divided into six *tehsils*, each headed by officers known as *nazim*. In addition, the estate of Sar-Mathura was directly administered by the Council, through a senior officer. The main departments of the state dealt with revenue, settlement, customs, judicial, police and jails. These were headed by secretaries with a chief secretary above them. These administrative institutions were overhauled during the course of Udaibhan Singh Deo's long reign.

Meanwhile, in the early years of Udaibhan's reign, Dholpur saw some political activity in 1915 under the leadership of Mukta Prasad Singh. Thereafter, in 1918, the Arya Samaj leader, Swami Shraddhanand, inspired a movement in Dholpur, which the state's government responded to sternly. The movement petered out after Shraddhanand's death.

Much later, in 1936 the Dholpur Praja Mandal was established under the leadership of Krishna Dutt Paliwal. The state refused to register this body, however, and the movement could make little headway. A few years later, in 1938, Jwala Prasad Jigyasu, Joharilal Indu, and others made another attempt to establish a Praja Mandal. The state responded by arresting a number of workers. Those arrested were released after some months.

Around this time, attempts were made by the Dholpur authorities to attract some industries to Dholpur. In 1943 the Dholpur Glass Works Ltd was established at the capital, through a special agreement with the State's administration. In 1945 this became a Public Limited Company, at the urging of the Dholpur ruler.

It was also in 1945 that a meeting was called by the Praja Mandal at the village of Tasimo, in the Dholpur sub-division, to demand 'responsible government'. There was some violence, and deeming the situation to have got out of control, the Deputy Superintendent of Police ordered his men to open fire upon the assembly. Thakur Chhatar Singh and Pancham Singh died as a result.

In 1947, the State of Dholpur acceded to the Indian Union. Prior to this, the ruler of Dholpur had been one of the leading men within and outside the Chamber of Princes, who had opposed the proposed accession of the Indian princely states. He had supported alternative plans and proposals, mainly advocated by the group led by the Nawab of Bhopal, which visualised a different future for the princely states.

Following Dholpur's accession, the demand for 'responsible government' grew afresh within the state. Early in 1948 popular pressure finally convinced Udaibhan Singh Deo to announce the necessary legislative changes. Shortly afterwards, Dholpur became part of the newly forged 'Matsya Union' in March 1948, together with Alwar, Bharatpur and Karauli. Dholpur's ruler, the Maharaj Rana Udaibhan Singh Deo became the Raj Pramukh of the Matsya Union, with the Alwar Praja Mandal's Shobha Ram, as chief minister. Subsequently, as noted elsewhere, the Matsya Union itself became part of the new state of Rajasthan.

BRITISH ADMINISTERED AJMER-MERWARA

Like other British provinces in India, the British-administered Ajmer-Merwara area had become politically conscious and active much before its neighbouring princely states. From the early part of the twentieth century onwards Ajmer became an important centre of revolutionary and other forms of nationalist, anti-British, activity. For example, several absconding accused in the Hardinge bomb case were sheltered by the nationalists of Ajmer. The revolutionary Raja Mahendra Pratap Singh found friends here, as did Swami Kuinarananda from Bengal. Bhagat Singh too found temporary refuge at Ajmer even as the police force of British India sought to arrest him. The railway line allowed good access between Ajmer, British

India and the Indian states, while at the same time, the very location of Ajmer meant that it was convenient for any nationalist wanted by the police or other authorities of British India to cross the border and slip into one of the neighbouring princely states of Rajputana! Over the course of the next few decades, Ajmer remained a vital hub for several types of nationalist activities, ranging from revolutionary to those concentrating on social reforms and non-cooperation. It would also remain an enclave of British Indian 'modern' ideas and educational initiatives, amidst the Indian princely states of Rajputana.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, when the revolutionary activist, Ras Behari Bose, organised a movement against the British, he gained the support of a core group based in and around Ajmer for organising action in Ajmer-Merwara and surrounding Rajputana area. The group included men like Thakur Gopal Singh of Kharwa (near Ajmer), Arjun Lal Sethi (an educationist from Jaipur), Kesri Singh Barhat, Damodar Das Rathi from Beawar (who had been influenced by revolutionaries from Bengal and United Provinces who were secretly sheltered at his place), and Bhoop Singh (later known as Vijay Singh 'Pathik'). At Jaipur, the organisation was, in the subsequent absence of Sethi, looked after by Brijmohan Lal Mathur (one-time Vice-Principal of the Arts School, and an associate of Lala Hardayal of Delhi's 1914 Hardinge bomb conspiracy).

The revolutionaries had apparently recruited men and organised guns for launching an armed struggle against the British on a pre-arranged date in February 1915. However, British India's Intelligence Department found out about the conspiracy, and taking pre-emptive action, made several near-simultaneous arrests across the subcontinent. In the Ajmer area, Thakur Copal Singh of Kharwa dispersed his followers and hid his cell's cache of arms and ammunitions, before he was arrested, as were Sethi etc. The Thakur and his associate, Bhoop Singh, were confined at Todgarh. While Bhoop Singh managed to escape and make his way to Mewar, taking the alias of 'Vijay Singh Pathik' (becoming a prominent leader of the Bijolia movement later, as has been discussed elsewhere), Copal Singh remained confined till 1920.

In the interim, Arjunlal Sethi, Kesri Singh Barhat, Ram Narain Chowdhry and Vijay Singh Pathik (alias Bhoop Singh) were among the co-founders of the Rajasthan Seva Sangh to which reference has been made previously. Established at Wardha, the Seva Sangh's office was later transferred to Ajmer. The stated objective of the Rajasthan Seva Sangh was to assist the agrarian movements in various Rajputana States. The Rajasthan Seva Sangh also published a newspaper known as *Rajasthan Kesari*. The organisation was dissolved in 1927, apparently due to differences at the leadership level.

Meanwhile, in 1926, Hari Bhau Upadhyaya (1892-1972), a disciple of Gandhi, arrived in Ajmer, where he founded an institution along Gandhian lines at Hatundi, a few miles from Ajmer, in 1927²¹². Soon serious differences arose between Upadhyaya and Arjunlal Sethi, who was at the time the president of Ajmer-Merwara's Provincial Congress Committee. Upadhyaya took Sethi's place as president of the P.C.C., while Sethi withdrew from active politics and concentrated on the cause of Hindu-Muslim amity and of education, while maintaining his deep commitment to the nationalist cause.

In April 1930 a number of Congress workers were arrested during the course of Mahatma Gandhi's Salt Satyagraha. Among them were Hari Bhau Upadhyaya, Vijay Singh Pathik, Arjunlal Sethi, Ram Narain Chowdhry and Prof. Gokul Lal Asawa. Many of them would remain in prison till November 1930. Thereafter, several Congress workers of the Ajmer-Merwara area courted arrest in 1932, during the continuing Non-Cooperation movement.

The same year Ram Chandra Narhari Bapat of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army, which too had established roots in Ajmer, was sentenced to ten years' rigorous imprisonment for an attempt against the life of Gibson, the AGG in Rajputana. (Gibson had allegedly been responsible for ordering extreme repression of the people while he was prime minister of Rajkot). In 1935, Jwala Prasad, Ram Singh, and Ramesh Chandra Vyas were arrested in the Dogra Shooting Case. Ram Singh was sentenced to seven years' rigorous imprisonment, while the others were acquitted. In the Quit India movement of 1942, many Congress workers were arrested. Of

them, Jwala Prasad and Raghu Raj Singh escaped from jail in January 1944, while several others were released in 1945.

Along with the political activities, Ajmer had continued to thrive as an important commercial, educational and administrative centre, and the Ajmer-Merwara province as a whole had seen more 'modern' institutions set in place than many of the other parts of Rajputana. The Cooperative Credit Societies Act had come into force in the province in 1904, and by 1931 there were 655 societies with a membership of more than 20,000. A provincial Cooperative Bank had also been established at Ajmer in 1910. Later many other banks established their branches at Ajmer and other parts of Ajmer-Merwara.

As far as educational facilities were concerned, by 1903 Ajmer-Merwara already had fourteen secondary schools. New institutions — both state-run and other — continued to come up in the province over the course of the next half century or so. In 1914, the Savitri Middle School for girls (the second girls' Middle school for Ajmer-Merwara) was established, and in 1919 the Mission Sisters of Ajmer opened another High School for girls. In 1929, a Sanskrit Pathshala, which had been established at Beawar in 1904 by the Sanatan Dharam Sabha, was raised to the Intermediate standard, and in 1942 the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic (DAV) High School run by the Arya Samaj was raised to the intermediate standard. As such, taken together with previously established educational institutions, it is not surprisingly that the area's percentage of literacy according to the 1941 census was 12.5% of the total population, as against the 5.17% for the rest of Rajputana. Thus, by 1948-49 Ajmer Merwara had 459 educational institutions with more than 45,000 boys and girls on their collective rolls.

The first half of the twentieth century saw the establishment, in 1906, of the Edward Mills at Beawar. This was the town's second cotton textile mill. In 1925 came the Mahalaxmi Textile Mills, and in 1941 the Vijaya Cotton Mills was established at Vijayanagar, with 14,000 spindles and 316 looms. Ajmer-Merwara had several wool-carding and cotton ginning factories too. On the small-scale industry front, the making of *gota* (gold and silver tinsel weaves) gave employment to about 5,000 families! (One should emphasise the cosmopolitan nature of Ajmer by this time, with its

many different communities, including some 250 Parsis (Zoroastrians). The area's Mers of Merwara claimed descent from Rajputs. Some, who asserted Rajput descent along with subsequent conversion to Islam, began to be called 'Merat' in the early twentieth century, while the unconverted 'Hindu' elements preferred to use the term 'Rawat').

Following the Independence of India in 1947, the integration and re-organisation of states found the previously British-administered province of Ajmer-Merwara listed as a 'C' category province in the new constitution. The process of integration entailed much discussion, and many possible combinations were examined and suggested by different groups. Thus, at the Ajmer Political Conference held at Mhow, under the chairmanship of Shankerrao Deo, general secretary, All India Congress Committee, two resolutions were adopted on 7 April 1948. One called for the unification of the Rajputana and Central Indian States, and the second for the continuation of Ajmer- Merwara as a province. The conference called upon India's Constituent Assembly to make a constitution for the province and take into account the view of the area's people before deciding the issue of merging Ajmer-Merwara into Rajasthan. A subsequent resolution of 29 June 1948, put forward at Beawar, asked that whole of Rajputana including Ajmer-Merwara should be formed into one administrative unit, which should, in the interim, be administered by a representative democratic body.

Following elections and the convening of a legislative body, Haribhau Upadhyaya became Ajmer's first chief minister²¹³. In 1956 Ajmer-Merwara was absorbed into the present-day state of Rajasthan. Eventually, following a formal re-organisation of states, Ajmer-Merwara became part of Rajasthan on 1 November 1956.

THE TRANSITION FROM RAJPUTANA TO RAJASTHAN

The Independence of India initiated perhaps the most drastic of changes for the various princely Indian states and the traditional life-styles of their people. Over the next quarter of a century India's princely order became relegated to the pages of history, as a new Rajasthan came into being. In

this, political mastery vested from a democratic process linked to that of the rest of the nation, and from elections, the constituting of a State Legislative Assembly and so forth. It would see the launch of land-reforms, the initiation of Panchayati Raj and the abolition of the old *jagirdari*, *biswedari*, and *zamindari* institutions. It would also witness the end of a long-established pattern of governance, and the formal conclusion to the centuries-old era of individual kingdoms and monarchies, the place of which was taken by democratically elected and publicly accountable governments.

¹ The Indian national movement is well-known and has been discussed in many works. Since it cannot be covered in detail here, salient aspects have been highlighted further in this chapter.

² For more information, see V.K. Vashishtha's 'Caste Reform Associations (*Sabhas*) and their Social and Political Mobilization in the Princely States of Rajputana, 1877-1949', In Mathur (Ed.) *Social and Economic Dynamics of Rajasthan Politics*, Aalekh Publishers, Jaipur, 1996, pp.83-115.

³ Vashishtha, *Ibid*, 1996, pp.99-100, 113.

⁴ For details, see Vashishtha, *Ibid*, 1996, pp.100, 102-103.

⁵ V.K. Vashishtha, *Ibid*, 1996, pp.84.

⁶ For facets of India's national movement, see works like B.R. Nanda *The Making of a Nation*, HarperCollins, New Delhi (1998); Majumdar (Ed.) *Struggle For Freedom Vol.XI*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, Bombay (1969); Chandra *et al India's Struggle for Independence 1857-1947*, Penguin, New Delhi (1989), B.N.Pandey *The Break-Up of British India*, Macmillan, London (1969), S. Sarkar *Modern India 1885-1947*, New Delhi (1983); & Tara Chand's four volume *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, New Delhi; among others.

⁷ It urged that "representation...be commensurate not merely with their numerical strength, but also with their political importance and the value of the contribution which they make to the defence of the Empire..."

⁸ The Extremists were excluded from the Congress party.

⁹ For more on this, see, among others, Majumdar (Ed.) *Ibid*, 1969, pp. 198-235.

¹⁰ Kesari Singh joined service at the court of Maharana Fateh Singh of Mewar at an early age. Later, his services were placed at the disposal of the Maharao of Kotah.

¹¹ See works like K.S. Saxena's *The Political Movements and Awakening in Rajasthan*, New Delhi, 1971.

- ¹² The parties jointly demanded a legislative assembly for India. The Pact accepted the principle of separate electorate for the Muslim community, and agreed that in five out of the seven provinces Muslims would get 'over-representation'. 'Under-representation' in Bengal and the Punjab would later become a major issue.
- ¹³ Prepared by Edwin Montagu and the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, following Montagu's tour of India, and the inviting of comments from various people, among them Alwar's Maharaja Jey Singh. Jey Singh's notes and discussions were apparently consulted by Montagu, and went towards some of the reforms and changes suggested in the Montagu-Chelmsford (also 'Montford') Report of 1918.
- ¹⁴ For the Indian Liberals, see among others, R.J. Moore's *Liberalism and Indian Politics 1872-1922*, Edward Arnold, London (1966); and Abha Saxena's *Indian National Movement and the Liberals*, Chugh Publ., Allahabad (1986). For Tej Bahadur Sapru's role, see R. Hooja 1999 *Crusader for Self-Rule: Tej Bahadur Sapru and the Indian National Movement (Lift and Selected Letters)*, Rawat Publ., Jaipur & New Delhi.
- ¹⁵ For more on the Indian princes, politics and developments of the age, see among others, Ian Copland's *The Princes of India in the Endgame of Empire, 1917-1947*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997.
- ¹⁶ See D.A. Low's 'The Govt, of India and the First Non-Cooperation Movement 1920-22', *Journal of Asian Studies*. vol. XXV 1966, pp.241-59.
- ¹⁷ For more on the Princely Indian States, the Chamber of Princes and the interaction of individual Princes with the Government of India, see Robin Jeffrey (Ed.) *People, Princes and Paramount Power: Society and Politics in the Indian Princely States*, Delhi, 1978; and Copland, *op.cit*, 1997, among others
- ¹⁸ See Hooja 1999, pp.34-35.
- ¹⁹ An All-Parties Conference was convened in November 1924 at Bombay to resolve standing issues.
- ²⁰ Drafted by Motilal Nehru, assisted by his son, Jawaharlal, the report was given its full form by T.B Sapru.
- ²¹ Nanda 1998, pp.201.
- ²² See works like R.J. Moore 1974 *The Crisis of Indian Unity:1917-1940*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.
- ²³ D.A. Low, *Britain and Indian Nationalism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, pp.41-71.
- ²⁴ *Ibid*, pp.50-57.
- ²⁵ Elder brother of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

- ²⁶ In constitutional law there is no difference between full dominion status and independence. M. Brecher noted in *Nehru: A Political Biography*, Oxford, 1959, pp.134, that “the controversy over Dominion Status and complete independence was over a straw man for there is no substantive difference between them”.
- ²⁷ See Nanda 1998, pp.204-209.
- ²⁸ Moore 1974, pp.108.
- ²⁹ See D.A. Low, *Rearguard Action*, Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1996, pp.54-95.
- ³⁰ Pandey 1969, pp.134.
- ³¹ See Nanda 1998, pp.226-231.
- ³² Low 1996, pp.114.
- ³³ Sapru and Jayakar submitted a joint memorandum on 27 December for inclusion in the conference proceedings. This gave an outline for a dominion constitution with a federal centre responsible to the legislature. It sought responsibility at the Centre, ‘Indianization’ of the army, defining the special powers of the Governor General and Governors, etc. The inauguration of the federation was recommended for 1935.
- ³⁴ Formerly ‘North Western Provinces & Oudh’, in 1902 this became ‘United Provinces of Agra & Oudh’.
- ³⁵ The five volumes on *Peoples Movement in Rajasthan*, Shodhak, Jaipur, also provide selections from the original papers of numerous concerned individuals.
- ³⁶ In its 1939 Ludhiana session, the AISPC proposed that Indian Princely States having revenue of Rs. 50 lakhs, or a population of 20 lakhs could remain as autonomous units, with the rest amalgamating.
- ³⁷ Nanda notes (1998, pp.285-86), “The demand for Pakistan probably surprised the British Government as much as it surprised the Congress. Initially, its significance in British eyes was that it confirmed their stock thesis that constitutional progress in India was barred not by British hesitation but by Indian discord...But for the war, it is doubtful if even an indirect endorsement of the Pakistan proposal would have been publicly made so soon. The war was, however, dictating the pace of events, which neither the British Government nor the Indian leaders could entirely foresee or control”.
- ³⁸ For Sapru’s role as a mediator between Gandhi and Jinnah in 1941, see Low 1996; and Hooja 1999.
- ³⁹ The Atlantic Declaration clauses included a pledge by the two signatories to “respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live”, and noted a “wish to see sovereign right and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them”.

- ⁴⁰ Winston S.Churchill *The Second World War* Vol.1.3, (1950) rep.Bantam Books, New York, 1962, pp.574.
- ⁴¹ Low 1996, pp.207.
- ⁴² Ibid, pp.206.
- ⁴³ For Churchill's version, see 'The Cripps Mission', in *The Second World War*, Vol. 4, *op.cit*, pp. 177-192.
- ⁴⁴ In July, Gandhi said in a newspaper interview that if a declaration was made that India would become independent after the war, he could advise the Congress to participate in a national government with full control over civil affairs while the Viceroy retained command over military affairs. Gandhi and Wavell had some correspondence over this, but the latter remained cool towards such a proposed arrangement.
- ⁴⁵ A term bestowed upon Jinnah by Gandhi.
- ⁴⁶ This conciliation committee examined the communal and minorities question from a constitutional and political point of view and got views from leaders of various parties. Its *Constitutional Proposals of the Sapru Committee Report* was the work of Sapru, with Jayakar, Gopalaswami Ayyangar and Jagdish Prasad.
- ⁴⁷ The report's guidelines for the constitution of an independent Union of India visualised a single state comprising federated units (whether provinces or states), and unfederated Indian states. Analysing Hindu-Muslim relations, the report rejected the idea of a separate Pakistan. It had few recommendations about the Indian states beyond providing for their *voluntary* accession, as the states had not been represented on the committee. The report suggested that the head of state could be from among the rulers of the Indian states; recommended special safeguards; and outlined fundamental rights and other constitutional details.
- ⁴⁸ E.g., the Thakur of Arooka, Karni Singh Shekhawat (d. 1951), a member of the *Walterkrit Hitkarini Sabha*, became a member of Jaipur state's Assembly. Later he was elected the first *sarpanch* of Arooka.
- ⁴⁹ The Royal Indian Navy (RIN) Mutiny (18-23 February) shook Bombay and the rest of the country.
- ⁵⁰ The Maharawal of Dungarpur suggested to the Cabinet Mission that small states like his own should be allowed to group themselves into larger units by "pooling sovereignty" on a regional and linguistic basis.
- ⁵¹ Karni Singh, *The Relations of the House of Bikaner with the Central Powers*, New Delhi 1974, pp 301.
- ⁵² The Interim Government plan proposed that of the fourteen members, six would be from Congress, five from the Muslim League, and one member each would represent the Sikhs, Indian Christians, and Parsis.
- ⁵³ Pandey, *The Break-Up of British India*, 1969, pp. 185-186.

