

Angma Jhala and Jayasinhji Jhala (Eds.)

Genealogy, Archive, Image:

Interpreting Dynastic History in Western India, c.1090-2016

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For Bava
H. H. Maharaja Meghrajji III of Dhrangadhra
Writer, Anthropologist, Artist, Politician, Historian

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as well as support the study and understanding of Jhalavad through research grants and sabbatical leaves. Temple's Center for the Humanities hosted the first exhibition of paintings referred to in this collection during 2013. In 2014, the paintings were also shown at Mehrangarh Fort Museum in Jodhpur, India, and we thank H. H. Maharaja Gajsinh II of Jodhpur, Rajkumar Martand Singh of Kapurthala and Director Karni Singh Jasol, for exhibiting these works. We are grateful to Harvard University's Library of World Music for their interest in the preservation and collection of Jhalavadi music and Tozzer Library for their acquisition of the documentary film, *Halo of Heroes*. In particular, we thank the late John Marshall and Documentary Education Resources for their decades of interest in the ethnographic films of Jhalavad.

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Research Society and *Durbar*, the journal of the Indian Military Historical Society. His next book, (Helion & Company Ltd, 2018), will cover the contribution of the Indian Princely States to the First World War.

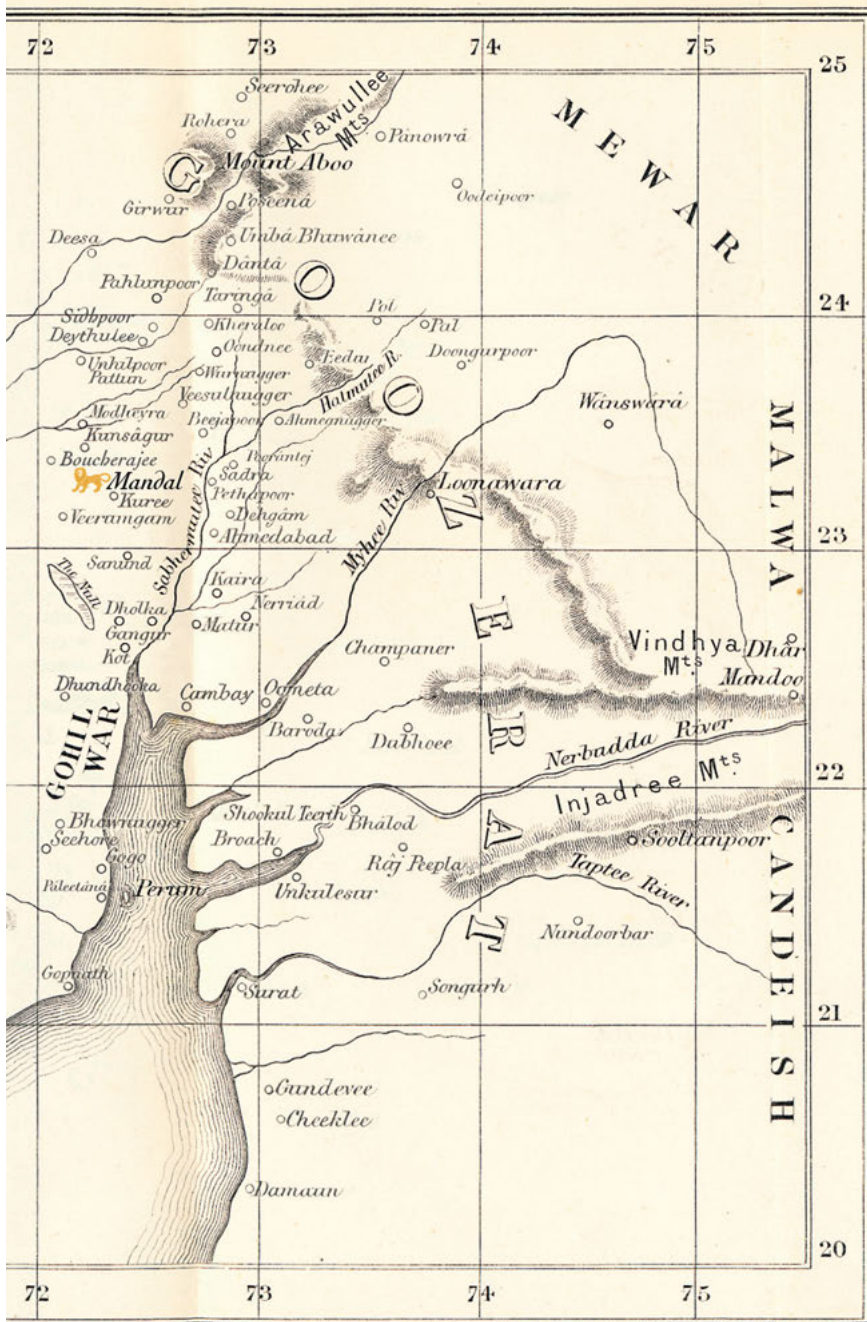
Kevin McGrath was born in southern China in 1951 and educated in England and Scotland; he has lived and worked in France, Greece, and India. Presently he is an associate of the Department of South Asian Studies and poet in residence at Lowell House, Harvard University. His many publications include *Fame* (1995), *Lioness* (1998), *Maleas* (2002), *The Sanskrit Hero* (2004), *Flyer* (2005), *Comedia* (2008), *Stri* (2009), *Jaya* (2011), *Supernature* (2012), *Heroic Krsna and Eroica* (2013), *In The Kacch and Windward* (2015), *Arjuna Pandava and Eros* (2016), and *Raja Yudhisthira* (forthcoming 2017). McGrath lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts, with his family.

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Adapted from A.K. Forbe's *Ras Mala 1878 Map*. Showing Jhallesvar and other Jhala Capital Cities from 1093-1878.



Map created from A.K. Forbe's RASMALA 1878.

Angma D. Jhala

1 Introduction: Genealogy, Archive, Image

This compilation of essays addresses the ways in which history and tradition are ‘reinvented’ (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983) through text, memory and painting. In particular, it focuses on the making of Jhala dynastic history in Jhalavad over a millennium, from the eleventh century to the present day in northeastern Saurashtra, a region of peninsular Gujarat in western India. Hindu Rajput *kuls* (clans), like the Jhalas, have existed in India since the seventh century and in Saurashtra from the eighth century onwards (Singhji, 1994, 30). During this period, they have shaped internal religious and caste politics through intraclan and intercaste rivalries and alliances, as well as the region’s relationships with external, hegemonic state forces, including the Rajput Solanki and Vaghela imperial dynasties, the Delhi and Gujarat Sultanates, the Mughal empire, the Maratha confederacy, the British Raj and the postcolonial Indian Republic.

Over this period, the Jhalas have been a force in the region. They founded their kingdom in the late eleventh century at Patadi before forming capitals at Santalpur, Mandal, Kuwa-Kankavati and Halvad. Later, they established the capital city of Dhrangadhra in 1741 (Mayne, 1921, 27-30), where the erstwhile ruling family still resides. After 1783, the kingdom was renamed Halvad-Dhrangadhra, and in 1820 came under the expanding control of the English East India Company (McLeod, 1999, 19). Following the first war of Indian Independence or the ‘Mutiny’ in 1858, it was administratively reclassified as a princely state.¹ At the time of the last ruler, Maharaja Meghrajji III’s birth in 1923, Halvad-Dhrangadhra was a First Class, 13 gun-salute state, comprising of 1,157 square miles and a population of 250,000 (Obituary of the Maharaja of Dhrangadhra-Halvad, 2010).

Adopting Fernand Braudel’s *longue durée* approach, these essays illustrate how the ‘scars of events’ from the past affect a present reality (Strauss as quoted in Braudel, 1982, 36). A multidisciplinary work, which crosses the boundaries of history, anthropology, musicology, literary studies, visual, film and digital media, this volume investigates how connective histories, what we term ‘genealogical geographies’², construct a region, community, dynasty and family over several centuries. ‘Genealogical geographies’ is an understanding of the present and the past as shaped by lineal records of kinship. In this way, it links the deeply intimate life histories of individuals, the premier Jhala kings or Jhallesvars and their close associates, royal and non-royal, with the formation of a particular land and place – Jhalavad – both

¹ The princely states, which consisted of more than five hundred semi-autonomous kingdoms, covered two fifths of the subcontinent’s land mass and one third of its population. They created their own forms of internal governance, revenue collection, law courts and religious institutions, separate from that of directly governed British India (Copland, 1997, 8; Ramusack, 2004, 2).

² We are indebted to Rajkumari Rajasree Jhala who helped us coin this term.

as a territorial state found on an ever shifting map, and an emotive geography of the imagination, remembered both in past and contemporary longings (Anderson, 1983). In the process, these essays highlight the importance of studying peripheral states and marginal actors in the context of larger imperial and national historiographies.

In particular, this volume chronicles the genealogical history of the Jhala *kul* and its rulers through a series of digitally produced miniature paintings. These paintings are themselves interpretations of the collected textual and oral archive of Meghrajji III (1923-2010). Carefully enhanced over a lifetime, this archive includes ancient, medieval, colonial and postcolonial texts as well as eyewitness accounts and ethnographies. No other scholarly work delves into the history of the Jhala dynasty in such a systematic way and with such breadth.

It is a particularly fortuitous and opportune time to publish this book, which could not have been conceived in an earlier era of academic production. While rooted in the pre-modern era of the eleventh century, this book explores the making and remaking of identity in contemporary Jhalavad through twenty-first century methods of expression which have emerged only recently with the digital age and communications revolution. Before going further, it is important to address the history of this region and its larger place in the Indian subcontinent.



Figure 1.1: Poet Dungarsi recounts the tale of the founding of Halvad February 10, 1488 to Jhalavad Raj Gajsinhji I in 1663.

1.1 The Periphery/Centre Debate: Framing a Region Through Dynastic History

While a peripheral state in western India, Jhalavad lay at the vibrant fault lines of global, dynamic empires and cosmopolitan, culturally hybrid innovations. The history of kingdoms and royal courts around the world is inherently one of transcultural exchange and flexible, porous border sharing, either for those on the fringes or centres of empire. Rooted firmly in a regional past in what is today contemporary Saurashtra, the Jhala royal court and its satellite aristocracy at various times was influenced by (and influenced) the larger political, religious and economic forces of empire, which shaped the Indian subcontinent during much of its history, and vibrantly connected it with transcultural systems of political governance, law, revenue collection, religious expression, and material production, patronage and consumption.

As historians of modern South Asian and imperial history have argued, regional or local narratives are invariably global histories (Bayly, 2004, 2), shaped by global geopolitics, trade routes, cultural and religious amalgamations (Darwin, 2008) and imperial collecting (Jasanoff, 2005; McGowan, 2005, 263-287), and should be read more comprehensively and deeply over the *longue durée* (Armitage and Guldi, 2015; Bayly, 1989; Pomeranz, 2000; Greene, 1994; Daniels and Kennedy, 2002; Smolenski and Humphrey, 2005; Marshall, 2007).

Monarchies, among the oldest form of government and human social ordering, are in many ways a prime prism through which to observe such cross-cultural relationships. An institution shaped by social hierarchy and inequality, hereditary succession and elaborate etiquette, it was focused both on the local and the supralocal, the individual sovereign (usually male, occasionally female) (Walthall, 2008, 1), and the broader world which sustained him, particularly a courtly household of close relatives, friends, advisors and domestic staff who were engaged in the organization and administration of royal life and duties (Duindam, Artan and Kunt, 2011, 1). Kings, from the Tudor monarchs of England, the Bourbons of France, the princes of the Mughal Empire, Ottoman Sultans and the Shoguns of Japan, were highly sensitive to the local concerns of their own citizenry while simultaneously ever conscious of the need to create alliances with external forces, whether military, economic, sacred or aesthetic. There is a rich literature on such court studies, particularly in the field of anthropology (Tambiah, 1985; Geertz, 1980; Beattie, 1960; Butler, 2002; Ikegami, 1997; Inomata, and Houston, 2001).

The Jhala state from its founding in Patadi under Harpal Dev in 1093 A.D. came under the influence of various imperial actors, whether the Solanki and Vaghela Rajput Dynasties, the Sultanates, the Mughals, the Marathas or the British, as mentioned earlier. These imperial umbrella states would introduce various cultural practices, Indo-Persian, Central Asian, Maratha and European, into the royal court, creating a contested synthesis of the regional periphery and the metropolitan center. Jhala

rulers would both resist and accommodate these new cultural additions, creating a hybrid concept of governance, religious practice and material display, fusing together aesthetic elements from Asia and Europe, the modern and the pre-colonial, the religious and the secular.

Rajput kingdoms, like that of Jhalavad, adopted and resisted various aspects of Mughal political, economic, social and religious practice. The era saw them co-opted into Mughal forms of administration and revenue collection, particularly the *mansabdari* system (Richards, 1995, 24), the celebration of Persian as the court language of official discourse, the hybrid development of syncretic religious practices which intermingled aspects of medieval Islam, such as Sufism, and Hindu *bhakti* (Embree, 1958/1988, 484), the patronage of Mughal traditions of architecture and painting (M. Bose, 2015, 33; Glynn, 1996, 67-93; Asher, 2008, 22-46; Asher and Talbot, 2006, 148-151), dress and ceremonial ornamentation (Hambly, 2003). Indo-Persian court culture also influenced the domestic life of the court with the implementation of gender seclusion (through the building of *zenana* palaces), the veiling (*pardah*) of aristocratic and royal women, and political marriages of alliance between Rajput princesses and members of the Mughal family and dignitaries (Joshi, 1995; Lal, 2005; A. Jhala, 2008).

1.2 Colonial and Postcolonial Reverberations

Later, in the process of opening up to European trade and cultural influence, the Mughals also made India vulnerable to European conquest and ultimate capture of indigenous markets. The English East India Company was founded in 1600 under Royal Charter by Queen Elizabeth I, and by 1619 gained the right to trade in Mughal India, under Mughal Emperor Jahangir (Bose and Jalal, 2004, 34). With the global rise of European trading houses in the eighteenth century, India would see itself as the desired focus of robust occidental military capitalism, fought over by the Portuguese, Dutch, French and English, among others. As the English and the French embarked upon the Seven Year's War (1756-1763), American Independence (1776), the French Revolution (1789) and the ensuing Napoleonic campaigns (1803-1815) in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century North America and Europe (Marshall, 2005), so too did they militarily engage at the peripheries, including India. It is no small detail of history that with Britain's loss of its American colonies, it shifted its sights eastward to India, later dubbed the jewel in its crown of colonial possessions, after capturing the wealthy and strategically significant province of Bengal in the 1760s (Bose and Jalal, 47). By 1818, the English East India Company was the dominant European force in western India, including the Gujarat peninsula, and within a few decades, Britain was the paramount power in the entire subcontinent after the transition from Company to Crown rule, following the first war of Indian

Independence in 1857, when Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India in 1858 (Ramusack, 2004, 164).

The Jhala state, like most Indian kingdoms, would be influenced by ensuing European systems of trade, politics, reform and consumption during the high point of the British Raj. It would come under the larger umbrella of colonial paramountcy, even while remaining internally semi-autonomous. New western systems of local administration, governance, law, medicine and education were introduced into princely states. Royal households adopted more European forms of dress, cuisine, architecture and language, as did the rulers of Halvad-Dhrangadhra. British imperialism brought new technologies to India, for textile production, manufacturing salt by products, road building, railways and printing presses.³ Megalopolises, such as Calcutta, Delhi and Bombay, enabled regional princes, like the Jhala rulers, to attend all-India wide imperial durbars, and steamship travel to Europe encouraged them to engage in the wider world of European travel and cultural exposure (Jaffer, 2007, 19–22).

In 1947, at the same time India became independent from British rule and was partitioned, the princely states lapsed, merging into the new democratic states of postcolonial South Asia. However, Indian princes continued to play an engaged role in the public life of the new nation. Former rulers served as diplomats, governors, patrons of educational and charitable institutions, local magnates, company directors, cabinet ministers and, particularly, as elected politicians (Copland, 1997, 267-8; Ramusack, 1978, 244-6; Cannadine, 2001, 174). Of the 284 princely families, which were granted the Privy Purse and privileges at the merger of the states, more than one third have been candidates for state legislative assemblies or the Lok Sabha (the lower house of Parliament). More than two thirds of these royal families came from Rajput dynasties alone (Richter, 1978, 335-7). The last Maharaja of Dhrangadhra was himself among this first generation of princely politicians (*rajvanshis*), serving as a deputy governor (*uparajpramukh*) of Saurashtra in the transitional government and later as an elected politician both to the local Gujarat assembly and the Indian parliament.

³ During the late nineteenth century, the rulers of Halvad-Dhrangadhra were among this generation of reform-minded, modernist Indian princes. Raj Mansinhji (r. 1869-1900) of Dhrangadhra founded English language schools for boys and girls, reformed the judiciary and established hospitals and cotton ginning factories. His successor, Ajitsinhji (r. 1900-1911), who ruled during the first decade of the twentieth century, worked on infrastructure and building projects, paving roads and constructing the Ajitnivas Palace and Jaswantsinhji Library, as well as making primary and secondary education free in the State. For his social reforms, he was appointed a Knight Commander of the Order of the Star of India (KCSI) in 1909. His son, Ganshyamsinhji, who was partly educated in England, built additional schools, hospitals, dispensaries and orphanages, established scholarships for the study of math and science, and founded a Chemical Works to process salt. For these various acts, he received the new dynastic title of Maharaja in 1918, was also made a KCSI and later became a Knight Commander of the Order of the Indian Empire (GCIE) in 1922. See Mayne (1921, chapter 6).

In the process, peripheral areas like Jhalavad and other Indian monarchies, which survived up through the middle of the twentieth century, were constantly in flux over nearly a millennium. While open to new influences, the kingdom continued to practice various pre-colonial and pre-Islamic conventions, perpetuating institutions and patterns of living in the periphery long after they may have disappeared at the centre. These include the ceremonial and ritual performances of kingship, in the *rajyabhishek* (royal coronation), royal marriage festivities, pilgrimages, the Rajput Durbar, the maintenance of gender-segregated festivities, such as *zenana* and *mardhana mehfil*, the building and consecration of temples, wells and other auspicious sites, and the sacred plowing of the fields.⁴ In examining such practices, these essays are situated in recent studies on the continued salience of marginal communities and smaller states within larger imperial superstructures.⁵

1.3 Scholarly Ruminations: Studies of Princely India and Ethnohistory

In addition, this collection arises out of the dynamic, growing scholarship on the Indian princely states,⁶ which includes more focused studies on specific regions or erstwhile kingdoms⁷ as well as particular themes in princely historiography, from religion and nationalism, women and domesticity, to education and the environment.⁸ This group of essays is also situated within the vibrant discourse on Rajput history, kinship and kingship, although much of this previous work is two or more decades old, with rare exceptions.⁹

In particular, it emerges out of the nexus between history and anthropology, and is indebted to pioneering endeavours in South Asian ethnohistory, notably

⁴ Marzia Balzani noted the various ways that the current Maharaja of Jodhpur continues to practice royal ritual in everyday life (Balzani, 2003, 21) while Lindsay Harlan has addressed the continued practice of various forms of religious observation, ritual practice, marriage customs and *pardah* observance among aristocratic Rajput women in late twentieth century Rajasthan (Harlan, 1992).

⁵ Shail Mayaram (2003) has argued for the resuscitation of orality and myth in constructing the history of the marginalized Meos, who existed under various umbrella states (sultanate, Mughal, British colonial and princely); also refer to the work of Agha and Kolsky (2009).

⁶ There is a wide history on princely India. See the work of: Copland (1997); Dirks (1987); Ramusack (2004 and 1978); Keen (2012). For collected essays addressing various themes, refer to Ernst and Pati (2007); Jeffrey (1978) and Ikegame and Major (2009). For an overview of Indian princely historiography, see Groenhout (2006, 629-644).

⁷ Refer to Cohen (2007); Ikegame (2013); McLeod (1999); Rai (2004).

⁸ Refer to Bhagavan (2003); Hughes (2013); A. Jhala (2008 and 2011); Kooiman (2002); Lambert-Hurley (2007); Plunkett (1973, 64-80).

⁹ For some illustrative works, refer to Harlan (1992); Joshi (1995); Kasturi (2002); Minturn (1993); Peabody (2003).

the work of Bernard Cohn, Nicholas Dirks and Lloyd and Suzanne Rudolph (Cohn, 1987 and 1996; Dirks, 1987). As Bernard Cohn argued in his seminal collection, *An Anthropologist Among the Historian and Other Essays*, “history can become more historical in becoming more anthropological, [and] anthropology can become more anthropological in becoming more historical” (Cohn, 1987, 42). The Rudolphs in particular incorporated ethnohistory as a lens through which to observe the sustaining interrelationship between tradition and modernity, and thus better understand institutions and societies caught in the ‘midpassage’ (Rudolph and Rudolph, 1967, 6).

This merging of history and anthropology was most influentially deployed in Nicholas Dirks’ work on the ‘little kingdom’ of Pudukkottai, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom*. Dirks suggests that interdisciplinary scholarship fosters an “ethnohistorical” type of fieldwork, spent as much working in archives, libraries and government offices as in interviewing significant citizens, participating in village festivals, attending marriages and transcribing conversations in their entirety (Dirks, 1987, 13-14), and this compilation follows a similar trajectory and methodology. However, Dirks focused primarily on the colonial era and concluded that the Indian kingdom was a ‘hollow crown’ upon an empty political stage, which contrasts to our argument of the continued political influence of Jhala polities in constructing identity and embodying power in both the colonial and postcolonial periods. Furthermore, we also question Dirks’ arguments in his later monograph *Castes of Mind* on the systematized colonial construction of caste identity. Indeed, while this is a powerful thesis which may have applied to directly governed British India, it was less a reality in regional kingdoms, like the Jhala polities, which had only indirect colonial intervention particularly in relation to caste reform and for a much shorter duration (Dirks, 2001, 5). More recently, Aya Ikegame has combined historical and anthropological methodologies in her work on the clan, lineal and marital connections of the Mysore royal family in *Princely India Re-imagined*. She similarly uses anthropological insights to contextualize the historical past, such as the reports of British political officers, in the process revealing how royal practice was shaped both by colonial modernity as well as the “constantly changing and contesting cultural norms of local society” (Ikegame, 2013, 14). Similarly, Nandini Sundar applied such ethnohistorical methodologies to understand ‘tribal’, princely Bastar in eastern India, histories of resistance and the struggle for natural resources (Sundar, 1997). More recently, outside the field of princely India, Joy Pachuau has innovatively incorporated historical analysis into her ethnography of the Mizo people and the construction of a Mizo identity in northeast India (Pachuau, 2014).

In the process, this group of essays examines the ethnohistory of the Jhallesvars through a particular archive and the painstaking diligence of one archivist, Maharaja Meghrajji III, who over several decades collected various materials – oral, written, musical and visual – on the genealogical geography of Jhalavad. Before going further, it is important to examine this archive and its creator.

1.4 The Role of the Archive: Meaning, Preservation and Revitalization

Memory, like history, is rooted in archives. Without archives, memory falters, knowledge of accomplishments fades, pride in a shared past dissipates. Archives counter these losses. Archives contain the evidence of what went before. This is particularly germane in the modern world. With the disappearance of traditional village life and the extended family, memory based on personal, shared story-telling is no longer possible; the archive remains as one foundation of historical understanding. Archives validate our experiences, our perceptions, our narratives, our stories. Archives are our memories. (Schwartz and Cook, 2002, 18).

This compilation is based upon the sources culled from a particular archive and the imagination of a particular archivist. As Joan Schwartz and Terry Cook suggest above, archives preserve memory and consecrate history, which is particularly vital in a contemporary present where non-textual forms of remembering, such as the oral accounts of extended family members or village communities, are increasingly becoming lost. Archives serve as “narratives” and “stories” of individual, familial, communal and ultimately regional recollection.

The concept of the archive developed in the English language from ancient Greek via medieval Latin and later French. It etymologically is rooted in the idea of “arkheion,” that is the residence of the “archon,” a superior magistrate who held the official papers of the law in his home (Derrida, 1996, 2). Before it became adopted by Anglophone nations in the nineteenth century, the archive’s meaning was largely connected with this idea of the historical record or an authentic document (Jenkinson, 1922, 3).

Thus, from its origins, as Jacques Derrida has argued, the archive was correlated with power as the material site of the law and the construction of knowledge. In his definitive work, *Archive Fever* (or *Mal d'archive: une impression freudienne* in the original French publication), Derrida extended Freudian psychoanalytic theory to argue that the archive emerged out of a repetitious need to record as a counteractive device against the erasure of memory (in the “death drive” impulse). He called for the democratization of the archive in its constitution and construction (Derrida, 1996, 1-9) and argued that it was molded by prevailing social, political and technological conditions (Manoff, 2004, 12). Michel Foucault, who in *The Archeology of Knowledge* similarly argued that knowledge was power, likewise influenced theorists of the archive. Together, they propounded that the archive was the focus for human knowledge, memory and power and a quest for justice (Schwartz and Cook, 2002, 4).

Such interpretations of the archive would lead to various derivative spinoffs, including the ‘social archive,’ the ‘raw archive,’ the ‘imperial archive,’ the ‘postcolonial archive,’ the ‘popular archive,’ the ‘ethnographic archive,’ etc. (Manoff, 2004, 11). For the purposes of this collection, it was the creation of archives on the non-western world, particularly imperial and postcolonial histories, which are most salient. In

The Imperial Archive, Thomas Richards, channeling Foucault and Edward Said (Said, 1978), argued that the administrative heart of the British Empire was focused on knowledge production and the institutions which supported it, such as museums, surveys, geographic societies and universities. Recording and documenting empire thus became a way to psychologically legitimate imperial dominance and surveillance of large territories beyond its control. The imperial archive served as a ‘fantasy’ repository of knowledge, which bolstered up state and empire (Richards, 1993, 4-6).

South Asian scholars have also been preoccupied with the idea of the archive, which has sharply influenced the development of both the history and anthropology of the region. Whether it is through exhuming records of the marginalized, forgotten or silenced which is the project of the Subaltern Studies collective, ‘decentring Europe’ and the multiplicities of western power, exposing the construction of Orientalist misconceptions or problematizing the study of gender, sexuality and women’s history,¹⁰ South Asian scholars have attempted to mine the archive and in the process widen its range and possibilities.

Nonetheless, most of this scholarship, particularly in postcolonial independent India, has focused on nationalist historiography, to the exclusion of regional kingdoms, which existed long before the advent of modern states. While they came under the umbrella of colonial influence in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, these local principalities also often reflected an authentic indigenous past.

The particular archive which informs these essays was largely collected by one archivist, who was assiduous in finding documents and records, and annotating, labeling, summarizing, classifying and ultimately preserving them in both physical and digital form, so they can be used today. He was also a historic individual who lived (temporally and psychologically) within the various political systems, monarchic and republican, and time periods, early modern, medieval, colonial and postcolonial, which inform these essays. Thus, the documents he collected canvas a vast period of time in global and particularly South Asian history, from the eleventh to the twentieth centuries, in emphasizing how a peripheral state and peripheral dynasty came into contact with larger imperial forces and in the process resisted and collaborated with them in often both innovative and subversive ways.

Incorporating a wide range of source materials, this archive includes bardic epics, diaries, songs and poems, medieval court chronicles, genealogies, architecture (in the form of royal palaces, leisure houses, step wells, cremation grounds, cenotaphs, dams and lake compounds), stone inscriptions, paintings, heraldic sources, and royal ritual of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. They are composed in diverse languages, from the ancient to the modern, including vedic and classical Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, medieval and modern Gujarati, Hindi, Marwari, Kutchi, Sindhi and Marathi, as well as English. It also includes an impressive archive on the musical legacy of

10 For a fuller discussion of this scholarly literature refer to Mathur (2000, 93-99).

the royal court, which Meghrajji recorded after his return from Oxford in 1957.¹¹ As archivist, Meghrajji had enormous ingenuity in appraising, selecting, describing and preserving these records, which are central to the identity formation and construction of memory (Schwartz and Cook, 2002, 2), for a region and a people. The archive was his ‘brain child,’ a particular passion and pleasure, and his biography is seminal to understanding this collection.



Figure 1.2: H. H. Maharaja Meghrajji III in his study, 1985.

1.5 Archivist as Ethnohistorian: H. H. Maharaja Meghrajji III of Dhrangadhra

His Highness Maharaja Meghrajji Mayurdwajsinhji III was born in the Ajitnivas palace in Dhrangadhra on the 3rd of March 1923. He was first educated at the Dhrangadhra palace school, in a mixed classroom with his brothers, eight sisters and occasionally

¹¹ Meghrajji engaged India's premier musical institution, All India Radio, to record the songs of classical court singer, Bhagvati Bhai Prasad, over the course of a year. Later he documented the songs of zenana court singers, Langha Alarakhi Bai and Mir Hemu Bai, on royal women's rites of passage. His son, Jayasinhji Jhala, added to this collection with recordings in 1979, made in collaboration with the National Center for the performing Arts, Mumbai, which today, along with the World Music Library, Harvard University, houses copies of these audial works.

cousins, under the direction of Jack Meyer. In 1933, the palace school moved to England, where it was renamed the British public school Millfield in Somerset.¹² He soon left, however, to continue his education at Haileybury before returning to India, where he was enrolled in St. Joseph's Academy at Dehra Dun and thereafter Shivaji Military School in Pune, before prematurely curtailing his studies to become Maharaja.

On acceding to the *gadi* (throne) in 1942 on his father's early death, he enacted a vibrant policy of reform and modernization. He pushed for the affirmation of the fundamental rights of his subjects, desegregation of untouchables and women's rights to property and remarriage. He made primary school free and accessible and encouraged village and municipal self-government.

However his reign was only a few years long and, with the approach of Independence and Partition, he worked for a free, republican India. He was among one of the first princes to sign Viceroy Mountbatten's Instrument of Accession, which saw the amalgamation of his kingdom with larger Saurashtra and in the process lost his regnant powers. In 1948, he was appointed a Knight Commander of the Order of the Indian Empire. From 1948 to 1952, he served as *uprarajpramukh* (deputy governor) of Saurashtra, and was briefly president of the state bank and a member of the Planning Commission.

In 1952, he left political life to resume his education, going up to Christ Church, Oxford, where he enjoyed a close friendship with the House's senior censor, Professor Hugh Trevor-Roper. In 1953, he attended the coronation of the young queen Elizabeth II in Westminster Abbey. During six years at Oxford, he read philosophy, took drawing classes at the Ruskin School, dabbled in heraldry and completed a BLitt in Anthropology, writing a thesis on the Hindu *Samskaras* (sacraments).

After his degree, he returned to India and entered electoral politics, as had a number of his other fellow princes. In 1967, he was elected to the Gujarat legislature and later the Lok Sabha between 1967-1971, where he worked for the protection of the princes' titles and their privy purses against Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, through leading the Concord of Princes, over an embattled three year period. He and his allies won the case, when the Supreme Court of India declared the stripping of their privileges unconstitutional. However, Mrs. Gandhi dissolved parliament and, under the new government, the Chief Justice was removed and the Constitution Amendment Bill reintroduced.

Meghrajji later lost his reelection, as he was hospitalized in London and unable to campaign. Thereafter, he largely retired from political life and focused on scholarship and the creation of the archive, which informs this volume. He would spend the last three decades of his life, researching the history of the Jhala *kul* (clan). While he did not publish his work in scholarly journals during his lifetime, he created a small press

¹² Meyer would later become Headmaster of Millfield School.

in Dhrangadhra to share his research (Obituary of the Maharaja of Dhrangadhra-Halvad, 2010). He died on 1 August 2010, aged 87. To the last day of his life, he was still interested in preserving these records. His passing marked the end of an era. As one admirer argued, he was a “ruler, moderniser, legislator, intellectual, heraldist, socialite, traditionalist and anglophile. . . His Highness might have been casually dismissed as another playboy prince; but his erudition and deep intellectual curiosity, his committed public service and concern for his people’s welfare, and his kind-hearted nature and generosity of spirit gave short-shrift to such unfair comparison. His passion for heraldry, genealogy and chivalry provided further evidence that this was a peerless prince.”¹³

Throughout his life, he was keenly aware of the importance of recording memory. From a young age, he noted everything from the most momentous public events of his life to quotidian minutiae, which sparked his limitless curiosity. As a ruler, he kept a diary, a byproduct of his disciplined English public school education, which he hoped would serve as a reminder to his future adult self of adolescent aspirations, affectionately christened ‘Sharda.’ A promising student with polyglot interests, he studied theology, philosophy, painting and anthropology at Oxford, writing a thesis on the Hindu sacraments. His letters throughout his lifetime, whether to colonial administrators, members of the Viceregal staff, the British aristocracy, Indian government officials, scholars and even friends and family, had margins for commentary and exegesis of select texts. Once sent or received, they were always carefully filed away by his staff chronologically or thematically. Even the books of his personal library in Dhrangadhra were inscribed, not only with the place, date of purchase or name of the giver, but also often the date(s) he had last read and re-shelved them.

In later years, when he had retired from public life and became a full time scholar, he took his library and archives with him wherever he traveled – whether it was to his New Delhi home, his country house in Pune, his childhood palace estate in remote Dhrangadhra or even during a six-month visit to Princeton, NJ. Wherever he was, his rooms were spartanly furnished and whatever surfaces remained – desks, tables and the floor surrounding his reading chair – stacked high with scholarly tomes, manuscripts and files of his own notes or ‘jottings.’ Monier-William’s Sanskrit dictionary lay beside Hobson Jobson’s Anglo-Indian compendium and medieval Gujarati lexicons; Abu’l Faz’l’s Persian *Ain-i-Akbari* beside Alexander Forbes’ *Ras Mala* and 2 volumes of *The Hindu World*. On a given day, he might be working on autobiographies of the first founder of the Jhala lineage, the eleventh century Harpal Dev and his consort, the goddess Shaktima; annotated excerpts of British, Marathi and Gujarati records on the eighteenth century queen Rani Jijima; or sketches for the

¹³ Refer to <http://bloggingyoungfogey.blogspot.com/2010/09/hhthe-maharaja-of-dhrangadhra-halvad.html>. Also published in the *Heraldry Gazette*, <http://www.theheraldrysociety.com/publications/heraldrygazette/March11p5-8.pdf>.

new temple he had commissioned at the former Jhala capital in Patadi. This archive was a rich and meticulously recorded fund of material, which informs the paintings and essays of this volume.

Not only did he compile and preserve an archive on his ancestors, often interwoven with transliterations and occasional translations of relevant texts, passages or terms, but he also added his own memories. During the course of his lifetime, he wrote hundreds of pages of essays and ‘thoughts’ on wide ranging topics of his own lived experience: whether the rituals of his coronation (*rajyabhishek*) in 1942, his letters as *uprajajpramukh* from 1948-1952, or his correspondence for the Concord of Princes as the leader of the parliamentary opposition against Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1970-1971. He spent much of his later years re-remembering these moments of his past alongside collecting the larger archive on the Jhallesvars. Thus he deepened the record with his own vibrant recollections as much as he preserved it, in the process becoming ethnographer and ethnographic subject, historian and primary source.

This process was one of deep joy and intimate connection; indeed, of what Walter Benjamin describes as the blissful ownership of knowledge. “O bliss of the collector,” Benjamin opines after unpacking his much beloved library “. . . For inside him there are spirits, or at least little genii, which have seen to it that for a collector – and I mean a real collector, a collector as he ought to be – ownership is the most intimate relationship one can have to objects. Not that they come alive in him, it is he who lives in them” (Benjamin, 1968 reprint 2007, 67). One could well imagine Meghrajji sympathizing with such sentiments when considering his own library, his own archive.

1.6 Painting the Jhallesvaras

The paintings, which form the basis of these essays, reinterpret Meghrajji’s collected oral, textual, archeological, genealogical and material archive as well as more recent ethnographic research by Jayasinhji Jhala, in an innovative visual process. Originally exhibited as the “Illustrated Story of the Jhallesvaras” at the Mehrangarh Fort Museum in Jodhpur during winter 2014, the paintings depict a series of events in the dynastic history of the Jhallesvaras and highlight key moments in each ruler’s reign, from the eleventh to twentieth centuries. Artistically, these paintings emerged out of the Rajput miniature painting tradition, with an emphasis on a developing Jhalavadi hybrid style.¹⁴

¹⁴ The paintings are produced through an ongoing collaboration with Raj Meghrajji’s granddaughter and painter, Liluye Jhala and miniaturist Vijay Chauhan, the storyteller Amrit Kalu and bard Kiritdan Gadhvi, as well as past and present students of Jayasinhji Jhala from Temple University, including Dr. Lindsey Powell, Anabelle Rodriguez, Katey Mangels, Rhett Grumkow, Keith Marchiafava, and Cameron Snyder Mitchell.

1.7 Painting Methodology

These pieces are constructed through a new method of contemporary painting, which marries digital technology, photography and traditional Indian miniature styles. The creators utilized computer generated imagery for the forms and colours to create a mood traditionally known as *rasa*. *Maya* (illusion) and *lila* (play) also inform the paintings which are based on the story, *katha*, mythical, historical or ethnographic.

The painting process is influenced by the pioneering work of contemporary painters Shazia Sikander and Amrit and Rabindra Singh, who have reconceptualized the Indian miniature in a contemporary present. Sikander juxtaposes Indo-Persian miniatures with newer digital media forms, including animation, video and mural, to produce wildly imaginative works, while the Singh twins, whose school of art has been dubbed “Past Modern” combine western and eastern aesthetic traditions in often witty and symbolic ways (www.shahziasikander.com and www.singhtwins.co.uk.)

The recording of dynastic history through paintings was not new for the Jhallesvars. Soon after Meghrajji came to the *gadi* in the early 1940s, he commissioned court painter Mul Chand to depict various historical events in the Raja Ravi Varma style of European realism. This painting collection, however, was later removed from public view and stored for several years. In the 1980s, Jayasinhji Jhala revisited these paintings as a Harvard doctoral student and the experience catalyzed his own interest in creating a visual archive of genealogical history. He first engaged the local Jhalavadi painter H. Valera from the nearby town of Limbdi to paint large canvases (5ft by 7ft) for display in the main gallery of the Durbar Hall in Ajitnivas palace. Later through the introduction of his cousin, Maharaj Durgapratapsinhji of Pratapgarh, Jayasinhji commissioned painter Vijay Chauhan, a teacher who is descended from a family of traditional miniaturists.

Each painting is produced in several stages. In the initial stage, the painting is conceived by addressing specific historical, genealogical, literary or ethnographic sources from Meghrajji’s archive. In the second stage, the painting is created digitally through Photoshop software and photography. US-based artists sent sketches of paintings, full or partially complete, to Vijay Chauhan. In the third and last stage, the digital image is altered and painted by Chauhan with the help of his assistants in Rajasthan. Most of these images are painted in the traditional Marwari style of western Rajasthan, although elements from the Gujarat, Mughal, Deccan, Punjab and Pahari miniature painting schools are also incorporated in the final composition, along with contemporary photographs of relevant historical monuments, objects and landscapes. The resultant Jhalavadi hybrid style takes images or parts of images from published books on Rajput, Mughal and other painting traditions to shape a composition based upon a given poem, song, story, monument or stone inscription. Wherever a Jhalavadi visual image or fragment is available, it was given more importance in the making of the painting. The final paintings as reproduced in this volume reflect the amalgamation of these various visual traditions, painterly, photographic and new media, and serve as reinterpretations of Meghrajji’s archive.

1.8 Marginal Voices and Diverse Sources

In addition to bringing attention to a history of the princely state in the periphery, these essays highlight figures often marginalized in earlier historical records, who cross boundaries of caste, class, gender and occupation. They include such oft understudied subjects as women, non-royal members of the court, including ministers (*dewans*), genealogists (*barots*), surveyors, administrative and domestic staff and other subordinate groups, of various ethnic, religious and caste backgrounds in their relationship with the Jhala dynasty, including Bhils, Siddhis, Madaris, Langhas, Bhavai players, farmers, and wandering *bhakts* (or devotees). In the process, it reveals how such seemingly marginal historical figures radiated influence outward from the royal domestic into the broader planes of everyday life between the court and its peoples, and between the state and larger political forces, Mughal, British and later nationalist.

This collection also depicts the Jhallesvar in various lights, not only as supreme, divinely ordained monarch. While at times a hero and a god, the Jhala king also emerges in these essays as outlaw, refugee, usurper, soldier and occasionally mercenary, pilgrim, renunciate, banker, patron of the arts and architecture, educator, reformer, legislator, industrialist, parliamentary politician, scholar and private individual. These are also life histories of Jhallesvars as imbedded within families, as sons, brothers, cousins, fathers, uncles and grandfathers and so on, entrenched in all the intimate trials and tribulations, aspirations and jealousies, of the familiarly domestic. In this way, these essays reveal very human natures, informed both by human frailty and the mythic status given them in recollected memory and legend.

Building upon the rich documentation of Meghrajji's archive and Jayasinhji Jhala's commissioned paintings, the collected essays here address the source material through a diversity of disciplinary perspectives. These chapters examine musical songs, theatrical plays, histories of arms and weaponry, bardic chronicles and poetry, ethnography and ethnographic encounters through the lens of historians, anthropologists, Sanskritists and musicologists, as described below.

1.9 Chapter Outline

The first four chapters address the myths and history of the Jhala dynasty. The first chapter by John McLeod is a genealogical overview of the Jhallesvars from their early genesis in the Makhvan clan until the present. After beginning with a brief discussion of McLeod's personal relationship with the archive and Maharaja Meghrajji as archivist, the chapter focuses on a detailed chronology of the dynastic line, emphasizing particular rulers or members of the family.

Kevin McGrath in the second chapter analyzes the literary depiction of the Jhallesvars, through poetry, song, folklore and mythology, over time. In particular, he highlights the development of a particular Kshatriya culture, in depictions of the king as hero/warrior. He makes fascinating connections between the Sanskrit epic, the Jhalavad archive and the paintings in the construction of a *kshatriya dharma*.

In Chapter three, Tony McCleghanan provides a rich military history of the Jhallesvars, focusing on the pre-colonial era up until the arrival of the British. Through emphasizing particular episodes of military engagement, McCleghanan underlines how the territorial boundaries of the Jhala state changed over time, as it came into contact with various imperial powers, Solanki, Sultanate, Mughal and Maratha.

Angma Jhala examines the history of women associated with the Jhala court in chapter four. While addressing a variety of female archetypes, including woman as *kuldevi* (clan deity), regent and warrior, her central interest lies in the reign of the mid-eighteenth century queen, Rani Jijima, who ousted her usurper brother-in-law and met the armies of the Maratha *peshwa*. Her reign would later lead to the consolidation of the kingdom as Halvad-Dhrangadhra.

Chapters five and six address recent ethnography on the Jhallesvars as patrons of the musical and theatrical arts. Michael Oppenheim in chapter five examines the history of musical traditions in the Jhala dynasty and circles of patronage, connected directly or implicitly with the erstwhile court. Jayasinhji Jhala in Chapter 6 focuses on contemporary re-remembering of a late fifteenth century event, *Kuva-no-Ker*, after a long period of forgetting. The ‘well of sorrow’ or *Kuva-no-ker* commemorates the sacrifice of Jhala royal women during the sacking of Kankavati in 1486. These women chose to die by drowning rather than be enslaved by the Muslim enemy. The chapter references twenty-first century folklore in the context of earlier bardic (*charani*) and colonial texts. In the process, it argues that contemporary inheritors of the Jhalavad past continue to shape its future development.

In conclusion, by focusing closely on one lineage over a long period, this volume aims to achieve a cohesiveness and intellectual depth and breadth that generalized scholarship often cannot. Taking an ethnographic approach to Indian history and genealogy in such a manner and across various loci, from court to village to grasslands to museum, is unusual. Through incorporating high-resolution digital reproductions of historical and recent photographs, archival and contemporary film and video footage, audio files of court poetry, music, genealogical and astrological readings, alongside a rich archive of written and oral texts, this work will establish new ways of understanding longstanding tradition and its constant reinvention. We believe it will be of wide interest to a range of academic and aesthetic disciplines, including history, genealogy, folklore, bardic and oral literatures, art and architecture, women’s studies and histories of domesticity, music, theatre, photography, film and video studies and the developing field of digital media. We hope that that it will further catalyze other such multidisciplinary studies.

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Kevin McGrath

3 Landscape, Poetry and the Hero

Kingship, landscape, and poetry—particularly heroic poetry—have been involved together in Northern India for millennia, mutually dependent and mutually thriving. In this Collection of paintings MK Jayasinhji Jhala has both inspired and arranged a combination of sources and artistic agencies and the result attains an uncommon and most beautiful fruition. The exhibition presents a matchless collection as well as a new *school* of Indian painting, depicting significant princely life in the clan of Jhala during the last millennium; such a rich historical retrospective is unique in the custom and conventions of North Indian courtly painting. The people in these pictures are a clan that stems from Kirtigadh in Sindh where Harpaldev—who established the lineage—originated in the Eleventh Century; the clan is now settled in Saurashtra of Western Gujarat. In this essay I shall describe their *ksatriya* culture and the early literature which supplies a framing context for the exhibition, the manifold, as it were, from which these works on paper have sprung.¹

Heroes in antiquity were always figures of local significance and achievement, unlike the more Pan-Indic deities; within a particular geographical region heroes were active in their superhuman efforts and dynamic in the worship which they received. It was this specifically local devotion, engaged by rituals of honour, that went to generate supernatural consequences which were of benefit for the community: harvests, fertility of stock, security from attack, and the general well-being of the people.

Kings possessed authority but it was the *puissant* energy of the heroes that accomplished the words and aims of the king or chief. Similarly it was kingship that patronised the poets who proclaimed the deeds of the heroes.² All three of these agencies—kings, heroes, and poets—grounded their position within and upon a particular terrain and topography, where a certain landscape supplied the foundation for rule, literature, and mythology. Within a cultural situation the interaction of these three components was inseparable and this was especially so in societies that were preliterate and premonetary in form; for there the ancient songs, stories, and pictures

¹ Some of the items in the Collection are actually large paintings, oil on canvas: such as Nos. 3.6 3.7. and 7.5.

² There is a beautiful depiction of this relation between *raja* and *kavi* in painting No.1.1, where Raj Gajsinhji I, c.1663, is shown listening to or in colloquy with his poet. These paintings have been commissioned during the last decade by Jayasinhji Jhala and illustrate the Jhala lineage, beginning with Harpalji in the Eleventh Century C.E. In McGrath (2017), I have described at length the system and pattern of late bronze age kingship as represented by Epic Mahabharata. Jhala (1991) has carefully examined the kingship and its corollary kinship systems as historically played out in Saurashtra; these accounts of his form the basis and background for the Collection.

were the actual vehicles of social value and its transmission and in this way *ksatriya* or 'warrior' ontology was generated, communicated, and received.³

Concerning the aetiology of the pictorial, in this poetic process of song—which preceded the visual process of painting by many centuries—the relation between word and image, between the material or acoustic and the pictorial was vital and crucial, for this was how the audible effect of poetry went to create a mental image for an audience; or, how the poet visualised for an audience the heroic and royal narratives.⁴ In an hypothetical and original sense therefore, such an occasion of poetic performance marks the initial generation of images which are then later translated into pictures: either embroidered, woven, or painted. These 'sights' in time assumed further embodiment in the paintings commissioned by kings that illustrated the myths, legends, and the songs of the poets. These paintings were—and still are—always fixed and located within a particular physical situation, the domain and territory of the king: that is the basic ground and plane for the songs and pictures which we refer to in this present essay.

The exhibition portrays a sequence of forty rulers and each picture demonstrates a particular narrative, myth, or rite concerning these chiefs, the *rajas* and *maharajas*. The nature of historical documentation which reflects events beginning in the Eleventh Century C.E. is amorphous and what exactly constitutes an *event* in the historical record is often derived from either poetry, folklore, or perhaps even sculpture or embroidery. Pre-literacy organises the past in fashions that are not what we now consider rational, sequential, nor perhaps even inferentially valid, and it is this kind of reference or semantic frame which the current exhibition of paintings draws upon in its presentation. The key to understanding these works lies in metonymy: how the images and figures connect to the events, myths, and songs of a generally unrecorded past, and especially how these images relate to the philosophy and *ethos* of traditional *ksatriya* culture.

Also, as with any work of art or any cultural artefact, the paintings are metonymically connected with many of the traditions and schools of North Indian royal painting.⁵ The metaphors of the work are taken from the myths and poems which have become attached to the various kings during the centuries that the Jhala clan have been established, first at Patadi 1093, then at Santalpur 1304, then Mandal 1408 then Kankavati 1425 then Halvad 1488 and finally at Dhrangadhra 1783 C.E. respectively. The paintings present a visual synthesis of many North Indian pictorial

³ In the Appendix to McGrath (2015), I have examined in summary form the nature of epic pre-literacy.

⁴ I exclude all reference and discussion of embroidery and weaving and that kind of image generation from the present essay as this is a topic in its own right and another field of study and research. The singing of patterns and the weaving of images is a long established artistic medium. For this refer to Tuck (2006) and Frater (1995).

⁵ These schools include the techniques and manners of Marwari, Deccani, Kotah, Pahari, Mewari, Bundi and Mughal styles of work.

traditions and styles inherited from the Rajput lineages of Mewar, Marwar, Harodti, Pahari, Kutchi and others with whom the Jhallesvars were tied in marriage and with the Mughal with whom they fostered alliances of war and peace, in this post-modern rendering which has come to us *via* the informed inspiration of Jayasinhji Jhala. The literary model for many of the heroic Jhalavari songs is derived from the late bronze age Epic Mahabharata, an Indo-Aryan poem that describes how two clans—one founded upon a matrilineal system of kinship and one founded upon the patriline—fought for dominance of North-western India in the First Millennium B.C.E., what in fact led to a period of partition in the kingdom or *bheda*.

In the region of Jhalavar one of the earliest visual representations of heroes and kings, or rather of deceased heroes and kings, occurred in the small *bas-relief* carvings of the memorial stones which even today can be seen throughout western Gujarat. These stone pillars, *palias*, set deeply and firmly into the earth, record the death of warriors in battle; sometimes there are short inscriptions beneath the image detailing the identity and achievements of the warrior.⁶ Interestingly, there are also corresponding *sati* stones, which document the demise of the hero's spouse who heroically ascended the funeral pyre of her fallen husband.⁷ These monuments date from about the Sixteenth Century and they are often found nowadays outside of shrines or temple precincts where they receive offerings and worship in their own right. The name and deeds of the original deceased hero are usually long forgotten, this being a case where ritual is sustained even though the accompanying myths have been forsaken.

I first encountered the Jhala family through Jayasinhji Jhala, who invited me to Dhrangadhara in 2002, just after the earthquake of that year. What ensues in this present essay draws upon my own personal memoir of time spent in and about that district's territory, particularly in light of my understanding of the epic Mahabharata, a late bronze age poem of which I am a scholar.

Hence I came to this remarkable and exceptional collection of Jhala paintings as a student of preliterate culture, as one who attempts to reconstruct the connectivity which exists between images and words, between pictures and language, the visual and audial; attempting to realise the activity of social and historical recollection which such works of art constellate as past signs enabling a group of people to secure a present mutual coherence. Such aesthetic integrity works with the media of both the literate and the painterly, as well as with conventional morality and paradigms

⁶ Kalhoro (2010) has made a study of such *palias* or *kirti-stambhas* in the region to the west of Jhalavar. His work is an ongoing research project and further surveys and materials are forthcoming.

⁷ One of the paintings in the Collection illustrates such a moment; this is painting No. 6.3, showing the funeral pyre of Raj Udesinhji 1408 who is about to be cremated along with his principal wife who cradles his head in her lap. Painting No. 3.15 illustrates how such heroic femininity can translate even into the Goddess herself, Shakti-Ma.

of mythical hierarchy. These are some of the concepts and methods with which I have composed this present chapter, drawing upon the practical relation between the sound and phonemes of poetry, the iconography of painting, and the coded expressions of an ancient character. Literacy and visual depiction generate each other—particularly in terms of metaphor—and so convey a certain ethical or spiritual right in that expression.



