CHAPTER I
RISE OF MARATHA POWER AND REGIONAL REALITY

In order to get an insight into the nature and background of the Maratha intervention in the major Rajput states of Rajasthan it will be pertinent to have a closer understanding of the structure and distinctive feature of the Rajput polity in historical perspective. Prior to the Mughal intervention a clan dominated territory of the Rajput state was perceived as constituting Rajasthan or the core area that was under direct control of the Rajput ruler and thakurais of the members of the clan lineage. The inherent rights of the members of the clan lineage in the conquered and colonized territory constituting the desa or state formed the basis of political authority and distribution of the resources. In this structure of polity a clan state could hardly be viewed as a compact territory with a centralized authority. For all practical purposes a clan state was an amalgamation of a number of miniature states. Differentiation that existed in terms of territorial resources was based upon two interlocking systems: one on kinship and the other on the military might of individual members of the clan lineage. The relationship between the ruler and members of the clan lineage in terms of the distribution of land and the pattern of authority was not invariably identical and static, it depended on the balance of power between the two and territorial resources available at any given period of time. In this context it is worth mentioning that a distinction was also made between inherited territory and newly conquered territory. Continuous parcelization of territory amongst brothers and sons prompted ambitious and powerful rulers to peruse expansionist policy both within the clan dominated territory at the cost of the members of the clan lineage as well as outside its bound giving rise to inter and intra clan feuds. These inherent conflicts provided ample scope for the intervention of outside authority. The long drawn out tussle between Rao Maldeo of Jodhpur and those members of the clan lineage who refused to accept him as the supreme authority and asserted their independent territorial rights culminated in Shershah's attack on
Marwar\textsuperscript{1}. Internal strife in Amber, Bikaner and Marwar over the succession issues led to the Mughal intervention in the affairs of these states on the requested of the disgruntled members of the ruling family.

The Mughal intervention and its bearing on Rajput policy needs to be examined against this background. The establishment of the Mughal paramountcy had several implications for the Rajput clan states. The Rajput chieftains including their nobles accepted the overlordship of an outside authority. Almost all leading Rajput rulers and their clan men with the exception of Mewar had accepted the Mughal imperial service under Akbar\textsuperscript{2}.

When a Rajput ruler accepted imperial service he was given a jagir that in part consisted of the clan dominated territory which was held directly by him including the capital town. These tracts formed the watan jagir. Part of the jagir granted in a clan dominated area was temporary in nature. The Rajput notion of this jagir irrespective of its tenure was the Patshahi or imperial jagir held in the desa or clan territory against one that could be assigned in the Patshahi desa or outside the clan dominated territory\textsuperscript{3}. The Mughal notion of watan jagir and the assignment of Patshahi jagir in the desa had significant implication for the clan lineage territories or thakurais for these units were brought under the control of the assignee and assignment was made by an outside power. The territorial rights and authority of the clan lineage holding thakurais and exercising parallel sovereign rights were reduced to the zamindar right. The size of the watan jagir varied form one Rajput ruler to another on political consideration. The extant of watan jagir held by Raja Rai Singh of Bikaner was much larger than one possessed by the rules of Marwar. The extant of Patshahi jagir held even in the desa fluctuated in accordance with the change in the mansab held by the Rajput ruler.

\textsuperscript{1} Singh, Dilbagh, State and Society Medival Rajasthan I, in Grewal J.S. (ed), The State and Society in Medieval India, Part I, OUP New Delhi, 2005, P.239.
\textsuperscript{2} Chandra, Satish, Mughal Religious Policies, The Rajputs and the Deccan, PP 72-103.
\textsuperscript{3} Singh, Dilbagh, State and Society Medieval Rajasthan, P 241
When a Raja died, all the parganas held by him in watan jagir with the exception of the core pargana or rajthan did not automatically pass on to his successor. The extent of his watan jagir depended upon his initial mansab. Thus in the case of Marwar when Mota Raja Udai Singh was granted the gaddi in 1582 he got only parganas Jodhpur in watan jagir. When Suraj Singh succeeded him in 1595 he received only, three parganas in watan jagir- Jodhpur, Siwana and Sojat, his son and successor Gaj Singh was granted Jodhpur, Jaitran, Sojat and Siwana in watan jagir. When Jaswant Singh became the ruler he was given the mansab of 4000 zat and sawar, and his watan jagir comprised of parganas Jodhpur, Merta, Siwana, Sojat, Phalodi and Satalmer. It is evident from all these instances that the Mughals did not treat the Rajput State as a cohesive or compact territorial unit. Any number of parganas barring the core parganas or rajasthan could be assigned to the Rajput ruler or any other mansabdar depending upon the will of the Mughal Emperor.

Significant changes occurred in the clan polity due to the Mughal intervention in Rajasthan. The members of the clan lineage were deprived of their right to nominate the ruler. Now it was the prerogative of the Mughal Emperor to place on the gaddi any son of the deceased ruler. This further strengthen the position of the ruler vis-à-vis the lineage members.

