CHAPTER FIVE

FAMILIES AND FRONTIERS
MARATHA’S MARCH BEYOND MAHARASHTRA

1. Politico-Geographical Frontier
2. House of Scindias and Holkars
3. Forms of Political Legitimation
4. Conflict Around Political Status
5. Scindia-Holkar Rivalry
6. Religiosity and Political Sovereignty
7. Politico-Cultural Interface with the Conquered Territories
 Conclusion
FAMILIES AND FRONTIERS:
MARATHA'S MARCH BEYOND MAHARASHTRA

The processes of state formation in the 18th and early 19th century show a thoroughly cris-crossed pattern of power enveloping the Indian subcontinent. The Imperial logic of empire building is now getting replaced by the intermediate form of power in reckoning. The developing power structure gradually becomes the legitimate expression of the time, where swarajya resulted in the building up of samrajya. Although the antecedents of samrajya was well there since the time of Shivaji, but the 18th century saw its vigorous pursual under the brahmin Peshwas at Pune. This strong drive of 'frontier' expansion beyond Maharashtra was accelerated by the sardars of the Peshawa regime. Infact, the very sustenance of the new elite families seems to be hinging around the territorial expansion, along with a strong desire to seek independent political status. These sardars started relentlessly marching into southward and northward territories with a heavy military exaction in the form of chouth and sardeshmukhi from the conquered territories. They carried the Maratha samrajya banner right from the time of Bajirao I, and managed to incorporate many new territories in Central and Western India by around 1760. Although rising from a humble origin, the house of Holkars and Scindia marched alongwith their own political ambition to stablish the Maratha power firmly around the subcontinent. They
presumably had to steer their way through in the midst of
the haughty disdain of brahmin regime and the ascending
power of the British colonialists. The assertion of
sovereign rights in the newly acquired domains as well as
the earlier one no doubt further complicated the pattern of
power, as it no more remained a scheme of centralised
government and administration. In the context of the
European state formation, Norbert Elias talks about
'monopoly mechanism' which, according to him, led the
empires decay into discrete dominions.¹ It is through the
elimination struggle and constant accumulation of territory
that a process of state formation is set in motion. He says
in the course of this monopoly process the control over
relatively large territorial possessions and military power
slips away from the centralized authority. It passes first
to his functionaries and then to the warrior class with its
own internal hierarchy. Such shifts in favour of many lead
to a different form of control, where monopoly of force and
taxation take a 'public' form.² This also corresponds to the
emerging structure of power configuration in the 18th
century India, and particularly in the context of the
emerging Maratha families as political elites.

¹ See for a detailed discussion of the use of monopoly mechanism in
the context of Greeko-Roman empire and later the western empires
of France, England and Germany, in N. Elias, The Civilizing
Process: State Formation and Civilization (trans by E. Jephcott)

243
Moreover, the relentless frontier expansion was equally compounded with the fact that the interface between the conquered and the indigenous is not to be sought in the mere agrarian realm of revenue appropriation and military exaction, but it equally demanded a rational explanation of rule over the conquered territories. This certainly found its manifestation in the cultural and religious moorings of the Marathas and their conscious attempt to spread it over the conquered territories while building up political relationship with them. The Maratha sardars equally seem to be quite instrumental in asserting the Hindu identity of their self and in regenerating the Hindu Dharma at a far wider plane under the overarching Perso-Islamic culture of the Mughal imperial rule. The Maratha identity was equally getting diffused due to the lower and humble origin of some powerful families, but well within the ambit of heterogeneity in the base, and homogeneity within the 'Maratha' as a category. The emergence of these families certainly questioned the preconceived and dominating ideology of brahmanic institution. The brahmanic regime eventually succumbed to its own internal pressure in accommodating the rights and aspirations of new and old political elites of the land.

This chapter seeks to explain the processes of power and authority acquired by the new political elites. While explaining the power configuration of the emerging order,
this chapter intends to dig out the origin and base of the two important families, namely Scindia and Holkar and their relationship with the Peshwas, Mughals as well as the Britishers. Along with the political expansion of the Maratha frontier, the discussion delves deep into the cultural and religious patterns established and spread by the various families beyond Maharashtra.

Similar to other parts of India, the 18th century Peshwa regime also witnessed the ‘parcellization of sovereignty’. The notion of now obsolete but at one time extremely influential theory of absolute sovereignty, overarching authority and monolithic state put forward by medieval historiography is considerably questioned. The recent spate of research has questioned and contested the notion of a state helplessly enfeebled. It is in this context that Burton Stein developed the concept of the ‘segmentary state’, which however was compounded with many problems, particularly when faced with Tipu’s bureaucratised state. But the characterisation of the 18th century as potentially vibrant and dynamic is derived from the thesis

---

3 The understanding of Mughal state as centralised, monolithic and revenue collecting machinery could be seen in Irfan Habib, The Agrarian System of Mughal India, 1556-1707 (Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1963), pp. 315-51; Satish Chandra, Medieval India Society, the Jagirdari Crisis and the Village (Macmillan 1982).

4 For a proper understanding of the concept of segmentary state, see Burton Stein; Peasant, State and Society in Medieval South India (Delhi, Oxfprd, 1980), see Introduction.
of Berni Cohn and J.C. Heesterman. It was later represented through a rich empirical work by Chris Bayly. Bayly strongly went against the construction of 18th century as 'the black legend', an issue expressed often in the British imperialist ideology to counter Indian nationalism. He, in fact, demonstrated that in the 18th century authority was greatly dispersed, varied and parcelized. Bayly's thesis was later followed by host of historians working in India and outside. They further demonstrated a close link of early colonial rule with the prior indigenous regimes. Thus, the pre-conceived notion of Marathas as a marauding, rapacious and licentious hordes in certain historical writings is untenable. Stewart Gordon has clearly shown that even the areas subject to Maratha rapine and pillage could recover in a short time. It seems ironic that "these supposedly archtypical marauders, the Marathas, of all the

---

5 The initial understanding of 18th century as a phase of complex old regimes with potential economy is there in these old writings. Bernard Cohn, 'Political System in 18th Century India', JAOS, vol 82, 1962, and J.C. Heesterman, 'Western Expansion and the Indian Reaction', in J.C. Heesterman, The Inner Conflict of Tradition: Essays in Indian Ritual Kingship and Society, (OUP, Chicago, 1985), pp. 158-176.

6 Chris Bayly in fact initiates the process of looking at 18th century with an eye on regional archives at a deeper plain, see Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the age of British Expansion, 1770-1870 (OUP, 1983, RPT, Delhi 1992), pp. 7-15.

7 Bayly, Ibid, pp. 8-16.
successor states should have left the most complete administrative record". 6

Politico-Geographical Frontier

The sustenance of power is inextricably linked to the expansion of political domain. In the case of the Marathas, the notion of 'Maratha state' dates back to the time of Shivaji, but it was not before the arrival of the Peshwas that a massive campaign was launched to integrate various new territories into the Maratha state. Compounded with the need of expansion were measures and policies to be pursued in conciliating the conflicting forces represented by the various sardars. These sardars gradually became so powerful that the Peshwas anticipated a great threat to their existing political status. The second group of sardars comprising Scindia, Holkar and Gaikwad emerged beneath the hegemony of the politically reigning Poona.

The Satara Chhatrapati remained until late the sole sovereign to grant sanction for the expansion of the Maratha frontier. So the Peshwa could not embark on a campaign until he took leave of the Raja. 7 The expansion of empire generally remained the main pre-occupation of the Peshwas


and their sardars only. This preoccupation was contested by the Bhonsles of Nagpur in the eastern region\textsuperscript{10}, Dabhades in Gujarat, the Pawars in Malwa. The south, however, remained a bone of contention between the old sardars.

It is well evident that with the arrival of Bajirao I the Maratha expansion took a real stride all around the subcontinent. They expanded their internal geographical frontier with all their political foresight and acumen. They made their gradual inroad into Rajasthan, Punjab and Delhi. The Marathas simultaneously marched into Bundelkhand and the borders of Uttar Pardesh along with their attack on Orissa and the Bihar-Bengal border. Their long drawn-out scheme of invading Karnataka remained very important into their scheme as it had again passed into the hands of Nizam. The northern campaign of the Maratha also witnessed that many important Maratha families like Pawars, Yadavas, Dabhades lost their standing on the way, while Scindia, Holkar, Gaikwad rapidly rose into prominence. Since these latter families remained strongly loyal to the Peshwas so their rise in Central and Western India was crucial in shaping the Maratha authority beyond Maharashtra. The Bhonsle family, however, dominated the Maratha expansion towards eastern part. This family declared themselves independent of Peshwa, but acknowledged

\textsuperscript{10} See for a good discussion on the Bhosles of Nagpur, T.S. Shejwalkar; Nagpur Affairs, Vol.1, Deccan College Monograph Series: ( Poona,1954), p.XXXVII.
the authority of the Satara Raja. The Bhonsles collected the revenues north of the Mughal subha under the title of fauz-saranjam or 'military assignment' with delegated sovereign power of Sikkekhatyar from the satara Chhatrapati. It was the Gaikwad in Gujarat who remained the main contender of the dowlat or dominion throughout the second half of the 18th century. The Gaikwad equally remained loyal to the Peshwa as well as to Satara Raja. Similar to the Nagpur Bhonsles they also enjoyed the status of saranjamadars, but not of king as enjoyed by the Bhonsle family.

