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Intersected Communities:
Urban Histories of Rajasthan, c. 1500 – 1800

By

Elizabeth M. Thelen

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

History

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Munis D. Faruqi, Co-chair

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Professor Abhishek Kaicker

Professor Lawrence Cohen

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Abstract

Intersected Communities: Urban Histories of Rajasthan, c. 1500 – 1800

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Professor Munis D. Faruqi, Co-chair

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“Intersected Communities” argues that religious institutions, particularly Sufi shrines and Hindu temples, formed crucial links between local residents and state administration in urban centers in Rajasthan between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. Because of these links and the significant patronage they received, religious institutions contributed to the resilience of cities and towns in the face of rapid political change and instability while simultaneously rearranging the stakes of local social conflict. However, despite their importance to urban society, religious institutions did little to either promote or prevent conflict between Hindus and Muslims. Rather, regular minor conflicts between neighboring caste or clan-based communities and practices of residential segregation diffused tensions. The dissertation traces these developments through a study of three urban centers in Rajasthan, namely Ajmer, Pushkar, and Nagaur.

Patronage built strong ties between urban religious institutions and regional and imperial political formations. Through these ties, transregional political changes reshaped sections of local society. Mughal, Rajput, and Maratha rulers all offered patronage to both Hindu and Muslim sacred sites in Rajasthan. This patronage reshaped the political and social worlds of Ajmer and Pushkar. Significant Mughal patronage of Ajmer and the *dargah* of Mu‘in al-Din Chishti between the mid-sixteenth century and the end of the seventeenth century promulgated the idea of Ajmer as a center of Mughal power in Rajasthan. The identification of Ajmer with the Mughals meant that as Mughal authority over Rajasthan waned in the eighteenth century, both Rajput and Maratha leaders were intent on gaining control over Ajmer and supplanting the Mughals as patrons. Patronage often became a proxy for political conflicts and etched divisions in the communities of religious specialists in Ajmer and Pushkar that reflected the political conflicts occurring across Rajasthan. At the same time, hereditary communities of shrine attendants and religious specialists known as Pirzadas pursued multiple strategies to attract and retain patronage across successive political regimes. One set of strategies focused on the control of lineage and community narratives, while a second set of strategies sought access to political information. Through these strategies, the Pirzadas constituted themselves as a community of Muslim elites with deep political ties, religious authority, and extensive economic resources.

In eighteenth-century Nagaur, inter-community conflicts occurred relatively rarely because of pervasive community segregation, but when they did occur, they broke out over public spaces and shared resources. An analysis of intercommunity conflicts reveals that inter-community conflict occurred between closely associated communities who competed with each other for resources and

social prestige. Artisan castes fought over the use of water tanks, while Holi conflicts broke out between merchant communities. Although these fights and disputes sometimes used religious rhetoric or forms, this was uncommon and mostly occurred between Hindu and Jain merchant groups. Hindu-Muslim conflicts were rare because these communities were not usually socially or physically proximate groups. Property transactions and the logic of neighborhoods supported caste and religious segregation that minimized intercommunity conflict. Communities attempted to enforce uniformity in the construction of neighborhoods to signal shared status and made efforts to create social uniformity in neighborhoods by excluding certain groups. They invoked moral bounds on economic transactions that limited who could hold mortgages, rent, or live in a given property. However, it took constant effort to create and maintain social segregation. This was especially the case in the face of mobile populations who fled due to famine and war, such as the 1754-55 siege of Nagaur, and who might be replaced by the in-migration of ascending social groups.

Together, these chapters demonstrate the complex and sometimes contradictory ways that religion intersected with the political, economic, and social realms of premodern South Asia. This dissertation extends the insights of recent scholarship that carefully reads elite religious identities and the practices of religious and community boundaries beyond the elites to show that inter-religious conflict was far less common between non-elites. Second, in examining the role of networks in promoting urban stability and the impact of regional and transregional events on local society, it highlights the critical role of religious institutions in both processes. Lastly, it proposes that claims to custom and tradition could be effective drivers of change and draws attention to the nature of custom as a contested and flexible category in Rajasthan in the precolonial period.

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Note on Transliteration and Dates

Working with both Persian and Rajasthani sources means transliterating names and technical terms from both languages. I have opted to forgo diacritical marks in both languages other than (‘) for “ain” in Persian words in order to avoid ambiguity between conflicting diacritical systems. For words that are found in both languages, I generally follow the transliteration scheme for the source language. If there are common variants of terms or names used in source materials, I provide those in parentheses at the first mention.

Persian terms follow the transliteration used by F. Steingass in *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary*, except for proper names and the term “*madad-i ma‘ash*,” where I include the *izafe* not used by Steingass. Rajasthani and Hindi terms follow the transliteration system used by R. S. McGregor in *The Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary*, except for the unvoiced palatals “c” and “ch,” which I render as “ch” and “chh,” to better guide the pronunciation for non-Hindi or Rajasthani speakers. For the same reason, any occurrences of the sibilants “ś” and “ṣ” in Hindi or Sanskrit terms, I write as “sh.” These two sibilants do not occur in Rajasthani.

Proper nouns present further challenges. For well-known persons, I follow the common conventions of recent scholarship. For instance, I use Shinde, not Sindhia nor Scindia, to refer to the Maratha family ruling from Gwalior. For Perso-Arabic names and titles of famous persons that include the Arabic article “al-,” I prefer the widely used LOC transliteration convention for these names in Persian. Thus, I use Mu‘in al-Din, not Mu‘in-ud-din. However, for the personal names of people who were not major historical figures, I follow the orthography of the source text in my transliteration, which presumably reflects the pronunciation of the time and place. I have standardized the spellings of titles and caste names as needed to reflect typical contemporary usage and allow the reader to more easily cross-reference related scholarship. I have italicized titles not used commonly in English and occupational castes, but not sub-caste (*gotra*) names.

For place names, I mostly follow the conventions of current maps. This is particularly important for the city of Nagaur, Rajasthan in order to distinguish it from the city Nagore in Tamil Nadu, which also has a prominent Sufi shrine to a saint named Hamid al-Din. The only exception is my use of Amber not Amer for the Kachhwaha Rajputs’ kingdom, which reflects the most common spelling in extant scholarship but not the spelling on most current maps.

In the main body of the text, I use dates according to the Gregorian calendar. In the footnotes, I provide the dates according to the Islamic and Vikram Samvat calendars as they are given in the documents referenced. While it is possible to convert Islamic dates to Gregorian with high accuracy, the resources to do this for the Vikram Samvat calendar in use in Marwar in the eighteenth century are not available. Thus, following other scholars of Marwar, I have relied on the approximation of 57 years difference between Vikram Samvat and Gregorian calendars to make general conversions. In my citations, I transcribe the Vikram Samvat months as they appear in the Rajasthani texts.

Abbreviations

- ABF The personal library of Peer Sufi Abdul Baqi Chishti Farooqi
GS The personal library of Pirzada Ghulam Sarwar Chishti Sulaimani Faruqi
JSPB *Jodhpur Sanad Parwana Babi*

Introduction

In the fall of 1678, Iftikhar Khan, the Mughal governor (*subahdar*) of the province Subah Ajmer, set out from his home in Ajmer to camp in nearby Pushkar and oversee the annual Pushkar fair (*mela*).¹ Held for at least five days during the full moon of the month of Kati (Kartik, October-November), the fair attracted large numbers of traders and pilgrims, who were often the same people, who sought to partake in lively markets for livestock and other goods, as well as take a dip in the sacred Pushkar Lake. According to Hindu traditions recorded in the *Padma Purana* and the *Pushkar Mahatmya* and also circulating orally, the lake was the site of a sacrifice performed by the god Brahma. Whoever ritually bathed in the lake in the five days leading up to the full moon of the month of Kati would receive entry to the land of the gods (*devaloke*) upon their death, thereby ensuring escape from the cycles of rebirth.² The annual fair on this occasion in Pushkar was the largest fair in the region of Rajasthan and drew thousands of people to bathe and trade.

Iftikhar Khan, who was a Muslim nobleman in the Mughal court, balanced conflicting financial, religious, and political interests in his oversight of the fair. One of his roles was ensuring the collection of tax revenue from the fair. The Mughal administration charged a pilgrim tax of one or two *tankas* (copper coins) per dip in the lake. In 1678, they negotiated a flat payment of 1000 silver rupees from the Brahmins who oversaw the ritual bathing. Additional taxes, totaling 8,400 rupees, were collected on the trade conducted over the sixteen days of the fair. Iftikhar Khan also sought to avoid disorder and crime in connection with the large crowds that gathered. In this particular year, Mughal officials were particularly concerned because the fair overlapped with the first several days of the Muslim holy month of Ramazan. Because of this, Iftikhar Khan faced criticism from the Mughal Court for allowing the fair to proceed. However, he endorsed the fair in part because of its importance to political networks. During the fair, a number of Rajput chiefs who served the Mughal court came to bathe and then met with Iftikhar Khan. Some of these local dignitaries brought tribute, and Iftikhar Khan distributed imperial orders to the Rajputs.³

Iftikhar Khan's visit to the Pushkar fair in the fall of 1678 points to the entangled role of religion, politics, and economics in shaping social interactions and governance in premodern South Asia. While some of Iftikhar Khan's actions and interactions were informed by his and others' religious identities, they were also moderated by the immediate context, which exposed tensions between local and imperial perspectives on religion and rule. At first glance, the Mughal administration of the Pushkar fair might appear to fall into a tidy narrative of oppressive Muslim rule over Hindu subjects, one in which the Mughals taxed Hindu devotees and threatened to shut down the religious observances entirely. Yet, a closer reading shows how intersecting interests generated conflicting attitudes and complex identifications that explain why Iftikhar Khan, a provincial governor, would go against some of the instructions from the Mughal court and not only permit the fair to occur but also attend it in person. On the economic front, the income from taxes on trade at the fair was more than eight times greater than the taxes raised on the ritual bath, revenue which would be lost if the Mughal state did not allow the fair to occur. Regarding politics,

¹ *Waqai' Sarkar Rantanbhor wa Ajmer* (Aligarh transcript, undated, Centre of Advanced Study in History Research Library, Aligarh Muslim University, India), 48. For background on this manuscript, see Syed Liyaqat Hussain Moini, "A Critical Analysis of the 'Waqai Sarkar-i-Ajmer Wa Ranthambhore,'" in *Bias in Indian Historiography*, ed. Devahuti (Delhi: Indian History & Culture Society; D. K. Publications, 1980), 390-5.

² For more on the Puranic and Mahatmya traditions regarding Pushkar, see Aditya Malik, *Das Puskara-Mahatmya* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1993).

³ *Waqai'*, 50-1.

Iftikhar Khan spent much of his time in Pushkar meeting with Rajputs who were petty nobles in Mughal service, convincing them to follow orders to join the Mughal army in the Deccan with their troops. Perhaps in service of these goals, Iftikhar Khan clearly did not agree with the Mughal *diwan* (minister of state) that the Pushkar fair should be canceled because it occurred this year during Ramazan. The Hindus with whom Iftikhar Khan interacted in Pushkar also expressed a range of religious identities and practices. On the one hand was the *purohit* (priest) from the court of the kingdom of Mewar who sent a deputy to deliver tribute to Iftikhar Khan. He did so because he did not speak to Muslims as a personal rule. On the other hand, the Hindu Rajput prince of Rupnagar sought permission from Iftikhar Khan to go on a pilgrimage to the Sufi shrine (*dargah*) of Ajmer immediately after his ritual bath in Pushkar.⁴

Such overlapping interests and practices raise key questions that lie at the heart of this work: when, why and how did religious identities or affiliations matter in practice in precolonial India?

Rather than consider religion and religious identity in terms of theological discourse or the discrete worship practices or beliefs of an adherent, I seek to understand religious institutions and the availability of religion as one of several corporate identities impacting day-to-day life in South Asia from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Doing so reveals both the centrality of religious institutions in supporting urban economies and linking local urban society to transregional politics, and decenters the role of religion in inter-group conflict. In this study of the urban centers of Ajmer, Pushkar and Nagaur in the western Indian region of Rajasthan, the practice of religious identities and religious institutions took place in a diverse social setting and against a backdrop of overlapping political and economic concerns. Prominent cities in medieval Rajasthan, as in many parts of South Asia, encompassed multiple roles simultaneously: market centers, military outposts, local administrative headquarters, and pilgrimage destinations. In Ajmer, Pushkar, and Nagaur, religious institutions - including Sufi shrines (*dargahs*) and Hindu temples - formed crucial connections between regional and imperial politics and the day-to-day life in the cities. Such institutions attracted royal and imperial patronage, a connection that had political, economic, and social ramifications for the cities and towns where these religious institutions were located. Despite their importance to urban society, religious institutions did little to either promote or prevent conflict between Hindus and Muslims. Rather, regular minor conflicts between neighboring caste or clan-based communities and practices of residential segregation diffused tensions since at least the mid-eighteenth century, which is the earliest period for which there is a sufficient archive to judge this claim. To understand the contingent role of religious identity in Rajasthan's urban centers, I draw together five themes and perspectives: 1) towns, cities, and urban history; 2) political economy; 3) the structures and roles of religious institutions; 4) caste and religious identities and the scholarship of communal conflict; and 5) everyday practices and legal processes. The following sections describe and defines these themes. The introduction concludes with an examination of sources, methodology and the setting, and an overview of the following chapters.

Towns and Cities

The urban history of South Asia, particularly in the precolonial period, has received scant and intermittent study, and tends to focus on a small number of cities, including Delhi, Surat, and Banaras.⁵ Within the literature, three approaches to urban history predominate: the analysis of

⁴ *Waqā'i*, 50-1.

⁵ Most of the scholarship on urban history in premodern South Asia is published in articles in edited collections and conference proceedings. These volumes include: Makrand Mehta, ed., *Urbanization in Western India, Historical Perspective* (Ahmedabad: Gujarat University, 1988), Indu Banga, ed., *The City in Indian History: Urban Demography, Society and Politics* (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1991), Indu Banga, ed., *Ports and Their Hinterlands in India, 1700 – 1950* (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1992), Narayani Gupta, ed., *Craftsmen and Merchants: Essays in South Indian Urbanism* (Chandigarh:

political capitals as an embodiment of the power and authority of the ruler, the study of towns and cities as crucial nodes of trade networks, particularly with reference to the Indian Ocean trade, and the religious town or city as an outgrowth of spiritual activity and embodiment of sacred space. The urban centers in Rajasthan examined here have elements of all of these typologies, so I draw on this scholarship to frame my discussions of what urban spaces meant. Because I want to think through how political, economic and religious elements combined to impact urban society, I also draw on theories of society and public spheres of cities that have developed with reference to the nineteenth and twentieth-century city in South Asia.

Several interpretations of capital cities in premodern South Asia argue that these cities were purposely built to reflect and promote the authority of the ruler. These approaches draw our attention to the links between urban space, architecture, and the expression of power. Foremost among the champions of this perspective is Stephen Blake's work on the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan's (r. 1628-58) construction of Shahjahanabad, a new capital city in Delhi. Blake argues that Shahjahanabad as a city was deeply tied to the 'patrimonial-bureaucratic' nature of the state and that the city was fully within the control of the emperor and imprinted with the structure of the imperial household. From the physical spaces of the city to the urban economy, all was focused around the needs of the imperial household.⁶ Analyses of Rajput capitals in Rajasthan, including Udaipur, Jodhpur and Jaipur have followed a similar framework. Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II (r. 1700 – 1743) introduced new temple and civic architecture when he built Jaipur in the 1720s. This architecture emphasized his new title as a servant of the deity (rather than the Mughal emperor) and provided the facilities for grand processions through the streets highlighting his authority. In creating Jaipur, Jai Singh also incentivized the settlement of merchants, artisans, and religious specialists, thereby building a population that reflected his authority and political needs.⁷ Newly built cities such as Shahjahanabad and Jaipur were informed by principles of design that etched political authority into the urban spaces and managed the movement and settlement of the city's populace. While some of the patronage of Ajmer, Pushkar and Nagaur had similar effects, it was more limited than in Delhi or Jaipur because a larger percentage of the spaces in these settlements were not centrally planned. This opened up more room for local negotiations around the articulation and representation of power.

If many scholars argue that the economies of political capitals were oriented toward the needs of nobles and the ruler's household, studies of trade and port cities have predominately emphasized their orientation toward the needs of international capital and the European trading companies. Ashin Das Gupta proposes a model of the 'maritime city' of eighteenth century India as distinguished from villages. Such cities featured financial tools and access, as well as infrastructure and labor for seafaring. They also featured open access to financial markets, with extensive lending across community and ethnic lines, though communities were closed associations joined primarily

Urban History Association of India, 1993), Kenneth R. Hall, ed., *Secondary Cities and Urban Networking in the Indian Ocean Realm, c. 1400 – 1800* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008), Lakshmi Subramanian, ed., *Ports, Towns, Cities: A Historical Tour of the Indian Littoral* (Mumbai: Marg Publications, 2008), and most recently, Yogesh Sharma and Pius Malekandathil, eds., *Cities in Medieval India* (Delhi: Primus Books, 2014). There are also some works that take a more encyclopedic overview of urban history, but are more descriptive than argumentative. See Aniruddha Ray, *Towns and Cities of Medieval India: A Brief Survey* (New York: Routledge, 2017) and M.P. Singh, *Town Market Mint and Port in the Mughal Empire, 1556 – 1707: an administrative-cum-economic study* (New Delhi: Adam Publishers, 1985).

⁶ Stephen P. Blake, *Shahjahanabad: The Sovereign City in Mughal India 1639-1739* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 25.

⁷ Catherine B. Asher, "Jaipur: City of Tolerance and Progress," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 37, no. 3 (September 2014): 410-430.

through birth.⁸ Yet, aside from seafaring labor and shipbuilding yards, the characteristics Das Gupta enumerates regarding the financialization of port cities also apply to premodern trade cities throughout the interior of the Indian subcontinent. This meant that shifts within the Indian Ocean economy impacted the economy of inland towns and cities in Rajasthan and elsewhere. In considering the transmittal of such effects to inland towns and cities, Kenneth Hall's theorization of the secondary city is instructive. Secondary cities, which were fundamentally formed around markets, were engaged in networks of exchange as intermediaries between local communities and the metropole and engaged in creative acts of localization.⁹ This network might transmit not only fashions and economic trends but also political realignments. In Ajmer and Nagaur, and to a more limited extent in Pushkar, extensive financial resources and networks developed that reinforced their connection to the Mughal capital, and extended across the subcontinent and beyond. This meant that these places were not isolated from regional and global economic trends.

A third model for urban spaces in premodern India is the pilgrimage town or religious center. In this scholarship, which has been disciplinarily rooted in Religious Studies, Banaras (Varanasi) occupies a central place. Diana Eck characterizes this city as both a physical place and also a realm of the gods that was transposed into the human city. She argues that the functions, economy and history of Banaras were arranged around the needs of pilgrims and religious functions. The city of Banaras developed an iconic conceptual presence as an archetypal 'pilgrimage city' that was the model for all pilgrimage cities in India, while simultaneously collapsing itself into the representations of sacred waters and pilgrimage towns and cities elsewhere.¹⁰ While Eck takes the pilgrimage city as both a historical and ahistorical entity, historians have challenged the depiction of Banaras as solely or primarily a pilgrimage city. Instead, they focus on other historical aspects of the city, such as its role in the eighteenth and nineteenth century as the largest regional population and economic center in the eastern Gangetic plains and its cultural forms and expressions outside of pilgrimage.¹¹

These contrasting approaches to Banaras highlight the challenge of both taking seriously the constructions of religious meaning around pilgrimage cities and acknowledging how that meaning exists within a broader complex field of historical developments and meaning. When I began this project, I formulated my project through a pilgrimage studies lens, intending to study religion and local society in pilgrimage cities as a way to think about the impact of pilgrimage in the absence of much archival material on premodern pilgrimage. However, my archival research showed me that such an approach cut out the complex web of networks that drew together religious aspects, political power, economic developments, and social interactions in the cities in question. While I can in no way claim to have 'fully' captured a city or urban space, I have chosen to privilege networks and interactions as analytical categories in order to show how religion intersected with politics, economics and society.

In framing the urban history of premodern Rajasthan in terms of networks and interactions, I have drawn on a fourth model of the city in South Asia: as a unique site of community formation and identity contestation. This scholarship to date concerns the nineteenth and twentieth century. Drawing on Habermas's idea of the public sphere, this scholarship shows how vernacular print and discourse created new urban publics and a Hindu middle class in colonial India. In her discussion of the role of Harischandra, often called the 'father of Hindi,' in creating a national Hindu public

⁸ Ashin Das Gupta, "The Maritime City," in *Ports and Their Hinterlands in India, 1700 – 1950*, ed. Indu Banga (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1992), 359-66.

⁹ Hall, 5.

¹⁰ Diana L. Eck, *Banaras: City of Light* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), 39-42, 48-9, 283.

¹¹ Sandria B. Freitag, ed., *Culture and Power in Banaras: Community, Performance and Environment, 1800 – 1980* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 1-3.

sphere, Vasudha Dalmia argues that his connections to the city of Banaras and participation in *dharm sabhas* in the city that brought together merchants and Brahmins gave him credibility and resources for building a broader public sphere.¹² Doug Haynes argues that a public culture emerged in Surat in the nineteenth century. Unlike the European public sphere, which grew out of print culture and a new bourgeoisie in the eighteenth century, in Surat the public culture was shaped by men who belonged to local elite groups and were pivotal interlocutors between local communities and the British administration.¹³ They defined their concept of public culture and the range of their concerns, which revolved around civic duties and philanthropy, on European ideals of public culture. This public culture was a change from the personal politics and tribute relationships of Mughal and Company rule toward a civic-minded politics.¹⁴ With reference to Calcutta, Swati Chattopadhyay argues that colonial discourse was unable to fully encompass and control the production of social space; competing representations of the modern in colonial Calcutta demonstrated the agency of subaltern groups in the city to produce alternate subjectivities.¹⁵ Scholarship on modern cities in South Asia emphasizes the importance of public space, public debates, and intellectual networks to creating new social configurations and the development of community outside of and in dialogue with state power. A literate, middle class, discursive public sphere did not exist in India prior to the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, the scholarship on the emergence of urban publics is instructive to considering society and community in towns and cities like Ajmer, Pushkar, and Nagaur because of its emphasis on negotiations between communities and political powers and its investigations of the relationship of urban space to society.

Political Economy

The networks of urban centers in Rajasthan were affected by larger trajectories of regional and transregional changes in the political economy. Like much of the Indian subcontinent, Rajasthan's economy and politics underwent several important shifts between the sixteenth century and the end of the eighteenth century. Because Rajasthan was a generally resource-poor area with an arid climate that limited agricultural revenues, transregional connections played a central role in its economic and political fortunes. When the Mughals incorporated Rajasthan into the empire in the sixteenth century, the security of roads between the Gangetic agricultural heartlands and Rajasthan improved. Goods headed for the seaport of Surat, the Mughal's main link to Indian Ocean trade from the 1570s onwards, and Multan, a key depot on overland routes to Central Asia, passed through Rajasthan in growing numbers. Cities along the trade routes, such as Ajmer and Nagaur, benefited from increased trade because they levied taxes on passing caravans and provided financial services to traders. During the seventeenth century the levels of transregional trade crossing Rajasthan gradually declined because the expansion of Mughal control into central India and the Deccan opened up routes to Surat via Burhanpur with better year-round water supplies. However, this change was counterbalanced by the Rajputs' attainment of increasingly prominent roles and higher ranks in the Mughal nobility. Rajput kings and chiefs in Mughal service received revenue collection rights (*jagir*) in exchange for their service. They often sought and attained lucrative assignments in more productive agricultural areas, such as the indigo-producing region of Bayana. In addition to using this revenue to fund the military retinues the Rajputs were obliged to provide to

¹² Vasudha Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions: Bharatendu Harishchandra and Nineteenth-century Banaras* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997).

¹³ Douglas E. Haynes, *Rhetoric and Ritual in Colonial India: The Shaping of a Public Culture in Surat City, 1852 – 1928* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 108.

¹⁴ Haynes, 141. The chapter epigraph has a quote from Harishchandra that there is no such word as 'public' in the languages of India to illustrate the foreignness of the concept of a public sphere or public culture.

¹⁵ Swati Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 3-9.

the Mughals, they also used it to support their court lifestyle and the conspicuous consumption of rule, which helped employ urban artisans in their home territories in Rajasthan.¹⁶

Political upheaval in the eighteenth century interrupted the revenue streams from trade and *jagirs*. As Mughal authority broke down, Rajput claims to *jagirs* outside of Rajasthan became tenuous. By the mid-eighteenth century, Maratha warlords had consolidated control over the lands in Gujarat and central India, which the Rajputs had long favored as *jagir* postings. The Marathas also increasingly played a role in Rajput politics in Rajasthan. They partook in succession conflicts and took control of key territories, including Ajmer. When the Marathas defeated Rajput kings, they signed treaties obliging the Rajputs to pay tribute to the Marathas. These tribute obligations were often onerous. The Rajputs ignored the tribute demands whenever Maratha military power and presence in Rajasthan was weakened. However, when they could not defy the treaty terms, the Rajputs often increased tax rates and more thoroughly enforced tax collection upon their subjects. The Rajputs also relied on moneylenders to help service their debts to the Marathas as well as to support the functioning of the court.¹⁷

In Rajasthan, as across much of North India in the eighteenth century, the declining political power and monopoly over financial resources of the Mughals and regional political powers coincided with the increased wealth, status, and power of merchant-banking communities. In his analysis of these merchant-banking communities, C. A. Bayly argues that earlier portrayals of the eighteenth century as a ‘dark age’ of political chaos and economic stagnation are incorrect. Rather, trade and commercial endeavors in the eighteenth century flourished, facilitated by networks of merchant families that spanned the subcontinent. As a result of expanding trade and financialization even as centralized political power broke down, new regional states grew increasingly dependent on alliances with merchants, who partook in tax farming, financial transfers, and credit (*bundi*), thereby making it possible for the ruler to live the lifestyle of a king and to pay his troops. Bayly also argues that while imperial capitals, such as Delhi, became depopulated, new cities and market centers emerged along the Ganges that were oriented toward new logics of trade, including that of the British based in Calcutta. Indeed, he argues that the East India Company’s rise to power was due to their ability to negotiate better access to capital than regional Indian rulers and Mughal successor states.¹⁸

My work re-examines the questions raised by Bayly about what factors created robust economies and social change leading to the rise of new towns and cities at a time of fluid and often weak political power. From the vantage point of Rajasthan, key aspects of Bayly’s argument do not hold. Foremost among this is his economic argument. The robustness of economic growth in the Gangetic plain was tied in large part to the increasing orientation of trade and transport down the Ganges, toward sea-going ships in Hughli and Calcutta. This coincided with the decline of Surat as a major port and a general decline in the trade connections between western India, including

¹⁶ For more on the political history of the Mughal Empire, including the place of the Rajputs within the nobility, see John F. Richards, *The Mughal Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). More specifically on Rajputs and the economy and politics of Rajasthan see Robert C. Hallissey, *The Rajput Rebellion Against Aurangzeb: A Study of the Mughal Empire in Seventeenth-Century India* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1977), and B. L. Bhadani, *Peasants, Artisans and Entrepreneurs: Economy of Marwar in the Seventeenth Century* (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 1999), 375 and *passim*. For a recent take on Rajputs in Akbar’s court and their *jagirs*, see Balkrishan Shivram, *Jagirdars in the Mughal Empire During the reign of Akbar* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2008), 107-8.

¹⁷ Classic works on the *jagirdari* crisis of the late seventeenth century on and the Mughal decline include the scholarship of Irfan Habib, and Satish Chandra. For more on the Maratha expansion in Northern India, see Stewart Gordon, *The Marathas 1600-1800* (1998; repr., New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2012), especially chapters 5, 6, and 7.

¹⁸ C. A. Bayly, *Rulers, Tomnsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion 1770 – 1870*, 4th edition (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010); and C. A. Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), especially Chapter 2 “Indian Capital and the Emergence of Colonial Society.”

Rajasthan and Gujarat, and both the coastal trade and the Gangetic Plains.¹⁹ In response to invigorated trade along the Ganges in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the central Gangetic plains saw a rise in new commercial towns dominated by Hindu merchants, alongside older *qasbas*, small urban centers where Muslim gentry presided. Bayly suggests that the rise of the commercial towns and the separation of these two types of urban centers along religious as well as class lines contributed to the development of communal violence.²⁰ In Rajasthan in the same period, there was no rise in commercial towns. Rajasthani merchants either continued to work in existing towns and cities in Rajasthan, or they migrated eastward and sent earnings to family in their hometowns by *hundi*. Nor were there *qasbas* in the same form in Rajasthan because Hindu Rajputs dominated the gentry, while Muslims were primarily religious elites, soldiers or artisans.

Despite the differences in the specifics in the political economy in the Gangetic plains and Rajasthan, Bayly's larger point, that urban centers were robust and resilient, holds for Rajasthan in the eighteenth century.²¹ This contradicts the long-standing interpretation of the eighteenth century as a period of urban decline, based largely on the reports of court and literary elites fleeing Delhi in the wake of attacks on the city.²² B. L. Bhadani argues that urban centers went into decline in Rajasthan in the eighteenth and nineteenth century.²³ My research shows resilience in urban centers in the eighteenth century, which suggests that urban decline in Rajasthan was a nineteenth-century phenomena based in part on the crisis of war and also on long-term economic trends. British accounts of Rajasthan around 1818 emphasized that the area around Ajmer and elsewhere was depopulated. They sought to incentivize merchants and others to move to the area and rebuild the local economy.²⁴ It is most likely, however, that this depopulation and de-urbanization occurred rather rapidly in the face of military conflicts and famine in the first third of the nineteenth century. Ajmer recovered from this crisis, but other cities, such as Nagaur, went into long-term decline in the nineteenth century. For Nagaur and other cities, the erosion of networks linking trade flows, financial capital and political interests in the nineteenth century contributed to de-urbanization.

Religious institutions, particularly pilgrimage destinations, played a key role in the resilience of towns and cities in eighteenth-century Rajasthan. Bayly argues that religious towns fared better than political towns in the eighteenth century because of the persistence of popular pilgrimage after political changes disrupted patronage.²⁵ But in Rajasthan significant patronage persisted across political transitions. In the next two chapters, I explain how and why this was the case. Robust and diverse networks of patronage shielded religious institutions from much of the uncertainty faced by political leaders in the eighteenth century. Prominent religious sites and figures maintained ties with multiple patrons. Although the highest political authority was often the single most generous patron, regional and local authorities, eminent merchants, and communities of pilgrims, also bequeathed

¹⁹ Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, 157-9.

²⁰ Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, 366-68.

²¹ Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, 108-9, 162. Bayly shows how new towns and markets developed and thrived in the eighteenth century outside of the Mughal imperial capitals Even Delhi, though depopulated at times through repeated attacks, continued to draw merchants and powerbrokers who invested in rebuilding the city. 123-4.

²² A genre of Urdu poetry, *Shahr Ashob* ('the city's misfortune'), was widely used to describe Delhi and other Mughal cities in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, particularly after Nadir Shah's sack of the city in 1739. See for instance Carla Petievich, "Poetry of the Declining Mughals: The *Shahr Ashob*" *Journal of South Asian Literature* 25, No. 1 (Winter/Spring 1990): 99-110.

²³ Bhadani, *Peasants, Artisans and Entrepreneurs*, 388-89. Bhadani is not able to specify dates of this decline, because it is based on comparing census data from 1891 with population statistics based on Nainsi's *Marnar Pargana ri Vigat* from the mid-seventeenth century.

²⁴ Foreign Political Department, Federal A/Foreign 1835/Political/Consultation 11 May/File No. 15, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

²⁵ Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, 128-9, 137.

grants and money to religious institutions. Such robust patronage networks were found across both Hindu and Muslim institutions. During the eighteenth century, religious institutions developed structures to further attract and maintain patronage, and aspiring political leaders supplanted previous patrons in a quest for more prestige. Under the British in the nineteenth century, intensified regulation and control of religious institutions and the presence of new borders and transportation routes undermined many of the patronage schemes and pilgrimage norms that existed in the eighteenth century.

Religious Institutions

Understanding patronage networks and the social, political, and economic world of premodern South Asian religion means foregrounding religious institutions rather than religious beliefs. While beliefs and philosophies can be gleaned from the writings of courtly elites and religious leaders, such writings are not available for a wider swath of the population. With the term “religious institutions” I refer to the organization and administration of groups of religious specialists and the management of physical spaces and properties related to religious rituals and forms of worship or devotion. Focusing on institutions rather than beliefs shows the similarities of administrative principles that were applied across different religious traditions and highlights how rulers worked within shared frameworks of patronage, even when they were associates of different traditions. The institutions at the core of this study, Sufi *dargahs* (tomb shrines) and Hindu temples, were some of the most prominent religious organizations in premodern South Asia.²⁶ Neighborhood mosques, shrines, and temples presumably played a central role in the daily religious experience of common people in cities and villages across South Asia, but these are difficult to track in the archive. Therefore, I focus on sites that attracted both popular pilgrimage and state patronage. Major pilgrimage sites tended to support larger communities of religious specialists and had a more elaborate administrative structure, which means that more records concerning these sites survive to the present.

Both Sufi *dargahs* and Hindu temples developed extensive administrative schemes and norms that guided the relationships and duties of religious specialists. Between 1100 and 1400, Sufi brotherhoods throughout the Islamic world became increasingly institutionalized, with more formal hierarchies and systems of education and the transmission of authority. Alongside these changes, the tomb shrine rose in popularity and significance.²⁷ The saint buried in the shrine is understood as a spiritual master in the Sufi lineage and the descendants of the Sufi master, known as *pirzadas*, tend to the shrine. The *pirzadas* are presided over by the spiritual head of the shrine, known as the *sajjada-nishin*. At larger shrines a number of hereditary *khadims* (servants) tended the shrine in addition to the *sajjada-nishin*. They took care of daily functions at the shrine such as the cleaning and lighting ceremonies and helped officiate rituals for pilgrims. Under the Mughals, if not earlier, the state began to appoint a *mutawalli* who oversaw the financial aspects of the *dargah* including the endowment (*waqf*). The *mutawalli* was typically but not always a Muslim and was not necessarily related to the Sufi or his descendants.²⁸ Hindu temples also had hereditary attendants and religious

²⁶ I wanted to include Jain institutions in my analysis but was unable to access the relevant records, which are largely in private collections that are closed to outside scholars.

²⁷ Sufi brotherhoods grew institutionalized between 1100 and 1400 across the Muslim world. Nile Green, *Sufism: A Global History* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 81-93.

²⁸ These structures were common in tomb shrines across South Asia. For a discussion of these institutions with specific reference to Ajmer, see Carl W. Ernst and Bruce B. Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love: The Chishti Order in South Asia and Beyond* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 101-4; P. M. Currie, *The Shrine and Cult of Mu'in al-Din Chishti of Ajmer* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), 143 -155; and Syed Liyaqat Hussain Moini, *The Dargah of “Khawaja Gharib-un-Nawaz” of Ajmer* (Jodhpur: Books Treasure, 2015), 129-165.

specialists. Most temples would have one or a small number of Brahmin priests who performed temple rituals, cared for the deity, mediated the offerings to the deity for worshippers and distributed the blessed offerings (*prasada*) afterward. At larger pilgrimage sites, larger communities of priests known as *pandas* and *tirth purohitis* facilitated the pilgrim's rituals. Each priest or priestly family had a hereditary claim to officiate for particular families of pilgrims or pilgrims from specific regions, a practice that was later adopted by the *khadims* of Sufi shrines. The priests kept records of the pilgrims and their donations in account books.²⁹ Although the institutional structures between these practitioners were not as formalized as those in Sufi shrines, the pilgrimage priests typically formed a caste or subcaste group that together regulated affairs between group members.

These religious institutions had close ties to royal and imperial courts. Sufi literature, particularly in the Chishti *silsila* (initiatic lineage), exhorted followers to ignore the affairs of the world and earthly power (*dunya*) and instead to focus on the spiritual world to come (*din*) through ascetic practices. Sufi lodges and shrines tended to be located on the outskirts of a town or a city, remote from the court of a Sultan or emperor. In spite of these proclamations of separation from worldly power, the Sufi tomb-shrine that developed at the burial site of prominent Sufis often became deeply enmeshed in this-worldly administrative and political concerns.³⁰ In fact, the administration and rituals at the *dargah* mirrored those at the imperial Mughal court.³¹ The theological conceptualization of the relationship between ruler and deity in Hinduism was rather different from that in Islam, yet there were also similarities in the renunciant traditions of Hinduism that emphasized withdrawal from society. Pilgrimage in Hinduism also often held resonances with renunciation and ascetic practices that contrasted with courtly norms. Pilgrimage was classically constructed as the affair of the renunciant householder in old age. Yet, as in the case of Sufis, Hindu pilgrimage sites were not typically removed from realms of power. Kings and other notables made pilgrimages, provided patronage, and maintained hereditary relationships with pilgrimage priests.³²

Using the framework of religious institutions to discuss premodern Islam and Hinduism opens up several vantage points that are otherwise obscured. Seeing the similar administrative and institutional structures, as well as the parallels and ties between the religious institutions on the one hand and royal and imperial courts on the other hand, challenges narratives of difference and distinction that posit Hinduism and Islam as oppositional pairs, just as they also posit pilgrimage and renunciant traditions in opposition to the court. Recognizing the ties that cross and bind these pairs allows us to understand the evidence of patronage across religious traditions not as an aberration or exception but rather as unsurprising participation in a shared system. It also emphasizes the developments of those institutions as part of larger processes of historical change. The frame of religious institutions also highlights the shared aspects of state and religious administration, which emphasizes the ways that such institutions mirror the state within their local communities. In some

²⁹ B. N. Goswamy, "The Records Kept by Priests at Centres of Pilgrimage as Source of Social and Economic History," *Indian Economic and Social History Review* (1966) 177-8. For a description of modern practices in Pushkar, see Sushila Zeitlyn, "The Construction and Reconstruction of Pushkar," *South Asian Studies*, 1988 4:1, 42-44.

³⁰ Carl W. Ernst, *Eternal Garden: Mysticism, History and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Center* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), 243-44; Nile Green, *Making Space: Sufis and Settlers in Early Modern India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012), 21-2.

³¹ Even the Persian word *dargah* was used for both tomb-shrines and the imperial court. For further descriptions of the similarities between court and shrine protocol, see Syed Liyaqat Hussain Moini, "Rituals and Customary Practices at the Dargah of Ajmer," in *Muslim Shrines in India: Their Character, History and Significance*, ed. Christian W. Troll, 2nd ed. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 61-3.

³² For example, Mahesh Sharma describes royal patronage in Himalayan pilgrimage shrines. *Western Himalayan Temple Records: State, Pilgrimage, Ritual and Legality in Chamba* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 52-3.

cases, religious institutions even functioned as quasi-states.³³ Urban religious institutions formed a node connecting regional and imperial politics and economics to local residents.

Caste, Religion, and Social Identities

Political and economic uncertainty in eighteenth-century South Asia intensified social changes as people moved, gained or lost status, and changed their community affiliations and identities. Such changes in social identity and community ties were a key factor in the frequent minor conflicts that policed social boundaries and enforced ideals of segregation. Analyzing such conflicts requires asking, what did it mean to belong to a particular community? How did individuals identify and act corporately? Both caste and religion were intersecting core elements of community identities. By caste, I mean discrete ethnic sub-groups who typically practiced endogamous marriage and were hierarchically ranked as part of the larger society.³⁴ Treating caste in terms of ethnicity accounts for its function in communities beyond Hindus. Sumit Guha identifies several strands of caste as a concept: the politicized nature of its social rankings, which tied these rankings to socio-economic power, the overlap between caste and occupational guilds, and notions of purity and pollution that shaped and justified practices.³⁵

Caste identification in eighteenth-century Rajasthan typically operated along occupational lines, creating resonances between caste groups and occupational guilds, though there were exceptions. Castes and subcastes, referred to by terms including *jati*, *nyat*, and *kehamp*, were one of the most delimited levels of social identities. At a larger scale were *varna*-type categories that united multiple occupational groups into broader classes, such as artisans or merchants. Even more broadly, religion, including Hinduism, Jainism, and Islam also defined communities, and religious identities often overlapped with caste and occupational identities. The boundaries between all of these community identities were unstable and contested but they were made visible through practices and enforced by power and sometimes violence. All of these identities informed social practices including marriage, the sharing of food, and as well as traditional obligations of labor or relationships of credit and gifting. They also played a key role in shaping legal practices because most disputes were resolved within a caste group. Given the power of these social identifications, throughout this work I pay attention to the choices of identification used to frame conflicts and boundary formation.

The caste system underwent considerable change across South Asia in the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century when by most accounts it began to develop a more religious character, new rigidity in hierarchy, and increasingly sharp distinctions between groups. Susan Bayly argues that caste as a system first began to emerge in the eighteenth century as a product both of emerging Mughal successor states that foregrounded the role and priorities of Brahmin communities and of the perceptions and writings of British orientalist who shaped the policies of the early East India Company rule.³⁶ Caste in the eighteenth century was a largely political system related to the rule of kings; it was only with colonial rule, especially after 1857, that caste was reconceptualized as a

³³ R. D. McChesney, *Waqf in Central Asia: Four Hundred Years in the History of a Muslim Shrine, 1480-1889* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 192.

³⁴ This definition follows the usage of Sumit Guha, which is based on McKim Marriot's definition. Sumit Guha, *Beyond Caste: Identity and Power in South Asia, Past and Present* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 10.

³⁵ Guha, 2.

³⁶ Susan Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Much of the work of Bayly, as well as of Nicholas Dirks, has been to insist on caste as a historical category, subject to change, rather than simply a structural element of Indian society.

religious system.³⁷ Nicholas Dirks argues that caste in the eighteenth century was based not on a religious axis of purity and pollution but rather on royal authority, proximity to the king, and conceptions of honor that informed hierarchies of power and dominance.³⁸ He sees the decline in kingship in India, starting as early as the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and accelerating in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as the key motor that reorganized the caste system into a less political and more religious system and that led to a Brahmin rise in power and prominence.³⁹ In agreement with these analyses of caste in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, caste clearly had political dimensions in eighteenth century Marwar. Those of highest status undoubtedly had closer proximity and access to the king. The state also used caste as a way of grouping and managing its subjects for legal and political purposes, and political and social mobilizations tended to happen along caste lines.

Despite its political aspects, caste in the eighteenth century clearly was affected by and intersected with religion and the formation of religious identities. The reshaping of Hindu religious identities in the eighteenth century, particularly those aligned with Vaishnav devotionism, attest to this.⁴⁰ Divya Cheriau argues that the combination of the Marwar maharaja's embrace of Vaishnavism and the Vaishnavism of prominent merchant communities who bankrolled the kingdom and held many key administrative posts, led to the creation of laws and orders that promoted moral codes and restricted behaviors on religious grounds. For example, *jiv hamsya*, violence against living things, was outlawed. These policies promoted a singular shared Hindu identity for merchants and Brahmins while simultaneously creating a category of untouchable outcastes (*achhep*) that consisted of many artisans and service groups, including many Muslims.⁴¹ Attending to changes in caste and religious identities in light of their close ties to political and social change reveals the intersecting factors that shaped community identity and informed conflicts between communities.

Communal Interactions and Conflict

Holding the kaleidoscope of social identities and their eighteenth century changes and frequent configurations and reconfigurations of alliances and conflict together simultaneously helps explain the lack of major violent conflict between Hindus and Muslims on the one hand, and the almost constant minor conflicts between closely associated groups with overlapping interests, on the other. Religious conflict, particularly communal conflict between Hindus and Muslims, has a central place in the historiography of South Asia. There is a large body of historical scholarship on communalism in South Asia that continues to grapple with the place of religion in society in the wake of the violence of Partition and the rise of Hindu Nationalism in contemporary India. In the face of such presentist political concerns, one tendency has been to read the communal conflicts of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries back into earlier periods. Yet such tendencies can skew a

³⁷ Nicholas Dirks, *Castes of Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). The reinterpretation of caste as a purely religious system by the British coincided with intellectual maneuvers that denied that India was a place with a history or politics before the advent of colonialism. See for instance Hegel's discussion of India.

³⁸ Nicholas Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). See Chapter 8 in particular.

³⁹ Dirks, *The Hollow Crown*, 10, 284, 322. Sumit Guha agrees with Dirks that the political aspect of caste must be central to our understanding, he argues that caste and its political ties extended beyond a Hindu domain. Thus, the rise of Muslim rule in North India generated an intensification of the state-subject relationship and thus of the practice of caste. Guha, 15-16, 39-40.

⁴⁰ Dirks discusses the role of Vaishnav devotionism in effecting a shift from kingship based on Vedic sacrificial ritual to one based on gifting. The latter amplified the importance of proximity to the king in structuring caste and the overall order of the kingdom. Dirks, *The Hollow Crown*, 38-44, 240.

⁴¹ Divya Cheriau, "Ordering Subjects: Merchants, the State, and Krishna Devotion in Eighteenth-Century Marwar" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2015). Chapters 2 and 3 are particularly relevant here.

historical examination of the past by overemphasizing moments of Hindu-Muslim conflict and glossing over other sorts of alliances and confrontations.⁴² Others scholars celebrate the unifying potential of the devotional religious practices of Sufism and Bhakti, often over-emphasizing cooperation and syncretism in the premodern period in the process and seeking the root of all religious conflict in colonial ‘divide and rule’ policies.⁴³ One response to these trends in scholarship has been to examine precolonial Hindu-Muslim relations and point out the ways that syncretistic and communal tendencies could coexist in the eighteenth century, sometimes within the same community or individual.⁴⁴ However, such approaches risk continuing an overly general emphasis on Hindu-Muslim relations, without sufficient attention to context. My research troubles these interpretations. Situating religion as part of a broader constellation of identities and community formation shows that in the early modern period Hindu-Muslim conflict was rare, except perhaps in elite circuits between Hindu Rajputs and Muslim Mughals and Afghans who competed with each other for status in the Mughal Court and for power and resources in successor states. Furthermore, whatever sorts of syncretism may have been possible for certain religious elites or groups of pilgrims, it did not necessarily extend out to the society of the local city.

Several scholars have turned to political and economic factors in order to explain moments of violence between Muslims and Hindus in the precolonial period. Richard Eaton traces the pattern of temple destruction by Mughal rulers and shows that temple destruction was motivated by the association of Hindu kings with temples and attempts to target local Hindu rulers who were rebelling against the Mughals.⁴⁵ Najaf Haider explains the causes of a 1714 Holi riot between Hindus and Muslims in Ahmedabad in primarily economic terms, as rivalries between Hindu and Muslim merchant communities.⁴⁶ Both of these studies rightly point to the broader contexts of violence between Hindus and Muslims, yet neither grapples with how religious identities simultaneously infused these events with certain meanings in contemporary accounts.

Over the past two decades, a growing body of detailed local studies that grapple with issues of intra- and inter-religious relationships has emerged. Much of this scholarship attempts to displace the opposition of self and other by focusing on intra-religious conflicts. Some scholars have demonstrated that the inscriptions and rhetoric that earlier scholarship understood as demonstrating Hindu-Muslim antagonism or scolding non-believers, is actually aimed at an internal audience, such as in Sunil Kumar’s reading of inscriptions on the Qutb Minar as a discussion internal to Islam.⁴⁷

⁴² For an early critique of this approach, see Sandria B. Freitag, *Collective Action and Community: Public Arenas and the Emergence of Communalism in North India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 9.

⁴³ This perspective is more common in scholarship from the 1980s or earlier, but persists in some work today. See for instance Mushirul Hasan’s assertion of the integration of Muslim and Hindu life in *qasbas* prior to the 1920s in his book *From Pluralism to Separatism: Qasbas in Colonial Awadh* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 24-5. See also Asim Roy’s argument that colonialism and nationalism “engaged, challenged and undermined” precolonial India’s “syncretistic tradition.” Asim Roy, “Introduction,” in *Living Together Separately: Cultural India in History and Politics*, eds. Mushirul Hasan and Asim Roy (New Delhi: OUP, 2005), 2. See also Moini, *The Dargah of “Khawaja Gharib-un-Nawaz”*, 80, 116. For an earlier instance of this perspective, see Richard M. Eaton, *The Sufis of Bijapur, 1300 – 1700* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 151, 164-173.

⁴⁴ C. A. Bayly, “The Pre-History of ‘Communalism’? Religious Conflict in India, 1700 – 1860,” *Modern Asian Studies* 19, no. 2 (1985): 202; Stewart Gordon, “Hindus, Muslims, and the Other in eighteenth-century India,” *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 3, No. 3 (December 1999): 235.

⁴⁵ Richard M. Eaton, “Temple Desecration and Indo-Muslim States” in *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia*, eds. David Gilmartin and Bruce B. Lawrence (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2000), 246-81.

⁴⁶ Najaf Haider, “A ‘Holi Riot’ of 1714” in *Living Together Separately: Cultural India in History and Politics*, eds. Mushirul Hasan and Asim Roy (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), 127-139.

⁴⁷ See for example Sunil Kumar, “Qutb and Modern Memory” in *The Partitions of Memory: The Afterlife of the Division of India*, ed. Suvir Kaul (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001), 140-182.

Others have introduced nuance in describing both the limits and possibilities of religious tolerance. For example, Muzaffar Alam describes how the prevalent embrace of the concept of *wahdat al-wujud* (unity in being) allowed an eighteenth-century Sufi in Awadh to participate in Hindu festivals and rituals, but that the acceptance of such behavior was limited to very small numbers of Sufi adepts.⁴⁸ Others have looked at the range of attitudes of one religious group to various sorts of others, such as the attitudes of Bhakti devotees to other Bhakti *sampradayas* (schools/lineages), non-bhakti forms of Hinduism, and Muslims.⁴⁹

These studies all pay close attention to religious identities and philosophies, as well as to broader political, economic, and social contexts to explain why and how conflicts were managed. Yet, most of these scholarly discussions remain moored in the actions and discourse of literate courtly and religious elites.⁵⁰ In the third and fourth chapters, I track intercommunity interactions in Rajasthan beyond the realm of courtly elites or religious leaders and theologians. This lens shows struggles for social status among peers to be the main site of conflict, rather than religious identities. It also shows attempts by local petitioners to invoke religious language, symbols, and identity in their conflicts in ways that the maharaja's court typically did not itself promulgate.

Law and Everyday Practices

Community formation and conflict in eighteenth-century Rajasthan is legible in petitions to the king from local individuals and communities seeking rights and conflict resolution. These petitions not only form an archival window into this topic but also are themselves an important part of the process of community formation. The bulk of the disputes cover topics we might consider mundane: inheritance, property ownership, debts, marriages, and adoptions. Many similar disputes were likely resolved by caste panchayats and the local administration. Because those disputes did not enter the archive, the archive is necessarily partial. On the basis of the petitions that did reach the king's court, however, it is clear that repeated and often protracted disputes on issues that fall within what today is considered civil law were central to the formation of community and the regulation of society. The petition process was part of entering local community-based regulations into more formal structures of law backed by the authority of the king. Whether to maintain the status quo or to enact change, it took repeated efforts to reauthorize social norms and forms of relations and exchange.⁵¹

In recent years, the historiography of the premodern state in South Asia has recognized the role of local actors in shaping state practices, often through resistance and the strategic use of legal and administrative forums. Farhat Hasan and Nandita Sahai both examine the process of negotiation between the ruling classes and the ruled, in Gujarat and Marwar respectively. Their analyses reframe questions of state formation and model the construction of power and statecraft through the negotiations of actors with unequal power. Drawing on Foucault's model of capillary power, Hasan

⁴⁸ Muzaffar Alam, "Assimilation from a Distance: Confrontation and Sufi Accommodation in Awadh Society" in *Sufism and Society in Medieval India*, ed. Razi al-Din Aquil (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 148-175.

⁴⁹ Vasudha Dalmia, "Hagiography and the "Other" in the Vallabha *Sampradaya*," Heidi Pauwels, "Diatribes against *Saktas* in Banarasi Bazaars and Rural Rajasthan: Kabir and His Ramanandi Hagiographers," and Shandip Saha, "Muslims as Devotees and Outsiders: Attitudes toward Muslims in the *Varta* Literature of the Vallabha *Sampradaya*," in *Religious Interactions in Mughal India*, eds. Vasudha Dalmia and Munis D. Faruqui (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014), 264-341.

⁵⁰ In addition to the above-mentioned examples, similar limitations are found in the essays in David Gilmartin and Bruce B. Lawrence, eds., *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2000).

⁵¹ See for instance Sally Falk Moore, *Law as Process: An Anthropological Approach* (1978), 2nd ed. (Hamburg: Lit, International African Institute, 2000) for an early theoretical exploration of regulation as a process that is always incomplete, and the connection between law and the social outside of Europe.

argues that the Mughal state was a mutable component of power that was engaged “in a process of constant conflict and change prompted by strategic action among social groups.”⁵² Thus, the protests of merchant groups in Gujarat played a key role in shaping the state’s power and policies. Sahai makes a similar argument that artisans and the ruler of Marwar were in constant negotiation with each other over obligations and resources. Artisans negotiated favorable terms of exchange and patronage with the king so long as the rule of the king was fairly weak. But when the state, strained by conflict with the Marathas in the end of the eighteenth century, demanded higher taxes and free labor (*begar*) beyond established norms, artisans responded with protests and resistance.

Sahai and Hasan both show how individuals and communities took policies that were not made to serve them but rather to serve the interests of the state and then used legal forums and acts of resistance to creatively produce results favorable to themselves and to shift state policies. Local communities and politics influenced the evolution of judicial practices and norms during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. With reference to Gujarat, Hasan argues that *shari’u* formed a shared normative framework that through its flexibility or ambiguity could be adjusted and manipulated by local stakeholders to fit local issues.⁵³ In Marwar, the normative framework of *wajabi*, ‘appropriateness,’ governed social-political relations.⁵⁴ What sets *wajabi* norms apart from *shari’u* is the great extent to which *wajab* behavior is governed by specific social relationships. Thus, *wajab* notions of relations between different castes varied. The strong language of tradition in Marwar petitions was used to legitimize *wajabi*, even though the definition of *wajabi* behavior was constantly under negotiation. Both *shari’u* and *wajabi* were shared authoritative frameworks, recognized by both the state and local actors yet also responsive to local negotiations and applications. Such flexibility made the law a key site of negotiation between the state and its subjects.

Both Sahai and Hasan frame state-local interactions primarily as signs of resistance by local actors to the state or disruptions to state authority.⁵⁵ In contrast, I examine state-local negotiations to ask how local communities used state policies and legal apparatus to register resistance and pursue objectives with regards to other local communities. Individuals and groups in eighteenth-century used formats such as the petition and legal case not only to resist state power but also for their own purposes adjacent to or outside of the state. Rules and legal processes shaped the forms of social objectives but not the content.⁵⁶ This was a common practice in South Asia and beyond; in the Ottoman Empire, for instance, people turned to the courts to record private agreements and certify their truthfulness.⁵⁷ Thus, while I occasionally reflect on the implications such petitions may have had on sovereignty, my primary intent is to show how people in Ajmer, Nagaur, and Pushkar worked within extant legal frameworks to pursue their own objectives with respect to local society. Although many pursued cases through the royal court, their aims were often targeted toward the formation and maintenance of social communities in their local urban setting.

Sources and Methodology

Legal and administrative records provide insights into the practices and conflicts that shaped everyday life in premodern South Asia. Although they are products of imperial and royal courts, they

⁵² Farhat Hasan, *State and Locality in Mughal India: Power Relations in Western India, c. 1572-1730* (Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 8.

⁵³ Hasan, 71-2.

⁵⁴ Nandita Prasad Sahai, *Politics of Patronage and Protest: The State, Society, and Artisans in Early Modern Rajasthan* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 25-28.

⁵⁵ Hasan, 2, 54, 56, 126 and passim; Sahai 233-4.

⁵⁶ Moore, 4.

⁵⁷ Leslie Peirce, *Morality Tales: Law and Gender in the Ottoman Court of Aintab* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 8-9.

can be read ‘against the grain’ for the lives of the petitioners and grant recipients that are recorded within them. Doing so requires familiarity with the genre conventions of such documents in order to see differentiation. Unlike other court records, such as chronicles and gazetteers, which remain focused on the internal function on the court, or general surveys and statistical overviews of the state’s domains, administrative and legal records are outward facing to the lives of individuals and local communities who petitioned or received specific grants. Although I have at times turned to additional bodies of evidence, including inscriptions, nineteenth century records of folk tales, and imperial chronicles in order to set my interpretations in a broader context, the bulk of the dissertation is argued on the basis of court orders in Persian and Rajasthani issued between the mid-sixteenth century and the end of the eighteenth century.

Working across Persian and Rajasthani archives is critical for the historical understanding of the Rajasthan region particularly before the nineteenth century. This is because people in that period encountered and used both languages, and because Rajasthani documents were heavily influenced by the format and norms of Persian documents. Private collections of records relating the Nagaur *dargahs* show that the shrine attendants received grants and filed petitions in both languages.⁵⁸ Similarly, Rajasthani records of Nagaur in the eighteenth century make reference to petitioners bringing Persian documents to the maharaja’s court to prove their claims.⁵⁹ People in early modern Rajasthan lived in a bilingual world, and accessing their experiences requires straddling these linguistic realms as they did. Working across Persian and Rajasthani archives also allows me to piece together continuous trends or experiences whose archives shift primary language. In the eighteenth century, administration in Rajasthan moved increasingly toward using Rajasthani. Shrines received mostly Persian grants in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries but an increasing number of Rajasthani grants in the eighteenth century. Without moving between both languages, half of the story of this patronage would remain obscured. Even in the eighteenth century, when Rajasthani became the dominant language of administration across most of Rajasthan, familiarity with Persian documents is helpful for understanding the archive. Rajput legal and administrative regimes were deeply influenced by the Rajputs’ experiences as nobles in the Mughal court where they functioned within Mughal Persianate systems of charity, revenue collection, and justice.⁶⁰ As Mughal power waned and the Rajputs increasingly used Rajasthani language documents in their official dealings, the Rajasthani documents borrowed terms and concepts heavily from Persian.

The bulk of the patronage grants I consulted were written in Persian. These are mostly *farmans* and *sanads*, orders from the Mughal emperor and the imperial court respectively, as well as a much smaller collection of correspondence. The majority of the *farmans* and *sanads* related to patronage are charitable grants known as *madad-i ma’ash* or *suyurghal*, which were typically made to religious figures and institutions such as *dargahs*. The grants ranged from giving a specific item to be used in religious observances, to the revenues rights to villages to cover the living expenses of religious mendicants. In exchange, the recipient was instructed to offer prayers for the longevity of the emperor and the empire. Although many interpretations of *shari’a* stipulate that such grants should only be made to Islamic institutions to promote the practice of Islam in the land, the Mughal

⁵⁸ There are both Persian and Rajasthani documents related to the Sultan al-Tarikin *dargah* in the private collections of Peer Sufi Abdul Baqi Chishti Farooqi and Pirzada Ghulam Sarwar Chishti Sulaimani Faruqi. There are also some documents that are bilingual.

⁵⁹ See for example *Jodhpur Sanad Parwana Babi* (henceforth JSPB) No. 20, f 47B-48A Chait Sud 14 VS 1835, in which there is a Persian *khat* offered as proof of a mortgage.

⁶⁰ Monika Horstmann examines parallels in form and content between Persian and Rajasthani documents in “The Preambles of Official Letters from Rajasthan: Toward a Stylistic Typology” *The Indian Historical Review* 25.1 (July 1998): 29-44.

emperors made these charitable grants to both Muslim and non-Muslim recipients.⁶¹ Persian grants made to recipients in Ajmer, Pushkar, and Nagaur are scattered in archives and personal collections. Some also have been published - sometimes only as a digest or summary, at other times with full translations into English, Hindi, or Urdu and an image, transcription, or both, of the original document. Lastly, some relevant documents were transcribed in nineteenth and twentieth-century court proceedings or in British imperial gazetteers. I also consulted Rajasthani patronage grants (*biba nama*, *bhog*, and *punya arath*) held in private collections and transcribed in records from the kingdom of Amber (Jaipur Princely State) known as the *Dastur Komwar*.⁶²

In my later chapters on disputes and community, I rely most heavily on the Rajasthani-language *Jodhpur Sanad Parwana Bahi* records. The record series starts in 1764 and extends into the twentieth century, covering all territories of the Marwar Kingdom, also known from 1818 as the Jodhpur Princely State. Because these records include petitions from people with a wide range of occupations and caste affiliations, they provide a crucial window into the social history of Rajasthan. These *bahis* (registers) contain transcriptions of orders given by the Marwar maharaja's court and are arranged by district (*pargana*) and administrative division (*kacheri*, *sayar*, and *kotwali chauntara*). The copies omit introductory formulae and seals found on the original documents, but they do include marginalia, as well as date, place of issuance, the name of the official who recorded the order, and the names of the parties concerned. The orders cover a range of issues regarding administrative appointments, revenue collection, payment of state servants, manufacturing weapons and other goods, public works, and orders in response to petitions from subjects seeking redress for their complaints or disputes. I have primarily drawn on the *kotwali chauntara* records for Nagaur, which focused on urban affairs and justice, including crime, property, and interpersonal disputes. These records often focus on issues that were not satisfactorily resolved by caste *panchayats* or local administrators. They typically contain a summary or copy of the petition as well as the court's order, though the order often instructed local administrators to investigate the matter further and solve it appropriately.

The Setting

The urban spaces I focus on are located in the arid and semi-arid tracts lying to the west of Delhi, which were home to kingdoms ruled by regional kings known as Rajputs since at least the tenth century. In the 1570s, after the Mughal Emperor Akbar subdued most of the regional Rajput kings and princes in this area through a combination of military might, treaties, and alliances, he combined the lands of these local powers into a single provincial administrative and revenue unit called Subah Ajmer. One of twelve main provinces (*subahs*) of the Mughal Empire, the region was overseen by a governor (*subahdar*) based in the city of Ajmer, but the Rajputs retained claim to areas within the province recognized as their traditional homelands (*watan jagir*). Most Rajput kings served as nobles in the Mughal court. From the sixteenth century onward, the kings of Amber (Amer, Jaipur), Marwar (Jodhpur), and Mewar (Udaipur) were the most prominent and powerful Rajput leaders. In the nineteenth century, the British designated an area almost identical to the territory of

⁶¹ For a discussion of specific forms, norms, and terminology of Mughal Persian documents, as well as examples and translations of such documents see J. S. Grewal, *In the By-lanes of History: Some Persian Documents from a Punjab Town* (Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1975); B. N. Goswamy and J. S. Grewal, *The Mughal and Sikh Rulers and the Vaishnavas of Pindori* (Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1969), 22-44, and B. N. Goswamy and J. S. Grewal, *The Mughals and the Jogis of Jakhbar: Some Madad-i-Ma'ash and Other Documents* (Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1967), 18-24.

⁶² Monika Horstmann provides a detailed guide to the norms of eighteenth-century documents from Jaipur, especially those related to religious charity in *In Favour of Govinddevji: Historical Documents relating to a Deity of Vrindaban and Eastern Rajasthan* (New Delhi: Manohar, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 1999), 31-84.