The growing authority of the ruler also led to the bureaucratization of the lineage territory. Older relationship based on kinship and shared accesses to resources was transformed into those based on loyalty and service. Modeled on the Mughal jagir system of prebendal tenures, the kinsmen were assigned revenues of land tracts that were conditional on service. A system of valuation (tan or rekh) of the revenue of villages was used to estimate the income occurring from the jagir and accordingly the jagirdar was requested to maintain troopers and horses. The jagir assignments were made through annually

renewable sanads or pattas legitimizing access to the revenue of the assigned tract on specific condition of service thereby replacing any prior claim to land based on hereditary right\(^1\). The assignments continued to be made to members of the ruling clan but the dominance of a particular sub-clan in a pargana was broken by the expedient of assigning jagirs to various sub-clans in the same pargana. These jagirs were held for longer duration and tended to become hereditary in the course of the 18\(^{th}\) century.

The impetus towards the bureaucratization of tenures by the Rajputs rulers went as far as to attempts to convert the status of the members of clan lineage from autonomous small chieftains into jagirdars. The relationship between the clan lineage and the ruler had customarily been based on military cooperation and political allegiance by the members of clan lineage in returns for autonomy in the affair of the lineage territory (thakurai). Attempts were made to redefine this relationship by treating the thakurai as jagir by fixing a notional revenue assessment of the lineage territory and fixing condition of service in proportion to the assessment. The political authority of the ruler was enhanced at the cost of the ancestral rights of the jagirdars belonging the clan lineage. This forms the background of the later controversy regarding the status of the clan lineage. The long period of political development and transformation in the preceding century made it difficult to validate the claim to autonomy made by the clan lineage on the basis of ancestral right and original conquest.

Despite all the limitations imposed by the Mughal paramount power, the Rajputs never gave up their own notion of what they regarded as their own desa or clan territory. The conflicting Mughal and Rajput perception of the clan territory found manifestation during the 18\(^{th}\) century in the wake of the decline of the Mughal authority when the principal Rajput chieftains pursued the policy of territorial expansion\(^2\). The conflicting perception of the territorial rights of the ruler

\(^1\)Singh, Dilbagh, State, Landlords and Peasants: Rajasthan in the Eighteenth Century, Delhi, 1990 PP 145-146
\(^2\)Singh, Dilbagh, State and Society in Medieval Rajasthan, op. cit. PP 242-243
Gupta, S.P. Agrarian System of Eastern Rajasthan, op. cit, PP 10-17
and clan lineage tended to alter the pattern of intra clan relationship that persisted throughout the 17th century and revival of the pre-Mughal Rajput polity paving the way for conflicts between the ruler and important member of the clan lineage for assertion of power and authority1.

Rapid decline of the Mughal central authority after the death of Aurangzeb had a far reaching implication for the Rajput clan states. Satish Chandra's study of the Mughal-Rajput relations has shown that the relationship was a sort of political alliance designed for mutual interest. It enabled the Rajputs chiefs to consolidate their position in their respective territories as well as against rival claimants. It opened a wider political arena for them and brought them to the forefront of the Indian political scene. They became the sword arm of the empire and by entering into matrimonial alliance with the Mughals they were able to establish personal relations with Akbar and Jahangir.

Satish Chandra and M. Alam’s works have examined the process of breakdown of the imperial system at various levels and the nature of changes taking place in the old relationships between different constituents of the empire2. C.A. Bayly has tried to define the ‘crisis’ of the 18th century by examining the developments at different level of the imperial systems by focusing upon the growth of many new centers of political authority, trade and commence and trajectory of the Mughal state3.

The present understanding about the Rajput principalities of Rajasthan in the 18th century particularly in the wake of the declining Mughal authority during the first half of the 18th century is that they were neither the successor states nor a political manifestation of the movements challenging the imperial authority like

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1Chandra, Satish, Essays on Medieval Indian History, op. cit. OUP, Delhi, 2003 P 389 and 410.
2Chandra, Satish, Parties and Politics at the Mugh Court, PP 258-68
Alam, M, Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India, Awadh and Punjab, 1707-1748, New Delhi, 1986.
the Marathas, the Sikhs and the Jats. They fall in different category as they gained considerable autonomy without ever formally declaring independence from the Mughal Empire. The Mughal authority over the Rajput chiefs became lax on its own and they were left to fend for themselves. The receding Mughal control paved the way for the Maratha onslaught towards north and their entry into Rajasthan. Various studies on Rajasthan have shown that the Rajputs states witnessed economic growth during the 17th and first half of the 18th century which is reflected in expansion of area under cultivation, colonization of new village and growing emphasis on the cash crops. An important development during this period was the close contact between the local state and the merchant groups which facilitated the expansion of rural economy, trade and commercial activities.

