INTRODUCTION

Among the successor states of 18th Century India, the Marathas under the Peshwas were one of the most powerful and widespread. With a new generation of Maratha Sardars like Shinde and Holkar in Peshwas army, Maratha power expanded beyond the Narmada River as the Mughals were getting weaker in the regions outside Delhi. Marathas under Peshwa Baji Rao I and Chhatrapati Shahu conquered Khandesh, Malwa and Bundelkhand from the Mughals through a series of campaigns by late 1730s. Above geographical regions later also identified as Central India emerged as a base for future Maratha military operations in the neighbouring region of Rajasthan as well as tracts North of Chambal and Yamuna rivers extending from Mathura-Agra belt to Allahabad. Central India acted as a new homeland for powerful Maratha political formations of Shinde and Holkar in the later half of the Eighteenth Century. From here Shinde and Holkar were able to revive Maratha power in Rajasthan, Delhi and Doab regions in the North that were lost after the Battle of Panipat in 1761.

Rise of Shinde and Holkar in Maratha politics and their role in Maratha state formation before and after the third Battle of Panipat can be better understood in the light of simultaneous processes of disintegration of the Mughal Empire and the rise of Maratha power under the Peshwas. In the South the Marathas replaced Mughal power in the outlying provinces after Shahu and Peshwa Balaji Vishwanath had stabilized their position in Maharashtra during the period 1713 to 1720. Next Peshwa Bajirao adopted the policy of Maratha expansion in Khandesh, Malwa and Bundelkhand. The rise of Maratha power outside Maharashtra received further impetus from the weakening of the Mughal Empire at the centre as the differences between the various groups of nobles at the Delhi court grew over the years following the demise of Aurangzeb. This impacted already strained Mughal central authority’s control over the outlying provinces. Bajirao gave Ranoji Shinde and Malhar Rao Holkar administrative and military power through distribution of saranjams in Malwa and Khandesh. Shinde and Holkar families exploited this opportunity and made strong presence in the areas North of Narmada River in the later half of the Eighteenth Century.
The disintegration of the Mughal Empire and rise of the Maratha power during the 18th century happens to be the main themes in the major works on 18th Century India.

Jadunath Sarkar and G S Sardesai were the first to write authentic history of the Mughal Empire and the Marathas during the 18th century based on documentary evidence culled from Persian, Marathi, English and primary sources in other local languages. Sarkar in his *Fall of the Mughal Empire* made full scale study and mapping of the receding Mughal Empire in the context of the emerging regional and local power group's new challenges and coping up with the emerging power equations in the outlying provinces.\(^1\) Maratha expansion in the North happened to be his main focus while dealing with the various regional powers that came to inherit the erstwhile Mughal *subas* beyond the Delhi-Agra region following the period of Muhammad Shah; the last Mughal Emperor to hold power in the outlying provinces. Shinde and Holkar's advance and progress in the North may not be possible to study on the same scale as Sarkar and Sardesai have attempted being contemporaries and complementing each others mastery over Persian and Marathi languages.

Like Sarkar, Sardesai's *Marathi Riyasat*\(^2\) and *New History of the Marathas*\(^3\) were first full scale history of the Marathas based on the official Marathi records of the Peshwa period preserved in the *Peshwa Daftar*. Sardesai improved upon James Grant Duff\(^4\) and M G Ranade's\(^5\) accounts by bringing out first authentic political history of the Peshwa Period, Maratha expansion in the North under Peshwa and later Mahadji Shinde received prime attention as he devoted second and third volumes to assimilate his findings from the 45 volume *Selections from Peshwa*

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1. Sarkar, Jadunath, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, 4 Volumes, First Published 1932-50, Reprint, New Delhi, 1971-75
Daftar series of documents that he brought out of the documents preserved in the Alienation office, Poona.¹

More than producing the authentic political histories in the nationalist framework both Sarkar and Sardesai worked on vast mass of contemporary documents in Persian, English and Marathi relating to Maratha expansion and supremacy in the North during the later part of the 18th Century. To Sarkar’s credit goes compilation & translation of several volumes of English and Persian records relating to Maratha expansion and supremacy of Shinde and Holkar in the North in the second half of the 18th century.² Sardesai, besides looking after the production of multi volume Selections from the Peshwa Daftar, also compiled another volume of Marathi paper relating to the period of Mahadji Shinde and Nana Phadnis.³

Besides providing easy access to the documents to future historians by translating from Persian to English and transcribing difficult Modi Marathi documents into Devnagri, both Sarkar and Sardesai have provided their own assessment of the trend of events as evident from the documents in the introduction to these compilations. Study of Shinde and Holkar’s in North India campaigns, their growing power and their relations with the Poona court, The English, The Mughal Emperor and the various power groups in the North seems to have been close to both Sarkar and Sardesai.