Subah Ajmer as an administrative unit known as the Rajputana Agency. Both of these political formations, Subah Ajmer and the Rajputana Agency, map almost perfectly onto the territory of the modern Indian state of Rajasthan. I have opted to use the name Rajasthan throughout to refer to this region because of its dominant usage in related scholarship and the geographical coherence of these political boundaries over 450 years.⁶³

Within Rajasthan, I am primarily concerned with three urban sites: Ajmer, Pushkar, and Nagaur. These three share several features. They were prominent religious centers in Rajasthan throughout the period under consideration, and contain sites sacred to Hindus, Muslims and Jains, including pilgrimage sites that drew pilgrims from Rajasthan and beyond.⁶⁴ They all lay along established medieval overland trade routes linking the fertile Gangetic plains to ports on the Arabian Sea and to Multan and Lahore. They had longstanding ties to political power, though none of them were Rajput capitals in the period under study. Lastly, these three urban settlements were tied to each other, economically, politically and religiously. Drawing on these urban characteristics, I tend to call these spaces “cities,” especially in reference to Ajmer and Nagaur. In the sources, the terms *shahr* (*shabar*, city) and *qasba* (well-populated town or small city) are used interchangeably. Because of their similarities and interconnected nature, at times I suggest that trends and tendencies observed in one place may apply to the others when the unevenness of the archive does not allow us to know for certain.

Ajmer was settled in about the twelfth century as a capital of the Rajput Chauhan dynasty. The walled city is nestled at the bottom of large hill, on top of which is a well-defended fort known as Taragarh. The city was situated at a strategic crossroads through the Aravalli Mountains, a low-lying range that transverses Rajasthan from northeast to southwest. By the end of the twelfth century, Ajmer had been conquered by the armies of Muhammad Ghori and Iltutmish, early rulers of the Delhi Sultanate. It is believed that around the same time, a Sufi shaikh from Central Asia, Mu‘in al-Din Chishti (d. 1236), settled in Ajmer. Recognized as the founder of the Chishti lineage in South Asia, Mu‘in al-Din trained a number of disciples who became renowned Sufi leaders in Delhi and the Panjab. After Mu‘in al-Din’s death, his tomb in Ajmer was gradually developed into a shrine (*dargah*) that became a popular pilgrimage destination. Ajmer also became a Jain center in the medieval period with the establishment of Digambar seat of learning (*bhattarak*). In addition to its religious prominence, Ajmer became the seat of the Mughal governor in the sixteenth century, which formalized its connection to imperial politics.⁶⁵

About eight miles west of Ajmer is Pushkar. If judged by size, Pushkar was not properly an urban space but rather a village. However, during the annual animal fair and when military groups were camped there, its population would swell by thousands. The settlement rings Pushkar Lake, a holy lake and one of the few natural freshwater lakes in Rajasthan. Because of the religious importance of the lake, which is mentioned in a number of ancient texts, the dominant community

⁶³ For more on the question of Rajasthan’s historical coherence as a region, see Deryck O. Lodrick’s essay on the question of Rajasthan as a political and cultural unit. “Rajasthan as a Region: Myth or Reality?” in *The Idea of Rajasthan: Explorations in Regional Identity Volume I: Constructions*, eds. Karine Schomer et al. (1994; repr. New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies, Manohar, 2001), 1-44.

⁶⁴ In the eighteenth century, several towns and cities became well-known Vaishnav centers that attracted temples, patronage and pilgrims. These include the town of Nathdwara in Mewar, and Jaipur, the capital of the Amber kingdom built in the eighteenth century.

⁶⁵ Most histories of Ajmer focus on the *dargah* of Mu‘in al-Din. See Syed Liyaqat Hussain Moini, “The City of Ajmer During the Eighteenth Century: A Political, Administrative, and Economic History” (PhD diss., Aligarh Muslim University, 1987) and Jagat Narayan, *Ajmer and the Mughal Emperors* (Kota, Rajasthan: Neha Vikas Prakashan, 1997). There are short accounts of Ajmer, Pushkar and Nagaur in Kailash Chand Jain, *Ancient Cities and Towns of Rajasthan; a Study of Culture and Civilization*, 1st ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1972), 100-105 (Pushkar), 242-50 (Nagaur), 301-8 (Ajmer).

was Brahmin religious specialists rather than the cultivating and landowning classes that dominated a typical village. The influx of patronage and pilgrimage tied Pushkar into a diverse network of exchanges. Only a half-day's walk or ride from Ajmer, Pushkar was closely affiliated with Ajmer. Pilgrims and dignitaries tended to visit both locations.⁶⁶

Nagaur shared many characteristics with Ajmer. It too was founded in the medieval period, largely as a fortified outpost. It was developed under Sultanate rule in the twelfth century when it became the seat of the governor of Siwalik. One of Mu'in al-Din Chishti's disciples, Hamid al-Din Nagauri, settled in Nagaur in the early twelfth century. The site of his burial became the *dargah* known as Sultan al-Tarikin. Nagaur had a flourishing religious and intellectual life in the medieval period. Other Sufi lodges and shrines were established, and the Jain community also recognized Nagaur as an important center that was part of Jain pilgrimage circuits, a monastic retreat for Jain monks during the rainy season, and a Digambar Jain seat of learning. Nagaur became the capital of a small state under the Khyamkhanis, a secondary lineage of the Gujarat Sultans. In the seventeenth century it became the base of a side-branch of the Rathor Rajput family that ruled over Marwar.⁶⁷

Plan of the Dissertation

The themes discussed above are elaborated in the following chapters. The first two chapters focus on patronage and religious institutions, while the last two are primarily concerned with questions of community and conflict. The first chapter address the patronage of religious institutions in Ajmer and Pushkar from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. In both Islamicate and Hindu states in South Asia, patronage was a political language that tied the ruler to the territory through support of the saint or deity and the religious specialists who tended to shrines and temples and offered prayers on behalf of the rulers. This shared ethic meant that Mughal, Rajput, and Maratha rulers and leaders all offered patronage to both Hindu and Muslim sacred sites in Rajasthan. Ajmer and Pushkar emerged as a bimodal center of patronage in Rajasthan in which both places received support from Hindu and Muslim patrons. This patronage reshaped the political and social worlds of Ajmer and Pushkar. Significant Mughal patronage, particularly of Ajmer, between the mid-sixteenth century and the end of the seventeenth century constructed a narrative of a special Mughal connection with the city and the *dargah* of Mu'in al-Din Chishti. This patronage linked religious and political practices and interests. It promulgated the idea of Ajmer and its environs as a center of Mughal power and administration in the region. The identification of Ajmer with the Mughals meant that as Mughal authority over Rajasthan waned in the eighteenth century, both Rajput and Maratha leaders were intent on gaining control over Ajmer and supplanting the Mughals as patrons. Patronage could become a proxy for political and military conflicts. Because patronage practices closely tied particular groups of religious specialists to a given political power, successive patrons often favored different parties within the community of religious specialists, just as a new ruler tended to favor different members of the nobility than his predecessor did. This meant that while the shrines and temples as a whole maintained a high level of patronage through the reigns of

⁶⁶ Because of limited historical archive, especially for the precolonial period, most scholarship on Pushkar is based in anthropology, literature and religious studies, such as Malik, *Das Puskar-Mahatmya* and Sushila Zeitlyn, *Sacrifice and the Sacred in a Hindu Tirtha: the case of Pushkar, India* (PhD diss., London School of Economics, 1986).

⁶⁷ The most extensive English treatment of Nagaur's medieval history is found in Mehrdad Shokoohy and Natalie H. Shokoohy, *Nagaur: Sultanate and Early Mughal History and Architecture of the District of Nagaur, India* (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1993). Mohammed Haleem Siddiqi covers the political history of Nagaur between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries in Hindi. *Madhyakalin Nagaur ka Itihās* (Jodhpur: Maharaja Man Singh Pustak Prakash, 2001). For the history of Jains in Nagaur, see K.C. Jain, "A Brief History of Nagaur," *The Orissa Historical Research Journal* 7, no. 3&4 (Oct 1958-Jan 1959), 133-139.

successive rulers, patronage etched divisions in the communities of religious specialists in Ajmer and Pushkar that reflected the political conflicts occurring across the region of Rajasthan.

The second chapter examines the patronage of religious institutions from the perspective of the recipients of patronage between the sixteenth and the end of the eighteenth century. Drawing on the records of the two main *dargahs* in Nagaur, I show that hereditary communities of shrine attendants and religious specialists known as *pirzadas* pursued multiple strategies to attract and retain patronage across successive political regimes. One set of strategies focused on the control of lineage and community narratives. These were achieved by showing the relationship of *pirzadas* to saintly lineages and pursuing strategies of inheritance and marriage that controlled membership in the *pirzada* community. The second major set of strategies sought to access and control information. This included keeping a close watch on military and political developments in Rajasthan and the Mughal court in order to decide who to approach for patronage, maintaining a broad range of patrons, and developing expertise in Persianate and Rajasthani administrative and legal norms. Through these diverse strategies, the *pirzadas* constituted themselves as a community of Muslim elites with deep political ties, religious authority, and extensive economic resources.

The focus of the argument in the third chapter shifts from patronage systems to community conflicts over shared public spaces and resources held in common. During the second half of the eighteenth century in Nagaur, most conflicts that reached the royal courts for adjudication took place between individuals who typically belonged to the same occupational and social community or caste (*jati*). Inter-community conflicts occurred less frequently, but when they did occur, they broke out over public spaces and shared resources. My analysis of two types of intercommunity conflicts, the first about access to natural resource commons and the second concerning neighborhood processions (*gehar*) on Holi, reveals that inter-community conflict tended to occur between closely associated communities who competed with each other for resources and social prestige. Artisan castes fought over the use of water tanks, while Holi conflicts broke out between merchant communities. Repeated conflict established social ranking and community boundaries. Although these fights and disputes sometimes used religious rhetoric or forms, this was rare and mostly occurred between Hindu and Jain merchant groups. In Nagaur, Hindu-Muslim conflicts were rare because these communities were not usually socially proximate groups.

The fourth chapter shows how property transactions and the logic of neighborhoods supported caste and religious segregation that minimized intercommunity conflict in Nagaur. However, it took constant effort to create and maintain social segregation, especially in the face of changing and mobile urban populations who fled due to famine and war and might be replaced by the in-migration of ascending social groups. Neighborhoods underwent constant construction and reconstruction. More than maintaining infrastructure, communities attempted to enforce uniformity in the construction of neighborhoods to signal shared status and a unified community. Alongside these efforts to promote physical uniformity in neighborhoods were efforts to create social uniformity by excluding certain groups. These practices put moral bounds on economic transactions that limited who could hold mortgages, rent, or live in a particular property. Residents also relied on inheritance strategies and claims to ancestral (*bapoti*) houses to maintain control over neighborhood properties and prevent them from being sold or transferred to members of other communities. All of these strategies were used, especially in the wake of the 1754-55 siege of Nagaur, though state intervention could thwart segregation.

Together, these chapters demonstrate the complex and sometimes contradictory ways that religion intersected with the political, economic, and social realms of premodern South Asia. Sustained patterns and processes, whether of patronage granting or receiving or of community formation, were challenged by the political and economic upheavals of the eighteenth century. Nonetheless, negotiations and shared norms between communities, religious institutions, and

political leaders meant that many of these patterns and processes persisted, albeit in shifted forms. The robustness of these structures contributed to the resilience of urban spaces and society in precolonial Rajasthan.

All the Kings' Grants: Ajmer and Pushkar, 1560-1800

Introduction

Generous patronage of religious institutions was a core element of the ethics of kingship in precolonial South Asia that was common to both Hindu and Islamic ideals of rule. Kings and emperors granted village revenues and gifted valuable items to temples, mosques, Sufi shrines, Hindu ashrams, ascetics and prominent religious scholars and leaders. In exchange for this largesse, religious leaders and institutions offered prayers for the longevity of the ruler and state. These patterns of patronage are recognizable across South Asia in a variety of locales and time periods, from royal patronage of temples in the twelfth century Chola Empire in southern India, to the construction of mosques in Sultanate and Mughal cities, and Maratha support of Brahmins in Varanasi in the eighteenth century. The patronage of religious institutions in Rajasthan from circa 1500 to 1800 took place within this broader context. The shared ethic of patronage interlinked religion and politics in important ways. On the one hand, rising rulers often took over the patronage at sites favored by prior rulers, leading to common practices and sustained patronage for these sites even in the face of rapid political change between Mughal, Rajput and Maratha authorities. On the other hand, new patrons often supported different factions of religious specialists within an institution than their predecessors, which contributed to conflicts within local religious communities. Religious patronage etched political power and political conflicts into local communities because patronage closely identified rulers with particular cities and institutions. In this way patronage was a realm of political competition with profound local impacts.

These patterns of patronage are most clearly visible in the history of the Rajasthani pilgrimage centers of Ajmer and Pushkar, which received the greatest amounts of patronage, though they extend to other Rajasthani pilgrimage centers. In brief, when the Mughal emperor Akbar (r. 1556-1605) embraced the Chishti Sufis, rather than the Naqshbandi Sufi lineages that had been favored by his ancestors, he generously patronized the city of Ajmer, home to the *dargah* (tomb shrine) of the Sufi luminary Khwaja Mu'in al-Din Chishti (d. 1236), considered the founder of the Chishti lineage in South Asia. Throughout the next century, Mughal emperors and nobles continued to give grants to religious institutions in Ajmer and nearby Pushkar. These urban centers became the administrative and symbolic centers of Mughal authority in Rajasthan. During the eighteenth century, as Mughal power waned in Rajasthan, the rulers of local kingdoms, including Marwar and Amber, asserted their power vis-à-vis the Mughals. These rulers often focused their political aspirations on Ajmer and Pushkar, because of their close identification with the Mughals as well as their strategic importance. As a result, these urban centers witnessed many military conflicts throughout the eighteenth century. The conflicts and ambitions of the kingdoms of Marwar and Amber in Ajmer and Pushkar were replicated in competing patronage patterns. The Rajput kingdoms vied for power through their ability to propagate and protect important religious sites. From the mid-eighteenth century Maratha leaders entered the political fray in Rajasthan and also became important patrons of religious institutions and pilgrimage sites in Ajmer and Pushkar. Maratha patronage at these sites expressed their dominance over the Rajput kingdoms and their claims to sovereignty over much of North India. The Maratha presence in Rajasthan is typically

understood as destructive and exploitive, but through patronage the Marathas became benefactors of some cities in the region.

These developments, which will be explored in detail below, show that religious patronage from regional and imperial rulers helped sustain urban life even in the turbulent eighteenth century. In his foundational study of north Indian market towns and the colonial transition, C. A. Bayly observes that during the eighteenth century there was growth in patronage and religious institutions across the north Indian plains. According to Bayly, religious institutions sustained population centers because “religious practices and religious centers were not closely tied to the wheels of political power.”¹ However, the history of patronage in Ajmer and Pushkar discussed in this chapter contradicts Bayly’s conclusion. It was precisely the close association of religious centers to political power that sustained pilgrimage cities and towns through the eighteenth century in Rajasthan while simultaneously translating regional and imperial politics into the local environment.

Shared Ethics of Patronage and Politics

Although rooted in distinct religious ideologies, both Hindu and Islamic notions of kingship and sovereignty in medieval India promoted extensive and generous religious patronage by the king or emperor. The similarity of these patronage ideals was reinforced by the integration of Hindu-ate and Islamicate systems of administration in the Mughal Empire, which had a pervasive influence in Mughal successor states.² These shared patterns and the deep politics of religious patronage means that inter-religious patronage of Muslim sites by Hindu rulers and elites and Hindu sites by Muslim rulers and elites was neither surprising nor a sign of exceptional toleration. Rather, such acts were the outgrowth of a shared political culture and led to cycles of patronage where the authority behind the grant would change but the same institutions continued to receive patronage.

In medieval India, Hindu kings were tied to divine sovereignty in several ways that promoted religious patronage. Through the coronation ritual of *abhishekh* the king enacted a Vedic ritual of sacrifice that mimicked the ritual sacrifice of *purusha*, the first man in the Vedas. This sacrifice was an act of creation and distribution and installed the king as the source of prosperity.³ In South India, according to the model described by Arjun Appadurai, sovereignty lay in the body of the deity. The king was a servant of the deity and his main service was by providing protection. This protection meant securing access to revenue from the land that the king and others offered in grants and arbitrating disputes between shrine attendants and others who paid more minor service to the deity and temple. Patronage was rooted in the kingly obligation to protect.⁴ Patronage was also key to attracting and maintaining the presence of deities in one’s territories, as Norbert Peabody argues.

¹ C. A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion 1770-1870*, 4th ed. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 134-139; quote from 139.

² Nandita Sahai has also discussed the role of the Mughal state in shaping shared norms of conspicuous consumption and patronage of artisans. Sahai, *Politics of Patronage and Protest: The State, Society and Artisans in Early Modern Rajasthan* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 180. By “Hindu-ate” I invoke a parallel to the term “Islamicate,” which was coined by Marshall Hodgson to refer to general civilizational phenomena influenced by the religion but which were not narrowly religious.

³ Ronald Inden, “Ritual, Authority, and Cyclic Time in Hindu Kingship” in *Kingship and Authority in South Asia*, ed. J. F. Richards (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin, 1978), 28-73.

⁴ Arjun Appadurai, *Worship and Conflict under Colonial Rule: A South Indian Case* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 21-22, 50-51. See also Nicholas Dirks, *The Hollow Crown*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1988), and John Cort, “Who Is a King? Jain Narratives of Kingship in Medieval Western India” in *Open Boundaries: Jain Communities and Cultures in Indian History*, ed. John E. Cort (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998).

From the late seventeenth century, a number of important Vaishnav deities who had been installed in temples in Mathura and Vrindavan were removed from those temples in the face of threats to the temples from the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb (r. 1658-1707). Hereditary caretakers, Goswamis, cared for these deities. With the rising popularity of Vaishnav devotionism among Rajput leaders, these rulers and chiefs offered extensive patronage to the deities and to the Goswamis to entice them to settle in their territories.⁵

Islamic rulers in medieval South Asia turned to religious patronage as a key component of consolidating their presence in South Asia and establishing legitimacy vis-à-vis other Islamic sects and states.⁶ From the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate in the late twelfth century, Muslim rulers in northern India sought to establish an Islamic presence and sanctify their new territories by supporting mosque building and the settlement of Islamic holy men, including Sufis.⁷ Later rulers, including the Mughals, pursued similar actions. In Islamic formulations, an ideal ruler was to embody justice in his realm through supporting the ideals of *shari'a*. One aspect of this, which the Mughals embraced, was supporting religious officials, as well as sending donations to the Hejaz.⁸ Yet the Mughals employed a broader frame of religious patronage than typically understood from *shari'a* ideals. Although Mughal patronage was certainly most extensive and most generous toward Islamic recipients, the Mughal court extended these ideals of patronage to non-Muslim religious adepts and institutions as well.⁹

On the basis of these shared ideals, intersecting patronage systems developed and were implemented in nearly identical ways. Mughal, Maratha and Rajput charitable grants shared administrative conventions in language, format, and procedure. The Mughal court issued grants known as *madad-i ma'ash* and *su-yurghal* to support the livelihood of holy men and religious mendicants and the ritual functions of shrines and temples. These grants provided revenue either in fixed sums or the rights to the tax revenue of particular areas of land or villages.¹⁰ Rajput rulers made similar *punya arath* and *punya udik* grants to religious specialists and religious institutions that also were based on tax revenue shares. The *punya* grants were hereditary but required reconfirmation at the time of inheritance.¹¹ From the 1690s, *madad-i ma'ash* grants became formally hereditary, though they had often informally been hereditary before that point.¹²

The similarities between these grants were reinforced by the shared administrative and technical frameworks and the Rajput adoption of Persianate court stylings. Rajputs were one of the key groups of nobles in the Mughal court, and through generations of service became intimately familiar with the Persianate administration and technical language in use in the Mughal

⁵ Norbert Peabody, *Hindu Kingship and Polity in Precolonial India* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 66-70.

⁶ Finbarr B. Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval "Hindu-Muslim" Encounter* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 153. Throughout the book, Flood has careful arguments about the limits and possibilities of encounter and religious ideology and material practice in South Asia.

⁷ Simon Digby, "The Sufi Shaikh as a Source of Authority in Medieval India" in *India's Islamic Traditions, 711 -1750*, ed. Richard M. Eaton (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 236-7.

⁸ Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam: India 1200 – 1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 78.

⁹ B. N. Goswamy and J. S. Grewal, *The Mughals and the Jogis of Jakbbar* (Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1967), 15-16, 19-22.

¹⁰ For an overview of these grant types, see Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India 1556-1707*, 3rd ed., 2014 (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1963), "Revenue Grants," 342-63.

¹¹ For more on *punya* grants, see Monika Horstmann, *In Favour of Govinddevji: Historical Documents Relating to a Deity of Vrindaban and Eastern Rajasthan* (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 1999), 35-7.

¹² Habib, 351-2.

administration. Even when Rajput leaders became increasingly independent from the Mughal state, they continued to incorporate these Persianate norms into their own regional administrative regimes. Maratha leaders were similarly influenced by Mughal administration. Through the mid-eighteenth century, many of the grants issued by Rajput rulers were bilingual, using both Persian and Rajasthani. Even as grants from the mid-eighteenth century onward typically were issued solely in Rajasthani, the terms and conditions of the grants interpolated Persianate norms. For example, the language of Maharaja Jai Singh II of Amber's grants written in Rajasthani show a mixed Perso-Rajasthani idiom, with the use of technical Persian terms such as *tabarruk* (blessed food or presents) and *nazr* (gift or offering to a superior or god) alongside typical Rajasthani terms for offerings such as *punya dhan* (a grant of grain) and verb forms including *charhana* (to offer or dedicate to a deity). The language of these grants was not coded based on the religion or linguistic preferences of the recipient.

The Setting

The impacts of a shared ethic of patronage are clearly seen in the trajectories of Ajmer and Pushkar between 1500 and 1800. Both places have long histories as religious centers and gradually became some of the most prominent pilgrimage destinations in the region of Rajasthan. Unlike Ajmer, Pushkar never developed into a major political town or capital. Yet, in both places, religion and politics became closely entwined through patronage and symbolic resonances. Although Ajmer has become most famous as a Muslim center, and Pushkar as a Hindu center, the dynamics between religion and politics is best understood by studying these two sites in conjunction with each other because they have long operated as a closely linked pair. Claiming Ajmer as a political capital typically gave kings and emperors control over Pushkar as well and during the early modern period these places became the pilgrimage sites in Rajasthan with the greatest trans-regional draw.

Tucked at the base of the Aravalli Hills, which provided both security and better than average rainfall in an otherwise arid region, Ajmer became the capital of the powerful Chauhan dynasty in the twelfth century. Under the Chauhans, the city attracted Hindu ascetics, as well as developed into a center of Digambar Jain learning and preaching.¹³ With the defeat of Prithviraj Chauhan in the Battle of Tarain in 1192, Ajmer came under the rule of the Delhi Sultans. Around the same time, the Sufi Mu'in al-Din Chishti settled in Ajmer. He and his followers instructed many of the most prominent medieval Sufis across northern India. After his death, his burial site was gradually developed into a prominent *dargah*.

Pushkar lies about eight miles west of Ajmer, on the other side of a large hill, Nag Pahar. One of the few places in the region with naturally occurring freshwater lakes, it is a site of ancient settlement. Archaeological remains indicate habitation since at least the second century BCE. The town had developed into a center of Brahma worship in the early medieval period.¹⁴ By the seventeenth century, Pushkar was the site of a popular annual religious fair (*mela*) in the fall that drew pilgrims, traders, and nobility.

Ajmer and Pushkar were also strategic sites in the region. Ajmer especially held multiple attractions for Rajput, Mughal, and Maratha rulers and military commanders: it was the de facto seat of Mughal power in Rajasthan, seconded only by Sambhar, which was closely held by the Mughals because of the important salt works, and the fortifications at Ranthambhor and Narnaul. The fort of Ajmer was one of the key hill forts in Rajasthan and commanded a main route through the Aravalli

¹³ Kailash Chand Jain, *Ancient Towns and Cities of Rajasthan* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1972), 301-2.

¹⁴ Jain, 101-103.

Mountains. Ajmer and its environs, including Pushkar, had comparatively high resources in an arid region. The area was known for the production of luxury items such as fruits, roses and lotus root (*singhara*), all of which had ritual importance and luxury status. Ajmer also had mines in the hills that produced copper, lead and iron.¹⁵ The city and environs of Ajmer bordered the territories of the kingdoms of Amber and Marwar. The resources in and near Ajmer increased political interest in the region and made it a strategic point of expansion for both kingdoms.

Methodology and Sources

This chapter focuses on patronage from the perspective of the patrons. Most of the evidence comes from charitable grants recorded in documents known as *sanads* and *farmans*. While some of these documents are in archival collections, many exist in private collections. However, ongoing legal struggles for hereditary rights at the *dargah* in Ajmer have brought many of these documents to light. There were a large number of cases and appeals in the past century, with decisions as recent as 2013. Documents regarding the *waqf* (endowment) and shrine administration dating from the sixteenth century onward were admitted as evidence in these cases, some of which are available as published legal proceedings and others are in colonial administrative archives. Pushkar records also entered the colonial record primarily through court cases between Brahmin priests claiming patronage rights. Scholarly access to the original documents of charitable grants in Ajmer and Pushkar is extremely limited because they are held in private collections of shrine officials and Brahmin community leaders.

Some documents regarding the Ajmer *dargah* have been published because rival legal parties consisting of the *divan* (the spiritual and administrative head of the shrine) and the *khadims* (customary shrine attendants) sought ways to pursue their claims in and out of court. I have consulted two such publications from the twentieth century, *Asnad al-Sanadid* and *Faramin-i Salatin*.¹⁶ *Asnad al-Sanadid*, published in the 1952, was written by ‘Abdul Bari Ma’ni, a *khadim* of the shrine, intellectual, and resident of Ajmer. Ma’ni had access to documents in his own collection, as well as those held by other *khadims*. He did not have access to the *divan*’s documents. *Faramin-i Salatin* was published in 1926 by Bashiruddin Ahmed Dihlavi. Its first section contains a collection of documents regarding Ajmer.

The ongoing legal disputes over the Ajmer shrine impacts the scholarship on Ajmer both in access to sources and in the framing of arguments. Dr. Liyaqat Moini, who is also a *khadim* of the Ajmer shrine, has written two of the few major academic works on the shrine complex. His dissertation and book are based on extensive and authoritative archival research. I rely heavily on Moini’s scholarship because of his detailed descriptions of Ajmer’s political history, particularly in the eighteenth century, a topic which has received little scholarly attention elsewhere. But occasionally his arguments seem directed against the legitimacy of the *divan*’s claims rather than toward scholarly debates. Moini casts great doubt on the accuracy of *farmans* transcribed in Bashiruddin Ahmed’s *Faramin-i Salatin* and claims that these documents were copied from a book that was earlier published by the family of the *divan* in order to stake their claim to the post. He notes that these documents, whose originals have not been seen, were rejected as evidence as a judge

¹⁵ Syed Liyaqat Hussain Moini, “The City of Ajmer during the Eighteenth Century: A Political, Administrative & Economic History,” (PhD diss., Aligarh Muslim University, 1987), 375-7.

¹⁶ There is a third published collection referenced by both Liyaqat Moini and Motiur Rahman Khan, but I was unable to access a copy. The text is Mirza ‘Abdul Qadir Baig, *‘Abda a Tauliyat* (Ajmer: Job Press, 1940).

in the 1930s.¹⁷ The current *divan* claims that Moini's work is inaccurate. The *divan* maintains a personal website and a library of books and records that support his position. In light of these disputes, when reading the archival and secondary sources for the Ajmer shrine and Pushkar Brahmin communities, I remain cognizant of the high political and financial stakes that have influenced the production of these sources and their continued circulation.

In my analysis of the history of patronage at Ajmer and Pushkar, I follow the approach of R. D. McChesney, who insists that charitable institutions such as *waqf* must be understood as locally situated practices that changed over time, particularly in relationship to sharp political changes, rather than as abstract legal concepts.¹⁸ The sites I study received state patronage regularly from at least the thirteenth century. This patronage existed within shifting political frameworks. Changes in patronage due to shifting politics inscribed regional and imperial politics and conflicts onto the specific locality. Throughout I attempt to point out the significance of the overall structural continuities of religious patronage in Ajmer and Pushkar, while also drawing attention to the shifts of meaning and practice within these forms and their ties to politics.

The remainder of this chapter begins with the patronage patterns established by the Mughals in Ajmer. These practices made Ajmer into a Mughal city and tied the shrine administration to imperial politics. Next, it describes the changes in patronage in the first half of the eighteenth century, and the disparate ways that Maharaja Ajit Singh of Marwar (r. 1679-1724) and Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II of Amber (r. 1700-1743) interacted with Ajmer's Muslim population. As both Rajput leaders attempted to claim Ajmer, their approach was influenced by both Mughal precedent and their relationship with the Mughals. The third section examines the impact of conflicts between Amber and Marwar on the Brahmins of Pushkar in the same time period. Political rivalries between the two states lead to patronage rivalries, with each state sponsoring a distinct group of Brahmins as ritual pilgrimage priests resulting in enduring local conflicts between these groups. The last section examines the rise of a Maratha administration centered on Ajmer in the second half of the eighteenth century and the implications of the ways they entered the patronage market. Although scholarship typically depicts the Marathas in eighteenth-century Rajasthan as looters and marauders, in Ajmer and Pushkar, they became important patrons and administrators.

Making Ajmer Mughal, c. 1560-1707

Across the reigns of four emperors from the mid-sixteenth century through the seventeenth century, the Mughals marked Ajmer as a site of their power through patronage, pilgrimage and rhetorical strategies. Mughal patronage in Ajmer took two primary forms: firstly, the construction of buildings, including palaces, fortifications, and mosques, and secondly, charitable grants to Islamic shrines and holy men. The Mughals rebuilt the city and architecturally overwrote the Chauhan and Sultanate past of Ajmer.¹⁹ Mughal charity in Ajmer centered on the *dargah* of the thirteenth-century Sufi saint Khwaja Mu'in al-Din Chishti, though they extended patronage to other religious institutions in the city, including the shrine of Miran Sahib Khing Sawar inside the fort on top of

¹⁷ Moini, "The City of Ajmer," xiv.

¹⁸ R. D. McChesney, *Waqf in Central Asia: Four Hundred Years in the History of a Muslim Shrine, 1480-1889* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 4-6.

¹⁹ Cynthia Talbot argues that the Mughals, starting with Akbar and his chronicler Abu'l Fazl minimized Prithviraj Chauhan's connection to Ajmer, instead envisioning him as the ruler of Delhi in an act of imperial integration reflective of Delhi's greater political standing in the sixteenth century. *The Last Hindu Emperor: Prithviraj Chauhan and the Indian Past 1200 – 2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 72-104.

Taragarh hill.²⁰ Patronage created divisions between shrines that received unequal levels of funds and also between attendants at the same shrine, whose fortunes rose and fell depending on imperial favor. The Mughal grants set up hereditary patronage that formed the baseline of the shrine's *waqf* over the following centuries. This patronage established a lasting power dynamic within Ajmer and set the stage for struggles within the shrine for the large income from *waqf* and *nazr*. On a regional and imperial scale, Mughal patronage increased Ajmer's political profile and its religious prominence.

Ajmer was already a popular pilgrimage center when the Mughal emperor Akbar made his first visit there in 1562. Between Mu'in al-Din's death in the thirteenth century and the end of the fifteenth century, a hagiographical tradition developed around the saint and pilgrimage to Ajmer became a popular practice.²¹ By the time the prominent Sufi Jamali visited the *dargah* of Mu'in al-Din in the early sixteenth century, it was a regular pilgrimage destination. Indeed, according to court chronicles, Akbar was inspired to make his first pilgrimage to the *dargah* when he passed laborers singing songs in praise of the *khwaja* while out on a hunt.²²

Akbar transformed Ajmer from a folk shrine to an imperial site. In the second half of the sixteenth century under Akbar, imperial patronage and intervention in shrine management escalated rapidly. Combined with Akbar's personal pilgrimages to the shrine, undertaken almost annually over a period of eighteen years, this imperial interest raised the prominence of the shrine and elevated the resources available to the shrine. Akbar's actions drew the shrine more closely into the orbit of state politics. They also established a precedent of imperial patronage and intervention that was followed by Akbar's successors over the next hundred years after Akbar's death.

Alongside early military campaigns in Rajasthan to subdue rebellious nobles and even before he visited Ajmer himself, Akbar began issuing commands regarding *dargah* in Ajmer. He granted the office of *tauliyat*, or administrator of religious trusts, to Shaikh Hussain in 1560, two years before he visited the shrine. Akbar's appointment of Shaikh Hussain marked the beginning of an interventionist role of Mughal rulers and nobles in the administrative affairs and organization of the shrine. As the holder of *tauliyat*, Shaikh Hussain oversaw the distribution of *langar* (charitable distribution of food) and *waqf* income, of which a considerable share went to his own family. He was also in charge of distributing fixed shares from the offerings made at the *dargah* (*nazr*) to the shrine attendants (called *mujawirs* or *khadims*) in such a way as to avoid disputes.²³

²⁰ Unless otherwise specified, "Ajmer shrine" or "Ajmer *dargah*" refers to Mu'in al-Din's *dargah* throughout the chapter. Miran Sahib Khing Sawar is believed to have been a Muslim soldier who died defending Ajmer against a Rajput attack in the early thirteenth century and has been memorialized as a martyr. His shrine is in the Taragarh fort on the hill above the city of Ajmer. The martyrdom hagiography that developed around Miran Sahib is not supported by any historical documentation. His identity appears to have been collapsed with several other figures and there are shrines dedicated to Miran Sahib in several other locations, including Amraoha, Banaras, and Bundi. P.M. Currie, *The Shrine and Cult of Mu'in al-Din Chishti of Ajmer*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), 121.

²¹ For details of pre-Mughal records, see Simon Digby, "Early Pilgrimages to the Graves of Mu'in al-Din Sijzi and other Indian Chishti Shaykhs" in Milton Israel and N.K. Wagle, ed., *Islamic Society and Culture: Essays in Honour of Professor Aziz Ahmad* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1983), 95-100, and Currie, 20-39, 97-99.

²² Abu'l Fazl, *The Akbar Nama of Abu-l-Fazl: History of the Reign of Akbar including an Account of his Predecessors*, Trans. Henry Beveridge (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1907, reprint Delhi: S. S. Publications, 1977), 2:237. Currie, 99 and Moini, "The City of Ajmer," 271.

²³ S. A. I Tirmizi, *Mughal Documents 1526-1627* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1989), 47-8, Document 12. This is a translated summary of a document transcribed in Bashiruddin Ahmed Dihlavi, *Faramin-i Salatin* (Delhi: Delhi Printing Press, 1926), 2-3. Although there are no records of *dargah* administration prior to 1560, Shaikh Hussain's administrative duties indicate that there was a sizeable *waqf* in need of management.

The influx of wealth and power that accompanied Akbar's appointment of Shaikh Husain and grants to the *dargah waqf* became a rupture point for the shrine community. The community soon challenged Shaikh Hussain's role in the *dargah*. When Akbar visited the shrine in the early spring of 1570 at the time of the *urs*, the annual celebration of the saint's union with god upon his death, a dispute broke out:

As on the occasion of the division of the gifts, which came to a large amount, those who claimed to be descendants of the Khwaja, and who had the superintendence of the shrine – their chief was Shaikh Husain – took possession of the whole of the money, and there were disputes and quarrels between him (Shaikh Husain) and the attendants on the shrine, and there was the allegation that the Shaikhs who had charge of the shrine had told falsehoods with regard to their descent, and as this dispute had gone on a long time, His Majesty appointed trustworthy persons to inquire into the matter and to report thereon. After much investigation it was found that the claim of son-ship was not genuine. Accordingly the charge of the shrine was made over to Shaikh Muhammad Bukhari, who was distinguished among the Saiyids of Hindustan for knowledge and fidelity.²⁴

The concentration of wealth in the shrine, bolstered by Akbar's repeated pilgrimages and his distributions of coins and gifts in person as well as his various revenue grants raised the stakes in competition between shrine authorities over their respective roles and rights and pitted the claimants to two types of hereditary affiliation, descent from the *khwaja* himself and descent from early *khadims* of the shrine, against each other.²⁵

Between the 1560s and 1580s the shrine and those affiliated with it accumulated significant wealth from Mughal patronage. Donations varied in size, often according to the prestige of the recipient: a *khadim* received twenty *bighas* of land irrigated by two wells, each *bigha* being about 0.59 acres; in contrast, a *mutawalli* (administrator of a religious institution) received the revenue of an entire village.²⁶ The land in both cases was in areas near Ajmer, thus contributing to the shrine's dominance in local areas and ties to local governance. Unlike *jagir* revenue grants given to nobles and military men, which were regularly reassigned to prevent the growth of local powerbases, *madad-i ma'ash* charitable grants were inalienable during the lifetime of the grantee. In addition to grants of revenue, some grants provided the supplies for daily rituals at the shrine, such as granting oil to light lamps.²⁷ These sorts of grants drew in the resources from urban artisan groups and the produce collected by local state officials. In addition to these piecemeal grants to individuals, in 1574-5 Akbar made a substantial grant to the *dargah waqf* to support the distribution of food to the poor (*langar*). This grant included the revenue of 500 *bighas* of land from eighteen nearby villages as well as 5,000

²⁴ Abu'l Fazl, 2:511.

²⁵ Currie notes that the *sajjada-nishin* role at a shrine, consisting of care and leadership of the shrine is typically held by direct descendants of the shrine, whereas *khadims* are descendants from disciples or students of the Sufi. In the case of Mu'in al-Din Chishti, it appears that his descendants left Ajmer after a generation, and the early shrine was tended solely by *khadims*. Families claiming descent from Mu'in al Din resurfaced in Ajmer in the mid-fifteenth century. 148-52.

²⁶ Tirmizi, *Mughal Documents 1526-1627*, 55, documents 41, 42. See also Abdul Bari Ma'ni, *Asnad al-Sanadid* (Bombay: 1952), 5-10. The measurement of a *bigha* varied considerably over time. For an extended discussion see Habib, 406-419.

²⁷ Tirmizi, *Mughal Documents 1526-1627*, 53, document 36. Ma'ni, 3-5.

rupees in cash annually, salt to be used in cooking, and revenue from a tax on the sale of salt.²⁸ The cumulative effect of these grants affiliated significant areas of local land to the *dargah* and increased the responsibilities of the *mutawalli*.

The shrine attendants also collected significant revenue from *naẓr*, the charitable donations of pilgrims. Although it is unknown how much wealth was donated in this way, a quarrel in 1580 over the division of these donations prompted Akbar to order an investigation into the matter, which suggests that a lot was at stake.²⁹ This income was dependent on the number and generosity of pilgrims. Akbar's own pilgrimages as well as his patronage likely increased the popularity of the shrine, and thus may have indirectly resulted in greater income from donations for the *khadims*. Akbar also patronized several construction projects that provided both attractions and resources for pilgrims. He built a mosque in the shrine and decorated the shrine with drums.³⁰ He had the city of Ajmer re-fortified and built a palace there as well as had *khanaqahs* (lodges) built to shelter pilgrims.³¹ Perhaps most importantly for the sake of drawing pilgrims, Akbar patronized the building of *kos minars* (pillars placed at a distance of one *kos* or about two miles apart along a road) and of rest houses approximately every ten *kos* along the route between Agra and Ajmer. Both facilitated rapid and light travel between the two cities.³² He may also have ordered wells sunk along the path, which would have further encouraged travel along the route.³³ Although the emperor made his last visit to the shrine in 1580, his construction undoubtedly increased the number of pilgrims visiting the shrine over the course of decades and connected the shrine more deeply to centers of power and population in the Gangetic Plain.

Despite his long involvement with the shrine of Mu'in al-Din, Akbar abruptly stopped going to Ajmer after 1580. In only one instance shortly afterward, in 1581, he deputed Prince Daniyal to go to Ajmer in his stead. Akbar's abandonment of his annual pilgrimage to Ajmer did not signify disfavor of that particular shrine. Rather, it was a sign of his shifting approaches to religion and rule.³⁴ In the early 1580s he stopped his visits to all Sufi shrines. His court chronicler, Abu'l Fazl, explained the sudden change in Akbar's pilgrimage practice in terms of Akbar's deepening understanding of his role as emperor. Akbar was responsible for the welfare of the whole of the empire, so he no longer thought it appropriate to undertake pilgrimage for the benefit of his own soul if the travel did not also address the needs of the empire.³⁵ Because political and administrative issues in Rajasthan and neighboring Gujarat were settled, Akbar's personal presence was no longer

²⁸ Assistant Commissioner's Office, Ajmer, File 1/6779/A(3)9.1 "A note on the Dargah Khwaja Sahib" 1888, Folio 12-3. Rajasthan State Archives, Ajmer. In the file the year on the document, 982 AH has been incorrectly converted to 1567. See also Ma'ni, 167-172.

²⁹ Tirmizi, *Mughal Documents 1526-1627*, 58-9, document 62. The dispute was resolved by an agreement drafted four years later which designated the fractional shares each patrilineage of *khadims* was to receive.

³⁰ S. A. I. Tirmizi, *Ajmer through Inscriptions (1532-1852 A.D.)* (New Delhi: Indian Institute of Islamic Studies, 1968), 18, 50-1.

³¹ Abu'l Fazl, 2:511, 516.

³² Abu'l Fazl, 3:156; Muhammad Arif Qandhari, *Tarikh-i Akbari*, trans. Tasneem Ahmad (Delhi: Pragati Publications, 1993), 65. There are slight discrepancies in the texts about whether the order to build the *minars* was given in 1573 or 1574.

³³ 'Abd al-Qadir Badauni, *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh*, trans. George S. Ranking (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1925, reprint Karachi: Karimsons, 1976) 2:176.

³⁴ Abu'l Fazl, 3:361.

³⁵ Abu'l Fazl, 3:402.

needed there.³⁶ Although Akbar appears not to have made any further grants in Ajmer during the last twenty-five years of his reign, his earlier grants remained in effect. He substantially altered the fortunes of the shrine, the local economy, and political structures in Ajmer.

Akbar also established a precedent of patronage and worship that was followed by his successors. His connection to the shrine in Ajmer, and the ties he displayed between his devotion to the Chishti lineage and the birth of his sons provided the foundation for his son and successor Jahangir's close identification with the shrine of Mu'in al-Din Chishti. Jahangir (r. 1605-1627) re-emphasized the personal ties between the emperor and the Chishti saint. Though he made fewer pilgrimages to the shrine than his father, Jahangir gave the *khwaja* a central place in his projection of himself as emperor. This is apparent in a series of paintings from the imperial atelier that depict Mu'in al-Din Chishti handing the globe to Jahangir, symbolically giving him power over the world.³⁷

Jahangir demonstrated the relationship between his rule and the saint's blessings through his actions during his visits to Ajmer. He first visited the shrine as emperor in 1613, when he performed the pilgrimage, and moved the Mughal court to Ajmer in order to oversee his son Khurram's campaign against the Rana of Mewar.³⁸ Although that campaign was successfully completed in 1615, Jahangir and his court remained in Ajmer until 1616. These three years were the most intense period of Jahangir's patronage of the shrine. During his stay in Ajmer, Jahangir visited the shrine nine times. At one point he presented a large *deg* (cauldron) to the shrine and served the food cooked in it to mendicants and the poor with his own hands.³⁹ After Jahangir recovered from a grave illness, he pierced his ears with pearl earrings, calling himself the 'ear-pierced devotee' of the *khwaja*.⁴⁰ He distributed earrings to his nobles and they became a fashion in his court.⁴¹

Along with demonstrating his devotion to the shrine of Mu'in al-Din, Jahangir undertook a building campaign in Ajmer. Unlike his father's construction in the city, which had mostly focused

³⁶ Various theories have been put forward to explain Akbar's sudden change in practice beyond Abu'l Fazl's explanation. It is also possible, as seems to be suggested by Badauni, that Akbar's growing interest in *subh-i kul* (peace to all) diminished his interest in standard practices of Islam, including pilgrimage to shrines and a redirection of his spiritual focus. Badauni, 2:280. Akbar's cleaving to the Chishti *silsila* between the 1560s and 1580s may also have been motivated by his struggle with his half-brother Mirza Hakim in the northwest and thus by imperial politics external to the region; Akbar ended his pilgrimages shortly before Mirza Hakim was defeated. Munis D. Faruqui, "The Forgotten Prince: Mirza Hakim and the Formation of the Mughal Empire in India," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 48, no. 4 (2005): 513-5.

³⁷ Bichitr, "Portrait of Mu'in al-Din Chishti," India, Mughal period, c. 1620. Opaque watercolor and gold on paper. 21.8 x 13 cm. Chester Beatty Library, Dublin. 7A.14. A corresponding image of "Jahangir Holding a Globe" is found in the same collection, 7A.5. Reproduced in Jahangir, 150-1.

³⁸ Jahangir, *The Jahangirnama: Memoirs of Jahangir, Emperor of India*, trans. and ed. Wheeler M. Thackston (Washington, D.C.: Freer Gallery of Art/Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution and New York: OUP, 1999), 149. Jahangir had first visited the shrine as a prince when he met his great aunt Gulbadan Begum on her return from the Hajj pilgrimage. Gul-badan Begum, *Humayun-Nama (The History of Humayun with Persian Text)*, translated with introduction and notes by Annette S. Beveridge (Lahore: Sang-e-meel Publications, 2002), 75. Khurram became the emperor Shah Jahan.

³⁹ Jahangir, 154-5. The scene is also depicted in paintings: "Jahangir Dispensing Food at Ajmer," Mughal period, ca. 1620 or later, opaque watercolor on paper, 31.5 x 20.7 cm, The Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, 29.6257, which is reproduced in Jahangir, 154; and "Jahangir Dispensing Food at Ajmer," possibly by Fath Chand, from a *Jahangirnama* manuscript. India, Mughal period, c. 1620, opaque watercolor and gold on paper, 31 x 20 cm. Raza Library, Rampur, Album 1, folio 4a and reproduced in Jahangir, 196.

⁴⁰ Jahangir, 161. Ear rings were a cultural sign of a slave, and thus represented utmost devotion. They were also used to express religious devotion, such as the ear piercings of Nath yogis.

⁴¹ Balchand, "Jahangir receives Prince Khurram on his return from the Mewar campaign, Ajmer, Diwan-i 'Amm, 20 February 1615" reproduced in Milo Cleveland Beach and Ebba Koch, *King of the World: The Padshahnama, An Imperial Mughal Manuscript from the Royal Library, Windsor Castle* (London: Azimuth Editions Limited, 1997), plate 5.

on forts and other defensive architecture, Jahangir built pleasure gardens and palaces, a sign of the more settled nature of the empire. During his three-year tenure in Ajmer, Jahangir built a new palace on the banks of Anasagar Lake, a garden retreat in the hills near the city, and a hunting lodge in nearby Pushkar. Upon his departure, he had Bisaldev tank repaired and restored to secure the water supply for the city.⁴² Through these building initiatives he both furthered the ability of the city to support the residence of imperial family and troops and improved the resources for the residents and visitors to the city.

The accrual of land and revenue to the shrine's *waqf* and the *khadims* during Jahangir's reign further entrenched the shrine's political ties. In 1618 the *waqf* consisted of 457,000 *bighas* of land with an annual income of 9,050 rupees. One third of the income was designated for *dargah* functions of *urs* and *roshanai*, one third for Shaikh Hussain, whom Jahangir had reappointed as *mutawalli*, and one third for holy men and renunciants.⁴³ Yet the number of claimants to the *waqf* was also increasing, leading to disputes over the division of the resources. Jahangir frequently issued orders to settle such disputes. For example, in 1618 he issued an order dividing shares in 27,310 *bighas* of land between 229 shrine attendants.⁴⁴

Jahangir's orders also revealed the tie between religious charity and the expectation of political support. More than any other Mughal emperor, Jahangir ordered the resumption or removal of charitable grants made to servants of the shrine in Ajmer. In 1618, noting that thirty-three of the *mujawirs* (attendants) had failed to wait on the emperor while he was in residence in Ajmer between 1613 and 1616, Jahangir ordered the resumption of the land of the missing *mujawirs* into crown lands (*khalisa*).⁴⁵ Details of why these men, who were *khadims* of the *dargah*, failed to attend on Jahangir are unknown, though they may have been motivated by the strand of Chishti philosophy that resisted any involvement with matters of the court. This incident suggests a *quid pro quo* relationship was established where the emperor's religious devotion to the shrine was to be repaid with the political allegiance of the *waqf* and *madad-i ma'ash* beneficiaries. Failure to meet the emperor would result in a loss of rights and income. *Madad-i ma'ash* grants typically concluded with instructions to the grantee to pray for the longevity of the emperor and the empire in exchange for the revenue they received. Under Jahangir, such language was more than a formulaic expression. Grantees who did not show enough dedication to the emperor lost their grants.

Jahangir's successor, Shah Jahan (r. 1628-58), validated his relationship to the shrine by referencing precedent. In the court chronicle the *Shah Jahan Nama*, 'Inayat Khan explained Shah Jahan's pilgrimages through the actions of the previous emperors. Introducing the topic of Shah Jahan's third pilgrimage to the shrine in 1643, he wrote, "The reigning dynasty had always entertained particular reverence for the sacred and revered resting place of Khwaja Mu'in al-Din Chishti, so much so that both the preceding Emperors Akbar and Jahangir had several times made the pious procession round the blessed shrine."⁴⁶ Through this and similar rhetorical acts, the

⁴² Jahangir, 202.

⁴³ Tirmizi, *Mughal Documents 1526-1627*, 107, document 212.

⁴⁴ Tirmizi *Mughal Documents 1526-1627*, 105, document 207. If split evenly, this would give about 119 *bighas* per individual.

⁴⁵ Tirmizi, *Mughal Documents 1526-1627*, 104, document 206.

⁴⁶ 'Inayat Khan, *The Shah Jahan Nama of 'Inayat Khan: An Abridged History of the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan, Compiled by His Royal Librarian : the Nineteenth-Century Manuscript Translation of A.R. Fuller (British Library, Add. 30,777)*, eds. W.E. Begley and Z. A. Desai (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), 303.

Mughal court created narratives of the special relationship between the emperor and this particular shrine. This sort of association was not developed with any other shrine.

As emperor, Shah Jahan made three pilgrimages to Ajmer. Like Jahangir and Akbar before him, each visit was tied to a political objective. For Shah Jahan, this was negotiation and military action against the Rana of Mewar, a pattern that started long before Shah Jahan took the throne. When Shah Jahan led the campaign against the Rana of Mewar in 1613 as a prince, he vowed that if he was victorious, he would build a mosque in the *dargah*. In 1628, when he visited the Ajmer *dargah* on his march toward Akbarabad to ascend the Mughal throne, he initiated the construction of this mosque.⁴⁷ This construction inside the shrine followed the precedent that emperors built and renovated within the shrine itself, while Mughal nobles gave their patronage to other shrines in Ajmer or mosques within the city. This division marked the *dargah* of Mu‘in al-Din as a privileged imperial space.

Like his predecessors, Shah Jahan visited the shrines of Mu‘in al-Din and Miran Sahib, offered prayers, and gave substantial sums of money to shrine attendants and religious mendicants during each stay in Ajmer. In the winter of 1636, he arrived on the day after the *urs* and stayed for a week in the palace on the edge of Anasagar Lake. He visited the *dargah* of Mu‘in al-Din, traveling to the shrine on foot from his palace in Ajmer. In addition to performing pilgrimage rites and reading from the Quran, he “distributed 10,000 rupees among the poor and indigent who resided at the glorious shrine,” inspected the marble mosque he had built eight years earlier, and attended the public prayers in the shrine in the evening.⁴⁸ His second pilgrimage took place in the fall of 1643 and followed the same patterns. He visited the shrine on the day he arrived and again donated 10,000 rupees, this time to the servants of the shrines as well as “other poor people who led a secluded life of piety within its precincts.”⁴⁹

On yet another visit to the shrine on November 26, 1643, Shah Jahan brought together several expressions of sovereignty: piety, charity, and prowess in hunting. He ordered that the animals he had caught while hunting should be cooked in the *deg* (cauldron) granted by his father Jahangir and then fed to the poor as *langar*. ‘Inayat Khan noted that “145 imperial *mans* of meat, rice, butter, and other ingredients were all cooked in it (the *deg*) at once.”⁵⁰ This act of imperial generosity connected the emperor to the piety of the mendicants’ devotional poverty. Beyond the symbolic and theological dimensions of this act, one wonders: did the patronage of food from the *langarkhana* and *deg* support communities of urban poor in Ajmer or was consumption restricted to religious mendicants?

Alongside his pilgrimages, Shah Jahan tackled local political problems and uprisings, particularly relating to Mewar. In October 1654 Shah Jahan headed to Ajmer to address the disloyalty of Rana Raj Singh of Mewar. “Better execution of state affairs” was his primary motivation for the journey.⁵¹ Mughal nobleman ‘Allami Sa‘d Allah Khan went with 30,000 troops toward Mewar to deal with the affront to Mughal authority of the Mewar king’s re-fortification of Chittor, while the main Mughal contingent headed toward Ajmer. On November 6, 1654 Shah Jahan

⁴⁷ ‘Inayat Khan, 15.

⁴⁸ ‘Inayat Khan, 195-6. He arrive on 7 Rajab/December 6, 1636.

⁴⁹ ‘Inayat Khan, 304. Shah Jahan arrived in Ajmer of 6 Ramazan 1053/November 8, 1643.

⁵⁰ ‘Inayat Khan, 304. It is also interesting to note the use of animals caught in the hunt for this charitable feeding, both because those animals were seen as royal prerogative, but also because of the claims that the *degs* were used to make vegetarian food and thus include Hindus; clearly this was not always the case.

⁵¹ ‘Inayat Khan, 501.

reached Ajmer, performed the pilgrimage to the shrine and, as in his prior visits, gave 10,000 rupees to shrine attendants and ascetics. Shrine officials reported to him that the annual expenses of the *dargah* were 27,000 rupees but that “the revenues of the villages charitably allowed for its support had exceeded that sum, with the result that a quantity of money had now accumulated in its endowment.”⁵² Nevertheless, Shah Jahan conferred 30,000 rupees for the annual expenses, which conferred an excess of 3,000 rupees above actual expenditures. When the emperor received a conciliatory petition from Rana Raj Singh, he made a second visit to the shrine and departed Ajmer shortly thereafter on 24 November 1654.⁵³

Shah Jahan, like his father and grandfather, took an interventionist approach to the administration of the Ajmer shrine that impacted the community of shrine attendants. Shah Jahan appointed Shaikh Mu‘in al-Din as *sajjada-nishin* of the shrine, thereby perpetuating the imperial prerogative to manage the affairs of the shrine and compelling the loyalty of the *dargah* administration to the emperor.⁵⁴ He also devised a new system for dividing donations from pilgrims to servants of the shrine, which persists to the present. He divided the *mujawirs* into seven groups of 27 people. Each group held the key to the shrine one day a week, which gave them rights to *naẓr* (offering) revenue on that day.⁵⁵ While this clarified the division of revenue rights, it also formed restructured alliances between *mujawirs* according to the division. In 1638 Shah Jahan also revised how the *waqf* was apportioned, changing the divisions and amounts set by Akbar and making some additional designations. He granted 25,780 rupees in annual revenue from various districts that he designated to cover the expense of *urs*, *langar*, *roshanai* (lighting), *furush* (floor coverings) *gul* (flowers) as well as for the maintenance of the mosque officials in the shrine and charity for holy men (*hafizes*) as well as others including travelers.⁵⁶ Through these grants, the shrine impacted the local economy because of the scale of communities employed and its ability to support Muslim intellectuals as well as travelers and the poor.

Shah Jahan also reformed the *madad-i ma‘ash* grants held by the *mujawirs* by making them hereditary in this specific case. Breaking with the tradition of resumption of *madad-i ma‘ash* land on the death of the recipient, Shah Jahan supported the rights for descendants of a *mujawir* to inherit his *madad-i ma‘ash* as long as they actively performed their traditional duties at the shrine. The *mutawalli* retained the right to seize the shares in *madad-i ma‘ash* of *mujawirs* who died without heir or those shares that were not legitimately held, such as those that were gained fraudulently or forcefully.⁵⁷ This order further entrenched control over land and revenue in the hands of families of shrine attendants.

Shah Jahan’s reforms in Ajmer were carried forward by his son Aurangzeb (r. 1658-1707). Aurangzeb visited Ajmer only during the first half of his almost fifty year reign because of his long campaigns in the Deccan during his later years.⁵⁸ He made his first visit to the shrine after his victory

⁵² Inayat Khan, 502.

⁵³ Inayat Khan, 502.

⁵⁴ S. A. I. Tirmizi, *Mughal Documents (1628-1659) Volume II* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1995), 44, document 15.

⁵⁵ Tirmizi, *Mughal Documents (1628-1659)*, 108, document 279 from November 10, 1654.

⁵⁶ Tirmizi, *Mughal Documents (1628-1659)*, 60-1, document 84. See also Ma‘ni 157-78 for a transcription, Urdu translation and full discussion of this grant as well as Akbar’s earlier *farman*.

⁵⁷ Tirmizi, *Mughal Documents (1628-1659)*, 63, document 92.

⁵⁸ His small number of visits was not due to a dislike of Sufism. While in the Deccan Aurangzeb showed repeated devotion at the *dargah* of Saiyid Muhammad Gesu Deraz in Gulbarga. Saqi Must‘ad Khan, *Maasir-i-Alamgiri: A History of the Emperor Aurangzib-Alamgir*, translated and annotated by Jadunath Sarkar (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 1981), 175-6, 188.

over his brother Dara Shukoh on March 22, 1659 at the battle of Deorai, which was fought in a mountain pass only a couple of miles outside Ajmer. Immediately after the victory at Deorai, Aurangzeb visited the *dargah* in Ajmer and offered prayers of thanks for his victory. He also held a royal audience there to reward his loyal followers for their service in the battle before departing for the imperial capital, Shahjahanabad.⁵⁹ Although Aurangzeb had already crowned himself emperor once, it was this victory that confirmed his claim to the Mughal throne because it effectively ended his brother Dara Shukoh's campaign for the throne. The victory in Deorai paved the way for Aurangzeb's second coronation, while his visit to Mu'in al-Din's shrine immediately afterward laid claim to his dynasty's spiritual legacy.

Politics drew Aurangzeb back to Ajmer between 1680 and the end of 1681. He spent about one-and-a-half years in Ajmer overseeing the campaign against the Rathor rebels in Marwar. During this time, he regularly attended Friday prayers in the shrine and made efforts to improve the security of the city.⁶⁰ Overall, the descriptions of Aurangzeb's time in Ajmer in chronicles such as the *Maasiri 'Alamgiri* give sparse details, but Aurangzeb seems to have followed past precedent, though his donations were smaller. He visited the shrine immediately upon arriving in Ajmer, made a donation to the shrine that was reported to have been of Rupees 5,000, and also visited the shrine immediately prior to his departure from the city. Aurangzeb stayed in the 'Jahangiri' palace on the banks of Anasagar.⁶¹ Also following past precedent, Aurangzeb used his stay in Ajmer as a base for sending troops against the rebelling Jodhpur Rathors and for a campaign against the Rana of Mewar, who was supporting the rebels.⁶²

Aurangzeb's grants to shrine attendants also followed prior patterns, though, here too, he was less generous than previous emperors and did not add any major new lands to the *dargah waqf*. There are only four extant grants from him that appear genuine.⁶³ In one, he granted thirty *bighas* of land in *madad-i ma'ash* to a *khadim*, in another instance fifteen *bighas* each to two different *khadims*, and in the third, forty-five *bighas* which were divided three ways.⁶⁴ These grants supported the livelihood of the *khadims*, some of whom were described as scholars. Aurangzeb decreed that all Mughal *madad-i ma'ash* grants were hereditary in 1690.⁶⁵ Like Shah Jahan's earlier Ajmer-specific order to this effect, this change consolidated economic resources and power in the hands of *khadims* and empowered them to claim rights across successive rulers.

Over the course of almost 150 years, Mughal patronage and interventions in shrine management tied the *dargah* of Mu'in al-Din Chishti and the city of Ajmer to Mughal power and prestige. *Khadims* and others affiliated with the *dargah* accessed increased revenue and resources, which raised their power and status. But it also made them vulnerable to imperial ambitions. Although much Chishti literature emphasizes a separation from government power, in this case, the shrine was tied ever more closely into Mughal power. Mughal policies favored various *khadims*,

⁵⁹ Inayat Khan, 557.

⁶⁰ Moini, "The City of Ajmer," 22-24.

⁶¹ Saqi Must'ad Khan, 107,111,123,125.

⁶² Saqi Must'ad Khan, 116-7

⁶³ There are several *farmans* labeled as from Aurangzeb in the collection of *Faramin-i Salatin*, however, following both Moini's analysis of errors in the titles and significant differences in language and style from other Aurangzeb *farmans*, these may be forgeries. It is possible that they were grants from 1170 AH, not 1070. Moini, 286-7; Bashiruddin Ahmed Dihlavi, 16-7.

⁶⁴ Ma'ni, 229-40.

⁶⁵ Habib, 351-2.

divans and *mutawallis* at different times, which led to struggles and conflicts between these groups. Ajmer experienced significant, if uneven, influence from the interest Mughal emperors took in the city, but its position as a regional headquarters placed imperial power at the core of the city's politics and identity. Over the course of the eighteenth century, as Mughal power faded in Rajasthan and Rajputs and Marathas took over the city, these new authorities grappled with the legacy of Mughal patronage in Ajmer.

The Rise of Rajput States and the Ajmer Shrine, c. 1707-1743

After the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, Mughal imperial power and patronage in Rajasthan began to wane. Short reigns and repeated succession struggles fractured imperial power and strained the treasury. Rajput maharajas and chiefs in Rajasthan continued to pay lip-service to the Mughal Empire, but they drew closer or further from the court depending on their political advantage and consistently sought to cement and expand their local authority in Rajasthan. Ajmer was a central site for Rajput political struggles in the eighteenth century because of its association with Mughal power. In particular, the city became a point of contention between the emerging states of Marwar and Amber. During the first half of the eighteenth century, the alliance between Marwar and Amber ebbed and waned as the rulers of both kingdoms attempted to assert their preeminence within the region. Marwar and Amber's claims to Ajmer were a projection of their own power vis-à-vis the Mughals and their competition with each other.

The Rajput kings of Marwar and Amber asserted their power in Ajmer in diverse ways. Both sought power through negotiation and financial arrangements. If negotiations failed, Ajit Singh of Marwar tended to use violence and defiance, attacking Ajmer multiple times and revoking Mughal policies there and in Marwar. In contrast, Jai Singh II of Amber built his influence in Ajmer through a campaign of patronage. Both of these approaches sought to hollow out Mughal authority and built on long-standing and complicated relationships between Rajput states and Muslim shrines and symbols. Ajit Singh and Jai Singh's strategies were part of a longer history of complicated relations between the Rajputs and Islamic institutions. In the sixteenth and seventeenth century, Rajputs in Rajasthan had shown a range of attitudes toward Muslim shrines and symbols. Prominent Rajputs had frequently visited the *dargah* in Ajmer, often in conjunction with pilgrimages to Pushkar, and had supported the construction of mosques and *Idgahs* in their territories.⁶⁶ But mosques in Rajput territories had also been destroyed or damaged at times, including in retaliation for Aurangzeb's campaign against temples throughout the Rajput states during the peak of the Rathor rebellion in the 1680s.⁶⁷ These contradictory impulses suggest that the relation of the Rajputs to Muslim institutions

⁶⁶ *Waqai' Sarkar Rantanbhor wa Ajmer*, Aligarh Transcript, Centre of Advanced Study in History Research Library, Aligarh Muslim University, f 51. Z. A. Desai, *Published Muslim Inscriptions of Rajasthan* (Jaipur: The Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Govt. of Rajasthan, 1971), 107. Inscription 338 attributes the construction of an *Idgah* in Merta to patronage from Maharaja Jaswant Singh of Marwar (r. 1638-78) during the reign of Emperor Shah Jahan.