From 1722 onwards the Marathas started moving into Gujarat under the leadership of Dabhade family; and by around 1731, they vigorously got into the scheme of expansion beyond Narmada in establishing their supremacy in northern India. Between 1727 to 31, Bajirao made possible the Maratha movement into Gujarat, Malwa and Bundelkhand.

---

11 See the Bhonsle's claim in north and eastern part and their dominance in these areas, in SPD, Vol. 6, pp 19-23; also see T. Jenkins, Report on the Territories of the Raja of Nagpur (Nagpur, Reprinted, 1923), pp. 50-75; also see C.U. Wills, British Relations with the Nagpur State in the 18th century: An Account, Mainly based on Contemporary English Records (Nagpur, 1926), pp. 7-21.

12 SSRPD, 4, nos 226, 231.


14 For a detailed discussion of Maratha's movement in these areas and interesting account of Maratha's march into the north and Malwa region, see SPD, XIII, XIV; S.N. Gordon, "The slow conquest: administrative integration of Malwa into the Maratha Empire, 170-1760, MAS, 2, 1 (1977), pp. 132-157; as well as some latters of the
The process of expansion remained into operation till 1738. In the beginning the expansion generally entailed an imposition of chauth and sardeshmukhi for the protection of conquered territories. The period spanning from 1720-40 remained more of an expansionist phase than establishing solid administrative system in the conquered territories. But the policy of exacting chauth and sardeshmukhi certainly provided a short of fulcrum upon which the Maratha sovereignty was being given shape in the outer ‘frontiers’. However, the main stumbling block in the rapid Maratha movement was no other than the Nizam in the Deccan. The presence of Nizam in the Deccan proved to be a real threat for the Marathas, who strongly contested the Maratha’s revenue rights in areas like Karnataka, Khandesh, and in Gujarat as well. Much before Hyderabad became the capital of Nizam in the 19th century, it was Aurangabad in northern Maharashtra, which remained the main base of Nizam’s operation. Both the contenders of power seem to have greatly interpenetrated into their rights of collecting revenue from the same pargana or village.\(^\text{15}\) It was not before the battle of Palkhad in 1728 that Nizam was forced by Bajirao to come to terms. Bajirao also managed to defeat the combined forces

---


For a good discussion of Nizam, see Elliot and Dowson, Vol. 7, p. 528-32; see Duff, I, p. 266, and many letters illustrating the later phase of Maratha Nizam relations, in *PRC*, IV, Nos. 8, 44, 72, 88, 100, 107, 118.
of Dabhade, Gaikwad, and Kadam Bande who had been with Nizam, and had been the main contestants for the control of Gujarat. But the Phalkhad battle resulted in Shahu emerging as the main Maratha monarch along with his right to collect chauth and sardeshmukhi of the Deccan. The compromise between Nizam and Bajirao certainly eased the process of Maratha movement in the north without feeling further threat from the Nizam, and the Nizam kept nurturing his interest generally in the south.

The connotation, however, of Maratha samrajya can not be realised before going into the main heartlands of north and Central India. It was the movement into Malwa, Delhi and Rajashtan as well as Bundelkhand that we can gauge the solidiity of Maratha sovereignty beyond Maharashtra. The conscious encroachments of Maratha bands and their eventual settlement in the areas of Malwa, Rajashtan and Gugarat, that we find Marathas spreading their fabric of rajya over outer frontiers with an attempt to create its own administrative apparatus as well. This main area remained

---

16 SPD, 12, No. 39.
17 SPD, 30, Nos. 90, 91.
18 See for Maratha's encroachment into the areas of Rajasthan as well as the implication out there. in Dilbagh Singh, State, Peasants, and Landlords: Rajasthan in the 18th century (Manohar, 1990).
19 See the Peshwas and the Sardars movement into Northern territories during 1732-36, in SPD, Vol. XIV, Nos. 8, 7, 16, 23, 39.
under constant operation by Scindia, Holkar, Pawar as well as the Peshwas in 1785. It was in 1728 that Bajirao along with Chimaji had moved into Malwa and made their inroads almost to the banks of Chambal and the Jamuna threatening Delhi as well. On the way Bajirao also built up cordial relation with the Rajput chief Swai Jai Singh. And in 1733 Holkar and Scindia led their armies into Malwa, crushed Jaysingh’s army and exacted a heavy payment with a promise to pay the tribute annually. The Mughals and the Marathas ceaselessly had to fight with each other over the position of Malwa; and the Mughals severely felt subdued infront of a big Maratha army. BajiraoI also attacked Delhi in 1737 until the issue of Marathas rights over Malwa was settled in 1739, where the Mughal representative, the Nizam, had to grant the whole subha of Malwa to the Peshwa. The Bhopal treaty of 1739 made possible for the Marathas to collect yearly tribute. The Marathas equally made no attempt to displace the local lineages as long as they continued to pay the yearly tribute. The expansion simultaneously led to the growth of centralised and civilian revenue administration in most of the conquered areas. The rights over the conquered

---

20 See SPD, XIII, No. 10, Nos. 43, 50.
21 SPD, XIV, Nos. 2, 24, 29; also see SPD, XV, No. 86.
22 SPD, XV, pp. 93-96; also see Raghubir Singh on the Consolidation of Maratha power in Malwa, Malwa in Transition, pp. 288-305.
23 See SPD, XIV, No. 8; The Maratha Rule in the Nagpur Territories Constituted for the peopepl an immense advance upon the systems
areas were intermixed and shared with many sardars. The brahmans started filling up the bureaucratic layers with Peshwa as the main arbitrators of dispute. The sardars copied their administrative practices from the Peshwas. They appointed officers as Diwan, the Fadnis and the Kamvisdars. Even the Bhonsles also seem to have copied the administrative system from the Peshwas. The Bhonsle Raja seems to have administered criminal justice and Patels imposed small fines.

These multiple claims and the variegated authority exerted by the various sardars proved to be a constant source of tension for Balaji Bajirao. But these oppositions were not strong enough to outbalance the increasing power. Balaji Bajirao managed to derive lot of strength from the fresh conquests of north. Balaji got the farman of his claim on Malwa through the imperial order. The gradual success enabled the Marathas to move firmly into the northern territories, by making four concerted attempts between 1740-48. In the same year they reached beyond Delhi into the Punjab as far as Attock and to the east into the Doab, Awadh, Allahabad, Bihar, Bengal and Crissa. Balaji launched

---

26 A. Wink; opp.cit., p. 74.
a third campaign to settle his claim in Bundelkhand and Rajasthan. He encountered oppositions from the Bhonsle Rajas in the Bihar-Bengal region where the Satara Raja’s intervention eventually settled the dispute between these two. The campaign towards north was again launched after the death of Sahu. These innumerable conquests also posed several problems to the Peshwas.

Although the defeat of the Marathas at Panipat in 1761 seems to have halted the process of expansion. But Balaji Bajirao earlier had managed to bring the whole of Karnataka under his sway in 1760. The Panipat disaster led the local potentates like Jats, Rajputs, Rohillas and Bundelas to stop the tribute and revenue payments. The Peshwa’s plan of northern supremacy got a severe jolt due to Nizam’s attack at home. The revival of Maratha power in the north began possible only when the Nizam was badly defeated at Raksha Bhuwan. They further encountered jats as their main rival in the north. It was left to Mahadji Scindia and Tukoji Holkar to put down the Jats.

---


29 Ibid., pp. 3-5.

30 Ibid., p. 7.
Within this background of continuous expansion that we should now turn over to the emergence of these two important families, namely Scindia and Holkar, in understanding the Maratha expansion into the areas of Malwa, Rajasthan, Delhi as well as a cursory look at Bundelkhand. Since these were the main families of the 18th century who remained mainly instrumental in expanding the Maratha frontier so a look at their own areas of operation and their gradual settlement will reveal the complex pattern of contesting Maratha powers. This will further enable us to understand the new political elites with the attendant attributes of sovereign power as well. Moreover, the interface in the realm of religious and cultural practices with the conquered territories will be yet another important theme of this chapter which will be discussed later.