- ⁵⁴ In February 1947 these prime ministers met at Jaipur and set up a smaller committee that included Bundi's prime minister, Alwar's acting prime minister, and Dungarpur's minister. This met on 15 March and agreed that, given common ties, a Rajputana Union was an option.
- ⁵⁵ Nidhi Sharma's *Transition from Feudalism to Democracy*, Aalekh, Jaipur, 2000, pp.23-25, gives examples.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid.
- ⁵⁷ Bhopal's Nawab Hamidullah Khan (b. 1894; r. 1926-1960), was Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes.
- ⁵⁸ Singh 1974, pp.304-305.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid.
- ⁶⁰ Singh, 1974, pp.308.
- ⁶¹ Created by a Cabinet decision of 25 June 1947, the States Department was intended for conducting relations with the Indian States. It was also meant to supervise its future 'Residents' to the States.
- ⁶² See V.P. Menon's *The Story of the Integration of the Indian States*, Orient Longman, Calcutta. 1956.
- ⁶³ See, for instance, Shail Mayaram's *Resisting Regimes*, OUP, Delhi, 1997; especially pp.162-220.
- ⁶⁴ Gandhi stood for non-intervention by the Indian National Congress in the internal matters of the princely states.
- ⁶⁵ In 1922 the Deccan States Association called a meeting at Poona (Pune) of all interested in the welfare of the princely states. Later, the All India State People's Conference was formally established in 1927.
- ⁶⁶ Described as a *banjara* of the erstwhile Dungarpur state.
- ⁶⁷ See, among others, Ram Pande's *Agrarian Movement in Rajasthan*, Shodhak, Jaipur, 1974 [Reprinted 1988]; B.K. Sharma's *Peasant Movements in Rajasthan:1920-1949*, Pointer Publishers, Jaipur, 1990.
- ⁶⁸ Around c. AD 1775 there had been unrest among the Meghwal community of the Churu area.
- ⁶⁹ T.K. Mathur 'The Growth and Development of Praja Mandal Movements in Rajasthan', in Ratnawat and Sharma (Eds.), *op.cit*, 1999, pp.354.
- ⁷⁰ G.N. Sharma and V.S. Bhatnagar's 'Agrarian Discontent and Peasant Movements in Rajasthan: A Brief Survey', in Ratnawat and Sharma (Eds.), *op.cit*. pp.348.
- ⁷¹ M.S. Jain, *Concise History of Modern Rajasthan*, Wishwa Prakashan, New Delhi, 1993.

- ⁷² Son of Hamir Singh and Kanwal Kumari, Bhoop was brought up in his uncle's home where he learned Arabic, Sanskrit, Persian and English. He later won acclaim for his writings in Hindi and Marwari.
- ⁷³ Vijay Singh Pathik lived to see a free India, though his long contribution does not appear to have been adequately rewarded. He continued to serve the people until his death at Ajmer on 28 May 1958.
- ⁷⁴ From Ajmer, Verma moved to Dungarpur state's Sagwara area, to work against untouchability, superstition, alcoholism, etc. Associated with Baba Lakshmandas and Shobhalal Gupta, he encouraged Bhil boys to attend school at Sagwara's Harijan Ashram, and started schools at Khadlai village and elsewhere.
- ⁷⁵ For more on Begun, Parsoli, Mandesra, and organisation of panchayats at Amargarh, etc. see Pande's *Agrarian Movement in Rajasthan*, 1974 [Rep.1988], pp.33-39.
- ⁷⁶ See Pande, *Ibid*, pp.67-71. For more about Jat farmers versus Rajput dominance etc., see K.L.Sharma's 'The Peasant Movement and the Caste-Class-Power Nexus in Shekhawati', in P.C. Mathur (Ed) *Social & Economic Dynamics of Rajasthan Politics*, Aalekh, Jaipur, 1996, pp.116-138.
- ⁷⁷ Pande, *Ibid*, pp.67.
- ⁷⁸ Short Hindi monographs have recently been published by the Government of Rajasthan's 'Rajasthan Swarn Jayanti Samaroh Samiti' about various individuals who participated in, or led, the National Movement in Rajasthan. The tracts commemorate the Golden Jubilee of Indian Independence
- ⁷⁹ Pande, *op.cit*, pp.82-86.
- ⁸⁰ See also, Hooja 1988.
- ⁸¹ For more on 'Bhagatism', among others, see V.K.Vashishtha's *Bhagat Movement: A Study of Cultural Transformation of the Bhils of Southern Rajasthan*, Shruti Publication House, Jaipur, 1997.
- ⁸² See Hooja 1988.
- ⁸³ He traced his spiritual lineage from the Bundi *Dashnami Panth* of ascetics.
- ⁸⁴ An early follower was Kuria from Surat, whose son Bhagwan Maharaj became a chief exponent of the sect, with his *dhuni* (religious abode) at Surat.
- ⁸⁵ 'Samp' (pronounced 'sump') is apparently derived from the Hindi word 'Sabhya' — one who is cultured.
- ⁸⁶ See, Jagdish Singh Gehlot's *Rajputana ka Itihas — Sirohi Rajya*, Rajasthan Law Weekly Press, pp.71.
- ⁸⁷ Part of Rewaskantha Agency of Bombay Presidency.

- ⁸⁸ See, Ram Pande (Ed.) *Peoples Movement in Rajasthan*, Vol.III, Shodhak, Jaipur, 1988.
- ⁸⁹ V.K. Vashishtha, *Bhagat Movement*, *op.cit*, 1997, pp.108.
- ⁹⁰ Cited in full in Vashishtha, *Ibid*, 1997, pp.143-155.
- ⁹¹ For more on Guru Govindgiri and his work, see V.K. Vashishtha's *Bhagat Movement*, Jaipur, 1997.
- ⁹² Not all Bhils lived off settled agriculture at this time. Many practised '*walar*' or slash-and-burn shifting cultivation, along with hunting and collecting forest-produce. The 'tribals' as they were designated by the British, had a range of interactions with the non-tribals. Their occupational activities and settlement patterns varied, depending on factors like terrain and the degree of contact with 'non-tribals' (see Hooja 1988). The Bhils themselves often perceived mutual differences that were *not* obvious to external observers. In the early twentieth century, anthropologist S.C. Roy was told about the 'Kalia Bhils' of Jai Samand (Dhebar lake), who, his 'Ujla Bhil' informants insisted, were fully different in appearance and habits! Roy studied and documented Jai Samand's 'Kalia Bhils', whose activities included fishing and hunting crocodiles from rafts, and found that the differences were more cultural than 'racial' or physiology-related (S.C. Roy *The Black Bhils of Jaisamand Lake in Rajputana*, *Journal of the Bihar & Orissa Research Society* 10 (1 & 2), 1924, pp.97-113).
- ⁹³ The Shekhawat chieftain of Malsisar, Bhur Singh, who was a member of the Council of Ministers of Jaipur state from 1895 to 1909, was among those who joined Kesari Singh and others in convincing Maharana Fateh Singh of Mewar against attending the 1911 Delhi Durbar. Bhur Singh also authored several works, among them *Vaharana Yash-Prakash*, *Vividh-Sangraha*, and *Shloka-Sangraha*.
- ⁹⁴ On the issue of Mewar's conservatism, the observations of Amar Singh, who saw Udaipur while a member of the wedding-party accompanying the Maharaja of Kishangarh for his wedding to an Udaipur princess, make interesting reading. See *Reversing the Gaze: Amar Singh's Diary, A Colonial Subject's Narrative of Imperial India*, edited by Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and Lloyd I. Rudolph, with Mohan Singh Kanota, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2000.
- ⁹⁵ A future Chief Minister of Rajasthan, Mohan Lal Sukhadia, caught the public eye at the session on becoming the general secretary of the Mewar Praja Mandal.
- ⁹⁶ In 1926, excess water was drained by creating a breach near Dudh Talai. This saved the Sarup Sagar embankment from being washed away, even while it caused damage to the Sajjan Niwas Gardens!
- ⁹⁷ E.g., the Railway Union and the State Workshop and Motor Garage staff voiced demands, some of which were met by the authorities. However, the railway workers felt constrained to go on strike in July 1946.
- ⁹⁸ Mewar's representatives to India's Constituent Assembly were Prime Minister Sir S.V. Ramamurthy and the Praja Mandal leader Manikya Lal Verma.
- ⁹⁹ *Report on the Administration of Dungarpur State, 1901-02*, pp.13.

- [100](#) Government of Rajasthan's *Rajasthan District Gazetteers — Dungarpur*, Directorate, District Gazetteers, Jaipur (Ed. K.K. Sehgal), 1974, pp.37.
- [101](#) Ibid, pp.281.
- [102](#) See, Vashishtha, *op.cit.*, 1997, pp.55-61.
- [103](#) Ibid, pp.61-74.
- [104](#) Jey Singh also constructed luxurious palaces at Alwar, Sariska and Abu.
- [105](#) Shall Mayaram, *Resisting Regimes: Myth, Memory and the Shaping of a Muslim Identity*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1997, pp.78-79.
- [106](#) Ibid, pp.80.
- [107](#) Ibid, pp.81-82.
- [108](#) 'Jey Paltan', originally raised in 1825 as the 'Fateh Paltan', was expanded and reorganised as part of the 'Imperial Service Troops'. The 'Pratap Paltan' was raised in 1919
- [109](#) Apparently Motilal Nehru once commented that it was a pity Jey Singh was born a prince, thereby depriving the people of an able leader!
- [110](#) See Shail Mayaram's *Resisting Regimes*, 1997, pp. 64. See also Ian Copland's *The Princes of India in the Endgame of Empire, 1917-1947*, Cambridge, 1997.
- [111](#) Jey Singh contributed Rs 40,000 towards the Sanatan Dharma Sabha at Lahore and inaugurated the Sanatan Dharma College there. He also helped establish an Arya Samaj school near the Red Fort at Delhi.
- [112](#) This aimed at 'purifying' and accepting into the Hindu fold — socially and in terms of religious practices — individuals or groups converted to other faiths, often in the times of some long-ago ancestor.
- [113](#) Shail Mayaram, *Resisting Regimes*, 1997, pp.64.
- [114](#) Ibid, pp.65.
- [115](#) Mayaram's work (Ibid, 1997, pp.66), details how Islamic organisations soon came forward to 'reclaim' the 'reconverted' Hindus, and states that the formation of a Muslim organization in Alwar was partly a reaction to the Arya Samaj's shuddhi movement, just as Tabligh and Tanzim had been at an all-India level.
- [116](#) Copland, *op.cit.*
- [117](#) Jey Singh attended the Delhi Durbar marking the coronation of Emperor Edward VII, and was on relatively good terms with the British hierarchy in the earlier part of his reign. In 1909 he was made a KCSI (Knight Commander of the Star of India), and in 1919 followed the GCSI (Grand Commander of the Star of India).

- [118](#) In 1941 Alwar state had 73% Hindus and 27% Muslims, of which the Meos were about 60%.
- [119](#) O' Dwyer left it on record that his settlement was at least fifty per cent higher than he would have dared impose in a British district.
- [120](#) Prior to this, the Anjuman and Hindu organisations had been building up their respective support-bases. Closure of Muslim *madrassa* schools too had become an issue between the Anjuman and the Alwar state.
- [121](#) Mayaram (*op.cit.*, 1997, pp.111), notes that "...mobilization on the question of *jamâ* (revenue), the role of the pal panchayats, and Meo chaudharis, the reverberation of drums through the countryside — all this brings out the continuity of 1932 with repeated Meo risings, such as in 1831, 1854, 1870 and 1894".
- [122](#) *Ibid*, 1997, pp.111-114.
- [123](#) Shail Mayaram has several publications on the Meo narratives.
- [124](#) Scholars querying the Meo uprising being agrarian, ask why this occurred in 1932, rather than earlier when the new land-revenue rates had been announced. In response, Mayaram (1997, pp.94-98), notes that the post-First World War boom was followed by a slump, with a fall in agricultural prices. The world-wide economic depression in 1929 saw a further steep downward trend. In Alwar, prices fell below those in neighbouring areas, adding to five years of crop-failures that had made the peasants indebted to trader-money lenders.
- [125](#) Later knighted, Sir Francis Wylie (1891-1970) became Resident at Jaipur in January 1935. He held many eminent posts, including Governor Central Provinces & Berar 1938-40 and Governor United Provinces 1945-47.
- [126](#) Among the leaders were Syed Mutalabi Faridabadi in Gurgaon; Dr K.M. Ashraf in Gurgaon, Mathura, Bharatpur and Agra, and Chaudhary Abdul Haye in Alwar.
- [127](#) The Meo Panchayat sought to promote education; improve the socio-economic conditions of Meos; and get redress for the community's grievances through constitutional means.
- [128](#) It appears more due to Alwar's handling of the agrarian issue and its attitude towards the Meos that their mutual tension came to be perceived as due to the communal issue. Muslim political organizations (Muslim League, Jamait-i-Tabligh-ul-Islam, All India Muslim Conference, etc.) were not slow in ensuring that the Meo voice got noticed in newspapers across British India and the princely states.
- [129](#) Mutalabi, M.N. Tandon, Abdul Haye, etc. joined the Bharatpur Kisan Sabha led by Kishan Lal Joshi.
- [130](#) For more on the issue, see Shail Mayaram's *Resisting Regimes*, Delhi, 1997; especially pages 162-220.
- [131](#) See. Shail Mayaram's *Resisting Regimes*, Delhi, 1997, pp.58.

- [132](#) For more on how this worked in practice in the Alwar and Bharatpur states, along with the activities of the Tablighi Jama'at and other Muslim organizations, and the overall effect for the people — including partition-violence, see Mayaram's *Resisting Regimes*, Delhi, 1997, particularly pp.59-75, 162-254.
- [133](#) Ibid, 1997, pp.65.
- [134](#) Ibid, pp.75-76.
- [135](#) Ibid, pp.76.
- [136](#) Ibid, pp.77.
- [137](#) Ibid, 1997, pp.70.
- [138](#) Cited in Ram Pande's *Agrarian Movement in Rajasthan*, Shodhak, Jaipur, 1974 [Reprinted 1988], pp.64.
- [139](#) Shail Mayaram (*op.cit.*, 1997, pp. 113), holds that "risings which are now being written about as 'peasant movements' were essentially caste movements in terms of their mobilization...The Meos were certainly the most cohesive of the local peasant castes, and they had had a tradition of resistance".
- [140](#) Ibid, 1997, pp.112.
- [141](#) Lothian has described Bharatpur's Meo 'unrest' in his book, *Kingdoms of Yesterday*. A decade later, in 1943, the Meos would again agitate against the increased land revenue being charged from them.
- [142](#) See Shail Mayaram's *Resisting Regimes*, Delhi, 1997.
- [143](#) Ibid, pp.185.
- [144](#) Ibid.
- [145](#) Ibid, pp.187.
- [146](#) Ibid.
- [147](#) Bundi exported oilseeds, cotton, spices, opium, hides etc., and imported cloth, sugar, rice and salt.
- [148](#) Later to be law minister in the April 1948 Union of Rajasthan, and to subsequently serve in various successive Cabinets of the post April 1949 Government of Rajasthan as a minister.
- [149](#) In 1902 Ganga Singh fixed his Privy Purse (at five per cent of the State's revenue) to meet personal and family needs.
- [150](#) See, K.M. Panikkar, *His Highness the Maharaja of Bikaner: A Biography*, Oxford University Press, London, 1937. Also Hooja's *Prince, Patriot, Parliamentarian: A Biography of Dr.*

Karni Singh — Maharaja of Bikaner, HarperCollins India, New Delhi, 1997.

[151](#) For peoples' movements in Rajputana, see, M.S.Jain (*Tourist History of Modern Rajasthan*, 1993, pp.152-188; *Rajasthan Suite Gazetteer*, Vol.2, 1995; Ram Pande *Agrarian Movement in Rajasthan*, Shodhak, 1974 [Reprinted 1988]; K.S. Saxena's *The Political Movements and Awakening in Rajasthan*, 1971.

[152](#) For details, among others, see Jain, 1993, pp.153-188.

[153](#) Ibid, pp.211.

[154](#) Singh, 1974, pp.276-277.

[155](#) Nationalist leaders like Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya were among Ganga Singh's close friends. The Bikaner ruler was a major patron as well as Chancellor of the Benares Hindu University too.

[156](#) See Hooja, *Crusader for Self-Rule: Tej Bahadur Sapru and the Indian National Movement*, 1999.

[157](#) See Pande, 1974 [rep. 1998], pp.72-77.

[158](#) In 1945-46 a sugar factory set up was at Ganganagar. The Sadul Textile Mills Ltd. too was established.

[159](#) Singh, 1974. pp.281-349.

[160](#) Cited in Hooja, 1997, pp.99.

[161](#) See, among others, Pande 1974 [rep.1998], pp. 72-73.

[162](#) See, among others, Pande 1974 [rep.1998], pp. 73-74.

[163](#) See Jain, 1993, pp.183.

[164](#) See Karni Singh's views in Hooja 1997.

[165](#) Ibid, pp.108.

[166](#) Karni Singh, 1974, pp.309.

[167](#) Singh, 1974, pp.312-313.

[168](#) Singh, 1974, pp.313-314.

[169](#) In Hooja, 1997, pp.104.

[170](#) Singh, 1974, pp.292-293.

[171](#) Singh, 1974, pp.294-296.

[172](#) Singh, 1974, pp.296-297.

- [173](#) For more on the interaction and relations between the British and the State of Jaipur, see Robert W. Stern's *The Cat and the Lion; Jaipur State in the British Raj*. E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1988.
- [174](#) During his stay in Britain, Maharaja Madho Singh II was given an honorary L.L.D by Edinburgh University.
- [175](#) See, K.S. Saxena's *The Political Movements and Awakening in Rajasthan*, New Delhi, 1971, pp.131-32.
- [176](#) Born on 21 August 1911, Mor Mukut Singh, second son of Thakur Sawai Singh of Isarda, gained the name Man Singh on his legal adoption by Maharaja Sawai Madho Singh II on 24 March 1921.
- [177](#) Bertrand Clancy (ICS) was president of the Council of State during 1929-32.
- [178](#) We shall not go into details here, but interested readers may see *Rajasthan District Gazetteers — Jaipur* (Ed. Savitri Gupta), Directorate of District Gazetteers, Jaipur, pp.472-477, and 550-552.
- [179](#) See Pande *op.cit.* pp.67-71; K.L. Sharma *op.cit.*, in P.C. Mathur (Ed) 1996, pp.116-138.
- [180](#) K.L. Sharma, *Ibid.*
- [181](#) Among other things, the *kisans* asked that Jats should get priority and encouragement in obtaining jobs in the Shekhawati *jagirs* and *thikanas*; enjoy privileges and social status equal to the Rajputs, and that all partisan orders and practices against the Jats should be abolished. See, Sharma, *Ibid.*, 1996, p. 127.
- [182](#) See, Barnett R. Rubin's *Feudal Revolt and State-Building: The 1938 Sikar Agitation in Jaipur State*, South Asian Publishers, New Delhi.
- [183](#) Ranbir Singh, 2001.
- [184](#) Sikar was resumed by the Government of India in 1954.
- [185](#) Vikram Deo Singh's daughter is married to Crown-Prince Paras of Nepal.
- [186](#) Sardar Singh's marriage to a daughter of Rana Singha Shamsher Jung Bahadur Rana ended in divorce. As they had no children, and Sardar Singh did not adopt an heir, the Khetri line formally ended with his death.
- [187](#) Mahatma Gandhi's support for homespun *khadi* led to the establishment of an All-India Charkha Sangh.
- [188](#) In Independent India, Maharani Gayatri Devi served as an elected Member of Parliament for a considerable time. The 175,000 votes polled in her favour in the 1962 Lok Sabha (Parliament) elections became a world record for an electoral majority!
- [189](#) An internationally renowned polo-player, Man Singh II later became India's ambassador to Spain.

- [190](#) Pratap was knighted by the British in 1885. ‘Sir P’ served in the Mohmand and Tirah campaigns, led the Jodhpur Lancers in the Allied Expeditionary Force against the Boxer Rebellion in China, and saw action in France and Egypt during the First World War. He was also an aide-de-camp to King Edward VII, the King-Emperor, and to his son and successor, King George V, and received an honorary degree from Cambridge in 1895.
- [191](#) British India’s Imperial currency was also introduced into Jodhpur during 1900.
- [192](#) The achievements of the Jodhpur troops in China, and in other, later, campaigns won them kudos.
- [193](#) For a glimpse of life at the contemporary Jodhpur court, and connected aspects, see *Reversing the Gaze: Amar Singh’s Diary, A Colonial Subject’s Narrative of Imperial India*, edited by Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and Lloyd I. Rudolph with Mohan Singh Kanota, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2000.
- [194](#) In accepting the charge of regent of Marwar, Sir Pratap abdicated his rights to the throne of Idar.
- [195](#) Chhitar Palace (Umaid Bhawan) took twelve years to build. It stands on an elevated rocky ground. The central dome with its double roof is a fine piece of modern architecture. It is now a hotel-cum-residence.
- [196](#) See, K.S. Saxena, *State Politics in Rajasthan*, Aalekh Pub., Jaipur, 1996, pp. 17.
- [197](#) The political parties of British India tacitly (and sometimes openly) encouraged popular movements in the princely states. On 10 March 1936, Jawaharlal Nehru visited Jodhpur to apprise himself of the political situation in Marwar state, and addressed a public meeting. Subhash Chandra Bose, while travelling from London to Calcutta, too stopped briefly at Jodhpur. The visit was welcomed by Marwar’s activists.
- [198](#) In May 1940 Jai Narain Vyas informed Sir Donald Field, Prime Minister of Jodhpur State, that “every Marwari is loyal...to the person and throne of His Highness”. (See Jai Narain Vyas Papers, Nehru Memorial Museum & Library, New Delhi.).
- [199](#) In March 1949, Marwar state had the largest textile unit in Rajasthan — the Maharaja Sri Umaid Mills Ltd., established in the 1940s at Pali by the Bangurs. It had 442 looms, 19000 spindles, and 2500 workers.
- [200](#) Pande ‘A Brief Sketch of the History of Karauli State’, *Shodhak*, Vol.31.C.93, September-December 2002, pp.290.
- [201](#) It meant more interaction with the world outside, and like his contemporaries, Sirohi’s ruler travelled to the Coronation *Durbar*, to Simla to meet the Viceroy, on pilgrimages, to Bombay, and even overseas.
- [202](#) B. Hooja, 1996, pp.53.
- [203](#) Ibid.
- [204](#) Ibid, pp.53-54.