Figure 3.1: Palia headstones of fallen warriors at the village of Malwan.

Let us now address seven of the foremost paintings or groups of painting in the collection and examine the corresponding poetry and see what these pictures can tell us about both past and present Jhalavari and *ksatriya* custom. These important works will lead us toward a larger comprehension of the arrangement of the collection itself and to the underlying philosophy and phenomenal models of Jhalavari *ethos*.

Firstly, “The sound of the swordplay rings, heads fall from bodies, Rajput bodies are being cut to bits and pieces, piles of corpses are growing ... Rajputs of true valour are going to heaven, *apsaras* (divine maidens) are marrying heroes whose necks they garland with flowers, crying ‘har, har, Rajputs leave life!’ ... The battle continued for three days and Maharana Sri Khetaji fought without his head all the way to the gates of Kudni until his body fell. So the entire force of Khetaji gained fame in death.” These are some of the words that are traditionally said to relate painting No.3.2 which

illustrates moments from the battle of Jhalesvara Raj Durjansalji, c.1160-83, with the army of Sultan Muhamed Ghuri.⁸ In the next painting, No.3.3, the king accepts the formal submission of his opponent.

The painting is in the form of three horizontal registers. In the lower band, the dead warriors are being eaten by ghouls and demons, a scene that is in the *genre* of Epic Mahabharata where the battle field is always described in terms of its human carnage and the consumption of blood and limbs by supernatural beings and scavenging birds; this is especially true in Book XI of the epic, the *Stri parvan*. This lower level of the painting illustrates a conception of the underworld and there the wreckage of deceased warriors fuels subterranean livelihood; this is the inferior region of the tripartite cosmos where material transition occurs, where the deceased find themselves before being reborn once again back into the terrestrial level.

In the middle and dominant order—and this occupies half the area of the painting—there is the scene of battle itself, with Rajputs in white apparel led by their haloed king in crimson gear and their opponents in darker costume. Three of the warriors are headless as they fight, one of their hands grasping the severed head whilst the other wields a sword. In the upper band of the picture which is supernal—and the painter has bevelled the surface of the battlefield there in order to supply an impression of the earth's curvature—there are divine and winged beings upon a carmine sky along with a central incandescent sun which secures the spirits of the fallen heroes, both Muslim and Hindu.

All of this is familiar to a Jhalavari audience insofar as much of the imagery replicates the poetry and metaphors of the Sanskrit Epic Mahabharata; by metonymy the painting and its corresponding poem connects with ancient bronze age heroic literature, particularly as represented in the four Kuruksetra Books, VI-IX of the epic text. Within that poetry war and combat are made beautiful and death receives an aesthetic qualification, for there is nothing that is purely horrific or awful and the poets engage with many metaphors of beautiful trees or mountains which supply a pleasing and aesthetic *likeness* to heroic endeavour. This is similar to how the painter of the exhibits in this present collection formalises the acts of destruction and physical violence into a perfectly poised composition that is visually satisfying: the chromatic qualities of the paintings and their formally balanced organisation brings to the translation of death and disorder something timelessly beautiful.

Battle, it is to be recalled, is what supplies a *ksatriya*, a king, with his legitimacy of rule, and it is from such focal moments in time that the subsequent *danda*, 'orderly government' is established. These paintings then, in many instances, where such occasions of successful warfare are represented, mark the actual navel, the '*yoni* or 'origin', 'source' of Jhalavar hegemony. The paintings, illustrating events or myths—

⁸ All textual references are by personal communication, Jayasinhji Jhala. In this essay the terms *rajput* and *ksatriya* are interchangeable.



Figure 3.2: Jhallesvar Raj Durjanshalji at the Battle of Gadaraghatta, Mt Abu, 1178.

songs and stories—about events, thus also supply an ongoing legitimacy to both governance and culture and received *ksatriya* codes and norms of conduct.

Death is the great criterion or signal for *ksatriyas*, the warrior community who are depicted in these works. The particular emotion that is part of such pictures or songs of conflict and annihilation is that of grief, not of anger; the battle paintings thus depict an affect that concerns death and loss rather than anger and violence.⁹ The principle of kingly rule is that of compulsory force or the power of punishment, just as the principle of brahminical order is accorded by the practice of solemn ritual and the fire sacrifice. The warrior's willingness to approach death and to die by the sword is conceptually akin to the brahmin priest's submission to the cosmic hierarchies as formulated in his hymns and rites, and the farming caste's willingness to work and to labour upon the land. All three *kinds* of action create value or meaning in life and their primary agency is actually semantic rather than productive, for human value is not natural but must be created or be *made* by some kind of work or effort. Hence meaning is produced from the natural world *via* such procedures: death for the *ksatriya*, the ritual for a brahmin, *georgic* labour for the farmer or herdsman. The former is the subject for so many of these warrior paintings, where the heroes and kings are shown in moments which either cause death or submit to death.

I would argue that the sword is the primary metaphor in *ksatriya* culture and the one metaphor that goes toward the generation of all other metaphor; it is *the* sign in an iconographic sense, the master signifier that leads to the creation of all signification and meaning for both kingship and heroic culture. This is what the anthropologist Marcel Mauss referred to as *mana*, that almost prediscursive and undisclosed signifier which causes all other semantic reference to occur and to exist.¹⁰

The instrument of death, the sword is of course vitally linked to the generation of duality in this warrior culture insofar as it is the weapon of the hero and combat is by definition fundamentally dualistic; the sword cuts and makes *twofold*. One can see in painting No. 3.2. a practical duality at work, between the Rajput warriors and their opponents, schematised in the central register of the picture. Above and below this band duality is again represented by the aerial and the subterranean, situated on either side of the terrestrial. Duality, I would argue, is a profound and essential

⁹ The Homeric Iliad is a poem that is an expression of how human beings might secure mental and emotional equilibrium in the face of absolute loss; the poem is of course a demonstration or work of complete warrior *ethos*, it is a *ksatriya* poem. King Yudhisthira in Epic Mahabharata is similarly greatly driven by his extensive feelings of grief, especially in the second half of the poem. Grief is more intrinsic to the human condition than even the knowledge supplied by love and affection, for the latter are—in their ontology—physiological in nature, whereas grief and the comprehension of loss are phenomena that are thoroughly historical.

¹⁰ See Mauss (1902-03). In Lacanian psychoanalysis it is the *phallos*—that prediscursive signifier which exists prior to all other signifiers and which is essentially hypothetical—which is the one and primary sign which generates all subsequent signification in a language or a culture.

component of the *ksatriya* vision of belief and life's *praxis*, and one can view this model in both the present painting and in the subsequent picture, No. 3.3, where the defeated army of Muizz-ud-din Muhammed Ghuri surrenders at Gadaraghatta near Mount Abu in 1178 C.E.¹¹



Figure 3.3: Jhallesvar Raj Durjanshalji, commanding General of Gujarat, accepts the surrender of the defeated forces of Muizz-ud-din Muhammed Ghuri at Gadaraghatta in 1178.

By duality I mean not simply structural form but also narrative organisation, for duality can be construed as both synchronic and diachronic. This natural duality or

¹¹ I argue this point extensively and in detail in McGrath, *Arjuna Pandava, The Double Hero in Epic Mahabharata* (forthcoming). In the Hala Jhala ra Kundaliya, a Seventeenth Century song written by the Caran Isardassji and translated by Jayasinhji Jhala, the poem commences with the verse: “Like lions the Hala and Jhalas—Jasaji and Rayasinhji—will fight. Will they capture the lands of the enemy? Will they give up their lands into the hand of the enemy? That man who establishes authority over the enemy’s lands, who crushes their heads into dust, to such a man’s enemy’s wives sleep is never deep. It is certain the Hala’s homes will be torn.” The Homeric Iliad is similarly organised on such a dualistic pattern where *doubling* is essential to the movement of the narrative and, I would argue, fundamental to the cognitive process of poetic composition. It is a poetic technique, like the *fugue* or the musical use of counterpoint.

symmetry of cognitive process on the part of the painter or the poet is founded upon the warrior's or the king's act of both contention and the possibility of contention. It is the corollary act of bloodshed that goes to define the boundaries of a king's domain and in Sanskrit the word *maryada*, which indicates 'boundary' or 'frontier', 'limit', has the folkloric etymology of 'that which devours young men', or an object which acts as a marker for those who perished in the defence of the clan terrain. Thus the topography of a region itself is linked to the death of warriors who submit to their destruction as they go out to protect the kingdom; the blood of the heroes stains the domain with the king's propriety.¹² The fundamental purpose in life of a *ksatriya* or king is, of course, to protect the land: in that significance lies the etymology of the word (McGrath, 2004, Ch. 2 and 3). A king protects not simply his subjects but metonymically the landscape itself. The hero stones—memorial tributes to dead warriors and sometimes to their wives—the *palias* or the *stelae* that one still finds deeply fitted into the earth of Western Gujarat are thus defining that terrain as belonging to a king and his lineage (Sontheimer, 1989; Kalhoro, 2010). In that sense then the death of the warrior in battle actually provides an index for kingdom and rule. What we have in these battle paintings are the images of such mortal submission and triumph: *jaya* or 'victory' in the full sense of the word, triumph over opponents and triumph over death itself. For a warrior to perish so gloriously and valiantly is for him to succeed absolutely in life; this is the central teaching of the Bhagavad Gita, the chariot song which lies at the heart of Epic Mahabharata.

Concerning this idealisation of terrain and the metaphorical yet physical *body* of kingship and kingly presence, in some of these paintings a prancing hare is charmingly depicted—as in Nos. 3.4, and 7.5—relating to the myth in which *raja* Rajodharji was spiritually directed toward the establishment of Halvad citadel through his encounter with this animal in 1487. The poets describe this scene, saying: "A courageous hare stood before his horse, and the hare confronted the horse. Seeing the bravery of the hare, Rajodharji understood: 'this earth has the power to raise heroes', he thought. 'This Hare is a celestial being ... an avatar force ... this is a celestial being. This earth, this ground is valorous, a cradle of heroes. Therefore, my new capital I will establish here. It is a land of heroes.'"¹³ Again, one observes the terrestrial association between the physical world and rulership, for these two earthly agencies are thoroughly integrated and bonded for such is the essential nature of kingly *rationale* in this culture: to protect the land not only by force but by virtue of

¹² In the poem *Hala Jhala ra Kundaliya* the poet claims, "Like little streams blood flows from the dead warriors ... O heroes, it is good to die, by dying stories of heroes will live. They are the true men. A short life is good as their name will spread throughout the world ... By fighting in battles their fame is like the moon and sun and true heroes are those who at the right moment sacrifice themselves and attain glory."

¹³ These lines are taken from a film recorded in the summer of 2014; the title of the film is, *The Halo of Heroes*. Personal communication, Jayasinhji Jhala.

a mystical and at times epiphanic communication. Hares live in the ground, in folds in the earth, and it is thus that the actual terrain possesses causality in the myths of origin and so becomes personified not simply as the deity Shakti-Ma but also as the various creatures of the earth and sky who communicate to the kings and heroes their destiny: the endlessly ongoing destiny in time of the Jhala lineage. In general, there are many animals and birds to be seen in all of these paintings, as earthly and aerial witnesses of the deeds, events, and celebrations that are here recorded. As the contemporary Twentieth Century poets say, “In this brave Jhalavad land the fame of Jhala kings and valour is ever present. Jhalesvara Raj Rajodharji built this beautiful royal palace five hundred years and more ago and it is a shining tower of history. Despite the slaps of time it stands proud. Even now its Goddesses reside here. Its walls are shining with the blazing power of the deity Shakti-Ma.”¹⁴

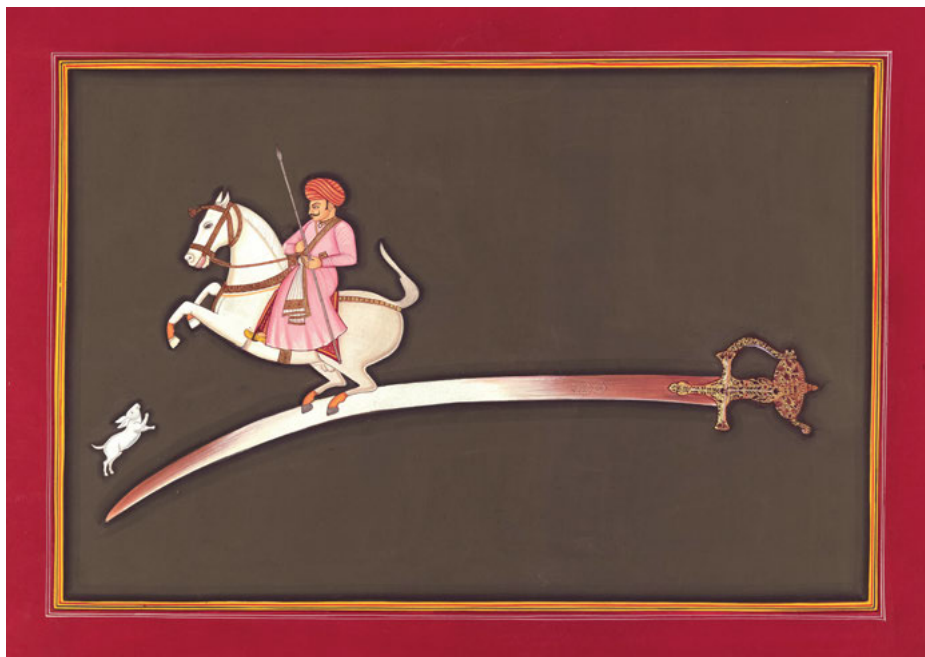


Figure 3.4: Jhallesvar Raj Rajodharji encounters the Valiant hare at Halvad, 1487.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*



Figure 3.5: Jhallesvar Raj Ajoji's glory at the Battle of Khanwa fighting Mughal Emperor Babar 1527.

By extension, the headless warrior, a *motif* that figures in several of these paintings is a sign of the resolution and moral probity or purity of the warrior; a fighter who is so ethically and physically correct or 'right'—and the word *raja* stems from this idea of rule in a linear sense or right—that, despite losing his head he is still able to continue

in combat and will achieve victory.¹⁵ In a famous poem about Raja Raisinhji there is the line, “*Ksatriyas* fight even when their heads are cut from their bodies”, for such is their tenacious valour and warrior vigour and probity.¹⁶ In painting No. 3.6 this idea of the headless fighter is most beautifully presented by a picture where seven warrior kings are seated in profile upon the sand each holding his head which faces another similarly arranged figure; at the centre is the personified Sun, Surya, who looks out of the painting at the viewer. The scene is taken from a story about Raja Ajoji, who ruled briefly at the end of the fifteenth century. The notion of a headless warrior is of course a most ancient and Indo-European image and the Old English poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is perhaps our most common Western song in this tradition.¹⁷



Figure 3.6: Seven Jhala heroes. Father Jhallesvar Raj Ajoji, son, grandson, great-grandson and beyond, sacrifice their lives for their kingdom Mewar. Fell at Khanwa 1527, Chittor 1534, Chittor 1535, Chittor 1568, Haldighati 1576, Ranakpur 1609, Hurda 1622.

¹⁵ In Nos. 3.4, 3.5, and 3.10, of the paintings.

¹⁶ Line in film *Halo of Heroes*.

¹⁷ Concerning the Indo-European or Indo-Aryan poetic and cultural tradition see Benveniste (1969), Nagy (1974 and 1979), Jamison (1994), Fortson (2004), West (2007) Frame (2009) Witzel (2012), to name but a few scholars in this field. There is also the *mytheme* of the poet's singing head—as with the Greek Orpheus—which possesses such poetic or spiritual fortitude after death and the dismemberment of the body that the poems and songs continue to issue from his mouth.

Likewise, in painting No. 3.7, a scene from the Mahabharata Epic is presented in which the Sanskrit hero Karna removes his inborn breastplate, a natural *cuirass*, along with his innate ear-rings and offers these to the deity Indra who is disguised as a brahmin mendicant. Once again there is the depiction of the nobility and moral clarity of the warrior who is able to surrender his invulnerability and mortality at the mere request of a priest.¹⁸ The hero is so morally immaculate that cutting and removing part of his body—despite the pain and the consequent vulnerability—that he is able to accomplish this terrific act, such is the warrior's generosity and bravery. The hero is in complete disregard of death or corporeal suffering and it is more significant for him to make such a demonstration of his non-attachment to material, worldly conditions, objects, or even to life itself; again, this is the ultimate message of the Hindu Bhagavad Gita, a *ksatriya* song that is *the* central element in the warfare scenes of Epic Mahabharata (McGrath, 2014).

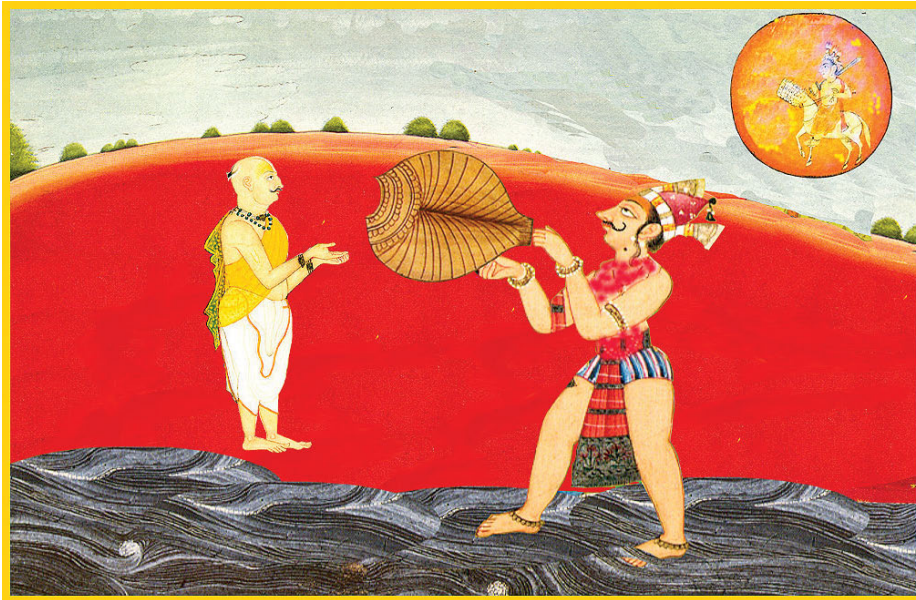


Figure 3.7: Karna, hero of the *Mahabharata*, gifts his armor to his foe.

Heroes and *ksatriya* warriors are supposed to always give on request, it is their ethical duty in life never to refuse, especially to refuse a brahmin, and they are not attached to any mere aspect of life. Obverse to this is their duty to punish any behaviour that

¹⁸ I have written about this scene as it appears in the Pune Critical Edition of Epic Mahabharata in McGrath (2004, Ch. 4, 2).

exceeds or diminishes correct *dharma* or ‘appropriate manner’, ‘decorum’. In fact there is an unspoken code—as it were—that prescribes the moral obligations of a king and warrior and many of the paintings in the present collection represent such an *ethos*. Thus the notion—or actually the ideal—of the headless warrior is part of this culture of practical truthfulness: the speech of a king or warrior is inviolable to such an extent that his words constitute a speech act and possess an unbreakable efficacy.¹⁹ The integrity of a hero is therefore so inherently profound and matchless that for him to continue fighting even *without his head* is emblematic of his moral steadfastness and warrior tenacity. J.D. Smith in a beautiful rendering of the Rajasthani Epic of Pabuji, relates of a similar account of a headless warrior (J.D. Smith, 1991).

Secondly, the next painting in the sequence, No. 3.8, portrays Raj Ranoji dancing with women of the family at the Navratri festival in c.1515. The refrain to the dance-song is, *Haq padi vinar jagyo re*, “The shout is out, warriors wake up”. In this round dance the king is at the centre of the movement and in the years following this initial event—the performance shown in the painting—the song came to be part of the *repertoire* of the women in the *zenana*, ‘the women’s quarters’. In the present recording on the Halvad website the performance is by a group of women and not by a single poet; it was to accompany a group of men and women moving in a clockwise formation, two steps forward one step backward, the *tempo* being sustained and amplified either by the clapping of hands or the tapping of sticks held up by the hands: this latter gesture is represented in the painting. Jayasinhji Jhala writes, “it can be performed with sticks and also with bucklers and batons in a more war-like manner. When this kind of performance happens some of the singers may ululate by making high sounds with their tongues in a celebratory manner. The dance can be danced in a frenzied state of high energy and hearkening awareness and non-awareness.”²⁰

“The shout is out warriors wake up, the horns of war sound. Friends, bring warrior weapons ... Sesodhiya warriors painted themselves in blood ... the torso fights whilst holding its head in its hand. Look, at the protectors of honour (*rang*).” It is notable that such a genial and light-hearted portrayal of kingly pastime is associated with a battle chant; so intimately entwined are the male and the feminine aspects of *ksatriya* culture in which the men are happily prepared to perish in order to protect their clan members and the womenfolk are equally prepared to accept heroic death upon the funeral pyre of the fallen warrior. In this sense union in death is ultimately a far stronger bond than union that comes of living affection.

¹⁹ Refer to Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) on the philosophy of the *speech act* or ‘how to do things with words’. For speech acts veracity is not important but the success of accomplishment, the power of causality, denotes the valence of such a kind of language: a speech act is ideally efficacious. A speech act is neither true nor false but only effective or not effective.

²⁰ The complete text of a performance of this song, first recorded in 1979 by Jayasinhji Jhala, can be found at: The Harvard Library of World Music, Cambridge MA and at the National Center for the Performing Arts in Mumbai under the Dhrangadhra Music Collection.



Figure 3.8: Raj Jhalesvar Raj Ranoji dancing the famous rasada *Haq Pade Vinar Jagjo* with the women of his family and court during the Navratri festival, 1515.

There are eighteen dancers in the picture, sixteen of whom circulate about the double figure in the centre, and there are two opposing groups of women in the lower part of the frame who play drums and tambourines and who sing and clap. It is night in the *zenana* with the moon rising above the palace walls into a clear blue starry sky; two groups of trees are matched on either side of the painting and two oriel windows—the emblem of the clan—are depicted beneath the white rising planet and two peacocks are standing and observing all this at the bottom of the frame. The king is portrayed with a halo, a *nimbus* of pale blue outlined in gold. Not only in the battle paintings therefore, do we observe this visual organisation of symmetry, but also in the pictures where warrior pleasures and dalliance are portrayed.

As we stated above, this compositional form of duality is both profound and central to *ksatriya* conceptions of life and manner, being the initial premise to heroic philosophy in an almost syllogistic fashion. Certainly, in these paintings, this is typically the pattern of visual semantics. In the dance is implicit the bond between wives and warriors, the ineradicable and indissoluble symmetry of these men and women, a conjunction that will continue as far as death itself. Also in the dance—in terms of Hindu Saiva belief as expressed by the divine dancer himself, the *Nataraja* or ‘lord of the dance’—the eternal and cosmic ballet of the deity supplies *tempo* and rhythm to the nature of all beings, to the frequency of life and death.²¹ Here in the picture, the dance is circular and is thus potentially unending, until at last one of the warriors departs from the round in order to enjoin battle; it will then be the duty of the women to either celebrate his victory or to mourn and to grieve for his glorious death. Hence there is a poignance to this joyous little scene of delight insofar as the dualism of crossed staves in the resounding dance is metaphorically linked to the crossed swords of martial combat, a *motif* evinced in many of the other paintings.

Thirdly, in painting No. 3.9 Raja Arjunsinhji, who flourished at the outset of the Thirteenth Century, is shown offering a herd of white Jhalavar Wadhiyari cattle at the temple of Visnu Caturbhuj in Dvaraka. The temple is surrounded by a sea of dark waves and the composition of the picture is as usual organised in terms of duality, many double images—either in opposition or addorsed—focussing about the uniform image of the building with its vertical bipartition of images: at the lower level above the *sanctum* where a four-armed statue of Visnu is stationed; and higher, in the spire itself is the superior image of the Goddess, Shakti-Ma, the Jhala clan deity. She is represented in the aniconic manner of an upturned arm with the hand open and facing outward, what is referred to in Buddhist iconography

²¹ Certain scholars, like Klostermeier (1984, 122ff.) , would argue that Rudra-Siva is an indigenous divinity and not one of the Indo-Aryan deities that arrived in the Sub-Continent when the Vedic peoples migrated into the North-Western regions.

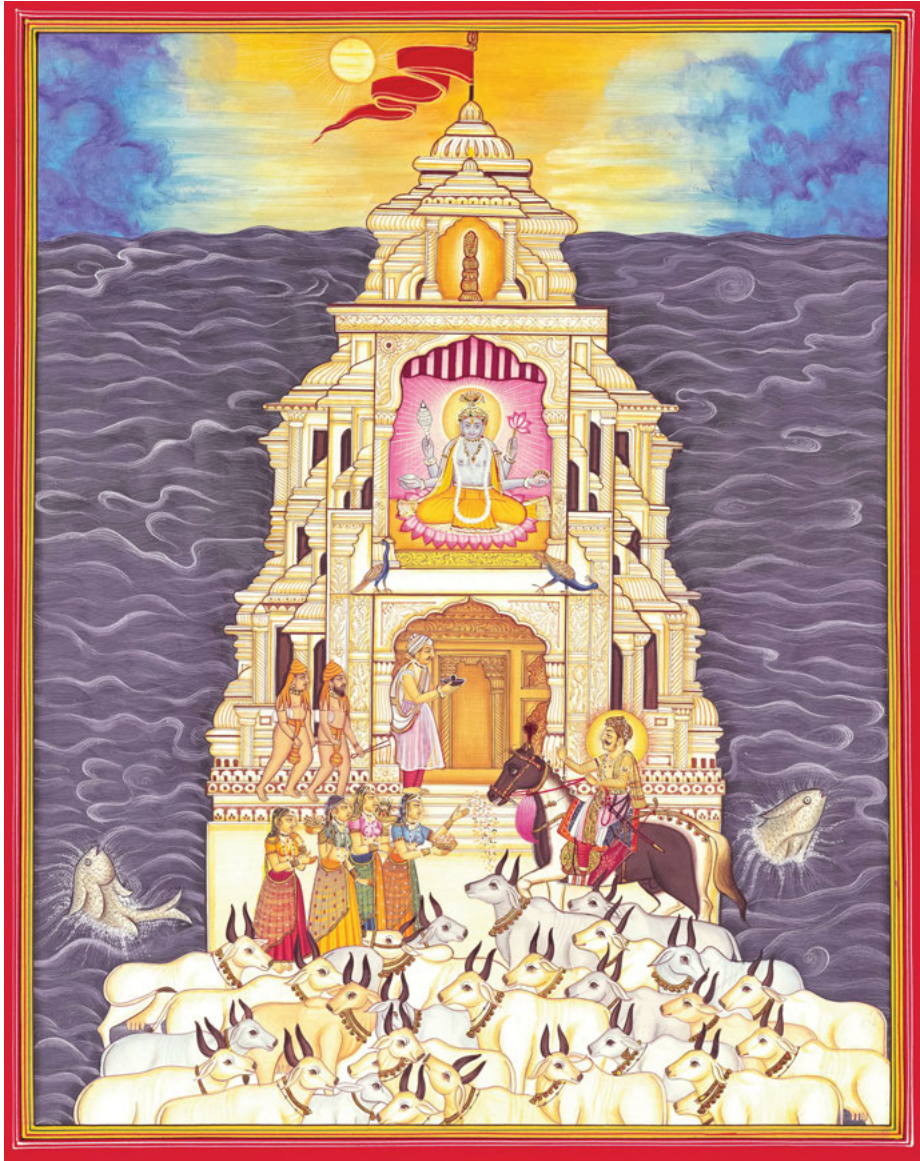


Figure 3.9: Jhallesvar Raj Arjunsinhji Dwarkadasji 1210-1240, gifts a herd of Wadhiyari cows to Chaturbhuj Vishnu at Dwarka by the sea.

as the *abhaya mudra*, ‘fear not’: a gesture typical of Buddhas and *bodhisattvas* in sculptural form. It is notable that the clan divinity is established as the superlative element in this temple, above all else. So much of the picture’s symmetrical form is rendered emphatically by the doubling of bovine horns in the lower register of

the work, the darkness of the horns sharply delineated upon a whiter ground of the animals' bodies; there being twenty-four head of cattle.²²

This painting records what must have been a successful campaign to the western reaches of Gujarat peninsula—far from the clan citadel at Patadi—and the devotion of the king not to the clan deity but to Visnu. The accompanying poem—and the painting was inspired by these verses—claims: “Lord of the Jhalas, Arjunsinh, champion of the eternal *Dharma*, came to Dvarka with an unimaginable force. With fierce sword he liberated Vradmanpur ... he subdued the citadels ... Arjun establishes the seat of the Goddess Shakti-Ma in the *shikhara*, ‘the spire’.”²³

Cattle rustling has always been a vital social practice in pastoral societies and is a thematic feature of much Indo-European poetry. The painting 3.10, along with painting No. 6.10, illustrates a moment where the hero or the king has proceeded about the kingdom towards the various directions, what in Sanskrit is referred to as the *digvijaya*, ‘victory over the compass points’. In this fashion the poem states that, “Arjun Makhavana offered much wealth and profound obeisance. In the north is Badrinath, in the east Jagannath is worshipped; in southern lands, Ramesvaram, but everywhere Dvarkadhesh is honoured.” Heroes in epic often proceed in such a geographical manner in order to secure material and verbal tribute from subject domains in a period prior to a major kingly sacrifice, like the *Rajasuya*, ‘the royal unction’, or the *Asvamedha*, ‘the horse sacrifice’.²⁴ These pictures represent such kinds of ‘progress’ where the royal impress and authority is established either by the journey of the king in person but more usually by the movement of the heroes who enter into contest with whatever other heroes might oppose them.

22 A poem exists that praises this king; the text is here translated by Jayasinhji Jhala. *Harpaldevji's son, Sodhaji, a great grandson, king of the seat of Patadi / Lord of the Jhalas Arjunsinh, general rann of Gujarat's king / Champion of the sanatan dharma / Came to Dvarka with an unimaginable force / With a fierce sword he liberates Vradhpur / With cavalry, elephants, and chariots and infantry he subdued all the fortresses / Marching in a great circle with brave demeanour he strengthens the sovereignty of the king / Through jungles he comes to the main portals of the deity Jagdish's temple at Dvarka to worship / Of all the grand lords of the realm he is the first lord / Facing the western sea on the edge of the coast he rebuilds the beautiful Shikhara / On Akhatrij day he unfurled the pennant of the deity / He offered much wealth, deep devotion, so we hail Arjun Makhavana / In the north Badrinath, in the east Jagannath / In southern lands Ramesvaram, but everywhere Dvarkadhesh is worshipped.*

23 This poem exists only in fragmentary form and was discovered in the collection of papers entitled the *Puran Samgraha* in the archive of his late Highness, the Maharaja Meghrajji III of Halvad-Dhrangadhra. It has been translated by his son, Jayasinhji Jhala.

24 I have discussed this ritual process of *digvijaya*, where the hero subjugates the various domains about a kingdom prior to kingly rites taking place, in McGrath (2017, Ch.2).



Figure 3.10: Headless Kunvar Viramdevji son of Jhallesvar Vaghoji brings the cattle back to the cattle keeping Bhavards of Sami-Munjhpur 1485. He is today worshiped as the god JhalaBapji in Gujarat.

In this old culture cattle are important signifiers of material wealth and are most worthy tokens of exchange and the movement of livestock between individuals or communities is typically central to if not generative of many of the poetic narratives and myths. From Vedic times—pre-monetary times—the cow has always received great and honorific praise as a item of divinity and of beauty; it is the sacred object that is constantly being exchanged among social groups as a sign of hierarchy and relation. Cattle in such an economy are a medium of wealth that cannot be consumed but only given and received or stolen.²⁵ In this particular picture we have a snapshot of such myth and society, where both divine and human hierarchies are momentarily realised.

Fourthly, painting No. 3.11 concerns Raja Mandalika III of Sorath whose capital was in Junagadh to the south-west; he was the head of the Chudasama clan and was marching with an army to marry Soma De—a Jhala princess and daughter of the Jhalesvara Bhimsinhji—in Sithapura, Jhalavad. In this picture Bhimsinhji is shown

²⁵ J.D. Smith (1991) has translated the Rajasthani Epic of Pabhuji where cattle theft and the subsequent offering of cattle to a divinity are central to the narrative.

with his force marching towards the *barat* or 'groom's party' of Mandalika as they approach the realm of Jhalavar.²⁶ The *raja* is portrayed seated in a *palanquin* at the centre of his army and his paramount splendour is indicated by the *aftab*, or 'titular parasol' that is held above his head.



Figure 3.11: Jhallesvar Raj Bhimdevji rides to receive his son-in-law Ra Mandalik III of Sorath, 1455.

This is one of the most magnificent pictures in the collection and a description of the march is given in an accompanying poem. There are elephants, cavalry, chariots, and infantry—the traditional four elements of an epic army—all carefully and precisely illustrated, and from a historical point of view this portrayal of a full Rajput force is thoroughly informative; there are even what appear to be items of early artillery, cannon drawn by teams of bullocks. The force moves horizontally over the desert terrain in perfect order and arrangement and the dignity of the moment is captured by the painter in the stillness of so much overtly tumultuous and noisy progress. The

²⁶ Sorath, Halar, Jhalavad, Gohilvad, and Kathiavar were the five princely regions of the Saurashtra peninsula, an area called Kathiawar by the British.

calmness and integrity of this army is underlined by the paratactic representation of the various armed figures, row upon perfect row of infantry with swords, horsemen with spears, even the clouds in the sky take on such paratactic organisation as if nature itself were aligned with and by the discipline of the Rajput force.

Here, it is not a composition of dual agencies or images that supplies the picture with its structure but the serial representation of identical components. Death is the demise of order into chaos and disorder and yet the *ksatriya* forces which administer this terminus are here perfectly depicted in their restraint and diverse unison. There is no indication of *dis*-order and this engine of death—the army—is here engaged in a nice instance of counterpoint, for what is actually being represented is a wedding party on its way towards marital union and sexual conjunction. What the painting represents is thus almost *oxymoronic* in its double message of martial force and the mystical joining of the male and feminine components of the universe. Both destruction and creativity are so defined in their potential by a faultless and flawless ordering of visual detail and its precise repetition.

The poem that accompanies this painting tells of the various other princesses of India and speaks of their qualities yet also of each one's disadvantage; the poet gives names for fifteen of these kingdoms.²⁷ Recounting a list of possible brides he specifically precludes them all: he says that one has no art of conversation, another speaks too fast and falters in her words, another is physically unright, another is overly-skilled in black magic, another's hair is not good, another possesses hairy knees, another has long ears, and another is frigid and lacks amorous inclination, and so the poem proceeds. Only the daughter of Bhimsinhji is suitable. Many of the kingdoms of the Sub-Continent are mentioned in the poetry and not simply the traditional thirty-four Rajput lineages, and the song well illustrates the condition and state of princely rule at the time of the Fifteenth Century. What the poet is accomplishing—*via* the metaphors of all these rejected royal women—is not only a cataloguing of princely states but a denigration of their condition *qua* their improper and problematic womenfolk who are all flawed in their incomplete femininity—in comparison to the faultless perfection of the Jhala bride.

The poet describes in narrative detail events that occur in the progress of the *barat*, 'the groom's party'. "Having seen a beautiful and timid mare on the way, two horses threw off their riders and started to fight, but the mare went away. A harlot smiled mildly, seeing this ... A cart of chief merchants broke down in a narrow way due to its heavy load; some pass over the cart lying there whilst others—because of their proud galloping horses—move ahead and some others halt ... A courtesan who had fallen from her horse as it moved among rows of haughty camels is helped by someone and someone else tries to re-arrange her lower garment whilst another attempts to restrain

27 The poem, the Mandalika Mahakavya, is a biography of Raja Mandalika and was composed by Sri Gangadhara.

her horse ... A poet sang a surprising panegyric for someone other than his king and another poet forbade him, saying 'do not sing that song', and he began wielding his sword as did the other ... The bridegroom Raja Mandalika enjoyed all this and other astonishing acts of his people; he observed the sound of the drums beaten to indicate his approaching meeting with the Jhala king."



Figure 3.12: SomaDe daughter of Bhimdevji married Chudasama Ra Mandalik, ruler of Junagadh-Sorath. She was a poet tutored by poet Narsi Metha, 1455.

Then comes a lengthy metaphor, very much in the style of the four Kuruksetra Books, the battle books of the Epic Mahabharata, where it is said that, "The army is a powerful river, the king a great swan, the lotus were women and the infantry horde were beautiful like the uninterrupted waves of that river." This is followed by another extensive simile, again in the exact style of the epic: "The city was festooned with strings of mango leaves and sprouts of bajra and houses were adorned with raised platforms of gems on coats and gems on couches onto which garlands of pearls were hung low and wide as if upon the peaks of the best mountains of silver." The appropriation of imagery from the archaic late bronze age poem infuses and charges this pre-modern poetry with resonance, metonyms that engage with the ancient warrior culture of the Bharatas.

So much of this poetry that is connected with these paintings is of such a kind of formulaic nature, drawn from the First Millennium B.C.E. epic tradition, just as the painting themselves are made up of and organised according to the iconic traditions of West Indian visual culture of the early Second Millennium C.E. It is remarkable how uniform and coherent these distinct media are and even after thousands of years the synthesis of traditions possesses such resilient longevity and impulse. There is no impetus toward innovation here only the strength and flexibility come of cultural continuity and complexity, of renewal and virtuosity; this is so unlike the schools of Western European and American painting of the present and the last century where the imperative necessity towards innovative gesture governs so much artistic production.

It is this stability of tradition and of culture which does not seek to innovate but only to perfect and to renew that is emblematic of kingship in Jhalavar in the centuries preceding the twentieth century, with all its profound and brutal divisions. The shift away from a pre-monetary system of economy and a social order of loyalty and fidelity began with the movement towards secondary urbanisation in the middle of the First Millennium B.C.E., when the former coherence of a preliterate culture began to transform into a society where fungibility became the medium for social coherence, where *price* replaced affiliation.

What is being presented to the viewer in all of the paintings in this collection is a world where human association was once based upon affinity and an exchange of services, of allegiance, faith, and mutual reliance.²⁸ There is thus an idealism at work here in that the pictures represent—in both the figuration of life and pleasure, of death and violence—an ideally balanced existence in which the natural world, the terrain and the kingdom, are integral components to such an economy of metaphor and of material as given in the pictures. This is a moral conviction profoundly inherent to the works and is in apposition to the nature of production and consumption which exists in the present twenty-first century, where human affiliation is founded upon price and the conception of a market. The Mahabharata epic was likewise a retrojection of an idealised society in which many elements of spiritual, political, and social *kinds* of ideal harmony were synthesised and formed into a poetic composition that possessed all the appearance of unity and cohesion; it too was an ideal which due to its stylised and archaic syncretism was able to communicate both universal and conventional or social truths.²⁹

28 On this point of transition between the pre-literate and pre-monetary to a more 'modern' form of social order refer to Wiser (1936) and McGrath (2017, Ch. III).

29 The American cinema of Wim Wenders or the conceptual antiquity of Nicolas Poussin or the dramatically realised historical kingship serialised in the plays of William Shakespeare are all of a similar formation, in that they all represent a syncretic and idealised past which, due to the unique and remarkable artistry of the creators, is able to convey a certain *truth* pertaining to the human condition.

Fifthly, in painting No. 3.13, which shows the Bhaktaraj Amarsinhji who flourished in the Nineteenth Century, we observe an unusual style on the part of the painter for the details of the image are reduced and thoroughly refined in favour of large blocks of pure colour. The king rides—without horse or vehicle—in one direction and a dark deer-like goat proceeds in counterpoint; above the king are geese in the sky, flying in both directions to the left and right. Again, the composition is based upon dual process and configuration. Unlike all the other paintings in the collection there are great areas of the picture which are simply pure colour and these supply the view with strong chromatic and visual distinction; there is a sensibility of great *élan* and swiftness and yet the composition is such that so much velocity becomes thoroughly stable and unmoving, beautifully and harmoniously poised.



Figure 3.13: Poet Warrior Bhaktaraj Amarsinhji II meditates about the futility of war after the Battle of Vadva in 1805 when Jhalas slaughtered Jhalas.

This great king was a warrior poet whose devotional hymns are performed in Jhalavar even today. The present painting was inspired by a *bhajan* or ‘hymn of devotion’ which commences, “All wish to acquire Nirvana, all living souls wish to go towards Nirvana.”

Javun che Nirvana. Jivadane javun che nirvana re.
Cheti ne chalajo javun che Nirvana.
Rase jase praja jase rupari rani re.
Indra no Indraasana jase ane Indrani re.
Cheti ne chalajo javun che Nirvana.
All want to go to Nirvana, the soul wants to go to Nirvana.
Walk carefully, all want to go to Nirvana.
The king must go, the people must go,
even the beautiful Queen must go.
Divine Indra's throne and Indrani will go.
Walk carefully, all want to go towards Nirvana.

What is surprising about this song is the synthesis of Buddhist, Indo-Aryan or Vedic, and modern Hindu notions of both cosmic and human predicament; as we have already observed, this is a conflation that is to be found in Epic Mahabharata, where many social and spiritual traditions are combined in a uniform single and *ideally* synoptic culture.

In the painting the divergent geese in the upper register are metaphors for the souls of the deceased warriors who fell at the battle of Vadvada, the final major battle that was fought in Jhalavad in 1805; a moment that marked the end of active and dynamic warrior culture in the region. It is telling that the finality of warrior culture as an historical phenomenon receives such a minimalist and stringent colouration, compared to all the other paintings, and it is as if the painter is expressing the mourning involved in such an historical instant: for melancholy and grief eliminate distinction and subdue all difference. The chromatic and figurative minimalism expresses this moment of conclusion and closure in which a thousand years of tradition and custom receive their *terminus* and all that follows—in one way or another—will be recapitulation rather than practice.³⁰ In a sense then, this one picture is a summary emblem and clarification of the situation of Jhalavar today, with its changeless and timeless beauty refined and paused in the midst of dramatic action—activities that have been sustained for more than a millennium.

Sixthly, in painting No. 3.14 there is the posed scene of a wrestling match or *kusthi* where Raja Raisinhji who was to rule in the latter part of the Sixteenth Century is presented as the victor who has just defeated an opponent; he is shown vaunting above his fellow contestant. There is the usual symmetrical arrangement of composition aligned on either side of the two combatants, framing them as it were:

³⁰ By recapitulation I understand not simply the act of *re*-telling, but also of ritual activity, painting, sculpture, music, social manners, and the performance of poetry. It is *via* these various actions that a former world is recalled and recollected due to the intimations of metonymy, whereby all such experience is joined in one concatenation and reticulation with the present.

a duality of architecture, of peacocks, of seated audience, of courtiers who attend upon the Emperor Akbhar who observes the match, and in the counterpoint between a horse and an elephant. There exists a wonderful poem about this king, which makes the claim that the narrative is “immortal”.³¹ This particular painting of the wrestling match is an illustration of a moment toward the end of the poem’s narrative where the king, disguised as a *saddhu*, an ‘itinerant mendicant’, enters the lists and defeats the Emperor’s champion.³²

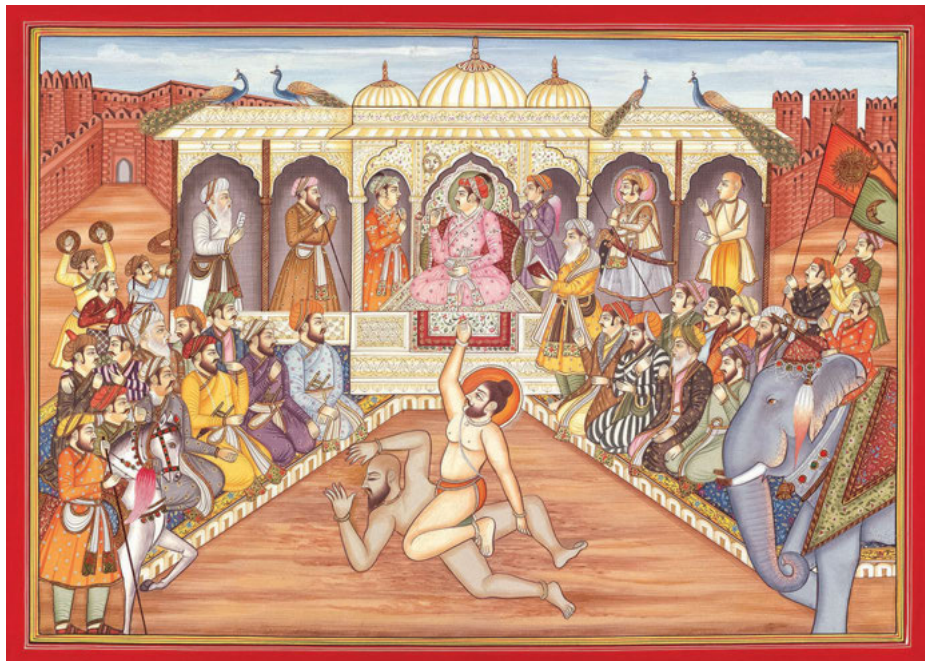


Figure 3.14: Jhallesvar Raj Rayasinhji I defeats wrestler Eko Mal Hebat Khan at Fatehpur Sikri, as Mughal emperor Akbar, Mota Raja Udaisinhji of Jodhpur, Crown Prince Salim, Markand Bharati, and Sufi Rahimji, look on, August 7, 1585.

Earlier in the poem the young prince Raisinhji had made the statement, a threat, or what was in effect a speech act, that he was going to sound the drums of Halvad in the kingdom of his maternal uncle, what is in fact a challenge to combat. The song is a manifestation of *ksatriya* conduct or *dharma*, what amounts to ‘warrior decorum’. As we have already noted, the words of a *ksatriya* are irreversible and inviolable, “the

³¹ This is a fifteenth century poem and this version was performed by Amrit Kalu in 2009 at Dhrangadhra.

³² This occurs beginning at point 29.54 in the poem.

word of a warrior does not turn back”, just as the true hero would never turn away or retreat. Similarly, a warrior should never strike another warrior in the back or whilst he sleeps and should always protect those who claim protection and those who are in pursuit of or in the practice of spiritual devotion; also, a right *ksatriya* woman will endure the heroism of death upon the funeral pyre of her husband who has fallen in battle, for such is the feminine corollary to a warrior spouse's heroism.

The young prince and his elder relative join in combat; usually, the relation between a nephew and his maternal uncle is a profound and most intimate bond and so the conflict here possesses something of the horrible or deeply incorrect. The two forces engage and then the two protagonists contest with until the younger slays the other with a cast of a spear and in his dying the uncle calls upon his Kacchi Jadeja friend and relatives, Rao Khengarji and his brother Sahibji, to avenge him.³³ This does happen, when the Jadeja Kacchi Rao sends a force lead by Sahibji. Sahibji and Raisinhji fight hand to hand at Malia on March 2nd, 1566. Sahibji is slain and Raisinhji, falls unconscious but is not slain and is carried away by a troupe of wandering mendicants. All this has preceded the wrestling bout, for Raisinhji had entered upon a life *incognito* after his defeat and it was only with this match of strength that his true and intrinsic power was to be uncovered. This contest then marks the instant when the disguise is revealed prior to the hero-king returning to defeat his enemy and retrieve the kingdom. In terms of the iconography it is as if the superlative hero is transformed from out of the body of the defeated and somewhat gross wrestler whom he has just vanquished: these are the two bodies of the narrative which have been almost fused by the painter's art. Eventually, such is his heroic valour, that Raisinhji becomes a headless warrior and fights, and so even in death he remains superhuman.

Finally and in closing, let us now view these paintings from another dimension altogether and briefly examine how the feminine is thoroughly and strongly present in many of these works as an active agency critical to the practice and dynamism of animated kingship. In traditional and late bronze age North Indian society a king must possess a queen in order to be able to rule correctly.³⁴ Let us see then how it is that the feminine appears in the pictures and thus how the feminine registers as a phenomenon in Jhalavari *ksatriya* culture.

³³ Khengarji was the first Rao of all Kacch and was anointed in 1548 at Rapar, later moving his capital to Bhuj; he established the port of Mandvi in 1580.

³⁴ In McGrath (2009), I have shown how the feminine in Epic Mahabharata plays both a generative and an active role in the organisation of the poem's narrative. In pre-literate and pre-monetary culture women are vital signifiers in the creation of value and worth and it is their language which establishes the standards of *ksatriya* culture or *dharma*: they are the ones who speak such truths, whereas the fathers, husbands, brothers, sons, and nephews, are the ones who accomplish such practically. In both the Homeric epics and in both Epic Mahabharata and Ramayana the presence and role of the feminine is the initial motive agency that drives and resolves the progress of the narrative.

In the present series of the collection the Goddess herself appears in Nos. 3.15 and 5.2, both paintings illustrating events that occurred during the rule of Harpaldevji in the Eleventh Century. Harpaldevji was married to a woman who was in fact the Goddess personified and from this union the kingdom was first established and thence generated. In the former work she is portrayed surrounded by slender stylised flames and in the latter picture she is represented more conventionally as being mounted upon a lion and bearing various weapons in her prolific arms.



Figure 3.15: The Rajputani as SatiMa displays the fiery internal power essence or *tejasva* understood to reside in all women.

In painting No. 3.16, the Goddess along with Raj Vegadji who flourished in the fourteenth century, watches the destruction of the Sultan of Gujarat's army caused by the intense monsoon rains sent by the deity herself in her mode as Meladi-Ma. This is the destructive aspect of the deity; she is one who generates the clan and the kingdom, and who oversees the protection of the domain in the face of attack and who—in this her negative phase—destroys all who oppose her mortal kin. This bivalent quality of the Goddess is a feature of both narratives and of iconography, she is literally and actively duplicitous.



Figure 3.16: Goddess MeladiMa destroys the army of the Sultan of Gujarat at the battle of Kadi in the 1350s by releasing a torrential rainstorm, as Raj Vegadji and his army watch.

In painting Nos. 3.17 the Rani Jijima is portrayed upon horseback with an *aftab* held up behind her receiving obeisance from an abject kinsman who presses his forehead upon her foot which is mounted in the stirrup. In the latter part of the Eighteenth Century she ruled from Dhrangadhra whilst her husband ruled from Halvad; her intrepid son, Jasvantsinhji II, re-united the two domains into a single kingdom again, establishing his throne at Dhrangadhra in 1783. Here the feminine assumes the position of royal dominance and there is no question of any veiling or of suppressed emotion as the Rani leads seven mounted warriors.

In picture No. 3.18 Raj Devrajji in the company of his women-folk visits the Little Rann and a flamingo colony that was then located in that region, situated near Kharagoda. In this painting there is a depiction of easy and mutual happiness and the party—mounted on camels—proceeds along the edge of the Rann, a salt desert or the eponymous Floating Desert. As is usual with so much of the present work the figures are poised in dual form with each camel mounted by two riders; in fact, the painting at large is made up of two registers of riders portrayed against the cerulean and cyanine blue of the saline terrain where flamingos have built their raised mud nests. It is a charming image and typical of the collection's graceful portrayal of women, where the male and the feminine are in happy accord and without any indication of dominance nor of any overbearing.



Figure 3.17: Rani JijiBa accepts the surrender of her brother-in-law Shesmalji on April 10 1758 at Dhrangadhra with her son Kunvar Jaswantsinhji and Muslim commander Muhamad Muchalo beside her.



Figure 3.18: Jhallesvara Raj Devrajji 1240-1265 with his wives visit flamingos in the floating desert.



Figure 3.19: Jhallesvar Raj Ramsinhji (1368-1385) Plowing the First Furrow.

There are many such scenes of joint amity and amusement in which a king and the royal women are shown either physically close or in pictures where the women-folk play an active role in celebrating a royal rite: as in painting No. 3.19, where Raj Ramsinhji who ruled from 1368-1385, is shown ploughing the first sacred furrow at the onset of the rainy season whilst his women observe and encourage him with the beating of drums. This is one of the many rites of kingship that the collection depicts, the image of ritual being substituted for the presentation of historical events, which, of course, engages with a different understanding of conceptual time.