House of Scindias and Holkars

The Peshwas had to undergo various difficult phases and pursued a policy of appeasement, reconciliation along with the building and breaking up of the alliances. These elements became the important constituent of the ongoing political relationship. The continuous and constant delegation of authority became a common feature from the emperor of Delhi down till these numerous chiefs. The legitimacy was sought through a humble and subservient relationship with the established centres of power.
It is in this context that the emergence of Scindia and Holkar shows the complexity of the new power pattern, despite having a subservient nature of relationship towards the Peshwas. Both these families shared sovereign rights initially in the areas of Rajasthan, Malwa, Bundelkhand and later Scindia managed to have firm grip over Hindustan due to the dwindling imperial authority. The most important of these new group of sardars who owed their rise to the Peshwas, was the house of Scindia. The unprecedented amount of power and the growing prominence of this family made the political status of the Peshwas uncomfortable. Scindia's power reached to such a high degree that Mahadji also took hold over Delhi in his own possession for sometime. Scindia went on to reinstate Shah Alam on the throne of Delhi, when the emperor was deposed by the Rohilla Chief, Gulam Qadir.\(^{31}\) The power of this family in the late 18th century was gravitating more and more towards Hindustan, the area according to a Marathi document lies between Sutlej and Narmada.\(^{32}\) Scindia, in fact, became more prominent in the Malwa region than Hindustan despite his strong hold over the imperial politics.

\(^{31}\) G.S. Sardesai (ed.), *Historical papers relating to Mahaji Scindia* (Gwalior), No. 250, 297.

The rise of these two families Scindia and Holkar from the relatively low origin, is a further testimony to the fact that despite the receding impact of the Warkari movement in the 18th century, the objective of the movement can once again be seen in the rise of these two families, apart from the upward social mobility which earlier crystallized around the Maratha-Kunbi caste cluster.

The emergence of these families questioned the brahmanic hegemony as they hardly asserted any Kashtriyia status. However, in the course of expansion they greatly emulated the life style of ancient kashtriyia dynasty of Rajastahan. But this status as Hindu kings brought them into a strained relationship with the ruling brahmin’s regime. The latter argued increasingly that these elite lineage families had after all no proper claim to differentiate themselves from the poor and lower status of western India in general.33

The family of Scindia was shudras of the tribe of koonbee or cultivator.34 The first appearance of this family in Central India was early in the 18th Century in the person of Ranoji Scindia. There does exist a dispute

33 John Malcolm, Memoir of Central India, including Malwa and adjoining Provinces with the history and copious illustrations of the past and Present of that country, 2 Vol. Sagar Publication (New Delhi, 1970), Vol.II, pp.116-125.

regarding the origin of this family, as they are supposed to have a link with the Kashtriya family of Rajasthan. The original name of this family was sendrak, who were a prominent family of ancient India.\textsuperscript{35} The attempt of people like John Malcolm who attributes Scindia's pedigree to a Shudra caste,\textsuperscript{36} have been questioned by some Indian historians. V.L. Srivastava, as pointed out, asserts that Scindia had a kashtriya origin.\textsuperscript{37} In fact, Grant Duff also describes that Scindia's were "distinguished silledar (cavaliers) since the time of Brahmanic dynasty".\textsuperscript{38} Duff clearly speaks much against Malcom that "it is difficult to see why Ranoji Scindia, who was a relation to Raju Sahu, should prefer a menial job as against the military profession, which at that time promised to every youthful and aspiring spirit a rich harvest of wealth and glory",\textsuperscript{39} But it is futile to go into the debate of Scindia's origin as they themselves never asserted any Kashtriya status.

\textsuperscript{36} V.S. Srivastava, Elements Amongst Marathas, pp. 4-11. Scindia's origin remains disputed as Ranoji Scindia came of an ancient Ksatriya family bearing the name of Sendrak. They rose to the royal notice during the Bhamini rank where they were known as Shinde, a word which the English have further corrupted into Scindia. Ranoji Scindia was a scion of a younger branch. His father was in Balaji Vishwanath's service and he was brought up as a playmate of Baji Rao. When Baji Rao grewup, Ranoji still held fast the Peshwa's slippers.


\textsuperscript{38} V.S. Srivastava, opp.cit., p. 7.

\textsuperscript{39} Grant Duff. op. cit., Vol. I, p. 177.

\textit{Ibid}, Vol.I, pp.177-80
The Scindia became hereditary headman or Patil of Kumarkheda, about 12 miles from north of Poona and from now onwards the rise of Scindia was spectacular.\textsuperscript{40} After the death of Balaji Vishwanath, Ranoji was to carry the Peshwa’s slippers. It also gave respect to Scindia family for their close proximity to the Peshwas.\textsuperscript{41} Ranoji Scindia fixed his headquarters at Ujjain, which rose as a first capital of Scindia’s dominion. He died in 1750 and was left behind with a large family.\textsuperscript{42} After Ranoji, it was Mahadji Scindia who became very powerful overtime. John Hope observes that ‘the geographical extent of Scindia’s country is in length 300 miles, and extended almost from the city of Agra, in the north-west presidency, to Bombay in the south. While the prince and the court are Marathas, the people themselves are Rajputs and Jats, and differ therefore from their rulers in race, though not in religion’.\textsuperscript{43} But before discussing the 18th century Maratha context and their relation with Peshwas and others, it would be better to discuss the background of Holkars. The emergence of this family is also closely related to one of the broader arguments running in this thesis.

\textsuperscript{40} J. Malcolm \textit{op.cit.}, Vol. 1, pp. 116-141.


Similar to the rise of Scindia, the family of Holkar equally proved to be a strong political force in the 18th century Maharashtra. Malhar Rao Holkar had a low origin. Their ancestors were Dhangars or herdsmen by caste of the village Houl. Malhar Rao Holkar's father was: 'Chaugala' or deputy Patel. From the village Houl in the Deccan, the descendants of this family picked their name as 'Holkar'.

One particular incident in which Malhar Rao Holkar slew a leader of Nizamul Mulk, brought him great fame and it also led Baji Rao to take him into his own service. Later, he was raised to the command of 500 horses. Malhar Rao Holkar was also entrusted with the management of Maratha interests in Malwa around 1728. But his field of activity and his major military achievements remained in Hindustan after formal cessation of Malwa to the Marathas by the Mughal emperor. The Holkar estate of Indore later crystallized into a political entity.

Thus it is the rise of these two important families in Central India which considerably undermined the influence of brahmanic regime at Poona. The appointment of Scindia as a hereditary deputy of the Delhi emperor further aggravated

44 J. Malcolm, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 142; also see A Crawford, Our Troubles in Poona and the Deccan (Westminster, 1897), p. 132. The Holkars original name was Virkar, but after moving to Hol on the banks of Nira, they changed it to Holkar as a result of their new residence.


46 Raghubir Singh, Malwa in Transition, or a Century of Anarchy: The first phase, 1698-1765 (Bombay, 1936), p. 286.
the situation, as the entire administration went into the hands of Scindia.\(^47\) This gradual prominence of Scindias even led a man like G. Duff to think that now the Scindias are aiming to replace the brahmin court and attempting to set up their own authority at Poona.\(^48\) But despite their continuous growing power they remained submissive to the Peshwa government. The Peshwa government was accredited with the sovereign right upon all their conquests, and thus this family acquired it merely as an assignment to their name. All the acquisitions of Scindias were made in the name of the Peshwas. Both these families were assigned with countless assignments in Malwa, Hindustan as well as Deccan.

In a campaign led by Raghoba, the uncle of Peshwa Madhav Rao, Mahadjji accompanied him on the war front. However, Mahadjji remained suspicious in Raghoba's eyes. Mahadjji was accused of his doubtful conduct in the course of the siege of Gonad. It made Raghoba so angry that he ordered for Mahadjji's execution. But somehow it was averted by the efforts of Malhar Rao Holkar, who prostrated himself to Raghoba for saving the life of Mahadjji Scindia. It was directed further by Peshwa Madhav Rao not to execute Mahadjji considering Ranoji's whole family had scarified their lives in the service of the Maratha empire.\(^49\)


In the initial phase, Scindia similar to Holkar, received saranjam in Malwa around 1729 and the Peshwa’s seal. He equally shared with Holkars the collection of the revenue of this province.\(^5^0\) Scindia was also made hereditary saranjamdar like Holkar which was held directly from the Peshwa government. The later development and particularly Scindia’s rising fame brought them into an acute political conflict with Nana Phadnis, regent of the Peshwa Madhav Rao.\(^5^1\)

Malharrao Holkar, the real founder of the Holkar house, was a siledar commanding his own horseman in the service of Kadam Bande. Later he was appointed subhedar to collect revenue of the whole provinces of Malwa, along with Scindia.\(^5^2\) It was in 1733 that Holkar was granted Indore, which grew into a hereditary dominion or the doulat of the Holkars.\(^5^3\) Holkar never lagged behind in showing their strong loyalty to the Peshwa, evident in conquests and acquisitions added to his saranjam under the title of the Peshwa. After Malharrao, the administration went into the hands of Khanderao’s widow, Ahilyabai. Malhar Rao went on to

---

\(^{50}\) S.P.D., Vol. 30, No. 318.

\(^{51}\) G.S. Sardesai, *Main current of Maratha History* (Bombay, 1949), Ch. 6.

\(^{52}\) See V.V. Thakhur (ed.), *Holkar Sahicya Itihasacin Sadhane* (Indore, 1944-45), Vol. I, Nos. 6, 181.