⁶⁷ Richard M. Eaton, "Temple Desecration and Indo-Muslim States," in *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia*, eds. David Gilmartin and Bruce B. Lawrence (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2000), 265. *Waqai'i*, f 191-2 reports complaints of *faqir* harassed and not allowed to say the call to prayer. *Waqai'i*, f 372 records damage to mosques and an order to repair them; f 11 and 52 records the destruction of temples by agents of the Ajmer Subahdar Iftikhar Khan. These temple destructions are not included in Eaton's survey. Syed Liyaqat Hussain Moini, "A Critical Analysis of the 'Waqai Sarkar-i-Ajmer Wa Ranthambhore'" in *Bias in Indian Historiography* ed. Devahuti (Delhi: Indian History & Culture Society, D. K. Publications, 1980), 393, makes brief mention of some of these incidents in the *Waqai'i*.

was shaped in part by their association with the Mughals and the political goals of the Rajputs, rather than a consistent religious philosophy or anti-Muslim bigotry.⁶⁸

The early eighteenth century saw the erosion of Mughal authority in Rajasthan. After the death of Aurangzeb, Rajput loyalty to the Mughal crown, which had already been shaky, weakened further.⁶⁹ Between 1707 and 1709 the rulers of the three major kingdoms in Rajasthan: Maharana Amar Singh of Mewar, Maharaja Ajit Singh of Marwar, and Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II of Amber, were often allied with each other in their defiance of the Mughal court. Emperor Bahadur Shah's (r. 1707-1712) claims to the Rajput capital cities of Jodhpur and Amber as Mughal crown land (*khalisa*) triggered their initial resistance. The Rajput kings simultaneously entered into armed rebellion and negotiations with Bahadur Shah in order to secure their homelands and then enlarge their territory and influence.⁷⁰ Ajmer lay at the center of these struggles.

Rajput resistance initially reinforced Mughal power over Ajmer and Mughal affiliation with the *dargah* of Mu'in al-Din Chishti. Bahadur Shah marched through Rajasthan with the imperial army and made his first visit to the *dargah* of Mu'in al-Din as part of his campaign to make Ajit Singh and Jai Singh submit to imperial authority in the end of 1707 and spring of 1708.⁷¹ Even before he reached Ajmer, Bahadur Shah was demonstrating his ties to the shrine. While camped near Amber, over 80 miles northeast of Ajmer, Bahadur Shah received the Chishti shrine's administrator (*mutawalli*), Sabir Ali, who brought him *tabarruk* (blessed food or other gifts from the *dargah*).⁷² As the emperor marched further toward Ajmer, he sent gifts to Sabir Ali, affirming their relationship. He sent Prince Rafi' al-Shan to visit the shrine under the guidance of Bijai Singh, the brother of Jai Singh who wanted to be made king in Jai Singh's place.⁷³

Bahadur Shah's visit to Ajmer followed the established idiom of imperial devotion and served as an assertion of his imperial authority. Although he had claimed the imperial throne after Aurangzeb's death in 1707, he continued to face serious challenges for the throne in 1708. Following a well-established script of imperial faith and charity was one way to demonstrate his rightful claim to rule.⁷⁴ On March 25, 1708, Bahadur Shah visited the shrine of Mu'in al-Din

⁶⁸ This contradicts Eaton, who argues that because mosques and other Muslim institutions were "considered detached from both land and dynastic authority and hence politically inactive," they generally escaped damage or destruction, unlike temples. Eaton, 267.

⁶⁹ Ajit Singh and his supporters in Marwar had remained in rebellion against the emperor for several decades at the end of the seventeenth century. The Kachhwaha Rajputs of Amber had fallen on hard times during the rule of Raja Ram Singh (1667-1688), who was suspected of helping Shivaji escape from Agra and thus punished with a greatly reduce posting thereby provoking resentments against the Mughals. V.S. Bhatnagar, *Life and Times of Sawai Jai Singh 1688-1743* (Delhi: Impex India, 1974), 13.

⁷⁰ The conflict between Jai Singh and Bahadur Shah was further complicated by the fact that Jai Singh had sided against Bahadur Shah during the Mughal war of succession whereas Bijai Singh, Jai Singh's brother, had allied with Bahadur Shah. Bijai Singh proceeded to use his connections to the emperor to attempt to further his own claims to the Amber throne. Bhatnagar, 38-9.

⁷¹ After demonstrating his power to Jai Singh by seizing the Kachhwaha capital Amber and renaming it Islamabad, the emperor sent some of his men in advance to Ajmer while he headed toward Marwar with the main army to face Ajit Singh. In February 1708 Ajit Singh entered negotiations with the emperor, in part pressured by the willingness of Indar Singh, the *jagirdar* of Nagaur, to continue making claims for the Marwar throne. As part of the final agreement, Ajit Singh guaranteed that he would reinstate Islamic justice based on the *shari'a* and *qazi* system in his territories, which he had ended the previous year in defiance to the Mughals. Bhatnagar, 47-51, Moini, 59-60.

⁷² Moini, "The City of Ajmer," 54, citing the *Bahadur Shah Nama*.

⁷³ Moini, 58-9.

⁷⁴ To further emphasize his ties to the Sufis patronized by the Mughal ruling family, Bahadur Shah had visited the shrine of Shaikh Salim Chishti in Fatehpur Sikri as he marched from Agra toward Ajmer. Moini, 52.

accompanied by princes and nobles, where he offered 1000 *asbrafis*, gold coins worth about 14 rupees, and gave 11,000 rupees of *naẓr* to the *khadims* of the shrines.⁷⁵ The *mutawalli* presented the emperor with a sword, drum, turban, and sweets. The following day the imperial women visited the shrine and made offerings.⁷⁶ Over the course of a week, Bahadur Shah returned to the *dargah* multiple times, offering money and prayers each time, and made at least one *madad-i ma'ash* revenue grant to a shrine attendant.⁷⁷

However, in the face of ongoing military challenges in South India, Bahadur Shah was not able to sustain the power his visit to the shrine symbolized. Believing that he had settled matters in Rajasthan, Bahadur Shah departed Ajmer on April 1, 1708 to march toward the Deccan where his brother Kam Bakhsh was challenging his succession. The Rajputs almost immediately began to resist Mughal authority again. Both Jai Singh and Ajit Singh and their troops were supposed to join Bahadur Shah's march to the Deccan. However, they abandoned the imperial army as soon as Bahadur Shah had crossed the Narmada River. Forming an alliance with Maharana Amar Singh, Jai Singh and Ajit Singh sought to reclaim their capitals of Amber and Jodhpur.⁷⁸ After seizing these cities, Ajit Singh and Jai Singh became increasingly bold in their resistance and conducted a number of raids and sieges throughout 1708, including capturing Sambhar, an important salt manufacturing site and armed garrison.⁷⁹

Jai Singh and Ajit Singh's defiance of Bahadur Shah culminated in their plan to seize Ajmer in early 1709. But, at this juncture the alliance between Jai Singh and Ajit Singh broke down. Jai Singh became concerned that any attack that threatened the Ajmer *dargah* would have more serious consequences in imperial politics than he was willing to risk. Throughout his life, Jai Singh oscillated between defiance and conciliatory negotiations with the Mughals. In early 1709, one of his agents, Devi Das, was negotiating with the imperial court on Jai Singh's behalf for an imperial office (*mansab*). As the Rajputs were planning the attack on Ajmer, Jai Singh's *divan* (minister of state) Bikhari Das received a letter from Devi Das urging caution. He warned against quarreling with *dargah* officials and emphasized that "there can be hindrances in the grant of a *mansab* in case the affair of *dargah* will not be decided peacefully."⁸⁰ Devi Das's letter highlighted that guaranteeing the safety, security and prosperity of the shrine was a key part of negotiations with the Mughal ruler. Displeasing the *dargah* officials would have serious political repercussions. Devi Das's advice prevailed, and Jai Singh decided not to accompany Ajit Singh in the attack on Ajmer.

Ajit Singh, however, was not deterred. On February 19, 1709, he laid siege to the city of Ajmer. His campaign was not welcomed by the city's inhabitants. A large number of Ajmer residents supported the Mughal government over the Rajputs in this conflict. Not only musket men and soldiers, but also several thousand Hindus and the *khadims* of the *dargah* supported Mughal commanders in resisting Ajit Singh's siege in 1709.⁸¹ After several days of siege, Raja Raj Singh of

⁷⁵ For more on the value of *asbrafis* and their fluctuation, see Habib, 432, 439.

⁷⁶ Moini, 64-5. Moini does not think it that Bahadur Shah visited the shrine of Miran Sahib, though one of the sources consulted by him does mention the visit.

⁷⁷ Ma'ni, 261. Dated 13 Muharram, 2 Regnal. Bahadur Shah presented 100 *bighas* of land to Khadim Saiyid Muhammad 'Aqal.

⁷⁸ Bhatnagar, 54-56, Moini, 66.

⁷⁹ Moini, 76.

⁸⁰ *A Descriptive List of the Khatoot Abalkaran (Rajasthani (1633 to 1769 AD))* (Bikaner: Rajasthan State Archives, 1975), 66, Document 280_272 Chaitra Badi 5, 1765 VS/17 February 1709. Some scholars also postulate that Jai Singh did not join Ajit Singh because of miscommunication between the two. Bhatnagar, 71.

⁸¹ Moini, 82 fn 1.

Kishangarh negotiated a settlement between Ajit Singh and Shuja'at Khan, the Mughal governor (*subahdar*) in Ajmer. Ajit Singh received 45,000 rupees, two horses and an elephant in exchange for lifting the siege.⁸² Although Ajit Singh did not successfully take Ajmer, his siege drew the ire of Bahadur Shah. The emperor returned to Rajasthan as soon as he could leave the Deccan. The imperial army began to march toward Ajmer in the fall of 1709 to pressure Ajit Singh to submit. In June 1710, while camped just outside Ajmer at Deorai, Bahadur Shah received both Ajit Singh and Jai Singh in an audience. They once again swore their loyalty to the emperor and were granted *mansab* ranks as well as *jagir* territory in exchange.⁸³

After the meeting, all parties visited nearby holy sites. Both Rajput kings went to Pushkar and performed pilgrimage rites. Formerly under close control of the Mughal throne, Pushkar in this period emerged as a symbolic site of Rajput power in opposition to the Mughals in Ajmer, with pilgrimage and holy dips in the lake book-ending political negotiations. Meanwhile, the emperor proceeded to Ajmer where he visited the shrines of Mu'in al-Din Chishti and Miran Hussain Khing Sawar and made offerings at both. He also gave another revenue grant to some of the *khadims* for their religious service. Overall, Bahadur Shah's second pilgrimage at Ajmer continued to uphold Mughal imperial conventions in demonstrating sovereignty through patronage and belied shifting politics and his weakened position. However, his relatively conservative revenue grants reflected the strained financial conditions of the empire.⁸⁴

Despite Bahadur Shah's efforts to implement Mughal rule over Ajmer and the entire region of Rajasthan, his administration was under constant threat from local resistance led by the maharajas and the internal dissension of other nobles. Ajmer was a prime target for Ajit Singh and other Rajputs because of its strategic location and close affiliation with Mughal interests. Even after submitting to the crown a second time, Ajit Singh continued to wage minor skirmishes and raids across Rajasthan. In the early spring of 1711 Ajit Singh reached Pushkar en route to Ajmer with troops, but finding the imperial forces at Ajmer better prepared than he had thought, he withdrew to Merta.⁸⁵ The ongoing raids and battles threatened the morale of Mughal officials in Rajasthan.⁸⁶ Mughal officials also often had their own political intrigues that disrupted local life in Ajmer, such as when the *subahdar* Shuja'at Khan fought with his sons in the city, leading to fifteen injuries and deaths.⁸⁷ Such violence and uncertainty in and near Ajmer threatened the safety of pilgrims and likely decreased their number, thereby hurting the fortunes of the *dargah*.

Bahadur Shah's death in 1712 set off another succession struggle for the Mughal throne, which increased the disruptions to Mughal administration in Rajasthan. Ajit Singh and Jai Singh took advantage of these disruptions to further their resistance. Neither Jai Singh nor Ajit Singh acknowledged the short-reigned Jahandar Shah's (r. 1712-1713) accession to the Mughal throne.

⁸² R. S. Sangwan, *Jodhpur and the Later Mughals AD 1707 – 1752* (New Delhi: Pragati Publications, 2006), 14-5. The siege itself was planned under false pretenses. Shuja'at Khan, the *subahdar* of Ajmer, wrote a letter to Ajit Singh inviting him to attack the city and promising no resistance. This letter proved to be a decoy. When Ajit Singh drew near to Ajmer, he realized that Shuja'at Khan had been joined by about 2,500 troops and was opposing him, instead of inviting him into the city.

⁸³ Moini suggests that the emperor's willingness to reconcile the Rajput maharajas at this juncture was due to the pressures Bahadur Shah was facing from rebellious Sikhs in the Panjab. Moini, 96.

⁸⁴ Moini, 92, 100-1. Bahadur Shah gave 11,000 rupees *nazr* at the shrine of Mu'in al-Din Chishti, and 1,000 rupees *nazr* at the Khing Sawar shrine. The revenue grant was for 100 *bighas* of land and dated 7 Rabi' I, 4 Regnal. Ma'ni, 267.

⁸⁵ Moini, 104.

⁸⁶ Moini, 91.

⁸⁷ Moini, 74 fn 1.

Instead, ignoring Mughal orders, they jointly captured and claimed territory from Mughal officials around Didwana and Sambhar in central Rajasthan.⁸⁸ Ajit Singh also expanded his territorial claims near Ajmer, which interrupted dargah revenue streams. Over the course of 1712, Ajit Singh seized villages in Pargana Ajmer that were assigned to others in *jagir* and began to collect tax revenues from them in defiance of Mughal orders.⁸⁹ The villages he seized included Bhinai and other areas that were part of the *dargah waqf*.⁹⁰ In the fall of 1713 Ajit Singh was collecting revenue in the *parganas* of Baswa and Didwana, including from lands that were part of the *dargah waqf*, which forced *langarkhanas* (charity kitchens) at the *dargah* to close and led to complaints about his actions.⁹¹

Once Emperor Farrukh Siyar (r. 1713-1719) consolidated his power in 1713, he began to respond to the defiance of Ajit Singh and Jai Singh. Because Jai Singh made significant overtures of concession, he was spared the brunt of the Mughal backlash. Ajit Singh, however, had continued to try to expand his power in various ways, including attacking the territories of nearby Rajputs and attempting the assassination of his rival Mohkam Singh, the son of Indar Singh of Nagaur, in Delhi in September 1713. The emperor also received complaints about Ajit Singh's treatment of Muslims.⁹² In response, Farrukh Siyar planned a military campaign against Ajit Singh. He deputed Hussain 'Ali Khan (d. 1720), one of the powerful Saiyid brothers who propped up his rule, to lead a campaign against Ajit Singh.

En route to Marwar, Hussain 'Ali Khan spent several days in Ajmer in January 1714. Camping at Anasagar lake, he visited the Chishti *dargah* and as well as Miran Sahib's shrine and presented *naẓr*. He also visited the tombs of his parents outside the eastern city walls.⁹³ Given the power of the Saiyid brothers in supporting Farrukh Siyar's reign, Hussain Ali Khan's pilgrimage fulfilled the obligations of the emperor to the Ajmer *dargah*. Farrukh Siyar himself never made a pilgrimage to Ajmer. During his reign, the relationship with the shrine began to rely on long-distance correspondence, rather than the presence of the emperor. The *khadims* of the shrine sent *tabarruk* to Farrukh Siyar upon his coronation.⁹⁴ In exchange, the emperor still offered protection. Farrukh Siyar's campaigns against Ajit Singh protected Mughal interests and the interests of the *dargah*. In April 1714, after months of negotiations and military action in Marwar, Ajit Singh signed a treaty and submitted to the Mughal ruler. Hussain Ali Khan withdrew from Marwar to Pushkar and then Ajmer, where he stayed for several months shoring up Mughal authority in the region before departing.⁹⁵

Between 1714 and 1720, Ajit Singh and Jai Singh held governorships in Gujarat and Malwa respectively that gave them an outlet for expansion without threatening Mughal power and interests in the Ajmer area. Shortly after Farrukh Siyar was deposed in 1719, the short-lived new emperor Rafi' al-Daulah (r. 1719) rewarded Ajit Singh for supporting him with the *subahdari* of Ajmer and Gujarat.⁹⁶ This was the first time a Rajput was put directly in charge of Ajmer province and this post

⁸⁸ Moini, 109.

⁸⁹ Sangwan, 34, Moini, 110.

⁹⁰ Sangwan, 34.

⁹¹ Jagat Narayan, 134.

⁹² Moini, 118-9. Mohkam Singh was a potential claimant to the Marwar throne. Aurangzeb had briefly installed Indar Singh as the king of Marwar after Jaswant Singh's death and the outbreak of the Rajput Rebellion in 1679.

⁹³ Moini, 122-3. Jagat Narayan attributes this trip to Farrukh Siyar, but that seems to be a misreading. *Ajmer and the Mughal Emperors* (Kota (Raj.): Neha Vikas Prakashan, 1997), 135.

⁹⁴ Moini, 115.

⁹⁵ Moini, 129.

⁹⁶ Moini, 134-136. Shah Jahan II ruled for under four months.

greatly expanded Ajit Singh's standing. When Muhammad Shah (r. 1719-1748) succeeded to the Mughal throne in September 1719, he reconfirmed the grant of these provinces to Ajit Singh in gratitude for his help in negotiating Jai Singh's submission to the new emperor. Jai Singh's submission obviated the need for the emperor to march through Rajasthan and so his planned visit to the *dargah* of Mu'in al-Din was canceled.⁹⁷

But soon thereafter, conflict between Ajit Singh and the Mughals reemerged. The death of both Saiyid brothers in the fall of 1720 weakened Ajit Singh's position at the Mughal court because they had become his main allies. Instead, Jai Singh came into greater favor with the new emperor, Muhammad Shah. Ajit Singh went into rebellion. In 1721, Muhammad Shah ordered that Ajit Singh be removed from the *subahdari* of both Gujarat and Ajmer because of reports of his maladministration and oppression of the people. In response, Ajit Singh marched on Ajmer with a large body of troops and seized the city by force.⁹⁸ He occupied the Mughal palace on the edge of Anasagar.⁹⁹ Shortly after he took control of Ajmer, Ajit Singh may have persecuted the city's Muslims. Some reports describe that when he seized Ajmer he suppressed Muslims in Ajmer by ordering the destruction of mosques, bans on the call to prayer, and bans on the killing and consumption of cattle.¹⁰⁰ Other sources mention that Ajit Singh oppressed the people of Ajmer with no further details.¹⁰¹

This incident was part of a pattern of Ajit Singh's treatment of Muslim communities in his territory, or at least the narration thereof. In one account, when Ajit Singh rebelled after Aurangzeb's death, he implemented prohibitions on the slaughter of cows, oppressed Muslims, and rebuilt temples in his territory.¹⁰² The Persian sources might have used hackneyed explanations or tropes to justify Mughal aggression against Ajit Singh. However, given the widespread nature of the account and other evidence referring to incidents of mosque destruction in Rajasthan in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the charges likely held some truth.¹⁰³ P. M. Currie argues

⁹⁷ Moini, 139-40.

⁹⁸ Moini, 141-3, Sangwan, 80. Moini and Sangwan disagree about the order of events; Sangwan writes that Ajit Singh's march on Ajmer was a reaction to his removal from posts; Moini that the march provoked his removal.

⁹⁹ Vikram Singh Bhati, ed., *Mundiyyar ri Khyat* (Jodhpur: Itihas Anusandhan Sansthan, 2005), 188-9.

¹⁰⁰ There is considerable confusion and disagreement in the secondary literature about these events. Some authors, such as Currie put this attack in 1719 (111). R.S. Sangwan acknowledges Ajit Singh's promises not to harass the population, but does not see this as evidence that he did harass them (80, 90 note 111).

¹⁰¹ Moini, 142.

¹⁰² Moini, 47. Many eighteenth and early nineteenth century Rajasthani chronicles do not mention these earlier oppressions and resistance, and some omit it in regard to the events of 1721 as well. For example, *Mundiyyar ri Khyat* focuses almost entirely on battles and the movements of armies in its discussion of this time period. There is no mention of any policies regarding the general populace (188-192).

¹⁰³ In 1117 AH/1705-6 and again in an undated document Rao Chatar Singh appealed to Jai Singh that he had been falsely accused of dismantling a mosque. *A Descriptive List of Arzdashts (Persian) Addressed by the Various Officials to the Rulers of Jaipur 1658- 1707* (Bikaner: Rajasthan State Archives, 1981), 93 No. 484/1228. It is impossible to know the scale, but there were also hints of anti-Muslim violence in the wake of the Rajput rebellion. For instance, Mohammad Ilyas and Fateh Mohammad made a complaint to Ram Singh that two of their students had been caned or beaten and brutally killed as well as religious pamphlets and books destroyed by men in the service of the maharaja. The complainants wanted these men removed from service. Ibid., 33. Ajit Singh was also not alone in making restrictions on the slaughter of animals. In an *arzdasht* (petition) from 1716, Mohammad Ali petitioned the Jaipur maharaja to remove a ban on slaughtering goats in Ranthambhor because the ban was causing difficulties for both Hindus and Muslims. *A Descriptive List of the Arzdashts (Persian) Addressed by the Various Officials to the Rulers of Jaipur (1707 to 1720 AD)* (Bikaner: Rajasthan State Archives, 1986), 16, document 176/1995.

that Ajit Singh's actions in Ajmer were revenge for Aurangzeb's policy of temple destruction and harassment of Hindus during the Rajput Rebellion.¹⁰⁴ But he was more likely motivated by generalized antagonism to the Mughals that targeted Muslim institutions in Ajmer because of the deep affiliation between the Mughals and the Sufi shrine of Ajmer.¹⁰⁵

Once he secured Ajmer, Ajit Singh demonstrated a conciliatory attitude, restored rights to Muslim subjects and showed documents to the Mughal Court to justify his occupation of the city.¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, over the next six months, Ajit Singh and the Mughal army threatened and raided each other. Only when Ajit Singh's representative at the Mughal Court presented his submission and *nazr* to the emperor on March 21, 1722 was peace restored in the area. In spite of his rebellion, Ajit Singh was allowed to retain the *subahdari* of Ajmer, a post he held until the following spring when he murdered two officials who had been posted to keep a check on his power.¹⁰⁷ Ajit Singh resisted handing over Ajmer to the new *subahdar*, Haider Quli Khan, which led to two month siege of Taragarh Fort in the summer of 1723. In November of that year, Ajit Singh attended the Mughal Court and sought to rejoin the ranks of nobles.¹⁰⁸ His reign and possible reconciliation with the Mughal court was cut short when he was murdered on June 23, 1724 by his son Bakht Singh.¹⁰⁹ Ajit Singh's death ended Rajput military attacks on Ajmer for a quarter century.

Ajit Singh had a largely antagonistic relationship with Ajmer's Muslim population through the 1710s and 1720s as he sought to control the city. His string of attacks on the city disrupted life, reduced *dargah* income and interfered with religious rituals. Taking a different approach, from the 1720s onward Jai Singh sought influence in Ajmer through negotiation and, especially, by becoming a patron of Ajmer's Sufi shrines. With the declining influence of the Mughal government and its inability to step in effectively to safeguard rights of the *dargah* and its community, the shrine administration became more dependent on regional kings and chiefs. Rajput chiefs had visited the *dargah* and made offerings to the *kehadims* since at least the 1670s, but in the eighteenth century these connections were intensified and regularized as exemplified by the Amber king's patronage.

Led by Jai Singh's efforts, the affairs of Ajmer also came increasingly under Rajput sway through non-military actions from the 1720s. Although non-Rajput Mughal officials held many of the important *jagirs* and administrative posts in Rajasthan, Rajput rulers used the *ijara* system of revenue farming to gain control of these lands and posts. In November 1728, Abhai Singh (r. 1724-1749), who was Ajit Singh's successor in the kingdom of Marwar, wrote to Jai Singh that "the *parganas* of Ajmer, Sambhar, and Didwana were granted on lease to both of us (half share each) through your (Jai Singh's) efforts." However, the emperor had recently withdrawn approval for this arrangement. Abhai Singh requested that Jai Singh get the order reapproved or prepare to use force to hold onto their claim to this land.¹¹⁰ Jai Singh successfully resolved the issue through negotiations

¹⁰⁴ Currie, 110.

¹⁰⁵ G. D. Sharma interprets Ajit Singh's attacks on Ajmer as a way of pressuring the Mughal Emperor to respond to his demands more quickly. Sharma, *Rajput Polity: A Study of the Politics and Administration of the State of Marwar, 1638-1749* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1977), 226.

¹⁰⁶ Moini, 144; Sangwan, 80; Currie, 111.

¹⁰⁷ Moini, 145-8.

¹⁰⁸ Moini, 150-1.

¹⁰⁹ G. D. Sharma, 241.

¹¹⁰ Gopal Narayan Bahura and Chandramani Singh, *Catalogue of Historical Documents in Kapad Dwara Jaipur* (Amber & Jaipur: Jaigarh Public Charitable Trust, 1988), 149, document 118.

within a month, though the new agreement favored him alone.¹¹¹ Building on these successes, he later took the Ajmer *subahdari* on *ijara* in 1740.¹¹²

In addition to *ijara* agreements, Jai Singh turned to religious patronage to establish and reinforce his authority in the area. In many ways, Jai Singh's relations with the Ajmer shrine were similar to the patterns established by the Mughal rulers, although he limited his patronage to offerings to the shrine and *khadims* rather than *waqf* or *madad-i ma'ash* grants. His donations generally correlated with the times when he was present in Ajmer or Pushkar, and when he was involved in political negotiations to establish himself in the region. Jai Singh's patronage of the *dargah* between the 1720s and 1740s was a demonstration of his power over Ajmer and its environs in the face of Marwar Maharaja Abhai Singh's desire for control of the area.¹¹³

Jai Singh claimed the territory of Ajmer only after he had cemented his position in Ajmer through patronage. His largesse in the city centered on the shrine of Mu'in al-Din Chishti, but he also included donations to the shrine of Mu'in al-Din Chishti's wife Bibi Hafez Mahal, the shrine of Miran Sahib, and other minor shrines in Ajmer. In his first grant in 1719, Jai Singh gave money to the shrine itself and the *khadims* of the shrine as well as offered money for the upkeep of the tomb of 'Abd Allah Khan and his wife, the parents of the Saiyid brothers.¹¹⁴ In 1723, Jai Singh made another offering, this time to Khwaja Sahib, Bibi Hafez Mahal, the *khadim* community and other servants of the shrine. While not as large as many imperial grants, these donations were significant; the latter totaled two gold *mohars* and 1132 rupees.¹¹⁵ Jai Singh's grants often included small sums of cash for a *wakil* at Miran-ji's *dargah* and on several occasions he funded the cooking of food in the *deg* at a cost of 600 rupees. In some years, in addition to cash, he also offered oil for the lighting ceremony.¹¹⁶ He made further donations to the shrine in 1727, 1729, 1730, and 1734. Having established himself as a patron in Ajmer in the Mughal mold, Jai Singh held Ajmer *pargana* from 1740 until his death in September 1743.¹¹⁷ During this period, his patronage in the city intensified and he made donations annually between 1740 and 1743.¹¹⁸

In addition to patronizing the shrine while he was in Ajmer, Jai Singh established a *wakil* relationship with a family of *khadims*, as the Mughal emperors had also done. This practice was one way in which the shrine administration adjusted to changing politics. Although no Mughal emperor visited the shrine after Bahadur Shah in 1710, the *khadims* maintained ties with successive emperors

¹¹¹ Bhatnagar, 275. Bhatnagar mentions that the terms of the *ijara* rent included every area of the *subah* excluding *baveli* Ajmer (the city itself) at a rate of rupees 175,000 for one year.

¹¹² Moini, 160. The post had been assigned to Mughal nobleman Qamar al Din. This was first instance of *subahdari* being given on *ijara*. By some accounts, Qamar al Din had gone to Ajmer after reports of bans on cattle killing in the city.

¹¹³ Har Bilas Sarada asserts that Jai Singh replaced the Mughal gold lattice railing at the shrine that had been destroyed by the Marwar Rathors with an elaborate and expensive silver railing, but does not attribute his sources. Sarada, *Ajmer: Historical and Descriptive* (Ajmer: Scottish Mission Industries, 1911), 100.

¹¹⁴ Dastur Komwar, Vol. 18, 34, Magsar Bud 13 VS 1776, Jaipur State Records, Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner.

¹¹⁵ Dastur Komwar, Vol. 18, 33, Asadh Sud 10, VS 1780. Jai Singh II gave generously to the shrine of Mu'in al-Din Chishti and the *khadims*. Yet this generosity pales in comparison to his grants to other religious institutions, such as Govinddevji, a Vaishnav deity from Vrindavan who was installed in Jaipur during Jai Singh II's reign. In 1720, Jai Singh gave nearly 2000 rupees annual revenue to this deity. In 1740, he ordered that a cess from each revenue grant to support both the deity and the temple Goswamis of Govinddevji. This grant considerably enriched the shrine and integrated it into the administration of the Amber kingdom. Horstmann, 25.

¹¹⁶ Dastur Komwar, Vol 18, 37, Asadh Sudi 13 VS 1797.

¹¹⁷ Moini, 163. In 1741 after the Battle of Gagwana between Marwar and Amber, Jai Singh had promised the territory of Ajmer to Abhai Singh but did not hand it over.

¹¹⁸ Dastur Komwar, Vol 18, 34-41.

through a system of representatives, in which a *khadim* was deemed the ‘*wakil*’ in charge of praying and participating in the shrine on behalf of their patron and sent the patron *tabarruk*, which consisting of blessed or sacred objects from the shrine. This flexible system maintained patronage when patrons could not be present. The *wakil* system was implemented not only for imperial clients but also for pilgrims from the surrounding regions.¹¹⁹ The designation of a *wakil* came to be understood as hereditary, so it also tied particular *khadims* to particular families or regions and thus to particular politics. From 1727, *khadims* sent *tabarruk* from the shrine to Jai Singh at regular intervals, for which he offered thanks with small donations of 20 rupees.¹²⁰ The pattern that Jai Singh established carried over to his heirs. This relationship continued for at least the next quarter century.¹²¹

Rajput patronage did not fully eclipse Mughal patronage of the shrine, but it became an increasingly important source of economic stability and local protection for the Ajmer *dargah*. The emperors continued to issue *sanads* and *farmans* but they lacked the power on the ground to enforce these documents. “*Farman rava*,” or the “flowing of orders,” was a typical Persian phrase signifying the ruling power. The decline in Mughal *farmans* issued to the shrine of Ajmer emphasizes how the ability of the Mughal rulers to exercise real power in Rajasthan dropped during this period. Yet, early Mughal patterns of patronage influenced the attitude of rising Rajput rulers to Ajmer. Ajit Singh threatened Mughal religious patronage and grantees in order to provoke the Mughals and to establish his own power in Ajmer in the 1710s and early 1720s. In contrast, from the 1720s until the 1740s, Jai Singh replicated Mughal patronage patterns to establish his authority in Ajmer.

The Creation of Bari Basti and Choti Basti, c. 1700-1800

Jai Singh’s model of patronage not only allowed him to usurp Mughal imperial roles in Ajmer, but also to challenge Marwar’s power through patronage in Pushkar. Jai Singh, and his contemporary rulers in Marwar, Ajit Singh and Abhai Singh, made frequent visits to Pushkar. They spent time there to go on pilgrimage to the sacred lake and to negotiate with each other and with the Mughals. Along with nearby Ajmer, Pushkar was a key political and religious node in Rajasthan. Throughout the first half of the eighteenth century the rulers of Amber and Marwar competed with each other for power and territory, engaging in temporary alliances against common opponents but also regularly fighting with each other. In Pushkar, these rivalries were expressed in competing patronage that reinforced social divisions between the two main groups of Brahmins who lived in the village and served the pilgrims. The conflicts between Amber and Marwar came to be embodied in the social fabric of Pushkar in local rivalries that persist into the present.

Pushkar today is split into two main neighborhoods: Bari Basti, along the western two thirds of the lake, and Choti Basti, on the eastern third of the lake.¹²² Bari Basti is inhabited by Parishar Brahmins, a local community of Brahmins found primarily in western Rajasthan, particularly in the areas around Jodhpur and Nagaur, whereas Choti Basti is home to various Brahmin groups including Gaur and Gujarati Brahmins, who are found across India. The latter groups are thought to have settled in Pushkar well after the Parishar Brahmins, although the dates of each community’s

¹¹⁹ Moini, 327-30.

¹²⁰ Dastur Komwar, Vol. 18, 35, Kati Bud 4 VS 1787.

¹²¹ Dastur Komwar, Vol .18, 42-6.

¹²² The two neighborhoods, whose names literally mean big neighborhood and small neighborhood, are referred to in some records by their Persianate names: Basti Kalan (big) and Basti Khurd (small).

settlement is unknown.¹²³ The separation between the neighborhoods is reinforced by the separate community associations of the Brahmins that reside in each neighborhood, which control the offices and rights of performing sacrifices for pilgrims and revenues of the bathing *ghats* (steps) and temples that ring the lake and are associated with the *bastis*.¹²⁴ The Brahmin families in each community maintain registers (*bahis*) of the pilgrims they serve and claim hereditary rights to perform the pilgrimage rites for pilgrims from specific villages or regions.

The exact origin of Bari Basti and Choti Basti and the different Brahmin communities that inhabited these neighborhoods is untraceable, but two separate communities of Brahmins in Pushkar were known by the early seventeenth century.¹²⁵ When the Mughal emperor Jahangir was in residence in Ajmer between 1614 and 1617, he took a personal interest in the affairs of Pushkar. He visited the village on several occasions on hunting expeditions and made revenue grants to the Brahmins living there.¹²⁶ On May 25, 1614, Jahangir granted the village of Pushkar as *in'am* (revenue-free land) to the Brahmin residents of Pushkar.¹²⁷ This grant removed the tax burden of the town toward the empire, by granting the revenue back to the resident Brahmins. Three years later, in a *farman* from May 13, 1617, Jahangir stated that he had learned that there are two groups of Brahmins in Pushkar (*do qaum jannardar*). Mughal officials had suspended the grant of Pushkar village as *in'am* to the Brahmins because of a dispute between these two groups over the division of pilgrim's donations and cattle grazing rights. In the 1617 *farman* Jahangir restored the village of Pushkar as *in'am* to the Brahmins and specified that the two *qaums* should divide this *in'am* grant and all donations from pilgrims between themselves. Furthermore, he threatened that if the quarrel over cattle grazing persisted between the two groups, the involved parties would be imprisoned in Ajmer.¹²⁸ Mughal policy toward these groups attempted to resolve the quarrel through extending patronage to both communities and threatening punishment to both communities. Extant Mughal records of Pushkar are scarce, however, so the precise identities of these two rival groups and whether they faced further sanctions from Mughal administrators is unknown.

In the eighteenth century, Rajput patronage helped solidify rivalries between Brahmins in Pushkar. Unlike the Mughals, who had tried to deal with the Pushkar Brahmins as a unified group and insisted that patronage be shared between Brahmin groups, the Rajput kings aligned themselves with the Brahmins of either Bari Basti or Choti Basti. During the eighteenth century, with the rise of Rajput states and a decline in Mughal power, Rajput kings and nobles, as well as occasionally wealthy

¹²³ Pandit Maharaj Kishan, *Tawarikh-i Ajmer* (Rohtak: Matbua Anwar al-Qamar, c. 1876), 16-7, 19.

¹²⁴ According to legend, there were originally twelve ghats. A survey in 1876 listed 36 ghats (see below); at present there are 52 ghats.

¹²⁵ Although archeological and textual evidence indicate human settlement at Pushkar for thousands of years, the earliest intact documents that survive are from the early seventeenth century, during the reign of the Mughal emperor Jahangir. Abdul Bari Ma'ni was shown an Akbar-period *farman* when he was in Pushkar in 1949. However, the top half of the document was ripped and missing. All he could read was the end of the order for officials to fulfill an unspecified grant, the date Ramazan 977 AH, and some official seals. 139.

¹²⁶ Jahangir, 153.

¹²⁷ Tirmizi, *Mughal Documents 1526-1627*, 92, document 164.

¹²⁸ Tirmizi *Mughal Documents 1526-1627*, 101-2, document 197. In the settlement report of 1875, J. D. Latouche cites an additional Jahangir-period *farman* that granted two-thirds of pilgrims' offerings to the Brahmins of Bari Basti, and one-third to the Brahmins of Choti Basti. Latouche's account does not provide any further details of the provenance of the *farman* and its existence is not currently traceable. J. D. Latouche, *Report on the settlement of the Ajmere & Mhairwarra Districts*, (Calcutta: Printed at the Foreign Dept. Press, 1875), 18.

merchants and prominent castes, supported the renovation and construction of temples and *ghats* in Pushkar. The rulers of Marwar and Amber constructed *ghats* and temples and extended other forms of patronage to Brahmins out of religious devotion, but also as an extension of political competitions that existed between the two states during the eighteenth century. The divisions in the town between Bari Basti and Choti Basti were cemented by competing patronage from Marwar and Amber.

Jai Singh of Amber played a key role in the success of the Choti Basti Brahmins. He was a major patron in Pushkar during the first half of the eighteenth century and his patronage was concentrated in Choti Basti. Throughout his reign, Sawai Jai Singh demonstrated a deep interest in religious ritual and offered extensive religious patronage. Besides Pushkar, he visited other major Hindu pilgrimage sites, including Mathura, Vrindavan, Banaras, and Allahabad and patronized the construction of temples across North India. He had an interest in Vedic ritual, reviving and performing the Vedic *ashvamedha* sacrifice in 1734 and 1741, and was a follower of Vaishnavite bhakti.¹²⁹ His involvement in Pushkar, a site closely associated with the Vedic sacrifice rites, was both an extension of these interests in religious rites and pilgrimage and an expression of his duty as a dharmic king to protect and preserve the proper order.

The close association of Choti Basti with Jai Singh and Amber state began in the 1730s, a period when Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh and Maharaja Abhai Singh of Marwar's relationship had soured and they often found themselves on opposite sides of both local and imperial conflicts. Abhai Singh resented Jai Singh's involvement in Ajmer and its environs, which he saw as rightfully part of his own domain.¹³⁰ Jai Singh used his patronage in both Ajmer and Pushkar to further his claim to the region and build local support. In 1732, Jai Singh transferred the duty of *tirth purohitai* (officiating the pilgrimage ritual) from the Brahmins of Bari Basti, to several Brahmins of Choti Basti.¹³¹ In doing so, he separated his funding from and opposed his patronage to that of the Marwar rulers, who had long supported the Bari Basti Brahmins. For the Brahmin communities in Pushkar, these duties conferred both wealth and privilege. The Bari Basti Brahmins likely protested Jai Singh's transfer of patronage to the Choti Basti Brahmins but they were not able to regain Jai Singh's favor. Several years later, the Bari Basti Brahmins agreed in writing that they would abide by the terms of Jai Singh and not perform or claim the duties of *tirth purohitai* from the maharaja of Amber, his officials, or any Kachhwaha Rajputs, the clan of which the maharaja was the preeminent member.¹³² Jai Singh's patronage bolstered the Choti Basti Brahmins because he was the first powerful ruler to endorse them as pilgrimage officiants. His transference of patronage contributed to resentments between Bari Basti and Choti Basti Brahmins because it caused the Bari Basti group to lose income and prestige.

Jai Singh also took on major construction projects in Choti Basti. He rebuilt Raj Ghat, a *ghat* originally constructed by Maharaja Man Singh I of Amber (r. 1589-1614) over 100 years earlier. Jai Singh's architects drew plans for the construction of a temple of Sitaram-ji and a ladies' bathing ghat,

¹²⁹ Bhatnagar, 264, 339-40. The *ashvamedha* sacrifice marked the territory of a righteous king. It involved setting a white horse free to roam. Wherever the horse went, that area was understood to be part of the king's territory. The ritual was performed by the god and ideal king Rama, so Jai Singh's performance of the ritual was both an engagement with Vedic ritual and a way of symbolically connecting himself to Rama.

¹³⁰ Bhatnagar, 258.

¹³¹ Kishan, 18. The *sanad* names Heera as the leader of the Bari Basti Brahmins.

¹³² Kishan, 19.

or *zenana* ghat, on Raj Ghat.¹³³ Sitaramji was the main deity of the Ramanandi sect of Vaishnav devotees affiliated with the Amber ruling family. Building this temple installed the family deity in Pushkar and yoked together Sawai Jai Singh's interests in both bhakti and Vedic Hinduism.¹³⁴

Jai Singh's descendants continued to patronize and build on Raj Ghat. His great-grandson Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh (r. 1778-1803) undertook further renovations of Man Mandir, the main palace and temple complex on Raj Ghat, based on plans drawn in the spring of 1800. The renovations included widening doorways that were too narrow for royal conveyances as well as putting *jalis* (carved screens) on the *zenana ghats*.¹³⁵ Raj Ghat was one of the largest, most prominent structures on the eastern end of the lake in the eighteenth century. These construction projects increased the prominence of the Amber rulers in Pushkar. They provided facilities for pilgrims and employment for the artisans who built them and the priests who served on the renovated *ghats* and the new temples. Shortly after Maharaja Pratap Singh's construction in the early nineteenth century, the Marwar ruler Maharaja Man Singh (r. 1803-1843) responded with considerable renovations at the Marwar royal ghat located directly opposite from the Amber ghat.

Prominent ghats, such as Raj Ghat, and their temple priests (*pujaris*) were supported through revenue grants. These grants ranged from 100 or 200 rupees annually in cash, to the tax revenue rights for several villages. The *pujaris* were typically Brahmins, though some temples were overseen by renunciants, including Gossains and Bairagis. The Brahmins claimed the *pujari* post by performing pilgrimage rites (*tirth purohitai*) for the person who built the *ghat*. The *pujari* privileges were hereditary. In some instances in the nineteenth century, the wives of various Brahmins were listed as *pujaris*. They had inherited these rights to revenue from their fathers or their husbands though it is doubtful that the women performed the duties of a *pujari*.¹³⁶

In Choti Basti, people from Amber were the main patrons, including the ruling family and some prominent officials and merchants. The Marathas also patronized some *ghats* there, as did the emerging eighteenth-century state of Kishangarh. The Bari Basti ghats had a greater range of patrons and builders, including maharajas from Marwar, Kota, and Bundi, and some wealthy merchant-bankers (*mahajans*), prominent religious leaders (*pandits* and *mahants*), and scribes (*kayasths*). But Marwar held the most important patronage positions. The most ritually significant ghats in Bari Basti, such as the Brahma ghat, were affiliated with the Marwar state.¹³⁷ Eighteenth-century Marwar rulers also patronized particular Brahmins in Pushkar, particularly the family of Brahmins designated as the Marwar maharaja's *tirth purohitis*. This family held revenue rights to the village Kurku since about 1707 and received eight rupees annually from Marwar officials in the city of Merta.¹³⁸ The Marwar rulers also gave general charitable donations to Brahmins in Pushkar, and appointed a Brahmin as an official inspector (*darogha*) of these grants.¹³⁹

¹³³ Gopal Narayan Bahura and Chandramani Singh, *Catalogue of Historical Documents in Kapad Dwara Jaipur Part II Maps and Plans* (Jaipur: Maharaja of Jaipur, 1990), 20, Entry 30, image 13. Based on instructions written on the map, it was most likely prepared for Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh during the early period of his rule. Man Singh I ruled Amber from 1589 to 1614.

¹³⁴ There had been Vaishnav temples in Pushkar since the medieval period, but to Vishnu as Varaha, the boar avatar rather than Ram or Krishna.

¹³⁵ Bahura and Singh, 52, entry 353. The plan is dated to Baisakh Sudi 15 VS 1857.

¹³⁶ Kishan, 20-39.

¹³⁷ Kishan, 20-39.

¹³⁸ JSPB No. 1, f 43B Bhadwa Budi 4 VS 1821; JSPB No. 5 f 107B Phagun Sud 8 VS 1823.

¹³⁹ JSPB No. 32 f 52A VS 1842.

The economic and social divisions stemming from patronage between Amber and Marwar became part of the identity of the Bari Basti and Choti Basti Brahmins. Several origin tales that have circulated in Pushkar for over 200 years demonstrate the affective connections between Pushkar Brahmin communities and the rulers of Marwar and Amber. These tales suggest the prominent place Marwar and Amber came to hold in the identity of the rival communities. One prominent tale explains the transition from the Pushkar of an ancient Satya Yuga past, when the deity Brahma performed a sacrifice there, to recent historical time. It associates the development of Pushkar as a medieval pilgrimage center with a tenth-century Parihar ruler. The Parihars were the predecessors, and according to some genealogies, the ancestors, of the Rathor Rajput rulers of Marwar.¹⁴⁰ In some versions of the tale, the king Nahar Rao settled Parishar Brahmins at Pushkar to serve all pilgrims and devotees.¹⁴¹ These versions support claims by Parishar Brahmins to be the original inhabitants of Pushkar and thus the rightful recipients of all patronage and the officiators of all sacrifices and offerings at the lake.

A second widely circulated tale describes the origin of Choti Basti and challenges the rights of the Parishar Brahmins to Pushkar. This is an eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century account that ties the eighteenth-century ruler of Amber, Jai Singh, to the creation of Choti Basti and the settlement of Brahmins in that neighborhood. According to this tale, Jai Singh visited Pushkar and engaged the services of a Parishar Brahmin to perform an offering at the lake. Grateful for the priest's services, Jai Singh gave him a set of his own clothes.¹⁴² Later, when the Parishar priest's daughter got married, the priest gave the maharaja's clothing to his new son-in-law. Sometime thereafter, the priest's son-in-law, who was a bhojak from the Jaipur area, was participating in a funeral procession in Jaipur and sitting on the bier next to the corpse. The maharaja happened to ride by the procession. Jai Singh recognized his clothes and was angered that a bhojak was wearing them. Bhojaks were considered very low-status priests and ritualists, who often served as temple attendants at Jain temples.¹⁴³ Jai Singh declared that the priest who had performed his sacrifice at Pushkar was a false Brahmin because true Brahmins would not intermarry with bhojaks. Thus Jai Singh withdrew the rights of *tirth purohitai*, or officiating the sacrifices, for him and all Rajputs of his clan, from that Brahmin and all Parishar Brahmins in Pushkar. Instead, Jai Singh built a new neighborhood in Pushkar, Choti Basti, which he settled with non-Parishar Brahmins. He authorized

¹⁴⁰ Reu traces Nahar Rao to the ninth century Parihar ruler Nagabhat. However, he does not disclose by what criteria he makes this association. B.N. Reu, *The Glories of Marwar and the Glorious Rathors* (1946; repr., Jodhpur: Maharaja Mansingh Pustak Prakash, 2013), 29-32. B.N. Reu, *Marwar ka Itibas* (1940; repr., Jodhpur: Maharaja Mansingh Pustak Prakash, 1999), 1:8.

¹⁴¹ Kishan, 15. The tale is commonly attributed to the 10th or 11th century CE. To this day, rumors of a copper plate grant from the king circulate in Pushkar, with the original most often said to lay with the Pandit family that hereditarily serves Jodhpur. However, although they are in possession of Hindi/Rajasthani texts for the inscription, that contain the above narrative, none of my informants have seen the original copper plate. Indeed, James Tod was presented with a similar narrative of the origins of modern Pushkar. However, he was shown a Persian translation of the copper plate, whose authenticity he dismissed. *Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'han: Or, the central and Western Rajpoot States of India* (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul Ltd., 1829, reprint New Delhi: Rupa Publications, 1997), 1:607.

¹⁴² The giving of robes that had been actually or symbolically worn by a king was an act of incorporation in medieval and early modern India and was practiced by both Hindus and Muslims. The robes were considered an extension of the king's body.

¹⁴³ John E. Cort, *Jains in the World: Religious Values and Ideology in India* (Oxford: OUP, 2001), 59. Cort glosses Bhojak as 'eater.'

this newly-settled community of Brahmins to perform rituals for himself and his clan.¹⁴⁴ Through this tale, Jai Singh of Amber is given a founding and legitimating role in the claims of Choti Basti Brahmins to be the true holders of rights to *tirth purohitai* in Pushkar and the only orthodox Brahmins in the town. Jai Singh is portrayed as the originator of the Choti Basti settlement of Brahmins, even though this claim conflicts with the evidence from Jahangir's *farman*s that two *qaums* of Brahmins existed there over one hundred years earlier.

These tales and patronage patterns speak to how political rivalries between Marwar and Amber translated into social rivalries in Pushkar. The patronage of ghats and temples in Pushkar created hereditary rights and wealth among certain Brahmins of the town. The arrangement of those rights could increase or decrease the power of these groups. Thus, the internal dynamics of the town could be shifted by the proxy battles of patronage between rival states. The competing grants made by the Marwar and Amber rulers in Pushkar in the first half of the eighteenth century resulted in the reinforcement of two different, competing communities of Brahmins within Pushkar. These communities were also mirrored in the physical division of Pushkar into two neighborhoods: Bari Basti and Choti Basti.

Maratha Administration in Ajmer and Pushkar, c. 1749-1818

In the eighteenth century, the role of Maratha leaders in the politics of Rajasthan increased. The Marathas sought to gain control of Ajmer and Pushkar by displacing both Mughal and Rajput authority. In the first half of the eighteenth century, Marathas had launched occasional raids in Rajasthan, but the primary focus of their campaigns was in the neighboring regions of Malwa and Gujarat.¹⁴⁵ However, in the 1740s and 1750s the Marathas developed a major presence in Rajasthan because rival Rajput factions sought Maratha support in succession disputes in Amber and Marwar. Mughal power in North India was severely curtailed in the same period by the invasions in the west of Nadir Shah and Ahmed Shah Durrani, and in the east, the East India Company. Therefore, Rajput factions were unable to rely on Mughal support in succession conflicts as they previously had, nor were the Mughals effective allies against the increasingly powerful Marathas. After victorious campaigns in Rajasthan, the Marathas established treaty relationships with Rajput rulers that obligated the Rajputs to pay large sums annually to the Marathas. The Marathas also took control of some territory within the region. They obtained independent control of Ajmer through their participation in the succession struggle in Marwar after the death of Maharaja Abhai Singh in 1749. With the exception of a three year period from 1789 to 1792 when Marwar Maharaja Vijai Singh (r. 1752-1793) reclaimed Ajmer, the Shinde Marathas ruled Ajmer until 1818, when it was ceded to the British. In Ajmer and nearby areas, the Marathas became administrators, rather than invading plunderers. In this role they became active patrons of religious institutions in Ajmer and Pushkar, which added another layer to the tangled ties between local communities, religious institutions, and regional and imperial politics.

¹⁴⁴ Kishan, 17. Versions of this tale are known today among Pushkar Brahmins, especially those residing in Choti Basti. The tale speaks to caste anxieties and social boundaries.

¹⁴⁵ Rajput rulers including Ajit Singh and Jai Singh faced Maratha troops in the areas they administered, Gujarat and Malwa respectively. Jai Singh led several campaigns of the Mughal army against the Marathas in Malwa, and also took on a central role in the negotiations between the Mughal Emperor and the Maratha Peshwa, Baji Rao I. On several occasions, starting in the 1720s, Maratha troops launched raids into southern Rajasthan, targeting Kota, Bundi, and Mewar. Bhatnagar, 181-4, 204-212, 230-1.

In Rajasthan in the middle of the eighteenth century there was widespread political upheaval. Ajmer and its environs often lay at the center of these conflicts. First, the struggle for regional dominance between the kingdoms of Marwar and Amber came to a head. In 1740, through his support for Bikaner against Marwar Maharaja Abhai Singh's campaign, Jai Singh claimed victory over Marwar. This intensified the conflict between Marwar and Amber and led to a series of military clashes between the two states, many of which took place near Ajmer.¹⁴⁶ Amber was initially victorious but this was not to last. In September 1743, Jai Singh died, which abruptly ended Amber's westward expansion. Shortly thereafter Marwar's Abhai Singh sent his forces to capture Ajmer from the Amber kingdom.

Second, protracted succession struggles in Amber in the 1740s and Marwar in the 1750s destabilized both of these states. Many of the armed conflicts in these succession struggles took place in or near Ajmer. Jai Singh's death set off a succession struggle between his sons, Madho Singh and Ishwar Singh.¹⁴⁷ Madho Singh, supported by the rulers of Kota, Bundi, and Mewar, also invited Maratha help under Malhar Rao Holkar to fight Ishwar Singh who had been recognized by the Mughal emperor as the new king of Amber. Ishwar Singh in turn hired Maratha troops under Jayappa Shinde.¹⁴⁸ The succession fight included skirmishes around Ajmer, which Ishwar Singh had marched toward in 1744 and which was seized by Abhai Singh in 1745.¹⁴⁹ The war between the two brothers continued until 1750, when Ishwar Singh committed suicide because he could not pay the Maratha tribute that the Peshwa demanded to keep him on the throne.¹⁵⁰ At the end of the same decade, a new war of succession broke out over the Marwar throne. Maharaja Abhai Singh died in June 1749 at Pushkar. His brother Bakht Singh claimed the throne, as did his son Ram Singh. Both Ram Singh and Bakht Singh sought the support of the Marathas.¹⁵¹ However, Maratha commander Malhar Rao Holkar eventually decided to pursue neutrality. With the loss of his Maratha allies, Ram Singh lost to Bakht Singh, who occupied Jodhpur and claimed the Marwar throne on June 22, 1751 and captured Ajmer shortly thereafter.¹⁵² However, Bakht Singh died fifteen months later in September 1752. His son Vijai Singh claimed the throne and formally performed the accession ceremonies in January 1753. His right to rule was immediately challenged by Ram Singh so the fighting between the two branches of the family continued for several years. During this period Ram Singh's campaign was led by Maratha commander Jayappa Shinde.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁶ The largest of these battles was the Battle of Gagwana near Ajmer in 1741. Bhatnagar, 261-4.

¹⁴⁷ Bhatnagar, 267. Before his death, Jai Singh had attempted to guarantee the succession of Ishwar Singh, his eldest son, but Madho Singh, who was the son of a Mewar princess, had a right to the throne through the vow Jai Singh had made to the Mewar Maharana in 1708 when he married the princess to seal the Mewar-Amber alliance for regaining the city of Amber from Bahadur Shah.

¹⁴⁸ Stewart Gordon, *The Marathas, 1600-1818* (1998; repr., New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 137.

¹⁴⁹ Moini, 165.

¹⁵⁰ Gordon, 137.

¹⁵¹ Prior to Abhai Singh's death, Bakht Singh had already tried to recruit the Marathas under Malhar Rao Holkar. During the actual battle between Bakht Singh and Ram Singh, Malhar Rao sided with Ram Singh by sending him Maratha troops under the command of his son Khande Rao. G. R. Parihar, *Marwar and the Marathas (1724 – 1843 A.D.)* (Jodhpur: Hindi Sahitya Mandir, 1968), 58-9. Moini, 172.

¹⁵² S.C. Misra, *Sindhia-Holkar Rivalry in Rajasthan* (Delhi: Sundeep Prakashan, 1981), 31; Moini, 173. Among the general dearth of administrative records for this period, there is one short *bahi* regarding the expenses and taxes of Ajmer and Pushkar in VS 1808/1751 while Bakht Singh controlled the area.

¹⁵³ Misra, 32, Moini, 176, Beni Gupta, *Maratha Penetration into Rajasthan: Through the Mukandara Pass* (New Delhi: Research Publications, 1979), 44. Ram Singh claimed the throne or ruled parts of Marwar between 1749-51 and 1753-72.

Through their involvement with Rajput succession struggles, the Marathas sought control of Ajmer. In negotiations with the Mughals the Peshwas, the premiers of the Maratha state, demanded the *subahdari* of Ajmer in March of 1752.¹⁵⁴ When this demand was not met, Ram Singh, with the support of the Marathas, attacked Ajmer in the spring of 1752. According to the *Tarikh-i Ahmad Shahi* the Marathas “sacked the city, burnt many of its houses, slew all those who resisted, and then took [to, sic] plundering in the neighborhood.”¹⁵⁵ Throughout the summer of 1752 there was fighting in and near Ajmer between Bakht Singh and Ram Singh’s Maratha allies. Two years later, at the Battle of Gagwana (Gangwana), a village near Ajmer, the Marathas won, and staked a claim to Ajmer.¹⁵⁶ In February 1756, Vijai Singh signed the treaty of Nagaur that formally ceded Ajmer, its fort and nearby territory to the Marathas as compensation for the murder of Jayappa Shinde by the Rathors during the 1755 siege of Nagaur.¹⁵⁷ The treaty also settled the Marwar succession dispute by splitting the Marwar territories between Ram Singh and Vijai Singh.¹⁵⁸ Between 1756 and 1758, the Marathas and Ram Singh jointly administered Ajmer. But, in 1758, the Marathas forced Ram Singh’s representative out of Ajmer and began to independently administer the city.¹⁵⁹

From 1758 the Marathas held Ajmer and rights to revenue collection and tribute in nearby Rajput states. As a result, they developed a local administration in Ajmer that sought to realize revenue from the nearby Rajput maharajas more consistently than in earlier periods.¹⁶⁰ Maratha administration in Ajmer and Rajasthan operated within the language of Mughal norms and the pretense that their rights to administer were freely granted by the Mughal Emperor, rather than coerced militarily. The Shinde Marathas appointed a succession of *subahdars* in Ajmer who were in charge of administering the city, though details of their policies and administration are unavailable.¹⁶¹ Maratha power across North India, including their administration in Ajmer was briefly interrupted in 1761, with the Maratha loss at the Battle of Panipat on January 14 of that year. However, a campaign led by Malhar Rao Holkar reestablished the Maratha power so that by the end of 1761 they once again were able to enforce the terms of the Nagaur treaty of 1756 and resume tribute and revenue collection. The Maratha administration stabilized politics in Rajasthan until the late 1780s.¹⁶²

As part of their administration, the Marathas became key patrons in Ajmer and Pushkar. The Maratha victories of 1755 and 1756 were memorialized in a burst of patronage in Pushkar led by Govind Rao, the first Maratha *subahdar* of Ajmer. On the eastern edge of the lake next to the *ghats* of the Jaipur maharajas, the Marathas built several stone ghats, including Bangla Ghat and Shiv Ghat. In between these ghats they built a *chhatri* (commemorative pavilion) memorializing Jayappa Shinde, who was murdered during the siege of Nagaur. The Marathas installed *pujaris* (priests) from Choti Basti who served as their pilgrimage officiants in temples on Shiv Ghat and Varah Ghat. The Marathas also assigned the revenue of nearby villages they had recently conquered to support these

¹⁵⁴ Moini, 176. For more on the Peshwas, Brahmin accountants who became the de facto premiers of the Marathas in the eighteenth century, see Gordon, 109-113.

¹⁵⁵ As summarized in Moini, 174.

¹⁵⁶ Parishar, 80-2.

¹⁵⁷ Parishar, 88; Moini, 177.

¹⁵⁸ Parishar, 89.

¹⁵⁹ Moini, 178-179.

¹⁶⁰ Gordon, 138. Rajputs regularly resisted paying agreed-upon tributes to the Marathas unless pressured by the Maratha army.

¹⁶¹ Moini, 187-8.

¹⁶² Gordon, 157. Moini, 186. Moini completely disagrees with Gordon and states that 1767-87 was a period of constant conflict, both Rajput-Maratha and Rajput-Rajput, especially with the escalation of Shinde-Holkar rivalry.

temples and priests.¹⁶³ Maratha support for Choti Basti Brahmins bolstered these Brahmins' position vis-à-vis Bari Basti Brahmins and initiated a long-term connection between the Marathas and the local community.

The Marathas also built extensively in Ajmer. The Maratha *subahdar* Santuji, who held the post from 1770-4, made repairs and sponsored new construction in Ajmer. This included the construction of a garden dedicated to the shrine of Mu'īn al-Dīn, known as Chishti Chaman, and the construction of a nearby market.¹⁶⁴ Muslims serving the Maratha army and administration in key posts also showed their affiliation with the *dargah* through patronage. For instance, Mirza 'Adil, who had served the Shindes in Ajmer, was buried in the *dargah* in a marble tomb after his death in 1769.¹⁶⁵ His son, Mirza Chaman Beg, a Maratha *subahdar* in Malwa, sent one *lakh* (100,000) rupees to Maulana Shams al-Dīn in Ajmer to build an 'Idgah. The donative inscription on the 'Idgah makes explicit reference to Mu'īn al-Dīn Chishti and emphasizes Shams al-Dīn's current position as an upholder of the faith.¹⁶⁶ Mirza Chaman Beg also expressed his devotion to the shrine through his death. Like his father, he was buried in the *dargah*.¹⁶⁷

The Marathas' administrative presence in Ajmer enabled and inspired patronage in Ajmer and Pushkar from new patrons, which contributed their rising profile across the subcontinent. Many of these new patrons granted village revenue from their own territories, which tied Ajmer and Pushkar into larger geographical circuits of politics and finance. Some of these patrons never personally visited Ajmer. For instance, Ahilyabai Holkar, who led the Holkar Marathas after her father's death, built a *dharmshala* (rest house for Brahmins and mendicants) on Varah Ghat in Pushkar that was dedicated to feeding 108 Brahmins daily. Revenue from Ahilyabai's capital territories around Indore supported the *dharmshala*.¹⁶⁸ Her donations and constructions were part of a wider trend of growing Maratha patronage through North and Central India. Between the 1740s-1760s, Marathas had replaced Rajputs as the main patrons in large Hindu centers such as Banaras.¹⁶⁹

Ajmer continued to have great symbolic and strategic relevance in the political struggles of the last third of the eighteenth century and patronage in Ajmer remained highly political. Throughout the Maratha administration of Ajmer, the Mughal Emperor and other officials maintained relationships with the *dargah* through *sanads* and *wakīlat namas*.¹⁷⁰ Their patronage represented Mughal aspirations to reclaim the region. From the 1770s, Emperor Shah Alam II (r. 1759-1806) attempted to revive the Mughal connection to Ajmer, first through patronage and then militarily. To this end, he issued a new grant in 1770 to the *sajjada-nishin* (the spiritual head) of the *dargah* conferring rights to the revenue of the villages of Hokaran, Kishanpura and Dilwara. This grant was one of very few revenue grants from the Mughals to the Ajmer *dargah* in the eighteenth century. The man who Shah Alam II identified as the *sajjada-nishin* of the shrine was a descendant of Shaikh Hussain, whose legitimacy had been challenged by the Emperor Akbar two hundred years

¹⁶³ Kishan, 21-2, 27. There is another *chhatra* for Jayappa Shinde in Tausar, outside of Nagaur, which likely marks his cremation place.