Raghubir Sinh’s ⁴ Malwa in Transition also came close to the above genre of writing. Based on contemporary Persian and Marathi documents Raghubir Sinh provided extensive account of the Maratha campaigns and growing crisis of the Mughal Empire in the Malwa suba as experienced by the successive Mughal subadars after Aurangzeb’s period. Jai Singh, Nizam-ul-Mulk and other Mughal subadars role right up to the Maratha victory in 1738 found plenty of space in this study of the crisis of the Mughal Empire in the Malwa region. Raghubir Sinh’s familiarity with the complexion of the Malwa as local Raj put prince provides first hand account of the impact of Maratha campaigns on a large number of small Rajput principalities that assumed independent status in the period of Mughal-

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¹ Sardesai, G S (ed.), Selections from the Peshwa Daftar, 45 Volumes, Bombay, 1930-34
³ Historical Papers Relating to Mahadji Shinde, Sardesai, G S (ed.), Gwalior, 1937
⁴ Sinh, Raghubir, Malwa in Transition or A Century of Anarchy, 1698-1765, Bombay, 1936
Maratha struggle. Raghubir Sinh raises the problems faced by the local Rajput rulers in the transition phase when both regular Maratha campaigns and shuffling of Mughal *subadars* as a result of the growing pressure on the Mughal court brought the crisis in the Malwa to its climax. He also discusses the role played by Sawai Jai Singh in the Mughal-Maratha politics as *subadar* of Malwa. Jai Singh's larger ambition to expand his territory by favouring Marathas\(^1\) paved the way for Bajirao and his sardars to penetrate deeper and deeper in the region during the period 1720-1740.

Raghubir Sinh's work may have been inspired by John Malcolm's *Memoir of Central India*\(^2\) but its treatment of political history of Malwa in the first half of the 18\(^{th}\) century remains a pioneering effort that studies Malwa *suba* during the period of the crisis of the Mughal Empire and the rise of Maratha Power in contrast to Malcolm's post-mortem of Maratha rule over Central India just after the British occupation. What Malcolm's\(^3\) Memoir dealt with was the history of Malwa and other adjoining regions like Khandesh and Bundelkhand in the period after the demise of Mahadji Shinde and Ahilyabai Holkar as evident from the economic statistics and administrative details provided by him pertaining to Daulat Rao Shinde and Jaswant Rao Holkar's period.\(^4\) Basically Malcolm wrote an account of Central India based on his preliminary investigations of the region between 1817 and 1821 as a British administrator.\(^5\) The fragmentary history of origin and rise of Shinde and Holkar that he narrated were not based on contemporary documents but later reports that he gathered in course of his field visits. Thus Malcolm's work is a more authentic for the period of Daulat Rao Shinde and Jaswant Rao Holkar than the details on Mahadji Shinde and Ahilyabai Holkar's period which are based on later reports.\(^6\) Both Maratha campaigns and shuffling of Mughal *subadars* as a result of the growing pressure on the Mughal court brought the crisis in the Malwa

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\(^1\) Ibid., pp.162,

\(^2\) See Jadunath Sarkar's foreword to Raghubir Sinh's *Malwa in Transition*, pp. vii-viii

\(^3\) Malcolm, John, *A Memoir of Central India and Adjoining Provinces*, 2 Vols, First Published, 1823, Reprint, New Delhi, 1970

\(^4\) Malcolm, John, *A Memoir of Central India and Adjoining Provinces*, See Vol.2 for the statistical details pertaining to Central India

\(^5\) Ibid., See Vol. 1, pp.225-254

\(^6\) Ibid., See Vol.1, pp.142-324, Family History of Holkars before Jaswant Rao Holkar is briefly dealt, major portion is devoted to the career of Jaswant Rao Holkar, See pp.197-324
to its climax paving the way for Bajirao and his sardars to penetrate deeper and
deeper in the region during the period 1720 to 1740.

Study of decaying Mughal Empire and its politico-administrative
institutions at the turn of the 18th century in the context of the disintegration of the
Mughal Empire especially during the period of Aurangzeb and his weak successors
have been the main focus of the works of Satish Chandra¹ and Irfan Habib²
through his classic study provides a background to the weakening of the Mughal
Empire. Both the scholars' work have strong bonding as they take up the working
of zamindari and jagirdari system while describing the crisis of the Mughal
Empire. Expansion and effectiveness of the Mughal State structure in the outlying
provinces were based on the participation of the local zamindars and the local
Mughal representative – the jagirdar in hey days of the Mughal Empire.
Zamindars and jagirdars role in the Mughal revenue collecting machinery were
paramount according to Irfan Habib and Satish Chandra. Mughal State structure
came under pressure when zamindars and jagirdars started parting ways from the
central authority as pressure for greater revenue share and fresh jagir allotment and
distribution became unmanageable.

Since the rise of the Maratha power in the North started with the Maratha
campaigns and the later conquest of the Malwa suba, it is important to visualize the
whole political scene from Mughal, Maratha and regional perspective in the years
that followed Aurangzeb's demise. Successors of Aurangzeb proved weaker in
holding together the nobles both at the centre and in the provinces. In the absence
of a strong Mughal ruler faction politics at the centre became more and more
pronounced. This aspect has been highlighted in the studies made by Satish
Chandra³ and Muzaffar Alam.⁴

Bringing more authenticity to the process of changeover from Mughal
system to regional political formations, present genre of historians have expanded
the horizon and have probed deeper into the socio-economic history of each region

¹ Chandra, Satish, Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court, 1707-1740, First Published, 1959,
Reprint, 2002, pp.19-32; also Chandra, Satish, Medieval India: Society, the Jagirdari Crisis
and the Village, Macmillan, Delhi, 1982, pp.67-75
² Habib, Irfan, The Agrarian System of Mughal India, 1556-1707, First Published, Bombay,
³ Chandra, Satish, Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court, pp. 258-268
⁴ Alam, Muzaffar, Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India, Awadh & the Punjab, 1707-1748,
New Delhi, 1986
while studying broader political formation at the province and district levels for a
comparative study of 18th century political formation with those of the Mughal
period. In the process they have expanded their study to other social groups along
with the zamindars. Making use of a larger data base generated from the study of
village and pargana level records and also studying vast mass of contemporary
correspondences, news letters and private papers in not only the language of the
Mughal court but also the vast mass of contemporary records in English and local
Indian languages have been incorporated in these regional studies.