\(^{53}\) SSRPD, 4, No. 266; also see Thakur, *op. cit*, Vol. I, No. 50.
build up the power of his house over Hindustan. He endeavored to effect his object by operations which extended from the province of Oudh to the Indus and from the hills to Rajputana and to the mountains of Kumauon.\textsuperscript{54} He turned down a standing offer for his help rendered to the Vajir, Safdarjung, in saving Oudh from the Rohillas. Malhar Rao instead wished to be an officer of the Peshwas and desired to have no country independent of him; but that nomination to the office of Deshmukh.\textsuperscript{55} Malhar Rao had in his possession a large part of the Deccan, and considerable part of the province of Khandesh. However, the succession of Ahilyabai was obstructed by Raghoba. But the Peshwa Madhav Rao and his wife, the queen Ramabai, strongly favoured Ahilyabai’s claims to the jagirs of the Holkar family and at last the Peshwa recognised Ahilyabai’s claim inspite of Raghoba’s tenous opposition. Ramabai always showed warm regard for Ahilyabai, who equally reciprocated the kind gestures in many forms often sending some valuable presents as a token for her love and respect. Ahilyabai remained greatly loyal to her master the Peshwa and as a mark of great regard for her, she received the gift of Choli Maheswar from Madhav Rao.

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid, p. 150.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., p. 151.
Mahadji Scindia was equally instrumental in getting Ahilyabai the jagirs of the Holkar family. This cordial relationship between these two ruling houses proved to be of great advantage in extending the Maratha empire. Mahadji heartily espoused the cause of Holkar, whenever she was in difficulty and this sympathy was cordially reciprocated by Holkar. Unfortunately this cordial relationship was interrupted due to the imprudent conduct by Scindia's officers. The relations between Scindia and Holkar remained cool for some time but later it culminated in the battle of Lakhairi.

Forms Of Political Legitimation

The political legitimacy was also sought by paying a formal visit to the Pune Peshwas and it was duly reciprocated by the Peshwas as well to visit the houses of some important families, and keep up all the traditional customs intact. Earlier, there was a tradition maintained by most of the Maratha chiefs to pay yearly visit to the Peshwa's capital. But since Scindia became powerful in Hindustan the visit became irregular, and Scindia himself was coming in 1792 to Poona after a gap of twelve years. His visit created a real stir in the capital as it was apprehended that he might be wanting to usurp the Maratha
government. But it seems there was nothing serious on Scindia’s part as he once again conformed to respect the dignity of reigning Poona. He was willing that the Peshwa should accept the titles and dresses brought from the Delhi emperor. A grand darbar was held on 22nd June, 1792 for the acceptance of imperial insignia.

Earlier, in 1782, the Peshwa also made a visit to the Holkar’s residence and stayed quite some time there. He was escorted by the Holkar to the reception pavilion where he was entertained to a dance performance. This event then was followed by the presentation of robes, a pearl necklace, a sirpench, a calf elephant, horse to the Srimant (Peshwa).

The similarity of the power pattern in the ruling centres is evident in the adoption of various acts and etiquettes of a king by the Scindia and also the manner in which the authority was wielded. Scindia gave considerable attention in giving a permanent shape to his government. Malcolm points out that the countries under Mahadji’s observation were well managed, as were those where the inhabitants were peaceable and obedient. The manner in

---

56 See Sardesai, *NHM*, Vol. III, pp. 225-233; also see *PRC*, II, No. 223 Scindia’s visit had created an unprecedented stir and the Poona ministers were greatly threatened.


58 See *Poona Akhbars*, Vol. III, AR No. 18, 3rd Feb. 1782, p. 25


265
which Scindia himself presents and represents his power and the way in which he treats the British resident is a further testimony to the fact that in the 18th century power has to be understood in its own terms. The discussion of the British resident’s visit to the Scindia camp is described by Broughton. Broughton speaks that ‘Scindia met us just beyond his own tents. He was attended by all the sardars of the army and followed by the cavalry now in camp; but which I am convinced did not amount to more than three thousand men. They drew up in the form of a crescent, in the centre of which the Maharaja quitted his palnkeen at the moment when the resident did the same, this part of the ceremonial being regulated by the punctilio. Scindia was superbly dressed in rich brocade, with a profession of pearls and emeralds about his neck and arms. After the usual ceremony had taken place, he proceeded to his tents and are followed at a little distance... taking leave Pan and Uttar, were as usual distributed and the customary Khiluts were presented... when the Maharaja pays a visit to any person of rank, he sends his own masnad, or throne, on which he sits at the upper end of the tent, and every thing conducted precisely as at his usual Khilut, a superb birch drawn by four beautiful Arabian horses, was presented to the Maharaja on the part of the Governor General. Scindia was pleased with this elegant present’.

---

This is an eye witness account by the Resident posted at Scindia’s court. See, T.D. Broughton, Letters from the Mahratta Camp.
A close look at this meeting between Scindia and the British resident shows that certain standard form and manner was into regulation closed to the kingly etiquettes seen in the meeting between the Peshwas and the Chhatrapati. Scindia's adherence to such forms assert his newly acquired political status. Even the British, particularly with the treaty of Salbai, acknowledged Mahadji Scindia as an independent prince. 61 But it hardly mattered to Scindia as they remained firm in their loyalty to the Peshwas. The Scindia also remained consistent and cordial in their attitude and relationship with the British. Hence the rituals, ceremonials adhered to or practiced might seem complete in their meaning and function, but they represent the reinforcement of official hierarchy, a legitimation of parvenu dynasty combined with the parallels of celestial and earthly hierarchies which is aptly put in a phrase coined by David Cannadine the 'rituals of royalty'.62

The significance of power and ceremonial beneath the rituals of royalty were found to be the most enduring from in the 18th century power-pattern. The pomp and pageantry, spectacle and splendour are treated as an integral part of

---


62 David Cannadine and Simon Price, Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional societies (Cambridge, N.York, 1987), p.6. Many ancient empires association with pomp, splendour and how royalty was expressed, have been reflected through various articles in this book.
the political processes and the structure of power. The context of rituals in the case of Maratha state not merely remains a charade rather expressed the royalty of power. The inherent pattern within the rituals and ceremony expressed one by the established power and others by the emerging power established each one's political authority. Thus politics and rituals are not the separate elements, where one is conceived as serious and the other as superficial, but both are complementary to each other. Ritual is not to be seen as a mask of force, but is itself a type of power which will be further evident in the subsequent discussion.

Conflict Around Political Status

The complexities of the emerging pattern of the authority, the significance of the title and symbols, the rituals and ceremonials, the pomp and pageantry, manifested particularly in one important incident involving all the three great powers of the time, such as the emperor of Delhi, the Peshwas, and the Scindias. This incident hinges around the political status of Scindias when the emperor Shah Alam was deposed by the Rohilla chief, Gulam Qadir, in 1788. The chief wanted the emperor to accord him the title of Amir-ul-Umara and Mir Bakshi. But the refusal of the emperor to accord him with such titles resulted in his being deposed by this chief. It was Mahadji Scindia, who at the

crucial juncture, helps shah Alam and reinstated him on the throne of Delhi in 1788.\(^4\) Shah Alam pleased with Scindia's action, renewed the title of *Vakil-I-mutalaq* of the empire.\(^5\) However, much before this incident, the post of *Amir-ul-Umarah* was offered to Scindia in 1784. Scindia at that time refused to accept this office due to a strong loyalty shown towards the Peshwas. It was not in consonance with the obedience owed to the Peshwas.\(^6\) In the same year, Mahadji in a letter to the Peshwas informed that he obtained for Nana and the Peshwa, the *Bakshgiri* and the post of *Naib-I-Mansab* while the post of *Vakil-I-mutalaq* was given to Mahadji despite his request to the emperor that the Peshwa should be given the post.\(^7\) This incident led to a strong conflict between the ruling brahmin regime at Pune and the Scindia. The Poona court flatly refused Scindia's explanation and accused him for having secured this title for himself.\(^8\) Scindia continued his urge that the post by itself does not mean the defiance of the Peshwa's authority and they are


\(^5\) G.S. Sardesai (ed), *Historical Papers Relating to Mahadji Scindia* (Gwalior), Nos. 250, 297; also see Duff, 2, p. 175.


\(^7\) Ibid, p.17; also see Sardesai's *Historical Papers*, Nos. 359, 391.

still the servants of the Peshwas. But the court of Poona remained firm in its attitude towards Scindia. Eventually the Peshwas vehement protest was heeded by the emperor of Delhi. Now the Peshwas were invested with the title of Vakil-I-mutlaq which later became hereditary and Scindia was appointed as the hereditary deputy. Later these titles were also confirmed by the Raja of Satara. The title was given to the Peshwa on the condition that Mahadji alone and no one else would be administrator in Delhi.

