Appendix IV

Baroda, the capital of Gaekwad Dominion.

The Gaekwad dominion in the eighteenth century was scattered all over Gujarat and Kathiawad. These territories were not compact, the reason being that initially the Marathas invaded Gujarat for the collection of tributes only and were not conscious of creating kingdom. Later they started exacting tributes in a regular fashion. Pilajirao and Damajirao II, during the collection of tributes started gradually occupying the territories also with the decline of the Mughal power. In certain regions the Gaekwads established their sovereignty in full without resistance while in other regions they were given a tough fight. Thus the dominion could not be properly organised in a compact form. The Gaekwad dominion in Gujarat comprised of regions lying between the river Mahi and Narbada, a block lying to the west of Sabarmati river, zones lying to the south of river Tapti and scattered areas in the peninsula of Kathiawad.

Baroda was the capital of the Gaekwad dominion in Gujarat situated on 22° 15' 30" north latitude and 73° 11' east longitude. It was the seat of activity of the rulers of Gaekwad family. Malet describes Baroda as "the capital of Gaekwad dominion and the residence of Fatehsingrao I, the reigning head of the family. It is situated six kos from Versara situated in a beautiful plain twelve kos from Pavagarh, the loftiness and bulk of which rising singly above the flat forms a most magnificent object".


C.W. Malet An English Officer at Khambhat (Cambay) later Resident at Poona; account from his diary, Yr.1785-1786.
In ancient times Baroda was known by the names of 'Vatpattana' and Vatapadra (meaning abode of banyan trees). This sanskrit name was changed in Prakrit to 'Vadodara'. The history of Baroda dates back as early as Indo Grecian era when the township of Ankottaka (present day Akota, a suburb of Baroda) on the left bank of Vishwamitri river was the vital link for Brugukachha (present day Broach), a humming area for the trade. Repeated floods in Vishwamitri were responsible for another settlement on the right bank known as 'Vadapadraka' during the Gupta and Chalukyas period. Solankis and Vaghelas ruled Gujarat in later centuries when this township developed. Baroda later came under the Sultanate of Gujarat during the Muslim rule. It came under the Mughals during Akbar's time. With the advent of the Gaekwads on the Gujarat scene in the eighteenth century, the Mughal rule came to an end. Finally, Damajirao II took Baroda from Sher Khan Babi in 1734.

Forbes describes Baroda during Fatehsingrao's time as "the fortifications of Baroda like most other places in India in those times consisted of slight walls, towers at irregular distances and several double gates. The town was intersected by two spacious streets in those days dividing it into four parts meeting in the centre at a market place, containing a square pavillion with three bold arches on each side and a flat roof and fountains".