In No. 3.12 the princess Soma De who lived in the latter half of the fifteenth century is shown in a beautiful and finely but lightly detailed composition gesturing at a golden oriel in a garden; a small fawn is beside her. In No. 3.20 is picture of love-making atop an elephant; in No. 6.9 there is a delightful *zenana* scene where a *raja* finds happiness in the companionship of his wives and their kind.³⁵ In painting No. 3.21 there is another

³⁵ In painting No. 3.20, where the amorous couple are portrayed in an intimate embrace there are six simultaneous actions occurring at that moment of insemination. The *raja* impregnates his consort as he sips from a bowl of wine and also as he shoots dead a boar that is being hunted; his beloved smokes from a *hookah* and speaks with a small green parrot that sits on her right hand during the love making. Emblematic of all this, below the elephant a woman dances with a peacock. Such unity of actions is typical in so many of the paintings and mere serial time is often so compressed and supplied with dimension. There is much light-hearted joy in many of the works as well as the business of martial endeavour.

zenana scene—illustrating a moment in the Seventeenth Century at Halvad—where two women are shown at play with a board game, *chopat*; they are surrounded by three symmetrically matched groups of onlookers on either side. In painting No. 3.22, Raj Jhalakdevji disports in a tank with his *zenana* women during the heat of a summer afternoon, the *jalakrida* so fondly sung of by the early classical Sanskrit poets.

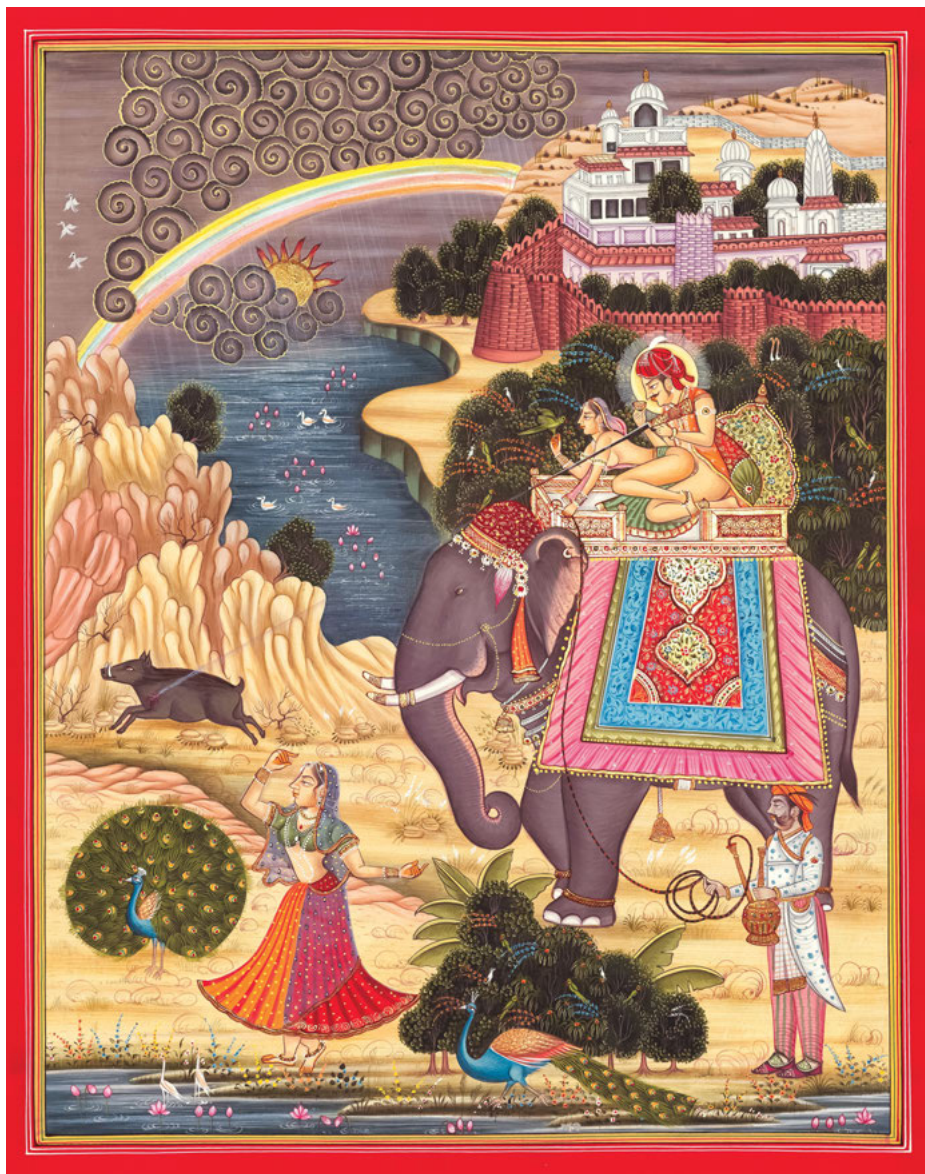


Figure 3.20: In the same instant Jhallesvar Raj Satarsalji knows the pleasures of sex, the hunt, and the glorious dawn, 1408-1420.

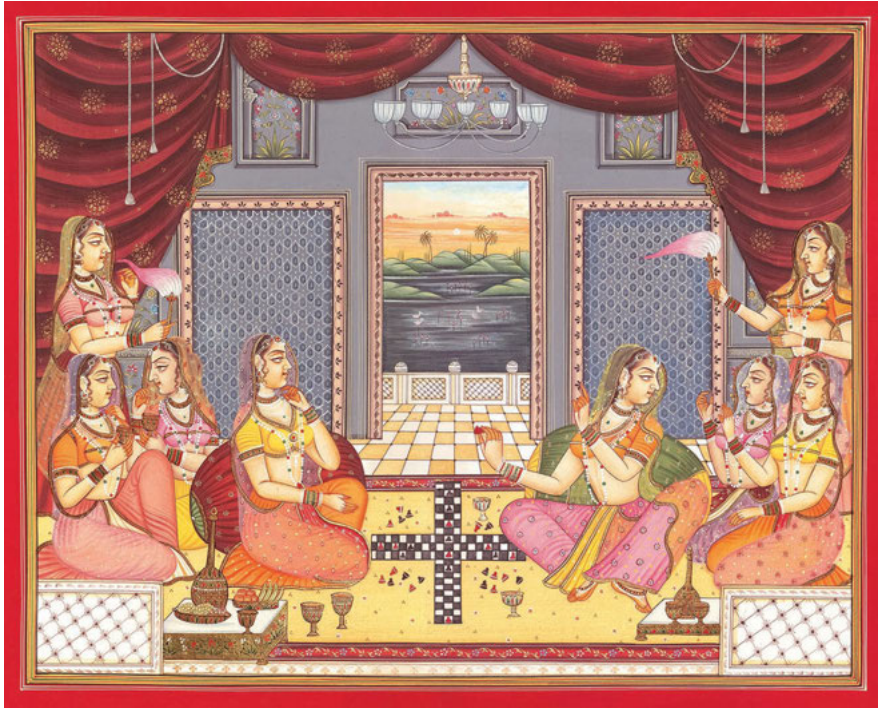


Figure 3.21: Two Solanki sisters, UmaidkunvarBa and ShamkunvarBa, the wives of brothers Jhallesvar Raj Askaranji and Kunvar Amarsangji play chopat, 1634.

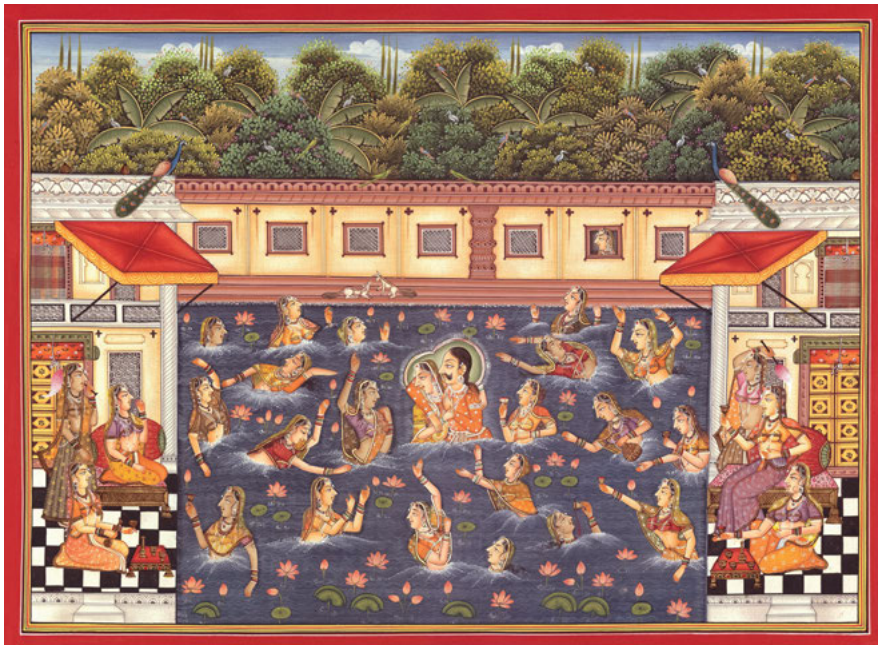


Figure 3.22: Jhallesvara Raj Jhalakdevji 1185-1210 and his family, with members of the royal *antarpur* enjoy water sports in a tank during summer at Patadi.

Amorous dalliance and such gallant intimacy in this royal culture is as important an activity as warfare and the deployment of arms. Just as in so many of the paintings the composition is organised in dual patterns, so this patterning is extended into the realm of cultural disposition itself, where the erotic is as symbolically important as the thanatic and destructive. This in itself is the *double* aspect of the Goddess, she is profoundly and originally creative but she also bears weapons and can easily annihilate the opponents of her realm: she kills with as much facility as she brings about procreation. As we have argued above this dualism is the fundamental metaphor of *ksatriya* culture as represented by the present Collection of paintings; it is also an intrinsic quality of Mahabharata poetics *qua* the world of *ksatriyas*.

It is as if the *double* in both literature and in iconography is an aspect of cognitive functioning, so prevalent is it in both verbal narrative and in pictorial *exempla*. In this old warrior culture duality and the *double* are structurally and in terms of narrative movement profoundly and intrinsically at work in the generation of meaning, image, and value. Certainly in the pictures which we have examined and in almost all of the Collection this model stands true. An efficient warrior must also be a fine lover, his vitality is always twofold; he kills with as much elegance as he propagates.

It is the present attunement of poetry, *muthos*, painting, architecture, and folklore, that sustains this *ksatriya* heritage as presented to us in the present collection. Socially this is an ongoing narrative of so many representational dimensions which nowadays even includes the medium of cinema (Mankekar, 1999). It is the figure of the hero—as king and as warrior—that stands at the focus of such narratives: the hero within and upon the landscape and the hero as a mortal character who is able to engage with both superhuman and supernatural forces in the cosmos, for nothing in these stories and poetry and in the paintings is merely mundane and diurnal.

Myth can be conceived of as a lens, an objective presence through which the sensible and material world is activated: thence a message is perceived as it registers upon or imprints the human *psyche*. I would argue that myth is thoroughly fundamental in this action insofar as it actually structures the organisation of the *psyche*. It is an invisible and purely original agency in that sense, a mental energy which we apprehend and conceive of in terms of the various narrative media: in the present case, that of painting. In this fashion, human behaviour thus becomes necessarily and profoundly mimetic.

There is also the concomitant and simultaneous presence of metaphor insofar as all myth is composed of metaphors. True human agency only occurs in the hypostatic or natural forms of human thought and emotion, or, as some would even aver, in the practice or act of perception itself. Metaphor, *qua* myth hence supplies the fundamental tissue of social culture, the paradigms and media of perception; hence the indelible power of myth as picture, as poetry, and as the lore that adheres about certain topographical points upon the earth's surface. The work of the humanist consists in the effort which moves toward the recognition and comprehension of how

such metaphor operates: what is the *nature* of that lens, or more specifically, what is that lens?³⁶

It is within the patterning of myth that the basic interdictions and exchanges—the two forces that lie at the heart of all human organisation, of intellectual and moral life—are to be located. These exchanges can be sexual, they can be with death itself, they can be the economic transition of things, or perhaps the engagement with the supernatural *ideas* that exist and occur upon a particular terrestrial situation—the deities. It is the interdictions or the prohibitions which establish the ground or the moment for such exchanges; death and birth being the primary metaphor of such instances, as warfare and pleasurable dalliance and coition. As the poets say, “The kings will go, the people will go and go also will beautiful queens. Time only remains, and the people’s eternal story.”³⁷ Even time however is conceived of in terms of the verbal and the visual, for time is composed of and by the movement of shadow.

The innovative drive of the present collection of paintings has rejuvenated this story and translated many and various diverse threads of former cultural communication and *muthos* into a new system of expression; this is the genius of Jayasinhji Jhala and his team of artisans, the poets and film-makers, the painters, the ethnographers and historians. It is the imagery borne of battle and martial conflict, of heroic prowess, of amorous flirtation and gaming; images of themes and *motifs* that have been drawn from a particular historical and mythical font, that move us toward an understanding of how the composition of Jhala consciousness has been formulated and rephrased through time, here depicted in the Collection and its present exhibition. In that sense then the pictures offer us a complete cosmology of Jhalavari cultural inheritance and a timely insight into one more aspect of complex human experience.

This is the world of timeless Jhalavar, re-invented and renewed by Jayasinhji Jhala, combining the media of modern technology and the artistry of a masterly Rajasthani painter of Ajmer and drawing upon the many various and sophisticated North Indian styles of representation as well as upon the *mythemes* and narrative manners of the Sanskrit Epic Mahabharata and the manifest tradition of subsequent warrior poetry. As we have seen, this discrete portrayal of a thousand years of *ksatriya* culture in both its creative and its destructive aspects builds upon a system of dualities within the paintings themselves: joining a system of illustration with a system of mythology, both engaged in an identical or simultaneous form of *doubleness*.

Once, when the world was not as it is now, kings, heroes, and their divine companions and consorts—here particularly represented by the Goddess—used to roam at will together across the terrain and topography of what we now know as Jhalavar. They conversed and dined together and even at times fought together or

36 What we are here referring to as a ‘lens’ is actually a linguistic composition, something that is made up of words, a verbal medium.

37 The final lines are taken from the film narrative of *The Halo of Heroes*.

made love. The dry ground itself was the vehicle for such conjoint and harmonious life, the earthly world of what is presently Western Gujarat. This wonderfully vivid and beautifully executed collection of paintings revives that old and stable colloquium, bringing it back to life for us today in the early Twenty-First Century, vivaciously, happily, and yet momentarily.

What the paintings in this Collection are telling the viewer—and of course, the audience of the poetry which accompanies these images—is, *Warriors wake up, the shout is out!* This is a call to consciousness, to a renewed and renovated awareness of philosophical, historical, and thematic understanding of what it means to walk and to exist not only upon the terrain of contemporary Saurashtra but for anyone who stands upon this earth. The pictures re-mind us of not only that old world but of the realm where moral distinction and aesthetic understanding were common to life, where human merit was not distinguished by affluence or modes of material consumption but by a cosmic, ethical, and practical understanding of how one should behave in the natural world, in the environment into which one had been born and where it was probable that one would perish. It is such humanistic refinement of the ephemeral which makes life not simply durable but also remarkable, valuable, and transparently beautiful.³⁸

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38 I am grateful to MK Jayasinhji Jhala and his wife Rani Rajkumari Rajasree, and to MK Siddhrajsinhji Jhala and his wife Rani Kanchande, for their great and extensive kindness and hospitality in Dhrangadhra on the several occasions when I have been fortunate to visit the region.

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Tony McClenaghan

4 Jhallesvaras in War and Peace

Compiled by the late Maharaja Sir Mayurdhwajsinhji / Meghrajji III and his son Dr Jayasinhji Jhala

Santhan Halvad-Dhrangadhra can be classed as an ‘antique, archaic or ancient’ State¹ in that it predated both the Muslim and Mughal Empires. It was a state which operated in a polity that was galactic and vibrant.² Over the course of eight centuries, its development as a State relied variously on the creation and maintenance of relationships of political diplomacy and military alliance, and on occasion more aggressive action. This entailed battles with other Rajput clans as well as internal family feuds, clashes with the Muslim rulers of the Sultanate, and later battles with the Mughals, the Marathas and finally the British. Military force was essential to the extension and maintenance of the State and its continuing position of dominance, and this essay will examine a representative sample of the wars of the Jhallesvaras, from a total of 46 martial engagements that span the period of 1040 to 1805, a period of 765 years.

However, between 1805 and 2016, some 211 years, it is noteworthy that no army has marched over the lands of Jhalavad. Much of the information about the first ruler, Harpaldev, is drawn from bardic legend, folklore and mythology as researched and analysed by the late Maharaja Sir Mayurdhwajsinhji – later Jhallesvara Sriraj Meghrajji III – and his son Dr Jayasinhji Jhala. The reigns of rulers to follow have far more substantial written accounts. During the 855 years of the history of the kingdom from 1093 to 1948, the descendants of the founder Harpaldevji spread across north India and established seven additional Jhala Rajput kingdoms of Limbdi, Wankaner, Wadhvan, Than Lakhtar, Chuda and Sayla in Saurashtra and Jhalrapatan in Rajasthan. In addition, Jhala cadets established the large landed estates of Badi Sadri, Delvara, Gogunda and Tana in Mewar, and Kunadi in Haroti, both in Rajasthan, as well as Narwar in the province of Madhya Pradesh and Labhuva in the Uttar Pradesh. Furthermore, not all of the descendants of Harpaldevji remained Rajputs. Some married into the Kathis and Koli castes and established small kingdoms and estates of their own. This essay is concerned with the exploits of the premier Jhala dynasty founded by Harpaldev, who was succeeded by his eldest son Sodhaji and the succeeding line of Jhallesvaras who practiced primogeniture.

1 Ramusack, Barbara N. (2004, 4).

2 Tambiah, S. (1973, 3–31).

4.1 Era of Eclipse and the New Dawn

The first example to be considered is that the founder of the Jhala Makhavana dynasty, Harpaldev. Harpaldev actually spent more time fighting for someone else than for himself, though the results of his efforts were to lead to the creation of his State. Harpaldev was born on 12 January 1066 to Kesardev, who had recently ascended the *gadi* of the Makhavanas at Kirtigadh, in Sindh, and his wife Vinayde. She was the sister of Karandev Solanki who, also in 1066 and as sixth in his line of succession, ascended the *gadi* of Gujarat on the abdication of his father, RajRajesvar Bhimdev I. The Solankis were themselves descended from the Chalukyas of Karnataka, a powerful ruling family. Both new rulers were 18 years old at the time of their accession.

In 1076 a defensive alliance was created between Kesardev and his maternal cousin, Raval Devraj of Thar Parkar guaranteeing that if one was attacked the other would come to his aid. As part of that alliance the young Harpaldev, then just ten years old, was betrothed to Devraj's child daughter, Rajesree. Kesardev had also entered into alliances with his brother-in-law, Karandev Solanki and with the Sodha king, both the Solankis and Sodhas being clans within the Agnivanshi lineage of the Rajput people, and he expected these to be honoured when called upon. In 1081, however, he was to be sadly disappointed when he needed assistance to defeat Hamir Sumra, Sultan of Sindh, who was conducting raids throughout the region, capturing and raping the women of the area. Despite these defensive treaties, no help came from the Solankis of Gujarat or the Sodhas. Nevertheless, in April 1082, Kesardev defeated the Sumras and rescued the captured women, though his eldest son was killed in a subsequent battle on 26 May 1082. His second son, Harpaldev, was wounded in the same battle while directly fighting Hamir, though he survived. Despite his immediate victory, and notwithstanding the failure of the Solankis to respond to a treaty call, at the conclusion of the battle Kesardev decided to send Harpaldev and his three younger brothers away to the home of their maternal grandmother with instructions that they should serve their uncle, Karandev Solanki. Before their departure Kesardev invested Harpaldev with the Omkar ornament from his turban, the symbol of Kingship among the Makhavanas, and instructed him to protect this symbol of his ancestors' legacy. Harpaldev and his two brothers, Vijaypal and Amarpal, and his half-brother Shantipal, left for Patan and the home of the Solankis. The following day, 28 May 1082, Kirtigadh fell against a renewed onslaught by the Sumras and Kesardev was killed in action. The sources do not relate the numbers of troops involved on either side, nor their armament or organisation, but it can be safely assumed that they included cavalry, infantry armed with spears, and bowmen.

Harpaldev and his brothers were well received in Gujarat. Karandev Solanki immediately appointed Harpaldev head of the Makhavanas. Harpaldev, however, proclaimed that he should not be called prince or king until he had earned the right. Harpaldev's education was supervised by his grandmother, Queen Udaymati, who later assigned the role to her daughter-in-law, Queen Minaldevi. Not only did Harpaldev

exhibit a keen intelligence, he also excelled in martial arts and sport, especially shield and mace, spear, bow and arrow and wrestling. Within Patan, criticism was growing of Karandev's failure to honour his treaty with the late Kesardev but still he gave shelter to all Makhavanas who arrived from Sindh. Harpaldev, through Karandev's permission, formed a new Makhavana Sindh Sena army, which he vowed would serve Karandev and his people. Again, there is no specific detail on the strength of this army or how it was organised. In effect, Harpaldev was acknowledging that, for as long as he was under Karandev's protection, he recognised Karandev as his suzerain.

In 1083 Karandev planned a second war against the Rajputs of Lat Desh, the old name for south Gujarat – he had made an earlier unsuccessful attack in 1071. He took Harpaldev and his brothers with him to serve as his bodyguard. Although successful this time the fight was not without its difficulties and Harpaldev was credited with saving the life of his uncle on three occasions, for which Karandev appointed him 'Lord of the Horse', as well as promising that, in time, he would provide sufficient forces for Harpaldev to recover Sindh. The following year Raval Devrajji of Thar Parkar requested of Karandev that Harpaldev should be required to honour the agreement of 1076 and marry his daughter, Rajasree. Harpaldev, now 19 years old, resisted on the grounds that Devrajji's people had not come to his father's aid two years earlier and had made no enquiries as to his or his brothers' well being in the intervening period. He declared that until he had recovered Sindh there would be no question of him marrying.

In January 1086 the Bhil Raja extended an invitation to Karandev to attend their Vasant Panchami festivities. The Bhils, now the third-largest (after the Gonds and Santals) and most widely distributed tribal group in India today were, even in the eleventh century, a diverse group of people. Karandev accepted the Bhil king's invitation and, taking Harpaldev and some shikari hunters with him, travelled to Bhil country. While on a hunting expedition he was attacked by some Bhils. Harpaldev intervened to save his uncle, killing many of the Bhils in the process, following which Karandev established a fortified outpost in the area which he garrisoned with part of his army. He also gave Harpaldev a flag-bearing horse, which Harpaldev named "Sankalp".

In 1092 Harpaldev met his future bride, Shakti-Ma, ten years his junior and the niece of Karandev. According to local legend she was a goddess who was to bear Harpaldev three sons who were destined to be the first kings of the three Jhala dynasties – Sodha of the Sodhan line from which all Jhallesvaras are descended, Mangu from which the Limbdi ruling family is descended, and Shekhar from which the Shekhar Shakha line is descended.³ In that same year Karandev had conferred

³ This reference emerges from the Jain text *Sahastralingsar Prabandh*, composed in Pali around 1408. The inscription reads: 'King Jayasinhdev presides over a court assembly in Shri Patan. Forty four courtiers are present, including in premier position, the Prime Minister Santu, followed by the three Jhala Ranas, Mangu, Sadha and Sresha, in seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth position.'

ruling powers on his son, Jayasinhdev,⁴ a young man with whom Harpaldev had been educated. The following year, 1093, Karandev and Jayasinhdev determined to re-take lands encroached upon by the Bhils. Harpaldev's Sindh forces and the Solanki's Patan army joined for the campaign, though Harpaldev did not participate since he had been appointed as Dharadhaskh⁵ and left behind to protect the queen and royal household.

In October 1093⁶ Asa Bhil's large forces engaged in battle which they lost, Asa Bhil was killed and his city, Ashapilli, destroyed. The Bhil surrendered and sought the protection of Karandev who built temples, constructed a lake and built the city of Karnavati.⁷

While Karandev and Jayasinhdev were away fighting the Bhils, one Babro⁸ from Sindh, realising that the two kings were absent, decided to attack Patan. Bardic legend describes Babro as a demon and it is as such that he is depicted in miniature paintings. In reality he can probably best be described as a brigand leading a band of renegades, though once more the sources do not give an indication of the size of force under his command.

According to legend, Harpaldev engaged Babro in single combat and, after a hard fight, defeated him following which Babro submitted himself and his men to Harpaldev's service.⁹ The following day, 23 October, Harpaldev married Shakti-Ma. On his return from his contact with the Bhils, and recognising the service Harpaldev had given, Karandev offered a reward. Harpaldev replied that he would like to establish his kingdom in the region based on the number of villages he could festoon in one night. Karandev offered him 84 villages but Harpaldev insisted on his solution, to which Karandev and Jayasinhdev agreed on condition that Harpaldev remained loyal to the Solanki rulers and would come to their assistance at all times. According to myth, on the night of Shakti-Ma's seventeenth birthday,¹⁰ she and Harpaldev established the Makhavana kingdom by festooning 2300 villages from a celestial winged chariot and the first 'Assembly of the Sun' was held on the following day, 3 November, when

⁴ Also seen as Siddhraj Jaisin, Sid Raj Jai Sinh, Jayasinhji.

⁵ Major domo of the household.

⁶ Sources vary as to the exact date between 6th October, 16th October, 22nd October and 24th-28th October. Given the supposed fight between Harpaldev and Babro on 22nd October the last of these dates seems most likely.

⁷ Today's Ahmedabad.

⁸ Also seen as Babra, Babaro But, Babrasur.

⁹ Some diary sources refer to Karandev witnessing the fight between Harpaldev and Babro. Given the sequence of subsequent events it seems more likely that he was told about it after the event on his return from fighting the Bhils.

¹⁰ Opinions vary as to the exact date. Some sources attribute her birthday to 11 October 1076 and therefore the creation of the kingdom to 11 October 1093; others attribute the dusk to dawn ride to create the kingdom to 2 November 1093. Since Harpaldev did not marry Shakti-Ma until 23 October it seems probable that references to her birthday having anything to do with the magical ride are misplaced.

the Auspicious Kingdom, later to be known as Jhalavad, was proclaimed. Quite how the number of villages included was arrived at in reality shall never be known but it is known that Jayasinhdev objected to its size. Babro, who had now become a loyal servant, was embraced by Harpaldev. Despite his earlier agreement to the formula for establishing the size of Harpaldev's kingdom, Jayasinhdev objected to the size of grant once he had seen the final figure. Three days later Shakti-Ma was furious with Harpaldev when he gave Jayasinhdev's queen 500 villages in the Bhal region without consulting her first. Harpaldev retained 1800 villages for his kingdom which he then divided between his brothers; Vijaypal receiving 84 villages on the Sabarmati river, Samant receiving the same number but on the Rupen river and Amarpal on the Vatrak river. This distribution was re-confirmed in 1108 following the Makhavana-Sumra war.

On 7 January 1094 Karandev abdicated and Jayasinhdev was crowned and assumed full powers, though the lasting resentment he held for Harpaldev was noted. November 1094 witnessed the first anniversary of the Makhavana kingdom when Harpaldev and the eight chiefs of Makhavana estates began to plan for the re-conquest of Sindh. In 1102 King Jayasinhdev resolved to attack the kingdom of Sorath and the capital of the Chudasamas at Junagadh.¹¹ Harpaldev objected on the grounds that it was the home of Jayasinhdev's paternal grandmother and his own maternal grandmother, Queen Udaymati, and that this would therefore be an illegal intra-family war. Jayasinhdev reacted angrily but nothing further seems to have come of this, at least for ten years. In April 1106 the king visited Patadi and Harpaldev's brothers sought his permission to start preparing for an attack on Sindh, to which he agreed, particularly since the powers of the Sumras seemed to be growing.

Shakti-Ma had died in 1105 and so, in January 1108, Harpaldev married the girl to whom he had first become engaged, Princess Rajesree, the daughter of Thar Parkar's Sodha king Raval Devrajji and by whom he would have nine sons. In March of that year he gathered his forces in Sindh, supported by the forces of the Sodha Parmar princes. Barvakhor Amir's¹² Sumra army was large and was on the point of victory when he was caught in a pincer movement, with the forces of the Makhavana Chiefs on one side and the combined forces of Harpaldev and the Sodha army on the other. The Sumra king, Unnd Amir, was captured and Harpaldev tasted victory, perhaps his greatest achievement. The Makhavana Chiefs asked Harpaldev to remain in Sindh but he declared that his place was now in Gujarat, though he bound them all together in a one-clan defensive alliance. He restated his earlier distribution of villages to his two brothers, first made when the Kingdom was created, but now added to it a gift of 24 villages each to his three sons by Shakti-Ma, and 12 villages each to the nine sons of

¹¹ Sorath – a kingdom in the south west of the Saurashtra peninsula – with its capital city, Junagadh. Watson (1876) described Saurashtra as at one time extending from the Indus to Daman, from which Ptolemy (A.D. 150) made Sytastrene, now called Sorath and Surat (p.2, f/n 1).

¹² Also seen as Unnd Amir.

Rajesree.¹³ Unnd Amir was kept with Harpaldev pending payment of a ransom which, when paid, was divided between Jayasinhdev, his wounded soldiers and the widows of the fallen, his brothers and himself. This is regarded as Harpaldev's revenge for the earlier sacking of his father's kingdom and with his new-found wealth he did much to improve the port city of Jhinjhuvada.

Over time more and more Makhavana Sindhis moved to Patadi but their growing influence, and the introduction of Sindhi language and customs led to a falling out between Harpaldev and his older sons who did not want to embrace these traditions. They left for Jhinjhuvada.

In December 1112 Jayasinhdev once again announced his intention of attacking Sorath, home of his paternal grandmother and Harpaldev's maternal grandmother in revenge for an attack made by Chudasama Ranak Khengar of Sorath during Jayasinhdev's absence. The ensuing estrangement between the two lasted almost until the end of Harpaldev's life. The disagreement did, however, led to a rapprochement for Harpaldev with his elder sons, Sodha and Mangu and he bestowed a number of villages on them as well as on his younger sons. Jayasinhdev was victorious in Junagadh,¹⁴ though no Makhavana attended the victory celebrations. Fifteen years later, in 1127, Jayasinhdev celebrated his fiftieth birthday and invited Harpaldev and his sons to attend. Harpaldev declined because of the occupation of Sorath, but sent his sons instead.

Between 1127 and 1130 Jayasinhdev, accompanied by his family and by the sons of Harpaldev, went on a pilgrimage to Somnath, in Junagadh. During his absence one Yas'ovarman¹⁵ marched into Gujerat and only left when Jayasinhdev's minister, Santu, agreed terms, an action which infuriated Jayasinhdev who, on his return from pilgrimage, started to prepare for war with the Paramaras Rajputs of Avanti¹⁶ Mandal, Malwa. He called upon Harpaldev to support him with his Makhavana forces. Harpaldev declined to become involved personally on the grounds that he was about to abdicate but he pledged the support of eleven of his sons as well as his

13 The 9 sons, it has been argued, are not the sons of Rajesree's womb but rather sons the couple adopted from the war orphans of the second and victorious Sindh war. Rajesree was too old to have nine sons if she got married late in life, especially if we factor in the birth of daughters and miscarriages.

14 Queen Ranakdevi, wife of Junagadh's ruler Rao Khengar, committed sati rather than submit to marriage with Jayasindhdev. He built a temple to her memory at Wadhwan, the place of her pyre, which still stands today.

15 Though clearly not the more famous Yas'ovarman, king of Kannauj in the late 8th century – when Gujarat was nominally in allegiance with the Kannauj kings.

16 Also known as Ujjain. It is interesting to note that Jayasinhdev's grandfather, Bhimdev I, had obviously enjoyed a closer relationship with the Paramaras at one time since, between 1026 and 1042, he worked with the then King Bhoj of Malwar to rebuild the Temple of Somnath following its destruction by the Muslim ruler, Mahmud of Ghazni in 1024.

confidant, Babro and his forces. Two of his sons, Mangu and Shekhra, were appointed cavalry commanders. Meanwhile, Harpaldev abdicated in favour of his son Sodha and retired with Queen Rajesree to Jhinhuvada. The war against Malwa lasted for five years and looked at one stage as if it would fail, until Babro and his forces bridged the Sipra river. In January 1136, on Harpaldev's 70th birthday, word reached him that all his sons were alive, though all were wounded. His wife, Queen Rajesree, died a couple of days later and Harpaldev left Jhinhuvada for Patadi. In February Jayasinhdev made a triumphal return to Patan with the defeated Yasovarman seated beside him. They were preceded in the procession by Harpaldev's son Mangu. The following month Jayasinhdev visited Harpaldev at Patadi, the first meeting since their falling out 24 years earlier, when Jayasinhdev, praising the Makhavans for always being at his side protecting him, asked that Mangu be considered his son. This was agreed to and during the victory celebrations Mangu¹⁷ married the daughter of the Junagadh king.

Just two weeks later, on 18 April 1136, Harpaldev died. He had seen much action in his long life, though mainly on behalf of others. At the age of 16 he helped his father defeat the Muslim Sultan Hamir Sumra in one fight, though had been sent away by his father before his own death at the hands of the Sumras at Kirtigadh. He then served his uncle, Karandev of Gujarat, and at the age of 17, while serving as his bodyguard, saved his life during a fight against Rajputs in south Gujarat. The same was to happen three years later while fighting against Bhil tribals who had attacked Karandev while out hunting. He took no part in the fighting against the Bhils in 1093 since he had been left behind as Dharadhaskh to protect the palace and the queen, but that occasion brought him into conflict with Babro of Sindh whom, having been defeated by Harpaldev became his loyal servant. His reward for the defeat of Babro was the gift of villages that went to make up his kingdom. His major campaign victory, in 1108, was not directly connected to the defence of his new kingdom, but exacted revenge on the Sumras of Sindh for their defeat of his father a quarter of a century earlier. Four years later he declined, on conscientious grounds, to support his cousin Jayasinhdev in his fight against Junagadh. Nor did he take any personal role in Jayasinhdev's conquest of Malwa on the grounds that he had just abdicated, though he did enable his sons to participate and all were wounded in protecting the king. Harpaldev was clearly a man of skill, of courage and of conscience and he set the tone for future rulers of Jhalavad.

¹⁷ Mangu was later to die at Patan defending Jayasindhdev from an assassination attempt (Merutunga (1982).



Figure 4.1: Raj Kesardevji rescues Rajput women captured by Hamir Sumra, 1073.

Within the exhibition of paintings¹⁸ there are two that cover this period. One painting depicts Harpaldev's father, Kesardev, leading his troops against Hamir Sumra, Sultan of Sindh, in which he defeated the Sumra army and rescued women who had been captured by them. A second painting depicts the magical night ride with the demon Babro and the Goddess Shakti-Ma as Harpaldev establishes the Makhavana kingdom by festooning 2300 villages from a celestial winged chariot, though the painting actually shows him riding a horse.

This first period was a time of trial and revival of fortune. Following the destruction of their ancestral kingdom in Kiritgadh, Sindh by the emergent power of the Muslim Hamir Sumras, we decipher some key patterns and principles of clan identity and formation under Harpaldev. He founded the new kingdom of Jhalavad within the existing kingdom of Gujarat. Jhalavad was a unique independent palantine state established through royal grant by the Solanki kings, Karandev and Jayasinhdev. The governing 'law of the fish' is contained by the tenacity and obligations of marital ties and alliance pacts between the ruling dynasts, Solanki of Gujarat, Sodha Parmars of

¹⁸ See Kevin McGrath's essay 'Landscape Poetry & the Hero' (in this volume) for a more detailed analysis of these paintings.



Figure 4.2: Night of November 6, 1093, SaktiMa, her Shiva incarnate husband Jhallesvar Raj Harpaldev, and demon servant Babrusur, ride to form the future kingdom of Jhalavad.



Figure 4.3: Jhallesvar Raj Harpaldev and RajRajesvar Jayasinhdev hunt the tiger at Bhilwada.

Thar Parker, Chudasamas of Sorath and the Jhall-Makhwans of Sindh that constrained to a degree the overlord from arbitrary actions of excess of power. The king, fellow subordinate rulers and his nobles are thus tied by the concept of *swami seva* or loyal service. For instance, Harpaldev is loyal to his uncle Karandev and younger cousin JayasinhDev. He also pledged his sons, forces and allies, even Babra the enemy he subdued and who in turn swore loyalty to him, to serve the Solanki dynasty. This was a time when kingdoms faced resistance from many sides: foreign Mlecha or Muslim forces, traditional foes from rival states such as Malva, and internal rebellious groups, including the Bhils and the Babras. The only time HarpalDev withheld his service and that of his sons and armies is when Jayasinhdev attacked the kingdom of their common grandmother's home, the kingdom of the Chudasamas of Sorath.

In victory, he was an exemplary Kshatriya king, the *danvir*, generous to his captives, such as Unnd, the Amir of Barakhor Sindh, whom he freed on condition that the Amir pay the agreed upon ransom. He distributed the spoils of war with due diligence, gifting proportionally appropriate treasure to the paramount ruler, King Jayasinhdev, the other Makhwan chiefs, his younger brothers, his sons as well as loyal and meritorious soldiers. He and his second wife Rajasree also provided sanctuary for the victims of these conflicts, including adopting many orphans of war. He was the responsible *Kuladhipati*, lord of the clan, in that he brought his displaced peoples from Sindh and settled them in the new kingdom he created through the protection of his fighting arm for the Solanki Dynasty and by his principled participation in matters of martial engagement, when he did not join the Solankis in an illegal war with the kingdom of Sorath to whom he and the Solanki Jaysinhdev were related.

Throughout his life, the paramount power supported him despite the differences which existed between these two cousins. Throughout Jayasinhdev's reign, Harpaldev was not prevented by Solanki forces from further consolidating his territory, or resettling refugees from Sindh to form his *Sidh Sena* ('Army of the Right'), which served both Jhalavad and the Solanki kingdom. During the entire period of Solanki dominance, no Solanki force is recorded to have ever attacked Jhalavad. The relationship between these two states was inviolable.

Harpaldev's greatest achievement was the making of a new kingdom within an existing larger kingdom of the Solanki which was to endure from 1093 to 1149. The kingdom was populated by local residents, as well as the incoming migrant Jhall-Makhwan clan, and the subdued Babariyas of Sindh. It was only after eleven years of Harpaldev's service to his maternal uncle Karandev that the kingdom was established in 1093. In the next twelve years, from 1093 to 1105, the divine and highborn Solanki wife SaktiMa and Harpaldev together laid the foundation of their kingdom. This foundation itself was built on marital relations between the Solanki kings and Harpaldev as well as his relationship with the Rajput Sodha kingdom of Thar Parker and the Chudasama kingdom of Sorath. These kin relations provided access, shelter in the time of trial and the opportunity to rebound and reclaim lost status.

From 1093 to 1325 the relationship of the rulers of Jhalavad and the paramount Rajput dynasties of the Solanki and Vaghela of Gujarat remained firm. There is no record of any Solanki or Vaghela army invading Jhalavad. The Jhala kings continued in military and administrative service as *mahamandalesvara* [governors] and *senanani* [military generals]. They served in wars against invading Muslim forces of Ghori and Khilji, incursions from Sindh, rival Rajput kingdoms of the Chauhans of Sambhar and Delhi and Paramaras of Malwa as well as against the indigenous tribes of the Bhils.

With the diminishment of Rajput power and the establishment of the Muslim Sultanates of Delhi and Gujarat, from 1325 to 1573, the Jhala kings entered a period of continuous war with Muslim powers, with some periods in which alliances fostered relative calm. They did not engage in collaborative enterprises nor established immediate kin ties. Whereas proximity marked the period prior, distance would characterize the relationship between paramount power and the Jhala kingdom in the following period.

4.2 Era of New Alliances

A jump of over 400 years introduces the second sample regnal period, that of Rayasinh I (Raisinh/Raysinh) (1563-1587) and his son, Chandrasinh I (1587-1628) where the Jhallesvaras enter into a period of new alliances with Muslim power their principal enemy from the early 1300 hundreds and 1580s. But before detailing the events it is worth digressing slightly to discuss sources for this period and dates in general.

There are three contemporary sources reporting on the times of Rayasinh's life and several later works. The contemporary sources are: Shaikh Abul Fazl, Emperor Akbar's diarist, who wrote his "*Akbarnama*",¹⁹ Ahmad Nizam-ud-din,²⁰ Bakhshi²¹ of Gujarat from 1584 to 1590, who wrote "*Tabakat-i-Akbari*",²² Abdu-l-Qadir Ibn-i-Muluk Shah, also known as Badauni, appointed by Akbar to religious office in the royal courts in 1574 to translate the Ramayana and Mahabharata, but who also wrote the "*Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh* (Selection of Chronicles)".²³ Muhammad Arif Qandharis' "*Tarikh-i-Akbari*"²⁴ is particularly useful for the earlier period of Akbar but Abu Fazl does not use it and it does not seem to mention Rayasinh. Count Frederick Noer's "*Der Kaiser Akbar. The Emperor Akbar*" translated by H. Beveridge ignored Badauni but noted in his preface²⁵:

19 Abul Fazl, A. (1873-1876, translated 1921) AN hereafter.

20 Also referred to as Nizami.

21 Paymaster - appointed by the fourth Viceroy, Itimad Khan Gujarati.

22 In Elliot, H.M. and Dowson, J. (1867-77), Vol. 5, Chapter XL.

23 Also referred to as *Tarikh-i-Badauni* (*Badauni's History*), translated 1889.

24 Translated by Tasneem Ahmad (1993).

25 Noer, Count F. (1890), p. xlv.

“On this [Nizami’s] chronicle my work is based because its records of fact are the most accurate and faithful; its style is simple and free from elaboration; ... It contains a wealth of material but, it must be confessed, in a state of uncritical disarray.” And his ‘To the Reader’ (p lv): “The knowledge of sources has deepened with the progress of the work, and the result has been that in this part the masterly accounts of Abul Fazl have assumed the first place in the place of those of Nizamuddin Ahmed. One reason, for this change, is the want of a trustworthy chronology in the *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*.”

Others criticise Abul Fazl for his fawning attitude towards Akbar, failing to mention or raise any issue which casts an aspersion on Akbar. Badauni, whose rivalry with Abu Fazl is renowned, is considered to have had an analytical independent mind who did not gloss over uncomfortable questions on Akbar’s ability as an administrator.²⁶

J.W. Watson’s “History of Gujarat” (1876) draws largely on two earlier Persian works; the *Mirat-i-Sikandri* by Sikandar ibn Muhammad Manjhu, which covers the period up to Akbar’s conquest (A.D. 1573), and the *Mirat-i-A’hmadi* by Ali Muhammad Khan, which covers the period A.D. 1573-1760. Watson’s work, which in itself is a masterly synopsis of the two Mirats, describes them as “are the two most authentic of the Persian histories of Gujarat”.²⁷

Emperor Akbar introduced the solar Ilahi Era with Persian names of months on March 10 1584²⁸. The Era was back-dated to commence on Akbar’s accession to the throne, on 10/11 March 1556; its years begin on 10/11 March and coincide with his regnal years – referred to in the following pages as ‘Akbari’ (AA = Anno Akbari). Both Abul Fazl and Nizami’s chronicles record their events per Akbari years, “..... but ‘The Tabakat and Badauni go astray at the 22nd year’”²⁹

There is, therefore, much cause for confusion in citing dates and the research by the late Maharaja Jhallesvara Sriraj Meghrajji III and his son Dr Jayasinhji Jhala, on which this paper has been based, has attempted to clarify this.

To return to the narrative of Rayasinh and his son Chandrasinh, much had happened in the intervening 400 years since Harpaldev’s reign, including seven rulers being killed, either in battle or by intrigue. Perhaps one of the most significant events was the relocation of the State capital by Rayasinh’s great grandfather Rajodharji, from Kuwa-Kankavati to Halvad. Rajodharj’s son Ranoji had succeeded to the gaddi in 1500 but was killed in 1523 by Shahjiv, son of Malik Bakhan of Dasada whom Ranoji had killed. Ranoji had been succeeded by Mansinh, also known as Man Ghelo, whose

²⁶ “Compare the writings of Abu Fazl and Badauni on Akbar’s reign”, www.preservearticles.com. Accessed 15 February 2015.

²⁷ Watson, John W. (1876), Preface.

²⁸ AN 2.p17 and AN 3.p644. Majumdar, R.C. (1984, 138-139) gives the date as 1582 and makes the point that it is difficult to define the Divine Faith. “.....neither inspired by Revelation nor based on any well-defined philosophy or theology.....[it is] no wonder that the *Din-i-Ilahi* could obtain hardly twenty-five converts of note and died with its author”.

²⁹ Elliot and Dowson (2014, 246).

first act was to avenge the death of his father by attacking Dasada and killing Shahjiv. This resulted in the Sultan sending a punitive force against him and he was forced to flee to Cutch. With his State annexed by the Sultan, Mansinh lived as an outlaw and, supported by his brothers Adoji and Varsoji and with his band of horsemen, spent several years attacking the Sultan's officers and officials throughout Jhalawar. Their mother was a princess from Bikaner whose sister was married to Bahadur Shah and he offered the two brothers the State of Jhalawar in return for expelling Man Ghelo and giving their subordination to the Sultanate, an offer they spurned. Eventually Mansinh did submit to the Sultan at Diu, was pardoned and reinstated with honour.



Figure 4.4: Jhallesvar Raj Ranoji slays Shahjiv, the son of Malik Bakhan of Dasada, 1523.

Just prior to his death there occurred a serious argument with his son, Rayasinh who, according to the Kondh record and Dadubha Saheb of Kondh,³⁰ was ‘hot-headed’ (*“uccard vriaj-na/ svabhav-na hata”*). The Raja had appointed Charab Dhanaji Raba to mediate between himself and his two brothers, Varsoji and Adoji of Kondh, to decide the number and names of villages to be assigned as additional appanage,

³⁰ Dadubha Saheb Bahadur Devisinh Saratsinh Jhala of Kondh. Police Commissioner of Dhrangadhra State.

to his younger brothers. (Adoji later died without issue while Varsoji was Dadubha Saheb's ancestor.) Rayasinh maintained that there had never been, and never could be, mediation between a sovereign and what he regarded as blackmailers but he was overruled. As heir-apparent he was required, by established custom, to confirm and ratify the award. He was outraged by the generosity of the award to Kondh and insisted that it be disregarded by his father. But Mansinh told Rayasinh that he did not know what his brothers had suffered and lost on Mansinh's account when he did not have the state or power in his hands. Rayasinh argued that everyone knew and praised them for what they had done, but it was their *dharma*, and what they were now demanding amounted to *adharma*, thus negating any good there may have been in their original service. Although Man Ghelo was bitter about the generosity of the awards he had no option but to grant it. The resulting serious argument between Mansinh and Rayasinh led to the Raj expelling his son from the State and he made the awards to Kondh and granted six villages to the arbitrator, Charab Dhanaji Raba.

The loss of his son seems to have had a direct bearing on Mansinh's death four or five months later. The date of his death, and therefore of Rayasinh's succession, is subject to dispute. The DharVahi says VS 1620 (A.D. 1564) and this is repeated in various sources including SivaKatha and Watson. However, the date is clearly inscribed in the Halvad Kirti-Deri No 3 as VS 1620 Kartik Sud 15 (A.D. 31 October 1563) and that is the date accepted for this paper. According to Abu Fazl he spent the first three years of his rule in Halvad, attacking the neighbouring zamindars such as the Jam of Nawanagar and Khengar (Rao of Kutch) but probably his most significant battle during this time was against his maternal uncle and his father's enemy, Thakur Jassaji of Dhrol, on 3 December 1565 during which Thakur Jassaji was killed. Rayasinh's name was celebrated in song and story in the towns of Gujarat for the courage he displayed and he earned great renown.³¹

On 2 March 1566, Rayasinh was involved in the costly battle of Malia against Jadejas of Kacch. Badly wounded in the fighting, he was carried away from the field by his faithful golden mare 'Sihan' (Lioness), pursued by two Kacchi horsemen. Their horses were not swift enough, however, and they lost him in the falling dusk. The loyal mare went on through the jungle for many miles until her master fell off and lay unconscious in a ditch. The following morning Mukund Bharati³² and his fellow pilgrim sadhus were passing by, returning from a pilgrimage to Dvarka and Hinglaj

³¹ Sources do not give details of the composition of his army at this time. Some fifty years before this date the Portuguese traveller Barbosa (1511-1514) described the Gujarat cavalry as comprising "Moors and Gentiles armed with thick round shields edged with silk, [with] two swords each, a dagger and a Turkish bow with very good arrows...some carry maces, and many of them coats of mail, and others tunics quilted with cotton" (Watson, 1876, 40, f/n 1). Might the composition of the force become more local by 1563? Difficult to say.

³² The Bharatis are one of the ten Orders of religious mendicants founded by Adi Sankaracarya's most famous disciple Suresvara (800-840). They add 'Bharati' after their adopted name.

Mata on the Baluchistan coast, a 100-mile sea journey west from Karachi when, alerted by the noise and movement of the horse, they found Rayasinh. They tended him back to health and he then joined them on their round trip of Bharatavarsa, an absence that was to last for nineteen years. Had it not been for his horse and the Sadhus, Rayasinh would have surely perished.

Word was brought to his capital that Rayasinh had been badly wounded and his horse had carried him away towards the Rann. They had disappeared in the dark and an assumption was made that they must surely have perished in the cold night in the vast Rann. Rayasinh had made Bhati Govind Das, a close confidante of his mother Jamjadi Gangama Dhrolvala, his Pradhan or Vizier. Neither Rayasinh's mother nor his Pradhan would accept that their king had died. There was ill feeling between the Pradhan and Varsoji of Kondh, Rayasinh's uncle. Matters were already strained, therefore, when Varsoji and the Purohit Narottamdas Raval came before Rayasinh's mother and said it was unseemly for the queens not to put on the garments of widowhood and for the young Chandrasinh not to mount the throne. Still the Pradhan, Govind Das would not agree. Ultimately when Gangama and Jamjadi Lalajirajba, Rayasinh's chief queen agreed, the Pradhan had to agree and call a court gathering, just as the Pradhan of Mansinh had called when that king died and Rayasinh was away having been banished.

Varsoji took the premier place at the meeting and questions were raised as to whether Rayasinh would have left his queens and his people in such a state had he been alive, the obvious inference being that he must have died. Varsoji made the point that with a king on the throne the state was safe and sound, the people were happy and go about their business without fear; without a king everything would go into disarray and vassals and neighbours would take advantage. Others said that in according with tradition, whether the king was dead or merely absent, Chandrasinh had already succeeded and it only remained to anoint him and proclaim him – it was what his father would have said and wished. Yet others pointed out that Chandrasinh was only a child and it would do no harm to wait, suggesting that he should become regent. This argument was countered by Varsoji who asked how a minor could be regent when he himself would need a regent. The Purohit said that Rayasinh should be mourned as lost and the queens should break their bangles.³³ Rani Lalajirajba, Chandrasinh's mother, would not agree but eventually the voice of the people carried and the Purohit and the Nagar Seth both went before Gangama, Lalajirajba and the Pradhan and said, "Let the earth wait but let the throne be filled before the sun begins its southward journey". Thus it was that Chandrasinh was anointed and proclaimed king, though one of Rayasinh's queens, Mirade or Lilijirajba, refused to believe that her lord was dead: she did not wear black and did not destroy her bangles. Later, when Chandrasinh had grown up, Bhati Govind handed over the Pradhanpad to another, though he continued to serve the gadi all his life.