[205](#) Ibid.

[206](#) Ibid, pp.54-55.

[207](#) Ibid, pp.55.

[208](#) For details, see B. Hooja, 1996, pp.65-66.

[209](#) B. Hooja, 1996, pp. 56.

[210](#) Ibid.

[211](#) Most citizens of Tonk were agriculturists. Wheat, *jowar*, gram, maize, cotton and poppy were grown.

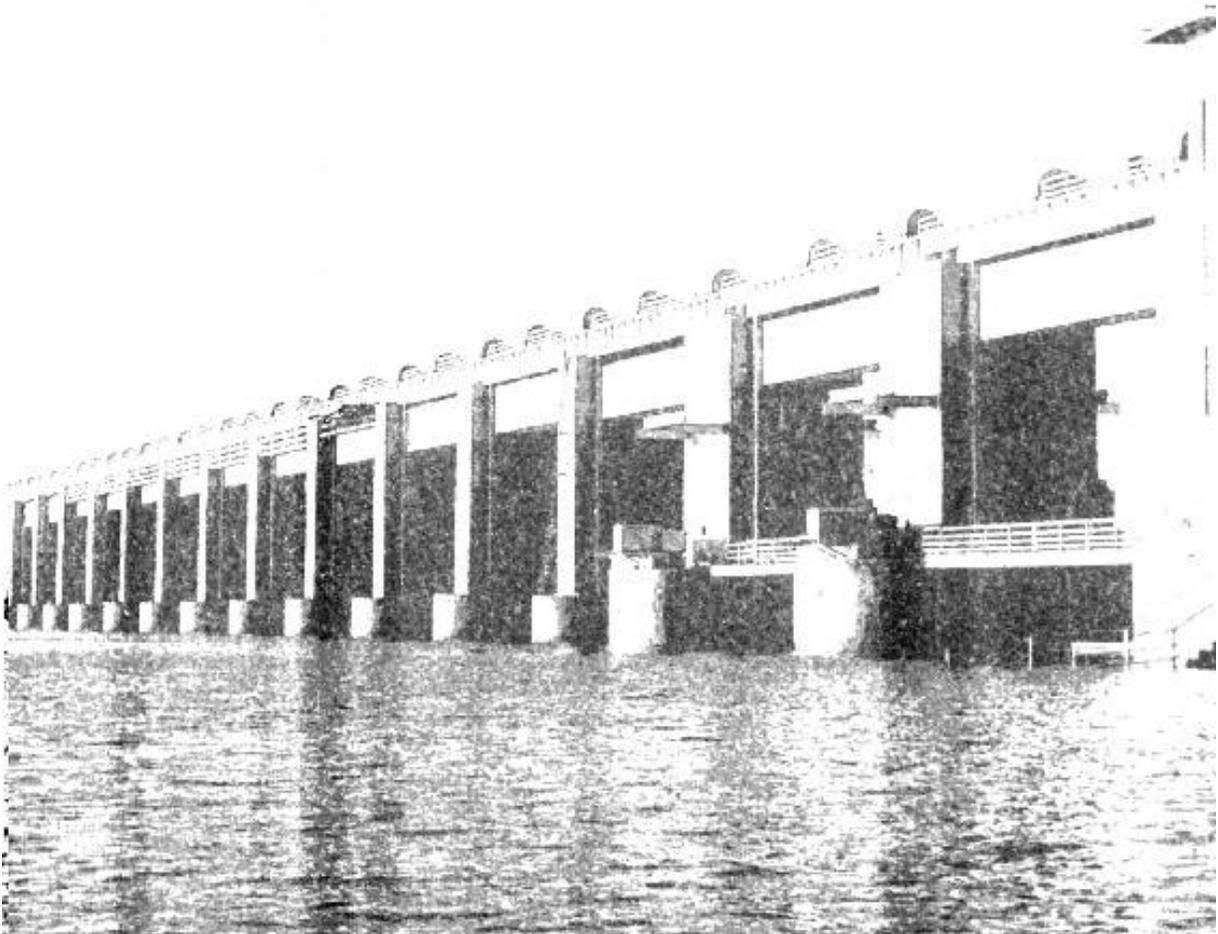
[212](#) In 1945 an institute for women's education was set up at Hatundi. It is now a Teachers' Training College.

[213](#) After India's Second General Elections in 1957, he became Rajasthan's finance minister, and in 1962 the state's education minister. He later resigned from office because of failing health and lived at Hatundi, busy with education-related and social work, and his writing, till his death in August 1972. Author of many books and translations, he was awarded a *Padma Bhushan* in 1966.

SECTION
EIGHT



**A NEW AWAKENING:
THE MAKING OF PRESENT-DAY RAJASTHAN**



INTRODUCTION



AT THE TIME OF INDIA'S INDEPENDENCE ON 15 AUGUST 1947, THE region of 'Rajputana' comprised not only the various princely states and chiefships already referred to, but also the Government of India's centrally administrated province of Ajmer-Merwara. The princely states included Udaipur (Mewar), Jaipur (Dhoondhar), Jodhpur (Marwar), Bikaner, Jaisalmer, Kota, Bundi, Tonk, Jhalawar, Kishangarh, Alwar, Bharatpur, Sirohi, Dholpur, Karauli, Dungarpur, Banswara, Pratapgarh-Deoliya and Shahpura, and the chiefships of Kushalgarh and Lawa. Gradually these princely states and chiefships — and eventually the province of Ajmer — were integrated to form a viable and resourceful state from the point of view of administrative and development-related considerations. Sirohi changed hands between Bombay Presidency and Rajputana, before finally becoming part of modern Rajasthan. Most of the other erstwhile 'Rajputana Agency' states became part of the new Indian state of Rajasthan. The integration of these states to form today's 'Rajasthan' took place in seven stages between March 1948 and November 1956¹. The new state of Rajasthan was divided into districts for administrative convenience. (These districts currently number thirty-two in all).

The physical integration of the princely states required the concerned rulers to affix their signatures on fresh relevant covenants, which was achieved in due course. Significantly though, the main obstacle to any scheme of merger was not so much the rulers — who, in any case found themselves driven to the wall when integration gathered pace — as some of the *jagirdars* of the different princely states. These feudatories had long

enjoyed traditional revenue-collection and other rights over their holdings. They identified with certain tracts as lands where their ancestors had lived and died; they were part of a political system and process that was tested and familiar; and they acknowledged certain established allegiances to their ruler and land. In contrast, the new world that was being placed before them appeared uncertain and uncharted!

These *jagirdars* and *thakurs* had little overt say in the matter, though, just as the 'ordinary' citizens of the states too did not, as the authority and right to sign the covenants vested solely with the rulers. However, the *jagirdars* made their opinions known very vociferously in more than one princely state and at more than one large gathering. For example, at a session of the Kshatriya Parishad at Jodhpur, where the overall tone was anti-merger, the *thakur* of Nimbaj, Ummed Singh, asked the people to decide whether the merger of Jodhpur into another unit would be beneficial or detrimental to them. Anti-merger demonstrations were reported from some parts of Jodhpur state. On 30 May 1948, in which arms were flourished in the course of an anti-merger procession at Pali, one of the proposals re-iterated a decision not to join the proposed Rajasthan Union. In a like manner, a meeting organised jointly by the Kisan Sabha and Bhils of Mewar at Udaipur's Gulab Bagh on 26 July 1948, where the gathering included the *sarpanch* and *mukhiyas* of 5,000 villages, objections were expressed to the merger of Udaipur into a Rajasthan Union². The meeting also demanded the dissolution of Mewar state's Council of Ministers.

Given the attitude taken by the *jagirdars* (who were mostly Rajputs), and given the broad general perception that they were opposed to the viewpoints of the local *praja mandals/parishads*, additional misunderstandings and the ploys of vested interests sometimes led to the matter taking the appearance of a Rajput v/s non-Rajput issue. (For example, in Marwar an anti-Rajput, pro-peasant Jat movement gained strength under Baldevram Mirdha, a former Marwar state superintendent of police and subsequently an acknowledged popular leader for agrarian communities of the region). In Mewar, successful opposition to the Mewar Kshatriya Parishad was led by people like Jayachandra Vidyalankar and his associates. In spite of such protests and problems, the process of integration went ahead, accompanied by many kinds of changes and transformations

(as noted in this chapter), leading to the creation of the contemporary state of Rajasthan.

TOWARDS THE 'INTEGRATION' OF RAJPUTANA'S PRINCELY STATES

From 15 August 1947 the new Government of India took on the task of administering its share of erstwhile British Indian provinces, as well as the princely states and chiefships that had signed individual 'Instruments of Accession' handing over defence, communications and foreign relations to the new nation-state of India. At the time, it was widely believed that the larger and more viable princely states would retain their separate identity, while smaller less viable units would eventually either merge together or join adjacent (formerly British Indian) provinces. Almost immediately thereafter, a scenario of rival claims for 'seniority', indecision and uncertainty, some intrigue, and some attempts at re-iteration of independence or sovereignty by certain princely states led the Government of India to speed up the process of amalgamating or merging the smaller and 'unviable' Indian princely states into new viable combination, or unions.

The vigorous policy of the Home Minister and Minister for States, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, in this matter was ably seconded by the Government's Secretary of the latter department, V.P. Menon³. The logic given was that the people of the Indian states desired the same measure of freedom and democratic rights etc. as enjoyed by the people in provinces and centrally administered parts of the country. Furthermore, the rulers of the smaller 'non-viable' states were not in a position to bring about the desired administrative reforms for want of resources. Consequently, it was decided to group them into sizeable units by merging them with either the neighbouring provinces, or converting them into centrally administered areas. In time, this process was extended to encompass the major states too, by creating new 'viable units' through the formation of unions of states.

Writing about it in later years, Dr. Karni Singh of Bikaner viewed this process as “...going back upon the solemn assurances given at the time the accession of the States was sought...The process of integration started avowedly with the consent of the princes, but a consent which circumstances did not permit them to withhold...Even the eighteen States which the Government of India had at first declared as those satisfying the conditions as viable units of the Indian Union and whose names were listed in the relevant schedule of the Draft Constitution placed before the Constituent Assembly, ultimately lost their separate entity as the process of integration and merger progressed and in good time before the Constitution was adopted. Bikaner State was among these eighteen viable States”⁴.

The process of integration had begun with the rulers of the Chhattisgarh and Orissa states ceding to the Dominion Government full and exclusive authority, jurisdiction and powers for and in relation to the governance of their States by agreements signed on 14 December 1947 and subsequent dates. At a conference attended by several Indian rulers and by Lord Mountbatten on 7 January 1948, V.P. Menon, Secretary in the Government of India's States Department, assured the princes present that the principle of merger would not be applied to those states which had individual representatives in the Constituent Assembly.

In the opinion of Karni Singh⁵, “In order to appreciate this second phase of wiping off the entity of Indian States in the name of unification of India it is necessary to...examine the workings of the minds of those at the helm of affairs in the States Department. When Sardar Patel was sceptical about the rulers of the Indian States agreeing to accede to the Indian Union and expressed his doubts about the same to V.P. Menon, he at once pointed out that the rulers could not refuse to accede. Menon's contention was that the lapse of paramountcy was a blessing in disguise for India because with it ended the many privileges which the princes enjoyed under the various treaties and engagements and which carried with them certain obligations which they would have been obliged to honour if paramountcy had been transferred to them. According to him they were now free. He even told the Sardar that in case of political or communal agitation in the States or in case of the people rising up and demanding freedom or to join India or in case of popular agitation beginning to threaten the rule and even the lives of the

rulers, who else would they have to look up to for protection other than the Indian Government. He said that it was now their turn to say how the princes behaved. And the Sardar was not slow to catch the point, which in plainer words meant that any of these conditions could be created to achieve the desired end. And instances are not wanting..”

“...Thus, when soon after the States had acceded to the Indian Union, in respect of the three subjects of common concern, namely, Defence, Foreign Affairs, and Communications, the curtain was lifted for the second act of complete merger of over five hundred States. A lurking doubt was created in the minds of the people if the builders of free India were completely honest with the rulers and whether they did not actually negotiate accession as a first step with mental reservations to bring about total integration a little later on. The argument that the smaller States could not have a high administrative efficiency as required by the people after Independence, and hence that there should be a move to merge the smaller States into groups, or with the adjoining provinces, or into centrally administered areas, was understandable. In fact Maharaja Sadul Singh had advocated the formation of sizeable units of States much earlier so that they could keep themselves abreast with administrative reforms... The question of the merger of larger viable units, however, was a different matter”.

“The two issues of accession and merger should never be confused. Accession of the States meant bringing into India under one flag nearly 1/3rd more of India at a time when a third force was possible and the Centre was somewhat weak due to transfer of power from British to Indian hands and due to the upheaval caused by partition. Maharaja Sadul Singh’s strong lead to bring about accession was thus a most patriotic move. The merger issue, however, was an entirely different proposition as this envisaged boundary changes within the country with the head of State from a ruler changing over to a life-Rajpramukh. In fact the question of monarchical governments continuing as constitutional heads had been accepted in principle subject to the people’s approval by all the Freedom fighter leaders including Gandhiji, Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel” [6](#)

Karni Singh later expressed criticism “not to the merger of the States themselves, but to the way in which it was brought about after assurances to

the contrary given *ad lib* by the top-most leaders of India...Forcing of merger on the people of the States without taking their opinion was hardly democratic. It would have been much better had the Government of India at the time of the accession of the States to the Indian Union declared their policy that the ultimate merger of the States would be their goal, immediately or in progressive stages”⁷.

THE PROCESS AND STAGES OF INTEGRATION IN RAJASTHAN

According to the terms of the policy pronouncement by the Government of India, the ruling ‘princes and chiefs’ of the Indian states had full power to sign covenants of mutual unions for creating larger viable units. (Earlier too it had been the rulers who had made the choice about joining either of the two dominions of India and Pakistan). Their ‘subjects’ or the local people, even those who had organised and led the local praja parishad/mandals or other organisations within different states, generally had nothing to do with such signing of covenants except to a marginal extent in states where some of the local leaders had been co-opted or nominated as ‘popular’ ministers in the administration. In fact, until the new constitutional set-up came into being, there was an *ad hoc*-ism in the process of transition from princely to popular rule; in terms of political activities and in respect of the various legislative and administrative measures. A fully democratic or representative government had not yet appeared, and ‘popular’ ministers were handpicked and nominated or supported by the Congress high command.

Rajputana’s integration was completed in several stages. The Government of India’s States’ Ministry had originally stated that only states with populations more than one million and annual income over rupees ten million would be allowed to maintain their individual identities. However, as the process of integration gathered pace, the States’ Ministry reversed its earlier decision and decided that no princely state could be allowed to maintain its identity not withstanding its size, income or population.

There were five main stages in the integration of the various states of Rajputana into present-day Rajasthan. To begin with, the states of Alwar, Bharatpur, Dholpur and Karauli⁸, situated in the eastern portion of Rajputana combined their territories together, on the advice of the Government of India's Ministry of States, into a single unit with a common executive, legislature and judiciary. This was called the Matsya Union, or the United State of Matsya Union. (The significance of the name becomes apparent when we recall that this was the name of a kingdom situated in this area during early historic times).

The covenant regarding this union was signed by the rulers of the four concerned states and the Government of India on 28 February 1948. The Matsya Union was formally inaugurated on 18 March 1948, by an Indian minister of Cabinet rank N.V. Gadgil. Alwar was designated the capital of this new Matsya Union. The ruler of Dholpur became the 'Rajpramukh' or chief of this Union of four erstwhile states, and the Maharaja of Alwar the 'Upa-Rajpramukh'. Shobha Ram, a senior peoples' movement leader from Alwar state, became the prime minister. The joint territory of the new union covered an area of 7,589 square miles, a population of 18,37,994 and revenue of Rs. 1,83,000. Matsya Union was divided into three districts, eight sub-divisions, twenty-three *tehsils* and twelve *sub-tehsils*.

While the Matsya Union was being formed, the rulers of Kota (as Kotah is now spelt), Dungarpur and Jhalawar had taken initiative towards the formation of another union of regional states. They met at the States' Ministry in Delhi on 3 March 1948, and welcomed a suggestion that Udaipur State should also be invited to join. However, S.V. Ramamurthy, the then *dewan* of Udaipur suggested the alternative that the other states merge into Udaipur. Not only was the suggestion unacceptable and unpalatable to the other rulers, but even India's States Ministry made it clear that they would not countenance any single state swallowing up its smaller neighbours.

Instead, the rulers of Bundi, Kotah, Jhalawar, Dungarpur, Banswara (including Kushalgarh), Pratapgarh, Kishangarh, Tonk, Shahpura and Lawa decided to come together in a union⁹. This mutual alliance was to be inaugurated on 25 March 1948 at Kotah. This 'Rajasthan Union' welded

together a population of about twenty-four lakhs across 17,000 sq miles of territory, with approximate joint revenue of Rs. two crores. The ruler of Kotah was recognised as the Rajpramukh, and Kotah as the new Rajasthan Union's capital. The rulers of Bundi and Dungarpur were designated as the two Upa-Rajpramukhs, and Gokul Lal Asawa as the prime minister of this union.

A Constituent Assembly was visualised for this union, with twenty-four elected representatives, on the basis of one seat for every one lakh of people. To safeguard the interests of the land-owning jagirdars etc., the Rajpramukh was authorised to nominate four additional representatives to the Assembly. These clauses were incorporated in the covenant signed by the concerned states.

Meanwhile, negotiations between the Government of India and the state of Udaipur had been taking place, and on 23 March 1948, two days before the scheduled 25 March inauguration of this union, Udaipur informed the States Ministry that it too was willing to come into the union. As it was too late to put off the inauguration of the Rajasthan Union, that ceremony was duly held at Kotah as per schedule, even as fuller discussions commenced between Udaipur and the Ministry, including on issues like the position and future status of the Maharana of Udaipur, an appropriate privy purse, and the location of a capital for the proposed new union. The other covenanting states were consulted regularly, and it was eventually agreed that the Rajasthan Union should be re-constituted to include Udaipur, and the previous covenant superseded by a fresh one, allowing for the inclusion of Udaipur as a covenanting state of the proposed new union.

The third stage in the formation of contemporary Rajasthan was thus entered into. The concerned rulers met and elected the incumbent Maharana of Udaipur (Bhagwat Singh [ascended *gaddi* in 1955, d. 1984]), as the Rajpramukh-for-life of the union, though it was made clear that the privilege would not be extended to the Maharana's successors. The Maharao of Kotah, who was the Rajpramukh of what was referred to as the 'Former Rajasthan Union', agreed to give up his position as Rajpramukh in favour of the Udaipur ruler, and his brother-princes agreed that he should

become the senior Upa-Rajpramukh. The rulers of Bundi and Dungarpur were confirmed as joint junior Upa-Rajpramukhs of the proposed union.

After intense negotiations, it was further settled that the capital of the proposed union would be Udaipur. Since the previous Rajasthan Union had vested this honour with the city of Kota, it was decided that the legislature of the new union would hold at least one session each year at Kota. By this means it was sought to compensate Kota for the loss of 'honour' in being deprived of its status as the short-lived capital of the former Rajasthan Union. It was further decided that units of Kota's State Forces and other institutions and departments that could conveniently continue to remain at Kota be retained there. In addition, it was confirmed that when the proposed union settled the boundaries of its new administrative divisions and districts, one division level headquarter under the charge of a commissioner would be based at the city of Kota.

This new union was inaugurated on 18 April 1948, by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India. It was called the United State of Rajasthan, and its territory encompassed a total of 29,977 sq miles, with a joint population of 42, 60,918, and total combined revenue of rupees three hundred and sixteen lakhs. A Cabinet consisting of representatives from the covenanting states took office, with Manikya Lal Verma¹⁰ as the prime minister (chief minister) of this union. That May, at a summit meeting called at Delhi, the Rajpramukhs/Governors of Rajasthan, Madhya Bharat, Saurashtra, Vindhya Pradesh and Matsya jointly signed new instruments giving the Indian Government the power to pass laws in respect of all matters falling within the federal and concurrent legislative lists included in the Seventh Schedule of the 'Government of India Act, 1935'.