The beginning of the 18th century is marked by receding imperial control, growing factionalism at the Mughal court and emergence of new political entities. These developments created a different political situation for some of the Rajput principalities giving momentum to inter state rivalries and succession disputes. The rivals rulers and contenders for claim on ancestral domain were forced to aligned either with one of the faction at the Mughal court or seek intervention of an outside power. Frequent warfare between Kota and Bundi after Aurangzeb's death forced Bhim Singh of Kota to seek the protection of Saiyad brothers. The success of Bhim Singh against his rival ruler of Bundi with the patronage of Saiyad brothers enhanced the position of Kota ruler in the inter state politics of Rajasthan. The growing Maratha presence in Malwa became a cause of great concern to the Kota rulers. They could feel the pressure created by the Maratha entry into Malwa in various ways as their domain was adjacent to Malwa. Therefore, the problem of the Kota chief was not only to maintain his hold over the principality but also to protect it from the impending threat of Maratha incursions. The Kota chief Durjansal participated in the Mughal campaign against

1Chandra Satish, The 18th Century in India, op. cit.
2Gupta, S.P, Agrarian System of Eastern Rajasthan, op. cit. PP 38-44
the Maratha in 1734-35 and 1737. After the failure of Nizamulmulk against Peshwa Bajirao the Kota chief had agreed to pay chauth to the Marathas.

The growing political uncertainty also created internal turmoil in Kota. The Rajput jagirdars began to defy the authority of the Raja. Many of them failed to turn up even after being called by the ruler. Some deserted him when he was on his way to Rampura. The changed political climate prompted the jagirdars to act independent of the ruler's authority. At the same time with the Mughal protection gone, the chief was critically dependent upon the support of the clan. The Kota ruler had to appease the Marathas with regular payment of tribute.

The murder of Ajit Singh by his son Bakht Singh in 1724 was followed by succession dispute among his sons for the throne of Jodhpur. Abhay Singh was recognized by the Mughal emperor as the new ruler. However, the younger sons of Ajit Singh revolted against him with the support of some powerful Rathore sardars. Abhay Singh's diwan Bhandari Raghunath received help from Sawai Jai Singh of Amber who also requested the Maharana of Udaipur to send his forces to assist Abhay Singh to crush the rebellion. Thus with the help of Amber and Udaipur, Abhay Singh defeated his brothers Anand Singh and Raj Singh. He further strengthened his position by gaining the support is brother Bakhat Singh who was given possession of Nagor. When Abhay Singh was on his way to Gujarat to take up the Mughal assignment he came to know that his defeated brothers were trying to seek the Maratha help to occupy Jodhpur. Abhay Singh could see the Maratha threat to his state hence he decided not to proceed further. When in 1728 the Maratha invaded Marwar territory and plundered Jalore, he decided to make peace with his brothers. In view of the growing Maratha influence in Gujarat, the Mughals decided to appoint Abhay Singh as the governor of Gujarat in 1730.

The Maratha had begun to look towards Gujarat as a source of perpetual revenue since Shivaji's momentum. From 1716 onwards there were continuous

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1 Sinh, Raghabir, Malwa in Transition, P 285; Sarkar, J.N, Fall of the Mughal Empire, Vol.1, P 163
2 Parihar, G.R, Marwar and the Marathas, P.27
Maratha raids for regular exaction from the province. The Maratha presence in Gujarat was a concern for Abhay Singh as Marwar was open to Maratha attacks from Gujarat side. In the meantime differences between the Peshwa and Senapati Dabhade took a serious turn. Abhay Singh decided to be an ally of Bajirao and supported him with the Rathor forces and artillery in the battle against Dabhade.

The formidable pressure of the Marathas in Gujarat continued to pose a threat to Abhay Singh's position and prestige as the Mughal governor of Gujarat. He left Gujarat in 1733 in the face of the danger of an attack on Marwar by the ruler of Bikaner. By 1737 the Rathors totally withdrew themselves from Gujarat.

To check the Maratha advancement in Rajasthan Sawai Jai Singh convened Hurda conference which was also attended by Abhay Singh along with his brother Bakhat Singh. The Rajputs were also assured of the Mughal support by the Wazir Qmar-ud-din khan and the Bakshi Khan-i-Dauran. The combined Mughal-Rajput army reached Rampura, where Holker and Shinde were encamping. The Marathas passed the rear of the Mughal army, crossed the Mukundara pass and via Bundi entred the defenseless Jaipur territory. They looted Sambhar and collected good amount of money. Realizing the futility of anti-Maratha Rajput-Mughal front, Jai Singh and khan-i-Dauran decided to follow the policy of appeasement and agreed to pay 22 lakhs of rupees annually to the Maratha as the chauth of Malwa. However, Abhay Singh decided to join the anti-Maratha faction of the Mughals and pleaded for strong action against the Maratha. On the advice of Jai Singh, Bajirao asked his Maratha sardars to invade Marwar and lay it waste. Holker and Shinde, who were also supported by Raja Pratap Singh Hada of Bundi reached Merta. The Maratha first tried to negotiate with the Rathors for the payment of ransom. But on Abhay Singh’s advice his representatives refused to pay any ransom. The Marathas occupied

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1 Parihar, G.R, Marwar and the Marathas P.33
2 Bhatnagar, V.S. Life and Times of Sawai Jai Singh, Delhi, 1993 P 228
Merta and continued the siege to the fort of Merta. Eventually the Rathors surrendered to the Maratha and accepted the Maratha demand for ransom. The Marathas also forced Abhay Singh’s brother Bakhat Singh of Nagor to pay tribute\(^1\).