Suggestions have also been made by Barnard Cohn to widen the scope of
study of 18th century political systems to all levels of elite formation right from the
central authority at centre and suba level to the zamindars at pargana and mahal
levels. Cohn also makes suggestions for study of regions as functions of centres
integrated by various types of networks, most common being the trading and
political network binding together a particular region.

C A Bayly’s study for North India in the later half of the 18th century and
better part of the 19th century focuses on the role played by merchants, traders and
bankers as agency for change in the regional political formations that they had
served as financiers gave way to British Empire as they switched sides.

Muzaffar Alam in his study of the Mughal political decentralization in the
first half of the 18th century has made a case for growing prosperity of zamindars
as the cause of their revolt in Awadh and Punjab on the basis of contemporary
Persian records. Another social group represented by madad-i-maash holders who
had come to hold large areas in revenue free grants in Awad pl region too became
powerful and distanced themselves from the Mughal empire, due to their shifting
relations they also came in conflict with the local zamindars argues Muzaffar
Alam.

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1 Cohn, Bernard S, ‘Political Systems in Eighteenth – Century India: The Banaras Region’ in An
Anthropologist Among the Historians and other Essays, Delhi, 1987, pp.483-499
2 Cohn, Bernard S, “Networks and Centres in the Integration of Indian Civilization” in An
Anthropologist Among the Historians and other Essays, Delhi, 1987, pp.78-87; See also his
‘Region Subjective and Objective: Their Relation to the Study of Modern Indian History and
Society’ in the same volume, pp.100-135
3 Bayly, C A, Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British
4 Alam, Muzaffar, op.cit., pp.305-7
Making use of a large data base generated from the study of pargana and village level revenue records from Jaipur state in Rajasthan, Dilbagh Singh’s study of local and revenue administration of Jaipur state in the second half of 18th century depicts progressive decline in the economy in Jaipur state through out the second half of the eighteenth century.¹ Eastern Rajasthan that this study focuses upon besides suffering from the frequent visits by the Maratha armies also had to face frequent famines. Dilbagh Singh has shown the local economy of Eastern Rajasthan in shambles on several counts: large scale migration of cultivators to Malwa and Kota region, decline in revenue collection from 28 to 50 percent, cultivated area shrinking by 50 percent, decline in cultivation of both cash and food crops, also growing incidence of contract farming called *ijara* as investment opportunity, as agricultural production by the richer section stopped.²

Rise of the Marathas in Maharashtra under the Peshwas and their expansion in the North during the 18th century period has also received wide scholarly attention as it was viewed as part of larger disintegration of the Mughal Empire process in the outlying provinces in the South. Irfan Habib has viewed rise of Shivaji as *zamindars* uprisings in the Deccan against the oppressive Mughal rule.³ Marathas were among the first to pose challenge to Mughal power in the Deccan during the period of Aurangzeb and later Maratha dominated areas were the first to breakaway from the Mughal Empire soon after the demise of Aurangzeb. Satish Chandra has highlighted *jagir* distribution to Maratha sardars as causing rift between the Mughal nobles and the Emperor, because later on as the Empire reached its territorial limits, it became difficult to satisfy the new applicants with *jagirs*.⁴ Rise of the Peshwas and expansion of the Marathas in the North was continuation of the political process that began under the leadership of Shivaji who successfully led Maratha *sardars* against Aurangzeb till his death. Aurangzeb’s attempt to bring Maharashtra under Mughal Empire after Shivaji’s death was met with strong resistance shown by the Maratha sardars led by Rajaram, younger son