Following the formation of the United State of Rajasthan, only four erstwhile Rajputana states still remained outside this new union. These were the states of Jaipur, Jodhpur, Bikaner and Jaisalmer. (Previous boundary adjustments had already placed Idar, Palanpur, etc. outside the new Rajasthan). All were old established major states, and Jaipur, Jodhpur and Bikaner came into the category of what the Government of India had defined as 'viable states'. (In the case of Jaisalmer, while it was relatively undeveloped, it had a very vast territory, inhabited by a small population,

spread over five to six hundred villages or hamlets, and limited urbanisation. Its traditional links with the hinterland stretched up to the Indus River, which gave support to pastoral and trading activities in the past. The partition of the subcontinent sundered these traditional ties and geographical trade and migratory animal routes. This had happened much more in the case of Jaisalmer than the other states like Bikaner and Jodhpur).

The Government of India's Ministry of States soon initiated negotiations for the merger of these major and viable states too. The negotiations were protracted, several meetings took place jointly and severally between the rulers, along with their advisors and local popular leaders, and representatives of the Ministry of States led by V.P. Menon, as well as with representatives of the unions already in place within Rajasthan, into which these four states were to be merged.

The four concerned rulers agreed to join a Greater Rajasthan Union. On 14 January 1949 Sardar Patel announced at a public meeting at Udaipur that the rulers of Jaipur, Jodhpur and Bikaner had agreed in principle to integration. It was agreed that the Maharana of Udaipur would become the Maharajpramukh-for-life of the new union, with the Maharaja of Jaipur becoming the Rajpramukh of the union, also for life. The rulers of Jodhpur and Kota were to be designated as senior Upa-Rajpramukhs, and those of Bundi and Dungarpur as the junior Upa-Rajpramukhs, for a period of five years. It was also agreed that the capital of this Greater Rajasthan Union — or United State of Greater Rajasthan — was to be the city of Jaipur.

A provision was included in the fresh covenant to which all the states joining the Greater Rajasthan Union became signatories, by which the Rajpramukh executed a fresh Instrument of Accession, accepting all the subjects in both the Federal and Concurrent Lists for legislation by the Dominion Legislature, except the entries relating to taxation and duties¹¹. The rulers of the states signing the covenant were given one vote each in the election of the Rajpramukh and Upa-Rajpramukhs. Later, however, it was decided that each member of the Council of Rulers should have a number of votes equal to the number of per lakh population of their respective states. This covenant also included a clause stating that the

Rajpramukh and the Council of Ministers were to function under the general control of, and comply with, such particular directions as might from time to time be given by Government of India until the constitution framed by the Constituent Assembly came into operation. The rulers readily accepted the proposal, but the 'popular leaders' (who had headed peoples' movements for 'responsible government' in various states) needed some persuasion by the Government of India.

Thus, the merger of the states of Jaipur, Jodhpur, Bikaner and Jaisalmer into the United State of Rajasthan took place, and collectively the new union of states became known as the United State of Greater Rajasthan. It was formally inaugurated on 30 March 1949 by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. The first Cabinet of the United State of Greater Rajasthan was formed on 7 April 1949, with Hiralal Shastri as the chief minister. On the same day (7 April 1949), Bikaner state was formally integrated into the United State of Rajasthan, and the administration of the state of Bikaner was handed over to the new Government of Rajasthan¹².

Matsya Union, which had been formed by Alwar, Bharatpur, Dholpur and Karauli in March 1948, was still outside the United State of Greater Rajasthan. The Government of India approached this Union to know whether it wanted to be merged with the United State of Greater Rajasthan, or with the United Provinces. A fresh covenant was signed by the four rulers of the states of the Matsya Union on 10th May 1949, by which they abrogated their previous covenant, and agreed to the merger of Matsya Union into Greater Rajasthan. On the part of the United State of Greater Rajasthan, the covenant was signed by the Rajpramukh of Greater Rajasthan. On 15 May 1949, the administration of the Matsya Union was formally transferred to the Greater Rajasthan union, thereby creating — with some exceptions and some subsequent border adjustments — the boundaries of the modern-day state of Rajasthan that we are today familiar with. The exceptions related to the princely state of Sirohi, the previously British administered Ajmer-Merwara area, and some small boundary adjustments regarding parts of Sirohi, Tonk, etc., on which we shall focus in due course.

For a while, the administration of the covenanting units was carried on by five Administrators appointed by the Rajpramukh. They were assisted by Unit Secretaries and existing heads of departments. Deputy Administrators were also appointed for Jaipur and Jaisalmer. The five administrators were replaced on 15 August 1949 by divisional commissioners, following a decision to constitute five commissioner divisions and district units for administrative purposes. The new state of Rajasthan's five territorial divisions were Bikaner, Jodhpur, Kota, Udaipur and Jaipur, each headed by a divisional commissioner. These five divisions comprised a total of twenty-four districts, and previously existing districts were abolished with effect from 15 October 1949. So too were the Unit Secretariats. Each commissioner was assisted by an additional commissioner. Each district was placed under the administrative control of a collector-cum-district magistrate. Below each collector-cum-district magistrate were various officers like sub-divisional officers (SDO), *tehsildars*, etc. These new Divisions encompassed more than one former princely state. This, the erstwhile states of Mewar, Dungarpur, Banswara, Pratapgarh and Shahpura, along with the former Nimbahera *pargana* of erstwhile Tonk state became one Division, with Udaipur as the headquarters. The new districts of Barmer, Jalore, Nagaur and Pali were carved out of tracts previously under erstwhile Bikaner and Jodhpur states, while the former princely state of Jaisalmer now became a single district.

Reference has been made above to Sirohi state. Sirohi had been transferred, on the basis of language, to the Western India and Gujarat States' Agency in February 1948. In March 1948, when the individual states of the Gujarat Agency merged with the province of Bombay, the issue regarding the placement of Sirohi was again taken up. In fact, when the state of Danta (formerly a part of Rajputana Agency) was merged with Bombay, there was a strong reaction, and it was apprehended that Sirohi state too would soon be handed over to Bombay. At the time, the choice was between Sirohi merging with either Bombay or Rajasthan. Under an agreement signed by Sirohi's Maharani Regent on 8 November 1948, Sirohi was taken over as a centrally administered area of the Government of India temporarily.

On 5 January 1949, Sirohi's administration was handed over, on behalf of the Government of India, to the Government of Bombay. Meanwhile, the newly formed states of Rajasthan and Gujarat both put forth demands, spear-headed by popular leaders, for the inclusion of Sirohi in their respective units. Ultimately, the state of Sirohi was divided between Rajasthan and Bombay. On 25 January 1950, erstwhile Sirohi state's Abu Road and the Delwara *tehsils* (with their eighty-nine villages) merged with Bombay, to become part of Bombay State's Banaskantha district, and the remainder came into Rajasthan. Rajasthan's portion of Sirohi became a district, with its headquarters at Sirohi town, within Jodhpur division. With the inclusion of Sirohi to the United State of Rajasthan, the total number of districts and subdivisions in the state became twenty-five and seventy-eight respectively.

Thereafter, with effect from 26 January 1950 the United State of Rajasthan officially came to be called 'Rajasthan'. Rajasthan was categorised as a 'Part B State' under India's Constitution, while Ajmer, previously a British India province administered by a Chief Commissioner, was categorised as a 'Part C State'. Some further boundary changes lay in the future.

In April 1951, in the wake of continued protests about this division of Sirohi, the Government of India stated that the issue would be re-considered after the forthcoming First General Elections of India. The Central Government also asked the two provincial governments of Rajasthan and Bombay to submit their opinions following the inauguration of their respective new legislatures and elected governments. Both sides constituted committees and compiled documents, besides ascertaining public opinion. (In Rajasthan, the state's Chief Minister convened a committee of historians and scholars under Muni Shri Jinvijay in September 1952 to compile historical, social, cultural, linguistic, economic etc. material about the Abu area). The matter was referred to the 'States' Reorganisation Commission', which was established in 1953 to examine the question of the reorganisation of the states of the Indian Union. The States Reorganisation Commission, which submitted its report in 1955, ruled in favour of Rajasthan on the matter of Sirohi's placement.

The commission also needed to decide if Bharatpur and Alwar should, on linguistic grounds, become part of either a future Greater Delhi or a Braj Pradesh. The commission did not recommend this, ruling that there had not been any appreciable change in public opinion since the Shankerrao Deo Committee's consideration of the question in 1949 that would justify altering the *status quo* as far as Bharatpur and Alwar were concerned.

In 1956, in the wake of the recommendations of the Reorganisation Commission and the ensuing States Reorganisation Act, the Abu and Delwara portions of erstwhile Sirohi that had been previously merged into Bombay, and certain other enclaves of erstwhile Jhalawar and Tonk states — like Sunel, 'Tappa, Sironj etc. — were exchanged and adjusted into the state of Rajasthan, on 1 November 1956. Simultaneously, Ajmer-Merwara too was merged into Rajasthan to give it its present-day form.

With the integration of the majority of the princely states of Rajputana into modern-day Rajasthan (and the remaining, like Palanpur, and Idar, into other new units), a major chapter closed on the long individual dynastic histories of various local kingdoms. It was the end of an era; an end, in many cases, of many centuries of hereditary rule, just as it was also the beginning of a new age, in which popularly elected governance was to play a major role¹³. By and large, the erstwhile rulers and their *sardars* and senior *jagirdars* etc. managed to carve out a passage for 'honourable' retreat from their former courts and positions of power to a new guaranteed status of dignity and privileges, while at the same time adjusting themselves in the changing situation.

The Instruments of Merger and the Covenants, which transferred power from the individual rulers of each of the concerned princely states, also detailed the rights, privileges, etc. fixed for them and their successors. In addition, these provided for the retention of their private properties by the princes, and guaranteed to them privy purses (which would become smaller in amount with each passing generation), and succession to their *gaddis*. (These rights, privileges, titles and privy purses would finally be abolished in December 1971, through the 26th Constitutional Amendment

passed by India's Parliament, which was to sweep away the last vestiges of an old system¹⁴).

THE NEW POLITICAL ADMINISTRATION OF RAJASTHAN

As already noted, on 7 April 1949, Hira Lal Shastri, a Praja Mandal leader from Jaipur, became Chief Minister of the newly integrated greater union of contemporary Rajasthan. Just over a month later, following the merger of the Matsya Union in mid-May 1949, Matsya Union's chief minister, Shobha Ram, was included into the Shastri-led Cabinet.

The new political system was to see difficult balancing acts among the new democratic political masters of Rajasthan, as representatives from many erstwhile individual states of Rajputana were adjusted in ministerial berths, or jostled each other for better positions in the power-stakes over the next few years, as they vied to further their separate vested and often parochial interests. It may be noted here that soon after Independence the Congress Party had officially entered the Rajputana area, and most of the various Praja Mandals and Parishads and some other popular organisations like the *Rajasthan Seva Sangh* had merged to form the Rajasthan Pradesh Congress¹⁵. However, even as the physical integration of the princely states of Rajputana commenced, there was little immediate emotional integration of the people of various princely states, and much less, any rapport among those who had provided popular leadership to the political movements within these states.

For, there were many individuals who had played important roles in the popular movements within different Rajputana states previously. Some of them had held posts of prime ministers and chief ministers in 'popular' ministries of various states in the late 1940s. Others had ambitions to do so in the new free Rajasthan, and many had backing from different individuals at the Centre. In any case, adjustments and area-representations became a vital issue, particularly as the integration of states had been as hurried at the organisational and ground-level for regional 'popular' functionaries and political workers as it had for the rulers, and the new identity of 'Rajasthan'

was not the result of a phased and natural development, but one resulting from external pressures to amalgamate as fast as possible.

While the final phases of the integration process was being worked out, Hiralal Shastri's Interim Ministry remained in office rather precariously for about a year and eight months. On 5 January 1951, the Shastri-led ministry resigned, following the Congress party voting a motion of no confidence against it. It was succeeded by a fresh one, which was headed by an ICS officer, C.S. Venkatachar, as Chief Minister, and included Bhola Nath Jha, also of the ICS as a Minister. As L.M. Eshwar noted rather acidly, "...politicians coming together to form a generally acceptable and stable ministry was a problem. The Centre thought it wise to give the warring politicians a holiday... [and a]...bureaucratic team ruled the State for 91 days"¹⁶.

In a short span of time, this 'ICS Ministry' brought cohesion in the administration. It also led to a re-alignment among politicians, and after repeated representations by Congress leaders, Nehru agreed to the replacement of the ICS men by a Congress ministry. Jai Narain Vyas, who had not found a berth previously in the Shastri ministry, was made the leader of the new ministry, which included Mohanlal Sukhadia, Jugal Kishore Chaturvedi and Narottam Lal Joshi (later the first ever Speaker of the one hundred and sixty member Rajasthan Vidhan Sabha), and came into being on 26 April 1951.

However, even as the tasks of administrative, judicial, financial etc. integration continued, it became apparent that "...the era of political instability was not over. Vyas was unable to control all the groups in the Congress, groups claiming to represent various regions... although the ministry was fairly broad-based. ...Somehow, the Vyas ministry carried on until the first General Elections in 1952"¹⁷. By this time, the Constitution of India had conferred full citizenship rights to the people of Rajasthan, and their freedom and fundamental rights were guaranteed, in common with all other Indian citizens. Thus assured, they faced the first General Elections of India on the basis of adult franchise. The elections were for both the Central Legislature as well as for Rajasthan's State Legislature.

The run-up to the first General Elections had also seen the emergence of various electoral groups. One of these was the Rajasthan Pradesh (or State) Congress — the local affiliate of the Indian National Congress — which had by then absorbed into its growing fold the various units of Praja Mandals/Parishad that had once been linked with the All India States People Conference. Among the various other political parties or groupings that entered the electoral arena were the Ram Rajya Parishad, Jan Sangh, Hindu Maha Sabha, Krishikar Lok Party, Kisan Mazdoor Federation, Kisan Janta Party, Sectioned Castes Federation, the Socialist Party, Communist Party and the Forward Bloc. There were also several independent candidates, not associated with any political organisation. The elections gave the Congress a majority — albeit a slender majority — in the State's Vidhan Sabha (Legislative Assembly).

Many of the erstwhile rulers and their *sardars* and senior *jagirdars* etc. also came forward to actively participate in the electoral process when the first ever General Elections based on adult franchise were held in 1952 for the Parliamentary as well as State Legislative bodies. For example, Maharaja Hanwant Singh of Jodhpur won his electoral seat, but died in an air-crash, even as the news of his victory was circulating across Jodhpur. Maharaja Karni Singh of Bikaner won a parliamentary seat, as did numerous other Maharajas and other close members or ruling families. Rajasthan's Vidhan Sabha too had a marked and fairly strong presence of the 'Old Guard' of rulers, *sardars* and *jagirdars* etc. in its first-ever elected Legislative Assembly. Among them were Raja Man Singh (Weir constituency), Maharaj Kumar Brijendra Pal (Karauli constituency), Rajadhiraj Amar Singh (Shahpura constituency), Raja Himmat Singh (Phalodi constituency), Maharawal Sangram Singh (Amber-B constituency), Kunwar Jaswant Singh (Bikaner constituency), Rao Raja Sardar Singh (Uniara constituency), and Major Apji Raghuraj Singh (Kishanganj constituency), besides many others. The Ram Rajya Parishad was one of the political organisations that gained adherents from the former 'ruling forces' and this organisation gained twenty-four seats in the 1952 State Legislative Assembly elections. It continued to win seats till the 1967 elections.

The incumbent Chief Minister, Jai Narain Vyas was defeated in the elections from both the seats on which he contested! Interestingly, people like Vijay Singh Pathik were not given a 'ticket' by the Congress. Pathik contested as an Independent candidate and lost. Some of the 'popular' leaders like Gokul Lal Asawa, Jugal Kishore Chaturvedi and Pandit Abhinahari also lost, while Hira Lal Shastri, Manikya Lal Verma, Gokul Bhai Bhatt and Raj Bahadur did not stand for elections. No woman won a seat in the 1952 State Legislature elections (though some contested elections), but in a by-election held in November 1953 Yashoda Devi won her seat on the Praja Socialist Party ticket.

In the interim, on 3 March 1952, Vyas's lieutenant, Tikaram Paliwal took over as Chief Minister, with a fresh Cabinet. Guiding the affairs of the ministry from outside, Vyas waited for an opportune moment to return to power. In October that year he was declared successful in a by-election and on 1 November 1952 Paliwal gave up the Chief Minister's post to Vyas. Vyas made Paliwal his Deputy Chief Minister, and reconstituted the Ministry. Instability continued to haunt the Vyas ministry, though, especially when the Chief Minister and his deputy fell out. Paliwal quit the ministry on 15 April 1953 — as had some others — but re-joined it on 8 January 1954. Even after the First Five-Year Plan began, a major part of Vyas's time and energy was consumed in settling intra-party quarrels and intra-Cabinet differences. After two years of Vyas's leadership, the Congress party elected Mohanlal Sukhadia in his place.

Sukhadia was sworn in as Chief Minister of Rajasthan on 13 November 1954. The Cabinet of the thirty-eight-year old Sukhadia, who was the youngest Chief Minister of any state in India at that time, saw women take high political office for the first time in modern Rajasthan with Kamla (Beniwal) becoming a deputy minister¹⁸. Pressing economic and administrative problems began receiving due attention. Meanwhile, a dissident group developed in the party under the leadership of Kumbha Ram Arya. However, Sukhadia would successfully continue to hold the reins of governance in his hands for seventeen years as Chief Minister. His tenure would see the passage of many Legislative Bills and Acts that would further see the transformation of the region of Rajasthan.

Much was to happen in the political sphere over the following decades. As most of it still forms part of contemporary knowledge, books and public memory, and has been well-reported in newspapers, journals, academic and popular books, etc., we shall leave this ‘political’ aspect of the history of contemporary Rajasthan at this point, and deal with aspects of the administrative and financial, etc. integration of Rajasthan, the vital land-reforms, and the coming of the system of democratic decentralisation and peoples’ participation in governance known as Panchayati Raj.

ASPECTS OF INTEGRATION — AN OVERVIEW

The time between the formation of each successive ‘union’ and its subsequent merger into another one, as mentioned above, was so short that in spite of the best of intentions and efforts, no final shape or picture of over-all integration of services, courts or laws could emerge until the coming together of the United State of Rajasthan in its final form. In fact, each time a union merged with another union the process of previously undertaken administrative etc. integration had needed to be left half way, and a fresh start made!

However, once the Greater Union in Rajasthan came into place in the summer of 1949, serious attention was given to the complex task of putting into place an integrated state apparatus right from the head of state and Cabinet, through to a new State Secretariat and the organisation of various departments and administrative units. Almost all of these had to be re-demarcated. Given the dimensions of the task and the complexities involved, Rajasthan’s integration was a Herculean effort, indeed. Perhaps the greatest challenge was of creating awareness in all agencies and officials of administration and the people at large of their new common identity — as citizens of India, rather than as ‘loyal subjects’ of one or other of the region’s princely states.

The political and administrative integration of the princely states of Rajputana was only part of the complex process of integration. The bulk of the erstwhile kingdoms which were merged into modern Rajasthan had been in existence for several centuries. As such, all of these had separate

and long-established systems of revenue-fixation and collection, military and general administration, coinage, judiciary, policing, and so forth.

In fact, even weights and measures, dialect, customs, and aspects like coinage, were not uniform amongst the different states of Rajputana. Their start of their financial year also differed. Thus, while the financial year in Udaipur, Bharatpur, Bikaner, Kishangarh, Shahpura and Jaisalmer states began on 1 July and ended on 30 June, the financial year for states like Jodhpur, Kota, Bundi, Jhalawar, Partabgarh, Dungarpur, Banswara and Dholpur began on 1 October and ended 30 September. In total contrast to both the above, the financial year for Sirohi and Tonk states began on 1 November, and ended on 31 October. It must have taken some getting used to thereafter, when the financial year for Rajasthan was fixed as being from 1 April to 31 March, in common with the rest of India!

Similarly, though British Indian currency was legal tender in the Indian Princely States, coins of local mints were also in circulation and used in accounting. Thus, in the official account books of Jaipur state, not only were all receipts and expenditure involving *Kaldar* (British coins) first converted into the local *Jharshahi* coins of Jaipur state at the prescribed rate of exchange, even the ledgers had to have four columns, indicating amount in *Jharshahi*, amount in *Kaldar*, *Kaldar* converted into *Jharshahi* and total amount in *Jharshahi*!

Writer and former member of the Rajasthan Legislative Assembly, Laxmi Kumari Chundawat (who was brought up in the Deogarh *thikana* of the state of Udaipur, and married the heir (subsequently chief) of the Rawatsar *thikana* in erstwhile Bikaner state), has noted in her memoirs: “Before Independence, currency was always a problem, particularly for travelling. There were three kinds of rupee coins in Udaipur state — the *Sarupshahi* rupee was divided into seventeen annas, the *Chittori* rupee into sixteen, and the *Chandauri* rupee into nine or ten — and it required some degree of skill and practice to make the calculations correctly...And none of these coins could be used outside of Mewar. If we were leaving the state, the coins had to be exchanged, and the rates varied. When we went to Ajmer, we had to buy British Indian currency”¹⁹

Thus, it was essential to integrate such aspects as well as the different land tenures and so forth, into a new, common, pattern. Furthermore, for the efficient working of their own individual administrative, police, judiciary, financial, and educational systems, the different states of Rajputana had evolved their own State Services for administrative purposes. These different States' Services too needed to be integrated into the greater administrative system of the new state of Rajasthan. In a like manner, the various armed forces of the different states — many of whom had won honours for their courage and gallantry during the First and Second World Wars — needed to be integrated into independent India's armed forces.