During the period 1737 to 1742 Abhay Singh did not demonstrate open hostility to the Marathas. However, his rival Sawai Jai Singh got an opportunity to weaken the position of Abhay Singh, when his brother Bakhat Singh of Nagor revolted against him. Jai Singh invited Bajirao at Dholpur with a view to enter into an agreement of mutual support against common enemies. But Abhay Singh foiled Jai Singh attempts to interfere in the internal affairs of Marwar by winning over his brother. Jai Singh now supported the claim of another brother of Abhay Singh namely Rattan Singh and recognized him as the ruler of Jodhpur. But Abhay Singh and Bakhat Singh thwarted his attempts by successfully facing the Jaipur army. Jai Singh had to conclude peace with Abhay Singh in 1742 and promised not to disturb him in future\(^2\).

The Rathors had agreed to pay annual tribute to the Maratha after the battle of Merta in 1736. However, they could not keep their promise and defaulted in payment. The Peshwa deputed Shinde and Holker to collect the tribute, but they did not succeed much in realizing tribute and forcing the raiyat to pay money. The raiyat at large resisted the Marathas and preferred to flee and destroy their dwelling houses rather than to make any payment\(^3\). Abhay Singh deliberately evaded the payment of tribute. Holker wrote to the Peshwa that strong measures need to be adopted soon to realize outstanding amount of tribute.

In 1743 once again the relation between Abhay Singh and Bakhat Singh became strain and there was possibility of a civil war between two brothers. Bakhat Singh strengthened his position by acquiring governorship of Ajmer from

\(^2\) Parihar, G.R. Marwar and the Marathas, P. 57
\(^3\) ibid, P 57
the emperor Ahmad Shah. He was also given the territory of Sambhar, Didwana and Narnaul. Bakhat Singh lost no time in occupying Sambhar which annoyed Abhay Singh. Bakhat Singh sent his son to Bikaner to solicit the help of Maharaja Gaj Singh. Abhay Singh retaliated by seeking help from the Marathas. Holker proceeded towards Sambhar to face Bakhat Singh. However, his attention was drawn to Jaipur affair which required his presence urgently. Holker brought about peace between the brothers and left for Jaipur along with a Rathor force deputed by Abhay Singh to help him against Ishwari Singh of Jaipur who was defeated at Bagru by the combined forces in August 1748. Thereafter Holker and Abhay Singh met at Pushkar, both exchanged turbans, shared food on the same table and developed close personal relationship which persisted even later on. Thus before his death Abhay Singh managed to secure the goodwill of Holker to protect the interest of his family.

**Expansion of the Maratha Power in Malwa**

By the end of the 17th century the failure of the Mughals to crush the Maratha movement despite Aurangzebeb's long presence in the Deccan came as a serious blow to the prestige of the Mughal Empire. Not only that the Marathas successfully defended themselves in the Deccan, they took an aggressive posture and started to raid the rich province of Malwa. The decline of the Mughal power especially after the death of Aurengzebeb further facilitated the gradual advancement of the Maratha power in Malwa. As early as 1711, the Marathas crossed Narbada and reached as far as Ujjain.

The Maratha encroachment upon the imperial territory was alarming because of the sensitive location of Malwa. In order to check the Maratha advancement Sawai Jai Singh was appointed as the Mughal governor of Malwa. He justified his appointment when he successfully resisted the Marathas and defeated the Maratha army in May, 1715. Sawai Jai Singh was entrusted with the responsibility to suppress the Jats of Agra region in September 1715 and he

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remained totally involved in the Jat campaign for two years, leaving the responsibility of administration to his deputy. Jai Singh's absent for almost two years encouraged the Marathas to resume their inroads in Malwa. The Maharana of Udaipur was requested to give military support to the deputy to check the Maratha advancement. He readily responded as the boundary of Malwa touched the boundary of Mewar as well. In view of the continuous raids of the Marathas the emperor decided to replace Jai Singh as the governor of Malwa¹.

Under Baji Rao who became the Peshwa in 1720, the Maratha policy of northward expansion found a fresh momentum and approach. Under his leadership the Maratha raids into Malwa for the realization of chauth became a regular feature. However, at the same time the Marathas also opened negotiation with the Mughals for obtaining the right to collect chauth from Malwa and in 1725 Shahu sent his agent to Maharana Sangram Singh requesting him to use his influence over the Emperor for the grant of this right to the Marathas. In the meantime the Marathas asserted their military might first by humiliating Nizam at Palkhed in 1728 and then defeating the Mughal army under Girdhar Bahadur the then governor of Malwa in the battle of Amjhera in which the Mughal governor lost his life². His cousin Bhawani Ram was appointed in his place but soon he was replaced by Sawai Jai Singh who was in favor of conciliating the Marathas. The Maratha sardars were instructed by Shahu to be considerate to Sawai Jai Singh keeping in view the old friendship³. Jai Singh's proposal for the annual grant of Rs. 10 lakhs to the Maratha in lieu of the chauth of Malwa was turned down by the Emperor and Jai Singh was dismissed from the governorship. However, he was brought back in 1732 and was asked to maintain a force of 48 thousand out of which Mewar was to contribute 18 thousand. He had strict order from the emperor to drive the Marathas out of Malwa. But the Marathas inflicted a crushing defeat on Sawai Jai Singh and compelled him to agree to pay Rs. 6 lakhs in cash and concede to their demand of realizing chauth from Malwa.