¹⁶⁴ Sarda, 38. Moini, 187.

¹⁶⁵ Tirmizi, *Ajmer through Inscriptions*, 62.

¹⁶⁶ Tirmizi, *Ajmer through Inscriptions*, 63.

¹⁶⁷ Tirmizi *Ajmer through Inscriptions*, 64.

¹⁶⁸ Kishan, 26. Ahilyabai was famous for her extensive patronage of Hindu holy sites throughout North and Central India. For a comprehensive list of Ahilyabai's charity, see Vasudeo (V. V.) Thakur, ed., *Life and life's-work of Shree Devi Abihya Bai Holkar, Holkar State History* Vol. II (Indore: Modern Printery, nd).

¹⁶⁹ Gordon, 146.

¹⁷⁰ Moini, 179.

earlier. Shah Alam II's grant reignited disputes over the post and resurrected the ruler's role in arbitrating the succession to the *sajjada-nishin* post.¹⁷¹ In 1778-9, Shah Alam II even planned an imperial pilgrimage to Ajmer, the first in over half a century by a Mughal ruler, but he only got as far as Jaipur before he returned to Delhi. From there, he symbolically asserted his authority over Ajmer by appointing Prince Mirza Akbar the *subabdar* of Ajmer though the prince could not assume the post because of Maratha opposition.¹⁷² Unable to take Ajmer himself, Shah Alam II supported Maharaja Vijai Singh of Marwar and Maharaja Pratap Singh of Amber in a campaign to win Ajmer back from the Marathas in the 1780s. After several years of conflict, the Battle of Tungla in July 1787 was a turning point in this effort, and by August of 1787 the Marwar forces had taken Ajmer city and were besieging the fort of Taragarh, which fell by the end of the year.¹⁷³

Shortly after occupying Ajmer, Vijai Singh integrated the region into the administration of Marwar under the supervision of his deputy Dhanraj Singh.¹⁷⁴ The rapidity with which this transition happened suggests the analogues between Maratha, Mughal and Rajput administrative schemes. The right to patronage was a key issue that came before the Marwar administrators as they assumed power in Ajmer. Vijai Singh's officials in Ajmer reconfirmed most prior grants made to Hindu and Muslim religious institutions and officials. For example, the maharaja ordered that a Hanuman-ji temple in Ajmer should continue to receive three rupees a month.¹⁷⁵ Muhammad Fazal petitioned that for reading the 'Id sermon (*khutba*) he traditionally received 50 rupees, two robes and 150 *bighas* of land near Ajmer from the court, in addition to money and grain from the *dargah waqf* and the *khadims*. The court approved his claims.¹⁷⁶ The Marwar court confirmed the holdings of other prominent Muslims in Ajmer, including those of the shrine's *divan*, Asghar Ali. He was granted 400 rupees from the Ajmer revenue office, as well as the villages of Ghanahedo and Dilwara, which he stated had always belonged to the *pirzada* lineage (the descendants of Mu'in al-Din). He also made claims to the tax revenues of the villages of Hokaran and Kishanpura, which had been granted by Shah Alam II. The court reconfirmed all these holdings.¹⁷⁷ Marwar officials also authorized new grants to both Hindus and Muslims. For instance, the Ajmer revenue officers received orders to give twenty-five rupees to Imam Baksh, a *mujanvir* of the Miran Sahib shrine, and several Brahmins received revenue free land grants (*dobita*).¹⁷⁸

In cases where petitioners sought to restore rights that the Marathas had abrogated, the Marwar officials tended to uphold earlier Mughal grants and undo Maratha changes. The *khadims* of the *dargah* of Khwaja Mu'in al-Din Chishti petitioned regarding their revenue rights. The *khadims* argued that they had revenue rights in five and a half villages on the basis of a Mughal grant. However, the Marathas had assessed taxes of 750 rupees annually from those villages in violation of

¹⁷¹ Currie argues this grant is the origin moment of government involvement in the inheritance of the *sajjada-nishin* post, but I argue that this is a return to earlier forms of Mughal interference. Currie, 155.

¹⁷² Moini, 187-8.

¹⁷³ Parihar, 114-5. In the run up to the battle of Tungla and siege of Ajmer, Vijai Singh had to negotiate support from Mughal commanders who had generally been supporting the Marathas. Parihar 111-2, 116-7.

¹⁷⁴ Although I have not consulted Marathi records relating to the Maratha administration in Ajmer, extant Persian and Marwari records of Maharaja Vijai Singh's rule over Ajmer between 1787 and 1790 show how local residents, religious officials, and the Marwar administration interacted with Maratha practices and precedent.

¹⁷⁵ JSPB No. 37 f 121A Maha Sud 13 VS 1844. The temple was located near the *daulat kbana*.

¹⁷⁶ JSPB No. 37 f 123A Baisakh Sud 1 VS 1844. From the *dargah* and *khadims* he got a half rupee and 8 *ser*s of grain. One *ser* weighed a little more than a pound under the Mughals. Habib, 420.

¹⁷⁷ JSPB No. 37 f 124A Jeth Sud 3 and 4 VS 1844.

¹⁷⁸ JSPB No. 37, f 122A Chait Bad 13 VS 1844, JSPB No. 37, f 122B Baisakh Bad 8 and Baisakh Bad 9 VS 1844.

the *khadims*' rights. The Marwar court ordered that these taxes should not be collected.¹⁷⁹ However, occasionally the Marwar officials upheld changes made by the Marathas to the *dargah waqf*. Faqir Badula Shah petitioned that because of his connection with the Sri Khobara Bhairun-ji temple, he had received thirty-six *bighas* of land, including fields and orchards, and three rupees a month under Pandit Govind Rai, the Maratha *subahdar*. The land and monthly rupees were both from the *waqf* of Mu'in al-Din Chishti's *dargah*. But recently, Badula Shah was harassed and was not receiving these payments. The court upheld the grant from the *waqf* and ordered no interference in it.¹⁸⁰ Both of these cases show that the Marathas were willing to appropriate and redirect *waqf* funds away from the *dargah* proper for a variety of causes, while the Rajputs were only willing to interfere with the *waqf* if the funds were still being used for religious charity.

Political allegiances influenced who benefited among Ajmer's religious specialists under the Marwar maharaja's rule versus the Maratha rule. Although the *khadims* and *sajjada-nishin* of the Ajmer *dargah* sought advantages with the Marwar court, other prominent Muslim families and shrine officials who were closely allied with the Marathas took refuge outside of Ajmer while it was controlled by Marwar. After the Rathors took Ajmer in 1787, the *mutawalli* of the shrine of Mu'in al-Din Chishti fled to Kishangarh for safety.¹⁸¹ The *mutawalli* had been appointed by the Maratha *subahdar* and thus was a representative of the Marathas. At the time the Kishangarh rulers were allied with the Marathas and would have been sympathetic to Maratha officials and affiliated nobles. Given the Marwar state confirmed grants to numerous prominent Muslims, the *mutawalli*'s flight to Kishangarh was not motivated fears of anti-Muslim discrimination. Rather, the risks the *mutawalli* faced from the Rathors stemmed from Rathor enmity with the Marathas and reflected the identification of political leaders with religious ones through patronage and grants.

Vijai Singh's rule in Ajmer was short-lived. Mahadji Shinde (d. 1794) and his troops retook Ajmer in January of 1791 after a four month siege.¹⁸² In this campaign, religious practices and military strategy intersected. Mahadji Shinde deployed pilgrimage as a cover for the real objectives of the Maratha forces. When Mahadji was marching toward Ajmer in January 1791, he "reassured the Jodhpur Raja, that his intention in this advance was peaceful, for the Hindus to bathe at Pushkar and the Muslims to visit Mu'in al-Din's Dargah."¹⁸³ But his main intent clearly was to recover Ajmer. After the Marathas's military victory, Mahadji did make a pilgrimage to the shrine of Mu'in al-Din in April of 1791 and several days later he bathed at Pushkar with his wives.¹⁸⁴ From 1791 until 1818 the Shindes, leaders of a Maratha kingdom based in Gwalior, held Ajmer, though the city and fort experience military conflicts in 1800, 1802, and 1815.¹⁸⁵

The Shinde Marathas made some important changes to the operation and organization of the *dargah* of Mu'in al-Din in this period. In 1799-1800, Daulat Rao Shinde (d. 1827) made the post of *mutawalli* hereditary for the family of the occupant at the time, Mir Aziz Ali.¹⁸⁶ If the post for the

¹⁷⁹ The villages were listed as Bir, Raygarh, Ghegil, Baijo, Vanevari, and half of Nandla. JSPB No. 37, f 121A Phagun Sud 5 VS 1844.

¹⁸⁰ JSPB No. 37, f 122B Baisakh Bad 5 VS 1844.

¹⁸¹ Moini, 191, 311.

¹⁸² Parihar, 121, 130-2. Mahadji was the ruler of Gwalior from 1761-94.

¹⁸³ P. M. Joshi, ed., *Persian Records of Maratha History: II: Sindbia as Regent of Delhi (1787 & 1789-91)*, trans. Jadunath Sarkar (Bombay: Director of Archives, Govt. of Bombay, 1954) 46, letter 24.

¹⁸⁴ Joshi, 48, letter 26.

¹⁸⁵ Moini, 195-199. There was also possibly an attack in 1803-4.

¹⁸⁶ Currie, 165.

prior 150 years had served to represent imperial or state in the affairs of the *dargah*, this change reduced the *mutawalli*'s dependence on the government. In 1802, Daulat Rao Shinde made another revision to the *dargah* administration by assigning the revenue from the village Dantra to the *mutawalli* in place of a fixed salary that had been set by Shah Jahan. The village, however, had been assigned to the *dargah waqf* in 1718, so this *sanad* contravened conventional *waqf* law.¹⁸⁷

Under Maratha rule between 1761 and 1787 patronage at Ajmer and Pushkar had expanded to Maratha leaders based outside of Rajasthan. From the 1790s, patronage expanded further to include the leaders of numerous emerging states in South India. In this period, the shrines and temples became a patronage locus for Muslim and Hindu leaders across the Indian subcontinent, a trend that would continue into the twentieth century. The Marathas asserted themselves as brokers for the right to patronize the Ajmer shrine. In 1791, the Nawab of Arcot negotiated with Mahadji Shinde for the right to repair the *dargah* buildings in exchange for providing Mahadji with a telescope. The correspondence between the two indicated "that there was much rivalry to gain the privilege of funding this repair work."¹⁸⁸ Two years later, the Nawab of the Karnatak, Muhammad Ali Khan Wala Jah built an open hall, the Karnatak Dalan, as a shelter for pilgrims in the shrine complex. This fulfilled a vow he had made for recovery from an illness. In 1800, the maharaja of Baroda donated a ceiling covering (*chatgiri*) for the mausoleum ceiling.¹⁸⁹

But the Shinde Marathas retained the main patronage roles in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, which expressed their political primacy in the region. They extensively patronized the religious shrines and temples in Ajmer and Pushkar. Thomas Broughton, an English mercenary serving in Daulat Rao Shinde's army, described the Shindes' great affection for the *dargah* of Mu'in al-Din Chishti. He witnessed Shinde sponsorship of the cooking of a *deg* (cauldron) in the shrine on three occasions. The shrine's *kehadims* had rights to contents of the *deg*, which were considered blessed (*tabarruk*). Sponsoring the cooking of a *deg* supported the *kehadims* both spiritually and financially. The food from the *degs* was packaged and sold to devotees of the shrine.¹⁹⁰ The Marathas also patronized Miran Sahib's shrine. Broughton observed that some of Shinde's soldiers made a pilgrimage there.¹⁹¹ In 1807 Rao Bala Ingliya, the Maratha *subahdar* of Ajmer, built a *dalan* (open hall) at the shrine after he had a dream in which he saw Miran Sahib.¹⁹² Between 1811 and 1813 a second *dalan* was built by Rao Gomanji Shinde, the *subahdar* who succeeded Rao Bala Ingliya.¹⁹³

Maratha patronage was equally important in Pushkar. Maratha leaders and administrators sponsored many of the temples and buildings that still stand in Pushkar today. These included the ornate marble Mahadev temple and a large building sponsored by Mahadji Shinde that contains temples and many cells for Bairagi Vaishnav priests and for pilgrims to stay in.¹⁹⁴ Daulat Rao Shinde sent gifts to Pushkar, but, according to Broughton, they were lesser in value than his donations to

¹⁸⁷ Currie, 166.

¹⁸⁸ Currie, 112.

¹⁸⁹ Currie, 113; Tirmizi (1968), 64-5.

¹⁹⁰ Thomas Duer Broughton, *Letters Written in a Mabratta Camp during the Year 1809, descriptive of the character, manners, domestic habits, and religious ceremonies, of the Mabrattas* (London: A. Constable and company, 1892), 256-7.

¹⁹¹ Broughton, 253. Broughton did not go for fear of Maratha suspicions about his visit to Taragarh fort.

¹⁹² Tirmizi, *Ajmer through Inscriptions*, 67.

¹⁹³ Tirmizi, *Ajmer through Inscriptions*, 68.

¹⁹⁴ Broughton attributes the Mahadev temple to Anaji Shinde, Daulat Rao's grandfather, as opposed to Govind Rao as per Kishan. The facilities for pilgrims he describes may be the same as the Char Devri. Broughton says it was supported by the revenue of ten villages. Broughton, 259.

Mu‘in al-Din’s *dargah*. Broughton explained that Daulat Rao Shinde never personally went on pilgrimage to Pushkar because his great uncle Mahadji Shinde had died shortly after making a Pushkar pilgrimage in 1791, which was an inauspicious sign.¹⁹⁵ However, Daulat Rao Shinde likely rebuilt Kot Tirth Ghat, the site of Jayappa Shinde’s memorial *chhatra*.¹⁹⁶ Maratha *subahdars* also patronized the Pushkar *ghats*. Rao Bala Ingli built Bala Rao ghat and a Krishna temple on the *ghat* and Rao Gomanji built an Atmateshwar temple.¹⁹⁷ But most significantly, Gokhal Chand Parekh, one of the Shinde ministers, spent 130,000 rupees to rebuild the Brahma temple.¹⁹⁸ The intensified patronage and new construction in Pushkar as the Shinde Marathas asserted and expanded their political power helped sustain the local religious communities.

Beyond their patronage, Maratha rule in Ajmer and campaigns in Rajasthan also benefited the shrines and temples in the region through pilgrimage. Although marching armies often stressed local village communities through demands of food and fodder and stray violence, they could be a boon for religious institutions. Tales about Ajmer and Pushkar circulated in the Maratha army camps and soldiers and army followers sometimes left the campaign to go on pilgrimage. While the Maratha army was marching in southern Rajasthan in 1809, Broughton observed caravans of Hindus and Muslims splitting off to go on pilgrimage to Pushkar and Ajmer.¹⁹⁹ Typically, a marching army in eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century Rajasthan was associated with looting and scavenging. However, the armies of the Marathas marching through Rajasthan were also a source of pilgrims and donations for the religious institutions of Ajmer and Pushkar.

Although the Marathas squeezed revenue from the surrounding Rajput kingdoms, which could cause economic distress, their presence in Ajmer and Pushkar was overall beneficial for the religious institutions there because the Marathas increased patronage and drew in pilgrims. The Marathas, like the Rajputs, sought control of Ajmer not only for strategic reasons but also because of its long identification with the Mughal state and sovereign. Their active patronage roles in Ajmer and Pushkar both helped them gain local support and showed them as legitimate rulers to their political rivals across the subcontinent. While Maratha patronage mostly followed the prior patronage patterns of the Mughals and Rajputs, it also continued to shape and reshape the religious spaces, the communities of religious specialists, and the balance of power within religious institutions.

Conclusion

Official patronage of religious institutions in Rajasthan between the sixteenth and early nineteenth century played a key role in raising the regional and imperial importance of cities such as Ajmer. This patronage led to the close identification of political leaders and religious institutions, which contributed to the legitimacy of the rulers, but also made centers of patronage targets for political rivals. Yet because the Mughals, Rajputs and Marathas had a shared ethic of the centrality of religious patronage to kingship, even when the Rajputs and Marathas succeeded in usurping Mughal power in Rajasthan in the eighteenth century, they perpetuated existing patterns of patronage. This

¹⁹⁵ Broughton, 260.

¹⁹⁶ Kishan, 21. The ghat and its *pujari* were supported with the revenue of four nearby villages.

¹⁹⁷ Kishan, 33; Sarda, 143.

¹⁹⁸ Sarda, 142. This is the temple structure that stands today.

¹⁹⁹ Broughton, 180.

created remarkable continuity in the patronage of both Muslim and Hindu religious institutions, even in the face of political upheaval.

The state patronage of religious institutions helped sustain local communities and urban centers through the end of the eighteenth century. In the century preceding British rule, Ajmer and its environs were a frequent military target, but the area's religious institutions, especially the shrine of Mu'in al-Din Chishti and the ghats of Pushkar, were also a constant draw for patronage. These investments helped sustain the local economy, and surely helped retain the local population. Patronage also drew in pilgrims from Rajasthan and beyond, who further contributed to the local economy. These impacts of official patronage did decline in the first two decades of the nineteenth century. The second and third Anglo-Maratha Wars (1803-1805 and 1817-1818) and the regular raids of Pindari irregular troops between the two wars increased the economic and political distress experienced across Rajasthan, likely causing many people to migrate, at least temporarily. After the British took direct control of central Rajasthan in 1818 and made Ajmer their local base of government and military operations, they undertook a campaign to repopulate Ajmer. This repopulation campaign was necessary because of the stresses of the wars immediately leading up to the British conquest, rather than a long-term trend of urban decline.

Although religious patronage contributed to economic stability, it also contributed to social change in Ajmer and Pushkar, particularly within communities of religious specialists. As patronage drew them closer to centers of political power, the communities associated with religious institutions were affected by political developments. Imperial and regional investments in shrines and pilgrimage sites formed and split communities along lines of descent as they pursued wealth and favor with claims to be 'true' representatives. The administration of the *dargah* in Ajmer and the Pushkar temples evolved in relation to changing regional and imperial politics. Political rivalries expressed through competing patronage often translated into local rivalries between groups of grantees. If religious institutions and their affiliated communities of attendants and ritualists gathered considerable resources from patronage, they also had to invest in maintaining those resources during political transitions. The following chapter looks at the efforts of religious specialists at Sufi shrines in Nagaur to attract and maintain patronage.

Pirzadas and the Art of Securing Patronage, 1560-1800

Introduction

As Sufi shrine cults became institutionalized between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries in India and elsewhere, new communities of religious specialists emerged. These specialists maintained the tomb shrines of Sufi saints, managed the shrines' ceremonies and served pilgrims and local devotees. Increasingly, the spiritual authority (*barakat*) of Sufi saints was identified with their shrines after their death. The religious specialists who tended the shrines inherited access to this authority and mediated it for devotees visiting the shrine.¹ In Nagaur, these specialists were referred to by the title "*pirzada*," which means the descendant of the holy man. They received their authority to care for the shrine from their familial descent from the saint who was buried there. Unlike many Sufi masters who traveled from place to place receiving instruction in the philosophy and practice of Sufism and who set up Sufi lodges (*khanaqahs*) in new locations to spread the teachings of their lineage of initiation (*silsila*), *pirzadas* who cared for *dargahs* (tomb shrines) typically remained in the same place during their lifetimes. This meant that they became an important part of the local social and political dynamics. The *pirzadas*' authority and nodal position in social and political networks was reinforced by their close ties to local Muslim communities through *pir-muridi* relationships, through which they offered spiritual guidance to devotees. It was also reinforced through the extensive state patronage that they and the shrine received, which established *pirzadas* and similar communities as part of the local landed elite.² The *pirzada* community in Nagaur exercised considerable agency in maintaining their spiritual authority and their material resources, which shaped their role in bridging the concerns of local communities in Nagaur and regional and imperial politics between the mid-sixteenth century and the end of the eighteenth century.

The previous chapter showed how changes in regional and imperial politics from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century impacted local sociopolitical relationships through patronage in Ajmer and Pushkar. Whereas that chapter privileged a top-down perspective on giving patronage, in this chapter a bottom-up portrait of receiving patronage is developed. Focusing on several *dargahs* and *khanaqahs* in Nagaur, I ask, how did these institutions and their communities of religious specialists respond to the changing political fortunes of the Mughal Empire? The community leaders and families associated with these shrines were not passive recipients of imperial and regional largesse. Although the shrines in Nagaur did not develop the same level of entrenched administration as at the *dargah* of Mu'in al-Din Chishti in Ajmer, *pirzadas* in Nagaur made efforts to preserve and promote their rights to pilgrimage revenue and patronage. Saint as recluse and shrine as a refuge from the political world was a prevailing discourse, particularly in Chishti Sufi writings. But in practice, *pirzadas* were closely linked to both political stakeholders and to the local communities, for whom they sometimes served as leaders. Thus, the activities and strategies that they employed to

¹ For a description of similar processes and structures in Sind, see Sarah F. D. Ansari, *Sufi Saints and State Power: The Pirs of Sind, 1843-1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 23.

² For comparative situations, see Ansari, 23, 30-2, and Richard Eaton, "The Shrine of Baba Farid" in *Moral Conduct and Authority: The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam*, ed. Barbara D. Metcalf (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 336, 349.

attract and retain patronage as well as their effectiveness impacted not only their personal fortunes but also the fortunes of the larger Muslim community in Nagaur. Regardless of their successes in their negotiations for power and authority, the *pirzadas*' political practices invoked them as a community.

Nagaur's *pirzada* community grew up around the Sufi *khanaqahs* and *dargahs* that had been established in the city in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. While little is known about their early medieval history, from the rise of Mughal power in Rajasthan in the 1560s it is clear that the families of *pirzadas* actively responded to changes in politics and patronage with the hope of maintaining or increasing their status and wealth. They used the prevailing political and legal systems to promote their needs and resist challenges to their rights at the local, regional and imperial level. Two major strategies prevailed: one relied on controlling or revising familial and spiritual lineages, the other relied on strategically using political access and information. These efforts affected relations between the different shrines and *khanaqahs* in Nagaur and larger regional networks of shrines. They also contributed to the refashioning of the *pirzada* community itself by defining insiders and outsiders, and rearranging hierarchies within the community.

My argument builds on the historiography of the social and political roles of shrines and holy men in premodern South Asia, bridging longstanding debates on the relationship between Sufis and the state and recent scholarship on shrines, the formation of Muslim communities, and broader social and political networks. South Asian Sufism, especially the tomb-shrine aspects of it, was closely entangled with state affairs, even if Sufi saints had at times rejected such alliances. In an early statement of this position, Simon Digby, contravening the long-held position that Sufis, especially Chishtis, had remained aloof from the state, describes the reciprocal ties of political and spiritual power in establishing legitimacy in Sultanate India.³ Critiquing Digby for privileging the viewpoints of Sufis over those of the state, Sunil Kumar compares the discourse of Sultan Ala' al-Din Khilji and Sufi Nizam al-Din Auliya, showing that they rivaled each other for power in Delhi as both claimed to protect the moral order of the city.⁴ Like Kumar, Blain Auer emphasizes that the Delhi Sultanate and Sufi shaikhs in North India were establishing their authority simultaneously in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. This meant that forms of writing about Sultans and Sufis evolved in conversation as they collaborated and competed. Bauer argues that scholars have overemphasized the significance of Chishti discourse of staying isolated from the state by failing to recognize that this discourse occurs in didactic texts that sought to bolster saints' authority through emphasizing their commitment to devotional poverty (*faqr*).⁵

Regardless of the rhetoric of separation between Sufis and the state, as Sufi shrines institutionalized, they became much more closely linked with the state. As Carl Ernst shows, in Khuldabad the attendants of the shrine of Burhan al-Din drew closer to the court because "in the absence of an active teaching lineage, the Sufi shrine was totally dependent on kings for support."⁶ In fact, tomb shrines and their affiliated communities could become so closely enmeshed with the

³ Simon Digby, "The Sufi Shaikh as a Source of Authority in Medieval India," reprinted in *India's Islamic Traditions, 711-1750*, ed. Richard M. Eaton (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 234-262.

⁴ Sunil Kumar, "Assertions of Authority: A Study of the Discursive Statements of Two Sultans of Delhi" in Muzaffar Alam, Françoise 'Nalini' Delvoye and Marc Gaborieau, eds., *The Making of Indo-Persian Culture: Indian and French Studies* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2000), 37-65.

⁵ Blain H. Auer, *Symbols of Authority in Medieval Islam: History, Religion, and Muslim Legitimacy in the Delhi Sultanate* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 93-5.

⁶ Carl W. Ernst, *Eternal Garden: Mysticism, History, and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Center* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), 244.

state that they themselves became key political actors. In a study of the 'Alid shrine in modern day Mazar-i Sharif (Afghanistan), R. D. McChesney argued that the accrual of *waqf* grants to the shrine, particularly revenue rights to an extensive area of agricultural land combined with a weakening of local politics, led to the creation of 'shrine-state' based on the economic and political interests of the shrine. The extensive *waqf* grants propelled the shrine to develop an elaborate administrative structure to collect and manage revenue, gave it reason to promote local settlement and agriculture, and to take positions in local politics to guard its interests. During periods when regional politics were in flux, the shrine was the foremost local religious and political authority.⁷

Other scholars focus on the localization of shrines and their connections to particular communities. Richard Eaton's analysis of Sufis in Bijapur helped broaden the scholarship on Sufism beyond issues of belief and spiritual practices. He draws attention to multiple social roles that Sufis inhabited: warriors, reformers, writers, landed elites, and dervishes. Each of these roles shaped the Sufis' relationships to the court and the *'ulama* (theologians) and to local Muslim and non-Muslim communities. More recent scholarship on South Asian Sufism emphasizes the production of regional and trans-regional Muslim identities and communities through Sufi texts and shrines, showing Sufi institutions as critical nodes in social networks. For instance, Nile Green argues that saints and living holy men produced a Muslim sacred geography in the Deccan. His work creates a model of the role of text and architecture in manufacturing memory and fostering communities of belonging for migrants. Shrines imprinted sacred Muslim genealogies on the landscape and tied the local Muslim community to places of Sufism's origin in the Central Asia and the Middle East. Focusing on medieval Gujarat, Jyoti Balachandran traces the emergence of a community of Muslim intellectual elites, whose common identity was nurtured by Sufi literary traditions rather than by the Gujarat Sultans.⁸ Green and Balachandran's scholarship highlights the importance of Sufi lineages, texts, and tombs in fostering new communities and connecting local people to transregional networks and identities.

Given the establishment of the close relationship between Sufis, and particularly Sufi shrines, and the state, and Sufism's role in mediating communities and building networks, my argument that *pirzadas* actively pursued patronage and were key interlocutors between local communities and the state is unsurprising. What is new is my examination of how the *pirzadas* did so, and the impacts of their pursuit of patronage on both the *pirzada* community and local society. Previous scholarship does not address the internal dynamics or agency of shrine servants and Sufi communities in medieval India. This is in part due to source limitations: most studies of Sufism rely heavily on hagiographies (*tazkiras*), the sayings of saints and instructional manuals (*malfuzat*), and court chronicles, all of which say little about *dargah* affairs and can lend themselves to prescriptive or one-sided accounts. Where administrative or legal records are used, the documents typically are quite few in number.⁹ I am fortunate to have access to copies of a relatively large collection of legal and administrative records: over 95 documents relating to the *dargah* of Hamid al-Din Chishti in Nagaur

⁷ R. D. McChesney, *Waqf in Central Asia: Four Hundred Years in the History of a Muslim Shrine, 1480 - 1889* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1991), 192.

⁸ Richard Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur, 1300-1700* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978); Nile Green, *Making Space: Sufis and Settlers in Early Modern India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012); Jyoti Gulati Balachandran, "Texts, Tombs and Memory: The Migration, Settlement and Formation of a Learned Muslim Community in Fifteenth-Century Gujarat" (PhD Diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2012) <<http://www.escholarship.org/uc/item/89q3t1s0>>.

⁹ Ernst discusses a set of fifteen medieval revenue documents relating to Khuldabad, 216-21. McChesney frames much of his book around a very limited number of documents.

from the private collections of Peer Sufi Abdul Baqi Chishti Farooqi and Pirzada Ghulam Sarwar Chishti Sulaimani Faruqi, and 46 documents regarding the Bare Pir Sahib Dargah.¹⁰ These records include revenue grants, wills, legal judgements, personal correspondence, and newsletters. Further royal orders and judicial settlements are available in the registers (*bahis*) maintained by the Marwar kingdom for the period after 1764. Combined, these documents offer insights into the struggles and successes of the *pirzadas* in pursuit of patronage and other privileges. Thus, using the extant frameworks of the social and political role of shrines in Mughal India as a stepping off point, this chapter analyses the agency of the shrine leadership and members of the *pirzada* community in responding to social and political changes.

Medieval Nagaur's Religious Institutions

Nagaur was one of a handful of cities in Rajasthan where a significant Muslim population was established early in the medieval period. Muslims in Nagaur included political and intellectual elite, such as the prominent medieval *bakim* (Islamic doctor), Shihab al-Din bin 'Abd al-Karim Qiwan Ghaznawi Nagauri. This community supported the creation of Muslim institutions in the city. The Sultanate Period (c. 1200-1400) saw the construction of a large number of mosques in addition to the Sufi *dargahs* (tomb shrines) and *khanaqahs* (lodges). Inscriptions on the mosques suggest that the Muslim population had the money and political eminence to undertake building campaigns. During the early period of Mughal rule, the construction of mosques accelerated. Between the 1560s and 1580s at least five neighborhood mosques were built in Nagaur, primarily by local Muslims, not by nobles from the court.¹¹ This suggests that a Muslim community and Islamicate intellectual circles flourished in medieval Nagaur. The city may have even rivaled or outshone Ajmer in this period.

The foundations of Muslim society in Nagaur were the Sufi institutions. From at least the early thirteenth century, Nagaur was home to *khanaqahs* and *dargahs* for Sufi holy men of the Chishti, Qadiri, and Suhrawardi *silsilas* (chains, lineages), three of the four most popular Sufi lineages that spread across the Indian subcontinent during the medieval period. The *khanaqahs* of these lineages were built at the edges of the city, established around the tomb shrines of some of their early founders. Foremost among the *dargahs* was the shrine of Khwaja Hamid al-Din Nagauri Sufi Sawali (d. 1274), a Chishti Sufi who was one of the disciples of Mu'in al-din Chishti in Ajmer and who settled in Nagaur around the end of the twelfth century.¹² After the saint's death, his *dargah* became popularly known as Sultan al-Tarikin (king of the renouncers) after one of the titles given to the saint. The shrine is situated on the northeastern edge of the city of Nagaur, outside the city walls near the water tank known as Ginani Talab. The three-story gate to the *dargah* of Khwaja Hamid al-

¹⁰ I use the following abbreviations to reference the collections: Pir Sufi Abdul Baqi Chishti Farooqi = ABF; Pirzada Ghulam Sarwar Chishti Sulaimani Faruqi = GS. These two collections are unarchived, so I have used dates where possible to identify them. I have also created a numbering system for the copies of documents in my possession and have included brief details of these documents in an appendix. Many of the Bare Pir Sahib documents have been published in a rare book, along with Urdu summaries. Where both exist, I have provided reference both to the book and the file number maintained by the Bare Pir Sahib authorities, abbreviated as BPS.

¹¹ Mehrdad Shokoohy and Natalie H. Shokoohy, *Nagaur: Sultanate and Early Mughal History and Architecture of the District of Nagaur, India* (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1993), 180-1. Shams Khan Dandani built a large *jama' masjid*.

¹² Not to be confused with the thirteenth-century Suhrawardi saint, Hamid al-Din of Nagore (Tamil Nadu). Nor with the other Sufis in Nagaur who shared the name Hamid al-Din. I have used the name Hamid al-Din Nagauri consistently to refer to the Chishti saint buried in the Sultan al-Tarikin Dargah. For all other Hamid al-Dins from Nagaur, I include additional appellations to distinguish them (Qazi, khui, etc.).

Din Nagauri was built by the Delhi Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq (r. 1325-1351). During the fifteenth century, a second Chishti saint, Khwaja Makhdum Hussain (d. 1495-6), who was a descendant of Hamid al-Din Nagauri, settled in Nagaur. He gained renown for his renovations to the Sultan al-Tarikin shrine and his own grave and a mosque on the northern edge of the city associated with him also became part of the Chishti devotional circuit in Nagaur.¹³

Shortly after the establishment of the Chishti *khanaqah*, Qazi Hamid al-Din Nagauri (d. 1247), who was a judge in the early Delhi Sultanate, founded the Suhrawardi *khanaqah* in the thirteenth century. It is located on the northern edge of the city outside the Madhar gate, near the eighteenth-century tank Bakht Sagar and adjacent to a Muslim graveyard in use from the twelfth century. The complex is known today as the Shahids or the Pir Damir Sahib shrine. Although Qazi Hamid al-Din is not buried there, the graves of Maulana Ahmad Zahir al-Din, the son of Qazi Hamid al-Din, and of Maulana Ahmad Zahir al-Din's disciple Hamid al-Din Khui exist within the Suhrawardi complex and are a site of mostly local pilgrimage.¹⁴

Lastly, the Qadiri *khanaqah* was established on the southeastern edge of the city. After the development of a tomb complex for a Qadiri Sufi saint, it became known as the Bare Pir Sahib Dargah. Unusually, this *dargah* is located within the city walls at the edge of the Shams Talab. It borders the residential area of the city known as Pirzada Mahalla, which is home today to most of the families associated both with this *dargah* and the Sultan al-Tarikin shrine. Less is known about the early years of this shrine. The colloquial name for the shrine, in use since at least the eighteenth century, is Bare Pir Sahib, which literally means "great respected holy man," and is a generic title. According to the *sajjada-nishin* (spiritual head) of the *dargah*, the main tomb shrine in the complex is that of 'Abd al-Wahab, the son of the twelfth century Qadiri founder, 'Abd al-Qadir Jilani. But some scholars and members of the local community question who precisely is buried in the Qadiri shrine.¹⁵ For the purpose of this study, representations of the shrine and the affiliation of various figures with the shrine are more important than resolving any doubts about the saint's identity.¹⁶

The development of the Sufi *khanaqahs* and shrines in Nagaur occurred concurrently with the growth of a variety of non-Muslim religious institutions in the city. Between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, Jain and Hindu temples emerged as prominent centers of both religious and intellectual activity in Nagaur. Many of these temples persisted into the Mughal period, though few of their original structures survive to the present day. Hindu temples were found throughout the

¹³ 'Abd al-Haqq ibn Sayf al-Din Dihlavi, *Akhhbar al-Akhhbar* (Gambat, Pakistan: Faruq Akedami, c. 1977), 183. Shokoohy and Shokoohy, 29.

¹⁴ Shokoohy and Shokoohy, 55. Qazi Hamid al-Din, a contemporary of Khwaja Hamid al-Din Nagauri Sufi Sawali, is buried in shrine of Qutb al-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki in Mehrauli, on the Southwestern outskirts of Delhi.

¹⁵ Some have suggested that the tomb is really that of Shams Khan Dandani, a fifteenth century ruler in Nagaur who is believed to have built the nearby water tank. Shokoohy and Shokoohy, 43-6.

¹⁶ Shrine records from the sixteenth and seventeenth century frequently associate 'Abd al-Qadir Sani and 'Abd al-Razaq, descendants of a prominent Qadiri lineage in Uch in the Panjab, with the Nagaur shrine. Hagiographies suggest that these two did visit Nagaur but are buried elsewhere. 'Abd al-Wahab's name became increasingly associated with the shrine in documentary records starting in the late seventeenth century. In the twentieth century, this question has persisted, with those invested in the matter even going so far as to send inquiries via the Iraqi Embassy in Delhi to determine whether or not 'Abd al-Wahab Qadiri was buried in Baghdad. Ghulam Yahya Anjum gives a lengthy narrative about the research he has undertaken in regards to the question of whether 'Abd al-Wahab Qadiri Jilani is buried in Nagaur or elsewhere, the contradictory answers he received along the way, and the politics within Nagaur around this question. Ghulam Yahya Anjum, *Tarikh Musbaikh Qadariya, Jild Avval* (Delhi: Jamia Hamdard University, 2003), 352-71, 456, 459, 463, 465. Fatima Zehra Bilgrami, *History of the Qadiri Order in India (16th – 18th Century)* (Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, 2005), 96-8. *Akhhbar al-Akhhbar*, 202-5.

residential neighborhoods of the city, but one of the oldest still standing is the Bansiwala temple, which consists of a sixteenth-century Vaishnav temple built on top of an older underground Shiva temple. Unfortunately, aside from a few medieval inscriptions, records for the patronage of Hindu temples in Nagaur are not available. Jainism also flourished in premodern Nagaur. The city became a prominent center of Digambar (sky-clad) Jain learning with the establishment of a *bhattarak* seat, a post for learned monks to oversee Jain instruction and institutions; the attached manuscript library contains over 40,000 texts today. Jain ascetics regularly spent the four-month rainy period in Nagaur and offered instruction to the lay population. The close political connections between Nagaur and Gujarat during much of the medieval period likely supported the circulation of Jain monastics and the business endeavors of lay Jains, and helped to cement Gujarat and Rajasthan as the main areas of Jain activity in medieval northern India.

Challenges and Opportunities: Changing Politics and Patronage in Nagaur

The city of Nagaur experienced three major political phases that took it on a different political trajectory from Ajmer: first, its initial incorporation into the Mughal Empire; secondly, its evolution into a *watan jagir* (hereditary 'home territory' revenue grant) for a secondary lineage of the Rathor Rajputs; and lastly, its full integration into the Rathor kingdom of Marwar. Through these changes in leadership, the city went from being the capital of a medieval Muslim Khanate to a secondary city in a Hindu Rajput kingdom. These transitions in political authority and local administration resulted in a succession of different political elites in charge of issuing and guaranteeing charitable grants.

Throughout the medieval period, a succession of Muslim rulers governed Nagaur. From the twelfth century until Timur's sack of Delhi in 1398, Nagaur was the seat of Delhi Sultanate governors of the central northwestern part of Rajasthan called Siwalik at the time. After 1398, Shams Khan, who was the brother of the first Gujarat Sultan Muzaffar Shah I, established a small khanate in the region and made Nagaur his capital city.¹⁷ He and his descendants retained control over Nagaur for most of the fifteenth century. The dynasty ended in the 1530s, when Raja Maldev of Marwar conquered Nagaur. However, Maldev's claim to the city was brief; the Afghan leader Sher Shah Suri conquered Nagaur in the 1540s, and Mughal armies became active in region from about 1556.¹⁸ Following the Mughal conquest of Nagaur in the 1560s, Akbar made Nagaur the head city of a district (*sarkar*). This district was granted in *jagir* (revenue assignment) to a succession of Muslim nobles from the Mughal court until the 1630s.¹⁹ Unlike most of Rajasthan, Muslim rulers administered Nagaur almost continuously from the 1200s until the 1630s.

Much as in Ajmer, Akbar and his nobles played a key role in establishing a generous *waqf* in Nagaur, which in turn increased the *pirzadas*' reliance on the Mughals. The early Mughal grants under the Emperor Akbar to the Chishti shrine in Nagaur were framed as the continuation or resumption of earlier patronage. This depicted the Mughals as the legitimate successors. In the 1560s, Mughal power in Rajasthan was still tenuous and charitable grants followed quickly after military action. For example, in 1561 a rebellious Mughal nobleman, Mirza Sharif al-Din Hussain, fled to Nagaur from the imperial court and rebelled against Akbar. The emperor deputed forces

¹⁷ Shokoohy and Shokoohy, 10-11.

¹⁸ Shokoohy and Shokoohy, 20.

¹⁹ Mohammed Haleem Siddiqi, *Madhyakalin Nagaur ka Itihās* (Jodhpur: Maharaja Man Singh Pustak Prakash, 2001), 81-88; Shokoohy and Shokoohy, 20.

against him, and within a year made the first Mughal grant to the Nagaur Chishtis for the revenue of three nearby villages.²⁰ Several years later, when Akbar campaigned against the Mewar Rajput's fort of Chittor, he made a further grant of *madad-i ma'ash* to the Chishti Sufis of Nagaur.²¹ In December 1569, when Akbar began to truly cement his control of Rajasthan, he issued a much more extensive charitable grant to the Chishti *dargah*. He gave 700 *bighas* of land, fountains and water tanks, a share of pilgrim's offerings (*nazr u niyaz*) and a *haveli* (grand house) for the *sajjada-nishin* of the Sultan al-Tarikin Dargah. He also assigned additional funds and land revenue for the annual *urs* celebration commemorating the saint's union with god and to support the *dargah's* charitable works.²² In a further grant, Akbar rewarded the *sajjada-nishin* Shaikh Nizam for his visit to the emperor's court with extensive revenue rights.²³

While on the whole, the Mughal presence in Nagaur improved the prospects of Muslim religious institutions through generous patronage and political stability, the early years of Mughal rule were disruptive for some Muslim communities in the city. From the early days of the Mughal Empire, the Muslim community in Nagaur had to learn not only how to gain charitable grants from the new rulers but also how to successfully petition for redress when their rights were usurped by imperial forces. After the Mughals conquered Nagaur, they used it as a marching stop or base for further military action in Rajasthan. Between 1568 and 1574, the Qadiri Sufi leader in Nagaur, Khwaja Maqbul, complained repeatedly about soldiers occupying the Bare Pir Sahib Dargah, the attached *khanaqah*, and his *haveli*. He secured a number of imperial *farmans* and *sanads* in response to his complaints that ordered these premises to be vacated immediately and to allow Khwaja Maqbul alone to occupy the premises. However, the problem was clearly ongoing because he had to get the orders reissued multiple times over the span of six to seven years.²⁴ Given the large size of the fort in Nagaur, which predated Mughal rule, it is surprising that soldiers were also occupying the Qadiri *khanaqah* and *haveli*.²⁵ Khwaja Maqbul's complaints suggest that in the face of large-scale military campaigns, the Mughal state co-opted mosques and *dargahs* for official functions or to house soldiers. Responding to a similar issue, a seventeenth-century bilingual inscription in the Shah's Mosque in Nagaur instructed state administrators not to use the mosque premises as a jail.²⁶

Although the Mughals took over the primary patronage of the shrine of Sultan al-Tarikin, the emperors themselves were rarely in Nagaur. Even when they did stay in the city, any visits they may have made to the shrine were not recorded in the imperial chronicles. Akbar only visited

²⁰ Abu'l Fazl, *The Akbar Nama of Abu-l-Fazl*, trans. Henry Beveridge (1907-1939; repr., Delhi: Ess Ess Publications, 1977) 2:303-4. GS No. 1, 2 Rabi' I 971 AH (October 30, 1563). Although this document is fragmentary and missing its upper half that would likely have included seals and the specifics of the grant, it is clearly a grant of *in'am* or *madad-i ma'ash*. The *yaddasht* on the back of the document mentions three villages.

²¹ GS No. 2, 16 Jamada I 975 AH (November 28, 1567), grant for the revenue from two villages.

²² This document survives in multiple copies: ABF No. 1 and 2, 10 Rajab 977 AH (December 29, 1569). A further document relating to this grant indicates that this land was granted in *parganas* of Bharana and Run, to the south of Nagaur and that the revenues from these three villages were to be used to support the *urs* celebration and charitable works of the *dargah*. GS No. 3, undated.

²³ Additional land in *deb* (village) Bahdana near Nagaur and Tausar was granted as *madad-i ma'ash* directly to Shaikh Nizam as a reward for attending the court of the emperor. The document indicates that 40,000 *bighas* were granted, but this seems improbably large. GS No. 3, undated.

²⁴ Anjum, 442-7; BPS 240, 242, 244.

²⁵ The exact date of the fort's construction is unknown, but it predated the Mughals. In the 1530s Rao Maldev of Jodhpur conquered Nagaur, destroyed a number of Sultanate-period buildings, and rebuilt the walls of the fort. Rubble from the destroyed buildings, including inscriptions, were incorporated into the walls. Shokoohy and Shokoohy, 20.

²⁶ Desai, *Published Muslim Inscriptions of Rajasthan*, 142, No. 449.

Nagaur twice. In 1570, he visited the governor of Nagaur and had one of the water tanks renovated.²⁷ He camped there again on September 17, 1572 while marching to Gujarat for a major military campaign.²⁸ Given Akbar's repeated pilgrimages to Mu'in al-din's shrine in Ajmer, and that Khwaja Hamid al-Din was one of Mu'in al-din's direct disciples, it is surprising that none of the court chronicles mention Akbar visiting or otherwise patronizing the Sultan al-Tarikin Dargah. Nile Green argues that seventeenth-century Deccan shrines did not receive patronage from Aurangzeb because of their close ties to the Qutb Shahis.²⁹ The *dargah* in Nagaur may have been too closely tied to prior ruling lineages. It is more likely that Nagaur was simply strategically less important to Akbar than Ajmer or that his patronage of the shrine in Nagaur was so routine that it did not warrant mention. Although Nagaur remained the main city in a *sarkar* (district), after the Mughal conquest it was no longer the head of a small state nor the seat of the regional governor as under previous sultanates. Thus, it declined in its political centrality to the empire. The city remained largely unmentioned in official Mughal histories and unvisited by Mughal emperors for another 100 years. This changed in 1679 when Aurangzeb marched into Rajasthan and camped for several months in Nagaur in order to quell a Rajput rebellion.³⁰

From the 1630s, a prominent family of Hindu Rajputs gradually established their home base in Nagaur. They achieved this by repeatedly securing the *jagirdari* grant for revenue and administrative privileges of the Nagaur district from the Mughal Emperor. In 1634, Emperor Shah Jahan granted the city and *sarkar* of Nagaur in *jagir* to Rao Amar Singh, the oldest son of the Marwar king, Raja Gaj Singh (r. 1619-1638), who was a prominent Mughal nobleman.³¹ Although Rao Amar Singh was killed by Mughal nobles in 1644 after he murdered the *mir bakshi* (imperial treasurer) Salabat Khan in Shah Jahan's court in Agra, the *jagir* of Nagaur was nevertheless conferred on his son Rao Rai Singh, who remained in imperial favor.³² Shah Jahan's relatively lenient handling of Rao Amar Singh's family probably stemmed from the fact that Shah Jahan and Amar Singh's father Gaj Singh were cousins.³³ After Rai Singh's death in 1676, his son Rao Indar Singh was granted Nagaur in *jagir*, which he held onto with only some minor interruptions until his death in 1725.³⁴

²⁷ *Akbarnama*, 2:517-8. The work on the water tank is further discussed in my chapter on the commons.

²⁸ *Akbarnama*, 2:544. 9 Jamada I.

²⁹ Green, 158.

³⁰ Leslie Peirce notes a similar trend for the citadel of Aintab, which after being a central site of contention in the sixteenth century Ottoman expansion, returned to "banality" and rarely saw the Sultan or his armies. Peirce, *Morality Tales: Law and Gender in the Ottoman Court of Aintab* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 27, 41.

³¹ Gaj Singh was elevated to a 5000 *zat*/5000 *sawar mansab* rank in Shah Jahan's court. Gaurishankar Hirachand Ojha, *Jodhpur Rajya ka Itibas* (Jodhpur: Maharaja Mansingh Pustak Prakash, 2010), 1:264.

³² Inayat Khan, *The Shah Jahan Nama of Inayat Khan: An Abridged History of the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan, Compiled by his Royal Librarian. The Nineteenth-Century Manuscript Translation of A.R. Fuller (British Library, Add., 30,777)*, W.E. Begley and Z. A. Desai, eds. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), 314-5.

³³ Shah Jahan's mother, Jagat Gosain (Jodhbai) was the daughter of Marwar Maharaj Udai Singh. See the family tree in Wheeler M. Thackston, introduction to *The Jahangirnama: Memoirs of Jahangir, Emperor of India*, by Jahangir, trans. and ed. Wheeler M. Thackston (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian, 1999), x.

³⁴ In 1713, an attempt was made on the life of Indar Singh's oldest son, Mohkam Singh, and his younger son Mohan Singh was murdered by Ajit Singh's forces. There is disagreement over whether Mohkam Singh was killed at this point. Siddiqi asserts that he was not and that he took part in resisting Marwar's seizure of Nagaur in 1725. Hooja claims that Mohkam Singh was killed but also identifies him as the grandson of Indar Singh. Siddiqi, 152; R.S. Sangwan, *Jodhpur and the Later Mughals AD 1707 – 1752* (New Delhi: Pragati Publications, 2006), 38; Rima Hooja, *A History of Rajasthan* (New Delhi: Roopa & Co., 2006), 706. The Maharaja of Marwar Ajit Singh seized Nagaur in 1716 as part of a campaign to expand Marwar state. Although the Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah briefly reinstated Indar Singh in Nagaur in 1723,

Thus, for almost ninety years, a single family held Nagaur as a *jagir*. Despite the Mughals' general policy to move nobles to different *jagirs* every couple years, in practice a single person could hold a given *jagir* for years on end. Often several generations of a single family maintained control of a given territory through holding *jagir* rights. Nagaur had not been a *watan jagir*, 'homeland' grants that were typically held in perpetuity by local hereditary rulers who supported the Mughals, but nevertheless the city and district evolved into the de facto territory of a junior line of the Rathor Rajputs who ruled in Jodhpur. The Mughals allowed this development in part to have a power to balance against the senior line of ruling Rathors in Jodhpur. It also helped satisfy the claims to power of the junior Rathor lineages, especially since Amar Singh had been passed over for the Marwar throne in favor of his younger brother. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries a number of territories headed by junior Rathor Rajput lines emerged as new polities in Rajasthan, including Kishangarh and Bikaner; both eventually asserted full independence from Marwar.³⁵ Although the Amar Singh family recognized the suzerainty of the Mughals, Nagaur in the seventeenth century began to develop many of the characteristics of an independent state. This laid the administrative foundation for the later incorporation of the Nagaur into the Marwar Kingdom by promoting modes of rule that followed Rajput rather than Mughal norms.

Given the overall lack of direct intervention by the emperors in the city, Mughal administration in Nagaur, including charitable grants, was typically mediated through the *jagirdar*. The *jagirdar's* regional and imperial affiliations and ambitions influenced his administrative style. The Rathor Rajputs who gained control over Nagaur in the seventeenth century had both regional and imperial political ambitions, which shaped their administration of the *sarkar* (district). Regionally, they had eyes on the primary seat of Rathor rule in Jodhpur, to which the family of Rao Amar Singh made several claims. They also sought to bolster their position at the Mughal court, whose good graces kept the family assigned to the same *jagir*. Although Amar Singh family's ambitions often brought them into conflict with the Jodhpur Rathors and daughter of the Mughal Emperor, both sets of ambitions required them to develop a strong base in Nagaur. This encouraged them to engage in patronage in Nagaur. As established in the previous chapter, Hindu rulers continued charitable support for many of the Muslim shrines and institutions that had been established by earlier Muslim rulers and administrators and even made new grants, and Muslims did similar for Hindu and Jain temples and priests.³⁶ This pattern held in Nagaur. From the time the Rao Amar Singh family was appointed as the *jagirdars* of Nagaur in the mid-seventeenth century, the officials of the shrine of Sultan al-Tarikin Hamid al-Din Nagauri were typically able to secure patronage and the guarantee of their rights from the local Hindu authorities.³⁷

Although patronage continued, shrine officials and others in Nagaur faced new challenges and opportunities under the Rathors' hybrid administration that combined aspects of local

in 1725 Indar Singh was defeated by Abhai Singh, who had in turn been granted Nagaur in *jagir* by the Mughal emperor upon his accession to the Marwar throne earlier that year. Siddiqi, 154.

³⁵ Hooja, 542, 607-8. Kishangarh was founded by Kishan Singh, one of the sons of Mota Raja Udai Singh of Marwar. Kishan Singh had been granted the territory in *jagir* by Akbar.

³⁶ See Ch. 1, and also B. N. Goswamy and J. S. Grewal, *The Mughals and the Jogis of Jakbbar; Some Madad-i-Ma'ash and Other Documents* (Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1967); Tarapada Mukherjee and Irfan Habib, "Akbar and the Temples of Mathura and its Environs," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 48 (1987), 234-50; Tarapada Mukherjee and Irfan Habib, "The Mughal Administration and the Temples of Vrindavan during the Reigns of Jahangir and Shah Jahan," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 49 (1988), 289-99.

³⁷ ABF No. 21, Kati Bad 2 VS 1764 (c. 1707); No. 23, Asoj Sud 2 VS 1764 (c. 1707); No. 24, Kati Bad 14 VS 1765 (c. 1708).

Rajasthani forms of governance with Mughal Persianate norms. This complex political scenario, which created nested layers of patronage, legal codes and administrative procedures, had to be negotiated to ensure the political and economic success of the shrine and its attendants. For instance, locally issued documents increasingly used Rajasthani extensively, as opposed to the Persian records of the Mughal state. A large number of the grants and other documents issued to the Sultan al-Tarikin Dargah from the second half of the seventeenth century are in Rajasthani language and follow formulae that are distinct from Persian documents, though common across Rajput Rajasthani administration. The shrine officials needed to possess fluency in both sets of norms to preserve their widest access to resources through successful petitions and recognition of documents.

On the other hand, because the authority of the Amar Singh family as *jagirdars* was ultimately subordinate to Mughal authority and the Mughal imperial center could directly intervene in local matters, Nagaur residents were able to target petitions to the audience that would be most responsive to their claims.³⁸ If the residents in Nagaur were dissatisfied with the Rathors' administration of the city, they could make a petition requesting the intervention of high level Mughal officials. In 1679, residents of Nagaur lodged complaints in Ajmer with the *subahdar* (provincial governor) about the lack of a good *qazi* (Islamic judge) in the city. The *subahdar* justified the necessity of Mughal intervention to appoint a competent *qazi* not only on the basis of the *sharif* (proper, noble) character of the Muslim population in Nagaur but also with explicit reference to the fact that Nagaur was under Hindu rule.³⁹ In this episode, Nagaur's Muslim community took strategic recourse to a Muslim Mughal official, rather than the Hindu *jagirdar*, to secure a *qazi* who would be more sympathetic to their needs.⁴⁰

The politics of patronage, and the concurrent opportunities and challenges for the *pirzadas* and other local religious communities shifted again in the eighteenth century, particularly after the 1720s when the Mughals lost all significant authority over western Rajasthan including Nagaur. Throughout the eighteenth century, the Marwar state consolidated control over Nagaur as Mughal influence declined. In the early eighteenth century when Marwar Maharaja Ajit Singh was attempting to expand his kingdom, Nagaur was one of the first territories he seized. On the one hand, the *jagirdar* of Nagaur, Rao Indar Singh, had been the main rival for the Marwar throne for Ajit Singh's entire life and Ajit Singh sought to neutralize that threat. On the other hand, through Indar Singh and his family's long-standing hold on the territory of Nagaur, it had been naturalized as the domain of Rathor Rajputs rather than a Mughal territory. Despite his aspirations, Ajit Singh's control over Nagaur was tenuous and intermittent. But in 1724, Nagaur came under the control of Bakht Singh, the brother of Marwar Maharaja Abhai Singh, who was given the territory by Maharaja Abhai Singh as a reward for killing their father, Ajit Singh, and for supporting Abhai Singh's claim to the throne. Nagaur's ties to Marwar were strengthened by Bakht Singh's twenty-five year administration in

³⁸ Central Mughal authorities continued to appoint local officials subordinate to the *jagirdar* such as the *qanungo* and gave grants of land to these officials as rewards for their service. Sh. Hardayal Chand Mathur Sangrah, File No. 7, RSA Bikaner.

³⁹ *Waqai' Sarkar Rantanbhor wa Ajmer*, Aligarh Transcript, Centre of Advanced Study in History Research Library, Aligarh Muslim University, f. 35-6.

⁴⁰ How are we to read this opposition of a 'good' Muslim population and a Hindu ruler against whom the Muslim community must be shored up? It would be reductive to read this in line with nationalist historiography which pits Hindus and Muslims as constantly opposed. The patronage grants and inscriptions referenced above shatters assumptions of clear, antagonistic lines between the two communities. Yet these categories also work as more than empty signifiers, as both petitioners and political leaders appear to strategically manipulate them to build a particular case.

Nagaur and his orchestration of significant renovations to the fort of Nagaur, which turned the fort into a Rajput pleasure palace similar to those of other early eighteenth-century Rajput courts such as Jaipur and Kishangarh.⁴¹ When Bakht Singh's son Vijai, who spent much of his youth in Nagaur, successfully claimed the Marwar throne in 1752 after a succession struggle, he took the final step of fully incorporating Nagaur into the kingdom of Marwar.⁴² This expanded the territory of Marwar, but reduced Nagaur's status from the leading city of an independent region to being a secondary city in a larger kingdom. The concurrent Maratha raids of the mid-eighteenth century, the rising Afghan powers, and the shrinking circles of Delhi's influence also may have reduced the number of traders moving through Nagaur on old routes to Multan and Sindh, thus further cementing Nagaur's place as a secondary city.

As the Rathor Rajputs of Marwar assumed greater power in Nagaur, they increasingly became the sole political patrons and authorities over patronage.⁴³ Rajasthani administrative norms became dominant, and Nagaur's residents had less recourse to authorities beyond the maharaja. New patterns of state patronage began to develop, which affected both Muslim shrines and Hindu temples. In the second half of the eighteenth century, Krishna devotion was on the rise in Marwar, particularly among the ruling Rajputs and the merchant and scribal classes who filled the ranks of the kingdom's administration.⁴⁴ This shifted the emphasis of state patronage to Vaishnav temples. For example, the Rathor rulers and prominent merchants frequently sent material and monetary donations as well as made pilgrimages to Thakurdwara and Ekling-ji, the foremost Vaishnav temples in Rajasthan. *Prasad* (blessed food offerings) was sent from that temple and redistributed by the state among Vaishnav temples and priests in Marwar.⁴⁵

In this Vaishnav-inflected religious atmosphere, the Muslim community in Nagaur faced new challenges. Muslims across Marwar were oppressed and constituted as a distinct and low-status social group by new Vaishnav regulations promulgated from the 1770s, such as those promoting vegetarianism and forbidding Muslims from owning or butchering animals.⁴⁶ However, these restrictions seem to have had the largest impact on certain subsections of the Muslim community, such as the butchers who lost much of their wealth. In contrast, the *pirzadas* continued to enjoy the privileges of their *waqf*. Marwar administrators generally upheld the rights of *pirzadas* but did put more pressure on Muslim groups with less social standing, including *faqirs* (indigent holy men) and artisans.⁴⁷ In the long run, however, even the *pirzadas* were squeezed. In the second half of the eighteenth century, the Marwar state made fewer new charitable grants to the *dargahs* than previous

⁴¹ Catherine Glynn, "Rathore and Mughal Interactions: Artistic Development at the Nagaur Court, 1600-1751" in Debra Diamond, Catherine Glynn and Karni Singh Jasol, *Gardens and Cosmos: The Royal Paintings of Jodhpur* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 2008), 17.

⁴² Hooja, 713.

⁴³ In all three private collections I consulted from the Nagaur *dargahs* of Sultan al-Tarikin and Bare Pir Sahib, Mughal *sanads* and *farmans* are plentiful between Akbar and Aurangzeb's reign, have a limited presence for Bahadur Shah, Farrukh Siyar, and Muhammad Shah's early reign, and then completely end. In contrast in Ajmer, Mughal emperors and nobles continued to issue *sanads* and *farmans* throughout the eighteenth century.

⁴⁴ Divya Cherian, "Ordering Subjects: Merchants, the State, and Krishna Devotion in Eighteenth-Century Marwar" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2015), 92-6.

⁴⁵ For example, 44 rupees of *prasad* from Sri Thakurdwara was distributed in Nagaur on Ram Navami in 1795. JSPB No. 47, f 67B-68A Baisakh Bad 13 VS 1852.

⁴⁶ Cherian, 157-8, 171, 176-8.

⁴⁷ In one instance, Pinjaras (Muslim cloth printers) were evicted from a mosque by a well-off Rajput who claimed the land. JSPB No. 40, f 68AB Magsar Bad 12 VS 1846.

rulers. In the face of a growing number of claimants to the *waqf* over successive generations, the *pirzadas* faced increasing economic pressure. By the end of the eighteenth century, the political climate of patronage in Nagaur had shifted considerably from the norms of the Mughal Empire expressed in the mid-sixteenth century. The rulers of the Marwar Kingdom upheld most earlier grants issued by Mughal emperors and *jagirdars*, but were less likely to make new grants; those made were often less extensive. The *pirzadas* continued to pursue state patronage, but were less successful than they once had been.

The remainder of this chapter focuses on how religious communities, particularly the *pirzada* communities affiliated with *dargahs*, responded to these changes with strategies that focused firstly on manipulating lineage and secondly on cultivating various political relationships. The response of the *pirzadas* to these changing patterns of administration and patronage relied overwhelmingly on building, pruning, and reframing networks to gain or preserve access to resources. These networks took a variety of forms, including family lineages, spiritual lineages, legal and administrative structures, and information. Sometimes these actions were taken on behalf of the *pirzada* community as a whole; at other points these efforts were internally focused as different members of the *pirzada* group vied with each other for a larger share of power, prestige, and revenue.

Proximate and Remote Relations: Lineage and the Borders of Community

Because grants and religious offices were typically inheritable, lineage and family relations were a key element in gaining and controlling patronage. In Nagaur, as at many Sufi shrines, the *pirzadas*, who claimed blood descent from the Sufi saint, were the main spiritual and administrative leaders in the *khanaqahs* and *dargahs*. The *pirzadas* relied on the authority of lineage claims to lay claim to various rights including particular administrative roles. They formed lineage ties by means of spiritual initiation, blood descent from the Sufi saint, adoption and marriage. People claimed to belong to *pirzada* lineage on the basis of both proximate ties to living or recently deceased relatives and more remote connections to ancestors many generations removed. Individuals, families and the *pirzada* community as a whole could create, manipulate and contest family ties and membership in the community. For proximate relations, family was formed and fought through community norms and personal law. For remote relations, the *pirzadas* relied on hagiography (*tazkira*) and family trees (*shajaras*) to establish and prove lineage claims. Not all of the *pirzadas*' efforts to control or reformulate their lineage were recognized by external authorities or achieved their desired aim. However, the *pirzadas*' use of lineage in the pursuit of patronage helped constitute the *pirzadas* as a community by reifying boundaries and prestige within the community.