The ceremony and rituals performed on this occasion, the pomp and grandeur displayed, according to Duff, was beyond anything the inhabitants of Poona had ever seen. Crawford describes the ceremony in detail, "splendid Shamianas or Durbar tents were pitched, at the end of which was thrown on which lay the Imperial 'Furman' or patent, the dresses of honor and the decorations. Advancing up the Durbar, the Peshwas thrice saluting the throne, deposited on it his 'Nuzur' of 101 gold mohurs, and seated himself at the left of the Imperial pheromones were then read, including

---

69 Ibid, Nos. 400, 403.
70 Ibid., Nos. 398.
71 Ibid, No 404; also see G.Duff, Vol. 2, pp. 146,175
73 D.B. Parsanis, Historical Papers Relating to Gwalior State, V, no.62.

270
one which forbade the slaughter of bullocks and cows. The Peshwa then received the 'Khillut' or presents, and retiring into a small tent, arrayed himself in the dresses of hours, returned and reseated himself, where upon Scindia, Nana Furnavees and other subordinate officers presented their 'nuzure' to him in congratulations. The Peshwa, then rose, seated himself in the state 'palmkeen' or sedan chair just received, and was carried in great pomp to the city of Poona, followed and fanned by Scindia. Arrived at the Peshwa's palace, the ceremony of investing Scindia with the Deputship was duly performed". Scindia, on this occasion, over did his humility, when he begged to be regarded only as a hereditary servant of the Peshwas 'entitled only to carry his slippers' and to be addressed merely as 'Patel'. Scindia adopted a new Persian seal with the name of Peshwa minister appearing on it as that of his master.

This particular incident reveals the inherent political threat, tensions and jealousy around the significance of titles and symbols. This points to the form in which tradition is being represented in its temporal milieu while regulating the power and authority. These conflicts and the performance of rituals are not only specific to the Marathas as it had its genesis in earlier period and in the various

---

75 A. Crawford, Our troubles, pp. 14, 15.
76 Sardesai, Historical Papers, No. 577.
parts of the 18th century India. But what is significant is the way in which the tradition is being represented and the royalty is expressed through the rituals. Crawford's narrative further establishes that the performance of such rituals reinforced the hierarchization of officials as well as it was an attempt on the part of newly emerging political powers to seek legitimacy to their rule by invoking such traditions. Many other acts also remained closed and common along with the desire of getting invested with the robes of honour in seeking the solidity of the Sovereignty.

As it has been pointed out earlier that with the treaty of Salbai, the Britishers recognized Scindia as an independent sovereign. But still their submission to the Peshwa government remained unflinching. Malcolm clearly says "Mahadiji Scindia originally transacted all the affairs in the name of Peshwa, and not only his ministers, but all his public servants, even to his Chobdars or mace bearers, were called by the Peshwas but during the minority of Savai Madhav Rao, when Nana Farnvis was dewan, all the possessions of the Scindias, south of the Chumbil were made over to his direct authority. In the conquest made north of the Chumbil, the Peshwa's name was used and two principle officers from Poona attended Mahadji to guard the interests of the chief of the empire. On first entering Hindustan, some grants were made in the Peshwa's name. These were recalled and regular Sanads were given in the name of the emperor with the seal
of the Peshwa as minister and of Mahadji as his deputy." Malcolm hence indicates here the importance of the already established power where the defiance of Poona’s authority was tantamount to denigrating the political status acquired by Scindia. The seal bearing the mark of three different powers shows the complex nature of the levels of power which is inextricably linked to each one’s legitimation. It also shows that as long as one is able to arbitrate into the nested rights according to the wish of other powerful persons, the Sovereignty remains guarded and respected.

The growing power of Scindia can further be gauged through the fact that when the Pashwas were being given the post of Vakil-I-mutalaq, Nana Farnvis, the regent, strongly resented the Peshwas desire of being conferred with this title. Nana apprehended that it might bring Peshwas close to Scindia. Nana was greatly angered and jealous of Mahadji’s continuos prominence, and the appointment of a British resident at Scindia’s court. Despite all this, it was Scindia who always backed up Peshwa’s interest against the British and others. In 1784, Mahadji had warned Nana Farnvis about the nature of British diplomacy in Indian courts, ‘My attempt in organising the emperor’s power and resources and my elevation to the highest post in his

---

government, have given extreme offence to the British. Brown at Delhi is freely bribing the imperial gransters to remove me from the situations. You must remember how treacherous these British are'. Despite this warning, Nana consented with the British government to have a separate resident at Poona for direct dealing. This resulted in the appointment of Charles Malet, the first British resident ambassador at Poona. However, the growing differences between Scindia and Nana was considerably reconciled by the Peshwa Madhavrao II. Madhavrao puts it in unequivocal terms that both of your are my two hands. Thus, it demanded from them to support the Peshwa's government. Scindia's authority was confirmed in Hindustan, and dispute with Tukoji Holkar was settled. All these engagements in order to render them sacred and inviolable were sworn in a temple and under the most solemn form of their religion.

Unlike Mahadji Scindia, Daulatrao to a great extent put some restraint on the Peshwas hegemony. Daulatrao inherited all the scindia's states in Malwa, the Deccan and Khanesh, and he also became the deputy of the post of Vakil-i-mutalaq. He evaded the payment of the large demands made

82 SSRPD. 4 No. 281.
upon him by Nana Farnavis, for the Peshwas share of revenues of Malwa and Hindustan.\footnote{Malcom, \textit{op.cit}, Vol. I, p. 132; Vol. II, 144-146.} Dowlat Rao Scindia, according to Malcolm, 'considered himself, more the principal sovereign of India, than a member of Maratha confederacy.'\footnote{Ibid, p. 150.} He, in combination with Raghoji Bhonsle and Jaswant Rao Holkar, attempted to arrest the British progress which however resulted in failure.

**Scindia - Holkar Rivalry**

Being the main prop of the Maratha empire beyond Maharashtra, the relationship between these two ruling powers became conflicting as both of them came into conflict first in their campaign to Malwa and Rajasthan. The Peshwas attempted to curb the power and authority of the Scindias, and also to check the growing influence of the Holkars. The Peshwas played out Holkar against Scindia to preserve their own political status.

The rivalry between these two houses does have some antecedent earlier when Ranoji Scindia and Malhar Rao Holkar were working under BajiraoI. However, after Ranoji's death, the Scindia house had a capable and powerful man in the form of Mahadji Scindia. But Malharrao Holkar was succeeded in authority by his son's wife, Ahilyabai, who appointed Tukoji
to act as her deputy in leading the armed forces in campaigns. This double government, and the treaty of Salbai, when Mahadji pushed himself forward as the Regent of the Mughal empire, considerably undermined the strength of Holkar’s house. The rivalry was further compounded by Nana Phadni’s jealousy with the growing power of Scindias in Hindustan. Nana was intelligent enough to take the rivalry of these two houses into his own stride and posed Holkar as a counterpoise to the Scindias.

The Holkar house was hell bent on putting obstructions to Scindia’s northern affairs. Tukoji Hlokar arrived at Mathura on 30th July and joined Alibahadur, and tried to thwart Mahadji in everything, demanding absolute parity of powers, land and revenue between the Houses of Scindia and Holkar. While domestic recrimination, continued but they did not pay head and secretly wanted Scindia’s humiliation. When Holkar commenced attacking stray parties of Scindia’s

---

85 Tukoji wrote many letters to Ahilyabai about the manner in which the new acquisitions are being distributed in the north, where Scindia takes “Lion’s share”, and what remains is almost a desert, see V.V. Thakur, Holkar Sahichya, Nos. 229,234,236,241.

86 See Poona Akhbars, Vol. II, A.R. 99. The Peshwa was also making attempt to patch up the conflict between these two houses.

87 See their intense rivalry particularly in Rajasthan, SPD, 29, Nos. 233, 246 269 252 258; also see S.C. Mishra, Scindia-Holkar Rivalry in Rajasthan (Delhi,1981), pp.9-12, 20-46, 52-60; also see Sardesai, NHM, Vol. III (Bombay, 1968), p. 247.

horse. The Scindia army eventually advanced upon Holkar camp in the vicinity of Lakheri in 1793. The entire force of Holkar was virtually annihilated.\(^8^9\)

The rivalry once again surfaced when Yaswant Rao Holkar took over the command of Holkar house.\(^9^0\) Although Daulatrao's minister Baloba Tatya, strongly protested scindias measures against the Holkars,\(^9^1\) but Daulatrao could not effect any reconciliation with Yaswantrao Holkar. The two Holkar brothers, Yaswantrao and Vithoji, in the north and south, practically destroyed all the vestiges of the power which the Peshwa and his henchman Scindia exercised.\(^9^2\) A very inhuman kind of punishment was meted out to Vithoji Holkar by Bajirao II when he was captured by the Peshwa's man. Yaswantrao remained interlocked with Scindia's troops on the Narmada and Scindia managing to defeat Yaswantrao in 1801. On 30th October Holkar inflicted a severe defeat upon Ghatge and thereupon the two opponents separated and began different tactics, in which Scindia alone stood to lose what he already possessed, while Holkar gained immensely. Bajirao was also severely routed at Poona in 1802 by Yaswantrao, who although, was not willing to wage a war against his master;

\(^8^9\) For a detailed discussion of Scindia-Holkar's rivalry, see Sardesai's, \textit{NHM}, vol III, pp. 243-249.


but Bajirao's continuous stiffness to Holkar's demands and his dispute with Scindia not being resolved through proper mediation by Peshwa irritated him enough to plunder Poona.\textsuperscript{93} Despite Yashwantrao Holkar's letter not to be played into Scindia's hands,\textsuperscript{94} and let me settle the matter with Scindia; the Peshwa did not do any thing to bring peace with the Holkar. Eventually 25th Oct., 1802, witnessed Yashwantrao wreaking havoc upon Scindia's army in Poona, and defeating Bajirao so badly that he fled to a village Weadgaon and then to Singhad.\textsuperscript{95} Thus resulted in the final withdrawing of Scindia from the vicinity of Poona. While Bajirao II, out of fear, sought British protection against Holkar and concluded a treaty known as 'Bassein treaty' with the Britishers.