¹ Chandra, Satish, Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court, P.133.
² Selections from the Peshwa Daftar, Vol 13, Livas, 15, 23, 26, 27.
³ Raghubir, Singh, Malwa in Transition, P. 180.
return the Marathas agreed not to cause any disturbance in Malwa. Soon after
his defeat at Mandsaur, Sawai Jai Singh left the charge of the province to his
deputy and returned to Amber\(^1\). Towards the end of 1733 the Marathas again
marched into Malwa but now situation was beyond Jai Singh’s control and no
resistance was offered to the Marathas.

It was for the first time in 1734 that the Marathas were invited by the
Rajputs to settle their internal disputes. Sawai Jai Singh in order to assert his
superior position removed Budh Singh the ruler of Bundi from the gaddi and
made Dalel Singh Hada the ruler in 1730. Jai Singh’s move complicated situation
as the aggrieved party tried to seek intervention of an outside power which was
superior to Jai Singh. Pratap Singh Hada, the elder brother of Dalel Singh went
to the Deccan to seek the Maratha support for Budh Singh. Sihinde and Holker in
1734 restored the authority of Budh Singh on Bundi, but soon after Jai Singh’s
forces deposed Budh Singh and placed Dalel Singh on the gaddi\(^2\).

This was the beginning of the Maratha involvement in the internal affairs
and succession disputes of the Rajputs. The Marathas replaced the Mughals as
arbitrators in resolving the domestic disputes of the Rajputs. The Marathas
interference in Rajasthan got some legitimacy as they were invited by a section
of the Rajputs themselves. The Maratha intervention in Bundi exposed the
weakness of the Rajputs and became a matter of great concern for the rulers of
the Rajput states bordering Malwa. The Marathas by now were the de-facto
masters of Malwa and its contiguity to Udaipur made Maharana Jagat Singh very
anxious about the protection of his state from the Maratha inroads\(^3\). It was the
high time for the Rajputs to make a common cause against the Maratha
advancement in Rajasthan. Earlier also efforts were made to formulate a
common policy to check the Maratha expansion at the instance of Maharana
Sangram Singh, Sawai Jai Singh and Durjan Sal Hada of Kota. A major

\(^1\) Bhatnagar, V.S, Life and Times of Sawai Jai Singh, PP 210-211.
\(^2\) Bhatnagar, V.S, Life and Times of Sawai Jai Singh, PP 215-221.
\(^3\) Arzdash from Kanha Pancholi to Jai Singh, Vaisakh Vadi, V.S. 1781/1725.
breakthrough was achieved when the Rajput rulers called a conference at Hurda in 1734 to form a united front against any common enemy. However, this apparent unity remained a wishful thinking due to ambitions and internal problems of individual Rajput rulers. They lost the opportunity to offer combined resistance to the Marathas. The failure of Hurda agreement once again brought to surface inherent weakness of the Rajput polity. However, the Hurda conference at least revealed the willingness of the Rajputs to form an alliance to the Marathas irrespective of gestures of old relationship and goodwill between the Maratha and ruler of Mewar and Amber.

In 1736 Baji Rao visited Rajasthan to settle the pending issue of chauth. The purpose of this visit was to persuade the Rajput rulers to come to an agreement with him and confirm through a sanad the right of the Marathas to receive annual chauth from the Rajput states. The first major state which he decided to visit was Udaipur because of its glorious tradition and prestige. He reached Udaipur in September 1736 and was given a welcome present of Rs. 5000. Bajirao was instructed by Shahu not to create any trouble or ill will in Mewar and Jaipur. He had been advised by his well-wisher to remain calm while negotiating with the Maharana and to accept whatever he gives you. ‘You cannot grasp the whole world in one day’. After considerable negotiation a settlement for the payment of tribute was made with the Maharana which legitimized the supremacy of the Marathas over the Maharanas of Udaipur1. Leaving Udaipur, Bajirao passed through Nathdwara and then entered the Amber/Jaipur territory. Jai Singh reached village Jhadoli in paragna Malpura to receive Bajirao. They met a number of times, and had prolonged discussions to come to a settlement that would be acceptable both to the Marathas and the Mughal emperor. Bajirao kept on making new demands at different stages during the course of negotiations. Since the Mughal proposal did not contain grant of the governorship of Malwa to Baji Rao, the offer made by the Mughals was rejected by the Peshwa2. In the meantime Nadir Shah’s invasion in 1739 altered the political