It was a challenge before the new state of Rajasthan to integrate these administrative mechanisms. The tasks included screening and utilising the most efficient of systems and staff, compensating or pensioning-off extra personnel, and fixing relative seniority of officials drawn into modern Rajasthan's administration from different State Services, to name just a few. The financial mechanisms, including the taxation, and audit and accounts, of various individual Rajputana states had to be re-organised on par with the rest of India. The different revenue systems and mechanisms for revenue-collection of the various different erstwhile kingdoms needed to be integrated too. In addition, for revenue-related matters and their resolution, a Board of Revenue for Rajasthan was established on 1 November 1949.

Similarly, a homogeneous police administration needed to be created, to replace the system prevalent in different erstwhile princely states, and police *thanas*, circles, and administrative units needed to be re-organised. In this context, the Ordinance of 15 April 1949 provided for the integration of the various states' police forces, and the appointment of an Inspector General of Police for Rajasthan. All of Rajasthan was deemed to be one general unit for police administration and the Inspector General of Police for Rajasthan was given the powers of a magistrate throughout the territory of Rajasthan.

The entire judicial system too needed to be re-organised and integrated. Some of erstwhile Rajputana's states had efficient judicial systems, while others were not so modern. For example, under Maharaja Ganga Singh, Bikaner had been the first princely state of northern India to

establish a 'Chief Court' in 1910, which had later been upgraded to a High Court. Conversely, some other states of Rajputana had not made changes on par with the legal system of British India. Thus, uniformity had to be brought into the judicial system of modern Rajasthan, obsolete laws needed to be repealed, central legal provisions adopted, and fresh court benches, district courts and a mutually acceptable common High Court for Rajasthan — with a venue agreeable to all — had to be established.

The process of integration also entailed re-drawing district boundaries — not an easy task when the new 'districts' were often areas that had been full-fledged kingdoms in their own rights! For example, when the erstwhile Bundi state became a district of the new state of Rajasthan, thirty villages of the former Nainwa *tehsil* were transferred to the new Tonk district — an area that too had been a full-fledged state prior to its merger into Rajasthan. Simultaneously, seven villages of the erstwhile state of Kota were transferred to the new district of Bundi. Such boundary adjustments took place across the board for administrative purposes. (What it meant for people who had lived much of their lives as 'citizens' of one area, to become part of a 'rival' area is as yet an unstudied sociological process!)

Besides minor boundary adjustments between the new administrative districts, there was also a different problem — that of 'territorial enclaves'. There existed several small enclaves of land belonging to some states within the territory of another state. These generally dated from the time *jagirs* and other land-holdings were so conferred by the Mughals or by rulers of a state to an individual; or as part of a marriage or other settlement in the past. Once the states began to be merged, it was thought necessary, in the interests of administrative efficiency, that these small enclaves should be brought into the provinces or states in which they were geographically located. The procedure was carried out under the provision of Sections 290; 290 A and 290 B of the Government of India Act of 1935. In accordance with this decision, 113 villages were included and 58 villages were excluded from Rajasthan.

ADMINISTRATIVE INTEGRATION

The executive authority of the state was vested in the Rajpramukh subject to the provisions of the various covenants and the constitution to be framed. The Legislative Authority was also vested in him vide Article X of the covenant until the constitution framed by the Legislative Assembly came into being. However, the Rajpramukh could not act independently of his ministry as the covenant stipulated that a Council of Ministers would aid and advise the Rajpramukh. In the absence of a Legislative Assembly, all legislation took the form of ordinances issued by the Rajpramukh. It was also provided in Article XIX of the covenant that until the constitution was framed by the local Constitution Assembly and came into operation, the Rajpramukh and the Council of Ministers should be under the general control of, and comply with directions given by the Government of India from time to time.

The State Government on the advice of the Government of India appointed two Advisors (D.R. Pradhan and B.N. Jha — both from the ICS), and attached them to the departments of law & order, integration, revenue and finance. All papers connected with the departments passed through the advisors. They also attended the meetings of the Cabinet with a right to express their views but without the right to vote. C.S. Venkatachar, ICS, who was Regional Commissioner for Rajputana, was appointed Advisor to the Rajpramukh. It was made clear that for the time being, the appointment of the chairman and members of the Public Service Commission, chief secretary, finance secretary and inspector general of police, etc. were made in consultation with the Central Government.

Meanwhile, an Integration Committee was appointed on 9 April 1949. Rajasthan's Chief Minister was the Chairman, and the Integration Advisor and Chief Secretary among its members. A separate Integration Department with a Secretary (and staff) was created. The secretary of the Integration Department also served as the secretary to the Integration Committee. On 30 April 1949, the Rajasthan Public Service Commission was constituted replacing similar institutions in the Covenanting States. The following month, i.e. May 1949, a number of Departmental Reorganisation Committees were set-up to examine the existing organisation of the various departments in different units. Besides the Integration Committee and the Departmental Reorganisation Committees, other special committees were

appointed to facilitate integration and evolve a unified administrative structure for the states. Among them were committees for Unification of Laws, Land Tenures and allied matters, Revenue Laws, Integration of Financial Systems, Evolution of Uniform Pay Scales, etc. Reorganisation and integration of departments continued during 1950-51.

A committee was appointed on 11 May 1949 to formulate proposals for establishing the different sections of a general State Secretariat. This State Secretariat, with a Chief Secretary, secretaries and other staff, was established at Jaipur, the state capital. (It was reorganised in March 1951). In addition, several directorates and departments were unified, metamorphed into their new forms, or created afresh. By an order dated 13 July 1949, some of these had their headquarters not at the new State capital of Jaipur, but at different places (like Udaipur, Jodhpur, Bikaner, Kota, Alwar, Bharatpur, etc.), across the new Rajasthan so that almost all the major erstwhile state-capitals could serve as the departmental headquarters for one or another of the government offices.

One of the most important issues at the time pertained to the integration of land tenures, revenue assessments, and so forth. In this context, the Committee for Unification of Revenue Laws submitted its report in September 1949, along with Draft Tenancy and Revenue Bills. However, since a proposal for the abolition of *jagirs* was in the offing and ground was being prepared for substantive land reforms, the bills had to be revised. In order to regulate the jurisdiction and procedure of Revenue Courts and Revenue Officers, the 'Rajasthan Revenue Courts (Procedure and Jurisdiction) Act 1951' was promulgated on 31 January 1951. Pending the enactment of comprehensive legislation on agricultural tenancies, land tenures, land revenue, rent, survey, record settlement and other matters connected with land for the whole of Rajasthan, this Act was able to deal with matters arising out of the laws in force in the Covenanted States.

JUDICIAL INTEGRATION

The Rajasthan Administration Ordinance 1949, promulgated on 8 April 1949 (amended in May, after Matsya Union joined) provided for the

continuance of the existing laws which were in force in any of the covenanting states, till such time as these altered by a competent legislature or authority. This was necessary because of the absence of any uniform system of codified laws for the newly formed state. The amendment also provided for the appointment of advisors and administrators, and procedure for conduct of business of the government.

Subsequently a committee was appointed on 10 May 1949 with the erstwhile Chief Justice of Jaipur High Court as Chairman and four Members, one Secretary and one Joint Secretary to recommend the unification of laws existing in different states. As a result of its recommendations, the laws were unified by ordinances. A Central Law Ordinance was also issued by which 86 Acts of the Central Legislatures were adopted in Rajasthan. With the extension of 'Part A States' Laws to Rajasthan along with other Part B States, the unification of the legal system was complete. On 29 August 1949, a Unified High Court in Rajasthan was inaugurated at Jodhpur. Benches were established at Jaipur, Udaipur, Bikaner and Kota to dispose of the work pending in the high court of those units.

FINANCIAL INTEGRATION

An essential aspect of the process of integration through the series of merger of the erstwhile states was the integration of their budgets and financial resources. This went apace as each new merger took place in the short span of a year or two. The integrated units were also faced with financial problems due to lack of funds. Also, there were no clear and well-defined rules governing procedures for financial transaction. Therefore, one priority was to frame rules for financial administration and to devise accounting procedures. Other aspects that needed to be sorted out included some old treaty obligations between some of the States and the British Government which had devolved upon the Government of India. Similarly, there was the question of payment of privy purses to the rulers according to the terms of the covenants.

To remove any difficulty in the smooth financial transactions of the new State Government during the transitional period, it was clarified in an ordinance promulgated by the Rajpramukh on 8 April 1949 that until the bank accounts and treasuries of the different states comprising the United State of Rajasthan were integrated, the existing procedure of accounts, audit and payments prevalent in various states would continue and the officers concerned would function under the direction of the administrators appointed by the Government. In case any bank accounts had previously been operated by a minister, it would now be operated by the administrators concerned. A new current account, known as “Current Account of the United State of Rajasthan”, was opened with the Bank of Jaipur Ltd., which was to be operated by the Accountant General of the United State of Rajasthan.

The administrators of different Units (who had taken the administration of their units over on 7 April 1949), were asked to gather information on the following aspects of the various merged states. The first concerned the cash balances of the various merged states in banks and treasuries as on 31 December 1948 and 6 April 1949. The second related to the deposits, loans, investments etc. held by each state on 1 January 1949 and on 7 April 1949, and the third concerned the total assets and liabilities, including advances, as on 7 April 1949. Among other things, the administrators were asked to ensure that schemes involving new financial commitments were not undertaken without obtaining previous approval of the Government.

Meanwhile, the issue of Federal Financial Integration of the states had led to the establishment of a committee called the ‘Indian States’ Finances Enquiry Committee’, vide a Resolution of the Government of India’s Ministry of States, on 22 October 1948. V.T. Krishnamachari was its chairman. There were high-level discussions at Jaipur (May 1949), and at New Delhi (23 and 24 June 1949) between Rajasthan and the Federal Financial Integration Committee. As result, the outlines for future policies etc. were jointly evolved. An agreement was concluded between the President of India and the Rajpramukh of Rajasthan on 25 February 1950 by which the recommendations of the committee with necessary modifications were accepted by both the parties, for a period of ten years. In

November 1951, the President of India appointed a Finance Commission to examine the question of share of the states in the revenue accruing from income tax and Union excise, as well as to examine the question of grant-in-aid. Rajasthan's share was decided as per the recommendations of the commission. Rajasthan also got financial and technical assistance from the Centre for the National Five Years Plan.

In the interim, in order to integrate the accounts departments, the treasury units and the insurance departments of the various integrating units, a Departmental Reorganisation Committee had been constituted, and integration carried through accordingly. Subordinate officers were appointed in various departments. Budgeting system was evolved and classification of heads for accounts and budget purposes was made. Government Treasuries were established and started functioning at district headquarters with effect from 1 October 1949. These were the basic disbursing and receiving units, which were responsible for keeping a check on receipts and payments. The treasuries submitted their accounts to the Accountant General. Each treasury was headed by a treasury officer who worked under overall charge of the collectors of the concerned districts. Sub-treasuries were responsible for submission of their accounts to the treasuries under which they functioned. The Accountant General of Rajasthan was entrusted with the responsibility of compiling and maintaining the accounts of the state as a whole.

INTEGRATION OF THE VARIOUS STATES' ARMED FORCES

Prior to 1947, the covenanting states had maintained their own armed forces, which had their own diverse traditions, service conditions, and so forth. According to the terms of the individual Instruments of Accession signed in August 1947 by the rulers of the different states of Rajputana, their respective States Forces had been excluded from the scope of the term 'defence', which along with Foreign Affairs and Communications, had been handed over by the princely states to the new Government of India. As such, the various State Forces had remained under the authority of their respective rulers, except in cases where they were attached to or operating with any of the other armed forces of the dominion of India.

The issues of defence and the armed forces of the princely states were taken up again when the states began to be integrated. As per specific clauses in the new covenants, the individual military forces of each signatory state became the common force of the new Union being created. The authority to raise, maintain and administer such State Forces was vested exclusively in the Rajpramukh, subject to any directions or instructions that might be given by the Government of India from time to time. The charge of commanding the integrated state forces was to be given to an officer of the Indian Army, specifically lent to the Rajpramukh for this purpose. The strength and organization of these forces was to be fixed with reference to the role which they would play in defence of the country. The relative expenditure was to be met from the Union revenues. (Following financial integration etc., the Government of India accepted the liability of paying these forces, though). Eventually, the forces of the different Rajputana states were fully taken over by the Government of India and amalgamated with the Indian Army with effect from 1 April 1951.

The reorganization of Rajputana's forces had to be carried out along the pattern of the Indian Army. It was decided that the officers would be selected through the same machinery and in the same manner as for the officers for the Indian army and their promotions etc. would also be regulated likewise. Interchangeability of officers to a certain extent between the Indian Army and these forces was admitted. Meanwhile, a shortage of personnel in the Indian Army following the partition of the army between India and Pakistan, had led to the Ministry of States asking the United State of Rajasthan in July 1948 to take special measures and intensify its recruitment drive, and also to induce its ex-soldiers to join the Indian Army. It was also decided to raise a few battalions on a zonal basis for internal defence duties, as quickly as quickly as possible. Recruiting Officers posted at Ajmer, Indore, Gwalior, Kota and Tonk were authorised to make recruitment for Ajmer, Merwara, Rajputana and Central India and Gwalior State. The Government of the United State of Rajasthan also took the necessary steps, including issuing an ordinance regarding 'Employment of Special Forces'.

Meanwhile, the forces of the Covenanting States serving with the Indian dominion troops outside Rajasthan were subject to the provisions of

the Indian Army Act 1911 (VIII of 1911) as adapted and modified by Government of India. However, in view of financial stringency, the princely states started retrenchment of their employees of various departments, including their armies, for the 1948-49 budget. Thus, Marwar practically halved its army-related budget from Rs. 65 lakh to Rs. 35 lakh, retrenching 1600 of its army personnel (1,000 Rajputs and 600 Jats²⁰). The Government of India was asked to consider absorbing the retrenched 1600 soldiers in the Indian Army, since many of them had seen active service in Italy and elsewhere during the Second World War, and could prove a valuable asset to the Indian Army.

The armies of various other Rajputana states were similarly retrenched and reduced in numbers. It was a difficult situation on both sides. Thus, a rumour that Tonk state's army was to be totally disbanded caused alarm and panic. Finally, the Military Secretary to the Rajasthan Rajpramukh-stated that the authorities had no intentions of disbanding the entire army of Tonk state, but rather to gradually absorb the medically fit personnel into the regular Indian Army units as well as armed police forces, and pension off the rest in accordance with state rules. On 20 May 1950, the Army Act, 1950 (XLVI of 1950) received the assent of the President of India. It was applicable to various categories of armed forces, including persons belonging to the land forces of a Part B State (which Rajasthan had been declared), and came into effect from 22 July 1950, through a notification.

The Government of India framed a sixty point system regarding the absorption of officers from states' forces into the Indian Army, and deciding their individual seniority. Screening of certain groups was carried out by Service Selection Boards also. In due course, the entire process of either, retrenchment and pensioning off, or integration into the Indian Army, was completed, and the merged forces became a part of the Indian Army with effect from 1 April 1951.

The problems in merging and amalgamating armies that had their own long traditions can be understood. What may seem difficult to visualise over half-a-century later would be the numerous factors that needed to be dealt with. Sorting out matters relating to pensions and allowances to ex-soldiers — or in some cases descendants of a warrior whose bravery had led to

some grant-in-perpetuity generations earlier! Dealing with seniority issues; merging commands, and posting troops and officers in other units; disbanding some state units and transferring the soldiers elsewhere; and so forth. It was a tedious process that required meticulous attention. In the end, the war-experience of many of the forces from the different states of Rajputana, and their old, formidable, reputation, was to see several of the officers of the various former State Forces attain positions of seniority and authority in Independent India's armed forces.

However, aspects like the criteria for deciding the seniority created unrest among the officers, for the Government of India considered the Indian Army superior to the state forces in the matters of training and equipment, and many of those absorbed into the Indian Army were downgraded. On the other hand, the state forces had a long tradition of warfare and had seen recent active service too, like the Indian Army. Thus, they were aggrieved at the manner in which they were downgraded, or even deprived of their arms because of desert-related chronic, but not incapacitating, eye infection that rendered many of those who previously had seen active service declared to be medically unfit for the Indian armed forces. The matter was taken to heart by both, the states which were integrated, and the personnel thus affected.

VARIOUS GOVERNMENT SCHEMES, PROGRAMMES, ACTS AND ATTEMPTS FOR DEVELOPMENT

By the early 1950s various schemes and programmes for the 'development' and 'progress' of newly Independent India, and the 'betterment' of the life of its people, were being formulated and introduced by the national and state governments. (All of these need not be listed here. They form the subject-matter and context of many works and on-going discussions in the realm of economics, development economics, political science, the social sciences, law, environmental studies, and so forth). Thus, among other programmes, the Government of India's Community Development Programme was introduced in various parts of the country, including Rajasthan, along with the National Extension Service. It was launched in Udaipur district in 1952-53 at the Rajsamand 'Block' level. During 1953-54

two more 'blocks', Amet and Kumbhalgarh were taken up under the programme. Other districts of modern Rajasthan were similarly covered in due course under this and other Government of India programmes. The schemes fed into the Panchayati Raj programme launched subsequently in the state of Rajasthan (described briefly further in this chapter).

In a different move, the Rajasthan Bhoodan Yagna Act, 1954 came into force on 7 August 1954. This drew its inspiration from Vinoba Bhave's *Bhoodan* Movement (the voluntary giving away of excess lands in donation by the landed, so that the landless could get at least a small plot of land to farm). It provided for the creation of a Bhoodan Yagna Board for Rajasthan. Voluntary gifts of land were made to this body for re-distribution to the landless or needy persons or for use for community purposes. Meanwhile, the new Government was taking steps to abolish the *jagirdari* system and to initiate land-reforms that would benefit the ordinary masses of the state.

LAND REFORMS AND THE ABOLITION OF JAGIRS ETC.

In the traditional land-revenue systems prevalent in different parts of Rajasthan, the farmers (who were often 'tenants-at-will') were subjected to many levies, cesses and taxes, which were frequently uncodified. Some of these cesses and taxes had their origins in older systems, which had become obsolete over the centuries, but local land-lords could always fall back on these at their whim. The merger of the princely states changed many things. In the case of the *jagirdars*, their long-held rights to revenue-collection from villages held as part of their *jagir* could not continue indefinitely in a democratic free India. (At one stage, it was proposed that the new Union Government could collect the revenue and allot a certain proportion to the *jagirdars*, using the rest for education, health and other nation-building activities; while other feudal rights could be safeguarded for five years after which the new Government would be free to abolish them).

Immediately prior to the formation of the modern political State of Rajasthan in 1949, a few of the 'popular' ministries that had been inducted in various states of Rajputana around the time of Independence, had taken some steps connected with land-reforms. For instance, Manikyalal Verma's

government took steps to abolish *jagirdari* in 1948 when Verma became premier for the United State of Rajasthan. In 1949 came the 'Rajasthan Protection of Tenant Ordinance, 1949'. This was followed, within a couple of years, by the 'Rajasthan Produce Rents Regulating Act, 1951'. Between them, these legal measures ensured security of tenure; determination and regulation of rents, and protection to the tiller of the land against arbitrary and forcible eviction. In 1952 a legislation for the '*Rajasthan Land Reforms and Resumption of Jagirs Act, 1952*' was passed.

Sukhadia's tenure as Chief Minister, which began in the final quarter of 1954, oversaw a period of administrative re-structuring and reforms. The most major of these was land-related, and concerned the abolition of the *jagirdari/zamindari/biswedari* system. The promulgation of the 'Rajasthan Tenancy Act, 1955', which came into force on 15 October 1955, amended the multiplicity of land-tenures and tenancies that had been prevalent in different parts of erstwhile Rajputana. These were now formally replaced by three types of tenures, namely *khudkasht*, *khatedar* and *gair khatedar*. The following year saw the enactment of the 'Rajasthan Land Revenue Act, 1956', which consolidated and amended laws pertaining to land, powers and duties etc. of revenue courts and officials, maintenance of maps and land records etc., revenue and rent settlements, partition of estates, and all similar connected matters.

LAND REFORMS AND THE PROTESTS OF THE 'ANCIEN REGIME'

The policies and programmes of the India National Congress (first enunciated in the 1931 Karachi session) for restructuring the political economy of India, and its deep oft-stated commitment towards giving lands to the actual cultivators/tillers and bringing them into direct relationship with the state by eliminating or curtailing the role of intermediaries, had long rung alarm bells for the Rajput ruling elite and other land-holding *jagirdars*. Thus, with Indian Independence, the rulers and *jagirdars* and their cohorts became additionally wary and watchful, if not apprehensive of Congress's designs.