This treaty virtually eroded the base of the Maratha empire as Bajirao II entered into a subsidiary alliance with the British. Thus, "the ancient relations (between the Peshwa and his former feudatory aobles like Scindia) had been entirely abolished by the treaty of Bassein and the various treatise since concluded.\textsuperscript{95}In August 1812, T.

\textsuperscript{93} Rajwade's, MIS, Vol. X, No.607; Even during this period Yashwantrao showed his all humility 12 days before the Poona route.

\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., p. 373. See the letter written by Yashwantrao Holkar to Bajirao II. Holkar's demand was the release of Khando Rao Holkar, confined by Scindia; and the return of his ancestral Jagir.

\textsuperscript{95} See for a detailed discussion of Holkar and Peshwas attempts, and eventually the attack at Poona, in PRC, Vol. X, pp. VI-VII, also see Crawford, Our Troubles, pp. 38-43.

Jenkins, the resident at Bhonsle's court, explained to the minister of Bhonsle that "the treaty of Bassein had commenced, and the subsequent treatise between the three great Maratha powers and the British government and its allies had completed, an entirely new system of international law amongst all the governments of India, which left every state independent within itself, and had virtually dissolved all the former connections of allegiance which any of the Maratha states owed or pretended once to the Peshwa..... Although several indirect attempts had been made to revive the old system of considering the Peshwa as the head of the Maratha Empire, the British Government had, and ever would set its face against any attempt to disturb the existing order of things."  

The Bassein treaty resulted in restoration of Bajirao on the Poona throne without any difficulty. But it eventually established the British supremacy despite Holkar making all possible attempts to thwart the British design. Upon the request of Yaswantrao Holkar to visit Jejuri and his desire to obtain a Khilat from the Peshwa for his son Eliphnstone wrote a letter to Yaswantrao in 1811, "your Vakeels replied, that your coming to Jejoory, without receiving a khillut, would be objectionable on account of your honour and dignity, and I had the honour to state them"

in answer that whatever might have been the case formerly, you had now for many years carried on war, concluded peace, and exercised all the functions of sovereignty without any reference to his highness the Peshwa, and that the other powers of India had made treatises with you and had acknowledged your independence, so that you stood in no need of khilicut of investiture on the part of any state." This letter further speaks that even in the heydays of the Maratha power and despite having strongly strained relationship with the Peshwas, the Holkars remained firm and consistent in seeking the legitimacy to their sovereign self from the Peshwas and their loyalty to the master was unquestionable. Yaswantrao Holkar anticipated that the British is emerging as very powerful force so he requested Scindia to forget all the differences and restore the Maratha power. But Scindia remained quite indifferent to Holkar's request. The British closely watching the attempts made by Holkars decided to do away with this house in completely subjugating the Marathas. It culminated in the battle of Mahadipur in 1817 when the wife of Yaswantrao Holkar, Tulsibai, acting as the regent of Matharao II, fell badly to the British power. 

---

98 See Mr. Elphinstone's letter to the Chief Secretary Edmonstone, Poona Affairs, PRC, Vol. 12, pp. 34-36.
100 See PRC, Vol. X, p. XVII.
Bajirao II thus lost his sovereignty to the British with Elphinstone issuing a proclamation on the order of the Governor General in 1818. Bajirao thus was kept under British protection with a stipulated amount of pension.

Religiosity and Political Sovereignty

Despite the humble origin of these two houses, the brahmans still acquired the same privileges and the rights. Their administrative set up had also strong religious tinge evident in Scindia's attempt to fill up all his key 'administrative posts with Gaud Saraswats and Shenvi brahmans, who were opposed to the Chitpavans.\textsuperscript{101} Another ruler, the Holkar house, particularly Ahilyabai Holkar, used to say, that she deemed herself answerable to god for every 'exercise of power'.\textsuperscript{102} Her worldly duty was influenced with deep sense of religiosity as 'she heard scared volumes of her faith, distributed alms, and gave food, in person, to a number of brahmans.\textsuperscript{103} She spent considerable amount of money in the construction of temples, dharamshalas, and wells, throughout the Holkar possession in Malwa. Even she built holy edifice, maintained establishments and sent annual sums to be distributed in charity, outside of her possession in Malwa. Ahilyabai built magnificent temple at

\textsuperscript{101} Sardesai, Historical Papers, opp.cit, No. 358.
\textsuperscript{102} Malcolm, opp.cit., Vol. 1, p. 177.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid, Vol. 1, p. 178
Gaya, known as Vishnupad temple, as well as 'Ahilyabai Mandir'. Ahilyabai, in her principal structures at Gaya, is shown to have adoring the image of Mahadeva; which is preserved in one of her temples. She is sainted among her own tribe of having placed near the statues of god Ramachandra and his wife Sita. She through the constant supply of the Ganges water to southern region became much more famous. Her religiosity was so deep that 'the Nizam of the Deccan and Tipu Sultan granted her the same respect as that of the Peshwa, Muhammadans also joined with the Hindus in prayers for her long life and prosperity. In 1776 Tukoji Holkar writes to Nana Fadnis, "This State has grown on the good-will of the master, and service on the side of the Holkar's service in the form of protection of Gods and Brahamins."

In the course of the rise of these houses, they started emulating the life style of the kingly Kashatariya princes, particularly the ancient dynasties of Rajasthan. These Rajput princes used to come to Banaras and Gaya for performing obligations to the shades of their ancestor's in the ritual called shraddha. Growing number of genealogist brahmins attended to their spiritual requirements. Bayly

---

104 Ahilyabai's religious activities has been discussed in many articles, particularly see M.M. Chakrabarti, 'Ahilyabai's Mandir (Gaya) New achievements', in Ahilya Samrika, 1972, Vol. 3, p. 11; also see 14-15, p. 16, pp. 14.21 by Shivnarayan Yadav, in Vol. 2.

105 See V.V. Thakur, opp.cit, Vol. I, No. 74, p.199
argues that 'the Marathas' claim to the Rajput dynasties encouraged them to seek merit by associating with holy places. After 1680, the Marathas appear to have replaced Rajputs as major donor at Banaras, Allahabad, Gaya etc. By the mid 18th century a tradition was developed by the Scindia and Holker in which the majority of temples at Banaras were founded by the 'natives of Deccan.' Both these houses went on building huge stone bathing wharves (ghats) in Banaras and established 'colleges' of dependent brahmins there. The Maratha emigrants in Banaras accounted for not less than thirty thousand people by the end of the century.

Mahadji also managed to get back Ajmer as well as Pushkar, the holy place, in 1791. He here built a splendid new temple. Further, when Mahadji had been able to put down the enemy of Shah Alam in 1789, the emperor rewarded Mahadji by issuing a firman prohibiting cow-slaughter throughout the Timuride empire and granting Mahadji the two holy places, Mathura and Brindaban. The British further ratified in a letter written by J. Malcolm to the Governor

---

106 C.A. Bayly, Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars, opp.cit., pp. 135, 137.
107 Ibid., p. 136.
General, in 18th March 1804. The letter includes Scindia's demands that the emperor's firman regarding the prohibition of cow-killing should be confirmed by the British government. Scindia also requested the British to continue our rights over Mathura and Brindaban. He further asked that the pilgrims bearing the Maharaja’s (Scindia's) dastak to kashi and Gaya, the two important religions places of Hindu worship, be allowed to pass free from all duties.

Mahadji’s favourite place of residence remained Mathura and his attitude towards the religion of the land remained proverbial. He was equally fond of the company of saints and he often sought blessing from them before embarking on any major campaign. Saint Dattanath of Ujjain in fact accompanied Scindia to Hindustan and remained with him at Mathura and Gwalior. Scindia while making his way to Poona in 1792, first went to Bid to meet his Muslim Guru, and receive his blessings. He also went to Tulzapur to offer worship to his family deity.