33 An act performed by Hindu women on becoming widows.

Meanwhile, Rayasinh was still travelling with his fellow Bharatis but at some point, probably January 1584, the company arrived within the precincts of the Imperial court at Fatehpur Sikri where Rayasinh sprang to prominence by defeating the wrestling champion, Eko Mal with a punch of his fist.³⁴ There are two considerations in arriving at this statement. First, from his early youth Emperor Akbar was known to have been fond of the company of faqirs and yogis³⁵ and in 1578 began preaching the universality of God and religion. In April 1582 he promulgated the Din-i-Ilahi, his eclectic religion which attracted religious people of all persuasions, something he had set out to do. Badauni³⁶ noted that in A.H. 991 [1583]:

In the same year His Majesty built outside the town two places for feeding poor Hindús and Musalmáns, one of them being called Khaipúrah, and the other Dharmpúrah. Some of Abu-l-Fazl's people were put in charge of them. They spent His Majesty's money in feeding the poor. As an immense number of Jogís also flocked to this establishment, a third place was built, which got the name of Jogípúrah.

His Majesty also called some of the Jogís, and gave them at night private interviews, enquiring into abstract truths; their articles of faith; their occupation; the influence of pensiveness: their several practices and usages; the power of being absent from the body; or into alchemy, physiognomy, and the power of omnipresence of the soul.

..... On a fixed night, which came once a year, a great meeting was held of Jogís from all parts. This night they called Sivrát. The Emperor eat and drank with the principal Jogís, who promised him that he should live three or four times as long as ordinary men. His Majesty fully believed it, and connecting their promises with other inferences he had drawn, it became impressed on his mind as indelibly as though it were engraved on a rock.

This account corroborates very well the received account that the venerable Mukund Bharati made a tilak of vibhuti (ash) on the Badshah's forehead and gave him 'baudh'.

The second consideration concerns the presence of wrestlers in the vicinity of the Emperor, but again Abu Fazl provides the clue:

Whenever His Majesty holds court they beat a large drum, the sounds of which are accompanied by Divine Praise. In this manner, people of all classes receive notice. His Majesty's sons and grandchildren, the grandees of the Court, and all other men who have admittance, attend to make the kornish, and remain standing in their proper places. ... His Majesty with his usual insight, gives orders, and settles everything in a satisfactory manner. During the whole time, skilful gladiators and wrestlers from all countries hold themselves in readiness, and singers, male and female, are in waiting. Clever jugglers and funny tumblers also are anxious to exhibit their dexterity and agility.³⁷

³⁴ If the much vaunted and trumpeted incident is factual and not a bardic fancy, it is curious that the punctilious Abul Fazl does not allude to it but then, despite being renowned as a conscientious recorder of every birth, death, and marriage in the imperial family, he does not mention the marriage of Prince Salim, the future emperor Jahangir, to Jodhbai, who bore him the future emperor Shahjahan!

³⁵ Majumdar, R.C. (1984), op.cit, p.133.

³⁶ Badauni, Abd al Qadir, (1867-77), vol 5. p538, though Majumdar (ibid.) p.134 gives the date as 1575.

³⁷ Ibid., vol. 1, p.166.

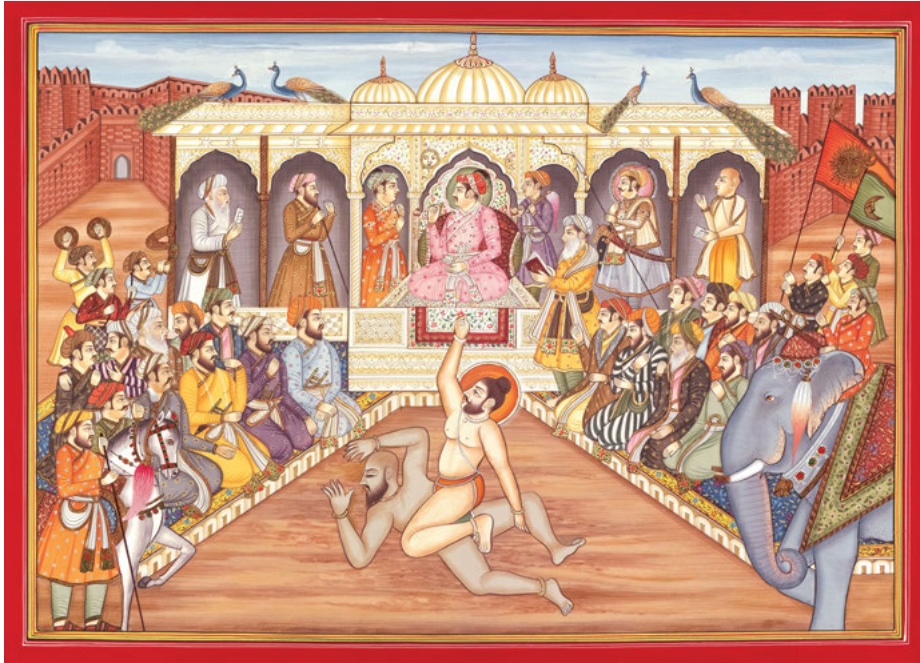


Figure 4.5: On August 7 1585 in Fatehpur-Sikri Jhallesvar Raj Rayasinhji I defeats Emperor Akbar's wrestler Eckomal Hebat Khan. Emperor Akbar, Raja Udaisinh of Jodhpur, Sufi Rahimji and Mukand Bharatiji look on.

As to the date of the incident with the wrestler Eko Mal Hebat Khan, short of an actual notice of the event in a chronicle³⁸ the indications of timing could not be better. The “Sivaratri” of the traditional account and the annual “Sivrat” of Badauni’s account cannot be other than the yearly Maha Sivaratri. The two ‘purās’, and then the third, were built in AH 991 which began on 15 January 1583. Based on Abu Fazl’s testimony, Rayasinh probably returned to Halvad in the last two months of Akbar’s 30th year, i.e. 10/11 January to 9/10 March 1585. Two Maha Sivaratris fall in the material period: either 11 February 1583 (AH 991 Muharram (1st month)), which is too early, OR, and the most likely:- Maha Sivaratri on 31 January 1584 (AA 29; AH 992 Muharram 28). This significant event, even if it existed only in folklore, is an important occasion in the life of Rayasinh and is represented in painting in the collection. Emperor Akbar, Crown Prince Salim, Markand Bharati, Sufi Rahimji and Mota Raja Udaisinhji of Jodhpur watched the contest, as a result of which Rayasinh became a court intimate

³⁸ If indeed it actually took place. See f/n 32 – Abu Fazl makes no mention of it and Badauni makes no specific reference to it. It may, therefore, be Bardic fancy but clearly something occurred that brought Rayasinh to the notice of Akbar and led to his staying at Fatehpur Sikri for about 8 months.

and stayed on at Fatehpur Sikri for about 8 months before bidding farewell to his Jogi friends and returning to his home in Halvad between January and March 1585.³⁹ His stay in Akbar's court was to have a long-standing influence on his subsequent reign as well as those of his successors. He became an adherent of Akbar's personal faith, *Din-e-ilahi*, and shared some of his views on alternate religious thinking as well. At the Emperor's suggestion, Rayasinh married his son and heir, Chandrasinh, to Satyabhamaji, the daughter of the Jodhpur ruler Mota Raja Udaisinh, to whom Akbar had granted Jodhpur in 1583. Meanwhile Akbar's own son, Crown Prince Salim (later Emperor Jahangir) was married to Satyabhamaji's sister, Mani Bai. This relationship by marriage would remain significant for the Jhallesvaras, both during times of peace and war, in the subsequent reigns of Emperors Jahangir, Shahjehan and Aurangzeb since it ensured they remained free from harassment from the emperor's armies for 80 years.

Although some sources refer to Mirza Abdur-Rahim Khan,⁴⁰ Khan-Khanan, viceroy of Gujarat, as being present at Fatehpur Sikri at the same time as Rayasinh, this is contradicted by other sources which clearly show him defeating Muzafar at this time. His presence at Fatehpur Sikri is therefore discounted but it would seem possible that, on his eventual return to Halvad in the first quarter to 1585, Rayasinh sought the assistance of Mirza Abdur-Rahim Khan to regain his throne from his son, though even this is only speculation since there is conflicting evidence in the sources. According to the Kondh story⁴¹ on his first return to Halvad Rayasinh pointed to his *bhagva* raiments and proclaimed that he was "*bairagi*"⁴² and had no desire or intention to rule. The fact is that he did become king once again, though as a simultaneous sovereign with his son,⁴³ he did wear saffron clothes even after assuming the *gaddi* again and he was called *Bava*.⁴⁴ Whether Rayasinh did or did not seek the assistance of Mirza Abdur-Rahim Khan in regaining his throne, it is worth saying something more about this most influential figure.

Some twenty years before Rayasinh came to the notice of the Emperor, Akbar had been fighting his opponents in the Gujarat/Kathiawar/Rajasthan region. In 1562, the year in which he had captured Jodhpur, he had repealed the Islamic law of forcibly converting prisoners of war and their families to Islam, but in 1568 he conquered Chittor and massacred many of the prisoners before carrying off the bronze gates

³⁹ See analysis of Abul Fazl's dating below in regard to a subsequent appearance before Akbar.

⁴⁰ Referred to by Watson (1876) as Mirza Khan, son of Beiram Khan. First appointed Viceroy 1575-77 and then for a second time 1583-90.

⁴¹ See f/n 28 above.

⁴² Possibly meaning *vairagi* – free from passion, an ascetic, one free from worldly desires.

⁴³ An untenable situation for Chandrasinh who left that night for Wadwan and, according to some sources, went on to Wankaner, then a Babaria country under Jhala protection.

⁴⁴ *Sadhu* or renounces, it also means *cobweb* and, of course, *father* and it is in that context that *Bava* became the accepted form of addressing the Jhallesvaras, and this still applies in local circles.

from Padmini's Palace to adorn his new Red Fort at Agra. In 1573 he conquered the Muslim rulers of Gujarat and Sultan Muzafar was placed in custody, though eight years later he escaped and fled to Saurashtra where he remained in hiding until 1583 when he raised a rebellion. Akbar appointed Mirza Aziz Kokaltash as his first Viceroy, though he retired after just two years and the young Mirza Abdur-Rahim Khan was appointed Viceroy, with the more experienced Wazir Khan as his diwan. Wazir Khan's administration was not particularly successful and in 1577 the Viceroyalty was transferred to Shahab-ud-din Ahmad Khan, the Governor of Malwa. With Muzafar Shah's re-emergence in 1583 Shahab-ud-din was recalled and his place as Viceroy taken by Itimad Khan. He in turn appointed his officers, including his Paymaster, Ahmad Nizam-ud-din, author of "Tabakat-i-Akbari". Itimad Kahn proved to be ineffectual in his post and within months Muzafar attacked and held Ahmedabad on 3 September 1583, proclaiming himself Sultan. Later that month Akbar appointed Mirza Abdur-Rahim Khan to his second term as Viceroy, sending him some strenuous men as officers "in order that they might go by a straight road to Gujarat, and address themselves to the punishment of the evildoers".⁴⁵ He was delayed at Fatehpur Sikri while he collected his officers and in the meantime Muzafar had taken Baroda on 23 November, Broach on 29 November, had plundered Khambat⁴⁶ and had increased the size of his force to almost 30,000 men. Finally, at the end of December Mirza Abdur-Rahim Khan was on the move, though his army halted at Patan. Despite the various changes of Viceroy it is worth recording that Ahmad Nizam-ud-din was retained as Bakhshi until 1590 and so was ideally placed to record his history of events.

On 16 January 1584 Mirza Abdur-Rahim Khan defeated the forces of Muzafar near Sarkhej, though Muzafar escaped and was pursued towards Khambat and then on to Baroda, Petlad, Rajpipla and Nadia. News of Mirza Abdur-Rahim Khan's victory did not reach Akbar until early February, shortly before his arrival at Fatehpur Sikri. Muzafar renewed his war effort and it was at Nandod, in the Rajpipla Hills, that Mirza Abdur-Rahim Khan's forces engaged and defeated the enemy on 10 March. In recognition of his victory Akbar bestowed on him "a horse, a dress of honour, a jewelled girdle and dagger, a *tumantoq/tuman tugh* ⁴⁷ and the rank of a commander of 5,000 which was the highest dignity of Amirs"⁴⁸ and made him Khan-i-Khanan. After this second defeat Muzafar fled to Champaner, Birpur/Virpur⁴⁹, Jhalawar and then on towards Surath before seeking shelter with Amin Khan Ghori, ruler of Sorath at Junagadh who then allocated Gondal to him. Both Amin Khan Ghori and Jam Satarsal

⁴⁵ AN, 3, p.613

⁴⁶ Khambhat/Cambay.

⁴⁷ A standard of the highest dignity (Bloch. P.50) as quoted by Badauni (year 992); Elliot and Dowson, 5, p.437.

⁴⁸ Equivalent to Panch Hazari – commander of 5,000 troops.

⁴⁹ 50 miles north-east of Ahmadabad (Elliot and Dowson, 5, p.437, f/n 3).

of Nawanagar⁵⁰ accepted 1 lakh Mahmudis⁵¹ from him and agreed to support him in his attack on Ahmedabad where Mirza Abdur-Rahim Khan had based himself. Muzafar advanced from Nawanagar to Morbi⁵² but Mirza Abdur-Rahim Khan learnt of the move and advanced to meet him. By the time Muzafar had reached Viramgam⁵³ he realised that his two allies had failed him; and he retreated towards the Barda hills. Mirza Abdur-Rahim Khan marched into Surath where Amin Khan Ghorī and Jam Satarsal made submission and offered to help against Muzafar. The Jam's men were supposed to guide Mirza Abdur-Rahim Khan's men but instead ravaged and looted the area of the Barda hills while Muzafar fled towards Othaniya in Gujerat. There he raised a large force before clashing with the Mughal division at Paranti, though again he was soundly defeated and only managed to escape barefoot and half dead.

While Mirza Abdur-Rahim Khan was engaged in the Barda hills the Jam's duplicity was discovered and his vakils dismissed before Mirza Abdur-Rahim Khan marched on Nawanagar to punish him. The Jam collected a large body of horse⁵⁴ and "innumerable" infantry but when Mirza Abdur-Rahim Khan came within seven kos⁵⁵ he sent his son with a number of gifts of appeasement⁵⁶ which were accepted. Mirza Abdur-Rahim Khan then returned to Ahmedabad where, five months later he was summoned to the Imperial Court.

For reasons that are far from clear it would seem that Mirza Abdur-Rahim Khan chose to take Rayasinh with him to Fatehpur Sikri. The event was recorded by Abul Fazl, though not by Nizam-ud-din:

"An occurrence was the arrival at court of the Khan-Khanan⁵⁷. A message had been sent to him that he should come as soon as he was satisfied with the condition of affairs in Gujarat. ... he left Ahmedabad on the 8th (Tir) and did homage on the 24th id. Rai Singh Jhala had the bliss of performing the kornish⁵⁸. His adventures are somewhat remarkable. ...⁵⁹ ... he travelled about in the wilds with the jogi. ... In the end of the previous year, he, after nineteen years took leave

50 Confusingly Nizam ud din refers to Jhalawar rather than Nawanagar (Elliot and Dowson, 5, p.438).

51 Mahmudi – a small silver coin circulated in Surat in the late 16th century which bore the name and titles of Akbar, and directly copied the style of the contemporary Kalima-type silver coins of Ahmadabad, but they were not products of the Mughal mint. The Raja of Baglana struck the mahmudis at his Mulher mint on order for the traders of Surat. The coins carried Akbar's name posthumously as long as they were produced. Bruce, Deyell, Rhodes, Spengler. (1971), p.28.

52 Also Morvi, in the north of Kathiawar where the route crosses the Ran (Elliot and Dowson, 5, p.438, f/n 3).

53 Nizam ud din refers to Paramgam (ibid. p.438).

54 Nizam-ud-din - 20,000 (ibid., p.439); Badauni - 8,000 (ibid., p.439, f/n 4).

55 Approximately 14 miles.

56 Sources vary as to a number of elephants plus some valuable horses and/or other gifts.

57 Mirza Abdur-Rahim Khan.

58 Obeisance.

59 At this point Abul Fazl gives a long biographical sketch of Rayasinh.

of the jogi, and came to his own house.⁶⁰ He took again upon his shoulder the burden of social life. Those who had known him recognized him ... By the help of the Khan-Khanan he regained the chieftainship of his district.”⁶¹

The date of this event is considered important and has been the subject of much additional analysis. What did Abul Fazl mean by “in the end of the previous year”? Abul Fazl reckons his years by Akbari/Ilahi years. The then current year AA 30, began on 10/11 March 1585 so the previous year, AA 29, ended on 9/10 March 1585. “In the end of” probably refers to the last quarter of the year, thus the earlier assessment that Rayasinh returned home to Halvad between January and March 1585.⁶² “Nineteen years” is an odd number to invent and thus Abul Fazl probably obtained his information directly from Rayasinh or someone extremely close to him, hence the placing the Battle of Malia/Malva, at which Rayasinh disappeared, at 2 March 1566. Both Abu Fazl and Noer reckon the date of the appearance of Mirza Abdur-Rahim Khan and Rayasinh at Fatehpur Sikri as 7 August 1585, a date accepted by this paper. They remained at Court until 24 August when they left together for Gujarat, though they parted company on the way so that the Khan-Khanan could settle some matters at Sirohi and Jalor, where he was joined by Nizami and his men. Meanwhile, Mirza Khan Koka, viceroy of Malwa, had been put in charge of operations in the Deccan, and Khan-Khanan had advanced in his aid, when Mirza Khan Koka suddenly postponed the war, because of “the rainy season”. Khan-Khanan returned to Ahmedabad and remained there “for five months” until the end of 1586.

As previously recounted, the disappearance of Rayasinh after the Battle of Malia in 1566 led to a disagreement between two of his wives, Lalajirajba and Lilijirajba, as to whether or not he was dead. With his return from his nineteen year absence relations between Lalajirajba and Lilijirajba steadily worsened. Lilirajba was at last proved right, he was still alive, but Lalajirajba had the last word. She pronounced an ‘ad’ that the Halvad house should not accept a lady from the house of Vav. Now it happened that Lalajirajba’s brother, Jam Lakhoji of Khilos, was on his sick-bed. Taking advantage of this his uncle, the reigning Jam Satoji sent camel-riders to Halvad, as if coming from Khilos, saying that Lakhoji was on his death-bed and was remembering his sister, brother-in-law and nephew. The ruse worked: Lalajirajba and Chandrasen immediately left Halvad for Khilos with a small force. Rayasinh stayed behind and soon afterwards met his end at Ghantila. And as it so happened, Lakhoji was indeed on his death-bed and soon died.

⁶⁰ As previously noted (f/n 34) Abul Fazl makes no mention of the supposed appearance at Akbar’s Court in January 1584 – the ‘Fist’ incident.

⁶¹ AN, 3, pp.699-700.

⁶² See f/n 28 & 40 above.

Ahmad Nizam-ud-din's "Tabakat-i-Akbari"⁶³ provides the account of the end of Rayasinh's life on 19 February 1587 at the Battle of Ghantila:

"Intelligence arrived that the Emperor was marching towards Kabul and had arrived at Atak Banaras, intent upon effecting the conquest of Badakhshan. Khan-Khanan wrote a letter soliciting the honour of being allowed to serve under him and the Emperor sent a farman summoning him to his presence. . . . Khan Khanan and Azdu-ud-daula . . . went off to join the Emperor. Just as the Khán-khánán started, the news was brought in that the men of Khangár [Ráo of Kach], as allies of Muzaffar Gujarátí, had attacked and killed Rái Singh, the zamíndár of Jháláwár.....The people of that neighbourhood [Ghântilâ], who had long been at enmity with him, assembled in force to attack him. The intelligence of their rising was brought to him while he was in the chaugan⁶⁴ ground. He immediately started to meet them, and came up to them in a moonlight night. They sent a person to him to say that if he were really Rái Singh he would not attack them by night. He magnanimously assented to their wish, and rested where he was, and went to sleep. His opponents here found their opportunity, and encouraging their followers they drew near to him, and when morning broke their whole party fell upon him. He and eighty men that were with him fought on foot, and he was killed. When Muzaffar Gujarátí heard of the departure of the Khán-khánán with his troops and family, he came to Amarún⁶⁵, ... and laid the foundations of an army. ... I with Saiyid Kásim and * * went to disperse the insurgents who had killed Rái Singh. When I reached Halwad, I sent a detachment to ravage the villages in the pargana of Mália, which belongs to Khengár; and I sent another detachment, under Mediní Rái, to Amarún, against Muzaffar. Upon their approaching that place, Muzaffar went off to Káthíwár [sic] and hid himself. The Jám sent his son to me to make excuses for his cruel treatment of Rái Singh, and Khangár also sent his agents to renew his promises of loyalty. I then returned to Ahmedábád."

This hostile action – the first of many – by the Jám, a supporter of Sultan Muzaffar III of Gujarat, – against Halvad, an ally (and a relation by marriage) of the Mughal, sealed the long lasting enmity between Halvad and Nawanagar.

What happened to Rayasinh's severed head in the hands of his victorious enemies and its dramatic retrieval by the Halvad Rajkavi, is the subject of a stirring poem. His had been a strange rule, marked by an absence of nineteen years when he wandered with a party of ascetics and during which his son had inherited the gaddi. He had then returned and, whether by design or not and whether with the assistance of Mirza Abdur-Rahim Khan or not, he had reclaimed his throne from his son. He enjoyed a brief but important relationship with Emperor Akbar as a result of which his house was joined by marriage with that of Jodhpur, as was the Emperor's, and this relationship by marriage had a positive effect on the well-being of the State for a period of about 80 years. This relationship also kept the Jadejas, his mother's clan in the Gujarat peninsula, in check, though in the end they were responsible for the murder of Rayasinh.

⁶³ Elliot and Dowson, 5, pp.443-446.

⁶⁴ Polo ground.

⁶⁵ Or Ambarun.

With Rayasinh's death the title reverted to his son, Chandrasinh. Having witnessed two bloody battles in his youth, the first at Dhrol in which his father's maternal uncle and his father's enemy, Jassaji had been killed, the second at Malia in which his brother had died and from which his father had disappeared for 19 years, Chandrasinh had an aversion to war and bloodshed. Nevertheless, he did not shy away from his duty when needed.



Figure 4.6: Before 14 July 1591, near the battlefield of Bhucharmori, Jhallesvar Raj Chandrasinhji negotiates peace between the forces of the Mughals and the Sultan Muzaffar III and his Muslim, Jadeja and Kathi allies. He was brother-in-law of Mughal crown Prince Salim and his sister was married to the Jadeja Jam Sataji.

Sultan of Gujarat Muzaffar III, called Muzaffar Gujarati by the Mughals, continued to be a thorn in the side of the Mughals and in 1591 was instigated by the Jam to rise again against them, as was Daulatkhan Ghori of Junagadh. The confrontation took place at Bhûchar Morî on 18 July 1591. Chandrasinh's role has largely gone unnoticed, even by Watson, though Abu Fazl mentions it, as does the Nawanagar Rajkavi.⁶⁶ At the outset he had interceded with the viceroy, Mirza Aziz Kokaltash ('Kokâ') to avert the war, meeting him at Viramgam, an outpost of Jhalavad. The viceroy entertained Chandrasinh's

⁶⁶ *Vibhâ-Vilâs* (1897).

proposals and dispatched three imperial grandees to the enemy, encamped beyond Morvi, to negotiate peace, but the overture was spurned. The Ghorī taunted and insulted Chandrasinh (according to the Halvad version) and the mission failed.

At Bhûchar Morī three armies on each side faced each other. On one side, Muzaffar commanded the centre, supported by the Lon, a Kathis, and with Ghorī's Junagadh contingent as his right wing and the Jam's Navanagar contingent on his left. On the Mughal side, Koka commanded the centre. The Halvad version puts Chandrasinh and his sena in the centre with the viceroy, but Abul Fazl, (who gives him little importance) places him in the left wing (opposite Junagadh). It rained incessantly for two days and two nights. Then, without sounding the 'Be prepared' on trumpets and war-drums, a customary etiquette in Rajput warfare, the Junagadh advance guard suddenly thrust forward. The imperial left wing, caught unprepared, fell back. Seeing a gap open in the enemy ranks Chandrasinh led a headlong cavalry charge straight at Daulat Khan.⁶⁷ The Ghorī was unhorsed, fatally wounded, and carried away and the Junagadh forces dispersed. Finding their right wing disappearing, the Kathis started fleeing while the viceroy advanced. Both Muzaffar and the Jam fled and, observing that it was over and his part done, Chandrasinh reined in his horse, and the Makhavân Siddhasenâ left the field. Then all at once the Jam's heir Ajoji and his vazir Jesoji Ladak arrived and joined the fray, rallying the Jadejas. Most were killed, though heroism on that day cannot be denied.

Chandrasinh continued to rule earning a reputation as a great administrator and governor. He took an interest in the affairs of his subjects, particularly in agriculture, and constructed both the Chandrasar tank and the bund across the Maha Nadi near Than. In 1628 he was deposed by his heir Askaranji and retired to a quieter life of cultivating his flower garden and orchard before he died in 1636.

The narrative now leaps forward briefly to the mid-seventeenth century to consider a significant event during the rule of Meghraj II. At this time the Mughal rule was beginning to show a familiar tortuous and chaotic pattern of succession in the closing years of Shah Jahan's rule with father set against son, and brother against brother. In 1657 Shah Jahan was taken seriously ill and, though he survived, the rumours of his impending demise set his four sons against each other in the battle for succession. Initially the most likely to win the contest appeared to be Dara Shikoh, the eldest and Shah Jahan's favourite. Dara Shikoh had already intervened with his father to curtail Aurangzeb's military adventures in Golconda and Bijapur but Aurangzeb's advances to meet his father's army led by Dara Shikoh led to the defeat of the latter and Aurangzeb's occupation of Agra where he imprisoned his father for the last eight years of this life. Aurangzeb then set about eliminating the competition of his three brothers. Murad and Shuja were easily dealt with but Dara Shikoh moved between the Punjab, Sind and Gujarat at the head of a large army.

⁶⁷ According to the Halvad version, drawn from the Purana-sangrah.

Meghraj received information that Dara Shikoh had arrived in Bhuj. The Raj's daughter, Sajjankunvar/Sajuba, who was married to Raydhanji, heir apparent of Kutch, informed her father that the Mughal prince with his army, accompanied by her husband at the head of a Kutch contingent, would be arriving in Halvad on their way to Ahmedabad. Dara Shikoh, who claimed consanguinity with her father (both being the grandsons of sisters (so also, of course, was Aurangzeb), was in extreme need of succour. Raj Meghraj was paying the annual tribute of 32,000 Mahmudis⁶⁸ for all of Jhalavad but had stopped paying after Ahmedabad was taken by Aurangzeb, Dara Shikoh's younger brother. Meghraj sent word to the rulers of Siani, Wadhwan, Wankaner, and Than-Lakhtar, and the Parmar of Muli, saying that he would no longer be paying the tribute⁶⁹ and that they should come to Halvad immediately with their armies to support the "Bâdshâh Salâmat", the living emperor.

All the Jhalavadi sardars, save Wankaner, responded. Wadhwan came but because he was given his place below Siani he left in high dudgeon.⁷⁰



Figure 4.7: In 1658, Mughal crown prince Dara Shikoh gifts distant cousin and ally Jhallesvar Raj Meghrajji II a jewel in Halvad garden in 1658.

⁶⁸ See f/n 50 above.

⁶⁹ There are two versions to account for this decision: (i) that Meghraj stopped paying because of his abhorrence of Aurangzeb or (ii) that it was a concession he obtained from Dara Shikoh or that the latter freely gave it.

⁷⁰ Meghraj's father, Amarsinh I had bestowed the 'Sardari' of Wadhwan on his cousin-brother Rana Ranoji.

Meghraj struck up a friendship with Dara Shikoh and sent a powerful Makhavan contingent, under his only son Gajsinh, to accompany and aid Dara Shikoh against Aurangzeb. Dara Shikoh entered Ahmedabad in triumph on 8 January 1659 and forged an alliance with Maharaja Jaswantsingh of Jodhpur with whom he stayed for a month. The Kutch and Makhavan contingents returned home, but Gajsinh stayed on. In the battle of Devrâi Ghât, (near Ajmer), Gajsinh fought with dauntless courage. Unhorsed and badly wounded in his left arm and leg, he was granted the title of 'Bahadur'. Nevertheless, Dara Shikoh was defeated by Aurangzeb, with the timely help of Maharaja Jaswantsingh of Jodhpur who had switched sides. Returning to Ahmedabad, Dara found the gates shut against him. He retired via Patdi, Halvad and Bhuj to Sindh, where he was ultimately caught. On 30 August 1659 Aurangzeb had him paraded through the streets of Delhi in chains and then, having dismembered him, had his body parts similarly paraded through the streets. After the debacle at Devrâi Ghât, Meghraj sent a powerful remonstrance to Raja Jaswantsingh.

In the last year of his father's reign Gajsinh had proved himself a hero. Wounded in the war, he was disabled and in pain for the rest of his life. Gajsinh had formed a personal bond with "Châchâ" Dara Shikoh and was deeply aggrieved by the hideous fate that had overtaken him and a hatred for Aurangzeb developed. In his short reign of 13 years (1661-1672) he awaited and prepared for retribution from the new Master of Hindostan but Aurangzeb and his viceroys were otherwise engaged. It was to be his son, Jaswantsinh I of Halvad who faced eviction. Maharaja Jaswantsingh of Jodhpur was appointed viceroy of Gujarat by Aurangzeb and, as some sources would have it, for no apparent rhyme or reason he descended on Halvad, like a bolt from the blue, and forced his namesake to quit. Why did he do this? Watson (1884)⁷¹ followed the version in the Dhrangadhra Vahi and since then every historian, British and Gujarati, has followed Watson.

Chandrasinghji, however [had] left a daughter (Bâi Jhinjhûbâ) who had married Ajitsinghji of Jodhpur. Ajitsinghji's father Jaswantsinghji Râthor was appointed Sûbahdâr of Gújarât in about A.D. 1617, ... at his daughter-in-law's intercession he sent an army against Halvad and, after some fighting, expelled Jhâlâ Jaswantsinghji.

This ignores the fact that Ajitsinghji was born *after his father's death*. Not knowing any reason for the viceroy's inexplicable action, nor being able to think of one, the historians have mindlessly followed the nonsensical reason invented by the writer of the Vahi. The reason was quite different. It was a *farman* dated 8 February 1659, issued by Aurangzeb to the Jodhpur Maharaja, a year after the emperor's accession to the throne.⁷² The *farman* says in brief:

⁷¹ Watson, Lt Col J W. (1878, 29).

⁷² Mughal rulers referred to Indian rulers as Jamindars.

The fact of sedition by Megh Raj, Zamindar of Halud⁷³ had repeatedly come to the notice of the Emperor. Therefore oust the Zamindar from there and settle Rai Singh Jhala, Zamindar of Wankaner, in that place and recover from him the *Two Lakhs Mahmoodis* he has offered and also *Thirty-Two Thousand Mahmoodis* annually, and credit the same in the Imperial Treasury.⁷⁴

Although Aurangzeb had been quick in issuing his punitive *farman* in order to punish the Halvad ruler for siding with Shah Jahan and Dara Shikoh in the previous year, its execution was delayed. Meghraj II had been succeeded by Gajsinh I and he by Jaswantsinh I. The Jodhpur Maharaja did not act until the last year of his second viceroyalty. He had had his hands full. Moreover to take on the Halvad Jhalas was a troublesome undertaking, – and so it was to prove. The Maharaja first tried to tempt Jhala Jaswant's brother Jagat (grandson of the Maharana Rajsingh of Udaipur-Mewar) that if he crossed over he would install him in Halvad. Jagat was unflinching in his loyalty.⁷⁵ Thereupon the viceroy descended on Halvad in full force and expelled his namesake.

Evidently the Wankaner ruler was unable to make good his offer of payment because Halvad was given in jagir to Nazar Ali Khan Babi and its name changed to Muhammadnagar (and Navanagar's to Islamnagar). He held it for six years before he was expelled by Chandrasingh of Wankaner in 1679, who held Halvad for three years. He in turn was expelled by Jaswantsingh I, who in 1682 received a sanad from Aurangzeb confirming him in possession of Halvad, thus bringing it back under the control of the Jhallesvaras.

Whereas [it has come to the notice] of His Majesty a submission from the Viceroy of Ahmedabad in Goojerat, representing that the Mahal of Halud was entirely assigned in accordance with the sanads of the former Rulers in Jagir to the ancestors of the Zamindar Rajput Jhala, namely Jasuantsing,⁷⁶ and his descendants generation after generation and whereas at this time it is represented that the abovementioned Mahal was assigned in Jagir to Nazar Ali Khan by the Court of His Majesty and whereas he, Nazar Ali Khan, receives every year the sum of twenty five thousand rupees by virtue of holding the Jagir, and whereas the above named Jasuantsing, expects that the claim for the abovementioned sum be rendered void; THEREFORE the order of His Majesty has attained the honour of manifestation as follows:

[Here follows a paragraph in which much of the text of the above Preamble is repeated – in command form.]

It is necessary that the present and future Viceroys and Officers and Accountants and Jagirdars, considering the abovementioned Mahal, together with the abovementioned villages and the

⁷³ Halvad.

⁷⁴ The original Farman is in the Jodhpur Collection of the Rajasthan Archives in Bikaner. Its copy was obtained by Dr Raghubir Singh of Sitamau, D.Litt., LL.B., and supplied by him (by his letter dated 7 Feb 1988) to Maharaja Sir Mayurdhwajsinhji.

⁷⁵ See previous references to brothers Adoji and Varsoji for an earlier and similar example of loyalty.

⁷⁶ Jaswantsinh.

abovementioned salt pits, as given to and confirmed in the possession and control of the former Jagirdar with his children and dependents, generation after generation, shall not demand Nazar Ali Khan's sum.

And all cases with regard to civil suits and criminal matters and other things being referable to him, Jasuantsing, these said Officers, &c., shall refrain from collecting any revenue from him. They shall consider the Zamindar Rajput as the independent Jagirdar of that place, without partnership with any person. And they shall neither change nor alter the same by any manner of means. And understanding that all demands of the Emperor and civil impositions are remitted and cancelled, they shall neither obstruct nor annoy him with regard to the revenues received from the land and expenses, and in respect of all the old and new customary payments and allowances, and shall not interfere in any way. And they are to consider the abovementioned Jagirdar as possessing mükhtar-e-kul (full authority). In this matter therefore, they are not every year to require a new Sanad (warrant) or Paravanah (permit). – Any other writings, &c., in this respect shall be deemed to be without effect. – Written on the fifteenth day of Shawal, in the twenty-fourth year of His Majesty's reign.

Nevertheless, despite the sanad it can be said that the previously close relationship between the Jhallesvaras and the Mughals had changed forever and much of this must be to do with the attitudes and behaviour of Aurangzeb. Both Jahangir and Shah Jahan had shown the same sort of tolerance for others as displayed by Akbar, receiving from them “sanctuary when in revolt and support when in power”⁷⁷ but Aurangzeb had no time for such niceties, whose priority was to restore the Muslim credentials of Mughal rule. He actively discriminated against Hindu and other religious groups through the re-introduction of a tax on Hindu pilgrims, previously lifted by Akbar, and either the imposition of new revenue duties on merchants and temples, including the re-imposition of the *jizya*,⁷⁸ or the removal of previously enjoyed endowments. Aurangzeb engaged in a number of military campaigns against both Rajputs and Marathas, many of them successful though none of them decisive. He died in 1707, to be succeeded by Shah Alam I, though he only lived for another 5 years but this time, and certainly by the time of the rule of Raysinh II⁷⁹ (1730-1745), the central authority of the Mughals was in steep decline while the power of the Marathas was in the ascendancy.

This account of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries reveal how the Jhala kings retained their lands from the aggressive incursions of the emergent Jadejas from Kacch who established their rule in the lands on the northern shore of the peninsula. Three battles, that of Dhrol 1565, Maliya 1566, Ghantila, 1587 mark this relationship. They fostered alliance with the new paramount Muslim power of the Mughals and from 1584 to 1673 participated in the war with the Mughals in Gujarat at Bhucharmori and against the combined forces of the Sultan of Gujarat Muzaffar III, Jadejas and

⁷⁷ Keay, John. (2000, 329).

⁷⁸ A financial contribution paid by all male adult non-Muslims towards their supposed protection under Mughal supremacy, instead of the liability placed on Muslims for military service in a *jihad* if required.

⁷⁹ Also known as Rayoji.

Kathis. They later participated in the Mughal war of succession at the battle of Devrai Ghat in Rajasthan. Between 1584 and 1673, their relationship with the Imperial Mughal emperors was strong perhaps in large part due to their kinship relations with Emperors Akbar, Jahangir and Shahjehan through their common kin ties with the Rathore kings of Jodhpur and in the common interest of containing the Jadejas.

Paradoxically, during this same period Jhalas and Jadejas lineages were actively engaging in building alliances with the Jhala dynasts through marriage. Before the early 1500s, no Jhala king took a Jadeja woman in marriage. From that time onwards, all Jhala dynasts but two, Askaran in the 1600s and Meghraj III in the 1940s, did not have a Jadeja queen. In fact there have been more Jadeja wives, Jadeja queens, and Jadeja mothers of Jhala kings of this dynasty than those of any other Rajput clan. Daughters of Jhala queens married to Jadeja kings have also actively participated in the politics of their married homes.

The deterioration of good relations between the imperial Mughals and the Jhala kings from 1673 to 1717 occurred due to a change in imperial policy under Emperor Aurangzeb, by the imposing of the intolerant Jezia tax on Hindus. This led to the fact that Jhallesvaras Meghraj II, Gajsinh I and Jaswantsinh I refused to align themselves with the new Emperor. During this period, Jaswantsinh I sought the aid of his Jadeja relatives, in a period building stability in relations between Jadejas and Jhalas. No Jadeja army has approached Jhalavad with intent to war since the fateful battle at Ghantila, where Rayasinh I was slain in 1587.

In addition, during the 1700s, Jhala royal progeny by mistresses were given to Muslim Viceroys and commanders of the Mughals, to secure political alliances.

4.3 Era of Reassertion and the End of Warfare

The three successive reigns of Raysinh II, Gajsinh II cum Rani Jijiba/Jijima, and Jaswantsinh II, are of singular importance in a long line of, up to then, 35 monarchs. With the overall Mughal authority in Gujarat on the wane and being overthrown by the Marathas, and with Maratha excursions into Saurashtra beginning, Halvad represents a native domain, an Indian kingdom, an indigenous polity, with a modicum of outside interference and relatively free of external influence. It is only when an organism isn't being poked at, isn't being impinged upon, and isn't under stress, that its internal organs, their functions and workings, can be best observed. It presents here a monarchy as it were, in a pristine state but one which is in turmoil and is, therefore, all the more interesting.

The importance of the stretch covered by the first two of the above three reigns, 52 years, (1730-82), lies not only in the geopolitical circumstance of the domain but also because of the access to information generally unavailable for the earlier periods. There are glimpses into some earlier reigns, but nothing so graphic, the source of information being the paramparâ (lineal tradition) of a cadet branch, its vahis and

bardic lore. Rana Kalyansinh⁸⁰ of Bavali, Raj Raysinh's brother, was *pradhan*⁸¹ to both him and his son Raj Gajsinh. He received Bavali in apanage and is the primogenitor of that proud Jhala branch. His third son Mûlu (Mûlarâj) was the *pradhan* of Gajsinh II and his son, Jaswantsinh II and, as it were, the bridge between these two once-estranged regimes. It is to him and his *paramparâ* that the source for the fuller and truer accounts of Raj Raysinh's and Raj Gajsinh's reigns must be accredited.

It has been said that Raj Raysinh II was one of those strong rulers who mean to do good to people whether the people want it or not. This is a mistaken impression. The situation he was forced into was not of his own making. There is no doubt that his intentions were benevolent and his intended measures exemplary, but his prime concerns were the security, and with it the prosperity, of his realm and his country with the marauding Marathas poised on his borders.⁸²

The people he was concerned with and came in conflict with were his Bhayats, the Jhala fraternity, or more broadly the *garasdars*,⁸³ the landed gentry. They owned more than two-fifths or nearly half the arable land of the state and much of it lay fallow and unproductive because of their chronic quarrels with each other and with their cultivators. The discontent among the latter had come to a head. The root of the problem probably lay with Raysinh's father, Pratapsinh (1718-1730), who enjoyed the good things of life and especially the annual gathering of his *garasdars* at Dasrah, traditional martial displays and sports and festivals. Revenue from Hariana swelled his coffers. Like his father before him, he considered that he owed the accession of Hariana and its revenue, and his father having regained his state, to the loyal wartime support of the *garasdars*. He gave them loans and grants for the asking, and spoilt them. They gambled, were extravagant, and became indebted. They were arrogant and quarrelled amongst themselves and with their peasantry who began to desert the land and became discontented. Pratapsinh had appointed his heir, Raysinh,

80 Also known as Kaloji.

81 Principal minister.

82 In the marble inscription (dated 9 May 1759) in the Maninâges'var temple in Dhrangadhra (which was completed during Raj Raysinh's son-and-successor's incarceration by the Marathas, – and the interim regency of his grandson) he is hailed as Jhâlâvâd Despati.

83 Feudals, called *garasdars* in Saurashtra (Watson calls them vassals), were those who had received villages or lands in *garas* or apanage and their descendants. Most of the territory was *khalsa* or crown held by the king and the rest, the *garasia* land, belonged to the feudals. It was granted for their hereditary enjoyment and to enable them to come forward for the defence of the realm, with men, horses, weapons and the personal service of the able-bodied amongst them. (When these functions, their *raison d'être*, which had kept them constantly vigilant and in a state of readiness, lapsed, with *Pax Britannica*, the order deteriorated.) The *garasdars* were in most part the king's younger sons or cadets, who received 'kapalgaras' ('garas of the forehead') and their descendants, – and hence they were his fellow-clansmen, his BHÂYÂTS, brethren. In lesser part were those who had received *garas* in reward for past services, mostly Rajputs, and in expectation of future service. (Land grants were also made to temples, monasteries, bards, etc. for other kinds of services.)

gadhpati of Sitha⁸⁴ (modern day Rajsitapur), a customary appointment after the loss of Wadhwan. In an incident in Sitha Raysinh, as gadhpati, had a brush with a garasia, – in defending a khedut (a cultivator) he had assaulted a garasia. He was summoned to Halvad and, in the presence of the complainant, reproved, not for defending the khedut but for resorting to physical violence. Where Pratapsinh was sympathetic and partial to the nobles, Raysinh was sympathetic and partial to the peasantry.

In later life Pratapsinh left the administration to his two able sons Raysinh and Kalyansinh. The two brothers were a remarkable pair, a rare combination, a united team all their lives. On his succession Raysinh made Kalyansinh his *pradhan* and his other two brothers Vajerâj of Ingorâlâ and Râno of Vegadvâ, *gadhvals* of Dhrangadhra and Sitha, and Prthurâj of Susvâv, *senapati* (army commander). Kunvars Gajsinh⁸⁵ and Asoji stayed in Halvad for training under Kalyansinh and the brothers Seshoji and Meruji were sent to their uncle in Sitha. Later, on Kalyasinh's advice, Raysinh called Gajsinh and Asoji to take part in discussions of policy and niceties of administration and external affairs. He also called Gajsinh's quick-witted wife Jijiba, in spite of Kalyansinh's protests. Raysinh had chosen her for his son and she was treated more like a daughter of the house than a wife. A strain was to develop between her (the future *de facto* ruler of Dhrangadhra) and Kalyansinh, which increased with the years.

Raysinh and Kalyansinh were full brothers. They looked alike, would have attended the same school and, like their father and grandfather they were well-versed in Persian. Their characters were complementary: Raysinh was strong-willed and took a forward view of things; Kalyansinh was conservative and a capable administrator. The elder was a people's man; the younger was 'a state's man, a statesman'. Kalyansinh's visits to Ahmedabad and his informants there kept him apprised of the decay of the Mughal authority in Gujarat and its impending collapse. They warned the Darbar of the aggressive intents of the Marathas in the first flush of their triumph in Gujarat. The royal brothers, king and minister, turned their attention to harnessing the state's resources, mainly agricultural and salt production. Their first care was to reinforce the eastern bounds, from which direction the trouble would come, re-strengthen the walls of Sitha, and fortify Dhrangadhra with a surrounding wall and turrets. Raysinh built his residence there and resided there from time to time.

On Kalyansinh's advice the Raj recalled his brother Vajeraj from Dhrangadhra and in his place appointed his Patvikumar, Gajsinh, as gadhpati and to reside there with his

⁸⁴ The original name of Sitha is Sinhashtala. "It is said that Sitha was founded during the rule of Jhâlakdevi between A.D. 1185 and 1210. The name is derived variously from the name of an Ahirâni, who became a Sati here, and from a supposed corruption of the word Sinhashtala or abode of lions. It is certainly a tradition in the village that formerly there was a forest here and many lions. There were lions doubtless, both here and at Jhinjhûvâdâ and Dhrangadhra, but the derivation seems fanciful and strained." (Watson, 50).

⁸⁵ Also known as Bhabhoji Bholo the simple.

wife. Because of unpleasantness between Jijiba and Seshoji, he and Meruji moved to Khambhada.

The state maintained a small standing army for garrisoning forts and manning the outposts. In time of need the garasdars were bound to render service and to furnish men, horses, and weapons. They indeed vied with each other and gloried in what they could muster, but not if they were bankrupt and paying interest to the money-lenders and their lands lay barren. Their quarrels were legion. They appealed to the Darbar for loans, which were impractical to grant, and to settle their quarrels, which if undertaken would leave one party, if not both, dissatisfied. The peasantry were in ferment. Disgruntled peasants importuned the pradhan. A sammelan⁸⁶ of bhumayati cultivators supported by headmen of khalsa villages waited on the Raj. They asked for loans and for being settled in khalsa villages with land to farm. On high occasions a sammelan of village headmen to make representations to the ruler were normal, but otherwise rare and usually serious. The situation had become grave, unprecedented. The Mahajan, who controlled the commerce of the state, took up the cause and pressed the Darbar for action.

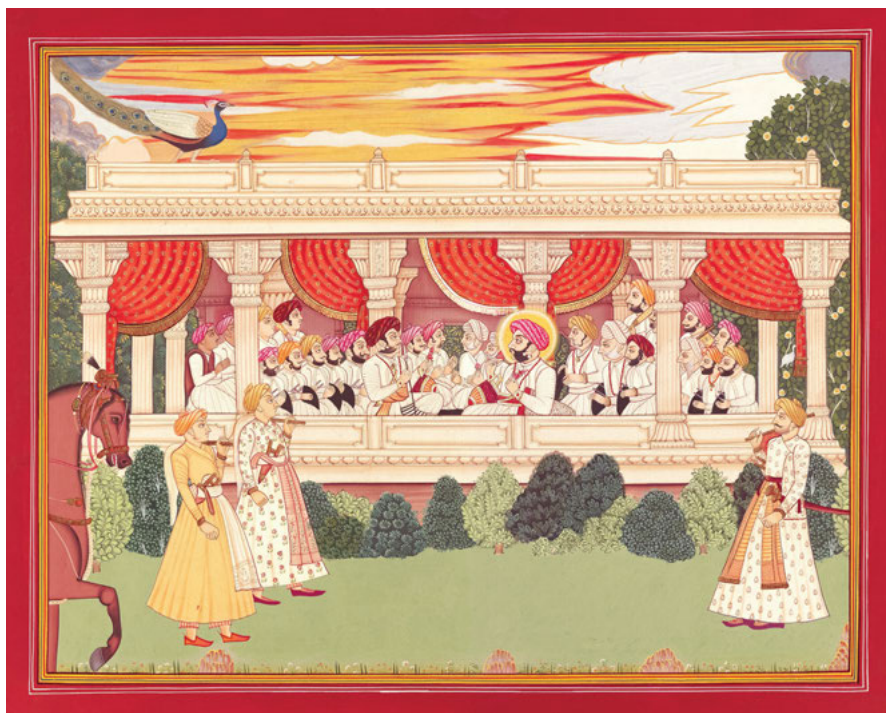


Figure 4.8: In 1732 Jhallesvar Raj Rayasinhji II summons a meeting to discuss rights and duties of his nobles.

⁸⁶ Gathering.

Raysinh called a convention of his uncles and brothers. He had four uncles (father's three brothers and a cousin), three brothers and seven sons. Mansinh of Malvan was the foremost amongst them. He was Raj Pratapsinh's first younger brother, his confidante, and the chief in his forum. He had received nine villages in apanage. With their concurrence, Raysinh issued a proclamation which – to resort to modern phraseology – alerted the garasdars to the perils of the hour and exhorted them to rise to the occasion and put their houses in order. The Darbar enacted a law which said, *inter alia*, that fields allowed to lie fallow for two seasons or more would be taken over and farmed by the Darbar for three years. This was seen by many as a subterfuge and opposition to it began to take root. Raysinh sent his manager Makanji Jhala to call the elders and leaders of the opposition to Halvad and reassured them that nothing adverse was contemplated and justice would be done. They believed his words but some unfortunate incidents between hot-tempered youths and the Darbar's men (the accounts vary), caused bloodshed, inflamed tempers and led to the Darbar's intentions being called into question.

Raysinh had not thought of consulting his sons. His eldest was away as gadhpati of Dhrangadhra. His second son, Kunvar Asoji, was a deeply religious youth, quietly devoted to his father. (There is a shrine to him where he is still worshipped.) The third son Kunvar Seshoji⁸⁷ “was of a restless and daring disposition”.⁸⁸ The fourth son Meruji was simple and open-hearted, like his eldest brother and a hero-worshipper of Seshoji. Asoji and Seshoji excelled in horsemanship, not so Gajsinh or Meruji. In childhood Gajsinh and Seshoji were spoken of as a pair like Raysinh and Kalyansinh. In fact the younger brother was quick and hot-tempered where the elder was slow and mild-tempered. He may have resented his eldest brother's primacy and the power that would devolve on him. It is rumoured that it was he who had given vent to the suspicion that the Darbar's motive was to appropriate garasia land. He called the rebels to Khambhada and organized them for resistance.

Raysinh summoned Seshoji to Halvad but his followers ‘would not allow him to go there’, or so it was said, so Raysinh gave orders for his son's arrest, thus leading to further turmoil. The Mahajan in a body waited on Raysinh and pleaded with the Darbar to show restraint. They sent a deputation to Seshoji and the rebel leaders pointing out that by taking the wrong road they would bring ruin upon themselves and the country but they claimed in turn that they were the legitimate defenders of the country. Raysinh now had no alternative but to quash the uprising and assert his royal authority or forfeit it. He had the vocal backing of the people at large. A muster was called which the loyal garasdars answered but although bardic sources say that although less than a third were with the Darbar and more than half were opposed, the might of the Raj would prevail. At this point Seshoji took his brother Meruji and the

⁸⁷ Seshmallji, the founder of the non-salute offshoot and state of Sayla.

⁸⁸ Watson.

rebel leaders to Gajsinh at Dhrangadhra where the rebels praised Raysinh as a just and benevolent ruler but castigated Kalyansinh as a usurper of royal powers.

There are contrary opinions about Gajsinh. On the one hand he is seen as kind-hearted and helpful to people in difficulty, and during his reign he certainly overlooked misdemeanours, forgave debts, ran a lax government, and left a debt; on the other hand he is seen as weak, timid and vacillating and there seems little doubt that during his time the Bhayats made encroachments on the crown lands with impunity. His wife Jijiba was made of sterner stuff, as was to become apparent. Flattered by the appeal made to his sense of justice and for once being asked to take the lead, he was persuaded by Seshoji and the rebel leaders about the threatened infringement of their rights and their fears of dispossession. There was a heated argument with the two brothers on one side and Jijiba on the other, the first recorded occasion of an open quarrel between husband and wife. Whatever might have been said between them, it provoked Gajsinh 'to take the bit between his teeth'.