2 Bhatnagar, V.S, Life and Times of Sawai Jai Singh, PP 234-238.
situation, severely damaging the prestige of the emperor and also affecting the position of different factions of the Mughal nobles at the court. Bajirao's death in 1740 weakened Sawai Jai Singh position at the Mughal court. Under the new Peshwa Balaji Baji Rao the Marathas continued to accept importance of Jai Singh's goodwill and looked upon for his support in their negotiation with the emperor. Sawai Jai Singh continued his efforts to bring about a settlement between the Marathas and the emperor. The Nizam also conveyed his willingness to the Peshwas to become a party in bringing about settlement between the Peshwa and the Emperor. But the Marathas preferred to rely on Jai Singh who had been the mediatory in their dealings with the Mughal court since long. The Peshwa wrote to Jai Singh that he considered him like his father and requested a loan of Rs. 20 Lakhs to relieve him from acute financial difficulties. He hoped that it would not be difficult for Jai Singh to obtain this amount from the emperor. In order to retain cordial relations with Jai Singh the Marathas even though took note of the fact that Jai Singh was helping Bikaner against Jodhpur decided to ignore his intervention and declared that his stand was justified. Balaji Bajirao strictly forbade Holker to take action in Rampura which might displease Jai Singh. He severely rebuked Holker for creating disturbance in Bundi and Rampura for recovering the outstanding dues. He wrote to Holker that his action has caused deep resentment at Jaipur.

The Peshwa and Sawai Jai Singh were to meet in early 1741 to settle the terms of agreement to be made between the Peshwa and the Mughal emperor. But in the meanwhile Shinde and Holker created widespread disturbance in northern Malwa. This provocative action of the Marathas displeased the emperor who decided to take precautionary measures as he did not approve of inconsistent and contradictory behavior of the Marathas. In view of the emperor's preparations for military measures against the Marathas, Peshwa was constrained to take counter measures. However, armed confrontation was

1Bhatnagar, V.S, op. cit, P. 251.
somehow avoided through the efforts of Jai Singh who arranged a meeting with the Peshwa at Dholpur. As per the terms of Dholpur agreement the Peshwa was made the deputy governor of the Malwa and that the Marathas were not to make disturbance in any other Mughal province\(^1\). But this agreement could not be honored by the Peshwa as it came in the way of other ambitious Maratha sardars particularly Raghuji Bhonsle. In 1742, when Jai Singh sent his representative to the Peshwa to protest against Shinde’s demand of Rs. 2 lakhs 40 thousand as khandani from Kota, instead of Rs. 1 lakh 20 thousand as agreed upon, the Peshwa replied that Kota falls in the jurisdiction of Ranaji and Mahadji Shinde and so it was their concern\(^2\). This forms the background of Maratha intervention in Rajasthan after Sawai Jai Singh’s death in September, 1743.

Marathas used Malwa as the safe base for their campaigns in North India. Maratha sardars Shinde and Holkar established their headquarters in Malwa after its conquest in late 1730s at Ujjain and Indore respectively. Holkar dominated most of Western Malwa and Shinde took control of the North and Eastern parts. Peshwa had direct control over most of Khandesh, south East Malwa and parts of Bundelkhand. From here Marathas made inroads into Rajasthan and North India across the Chambat-Yamuna river bank. The natural boundaries of central India roughly are Chambal-Yamuna river bank in the North, Tapti river valley in the south Aravalli hills in the west, Gwailgarh and Mahade hills of the Satpura range in the East. Central India exists in the western half of Madhya Pradesh, bordering districts of south East Rajasthan. Northern boundaries of Malwa plateau were marked by the river Chambal for same distance in the north-west separating it from the Hada principalities of Kota and Bundi in Rajasthan, the town of Kota itself located on the bank of river Chambal. For striking at Rajasthan Malwa afforded an excellent military base. Large number of people passed through this area annually as well as migrated from other parts especially Rajasthan and settled down lured by its fertile soil and very good

\(^1\) Selection from Peshwa Daftar, Vol. 5, L. 86 Sarkar, JN. Fall of the Mughal Empire, P 155.
\(^2\) Bhatnagar, V.S, Life and Times of Sawai Jai Singh, P 255.
climate. Frequent by people from all parts, Malwa has been termed as "Shatter or Route Region" without "persistent political tradition" and strong regional or religious identity\textsuperscript{1}. Raghubir sin has mapped the additional roads opened by the Marathas in the Malwa Suba and adjoining areas during their campaigns in the first half of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century\textsuperscript{2}. Like there was a route from Ajmer to Ujjain via Mandsor, linking Rajasthan and Malwa. Similarly an east-west road opened by the Marathas joined Kota to Shivpuri.

Maratha expansion in the North in early 18\textsuperscript{th} century was motivated by a desire to revive the ravaged economy of Maharashtra due to long standing war with the Mughals. Maharashtra itself was not so fertile and economically self inefficient as compared to neighboring Malwa and Gujarat. Peshwa's policy of northern expansion and acquisition of territory in Malwa were steps to gain accesses to the resources of prosperous Malwa. Added to it were access to political centres and pilgrimage centres in North India and Rajasthan.