Members of the *pirzada* community in Nagaur had access to heritable bundles of rights and administrative privileges through their connections to the *dargahs*. First and foremost among these privileges was the position of *sajjada-nishin*, which was the spiritual head of a shrine. In the Nagaur *dargahs*, the *sajjada-nishin* post combined the duties of spiritual leadership with administrative responsibilities; no evidence survives of a separate post of *mutawalli*, or state-appointed administrator that was common at major shrines.⁴⁸ The *sajjada-nishin* post conferred the greatest power in the

⁴⁸ Compared to the shrine of Mu'in al-din Chishti in Ajmer, the extant documents for this shrine from the early modern period make comparatively little mention of the administration of the shrine. In addition to no mention of a *mutawalli* in Nagaur, the attendants of the shrine were not given the title of *khadim*, nor are there records of detailed divisions of daily *nazr* through a system of key sharing as in Ajmer. These differences may be due in part to the difference in the scale of revenue and pilgrims.

dargah and was typically accompanied by rights to substantial shares of the offerings, rights to a *haveli* or other housing, and *madad-i ma'ash* charitable grants to support family living expenses. Another hereditary right was the permission to read the *kebutba* (Friday address) in the shrine. The holder of this post received a small stipend from the government.⁴⁹ Other inherited rights connected to the shrines included the right to a seat during *majlis* (gatherings), shares in *dargah* profits, and rights to residence, particularly on *dargah* grounds. The holders of these rights also tended to benefit, either directly or indirectly, from state patronage. There was local competition for all of these rights and the stakes increased over time as the number of potential claimants for a limited number of positions expanded greatly through successive generations. Through the creation of binding documents and the active maintenance and management of hagiographies and family trees, *pirzadas* controlled access to these rights and resources.

The *pirzadas* used wills and legal challenges to wills extensively to manage access to hereditary rights in the *dargah*. This was particularly true for shares in revenue of villages granted to the shrines and to religious specialists and shares in the offerings given by pilgrims.⁵⁰ In Nagaur recipients of *madad-i ma'ash* land revenue passed down their shares to their descendants, even before an imperial decree in 1690 authorized such inheritance across the Mughal Empire.⁵¹ Although high mortality rates may have helped consolidate properties at some points, in general the population of *pirzadas* was expanding and shares in revenue grants were divided between all children. Thus *pirzada* families often appealed to the state for additional grants because the heirs did not receive enough revenue from their inherited portion to cover their basic living expenses. Inheritance disputes were also common. These disputes revolved around the equal distribution of shares among heirs, cases where a *pirzada* died without an heir, and rights to inheritance through adoption. In each of these instances, the official ruling on the matter formed a judgment on the distribution of wealth and an official endorsement of certain individuals as rightful membership in the *pirzada* clan.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the *pirzadas* controlled access to property with wills and gift deeds. While some of their deeds followed predictable patterns designating the division of property between surviving sons. For the most part, property and rights in the *dargah* remained in the male lineages because access to this property typically depended on service in the shrines, which was restricted to men. Many also sought to consolidate property into particular branches of the family through wills, especially if children had predeceased their parents.⁵² However, women in the *pirzada* community also played an important role in shaping inheritance and access to property and rights. Women who inherited property and rights from their husband or father typically held onto it until their death. Women also acquired shares of *dargah* income and village revenue through their

⁴⁹ Two shaikhs, Bhikan and Shaikhu, claimed a right to read the *kebutba* in Nagaur in c. 1739-40 based on a right that had been granted to their ancestor almost 100 years earlier by Rao Amar Singh. GS No. 18 and 19, 1152 AH (1739-40).

⁵⁰ In regards to the Ajmer Shrine, Currie notes that prior to 1638, half of the *madad-i ma'ash* grant was incorporated into the *dargah waqf* on the death of the grantee. In 1638, Shah Jahan ordered that all of *madad-i ma'ash* grants in Ajmer should be inherited by the descendants of the grantee. P. M. Currie, *The Shrine and Cult of Mu'in al-din Chishti of Ajmer* (Delhi: Oxford UP, 1989), 175.

⁵¹ GS No. 4, 1033 AH (1623-4). Irfan Habib argues that under Akbar, Jahangir, and Shah Jahan, at least 50 percent of a *madad-i ma'ash* grant would be resumed upon the death of the original recipient, though small holdings (under 20 or 30 *bighas*) might be excluded from this practice. However, from 1690 Aurangzeb decreed that all *madad-i ma'ash* grants were deemed heritable. All inheritance was subjected to royal decree, not *shari'a* law. *Waqf* was in perpetuity, and *waqf* grants could include specific designations for *madad-i ma'ash*. Currie, 175, FN 3; Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India, 1556-1707*, 2nd ed. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 349-51, 359, especially fn 77.

⁵² GS No. 11, likely 1078 AH (1667-8); No. 15, 22 Rabi' I 1107 AH (October 31, 1695).

marriage portion or dowry. They protected their claim to this property throughout their lifetime and often played a key role in deciding its further inheritance and in consolidating possession. In one case, an adopted son's claim to these rights was turned down in favor of the woman's claim to marriage property.⁵³ Widowed women held onto the rights that passed through the male line after the death of their husbands. Some widows, typically with the permission of their husbands, made their own determination about the further inheritance of this property. For instance, one woman bequeathed the property to relatives and community members who had assisted them after their husbands' deaths.⁵⁴

Wills, however, had mixed success in controlling community access because they were not always followed. *Pirzadas* regularly disputed access to *naẓr* revenue and the *dargah* premises, even with immediate family members. Sometimes powerful family members ignored the norms of inheritance in order to increase their share of the rights and property. In the 1640s, one family of Qadiri *pirzadas* in Nagaur had an inheritance dispute over rights to the offerings at the Bare Pir Sahib shrine that were made by pilgrims and local devotees. The father's will divided the shares of revenue between his three sons and his daughter. But on the death of the eldest son, the second son claimed full control over the shrine. His younger brother and sister, and the legal heirs to the deceased brother lost their claim to the share of the offerings and were beaten up and kicked out of the shrine.⁵⁵ In removing his siblings from the shrine, the second son was symbolically removing them from the Qadiri *pirzada* community as well as restricting their access to income from donations. The disenfranchised parties sought restoration of their hereditary rights to income from the shrine and access to the shrine space; the state's resolution of the case is unknown.

Contestations over inheritance were more intense for higher prestige positions. The right to the post of *sajjada-nishin* (spiritual authority) at the shrine of Sultan al-Tarikin required blood descent from the Sufi saint; typically a political authority also confirmed it. The family of Shaikh Nizam held the post of *sajjada-nishin* at the Sultan al-Tarikin Dargah for at least seventy years, but that did not stop other *pirzadas* from vying for the post. Akbar's *farmans* from the 1570s recognized Shaikh Nizam as the *sajjada-nishin* of the *dargah*. He accompanied the imperial Sadr al-Sudur (the head of charitable grants) on a visit to the *dargah*, which suggests his role in welcoming prominent pilgrims and securing political ties and patronage.⁵⁶ His sons and grandsons were also recipients of grants and leaders of the *pirzada* community.⁵⁷ Shaikh Nizam's descendant Shaikh 'Abd Allah received a grant from Rao Rai Singh in the middle of the seventeenth century that confirmed Shaikh 'Abd Allah as the *sajjada-nishin*.⁵⁸

⁵³ ABF No. 39, Pos Bad 4 VS 1835 (c. 1778).

⁵⁴ GS No. 20, 15 Rajab 1160 AH (July 23, 1747).

⁵⁵ Anjum, 456-60.

⁵⁶ ABF No. 2, 10 Rajab 977 AH (December 29, 1659). His services were likely similar to the "*wakil*" services offered in Ajmer.

⁵⁷ Shaikh Nizam appears to have had four descendants, 'Abdul Aziz, 'Abd Allah, Auliya, and Ahmed. In 1623-4, his sons were mentioned in a land grant (inheritance) that divided the village incomes between the four of them. GS No. 4 1033 AH (1623-4).

⁵⁸ ABF No. 6 and 7, 7 Zu'l-Hijja, year unclear. The document lists Shaikh 'Abd Allah as the son (*wald*) of Shaikh Nizam, but this seems unlikely given that Shaikh Nizam was appointed *sajjada-nishin* in 1570, and Shaikh 'Abd Allah Through the confirmation of the post from Raja Rai Singh who held the *jagirdari* of the territory, the family is clearly dependent on the local *jagirdar* for their maintenance of a position of power at the shrine and for their economic well-being. It also suggests that the *jagirdar* was actually involved in the administration of the region, contrary to the image of *jagirdars* exploiting their territory for economic gain only.

While these grants suggest an orderly succession from father to son, Shaikh ‘Abd Allah faced competition for this post from his brothers as well as from other *pirzada* families claiming descent from Khwaja Hamid al-Din Nagauri. For instance, descendants of Hazrat Makhdum Khwaja Hussain challenged the Shaikh Nizam family’s eminence in shrine affairs in the 1650s. Typically, proximate relations from the immediate family of the current *sajjada-nishin* inherited the post and the largest share in shrine revenue. But more remote relatives who traced their ancestry to the saint buried at the shrine and to prominent figures in the shrine’s earlier history sometimes asserted rights to inheritance. For example, the descendants of Hazrat Makhdum Khwaja Hussain asserted their rights to shrine revenue in the mid-seventeenth century, challenging the preeminence of the Shaikh Nizam family at the Sultan al-Tarikin shrine. Hazrat Makhdum Khwaja Hussain lived in the fifteenth century and is buried in Nagaur. He is credited with restoring the Chishti shrines in both Nagaur and Ajmer and is believed to have been a descendant of Khwaja Hamid al-Din Nagauri.⁵⁹ Thus, his family was a major stakeholder in Nagaur’s *pirzada* community alongside Shaikh Nizam’s family. In an order from 1651, Shaikh Nizam’s descendants, Shaikh ‘Abdul Aziz and Shaikh Auliya, were guaranteed a half share of the *nazr* (offerings) of the *dargah*; the other half was designated for Hazrat Makhdum Khwaja Hussain’s descendants.⁶⁰ Using their claim to descent from Khwaja Hamid al-Din as well as their tie to Khwaja Makhdum, this family established their right to revenue and authority. The success of the Khwaja Makhdum descendants signified that the power structure within the shrine was in flux. As they and other alternative lineages put forth their claims, Shaikh Nizam’s family was no longer the only pole around which the power of the shrine was organized. Throughout the second half of the seventeenth century the Shaikh Nizam family’s control of the shrine declined, although they continued to claim shrine revenue and own and sell property in Nagaur.⁶¹

Another site of internal rivalry between *pirzadas* for inherited privilege at the *dargah* was the right to seats in *majlis* assemblies held for shrine rituals and festivities, including the annual *urs* (death anniversary) celebration. The *majlis* seats marked high status within the community and having a seat gave access to revenue from pilgrims and devotees. Thus, disputes about the denial of a seat or the inclusion of someone new in a *majlis* seat indicated the changing fortunes of particular families within the *pirzada* community. For instance, in the mid-seventeenth century Shaikh Sadr al-Din, a resident of Nagaur, complained to Rao Rai Singh that Shaikh Muhammad Reza had been excluded from his traditional seat at the *dargah majlis*.⁶² Jostling for access to the *majlis* seats was displacing prior stakeholders from their prominence and was symptomatic of an emerging new power order within the *pirzada* community. In the eighteenth century disputes over *majlis* seats intensified at the Sultan al-Tarikin Dargah. In one instance, the attempts to oust one family from the *majlis* seats extended over twenty years and two generations of *pirzadas*. This case, between Shaikh Safi Muhammad’s family and Shaikh Sher Muhammad’s family, came before Marwar officials on at least

⁵⁹ Shokoohy and Shokoohy, 17-18. They base this on the *Akhhbar al-Akhyar*.

⁶⁰ GS No. 7, 2 Rajab, year unclear. This document on *nazr* does not mention Shaikh ‘Abd Allah. He may have died in the intervening time, and one of his brothers had taken the post of *sajjada*, or perhaps, despite his hold on the *sajjada* post, the *nazr* was divided evenly between all members of the family.

⁶¹ Circa 1676, Shaikh Nizam’s grandson, Shaikh Manwar, son of Shaikh ‘Abd al-Aziz recorded a *qismatnama* regarding a house. GS No. 10. Circa 1695-6, Shaikh Manwar, son of ‘Abd al-Aziz, son of Shaikh Nizam made a will and testament after being predeceased by his son. GS No. 15, 22 Rabi’ I 1107 AH (October 31, 1695).

⁶² GS No. 9, (c. 1666-7).

four occasions. Despite multiple decisions in Sher Muhammad's favor, his family was repeatedly ejected from the Sultan al-Tarikin shrine.⁶³

Disciples (*murid*) of saints or their successors also claimed rights associated with the *khanaqahs* and *dargahs* thereby challenging the *pirzadas'* exclusive claim to these resources. However, the claims of disciples rarely held up in disputes. In a discipleship relationship, the spiritual guide (*pir*) had the ultimate right to acknowledge or break the relationship. In the seventeenth and eighteenth century, *pirs* were often *sajjada-nishins* and part of the *pirzada* community, so they were invested in maintaining social hierarchies that restricted the *murids'* claims. In the mid-seventeenth century, a disciple named Daula claimed he had permission to live on the land of Qadiri Shaikh Hazrat Saiyid Hamad, head of the Bare Pir Sahib Dargah, and that they shared their possessions on the basis of discipleship. However, Daula was unable to prove his claim in the court in Ajmer and he was evicted from the land of Saiyid Hamad.⁶⁴ The court rejected Daula's claim to being in a discipleship relationship with the Saiyid on the grounds of lack of proof and denial by the representative of the Saiyid. The limits of the *murids'* rights and relationships are further shown in another instance when a disciple, Lad Muhammad, who was staying on land within the *khanaqah* boundaries, produced a note promising to peacefully vacate the premises if asked by the *sajjada-nishin*. He also clarified that his relatives had no claim to this land.⁶⁵ The *pir-murid* relationship was a form of lineage that could confer rights on the disciple, but did not necessarily extend these rights to the disciple's family. Thus, the relatives of a *murid* were not automatically granted rights to the property of the *murid*, although the explicit denial of these rights in the document suggests that they may well have been pursued in some instances.

Filing legal petitions and writing binding agreements such as wills and gift deeds were the main short-term strategies to control and contest lineage and thus access to patronage. Longer term strategies that spoke to a broader public often revolved around hagiographies (*tazkiras*), which catalogued and recounted the lives of Sufi saints and sometimes other holy men. Rather than a static canon, hagiographies were written and rewritten to emphasize and legitimize particular connections or lineages.⁶⁶ Hagiographies varied in scope and purpose. Some hagiographies covered multiple initiatic lineages (*silsilas*), while others focused on a single lineage, such as the Chishtis, or even a particular local suborder. Hagiographies could be locally produced or imperially sanctioned. Political associations as well as religious concerns impacted who was included and emphasized in *tazkiras*. Deep Mughal ties to the Chishtis between Akbar and Shah Jahan's reigns led to a flourishing production of prominent *tazkiras* in the first half of the seventeenth century.⁶⁷ This production of hagiographies revised the reputations, narratives, and associations of many Sufi saints across the Indian subcontinent.

Such reframing may have occurred at the Bare Pir Sahib Dargah in the late seventeenth century. Throughout most of the seventeenth century, shrine records refer to the tombs of Hazrat 'Abd al-Qadir Sani and 'Abd al-Razaq, who were probably identified with sixteenth-century Sufis

⁶³ JSPB No. 16, f 45B Asadh Sud 1 VS 1833; JSPB No. 49, f 41B-42A Bhadwa Bad 4 VS 1854. Other *majlis* disputes also arose. See: JSPB No. 15 f 46A Asadh Bad 5 VS 1832; JSPB No. 16, f 44A Jeth Bad 9 VS 1833; JSPB No. 18, f 26B Baisakh Sud 14 VS 1834.

⁶⁴ Anjum, 450-1.

⁶⁵ Anjum, 452-3.

⁶⁶ Carl Ernst and Bruce Lawrence discuss this process in detail. See Ernst and Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love: The Chishti Order in South Asia and Beyond* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), "The Art of Ancestry," 47-63.

⁶⁷ See for instance table 2.1 in Currie, 25-6.

from Uch.⁶⁸ Starting around 1680, the prominence of the saints ‘Abd al-Qadir Sani and his son ‘Abd al-Razaq declined at the Qadiri shrine. In their place, ‘Abd al-Wahab, true son of ‘Abd al-Qadir Jilani, became the primary identification of the shrine in documents.⁶⁹ This shift arose, at least in part, from political considerations generated by the practice of hagiography by members of the imperial family. In the mid-seventeenth century, the Mughal prince Dara Shukoh wrote a hagiography, *Safinat al-Anliya*, that sought to establish the primacy of a particular sub-lineage of Qadiri Sufis stretching from ‘Abd al-Qadir Sani, to his own Qadiri Sufi *pir*, Mulla Shah.⁷⁰ Because the prince favored the saint ‘Abd al-Qadir Sani, the Bare Pir Sahib shrine’s affiliation with that saint may have drawn imperial sympathies and benefited the shrine. But divisions within Qadiri orders gained new political relevance when Prince Aurangzeb curried favor with Qadiris who opposed Dara Shukoh’s favored lineage.⁷¹ After Aurangzeb defeated Dara Shukoh in the war of succession for the Mughal throne, the strong affiliation of the Bare Pir Sahib Dargah with ‘Abd al-Qadir Sani likely became a liability for the *pirzadas* when pursuing patronage, so this affiliation disappears from most documents. Aurangzeb’s reference to Hazrat ‘Abd al-Wahab in his first *farman* regarding Nagaur’s Bare Pir Sahib Qadiri shrine reflected efforts to reframe the shrine lineage and benefit from Aurangzeb’s sudden presence and interest in Nagaur’s affairs during the Rajput Rebellion of 1679-1681.⁷² The new emphasis on ‘Abd al-Wahab, a twelfth-century saint born in Baghdad, also contributed to the shrine’s prestige because it emphasized the antiquity of the shrine and its close ties to the origins of the Qadiri order and sacred sites in the Middle East. This would have helped the shrine compete for resources with the Chishti and Suhrawardi shrines in Nagaur, which were both founded in the late twelfth century, and whose founders received far more prominent placement in many seventeenth-century hagiographies. Whatever the reason, emphasizing the connection to ‘Abd al-Wahab succeeded in improving the *dargah*’s fortunes. Concurrent with the shift in the primary tomb identification at the Bare Pir Sahib Dargah, patronage of the shrine increased.

Hagiographies played a prominent role in establishing or contesting the dominance of certain Sufi lineages at regional and transregional levels but the *shajara* (family tree) was the most important lineage document for many of the *pirzadas* at the local level. As a text that could be recited in the shrine, it demonstrated the descent of the saint buried there from the prophet. As a written document, it took the form of a map or chart tracing the saint’s esteemed lineage and showing the family ties connecting the *pirzada* to the saint.⁷³ It was, therefore, key evidence in any claim to a

⁶⁸ Bilgrami, 96-7. ‘Abd al-Razaq is thought to have been in Nagaur at the time of ‘Abd al-Qadir Sani’s death. However, most traditions hold that these saints were also buried in Uch.

⁶⁹ This shift is seen in the identifications given in the petitions and grants regarding the shrine. Sixteenth and seventeenth-century *farmans* and petitions from Nagaur’s Qadiri shrine made reference to ‘Abd al-Qadir Sani as the primary saint buried in and associated with the shrine. Anjum, 442, 456, 463, 469, 471, 473, 475, 506. From the 1680s, the notices instead emphasize ‘Abd al-Wahab Jilani, true son of ‘Abd al-Qadir Jilani. Anjum 479, 481, 483, 485, 489, 493 instead refer to ‘Abd al-Wahab Jilani, with one exception in 1167/1753 that refers to ‘Abd al-Qadir Sani. Anjum, 491.

⁷⁰ According to Bruce Lawrence, Dara Shukoh was writing against the Qadiri lineage favored by Shaikh ‘Abd al-Haqq Dihlavi in his prominent late sixteenth-century hagiography, the *Akbbar al-Akhyar*. Bruce B. Lawrence, “An Indo-Persian Perspective on the Significance of Early Persian Sufi Masters” in *The Heritage of Sufism Volume I: Classical Persian Sufism from its Origins to Rumi (700-1300)*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1999), 25.

⁷¹ Munis D. Faruqui, *The Princes of the Mughal Empire, 1504-1719* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 169-171.

⁷² Anjum, 479.

⁷³ A parallel can be seen in the *vamshavalis* of Rajput clans, which on one hand connected the clan to a deity, often Ram, and on the other demonstrated contemporary stakeholders’ claims to be part of a given family and have political

traditional right. *Pirzadas* staked claims to the *sajjada-nishin* post through the production of *shajaras* (family trees). In the second half of the sixteenth century, the lineage of the *sajjada-nishin* at the Bare Pir Sahib Dargah was taken over by one Khalil Allah. No extant documents refer to him as the son of Maqbul, the shaikh who had previously controlled the *dargah* premises. However, Khalil Allah's right to the *sajjada-nishin* post was established through an account that depicted him renewing the shrine, and, crucially, through the *shajara* that is recited daily at the shrine. The *shajara* depicts Khalil Allah as the descendant of a Qadiri saint from Uch, and therefore related to the Qadiri saint of the Bare Pir Sahib Dargah.⁷⁴ The recitation and repetition of this lineage in the *shajara* authorized his claim to the *sajjada-nishin* post.

Hagiographies and *shajaras* were also key texts in the formation of regional networks of shrines. These networks could raise the spiritual and political profile of shrines, thereby attracting patronage and pilgrimage. Hagiographies and *shajaras* reinforced the ties between Sufi centers that were forged through discipleship. In the thirteenth century, the Chishti *khanaqah* and, later, shrine of Hamid al-Din Nagauri was closely tied to Ajmer's *khanaqah* and shrine because Hamid al-Din was one of the early disciples of Mu'in al-din Chishti. However, Hamid al-Din did not receive the mantle of *kehalifa* that designated the primary spiritual successor of Mu'in al-din Chishti. He gradually became a more obscure figure in the Chishti canon of saints. Unlike other Sufis in Mu'in al-din's lineage, such as Qutb al-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki, Hamid al-Din did not become a major Sufi teacher and his shrine was less prominent. Therefore, the attendants of Hamid al-Din's *dargah* sought regional relevance by invoking the saint's ties to the more famous Ajmer shrine. This affiliation was emphasized in the mid-fifteenth century when Khwaja Makhdum Hussain re-established the Chishti *khanaqah* in Nagaur. The *khanaqah* had been briefly abandoned during the struggles for power in the 1450s between Firuz Khan and Mujahid Khan, the sons of the first independent ruler of the Nagaur Khanate, Shams Khan. Khwaja Makhdum Hussain also took a leading role in repairing the shrine in Ajmer. It is believed that he appointed one of his followers to lead the *khanaqah* in Ajmer before he returned to Nagaur.⁷⁵ Following these renovations, fifteenth- to early seventeenth-century hagiographies devoted considerable attention to Hamid al-Din Nagauri and recognized his ties to Mu'in al-din, which raised Hamid al-Din's profile among Chishti devotees.⁷⁶ Such rhetorical ties, which are reflected in hagiographies like the *Akbar al-Akhyar*, helped the shrine attract Mughal patronage. Some of the Mughal revenue grants designated *waqf* lands for both the Ajmer and the Nagaur shrines, suggesting the close association patrons made between the two shrines.⁷⁷ This affiliation undoubtedly helped the Sultan al-Tarikin shrine of Hamid al-Din Nagauri gain state support.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Ajmer and Nagaur Chishti shrines also had interpersonal ties including shared intellectual circles and family relationships. Disciples and

authority through descent. Many *vamsnavalis* were preserved in oral tradition by specialist groups such as Charans and Bhats.

⁷⁴ Anjum, 508, 527-8;

⁷⁵ Shokoohy and Shokoohy, 17-18. According to the Shokoohys, a chart in a local source shows Khwaja Makhdum Husain to be six generations down in descent from Khwaja Hamid al-Din Nagauri. *Akbar al-Akhyar*, 182-3.

⁷⁶ For instance, both are among the first saints dealt with in *Akbar al-Akhyar*, and each receive a much longer treatment than most of the saints. See also Jamal's *Siyar al-'Arifin*.

⁷⁷ The *yaddasht* of an Akbar period grant designates village revenue specifically for the Sultan al-Tarikin Dargah and Khwaja Mu'in al-din Chishti's *dargah*. GS No. 3, copy of a *farman*, c. 977 AH (1569-70); ABF No. 32, 10 Zu'l-Hijja, 31 Regnal.

attendants of both shrines wrote letters to each other describing their travels to other Chishti shrines, discussing religious matters, and distributing information through networks of Chishti devotees and initiates. The passing of greetings and the details of family members, such as the health of ones daughters, indicate close relationships between the correspondents.⁷⁸ Chishti *pirzada* communities also contracted marriages between communities in different towns and cities, which cemented regional ties, though they were not as common as marriages within their immediate locality. In the case of *pirzadas* in eighteenth-century Nagaur, they formed marriage alliances not only with Ajmer's *khadims*, but also with the *pirzada* community in Merta. If engagements between the communities were not upheld, community relations could deteriorate and the parties involved quickly filed petitions for justice.⁷⁹ This pattern of regional marriage alliances among shrine communities also emerged in the Deccan, and likely across the subcontinent. When Sufi lineages in the Deccan married into one another it created a separate social class of Islamic specialists.⁸⁰ In Rajasthan too, these marriages between the affiliates of shrines helped create the *pirzada* community.

Like the Chishtis, the Qadiri *pirzadas* also had regional networks extending to Merta and Ajmer. These networks included properties, especially contemplation cells that symbolically and financially linked the Qadiri communities in these cities to each other. A seventeenth-century Qadiri document explained the origin of these networks in terms of the actions of the twelfth-century saint thought to be buried in the Bare Pir Sahib Dargah. The document describes that when the holy man 'Abd al-Wahab traveled from Ajmer to Nagaur, he stopped in Merta, the only major urban settlement between the two cities. He stayed in Merta for an unknown period of time, and established a *chilla* (a cell or retreat for contemplation) near the city's Nagauri Darwaza (gate). In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the *sajjada-nishin* family of the Qadiri *pirzadas* of Nagaur managed and maintained the Merta *chilla*. Local residents of Merta supported the *chilla* with gifts of cows and improvements to the building.⁸¹ In the mid-eighteenth century, the establishment of a Qadiri *chilla* in Ajmer reinforced the link between Qadiris in that city and in Nagaur and Merta. According to local beliefs, a *faqir* brought a brick back from the Baghdad shrine of 'Abd al-Qadir Jilani, and was buried with it in the Ajmer *chilla* in 1770.⁸² This invoked the distant referent of the Qadiri network, Baghdad, which was the site of the founder of the Qadiri lineage, and tied it to Ajmer.

Through marriage, correspondence and hagiography, the *pirzadas* of both the Chishti and Qadiri shrines in Nagaur constructed a regional network of holy men, devotees, and land rights, in which Ajmer was a central pole tying these networks to founders and to sites beyond India. These affiliations ran counter to new political and administrative alignments. In the eighteenth century the political center for Merta, Nagaur and other regional cities in western Rajasthan was reorienting toward Jodhpur as they were more deeply integrated into the state of Marwar. However, the Nagaur shrines' connections with Ajmer still played a key role in supporting their claims to spiritual authority that underlay both their patronage and pilgrimage.

The local position of shrines was also affected by networking and relations between various shrines and *silsilas* (initiativ lineages) within the same city. The Chishtis and Suhrawardis in Nagaur

⁷⁸ ABF No. 48, undated; No. 59, January 17, 1914; GS No. 34, undated.

⁷⁹ JSPB No. 18, f 25B Baisakh Bad 11 VS 1834.

⁸⁰ Green, 28.

⁸¹ Anjum, 485.

⁸² Har Bilas Sarada, *Ajmer: Historical and Descriptive* (Ajmer: Scottish mission Industries Co., 1911), 129

were strengthened by alliances with each other. The practice of dual initiations in the Chishti and Suhrawardi Sufi lineages, which became common in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, eventually drew the administration of the Chishti and Suhrawardi shrines closer together.⁸³ But conflicts between the Chishtis and the Qadiris grew, separating the *pirzada* communities associated with each shrine. These conflicts may have stemmed from the unequal treatment and patronage of the Chishti and Qadiri shrines in Nagaur. Overall, the Chishti lineage enjoyed greater prestige and resources in Nagaur under the Mughals than the Qadiri did. The Chishti records for the Sultan al-Tarikin Dargah predominantly concern patronage, including land grants, other *waqf* matters, and *in'am* for various shrine attendants. In contrast, the Qadiri records of the Bare Pir Sahib Dargah rarely describe *waqf* grants. Instead, they document the repeated encroachment on the rights of the shaikhs to land and a *haveli* associated with the shrine including by representatives of the state such as soldiers, as well as interruptions to daily salary grants by “people fond of evil.”⁸⁴ The Bare Pir Sahib shrine even faced challenges from other Muslims in Nagaur. In the mid-seventeenth century, Saiyid Musa, who was one of the shaikhs of the Bare Pir Sahib Dargah, complained that the land, well and *haveli* of the *kbhanaqab* were being encroached upon by four Muslim men described as rebellious troublemakers.⁸⁵ Unlike the Chishti records, the Qadiri records suggest a hostile environment for the shrine in Nagaur, which likely caused jealousy between adherents of the two lineages.

Conflicts between the Qadiris and Chishtis in Nagaur came to a head in the early nineteenth century. At that point, the Qadiri *pirzadas* testified to their distinction from Chishti *pirzadas* in a series of legal petitions. The Qadiri *pirzadas* recalled traditional accounts of Chishti harassment of their community and cast aspersions on the Chishti community in Nagaur. In their testimony, they referred to several centuries of conflict and separation between the two groups. The Qadiri *pirzadas* claimed that jealous persons, including Chishtis and prominent nobles in Akbar’s court such as Abu’l Fazl, had harassed the sixteenth-century Qadiri *sajjada-nishin* in Nagaur, Khalil Allah, by spreading malicious rumors. According to the Qadiri testimony, when these persons were in the custody of Akbar and facing execution for their lies, Khalil Allah came and personally forgave them and secured their release. This account aimed to establish Khalil Allah’s rightful claim to the Qadiri *sajjadagi* and to demonstrate his moral superiority to his Chishti adversaries. The Qadiri *pirzadas* further reinforced their claim to moral superiority with their allegation that the Chishti *pirzadas* were in fact not the descendants of Hamid al-Din Nagauri but rather of menial servants who maintained

⁸³ This may explain why there is a *waqf* grant for Nagaur’s Suhrawardi shrine in the collection of the Chishti *sajjada-nishin*. The grant, probably from the eighteenth century, provided the revenue of 1001 *bigbas*, and rights to trees and the effects of the land to support the *rosbanai* (lighting) at the *dargah* for notable Suhrawardis Ahmad Zahir al-Din, Hamid al-Din Khui, Hamid al-Din Kabah Pish, Hamid al-Din Khalas Makhlus and Hamid al-Din Rehani. ABF No. 46, 1 Muharram, 8 Regnal, c. 18th century. Although the identities of all of these holy men cannot be confirmed, Ahmad Zahir al-Din is thought to be either the son or student of Qazi Hamid al-Din Nagauri and was responsible for running the Suhrawardi *kbhanaqab* after Qazi Hamid al-Din left Nagaur. Hamid al-Din Khui was also an early follower of this *kbhanaqab*. Both Ahmad Zahir al-Din and Hamid al-Din Khui are buried in the same complex which appears to have been both an old graveyard and the site of the Suhrawardi *kbhanaqab*. See Shokoohy and Shokoohy, 54-7. I have not been able to positively identify the other Hamid al-Dins mentioned in this document. There are local sayings about the “Seven Hamid al-Dins” of Nagaur, of which five total are mentioned in the document.

⁸⁴ Anjum, 442-7, 450, 513.

⁸⁵ Anjum, 465-6.

the shrine.⁸⁶ In another early nineteenth-century account that emphasized the distinction between the Qadiri and Chishti *pirzadas*, a Qadiri *pirzada* recounted a trip to Bhopal. Upon reaching Bhopal, the ruler, Nawab Nazar Muhammad Khan, had favorably received the Qadiri delegation. But an unnamed opponent told the Nawab that the Qadiri *pirzadas* were descendants of Mu'in al-Din Chishti, not of 'Abd al-Qadir Jilani. This insulted the Qadiri *pirzadas*. To clear their name, the Qadiris asked the *khadims* of the Ajmer Chishti shrine to witness that the Qadiris were not descendants of Mu'in al-Din Chishti.⁸⁷ Rumors about lineage were potentially potent and destabilizing because descent and community affiliation were sources of legitimacy. By insisting on the difference between themselves and the Chishti *pirzadas*, the Qadiris sought to establish their authority and to curry favor with particular rulers.

The *pirzadas* of Nagaur engaged in extensive internal politics and strategies to secure hereditary rights and advantages within the *pirzada* community. Both the spiritual authority that attracted patrons and devotees to the shrine and the rights to patronage and official posts in shrines were based on relations to earlier Sufi saints, so lineage and family relationships were central to the *pirzadas*' politics. They controlled lineage through the use and manipulation of wills, marriage alliances, hagiographies and family trees, petitions and legal cases, and rumor. They deployed these techniques in pursuit of resources and rights. While in many cases the *pirzadas* obtained their economic goals, both individually and collectively, through these techniques, they also succeeded in gradually reshaping their community. These internal politics helped determine privilege and ranking between *pirzadas*, enforce the divisions between Qadiri and Chishti *pirzadas*, and judge who could consider themselves part of the *pirzada* lineage.

Political Ties: Access to Grants, Justice and Information

The familial and spiritual lineages discussed above were not, on their own, sufficient for securing rights and privileges in politically unstable times. The *pirzadas* in Nagaur sought to shore up their position in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries through improving their political access. They leveraged close ties to sovereigns and political leaders to build personal and community wealth. The *pirzada* community cultivated favorable relations with regional and imperial leaders on the basis of deep knowledge of administration and politics. They also built robust and diverse networks, which increased their access to information and their options for action in response to challenges. The shrines were tied into multiple political networks at the same time, including both local Rathor rulers and the Mughal administration in Ajmer and Delhi. These networks broadened the *pirzadas*' field of potential patrons and gave them access to judicial options including the Marwar maharaja's court and Islamic courts and judges throughout northwestern India. They selectively used these networks for their own advantage. The *pirzada* communities also participated in imperial information

⁸⁶ Anjum, 508. The account is likely from the eighteenth or early nineteenth century. This technique of casting doubt on the lineage of one's opponents, particularly by disparaging them by saying they are descended from sweepers and other menial laborers appears to be a common tactic. It is what the current *divan* of Mu'in al-Din's shrine maintains is true in his ongoing legal battles with the *khadims*.

⁸⁷ Anjum, 493-5. Nawab Nazar Muhammad Khan, the son of Wazir Muhammad Khan, was the Nawab of Bhopal for about three years, circa 1816-1819, before he died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound (22 Muharram 1235/November 10 1819). He was married to Qudsiya Begam, who became the first female ruler of Bhopal. Shah Jahan Begam's *Taj al-Iqbal* gives a brief account of Nazar Muhammad Khan's reign in Bhopal, but does not mention any encounters with Sufis. H.H. the Nawab Shahjahan, the Begum of Bhopal, *The Taj-ul-Ikbal Tarikh Bhopal or, The History of Bhopal*, translated by H. C. Barstow (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink and Co., 1876), 39-41.

networks to remain apprised of shifting loyalties, and the movement of nobles and armies near and through their land holdings. This allowed them to identify threats and opportunities. During the rapid political changes of the eighteenth century such access to political information became ever more crucial for the *pirzada* community.

Particular *pirzada* families benefited from close ties to political leaders and used these connections to shore up wealth and become part of the local economic elite in Nagaur. For example, a lineage within the Chishti *pirzada* community led by Saiyid Taj Muhammad played an increasingly prominent role in the Sultan al-Tarikin Dargah affairs during the second half of the seventeenth century. Having initially received grants for 160 *bighas* of land, a share in the *naẓr*, a daily portion of oil, and two stores in Nagaur, Saiyid Taj Muhammad was particularly successful in getting these grants reconfirmed by Rao Indar Singh around 1676.⁸⁸ Despite official Mughal policies against *madad-i ma'ash* holders using charity to build up further profits, Saiyid Taj Muhammad and his family turned their access to revenue from patronage into increased economic holdings in Nagaur. Within a decade of Rao Indar Singh's confirmation of their grant, Saiyid Taj Muhammad's family had taken a well on *ijara*, an investment that gave them access to additional tax revenue and made them part of the local political administration in Nagaur.⁸⁹

The *pirzadas* also used their access to political leaders to enhance their role as the representatives of the local Muslim community. Muslims in Nagaur sometimes faced challenges from other groups or local authorities. The *pirzadas* intervened in these cases, claiming to be the representatives of all Muslims in the city, and used their political access to resolve the issue. In one instance, circa 1650-1651, the leader of the Bare Pir Sahib shrine complained that four mosques in the city, including the Jama' Masjid, were falling down, and that non-believers were blocking the efforts of devout Muslims in the city to repair and renovate the mosques and their tanks.⁹⁰ He appealed to the Marwar maharaja for permission and protection to make the repairs, which the king granted. Because the shaikhs who were the *sajjadas* of the shrines and *khanaqahs* typically had preexisting relationships with local and regional political powers, they could be effective spokesmen for Muslims in the city. Doing so surely lent credibility to their local claims to authority.

The *pirzadas'* success in petitioning rulers and building political relations relied on their familiarity with a variety of administrative norms. From tax collection to legal judgements, there was a great variety of administrative methods in use within and across regions in India. As Frank Perlin argues, administrative specialists needed "a library of categories and techniques" to cope with this variety.⁹¹ Like the administrative specialists, the *pirzadas* in Nagaur needed broad knowledge of administrative forms and norms in order to successfully acquire and maintain patronage and privileges. One aspect of the diversity of administrative forms was linguistic. While imperial and regional Mughal officials wrote *madad-i ma'ash* grants in Persian, the Rajput *jagirdars* issued *punya-arath* grants written in Marwari. The *pirzadas* needed to master both languages, including the specialized administrative formulas and divergent dating systems found in each, in order to preserve their rights in both regional and imperial domains and across changing regimes. The *pirzadas'* mastery of these

⁸⁸ ABF No. 13, 14, Bhadwa 1 VS 1733 (c. 1676); ABF No. 15, Bhadwa 3 VS 1733 (c. 1676). Earlier, in 1659-60, a complaint was brought about the division of *naẓr* between the descendants of Saiyid Taj Muhammad. GS No. 8, 26 Muharram 1070 AH (October 13, 1659).

⁸⁹ ABF No. 17, Savan Bad 1 VS 1744, 16 Ramazan, 31 Regnal (c. 1687).

⁹⁰ Anjum, 467-8.

⁹¹ Frank Perlin, "State Formation Reconsidered: Part Two," *Modern Asian Studies* 19, No. 3 (1985): 435-6.

forms is highlighted by the fact that many local officials learned Persian at the *dargahs* and the madrasahs that often were affiliated with them.⁹² Their mastery of Persianate and Marwari techniques is also demonstrated by their adaptation of these administrative systems to meet their own needs. The *pirzada* community produced their own body of documentation for internal and community records. By the eighteenth century, if not earlier, the leaders of the Sultan al-Tarikin shrine developed their own system of seals and stamps which they used to verify documents such as wills. These seals were similar to those of Mughal and Marwari officials. Their interpersonal agreements used official formulas and typically concluded with a statement that the document was written to provide proof of the agreement if necessary, showing an awareness of legal norms and procedures.

The *pirzadas* also needed intimate knowledge of the political system and political developments to lodge successful petitions. This meant partaking in the extensive networks of information gathering and sharing that originated during the Mughal period. Regional rulers and Mughal nobles posted representatives at the imperial court. Their representatives sent them summaries of the daily events in the court, as read out by a court official, and any other intelligence the representatives had gathered. Likewise, the imperial government posted news-writers (*waqi'a navis*) in prominent *sarkars* and in attendance on military leaders and the provincial governors (*subahdars*). These news-writers sent regular reports back to the emperor on local conditions and the deeds of administrators, including their policies and legal judgments.⁹³ In addition to the official networks, nobles and rulers also exchanged information through letters. During the eighteenth century, local states, such as the Kingdom of Marwar, adopted the information networks to their regional administration by posting news-writers and spies in towns and cities throughout the kingdom.

However, imperial and royal officials were not the only ones invested in and participating in the information economy. For *pirzadas* managing a shrine during the late Mughal Empire - who had come to rely largely on state patronage for their income - political information was a necessity. This meant partaking in the networks of information that circulated news of court politics, alliances, and the movement of armies. In addition to royal and imperial grants and legal petitions, the papers held in the private collections of Nagaur's current Chishti *sajjada-nishin* and another *pirzada* family include letters and news bulletins that provide details of local and regional events as well as the actions of key regional political figures. About one-tenth of the total collection of Chishti documents in Nagaur that I consulted are letters and newsletters. This correspondence is not directly addressed to the *pirzadas* and there is no clear indication of how they arranged to receive these letters. The letters often leave the identity of the both the sender and recipient hazy, relying on titles and honorifics, or general terms such as "maharaja sahib" and "banda" (servant), instead of given names. They are also difficult to date precisely because they typically give the year in the regnal years of unidentified rulers. Finally, because the contemporary collection of documents is itself incomplete, it is impossible to state with confidence the full extent of the *pirzadas'* access to information. However,

⁹² *Dargah Abhilekh*, Bundle 1, File 5, No. 6, RSA Bikaner.

⁹³ For a normative description of this system, see Abu'l Fazl, *The Ain-i Akbari*, trans. H. Blochmann (1927; repr., New Delhi: Oriental Books, 1977), 1:268-9. For more on this system, and particularly the British adaptation of it, see C. A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780 – 1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

the presence of these letters in the *pirzada* collections suggests that many people beyond rulers and noblemen participated in the networks of political information by far more people than the rulers.

The contents of these letters reveal a broad concern with Mughal activities and the actions and policies of the maharajas of Marwar and Amber, among others. Through them the *pirzadas* gained information about alliances and status that may have affected their legal and administrative strategies to gain and maintain patronage. Some letters provide details of the imperial postings of various officials, including Maharaja Abhai Singh of Marwar and Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh of Jaipur, and the movement of Mughal nobles throughout the empire.⁹⁴ They also detail the tribute (*peshkash*) payments made between nobles and rulers, the arrangements for the safe escort of dignitaries and others through territories, and the daily events at regional courts, such as the presentation of a gift of cheetahs.⁹⁵ Many of the letters describe the movements of armies and the men ordered by the Mughal emperor to join or leave the service of military commanders. Because the *pirzadas* had economic interests in the revenue of outlying villages around Nagaur that they held through grants, they were concerned with the movement of troops and officials who might seize crops or livestock. For instance, one letter reported a Maratha raid on a village that was part of the Sultan al-Tarikin Dargah's *waqf*.⁹⁶ The *pirzadas* likely used this type of information to help safeguard their resources and assess threats and losses.

On the basis of the information they gathered, the *pirzadas* could choose forums for presenting their petitions and complaints. Even in the seventeenth century under stable Mughal rule, Nagaur residents chose whether to appeal to the local Rajput *jagirdar* or to the Mughal *subahdar* in Ajmer in order to elicit the most favorable response. Under the Mughals, the *pirzada* community preferred to use the Islamic courts in Ajmer when deciding legal disputes. In the eighteenth century, even as the Marwar maharajas made more expansive claims to sovereignty, the *pirzadas* continued to choose which legal and administrative systems to turn to for particular issues. The Mughals did not have authority in Nagaur at the time, but the Marwar legal system prioritized community norms, so it upheld *shari'a* rulings obtained by the *pirzadas*. During a period when Ajit Singh of Marwar had control over Nagaur, the *pirzadas* still brought a dispute over inheritance to a court in Ajmer, rather than resolving it through the Marwar maharaja's legal system.⁹⁷ This shows that in the early eighteenth century, the Mughal Empire's justice system continued to be strong enough that the Nagaur *pirzadas* would preferentially enter a complaint or claim in a Mughal *shari'a* court, even though it meant considerable travel. That changed from the middle of the eighteenth century. From the 1760s, the *pirzadas* typically took legal issues surrounding the Sufi shrines in Nagaur for settlement by royal officials in Jodhpur when the community could not resolve the matter internally, rather than using Islamic jurisprudence or a *qazi*. For instance, in 1767 the *pirzada* community quarreled over the practice of *sama'* (ritual music) because some *pirzadas* wanted to hold the *sama'* in a different location than the one that traditionally had been used. Pirzada Alamdin sought and received the order from the Marwar royal court to prohibit holding the *sama'* in a new location.⁹⁸

Seeking justice through the Marwar maharaja's court meant adapting to different legal principles. The Marwar court's practices gave the *pirzadas* more leeway to resolve disputes than most

⁹⁴ GS No. 35, undated; ABF No. 47, 10 Rabi' II, year unknown; No. 49, undated; No. 52, undated, c. 18th century.

⁹⁵ ABF No. 29, 18 Muharram, 25 Regnal, c. 18th century; No. 57, undated.

⁹⁶ ABF No. 52, undated, c. 18th century.

⁹⁷ ABF No. 32, 2 Shawwal 1130 AH (August 29, 1718).

⁹⁸ ABF No. 38, VS 1824 Asoj Bad 9/c. 1767; JSPB No. 6, f 46A Asoj Bad 9 VS 1824.

shari'a courts would have. For disputes about personal matters, rather than criminal deeds, the Marwar court tended to refer the matter back to the caste group of the parties involved and summon a *panchayat*, a group of community elders authorized to make decisions for the community. The Marwar court treated the *pirzadas* as a caste group. This meant that in most of the cases the *pirzadas* brought, the state was not making a judgment on its own. Rather, the court often made enquiries from the *pirzada* community at-large to determine community norms and a *pirzada panchayat* typically decided the appropriate resolution to a dispute. In one case, in which the formation of the *panchayat* is described, four reliable men were selected from the descendants of Hamid al-Din Nagauri and four from another unspecified group of *pirzadas* in Nagaur.⁹⁹ This shows that the Marwar state treated the *pirzadas* as a single group distinct from other Muslim communities in Nagaur and also recognized that there were subgroups within the *pirzada* community.

Even in the second half of the eighteenth century, the *pirzadas* had legal options. Because of the community-centered approach of the Marwar legal system, they might mix legal forums as they sought to resolve a dispute. In a 1770 inheritance case involving the Bare Pir Sahib Dargah *pirzadas*, the proper documents were missing. In response to the case, the local magistrate (*kotwal*) in Nagaur summoned a *panchayat* that consisted of *pirzadas* from both Bare Pir Sahib and the Sultan al-Tarikin *pirzada* communities. In taking these steps, the Marwar authorities treated the *Pirzadas* as they would any caste group in Nagaur. However, when the *panchayat* was itself unable to resolve the issue, representatives of both sides of the dispute went to Delhi to consult with a *qazi* there. The Marwar administrators' response to the *pirzada* dispute localized the issue to the judgment of Nagaur's *pirzada* community. The community then reached out to alternative Islamic legal networks beyond the boundaries of the Marwar Kingdom to reach a settlement. By Marwar's legal practices, Nagaur's magistrate was bound to follow the resolution found by the *panchayat*. As a result, the Marwar king's court authorized the *qazi's* judgement that community had sought and ordered that this judgement should serve as a precedent for similar inheritance disputes brought by *pirzadas*, so that they were resolved before reaching the maharaja's court.¹⁰⁰ In this way, the Marwar court interpolated aspects of *shari'a* inheritance law into their legal practice. The *pirzadas'* access to alternate legal forums in Delhi allowed them to affect the practice of inheritance law in Marwar. This instance, alongside the *pirzadas'* use of documents and acquisition of information, demonstrates their creativity and resourcefulness in the face of changing and over-lapping political systems.

Conclusion

The *pirzadas* developed political strategies in response to the city of Nagaur's political shifts over 300 years from being the capital of a small khanate, to the center of Mughal *sarkar* often held in *jagir* by Rajputs, to becoming a secondary city in the kingdom of Marwar. Within their community, the *pirzadas* sought to control access to hereditary rights by strategically manipulating the representations of their lineage. Such claims rested on kinship ties and spiritual initiation. These relationships could be reframed to appeal to political authorities or extended to build regional networks. The *pirzadas* gained proficiency in multiple languages and forms of administration, which allowed them to secure rights from a broad array of patrons and political leaders. When conflicts over rights inevitably arose, the *pirzadas* strategically addressed issues in local and imperial courts to achieve their objectives. Although by the mid-eighteenth century the *pirzadas* were increasingly

⁹⁹ JSPB No. 10, f 73AB Chait Bad 3 VS 1827; JSPB No. 18, f 13A Jeth Bad 2 VS 1734.

¹⁰⁰ JSPB No. 10, f 73AB Chait Bad 3 VS 1827 and f 75AB Baisakh Bad 13 VS 1827.

pursuing most of their legal issues on the local level, they participated in extensive political information networks of the eighteenth century to protect their interests vulnerable to developments in regional and imperial politics.

These strategies allowed for adaptation in response to political changes, though they could not fully prevent a decrease in patronage of the *dargahs* in the face of the rising Vaishnavism that was endorsed by the Marwar maharaja in the late eighteenth century. In addition to the impacts on the economic standing of the *pirzadas* and the *dargahs* in Nagaur, the strategies employed by the *pirzadas* also affected the shape of their community. Attempts to rewrite hagiographies and *shajaras*, and disputes over inherited rights created insiders and outsiders among the *pirzadas* and contributed to the formation of the *pirzadas* as a particular, fairly elite group of Muslims within the city. This group became a pillar of the local Muslim community. The *pirzadas* could advocate for and represent Nagaur's Muslims in political disputes and support large projects, such as renovations to the city's *jama' masjid*. Yet the *pirzadas* were not immune to outside influence. As they brought cases before Marwar's administrators in the second half of the eighteenth century, they asked the state to rule on who could be part of their community and increasingly adopted the norms of caste organization. Lineage and politics were intertwined, and the Nagaur *pirzadas* regularly engaged both in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Conflict and the Limits of Shared Space

Introduction

Communities in Nagaur and elsewhere in the Kingdom of Marwar coalesced around occupational, ethnic and religious identities to form recognizable groups. These groups were reinforced by social practices such as arranging marriages only between group members and participating in particular rituals together; for the most part these groups matched the conception of caste typically referred to as *jati*. In the second half of the eighteenth century, disputes and conflicts occurred regularly between communities in the city of Nagaur. Conflicts between communities in Nagaur typically concerned access to common resources and shared spaces. Although religious symbols and rhetoric sometimes influenced the shape of inter-community conflicts in eighteenth-century Nagaur, there is no evidence of regular or sustained Hindu-Muslim conflict in the city. Instead, conflicts and disputes arose most commonly between neighboring communities, such as among groups of artisans who shared a similar social background and were jostling for priority and social status. Through often protracted disputes brought before the maharaja's court for appeal and settlement, these communities repeatedly diffused inter-group tensions and re-established community boundaries and rights, which may have reduced the chances of explosive violence between communities.

The limited scholarship on urban social and communal relations in Rajasthan often focuses on Ajmer because Ajmer is the most prominent Sufi and Islamic site in the region. The lack of communal violence in Ajmer, at least until recent decades, is commonly understood as the result of the presence of the Sufi shrine of Khwaja Mu'in al-din Chishti. Liyaqat Moini explains that the shrine brought Hindus and Muslims together and built harmonious social relationships in the city because the shrine was a site of worship for both Hindus and Muslims. He also argues that the shrine administration and economy, which involved Hindu communities such as the Hindus who sold flowers for pilgrims alongside Muslim communities, helped lessen inter-religious tensions.¹ Shail Mayaram gives a similar example for the post-Partition period in Ajmer. She argues that the economic integration and interdependence of Hindu Sindhi migrants and local Muslim merchants, which often occurred in markets driven by the shrine economy, bolstered peaceful communal relations in the city.² Both of these arguments focus on very specific subsections of the local populace and argue that economic integration is sufficient to support long-term social integration. However, Mayaram herself does not see such economic integration as fully sufficient to promote intercommunity harmony. Instead, she suggests that living together involves the long-term management of violence and community relations through forms of thought and lived relationships that cut more broadly across ethnic identities and combat fundamentalism.³ In contrast to Mayaram and Moini's approaches, which emphasize syncretism and overlap in religious identity and ideation as the key to explaining Ajmer's lack of communalism, Ajay Verghese states that pre-colonial Ajmer

¹ Syed Liyaqat Hussain Moini, *The Dargah of "Khwaja Gharib-un-Nawaz" of Ajmer* (Jodhpur: Books Treasure, 2015), 80-128.

² Shail Mayaram, "Living Together: Ajmer as a Paradigm for the (South) Asian City" in *Living Together Separately: Cultural India in History and Politics*, ed. Mushirul Hasan and Asim Roy (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), 151.

³ Mayaram, 149-50. Mayaram identifies six traits that promote peaceful living together: a shared mythic space, everyday experiences of interethnic intersubjectivity, institutions for the management of difference and dispute resolution, healing traditions that cross ethnic lines, the possibility of intermediate identities that blur categories, and network identities created through real-world activities.

did see incidents of communal conflict based on religious differences between Hindus and Muslims. He argues that British policies of religious neutrality reduced violence, in part by reducing the salience of the category of religious difference in the territory.⁴

Because of insufficient surviving records to evaluate these claims regarding precolonial Ajmer, I turn to Nagaur instead. Nagaur shared many characteristics with Ajmer in the precolonial period, including having several prominent Sufi shrines. The eighteenth-century records from Nagaur do not support any broad claims for the sustained socially-integrative power of an early modern *dargah* or temple. Rather, they suggest that the lack of communal Hindu-Muslim conflict and violence was due to patterns of social segregation that meant that Hindus and Muslims in Nagaur were rarely ‘neighboring’ communities.

My analysis here of intercommunity relations is constrained by the archive. The petitions and royal orders preserved in the archives typically record moments of conflict as well as economic transactions. As Mayaram observes, the archive is “primarily a history of conflict. The universe of ethnic interaction is rarely deemed worth recording.”⁵ The challenge of investigating community interactions is that it requires reading moments of conflict, complaints about aberrations from expected behaviors, and resolutions to disputes in order to gain a sense of social norms and how social relations may have changed. Recognizing these interpretive challenges, I focus here on group conflicts and how they involve identities centered on *jati* (occupational caste), ethnicity, and religion, in order to reconsider the social relations and conditions between different groups and what role religion may have played either in conflict or promoting harmony.

Inter-community conflict in Nagaur occurred in shared spaces. In the Nagaur records in the *Jodhpur Sanad Parwana Babis*, the majority of conflicts mentioned are disputes within a single family or a single caste, such as disputes over inheritance or engagements. In such conflicts, the problems discussed and their resolutions tended to be between individuals or one or two families in the same community. In contrast, petitions and orders that deal with whole caste groups as a bloc tended to focus on areas we might consider ‘public’ or ‘commons’ such as streets, markets, and water tanks. Thus, these spaces form the core focus of this chapter. Shrines, temples, and local rulers played a key role in creating and managing these spaces, so sovereignty and religious authority often overwrote their meanings. Because of these embedded associations, conflicts over these resources cannot be treated as purely economic but rather often held important valences of religious politics and social identity.

The first half of the chapter analyzes the regulation and use of a key resource in Nagaur, water, to show the limits of shared space. Rather than a place where people could come together in free associations, ponds, tanks, and wells were the grounds of struggle between different social groups. The limits of sharing also reflected the limits of social relations between different groups of residents. In the second half of the chapter, I focus on the conflicts that emerged around Holi processions known as *gebar* and show that, as with the case of water, the strongest conflicts tended to emerge between the most closely associated groups. A brief examination of the few records of conflicts between Hindus and Muslims in Nagaur that make some reference to religious identity support this conclusion. Although pilgrimage cities such as Nagaur experienced an influx of wealth due to increased patronage and pilgrimage from the sixteenth century and had an economy that

⁴ Ajay Verghese, *The Colonial Origins of Ethnic Violence in India* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 60-1, 63. Although Verghese draws his conclusion about the existence of precolonial strife from a very limited number of examples, and thus this conclusion must be treated with care, I appreciate that he opens up a question of when and how Ajmer developed a tradition or ethic of minimal inter-religious strife over an extended period rather than taking it as given.

⁵ Mayaram, 147.

largely revolved around shrines and temples, such interactions did not necessarily lead to increased social cohesion. In fact, shared spaces typically remained deeply segregated.

Section I

Shared Water Resources in Nagaur

Water was the single most crucial resource in Nagaur, which lay on the edge of the Thar Desert. No rivers flowed in this area, so residents and rulers built wells, tanks, and dams to harvest rainwater from the monsoon rains, which fell between July and September, and to access groundwater.⁶ The primary method of collecting rainwater was through tanks (*talabs*) that were typically constructed by building a dam across a valley or other natural depression and lining the area behind the dam with stones or bricks. *Ghats* (steps) were built along the edge to facilitate access to the water. The entire catchment area of a tank was an important resource: typically an area around the tank known as *agor* was designated where the harvesting of plants and trees other than for the pasturage and grazing of cattle was not allowed. Seepage from tanks tended to raise groundwater nearby, so stepwells (*baori/baoli*) were frequently constructed next to tanks to access the groundwater even once the surface water in the tank dried up. In the mid-sixteenth century, Abu'l Fazl observed three major tanks in Nagaur, which were likely constructed in the fourteenth or fifteenth century.⁷ By the mid-eighteenth century two additional tanks had been built, bringing the total up to five: Shams (Samas) Talab, Ginani (Jinani/Gilani), Bakht Sagar, Pratap Sagar (Partap), and Lal Sar. Only one, Ginani, lay inside the city walls. The other major tanks lay just outside gateways in the city wall. In addition to the tanks and their neighboring stepwells, there were a number of wells lined with brick (*kuva*), such as Rathor ri Kuva, about a kilometer north of the city, and unlined wells and pits that held water, such as Araya ri Khan. There was also an unlined pond on the western side of Nagaur known as Durlaya.⁸

Water resources were also maintained outside the city for agricultural uses and livestock. In the eighteenth century the area inside the city walls was filled with buildings, but grazing areas for cattle, camels, and sheep were maintained near the city. Although the climate and terrain was too dry for extensive forests, the state maintained several orchards in villages near Nagaur. To the southwest of the city, about two and a half miles from the central square, was Manasar ri Bag, directly south about two and a half miles, the village Tausar, and to the east a little more than a mile, Chenar. The orchards in these villages were tended by *malis* (gardeners) appointed and paid by the royal court in Jodhpur. These *malis* were responsible for the luxury crops grown there, such as roses. Wells and tanks were also maintained in these areas to irrigate the orchards, but unlike the tanks and wells in the city, these were typically given in revenue grants to local notables.

Water usage in Nagaur was segregated, with specific ghats and wells designated for specific purposes: human consumption, clothes-washing, artisanal production, and animal consumption, for which separate troughs were typically built. Women drew drinking water and transported it in clay pots as well as leather bags. At some sites, separate canals or smaller troughs or tubs within the larger water structure were built and assigned specific uses, such as processing dyed cloth. The usage of water in some tanks, such as Ginani, was highly restricted. Until the late 1760s, the water in this tank was not generally available for public use. A small number of elites and religious mendicants

⁶ Nagaur lies in a region that in recent years averages sixteen inches of rainfall a year, though the amount received each year is highly variable, and groundwater levels are frequently low.

⁷ Abu'l Fazl, *The Akbarnama of Abu-l-Fazl*, trans. Henry Beveridge (1907-39; repr., Delhi: Ess Ess Publications, 1977) 2:517.

⁸ For a summary of various types of irrigation and water structures in precolonial Marwar, see B. L. Bhadani, *Peasants, Artisans and Entrepreneurs: Economy of Marwar in the Seventeenth Century* (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 1999), 41-60.

had specific permission from the maharaja to draw a limited amount of water a day. On certain special occasions, such as wedding feasts, the maharaja permitted additional high caste individuals to use water from the tank for two or three days to meet the needs of feasting their whole caste group. Often, the court also granted money or grain to support these feasts.⁹ Other users faced punishment if caught. However, in 1773, in the face of a general petition from city residents, the court relented and declared that the water of the Ginani tank could be used by the people of the city.¹⁰

An Urban Commons

In historical scholarship, ‘commons’ has described a range of systems of property sharing, including land under collective ownership, land outside of ownership but under collectively managed use, or land technically owned by a lord or king but accessed collectively by local groups. Ecological histories and studies of the commons in India have tended to focus on villages and shared resources such as forests, grazing grounds, and irrigation works for agriculture. Yet urban centers in premodern India faced not only these challenges - as urban based agriculturalists and herders raised crops and animals to support the urban population - but also conflicts over natural resources needed for artisanal production. Thus, the conceptualization of the commons in South Asia needs to be extended to consider urban areas as well. Applying this conceptual lens to Nagaur shows how commons were the site of intercommunity struggles over property rights and their regulation. The urban commons in Nagaur were also sites where communities encountered the sovereignty of the maharaja because of the nature of water tanks as public works sponsored by state patronage and the attempts of communities to resolve their disputes through petitions to the maharaja’s court.

My analysis of Nagaur’s shared resources as commons challenges the prevailing narrative of the commons in South Asia as a site of caste harmony. This narrative has frequently celebrated ‘traditional’ caste relationships that managed resources such as pasturage and forests as successful social contracts that prevented environmental degradation. These caste relationships are contrasted to private property practices introduced by the British Colonial government over village properties and exclusionary colonial control assumed over forestry resources. Scholarly accounts often depict a decline narrative, of the unsustainable exploitation or decline of these resources under private property regimes and the persecution of groups with traditional claims to such commons.¹¹ However, such works often rely on assumptions about the status of the commons before the nineteenth century that are frequently based on more recent oral traditions or the notes and claims recorded by British agents at the time of colonial privatization and usurpation of the resources. Taking such claims of traditional rights at face value is problematic given the role of tradition in the rhetoric of rights regardless of the longevity of a given practice.¹² Our knowledge of many such precolonial traditions of land use and resource management comes from claims made to these traditions in the colonial record, but how many of these claims were already shaped to fit British notions of custom and tradition and respond to colonial politics? The records of Nagaur show that for a resource such as water, the model of caste harmony in apportioning and managing the

⁹ JSPB No. 13, f 79B-80A Magsar Bad 12 VS 1830; JSPB No. 13, f 85A Chait Bad 9 VS 1830.

¹⁰ JSPB No. 13, f 85A Chait Sud 3 VS 1830. The content or reasons for the petition are not recorded.

¹¹ See for example Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha, *This Fissured Land: An Ecological History of India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). For an interdisciplinary overview of scholarship on the commons see Derek Wall, *The Commons in History: Culture, Conflict and Ecology* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2014), 18-23. The failure of the commons was first articulated in Garrett Hardin’s essay “The Tragedy of the Commons.”