¹ Singh, Dilbagh, *State, Landlords and Peasants, Rajasthan in the 18th Century*, Delhi, 1990, pp.199-202
² Ibid., pp.199-201
³ Habib, Irfan, *op.cit.*, See the section on Political Role of Zamindars, pp.384-385 & For Shivaji see, pp.401-405
⁴ Chandra, Satish, *Medieval India: Society, the Jagirdari Crisis and the Village*, Delhi, 1982, pp.67-75
of Shivaji after Aurangzeb executed Sambhaji, elder son and successor to Shivaji. After Rajaram’s death in 1700 his widow Tarabai seized the initiative and rallied Maratha sardars against the Mughal forces till the death of Aurangzeb. Sambhaji’s son Shahu who had remained in Mughal captivity was released after Aurangzeb’s death in 1707. Shahu’s initial years were full of challenges as he was opposed by Tarabai and Maratha sardars who had rallied behind her for so long against Aurangzeb. Shahu’s inexperience and lack of support from Maratha sardars were tackled by a Chitpavan Brahmin, Balaji Vishwanath as the latter won over many Maratha sardars to Shahu’s side and drove away Tarabai to Kolhapur. Balaji Vishwanath was made Peshwa in Shahu’s council of ministers with unprecedented military and administrative powers. Here onwards Peshwa Balaji Vishwanath made steady progress as he stabilized Shahu’s position as Chhatrapati in Maharashtra. On Balaji Vishwanath’s demise his son Bajirao became the Peshwa and here onwards Peshwa’s position became hereditary as Shahu began to rely more and more on Peshwa in administrative and military affairs of the state. Under Balaji Vishwanath and Bajirao Maratha power replaced Mughal power in the whole of Deccan and also conquered Malwa by 1740. Andre Wink’s study of the Maratha state formation during the 18th century is based on Marathi documents both state and private papers which illustrates Watan as institution much akin to the zaminadri rights of the zamindars in the North and its role in elite formation at various levels in Maharashtra during the 17th and 18th century.1 Watandars as patel, kulkarni at village level and as deshmukh and deshkulkarni at district level acted as functionaries in the Maratha revenue collection machinery as well as partners in larger political formations led by the local Maratha sardars who in turn supported the Chhatrapati, the Maratha King. Wink introduces Fitna, a concept much popular in West Asia to the process of Maratha state formation during the 18th century as he studied the changing loyalty and conflict among the Maratha watandars and sardars in the process of Maratha state formation under Shivaji and his successors and later under the leadership of the Peshwas during the 18th century.

Century. Wink thus interprets the growth and transformation of Maratha State into a confederacy in the later period under the Peshwas and the Maratha sardars Gaikwad, Shinde, Holkar, Bhonsle and others within Maharashtra and outside in the *fitna* paradigm.

Rise of the Peshwa in Maratha politics marginalized the role of older sardars and the Senapati - the Maratha military commander. Thus Bhonsale a scion of Shivajis family and Dabhades whose power as Shahu's Senapati - military commanders were later absorbed by the Peshwa Baji Rao settled down in Nagpur and Gujarat respectively. With Bajirao leading the Maratha army, *Senapati* with diminished role had hardly any business at Poona as Peshwa took control over Maratha affairs. Dabhades drifted away from Poona politics and developed their base at Baroda in Gujarat after their serious rivalry with the Peshwa Bajirao in league with other sardars and the Nizam proved futile by the beginning of 1730s. Bhonsales too settled down at Nagpur as they concentrated on Maratha expansion in Bengal and Orissa.

Bajirao and later Peshwa as Shahu's chief administrator and military commander were subsequently in a position to act as the de-facto Maratha ruler, Shahu as Chhatrapati merely acted as Maratha head, distancing himself from day to day affairs at Poona court once threat from Nizam and Peshwas rivalry with Dabhade became a non - issue from the 1730s. Emergence of Peshwa as the de-facto ruler in Maharashtra and his growing power in the neighbouring Khandesh, Malwa and Bundelkhand had been achieved by a new class of supporters. Peshwa inducted his own men of Chitpavan Brahmin caste from Konkan in the Maratha bureaucracy and army. Secondly older Maratha sardars who had shown defiance and whose loyalty had been suspect were not preferred in Bajirao's army. From the mid 1720s onwards Bajirao led the fight against the domestic rival Dabhades and Mughal nobles Nizam, Mohammad Khan Bangash and Sawai Jai Singh in the company of new group of sardars. With unquestioned loyalty and some of them hailing from very humble background new lot of sardars accompanying Bajirao helped him in many challenging battles that took place from the mid 1720s onwards till the decisive Battle of Bhopal in 1738 that established Maratha control.

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1 Indian scholars have been critical of such a concept being applicable to political formations in pre-modern India, especially Irfan Habib, Muzaffar Alam, See their Reviews in Modern Asian Studies, Vol.23, 1989
over Malwa. Ranoji Shinde and Malhar Rao Holkar also joined as a part of Bajirao’s new team while he was trying to stabilize Maratha power in the early 1720s and showed total commitment during the campaigns in Malwa and neighbouring territories.

Maratha state formation in the 18th century that this study focuses upon traces the role of Peshwa’s saradrs Shinde and Holkar in strengthening and expansion of Maratha power in the North. Shinde and Holkar’s rise during the period of Bajirao and their campaigns in the areas beyond Narmada River in the North, covering the erstwhile Mughal territories of Khandesh, Malwa, Bundelkhand, Rajasthan and Agra has been referred as Core and Periphery of household state that the two families ruled and dominated from Indore and Ujjain in the later half of the 18th Century. Stewart Gordon’s study of Maratha conquest of Malwa and Khandesh and later consolidation in the Central India region has the same trajectory as those of John Malcolm and Raghubir Sinh. Gordon brings order to the numerous campaigns in Khandesh and Malwa right from the beginning of the 18th century and organized campaigns under the Peshwa Bajirao by calling them as a process of ‘Slow Conquest’ that gets completed with consolidation of the Maratha power by the 1750s in the areas directly controlled by Peshwa. Gordon analyses and grades the Maratha campaigns as being of increasing magnitude with the progress in time. Dislodging of Mughal power first from rural areas and then from smaller towns and finally the conquest of the main Mughal centres in Malwa and Khandesh as campaigns progress, needless to say Gordon borrows from Bernard Cohn’s framework of “Network and Centres in the integration of a region.” Gordon studies several aspects of Maratha state formation in Central India through independent papers that follows ‘The Slow Conquest’ reflecting on ascendency of Maratha rule in the region. But political formations in the territory

2 From the point of view of Mughal disintegration Gordon’s ‘The Slow Conquest’ and Muzaffar Alam’s Crisis of Empire in the Mughal North study the same problem of the breaking away of Mughal subas in the first half of the 18th century through different processes
assigned to Maratha sardars Shinde and Holkar in the adjoining areas of Malwa and Khandesh during the same period have so far remained untouched.