The Patvikumar led a deputation of the rebels to his father in Halvad. Raysinh was stunned, refusing to meet them, and it fell to Kalyansinh to admonish the princes and upbraid Gajsinh, saying that what was being done was in the long interests of the state and ultimately in his own future interests. Gajsinh had always resented his uncle's proximity to his father and ascendancy in the chovat.⁸⁹ He demanded a private audience of his father for himself and his brothers, Seshoji and Meruji but this was denied. Kalyansinh did his best to make Raysinh relent, but to no avail. Chagrined and aggrieved the kunvars left Halvad and returned to Sitha, with the rebels taking an oath and making known their resolve to resist the decree.

Kalyansinh sent a message that the royal decree would be withdrawn and settlement made, but the rebels must first lay down their arms and disperse. They agreed, but on condition that the settlement be granted by the king and the deed signed and sealed before them and God. Raysinh agreed, but his spirit was broken and what might be achieved in his time would be undone by his successor. Raysinh left it to Kalyansinh to discuss terms who told Gajsinh that it would not be well or fitting for him or any scion of the house to attend.

Signing of the Bhomiyati Pattâ - as the Bards tell it

IN THE ROYAL FORECOURT (râjângana) in varied colours on daris sat, – the Rajputs (sic), with sword-hilts in their laps, facing the high (elevated) throne (râjâsan, royal seat). On the (along its) left sat the mahâjan and the witnesses (sâkshi). Below the râjâsan on cushions (gâdis) sat the four Ranas, two uncles and two brothers of the Raj. Rana Man came not. The shadows lengthening,

⁸⁹ Forum, consultation - in this context a most important term, meaning a select meeting of those called and/or concerned.

Rano Kalyansinh pradhân went within where the râjparivâr waited. Kanvar Seshoji neither came nor was called. Kanvar Meroji came. Led by the pradhan and the râjkanvars, bearing their bound swords, the nagârâs (drums) beating, Rayalji, all in white, white-bearded, (and) without a sword, came, with Kanvar Âsoji by his side, and chammar-bearers and others behind. All standing made obeisance. Âsoji assisting, the Raj mounted the throne and there he sat erect. Kalyansinh came and making obeisance to the râjan, placed his sword on the ground, touched his dhani's (lord's) feet, and picking it up offered it to him to touch or to take. Then stood away to the right. In the sandhyâ kâl (twilight), the sun setting, the choghadiâ sounded, torches were brought. The Rajputs (sic) came one by one and in the same manner performed the rite. They returned to their places and stood before the presence. The râj masâlci (torch-bearer) made acclamation. In the silence Rano Kalyansinh said, 'Let the daftari read the deed for all and the witnesses to hear'. The daftari read. Kalyansinh himself helped move the pâtalâ before Raysinh and placed the deed upon it. The Raj took the kalam from the inkpot and with a firm hand signed the deed. Then the pâtvikano var (Gajsinh) signed the grant in keeping with royal custom. Raysinh gave his râjmudrikâ (royal signet) into the cupped hands of his brother (Kalyansinh). The pradhân sealed the deed and wrote upon it. And himself signed as witness. The other twelve witnesses came up and making obeisance signed, – the nagar-seth, the gadhvi, and last the daftari, who rolled up the pattâ. The Raj arose, the drums sounding, all made obeisance. Gajsinh gave his sword into his father's hands and fell at his feet weeping. His father clasped him to his bosom. With his sons Raysinh went within and retired to his chamber and evening prayer.⁹⁰

Raysinh went into a decline. He was depressed that his attempts to work for the good of the kingdom and the future strength of his heir Gajsinh, were rejected by his son. Kalyansinh tried to explain that the agreement had achieved more than they had contemplated. It had assured the garasdars their permanent rights, which they had always had, - he was himself one of them, - yet it had provided for the arbitration of disputes, asserted the Darbar's prerogatives and supreme authority in matters of justice and his status as guardian of the people tied to the law and head of all castes, and it had moreover procured the interests of the raiyat in being freed from excess levy harassment and secure in their legitimate occupations and tenures. But the Raj had lost interest and, in solitude, read and wrote poetry, played chess with close family members and played with his grandchildren. He forgave his son Gajsinh, whose heart was full of remorse, and appointed him regent, though it was Kalyansinh who still

⁹⁰ The practice of offering the hilt to be touched by the Ruler, on ceremonial occasions by those carrying a sword has since become a *remembrance* and court etiquette observed to this day in Dhrangadhra for those in uniform and carrying swords.

held the administration together. In course of time, Raj Raysinh II, far-sighted ruler, passed away. A wise chief, it was his last act which brought stability and set a pattern for the future.

As regent, Gajsinh was content to leave governance of the State to his uncle and pradhan, Kalyansinh. He introduced the even-handed approach that would give effect to the intent of the charter which was to last, in spite of the change of regimes. Kalyansinh was able to demonstrate to his fellow garasdars, young and old, examples of how the hauteur and high-handedness of a few, and the flight of their cultivators, was ruining them and bringing a bad name to all.

As ruler, Gajsinh had to contend with the demands of his wilful lady, Rani Jijiba, and the curbs on his indulgences and indiscretions by his pradhan, who controlled his administration. Like his father, he was constantly under the threat of a Maratha invasion, but like his grandfather he was popular with his garasdars whose martial support was needed for defence. He and Seshoji had been their champions against their father.

Kalyansinh had to bring it to Gajsinh's notice that Seshoji was acting as if he was ruler and was throwing his weight about. The brothers had words but Seshoji took offence and went to live in Mathak. The half-brothers Seshoji and Meruji had been granted Mathak and its six villages in a joint appanage, but Meruji's mother complained to Jijiba that Seshoji was harassing her son and encroaching on his rights and, he being a violent man, she feared for her son's life. Kalyansinh worked out a fair division which Raysinh was persuaded to put to his brother. Seshoji was offended by the accusations but agreed to accept whatever the Raj commanded, requesting permission to stay in Narichana, which was granted to him.

Gajsinh was by now tired of the wrangling between his wife, Jijiba, and his chief minister, and their either ignoring him or pulling and pushing him in different directions and in a fit of exasperation or self-assertion he took Seshoji into his Darbar. This was too much for Rani Jijiba who now preferred to live in Sitha with her son and her co-wife Rani Vadubâ. Gajsinh came ever more under Seshoji's influence and resided sometimes at Halvad and sometimes at Dhrangadhra, from where he would visit his family at Sitha. During one such visit to Sitha Kalyansinh was hearing a dispute between garasdars in Halvad. He did this habitually in open court in the morning. Seshoji joined him, but then exclaimed that he was making a big mistake in his approach and spoke to him rudely. In council disputes Gajsinh tended to side with his brother and began countermanding the pradhan's orders. Seshoji, playing on his brother's fears of a Maratha raid, demanded more money for defence which, after a hot argument, Kalyansinh refused. Gajsinh overruled him. Kalyansinh had had enough, took his virtual dismissal with good grace, resigned, and retired to Bavali. He called his brother Vajabhai from Dhrangadhra, gave him charge of the pradhanpad

and, from Bavali, wrote to Gajsinh urging him to make his son Jaswantsinh,⁹¹ then aged 15 or 16 years, gadhpati and put him in charge of Dhrangadhra. He also urged that Gajsinh should stay in Dhrangadhra. Gajsinh did as advised.⁹²

On his return to Halvad, Gajsinh discharged Seshoji from the council and his brother, in order to show contrition, rode to Bavali and apologised to his uncle, though it was a hollow apology. Taking advantage of the disorder at Halvad, Khavad Kathis⁹³ had seized Sayla and its neighbouring villages. The council was in a quandary as to how to respond and, Seshoji hearing of this and hoping to get back into his brother's favour, volunteered to evict the Kathis, if the Darbar gave him the means for war and permission to muster the garasdars, conditions that were agreed to. Gajsinh, attended by his kamdar Bhagvanji Jhala and bodyguards, accompanied the expedition and watched the action from afar. Seshoji kept his word and regained Sayla. Gajsinh was awed by the way his brother had rallied the garasdars and how they had responded to his command. At the celebration after their triumphant return to Halvad, the Raj made much of Seshoji and presented him with a banner with a SeshaNâg bearing the earth on its head, and made him Senapati.⁹⁴ The die was cast for further trouble!

Meanwhile Rani Jijiba sent word to her husband that she and their son Jaswantsinh were going to her father's hometown, Varsodâ, where her father was ailing. One school of thought had it that she planned to recruit her own bodyguards from her own clansmen. Gajsinh sent Kaka Vajoji to take charge of Dhrangadhra again and, to compound his follies, gave temporary charge of the pradhanpad to Seshoji. He and Seshoji then went to Sitha to give a send-off to Jijiba and Jaswantsinh. On the eve of the Rani's departure an unholy row took place between her and Seshoji, for which Gajsinh rebuked him and sent him back to Halvad. Jijiba sent a warning to Kalyansinh and took her departure while Gajsinh stayed on at Sitha.

At this time Gajsinh's sister Bai Phuljiba, who had married Jam Jasaji of Nawanagar, was visiting Halvad. One evening the chamberlain of the royal household informed her that Seshoji was plotting to overthrow the Raj. She despatched the chamberlain to Sitha, before the town gates were closed for the night, to ask the Raj to return with a force secretly to Halvad with all speed. News soon came that Seshoji had taken control of Halvad. Gajsinh was distraught and was persuaded to go to his uncle at Bavali. Kalyansinh was expecting him and had made arrangements to receive him. Gajsinh wept at the treachery of his trusted brother and Kalyansinh, duty-bound, agreed to be reinstated as pradhan.

⁹¹ Also known as Jasaji/Jasoji and Kunwar Bapji.

⁹² The first entry in Jaswantsinh's name in the *sât, â-pothis chopda* is dated 24 November 1757.

⁹³ Khavad Kâthis are the descendants of Khavadji, the eldest son of Harpaldev by his second lady. Their subsequent prowess in conflicts with the Marathas was so great that the latter named the peninsula Kathiawar, i.e. "the home of the Kathis," after them. They were notorious freebooters and cattle-rustlers, adept at guerrilla warfare and, as light cavalry, were formidable opponents.

⁹⁴ Army Commander.

Seshoji, ensconced in Halvad, thinking he had nothing to fear from his brother, and with Kalyansinh out of the game, felt secure in his possession. He began collecting resources to take Dhrangadhra and Sitha by stealth or open attack. Kalyansinh and Gajsinh infiltrated Halvad with a number of followers and one day, when Seshoji sallied out with a detachment of troops to levy a toll on, or to loot, a caravan that was crossing the Rann at Tikar, surprised the gatekeepers and overpowered them. Drums were beaten, the loyal soldiers rallied round the Raj, Criers went round the town and Phuljiba and citizens of the town gathered to welcome and garland Gajsinh. Kalyansinh had regained the rājdhāni (capital) for his nephew with little expense and no bloodshed, for which he was rewarded with the addition of the village of Manekvada to his kapal-garas, and a banner with the device of the Gujarati letter S in the form of a sathia.⁹⁵ Kalyansinh was now all powerful in the state.

Seshoji, with his detachment of troops, encamped at Khambhada, from where he marched to Dhrangadhra and took possession of it. While the Raj in council agonized, the garasdars pledged their support to Gajsinh, favouring Kalyansinh's plan to mobilize the garrison and the garasia strength and to take Dhrangadhra by storm. Gajsinh, fearful of a Maratha incursion, was averse to war. The Mahajan, however, said that to leave Halvad undefended would be to invite the Marathas since Dhrangadhra, now strongly fortified, could not be stormed and could withstand a long siege. Some other stratagem had to be found to oust Seshoji. The Mahajan's view prevailed – it would be fateful for the Marathas to find them embroiled in domestic war. With Gajsinh's consent Kalyansinh sent reinforcements to Sitha while Gajsinh sent a message to Rani Jijiba not to return, but this crossed with her own message to him.

On hearing of developments at Dhrangadhra Rani Jijiba travelled from Warsoda to Sitha with her son Jaswantsinh. She had raised a force from among her fellow-clansmen loyal to her, borrowed money, and collected the accoutrements of war. At Viramgam she had engaged the services of one Muhammad Muchālo to recruit Kasbatis⁹⁶ from Viramgam and Dholka. Arriving at Sitha she took command of the gadhisena, which had been reinforced by Halvad, and without waiting for the strong force she had asked for from Halvad, she laid siege to Dhrangadhra and, using the Kasbatis, prepared for an assault on the city.

⁹⁵ Swastika.

⁹⁶ Colonel Walker says of the Dholka Kasbatis that “they were a bold and turbulent people, some of whom commanded the services of a considerable number of horsemen whom they hired out to such of the neighbouring powers as required them. ... We have it also on the authority of Colonel Walker that the Kasbatis, “soldiers of fortune” as he called them, from their numbers and warlike character, were feared by that predatory race of men, the Kathis. Such were the allies whom Rani Jijiba called to her aid in attempting to dispossess Sheshabhai of Dhrangadhra.” (Mayne, 1921, 113-4).

As chance would have it *three armies* converged on Dhrangadhra. Watson's account suggests that this was contrived by Rani Jijiba, but the circumstance was fortuitous.

"In the meantime Bhagwant Ráo, an officer of the Peshwá entered Jháláwár to collect tribute. Jijibá obtained his assistance and that of the Ráadhanpúr Bábi and compelled Sheshábhái to quit Dhrángadhrá on condition that he and his men should be allowed to depart with the honours of war. These terms being accepted Sheshábhái quitted Dhrángadhrá ..."⁹⁷

The Nawab Babi Jawan Mard Khan II of Radhanpur had indeed stopped by on his way home to Radhanpur with his dispirited and exhausted army, having failed to install his son as Nawab of Junagadh. He was in a desperate hurry to reach Radhanpur where a crisis was brewing. Jijiba and Jaswantsinh entertained him and, in need of wealth he could carry while at the same time anxious to dispose of the cannons which were slowing down his progress, he sold his artillery to Jijiba for the cost of her jewellery. He agreed to march with her to Dhrangadhra and to array his forces with hers as if for an assault.

As a prelude the Rani opened with a cannonade on the walls of Dhrangadhra but had no intention of damaging them. Seshoji sent his senani,⁹⁸ Viraji, to sue for peace. Negotiations were proceeding and Seshoji was holding out when the Marathas arrived. Seeing the two armies on terms of amity Bhagwant Rao made common cause with them. There is a suggestion from Jijiba's Chopda that she paid the Peshwa's officer but, if true, the amount has not been determined. Jijiba granted that Seshoji would be allowed to keep the village of his kapal garas, Narichana and would be given the township of Sayla (which he had conquered), provided he surrendered the booty he had looted from the townsfolk of Dhrangadhra, and only if he swore perpetual allegiance to the Raj would he be allowed to depart "with the honours of war". He agreed and departed with drums beating and his Nag flag flying.

This event is captured in the collection which depicts the surrender of Seshoji to Jijiba on 10 April 1758, and his seeking her forgiveness. It chronicles not only an internecine conflict, but also the rare occurrence of a male dynast surrendering to a female relation and shows Seshoji and his wives bowing before Jijiba and her 18 year old son Jaswantsinh. Muslim commander Kasbati Muhammad Muchalo [Muhamad the Moustaches] stands beside her. Jijiba herself showed clemency, telling her kinsman through marriage: "I don't wish to see my sisters-in-law break their bangles",⁹⁹ thereby sparing his life.

⁹⁷ Watson, p.32.

⁹⁸ Commander.

⁹⁹ An act performed by Hindu women when they are widowed.

Much later Seshoji was to give proof of the sincerity of his profession of allegiance during the absence of Raj Jaswantsinh II. Some Kathi raiders had stolen cattle from Dhrangadhra villages. Seshoji went after them and recovered the cattle. "In recognition of this service Sheshabhai was given a [sic] handsome estate of Liya by the Raj Saheb".¹⁰⁰ Seshoji's was clearly an unbridled spirit. It could be that he was misunderstood from youth and that his undoubted talents were unrecognized, unappreciated and unused. The antipathy or bias against him in the Bavali and the Dhrangadhra accounts is understandable. But it must be recorded here, and the fact celebrated, that from the time of his oath and undertaking of allegiance given by him to Rani Jijiba, coupled with the concessions made to him by her, later confirmed by the Dhrangadhra Darbar, he and his successors proved themselves true to the oath and firm in their loyalty to the House of Dhrangadhra.

There is no question that the intrepid queen had astonished the world with her prowess. Nor is there a question that she had cast all norms to the winds, flaunted her lord and husband's commands and arrogated sovereign prerogatives. When Pradhan Kalyansinh and other Halvad ministers came to take over Dhrangadhra, a misunderstanding arose. There had been diverse criticisms of Jijiba, such as her disregard of the Raj's command not to wage war,¹⁰¹ of conceding territory to Seshoji, and even for going about unveiled and on horseback. The three main charges against her were:

1. That without any right or authority she had, on behalf of the Darbar, spoken (negotiated) with the Marathas and had entered into a disgraceful engagement with them, with all solemnity on Ram-Navami, that the Darbar would pay them a fixed tribute every year, – a shameful commitment which no rajvada had made and which the Darbar was not bound to honour nor would.
2. That she had allowed the treacherous Seshoji to depart with honour and had granted him or had promised to grant him a village, namely Liya, for quitting. The grant of land was a sovereign prerogative of Dhrangadhra. This was hotly denied. She said she had allowed Seshoji to depart with honour provided he surrendered his loot, and that the future grant would depend on his proving his loyalty to the Raj.
3. She and her son had made a desavari (foreign) alliance, – i.e. with the Nawab of Radhanpur and given Jhali in marriage to his son.

The outcome was that the Rani took umbrage, declined to give up the walled town, and declared herself independent. The state was bifurcated into Halvad and Dhrangadhra.

100 Anonymous. *The Ruling Princes, Chiefs ... in Western India Agency*, 1935.

101 It has been shown conclusively that the Halvad despatch riders had not reached her in time. The unanswered question is whether she would have heeded the orders had she received them.

'Bái Jijiba took possession of the town and paid the tribute as well as the nazaranáh, and commenced to govern this portion of the estate. From this date till Gajsinghji's death Jijibá and her son ruled at Dhrángadhra and Sithá; and Gajsinghji ruled at Halvad, each of them paying half the tribute.'¹⁰²

It was only later that the amount of the 'tribute' (annual ransom) was 'fixed' by Jijima (as she was now called) with the Maratha chiefs, the first and only instance of its kind until Colonel Walker's famous 'Permanent Settlement'.

Nowhere is found a prince, a ruler, who suffered such a succession of misfortunes and humiliations as did the gentle Raj Gajsinh, – (with three as yet to come, – his incarceration by the Marathas, the payment of ransom by his wife, and the murder of his sister). What sustained him in his time of trial and tribulation? The steadfast management by his pradhan Kaka Kalyansinh, the spiritual comfort by his gurubandhu Mahant Balgiri, the loyalty of his bhayat and the love of his people, the fussing care by his sister Phuljiba, the personal attendance of his kamdar Bhagvatji Jhala and daroga Ajo Khavas, and, perhaps most importantly, meditation and yoga.

The Bavali bards tell the tale:

Gloom descended on Halvad. Never in the history of a thousand years [actually about 680 in Gujarat] had the domain been cleft in twain. Râno Kalyansinh returned to Halvad downcast and in a fury. He banned commerce with Dhrangadhara. Gajsinh, for whom it was yet another adversity in a life of adversities, took the humiliation with yogic calm and royal dignity. He asked Kalyansinh not to be sudden but to call a chovat of leading men. Rana Kalyansinh told the chovat that what Raniji had achieved single-handed and unsupported was beyond belief. 'Nowhere in the Puranas or in the long history of Hindustan is found such a deed by a lone lady. Have we not said so and openly praised her? We have given no offence. For the Bai to have taken offence is a fancy, a pretext in order not to restore the panthak to the Raj. It is unworthy of a wife. It is intolerable. It is shaming for the Raj and for all of us. She has broken up our Jhala state. Can it be allowed? She must be persuaded or compelled to yield. I have placed an embargo on all commerce with Dhrangadhra.'

Others argued against him. Bai Phuljiba said, 'If you allow this you will blacken my brother's face. You will disgrace yourselves in the world. You will be laughed at in the entire rajavâdâ'. Balgiri Maharaj said, 'please listen. A vevar bandhi¹⁰³ would hurt the townsfolk of Dhrangadhra. Whatever else that has been said is all true. But the townsfolk worship the Rani as their saviour, they are the subjects of the king,

¹⁰² Watson, p.32.

¹⁰³ Embargo.

they are our own people, they are not aliens, and they would be antagonized.’ This time the aged Pradhan was unable to carry the assembly, – neither the Garasias nor the Mahajan. One said, ‘What if she marches with her mercenaries and cannon on Halvad?’ Once again the voice of the Mahajan, supported by the Raj and the Garasias, prevailed: that there be no further disturbance, tension should cease, commerce be resumed, and Patvikumar Jasoji¹⁰⁴ be appointed pātodhar for Dhrangadhra. [Would it not have been more appropriate to have appointed the lady patodharâ (regentess)?] An elder summed it up, ‘Long live our king, Raj Gajsinh Bava, yet some day, God willing, the state will be reunited’.

Kalyansinh was persuaded to continue as pradhan. He agreed on the condition that his efforts to undo the shameful partition of the state would not cease and both he and Phuljiba continued to exert themselves in this aim. He incurred the Rani’s inveterate hate. Some references imply that, no matter the great services Kalyansinh had rendered to the House, he and his Bavali line fell out of favour with the Rani and her successors, the Dhrangadhra rulers. This is untrue.¹⁰⁵

Another consequence of the break in continuity of State governance has also gone unnoticed. Jijima had done all she could to calm the agitation led by her husband against his father, Raj Raysinh. She would have regarded it as foolish, shortsighted, almost suicidal. The charter (pattâ) that the Raj, her beloved father-in-law, was forced to sign was for her an anathema. It became unmentionable in her presence and a dead letter for her and so for her successors. But its essence and even its terms had become a part of the paramparâ of the State. After all it had ushered in the things Raysinh Bava had wanted. These the Rani honoured, as did her successors. After the treachery by Seshoji and the skilful regaining of Dhrangadhra town, the attitude of the garasdars had undergone a change. They had been shocked and disillusioned by the usurpation of Halvad and then of Dhrangadhra by Seshoji. They now remembered the words of Raysinh, had honoured him and mended their ways. Their fields bore harvest. They were beholden to Raj Gajsinh and felt bound to him. But they admired and feared the fearless Rani.

One year after the split, the Maratha viceroy sent word of his coming to Dhrangadhra and then cleverly bypassed it. “In 1759 Sadâshiva Râmchandra marched against Dhrangadhra and Gajsinh sent an army to its aid. The Marathas now secretly

104 Jaswantsinh - Tension did not cease. There is no evidence that Jaswantsinh was appointed pātodhar. He was already gadhpati. However when Raj Gajsinh was taken captive by the Marathas, he did, on the advice of Kalyansinh, appoint him pātpātodhar. In the stone inscription (dated VS 1815•Vaishakh Sud 13, Wednesday, 9th May 1759) in the Maninâgesvara temple in Dhrangadhra, Jaswantsinh, who performed the pûrnâhuti, on the completion of the temple (during his father’s incarceration in Ahmedabad), is saluted.

105 There are a number of important posts that descendants of the Bavali line have held, including Salt Commissioner, Controller of Civil Supplies during the Second World War; OC, Makhwan Infantry, Revenue Commissioner and Port Commissioner Navanagar.

dispatched a force and made a night attack upon Halwad”.¹⁰⁶ The Marathas laid siege to Halvad and took it on 3rd April 1759. On 6th April Jaswantinh was appointed Regent and administrator of the kingdom and the following day Gajsinh was carried off to Ahmedabad in a great carriage. It was Rani Jijima who collected, from a willing people, the huge ransom demanded.¹⁰⁷ She sent the money, with a delegation of citizens, to Ahmedabad for the release of her estranged husband, who was kept in custody for a few months. Even then he had to part with the lid of Arjundev Dwarkadasji’s gold locket, which contains Chaturbhujaji’s image, which he wore round his neck and which he had obtained from the Dwarka Temple in the mid 1200s. On his eventual return, Gajsinh gave the precious locket to his son (which is now in the Raj’s daily puja) as well as the pargana of Hariana. The pargana was visited by Rani Jijima, where she made a settlement of vâdis,¹⁰⁸ as recorded in her Hariana account book. For all of this support, however, the relationship between husband and wife remained unfortunate.

Gajsinh died at Halvad in 1782 and was succeeded by his eldest son, Jaswantsinh II, who ascended to the gaddi on 5 April 1782 and ruled until 1801. He had clearly inherited his mother’s skill and flair for good governance. By 11 July of that year, he had successfully reunited the kingdom which had been torn asunder by the intrigues and mismanagement of his uncle and father, which was thereafter called Halvad Dhrangadhra. The following year, on 19 August 1783, Raj Jaswantsinh II moved the capital to Dhrangadhra and a few weeks later, by 28 September, had relocated the royal family there. On Dassera day, 5 October 1783, Dhrangadhra was proclaimed the kingdom’s new capital.

The next ruler, Raysinh III, reigned 3 ¾ years and a little after his son and successor, Amarsinh II, began to rule, the British arrived in the peninsula and soon took control. It can be fairly claimed that British hegemony sapped the relations between the ruler and the ruled.

From 1700 to the early 1800s, Mughal power waned, while the Hindu Marathas from Maharastra strove to establish overlordship over Gujarat. During this period the three Jhallesvaras Rayasinh II, Gajsinh II and Jaswantsinh II were less constrained from above, and contended for power with neighbours, cadets and even with their own Bhayat or nobility and clan leaders. Enterprising and able individuals, such as Jhala cadets like Kalyansinh of Bavali and the Muslim Kasbati commander Muhammad Muchalo [Muhamad the Moustaches], advanced their careers as they served the Jhallesvaras. The era also saw the introduction of paid mercenaries, mainly Muslim

106 Watson.

107 The figure of the ransom, – Rs 1,20,000, – in Rani Jijima’s chopadâ tallies exactly with the figure in the Peshwa Daftar in Poona (which is quoted in the *Gujarât-no Râjakiya ane Sânoskr.tika Itihâsa*, – *Marât.hâ Kâla*).

108 Irrigated terms.

soldiers, as a part of their standing armies, who supplemented traditional forces comprising of Bhayati forces drawn from the clan lineages. Muskets and cannon now formed part of the armed forces earlier reliant on the horse and sword, spear and the bow and arrows.

Most significantly we see in some detail the roles played by an assertive Jhala queen JijiBa and Jhala princesses who as queens in their married home affected succession and the administration of their husband's kingdoms. This detailed account of JijiBa allows us to consider with greater confidence the roles of former queens in earlier generations, about whom information is not as extensive.

Unsettled times enabled Jaswant II to recover much of the territory lost in earlier generations and it was at this time that the last kingdom of the Jhala's, Sayla, was established by the cadet Sheshmalji from lands wrested from other landholders, the Kathis and Babariyas.

4.4 Concluding Thoughts

In conclusion, several themes emerge from this examination of the Jhallesvars' military history. The first is that Jhalavad is a middling kingdom that has endured over nine centuries despite the arrivals and departures of eight imperial overlords: that of the Rajput Solankis and Vaghelas, Delhi and Gujarat Sultanates, Mughals, Marathas, English East India Company and finally the British Crown. The Jhallesvar kingdom has been both tenacious and fragile as it contends with each of these forces. In the process, it witnesses not only change in regional power in Gujarat, but also the jockeying between larger imperial states for suzerainty over the subcontinent, particularly northern India. Such wrangling for political influence includes the arrival of the first Islamic states in western India during the tenth and eleventh centuries, the shifting of the guard after the Mughal emperors wrested control from the Gujarat sultanate in the sixteenth, and lastly the collapse of Mughal imperium in the eighteenth century with the rise of competing Maratha and British forces.

During the same period, it is important to note that the Jhallesvars grappled with resistance both within and outside their state. These included the Babariya and Bhil tribes during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the rival Rajput states and forces of the Jadejas, Kathis and Dedas during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and the Kathis and roving mercenary Kasbatis in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Through studying the dynastic history of the Jhallesvars, historians can better understand how long lived kingdoms, like Jhalavad, which are found throughout the Indian subcontinent, endured, accommodated change and 'reinvented' themselves, long after more dominant states and their dynasties had lapsed.

In particular, this history of war reveals the importance of women and their lives in state formation and governance. Mothers and wives, such as SaktiMa and Rajasree, dominate in shaping the lives and careers of their husbands and sons, and

arguably, the fate of the state, itself, during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the dynastic marriage of Satyabhaji to Chandrasinh established a kinship relationship between the Jhallesvars and the supreme political dynasty, Mughal emperors Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan. Through these marital connections, successive generations of Jhallesvars protected the stability of Jhalavad and checked the advance of rival Rajput clans, such as the Jadejas. In the eighteenth century, Rani JijiBa emerged as a dynamic wife and mother, soldier and statesman, who negotiated with a wide range of forces from above and below, including the mercenary Kasbatis, her Rajput clansmen the *Chavdas*, the Muslim Nawab of Radhapur, the Maratha general, Sadashiva Ramachandra, her brother-in-law Seshoji and her co-wives, sisters through marriage. In this way, military histories can reclaim the voices of women who are often absent from dynastic chronicles, and illuminate their vital role in the public sphere.

Lastly, this essay emphasizes vibrant description of ethnographic detail over dry and distant analysis. It vividly brings to life the people and places of Jhalavad itself, by emphasizing the energy and vitality of local society, which shaped the agency of the Jhalavadi residents over nine successive centuries, and continues to this day.

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Angma D. Jhala

5 Rani Jijima, Soldier, Statesman, Financier: A Rajput Queen in Mid-Eighteenth Century Western India

In 1758, Rani Jijima, the senior wife of the Jhala ruler of Halvad, Jhallesvar Gajsinhji II (1745-1782), rode at the head of her troops, laying siege to the city of Dhrangadhra. She came to oust her brother-in-law, the wily and cunning Sri Sheshmalji. Mid-eighteenth century politics were volatile in western India, what with the recent wane of Mughal imperial power and the growing ascendancy of the Marathas. It was in this context of constantly shifting alliances that this internecine conflict within the Jhallesvar royal family took place. In an extraordinary instance of martial prowess and personal courage, the Rani led her soldiers, composed of her own *Chavdas* (fellow clansmen) personally loyal to her, as well as paid mercenaries, Kasbatis, under the Muslim commander, Muhammad Muchalo. She worked to regain her husband's lost citadel (*gadh*) for her teenage son, the then heir-apparent and future ruler, Raj Jaswantsinhji II.

The English political agent, Colonel Watson noted that three armies converged on Dhrangadhra during that fateful battle: those of the Maratha Peshwa, who had entered Jhalavad to collect tribute; the forces of the local Muslim ruler, the Nawab of Radhanpur, whom Jijima had charmed into becoming an ally; and the Rani's own troops (Amubha Saheb, 'Gajsinhji II and Rani Jijibai'). It goes without saying that the queen successfully defeated her brother-in-law the usurper, and would later herself govern from the new Jhallesvar capital in the years ahead. Not content with merely eliminating a dynastic rival, she would also dispute the authority of her mild-mannered, pious husband, thereby splitting the kingdom into two during his lifetime.

The accompanying portrait of the queen is a dramatic image of regnant authority, which carefully constructs a tableau of power. Rani Jijima rides imperiously out front, her face unveiled and her arm raised. Her adolescent son, the young heir apparent, accompanies her but rides fractionally behind his mother's mount in a position of respectful deference. Her sisters-in-law pay her obeisance. The defeated Sheshmalji touches her foot, which still sits in the stirrup as if in mid-action. His bent posture represents a final act of surrender and submission. Jijima herself famously showed clemency, sparing her brother-in-law's life, by proclaiming, "I don't wish to see my sisters-in-law break their bangles" (the act performed by Hindu women when they are widowed). His wives acknowledge her as the rightful regent, while a loyal subject holds a *chattri* (royal umbrella) as yet another auspicious symbol of sovereignty. She is at the centre of the scene, attracting the viewer's eye, and projecting herself as a speaking, living agent.



Figure 5.1: Rani Jijima accepts the surrender of her brother-in-law Sheshmalji on April 10, 1758 at Dhrangadhra with her son Kunvar Jaswantsinhji and Muslim commander Muhammad Muchalo beside her.

She rides unveiled which was her usual mode of dress as recounted in contemporaneous historical records. While commentators of the time commended her various acts of valour, even her champions decried this perceived lapse in appropriate female etiquette and appearance, in breaking with *pardah* or *ozhal* (that is, the covering of the woman's body or face) (Meghrajji, "Praise of Jijima"). Such controversies reflect the queen's unconventionality. What emerges from the archive is a forceful personality, one who routinely advised and challenged her husband and brother-in-law. She was also a skilled strategist and negotiator, well versed in the political philosophy of her day; a fine horsewoman and warrior; a pragmatic fundraiser; a feisty mother and co-wife, who defended her son and co-wives from internal threats; and a charismatic leader, adroitly culling loyalty both within the royal court and among external allies. Her success at the same time reveals the lacuna in effective (male) leadership during this period, which further galvanized such domestic political instability. Certainly, none of her male contemporaries appear to have had the force of character necessary to bring both internal unity to the Jhala polity or to simultaneously placate and awe foreign powers. Her ambitious, but ultimately ineffectual, brother-in-law, Sheshmalji,

her renunciate, pacifist husband, Raj Gajsinhji, and her adolescent son, Jaswantsinhji, who was not yet of age to play a significant role on the political stage, pale in contrast to this dynamic lady, who gained equal rights to rule through sheer grit by the age of 33 (Meghrajji, "Praise of Jijima"). As George Le Grand Jacob, a British aide to the Resident in Kathiawar several decades later in the 1830s, observed: "It is not unusual to consider Eastern women as a down-trodden, poor-spirited race, and yet cases are numerous in which they have been the actual rulers, whilst fathers, husbands, and sons were of small account" (Le Grand Jacob, 1871, 13).

Such instances of aristocratic and royal Indian women engaging in martial activities and more broadly in the political life of the royal court and its relations with larger hegemonic or imperial powers were not unusual. They played significant roles as military generals, regents and statesmen, patrons of religious, educational and cultural institutions, and as builders and financiers, funding various projects from the medieval era to the postcolonial republic, thus engaging in the wider public sphere of governance, and intellectual and cultural exchange.

They were also successful in creating political networks with key partners, by securing official appointments, ousting rivals and bequeathing expensive gifts or bribes. (Ramusack, 2004, 181). As Rosalind O'Hanlon notes, 'Whatever formal seclusion there was in the zenana. . . it did not cut women like these off from politics, but rather the opposite. The half-humorous references of nineteenth century observers ... to 'domination behind the curtain' may actually have reflected what was once a serious historical reality' (O'Hanlon, 1994, 49-50). While royal women left their father's homes, they often used their own kin connections to advance political ambitions, and promoted the prestige of their natal families over that of their husband's family and clan (Joshi, 1995, 19).

Many formed significant diplomatic and military alliances, as did Rani Jijima. During the medieval era, female members of the Mughal imperial family brokered peace, particularly through the act of marriage. (Lal, 2005, 30-31). Hindu Maratha women served as diplomatic emissaries for their husbands, receiving titles from Mughal Emperors or arranging conciliations between rival, warring Maratha kingdoms. Some, such as Tarabai Bhosle, Ahilyabai Holkar and Tulsibai Holkar, were well known for long periods of stable rule as regents and widows. (O'Hanlon, 1994, 49). Others took to the battlefield, whether against neighbouring kingdoms, the Mughals, the British or their own nobility, as did Rani Jijima in ousting her brother-in-law. The Maratha Rani of Jhansi, who fought against the British a century later during the Indian Mutiny, was seen as performing the duty of her dead husband by taking on the role of a man, and thus became a national icon. (Harlan, 1992, 196).

A growing body of scholarship has addressed the influence of *pardah* women on state governance, law, dynastic politics, cultural and intellectual patronage and religious orthodoxy and reform in both pre-colonial and colonial states. This literature has contested earlier portraits of zenana women as passive objects of colonial or indigenous patriarchy and the perceived political and social limitations of *pardah*.

Leslie Peirce and Ruby Lal have written significant works on the medieval Ottoman and Mughal harems respectively while Siobhan Lambert-Hurley and Shaharyar Khan have investigated the reigns of the four successive Muslim queens in colonial Bhopal during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. (Khan, 2000; Lal, 2005; Lambert-Hurley, 2006; Peirce, 1993).

I have written elsewhere extensively on the political and legal histories of colonial and postcolonial zenanas, especially in Rajputana and Saurashtra, which reveal that *pardah* women were engaged players in indigenous state politics and larger power sharing relationships with external hegemonic forces, colonial and nationalist. (A. Jhala, 2008; A. Jhala, 2009; A. Jhala, 2010).

Rani Jijima, as well as several other women of the Jhala royal dynasty, reflects such historic realities. The Raj Vahi or royal genealogy of the Jhala *kuladhaptis* records the wives of the forty-six generations of the royal line, from 1090 until the present. Not only were the chief wives or mothers of successors, the *patranis*, listed but in several cases the junior wives of rulers as well, along with their clan and family backgrounds. (Jayasinhji Jhala, "Marriage, Hierarchy and Identity in Ideology and Practice," 1991). Thus the names of women from the Jhallesvara's family prominently emerge in the genealogical archives. A number have distinct personalities, embodying a diverse spectrum of attributes that were shaped by their historic acts as well as their subsequent, in various cases, mythologized personas. These include the divine progenitor of the clan, or *kulmata* (clan mother), the eleventh century Saktima, who became a goddess; women who served as Regents such as the aforementioned Jijima; female members of the family who were patrons, funding the building of temples, stepwells and palaces as well as artisanal traditions and industries; and women who as servants or attendants played significant roles in state affairs. So while historically there were many women who formed part of the royal household and family, it is a select few who became the subjects of recorded memory and whose life narratives have been depicted in the paintings of this collection.

Nonetheless, due to the practices of *pardah* and the *zenana*, women have long been perceived as isolated and sequestered from matters of state. Both British colonial and later Indian nationalist historians have painted them as the silent, hidden occupants of the palace *antarpura* (inner chambers). Courtly Indian women have been described as shut out and cut off from the larger public sphere of state governance and intellectual engagement, despite the numerous examples of figures such as Rani Jijima. Indian nationalists M.K. Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru described *pardah* as a 'barbarous custom' doing incalculable harm on the state of India's women (Nehru, 1946, Reprint 1998, 243). European novelists, such as E. M. Forster, M. M. Kaye and Ruth Prawar Jhabvala, described royal women as the licentious denizens of the palace seraglio, mute and indolent, who stirred up trouble for the colonial government, while hidden behind closed doors (Forster, 1953; Jhabvala, 1975, Kaye, 1978). In part, this view of limited female agency is due to a historic minimizing and forgetting of 'women's sources' as well as the perceived wholesale absence of an

archive on women's lives. Historians, of South Asia as well as other parts of the world, have long believed that a paucity of materials on women's pasts reflect their negligible engagement in a broader world outside the narrowly defined domestic. As historian Joan Scott has noted, history has always excluded women from political discourse: 'why (and since when) have women been invisible as historical subjects, when we know they have participated in the small and great events of human history?' (Scott, 1988, 49-50).

As Durba Ghosh has argued, scholars must be critical of historical documents that deny native women existed and new methodologies must be introduced for reading texts where historical subjects are marginally or partially named. As she argues, the obvious deletion of women's names themselves in certain cases highlights their actual historic presence (Ghosh, 2006, 252). Such accounts question the diminution of South Asian women by both Orientalist (Said, 1978) and subaltern scholars, who have emphasized the repressive history of both British imperialism and traditional Indic patriarchies on women. (Chatterjee, 1990, 233-53; Mani, 1998; Spivak, 1988, 271-313). In contrast, Indian women were indeed present and 'spoke' in several different venues (Anagol, 1998, 80; Visweswaran, 1996, 115) as 'cosmopolitan' subjects rather than 'subaltern' figures (Burton, 2003, 17, 26-27).

With the growing fields of women's history, gender studies and feminist historiography, historians are increasingly open to new and diverse sources. Disciplines from social anthropology, literary criticism and history have challenged the emphasis once placed on 'high culture', print forms, articulated by dominant, empowered elites (Scott, 1988).

In any royal or aristocratic household, across culture and time period, much of state politics is inherently of a family nature and the domestic world was inevitably at the centre of governance, being of vital concern to the king and his close male relations and courtiers. A ruler's mothers (uterine or step), sisters, wives and mistresses had significant influence on his upbringing, his religious worldview and instruction, his education (particularly in terms of language, literatures, forms of statecraft, music, philosophy, etc.), his political and military alliances with other satellite, neighboring or distant states and his own aristocracy and gentry, often acquired through marriage, and economic resources gained through the introduction of bridal wealth and dowry. His authority as man and king was legitimized through his sovereignty, secured only through the perpetuation of his dynastic lineage - in the production of royal children, male and female, legitimate and illegitimate. In this manner, the women of his household were essential and had far reaching influence.¹

¹ This was not an unusual occurrence in royal families. One need only think of English king, Henry VIII's trials in the bedroom, to note how important familial politics, and particularly reproductive power, were on state affairs. Consider that multiplied many times in a polygamous environment.

It should also be noted that the women whose names do emerge from these often murky, and, in many cases, incomplete archives have been privileged for various reasons: either, due to luck as the sources have been preserved despite the mercurial vicissitudes of weather, warfare or disaster and remain intact up through the present, or due to their perceived significance by various record keepers (from the monarch down) who have deemed certain female lives, mythic or historical, worthy of remembrance. As Ramya Sreenivasan notes in *The Many Lives of a Rajput Queen*, the process of reconstituting memory from the historical “sources” is itself a historical practice, which has been “reimagined” and “reclaimed” by a wide range of social groups from royal and aristocratic centres to village law courts and middle class nationalists during the colonial era. (Sreenivasan, 2007, 6-7.) As she observes, historians have long been chary of literary narratives, such as bardic records or chronologies, not only as suitable archives of women’s lives, as mentioned above, but more generally as acceptable historical “sources”, questioning their reliability for their very “literariness colors their depiction of historical events.” (Ibid., 10). For this reason, there has been limited attention paid to oral and “folk” narratives, except by art historians and historians of the medieval devotional and sectarian traditions. She argues that for historians of culture (and I would argue this includes political historians), the importance of such sources is self-evident. Bardic accounts should be examined as well as their later manuscript production in terms of who produced and copied such “texts”, who served as patrons and who determined how they should be preserved and handed down to successive generations. All are seminal elements, as she argues, of the “hidden histories of cultural circulation, transmission and persistence.” (Ibid., 11).

5.1 A Word on Interpretation and Sources

Much of this chapter is indebted to the painstaking archival research of His late Highness Maharaja Meghrajji III of Dhrangadhra, who spent more than a half century compiling, transliterating and, in certain cases, translating a number of the documents which inform this chapter. Trained as an anthropologist, he was as much or more so a historian, philologist, political scientist and scholar of religion, among his many interests. A polyglot and a polymath, he collected a vast number of documents across multiple periods, from the Solanki, Gujarat Sultanate, Mughal, Maratha and British eras, and in various languages, including Sanskrit, Persian, Gujarati, Hindi, Marwari, Kutchi, Sindhi and Marathi, as well as English, which pertain to the history of the Jhallesvars and Jhalavad more broadly. Most of the primary sources referenced in this article owe their use and discovery to his meticulous and detailed compilations, accompanied often with his own personal commentary and careful notes. Much of the challenge in conducting this scholarship on women’s lives lie in the collecting of such materials, which cover nearly a millennium of human history and are recorded in a

plethora of different languages and dialects. One can only imagine the hours spent laboring through these, in several cases, obscure manuscripts, for those few specks of gold that quite literally sparkle down the murky tunnel of the past. (I hope this chapter will, in some small way, do justice to his Herculean labours of ‘mining the archives.’) As Meghrajji recounted in one of his marginal notes, the Jijima Records in particular were of historic interest, as they were the oldest State accounts maintained for the Jhala dynasty. Dated from around 1750, approximately two to three generations before the British arrival in Kathiawar, they were housed in the British Rajasthanik Court in Rajkot for evidence in a later case, the Hariana case, which revolved around an issue of bastardy and legitimacy that carried on for twenty years, from 1879-1899.

The records themselves held rich details on a variety of activities. These included the jewelry made for Jijima’s maidservants, the coinage of that era, the method of writing accounts, the creation of silos for grain storage in famine time, the payment of spies, the Rani’s leisure activities (such as bathing in the river) and military expenses, among various miscellanea (Meghrajji, ‘Jijima glimpses’).

In this manner, these paintings, and my critique of them, are fundamentally engaged in the process of interpretation and translation of meaning on several levels. First, they are engaged in interpreting bardic sources to reconstruct historic lives, arguably by coloring between and beyond the lines to fill in an incomplete or, in certain cases, missing record. How does one parse out myth from truth, revisionist views from historic reality? These are among the challenges a scholar must face when dealing with subjects of an earlier age, where the sources are not always composed contemporaneously with the historic events chronicled or are part of an oral tradition which cannot be validated through written records.

Second, the paintings “translate” these historic (and often mythologized) depictions from spoken or written sources to the pictorial world of the two-dimensional Indian miniature painting. Further, they are the product of the unique and individual imagination of Jayasinhji Jhala. His own background in Indian aesthetics, Rajputai and Rajput history and ethnography as well as the Jhallesvar chronicles, acquired both as a scholar and descendent of the Jhala royal lineage, informs these works. His background influences a range of choices made from the kind of themes addressed, the particular lives chosen as worthy of rendition, the aesthetic tropes and techniques used in the paintings themselves and the multimedia platform chosen to display these pieces. Everything – from the subjects of the paintings to the juxtaposition of particular visual elements to the entire composite scene – are his choices alone and these paintings should be seen as the product of a singular vision as much as a clan’s visual history, just as the oeuvre of any individual artist. At the same time, these paintings are very much collaborative pieces, arguably like those produced in a Mughal painting school, a Renaissance atelier or the Charles and Ray Eames architectural firm. They reflect the relationship between a master and his associates, where the principal visionary works with a team of other artisans; in this case, earlier medieval artists, living painters and digital media technicians, to create new and

innovative works. In this way, these paintings are both derivative (literally taking visual motifs from preexisting paintings) as well as original (creating a wholly new way of rendering a painting and in certain cases introducing new visual elements).

Thus, at every level, these paintings are mediating levels of meaning. They move from historic act as recreated and rendered in memory and myth, and from recited or written memory to vivid, visual rendition. In this manner, they generate novel ways of seeing and recollecting for their audiences.

This process is particularly compelling for female subjects who have not only been hidden behind the veil of *pardah* but also, often, the opaque curtain of archival silence. In the process, these paintings reclaim these women, beginning to sketch in their partially drawn profiles and shadowy figures upon both a painterly canvas and a historical memory.

This chapter will provide a wider discussion on the roles of women within the Jhala Rajput dynasty, before going into detail on the historical case of Rani Jijima. In particular, it will examine the depiction of aristocratic women as goddesses, patrons and political arbiters, as well as the important influence of lower caste women on the public life of the Jhala polity. It will then go into an in-depth analysis of Rani Jijima's influence during Gajasingh II's reign, both before and after the siege on Dhrangadhra. Her story is particularly illuminating as there are multiple historical sources available on her life, and she emerges as a very real, flesh and blood person, rather than one purely of myth or legend.

5.2 Goddess, Patron, Warrior and Regent: The Many Faces of Jhala Women

The following section will highlight a few significant women from the Jhallesvar chronicles, who have for various reasons been memorialized over time. There are, in particular, four roles that women have played in Jhala dynastic politics. First, that of goddess and divine benefactress and progenitor, reflected in the *kulmata*, Saktima. Second, as patronesses who built important public sites that formed the centre of political, religious or everyday life, including temples, stepwells or palaces. Third, as servants of the state, who worked on behalf of the *kuladhapati*, and fourth, as political players and Regents.

5.3 Woman as Goddess: On Saktima

All accounts of Jhala women, and indeed the clan more generally, must begin, in fact, with a woman who was not herself born a Jhala: that is the *kulmata* and *kuldevi*, Saktima, whose children became the first three Jhalas. Most Rajput clans (or *kuls*) have patron goddesses (*kuldevis*) whom they worship and who perform various

auspicious duties, such as the gifting of boons, the lifting of curses, protection during times of adversity, strength for political enterprise, and provisions for fertility and health. (Harlan, 1992). The Jhalas are additionally unusual in that they also have a *kulmata*, a goddess mother who serves simultaneously as the clan *kuldevi*. *Kuldevis*, just as other Hindu deities, are associated with specific holy sites and locations, which historically and still today, are centers for pilgrimage, that attract both domestic and external visitors to Saurashtra. For devotees, the particular act of union or *samadhi* with the deity comes through the act of *darsan* or actively “seeing” and beholding the icon. (Eck, 1998).

Saktima has many faces, so to speak, for which she is revered and worshipped. There is the historic late eleventh century woman who became consort and wife to a displaced soldier prince, Raj Harpaldev (1093-1130), who in turn rose to become king of a sovereign state. Then there is the queen who performed miracles, most notably by extending her arm from a window and lifting her sons bodily to safety from a marauding elephant in *mast* (heat). And finally, there is the later goddess, embodied in sculptural and painterly iconography, often depicted with gigantic all-seeing eyes, mounted on a fierce lioness and dressed in resplendent garments, whose image has been etched on amulets and worshipped in temples and home shines for nearly a millennium.

Saktima, the woman, was herself a Solanki, the granddaughter of Solanki Surajji. They were the descendants of the Lord of Patan, King Chamundrai. Her own father, Pratap, was from Modhera, a town near Patan, the capital of Gujarat, and served as a commander of the fort at Abu. A devout man, he was a great worshipper of the goddess Ambaji. Saktima was born on October 11 1076 within the Ambaji Temple precincts. (“Sri Saktudevina Purvajo”).

As legend, Saktima performed various miraculous acts that imbued her with divine qualities. Two are most notable. The first relates to her original encounter with Harpal Dev, the Makhvan adventurer and displaced prince, whose maternal uncle had given him the task of capturing the demon (*raksha*) Babrasur who was creating havoc in the countryside, looting and destroying villages. It is the classic tale of the hero on his quest, who conquers all in the creation of a new legitimate sovereignty, which we see in earlier Sanskrit and Homeric epics as well as later medieval vernacular ballads and praise songs. Saktima assists the hero in his mission, in this case aiding Harpal in his taming and civilizing of the “barbaric other,” the savage, lawless Babrasur.

In the various oral retellings, Saktima meets the hero when he has come to a cremation ground at night en route to the submerged lair of the demon. There Saktima tests the warrior’s mettle and courage: first by showing herself as a frail, old woman and then revealing her divine nature by growing as tall as the sky, with limbs the width of tree trunks. This unveiling of the divine self is a fundamental process of transformation in the Hindu tradition, which we see in the Sanskrit epic time and again, most notably with Krishna’s unveiling and divine manifestation in the

Mahabharata and *Bhagavata Gita*. Once challenged, Harpal Dev reveals his bravery and fearlessness, by resisting the goddess despite her evident omnipotence. Pleased by his courage, the goddess not only agrees to aid him in capturing the demon *rakshasa*, but also pledges to become his wife and consort, and help him establish his kingdom. Later, the king-in-making is given one night to garland as many villages as possible, which serves as a gift of territory from his maternal uncle, in exchange for purging the countryside of the barbarian scourge .



Figure 5.2: Night of November 6, 1093, ShaktiMa, her Shiva incarnate husband Raj Harpaldev, and demon servant Babrasur, ride floating, over the land tying festoons at 23 hundred villages to form the future kingdom of Jhalavad.

The accompanying painting depicts this momentous night on November 6, 1093. Harpal is recognized as an *avatar* of the Hindu god Shiva, with his demon servant Babrasur and regal, divine consort Saktima, as they ride from dusk to dawn, festooning the gates of 2300 villages with garlands. They began their journey in the town of Patadi, rested at Tuva at midnight, and ended the night at the village of Deghadiya at dawn (Deghaduya translates as ‘the moment of dawn’). The land they traversed became the boundaries of the new kingdom of Jhalavad.