Barely a decade or so previously, following the introduction of provincial autonomy under the 1935 Government of India Act, Congress-led 'Popular Ministries' in several provinces of British India had carried through legislation and executive measures towards agrarian reforms, and to curtail the political and socio-economic clout of the *talukdars* and big *zamindars* (as in U.P.) and other sections of the 'landed gentry'. Now with the Congress secure in power and authority at Delhi in Independent India, it seemed likely that the Government would initiate and promote similar, and possibly even more substantial and far-reaching, measures in states like Rajasthan and PEPSU ('Patiala and Eastern Punjab States Union').

In the interim, under the pressure of events related to the acts of accession to India, merger of states, the separation of rulers' privy purses, private properties and household buildings from state/public budgets, and the need to bring about and enforce reductions in the expenses of the courts and the *jagirdars* thikanas; the former rulers and their senior nobles had dispensed with the services of the administrative officers and set-up of their erstwhile separate states. Though some of them were integrated into the new system for Rajasthan, the bulk of the once large administrative, military, police and other retinues of the integrated states and the larger *thikanas* that had been part of such states, had become redundant. Thus, Rajput *jagirdars*, 'chhut-bhais'²¹ and others, including *Bhomiya*s (small landholders, whose *bhoms* (*bhums*) had traditionally been protected against alienation or being taken over by the state), were now being left in the lurch.

Disconnected from their royal */thikana* moorings, and not absorbed in the new set-up, these people who had previously found employment in various capacities in various states, and even the larger *thikanas*, became redundant. They were now faced with an uncertain future. Their first refuge or escape from uncertain prospects was naturally to revert to their own land-holdings, even though these had been earlier let out to tenants, or sub-tenants. One and all, they began to eject their tenants or tenants-at will, and occupy their lands for self-cultivation (as *Khudkasht*). It is believed that the small landholders, *jagirdars* and *bhomiya*s — whose own holdings were small and limited, went on to eject unprotected tenants in far greater

numbers than did the big *jagirdars*, who were holders of large *thikanas* comprising many villages.

This began to cause widespread resentment and protest among the ousted/ejected tenants. Before the situation could go out of hand, and to prevent wholesale ejections, the State Government issued the 'Rajasthan Protection of Tenants Ordinance (No.IX), 1949'. This provided for the reinstatement of all such tenants who had held land as tenants prior to 1948. They were given a further guarantee against such forcible future ejection. This was a well intentioned measure; but in view of the then poor and imperfect state of land records and the poor working efficiency of the revenue staff (especially the field level functionaries), the result was mixed. Only limited relief was available to the affected tenants; while some of the *bhomyas* who had earlier rented out all their lands were now left without any source of farm income.

For the *bhomyas* and small *jagirdars* much was at stake. Naturally they felt agitated by this sudden and unexpected turn in their fortunes. They were already unhappy with the thrust of the new land reform measures that had been introduced through ordinances from c. 1949, or were on the anvil. Such measures included the reorientation and reorganization of the entire structure of land revenue administration, proposed new revenue code and courts, the launch of land survey work, systematic records and settlement operations for the entire state, reduction in land-rents, and assured security to tenant-farmers. The future of their landholdings — their *jagirs* and *bhoms*, and their various 'traditional' rights and privileges, were at stake; and they rose to counter the challenge to their established political, economic and social pre-eminence.

The *jagirdars* and fief-holders rallied to the 'Kshatriya Mahasabha' at first. They would later come together under the banner of the 'Bhuswami Sangh' (literally the organization of *Bhuswami* — land owners or holders); after the smaller land-holders began to feel that the 'Kshatriya Mahasabha' was representing the interest of big *jagirdars* and was dominated by a handful of nobles²².

The wide spread agitation led by the '*Bhuswami Sangh*' in the newly emerged part 'B' States of the Indian Republic was unique in several respects. It was the first among several tests for the fledgling democratic polity recently put into place; and it was a confrontation challenging the imposition of new legislative reforms, particularly in respect of land-holdings, a new land tenure system and revenue administration. In the case of the new State of Rajasthan, the agitation was also unique in that the feudal elements of not merely one or two former states, but from all over erstwhile Rajputana came together to protect their traditional rights and privileges and to register their protest. Such a thing had not happened before, and would have been unthinkable under the old regimes where such elements had been, both, beneficiaries and partners.

This was a far different scenario to the agrarian-reforms movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (noted in the previous section), when *kisans* had come together to fight against the exploitative system and high land-revenue demands of the *jagirdars*. It was also different to the various peoples' movements for 'representative government' etc. This was the reverse of the coin. It was almost a rear-guard action by the feudal elements of *jagirdars* of all erstwhile states — big and small — to safeguard their interests before the new democratic upsurge, fuelled by ideals of social justice and equality as enshrined in the new Constitution of India, completely overwhelmed them. (The former royalists and *jagirdar* elements have continued to play a significant role in the politics, legislature, and other affairs of Rajasthan).

The Kshatriya Mahasabha, as previously mentioned, had organised Kshatriya (Rajput) Sabhas in various princely states during the years preceding Independence and the 'transfer of power', for rallying Rajput public opinion in an organised and concerted manner around the cause of protecting Rajput interests. The leaders had also appeared before the 'Venkatachar Committee' of 1949, which had been constituted to ponder over the prevailing conditions and recommended a pattern of land reforms suitable for Rajasthan and the neighbouring areas of Madhya Bharat (erstwhile states of Central Provinces — now incorporated in modern-day Madhya Pradesh). To represent their case, the *jagirdars* of Rajasthan had come closer to their counterparts in Madhya Bharat into a special

association or political forum, though effectively the Kshatriya Mahasabha had remained their spokesperson and negotiator.

In its bid to protect the interests of the Rajput fraternity, the Mahasabha took the lead in organising and coordinating the participation of Rajputs in the 1952 elections in a big way, and subsequently in guiding Rajput activities in the state's new legislature. The Kshatriya Mahasabha was a component group in the Samyukta Dal (United Front) of all Opposition MLAs which came into being after the election. The Mahasabha was equally alert and vocal when, on the recommendations of the '*Rajasthan-Madhya Bharat Jagir Enquiry Committee*', new reforms legislation was being discussed.

It may be noted that at the end of the elections, the Congress could attain only a majority of one in the Vidhan Sabha, and the elected 'popular' ministry had a rather uncertain, even precarious, hold on government. By the time of its second session it almost lost on the 'No Confidence Motion' moved by the Opposition's Samyukta Dal. Nearly eighty-four per cent of the Rajputs were solidly behind the Opposition. Fortunately for the Government, the *jagirdari* system had been abolished by an Ordinance soon after the General Elections, but before the newly constituted House could meet. Ultimately the fate of this ordinance was decided by judgements of the relevant courts following Rajasthan's *jagirdars* filing a number of cases challenging the constitutional validity of the legislative measures.

Meanwhile, the Congress tried to consolidate and build upon its razor-thin majority in the legislature, both by inducing some *jagirdars* to join its ranks and also by trying to persuade some of those who had gone to the courts to withdraw their petitions or appeals. Negotiations were also started with the Kshatriya Mahasabha and others concerned to reshape the final reform measures. The Enquiry Committee Report and the 1952 Ordinance had recommended exemption from abolition to all *jagirs* with incomes below Rs. 5,000/- a year, as against the larger (high-income) *jagirs*. The Ordinance had left doors open to acquire their *khudkasht* lands (literally, self-cultivated lands, or home farms of owner-cultivators) by ejecting their tenants.

This was a critical issue for most *bhomiya*s and *bhuswami*s who wondered whether the proposed revised legislation would give them such opportunities. Also under consideration/negotiations was the amount of likely compensation for *jagirs* that were being ‘resumed’ by the state.

Through all of 1953 and most of 1954 protracted negotiations followed on these points of dispute at different levels. This included the Government of India level, where the new Home Minister Govind Ballabh Pant and Prime Minister Nehru took a keen personal interest in understanding the issues involved and, ultimately, in resolving the dispute. Five of the prominent negotiators behalf of the *jagirdars* were the Thakur of Pokhran (a premier *sardar* of erstwhile Jodhpur state, Maharaj Himmat Singh (a brother of the late Maharaja Hanwant Singh of Jodhpur), the Raja of Khetri (who held the second-largest estate (*jagir*) in Jaipur state), the vice-president of the ‘Kshatriya Mahasabha’ — who was, at the time, the Rawal of Nawalgarh (one of the leading Thikanas in the Shekhawati area), and Thakur Jaswant Singh (leader of the Samyukta Dal in the Legislature and a former prime minister of erstwhile Bikaner state). Thus, almost all the regions of the new state were represented by experienced and committed exponents of the *jagirdars* case. Thakur Jaswant Singh and the Thakur of Serriari, a Jodhpur-based lawyer and general secretary of the ‘Kshatriya Mahasabha’ gave necessary assistance to the team of negotiators.

However; the smaller *jagirdars* could not but feel that with such high-level leaders in command, and all representing the bigger *jagirdars*, the cause of the small *jagirdars* could recede into the background or suffer in default. Soon after negotiations began, the Rajasthan Congress Pradesh indicated its proposal (or objective) to resume all *jagirs*, big or small, irrespective of their size. It urged the Congress government at the Centre (which was guiding and supervising all reform measures), to withdraw the previously announced exemption to *jagirs* with incomes less than Rs. 5,000 per year. The local Congress was keen to eliminate intermediaries and give legal possession of lands to the actual cultivators.

The fears and apprehensions of the smaller *jagirdars* were voiced by several member of the ‘Ram Rajya Parishad’, an important component of the Opposition’s Samyukta Dal. There were agitations and protest rallies in

Jaipur and in Udaipurwati area, a likely trouble spot with a fair concentration of small *jagirdars*. Settlement operations — which would have determined existing land rights, besides other things like land surveys and land records, were obstructed. As a result sixty arrests were made. Meanwhile, a rift appeared between the large and small *jagirdars*. By May 1953, while negotiations were still on, the small *jagirdars* had met at Jaipur and tried to take control of the movement, in their own way, from below. Their meeting resolved not to accept the terms of the new Legislative Bills unless these had the unanimous consent of the Mahasabha, including the sections representing the small *jagirdars*.

In July 1953, the terms of the agreement were announced. It was a mixed bag of compromise and adjustment. The provision enabling *jagirdars* without *Khudkasht* to eject their tenants was dropped. The small *jagirdars* were given relief by placing *jagirs* with annual incomes up to 5,000 outside the scope of resumption. The large *jagirdars* were sought to be appeased with fair and liberal terms of compensation, to enhance the payable amounts, even at the cost of the increased burden on the state's limited financial resources. By November 1953 the Home Minister's decision was endorsed by Prime Minister Nehru. This Nehru-Pant Award, as it was called, was then unanimously approved by fifty to sixty large *jagirdars* who were the mainstay of the General Council of the 'Kshatriya Mahasabha'.

The issue took a new turn when the Government once more announced its intention to resume all *jagirs*, big or small — in other words, to abolish the *jagirdari* system altogether. The blow was, however, proposed to the softened and made bearable by providing additional rehabilitation grants to the affected *jagirdars*. This proposal was then endorsed in the Revised (second) Award by Pant, and also incorporated in the subsequent amendment to the *Rajasthan Land Reforms and Abolition of Jagir Acts, 1954*.

The small *jagirdars* felt let down by their leaders. These leaders had large *jagirs* and dominated the 'Kshatriya Mahasabha'. The smaller landholders were equally suspicious of the Congress, then in power both at the Centre and in the state. Conscious of the need to have their own political organisation, they joined ranks to constitute the '*Bhuswami Sangh*', with a

twenty-one member committee. This included Thakur Madan Singh Danta, himself a big *jagirdar* but a vocal and active anti-establishment Opposition leader. The Danta Thakur had earlier been active in the mobilization of Rajput (and other '*dvija*' or twice-born, i.e. upper castes) in the 1952 election campaign as president of the 'Ram Rajya Parishad'. He had also been influenced by Swami Karpatri, the national president of the 'Ram Rajya Parishad', who was an ardent advocate of orthodox Hindu revivalism. Madan Singh Danta now took up the Bhuswami Sangh campaign as a sort of religious mission with great fervour. His other colleagues in the 'Bhuswami Sangh' mostly belonged to the professional and middle class Rajput families, and had limited incomes and a middling status in the community.

The vice-president of the Bhuswami Sangh was Ayuman Singh, with political experience and apprenticeship in the successful election campaign of the late Maharaja Hanwant Singh of Jodhpur. Editor of a local newspaper, his work as publicity secretary during the elections was an added asset. Another leading figure was Thakur Raghbir Singh of Jaoli, a former Home Minister of erstwhile Alwar State (to whom reference has been made previously). He had received his university education at Allahabad, and then training in the Punjab as a Collector but had spent most of his service time in the princely states. He was also president of the Rajasthan Ram Rajya Parishad. The Bhuswami Sangh gained from his active association and guidance. The general secretary, Pandit Raghunath Sahay, was an advocate. So was Tan Singh, another leading figure. One may also note that Shri Bhairon Singh Shekhawat — later a prominent leader of the Rajasthan Jan Sangh and then of the Bharatiya Janata Party, and a longstanding member of Rajasthan's Legislature both in Opposition and as Rajasthan's chief minister, and who is now India's Vice-President, began his long political career with the Bhuswami Sangh, after quitting his job in the Police Department of Jaipur state.

These self-employed or in-service professionals from the middle rung of the Rajput community, and/or rural society, could establish a more active and sympathetic rapport with their colleagues and constituents — the large sections of small *jagirdars* etc. There was also additional magic in the name of their organisation. The word '*bhuswami*' invoked the 'sanctity' of deep

and personalised attachment to their lands, and struck a chord of sympathy in numerous young and brave hearts in the countryside. Added to that was the zest and professional efficiency with which the young and enthusiastic leaders went about their work. All through first half of 1954, meetings were held at the district and *tehsil* levels, protesting against the deal they had got due to betrayal by, both, the large *jagirdars* (of the Kshatriya Mahasabha), and the Government. The protest and rallies culminated in the form of a massive satyagraha staged in Jaipur in June 1955.

The city bazaars were closed to avoid trouble. Hundreds of *bhuswamis* squatted in the streets, blocked all traffic and passively resisted all attempts to clear the affected areas. Hundreds offered themselves for arrest and were carted away to jail; hundreds went on hunger-strike while in custody, while hundreds outside and all over the State began to demonstrate in sympathy. Within a month 1,500 arrests were made: 700 in Jaipur alone.

Three demands were put forward again and again. Namely, that the *bhuswamis* should have the opportunity to acquire lands for *khudkasht*, that the government pay rehabilitation grants in lump sums; and that small *jagirdars* should be duly compensated for wells, small forts and such other permanent structures in their *jagirs/ thikanas*. While addressing the protest demonstrations the speakers would often remind their audience that their campaign was like a *dharam yuddha* — almost a call to religious duty, for which no sacrifice was big. Thus inspired and constantly motivated, the agitation went on for a long time without the Government yielding ground. Another massive satyagraha campaign was held in April 1956, perhaps the last big effort. After that the agitation kept simmering at a lower key until 1958 when the Prime Minister's Award brought in the assurance of an increased compensation. The agitation was then channelised into political and constitutional activities on the political stage and in the Rajasthan State Legislative Assembly.

Meanwhile, as the negotiations continued, some section of the larger *jagirdars*, under local pressures and in consideration of better bargaining opportunities by way of more generous settlements in their favour, had veered towards the Congress, which was the political party in power. Small *jagirdars* were also soon to follow suit. For example, eighteen *jagirdars* of

the first category had crossed over to the Congress Legislative Party in January 1954, thus firming up the shaky government. Their example was followed by others, so that by March 1954, 25 Rajput MLAs, one Member of Parliament, besides many from the ordinary 'rank and files' of the Rajputs, had joined the Congress. Not only had the Chief Minister of Rajasthan indicated to them the possibility of some of them being taken into the Cabinet following a future reshuffle, the Congress had also won recent by-elections (since after its one-vote precarious majority in 1952). In addition, the Congress party made some further concessions in favour of the *jagirdars* who seemed to have realised that a better deal could be possible if the Congress felt assured of their support. As a combined result of all these aspects, as many as forty-three leading *jagirdars* announced their decision to join the Congress. This was yet another blow to the crumbling strongholds of Rajput power structures.

Facing such new developments, the leadership of the Bhuswami Sangh tried to keep their following together and active: harping on the legacy of Rajput traditions of valour, glory and sacrifice; and raising the call for protecting their bonds with their lands, as well as the right to private property. But such calls and arguments did not cut much ice with the Government/Congress, when it came to the negotiating table. There was also a lack of cohesive unity among the Bhuswami Sangh leaders, and agitating factions were often driven apart by petty squabbles and dissensions.

They had little time or training to pay attention to details, and to the situation as it changed from day to day with the implementation of the Act. In fact, when the Government was criticised in the House that only about 1,100 to 1,300 claimants had received compensation, even though some 5,000 *jagirs* had been resumed, Rajasthan's Chief Minister Sukhadia told the Assembly that as against the number of nearly 5,500 *jagirdars* who had been already notified, only 1900 had filed in their claim forms²³. That was the scenario in April 1956, by which time the Bhuswami Satyagraha, and the movement as a whole, had lost much of its momentum. Its one-time, all-out mobilisation and maxim pressure during 1954 and 1955 had mainly petered out; and it had lost the battle in terms of political wisdom, strategy

and manoeuvring. The Nehru Award in 1958 marked the ultimate end of the Bhuswami agitation.

However, all in all, the agitation had fostered and created a section of the Rajput community as a possible political constituency. It had also thrown up a new and comparatively younger group of Rajput/Kshatriya/Bhuswami leaders with close and vital links with organisations like the Ram Rajya Parishad, Hindu Mahasabha, Jan Sangh and eventually the Bharatiya Janata Party. The Congress too, was a twofold gainer. In the first place, it was able to push through some fundamental reforms in the agrarian/land-revenue system through legislative measures, to bring about a crucial change in the social order and the political structure. For a young political organisation under a comparatively inexperienced leadership in a fragile and not very hopeful unified state polity, this was a big and creditable achievement.

What is more, the Congress was to break the ranks of the Opposition, which was then largely led by a combination of erstwhile rulers and their noblemen (the courtiers or '*darbaris*' and chiefs or *sardars*), with large and small *jagirdars* as camp followers. Large groups of Rajputs (*jagirdars* and all) gravitated to the Congress fold, changing that organisation's local clan/caste composition. Not only that, but the Congress realised that it could count upon and capitalise on the widespread support of the farming communities, including tenants, sub-tenants and even the landless, who had gained a renewed sense of security and fresh stakes in their landholding following the implementation of land-reforms. This entailed wide-scale transfer of *jagir* lands from the *jagirdars* and *zamindars* to the actual cultivator, and similar guaranteed provision in respect of the *Khalsa* lands; followed by allotments of Government lands/ cultivable wastelands etc to the landless and the marginal or small farmers.

With each successive measure, the support base of the Congress and its ideology broadened. Once-marginalised and exploited communities, castes and classes dependent on land, like the Jats, Gurjars, Malis, Meena, and Bhils, and various types of Dalits, came under the Congress sway. These developments were the preludes to such political measures as the new grassroots of democracy — the Panchayati Raj.

The Rajasthan Biswedari and Zamindari Abolition Act, 1959 came into force on 1 November 1959. The process of abolition started on 15 November 1959, when all settled zamindari and biswedari estates were abolished across Rajasthan. Other estates, whether settled or not, were abolished with effect from 15 January 1960. According to state records, 2,98,896 jagirs were resumed (by the modern state of Rajasthan), and 45 kinds of tenures abolished as a result of various land reforms effected. (We need not go into these at length here). Among the various Acts were the Rajasthan Tenancy Act, 1955, the Rajasthan Discontinuance of Cesses Act, 1959, and the Rajasthan Land Reform & Acquisition of Landowners Estates Act, 1963. (Among later Acts came the Rajasthan Imposition of Ceiling on Agricultural Holdings Act, 1973).

INAUGURATION OF PANCHAYATI RAJ IN RAJASTHAN

Another significant event for Rajasthan was the formal inauguration of the 'Panchayati Raj' system. In preceding centuries, there had been certain traditions of self government and corporate or guild-related administrative mechanisms at the town and village levels in Rajasthan. At the village level there were frequently 'caste (*jati*) panchayats'. Matters brought before such panchayats were decided according to prevailing custom in open meetings, headed by the '*panch*' — who were usually the 'elders' of the concerned group. Punishment varied according to the offence and status of the guilty. Given the socio-cultural notions prevalent during the pre-modern period, panchayat decisions were invariably regarded as being binding on the individual or groups on whom judgement had been pronounced.

Besides such 'caste panchayats', larger villages had a body — generally called *panch kul* (committee of five), in earlier records, which was like a village council. These *panch kul* were composed of village elders who were heads of various castes and religious groups of a village. This body came to be known as a *panchayat* (also *chotara*, *chora*, *hathai*), from the c. sixteenth century. The functions of this *panch kul* or *panchayat* included collection of taxes on items sold within the area of a particular village, allocation of money for charitable and public use, etc.