V S Kadam’s study of the origin and development of Maratha confederacy highlights the process of transformation of Maratha polity from a kingdom to a loosely knit political formation as the century progresses. Kadam has traced the origin of Maratha confederacy in the operation of saranjam system, first adopted during the period of Aurangzeb’s invasion of Maharashtra by Rajaram. Kadam’s study brings in to focus the dynamics of 18th century Maratha polity. The emphasis has been towards understanding political, administrative, financial and military relations between Peshwa at the centre and his sardars holding saranjams in the outlying areas.

Shinde and Holkar’s rise and progress as powerful Maratha sardars in the North in the later half of the Eighteenth Century brought Marathas to the centre stage of North Indian Politics. Malhar Rao Holkar and several members of Shinde family were instrumental in this process by establishing Maratha domination in Rajasthan and Doab regions before the Battle of Panipat. However, it was the revival of Maratha power after Panipat and their supremacy in the North under Malhar Rao Holkar, Ahilyabai & Tukoji Holkar and Mahadji Shinde that has so far only remained confined to many biographies produced in the early 20th century. Sarkar and Sardesai’s treatment has been in much larger Mughal and Maratha framework.

This study makes Central India, Rajasthan and adjoining Mathura -Agra region its focus while tracing Maratha state formation under Shinde and Holkar. During the course of Maratha campaigns all over the North beyond Narmada, Chambal and Yamuna rivers role of geographical and other local factors have been acknowledged. How local topography and strongholds impacted the response of


1 Kadam, V S, Maratha Confederacy: A Study in its Origin and Development, Delhi, 1993
2 Ibid., pp.18-31 for Saranjam System of the Marathas
3 Ibid., See his Preface
the local elite to Maratha control and dominance has been examined at various stages of Maratha expansion in the North.

Nature of Shinde and Holkar's relations with Jaipur and Jodhpur state in the second half of the 18th Century has especially been examined in the light of the local resistance to Maratha domination in the light of fresh evidence. Examination of Maratha - Rajput relations in the last quarter of the 18th century from the Maratha and from the perspective of the local elites is based on first hand account of Maratha vakil at the Jodhpur court and regular correspondence of Shinde and Holkar with the Jaipur state. Also the focus is on Shinde and Holkar's growing role as members of Maratha Confederacy vis-à-vis Peshwa's direct relations with the Jaipur and Jodhpur Rajput rulers after the death of Sawai Jai Singh in 1743.

An attempt has also been made here to study Shinde and Holkar's household state in the formative years in and around their bases in Central India while tracing their rise to power in Central India and Rajasthan. Presence of the Maratha elements in Shinde and Holkar's set up in Central India and North has been also examined along with the induction of local elements in the army during the last quarter of the 18th century under Mahadji Shinde. Mahadji Shinde's role in North Indian politics especially his relations with the Rajputs of Rajasthan, the Mughal Emperor and the English has also been analysed in the period of Maratha supremacy in the North.

Nature of Maratha control and dominance in Central India and in the areas in the North, beyond Chambal River under Shinde and Holkar varied. This has been examined in the light of the mechanism of revenue collection applied by Shinde and Holkar in different regions. Comparison of the arrangements for revenue collection during the period with the Mughal and Maratha revenue administration is another objective of this study. Various Centers (Indore, Ujjain, Mathura and Kota) and Network that integrated the periphery with the core region have been mapped while studying Shinde and Holkar's control and domination in the conquered territories.

Satish Chandra's thoughtful essay *The 18th Century in India: Its economy and the Role of the Marathas, the Jats, the Sikhs and the Afghans* is one of the
corner-stone of this study, especially his remark, “The internal character of the states of the Sindhia and Holkar needs to be assessed....”

In a larger framework this study also considers writings of Bernard Cohn and R G Fox. Muzaffar Alam’s and Sanjay Subrahmanyam’s introductory remark in a recent publication about the need to study the process along with the structure of a political formation is also important in this work on Shinde and Holkar where military campaigns are an ongoing process right from the beginning of the century but its nature changes in the second half of the 18th century. Cavalry based loosely organised Maratha army under Malhar Rao Holkar and Ranoji Shinde to infantry and artillery based army under Mahadji Shinde brought a sea change in the way Maratha army operated in the North from the days of Peshwa Bajirao.

The present work is divided into five chapters. Each chapter covers a particular aspect or a stage in Maratha state formation that emerges from the analysis of primary and secondary literature.