The second miraculous event occurs after she has been married to her human husband for twelve years. During this period, had him promise not to disclose her divine nature, for if he did so, she would be forced to leave. Harpal Dev has honoured his vow and Saktima is described as all that a devoted Hindu wife or *pativrata* should

be. She has assisted her husband in the formation of his new state and household, birthed him three sons, and is well liked by her subjects. During this time, the Jhala polity (still a Makhvan offshoot) is very much still on the make, and the people's reverence for Saktima is as much for the goddess' unique qualities as it is for her role in the founding and stability of the new state.



Figure 5.3: At noon in Patadi on April 14, 1105 A.D Saktima lifts her 3 sons from harm and this act of being lifted gives them the name Jhala.

In this second public act, Saktima fatefully reveals her divinity, creating the myth that will later supplant and further embellish the image of the historic woman. As this painting depicts, at noon on April 14, 1105, as the royal princes Sodhaji, Manguji and Shekhraji are playing with their friend Tapaliya Charan in the palace courtyard, an elephant in heat breaks his chains and invades the private family quarters. Wild and dangerous, the animal destroys all in its wake, rushing towards the princes. All seeing, Saktima watches the impending disaster from her palace window and extends her arm. It grows enormous in size (as her body did on first meeting her future husband). The boys climb upon it and are lifted up, saved from the impending disaster, while she taps Tapaliya Charan on his head and ushers him into a narrow alley where the mad elephant Supratik (whose name means 'auspicious omen') cannot reach him.

The name Jhala from the Gujarati word *jhalvun* 'to lift up' is thereafter ascribed to the boys and their descendants, while Tapaliya received the epithet, 'he who was tapped on the head.' The surrounding people and bird are witnesses to these acts of miracle by the now unveiled goddess Saktima. Just as in the earlier encounter with Harpal Dev, Saktima again creates order out of disorder, joyousness out of calamity.



Figure 5.4: At sunset in Dhama on April 14, 1105 A.D Saktima enters the ground to become JhalavadiMa, the mother earth.

This second miraculous act ultimately draws her human existence as the wife-consort of Harpal Dev to an end. Having revealed her divinity, she must depart the human world. Not dissimilar to Sita's departure in the Sanskrit epic *Ramayana*, she leaves the palace grounds and is swallowed up by mother Earth (which some feminist scholars have argued is an euphemistic symbol for the act of suicide) (Tyagi, 2013, 151). The *pativrata* who has more *shakti* (power) than her husband, while admirable, is dangerous, for the prince wishing to establish himself as lord of all he governs. While the deity may not have intended that her divinity eclipse her human husband, her very presence implicitly emasculates him.

Thereafter, Saktima takes on the mythological, theological role as consecrated goddess, who saved not only the clan's founder and his successors, but who will save, succor, nurture and in this way reproduce all clan members and inhabitants of Jhalavad, who are under the protection of the Jhala Raj.



Figure 5.5: Rajputani as SatiMa, the fiery internal power essence or *tejasva* understood to reside in Rajput women and by extension in all women.

Not only was the goddess Saktima herself honored and worshiped in such iconic representations, but so was her very divine energy or *shakti*. In this painting, an unknown Rajput woman or Rajputani is depicted as imbued with *shakti* and thus a representation of the universal Saktima or Satimata. It is believed that a fiery internal essence (*tejasva*) resides in all Rajput women and by extension all women. Here, the woman, as mother, nurtures her family, her clan, her country, her world and the birthing and sustaining powers of the universe. While ordinarily manifest behind a gentle exterior, housed in grace and restraint, the woman's *tejasva* in this painting is revealed through the powers of her *sat* (virtue). This is expressed pictorially through the flames emanating from her finger and toe: the finger representing knowledge and thought, while the toes the power of 'action' and the transformation that ensues from acts in the world.

5.4 Women as Patrons

Rani Kalyan De was the wife and widow of the murdered Jhallesvar Ranoji who pronounced the 'âd,' or ordinance against the practice of *sati* after a vision of Saktima prompted him to do so. She built a stepwell, the *Kalyani vav*, outside Halvad. In an

unprecedented break with tradition, which ordinarily chronicled the names only of male patrons on the sides of public buildings, such as temples or stepwells, she inscribed the names not only of seven successive generations of male rulers but also their queen consorts who bore their heirs. She included her own pedigree within this genealogy. It remains an important instance of a female contribution to the ruling house – not only as architectural patron but also as chronicler. In the accompanying painting, Rani Kalyan De visits the grounds of ‘*Arane vara Mahadev*’ temple outside Halvad.



Figure 5.6: Rani Kalyan De, learned in Sanskrit, visits the grounds of ‘*Arane vara Mahadev*’ temple Halvad on February 10, 1520. She lived her last days with the poet saint MiraBa in Dvarka.

It was also well known that she enjoyed a close relationship with her co-widow and her sons, which was described as loving, even when it came to a potential ousting of the successor Man Ghelo. She and her fellow co-wife, Yatna De, would follow the Krishna *bhakta* and songstress Mirabai into retreat and renunciation at Dvarka (Meghrajji, “Queens of the Jhallesvaras”).

At other instances, Jhala royal wives played an important role in cementing alliances with greater imperial forces. One such lady was Satyabhamaji (Rathodiji), daughter of Mota Raja Udesinhji of Jodhpur, wife of Raj Chandrasenji and mother of the ill-fated Askaranji. Not only did she bring ties with the Rajasthani kingdom of

Marwar-Jodhpur, but Satyabhamaji's sister, the princess Manibai, also often called Jodhbai, was the wife of prince Salim, later Mughal Emperor Jahangir, and mother of future Emperor Shah Jahan. The sisters maintained a close relationship, and according to some sources, Satyabhamaji may have intrigued to have the Mughal authorities remove Prithurajji, the heir apparent and progenitor of the Wankaner, Wadhwan, Chuda and Jhalarapatan lines, although that is debatable (Meghrajji, "Queens of the Jhallesvaras"). This relationship of marriage would remain significant for the Jhallesvaras, both during times of peace and war, in the subsequent reigns of Emperors Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb.

5.5 Women as Servants

It was not only aristocratic and royal women who played a part in the Jhallesvar history but also those who served as attendants, servants and members of lower caste groups.



Figure 5.7: Goddess MeladiMa destroys the army of the Sultan of Gujarat at the battle of Kadi in the 1350s by releasing a torrential rainstorm, as Raj Vegadji and his army watch.

The two who figure in this painting collection, Meladima and the unknown widow who visited Raj Ranmalsinghji II's court, both played critical roles, so much so that they have remained part of the clan history for several centuries, though they did not leave a legacy of reproductive power (through successors) or material remains (architectural buildings, wells, etc.) Their continued place in oral memory reflects how women from various caste and class backgrounds engaged in both consecrating royal authority and protecting it.

The Goddess Meladima is in many ways a folk hero, part Joan of Arc, part St. Teresa of Avila. While there is not as much textual material about her, she is very much part of living memory. The woman Meladima was a servant girl, who lived during the reign of Jhallesvar Raj Vegadji (1355-1368). When the warrior king was struggling to subdue the forces of the Sultan of Gujarat, during the battle of Kadi, she invoked a colossal storm, inundating the Sultan's troops with rain, and thereby protected the lands and suzerainty of the Jhallesvar.



Figure 5.8: Widow throws the coconut to reveal the divine presence in the king Jhallesvar Raj Ranmallsinhji II, 1841-1869, known as Dharamraj.

In the later nineteenth century episode of the coconut, which was recorded orally, an unnamed widow came to visit the *darbar* (court) of Raj Ranmallsinhji II (1841-1869).

Ranmalsinhji had been given the moniker Dharmaraj, the upholder of justice, by his subjects for his judiciousness and religious devotion. During his reign, he built a number of temples, including the Rammol temple and the *Gidhariji ni Haveli* to Krishna in Dhrangadhra. In addition, Ranmalsinhji was an accomplished scholar of Sanskrit, Persian, Urdu and Gujarati.

In this instance, as seen in the accompanying painting, the widow, who came from a modest caste group, throws a coconut at her lord's head. However, this act was not one of violence or disrespect. Rather, she used it to illuminate the king's divine nature. The coconut breaks in midair as it hits the invisible, adamant shield of his own holiness and wisdom. Thus, the act of both seeing the king and the breaking of the coconut is a boon to the viewer as devotee. In this moment, the king transcends the human plane and becomes the divine godhead as observed in the Hindu act of *darsan*. (J. Jhala, 2009).

These women also serve as important examples of the roles and agency of Jhala Rajput women. Perhaps one of the most significant documented historical figures is that Rani Jijima, the mid-eighteenth century queen and regent. The rest of the chapter is devoted to her life as case study.

5.6 Rani Jijima: Queen Extraordinaire

The years preceding Rani Jijima's siege and ascendancy had long been rife with uncertainty. Like his father before him, the Jhala ruler Gajsinhji II was in a vulnerable position, constantly under the threat of a possible Maratha invasion. However, he proved to be somewhat apathetic when it came to concerns of state governance and Rani Jijima constantly prodded and pushed her husband towards further action. Gajsinhji himself was content to leave the reins of government to his uncle (kaka), Kaloji. Kaloji proved an effective administrator, creating a charter to trade that established long lasting stability, despite successive changes in regimes. He appointed his own *kamdar* (manager), Bhagvanji Makanji Jhala, to serve the Raj as *daftari* (or record keeper) and his younger brother Devji as *bakshi* (army paymaster).

Kaloji also warned his nephew that his younger brother Sheshmalji was an increasing threat to the Raj, noting that he had become overly ambitious and arrogant. Gajsinhji and his brother exchanged harsh words to this effect and thereafter ceased speaking. Sheshmalji left the court in high dudgeon and went to live in Mathak.

Complaints against Sheshmalji were not limited purely to his audacity towards the *gadi* (crown), but also to close family members. His stepmother, mother of his half brother Meroji, complained to Rani Jijima that Seshmalji was harassing her son and encroaching upon his lands (both half brothers had been granted Mathak and six nearby villages in a joint appanage). She feared for Meroji's life.

Attempting to calm the situation, Kaloji thought to settle the dispute through a fair division of land and suggested Gajsinhji apprise Seshmalji of the terms. Sheshmalji

was insulted, but vowed he would accept whatever his brother commanded, but afterwards would make his own way in the world. He only asked for the town of Narchiana which Gajsinhji, touched by his apparent humility, gave to him.

However, Sheshmalji continued to be rude towards his sister-in-law, Rani Jijima. Gajsinhji, increasingly frustrated by this family feud, appointed Sheshmalji to his *darbar* (council) in a “fit of exasperation or self-assertion.” Piqued, Rani Jijima left with her son and co-wife Rani Vaduma for Sitha. According to Colonel Watson, Raj Gajsinhji was now more than ever vulnerable to his brother’s influence, and spent his time between Dhrangadhra and Halvad, in addition to visiting the family in Sitha and his *gurubandhu* (religious counselor).

While Gajsinhji was in Sitha, his uncle Kaloji heard a dispute during a routine open court proceedings in Halvad. During the hearing, Sheshmalji joined him and without prompting openly argued with his uncle, speaking in a discourteous manner before a public audience. For Kaloji, that was the last straw. He wrote to Gajsinhji urging him to put his young son Jaswantsinhji, who was then between the ages of 15 and 16, in charge of Dhrangadhra, with his mother’s aid, which Gajsinhji commenced to do.

After his return to Halvad, Gajsinhji removed Sheshmalji from the council. In a moment of contrition, the younger brother rode to Bavali and apologized to their uncle Kaloji, but sources suggest that the apology was not a sincere one. In the meantime, observing the disorder within the Raj, local Khavad Kathis, who were “notorious freebooter and cattle-lifters” skilled in cavalry warfare took Sayla and nearby surrounding villages (Amubha Saheb, “Gajsinhji II and Rani Jijibai”).

The Darbar was now in crisis, as they were unsure of what action to take. Learning this, Sheshmalji attempted to regain his brother’s favour by volunteering to deal with the Kathis, if Gajsinhji gave him the necessary permission, arms and men. The *bakshi* (army paymaster) was instructed to give Sheshmalji the necessary soldiers and accompany him on the campaign. Gajsinhji, attended by his *kamdar* Bhagvanji Jhala and his bodyguards, went along with the army, watching the action from afar, as Sheshmalji recaptured Sayla.

Awed by his brother’s military skill and leadership (for he had gained the support of the *garasdars*), Gajsinhji celebrated Sheshmalji’s victory with pomp and circumstance, presenting his brother with a *dhal* (banner) and making him *senapati* or general of his armies.

Learning of her brother-in-law’s successes, Rani Jijima sent her *kamdar* (manager) to Halvad, informing Gajsinhji that she and their son, the heir apparent, would visit her paternal home, Varsoda, as her father was ill. There is some speculation in Meghrajji’s commentaries as to her motivations and whether it was indeed a manufactured ruse. The sources suggest several possible motives for this trip to her childhood home. Watson suggests that she feared Sheshmalji’s growing influence and wished to take her son to the security of Varsoda. Amubha, a local village historian, argues that the Rani’s motivations were far more Machiavellian – she wished to return home to rally her own clansmen to her side (Amubha Saheb, “Gajsinhji II and Rani Jijibai”).

In the meantime, Gajsinhji sent his uncle Kaloji to Dhrangadhra and gave temporary charge to Sheshmalji, after which he and his brother went to Sitha as part of a farewell party for Jijima and the *yuvraj* (heir apparent), Jaswantsinhji. On the evening of her departure, the Rani and her brother-in-law engaged in an “unholy row” which reverberated throughout the household. Gajsinhji reprimanded his brother and ordered him back to Halvad, while Jijima departed after sending Kaloji a warning. Gajsinhji remained on in Sitha. It was a place he particularly loved due to its surroundings, a beautiful lake, where he could spend time with the Mahant of the temple.

At this time, their sister Bai Phuljiba, who had married Jam Jasaji of Navanagar, ruler of an important kingdom, was visiting Halvad, and expressed a mutual distaste for their elder sister-in-law, Jijima, to Sheshmalji. One night, the chamberlain of the household, the *daroga* Khavas Ajoji, informed her that Sheshmalji was planning to overthrow the Raj. She sent the chamberlain in haste to Sitha, before the town gates locked for the night, to bring Gajsinhji back with a secret force in all haste. As Watson noted, Sheshmalji now hoped “to usurp the gadi” and depose his elder brother. Gajsinhji fled to his uncle Kaloji in Bavali, where he wept at his brother’s treachery.

Sheshmalji, comfortably situated in Halvad and smug that he had nothing to fear from his brother or uncle, began collecting funds to lead a march on Dhrangadhra and Sitha, either for a secret or overt attack. One day, he went out with a contingent of troops to levy a toll tax or possibly loot a caravan that was passing through the Rann of Kutch at Tikar. At that moment, Kaloji, with a contingent of men, skillfully surprised the gatekeepers, taking back the city. In festive celebration, drums were beaten as Gajsinhji reclaimed his capital and was joyfully greeted and garlanded by his sister Phuljiba and the women and men of the town. As Udaysinh M Jhala, a local historian noted, Kaloji in such a manner recaptured the capital with little to no bloodshed on behalf of his nephew. (Amubha Saheb, “Gajsinhji II and Rani Jijibai”).

Meanwhile, Sheshmalji, with his own troops, made for Dhrangadhra and captured the city. Again, the Raj was agonized. The *garasdars* (gentry), alerted of such alarming news, rode to Halvad, where they pledged their support. Ignited by Bai Phuljiba’s rousing language, they supported Kaloji’s plan to mobilize the *ghadisena* (garrison) and take Dhrangadhra by storm.

But Gajsinhji was in a quandary for he feared a possible Maratha invasion. His Mahajan (advisor) had earlier suggested leaving Dhrangadhra undefended and open to possible infiltration (by the Marathas). Now, however, it was well fortified and could withstand an extended siege. For that reason, the Mahajan recommended letting Sheshmalji remain in Dhrangadhra, an opinion seconded by Kaloji, who agreed that a domestic dispute would be a foolish undertaking in light of possible Maratha interventions. Gajsinhji sent Kaloji to Sitha with reinforcements, while instructing Rani Jijima not to return.

Disregarding his message, Jijima marched from Varsoda to Sitha with her adolescent son. She had a band of faithful *Chavdas* [clansmen] and her own money, and began preparing her own battle plan by acquiring additional troops and armaments. In Viramgam, she engaged the mercenary Muhammad Muchalo, who recruited local Kasbatis (soldiers of fortune, as Colonel Walker noted, who were known for their cavalry skills) (Mayne, 1921, 113-114).

With these forces, she rode into Dhrangadhra, where she was met by two additional armies: those of the Peshwa and the Nawab of Radhanpur. The Nawab was on his way home from Junagadh, after having unsuccessfully attempted to put his son on the Junagadh *gadi* (throne). His army, disheartened and weary, was keen to reach Radhanpur swiftly. Nonetheless, he stopped in Dhrangadhra where he was warmly received and entertained by the Rani and her son and was thoroughly charmed by the queen. In need of moveable wealth, he sold his cannon to Jijima in exchange for her jewelry, and agreed to march his troops to Dhrangadhra city and situate his soldiers in readiness for an assault.

According to Amubha, when Rani Jijima was in Varsoda with her son, who was known as Kunvar Bapji, Gajsinhji sent a royal courier via camel messenger requesting that she remain in her father's home, but the message was lost in transit. This was largely due to the fact that Jijima had her own ambitions. She informed her husband that Sheshmalji should be routed from Dhrangadhra before the Maratha envoy arrived, and that she was preparing for the homeward journey. Kaloji had his own army (*sena*) but as noted earlier had thought better of marching on Dhrangadhra. Instead, Rani Jijima sent her own reinforcements to the garrison at Sitha, on the off chance that Sheshmalji might attempt to seize the village. Gajsinhji wrote to her advising her not to *jokham* (risk) traveling back to Halvad.

The Rani's response, on receipt of her husband's command, was fiery in nature. She asserted that should the Marathas find Sheshmalji in command of Dhrangadhra, they would use it for their own interests, and likely form a permanent settlement with the usurper, thus splitting the kingdom in half. She urgently reiterated that Sheshmalji must be removed swiftly and at whatever cost, even if he had to be given additional *giras* (villages) in compensation. She would ride back in all speed with her son, she wrote. This response was a clear and obvious rejection of her husband's royal decree.

She arrived at Sitha with the heir apparent, where the Raj appointed her adolescent son the Ghadaval (fort-keeper). But it was a title purely in name as the heir was more boy than man, and his mother took over most of his duties with vigor and skill, defying the prescriptions of *ozhal* (or *pardah*) and riding briskly from camp to camp.

Since her first attempt to seize Dhrangadhra failed, she resorted to forming significant alliances in her second, with the Kasbatis of Viramgam and Dholka and the Nawab of Radhanpur, much of which was personally financed through her own monies. (Amubha Saheb, "Gajsinhji II and Rani Jijibai").

5.7 The Siege

On the day of the battle, she opened canon assault on the walls of Dhrangadhra, although there is no mention of damage to the exterior. Sheshmalji sent his commander (*senani*), Viraji, to negotiate a peace agreement, although he tried to hold out as long as he could. They were in the midst of these negotiations when the Maratha contingency arrived. Seeing that his sister-in-law's forces were amicable with those of the Peshwa, Sheshmalji agreed to a common settlement (Amubha Saheb, "Gajsinhji II and Rani Jijibai").

According to the Maratha sources, as summarized by Umaidsinhji M Jhala of Bavali, the Maratha army arrived in the midst of the battle, just as Rani Jijima was about to breach the walls. She and her son held a council and prepared to meet them. The banners were flying in the wind and kettle war drums were beating. A line of gunners faced them, beside the Rani's Varsoda force, the hired Kasbatis, the Dhrangadhra contingent, and the Nawab of Radhanpur, who had signed a friendship pact with her.

The young Kunvar Bapji or heir apparent, then seventeen years old, in the company of four men, two officers and two lancers, rode out to greet the Marathas. He rode on his beautiful horse Apsara with his *bandhi talvar* (bound sword) held aloft, symbolizing that he came in peace. He rode straight to the Maratha *Subha* or Viceroy, Sadasiva Ramchandra, and with his hand on his sword, vowed that he would meet their demands in time. The Marathas, trusting in a Rajput's word of honor, accepted. In return, Rani Jijima and her son requested that the Marathas remain and through their presence intimidate those holding the Dhrangadhra fort through a show of strength. The Maratha commander agreed. Sheshmalji, witnessing this compact, realized that his time was up.

This was the first instance that the Marathas had met a Rajput queen in person and they were struck by "Jijima's commanding personality" and pledged a vow in reinforcement of her son's promise. While unable to feed the entire Maratha army, who 'occupied the earth,' she did extend an offer of hospitality to the Maratha leaders and officers as her personal guests.

In the following negotiations, her son Jaswantsinhji, with his mother's permission, promised that he would pay what they requested as tribute (although this would later be contested by his father). Those in attendance were impressed by his "open and honest demeanor" and a *bandhan* (or bond) was written up. Rani Jijima herself was illiterate, but her daughter-in-law, who was always by her side and served as her aide and companion, Chandra De, read and wrote both Gujarati and Marathi and served as her intermediary in these negotiations. This Jhala-Maratha agreement was signed on Ram Navami, 1758 (Umaidsinh M. Jhala, "Jijima-Maratha Mulk/giri and Halvad").

Beyond her negotiations with the Marathas, Rani Jijima was also aware of the need to pacify Sheshmalji. Aware of her brother-in-law's own ambitions and cognizant that she must satisfy those needs, Jijima not only granted him his life, but also his estates

and lands, including the towns of Narichana and Sayla, which he had conquered, as long as he gave back his booty to the town's residents and swore allegiance to the Raj in perpetuity. Once he eventually agreed to the Rani's terms and made the requisite vows, she gave him a proper farewell party. He departed Dhrangadhra with all honors, including the beating of drums and his Nag (serpent) banner unfurled. Subsequently, Rani Jijima entered the city gates victorious and the townswomen streamed out of the city to greet her.

Indeed, the chronicles of the time (and the later reminisces by descendants of these key players) note the unusual nature of this plucky, audacious lady. She was clearly an "intrepid queen" who "astonished the world with her prowess." She had publicly ignored and ultimately challenged her lord husband's decrees and given herself sovereign powers. When the ruler's uncle, Kaloji arrived with other Halvad ministers to take over the administration of Dhrangadhra, the queen stuck to her guns, unwilling to hand over the reigns of government. A misunderstanding arose. Her husband's council publically criticized her on several counts: for disregarding the Darbar's command, gifting territory to Sheshmalji and riding on horseback publically without being veiled (Amubha Saheb, "Gajsinhji II and Rani Jijibai").

According to a Bavali source, the Halvad council (*chovat*) took particular umbrage with three of her decisions. The first was that she had negotiated and signed an agreement with the Marathas without Darbar authority, which was seen as "disgraceful," and that this agreement occurred on that most solemn and auspicious of days, Ram-Navami. Further, she had agreed to pay a fixed tribute every year, which in itself was a "shameful commitment" that no Rajvada (royal house) had made before and which the Darbar did not wish to honour.

Secondly, she had allowed the "treacherous" Sheshmalji to leave Halvad with honour and had gifted him another village (that is Liya). The granting of land was the sole right of the sovereign, Raj Gajsinhji, and the queen consort did not have the authority to do so. The Rani responded that she had only given Sheshmalji the lands in exchange for his surrender of war plunder.

Thirdly, the council reprimanded her son for making an illegal *desavari* (i.e. foreign) alliance with the Muslim Nawab of Radhanpur and for having given him a Jhala woman in marriage to his son.

Indignant, the Rani showed herself an implacable adversary. In response to the Darbar's repudiation, she severed ties with Halvad. She declined to leave the walled city and "declared herself independent." Thereafter, the state was divided into two, with separate capitals in Halvad and Dhrangadhra. The Rani also paid fifty percent of the tribute to the Marathas, making herself not only a formidable player in internal dynastic affairs but also in the state's relationship with a significant regional power, in several instances overshadowing her husband (Meghrajji, "Praise of Jijima"). It was her own strength of will and character that would create the bedrock for her son's subsequent reign.

5.8 Her Influence Post Siege

If this period saw the rise of Jijima's star, it saw the wane of Gajsinhji's whose failings sound nearly Shakespearean in nature. One source notes, "Nowhere is found a prince, a ruler, who suffered such a succession of misfortunes and humiliations as Gaj Singhji." He would later face imprisonment by the Marathas and the humiliation of having his renegade wife pay his ransom, as well as the murder of his beloved sister. In the wake of Jijima's usurpation of Dhrangadha, he had the loyalty of a select few: his trusty and capable uncle Kaloji who continued to administrate his part of the kingdom, the spiritual guidance of his gurubandhu Mahant Balgiri and the indulgent affection of his sister, Phuljiba. He spent much of his later life in meditation and yoga.

A split state led to split government. Kaloji returned to Halvad disillusioned and ceased trade with Dhrangadhra. The Bhavali bards noted that he reported to his nephew that nowhere in the long history of Hindustan had there ever been a woman who was so unworthy of being a wife. Despite her courageous actions, she had broken apart the Jhala state and created a trade embargo.

Gajsinhji's guru warned that the severance of commerce between Dhrangadhra and Halvad should not occur, for the Rani might march herself on Halvad; this opinion was seconded by the king as well as his noblemen. Exchange between the two cities recommenced and the heir apparent Jaswantsinhji was made *patodhar* or regent of Dhrangadhra.



Figure 5.9: The Chaturbhuja madaliya of Jhallesvar Raj Dvarkadasji 1210-1240. It is in the puja of the Jhallesvars' shrine at Lakmivihar zenana palace in Dhrangadhra.

A year following the state's division, the Maratha viceroy wrote that he would stop at Dhrangadhra but then adroitly bypassed it. In 1759, he sent a secret force and laid a nocturnal siege on Halvad, taking it on the 2 April 1759. The Marathas captured Gajsinhji and took him to Ahmedabad. It was left to the intrepid Jijima to bargain for her husband's release, after collecting the ransom monies from her willing subjects. The Rani sent the funds along with a delegation of her subjects to Ahmedabad.

On Gajsinh's return, he gave the locket he wore, an image of Chaturbhajaji, to his son, (which is now part of the Raj's daily puja) as well as the pargana of Hariana, which was later visited by Rani Jijima. The relationship between husband and wife remained a less than happy one. As Meghrajji observed, it was a "tragic tale" which could easily serve as a subject for an entire book of its own (Amubha Saheb, "Gajsinhji II and Rani Jijibai").

5.9 Concluding Thoughts

Rani Jijima proved a formidable player during Gajsinh II's reign and emerges from the archive as one of the most clearly defined female figures of the Jhala line, with an individuated historic personality and attributable achievements. In part, her successes were due to the fragile and volatile nature both of mid eighteenth century politics in western India, seeing the eclipse of one empire, the emergence of another and the imminent arrival of a third, as well as a lacuna of strong (male) regnant power in the Jhala Raj itself. Yet it was not opportunity alone (coupled with an opportunistic instinct) that brought her to power and made her a credible and dominant power in her husband's reign. The Rani herself was an accomplished ruler in her own right; one imbued with martial prowess, physical fortitude, entrepreneurial instinct and diplomatic charm. As soldier and equestrienne, she was matchless, comparable to any male contemporary, leading military campaigns and spending long days in the saddle. As financier, she used both state and personal funds to pay the expenses of her siege. As negotiator and arbitrator, she showed adroit ability, creating alliances with the Nawab of Radhanpur, the Marathas, the mercenary forces of Muhammad Muchalo, and even with her own defeated brother-in-law Sheshmalji after the reconquest of Dhrangadhra. As one observer noted Rani Jijima's settlement with the Maratha's prevented their "armies ravaging and laying waste to the countryside"; a decision which was one of "extraordinary foresight, wisdom and achievement – unprecedented anywhere at that time and in the Annals of Kathiawar" and which anticipated the later East India Company's "Permanent Settlement" by 50 years (Meghrajji, "Praise of Jijima").



Figure 5.10: Rani JijiBa amongst her beloved spirited horses.

Most of these skills were largely self taught and gained through pure force of character, as Jijima herself was not a schooled woman of letters. She serves as a powerful predecessor for the later Maratha Rani of Jhansi, who would also valiantly fight with her son beside her. Where Jijima played on the regional stage, Jhansi would become a national symbol. But women like Jhansi were indebted to the many pre-colonial warrior-diplomat-queens who paved the way for her own ascendancy.

In terms of her gender, Jijima was criticized: as a disobedient and obstructionist wife, who did not heed her husband's commands; as a shameful woman, who displayed her face and body to all and sundry; as a controlling mother, who ruled in place of her adolescent son and minimized him. Yet in many ways she also embodied the classic *gunas* or virtues so oft celebrated in bardic literature and eulogized as desirable qualities for Rajput women even today. She was the brave, fearless Rajputni who rallies her husband and male kinsmen to battle, and teaches them their martial duty; the fearless mother who secures her son's interests and protects his estate; and the able bodied and strong willed warrior, who sleeps on horseback with her sword at the ready, as all good Rajputs should do. It is no surprise that Jijima has remained such a resonant figure some 230 years after her death. She is known to us largely due to the fact she captured the imagination of her descendent, Meghrajji, who became her advocate and commemorator, maintaining this record for posterity. But it is her powerful personality, and the persona she created, that beckons to us across time, as history, memory, legend, myth.

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Michael Oppenheim

6 Patronage Networks and Musical Traditions in Jhalavad

In any attempt to document the contemporary and historical culture of Dhrangadhra and Jhalavad in Gujarat, it is necessary to consider the performing arts that constitute the region's living traditions. Music, dance and drama are three intricately related arts, imbued with religious, cultural, political, and historical meaning.

Given the reality that these three arts exist as live performances, these artistic mediums are subject to change over time. Changes in performing arts may reflect the impact of modern influences. A conscious development, expansion and alteration of repertoire by new generations of performers is one such example. Another factor could be the effect of oral traditions being misremembered, especially as contemporary society places ever more economic pressure on groups that previously subsisted solely on their performance traditions.

Further complications for scholars occur when considering the vast variety of musical genres in Jhalavad, both contemporary and historical. The population consists of multiple communities including Hindus of all castes or *jatis*, Muslims, the Afro-Indian Shiddis, Sikhs, Jains, and other ethnic and religious groups. Music is nearly omnipresent in the contemporary soundscape of Dhrangadhra, with each group contributing their own musical traditions.

An examination of the soundscape of Dhrangadhra and Jhalavad provides insight into the social dynamic of the town and how the disparate communities interact in a shared environment. Music is heard in almost every corner of the town. Musical styles, functions and performance occasions are as diverse as the various peoples populating Dhrangadhra and the surrounding area.

Historically, the royal court was the primary patron for the arts. The court employed or engaged a variety of artists and musicians for ceremonial, ritual, or entertainment purposes. However, court patronage was limited to those events deemed appropriate for the context of the court, which exempted many varieties of folk arts, musics, and theatrical traditions.

The sources for historical musics used in this article are a collection of paintings commissioned by Jayasinhji Jhala, a member of the historical royal family. The paintings are depictions of musical experiences, or conceptualizations of those experience, as defined by performers, audiences, settings, and implications of movement or behavior.

Much as he is a patron of the paintings, Jhala is a source of contemporary patronage to a wide variety of musicians and performers. He brought a documented collection of court music recorded in the 1950s by his late father Jhallesvar Meghrajji III and another recorded by him in the late 1970s to inform and augment live performance today. As an anthropologist, Jhala's commissions extend far beyond the historical limitations of "court" music, transcending traditional boundaries of caste, religion, and socio-economic class.



Figure 6.1: Mera Bhai singing Bhajans at Jessada Village, 1983.

The contemporary musical events explored here are also experiences, defined by the same parameters of performer, audience, setting, and behavior as the paintings. However, as live performances they are subject to subjective interpretation by all parties involved. These interpretations and their effects on contemporary culture are a focal point of this chapter.

Through the patronage of Jayasinhji Jhala and the researchers whom he invites to Dhrangadhra, new models of contemporary music are born. These new musics evolve from the recontextualization of established musical traditions from a wide variety of distinct local cultures. These provide new opportunities for involvement in media such as audio recordings and films, with the benefit of a self-reflective and anthropologically informed worldview of the patrons.

6.1 Visual Sources

Music is alluded to in many forms of Indian visual expressive culture, such as paintings and sculpture. Decorative frescoes and sculptures in temples often depict musical scenes, particularly allusions to the story of Krishna and Radha. Such traditions are sculpted on the very walls of Dhrangadhra's Ajitnivas palace where the epics of the Ramayana and Mahabharata attest to these longstanding traditions of public performance and story.

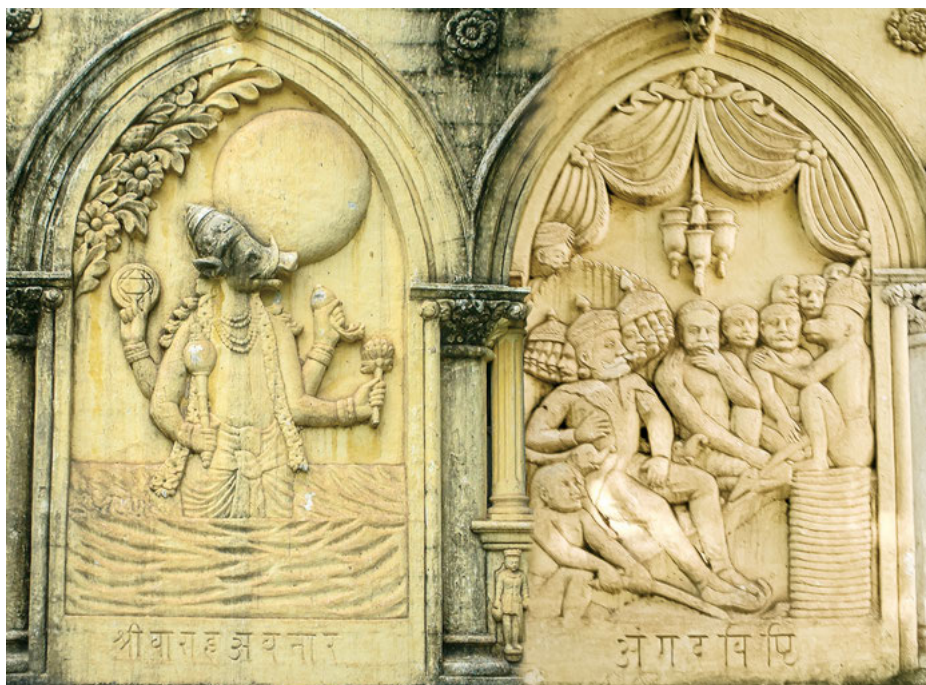


Figure 6.2: Vishnu as Varaha avatar. Hanuman requests the Demon king Ravana.

There is a trend in ethnomusicology to utilize miniature paintings as sources on music. The highly developed tradition of *ragamala* painting, or visual depictions of the musical modes, is a well-known artistic practice that directly links the musical features of *raga* to a poetic and visual interpretation. However, Reis Flora (1987) correctly identifies the potential value of a second category of painting, in which musical scenes are depicted.

As historical sources, painting can provide insight into the “presence, use, and development of musical instruments in India [and] patterns of behavior” from the period of the paintings (Flora 1987, 197). Bonnie C. Wade’s painstaking analysis of depictions of drone instruments in Mughal paintings is a prime example of paintings as a historical source that reflects musical performance practice (Wade, 1996).

Conversely, there are few studies that extrapolate social behavior from miniature paintings. There are certainly limitations to using these as anthropological or historical sources. This includes painting conventions such as stylization and reproducing aesthetic ideals of earlier eras that would not necessarily reflect contemporary musical practice (Flora 1987, 197). In fact, responding to the marginalization of Indian painting by Western influence, many paintings of the 19th century deal with “themes and events of the past rather than chronicling the present,” serving in no way “to chronicle contemporary social dynamics, urban or rural” (Jhala, 1993, 188).

It is also worth noting that there are many schools of Indian miniature painting. These are most often divided into the two broad categories of Rajput and Mughal paintings. Rajput painting displays an enormous stylistic range resulting from court patronage of local workshops, which reflect the ideals of the nobility commissioning the work. The early Rajput style, based on folk art, predominantly portrayed Hindu religious scenes; the Mughal style as defined under Emperor Akbar introduced secular subjects, including historical depictions and portraiture (Beach, 1975, 16). The extent of exchange and adaptation renders later Rajput and Muslim court paintings essentially indistinguishable, except through the depiction of specifically Hindu or Muslim scenes.

These court paintings serve as a “representational” record of court activity, often accurately representing musical performance practice, but with stylized, and therefore inaccurate, historical placement (Qureshi, 1991, 158). The purpose of these paintings was often to enhance the socio-cultural status of the patron. Given the emphasis on stylization and idealization, the portrayal of individuals and audiences in court paintings is probably not a reliable historical source. However, these same practices reveal the conceptions about how musical activities should occur and be received in a manner that reinforces the social capital of the patron.

6.2 The Paintings

The paintings referenced in this article are historically and anthropologically informed contemporary paintings, conceived and commissioned by Jayasinhji Jhala. They are not historical depictions, yet they are invaluable sources on the aesthetic ideals and stylized conventions of Rajput miniature paintings.

The paintings are both representative of the established system of court patronage and the anthropologically informed creative present. The scenes utilize the same stylizations as historical sources, but offer contemporary beliefs and conceptualizations about music and the events it accompanies.

These scenes fit into a few broad categories of religious or mythological scenes, historical events, and regular events and special occasions in court life. The context of the individual painting informs the viewer of the stylistic conventions and imagined realities of these events. Depending on the scene – historical vs. mythical, religious vs. secular – the performers, instruments, and audiences depicted should correspond to the appropriate context.

6.3 Historical Events

In Hindu tradition, a *sati* is a widowed woman who voluntarily immolates herself upon her husband’s funeral pyre. A woman faithful and devoted enough to commit this act was celebrated and even “rendered as a goddess for her superhuman bravery and strength” (Hardgrove, 1999, 730). *Sati*, as a devotional and quasi-divine act, was

most often practiced by the highest castes. This was exacerbated by prohibitions on widow remarriage by women of the Rajput and Brahmin castes. In fact, a *sati* was a model of piety for high-caste Hindus (Chowdhry, 1990, 259-261).

Images of *sati* occur in the visual arts of the British colonial period as well as in Rajput depictions. In Schurer's article "The Impartial Spectator of Sati, 1757-84," (2008) the author discusses three British engravings of widow immolation scenes produced between 1767 and 1776. In each of these engravings, the witnesses include both men and women. Two of the depictions include musicians or individuals with musical instruments as active participants in the crowd.



Figure 6.3: The Sacrifice of Rani Chauhanji SrangarkunvarBa of Sanchor, wife of Jhallesvara Raj Udesinhji, 1408.

The *Sati* image examined here is based on the historical event of SrangarkunvarBa daughter of Chauhan of Gadh Sanchor sacrifice at her husband's Jhallesvar Raj Udesangji's funeral 1352. The woman is the central figure of the image, and she is haloed, rather than the king. The scene is populated, exclusively by men, contrasting with the British engravings alluded to in Schurer. Many figures in the crowd are seen gesturing towards the heavens. There are six musicians pictured – two drummers, two holding gongs, one with a conch shell, and one with a curved bugle. Interestingly, the musician blowing the conch shell is the only character prominently displayed in green, and particularly, a shade of green that is not seen elsewhere in the scene.

A striking and unique feature of this painting is the way the composition inserts the viewer into the vantage point of a participant. The formation of a crowd around the peripheral and frontal borders is absent in the other paintings from the collection. Further, the vast horizon beyond the central image, dominated by the anthropomorphized sun, draws the viewer into the scene. These features, distinct to this painting, affect the viewer on a personal level, in an experiential way.

6.4 The Queen and Her Women at the Temple

This is a historical scene depicting the 500th anniversary of the founding of the Halvad castle in 1987. The queen is shown with her female contingent at the temple to give thanks to Shiva and the local deity SaktiMa.

The figures on the right side of the painting appear to be carrying offerings to the gods, with the queen foremost among them. The temple priest and an ensemble of female temple musicians populate the left side of the image. The three women seated in the front are portrayed playing a barrel drum, a plucked lute, and hand cymbals. The women behind the instrumentalists are dressed in a similar fashion as the instrumentalists. This perhaps indicates that they are also performers, such as devotional singers.



Figure 6.4: Maharani BrijrajkunvarBa at SaktiMa's temple Halvad in 1987 celebrating the 500th anniversary of the founding of Halvad. Heads of all Jhala kingdoms attended, as did Jhalas from overseas.



Figure 6.5: Jhallesvar Raj Ranoji dancing the famous rasada *Haq Pade Vinar Jagjo* with the women of his family and court during the Navratri festival, 1515.

6.5 Religious Events

The Ras Garba is a dance performed on festive occasions such as the nine-day Navratri festival and auspicious occasions such as birthdays, weddings, and other religious holidays (Jhala Kings, Colonials...:44). The garba is the most popular of women's folk dances and though commonly associated with Krishna, it also has origins as an agricultural ritual (Vatsyayan, 1976, 202-5).

The Ras Garba also has an iconographic connotation. According to legend, when Krishna danced the Garba with the cowgirls, "the splendor of the dancing was yielding four times more brilliance than the moon's orb," and "to see the sight, the gods appeared in the sky on their aerial vehicles" (Randhawa and Galbraith, 1982, 117).

The dance depicted is a variation of the Garba known as Dandia Raas. In Dandia Raas dancers use a pair of wooden sticks (dandia) to perform a dance in which each performer has a complex relationship to the dancers on either side, clapping the dandia to the rhythm of the music as they dance (Vatsyayan, 1976, 203).

The scene features sixteen dancing women forming the outer circle, with the king and another woman dancing in the center. There are six female musicians outside of the dance, including two varieties of barrel drums, hand cymbals, a trumpet-like instrument, and a woman pictured with no instrument, presumably a singer. There are also a number of peacocks, which symbolize grace, joy, beauty, and love.

In addition to the general celebration of the season the Ras in this paintings celebrates a historical event when the king returns victorious from war and dances with his wives and women. The text of the Rasada given below attests to the sentiments expressed.

6.6 Rasada of Haq Padi Viner Jagajo Re

The Shout is out! Warriors, Wake up!

This famous rasada, *Haq padi vinar jagjo re*, speaks to the time of war and the Rajputs' need for alertness. The song, translated as, *The Shout is out! Warriors, Wake up!* is sung by Langha Ala Rakhi, Mir Hemu Bai, Vaju Bhai Khwas and accompanied by other Khwas maids in Ajitnivas Palace, 1979.

*The shout is out, warriors wake up.
Friends, get warrior weapons, friends, get warrior weapons
The horns of war sound*

*Pick up spears, wear the armour, bind swords
Your drums roll as thunder, the trumpets roar, the trumpets roar
Arms strike as warrior fever comes
The horns of war sound*

*Then the warriors, Great fighters, play the game of swords, the game of swords
 The corners of the earth tremble
 The corners of the earth tremble
 The horns of war sound*

*Now there is the honor of blood, the honor of blood
 Midst contest, the chests of Kshatriyas take cannonballs
 For their homeland, they go to heaven
 Now flowed the rivers of blood, rivers of blood
 The horns of war sound*

*Jhala warriors, bathing themselves in blood, bathing themselves in blood
 The torso fights, holding the head in hand
 Look at protectors of honour, protectors of honour
 The horns of war sound*

*The shout is out, warriors wake up.
 Friends, get warrior weapons, friends, get warrior weapons
 The horns of war sound.*



Figure 6.6: Zenana women dance the Dandiya Ras at Navratri, 1979.

6.7 Holi

Holi is a Hindu ritual and festival of love, honoring one aspect of the life of Krishna. During the celebration, there is an inversion of social norms, such as status and gender roles, and the rules of pollution and purity that normally segregate people based on caste, are temporarily abandoned (Pandian, 2001, 560).

The scene shows the king amongst the women of his harem, throwing colored paint and celebrating the festival. There are several female musicians scattered throughout the scene. In the center are women playing a barrel drum and a woman holding a small lute with a single gourd. There are women in the lower left and right corners holding hand cymbals. There appear to be women to the extreme left and right holding frame drums. Peacocks and parrots are pictured, representing grace and joy, and fertility, respectively.

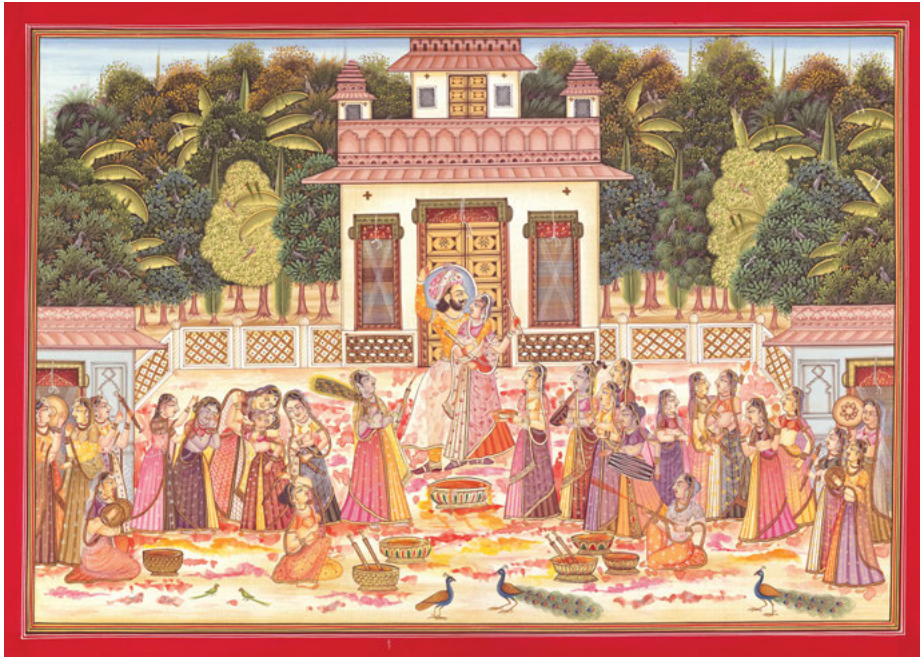


Figure 6.7: Jhallesvar Raj Virsinhji celebrates the festival of colors, *Holi* with his wives at Patadi (1385-92).

6.8 Court Life

6.8.1 Harem Scenes

Harem scenes of women enjoying music, both with and without the male ruler, are a common theme in Indian miniature paintings. The two examples above both include the king as the central figure, surrounded by the women of the harem. The king is the only male character in both paintings.

Image features three female instrumentalists. The instruments include a chordophone, harmonium, barrel drum, and hand cymbals. This image depicts recreational music, presumably a genre of light classical music with vocal accompaniment, due to the presence of the harmonium.

Image is even more heavily populated with instrumentalists. The left side shows a fretted chordophone, a pair of drums, and hand cymbal player. On the right there is a fretless lute, a cylindrical drum, and another cymbal player. The layout of the scene suggests that the women seated with the musicians would also be actively participating in the music making. The instrumentation again suggests a performance of Hindustani classical music.



Figure 6.8: Jhallesvar Raj Jetsinhji enjoys a musical evening at Kuva, 1420-1441.



Figure 6.9: Jhallesvar Raj Ranmallsinhji I romances with his Rathore bride PhulkunvarBa at Barmer Kotada, 1392.

6.8.2 Military Procession

The military procession is an opportunity to demonstrate the grandeur of the king and to announce the presence of the king and his court. As a demonstration of the king's prestige, it is a common theme of Indian court painters.

The painting of the annual procession from the palace of Santalji to the temple shrine of the Goddess SaktiMa in Santalpur 1304, is winding stream of men and women, horses and vehicles. Men, armed with spears and swords, flags and banners, and bearing a palanquin carrying a guru. A closed carriage carries the queen and other female members of the royal family. The procession is lead by a kettledrummer on horseback and the rear of the procession is a camel rider also drumming the kettle drums. It is a showcase of the kingdom's elite. Female musician with drums and cymbals and smaller finger cymbals provide merriment to the grand spectacle Three levels depict soldiers on parade implying a powerful military presence, reflecting the importance and power of the king.

This image surprisingly parallels the Sati image in a number of ways. First, the composition and placement of the figures differs in comparison to the other paintings. The members of the court populate the image in horizontal lines signaling order and control. The color scheme is very similar, focusing on earth tones shade. The effect

links these two images, the Sati as a symbol of devotion and earthly sacrifice, the Military Procession as a symbol of the worldly divine in the form of the Maharaja.

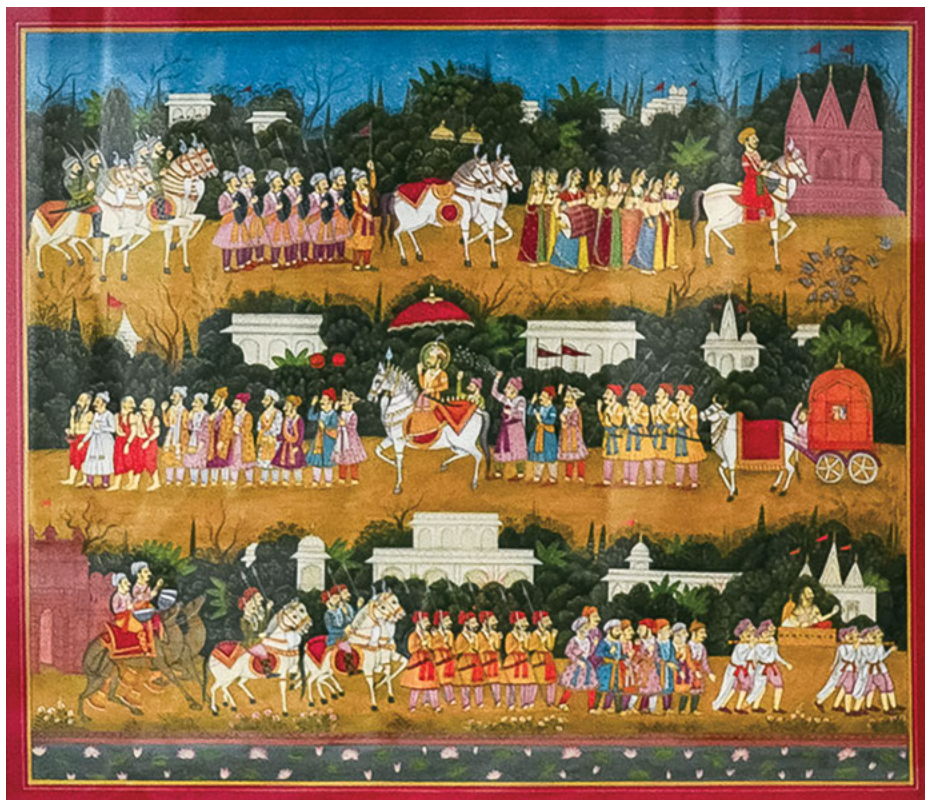


Figure 6.10: Jhallesvara Raj Santaldevji's procession to the temple of Shiva in his newly established capital at Santalpur, northern Jhalavad, 1305.

6.9 Special Events of the Court

6.9.1 Weighing the King

The Weighing Ceremony is a local tradition of Rajput kings, during which the king would be publicly weighed, and gave his own weight in silver to the needy (Jhala, 12). The painting shows the king on the scale, with an audience including priests, an armed guard, and women viewing from the towers of the *zenana*, or women's quarters. The musicians pictured are all female, one playing barrel drum, two playing circular frame drums, and two with small lutes.