In the context of urban areas, c. ninth to twelfth century references suggest the existence of town or market assemblies in parts of Rajasthan. Generally known as *mandpika* (also *mahajan*), these looked after administration, levying of new taxes on imports, and sanctioning of grants. These and similar local bodies and assemblies usually dealt with local affairs, and references suggest that even the local chiefs and rulers respected the decisions of such local assemblies²⁴. As such bodies were large, and could prove unwieldy, smaller sub-committees — including a *panch kul* (committee of five), were often established. According to some records, it seems that in Mewar the larger *mahajan* assembly consisting of sixteen members was convened only when it was required to sanction a new decree or some new imposts, with routine work dealt with by the *panch kul* committees. In ensuing centuries, while certain municipal functions continued to be carried out by functionaries known as *nagar rakshak* (or variants thereof), the representative character of the *mahajan* assemblies and *panch kuls* gradually deteriorated.

From about the c. sixteenth century onwards, though *panch kuls* and town assemblies continued to exist, they ceased to have much effective say in local administration. Archival records indicate that by this time serious matters, beyond the purview of the local village assemblies, were taken before the state-appointed local administrators of the area, or in the case of villages that were part of the estates of *thikanas* and *jagirs*, before the local Thakur or Rao etc.; while in urban areas matters went before a *kotwal*. The years that witnessed the decline of the Mughal Empire, with incursions by Marathas and Pindaris and internal problems in different states of the Rajasthan region, hastened the further weakening of local governance institutions.

In the wake of post-Integration reforms and administrative measures came the ‘Rajasthan Panchayat Act, 1953’. The Rajasthan Panchayat Act, 1953 “...governed the working of village panchayats and nyaya panchayats. It was built on existing gram/village panchayat acts of the princely states of Bikaner, Jodhpur, Bharatpur, Jaipur, Sirohi, Udaipur and Karauli (though nowhere were the Panchayats functioning as vigorous institutions”²⁵. With the enforcement of the Rajasthan Panchayat Act, 1953, Nyaya (judicial) panchayats were constituted too.

Thereafter, the most significant amendment to the 1953 Act took place in 1959, in consonance with the Rajasthan Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishads Act, 1959. This followed the 1957 'Balwant Rai Mehta Committee' recommendations to India's National Development Council, regarding the establishment of Panchayati Raj in India.

Thus, in 1959 Rajasthan became the first Indian state to enact legislation for an experiment in democratic decentralization that basically entailed strengthening local grassroots-level governance. 'Panchayati Raj' was formally inaugurated in Rajasthan by the then Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, on 2 October 1959, at Nagaur²⁶.

The system placed emphasis on traditional village institutions of 'panchayats', to which reference has been made several times in the course of this book. However, the traditional institution was not revived or taken up in its previous form. It was modernised, overhauled and given some 'teeth', so that in 1959 modern Rajasthan's Panchayati Raj was a three-tier system that involved Gram (i.e. village) Panchayats, Panchayat Samitis (i.e. committees), and Zila Parishads (i.e. District Councils), which functioned as parts of an interlocked institutional structure, with the Zila Parishad as the apex institution²⁷. Zila Parishads mainly functioned as an advisory body in Rajasthan (and were somewhat stronger here than in other regions), while the Panchayat Samitis were the intermediate institution that bore the brunt of functional powers and executing authority.

The lowest unit was the Gram Panchayat (i.e. village Panchayat), which had jurisdiction over a village or a group of villages. Already, following the 1953 Act, 3,929 panchayats had been made operative in Rajasthan. The 1953 Act had also provided for the formation of *tehsil* panchayats and district boards, but as these had not become fully operational they were abolished by the 1959 Act, which opted for the institutions of Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishads instead²⁸. Adult residents of all Gram Panchayats were encouraged to participate in periodic meetings, called Gram Sabhas ('*majma-e-aam*'), so that their views about the programmes and works taken up by the panchayats could be ascertained.

Meanwhile, villages had been grouped into administrative units called Community Development Blocks, and Panchayat Samitis were made coterminous with the 232 Community Development Blocks created throughout the state of Rajasthan. (A Community Development Block had the responsibility for planning and implementing a wide range of programmes. In effect, the 'block' or Panchayat Samiti, which was not always coterminous with the revenue tehsil, became the basic unit of development and of democratic decentralization).

Each Panchayat Samiti (or Block Council), consisted of the heads or 'Sarpanch' of all the panchayats, as ex-officio members, and all MLAs (Members of the State Legislative Assembly) as ex-officio associate members. There was provision for co-opting members as per prescribed criteria, so that various special interest or other marginalised groups could be represented. The chairperson — or 'pradhan' — of each Panchayat Samiti was elected by members of the Panchayat Samiti and members of the panchayats that fell within the area of the Panchayat Samiti, while the deputy — or 'up-pradhan', was elected by the Panchayat Samiti members.

The 1959 Act also provided for *nyaya* (judicial) *panchayats* for a group of three to seven Gram Panchayats, which could administer civil and criminal cases. Each Gram Panchayat could elect one member to the Nyaya Panchayat. Nyaya Panchayats were abolished in 1992, as they had not proved very effective.

All the pradhans of the Panchayat Samitis were ex-officio members of the district-level councils, or Zila Parishads. All MLAs and MPs, as well as the president of the district-level central cooperative bank, were ex-officio associate members, and there was provision for the co-option of representatives of special interest groups (e.g. women, scheduled tribes, and scheduled castes, etc.). Each Zila Parishad was headed by a 'zila pramukh'. Both the zila pramukh and the 'up-pramukh' — or vice-chairperson, were elected from among themselves by the ex-officio and co-opted members of the Zila Parishad.

Thereafter, during the formulation of the Third and Fourth 'Five-Year Plans' (in 1961-62, and then 1965-66, respectively), the Government of

Rajasthan made serious attempts to involve the Panchayati Raj bodies in 'planning from below', but the results proved somewhat disappointing²⁹. In 1992 the 'Constitutional (73rd) Amendment Act' was passed by Parliament with regard to Panchayati Raj in India. After the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution, the 'Rajasthan Panchayati Raj Act, 1994' was enacted in Rajasthan. Among other things, this provided for 33.33% representation of women at all levels of the Panchayati Raj system, along with 17.98% reservation for Scheduled Castes, 15.29% for Scheduled Tribes, 15% for 'Other Backward Classes'. It also empowered the state government to decide which functions of the 'Eleventh Schedule' subjects of the Indian Constitution were to be transferred or entrusted to the panchayat bodies at various levels. This was in accordance with the Constitutional 73rd Amendment Act, which provided for the decentralisation and devolution of powers in the case of twenty-four out of twenty-nine subjects mentioned under Schedule XI of the Constitution, with reference to Articles 243-G and 243-I.

Attention has continued to be paid to the continued strengthening of Panchayati Raj and local self-governance structures in Rajasthan, and in the year 2000 the State of Rajasthan had 32 Zila Parishads, 237 Panchayat Samitis, and 9184 Panchayats, besides District Rural Development Agencies [DRDAs], and District Planning Committees, etc. 'Power to the People' and 'Decentralisation' continue to be contemporary 'buzz-words', and it is clear that the forms and structures of the above-mentioned structures, along with numerous other complementary policies, programmes and tasks carried out since 1949 by the Government of Rajasthan, and various other semi-official and 'Non-Governmental Organisations' (NGOs), will continue to keep pace with the needs of the times.

MUNICIPALITIES AND URBAN LOCAL ADMINISTRATION

Coming now to municipal bodies and councils, during the nineteenth century, the British made attempts towards encouraging improvements in urban life at a limited number of towns. In 1864 a municipality was established at Abu, with a six-member body nominated by the AGG. In

1866, municipalities were set up in Ajmer and Beawar, and in 1869 a Municipal Committee was set up in Jaipur. (Lacking effective powers and initiative, this twenty-six member organisation was a relatively toothless body, though). In 1879 it was Kekri's turn for a municipality, followed by Jhalawar (1883), Jodhpur and Karauli (1884), Tonk (1885), Kishangarh, Jhalarapatan and Kotputli (1892), Kotah (1895), and Sardar Shahr (1896). The opening decade of the twentieth century saw the establishment of municipalities at Bharatpur (1901), Kushalgarh (1903), Bundi (1928), Shahpura (1939), and Jaisalmer (1941).

These municipalities came up as a result of state initiative. Initially, their task revolved around sanitation and health matters, under the supervision of the local Residency Surgeons. After 1920, municipal bodies began to acquire some sort of representative character, and several states also passed Municipal Acts and legislation. In Jaipur State municipalities were re-organised in 1922. Sub-committees were set up to look after different jobs. At Bikaner Municipal Act was passed in 1923; in Tonk and Alwar in 1934; and in Pratapgarh and Shahpura in 1938. But despite these legislative acts, membership of the municipal bodies remained restricted and state-controlled.

In 1937 a limited type of elective principle was introduced for the first time in the Jodhpur Municipal Board. The 1940s saw the introduction of the elective principle in most of the municipalities within Rajasthan. In 1943 the Jaipur Municipal Act was enacted, in which elected members were at the ratio of 4:5 in the Council, while the Jodhpur Municipal Act of the same year provided for an elected majority and an elected chairman. In Kota the municipality was reorganised in 1946 providing for elected members, and in Banswara, the Act of 1947 provided for fourteen elected and eight nominated members. Despite this, the growth of modern local self-government institutions was slow in Rajasthan's princely states.

When the modern state of Rajasthan was formed, it 'inherited' the diverse institutions and municipalities that existed in almost all the important cities and towns of the covenanting states of Rajasthan. However, these institutions needed more powers and the different municipal laws also needed to be integrated. The first step towards uniformity and integration

was taken in 1949 when the former Rajasthan Union adopted the U.P. Municipal Act of 1916 by an Ordinance. In 1950 a Directorate of Local Bodies was set up. This was followed by the 'Rajasthan Town Municipalities Act, 1951' (not applicable to 'city' municipalities). In 1959 the 'Rajasthan Municipal Act' was passed, repealing and superseding all previous municipal laws and enactments prevailing in the erstwhile Rajputana states. By this Act, the municipalities of Rajasthan became empowered to derive their income from several sources such as taxes, fees, fines and penalties and remunerative enterprises³⁰

TOWARDS THE FUTURE

As we look towards the future in the twenty-first century, the modern state of Rajasthan, with its long history, is attempting to juggle its past with its present. The second half of the twentieth century has seen many efforts at modernisation, institutional re-structuring, industrialisation, agricultural improvement and agricultural extension work, social and educational initiatives, and so forth. The period also witnessed various challenges, including in the form of famine or drought years, besides the 1965 and 1971 conflicts with Pakistan — with which country the state of Rajasthan shares a long common border.

However, in modern Rajasthan's (and India's) determined chase of the elusive mirage of 'development', 'progress' and 'modernisation', there has occasionally been some 'throwing the baby out with the bath-water' scenario. In part this stemmed from the urge for 'development' and rapid 'modernisation' over the past half-century or so, and in part from a tendency to equate and club together the discarded and despised elements of feudalism, caste disparities and similar accompanying paraphernalia with traditional knowledge systems and ways of life — these latter being considered out-dated, out-moded and redundant for any 'modern' forward-looking people and their collective future.

Thus, it is 'modern' to aim for your city or town becoming a metropolis to attract the elusive 'tourist with lots of money'. It is also

‘inevitable’, according to the way popular perception has been shaped over the past few decades, that each town, city and village, and most inhabitants of the region, should discard ‘backwardness’ and aspire for obvious symbols of ‘westernisation’ and ‘modernisation’ like high-rises, etc. — even if the scarcity of piped water and inadequate electricity means difficulty in pumping water to the tops of high-rises, and the recently mushrooming ‘apartment-blocks’ need independent bore-wells, which draw upon a failing source of ground-water!

As such, in a land already short of green cover, in which tree-felling rather than planting has been a feature of the latter half of the twentieth century, scores of old trees have recently been felled by official sanction to widen roads in the name of ‘development’. And, in many rural areas, even traditional ‘*orans*’ (sanctified groves attached to temples) and sacred groves, as well as village grazing ‘commons’, or ‘*charagah*’ (common pasture lands), have been illegally encroached upon, besides being conceptually dismissed in popular perception as features of a by-gone and now redundant lifestyle.

On a different front, many new opportunities for employment and livelihood have come up. The mining industry has been vigorously developed and promoted — though in November 2002 the Supreme Court placed a ban on mining activity in the Aravalli region (later modified, following appeals, to apply to certain areas and types of activity). What is interesting, though, is that prior to this, in the past couple of decades, stone-quarrying (both legal and illegal) and similar activities, even in or around areas with wildlife and foliage-cover, and various other environmentally sensitive activities have generally tended to be vociferously defended by concerned lobbies in many forums. Their argument being that ‘progress’ and the economic ‘betterment’ of the state of Rajasthan are the requirements of the twenty-first century, and that ‘development’ should not be impeded by what, in their eyes, constitute such ‘minor’ and maudlin issues as forests, wildlife, and environmental protection, while so many people struggle to eke out a living! This collective disregard for the land and climate is in sharp contrast to the local traditions, where indigenous water-harvesting systems, planting of trees, etc have been a feature of regional history through the centuries (as already noted).

Meanwhile, in response to the large volume of tourist traffic — mainly from other regions of India and in lesser measure from overseas, there has been a renewed interest in partially adapting old forts, palaces and *havelis* under private (i.e. non-government) ownership for tourist purposes. Many of these belong to the families of former rulers, *thakurs*, etc., or descendants of long-dead ministers and officials who had served in various erstwhile states. Some belong to families of eighteenth and nineteenth century merchants — the ‘Marwaris’, who moved away for business purposes to different parts of India but never gave up their traditional ties and built large *havelis* in their home-territories, many of which had fallen into disrepair over the years — sometimes due to joint and/or disputed ownership. Despite the cries voiced by a few of a ‘revival of Rajput domination’ through these buildings coming into the tourist circuit, tourist interest in these scores of ancient fortresses and buildings — not all of which can be protected and preserved by the State or the Centre through their respective departments of archaeology for obvious reasons — may serve to infuse new life for their conservation.

Obviously, not all modern interventions and attitudes can be condemned out-of-hand for leading to a situation of worry (or gloom). For example, besides efforts to fight Rajasthan’s by now traditional and recurrent problem of famine, the 1950s-’70s period also saw concentrated work on aspects like power and electricity generation, irrigation and dams, move towards industrialisation etc. In the power sector, after initial post-1947 modernisation and augmentation of power generation and distribution networks, including Rajasthan’s participation and well-defined shares in the Inter-State Power Projects, and following slackness for a while thereafter for some years, new power plants were installed. There was also an expansion in the capacity and distribution of the existing generating units and distribution networks. Rajasthan has a nuclear power generation complex in the Kota region and thermal power complex in Kota and Suratgarh areas respectively, and solar and wind energy have been tapped in some areas. However, the days of self-sufficiency in the power sector are yet a distant dream. Similarly, though rich in mineral resources, some of which have yet to be tapped, Rajasthan has lagged behind in industrial development, and in transport and communications.

Rajasthan has also seen several initiatives of governmental and NGO co-operation, particularly in the areas of poverty alleviation, women's development and education, including the Antyodaya, Women's Development Programme (WDP) and the Lok Jumbish and Shiksha Karmi Project, to name but some of the many such attempts. Since all these aspects of development and change in modern Rajasthan cannot be dealt with in greater detail at this point, I shall leave the issue here and request interested readers to look at the numerous recent publications that have looked at developmental issues etc. in Rajasthan.

While there has been considerable progress and expansion in educational facilities, in terms of technical education and acquisition of modern skills, other states/regions have beaten Rajasthan to a lower place. However, in terms of traditional arts and crafts the rich heritage is now being commercially exploited to a large extent, and Rajasthan's handicrafts, fabrics, and gem cutting and polishing and export trade are bringing in promising returns and revenues.

In the rural sector economy, uncertain weather conditions have brought in a regression through recurring droughts and near-famine conditions affecting the production of agricultural crops and the varied animal husbandry resources of cattle, sheep and goat, and camels etc. Meanwhile, one redeeming, and to some extent, a drought-proofing measure has been the extension of the irrigation facilities in general and the construction of large dual purpose irrigation and power projects such as the Ganga-Bhakra-Rajasthan Canal (now renamed Indira Gandhi Canal or 'Nahar'³¹), projects serving the north western desert parts of Rajasthan; the Chambal Project in Kota-Bundi area; and the Mahi in the Banswara-Dungarpur districts of southern Rajasthan. The importance of these projects — and the positive changes they have wrought — is clearly recognisable already.

However, as recent failures of monsoons followed by drought and famine conditions in quick succession have shown, the State seems to have reached the outer limit of exploiting or harnessing its water and other natural resources on the surface and underground. Simultaneously, after nearly half a century of neglect, abandonment and abuse, Rajasthan's

traditional water-collection and storage systems — *baoris, talaabs, tankas*, and the like — are now in a state of disrepair, even as ground-water availability has depleted. And, under pressure to collect and ‘harvest’ rainfall, a small beginning has only been made in the past few years towards reviving or replicating the structures and systems that for centuries allowed humans to manipulate their surroundings in this region — desert lands and all — which many post-Independence ‘modern’ inhabitants of Rajasthan scorned to consider important or valuable during the past fifty or so years, in our collective wisdom!

The nature of social and community interaction has altered too, over the past half-century or so, with education and socio-economic-political awareness regarding aspects like rights and equality coming to the fore. To an extent, this has also led to some dissension as well as increased competitiveness between caste and social groups, which has been further accentuated by the parliamentary provision of job-reservations at the national and state levels. The negative aspect of such a trend includes the lurking danger of further social and community dissensions, and misuse of this in electioneering etc. What issues with such disintegrative potentials will mean for the administrative state of Rajasthan and the nation of India must be a matter of future concern.

The land today called Rajasthan has borne witness to numerous generations of human activity, across many centuries, and many remains and reminders of the past still stand as mute testimony. The coming decades and millennia will, undoubtedly, leave their marks too — though what those will be is still hidden in the future!

¹ For an overview, see N. Sharma *Transition from Feudalism to Democracy* (2000) Aalekh, Jaipur; L.M. Eshwar *Sunset and Dawn* (1968) FACT, New Delhi; S. Chaturvedi *New Image of Rajasthan* (1966) Government of Rajasthan, Jaipur; etc.

² Apparently the Bhils asserted their traditional rights over Mewar and appealed to the Maharana, in the name of his ancestors Bappa Rawal and Pratap to side with them and not merge the state.

³ See, Menon, *op.cit.* 1956.

- ⁴ Singh, 1974, pp.323-324
- ⁵ Singh, 1974, pp.333-335..
- ⁶ Singh, 1974, pp.333-335.
- ⁷ Singh 1974, pp.341.
- ⁸ On 27 February 1948 the rulers of Dholpur and Karauli were asked by the Indian States' Ministry whether, given certain affinities with Alwar and Bharatpur, they would like to integrate their states in a union. They agreed.
- ⁹ India's Ministry of States' wanted Shahpura and Kishangarh to merge with Ajmer-Merwara, but the concerned rulers as well as 'popular' leaders of the two states preferred integrating with the Rajasthan Union.
- ¹⁰ Verma (d. January 1969) was later MP for Tonk constituency. In 1956 he organised a meeting of itinerant Gadia-Lohars (also Gadoliya-Lohar).
- ¹¹ *Rajasthan State Gazetteer*, 1995, pp.82.
- ¹² Rs. 4.87 crores in cash was transferred, along with assets of the Bikaner State Railway. The transfer included about nine crores rupees of railway line and rolling stock to the Central Government, and over a thousand miles of rail track. (Barring the State of Baroda, Bikaner's rail network was the biggest amongst all other Indian States).
- ¹³ Much has been written on this transition by various political and social scientists, but cannot be referred to in full here. For one perspective on 'Rajput polity' see I. Narain and P.C. Mathur's *The Thousand Year Raj; Regional Isolation and Rajput Hinduism in Rajasthan Before and After 1947*, in F. Franknel and M.S.A. Rao (Ed.) *Dominance and State Power in India*, vol.11, OUR New Delhi, 1990, pp. 1-58. For socio-political transformations, including 'Rajput feudal culture', see, among others, Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and Lloyd I. Rudolph's *Essays on Rajputana*, Concept, New Delhi, 1984; Rudolph and Rudolph, with Mohan Singh Kanota (Eds.) *Reversing the Gaze: Amar Singh's Diary*, OUR New Delhi, 2000; F. Taft (Ed.) *From Purdah to the People*, Rawat, Jaipur & New Delhi, 2000; and P.C. Mathur (Ed.) *Social and Economic Dynamics of Rajasthan Politics*, Aalekh, Jaipur, 1996.
- ¹⁴ When the Constitution 26th Amendment Bill was moved in the *Lok Sabha* for consideration on 2 December 1971, Baroda's Fateh Singh Rao Gaekwad told Parliament: "Twenty-two years ago on this very floor we were referred to as co-architects of Indian independence. Today we are branded an anachronism and reactionaries obstructing the path of building an egalitarian society..." The Constitution 26th Amendment bill was adopted by the Lok Sabha by 381 votes to 6. A week later, amidst the Indo-Pakistan war, the Rajya Sabha passed it by 167 votes to 7. On 28 December, the President of India gave the Bill his assent.
- ¹⁵ For more, see Richard Sisson's *The Congress Party in Rajasthan: Political Integration and Institution-Building in an Indian* Berkeley, 1972.
- ¹⁶ L.M. Eshwar, *Sunset and Dawn*. FACT, New Delhi, 1968, pp.51.