¹² See for example the careful studies of custom, customary law, the commons, and colonial governance in the Panjab in Richard Saumarez-Smith, *Rule by Records: Land Registration and Village Custom in Early British Punjab* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996). In the JSPB records custom and tradition inform legal judgements but as a category, ‘tradition’ in these records is not resistant to innovation.

resources does not fit. The frequent conflicts question the stability and longevity of commons arrangements and claims to traditional use. Therefore, rather than assuming that the management of the commons in South Asia was harmoniously arranged along caste lines, it is worth examining the premodern commons through questions such as: who was in charge of administering the commons? How was this process political? Whose needs were met?¹³

The negotiations of rights to the commons in eighteenth-century Nagaur were informed by conceptions of property, which had undergone a transformation in Rajasthan when the Mughals rose to power in the sixteenth century. For revenue purposes, the Mughals divided land into three categories: *kbhalisa* (Rajasthani *kbhalsa*, crownlands), *jagir* (lands abrogated to nobles), and *mu'afi* (charitable grants). These categories referred to who had the right to direct revenue collection from the land. The emperor would designate which land belonged to which category. G. D. Sharma argues that in Rajasthan these divisions of land were a new innovation that reshaped Rajput clan relations and politics. Prior to Mughal rule, Rajput clans held territory corporately through the *bhaiband* (brotherhood), in which the Rao or Raja was the first among equals, and territorial boundaries were fluid. But with the enforcement of Mughal norms, both the hierarchical distinction between the Rajput leaders and members of the *bhaiband* and the distinction of territorial boundaries grew.¹⁴ Even when Mughal power waned in the eighteenth century, the emerging Rajput states continued to use Mughal categories of revenue and land rights, including *jagir* and *kbhalisa* lands, in combination with the local convention of the *patta* system of grants, which gave revenue collection rights for villages or land in Rajput domains to dignitaries in the Rajput courts who typically held these rights for the duration of their lifetime.

Within these three larger categories of land, rights were granted in several forms in the kingdom of Marwar. These included rights to revenue, rights to use, and rights to occupancy. In agricultural lands, these rights were often distributed discretely between the *jagirdar*, state officials, and cultivators. In contrast, in the context of urban homes and shops, these rights were more likely to be bundled and functioned as total rights over the land, with corresponding markets for sale, mortgage, and inheritance of houses and shops. Within this framework, in urban areas there were lands clearly understood as private or highly restricted, with claimants not extending beyond immediate family members, and other lands and resources that were considered either the right of entire caste groups or more broadly as the right of all to access and use. In eighteenth-century Marwar, most commons or shared spaces, such as water tanks, were areas over which the crown and daughter of religious institutions exerted authority. But local groups were given rights of use, often in exchange for fees, as charity, or to promote local industry and thus ultimately to indirectly increase the revenue of the crown or the religious institutions. Urban water resources, unlike rural wells and tanks, were not granted to individuals for revenue farming. The tanks and wells in the city of Nagaur were accessed and relied upon by all of the residents of the city, which meant they were a particularly dense site of community politics. To better understand the politics of sharing and the

¹³ One inspiration for such an approach is the work of Anthropologist Rita Brara on commons in Lachhmangarh, Rajasthan since Indian independence. Brara asserts that rights in commons were often vague, and not as clearly defined as private property rights. However, the commons were also a space of limited social justice where the weaker members of society, such as artisans and service castes, could benefit from the resources when they had no private property. The resources of the commons became a site of mutual benefit for village residents, hunter-tribals, artisans and craftspeople, and feudal lords, and the relationships between these groups were molded through extended negotiations and occasional resistance over the use of commons. For instance, attempts to increase taxes on commons were resisted through peasant uprisings. Rita Brara, *Shifting Landscapes: The Making and Remaking of Village Commons in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 19.

¹⁴ G. D. Sharma, *Rajput Polity: A Study of Politics and Administration of the State of Marwar, 1638 – 1749* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1977) 8-9, 25-6, 118-9.

integration of economic, political, and religious concerns in these processes, let us examine a particularly drawn out set of conflicts between several groups of artisans in Nagaur.

Conflict at Durlaya Pond

In the summer of 1776, a series of disputes broke out between several communities of artisans and herders over water rights at the Durlaya pond on the western side of Nagaur city. *Ghosis*, a caste of cow-herders and milkmen, had been watering their cattle and water buffaloes in the pond but *dhobis* and *chhipas*, washers and cloth-dyers, objected to this. At the behest of the *ghosis*, Marwar state officials began investigating the matter. At first, the orders from the maharaja were sympathetic to the *ghosi* complaint: they were to be allowed to water their animals at Durlaya in accordance with tradition, as long as they took care to prevent the water buffalo from muddying the water or stepping on the clothes spread out to dry on the banks. But as the dispute escalated, with both sides trading insults, and the investigations dragged on, the court reversed its position. Witnesses testified that it was not traditional for *ghosis* to water their animals in Durlaya, but that many of the *ghosis*' other water sources had dried up that summer. By the following spring, the maharaja forbade the *ghosis* from using the water at Durlaya and ordered them to get water from another source known as Araya ri Khan instead.¹⁵

At the same time, a second conflict at Durlaya broke out between the leatherworkers (*khalpiyas* and *khatiks*) and the cloth-dyers (*chhipas* and *chadhavas*). The leatherworkers accused the cloth-dyers of crowding the leatherworkers out of the bank and ditch where they customarily processed skins. The leatherworkers also complained that the *chadhavas* dirtied the area where they worked. The *khatiks* attempted to convince the king's court to restrict *chadhava* access to the pond with testimony that only one subsection of the *chadhava* community was washing their wares in Durlaya, while the other *chadhavas* in Nagaur used other water sources. The implication was that all *chadhavas* should work elsewhere and not in Durlaya. Instead, the maharaja resolved the dispute by designating a region of Durlaya specifically for the *chadhavas* and giving them permission to dig a new ditch there, provided that the water levels in this new ditch and for the other two ditches in the pond, one used by the *khatiks* and the other by the *dhobis* and *chhipas*, remained equal.¹⁶

The Durlaya conflicts were triggered by a bad monsoon in 1776 that caused general distress. Many of the wells and other water sources in the city of Nagaur were drying up. This had driven the *ghosis* and others to look for new sources of water and brought different groups reliant on water for their livelihood in closer contact with each other than was otherwise typical, which provoked conflicts.¹⁷ By the following spring, the three major tanks in Nagaur were either dry or expected to be so within a month. Making good on a bad situation, the court took advantage of the low water levels in the city's tanks to have them desilted for the first time in many years, and repaired fallen stone walls.¹⁸ When the rain did fall again, desilting and masonry repairs would increase the capacity and storage ability of the tanks. In order to maintain the population and economy of the city, the court ordered carts of fodder delivered to Nagaur to keep cattle herds alive. It also instructed the local administrators to sponsor the construction of two new wells to provide drinking water for the city's residents.¹⁹

¹⁵ JSPB No. 16, f 31A Savan Sud 10 VS 1833; f 33B Dutik Bhadwa Sud 1 VS 1833; f 43B Jeth Bad 2 VS 1833; f 43B-44A Jeth Bad 7 VS 1833.

¹⁶ JSPB No. 16, f 31A Savan Sud 10 VS 1833; f 31B Bhadwa Bad 3 VS 1833; f 33AB Du. Bhadwa Bad Purnima; f 34B Dutik Bhadwa Sud 2 VS 1833; JSPB No. 17, f 47AB Phagun Sud 3 VS 1833.

¹⁷ One petition notes that there were no complaints about *ghosis* watering their buffaloes in Durlaya two years earlier when there had been plentiful rains. JSPB No. 16, f 33B Dutik Bhadwa Sud 1 VS 1833.

¹⁸ JSPB No. 17, f 47A Phagun Bad 11 VS 1833.

¹⁹ JSPB No. 17, f 22B Chait Bad 6 VS 1833; JSPB No. 17, f 50B Baisakh Bad 2 VS 1833.

But in the meantime, until more rain fell, the artisans who relied on water tanks and ponds to practice their craft struggled for access to enough water. As water levels dropped, groups were forced to work in closer proximity to each other which brought their different modes of production into conflict. Water buffalo, with their tendency to wallow, threatened to destroy the printers' and dyers' newly dried cloths by churning up mud and stepping on the fabrics. Slaked lime, used as a mordant by the cloth printers, ruined the *khatiks'* leather skins when rinsed off into the same part of the pond.²⁰ The processing of leather skins polluted the water in other ways, much to the annoyance of grazers and cloth printers. Resolving these conflicts of use and production revolved around how to share a scarce resource that fell outside of the boundaries of ownership by individuals or a single caste group. Resources such as water were carefully divided between different groups who policed the use of these areas and vigorously protested encroachment of their 'traditional rights.' Many scholars have suggested that such resources were efficiently organized at a local level or that commons were the unproductive default in response to the uncertain claims of rights over the land - including the ability of the powerful to usurp access to these lands.²¹ In contrast, the evidence from Nagaur reveals a third option: resources as shared spaces that were regulated by a sovereign in negotiation with local groups.

Sovereignty, Religion, and Water

In eighteenth-century Marwar, the maharaja claimed sovereignty over water and had a vested interest in the productive use of that water. From an economic standpoint, maintaining and constructing waterworks was expensive and the resources of a ruler or a religious institution were often required to fund such projects. Improving water security and maintaining the necessary accompanying infrastructure projects were high political priorities. As well as supporting the local population, constructing waterworks established a ruler's legitimacy and sovereignty. This had long been the case. For example, in 1570 the Mughal emperor Akbar spent months touring Rajasthan and supporting public works when he was cementing his hold over the region. One of the places he visited was Nagaur.²² While there, Akbar ordered the renovation of one of the major tanks in order to provide water for the city and his imperial camp.²³ This event was illustrated in a two-folio illumination completed in the 1590s found in an imperial manuscript of the *Akbarnama*. The image highlights the connection between the tank restoration and Akbar's sovereignty. In the painting, workers vigorously dig out sediment from the tank in the foreground, while in the middle-ground of the image, Akbar, mounted on a horse and flanked with imperial insignia, receives the submission of local nobles and supplications of residents. In the background the imperial camp and the city flank the action.²⁴ The restoration of the water tank, a particularly vital resource in this desert region, burnished Akbar's local reputation as a just and benevolent sovereign.

Two centuries later, the maharajas of Marwar were often similarly concerned with renovating and maintaining water tanks and irrigation systems in Nagaur. As Maharaja Vijai Singh's power rose in the late 1760s and early 1770s, he regularly issued orders to repair the masonry of stepwells and

²⁰ JSPB No. 16, f 31A Savan Sud 10 VS 1833.

²¹ Guha, 195-6.

²² *Akbarnama*, 2:516.

²³ *Akbarnama*, 2:517-18. The identification of this tank is ambiguous. Beveridge is unclear on the identification of this tank. He references the *Iqbalnama*, which only mentions two tanks: the Gilani (e.g. Ginani Talab), and the Shams Talab.

²⁴ Kesav Kalan and Chatarmuni, "Painting", opaque watercolor and gold on paper, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, IS.2:82-1896 (right half), c. 1590-95, <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O9596/painting-kesav-kalan/>; Kesav Kalan and Bhagwan, opaque watercolor and gold on paper, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, IS.2:83-1896 (left half), c. 1590-95, <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O9595/painting-kesav-kalan/>.

tanks, dig out silt, and rebuild watering troughs for livestock at the edge of wells.²⁵ Most of these orders came in the months preceding the rains, when lower water levels facilitated the repairs. The royal orders sometimes included emphatic notes to complete renovations and desilting quickly before the start of the rains, since completing the repairs would benefit the community when the monsoon came.²⁶ The maharaja's court also generally supported petitioners seeking finances to repair or improve wells. Even constructing smaller water structures, such as wells, often required state patronage. In 1775, for instance, one Faqir Muhammad Shah sought and received money from the maharaja of Marwar to reconstruct a well that had been destroyed by the Marathas.²⁷ In the case of the dispute between the *ghosis* and cloth dyers discussed above, the maharaja of Marwar eventually provided forty rupees to the *ghosis* to pay for renovations at the well where they, and their cattle, were relocated.²⁸ While in some cases caste *panchayats* did raise the funds to build wells together, it was far more common to seek these resources from the maharaja or, occasionally, local nobility and other elites.²⁹

The Marwar maharaja's patronage of water infrastructure was part of a larger pattern across premodern India, which demonstrates the ties between water, settlement, and religious and political authority. In Chola-period Tamil Nadu, temples played a key role in establishing tanks and irrigation systems that led to the spread of agriculture; rulers gave Brahmins land grants alongside the creation of new water tanks.³⁰ The process of building and maintaining irrigation in Tamil Nadu drove the regional political economy because it contributed to the integration of kings with local chiefs and supported the growth of the flourishing Sangam capitals.³¹ In the medieval Deccan, Sufi *dargahs* established tanks not only to perform ablutions at the shrine but also to provide the surrounding areas with drinking water and irrigation. When the city of Aurangabad was growing rapidly in the seventeenth century, Sufis built canals in the city that provided drinking water and powered a grain mill. These projects were funded by imperial patronage to the shrines.³²

But it took more than one-time efforts to sustain water access. Imperial and sub-imperial investment in water and irrigation infrastructure had to be continuously renewed. Water tanks and other structures could fill with silt quickly, and when the water availability declined, local residents tended to move away to better-provisioned areas. During the first half of the eighteenth century, Sa'adat Khan, a Mughal noble who later founded the Awadh state, maintained an irrigation system built by earlier Mughal nobles outside of Delhi. Records from this region indicate that the nobles who controlled the irrigation canals reinvested the majority of irrigation taxes collected into the maintenance of the system. Their profit from irrigation was not from the irrigation taxes but rather from the increased agricultural output. But when Sa'adat Khan moved to Faizabad in 1740, he no longer controlled and invested in those irrigation works near Delhi. The system began to decline without regular upkeep and investments. By the last third of the eighteenth century, travelers observed that the irrigation system had fallen completely into disrepair and disuse, and agriculture in

²⁵ JSPB No. 1, f 36B Asoj Sud 3 VS 1821; JSPB No. 2, f 32A, Dutik Chait Bad 13 VS 1822; JSPB No. 3, f 33B Jeth Bad 14 VS 1822; JSPB No. 5, f 81B Baisakh Bad 4 VS 1823; JSPB No. 7, f 56A Asoj Bad 12 BS 1824; JSPB No. 8, f 62B Pratham Savan Bad 6 VS 1825.

²⁶ JSPB No. 13, f 89A Dutik Baisakh Bad 10 VS 1830; JSPB No. 17, f 24B Chait Sud 11 VS 1833.

²⁷ JSPB No. 15, f 60B Asoj Sud 5 VS 1832.

²⁸ JSPB No. 18, f 29A Asadh Sud 13 VS 1834.

²⁹ B. L. Bhadani, *Water Harvesting, Conservation and Irrigation in Mewar (AD 800 – 1700)* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2012), 173-5, 210.

³⁰ Gadgil and Guha, 106-7.

³¹ David Ludden, "Patronage and Irrigation in Tamil Nadu: A Long-term View" *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. XVI, No. 3, 355.

³² Nile Green, *Making Space: Sufis and Settlers in Early Modern India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012), 184.

the region had declined.³³ Similar processes also occurred in Southeastern India, where damage to irrigation systems impacted the fortunes of temples, regional political leaders, and landowners. To preserve their revenue flows from agricultural taxes, “the financial means for repairs were always at hand.”³⁴ For a ruler’s authority in an area, and for his budget, it was crucial to maintain water infrastructure.

These links between sovereignty and water were so pervasive that they became part of popular discourse. One of the common origin stories of the pilgrimage center of Pushkar that circulated in the eighteenth century combines religious authority, kingly sovereignty, and water. In the tale, Nahar Rao, a Parihar Rajput leader in Marwar, was out hunting when he became separated from his men. Thirsty and lost, he stumbled across a tiny spring of water in the midst of the sandy terrain. When he drank from the water, he was miraculously healed from a skin infection, which signaled that the water was blessed. He later returned with his men, excavated the sand and silt, and built a proper tank at the site, creating Pushkar Lake and its *ghats*.³⁵ In this tale, though the water itself was blessed, it required a king or chieftain with the resources to create a tank for this blessing to reach the people.

The links between royal and religious authority and water can also be seen in Nagaur. Most of the major water tanks are named after the ruler or nobleman who built them, such as Shams Talab, constructed by Shams Khan Dandani in the early fifteenth century, and Bakht Sagar, the work of Marwar Maharaja Bakht Singh in the eighteenth century. These tanks were also closely affiliated with religious institutions: many of Nagaur’s temples and *dargahs* were built on or near their shores. The priests and devotees who tended to these religious institutions were often granted charitable rights to access the water even when the water was restricted for other residents.³⁶ The *agor* areas of uncut plants around a water tank were often dedicated to Hindu deities and general access to these areas could be restricted. Wandering groups of religious mendicants, including Dadupanthi and Nath yogi ascetics as well as Muslim *faqirs*, would camp around the edges of the tanks. Although city residents occasionally would submit complaints about the *faqirs*’ presence and activities, the maharaja often gifted these camps with supplies including wooden benches and cloth and gave the *faqirs* permission to harvest reeds in order to build thatch huts.³⁷

Related Conflicts over Resources

While the Durlaya case was a particularly protracted dispute in Nagaur, it was not an isolated incident of conflict over water and its division between local communities and types of use. A large number of complaints and disputes involved tensions between the watering of cows, buffalos, and horses and reserving access to tanks for human consumption. In the fall of 1768, city officials registered complaints about the state of affairs at Bakht Sagar. Women who drew drinking water from a section of the tank designated for that purpose (the *panghat*) protested that the presence of

³³ C. A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion 1770-1870*, 4th ed. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 87-8.

³⁴ Ludden, 351.

³⁵ Pandit Maharaj Kishan, *Tavarikh-i Ajmer* (Rohtak: Matbua Anwar al-Qamar, c. 1876), 15. The tale is commonly believed to describe events of the 10th or 11th century CE. James Tod was presented with a similar narrative of the origins of modern Pushkar. *Annals and Antiquities of Rajast’han: Or, the central and Western Rajpoot States of India* (1829; repr., New Delhi: Rupa, 1997), 1:607.

³⁶ JSPB No. 8, f 65A Magsar Sud 3 VS 1825; JSPB No. 13, f 85A Chait Bad 7 VS 1830.

³⁷ JSPB No. 15, f 69B Baisakh Bad 11 VS 1832; JSPB No. 49, f 34A Jeth Bad 13 VS 1854. In one instance, the court was prepared to order a group of 25 *faqirs* to leave when they were reported to have broken some of the stones out of the tank embankment, but relented when the *faqirs* threatened to perform ascetic self-injury if their camp was evicted. JSPB No. 15, f 70A Baisakh Sud 6 VS 1832.

cattle and horses in the same area was interfering in their work. The court concluded that cows and horses should not be watered from the tank. Instead, the city's officials should designate a separate well for the use of livestock. On the same date, the court also responded to complaints that mounted soldiers (*risala*) were allowing their horses to drink from Ginani Talab, which was restricted for human drinking water. The court ordered the soldiers to stop going to Ginani and to use a well instead. The court officials concluded by emphasizing that only water bearers should have access to the water in Ginani.³⁸ Over the years, there were repeated complaints about soldiers watering their horses at Ginani. Each time the court upheld the rights of the water bearers and ordered the soldiers not to use the tank under threat of punishment.³⁹ Such orders emphasized, or sought to re-inscribe, a clear hierarchy of water access and usage. According to the court and many of the petitioners, the water in tanks, and particularly that accessible from specific ghats like the *panghat*, should be restricted to human consumption, while wells and troughs were the proper area for animals to drink. Although such declarations were repeatedly violated, the state was invested in clearly apportioning water access and usage by assigning rights to particular water reservoirs and wells to particular groups.

Although the court wanted to stop animals from competing with human water consumption, the state also sought to guarantee cattle and other livestock sufficient access to water. This generated conflicts of interest between gardeners on the one hand and cattle owners and herders on the other. At the same time that the court prohibited cattle from being watered in Bakht Sagar, the court ordered that *malis* (gardeners) in Nagaur were to insure that the drinking trough for livestock remained full and that they reserved water for livestock from the supplies they used for crop irrigation.⁴⁰ Several years later, some *malis* were refusing to water cattle belonging to *mahajan* merchants from Adhulaya Well, even on the payment of fifteen rupees per month. The court sided with the *mahajans* and the *mali* who had greatest responsibility for watering the cattle was removed from this position. Another *mali* was given the job for three less rupees a month and the court decreed that cows may not remain thirsty.⁴¹

While complaints and regulations about watering cattle were especially prominent, disputes around water involved a wide range of groups and issues. Conflicts over water involved most of the major social communities of Nagaur, including merchants, artisans, urban agriculturalists and pastoralists, and religious mendicants. For example, *mahajans*, a Jain and Hindu merchant group, complained about *julabas*, Muslim weavers, using water from Ginani Talab to irrigate crops. The court responded with a prohibition on irrigating crops from any tank in Nagaur.⁴² A Sanyasi (mendicant) who had been living on Shams Talab for four years tried to intervene when some men came to wash clothes in the tank. The men insulted and swore at the Sanyasi. On the basis of the Sanyasi's complaint, these men were summoned by the court and punished.⁴³ Physical violence rarely occurred in community conflicts, but insults were common and taken seriously by the court. In another case, *malis* and *beldars* (excavators and stone-cutters) had a quarrel over access to a well in Nagaur that extended over multiple years and resulted in attacks and insults between the two

³⁸ JSPB No. 8, f 63B-64A Asoj Sud 1 VS 1825.

³⁹ See for instance JSPB No. 48, f 58A Chait Bad 9 Dutik VS 1853.

⁴⁰ JSPB No. 8, f 63B-64A Asoj Sud 1 VS 1825.

⁴¹ JSPB No. 13, f 88A Pratham Baisakh Bad Purnima VS 1830. The court's willingness to devote considerable resources to cattle probably stemmed both from economic interests, and from Vijai Singh's Vaishnav devotion to Krishna, who is often depicted as a cowherd.

⁴² JSPB No. 11, f 81B Magsar Bad 2 VS 1828.

⁴³ JSPB No. 18, f 3B Kati Bad 7 VS 1834.

groups.⁴⁴ In each of these cases, disparate needs for a shared resource brought these groups into conflict with each other.

Due to water's particularly wide use and the difficulty of apportioning it, water was the resource at the center of most group conflicts. This becomes clear when water management is contrasted with trees. In Rajasthan, trees were in short supply while also being in high demand for fueling fires, for certain types of construction, and for their other productive qualities such as medicinal use. But trees required both space and significant quantities of water to grow, so they were relatively rare and were in many cases a luxury product. Trees were not generally considered private property, and access to trees was regulated by the state. Like water, trees were embedded in cultural meanings of sacrality and sovereignty. Hindu temples were often closely associated with sacred groves, specific types of trees were associated with specific deities, and kings and emperors preserved jungle areas for their hunting pleasure.⁴⁵ Paintings produced for the Marwar royal court, such as those of Maharaja Bakht Singh in Nagaur fort, often showed the king relaxing in verdant gardens with large trees.⁴⁶ *Khalisa* land near Nagaur was designated for state orchards and *malis* were employed by the government to tend to the trees and gardens there. These gardens provided roses, jasmine and other flowers that the court used in religious celebrations like Holi and sent in offerings to temples, such as those in Nathdwara.

In contrast to urban water rights, which were typically negotiated and assigned on *jati* (caste) basis, the court granted rights to trees almost exclusively to individuals or families. These rights were frequently given as charitable grants, since trees were largely a cash crop. For example, the state carefully regulated neem trees, which were valued for their medicinal properties. Neem was not part of the native forests of Rajasthan and had to be intentionally cultivated.⁴⁷ The presence of a neem tree on one's property did not necessarily guarantee one the right to the produce of that tree. Instead, the king's court granted such rights, largely to local elites and religious officials.⁴⁸ Because trees could be apportioned in clearly-identified discrete units, any conflicts over these resources tended to occur between individuals who claimed rival *sanads* (royal deed or order) giving them permission to harvest a particular tree. These conflicts, which were rare, hinged on the authenticity of the order, rather than questions regarding the tree itself. This contrasts with conflicts over water, which was harder to quantify and tended to bring whole groups into conflict.

Conflicts, Caste, and Community Relations

The conflicts over water brought communities into contact with each other and with state in ways that reinforced sovereignty and inscribed new social hierarchies. The conflicts were influenced by a new state-supported politics of purity that increased caste divisions and gave the state power to influence social boundaries. Sovereignty was closely tied to water, so the king played a major role in assigning rights and settling disputes between different communities. In contrast to the idealized image of commons as a system of local control that has pervaded much of the scholarship on commons, the Marwar maharaja and his bureaucracy played an active role in the administration and

⁴⁴ JSPB No. 18, f 24A Chait Sud 8 VS 1824.

⁴⁵ For more on these dynamics in Rajasthan, especially in the mid-twentieth century, see Ann Grodzins Gold and Bhoju Ram Gujar, *In the Time of Trees and Sorrows: Nature, Power, and Memory in Rajasthan* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002).

⁴⁶ See numerous examples in Debra Diamond, Catherine Glynn and Karni Singh Jasol et al. *Garden & Cosmos: The Royal Paintings of Jodhpur* (Washington DC: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 2008).

⁴⁷ Gold and Gujar, 58.

⁴⁸ JSPB No. 14, f 46A Asadh Bad Purnima VS 1831; JSPB No. 14, f 56A Asadh Sud 3 VS 1831; JSPB No. 15, f 58B Savan Bad 2 VS 1832; Recipients of rights to the produce of one or two neem trees included a Josi, and Purohits, both Brahmin castes. They were also granted to Mehar/Mer individuals in one instance.

control of common resources, such as the water tanks of Nagaur. The maharaja claimed sovereignty over water and had a vested economic interest in the productive use of that water, so he arbitrated conflicts. Aggrieved parties sought out the king's judgement in all of the conflicts around water described above. In the Durlaya case, *khatiks*, *chadhavas*, and *ghosis* initiated their petitions regarding water access to the maharaja of Marwar because these communities saw the maharaja as the rightful arbitrator over water access. They also perceived a continuity of sovereign authority over water between different ruling regimes. A telling example arose in 1776 when the *khatiks* presented a Mughal grant written in Persian to the Marwar maharaja in order to substantiate their right to work in Durlaya.⁴⁹

Although the maharaja typically left the final resolution of disputes within a caste group to the caste *panchayat*, in inter-caste disputes, such as the Durlaya conflicts, caste *panchayats* were not summoned. Instead, the maharaja settled inter-caste conflicts by creating new orders or relying on the precedent of the arrangements made by previous maharajas. Compared to most cases which came before the court, the maharaja made a large number of new orders regarding the Durlaya case, which indicates his interest in the matter. Such decisions, and their acceptance by local communities, recognized the sovereignty of the ruler over shared spaces, such as ponds, and concomitantly, the maharaja's right to adjudicate caste relations. Shared spaces and resources, such as Durlaya pond, were an arena in which local communities came into contact not only with their neighbors but also with sovereignty, which undermines assumptions that these were a locally regulated commons.

The lines of conflict at Nagaur tanks, wells, and ponds emphasized caste distinctions between artisan castes rather than distinctions between high and low castes, which indicates that usage rather than ritual drove the community conflicts. The interpretations of caste dynamics around ideas of purity and pollution that predominate in scholarship on sharing water and the apportioning of water resources in South Asia are supported by very limited evidence in Marwar before the middle of the eighteenth century. A single seventeenth-century inscription from a Mughal nobleman, Mirza 'Ali Beg, on a stepwell in the city of Makrana prohibited low caste people "from drawing water from the well along with people of high caste."⁵⁰ This suggests caste-based segregation in water access but does not provide any reasoning or clearer definitions of who was covered by the prohibition. Without further evidence it is hard to know how regularly such prohibitions were made and enforced. In Nagaur in the eighteenth century, the records on drinking water and water conflicts do not suggest that drinking water was typically highly segregated by caste. Some orders even mention that the water can be used by all of the city's people.⁵¹ Overall, the separations of water in Nagaur were based around use concerns: was the water for industry, for animals to drink, or for humans to drink?

Yet, as the eighteenth century wore on, caste distinctions became increasingly emphasized in Nagaur and across Marwar. Divya Cherian discusses changes in Marwari society that point to the removal or contraction of shared spaces across the cities, towns and villages of Marwar in line with new social policies supported by the maharaja that were developed and enforced by the high-caste Jain and Hindu administrators and merchants who financed and ran the state. Firmer lines were being drawn between upper and lower castes, with lower castes increasing thrown out of shared temple spaces and restricted from using wells accessed by upper caste households. Across Marwar from the 1770s onward, drinking water segregation, both between Hindus and Muslims and between

⁴⁹ JSPB No. 16, f 31A Savan Sud 10 VS 1833.

⁵⁰ Z. A. Desai, *Published Muslim Inscriptions of Rajasthan* (Jaipur: The Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Rajasthan, 1971), 103, no. 327.

⁵¹ JSPB No. 13, f 85A Chait Sud 3 VS 1830; JSPB No. 17, f 50B Baisakh Bad 2 VS 1833.

upper and lower caste Hindus, increased, with new wells being built in many cases.⁵² This segregation was supported by the state. These actions took place at a time of changing political power that generated a rising class of bankers and administrators. This class supported and participated in new Vaishnav religious networks to activate a new politics of purity.⁵³

Although most of the conflicts over water in Nagaur occurred between proximate caste groups who had a similar social status, they were influenced by the logic driving caste segregation in Marwari society more generally. The water use of largely Muslim groups of artisans at Durlaya was susceptible to shifts in social power and caste status, such as those bolstered by the Vaishnavite reforms of Maharaja Vijai Singh.⁵⁴ The Durlaya conflict was set off by a drought, but the alliances and aggression expressed in the conflict spoke to emerging social changes. In the 1770s, as part of his reforms, Maharaja Vijai Singh declared new rules preventing violence against animals. Under these regulations, acts such as butchering animals for food or killing animals for protection, such as when a snake entered one's home, were punishable.⁵⁵ These regulations raised the suspicion around those who worked in industries dealing with animal products. Butchers, for example, were ordered to sell their herds and faced particularly intense harassment and policing in the year of the water disputes at Durlaya.⁵⁶ Against the backdrop of failing rains in 1776, artisans may have used the maharaja's regulations to try to gain advantages for their caste group. The *dhobis* and *chhipas* were emboldened to encroach on the *khatiks*' area because the *khatiks*, as leatherworkers, relied on products from dead animals and likely intermarried with the *kasais* (butchers) who had been targeted by the new regulations.⁵⁷ The *chhipas* and *dhobis*' success against the *ghosis* could also be seen in this light, with those who did not work with animal products claiming a higher status. The quarrels in Durlaya suggest that there was social reordering between predominantly Muslim artisan castes in response to the maharaja's decrees that were informed by Vaishnav ideals. Thus, the conflict was not only economic but also a proxy for contentions around status, including religious and ritual status, between closely associated castes.

Section II

Social Divisions and Conflict in Holi Processions

Tracking social conflicts in eighteenth-century Nagaur reveals that conflict was most likely to occur between caste groups who neighbored each other physically and in social status. Anthropological theories of 'neighborliness' tend to treat it as an ideal ethic that promotes peaceful and harmonious relations between people. Bhrigupati Singh, striving to avoid prior value judgements

⁵² Divya Cherian, "Ordering Subjects: Merchants, the State, and Krishna Devotion in Eighteenth-Century Marwar" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2015), 138-9, 143. Across the towns and villages of Marwar low-caste communities were forbidden to drink from wells controlled by upper castes, and were occasionally disenfranchised from wells that had previously been in their control. In 1788 in Didwana separate water was enforced for Hindus and Muslims. Cherian argues that this segregation was intensifying.

⁵³ Cherian, 90-157.

⁵⁴ The artisans involved in this dispute (*chhipas*, *chadhavas*, *dhobis*, *ghosis*, and *khatiks*) are not identified in the petitions regarding the case as specifically Muslim. However, based on the names given in other petitions from members of these groups, such as Sultan, Karim, Kasam, Isakh, and Hasan, it is safe to assume that these communities in Nagaur were most likely Muslim. Hardayal Singh, in his report on the 1891 census in Marwar, identifies *ghosis* and *chadhavas* as Muslim communities. Both Hindu and Muslim communities of *chhipas*, *dhobis* and *khatiks* were noted in the census. Hardayal Singh, *Report-Mardumshumari Raj Marwar 1891* (1894; repr., Jodhpur: Maharaja Mansingh Pustak Prakash, 2010), 480-1, 483, 491, 546-9, 551-3.

⁵⁵ Cherian, 157-8, 171, 176-8.

⁵⁶ JSPB No. 15, f 12A Kati Bad 6 VS 1832.

⁵⁷ Singh, 549.

on what it means to be a neighbor, argues for the concept of ‘agonistic intimacy’ as a model of neighborly relations. The proximity of neighbors in daily life generates the intimacy, while the *agon*, which can range in intensity from play to sport to conflict, comes from the friction between similar but distinct groups. The variable intensity of the agonistics means that the playful interactions of these sorts of neighbors can move flexibly between friendly or peaceable relations to more violent or antagonistic behavior.⁵⁸ This model can also fruitfully be applied to the relations studied in this chapter. Those groups in conflict in eighteenth-century Nagaur were close to each other and negotiated their relationships with each other through modes of play and competition. External events, such as drought and political or economic stresses, affected the form that this agonistic interaction took and the severity or intensity of interactions between neighboring communities. Because the archive typically includes only those issues that disrupted the local order and generated petitions, the cases I examine are moments when the agonistics slipped from play toward violence, conflict, or violation that prompted state intervention.

The rivalries expressed through agonistic intimacy often intensified during Holi, the springtime festival celebrated across northern India. Holi celebrations in premodern Rajasthan lasted for a week around the full-moon of the month of Phagun (Phalguna, February-March). Royals celebrated by playing with *gulal* (colored powders) and water in the *zenana* (women’s quarters), a scene which featured frequently in royal paintings of Holi festivities, and held feasts with their nobles. In addition, the maharaja celebrated Holi by leading a procession on elephant-back, during which the public was allowed to throw colored powders at him.⁵⁹ Holi was also celebrated with bonfires and dancing processions, known as *gehar*, which were conducted by different caste groups and were often drunken and rowdy. *Gebar* mostly processed through residential neighborhoods, though in Jodhpur the processions also visited the court, where “on the third day a dancing party of all sorts of people headed by a clownish pair and accompanied by a drunken crowd, dancing and singing loudly with phallic emblems, paid homage to the Maharaja. They were dismissed with robes of honor.”⁶⁰ These rambunctious processions could be the flashpoint for conflict between different caste groups in Nagaur.

Holi, as a festival that inverted norms, provided release from typical norms and social rules. But like carnivals and *charivari* in early modern France, this was not just a safety valve but rather could perpetuate certain social values and criticize the social and political order.⁶¹ Such moments of play were embedded with real meaning and could threaten to spill over into violence. The ritual of *gehar* made it possible for large groups of men from one caste to occupy streets and spaces in the neighborhoods of other castes with relative impunity. How often such processions occurred without incident in eighteenth-century Nagaur is impossible to say. However, at least every couple of years, groups brought complaints about the *gehar* to the royal court.

Like the water conflicts, Holi conflicts typically occurred between two closely linked groups jostling for social distinction. One such incident, concerning the Holi of 1764, was a quarrel that broke out between two merchant communities, the Khandelwals and the Agarwals. It began when the Agarwals joined the Khandelwal community’s *gehar*. This upset the Khandelwals. More than six months later, the Khandelwals sought and received a favorable response to their complaint about

⁵⁸ Bhrigupati Singh, *Poverty and the Quest for Life: Spiritual and Material Striving in Rural India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 151-2, 164-6.

⁵⁹ G. N. Sharma, *Social Life in Medieval Rajasthan [1500 – 1800 A.D.]* (Agra: Lakshmi Narain Agarwal Educational Printers, 1968), 173-4.

⁶⁰ Sharma, *Social Life in Medieval Rajasthan*, 174; *Jodhpur Hakikat Bahi* No. 2, f 81A Phagun Sud 2 VS 1831, Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner.

⁶¹ Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1975), 97-100, 187.

the Agarwals from the Marwar court. The order declared that since the Agarwals had never joined the Khandelwals' Holi *gehar* before, they should not be allowed to do so again.⁶² Yet, three months later the royal court overturned that ruling in response to a petition from the Agarwals and declared that they may join the Khandelwals' Holi procession because that is what had happened during the reign of the previous king. The records contain no further explanation for this change of heart. Indeed, the second order does not explicitly address the first, and both orders rely on claims of tradition in reaching a settlement. If the Agarwals did indeed join in the next Holi procession by the Khandelwals, that did not result in a complaint to the royal court. There were probably more general challenges to the Khandelwals' status in Nagaur at the time, as evidenced by their further Holi disputes with other proximate social groups. For instance, they also quarreled with *kehatris*, another Hindu merchant group, over *gehar* processions. Regarding this case, the court ordered that the procession be allowed to proceed as it had during the reign of the previous maharaja without opposition or harassment.⁶³

The conflict between the Khandelwals and Agarwals was motivated by the competition between these two proximate groups for social standing. They were both part of a larger *mahajan* merchant community yet maintained distinctions from each other through social practices including marriage patterns and religious observations. Lawrence Babb observes that each of the trading-caste communities in Rajasthan, such as the Khandelwals and Agarwals, "are socially quite distinct, each possessing a strong and highly individuated identity vis-à-vis the others. However, they also constitute a socially recognised cluster."⁶⁴ In Nagaur, the Khandelwals and Agarwals were distinguished from each other by the predominant religion practiced by each group and in status, though both groups were part of the *mahajan* community. Khandelwals in Nagaur were a largely Jain group.⁶⁵ In Nagaur they were one of several merchant groups prominent in local money-lending and property ownership. The Agarwals were a largely Hindu merchant group who had shops in Nagaur and were sometimes employed as government agents but appear to have had less financial and political power in the city. The Khandelwal objection to Agarwal participation was an effort to promote the distinction between these groups, whereas the Agarwals assertion of a right to participate in the Khandelwal *gehar* was an attempt to establish claims to a higher financial and social status. Although the petitions do not reference the Jain and Hindu identities of the Khandelwals and Agarwals, it may have played a role in their conflicts. As discussed further in the following paragraph, Jain communities were sometimes the targets of Holi violence and harassment at the hands of Hindus, even though Jains in Nagaur, as elsewhere in western India in the eighteenth century, partook in some Holi festivities.⁶⁶

⁶² JSPB No. 3, f 29A Magsar Bad 14 VS 1822.

⁶³ JSPB No. 11, f 86A Jeth Sud 5 VS 1828.

⁶⁴ Lawrence A. Babb, *Alchemies of Violence: Myths of Identity and the Life of Trade in Western India* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2004), 19.

⁶⁵ "Khandelwal" means "of the place Khandela" and can refer to four distinct groups: Brahmins, Hindu merchants, Jain merchants, and carpenters. But because Khandelwal Jain merchants have the largest population in Rajasthan, and because other entries concerning Khandelwals in the *Sanad Parwana Babis* mention their involvement in the government service and moneylending activities associated with Jain Khandelwals, and their participation in Jain functions, such as hosting religious leaders during the festival of Paryushana, it is most likely that these Khandelwals are Jain. Babb, 116; JSPB No. 2, f 29B Bhadwa Sud 1 VS 1822.

⁶⁶ While Jain scriptures and leaders have at various points urged Jains not to partake in Holi celebrations and in particular to abstain from the Holika fire, Jains in Rajasthan and Gujarat typically participated in most Hindu festivals, often including Holi. John E. Cort, *Jains in the World: Religious Values and Ideology in India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 180-1. See also John E. Cort, "This is How We Play Holi: Allegory in North Indian Digambar Jain Holi Songs," in *Texts and Traditions in Early Modern North India: Selected Essays from the Eleventh International Conference on Early Modern*

Sometimes the social tensions underlying Holi processions erupted into violence and created fault lines between communities that lingered for years. In 1767, on the morning of Holi, a *gehar* of Hindu Mahesri merchants from the neighborhood Bimbh ri Pal entered Surana Mahalla, the neighborhood of wealthy Jain merchants and moneylenders, gathered a pile of stones to block the way, and then approached the dwelling place (*upasran*) of Jain ascetics. Several months later, the court responded to this incident with an order forbidding gathering stones and approaching or harassing Jain ascetics during the Holi *gehar*.⁶⁷ Seven years later, this issue reemerged in the royal courts, which was a sign that resentments simmering at a local level between the two groups had not gone away. At first the court reissued the ban on the Bimbh ri Pal *gehar* (of mostly Mahesri Hindus) entering the Suranas' neighborhood, citing the earlier order. Shortly thereafter, however, the court changed its mind and conceded that Holi play could include the *gehar*, which should not face interference from the Jain merchants, who would be compensated by the court for their cooperation. The following year again an order was secured from the court allowing the *gehar* to proceed, on the condition that no one was harassed.⁶⁸ However, in a final ruling ten years after the initial complaint, the court determined that the residents of Bimbh ri Pal were at greater fault. The court ordered fines for misdeeds to be collected from the Bimbh ri Pal households and decreed that any future Holi *gehar* was to remain within the neighborhood.⁶⁹

Like the conflicts between the Agarwals and Khandelwals, the dispute over the Bimbh ri Pal *gehar* suggests the existence of tensions between Hindu and Jain merchants in eighteenth-century Nagaur. These two communities have frequently been portrayed as largely indistinguishable and to have had harmonious relations in both premodern and contemporary Rajasthan.⁷⁰ Yet conflicts in Nagaur suggest an awareness of distinctions and potentially violent relations between Hindu and Jain merchants, perhaps precisely because they formed distinct groups but were not fully other because they also had many shared rituals and practices. This example demonstrates the elements of 'agonistic intimacy' in eighteenth-century social relationships, where play spilled over into violence. The supposedly playful Holi *gehar* clearly communicated threats to the Jain community. The crowd targeted the Jain ascetics for harassment, who were a key symbol of the Jain merchants' status as patrons. The resentments against Suranas may have been largely motivated by economic factors because the Suranas were wealthy merchant-bankers. However, the residents of Bimbh ri Pal expressed such resentments through religiously coded actions. They used Holi processions to harass the Suranas and during the course of the processions, they targeted religious mendicants associated with the Suranas. These mendicants represented the religious community identity of the Suranas as the recipients of the Suranas' religious charity, while being themselves vulnerable because they were without money or possessions and often came from low status backgrounds.⁷¹

The maharaja vacillated in his support of the two groups. On the one hand, the royal court was dependent on the support of wealthy merchants and moneylenders who formed a key

Literatures in North India, John Stratton Hawley, edited by Anshu Malhotra and Tyler Williams (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

⁶⁷ JSPB No. 6, f 48B Asadh Sud 7 VS 1824.

⁶⁸ JSPB No. 14, f 40B Phagun Sud VS 1831; JSPB No. 14, f 41B-42A Chait Bad Purnima VS 1831; JSPB No. 15, f 29A Phagun Sud 10 VS 1832.

⁶⁹ JSPB No. 19, f 53A Chait Sud 3 VS 1834.

⁷⁰ Ann Grodzins Gold, "Sweetness and light: The bright side of pluralism in a Rajasthan town," in *Religious Pluralism, State and Society in Asia*, ed. Chiara Formichi (New York: Routledge, 2014), 128; Cherian, 107. Gold attributes any resentments between Jains and Hindus in contemporary India to financial resentments. Babb writes that the difference between Jains and Hindus is an "analytically hazy distinction." Some merchant castes intermarry between Jain and Hindu branches, and others do not. Babb, 20, 145, 192.

⁷¹ Cort, *Jains in the World*, 43-5. The monks known as *yatis* were usually inducted as children. Many were bought from poor non-Jain families and then inducted into the order.

component of the state administration and financing. Jains had long had a prominent role in the Marwar Kingdom.⁷² But on the other hand, with a legal system grounded in tradition and the maharaja's increasingly strong support of Vaishnav ideals, which included a robust tradition of Holi play, the court found on multiple occasions that it could not deny the right to take out a *gehar* to the Bimbh ri Pal residents. The maharaja finally sided with the Suranas only after many years of petitions and a prolonged investigation into the potential faults of both communities.

Although Holi disputes and violent agonism expressed through processions in Nagaur often fell along Hindu-Jain lines and within merchant groups, it did not do so exclusively. Other groups also expressed their antagonism toward each other through holding processions or blocking their progress. For instance, the residents of Kaithariya ra Mahalla, who were mostly merchants and scribes, had a tradition on Holi of gathering in the nearby orchards of the village of Tausar for feasts. They had traditionally ridden from their neighborhood to Tausar in a procession of carts. But in 1775, the Brahmins living in Hathi rai Chowk, a prominent square in Nagaur near the Kaithariya neighborhood, refused to let the carts pass through the square. The people of Kaithariya ra Mahalla took their complaint to the court and secured an order allowing them to use the road and cross the square without any interference from the Brahmins.⁷³

The Marwar court's often ambivalent responses to Holi processions arose from the court's own investment in Holi celebrations and its dependent relationships with merchant, Brahmin, and scribal communities as financiers and administrators of the kingdom. But the court simultaneously was concerned about reducing and avoiding conflicts between these communities. Because banning Holi processions was not a sustainable option, one way the court attempted to reduce Holi conflicts instead was to reduce the use of alcohol in celebrations. A complaint from circa 1766 about the *mahajans'* conduct at Holi focused on the presence and sale or consumption of alcohol in the *bazar* (market) and the presence of bonfires, which the complainant said caused fear because of the risk of fire spreading and burning down buildings in Nagaur. The court responded by issuing a ban on alcohol containers in the play of Holi.⁷⁴ This case falls in line with wider rulings across Marwar in the 1770s where the maharaja initiated a crackdown on the consumption of alcohol by upper castes.⁷⁵ The restrictions on the distribution and use of alcohol was an attempt to contain the rowdier aspects of Holi.

The Holi *gehar* conflicts in Nagaur recorded in the *Sanad Parwana Babis* show antagonistic relationships disguised as play. These conflicts bring to light fracture zones between social groups and the lines of negotiation between different groups. When such actions threatened or did spill over into violence, this was the "readjustment of power relationships in an urban site undergoing significant political change."⁷⁶ The annual Holi processions were a negotiation over space, access and belonging to different groups, and the relative social power of different communities. As such, they were negotiations over social change dressed in a language of custom and tradition.

The Absence of Hindu-Muslim Conflict

Hindu-Muslim conflict was not a part of Holi disputes in eighteenth-century Nagaur. This absence goes against the expectations a scholar might bring based on nineteenth-century records of Holi disturbances in Uttar Pradesh and the multiple accounts of one multi-day Holi riot in 1714 that

⁷² For instance, the position of *diman* was frequently held by a Jain, most famously by Munhata Nainsi in the seventeenth century.

⁷³ JSPB No. 15, f 67B Phagun Sud 10 VS 1832.

⁷⁴ JSPB No. 5, f 82A Baisakh Bad 7 VS 1823.

⁷⁵ Cherian, 210-221.

⁷⁶ Sandria B. Freitag, *Collective Action and Community: Public Arenas and the Emergence of Communalism in North India* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 51.

occurred in Ahmedabad, the then-capital of Gujarat Subah immediately to the south of Rajasthan.⁷⁷ In Nagaur in the second half of the eighteenth century, the recurring areas of conflict on Holi were always between upper caste Hindu groups or upper caste Hindus and Jains, rather than between upper and lower caste Hindus or between Hindus and Muslims. Following the idea of ‘agonistic intimacy,’ this should not come as a surprise. Tensions bubbled most frequently and persistently between neighboring and closely associated communities. Processes of social and physical segregation, which I discuss further in the next chapter on property ownership, reinforced that one’s physical neighbors and close associates primarily consisted of groups with social status similar to one’s own.

The lack of Hindu-Muslim conflicts on Holi is not an outlier in the *Sanad Parwana Babi* records for Nagaur. Overall, Hindu-Muslim disputes or conflicts were almost non-existent in Nagaur in the second half of the eighteenth century and on the basis of these records, one would not think to make Hindu-Muslim conflict a main category of inquiry. Out of the thirteen cases of intercommunity conflict in Nagaur discussed earlier in this chapter, only one, between *mahajans* and *julabas* over the use of water for crop irrigation, involved opposing sides that can be identified as Hindu and Muslim from their names and occupations. In the more than 2,000 petitions and orders regarding Nagaur that I have consulted in the *Sanad Parwana Babis*, there are only three or four cases that in any way might be read as Hindu-Muslim community tensions or conflict. Yet even these cases, of which I detail the two most extended disputes, do not persuasively demonstrate any persistent or long-standing community-wide Hindu-Muslim conflict in Nagaur. Rather, these disputes fit more with the tropes of property disputes and, in line with the other disputes discussed in this chapter, they arose when Hindus and Muslims literally became neighbors. Examining these conflicts also shows that although petitioners might occasionally resort to religion or religious identity as a rhetorical strategy, this language was not endorsed by the Marwar court despite its increasing Vaishnavism and did not appear to help petitioners win their cases.

In one instance, a Hindu merchant, Gangaram, was renting a shop from a mosque in Nagaur. When he wanted to buy the market (*bat*) that was attached to the mosque, the mosque refused, probably because the market was part of its *waqf*. But the king’s court ordered that the *bat* should be sold to the merchant and the deed given to him. More than a decade after this transaction, the merchant complained to the court that “Turks and *mochis* (a Muslim cobbler caste)” were fighting with him. The court reiterated that the *mochis* had no claim to the property and the market belonged to the Hindu merchant.⁷⁸ This lasting ill-will over the ownership of the market may have been due to the way that the merchant’s original purchase of the market went through the state and not the mosque and was a contravention of the idea of a *waqf* property of being held in perpetuity by a mosque. Not satisfied with the court’s decisions, the *mochis* continued to complain and petition. Three years later, the *mochis* prevailed in their case. The court ordered the return of the money Gangaram had deposited for the deed of the shop. The merchant had to empty the shop and was expected to turn it over to one of the *mochis*, named Sahu.⁷⁹ The orders and petitions do not explain why the court reversed its position but it does go to show that the court took precedent into account and, in balancing its interests, might support poor Muslim artisans over wealthier Hindu merchants.

The other main conflict between a Hindu and a Muslim group in Nagaur involved the destruction of a mosque. In the summer of 1789, a Rajput, Kesari Singhot Jodha, entered a petition

⁷⁷ Sandria Freitag discusses nineteenth-century Holi riots in Banaras in *Collective Action and Community*. For more on the Ahmedabad riot, see Najaf Haider, “A ‘Holi Riot’ of 1714” in *Living Together Separately: Cultural India in History and Politics*, eds. Mushirul Hasan and Asim Roy (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), 127-139. Haider’s analysis points to the social proximity of the Hindu and Muslim merchants between whom the disturbance originated.

⁷⁸ JSPB No. 7, f 59AB Asadh Bad 2 VS 1824.

⁷⁹ JSPB No. 10, f 73A Phagun Sud 8 VS 1827.

claiming that he had bought land on the edge of Ginani Tank and built a *haveli* (large house). But, while he was away, various cotton-carding, cloth-dying, and cloth-printing castes (*pinjaras*, *rangrejs*, and *chadbavas*) had encroached on his land, built a house, and were now quarreling with him. The court issued a ruling supporting the Rajput's right to the land and ordering the Pinjaras and others not to quarrel.⁸⁰ Yet the *pinjaras* soon entered a counter-petition asserting that the Rajput had demolished their mosque to construct a wall and gate. They testified that only a year before the court had recognized their ownership of the mosque. On the basis of this testimony, the court ordered the Rajput to halt construction on the land where the mosque had stood.⁸¹ Yet this order was not successfully implemented and the dispute remained unresolved.⁸² This case hinged in part on representations: was the building of the Pinjaras a house or a mosque? The discrepancies in social status between a Rajput and Muslim cloth-dying castes also informed the dynamic of the dispute. The court's response to the dispute is ambivalent. It reversed its position on the matter, likely in part because the *pinjaras* testified that some members of their community with damaged eyesight, a type of injury for which the state extended charitable protections, resided in the mosque.⁸³ Yet, the local administration was unable to implement the resolution of restoring the mosque land to the *pinjaras*, probably because of the local power and much higher social status held by the Rajput community.

These disputes between Hindus and Muslims in Nagaur are distinct from the other conflicts described earlier in the chapter because in the state records, they are not treated as conflicts between two groups. In each case, the court and the Muslim petitioners understood the Hindu petitioner as an individual, not as a representative of a whole caste group or of an ethnic or religious community. In both of the cases, the Hindu petitioner represented the Muslim petitioners as a corporate group by using both ethnic and caste identifiers in his petition. Yet, when the court responded to the Hindu petitioner's complaint with an order, it did not use ethnic identifiers for Muslims and tended to disaggregate caste groups to individuals by referring to particular *pinjaras* or *mochis* rather than to *pinjaras* or *mochis* as a community. Furthermore, although the maharaja had embraced Vaishnav devotionalism, this did not translate into consistently favoring Hindu petitioners over Muslim petitioners. Thus, the court rejected the possibility of portraying these conflicts as generalized Hindu-Muslim conflicts.

The disjuncture between the court and Hindu petitioners over how to frame these conflicts and the low number of Hindu-Muslim conflicts in these records suggests that in focusing on Hindu-Muslim conflicts in precolonial South Asia, scholars mostly miss the main social dynamics driving social conflict: upwardly mobile proximate communities jostling for social status. The over-emphasis on Hindu-Muslim conflict in our understanding of premodern South Asia stems not only from contemporary political concerns but also from the types of sources most commonly consulted. Elite literary texts and chronicles from Rajput courts in Rajasthan do use the image of the Muslim or Turk as a threatening outsider or the main enemy. But this is because Rajputs were neighboring communities with Muslim Mughal nobles. Since the mid-sixteenth century, Rajputs had been closely connected with Muslim nobles through their mutual service to Mughal emperors and through the marriage of Rajput women to those emperors. They were also intimate competitors for imperial prestige and regional power. Such intimacies drove conflicts between these groups that were commonly expressed through religious identities.⁸⁴ However, social echelons where there was greater

⁸⁰ JSPB No. 41, f 96B-97A Savan Bad 10 VS 1846.

⁸¹ JSPB No. 40, f 68AB Magsar Bad 12 VS 1846.

⁸² JSPB No. 40, f 72AB Maha Bad 1 VS 1846.

⁸³ Blindness was often mentioned in petitions, probably because the state was charitable to the blind and paid to feed them in towns and cities including Nagaur from 1779 onward. See Cherian, 169, 259.

⁸⁴ On conversion and the perceptions of Rajput and Muslim identities in the seventeenth century, see Ramya Sreenivasan, "Faith and Allegiance in the Mughal Era: Perspectives from Rajasthan" in *Religious Interactions in Mughal*

separation and less competition between Hindu and Muslim groups saw more intra-religious conflict than inter-religious conflict.

Conclusion

In Marwar, caste communities provided immediate forms of social control and conflict resolution through institutions of a committee of elders or community leaders known variously as *panchayats*, *panchs*, and *nyats* and regulated the social world for most urban dwellers. However, this system was generally not adequate to resolve inter-caste conflicts, which tended to occur in shared spaces. Religious, state, and economic structures created a number of shared spaces utilized by multiple groups that brought these groups into competition for both status and economic advantages. In Nagaur, as in many places, the key shared resources were water, trees, and pasturage immediately outside the city gates. These resources functioned as an urban commons, though rights to these resources ultimately resided in the maharaja, and communities in conflict over the resources relied on the maharaja for resolutions. Looking at these resources in the city of Nagaur, one sees that commons in the eighteenth century, far from being a shared public space that brought communities together, were natural resources over which there were regular fierce competitions for access. The study of caste relations around water have tended to focus on distinctions between high and low castes, but the water conflicts in eighteenth-century Nagaur were both most common and most protracted between closely related caste groups struggling for social distinctions and privileges.

The religious, economic, and political priorities of the maharaja also were spliced through shared spaces and resources. Many of these resources were also affiliated with religious institutions. Given the interplay between the maharaja's administration and religious institutions, many of the conflicts over shared resources took on a religious overtone although they also involved social and economic concerns. Though water conflicts, such as the fight over Durlaya Pond were not explicitly religious, they were informed by changing religious ideals backed by political power.

Religious processions on festivals and holidays, such as the Holi *gehar*, also brought religion into public spaces and was a common sites of conflict. If the conflicts around water largely involved either artisanal or agricultural castes, the Holi *gehars* in Nagaur expressed tensions between merchant, scribal, and Brahmin castes. This included significant tensions between Jain and Hindu elites. In the resolution of these conflicts, custom played a larger role than in the water conflicts and the court's decisions vacillated or contradicted each other more frequently. The maharaja's direct dependence on all of these groups for the financing and administration of the kingdom of Marwar impeded his ability to make a definitive judgement between these caste and religious groups and, at the same time, raised the stakes for all parties involved.

Looking at local conflicts across a wide range of social groups from the vantage of the *Sanad Parwana Bahi* records, we are met with a near absence of Hindu-Muslim antagonism or conflict. However, this absence cannot be attributed to the integrative or socially syncretic effects of Nagaur's Sufi shrines or the economy around the city's temples. Mono-causal explanations of the presence or absence of violence between communities in precolonial South Asia are insufficient. The public grounds of conflict were embedded with meanings of religion and sovereign power, stressed by environmental factors, and underwritten with economic competition and ethics of social segregation. Group conflicts in Nagaur typically fell along *jati* divisions, a form of social grouping

India, eds. Vasudha Dalmia and Munis D. Faruqui (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014), 159-191. The intimacies between Hindu and Muslim elites in both love and military conflicts is also seen in the Sultanate period Deccan and Rajasthan in similar forms. Cynthia Talbot, "The Story of Prataprudra: Hindu Historiography on the Deccan Frontier," in *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia*, eds. David Gilmartin and Bruce B. Lawrence (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2000), 292-3.

that coalesced around a mixture of occupational and religious categories and tended to limit social mixing between different communities in Nagaur. This effect is captured by the phrase “living together, separately.”⁸⁵ Such segregation did not eliminate inter-community conflict or violence, but rather meant that it was most likely to occur between neighboring groups who were deeply familiar with each other, though they might also harbor deep-seated resentments vis-à-vis one another. Conflicts between these groups occurred regularly but rarely escalated beyond the level of insults, so they allowed for the regular release and renegotiation of social tensions. The constant play of agonistic intimacies and the cycles of disputes, settlements, and appeals as adjudicated by the maharaja helped register and resolve changing power dynamics in the city of Nagaur before physical violence erupted.

⁸⁵ This phrase was the theme for the conference papers published in *Living Together Separately: Cultural India in History and Politics*, eds. Mushirul Hasan and Asim Roy (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Property, Community, and Neighborhood Segregation

Introduction

In the summer of 1773, five Muslim weavers (*julahas*), named Shaikh Mhaimad, Gaji, Imambagas, Hasan, and Daud, brought a petition to the Kotwali Chauntara, the legal and administrative court, in Nagaur. They claimed possession of two pieces of land in Nagaur's Khatripura neighborhood. However, the *khatris*, a Hindu merchant group who lived in the neighborhood, objected to the *julahas*' claim and blocked the Julahas' possession of the land. Local officials, who were sympathetic to the *khatris* argued that it was "not tolerable to have two Muslim houses together with Hindus" in the neighborhood and advocated instead to compensate the five Julahas with land in the neighborhood where most *julahas* lived.¹ The *julahas* countered that the houses they claimed had belonged to their great-grandfather and great-uncle and was their *watan* or homeland. The claim to the land as *watan* invoked a perpetual hereditary right and deep affective affiliation with the land, just as Rajput chiefs and kings enjoyed rights to a *watan jagir* in the heart of their territories under Mughal rule. The *julahas* testified that *julahas* and *khatris* had lived together in Khatripura without problems for generations. However, in 1755, the year in which the Marathas laid siege to Nagaur, the *julahas* had moved to Jodhpur, leaving their properties in Nagaur vacant. The maharaja's court had reclaimed the *julaha* properties as *khalisa* (crownland) because it was unoccupied and then sold it to some *khatris*. Although the local officials in Nagaur ruled against the *julahas*' petition, their judgement was overturned by the Jodhpur-based central administration (*darbar*) of Marwar. The *darbar* ordered that the properties were to be returned to the *julahas*.²

The *julahas*' petition speaks to the central topic of this chapter: the regulation and reformation of neighborhoods in eighteenth century Nagaur. The case on its own does not allow us to judge the veracity of the claims made by the *julahas* and *khatris*. However it raises a series of questions: How did the *julahas* come to have land in Khatripura? Why did the *khatris* find it intolerable to have Muslims and Hindus living together in Khatripura? How did the siege of Nagaur impact the population and long-term fortunes of the city? What was the impact of political events and the state on the formation of neighborhoods and patterns of property ownership?

Addressing these questions requires rethinking the role of social relations in property transactions and how neighborhoods were structured in premodern South Asia, as well as examining the processes that sustained these structures. Neighborhoods in cities, towns, and villages across much of the subcontinent were based around particular caste and occupational group identities. A specific group dominated each neighborhood and most other groups were excluded from living or owning property in that neighborhood. In much of the scholarship on South Asian towns and cities, this segregated arrangement of neighborhoods has been taken for granted or understood as a static configuration interrupted only by the emergence of metropolises and forms of modernity from the late nineteenth century onward.³ While it is true that urban neighborhoods across the subcontinent

¹ "su khatripura vicai doy ghar musulmana ra hiva bhela khatavai nahi"

² JSPB No. 13, f 73B-74A Savan Sud 13 VS 1830.

³ Between the 1960s and 1980s, scholarship aimed at defining the nature of urban spaces in sixteenth to eighteenth-century North India took these arrangements for granted. See for instance M. P. Singh's statement that "outside the

were typically segregated on the basis of caste and occupation, this segregation was neither complete nor a ‘natural’ distinction.

I argue that the spatial segregation of neighborhoods and the social distinctions implicit in neighborhood formation took constant work to establish and maintain. Drawing on over 450 documents relating to property disputes in Nagaur between 1764 and 1779, I show how individuals and groups worked to manifest an ethic of segregation through the constant work of consolidating property claims. These processes were impacted by the social and economic mobility of particular caste and sub-caste groups and by the gradual recovery of the city from the devastation of the Maratha siege of Nagaur in 1754 and 1755. In what follows, I first discuss terms and methodology and then I situate eighteenth-century developments in Nagaur’s neighborhoods in the context of larger trends in urban settlement in Rajasthan and across the subcontinent that show why the eighteenth century was a period of urban change. I then turn to the heart of my argument and show how Nagaur’s communities sought to create and maintain the spatial segregation of their neighborhoods by constructing uniform spaces, by mortgaging properties in strategic ways, and by claiming rights to ancestral homes. These strategies represent intent rather than result, because they did not lead to complete or durable neighborhood segregation in Nagaur. The instability of the urban social fabric due to war and changing economic and social status alongside inconsistent state politics often undermined efforts to promote segregation. To untangle some of the interactions between these factors and segregation efforts, at the end of the chapter, I return to the case of the Julahas and the Khatris to examine how the methods of segregation played out in the aftermath of the siege of Nagaur.