In the early phase of the expansion of Maratha power in north India the Maratha frontier was confined to Malwa plateau. Kota served as a base for further Maratha advancement in Rajasthan including Jat dominated areas of Bharatpur and Gohad as well as territory under the control of Rohilla Chief. The period between 1732 to 1761 witnessed increasing Maratha penetration into North India and Rajasthan. Kota serving as the entry point to Rajasthan was brought under Maratha influence\textsuperscript{3}. Kota being not so powerful state, could not offer any resistance to the Maratha raids. The Marathas used the Mukandra Pass in the Mukandra Hills of the Aravelli range situated south of Kota to enter into Harauti and Jaipur territories. Kota became an early permanent out post where Peshwa appointed Balaji Yashwant Gulgule as his vakil and revenue collector. The Marathas gained control of famous Gagron fort located near the Mukandra hills. Its strategic location facilitated the march of Maratha army on the route via

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{1} Cohn, B.S., An Anthropologist Among the Historians and other Essays, Oxford, 1992, P 109.
  \item \textsuperscript{2} Sinh, Raghubir, Malwa in Transition, Map of Malwa Facing P.1
  \item \textsuperscript{3} Shindeshahi Itihasachi Sadhne, Vol. 1, A.B. Phalke (ed), Gwalier, 1929, L.2, A.D.1742
\end{itemize}
Kota to other parts of Rajasthan and Delhi. This route could be used even in monsoon when Burhanpur-Agra-Delhi route could not easily be used. Kota became one of the permanent Maratha outpost as early as 1742 as well as an important base for Shinde and Holkar in conducting their campaigns in Delhi, Punjab and further North-West near the Afghan border. Arms and ammunition depot and factory were set up here to maintain supplies to Maratha camps in nearby frontier posts. In and around Kota both Shinde and Holkar had their holdings, and Kota vakil Gulgule managed their revenue accounts separately\(^1\). The Marathas were also aware of the economic importance of certain pockets, hence Shinde tried his best to gain control over the salt trade conducted from Sambhar in which both Jaipur and Jodhpur had fifty-fifty share.

The Maratha line of control in Rajasthan started from Rampura in the south-west on Malwa border which earlier was part of Mewar territory and given to Madho Singh son of Sawai Jai Singh. It came under Holkar’s control but the Marathas had to face frequent rebellions of the Chandrawat clan of the Rajputs who dominated Rampura\(^2\). Kota was also under the Maratha control and the ruler paid tribute both to Shinde and Holkar. Jhala Jalim Singh, the regent of Kota was a close of the Marathas. Mukardra pass around Kota which was an important point of entry into Rajasthan and nearby Gagron fort were under their control. The Marathas made repeated attempts to bring Ranthambhor under their possession by wresting it from Jaipur. It was an important fort and its strategic location facilitated control over Ajmer, Jaipur, Sambhar and and Bharatpur. Marathas made repeated claims over Ranthambhor and urged the Jaipur ruler to surrender it to the Marathas. However, the Marathas faced lot of opposition from the local zamindars of the area and Jaipur. Moving further from Ranthambhor Karauli was a friendly state and a safe passage to the Maratha army to enter into

\(^1\)Shindeshahi Itihasachi Sadhne, L. 20 A.D. 1744.
\(^2\) Holkarshahica, Itihasachi Sadhne, V.V. Thakur (ed) Vol.1 Indore 1944, Nos. 157,158,162. See Gupta, Beni, Maratha Penetration into Rajasthan through the Mukundaro Pass, Delhi, 1977; Also see shastri, R.P., Jhala Zalim Singh (1730-1830) Jaipur, 1971.

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Jaipur from Gwalior. Beyond Karauli the Jats of Bharatpur state were tough opponents of the Marathas till 1760 but their power declined after the death of Jat Raja Jawahar Sigh in 1768. However, in the 1780s the jats partially gave up their hostility towards the Marathas and became friendly with Mahadji Shinde who was equally keen to win over the jats after the defeat of his army in the battle of Lalsot. However, the jats continued their hostility to Holkar. Kumbher and Deeg were two strong mud forts in Bharatpur territory. Shinde’s base at Mathura in 1780’s and 1790’s was east of these jat strongholds. This entire area witnessed Maratha military presence and regular campaigns were conducted to force the Rajput rulers to pay tribute. These regular Maratha campaigns served dual purpose. Not only these asserted Maratha dominance over the local chiefs but also forced them to fulfill the obligation to pay tribute to the Marathas. The Rajputs met this obligation in part or full only when Marathas exerted armed pressure. Continued hassle over the payment of tribute, huge accumulation of arrears on account of delayed or nonpayment of tribute and other kinds of payment that were to be made to the Marathas were the order of the day throughout the latter half of the 18th century. The Marathas who found many areas in Rajasthan economically poor concentrated on collecting revenue directly from select pockets only. The economic considerations limited the Maratha penetrations into Udaipur, Jodhpur, Ajmer and Jaipur territory as they did not go further into arid areas further North-West. The Marathas were interested in revenue rich area falling in south-east Rajasthan. The Marathas also eyed place of strategic importance such as Ranthambore, Ajmer, Rampura, Kota and Bundi which were also fertile tracts and commercially productive. The revenue potential of these areas led to constant Marathas presence there. Shinde and Holker had to apply continuous military and diplomatic pressure to maintain their control at these places. However, local opposition and not so cooperative attitude of the Jodhpur and Jaipur rulers never allowed the Marathas to consolidate their hold over these places. It was after 1790 that the Marathas were able to assert their

Gwalior Kharita No. 165, Magh Sudi 1, V.S. 1815/1758, No. 166, Posh Vadi 10, V.S. 1815/1758.
commanding position in the areas when they defeated the combined army of Jodhpur and Jaipur at the battle of Patan and Merta.