First chapter Regional Reality and State Formation not only introduces Central India and Rajasthan regions in geographical terms but also maps strongholds, logistics and communication network that played a crucial role during the Maratha campaigns and conquest of a particular locality. Maratha state formation in the North during the 18th Century has to be first seen as control over a complex network of geographical and man made strongholds in these region. Maratha rise to power in Central and North India was an unprecedented attempt on such a grand scale, in the past no power moving from South to North from the areas beyond Narmada River and Vindhya hill ranges had achieved so much territorial gains. In 18th century Maratha cavalry was fast on mountainous terrain but large rivers like Narmada were to be crossed at selective points, there was no better access to interiors of Rajasthan than the Mukundra pass and majestic forts like Gawalior and those in Bundelkhand could test any army’s strategy to capture them.

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1 Chandra, Satish, *The 18th Century in India: Its Economy and the Role of the Marathas, the Jats, the Sikhs and the Afghans*, Calcutta, 1991, pp.28-29
2 Cohn, Bernard S, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays*, Delhi, 1987, Several Essays mentioned above
3 Fox, R G, *Kin, Clan, Raja and Rule: State-Hinterland Relations in Pre-industrial India*, Bombay, 1971
4 Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (ed.), *The Mughal State, 1526-1750*, OUP, Delhi, 1998, pp.1-71
Second chapter introduces the local elites in the regions that later were conquered and incorporated in the domain of Shinde and Holkar. The advantages of terrain and strongholds in the limited area that local Rajput chiefs enjoyed were key to the success of the Marathas. Maratha expansion was in alliance with the local elites of the region. Nanadlal Mandloi of pargana Kampel in south Malwa opened the doors for Maratha Expansion during the period of Bajirao as he controlled the fords on the Narmada river. Chhatrasal Bundela and Bajirao joined hands as Bundela Chief needed his support to drive away Mohammad Khan Bangash from Bundelkhand in the 1720s. Bajirao in return got a permanent and secure base in Bundelkhand when Chhatrasal promised him a portion of his territory. From Bundelkhand Bajirao could launch campaign in northern Malwa, Rajasthan and in Doab regions across Yamuna River. On the other hand local resistance in several areas hindered Maratha expansion. Khichi chiefs of Malwa, Gohad Jat Rana Chattar Singh, Bundela Rajputs and bigger Rajput chiefs of Rajasthan were strongly entrenched in their home territory. The process of Maratha domination and control here was a prolonged affair. Smaller Rajput chieftains in Rajasthan in the last quarter of the century allied with Mahadji Shinde in their own interest. Kota chief Zalim Singh Jhala’s association with Shinde helped both sides in gaining control over Mewar and Kota region. Zalim Singh neutralised the threat to Kota from Jaipur by allying with Shinde.

Third chapter traces the rise of Shinde and Holkar in the context of the rebuilding of Maratha power by Chattrapati Shahu and the Peshwa after the passing away of Aurangzeb. How Ranoji Shinde and Malhar Rao Holkar came in contact and rose higher as Maratha sardars in the new Maratha set up at the beginning of the 18th Century. Their rise to power has been dealt in context of Peshwas attempt to marginalize the older sardars and his growing reliance on new lot of loyal and humble sardars trained under his own leadership. Participation of the members of Shinde and Holkar family in the expansion and rise of Maratha power in the North after they had received territorial assignments in Central India both before and after the Battle of Panipat takes into account all major military campaigns in the North and South that made them the leading Maratha sardars.

Career of Mahadji Shinde had special bearing on Maratha affairs in the North. How Mahadji made a mark in Maratha politics after the third battle of Panipat is attempted in this chapter. Mahadji’s role in the Anglo-Maratha War,
coming closer to Mughal Emperor and his later military reforms and campaigns against Rajputs of Rajasthan made him the most powerful Maratha leader. The chapter tries to find out how he climbed up facing the challenges that came in the way to his supremacy in the North.

Maratha penetration in Rajasthan forms another thrust area in this work. Maratha campaigns and response of Jaipur and Jodhpur rulers to Shinde and Holkar’s attempts to control the economic resources of the region saw much blood shed for more than 50 years of Maratha domination. The chapter shows how the response of the local elite to Maratha domination was widespread resistance to presence of Maratha revenue collectors and their outposts in the region by the local zamindars. Shinde and Holkar’s gentle persuasion as well as military threats and aggression so evident in the correspondences over a long period of time that failed to fetch them enough tribute from the Rajput rulers of Jaipur and Jodhpur forms the crux of the arguments that Maratha had no more than dominating presence in the periphery. Mahadji Shinde’s victory over Jaipur and Jodhpur in 1790 was a result of the local support from self aspiring Rajput chieftains and through superior military build up, the chapter argues. The region suffered due to frequent Maratha demands for money and visit of the Maratha army that led regular pressure on Jaipur ruler to pay tribute also shown by the regular war of words and stand off between the two sides depicted in the Kharita records. Pressure on peasantry and incidence of large scale desolation in rural areas of eastern Rajasthan also support Maratha pressure for money on Rajput chiefs.