Defining Neighborhood

I use “neighborhood” to encompass several terms used in the records for residential groupings: *maballa*, *pol*, *vas*, *pura*, and *vadi*. These terms referred to regions of the city and designated clusters of houses. These terms for neighborhood are sometimes used interchangeably in the records.⁴ However, *pol* and *pura* refer to specific types of neighborhoods. *Pol* literally means gate. In cities such as Ahmedabad in Gujarat, a *pol* was a neighborhood that had limited entryways which could be locked at night for security. *Pols* tended to be the enclaves of wealthy merchants. Its usage in Nagaur appears to be similar to that in Ahmedabad. Suburban neighborhoods that lay beyond the city gates tended to be called *puras*, though in Nagaur some *puras*, including Khatripura, lay within

enclosures of the nobles, the rest of the people used to live together according to professions, crafts and castes. The merchants, craftsmen, professionals and labourers lived in separate wards.” *Town, Market, Mint and Port in the Mughal Empire, 1556-1707: an Administrative-cum-economic Study* (New Delhi: Adam Publishers & Distributors, 1985), 19-20. B. R. Grover makes a similar generalization for eighteenth century *qasbas* in his article “An Integrated Pattern of Commercial Life in the Rural Society of North India during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” *Indian Historical Records Commission*, Proceedings of the thirty-seventh session, Vol. 37 (Delhi, 1966) reprinted in *Money and the Market in India 1100-1700*, ed. Sanjay Subrahmanyam (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), 226. This approach has carried over in more recent scholarship as well. Nandita Sahai, who introduces a discussion on artisan neighborhoods in urban Marwar with the statement “As is well-known, the segregation of people on the basis of caste based on normative prescriptions of ritual purity, determined settlement patterns in cities as much as in villages.” *Politics of Patronage and Protest: The State, Society and Artisans in Early Modern Rajasthan* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 182. See the essays in Crispin Bates and Minoru Minu, eds., *Cities in South Asia* (New York: Routledge, 2015) for discussions about how nineteenth and twentieth-century urban life allowed for more interactions or fluidity of identities.

⁴ For example, JSPB No. 15, f 70B Baisakh Sud 10 VS 1832 mentions Surana rai Mahalla, but most records, such as JSPB No. 22, f 43B Baisakh Bad 14 VS 1836, use Surana ri Pol to refer to that neighborhood.

the city walls.⁵ *Puras* outside the walls tended to be the neighborhoods of poorer artisan castes and petty traders, though in some towns and cities there were also suburbs of prosperous trading groups.⁶ In Nagaur, the most prominent example of an artisan suburb is Luharpura, the enclave of ironsmiths that lay to the north of the city.

Neighborhoods often covered a fairly small area. They could be a single block or a small cluster of houses. They were used as landmarks in petitions, though they may not have encompassed every portion of the city. Some petitions mention houses that are near, but not in, a particular neighborhood.⁷ Nagaur had at least 46 neighborhoods and major squares, as well as several well-known markets. The six city gates and the five main water tanks also served as landmarks for residential clusters.⁸ While Nagaur had a large number of neighborhoods, several are particularly prominent in the records. These include Khatripura, Bajarvada, Ghosipura, Luharpura, Surana ri pol, Loha rai Chowk, and Navi Virampuri. I will focus on these seven localities to speak to larger issues of neighborhood formation in this chapter. Some of these neighborhoods underwent transformations in our period, including Khatripura which was resettled through personal and state initiative, and Navi Virampuri, which had been relatively recently created and settled. Others had longer, more stable existences and were more thoroughly segregated, such as Luharpura, Surana ri Pol, and Loha rai Chowk.

As in cities and towns across North India, the names for neighborhoods in Nagaur frequently were linked with caste or community names, for instance Gandhivadi, which refers to the *gandhi* community of Hindu merchants, or Surana ri Pol, which means the *pol* of the Surana Jain merchants, though nearby landmarks, including temples and shrines, might also lend their name.⁹ The caste after which the neighborhood was named was typically the majority population in the neighborhood. However, the records for Nagaur in the second half of the eighteenth century show that other castes lived in these neighborhoods as well. This was not an exceptional state; records of eighteenth century Batala in Punjab and early nineteenth-century Churu in the neighboring Rajasthani kingdom of Bikaner also show that neighborhoods housed mixed groups of castes.¹⁰ The mixing of caste in neighborhoods included not just various subgroups of merchant or Brahmin castes living together but also common instances of lower caste service groups, such as tailors (*darzi*) or barbers (*nai*), living amongst merchants and Brahmins.

During the eighteenth century, normative conceptions of cities in Marwar promoted the idea of designated, segregated neighborhoods and markets set aside for different communities. Eighteenth-century poems describe Jodhpur as having different lanes for different sorts of shops

⁵ This is likely because the walls were extended at some point.

⁶ Douglas E. Haynes, *Rhetoric and Ritual in Colonial India: The Shaping of Public Culture in Surat City, 1852-1928* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 55. M. P. Singh suggest that most *puras* were founded by wealthy men or nobles. This does not seem to have been the case in Nagaur. 21-22.

⁷ See for instance JSPB No. 21, f 57B Baisakh Bad 7 VS 1835, which discusses a property near Ghosivada.

⁸ 227 property records mention a location, of which 91 only mention Nagaur generally. There may have been more neighborhoods not mentioned in any of the petitions. Most of the neighborhoods cannot be accurately placed on a map of the city because of lack of data.

⁹ For examples of this system in other cities and towns, see M. P. Singh, 20-21.

¹⁰ J. S. Grewal, *In the By-lanes of History: Some Persian Documents from a Punjab Town* (Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1975), 19-20; Shashi Arora, "The Forms of Urban Organization in the Desert Parts of Rajasthan A Case Study of Churu (1750-1818 A.D.)" in *Urbanization in Western India, Historical Perspective*, ed. Makrand Mehta (Ahmedabad: Gujarat University, 1988), 91.

and residential quarters for different groups such as tailors (*darzi*), potters (*kumbar*), and shoemakers (*mochi*).¹¹ Such poems, composed to highlight the exploits and virtues of a ruler, waver between descriptive and prescriptive, representing idealized versions, or at least the most praiseworthy aspects of the city, as part of their larger eulogy. The poems testify to a worldview that supported and encouraged segregation in urban neighborhoods, though the formulation of segregation in the texts slips between *varna* models, which attest to an ideal social balance between four general classes, and more occupational or '*jati*' descriptions that seem to rest more on technical and resource needs.¹²

In analyzing segregation and caste-wise organization in Nagaur's neighborhoods, I rely on official records from the Marwar court. The Marwar Kingdom's orders (*sanads* and *parwanas*) identify petitioners with a given name and also with a caste, sub-caste, geographic, or occupational identifier. In many cases, such identifiers might supply two or more of these sorts of identities within one word. However, it is not clear from the records if the petitioners selected the descriptive identifiers themselves, if the state applied these labels, or if petitioners used such labels in order to make themselves legible to the state. Some categories overlapped. "*Mahajan*" referred to wealthy bankers, merchants, and moneylenders in general. Within that group, in Marwar there were sub-clans with distinct names and a tendency to socialize and intermarry with each other. Some of these sub-clans were Hindu and others were Jain. However, in the records, the same person or group of people could be referred to as *mahajan* or by their specific sub-clan.¹³ In this way, the records showed a certain flexibility or instability of representation and association. This aspect of the records is a cautionary reminder that caste identities and understandings of community were not necessarily fixed or unchanging.

The Nagaur property records maintained by the Marwar court show the politics of property and its uses in constructing community identity and maintaining both family and community prestige. The lines of segregation in Nagaur's neighborhoods were drawn along two main axes: first, religion, as seen in the tendency toward residential segregation between Muslim neighborhoods and Hindu and Jain neighborhoods; and second, occupation, which is evinced both by the clustering of members of a particular *jati* and in the particularly sharp spatial divides between artisan and merchant-banker groups. This type of occupational segregation draws together two visions of caste: *varna* groupings around four broad-based ritual and occupational groupings, of which three of the groups had a large presence in the city: Brahmin, Vaishya, and Shudra; and *jati* community identities rooted in occupational clusters. A complex combination of these principles, *varna*, *jati*, and religion, informed local ideas about who could live together and proper social practices in Nagaur. These ideas about segregation and living together were also based on the principle of *wajabi* (appropriateness), which informed behavior and transactions between different communities and underlay many of the court's legal decisions and orders.¹⁴

¹¹ G.N. Sharma, *Social Life in Medieval Rajasthan [1500 – 1800 A.D.], with Special Reference to the Impact of Mughal Influence* (Agra: Lakshmi Narain Agarwal Educational Printers, 1968), 54-5.

¹² *Varna* refers to fourfold division of society into Brahmins, *kshatriyas*, *vaishyas*, and *sudras*. This conceptualization of society was articulated in the Vedas. *Jati* refers to hereditary social groupings made on the basis of occupation and was supported by endogamous marriage practices.

¹³ For instance, a petitioner might be identified as a Sipahi (soldier) or as a Turkai darzi (Muslim tailor). JSPB No. 13, f 76B-77A Asoj Bad 1 VS 1830; JSPB No. 13, f 84A Maha Sud 14 VS 1830.

¹⁴ *Wajabi* was a cultural moral code of appropriate behavior that informed interactions within and between different communities in Marwar and between communities and the state. It was not a single stable category. Its meaning could be contested between groups and was open for negotiation and reinterpretation. For more, see Sahai, 25-28.

Segregation and Urban Upheaval in the Eighteenth Century

The process of neighborhood formation in Nagaur in the eighteenth century took place against the background of urban transformations across the subcontinent that led to changes in urban populations in both old and new cities, including the formation of new neighborhoods and structural changes in extant neighborhoods. Many of the urban transformations were driven by political instability that rearranged political boundaries and trade routes. The increasing dominance of European trading companies in ports reshuffled patterns of manufacture, thereby changing the relationship of the city with its hinterland. Europeans also constructed new cities, including Calcutta and Bombay, to support their mercantile ambitions. As older cities were cut off from trade routes or were emptied of political power, new towns and cities rose up. These new urban spaces were often more market-centered than the earlier administrative centers they replaced and thus were focused less on ruling classes and more on merchants, bankers, and moneylenders.¹⁵ Alongside these market towns a new set of political capitals emerged in the local and regional kingdoms that were established in the wake of the weakening Mughal Empire. As leaders rose and fell, so did capital cities. While older capitals fell into disuse in many cases, the eighteenth century saw the construction of a number of new, often planned, capital cities, such as Jaipur and Hyderabad. As changing politics and economics provoked the rise and fall of urban centers, neighborhoods in towns and cities across western India took on new forms that were influenced by ideology, security, and migration. All of these factors also affected the neighborhoods and society of the city of Nagaur in the mid-eighteenth century. This suggests that the patterns of property transactions and segregation in Nagaur could serve as a model for understanding these processes in Rajasthan and across western India.

In the new planned capital cities, the ruler designed and designated different markets and residential neighborhoods for specific communities. The plans the ruler created often had ideological foundations that promoted the ruler's reputation for protecting moral order. Some rulers who designed these cities, such as Maharaja Jai Singh II of Amber, drew on longstanding principles of South Asian architecture and urban design that advocated for the principle of segregated neighborhoods. In the *Arthashastra*, an ancient Sanskrit treatise on rule and economics composed at some point between 100 BCE and 100 CE, Kautilya advised that cities should be divided into sixteen regions divided by three major roads running north-south and three running east-west. Each region of the city was to be assigned to a different social community in the society.¹⁶ Though this text, which was rediscovered in 1905, was not in circulation during the medieval period, its ideas about city design resonated in later architectural works. For instance, in a fifteenth-century text from the court of Rana Kumbha of Mewar in southern Rajasthan, Sutradhara Mandana laid out guidelines for architectural and urban design that specified the quadrants of the city that should be relegated to different groups designated by both *varna* and *jati* distinctions. He advised that Brahmins and Kshatriyas should live in the eastern and southern part of the city, Shudras in the north. Turning to occupations, he listed that cloth-dyers and washer men in the north-west, and scavengers,

¹⁵ See C. A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion*, 4th ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

¹⁶ Sharma, *Social Life in Medieval India*, 45-6; Mark McClish and Patrick Olivelle, eds., transl., and introduction, *The Arthashastra: Selections from the Classic Indian Work on Statecraft* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2012), xix-xxi, 22-24.

shoemakers, oil makers and prostitutes in the south and south-west. Vaishyas and the main markets were to be located in the center of the city.¹⁷

New planned cities in the eighteenth century, such as Jaipur, implemented these sorts of design principles, dividing the city with long straight avenues and assigning different quarters to different groups. Jai Singh consulted various *shastras* while designing the city on a rectangular plan.¹⁸ He then invited various communities of merchants and artisans to settle into the city's neighborhoods, providing shops, land, and other incentives to attract them to move to Jaipur.¹⁹ Cities built in this way, which were populated rapidly with explicit guidance by the ruler, had neighborhood segregation by caste and occupation built into them from the top down. Although the neighborhoods may have changed later, their initial form in the eighteenth century was set by the king.

Although Nagaur was not a planned city, the nature of its neighborhoods was also affected by state-endorsed ideologies. Merchants and Brahmins in Marwar, who were often strong adherents of Vaishnav Hinduism, became more concerned with establishing and enforcing social segregation and boundaries in the eighteenth century than had earlier been the norm.²⁰ The ruler of Marwar, Vijai Singh, promoted Vaishnav practices that contributed to the increased segregation of social spaces by ordering daily Hindu devotional practice in 1785, yet barring certain segments of the society from partaking in these practices.²¹ Simultaneously, the rising upper castes formed alliances that included merchants, Brahmins, and scribes to advocate for and protect their status by restricting access to temples to upper castes and by making collaborative efforts to create segregation in many cities, towns and villages in the second half of the eighteenth century.²² Unlike most petitions which rested on a language of custom, in these petitions the *mabajan* and Brahmin groups justified their demands in terms of the protection of their *dharm*.²³

Secondly, neighborhoods across India developed new forms in response to the insecurity generated by the political upheavals and frequent military campaigns of the eighteenth century. For instance, in Ahmedabad, the main city of the neighboring province of Gujarat, political instability and threats to safety contributed to the development of a style of neighborhoods known as *pols*. In the face of local uprisings, famine, frequent attacks on the city, and the lack of maintenance of the city walls, caste groups, particularly those from merchant and administrative service communities built *pols*, residential clusters inhabited by a single caste or several closely affiliated groups with walls and gates controlling access. The gates were typically closed at night. The *pol* also collectively organized resources such as a temple, the utensils needed for community feasts, wells for drinking water, and arrangements for latrines for the inhabitants. In this way in the eighteenth century in Ahmedabad, the closed-off neighborhood provided resources for residents that were typically provided by the state in better times. The *pols* were inhabited by a single caste, who formed over 90

¹⁷ Sharma, *Social Life in Medieval India* 47; N. R. Dave *A Study of the Hindu Science of Architecture and its Practice with special reference to Rajavallabha* (Mumbai: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 2011), 185.

¹⁸ Ashim Roy, *History of the Jaipur City* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1978), 12.

¹⁹ Fatima Imam, "Indian Paradigms of Political Authority and Usages of Urban Space: Comparative Analysis of Jaipur as an Eighteenth-Century Example," *Studies in History* 32, no. 2 (2015): 162, 170-172.

²⁰ Divya Cherian, "Ordering Subjects: Merchants, the State, and Krishna Devotion in Eighteenth-Century Marwar" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2015), 30-90.

²¹ Cherian, 90-91.

²² Cherian, 121, 130-145.

²³ Cherian, 131.

percent of the population, and renting property was discouraged. Though a few service groups might have lived in the *pol*, they were a minority and likely had no say in the organization of social relations in the *pol*.²⁴ Although it was most closely identified with Ahmedabad, this form of neighborhood came into use in a number of towns and cities in western India and contributed to the formation of neighborhood segregation because of its exclusive nature.

Military threats and general insecurity may have led to construction of *pols* in Nagaur. It also contributed to significant amounts of temporary migration that put neighborhood occupancy in flux. In the eighteenth century, Nagaur was not only a key administrative city in Marwar, second only to Jodhpur. It was also an important military and strategic city. It had a well-built fort in the center of the city that had often served as a stronghold for Rathor Rajput leaders. This made it a target in military campaigns, which sometimes had disastrous results for the city's inhabitants. During and after the Maratha siege in 1754 and 1755, many residents left the city. Parts of the city, especially the suburbs outside of the walls, were likely destroyed. This disrupted ownership and occupation of property. People of all classes were highly mobile in the face of war or famine, going to Jodhpur, Jaipur, Bikaner, Delhi, and even Aurangabad and Hyderabad, often for years at a time.²⁵ More than a decade later, former residents were still returning to the city and trying to reclaim properties.

Lastly, economic changes, including the migration and rising social status of merchant groups also affected neighborhood composition in the eighteenth century. In some cases it decreased segregation, but in others it led to the displacement of existing residents and the creation of new segregated neighborhoods of merchants. Merchant and banking communities were gaining financial and political power in eighteenth-century Rajasthan. Their ability to acquire and move financial resources became important for Rajput leaders whose access to lucrative revenue assignments in rich agricultural lands outside Rajasthan fell due to both weakening Mughal power and increasing Maratha control over key regions such as Malwa and Gujarat from the middle of the century. In Churu in the Shekhawati region of northern Rajasthan, mixed-caste neighborhoods arose due to the in-migration of merchant groups who bought property within the walled city from lower economic and social groups. In some instances, however, the local government of Churu promulgated orders granting land in the city to merchants and compensating the low caste owners either with cash or with land that lay outside the city walls, thereby creating new segregated neighborhoods.²⁶ G. S. L. Devra argues that the extensive in-migration of merchants from Shekhawati into towns and cities in Bikaner explains the rising prominence of merchant communities in urban centers during the eighteenth century.²⁷ The migration of merchants caused significant shifts in the make-up of the urban social fabric and led to the restructuring of neighborhoods.

In Nagaur too, merchant and moneylending groups were gaining political and social power through their roles in administration and trade. In the expanding Marwar kingdom, Nagaur was an important administrative city. Maharaja Vijai Singh had spent much of his youth in the city and retained a connection to it. In the early years of his rule, between 1753 and 1761, it was the leading

²⁴ Harish Doshi, *Traditional Neighbourhood in a Modern City* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1974), 8, 10, 20, 33.

²⁵ For instance, Pinjara Isak went to Malwa and Mahajan Jaikisan's family went to Bikaner because of the Nagaur siege. JSPB No. 15, f 72A Jeth Sud 10 Du. VS 1832. JSPB No. 22, f 41A Baisakh bad 11 VS 1836.

²⁶ Arora, 90-91.

²⁷ G. S. L. Devra, "Stability and Change in Towns and Cities in North-West Rajasthan 1700-1818 A.D" in Makrand Mehta, ed., *Urbanization in Western India, Historical Perspective* (Ahmedabad: Gujarat University, 1988), 72-77.

city of one of the four *parganas* (districts) he controlled in the northern and western part of Marwar, while his rival for the throne, Ram Singh, controlled the districts in the south and east of the kingdom.²⁸ In Nagaur, like many cities in eighteenth-century Rajasthan, the prominence of merchant-bankers increased, as these groups not only strengthened their presence in Rajasthan but also fanned out across the subcontinent, building robust financial networks. Merchant-bankers were a crucial part of the economy and the administration of the city. The Marwar kings had long relied on Brahmin and merchant groups, especially Oswal Jains, to play a key role in the administration. Since at least the mid-seventeenth century, these merchants had served as *divan* (minister of state) and other administrative positions in the central court.²⁹ They had been elevated to these key posts in an effort by the king to secure the functioning of the state from rival Rajput claimants to the throne. In mid-eighteenth century, Nagaur's lead administrators in the key sectors related to tax collection, justice, and security at the regional and city levels were drawn primarily from merchant classes.³⁰ Although there was no city-planning in Nagaur, the fact that the local administration was drawn mostly from merchant and Brahmin classes may have affected how property disputes were handled at a local level.³¹

The rising economic and political fortunes of merchant groups likely contributed to attempts at segregation and the reforms of neighborhoods. In addition to its administrative facets, Nagaur was also a market city and the merchant-banker communities played a key role in both. The local market for goods was supplied by a large community of artisans in the city and it had particularly robust metal-working and cloth manufacturing industries, whose products circulated regionally. Alongside these artisans, there were merchants engaged in local and long-distance trade and finance. These merchants moved goods and provided financial services such as bills of exchange not just within the kingdom but also to neighboring kingdoms, including Jaipur, Bikaner, and Jaisalmer, as well as to Aurangabad, Delhi, and Hyderabad.³² This signified extensive resources and networks. Such economic ties would have further elevated the influence of merchant groups, attracted new merchants to settle in the city, and contributed to the jockeying for position between merchant groups whose fortunes were rising and sought to improve their standing in local society. However, the influence of the merchant-bankers on Nagaur's society and on the control and use of space and buildings in the city did not go unchallenged. Some of the more well-off or ascendant artisan groups challenged merchant abilities to develop segregated spaces, as will be discussed further below. The state, which needed artisan support, often supported artisan claims to land and thwarted the efforts of merchants to seize the land or drive certain groups out.³³ In these counter-arguments to segregation and displacement, the claim to *bapoti* (ancestral) land was particularly effective in gaining the support of the state. Thus, although an increasingly powerful merchant-banker community in

²⁸ Rima Hooja, *A History of Rajasthan* (New Delhi: Rupa, 2006), 715.

²⁹ Munhata Nainsi was the most famous Jain *divan* in the kingdom of Marwar because of his *Khyat* and *Marwar Pargana ri Vigat* which detailed the history and economic situation of the kingdom respectively.

³⁰ These included the head of the *kacheri* (district administration), *sayar* (customs house), and *kotwali chauntara* (fiscal, criminal and city administration). These posts were generally not held by Rajputs.

³¹ The *Jodhpur Sanad Parwana Bahis* contain records of cases that were not resolved locally, but surely many were and never reached the maharaja's court. See pages 99, 103, 123, 125-6 and 40 for some examples of when the maharaja's court overruled local decisions that favored merchants.

³² JSPB No. 10, f 74B Chait Sud 12 VS 1827; JSPB No. 14, f 41B, Phagun Sud 14 VS 1831; JSPB No. 16, f 41A Phagun Bad 14 VS 1833; JSPB No. 18, f 19B Asoj Bad 8 VS 1834; JSPB No. 18, f 22B Maha Sud 12 VS 1834.

³³ For more on the Marwar state's negotiations with and reliance on urban artisans, particularly before 1780, see Sahai, 190-200.

Nagaur made efforts to increase residential segregation, these efforts were often challenged by other inhabitants in the city.

Constructing Community

The construction of buildings in Nagaur's neighborhoods could disrupt or reinforce community ties. Building or renovating homes, shops, roads, and religious structures physically remade sections of the city and affected the day-to-day livability of the city. The physical formation and reconstruction of the neighborhood shaped how neighbors lived with each other. It affected living conditions and the use of property. Construction demonstrated financial success or prestige, and thus was a frequent site of conflict. The type of construction could also signify unity. In the absence of specific building regulations, the complaints of neighbors and their resolution through the maharaja's court regulated construction that impacted both the functional and the social livability of a neighborhood. Disputes over construction show how residents in Nagaur's neighborhoods sought to manage urban spaces and how they opposed developments that challenged or disrupted cohesive community identification.

Constant construction was necessary to maintain Nagaur as a livable space, as was true in towns and cities across the subcontinent. The fort, major religious structures including temples, mosques, and shrines, and *havelis* (the large houses in which elites lived) were constructed largely out of stone or brick and thus were relatively durable, though regular repairs and plastering were still needed.³⁴ But the vast majority of buildings were made from mud and thatch. European observers commented repeatedly on these structures in urban areas throughout the subcontinent. While relatively cheap to make, they were also easily destroyed. Fires often broke out in Indian cities, destroying large swathes of the buildings and killing residents and animals.³⁵ The monsoon rains also regularly damaged or destroyed houses.³⁶ In Nagaur in the mid-eighteenth century, rain more frequently destroyed homes than fires. In petitions, residents complained that during the rainy season their entire house fell down or the roof collapsed.³⁷ Because the kingdom's administrators levied taxes on new construction, residents brought petitions seeking a reprieve from these fees when fixing or reconstructing a building destroyed by rain.

Rainfall threatened the structural stability of homes and the comfort of residents, so its management was key to residential stability in the neighborhoods. Neighborhoods were densely settled, so insufficient drainage easily created unsanitary conditions and could cause local flooding. Residents were quick to complain about nearby construction that impacted drainage. A frequent source of conflict was new construction that disrupted or damaged existing drainage routes. The tentmaker Farash Ismayal complained about construction on a *mahajan's* new *haveli* that included a

³⁴ Minakshi Jain, Kulbushan Jain and Meghal Arya, *Architecture of a Royal Camp: The Retrieved Fort of Nagaur* (Ahmedabad: AADI Centre, 2009), 154-166.

³⁵ Yogesh Sharma, 40, 64. Sir Thomas Roe observed fires in Ajmer, including one that he estimated burnt 1000 structures and killed fourteen people. He wrote that fires were a near daily experience in the city. William Foster, ed., *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to India 1615-19* (1926; repr., New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1990), 154-5.

³⁶ See for example Sir Thomas Roe's description of a particularly heavy monsoon rain in Ajmer, which forced him and his neighbors to flee to nearby hillsides in case the tank's dam broke and completely washed away their part of the city. Although the flood was averted, he noted, "Yet the very rayne had washed downe a great part of the walls of my house and soe weakened itt all by divers breaches in, that I feared the fall more then the flood" Even regular rainfall was disruptive and potentially destructive: "every ordinarie raine making such a current at my doore that it runne not swifter in the arches of London Bridge and is for some howers impassible by horse or man." Foster, 717-18.

³⁷ JSPB No. 14, f 41AB Chait Bad 5 VS 1831.

new boundary wall and was located in the area where water had previously drained. The construction had stopped the flow of water out of the Gandhivadi neighborhood, which had caused flooding in Ismayal's house. In response to Ismayal's repeated complaints, the court ordered the *mahajan* to have a new drainage channel dug in the lane so that water would flow out of the neighborhood.³⁸ In a similar case, Nai Jairam complained that when a *darzi* built a new house next door to him, the drainage canal was relocated so that it ran right next to his kitchen, which caused water or humidity to get into his kitchen, likely spoiling his food. In response to his complaint, the drainage canal was dug again, this time back in its original position.³⁹ In addition to street drainage of waste water and runoff, the placement of roof drains and downspouts also impacted the livability of a neighborhood and neighborly relations. Purohit Anopram complained that the gutter drainpipe of a *mal's* residence was located over the door to his house, so that he was hit by water when coming or going from his home. He demanded that this be changed.⁴⁰

The location and construction of doors and walls was a site of conflict more generally. Walls and doors were not only about access but also related to how individuals saw and shaped their relationships with others in the neighborhood. Doors and walls demarcated boundaries, creating or restricting access to certain spaces, which created the spatial inclusion or exclusion of neighbors and community members. New doors in and out of properties signaled the distinction of different family units within a property. They also posed inconveniences for neighbors because they might encroach on communal spaces.⁴¹ When there were complaints, the court summoned neighbors to judge whether or not someone could build a door, or if the door they had made was proper by community standards. When Agarwal Jivraj built a new door, his neighbors complained it was improper and ordered it to be blocked. His son later attempted to fix it. Both Jivraj's and his son's efforts were subject to the payment of a tax fee to the city's administrators and to community judgment about whether such a door was proper.⁴² Walls, too, were community issues because they raised questions about the lines between shared and personal spaces. Many complaints alleged that walls blocked public access to neighborhood spaces and converted public areas into private possessions. Two shaikhs had a dispute when one built a wall that blocked a road that had existed for at least fifteen years, thereby cutting off his neighbors' access to the area.⁴³ A Tiwari rebuilt a fallen wall at the edge of his property in such a way that it blocked off all access to his neighbor's house.⁴⁴ In such cases, it is hard to believe that the builders in question were not aware that the walls they built were blocking access, and so these acts should be read as a hostile maneuver toward their neighbors. In some cases, however, the intentionality is less clear. Confusion could arise between city officials and local communities over traditions of land use. According to a petition, the *kotwal* (chief city official and magistrate) had sold land to a *ghosi* in Ghosivada, but that land included a traditional road which the *ghosi* blocked by building a house. The *kotwal* then wanted to break a wall belonging to another *ghosi* to provide access to the road but this *ghosi* refused to break his wall, saying that any road should be on *khalisa* land.⁴⁵

³⁸ JSPB No. 20, f 46B Phagun Bad 10 Pratham VS 1835; JSPB No. 22, f 33B Dutik Savan Sud 8 1836.

³⁹ JSPB No. 20, f 42A Kati Sud 13 VS 1835.

⁴⁰ JSPB No. 22, f 40A Chait Sud 3 VS 1836.

⁴¹ Sahai, 184.

⁴² JSPB No. 9, f 65A Asadh Bad 11 VS 1826.

⁴³ JSPB No. 10, f 65A Savan Bad 13 VS 1827.

⁴⁴ JSPB No. 17, f 45B Pos Bad 3 VS 1833.

⁴⁵ JSPB No. 20, f 42A Kati Sud 11 VS 1835.

Not even religious land grants and construction happened without criticism if community stakeholders perceived the new building to interfere with community or neighborhood functions. In 1777, the court had granted land in the city to religious devotee Bhagat Sitaldas, who had been dwelling just outside the Jodhpuri Darwaza at the site of his guru's *samadhi* (place of cremation). On this land in the city, the court explicitly granted him permission to construct a *chobhita*, a small four-walled structure in which he could dwell, and a *sal*, an open hall which could serve as a gathering space for devotees.⁴⁶ Yet just weeks after the grant was finalized, a neighboring *kachara*, a member of a glass bangle-making caste, complained about this construction. He alleged that the *chowk* (square) that Sitaldas had occupied in the city and in which he was building was the space where the *kachara* community traditionally held their Holi *puja* (worship). Sitaldas's new construction would displace this community function. Deferring to this complaint, the court ordered Sitaldas to select a different site in the city.⁴⁷ Although as a *bhagat* he was a recognized holy man, Sitaldas was not welcome in the neighborhood if he would disrupt established precedents and community spaces. As this and other examples in this chapter show, while the city administrators had the power to grant lands and to give permission for certain types of construction, absent any uniform policies on land use, building types and locations were contested and negotiated at the neighborhood level. As in other types of legal disputes, precedent and shared community ideals were most often the deciding factor in regulating land use.

Although many conflicts over construction were based in functional concerns, neighbors also entered complaints that were based on conflicts over status as expressed through building materials and architectural styles. The complainants often desired uniformity in neighborhood buildings, which created visible coherence in the community. In the neighborhood of Navi Virampuri, there were ongoing construction conflicts between Sirimali Naga and other Sirimalis about the height of buildings and what it showed about status within the community. Sirimali Vyas Naga complained to the court that when Sirimali Devkaran purchased land and built a brick house in Navi Virampuri, the plinth of his house was higher than the plinth of the temple. Vyas Naga contended that Devkaran's house being higher than the temple crossed norms of propriety. The court ordered an investigation into the building customs in both Navi Virampuri and the old neighborhood to determine if Devkaran was really going against precedent.⁴⁸ That height was a contentious marker of status is further shown by an order made several years later when Sirimali Naga also built a new house in Navi Virampuri. The court ordered Naga to make sure that the walls around his house were no higher than those of his neighbors.⁴⁹ His new construction was to be equal to that of his neighbors, not exceeding theirs in any way. Naga attracted further complaints the next year about this issue of wall heights.⁵⁰ Four years later, Naga's neighbors were once again complaining that he was building higher than was allowed, this time regarding a *barana* (gate).⁵¹ As a relatively recently constructed neighborhood, Navi Virampuri did not have established hierarchies, so the Sirimalis were in competition with each other to establish norms. After his initial complaint about the height of the plinth, Sirimali Naga harbored long-term resentments against Devkaran that

⁴⁶ JSPB No. 19, f 53B Baisakh Bad 7 VS 1834; JSPB No. 21, f 57B Baisakh Bad 2 VS 1835.

⁴⁷ JSPB No. 20, f 49B Baisakh Sud 11 VS 1835.

⁴⁸ JSPB No. 9, f 59A Magsar Sud 14 VS 1826.

⁴⁹ JSPB No. 12, f 49B Magsar Bad 6 VS 1829.

⁵⁰ JSPB No. 13, f 82A Pos Sud 14 VS 1830.

⁵¹ JSPB No. 17, f 50A Chait Sud 14 VS 1833.

centered on status and played out in property, construction, and legal cases. Naga entered another complaint seven years later, alleging that after Devkaran had bought property in Navi Virampuri, he and the other neighbors harassed Naga because he had less wealth by insulting him, excluding him from feasts, and playing *dandiya*, a type of dance that uses sticks as props, on Holi right outside his house instead of at the usual place. The issue escalated to physical fights with other Sirimalis, in which Naga's son was injured. Although Naga had the offenders briefly locked up, they were released after only two days. Naga claimed to the court, "I cannot remain near them."⁵² What started as a dispute over status resulted in both physical and moral injury, with one person, Naga, recognizing the impossibility of remaining part of the Sirimali community in the neighborhood.

Disputes over the construction materials and designs used in houses in Nagaur also were expressions of concern over status markers and who could rightfully display them. In some of these cases, the disputes sought to sharpen the distinction between the status and buildings of different communities. Construction with stone or brick to make *pakka*, permanent, buildings signaled greater wealth and privilege than *kachcha* houses built out of thatch and mud. There were conflicts in Nagaur over who could build a *pakka* house. These disputes often originated when upper caste groups tried to prevent lower castes from building *pakka* houses. For instance, a Brahmin objected to Darzi Tulsi building a *pakka* house near his own. Tulsi noted in his petition for help that the Brahmin had stopped him from making the piles of stones used in building a verandah or roof.⁵³ Similarly, Bhagat Lachmandas's neighbors objected when he began to make his house out of stone or brick instead of mud and thatch.⁵⁴

In other cases, complaints about construction style sought to lessen distinctions within a community. Like the petitions concerning height, community members made petitions that advocated for stylistic uniformity regarding architectural elements. They promoted inclusivity through internal group policing of status symbols. Qazi (Kaji) Badha complained that his neighbor Qazi Kasam built a *jharokha* (window niche) that was against the custom and from which pieces fell onto Badha's house. The investigation into the matter examined other houses in the community and determined that *jharokhas* were not a feature of *qazi* houses, so should not be added to them.⁵⁵ Likewise, one *churigar* bangle-maker objected when his neighbor, another *churigar*, constructed a niche in a new wall.⁵⁶ Through these complaints, neighbors forced the members of their community to adhere to uniform building standards and refrain from building architectural features that conveyed higher status than other members of their community.

Neighborhoods in Nagaur underwent near constant construction because of damage to buildings in the annual monsoon and as properties changed hands or individuals acquired more wealth and invested in their homes. Although the state collected taxes on buildings and construction, their placement and features were not closely regulated by local officials. Rather, neighbors raised complaints if the new construction either disrupted the physical conditions of life in the neighborhood or broke stylistic norms. The state typically ruled in favor of these complaints, supporting the construction of more uniform neighborhoods, where buildings followed past precedents and matched neighboring structures. This process promoted the neighborhood as a

⁵² "*una kanai rabai saku nahi?*" JSPB No. 16, f 35A Asoj Bad 2 VS 1833.

⁵³ JSPB No. 9, f 60AB Maha Sud VS 1826.

⁵⁴ JSPB No. 18, f 27B Jeth Sud 2 VS 1834.

⁵⁵ JSPB No. 18, f 22A Maha Bad 10 VS 1834; JSPB No. 22, f 44A Jeth Sud 4 VS 1836.

⁵⁶ JSPB No. 18, f 27B Jeth Sud 15 VS 1834.

physical manifestation of social coherence. This coherence was furthered by property transactions that promoted patterns of social segregation.

The Nature of Property Transactions

Property transactions in Nagaur took several forms: sale, mortgage, rental, grant, and inheritance. The operation of these modes of exchange show that property rights in land, homes, and shops in the city were treated as individually vested rights. Transactions could cover a whole property or a portion of the property, regardless of whether the property was owned by a single person or multiple people. While much of the administrative language of petitions and *samads* in Marwar relied heavily on Persianate terms, property rights and transactions were discussed and recorded largely with the Marwari terms glossed here.⁵⁷ The purchase of property (*mol lena*) was the subject of relatively few complaints. Sales between two parties generally did not appear to have involved any sort of financing or installment payments. Deeds or state-recognized possession of land (*taliko*) was secured from the Kotwali Chauntara for the payment of a fee.

In mortgages (*adano* and related forms of lending called *bhoglawa* and *gaibana*), the mortgager received money from the mortgagee while retaining the deed to the property. The mortgagee had rights to benefit from the property, including to occupy the property, rent it to someone else and collect the rent, or to further mortgage the property to another person. Mortgages could also be sold or inherited. Rent (*bhado*) could be charged for homes, shops, and markets. The court (*darbar*) granted residential property to the higher ranking state officials appointed to administrative posts in Nagaur. These homes were given from the state-owned crown-lands (*khalisa*) in Nagaur. Properties were also handed down through inheritance. Typically, inherited properties were divided between the children of the deceased. Property was divided between not only male heirs but also female heirs. Wives and daughters had claims in the property, as did daughters-in-law if their husbands were deceased. Inherited properties were divided into portions (*panti*) between heirs. Sometimes, one heir would buy out his coparceners. If a person had no children, he or she might adopt another member of their caste group or clan and designate the adoptee as their heir. The person adopted could be an adult at the time of adoption. If someone died without any designated heir, the crown claimed the property unless there were mortgagees or moneylenders with outstanding claims on the property.

The Marwar court paid close attention to property transactions. Taxes were charged on property transfers, including sale and inheritance. Unclaimed properties reverted to crown property (*khalisa*). The state might sell or rent such properties, including houses, shops and empty lands, grant them as residences to state administrators, or give them to local religious figures for the purpose of building a temple. To track these properties, the state conducted surveys of Nagaur identifying the current inventory of *khalisa* property. In 1765, the court asked for a record of how many *khalisa* houses, *havelis*, and large open halls (*nobaras*) there were in Nagaur, to whom such properties were granted and how many were empty, and who collected rent on *khalisa* properties.⁵⁸ Six years later, they undertook another such inventory.⁵⁹ Occasionally, the court granted lands to appointees that were already occupied. In these cases, the court arranged a different property for the grantee or it arranged a different residence for the occupant so that the property could go to the grantee. The

⁵⁷ For an introduction to the legal terms commonly used in Persian documents regarding property transactions, see Grewal, *In the By-lanes of History*, 33-39.

⁵⁸ JSPB No. 3, f 31B-32A Baisakh Bad 13 VS 1822.

⁵⁹ JSPB No. 11, f 77A Savan Bad 9 and 10 VS 1828.

crown could also repossess lands for various construction projects, in which case the current occupants were compensated with plots of land elsewhere in the city.

Because very few sale deeds survive for Nagaur or elsewhere in Rajasthan in the eighteenth century, my discussion of property transactions is based on petitions regarding such transactions rather than actual transaction documents. Deeds of sale (*bainamas*) and other official records of property transactions gave precise measurements of the size of land in question, its sale price, and the precise location and demarcations of the boundaries of land, but such documents are rare to come by in the archives.⁶⁰ The *Sanad Parwana Bahi* records often leave out much of this information regarding property, even though it was likely included in the original petitions submitted by plaintiffs. However, a small number of the *Sanad Parwana Bahi* records do contain some of this data, on the basis of which it is possible to draw a general sketch of the size and value of property in Nagaur.

The limited available data on the prices and measurements of properties suggests that both price and size varied by location and property type. Residential properties were often between twenty-one and thirty-six square *gaz*.⁶¹ Smaller plots of land that measured only three or four *gaz* square could be bought, particularly if they lay adjacent to existing properties.⁶² *Noharas*, larger pieces of land with halls used for caste gatherings or stable-like structures for animals, ranged from 170 to 363 square *gaz*. These lands were much larger than residential properties, being at least double the size and often seven to twelve times larger.⁶³ Elite houses belonging to merchant-bankers were also often on larger pieces of property, such as two houses located on 170 square *gaz*, though some artisans also had properties as large as 50 or 120 square *gaz*.⁶⁴ In addition to the range of sizes, pricing was also variable, suggesting a diversified property market: a *julaha* (weaver) bought nine square *gaz* for seven rupees, or about 0.78 rupees per *gaz*, while an Asopa (a *mahajan* merchant subcaste) bought 24 square *gaz* for 3.8 rupees per square *gaz*, and court suggested he should have paid 4.2 rupees per *gaz*.⁶⁵ A *bhagat* (Hindu religious devotee) who had bought 49 square *gaz* outside the city for about 0.82 rupees per *gaz* reported that subsequently nearby landowners were demanding 1.5 rupees per *gaz* or even 2 rupees per *gaz*.⁶⁶

There are three broad characteristics of the property-related petitions that Nagaur residents brought to the Marwar court in the 1760s and 1770s. One of the most noticeable aspects is the sheer diversity of communities bringing petitions. About 144 distinct caste, sub-caste, and occupational identities were used to describe the main plaintiff in complaints or the main recipient of property grants. An additional thirty-three such identities are referenced as the subjects of other's complaints. These petitioners included a wide range of artisan groups, though the largest numbers of petitions came from merchants, moneylenders, and religious elites. This shows that property was owned by

⁶⁰ See Grewal, *In the By-lanes of History* for a discussion of one collection of sale deeds and other property records, and selected examples of these documents including summaries and translations.

⁶¹ The length of a *gaz* (Rajasthani *gaj*) is a little under one yard. In the early Mughal period, it was about 30 inches, but in the seventeenth century an imperial *gaz* measured 33 inches long. It is unclear precisely how long the Marwari *gaj* was, though it was probably a similar measure. For more details on land measurements in the Mughal Empire, see Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India 1556-1707* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press 1963, 3rd edition 2014), 406-419.

⁶² JSPB No. 20, f 48AB Baisakh Bad 4 VS 1835.

⁶³ JSPB No. 20, f 41AB Kati Sud 2 VS 1835; JSPB No. 19, f 53B Baisakh Sud 9 VS 1834.

⁶⁴ JSPB No. 13, f 82A Maha Bad 2 VS 1830; JSPB No. 20, f 48AB Baisakh Bad 4 VS 1835.

⁶⁵ JSPB No. 20, f 48AB Baisakh Bad 4 VS 1835; JSPB No. 12, f 60A Baisakh Sud 13 VS 1829.

⁶⁶ JSPB No. 20, f 41A Kati Bad 10 VS 1835.

most communities living in the city. Among artisan groups, some were far more active in making and pursuing complaints about property, which indicates the variation in economic and social standing across these groups. Very few petitions emerge concerning certain artisan communities, such as leatherworkers, potters, common cloth printers, and dyers. More elite artisan groups, such as indigo-dyers and goldsmiths, pursued a larger number of petitions because they likely had more resources alongside greater social and economic aspirations that brought them into conflict with the upper caste groups.

A second key aspect is the prominence of women in these complaints. Women brought petitions, claimed property, designated heirs, and adopted heirs when they had no surviving descendants. Smaller numbers of women had entered into property transactions outside of kin networks, such as mortgages. Out of 474 petitions concerning property, ninety, almost one fifth of the total, involved the claims and interests of women or property that had been owned or mortgaged by women. These women came from across the spectrum of social communities in Nagaur, with particularly large numbers from merchant-banking groups, and included both Hindu and Muslim women. Some women sustained property disputes with other women, often those who had married into the family. However, most commonly women were engaged in defending rights to property or shares in property from male relatives, suggesting a certain fragility to women's claims which might be overridden by men with more economic power. Nevertheless, when these women brought complaints to the court, their claims were regularly upheld in the courts.

Lastly, disputes over property that were brought to the court occurred most commonly between two or more members of the same caste or occupational group. Among other things, this indicates a preference to conduct property transactions within one's closest community. This is certainly to be expected in cases of inheritance but is also found in cases of sale, mortgage, and the formation of partnerships to own both houses and shops. The second highest number of property disputes occurred between two closely affiliated groups, such as disputes between two sub-castes of Oswal Jains. Transactions between people of communities with widely varying status were far more infrequent. Even renting one's property to a member of another community was potentially objectionable.⁶⁷ The social proximity of both parties in these disputes indicates that in all likelihood, most property transactions, whether disputed or not, happened between people in the same or similar communities. Therefore, patterns of property exchange worked to reinforce caste identities and neighborhood segregation by concentrating homes in particular areas in the hands of particular groups.

Mortgages and Moneylenders

Families in eighteenth-century Nagaur commonly mortgaged their property. Mortgages were not just financial transactions but also carried social meanings that reinforced ideas about community identity and boundaries. Mortgages derived their social power from two main aspects. First, many individuals relied on the ability to mortgage property to pay for life-cycle social functions related to marriages and deaths. These functions brought the caste community together, so mortgages were closely tied to the production of social capital. Second, mortgages, unlike many other forms of property transaction, formed lasting relationships between the family who mortgaged their property and the family who held the mortgage. Mortgage debts were inheritable, so the

⁶⁷ For instance, a Saiyid objected to a Luhar renting and occupying the Saiyid's shop. JSPB No. 14, f 38A Bhadva Sud 4 VS 1831.

relationship between the two parties often spanned several generations. The person who loaned money through a mortgage had rights to further transact the property through renting or occupying the property, or by selling the mortgage note to another party. In the face of complex social relations and internalized ideas about proper behavior, this meant that mortgages involved an extensive amount of social trust between parties. Moneylending and mortgages were not just about who had capital to loan. Rather, social status also determined who could invest in a property through a mortgage.⁶⁸

Even if many of the buildings tended to be of impermanent materials, such as mud and thatch, land and houses represented a substantial investment of capital in early modern Rajasthan, and thus they were also an important financial resource. In Marwar in the mid-eighteenth century urban artisan communities earned about two to seven rupees per month, with possible additional payments in kind.⁶⁹ Property prices were typically between one hundred and four hundred rupees for a piece of land one could live on, in addition to taxes and fees for deeds.⁷⁰ Even for well-paid artisans, these prices represented anywhere from fifteen months to almost five years of their earnings, so property represented a large concentration of financial resources. This meant that Nagaur residents who owned property frequently mortgaged it when they needed cash. Mortgages varied in amount. On the low end was the mortgage a *bhagat* took out for eight rupees.⁷¹ Well-to-do groups had more valuable property and could contract larger sums in mortgage. For instance, a *sunar* (goldsmith) had a mortgage of one hundred rupees on his *haveli*, which he testified was worth one thousand rupees.⁷² The terms of repayment also varied. Interest was often between ten and thirty percent.⁷³ In some cases, such as the *bhagat's* mortgage for eight rupees, the person who took out the mortgage had to pay back double the amount of the mortgage to reclaim their property.⁷⁴

Mortgaging land was appealing because it was a way to quickly raise cash while maintaining ownership of the property. This was particularly crucial for life-cycle events such as weddings and deaths when individuals were expected to host large feasts (*jiman*) to commemorate the event. Across all caste groups in medieval Rajasthan, on the eleventh or twelfth day after someone died, their family was expected by custom to host a death-feast (*kharach*, *karaj*) for the entire caste community as well as the Brahmins. At royal *kharach* feasts, tens of thousands of rupees might be spent.⁷⁵ While commoners would spend much smaller sums, these rituals were still very expensive compared to their incomes. The state supported expenditure on such functions for those in its service through donations, special privileges, or advances on salary, but many people relied on

⁶⁸ Aside from mortgages, the only option for most people was borrowing money from a merchant-banker. Nagaur in the 1760s and 1770s was home to a large banking and moneylending class consisting largely of upper class Hindus and Jains. These groups lent money to each other, to other residents of the city, and to Marwar state. Loans to an individual were often under 200 rupees, but loans to the state or other merchants could run into the thousands or even tens of thousands of rupees. For instance, Mojiram had borrowed 200 rupees from a *saraj* (Shroff). JSPB No. 1 f 36AB Asoj Bad 5 VS 1821. A *sunar* (goldsmith) had a debt of 175 rupees to another *sunar*. JSPB No. 8, f 70B Jeth Sud 5 VS 1825. A merchant owed 7,600 rupees to *bobra*. JSPB No. 14, f 44B-45A Jeth Bad 14 VS 1831. Merchant-bankers in Nagaur also helped transfer large sums of money. A *Hundi* (bill of exchange) of over 20,000 rupees was cashed. JSPB No. 10, f 74B Chait Sud 12 VS 1827.

⁶⁹ Sahai, 195.

⁷⁰ For example, a Khandelwal sold a house for 225 rupees. JSPB No. 9, f 58B-59A Magsar Sud 9 VS 1826.

⁷¹ JSPB No. 22, f 43B Baisakh Bad 14 VS 1836.

⁷² JSPB No. 11, f 77A Savan Sud 1 VS 1828.

⁷³ G.N. Sharma, 340.

⁷⁴ JSPB No. 22, f 43B Baisakh Bad 14 VS 1836.

⁷⁵ G.N. Sharma, 126. In 1758, the feast after the death of Maharao Ajit Singh of Kota cost 62,944 rupees.

property mortgages to cover these expenses.⁷⁶ For instance, a Khandelwal in Nagaur mortgaged his family's house for 251 rupees to pay for his mother's *keharach*.⁷⁷ Spending these large sums on life-cycle rituals was a necessary part of maintaining one's status and honor within the caste community and the ritual feasts reaffirmed community membership.

People in Nagaur typically contracted mortgages of their property either within their community or with a moneylender. The former consolidated resources within the community, while the latter could preserve one's prestige in the community. Mortgages were more likely to be contracted between two members of the same community than other forms of loans. Merchant-banking groups often contracted mortgages within their particular sub-castes, such as when a Surana woman mortgaged her market (*hat*) to another Surana, but they also mortgaged more broadly within the *mahajan* community.⁷⁸ Artisan classes took out loans with moneylenders, but through mortgages, they also loaned money within their own communities.⁷⁹ Mortgaging within one's own community circumvented the moneylender and kept property investments within the community. Yet the complex ties of mortgaging to ideas of social honor could also push individuals to prefer taking on debts with merchant-bankers and moneylenders. Mortgages and loans were taken out to support the caste functions described above. One's ability to procure sufficient funds signaled prestige and honor within the caste community. If one did not have enough money, taking a loan from another member of the caste group might signal one's lower status within the group. As a result, in nineteenth century western India, peasant castes preferred getting loans from professional moneylenders (*baniyas*) rather than from the fellow members of their caste community.⁸⁰ It is possible that Nagaur residents in the eighteenth century felt similar pressures.

In any property transaction that involved multiple people maintaining a stake in the property, whether through mortgage, inheritance, or investment partnerships, all parties involved had to trust that the other parties would abide by *wajabi* ideals of proper behavior regarding any further transactions of the property. It was safest, morally, to transact property within one's own community because there would be fewer possible objections related to social status. The complex interaction between inheritance, mortgages, and investments sometimes tested the boundaries of this social trust. When people inherited a property, each heir was understood to have a right to a portion of the property. The property might remain as a physical whole or the heirs might split it by building a wall. Regardless of whether the property was physically split or not, each heir had rights to sell, mortgage, or rent their portion of the property. Likewise, when two or more individuals invested in property together (*sir*) or held a mortgage, they could transfer their portion of the investment to a different party.⁸¹ Most of these transactions followed ideas about social hierarchies, with transfers of mortgages and the rent of properties made to someone considered to be equal or higher on these hierarchies. However, if the moneylender or investment partners broke these ideals,

⁷⁶ The court gave salary advances, of two to twelve months' pay, to many of its servants. These advances were given for *keharach* when the person's father died and for the marriages of the person themselves, their son or daughter, or more rarely other relatives. There are hundreds of entries ordering these advances in the JSPB. For a representative sample of these salary advances, see JSPB No. 12, f 11B Bhadwa Bad 13 VS 1829.

⁷⁷ JSPB No. 20, f 50B-51A Jeth Sud 4 VS 1835. G.N. Sharma mentions an instance of Rajasthani woman who mortgaged her house for 70 rupees to pay for the *keharach* of her husband. 126.

⁷⁸ JSPB No. 20, f 40B Asoj Sud 12 VS 1835; JSPB No. 22, f 12A Phagun Sud 1 VS 1836

⁷⁹ For example, *lubars* mortgaged their property to each other. JSPB No. 6, f 46B Asoj Sud 2 VS 1824.

⁸⁰ David Hardiman, *Feeding the Baniya: Peasants and Usurers in Western India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), 104-5.

⁸¹ For example, a *boda* who held a mortgage in a *lodha's* house sold the mortgage deed to a *bobra*. JSPB No. 22, f 44B(2) Asadh Sud 11 VS 1836.

it caused moral injury and the property owner sought redress. In one case, two Brahmins had an investment partnership in a piece of land. However, one of them, Maharam, transferred his portion of the investment to Sirimali Naga to pay off a loan that Maharam had taken on another house. The Sirimali then sold his portion of the partnership to a member of the Muslim artisan stone-cutting *silawat* community. This meant that the *silawat* now owned the property investment in partnership with a Brahmin. Because of the considerable difference in social status between the two parties, the Brahmin found this situation untenable. He approached the court, where he entered his objection, asking how it was possible that he and a *silawat* should hold a property together. The court gave the Brahmin the option to buy out the *silawat's* portion.⁸² In this way, notions of honor and status placed restrictions on who could make property investments regardless of their economic resources.

Ancestral Homes

Community boundaries in neighborhoods were further maintained by active use of inheritance laws and special rights conferred on families who lived in the same property across multiple generations. Disputes over property ownership were frequently shaped by claims to property through the ties of ancestry. In inheritance cases, this meant using the wider ties of family to retain property within a community when a person died without children. Long-term residence was also recognized by a special legal category known as *bapoti* or ancestral property. Ancestral homes were often a testament to the long-term residence of a family or community in a specific place. The claim to an ancestral home could also be used strategically to limit who could live somewhere. It was a powerful language of custom that could frame objections to new residents and was a claim typically received sympathetically by the court. *Bapoti* land raises questions about the permanence and mobility of urban populations. Paradoxically, it testifies to both simultaneously as a claim to long-term residence and the right of possession it granted even if the current generation left the city for years at a stretch.

Ancestry and an individual's tie to a wider clan or community were invoked to maintain property resources within the community when someone died without descendants or a designated heir. If there was no designated heir, the court administrators typically reclaimed any land belonging to the deceased as *khalisa*. The court could then sell or grant the land to another party at will. This process reduced the financial and physical resources of the community of the deceased. It also raised the possibility that the court would transfer the land to someone outside their community who might cause trouble in the neighborhood. In order to foreclose such possibilities, communities made every effort to claim inheritance rights to properties by presenting their claim and paying a fee of about five rupees to secure *varasi* or inheritor status. Individuals and communities actively monitored the filing of *varasi* claims. In one case, an Ojha, a member of a Brahmin sub-caste, complained that a *julaha* Muslim weaver was making inheritance claims to a *nobara* that had been in the Ojha's possession for over twenty years.⁸³ He sought and received a ruling from the court declaring the *julaha's* claim to be false.

Communities also turned to corporate inheritance and distant family ties to claim land. Sometimes the court would recognize the right of the *kabila* (tribe, clan) or *bhaiband* (brotherhood) to inherit property in common from a community member. In a case in the *khatri* community, when

⁸² JSPB No. 18, f 23B-24A Chait Bad 14 VS 1834, f 27B Jeth Sud 15 VS 1834. After selling his portion, Sirimali Naga went on pilgrimage.

⁸³ JSPB No. 19, f 52B Chait Bad 2 VS 1834.

a daughter's right to her father's house was challenged, the panchayat ruled that if the daughter did not claim the house, it would become the property of the *kabila* in general, which had ten to twelve houses in their possession.⁸⁴ Other times, individual claimants came forward, providing evidence that they were the 'fifth generation' or 'sixth generation' brother of the deceased, meaning that if their family line was traced back to five or six generations, they and the deceased had a common ancestor.⁸⁵ This sort of case was made by all segments of society. In one instance, Nai Khuspal petitioned that his fourth generation *kabila-bhaibandh* relative Nai Diparadha had died without child, and that Khuspal had the sole inheritance rights. Yet, despite the fact that Khuspal paid five rupees to secure these rights in 1754, the Chauntara administrators in Nagaur threatened to make the property *khalisa*. Khuspal took his case to the court in Jodhpur to prevent the property from being reclaimed by the state by proving that he already had been designated the rightful heir to the property.⁸⁶

In settling property disputes, claims to ancestral occupation of a particular property were particularly effective. *Bapoti* or ancestral property was a property right derived from the long-term residence of a family over multiple generations on a particular piece of land and gave permanent rights to occupy the land.⁸⁷ Many plaintiffs in mid-eighteenth-century Nagaur claimed to have owned their property for several generations, or for a span of one hundred years or more; some even presented deeds from the late sixteenth century.⁸⁸ Petitioners in Nagaur in the 1760s and the 1770s readily invoked the claim to *bapoti* land and the court was generally sympathetic to this claim. For instance, on the basis of a claim to *bapoti* house, Surana Chenaram settled a longstanding property dispute with Josi Ghesu and claimed the property.⁸⁹

In most cases, it appears that the people claiming *bapoti* property really did have longstanding connections to the land in question. Yet, it is also possible that such rights were assumed by various groups who had not actually resided on the land for generations. When the British sought to stabilize land rights in western India in the nineteenth century, many people in Maharashtra who asserted *mirasi* rights to agricultural land on the basis of long-term occupation of the land were later found to be recent migrants.⁹⁰ In Nagaur, also, there were fraudulent claims to *bapoti* land in some instances. When Ghosi Lala's neighbor had a document drawn up about his own land, it attributed Lala's property to another man, Hema Mohal. Therefore, Lala approached the court to claim his land and testified that it was his ancestral property, not Mohal's. Mohal's son happened to be nearby so the court questioned him and he confirmed to the court that his ancestral property was in a different place. To confirm this testimony, the court ordered an inquiry from Lala's knowledgeable Ghosi neighbors about ancestral properties and an inspection of any available documents. If this

⁸⁴ JSPB No. 14, f 45AB Jeth Sud 4 VS 1831.

⁸⁵ JSPB No. 22, f 6B Kati Bad 8 VS 1836. Communities and individuals carefully tracked these sorts of ties as they could play a key role in determining a variety of relationships, including eligible marriage partners. For marriage purposes in many communities, relationships within seven generations were considered all of the same family and ineligible for marriage.

⁸⁶ JSPB No. 15, f 74A Asadh Sud 14 VS 1832.

⁸⁷ Peasants in Rajasthan claimed a *bapota* right to fields after 101 years of cultivation or land-use. Hardiman, 92-3

⁸⁸ JSPB No. 20, f 41AB Kati Sud 2 VS 1835 references a document from VS 1650 (c. 1593 CE); JSPB No. 20, f 38B Savan Sud 7 VS 1835 from VS 1685 (c. 1628 CE), and JSPB No. 13, f 76B-77A Asoj Bad 1 VS 1830 deed from VS 1656 (c. 1599 CE).

⁸⁹ JSPB No. 5, f 76B Bhadwa Bad 9 VS 1823. Josi Ghesu was granted a different house by the court.

⁹⁰ Hardiman, 94.

further evidence supported Lala's claim, the property would be recorded as his.⁹¹ Although the Marwar court did keep records of deeds, many *bapoti* properties did not have these records, so testimony from neighbors and community members was necessary to confirm whether the property was actually *bapoti*.

A claim to *bapoti* land or houses was a particularly powerful claim because it gave a right to return to and occupy the property even if one had left the land years earlier.⁹² For instance, a *sipahi* (soldier) family, who had moved to Jaipur, maintained a claim to property in Nagaur through their successful claim to *bapoti* status. In the first record regarding this extended and complicated case, two sisters-in-law, the wives of Sipahi Hayat and Umar, petitioned the court in 1773 and stated that a house in Bajarvada became their ancestor's property in 1599. Because women became representative of the family they married into, the two sisters-in-law could speak of their married home as their ancestral home and the purchaser of the home in 1599 as their ancestor despite a lack of blood relation to them. According to their petition, the Sipahi family later mortgaged the house for fifty rupees to Sorgar (gunpowder manufacturer) Latif in 1720 and the Sipahi family went to Jaipur. At an unspecified date, Latif, who held the mortgaged property, transferred it to Luhar (ironsmith) Rehman. Around 1773, Rehman had sought a deed of ownership for the property. Rehman's residence in the property was not a problem for the Sipahi family but his attempt to acquire a deed led to objections.

In framing the core of their complaint, the women asked the court, "How could a Luhar have the deed of our ancestral home written (in his name)?"⁹³ This statement points to community boundaries. The women articulated different standards for who could occupy the property versus who could claim to own the property. All of the parties involved in this case were Muslims, which may have shaped the Sipahis' and Sorgar's decisions to make property transactions such as mortgages. But a shared religious identity did not override the differences between their occupation identities that functioned like caste groups. Rehman's status as a *luhar* was the biggest objection that the women raised in their petition. Based on the women's rhetorical question, it would have been less objectionable to deed the land to another *sipahi*. This interpretation is supported by the preponderance of records of land being transacted within the *bhaibandh* and caste boundaries. There were concerted efforts to keep land within the same caste group even if not within the same family.

The community boundaries that the Sipahi family drew through their case centered on ownership of property, not use. This was emphasized when four months later, the same family, this time through Hayat's son Ghisai, registered another complaint. Ghisai declared that the mortgage receipt was with him, and on the basis of this further proof, the court was ready to acknowledge that the land belonged to him and his family. Documentary proof solidified the earlier oral testimony of the women. But another matter had cropped up: Luhar Rehman had built two houses on the property and there was the question of who had to pay the taxes on these constructions. Ultimately, Ghisai and his family were held responsible for these taxes.⁹⁴ Although they had objected to Rehman's attempts to get a deed, they took less issue with him building on the land. It was the property, not the buildings, which had been in the family for generations. Even after 53 years of absence, the property was still considered to be an integral part of the family, but buildings on the

⁹¹ JSPB No. 18, f 28B Asadh Sud 7 VS 1834.

⁹² Hardiman, 93.

⁹³ "su mbarai *bapoti ghar ro luhar taliko kisai lekhai karawai*" JSPB No. 13, f 76B-77A Asoj Bad 1 VS 1830.

⁹⁴ JSPB No. 13, f 84A Maha Sud 14 VS 1830. The Sipahi family is identified here as Turke *darzi* (Muslim Tailor).

land, which were probably of the mud and thatch construction that formed the bulk of houses and shops in Nagaur, were a more temporary feature.

The Sipahi family's experience of having their land usurped in their absence but successfully reclaiming it through *bapoti* rights was not an isolated occurrence. When Mali Svaichand moved somewhere outside of Marwar, a *bobra* occupied his house in Nagaur without permission. By presenting proof to the court that the house was his *bapoti*, Svaichand got his house back when he returned to Nagaur twenty years later.⁹⁵ Mahajan Jaikisan and his sons laid claim to a *bapoti* house, as well as a shop (*bat*) in the market but had to prove their claims multiple times over the years. In 1730, while the family was living outside of the bounds of Marwar (*pardes*), the court claimed the property as *khalisa*. A petition lodged in 1749 had re-secured the family's claim to the property and Jaikisan had lived there for a time. But in 1754, he and his sons went to Bikaner. Shortly thereafter, their tenants left because of the siege of Nagaur and the state tried again to make the property part of the *khalisa*.⁹⁶ Jaikisan and his family once more were able to prevent this from happening by proving that the property was their *bapoti*. Although the *bapoti* claim was typically effective in court, these petitioners still had to make constant efforts to keep the property within their family's control.

Claims to *bapoti* property sometimes were made collectively, in which case these claims functioned as a claim to an entire neighborhood. In 1777, the whole *ghosi* community in Nagaur approached the court because they were being hassled to procure deeds for homes and animal enclosures they had held for generations. They challenged the need of the local administration to create deeds for ancestral property.⁹⁷ This petition was fundamentally about the refusal of *ghosis* to pay the tax to have a deed written, but it also demonstrated a collective claim to the land as the area of the *ghosis*. The claim to *bapoti* constructed close ties between property, family, and community.