111 The various demands made by Scindia, see PRC, Vol. X, pp. 228-229.
What seems more striking and spectacular was Scindia's deep reverence for a Muhmmendan faqir, Bala Kadir. This particular act further shows how tradition was deep into the complementary elements. This faqir was the chief favorite and the companion of Mahadji Scindia. His prediction of great future for Mahadji brought him tremendous respect not only from Scindia but also from others.\textsuperscript{114} He became an acknowledged peer of Mahadji and he was always treated by him with utmost respect. Scindia prostrated himself at his feet every morning before he performed the ablutions prescribed by his own religion. He in the midst of his hectic activities also finds out opportunities to supply the money for the use of pious favorite. He has settled on Bala Kadir a considerable jagir and presented him with twenty thousand rupees to defray his expenses on a journey which he is about to make.\textsuperscript{115}

At the death of this faqir, all the leading peoples and sardars made considerable presents.\textsuperscript{116} Apart from this faqir, Scindia at his court received and protected all Muhammadan faqirs. One of them in fact is just retained for the sole purpose of proclaiming a march throughout the camp. The Muslim saint of Bid, Manshur Shah, was yet another favourite

\textsuperscript{114} T.D. Broughton, opp.cit., p. 222.

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid, p. 121.

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid, p. 228.
of Mahadji scindia. He, in fact, tried to secure the possession of Bid for this saint, but did not succeed in his object as Nizam Ali had strong stake at that place.\textsuperscript{117} Charles Malet, the first British resident at Poona, puts this act of Scindia in his own words, 'temporarily he is the Wakeel-i-Mutaluck an exalted son of Shah Allum, spiritually the devoted disciple of the holy saints Shah Habbeb and Shah Mansoor'.\textsuperscript{118}

The administration of the conquered territories of these houses generally remained in the hands of Saraswat brahmins. They, out of their pre-occupation, became considerably powerful groups by around 19th century. Apart from the proper hold which the Marathas managed to have over the towns and roads in the conquered areas, the terms of reference in their administrative transactions remained strongly Mughal. The tax collection, assessment and the payment all done along the line of Mughal administrative practices. Maratha sanad papers granted to the local grantees reflect the duties and rights in Mughal terms. The Maratha court and its police also remained closed to their Mughal counterpart.\textsuperscript{119}

\textsuperscript{117} See Sard\textsuperscript{a}n\textsuperscript{i}, NMH, Vol. III, p. 233.

\textsuperscript{118} P.R.C., II, No. 129, p. 228.

\textsuperscript{119} See S. Gordon, The Marathas, pp.143-145.
Thus once again the religiosity and the association with sacred places and the pilgrimage centres speak strong association with the pattern of royal behavior emerging out in the 18th and early 19th century India. The expenditure, lavishness, extravaganza associated with such acts, etiquettes, and royal practices became the legitimate expression of the royal power and the newly created pattern of authority. The conquered territories were also being stabilised in its administrative transactions.

Politico-Cultural Interface with the Conquered Territories

The above discussion further provides a backdrop to study the nature of relationship developed by the indigenous population with the conquered territorie's population. It has already been pointed out that the interface between the conquered and the indigenous people went much beyond the realm of appropriating agrarian surplus, revenues, cesses etc. The act of plundering and marauding can have its won logic and rationality to rule over an alien people for some time, but in the long run it becomes almost difficult to carry the burden of an alien empire without its root having had more beyond the economic interests and the imperial ambition. Since both these families came into prominence in the region of Malwa, so a brief look of Malwa and the Marathas would perhaps be the ideal point to start with.
Although certain aspects of administration and religiosity is already discussed earlier, the interface further in relation to religio-cultural attachment with the Maratha will show the political legitimation as an important ingredient of power construction. Before going into Malwa a cursory look of the interface with other conquered regions would provide a background to study this relationship.

In the south the Maratha court of Tanjore presided over a performance of poetry, religion and dance in the first half of the 18th century. It resulted in the fusion of ancient vaisnavism of the south with the saivism and the north Indian influence of the new rulers. In the north the Marathas supported the important shrine of Sheikh Muinuddin Chisti of Ajmer, already a shrine of popular veneration of the Hindus of Rajasthan. A late 18th century visitor to a Maratha revenue court in Gujarat noted how the court of justice presided over by the Chitpavan brahmins had become a quasi-temple where villagers did puja as well as registering rites. Even the Maratha administration to the places like Madura in south, also showed the development of Hindu religious practices. The Maratha officials dominated the


administrative transactions of the region, and the 'Modi-Marathi' became the court language. 122 This further points out that the religiosity was deeply ingrained. The interface was closely interrelated in relation to wielding power and in attempting to set up an administrative structure with the new territories. In this regard Malwa becomes crucial to explore the ways in which relationship was established as the Marathas had a strong stake in the region.

Malwa for the Maratha had remained an active field and a bone of contention since 17th century. Its strategic importance was due to the political and commercial nexus which it established with Hindustan and the Deccan. Stewart Gordon identifies Malwa as a 'March area', the one main route from the north to the south. 123 The area is inhabited by the Jats, Ahirs, Rajputs, tribals etc. But the region did not have any strong regional and religious identity.

Before the Maratha invasion, it was the Rajputs who as officials of the Mughal empire, remained powerful in this region. The Mughal patronage and the Rajput settlement, continued throughout the 17th century. But the process of using Rajputs as a collaborating elite was started since the

time of Aurangzeb. However, the Rajput did not establish any relationship with the indigenous population in matrimonial terms. But they indeed proved to be a lynch-pin of the Mughal administration and provided administrative stability to the empire.

The exact year of the Maratha incursions into this region is still vague. It is generally supposed that the penetration did not begin until 1720. This gradual incursion into the Maratha region has been beautifully summed up in Stewart Gordon's phrase called 'slow conquest'; the raid in fact began on the movable wealth of village and then proceeded from countryside to city and eventually with the force of ten thousand troops. Thus the Marathas as Malcolm describes, continued their incursions into this region for seven years, abandoned their annual attack of the province only with the advancement of Sawai Jai Singh, a Rajput Prince. But the authority of the Marathas was not established until the regime of Muhammad Shah. The field remained an acute point of contest between Scindia, Holkar and the Pawar, who were left by the Peshwas to levy chauth and sardeshmukhi. The sharing of revenue and the rising prominence of Scindias greatly disturbed the oldest Maratha

family, Pawar, in this region. All of them got embroiled into a conflict and factional dispute.

These gradual but continuous incursions of the Marathas brought them closer to the indigenous people of the area. Initially, the Marathas were content to divide the government and the revenues with the Hindu chiefs of military class.\textsuperscript{127} Similarly, they started assuming and adopting all those manners, etiquettes and behaviors suited to the Hindu population out there. The Rajputs and other powerful forces were appeased and conciliated by every concession to their pride, as well as to those forms of dignity which they had learned from their association with the Mughal government.\textsuperscript{128} While the lower level of the population, particularly the landlords and the cultivators, saw in the Marathas "beings of their own order, who though they had risen to power and dominion, continued to preserve the strongest attachment to the manners and the usages of those village communities in which they were born".\textsuperscript{129} Another interesting part of the Maratha movement in various parts of India was their attempt to keep up an 'intimate tie with their families and kindred tribe in their native districts; and the original links by which they were bound


\textsuperscript{128} Malcolm, \textit{opp. cit.}, Vol. 1, p. 12.

\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., p. 72.
to the community. These were constantly revived and strengthened by ties which operate with great force upon Hindus’. The Marathas simultaneously kept a sense of scrupulous inferiority in their intercourse and correspondence with the emperors as well as the Rajput princes.

The Marathas in the course of their stay in the Malwa region strongly strengthened their ties with the indigenous population by building temples, bathing ghats, tanks and rivers. Ahilyabai Holkar’s religiosity and her generosity has already been discussed. She built numerous temples in Malwa and other parts of India. The temple built by the Marathas also served the purpose of a school where Vedas and shastras were taught. The construction of numerous temples by these two families speak of the desire on their part to revive Hindu tradition. The Holkars, particularly, spent large amount of money on this project and continued religious grants for the repairs and maintenance of various temples. The Holkar’s Devasthan classification mentions some sixty-five temples built by Ahilyabai at different places throughout India. Similar to Holkars, Scindia also constructed various temples around Ujjain and Gwalior. Mahadji Scindia even went to build temples at the places

---

130 Ibid., p. 76.

like Mathura, Brindaban, Benaras etc. The style of Scindia's temple closely resembled the style adopted by the Rajputs.\textsuperscript{132}

The Mughal administration now started receding with the gradual stabilisation of Maratha settlements in the Malwa region. The effect is further evident in the change of the dresses of the men folk.\textsuperscript{133} They infused religious spirit into the brahmans of Malwa. Even in conventional matters religious colourings and effects were made. Many of the Maratha customs such as the worship of Ganesh, the distribution of til and sweets on the Makar sankranti were adopted by the Rajputs here.\textsuperscript{134} Even the dialect of the region was influenced with the Marathi language.\textsuperscript{135} The Marathas also had been able to regulate their relationship through the various administrative transactions. The faujdars and kotwals produced cases concerning every aspects of life. Every caste and clan of society came under their administrative decision.\textsuperscript{136}

\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., p. 79.
\textsuperscript{133} See Raghbir Singh, Malwa in Transition, pp. 333-339.
\textsuperscript{134} R. Singh, opp.cit., p. 335.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., p. 336.
The description of politico-cultural interface of the Marathas with the Malwa people further established this point that a mere desire of plunder and loot can never sustain an enduring political relationship despite the unprecedented amount of force and power being exerted upon the new people. It certainly needed other facets and avenues where the basic constituents of relationship of the ruler and the ruled have to have its internal logic in legitimizing each one's action. The deep imprint of the social and the cultural pattern of the Marathas made their gradual incursions more hospitable unlike the Mughals.