- [17](#) Eshwar, *Ibid*, pp.51-52.
- [18](#) She has had a long innings in politics, and became the Deputy Chief Minister of Rajasthan in early 2003 when her party was in power.
- [19](#) Frances Taft (Ed.) *From Purdah to the People*, Rawat Publications, Jaipur & New Delhi, 2000, pp.55.
- [20](#) The retrenched Jats went on strike. There was also other pressure on the State to take them back.
- [21](#) Literally, ‘younger brothers’. They were descendants of junior lines, who had traditionally obtained small landholdings for maintenance purposes, while the eldest sons had inherited the major lands, assets and titles.
- [22](#) For an insightful and descriptive perspective on the subject, and the ensuing movement, see Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and Lloyd I. Rudolph, *Essays on Rajputana*, Concept, New Delhi, 1984, pp.50-78.
- [23](#) *Ibid*, pp.66.
- [24](#) There were also special-interest groups, temple-gatherings and guilds of professionals (*Goshthis* etc.) that controlled the actions and behaviour of their respective professions in concerned areas. Jain sources record that during the c. eleventh to fifteenth centuries adult Jains had councils called *samghas*, which took decisions about hosting religious functions, and group pilgrimages. Each *samgha* was headed by a *samghapati*. Jain monks, nuns and women from the laity sometimes served as members of *samghas*.
- [25](#) Rakesh Hooja and Meenakshi Hooja, ‘Rajasthan’, in N. Buch (Ed.) *Status of Panchayati Raj in the States and Union Territories of India* 2000, Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi, 2000, pp.251.
- [26](#) Rajasthan won the race to be the first to introduce Panchayati Raj, beating Andhra Pradesh by nine days!
- [27](#) Rakesh Hooja and Meenakshi Hooja, 2000, *op.cit*, pp.251.
- [28](#) *Ibid*, pp.253.
- [29](#) *Ibid*, pp.254. See the same work for more on the functioning and effectiveness of Panchayati Raj in Rajasthan.
- [30](#) In the late 1970s the State Government categorised all municipalities in Rajasthan into four classes. By 1978 there were one hundred and eighty-seven municipalities in Rajasthan.
- [31](#) Erstwhile Bikaner state’s canal irrigation scheme for a large part of the desert wastes became the blue-print for the ‘Rajasthan Canal’ — now renamed the ‘Indira Gandhi Nahar Project’ (IGNP).

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GLOSSARY

Amil	Officer (often revenue related)
Anna	A type of coinage
Annadata	Literally ‘the giver of grain/sustenance’. Honorific commonly used for rulers in most of the erstwhile states of Rajputana.
Antehpura	Inner quarters; residential area of a palace; <i>zenana</i> or harem.
Badaran	Senior-most among the women staff of the harem or <i>zenana</i> .
Badshah (Padshah)	Emperor; King
Bajra	Millet
Bahi	Ledger or account-book
Bakshi	Term derived from the Mughal Court (Mir-Bakshi), and used in 18th and 19th century Rajasthan for the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. (See also Senapati).
Baori	step-well. Also known as ‘Baoli’.
Bapoti	Inherited property or wealth. Also a type of land tenure.
Baraat	bridegroom’s marriage procession or party
Bazaar	market street; shopping area
Bhai-beta	kinsmen; literally ‘brothers and sons’
Bhai-bantt	system of dividing inheritance equally amongst all the sons
Bhanej	sister’s son
Begum	Queen; wife of a Nawab, chief or aristocrat; also, term used for a princess or high-born (Muslim) lady.
Bhang	hemp
Bhom	Category of land-grant

Bhopa	religious man; one who recites Pabu-ji's tale using a traditional 'Phad' scroll;
Bhumia/Bhomiya	Holder of ' <i>bhum</i> '/' <i>bhom</i> ' category of land-tenure.
Bigha	A measurement of land, usually 1 bigha is less than an acre; 50 bighas = 10 hectare.
Biswa	Sub-division of a bigha; unit of land
Biswedari	Holder of a 'biswedari' tenure.
Biswedari	A type of land tenure
Charas	hemp
Charkha	Spinning wheel
Chauth	Literally, a fourth, or quarter. This 1/4 was the share the Marathas demanded from various kingdoms and chiefdoms as 'tax'. The Marathas sometimes levied an additional 'tax' of 'Sardeshmukhi', which was a further 1/10th portion of the concerned state's revenues. Sometimes 'Khandni' or a fixed indemnity, was also taken.
Chhatri	Canopy or umbrella; a pillared cenotaph with a canopied roof; memorial.
Dabhai	Term used for the sons of the foster-mother of a prince or noble.
Daftri	Head peon
Damami	Drummer
Dan	Alms
Dargah	shrine with a tomb of a Sufi saint.
Daroga	Police chief
Daroga	A sub-group of palace attendants in a Rajput state. Over time, they became a mutually exclusive group, intermarrying with other Daroga sub-groups only.
Davri	Personal attendant/maid-servant within a <i>zenana</i> .
Desh	State; country, land, homeland; honour connected with state or land.

Dewan	Senior revenue officer or finance minister; Also term for a prime minister.
Dhai	Wet-nurse
Dhenkli	Traditional water-lifting device
Dholi	Drummer. (fern. Dholan)
Digvijay	Attaining 'world-victory' — usually signifying a powerful monarch, whose suzerainty was acknowledged in all the directions surrounding his own capital.
Doab	Land between two rivers
Dola	Palanquin
Duhita/ Duhitra	daughter's son
Durbar (Darbar)	Court. (The term was also used for the ruler in many Rajput states).
Farman	Imperial/royal edict, decree or command, usually written.
Fauj	Army; military contingent
Faujdar	Commander of the army - fauj (or a wing of it); term for an administrative official.
Faujdari	Military-cum-civil governorship of an area
Gaon	Village. (See also Gram).
Gaddi	Throne; also a seat.
Ganja	hemp
Garh	Fort
Garhi	A small fort
Genayat (also Saga)	Families with whom matrimonial alliances were entered into. In Marwar, the court nobles from non-Rathore clans.
Ghat	River-bank; bathing place along the bank of a river; steps at a riverbank.
Girdawar	A revenue official
Gotra	Lineage; clan

Gram	Village. (See also, Gaon)
Gram Panchayat	Village council.
Gram Sabha	Assembly of all adult villagers
Gram Sevak	Village-level worker
Hakim	Officer in charge of a district, or other territorial unit; master
Hali	Farm worker
Halka	(area of) jurisdiction
Haveli	Courtyard house or mansion.
Hazoori	Own or personal lands or honour, as distinct from those connected with the State.
Hundi	Bill of exchange, or promissory note, used in traditional long-distance trade
Ijara	Land granted in sub-lease by the Mughal Emperor, or by any state, to a subordinate
Ijaradar	Holder of <i>ijara</i> land.
Inam	Gift, award or prize. Also a type of land-holding originally awarded as a gift.
Iqta	System of granting the rights of revenue of a specified area in lieu of salary.
Istmirardars	Holder of an 'Istmirari', or a 'permanent land revenue settlement' grant.
Istmirari	Type of land-grant, in which the revenue rates were fixed or 'permanent'
Izara	Sub-lease
Jagir	Formally assigned land-holding, the revenues of which were collected by the holder in lieu of certain obligations.
Jagirdar	Holder of a jagir
Jamiat	Rajput troop or army, usually made up of kinsmen
Janapada	ancient term, literally meaning 'land of the people (jana)', used to denote a state/kingdom/republic. (Particularly,

though not solely, republics and kingdoms contemporaneous with Buddha and Mahavir and extending into the ensuing centuries until the expanding Mauryan empire incorporated many lesser states). The term has also been used to denote a district or even administrative sub-division in later centuries.

Jauhar	Group immolation by the women and children of a besieged fort when the fall of the place seemed inevitable
Jaziya	A type of tax imposed on non-Muslims. (Muslims were expected to give a set proportion of their annual income as <i>zakat</i>).
Jharokha	projecting balcony or latticed window.
Jhalara	Ground-water body, mainly intended for community use, bathing and religious rites. This is often rectangular in shape, with steps on three or four sides. The term is sometimes also used for shallow wells dug along the banks of a stream, from which water was lifted.
Ji	Honorific denoting respect placed at the end of a name or a title.
Kamdar	Agent; estate manager or administrative officer
Kasba/Qasba	Small town, township
Kavya	Poetic compositions; epics; a body of literature.
Khadi	Hand-spun and hand-woven cloth
Khalsa	State/Crown property; Crown lands; land directly managed by the State
Khamagani	Salutation or greeting traditional to Rajasthan/Rajputana.
Kharif	Summer, or monsoonal crop
Khawas	Companion, usually a term given by a ruler
Khillat	Robe of honour presented by a ruler
Khiraj	Tribute
Khudkasht	Self-cultivated; land farmed by its owner, rather than by a tenant-farmer.
Khyat	A narrative or chronicle; form of manuscript; (Probably

derived from 'khyaati' meaning fame).

Kisan	Peasant; farmer
Kos	A measure of distance (In most area 1 kos generally corresponds to 2½ miles)
Kotri	Literally, a chamber, or branch, section/segment. In usage, <i>Kotri</i> indicates branches of ruling households of certain Rajput states, to whom certain recognition, rights and privileges were given in perpetuity.
Kotwal	City in-charge; police head of a city or town; jailer
Kshatriya	A warrior; one who belongs to India's warrior caste.
Kunwar	Term used for a son of a chief or ruler during the father's lifetime.
Lambardar	Term used in some areas for the village headman
Lakh	A unit signifying one hundred thousand
Lathi	Cane; wooden baton or stick
Lok	the world
Lok Sabha	House of Representatives (Lower House) of India's bicameral Parliament.
Log	people.
Ma-ji	Term used for the Queen Mother/ Dowager Maharani; widowed queen.
Mahajan	Member of the mercantile community; trader; businessman
Mahakma-Khas	State Office
Maharaj	Title given to the younger son(s) of a Maharaja (i.e. a Maharaj-Kumar), upon the demise of a ruler, and the accession to the throne of some other member (eg. an older brother) of the family. The son of a Maharaj was often called a Rajkumar (as distinct from a Maharaj-Kumar) during his father's life-time, and would succeed to the title of Maharaj upon the latter's demise. In turn, his son would then hold the title of Rajkumar. This would carry on for three, or some other fixed number of generations, before the title lapsed.

Maharaja	Literally ‘Great Ruler’(Maha + Raja), ruler of a state. In some of the Rajput princely states alternative forms like Maharana, Maharawat, Maharawal, Maharao or Raj-Rawal were traditionally used. The ruler of Udaipur, for instance, was called a Maharana.
Maharaj-Kumar	Son of a Maharaja.
Maharaj-Kunwarani	Wife of a Maharaj-Kumar.
Maharani	Queen.
Mandi	Market; regulated market especially for agricultural products; commercial centre.
Mansab	A court honour given by Mughal emperors. There existed different categories of <i>mansab</i> which specified the rank, lands, cavalry strength etc. awarded to a particular person.
Mantri	Minister
Mukhiya/ Mukhia	Headman; chief of a community or group
Munshi	Accountant; scribe; also agent or estate-manager
Mutsuddie	Business community that was also into administration, especially in Marwar/Jodhpur
Nagara	Royal drum
Naib	Deputy
Naib-Subedar	Deputy Governor
Nakedar	Official posted at check-points to collect official toll-tax
Nakkara	Kettle-drum — usually a sign of royalty
Narendra	Ruler or king; literally — ‘lord of humans’
Nawab	Title of a (Muslim) ruler or chief.
Nawabzada	Son of a Nawab
Nazar (nazrana)	Offerings of coins or a present to the ruler on ceremonial occasions as tokens of respect or allegiance; offering made to acknowledge suzerainty of a superior power.
Nazir	Term used in some parts of Rajasthan for eunuchs in royal service

Nishan	Imperial Mughal Communication
Oal	Becoming a short-term hostage to meet certain demands.
Pagri	Turban; see also <i>Safa</i> .
Palki	Palanquin
Panchayat	Term derived from a five-member (<i>panch</i>) committee of village (and/ or caste) elders who arbitrated and gave judgement in all manners of local issues, problems and situations.
Pandit	Term used for learned Brahmin; priest.
Pardayat	Term used in Rajasthan for a senior category of a ruler's concubine
Pargana	Tract of land; administrative unit; district
Paswan	Term used in Rajasthan for a category of a ruler's concubine
Pat-Rani	Queen-consort; seniormost queen.
Patel	Village headman; (term probably derived from pattedar — grant-holder); village revenue official.
Patwari	Revenue official who handled village level work
Patvi	Heir-designate, or senior-most male of a sub-clan
Patta	land-record or deed
Pradhan	Prime minister, premier officer; head; Term also used for chief of an organisation, or of village or town councils.
Praja	People
Pratishtha	Installation; consecration (usually of an idol in a temple)
Puja	Worship
Pujari	Priest of a temple
Pukka (Pucca)	Built-up; permanent; opposite of a temporary structure; something definite or firm
Purana	Old. The term is also applied to the body of literature known as the 'Puranas', which contain many genealogical listings and legends about India's 'ancient' past.

Purdah	Literally a curtain or veil; the practice of seclusion of women.
Purohit	Officiating priest of a ceremony; or a state's royal priest
Qasba/Kasba	Small town, township
Qiledar	Commander or in-charge of a fort
Rabi	Winter crop
Rahat	(So-called Persian wheel) Device for lifting water; term Charas also used.
Raj	to rule; the State
Raja	Ruler
Rajput	Lit. 'son of a Raja', the term has been used from medieval times onwards to denote the warrior ruling peoples of many parts of India, all of whom trace their descent from ancient India's <i>kshatriya</i> caste.
Raj Dadi	Paternal grandmother of a ruler/Dowager Rajmata.
Rajmata	Queen Mother/Dowager Maharani; same as 'Ma-ji'
Rajpramukh	Governor or token 'Head of State' in the post-Independence 'Part B States' of erstwhile princely India, which had been merged to form larger 'Unions'.
Raj-tilak	Ceremonial anointing of the forehead of a new ruler at the time of his coronation.
Rajya Sabha	The 'Upper House' or House of States of India's bicameral Parliament.
Rai	Term used for ruler, chief or king, especially—though not solely, during the c. AD 1000-1700 period. Persian chroniclers often referred to Hindu kings by the title of 'Rai'. The word is synonymous with Raja, Rao, Rana, Rawal.
Rao	Title meaning ruler or chief; also synonymous with Raja.
Raola/Rawala	Royal residence; inner quarters
Risala	Army; contingent of an armed force; cavalry
Rupee/rupiya	Form of coinage

Ryot	tenant-farmer; subject of a state; cultivator.
Sabha	An assembly or gathering; council.
Sadar Kanungo	Chief revenue inspector
Sadhu	Sage, hermit; one who has taken holy vows and renounced family ties.
Safa	Turban. In some states (e.g. Udaipur), the term <i>Pagri</i> was used instead of <i>Safa</i> .
Saga	Person related through marriage ties between families. Interaction between 'sagas' was an important aspect of Rajput life, affecting social, administrative and military etc. matters. (See also, ganayat)
Sahukar	Trader; business-man; mercantile-banker.
Samadhi	Final resting-place; memorial-site; term sometimes used for cenotaph or mausoleum
Samanta	Feudatory; fief-holder; also chieftain, landholder, Lord.
Samiti	Committee
Samvat	An Indian calendar. The most common of the Samvat reckonings that has been used in Rajasthan is the Vikram Samvat, established in 57 BC. A second is the Saka Samvat, which began in AD 78. Other local calendars have also existed, and have been referred to at appropriate places in the main text of this book.
Sanad	Document; charter; authority; grant of land or title.
Sanyas	State of renunciation
Sanyasi	One who has renounced worldly connections in search of spirituality (taken <i>sanyas</i>).
Sardar (Sirdar)	A noble or chief; one who has been granted the title of 'Sardar'
Sarkar/Sirkar	An administrative division (esp. under the Mughals); a big administrative unit.
Sarkar	Government; the authority; euphemism for king or superior
Sarpanch	Head of a village council; head of a Panchayat body; local elected village head.

Satyagraha	Standing up for the truth and civil rights, a creed of Gandhian philosophy; movement of peaceful non-violent opposition to British rule over India
Sawar	mounted cavalry; a horse-rider
Scyce	Groom (of horses).
Senapati	Commander-in-chief of the armed forces. (See also Bakshi)
Serai/Sarai	Wayside inn; travellers' lodgings, especially along trade and caravan-routes.
Seth	Merchant; business-man; mercantile-banker.
Shamlat	Joint or combined (administration or property)
Shikar	A shoot; hunting; big game hunt; hunting expedition
Sirdar (Sardar)	Noble; chief; commander
Shahzada	Prince; (literally son of a Shah)
Stupa	Buddhist monument, originally built to contain and revere a relic associated with the Buddha.
Suba (Subah)	Province
Subedar	Governor of a suba or province
Sultan	King; Emperor (usually used for Muslim rulers).
Sultana	Queen; Empress. Sometimes the term 'Malika' was used for the Empress
Swaraj	Self-rule; government of Indians in place of the British 'Raj' over India
Taccavi	Money advanced by the state to cultivators for agricultural purposes
Talab	Lake
Tanka/ Taka	Medieval coin
Tantra-Pala	Governor of a province
Tazimi	A type of court-honour; One who held certain honours or state distinctions

Tehsil /Tahsil	An administrative land unit; usually a sub-district or sub-pargana level.
Tehsildar	Administrative and revenue head of a tehsil
Thakur	A Rajput noble/chief; holding the title to a Thikana or Jagir (fiefdom).
Thali /Thai	A round metal platter, traditionally used for eating and/or serving food.
Thana	Garrison-post; police-station.
Thanedar	Garrison commander; In-charge of a Thana
Thikana	Estate; fief-land; tracts held by a Thakur or Thikanedar.
Thikanedar	Holder of a Thikana
Tika/teeka	Mark of coronation; act of recognising succession by 'offering tika'.
Tirtha	Pilgrimage-site; undertaking a pilgrimage; a holy site with temples etc.; a river-ford.
Tuladan	Ceremonial weighing (of a ruler etc.) against money or gold, silver, gems, etc. The weighed money or gems was always given away in charity
Umrao	A Noble; title given to a court noble (as for Sirdar).
Vakil-i-Mutlaq	Tax Commissioner
Vamsha/Vansha	Lineage
Vamshavali	Genealogy
Vidhan Sabha	Legislative Assembly
Watan jagir	Jagir comprising a kingdom (or estate); lands that normally devolved by inheritance upon the holder, with the formal approval and confirmation of the Mughal Emperor.
Wazir/Vizier	Minister; Prime Minister
Yuvraj	Heir-apparent. Often the term 'Maharaj-Kumar' was used instead. In many States the term 'H.A.' (Heir-Apparent) was also used in the 20th century.
Yuvrani	(Maharaj-Kunwarani) Wife of the heir-apparent.

Zamindar

Land-holder; fief-holder; local lord

Zenana/ Zenankhana

Term used for womens' (inner) apartments, especially where purdah was prevalent; pertaining to women. In contrast, men's quarters were the 'Mardana'

Zila

An administrative unit; district

SOME TRADITIONAL WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

WEIGHTS

1 Tola	11.66 grams
1 Chhatank	58.32 grams
1 Seer	16 Chhatank
1 Seer	933.10 grams
1 Maund	40 seer
1 Maund	37.32 kilograms
1 Seer (24 tolas)	279.93 grams
1 Ton	1,016.05 kilograms

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would have been, if my parents had not made the state of Rajasthan their new home after my father was 'allotted' the Rajasthan 'cadre' of the Indian Administrative Service when I was around two-and-a-half years old!

Rajasthan, also referred to by terms like 'Rajwarra', 'Raethan' and 'Rajputana' in the past, is synonymous in popular perception as the land of rajas and maharajas, chivalry, forts and palaces, the fabled Great Indian Desert or Thar desert, hardy folk and a treasure-trove of ancient lore, music, dance, ballads and myths.

The present-day Rajasthan came into being when nineteen princely states and two chiefdoms of Rajputana were merged together between 1948 and 1950. To this, tracts like Ajmer-Merwara and a few other zones were added in 1956. The region has a long history, stretching from the pre-historic Old Stone Age, in which local geography and environment had a role in determining the settlement-patterns and locations of towns and cities. The book covers a broad spectrum, encompassing the political, socio-cultural and economic history of present-day Rajasthan from the earliest times up to the middle of the twentieth century, in a comprehensive yet easy-to-read text aimed at, both, the general reader and scholar, alike.

A History of Rajasthan uses various archival, epigraphical, numismatic, architectural, archaeological, and art-history related information as well as traditional narratives, and oral and written chronicles, to provide a general overview of aspects like literature, religion, art and architecture, position of women, socio-economic conditions, science and technology, as well as the subaltern, peoples' oriented, 'everyday' life of the 'average citizen'.

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