The Siege of Nagaur and the Remaking of Khatripura

Property ownership and residential patterns in Nagaur were disrupted in the middle of the eighteenth century by warfare. Nagaur came under a lengthy siege as a result of a succession dispute. When Vijai Singh ascended to the Marwar throne after his father Bakht Singh's death in 1752, his right to rule was immediately challenged by his cousin, Ram Singh. In 1753, Ram Singh secured the support of Maratha general Jayappa Shinde for his cause. The following year, in September of 1754, Ram Singh and the Marathas clashed with Vijai Singh's forces near Merta. Vijai Singh suffered a defeat with heavy casualties and retreated to Nagaur. Ram Singh and the Marathas pursued Vijai Singh and laid siege to Nagaur in the end of October 1754. Although Jayappa Shinde, the Maratha general who was leading the campaign, was murdered in the summer of 1755, the siege held until mid-November 1755, leading to great distress for Nagaur's residents. The almost thirteen-month long siege cut off trade and provisions to the city. Some reports suggest that the Marathas cut off the hands and noses of people attempting to bring supplies into the city. Others indicate that Marwar in general was experiencing a famine in 1755 that exacerbated conditions in the city. Between 1755 and 1756, there were famine conditions in Bikaner, the kingdom bordering the district (*pargana*) of Nagaur to the north. This means that Nagaur likely continued to experience food

⁹⁵ JSPB No. 20, f 52A Asadh Sud 1 VS 1835.

⁹⁶ JSPB No. 22, f 41A Baisakh Bad 11 VS 1836.

⁹⁷ JSPB No. 18, f 26A Baisakh Sud 1 VS 1834.

shortages in the year after the siege was lifted. In fact, some sources indicate that this famine forced the Marathas to lift their siege and agree to a treaty.⁹⁸

The events of 1754 and 1755 reshaped Nagaur's society. The siege and its aftermath surely caused many in Nagaur to leave the city, although precise statistics are not available. The petition records from 1764 to 1779 contain many accounts of migration within the Rajasthan region to places such as Jodhpur, Bikaner, Jaipur, Mewar, and to the nearby region of Malwa undertaken between 1754 and 1756. Some petitioners who returned to Nagaur years later and were seeking to reclaim property explicitly stated that they left the city because of the siege. Merchants lost investments in shops, and tenants left the homes they rented, which in some cases simply ended the flow of revenue to the owners but in other instances led to squatters taking over abandoned houses. In the wake of such out-migration, the city's administrators registered vacant properties as crown lands and granted or sold them to both long-time residents and new migrants who began to move to the city as the economic and political situation in Nagaur and, more generally, Marwar stabilized in the 1760s and 1770s.⁹⁹ This moment of repopulation and new immigration as Nagaur regained security and prosperity laid the foundation for conflicts over property rights and the shape of neighborhoods.

The role of the siege, economic distress, and the subsequent regrowth of the city figure prominently in the account of the *julahas* with which I began this chapter. In that case, five *julahas* claimed ancestral property in Khatripora when they returned to Nagaur in 1773 after migrating to Jodhpur because of the siege. Further petitions filled out and complicated their complaints. The year before, a related investigation had been launched into *julaha* properties in Khatripora prompted by complaints from Julaha Shaikh Ali Daud and others. They petitioned that after they had moved to Jodhpur in the wake of siege, administrators had deemed *julaha* lands in Khatripora *khalisa*. Then the *kotwal* had sold the property to another party, likely a *khatris*.¹⁰⁰ The five *julahas* who claimed their *bapoti* houses in Khatripora were upset that those houses were being sold by the *kotwal* to *khatris*. The local officials' sales of houses in Khatripora to *khatris* under favorable conditions expanded *khatris* influence and property ownership in the neighborhood as well as helped exclude the *julahas* and other non-*khatris*.

The *khatris*' main objection to the *julahas* owning property in the neighborhood was framed in terms of religion. The *khatris* were a Hindu merchant group; *julahas* were Muslim weavers. Local officials, implicitly supported by the *Khatris*, argued that it was not tolerable to have Hindus and Muslims living together in the neighborhood. As a neighborhood, Khatripora did have a prominent Hindu religious character that had increased with time. In 1764, the court had granted 150 *gaz* of land to a *bhagat* to build a Vaishnav Thakurji Sri Kanhiyalal-ji temple in the neighborhood.¹⁰¹ Fourteen years later, the court granted further land to the same *bhagat* to build a kitchen for the

⁹⁸ Hooja, 713-715; Gaurishankar Heerachand Ojha, *Jodhpur Rajya ka Itibas* 2nd rev. ed. (1936; Jodhpur: Maharaja Mansingh Pustak Prakash, 2010), 2:142-147; B. N. Reu, *Marwar ka Itibas* (1940; repr., Jodhpur: Maharaja Mansingh Pustak Prakash, 1999), 1:371-375. Reu mentions in a footnote that the siege may have briefly lifted when Jayappa was killed.

⁹⁹ See for instance JSPB No. 11, f 73B Magsar Bad 13 VS 1828; JSPB No. 13, f 76B-77A Asoj Bad 1 VS 1830; JSPB No. 15, f 63B-64A Pos Bad 7 Gur VS 1832; JSPB No. 22, f 6B Kati Bad 8 VS 1836; and JSPB No. 22, f 41A Baisakh Bad 11 VS 1836.

¹⁰⁰ JSPB No. 12, f 59B Chait Sud 14 VS 1829.

¹⁰¹ JSPB No. 1, f 36A Bhadwa Sud 7 VS 1821.

temple to feed religious mendicants.¹⁰² Four temples in Khatripura, more than in any other locality, regularly received money on the holiday celebrations of Ram Navami and Janm Ashtami, and also received daily grants to provide for *kesar prasad*, saffron sweets that were sanctified by the deity and then distributed to worshippers.¹⁰³ The clustering of prominent Hindu temples in Khatripura lends credence to *khatri* claims of it being a Hindu neighborhood and the construction of a new temple suggests that this Hindu identification was an increasing trend.

In contrast, the *julahas* argued that the *khatri*'s objections were unreasonable because Hindus and Muslims had lived together in the neighborhood for generations. The *khatri* assertions that this was exclusively a *khatri* neighborhood ran counter to evidence of other communities living there, such as *khatis*, a group of Hindu carpenters. However, the maharaja's court was not particularly concerned with maintaining or creating caste exclusivity in this neighborhood. In 1777, further petitions regarding residences in Khatripura revealed that the court at some earlier point had relocated *julahas* and *paiks* (Muslim messengers) from Samadhipura to Khatripura, providing the members of the communities with lands in Khatripura to compensate them for their previous land.¹⁰⁴ This relocation was likely because of the siege. In another instance, the court had granted lands in Khatripura near the Delhi Darwaza to *julahas* whose houses in Samadhipura had been destroyed during the siege.¹⁰⁵ These relocations led to confusion around land deeds, with many *julahas* complaining that the local administrators were later unfairly hassling them to pay the deed tax and complaints about the extent of compensation. In the context of these relocations, it is possible that the *khatri* response was provoked by an increased population of *julahas* and others in Khatripura that the *khatri*s perceived as a threat to their neighborhood. The relocation of *julahas* from Samadhipura also questions whether Nagaur's *julahas* had actually been living in a consolidated community neighborhood before the siege. Some *julahas* claimed *bapoti* homes in Khatripura where they and their family resided even prior to the siege; others were relocated there from Samadhipura after the siege. Yet other records refer to *julahas* residing in Bajarvada. Thus, when *khatri*s demanded in 1773 that the five *julahas* go live with others from their community that demand was drawing on a reality that did not exist. Rather, there were several distinct clusters of *julahas*. If anything, the siege had contributed to creating more unity in *julaha* housing patterns because of the *julahas* who were relocated from Samadhipura to Khatripura.¹⁰⁶

In the wake of the Nagaur siege, Khatripura underwent transformations in population and character that challenged its residents' *wajabi* ideals. On the one hand it gained a more intensely Hindu character; on the other hand, relocations supported by the court increased the Muslim population of the neighborhood. This contributed to tensions between the two groups, and provoked efforts on the part of the *khatri*s to reinforce segregation, though such efforts do not appear to have been successful. This limited success in remaking Khatripura for *khatri*s only points again to the ways that segregation was only achieved or maintained through constant effort.

¹⁰² JSPB No. 20, f 39 AB Bhadwa Sud 6 VS 1835 and f 41 A Kati Bad 10 VS 1835.

¹⁰³ These were the temples of Thakurji Sri Girdhar-ji, Thakurji Sri Sitaram-ji, Thakurji Sri Rudnath-ji, and Thakurji Sri Kanhiyalal-ji. JSPB No. 21, f 9B-10A VS 1835; JSPB No. 2, f 36AB Baisakh Bad Purnima VS 1822.

¹⁰⁴ JSPB No. 18, f 26B-27A Jeth Bad 2 VS 1834.

¹⁰⁵ JSPB No. 20, f 48AB Baisakh Bad 4 VS 1835.

¹⁰⁶ *Julahas* were not the only artisan group to appear to have such split residential patterns. For instance, other petitions draw a distinction between *chadhavas* living at Nakhas Darwaza and elsewhere in Nagaur. JSPB No. 16, f 33AB Du. Bhadwa Bad Purnima VS 1833.

Conclusion

The often mixed results of communities' efforts to create segregation speaks to the limited and changing nature of neighborhood segregation. The patterns of who lived where and with whom changed over time, sometimes to the extent that a neighborhood name based on a caste community might no longer describe major populations in the neighborhood. At play in this process was also the tension between the actions of the local administrators in Nagaur and the orders of the maharaja's court. The local administrators more frequently sided with upper-caste petitioners in struggles between groups. The maharaja's court sometimes overturned these decisions and also gave orders, such as moving *julahas* and *paiks* into Khatripura, that went counter to the court's or local officials' previous orders and judgements. Inconsistency in policies and judgements between the city and the kingdom meant that cases could drag on for years as they moved between the two spaces of arbitration. This contributed to the limited successes of communities' initiatives for segregation.

Property transactions in eighteenth-century Marwar were an arena of struggle and conflict between different communities. The terms and outcomes of these struggles were influenced by wider political changes and events. These conflicts and their resolution were also a forum through which communities created and promoted segregation along several principles: family and community membership, status, craft or occupation, and religion. These principles informed the patterns of living together and the lines of separation in and between neighborhoods. Within the large number of property disputes, certain lines, particularly around status and religion, drew petitions and objections rooted in moral arguments claiming the impossibility or intolerability of living together. These moral arguments promoted segregation of communities based on occupational caste and religious identities within the neighborhoods of Nagaur.

Conclusion

This dissertation has shown the capacity of premodern urban centers in Rajasthan for resilience in the face of political and economic change and the interconnections of local society with regional and imperial politics. These features of towns and cities were often promoted by religious institutions which moderated the connections between local urban communities and political elites and contributed to local urban economies through their ability to attract patronage and pilgrims. However, these religious institutions, which included Sufi shrines and Hindu temples, were not a significant cause of social integration between diverse religious and caste communities in cities like Nagaur. Rather, the overall lack of interreligious violence in premodern Rajasthani cities was due to the fact that intercommunity conflict was most likely to occur between groups who were neighbors in status and space. Even between neighboring communities in eighteenth-century Nagaur there were no major outbreaks of violence because social tensions were addressed in frequent minor confrontations and negotiations, and through processes of social and spatial segregation.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Mughal policies and patronage integrated Rajasthani cities into transregional and imperial networks. From the time that Emperor Akbar conquered Rajasthan in the 1560s and early 1570s, the Mughals gave considerable patronage to Sufi shrines in Ajmer and Nagaur alongside their military campaigns in the region. They also made charitable grants to Hindu and Jain religious institutions in Rajasthan. The grants to the Muʿin al-Din *dargah* in Ajmer were particularly generous, and the emperors regularly interfered with the administration of the *dargah*, which contributed to the development of rivalries within the community of religious specialists tending to the shrine. The repeated pilgrimages of the emperors Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb to the *dargah* of Muʿin al-Din over the span of about 120 years and the rhetorical depiction of these pilgrimages in imperial chronicles and albums created a narrative linking the authority of the emperors to that of the shrine. Combined with Ajmer's status as the capital of the province (*subah*) and seat of Mughal administration in Rajasthan, this created a strong and widely recognized association between Ajmer and Mughal power.

In contrast, the Sufi shrines in Nagaur did not receive as much imperial patronage as Muʿin al-Din's shrine in Ajmer in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This was because the city of Nagaur was not as politically central for the Mughals as Ajmer and because Nagaur's shrines were more closely linked to the administration and patronage of prior Sultanates and regional Khanates than those in Ajmer. As a result of the lower levels of patronage, the Nagaur shrines did not develop as elaborate administrative structures as in Ajmer. Nevertheless, the religious specialists of the shrines, known as *pirzadas*, developed sophisticated strategies to attract and retain patronage and improve their position in the city. Through these strategies, the *pirzadas* affiliated with the Sultan al-Tarikin *dargah* successfully gained patronage from both Hindu and Muslim rulers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Particular families within the community of *pirzadas* also used their access to resources from these grants to become part of the local landed elite. In contrast to the Sultan al-Tarikin *dargah* community, the *pirzadas* of the Bare Pir Sahib *dargah* initially found little favor with the Mughals. In fact, they faced repeated problems with Mughal soldiers occupying the shrine and taking over the *sajjada-nishin's* house. By the mid-seventeenth century, however, relations with the Mughals had clearly improved. The attempts by the Bare Pir Sahib *pirzadas* to emphasize the shrine's connection to Sufi saints favored by Dara Shukoh, Emperor Shah Jahan's oldest and favorite son, helped. But after Dara Shukoh's defeat in the 1658 war of succession, the *pirzadas* pivoted to emphasize saints in their lineage who appealed more to the new emperor, Aurangzeb. The *pirzadas'* strategies successfully drew in more grants from the Mughals. But they also reshaped the *pirzada*

community, informing new expressions of identity and creating social networks and boundaries between different individuals.

Mughal investment in Rajasthani shrines began to drop off after Aurangzeb's death in 1707 as Mughal authority receded across the region. In Rajasthan the eighteenth century was a time of turbulent politics and economic reconfiguration, as it was across much of northern India. These changes were not just happening at the elite level but also were impacting local social dynamics in urban centers. They affected the status of local communities and the expression of various corporate identities. Many in local and regional urban centers had sufficient and flexible networks to maintain their position and gain support from changing political leaders but others lost status. The changes in politics and economics also impacted how pluralistic communities managed to live together in towns and cities by changing relatively stable social status dynamics.

In the first half of the eighteenth century, the Rajput maharajas of Marwar and Amber asserted their authority in the face of weakening Mughal rule. When it suited them, the maharajas of both kingdoms continued to recognize the authority of the Mughal emperor, but they also rebelled against the Mughals in order to gain greater concessions from the Mughals. One of their main goals was to extend their territory in Rajasthan. For the rulers of both kingdoms, Ajmer formed a key target of their expansion because of its strategic position and symbolic ties to the Mughals. The Marwar maharajas, especially Ajit Singh, attacked Ajmer repeatedly, defying the Mughals by successfully seizing the city and provoking the Mughals to negotiate. Through these actions, Ajit Singh extracted concessions from the Mughals including his appointment as the *subahdar* (governor) of Ajmer Subah, which was the first time a local Rajput ruler held that post and was given authority over the entire region of Rajasthan. The rulers of Amber also focused on gaining control of Ajmer. But in contrast to Ajit Singh of Marwar's military attacks, Maharaja Jai Singh II of Amber gained authority and influence in Ajmer by becoming a patron of the shrine of Mu'in al-Din. Through his patronage, Jai Singh symbolically stepped into the role of the Mughals and won local favor even before he claimed control of the *subahdari* of Ajmer. His descendants maintained a patronage relationship with the Ajmer *dargah* for at least several generations.

It was not surprising that Jai Singh chose to use similar forms of patronage at the shrine of Mu'in al-Din as his Mughal predecessors. Nor is it surprising that a century earlier, the Mughal emperor Jahangir was patronizing both the Muslim religious specialists at the Ajmer *dargah* and the Hindu Brahmin communities who served pilgrims in Pushkar. In Nagaur as well, the Marwar maharajas became important patrons of both Hindu temples and Muslim shrines. Both Islamic and Hindu theories of ideal kingship emphasized the king's role in ensuring moral order within his territory through the support and protection of religious institutions and religious specialists. In addition to this shared ethic of patronage, Rajputs and Marathas had served in Mughal courts, often for generations, before they began to set up more independent states, and had encountered and practiced shared norms of rule and administration with the Mughals. These shared norms contributed to the continuous use of patronage as a key form of rule across regimes and motivated the Rajputs and Marathas to take over patronage in Ajmer from the Mughals.

Within this overall continuity of patronage, there were also important changes as to which families of religious specialists found favor with royal and imperial patrons. This often had profound impacts on local society and the politics of the religious institutions. Even under the same political lineage there were important changes between successive rulers. The variation in designated recipients of Mughal patronage in Ajmer and the Mughal's direct interference with the administration of the Mu'in al-Din shrine contributed to the development of long-term rivalries between the shrine's *khadims* (attendants) and the *diman* (spiritual head). In Pushkar, the political rivalries of the Marwar and Amber kingdoms in the eighteenth century became embodied in the rivalry and disputes between the Brahmins of Bari Basti and the Brahmins of Choti Basti, a rivalry

and social rift which has persisted almost to the present day. In Ajmer and Pushkar, though less so in Nagaur, the political transitions of eighteenth century led to a gradual broadening of the base of patrons. This resulted in the emergence of new patrons among the political elite, including patronage from the far off Nizam of Hyderabad and ruler of Arcot. The period also saw the inclusion of merchants and other local elites as patrons. This deepened the transregional importance of these religious institutions and their local ties, and likely increased pilgrimage.

Although there was typically continuity in patronage between political regimes, this transition was not automatic. As seen in the case of the *pirzadas* in Nagaur in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, religious specialists had to seek out reconfirmation of grants and secure new grants by navigating complex overlapping sets of authority and administration. To do so, they needed access to information and political networks. This meant that religious specialists often developed skills in Rajasthani and Persian language and knowledge of both *shari'a* law courts and the justice systems of the Rajput maharajas so that they could make strategic decisions about where to pursue their legal cases and how to secure patronage. They also actively worked to keep abreast of changes in the status and post of political leaders and the movements of armies and officials. Such efforts helped the *pirzadas* maintain much of their patronage, rights, and prestige through the turbulent eighteenth century. However, they did see a gradual decline in their position in the second half of the eighteenth century relative to other religious institutions in Nagaur, especially after Maharaja Vijai Singh began to strongly endorse Vaishnavism in the 1770s.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, regional political changes impacted the social interactions of communities in Nagaur. This was likely the case earlier as well, though we cannot say for certain because the petition records that give us insight into local disputes only survive from 1764 onward. Merchant-banker, or *mahajan*, communities were increasingly powerful in eighteenth-century Nagaur as they were across Rajasthan because of political and economic changes that made them crucial financiers for the Rajput kingdoms. Because of their rising profile, there were a number of status disputes between the different *mahajan* communities that were expressed in forums such as Holi processions and architecture. Furthermore, using Vaishnav beliefs as justification, some merchant groups in Nagaur pushed for greater segregation in Nagaur's neighborhoods between different *jati* communities and between Hindus and Muslims. They sought the maharaja's support for these initiatives. However, at least in the 1770s, despite the maharaja's endorsement of Vaishnavism through decrees and patronage, his court tended not to endorse the use of corporate religious identities as reasoning in disputes, and often took ambivalent positions toward segregation. In disputes over resources such as water, artisans in Nagaur also approached the maharaja with petitions, which tied local social relations to political changes. Rather than a locally managed commons, water was a site of sovereignty, protected and managed by the involvement of rulers from the emperor Akbar in the sixteenth century, to Maharaja Vijai Singh in the eighteenth century. The artisans who were quarreling over water belonged to majority-Muslim caste communities, yet their alliances in the quarrel were influenced by the maharaja's Vaishnav beliefs about purity and status. Although all of these disputes had intensely local aspects, they also show how local communities were deeply affected by regional and transregional changes because of their integration into political and economic networks.

Alongside the development of Rajput states and the decline of Mughal power, the Marathas were also a key aspect of Rajasthan's political trajectory. From the mid-eighteenth century, the Marathas, especially under the Shinde and Holkar families, intervened in Rajput succession struggles, demanded tribute from Rajput rulers, and acquired territory in Rajasthan. The Marathas had a divergent impact on Rajasthan's cities. Their influence on local communities could be disruptive. Take the case of Nagaur. A succession struggle between Vijai Singh and Ram Singh for the Marwar throne led to the Marathas' thirteen-month siege of Nagaur in 1754-55. During this time, Nagaur's

inhabitants suffered many hardships and deaths. As a result, large numbers of Nagaur's residents to migrate to other parts of Rajasthan or beyond. Even twenty years later, these migrants were still gradually returning to Nagaur and attempting to reclaim their previous property. Through the processes of migration, the Maratha siege had a long-term impact on the population and configuration of neighborhoods in Nagaur, in addition to causing immediate loss of life and livelihood. In contrast, the Maratha presence benefitted Ajmer and Pushkar in the long run. Although the local population certainly suffered in the initial attacks and the Maratha conquest of that area, the Shinde Marathas soon formed an administration that ruled over these areas for most of the second half of the eighteenth century. The Shindes became important and generous patrons of both Ajmer and Pushkar's religious institutions. In fact, the Marathas built many of the principle religious structures that exist currently in Pushkar, such as the Brahma Temple. Furthermore, the Maratha armies that were marching in Rajasthan in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were a source of pilgrims who visited the *ghats* in Pushkar and the shrine of Mu'in al-Din Chishti and whose offerings supported local religious specialists. Thus, religious institutions and religious specialists in both Pushkar and Ajmer benefitted from the Marathas.

In tracing these events, this dissertation engages three major debates in South Asian historiography: 1) the history of Muslim-Hindu interactions in premodern South Asia; 2) the processes of urbanization and the impact of the eighteenth-century political crises on towns and cities; and 3) the nature of custom and everyday practices before colonial rule. The findings of this dissertation support several interventions in these debates. First, it extends the insights of recent scholarship that carefully reads elite religious identities and the practices of religious and community boundaries beyond the elites to show that inter-religious conflict was far less common between non-elites. Second, in examining the role of networks in promoting urban stability and the impact of regional and transregional events on local society, this work highlights the critical role of religious institutions in both processes. Third, it suggests that claims to custom and tradition could be the drivers of change and it draws our attention to the nature of custom as a contested and flexible category in the precolonial period.

A close reading of the practices of religious identity reveals that the relevance of religious identity in premodern Rajasthan was variable and contingent for both elites and non-elites. Hindu Rajput and Maratha leaders actively patronized Muslim religious institutions in Rajasthan, while Muslim Mughal nobles and emperors did the same for Hindu and Jain religious institutions. The rulers clearly supported holy men and religious institutions from outside their own religious tradition, though they favored those within their tradition with greater financial support. These widespread patronage practices contradicted much of the Rajput courtly literary production at the time that emphasized differences and conflicts between Hindus and Muslims. This contrast demonstrates that both ideology and practice must be considered when discussing Hindu-Muslim relations. In local non-elite contexts, corporate religious identity often was less emphasized than caste or occupational identities in people's understanding of their primary community affiliations. This meant that as communities and individuals came into conflict with their neighbors, they rarely understood these conflicts in strictly religious terms. On the rare occasion when residents of Nagaur tried to invoke corporate religious identities to win disputes, the court rejected that framing and focused on individuals rather than religious group identities. However, religious rhetoric and symbolism remained a resource for framing and enacting disputes and petitions. This is seen in the Holi processions that targeted Jain merchants, and when residents of Nagaur sought the replacement of a corrupt *qazi* by appealing to the need to support the Muslim community. The variable uses and meanings of religion in premodern Rajasthan, as elsewhere in the Indian subcontinent, means that scholarship on social relations needs to avoid framing inquiries too

narrowly around religion. Instead, religious identity needs to be studied in the wider context of other social identities and relations, and the processes that shape and invoke those identities.

Regional towns and cities in premodern Rajasthan also need to be studied a wider context because they were not isolated backwaters. Networks of trade, information, and patronage connected local communities and individuals to the political and economic world of northern India. While these connections changed local communities by, for instance, inscribing imperial and regional political conflicts into the rivalries of local communities, they also could be protective, sheltering local communities from economic distress and disruption. This was particularly true if the local communities had diverse networks. Religious institutions were often nodes on these networks and played a central role in connecting Rajasthani towns and cities to a wide range of political and economic actors. In the eighteenth century, in the face of greater political insecurity, religious institutions in Rajasthan developed more diverse and robust networks of patrons, bringing in not only political leaders from a variety of regions, but also soliciting more patronage from merchant elites. Simultaneously, they pursued new institutional structures, such as the practice of *wakilat*, that allowed for closer ties with patrons who were not physically present. Sustaining patronage in this way promoted investment in the local urban economy. All of these efforts drew religious institutions and their communities of specialists into close contact with elites in a variety of regions across the subcontinent. The religious specialists at these shrines and temples typically formed part of the local urban elite who might represent many of the followers of their religion in the town or city. Their connections to the wider world of their patrons therefore also affected the local community more broadly.

Urban populations experienced close connections with regional and imperial politics through their encounters with legal and administrative regimes. In eighteenth-century Marwar most disputes were resolved locally by caste-based *panchayats* and *nyats* comprised of respected community leaders who determined proper behavior. However, people also approached the city's *kacheri* and *kotwali chauntara* courts when an issue could not be resolved by the *panchayat*, or involved people from multiple communities. If the issue was not resolved in the city's courts, plaintiffs brought petitions to the maharaja's court in Jodhpur. Not just the elites or wealthy in cities like Nagaur did this. Artisans and poor people also constantly sought justice from the maharaja. Their petitions typically concerned the division and possession of property, but other issues, ranging from broken wedding engagements to defaulting on loans were addressed. Through these petitions, people sought the intervention of the maharaja's court in local incidents.

The petitioners often were using the courts and legal structures of the Kingdom of Marwar to pursue their own needs, like the religious specialists seeking patronage. Although they had less power than the maharaja and his administrators, they understood the systems of documents, administration, and legal judgements well enough to work through the petition system. They often relied on the element of custom or tradition to attain their goals. Petitioners in Nagaur made copious references to custom in petitions to justify their actions. Yet in many cases, petitions and counter-petitions regarding the same dispute invoked custom to support opposite actions and outcomes. Although it is possible that in these scenarios one party was lying, it is also possible that both sides were strategically using claims to custom not to discuss or verify the past but rather to creatively shape the future. This use of custom could disguise the processes of change by framing new innovations as longstanding traditions. Similarly, the overarching continuity in administrative forms between the Mughals, Rajputs, and Marathas disguised elements of change. Each of these states used similar categories of land classification, revenue collection, and charitable giving. In fact, they often used the same terms for these categories. However, across these different states, the same legal and administrative terms gradually took on new and different meanings. Further research is

needed on the question of change within apparent stable forms in the eighteenth century, whether custom or administration.

This dissertation, which focuses on the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, provides a foundation to reevaluate the impact of colonial rule on Rajasthan's cities and religious institutions in further research. Networks, custom, and religious identity remained important factors in urban social life under nineteenth-century colonial rule. The crucial role of networks and access to maintaining a resilient city is further demonstrated by the divergent paths of Ajmer and Nagaur in the nineteenth century. Although Ajmer was deeply affected by the Anglo-Maratha Wars in the early nineteenth century and experienced a severe decline, it quickly regained its population and became ever more deeply networked to political power across India. In the wake of the 1818 treaty with the Marathas that gave them control of Ajmer, the British administrators of Ajmer sought to repopulate it with merchants. The British decision to hold onto Ajmer and its immediate environs directly, while most of the rest of Rajasthan was divided into the territory of a number of Princely States meant that Ajmer was once again the main administrative center for the region. Over the course of the nineteenth century, British interests in Ajmer meant that the city remained politically and economically well connected to other key regions in India while also being integrated transregionally by rail lines and other infrastructure. At the same time, patrons from across India gave charitably to the Ajmer *dargah* and to the Pushkar temples and ghats. Once rail lines started to serve Ajmer, the number of pilgrims to both Ajmer and Pushkar increased dramatically, which forged a new series of transregional networks of devotees and patrons.

In contrast, Nagaur's population and importance as an urban center declined over the course of the nineteenth century because the city was increasingly cut off from wider networks. By 1883-4, when H. B. W. Garrick, a British official in the Archeological Survey of India, visited Nagaur as part of a tour of western Rajasthan, the population of Nagaur had shrunk compared to the eighteenth century levels. After surveying the city Garrick estimated that half of the area inside the city walls was unoccupied, and one third of the structures were fallen down or dilapidated.⁵⁵⁸ This was a dramatic change from a century earlier when the city had experienced considerable new construction and the addition of new neighborhoods like Navi Virampuri. Garrick wrote that he was one of the first foreigners to visit Nagaur because of its "isolated position" and "distressingly sandy roads."⁵⁵⁹ The shifts in interregional trade networks left Nagaur more isolated because it was no longer a key node or market. In the early nineteenth century, this was in part because of the major shift to trade moving east from the Delhi and Agra region, down the Ganges to Calcutta, rather than coming west through Rajasthan to Surat and other ports on the western coast, as well as the decline in overland trade through Central Asia. This was further compounded when the railways were built. Because Nagaur was no longer considered a strategic site, it was not on the main line connecting Rajasthan to Delhi and other points further east but rather was served by a branch line only that connected it to Jodhpur and Bikaner. Alongside Nagaur's remove from key networks of interregional trade, by the 1880s it was a site of little political interest. Political shifts with the creation of Jodhpur Princely State in 1818 largely stabilized the boundaries and political relations of the former Marwar kingdom. The stabilization of the boundaries of the state and the reduction in armed conflicts between Jodhpur and neighboring Rajput states or other military adversaries after 1818 reduced Nagaur's importance as a military stronghold. The British Agent posted to the Jodhpur court oversaw succession to the throne, which eliminated Nagaur's position as a secondary capital for potential

⁵⁵⁸ H. B. W. Garrick, *Report of a Tour in the Panjab and Rajputana in 1883-84* (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1887), 56.

⁵⁵⁹ Garrick, 48.

rivals for the throne. These changes meant that Nagaur was no longer a major political center that received regular attention and investment from the ruler in Jodhpur.

Religion and custom were often clustered together under British administration in ways that could create change while claiming to preserve prior traditions. Religious institutions became an intensive site of reform for Indian communities because Indians had more control of these institutions than of political institutions under the British. Local residents in Ajmer and reformers from outside the city debated the proper customs and role of the shrine attendants in the Ajmer *dargah*. But the British colonial government in Ajmer also intervened in the administration of the *dargah* of Mu'in al-Din. They attempted to resolve issues they perceived in the Ajmer shrine's management by determining customary usage and attempting to establish immutable custom. Although this gave the British plausible deniability that they were changing practices, in fact this approach often resulted in considerable innovation. For instance, in 1834 they denied the Mughal emperor's claim to interfere with the *dargah* administration because the British declared the emperor's appointment of a *mutawalli* to be "against usage."⁵⁶⁰ However, as this dissertation has shown, Mughal emperors appointed *mutawallis* at the Ajmer *dargah* since the sixteenth century. By the mid-1880s, the Ajmer Commissioner undertook an explicit effort to reform the shrine's administration, with the input of local prominent Muslims.⁵⁶¹ At the heart of this reform effort too, were attempts to determine the 'proper' customs. Most changes in the administration of the *dargah* and other religious institutions in Rajasthan under colonial rule were carried out in the guise of maintaining and upholding custom and tradition. This dissertation offers a foundation for re-evaluating scholarly debates about the British interaction with Indian tradition, and the colonial reinvention of tradition. It provides both a depiction of many customs in the precolonial period on the basis of precolonial records, rather than their depiction afterward by colonial officers, and perhaps more importantly, it provides a basis for understanding the categories of tradition and custom as sites of change and contestation in precolonial Rajasthan.

⁵⁶⁰ Foreign Political Department, Mixed (Cr., Fed and Ex.) A/Foreign Department 1834/Ootacammund Political/ Consultation 24 September/File No. 71, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

⁵⁶¹ Assistant Commissioner's Office, Ajmer, File 1/ 6779/ A(3)9.1, "A note on the Dargah Khwaja Saheb Ajmer," 1888, Rajasthan State Archives, Ajmer.

Glossary

<i>abbishek</i>	a coronation ritual for a Hindu king; consecration or anointment
<i>achhep</i>	an untouchable outcaste in eighteenth-century Marwar
<i>adano</i>	a mortgage
<i>agor</i>	an area of pasturage around a water tank where harvesting plants is restricted
<i>ashrafi</i>	a type of gold coin, worth about 14 silver rupees in the eighteenth century
<i>babi</i>	a register or account book
<i>bainama</i>	a deed of sale
<i>banda</i>	a slave, servant
<i>baniya</i>	a moneylender
<i>baori</i>	a stepwell
<i>bapoti</i>	ancestral; a permanent right to the property occupied by one's ancestors
<i>barana</i>	gate
<i>barakat</i>	spiritual authority of an Islamic holy man or saint
<i>basti</i>	a settlement or neighborhood
<i>begar</i>	unpaid labor, especially as performed compulsorily for a landowner
<i>bhado</i>	rent
<i>bhaiband</i>	a brotherhood
<i>bhakti</i>	devotional Hinduism
<i>bhattarak</i>	a learned Jain monk, also used to refer to a Digambar Jain seat of learning
<i>bigha</i>	a measurement of land equivalent to about 0.59 of an acre
<i>charhana</i>	the act of offering or dedicating gifts to a deity
<i>chhatri</i>	a commemorative pavilion or cenotaph
<i>chilla</i>	a meditation cell for a Sufi ascetic; a 40-day spiritual retreat for meditation
<i>chobbita</i>	a small four-walled structure
<i>chowk</i>	a square or plaza
<i>dandiya</i>	a group dance on holidays using sticks as props
<i>darbar</i>	central administration, court
<i>dargah</i>	here, a tomb-shrine; can also refer to a royal or imperial court
<i>darogha</i>	an inspector
<i>darwaza</i>	gate or door
<i>deg</i>	a cauldron
<i>devalok</i>	kingdom of the gods (Hindu)
<i>dharm</i>	the complex of religious and social obligations which a devout Hindu is required to fulfill; right action; customary observances of community or sect
<i>dharm sabha</i>	a Hindu religious assembly or community reform group

<i>dharmshala</i>	a rest house for Brahmins, religious mendicants or pilgrims; an almshouse
Digambar	the 'sky-clad' Jain sect
<i>din u dunya</i>	the next world and this: faith and earthly power
<i>diman</i>	the spiritual and administrative head of Sufi shrine; the minister of state or chief minister of a royal or imperial court
<i>faqir</i>	a religious mendicant
<i>faqr</i>	devotional poverty
<i>farman</i>	an imperial order
<i>furush</i>	floor coverings or carpets
<i>gaz</i>	a measurement of length, a little shorter than one yard
<i>gehar</i>	a rowdy procession to celebrate Holi, typically organized by a caste group
<i>ghat</i>	set of steps at the edge of a body of water
<i>gul</i>	a rose or flower
<i>hafiz</i>	a Muslim holy man, one who has memorized the Quran
<i>bakim</i>	a governor or judge; a Muslim physician
<i>hat</i>	a market
<i>haveli</i>	a large brick or stone house, typically built around a courtyard
<i>hiba nama</i>	charitable or gift deeds
<i>hundi</i>	a bill of exchange, remittance or certificate of credit
<i>Idgah</i>	a place of community gathering for Eid prayers
<i>ijara</i>	rent, tax-farm
<i>in'am</i>	a grant of rent-free land, often given as a reward or in charity
<i>jagir</i>	an assignment of land revenue in exchange for government service
<i>jagirdar</i>	a holder of a <i>jagir</i>
<i>jali</i>	a carved screen
<i>jama' masjid</i>	a congregational mosque
<i>jati</i>	occupational caste group; community, lineage, position fixed by birth
<i>jharokha</i>	a lattice window, or overhanging enclosed balcony
<i>jiman</i>	a large feast held at life-cycle events, including weddings and deaths
<i>jiv hamsya</i>	violence against living things
<i>kabila</i>	tribe, clan
<i>kacheri</i>	administrative and judicial headquarters of a <i>pargana</i>
<i>kachcha</i>	unripe; of buildings, made of mud and thatch, impermanent
<i>khadim</i>	a servant, used for shrine attendants
<i>khalifa</i>	the designated spiritual heir of a Sufi
<i>khalisa</i>	crown-lands
<i>khamp</i>	a sub-caste group or clan (<i>gotra</i>)
<i>khanaqah</i>	a Sufi lodge
<i>kharach</i>	a feast held by the family of the deceased twelve days after a death
<i>khutba</i>	Friday sermon or address in a mosque
<i>khwaja</i>	an Islamic holy man or saint
<i>kos</i>	a measurement of distance, about two miles long

<i>kos minars</i>	pillars or way posts built at a distance of one kos or about two miles apart
<i>kotwal</i>	a local administrator in charge of taxes and policing
<i>kotwali chauntara</i>	fiscal headquarters that also administers urban affairs and justice
<i>kuwa</i>	a brick-lined well
<i>langar</i>	charitable distribution of food, especially at a Sufi shrine
<i>langarkhana</i>	a kitchen where charitable food is prepared
<i>madad-i ma'ash</i>	a charitable grant of land revenue
<i>majlis</i>	a gathering
<i>malfuzat</i>	words, sayings, proverbs, instructional manuals
<i>mansab</i>	an imperial office
<i>mansabdar</i>	an office-holder or government official
<i>masjid</i>	a mosque
<i>man</i>	a measure of weight, about 40 kilograms or 88 pounds
<i>mela</i>	a fair
<i>mir bakshi</i>	an imperial treasurer
<i>mohar</i>	a gold coin, similar to an <i>ashrafi</i>
<i>mol lena</i>	to purchase property
<i>mu'afi</i>	land held in a charitable grant
<i>mujawir</i>	an attendant of a Sufi shrine
<i>murid</i>	a disciple or student
<i>mutawalli</i>	a shrine administrator or agent, typically appointed by the ruler
<i>nazr</i>	a gift or offering to a superior or to God
<i>nazr u niyaz</i>	presents or offerings; at a shrine, offerings from pilgrims
<i>nobara</i>	a large open hall
<i>nyat</i>	community, a group of the members of one <i>jati</i> including several sub-castes
<i>pakka</i>	ripe; of buildings, permanent, made of stone or brick
<i>panchayat</i>	a group of caste-community elders with authority over intra-caste disputes
<i>panda</i>	a Hindu pilgrimage priest
<i>panghat</i>	steps at a water tank designated for drawing water for human consumption
<i>panti</i>	a portion or part, including of inheritance or property
<i>pardes</i>	abroad; outside of one's home-kingdom
<i>pargana</i>	an administrative and revenue district
<i>parwana</i>	a grant or letter from a government authority
<i>patta</i>	a grant of village revenue rights
<i>peshkash</i>	tribute, a magnificent present to a prince or other dignitary
<i>pir</i>	a holy man or founder or leader of a religious sect
<i>pir-muridi</i>	a discipleship relationship
<i>pirzada</i>	a son or descendant of a <i>pir</i>
<i>pol</i>	a gated neighborhood
<i>prasad</i>	an offering of food blessed by a Hindu deity

<i>puja</i>	Hindu worship
<i>pujari</i>	a temple priest
<i>punya arath</i>	a charitable grant of land made by Hindu rulers, similar to <i>madad-i ma'ash</i>
<i>punya udik</i>	a charitable grant to support religious functions made by Hindu rulers
<i>pura</i>	a suburban neighborhood
<i>purusha</i>	the first man according to the Rig Veda
<i>qaum</i>	a tribe
<i>qasba</i>	a well-inhabited town or small urban center
<i>qazi</i>	Islamic judge
<i>roshanai</i>	a lighting ceremony in a Sufi shrine
rupee	a type of widely-used silver coin
<i>sadr al-sudur</i>	a government official in charge of religious grants
<i>sajjada-nishin</i>	a spiritual head of a shrine; literally: sitting upon the carpet
<i>sajjadagi</i>	the post of the <i>sajjada-nishin</i>
<i>sal</i>	an open hall
<i>sama'</i>	a musical assembly, ritual music gathering, ecstasy induced by music
<i>samadhi</i>	the cremation place of a Hindu saint or guru
<i>sampradaya</i>	an order or lineage of Hindu devotees in the Bhakti tradition
<i>sanad</i>	a royal deed or order
<i>sarkar</i>	a district
<i>sayar</i>	Marwari administrative division in charge of trade and custom duties
<i>shajara</i>	a family tree
<i>shari'a</i>	law or justice; the law of God; supplementary laws given by Muhammad
<i>sharif</i>	proper, noble, respectable; descendant of Muhammad
<i>shastra</i>	a Sanskrit treatise, often giving ritual guidance; scripture; body of knowledge
<i>silsila</i>	initiativ lineage, chain
<i>singhara</i>	lotus root
<i>sir</i>	a partnership in property, investment or business
<i>subah</i>	a Mughal province
<i>subahdar</i>	a provincial governor
<i>subahdari</i>	the post of provincial governor
<i>suyurghal</i>	a type of charitable grant typically of land revenue; charity-lands
<i>tabarruk</i>	blessed food or presents from a Sufi shrine, often distributed to devotees and patrons
<i>talab</i>	a water tank
<i>taliko</i>	deed, possession of land through payment of a fee to the court
<i>tankah</i>	a copper coin
<i>tauliyat</i>	office of the administrator of religious trusts at a shrine
<i>tazkira</i>	a hagiography or compendium of saints and holy men and women
<i>tirth purohit</i>	a Hindu priest who officiates pilgrimage rituals
<i>tirth purohitai</i>	the officiating of a Hindu pilgrimage ritual, or the right to do so
<i>'ulama</i>	learned men, theologians
<i>urs</i>	commemoration of a Sufi's union with God on their death anniversary

Vaishnavism	devotion to the Hindu deity Vishnu and his avatars including Ram and Krishna
<i>varasi</i>	a state-recognized right to inheritance or claim to the status of heir
<i>varna</i>	four-fold system of caste divisions originating in Vedic society: brahmin, kshatriya, vaishya, and shudra
<i>wahdat al-wujud</i>	unity in being, a key philosophy in some branches of Sufism
<i>wajabi</i>	appropriate behavior; a social and legal norm in eighteenth-century Marwar
<i>wakil</i>	a representative or advocate
<i>wakilat nama</i>	a letter of representation, or appointing a representative
<i>waqi'a nawis</i>	a news-writer
<i>waqf</i>	a charitable bequest
<i>watan</i>	homeland
<i>watan jagir</i>	a 'homeland' <i>jagir</i> , hereditary right to revenue from one's home territory

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Appendix

Documents from Personal Libraries

The following is a brief guide to the documents in the collections of Peer Sufi Abdul Baqi Chishti Farooqi and Pirzada Ghulam Sarwar Chishti Sulaimani Faruqi that I consulted. Each listing includes date, the ruler who authorized the document, a brief note on the content, the persons involved as recipient or petitioner, the language, and any additional notes. Some of the documents in these collections are damaged or illegible, so not all of this information is available for each document. In some cases, the year is only available in regnal years. Most of the documents are originals, but some are later copies. If the copies are of originals also contained within the collection, they are cross-referenced. The numbers given for the documents correspond the numbers used to refer to them in the footnotes.

Collection of Peer Sufi Abdul Baqi Chishti Farooqi (ABF)

1. Date: Rajab 977 AH (1569-70)

Authority: Akbar

Content: *madad-i ma'ash* grant of 700 *bighas* of land

Recipient: Shaikh Nizam son of Shaikh Mansur

Language: Persian

Notes: Copy, Document No. 2 is the original

2. Date: 10 Rajab 977 AH (December 29, 1569)

Authority: Akbar

Content: *madad-i ma'ash* grant of 700 *bighas* of land

Recipient: Shaikh Nizam son of Shaikh Mansur

Language: Persian

3. Date: VS 1684 (c. 1627)

Authority: Maharaja Gaj Singh

Content: exchange of villages in revenue grant

Recipient: Shaikh Salama

Language: Rajasthani

4. Date: Phagun Bad 8 VS 1697 (c. 1640)

Authority: Maharaja Amar Singh

Content: land grant

Recipient: Shaikh Fateh Muhammad son of Kamal Muhammad

Language: Rajasthani

5. Date: 26 Zu'l-Hijja 1066 AH (October 15, 1656)

Content: land grant

Recipient: Shaikh Abu Tarab

Language: Persian and Rajasthani

6. Date: 7 Zu'l-Hijja, 10 Regnal

Authority: Raja Rai Singh

Content: grant

Recipient: Shaikh 'Abd Allah son of Shaikh Nizam

Language: Persian

Notes: Presented as evidence in a legal case in 2003

7. Date: 7 Zu'l-Hijja, 10 Regnal

Authority: Raja Rai Singh

Content: grant

Recipient: Shaikh Abdullah son of Shaikh Nizam, *sajjada* of shrine

Language: modern Devanagari transcription of a Persian *farman*

Notes: copy of Document No. 6

8. Date: Jeth Sud 5 VS 1714 (c. 1657)

Authority: Maharaja Jaswant Singh

Content: revenue grant for 353 *bighas* of land

Recipients: unclear

Language: Rajasthani

9. Date: VS 1714 (c. 1657)

Authority: Maharaja Jaswant Singh

Content: revenue grant for 364 *bighas* of land

Recipient: Pirzada

Language: Rajasthani

10. Date: Jeth Sud 3 VS 1715 (c. 1658)

Content: revenue grant for 263 *bighas* of land

Recipient: a Shaikh

Language: Rajasthani

11. Date: 12 Regnal

Authority: Aurangzeb

Language: Persian

Notes: incomplete

12. Date: Asadh Sud 12 VS 1733 (c. 1676)

Authority: Maharaj Indar Singh

Content: *parvana* regarding grant of a field

Recipient: Shaikh Nizam

Language: Rajasthani

Notes: poor legibility

13. Date: Bhadwa Bad 1 VS 1733 (c. 1676)
Authority: Maharaj Indar Singh
Content: reconfirmation of a grant for 160 *bighas* of land
Recipient: Shaikh Taj Muhammad
Language: Rajasthani
14. Date: Bhadwa Bad 1 VS 1733 (c. 1676)
Authority: Maharaj Indar Singh
Content: reconfirmation of a grant for a daily salary (*rozina*) of 2 *tankas*
Recipient: Shaikh Kasim and Shaikh Hasam
Language: Rajasthani
15. Bhadwa Bad 3 VS 1733 (c. 1676)
Authority: Maharaj Indar Singh
Content: reconfirmation of a grant of $\frac{1}{2}$ *pav* of oil and 2 shops
Recipient: Shaikh Taj Muhammad, Abdul Khair, Jafar Muhammad
Language: Rajasthani
16. Date: 27 Shawwal, 28 Regnal, 1095 AH (October 7, 1684)
Authority: Aurangzeb
Content: *farman* appointing the recipient as Qazi in place of Saiyid Khalil Allah and granting 50 *bighas* of land
Recipient: Muhammad Sadiq son of Abdul Islam
Language: Persian
17. Date: 16 Ramazan, 31 Regnal; Savan Bad 1 VS 1744 (c. 1687)
Content: *ijara* of a well
Recipients: Abdul Khair, Jafar Muhammad, Shaikh Taj Muhammad
Language: Persian and Rajasthani
18. Date: 21 Zu'l-Qa'da, 41 Regnal
Authority: Aurangzeb
Content: *farman* granting 60 *bighas* of land
Recipients: Shaikh Khwaja Asar son of Shaikh Sher Muhammad; Shaikh Khwaja Mansur son of Shaikh Sher Muhammad
Language: Persian
19. Date: Savan Sud 6 VS 1755 (c. 1698)
Content: *in'am* of 100 *bighas* of land
Recipients: Miyan Khwaja Ahmad, Khwaja Mansur, Jat Thakur
Language: Rajasthani
20. Date: Bhadwa Bad 14 VS 1760 (c. 1703)

Content: *in'am* of 25 *bighas*
Recipient: Shaikh Hasim Gulamali
Language: Rajasthani

21. Date: Kati Bad 2 VS 1764 (c. 1707)
Authority: Maharaja Indar Singh
Content: *punya arath* of 101 *bighas* of land
Recipients: Shaikh Ghulam Muhammad, Shaikh Ghulam Ali, the grandsons of Abu Tarabji
Language: Rajasthani

22. Date: Phagun Sud 2 VS 1764 (c. 1707)
Authority: Maharaj Indar Singh
Content: grant of 51 *bighas* of land
Recipient: Shaikh Najivullah, son of Shaikh Taj Muhammad
Language: Rajasthani

23. Date: Asoj Sud 2 VS 1764 (c. 1707)
Content: grant of 51 *bighas* of land
Recipient: Shaikh Faizullah
Language: Rajasthani

24. Date: Kati Bad 14 VS 1765 (c. 1708)
Content: grant of 101 *bighas* of land
Recipient: Shaikh Ghulam Muhammad and Shaikh Ghulam Ali, the sons of Muhammad Hasim and grandsons of Shaikh Abu Tarabji
Language: Rajasthani

25. Date: Kati Bad 14 VS 1767 (c. 1710)
Content: grant of 101 *bighas* of land
Recipient: Shaikh Ghulam Muhammad and Shaikh Ghulam Ali
Language: Rajasthani

26. Date: Savan Sud 7 VS 1772 (c. 1715)
Content: grant of 41 *bighas* of land
Recipient: Shaikh Kurjulla
Language: Rajasthani

27. Date: Kati Bad 3 1773 (c. 1716)
Content: confirmation of *in'am* grant
Recipients: Shaikh Kurjulla, Latafulla, Najivulla, Idatulla, and Shaikh Masum
Language: Rajasthani

28. Date: Maha Bad 13 VS 1774 (c. 1717)
Content: copy of a *parwana* confirming *in'am*

Recipients: descendants of Pir Tarkin
Language: Rajasthani

29. Date: 18 Muharram, 25 Regnal (c. 18th century)
Content: newsletter regarding a nawab and developments in Sawai Jaipur
Language: Persian

30. Date: 31 Regnal (c. 17th- 18th century)
Authority: Nawab Shuja'at Khan
Content: *parwana* regarding the *madad-i ma'ash* of 100 *bighas* of land
Recipient: Shaikh Muhammad Safed
Language: Persian

31. Date: 10 Zu'l-Hijja, 31 Regnal (c. 17th-18th century)
Authority: Inayat Khan
Content: *parwana* for *madad-i ma'ash* of 150 *bighas* of land, and 700 *bighas* for the *urs*, revenue of these lands to be divided between the descendants of Mu'in al-Din Chishti and Sultan al-Tarikin Shaikh Hamid al-Din Faruqi
Recipient: Shaikh Muhammad Safed
Language: Persian

32. Date: 2 Shawwal 1130 AH (August 29, 1718)
Content: inheritance dispute
Participants: Shaikh Muhammad Naim son of Shaikh Aman
Allah son of Shaikh Muhammad; Shaikh Lutf Allah son of Iman Allah, Shaikh Karm Allah
Language: Persian

33. Date: Chait Bad 14 VS 1782 (c. 1725)
Authority: Maharaj Indar Singh
Content: land grant
Recipient: Shaikh Imamdin
Language: Rajasthani

34. Date: undated, 18th century
Authority: Mohkam Singh, son of Indar Singh
Recipient: Shaikh Jaffar Muhammad
Language: Rajasthani
Note: mostly illegible

35. Date: 21 Jamada I, 20 Regnal, 1150 AH (September 16, 1737)
Content: will for share in dargah offerings and village revenue
Concerning: Inayat Bibi wife of Shaikh Abdullah son of Shaikh Nizam
Language: Persian

36. Date: 7 Zu'l-Hijja, 27 Regnal, 1157 AH (January 11, 1745)
Content: *madad-i ma'ash* grant of cash
Recipient: Shaikh Zahir al-Din darvish, etc.
Language: Persian
37. Date: 2 Muharram 1170 AH (September 27, 1756)
Content: will for a portion of *dargah* income and land
Concerning: Inayat Bibi to Shaikh Ilam al-Din son of Shaikh Imam al-Din
Language: Persian
38. Date: Asoj Bad 9 VS 1824 (c. 1767)
Authority: Vijai Singh
Content: *sanad* settling a dispute over the *urs sama'*
Petitioner: Pirzada Alamdin
Language: Rajasthani
39. Date: Pos Bad 4 VS 1835 (c. 1778)
Authority: Vijai Singh
Content: *sanad* settling a dispute over adoption and inheritance
Petitioner: Pir Bhakas son of Pirzada Alamdin
Language: Rajasthani
40. Date: Jeth Sud 11 VS 1874 (c. 1817)
Content: *sanad* regarding payment of fine of 350 rupees for punishment of adultery
Concerning: Shaikh Gulab son of Nur Muhammad
Language: Rajasthani
41. Date: Chait Bad 13 VS 1883 (c. 1826)
Language: Rajasthani
Note: water-damaged
42. Date: Asadh Bad 11 VS 1888 (c. 1831)
Content: settlement of a dispute
Petitioners: Shaikh Hussain and Shaikh Nasiruddin
Language: Rajasthani
43. Date: Magsar Sud 7 VS 1892 (c. 1835)
Content: settlement of a dispute
Petitioners: Pirzada Gulab Muhammad and Qazi Salabadin
Language: Rajasthani
44. Date: Asadh Sud 8 VS 1933 (c. 1876)
Content: settlement of a dispute
Petitioners: Pirzada Muhammad Risandin, Jaurdin and the daughter of Abdul Gafurji

Language: Rajasthani

45. Date: 13 Zu'l-Hijja 1326 AH; Pos Bad 5 VS 1965 (January 6, 1909)

Content: will

Concerning: Qazi Sarj al-Haq son of Qamar al-Din

Language: Persian

46. Date: 1 Muharram, 8 Regnal

Content: regarding *waqf*

Language: Persian

47. Date: 10 Rabi' II, year unknown

Content: a letter

Language: Persian

48. Date: undated

Content: a letter on theological matters, mentions Ghulam Nabi, Shah Muhammad Hassan, Imam Baksh, and Fateh Muhammad

Language: Persian

49. Date: undated

Content: a newsletter regarding movement of a caravan

Language: Persian

50. Date: 7 Rajab, 2 Regnal

Content: a newsletter regarding movement of a caravan

Language: Persian

Note: contents are related to the information in Document 49

51. Date: undated, c. 18th century

Content: a letter regarding a petition and ijara, mentions Azim Allah Khan

Language: Persian

52. Date: undated, c. 18th century

Content: a newsletter, regarding Maharaja Abhai Singh and Raja Jai Singh

Language: Persian

53. Date: undated, c. 18th century

Content: a letter regarding Nawab Firuz Jang Bahadur and political news

Language: Persian

54. Date: undated, c. 18th century

Content: a letter regarding a *jagir* and the *faujdari* of *pargana* Kanori

Language: Persian

55. Date: undated, c. 18th century
Content: a newsletter regarding the travel of Prince Nisa Ram from Gujarat
Language: Persian

56. Date: undated
Content: a land grant
Language: Persian

57. Date: undated
Content; a grant to Sultan al-Tarikin Shaikhs
Language: Persian
Note: incomplete

58. Date: 1 Rajab 10 Regnal, c. 18th century
Content: a land grant
Recipients: Shaikh Kamal al-Din and Sultan Muhammad
Language: Persian

59. Date: 17 January 1914 CE
Content: a letter regarding Minudin Sahib and Nijamudin Sahib
Language: Hindi

60. Date: 9 August 1952 CE
Content: a *patta* concerning village revenue
Language: Hindi

61. Date: 2001 CE
Content: a *kbilafat nama*
Language: Urdu

Collection of Pirzada Ghulam Sarwar Chishti Sulaimani Faruqi (GS)

1. Date: 2 Rabi' I 971 AH (October 30, 1563)
Authority: Akbar
Content: *in'am*
Language: Persian
Notes: incomplete

2. Date: 16 Jamada I 975 AH (November 28, 1567)
Authority: Akbar
Content: *madad-i ma'ash* for land in *pargana* Nagaur
Language: Persian

3. Date: undated

Authority: Akbar

Content: *farman* granting land revenue to support the Shaikh and for dargah *urs*

Recipient: Shaikh Nizam

Language: Persian

Notes: a copy of the original document

4. Date: 1033 AH (1623-4)

Content: will

Concerning: Nur Beg, Shaikh ‘Abd Allah, Shaikh Ahmed, Shaikh Auliya, and Shaikh ‘Abd al-Aziz, sons of Shaikh Nizam

Language: Persian

Notes: damaged and partially illegible

5. Date: 14 Rajab 1034 AH (April 22, 1625)

Content: grant of 400 *bighas* of land in exchange for service to the *hakim*

Recipients: Mubarak Khan, Muhammad Khan, etc.

Language: Persian

Notes: a copy of an original document

6. Date: Shawwal 24, year unknown

Authority: Shah Jahan

Content: *yaddasht*

Language: Persian

7. 2 Rajab, likely 1061 AH (June 21, 1651)

Content: division of the *dargah nazr*

Concerning: Shaikh Abdul Aziz and Shaikh Auliya sons of Shaikh Nizam

Language: Persian

8. Date: 26 Muharram 1070 (October 13 1659)

Concerning: division of *dargah nazr* and some land

Concerning: Saiyid Rehmat Allah son of Saiyid Jaffar son of Saiyid Taj Muhammad; Saiyid Baqi and Saiyid Haddayat Allah sons of Saiyid Husain son of Saiyid Taj Muhammad

Language: Persian

9. Date: 13 Regnal (seal from 1077 AH) (c. 1666-7)

Authority: Rao Rai Singh

Content: *arz* for traditional seat in the *majlis*

Petitioners: Wakil Shaikh Sadr al-Din and Shaikh Muhammad Reza

Language: Persian

Notes: damaged

10. Date: 17th century (seal from 1087 AH) (c. 1676-7)
Content: *qismatnama* for a house
Concerning: Shaikh Manwar son of Shaikh ‘Abd al-Aziz son of Maghreb Shah
Language: Persian
Notes: damaged, only part of the document remains
11. Date: unclear, likely 1078 AH (1667-8)
Content: will, list of the property
Concerning: Jamal Muhammad son of Miyan Shaikh ‘Abd al-Aziz Chishti
Language: Persian
12. Date: 7 Rabi‘ II 1089 AH (May 29, 1678)
Content: *madad-i ma‘ash* for 50 *bighas* of land
Recipient: Shaikh Shukr Allah
Language: Persian
13. Date: 1094 AH (1682-3)
Content: concerning 45 *bighas* of land
Language: Persian
Note: partially illegible
14. Date: Baisakh Sud 14 VS 1749 (c. 1692)
Content: grant for 50 rupees annually
Recipients: Abdul Rasid, Shaikh Abu Muhammad, Shaikh Kabir, and Shaikh Hajjiullah
Language: Rajasthani
15. Date: 22 Rabi‘ I 1107 AH (October 31, 1695)
Content: will
Concerning: Shaikh Manwar son of ‘Abd al-Aziz son of Shaikh Nizam
Language: Persian
16. Date: Savan Bad 11 VS 1760 (1703)
Authority: Maharaja Indar Singh and Mohkam Singh
Content: *punya arath* of 200 *bighas* of land
Recipient: Bhagat Gopal Das’s disciple Naraindas
Language: Rajasthani
Note: a copy of the original
17. Date: 14 Ramazan, 2 Regnal, 1131 AH (July 31, 1719)
Content: a property transaction regarding a place in Mahalla Pir Bakhsh pawned to Nur Muhammad, son of Musa Qaum Nurbaf for 20 rupees
Concerning: Qazi Shah Muhammad son of Qazi Pir Muhammad ‘Arif Qureshi
Language: Persian

18. Date: 1152 AH (1739-40)
 Content: right to read *khutba*
 Concerning: Shaikh Bhikan and Shaikhu, sons of Khan Jahan
 Language: Persian
19. Date: 1152 AH (1739-40)
 Content: right to read *khutba*
 Concerning: Shaikh Bhikan and Shaikhu, sons of Khan Jahan
 Language: Persian and Rajasthani
 Notes: A copy of Document 18, with a Hindi translation
20. Date: 15 Rajab 1160 AH (July 23, 1747)
 Content: will regarding land and share to *dargah nazr*
 Concerning: Murad Bibi daughter of Shaikh ‘Abd al-Rahim, wife of Shaikh Muhammad Qabl, son of Shaikh Hissam
 Language: Persian
21. Date: Pos Sud 4 VS 1806 (1749)
 Content: regarding *rozgar* (salary)
 Language: Rajasthani
22. Date: 9 Jamada I 1176 AH (November 26, 1762)
 Content: will
 Concerning: Shaikh Badr al-Din son of Shaikh Sadr al-Din Chishti
 Language: Persian
23. Date: 1177 AH (1763-4)
 Content: *iqarnama* regarding *nazarana* for service
 Concerning: Pir Muhammad Khadim, Shaikh Muhammad Taqi and Abdul Nabi
 Language: Persian
24. Date: 11 Zu’l-Qa’da 1193 AH (November 20, 1779)
 Content: will
 Concerning: Shaikh Fakhr al-Din son of Shaikh Sadr al-Din
 Language: Persian
25. Date: Jamada II 1263 AH; VS 1903 (c. 21 May 1847)
 Content: will
 Concerning: Shaikh Nur Muhammad Khatib and Jamal Muhammad, sons of Shaikh Sher Muhammad, etc.
 Language: Persian with a few notes in Rajasthani
26. Date: unclear, early 1100s AH from seals
 Language: Persian

Notes: brief text that is illegible

27. Date 6 Shawwal, 5 Regnal
Authority: possibly Farrukh Siyar

Content: grant of *jagir*

Recipient: Khwaja Mansur and Khwaja Muhammad

Language: Persian

28. Date: undated

Content: grant of village revenue

Recipient: Shaikh Abu Muhammad and Shaikh Ghaus

Language: Persian

29. Date: undated, c. 18th century

Language: Persian

Notes: damaged and partially illegible

30. Date: undated, c. 18th century

Content: a letter

Language: Persian

Notes: Concerning some of the same matter as Document 29

31. Date: undated

Content: regarding village Ghunsali

Concerning: Fazl-din

Language: Persian

32. Date: undated

Content: letter regarding the resolution of a revenue claim petition

Concerning: Shaikh Soda Bafi and Pir Muhammad

Language: Persian

33. Date: 5 Rajab, 22 Regnal

Content: a *parvana*

Regarding: Sapardar Khan Bahadur, Partab Singh, Muhammad Bafi Nama

Language: Persian

Note: A copy of the original

34. Date: undated

Content: letter regarding the visit of a shaikh from Gwalior Sharif

Language: Persian

35. Date: undated

Content: letter from Kota regarding movements of an army

Language: Persian

36. Date: 11 Shawwal, 47 Regnal

Content: a petition regarding rights to land outside the city that belongs to the Hamid al-din *dargah*

Language: Persian

37. Date: 29 Rabi' I, 10 Regnal

Content: describes the life of Sufi Hamid al-Din

Language: Persian

38. Date: 15 Safar, 27 Regnal (18th century)

Recipient: Shaikh Khair al-Din and Muhammad Aqil, Shaikh Shukr Allah

Language: Persian