With numerous fortified locations of the Rajput rulers and their lineage members the Rajput always offered stiff resistance to an invading army. Extreme climate conditions were also a deterrent particularly during hot summer months. The major states of Rajasthan, Jodhpur, Jaipur and Udaipur bore the brunt of Maratha onslaught but offered tough resistance to the Maratha. They could evade payment of tribute despite repeated claims and reminders on part of the Marathas. The Marathas could overawe the Rajputs only after engaging them in pitched battles deploying Europeanized Maratha forces in 1790. Numerous forts and fortalice of the Rajput rulers and their subordinates scattered over all parts of Rajasthan were used to resist the Marathas and defy their hold on territory.

As noted earlier economically Rajasthan was not as rich as neighboring Malwa, Gujarat and Doab because of its geographical complexities which did not permit rich agriculture\(^1\). However, there were certain important trading centers in Rajasthan which the Marathas found useful particularly for trading in quality horses brought from Sindh side along with other draught animals like camel and bullocks. Pushkar, Nagor, Batotra, Patan and Jaipur were important center\(^2\). The Marathas were also interested in acquiring control over Sambhar. Maratha activities in the fifty years were centered around Ajmer, Kishangarh, Shahpura, Malpura, Tonk, Toda, Sambhar, Kota and Bundi. All these areas were located where frontiers of Jaipur, Jodhpur and Udaipur states converged. Other areas falling in these states did not attract Maratha interest as they lacked in revenue yielding capacity.

The Peshwa quite often sent orders for the purchase of Turkish horses from Jaipur for his personal requirements. Horse trading centers in Rajasthan also attracted the attention of the Marathas. It is evident from the Kharitas

\(^1\)Singh, Dilbagh, State Landlords and Peasants, P. 2
\(^2\)Gwalier- Kharita No.19, Magishri Vadi 4, V.S. 1828/ 1771; No.136, Bhadon Vadi 2, V.S. 1828/ 1771; No.107, Baisakh Sudi 9, V.S. 1843/1786; No.105, Jeth Vadi 5, V.S. 1843/1786.
originating from the Maratha centers that the Maratha representatives often crossed over to Rajasthan to purchase horses and camels from Rajasthan just before the Battle of Panipat. Mahadji Shinde's letter to Maharaja Prithvi Singh of Jaipur in 1771 indicates that the Marathas interest in horse trade from Rajasthan remained intact even after the battle of Panipat. He wrote to Prithvi Singh to render his good officers in helping his ally in North India Himmat Bahadur's agent Gosai Jagrupgiri, who has gone to Rajasthan to buy horses and camels from the cattle trade fairs. Many of the local fairs emerged as the trading centers for horse trade in Rajasthan. These were being used as important outlets for indigenous horse trade of Sindh and Gujarat. Horses of the imported breed were also traded in these centers. The Maratha sardars required horses for their cavalry which they obtained from Pushker, Nagor and Baltora at cheaper rates. These places were frequented by the Maratha sardars and their representatives. Pushkar fair was the major center for horse trading. Mahadji Shinde was personally interested in promoting Pushkar fair. He made a personal request to Pratap Singh; the rulers of Jaipur to inform invite all the traders for participation in Pushker fair.

In the early phase when the Maratha north bound activities were confined to Mawla only, Kota was used by the Marathas as a safe base for further advancement in Rajasthan. The period between 1732-1761 witnessed the gradual expansion of Maratha dominance in Rajasthan. Kota became the gateway to Rajasthan. Kota being a small state, could not afford to resist the powerful Maratha raids. The Marathas used Mukundra pass which was located south of Kota to make inroads into Kota, Bundi and Jaipur. Famous Gagron fort was important for the Marathas for conducting campaigns in Rajasthan. Control over Gagron also facilitates movement on the route via Kota to Rajasthan and Delhi as it was all weather route including the monsoon season when Burhanpur-

1 Indore Kharita No. 80, V.S. 1818/1761.
2 Gwalior Kharita No. 19, Magishri Vadi 4, V.S. 1828/1771.
3 Shindeshahi itishasachi sadhne, Vol 1, A.B. Phalke (ed).
Agra-Delhi route was not easy\textsuperscript{1}. Kota became one of the permanent Maratha out
post as early as 1742 and in the 1750s and 1760s it became even more
important base for the North bound campaigns of the Marathas under Shinde
and Holker. Arm and ammunition depot and factory were set up in Kota to
provide timely supplies to Maratha camps.

In the process of the expansion of the Maratha power in the North, the
Maratha crossed ever many geographical boundaries. Shinde and Holker owe
much to their military success due to their strong cavalry expertise in guerilla
warfare and subsequently on their adaptation of new tactics on the warfare in the
north. In short span of time the Marathas moved from Khondesh to Malwa and
Bundelkahnd and moved thereafter brought Rajasthan, Delhi and Doab under
their dominance.

\textsuperscript{1} Shastri, R.P, op. cit, P. 27.