There is substantial evidence of trade in certain precious items like horse and camels between the Maratha courts of Peshwa, Shinde and Holkar after Marathas made Kota their base and established regular communication channel with Jaipur court. Shinde also sought regular remission of toll tax, Mahsul, from traders’ crossing over to Jaipur region for trade. Jaipur ruler was also asked to provide protection to merchants, traders and pilgrims crossing over to Jaipur region. Growing contact between Malwa and Jaipur region may be traced to from Sawai Jai Singh’s period when he served as Malwa’s subabdar.

Final chapter looks at Shinde and Holkars administrative and revenue arrangements in the conquered territory as it evolved after Peshwa granted them saranjams in Malwa and Khandesh. The ongoing process of conquest and expansion led to adding of fresh saranjams by Peshwa to both the sardars in
Rajasthan and Doab. As in the outlying areas Marathas didn’t have much control, the chapter shows how Marathas collected tribute by making local arrangements and negotiations without taking over the revenue collection machinery of the local chief. In the core areas of Maratha control that covered most of south Malwa and north-west Malwa, especially Ujjain, Indore and Kota centres came up with administration network managed by the local kamavisdars of Shinde and Holkar. Growing incidence of *ijara* and Shinde’s grant of large chunks of Mughal territory that he came to control in the 1780s to his military generals were taken up as measures to bail out the household states from the growing scarcity of funds needed to pay the army in the years of hectic campaigns and warfare. Bankers involvement in state finance is also shown to be a growing practice as both Holkar and Shinde began to rely on them for ready cash towards the end of the 18th century. Involvement of several bankers of Indore in Holkar’s state affairs as revenue farmers has come to light. Shinde’s dealings with bankers were even greater as were his expenditures on army when he moved to North after the Anglo-Maratha war.

On a larger scale the work treats the whole territory that came under Shinde and Holkar’s supremacy as highly settled core areas of personal control where Maratha set up was well established and beyond that there was a large periphery where they dominate through their military supremacy. Here Shinde and Holkar had an agreement with the local elite to serve them militarily and pay the tribute. However, this arrangement worked only when the local elite was under pressure. Most of the time the local elite was freely operating and the Marathas had to apply military pressure to bring them back to their fold.

What is also evident is that various regions and regional identities are getting merged as Marathas and other local powers that emerged after Mughal disintegration were interacting on a regular basis now through their vakils (agents) in the courts of other local powers. Military campaigns, inter-regional trade and pilgrimage were bridging the gaps between North and South too. As it involved crossing local barriers and development of new military and trade route and also probably the language barrier. Growing proximity of Maharashtra and Central India to Rajasthan, Delhi-Agra and Doab regions as there was greater movement of people now than probably during the Mughal period is indicated in this work.
**Nature of Source Material**

Most of the primary sources used for this study are in form of correspondences in Marathi, Rajasthani, Persian and English by Maratha rulers, their associates, administrators posted in the local ruler's courts as well as representatives of British and other powers in the Maratha courts. Eighteenth century compared to the Sixteenth and Seventeenth century generated far more records as there was greater interaction among the new and old political formations and also because of the fast changing political scene. Regular reporting of events and local affairs in the North is evident in vast mass of documents generated by Maratha news writers, reports of the Maratha vakils, the Persian Akhbarats, reports of the English Residents that fills several volumes.

Marathi correspondences from the very beginning of Peshwa’s campaign in Central India are the richest collection for the entire period of the study. Separate Series of Correspondences deal with Peshwa, Holkar and Shinde’s day to day engagements ranging from military campaigns, movement of Maratha Sardars in the localities of Central India, fast changing situation in the courts of local elites, payment of tribute etc. As the period progresses these correspondences are richer in detail about day to day movement of Maratha army on various fronts and results of Maratha military operations against the local powers. They also contain details of the local terrain and strongholds enabling an estimation of the various stages of the Maratha expansion both before and after the third battle of Panipat. However, it is matter of internal administration-Maratha arrangements in the newly conquered areas like allotment of saranjams to Maratha sardars, appointment of revenue collectors, schedule and details of pending dues from the local chieftains under domination that the later Marathi correspondences also include along with Military details.

Marathi scholars have transcribed all these Marathi correspondence from Modi to Balbodhi i.e. Devnagri script. Holkar’s official correspondences were compiled by V.V. Thakur under the title Holkarsahica Itihasacin Sadhanen. Shinde’s official records referred as Gulgule Daftar have been also transcribed. Part of it has been printed under the title Shindesahica Itihasachi Sadhane by A B

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1 Holkarsahica Itihasacin Sadhanen, Thakur, V. V., Vol.1, Gawalior, 1929
Phalke\(^1\); however, major portion of *Gulgule Daftar* are yet to be published, though copy of it in transcribed form is available in Sitamau Library (MP) collected by Raghubir Sinh.

The *Selection from the Peshwa Daftar* Series compiled by G.S. Sardesai is another important source for the study of the early careers of Shinde and Holkar under the Peswhas. These are the published records that were selected from the vast mass of Marathi records preserved at *Peshwa Daftar*, Pune.