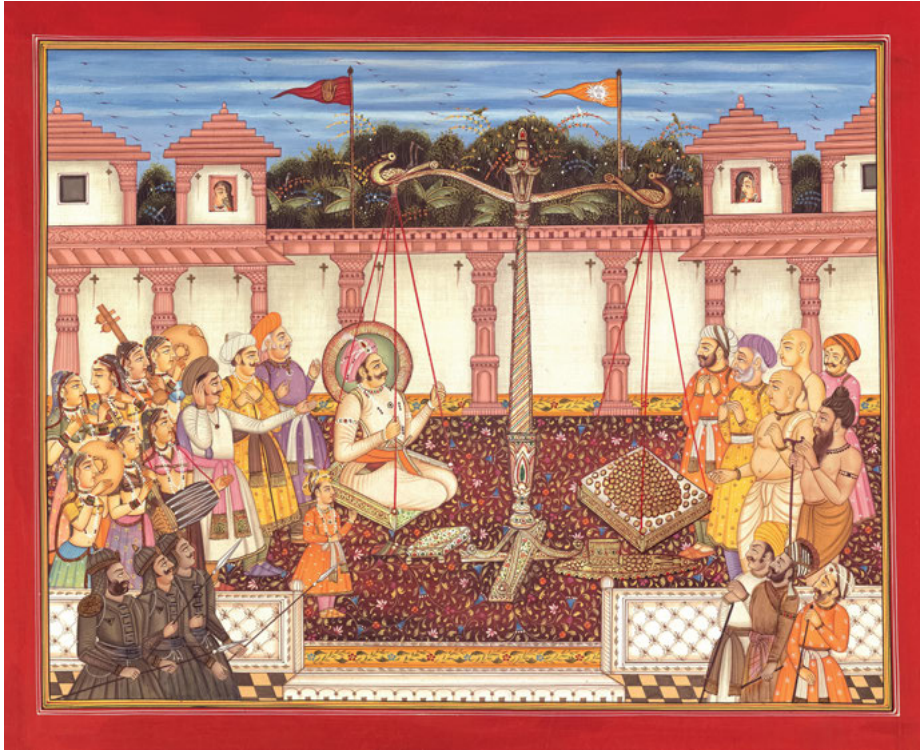


Figure 6.11: Jhallesvar Raj Padamsinhji being weighed on his birthday for charity 1331-1340.

During this ceremony and at similar ceremonies in both the Mardana [male spaces and Zenana [female spaces] the court singers sang praise songs that are known as Bhav. The famous classical singer Bhagvati Shankar Prasad Bhatt was the lead court musician in the reigns of Maharaja Ghanshyamsinhji 1910 to 1942 and Meghrajji III 1942-2010. His song, 'Be immortal Mayurdhwaj Maharaj' a bhav sung at annual durbar gatherings was part of a music collection commissioned by Meghrajji's father Maharaj Ghanshyamsinhji in the 1940s (Bhatt, 1942). Here is a Bhav written for Jhallesvar Maharaja Mansinhji II who ruled from 1969 to 1900.

Bhavs are songs of praise sung in praise of kings and queens and members of the royal family and also occasionally of high nobles and officials and heroes.

They are sung at Durbar gatherings in the Suraj Sabha hall the main audience hall of Ajitnivas Palace and in Zenana. When danced to in the zenana, Bhavs are danced very slowly with grace. Almost in slow motion and has the movement of a swaying elephant. Regal and measured is the pace, majestic, and the tone of the singing serious and grave and awesome.

Bhav songs are sung by men, Bhatt, Brahmin, Charan, Gadhvi and Muslim at royal audience events. In the Zenana the Muslim Langhas and Mir sing Bhavs. They

drum while they sing. The royal ladies nor their maids, did not sing these songs. They listened to them and danced to them. The words I refer to cross into the vocabulary of Rajasthani dialects especially Marwaris and also Kutchi as well as some Urdu words, perhaps even Sindhi and Persian. This vocabulary was the legacy of the court singers as they sang in the courts of all Rajavada from Saurashtra in the west to Rajasthan in the northwest and into Madhyapradesh and beyond.



Figure 6.12: Bhav of Jhallesvar Raj Mansinhji II sung by Langha Ala Rakhi Bai and Mir Hemu Bai in Ajitnivas Rajmahal in 1979.

The text of the Bhav of Jhallesvar Raj Mansinhji II sung by Langha Ala Rakhi Bai and Mir Hemu Bai in Ajitnivas Rajmahal in 1979.

King Mansinh, reigning king
King Mansinh, reigning king
Look in awe
O king Mansinh, live long king

Look in awe O king Mansinh, live long king
Look in awe

*Lord of the earth comes, majesty comes
 Lord of the Earth of beauty
 The country sees. The drums rejoice king of the parasol
 Oh Man [gives joy]*

*O king Mansinh live long king
 Look in awe*

*O Ranmalsinh god [late father of the king]
 Born of ?, she adorns the legacy of Ranmalsinh
 Born of Jamnagar princess [wife]
 Who gave prince Jaswant to Man
 O he comes*

*O king Mansinh live long king
 Look in awe*

*Blessed with queens
 Blessed with large family
 Gives dynamic energy to the [zenana] courtyard
 Our immortals Gods and ancestors know/smile*

*That is why, O king Mansinh, live long king
 Look in awe*

*Now your horses neigh
 Horses neigh
 Yes their splendor - do accept*

*O king Mansinh, live long king
 Look in awe*

*O king Mansinh, live long king
 Look in awe*

6.10 Plowing the First Furrow

Traditionally, the Hindu king would plow the first furrow of the harvest, hence making the world fruitful and fertile. Following this act, the farmers of the kingdom would begin the season's farm cultivation.

In this image, both men and women of the court attend the king. Parrots are present, representing fertility, birds and deer are abundant, and the rain is falling. The women in the lower left corner are shown playing hand cymbals, a chordophone, a large barrel drum, and there are men grouped with the female instrumentalists.



Figure 6.13: Jhallesvar Raj Ramsinhji (1368-1385). Plowing the First Furrow.

6.11 Music in the Paintings

Comparing and contrasting the paintings and their categorization reveals some of the idealized conceptualizations of not only the events depicted, but also of music and its social function.

6.11.1 Performers

The musicians in the paintings discussed are predominantly female. The only mixed gender ensembles are possibly within the images categorized as special events, that is, Weighing the King on His Birthday and Plowing the First Furrow. Even in these

images, women are the only characters depicted with instruments; the men involved appear to be singing. The grouping of men and women in the left hand side of each special event image does not seem arbitrary, thus suggesting they are one mixed gender performance group.

There is a strict demarcation between the men and women on the right hand side of the Plowing the First Furrow painting. The segregation is even more marked in the Weighing the King on his birthday – the only women not grouped with the performers are viewing from the towers in the background.



Figure 6.14: Jhallesvara Raj Bhimdevji rides to receive his son-in-law Ra Mandalik III of Sorath 1455.

The only paintings featuring male instrumentalists are a Military Procession and Sati image. From the paintings selected, these are also the only scenes that are dominated by male characters; the Military Procession glorifying the king's court and Sati praising the wife's devotion and faithfulness. These are very distinct types of events. The Military Procession would presumably be a recurrent occasion, attending the king on any of his travels throughout the kingdom. Conversely, the Sati is a historical event of exceptionally rare occurrence. However, there is a commonality between these scenes, as they both celebrate the divinity of a particular individual; that is, the

king and the *sati*, respectively. As two scenes depicting the highest honors, that is, the presence of the king and the transformation from wife to sati, it is significant that male performers are portrayed.

6.11.2 Audiences

The audiences also conform to a finite number of archetypes. The following four audience types are identifiable: 1) male audiences with female performers, 2) the king attended exclusively by women, 3) exclusively male gatherings (no female performers), and 4) mixed gender gatherings.

The exception to this is the painting of The Queen and Her Women at the Temple, which is the one of few paintings of the selection that does not portray the king. There is a male priest present in the image, but all other figures are female.

There are two paintings that are exclusively, or almost exclusively, male audiences. These are the Military Procession and the Sati. These are also the only images with male instrumentalists. There are no women in the military procession and the sole woman in the Sati is the wife immolating herself on her husband's funeral pyre.

The absence of women in the crowd around the Sati is surprising, especially given the regular depiction of women witnessing such events in the previously discussed British artwork. The depiction of the musicians as men is also notable in contrast to the more frequently depicted female musicians.

The scenes depicting the religious celebrations Holi festival of colors and Dancing Garbas) and the scenes of court life in the harems conform to the portrayal of women alone with the king. This would be consistent with the life in the *zenana* (women's quarters), in which women were segregated from men, but self-sufficient and privileged with entertainment and leisure time.

The special occasions of the Weighing the King on his Birthday, and Plowing the First Furrow are each distinct in their portrayal of gendered groups. Weighing the King depicts both men and women in the audience, though it is possible that the women shown on the street level are the musicians; however, women are clearly seen viewing the event from the *zenana* towers. Plowing the First Furrow is the only truly integrated audience in which both men and women are depicted as witnesses to the event and musicians.

It appears that the gender constituency of the scenes relates to the type of event – religious, historical, life in the court, or special events of the court. The religious celebrations and court life scenes depict the king with his women, presumably inside the women's quarters. This contrasts with the audience types depicted in the other paintings, in which women and men are segregated, or audiences are primarily single gendered.

From this sampling of nine paintings, music is, or is at least conceptualized, as a part of every type of social function. Celebrations such as religious festivals (Holi and Navratri) and royal processions or birthdays are attended by music. So are acts of extreme piety and devotion, like the Sati event.

Music is depicted as a part of the event, though it is often segregated by gender and physical space; this suggests that these musical events were enacted by specialists, and were not communally performed.

This separation is notable in the Weighing of the King and the Queen and Her Women at the Temple scenes. The Military Procession also seems to show musicians in prescribed places, at the beginning and end of the procession.

The harem and Dancing Garba scenes are somewhat more ambiguous in determining a segregation of musicians and audience, suggesting a more communal music making event.

Finally, the Sati is the only scene in which the musicians are truly dispersed within the audience. Perhaps this is implicating a direct role in the event for the audience in its entirety, as opposed to active participants versus passive onlookers.

6.11.3 Types of Instruments

While performers and audiences provide a glimpse of potential behaviors at court-related events, the actual instruments depicted provide insight into the beliefs about certain genres of events. In India, instruments have specific extra-musical connotations. These include associations with the royal courts, particular religions and religious acts, geographic identity, season, and connections with specific deities.

The instruments depicted are most prominently membranophones and idiophones. Chordophones and aerophones appear in significantly fewer instances. Various membranophones are depicted in each painting. Idiophones are in all but one. Chordophones appear in six of the nine, and aerophones in three. There is a variety of instruments depicted within each classification. The specific instruments are selected from pan-Indian, Hindu, local, and religious contexts. These signify differing meanings appropriate to the image's context.

6.11.4 Membranophones

Drums, or membranophones, are the most frequently pictured class of instrument in these paintings. In the Indian tradition, there are five broad categories of drums, determined by shape. These are the *dhol*-type cylindrical drums, *nagara* bowl-shaped drums, *damaru* hourglass-shaped drums, the *khanjari* frame-drums, and

the *ghada* pitcher-type drums (Bhattacharya, 1999, 94). Within each category of drum-type, there are myriad regional and function-based variations.

The most commonly depicted membranophones are the dhol-type cylindrical drums. There are two main varieties in the paintings. Both are double-sided drums with two playing surfaces. The difference is the width of the barrel; the larger variety appears to be the dhol, an accompaniment instrument used at Hindu celebrations and all music making events (Hardgrave and Slawek, 1997, 69). The Sangeet Natak Akademi recognizes at least three types of barrel drum referred to as dhol, from the regions of Assam, Himachal Pradesh, and Orissa. Each variety is played with a combination of stick and hand, and all three are associated with traditional and folk music and dances (Sangeet Natak Akademi).

Similar to the dhol, but smaller, is the *dholak*. The dholak is extremely popular, is played with the hands, and is “used throughout India in folk music, dance, festivals and ceremonies” (Krishnaswami, 1971, 93). The dholak, as a smaller drum, is commonly used for indoor performances, and is often played by female performers (Hardgrave and Slawek, 1997, 76-8).

Another possible interpretation of the smaller cylindrical drum is that it is the North Indian *pakhawaj*. The pakhawaj is historically one of the predominant instruments of Hindustani classical music, especially through its role as the only accompanying instruments in the dhrupad style of singing. It is also notable that the *pakhawaj* was an integral instrument in Vaishnavite temple across India (Kasliwal, 2001, 26-7). However, due to the asymmetry of the heads of the pakhawaj, which is indeterminate in the paintings, it seems likely that the drums depicted are, in fact, dholaks.

The nagara is one of the oldest Indian instruments and is mentioned in the Indian epics. It is associated with military processions, temples, and religious institutions (Krishnaswami, 1971, 91). It is a bowl-shaped drum, with a single head, struck by a stick. The nagara was once a utilitarian instrument, used by any courier traveling long distances, and perhaps to drive away dangerous animals. The nagara also was an instrument of the court, ceremonial bands, and for accompanying certain tribal dances in Bihar and Bengal (Hardgrave and Slawek, 1997, 92-4). The *nagaru* is a type of nagara drum specific to Gujarat, used in processions, temple services, and to accompany folk dances (Sangeet Natak Akademi 28).

The *tabla*, the most widely used percussion instrument of North India, consists of two distinctly tuned drums, played by the left and right hand, respectively (Krishnaswami, 1971, 76). The tabla initially accompanied various folk musics, and was associated with lower castes, but was adapted into Hindustani classical music by the eighteenth century (Kasliwal, 2001, 39-40).

The final class of membranophone depicted in the paintings is the frame-drum, or khanjeera. These styles of drums are used to accompany light music such as devotional songs and folk dance (Kasliwal, 2001, 57).

6.11.5 Idiophones

Idiophones are present in the majority of the paintings. These are in the forms of metal cymbals and gongs, and wooden sticks used as clappers.

The dandia, a lacquered, painted pair of sticks is a rhythmic instrument used during the Raas Garba dance in Gujarat (Sangeet Natak Akademi 12). The Garba dance itself has associations with Krishna as well as martial connotations.

Two varieties of hand cymbals are depicted in the paintings. One is the large, 8 to 10 inch pair of cymbals known as *jhanj* or *brahmatalam*. These are used in temple rituals and are found in temple sculptures (Krishnaswami, 1971, 101). The smaller variety is the *manjira*, which are found in devotional music all over India (ibid.). It is presumably one of the earliest instruments in India, found both in religious ceremonies and in the music of singers in the streets and markets (Hardgrave and Slawek, 1997, 115).

Solvyns historically identified two types of metal gong, differing primarily in function. These are the *kasar* and *kasi*, used for temple and religious functions, and for secular music making, respectively. Both are plate gongs, though the *kasar* is struck by a temple servant, and its use is strictly forbidden outside of religious occasions (Hardgrave and Slawek, 1997, 30). In contrast, the *kasi* is one of the most common instruments in private entertainment, and the performers may be individuals of lower castes (ibid.:118).

6.11.6 Chordophones

There are many chordophones in Indian music, which are particularly challenging to accurately identify in these paintings. The following is a list of the chordophones that are arguably depicted in the images.

The majority of the stringed instruments depicted clearly show either one or two gourds. They all appear to be plucked, as opposed to bowed, instruments. In most cases, the single gourd instruments seem to be *tamburas*. The *tambura* is ubiquitous in the classical music of India as a drone instrument, accompanying voice and solo instruments (Krishnaswami, 1971, 39). The *tambura* is a four stringed, fretless instrument that comes in a variety of sizes.

There also varieties of *sitar* that are single gourd instruments. The differentiating features of the *sitar* are the frets along the length of the neck, and the *chikari*, or drone, strings (Kasliwal, 2001, 147).

The double-gourded instruments appear to be the North Indian *bin*, a fretted, plucked lute. The *bin* is held in a slanted position over the shoulder. The *bin* also has a history as an accompanying instrument to vocal music (Krishnaswami, 1971, 41). *Veena*, a broad category of chordophone including the *bin*, is especially associated with the Indian ethos and religion. The goddess of learning, Saraswati, is one such example of a deity usually depicted with a *veena* (Kasliwal, 2001, 112).

6.11.7 Aerophones

There are three aerophones depicted in the paintings, constructed from shell, horn, and brass.

The *shankh*, or conch shell, is a wind instrument used in Hindu religious contexts. It is conceptualized as being first played by Krishna and is alluded to in both the Ramayana and Mahabharata (Hardgrave and Slawek, 1997, 28). The shankh has martial connections and was previously used as a war trumpet. In modern contexts it is used in religious and temple ceremonies and in processions (Krishnaswami, 1971, 87).

The *shehnai* is an wind blown reed instrument with auspicious connotations (Krishnaswami, 1971, 63). The shehnai has been incorporated into the mainstream of Hindustani classical music in addition to its association with festivities and ceremonies (Kasliwal, 2001, 93-4).

The bent brass horn is difficult to identify. It may be *kakad singhi* or *nagphani*, both of which are Gujarati. They are both brass aerophones characterized by serpentine bends (Sangeet Natak Akademi 20, 28). Krishnaswami (1971, 89) considers all variety of horn as *shringa*, an all-encompassing term that includes instruments constructed from animal horn or brass, in shapes from straight to curved to S-shaped. All *shringa* are recognized as being used in temple services, processions, marriages, and festive occasions (ibid.). A similar type of horn, referred to as *bak*, is noted as for its use in processions and as a military instrument to accompany both cavalry and infantry (Hardgrave and Slawek, 1997, 132).

One conspicuous absence from the aerophone class is any type of flute, especially the *bansuri*. The flute is mentioned as early as the Vedic literature, it appears in iconography as early as the second century frescoes at Ajanta, and it is ‘immortalized in Indian mythology because of its inseparable association with Lord Krishna’ (Kasliwal, 2001, 71).

6.12 Instruments in the Paintings

6.12.1 Historical Events

In the Sati image, men are depicted playing two large dhols, two kasars, one shankh, and one S-shaped shringa. The kasar, shankh and shringa all have temple and religious connotations, which is expected in the context of this image.

The historical depiction of the Queen and Her Women at the Temple depicts three temple women playing the dholak, bin, and manjira. The manjira and bin both have connotations connected with devotional music. The bin, with its historical role as an accompaniment to singing, indicates that the women grouped behind the instrumentalists are in fact devotional singers.

6.12.2 Religious Festivals

The Dancing Garbas scene depicts women playing the dhol, dholak, manjira, and shehnai to accompany a large group of dancers. The dancers each have a set of dandia, augmenting both the dance and the sonic product. There are two non-dancers pictured without instruments, these are presumably singers. Again, the meanings associated with the instruments are consistent with the context – the auspicious character of the shehnai, with the devotional and folk nature of the drums and manjira, reinforces the Garba as a regionally meaningful practice.

The women and king playing Holi features all female musicians, with two sets of manjira, two khanjeera drums, one small tambura, and one dholak. The presence of the tambura, a drone instrument, suggests singing. The khanjeera and manjira's association with folk dance and devotional music conform to the festival context of Holi.

6.12.3 Court Life

The scenes depicting court life include social scenes of the king with his harem and the martial display of a procession announcing the king.

Both harem scenes depict large musical ensembles playing in similar contexts. One image shows women playing the dholak, tambura, manjira, and harmonium. The harmonium, a Western import, is in secular Indian music of all kinds, including folk, light, semi-classical and even classical music (Kasliwal, 2001, 256). Another image depicts women playing the bin, tabla, dholak, jhanj, manjira, and sitar. In both cases, the instruments are associated with secular, social music events.

In contrast, the Military procession, an alternate part of court life, features vastly different classes of instruments. The procession shows four nagara drums and one dholak in the front of the procession, and a large shringa in the rear. The nagara and shringa are especially associated with processions and martial aspects of the court. Of further interest is the fact that this music is performed, exclusively by male musicians.

6.12.4 Special Events

The King Plowing the First Furrow depicts women playing the dhol, manjira, and tambura. As these instruments all are accompanying instruments, it seems likely that the men and women grouped with the instrumentalists are singers.

The Weighing of the King depicts female musicians playing the dholak, two khanjeeras, and a small lute. Though the gourd is not visible, it appears to be a plucked lute, such as the tambura. Again, the men and women grouped near the instrumentalists are likely singers.

6.13 Reading the Paintings

Analysis of the paintings provides insight into the conceptions of musical events associated with the court traditions of Jhalavad. The categories of historical and religious events, and regular and special occasions of the court, offer a variety of musical contexts. These differ in performers, audiences, and instrument types. The instruments are indicative of the type of music being performed. They help to differentiate between instrumental or vocal music, and genres such as folk, devotional, religious, or secular classical music.

There is an overwhelming portrayal of women as musicians in the devotional, festive, and leisure contexts. Perhaps this is due to a number of the scenes taking place within the women's quarters. Conversely, the seemingly most serious scenes, depicting the Sati and Military Procession, feature exclusively male musicians.

The audiences are mostly segregated along gender lines, but this trend is abandoned in the depiction of the King Plowing the First Furrow. The performers are mixed gender groups in both of the images identified as special occasions. Perhaps this is significant as these scenes are not religious, nor are they of leisure. These occasions could represent instances in which women would leave the *zenana*, to witness significant court events.

The paintings examined depict traditional values of the royal court in the history of Jhalavad. Devotional, religious, and secular musics are portrayed within the confines of the court tradition and conceptions. However, these depictions eschew any music or cultural activity outside of the court practices and patronage. Though the paintings are stylistically, anthropologically, and historically informed, they incorporate only one aspect of the culture of Jhalavad.

Because the paintings are not strictly historical or documentary, they rely on evoking sensory experiences for the viewer. These experiences are enhanced and guided by the individual viewer's knowledge, familiarity, and personal connection to Jhalavad and its history. Certainly, these facets profoundly influenced the conceptualization and creation of these paintings. However, even a neophyte will respond to such stimuli in ways intended by the artist and ways that are unanticipated.

In a similar manner, musical events parallel the inception, creation, presentation, and interpretation of these paintings. The juxtaposition of contemporary music and non-local audiences creates a unique intersection of cultures, traditions, and individuals. In the same way that anthropologically informed art is created in visual media, a musical performance may embody many of the same elements. These may be consciously accounted for, or result spontaneously from the contexts in which performers and audiences, as essential actors in a live event, interact.

The remainder of this chapter explores contemporary music cultures in Jhalavad, their communities, and the ways in which these traditions interact with the current demographics introduced by Dr. Jhala and Western students and researchers.

6.14 Contemporary Traditions in Jhalavad

The paintings discussed previously inform viewers of varying contexts for music within the traditional court and court patronage system. There are also clear archetypes for performance ensembles and audiences, and associations of categories of events with particular instruments. The following discussions illustrate additional events, contexts, and traditions, which provide a broad overview of contemporary musical practices in the same cultural purview. Further, the music cultures considered are of interest to anthropologists, musicologists, and artists aiming to create similarly ethnographically informed works.

Due to the nature of the study abroad program, and its finite presence in Dhrangadhra, there were three types of events witnessed by the Temple University students and researchers. The first type was commissioned performances intended explicitly for outside researchers. In this context, the students, backed by the authority of the Jhala name, were essentially patrons. For these events, performers either travelled to the grounds of the Ajitnavas Raj Mahal (a palatial Jhala property), or students, accompanied by translators, went to the homes of the performers or venues within their communities.

A second performance type was independently occurring events to which researchers were invited. These were either public events or personal invitations to private events. In these events, the intended audiences were local community members. On these occasions, the behavioral concessions of the performers and audiences to accommodate, or account for the presence of outsiders, were of particular interest.

A third type of event consisted of personal invitations to witness and document cultural behaviors that are not conceptualized as performative. This includes worship such as pooja in a Hindu family home and daily prayer and Quran recitations in a Muslim household.

6.15 Hindu Devotional and Religious Music

6.15.1 Bhajan Singers

Bhajan is a generic term for popular religious songs from the Hindu tradition. The focal point of a bhajan is the often repetitive, devotional lyrics. Rhythms are typically uncomplicated and the melodies are simple and direct, as opposed to the complex nature of melodies in the Hindustani classical tradition. Instruments used to accompany bhajans are drawn from regional, folk, and classical traditions, with the Western harmonium being particularly valued as a melodic guide and drone (Simon, 2015, 3).

6.15.2 Bhajans in Dhrangadhra

Bhajans are extremely common in the musical soundscape of Dhrangadhra. Bhajans sung include those written by Narsi Mehta who wrote in the 15th century as well as those of the poetess Mira Bai and Tulsi Das. These bhajans are sung all over India and beyond. In addition, the bhajans of local kings such as Jhallesvar Amarsinhji II 1803-1841 known as Bhaktaraj and saints like Desai Bhagat, a Dhrangadhra policeman turned saint in the late 19th century, as well as the new bhajans written by pastoralists and farmers make up the performances of an evening. Through performances commissioned by Dr. Jhala for the Temple University program, and performances at temples for local gurus and ‘saints,’ I documented four independent bhajan performances between 21 May and 30 May 2014.

Three of the events featured an ensemble led by Ramchandra and his son Dipak, the owners of a small music store in the town Dhrangadhra. Two of these performances were commissioned by Dr. Jhala to occur on the grounds of the Ajitnavas Raj Mahal, a palace complex of the Jhala dynasty and the quarters of the students and researchers he hosts. The third event was at a temple, with a guru presiding and being honored.

The fourth bhajan performance occurred at a temple meeting of a particular sect of Hindus, overseen by a spiritually accomplished and honored guru. The performance was brief, performed by members of the congregation, and preceded their regular meeting and prayer.

The instrumentation was similar in each performance, with 5-6 performers in each ensemble. Each performance featured vocals, harmonium, tabla, manjira, and jhanj. One segment of a performance by Ramchandra’s group featured a Korg electric keyboard in place of the harmonium; another of his group’s performances featured two tabla players simultaneously. There were frequent instrument swaps; various members of the group took lead roles singing and playing harmonium, or playing manjira or jhanj.

Here is the text of the well known Bhajan written by the poet king Jhallesvar Raj Amarsinhji II in the early nineteenth century. It is said he wrote it in remorse after the Battle of the Goat 1805 where Jhalas slew Jhalas and great many were slain to little advantage.

Javun che nirvana

Wanting to go to Nirvan [Refrain]

All life wants to go to nirvan

Tread carefully as you go

We have to go to nirvan

Flesh will become mud, breath will become water

This impermanent body will be useless

So walk in gentleness for all have to go to nirvan.

*The King will go, the people will go and even the beautiful queen will pass
Even Lord Indra and his Indrani on their celestial throne
Also Bramha and his Bramhani
So walk in gentleness, for all have to go to nirvan.*

*At golden Srilanka the sun was made to stop in the sky by the demon Ravan
His glory was finally reduced to dust.
So walk in gentleness, for all have to go to nirvan.*

*Dhru and Kush stepped down from the throne to see nirvan
Raja Amarsingh sings, Immortal is this story
So walk in gentleness for all have to go to nirvana.*

*All must go to nirvan
All life wants to go to nirvan
Walk in gentleness we have to go to nirvana [2014 Ramchandra Bhai]*

It is a song that says 'All that exists, must pass. King and Queens and even the Gods must pass. Only the story remains, only the story is immortal.



Figure 6.15: Bilal Habshi, Arjan Bharvad, Prabhatsinh Jhala, Amrit Kalu Bhavaiya and others sing the bhajan 'Going to Nirvan' 2016 in AmarMahal at Halvad Palace 2016.

6.15.3 Audience Interactions

In all four cases, performers were open in inviting audience members, both local and Western, to participate, mostly by offering the opportunity to play *manjira* and *jhanj*. The multi-layered and polyrhythmic nature of these patterns allowed even inexperienced players to actively participate in the performance, while the experienced performers added appropriate complementing rhythms to the overall texture.

Singing was also encouraged. In many *bhajans*, lyrics, or certain sections of songs, are repetitive and relatively simple. While local audiences often knew the songs and needed no impetus to participate, the Western audience required encouragement and assistance to learn the lyrics. At the private performances at the *Ajtinivas Raj Mahal*, *Ramchandra* and his group actively encouraged participation. This extended to inviting local members of the audience to lead songs with his group accompanying, and to even attempt to accompany unfamiliar Western songs sung by members of the Temple University program.

6.15.4 Ramayana Singer

The Hindu epic the *Ramayana* is one of the central texts in Hindu devotional practice. There is still a tradition of experts reciting and commentating on the *Ramayana* in performance contexts. This is a hereditary occupation. The *Ramayana* singer we encountered in *Dhrangadhra* is from a lineage of such performers. He is the fourth generation of *Ramayana* singers, and his son *Vijay*, who is also a student of *Hindustani* classical music, is preparing to become a *Ramayana* singer himself.

In a private event, several students and researchers were given a brief performance in the home of the singer. The only instrumentation was the singer accompanying himself on the harmonium. The performance alternated between musical themes and spoken word commentaries. The role of the singer is not merely to recite the story of the *Ramayana*, but to use his interpretation to illustrate the sustained relevance and importance of its teachings in the modern world. The singer is not only a performer and repository of the epic, but an active interpreter, scholar, and evangelist.

6.15.5 Puja

Though not conceptualized as music or a performance event, the *puja* (worship) ceremony in Hindu households is a ritual enactment with musical elements. The household *puja* consists of devotional acts in the presence of the family altar, which is stocked with images of patron deities and meaningful paraphernalia from the family.

The puja we recorded was in the home of Ranjitsingh, an employee of the Jhala family. The event consisted of his extended family, all of whom live in the home, and two researchers observing and documenting the event. The act of making puja was relatively brief, with ritual lighting of puja candles, followed by a recitation or prayer, accompanied by bells and hand-clapping.

6.16 Muslim Devotional and Religious Music

6.16.1 Siddhi Culture

The term Siddhi refers to a number of communities of Indians of African descent, resulting from generations of migrations to South Asia, both forced and voluntary. Historically, Siddhi were renowned for their naval prowess, and there were two Siddhi kingdoms along India's western coast in the 12th century (Bhattacharya, 1970, 579). More recently, Siddhi served in royal courts as bodyguards, soldiers and guards of the female quarters. In Gujarat, possession of Siddhi servants was a sign of prestige in both Hindu and Muslim courts (Basu, 2008, 165).

Siddhi are often Sufi Muslims, with distinct beliefs and practices accredited to their African origins. These include the worship of African-Sufi patron saints, possession rituals, and distinct musical traditions. The Siddhi *goma* performance is one example, characterized by men and women dancing in circles, specific rhythmic patterns, call-and-response singing, and African derived percussion instruments (Basu, 2008, 164). Goma performances were not restricted to Siddhi religious festivals. In the past, goma was also performed by Siddhi servants in the royal courts for birthday and wedding celebrations (Jayasuriya, 2008, 431).

6.16.2 Siddhi in Dhrangadhra

Several students and myself were invited to attend a Siddhi goma celebrating an Afro-Indian Sufi saint. This event took place at the Siddhi mosque over two evenings in late May. The event included male and female members of the Siddhi community of all ages.

We arrived at the event around midnight, at which time men and women were already gathered in the mosque performing rituals, accompanied with drumming and rattles. After about 30 minutes, the non-Siddhi guests were invited into the mosque, where the music was gradually gaining intensity.

The ensemble included at least nine drums, most of which were two-headed barrel drums held in the lap or placed on the floor. One very large drum, the *mugarban*, was a lead drum, dozens of women played shakers, and one man blowing a conch shell. The drumming patterns were characterized by ostinatos and polyrhythms, seemingly

with room for variation. Call-and-response song forms characterized the singing. The dance included both men and women dancing in a circle, and several older women were entranced in bouts of spiritual possession.

With the exception of the shakers, the instruments were played exclusively by men. There was much interchange among individuals playing drums, and both men and younger boys participated in the drumming. One of the community elders seemed to direct the drummers, indicating which drums new participants could play, and indicating proper rhythms when patterns were incorrect. While Siddhi women were inextricably involved in the event through dancing, singing, and possession, Western women were marginalized in their participation. In accordance with religious taboos, the female audience was asked to remain separate from the men and were placed towards the rear of the mosque.

The event resumed the following evening, though with far fewer Siddhi in attendance and no possession rituals. However, the second event was less restrictive in the roles Western researchers, especially women, could take in participation. Dancing was encouraged, as was playing the shakers, and I was even given the opportunity to play one of the drums.

6.16.3 Muslim Prayer and Recitation

One of the fundamental practices in Islamic devotion is the performance of formal prayer, or *namaz*, five times daily. This is initiated by the muezzin's call to prayer, an amplified recitation that informs Muslim's of the appropriate times to perform *namaz*.

Muslim prayer is not conceived as musical, yet does contain melodic elements in the chant and recitation. We were invited to observe a local Muslim father perform the *namaz* and ablutions, and afterwards, his daughter read from the Quran. Again, this enactment was neither considered music nor singing, but it was emotionally charged and maintained rhythmic and melodic elements of stylized recitation.

6.17 Secular Performances

6.17.1 Madari Show

The Madari of North India are a Hindu-Muslim religious community, previously considered a lower-caste or "untouchable" group. Historically segregated, the Madari in Dhrangadhra retain a distinct community on the outskirts of the town. One source of income is performance of snake charming, magic shows, and music.

In visiting the Madari community, two senior men, Saujinath and Motinath, performed magic shows and music on the *pungi*, or "snake charmer's flute." Saujinath's performance included story recitations, punctuated and accompanied by *damroo*

drum and impersonated animal sounds. The show also included snake charming and sleight-of-hand magic tricks. Motinath, a musician of the community, performed an extensive rendition of a number of raga-based improvisations and melodies on the *pungi*. He had no rhythmic accompaniment, but the *pungi* and circular breathing techniques provided the constant drone associated with many types of Indian music.

Following the formal performance, several of the younger Madari boys demonstrated a distinct dance of the community to prerecorded music. This was an opportunity for younger generations to interact with outsiders as well as to perform and share their cultural heritage.

The audience consisted of the children of the community, four researchers from the Temple University program and one local translator from the Kshatriya caste. The very presence of a Kshatriya woman amongst the Madari is indicative of changing caste restrictions and evolving opportunities for local communities of performers. This is again driven by both the presence of non-Indian audiences and the socio-religious influence of Dr. Jhala and the status bestowed upon him.

6.17.2 Langha Praise Songs

There are many traditions of praise singing in North India, one of which is practiced by members of the Langha community. The Langha are a Muslim community, whose ancestors were Hindu Rajputs who converted to Islam. They are renowned as folk singers for Rajput and Muslim patrons. They traditionally perform at events such as weddings, births, and major court events, such as coronations. The Langha musicians are now frequently included in events and festivals intended to promote Indian folk culture.

Langha singers compose songs that glorify and praise the patron and his family, drawing on their knowledge of the history and contributions of the family.

One other researcher and I travelled to Santalpur, Gujarat to hear and record a Langha singer, Babiben, who performed at the most recent coronation of a Jhala king. Two members of Babiben's extended family accompanied us to Santalpur and other locations in the Kutch region.

Though the audience was very small (two outsiders, our local translator, and Babiben's family members), the performance was highly interactive. Babiben sang with the accompaniment of two dhol players and one shehnai. The texts she sang dealt with themes of Dhrangadhra and Jhalavad's history, as well as the accomplishment of members of the Jhala family. Her familiarity with the Jhalavad religion, history, and lore informs for her songs in praise of the Jhala family and its individual members.

As patrons, resulting from our connection to Dr Jhala, performative aspects of the music were emphasized. These included dancing, and random acts of showmanship to involve us, such as lifting audience members seated on the drums, while playing uninterrupted. I was given an opportunity to play the dhol, and upon maintaining the

pattern I was shown, the second drummer began elaborating with complementary and interlocking drum parts, in a fully interactive musical exchange.

Finally, in a similar manner as the Madari, we were treated to a choreographed performance, to recorded Indian popular music, danced by a young girl of the family.

6.17.3 Wedding Music

In Jhalavad, we happened upon parts of two separate wedding celebrations. One was a street procession in Dhrangadhra, The procession was early evening, around 6:30 pm, on a Saturday night. The performers and procession members were on foot and in vehicles, in the midst of regular traffic.

The music consisted of at least two drummers playing the dhol, an amplified singer, and amplified electronic keyboard. The procession consisted of the wedding party and guests, presumably coming to or from the temple to the site of the celebration.

In the Kutch region, near Santalpur, we encountered a local wedding celebration at the family home of the newly married couple. There were two dhol players, and a number of wedding guests dancing the Ras Garba. Women were singing together while dancing. These songs were presumably well-known, as there was no group leader or call-and-response pattern. Though we stayed only briefly, the groom insisted that we partake in at least one dance before leaving to attend other functions we had come to record.

A third example of wedding music was out of the wedding context. While visiting a Hindu temple in Kanthkot, Gujarat, a group of two women and one young girl demonstrated Kutchi folk songs, particularly wedding songs.

6.17.4 Street Theater

Theatrical traditions are an important part of rural Indian culture for their role in conveying religious, political, and historical messages. In Dhrangadhra, amateur street theater performances are free and open to the public. We briefly attended a performance, heavily attended by local members of the community, especially families with young children.

There was a significant musical aspect of the performance, with the actors both reciting and singing the lines of their characters. The singers were accompanied by a tabla, a percussion instrument fashioned from a brass pot or vase, and the Indian banjo, or *bulbul tarang*. The banjo is a horizontally oriented plucked string instrument, in which depressing keys along the length of the strings sounds distinct tones. The music was characterized by consistent and repetitive percussion rhythms, extended vocal melodies, and occasional, repetitive interjections of short banjo melodies.

This event offered very little opportunity for audience participation. The drama and music was extensively rehearsed, and the performance was intended as a storytelling event, as opposed to a participative occasion. However, the impact of Western researchers did not escape notice or response from the local audience. Individuals documenting the performance with video and pictures on camera phones especially noted the presence of Westerners in the audience. Many individuals took the opportunity to socialize with us.



Figure 6.16: Bhavai Performance at Halvad, May 2016.

6.17.5 Bhavai Theater

The Bhavaiya are a caste of rural theater performers. Despite the fact that they are practicing Muslims, they serve as a custodian of Hindu values. The dramas they perform deal with local conceptions of Hinduism, and Jhalavad history and mythology. The Bhavai musical ensemble consists of dhol, manjira, jhanj, and shehnai. The performance includes stylized acting, singing, and musical interludes (Jhala 2004). Here are two examples, two couplets and another of a ‘song of lamentation’ that are elements of Bhavai performances.

Doha 1:

The daggar of Amarsingh, the sword of Togaji
The palm of Raisinhji, [have marked] the darbar of Delhi. (Mayne 1921: 81).

This couplet or Doha recounts the events at the court of Mughal emperor Akbar in the sixteenth century.

Doha 2:

O mother give birth to a bhakt, or to a donor or to a warrior,
If you cannot give birth to one of these types, it is best you remain without child and
retain your good name. (Rudatala and Jhala 2015).

This couplet is used quite freely in the stories of warriors enacted in Bhavai performances

As Bhavai Director Amrit Kalu explains, “In Halvad, in the absence of the vanished King, fourth Queen Rathorji Raniji Shri Dev Kunverba Sahib, of Mansa who does not accept that her husband Rayasinhji has been slain. She sings in the round room of GadhechiMa, the religious garbo to the goddess SaktiMa, while thunder lightening and rain fall on the castle at night. The queen dances with a sword and implores the Goddess to return her husband to her”:

Let The Clouds Rain

*Let the clouds rain
And let the wind howl
Goddess Mother your lamp
Will never be blown out [Refrain]*

*Let the clouds rain
And let the wind howl
Goddess Mother your son [Rayasinhji]
Will never be destroyed*

*Let dust storm and rainstorm come
Let dust storm and rainstorm come
Let even mountains sway
Goddess Mother your son [Rayasinhji]
Will never be destroyed*

*Let the clouds rain
And let the wind howl
Goddess Mother your lamp
Will never be blown out*

Let come Demons Rahu and Ketu
Let unity be taken away
Goddess Mother your son [Rayasinhji]
Will never be destroyed

Let the clouds rain
And let the wind howl
Goddess Mother your lamp
Will never be blown out

Let the Asura come and try
Let devotion be pulled away
Goddess Mother your son [Rayasinhji]
Will never be destroyed

This religious garbo has been adapted as a lamentation by a wife to inform the Rayasinhji play performance audience and so verses have been dropped.”

The above examples suggest a flavor of the performances offered by the Bhavaiya performers to the village populations of Jhalavad.

Traditionally, Bhavai troupes travel to rural communities for extended performances that last throughout the night and are attended by all members of the village community. The performances include music, drama, and comedy, pertaining both to contemporary issues in India and local heritage. Additionally, there are preliminary rituals to bless the stage before a performance.

In a particularly intriguing negotiation of tradition and cross-cultural collaboration, a troupe of Bhavaiya from Kankavati, Gujarat fully participated in a student film project. This film tells a story from the Jhala dynasty history that is a standard part of the Bhavai repertoire. However, this was not an open village performance, but a closed filming taking place on location at the site of the Halvad Castle. The actors and musicians were performing standard scenes, in an unfamiliar order, to emphasize particular aspects of the story and to fit the film format. Dr. Jhala, as a participant in the project, requested particular scenes, which were familiar to the Bhavai actors. In this format, the story was told in a streamlined way, but the additional facets of Bhavai performances were exempted.

In collaborating with the Bhavaiya, the director of the film succeeded in finding authentic and informed actors, who may in fact be the best possible candidates for such a film. The project presented an opportunity for the troupe to explore possibilities for exposure and new sources of patronage. Further, the association with the Jhala family elevated the status of the troupe and the individuals involved. They ended this new expression of their traditional performance with a traditional ending identity song that they always use to end their performances. They did so expressing

this is necessary for there to be continuity of their performance. They saw this as an extension of their time honored heritage.

We are the Bhavai Players of Kankavati

Amrit Kalu and all the Bhavaiyas of Kankavati sing the song of loyalty to the Jhala Kings.

*'We are the Bhavai Players of Kankavati
We are the subjects of the Jhala Kings of Dhrangadhra
Who ruled from Patadi and Kankavati
We praise our patrons
We bless our royal fathers
Over whom is held the royal umbrella
Who are our shelter, these kings of Jhalavad for 700 years
Live long live through the ages Jhala kings
Live long live through the ages Jhalas.'*

This is part of the song taken from the film *Halo of Heroes* where these Bhavaiya sing this song at the end of the performance and it is the traditional manner in which they end all their performances.

6.18 Genealogical Ceremony

The Barots of Gujarat are a caste of entertainers, praise singers, and genealogists, especially associated with the Hindu Rajput courts (Thompson, 1992, 1). The Barots are the traditional compilers and keepers of genealogical surveys for royal patrons and entire kingdoms. There is historically an acceptance of both the occupations of genealogist and musical activity among the roles of Barots (Thompson, 1992, 4). The recitations of genealogies and praise singing are inter-related events; one of the rare occurrences for modern praise singing is in the context of genealogical performances at marriages (Basu, 2005, 91).

In 2014, the annual genealogical ceremony coincided with the Temple University in Dhrangadhra program. This ceremony included more than a dozen guests, not including the study abroad contingent. The ceremony honored the royal patron (in this case Jayasinhji Jhala) receiving the completed birth and death records from Barots conducting the local genealogies. There was an altar honoring the late Maharaja and patriarch of the family. There was also an emphasis on pomp and ceremony, with the royal family being attended by bodyguards. The Barots did perform a musical ceremony involving chants, bells, and the blowing of conch shells. Though a decorous occasion, the ceremony was relatively short, approximately 40 minutes in length.

6.19 Stratifications of Performance

Though music is ubiquitous in the Dhrangadhra and Jhalavad soundscape, there are distinct categories of events. These include devotional and religious music. The religious music considered here is drawn from Hindu and Muslim traditions, exempting Jain, Sikh, and Christian traditions. There are also many varieties of secular music. These include ceremonial court music, wedding music, praise singing, various theatrical genres, classical and light-classical music, various folk musics, and popular music, such as Hindi film songs.

Further classifications of non-classical music in North India are particularly vexing and inconsistent. Components of such classifications include musical styles, textual styles and value, and socio-cultural and socio-economic associations of the musical genre. This is reflected in the status of performers, audiences, and the type of venue and occasion. There are varying degrees of cultural negotiation in presenting established musical tradition in new contexts or to unfamiliar audiences.

India as a whole, and Dhrangadhra as a microcosm, are complex cultural environments where historically segregated groups, often defined by caste, but also by religion, socio-economic status and geography, each developed unique performance arts. Defining classical art music, or pure classical music is relatively simple, but the term ‘folk’ is correctly identified as too broad to include the myriad non-classical, yet traditionally-based, musical cultures.

One classification scheme accounting for these cultures is the identification of an “intermediate sphere” between classical and folk music. This is a five-tiered classification accounting for non-classical musics that still display elements of Hindustani classical theoretical concepts, or distinct, yet articulated, parameters that serve as a music theory for the genre (Manuel, 2015, 83). Two categories from this scheme are particularly relevant to the music of Dhrangadhra; those are “sophisticated professional folksongs” and “sophisticated prosody-driven genres.”

The sophisticated professional folksong classification includes performances by “trained (usually hereditary) specialists, such as Langhas...with some stylistic, theoretical, and structural elements derived from Hindustani music” (Manuel, 2015, 88). The praise singing of the Langha tradition and the raga-based improvisations of the Madari *pungi* players may both correspond with the Hindustani-influenced parameters outlined.

Secondly, the sophisticated prosody-driven genres use poetic and metrical theory in constructing melodies (ibid.). These genres often include vernacular musical theater traditions. The melodically complex nature of the street theater discussed below may correspond with this category, as opposed to the seemingly more folk-oriented and melodically simplistic drama of the Bhavaiya.

Manuel (2015, 86) notes that these intermediate genres tend to be regional, text driven, and ancillary events to ritual or narrative action. Of particular interest to this chapter, is his echoing of Kathryn Hansen’s sentiments in relating to the function

of these musics. She recognizes these as mediating mechanisms between disparate communities, with distinct populations, socio-cultural relationships, and ways of life (Manuel, 2015, 87).

Reflecting the impact of new opportunities for performance and collaboration, it seems that such classifications, while useful, will soon be outdated. Recognition of the mobility of folk, classical, and intermediary musics is essential to further classifying contemporary music cultures in India. This mobility is a result of new interactions between performers, audiences, and patrons, as well as the impact of these influences on the performative aspects of the event. However, not all events will intrinsically change due to these alterations. Devotional music remains devotional, ceremonial music will retain its meaning regardless of the audience. Of particular interest here are those musical genres which are actively evolving in response to new stimuli from both local and outside sources.

6.20 Agency in Contemporary Traditions

New opportunities for performance have evolved for many of the music cultures discussed. This extends beyond the presence of new audiences and expanded concepts of patronage. Musicians have unprecedented opportunities to interact with contemporary audiences. These are the result of new sources of income and patronage, changing restrictions and attitudes regarding caste and religion, and new artistic values and objectives.

The events the Temple University student researchers and I attended featured three distinct levels of interactivity. The least interactive could be considered the most traditional or, to use a loaded term, “authentic” performances. These were events and activities scheduled to take place regardless of any outside influence. Further, the nature of these events was not significantly altered due to the presence of outsiders. At these events, the performance was intended for, and meaningful, to the local communities and participants. We were kindly received as passive observers, but not active participants.

The second level of interactivity consists of planned or commissioned events in which performers specially cater to, or involve, outsider participation. On such occasions, the performative aspect of the event is enhanced by participation, such as actively dancing, singing, or playing musical instruments. However, it can also include other aspects of alteration to the “traditional” models of enactment. Examples of this are extra-performative acts, such as interruptions and explanations in English, or additional cultural sharing beyond the definition of the scheduled or commissioned performance.

The third level is dependent on outsider patronage or participation for the event to occur. These performances are interdependent, requiring active participation between local performers and outside contributors. These are novel models of

expression, combining the traditional local culture and outside stimulation. This may include active participation or non-traditional patronage from non-local sources. The novel nature of these events is determined not only by the content of performances, but by the context in which they occur. Therefore, a traditional performance in a foreign context constitutes an interdependent event.

6.21 Classifying Interactions in Dhrangadhra, Jhalavad

The first class of interactions is that in which outsiders have little or no influence on the context or performance of a musical enactment. The events are meaningful for local and, more or less, traditional audiences. From the recordings made during the summer of 2015, Muslim prayer and Hindu puja are two primary examples. Also, the initial night of the Siddhi celebration characterized this type of event. In all three cases, the musical aspects were conceptualized not as music at all, but as prayer. The genealogical ceremony enacted by the Barots in the Ajitnivas Raj Mahal was a parallel secular event. The sole purpose of these events was to meet the religious and ritual requirements of the performers and their respective communities.

Singing, dancing, or playing musical instruments most frequently characterized the second level of interaction, active participation. This was exemplified in the bhajan performances through the freely offered manjira and the sharing of lyrical refrains to encourage audience involvement. Similarly, drumming during the second night of the Siddhi event and with the dholak players among the Langha, or dancing at a wedding, achieved the same level of interactivity. However, active performance was not the sole defining characteristic of this level of interactivity. Amongst the Madari, a commissioned event was followed by the very personal act of sharing the dancing of the younger members of the community. This freely shared event, outside of the commission, was a direct result of the presence of outside influence in the community.

Finally, there were events dependent on new sources of patronage, recontextualizations of performance, and outside participation. The most explicit such event was the film at Halvad Castle utilizing the Bhavai troupe as actors. The patronage not only provided an alternate and non-traditional site for the event, but a modified enactment of the standard Bhavai performance. A second such event, was a fusion project between my Hindustani music teacher, Mehul Sheth, and myself. This was an attempt to combine the improvisational nature of Hindustani music with Western chord progressions and song forms. Due to time constraints, this was not performed beyond preliminary rehearsal, and was not recorded.

6.22 Tradition in Transition

In Dhrangadhra in 2014, as opposed to 2005 when I first conducted fieldwork in this area, there was a significant increase in the number of local participants with available cameras, usually in the form of mobile phones. There were many individuals recording the performances, and often recording the audience. These included performers, audience members, and the translators and staff of the study abroad program. This included particular focus on Western researchers as audience members.

The local documentation and increased efforts by performers to encourage the participation of Western audiences, were striking contrasts from my first fieldwork experience. Perhaps this is due to growing familiarity with Western researchers as a result of the decade of study abroad and research trips led by Dr. Jhala. There are active efforts to share local knowledge and traditions and, in some cases, to learn Western music, or connect socially with outside researchers. This is an intriguing possibility to not only create anthropologically informed art, but to develop opportunities for cross-cultural collaborations embracing the same ideals.

The processes of patronage, historicity, and anthropologically-informed (or culturally mandated) performances are active constituents of the music cultures surveyed in this article. As systems of patronage, and relationships between audiences and performers, and locals and outsiders change, new opportunities will continue to emerge.

The presence of Western researchers, and their relation to the socially and religiously engrained Jhala family, inevitably affected the contexts and behaviors of performance. However, patronage of the arts is not a new phenomenon. This patronage has always affected local arts. Historically, this patronage would be primarily by Rajput courts, restricted to select artists, poets, bards, musicians, and the like. What is more intriguing is the contemporary state of patronage in which members of traditionally persecuted communities, such as Madari, are also invited to share their arts, culture, and histories with individuals of higher castes, socio-economic status, and even foreign scholars.

These recontextualizations of traditional performance provide a valuable insight into anthropology in practice. Through evolving concepts of patronage, local artists are empowered in the creation of contemporary, yet historically, traditionally, and anthropologically informed works.

6.23 Conclusion

Though recently created, the paintings considered in this chapter are repositories of traditional conceptions of musical events. The court context and presence displays a bias toward the type of arts and events historically associated with royalty and nobility. The paintings reflect a contemporary artist's knowledge of local history

and mythology with established artistic standards and ideals. However, as noted, court patronage limits opportunities to certain genres of performance. By extension, conceptualizations of music are contained within these historical limitations.

The contemporary musical soundscape of Dhrangadhra and Jhalavad illustrates a much broader artistic array. These previously overlooked genres of performance are now enjoying a kind of patronage from local and Western sources. Interactions with patrons and audiences affect, and in some ways, define performance. The value of study abroad and research programs, such as that offered by Temple University is undeniably valuable for students. It is also economically and socio-culturally valuable for local performers. Given the nature of ethnography, and the effects of technology and modernity on traditional cultures, it is worthwhile to recognize how interactions affect tradition. Classifications of event types, audiences, and interactions enable researchers to interpret their own observations on a continuum, recognizing a range of traditional events to novel expressions, resulting from ever-evolving concepts of performance, tradition, and patronage.