In a much similar manner the Marathas also influenced other parts of this imperial project. The Rajput-Maratha relationship is another point which contributes in the understanding of two different levels of power: Marathas and Mughals. However, the Marathas also had some parallels in transacting various administrative activities as well as some similarities in the ways the authority was wielded by these two different powers. The fraternal relationship in Rajasthan between the clan members were complemented by eating metaphors and the food was used to express the bonds between the persons (brother) in their individual capacity.137 Similar to this bond or the symbol of unity, the

Marathas were also knitted into a category through their close attachment to the watan. This very bond among the Marathas created through watan has been conceived by Frank Perlin as 'counter ideology';\textsuperscript{138} which can also flunt the concerns and rhetorics of the established centres of power. Thus in many ways the interrelationship established by Rajputs and Marathas becomes significant in understanding the emerging power in external frontier.

The Rajput-Maratha relationship in the initial phase was not very smooth as the internal dispute within Rajputana involved the Rajput princess into continuous conflict with each other. But this very conflict and dispute seems to have facilitated the Maratha penetration. The Maratha's continuous incursions into Malwa facilitated their entry into Rajputana and forced the Rajput rajas to comply with their demands. The Rajputs often used the Marathas to gain edge over their opponents within the Rajputana itself. Further, the breakdown of imperial rule in Rajasthan helped the Marathas to extend their power over other parts of Rajputana.\textsuperscript{139} Although Mahadji was once badly defeated at

\textsuperscript{138} Frank Perlin, 'concepts of order and comparision with a diversion on counter ideologies and corporate institutions in Late Pre-colonial India', in T.J. Byers and H. Mukhia (ed.), Feudalism and Non European Societies (London 1985), pp. 131-138.

\textsuperscript{139} See for the phase wise Maratha movement and their relation with the major states of Rajputana, in R.K. Saxena, Maratha Relations with the Major states of Rajputana (1761-1818 A.D.) (Chand andco, New Delhi, 1973), pp. 4-14, 52, 260.
Lalsot by the Rajput princes,\textsuperscript{140} but he recovered his loss in a very short time and became very powerful. In contrast to Malwa and Gujarat, the Marathas did not establish any regular direct administration in Rajasthan.\textsuperscript{141} It was Scindia who were able to acquire superiority over the Rajputs and Scindia managed to derive stable income from this region. Again here Scindia maintains his strict formal relationship with the ruling dynasty at Pune. The tribute which he obtained from the Rajput chiefs, he made it on the name of the emperor as well as in the name of the Peshwa.\textsuperscript{142}

The pilgrimage of Radhabai, the mother of Baji Rao I and Chimanji Appa, was applauded by all the Rajput princes. Large number of invitations powered in from Rajput princes as well as from the Mughal officials. All these people desired to receive the revered lady in their states.\textsuperscript{143} The lady later was accompanied by a special deputant... of Raja Jai Sing throughout her journey. The relationship is also seen in a letter addressed by Baji Rao to Swai Jai Singh. The friendly relations in this letter is expressed by Baji

\textsuperscript{140} See J.N. Sarkar (trans.), \textit{Scindia as the Regent of Delhi}, pp. 4-8.
\textsuperscript{141} Saxena, \textit{opp.cit.}, p. 261. But they often paid tribute and lucratives to the Marathas.
\textsuperscript{142} Wink, \textit{opp.cit.}, p. 140-43.
Rao to Jai Singh through the term ‘Kaka’.\textsuperscript{144} In 1743 Jai Singh celebrated the performance of Vajipeya Yajna at Jaipur in which the considerable number of Maratha brahmins were invited.\textsuperscript{145} The relationship also manifested in the ways they adopted and amalgamated styles, habits and etiquettes of the north Indian people. In one of the letter written by Nana Saheb from Bundelkhand in 1752, he says, "Life here is rich and full, one finds here larger gardens, growing varieties of flower and lotuses. The people here are rich and fare in complexion.\textsuperscript{146}

The places like Kota and Bundi, remained very friendly to Scindia and Holkar. Often the rulers of these places made rich presents to the Maratha families. In 1806, the Kota ruler sent valuable presents to the Bhonsle family.\textsuperscript{147} There also developed a particular system of offering Tika presents at the time of succession. In 1775 a valuable Tika was sent to Jankoji Scindia, as well as to Daulatrao Scindia in


\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., p. 84.

\textsuperscript{146} See this detailed letter of Nana Saheb to his friend to Nana Purandare in 1742, Sardesai, NHM, Vol. II, pp. 254-255.

\textsuperscript{147} See for a detailed description of various presents made by the Rajput rulers, in Beni Gupta, Maratha Penetration into Rajasthan (Delhi,1979), pp. 120-121.
1806. Along with several costly presents, Malharrao II also received Tika in 1811. In fact, tika presents remained a mark of strong loyalty on behalf of rulers of these states. The custom of sending tika to every succeeding ruler shows the acceptance of the ruler as a ruling lord.

Conclusion

It clearly emerges from the above discussion that the brahmnical institution had to adjust itself to the growing claims of various families and started co-sharing sovereignty in satisfying the imperial ambition. Accompanied with the imperial ambition is the meaning of identity which broadened as identity now no more expressed itself in relation to specificity in internal geographical frontiers, regional culture etc; but the gradual shaping-up of the interrelationship which inculcated and amalgamated cultures and rituals of two different traditions. The representation of tradition gets widened in constructing the Maratha identity as also seen in the way the brahmnical tradition was hammered at with the rise of these relatively low origin houses. These houses or families maintained a subservient relationship with the ruling brahmin regime as established centre of power. They sought legitimacy to their

---

148 Ibid., p. 122.
149 Ibid., p.122.
own rule by establishing such submissive relations, but refrained from bowing to the brahmical institution and their preconceived superiority as well as their own made dominant ideology by carving out their own independent authority. These two ruling houses of Scindia and Holkar represented almost all the constituents of ruling political elites in their attempts to stake claim over Malwa, Rajasthan, Bundelkhand, Deccan as well as Hindustan. They always represented Maratha interests in broader terms then the mere representative of the brahmanic regime of Pune. It was the Maratha banner which remained dominant in their discourse with their superiors and associates. The independent assertion of their powers with due respect to the established regimes speaks highly of the Maratha identity getting widespread in their relentless zeal to move beyond Maharashtra. What also seems clear that the politico-geographical frontier remained at crossroad to be threatened and thwarted by other powerful groups. The Marathas although remained relatively more stable and long lasting than other contenders in the conquered area. But the endurance of the frontier in cultural terms seems more strengthened. The cultural interface with the conquered territories shows the extent of Maratha identity along Hindu Dharma which was considerably reciprocated by the conquered population. Their various religious practices and the performance of various ceremonials and rituals relating to religion further made their claim more stronger and they remained more
hospitable in the conquered areas than the Mughal representatives.

The other important point which is evident through the above discussion is the importance of the titles, symbols and rituals at a secular plain acquired in creating a political process. The combination of celestial and earthly activities also sometimes manifested in the performance of rituals and ceremonials which speak the way the 18th century Maratha power evolved itself, a feature of various other parts of India as well. The pomp and pageantry found enough of expression in their ceremonials and rituals. Apart from reinforcing the official hierarchy, it shows each up in striving to legitimize itself. They were simultaneously looking for an opportune moment to conquer the last vestiges of power and thus they indulged themselves into rituals and ceremonials which in David Cannadin's words is aptly put as 'Rituals of Royalty'.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCINDIAS AT GWALIOR</th>
<th>Year (in A.D.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jayappa</td>
<td>1745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jankoji</td>
<td>1755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahadji</td>
<td>1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daulatrao</td>
<td>1794</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jankojirao</td>
<td>1827</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOLKARS AT INDORE</th>
<th>Year (in A.D.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malharao</td>
<td>1728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahylyabai</td>
<td>1765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tukoji</td>
<td>1795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yashwantrao</td>
<td>1798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MalharraoII</td>
<td>1811</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MAP OF SCINDIA AND HOLKAR'S DOMINION

Fig: 1.4
Source: - K. P. Diksit, Maharashtra in Maps
(Maharashtra State Board, Bombay, 1986)