Maratha *vakil* and news reporter Krishnaji Jagannath's newsletter sent to the Peshwa and Nana Phadnis from Jodhpur court of the Rathores for the period 1785 to 1794 is another important compilation by D.B. Parasnis\(^2\) published in *Ithias Sangraha* in 1915. This Jodhpur agent of the Marathas not merely reports the events of importance in the Jodhpur court affecting Marathas interests but also events in the court of other important rulers of Rajasthan like Jaipur and Udaipur and likely to have a bearing on the fortunes of Peshwa and his sardars Shinde & Holkar. Such are also the details in the dispatches of Sadashiv Dinkar\(^3\) to Poona Court from Delhi and Vitthal Shamraj\(^4\) and Vikaji Dattar from Ahilyabai Holkar’s residence at Maheshwar near Indore.

In Rajasthani, Marathas ruler’s official correspondences called Kharitas are addressed to local Rajput rulers and chieftains. The *kharitas* sent by Peshwa, Shinde and Holkar for the entire period of study are available in the Rajasthan State Archive, Bikaner.\(^5\) They are very comprehensive and focused messages from Marathas to Jaipur rulers about their demands and requests besides routine messages. Details in the Kharitas pertain to Maratha pressure for regular tribute payment and settlement of the backlog/pending dues, territorial disputes and encroachments in Maratha controlled areas on the frontiers of Jaipur state, instructions for favourable action in matters of Maratha subjects having social and economic ties in Jaipur state or city. Besides there are regular details of animal trade from Rajasthan fair grounds especially of Horse and Camels, movement of

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\(^1\) *Shindesahica Ithiasachin Sadhanen*, Phalke, A. B., Vol.I, Gwalior, 1929

\(^2\) *Ithias Samgraha*, (ed) D B Parasnis, Poona, 1915

\(^3\) *Historical Papers Relating to Mahadji Sindhia*, (ed) Sardesai, G S, Gwalior, 1937


\(^5\) Also See the Published list, *Kharita: Gwalior-Jaipur (Vikram Samvat 1802-Vikram Samvat 1873)*, Rajasthan State Archive, Bikaner, 1977
pilgrims and visitors under state protection. The language in Kharita documents highlights Maratha’s coercive attitude and domination. As there are fewer kharitas dispatched by the Peshwas, that too in the 1750s and 1760s and larger number are written by Shinde and Holkar, it is an indication of lesser contact of Peshwas with Jaipur rulers as Shinde and Holkar grew stronger in Central India after the third battle of Panipat.

Another set of Rajasthani records called Dastur Kaumvar are records of men from different regions visiting Jaipur state Dastur Deekhni in the same series lists Maratha visitors of high and low ranks to the Jaipur court. These records add to existing perception of the level of contact between Marathas and Jaipur ruler throughout the period of the study.

Both Kharita and Dastur Dikhni records substantiate widespread and perpetual Maratha presence and influence over Jaipur state and its neighbourhood.

Among English sources Foreign Department Records from 1760 onwards provides supporting evidence on Maratha campaigns in northern Malwa, Bundelkhand and Doab regions in the post-Panipat period. Most importantly they describe how Mahadji Shinde got rid of the presence of two of the Peshwa’s Sardars - Visaji Krishna and Ram Chander Ganesh sent from Poona to reinforce Maratha campaigns against Jats and Sikhs. Not very generous in details still Foreign Department Records corroborate descriptions in other sources on Marathas existing relations with Mughal emperor Shah Alam, Nawab of Awadh, Rohillas, Jats, Bundelas and the Rajputs of Rajasthan as viewed by the English officials posted in the Awadh Nawab’s court and at Allahabad.

British Resident Charles Malet’s letters from Poona Court written in 1781-82 throws light on Maratha relations with Rana of Gohad, a powerful Chieftain in the surroundings of Gwalior.\(^1\) Much more extensive details by English Residents in the court of Mahadji Shinde are available for the period 1785-94. The correspondence by David Anderson, James Anderson, William Kirkpatrick and

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\(^1\) Sinh, Raghubir (ed.), *Selections from Sir C W Malet’s Letter-Book, 1780-1784*, Poona Residency Correspondence, Extra Volume, Bombay, 1940
William Palmer further add on to the information on Shindes rise as a military power and Maratha campaigns in Rajasthan as seen from Mahadj Shindes camps. ¹

Translations of Persian Akhbarats and correspondences by Jadunath Sarkar for the period after Panipat also provide extensive details on Maratha campaigns in Malwa and Rajasthan. Most of these Persian correspondences were written by Maratha and local news writers stationed at Delhi court. There are also Persian newsletters from the camps of Mahadji Shinde, Jaipur court as well as from Delhi court for the entire period of Lalsot campaign in 1787 and Mahadji Shinde’s campaign in Rajasthan in 1790-91.

While Maratha accounts of the period by and large contain details of politico-administrative developments. It is Rajput accounts on the other hand that reveals the ground realities of the Maratha domination in the Rajasthan region. Letters of Jodhpur vakil of the Peshwa often describes fear among the local elite about consequences of taking on the might of the Marathas. Rajput account also describes destruction and long term impacts of Maratha presence in the region, especially feeling of opposition and discontent among Rajput chieftains due to Maratha presence. English accounts of the period are on the other hand valuable in judging the strength and weaknesses of Maratha polity as the English observers of the Maratha events were quite neutral to whatever was happening in Central India and Rajasthan.

¹ Mahadji Sindhia and North Indian Affairs, 1785-1794, Sarkar, J N (ed.), Poona Residency Correspondence, Vol.1, Mumbai, 1936