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Jayasinji Jhala

7 Village Archives: Reinventing Fifteenth Century Memories in Twenty-first Century Jhalavad

In May of 2016 a movement began in the village of Kankavati in Jhalavad. Several centuries earlier, in 1486, the royal women of ruler Raj Vaghoji's *zenana*, including his eight queens, the wives of his sons, kinsmen and fellow noblemen and their companions and maids, drowned themselves in an act of mass sacrifice (*johar*). Many, whose names are still known in the genealogical record, were connected to other leading royal and aristocratic families across the region.¹

The deaths were an unfortunate result of miscommunication during wartime. The eight queens were informed by the palace guards that their husband's royal standard was lowered; a sign that he was slain in battle. To prevent the humiliation of capture and enslavement by the Muslims soldiers of the Sultan of Gujarat, Muhammad Begada, they leapt into a well in the palace compound and drowned. In local memory, the event was called *Kuva-no-Ker*, the 'Calamity of Kuva.' In total some 750 women died that day.

At the time of the battle, Kankavati was the Jhala capital. When Raj Vagoji returned from the battle unscathed, he learned of these mass deaths. In grief, he and his sons re-entered the fray and died in pursuit of the Sultan's forces. Thereafter, the village was destroyed and abandoned. Within nineteen years, however, the kingdom was regained on 6 July 1515, as noted in the inscriptions of Jhala king Ranoji², and the village of Kankavati once again subsumed within the Jhala polity, in which it remained until the mid-twentieth century. On February 15 1948, the kingdom, now reclassified a princely state under the British Raj, merged with the newly independent republic of India. Today Kankavati is a small village in the modern district of Surendranagar in Gujarat, where the remains of the fort and the 'Well of Sorrow' still stand to remind residents of the fateful events, which occurred 530 years ago. Its residents are now eager to build a shrine in memory of these women. Possible names for the intended site, such as *Jal Johar* ('Sacrifice by Water'), *Kshatriyani Dhvaj* ('The Flag of the Kshatriyani ladies') and *Matao ni Dhaja*, ('The Flag of the Mothers'), reflect the reverence still felt by local people for these medieval martyrs.

1 These women included 1) Vansda Solanki Mansinhji's son Bhavsinhji's daughter, Rani VijaykunvarBa; 2) Thar Parkar Sodha Jetsinhji's son Kalyansinhji's daughter Rani DevkunvarBa; 3) Dungarpur Sesodia Ajaysinhji's son Jaswantsinhji's daughter ChaturkunvarBa; 4) Mansa Chavda Lakhdirdi or Lakhaaji's son Tejsinhji's daughter Rani IndrakunvarBa; 5) Merta Rathod Amarsinhji's son Jayasinhji Amarsinhji's daughter Rani RajkunvarBa; 6) Mogar Solanki Mahida Sangoji or Sangamsinhji's Rayasinhji's daughter Rani VadankunvarBa; 7) Pethapur Vaghela Rupsinhji's son Vijaysinhji's daughter, Rani DevkunvarBa; and 8) Rajpipla Gohil Surajmalji's son Raysinhji's daughter Rani KanakkunvarBa.

2 These inscriptions are mentioned in Diskalkar (1939, 25-41).



Figure 7.1: Remains of the Fort of Kuva, 1486-2016.

The sandstone arches of the gates to Kankavati citadel are visible from the road approaching the village, though the main building is ruined and reduced to its foundations. It is overgrown with scrub and thorny vegetation. A rusty sign from the Indian Archaeological Survey informs visitors that the state and national governments recognize the cultural value and historicity of the site. As is often the case with such official designations, the sign provides only minimal information: the existence of the building and its original founder. But there is no hint to the fuller story and history of what occurred in this location. On first appearance, it would seem that a long past event is being forgotten with the passage of time and its material remains eroded into oblivion. But closer scrutiny reveals that this is far from the reality. Hidden from view, in a niche of the gateway, lies an image of the goddess Saktima, her trident glittering in gold paper. Everyday a sadhu, who lives in a modest, crumbling hut nearby, lights an oil wick in a clay vessel (*diya*) before her image.

Beyond such quiet and personal remembrances, there are also more vocal, public commemorators of this event within the larger village community. The Tragada Bhavaiyas³ are professional performers of traditional theater known as *bhavai* and longtime residents of Kankavati village (J. Jhala, 2009). They received land grants in

³ The Tragada bhavai are performers from the Rudatala clan.

the late sixteenth century from the then Jhala rulers and have performed religious and historical plays during all night performances in the villages of Jhalavad, including a retelling of the events at Kankavati. The Turi and Raval communities, wandering minstrels who sing valorous tales of gods, kings and saints to all castes of Jhalavadi village society, also reside in villages near Kankavati. They, along with the Muslim Langha, Mir and Siddi musicians, re-remember the tragedy of the *Kuva-no-Ker* as do the as Bhavard, Rabari (Enthoven, 1920) and Ahir communities. It is far from a forgotten tale, but one still deeply celebrated in the popular imagination and local oral tradition.



Figure 7.2: Bhavai performance *Drums of Dharma*, 2016, Halvad.

In addition to oral literature, the villages of Jhalavad also have ancient literary traditions where this story is recorded. *Charans* and *Bhatts*, bardic peoples who served Jhala royal families and lineages, and the *Vahivancha* genealogists recorded their genealogies through such stories (Shah and Shroff, 1972, 40-70; Desai, 1991, 381-191). These bardic narratives, that is *charani sahitya*, consist of various literary forms: *khyatas* (chronicles), *vartas* and *vatas* (stories), *raso* (martial epics) and *Veli Krishan Rukman ri*, Doha-Chhand (verses) (Meghani, 1943).



Figure 7.3: Jayasinhji Jhala at the 'Well of Sorrow,' May 2016.

There are also the chroniclers of the king's court, clan and lineage. These appointed historians recorded the lived events of their patrons and recounted the deeds of their ancestors. Court painters also depicted such histories through visual form, in paintings on canvas, paper and murals on palace and fort walls, while sculptors and architects built memorial stones and cenotaphs. Beyond indigenous authorship and its representations in several genres, I also investigate the history of dominant powers, from the Delhi and Gujarat Sultanate, Mughal Empire, Maratha confederacy, British Raj and the postcolonial nation state, which have all recorded this major event and interpreted its significance through varied perspectives.

In particular, I focus on three largely neglected or forgotten indigenous texts of Jhalavad's villages to understand how peripheral regions and marginalized groups, namely the poor and the less educated, retain memory. Through reading the 'village archive,' we can better understand how village societies perceived their kings historically as well as why, after 530 years of near dormancy, this tale dramatically resurfaced in the twenty first century.

Many of the sources in this paper are translated here into English and shared in a scholarly context for the first time. For this reason, I have reprinted several long sections of particular village chronicles without too much commentary. This paper is less an

analysis and critique of particular tales, then an exhuming of lost materials to be shared with a new audience. My hope is that these sources will inspire other scholars to study village archives and reconsider their significance in the making of history and culture.

7.1 The Sensitivities of the Archive

Archives are inherently fraught repositories of knowledge making and controlled by systems of power, as formulated by the seminal theories of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault.⁴ What materials make up an archive and what is excluded? Should archives be preserved over time or adapt? Who are the makers, custodians and audiences for archives and why should certain groups or individuals have authority over the construction and preservation of memory?

Indeed, not only the makers, but also the audiences for archives, including scholars, can be “extractive” rather than (objectively?) “ethnographic” as Ann Stoler warns, particularly during the colonial period, when “documents are. . . invoked piecemeal and selectively to confirm the colonial invention of traditional practices or to underscore cultural claims” (Stoler, 2002, 87-109). Nicholas Dirks argues that archives thus reveal the limits of knowledge and single disciplinary perspectives. He encourages scholars to apply multiple approaches in their research and build a more global and ethical archive, which is one of the intents of this essay (Dirks, 2015). Similarly, Jean and John Comaroff challenge us to “create new. . . archives of our own” which not only brings attention to new kinds of sources, as they rightly urge, but also different ways of interpreting and reading these materials (J. Comaroff and J. Comaroff, 1992).

In particular, the village archive reveals the elasticity of tradition as reinvented and reshaped over time, as argued in Eric Hobsbawm’s and Terrence Ranger’s seminal *Invention of Tradition*.⁵ This living, mutating archive includes texts, inscriptions, monuments, visual materials, oral histories and theatrical performances. As a native of Jhalavad, born and bred, these stories of my birthplace have informed my identity over the past sixty-seven years. As a western-trained ethnographer, who analytically examines my own culture from a distance, I am aware that these tales invoke particular kinds of memory, history and genealogy while fostering agency on the part of their composers and listeners.

⁴ Refer to Derrida (1996) and Foucault (1972). Foucault generally uses this term to indicate the various institutional, physical and administrative mechanisms and knowledge structures, which enhanced and maintained the exercise of power within the social body. Genealogy, itself, dealt with knowledge and culture, in designating how information on a given historical period and culture was collected and preserved (O’Farrell, 2005).

⁵ Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) in particular refer to Bernard Cohn’s essay “Representing authority in Victorian India” and David Cannadine’s “The context, performance and meaning of ritual: the British monarchy and the ‘Invention of Tradition, c. 1820-1977.’”

7.2 The Sources

There are six primary published historical sources and one unpublished doctoral dissertation, which form the textual base for this historical event. They include Mughal court chronicles⁶, British colonial records⁷ and medieval Gujarati works.⁸ In addition, there are various unpublished vernacular sources⁹ as well as contemporary video footage, which document the founding of the Halvad citadel following the tragedy at Kuva Kankavati (Rudatala and Jhala, 2015).



Figure 7.4: 8 Rajput queens sacrifice themselves at Kuva no Ker, the Well of Sorrow in 1486 to avoid the dishonor of enslavement and forced conversion by Muhamad Begada, Sultan of Gujarat.

⁶ From 1487 onwards and in the ensuing centuries-long period of Muslim dominance, it is largely the *Tawariks* or Muslim court chronicles, notably the *Mirât-i-Sikandari*, *Mirât-i-Ahmadi*, *Tabakât-i-Akbari*, and that of Abu'l Faz'l which have informed the history of the region.

⁷ These British accounts include: Watson (1876, 44-45); Watson (1878/84, 21-22); Mayne (1921).

⁸ These Gujarati records include Desai's 1967 *Saurâshtra-no Itihâsa* and 1977 *Gujarât-no Rajakîya ane Sânskrtika Itihâsa* and Acharya's 1974 Doctoral Thesis (unpublished) "Mahanibandh", Saurashtra University, Gujarat.

⁹ For unpublished vernacular materials in Gujarati, see *Kankavatidhar Jhallesvar Mahipati Ran Vaghoji na Parivarnu Patrak*; *Ran Vaghoji Akhyani*; *Kondh Bhayati Puransangrah*; *BadavaPantalji ni Khayat*; *Madavdanji ni Khayat* and others.

Most medieval and colonial historians relied upon Muslim court chronicles, the *Tawarik*; a stance which was perpetuated by postcolonial Indian scholars as well. However, these records often emphasize the perspectives of conquerors and empire builders over the local citizenry. Wars of resistance against the occupying power are ordinarily described as unlawful revolts and rebellions against established authority, and regional rulers, such as the Rajputs, perceived as uncouth mischief mongers or dangerous outlaws, rather than valiant, legitimate defenders of local liberty as often perceived in vernacular, indigenous sources.¹⁰

7.3 History as Story: Comparative Interpretations of Kuva-no-Ker

As mentioned above, there are many competing readings of the *Kuva-no-Ker* events. Let us begin with a more familiar one from the colonial period, which is informed both by the medieval Indo-Persian records and British imperial attitudes towards indigenous subjectivity and agency. This particular retelling emerges from Mayne's *History of Dhrangadhra State*, an official history of the premier Jhala lineage and kingdom, Halvad-Dhrangadhra, commissioned by the reformist, westward-leaning Maharaja Ghanshyamsinhji, and published in 1921.

Waghoji being rebellious, the Prince marched against him and was worsted in a sharp encounter with the Jhalas at Saidpur, a place about six miles north of Dhrangadhra. Accordingly Sultan Mahomed Begada himself marched with a large force upon Kuwa and laid siege to the place. Waghoji, with all his vassals, made a resistance from the fort, but failure of provisions caused him to make use of offensive rather than defensive measures. He determined to try the effect of a sally; but before taking this desperate measure he ordered the guards of the Zenana to keep their attention upon his banner, upon which a representation of the Shakti Mata was emblazoned; for he had given instructions to his Ranis to commit the rite of Sati in case his standard should be seen to fall. During the sally, the standard-bearer, we are told grew weary and set down the banner for a moment. The Zenana guards, thinking that Waghoji had fallen, informed the Ranis, who with their Wadarans, *i.e.* maidservants, threw themselves into a well and were drowned. The opening of the well can still be seen in the centre of the ruined Rajghadi at Kuwa. In the meantime, Waghoji, by a desperate effort, drove off his enemies and re-entered the fortress only to hear that his Ranis had taken their lives. In his distress, therefore, he determined to die on the field of battle. Rushing out of the fortress he and the chief of his Sardars, after destroying many of the enemy, were at length themselves laid low. Kuwa was then sacked and from that day ceased to be the Jhala capital. . . The sack of Kuwa was up to this time the greatest disaster which had ever happened to the Jhalas; so deep an impression did it make upon them that the expression, *Kuva-no-Ker*, viz the destruction of Kuwa, has become proverbial for any great calamity. (Mayne, 1921, 58-59).

¹⁰ Such conflicting descriptions are not new in recorded history, and corollaries can be made with the history of the German (Nazi) occupation of France and French resistance during World War II. Refer to Jackson (2003).



Figure 7.5: Rajodharji encounters the Valiant Hare at Halvad, 1487.

Mayne extends this account of the sacking of Kuva with a description a few pages later on the founding of the new Jhala capital at Halvad. He continues:

At the time Rajodharji reached this place during his flight from Kuva only a village marked the spot. The following is related to have been the manner of his selection of Halvad as his new capital. One day when he was hunting at this place a hare came out of the grass, and instead of fleeing faced his horse. Rajodharji, therefore, astonished at the courage of the hare, naturally so timorous an animal attributed it to some excellent quality in the soil and resolved to make his capital there. (Ibid., 67-68).

This British interpretation of the battle and fall of Kankavati emphasizes Jhala desperation, rashness and lack of preparedness through the choice of specific words and sentiments. Mayne portrays the event as a rebellion, not justified defensive action by patriotic citizens with legitimate grievances, but rather a conflict between two kings. The dominant conqueror is portrayed as the rightful authority, instrument of law and guarantor of security in the realm, while the ancient custodian and protector of the land appears a rebellious outlaw, seeking to destabilize order and disrupt peace through unjust means. Furthermore, the Rajput women are described, as is often the case in colonial accounts of *sati*, as pathetic victims without agency, who

blindly accept death over dishonor in the mass rite of *johar*.¹¹ The writer does not mention that *johar* is an act practiced only by Hindu Rajput forces when they are losing to Muslim enemies, conventionally perceived as cruel and merciless in their enslavement of captives and forced conversion to Islam. There is no such incident of mass *johar* in accounts of Rajput armies defeating fellow Rajputs or Hindus, or, indeed, Muslim forces, as they do not compel the defeated to convert to their faith.

The depiction of Halvad's founding in the later episode with the divine hare highlights ideas of myth and legend, the magical and fantastic, the odd and unusual. King Rajodharji is overawed by wonder and takes this miracle as evidence of an auspicious future for his kingdom. Based on such prophetic signs, he decides to build his capital and new fortress at Halvad. However, such an encounter might also suggest that he was a man easily governed by superstition, being an unlettered adventurer, perhaps?



Figure 7.6: Goddesses SaktiMa and Lakshmi Ganga promise prosperity, 1487.

¹¹ There is a wide literature addressing colonial perceptions of *sati*. For some seminal works, refer to Mani, 1998, and Spivak, 1988, 271–313.

7.4 Vernacular Readings: A Miraculous Encounter

Ojasviba: The pride of being a Jhala
 Allows me to contemplate my history
 Who am I
 These two words behind my name pulls me
 to witness my history
 This royal palace of Halvad
 The stories of the Jhala Kings
 Is witness of life
 Every pillar, stone and balconies
 Is a fortunate witness of history
 This history I can experience even today
 Oh! 'Well of Hope'
 Is witness of the valour of Raj Rajodharji.
 After the Tragedy at Kuva -1486
 Raj Rajodharji set out to find a new capital for his kingdom

Chorus: This land's grasses, its forests, its yellow flowers, its red flame of the forest flowers, its shiny thorns, the Koyal bird calls, the peacock trumpets, the white perfumed Champa flower spreads fragrance, the black buck antelope leaps, the lion roars. When thunder and lightening herald the furious rain to the fiery land, all rejoice in dance and song.

Ojasviba: A brave Hare stood before his horse
 Hare confronted the horse
 Seeing the bravery of the hare, Rajodharji understood:
 'This earth has the power to raise heroes'.
 King: What's this?!
 Noble: War drums sound. In front is this hare!

Voice from off stage: "King!
 Understand this is a fiery furious land,
 This Hare is a Celestial Being, O King.
 An Avatar Force."

King: Did you hear?

Noble: Sir, The monkey says, this is a Celestial Being.

Priest: This earth, this ground is valorous. Correct.

Noble: Cradle of Heroes. Yes.

King: Therefore, my new Capitol.
I will establish here.

Noble: Of course!
Land of heroes!

King: Minister, I will establish my Capitol here!

Minister: As you wish, O King
All, Hail SaktiMa.

Ojasviba: With his spear point he brought forth water.
And he established himself.

King: We have come upon this hare, but he does not run.

Noble: Heroic quality of the soil.

King: At this place I will place my royal seat.
Though I have lost, from here I will regain my power.

Noble: Yes of course you will.

King: Here I will set my foundations

Chorus: Hail Saktima.
Goddess SaktiMa: 'O, King!
I, Sakti have appeared today and tell you
You have come to this spot.
It is the place for heroes
The sacred heart of Jhalavad,
Therefore,
Set up your beautiful city
For Ganga water and prosperity
I leave my sister Ganga – Lakshmi, here with you

All performers: Hail Saktima!

Ganga: Lakshmi, O King.
Build your fine city.
Never will there be drought
In your kingdom, there will never be lack of water.

SaktiMa: O King, whenever you request us, we will come to your aid.

All performers: Hail to SaktiMa.' (Rudatala and Jhala, 2015).

In this 2015 video version of the Halvad founding, the narrator Ojasviba Jhala, a local schoolteacher, emphasizes the role of divine intervention in aiding the valiant king to regain the necessary strength, courage and endurance to reconquer his lost lands and kingdom. In this passage, she expresses awe and pride as a Jhala descendent, standing at the *Svasti Kuva*, 'Well of Hope,' in Halvad citadel, where her ancestor king encountered the mythic hare some 530 years earlier. According to legend, he pierced the earth with his sword and a spring bubbled forth. Its sweet waters form the 'Well of Hope' today.

Bhavai actors, who reside in the village of Kuva, reenact this ancient and familiar story. In their play version, the king is tutored by the hare, who far from being ordinary, has divine attributes, neither expressing fear, confusion or surprise by the sudden arrival of the unknown horseman. Rather, the hare emanates a supreme calm, reflective of its divinity, as *avatar* of a god come to aid the brave warrior in bringing peace and prosperity to the ravaged land of Jhalavad. To reinforce this point, two goddesses appear in the play at the very moment that the hero decides to make Halvad his capital and the home of his family, lineage and clan. These goddesses include the clan mother Saktima and Ganga, goddess of the river.

Saktima is the mother deity or *kuldevi/kulmata* of the Jhalas, who formed Jhalavad with her Shiva incarnate husband Harpaldev in 1093. Later in her marriage, she rescued her three infant sons from a maddened royal elephant, and in the process created the first Jhalas. Her appearance at this time of personal trial assures the beleaguered king that he is not alone during his darkest hour. In addition, she brings her sister goddess, Ganga Laxmi. Ganga is the divine image of water, a resource particularly sacred in the desert regions of Jhalavad, and symbolizes success and longevity for the future inhabitants of this newly consecrated ground.

For Amrit Kalu, the leader of the *Bhavai* troupe, the Halvad founding tale is not a distant narrative of a far removed land at the other end of the Indian subcontinent. Rather, it is a tale with resonate and intimate power, as his players live in the very same village and are familiar with the principal locations, including the 'Well of Sorrow' and the 'Well Auspicious' of the narrative. Nonetheless, the Halvad citadel for all its geographical proximity is largely inaccessible, being a private, royal property, which only the family of the Jhallesvar and newly married Jhala couples visit to receive blessing from the gods and ancestors, who reside in its shrines.¹² Visiting it for the purposes of a performance is a rare and celebrated occasion.

In summary, this encounter at the 'Well of Hope' is one between a local king, the native son of the soil, and a divine entity who legitimates and consecrates his status as rightful sovereign and resident. He is no longer a lost wanderer in an alien land. Through his *kuldevi* Saktima and the very living forces of grass, water and air

¹² Though, still a largely private property, it is visited for the purposes of pilgrimage and performance, unlike the abandoned ruin of Kankavati Kuva.

manifest in the valiant hare, Rajodharji becomes one with the land. Unlike the British accounts, where the forces of man and nature are aligned against him, this vernacular narrative emphasizes how he is aided and empowered to rebuild and recover a new Jhalavad.

7.5 Village Voices: Local Mythologies

In addition to these older textual and oral records on *Kuva-no-ker*, perhaps the least studied or understood interpretations are those from local village storytellers, poets and songsters. The following account emerges from the repositories of Khondh village.¹³ This lengthy excerpt is a retelling of Halvad's founding and is taken from a conglomeration of these local records.

'As prince his name was Rayoji but after becoming king he is known as Rajodharji. In Halvad, at his formal investiture he was acclaimed as Ran Rajdhar. In his grandson Raj Mansinhji's time, a stone inscription will carry the name of Ran Rajdhra. After founding Halvad, he conquered the lost lands of Jhalavad and those of the neighboring subbah of Jambu Siani. During this time he is known as Rajudharak and, in history, as Rajodhar.'

'Rajodharji was born in 1460. He was 27 years old at the time of the battle of Kuva-no-Ker in 1486. He was born in the year his grandfather Raj Bhimdevji became king. He was a five-year old toddler when his beautiful and favorite aunt PhaiBa Somde was married in a great ceremony to the Great Ra Mandalik of Sorath, who came to marry her with a grand entourage from Junagadh. Many famous kings and personalities were present, including the famous poet Narsi Mehta who took Rajodharji's father Vahoji as pupil and gave him instruction.

'At this time there was no ozhal or purdah (female seclusion) in Kankavati and he, his brothers and sisters rode in the countryside, learned to hunt and shoot and visited their mothers' homes and famous temples of the region.

'Like his father, Raj Vaghoji, Rajodharji was tall and strong. A brave warrior, he participated in his father's campaigns against the rapacious Sultan of Gujarat's men.'

Battles of Kankavati

There were three battles associated with the fall of Kuva Kankavati. In the first, the Sanjay Battle, which occurred near the village of Saidpur, the Sultan's son and heir,

¹³ These materials include excerpts of Jhallesvara Raj Rajdharji's life from *Kondh Bhayati Puransangrah*, *Shiva Darshan Katha*, *Vahivancha Barot Jhallmakhwan Adikul Vanshagan Vahi*, *Kankavatidhar Jhallesvar Mahipati Ran Vaghoji na Parivarnu Patrak*, *Ran Vaghoji Akhyani*, *Badava Pantalji ni Khayat*, and *Madavdanji ni Khayat*. These are local texts written in Gujarati.

Khalil Khan, was captured and released. Raj Vaghoji's sons, his heir Nayoji and Ramsinhji, were killed while fighting on the banks of the Falku river at Dhrangadhra. Mahipaldevji and Ajoji, two other sons were killed shortly after in the second battle of Chatra outside the fort of Kuva. Rajodhraj, who later became the Jhallesvar, and his brother Lakhoji were wounded during this battle and carried from the field.

In the first two battles, the Jhalas are victorious. However, on their return to the Kankavati citadel after the second skirmish, they discover an egregious miscommunication has occurred. The rulers' wives, believing their lord king has died in battle, took their own lives by leaping into a well and drowning to escape the ignominy of capture, rape and enslavement by the Muslim army. The Khondh village records say some 750 women in the fort killed themselves on that day. Learning of this disaster, a crazed Raj Vaghoji returns to the battle. In this third attack, while chasing the retreating army of the Sultan, he is mortally wounded and his sons Sangoji and Ramsinhji killed beside him.

The surviving Jhala warriors abandon the fort and melt into the jungle scrub after cremating their dead. When the Muslim forces finally arrive they find an abandoned fort and a greatly reduced town population. They destroy the fort and set up a command post at Kuva Kankavati. The Kondh archive describes these events in the following passages.

Kankavati in the Sultan's control

'The next day the Sultan's army arrived. The leading Patels said to the Commander, "There is no one left here. You can see the funeral pyres." The Sultan responded: "Capture the princes and bring them before me. I want to make them Mussalmans." The Commander established a military camp and inspected every village, but the villagers protected their own. They said: "[The princes] have become invisible through the forces of Barbara and cannot be found." In anger, the Commander destroyed the Kankavati fort and the town hall, decreeing that "No Jhala will ever be able to establish their power again!" But without a fort, he could not retain power in Kankavati. A short time later Jhalavad was re-established.'

Vaghoji on his death bed

'On his deathbed, Vaghoji called for both his wounded sons, Rajodharji and Lakhoji. He said to Rajodharji, "Son, now Jhalavad is yours, and will remain yours. But how can you stay here? The Sultan will return for revenge. Take the people and move to another brave region." He then said with quiet resignation, "I did my dharma." Afterwards Vaghoji mediated on Damodarrai [Krishna], and during the night, while listening to the verses of the Gita, went to Gouluk – died.'

Rajodharji ascends the gadi (the throne)

‘In the morning they removed Rajodharji’s bandages and sprinkled him with sacred *Ganga jal* (Ganga water). Then they applied the *ujjal tilak* on his forehead. (According to the custom of the Jhallesvaras, the king is anointed is by marking the forehead with the thumb dipped in red and then the same done with the remaining fingers). The new king, with the elders, went to the battleground and acknowledged the earth. Then Lakhoji laid their father and their mothers on their pyres with all the slain and lit the flames on the riverbank. The pyres burnt all night.’

Rajodharji’s Oath

‘Rajodharji then asked the elders, “Now what?” They all replied, “We should not stay here. The Sultan will return for revenge, for he who has not tasted defeat, is fearless. Go to the far bank of the Macchu, where he will not follow you. There your paternal uncle will keep you as you convalesce.” Rajodharji replied: “But what after that?” At that moment, no one spoke. So he repeated, “What after that?” The elders looked at each other and said, “Son, don’t worry about that now. Time will give you strength. We won, but whom did we defeat? All is by the Gods’ will, rising or falling in fortune. What is gone is gone.”

‘Rayoji sat up from his bed, where he lay ill, and asked for *Ganga jal*. “We have neither lost nor won over another,” he told the elders. “*Dharma* and the future lies in our hands. It is in your hands and in mine. I take a vow that I will regain sovereignty over this land. Grandfather Harpal bears witness (from heaven) and Grandfather Jetaji (Rajodharji’s ancestor four generations prior).” The elders all rose and applauded the king: “Let it be so! Long live the King! Long live the king! May Barbaro come to your aid (from heaven), and make you victorious. Get well and undertake this task soon.” All the nobles spoke such words.’

Rajodharji’s speech

‘That evening Rajodharji sent for his generals and spoke to them calmly, “Warriors, what has happened is in the past. The ‘ancestors’ presence’ is real. The Sultan will return with a large army. We must not fight on a wide *maidan* (open space) for we cannot engage such a large force. So we will fight through small skirmishes, tirelessly. We shall not rest nor give them rest. We will badger and harass them from this beloved land and drive them out. Now, take the wounded to their homes. Let the boys and girls return with their maidservants to their mothers’ home and the zenana ladies to their fathers’ homes. Tomorrow we will scatter. Make haste and prepare all hidden sanctuaries. Grass, scrubland and dense forest are ours. Wherever you see the enemy, cut him down and drive him out.”

Then he called the wealthy (merchants) and proclaimed, “We do not wish to remain here any longer, but will return and reestablish our rule. Without us, your safety cannot be protected, so leave with us and find safety on the bank of the Macchusuri River.” Then he turned to the Patels (village headmen), *pasayatas* (servants) and the general populace: “Do not despair and cease crying.” The leading Patels responded, “Bap (father) without you, what will happen to us?” Rajodharji replied, “No one will reach you. Wait patiently on your land. Should the Sultan’s men come, obey their orders. No trouble will follow. If they harass you excessively, come to us. We will give you land.’

Kankavati, the capital, ceases to be

‘As morning dawns, many loaded their bullock carts and moved away. The rich listened to the king’s decree and traveled to the west bank of the Macchusuri River, seeking the protection of Jhala land. Rajodharji embraced all his clansmen, sons and brethren and sent them onwards to their respective villages. Then he, with his brothers, nobles and bodyguards rode into the forestlands. Kankavati grew quiet and silent then.’¹⁴

‘Rajodharji’s younger brothers were still children. His officers arranged for each boy to be sent to their individual mothers’ home for caretaking. But where could Rajodharji hide? He was well known and like his father four hands tall and very strong. Rajodharji had been grievously wounded in the second battle. Now he could not go to the east or the south. In the west, Macchu Kantha, Thaleca, Bhimoria and Babariya lands around Chotila were not under Jhala suzerainty. Rajodharji’s paternal uncle, the lord of Ajmera, and son of Sodhaji had died in the battles of Kankavati. His son and successor was in Ajmera. So Rajodharji was taken in covered carriage, *a sigram*, to Ajmera by his nobles.

When Rajodharji regained consciousness, he asked, “Where do we go now?” Having heard the reply he said, “Before taking shelter, we must perform the last *shraddh* rites for my *satimatas*, my dead mothers as is only proper. Let us go to Siddhpur. Then we can decide what must be done next.” At this time, Rajodharji had only six personal attendants. They dressed in the clothes of merchants and took the road for Patadi.

¹⁴ In Megharpar village on the far bank of the Macchusuri river, Rajodharji’s uncle had established a power hold. So we can understand that at this time the extent of Jhalavad was far to the west.

From village to village he saw men had shaven their heads in respect for the late King Vaghoji's death.¹⁵ (The ritual is to shave a man in mourning's head ten days after the death of his father). Seeing the women crying, the prince's heart grew heavy with grief. All were speaking of the 'Tragedy of the Well Kuva' as they passed through Mandal and Bahucharaji to Modhera. Throughout, Rajodharji felt the pain of his wounds most intensely. In Modhera, the *ved* doctors told him he must rest. So to treat his wounds, he stayed.

Here he learned how the Sultan's men had destroyed Kankavati, looted Ajmera, and were searching for Vaghoji's young sons and brothers from village to village, with drums sounded to spread this news.

In Modhera there was a very rich merchant by the name of Kuber Bhandari, an associate of Rajodharji's grandfather Ran Bhimdevji. When he heard of the tragedy at Kuva, his heart filled with immense sorrow. His grief was one of many such expressions of affection and loyalty for our kings in history. Seeing prince Rajodharji, his eyes flowed with tears. He invited Rajodharji to stay as his guest in his haveli mansion, and Kuberji employed many reputed *ved* doctors to treat the princes' wounds. The leaders of Modhera soon learned that Raj Vaghoji's heir was in town and arrived in secret to meet him and offer allegiance.

But Kuberji worried for his royal guest. He cautioned Rajodharji, "Prabhu, this secret will come out." Rajodharji agreed that the Sultan would soon send his soldiers and threaten the people. The merchant replied, "You must proceed with the *shradh* rites at Siddhpur. By the gods' blessing you are alive, and your body has endured what is unspeakable. Our conversations are not yet over, so please return later." The king and his companions this time donned the clothes of Brahmins and made for Siddhpur.

The earliest ancestor of the Jhalas, divine Harpaldev, had built the Markandeya ashram on the banks of the Saraswati river in Siddhpur. There, its priest, Purshotam Dasji, performed the last rites (the *Gor*) for Rajodharji. Choosing an auspicious time with appropriate astrological signs in place, he guided Rajodharji in the *shraddh* rites for his *sati* mothers. Then peace descended on the mind and heart of the prince. Afterwards, village elders and learned wise men came every evening to visit Rajodharji, and hear what happened at Kankavati.'

15 A Hindu man traditionally shaves his head in mourning 10 days after the death of his father.

The following passage emerges from the *Badava Pantalji ni Khayat*.¹⁶

‘Sitting on the banks of the Sarasvati river, Rajodharji said to himself, “Except for my name and fame, nothing else remains. How will I lead the rest of my life? What is my *dharma*?” On Shivratri, Rajodharji bathed in the river. In its flowing waters, he discovered a beautiful *shivling* stone.¹⁷ Carrying it with both hands, he brought it to the riverbank. Many Brahmans gathered around him astonished by the *shivling*. After performing the proper rituals, he worshipped and sanctified the image and placed it in his puja. He then invoked God Mahadevji (another name for Shiva).

Next day, after bathing he worshipped the *shivling* once again. Sitting in *padmasana*, a crossed legged posture, he entered into deep meditation. In that state, Shiva appeared before him in the form of his great ancestor, the divine Harpaldev. That divine person said:

“You are a protector and shelter for the homeless. When anyone comes for protection, you as a Rajput cannot abandon them.”

Rajodharji replied: “True, but what do I have? I have a name and perhaps fame. I have confidence. But I have nothing else. I have no parents, family, court, land, wealth, or army. I am alone.”

At that moment the bells and drums of the *aarti* sounded. Rajodharji opened his eyes and saw in front of him the bold *Trishul dand*, a trident staff. He raised the trident staff to his head, and carried it to his puja.’

The next excerpt is taken from *Madavdanji ni Khayat*.¹⁸

‘Mahadev, pleased by Rajodharji’s devotion, replied, “Go forth and rule.” Rajodharji then prepared to return to his homeland, not discriminating between the high and low among his people. Young people of many castes and communities came to him and he treated all alike. They said, “We will return with you.” But Sarangji (another name for Rajodharji) replied, “No.” Believing there

¹⁶ This is an account written by Charan Badava Pantalji that is now in the Jhallesvar archive.

¹⁷ A *shivling* stone or *shivalingam* is a water shaped stone that is taken from rivers and placed in Shiva temples and private places of worship. It represents the Hindu god Shiva and stands in place of a sculpture of the god.

¹⁸ This is an account by Charan Madavdanji that is now in the Jhallesvar archive.

was no need to hurry, Rajodharji decided he would travel slowly by night to reach his homeland.

'He passed two or three days in Modhera. There, the Siddhpur youth also began gathering to see him and Rajodharji was very pleased. They said quietly, "Sarangji, we want to join the army of the king." Sarangji replied: "This is not your work. In matters of fighting, it is the work of Kshastriyas." They replied, "We are Kshatriyas, do not stop us." Then Sarangji explained, "You must seek and receive your parents' permission. Without their permission, we cannot take you with us." Many however had already been granted their parents' consent, and were allowed to accompany the king until the temple of Bahucharaji in Bahucharaji town. Rajodharji advised the very young, "When you are older, come."

'Afterwards, the youth of Modhera also gathered around him. Sarandevji told them the same thing: "If you have your parents' permission, come to Bahucharaji temple. But don't come as a large group, come in small groups separately."

'At the time of his departure from Modhera, the loyal and loving Kuber Bhandari came before Rajodharji. "Prabhu Lord," he said, "Now you are trapped by my 'net of devotion.' So if you do not agree with me, I will not let you go."

'Rajodharji, was moved, and replied: "You have done much for us all, so speak. I will accept whatever you say." Then the Seth gave a fine mukat crown and, folding his hands together, made the following request: "Whatever I have, I wish to offer to you." Rajodharji accepted the mukat crown.'

Within a year, the new capital of Halvad was established, only thirty miles away from Kuva Kankavati. In the remaining thirteen years of his reign, Jhallesvara Rajodharji, with the aid of his wife Asha De, his brothers, clansmen and the village folk recovered most of the lost territories of his kingdom through skirmishes and raids on the Sultan's forces.

7.6 Jhalavad's Guerilla War (Nanu Khet Yudhha)

'In one year, he so ravaged the forces of the Sultan, from his lands to Sianni, that only the town of Kankavati remained in the Sultan's control. His power wobbled. Jhala warriors attacked wherever they could. In Rajodharji's own words, this period was named the *Nanu Khet Yudhha* or the Guerilla War. During this conflict, his four brothers fought beside him as his equals, along with Muli's brave and strong Parmar Thakor Lakdhirji and Than's Babariya warriors. The king gave fiefs of seven villages each to his brothers.

‘His Brother Lakhoji accompanied Manguji’s descendant Khetaji’s son Sangaji to Sianni and restored it to him. In that district, near the town of Dandhoka, lies the village of Rangpur, which has remained in the hands of Lakhaji’s descendants, the jagirdars of the village Kidi, for several generations. This reflects the power and extent of the kingdom of Rajodharji.’

‘In the oral tradition there is a *tuchka* or short saying that “the great sultan cast a net in Jhalavad and was himself caught in its net.” In the end, the Sultan was forced to concede a truce with Rajodharji. He admitted to Rajodharji, “What happened in Kuva was done by me. Since you attacked us, we came, but otherwise what is there (that I could desire) in your country? All of Gujarat is mine. So take the road to peace. Sign a truce, and acknowledge me as Sultan. Otherwise I will destroy you.” So then, on Lakhdirji’s (Parmar Thakor of Muli’s) advice, Rajodharji made peace.’

This long narrative is interwoven with accounts from various sources and authors in the Kondh village archive. From the early sixteenth century onwards, Kondh was an important village where several Jhala notables maintained their estates, and its leadership would play an important role in the kingdom’s administration up until the mid-twentieth century in 1948.

7.7 Interpretations of the Village Archive

This village archive reads very differently from the British accounts of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In those narratives, Rajodharji is depicted as a solitary figure, stateless, landless and friendless, who must fend for himself and regain his kingdom through his wits and muscle alone. There are no kinsmen, loyal subjects, advisors, allies or gods who assist him in winning back his kingdom as collaborators. In the video depiction of the tale, Rajodharji is shown receiving the support and blessing of the divine, including ancestor deities and the gods of the elements – earth, air, wind and water.

In the Kondh records, we experience an entirely different world in which the king is embedded in a dense tapestry of social relationships. This is a world saturated by networks, political, economic and sacred. We see the king given sanctuary and monies by the merchant, the Seth, healed by the village *veds* (traditional doctors), cleansed and guided by the priest, *purohit*, engaged in conversation and intellectual stimulation by the village elders and wise men, and showered with devotion and loyalty by the village youth, who follow him like an exiled Rama to the village’s outer boundaries. In the moments of deepest loss, when he is bereft of kingdom, parents and possessions, the king remains beholden to many who expect him to act and

sacrifice on their behalf, and in exchange assist him in remaking his kingdom. As the gods remind him, that is his *dharma*, his purpose, regardless of his many losses.

Through such acts, the tale emphasizes that the state is not his kingdom alone, but a land over whom the gods preside, where all caste communities have place, voice and agency. It is this land of interdependent unity which the poets want their king to acknowledge, consecrate and protect, not only in the historical past, but also in the contemporary present, in preserving these values of traditional social harmony. Priests, merchants, doctors, generals, soldiers, farmers, nobles and the idealistic young people all play specific roles essential in the recovery of lost land and identity.

The village archive also illuminates a personality who is an emotional being with particular character traits. Through these descriptions, Raj Rajodharji emerges as a private individual rather than representative symbol of kingship. In the process, such accounts reveal the everyday relationships between a Hindu Rajput Jhala king and his people during times of crisis. While the hierarchical relationship between sovereign and subjects are maintained, nonetheless, the most modest lives are celebrated and given attention by the ruler. It is through such relationships that the Jhala dynasty was able to survive the oppression of various imperial overlords, from the Rajput Solankis of the eleventh through thirteenth centuries, the Muslim regnums of the Delhi and Gujarat sultanates and the Mughal Empire until the mid-eighteenth century, the Marathas in the eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries, and finally the British until Independence in 1947. These passages suggest both veneration and familiarity between the common people and monarch. The king is a blessed person of divine attributes, but also accessible as concerned mother-father ('Ma-Bap') of his people and indeed all life in Jhalavad. From desert to jungle, farm to market, temple to fortress, all locations make up the complex world of Jhalavad. The king travels comfortably through these varying landscapes. He is not an aloof and distant sovereign, encased in the high towers of power, insulated and removed from his people by circles of administrators, advisors, priests, staff or bodyguards. Rather, these records suggest a certain porosity of access between the king and ordinary people. He can know their hardships and they can see his constraints as he devotes his energies to the dual tasks of working for their betterment as well as protecting them from invaders, drought, disease and the aggressive proselytism of competing religions. All these forces impinge upon the Jhala king and the task of governance.

These passages by three kinds of authors, British historians, the Bhavai theater players and the village archive of Kondh, enable us to participate in the lives of Jhallesvars Raj Vaghoji and his son Raj Rajodharji through multiple perspectives over time. The sentiments expressed in the village archives of Kondh, in particular, suggest a counter narrative to a historiography from the 'top,' composed by social elites. Rather they reveal a strong village agency, what we might call a 'history from below,' in populist support of the king which remains to this day.

Furthermore, the descendants of these village communities continue to preserve these narratives, suggesting that village voices are as relevant today as in

the past. In 2016, it is largely a village driven agenda that has paved the way for the revitalization and revival of the Kankavati fort ruin and its 'Well of Sorrow' as well as the resurrection of a memorial to goddess Saktima and the *satimatas* of Kuva. Why do these communities wish to remember this period when monarchy is long gone? Today there are no kings ruling in Jhalavad nor a Jhala kingdom. India is a democracy. For two centuries, since 1805, no army has marched to war in Jhalavad, which has seen relative peace. Rather, Jhalavad enjoys unprecedented prosperity, greater than at any period in its 900 years. The desert land now has water, that maker of life and good fortune, since the opening of the Narbada canal by the Gujarat state government. Water and modern technology is transforming badlands and scrub into agricultural land, up to the very lip of the floating salt desert in the Rann of Kutch. In this time of stability, wealth and republican politics, what purpose does it serve the village society of Kankavati and the Jhala Rajput inhabited villages and towns of Jhalavad to revitalize the desolate and abandoned site of a long ruined castle and its tragic well?

During the month of May 2016, I attended six meetings during which this nascent project was discussed. At the village of Dhama, where the goddess Saktima departed into the earth after revealing her divine nature in 1105, thousands of Jhala men and women as well as other Jhalavadis, who are devotees of the goddess, gathered and proposed that Kankavati should be remembered not only for its sacredness to Jhala Rajput women, but for all Rajput women generally. It was proposed that a temple for Saktima should be built and the 'Well of Sorrow' beautified through erecting a protective, outer circular wall in whose niches stone sculptures of the dead queens or their hands could be displayed. At the base of the sculptures, a stone water trough would be built for cattle and other animals to drink. In addition, they argued for the construction of a tall tower similar to those used for cellular phone signals to fly a 52 yard long banner. The flag would be emblazoned with the lion vehicle of the goddess Saktima, the same symbol imprinted on Raj Vaghoji's standard on that fateful day in 1486.

The topic of *Kuva-no-ker* was again informally discussed at the mourning ceremony of a member of the royal family of Wadhvan, one of the seven Jhala kingdoms that collectively compose Jhalavad, and by a group of young people during the opening of a new cinema hall in the district capital of Surendranagar. Around the same time, *Bhavaiya* actors from Kankavati village performed at the Halvad citadel and reiterated the village's interest in building a temple to SaktiMa. At a separate meeting, also at the Halvad citadel, senior Rajput women who held elected political office in municipalities and village councils discussed the need for women's participation in politics and their potential as fundraisers. Finally at Kankavati itself, the village headman, a Bharvard pastoralist, called a meeting in which several bards, caste leaders and Jhala leaders from neighboring villages conferred on how best to gain permission for the historic site from various government authorities and a government grant as Gujarat state promotes religious tourism.

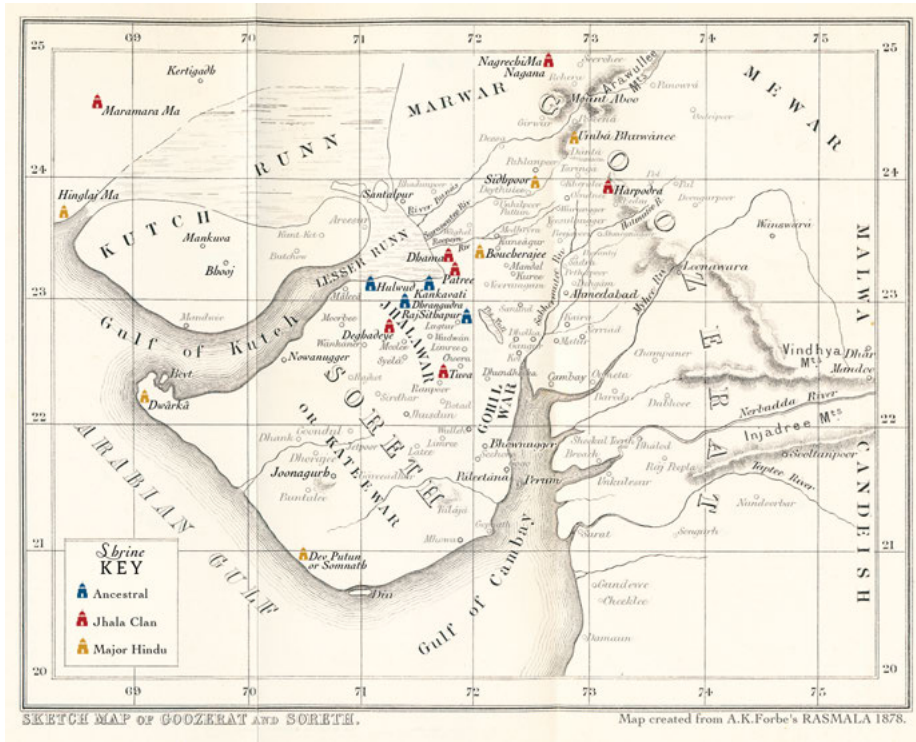


Figure 7.7: Jhala Pilgrimage Shrine towns.

This energy from the village periphery to the towns and cities of Jhalavad reflects a new kind of optimism, fostered by new avenues towards wealth growth and a positive vision for the future. It builds upon resurgent activity by Jhallesvara Maharaja Meghrajji III who during the late 1960s began to unite the populations of the seven distinct Jhala kingdoms into a single Jhalavad. To do so, he encouraged the forming of an annual pilgrimage to the four sacred shrines of Patadi, Tuva, Deghadiya and Patadi where the divine progenitors, Saktima and Harpal Dev, travelled during the course of their night journey which birthed Jhalavad in 1093 (J. Jhala, 1991, Chapter I, Part I, pp. 19-22). These shrines are located in different parts of Jhalavad and were not exclusive to any single former Jhala kingdom. Since the 1960s, with the growing participation of all Jhala families and other Jhalavadis, three of the four shrines have new temples, and presently the fourth is being constructed.

Having identified the sacred shrines of the divine ancestors, this new project at Kuva Kankavati is one example of the growing energy of the Jhalavadi peoples, who wish to celebrate the woman as goddess and sacrificing mother. It is also an attempt to reclaim their past as they assert themselves in a new political system within modern, democratic India.



Figure 7.8: Power of Devotion. Maharani Brijrajkunvarba invites the divine couple Ishanaavatar Harpaldev and SaktiMa to Patadi at the ground breaking ceremony at Patadi, February 27 2014.



Figure 7.9: Rajputani Mother as nurturing Tigress.

In this manner, this essay is a recording of the events of spring 2016, and presents these stories in detail so readers can encounter this little known archive for the first time and better understand it. Perhaps, more importantly, it signals the existence of a vast hoard of such similar village records all across India, which invite new perspectives and interpretations in the larger anthropology of exploration and the inquiry of discovery.

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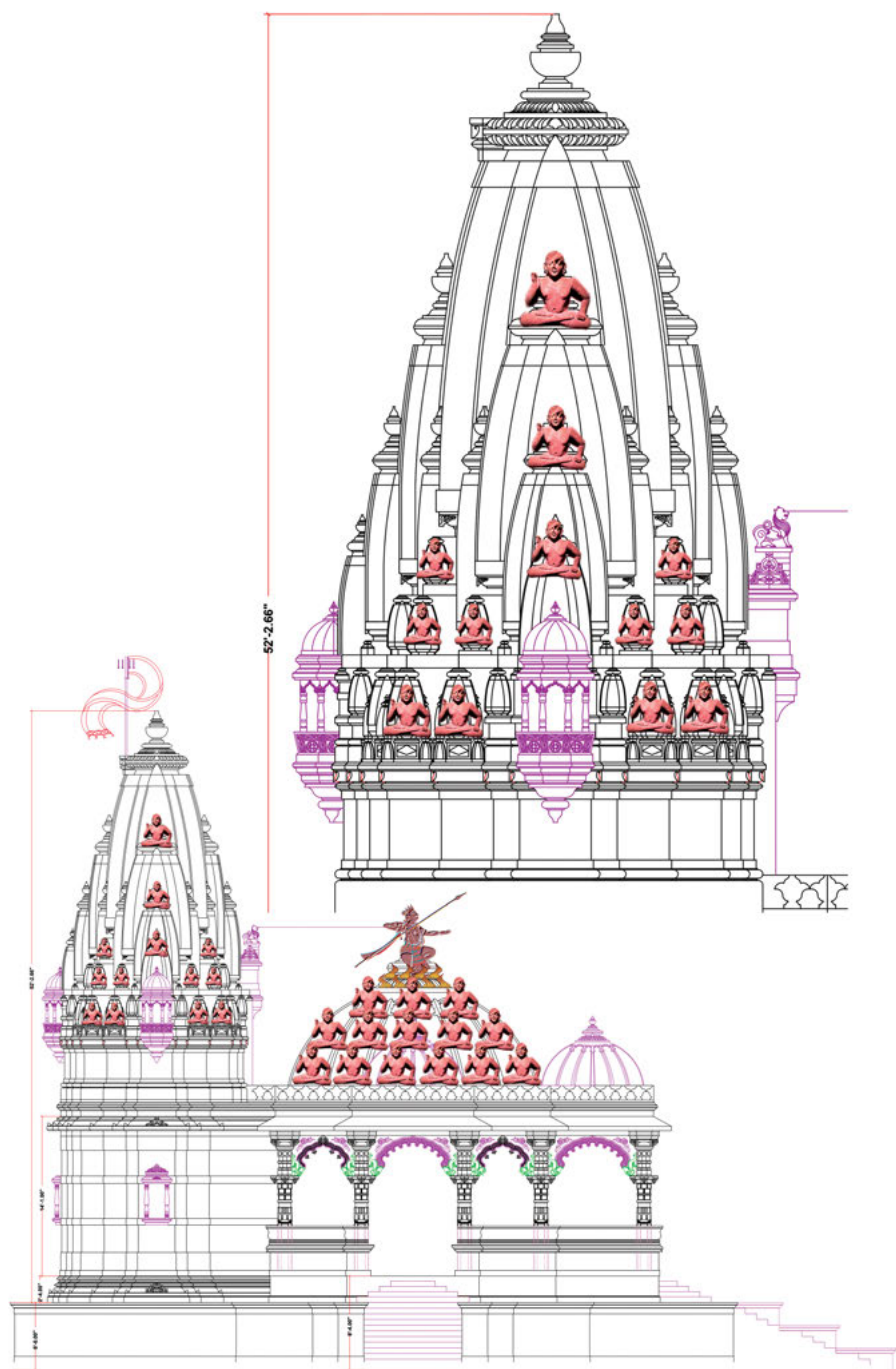
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